



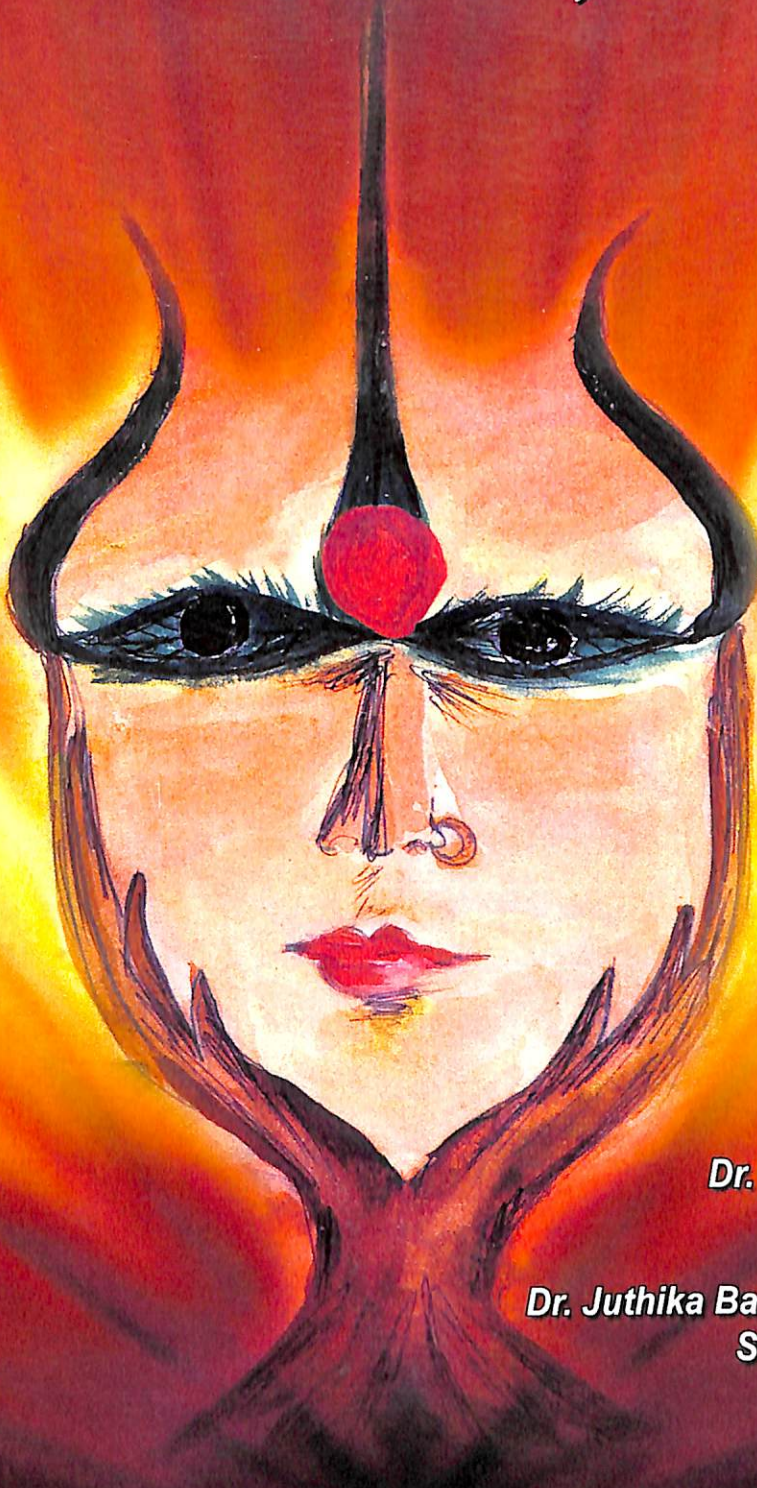
शक्ति

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Editorial

Women are regarded as the symbol of Strength. Especially in Hindu Mythology, women are given a special status and are worshiped as a "Devi" or "Shakti", who has the potential power to produce, sustain and also to destroy every evil that is interrupting the natural inhabitants of the earth. Women are worshiped as Goddesses in Greek mythology as well. And in almost every religion, women are specially treated and respected. The Earth is even regarded as "Mother Earth" or "Prakriti" because just as a mother who gives birth to a child, nourishes and protects her child from every obstacle; our mother earth nourishes and protects every seed ever planted to grow healthily.

But the crux of the problem lies in how people are actually treating their women today. Even though women are regarded as a 'Devi' or Goddess and are given special respect; she holds a meagre position in the society. Hence for women to acquire a proper position in the society, she must be conscious about her potential and power. Women today have invaded all walks of life from politics, industry, business, to even adventurous enterprises like explorations in space. These women are exceptionally talented, who had the courage to fight against discrimination at every step; but it is not possible for ordinary women to swim against the prevalent trend. Therefore, women have to think and chalk out their own liberation. For this, educated woman can play a great role and their active participation in awareness programmes can very effectively help the common or ordinary women to be conscious about their power and potentials. As the strength and progress of a society depends on its basic elements, i.e., man and women, therefore the certainty in the progress of a society lies in giving equal status to both the elements without any exception.

As a part of research activity, Narangi Anchalik Mahavidyalaya Women Cell published the women related research journal, "Shakti , The Strenght". The journal got its ISSN on its maiden issue and we are proud to present this second edition of the journal. We hope our journal contributes towards research work and grows stronger in years to come.

Here, on behalf of the editorial board, I would like to acknowledge all the contributors for their valuable contributions. I would also like to offer our heartfelt thanks to the principal of our college, Reeta Dutta Hazorika for her moral support and all the members of woman cell, for their constant support and appreciation.

Karabi Goswami

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Entrepreneurship and Women :

A way to gender equality

A study in Kamrup(Metro) district of Assam

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Abstract :

Women empowerment is a much debated and a very sensitive topic in the modern society. It means a process by which women are made economically independent, socially mobile, confident and allow them to take part in all types of decision making both in the family and society. They become aware of their rights and meet their challenges in life. This can be done by providing the women with the opportunity of education, entrepreneurship, public speaking, political participation and also giving decision in domestic and social activities. Making the women economically independent is found to be the most important way to make them empowered as economic independency makes them feel confident . For this, they should be provided with some kind of entrepreneurial abilities.

It is in this background, this paper makes an attempt to study the impact of entrepreneurial activity in making the women economically independent and makes them feel equal with the male members of the society. The paper also tries to study the problems faced by the women in their entrepreneurial activities.. Both primary and secondary data have been used in the study . Primary data is collected by taking personal interviews..

[Key words : Economically independent, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment]

Introduction :

Women empowerment is a much debated and a very sensitive topic in the modern society. Women empowerment means a process by which women are made economically independent, socially mobile, confident and allow them to take part in all types of decision making both in the family and society. They become aware of their rights and meet their

challenges in life. This can be done by securing greater access to resource, command over knowledge and bringing about a significant ideological shift which result in changes in women's self image and how they are perceived in relation to the community. Rio + 20 outcome recognized that there are critical linkages between women's empowerment, health, gender equality and sustainable energy, which are all important for sustainable and inclusive growth. According to United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), Women empowerment is not only a human right but also it is necessary for achieving Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

Many studies and discussions have been done for uplifting the women's status and position in the society in different parts of the world. Though some changes have occurred in the position of women, it is restricted to only a very small proportion. Still a very large percentage of women are treated only as daughter, wife or mother. In the family, the role of women is restricted in food preparation, household management and taking care of their children etc while the earning and all the important decisions of the family including the financial matters are taken by the male members. In most cases women are found to be dependent on any of their male family members like father, husband or brother economically, for social movement and any type of decision making. In India, men and women are equal in the eye of law, but still Indian women are not free from the sufferings of dowry system, domestic violence, sexual harassment etc. Women today are educated but illiterate in knowing their rights properly (Hussain 2013). Hence it has been strongly realized that women should be made confident, competent, courageous, strong, hard working so that they can face and solve any problem in their life. This is possible by changing attitude and traditional mindset of the people.

For empowering women, they should be given the opportunity of education, public speaking, political participation and also giving decision in domestic and social activities. Making the women economically independent is the most important way to make them empowered as economic independency makes them confident. For this, they should be provided with some kind of entrepreneurial abilities. It is in this background, this paper makes an attempt to study how the entrepreneurial activity makes the women economically independent and makes them feel confident and competent for any type of work to start with.

Adema et.al (OECD 2014), in the report mentioned that women's economic empowerment can be enhanced by improving entrepreneurship and leadership which could contribute to economic growth, job creation and economic growth.

In our country with such a huge population and problems of unemployment, women entrepreneurship happens to be the best tool of women empowerment. Today's women must supplement their family income using their skill and potential that they possess. They

instead of waiting employment outside home should start their enterprise by sharpening their skill and competencies by way of training.(2015,Dwivedy & Dwivedy).

Devi (2013), in a study ' Women Status in Assam' found that there is need to create socio political consciousness among women in order to bring changes in their traditional life style.

Nayak & Mahanta (2009), in their study 'Women Empowerment in Assam' found that Women access and control over resources is far less in Assam in comparison to other states of India. However awareness about micro credit programmes is more in Assam than in the other states. The study concluded that there is need to create awareness towards achieving the desired goal of women empowerment in the state.

Jamali, D (2009), in a study mentioned that a combination of personal characteristics such as confidence, ambitions and determinations, hard work etc make women entrepreneurs successful to run a business.

Objectives :

1. To examine the impact of entrepreneurship on socio -economic condition of women.
2. To find out the problems faced by the women in their entrepreneurial activities.

Methodology :

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. Pimary data is collected through direct interviews of some women entrepreneurs. Twenty women entrepreneurs from different localities of Kamrup (Metro) district were interviewed with a schedule of questions.. In the survey women were queried about the issues like age, education, access to resources, initial investment, return on investment, income generating processes, financial independency, participation in domestic decision making in different family matters, social mobility etc. They were also queried about the problems if any they experienced during their journey. Random sampling method was used for selection of localities, and respondents.

The secondary data was collected from the various publications and websites. The research paper is a descriptive analysis on the basis of available information.

Study Area :

Kamrup Metropolitan district is a district of the state of Assam created in 2003 curved out of the erstwhile Kamrup district with Guwahati as its capital. Guwahati, the only metropolitan city in the entire North eastern region is one of the most rapidly growing city in India.

The population of the district grew from just 1,059,578 in 2001 to 1,260,419 in 2011 exhibiting a population growth rate of 18.95 per cent over the decade.. Out of this 17.30 per cent of population lives in the rural areas. The average literacy rate is 88.71 per cent as against 83.21 percent in 2001. Gender wise male and female literacy rates in 2011 are 92.13 and 85.07 respectively. But in the rural area the literacy rate is only 82.36 for male and 70.22 per cent for female. The sex ratio is 922 per 1000 males. Total literate persons in the district are 1,001,191 of which male and female are 537,227 and 463,964 respectively.

Analysis & Findings :

In the present study, the researcher has selected randomly twenty (20) women entrepreneurs who are engaged in various entrepreneurial activities. These women belong to different age groups ranging from 35 to 55 years. Out of these women eightteen of them are married. And two are unmarried. The study reveals that women's entrepreneurship in the study area is limited within some specified field. These are mainly tailoring, designing/embroidering on readymade ladies wares, producing garments with traditional handlooms, running beauty parlors, running small shops of essential items. Besides these few women entrepreneurs have also started to run educational institutions and manufacturing industries. The researcher also interviewed twenty (20) women who are exclusively engaged in household activities such as taking care of their children and other domestic responsibilities to know their opinion about women participation in entrepreneurial activities.

All the respondents are of the opinion that women should be given equal opportunity as men to take part in any type of social and economic activities. They all agree that every women should be economically independent. They reveal that the ability of women is not inferior to men. They are capable of doing any type of work and running any type of entrepreneurship as men can do. The only difference is that they lack courage. It is due to traditional stereo type norms that male members of the family will earn for the family, take all important decision relating to financial and other important decision and female will take care of their children and perform other domestic activities. The study reveals that in the metro areas of Kamrup district some women are engaged in some entrepreneurial activities only due to compulsion to supplement their family income but not as a career. The women are hesitant due to fear to take up new venture, lack of family support, low access to capital, lack of business and technical skill, lack of knowledge about the marketing and accounting. However, some of the women entrepreneurs are running their business very efficiently. They have expressed that in order to further enhancement of women entrepreneurship, women should have higher education, technical education along with training in skill development.

All the entrepreneurs admit that in the initial stage due to fear about the prospect of the business as well as social conservations, they took help or advice from their husbands or male relatives to start a business. Once they learnt they could run it independently. All the respondents (entrepreneur) mentioned that initial financial support came from their family income either parents or close relatives. However some of them also took bank finances.

The study also reveals that initially due to traditional attitude of our conservative society, they had to face some domestic hindrances, and criticisms from the family members and neighbours as women were not in numbers in such entrepreneurship before. But gradually their confidence level increases and it helps in their business expansion. They are now not only creating jobs for themselves, but also they have created jobs for others. Although some a few women entrepreneurs could give employment to a large number of persons (more than 350), all the respondents feel happy that they are giving employment to at least three to four persons. All have agreed that Passion, perseverance, strong determination, hard work, ambition, self-confidence, devotion to work made them successful despite they had to face some barriers in their work.

In the field of performance, majority of them expressed satisfaction with their performance and hopeful for business expansion in spite of the constraints they had to face in their journey.

The study also reveals that women's participation in entrepreneurial activities helps the utilization of their creativity, potentiality and talents and makes them economically independent. As soon as they are economically independent, their status in the family as well as in the society increases. Participating in various entrepreneurial and other social activities opens the doors of information and knowledge for these women. This enables them to learn about their changing roles and newer responsibilities in this changing global scenario.

Regarding the problems they face in their work , most of them expressed initial domestic hindrances and criticisms from the family members and neighbours was the major problem. Besides balancing family and business work is the problem faced majority of them. Another major problem was the source of finance, so initially they had to limit their business. One of the entrepreneurs has expressed her dissatisfaction that it takes much time in obtaining sanction or approval from government department in connection with her business.

Conclusion :

Gender equality is a big challenge for all the countries of the world. In our country also many studies have been done on this regard. In this study it is found that women are

engaged in different types of economic activities. Sometimes such engagement is only to supplement the family income not as a career. After marriage majority of the women get engaged in unpaid household activities. So the women should be encouraged from their young age for entrepreneurial activities so that they can utilize their creativity and potentiality and get themselves engaged in some business, fulltime or part time without disturbing their family. Women entrepreneurship also has an important role in increasing employment opportunity and thus economic development in a country. Knowledge, Courage and Confidence are the three important factors to make a woman successful in her entrepreneurial activity. Once a woman is economically independent, her confidence level increases and she can prove herself successful in every sphere of life.

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Empowerment of Indian Women: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract :

Empowerment is a process which generates changes in our own ideals and perception. It creates awareness about one's rights and opportunities for self-development in all important spheres of life. Empowerment should enable the individual or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers. Virtually, empowerment is a process that enables a powerless woman to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence and a group of women and men, a sense of collective influences over oppressive social conditions (Hotter 1996). Women empowerment is generally used in two senses- general and specific. In general sense, it refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedom and opportunities. In specific sense, women empowerment refers to enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. The constitution of India has provided Indian women equal rights with men. Though the position of Indian women has changed a lot, there is still a great difference between constitutional position and ground reality of the position of women in India. The discrimination against women and girls— including gender based violence, economic discrimination, reproductive health inequalities and harmful traditional practices - remains the most pervasive and persistent form of inequality.

Therefore the present paper has made an attempt to discuss the constraints and challenges to empowerment of women in India and various government efforts for empowerment of women. The paper will also provide some solutions to improve empowerment of women in India. The paper is based on secondary sources of data.

[**Keyword** : Empowerment, awareness, rights, opportunity, self development, constitution]

Introduction :

Empowerment is a process which generates changes in our own ideals and perception. It creates awareness about one's rights and opportunities for self-development

in all important spheres of life. Empowerment should enable the individual or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers. Virtually, empowerment is a process that enables a powerless woman to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence and a group of women and men, a sense of collective influences over oppressive social conditions (Hotter 1996). The term empowerment covers a vast landscape of meaning, interpretations, definitions and disciplines ranging from psychology and philosophy to the highly commercialized self-help industry and motivated sciences. Sociological empowerment often addresses members of groups that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision-making processes through- for example, discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Empowerment is a methodology which is often associated with feminism.

The nature of empowerment renders it difficult to define. On the one hand, it is often referred to as a goal for many development programmes on the other hand, it can also be conceived as a process that people undergo, which eventually leads to changes. Nelly Stromquisc, for example, defines empowerment as "a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and institutions throughout society". Lucy Lazo describes it as "A process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means on enabling the access to a control over such means and resources." Though Women constitute half of the total population of a country but they suffer from many disadvantages as compared to men in terms of literacy rates, work participation rates etc. Social, economic and political empowerment is the need of the day, as it is one only surest way of making women "equal partners in development".

The process of women empowerment is conceptualized in terms of personal assertions, self-esteem and confidence ability to protect themselves as women attaining socio-political participation and economic independence, ownership of productive assets and provide leadership of women. Thus empowerment is an active and multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life (Pillai, 1995). There are 5 issues relating to women empowerment, a women's sense of self value and respect; the right to have choices and decision making power; access to various opportunities; prospects and means; the right to have power; to control their own life; and at the ability to influence trends in social change to create more social and economic orders; both nationally and internationally (Secretariat of the UN, 2001). The development of a country depends mostly on human talent. As women constitute half of the population of the country, therefore, the national development greatly depends on how the society provides opportunities to flourish its females, talents and gets advantage of their skills and productivity (Jager and Rohwer, 2009). Empowerment of women has been recognized as the most fundamental concern in determining women's status and

position (Women's empowerment is a critical aspect of promoting gender inequality [UN population fund, 2011]). The government has been implementing various schemes for the socio-economic advancements and development of women in the country. The "National Policy of Empowerment of Women" was adopted in 2001 with the objective of ensuring women their rightful pledge in society by empowering them as agents of socio-economic change and development.

So, it can be said that the term is therefore more relevant to the marginalized groups the poor, the illiterates, the indigenous communities and of course, cutting across these categories, the women.

Women empowerment means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day to day live in the social, political and economic terms. It is the process of obtaining opportunities for marginalized people. Women empowerment is generally used in two senses- general and specific. In general sense, it refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedom and opportunities. In specific sense, women empowerment refers to enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. The constitution of India has provided Indian women equal rights with men. Though the position of Indian women has changed a lot, there is still a great difference between constitutional position and ground reality of the position of women in India.

Therefore the present paper has made an attempt to study the Constraints to Empowerment of Women in India and to provide solutions to overcome this.

Objective of the study :

The present paper has made an attempt to discuss the constraints and challenges to empowerment of women in India and various government efforts for empowerment of women. The paper will also provide some solutions to improve empowerment of women in India.

Methodology :

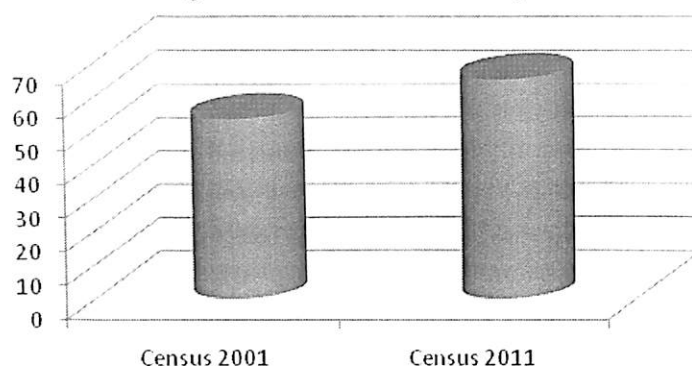
The present paper is based on secondary sources of data. For secondary sources of data I have used various books, Journals, government reports and magazines.

Constraints to Women's Empowerment in India :

Empowerment of women is closely linked to the opportunities they have in education, health, employment and for political participation. Over the years, significant advancement has been made in India on many of these counts. Data on literacy rates, enrolment and drop rates in primary education, life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality rates, etc. has shown a progressive trend.

There has been an appreciable gain in the overall sex ratio of 10 points from 933 in 2001 to 943 in 2011. On the health front, implementation of the National Rural Health Mission has resulted in an improvement on many indicators pertaining to gender. Fertility rates have come down and have reached replacement levels in a number of states. Maternal Mortality Rate is improving, from 301 per 100,000 live births in 2003 it has come down to 212 (SRS 2007-2009), similarly Infant Mortality Rate has reduced to 47 per 1000 in 2010. Institutional deliveries have risen from 41 per cent in 2006 to 73 percent in 2009. There has been an increase in literacy amongst women from 53.67 per cent (Census 2001) to 65.46 percent (Census 2011).

Figure 1: **Women Literacy Rat**



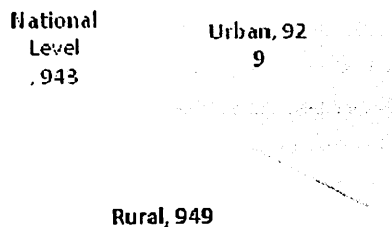
However other indicators that measures women empowerment in society such as work participation rates, sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years and gender based violence continue to be heavily skewed against women (Table 1). India's Gender Inequality Index value of 0.617 in 2011 placing the country at 129 among 149 countries globally is reflective of the high gender

Table 1: **Selected Indicators on Women Empowerment**

Indicators	Male	Female
Literacy Rate (Census2011)	82.14	65.46
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000live births) SRS 2009-10		212
Sex Ratio (Census 2011)	1000	940
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)	1000	914
Worker Population Ratio (per 1000)	819	336
MPs in Lok Sabha (%)	89.18	10.82

Source : Report of the Working Group on "Women's Agency and Empowerment" for the XII Five Year Plan 2011, p-5.

Figure 2 : Sex Ratio (Number of Females per Thousand Males) in 2011



Inequality that is prevalent. The lower attainments of women in key human development indicators are indicative of the sharp disparities in opportunities available to women and men. We can give example of deteriorating child sex ratio (0-6 years) in this regard. It declined by 13 points from 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011. There are increasing concerns regarding the gap between male and female infant mortality rate 49 for girls as compared to 46 for boys.

The 66th Round of NSSO (2009-10) provides insights on the recent trends in employment and education of women. It reveals that

- Work Participation Rate declined from 28.7 percent in 2004-05 to 22.8 percent in 2009-10.
- It shows the concentration of women continues to remain high in the agriculture sector.
- Another significant factor is the increasing number of young girls and their retention in their education which may also be one of the contributing factors for the decline in the WPR.
- It shows that the number of girls in school in the age group of 5 - 14 years has increased from 79.6% in 2004-05 to 89.7% in 2009-10. Similarly the number of girls in the educational system in the 15-19 years age group has increased.

Data from National Crime Record Bureau shows that the total number of crimes against women increased by 29.6% between 2006 and 2010. In the year 2013 year only 309,546 cases of crime against women were registered.

A women's life is full of miseries. Being an infant she faces numerous problems like female infanticide, high infant mortality rate, discrimination in breast feeding and

nutrition. As a child (1 - 10 years) she suffers health hazard like child mortality, malnutrition, polio, anemia, as well as social evils like child marriage, child labour and school dropout, discrimination in food, health care and child abuse. An adolescent (11 - 18 years) health and nutrition problem continues. She even faces life threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS. Social problems like child marriage, child labour, trafficking, commercial sex works, school dropout etc. add to the situation. Her problem continues as she becomes an adult woman. She faces problems and discrimination like domestic violence, rape, trafficking, commercial sex works, abortion, dowry harassment, polygamy, lack of asset etc. Health problem such as HIV/AIDS, anemia still continues. NFHS 3 (2005 - 06) indicates that about 55% of women in the age group 15-49 years suffer from anemia. At the state of pregnancy maternal mortality rate, anemia, unsafe delivery, early and frequent delivery, under nutrition are serious problems faced by women. As worker, women suffer in way of sexual abuse at workplace, wage discrimination, discrimination in employment, safety and security, lack of support facilities. Older women often suffer with ill health, widowhood, insecurity, sometimes destitution and even begging. Apart from these, women do household work day and night which is not counted as a part of national income.

Even after more than 66 years of independence, barring a few exceptions, women have mostly remained outside the domain of power and political authority. Though women constitute half of the population, yet their participation and representation in law making and law executive bodies are not very satisfactory. Though 73rd and 74th amendment have provided access to women in the decision making process at the grassroots level but their representation in the parliament and state legislatures is very poor.

Steps taken for ensuring dignity and existence of women in India

A number of steps have been taken since independence to ensure dignity and existence of women in India. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights & Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Government of India has made lots of plans and programmes for empowerment of women. To eliminate gender based discrimination, gender budgeting was introduced in 2005-06. Latest budget has made an allocation of Rs 1000 Crore for Nirvaya fund and Rs 100 Crore for the BetiBachao, BetiParhaoYojana.

Schemes for women empowerment

The ministry of women and child development has evolved various schemes and programmes for women empowerment. These schemes are spread across a broader spectrum such as women's need for shelter, security, safety, legal aid, justice, information, maternal health, nutrition etc. as well as their need for economic sustenance through skill development, education and access to credit and marketing.

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India (GoI) on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall processes that promote all-round Development of Women. It has the mandate to strengthen the inter-sector convergence; facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments. The Mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries.

The schemes of the Ministry like Swashakti, Swayamsidha, STEP and Swawlamban enable economic empowerment. Swadhar makes women to be strong and independent by spirit, by thoughts and by action and provide full control over their lives rather than be the victim. SSH provides temporary residence to women and girls who are in social and moral danger due to family problems, mental strain, violence at home, social ostracism, exploitation and other causes. Swayamsidha organizes women into self-help group. The Ministry also supports autonomous bodies like National Commission, Central Social Welfare Board and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh which work for the welfare and development of women.

During the Twelfth Plan a number of initiatives will be undertaken for empowering women. The Swayamsiddha Phase II will ensure holistic empowerment of women through SHGs. Ujjawala, a comprehensive scheme to prevent and combat trafficking with provisions for rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims will integrate the victims back into society. A

The Indian Government has also launched the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) for comprehensive empowerment of women. This is a centrally sponsored scheme, coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments. The Mission contributes to empowering women socially, economically, erasing crime and violence against women, to educate women, establishment of policies and programmes and spreading awareness. A scheme for providing restorative justice to victims of rape through financial assistance, as well as support services will be implemented in the 12th Plan in pursuance of Supreme Court of India directives.

Suggestions :

- Proper coordination amongst various organizations running women welfare programmes is the most essential requirement for empowerment of women.
- All women do not acquire same socio economic status. Women belonging to vulnerable sections need special attention or specific schemes.
- Village self-help groups should be created in which women can independently establish financial institutions that manage profit making programmes.

- There is need to educate the public about various women's issues to ensure that local women received equal opportunities and compensation.
- Gender sensitivity must be promoted among people.
- Gender differentials in Infant Mortality rate and Child Mortality rate can be reduced by increasing consciousness among people about the value and importance of girl child.
- Moral values should be incorporated in a family member about honoring the dignity of women.

Conclusion :

As the empowerment of women as become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level, so Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate of which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participation in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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Rani Gaidalu - a Tribute

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Introduction :

Rani Gaidinliu-who was called 'The Joan of Arc of the Naga hills'. She was the only person from Nagaland to be honoured as 'Freedom Fighter' by the Union Government along with the freedom fighters of other states. The year 2014-15 is the birth centenary year of the legendary Naga lady, Padma Bhushan Rani Gaidinliu. Rani Gaidinliu was born on 26 January 1915, to Lothonang Pamei (father) and Kachaklenliu (mother) in Longkao (Nungao) village of Manipur. She was third daughter among eight children. At the age of 13, she joined the Haraka movement of her cousin Haipu Jadonang of Tamenglong part of Manipur state..

The Haraka movement : While the Naga churches had no clear sense of the reality of their earthly dimension in their spirituality, a group of Nagas under the leadership of Jadonang began propagating a freedom movement mingled with the Haraka Cult (a Naga traditional religious insurrection) teachings. In the wake of the Western impact, the mushrooming of cult movements was apparent in many tribal societies. The Haraka Cult was one of these movements. The Haraka movement under Jadonang was a religio-political movement against the British. The Haraka religious teachings, comprised of ten principles, were the mixture of the Mosaic Ten Commandments and the Naga traditional creation centered religion. It was believed that Jadonang, the founder of the Haraka Cult was passed by the spirit of God and was able to heal people as well as to prophesy. It was a kind of old animistic religion of three concerned tribes, i.e. Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmei. Jadonang was highly against the spread of Christianity in Nagaland. He propagated to his people if they worshipped and made human and mithun sacrifices before the God creator Tingwang, he would give them plenty of food and drinks, there would be no illness and they would enjoy unrestrained freedom'.

Hang of Jadonang : Once they caught and killed four Manipuri traders who were on their way to Assam and offered their blood to their deity in a temple near Nungkao. Alarmed at the dangers of the Haraka worship the British Government decided to put an end to it. Jadonang and Gaidinliu were apprehended with a number of other persons in

connection with this murder. Gaudiliu escaped before trial, but Jadonang . together with five other accused , was convicted of murder in the court of the political agent in Manipur , who exercised on behalf of the Maharaja the higher judicial powers.

The death sentence of Jadonang was confirmed by the Governor of Council, acting on behalf of the paramount power and hanged on 29th August 1931 at Imphal, present capital city of Manipur. In other five cases Lungtons, Hachunguon, Dulungpu (or Lulungpu), Mupuong and Siphai, the sentence was committed to transportation for life.

Haraka movement under Gaidinliu : After Jadonang's execution the responsibility of the liberation movement of the Naga Hills was carried out by Guidiliu, who was then only seventeen years old. Gaidinliu started sending around the message of revolt against the British in the Naga hills. Under her leadership the character of the movement became more militant. Gaidinliu told to the people— “we are free people, the white men should not rule over us, we will not pay house tax to the Government, we will not obey their unjust laws like forced labour and compulsory portorage subscription”. She urged the people not to pay taxes and not to work for the British which were the practices of the freedom struggle at that time. She tried to prepare her people to fight against the British Government and “raised the banner of independence and called her people to rally round it”. She even went underground and led many attacks on the British administration. Under her direction a fortress was constructed, to resist the British force to advance. The capacity of the fort was four thousand warriors. But the Government received information regarding the where about of Guidiliu and her plan. The Government was also informed that the fortress was not yet ready and the rebels had not taken up any precautionary measures. The Government made sudden attacked on the rebel party of Guidiliu. There was no alternative way to escape, all the rebel members surrendered to the British force on the 14th October 1932.

Arrest of Rani Gaidinliu : Guidiliu was arrested in 1933 at Pulumai in Naga Hill. In chain she was brought to present to present capital, i.e. Kohima via Khonoma village. 'this young fiery freedom fighter was treated no better than a wild animal by the British. A rope had also been tied round her waist. The very next day Gaudiliu along with her younger brother was mercilessly beaten in Kohima jail. Their muscle were torn, clothes were also removed from their bodies.'

Gaudiliu was tried in the court of political agent as Manipur State for over 10 months. She was convicted as guilty of abatement of the murder. Her trial ended with the verdict of J.C. Higgins, Political Agent of Manipur State on 11th January 1933 and sent to life imprisonment. Though the movement continued for some time, it could not sustain longer for want of good leadership.

Repercussion of Guidiliu's Arrest : Gaudiliu was only 17 years when she was arrested. Saralabala Devi, Secretary of Mahila Sangha , Sylhet protested against her life imprisonment and “requested the Assam Government to allow Guidiliu (who was below twenty age) to be kept in charge of the Sylhet Mahila Sangha till her release orders were passed by the authorities.”

M.C. Mitra, M.L.A was questioned in the Assembly about the arrest of Gaidalu, who was a absconder in a murder case in which her leader, Jadanang was executed. The court held that as a member of the unlawful assembly which committed the murder she was liable to the full penalty. Protest against Gaudiliu's trail in Manipur Sylhet Mahila Sangha reacted as—

"The unrest or rebellion in the hill tracts of which Gaudiliu was admitted to be the "fire-band" comprised greater part of the British territory than the Manipur State. The Assam Government carried on the operation to quell the disturbance and captured Gaudiliu. After all she was charged with murder and tried in Manipur State. The charge against her was designed, it is suspected, to take away the political aspect of her activities and she was tried in Manipur State to secure easy conviction”.

The Secretary of Mahila Sangha of Sylhet, Mrs. Sarala Bala Devi, on behalf of the Sangha appealed to the Governor General of India, to release Gaudiliu from imprisonment. At the time of touring Eastern India in 1937 during his political activities Jawaharlal Nehru came to know about Gaudiliu. He wrote to the British MP lady Astor to do something for the release of Gaudiliu but the Secretary of the State for India rejected her request stating that trouble may rise again if Gaudiliu was released. In his book Unity of India he expressed his feelings , sympathy and bitterness towards her imprisonment— "This heroic girl was captured and sentenced for transportation for life. And now she lies in some prison in Assam, wasting her bright young womanhood in dark cells and solitude. Six years she had been there. What torment and suppression of spirit they have brought to her, who in the pride of her youth dared to challenge an Empire! And India dose not even know of this brave child of the hills. But her own people remember their Gaidiliu, the Rani and think of her with love and pride, and a day will come when India also will remember her and cherish her, and bring her out of her prison cell".

Gaidiliu serving the prison term of 14 years from 1933 to 1947 in various jails in Gauhati, Shillong, Aizawal and Tura jail , she freed in 1947 after India gained freedom and Nehru gave her the title 'Rani' and she came to be known as such.

Conclusion :

The situation under British administration compelled Rani Gaidilue to hold gun in her hand and adopt the jungle path to protect her people from forcible conversion at gun

point. Rani Gaidilue's struggle did not end with India getting freedom. She launched a battle to protect her Heraka faith, and clashed with Naga groups. and for some years demanded a Zeliangrong Administrative Area comprising contiguous areas of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur inhabited by the Zeme, Liangmei and Rongmei peoples. The brave lady, the 'Daughter of the hills' or 'Queen' or 'Rani Ma' of her people, passed away on 17th February 1993. I salute her on the context of her birth centenary.

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Socio-economic Conditions of Female Domestic Workers :

A Study in Guwahati City

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Abstract :

Unorganized labour sector dominates the Indian labour force. Among them female workers in India constitute one third of the total workforce. These female workers are found in agriculture, construction, street vending, domestic help etc. Majority of female workers are found in as domestic helpers worldwide; because for the illiterate and unskilled female worker, domestic work is proper field of employment. But this work is not regulated and so it does not fall within the purview of employment system. As most of them are illiterate, their bargaining power is very weak and there is no uniform remuneration system and social security provision. In India, millions of women are engaged as domestic helpers. So far the state of Assam is concerned, Guwahati city alone is a home to the thousands of female domestic workers, and most of them have migrated from rural areas to the city. With the process of rapid urbanization in Guwahati city, the need for domestic help is continuously rising. But the FDWs are not enjoying any professional and social dignity. They face many difficulties at workplace as well as at their home. They are not professionalized, so are compelled to accept low wages.

This paper intends to study socio-economic condition of the female domestic workers and justify the dire need for measures to be taken for the betterment of these workers, so that the FDWs become powerhouse of women empowerment.

[Key Words : Female Domestic Workers (FDW), Socio- Economic, Professionalism.]

Introduction :

Female domestic workers constitute a major segment of unorganized labour force. These workers are an indispensable part of urban life. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines a domestic worker as "someone who carries out household

work in private households in return for wages." It is observed that with rapid urbanization it has become a common phenomenon to employ domestic help for household works in almost all big cities and towns. These workers contribute to the society silently by helping in different odd jobs like cleaning, dusting, sweeping, cooking, child care etc. for the smooth functioning of the house. Nowadays, in urban areas especially, domestic workers are an unavoidable necessity. Guwahati is no exception. But the female domestic workers are very vulnerable to exploitation both at workplace and at their home. They are not recognized for their work, no future, no old age relief. Of all categories unorganized workers, the domestic workers income is lowest and they are victims of exploitation. (Tripathy 1996)

Most of the FDWs come from economically backward families. They are not covered by Minimum Wage Act. So there is no fixed, uniform wages and fixed hours of work. Moreover these workers are not professionally trained. So they have no idea about the time limit of a particular work. Everything from hike in wages to leave, depend on the mood and goodwill of the employer which vary from employer to employer. These workers do not belong to any organization which can protect their rights and provide social security. Guwahati is the gateway of north eastern states. Urbanization leads to a tremendous change in the lifestyle of the people of Guwahati city. In such a situation, there is an urgent need of domestic help in almost all type of household. So it is observed that female members belonging to BPL families engage themselves as domestic helper. These workers are generally illiterate; and migrate from nearby places mostly after marriage. When their family incomes fall short of their needs, these women engage themselves as domestic help in different households. Lack of professionalism compels them to accept wages according to their employer's decision.

Legal provision

There is no proper legal provision to improve the socio- economic condition of FDW's. However of late, the adoption of the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008 is one of the first steps towards ensuring social protection to domestic workers. Since then many state governments including Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Gujarat, Kerala, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Tripura and UTs like Andaman & Nicobar Islands have implemented this Act in their states by constituting the State Social Security Boards and providing welfare schemes under this Act including pension. The extension of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) to domestic workers is one of the first schemes under this program.

As far as the role of NGO's is concerned, there is only one name meant for the FDW's i.e. Social Transformation and Environment Protection (sStep) who work for

promoting the rights of the female domestic workers. Initially they form a committee "Guwahati Gharua Bankara Karmi Kalyan Samiti" to fight for their rights. But afterwards they concentrated on developing a domestic help agency to organize and professionalize domestic workers to earn more wages with dignity.

Purbanchal Maitri Development Society, a non-profit organization established during 2010-2011, train women from different parts of the north-eastern region and helps them find employment through their Flagship programme 'Sahayika'. The registered members are also referred to as Sahayika. The objective of the programme is to enable the female domestic worker to earn more money with dignity. First of all, they organize and mobilize the domestic workers through personal network system. Maitri's trainers emphasize soft skills, like punctuality, decision-making and effective communication. They also take care of the security of the FDWs. In Guwahati, they have two centers in Chandmari and Beltola. They are soon going to open a branch in Dibrugarh. Recently this organization became a government regulated organization. Now the Sahayika will get 2 days paid leave in a month, 10 days medical leave in a year and 14 holidays in a year. Annual increment of the Sahayika has to be done by 10% annually. At present they have 900 hundred registered Sahayikas. They are engaged in activities like mopping, cooking, washing cloth and utensils, babysitting, old age and patient care. They are three different slabs of monthly remuneration for the Sahayika. They are also in process to provide Provident Fund facilities to the FDWs.

Objectives of the study :

The objectives of the study are:

- i. To study the socio-economic condition of the female domestic workers (FDW).
- ii. To study prospect of different measures undertaken to professionalize the FDW's to live a dignified life.

Significance of the study :

The significance of the study of socio-economic condition of female domestic workers lies in the fact that this study will help the policy makers to formulate specific policies to provide social security to these workers and also help in women empowerment. The non- government organization can also work to develop the socio- economic condition of FDWs.

Methodology :

The female domestic workers selected for the survey are the part time, nonresidential workers who work in one or more household in a day. Among the FDW, 50 samples are

randomly selected for interviewing. A pre-structured schedule is prepared to collect primary data.

The study was conducted in 5(five) different areas of Guwahati city, namely Bamunimaidan, Chandmari, Silpukhuri, Rajgarh, Kharghuli. Out of 50, 10 respondents are selected from each of the five areas. The secondary data are collected from different seminar papers, research project, websites, Govt. reports, etc. The data are presented in a tabular form and analyzed.

Data analysis :

The following tables analyses the profile, socio-economic conditions of female domestic workers.

TABLE 1. Distribution of respondents according to age group, migration status, religion and caste

AGE GROUP	MIGRATION STATUS		RELIGION			CASTE			
	M	NM	H	M	O	G	SC	ST	OBC
20-30	11	03	10	04	--	--	13	--	01
30-40	12	04	14	02	--	01	12	--	03
40-50	09	04	11	01	--	02	10	01	--
50-60	05	--	05	--	--	01	04	--	--
60& above	02	--	02	--	--	01	01	--	--

Source: Survey Report

M - Migrated, NM- Non-Migrated, H- Hindu, M-Muslim, O-Others, G-General , SC-Schedule Caste, ST- Schedule Tribe, OBC- Other Backward Classes.

The above table reveals that the numbers of female domestic workers in the age group of 30- 40 is maximum, i.e. 32%. Majority of FDW (78%) are migrated to Guwahati city. In the study, out of 50 samples, it is observed that majority of FDWs belong to Hindu community. The reason behind of less number of Muslim workers in household work is that Muslim female workers are more capable of working in construction sites as casual labour. As a casual labour their daily earning is more than a domestic worker. So it is very possible that with changing development scenario more and more Muslim female workers are engaged in construction activities. Cast wise 10% belong to General, 80% FDWs belong to Schedule cast categories, 2% of Schedule Tribe and 8% belong to other backward classes.

TABLE 2. Distribution of respondent according to Marital Status. Education level. No of working household

MARITAL STATUS			EDUCATION LEVEL				NO. OF WORKING HOUSEHOLD		
Married	Separated	Widow	Illiterate	Primary School	Middle School	High School	01	02	More than 02
36	05	09	31	10	06	03	10	28	12

Source: Survey Report

Table 2 reveals that out of 50 respondents, 72% are married, 10% are separated and 18% are widow. Majority of FDW's do not have any education as 62% are illiterate, 20% have only primary education, 12% have education up to middle school and only 6% have reached high school level. Most of the FDWs are working in 2(two) household in a day. About 20% are working in a single household 56% are working in 2 (two) household and 24% are working in more than 1/2 household.

Table 3. Distribution of FDW according to Personal Income and Family ncome

Monthly Income	2000-3000	3000-4000	4000-5000	5000-6000	6000-7000	7000-8000	8000-9000	9000 & above
No. of FDW	22	08	04	09	04	02	01	0
Type of Works	Dusting Mopping	Dusting, Mopping & Utensil Wash	Dusting, Mopping & Utensil & Cloth Washing	Utensil Washing & one-time cooking	Utensil Washing & one-time Cooking	Utensil Washing & Cooking for Two Times	Cooking	-----
No. of Household	02	03	02	02	03	02	05	-----
Family Income	Below 5000	5000-7000	7000-9000	9000-11000	11000-13000	13000-15000	15000 & above	No Fixed Income
No. of FDW	02	04	08	12	12	04	04	04

Source: Survey Report

Table 3 shows the monthly and family income of the FDW. In family income, the FDW's personal incomes are included. The range of average income of the FDWsis found out to be from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 3000 in a month.

TABLE 4. Distribution of FDW according to their Living Condition

OWNERSHIP		AREA OF LIVING			TYPE OF HOUSE		
Own	Rented	Slum	Barrack	Residential	Katcha	Pacca	Semi Pacca
13	37	20	22	08	10	15	25
26%	74%	40%	44%	16%	20%	30%	50%

Table 4 reveals that out of 50 respondents, 24% have their own house and 74% live in rented house. Area wise 40%, 44% and 16% live in slum, barrack and residential area respectively. So far type of house is concerned, 20% live in katcha house, 30% in pacca house and remaining 50% live in semi- pacca house.

TABLE 5. Distribution of FDW according to Living Style

Source Of Water				Cooking Medium			Bank Account	
Burwell	Well	Supply Water	Paid Water	Gas	Kerosene Stove	Firewood	Yes	No
02	11	08	29	42	06	02	37	13
4%	22%	16%	58%	84%	12%	4%	74%	26%

Table 5 reveals that out of 50 respondents, 4% use water from Burwell, 22% from well, 16% from supply water and 58 % use paid water. Again 84% use gas, 12% use kerosene stove and 4% use firewood's as cooking medium. As far as bank account is concerned, 74% has bank account and remaining 26% do not have bank account.

Findings :

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

- During the study, it is found that majority of the FDW are belong to the backward community i.e. scheduled caste community.
- It is found that a large section of FDW are migrated to Guwahati city from adjoining areas like Rangia, Nalbari, Baihata Chariali, Tongla, Hajo, Jagiroad etc. A few of them are also from Nowgoan, Bongaigoan etc. A very few numbers are from Guwahati itself. They migrate to Guwahati city mainly by marriage.
- The FDWs generally work in one or two household in a day. Majority are engaged in floor mopping, dusting, utensil and cloth washing.
- During the study it is observed that the spouse of FDWs are also engaged in various unorganized sectors like daily wage earner, factory casual labour, private car driver, hotel boy, painter, mason, auto driver etc. So there is no scope of getting any social security benefits like old age pension, medical allowance etc. except the BPL card for the family of FDWs.

- One of the common problems among the female domestic workers is that the husbands are more or less habituated to drinking. Most of them drink regularly and a few occasionally. After getting drunk, they assault their wives which ultimately give rise to domestic violence.
- Although there is a general belief that FDWs are very frequently change their workplace, but in this study, it is found that the female domestic workers do not prefer to change the workplace very frequently, provided they are paid according to their expectation and receive good behavior and extra benefits in the form of cash or kinds.
- Although there is no official holidays for FDWs, but there are unofficial holidays for them during the time of illness, festivals, etc. Generally, there is no wage cut for absence. But there is always a fear of losing the job in case of continuous absence.
- During the study, the FDWs expressed their view of the behavior of the employers to be gentle towards them.
- Out of 50 respondents majority possess mobile phones. It becomes a necessity for them for communication. Half of the respondents have T.V. They prefer to possess a television as it is the easiest means of entertainment.
- Out of their total income in a month (personal + family income) of the FDWs more than 80% incomes are spent on food. A very nominal amount is left for medical, education of the children and other necessities. So there is nothing left to save.
- Apart from one or two female domestic worker, others are not aware of the existence of any union or laws meant for them.
- The FDWs are very conscious about the education of their children and try to facilitate it to them.
- They usually put their children in government schools.
- Birthday celebration of their children is very common and considered by FDWs as a mark of social status.
- Although majority of the workers have bank account, but during the study it is found that these bank account holders open their account only under the scheme of Dhan Jan Yojana. So these accounts are only in the namesake and do not have any deposits. The only deposit is the gas subsidy amount which they usually withdraw to buy gas cylinder.
- During the study it is found that more than 50% families of FDWs are living on paid water. This is an unwanted luxury for them. The actual scenario is that people are not provided with the basic amenities of life.

Conclusion :

From our study it is revealed the FDWs are living at present, without any future. They constitute a major part of the society, but their existence is totally unnoticed. Till they are working, they are being paid. But as soon they have to stop work due to illness, old age or any other reason; they are left with zero income. The first and foremost duty of the society is to organize these workers and make provisions to provide them some social security.

It is equally important to give them proper training to make their profession more dignified.

For this Maitri type of organization should come forward. The government should also take steps to bring the FDWs under the Minimum Wage Act as much as possible to make the FDWs aware about the legal provision meant for their protection. To materialize the benefits of Unorganized Social Security Act, the registration of the workers are important. But it observed that there are no sufficient provisions for the registration of the workers with the Board. There are lack of funds and manpower to carry out the programme. Awareness programmes should be conducted from time to time. Moreover the spouses of the FDWs are mostly alcoholics. To help to maintain a stable family life, drug counseling centers could be set up to help them get over this habit.

There are certain issues related to FDWs like fixing fair and minimum wages, providing weekly leave, paid annual leave, to make provision of other social security benefits like old age pension, maternity benefits, medical allowance etc. which can be looked after by the government. Combined effort of Government, NGOs and other organizations can convert domestic work from a mere livelihood to a profession. Then, it is very much possible that the FDWs become the symbols of hope, dignity and empowerment.

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Phuleswari Konwari : A Woman of Substance

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Abstract :

The 18th century in the history of Assam is a tumultuous period of political and socio-religious upheavals. In the wake of such developments a woman played a significant role named Phuleswari who happened to be the chief queen of king Siva Singha (1714-1744). She was one of the extra ordinary women of the time. She was a paragon of beauty and equally of intelligence, who ruled Assam as Bar Raja or chief king for eventful nine years from 1722 to 1731 CE. She was the first woman to rule Assam and contribute immensely in empowering woman in patronising great literary works, and her zeal for Sakta faith made her all unique in the history of that era.

This paper is an attempt to look at certain aspects which hitherto remains unexplored. The various documents, manuscripts and secondary sources will be our prime sources of inquiry.

[Key words : Phuleswari konwari, socio- religious condition, sakta, empowerment]

- 1:1** Siu-tan-pha alias Siva Singha was the 34th Ahom ruler in succession of the Ahom throne. He became disciple of Krishnaram Nyayavagish, a Sakta priest from Bengal as per his father king Rudra Singh's wishes and bestowed upon him the management of the Kamakhya temple, along with large area of land in Kamarupa for his livelihood. He was a staunch Sakta Hindu and his reign saw predominance of Saktism. His reign witnessed the rapid social changes . Siva Singh married a dancing girl, named Phulmoti, daughter of Sarbananda, who belonged to Koch family of nat or professional dancers of Sinatoli amidst protest from the royal household. Phulmoti, from her very childhood, was charming, tactful in nature, intelligent and above all very beautiful who could attract people at very first sight. All these virtues made her nature more extra ordinary than her peers. King Siva Singha succumbed to her beauty and married her despite her non-royal background and named her as Phuleswari, which means queen of flower. Thereafter, he made her his chief queen who assumed the name Pramatheswari, another name of Durga. This happened

for the first time in the case of non-royal. The name Siva-Durga concept came from growing influence of Sakta under their Spiritual leader Parvatiya Gosain or Krishnaram of whom both were devoted disciples. Very soon by dint of her strong personality, exquisite beauty, lady charm Phuleswari won the heart and soul of the king and started interfering in the entire state affair. In short, she was the chief advisor of the king and was most beloved among all the queens. The King was highly under her influence in all issues related to administration and governance. Interesting stories about the intelligence and sheer presence of mind of Phuleswari Konwari is passed on orally from one generation to other. It is said that once in the absence of king Siva Singha in palace, Phuleswari, with two other attendants went to her father's home. Even being in the royal palace, she never forgot her childhood days and taste of food of her home. She had food at home come to the palace, and praised the food more than that of the royal kitchen. Siva Singha came to know about the journey and was very annoyed with her for being a queen and yet mixing up with common people. When he asked Phuleswari about it, she very humbly admitted and replied that all these happened in her dream only not in reality. Siva Singha was convinced by her false statement to be true. Such was her presence of mind and intelligence.

- 1:2** As king was completely under the influence of Brahmin priests and astrologers, he developed superstitious belief and became a fatalist. In the 9th year of his reign his spiritual guides and soothsayers predicted an end to his rule owing to the evil influence of what was called a Chatra-Bhanga-Yoga. He was alarmed by their prediction, and on the advice of the Parvatiya Gosain, declared his beloved chief queen Phuleswari to be the Bar Raja or chief king, giving her the name Pramateswari, and proclaiming royal umbrella, throne, the Ahom emblem of sovereignty and stuck coins jointly in her and his names.

Thus, a favourable turning point suddenly came to the life of Phuleswari like divine blessing in disguise which turned out to be very crucial in bringing added name, fame and glory crowning her as the first woman ruler of Assam.

- 2:1** As Bar Raja, Phuleswari, with her power and position, appointed her younger brother Harinath as Borgohain and Rajmantri. He was later given the post of Barpatra Gohain which was till then occupied by a particular Ahom phoid or clan. The family was later on known as Kaluganya Barpatra Gohain. Also, she appointed her uncles, cousins to some powerful offices of the administration.
- 2:2** Adding another dimension to her reign, Phuleswari did some philanthropic public works like excavating the Gauri Sagar tank and three temples on its bank dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Devi. She also constructed road in memory of king's mother

named Dhai Ali. Another significant aspect of Bar Raja was her liberal royal patronage to literary activities. In her active patronage poet Ananta Acharya Dviya composed an Assamese version of Ananda Lahori, Kaviraja Chakravoti composed works like Sangka Suda Badha, Gita Govinda, Sakuntala Kavya and Sulocala episode. The Brahma Vaibarta Purana was translated into Assamese under patronage of king Siva Singha and Bar Raja Phuleswari. One of the outstanding work done by the queen was to open school at capital Rangpur for women which was named as Bar Raja Pahahali which lasted till 1796 CE . She took initiatives and steps to train women developing their skills in handloom, sericulture, embroidery, and made weaving and spinning compulsory for them by royal decree.

2:3 As new staunch Sakta, Bar Raja Phuleswari meddled too much in the matter of religion and customs. When Sakta faith was given the official status of the state, it created resentment among the people and earned her unpopularity and her good works among the subjects later on proved to have disastrous consequences to the kingdom. She became so bigoted for the Sakta creed and took great interest in converting the people to the new sect as her prime duty and lost all her good quality by interfering with the religious and social practices of others. She forced Mahantas to bow down before the Durga image, take on forehead sacred vermilion. Such act of religious fanaticism injured the religious sentiments of the Vaishnava Mahanta, who exercised considerable influence over the populace, and paved the way for outbreak of revolt. She even threw away the original images and idols of Gods in the temples into the river and substituted them with newly made stone and brass images. All sorts of Hindu and Sakta rituals entered the Ahom palace and she replaced custom of burying the dead with that of cremation.

Bar Raja did not live long owing to a prolong illness. She died in the 9th years of her eventful reign in 1731 CE .

3:1 Bar Raja Phuleswari with all her luck and shrewdness excelled from a common dancing girl to the position of the chief queen of Ahom king Siva Singha. Her rule of nine years is marked for many reasons mainly for empowering women, contributing greatly towards literary activities, adopting Hinduism in the royal household and policy of putting Sakta faith in the religious milieu leading to "Persecute and patronize" . She was to some extent politically instrumental in laying the ground where Neo-Vaisnavism and Saktism entangled in the race for political power and influence which germinated the seed of the downfall of the Ahom kingdom in the long run. Though she was blamed for her religious fanatic deeds yet there is another facet of it - she might be apprehensive of the growing influence of Vaisnavism and Satras and its emergence as powerful social organization with

large number of people and enormous wealth, power where Rajbhakti is transformed to Gurubhakti and which might challenge the authority of the king's sovereignty.

Bar Raja Phuleswari devoted most of her time for building temples of Siva-Sakti and making very generous grants of land and labour for the support of Brahmans and temples. She proved to be an able ruler of her time yet many of her radical actions and decision had caused great harm to her name and fame.

Bar Raja Phuleswari Konwari was a woman of substance in the eighteen century Assam. Noted historian S.K. Bhuyan comparing her with Mughal queen Nurjahan said that she is a replica of the latter. She was a paragon of beauty. The nemesis of the Ahom rule had befallen on her tryst with destiny.

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নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ তিনিটা কবিতাত নাৰী : এক বিহংগম দৃষ্টি

যোজনাগন্ধা পাঠক
সহকাৰী অধ্যাপক, অসমীয়া বিভাগ
নাৰেঙ্গী আঞ্চলিক মহাবিদ্যালয়, গুৱাহাটী

সংক্ষিপ্ত সাৰ :

নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈ আধুনিক অসমীয়া কাব্যজগতৰ স্বনামধন্য কবিসকলৰ অন্যতম। বিষয়বস্তু, প্ৰকাশভঙ্গী আৰু আঙ্গিকৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেখেতে নতুন পৰীক্ষা নিৰীক্ষা চলোৱা দেখা যায়। বিশেষকৈ নাৰীৰ মানসিক জগতখনক কবিয়ে এক বিশেষ দৃষ্টিৰে চোৱাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰিছে। অতি সংবেদনশীলতাৰে পুৰুষপ্ৰধান সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থাত নিজক হেৰুৱাই পেলোৱা নাৰীৰ জীৱন-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ প্ৰকাশ কবিতাৰ মাধ্যমেৰে কৰি আত্মমুক্তিৰ হেঁপাহক মূৰ্ত্ত ৰূপ দিছে। গান্ধাৰী, দ্ৰৌপদী, সীতা— ভাৰতৰ প্ৰাচীন মহত্বপূৰ্ণ পুৰাণ শাস্ত্ৰ ৰামায়ণ আৰু মহাভাৰতৰ পৰা তুলি অনা চৰিত্ৰকেইটাক আধুনিক প্ৰেক্ষাপটত কবিয়ে নতুন মূল্যায়নেৰে অংকিত কৰিছে। কেউটা চৰিত্ৰৰ মাজতে পোৱা গৈছে নাৰীৰ ওপৰত যুগে যুগে ধৰ্ম, সমাজ আৰু সংস্কাৰৰ দোহাই দি চলাই যোৱা কিছুমান ভণ্ডামিৰ চিত্ৰ। নাৰীমনৰ বেদনা, হতাশা, ক্ষোভ, অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্ব, স্বপ্ন আৰু স্বপ্নভংগৰ মূৰ্ত্ত প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ ‘গান্ধাৰী’, ‘সীতা’ আৰু ‘দ্ৰৌপদী’ - কবিতা তিনিটাত। কবিৰ সচেতন সংবেদনশীল মূল্যাংকনত শংকা-ক্ষোভ-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী ৰূপ পৰিস্ফুট হৈছে পৌৰাণিক কালজয়ী চৰিত্ৰকেইটি। আত্মমুক্তিৰ হেঁপাহ উন্মুক্ত হৈছে আলোচ্য কবিতাকেইটাৰ মাজত। [চালিকা শব্দ : ভাৰতীয় নাৰী, মানৱীয়তা, অধিকাৰ, নাৰীমুক্তি।]

০.০ অৱতৰণিকা :

কবিতা জীৱনৰ বিচিত্ৰ জীৱন প্ৰবাহৰ ফচল। কলাৰ অন্যান্য বিভাগতকৈ কবিতাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰখন যেন কিছু ভিন্ন— কবিতাৰ সুকীয়া আবেদনে সেই ভিন্নতা আৰু সৌন্দৰ্যময়তা প্ৰদান কৰিছে। পৰিৱৰ্ত্তিত যুগ মানসিকতা বা বিৰূপমান গতি-প্ৰবাহত কবিতাৰো বিভিন্ন ৰূপ আৰু পৰিৱৰ্ত্তন আমি প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰিছোঁহঁক। আধুনিক অসমীয়া কবিতাৰ স্বনামধন্য কবিসকলৰ ভিতৰত নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ নাম বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য। তেওঁ প্ৰকাশভঙ্গী আৰু আঙ্গিকৰ লগতে বিষয়বস্তুৰ ন ন পৰীক্ষা নিৰীক্ষা চলোৱা দেখা গৈছে। নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰ কবিতাত নাৰীৰ জীৱন-যন্ত্ৰণা, স্বপ্ন আৰু স্বপ্নভংগৰ দুখ সুতীৰ ৰূপত প্ৰকাশ পাইছে। সংবেদনশীলতাৰে দৈনন্দিন সমস্যাৰ লগতে অন্তৰ্জগতক প্ৰাধান্য দিয়া কবিৰ নাৰী বিষয়ক কবিতাকেইটা গুণগত দিশৰ পৰা অতি উচ্চ মানদণ্ডৰ। এই প্ৰবন্ধত আলোচ্য বৰদলৈৰ বৰদলৈ ‘দ্ৰৌপদী’, ‘গান্ধাৰী’ আৰু সীতা— তিনিওটা নাৰী বিষয়ক অতি উৎকৃষ্টতম কবিতা। কবিৰ উক্ত কবিতা তিনিটা জীৱন-জিজ্ঞাসাৰ অন্বেষণ আৰু

নাৰীমনৰ ভিন্ন অনুভূতিৰ প্ৰকাশেৰেও সৌন্দৰ্যময়। কবিয়ে আধুনিক প্ৰেক্ষাপটত বিশ্লেষণ কৰিছে প্ৰাচীন মহাকাব্য ক্ৰমে ৰামায়ণ মহাভাৰতৰ আদৰ্শ নাৰী সীতা দ্ৰৌপদী আৰু গান্ধাৰীৰ চৰিত্ৰ। নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰ কবিতাত প্ৰত্যেকগৰাকীয়ে ধৰা দিছে তেজ মঙহেৰে গঢ়া সাধাৰণ একোগৰাকী নাৰীৰ দৰে- সাধাৰণ নাৰীৰ আবেগ-অনুভূতি সংযোজিত হৈ পৌৰাণিক চৰিত্ৰকেইটা অধিক প্ৰাণৱন্ত আৰু সজীৱ হৈ উঠিছে। দ্ৰৌপদী, গান্ধাৰী, সীতা— তিনিওটা কবিতাতে নাৰীৰ মানসিক জগতৰ বতৰা দিয়াৰ লগতে যুগে যুগে নাৰীৰ ওপৰত চলি থকা নিৰ্যাতন নিপীড়নৰ কাহিনী বৰ্ণিত হৈছে। নাৰী-মনৰ বেদনা-হতাশা-ক্ষোভ-শংকা-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ মূৰ্ত প্ৰকাশ ঘটাইছে আলোচ্য কবিতাকেইটাত। কবিৰ নতুন মূল্যাংকনত উন্মুক্ত হৈছে পৌৰাণিক কালজয়ী চৰিত্ৰকেইটিৰ ক্ষোভ-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী ৰূপ।

১.০০ অসমীয়া কাব্য সাহিত্যত নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা

বহুমুখী প্ৰতিভাৰ অধিকাৰিণী সৰস্বতী নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈ দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধৰ পিছৰ এগৰাকী অন্যতম শ্ৰেষ্ঠ অসমীয়া কবি। কবিতাৰ ওপৰিও একেধাৰে গীত-মাত সংস্কৃতি আৰু সমাজৰ অধ্যয়নৰ লগতে পুৰাণ শাস্ত্ৰ আৰু বেদ-বেদান্তৰ অধ্যয়নো তেওঁ গভীৰভাৱে কৰিছিল। প্ৰকাশিত কবিতা পুথিসমূহ হ'ল, — বন ফৰিঙৰ ৰং, দিনৰ পাছত দিন, সমীপেষু, অন্তৰংগ, সুদীৰ্ঘ দিন আৰু ঋতু, শব্দৰ ইপাৰে শব্দৰ সিপাৰে, অমিতাভ শব্দ, বসন্তৰ এদিন, 'ডঃ নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ নিৰ্বাচিত কবিতা' আৰু 'ডঃ নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ গীত আৰু কবিতা সমগ্ৰ'। "সুদীৰ্ঘ দিন আৰু ঋতু" কাব্যগ্ৰন্থৰ বাবে তেওঁ সাহিত্য একাডেমিৰ বঁটা (১৯৮৩) লাভ কৰে।

অধ্যৱসায়, একাগ্ৰতা আৰু কঠোৰ পৰিশ্ৰম নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰ সফলতাৰ কেইটামান উল্লেখনীয় দিশ বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। তেওঁৰ কবিতাত সাধাৰণতে সৌন্দৰ্যশালী প্ৰকৃতিৰ নান্দনিক চিত্ৰণ, প্ৰেমৰ বিভিন্ন ৰূপৰ বৰ্ণনা, জাতীয় চেতন্য আৰু ঐতিহ্য চেতনাৰ লগতে জীৱন-জিজ্ঞাসা প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে। কবিৰ জীৱন-জিজ্ঞাসা কেতিয়াবা নাৰীমনৰ বিচিত্ৰ অনুভূতিৰ প্ৰকাশেৰেও অত্যন্ত সৌন্দৰ্যময়। বৰদলৈ আধুনিক যুগৰ কবি যদিও তেওঁৰ কবিতাত ৰোমাণ্টিক গীতিধৰ্মীতা সততে অনুভৱ কৰা যায়। তেওঁৰ প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশিত কবিতাটি আছিল 'বাৰ্ণাৰ্ডশ্ব'— ১৯৫০ চনত ৰামধেনু আলোচনীত কবিতাটি প্ৰকাশ পাইছিল।

নাৰীমনৰ বিষাদগ্ৰস্ততা নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ কবিতাৰ এক অন্যতম বিষয়। শংকা, হৃদয়ৰ নিসংগতা, ক্ষোভ আৰু বেদনা মৰ্মস্পৰ্শীৰূপত প্ৰকাশ পাইছে কবিৰ আলোচ্য তিনিওটা কবিতাত। কবিৰ মহাকাব্যিক গভীৰ ঐতিহ্যপ্ৰীতিৰো উদাহৰণ উক্ত কবিতা তিনিটা। গান্ধাৰী, দ্ৰৌপদী আৰু সীতাক কবিয়ে নতুন মূল্যায়ণেৰে তুলি ধৰিছে। কবিৰ কবিতাৰ বিষয়বস্তু মানুহৰ মনোজগত আৰু চৌপাশৰ বিচিত্ৰ পৃথিৱীৰ পৰা সমানে আহৰিত হৈছে। সমাজ বীক্ষণ নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ কবিতাৰ মূল বিষয় বা দৰ্শন। নাৰী হৃদয়ৰ মুক বেদনা, নাৰী স্বাধীনতা, নাৰীমুক্তি আদিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেওঁ অতি সচেতন অৱলোকন কৰিছিল। আত্মমুক্তিৰ হেঁপাহক কবিয়ে মূৰ্ত ৰূপ দিছে কবিতাৰ মাধ্যমেৰে।

এই গৰাকী কবিৰ কবিতাৰ সামগ্ৰিক দিশ পৰ্যবেক্ষণ কৰি ড° সত্যেন্দ্ৰনাথ শৰ্মাদেৱে এনেদৰে লিখিছে— "আধুনিক অসমীয়া কবিতাৰ প্ৰাঙ্গনত নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈয়ে নাৰীমনৰ কোমল হৃদয়ানুভূতিৰে প্ৰাকৃতিক শোভা, বিগত সমাজ, অনাগত দিন আৰু বৰ্তমানৰ ক্ৰোধোক্ত পৰিৱেশ আৰু সীমিত জীৱনক

মুক্তক ছন্দৰ আধাৰিত গতিত প্ৰকাশ কৰি স্বকীয় স্থান উলিয়াই লৈছে। ভাষাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত পৰিমিতবোধ কবিতা কিছুমানত লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়।”

১.০১ বিষয়বস্তুৰ উদ্দেশ্য আৰু গুৰুত্ব

মহাকাব্যিক চৰিত্ৰ গান্ধাৰী, সীতা আৰু দ্ৰৌপদীৰ মাজেৰে নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ ব্যতিক্ৰমী চিন্তাধাৰা চিত্ৰায়িত হৈছে। তেওঁলোকৰ মনৰ নিভৃততম কোণত পোহৰ পেলাই স্বাভাৱিক নাৰী হৃদয়ক উন্মোচিত কৰাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে। লগতে ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ জীৱন দৰ্পন উক্ত তিনিটা চৰিত্ৰৰ জৰিয়তে ভাৰতীয় সমাজ জীৱনত নাৰীৰ স্থান নিৰূপণ কৰিবলৈও প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

নাৰীৰ অন্তৰত বহু আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষা পুৰুষ-শাসিত সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থাত যেন মুহুৰ্তে মুহুৰ্তে নিঃশেষ হৈ আহিছে। ইচ্ছা আৰু আকাঙ্ক্ষাৰ অৱদমনে নাৰীৰ সুস্থ মানসিকতা আৰু প্ৰতিভা বিকাশৰ অন্তৰায় হৈও বহু সময়ত দেখা দিয়ে।

পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ বিপৰীতে পুৰুষ-নাৰীৰ সম-মৰ্যাদাক সন্মান জনাবলৈ আগ্ৰহী সকলোৱে উক্ত চৰিত্ৰকেইটিক বিশেষ দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে চাবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰি আহিছে। এনে এক প্ৰয়াসৰে ফলশ্ৰুতি কবি নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ আলোচ্য কবিতা তিনিটা।

১.০২ বিষয়বস্তুৰ বিশ্লেষণ

এক বিষয় নিসংগতাবোধৰ সুৰ নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰ কবিতাত সততে অনুৰণিত হৈ থকা শুনা যায়। নাৰীৰ মানসিক জগতখনক লৈ যেন কবিয়ে অহৰহ পৰীক্ষা নিৰীক্ষা চলাই গৈছে; প্ৰকৃত সত্তাৰ সন্ধানত কবি সদা উন্মুখ। সৰল প্ৰকাশ কৌশলৰ মাজেৰে জীৱনৰ গভীৰ বিষয় একোটাক তুলি ধৰাত কবি সিদ্ধহস্ত। সাৱলীল প্ৰকাশ দক্ষতাৰ গুণত নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰ কবিতাত নাৰীৰ মনোজগতখন অপূৰ্ব ৰূপত চিত্ৰিত হৈছে। কবৰী ডেকা হাজৰিকাৰ ভাষাত,— “তেওঁৰ (নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈ) কবিতাত চিন্তাৰ খোৰাক যি দৰে আছে, উপস্থাপনৰ সুকুমাৰতাও সেইদৰে আছে।” (অসমীয়া কবিতা/ পৃঃ ১৭৭)

ব্যাসদেৱৰ অসাধাৰণ অতুলনীয় সৃষ্টি দ্ৰৌপদী মহাভাৰতৰ নায়িকা। নীলমোহন ৰায়দেৱৰ মতে,— “দ্ৰৌপদী যদিও আছিল দ্ৰুপদ ৰাজনন্দিনী, পাণ্ডুৰাজ কুলবধু, পঞ্চপাণ্ডৱ জায়া আৰু স্বয়ং কৃষ্ণৰ স্নেহধন্যা সখী, তথাপি এই গৰাকী ভাৰত-নায়িকাৰ মনতো নাছিল কোনো পূৰ্ণতা। পদে পদে তেওঁ হৈছিল প্ৰতাৰিতা, অপমানিতা আৰু লাঞ্চিতা। অশান্ত এক মনোবেদনাই তেওঁৰ জীৱন ইতিহাস কৰি তুলিছিল ছায়াচ্ছন্ন, বেদনাক্লিষ্ট। এই সকলোবোৰৰ এটাই মাথোঁ কাৰণ— দ্ৰৌপদী নাৰী, তেওঁ কুলবধু।”^২

মহাভাৰতৰ নায়িকা দ্ৰৌপদীয়ে স্বয়ম্ভৱত প্ৰেমাস্পদ অৰ্জুনক পতিৰূপে বৰণ কৰাৰ পাছত অকল্পনীয়ভাবে জেষ্ঠজনৰ পৰামৰ্শত নিজক সমৰ্পন কৰিবলগীয়া হৈছিল অৰ্জুনৰে চাৰি ভাই-ককাইৰ ওচৰত। প্ৰেমক একাঘৰীয়া কৰি প্ৰথম অংক শায়িনী হ’বলগীয়া হৈছিল অৰ্জুনৰ অগ্ৰজ ধৰ্মৰাজ যুধিষ্ঠিৰৰ। দ্ৰৌপদীৰ মনোজগতৰ বতৰা লোৱাৰ অৱকাশ যেন স্বয়ং ব্যাসদেৱৰো নাছিল। দ্ৰৌপদীৰ অৱচেতন মনত অতৃপ্তিয়ে কিদৰে ক্ৰিয়া কৰিছে তাৰ বৰ্ণনা আছে নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰ দ্ৰৌপদী কবিতাটোত—

“বিচাৰোঁ কৰ্ণক কিয়? কিয় এই তৃষ্ণা জাগে
আকণ্ঠ ভৰি মোৰ থাকোতে অমৃত?
এয়াযে মায়াৰ খেলা
দেহী আমি তথাপি কৰোঁ যে বাস
দেহৰ উৰ্দ্ধত।
এয়া এক অনুভৱ বিশেষ স্তৰৰ
এয়া এক মানসিক উপলব্ধি গভীৰ মনৰ

.....
সৌন্দৰ্য নহয় মাথো অপৰূপ অৱয়ব ভঙ্গী আৰু
সুললিত স্তৰ
সৌন্দৰ্য লুকাই থাকে বোধ, মেধা, বীৰত্ব,
পাণ্ডিত্য, ব্যক্তিত্ব আৰু
সুঠাম মনৰ ক’ত প্ৰকাশত।।
নাৰী মই যুগে যুগে সেই সৌন্দৰ্যৰে
অক্লান্ত পিয়াসী।।”

ড° কৰবী ডেকা হাজৰিকাৰ ভাষাত,— “সকলো সংবেদনশীল হৃদয়তে থাকে আত্মানুসন্ধানৰ
একোটি চেষ্টা। কবি নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাৰো সেই একেই প্ৰশ্ন, একেই আত্মজিজ্ঞাসা।”

সৰ্বগুণেৰে বিভূষিত পাঁচগৰাকী স্বামী আছিল যদিও দ্ৰৌপদীৰ বেদনাদায়ক অৱচেতন মনে
বিচাৰিছে কৰ্ণক; যি কৰ্ণক দ্ৰৌপদীয়ে নিজৰ স্বয়ম্বৰ সভাত সূতপুত্ৰক বৰণ নকৰোঁ বুলি চিঞৰি ধনুত গুণ
সংযোগ কৰি লক্ষ্যভেদ কৰাৰ পৰা বিৰত কৰিছিল। কিন্তু সৌন্দৰ্য পিয়াসী বিচিত্ৰ নাৰী মনত সৌন্দৰ্যৰ
অৰ্থ কেৱল বাহ্যিক ৰূপ-সৌন্দৰ্য নহয়। নাৰীৰ হৃদয়ৰ গভীৰতম কোণত সদা পুঞ্জীভূত হৈ থাকে বিচিত্ৰ
অনুভৱ— যাক কবিয়ে এখনি ফুলনি বুলিছে।

‘দ্ৰৌপদী’ কবিতাটিৰ মাজেৰে কবিয়ে দ্ৰৌপদীক চিৰন্তন নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ প্ৰতিমূৰ্ত্তি হিচাপেও প্ৰতিপন্ন
কৰিব খোজা যেন লাগে। পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজত সদা লাঞ্ছিতা নাৰীয়ে সামাজিক নৈতিকতাৰ কৃত্ৰিম
পোচাকেৰে নিজক আবৰি ৰাখিবলগীয়া হয় যদিও বহুসময়ত চেতন- অৱচেতনৰ দোমোজাত নিজক
প্ৰকাশৰ সুৰঙা বিচাৰে—

“মই মাথো কবি গ’লৌ
সত্যৰ সহজ স্বীকাৰ
যিবোৰ স্বীকাৰ ভণ্ডামিৰ মুখাৰ তলত
সৰ্বদায় গুপ্ত হৈ থাকে।”

কবিয়ে ক’ব বিচাৰিছে সত্যৰ বহিঃপ্ৰকাশ কৰা দ্ৰৌপদীৰ চিন্তাধাৰাত চিৰন্তন নাৰীমনৰেই যেন
প্ৰকাশ হৈছে—

“মই ব্যতিক্রম

নহয় নহয়

মই মই যে মাথো চিৰন্তন নাৰী”

নীলমোহন ৰায়ৰ মতে,— “পুৰুষ শাসিত সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থাত যুগ যুগ ধৰি এশ এবুৰি বাধা-নিষেধ মানি মানি সংকুচিত হৈ পৰা নাৰীয়ে যি মানসিক অনুভূতিক প্ৰকাশ কৰিব নোৱাৰে -- দ্রৌপদীয়ে তাকেই সহজভাৱে প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে।”^৪

স্বকীয় ভাৱ-বৈশিষ্ট্যসম্পন্ন নিটোল ভাৱঘন কবিতা ৰচনা কৰা নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ কবিতাত বহুৰঙী জীৱন-চৰ্যা প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে। নাৰীৰ মনোজগতৰ বিচিত্ৰ উপলব্ধিৰে সীতা কবিতাটোতো কাৰুণ্যৰ মূৰ্ত প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে। ৰামায়ণৰ নায়িকা ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ আদৰ্শ নাৰী সীতা স্বামী ৰামচন্দ্ৰৰ আদৰ্শৰ আঘাতত পদে পদে অপমানিতা আৰু পৰিত্যক্তা—

“সীমন্তত মোৰ এয়া দগ্‌মগ্‌ কৰি থকা

ৰক্তধাৰা-সধবা শব্দৰ এক নিষ্ঠুৰ বিদ্ৰূপ।”

কবিতাটোত যন্ত্ৰণাদগ্‌ হৃদয়ৰ হাহাকাৰ বাংময় হৈ উঠিছে। সীতা চৰিত্ৰৰ বেদনা কবিয়ে অন্তৰস্পৰ্শীকৈ তুলি ধৰিছে।

“কেউকাষে মোৰ

শ্বাপদ সংকুল ভীষণ নিৰ্জৰ্ন এই গভীৰ অৰণ্য

ঠিক যেন মোক ঘেৰি দণ্ডায়মান নিৰ্বিকাৰ

অযোধ্যাৰ প্ৰজা।”

পুৰুষ শাসিত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত বহু সময়ত পুৰুষৰ প্ৰতাৰণা, আৰু ভণ্ডামিৰ সন্মুখত নাৰীয়ে নীৰৱে হৃদয়ৰ আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষাক জলাঞ্জলী দিয়াৰ উপৰিও বহু লাঞ্ছনা-গঞ্জনা অকাতৰে মূৰ পাতি ল'বলগীয়া হৈছে। নাৰীৰ শুচিতাৰ দিশটোলৈহে যুগে যুগে সমাজে কেনেদৰে প্ৰশ্নৰ উত্থাপন কৰি আহিছে সেই কথা ‘সীতা’ কবিতাটোত কবিয়ে প্ৰচ্ছন্ন ইংগিতময়তাৰে ফুটাই তুলিছে। কবিতাটোও প্ৰতাৰণা আৰু স্বেচ্ছাচাৰিতাক কবি নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভাই তীৰ্থক ৰূপত উপস্থাপন কৰিছে—

“স্বৰ্ণসীতা গঢ়ি আজি ৰামে হেনো

মহাযজ্ঞ কৰিছে ৰচনা

জীৱন্ত সীতাক নিজহাতে আঁতৰাই থৈ

স্বৰ্ণসীতা গঢ়াৰ প্ৰয়াস

কি যে এক হাঁহি উঠা ভূৱা প্ৰতাৰণা

ধূলিত লুগিত সত্য তাৰ প্ৰতি দৃষ্টিহীন

ভণ্ডামিৰ এই চিত্ৰ দেখি

এতিয়াও নিৰ্বিকাৰ প্ৰজা।

আকৌ আহান মোক

অগ্নি এক পৰীক্ষাৰ বাবে

ধিকাৰত ধৃতি শেষ হয়

পৌৰুষৰ এই দুৰ্বলতা অসহ্য অসহ্য...” (সীতা)

মহাভাৰতৰ পৰা তুলি আনি তেজ-মণ্ডহৰ চিৰন্তন নাৰীৰ ৰূপত তুলি ধৰা আন এটি চৰিত্ৰ হ’ল ‘গান্ধাৰী’। মহাভাৰতৰ এই কৰুণ চৰিত্ৰটিক কবিয়ে অতি সূক্ষ্ম নিৰীক্ষণ কৰিছে :

“নাৰী মই, তথাপি নহওঁ নাৰী

সেই নাৰীঙ্গ মনৰ আকাশে যাৰ

ক্ষণে ক্ষণে বৰণ সলায়।”

কবিয়ে মহাভাৰতৰ ৰাজমাতা গান্ধাৰীৰ মনোজগতৰ বেদনা মৰ্মস্পৰ্শীকৈ তুলি ধৰিছে—

“মইতো নহওঁ মাতৃ- মোৰতো সন্তান নাই

এশ পুত্ৰ? সি এক হাঁহি উঠা কথা

এশ দুস্বপ্নৰ সি যে এক

কাল আৰ্হিভাব।”

নাৰীমনৰ নিভৃততম্ অনুভূতিৰ ব্যঞ্জনাৱুক প্ৰকাশেৰে সমৃদ্ধ কবিৰ গান্ধাৰী কবিতাটো। মহাকাব্যিক চৰিত্ৰটিক কবিয়ে মানৱীয় সুখ-দুখ অনুভূতিৰ পৰিপূৰ্ণ এগৰাকী চিৰন্তন নাৰী হিচাপে তুলি ধৰিছে :

“প্ৰেমিকা— তথাপি নহওঁ প্ৰেমিকা

সেই অৰ্থতঃ অন্ধ স্বামীৰ বাবে

নিজৰ দৃষ্টিক যি অৱৰুদ্ধ কৰে।”

কবিয়ে ‘গান্ধাৰী’ চৰিত্ৰটোৰ মাধ্যমেৰে গতানুগতিক মহাভাৰতীয় গান্ধাৰীৰ সলনি আধুনিক প্ৰগতিশীল নাৰীমনৰহে ছবি আঁকিছে। প্ৰকৃতাৰ্থত গান্ধাৰী যেন জীৱনৰ সম্পূৰ্ণতাৰ পৰা বঞ্চিত হৈ ব’ল :

“ঘৰত জ্বলিছে মোৰ এশখন চিতা জুই

এশখন কপালত

শ্মশানৰ মহাশূণ্যতা।

কিন্তু চিতাৰ কুকুহা আজি

পৰা নাই জ্বলাব

ৰিক্ত এই এখনি পথাৰ।”

ক্ষমতালিপু, জন্মান্ধ, ধৰ্মান্ধ পিতৃ ধৃতৰাষ্ট্ৰৰ উচ্ছৃংখলতাৰ ফলশ্ৰুতিত এশ কৌৰৱ পুত্ৰৰ যেতিয়া যুদ্ধক্ষেত্ৰত মৃত্যু হৈছিল, তেতিয়া গান্ধাৰীৰ মাতৃ হৃদয় হাহাকাৰ কৰি উঠিছিল— এশ পুত্ৰৰ এশখন চিতাৰ সন্মুখত থিয় হৈ ৰিক্ত হৃদয় শোকত ভাগি পৰিছিল।

‘গান্ধাৰী’, ‘দ্রৌপদী’, আৰু ‘সীতা’— তিনিওটি কবিতাতে ব্যঞ্জিত হৈছে নাৰীমনৰ বিচিত্ৰ অনুভূতি। ক্ৰয়েডীয়ে মনস্তত্ত্বৰ প্ৰকাশ ঘটা লক্ষ্য কৰা যায় দ্রৌপদী কবিতাটিত। কবি বৰদলৈয়ে অদ্ভুত দক্ষতাৰে দ্রৌপদীৰ অনুভৱী সত্তাক চিত্ৰিত কৰি চিৰন্তন মানৱীয় গুণৰেই যেন প্ৰতিফলন ঘটাইছে। প্ৰাপ্তি অপ্ৰাপ্তিৰ লুকাভাকুৰ মূৰ্ত প্ৰকাশ কবিতাটি—

“চেতনাৰে দৃঢ় হৈ থিয় হৈ থাকোঁ মই
মোৰ ভৰিৰ তলত থকা দুপতা মাটিতে
আশ্চৰ্য তথাপি
মোৰ ছায়া যায় আগবাঢ়ি দুহাত প্ৰসাৰি।” (দ্রৌপদী)

সীতাৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ গাভীৰ্য, মহত্ব, ব্যক্তিত্ব আৰু মৰ্য্যাদাই যেন সমগ্ৰ ভাৰতীয় নাৰীসমাজৰ মৰ্য্যাদাৰে-
প্ৰতিফলন ঘটাইছে :

“মই সীতা
নাঙলৰ জোঙাফালে
পৃথিৱীৰ গৰ্ভ ফালি
জন্ম দিলে মোক
কৰ্ষণত জন্ম হোৱা মই কৃষ্টি
ভাৰতৰ শান্তি মই দেশৰ যৌৱন।” (সীতা)

সীমাহীন বিষণ্ণতাবোধেৰে তিনিওটা কবিতা সেমেকি আছে। গান্ধাৰী কবিতাটোত গান্ধাৰীৰ পৰিচয়
কুৰুৱংশীয় নৃপতি ধৃতৰাষ্ট্ৰৰ পত্নী হিচাপে অংকন কৰাতকৈ মহাভাৰতৰ ৰাজমাতা গান্ধাৰীক কবিয়ে
অত্যন্ত অনুভূতিপ্ৰৱণ, বেদনাক্লিষ্ট সাধাৰণ নাৰী হিচাপেহে অংকন কৰিছে। গান্ধাৰী কবিতাটি মাতৃ হৃদয়ৰ
নিৰিড় অনুভৱৰ সূক্ষ্ম প্ৰকাশ— মাতৃ হৃদয়ৰ স্নেহ-মমতাৰ লগতে ক্ষোভ আৰু বেদনা মন্থস্পৰ্শীকৈ
ৰূপায়িত হৈছে কবিতাটিত :

“মাতৃৰ মায়াসনা মিঠামাত
য'ত হয় সন্তানৰ তীক্ষ্ণ বাঘজৰী
সেয়েতো ঘৰ, হাঁয় মিঠা আকাশ্বাৰ
মোৰ সেইঘৰ, সেই ঘৰ ক'ত?
হায়, মই যে নহ'লোঁ মাতৃ সেই অৰ্থত।” (গান্ধাৰী)

মানৱ মন স্বভাৱতে ৰহস্যৰে আবৃত আৰু কেতিয়াবা সেই ৰহস্যময়তাই মানুহৰ আত্মবিশ্লেষণতো
আউল লগায়। পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থাত পুত্ৰক উপযুক্ত নৈতিক শিক্ষা দিব নোৱাৰা কথাতোৱেও
বহুসময়ত গান্ধাৰীক মনোকষ্ট নিদিয়াকৈ থকা নাই—

“মই এক অব্যয় বিশ্বায়
সাধাৰণ মাতৃত্বৰ পৰা
কি যে এক ব্যতিক্ৰম মইঙ্গ
কুৰুক্ষেত্ৰৰ এই ৰক্তিম তমসাচ্ছন্ন
শ্মশানৰ প্ৰান্তৰত থিয় দি চাইছোঁ মই
নিজৰ স্বৰূপ।” (গান্ধাৰী)

মুক্তক ছন্দত ৰচিত বৰদলৈৰ আলোচ্য তিনিওটা কবিতা সত্যৰ অকপট স্বীকাৰৰ লগতে ক্ষোভ
আৰু বেদনাৰ ব্যঞ্জনাত্মক প্ৰকাশ আৰু সুৰ লহৰেৰে সমৃদ্ধ মনোৰম আধুনিক কবিতা। কবিতাকেইটাত
সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান, স্বাধীনতা আৰু অধিকাৰ সম্পৰ্কে এক স্পষ্ট মূল্যায়ণ হৈছে।

উপসংহাৰ :

ভাৰতীয় মহাকাব্য ৰামায়ণ আৰু মহাভাৰতৰ কাহিনী যেনেদৰে ভাৰতীয় জনমানসত অতি আপোন আৰু জনপ্ৰিয়, তেনেদৰে মহাভাৰতৰ নায়িকা 'দ্রৌপদী', ৰাজমাতা 'গান্ধাৰী' চৰিত্ৰৰ লগতে বাল্মীকি ৰামায়ণৰ নায়িকা 'সীতা' চৰিত্ৰ ভাৰতীয় সমাজত প্ৰত্যেকৰে বাবে আপোন আৰু গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ। উক্ত প্ৰত্যেক গৰাকীকে কবিয়ে তুলি ধৰিছে মনৰ পৰিচয়ত সাধাৰণ নাৰী হিচাপেহে। সীতা, দ্রৌপদী, গান্ধাৰীক আধাৰ হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰি কবি নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈয়ে পুৰুষশাসিত সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থাই যুগ যুগ ধৰি মানসিকভাবে সংকুচিত কৰিবা কোঙা কৰি পেলোৱা চিৰন্তন নাৰীমনকেই প্ৰতিফলিত কৰিছে। কবিতা তিনিটাত ব্যঞ্জিত হৈছে নাৰীমনৰ বিচিত্ৰ অনুভূতি। কবিয়ে কবিতা তিনিটাত কোমল শব্দচয়ণ আৰু স্বাভাৱিক সৰলতাৰে আত্মমুক্তিৰ প্ৰয়াসক মূৰ্ত ৰূপ দিছে।

বাল্মীকি ৰামায়ণত ৰজা ৰামচন্দ্ৰই সীতাৰ প্ৰতি কৰা দুৰ্য্যৱহাৰৰ পৰিণতিত সীতাই বিনা প্ৰতিবাদেৰে নিয়তিৰ বুকুত আশ্ৰয় লৈছিল। বৰ্তমান ভাৰতীয় সমাজতো আত্মমুক্তিৰ হেঁপাহ প্ৰৱল হৈ উঠা দেখা গৈছে। বিবাহ-বিচ্ছেদৰ সংখ্যাও বাঢ়ি গৈছে। সহণশীতা, ধৈৰ্য আদি গুণবোৰ কেৱল নাৰীৰ ওপৰত ন্যস্ত ৰাখিব বিচাৰ লগতে অসংখ্য বাধা নিষেধৰ মাজত জীয়াই থাকিবলগীয়া কথাবোৰৰ পৰিণামতে এনে হৈছেগৈ।

পৰিশেষত ক'ব পাৰি, মুক্তক ছন্দত ৰচিত দ্রৌপদী, সীতা, গান্ধাৰী — তিনিওটি কবিতা নাৰীমনৰ আভ্যন্তৰীণ গভীৰ অনুভূতিৰ ব্যঞ্জনাৱলক প্ৰকাশেৰে সমৃদ্ধ অতি উচ্চমানৰ নতুনত্ব বহনকাৰী আধুনিক কবিতা যিয়ে পুৰুষপ্ৰধান ভাৰতীয় সমাজৰ নৈতিক প্ৰমূল্যহীনতা, আৰু নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি চৰম অমানৱীয়তাকে প্ৰতিপন্ন কৰিছে।

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Witch Hunting : A Burning Problem in Assam

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Abstract :

Witch hunting is one of the inhuman practices not only because so many women have lost their lives but also this evil practice has created another social menace that strikes directly on the women self-esteem. This paper tries to explore how this evil practice has become one of the legacies of violence among women. This study also elaborates critically the intensity of this evil practice in Assam and how this practice has been an intention to use women as another instrument to exploit.

[Key words : Witch hunting, Women, Violence, Witch-craft and culture.]

Introduction :

Witch hunting is prevalent in many parts of India. Numerous laws have failed to curb the inhuman practice. This is a superstitious and barbaric practice which leads to persecution and even death of hundreds of helpless innocent person, basically women in India including Assam. Witch hunting is considered by many experts as a legacy of violence against women in our society. The rigid rural social system compels the women to surrender themselves to the patriarchal values because of which, they have been ignored and denied opportunities for participating and sharing the benefits of education and development. The mind-set of the women is equally a responsible to their poor status. The ugly side of the discrimination time and again manifests itself in varying forms. Witchcraft from very beginning has been a part of the tribal customs, and it has plagued Assam for several generations. Witchcraft in historical, religious and anthropological contexts is the exercise of alleged super-natural or magical powers or spells. According to local beliefs and legends, a witch, or daini in Assamese, is a woman who has magical powers that bring misfortune upon the community. In India, where 80% worships are in the name of Goddess, in that country, more than 20 women's per year is killed in the name of witchcraft, a purely baseless, unreasonable and unacceptable practice prevalent in Assam. Being a superstitious country, the conflict of interest between science and superstition still continues in our country as most of the rural and tribal areas lurch under this veil of superstition.

The Meaning of Witch-Hunting :

The word Witch is derived from old English word Wicca (masculine) and Wicce (feminine). In early Europe, woman who defied the order of the church were considered as witches and to save the society from the shadow of the evil spirit, such women were burnt alive. Subsequently, they were held responsible for famine and epidemics and were eliminated. The meaning of "witch" is the practitioner of witchcraft. Generally, "witchcraft" means the practice of causing harm by supernatural means and a "witch" means a person who is believed to cause harm by supernatural means. Certain superstitions are extremely brutal to the extent of causing death of a person. Witch hunting is one such killing practice. Beliefs in witchcraft and resulting witch-hunts, existing in many cultures in the whole globe and it still exists and expands in new dimensions. Besides superstitious beliefs behind many such attacks, there are numerous occasions when people are targeted for their land and property. Witches are believed to bring ailment to people, livestock and destroy crops. The alleged witches are tortured by their neighbour till death or banished from the village. In general, the 'witch' is usually identified by the local quake. It is a systematic act of violence against women whereby the entire community sanctions the punishment meted out to the person being accused of witchcraft. However, it is different from place to place and country to country, but it becomes a global problem and it attracts the attention of each and every conscious person. In Assam, the practice of witch-hunting is most prominent among the Tea Tribes, Missing, Rabha, Bodo, Hajong communities and most of the cases of witch-hunting are reported from the districts of Kokrajhar, Baska, Chirang, Bongaigaon, Udalguri, Sonitpur, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Goalpara etc.

So, although there is no any well accepted common definition, the devil practice simply means torturing and killing of innocent women merely on the suspicion of practicing witchcraft (locally known as 'daini').

Women are Hunted by Witch-Hunting in Assam :

Accusing innocent woman of causing ailments or other misfortunes, especially the widows and single women and branding her as a witch, following it up with public ridicule and death is one of the grossest forms of human rights violation. In India, if we see from ancient era till date the heinous crimes are being committed dominantly against women. 'Sati Dah Pratha', 'Practice of Child Marriage', 'Crime of Female Foeticide' etc. were practiced and some of them are still in practice. Witch-Hunting is also one of such prohibited inhuman practices where innocent and helpless women become the victim of the irrational belief.

In view of witch-hunting, women are not safe and secured in Assam, particularly in the rural and downtrodden society. Every day, the media has been reporting cases of

women who are labelled 'witches' being brutally and mercilessly killed for past several years. When we verified the various cases of witch hunting, for as long as the belief has existed, it has been actually used to gain leverage over someone who is vulnerable and then settle personal scores, usually over matters related to property, marriage, etc. Vulnerable women (particularly the single women who inherit property), children, the elderly and the mentally ill have been branded witches and condemned to death. Sometimes the alleged Witch is put through a 'purification' process which may take several weeks. There also have been instances where the family members of the identified 'witch' are levied huge amount of fines by the community leaders.

Again, the majority of accusations are made against unmarried, widowed or childless women. Though as the weaker section of society, women are made targets of witch-hunters, sometimes male persons are also become victims of witchcraft. In reality, the mass attack on women, reflecting a dramatic devaluation of their position and identity. In North-East States, especially in Assam, branding women as a witch is a common play to grab land, settle scores or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. In most of cases, it is difficult for the innocent women to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home and family or driven to commit suicide. So, from this point of view it will be significant to declare it as women hunting.

The Causes Behind Witchcraft :

The existence of an antithetical relationship between culture and modernity, with women being seen as the representative of the Indian culture, has taken a heavy toll on women, who have been reduced to cultural artefacts. Therefore, women attempting to wriggle out of this socially constructed role of culture bearers are still looked down upon in certain conservative pockets. In some societies, the practice is used as a way to explain about happening of certain misfortunes and suspect raises as to why something happened and not the explanation of how it happened. Sometime the male persons are also targeted when the women could not found or they tried to protect them. Many factors are responsible for the prevalence of witch-hunting in Assam, basically—

Illiteracy	Superstition	Economic Disparity	Lack of Medical Facility and beliefs in Bej, Djha or Quacks	Lack of Awareness	Property Grabbing	Lack of basic infrastructure, sanitation and potable water etc.	Political influence	Refusal of sexual advantage
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Illiteracy, ignorance and lack of proper health care facilities in a number of interior areas of the state are primarily responsible for the spurt in cases of witch killing. It is ironies that even in this modern age, a significant section of the population are still under the spell of irrational beliefs and superstition. Instead of qualified doctors some communities in the interior areas of the state repose faith in quacks, and in those practising witchcraft. The quacks too manage to convince the poor gullible patients about their supernatural abilities. A lot of patients have lost their lives in the hands of such quacks. Some however use the label witch to settle personal scores and to justify the cold-blooded killings. Severe lack of proper sanitation in most of remote areas of the state is primarily responsible for the spurt in cases of witch killings. If the water is not potable as well as not safe for use, then it will be the cause of Diarrhoea, Malaria, Pneumonia and many more water born diseases. But because of illiteracy and lack of awareness, the affected people seek the recourse of quacks and starts searching for influence of devil forces. It is an irony that even in this modern age, a significant section of the population is still under the spell of irrational beliefs and superstitions. Anyway, whatever be the reasons, such ghastly practices cannot be allowed in any modern society and should eradicate such a crime with an iron hand as soon as possible.

Violation of Constitutional Rights and Human Rights :

Witch-hunting which results from witchcraft is a serious type of Human Rights violation especially against women. Traditionally, a witch is believed to be a woman having evil magic powers. Witch-hunting is a burning problem in the present day context as it is declared as heinous crime not only against women but also against humanity. Art. 'Right to Life and Personal Liberty' of each and every person 21 of the Indian Constitution en-visages. Thus, no person has the power to take off another's life without comply with the procedure established by law. The evil practice of witchcraft which leads to witch-hunting of an innocent person dominantly women is really becomes a challenge for the Constitution of India.

The PREAMBLE of the Constitution of India declares: "We, the people of India having solemnly resolved to constitute India". Thus, the preamble of the Constitution says about 'People' without making any discrimination regarding sex. All men and women are equal in the eye of law. From this point of view, witchcraft or witch-hunting is absolute violation of mandates of the Constitution, because the evil practice of witchcraft is dominantly exercises against the weaker section of the society i.e. women.

- a) ARTICLE 14— "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law ... "Here again the word 'Person' is there. In *Air India vs. - Nargesh Meerza** the Apex Court of India held that the provisions of Regulation 46 and 47 of the Air India and

Indian Airlines Regulations was manifestly unreasonable, unconstitutional and arbitrary and was clearly violation of Art.14 of the Constitution.

- b) ARTICLE 21 of the Constitution of India lays down that "No person shall be deprived of his' Life and Personal Liberty' except according to procedure established by law". Here the expression 'life' does not connote merely physical or animal existence, but includes right to live with human dignity. Thus, Art. 21 also specifically provide that without procedure established by law, nobody can take away another person's life and liberty. Therefore, the practice of witchcraft is a direct and absolute violation of Constitutional mandates enshrined in Art.21, because innocent persons are tortured and even killed without responding and respecting to norms of law and society.

*(AIR 1981 SC 1829)

Apart from these constitutional provisions, certain other Articles of the Indian Constitution stimulates empowerment of women and advancement of weaker section of the society, namely—

- a) Art.15 (3)
- b) Art.51 A (e)
- c) Art. 243 D
- d) Art. 243 T of the Constitution of India

But the practice of witchcraft results in witch-hunting pays no heed and respects to the spirit of the Constitution makers and thus commits total violation of Human Rights as well as Constitutional Rights.

Case Studies on Witch-Hunting in Assam :

- 1) The brutal killing of PURNI ORANG of No.1 Bhimajuli village of Sonitpur district on 20th July 2015, make our heads hang in shame.Orang was branded a WITCH by another woman, a self-proclaimed priestess who claimed to be possessed by Goddess Lakshmi. The unfortunate woman was taken out of her house by an angry mob and then beheaded on the bank of the Dhulie river. The old lady faced mob violence and summary execution without any chance to defend herself. Even as the police have arrested some of the persons responsible for the heinous crime, the case has brought to force the condition of our society and the ideas which will grips the minds of countless people.
- 2) In the month of August,2014 three(3) members of a family have been brutally killed on suspicion of practicing witchcraft in Manglajhora village in Kokrajhar

district under BTAD. The victims were identified as Rajendra Brahma (65), Bangali Brahma (60) and their 35 year old daughter Malati Brahma. Three (3) culprits were arrested for the alleged involvement of heinous crime.

- 3) On 22nd September, 2015, Lakhimpur police rescued a 75 year-old person, accused of practising witchcraft, from an irate mob at a remote village in Lakhimpur district. The incident occurred at Na-Dola village under the panigaon police station. When a group of villagers detained DandaPegu on the charge of practising witchcraft and black magic, panigaon police, led by the officer in-charge, rescued the elderly person from the mob which was about to lynch him in the village off the Subansiri river after receiving distress call in the morning.
- 4) At Bamunimaidam Guwahati, one Meera Das (40), and Manoj Das (16) were attacked by their neighbour on charges of practising witchcraft and black magic. The local people destroyed their house and later the situation tackled by local police.

Total number of cases recorded in Assam since 2011:

Year	No. of cases in Assam
2011	29
2012	11
2013	16
2014	09
2015 till now	09

Impact OF Witch Hunting On the Society

There is no positive impact of witch hunting on the society. Witch hunting practices brought only painful end with social disintegrates. The practice does not serve any purpose for society building but it commits the social disorganization. The consequences of witch-hunting are—

- a) Isolation
- b) Forced displacement
- c) Breakdown of family
- d) Social stigma
- e) Psychological imbalance
- f) Loss of property
- g) Loss of livelihood
- h) Children's education hampered
- i) Social non-acceptance

Measures taken to Prevent and Eradicate the Heinous Crime :

Witch-hunting is a global problem as it is a serious type of Human Rights violation. Witch-hunts are part of a worldwide pattern of increasing violation against women that we need to stop. Society can't progress without eradicating it. It is the cruel, heinous and degrading crime against whole mankind more especially against women. Despite a specific law for prohibition of witch hunting in State, spurt in the incidents of superstitious practice related violence is highlighting the need for a more focussed approach to solve this problem. To serve that purpose, first we need to understand the forces and social dynamics responsible for them. It is the high time the authorities woke up to this social evil and took steps to eradicate it from the society.

1. On 13th August 2015 a bill has been passed in legislative assembly of Assam, where in the punishment for the convict of witch hunting practice is 3-5 years of imprisonment or Rs. 50,000-5,00,000 fine.
2. The Assam State Commission for Women started the project titled "Targeted Intervention and Prevention of Witch-Hunting in Affected areas of Assam" has launched a survey and various awareness drives, including sensitization programmes to fight this social evil. The Commission has conducted survey at two places- SilaSenduriGhopa near Gauripur in Kamrup (rural) and Amchang, Jorabat. During the survey they found that lack of education, poor health care facility, poor sanitation, lack of pure drinking water specially during summers because the diseases like Malaria, Typhoid etc. arose in this season are the reasons of practice of witchcraft.
3. "Project Prahari" launched by The Assam Police for participatory development to fight social maladies and deprivation. Under the project, also they launched awareness drive against "Witch-hunting" in States remote areas.
4. North East Network, a women's rights organization in the North East of India in collaboration with Assam police is organizing a training programme in the month of september,2014 on gender discrimination, violence against women including witch-hunting and necessity of new laws for change in society.
5. The Assam MahilaSamataSociety, a social organization has been working to end the devil practice of witch-hunting from the society
6. BirubalaRabha, the prominent leader of anti-witch hunting revolution, founded "Misson Birubala". She is an anti-witch-hunting activist and a prominent member of Assam MahilaSamata Society has been working for last two decades to root out the practice of witchcraft from the society. Birubala Rabha said that 'lack of scientific knowledge and deep-rooted belief in occult practices in several backward areas in rural Assam are the basic causes of witch-hunting, and it should be prevented by timely intervention.'

Besides dealing sternly with the culprits and punishing them severely, the Government must act in a concerted manner by strictly enforcing the anti-witchcraft laws, sensitizing the police and the personnel of other agencies, launching campaign against superstition and witch hunting, spreading scientific temper, organizing women at local levels, rehabilitating survivors of witch hunting incidents and spreading awareness. In this regard, Government should shout for helping hand from NGOs, Religious institutions, Educational institutions, and from the fourth pillar of democracy i.e. 'the Media' to root out the curse of witchcraft from the society. The print and electronic media both through publication of articles as well as debates and panel discussions can catch the eye and attention of one and all, and there by send a message to the society about the effect of this type of unreasonable, inhuman and unethical activities.

Conclusion :

The concept of women empowerment has undergone a sea change in the past six decades, but when a woman is still humiliated by labelling her as witch and tortured, it reminds us the dark side of the story-a woman's right to live with dignity is still not recognized by the society at large. Again, if we look at the religious concept, we will find that as like a person can't give life to a person, in the same capacity he can't take off other's life at his whim. Thus, the practice of witchcraft which results in witch-hunting directly violates the Constitutional mandates as well as religious faith

Witch-hunting, the inhuman and barbaric practice becomes a threat for mankind and thus it becomes a curse upon the society. So, it is the high time to think over the evil impact of this social disease and to prevent, root out and protect the society from witch-hunting. One stringent law is the urgent need to combat with the occult practice of witchcraft. Moreover, it is the duty of each and every citizen of a society to come forward, because without social awareness among peoples and public cooperation, law can't take its own way.

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Education for Women's Equality and Empowerment : A Perspective

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Abstract :

Where women are respected, there God reside, where they are not there all work and efforts come to naught. There is no hope of rise for that family or country where women live in sadness. Man and women are just like two wheels of a chariot. They are equal in importance and they should work together in life. The one is not superior or inferior to other. Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Women Empowerment is a global issue .Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Therefore, with this paper, a study has been conducted to know the impact of education on women empowerment and equality and the changed scenario in this field.

[**Key words** : Empowerment, equality, economic change, girl child, self confidence.]

Introduction :

The best creation of God on earth is man and women, in doing that HE has also provided equal rights to both, but we the people discriminate between the two. Swami Vivekananda had said, "As a bird cannot fly on one wing, no society can make progress unless its women to join men in all its activities." This statement has rightly made clear the importance of women in our society. Women constitute 50% of the total population and therefore there cannot be happiness and prosperity, so long women remain depressed and exploited.

Women are partners in development, but their contribution as wives, mothers, income earners and community members, often goes unnoticed, unrecognised and undervalued. The movement for improving women's status all over the world has always

emphasised education as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in society. Education influences a woman's chances of paid employment, her earning power, her age at marriage, her control over a child bearing, her exercise of legal and political rights, and even her ability to care for herself and her children. Education is considered to be the most effective instrument of bringing about social and economic change. It is a fact that education as a source of social mobility, equality and empowerment, both at the individual and collective level, is imperative for women, who constitute half of human kind. It is rightly said, "To awaken the people, it is women, who must be awakened, once she moves, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves." In a democracy like India women must be given equal opportunities and responsibilities in the society and this is possible only if they are provided education. Jawaharlal Nehru had stated long back that "educating a man is educating an individual, while educating a woman is educating a family." Gandhiji has also stressed the importance of educating women. Education improves women's status within the family and also equips them to play any role in the wider context. Dr. Radhakrishnan has also remarked "there cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men or women, the opportunity should be given to women for then it would more surely be passed on to the next generation." The mother is called the first teacher of the child. A child is matured physically, emotionally and spiritually by the mother. Therefore, the mother is the key to the quality of the next generation. If the mother is aware of her values, if she is valued and respected by the family and society, if she enjoys her rights and privileges as a mother, wife and daughter, then these elements are transmitted to both her daughters and sons. Their thoughts and value system lead to the development of a good family, good society and a good nation. These show that education of women is of paramount importance for the progress of the society. In the modern world of today the women goes much beyond the home and bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equality with men the responsibility for the development of the society in all contexts. Thus, the education of girls should receive emphasis not on only in the grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation.

Women empowerment: Meaning and objectives :

Women make up half of the total resources yet they are not given the chance to utilize one half of the total resources. The society has conditioned a female to live through an institution of subjugation. Women are still victimised mercilessly at the altar of greed, customs, tradition and religion. The greatest challenge today in India is to empower women. Empowerment is a process which helps people to gain control on

their lives through raising their awareness and helping them take action and work. In other words empowerment facilitates change and enable a person to do what he or she wants. It is the feelings that activate one's psychological energy to accomplish one's goals. Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference in 1985 at Nairobi. The conference defined it as a "re-distribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women." 'Power' is the key word of the term empowerment, which means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. Power is not a commodity that can be trans-located or can be given as alms. Power has to be acquired and once acquired, it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved. Women empowerment is a process through which women acquire knowledge, skills and willingness to critically analyse their situations and take right decisions and actions so as to change the position of women in society. It refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social and economic strength of women. It always involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

The term 'Women Empowerment' has come to be associated with women's struggle for social justice and equality. According to the Country Report of Government of India "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power. It would promote women's inherent strength and positive self-image." To empower women does not mean to give them power to dominate others or to use power to establish their superiority over others. Women's moving to a position of power does not mean that she is going to abuse power to ill-treat and exploit men. Women's empowerment in reality is to empower herself, and not to overpower men. For women's empowerment it is the men also who have to be empowered in reality and who have to become partners of women in all endeavour of equality, development and peace and not to be against them.

In 1972, the UNO General Assembly proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year to be devoted to women issue to intensify action, to achieve equality for women and to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort. In 1975, following the World Conference of the International Women's Year. In Mexico, the General Assembly proclaimed 1975-1985 as the UN Decade for Women.

The main objectives of women empowerment are as follows:

1. To create self confidence and internal strength which help to face life.
2. To develop capacities and capabilities to take responsibility.
3. To enhance qualities which help them to take self decision.
4. To increase the power of decision making at all levels.
5. To enhance participation on national development.
6. To reduce gender discrimination.

7. To influence in the direction of social change.
8. To create an environment through positive economic and social policies.
9. To give equal access to women in health care, education, career, employment, social security etc.
10. Enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedom on equal basis with men.

Historical Background of Women Empowerment in India :

The status of Women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. In early Vedic period Women enjoyed equal status with men. Rigved & Upanishads mention several names of women sages and seers notably Gargi & Maitrey. However later the status of women began to deteriorate approximately from 500 B.C., the situation worsened with invasion of Mughals and later on by European invaders. Some reformatory movements by Guru Nanak, Jainism, Rajaram Mohan Rai, Ishwarchandra Vidya Sagar, Pandita Rama Bai and others did give some relief. It is not that Britishers didn't do anything for improving the condition of women. Some laws were enacted such as "Abolition of practice of Sati", Widow Remarriage Act 1856 etc. The real change came after independence. Constitution of India guarantees equality to women (Article 14). There are other articles too which ensure rights of women e.g. no discrimination by the state [Article 15(1)] equality of opportunity (Article 16) etc. Feminist activism picked up momentum in India during later 1970's. Later on many groups and NGO's have been working for the Empowerment of women. We are proud that in India Women got voting right much before USA and some other European countries.

Steps Undertaken in India for Women Empowerment :

The Constitution Framers were very much conscious of the problem of women empowerment hence they ensured that the Principle of Gender Equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental duties and Directive Principles. Moreover the Constitution also empowers the states to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The real impetus for this movement was gained when under the Premiership of Mrs Indira Gandhi, a scheme known as Indira Mahila Yojana was launched. Various Schemes were later on launched for the empowerment of women such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Self help groups at Panchayat level and many more. The establishment of National Women's Commission and State Women's Commissions were important milestones in the direction of Women Empowerment in India. The National Policy for the Empowerment of women (2001) was an important step taken by the Government of the time for accelerating the pace of women empowerment. The policy was aimed at ensuring women empowerment through

positive economic and social policies for the full development of women. So that they could realize their full potential. The policy assured equal access to women to health care, quality education, participation and decision making in Social, Political and Economical life of the nation. The National Policy also aims at strengthening legal system for eliminating discrimination against Women. It also visualizes strengthening partnership with Civil Society, particularly Women's organizations. States have also taken various measures for empowerment of women. In India there is an Organisation called Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) a trade union in India which helps women in urban sector by giving loans, supports poor women by its multiple sources of financial investment. In doing so their income level has been increased and they are rescued from the red tappism also.

Still a Need for Women Empowerment :

In spite of the various measures taken up by the government after Independence and even during British rule the Women haven't been fully empowered. We may be proud of women in India occupying highest offices of President, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of the Opposition or women like Ms. Chandra Kochar occupying highest positions in the Corporate Sector but the fact remains that we still witness dowry deaths, domestic violence and exploitation of women. The female foeticide is not an uncommon phenomenon. The male female ratio though improved over last few years is still far from satisfactory. It is 940 women per 1000 men for India in some states it is as much lower as 877. These are the states where female foeticide is maximum. The female literacy rate is also lower than the male literacy rate. The ground reality is deprivation, degradation and exploitation of women specially women from rural areas and those belonging to deprived sectors of the society. The Urban elite class women have no doubt been benefitted by the efforts of women empowerment. Dr. Dashrath Bhuyan in his article titled "Empowerment of Indian Women : A challenge of 21st century writes "Women are being brutalized, Commodified, materialized and subjected to inhuman exploitation and discrimination." Inspite of reservation being granted to women in Panchayat elections after 73rd and 74th Constitution amendment, in many Panchayats the male Chauvinism does not allow them to function independently.

Globalization :

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. However, from the micro-level studies that were commissioned by the Department of Women & Child Development, it is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and quality of employment. Benefits of the growing global

economy have been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities, the feminization of poverty, increased gender inequality through often deteriorating working conditions and unsafe working environment especially in the informal economy and rural areas. Strategies should be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process.

Social Empowerment of Women :

Under the social empowerment of women steps needs to be taken to improve the health status of women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the areas which do not have good medical facilities. A programme for checking the spread of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV / AIDS and infections / communicable diseases like T.B. needs to be launched. Women face high risk of malnutrition hence focussed attention would have to be given to meet the nutritional needs of women at all stages of their life cycle. The problem in the country is serious about the women belonging to disadvantaged groups. They are the most exploited lot. The Social activist should keep a vigil on the atrocities committed on women belonging to weaker sections and help them to fight the legal battle for obtaining justice. Schemes need to be introduced for helping women who are victims of marital violence, who are deserted and those engaged in sex professions. Awareness programmes need to be organised for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights. Government has to be vigilant for ensuring that there is no discrimination against the girl child and her rights are protected. The social stigma like child marriage. Female foeticide, child abuse and child prostitution must be eradicated immediately.

Education and Women Empowerment :

Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. Hence, education for Women has to be paid special attention. Greater access for women to education must be ensured in the educational system. Gender sensitivity must be developed. A watch has to be kept on dropout rate of girls and corrective measures should be taken to check the dropout rates.

Role of NGO's in Women Empowerment :

Governmental Organizations are formal agencies working for the empowerment of women. But this work requires multidimensional approach and hence a large number of voluntary organizations / NGO's have gained increased attention in the field from grass - root level to national & international level. Their role is so impressive because they work

with missionary zeal and commitment. The working style of NGO's is open, transparent and personal. So, they are more effective in this direction. They organize seminars, conferences and workshops for the awakening of the masses. Their mass appeal - style contributes to a better understanding of women's rights and of the means to ensure the enjoyment of those rights and the elimination of discrimination. They prepare urban and rural uneducated women for self - employment, which is vital for the economic empowerment of the women. In short, all these programs and functions of NGO's contribute towards the realization of sustainable community development and hence women empowerment.

Role of International Agencies: for Women Empowerment

Promotion of equality between women & men and the empowerment of women is central to the work of United Nations. The UN actively promotes women's human rights and works to eradicate, discourage of violence against women, including in armed conflict and through trafficking. There are various UN agencies working for the empowerment of women like The Commission on the Status of women, The Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women, The Division for the advancement of women, The United Nations Development Fund for women, and recently, the UN Women association is formed which co-ordinates the activities of all the former UN agencies. These international agencies work to ensure that women have a real voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society. So they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision- making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries.

Findings :

From the analysis of above discussion it can be concluded that nationally and internationally greater endeavour has been taken for the development of women folk in terms of education, their economic as well as emotional status. As for now, a somewhat progressive picture of empowered women can be seen in India as well as in some other parts of the world.

Conclusion :

The Empowerment of women has become one of the most important Concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Efforts by the Government are on to ensure Gender equality but Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in

which there is no gender discrimination and Women have full opportunities of Self decision making and participating in the Social, Political and Economic life of the Country with a sense of equality. Then only the Vedic verse: Wherever Women is respected, God resides there would come true.

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Personality and creativity among working and non working women :

A comparative study

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Abstract :

The aim of the research is to study the relationship between personality and creativity among working and non working women. The data was collected from 20 working and non working women respectively in two consecutive days with each woman where each new test was given on each fresh day to each woman. The study sample comprises of 20 working and non working women respectively. The women are of 25 to 45 years of age. Purposive sampling method was use. Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory was use as a tool for data collection. Mean and Standard Deviation and correlation was use as a statistical tool. The results indicated that there are statistically significant correlation between creativity domains and personality traits among working and non working women in selected areas. Differences were also found in certain personality traits of working and non working women. But in the creativity domain no differences were found in working and non working women.

[**Key word** : working women, non-working women, personality, creativity]

Introduction :

Creativity

In the UK, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) published in 1999 a report where they provided a more elaborated, but similar definition of creativity. They maintain that creativity processes have four characteristics:

1. It is imaginatively, it always involves imagination, since it is the process of generating something original.

2. It is purposeful: it is imagination put into action towards an end.
3. It produces something original in relation to one's own previous work, to their peer group or to anyone's previous output in a particular field.
4. And finally, it has value in respect to the objective it was applied for. Creativity involves not only the generation of ideas, but also the evaluation of them, and deciding which one is the most adequate one.

Personality

Definition: "Personality" can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person who uniquely influences his or her cognitions, emotions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations. The word "personality" originates from the Latin *persona*, which means mask. Personality may also refer to the patterns of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments, and behaviors consistently exhibited by an individual over time that strongly influence their expectations, self-perceptions, values and attitudes, and predicts their reactions to people, problems and stress. (Kerlinger, F.N., 2008).

Review of literature :

In a study conducted on "Personality and Career -She's got what it takes" by Fietze. S., Holst. E., Tobsch. V., (2009) it was found that personality traits might play a strong role indirectly: Some of the stronger career effects, such as work experience, long working hours, and labour market segregation, can also reflect differences in personality traits. (Fietze. S., Holst. E., Tobsch. V., 2009).

In an another study conducted by Barton. K., Cattell. H.(1972) titled " Personality characteristics of female psychology science and arts majors" Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor Test was used to compare the variables . The results indicated that Psychology major female showed higher on Factor - Imaginative, Tender-minded, Assertive and Sober when compared to an arts or science group (Barton. K., Cattell. H.,1972)

Bachtold. L.M., and Werner. E.E.,(1972) conducted a study on "Personality Characteristics of Women Scientist" by using Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor . Women scientist were found to be more serious, radical, confident, dominant, intelligent, and adventurous than women in the general population and less sociable, group-dependent and sensitive. Personality profiles on 16 PF of men and women scientist showed strong similarity ($p < .01$). (Bachtold. L.M., and Werner. E.E., 1972)

Methodology :

Need for the study : In a society working women and non working women play vital roles and performance of these roles are based on their social and cultural norms

and values. Distribution of these roles is for the development of a society. However, there can be differences in their personality and level of creativity while dealing with various issues. This study will help us to identify these differences between working and non working women which will give us an idea regarding the women folk. The differences in personality factors may also lead a women choose herself as a career women or a homemaker. Creativity is a factor for problem solving also. Both working or non working women deals with various problem solving consequences in their day to day activities. This study can even help us to understand the level of creativity among working and non working women and their problem solving strategies

Aim : To study the relationship between personality and creativity among working and non working women.

Objectives :

1. To assess the relationship of between working women and non working women in the dimension of creativity
2. To assess the relationship of between working women and non working women in the dimension of personality traits
3. To assess the relationship between creativity and personality among working women and non working women

Hypothesis:

1. There would be a positive correlation between working women and non working women in the dimensions of creativity.
2. There would be a positive correlation between working women and non working women in the dimensions personality traits.
3. There would be a positive correlation between creativity and personality among working women.
4. There would be a positive correlation between creativity and personality among non working women.

Place of study : The study was conducted in the Jalukbari area of Guwahati. Data was collected from the working and non working women with a strength of 20 respectively. The data was collected from 20 working and non working women respectively in two consecutive days with each woman where each new test was given on each fresh day to each woman

Sample :

The study sample comprises of 20 working and non working women respectively. The women are of 25 to 45 years of age.

Selection Criteria :

- A. Inclusion criteria: Subject's meeting the following criteria were included in the cohort
- Individuals from the range of 25-45 years of age
 - Literate in English.
 - Women within a medium range of socio-economic status.

Exclusion criteria : Persons with the following were excluded from the cohort.

- Any physical, psychiatric or organic disorder.
- Individuals below 25 years of age and above 45 years of age.
- Individuals who are not literate in English.
- Women below or above medium range of socio-economic status.

Correlational research :

Correlational research tests for statistical relationships between variables. The researcher begins with the idea that there might be a relationship between two variables. Researcher then measures both variables for each of a large number of cases and checks to see if they are in fact related. The relationship of interest could be either a D relationship or an R relationship. It also involves null hypothesis testing to see if the observed relationship is statistically significant

Sampling type :

Purposive sampling: It is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling technique. Non-probability sampling focuses on sampling techniques where the units that are investigated are based on the judgment of the researcher. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which enables in answering research questions.

Mode of Selection of Cases :

- (a) Sampling procedure: Samples were taken using random sampling procedures
- (b) Informed consent was taken in all cases.

Test used:

1. **Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) :** Building on J.P. Guilford's work and created by Ellis Paul Torrance, the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), a test of creativity, originally involved simple tests of divergent thinking and other problem-solving skills, which were scored on four scales :

- Fluency. The total number of interpretable, meaningful, and relevant ideas generated in response to the stimulus.
 - Flexibility. The number of different categories of relevant responses.
 - Originality. The statistical rarity of the responses.
 - Elaboration. The amount of detail in.
2. **NEO Five-Factor Inventory** : The Revised NEO Personality Inventory, or NEO PI-R, is a psychological personality inventory; a 240-item measure of the Big Five personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Additionally, the test measures six subordinate dimensions (known as facets) of each of the "FFM" personality factors. The test was developed by Paul T. Costa, Jr. and Robert R. McCrae for use with adult (17+) men and women without overt psychopathology. The short version, the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), has 60 items (12 items per domain). The NEO PI-R and NEO-FFI were updated in 2010 in a manual called the NEO Inventories for the NEO Personality Inventory-3, NEO Five-Factor Model 3, and NEO Personality Inventory-Revised.

Method of Data Collection :

After selecting the subjects and control as per the selection criteria, an informed consent for participation in the study was taken from all cases and control subjects. The data were collected in two sessions with a break of one day in between for each of the two test used. Time period of the data collection ranged according to respective test used. For all sample, privacy of the test results and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

Statistical tools used :

1. Mean and Standard Deviation
2. Correlation

Results:

(Significance at .05)

Table 1 : Correlation between Fluency and Personality Traits among working women :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Fluency x Neuroticism	-.055	p > .05
Fluency x Extraversion	-.093	p > .05
Fluency x Openness	-.150	p > .05
Fluency x Agreeableness	-.123	p > .05
Fluency x Conscientiousness	-.100	p > .05

Table 2 : Correlation between Originality and Personality Traits among working women:

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Originality x Neuroticism	-.215	$p > .05$
Originality x Extraversion	.364	$p < .05^*$
Originality x Openness	.309	$p > .05$
Originality x Agreeableness	.392	$p < .05^*$
Originality x Conscientiousness	.400	$p < .05^*$

Table 3 : Correlation between Abstraction of Titles and Personality Traits :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Abstraction of Titles x Neuroticism	.114	$p > .05$
Abstraction of Titles x Extraversion	-.156	$p > .05$
Abstraction of Titles x Openness	-.153	$p > .05$
Abstraction of Titles x Agreeableness	-.247	$p > .05$
Abstraction of Titles x Conscientiousness	-.211	$p > .05$

Table 4 : Correlation between Elaboration and Personality Traits among working women:

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Elaboration x Neuroticism	.239	$p > .05$
Elaboration x Extraversion	.124	$p > .05$
Elaboration x Openness	.059	$p < .05^*$
Elaboration x Agreeableness	-.052	$p > .05$
Elaboration x Conscientiousness	-.059	$p > .05$

Table 5 : Correlation between Resistance to Premature Closure and Personality Traits among working women :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Resistance to Premature Closure x Neuroticism	.194	$p > .05$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Extraversion	.168	$p > .05$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Openness	.143	$p > .05$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Agreeableness	.059	$p < .05^*$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Conscientiousness	.109	$p > .05$

Table 6 : Correlation between Fluency and Personality Traits among non working women:

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Fluency x Neuroticism	-.155	p > .05
Fluency x Extraversion	.216	p > .05
Fluency x Openness	.121	p > .05
Fluency x Agreeableness	.160	p > .05
Fluency x Conscientiousness	.158	p > .05

Table 7 : Correlation between Originality and Personality Traits among non working women :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Originality x Neuroticism	.131	p > .05
Originality x Extraversion	.059	p < .05*
Originality x Openness	-.286	p > .05
Originality x Agreeableness	-.168	p > .05
Originality x Conscientiousness	-.215	p > .05

Table 8 : Correlation between Abstraction of Titles and Personality Traits non working women :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Abstraction of Titles x Neuroticism	.124	p > .05
Abstraction of Titles x Extraversion	-.146	p > .05
Abstraction of Titles x Openness	-.154	p > .05
Abstraction of Titles x Agreeableness	-.240	p > .05
Abstraction of Titles x Conscientiousness	-.210	p > .05

Table 9 : Correlation between Elaboration and Personality Traits non working women :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Elaboration x Neuroticism	.269	p > .05
Elaboration x Extraversion	.174	p > .05
Elaboration x Openness	.117	p > .05
Elaboration x Agreeableness	-.051	p > .05
Elaboration x Conscientiousness	.364	p < .05*

Table 10 : Correlation between Resistance to Premature Closure and Personality Traits non working women :

Variables	Correlation	Significance
Resistance to Premature Closure x Neuroticism	.059	$p < .05^*$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Extraversion	.163	$p > .05$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Openness	.163	$p > .05$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Agreeableness	-.164	$p > .05$
Resistance to Premature Closure x Conscientiousness	.129	$p > .05$

Interpretation and discussion:

The aim of the research is to study the relationship between personality and creativity among working and non working women.

In Table 1, it was found that there is no statistically significant correlation between Fluency of creativity domain and personality traits among working women.

Whereas in table 2, it was found that there is a statistically significant correlation between Originality of creativity domain and personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness of personality traits among working women. Therefore it indicates that working women have unusualness in their reposes. They have new ideas in terms of creativity. The statistical data indicates that working women who are have original ideas are more socialable, assertive, active and talkative. These women like excitement and stimulation and tend to be cheerful in disposition. They are even upbeat, energetic and optimistic. Working women those who scored more in originality are also fundamentally altruistic, sympathetic in nature. They believe that others will be equally helpful in return. These women are more popular than antagonistic individuals. The statistical data also indicated that working women having original idea are also conscientiousness in personality domain. These women are strong willed and determined. They are self controlled which can be also referred as more active process of planning, organizing and carrying out task.

In Table 3, it was found that there is no statistically significant correlation between Abstraction of Titles of creativity domain and personality traits among working women.

In Table 4, it was found that there is statistically significant correlation between Elaboration of creativity domain and Openness of personality traits among working women. Therefore it indicates that working women have the fine ability for imagination and exposition of details. Results states that working women who scored more in elaboration have scored more in the personality trait of openness. It can interpreted as working women who have fine ability for imagination are also attractive to inner feelings, sensitive

and have intellectual curiosity. These women will involve in active imagination and will have independence of judgment.

In Table 5, it was found that there is statistically significant correlation between Resistance to Premature Closure of creativity domain and Agreeableness of personality traits among working women. This indicates that working women will be able keep open and delay closure long enough to make the mental leap that makes original ideas. These Working women will be fundamentally altruistic, sympathetic in nature. They believe that others will be equally helpful in return. These women are more popular than antagonistic individuals.

In Table 6, it was found that there is no statistically significant correlation between Fluency of creativity domain and personality traits among non working women.

In Table 7, it was found that there is statistically significant correlation between Originality of creativity domain and Extraversion of personality traits among non working women. Therefore it indicates that non working women have unusualness in their reposes. They have new ideas in terms of creativity. These non working women will also be socialable, assertive, active and talkative. They like excitement and stimulation and tend to be cheerful in disposition. They are even upbeat, energetic and optimistic.

In Table 8, it was found that there is no statistically significant correlation between Abstraction of Titles of creativity domain and personality traits among non working women.

In Table 9, it was found that there is statistically significant correlation between Elaboration of creativity domain and Conscientiousness of personality traits among non working women. Therefore it indicates that non working women have the fine ability for imagination and exposition of details. These women are strong willed and determined. They are self controlled which can be also referred as more active process of planning, organizing and carrying out task.

In Table 10, it was found that there is statistically significant correlation between Resistance to Premature Closure of creativity domain and Neuroticism of personality traits among non working women. This indicates that working women will be able keep open and delay closure long enough to make the mental leap that makes original ideas. These non working women can also be emotionally distress from social phobia to agitated depression to borderline hostility. They can have the tendency to have negative affect such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt and disgust.

Personality factors common to both working and non working women :

In the ground of personality both working and non working women are socialable, assertive, active and talkative. Both working and non working women like excitement and stimulation and tend to be cheerful in disposition. They are even upbeat, energetic and

optimistic. These shows that both working and non working women are extravert. It was also found that both working and non working women have a Conscientiousness personality. They have the fine ability for imagination and exposition of details. Both working and non working women are strong willed and determined. They are self controlled which can be also referred as more active process of planning, organizing and carrying out task.

Creativity domain common to both working and non working women :

In the ground of creativity it was found that both working and non working women have unusualness in their reposes. They have new ideas in terms of creativity. This refer to the originality domain of creativity. Results also indicated that both working and non working women have the fine ability for imagination and exposition of details which indicates creativity domain of elaboration. Together with these both working and non working women have good Resistance to Premature Closure This indicates that both working and non working women will be able keep open and delay closure long enough to make the mental leap that makes original ideas. The study indicated that the creativity domains of both working and non working women are similar while calculated through TTCT.

Difference in personality traits among working and non working women :

The results of the study indicated that working women working women have fine ability for imagination are also attracted to inner feelings, sensitive and have intellectual curiosity. These women will involve in active imagination and will have independence of judgment. Working women will be fundamentally altruistic, sympathetic in nature. They believe that others will be equally helpful in return. These women are more popular than antagonistic individuals. Whereas non working women scored more in Neurotism indicating that they will be emotionally distress from social phobia to agitated depression to borderline hostility. They can have the tendency to have negative affect such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt and disgust.

Conclusion :

The aim of the research is to study the relationship between personality and creativity among working and non working women. It was found that there is a statistically significant correlation between Originality of creativity domain and personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness of personality traits among working women. The study also indicated a statistically significant correlation between Elaboration of creativity domain and Openness of personality traits among working women, Resistance to Premature Closure of creativity domain and Agreeableness of personality traits among

working women. It was found that there is statistically significant correlation between Originality of creativity domain and Extraversion of personality traits among non working women. The results have also shown that there is statistically significant correlation between Elaboration of creativity domain and Conscientiousness of personality traits among non working women and significant correlation between Resistance to Premature Closure of creativity domain and Neuroticism of personality traits among non working women. Common Personality traits found common to both working and non working women are Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. All creativity domains found significant for both working and non working women were common in between. Difference in personality traits among working and non working women were found in Openness, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

Limitations and further suggestions :

The aim of the research is to study the relationship between personality and creativity among working and non working women. The limitation of the study are as follows:

1. The sample size is too small. This limits the efficiency of the findings of the findings to be generalized. A large sample should to be taken to generate the results
2. There was no control group in the study due to time constraints. Inclusion of control group would have provided a better comparative analysis. Further research should incorporate control group.

Merits of the study : The study revealed the comparative analysis between working and non working women in terms of creativity and personality.

Further suggestions :

The creativity and personality are vast areas. More studies can be conducted by using psychometric scales coving the vast domain of personality and creativity. Moreover, researches on working and non working women in the field of psychology are an asset for helping women in terms of psychological distress. Therefore more researches need to be conducted in this area.

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Superstition and Women: Special reference to Assamese Society

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Abstract :

It is the undeniable fact that women of our country are the worst victims of superstitions. At the same time they are the main agents who propagate the superstitions most. The belief in superstition affects a woman mentally as well as physically. The whole society should acknowledge and understand this fact, so that, ways can be found out to eliminate this mental slavery of women. Indian society is particularly male dominated except for few North Eastern states like- Meghalaya and Manipur. Assamese society which is a part of North Eastern states is also male dominated where women suffer from so many superstitions related rituals and customs prescribed by the society. Witch hunt, religious and social rituals, vows that are imposed over women, are major superstitions prevailed in Assamese society. Several common superstitions like a woman is supposed to cook and feed her family, a woman supposed to eat whatever is left over after serving everyone in the family, hard work during pregnancy period due to some prevailing superstitions, affected the health of women. All these factors enslave women mentally and physically. Ignorance, lack of awareness, age-old mindset, socio-economic conditions like poverty etc are the major causes of these superstitions. So, to remove all these from society and for social reconstruction the stakeholders should take appropriate steps.

[**Key words** : ritual, custom, malnourishment, ignorance, awareness.]

Introduction :

Superstition is considered a widespread social problem. Superstition is the belief or practice which is explained by supernatural causality- that one event causes another without any natural process linking the two events- such as astrology, religion, omens, witchcrafts, and prophecies etc. that contradict natural science. It is generally understood to be an irrational fear or reverence for something which cannot be examined or testified by science. Superstition is a familiar term in an average person's vocabulary and people

generally share a common understanding of the notion of superstition. Traditionally associated with this notion are a wide range of phenomena, including magic, ritual, myth, and occult practices commonly prevalent in the society and generally regarded as erroneous beliefs - irrational, primitive, and based on inadequate information (Sheibe & Sarbin, 1965; Dundes, 1961).

"Every civilised human being, however high his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper level of his psyche' (Jung. The Archaic man in C. W. 10. 51). That is why in weak moments even a rational and logical human being also believes in some superstitions. Women are more superstitious compared to men. The real cruelty behind the superstitions or blind faith is that, it creates the mental slavery; person stops thinking and opens the doors for the exploitation. Women are the victims of all the exploitation and harassment arising through these superstitions and still they don't take any objections against that. They believe that, these are not superstitions but the beliefs or customs which gives meaning to their life. The women who are exploited due to blind faiths become carrier of them, and then they are passed from mother to daughter and Mother-in-law to daughter-in-law.

In India superstition is considered as a widespread social problem. It is the undeniable fact that women of our country are the worst victims of superstitions. Assamese society is also dominated by so many age old beliefs or superstitions that create major social problems. Particularly there are so many rituals and customs prevailed in Assamese society which is nothing but superstitions imposed upon women. Indian society is particularly male dominated except for few North Eastern states like Meghalaya and Manipur. Assamese society which is a part of North Eastern state is also male dominated where women suffered from so many superstitions related to rituals and customs prescribed by the society.

Objective of the Study :

The objective of the present paper is to examine the superstitions prevailing in Assamese society that affects physical and mental health of women and also the status of women in society. Secondly, to find out the causes of these beliefs so that empowerment of women is possible for social progress.

Methodology :

The present paper is based on the secondary data collected from the secondary source i.e. published literature of the subject concern. Moreover, descriptive survey method is also used, as regarding the problem opinions of different personalities who suffered from these superstitions through interview method.

Superstitions Related to Women Prevailed in Assam :

Indian society in general and Assam in particular, most of superstitions that prevailed in society are women related of which some are harmful and some are neither harmful nor beneficial. Of these some are religious rituals, some are tradition and customs, and some are nothing but blind beliefs. There are some superstitions which are general, general in the sense that they are universally acceptable by all and prevailed almost all over the world. Here we have focussed on only those superstitions, which are women related and also peculiar to Assamese society.

Witch hunting is one of the dangerous superstitions that kill. However, this superstition is found in several states of India, but in Assam it becomes a burning problem today. There have been at least 65 cases of witch hunting reported during 2007-2012 from Assam alone. According to Government source, most witch-hunts reported last year in Assam were from Kokrajhar, Udalguri and Sonitpur districts. The practice is also prevalent in Kamrup (rural), Goalpara, Chirang, Baska, Lakhimpur and Karbi Anglong districts. The practice is more prominent among the Rabha, Hajong, Mishing, Bodo and the Adivasi community in Assam. Especially women, are accused of witchcraft and attacked, occasionally killed. It has been reported that mostly widows or divorcees are targeted to rob them of their property. The witch is called a 'daini' in local parlance and believed to cause ailment to people, destroy crops and other livestock etc. She is usually identified by an 'ojha', 'bez' or 'deodhani' (all names for witch doctors) and either banished from the community or killed. The process of identification of the witch is specified by the witch doctor by looking into the symptoms of the patient. It is believed that a disease has been caused due to the 'witch craft' people try to get rid of the spell through prayers and offerings. Boiled rice together with a cock reduced to ashes is taken in a banana leaf and kept in the middle of a road as an offering to the 'daini'. People believe that without these prayers and offerings the patient would not survive.

Apart from this life killing superstition, there are so many superstitions prevailing in Assamese society which are though not life killing, but affect the physical and mental conditions of women. From her childhood woman suffered a lot due to some superstitions which are social customs and rituals.

In Assamese society, during puberty, when the girl child undergoes menarche, she has to follow so many hard rituals. First, four days fasting is compulsory during this period. They have to sleep in a bed made of straw on the floor in a dark room where all the doors and windows are closed. As this is related to the fertilisation of woman, behind her bed, a kind of seed called "Dimaru guti" is placed with a bowl full of rice. Even she cannot take a bath during these four days. In upper Assam area, this ritual is continued till seven days. This is called "Tolani biya". A banana tree is symbolised as her husband. These rituals are

performed to prepare a girl child to become a complete woman. However these rituals affect the physical and mental conditions of a girl child. The unhygienic atmosphere, fasting affects her physical health and the preparation to transform a child to a woman in a single day affects her mental condition badly. During menstrual period a woman should not sleep with her husband; she even cannot touch anybody. These rituals are nothing but superstitions.

In Assam, at the time of marriage ceremony the bride has to take bath which is called "nouwa" behind a banaria tree as the banana tree is regarded as the symbol of fertilisation. Even if the marriage of a girl is delayed her marriage is done with a tree. Minute observation of all these rituals shows that women are regarded as the symbol of fertilisation to produce a child. That is why in Assam women sow the seeds in paddy field, because it is believed that as she is the symbol of fertilisation, crops grow well if she sow the seeds.

Some superstitions are related to black magic and witch craft is an example of it. It is believed that through the hair, nail and used clothes of a pregnant woman, black magic can be done to harm her child. So these articles should be kept carefully. Another ritual called "Pungsavan" is performed during pregnancy period so that she should deliver a boy child. During this ceremony the woman, though she is pregnant have to fast the whole day, which affects her, as well as her child. 'Pranchamrit' ceremony is another ritual that is performed during pregnancy. This ceremony is performed with the lady who have boy child, because it is believed that due to this ritual she can successfully deliver a healthy child.

There are so many beliefs which are called "Lokasar" are nothing but superstitions. These superstitions are life threatening. During the time of delivery, woman has to deliver her child in the floor, not in the bed. No one can touch her because it is believed that if someone touches her, that person has to follow some other rules like fasting. It called "Suwa loga". So, in some cases a woman alone has to deliver her child without the help of other. Even some times she becomes faint due to weakness. It called as "Baghini Prasuta" and no one believed that it is due to her weakness. However, this type of belief is hardly found in contemporary Assamese society. Still so many women are found even today who are the victims of such rituals. After delivery a knife is kept with her so that it can protect her and her child from bad souls or ghosts. Some other superstitions related to it are "Mukh bhanga" that is musterd seeds are thrown in the fire etc. are some common beliefs passes through generation wise from mother to daughter and mother in law to daughter in law.

The widows of Assamese society, particularly Brahmin widows have to follow some strict rules prescribed by the society. They have to wear white dress; eat vegetarian diet

etc so that she can control herself. It is believed that they have no right to participate in some social ceremonies. Women have no right to cook and serve her mother in law till she becomes a mother or her "Pag lowa" ceremony is performed.

In Bodo community of Assam, it is believed that, at the time of cultivation, to call forth the rain, the Bodo women perform a particular dance. Similar tradition is found in Goalpara district. To please the rain God "Hudum" young girls should perform dance without any clothes.

The religious tradition called "Devadasi" is also a kind of superstition that is prevalent in Assam. The devadasi tradition (servant of god) is a religious tradition in which girls are "married" and dedicated to a deity (God or Goddess). In the name of religion and god 'devadasi' are exploited and introduced to the circle of prostitution. But this tradition has faded away with time and is eliminated completely in the modern day Assamese society.

Several common superstitions like a woman is supposed to cook and feed her family, a woman supposed to eat whatever is left over after serving everyone in the family, hard work during pregnancy period due to some prevailing superstitions, affected the health of women. All these factors enslave women mentally and physically.

Apart from all the above mentioned traditions, there are several beliefs prevalent in Assamese society. Here we have mentioned only few of them. It is also believed that women are the bearer of tradition and culture. It's the duty of women and not the men to carry out this responsibility. If women ignore this duty, it will cause disintegration of the traditional family. More over this religiosity engenders the feminine virtues like endurance, sacrifice, graciousness, etc., without which a woman can get no respect in the society. The woman who refuses to be 'lesser being' is not acceptable to the society. The real motive of this all is perpetuation of discrimination, patriarchy, social distortions and male domination in the name of religion, tradition and culture.

Causes and Effects of Superstition :

Assamese society is male dominating society. Women spend their whole life in male dominance. She is brought up with a teaching of her role in life as daughter, wife and mother. Here, the famous scripture "Manusmriti" played a great role. She has to do everything for the man in her life. Her every fast, vow is for her husband or son. If her husband died due to any reason, she is considered responsible for the death and ostracized by her family and society. As a widow, she is not invited to any religious function or celebration of any auspicious day. Every religion in the world has given the poor treatment to women in every aspect of life. For thousands of years, this religiousness is being engraved on her mind. The inferiority complex, sorrows and helplessness of hers leads to the superstitions.

The main reason of superstitions in women is our customs & traditions. She don't have right to diagnose the rituals. She never asked how and why. She is doing all these rituals full of superstitions and with blind faith, just because it was told by her forefather. She is treated as the bearer of tradition and culture. Her physical & mental illness also causes to make her superstitious. Her health is always purposely ignored, from her birth. She is never given healthy diet. Always fresh & good food is given to a boy or male members of the family. Women are always ignored. Lack of recognition, respect and prestige in family puts most of the women under continuous mental strain, there are other reasons too, torture by in laws, ignorance of husband, household conflicts, sexual dissatisfaction etc. All these factors shatter her personality. But society tries to link up this ill personality with black magic.

Poverty is also a factor as it is observed that in societies where majority of people are poor, superstition played a major role. Women are generally economically dependent and backward which may be also regarded as the cause of her belief in superstitions. Lack of education is another important cause of superstition. Ignorance of the scientific knowledge makes women superstitious. No wonder that women surrounded by so many adversities- malnutrition, neglect in childhood, ignorance, early pregnancies, deliveries without any medical help, rigors of bringing up the children and facing responsibilities without receiving proper training and education-become victims of superstition. Solution to the problem of superstition involves solving all these related problems. Therefore, education is very much necessary to solve this problem. Woman has to be educated and all help shall be extended to such women to empower and educate other women, as they know the root situation better than anybody. Women shall be trained to keep the scientific attitude so that they can diagnose the rituals & by that they can dare to deny the wrong things.

Conclusion :

Superstition is one of the major obstacles for the development of society. Therefore, to remove this from society and for social reconstruction the stakeholders should take appropriate steps. Superstitions are usually attributed to the lack of education but, in India, educated people have also been observed following beliefs that may be considered superstitious.

So, awareness programme is very much necessary particularly among women, as women are more superstitious and are the main agents who propagate superstitions most. This awareness should be started from the root level of society, particularly in village area where majority of women are poor, uneducated and superstitious. For this, educated woman can play a great role and their active participation in awareness programmes can

very effectively help remove these obstacles from our society. All of us should condemn the spread of superstition.

According to PTI report, The Assam State Women's Commission has initiated the process towards a law against witch-hunting. The Assam Government is also planning to bring in an anti-superstition bill considering the fact that attacks on people practising witch craft are on the rise in our state. Apart from enacting a new law, Government would also decide to launch an awareness campaign. Apart from Government initiative, NGO's role is very much important for this cause as well.

Women are the root of society; she is the mother the first teacher of a child. If a woman is uneducated and superstitious than how is she expected to properly train her child. It is therefore, high time that we rethink our outdated rites and rituals, especially those against women and rectify them as early as possible. These rites, rituals, vows and observances are supposed to be part of our culture and we should justify them rationally and should not believe in them blindly. The 'slave like' psyche of women should be changed in every society. One has to admit that this cannot be done in one stroke and is a rather slow process of incremental changes. Sane and rational men will certainly come forward to help them but women need to work towards their own liberation. Therefore, we all should work for it so that social reconstruction is possible.

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মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ চুটিগল্পত নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্ব

বন্দনা বৰুৱা

অসমীয়া বিভাগ, চৰাইবাহী মহাবিদ্যালয়
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১.০. প্ৰস্তাৱনা :

উত্তৰ স্বাধীনতাৰ কালছোৱাত যি কেইগৰাকী মহিলা লেখিকাই অসমীয়া গল্প-সাহিত্যলৈ এক নব্য মানবীয় দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী কঢ়িয়াই আনিছিল তাৰ ভিতৰত মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামী অন্যতম। সংখ্যাত তাকৰ হ'লেও তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহে এক বাস্তৱবাদী চিন্তাধাৰা কঢ়িয়াই অনাৰ লগতে মনোবৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তা-চৰ্চাকো আদৰি আনিছিল। মামণি ৰয়চমৰ সাহিত্যিক সুখ্যাতি কেৱল অসমৰ বুকুতেই সীমাবদ্ধ আছিল এনে নহয়, অসমৰ বাহিৰৰ ৰাজ্য তথা বিদেশতো তেওঁৰ সুখ্যাতি বিয়পি পৰিছিল। উপন্যাস সাহিত্যত তেখেতৰ খ্যাতি আছিল অনন্য। 'নীলকণ্ঠী ব্ৰজ' 'চেনাবৰ শ্ৰোঁত' 'মামৰে ধৰা তৰোৱাল' 'দঁতাল হাতীৰ উঁয়ে খোৱা হাউদা' 'আধালেখা দস্তাবেজ' আদি কেইবাখনো উল্লেখযোগ্য উপন্যাস ৰচনা কৰিছিল। ৰামায়ণী সাহিত্যতো আছিল তেওঁৰ বিশেষ বুৎপত্তি। সৃষ্টিশীল মনোভাৱ আৰু গভীৰ অধ্যয়ন পুষ্ট চিন্তা-চৰ্চাই তেওঁৰ খ্যাতি দুগুণে বৃদ্ধি কৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহত নাৰীৰ চিন্তা-চৰ্চা, দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী আৰু নাৰী মানসৰ পৰিচয় পোৱা যায়। তদুপৰি সমাজ পৰিবৰ্তনৰ লগে লগে পৰিবৰ্তনকাৰী চিন্তাধাৰাৰ নাৰী মানসে কেনেদৰে ক্ৰিয়া-প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিছে সেই বিষয়ৰ বিশ্লেষণো তেওঁ দাঙি ধৰিছিল।

২.০. বিষয়বস্তু নিৰ্বাচনৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা :

ঔপন্যাসিক হিচাপে মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ ইতিমধ্যে কিছু আলোচনা হৈছে। কিন্তু তেওঁৰ গল্পবোৰৰ বিষয়ে এতিয়াও পৰ্যাপ্ত আলোচনা হোৱা নাই। মামণি ৰয়চম আছিল নাৰীবাদী লেখিকা। নাৰীৰ আবেগ অনুভূতিৰ পৰা সামাজিক পৰ্যায়ত তেওঁলোকৰ স্থান, সমাজৰ অন্যায় অবিচাৰ ৰক্ষণশীলতাত তেওঁলোকৰ মানসিক চিন্তা-চৰ্চা, নাৰীৰ মনোজগতৰ সূক্ষ্ম বিশ্লেষণ— এই বিষয়বস্তু সমূহে তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহত দেখা দিছে। নাৰীবাদী লেখিকা হিচাপে তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহত নাৰীকনো কিদৰে উপস্থাপন কৰিছে সেই বিষয়ে আলোচনা হোৱা উচিত। এই গৱেষণা পত্ৰত সেইবাবেই ওপৰোক্ত বিষয়বস্তুক নিৰ্বাচন কৰা হৈছে।

৩.০. আলোচ্য বিষয়ৰ পৰিসৰ :

অসমীয়া সমাজ জীৱনৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰক মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীয়ে তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহত কেনেদৰে উপস্থাপন কৰিছে সেই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ যাওঁতে তেওঁৰ দ্বাৰা ৰচিত গল্পসমূহৰ ভিতৰত কেইটামান গল্প নিৰ্বাচন কৰি লোৱা হৈছে। 'সংস্কাৰ' 'উদংবাকচ' 'ৰিণিকি ৰিণিকি দেখিছো যমুনা' 'ঈশ্বৰীৰ

সংশয় আৰু প্ৰেম', 'নাঙঠ চহৰ' আদি গল্পত নাৰীৰ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণ কিমান নিখুঁত ভাৱে অংকন কৰিছে তাৰেই আলোচনা কৰাই এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ গৱেষণা পত্ৰৰ পৰিসৰ হ'ব।

৪.০. গৱেষণা পত্ৰ প্ৰস্তুত কৰণৰ পদ্ধতি :

এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ গৱেষণা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুত কৰোঁতে মূলতে বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতি অনুসৰণ কৰি তলত দিয়া ধৰণে আগবঢ়াই হৈছে।

(ক) তথ্য সংগ্ৰহ :— আলোচনাৰ বাবে প্ৰয়োজনীয় তথ্য সংগ্ৰহৰ বাবে মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ কেইটিমান গল্পক নিৰ্বাচন কৰা হৈছে।

(খ) পৰ্যবেক্ষণ আৰু বিশ্লেষণ :— প্ৰাপ্ত তথ্যসমূহ আৰু ইয়াৰ লগত জড়িত বিভিন্ন আলোচনী, প্ৰাসংগিক পুথিৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰা তথ্যসমূহ পৰ্যবেক্ষণ আৰু বিশ্লেষণৰ যোগেদি একোটা সিদ্ধান্তলৈ আহিব বিচৰা হৈছে।

(গ) তাৎপৰ্য উপলব্ধি :— সমাজ জীৱনৰ অংশীদাৰ হিচাপে নাৰী আৰু নাৰীৰ লগত জড়িত মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণে লেখিকাগৰাকীৰ গল্পসমূহক কিমানদূৰ প্ৰভাৱিত কৰিছে এই বিষয়ে তাৎপৰ্য উপলব্ধি কৰা।

(ঘ) সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণ :— শেষত প্ৰাপ্ত ফলৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি এটা সিদ্ধান্তলৈ আহিব বিচৰা হৈছে।

৫.০. গৱেষণা পত্ৰৰ উদ্দেশ্য :

আমাৰ এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ গৱেষণা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুতকৰণৰ প্ৰধান উদ্দেশ্যসমূহ হৈছে :—

(ক) নাৰীৰ চেতন-অৱচেতন মনৰ বিশ্লেষণ লেখিকাগৰাকীয়ে তেওঁৰ গল্পত কিদৰে দাঙি ধৰিছে এই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰাতো এই গৱেষণা পত্ৰখনৰ অন্যতম প্ৰধান উদ্দেশ্য।

(খ) নাৰীৰ প্ৰেম ভালপোৱা, আৱেগ-অনুভূতি, নাৰীৰ চিন্তাধাৰা, দৰ্শন, সমাজৰ পৰম্পৰাগত সংস্কাৰ, নিঃসংগতা পুৰুষৰ সমাজখনত নাৰীৰ স্থান এইবোৰৰ আধাৰত লেখিকাগৰাকীয়ে নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্বৰ বিশ্লেষণ কেনেদৰে আগবঢ়াইছে এই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰাতোও এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ গৱেষণা পত্ৰখনৰ অন্যতম উদ্দেশ্য।

৬.০. মূল আলোচনা :

মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামী কুৰি শতিকাৰ দ্বিতীয়াৰ্দ্ধৰ অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ এগৰাকী প্ৰতিভাশালী কথাশিল্পী। ঔপন্যাসিক হিচাপেই নহয় এগৰাকী বিশিষ্টা চুটিগল্প লেখিকা হিচাপেও তেওঁ অসমীয়া গল্প সাহিত্যত সুপ্ৰতিষ্ঠিত। সংখ্যাৰ ফালৰপৰা বেছি নহলেও মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ এমুঠিমান গল্পৰ মাজেদিয়ে ফুটি উঠিছে গল্পলেখিকাৰ বৰ্ণনাৰ নৈপুণ্য, ভাষাৰ ব্যঞ্জনাময় ব্যৱহাৰ, চৰিত্ৰৰ মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্ব ইত্যাদি। লেখিকাগৰাকীয়ে জনপ্ৰিয় উপন্যাস সমূহত দেখুৱাৰ দৰেই গল্পসমূহৰ মাজেদিও দেখুৱাইছিল নাৰীৰ মনৰ গভীৰ কোণত লুকাই থকা ভাৱ-অনুভূতি আৰু গোপন বাসনাসমূহক। বেছিভাগ গল্পতে তেওঁ জীৱনৰ অভিজ্ঞতাক এক ৰসাল বৰ্ণনাৰে উপস্থাপন কৰিছে। মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীয়ে সমাজৰ ধনী শ্ৰেণীৰ নায়িকাৰ পৰা গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ সহজ-সৰল দুখীয়া-দৰিদ্ৰ নায়িকাৰ জীৱনৰ ওপৰত আলোকপাত কৰাৰ উপৰিও বৌদ্ধিক

চিত্তাৰ্চাৰ লগত জড়িত নাৰীৰ পৰা নিৰক্ষৰ নায়িকাৰ ভাৱ-অনুভূতি, কামনা-বাসনা, চিত্তাৰ্চা তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহত উপস্থাপন কৰিছে। ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্যৰ শ্ৰেষ্ঠ গল্পসমূহৰ ভিতৰত মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প ‘সংস্কাৰ’ক স্থান দিব পাৰি। ‘সংস্কাৰ’ নিঃসন্দেহে শ্ৰেষ্ঠ গল্প। গল্পটিত বৰ্ণিত হৈছে দুগৰাকী নাৰীৰ মনোজগতত দেখা দিয়া বিভিন্ন ভাৱ-অনুভূতি। পৰিবেশ পৰিস্থিতিত পৰি দুয়োগৰাকী নাৰীয়ে কিদৰে বিভিন্ন ক্ৰিয়া-প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে আৰু তাৰ যোগেদি চৰিত্ৰ দুটিৰ মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্ব কেনেদৰে প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে তাৰেই আধাৰত ‘সংস্কাৰ’ ৰচিত হৈছে। ‘সংস্কাৰ’ গল্পটিৰ উল্লেখযোগ্য নাৰী চৰিত্ৰই হৈছে দময়ন্তীৰ চৰিত্ৰ। দময়ন্তী বামুণৰ বিধৱা নাৰী, দুজনী কনমানি ছোৱালীৰ মাক হোৱা স্বত্বেও দময়ন্তীৰ দেহত ভৰপূৰ যৌৱন। আৰ্থিক দৈন্যৰ মাজত জীৱন কটোৱা দময়ন্তীয়ে নিজৰ ৰূপ-যৌৱনৰে পুৰুষক আকৰ্ষণ কৰে। পুৰুষৰ দুৰ্বলতা কোনখিনিত তাই নুবুজা নহয়। সেয়ে নিজৰ ৰূপ-যৌৱন-সৌন্দৰ্যৰে দময়ন্তীয়ে সিহঁতক আকৰ্ষণ কৰি অৰ্থৰ বিনিময়ত নিজৰ দেহাটো সিহঁতৰ হাতত তুলি দি নিজৰ আৰ্থিক দৈন্যতা দূৰ কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰে। অৱশ্যে চৰিত্ৰ ফালৰ পৰা দময়ন্তী আগতেও ভাল নাছিল, পিছত স্বামী ঢুকুৱাত তাই গাঁৱৰ ডেকাবোৰৰ আকৰ্ষণৰ কেন্দ্ৰবিন্দু হৈ পৰিছিল। এনেদৰেই দময়ন্তীয়ে জীৱন নিৰ্বাহ কৰে, পুৰুষক নিজৰ দেহাটো এৰি দি অবৈধভাৱে গৰ্ভৱতী হৈ বাৰে বাৰে তাই গৰ্ভপাত কৰোৱাইছে। দময়ন্তী যেন পুৰুষ শাসিত সমাজখনত পুৰুষৰ উৎপীড়নৰ এক প্ৰতীক। বাৰে বাৰে কৰা তাইৰ গৰ্ভপাতে এফালে তাইৰ ওপৰত পুৰুষে কৰা অবিচাৰৰ যন্ত্ৰণা প্ৰকাশ পাইছে আৰু আনফালে পুৰুষ শাসিত সমাজখনত পুৰুষৰ স্থায়ী পৰিচয়ক অস্বীকাৰ কৰিব বিচৰা হৈছে। বংশ ৰক্ষাৰ স্বাৰ্থতে পীতাম্বৰ মহাজনেও তাইৰ কাষ চাপিছে। দুজনী ছোৱালীৰ সৈতে তাইক নিজৰ কৰি লব বিচাৰিছে। মধ্যস্থতাকাৰী ৰূপে উপস্থাপিত হৈছে কৃষ্ণকান্ত পুৰোহিতৰ চৰিত্ৰ। কৃষ্ণকান্তই অৰ্থৰ বিনিময়ত দময়ন্তীক সৈমান কৰাইছে পীতাম্বৰৰ লগত দৈহিক সম্পৰ্ক স্থাপনত। পীতাম্বৰ সুখী হ’ল, যেতিয়া জানিলে দময়ন্তী গৰ্ভৱতী বুলি। পিছে সেই সুখ পীতাম্বৰৰ স্থায়ী নহল। দময়ন্তীয়ে পেটৰ সন্তানক নষ্ট কৰি পেলালে। কিন্তু কিয় কৰিলে? কৃষ্ণকান্ত পুৰোহিতৰ ভাষাত তাই বোলে শূদিৰৰ বীজ কঢ়িয়াৰ নোখোজে। তাই শাণ্ডিল্য গোত্ৰীয় বামুণ। পীতাম্বৰ মহাজন যেন সেইফালেই থৰ লাগিল। সমাজত প্ৰচলিত পৰম্পৰাগত সংস্কাৰৰ বশৱতী হৈ তাই পিতাম্বৰৰ ভৱিষ্যত বংশধৰক হত্যা কৰিছে। কাৰণ দময়ন্তী স্বামীহীন, আৰ্থিক দুৰৱস্থাত ভুগি থকা নাৰী হ’ব পাৰে কিন্তু তাই বামুণৰ ছোৱালী। নিজৰ দেহত উচ্চজাতৰ তেজ বৈ থকা অৱস্থাত তাই কিদৰেনো শূদিৰৰ সন্তান গৰ্ভত ধাৰণ কৰে। দময়ন্তীয়ে যত্ন কৰিলেও সমাজত প্ৰচলিত থকা সংস্কাৰৰ পৰা মুক্ত হ’ব পৰা নাই। এফালে দময়ন্তীৰ জীৱনত সৃষ্টি হোৱা আৰ্থিক দৈন্যতা আৰু জৈৱিক ক্ষুধা, আনফালে সামাজিক সংস্কাৰ, এই দুয়োটাই তাইৰ চৰিত্ৰত মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে। এই মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বৰ বাবেই পীতাম্বৰৰ বীৰ্য ধাৰণ কৰিও তাই সুখী হ’ব পৰা নাই, অথচ পীতাম্বৰে তাইক জীৱনৰ নিৰাপত্তা প্ৰদানৰ প্ৰতিশ্ৰুতি দিছিল। কিন্তু সেই প্ৰতিশ্ৰুতি আৰু স্বচ্ছল জীৱনৰ সুখকো তাই পৰিত্যাগ কৰিছে কেৱল জাত্যাভিমানৰ বাবেই। দময়ন্তী সমাজত প্ৰচলিত সংস্কাৰৰ প্ৰতিনিধি যদিও মাজে মাজে তাইৰ চৰিত্ৰত পৰম্পৰা বিৰোধী বৈশিষ্ট্য দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। শূদিৰৰ বীৰ্য বুলি তাই পীতাম্বৰৰ সন্তানক নষ্ট কৰি পেলালে কিন্তু সেইজনী দময়ন্তীয়ে আকৌ প্ৰচলিত সমাজৰ সংস্কাৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধে গৈ বামুণৰ বিধৱা তিৰোতা হোৱা স্বত্বেও মাছ-মাংস খাইছে। প্ৰচলিত সমাজৰ সংস্কাৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধে যদি তাই থিয় দিব বিচাৰিছিল তেতিয়াহলে তাই সাহসেৰে পীতাম্বৰক আদৰি ল’বও পাৰিব লাগিছিল। কিন্তু দময়ন্তীৰ চৰিত্ৰত সেই সাহসৰ অভাৱ দেখা গ’ল। প্ৰকৃততে

নিৰক্ষৰ এই গৰাকী কম বয়সীয়া চঞ্চল যৌৱনা বামুণৰ বিধবাই নিজৰ ইন্দ্ৰিয়ক দমন কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। নিজৰ দৈহিক ক্ষুধা আৰু লোভৰ বশৱৰ্তী হৈয়েই তাই পৰম্পৰ বিৰোধী কাম কৰিব লগা হৈছে। মাছ-মাংস খাই তাই সমাজত প্ৰচলিত নীতি নিয়মক উলংঘা কৰিছে, আনফালে প্ৰচলিত সংস্কাৰৰ বশৱৰ্তী হৈ পীতাম্বৰৰ সন্তানক তাই নষ্ট কৰি পেলাইছে। প্ৰকৃততে নাৰীয়ে সমাজত প্ৰচলিত নীতি-নিয়মক দেখা-দেখিকৈ উলংঘা কৰিবলৈ টান পায়। পীতাম্বৰৰ সন্তানক জন্ম দিয়াহেঁতেন তাই পীতাম্বৰক গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলগীয়া হ'লহেঁতেন। তাৰ পাছত সমাজত তাইক লৈ চৰ্চা চলিলহেঁতেন, বিভিন্নজনে বাক্যবাণেৰে থকাসৰকা কৰিলহেঁতেন। ইমান খিনি সাহস গাঁৱৰ এগৰাকী বিধবা নাৰীয়ে দেখুৱাতো প্ৰায় অসম্ভৱ। ই নাৰীৰ এক বিশেষত্ব। কিন্তু মাছ-মাংস খালে অপৰাধ হয় ঠিকেই কিন্তু দময়ন্তীয়েতো তাক দেখুৱাই খোৱা নাই দুজনী জীয়েক আছে মানুহে সুধিলে সিহঁতৰ বাবে লোৱা বুলি ক'ব পাৰিব। এনে উত্তৰ হয়তো তাইৰ ওচৰত আছিল কিন্তু গৰ্ভৱৰ্তী হলে কথাতো লুকুৱাই খোৱাতো সম্ভৱ নহ'ব। জাত্যাভিমানী দময়ন্তীয়ে শেষত প্ৰচলিত সংস্কাৰৰ বশৱৰ্তী হৈ এনে এটা সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। দময়ন্তীৰ চৰিত্ৰত হয়তো আন দুই এটা কথাই প্ৰভাৱ পেলাব পাৰে। অৱশ্যে সি প্ৰকাশ্যভাৱে ফুটি উঠা নাই। দেখা যায় যে দময়ন্তীৰ চৰিত্ৰ ভাল নহয়, পুৰুষক নিজৰ শৰীৰটোৰ ৰূপ সৌন্দৰ্য্য উদঙাই দি আকৰ্ষণ কৰি ভাল পায়। বহুপুৰুষগামী এগৰাকী চঞ্চলা নাৰীৰ পক্ষে কোনো এডোখৰ ঠাইত স্থিতিৱস্থাত থকাতো প্ৰায় অসম্ভৱ। মুকলিমুৰীয়া চৰায়ে সজাঁত বন্দী হৈ থাকিবলৈ টান পায়। হয়তো দময়ন্তীৰ মনোজগতত তেনে কথাযো ক্ৰিয়া কৰিব পাৰে। সেই বাবেই পীতাম্বৰ মহাজনৰ ওচৰত বন্দী হৈ থাকিবলৈ তাই ইচ্ছুক নহয়। কিন্তু প্ৰকাশ্যে দেখা যায় যে শূদ্ৰৰ লগত ঘৰ-সংসাৰ কৰা বাবে তাই মানসিক ভাৱে প্ৰস্তুত হ'ব নোৱাৰিলে। ফলত তাই এনে সিদ্ধান্ত ল'বলগীয়া হ'ল। সমাজৰ প্ৰচলিত সংস্কাৰৰ ওচৰত তাই হাৰ মানিলে। গল্পটিত নাৰীৰ ভাৱ অনুভূতিৰ বিশ্লেষণ সুন্দৰ হৈছে।

‘সংস্কাৰ’ গল্পৰ আন এগৰাকী নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ হৈছে পীতাম্বৰৰ ঘৈণীয়েক। পীতাম্বৰৰ ঘৈণীয়েকৰ মুখত লেখিকাই এটাও সংলাপ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা নাই। কিন্তু তাইৰ দৃষ্টিৰ মাজেদিয়েই লেখিকাই উপস্থাপন কৰিছে তাইৰ মনৰ ক্ষোভ, বিদ্ৰোহ আৰু বিতৃষ্ণা। পীতাম্বৰৰ ঘৈণীয়েক ৰুগীয়া মানুহ, কুৰিবাৰ গুৱাহাটীলৈ অনা-নিয়া কৰিও তাইক সুস্থ কৰিব পৰা নগ'ল। এই গৰাকী ৰুগীয়া মানুহে পীতাম্বৰৰ বংশৰ ৰক্ষা কৰাৰ হাবিয়াসক কেতিয়াও পূৰ্ণ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। সেই কথা পীতাম্বৰ আৰু তেওঁৰ ঘৈণীয়েকেও জ্বুনে। তথাপি ৰুগীয়া মানুহগৰাকীয়ে যেন পীতাম্বৰক আন নাৰীৰ হাতত স্ব-ইচ্ছাৰে তুলি দিব নোৱাৰে। ইও নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্বৰ এটা দিশ। এজনী নাৰীয়ে কেতিয়াও নিজৰ পুৰুষ জনক আনৰ লগত ভগাই ল'ব নোৱাৰে। লাগিলে শাৰীৰিক ভাৱে তেওঁ অক্ষমেই হওক। কৃষ্ণকান্তইনো পীতাম্বৰ মহাজনক কি বুদ্ধি দিছে সেই কথা জানিবলৈ তাই ব্যগ্ৰ হোৱাই নহয় তাইৰ মনত সৃষ্টি হোৱা খং-ক্ষোভ লেখিকাগৰাকীয়ে বৰ্ণনাৰ চাতুৰ্যৰে এনেদৰে দাঙি ধৰিছে। “তাইৰ চকু দুটা ট ট কৈ জ্বলি আছিল। কৃষ্ণকান্তই পীতাম্বৰক কি ক'ব বিচাৰিছে এই কথা জানিবলৈ তাই যেন উত্ৰাৱল হৈ আছে, দুৰৈৰ পৰা অহা দৃষ্টিও যে এনেধৰণে তীক্ষ্ণ, হৃদয়স্পৰ্শী হ'ব পাৰে এই কথা কৃষ্ণকান্তই আগে-পিছে গম পোৱা নাছিল।”^(১) দময়ন্তীৰ কথা পীতাম্বৰ মহাজনক কৈ কৃষ্ণকান্তই দুৱাৰৰ সিপাৰে বিছনাত শুই থকা পীতাম্বৰৰ ঘৈণীয়েকলৈ চাইছিল আৰু দেখিছিল মানুহজনীৰ চকু মেল খাই আছিল। চকুত যেন জুইহে জ্বলি আছিল। পীতাম্বৰৰ ঘৈণীয়েকৰ চকুৰ এই জুইকুৰাই প্ৰমাণ কৰে তাইৰ মনৰ বিতৃষ্ণা, ঘৃণা আৰু বিদ্ৰোহক। আন এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ লগত

সম্পৰ্ক স্থাপন কৰিবলৈ উচতোৱা কৃষ্ণকান্তক পৰা হ'লে তাই বাৰুকৈয়ে এসেকা দিলেহেঁতেন। পিছে তাই নিৰুপায়। নিজৰ স্বামীয়ে কৃষ্ণকান্তৰ কথাত সাঁহাৰি দিয়াত তাইৰ অন্তৰ দুখ-শোক-অভিমানত জ্বৰুলা হৈ উঠিছে। শাৰীৰিক-মানসিক আঘাতে জৰ্জৰিত কৰা এই মানুহগৰাকীৰ অন্তৰত পুঞ্জীভূত হৈ আছে অনেক ক্ষোভ, কিন্তু গিৰিয়েকক তাই বাধাও দিয়া নাই। অসহায় এই গৰাকী নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি পাঠকৰ অন্তৰত সহানুভূতিৰ সৃষ্টি হয়। দময়ন্তীৰ লগত সম্পৰ্ক হোৱাৰ পিছত পীতাম্বৰে নিজৰ ঘৈণীয়েকক পৰিচৰ্যা কৰিবলৈকো এৰিলে। পুৰুষৰ নিৰ্দয়-নিৰ্মম অত্যাচাৰৰ বলি হৈছে এই গৰাকী নাৰী। খোৱা-বোৱাতো কোনেও গুৰুত্ব নিদিয়া হ'ল। ভাত দিলে লগত পানীৰ গিলাছ দিবলৈকো পাহৰিছিল। পিয়াহত ডিঙি শুকাই কাঠ হৈ গ'লেও নাইবা চুৱা বাচন চকুৰ আগত পৰি থাকিলেও তাই মনে মনে থাকে। মুখেৰে এটাও শব্দ প্ৰকাশ নকৰে। পীতাম্বৰে তাইৰ বিচনাখন শোৱা কোঠালীৰ পৰা উলিয়াই টেকীশালৰ কাষৰ দুৱাৰ-খিড়িকী নোহোৱা অন্ধকাৰ খোপৰি এটাত থৈ দিয়ে। তথাপি তাই প্ৰতিবাদ কৰা নাই। মৰাশ পৰাদি তাই মাত্ৰ পৰি হৈ থাকে। কিন্তু আচৰিত কথা এই যে এই অন্ধকাৰৰ মাজতো মানুহজনীৰ চকু দুটা জ্বলি থাকে। মাটিৰ চাকিৰ শেঁতা পোহৰৰ দৰে তাই এই দৃষ্টিৰ পোহৰত যেন সকলো বস্তুৰে নাঙঠ ৰূপ দেখা পায়। মানুহগৰাকীয়ে পীতাম্বৰ মহাজনৰ নাঙঠ চৰিত্ৰটোক উপলব্ধি কৰিবলৈ বেছি পৰ লগা নাছিল। দেহত যৌৱন নাই গতিকে মহাজনে কি কাৰণে তাইৰ আদৰ-যত্ন লয়। মহাজনক দৈহিক-মানসিকভাৱে সুখী কৰিব পৰা ক্ষমতা তাইৰ নাই। গতিকে তাই অনাদৃত। পুৰুষৰ লাঞ্ছনা বৰ্বৰতাক তাই নীৰবে নিৰ্বিকাৰভাৱে মানি লৈছে। তথাপি তাইৰ অন্তৰত জ্বলি আছে বিক্ষোভৰ একুঁৰা জুই। তাৰ প্ৰমাণ তাইৰ চকু দুটা। “ৰোগশয্যাতে পৰি মৃত্যুৰ দিন গণি থকা পীতাম্বৰৰ বেদনাত ঘৈণীয়েকৰ মনৰ অপ্ৰকাশ বেদনাও লেখিকাই লুকুৱাই ৰখা নাই— ঠাৰে-চিয়াঁৰে, সুকৌশলে তাৰ তেওঁ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে।”^(২) গিৰিয়েকৰ সকলো কাৰ্যৰ নীৰৱ সাক্ষী হৈ ৰৈছে তাইৰ চকুজুৰি। দময়ন্তীৰ লগত যোগাযোগ, সম্পৰ্ক স্থাপন, দময়ন্তীৰ সন্তান ধাৰণ এই সকলোবোৰ খবৰ তাইৰ চকুৰ সেই মৰ্মভেদী চাৱনিটোৰে প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰিছে। বেমাৰী মানুহৰ ইচ্ছা-অনিচ্ছা, সুখ-দুখ বুলি যেন কোনো কথা নাই। সেই বাবে তাই নিজৰ অন্তৰৰ বেদনাক অন্তৰতে লৈ এক নিজীৱ মূৰ্তিলৈ ৰূপান্তৰিত হৈছে। সেয়ে হ'লেও তাইৰ চকুজুৰিয়ে কিন্তু অহৰহ প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰি আছে গিৰিয়েকৰ দৰে এজন পুৰুষৰ কদৰ্যতা তথা অমানৱীয়তাক।

গল্পটিত নাৰীৰ মনৰ ভাৱ-অনুভূতি সঠিক বিশ্লেষণ হোৱাৰ উপৰিও নাৰীৰ গোপন মনোজগতত লুকাই থকা বহু কথাই প্ৰকাশ হৈ ওলাইছে। এফালে গল্পটিত নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্বৰ সুন্দৰ বিশ্লেষণ হৈছে, আনফালে গল্পটিৰ মাজেৰে আৰ্থিক দৈন্যত ভুগি থকা নাৰী বা পঙ্গু-দুৰ্বল অসহায় নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি পুৰুষৰ মনোভাৱ, ব্যৱহাৰ কেনে সেই কথাও ব্যক্ত হৈছে। পুৰুষে নাৰীক জৈৱিক আনন্দ পূৰণৰ আহিলা হিচাপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে, তাকে নাপালে সময়ত দুৰ্ব্যৱহাৰ কৰাৰ বৰ্ণনা লেখিকা গৰাকীয়ে সুন্দৰভাৱে দাঙি ধৰিছে। নাৰী যেন পুৰুষৰ বাবে দৈহিক ক্ষুধা নিৰাময়ৰ আৰু বংশৰক্ষা কৰিবৰ বাবে সন্তান উৎপাদন কৰা এবিধ যন্ত্ৰহে। পীতাম্বৰৰ লেখীয়া একশ্ৰেণী পুৰুষৰ মানসিকতাত সেই কথা স্পষ্ট হৈ উঠিছে। “গল্পটোত সমাজৰ এলাস্কুকলীয়া পুৰাতন-কুসংস্কাৰ আৰু এই কুসংস্কাৰৰ পৰিণতিত বিশেষকৈ নাৰী জীৱনে কি দৰে দুৰ্বহ যন্ত্ৰণা, বেদনাৰ বোজা বহন কৰিব লগা হয় তাৰো সহৃদয় ব্যাখ্যা আগবঢ়োৱা হৈছে। ফ্ৰয়েডীয় মনস্তত্ত্বৰ প্ৰভাৱ তেওঁৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰত বিদ্যমান।”^(৩)

মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীয়ে তেওঁৰ উপন্যাসমূহত নাৰী মনৰ গোপন অনুভূতিবোৰক যিমান নিৰ্ভীকভাৱে উপস্থাপন কৰিছে চুটিগল্পটো তেওঁ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ বিশ্লেষণ কৰিবলৈ এৰা নাই। নাৰী চৰিত্ৰক অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ দিয়া আন এটি উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প হ'ল 'উদংবাকচ'। গল্পটিত তৰাদৈ নামৰ এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ দুৰ্বিসহ জীৱন-যন্ত্ৰণাক ফুটাই তুলিব যাঁওতে কি দৰে পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা তাই লাঞ্ছিত-অপমানিত হৈ ৰৈছে তাৰ বৰ্ণনা আগবঢ়োৱা হৈছে। তৰাদৈয়ে শ্মশানৰ পৰা মৃতদেহ কঢ়িয়াই লৈ অনা এটা উদং বাকচ আনি নিজৰ ঘৰত বৰ আটোম টোকাৰিকৈ ৰাখিছিল, তাৰ ভিতৰত কুচি-মুচি সোমাই থাকি তাই এক অনন্য অনুভূতি অনুভৱ কৰিছিল। মৃতদেহ কঢ়িওৱা বাকচ হ'লেও দৰিদ্ৰতাৰ মাজত জীৱন কটোৱা তৰাদৈয়ে তাৰ মাজত শুই থাকিয়েই নিৰাপত্তা অনুভৱ কৰিছিল। কিন্তু সেই উদং বাকচটোৰ লগত গঢ়ি উঠা এই অভিনৱ আন্তৰিকতাক এদিন তাই স্ব-ইচ্ছাৰে বাদ দিবলগীয়া হ'ল। নিজ হাতে তাই শ্মশানৰ ওচৰলৈ নি বাকচটোত জুই লগাই দিলে। যেন তাইৰ অন্তৰত জ্বলি উঠা প্ৰতাৰণা, বিশ্বাস ভংগৰ জুইকুৰাহে দপদপাই জ্বলি উঠি বাকচটো নিঃশেষকৈ পুৰি পেলাইছে। অতদিনে নিজৰ প্ৰেমিকৰ প্ৰতি মনত সাঁচি ৰখা প্ৰেম-ভালপোৱা, বিশ্বাসৰ ছবিখন যেতিয়াই খহি পৰিছিল, তাইৰ অন্তৰত বিক্ষোভৰ জুইকুৰাও তেতিয়াই দপদপাই জ্বলি উঠিছিল। তৰাদৈক খবৰ দিছিল তাইৰ পুলিচত কাম কৰা ককায়েকে। কিদৰে বাগিচাৰ চাহাবৰ সৰু পুতেক সৰু বোপাইৰ মৃতদেহ সেই বাকচটোৰ ভিতৰত এয়াৰপ'ৰ্টৰ পৰা কঢ়িয়াই অনা হৈছিল আৰু সেই সৰু বোপাইৰ লগত এসময়ত তৰাদৈৰ প্ৰেম, প্ৰেমৰ নামত তৰাদৈয়ে সৰ্বস্ব সমৰ্পণ আৰু সৰু বোপায়েও সেই সময়ত তৰাদৈক বিয়া পাতিব খোজাত বুদ্ধি কৰি তেওঁক উজনিলৈ ট্ৰেনফাৰ— এই সকলোবোৰ কথাই ককায়েকে তাইক মনত পেলাই দিছিল। তৰাদৈৰ অন্তৰ কান্দি উঠিল, দুৰ্ঘটনাত মৃত্যু হোৱা তাইৰ সেই প্ৰেমিকৰ বাবে। পিছে অন্তৰৰ সেই প্ৰেম ঘূৰালৈ পৰ্যবেশিত হৈছিল যেতিয়া তাই শুনিছিল সৰু বোপায়ে বিয়া পতাৰ সিদ্ধান্ত লোৱাৰ কথা আৰু বিয়ালৈ বুলি আহোঁতেই দুৰ্ঘটনাত মৃত্যু হোৱাৰ বতৰা। ককায়েকে উলিয়াই দিয়া সৰু বোপাইৰ বিয়াৰ নিমন্ত্ৰণী পত্ৰ কেইখনে যেন তৰাদৈক তাকিছিল কৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে। কাৰণ তৰাদৈয়ে বিশ্বাস কৰিছিল সৰু বোপায়ে তাইক বিয়া পাতিব নোৱাৰাৰ বাবেহে বিয়া নপতাকৈ আছিল। পিছে তৰাদৈৰ এই বিশ্বাসে যেন উজুটিহে খালে। অতদিনৰ পৰা পুহি ৰখা বিশ্বাস, আন্তৰিকতা মূহুৰ্ততে ঘূৰালৈ ৰূপান্তৰ হ'ল আৰু হৃদয়ত জ্বলি উঠিল একুৰা বিক্ষোভৰ জুই। সেই জুইকুৰাতে পুৰি ছাই হৈ গ'ল অতদিনে আটোম টোকাৰিকৈ ৰখা তাইৰ মৰমৰ সেই উদং বাকচটো। বাকচটো জ্বলাই দিহে তাই স্বস্তিৰ নিশ্বাস পেলাইছে। ইয়ো নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্বৰ আন এটি দিশ। যাক অন্তৰেৰে নাৰীয়ে আটাইতকৈ বেছি ভাল পায়, বেয়া পালে সেইজন ব্যক্তিক ঘৃণাও কৰিব পাৰে প্ৰচণ্ডভাৱে। উদং বাকচটো তৰাদৈৰ জীৱনটোৰ অন্তঃসাৰ শূণ্যতাৰ প্ৰতীক।

অসমীয়া প্ৰেমৰ গল্পসমূহৰ ভিতৰত মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ 'ৰিণিকি ৰিণিকি দেখিছো যমুনা' এটি উৎকৃষ্ট চুটিগল্প। "গল্পটোত পত্নী বিয়োগ হোৱাৰ কৃষ্ণেন্দু নামৰ পুৰুষ জনৰ প্ৰতি ক'ব নোৱাৰাকৈয়ে আকৰ্ষণ অনুভৱ কৰা নায়িকা গৰাকীৰ প্ৰেমানুভূতিৰ এক গভীৰ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণ আগবঢ়োৱা হৈছে। তদুপৰি মানুহৰ জীৱনত কৈশোৰ বসয়ৰ পৰাই প্ৰেমানুভূতিৰ কিদৰে উদ্ৰেক হয়, তাৰো মনস্তাত্ত্বিক ব্যাখ্যা আছে।"^(৪) গল্পটিত দুটি নাৰী চৰিত্ৰক লেখিকাই উপস্থাপন কৰিছে। ধনীৰ ঘৰৰ ছোৱালী আইমানো আৰু সিহঁতৰ ঘৰৰ সন্মুখত নতুনকৈ অহা ড্ৰাইভাৰটোৰ ছোৱালী সুনন্দা।

আইমানোৱে মাক-দেউতাক আৰু লগুৱা মনোকাইৰ নিশ্চিদ্ৰ পহৰাৰ মাজত এক বৈচিত্ৰহীন শৈশৱৰ দিনবোৰ কটাইছিল, যাক সুনন্দাই কৈছিল সজাঁত বন্দী ভাটো চৰাইৰ জীৱন বুলি। আনহাতে ড্ৰাইভাৰৰ ছোৱালী সুনন্দাই এক স্বাধীন বৈচিত্ৰ পূৰ্ণ জীৱন কটাই আইমানোতকৈ বেছি সুখত কাল কটাইছিল। সংগীবিহীন বৈচিত্ৰহীন জীৱনটোৰ নিৰানন্দৰ কথা উপলব্ধি কৰিবলৈ প্ৰথমে আইমানোক সুনন্দায়েই শিকাইছিল। যৌৱনত প্ৰেমবিহীন জীৱন কটোৱা, নিজৰ প্ৰেমিকলৈ এখন প্ৰাণ ভ্ৰা চিঠি লিখিব নোৱাৰা আইমানোৰ জীৱন যে অৰ্থহীন, সেই কথা সুনন্দাই উপলব্ধি কৰোৱাইছিল। নিজৰ মনৰ গভীৰতাৰ পৰা আইমানোয়ে লিখা চিঠিবোৰ সুনন্দাই তাইৰ নামত নিজৰ প্ৰেমিকলৈ পঠাইছিল। যৌৱনত প্ৰেমবিহীন নিঃস্ব জীৱন কটোৱা আইমানোৱে সেইবাবেই সিহঁতৰ ঘৰত অফিচৰ কামত থাকিবলৈ অহা কৃষ্ণেন্দুৰ প্ৰেমত আৱদ্ধ হৈ পৰিছিল। কৃষ্ণেন্দুক লৈ ব্যস্ত হৈ পৰা তাইৰ জীৱনৰ পৰিবৰ্ত্তন খিনিক মনোকাই আৰু মাকে লক্ষ্য নকৰাকৈ থকা নাছিল। বোধকৰো সুনন্দাৰ কথাই আইমানোক উৎসাহিত কৰিছিল কৃষ্ণেন্দুৰ প্ৰেমত আৱদ্ধ হ'বলৈ। কোনো পুৰুষৰ সান্নিধ্যলৈ আহিবলৈ সুযোগ নোপোৱা আইমানোৱে কৃষ্ণেন্দুক কাষতে পাই তেওঁৰেই প্ৰেমত আৱদ্ধ হৈ পৰিছিল। তদুপৰি পত্নী বিয়োগ হোৱা কৃষ্ণেন্দুৰ প্ৰতি তাইৰ অন্তৰত গভীৰ সহানুভূতিৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছিল। ইও নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্বৰে আন এটি দিশ। কৃষ্ণেন্দুৰ প্ৰতি সৃষ্টি হোৱা প্ৰেমে তাইৰ বিবাহিত জীৱনতো প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়াৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছিল। নিজৰ স্বামীক তাই কৃষ্ণেন্দুৰ ঠাইত বহুৱাব নোৱাৰা বাবেই তাইৰ অৱচেতন মনৰ মাজত সৃষ্টি হৈছিল মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বৰ। মাতৃ হ'বলৈ ওলোৱা আইমানোৱে বিচাৰিছিল যেন তাইৰ এজনী ছোৱালী জন্ম হওক। সেই জনী ছোৱালীয়ে যেন দুখ-কষ্টৰ সময়ত প্ৰেমিকৰ বুকুৰ মাজত সোমাই সেই কষ্টক পাহৰি যাব পাৰে আৰু সেই জন প্ৰেমিককে বিয়া কৰাই নাৰীৰ জীৱন সাৰ্থক কৰিব পাৰে। তাইৰ দৰে যেন এজনক প্ৰেম আৰু আনজনক স্বামী গ্ৰহণ কৰি এক দুমোজাত জীৱন কটাই মাতৃ হ'বলৈ নোলায়। মাতৃ হ'বলৈ ওলায়ো কি এক দুৰ্বিসহ যন্ত্ৰণা তাই কঢ়িয়াই লৈ ফুৰিছে, সেইটো যেন তাইৰ সন্তানৰ ক্ষেত্ৰ ত নহয়। গল্পটিত এজন পুৰুষৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেম আৰু সেইজন প্ৰেমিককে স্বামী গ্ৰহণ কৰি মাতৃ হোৱাৰ নাৰীৰ যি মানসিক প্ৰৱণতা তাৰ সুন্দৰ বিশ্লেষণ আগবঢ়োৱা হৈছে। প্ৰেম যে কেৱল দেহজ প্ৰয়োজন পূৰণৰ আহিলা নহয়, প্ৰেমৰ লগত জড়িত হৈ আছে দেহাতীত এক আত্মিক সম্পৰ্ক সেই কথাও গল্পটিত ব্যক্ত কৰা হৈছে।

মামণি ৰয়চমৰ গল্পই পাঠকৰ অন্তৰত প্ৰৱেশ কৰি দেহ-মন ৰোমাঞ্চিত কৰি তুলিব পাৰে। লেখিকাই চৰিত্ৰৰ মাজত সোমাই ইমান সুস্পষ্ট সুস্পষ্ট কথাবোৰ বৰ্ণনা কৰে যে পাঠকে ইয়াৰ ৰস আনন্দনত আপ্লুত হৈ পৰে। গভীৰ মনোবৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তাধাৰাৰ ব্যক্তিৰ পক্ষেহে ই সম্ভৱ। নিজৰ মনৰ গভীৰতাক উপলব্ধি কৰিব পাৰিছিল বাবেই তেওঁ চৰিত্ৰৰ অন্তৰ্জগততো প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব পাৰিছিল। তেখেতৰ আন এটি উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প হৈছে— 'নাঙঠ চহৰ'। 'নাঙঠ চহৰ' গল্পটিত নায়িকা উৰ্মিলাৰ সংঘাত পূৰ্ণ জীৱনৰ বিভিন্ন চিত্ৰ অংকন কৰা হৈছে। গল্পটিৰ পটভূমি দিল্লী মহানগৰ, দিল্লী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ত কাম কৰা উৰ্মিলাই অৱচেতন মনত এক মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বৰ অহৰহ মুখামুখি হৈ থাকিব লগীয়া হৈছিল। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ত চাকৰি কৰা গিৰিয়েকে উচ্চ শিক্ষাৰ কাৰণে বিদেশলৈ গৈ এগৰাকী ফৰাচী মহিলাৰ লগত সম্পৰ্ক কৰি ভাৰতলৈ আৰু উভতি নাহিল। গিৰিয়েকে এৰি থৈ যোৱাৰ পিছত এক প্ৰচণ্ড মানসিক চাপত ভুগি ভুগিয়েই উৰ্মিলাই পঢ়া-শুনা কৰি দিল্লীলৈ চাকৰি কৰিবলৈ গুছি আহিছিল। আৰম্ভ হৈছিল উৰ্মিলাৰ সংঘাতপূৰ্ণ জীৱনৰ আন এক অধ্যায়। বৈবাহিক জীৱনৰ তিক্ত অভিজ্ঞতাৰ পিছত তাই সিদ্ধান্ত লৈছিল উৰ্মিলা যোৱা সংসাৰখনক তাই পুনৰ নতুনকৈ সজাই তুলিবলৈ।

লগে লগে তাইৰ মনটো এটি চিকাৰীৰ মনলৈ ৰূপান্তৰিত হৈছিল। তাই লগ পোৱা প্ৰত্যেকজন পুৰুষৰ মাজত তাইৰ নিজৰ মনৰ প্ৰিয়জনক বিচাৰিবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিছিল। অকলশৰীয়া নিঃসংগ উৰ্মিলাৰ ওচৰত গল্প-গুজৰ মাৰি সময় কটাবলৈ বিভিন্ন জন আহিছিল সাংবাদিক ৰূপচন্দ্ৰ, অধ্যাপক ঠাকুৰ, অংকৰ গৱেষক যশোৱন্ত। উৰ্মিলাৰ অলপ সান্নিধ্য, অলপ সংগসুখ পোৱাই তেওঁলোকৰ উদ্দেশ্য। উৰ্মিলা যেন নাৰী মনস্তত্ত্বৰ অন্য এক প্ৰকাশ। নাৰীৰ মনত মহান কামৰ প্ৰতিও দুৰ্বলতা তাকে। উৰ্মিলাৰো আছে, সেইবাবে হৰিজনৰ দৰিদ্ৰ ল'ৰা জগন্নাথক পঢ়াই-শুনাই মানুহ কৰি গঢ়ি বিচাৰিছে। উৰ্মিলাৰ ওচৰত সময় কটোৱা প্ৰত্যেকজন পুৰুষৰে ব্যক্তিগত জীৱন সুখৰ নাছিল। উৰ্মিলাৰ ওচৰলৈ আহি আড্ডা দি এক প্ৰচণ্ড মানসিক সুখ পাইছিল। প্ৰত্যেকজন পুৰুষৰ মানত নিজৰ মনৰ প্ৰিয়জনক বিচাৰি ফুৰা উৰ্মিলাই বিচাৰিছিল এনে এক পুৰুষৰ সংগ যাৰ সান্নিধ্যই তাইৰ দেহ-মন তৃপ্ত কৰাৰ লগতে তাইৰ নিঃসংগতা দূৰ কৰি নিৰাপত্তা দিব পাৰিব। উৰ্মিলাই তেনে এজন পুৰুষক বিচাৰি পাইছিল যশোৱন্তৰ মাজত। যশোৱন্তৰ পৰা ভাল পোৱাৰ একাধাৰ কথা শুনিবলৈ তাই ব্যগ্ৰ হৈ পৰিছিল। এদিন তাইৰ এই আগ্ৰহ হতাশালৈ ৰূপান্তৰ হ'ল। দৈহিক সুখ বিচাৰি উৰ্মিলাই হাবাথুৰি খোৱা নাছিল, নাৰীৰ মনৰ সত্বাক জগাই তুলি দেহাতীত এক গভীৰ আত্মিক সম্পৰ্কৰ পোষকতা কৰাৰ বাবেই উৰ্মিলা যেন পুনৰ ভাগি পৰিব লগা হ'ল। পুৰুষে বিচাৰে দৈহিক সুখ, জৈৱিক সুখৰ তাড়নাত নাৰীৰ ওচৰ চাপে, মনৰ তৃপ্তিতকৈ যেন যৌন ক্ষুধাৰ তৃপ্তিয়েহে তেওঁলোকক লালায়িত কৰে। প্ৰেমত মানসিক সম্পৰ্কতকৈ দৈহিক সুখক প্ৰাধান্য দিয়া এই শ্ৰেণী পুৰুষক উৰ্মিলাই সহ্য কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। তাইৰ মনত যশোৱন্ত ব্যতিক্ৰমী পুৰুষ, যি জৈৱিক ক্ষুধাতকৈ অন্তৰৰ সম্পৰ্ককহে গুৰুত্ব দিয়ে। পিছে উৰ্মিলাৰ সেই সপোনৰ মানুহ যশোৱন্ত নাছিল। এদিন যশোৱন্তয়ে উৰ্মিলাক যৌন সুখৰ সামগ্ৰী হিচাপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিব বিচাৰিলে। উৰ্মিলা গৰ্জি উঠিল, সপোন ভাঙিল, মনৰ মানুহ যশোৱন্ত যেন ঘৃণাৰ পাত্ৰলৈ ৰূপান্তৰ হ'ল। হৰিজনৰ ল'ৰা জগন্নাথও ঘৰ এৰিলে। জগন্নাথৰ মানত দিল্লীৰ 'জুগুগি জুপৰিত' বাস কৰা সেই বেয়া তিৰোতাবোৰৰ লগত উৰ্মিলাৰ কোনো পাৰ্থক্য নাই। পুৰুষৰ মাজত হৃদয়ৰ সন্ধান কৰি কৰি উৰ্মিলা নিঃসংগ হৈ পৰিল। উৰ্মিলাৰ মনত বাহ লোৱা সেই দুৰূহ নিঃসংগতাই তাইক ধৰাসায়ী কৰি পেলালে। উৰ্মিলাৰ ভগ্ন হৃদয়খনক উপলব্ধি কৰিবলৈ কোনো নোলাল। আনকি শেষত জগন্নাথও তাইক বেয়া তিৰোতা বুলি ভাবিয়েই যশোৱন্তক তাইৰ ওচৰলৈ ধৰি লৈ আহিল। উৰ্মিলা স্তব্ধ হৈ পৰিল। সংঘাত আৰু পৰিস্থিতিয়ে তাইৰ জীৱনত ওলোটো প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়াহে সৃষ্টি কৰিলে। উৰ্মিলাৰ যোগেদিয়েই নাৰীৰ মনস্তত্ত্বক দাঙি ধৰিব বিচৰা মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীয়ে দেখুৱাইছে জৈৱিক সুখতকৈ নাৰীৰ মানসিক সুখতহে পৰিতৃপ্ত হোৱাৰ প্ৰৱণতা থাকে। যৌন সুখ বিচাৰি অহা যশোৱন্তক সেই বাবেই উৰ্মিলাই অপমান কৰি খেদি পঠাইছে। কিন্তু পুৰুষৰ মাজত প্ৰিয়জনক বিচাৰি ফুৰা উৰ্মিলাক জগন্নাথৰ দৰে একশ্ৰেণীয়ে বিশ্বাসত নলয়। বিভিন্ন পুৰুষৰ লগত দৈহিক সম্পৰ্ক স্থাপন কৰা বেয়া তিৰোতাবোৰৰ দৰেই উৰ্মিলাৰ চৰিত্ৰকো সন্দেহ কৰে। উৰ্মিলাই জগন্নাথক বুজাই দিব পৰা নাই তাইৰ মনৰ নিঃসংগতাক। এক গভীৰ মনঃসমীক্ষণৰ আধাৰত লেখিকাই গল্পটি ৰচনা কৰিছে। অৱচেতন মনত লুকাই থকা নাৰীৰ গোপন লিঙ্গাক এনে সুন্দৰ ৰূপত উপস্থাপন কৰিছে যে ই পাঠকৰ অন্তৰ চুই যাবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। “লেখিকা গৰাকীৰ আন বহুতো গল্পৰ দৰে ইয়াতো এক অন্তৰ্ভেদী বিষাদৰ সোঁত এটা নিজৰি নিজৰি বৈ আছে। এইটো গল্পও নিৰ্মম অভিজ্ঞতাৰ এক সংবেদনশীল ৰূপায়ণ।” (৫)

বিভিন্ন ৰামায়ণী আলোচনাত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰোঁতে বিভিন্ন পণ্ডিত গৱেষক সাধুসন্ত, ৰাম ভক্ত সন্ন্যাসী আদি বিভিন্নজনৰ লগত তেওঁৰ পৰিচয় হৈছিল। তেনে এক যাত্ৰাৰ আধাৰতেই ৰচিত হৈছিল তেওঁৰ ‘ঈশ্বৰীৰ সংশয় আৰু প্ৰেম’ নামৰ গল্পটি। কম বয়সতে বিধৱা হোৱা ঈশ্বৰীৰ মনত প্ৰেম-ভাল পোৱা, পুৰুষৰ সান্নিধ্য লাভৰ তাড়না এই সকলো বোৰেই বিদ্যমান। বিধৱা হ’ল বুলিয়েই নাৰী দেহৰ এই গোপন লিঙ্গাবোৰৰ পৰা ঈশ্বৰীয়ে নিজক আঁতৰাই আনিব পৰা নাই। পুনৰবাৰ যেন তাই মনে বিচৰা পুৰুষজনৰ ওচৰত নিজৰ দেহ-মনক সমৰ্পণ কৰিব বিচাৰে। গাভৰু বিধৱা ঈশ্বৰীয়ে দেহ-মনৰ এই তাগিদাক অস্বীকাৰ কৰিব পৰা নাই। সেইবাবেই তাই ৰামায়ণী সাহিত্যৰ অগাধ পণ্ডিত ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণাৰ প্ৰতি দুৰ্বল হৈ পৰিছিল। অশ্লচেতন মনত লৈ ফুৰিছিল এইজন ব্যক্তিৰ প্ৰতি এক অফুৰন্ত প্ৰেম। কিন্তু বিধৱা ঈশ্বৰীয়ে ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰক ক’বলৈ সাহস কৰা নাছিল। ৰামায়ণী আলোচনাত ভাগ ল’বলৈ যাওঁতে ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণাৰ লগত একেটা ছিঁত বহি যোৱা ঈশ্বৰীয়ে অনুভৱ কৰিছিল ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণাৰ গোপন হাতৰ স্পৰ্শ। ইমান দিনে ৰাণাৰ প্ৰেমৰ প্ৰত্যাশী হৈ অহা ঈশ্বৰীৰ দেহ-মন আশ্বত হৈ পৰিছিল ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণাই আগবঢ়োৱা গোপন প্ৰেমৰ আহ্বানত। ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণাই হাতৰ আঙুলিত পিন্ধা এটা আঙঠিৰ স্পৰ্শই ঈশ্বৰীৰ সংযমৰ বান্ধ যেন খোল খোৱাই দিব বিচাৰিছিল। কলাফুলৰ ওপৰেদি অহা-যোৱা কৰা ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰৰ হাতখনৰ স্পৰ্শত ঈশ্বৰীৰ শৰীৰ যেন ভাৰা হৈ পৰিছিল। তাই বহা ছিঁটোৰ একাষে বহিছিল ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণা আৰু আনফালে শ্ৰীৰামচন্দ্ৰ মন্দিৰৰ সন্ন্যাসী জটাধাৰী সেৱক। ঈশ্বৰীৰ এই দেহমনৰ এই দুৰ্বলতাক জটাধাৰী সন্ন্যাসীয়ে জানিব বুলি তাই সংকুচিত হৈ পৰিছিল। বাৰে বাৰে দেহৰ এটা অংশলৈ উঠি-নামি যোৱা ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰৰ হাতখনৰ স্পৰ্শত ঈশ্বৰী বলীয়া হৈ পৰিছিল। তাইৰ বুকুৰ মাংসপিণ্ডখিনিও যেন কঠিন হৈ পৰিছিল। যাত্ৰাৰ এই প্ৰেম ভৰা মাদকতাত ঈশ্বৰী ক্ৰমাত ডুবি যেন নিঃশেষ হৈ যাবলৈ ধৰিছিল। কিন্তু ঈশ্বৰীৰ সেই প্ৰেমৰ মাদকতা বৰ বেছি সময় স্থায়ী নহ’ল। পথ ভুল হৈছে বুলি হুলস্থূল লগাত গাড়ীৰ ভিতৰৰ লাইট জ্বলি উঠিল। সেই পোহৰত ঈশ্বৰীয়ে দেখিলে যিখন হাতৰ স্পৰ্শত তাই বলীয়াৰ দৰে প্ৰেমৰ মাদকতাত ডুবি পৰিছিল সেইখন হাত ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰৰ নহয়, জটাধাৰী সন্ন্যাসীজনৰহে। কাৰণ তেওঁহে পিন্ধিছিল এটি লোহাৰ আঙঠি। ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰে সেই আঙঠি পিন্ধা নাছিল। এক অব্যক্ত বেদনাত ঈশ্বৰী ছটফটাই উঠিছিল। মোহভংগ হৈছিল ঈশ্বৰীৰ। “স্বৰূপাৰ্থত আলোচ্য গল্পটি এটা প্ৰেমৰ গল্প— ঈশ্বৰী দেৱীৰ সযত্নে পালিত গোপন অনুৰাগৰ কাহিনী। ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰ ৰাণাৰ প্ৰতি তাইৰ অনুৰাগ আৰু তাক লগ পোৱাৰ একান্ত কামনাই সুদীৰ্ঘ যাত্ৰা পথত তাইৰ হিয়াখনে কি দৰে আচ্ছন্ন কৰি ৰাখিছিল আৰু সেই অনুৰাগৰ ফলত মৃত স্বামীৰ ওচৰত তাই নিজকে অপৰাধী বুলি গণ্য কৰাৰ যাত্ৰাণা কাহিনীটোত সুন্দৰকৈ বৰ্ণনা কৰা হৈছে। গল্পটোক এক মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণ বুলিও অভিহিত কৰিব পাৰি।”^(৩) গল্পটিত এগৰাকী বিধৱা গাভৰু নাৰীৰ চেতন-অৱচেতন মনৰ ক্ৰিয়া-প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া ব্যক্ত হৈছে। দেহিক-মানসিক অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বত জৰ্জৰিত হৈ পৰিছে ঈশ্বৰী। প্ৰেমৰ গভীৰতাত ডুবি থকা ঈশ্বৰীৰ মন তাইৰ স্বামীৰ প্ৰতি যে অপৰাধত ভোগা নাই এনে নহয়। তথাপিও তাইৰ মনত ধৰ্মবাহাদুৰৰ প্ৰতি থকা প্ৰেমে গোপনে অহৰহ শক্তিশালী ৰূপ গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ ধৰিছে। এগৰাকী বিধৱা নাৰীৰ নিঃসংগতা, যৌন কামনা, গোপন লিঙ্গা এই সকলোবোৰকে লেখিকাগৰাকীয়ে মনঃসমীক্ষণৰ দৃষ্টিৰ ফালৰ পৰা বিশ্লেষণ কৰিছে। মুঠৰ ওপৰত ঈশ্বৰীৰ দৰে নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ সমূহ লেখিকা গৰাকীৰ মনৰ গভীৰতাৰ পৰা ওলাই আহিছে আৰু মানবীয় ভাৱ

অনুভূতি, দোষ-ক্ৰটি সকলোবোৰ সামৰি লৈ বাস্তৱবাদী চৰিত্ৰ হিচাপে উপস্থাপিত হৈছে। নাৰী হৃদয়ৰ এক বিচিত্ৰ অভিব্যক্তি ঈশ্বৰীৰ মাজেদি প্ৰকাশিত হৈ উঠিছে।

৭.০. সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণ :

মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ লেখনিত যতেই নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ উল্লেখ ঘটিছে তাতেই তেওঁ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণৰ ওচৰ চাপিছে। সংস্কাৰ, উদং বাকচ, ৰিণিকি ৰিণিক দেখিছো যমুনা, নাঙঠ চহৰ, ঈশ্বৰীৰ সংশয় আৰু প্ৰেম আদি গল্পত নাৰীৰ ভাৱ, অনুভূতি, গোপন কামনা, আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষা, প্ৰেম, যৌন আবেদনৰ প্ৰতি নাৰীৰ দৃষ্টি ভংগী এই সকলোবোৰেই নিখুঁত ৰূপত বৰ্ণিত হৈছে। ফ্ৰয়েডৰ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণেও গল্পৰ চৰিত্ৰসমূহক এক সুকীয়া সৌন্দৰ্য প্ৰদান কৰিছে।

৮.০. সামৰণি :

অসমীয়া গল্প সাহিত্যৰ বুৰঞ্জীত মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীয়ে এখন সুকীয়া আসন অধিকাৰ কৰি আছে। তেওঁ গল্পসমূহত চৰিত্ৰৰ যি মানসিক বিশ্লেষণ ঘটিছে সিয়ে তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহক এক সুকীয়া মৰ্যদা প্ৰদান কৰিছে। পৰিবৰ্তনকামী সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰী পুৰুষৰ স্থান, নাৰীৰ সমস্যা, দ্বন্দ্ব সংঘাত, অৰ্থনৈতিক নিৰাপত্তাহীনতা, চেতন-অৱচেতন মনৰ বিভিন্ন ক্ৰিয়া-প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া এই সকলোবোৰেই যেন হাতত ধৰাধৰিকৈ তেওঁৰ গল্পৰ মাজেদি প্ৰকাশ লাভ কৰিছে।

পাদটীকা :

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| ১। সংস্কাৰ | : মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ প্ৰিয়গল্প, পৃষ্ঠা ৪, ৫। |
| ২। কটকী ড° প্ৰফুল্ল | : মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ প্ৰিয়গল্প, পাতনি পৃষ্ঠা (জ)। |
| ৩। বৰুৱা প্ৰহলাদ কুমাৰ | : অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ অধ্যয়ন, পৃষ্ঠা ৩০৭। |
| ৪। বৰুৱা প্ৰহলাদ কুমাৰ | : অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ অধ্যয়ন, পৃষ্ঠা ৩০৭। |
| ৫। কটকী ড° প্ৰফুল্ল | : মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ প্ৰিয়গল্প, পাতনি পৃষ্ঠা (গ)। |
| ৬। কটকী ড° প্ৰফুল্ল | : মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ প্ৰিয়গল্প, পাতনি পৃষ্ঠা (ঝ)। |

গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী :

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| ১। গোস্বামী, ত্ৰৈলোক্য নাথ | : আধুনিক চুটিগল্প সাহিত্য, ষষ্ঠ প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৯। |
| ২। বৰা, ড° লক্ষীনন্দন | : সম্পাদনা, গৰিয়সী, ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী, ২০১২। |
| ৩। বৰুৱা, প্ৰহলাদ কুমাৰ | : অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ অধ্যয়ন, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, নবেম্বৰ ১৯৯৫। |
| ৪। মামণি ৰয়চম গোস্বামীৰ প্ৰিয়গল্প | : দ্বিতীয় প্ৰকাশ, জানুৱাৰী, ২০০১। |
| ৫। হুছেইন, নিকুমনি সম্পাদনা | : মামণি ৰয়চমৰ আভা আৰু প্ৰতিভা, দ্বিতীয় প্ৰকাশ, ২০১১। |

Human Rights for Women : Scenerio in Assam

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Abstract :

By birth all human being are entitled to human rights. For the all-round development of the individuals freedom is essential. Therefore the concept of human right is given importance by the nations of the whole world. In international level various steps have been taken for the protection of human rights. But still women are deprived of basic human rights. In recent years, there has been increasing incidents of violation of human rights of women in Assam. Even in the presence of so many women protective measures, majority of women in Assam are dominated and are not getting those facilities which are needed for their development. So in this paper an attempt has been made to study about human rights for women and to analyse how far these rights are enjoyed by the women in Assam.

[Key words : Human rights, women empowerment, UNO]

Introduction :

Human Rights are inherent in human existence. We the human beings are different from the other creatures in the sense that we can think logically and direct ourselves by applying our knowledge which is not possible for the other creatures. Thus we have special ability which is needed to be safeguarded and nourished through freedom. Without freedom no one can develop one's own personality. This freedom implies rights for human beings or human rights. Thus human rights are inherent and inalienable rights which are due to an individual by virtue of his /her being a human being. In fact the concept of human being is based on the theory that a man is born free and soon after his birth he gets inalienable rights to live with dignity which must not be intruded by others.

In 539 B.C. the armies of Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia, conquered the city of Babylon. But it was his next action that marked a major advance for man. He freed the slaves, declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion and

established racial equality. These and other decrees were recorded on baked -clay cylinder. Known today as the Cyrus Cylinder, this ancient record has now been recognized as the world's first charter on of human rights. From Babylon, the idea spread quickly to Greece, Rome and India also. However, it was only in the 20th century, after the end of the 2nd World War, that Human Rights for all came to be recognized as one of the key objectives of our civilized life. The most important thing is that in each and every international document or covenant or agreement on human rights, man and women are treated equally. The concern for human rights for both man and women reflected on all pages of the UN Charter. The UN Charter makes it a responsibility of the Nations under its Art.55(e) "to promote, universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion." Unfortunately, even in this modern age, despite the presence of so many protective measures for women rights, women are suffering from various atrocities and most of them are not aware about their rights and even unable to see themselves in equal footing with that of men. Now a days in Assam the lives of women is not secured at all. Violence against women has been increasing in such a way that practically they are deprived of most of the important rights that are known as human rights. Therefore in this paper an attempt has been made to study about women human rights and to analyze how far these are enjoyed by the women of Assam.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this paper are:

1. To have an idea about the human rights of women.
2. To examine how far the women in Assam are able to enjoy these rights.
3. To find out the causes of human rights violation in Assam and to suggest some measures for reducing the cases of women's human rights violation in Assam.

Methodology :

This paper is based on analytical and descriptive method. Required information and data are collected from books, newspapers, journals and internet.

Provisions of human rights for women :

The Preamble to the charter of UNO mentions the determination of the peoples of the UN to the nation faith in fundamental human rights of men and women to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of the rights of women. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 10th December also recognized equal rights for men and

women. Article 1 of it says that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. For the protection of the rights of women and giving them equal rights with that of men, various agreements were signed and conventions were held in international level. Most important of them are as follows-

The Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.

The Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

The Convention on Political Rights of women,

The Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women,

The Convention on Nationality of married women,

The Convention and recommendation on consent to marriage, minimum age and registration of marriage,

The Convention for suppression of traffic in person and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others,

The Commission on the status of women that was established in 1946, now working for the equality, development and peace of women. Under the development program of UN, in 1985, a fund was created for women. It is known as United Nations Development fund for women. For proper study of the life of women, The International Research and Training institute to the advancement of women was also established by the UN.

The Convention on political rights of women 1952, provided for following rights of women-right to vote, right to contest election, right to hold public office etc. The year 1975 was observed as International women year and importance was given on gender equality in all aspects of life especially in education and in workplace. Importance was given on the inclusion of women's rights in the constitutions of all states.

Constitutional Provisions for human rights protection of women in India :

As in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Preamble to the Indian Constitution also promises to secure for its citizen, justice- social, economic and political, Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and equality of status and opportunity. In fact the principle of justice and equality stands for removing all forms of discrimination against individuals including women. The Fundamental Rights of The Indian Constitution incorporates various rights which provides human right for women. Article 15(3) allows the state to make special provision for women and children. Article 16 provides for equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to appointment to any office under state. Article 21 provides for right to life and personal liberty. In several cases this article has come to the rescue of women who have been victimized. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human being and forced labour. This has improved the condition of women in terms of forced prostitution. In 1950, the govt. of India ratified an international convention for the

suppression of immoral trafficking in person. And as a result of it, in the year 1956 the parliament of India has enacted the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girl Act.(SITA). In 1986 the Act was amended and now it is known as Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (PITA). The aim of this Act is to limit and eventually abolish prostitution in India by gradually criminalizing various aspects of sex work. Like the fundamental rights, the Directive Principles of State Policy also directs the state to take certain measures for providing rights to women. As for example, Article 39(a) urges the state to provide equal rights to adequate means of livelihood to both, men and women. Article 39(d) provides for equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Parliament has enacted the Equal Remuneration Act 1976, to implement Article 39(d).

By the constitutional amendment of 73rd and 74th, 1/3 seats had been reserved for women in all Panchayat institutions so that women can participate in decision making process from the very grass root level. At present, the reservation for women in Panchayats has been increased to 50%.

Important legal remedies for the protection of women's rights:

Besides constitutional provisions, there are various legal remedies for the protection of women's rights in India. Some of them are-

Indian Penal Code 1860, Minimum Wages Act of 1948, Hindu Succession Act of 1956, Maternity Benefits Act of 1961, The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 etc.

Scenario of human rights protection of the women in Assam :

It is a known fact that women in all over India are still living under suppression and are not given that position and dignity for which they do naturally deserve as human beings. Although the North Eastern region shows comparatively high status of women, at present in this region too violence against women have been increasing in such a way that it is difficult to think that whether we are living in a human society or not. Assam is not exceptional to this condition. The following indicators can show the real picture.

Right to education of women in Assam :

Although access to education is being recognized as a human right, and women should not be deprived of it, yet it has been found that the position of women in this respect when compared to men is very poor in Assam. According to the census of 2011, the total literacy percentage in Assam is 73.18%. While men literacy percentage is 78.81%. Female literacy percentage is 67.27% with the gap of 11.54%. Girdrop-out rate in Assam is generally higher in comparison to boys due to absence of proper toilet facilities in the

schools, economic backwardness of the rural families and lack of interest of the guardians for girl education. However in urban areas girl's literacy rate is quite satisfactory.

Women's personal right to life:

As women are also human beings so they have full right to live their lives with freedom and dignity. Unfortunately, from last few years it has been seen that in Assam women even the little girls have no security of their life. The cases of violence against women have been increasing in such a way that there is total violation of women human rights in Assam. Following statistics gives the facts:

Table-1

YEAR	CASES
1997	645
1998	693
1999	643
2000	669
2001	785
2002	903
2003	1049
2004	1036
2005	1217
2006	1203
2007	1310
2008	1419
2009	1631
2010	1721
2011	1146

Source : Sadin16 Dec.2011; www.pratidin.assam.com/sadin

In Assam even minor rap cases are not less in number. According to government report, from 2006 to 2011 there had been 7,164 rap cases and 11,553 women trafficking cases were recorded. Moreover, killing of innocent people specially widows and unmarried lonely women in the name of witch hunting is the ultimate violation of human right. In the name of witch hunting, in 2011 highest 29 murders were recorded. Besides

these, domestic violence, molestations, kidnapping, sexual harassment, importation of girls, dowry cases etc. are increasing in Assam day by day. Despite the presence of police force, high court, various NGOs, Mahila Samittees state Commission for women and above all State Human Commission, majority of women in Assam are deprived from enjoying human rights. In reality, institutional mechanism for women human rights protection is there, but these are exiting only as toothless tiger. In this background we can't comment that years long efforts in international level for women's human rights protection, have been successful in Assam.

Women in Assam and their political and economic human rights :

Under International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, along with other rights all human being are allowed to enjoy right to work, right to minimum pay and humane working environment, right to equal pay for equal work for both men and women, right to free choice of employment, right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family. A large section of women in Assam are mostly absorbed in agriculture, tea gardens, hand loom industries, educational institutions and a minor section in the industrial sector and in administrative sector. Although these developments brings economic independence for women, at the same time they are now doubly burden as they have to look after the unpaid and unorganized domestic work as well as the work in the public sphere. But all the times it is humanely not possible for the working women to maintain balance of both the works. In India as well as in Assam we get a negative picture in the context of Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM). Because the women in our country have comparatively poor health status, low educational status and lower skill and lower wages than men. This proves how the human rights of women in their economic life are violated. However, there is a positive aspect in the role of women in the development process. Since 1999, a large number of rural people particularly women have been mobilized into Self Help Groups (SHGs)

Women in India are in better condition in the matter of participation of decision making process of the country. Because when in the first general election 1952, under universal adult franchise all adult citizens of India including women were allowed to cast their votes, in many other countries of the world women were debarred from exercising this right. At present although reservation of seats for women in the Panchayats and parliament has been increased, in actual practice they have to follow the dictates of the male members of their family. The situation is same in case of women in Assam also, as in rural areas of Assam, women literacy level is low and therefore their access to information is also limited. Moreover, in those areas even in household matters also women are not given such importance. Under this condition we can hardly expect that women right in decision making process is properly enjoyed by the women in Assam.

The armed forces Special Power Act, 1958 AFSPA a law operative in disturbed areas including large parts of the Northeast region of India and Jammu & Kashmir, has facilitated grave human right abuses. In attempt to crush the terrorist organizations, under this Act, the armed forces personal has given such power that no one can lodge any complain against them in police station. It resulted in innumerable incidents of arbitrary detention, torture and rape by security personal in Assam. It can be called as grave violation of human rights in Assam specially of the women. The Verma Committee which was released in 2013, noted that in conflict areas legal protection for women was often neglected and emphasized that women were entitled to the security and dignity and afforded to citizen elsewhere in the country. The committee recommended that sexual violence against women by member of armed force should be brought under the preview of ordinary criminal law.

Institutional mechanism for the protection of women rights in Assam :

For the protection of women rights in Assam there are various types of agencies. For example, according to the provision of The Human Rights Protection Act of 1993, The State Human Right Commission was established in Assam. It can enquiry into violation of human rights, can investigate such cases and have to submit report to the government of Assam. But it has no such authority to take decision on human rights violation cases. Moreover, it has no separate court of trial.

The state Commission for Women in Assam has been rendering its service for women empowerment, providing legal support for the protection of their rights and also enquiry all cases relating to the violation of women's rights. But it is also lacking the authority to punish the culprits..

A Crime against Women Cell was created at CIDHQrs. Assam Police in 1994, to supervise and monitor the progress of investigation of cases/ offences falling under relevant sections of IPC and other Special laws.

Under section 12C of the Legal Services Authority Act 1987, any women is entitled for free legal aid.

Besides these, private NGOs like GOLD, North East Network etc. and mahila Samittees like Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samittees are providing remarkable services for women protection and empowerment. However, financially these organizations are not strong enough to deal with such cases and to provide support to the victimized women for their rehabilitation.

Findings :

On the basis of the above discussion based upon the study, the following findings are understandable.

1. By birth all human beings, both men and women are entitled to human rights.
2. In international level various conventions and conferences were held for the protection of women rights.
3. The member countries of the UNO in their own constitutions incorporated human rights including rights for women also.
4. In Indian Constitution also there are various provisions for the protection of human rights of women. Moreover, there are various legal remedies for the protection of women rights in India.
5. Despite the presence of so many provisions for the protection of women's rights the status of women in Assam in various fields is not satisfactory and they are deprived from the enjoyment of many rights which are confirmed as human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. Violence against women in Assam at present has been increasing in such a way that it is not wrong to say that there is serious violation of human rights in Assam.
7. The institutional mechanism for the protection of women rights in India as well as in Assam is not effective as they are lacking decision making authority.

Suggestions:

1. The mission of the government, education for all must be fulfilled. Otherwise, the evil elements of the society will always torture the ignorant and the illiterate masses including the women.
2. The agencies which are working for the protection of women rights are to be provided with sufficient resources and power so that they can get positive result of their effort.
3. Human Right Education is crucial for the fulfillment of the commitment made in the Constitution of India. Lack of human rights literacy is the source of human rights violation. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has identified three important sectors of the Indian society: (i) The political parties (ii) The Executive authority at all levels and (iii) Educationists.
4. In this modern age, electronic media and press can also play a significant role in sensitizing the issue of protecting the women from human rights violation by presenting the real facts of such incidents before the society.
5. As there is no special court for the trial of human rights violation cases, so the judicial system of our state should actively and honestly discharge its duty in resolving human rights violation cases.

6. The police force in Assam has to adopt new strategies so that the victims can get justice and those who create violence against women can't escape from the sight of the police.

Conclusion:

In present days, violation of women's rights is a big issue in the entire world. In one hand, women in the forms of various goddesses are worshipped in India for prosperity, strength and knowledge and on the other hand in reality, they are supposed as the curse for the family. They are deprived of all those facilities which are very essential for living as humanbeings. The scenario of Assam as discussed above is not different from it. In the analysis it is found that only system can't give rights to women; what is needed is that our mentality towards women must be changed first. Therefore, UN General Secretary Kofi Annan has rightly said that "violation against women is perhaps the most shameful human right violation. As long as it continues, we can't claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace."

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WSHGs and women's Economic Empowerment in Assam

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Abstract :

Women are half of the world and half of the society. We often face two sides of the society. In one side we exercise on gender equality and in the same time we consider women as the weaker section of the society. When we talk about walking together we are killing girl child before birth. In present time of globalization we cannot deny importance of self help groups. Self help groups are formed with some good and profitable purposes. The main purpose of the unit is to link people with the banking system. And it saves the poor people from high interest. Because the poor villagers have to pay large amount of interest when they need money. Self help group is also important to create the habit of saving. Perfect utilization of loan doesn't happen because many of the villagers lack the knowledge of investing money. Self help groups provide people with low interest easily available loan. The self help groups help the people to be independent using the loan properly. It also encourages to be united. SHGs particularly women's groups, have been formed to achieve a number of goals and targets to improve the lives of the women, their families and communities in which they live. Groups can give women social leadership through the collective strength to lobby and campaign and achieve tasks beyond the ability of single women. Together women can support each other to take on new projects and ideas and make change to their lives. Group can help women to feel valued and to know their needs are being considered. Groups have been used to achieve economic security for women and their families and there are many examples of women's groups being formed to establish thrift, credit and income generating activities or health awareness programs. The group must facilitate action and change and to increase security and personnel development. If a group fails to achieve its targets then it can become an added burden producing little or no returns. Without economic right no rights will be implemented properly. If women have to be treated equally in society they must possess some economic rights. Especially the women of the rural areas. Now in metros wife start

to work in every households. But in rural area it is a matter of concern. So, women self-help groups could play a vital role for empowering the women in rural areas specially.

[**Key words** : WSHG, women empowerment, micro-finance.]

Introduction :

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution confers equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economic and social spheres. Article 15 (3) of the Constitution empowers the State to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women. However, the question of women's development in terms of raising their social and economic status received low priority in government programmes till the mid seventies. In the 73 rd Constitution Amendment Act 1992, provision is made for one-third reservation for women in each and every step of Panchayat. The Government of India has declared the year 2001 as Women's Empowerment year. The need of the hour is mobilization of women to fight for their equal share in all spheres. In this context, Self Help Group has emerged as the most successful strategy in the process of participatory development and empowerment of women. Women in India make up 7.5% of the world's total population.

What is SHG and why for women?

Self-Help group : also called mutual help or aid group - are composed who are a similar mental, emotional, or physical problem, or who are interested in a focal issue, such as education or parenting. Historically, people banded together to improve their chances for survival by pooling their social and economical resources; however, cotemporary groups are more likely to organize around a theme or problem.

Self-help group is a unit formed by the village voluntarily. It is formed by them for the fulfilment of their necessity and society as well. Generally it is formed by the people living below poverty line (BPL). Every member of this group should belong to the poor class, maintaining low living standards. A few of them had the habit of saving money from their monthly income. All these members of a unit should belong to the class who are still unable to cope with the traditional banking system. The unity and mutual understanding is important among members of this unit. Because when they start a project the mutual understanding helps them to fulfil the project. And for betterment the unity is always the most important criteria. Unless the members attain unity and mutual

understanding among themselves, they cannot fulfil their desire goals. Every member of this deposits his remain income weekly, forth nightly or monthly. Then they form a general capital for the group. Money is lent to any member with interest if it becomes necessary. Ultimately, regular saving and lending money from the saving is the main aim of this unit. Developing self-help groups in the rural areas the poor class people can grow will up the habit of saving money. After the maturity of the unit the bank will help them for loan. It seemed that growing up the self help group the people who are living below poverty line are able to save money regularly and could help themselves when they feel necessity.

Importance of self help groups

In present time of globalization we cannot deny importance of self help groups. Self help groups are formed with some good and profitable purposes. The main purpose of the unit is to link people with the banking system. And it saves the poor people from high interest. Because the poor villagers have to pay large amount of interest when they need money. Self help group is also important to create the habit of saving. Perfect utilization of loan because many of the villagers lack the knowledge of investing money. Self help groups provide people with low interest easily available loan. The self help groups help the people to be independent using the loan properly. It also encourages to be united. SHGs particularly women's groups, have been formed to achieve a number of goals and targets to improve the lives of the women, their families and communities in which they live. Groups can give women social leadership through the collective strength to lobby and campaign and achieve tasks beyond the ability of single women. Together women can support each other to take on new projects and ideas and make change to their lives. Group can help women to feel valued and to know their needs are being considered. Groups have been used to achieve economic security for women and their families and there are many examples of women's groups being formed to establish thrift, credit and income generating activities or health awareness programs. The group must facilitate action and change and to increase security and personnel development. If a group fails to achieve its targets then it can become and added burden producing little or no returns. At this stage the group will cease to function. Ultimately the SHGs must be able to manage itself and be sustainable without the intervention of a field worker. To achieve this group will need access to information, networks and resources to know how to gain access on their own terms and without relying on others for their survival.

Importance of WSHG

SHG programme has a profound social impact. Important findings with respect to the SHG programme are-

- (a) It has enabled households to spend much more on education than non-Clint households. Families participating in the programme have reported better school attendance and lower dropout rates.
- (b) It has empowered women by enhancing their contribution to household income, increasing the value of their assets and generally by giving them better control over decisions that affect their lives.
- (c) In certain areas, it has reduced child mortality, improved material health and the ability of the poor to combat disease through better nutrition, housing and health—especially among women and children,
- (d) It has contributed to reduce dependency on informal money lenders and other non- institutional leaders in rural areas.

Global view on Women Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment requires bold and sustained action to advance women's opportunities and rights and to ensure that women can participate and be heard. To increase their economic opportunities, women need access to more and better jobs, a business climate that supports them in starting and doing business, a financial sector that gives them access to financial services tailored to their needs, and greater livelihood security in times of food and fuel crises. This is especially true for women living in rural areas and vulnerable environments. Securing women's legal rights, especially to land and other property, and ensuring that women's voices and priorities are heard and acted on are vital components of empowerment—securing women's land rights has a direct impact on their ability to access finance, for example. Empowering women—the third of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—also helps to speed progress toward other MDGs.

UNDP advances women's economic empowerment by:

- Advocating for increased recognition, reduction and redistribution of women's unpaid care work;
- Supporting research of customary law to help women gain access to land and participate in decision-making form;
- Supporting women's entrepreneurship through training in production skills and techniques, business management and functional literacy;
- Helping to certify businesses that adhere to equality standards in the workplace;
- Supporting efforts to strengthen women's legal rights to property.

Women empowerment in Assam :

"Assam to set up Women, Child Development Agency" : Tarun Gogoi, CM Assam
While hoisting the National Flag on occasion of the 66th Republic Day celebrations

in Guwahati, Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said, a Women and Child Development Agency will be set up in the state for improving overall condition of the women and children. Gogoi said, "A Women and Child Development Agency will be created to make focused efforts in order to improve the overall condition of women and children. The civil society and the government must work together to fulfil this national goal." He also said the government has framed guidelines for one-stop crisis centre 'Nirbhaya' for rescue and rehabilitation of women in distress. "A state resource centre for women has been operationalised under the Women Development Council sponsored by National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW). The government has also decided to provide financial assistance of Rs 5,000 to mother of the girl child in addition to the existing provision of Rs 5,000 to the girl child," Gogoi said. He said the government will also take up a nutrition mission to ensure sufficient nutrition levels for people, especially women and children.

Thousands of female anganwadi workers in rural Assam are helping the underprivileged and the poor fight their ignorance about health and education. At a time when the people of Assam are experiencing problems of unemployment, insurgency and corruption, some 25,416 anganwadi workers are helping the people overcome their difficulties. "Anganwadi workers who have not gone to college for higher studies are doing everything, right from health check-ups, immunisation of expectant mothers against tetanus, nutrition and health education and non-formal pre-school education among rural children," says the Assam government's director of social welfare, Nafifa Ahmed. According to Ahmed, in the two hill districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills, the anganwadi workers are doing an excellent job. Ahmed said that being an anganwadi worker had become a status symbol for the village girls, since the job not only afforded them scope to serve the underprivileged and people below the poverty line, it also gave them an income. The director claimed that the success of 196 projects under the centrally-sponsored Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) could largely be attributed to the sincerity and dedication of the anganwadi workers and their helpers. At remote villages in Assam's 23 districts, the anganwadi workers are doing the job of paramedics. Even during the middle of the night, these workers attend to expectant mothers and suffering children. Anganwadi workers who have studied till the eighth standard receive a monthly remuneration of Rs 438; those who are matriculate get Rs 500 per month. The popularity of the anganwadi workers can be gauged from the fact that many Assam government departments have started using the services of the workers to implement their welfare schemes at the rural grassroots level. According to Nafifa Ahmed, the heads of departments pay the anganwadi workers extra when they use their services. She claims that about 76 such workers have been adjudged as best anganwadi workers. This assessment is done at the end of every year.

Findings : Rather can say Suggestions

Economic development efforts to combat poverty can only succeed if women are part of the solution. Doing so yields a double dividend: When women are economically empowered, they raise healthier, better educated families. Their countries are more economically prosperous because of it, too. Since our founding more than 30 years ago, ICRW's work has expanded understanding of women's economic contributions as well as the hurdles that prevent them from being successful. Our efforts focus on how gender affects economic development efforts related to assets and property rights as well as employment, enterprise development and financial services. We strive to increase women's ownership, use and control of assets and property. We want to empower women as economic agents and better their ability to access markets on competitive and equitable terms. And with our partners, ICRW aims to integrate gender perspectives into program and institution activities. We believe such an approach improves the likelihood that efforts to strengthen women economically are successful.

Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home. But they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies. And, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities.

Conclusion :

Many international commitments support women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality. UN Women supports women's economic empowerment in line with these, and with the growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development. Working with a variety of partners, our programmes promote women's ability to secure decent jobs, accumulate assets, and influence institutions and public policies determining growth and development. One critical area of focus involves advocacy to measure women's unpaid care work, and to take actions so women and men can more readily combine it with paid employment.

In all our economic empowerment programmes, UN Women reaches out to women most in need, often by engaging with grass-roots and civil society organizations. Particularly marginalized groups include rural women, domestic workers, some migrants and low-skilled women. Our aims are higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.

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Socio-political Status of Women during Ahom Rule

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Abstract :

The Medieval period of History has informed us a very sad picture of women's life. When the World history provides us with so many inhuman stories of women's life but contrast to that situation in the medieval period, the Ahom rule of Assam has brought to us great example of maintaining high position of women in the society. During medieval time the Ahom belong to the Shan branch of mighty Tai or Thais of the South East Asia, ruled over a major part of Assam from 1228 AD up to 1826 AD. During that period of their political authority, position of general women was seen high in the society. Royal women did play significant role in different aspects of Ahom political life from regency to court intrigue even fighting the wars. Many of them were political advisors, warriors, patriots etc. As a whole women in the Ahom society from queen to downwards had a great role in the decision making process.

[**Key words:** Medieval period, Ahom dynasty, Social dignity, Statecraft, decision making process.]

Objectives :

This study seeks to bring out the life of women in general and royal class in particular during Ahom rule, where life of so many valiant and warrior women which could be great inspiration for women's life in the decision making process.

Methodology and sources :

To enquire in to the life of women and to study the different aspect of their socio-political status during Ahom rule, historical analytical method is followed by taking contemporary Ahom chronicles called Buranjis as primary sources. In secondary sources several books written by established writers on Ahom history were used. For some information web based sources are used.

Literary Review :

International Women's Decade, 1975- 85 has provided an impetus to the growth of social sciences literature on women in general - their status in the society - and issues related to gender- based discrimination and inequality in particular. Gender studies are now on the priority agenda of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1980. A survey of literature by Malavika Karlekar (2000) on "Women's studies and women's Development", sponsored by ICSSR covers the studies up to 1990 which is a valuable document for further research in the field. Madhu Kishwar, the editor of MANUSHI (the women's journal) and activist scholar, also emphasizes the need to look in to our tradition and try to separate the devastating aspects from the points of strength within the cultural traditions, and start using the strengths to transform the traditions. Our cultural tradition has tremendous potential within them to combat reactionary and anti- women ideas, if we can identify their points of strength and use them creatively. (1984: 46-47)

The Manusmriti also known as Manav Dharma Shastra is the earliest metrical work on Brahminical Dharma in Hinduism consists of 2690 verses, divided in to 12 chapters, many of those verses that are full of prejudice, hatred and discrimination against women.

In Kautilya's Arthashastra composed between the third and fourth century BC recognized the existence of women in a male- dominated society and mention women in connection with its laws and regulations. But this laws and regulations were granted to men and women according to the complex varna or caste system of Hindu society. So the position of women was different according to Varnasystem in that time. The upper class women had to suffer more bindings than lower class women concerning to their socio-economic status.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833), condemned Sati, Kulin, polygamy and spoke in favour of women's property rights. He held the condition of Indian women as one of the factors responsible for the degraded state of Indian society.

Swami Vivekananda spoke great inspiring comments for women - "can you better the condition your women? Then there will be hope for your well-being otherwise you will remain as backward as you are. ...Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are capable of doing it as any in thy world...."

Gandhi had a great role in the emancipation of women's life by bringing women in to the political sphere during Freedom Movement. Vina Mazumdar (1976), Devaki Jain (1986) and others see Gandhi as a great liberator who adopted a revolutionary approach in raising the status of women. Malavika Karlekar argues that Gandhi invented the 'tradition' of anew femininity. Thus Gandhian woman was to use her traditional qualities to build a new positive image of action, resistance and change. Madhu Kishwar argues, while in

many ways. Gandhi's views on women and their role in society are not very different from those of the 19th century reformers, in some other important ways he marks a crucial break from the tradition. The most crucial difference is that he does not see women as objects of reform, as helpless creatures deserving charitable concern. Instead he sees them as active, self-conscious agents of social change. ...He is primarily concerned with bringing about radical social reconstruction. ...One of the most lasting contributions of Gandhi to the women's cause was that he gave it moral legitimacy.

Discussion :

Socio-Political position of women during Ahom Dominion:

The socio-political status of women was seen high during Ahom period. The Ahom chronicles provide information how women participated in the decision making process of Ahom statecraft. Baruah S.L. (1985) wrote that, "though the position of women was subordinate to man, she enjoyed great freedom in society where the tribal outlook still prevailed. There was no purdah system. Women played an important role in all family affairs. ...All women from queen downwards were proficient in spinning and weaving. No formal education was given to the girls. However she got teaching in morality and spiritualism from the elder members of the family and through the recital of the Kirtanghosa in her house as well as in the village Namghar. Among the tribes Hinduised or not, there were no dowry system. Rather they had a practice of paying bride-price (ga-dhan). There was no child marriage except amongst the Brahmanas and Kayasthas. Girls of the tribal communities could choose their own husbands and even in case of the settled marriages the consent of the girls was always taken. Widow re-marriage was prevalent but not among the Brahmanas and Kayasthas."

Barpujari H. K. (1994) observed that womenfolk of Assam were comparatively freer than their counterparts in other parts of India. They could move freely and took equal share in planting and harvesting crops with the men folk. The women from higher castes did not go to the fields but there was no restriction in their movements. There are ample evidences in the medieval-biographical literature about the participation of women in matters of religious importance. Bhubanesvari the daughter of Harideva, and Kanaklata, grand-daughter-in-law of Sankardeva guided the destiny of their respective sub-sects as religious heads. The self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, was not widely spread in Assam, which was so widely practiced in some parts of India. However according to some medieval biographies like *Haridevacarita* (Harideva charita by Banagayagiri, p-52), the mother of Harideva, viz., Parijati immolated herself on the funeral-pyre of her husband Ajanbha. Gurulila of Ramaraya (p-180) mentions that the two wives of Godadhara, the son of Bhattadeva, similarly immolated themselves on the

funeral fire of their husband. Two biographers of Sankardeva (Ramananda, 'Gurucharit v-17', Daityri Thakur, v-36), stated that Sankar's mother Satyasandha died a suttee after her husband's death.

Position of women in the Royal-Court :

Many Women from royal class were seen maintain high position in the royal court and actively participated in the statecraft and policy making. Queen Chao Shin Kuanri, consort of Ahom king Suklenmung who was also known as Gargaya Raja, played a very interesting role in political decision making process. She was a Nara princess and a daughter of Magaung chief. She emerged as one of the principal advisor of king Suklenmung. She advised king to erect a rampart (Gar) surrounding the capital Gargaon for its security. As has been mentioned by Bhuyan S. K., observing the workload of newly extended territory she advised the king to create a new post and accordingly the post Barpatra Gohain was created. Thus due to her cleverness Ahom dynasty got a fortified and strong capital. The post Barpatra Gohain also emerged as one among the prominent pillars of Ahom administration. Baruah S. L. (1985) observed the scholarship and intelligence of this queen and how she exercised tremendous influence upon the king in the matter of statecraft.

Another woman who emerged as a very exceptional political figure in statecraft was Phuleswari Kuanri. She created so many changes in socio-religious cultural life of Ahom dominion. She was the queen of Ahom king Shiva Singha (1714 A.D.). King Shiva Singha, due to the declaration of "chatra bhanga yoga" by Brahmana priests, which means the end of his rule in 1722 A.D., had to declare Phuleswari Kuanri the Bar Raja or the chief queen to run the state affair on his behalf. Gait E. A. Sir has observed that the coming of Phuleswari Kuanri to the power greatly diminished the prestige of the Ahom crown in the eyes of the people. However her religious policy created a new beginning of the revival of Hinduism in Ahom culture. She belonged to the Nati caste, daughter of Chinatalia nat and a temple dancer. She was a devotee of Hindu Sakta religion. Her rise to power brought the Sakta religion in to prominence. Being an able administrator as Bhuyan S. K. has observed that she immediately after assuming the power made her brother the Barpatra Gohain, her paternal uncle to Tipamia phukan and her nephew Dhakial Barua so that to make her position strong encircling her selves with her supporter. But she was strongly criticized for her policy of the persecution of the supporter of popular Vaishnava sect. To convert the Vaishnava Mahantas in to Sakta faith she utilized so many unethical tortures which led another troublesome chapter in the history of Ahom dynasty. Gohain Baruah P (2004) has observed that after this incident the anger, anguish and the will to avenge the insult of the Mahanta culminated in to Mayamora rebellion which was one among the main factors to bring about the downfall of the Ahom Rule. She took

another important policy like cremation ritual for the dead. She pursued so many public works too. For the interest of the people she excavated the Gaurisagar tank. The tank is now one of the largest in Assam. She also built three temples on the bank of the tank. These were Bordol, Gokhain dol and Devi dol which is remarkable form of architecture of Ahom period. She was also a patron of Sanskrit learning and established numerous Sanskrit tols (schools) within the boundaries of the Ahom state. She was also a patron of so many learned personalities. Ananta Acharya composed Ananda Lahiri and Kabi Chandra Dvij composed Kama- Kumara Harana and the Dharma Purana. Phuleswari ruled over the Ahom state as Bar Raja from 1722 A.D. to 1731 till her death. By following Saktism she crossed the limit specially the persecution of Vaishnava Mahanta. Bhuyan S. K. observed that "this is the most significant dark spot in her career." Otherwise she was the pioneer of so many creative thinking.

After the death of BarRaja Phuleswari her younger sister which had previously been married to the Solal Bargohain of the Miri Sandikai family by whom she became the mother of two sons, snatched by the king and married her. She was Draupadi or Parvatia Kuanri. Following her sister's foot step she also appointed her near relatives in various important post .She had a son through the king who was made Tipam Raja. Of her two sons by her former husband, one was appointed Bargohain and the other Sadiya - khowa Gohain. She excavated the famous tank named Siva-Sagar. Baruah S. L. also observed that she was not different from her elder sister.

After the death of parvatia kuwari king married Akari Gabharu and made her the Bar Kuanri or chief queen in 1661 saka (1731 A. D.)

Ahom history had provided us the example of so many women patriot among them mention may be made the name of Kuranganayani. She was a Monipuri princes married to Ahom king Rajeswar Singha. When the Mayamorias broke in to revolt and captured the Ahom capital Gargaon keeping the king Lakhmi Singha in captivity, Kuranganayani along with loyalist brought down the Mayamarias freeing the Ahom capital. This was a great example of political consciousness and responsibility which as women she shouldered along with the man.

One of the best examples of patriotism and sacrifices was Mula Gabharu the wife Ahom commander Phrensenmung who was entrusted with the responsibility to move forward to stop Turbak Khan, the Mughal invader during the rule of Dihing Raja Suhungmung. In this war initially though Ahom achieved success but later in the battle fought in Kapili they had to suffer heavy losses including Phrensengmung and eight other general who achieved martyrdom. Tamuli. L. (2005) has observed that the wife of Phrensenmung, Mula Gabharu on hearing the valiant death of her husband moved to the battlefield and inspired the Ahom soldiers by fighting against the invading forces.

Mula Gabharu died fighting the enemy forces but the example of patriotism, valour, bravery inspired the Ahom so much that they finally defeated the Mughals. Turbak was killed and buried on the top of Charaideo hill.

In 1663 A.D. Mughal General Mir Jumla invaded Assam. Ahom got a crushing defeat and had to sign the humiliated treaty of Ghilazharighat. According to one provision of the treaty the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Sigha had to offer his only daughter princess Ramani Gabharu to the Mughal Haram. Bhuyan S. K. (1957) has mentioned that during the period of political instability (1673-1681 A.D.) when Ramani's maternal uncle Laluk sola Barphukan, commander of Gauhati conspired against the king and was ready to surrender Gauhati to the Mughal subedar Azamtara then governor of Bengal (the eldest son of Mughal king Aurangzeb, with whom Ramani Gabharu had to marry) in lieu of his help to usurp the throne, Ramani Gabharu boldly wrote a letter to her uncle Laluk sola not to betray motherland and to break the friendship with the Mughals which could have serious consequences. Ramani Gabharu's this act of boldness and her concern for her motherland is an example of passion for her motherland.

Jaymati Kunwari , was the rare example of sacrifice and patriotism . Her accountability and political consciousness led the phase of Ahom history in to a new turn which reached the position of stability under the strong hand of her husband Gadadhar Singha and son Rudra Singha. She was belonged to a noble family and was wife of prince Gadapani of Tungkhungia clan. During the period of political instability and king makers (1673 A.D.-1681 A.D.), Laluk sola Barphukan emerged as the powerful political authority among the nobles who had his own selfish designs to become de facto ruler of the Ahom throne. He started to eliminate the Ahom princes through a reign of terror by killing the appropriate Ahom princes of Ahom family. His main target of attack was prince Gadapani, who had to leave his household and live as fugitive. To find out Godapani and bring him down under pressure Laluk sola arrested his pregnant wife Jayamoti Kuwari and inflicted upon her heavy torture. But still she refused of say anything about her husband whereabouts. She later died of the brutalities committed by Laluk sola. Later Laluk sola was killed by the supporter fraction of Godapani, who became king assuming the name Gadadhar Singha in 1681 A.D. She sacrificed her life for the cause of her nation and her sacrifice became fruitful and Ahom state witnessed great development during Gadadhar Singha and Rudra Singha's reign.

Bhuyan S. K. (1957) has observed that there are examples of women being employed as spies in the Ahom period. During the period of political instability (1673-1681) Debera Barbarua employed three women as consorts of king Suhung to use him as a puppet king so that Debera could increase his power. Among the three consorts one

was Pakhari Gabhuri, whom specially use by Debera. But she instead of helping Debera used to make aware the king about Debera's conspiracies. Coming to know the same Debera put both Pakhari and Suhung to death.

Pijou Gabharu was the daughter of Badan Chandra Barphukan and was daughter in law of Purnananda Buragohain. When Purnananda Buragohain decided to arrest Badan Barphukan for his atrocities upon the people of Gauhati, Pijou Gabharu confidentially sent information to her father Badan Chandra Barphukan about the plan. On receiving the news Badan Chandra first fled to Bangle to seek British East India Company's help but when it was refused he went to Burma, which led the Burmish invasion to Assam. Lack of political consciousness and proper judgment of women like Pijou Gabharu led the incident like Burmish Invasion which was one of the causes of the downfall of mighty Ahom. She was an exception from the example of patriotic warrior women of Ahom dynasty.

Major Findings :

From the foregone analyses some interesting observations have been revealed. These are :

1. The position of women in the society was high during Ahom rule. No gender-based discrimination and differences were seen in defining the status considering men or women. Women could involve in decision making process in family mater and state level process. Women could participate in the royal court, in the battle field, in agricultural field, in religious institution etc. No bindings were seen in their activities. After all women during the time of Ahom rule could prove their high level existence in the society.
2. Women could become head of an institution like state. BarRaja Phuleswari Kunori was seen maintaining far excellences in so many matters. Her educational policy, and constructive works proved her efficiency. Her political hold in the state craft proved that she was not different from a man in any sense. She had leadership qualities. Chao shin Kuanri's knowledge and concern about statecraft was really appreciable.
3. Observing political activities and sacrifices of royal women like Jayamati Kuanri, Mula Gabhuru etc. it can be argued that women were so much concern to their statecraft and safety of the nation.
4. From the point of accountability, responsibility, patriotism and valour , Mula Gabharu can be compared with Ahom general Lachit Barphukan, the great hero of the battle of Saraighat (March 1671). The courage and inspiration provided by both of them helped the Ahom army to achieve victory over strong Mughal force.

5. Women from common population also took part in the political affairs and battle field. During the time of First Moamariya uprising (1769-1770) from the revolutionary side in the Moran area, local leader Nahar's two wives Bhatuki and Bhabuli, who then took the name Radha and Rukmini, respectively performed active part in the fighting against Ahom king and able to defeat the royal force. (Baruah S. L. 1985, P-309).
6. Women could also take military training, so we can find the examples of women like Mula Gabharu, Radha and Rukmini etc. in the Ahom Society.
7. From religious point of view no inferior position of women was found based on Hindu Brahmanical Religious custom. Women could stand equally with men in the tribal based Ahom society. Some example of self- immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husband were found but it was some rare example. Moreover slowly and slowly effect of Hindu religious custom may be fall in tribal cum non- tribal mix Ahom Society.
8. Some women were seen involving themselves in court intrigue and conspiracies which led serious outcome like down fall of the Ahom dynasty. Person to person character may be varied. Wrong can be done by any person whether he may be male or female.

Conclusion :

The Ahom period of medieval History really bring for women great inspiration and enthusiasm. Women of the Ahom age were really the symbol of strength. Our traditional history has both the negative and positive aspects. If we can bring the positive side of our socio-cultural tradition then it will be really fruitful. Ahom socio-cultural history has brought tremendous potentiality for the positivity and inspiration of women's life.

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‘মৃগনাভি’ উপন্যাসৰ নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক চিন্তা

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সাৰাংশ : নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক চিন্তাৰ্চাৰে জনপ্ৰিয়তা অৰ্জন কৰা ঔপন্যাসিক অৰূপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতাৰ ‘মৃগনাভি’ এখন নাৰী মনঃস্তাত্ত্বিক উপন্যাস। ‘মৃগনাভি’ উপন্যাসৰ মুখ্য চৰিত্ৰ ‘সোণতৰা’ৰ দৰে বহুতো নাৰীয়ে সমাজৰ পৰা অৱহেলা আৰু পৰিয়ালৰ পৰা অনাদৰ পাই মানসিক ভাৰসাম্য হেৰুৱাই পেলায়। পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰীয়ে মানৱ সমাজৰ আধাৰ। কিন্তু আমাৰ তথাকথিত সমাজত পুৰুষতকৈ নাৰীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত যেন সমাজৰ নিয়ম বৰ্তাই ৰখাৰ দায়বদ্ধতা কিছু বেছি। অৱশ্যে বহুত ক্ষেত্ৰত দেখা যায় যে নাৰী সকলে নিজৰ অধিকাৰ আৰু প্ৰাপ্যৰ বিষয়ে জানিবলৈ আৰু তাক পাবলৈ আগ্ৰহী নহয়।

যিখন সমাজে সামাজিক শৃংখলাবদ্ধতাৰ বাবে সমাজৰ অলিখিত নীতি-নিয়ম প্ৰস্তুত কৰে সেইখন সমাজেই আকৌ কেতিয়াবা সমাজৰ সদস্যৰ জীৱন ধ্বংস কৰাও দেখা যায়। এনে পৰিস্থিতিত আদিত্যৰ দৰে সাহসী পুৰুষৰ সহযোগিতা সকলোৰে কাম্য।

এই আলোচনাত আমি ‘মৃগনাভি’ উপন্যাসৰ জৰিয়তে নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক কিছুমান বিষয়ৰ আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ বিচাৰিছো আৰু লগতে এনেধৰণৰ আলোচনাই যাতে নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰ সম্পৰ্কে সজাগ কৰি সমাজত তেওঁলোকৰ স্থিতি সুদৃঢ় কৰে তাৰেই প্ৰয়াস কৰিছো।

[চালিকা শব্দ : নাৰী, সমাজ, অধিকাৰ, সজাগতা, কল্যাণ।]

আৰম্ভণি : উপন্যাস সৃষ্টিত কল্পনাৰ অৱদান অনস্বীকাৰ্য। পৃথিৱীৰ সাহিত্যৰ বিভিন্ন অংগৰ মাজত উপন্যাসৰ জনপ্ৰিয়তা যথেষ্ট। জীৱনৰ ব্যস্ততাৰ মাজতো মানুহে নিজৰ জীৱনৰ সৈতে মিল থকা, কেতিয়াবা সম্পূৰ্ণ নিজৰ যেন লগা, কথাবোৰ পঢ়ি অভিভূত হৈ পৰে। সৰু সৰু কথাৰো খুটি নাটি আলোচনা, বিভিন্ন স্পৰ্শকাতৰ বিষয়বোৰকো ওচৰৰ পৰা চুই চোৱাৰ হেপাহ, কাৰো আগত প্ৰকাশ কৰিব নোৱাৰা কিছুমান কথা, যেতিয়া পাঠকে উপন্যাসৰ জৰিয়তে পাঠ কৰিবলৈ সুবিধা পায়, অনুভৱ কৰিবলৈ অৱকাশ পায়, তেনে মূহুৰ্ততে জীৱনৰ সন্তুষ্টিয়ে পাঠকৰ মন-প্ৰাণ আছন্ন কৰি তোলে। সেয়েহে উপন্যাসৰ ৰস আশ্বাদন কৰি পাঠকৰ মনলৈ এক বিশেষ সতেজতা আহি পৰে আৰু ইয়ে মানুহক জীৱন পথত আগুৱাই যাবলৈ মানসিক সাৰপানীৰ যোগান ধৰে।

‘মৃগনাভি’ অৰূপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতাৰ এখন নাৰী মনঃস্তাত্ত্বিক বিষয়ৰ উপন্যাসিকা। কলিতাৰ প্ৰায়খিনি ৰচনা নাৰী বিষয়ক। সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন স্তৰৰ নাৰীৰ সমস্যাও বিভিন্ন। ঔপন্যাসিকা গৰাকী নাৰীৰ সামাজিক

আধকাৰৰ বিষয়ে যথেষ্ট সজাগ। এহ ধৰণৰ মানাসকতাই লেখক গৰাকীৰ ৰচনাসমূহ উৎকৃষ্ট নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক ৰচনা হিচাপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত কৰাইছে। তেওঁৰ নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক আন কেইখনমান উপন্যাস হ'ল— অয়নান্ত, অৰুণিমাৰ স্বদেশ, মোৰাধৰা পথাৰৰ মাণিকী মাধুৰী, ফেলানী (বহু চৰিত্ৰ আছে যদিও নাৰীৰ অনুভূতি প্ৰকাশেই মূল বিষয়) ইত্যাদি। 'মৃগনাভি' লেখিকাৰ প্ৰথম উপন্যাসিকা। ১৮৮৭ চনতে ৰচনা কৰা এই উপন্যাসিকা খন ৰচনাত লেখিকাৰ এক স্বকীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য ফুটি উঠিছে। আত্মবিস্মৃতিমূলক উপন্যাসিকাখনৰ কেন্দ্ৰীয় চৰিত্ৰ 'সোণতৰা'ৰ জীৱনৰ কৰুণ মধুৰ কাহিনী অতি স্পৰ্শকাতৰ। সমাজে বান্ধি দিয়া নিয়ম-নীতিৰে পৰিচালিত, শৃংখলিত জীৱন পথত কিন্তু সেই একেখন সমাজেই 'সোণতৰা'ৰ জীৱনলৈ অন্ধকাৰ নমাই আনিছে। ফলত সোণতৰাই মানসিক ভাৰসাম্য হেৰুৱাই পেলাইছে। এনে অৱস্থাত এগৰাকী নাৰীক ব্যক্তি, পৰিয়াল তথা সমাজৰ পৰা লাগে মাথো অকণমান সহঁৰি আৰু সদভাৱ। উপন্যাসখনত সোণতৰাই তাইৰ সহকৰ্মী আদিত্য, পুত্ৰ সোণমণিৰ সাহচৰ্য মৰম আৰু চিকিৎসকৰ চিকিৎসাৰ দ্বাৰা সুস্থ হৈ উঠি এটা নতুন জীৱনলৈ আগবাঢ়িছে।

বিষয়ৰ গুৰুত্ব : অতীজৰে পৰা নাৰী বিষয়ক চিন্তা-চৰ্চাই পৃথিৱীৰ বিভিন্ন সাহিত্য চহকী কৰিছে।। যুগে যুগে নাৰীৰ সামাজিক অৱস্থান, মৰ্যাদা সম্পৰ্কে পণ্ডিতসকল আলোচনাত সৰব হৈ উঠিছে। নাৰীক ঐশ্বৰিক শক্তিসম্পন্ন বুলি ক'লেও কিন্তু প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থত ইয়াৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ ওলোটা পৰিস্থিতিৰ হৈ অৱতাৰণা ঘটা দেখা পোৱা যায়। ফলত নাৰী বিষয়ক আলোচনাৰ নতুন নতুন দিশ নিতৌ আলোকিত হৈ আছে।

মানুহ সামাজিক প্ৰাণী। কিছুমান অলিখিত নিয়মৰ দ্বাৰা পৰিচালিত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত 'নাৰী'ৰ বাবে কিছুমান সুকীয়া নিয়ম থকা দেখা যায়। যদিও পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰী সমাজৰ প্ৰতি দায়বদ্ধতা থাকে তথাপি নাৰীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এনে দায়বদ্ধতাৰ সীমালৈ যথেষ্ট গভীৰ। ইয়াৰ কাৰণ ফঁহিয়াই চোৱাৰ বাবে আৰু সমাজৰ কল্যাণ সাধন কৰাৰ উদ্দেশ্যে ৰচনা কৰা এনে উপন্যাসৰ আলোচনা যথেষ্ট গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ।

উপন্যাসৰ বিষয়বস্তু : লেখিকাৰ 'মৃগনাভি' নামৰ মনঃস্তম্ভমূলক উপন্যাসিকাখন তেওঁৰ উপন্যাস সাহিত্য জগতত প্ৰথম পদক্ষেপ। স্ব কথিত উপন্যাসখনত উপন্যাসিকাই 'সোণতৰা' নামৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰটোৰ বাল্যকালৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি মাতৃত্ব আৰু তাৰ পিছৰ জীৱন সংগ্ৰামৰ জটিল সময়ছোৱাৰ এখন হৃদয়পৰশা ছবি অংকন কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছে।

সৌন্দৰ্যপ্ৰিয় মনৰ সোণতৰাই ইংৰাজী প্ৰধান বিষয় হিচাপে লৈ বি.এ পঢ়ি থাকোতেই মাকে বিয়া দিয়াৰ বাবে যো-জা কৰে। তাইৰ হৃদয়ত তেতিয়া অলেখ ফুলৰ কলি ফুলি উঠাৰ বাবে উথপথপ.....। মনৰ মাজত তাই বিচাৰিছিল "দ পুখুৰীৰ দৰে গভীৰ চকু, দীঘল দীঘল আঙুলি, দীৰ্ঘ দেহা, কবিতা পঢ়া, ছবি ভাল পোৱা, ফুল ভাল পোৱা এজন নম্ৰ যুৱকৰ।" তাই কল্পনা কৰিছিল— "আমি আইভী লতাৰে ঘেৰা বাৰাণ্ডা এখনত জিকা ফুল ফুলাৰে পৰা শেৱালি সৰালৈকে বহি থাকিম। মোৰ চুলিত আঙুলি ৰাখি তেওঁ নিশাৰ নতুন সৌন্দৰ্য উপলব্ধি কৰি ৰ'মিঅ'ৰ সেই প্ৰবল প্ৰেমৰ উচ্ছাসেৰে ক'ব- "I never saw true beauty till this night". সেই প্ৰবল উচ্ছাসে মোক বুৰাই পেলাব।" বুকুৰ ভিতৰত হেজাৰ ফুলৰ পাপৰি পখিলা হৈ উৰিবলৈ নৌ পাওঁতেই শিৱসাগৰৰ চাহ বাগিছাৰ মালিক, নদন-বদন অৱস্থাৰ পৰিয়াল এটাই তেওঁলোকৰ সৰু পুত্ৰ শান্তনু চলিহাৰ বাবে সোণতৰাক পছন্দ কৰি থৈ গ'ল।

মাকৰ মতে, সোণতৰাই পঢ়া-শুনা কৰি থাকিব পাৰিব, কিন্তু ইমান ভাল মানুহৰ ঘৰৰ ল'ৰা এটা ভাগ্যৰ বল নহলে পোৱা অসুবিধা। তেওঁৰ ছোৱালী ৰাজৰাণী হৈ থাকিব পাৰিব। কিন্তু সোণতৰাই বাস্তৱ

ক্ষেত্ৰত ইয়াৰ একোৱেই নাপালে। ধনী ঘৰৰ মদাহী, নাৰীলোভী, চৰিত্ৰহীন শান্তনু চলিহাই দিয়া নীলা, বগা, ৰঙা, সেউজীয়া বাখৰেৰে চালি ধৰি থকা ম'ৰা চৰাইৰ চানেকীয়া আঙুঠিটোৱে তাইক যেন এটা প্ৰাণহীন চাবি দিয়া পুতলা কৰি পেলালে। এটা সময়ত অনিচ্ছাসত্ত্বেও শান্তনু চলিহাৰ পত্নী হিচাপে স্বামীক সুখী কৰিবলৈ, গোমোঠা মুখত হাঁহি 'জিলিকাবলৈ সোণতৰাই প্ৰাণপণে চেষ্টা কৰিব ধৰিলে। "মানুহে কি ক'ব"— মামীয়েকে কোৱা এই কথাষাৰ পলে পলে অনুভৱ কৰি সোণতৰাই প্ৰতিটো মুহূৰ্ততে সমাজ তথা পৰিয়ালে ভাল পোৱা সকলো কাম নিৰৱে কৰি যাবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিলে।

কিন্তু শান্তনু চলিহাৰ সন্তানৰ মাতৃ হ'বলৈ আগবঢ়া সোণতৰাই অকালতে স্বামীক হেৰুৱাব লগা হ'ল। তাই এটা প্ৰি-মেছিউৰ বেবী জন্ম দিলে। স্বামীৰ শ্ৰাদ্ধত অহা মানুহে আৰু ভকত সকলে তাইক আৰ্শীবাদ দিলে— "সতী সাবিত্ৰী হৈ স্বামীৰ চৰণ চিন্তি তেওঁ জীয়াই থাকক, ভগৱন্তই পোনাটোক কুশলে ৰাখক।" চলিহা পৰিয়ালৰ বিশাল সম্পত্তিৰ ভাগ হ'ল। দুমাহৰ পিছত কপাহৰ মাজৰ কেচুৱাটো কোলাত লৈ সোণতৰা মাক হতঁৰ সৈতে গুৱাহাটীৰ ঘৰলৈ গুচি আহিল। লাহে লাহে ল'ৰাটো ডাঙৰ হৈ সোণমণি হ'ল।

শিৰত সেন্দূৰ নথকা নাৰীক সমাজৰ এক শ্ৰেণীৰ মানুহে কৰা নিকৃষ্ট ব্যৱহাৰৰ পৰা সোণতৰা সাৰি যোৱা নাছিল। তাই মাকহতঁৰ ঘৰৰ নিৰ্দিষ্ট কোঠা এটাতে বহি থাকিবলৈ ভাল পাইছিল। আনকি নিজৰ মাকেও ভায়েক চাকৰিত ইণ্টাৰভিউ দিবলৈ যোৱাৰ মুহূৰ্তত তাইৰ উকা কপালখন নেদেখাটোৱে কামনা কৰিছিল। কিছুদিন পিছত ভায়েকৰ বিয়াৰ সময় আহি পোৱাত তাই সোণমণিক লৈ এটা ভাৰাঘৰলৈ গুচি গৈছিল। ইতিমধ্যে তাই স্কুলৰ চাকৰি এটাত জইন কৰিছিল। ঘৰৰ কাৰোবেপৰা সহায় নোলোৱাকৈ সোণমণিক লৈ অকলে সংসাৰৰ দায়িত্ব লোৱা তাইৰ কাৰণে ইমান সহজ নাছিল। কিন্তু লাহে লাহে সকলো অসুবিধা আতৰি গৈছিল। তাই এম এ পৰীক্ষা দি ভাল নম্বৰ লৈ পাছ কৰিছিল। সোণমণিয়ে গান গাবলৈ আৰু গীটাৰ বজাবলৈ শিকিছিল। হোষ্টেলৰ চুপাৰৰ দায়িত্বও তাই লৈছিল আৰু তাতে নিজস্ব এখন জগত গঢ়ি তুলিছিল।

নিজৰ সৰু সংসাৰখনত নিজে ব্যস্ত হৈ থকা সোণতৰাৰ দৈহিক সৌন্দৰ্যই কিন্তু ধৰণী শৰ্মাৰ দৰে ৰাজনৈতিক নেতাৰ দৃষ্টি আকৰ্ষণ কৰিছিল। তেওঁ ৰাতি নিচা কৰি আহি তাইক প্ৰায়ে আমনি কৰিছিল— "শৰ্মাৰ চাৱনিটো মোৰ শৰীৰত এডাল বিছাৰ দৰে বগাই ফুৰিছিল।..... তাৰ পিছত বহুকেইবাতি মই শুব পৰা নাছিলো। বিছাডাল মোৰ দেহাৰ ভাঁজে ভাঁজে বগাই ফুৰে। মই কেৱল কল্পনা কৰিছিলোঁ এটা দিনৰ কথা যিদিনা বিছা বগাবলৈ মোৰ দেহত আৰু কোনো ভাজঁ নাথাকিব।"^{৩০}

ইয়াৰ পিচতে ওচৰতে থকা কলেজখনত সোণতৰাই ইংৰাজী বিভাগত প্ৰবক্তাৰূপে জইন কৰে। সেই সূত্ৰে কলেজৰ সহকৰ্মী আদিত্যৰ লগত সোণতৰাৰ চিনাকি হয়। মাজে মাজে আদিত্য সোণতৰাহতঁৰ ভাৰাঘৰটোলৈ আহে। এনেদৰে কণমাণি সোণমণিৰ লগতো আদিত্যৰ আত্মীয়তা গঢ়ি উঠে— "ক্ৰিকেট তৰ্কত মজি থকা তেওঁ আৰু সোণমণিক চাই চাই মই বুজিছিলোঁ মোৰ সমস্ত দিও সোণমণিক মই বহুত কিবা-কিবি দিব পৰা নাই।"^{৩১} সিহঁত দুয়োজনে একেলগে খেলিছিল, গীটাৰ বজাইছিল, গান গাইছিল, আনকি আদিত্যই সোণমণিৰ নতুন কবিতাও চাই দিছিল। আদিত্যৰ আকৰ্ষণীয় চৰিত্ৰই সোণতৰাকো মোহিত কৰিছিল। কিন্তু সমাজৰ কঠোৰ বন্ধনত আৱদ্ধ স্বামীহীনা সোণতৰাৰ বাবে এই অনুভূতি মূল্যহীন

আছিল। কিন্তু কোনোবা খিলিত যেন তাই আদিত্যৰ মাজত পাট ওৱান পটি থাকোতে মনৰ ভিতৰত গোপনে বিচৰা মানুহ জনৰ লগত মিল দেখা পাইছিল।

আদিত্যৰো সোণমণি আৰু সোণতৰাৰ সংগ পাই যেন আকাশহে ঢুকি পাইছিল। সোণতৰা, আদিত্য আৰু সোণমণিৰ জীৱন সুন্দৰভাৱে চলি আছিল। তেনেতে আকৌ সোণতৰাৰ জীৱনলৈ পৰিয়াল তথা সমাজৰ অভিপ্ৰাণ নামি আহিল। সকলোৱে তাইক কৰ্কথনা কৰিব ধৰিলে। সমাজে কি ক'ব? পৰিয়ালে কি ক'ব? সকলোৰে পৰা তাই মাথো বেয়া ব্যৱহাৰ পাব ধৰিলে। আনকি সোণমণিকো বৰজনাক হ'তে লৈ গৈ সোণতৰাৰ মনত বেয়াকৈ আঘাত দিলে। তাই নিঃশব্দে সকলো সহ্য কৰি থাকিব লগা হ'ল।

ফলত সোণতৰাই মানসিক ভাৰসাম্য হেৰুৱাই পেলালে। ছবি আঁকি ভাল পোৱা, কবিতা পঢ়ি ভালপোৱা, সেই কোমল অন্তৰৰ ছোৱালীজনীয়ে আউলী বাউলী হৈ বৰজনাক আৰু পুতেক সোণমণিক মাৰিবলৈ উদ্যত হৈ পৰিল। গোটেইবোৰ খেলিমেলি হৈ পৰিল। শেষত আদিত্যই তাইক মানসিক চিকিৎসালয়লৈ লৈ যায় আৰু তাতে ড° যোছেফ, চিষ্টাৰ, আদিত্য আৰু সোণমণি, সকলোৰে আন্তৰিক সহযোগিতাত সম্পূৰ্ণ এবছৰৰ পিছত তাই পুনৰ আগৰ অৱস্থালৈ ঘূৰি আহিল। শেষত শক্তিশালী চৰিত্ৰ আদিত্যৰ সহায়ত সোণতৰাই মানুহে গঢ়ি তোলা সমাজখনৰ নিয়মৰ বিৰোধিতা কৰি সাহসেৰে সোণমণিক লৈ এখন সুন্দৰ সংসাৰ গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ আগবাঢ়ি আহিছে।

নামাজিক গুৰুত্ব : 'মৃগনাভি' উপন্যাসখনত সমাজত নাৰীক কিদৰে সময়ে সময়ে উপেক্ষা কৰি অহা হৈছে তাকেই প্ৰতিফলিত কৰাৰ দুৰ্বাৰ প্ৰয়াস স্পষ্ট হৈ উঠিছে। 'সোণতৰা' চৰিত্ৰটোৰ জৰিয়তে লেখিকাই নাৰীয়ে সমাজত প্ৰতিমুহূৰ্ততে পাই অহা অৱমাননা, অৱহেলা আদিৰ ছবি ফুটাই তুলিছে। কলেজত পঢ়ি থকা সোণতৰাৰ মনৰ কোমল অনুভূতিক ঘৰৰ কোনেও গুৰুত্ব দিয়া নাই। তাই নিজৰ জীৱনটোক লৈ দেখা সপোনে সমাজৰ হেঁচাত বাস্তৱ ৰূপ পোৱা নাই। মাক-দেউতাকে পৰম্পৰা ৰক্ষা কৰিবলৈ তাইক বিয়া দি যেন নিজৰ দায়িত্ব পালন কৰিছে। চৰিত্ৰহীন পুৰুষ এজনৰ সৈতে বিয়া হবলৈ সন্মত নোহোৱাৰ পিছতো মাকে ৰাতি দেউতাকক কোৱা তাই শুনিছে— "বিয়া ঠিক হোৱাৰ পিছত ছোৱালী ঘৰত ৰখাটো ভাল নহয়। তেওঁলোকলৈ লিখক— বিয়াখন সোনকালে পাতক, পিছতো পঢ়িব পাৰিব।"৫ সোণতৰাই সেইদিনা অনুভৱ কৰিছে যে এইখন সমাজত নাৰীয়ে নাৰীৰ দুখ বুজি নাপায়, মাকে নিজৰ জীয়েকৰ মনৰ কথা উপলব্ধি কৰিব নোৱাৰে।

বিয়াৰ কিছুদিন পিছতে সন্তান সন্তবা সোণতৰা বিধৱা হৈছে। তাইৰ স্বামীক বনুৱা ছোৱালীক প্ৰতাৰণা কৰা বাবে দাৰে ঘপিয়াই হত্যা কৰা হৈছে। অকাল বৈধব্যৰ জৰিয়তে তাইৰ জীৱনলৈ নামি আহিছে সমাজৰ অৱহেলা, অস্পৃশ্যতা। তাই যেন সমাজৰ বাবে এক বোজা হে ! লাহে লাহে সোণমণি ভাঙৰ হ'ল; কিন্তু সমাজে যেন তাইক প্ৰতি মুহূৰ্ততে চাই আছে, প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰিছে তাইৰ প্ৰতিটো কাম-কাজ কাৰণ তাই বিধৱা। চুবুৰীত অনুস্থিত মাংগলিক অনুষ্ঠান বোৰলৈ গৈ তাই সদায় মানুহৰ লাঞ্ছনা, গঞ্জনাহে পাইছে। ঘৰৰ কিবা ভাল কাম-কাজতো মাকে তাইক কৌশলেৰে আঁতৰাই ৰাখিছে।

এনে ধৰণৰ কথাবোৰে সোণতৰাক বৰ আঘাত দিছিল। তাই বিধৱা হোৱা বাবেই এম.এল.এ ধৰণী শৰ্মা তাইৰ ঘৰলৈ আহি তাইক বেয়া ইংগিত দি থৈ গ'ল। সেইদিনা তাই অনুভৱ কৰিছিল যে সমাজত বিধৱা হৈ জীয়াই থকাটোৱেই যেন এটা পাপ।

কলেজৰ চাকৰি পোৱাৰ পিছত একে কলেজৰে প্ৰবক্তা আদিত্যৰ সৈতে সোণতৰাৰ পৰিচয় হয় সমাজ আৰু পৰিয়ালৰ কঠোৰ নিয়মৰ মাজত পালিত সোণতৰাই বহু কষ্ট কৰি আদিত্যক মনৰ মাজলৈ আহিবলৈ বাধ্য দিছে। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত সোণতৰাই সদায় বিবেককে গুৰুত্ব দি চলিলেও পিছত কিন্তু হৃদয়ৰ জয় স্বীকাৰ কৰি ল'বলৈ বাধ্য হয়। আদিত্য, সোণতৰা আৰু সোণমণিয়ে যদিও ইজনে সিজনক বিচাৰে, সমাজখনে কিন্তু তেওঁলোকৰ এই সম্পৰ্কক বাস্তব ৰূপ পাবলৈ নিদিলে। পুনৰ সমাজৰ নিষ্ঠুৰতাৰ বলি হোৱা সোণতৰাই মানসিক সন্তোলন হেৰুৱাই পেলালে। উদাৰমনা আদিত্যই তাইক এবাৰ কৈছে— “এইখন সমাজে মানুহৰ জীৱন কেৱল ধ্বংস কৰিব পাৰে, এটা জীৱনো গঢ়িব নোৱাৰে।”

সামৰণি : বিভিন্ন দিশৰ পৰা পৰ্যালোচনা কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থিতি সম্পৰ্কে সজাগ ঔপন্যাসিকা অৰূপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতাই আন উপন্যাস কেইখনৰ দৰে ‘মৃগনাভি’ উপন্যাসতো ‘সোণতৰা’ চৰিত্ৰটোৰ জীৱনজোৰা যন্ত্ৰণাৰ এক মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী বৰ্ণনা চিত্ৰিত কৰিছে। সাধাৰণতে সমাজৰ নীতি নিয়ম পালনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত নিজৰ জীৱন পৰ্য্যন্ত জলাঞ্জলি দিবলৈ প্ৰস্তুত এক শ্ৰেণীৰ নাৰীক আমি সমাজৰ প্ৰতিজন সদস্যই মানুহৰ দৰে জীয়াই থকাৰ ন্যূনতম অধিকাৰ থিনিৰ পৰা বঞ্চিত কৰাটো অনুচিত। পুৰুষ আৰু প্ৰকৃতি--- সৃষ্টিকৰ্তাৰ সৃষ্টি। এনেক্ষেত্ৰত আমাৰ সমাজখনে পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰীৰ বাবে পৃথক নিয়ম কিয় প্ৰস্তুত কৰিছে? নাৰীক শক্তি স্বৰূপে পূজা-পাতল কৰিলেও কিন্তু প্ৰকৃততাত নাৰীৰ উচ্চাকাংক্ষা, নাৰীৰ উন্নতি কাৰোৰেই কাম্য নহয়।

বৰ্তমান যুগৰ পৰিবৰ্তন হৈছে। শিক্ষা-দীক্ষা গ্ৰহণ কৰা ফলত নাৰীসকলৰ মানসিকতা সলনি হৈছে। মানুহৰ মনৰ দিগন্ত প্ৰসাৰিত হৈছে। তথাপি যেন কৰবাত নাৰী সকলে সমাজৰ অৱহেলা, মানসিক শোষণৰ বলি হ'ব লগা হৈছে। এইক্ষেত্ৰত অৱশ্যে নাৰী সমাজো যথেষ্ট দায়ী। অৰূপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতাৰ উপন্যাস ‘মৃগনাভি’ত এনে উপলব্ধিৰ প্ৰকাশ অনন্য আৰু ইয়ে নাৰীসকলক নিজৰ অস্তিত্বৰ বিষয়ে সচেতন কৰাত যৎপৰোনাস্তি সহায় কৰিব।

সহায়ক গ্ৰন্থৰ তালিকা :

মুখ্য সমল-	কলিতা, অৰূপা পটঙ্গীয়া	: মৃগনাভি
গৌণ সমল-	কটকী, প্ৰফুল্ল	: স্বৰাজোত্তৰ অসমীয়া উপন্যাস সমীক্ষা
		: সাহিত্য আৰু সংজ্ঞা
		: ক্ৰমবিকাশত অসমীয়া কথা শৈলী
	গোস্বামী, ত্ৰৈলোক্য নাথ	: সাহিত্য আলোচনা
	শৰ্মা, সত্যেন্দ্ৰ নাথ	: অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ গতিধাৰা
		: অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ ভূমিকা
		: অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ সমীক্ষাত্মক ইতিবৃত্ত

Participation of Women in the Development Process of India

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Abstract :

Women have been participating in the development process since the human civilization started. Sometimes, contribution to the development comes directly or sometimes indirectly. Unfortunately, it was not recognized in the earlier days but good news is that modern society has changed the attitude. Baumann in 1928 recognized the importance of women in his classic article, 'The Division of Work According to Sex in African Hoe Culture'. Women in rural areas traditionally engaged in many productive activities such as agriculture, agro-processing crafts and home industries, trade and commerce. Women in urban areas also contributed to the development in participating various prominent areas. In India, majority of women engaged in unorganized sector. In the unorganized sector they did not get suitable return for their services. Most of time they are less remunerated than men. However, in recent years the position and role both are altered. Today they are not only employing themselves in various institutions or industries but also acting as a producer or investor and creating employment opportunities. New employment avenues generate income and reduce poverty as well as inequality. But social, legal and economic constraints limit their role in the development scenario. Secondary data will be collected from the different sources for the purposes of the study.

[Key words : development, recognized, productive, contributed, unorganized, investor, constraints]

Introduction:

Women have been participating in the development process since the human civilization started. They participated and contributed to the development process indirectly or sometimes directly. Unfortunately, it was not recognized in the earlier days but good news is that modern society has changed the attitude. Baumann in 1928 recognized the importance of women in his classic article, 'The Division of Work According to Sex in

African Hoe Culture'. Assigning even a very low wage for women's unpaid tasks yields an annual figure of US\$612.8 billion, or 61 percent of GDP in the country. Women in rural areas traditionally engaged in many productive activities such as agriculture, agro-processing crafts and home industries, trade and commerce, but there has been a tendency to underestimate their economic roles and to undercount their participation due to inadequate data, prevailing definitions of economic activity and current sampling and interviewing procedures employed in obtaining national statistics. They are also engaged in many unpaid services for the well-being of her family. Women service to her family and children to build human capital which is helpful for the development is admirable. Mahatma Gandhi said when a woman is educated, two families are educated. Thus, when we educate a woman we don't only educate two families but also we educate generations and furnish input for development. In the words of former president APJ Abdul Kalam "empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation." Good nation makes the path smooth for development of a country.

Development requires sufficient employment of the people in the country along with other factors. As the term development indicates economic growth as well as other progressive changes in the country. Thus, people remain employed in the formal sector and informal sector in the country. Formal sector is secured sector but informal sector is generally characterized by low capital investment, low productivity and low earnings. The quality of work, comprising job security, income security, social security and conditions of work, is also considered to be low in the informal sector. However, both the sectors are essential for development of the country.

Objective :

Some of the specific objectives of the study are

- (i) to reviews the engagement of women in different activities.
- (ii) to reviews the role of women in the development.

Method and Material :

Secondary data are collected from the various sources for the purpose of the study. Role of women in the development of India is shown by their contribution to the Indian Gross Domestic Product(GDP).On the basis of contribution in terms of percentage it would be considered whether their role in the development is significant or not. If the percentage of contribution in the GDP is more, than their role is considered as significant

and if it is negligible then it is considered insignificant. Higher contribution implies higher income among the women and higher income implies less income inequalities, opportunities for better education and health facilities and also higher standard of living.

Discussion :

The total women population in the country according to 2011 census is estimated 5865 million. But as far women workforce is concerned it is 25.6 percent whereas men workforce is 51.7 percent (census, 2011). Among the total women workforce 14.7 percent main worker and 11.00 percent is the marginal worker. In agriculture, 75 percent of all female workers and 85 percent of all rural female workers are engaged (swain et al.2011). In spite of their highest engagement in the said sector the return from the sector to them is not satisfactory. Empirical evidences have found women in agricultural households to be occupied with relatively low paid, tedious and exhaustive farm jobs (Mencher and Saradmoni, 1982, Kaur and Goyal, 1996, Rani, et al., 1990) even while encountering a deteriorating bargaining power in the labour market (Hirway and Roy, 1999,)

In India majority of the people are employed in the informal sector, 86.21 per cent of workers in the country in the year 2004-05 worked in the informal sector. In the informal sector women workers are maximum as compared to men. Among women workers, 91.2 per cent were in the informal sector as compared to 83.9 per cent men. Thus, a significantly high percentage of women were engaged in low quality informal sector work

Table 1 : Percentage Distribution of women Workers in Informal and Formal Sectors (India) by Industry Groups, 2004-05

Sl.No	Industry Group	Informal sector	Formal sector
1	Agriculture	78.22	16.16
2	Manufacturing	10.44	22.90
3	Trade	3.48	1.43
4	Education	1.04	26.24
5	Private households & ETOs	2.53	0.00
6	Construction	1.26	7.72
7	Other Community, Social & Personal Services	1.35	2.56

Along with the agricultural activities Indian women are also engaged in many entrepreneurial activities. An entrepreneur is a person who combines capital and labor

for production. According to Cantillion "entrepreneur is the agent who buys means of production at certain prices, in order to sell at prices that are certain at the moment at which he commits himself to his cost". A woman entrepreneur is a woman who starts and owns and enterprise by investing at least 51 percent in an enterprise. Various entrepreneurial activities where women engaged in the different states of India are- Dairy (PP), Bee-keeping (PP), Papad and -badi making (FP), Pickles (FP) Livestock (PP), ,Fruit and vegetable processing (FP), Improved animal feed (NEC), Nursery raising (PP), Vermin-composting (NEC), Potato production using bio-pesticide (NEC), Diversified farming (PP), Fisheries (PP). Vermi-culture (NEC), Agarbatti-making (CRF), Blanket-making (CRF), Spice processing (FP), Dalia-making (FP), Milk processing (FP), Basket-making (CRF), Coir products (CRF), Jute handicrafts (CRF), Leaf plates (CRF) Preparation of jam and jelly (FP), Preparation of potato chips. Women entrepreneurship has gained momentum in the last three decades with the increase in the number of women enterprises and their substantive contribution to economic growth (Sharma,2013)

The emergence of Information Technology sector in mid-1990s has unveiled a potential employment opportunity for women in this organized sector congenially befitting their job environment and offering, in principle, least gender discrimination (Bhattacharyya et al,2012) .The Indian IT-BPO industry has emerged as the largest private sector employer in the country with direct employment of about 2.23 million professionals. The percentage of female employees, over the years, has steadily increased from 35percent in 2006 to 36 percent in 2008 at the junior level (NASSCOM-Mencher, 2009).

According to World Economic Forum, India gender gap review 2011, women are just 3 percent of legislative, management, and senior official positions. An estimate by community business standard chartered bank in 2010, Women held only 5.3 percent of board directorships of BSE-100 companies. World economic forum in 2010 shows that 22.6 percent of women are employed in business in the country and they make up 14 percent of senior management roles. According to Gender Diversity Benchmark, 2011, India has the lowest national female labour force and the worst leaking pipeline for junior to middle level position women

However, the female labor force participation rate (Rural and Urban) in 2011-12, within the few states in India is shown in the table 2.

Table 2 : State-wise female Labor Force Participation Rate (usual principal and subsidiary status)in 2012

State	Rural	Urban
Andhra Pradesh	44.8	18
Arunachal Pradesh	28.2	13.9
Assam	12.9	9.7
Bihar	5.8	5.4
Chhattisgarh	41.6	25.2
Delhi	14.6	10.9
Goa	21.2	17.4
Gujarat	27.9	13.5
Haryana	16.4	10.2
Himachal Pradesh	52.9	23.6

Source : Calculated from NSS Database, Employment and Unemployment Surveys, 61st, 66th and 68th Rounds

Although it is not easy to accept women as the boss among her male subordinates, but it does not imply that it is impossible. Fifteen of such corporate women with their leadership in different corporations are shown in the table 3.

Table3 : Fifteen Indian corporate women with their leadership status

S. No	Name	Position	Corporation
1	Vinita Bali	Managing Director	Britannia Industries
2	Shobhana Bartia	Vice chairperson	Hindustan Times (HT) Media
3	Elaben Bhatt	Founder	Self Employed Women's Association(SEWA)
4	Neelam Dhawan	Managing Director	Microsoft India
5	Manisha Girotra	Chairperson & Managing Director	UBS India
6	Renu Sud Karnad	Executive Director	Housing Dev. Finance Corporation (HDFC)
7	Naina Lal Kidwai	Group General manager andCountry Head	Hong Kong Shanghai Bankin Corporation (HSBC)
8	Kiran Mazumdar Shaw	Chief Managing Director	Biocon
9	Zia Mody	Managing Partner	AZB and Partners
10	Amrita Patel	Chairman	National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)
11	Swati Piramal	Director,	Nicholas Piramal
12	Chanda Kochhar	Deputy Managing Director	Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation
13	Renuka Ramnath	Managing Director,CEO	ICICI Venture Funds Managemnt
14	Preeta Reddy	Managing Directore	Apollo Hospitals Group
15	Shikha Sharma	Managing Director,CEO	ICICI Prudential Life Insurance

Although above 70 per cent of the women workers were employed in agriculture, the share of the sector in the GDP contribution of women was just 39.2 per cent in 2004-05. The manufacturing industries had the second largest share of 14.7 percent though the share of the sector in the employment of women was only 11.5 percent. The other industry groups which shared a sizeable percentage of GDP contribution of women were (i) trade (7.8 percent), (ii) education (5.3 percent), (iii) real estate, renting & business services (4.3 percent), (iv) banking & financial intermediation (16.8 percent), (v) construction (4.1 percent) and (vi) public administration and defence (3.7 percent), and (vii) health services (3.6 percent). Private households which employed the fifth largest percentage of women had the second lowest share of GDP contribution of women. In other words, the average gross value added per worker in the case of private households was one of the lowest.

In the aggregate, 19.8 per cent of the GDP was contributed by 32.2 per cent women workers in the year 2004-05. It consisted of 11.7 per cent in the informal sector and 8.1 percent in the formal sector. While a little over 50 percent of the GDP was generated in the formal sector, the contribution of women was as low as 8.1 percent. It was primarily because of male dominance in the formal sector and employment of a large percentage of women in comparatively low productive industries. The only industry group in which the share of women exceeded that of men in GDP was private households. The other sectors in which the contribution of women to GDP was above 40 per cent were agriculture (41.3 percent) and education (41.2 percent). The share of women was 38.1 per cent in the case of health services and 25.1 per cent in the case of other 'community, social and personal services'

The overall annual growth rate in GDP between 1999-2000 and 2004-05 was about 5.99 percent. In the case of contribution of women, the growth rate was lower at 5.61 per cent as against 6.1 per cent in the case of males. While the growth rate of GDP in the formal sector was about 7.6 percent, it was only 4.5 per cent in the informal sector. The GDP contribution of females in the formal sector, however, recorded a higher growth rate of 9.2 per cent. The sectors which recorded comparatively high growth rates in the contribution of women to GDP were (i) real estate, renting and business services (19.3 percent); (ii) health services (11.4 per cent); (iii) hotels and restaurants (8.6 per cent); (iv) trade (8.4 percent); (v) manufacturing (7.9 per cent); (vi) education (7.9 per cent); (vii) banking and financial services (7.9 per cent); and (viii) electricity, gas and water supply (7.8 per cent). Growth in the industry group electricity, gas and water supply was contributed by the formal sector as there was a decline in the contribution of the informal sector in this category

Above discussion manifests that women playing important role in the development process. Contribution coming from the women to the gross domestic product of the country is definitely boosting the development process. Engagement of women in most of the sectors implies generating income for them. Increase in income reduces the problems

income inequality as well as poverty in the society. High income again facilitates good education and health facilities for their children which are essential inputs for development of the country.

Constraints :

Few factors mentioned below for limiting role of women in the development process in India.

(I) Less Attention

Attention has narrowly focused on ensuring the equal access of girls to primary education. Inequality of access to secondary and higher education persists, as does the limited engagement of girls in the study of science and technology, limiting the future life and employment options of adolescent girls. As 1 in 7 girls marries before the age of 18 in the developing world (UNFPA 2012), early and forced marriage remains a key issue and an important factor limiting young women's engagement in both education and economic activities

(ii) Religion

Religion still has a key role to play in determining gender norms in many cultures and fundamentalist views across the spectrum of religions threaten or deny women's rights, including rights related to sex and sexualities, and to mobility and employment. Economic fundamentalism, policies and practices that privilege profits over people, also denies women their rights as workers and to work.

(iii) Additional work burden

Women are generally less able than men to participate in economic opportunities because they face a work burden that men do not. In most societies, women are responsible for most of the household and child-rearing activities as well rearing of small livestock, although norms differ by culture and over time. This additional work burden is unpaid and limits women's capacity to engage in income-earning activities, which often require a minimum fixed time before being profitable

Recommendations :

For the purpose of well being of women and their more participation in the development process few suggestions are furnished.

- (i) Adequate attention for their overall development.
- (ii) Appropriate provisions for security and free mobility.
- (iii) Balanced work burden and make provisions for improvement of the unorganized sector.

- (iv) Practical execution of all policies taken by the government for the wellbeing of women.
- (v) Make strict provision for punishment to those guardians' who neglect over all development of their girl child.

Conclusion :

Women are always vital for society as well as development. Their participation area in the present time is expanded much more than the earlier scenario. In modern times women are not only keep them busy in the primary sector but lots of women are also entered in the secondary sector as well as service sector. Good sign is that from agricultural field to space work, everywhere women are found. It proves the positive movement of women to the development path. However, as far as women engagement is concerned, their contribution to the Indian GDP is not satisfactory. But their contribution can be much improved either by transferring them to organized sector or more improvement in the unorganized sector.

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Migration in Literature and the Diasporic Women : A Reading of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel "The Namesake"

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to highlight some of the crisis of the immigrant Indians experience, especially that of a woman named Ashima in the US as explored by Jhumpa Lahiri, a Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, in 'The Namesake'. It will bring forth the theme of dislocation and the pain of building a new life of a woman in a different world. It will discuss the immigrant's sense of belongingness in the novel.

The paper will also focus on the issues of cultural identity, tradition and expectations of a small family and especially Ashima making the voyage between the two worlds, namely, the Orient and the Occident. It will also discuss the term 'diaspora' and the various issues like multi-culturalism, loneliness, and rootlessness. It will portray the trauma of cultural disorientation and displacement suffered by Ashima after she settles abroad with her husband Asoke.

After an arranged marriage, Asoke and Ashima Ganguli leave Calcutta to settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A sense of loneliness engulfs Ashima as she remains confined to her kitchen and bedroom. Soon Ashima becomes pregnant and she realises that 'for the past eighteen months, ever since she had arrived in Cambridge, nothing has felt normal at all'.

She can tolerate the pain herself but she is greatly worried about the consequences of 'motherhood in a foreign land.' Though she had undergone sleepless nights, yet she feels astonished to think of her body's ability to make life, in the same way as her mother and grandmother had done. However, she is all of a sudden 'terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare.'

Culture plays an important role in the growth and behaviour of an individual and more specially that of a woman. Ashima tries to preserve her native culture in the adopted country. The paper will elucidate the conflicting nature of the eastern and western culture and show how Jhumpa Lahiri's characters like Ashima construct their identity as Indian Diasporians in the US.

[**Keywords:** Migration, diaspora, displacement, culture.]

Introduction :

Jhumpa Lahiri, being an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration, has carved a niche in the annals of English literature as a post-colonial diasporan writer. The word 'diasporan' is used by Robert Gnanamony. The word stands for all those Indians who have migrated to different countries across the globe seeking better fortunes. The expression designates mostly to people who have emigrated to the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other Commonwealth countries like the Caribbean islands. According to Stephen Gill, (2001:7) " 'Diaspora' in Greek means dispersion or scattering. In Hebrew, the word that is used for 'diaspora' is 'Galut' which means exile." The dislocation, homelessness and memories of homeland were part of the diasporic sensibility. The Diasporans suffered a sense of loss, alienation and a dream to return to the land of birth. An important characteristic of 'diaspora' is that a strong sense of connection to the homeland is made through the practice of culture and the ways of life. Jhumpa Lahiri herself says, "The way my parents explain to me is that they have spent their immigrant lives feeling as if they are on a river with a foot in two different boats...each boat wants to pull them in a separate direction and my parents are torn between the two. They are always hovering, literally straddling two worlds."

Objectives :

Jhumpa Lahiri wonderfully portrays in "The Namesake" some of the issues encountered by a woman in the U.S. These issues include an identity crisis, the immigrant's sense of belongingness, a sense of solitariness, multi-culturalism, and the pangs of abandoning the motherland. This paper will examine these issues and its impact on Ashima in the novel.

Discussion :

Jhumpa Lahiri opines that for immigrants, a feeling of solitariness and a longing for homeland is more painful to them than for their children. "The Namesake" is a story about the woe and struggle about a Bengali couple, namely, Ashoke Ganguli and Ashima Ganguli who immigrate to the U.S. after their wedlock in Calcutta. As the novel unfolds before us we find that it is an August evening of the year 1968 and Ashima Ganguli is standing in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment, combining rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. It is two weeks before her due date and she is making her favourite Indian snack. In no time she experiences a spasm of discomfort and calls out to her husband Ashoke, a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at MIT, who is studying in the bedroom. Here Lahiri says, "When she calls out to Ashoke she doesn't say his name. Ashima never thinks of her husband's name when she thinks of her husband, even though she knows perfectly well what it is." (page 2).

Ashima is hospitalised but there is no one to be with her. But if it would have been India she would have had a host of relatives to solace her at this crucial moment of her life. She experiences a sense of loneliness and wonders, "If she is the only Indian person in the hospital." (page 3). There is nothing to comfort her and she thinks that "In India women go home to their parents to give birth, away from husbands and in-laws and household cares, retreating briefly to childhood when the baby arrives." (Page 4). A feeling of fear engulfs her all of a sudden and "she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems to be so tentative and spare". (page 6).

The difference between Ashima's feeling of alienation in the U.S. though she had stayed there for a long time and her children Gogol and Sonia's unwillingness to stay in India is beautifully captured by Jhumpa Lahiri in her novel "The Namesake". In the novel we find that Ashima is unable to cope up with the rules and regulations followed by her son Gogol and as such she suffers from an inner mental agony. Her intense desire to return to India is explicit in the novel when she says: "I'm saying I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right and I want to go back." (page 33).

Culture plays a vital role to construct the immigrant's identity. Stuart Hall (1996:51) has elaborately discussed the issues of cultural identity. He speaks of two types of cultural identity. First of all, he refers to identity understood as a collective, shared history among individuals affiliated by race or ethnicity that is considered to be fixed or stable. According to this understanding, our cultural identity reflects the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us as "one people". He also explores a second form of cultural identity that exist among the Caribbean, that is an identity understood as unstable, metamorphic and even contradictory which signifies an identity marked by multiple point of similarities as well as differences. The cultural identity refers to "what they really are" or rather "what they have become."

A search for cultural identity by immigrants such as Ashima runs through the novel "The Namesake". Ethnic food and costumes stands for one's ethnic identity. In the novel the writer focuses on minute details regarding Asoke and Ashima's love of the Indian cuisine. They prefer to have Indian Bengali food like rice, dal, samosa which symbolises their shared roots. On the other hand, their children Gogol and Sonia relish the American dishes such as the shake and bake chicken or Hamburger which they enjoy to their heart's content. Gogol savours a mouthful, aware that for the next eight months nothing will taste quite the same. Moreover, Ashima's wearing traditional Indian sari than any other western dress conveys the preservation of their ancestral culture.

Whereas the term "culture" suggests the arts, customs, institutions of a certain people or nation, thereby helping us to distinguish a certain group of people or nation from

others or one nation from another, the term "multiculturalism" suggests the co-existence of a number of cultures. In her novel "The Namesake" Jhumpa Lahiri takes her characters like Ashima to a world surrounding different cultures and through her meticulous skill she provides her readers with the different modes of life representing varied cultures.

According to Edward Said (1993:8), "Culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought." The Question is: Do the immigrants live in a land of nowhere, resulting from their attempt to overcome their varied cultural issues?

Rajeev Bhargava(1999) speaks about "Identity Constituting" which means a person's beliefs, practices and ambitions naturally go into his /her to constitute that person's identity. In the novel, we find that Ashima is mostly confined to the four walls of her house and as such she experiences the conflicting nature of the eastern and western culture. Though the Occident shocks her profoundly yet she prefers "to keep to herself"(page 10). Though Ashoke had seen worse misfortunes in life and especially the train accident in which he thought he was dead but found himself alive, yet Ashima was unable to adjust herself to the western culture. She still wears saris and still puts her long hair in a bun .When she becomes a widow she makes up her mind to "return to India with an American passport." (page 276)

Cultural performance is an important factor that builds the immigrants identity in a foreign land. Asoke and Ashima Ganguli nurture the Bengali culture by listening to Tagore's songs, debates about the films of Satyajit Roy. In the foreign countries the native cultural activities like dances or songs build cultural identity of the immigrants. But it is seen in the novel that Gogol has an ear for American music rather than the Indian Cultural music. "Ashoke looks around the room. He notices the Lennon pinned to the bulletin board, and then a cassette of classical Indian music he'd bought for Gogol months ago... still sealed in a wrapper." (page 77-78). Ashima and Asoke try with their heart and soul to make Gogol acquainted with the cultural activities of India like Kathakali dance but all their efforts end in smoke.

In "The Namesake" Jhumpa Lahiri explores the conflict between the two worlds_ the Indian world and the American world. Gogol despises his own name. His father was a lover of the nineteenth century Russian writer Nickolai Gogol and so he gives that name to his only son. Gogol is annoyed because he believes that his name is the cause and symbol of the way he feels as an Indian-American, struggling between the Bengali heritage of his parents and his American way of life. Thus Lahiri takes us into the world of the Indian immigrant experience. We find that Gogol, Sonali and Moushumi are American born children of Indian parents. Their names act as barriers to define their identities. Whereas the name Gogol clearly points out Russian identities, the names like Sonali and Moushumi are out and out Indian instead of American.

A sense of belongingness pervades Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, "The Namesake". Moushumi, born in London of Bengali parents can be seen as moving from one particular country to another. Hence she fails to stick to any particular cultural, ideological value of the countries like Britain, America and France. Hence her sense of belongingness is not stable. She does not belong to any particular country. Moushumi has a profound love for French literature, food and she has an ample number of French friends. All these show her attachment towards the French environment. In the novel we find that Moushumi dates with an American man Graham and even gets engaged to him. But Graham finds the Indian culture stifling where he cannot kiss or hug Moushumi openly and so the engagement splits. However she has already a French boy-friend named Dimitri whom she had met during her teens, but Dimitri is in Paris. However she comes across Gogol and agrees to tie the nuptial knot with him. Gogol and Moushumi enjoy their conjugal life for a year but finally they land in divorce.

Conclusion :

Thus we can say that Jhumpa Lahiri's novel "The Namesake" is a fine example of a contemporary narrative which explores the immigrant Indians experience in the U.S. In this contemporary age, issues like global migration, the intersection between different territories and a sense of identity are serious issues. The novel is a miniature of a tiny family making the voyage between two worlds_ the Orient and the Occident. It is the story of a woman and her family, of her life and hopes, love and sorrows. The novel includes the elements of alienation, loss, migration and a dream to return to the land of birth. It includes the unwilling acceptance of the host country by the immigrants.

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Status of Higher Education of Women : Prospects and Future in Assam

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Introduction :

Education expands opportunities for women, equips them to make more informed choices, and empowers them to resist oppression and enables them to claim their rights. The right to education is inextricably linked to other basic human rights including the right to freedom from discriminations, the right to work and the right to participate in decisions affecting one's self and one's community. At the time of the 1991 census, only 39% of Indian women could read and write.

Women constitute half of the country's population, in other words half of the country's human resources. No country can achieve the goal of development without taking into account the gender factor. This was clearly indicated in HDI (Human Development Index) 1995 that women all over the world are receiving unequal treatments. The perspective of women and development is not only important because they comprise of almost 50 percent of the population but it needs to be discussed as they are the most deprived section in any community due to several reasons and patriarchy is one of the dominating reasons.

Status of higher education of women in pre and post independence:

It's nice to remember our past, either that is our personal or a world history. Now a day's women are participating in many important roles in all departments. We can say like this "there are no departments without women". In our past generations women are treated like slaves. Every one during that time thinks that education is the only way to bring the women out of the kitchen where they use to be before independence. Our father of nation Mahatma Gandhi said that "if a man got education he only will be benefited, instead of that if a woman got that education her whole family would receive those benefits. If every woman in a community got education then that whole community would receive those benefits, because of that we can archives the national development. If we examined

the women's status in our society, always men got the high or leadership positions. But women didn't get there basic facilities and treated as a slaves. Before our independence, education is denied for women.

Dr.Muthu lakshmi is the first lady who made a history by joining in the madras medical college in the time when ladies are denied to come out of their house. And she is the first Indian woman (south Indian woman) got scholarship from our government to continue her higher studies in abroad. She starts "Adayar Cancer Hospital" in Chennai.

When the four Vedas (Rick, Yajur, Cama, Atarvanam) are found they are taught to women also. After that education is denied to them. While British ruled our country they taught us the importance of the women education. Compulsory women education starts because of the diligent and inspiring views of our social revolutionaries' rajaram Mohanroy, Chandra Vidyasagar, Periyar, Ambedkar, Phule.

After independence various actions are taken to improve women education. So that according to the calculation made in 1971 and 2001 the rate of women education increased comparing to men. In 2001 the percentage of women education risen to 55% from 22%. According to this calculation the educational growth of the men is 11.72% and the growth of women almost reached 15%. Today the mothers of girl babies are interested to educate their girls in any intension. Many Indian women proved that women can do everything.

Lady Legends in our country - a recap

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu - first female Governor
Vijayalakshmi pandit - first female UNO President
Indira Gandhi - first female Prime Minister
Bachendri Pal - first lady who climbed the Mount Everest
Pathima biwi - first female judge

Kalpana Chawla, Sunita Williams, athlete PT Usha, Shiny are proved the strength of ladies. Today ladies proved their talents and hard work in all fields not only in home managements but also in factory, court, studies, and politics. We see that women interests in politics are increasing day by day. 33% of placements for women in politics are the proof for that. There is no doubt using this women education a lady can improve not only her family but also the people around her.

Pre independence :

The history of female education in India has its roots in the British Regime. Women's employment and education was acknowledged in 1854 by the East India Company's Programme: Wood's Dispatch. Slowly, after that, there was progress in female education, but it initially tended to be focused on the primary school level and was related to the richer sections of society. The overall literacy rate for women increased from 0.2% in 1882 to 6% in 1947.

In 1878, the University of Calcutta became one of the first universities to admit female graduates to its degree programmes, before any of the British universities had later done the same. This point was raised during the Ilbert Bill controversy in 1883, when it was being considered whether Indian judges should be given the right to judge British offenders. The role of women featured prominently in the controversy, where English women who opposed the bill argued that Bengali women, whom they stereotyped as "ignorant" and neglected by their men and that Indian men should therefore not be given the right to judge cases involving English women.

Bengali women who supported the bill responded by claiming that they were more educated than the English women opposed to the bill and pointed out that more Indian women had degrees than British women did at the time.

Post independence :

After India attained independence in 1947, the University Education Commission was created to recommend suggestions to improve the quality of education. However, their report spoke against female education, referring to it as: "Women's present education is entirely irrelevant to the life they have to lead. It is not only a waste but often a definite disability."

However, the fact that the female literacy rate was at 8.9% post-Independence could not be ignored. Thus, in 1958, a national committee on women's education was appointed by the government, and most of its recommendations were accepted. The crux of its recommendations were to bring female education on the same footing as offered for boys.

Soon afterward, committees were created that talked about equality between men and women in the field of education. For example, one committee on differentiation of curricula for boys and girls (1959) recommended equality and common curricula at various stages of their learning. Further efforts were made to expand the education system, and the Education Commission was set up in 1964, which largely talked about female education, which recommended a national policy to be developed by the government. This occurred in 1968, providing increased emphasis on female education.

Status of Women in Assam :

In Assam, the status of women is high in comparison to the women of some other States of India. One salient feature in the Assamese society was the absence of the dowry system. Assamese society (except those who came from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and other places) did not have dowry as a part of marriage, as is the custom found in other States. But in the post-independence era, the evil of dowry system has stealthily been invading the Assamese society with the result that some dowry death cases have been reported. The "State of Indian Women Report 2001-02" released by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development, revealed that the crime rate against women is even higher than the all-India average. In 1999, crimes against women including rape, molestation, sexual harassment, abduction, dowry deaths and cruelty at home were 127 cases per million persons at the all-India level. In contrast, in Assam it was 138 cases per million persons. The statistics are mind-boggling. In the all women police station in Guwahati, the registered cases of crime against women rose to 46 in 2001 from 23 cases in 1993. The number of dowry deaths in the State had increased from 22 in 1997 to 44 in 2001. Cases of molestation and harassment had arisen from 686 in 1997 to 763 in 2001. According to the data made available by the Assam Government to the State Legislative Assembly in July 2008, the number of rape cases registered in the State went up from 785 in 2001 to 1311 in 2007. These statistics also mean that on an average Assam registers a minimum of 100 rape cases a month. Similarly, the number of dowry-related cases including dowry deaths registered has alarmingly gone up from 1307 in 2001 to 3063 in 2007. It shows that dowry-related registered cases have increased nearly threefold in Assam between 2001 and 2007. Moreover, incidents of molestation, trafficking, murder and domestic violence have also gone up, indicating that all is not well with women in Assam in the present times

Importance of higher education for women:

Education is the process that liberates mind. It is liberalization from all forms of darkness and ignorance. It is a lifelong process of learning and empowerment and is the basic of change and development. Education has been identified as the most important instrument for improving women's position in society all over the world. It develops the personality of the individual, makes them eligible to fulfil certain political, economic and cultural functions and thereby improves their socio-economic status. HIGHER education plays a significant role in the socio- economic and cultural development of a country. It is associated with the personal, social, economic and cultural aspects of being human, and underpins the goal of a sustainable society. It helps in the understanding of societal norms; gives individuals self-reliance, and discourages discrimination based on gender, beliefs, religion and social class. Higher education promotes an enlightened citizenship necessary

for democracy. Higher education also encourages idiosyncrasy, tolerance, merit, pluralism and analytical and problem-solving values that are as essential for a productive democracy a nation's position in the world economy.

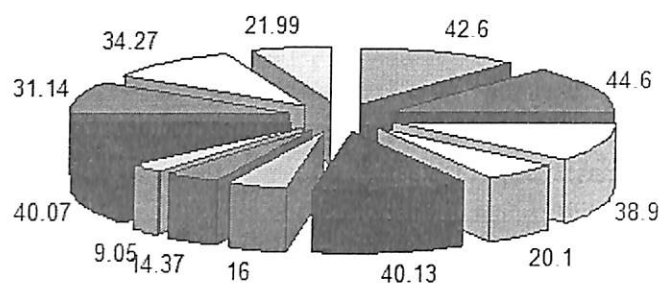
Educated women have a major role in the growth of a society. Educated women have a greater sense of control over their lives and more power and control over resources within the family than do uneducated women. They get social recognition, which helps to get insight of and have an awareness of what is undesirable and unfavourable about their current situation. The educated female can perceive a better situation and the possibility of attaining it. She can realize what is within her reach and what she should do to effect the improvement. In this way, educated women become empowered and have increased status and autonomy. This empowerment can take place at community or regional/national level as well as within the family/household. During last fifty years, the matter of females' rights and empowerment first emerged in Europe and the West, and then expanded to encompass two thirds of the world. Nevertheless, access to higher education remains a barrier for women in many countries. There is significant variety in the status of women across classes, regions, and the rural/urban divide due to uneven socio-economic development and the influence of tribal, feudal, religious and social formations on women's lives. However, women's situation versus that of men is one of general subordination, determined by the forces of patriarchy across classes, regions, and the rural/urban divide.

Status of women higher education in North East India, Assam :

In the field of education, women in Assam are in a better position than the all-India average. As per 2001 census the literacy rate for Assam is 64.28 per cent as against 65.38 per cent for India. While male literacy is 71.93 per cent (India-75.85 per cent), female literacy stands at 56.03 per cent (India-54.60 per cent). The male female gap in the literacy rate is still perceptible although it is declining over time and is much below the all-India average. Attainment of a higher literacy rate alone does not make a community educationally advanced. Completion of primary stage of education and continuation of school upto 15 years of age, etc. are taken as indicators of educational attainment. The phenomenon of school drop-out is a negative indicator of educational attainment. The dropout rates of both boys and girls in Assam remained higher than all-India average from 1981 to 2001. The drop-out rate of girls was higher in most of the years.

Notwithstanding, Indian women's movement has paved the way for women's continued access to higher education. Current statistics produced by Statistical Handbook Assam, 2009 suggests that of the total enrollment of students in higher education, the percentage of women stands at 33.63. The breakdown of women's enrollment in different subject is illustrated in the following diagram.

Percentage of Women Enrolled in Different Subjects (Source: Statistical Handbook Assam, 2009)



□ PhD/Mphil/Dphil	■ MA	□ MSc
□ Mcom	■ BA and BA (Major)	□ BSc and BSc (Major)
■ Bcom and Bcom (Major)	□ B.E. (Engineering)	■ B.Ed.BT
■ MBBS	□ Management Courses	□ LLB/LLM

It is evident that women accessing higher education are participating in the public sphere as active agents of transformation rather than simply being recipients of higher education. However, these women belong mainly to middle class or elite section of Assamese society. But empowerment should be prerogative to all section of women. With the launching of programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal, Right to Education, there have been spectacular achievements in literacy among girls: with startling increases in enrolment rates. Despite these great efforts to tackle illiteracy, the statistics produced by National Family Health Survey, India, 2008 suggests that in Assam still 30% women within the age-group 15-49 have never attended school, while, only 19% women have completed at least 10 years of schooling. Even unemployment remains a major problem. According to the latest figures, the registered unemployed stand at 2.1 million, which undoubtedly exacerbate poverty. Importantly, educated unemployment is increasing alarmingly- graduates account for 20%, and school leavers account for 57% of the registered unemployed persons. Assam, 2009-10, womens.

Lecuna of higher education and its Problem of reaching the women:

Education is the root cause of civilization and there is no denial of the fact that society cannot progress, if half of its population is not exposed to the chances of proper education. The constitution of India guarantees equality of status and opportunities to all

its citizens, yet it has been observed that lack of sufficient educational access among women is the greatest barrier to the implementation of their constitutional rights and status. Education not only makes the woman more capable to perform their traditional duties of mother and wife but it also makes them more efficient members of society. The backwardness of women- educational, social, economic or political makes them the largest single group, hindering the process of rapid social change. Many women are compelled to stop their study just after completion of their high school or higher secondary school. Their dream of higher education remains unfulfilled due to different socio-cultural constraints. This paper makes an attempt to find out the different types of hurdles confronted by women in pursuing higher education.

There are certain reasons in the way of female before getting enroll in higher education. Stereotypical behavior of the society, financial problems and son preference. Financial issues are major ones; travel from and through institute girls face harassment from rambles and criticism from society. Females from rural areas do not get permission, narrow minded attitude, gender discrimination, conveyance problems; co-education is not acceptable in many families, Lack of support of family, transportation, co-education, male dominating family, fear of female empowerment. Lack of finances, co-education, sending girls to hostel is bold decision, religious families do not allow girls to study in universities even in veil. Co-education and boarding facilities are the main cause some female do not like to talk with males due to lack of confidence. Females are considered to be breaking the norms of marriages some people with backward thinking think that girls will be over (them) if they get higher education.

Family structure is the main reason; family's preference is the marriage of daughters instead of spending on higher education, as fee structures are very high. Govt. should arrange for scholarship. Transport expenditures are also very high in big cities. Males are lagging behind in education, so it's difficult to find match for educated females. Parents think conservative thoughts for their daughters' higher education. If they do cooperate then their daughters can go out of city for higher education. Our system is not supportive for females' education; females' confidence is snapped due to male dominancy. Females are not encouraged for higher education, they think females will join coeducation and will interact with males and will raise their voice against family norms and will demand human rights. Parents keep in mind the society restriction and get marry their daughters soon due to age fear, people like young girls for marriage. After getting higher education females face problems during their professions. Male and female interaction, our society is different from other cultures and females do not feel comfortable while interacting with males. Late working hours are a big problem. Married females cannot stay at workplace late at night. Women get married at the age of 22 or 23 and after this they have the

responsibilities of their kids and household tasks, that's why they cannot manage their job. Harassment and male dominance in society and personal concerns are household responsibilities and low motivations.

Long working hours, lack of cooperation by husbands, lack of cooperation by male colleagues, females are not allowed to work in field and are not provided with sufficient resources, if demand of job is against ethical and moral beliefs of a girl she will quit job. Male domination, lack of support

from family and husband, pressure of saving marriage, females are compelled to be dependent on males, Working time and unsuitable work tasks, teasing attitude of males and harassment is a big issue. Some females do not get work recognition and leave job. Females are not allowed to do job because most males think that it's not their duty, they have to take care of household, have to give full time to the family. Financially strong females don't want to do job; they get education only for awareness Life partner doesn't accept the superiority of wife in career.

Measures to solve the problem:

There is an urgent need to create awareness among the women in particular, of the social evils of the society. Women are so much cocooned by various social customs and taboos, that they often cannot and do not want to bring changes in their own traditional lifestyles, so there is a need for creating socio-political consciousness among women. No amount of government help can really achieve the desired results, unless the women themselves realize the need of such a change. The urge to liberate them, to fight against the social ills, should come from within. Developing positive attitude towards women is necessary. While government actions and steps are necessary for removing gender inequalities and injustices and for empowering women, these can become effective only if society's attitudes and outlook towards women change. Women's empowerment would be achieved only when the attitudes-ways of thinking, feeling and willing-as also ways of behaving of men, women and society towards women become congenial and positive, so as to respect her as a person with an identity of her own, to be treated, as an equally worthy human being rather than taking her as a commodity and primarily as a sex object to be abused, exploited, discriminated and ill-treated.

Providing economic security is a must. As long as women feel insecure, she cannot come up in life. Therefore, the most important thing is to impart education to women and to make them economically independent. Economic independence creates confidence and provides social security. The voluntary organizations, should take up concrete steps, if necessary in collaboration with the governmental agencies to provide more and more employment opportunities to women.

Higher education's prospects and future:

As an initiative towards empowering more female students to attain the benefits of higher education, many countries have encouraged the establishment of all women's colleges and universities. These universities can introduce areas of special interest to women, offer courses, which meet trials of contemporary life and make women independent. In professional education, males represent the majority of the faculty of higher education institutes worldwide. Managerial positions are usually held by males and they not only have more decision making power but also have more opportunities of social networking In Pakistan education today. The situation shows some improvement but for women to achieve a successful career it is likely to be at the cost of their family life and the inner strength of purpose to overcome the prevailing socio-cultural norms of society. At the end, I would say we should provide opportunities to females to get enroll in higher education to get a prestige in a society and can equally contribute in the welfare of society and its sustainability.

On the basis of the findings of the study the following suggestions can be put forwarded to overcome the obstacles confronted by women in pursuing higher education.

- o The government as well different NGOs should come forward to bring an attitudinal change in parents and community towards higher education of women.
- o Gender discrimination of any type at any stage of a woman's life should be considered as an offence and stern legal action should be taken against any of violation of the same.
- o A woman's contribution to her family must not derestrict only to the 'unpaid labour'; instead, she should be encouraged to earn for herself and her family. Similarly household works- such as child caring, preparing food for the family should be done by both man and woman by sharing them mutually.
- o Proper awareness should be created among the women, so that they become well aware of their rights and various policies which are especially meant for women.
- 5. Institutions of higher education should be opened for girls in rural areas.
- 6. The education should be made need-based. An educational approach which will solve the economic problem is necessary.
- 7. Separate colleges and universities for women should be established wherever needed.

Conclusion :

The history of women's higher education shows that though the education of women has expanded but is still far from satisfactory. Education of women is the foremost requirement in improving the status of women in the society. An educated woman can

face the vagaries of life without any fear. Education creates modern outlook among women which in turn strengthens their claim for better status in the society. Because lack of education implies lack of awareness about their own rights and privileges which ultimately becomes a factor in deteriorating their social status. Education is the only medium through which the image of a girl-child as a second class citizen can be removed.

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Anita Desai's Bimla as " A New Woman" in her novel Clear Light of the Day

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Anita Desai is said to be the first Indian woman novelist to introduce the deep psychological conflicts of her characters. She does not portray the social life, political events or economic background of her female protagonists. As R.A. Singh points out, "Desai's fiction can be analyzed taking into consideration the psychological motivations of her novels as psychic drama... she explores the intricate facts of human experience bearing upon the central experience of psychic tensions of her characters"(9). Being a novelist of the human heart Desai's main objective is to reveal the inner crisis of the characters. This psychological struggle of her heroines can be clearly seen in her novels - Cry, The Peacock, Where shall we go this Summer, Fire on the Mountain, Voices in the City and Clear Light of The Day. Clear Light of The Day was published in 1980. Like all of her other novels, it totally submerges us. The background of the novel is set in Old Delhi. The novel consists of three parts. The novel opens with the arrival of Tara, the younger daughter and her husband Bakul to Tara's native place Delhi. The old house where Bimla(Bim), the elder sister and her autistic brother Baba lives is in a dilapidated condition. The story is developed through the stream of consciousness of the two principle characters, Bim and Tara. Raja, the elder brother by marrying Hyder Ali Sahib's daughter shifts to Bangalore is the owner of the house where Bim and Baba lives. Actually Tara and her family has come to attend Raja's daughter Moyna's wedding. But Bim is not eager to go to the wedding because she hates Raja now but once whom she adored as a hero in her childhood days. Bim in her subconscious mind tries to cling on to the joyful moments of her childhood when she was always in the company of her siblings. As Arindam Das views, "She rather attains a spiritually and emotionally fulfilling sense of life developing understanding towards it. Indeed Bim's character grows in spite of adversity, lovelessness and betrayal"(80). At times Tara feels guilty for escaping from the house. Bimla has undertaken all the responsibilities on her shoulders through all the years. She took care of Aunt Mira Masi, when she was sick, and of Raja when he suffered from tuberculosis. Now Bim was a middle-aged lady and Baba was also quite

grown up but he could do nothing for himself. They lived in the same old house. He only listens to gramophone record always. In *Clear Light of The Day*, Anita Desai tried to weave the history of Delhi which became in most parts, the centre of action. As old Delhi is unchanged, Bim too remains the same. The house is not painted and Bim too has not changed her views. She remains, rigid, rough and a spinster all through the years. Her psychic state was clearly visible as Bim didn't like changes as well. She speaks with Tara "Changed? How? You mean the house newly painted, the garden newly planted, new people coming and going? Oh no, how could I, Bim?" (12). The flashback technique is successfully used by Desai in the novel. The happenings of the past and present go together. Through Bim's remembrance Desai portrays Bim and Tara's parents as individuals who were completely unconscious of their children. They have left their children in the care of their aunt Mira Masi. In the novel Bim takes life as an adventure. She acts both as a heroine and also as a rebel. She sacrifices her whole life looking after her autistic brother Baba. Like Maya in Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, who is attached towards pets, Bim a spinster is also attached towards pets. She talks to Tara, "You think animals take the place of babies for us love - starved spinsters', ... 'But you're wrong', ... 'You can't possibly feel for them what I do about these wretched animals of mine'" (16). Bim leads her own life. She is a history professor and enjoys her profession. She is greatly attached towards the students as well. For Bakul, Tara's husband this old house is a dull, lazy place, but Tara accepted him leaving the worries, dullness, harsh responsibilities, everything to Bim and escaped from this prison. Bim is a strong, stable, stubborn and a dominating, irritable character at one side and on the other abstract, at times a traditional Indian woman. Bim in her childhood desired to conquer the world but finally ended up by conquering herself. Bim loves to read Lord Byron's poems to Raja, when he was sick. But Raja doesn't try to face the world bravely like Byron's characters. Only Bim takes life as a challenge. Though, outwardly Bim seems to be a rough person, but by heart she longed for love and affection. She gives this to others but in return they all ignore her and leave her alone. She is also loved by a doctor namely Dr. Biswas, who comes to treat aunt Mira Masi. He understands her feelings and tells her, "Now I understand why you do not wish to marry. You have dedicated your life to others - to your sick brother and your aged aunt and your little brother who will be dependent on you all his life. You have sacrificed your own life for them" (154).

Bim is shocked to hear all these things. As she was not like Tara she couldn't accept him and thought she would not lead a happy life with him. Bim, in her young age while playing games always wanted to be a heroine, "She would hear their voices ringing, as pure as glass, or flame. Raja and Bim, tall and straight and true, their voices ringing out. I will be a hero, one had called out from the pure white peak of a candle flame, and the

other had echoed back, as in a song, 'And I will be a heroine'(125). Bim wants to be a 'new woman' herself, and does not like to lead a life like Maya, Sita and Monisha, Anita Desai's other heroines. She chooses not to marry because she is not the usual, timid, submissive type of a woman. She does not have any thirst for sex. These things are out of her range. She is not a man hater, but finds it difficult to find a suitable love-partner for her. But like a very real woman, she cannot live without love, love for Baba and Raja. "She saw how she loved him, loved Raja and Tara and all of them who had lived in this house with her. There could be no love more deep and full and wide than this one, she knew . No other love had started so far back in time and had so much time in which to grow and spread. They were really all parts of her, inseparable, so many aspects of her as she was of them"(257). In her childhood days, Bim wanted to become Joan of Arc or Florence Nightingale. Both these figures led a life of sacrifice, surrendering themselves totally for others. Bim also became a sacrificial Lamb. "Bim of course worshipped Florence Nightingale along with Joan of Arc in her private pantheon of saints and goddesses"(200). When Raja and Tara realize their ambitions and goes out of their house Bim suffers. Bim, the most intelligent and spirited of the three, has to live with a mentally retorted Baba. Tara's ambition was to become a housewife and it is realized and Raja married Hyder Ali's daughter thereby inheriting all his properties. Bim is troubled because of the demise of a Byronic hero in her brother and the death of a Florence Nightingale in her.

Bim feels that her brother Raja and sister Tara have been ungrateful to her at times. Bim finds them as blood sucking mosquitoes, "They had come like mosquitoes - Tara and Bakul and behind them the Misras, and some where in the distance Raja and Benazir - only to torment her and mosquito like, sip her blood"(239). They received all kinds of help from her. She also took care of all of them but they gave only pains to her. "All of them fed on her blood, at some time or the other had fed - it must have been good blood, sweet and nourishing. Now, when they were full, they rose in swarms, humming away, turning their backs on her"(239). Suddenly a transformation could be seen towards the end of the novel.. Bim could see the Clear Light of The Day. She decided not to go to Raja's daughter Moyna's wedding and sends Tara and Bakul happily to the wedding. She participates in the music consort arranged in Misra's house, their neighbour. As R. A. Singh presents, "The reading of Aurangzeb's last words brought out a catharsis. Bim repents. Affections win and Raja is reconciled. The emotional conflict is decided in favour of affections which is the life philosophy in this novel upholding human affections and love as the highest value in life"(14). Bim accepts the reality of life and makes up her mind to forgive Raja and attend the marriage of his daughter and tries to live happily with her mentally retarded brother Baba.

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Socialisation of Women with Disabilities

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Abstract :

Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Disability is a relevant social matter, and we know that the number of people affected by it grows day by day. Some international studies, consider that the figure is as high as 20% in developing countries. Despite the fact that the number of people with disabilities is so high, in many fields they are treated as "invisible effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities The term 'disability' can be defined in several ways and is influenced by cultural perspectives, political views, as well as requirements by governments and service providers to determine eligibility for services. One commonly adopted definition put forwarded by the World Health Organisation.- 'Disability' refers to 'any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. Most of us learn about disability as part of the socialization process, rather than as a result of personal experience. When we talk about women, the situation of "invisibility" is even greater, though there are about 250 million women in the world with some type of disability. Forming part of two disadvantaged and minority groups (disabled people, and within these "women"), they find themselves up against a double discrimination, as well as various barriers which make accomplishing objectives essential in everyday life very difficult. The present study aims to understand the concept of disability and to highlight the issues of inequality in the socialisation process of women with diverse disabilities.

[Key Words : Socialisation, disabilities, invisibility, discrimination, barriers, inequality]

Introduction :

Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Like gender

and race, the concept of disability is a social construct used to define who are 'other' or different from those who are the normal and adequate citizens. The term 'disability' can be defined in several ways and is influenced by cultural perspectives, political views, as well as requirements by governments and service providers to determine eligibility for services. One commonly adopted definition is that put forward by the World Health Organisation.- 'Disability' refers to 'any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being'. Disability is created by societies that don't take into account the needs of those who do not meet with that society's ideas of what is 'normal'. The stereotype in any society of a 'normal' or acceptable body may generate a disabled identity among those with bodies that do not conform to this stereotype, even when the impairment does not cause mobility or other difficulties for that person. Whether someone is disabled or not is then a social product - it is social attitude which turns an impairment into a disability, as society discriminates against them. As Shakespeare argues, 'people become disabled, not because they have physical or mental impairments, but because they have physical or mental differences from the majority, which challenge traditional ideas of what counts as "normal"'. Disability is about the relationship between people with an impairment and a society which discriminates against them. Disability is seen as a social construction - a problem created by the attitudes of society and not by the state of our bodies.

Discussion:

Disability may affect hearing, vision, intellectual functioning, learning, mobility, speech and/or mental health. It may also be the result of medical conditions such as epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease or AIDS/HIV. This bases the definition on a biomedical conception of disability. This definition then leads to the treatment of disability as a problem residing within individuals. It has been a major criticism by many people with disabilities that explanations and definitions of disability have been put forward by non-disabled, 'professional' people and have focused on the bodies of people with disabilities as the principal cause of all their problems (Chadwick, 1994)

Developing an understanding of the term 'disability' requires much more than just a definition of the sensory, physical, intellectual or psychiatric aspects. It involves an awareness and understanding of the ways that the dominant values and practices in our society operate to make having a disability an issue which affects a person's image and their opportunities and choices in life. A different construction is found in the social model where disability is not an outcome of bodily pathology, but of social organisation. In this context the real causes of disability are discrimination and prejudice (Shakespeare in Hughes & Paterson 1997). It is discrimination within society that is the greatest obstacle

to full participation by people with disabilities. In some contexts a welfare model of disability is used. Expediency dictates which disability model will be used in formulating policies, programs and services but the social constructs of disability are rarely addressed. Disability is a relevant social matter, and we know that the number of people affected by it grows day by day. Some international studies, consider that the figure is as high as 20% in developing countries. Despite the fact that the number of people with disabilities is so high, many fields they are treated as "invisible citizens". When we talk about women, the situation of "invisibility" is even greater, though there are about 250 million women in the world with some type of disability. Forming part of two disadvantaged and minority groups (disabled people, and within these "women"), they find themselves up against a double discrimination, as well as various barriers which make a difference.

Popular views of disability, for those without direct experience, are often formed through the mass media. Media images of disability are often linked with socially unacceptable behaviours, or suggest that we have good reasons to fear people with disabilities, especially those with mental or behavioural difficulties, or who display violent or inexplicable behaviour. Stereotypes of disability, particularly those generated by the mass media, include ideas that disabled people are dependent on others, less than human, are monsters or wicked people, or have maladjusted personalities and 'aren't like other people'. Alternatively, they may be seen as people to be made fun of or pitied, or praised for their courage in coping with their disability. Only rarely do the media treat disability as a perfectly normal part of everyday life. Disability therefore becomes an identity marking people out as different from others. Disability is often seen by the non-disabled as a stigmatized identity - as something to be hidden or ashamed of.

Women with disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the peak organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia. It is a not-for-profit organisation constituted and driven by women with disabilities. It is the only organisation of its kind in Australia and one of only a very small number internationally. WWDA is unique, in that it operates as a national disability organisation; a national women's organisation; and a disabilities to the margins in our world view. The fact is that women with disabilities make up 20% of the population of women - that is nearly 2 million of us (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003), and that because of this high representation our experiences should become a mainstream issue in consideration of the domestic violence scenario. There is a high incidence of violence against women with disabilities. It is extensive and of a pervasive nature. Yet until recent years, there has been a profound silence around the experiences of violence among women with disabilities. The issues for women with disabilities have largely been excluded from most generic policies and from responses to the issue of women and violence. Women with disabilities are largely invisible in both the disability and women's movements. All

these factors combine to produce a situation where women with disabilities are relegated them to a position of extreme marginalisation and consequently, to increased risks and experiences. This is pertinent because it explains why women with disabilities are a vulnerable group, consigned to positions of disempowerment in society, and as such vulnerable to all forms of exploitation, not the least of which is domestic violence. Women with disabilities are, from the government record, one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Analysis of data available from a variety of sources, gives us the following information about women with disabilities(Frohman 2002).

- " Women with disabilities are less likely than their male counterparts to receive a senior secondary and/or tertiary education. Only 16% of all women with disabilities are likely to have any secondary education compared to 28% of men with disabilities.
- " Women with disabilities earn less than their male counterparts. 51% of women with a disability earn less than \$200 per week compared to 36% of men with a disability.
- " Only 16% of women with a disability earn over \$400 per week, compared to 33% of men with a disability.
- " Women with disabilities are less likely to be in paid work than other women, men with disabilities or the population as a whole. In fact, men with disabilities are twice as likely to be in paid employment as women with disabilities.
- " The percentage of women with disabilities being assisted by Government funded open employment services continue to decline. Open employment and disability employment services assist twice as many men with disabilities as women with disabilities.
- " Women with disabilities' participation rates in the labour market are lower than men with disabilities' participation rates across all disability levels and types.
- " Women with disabilities are substantially over-represented in public housing, comprising over 40% of all persons in Australia aged 15-64 in this form of tenure. Women with disabilities are less likely to own their own houses than their male counterparts.

Aside from albinism, women with disabilities also face sexism, racism, ageism and discrimination based on sexual orientation. They face double discrimination by society - as women they are discriminated against on the basis of gender and as people with disabilities, they are discriminated against on the basis of their disability. This discrimination is often embedded in cultural societal values that limit women's opportunities for self-improvement and self-development (Frohman 1998;) Low levels of education relegate women with disabilities to lower echelons of society, limit their access to information and their ability to interpret it, limit their life choices and limit their ability to achieve financial

and living independence. If we accept that violence against women is linked to social inequality, it is easy to see how all these factors reinforce this inequality and are likely to exacerbate the exposure of women with disabilities.

The term 'disabled' frequently carries with it a stigma arising from stereotyping, which prevents people with impairments from achieving full social acceptance. An impairment may be seen by others as involving total disablement, rather than as just one aspect, and remaining abilities may not be recognized. The stigma attached to disability, leading to what Goffman called a stigmatized or spoiled social identity, means it can also become an identity of exclusion, excluding disabled people from full participation in society, as they face, for example, unnecessary physical barriers in buildings and streets, discrimination in employment, inadequate medical care, negative portrayals in the media, and mocking, patronizing or dismissive attitudes from others.

The classification of the types of violence mentioned is particularly interesting, and can be useful to professionals who work in the fields of disability and/or attention to women who suffer maltreatment, due to the fact that the majority of the violent actions against disabled women are not generated nor shape up in the same way when inflicted against women without disability. The contributions of the organisations from the four countries of the European Union, partners in the METIS Project (framework of this study), regarding this topic are also enclosed. The organisations are: DANISH WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES (DWD) from Denmark, AUTONOM LEBEN, from Germany, Forum women and Disability, from Sweden, and the Association Initiatives and Social Studies (IES) from Spain, promoter of the project. Each contribution focuses on a different aspect of the same problem but they all share a common point, the fact of the prevalence of an unfair situation, which this report highlights regardless of the degree of culture or socio-economical index of the country.

Conclusion :

The above report shows a general view of the problem, though quite unknown, which affects an important number of disabled women; that of being the object of it has been structured as to accomplish two objectives:

- To make the public in general aware of a complex situation, so that the dimension and fundamental characteristics are known.

- As an element of thought to those who bear the intervention and planning tools of this topic in their hands.

The scope of this report is quite modest, if we bear in mind how much more is yet to be done. Although there is little knowledge about the topic, this report could become an important point of reference, because it attempts to gather and organise the remote and scattered information available today.

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মহিলা সবলীকৰণ আৰু আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা

বনশ্ৰী দেৱী

সহকাৰী অধ্যাপক, ৰাজনীতি বিজ্ঞান বিভাগ
নাৰেঙ্গী আঞ্চলিক মহাবিদ্যালয়

সাৰাংশ : আজি সমগ্ৰ বিশ্বতে মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দিয়া হৈছে। বিভিন্ন আইনৰ জৰিয়তে চৰকাৰে তাক বাস্তৱত ৰূপায়িত কৰিব বিচাৰিছে যদিও আজিও প্ৰতিদিনে ধৰ্ষণ, যৌতুক, কন্যাশ্ৰুণ হত্যা, ঘৰুৱা হিংসা আদি কাৰণত বহুতো মহিলাক হত্যা কৰা হৈয়ে আছে। সেয়ে, মহিলা সকলক সবলীকৰণৰ বাবে কেৱল আইন তৈয়াৰ কৰিলেই নহ'ব তেওঁলোকক সমাজত উপযুক্ত স্থান নিদিলে মহিলা সকলক বাস্তৱ ক্ষেত্ৰত পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজত আগবাঢ়ি যোৱাত নানা সমস্যাৰ সন্মুখীন হ'ব। প্ৰৱন্ধটিত বৰ্তমান মহিলাৰ আমাৰ সমাজত স্থান আৰু তাৰ বিভিন্ন কাৰণ সমূহ তথা সাবলীকৰণৰ বিভিন্ন উপায় সমূহ আলোচনা কৰা হ'ল।

[চালিকা শব্দ : সবলীকৰণ, নিৰ্যাতন, ধৰ্ষণ, যৌতুক, মহিলা সবলীকৰণ]

প্ৰস্তাৱনা : আজি সমগ্ৰ বিশ্বতে মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দিয়া হৈছে। পুৰুষ মহিলা উভয়ৰে সমস্থান তথা সমউন্নয়ণ অবিহনে যে এখন ৰাষ্ট্ৰ প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থত উন্নয়ণৰ পথত আগবাঢ়ি যাব নোৱাৰে সেই কথা আজি বিশ্বৰ প্ৰায় সকলোবোৰ দেশেই উপলব্ধি কৰিছে। পুৰুষ অধিকৃত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত আজি পুৰুষৰ লগতে নাৰীও বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্ৰত আগবাঢ়ি যোৱা দেখা গৈছে। কিন্তু বাস্তৱ ক্ষেত্ৰত এতিয়াও আমি দেখি আহিছো যে মুক্তিমেয়ে কেইগৰাকীমান নাৰীৰ বাহিৰে আজিও সমাজৰ অধিক সংখ্যক নাৰীয়ে বিভিন্ন কাৰণত নিজৰ দক্ষতা, আগ্ৰহ, সক্ষমতা থাকিলেও পুৰুষৰ সমানে আগবাঢ়ি যাব পৰা নাই। চৰকাৰে বিভিন্ন আইনৰ সাহায্যৰ জৰিয়তে নাৰীক আগবঢ়াই নিব খুজিলেও আজিও নাৰী যেন প্ৰগতিৰ পথত আগবাঢ়ি যোৱাত বিভিন্ন বাধাৰ সন্মুখীন হৈ আহিছে। এই প্ৰৱন্ধটোত মহিলা সবলীকৰণ আৰু আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ বিষয়ে গভীৰ ভাৱে আলোচনা কৰা হৈছে।

উদ্দেশ্য : প্ৰৱন্ধটোৰ মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য সমূহ তলত উল্লেখ কৰা হ'ল-

- ১) মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ অৰ্থ আলোচনা কৰা।
- ২) মহিলা আৰু ভাৰতীয় সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰা।
- ৩) মহিলা সকল নিৰ্যাতিত হোৱাৰ কাৰণ সমূহ আলোচনা কৰা।
- ৪) মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ বিভিন্ন উপায় সমূহ আলোচনা কৰা।

মহিলা সবলীকৰণ : 'সবলীকৰণ' শব্দটোৱে অৰ্থনৈতিক, ৰাজনৈতিক, সামাজিক, শৈক্ষিক, স্বাস্থ্য সকলো দিশতে আগবাঢ়ি যোৱাটোকে বুজায়। গতিকে মহিলা সবলীকৰণ বুলিলে মহিলা সকলৰ এনেবোৰ দিশত পুৰুষৰ সমানে আগবাঢ়ি যোৱাটোকে বুজোৱা হয়। বিশ্বৰ অৰ্ধসংখ্যক জনসাধাৰণে হৈছে

মহিলা। কিন্তু এনে মহিলা সকলৰ বিশ্বত অৰ্থনৈতিক অৱদান হৈছে মাত্ৰ ০.১ শতাংশ। উৎপাদনৰ মাত্ৰ ০.১ শতাংশহে তেওঁলোকৰ নিয়ন্ত্ৰণাধীন। প্ৰায় ৭০ শতাংশ মহিলা আজিও দৰিদ্ৰ সীমাৰেখাৰ তলত বাস কৰে। বিশ্বৰ $\frac{2}{3}$ শতাংশ মহিলাই হৈছে অশিক্ষিত। মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ বাবে ৰাষ্ট্ৰৰ সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণত তেওঁলোকৰ অংশ গ্ৰহণৰ অতি প্ৰয়োজন। অন্যথাই পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত মহিলাৰ উন্নয়নৰ বাবে ৰাষ্ট্ৰই প্ৰকৃত পদক্ষেপ ল'ব বুলি আশা কৰিব নোৱাৰি। কিন্তু বিশ্বৰ ৰাজনীতিত মাত্ৰ ১০ শতাংশ মহিলাই অংশ গ্ৰহণ কৰা দেখা যায়। গতিকে দেখা গৈছে যে মহিলা সকলে যি ধৰণে আগবাঢ়ি যাব লাগিছিল প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থত তেনেদৰে আগবাঢ়ি যাব পৰা নাই।

ৰাষ্ট্ৰ সংঘৰ আন্তৰ্জাতিক মানৱ অধিকাৰ ঘোষণা পত্ৰত পুৰুষ মহিলা দুয়োৰে সমান অধিকাৰৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দিয়া হৈছে। ১৯৭৫ চনত ৰাষ্ট্ৰসংঘৰ অধিৱেশনত সেই দশকটোক “মহিলা উন্নয়ন দশক” বুলি ঘোষণা কৰাৰ পৰাই মহিলা সবলীকৰণ বিশেষকৈ মহিলাৰ ৰাজনৈতিক অংশগ্ৰহণৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দিয়া হয়। ১৯৯৫ চনত বেইজিংত যি আন্তৰ্জাতিক মহিলা সন্মিলন হৈছিল তাত মহিলাৰ সকলো ক্ষেত্ৰতে সমঅধিকাৰৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দিয়া হৈছিল। ২০০০ চনত নিউইয়ৰ্ক চহৰত ৰাষ্ট্ৰসংঘৰ সহস্ৰক সন্মিলন (Millenium Summit)ত যি সিদ্ধান্ত লোৱা হৈছিল সেই অনুসৰি ২০১৫ চনৰ ভিতৰত লিংগ সমতা স্থাপন কৰা আৰু মহিলা সবলীকৰণ স্থাপন কৰা হ'ব বুলি সিদ্ধান্ত হৈছিল কিন্তু আজিও মহিলা পুৰুষৰ সমানে আগবাঢ়ি যাব পৰা নাই। ইয়াৰ বাবে সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাও যথেষ্ট পৰিমাণে জগৰীয়া।

মহিলা আৰু ভাৰতীয় সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা : ঋক্ বেদত মহিলা সকলক সৰ্বশক্তিমান বুলি স্বীকৃতি দিয়া হৈছিল। মহিলা সকলক দেৱী বুলি পূজা কৰা হৈছিল। তথাপিও আমাৰ পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত মহিলা সকলক সদায়ে নিষ্পেষিত, শোষিত হৈ আহিছে। মুক্তিমেয় কেইগৰাকীমান মহিলাৰ বাহিৰে পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত মহিলা সকলক কেতিয়াও তেওঁলোকৰ ন্যায্যপ্ৰাপ্য ভোগ কৰিবলৈ দিয়া হোৱা নাই। বৈদিক যুগত যদিও মহিলা সকলৰ স্থান কিছুপৰিমাণে উন্নত আছিল তাৰ পিছতে কিন্তু মহিলাৰ স্থান পুনৰ অৱনমিত হোৱা দেখা যায়।

মোগলে ভাৰত আক্ৰমণ কৰাৰ পিছত মহিলাৰ স্থান আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত অতি শোচনীয় হৈছিল। মহিলা সকলক মোগল সেনাই বিয়া কৰাই ধৰ্মান্তৰ কৰাৰ শংকাত কন্যা শিশু সকলক বাল্যকালতে বিবাহ-পাশত আৱদ্ধ কৰাই কন্যা শিশুৰ পিতৃ-মাতৃ হৈছিল চিন্তামুক্ত।

স্বাধীনতা সংগ্ৰামৰ পিচৰ সময়ত মহাত্মা গান্ধীজীয়ে পোনপ্ৰথমে মহিলা সকলক ঘৰৰ চাৰি বেৰৰ মাজৰ পৰা ৰাজপথলৈ আনিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছিল। স্বাধীনতা সংগ্ৰামত সমগ্ৰ ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰে মহিলা সকলে যি অৱদান আগবঢ়াই থৈ গৈছিল সি সঁচাকৈ প্ৰশংসনীয়।

কিন্তু স্বাধীনতাৰ পিছত দেখা যায় ভাৰতৰ মহিলা সকলে যি দৰে ভাৰতৰ ৰাজনীতি বা অৰ্থনৈতিক দিশত আগবাঢ়িব লাগিছিল সেইদৰে আগবাঢ়িব পৰা নাই ফলত সামাজিক ভাবেও তেওঁলোক হৈ পৰিছে শোষিত। পিতৃ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা, পৰিয়ালৰ দায়িত্ব, শিক্ষাৰ অভাৱ, চৰকাৰৰ উপযুক্ত ব্যৱস্থাৰ অভাৱ ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন কাৰণত আমাৰ মহিলা সকল যথেষ্ট পৰিমাণে আজিও পিছপৰি থকা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা গৈছে।

আজিৰ আধুনিক ভাৰতীয় সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত আমি সকলোৱে মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ বিষয়ে কওঁ, কিন্তু কিমান দূৰ মহিলা সকল স্বাধীন সেইটো চিন্তাৰ বিষয়। শিক্ষিত সমাজ খনতে যদি লক্ষ্যকৰো পুৰুষ মহিলা

উভয়ে আজিকালি চাকৰি কৰে। কিন্তু মহিলা সকলে কৰ্মক্ষেত্ৰলৈ ওলায় যাব লাগিব বুলি ৰাতি নৌপুৱাটোই উঠি ঘৰৰ সকলো কাম কৰি সন্তানক শিক্ষানুষ্ঠানলৈ পঠিয়াই স্বামীক কৰ্মক্ষেত্ৰলৈ পঠিয়াই কেতিয়াবা সময়ৰ অভাৱত নিজে ঘৰৰ পৰা পেটত একো এটা নিদিয়াকৈ কৰ্মক্ষেত্ৰত আহি উপস্থিত হ'ব লগীয়া হয়। আকৌ কৰ্মক্ষেত্ৰৰ পৰা স্বামী আৰু পত্নী দুয়ো একেসময়তে ঘৰগৈ পালেও প্ৰথমে পত্নীয়ে স্বামীক চাহ কাপ দি হে নিজৰ খোৱাৰ কথা চিন্তা কৰিব পাৰে। বহু ঘৰত আজি কালি অৱশ্যে পুৰুষ সকলে মহিলা সকলক ঘৰুৱা কাম-কাজত সহায় কৰে যদিও তাৰ সংখ্যা তেনেই নগন্য বা সহায় কৰিলেও প্ৰথমে পুৰুষ সকলে তেওঁলোকৰ জিৰণী লোৱা, ৰাতিপুৱাৰ চাহ কাপৰ সৈতে বাতৰি কাকতখন চোৱা আদি কামসমূহ কৰাৰ পিছতহে সময় পালে পত্নীক সহায় কৰি দিয়ে। আনহাতে আৰ্থিক ভাৱে স্বাৱলম্বী হলেও বহু মহিলা আজিও স্বামীৰ দ্বাৰা নিৰ্যাতিত। মহিলা সকলে সমাজৰ পৰা লাঞ্ছনা পোৱাৰ ভয়তে বা সমাজত উপযুক্ত সুৰক্ষা পোৱাৰ পৰা বঞ্চিত হোৱাৰ শংকাতে তেওঁলোকে স্বামীৰ বিৰুদ্ধে কোনো ধৰণৰ গোচৰ নিদিয়। মহিলা এগৰাকীয়ে স্বামীক ত্যাগ কৰি গ'লে স্বাভাৱিকতে মানসিক ভাবে যথেষ্ট ভাৰাত্ৰাস্ত হৈ থাকে; তেনে অৱস্থাত তেওঁলোকক যেতিয়া আমাৰ মহিলা সকলৰ মাজৰে আকৌ বহুতে বিভিন্ন প্ৰশ্নৰে খৰকা-সৰকা কৰে তেওঁলোক মানসিকভাৱে আৰু দুৰ্বল হৈ পৰে। গতিকে তেওঁলোকে স্বামীক ত্যাগ নকৰি ঘৰতে নৰক যাতনা ভোগ কৰি বিভিন্ন সময়ত মৃত্যু মুখত পৰাও দেখা যায়।

এইখিনিতে এটা কথা উল্লেখ কৰিব লাগিব যে মহিলা সকল বহুক্ষেত্ৰত মহিলাসকলৰ দ্বাৰাই নিৰ্যাতিত হয়। আনহাতে সকলো ক্ষেত্ৰতেই যে মহিলা সকল নিৰ্দোষী সেইটো ক'লেও একপক্ষীয় হ'ব। বিভিন্ন সময়ত মহিলা সকলে প্ৰচলিত আইনৰ সাহায্যলৈ পুৰুষ সকলক বিনাদোষতে শাস্তি প্ৰদান কৰে। কিন্তু ইয়াৰ সংখ্যা তুলনামূলকভাৱে যথেষ্ট কম। সৰহ সংখ্যক নাৰীয়েই হয় পুৰুষৰ হাতত নিৰ্যাতিত।

মহিলাসকল নিৰ্যাতিত হোৱাৰ কাৰণসমূহ :

- ১) পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত পুৰুষ সকলে তেওঁলোকৰ স্থান মহিলা সকলতকৈ সদায় উচ্চ বুলি ভাৱে।
- ২) শিশু অৱস্থাতে পৰা ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীৰ পাৰ্থক্য দেখুৱাই অহাৰ ফলত পুৰুষ সকলে কেতবোৰ কাম কৰিলে তেওঁলোকৰ স্থান অৱনমিত হ'ব বুলি শংকা কৰে। উদাহৰণ স্বৰূপে এটি শিশুৱে তেওঁৰ কিতাপত যদি “দেউতা অফিচলৈ যায়” বা “মায়ে ভাত ৰান্ধে” এনেধৰণৰ বাক্যবোৰ পঢ়িবলৈ পায় তেনেহ'লে শিশু অৱস্থাৰ পৰাই তেওঁৰ এটা মানসিকতা হ'ব যে মাতৃ বা ছোৱালীৰ কাম হ'ল ভাত ৰন্ধা, পুৰুষৰ কাম হ'ল ঘৰখনৰ বাবে উপাৰ্জন কৰা। আকৌ বিভিন্ন সময়ত ছোৱালী এগৰাকীক পিতৃ-মাতৃয়ে ছোৱালী বাবে বিভিন্ন কাম কৰিবলৈ মানা কৰে আনহাতে ল'ৰাবোৰে কেতবোৰ কাম কৰিলে ছোৱালী নেকি বুলি জোকাই, ফলত ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীৰ মাজত প্ৰভেদ গঢ়ি উঠা দেখা যায়।
- ৩) মহিলাসকল আৰ্থিকভাৱে দুৰ্বল হ'লেও পুৰুষ সকলে তেওঁলোকৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্যাতন চলাবলৈ সাহস পায়।
- ৪) আমাৰ চৰকাৰী নীতিসমূহ এই ক্ষেত্ৰত বহুপৰিমাণে জগৰীয়া। এগৰাকী মহিলাই যদি এখন চৰকাৰী প্ৰ-পত্ৰ পূৰণ কৰিব লগা হয় তাত তেওঁ নিজৰ স্বামী /পিতৃৰ নাম উল্লেখ কৰিব লগা হয়।

অৰ্থাৎ তেওঁৰ নিজৰ কোনো পৰিচয় নাই বা তেওঁৰ মাতৃয়ে অজস্ৰ ত্যাগৰ বিনিময়ত তেওঁক ডাঙৰ কৰা স্বত্ত্বেও মাতৃৰ পৰিচয় দিয়াৰ আৱশ্যক নহয়। এগৰাকী বিবাহিত মহিলাৰ ভোটৰ পৰিচয় পত্ৰখন চালে দেখা যায় তাত তেওঁৰ নামৰ লগতে স্বামীৰ নামো উল্লেখ আছে কিন্তু স্বামীৰ পৰিচয় পত্ৰখনত পত্নীৰ কোনো উল্লেখ নাই। এন. আৰ. চি. ফৰ্মখন ভৰ্তি কৰোতে পত্নীয়ে তেওঁৰ স্বামীৰ লগত সম্বন্ধৰ বিষয়ে প্ৰমাণ দিব লাগিব কিন্তু স্বামীয়ে তেওঁৰ পত্নীৰ বিষয়ে কোনো উল্লেখ কৰাৰ প্ৰয়োজন নাই। শিশু এটিক স্কুলত নাম ভৰ্তি কৰিব লাগিলেও দেউতাকৰ পৰিচয় বিচৰা হয় কিন্তু মাকৰ নহয়।

- ৫) চৰকাৰে বহু আইন তৈয়াৰ কৰিছে যদিও তাৰ সঠিক ব্যৱহাৰ এতিয়াও হোৱা নাই। বহু মহিলা অশিক্ষিত কাৰণতে হওঁক বা সামাজিক ভাবে লাঞ্চিত হোৱাৰ ভয়তে হওঁক আইনৰ সহায় লবলৈ শংকা কৰা দেখা যায়। আনহাতে বহুক্ষেত্ৰত আদালতত লাঞ্চিত হোৱাৰ ভয়তো মহিলা সকলে স্বামীৰ বিৰুদ্ধে গোচৰ তৰা দেখা নাযায়।
- ৬) উপযুক্ত শিক্ষা নথকাৰ বাবেও বহুক্ষেত্ৰত মহিলা সকল নিৰ্যাতিত হোৱা দেখা যায়।

মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ উপায় সমূহ :

- ১) স্বামীৰ দ্বাৰা নিৰ্যাতিত বা সামাজিক ভাবে নিৰ্যাতিত মহিলা সকলক উপযুক্ত সুৰক্ষাৰ বাবে বে-চৰকাৰী সংগঠন সমূহে উপযুক্ত পদক্ষেপ লব লাগিব।
- ২) মহিলা সকলক আৰ্থিকভাৱে সুৰক্ষিত কৰিব লাগিব।
- ৩) আইনৰ সাহায্য যাতে সকলোৱে ল'ব পাৰে তাৰ বাবে আইন ব্যৱস্থা সহজলভ্য হ'ব লাগিব।
- ৪) আমাৰ সমাজৰ মহিলা সকলে নিৰ্যাতিত মহিলা সকলক উপযুক্ত সাহায্য প্ৰদান কৰিব লাগিব।
- ৫) চৰকাৰে কেৱল আইন তৈয়াৰ কৰিলেই নহ'ব। সেই আইন প্ৰকৃততৰ্থত কাৰ্য্যকৰী হৈছেনে নাই তাক চাব লাগিব। সমাজত প্ৰতিদিনে যৌতুক, ধৰ্ষণ আদি কাৰণত নাৰী হত্যা হ'বলৈ ধৰিছে কিন্তু ইয়াৰ বিৰুদ্ধে উপযুক্ত আইন আছে যদিও সেই আইনবোৰ কাৰ্য্যকৰী কৰাত ব্যৰ্থ হৈছে।
- ৬) নাৰীয়ে তেতিয়ালৈকে প্ৰকৃততে প্ৰাপ্য অধিকাৰ নাপাব যেতিয়ালৈকে আমাৰ সমাজৰ নাৰী সম্পৰ্কে মানসিকতাৰ পৰিবৰ্তন নহ'ব। আজি ধৰ্ষিতা ছোৱালী এগৰাকীক সহজে সমাজে আঁকোৱালি লব নোৱাৰে। তাইক উপযুক্ত ব্যক্তি এজনে বিয়া কৰাবলৈ আগবাঢ়ি আহিব নিবিচাৰে কিন্তু ধৰ্ষণ কৰা ব্যক্তিজন সহজতে বিবাহ পাশত আৱদ্ধ হোৱা দেখা যায়। কন্যাক্ৰমণ হত্যা আজিও সমাজত চলিয়েই আছে। অৰ্থাৎ আজিও কন্যা শিশুটিক বোজা বুলি ধৰা হয় যাৰ বাবে শিশুটিয়ে এই পৃথিৱীত চকু মেলাৰ আগতেই মাতৃ গৰ্ভতে হত্যা কৰা হয়। বিধৱা, নিঃসন্তান, কমবয়সীয়া মহিলা এগৰাকীৰ বিয়াৰ বিষয়ে সমাজে চিন্তা কৰিবলৈ টান পায় কিন্তু বিবাহযোগ্য কন্যা সন্তান থকা এজন ব্যক্তিৰ পত্নীৰ মৃত্যু হ'লে দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ কথা ভবা হয়। গতিকে মানুহৰ মানসিকতাৰ পৰিবৰ্তন নহ'লে মহিলা সবলীকৰণ কথা চিন্তা কৰি লাভ নাই।
- ৭) সমাজত প্ৰচলিত কু-সংস্কাৰ সমূহেও মহিলা সকলক বিভিন্ন ধৰণে শোষিত কৰি আহিছে। সেয়েহে সমাজৰ পৰা এনেকুৱা কু-সংস্কাৰ সমূহ আঁতৰ কৰিবৰ বাবে মহিলা সকল আগবাঢ়ি আহিব লাগিব।

উপসংহাৰ : মহিলা সবলীকৰণ আৰু বৰ্তমান সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান পৰ্যবেক্ষণ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে মহিলা সবলীকৰণৰ বিষয়ে কেৱল কাকতে পত্ৰই আলোচনা কৰি থাকিলেই নহ'ব। বাস্তৱত তাক কাৰ্য্যকৰী কৰাৰ মানসিকতা নাথাকিলে নাৰী যুগে-যুগে হৈ ৰ'ব নিষ্পেষিত, শোষিত যদিও আমি পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত পুৰুষে নাৰীক শোষণ কৰা বুলি কওঁ বিভিন্ন সময়ত দেখা যায় যে নাৰীসকল মহিলাৰ দ্বাৰাও শোষিত হৈ থাকে। এগৰাকী নাৰী যেতিয়া শাহ হয়, নন্দ হয় বহু সময়ত তেওঁলোকে পাহৰি যায় যে তেওঁলোকো এগৰাকী মহিলা। গতিকে নাৰীৰ সবলীকৰণত বাধা বুলি অকল পুৰুষক জগৰীয়া কৰিলেই নহ'ব। আমাৰ নাৰী সকলো বিভিন্ন সময়ত নাৰী নিৰ্যাতন কাৰ্য্যত লিপ্ত হোৱা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। সেয়েহে মানসিকতাৰ পৰিবৰ্তন অবিহনে নাৰী সবলীকৰণ সম্ভৱ নহয়।

প্ৰাসংগিক গ্ৰন্থ :

অসমীয়া

- ১) গোস্বামী ভাস্কৰজিৎ : ক্ৰমবৰ্ধমান নাৰী নিৰ্যাতন, প্ৰান্তিক ১৬-৩০ নৱেম্বৰ ২০০৪
- ২) বৈশ্য, ধনেশ্বৰ (সম্পাদিত) ২০১০ (প্ৰবন্ধ) “অসমত সামাজিক বিৱৰ্তন আৰু মানসিক উত্তৰণৰ ভিত্তিত নাৰী জাগৰণ। বৰভাগ মহাবিদ্যালয়ৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰকাশিত।

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Women and the Indian Freedom Movement— An Analysis

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Abstract :

The History of Indian Freedom Struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of women. The sacrifice made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place. They fought with true spirit and undaunted courage and faced various tortures, exploitation and hardships to earn us freedom. When most of the men freedom fighters were in prison the women came forward and took charge of the struggle. The list of great women whose names have gone down in history for dedication and undying devotion to the service of India is a long one. Women shouldered critical responsibilities in India's struggle for freedom. They held public meetings, organized picketing of shops selling foreign alcohol and articles, sold khadi and actively participated in National movement. They bravely faced the baton of police and went behind the iron bars. Hundreds and thousands of Indian Women dedicated their lives for obtaining freedom of their motherland. The valuable role played by the innumerable women is all the more significant as most of these women were illiterate and they lent their unstinting support at a time when stepping out of their house itself was considered a taboo for women.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to remember those brave women and pay tribute to the thousands of unsung heroes, most of whom, missed out on the pages of history but without whose support and contribution, India would not have seen the light of freedom.

[Key words : Indian, Freedom, Movement, Women of India, Non Cooperation Movement, Bravery, Sacrifice, Satyagraha, Swadeshi, Civil Disobedience Movement, Salt March, Quit India Movement, Mahatma Gandhi.]

Introduction :

The entire history of the Freedom movement is replete with the saga of bravery sacrifice and political sagacity of great men and women of the country. This struggle which gained momentum in the early 20th century threw up stalwarts like Mahatma

Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, C. Rajapolachari, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhal Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose. Their number and stature often gives us an erroneous impression that it was only a man's movement. But it is not so. Many prominent women played a leading role in the Freedom Movement. The important place assigned to women in India dates back to the time of the Vedas and Smritis. Manu declared that where women are adored Gods frequented that place. During the Vedic Age, the position of women in society was very high and they were regarded as equal partners with men in all respects. All have heard of Maitri, Gargi Sati Anusuya and Sita.

In keeping with this tradition, burden of tears and toils of the long years of struggle for India's freedom was borne by the wives, mothers, daughters, silently and cheerfully. The programme of self imposed poverty and periodical jail going was possible only because of the willing cooperation of the worker's family in the various resistance movements in the villages, the illiterate women played this passive but contributory part as comrades of their men folk. We pay our homage and deep admiration for the womanhood of India who in the hour of peril for the Mother land forsook the shelter of their homes and with unfailing courage and endurance stood shoulder to shoulder with their men folk in the frontline of Indian National Army to share with them the sacrifice and triumphs of the struggle.

Objectives :

The chief objective is to discuss the role and contributions of the Indian women to India's struggle for Independence. Through this study an attempt is made to trace those women whose contributions are not recorded by history but without whose unstinted moral support and undaunted courage and sacrifice would not have strengthened the hopes and aspirations of millions of Indians who actively took part in the Freedom struggle.

Indian Women's Contribution to India's freedom struggle :

It has been more than 20 decades since a large group of people belonging to different regions and different timelines dreamt the same dream. India's independence from the colonial region of the British invaders. Amongst these people millions were women, some known and others uncelebrated. After 68 years since they fulfilled their dream of freedom, so that we could reap the benefits in today's world, these women are still a huge inspiration for all Indians. These women grit and determination in the face of adversity, their courage to look death in the eye, their intense love and respect for their motherland, all serve the same purpose to the ignite our minds and strive for a better world. Even though these women leaders have been long gone and forgotten they deserve every Indian's

acknowledgement, applause and respect. History has witnessed many women with exceptional bravery and intelligence who walked shoulder to shoulder with men of their times.

Women's participation in India's freedom struggle began as early as 1817. Bhima Bai Holkar fought bravely against the British Colonel Malcolm and defeated him in guerilla warfare. Many women including Rani Chin namma of Kittur, Rani Begum Hazrat Mahal of Avadh fought against British East India Company in the 19th Century, 30 years before the First war of Independence 1857.

The role played by women in the War of Independence (Great Revolt of 1857) was credible and invited the admiration of even the leaders of the Revolt. Rani of Ramgarh, Rani Jindar Kaur, Rani Tace Bai, Baiza Bai, Chauhan Rani, Tapaswini Maharani daringly led their troops into the battle field.

Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi whose heroism and superb leadership laid on outstanding example of real patriotism Indian Women who joined the national movement belonged to educated and liberated families, as well as those from the rural areas and from all walks of life, all castes, religious and communities. Sarojini naidu, Kasurba Gandhi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Anee Besant in the 20th Century are the names which are remembered even today for their singular contribution both in battlefield and in the political field.

The history of Indian Freedom struggle can be divided into 3 stages. 1st stage was before the First War of Independence. When there was unorganised and localized fighting mainly Resistance Movement. i.e. after the battle of (1757) which strengthened the political power of British East India Company.

The 2nd stage was during 1857 to 1919 when the strong feeling and thirst for freedom developed and agitation initiated all over the country against the British East India Company.

The 3rd stage was during 1920-1947 when organizations were formed national wide and well organized meetings, Satyagrahas, demonstrations were arranged and launched a series of mass movements - The Non Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement etc. This has developed step by step and unbeaten strength, unity oneness amongst Indians that led to independence.

The First War of Independence 1857-58 was the first general agitation against the rule of the British East India Company. The doctrine of Japse, issue of cartridges at Meerut triggered the fire though there were a member of causes that infuriated the Indian people and soon became a widespread agitation - a grave challenge to the British rule. The immediate consequence was the transfer of power from the British East India Company to the British Gown. The British succeeded in crushing the revolt but it was certainly a

popular revolt where the Indian rules, masses and militia participated enthusiastically, that it is called the First War of Indian Independence. Rani Lakshmibai was the great heroine of the First War of Indian Freedom. She showed the impediment of patriotism, self respect + heroism, she was the queen of a small state but the empress of a limitless empire of glory.

Swadeshi movement emanated from the Partition of Bengal 1905 and continued upto 1908. It was a successful economic strategy to remove the British Empire from power and improve economic conditions in India through following principles of Swadeshi (self sufficiency). Women joined men to protest this diversion by boycotting foreign goods and buying only Swadeshi goods, (goods produced in Bengal). Mrs Nonibala Devi joined the new Jugantar Party which was dedicated to aggressive movement.

General Dyer's Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919) followed the strike wave, when an unarmed crowd of 10,000 Baisakhi celebrities were mercilessly attacked with over 1600 rounds of ammunition. The resistance of ordinary Indians continued with no less than 2000 strikes taking place involving 1.5 million workers in the first six months of 1920. It was in response to this rising mass revolutionary tide that the leadership of the congress was forced to confront its conservatism and give a somewhat more militant face to this programme. The Non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement was thus launched

Non cooperation Movement was started after the return of M.K. Gandhi to India from South Africa in 1915 and took up the demand of self rule and non-cooperation. Sarla Devi, Muthulaxmi Reddy, Sushila Nair, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Sucheta Kreplani and Aruna Asaf Ali are some of the women who participated in the non-violent movement. Kasturba Gandhi wife of Mahatma Gandhi, women of the Nehru family, Kamla Nehru, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit and Swarup Rani also participated in the national Movement. Lado Rani Zutshi and her daughters. Manmohini, Shyama and Janak led the movement in Lahore.

Mahatma Gandhi later demanded for Poorna Swaraj through non-violent methods. His call to join the Satyagraha Movement witnessed women getting involved in all his programmes. Some of the important women who played a very active role in the Swadeshi Movement were Dr. Sarojini Naidu, Smti. Urmila Devi, the widowed sister of the congress leader CR Das, wife of CR Das, Biamma, the mother of Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali, the leaders of All India Khilafat Committee, Durgabai Desmukh, Smti. S. Ambujammal Smti. Basanti Devi and Krishna Bai Ram of Madras and so on.

Gandhiji inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement by conducting the historic Dandi Salt March where he broke the Salt Laws imposed by the British Government. Followed by an entourage of 79 ashram inmates Gandhi embarked on his march from his Sabarmati Ashram in a 2000 mile trek to the remote village Dandi that is located on

the shoes of the Arabian Sea. On 5th April 1930 Gandhi broke the salt law by picking up a fistful of salt lying on the sea-store.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was an important milestone in the history of Indian independence. 26th January 1930 was celebrated as Independence Day in India. It was the height of disobedience of British rule and order. As usual it was repressed and the British Government resorted to brutal firing; killing hundreds of people. Thousands of people including most of the leader were arrested. It was during this movement, women from all four corners of the country came out to back up the movement and played an active role in the struggle. Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Assaf Ali and Bhikaji Cama, to name but a few, inspired millions of others to take the first step towards emancipation and equality. Although the Civil Disobedience movement failed to achieve an immediate positive outcome, it was an important juncture in the history of Indian independence, as it enabled masses to rediscover their inherent strength and confidence to crusade against the British, thanks to the thousands of women who consistently gave physical as well as psychological support to the menfolk.

In August 1942, the Quit India Movement was launched "I want freedom immediately, this very night before dawn if it can be had. We shall free India or die in the attempt, we shall not live to see perpetuation of our slavery" declared the Mahatma as the British resorted to brutal repression against non-violent Satyagrahas. The Quit India resolution taken against British directly addressed women as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom required to sustain the flame of war. Usha Mehta, a committed patriot set up a radio transmitter called 'The Voice of Freedom' to disseminate the 'Mantra' of freedom war. News of protests and arrests, deeds of young nationalists and Gandhi's famous 'Do or Die' message for Quit India Movement were circulated amongst the masses. Usha Mehta and her brother persisted with their task of broadcasting until her arrests.

These acts proved that the British could maintain the empire only at enormous cost due to widespread agitation.

The list of great women whose names have gone down in history for their contribution towards India's freedom struggle is endless. A look into the pages of History gives us countless episodes of courage and sacrifice by unknown women thus inspiring India's freedom struggle.

Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi is a well known figure in Indian history who laid an outstanding influence on the succeeding women freedom fighters. She used to go into the battle field dressed as a man. Holding the reins of the horse in her mouth, she used the sword with both hands. She fought valiantly and although beaten she refused to surrender and fell as a warrior should, fighting the enemy to the last. Her remarkable courage inspired many men and women in India to rise against the alien rule. She was a symbol of bravery,

patriotism, self respect, perseverance and generosity she fought till her last breath for the welfare of women in the country and for the noble cause of India's independence.

Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India a great orator and distinguished poet came into the limelight in 1917. She proved a faithful lieutenant of Mahatma and openly criticised the British rule which caught the attention of the intellectuals and scholars.

Madame Cama in her own way helped the revolutionaries with money and materials. She unfurled the first National flag at the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart 'Germany' in 1907 and declared, "This flag is of Indian independence. Behold, it is born! It has been made sacred by the blood of young Indians who sacrificed their lives I call upon you, gentlemen to rise and salute this flag of Indian Independence."

Anne Besant, the leader of the Theosophical Society joined the Congress and gave a powerful lead to women's movement in India. She was a leading labour organiser, strike leader, reformer, educationist all rolled in one. The first woman President of the Congress, Anne Besant came to be associated with rationalist congress group of workers.

Aruna Asaf Ali, also known as Aruna Ganguly was an active social worker and freedom fighter who along with her husband, a lawyer was involved with the National Congress. She took part in the Salt Satyagraha as well as other protest marches and was imprisoned for her so called impertinence. While in prison she continued her struggle and raised her voice against the inhuman treatment of convicts in Tihar jail.

Matangini Hazra, known as Gandhi Buri remains an obscure name for many Indians. Having initiated herself into the patriotic movement at a later stage in her life, her courage was commendable. During a procession, despite being shot thrice she never backed down and marched forward with the national flag repeating the slogan "Vande Mataram".

Tara Rani Srivastava of Bihar along with her husband, on a certain occasion during a protest march at the Siwan Police Station, played the role of leaders. It was at this procession that her husband was shot but this brave lady remained unflustered. Not only did she tend to him till his death, but she continued her struggle despite all obstacles thus making her nation proud.

Kanaklata Barua, the unsung heroine from Assam played quite a crucial role in India's struggle for freedom. She was a significant member of the Quit India Movement. On the fateful day she accompanied other volunteers of the movement to hoist the National flag but was prohibited by the police. Though she tried convincing that her intentions were noble the British police force shot her down with several others. Thus at the tender age of 17 this young woman sacrificed her life for her country.

Sucheta Kripalani, a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, was one of the trail brazers of the riots that took place during the Partition of India. She was a formidable member of the Indian National Congress and once India gained its independence, she was chosen to

be a part of the drafting committee involved with the creation of the Constitution. Post independence she served as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

Kittur Rani Chinnamma, a celebrated figure in Karnataka, is yet to gain recognition across the country for her efforts during the independence struggle. As early as 1800's this queen of Kittur led an army of soldiers against one of the earliest signs of British dominance, the Doctrine of Lapse.

Begum Hazrat Mahal, played a major role during the first War Independence 1857-58, also known as the Begum of Awadh, wife of the then Lucknow ruler Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Working in close association with the other leaders of the Sepoy Military, she was not only a strategist but fighting on the battlefield she seized the control of Lucknow. Though the English recaptured Lucknow, and she was forced to flee to Nepal, she tirelessly organized soldiers against the British. To acknowledge her endless efforts, the Govt. of India issued a stamp on 10th May, 1984.

Usha Mehta, as a 8 years old participated in a protest against the Simon Commission and shouted her first words of protest against the Raj "Simon go back". But she is best remembered for broad casting the Congress Radio, an underground radio station which functioned during the Quit India Movement.

Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, a known theatre actor, played a crucial role in India's fight for independence, which is known to few. She was the first woman to be arrested for her role as a patriotic leader by the British Govt. and the first woman candidate for the legislative Assembly. She predominantly worked towards improving the socio-economic conditions of women in India reviving lost practices like theatre and handicrafts.

Lakshmi Sahgal, a former Indian Army Officer served a sentence in Burma prison for her role in World War II. Known as Capt. Lakshmi, she enrolled herself into the army formed by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. In fact, she was in charge of establishing and leading the Rani of Jhansi Regiment comprising of women soldiers.

Moolmati, an unknown supporter of the Freedom Movement was the mother of Ram Prasad Bismil who formed the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association in 1928. A simple woman, she supported her son throughout his struggle for the freedom, and even at the time of his hanging, she was firm in her response and remained unmoved. Such was her resolve, post his death, she raised her other son's hand and offered him to the freedom movement. Without her unstinting support and belief, Ram Prasad might not have had the resolve to pursue the path he had chosen.

Raj Kumari Gupta, drawn towards Mahatma Gandhi, joined the freedom struggle. Her zeal and conviction drew her closer to Chandrashekhar Azad and his line of revolutionary response. She contributed greatly to the famous Kakori train robbery, and without the knowledge of her husband and her in-laws she secretly carried messages and

materials to other revolutionaries. Disowned by her in-laws after she was arrested for supplying firearms, she lived an unknown life but she was a true hero and deserves a mention in our history.

Tara Rani Srivastava, passionate about freeing India from British rule, responded to Mahatma Gandhi's call to the Quit India Movement in 1942. Protests were organized and since in those days, police stations were seen as a symbol of Government authority and raising a flag would represent a major show of defence. A crowd gathered and marched towards Siwan Police Station shouting Inquilab. But the police opened fire and her husband was hit. Undeterred Tara tore a part of her saree bandaged him and continued to lead the crowd. By the time she returned her husband died but she continued to support the freedom struggle.

Ahadi Banu Begum came from a conservative Muslim family of Lucknow, was the mother of Maulana Mohmd Ali Jauhar, the leader of the Khilafat Movement. Fondly referred as Bi Amma, this woman of steel was one of the significant Muslim women leaders of India's patriotic movement. During a time when women from Muslim families were strictly prohibited from embarking on anything concerning the outside world, Ahadi Bano showed the gist to speak to a large political gathering and inspired them for the freedom struggle, all from behind the purdah.

Kasturba Gandhi, wife of Mahatma Gandhi worked with him for many years. She was the leader of the Women's Satyagraha, helped her husband in the cause of indigo workers in Champaran and No Tax Campaign in Kaira. She many times took her husband's place when he was under arrest and herself died in prison from a massive heart attack on Feb, 1944.

Kamala Nehru gave full support to her husband, Jawaharlal Nehru in his desire to work for the freedom struggle. In Allahabad, her home town she organized processions, addressed meetings and led picketing of shops selling foreign liquor and articles and played a prominent role in organizing the No Tax Campaign in United Provinces. During the Non Cooperation Movement she organized groups of women and propagated use of Khadi cloth. When her husband was arrested to prevent him from delivering 'seditious' public speech, she went in his place to read it out. She however died of tuberculosis when her husband was in prison.

Last but not the least, mention has to made to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, daughter of Motilal Nehru, who actively took part in the Non-Cooperation movement against the British rule. She represented India in many of the conferences abroad and attended numerous public lectures and challenged the British dominated delegate's rights to represent India. She was a great fighter and served vigorous jail sentences but inspite of it, she carried on her fight against the British domination.

Conclusion :

After a century of revolutions, struggle, blood shedding, satyagraha and sacrifice, India finally achieved independence on August 15, 1947. The Hindus, Muslims, the Sikhs, the Christians and all the other brave sons and daughters of India fought hand in hand to throw the British out of India. Perhaps for the first and the only time in world history the power of a mighty global empire on which the sun never sets, had been challenged and overcome by the moral might of a people armed only with peace ideals and courage.

We have seen from the above discussion that the struggle for India's freedom would not have been possible without the contribution of Indian Women. Countless women have made great and rich in various ways, in the battlefield, in political field, in society, in the economic sphere but most importantly behind the scenes, supporting sons, daughters, husbands, brothers and taking brave decisions. These acts are more significant in context of the limited opportunities of the times and the courage it took to come out and speak for freedom. History speaks volumes of the deeds of these women who came to prominence in the hour of need and could make individual impact in the society. Apart from the celebrities who could find place in the annals of history the collective spirit of multitude of common Indian women was somewhat phenomenal as thousands of them played a crucial role in sustaining the momentum of the movement. At the backdrop of a conservative society, the openness with which the women participated in various activities such as rendering courier service, catering for the freedom fighters nursing etc. they gave moral strength and motivated the men folk consistently. They even went to the extent of selling their precious jewellery to raise funds for the cause of the nation. It is time to remember women of the freedom movement era who fought bravely for their country and contributed towards the achievement of independence of our India. They not only inspire the young generation of Modern India but is a source of inspiration to all. On this 69th Independence year, we admire and salute the women hood of India.

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Feminist Readings of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*

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Innumerable books, articles and essays have been written on woman from more or less restricted point of views - be it psychological, cynical, religious, psychoanalytical and feminist written by women themselves but it was Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, a book on woman, her historical and contemporary situation based on Western culture which was biologically accurate and consistent. It is hailed to be a 20th century classic and landmark in the history of feminism. Five decades after its appearance, it was successful in transforming perceptions of the social relationship of man and womankind in our time. 'Feminine Literature' nowadays is animated less by a desire to demand our rights than by an effort towards clarity and understanding. The work has given rise to many questions, criticisms and controversy. De Beauvoir does try to portray an independent woman of the present. She philosophises on the perspective, which is that of existentialist's ethics based on Sartre's existentialism. De Beauvoir being French does derive a lot from the French way of life, customs, ideologies and literature. Writing on woman cannot be a happy or easy prospect infact it is a bit irritating as it gives rise to many opinions and ideas. The word 'Feminine' is hailed to be a battleword. Some people wonder or question if women still exist in all their feminine traits, humbleness and elegance. It was a time when young belles were directed and attracted towards courtship, marriage and masculine support while boys inclined towards violence and life of productive activity. The central idea of the book is that since patriarchal times, woman have been forced to secondary place in relation to men.

'Who is a Woman?. What is a Woman?. 'Woman is a womb'. A woman is mysterious though her identity is always threatened by her surroundings in variant ways. People in US believe, woman is lost as she has nothing solely that belongs to her. Her dependency is her greatest weakness. The first major female want or need is her recognition as a human being and not merely as someone's daughter, sister, wife, mother and all the other relations she is bound with. Woman hold to the philosophy of the enlightenment, rationalism of nominalism, women to them, are merely the human beings arbitrarily

designated by the word 'woman'. Psychologists regard woman as first human being. Every concrete human being is singular, separate individual. Women sometimes assert themselves to be on equal grounds with their male counterpart as par masculine consideration and respect, mainly to avoid feminine weakness.

Women from time immemorial have been forced to occupy a secondary position in relation to man. Seen minutely it has been observed that the feminine characteristics are forced by environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. Women have become professionally and financially independent but besetted with innumerable difficulties they have to face both in the house and outside. These women are prejudiced both at home and work-place - jealousy, specially if there are unmarried women around. Men do not enjoy feminine direction at home or outside.

Man is the provider of the family, this concept is very middle-class though in US and other countries seventy five percent woman go out and work outside. Women have come to be associated and expected on all levels, with the psychological development of their children, playing an important role. Many women have been found to opt for work to avoid working in the kitchens while others work to supplement the provider's earnings to enhance their financial stability. Professional woman and highly placed women in business can attain full position of independence and equality who have profound and permanent interest in their work and projects. A man never presents himself as an individual. Masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. Man represents positive while woman represent negative, defined by limiting criteria without reciprocating. Women have ovaries, a uterus imprisoning in her subjectivity, circumscribing her within the limits of her own nature. Man ignores his anatomies and direct and normal connection with the outside world. Woman's body is a hindrance weighed down by everything. The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities.

Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Man can think himself devoid of a woman but a woman cannot because she is absolute sex. He is the subject, the Absolute while she is the Other. This duality of Absolute and Other is the expression of duality of existence. Woman dependency is history as they are not given the ability to culminate in a unit. Infact they have no concrete means for organising into a unit to face the difficult situations. Women do have a revengeful fetish creating problems for man as they are emancipated socially through man's need, sexual desire. They cannot be called slaves nor equals. Presently they are supposed to have monopolized important posts and have cruised into man's domain. But they lacked solidarity of work and interest which gave an edge to the man. Duality relents competitions and the winner will always assume the status of Absolute. Women may have failed to lay claims to the status because of definite sources for she

needs the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity and her Other role. Men and women have never shared the world in equality. Males are confirmed of their superiority, Lords of Creation. Infact some point the fact that subordination of women is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. Women are not wrong when they decline to accept the rules laid down for them, for the rules are made by men for their own comfort. Legally, politically, socially economically and historically, women have never been given equal status with man. Their place was home and hearth. Man makes Woman, the Other but woman fails to lay claim to her status as she feels the cord of the bond as she lacks certain resources. At times , Women are happy to be called the Other. Though by eighteenth century, democratic ideas were instilled in men as a result of which slowly, women frayed to work in factories with their male counterparts for productive work.

Women are also human beings, a concrete one, an individual and should be so treated. Simon de Beauvoir wanted to find out about what she calls a mysterious and threatened reality known as Femininity. It is the destiny of a woman to be female - the eternal feminine, the word is used symmetrically only as a matter of form, for legal purpose. She has no decisive role to play, relaxation is given only for her sex. A man's body is a normal connecting agency to the world while a woman's physical self is her hindrance. She is a natural defectiveness and is called an 'incidental being'. A woman is an autonomous being because man can think of himself without woman but a woman cannot think of herself without man. A woman is hailed 'the sex', she is defined and differentiated with reference to her , she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject , he is the Absolute— she is the Other.

Woman cannot constitute themselves as a whole, as they have no past, no history, no religion etc. Man is the presupposed master and the woman, his slave. Woman have always been man's dependency, if not his slave. Modernity also has not given woman the kind of freedom on entirety as they should have. Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. After the industrial revolution, woman frayed into productive labour , which gave women a certain economic stability.

To remove the myths and doubts regarding who or what a woman is, Beauvoir first turned to Biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism. These disciplines reveal indisreputable essential differences between men and women but provide no justification for woman's inferiority. They all take woman's inferior 'destiny' for granted. "Destiny" has three chapters, the first being 'Biological Data' describing the relationship of ovum to sperm in all kinds of creatures. In 'The Psychoanalytical Point of View', Beauvoir expounds Freud's and Alfred Alder's theories. In 'The Point of View of Historical Materialism', Beauvoir relates to the origin of the family, , private property and the state by Friedrich Engels

though lacks in basis or reasons. A woman situates herself in the domesticity of life while man goes about working, It is his duty to kindle the fire of the house. The discovery of metals enlarged the scope of agricultural land. Private property, master of slaves and earth, man becomes the proprietor of woman too, great historical defeat of the feminine sex. The men takes his productive labour to be of immense authority. Man always have a sovereignty where he indulges in sexual caprices - wherein he fornicated with slaves or courtesans as he practises polygamy. Woman are proletariat and are downtrodden. The problem of woman is to seek, fulfilment and accomplishment as an individual. Individualism can be observed through challenge, struggle and single combat. Woman's incapacity brought her ruin because man regarded her in the perspective of his project for enrichment and expansion. A woman is productive in all aspects- worker and as for her reproductive function.

'Female' the word has an insulting tang to it for it emphasizes woman's animality-swollen termites, female praying mantis, spider, tigress, lioness, panther having feminine imbibedness. Reproductive act is the resultant of the sperm and eggs. Initially Platonic myths analyzes that there were men, women and hermaphrodites having two faces, four arms, four legs, and two conjoined bodies. Women are incidental being. Man do have the element of humanity as they always take the female to be inferior in self. It is the male whose sperm is protected in the egg, to become human being later. This amalgamation is complex- as a woman has to attain her puberty, then the process can be followed. Her body undergoes a change which is disfunctioning for her for quite sometime. But she handles it and maintains the physiology of her being.

Not only biologically but psychologically woman has to feel that she is a woman-defining herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional self. Psychology is both complex and methodical. No one worried about woman's destiny, it was the slight modifications in feminine libido that made a woman (girl) go through narcissistic phase. The transition of male and female is subjective, as the male organ will remain the specific organ of eroticism while woman must pass from clitoral pleasure to vaginal. Woman feel mutilated in their sexuality as they find the organs mystery which arises in them a conflict because of a forced attraction. A woman seeks 'the sovereign father' whom she seeks in her lover or husband where the feeling to be dominated is obvious. For woman, there are no choices, only compulsions and inhibitions. Sexuality does play a decisive role in human life, as it is inter-related with one's own body. In psychoanalysis, determinism and collective unconscious are undeniable generality. Woman defines herself by her consciousness of her own femininity by rejecting the contributions of Science or denying the fertility of some of its insights. Woman has her own nature a hankering for feminine destiny. They should reject the flights from reality and seek self-fulfillment in

transcendence. A psychoanalyst will interpret all social claims of woman as phenomena of the masculine protest. To discover woman we need to take the human being in its totality taking the total perspective into account.

Professional woman and highly placed woman in business are woman with profound interest in work and where Beauvoir is concerned about the genuine work and projects. Beauvoir refers to one important and firm basis for an ideal relations between man and woman, for which she questions that man and woman's higher education should be different. For men, 'domestic science' should be emphasised as it would provide training. Beauvoir is quite approving of equal education between man and woman specially in the American colleges. As a result women wanted to be among their male counterparts not in the gallery amongst the women. There is a defiance attitude in American women as they are haunted by a sense of their femininity.

Of all the writing from the existentialist movement, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has been hailed as the path breaking study of women which has had an extensive and enduring impact.

It is also the work of Anthropology, Sociology, Biology, and psychoanalysis. Beauvoir has used penetrating imaginative power to put forward an idea which to a large extent is talked in a hush-hush manner. If women need to prove then they should be bold enough to learn about their sexuality, protect it and pave ways to make women free from all sorts of violence and harassment.

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Domestic Violence against Woment : A Serious Issue of our Society

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Abstract :

Domestic violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Domestic violence includes physical aggression, sexual abuse and psychological violence. Usually when these violence become extreme, it results in deaths. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. This problem is not a new one rather it has its deep roots inserted since decades.

In our society, many women are ill treated by their husbands but it is seen that they remain silence and never report about such incidences. Due to such domestic violence, many women at times lose their precious life and this should not happen as women are crucial to the growth and development of any nation and the world at large.

This paper tries to find what exactly is domestic violence, causes and types of domestic violence, certain rights given to women under the domestic violence act and how domestic violence psychologically affects woman.

[**Key words:** Domestic violence, domestic violence act, psychological effect]

Introduction :

Women throughout the world have been given lower status than men. Earlier, women were expected to get married and settle down in life and the rights of power, position and authority over women were given to men. Women were given a very subordinate role and status. In the 21st century even though women are educated and equally participating in employment with men, still their lives are being controlled directly or indirectly.

Domestic violence against women is a serious problem concerning human rights violation. In last two decades violence against women has emerged as the most burning issue throughout the globe. Day- to- day violence is taking a lift in spite of all the necessary

actions taken by the government agencies. Women are vulnerable targets to extreme forms of aggression such as incest, rape, dowry deaths, trafficking etc.

Meaning of Domestic Violence :

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

Domestic violence includes harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault - intimidation. It includes physical injury, as well as "wilfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place a spouse in fear of injury and compelling the spouse by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the spouse has a right to abstain". Confining or detaining the spouse against one's will or damaging property are also considered as acts of violence. Domestic violence includes not only inter-spousal violence, but also violence perpetrated by other family members

There are certain rights guaranteed to women under article 14,15 and 21 of Indian Constitution based on which an act was introduced titled Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. According to this act Domestic violence means any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute violence if it,

- i. Harms or injures or endangers the healthy safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical of aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse;
- ii. Harasses, harms, injuries or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security;
- iii. Has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or nay person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b);
- iv. Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to be aggrieved person.

Types of Domestic Violence

1. **Physical-** Like slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, grabbing, pinching, hitting, biting, punching, kicking, threats with an object or weapon, and murder. It also includes traditional practices harmful to women such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of passing a widow, and her property, to her dead husband's brother).

2. **Sexual-** Like coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others.

3. **Psychological-** It includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation.

4. **Economic-** It includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.

5. **Emotional-** It includes constant criticism, belittling victim's abilities and competency, name-calling, insults, put-downs, silent treatment, manipulating victim's feelings and emotions to induce guilt, subverting a partner's relationship with the children, repeatedly making and breaking promises.

Causes of Domestic Violence :

There is no single cause of domestic violence. It comes from a combination of factors, including society's attitudes, community responses, and the individual psychology experiences of the abuser and the abused. Domestic violence is the result of an abuser's desire for power and control. Abusers think to control their partner because of low self-esteem, extreme jealousy, difficulties in regulating anger and other strong emotions, or when they feel inferior to the other partner in education and socioeconomic background. Some men with very traditional beliefs may think they have the right to control women, and that women aren't equal to men. Women are considered less important by many in our society and this creates an imbalance of power between the sexes. As a result male abusers are too often allowed to get away with their actions. According to some people, domestic violence occurs because the victim provokes the abuser to violent action while others believe the abuser simply has a problem managing anger. In fact, "the roots of domestic violence can be attributed to a variety of cultural, economic and psychological factor.

Problem like dowry is also contributing to domestic violence towards women to a great extent. There have been gruesome reports of young bride being burnt alive or subjected to continuous harassment for not bringing home the amount of demanded dowry. Apart from all these, psychopathology, substance abuse, poverty, cultural factors, anger, stress, and depression are often thought to cause domestic violence. Many cases of domestic violence against women occur due to jealousy when the spouse is either suspected of being unfaithful or is planning to leave the relationship. The most common causes for women stalking and battering include dissatisfaction with the dowry and exploiting women for more of it, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with him, neglecting children,

going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking properly or on time, indulging in extra marital affairs, not looking after in-laws etc. In some cases infertility in females also leads to their assault by the family members. At times, women are even sexually coerced by their partner themselves against their will. They are brutally beaten and tortured for not conceiving a male child. Incidents like, ripping off a woman's womb for killing the female foetus when she disagrees for abortion have also come to light. Apart from these, it is sometime seen that when the income of a working woman is better than her partner or due to her work she has to come to the house late at night then the chance of domestic violence is high in such cases.

Domestic Violence Act :

Under this Act, women are granted certain rights like-

- **Right to reside in a shared household :**

The Act secures a woman's right to reside in the matrimonial or shared household even if she has no title or rights in the household. A part of the house can be allotted to her for her personal use. A court can pass a residence order to secure her right of residence in the household.

The Supreme Court has ruled in a recent judgment that a wife's claim for alternative accommodation lie only against her husband and not against her in-laws and that her right to 'shared household' would not extend to the self-acquired property of her in-laws.

- **Right to obtain assistance and protection:**

A woman who is victimized by acts of domestic violence will have the right to obtain the services and assistance of Police Officers, Protection Officers, Service Providers, Shelter Homes and medical establishments as well as the right to simultaneously file her own complaint under Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code for matrimonial cruelty.

- **Right to issuance of Orders:**

She can get the following orders issued in her favour through the courts once the offence of domestic violence is prima facie established :

1. **Protection Orders:** The court can pass a protection order to prevent the accused from aiding or committing an act of domestic violence, entering the workplace, school or other places frequented by the aggrieved person, establishing any kind of communication with her, alienating any assets used by both parties, causing violence to her relatives or doing any other act specified in the Protection order.
2. **Residence Orders:** This order ensures that the aggrieved person is not dispossessed, her possessions not disturbed, the shared household is not alienated or disposed off, she is provided an alternative accommodation by the Respondent if she so requires, the Respondent is removed from the shared household and he and his

- relatives are barred from entering the area allotted to her. However, an order to remove oneself from the shared household cannot be passed against any woman.
3. **Monetary Relief:** The Respondent can be made accountable for all expenses incurred and losses suffered by the aggrieved person and her child due to the infliction of domestic violence. Such relief may include loss of earnings, medical expenses, loss or damage to property, and payments towards maintenance of the aggrieved person and her children.
 4. **Custody Orders:** This order grants temporary custody of any child or children to the aggrieved person or any person making an application on her behalf. It may make arrangements for visit of such child or children by the Respondent or may disallow such visit if it is harmful to the interests of the child or children.
 5. **Compensation Orders:** The Respondent may be directed to pay compensation and damages for injuries caused to the aggrieved person as a result of the acts of domestic violence by the Respondent. Such injuries may also include mental torture and emotional distressed caused to her.
 6. **Interim and Ex parte Orders:** Such orders may be passed if it is deemed just and proper upon commission of an act of domestic violence or likelihood of such commission by the Respondent. Such orders are passed on the basis of an affidavit of the aggrieved person against the Respondent.

Psychological Effect of Domestic Violence on Women :

Abuse can have a serious impact on the way a person thinks and interacts with the world around them. Domestic violence affects one's thoughts, feelings and behaviors and can significantly impact one's mental stability. Women who are beaten or sexually assaulted, the emotional and physical strain can lead to suicide. These deaths are the only options on the hands of the women to escape from violent relationships. Research suggests that abused women endure enormous psychological suffering because of violence. Many of them are severely depressed or anxious, while others show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is characterized by symptoms such as flashbacks, intrusive imagery, nightmares, anxiety, emotional numbing, insomnia, hyper-vigilance, and avoidance of traumatic triggers. They may be chronically fatigued, but unable to sleep; they may have nightmares or eating disorders; turn to alcohol and drugs to numb their pain; or become isolated and withdrawn. Mental health sequelae to domestic violence include anxiety, depression and post traumatic stress disorder (Bonami et al., 2006), often presenting with co-morbidities such as self-harm, and drug and alcohol misuse (Kaysen et al., 2007; Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994). Additionally, women may experience low self-esteem, anxiety and depression, passivity and learned helplessness (Stewart & Cucutti, 1993), as well as post traumatic stress disorder

and suicidal feelings (British Medical Association, 1998). A psychological revulsion to the women's own bodies was a direct consequence of the physical abuse and associated scarring. The longevity of the psychological effects of these injuries affected the way the women perceived themselves, with an evident dislike towards specific parts of their body that had been targeted by the perpetrator.

Conclusion :

Domestic violence against women is a serious problem concerning human rights violation.

Any abusive, violent, coercive, forceful, or threatening actor word inflicted by one member of a family or household on another can constitute domestic violence. There are certain rights guaranteed to women under article 14,15 and 21 of Indian Constitution based on which an act was introduced titled Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Domestic violence is the result of an abuser's desire for power and control. Abusers think to control their partner because of low self-esteem, extreme jealousy, difficulties in regulating anger and other strong emotions, or when they feel inferior to the other partner in education and socioeconomic background. Many cases of domestic violence against women occur due to jealousy when the spouse is either suspected of being unfaithful or is planning to leave the relationship. Domestic violence affects one's thoughts, feelings and behaviors and can significantly impact one's mental stability. As the women suffer from psychological trauma and stress, so it is necessary that they should seek professional help and go for counselling sessions in order to overcome their problem and live a life without stress and anxieties.

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Chandraprova Saikiani : A Pioneering Woman Towards Women Empowerment

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Abstract :

Chandraprova Saikiani, a very prominent figure in the history of Assamese women's movement emerged at this time. Saikiani's daring activism and writings have had a liberating impact on women at a time when men were dominating the scene. She, in a sense, symbolized liberation of Assamese women. Saikiani's mission was to assist women to become aware of their potential and power. Chandraprova Saikiani's life is representative of the struggle of Assamese women in the early part of the twentieth century for education, for political rights, for the right to establish oneself as an independent social entity and to fight against social injustice and discrimination. However, though she did not cease to do that also, Saikiani chose rather to merge her personal struggle with that of Assamese women. She made a strong protest against the unequal treatment to men and women by the society. The Assam Mahila Samity established its branches in different parts of Assam. It concentrated against the system of child marriage, polygamy etc. and encouraged widow remarriage. Assam Mahila Samity had also undertaken certain welfare programme for the upliftment of women's status. The role of education of women was variously stressed to bring about a positive change in the society. Thus, women became conscious of their own position as well as their identity in the society.

[**Key words** : Freedom, Struggle, Injustice, women. Rights.]

Introduction :

Chandraprova Saikiani, social activist, freedom fighter, politician, once a firebrand rebel and great humanitarian, who can aptly be described as the first feminist of Assam. She has been referred to as a 'daughter of fire' (Agnikanya) and a 'rare wonder' (Bismit Betikram) for her crusading zeal and fiery rebellion, against the social evils and the medieval patriarchal ethos of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Assam. Parallel to

women's movement in India, the women's movement in Assam dates back to the early twentieth century. The efforts of Assamese social reformers opened avenues for women to acquire education. Women received a strong impetus to come forward to get education and to become aware of the suffering of their lot. Chandraprova Saikiani's role in empowering Assamese women through her active participation in National Freedom Movement and Women's Liberation Movement in Assam was of great significance. She had proved herself as the liberator of women in Assam at a time when the conservative society did not respect the needs and aspirations of women.

Early life :

Chandraprova Saikiani, born on 16th March 1901, in a remote village called Doisingiri in Bajali, in old Kamrup District. She was the daughter of Ratiram Mazumder and Gangapriya. Chandraprova Saikiani took her primary education at Bhaluki village and after she got admitted in the Boy's M.V.School at Kathalmuri as there was no girls' school in that locality. She emerged as the symbol and representation of the struggles of the Assamese women in the early part of the twentieth century. The struggle for political rights, against social injustice and most important of all the establishment of a socio-economic identity through education and social rights were central to her battle for women and the downtrodden. Chandraprova's private problems like her early struggles to educate herself and her younger sister Rajaniprova, against the prevailing conservatism of the village society, fighting against social evils and injustice against women in relation to marriage, motherhood and widowhood meted out to her sisters, her own unwedded motherhood, were merged with the struggle, of the mass of Assamese women. Her life, described as a turbulent river constantly dashing against rocks, but flowing on and on, was the stuff of fiction. Her journey from her remote village Doisingiri to the Nagaon Mission School run by the American Baptist Missionaries, thence to Tezpur as a teacher and the beginning of her career as a freedom fighter and political leader is a story of struggle and endurance.

Her role in Women's Liberation Movement :

Indian tradition has not given equality to women and it was deeply felt by Chandraprova Saikiani and she tried to recover Assamese women from that state of subordination. Saikiani thought that an educated and economically independent woman takes all decisions concerning various aspects of her life. An empirical observation of women's needs is essential for the process which leads to their empowerment. Because, empowerment of women basically means providing them with equal opportunities in all spheres whereas gender equality plays a crucial role in uplifting women. Chandraprova

Saikiani was the catalyst to the beginning and spread of modern education for women in Assam, educating herself and spreading the light of literacy by establishing schools for girls in the backward villages, in her birth place. Moving from house to house, collecting girls, imploring parents, using the bicycle as the mode of communication. Chandraprova Saikiani felt that the slow paced life of the Assamese women, were the deterrent to freedom and equality. The 'modern' mode of transport the 'bicycle' which gave mobility and freedom to men were taken by her as a symbol of emancipation for women. 'Abhijatri' (1996), the Sahitya Academy Award winning novel by noted writer Nirupama Borgohain on the life of Chandraprova Saikiani records her feelings which she expresses to a village boy as-"If only I had a bicycle like you, I could have covered miles within moments....., and I must own a bicycle one day....." (Page-45-46). She would indeed ride a bicycle, covering miles and wanderings in her village and state, through mobility, creating a new liberated female identity. Her contribution to women's education in Assam is unsurpassed. Chandraprova Saikiani's desire to reach the heights of achievement in education, emancipation and equality are expressed in her desire for mobility. Such a personality as Chandraprova Saikiani, a rare mixture, of the tough passionate rebel and the eternal romantic was the material which created legends and history. Her convictions and beliefs were expressed not only in her life's, but also in her work of fiction Pitribhitha (1937) regarded as one of the early modern Assamese novel which attains a special status in Assamese literature.

Her role in Freedom Moment :

The freedom movement guided by the Gandhian ideology had a liberating effect on women in Assam. Mahatma Gandhi treated women as equal to men and encouraged to take up the cause of the country. In 1921, Gandhi started the Non-Cooperation Movement against the British government and in the same year he visited Assam with the message of non-cooperation. He urged Assamese women to take responsibilities to unite the country and work to free it from foreign domination. Chandraprova Saikiani met Gandhi when he visited Tezpur town and having been deeply influenced by his ideology and vision, she joined the Non-Cooperation movement and appealed to the womenfolk of Assam to come out for the cause of the nation. Women of Assam irrespective of class, caste and creed jumped into the freedom struggle under the guidance of Chandraprova Saikiani and played a crucial role in the freedom movement of India. The promotion of spinning and weaving, one of the major agenda of the non-cooperation movement, enthused the Assamese women who were traditional experts in spinning and weaving. Even Gandhi was highly impressed at their expertise in weaving. Chandraprova Saikiani engaged herself in the Non-Cooperation movement, imparted non-cooperation message

village to village and mobilized women workers. They began to accompany their husbands in freedom movement, addressed public meetings, spoke against opium, alcohol addiction and campaigned against the use of foreign goods and for the use of swadeshi goods. Thus, women experienced new orientation and vitality in their lives. There was a remarkable attitudinal change in Assam which made them question the injustices inflicted on them. They became aware of the outside world and their subjugated status. So, a whole range of changes -emotional, social and political happened in the lives of women. Women of Assam had a great contribution towards the success of Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam. In this respect, Chandraprova Saikiani was stood as a symbol of courage for Assamese women and inspired them to become active fighter for freedom. Women power was strengthened by the formation of Mahila Samities and their constructive works in which Chandraprova Saikiani's role was exceptional.

Formation of Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samity :

One of the most significant developments in the history of Assamese women's movement was the formation of a state level organization called the Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samity that came into existence in 1926 under the leadership of Chandraprova Saikiani. In Assam, the movement for empowerment of women is almost as old as the freedom movement in this part of the country. It dates back to as early as in 1926, when the women attending the Dhubri session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha got together under the leadership of Chandraprova Saikiani and announced formation of the Asom Mahila Samity, which was later rechristened as Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samity. The novel 'Abhijatri' records in vivid images, the scene of that famous meeting of the Assam Sahitya Sabha at Nagaon in 1925, when Chandraprova protested the rule of women, sitting behind a curtained enclosure at public meeting. Her impassional plea to the assembled women-"Are you human beings or caged animals that you are sitting inside an enclosure? God has not created women lower than men.....I appeal to you my sisters, tear apart this barrier and come out, to the open air, to a free world.....". (Page-146-147). The tremendous response of the womenfolk breaking the bamboo curtain and emerging in a body to confront the world can be regarded as a path breaking event in the history of women emancipation in Assam. The Assamese women recognised in Saikiani a leader who could take up their cause forward. Realising women's poor participation in the political issues, Saikiani personally took upon herself many roles. Along with Saikiani other young educated women and school teachers' like- Laksmpriya Chaliha, Punyaprova Das, Chandrakanti Das and Rajabala Das came forward to fight for women's cause.

After the suspension of Non-Cooperation movement Chandraprova Saikiani joined herself in the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi. She understood it clearly

that political and economic freedom should go hand in hand, otherwise fruits of freedom cannot be tasted. So, she worked to achieve both political and economic freedom. Under her leadership, Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samity carried the message of Mahatma Gandhi and freedom struggle to all women of Assam and worked for women's education and self employment. Apart from spreading women's education to every nook and corner of Assam, the samity took up the welfare of the mother and the child along with fighting for the cause of opium prohibition, removal of child marriage, spread of khadi and other indigenous industries. They also took special care to help orphans and destitute women and to remove untouchability. Thus; it played an important role in bringing about awareness among the women to fight against their repression and to develop a sense of self respect. In 1929, Child Marriage Restraint Act was introduced in India to prohibit the system of child marriage. The members of the Mahila Samity took active part in preventing the parents from getting their children married off at a tender age. As a result of all these public activities and participatory initiatives women became empowered of many legal aspects too. Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samity made significant steps in empowering the women folk in Assam. Dr. Aparna Mahanta comments as "The story of the establishment and growth of the Assam Mahila Samiti in the second quarter of the twentieth century is interwoven with the personal history of Chandraprova Saikiani, unusual woman for the time. (Journey of Assamese Women, 1636-1937).

Findings and Conclusion :

The 'Courageous Voyager'- a metaphor for the hazardous, pioneering, often tragic life's journey of Chandraprova Saikiani, a true path-finder among Assamese women. Noted writer, critic, Homen Borgohain's perspective comment sum up Chandraprova's relationship with the Assamese society. He has remarked that Chandraprova Saikiani was the torch-bearer of the Feminist Movement in Assam. Had she belonged to any other community, her eventful life would have enriched the literary tradition of her people. But in Assam, very few know her or of her great contribution.

Chandraprova Saikiani, a rare member, of the tough passionate rebel and the eternal romantic was the material which created legends and history. Her convictions and beliefs were expressed not only in her lives, but also in her work of fiction *Pitribhitha* (1937) regarded as one of the early modern Assamese novels which attains a special status in Assamese literature.

On the 16th march, 1972, Chandraprova Saikiani's eventful life came to an end. She taught Assamese women to respect themselves, to assert themselves and to take pride in fighting against foreign rule. It was Chandraprova Saikiani who made Assamese women ready to serve the nation without any hesitation. Thereby, breaking tradition,

throwing caution and convention to the winds and providing a fitting tribute to women who lived and died for a world, free from prejudices' and discrimination. In present day Assamese society, full of vices like witch-hunting, dowry, domestic violence, we greatly feel the absence of a courageous woman leader like Chandraprova Saikiani.

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Title: The socio-religious status of women from Rig vedic to present age

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The status of women is a relative and multidimensional concept, since time immemorial, women has powerful role in socio political, intellectual and religious fields. Men and women constitute, philosophically speaking, the two sides of the coin. But the condition and status of women in Indian society changed substantially from the early period to the beginning of the present century.

The status of women in any society may be truly judged by the way in which the birth of the girl is celebrated. To start the status of women in Ancient India. In the Rig veda there is no reference to an instance where the birth of a girl was considered inauspicious. The position of the maiden in home and the society may best be measured by the freedom she enjoys for her education. In the Rig veda the fact that girls received education is evident from the composition of hymns by the female seers. Female seers had visualized the mantras like the male seers. Although it is not always easy to distinguish the female names from the male ones yet based on the probable gender of the names, the male and female seers are separated from each other. So certain seers were defined to the female seers or the speakers of the vedic verses comes to about thirty. Some of them are Lopamudra, Ratri, Dakshina, Vak, Sraddha and so on. In this period we notice liberal outlook in so far as women empowerment is concerned.

So far as marriage system is concerned, reference of old age marriage is found in the Rig veda child marriage did not exist in Rig vedic times as no reference is available . In the Rig veda, few indirect references to the widows and their remarriage are found. The nature of widow remarriage is uncertain but it is obvious that the widow was comfortably adjusted in the society and her condition was not pitiable. Sati pratha also did not exist in the Rigveda, because there is not a single context. Purdah was also vogue in the Rigvedic period. Women used to take part in social and religious activities with men. The presence of ladies in public gatherings was a normal feature in the vedic times. Like every patriarchal society here also the father is the commanding authority, but in the household affairs the mother is considered to be the supreme.

Regarding the legal position of women nothing has been clearly said in the Rigvedic verses. The legal-status of the daughter is hinted in a few passages, which are not quite conclusive.

On the whole the position of women was fairly satisfactory in the Rig vedic age. The position which women occupied in Hindu society in the dawn of civilization during the vedic age is much better than what we ordinarily expect it to have been.

During the time of Upanishad period, women began to take keen interest in the study of the philosophical problem. Polygamy was very vague in the Vedic and the Upanishadic period.

But in the Brahmana age the position and the status of women got decline. The Brahmana preached different Dharmas. According to Chaturasrams the only dharma of a women should be "Pativrata".

We also seen the same pathetic condition of women during the times of Puranas. During this time puberty marriages were popular and came to be practiced. Widow Remarriage was prohibited. Husband was given the status of God for women, education was totally denied to her custom of "Sati" was introduced, purdah system cam into vogue, polygamy cam to be tolerated and women were forbidden to offer sacrifices and prayers and reading of religious books.

In the Epic age, self restraint and self respect of women were the hallmarks. The abduction of Sita by Ravana, Drupadi's "Vastra haran" at the dice hall, Rama's suspicion for Sita's chastity and his attempt to take her "Agni Pariksha" and the extremely pathetic lament of Gandhari in the "Strivilapa Parvadhyaya" of Mahabharata are all that show not only their helpless condition but also show their degraded position. So we see that though in some places of the epic, women were portrayed as helpless and without any high status, at the same time, there are also some indications in which women were given a very high status. In the Ramayana, Sita was worshipped by men as a Lakshmi. She was an ardhangini of Rama. The Mahabharata makes the position still more disgraceful. According to its injunctions', "women are gifted with the most powerful senses". They have no scriptures to follow and only are living lies. Beds, seats, ornament, food and drink and absence of all that is respectable and righteous, indulgenceship disagreeable wards and love of sexual companionship- there were bestowed by Brahma upon women". (Mahabharata, Anushasan Parvan, 40-11-12). Again , women have no sacrifice ordained for them. There are no shradhas which they are called upon to perform. They are not required to observe any fast. To serve and worship their husbands with respect and obedience forms their only duty. Through the transaction of that duty only they succeed in conquering heaven". (Mahabharata, Anushasan Parvan, 46-13)

The glorified as well as the pathetic condition of women during the two epics constitute the prevailing theme in the literatures of Smrities, Sutras and Sastras. Manu, the famous law giver, also somewhat confused regarding the status of women. Because in some places of his Samhita, he classified women with Sudras and also in some other places of the same version, he compared women with the mother Goddesses like Lakhmi and Saraswati. According to Manu " the two sexes are unequal in strength, stamina and psychology. But at the same time, in some other places of his book "Manu Smrite" , he gave women a very prestigious position.

In Muslim period, more restrictions were imposed on women due to the rigidity of the caste system and imposition of Brahminical austerities on the entire society.

However, if we look back to the history we have seen that the status of women of Assam is different. Here history reflects that in ancient Assam, the status of women was very high and they enjoyed freedom. They even took part in the administration. In the royal families, they were in a prestigious position. In this connection, we can mention the names of Nayana, the wife of Gopala, Harshapalas queen Ratra and Brahmin lady Paluka.

In Ahom period, women also occupied a higher position. Even in history it is also evidence that Ahom queen Phuleswari and Ambika etc ruled over Assam few years. At the same time women like Jaimati also suffered much. So, we see that in Assam, women are being able to get some good status only because they are Pativrata.

But in the vaisnava period, we get a sad picture regarding the status of women. Sankardev also refused the freedom of women. In Rukmini Harana, Sankardeva wrote- "Swavabata tiri jati nehi swantantari kalita haibek lakastir paradhin". Until now women are not allowed to enter in the Kirtan ghar of Barpeta. The vaisnava period made women the blind follower of her husband. She has only one dharma and that is pati dharma. The vaisnavas asked male people to avoid the company of women because women are the main source of temptation so vaisnavas asked their disciples to be aware of women. In the Bhagabat Gita, it is mentioned that "A man who believes in women is bound to be deemed like an ignorant insect falling into the fire." In Neo vaisnava literature also women were classed with chandalas and sudras.

The above discussion shows a very low status of women during the vaisnava period. But it does not mean that Sankardeva had no concern for women.

However, the Sarana Pratha of our state also to some extent degrades the status of women. Women cannot be able to do any ritual work without taking Sarana. She even can't enter the kitchen without sarana. But there is no hard and fast rule for men for taking sarana.

However, the situation has slightly been changed today. It is quite under stable that women oh modern age are prosperous and free from the earlier. The reform movement

gave a new turn to the status of women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer in this regard. Arya Samaj, Prathana Samaj fought for the equal rights of women. Mahatma Gandhi also fought for the cause of women. Moreover, the status of women improved a little with the help of some legal measures like Widow Remarriage ACT(1856), Special marriage Act(1872), Child Marriage Restriction Act(1929) etc. However, the dowry system which are prevailed in other parts of India is comparatively less in Assam.

The change in the status of women got impetus after independence because of the enactment of some laws Marriage Act(1954), Hindu Marriage Act(1955), Anti-Dowry Act(1961) etc.

Even today women God is being worshiped by people in Kamakhya temple. The worship of Kumari being observed in the Kamakhya and verious temple now a day's also which represent the higher status of women in ancient Assam.

The above analysis reveals that women had to undergo ups and downs regarding the socio-religious status from the beginning till the present time. Though there is some improvement in the condition and status of women, yet women need mutual cooperation in this regard. So, we the women must have to take initiative to solve this problem of equality with men in this society. An improvement in the status of women in all levels can only take place when the women themselves desire to be equal and unless such desire comes from within, neither state's and NGO's initiative nor any religious reforms actually improve the status of women in real sense. Last but not the least, the very important is the women's empowerment which will help the women for upholding a good position and status in the society.

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A Study On Awareness and Accessibility of Women In Relation to Public Transport (ASTC and GGMTA Buses) of Guwahati city

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Abstract :

Background: From the pre-independence period to the present 21st century women have been playing diverse roles i.e. from participating in the nationalist movements to being pushed into the domestic household space, to their resurgence as super woman today. All the sectors of development now needs the productivity of both men and women equally. As women are at par with the male counterpart so it is necessary to have access to public transport for survival of the multiple needs required on daily basis. The present study is an attempt to assess the awareness and accessibility of women in relation to Public Transport(ASTC and GGMTA Buses) of Guwahati city.

Methodology :

The current study assesses the awareness and accessibility of women in relation to Public Transport(ASTC and GGMTA buses) of the age group 20 to 50 years. The sample consisted of 40 females. An Interview Schedule and Participant Observation were used for data collection. Qualitative analysis was used.

Result: After analysis and interpretation it was observed that 60% of the sample have awareness regarding the various issues related to public transport in Guwahati city like special bus facilities for women, reserved seats for women, safety, security etc while the rest 40% of the sample lack awareness regarding those issues. Again it was observed that 70% of the sample have no difficulty in accessing the public transport for their daily commuting, on the other hand 30% face difficulty in accessing the public transport.

[Key words : Accessibility, Awareness, Public Transport, Women]

Introduction :

India is a thickly populated country in the world with over 1.2 billion people making their livelihood (as per the 2011 census). Out of these 1.2 billion, there are roughly 100 million people with disabilities which is almost 1/6th of population of disabled people in the world. The country has been growing rapidly but is unable to cater to the diverse needs of the disabled and the non-disabled equally creating a gap between the two which is a major concern that needs to be addressed immediately. This gap has resulted in a number of barriers in the primary sectors, namely, Education and Development, Employment and Economy, Health and Nutrition, Transportation etc.

The present study is on awareness and accessibility of women in relation to public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) of Guwahati city.

From the pre-independence period to the present 21st century women have been playing diverse roles i.e. from participating in the nationalist movements to being pushed into the domestic household space, to their resurgence as super woman today. All the sectors of development now needs the productivity of both men and women equally. As women are at par with the male counterpart so it is necessary to have access to public transport for survival of the multiple needs

required on daily basis. Presently women tend to combine various activities that they must complete in a day, for example, domestic and care taking responsibilities as well as wage-earning trips. In public transit it is very common that women have to get off at multiple destinations, pay multiple fares and travel during off peak hours (Peter, 2002, 7). Safe public transport for women and girls accounts for and accommodates the reality of the travel patterns of women and girls.

No doubt the mobility of present women have increased rapidly to carry out the multiple tasks but what must be recognized is that the trips in the public transport also have the potential to be less safe since many women must walk through, or wait in, unsafe areas in order to access public transport. According to Oxford English Minidictionary, "Access is the opportunity to do something" , and in the context of the present study, access means accessing the public transport by the women in the age group 20 to 50 years. Moreover at odd times of the day and in isolated places, public transport may be unreliable, bringing the focus on the fact that many women must travel through the city very early in the morning and late at night (Peter 2002,7).

Guwahati, the Kamrup Metropolitan district of Assam, is situated on the Southern bank of the mighty River Brahmaputra. It is situated at 26degree10'45"N latitude and 91degree45'0"N longitude with an area of 651.12 Sq.km. and a population of 1584342. It is the major metropolis of eastern India and one of the fastest developing cities of India. Guwahati, the Gateway to the North-east India has been developing in a rapid pace and

is the hub for all the north-eastern population due to its good modes of communication, commercial transactions, education, health, employment etc.

The government buses in Guwahati city operate under ASTC and the private buses operate under GGMTA. The city has around 1200 privately operated city buses. The Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) operates around 250 city buses in Guwahati, including the ones the city has received from the Central government under the Jawahar Lal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

About three lakh Guwahatians use city buses to travel to various destinations everyday. About two lakh of them travel by the city buses during the peak hours - i.e. between 8:30 -10:30 am and 3-6 pm. Going by the estimate Guwahati needs around 5,700 city buses, each carrying 35 passengers. For that the capacity of the city roads is to be assessed. The public transport system in the city has some organisational problems too. As regards the city buses, there are seven organisations, including the ASTC, which are functioning. During the past 1 and ½ a year the State Transport Department, the Kamrup(Metro) District Administration and the City Police tried to improve the situation through discussions but to no avail.

The only saving grace in the city's public transport scenario during this period is the introduction of low floor buses. Low floor buses are designed with special height adjustment controls and wide entrance for easy accommodation of all commuters specifically for women of all age groups. Unreliability of the public transport system, ever increasing distance of the city destinations with the expansion of the city, and less number of reliable public buses is hindering the development of the city in an optimum way.

Mika Kunieda and Peter Roberts in *Inclusive Access and Mobility in Developing Countries*, highlights the accessibility issues in developing countries. The universal mode of transport in urban and rural settings is walking since this mode connects households to the transportation, system and destinations. However, there are many barriers to movement in the pedestrian environment, particularly in developing countries for the transportation disadvantaged. The paper advocates the need to mainstream the pedestrian environment into transport. It also describes an outline for inclusive transport indicators to monitor accessibility and improvements to transportation and especially pedestrian infrastructure.

Peter Roberts and Julie Babinard of The World Bank, in *Transport Strategy to Improve Accessibility in Developing Countries*, outlines guidance for addressing the access and mobility needs of disabled and elderly people in the context of the World Bank's mission to reduce poverty and discusses the main challenges for providing inclusive transport. It draws attention to opportunities to learn from transport interventions and to

current research. These aim to raise awareness of proven good practice in setting policies and strategies. We also contribute to a community of practice which draws on current and new experience to improve planning, design and implementation for inclusive transport in developing countries.

Rationale of the Study :

Public transport is the lifeline of Guwahati city. It is the basic mode of communication for fulfilling the needs on a daily basis. The present study deliberately emphasized the women commuters using public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) of Guwahati city. In the transition from pre-independence period to the present century women have been seen as playing diverse roles. In modern times women tend to combine multiple activities for example, taking domestic responsibilities to earning for the household, and for fulfilling them on a daily basis they often resort to public transport. These multiple activities makes women travel during off peak hours and to multitude of destinations which is indicative of the fact that these travel patterns have the potential to be less safe as many women have to walk through, wait in unsafe areas to access public transport. Moreover the public transport of Guwahati city have been unable to serve the multiple roles of women effectively.

Objectives of the Study :

1. To study the convenience and difficulties in accessing the public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) by women in Guwahati city.
2. To study the awareness of public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) and its provisions for women in Guwahati city.

Methodology :

Research Design:

Qualitative research was used for analysis and interpretation. Qualitative researchers seek illumination, understanding and extrapolation of findings. The Survey method is employed in conducting the present study. Under this method an Interview Schedule and Participant Observation were used to gather first hand information from the sample. Survey research is defined as a technique whereby the researcher studies the whole population with respect to certain sociological and psychological variables.

Sample :

The sample size selected for the present study is forty. The age group of the sample was 20 to 50 years. The sample was selected using random sampling. The sample for the study was selected within the Guwahati city.

Tools Used :

An Interview Schedule and Participant Observation were employed to fulfill the objectives of the study.

Analysis and Interpretation :

The present study emphasizes awareness and accessibility of women in relation to Public Transport (ASTC and GGMTA Buses) of Guwahati city. In the modern times women tend to combine multiple activities, i.e. from taking domestic responsibilities to earning for the household, and for fulfillment of them on a daily basis they often resort to public transport. These travel patterns make women commute even during off peak hours making their commuting prone to being unsafe as they need to walk through, or wait in areas to access public transport. The public transport of Guwahati city has been unable to serve efficiently the multiple roles that women need to play in the present day.

In the current study after analysis and interpretation percentage of responses of the sample were computed concerning awareness and accessibility of the Public Transport (ASTC and GGMTA Buses) of Guwahati city. The obtained data are presented in a tabular form:

Table 1 Displaying the YES and NO responses of the sample concerning Awareness and Accessibility:

TOTAL SAMPLE (40)	YES RESPONSES (%)	NO RESPONSES (%)
AWARENESS	60%	40%
ACCESSIBILITY	70%	30%

Table 1 indicates that 60% of the sample have awareness regarding the various issues related to public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) in Guwahati city while the rest 40% of the sample lack awareness regarding those issues. Again it was observed that 70% of the sample have no difficulty in accessing the public transport for their daily commuting, on the other hand 30% face difficulty in accessing the public transport.

FIGURE 1 : Pie Representation of the sample concerning Awareness of Public Transport-

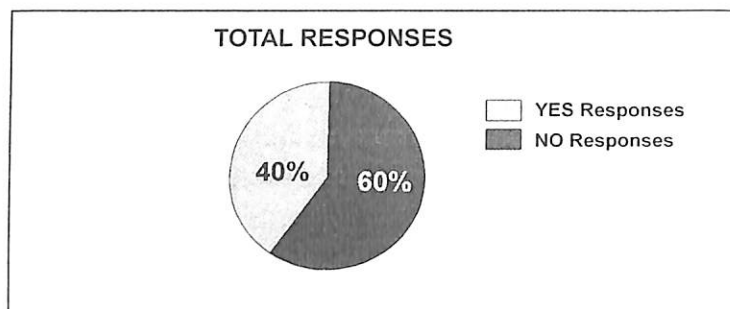


Figure 1 indicates that 60% of the total sample responded positively while 40% of them responded negatively.

Figure 2: Pie Representation of the sample concerning Accessibility of Public Transport-

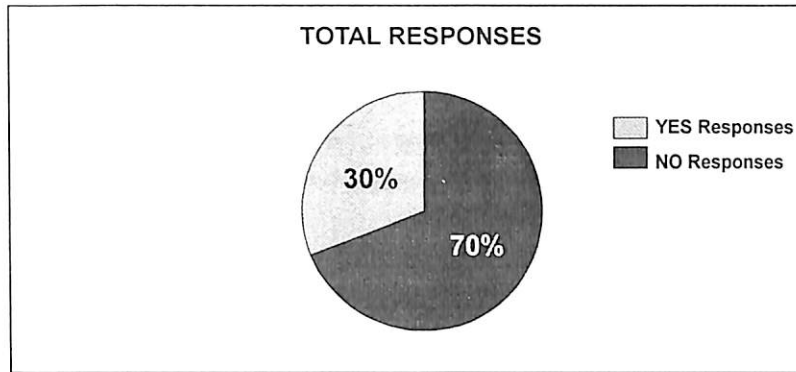


Figure 2 indicates that 70% of the total sample responded positively while 30% of them responded negatively.

Major Highlights of the Study :

The present study was carried out to assess the awareness and accessibility of women in relation to public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) of Guwahati city. After analysis and interpretation it has been observed that 60% of the sample have awareness regarding the various issues related to public transport (ASTC and GGMTA buses) in Guwahati city while the rest 40% of the sample lack awareness regarding those issues. Again it was observed that 70% of the sample have no difficulty in accessing the public transport for their daily commuting, on the other hand 30% face difficulty in accessing the public transport.

It was observed from the following study that-

- ★ The height of the bus stoppages and that of the JNNURM buses must be equivalent. Here the private buses are not taken into consideration because they have been considered as an inconvenient mode of transport by the sample.
- ★ The buses in Guwahati city hardly follow the norm of stopping one bus at a time in the bus stop, but a number of them rush together, which is otherwise followed in states like Bangalore, in India itself. If followed, the access to city buses will be made easy for everyone, especially for women.
- ★ The new bus stoppages constructed in the city, though convenient, has certain setbacks creating hurdles for everyone to board a bus. The steps are not well

constructed and in many stoppages we can witness a drain or a gap existing between the bus stoppage and the main road thereby making accessibility difficult. It is suggested that along with the steps in the footpaths a ramp in accordance to curb height (125mm above carriageway) should be constructed for reaching out the bus stoppage easily, but nowhere this can be seen.

- ★ There should be an equal distribution of city buses on all routes easing the traffic flow and enhancing accessibility too. The number of public city buses (of ASTC and jnNURM) operating in the city roads as compared to private buses are very less (as reported in Assam Tribune, 2011, 1,200 private buses and 250 ASTC and jnNURM buses are operating) thereby increasing the number of public city buses is an urgent need.

Conclusion :

The awareness and accessibility of women in relation to public transport has been in a progressive direction if the percentage of responses in each area is individually analyzed. But the kind of travel patterns women need to fulfill on a daily basis and for which they need to travel during off peak hours also, the public transport cannot be considered fully secure and safe. Along with the improvement in the public transport services, the awareness of women regarding the introduction of new accessibility guidelines concerning the public transport, facilities in public transport and so on is also equally important.

Limitation of the Study :

This study has been limited to the women commuting in the Guwahati city as it has been conducted in an urban setting. Moreover it has considered only the city buses excluding the other vehicles which are used as modes of communication. Further the study have excluded the male counterpart, the children and other commuters for whom public transport is a basic mode of communication on a daily basis.

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মহাপুৰুষ শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱৰ কাব্যত মধ্যযুগীয় অসমীয়া নাৰীৰ ভিন্ন ৰূপ এটি বিশ্লেষণাত্মক অধ্যয়ন

ইৰাণী ঠাকুৰীয়া
সহকাৰী অধ্যাপিকা, অসমীয়া বিভাগ
নাৰেঙ্গী আঞ্চলিক মহাবিদ্যালয়

প্ৰস্তাৱনা :

অসমৰ সমাজ-সংস্কৃতি তথা আধ্যাত্মিক জগতত যুগদ্ৰষ্টা মহাপুৰুষ শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱ এটি উজ্জ্বল জ্যোতিষ্ক তথা ধ্ৰুৱতৰা। তেওঁৰ বিশাল ব্যক্তিত্বই অসমীয়া বিভিন্ন জাতিক এনেদৰে সংগঠিত তথা একত্ৰিত কৰি গ'ল যে তাৰ প্ৰভাৱ আজিও আমি অনুভৱ কৰোঁ। তেওঁ প্ৰচাৰ কৰা নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ আদৰ্শই অসমীয়া সমাজত জাতিভেদৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সহিষ্ণু মনোভাৱ ল'বলৈ শিকালে। নামঘৰত সকলোৱে মিলি-জুলি নাম-কীৰ্তন কৰি যোগ্যতাৰ ভিত্তিত গণতান্ত্ৰিক পদ্ধতিৰে ভাওনা-সবাহত অংশ ল'বলৈ শিকিলে। অকল আধ্যাত্মিক জীৱনতে নহয়, সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো মহাপুৰুষজনাই অসমীয়া জাতিক অতুল বৈভৱ দান কৰি গৈছে। তেওঁৰ প্ৰেৰণাতে পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত সত্ৰ-নামঘৰসমূহত সাঁচিপাতৰ বিশাল সাহিত্য ভাণ্ডাৰৰ সৃষ্টি হয়। সেয়েহে ড° মহেশ্বৰ নেওগদেৱে তেওঁৰ বিষয়ে এনেদৰে কৈছে — “অসমৰ আধ্যাত্মিক, সাংস্কৃতিক, সামাজিক জীৱনৰ ওপৰত শংকৰদেৱৰ ৰচনাৰ প্ৰভাৱ প্ৰভূত। নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম আন্দোলনৰ এটি প্ৰধান লক্ষণ গণতান্ত্ৰিকতা। এই আদৰ্শতে অনুপ্ৰাণিত বৈষ্ণৱ সাহিত্যই অসমৰ জাতীয় সাহিত্য ৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা লাভ কৰে; বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মমূলক সামাজিক পদ্ধতিয়ে অসমৰ সামাজিক জীৱনক এটা স্পষ্ট আৰু সুস্থ ৰূপ দি তোলে। এইখিনিতেই শংকৰী সাহিত্যৰ সাৰ্থকতা। ড° সত্যেন্দ্ৰ নাথ শৰ্মা, ড° হৰিনাথ শৰ্মা দলৈ আদি বিশিষ্ট সমালোচকসকলে ৰচনাৱলীসমূহৰ ভিতৰত কাব্যৰ সংখ্যা ছখন বুলি কৈছে — ‘হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান’, ‘ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ’, ‘বলিচলন’, ‘অমৃত মন্থন’, ‘কুৰুক্ষেত্ৰ’, ‘অজামিল উপাখ্যান’। কিন্তু বিশিষ্ট সাহিত্যিক ড° হেম বৰাদেৱে ‘গজেন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান’খনকো কাব্যৰ শাৰীত থৈছে। তেওঁ এই প্ৰসংগত এনেদৰে কৈছে — ‘শংকৰদেৱৰ কাব্যৰ সংখ্যা সাতখন। ইয়াৰ চাৰিখন কাব্য ‘কীৰ্তন’ পুথিত সংকলিত হৈছে। সেই কেইখন হ'ল — (১) বলিচলন, (২) অজামিল উপাখ্যান, (৩) গজেন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান আৰু (৪) অমৃত মন্থন। স্বতন্ত্ৰ পুথি ৰূপত প্ৰাপ্ত বাকী তিনিখন হ'ল — (১) হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান, (২) কুৰুক্ষেত্ৰ আৰু (৩) ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ।

মহাপুৰুষ শংকৰদেৱ বিৰচিত কাব্যকেইখনত মধ্যযুগীয় অসমীয়া সমাজ-জীৱনৰ প্ৰতিচ্ছবি অতি সুন্দৰকৈ প্ৰতিফলিত হোৱা দেখা যায়। হৰিবংশ, ভাগৱত পুৰাণ, বিষ্ণু পুৰাণ আদি বিভিন্ন পুৰাণ-

উপপুৰাণৰ পৰা মূল সংগ্ৰহ কৰি গুৰুজনাই কাব্যকেইখনৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহ ৰচনা কৰিছে যদিও সেইবোৰৰ মাজত অসমীয়া জীয়ৰী-বোৱাৰীৰ প্ৰতিচ্ছবিৰে ভূমুকি মাৰিছে। স্নেহশীলা মাতৃ, জীয়ৰী, বোৱাৰী, পতিব্ৰতা সহধৰ্মিনী, মৰমীয়াল শাহু আদি নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ ভিন্ন বৰ্ণাঢ্য ৰূপৰ সমাবেশ ঘটিছে তেওঁৰ কাব্যকেইখনত। তলত এই বিষয়ে বহলাই আলোচনা কৰা হ'ল।

শংকৰদেৱৰ কাব্যত মধ্যযুগৰ অসমীয়া নাৰীৰ ভিন্ন ৰূপ :-

আমাৰ সমাজখন পিতৃতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজ যদিও জনজাতীয় মাতৃতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজৰ প্ৰভাৱতে হওক বা আন কাৰণতেই হওক ঘৰৰ গৃহিণী বা মাতৃগৰাকীয়ে যিকোনো গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ কথাত যথেষ্ট সক্ৰিয় ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰা দেখা যায়। শংকৰদেৱে 'ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ' কাব্যতো ৰুক্মিণী বিবাহযোগ্য হোৱাত মাতৃ শশীপ্ৰভা চিন্তিত হৈ স্বামীক এই কথা সোঁৱৰাই দিছে। আমাৰ যৌথ পৰিয়ালত বিবাহ সম্বন্ধীয় কথাবোৰত জ্ঞাতি-কুটুম্বই আলোচনাৰ জৰিয়তে উপযুক্ত সিদ্ধান্ত লয়। ইয়াতো ৰাণীয়ে সোঁৱৰাই দিয়াত ৰজাই ৰুক্মিণীৰ বিবাহৰ বিষয়ে জ্ঞাতি-কুটুম্বক মাতি আলোচনা কৰি বিবাহৰ অনুমতি ল'ব বিচাৰিছে—

জ্ঞাতি পুত্ৰগণ মোক দিয়ো অনুমতি।

কৃষ্ণক সম্বন্ধ কৰো মিলোক মুকুতি।।

কিন্তু মাতৃয়েহে জানে কন্যাৰ মঙ্গল ক'ত। কেতিয়াবা পৰিয়ালৰ আন সদস্যই তথা জ্ঞাতি-কুটুম্বই লোৱা সিদ্ধান্ত জীয়ৰীৰ বাবে উপযুক্ত নহ'বও পাৰে। শশীপ্ৰভাৰ মাতৃহৃদয়ে এই কথা হৃদয়ঙ্গম কৰিব পাৰিছিল, সেয়েহে স্বামীৰ এই কাৰ্য্যত বাধা দিছে। মহাৰাণী শশীপ্ৰভাই শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণক উপযুক্ত জোঁৱাই বিবেচনা কৰি স্বামীক জ্ঞাতি-কুটুম্বৰ লগত আলোচনা কৰাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে সিদ্ধান্ত ল'বলৈ অনুৰোধ জনাইছে। শশীপ্ৰভাৰ এই কাৰ্য্যই আমাৰ সমাজত এগৰাকী দায়বদ্ধ মাতৃৰ ছবি অতি সুন্দৰকৈ প্ৰতিফলিত কৰিছে—

অনন্তৰে মহাদৈ মাতিলা সৱামীক।

সুধিবে নলাগে বিহা দিয়োক কৃষ্ণক।।

কিন্তু পিতৃতান্ত্ৰিক আমাৰ সমাজখনত নাৰী বহু সময়ত উপেক্ষিত হ'ব লগা হয়। ইয়াতো সেইদৰে মহাৰাণী শশীপ্ৰভাৰ অনুৰোধে প্ৰাধান্য লাভ কৰা দেখা নাযায়। আনহাতে, কাব্যখনৰ এঠাইত বেদনিধিয়ে শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণৰ আগত ৰুক্মিণীৰ মনৰ ইচ্ছা ব্যক্ত কৰাৰ প্ৰসংগত কোৱা 'স্বভাৱতে তিৰী জাতি নুহি স্বতন্ত্ৰী' কথাষাৰে মধ্যযুগীয় অসমীয়া সমাজখনত যে নাৰী পুৰুষৰ অধীন আছিল তাৰ উমান পাব পাৰি।

গুৰুজনাৰ ৰচনাত সমাজৰ সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰই ভূমুকি মাৰিছে। পতিব্ৰতা নাৰীৰ ৰূপত 'হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান'ৰ শৈব্য আৰু 'বলিচলন'ৰ বিষ্ণুৱলীৰ চৰিত্ৰই আমাৰ হৃদয় স্পৰ্শ কৰি যায়। এগৰাকী সৰ্বগুণ সম্পন্ন আদৰ্শ অসমীয়া সু-গৃহিণী তথা সহধৰ্মিনী শৈব্য কবিৰ ভাষাত —

শৈব্য নামে ভৈলা তান প্ৰিয়া পটেশ্বৰী।

স্ত্ৰীৰত্ন মাজে লেখি গুণৱতী সতী।

ৰূপত পাৰ্বতী পতিব্ৰতা পুণ্যৱতী।।

পতিপ্ৰাণ পতি জ্ঞান পতিকেসে ধ্যান।

পতি বিতিৰেকে সোপনতো নাহি আন।।

নৃপতিৰ প্ৰাণতো অধিক আতিশ্লেহে।

পতিৰ সুখতে সুখী আৰু পতিৰ দুখত দুখী শৈব্যাই স্বামীৰ জীৱনলৈ অহা দুৰ্যোগৰ সময়ত সহচৰ ৰূপত কাষত থিয় দিছে। জন্মৰ পৰা অভ্যস্ত ৰাজকীয় জীৱনৰ সকলো সুখ-সন্তোগ বিনা দ্বিধাই পৰিত্যাগ কৰি স্বামীৰ কষ্টকপূৰ্ণ জীৱনৰ সংগী হৈছে। স্বামীৰ সত্য ৰক্ষাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সকলো প্ৰকাৰে সহায় কৰি উৎসাহ যোগাইছে। সেয়েহে ৰজা হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰই এনেহেন সুযোগ্যা পত্নীৰ লগত বিচ্ছেদ ঘটাব চিন্তাত স্ৰিয়মান হৈ বিলাপ কৰিছে —

‘হৰি হৰি প্ৰাণেশ্বৰী

আপদ মইতৰি

মোহোৰ কষ্টৰ হেমহাৰ।

কোন সতে মোক এৰি

থাকো মই প্ৰাণ ধৰি

মুখ্যপ্ৰাণ তইসি আত্মাৰ।।

পত্নী সম্পৰ্কে হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰৰ সেই অনুভূতিয়ে সত্যতা লাভ কৰিছে যেতিয়া শৈব্যাই বিশ্বামিত্ৰৰ কোপৰ পৰা স্বামীক ৰক্ষা কৰিবলৈ বৃদ্ধ ব্ৰাহ্মণৰ ওচৰত ক্ৰীতদাস ৰূপে বিক্ৰী কৰি পতিব্ৰতা নাৰীৰ মহান চানেকি সমাজত দাঙি ধৰিছে।

‘বলি-চলন’ৰ বলি ৰজাৰ পত্নী বিষ্ণাৱলীও এগৰাকী আদৰ্শ সহধৰ্মিনীৰ নিদৰ্শন। শৈব্যৰ দৰে বিষ্ণাৱলীৰো পতিপ্ৰেম অতুলনীয়। বিষ্ণাৱলীয়েও স্বামীৰ দুখৰ সময়ত নিজকে ঢাল ৰূপে আগবঢ়াই স্বামীৰ মুক্তি কামনা কৰি নিজে শাস্তি খাবলৈ সংকোচ কৰা নাই —

‘তভো য়েবে আছে কোপ আংক এৰি বান্ধ মোক।

মই মৰো স্বামীৰ পালটি।।

চিৰ পৰিচিতা স্নেহসিক্তা, মমতাময় মাতৃৰ প্ৰতিমূৰ্তি হ’ল শশীপ্ৰভা, দৈৱকী, দেৱমাতা অদিতিৰ চৰিত্ৰ। শশীপ্ৰভাই জীৱনীৰ বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত নিঃসংকোচে নিজ মত ব্যক্ত কৰিছে। আনহাতে পুত্ৰ যিমানে অসৎ নহওক কিয় মাতৃয়ে পুত্ৰ স্নেহ পৰিত্যাগ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। শশীপ্ৰভাই পুত্ৰৰ চিন্তাত শোকাভূৰ হৈ পৰিছে — ‘পুত্ৰ শোকে দহে হাৰ হিয়ে হানে মুঠি যাব’। শংকৰদেৱৰ সাৰ্থক সৃষ্টি কৃষ্ণ মাতৃ দৈৱকীও পুত্ৰৰ চিন্তাত চিন্তিত হৈছে। সেয়েহে বলভদ্ৰ, গদ, সাত্যকি আদি যাদৱ বীৰসকলক কৃষ্ণৰ সাহায্যৰ বাবে যাবলৈ আদেশ দিছে। জগৎ পুৰুষ ব্ৰজগতৰ পতিৰ মাতৃ হ’লেও এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ নাৰীৰ দৰে পুত্ৰৰ চিন্তাত ব্যাকুল হৈ পৰিছে।

একেশ্বৰ মাত্ৰ বজাই গৈলেক পুতাই।

কেতিক্ষণে কিবা শুনো ডৰে ধাতু যায়।

শশীপ্ৰভা আৰু দৈৱকীৰ দৰে ‘বলিচলন’ কাব্যৰ দেৱমাতা অদিতিও স্নেহশিক্ত এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ নাৰী। সেয়েহে স্বৰ্গৰ পৰা খেদা খোৱা দেৱতাসকলে যেতিয়া পৰ্বতে হাবিয়ে-বনে অনাই বনাই ফুৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে অদিতিৰ মাতৃ হৃদয় দুখত ভাগি পৰিছে। এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ নাৰীৰ দৰে পুত্ৰসকলৰ দুখৰ কাৰণে নিজৰ কপালকে দোষ দি নিজকে দায়ী বুলি ভাবিছে —

“পাপিষ্ঠীৰ কিনো মোৰ অভাগ্য কপাল।

ত্ৰিদশ দেৱৰ আৰ নেদেখিলো ভাল।”

আনহাতে আমাৰ সমাজৰ চিৰ পৰিচিত বিয়েনীৰ ৰূপত শশীপ্ৰভা আৰু দৈৱকী শংকৰদেৱৰ সাৰ্থক সৃষ্টি। আদৰ-স্নেহৰ মাজত তুলি-তালি ডাঙৰ-দীঘল কৰা আলাসৰ লাডু ছোৱালীজনীৰ যেতিয়া বিয়া দিয়া সময় উপস্থিত হয় তেতিয়া মাতৃগৰাকী শংকিত হৈ পৰে। ‘ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ’ কাব্যতো মহাদৈ শশীপ্ৰভাই এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ কন্যাদায়গ্ৰস্তা মাতৃৰ দৰে ভীতিগ্ৰস্ত হৈ বিয়েনীৰ আগত শংকা প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে —

দৈৱকীৰ হাতে

ধৰিয়া বোলন্ত

শশীপ্ৰভা মাহাদই।।

পাঞ্চপুত্ৰ মাজে

জীউ এক খানি

সম্যকে মোহোৰ জীউ।

কাবৌ কৰো হেৰা

পালিবা বিহানী

তোম্মাৰেসে ভৈল জীউ।।

সুবাগতে মোৰ

বাটিল ৰুক্মিণী

দিনে কৰে শত ৰোষ।

বাকি বাকি তুমি

আপুনি বাহিবা

মৰষিবা দশ দোষ।।

তোম্মাৰ হাতত সুম্পিলো জীয়াইক।

এনেদৰে মৰমৰ জীজনীৰ সকলো দোষ ক্ষমা কৰি স্নেহ আৰু শাসনৰ মাজেৰে আপোন কৰি ল’বলৈ দৈৱকীক অনুৰোধ জনাই দায়িত্ব অৰ্পণ কৰা চিত্ৰই অসমীয়া সমাজৰ কন্যাদায়গ্ৰস্তা মাতৃৰ কৰুণ ছবিকে প্ৰতিফলিত কৰিছে। সেইদৰে বহু সময়ত বিবাহ কান্দোনত আৱদ্ধ হৈ পৰাৰ পিছত পুত্ৰজন পৰিস্থিতিত বাধ্য হৈ শহুৰৰ ঘৰৰ বেছি আপোন হৈ পৰে। জীয়াৰীৰ বিবাহ উপলক্ষে দুখ মনে থকা শশীপ্ৰভাক দৈৱকীয়ে দিয়া প্ৰবোধ বাণীয়ে সকলো কালৰে প্ৰযোজ্য সমাজৰ এনে চিৰ পৰিচিত ছবিয়ে দাঙি ধৰিছে —

তোম্মাৰেসে জী জমাই তোম্মাৰেসে ঘৰ।

তোম্মাৰ আপোন হুইয়া আমি হুইবো পৰ।

বিবাহৰ পিছত আমাৰ সমাজত সাধাৰণতে ছোৱালীজনীয়ে নিজৰ ঘৰখনৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে স্বামীৰ ঘৰখনহে আদৰি ল’ব লগা হয়। ‘ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ’ কাব্যত মহাদৈ শশীপ্ৰভাই জীয়াৰীৰ বিবাহ উপলক্ষে দ্বাৰকালৈ আহোতে ৰুক্মিণীয়ে আনন্দেৰে আগুৱাই নিবলৈ আহি শাহু দৈৱকীক দেখি প্ৰথমে শাহুক প্ৰণাম জনাই পাছতহে মাতৃক প্ৰণাম জনোৱা কাৰ্য্যই বোৱাৰীৰূপে ৰুক্মিণীৰ সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতিৰ প্ৰতি দায়বদ্ধতা প্ৰকাশ পাইছে —

মাৱক দেখিয়া ৰুক্মিণীৰ ৰঙ্গ চিত।

উৰুক মুৰুক কৰি গৈলা সন্নিহিত।।

শ্বাশুক প্ৰণামি পাছে নমিলা মাৱক।

পূৰ্বৰ পৰা বৰ্তমানে আমাৰ সমাজত জ্যেষ্ঠজনক দেখিলে বোৱাৰীয়ে ওৰণি লয়। ‘ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ’ কাব্যতো ৰুক্মিণীয়ে যুদ্ধৰ বিভীষিকাময় পৰিবেশৰ মাজতো ভাইশহুৰ বলৰামক দেখি ওৰণি ল’বলৈ পাহৰা নাই —

“লৈলন্ত ওৰণি পাছে দেখিয়া জ্যেষ্ঠক।

ৰুক্মিণীৰ দুখ দেখি বলাইৰ কৰুণ।^{১২}

সেইদৰে মূৰত ওৰণিৰে পৰিবৃত্ত হৈ জ্যেষ্ঠজন, গুৰুজনক সমীহ তথা শ্রদ্ধা-ভক্তি কৰা অসমীয়া গৃহিণীৰ সুন্দৰ নিদৰ্শন হ’ল শংকৰদেৱৰ কাব্য ‘বলিচলন’ৰ বলি ৰজাৰ গৃহিণী বিদ্যাবলীৰ চৰিত্ৰটি—

মাথাত ওৰণি লৈ অধোমুখে মহাদই

লাজে ভয়ে যান্ত ধীৰে ধীৰে।^{১৩}

মধ্যযুগীয় অসমীয়া নাৰীৰ সাজ-পাৰ আ-অলংকাৰৰ এটি সম্যক আভাস শংকৰদেৱৰ কাব্যৰ জৰিয়তে লাভ কৰিব পাৰি। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে ‘হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান’ত ৰাজ্য ত্যাগী হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰৰ পত্নী শৈব্যাই ঋষি বিশ্বামিত্ৰৰ ওচৰত পৰিত্যাগ কৰা অলংকাৰ বৰ্ণনাত —

দেখি শৈব্য আপুনি কাড়ন্ত অলংকাৰ।

মুকুট-কুণ্ডল শঙ্খ সাতেসৰি হাৰ।।

কেয়ুৰ কংকন ৰঙ্গ নুপুৰ পাৰৰ।

যতেক ভূষণ কাটি দিলন্ত গাৱৰ।^{১৪}

সেইদৰে ‘ৰুক্মিণী হৰণ’ কাব্যত ৰুক্মিণীয়ে পৰিধান কৰা সাজ-সজ্জা, অলংকাৰৰ বিৱৰণত—

(ক) গাৱ মুচি দিব্য নেট বস্ত্ৰ দিলা আনি।

প্ৰবন্ধে পিন্ধিলা তাক আপুনি গোসানী।।

ৰত্নৰ মেখেলা টানি বান্ধিলা কংকালে।

মুঠিতে লুকাই বতাসতে যেন হালে।।

শিৰত সিন্দুৰ আগৰৰ দিলা ফোট।

কৰ্ণে খঞ্জখিলি শিৰে পিন্ধিল মুকুট।।

চাক চাকি শলাই জ্বলে উপৰ কৰ্ণৰ।

ৰত্নময় গলপতা গুলিয়া গলত।।

সুৱৰ্ণেখচিত গলে সাতেসৰি হাত।

হৃদয়ত জলৈ জিলিমিলি পেচন্ধাৰ।

বাহুত সুৱৰ্ণটাৰ কৰত কংকন।

কপালত জলৈ আতি সুৱৰ্ণৰ জেঠি।

দশো আঙ্গলিত জাপ সোণাৰ আঙ্গুঠি।।

ৰত্নৰ নুপুৰ পাৰে ৰুণজুন বাজে।^{১৫}

শৈব্যা, ৰুক্মিণীৰ এনে সাজ-সজ্জা, আ-অলংকাৰ বৰ্ণনাৰ পৰা আমি কবিৰ সময়ৰ অসমীয়া নাৰীয়ে কাণত খঞ্জখিলি, চাকিশলা, মকৰ-কুণ্ডল, ডিঙিত সাতেসৰি হাৰ, জিলমিলিয়া পেণ্ডাৰ, ৰত্নৰ গলপতা গুলিয়া, বাহুত সূৰণৰ হাৰ, কৰত কংকন, কপালত সূৰণৰ জেঠি, হাতৰ দহো আঙুলিত আঙুঠি, বিয়াৰ কইনাই মূৰত মণিময় মুকুট আদি পৰিধান কৰিছিল বুলি জনা যায়। নাৰী সমাজত পাটৰ বস্ত্ৰৰ সমাদৰ সেই সময়তো আছিল বুলি জনা যায় —

“পিন্ধিল বিবিধ পাট-বস্ত্ৰ অলংকাৰ।।”^{১৬}

আনহাতে ওখ খোপা বান্ধি খোপাত মালতী আদি ফুল গুজি চুলিৰ কেশসজ্জা কৰিছিল —

প্ৰৱন্ধে বান্ধিলা খোপা উচ্চ কৰি খোপা।

মালতী ফুলৰ ভিতৰত দিলা খোপা।।^{১৭}

‘অমৃত মন্ত্ৰন’ কাব্যত স্বয়ম্বৰৰ বাবে সাজি কাচি ওলোৱা লক্ষ্মীদেৱীৰ প্ৰসাধন, কেশসজ্জা আদিয়ে সেই সময়ৰ অসমীয়া নাৰীয়ে কৰা সৌন্দৰ্য্য চৰ্চাৰ নিদৰ্শন দাঙি ধৰে —

কংকালত ৰত্নময় মেখেলা বান্ধিলা।।

কেশ তুলি বান্ধিলা উচ্চল কৰি খোপা।

উপৰত দিলা তাত পাৰিজাত খোপা।।

নাগৰাজে আনি দিলা সূৰণ কুণ্ডল।।^{১৮}

‘হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰ উপাখ্যান’ত ‘সুগন্ধ চন্দন যাৰ গাৱে ঘসি মল কাঢ়ে’^{১৯} বুলি থকা বৰ্ণনাৰ পৰা সেই সময়ত শৰীৰ পৰিষ্কাৰ কৰোতে সুগন্ধি প্ৰয়োগ হোৱা বুলি জনা যায়।

উপসংহাৰ : এইদৰে বিশ্লেষণাত্মক দৃষ্টিৰে মহাপুৰুষ শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ কাব্যসমূহ আলোচনা কৰিলে ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ সহনশীল, মমতাময়ী, আত্মত্যাগৰ যি সৰ্বজন গ্ৰাহ্যৰূপ তাৰ সুন্দৰ প্ৰতিফলন দেখা যায়। যিহেতু নাৰীয়ে এখন সমাজ শৃঙ্খলাযুক্ত, পৰিশীলিত হোৱাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অভিভাৱকৰ ভূমিকা পালন কৰে, সেয়েহে শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ কাব্যৰ এই নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহে সেই সময়ৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা, আচাৰ-ব্যৱহাৰ আদিৰ বিষয়ে এটি সম্যক ধাৰণা গ্ৰহণ কৰাত সহায় কৰে। শশীপ্ৰভাৰ জীৱনীৰ বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণ কৰোতে উপেক্ষিত হৈও স্বামীক জনোৱা অনুৰোধ, দৈৱকীয়ে শশীপ্ৰভাক বিয়নী হিচাপে দিয়া সান্ত্বনা বাণী, বোৱাৰীৰূপে ৰুক্মিণীৰ আচৰণ, দেৱমাতা অদিতিৰ ত্যাগ, হৰিশ্চন্দ্ৰৰ পত্নী শৈব্যাৰ স্বামীৰ দুখত জীৱনৰ সমস্ত সুখ ত্যাগ কৰাৰ যি মনোভাৱ, বিদ্যাৱলীৰ স্বামীৰ প্ৰতি যি কৰ্তব্যনিষ্ঠা, দ্ৰৌপদীৰ যি আত্মত্যাগী ভূমিকা সিয়ে আমাক এগৰাকী ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ বিভিন্ন পৰিস্থিতিত ভিন্ন তথা বৰ্ণাঢ্য ৰূপ দাঙি ধৰে। শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ সময়ত সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান কিছু পৰিমাণে অৱনমিত হৈছিল যদিও, মহাপুৰুষজনাই অসমীয়া নাৰীৰ সৃষ্টিকামী, সংস্কাৰীৰূপটোহে ঘাইকৈ তেওঁৰ কাব্যত অঙ্কন কৰিছে।

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Gender Sensitization : Need of the Hour

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Abstract :

There was a time when the role of men and women were defined differently in our society as SHE was confined to the hearth and house while HE was for the fields. Today the scenario has totally changed as people are proud of their mothers, wives, sister or daughters who walk hand in hand with men in all spheres of life. But it is also true that still there is gender discrimination in some pockets of our societies. Gender discrimination can happen at work places, institutions, in the family or outside. Gender sensitization in first instance, aims to change the perception that men and women have of each other. It creates a mindset in men that no longer sees in women the stereotypical image. The impression that women are a weak and unequal entity no more clouds the minds of common man. Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio- economic development. The general perception of men and women on the rigid gender division of labour and other orthodox practices related to gender begin to die down. Women also tend to develop the perception that they are no subordinate to men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organization level. Now the time has come for each one of us to take our roles seriously and responsibly in gender sensitization to uproot the evils of gender discrimination from the society and there is no doubt that we will be able to create a society where there will be gender equality in true sense.

[**Key words** : Gender Sensitization, Gender, Gender Discrimination, Gender Empowerment, Gender Equality, Gender roles, Stereotypes, Sex roles.]

Introduction :

Next to god we are indebted to women, first for the life itself, and then for making it worth living-Bovee.

The first question that comes to our mind when we come across the term gender sensitization is what is the need for gender sensitization in today's era? Can anyone deny the importance of boys and girls? The answer is obviously 'No'. Are boys and girls

considered equally important in remote areas or even in urban society? The answer to the latter is 'certainly not!'

On the one hand women are seen occupying prominent positions in society and in many professional areas which were earlier stereotyped exclusively as male domains, on the other hand cases of violence against women are still rampant and in fact have increased manifold. One cannot help but just wonder at this strange paradoxical situation!

The Indian society has a hypocritical attitude towards girls. We still get to hear cases of female foeticide and sex determination tests in rural and urban areas respectively. In some affluent and educated classes even today such discrimination exists albeit in a milder form. If the daughter is given the opportunity to pursue higher studies in India, the son is inspired to obtain a degree from abroad. Why this discrimination between boys and girls.

Most of us will get blue in the face denying the fact that gender inequality does exist even at our homes though it is termed as being protective towards our daughter but instead of simply protecting our daughters why can't we just teach our sons to be sensitive towards the women, to respect them. As Gloria Stienem says, "We've begun to raise daughter more like sons, but few have the courage to raise our sons more like daughters."

Discussion :

Gender Sensitization according to some simply means the feeling of empathy for opposite sex. Gender and sex too, have a thin line of demarcation between them. When we talk simply about the biological difference between a male and a female, we are talking in terms of sex but when we talk with reference to the social, cultural and economic status of both, we talk in terms of gender.

Gender is a neutral word that stands for both male and female. Gender describes the role of women and men in a society that is determined by the contribution of many factors that may arise out of social, political, economic and cultural situations and this has nothing to do with biological differences.

The more formal definition of gender sensitization is the change in behaviour and instilling empathy into the view that we hold about our own and the other gender. It is interlinked with gender empowerment and gender equality. Gender equality means that there is no discrimination on grounds of a person's sex in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in the access to services. It refers to the state of being equal in status, rights and opportunities. Gender equality is a task in progress - not something that has been achieved anywhere on this planet. The idea of power is at the root of the term empowerment⁵. The word empowerment is used in many different contexts.

Empowerment basically refers to empowering people, it is a process which aims at helping people to gain control over their lives, through rising awareness, action and working. Empowerment in general refers to empowering people particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities in relation to the term gender empowerment.

Women in India still suffer from gender inequality because of the lack of gender sensitization on part of males and in some cases because of females too. Many of us blame that the moral degradation of values and ethics amongst the youth is the root cause of such problems. These problems are directly or indirectly related to the lack of gender sensitivity be it the case of eve-teasing, domestic violence, sexual harassment at the workplace, or the case of brutal rape.

The main problem of the male dominated Indian society is the lack of women recognition and appreciation for women's involvement in multifarious activities. The men are reluctant to acknowledge women's contribution.

Since time immemorial the females have been considered as the weaker sex but the physical weakness of a female can never lead a male to empower her if he is sensitive enough to realize that within her delicate and physically weak body resides a tender heart which cares for him as a mother, a sister, a daughter and also as a wife. But this realization must come from within, from the moral values imbibed in him and how he has learnt to treat a female from his surroundings at home and outside.

India has a tradition of patriarchal culture. Patriarchal culture is the whole way of life which is conducted according to the beliefs of patriarchal ideology. Men are the breadwinners, women are housewives. Men are in government and women at home.

Women gender roles were always stereotyped as managing the household, looking after the sick, elderly and younger members of the family, cleaning, washing, cooking, bearing and rearing children while the men gender roles were stereotyped as the provider of the house, child discipline, decision maker and other works that involved greater physical strength, as males were and still are considered as the stronger of the two sexes. Men being physically stronger than women were and still are thought to be more intelligent than the women but the fact begs to differ in reality, physical strength has nothing to do with intelligence. Women have always been subjected to the biased attitude of men, have always been a victim to their ego and were always looked down upon. Men have always been denying equal status to women; they consider the women merely as their possession. Women in the eyes of men have always been a type of second class citizen who doesn't have the right to dream, to freedom and equality.

Sex roles are not interchangeable. Male sex roles cannot be done by females and female sex roles cannot be done by males. These are roles dictated by the biological demands of the sexes. Role in this case has been taken to mean what a female or male

body can do. The female body can bear and rear children, breastfeed and menstruate while the male body produces sperms and ejaculates.

But gender roles are interchangeable. For example, a woman's role as a household cook is not biologically given. Men can and they often cook. Such a set of common beliefs concerning the different attitudes and abilities of women compound to men is known as gender stereo-typing. But the sad part is only the activities by men are recognised as work and are rewarded materially and by privilege.

But it's high time now that the jinx should be broken, stereotyping must stop. When a boy cries, we say "Don't cry, boys don't cry". Boys can show their emotions too there's nothing wrong about it. When a girl laughs loudly, we say "Don't laugh loudly, it is not acceptable". There is nothing wrong about it, girls too have the freedom to laugh. Stereotypes are fixed ideas or assumptions about a group of people. Individuals belonging to that group are assumed to have the characteristics of that group.

Family and educational institutes may play an pivotal role in it. As children learn what they get to see. The blunt truth is whatever percolates in the innocent young minds is finally given to them by their socio-cultural environment which mainly includes their family, school and peers and what they get to learn at such a young stage tends to stay with them for a lifetime. Hence, a major part of the responsibility for developing gender sensitization rests on the shoulders of family members and educators. There is an urgent need to develop a family atmosphere where all members of the family enjoy an equal status, are equally respected and taken care of irrespective of their gender and are treated with empathy.

Educators can also make a huge difference by developing an atmosphere at schools, where a child naturally tends to absorb values and ethics as he/she grows up from a kindergarten kid to a senior secondary youngster. This would not only make the students duty conscious but also protective and caring towards others. Boys should learn through their school environment, that they are not made to empower any of their girl classmate make her realize that she is physically weaker than boy but to be their saviours and protectors in any unsafe situation. Girls should also be trained to be equally caring for their male classmates without losing their self-esteem.

Education plays role of a 'catalyst' in gender sensitisation. Educating the young boys and girls about gender equality and sensitization must not only be limited to schools but it must form a part of the syllabus at college and at university level too. Academicians believe that courses in gender studies and women's studies can play a big role in sensitising students to this issue along with workshops and discussions and other such activities. Many universities across the country already have women's studies centres and gender sensitisation committees that offer courses and help students to be more proactive and sensitive towards this issue.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) had also issued guidelines in the eleventh plan for development of women's studies in Indian universities and colleges.

Gender Sensitization cannot happen overnight. It requires a thorough exposure to different kinds of thoughts. It's important to expose the students to academic debates too. Sensitisation requires deep thinking and serious engagement and is an ongoing discussion.

But before sensitizing the masses some myths regarding gender sensitization must be busted like gender sensitization is not a war of the sexes. It is not anti-male. Both women and men are its victims. Both have a stake in the struggle for gender equality. Gender sensitization studies are not just for the women and courses in women studies enhances critical thinking.

I firmly believe in what David O'Mckay quotes "Women are created from the rib of man to be beside him, not from his head to top him, nor from his feet to trampled by him but from under his arm to be protected by him, near to his heart to be loved by him".

Conclusion :

Now the time has come for each one of us to take our roles seriously and responsibly in gender sensitization to uproot the evils of gender discrimination from the society and there is no doubt that we will be able to create a society where there will be gender equality in true sense. Together we can make a big difference. Let there be a beginning.

I would like to end my note on a beautiful composition by Mariam Bibi.

Gender Awareness

When you talk about gender awareness

You talk about absolute fairness

It's all about peace and equality

Divine justice in reality

Exploring yourself and expanding your vision

Listening to your conscience and making decision

You learn to conquer as well as to surrender

To celebrate success as well as to accept failure

It's all about humanity

Living together in tranquillity

Where no one is powerless and powerful

Its land of beauties.....Beautiful!

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Aspects Of Gender Issues As Protrayed By Virginia Woolf In A Room Of One's Own

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Virginia Woolf, in *A Room Of One's Own* (1928) made the connection between women's cultural poverty and women's material poverty; it was the stand she took in *Three Guineas* (1938) where she linked the male domination of the cultural heritage with exploitation, violence and war.

The argument of many women; that in the broadest possible sense, the knowledge of women's contribution could make a significant difference to the judgements and practices of the whole society. Women whose philosophies are as far as Dora Russel's, Elizabeth Robin's, Kate Millet's and Adrienne Rich's have nonetheless agreed on the central point that male dominance means women's silence and that society can no longer afford to neither hear nor head the voice of half of humanity. These women and many others as well have insisted that while women are kept out of the cultural traditions we have a heritage which is comprised of nothing other than political propaganda, in which the powerful decree their world view as the only world view, and in which those who differ from the powerful are censored, suppressed and outlawed. To reclaim and revalue the women writers, men have removed in this framework, to do more than challenge: it is to take a political stand and to challenge the propaganda of a dictatorship.

The narrator in *A Room Of One's Own* begins her investigation at Oxbridge College where she reflects on the different educational experiences available to men and women as well as more material differences their lives. She then spends a day in the British library pursuing the scholarship on women, all of which have been written by men, all of which have been written in anger with the least respect for women. Taking refuge in history she finds very little data about the everyday life of women and that is why she decides to reconstruct women's existence.

For the narrator, money is the primary element that prevents women from having enough space of their own, and thus having money is of the outmost importance. Because women do not have enough power, their creativity have been systematically stifled throughout the ages. Woolf states that intellectual freedom depends upon material things

and poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time.

This argument is at the core of why so few women have been able to make their mark as poets and writers as compared to men. Woolf believes that writing of fiction lends itself more easily to frequent starts and stops, so women are more likely to write novels than poetry: women must contend with frequent interruptions because they are so often deprived of a "room" of their own in which to write. Without money, Woolf implies, women will remain in second place to their creative male counter-parts. The financial discrimination between men and women at the time of Woolf's writing, perpetuated the myth that women were less successful writer.

Woolf argues that even history is subjective and what she seeks is nothing less than "the essential oil of truth", but this alludes her, and she eventually concludes that no such thing exists. To demonstrate the idea that opinion is the only thing that a person can actually "proof", she fictionalises her lecture, claiming, "fiction is likely to contain more truth than fact." Reality is not objective, rather, it is contingent upon the circumstances of one's world.

The narrator also emphasizes the fact that the gender inequality is another cause why women have produced less impressive works of writing than men. To illustrate this view point, the narrator creates a fictional woman character, Judith Shakespeare, the imaginary twin sister of William Shakespeare. Woolf uses Judith to show how society systematically discriminates against women in spite of her being as talented as men. Judith writes, but she is secretive and ashamed of it. She is engaged at a fairly young age, when she begs not to have to marry, her father beats her up and she eventually commits suicide.

The central argument of Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own* is that every woman needs her own space, her own freedom in order to engage in uninterrupted writing time. During Woolf's time, women rarely enjoyed these luxuries for which their art suffered. But Woolf is concerned with more than just the room itself. She uses the "room" as a powerful symbol for many larger issues, such as privacy, quality leisure time and economic emancipation, each of which is a component of the countless inequalities between men and women.

Before winding up the essay, Woolf predicts that until these inequalities are rectified, women will remain second class citizens and their literary achievements will also be branded as such. Woolf inter-weaves her journey with her own theory about the world including the principle of "incandescence", a state in which everything that is personal burns away and what is left is "left nugget of pure truth" in art. The narrator skillfully leads the reader through one of the most important works of feminist literary history to date. For George Eliot, as for her heroines, Woolf wrote:

"the burden and complexity of womanhood were not enough; she must reach beyond the sanctuary and pluck for herself the strange bright fruits of art and knowledge. Clasp them as few women have ever clasped them, she would not renounce her own inheritance-the difference of view ... the difference of standard ..."

(The Feminist Reader, 1997, Pg-66)

The terms here are worth lingering on; they bring to light a hidden problem as well as articulating an obvious one. The problem explicitly located is in one way or another the theme of many frequently asked questions, that is the nature of women's access to culture and their entry into literary discourse. The terms used by Virginia Woolf therefore also uncover something of the rift experienced by women writers in a patriarchal society, where language itself may re-inscribe the structure by which they are oppressed. Women's exclusion from education, employment, as well as the pressure on them to become angels in the house, caring for their husband and children, necessarily gives them a different outlook to men.

Woolf acknowledges that during 1929, there are almost as many living women writers as there are male writers, but that writing is not always as diverse, or objective as it might be. Autobiography is not enough, women need to be free to use all genres, and be able to write without anger or defensiveness she found in Jane Eyre. A writer "at war with her lot" produces a cramped text, she argues. Given that Woolf was a social feminist, in that she saw women, not as identical to men, but as offering a different perspective as a result of their different social makeup, it seems that Woolf is discouraging writing based on grievances rather than writing based on gender differences.

To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine, is precisely the move which enables the patriarchal power to define, not femininity, but all women as marginal to the symbolic order and to society. Why has *A Room Of One's Own* become increasingly relevant today and why should it be read to get a fix on the entire feminist movement? For two reasons. First, and the most obvious, is because it is simple case of equality and justice. Woolf has offered women "a liberal vision of consciousness raising whose aim was to awaken them to the new possibilities of individual self-fulfilment." Second, it is a counter to the rhetoric of "gender feminists" who appeal to women as genetically defined. Gender feminists argue women are the only resource to engage in a common political struggle, that for power. And once the whole issue is taken as a struggle for power, the stakes are constantly being raised.

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