# RAY:

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# EDITORIAL

I feel immense pleasure to publish the fourteenth issue (Vol. VII, No. 2) of *'RAY: International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies', (E-ISSN: 2456-3064)* on behalf of Chakdaha College, Nadia, West Bengal, India. It's a blind peer reviewed, Indexed (DRJI) International Journal to be published biannually (April - October). The aims and objectives of the Journal are to publish the valuable empirical and experimental studies that have significant contribution towards developing theoretical and practical knowledge in multiple disciplines like Physical Science, Bio-Science, Social Science, Behavioural Science, Engineering Science, Medical Science, Business Studies, Humanities, and Literature, etc.

I avail myself of this opportunity with great pleasure in acknowledging my deepest sense of gratitude to all concerned with and related to this endeavour, particularly Editorial Board Members, Advisory Board Members and Reviewers who tendered their painstaking efforts throughout the period of preparation of this journal.

No doubt, I am personally indebted to the authors who have contributed their valuable contributions to this journal. In the present issue we are publishing six research articles. I convey my heartfelt gratitude to all respected authors.

Utmost care has been taken to prepare the present issue of the journal, in spite of that we are always liable to apology for any unwanted mistakes. Any comment, any suggestion for improvement of the journal is always appreciable.

I wish its every success in all respect.

**DR. SWAGATA DASMOHANTA**
*Editor in Chief*

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# Disaster Management and Development in Bangladesh: Understanding the Legal and Institutional Effects

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**Structured Abstract:**

**Purpose:** How does the legal and institutional framework for disaster management (DM) has become clearer over the years to leverage sustaining development in Bangladesh?

**Study Method:** The study has been accomplished based on the content analysis.

**Findings:** legislation and structural setups have fully grasped the essence of disaster management as an integral part of Bangladesh's disaster management system. Unfortunately, it is not exploited to complement achieving SDGs.

**Originality:** The model adopted by the Government of Bangladesh traditionally consists of three key components of a disaster management approach and guarantees that a comprehensive risk reduction tradition will remain fundamental to all efforts to take care of climate change and environmental management throughout the process. A study on institutional and legal aspects of disaster management complementing development was not found in the contemporary scholarship and this is the reason why it deserves novelty.

**Keywords:** Disaster Management, Disaster Risk Reduction, SDGs, and Local Government

## Introduction

Many scholars, experts and researchers believe that the causes of vulnerabilities because of natural disasters impact on the lives and livelihood of people and some of the actions of different stakeholders and their adaptation strategies certainly enable to minimize the level of vulnerability. In the context of Bangladesh, most research on disaster management focuses on the extent of natural disasters and disaster response management. The Government of Bangladesh has underlined with NGOs, INGOs and donor agencies working in Bangladesh on the direction and role and responsibilities of disaster response and recovery starting from the culture of disaster preparedness and mitigation (CEGIS, 2009).

Sensitivity, consistent with public policy in the pursuit of disaster management, has become one of the major research challenges, particularly in mitigating the effects of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation (ADB, 2004). Moreover, there is a lack of discussion of fundamental issues and relevant adaptations which may affect the level of vulnerability in the near future (UN, 2002). Non-state actors often act as a supporting force in helping the government through various programs in disaster management, climate change adaptation and environmental management.

Disaster management stakeholders and actors in regular discussions with the Government of Bangladesh have seen the official Nexus support disaster / climate change / environmental awareness to integrate disaster mitigation considerations into development planning policies and programs over the past few decades (ADB, 2008). Due to their deliberate involvement in the strategy design and review process, DM has achieved a breakthrough in DM and development in Bangladesh through a highly comprehensive approach to engaging civil society members and development partners.

Literally, the integration of disaster mainstream, climate change and environmental issues into development plans and processes in a coherent way that minimizes the risks of potential damage due to natural causes and hinders overall development means engaging in a systematic inclusive effort (GoB, 2008). Throughout the process development process, Bangladesh is considered as an ideal learner of this movement to reduce the associated risks due to environmental risks as well as because of climate induced migration particularly for those who are living in and around the coastal lines of the country.

Only fair, relevant stakeholders (Bangladesh government, development partners and other non-government actors at the local and international level) have realized that risk identification and management measures should be an integral part of their expansion plans to benefit from joint efforts to sustain the turnaround. Bangladesh will become one of the best resilient countries in the future (DDM, 2012). Moreover, poorly planned and managed metropolitan development, environmental degradation, poverty and inequality and fragile governance tools continue to cause rapid-growing losses and damage associated with widespread threats in Bangladesh, and how can multi-stakeholders work by projecting risk scores?

Literally, disasters, the environment and climate change are the key issues associated with the mainstreamed development goals of Bangladesh government throughout the process of elevating the economic growth even in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on SDGs implementation, localizing disaster management and climate change adaptation has been essential through a collective coordinated approach with active participation of multi-stakeholders with technical and financial aid as usual like the past under the dynamic leadership from the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.

Disaster management traditionally recognizes the implementation of systematic and comprehensive efforts to reduce or eliminate the risk of potential damage due to both natural and man-made causes as well as adverse effects of climate change and environmental movements (DDM, 2012). This systematic involvement should be incorporated into the mainstream of development planning and processes so that risks can be addressed to achieve better results keeping the spirit of collective efforts under the guidance of the national government.

We need to be careful when talking about massive disaster management by adopting sustainable development policies in the context of climate change and environmental degradation in Bangladesh. In fact, in order to ensure the sustainability of the development process from policy planning to implementation, the national government of disaster prone countries like Bangladesh must try to reduce the vulnerability of the poor and other helpless people in the society to the effects of natural disasters A) Transforming disaster management from a traditional response and recovery system to a more comprehensive risk reduction culture by taking an example; B) To establish the legal and institutional capacity of the national disaster management system to improve both response and recovery management at all levels (GoB, 2008).

As a disaster-prone country, we are not serious about bringing Bangladesh into the mainstream of disaster management in our development activities, although in recent times, with the endless stimulus of international actors, the government has begun to realize that risk identification and management should be an integral part of them (GoB, 2008). Progress planning, development methods and governance have been treated as the most priority for the equitable development of the country in line with the SDGs stipulations.

**Disaster Management - a Comprehensive Approach: Looking at the Disaster Management Model of the Government of Bangladesh**

Coordinating Disaster Management Procedures in Bangladesh the systematic search for disaster management in Bangladesh is not well known in the available literature as well as in the field of action, although Bangladesh deserves praise for adopting a holistic approach from legal matters to institutional building. Moreover, despite having a holistic approach to disaster management, this approach is taken from a variety of programs at the national, international and community levels, and is not redeveloped or reconsidered from time to time in line with field experience and theoretical perspectives (Islam, 2018).

As a result, the implementation of the disaster management, climate change adaptation and environmental management in Bangladesh, as well as the shortcomings of the policy, is not progressing as well as expected, working professionally. Lack of coordination among different stakeholders hinders rapid response as well as disaster management to some extent during an emergency response, is explored through this exercise from the beginning of undertaking. Besides, implementation of the programme with proper monitoring and evaluation gets highest priority as long as good governance is concerned. Political undue influence free credible and on time implementation of DM, DRR and CCA projects is the top most priority and the government must be serious in this regard.

To bring it into the mainstream, the legal and institutional framework for disaster management (DM) has become clearer over the years. In addition, legislation and structural setups have fully grasped the essence of disaster management as an integral part of Bangladesh's disaster management system to complement the national government's efforts to achieve SDGs even in the midst of the COVID epidemic. The model adopted by the Government of Bangladesh traditionally consists of three key components of a disaster management approach and guarantees that a comprehensive risk reduction tradition will remain fundamental to all efforts to take care of climate change and environmental management throughout the process.

The material of the model refers to the use of scientific erosion (including the effects of climate change) as a basis for accurately determining the impending hazardous environment. According to the Disaster Management Model, in order to improve measures for threat management, the risk environment must first be defined to empower relevant actors inside

and outside the government to bring about a paradigm shift in the disaster management culture (UNISDR, 2004).

What we can realize is that in order to define a risk environment, knowledge about the interface of risk and the basics of risk (community) is created and conducted in an organized and analytical manner necessary from the beginning of the joint effort. Defining an environment of risk involves both traditional and recognized risk analysis and involves various stages, such as establishing the context of the socio-political environment.

The Disaster Management Act passed by the Parliament of Bangladesh in 2012 gives role and obligation to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief to manage the national disaster management efforts and involves all ministries and ensures the business of disaster management for all. Under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) was established after the approval of the Disaster Management Act, which passed a decade ago (DDM, 2012).

I will briefly define the role of the disaster management department here. The Department has been authorized to implement the provisions of the Disaster Management Act by reducing the overall sensitivity to the various effects of disasters by taking integrated mitigation measures adopted by various governmental and non-governmental groups related to disaster management and emergency response.

**Legal and Institutional Affairs of Disaster Management in Bangladesh**

The Disaster Management Framework provides the relevant legislation, strategy and best practice framework under which the work of Emergency Response Management (ERM) in Bangladesh is carried out and implemented (GoB, 2008). The structure includes:

1. Disaster Management Act
2. National Disaster Management Policy (to be formulated and adopted)
3. National Plan for Disaster management
4. Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD)
5. Guidelines for Government at all Levels (Best Practice Models)

The guidelines have been developed as best practice models for governments at all levels and are used to assist ministries, NGOs, disaster management committees and civil society in

implementing disaster risk management. The guidelines will include, among others (The Daily Star, 2011):

1) Community Risk Assessment (CRA) Guideline
2) Disaster Impact, Damage, Loss and Need Assessment Guideline
3) Local Disaster Management and Emergency Fund Management Guidelines
4) Indigenous Coping Mechanism Guidebook
5) Hazard Specific Risk Assessment Guidelines for Earthquake, Flood, Cyclone, Fire, Drought etc.
6) Emergency Response and Information Management Guideline
7) Contingency Planning Template
8) Emergency Response Management Guideline
9) Disaster Information Management Guideline
10) Sectoral Disaster Management Planning Template
11) Natural Disaster Risk Incorporated Local Level Planning Template
12) Guidelines for Road, Water, Industrial and Fire safety
13) Guideline for Disaster Shelter Management
14) Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline for the Implementation of the Plan
15) Guideline for International Assistance Management in Disaster Emergency
16) Multi-Agency Disaster Incident Management Guideline

## DM Implementation Challenges, Institutional Limitations, Policy Gap and Way Forward

Regarding disaster management approach through the local government institutions, the needs are great but the response of the local government is ill-informed, disorganized and barely recognizable. The agencies do not have a clear mission to act on climate change in a coordinated way, nor are they given the resources to do so (UNDP, 2004). The data simply shows that the officials responding do not know much about disaster management but they believe it is too big an issue for them to handle. Let me talk about the role of local government at the urban Bangladesh in disaster management.

Obviously, the local government cannot stop disaster and its impact but its overall objective should be that the city corporation should do whatever it can do to contribute to the cause of helping the urban residents to mitigate and adapt to climate change and disaster (UNDP, 2018). The fact that it cannot do everything should be no excuse for its doing nothing. While

major cities of Bangladesh have little polluting industry, the Corporation Council can make by-laws to require manufacturers to use carbon capture and recycling and to prohibit water emissions. An appropriate city office can be mandated to enforce the central government's legislation to protect the city's ponds, which could act as mini-carbon-sinks, and are being destroyed with reckless abandon.

Without proper implementation of disaster management, sustainable disaster management policy framework is a meaningless application that will create a float-up answer by imposing explanations from top to bottom. Therefore, the level of enforcement of legal obligations, as well as the implementation of disaster management programs by the relevant disaster management agencies, will be unveiled with this effort. We must be aware of proper environmental management by integrating disaster management into the good governance indicators. We have to make sure that paradigm shift from the relief culture to the disaster risk reduction are linked with climate change adaption and environmental governance.

Disaster risk reduction is a problem in the disaster management department that becomes a system error because a comprehensive national agency is needed to determine the role and strategy for disaster risk reduction. Since the Disaster Management Department operates single-handedly, the system lacks leadership, proper strategy and strategy implementation.

We have to get at the root causes of those kinds of failure and those roots run very deep: into the unsatisfactory distribution of power and revenue between the central and local governments, into Bangladeshi culture, into the failure of local government generally in Bangladesh because it did not develop from a thirst for democracy or devolution of the people but was always a concoction of administrators in the capital, first colonial administrators and later bureaucratic administrators.

Obviously, all that cannot be changed, if only because a lot of it is simply the history of the country. One should not be too ambitious in planning to solve the collapse of municipal environmental governance. Indeed, whether that collapse can be solved at all is a very open question. Some real incremental improvement would be a nice change worth working for.

Some old-fashioned NGO community organising, on environmental action at the community level, might be a good start. Then the structures might work on their own or, if new laws were needed, people might actually obey them because they believe in the importance of such

laws. Laws in advance of the culture change will be fantasy laws, of no impact, like the ones we have on municipal environmental governance now.

Either environmental governance should be "nationalized" in the central government, which has the power and resources to do it, with no role for the municipalities, or the Municipalities should be empowered to levy and collect taxes and make laws without the permission of the central government officers, which would give them the power and resources to do it (UNRCO & MoFDM, 2012). The present structure of putting all the resources and power in the central government and all the responsibility for environmental governance in the Municipalities is like a predictable plan for failure – and it works to do for leveraging the persistent efforts of the national government to localizes effective disaster management empowering the urban and rural level local government bodies (USAID, 2007).

**Conclusion**

Disaster management policy should not be owned by one ministry but by all government agencies so that a strategic 'joint' approach can be developed and institutionalized to reduce disaster risk to a certain level. The strategy includes joining a capacity building training program for all concerned officers to successfully implement the DRR guidelines. Leadership is an important factor especially for disaster management. It shows the need to strengthen diplomatic relations. In order to empower the UDMC, we must work to create disaster awareness through frequent meetings on the three stages of disaster (past, present and future). Effective UDMC literally contributes to fundraising, setting up disaster warning stations in every UP office, setting up disaster shelters, forming volunteer teams for emergency response, organizing three-step training for disaster management effectively.

Creating social awareness, encouraging community participation in post-climate assessment, disaster response and implementation of government programs certainly plan a great role in disaster management at the grassroot level. As this UDMC works with community-led elected representatives at the grassroots level and mobilizes community support, this committee survives. However, the involvement of women should be mandatory so that the needs and vulnerabilities of the community during the disaster can be realized and effectively addressed.

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# Translating Shakespeare into another Genre:
# A Re-writing of "Othello" by Muktaram Vidyabagish

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**Structured Abstract:**

**Purpose:** Translation and adaptation of a Shakespearean play is a complex process fraught with issues of language, genre, culture, ideology etc. And when this translation is not from the source text of Shakespeare, rather from the prose rendering in the form of a tale; it becomes much more intriguing. This article seeks to explore the politics behind Muktaram Vidyabagish's translation of the "Tale of Othello" by Charles and Mary Lamb.

**Methodology:** The author is keenly interested in looking into the intention of the translator (while working within a colonial paradigm) behind his choice of the source text, as he clearly surpasses the racial dimension of the Shakespearean text and tries to draw the readers' sympathy towards Desdemona instead of Othello.

**Findings:** The author has found that while trying to draw readers' sympathy towards Desdemona rather than Othello, the translator actually tries to make it a tale of love and jealousy divesting it of its colonial paradigm. The present article intends to unfurl this complex web of issues behind this decision of the translator.

**Keywords:** Colonial, Racial, Ideology, Language, Politics.

Shakespeare is implicated in the biggest and most significant colonial construct in India – the English language – with all its cultural baggage. The language issue is an inevitable refrain in all considerations of Shakespeare in India, mainly through the two modes of the literary translation and the innovations and adaptations in performance. The question of language is both unavoidable and inescapable in a region where vast numbers of theatre and cinema audience were, and still are, illiterate and/ or unschooled in the English language. The agenda of a people's education is almost always a hegemonic exercise and, in a linguistically diverse context like India, the instrumentalization of Shakespeare for education is fascinating because it yields results that are divergent and go far beyond the colonial goal of showcasing the best of the English language or imperial culture. (Panja and Sharaf 2)

Whatever is said above about India's negotiation with Shakespeare is true in case of Bengal as well. The view that Bengali drama is a combination of western influence; western dramatic techniques like stage-craft, lighting and sound, the idea of tragedy, tragic-comic scenes, five-act division of Elizabethan and Shakespearean plays, and use of music are all imported into Bengali drama suggests that Bengali drama has a continuity and at the same time a distinctive characteristic. Its distinctiveness lies in the hand of traditional cultural forms and European dramatic techniques. Development of Bengali drama literature in nineteenth century was greatly influenced by Shakespeare. There is no denying the fact that apart from a few exceptions, the reputed literary figures of the nineteenth century, who were well versed in both English and Bengali, were generally indifferent towards translating Shakespeare into the native language. The most influential section of the literary community of the time thus preferred to enjoy Shakespeare in the original, in all his pristine purity uncontaminated by translation. Translations of Shakespeare began in Bengal when English education was more or less firmly established and a sizeable population of English-knowing people emerged. It is ironical and slightly baffling because the English-educated community could read Shakespeare in original and did not require any translation. What then were the motivations of translating Shakespeare into Bengali? Sisir Kumar Das comments: "enrichment of the emerging Indian literature" is one pivotal motivation of translating Shakespeare ("Shakespeare in Indian Languages" 115). Translations of Shakespeare were "exercises to introduce foreign literary models" to the "general" readers and these should be considered as part of experimentations of new literary genres emerging in the nineteenth century to "present a new set of canons and models replacing the traditional one" (Sisir Kumar Das, "Shakespeare in Indian Languages" 112-13). The basic motivation was to make Shakespeare accessible to the readers having limited English or no English and bridge the gap between the English knowing elite and the section of reading-public lacking English. English being the medium of instruction in higher education and the language of political and cultural authority, the distinctive section read Shakespeare in the original occupied hegemonic status and the attempt was to reduce their pervasive authority in intellectual sphere. This further aimed at mass popularisation of the bard in Bengal.

In Bengal, comparatively less influential literary persons and a few social reformers involved in translation activity. Strategically the initial translations were in narrative form providing only the elementary idea of the exotic stories of the plays. The word 'abridgement' means 'contraction' or 'shortening' of a text. Abridgement of *Othello* consequently implies a re-

telling of *Othello* in abridged narrative form. Technically speaking, abridgements do not fall under the purview of translations. However, it is essential to scrutinise them as Bengal's negotiations with Shakespeare's plays began with re-tellings in story form and they are crucial to the process of native assimilation. They familiarised the Bengali reader with the playwright's work, paving the way for fuller and faithful dramatic translations and eventually for innovative adaptations that appropriated and homogenised Shakespeare for the Bengali stage. The introductory groundwork laid down by these popular shortened narrative versions facilitated the transformation of a one-way imposition of the coloniser's cultural heritage into a two-way process that benefited indigenous literature and simultaneously enriched the Shakespearean repertoire. The stories providing brief and catchy accounts of the plays captured the minds of the people at all levels from folk to the elite, and thus played a great part in popularising Shakespeare.

Here, *Tales from Shakespeare* (jointly published by Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb in 1807) was an inspiration for the translators. The reason behind such choice may be traced back to Charles Lamb's essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation", where the essayist critiques the notion of dramatic performance as being at par with the power to create poetical works of imagination. He objects to the deification of the actor, whom he considers a mere imitator of the signs of passions of a dramatic character created by the dramatist. He, however, concedes that the imitative portrayal of the actor is much more impressionistic on the viewer rather than on the reader who must slowly apprehend the dramatic text through reading. And herein, the average playgoer (especially those who cannot read or write) identifies the actor with the character which they represent. So, Lambs' venture, which was primarily meant for the reading public, became a source text for the translators.

In the "Preface" to *Tales from Shakespeare*, Charles Lamb clearly reveals his intention saying

> It has been wished to make these Tales easy reading for very young children. To the utmost of their ability the writers have constantly kept this in mind; but the subjects of most of them made this a very difficult task. It was no easy matter to give the histories of men and women in terms familiar to the apprehension of a very young mind. For young ladies too, it has been the intention chiefly to write; because boys being generally permitted the use of their fathers' libraries at a much earlier age than girls are, they frequently have the best scenes of Shakespeare by heart, before their sisters

are permitted to look into this manly book; and, therefore, instead of recommending these Tales to the perusal of young gentlemen who can read them so much better in the originals, their kind assistance is rather requested in explaining to their sisters such parts as are hardest for them to understand: and when they have helped them to get over the difficulties, then perhaps they will read to them (carefully selecting what is proper for a young sister's ear) some passage which has pleased them in one of these stories, in the very words of the scene from which it is taken; and it is hoped they will find that the beautiful extracts, the select passages, they may choose to give their sisters in this way will be much better relished and understood from their having some notion of the general story from one of these imperfect abridgments; — which if they be fortunately so done as to prove delightful to any of the young readers, it is hoped that no worse effect will result than to make them wish themselves a little older, that they may be allowed to read the Plays at full length (such a wish will be neither peevish nor irrational). When time and leave of judicious friends shall put them into their hands, they will discover in such of them as are here abridged (not to mention almost as many more, which are left untouched) many surprising events and turns of fortune, which for their infinite variety could not be contained in this little book, besides a world of sprightly and cheerful characters, both men and women, the humour of which it was feared would be lost if it were attempted to reduce the length of them.

From the "Preface" it is clear that *Tales from Shakespeare* was written primarily for the children and women. When this is translated for the colonised Indians, and not the original Shakespearean play, it says something about the construction of the colonised in the eyes of the colonisers. First it points to a 'homology between childhood and the state of being colonised', to put it after Ashis Nandy, 'which a modern colonial system almost invariably uses'. Nandy illustrates,

Colonialism dutifully picked up these ideas of growth and development and drew a new parallel between primitivism and childhood. Thus, the theory of social progress was telescoped not merely into the individual's life cycle in Europe but also into the area of cultural differences in the colonies. What was childlikeness of the child and childishness of immature adults now also became the lovable and unlovable savagery of primitives and primitivism of subject societies.

In 1852, Muktaram Vidyabagish, a Sanskrit scholar, translated all the twenty stories abridged by Lambs in *Apurba upakshyan* [*Exquisite Tales*]. "Othello" is included in the collection. He was a professor of Sanskrit College and Hindu College, contemporary of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, rendered two books, *Arabio upakshan* [*Tales of Arab*] (1853) and *Apurba upakshyan* [*Exquisite Tales*] (1259) [1852/53] both for periodical publication in the "Sambad purnachandraday" (Sukumar Sen 39). The title page of *Apurba upakshyan* just mentions that it is translated from Lambs by Muktaram Vidyabagish in 1318 (1852). The name of the publisher is not mentioned (Rina Ghosh 49).

This is a collection of translations of twenty tales from Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*. The author tells that this volume is intended for those people who do not know English. He says that Lamb's version was intended for young people. Muktaram's rendition, apart from some minor textual alterations, is largely faithful to Lamb's storyline. He retains the place names and the names of the characters as they are in the original. The least liberty he enjoys in textual alterations, i.e. adding of a line or two or enlargements and interpretations of events and situations, is either to construct the regular form of a connected story or make them suitable to the Bengali reader. His language, in spite of Sanskritisation, is said to be transparent and easily intelligible (Rina Ghosh 50).

Muktaram Vidyabagish, as his preface testifies, is aware of the difficulties of rendering Shakespeare directly, especially the tricky task of conveying the original in the rhymes and accents of indigenous Bengali permeated by a very different cultural ethos. He feels that Bengali as a language is yet to achieve the suppleness and elasticity required for transmitting the versified outburst of variegated emotions of the Shakespearean protagonists (Rina Ghosh 50, 53). Thus, his decision to translate the simplified narrative version of Lambs is a conscious choice: it would acquaint the common people with the exotic story elements of Shakespearean plays while eschewing the alien excesses of linguistic and dramatic turbulence. Muktaram Vidyabagish is confident that even a primary awareness of the "epics" (Muktaram quoted in Rina Ghosh 49) in fiction-form aesthetically entertains the readers and makes them intellectually superior and ethically profound.

Such views exemplify the caution and seriousness with which the early translators approached Shakespeare. The earnest desire to acquaint the colonised with the achievements of the colonisers' icon reflects a cosmopolitan rather than a slavish attitude (Nazmul Ahsan 22). Apart from providing aesthetic pleasure to the fiction-loving natives their renditions

satisfied "pedagogical necessity" as well (Sisir Kumar Das, "Shakespeare in Indian Language" 117). They contributed immensely towards popularising Shakespearean plots and characters in Bengal and laid the foundation of early, tentative Bengali translations of Shakespeare followed by more competent renditions. A significant departure from Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* is that the efforts of Muktaram Vidyabagish are not directed at children. Their intention was to open up the hitherto insular Bengali literature and readers to alien, diverse and exciting treasures like Shakespeare. Lambs act as a key mediator in the project perhaps because the adult readers of Bengal, like the British children, were encountering the phenomenal playwright for the first time and needed an easy and approachable medium for the purpose. Bengal's engagement with Shakespeare the dramatist thus begins at a double remove: in a non-dramatic format transcreated from the original by an author for the Juvenile Library as late as 1807.

The primary motivation of translating Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* was to present the section of reading-public, not proficient in English, the specimen of English literature and minimise the gap between the English-knowing elite and the larger community who did not have any English or very little English. The translators were not figures with literary reputations. It would not be extravagant to claim that they tried their hands to Shakespeare with the motivation of social reform. They certainly believed in the probability of ethical improvement of the readers while going through the stories. This is surprising while one section of the literary community of the time kept on campaigning Shakespeare as immoral by raising philosophical objections against his tragedies, these earliest translators of Bengal apart from aiming enrichment of indigenous literature with the acquaintance of the literature of the west, emphasised ethical significance of Shakespearean plays.

Now this article would like to look into the plot structure of Muktaram's rendition. The opening or introduction to any literary work is extremely important. It is what sets the mood. How the adapting authors decide to open their version can illustrate a lot about their intentions and their audience. Shakespeare's play begins with anger and annoyance. Iago and Roderigo are angered, jealous, and frustrated about Cassio's promotion and Othello's marriage to Desdemona. The very first word uttered by Iago is the profane exclamation, "Sblood", which sets the tone for his contemptible character and the wicked plan he will soon set into motion. The opening of Vidyabagish's rendition follows that of the Lambs, and for

doing so it can be considered the complete opposite. The opening of Vidyabagish's tale reads:

বেনিস দেশের বিচার-সংক্রান্ত মহাসভার সভ্য মহাধন সম্পন্ন ব্রাবানসিও নামা কোন ব্যক্তি ছিলেন।

তাঁহার দেসদেমনা নাম্নী পরমাসুন্দরী এক কুমারী হয়।

This opening passage reads like a fairy tale. Not only does it sweeten up the originally bitter opening, but also sets up Desdemona, the "fair" maiden waiting to be won, as the central protagonist. It seems that, just like the Lambs, Muktaram wants the native readers to feel most sorry for Desdemona rather than Othello. That the "greatest lady" should not be "altogether condemned for the unsuitableness of the person whom she selected for her lover" is clear from Muktaram's rendition also

দেসদেমনা কুরূপ পাত্রকে স্বয়ং বরণ পূর্বক পতিত্বে পরিগ্রহ করিতে স্বীকার করিলেন বটে, কিন্তু ইহাতে লোকতঃ নিতান্ত নিন্দনীয়া হইলেন না,

She can do no wrong. She is, of course, innocent of any wrongdoings in Shakespeare's play too, but the way in which Muktaram (following Lambs) forces it upon his readers is questionable.

In the end of the Shakespearean text, the eponymous hero tragically falls victim to Iago's elaborate plot and craves for the readers' sympathy by begging for understanding and committing suicide, his final act of service as General. In the same sentence of Othello's tragic demise, the Lambs are sure to mention "that his wife (poor innocent lady) had been ever faithful to him." As Muktaram is translating Lambs' tale, he also does the same

অনন্তর দুরাত্মা ইয়াগোর ষড়যন্ত্র প্রকাশিত হইলে ওথেলোর হৃদয় অকস্মাৎ ব্রজাঘাত তুল্য অনুতাপের আবেগে বিদীর্ণ হইতে লাগিল। তখন স্পষ্ট দেখিতে পাইলেন, বিনা অপরাধে ধর্মপরায়ণা পতিব্রতা পত্নী হত্যা করিয়া মহাপাপী হইলাম এবং পরম প্রেয়সীর পরিগ্রহাবধি সদ্ভাব ও প্রণয় স্মরণপথে আবির্ভূত হওয়াতে দারুণ শোকানলে দগ্ধ হইতে লাগিলেন। পরিশেষে প্রাণধারণে অসহিষ্ণু হইয়া, প্রিয়তমার মৃত শরীরের উপরি শয়ান হইলেন এবং স্বহস্তে আত্মগ্রীবায় তীক্ষ্ণ তরবারির আঘাত করত ক্লেশের শেষ করিলেন।

As in the opening, Muktaram continues to make the story about Desdemona, taking the spotlight away from Othello at the most empathetic moment. The translator omits his final speech and the fact that he understands his transgressions and cannot forgive himself for what he has done. Following Lambs, Muktaram points out the faults of Othello himself. This drastically changes the readers' view of Othello and the play as a whole.

In simplifying *Othello*, the Lambs do very little justice to Shakespeare's play. Muktaram's rendition is no different. The basic framework is there. It is a skeleton of the story without the heart. This version of the text does not add anything to the play and leaves much out. The only characters in this new text are Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Cassio and Brabantio. By eliminating persons of the play, the new text is forced to ignore important contextual characters like Emilia and Roderigo. Important secondary plots have completely been excluded.

Rewriting a tragedy – a genre with its own linguistic, philosophical, conceptual norms – is an act fraught with implications and complexities. Lamb's tale not only has to negotiate this challenge but also has to keep in mind the norms of the tale, another genre in its own right. Lamb's "Tale of Othello" then, becomes a dominant revealing and (at the same time) problematising Lamb's conception of tragedy. Simultaneously, the tale also traces the shift in the dominant mode of cultural expression – from drama to prose – since the time Shakespeare and his contemporaries wrote for the Elizabethan and the Jacobean stage. In this connection, we should keep in mind that tragedy was not a genre alien to the European tradition as it was to the Indian classical, specifically Sanskrit (*Urubhangam* being perhaps the only instance of Sanskrit tragedy), tradition. Perhaps Muktaram, by his prose rendition, tried to bridge that gap to some extent.

To conclude, one question constantly pricks the readers regarding the reason behind Muktaram's position as a translator who, in spite of belonging to the colonised country, completely ignored the racial aspect of the Shakespearean text in his rendition. The reason may be traced back to the act that in spite of being a dramatisation of male jealousy, doomed love and victimisation of devoted female, Shakespeare's *Othello* fails to be a universal tale about a man coming to terms with the supposed betrayal and adultery of those closest to him. It is perhaps the only tragedy of the Bard where the protagonist's characters and behaviours are always traced to his racial identity. The reason is Shakespeare's arbitrary attempt to make Othello stand on the complicated crux of contemporary beliefs about black-skinned people

and Muslims. Resultantly, reading or producing the play in a society where racial discrimination and apartheid are practised is to lend a new powerful meaning to the play. Adaptation, a complex bilingual and bicultural process, is further problematised in a colonial scenario particularly inflected by burgeoning nationalism and imperialist counter-oppression. But Muktaram Vidyabagish's prose adaptation carefully avoids this dimension. The reason behind this may be traced back to the fact that dealing as it does with marriage and love, *Othello* has generic affinities with comedy or domestic drama rather than with heroic or classical tragedy. Prof. Paromita Chakravarti is quite correct to say that this could be one of the reasons why in Indian translations, adaptations and critiques, the play is always treated as a text which articulates individual freedom and romantic love against patriarchal dictates and familial pressure. The concerns of gender and women's identity receive much greater prominence than racial issues. Race is only one component in the romantic plot.

The silence about racial issues in colonial adaptations of *Othello* was not solely because of the colonial pedagogical strategy which sought to erase the racial context of the play as was clearly the case in South Africa. Nineteenth century race theories were perhaps also responsible for this silence. Most Orientalist histories traced the origin of both Hindus and Europeans to a common Aryan stock. As such no racial divide was perceived to exist between the coloniser and colonised. This theory was happily accepted and developed by Indian historians too. Thus, the Indian reader, adapter and translator of *Othello* would more readily identify with the Europeans than with the black character. Othello's predicament in a white society, his alienation and otherness, is not seen as providing a parallel to the situation of the Indian colonised subject. This is the case with Muktaram as well. So, gender issues rather than racial matters assume importance in his re-writing.

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# Women Empowerment and their Empowering Schemes in India

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### Structured Abstract:

**Purpose:** To awake the people, it is the women who should be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the nation moves".(Jawaharlal Nehru) In spite of her remarkable contribution in every field of life whether home or place of work, still she is at the receiving end at the hands of male hegemony. This parochial mindset approach needs to be addressed so that the role of women in growth and prosperity of state and society as a whole can be recognised as a tool of change. One such important tool in empowerment of women is state itself and state has to show its writ on ground level. Its policies and laws in long run will definitely prove a positive factor a, beacon light to meet out the challenges faced by them and this will overcome the negative thoughts of society. Women empowerment in India is one of the principal terms for society's overall development. There is nothing erroneous in participating in the development of society. In the world of corporates, women are playing numerous roles in meadows such as medical, engineering, and so on.

**Design / Methodology / Approach:** This research paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. The study materials are collected from various kinds of books and journals.

**Findings:** There should be no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

**Originality / Value:** The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21$^{st}$ century not only at national level but also at the international level. Society must provide equal opportunity to both of the sexes for the upliftment of society and for the wellbeing of society as a whole. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet.

**Keywords:** Women, State, Laws, Emancipation, Policies, Problems.

**Paper Type:** Theoretical Research Paper.

## Introduction

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women are an integral part

of every economy. All round development and harmonious growth of a nation would be possible only when women are considered as equal partners in progress with men. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. Women empowerment enables autonomy and control over their lives. The empowered women become agents of their own development, able to exercise choices to set their own agenda and be strong enough to challenge their subordinate position in the society. Women particularly in rural areas have proportionately least possessions, skills, education, social status, leadership qualities and capabilities for mobilization, which determines the degree of decision making and power, and as a result, their dependence on men increases. They have been confined to the four walls of the household, overburdened with domestic works and controlled of their mobility and personal freedoms by the men of the household since time immemorial. So they have lagged behind in the fields of education, skill development, employment and as a result, their work is greatly undervalued in economic terms .Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The empowerment of women include creating awareness and consciousness about situations of women, discrimination of women, rights of women, opportunities to the women and importance of gender equality , organizing a group collectively, group identity and group pressure; capacity building and skill development, ability to plan, to decide, to organize, ability to manage, ability to carry out activities, ability to deal with people and institutions in the world around them; participation in decision making at home, in the community and in the society, and access and control over resources, over means of productivity and over distribution . Empowerment is the process of changing power relations in favour of those at the lower levels of a hierarchy. Empowerment of women implies process by which women's power of self-realization is promoted and reinforced. They develop the capacity for self-reliance out crossing the relationship subordination on account of gender, social and economic status and the role in the family and society. It encompasses the ability to make choices, control resources and enjoy participatory relationship within family and community. To achieve these objectives, empowerment of women also implies their ability to participate in it and also lead social movements to remove obstacles in their progress towards their goal. Women empowerment involves the building up

of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. Women should be put in the country's development agenda to achieve its desired goal. They should also be made partners in development and development ultimately becomes a process of empowerment. This ensures their full participation in every aspect of social and national development. This participation is necessary to increase the productivity level of women. Thus, women's empowerment would enlarge the choices and productivity levels of individual women and the collective contribution of women groups. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

## Factors Affecting Women's Empowerment in India

Given below are the factors affecting women's empowerment:

1. **Gender Discrimination must be Checked:** The problem of gender discrimination has affected the pace of women empowerment in India. Gender discrimination in all realms of action must be checked. Women must be furnished with a resort to take an active part in decision making at every level and direction procedures to attain the motive of empowering women. They need to get due admiration and prominence, which they rightfully earn on merit basis in society to accomplish their fate.

2. **Educational Factor:** Education is the most vibrant factor of advancement and growth. It is the only significant tool for anticipating women empowerment in India & human resource development. It gives light to the possibilities for access to employment and making a livelihood, which in twirl revivify economic empowerment to women. In order to join the community of developed countries, people should understand the value and importance of women's education and, thereby, put combined efforts to make India on the progressive track. Education makes the individual conscientious, enabling them to comprehend, interpret, criticize, and eventually transform their atmosphere. It results in

the accession of abundances of skills that heighten a person's enthusiasm and her proficiency to shape life in a better form.

Education is the initial line of defense for women who withstand life-imperiling circumstances that traditional lifestyle perpetuates. It motivates a sense of supervision over personal fortune. In addition to this, it unlocks the door to preferences that are not confined by tradition. With a meaningful education, the women's status strides beyond the restrictions of motherliness. Advancement of education of women and girls allots to the postponement of their marriage timing and the ensuing constriction in the volume of their families.

Priority should be plopped on enrolment along with retention of the girl child in basic formal schooling and non-formal education via incentive methods like a supply of textbooks free of cost, midday meals, school bags, science kits, uniform, scholarship, residential and hostel facilities as well as the expulsion of gender discrimination in the curriculum. Education will go an extended way in making women familiar with their legal and personal rights and make them battle for their privileges, which will direct to protecting their rights mentioned in the Constitution.

❖ **Mass Media is Bringing the Transformation:** The mass media is responsible for playing a significant function to project and propagate associated issues, most specifically about women empowerment in India. The numerous programmes pertaining to women's prestige revealed the mass media enable her husband to behave toward her wife with loads of honor and respect. He can remake his attitude and assist her in the domestic domain to reduce stress and anxiety. The mass media performs a crucial role in repairing the attitude and way of conversation of husband and other family members towards women.

❖ **Steps Regarding Implementation of Women Development Programme along with Numerous Acts:** Training programme based on action at the village or in rural parts of India along with vocational programmes and the growth-oriented entrepreneurship development programmes must be organized to make women self-reliant after becoming self-employed by enhancing their efficiency and capacities in making prompt decisions. It's extremely important to check cases related to female feticide & infanticide by prohibiting the sex determination of child that is yet to take birth via the Regulation & Prevention of Misuse Act 1994 as well as PNT ACT (Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques

Act) other rulings correlating to marriage, succession, divorce, adoption, dowry and moral safety or protection against sexual harassment needs to be implemented for serving the goal of women empowerment in India.

❖ **Changes in Women's Attitude:** Women should empower themselves by becoming to be aware of their oppression, indicating initiative, and confiscating chances to bring a shift in their status. Empowerment must come from within the soul. Women need to empower themselves by bringing a major change in their attitude.

Women must know that opportunities will not reach their laps. They would have to determine ways to create them. They should fight back to rebuild their prominent position in Indian communities and societies. They must flourish hard to carry out their rights and maintain justice & equality in society. They need to work vigorously for the entire elimination of poverty, dowry-ills, illiteracy, and productive implementation of all programmes and laws related to women.

Women's empowerment is valuable for the development and advancement of the family, community as well as the nation. Hence, it must be a leading concern of the Indian Government to bring women into the fore of the development strategy by empowering them via numerous development-oriented schemes.

❖ **Organization for Awareness Programmes-** State and National level commissions for women, Non-Governmental Organisations, ICDS Programmes, must undertake e-awareness, the Taskforce for women & children Development DWACRA (Concerning Development of Women & Child in Rural Areas), women's rights, human rights, a campaign about legal rights, education about saving schemes, population education, environmental education, rehabilitation programmes with all integrity and solemnity.

**Importance of Women Empowerment**

In recent times, everyone is pointing on the empowerment of women. It is right to say that women's empowerment has become the necessity of the time. Women should possess liberty, faith, and self-worth to opt for their needs and demands. Discrimination based on gender is useless and is having zero worth by looking at the growth of women in the last few decades. Women are paid less and are treated as a cook and slave in families, and their real potential fails to get highlighted. Women empowerment in India is required to overcome situations of

such types and to provide them with their independent role in Indian society. Empowering women is a necessary right of women. They should have proportional rights to contribute to society, economics, education, and politics. They are approved to gain higher education and receive a similar treatment as men are receiving.

**Ensures Holistic Development of Society**

Women empowerment in India is one of the principal terms for society's overall development. There is nothing erroneous in participating in the development of society. In the world of corporates, women are playing numerous roles in meadows such as medical, engineering, and so on. Apart from taking part in the sphere of technology, they are energetically partaking in security services such as police, navy, military, etc. All these before-mentioned services are taking the community to another level.

**Determine their Intelligence Level**

Over the preceding decades, there has been a uniform increase in women's empowerment. Women must possess self-worth, confidence, and freedom to choose their needs and requirements. Classifying the people based on gender is unreasonable, and it has no worth. Still, women are paid less, expected to cook, and restricted by their family members. To overcome these situations and to have an independent role in society, women's empowerment is needed.

Empowering women is the fundamental right of women. They can have equal rights to participate in education, society, economics, and politics. They are allowed to have higher education and treated in the way like men. In this article, you will know about the importance of women's empowerment. So make a halt on this page and read the following content.

**Able to solve unemployment**

Unemployment is one of the common problems that can be seen in the developing society. The research says that half of the population consists of women. The unemployment of women and unequal opportunities in the workplace can be eradicated with the help of women empowerment in India. Whenever women are facing unemployment, their true potential is left without any use. To make use of the strength and potential of the women, they must be

provided with equal opportunities. You can motivate them by providing any special gifts. The best time to honor women is women's day. You can honor them with women's day gifts.

## Know about their intelligence

It is unthinkable to understand and analyze the way of living of women by peeking at them. You can foresee their level of intelligence by way of moving toward the problems and in the solution-finding. In the contemporary era, women are nicely versed in unraveling technical troubles. Women's empowerment plays a vital role in these cases. Without women empowerment in India, you won't be able to determine and understand the intelligence of women. Therefore, making existence in work is particularly important and an advantageous one. You can present any gift to give recognition to their work.

## Capable Enough to Solve the Issues of Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the widespread problems that can be glimpsed in societies in the developing stage. The study says that around half of the population comprises women. The unemployment of women & unbalanced opportunities in the working place can be eliminated with the assistance of women empowerment in India. Whenever women are confronting unemployment issues, their true capability is left without any intention. To make use of the courage and capacity of the women, they should be empowered with an equal number of opportunities.

## Government Schemes for Women Empowerment

Government of India implemented various poverty alleviation and rural development programmes. These programmes have special components for women empowerment. At present, the Government of India has over 37 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. The implementation of these programmes / schemes is monitored specifically with reference to coverage of women. Some of these are as follows:-

1. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
2. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
3. (Aajeevika) and the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).
4. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
5. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.

6. NGO's Credit Schemes.

7. Crèches / Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.

8. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.

9. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993

10. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).

11. Swalamban.

12. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).

13. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).

14. Swadhar.

15. Swayasjdha.

16. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes

17. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.

18. Hostels for working women.

19. Ujjawala (2007).

20. Working Women's Forum

21. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October,1993.

22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

23. Swa Shakti Group.

24. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.

25. Short Stay Homes.

26. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).

27. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 199517.

28. Dhanalakahmi (2008).

29. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.

30. Mahila Samiti Yojana.

31. SBI's Sree Shaki Scheme.

32. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 199517.

33. Indira Mahila Kendra.

34. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).

35. Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.

36. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).

37. Beti padao beti bacho yojana.

The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. In the past "Vedas Purana" of Indian culture, women were being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women. The existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and mangers in developing countries. Young girls are considered as a big burden in the family. Rape cases are increasing in the modern times which force us to take an initiative about the security of the female population. Ways to Empower Women: Providing education in every field Change in women's control over Decision making Providing women police stations for their complaints Changes in women's mobility and social interaction Providing separate hospitals for their checkup Changes in women's labour patterns Providing separate schools / colleges for their safety Providing equal rights Providing separate transport system Changes in women's access to and control over resources Self-employment and self-help group Providing equal property rights Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation and Housing Providing equal opportunity in sports and other activities Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

**Conclusion**

From the study we concluded that in the present scenario the condition of the Indian women is not as good as it should be and there is a need to accomplish such steps which will help to accommodate the rights and the basic needs of women population. Thus, the attainment in the field of income, employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor and needs to be check. Because with the empowerment of women, the elimination of gender discrimination and the creation of a balance of power between men and women will not only be beneficial to women, but society as a whole shall benefit politically, economically and culturally. The greatest need of an hour is change of

social attitude to women. "When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves". It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. 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. Society must provide equal opportunity to both of the sexes for the upliftment of society and for the wellbeing of society as a whole. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal because empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which they can get the proper benefit from the schemes made by Government for the women development. There should be no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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# Affinity and Alienation: Unheard Voices of Non-tribal People in Anjum Hasan's Lunatic in My Head

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**Structured Abstract:**

**Purpose:** In the era of large-scale shifts of people, information, objects, and image across continents, the internal displacement is often overlooked. Such migrations are largely the result of uneven development in the aftermath of colonization and are seen most starkly in the northeastern state of India. For a long period of time the region has been beset with many problems, underdevelopment, militancy, ethnic conflicts, cross border refugee and smuggling problems, that have led to widespread disaffection among its inhabitants. This has resulted in the phenomenon of widespread migration of the people of the northeast to the metropolitan cities like New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore.

*Lunatic in My Head* is a reflection of lives of three protagonists, lecturer Firdaus Ansari, IAS aspirant Aman Moondy and eight-year-old Sophie Das. They have all been born and brought up in Shillong. Yet, by virtue of their identity of being Dkhar – the Khasi word for a non-tribal – a constant line of ethnic divide separates them from the locals. The book deals with not-so-much-talked about topic, the confused state of the Dkhars, who are not completely insiders and yet not completely outsiders.

The present paper situates at this problematic juncture of existential questions of the non tribal people. It will try to investigate the multi-cultural situation in Shillong and will also ask questions about identities and whether they really matter so much as to inflict irrational violence and play dirty politics on one another. Several instances in the book are evocative of this discrimination against the non tribal people. Sophie is scoffed at by Khasi girls of her age because the waitress refuses to serve her tea and snacks at the wedding. Aman, consciously aware of his outsider status, remains silent when the bully Max abuses the boiled-potatoe seller. And Firdaus feels no less that an alien when Ibomcha, her boyfriend, talks about taking her to Manipur to meet his mother. Yet they cannot help loving Shillong.

**Methodology:** This paper follows the methodology of Interpretive research that tends to read a text with reference to certain theories of literature. It follows broadly the theories of postcolonialism. Apart from this, my paper also follows the method of Discourse analysis – a process of analysing the language of a text.

**Findings:** The paper ventures to deal with the sensitive space that exists between the insiders and the outsiders, their desire to belong to the other, and their agony of not being able to do so. Moreover, the paper will throw into question the concept of home, identity and multicultural society.

**Value:** The relevance or value of this paper lies in the prospect that it questions certain hegemonic concepts like that of home, identity, self, other etc.

**Keywords:** Northeast India, Migrancy, Ethnicity, Affinity, Social Exclusion.

*Lunatic in My Head* (2008) by Anjum Hasan is set in the northeastern part of India, which is known to other parts of India and world as the hotspot of ethnic violence, extremism and insurgency. Northeast India is the homeland of large number of ethnic groups who came to the region from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to the different racial stocks, speak different languages, and have varied socio cultural tradition. As a result the region has become the epicenter of various ethnic nationalities. Tensions between various ethnic and linguistic communities are quite commonplace here as they struggle for space and identity. Hasan's novel situates itself in this sensitive point of ethnic tensions – between the Khasis and non-Khasi people in the state of Meghalaya.

One of the unique features of the state of Meghalaya is that majority of tribal population follows matriarchal system where lineage and heritage are traced through women. The non-tribal communities in Meghalaya are made up of migrants from other parts of India and recent migrants from neighboring countries particularly Nepal and Bangladesh. A large scale exodus of Bengali and Nepali people had taken place on several occasions. Since the late eighties numerous cycles of ethnic cleansing rocked the state and people belonging to Nepali, Bengali, Bihari and Marwari communities became the target of attack. Unfortunately, these postcolonial feuds have failed to grab the same level of national and international attention, as the feuds in regions like Kashmir, Sri Lanka or Syria. This region since Independence witnessed migration of Bangladeshis, Nepalese and migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The 'insider' and 'outsider' syndrome crippled the social, political, economic and cultural life of tribal communities as they carry a strong feeling of distrust against the center. The region remains marginalized from mainland India which, they feel, has always regarded them as the "Other."

For a long time, the small town India remains under represented both in the hands of sociologists and anthropologists. Even there is a conspicuous lack of assessment of small town culture in the field of urban studies. Literary scholars too have long neglected the

intensive reading of small town culture in their principle engagement with the dichotomous framework of the rural versus urban. Thus, they have rarely tried to understand the differences between the cultural worldviews of the metropolis and small town. In case of India, every small town bears a distinct identity very much recognizable from its people, culture and belief. Therefore, the urban space of a small town is not without its share of imagination of the people that live in it. It is the people that give a place its character and colour. Challenging the common notion of a small town to be a homogenous space, Shillong, historically, never bears an identity like that. Since the colonial period, Shillong emerges to be a cultural melting pot where people from the plains of Assam in particular, and the neighbouring provinces of Bengal, Bihar and the distant land of Punjab, Rajasthan and Nepal, came to reside along with the indigenous population as government servants, doctors, army personnel, teachers and small traders. Over the time, these immigrant people settled permanently in their host land being enomoured by the peace and harmony prevailing here. But the situation changes and the space began to transform itself. The partition of India and the transfer of Sylhet to East Pakistan led to the migration and settlement of lakhs of East Bengal migrants in the then undivided Assam. Shillong's cosmopolitan nature collapses as the tribes in the region begin to view immigration as an encroachment in their autonomy and interest. The group of non-tribe Shillong novelists, in their attempt to narrativize the issue, tries to rearticulate their claim, in love, to the land and its history.

The writings of Hasan in this context is a truthful attempt to represent the people of the North east and their complexit. Most importantly, *Lunatic in My Head* is a powerful yet understated attempt to throw a light on this troubled region. *Lunatic in My Head* gives us a glimpse into the lives of people who are considered as 'outsiders' in the context of latent political tensions. This paper will try to examine Hasan's debut novel *Lunatic in My Head* in the light of its engagement with issues like migrancy, displacement, cultural confrontation, and the exilic condition of non-Khasi immigrants in the Northeast. *Lunatic in My Head* is a reflection of the lives of three protagonists, lecturer Firdaus Ansari, IAS aspirant Aman Moondy and eight-year-old Sophie Das. They have all been born and brought up in Shillong. Yet, by the virtue of their identity being Dkhar – the Khasi word for a non-tribal - a constant line of ethnic divide separates them from the locals. The book deals with not so much talked about topic, the confused state of the Dkhars, who are not completely insiders and yet not completely outsiders. The heterogeneous nature of the society is reflected in the very first page of the novel through Firdaus's outlook at it:

A mere glance was usually enough to reveal the important things about them – the languages they spoke, their social position, how long they had lived in Shillong. Fiedaus knew that the woman waving to her from the window of the beauty parlour, her friend Sharon, was a quarter British, a quarter-Assamese of the tea-planter variety, and half-Khasi. She knew that the college boys whistling raucously from across the street were entirely Khasi; that the short, scruffy men from the restaurants, out shopping for vegetables and chicken to put in the evening's noodles, were from distant Nepal but had probably never stirred out of Shillong since their parents migrated here; that two menwith long black umbrellas and jholas, out to fetch their children from school, were Bengalis who were born here; that the woman with orange hair who ran the liquor store was Goan and, since there were very few Goans in Shillong, something of a freak case, but that the man with the spherical bald head leaning on the counter of his bookshop was not, because he was Sindhi and had plenty of compatriots in the city (Hasan 3-4).

Firdaus herself belongs to none of these categories. She refused to be identified as Bihari because though her parents were from Bihar, she was born and brought up in Shillong. Categorically she falls into the group of second generation migrants who had to negotiate their own sense of belonging and identity in the postcolonial nation-space. On the other hand, the older generation had to suffer migration as a life-long stigma of being an outsider. The pain of migrancy, with its fears and anxieties, experienced by the first generation of migrants is different from that of the second generation. Firdaus had lived among the local Khasi people in Shillong since her birth; yet her life in the hill station had always been precarious.Therefore, in Shillong's eyes she is simply a dkhar, a foreigner who did not have roots here, did not have the ground needed to put roots in. She shares neither of her grandfather's castist belief that being a muslim she cannot marry outside her own caste; nor of his strong sense of nostalgia for his own homeland. At the end of the novel we see Firdaus planning to marry Ibomcha, a Manipuri boy and tell it to her grandfather though she knew quite well that her grandfather would be terribly unhappy about it. Firdaus lives in a strange state of flux; she is tremendously conscious about the difference of culture when she was proposed by Ibomcha, a Khasi young man. She is pretty sure that she shares nothing of his homeland, his tribe, his love for his mother, his dozens of cousins, his schemes and his beliefs; yet she decides to marry Ibomcha just as she decides not to leave Shillong in spite of its bleak prospect in future:

> She had at the time been looking forward to leaving Shillong and enrolling in a university in Delhi. All through college she had imagined what it would be like to leave home . . . Firdaus had imagined herself . . . disappointed by her parent's inability to grasp the immensity of the difference between the big city and the small town. She had never been to Delhi, but already then she saw clearly how her experience of it would swallow her life in Shillong, drown it, push it to the verge of meaninglessness, and how this irrelevance would be symbolized most starkly by her parents' incomprehension of what it meant to live in the metropolis (Hasan 107).

Through the course of the novel Firdaus seems to gain matuirity over this practical world. Earlier she found the match between Sharon and Nivedita's husband sheerly romantic; she was enoumoured by the idea of two people separated by everything – age, community, religion – reaching out for each other; she had loved the irrationality of it. But now she comes to realize that the same irrationality seemed to be the cause of Sharon's death.

The ethnic relations are highly complicated in the Northeast. For a long time, many of the Northeastern ethnic groups have been fighting the Indian state in their quest for political autonomy. Ethnic groups like Naga, Mizo, Bodo, Khasi, and Kuki, are challenging the state-constructed definition of a nation, and trying to build up new narratives of their nations based on ethnicity and distinctive cultural moorings. They always felt a lingering sense of alienation from the rest of India due to geographical and historical factors. Moreover the dynamics of demographic shifts due to large scale migration from the rest of India seems to doubly spur the issue of militant nationalism and ethnic assertions for political autonomy. The issue of migration has been put under tremendous threat as the local tribes have always regarded the successive waves of migration as posing threats to their cultures and economic resources. Therefore, the insider-outsider dichotomy of the nation state gets reverted in the ethnic world of the Northeast. The polemics of power seems to be very much functional in creating an atmosphere of doubt and distrust between the 'insider' and the 'outsider'. The divide between them may also be seen as the postcolonial distance between the 'self' and the 'other'. Several instances in Hasan's *Lunatic in My Head* are reflective of this discrimination against the non-tribal people of Shillong. Sophie was scoffed at by Khasi girls of her age because the waitress refused to serve her tea and snacks at the wedding ceremony of a Khasi family where Sophie went with her landlady Kong Elsa, another woman from Khasi community.

Hasan's novel engages itself with the liminal subjectivity of the non-ethnic migrants of the post-colonial India. In opposition to the state recognized citizenship these internal migrants could never become full-fledged citizens in the new country and here comes the issue of social exclusion which is a multidimensional process covering social, economic, cultural and political domains. Marshall Wolfe talks about various kinds of social exclusion – exclusion from livelihood, exclusion from social services, welfare and security networks, exclusion from political choice, exclusion from popular organization and solidarity, and exclusion from understanding of what is happening (Wolf 81-101). The socially excluded is deprived of social recognition, self-respect and social values. The basis of exclusion can be race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region, or caste. Each form of exclusion has its nature and manifestation. In *Lunatic in My Head*, exclusion on the basis of race and ethnicity predominates over every other forms of social exclusion. It is as a result of this social exclusion that Mrs. Das takes exception to Sophie's close attachment to Kong Elsa's family even though the latter is the woman who helped them in the worst phase of their lives by giving a relaxation to house rents. Mrs. Das, being apprehensive about Sophie's future, tells her husband: "It's good thing that she spends time with the old lady but she's getting obsessed with that family. After all, their culture is different . . . I know we can trust her- she is a very fine person. But what is the effect of all this on Sophie? She's becoming obstinate. She doesn't want to help me in the house. And have you seen her science exercise book? Each and every test she's done poorly in." (Hasan 287). Interestingly enough, all that is bad in Sophie, opines Mrs. Das, is the outcome of her engagement with a tribal family and her picking up of all sorts of tribal habits. Mrs. Das is too much concerned about retaining the culture promoted broadly by nation state: "My worry is – what will happen to Sophie? She will lose her culture. As it is she knows nothing about anything. Ask her about Mahabharata, why Diwali is celebrated, who Meera Bai was – nothing. Zero." (Hasan 289). Amartya Sen says that sense of one's identity creates a sense of exclusion from mainstream (here in this context 'mainstream' is the tribal culture) and in "many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups" (Sen 2). Mrs. Das's sense of their own identity compels her to look at the tribal culture in disapproving terms. Constructing a national identity and in the process ignoring the specificities of smaller communities further creates exclusionary tendencies.

The issue of social exclusion is usually related to the problem of equal opportunity. Though modern liberal democracies formally recognize full citizenship, very often it creates unequal

citizenship in actual practice. The politics of northeast India is marked by ethnicity and extremism for a long time. The assertion of various ethnic identities and the attitude of the state in containing ethnic extremism make the region distinct from the rest of India. The root cause of ethnic assertion can be found in the identity crisis of various tribal communities who extend over the territorial boundaries drawn by the Indian nation state. Most of the ethnic assertions are due to ethnic group's desperate attempts to protect their identity, culture and language. The basis of ethnic assertion can be seen in two contexts. Firstly, the tribal communities' subjective consciousness of being excluded, oppressed and marginalized. Secondly, the process of development failed to address the legitimate concerns of the people. Though after independence the Indian state tried to integrate and assimilate various ethnic communities in the mainstream national identity, the development process generated a feeling of alienation among them. That is why when Aman and Ribor went by their old school, near the escarpment on their right the graffiti in dripping red paint read, "We Are Khasis by Blood, Indians by Accident" (Hasan 32). Shillong is a wasteland for everybody living here with no such hope to keep them alive. On their way Aman and Ribor met their old school friend Partho who had a big dream of making a career in Indian army. On his way to fulfilling his dream he gave himself another name – Stephen Pratt but shortly his dreams are shattered:

> After a failed attempt at a career in the Indian army, Partho had returned to Shillong, married a girl his mother had located for him, and now worked desultorily as a computer instructor. He no longer called himself Stephen Pratt. His father was severely alcoholic and Partho himself did not always speak as if he were in absolute command of his reason. Aman felt grief every time he met Partho. This boy, whose panache had once fascinated him, was now an unshaven depressive given to making jokes that weren't funny. (Hasan 32)

Mrs. Moondy is anxious at the thought that Aman, her only son, would fail the exam and become a clerk in some horrible government office or, worse still, a school teacher and never get out of Shillong. Issues of home and exile are also raised by Mrs. Das's words to her husband, which again, in a way, brings forward the cultural conflict: ". . . why don't you apply for a job elsewhere, outside Shillong? Where is it written that we have to stay in Shillong? There is nothing in this place anyway. No jobs, no culture." (Hasan 286).

The material existence of tribal communities was threatened by the influx of migration, occupation of key government jobs by non-tribals leading to further exclusion. The phenomenon of ethnic extremism is further activated by declining job opportunities in the government sector. Ethnic communities begins to feel in terms of 'us' and 'them' and gradually comes to realize its relative deprivation in comparison with others. Ethnicity, in this context, is the "phenomenon of an ethnic group coming to self-awareness that enables it to reaffirm its identity and pursue its interests" (Heredia 1011). Thus the frustration of the unemployed youth was utilized by the extremist groups to serve their interests. The demands of extremist groups are varying from autonomy to secessionism. They often challenge the sovereignty and integrity of the nation state. We find so many instances of ethnic extremism in smaller scale in the novel, *Lunatic in My Head*. Aman was frequently made victim of racist attacks by a gang of Khasi boys even when he is with his friend Ribor, a Khasi boy. The boys who clustered around them in a threatening ring were Ribor's kinsmen. Aman was, in the language of the bullies, a dkhar – an outsider. Ribor started addressing the gang but in an interesting way he had not reasoned through what he wanted to say – he was merely speaking of an instinct for peace, a desire that people leave other people alone. Aman himself was tormented by a kind of identity crisis. That is why, "He found it particularly hard to defend himself against racist attacks because he was never sure who he was defending – an encroacher, a permanent guest of the hills people, or someone who belonged here because he had never lived anywhere else? Which one of these? He didn't know. He would have liked to avoid the issue." (Hasan 37) As the story unfolds we discover that the leader of the bully group, Max is actually Ribor's brother and he has shot a man in Laitumkhrah last week. Even after shooting a man dead, Max continues to be desperate in bullying dhkars, be it aloo-muri-wallah. Sarak Singh or his brother's friends, Aman or Bodha. Max is not at all afraid that the police are on to him; he is walking about town like a man without worries. This is the reality in which most of the tribal youths waste their lives.

In her lyrical yet restrained prose, Hasan gently probes the sense of alienation. What makes the theme of alienation more problematic is that the characters dwindle between affinity and alienation. They are in love with sylvan beauty, camaraderie and solitude of Shillong but at the same time they abhor the stagnancy of their lives in a small hill town of Northeast India. The exact reflection of it is hinted in Mrs. Das's words. She is full of contradictions as Mr. Das assesses her nature. She asks her husband to leave this place as there is no jobs, no culture here. But after a while she reflectively says: "You stay here for eight, ten years and

then you can't go anywhere else. You get used to this place. Remember when we went to Delhi last time, how difficult it was? Everything seemed strange. People were rude, taxi-wallahs cheated us. Even though we consider ourselves Dilli-wallahs." (Hasan 28). Therefore, the insider-outsider dichotomy gets disturbed as the 'outsider' feels more comfort in another's land rather than their own. The comfort of the outsider in an alien land is much more intensified in Mr. Das's words: "But that's the beauty of this place. The rain, the hills – just look at the garden, it looks alive. I'm not moving anywhere. That I've decided. Job or no job, this is where I'm going to stay. . ." (Hasan 288). Interestingly, Hasan, even after raising so many problematic issues in her narrative, ultimately make peace with everything just the way Firdaus makes it with Hemingway. The end of the novel can be drawn into a single thought line by Sophie Sharma: "Thank God we're not compelled to go to awful places like Calcutta. We keep complaining about Shillong, but think of all good things about this place." (Hasan 344). On a final count, Anjum Hasan seems to suggest that affinity and alienation are fluid states, constantly changing in this era of large scale migrations.

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# Politics to Poetics: Nationalist Rhetoric and Nationalist Reality in Select Poems of Robin S Ngangom and Agha Shahid Ali

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### Structured Abstract:

**Purpose**: The different modes of conceptualizing nation and nationality like territory/ geography, linguistic oneness, shared religion or culture etc., have been attempted over the years by different theoreticians. Nevertheless, the ambivalence, ambiguity and consequent inadequacy have always been unmasked, implying the untenable nature of the terms. The politics of globalization, migration and diaspora has further problematized these concepts. The present paper intends to study select poems of Robin S. Ngangom and Agha Shahid Ali, poets from the two "troubled" lands– Manipur and Kashmir, respectively, in the light of "nation" and "nationality" studies.

**Methodology**: The proposed study will adopt an interpretative approach. Inputs from different fields like postcolonial studies, nationalism studies, and diaspora studies will be incorporated to this end.

**Findings**: The study exposes the limitations of such categorizing, which in one way or the other lead to the policy of exclusion(s) and create new marginalities. It shows that nationhood for both the poet Robin S Ngangom and Agha Shahid Ali is problematic and cannot be easily categorised.

**Value**: The relevance or value of the proposed study lies in the fact that it questions and problematizes the essentialist or the constructivist nature of a nation which is often highlighted by different theories about the nation. It unmasks the inherent inadequacy of the terms like "nation", "nationality", "nationhood" etc. indicating the contingent nature of it, rather than having any fixed signification(s).

**Keywords**: Nation, Exclusion, Marginalization, Robin S Ngangom, Agha Shahid Ali

In his 1882 lecture, titled "What is a nation?", Ernest Renan avowed that the idea of a nation is a relatively new formation in history. He also categorically said that nations are not "natural" entities and that it is "constructed". Benedict Anderson's famous formulation of nation as an "imagined" political community also highlights the "constructed" nature of the nation. In his essay "A nation is a nation, is a state…", William Connor further asserts that the essence of a nation is "a psychological bond that joins people and differentiates it in the

subconscious conviction of its members from all other people in a most vital way" (Connor, 1978, p. 300-301). Connor's proposition brings forth another characteristic of a nation — that the people of a nation supposedly share a sense of homogeneity. Now, this notion of homogeneity in the "national imaginary" brings to the fore the possible exclusionary tendency. Notionally people living in a nation-state may be homogenous, but the lived reality contradicts this ideational image. Thus, the theories of the nation either highlight the essentialist or the constructivist nature of a nation.

In the postcolonial countries, the concept of nation was imported from the West. Nationalism in these countries came into being in the shape of the anti-colonial struggle and independence movement. In most cases, the common bond crafted during the independence movement was subsequently challenged by various divisive tendencies betraying the nation's instability. Ernest Renan finds this instability of the nation as an inevitable consequence of its "constructed" nature. According to Renan, the "myth of nationhood, masked by ideology, perpetuates nationalism, in which specific identifiers are employed to create exclusive and homogeneous conceptions of national traditions. Such signifiers of homogeneity always fail to represent the diversity of the actual "national" community for which they purport to speak and, in practice, usually represent and consolidate the interests of the dominant power groups within any national formation" (Renan in Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 135). In fact, a nation can never be full of homogenous people throughout its geographical territory. There must be a majority as well as a minority. The moment any nation or nationalism is based on the majority, there comes the policy of exclusion and division, which in its turn, gives rise to the voices of the dissents. A nation becomes a contested site of control and domination.

The factors like class, caste, religion, language and gender also define the nature of belonging in a multi-religious multicultural country and create different kinds of minorities based on class, caste, religion, language, ethnicity etc. Subrata K Nanda observes that in a multi-national state like India, the connotation of nationality or national identity seems problematic. He argues, "Normally, in these countries, people's loyalty to their overarching nation/state competes with the loyalty to their respective nationalities. Stated differently, people in such cling to their civil-political identity without shedding or tampering specific cultural identity and the notions of ancestral "homeland" (Nanda, 2006, pp. 24-25). The problem arises when the territorial boundaries of these nations in a multi-national state do not correspond with their cultural / ethnic boundaries. In India, for example, the ethnic and ethno-regional

inequities were engineered by colonial boundary-makers whose arbitrary policy of map-making has thrown a significant challenge to civic nationalism. In this respect, it should be kept in mind that the total geographical territory of present India plus Pakistan and Bangladesh was not under British rule. There were 565 princely states in India at the time of Independence. After the country got Independence, these princely states were gradually annexed to the newly independent nation-state, and the old boundaries of the princely states were replaced by the new provincial boundaries. The new boundaries did not coincide with the older autonomous states. There were protests and resistance, and these voices of protests and resistance have been reflected in the literature of those regions since then. The North East of India and Kashmir are two such conflict regions and the contest sites of nations / nationalisms. In the subsequent sections of the present paper, the poems of Robin S Ngangom and Agha Shahid Ali, two eminent poets from Manipur (a North-East Indian state) and Kashmir, will be discussed in detail in order to show how their poems act both as the poetry of resistance and as the poetry of witness to the suffering meted out by the people of the marginally "other" regions in the hand of the nation-state.

In any discourse on the Indian nation-state, the Northeast has always been seen as "the other". It is commonly referred to as the "periphery" or the margin of the Indian nation-state. The root of the problem dates back to the very inception of the birth of the independent Indian nation-state in 1947. The colonial political expediency led to the entire North East region being yoked together with the newly independent nation-state. Subir Bhaumik aptly calls this "the accident of geography":

> India's North East is a region rooted more in the accident of geography than in the shared bonds of history, culture and tradition. It is a directional category right out of colonial geographical usage— like the Middle East or the Far East. A young Assamese scholar describes it as a "politically convenient shorthand to gloss over complicated historical formations and dense loci of social unrest".1 The region has, over the centuries, seen an extraordinary mixing of different races, cultures, languages and religions, leading to a diversity rarely seen elsewhere in India. (Bhaumik, 2009, p. 1)

The interests of the Indian nation-state have been at odds with the reality and the aspirations of the people of this region. Hence, we find in the literature of North East India a voice of resistance to British and later Indian attempts to administer the area. Ethno-cultural conflicts

are rampant in these areas, leading to violent political agitations and even insurgent and/ or separatist movements.

While writing about the poets and the poetry produced in the North East in his essay "Poetry in the time of terror", Robin S Ngangom argues, "The writer from Northeast India, consequently, differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. […] living with the menace of the gun, he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry or woolly aesthetics but must perforce master "the art of witness" (Ngangom, 2005, p. 171). Ngangom's poems perform this "art of witness" faithfully. His most ambitious and overtly political poem "The Strange Affair of Robin S. Ngangom" brings to the fore all the lived reality that the poet has witnessed. The introductory lines of the poem— "Not once can I say / I am the captain / behind this wheel of fire" (Ngangom, 1997, p. 9) — voices the loss of self-control which in the terminology of the discourse of nationalism can be called the right of self-determination or here the absence of it. The phrase "wheel of fire" indicates the turmoil that the people of Manipur are subjected to. Again, "misplacing / a bronze bell / somewhere, sometime" (Ngangom, 1997, p. 9) evokes a sense of wrong done to the people of the land, suggesting the transition of the status of Manipur from an autonomous state to a marginalized state of a newly independent nation-state. The image of a goat with a marigold garland between horns aptly betrays the overarching theme of sacrifice and victimhood portrayed in the poem. The political changes resulting from this transition subsequently brought social, cultural and economic changes that were in no way hopeful or beneficiary. The poet-speaker ruminates ruefully—

> When I turn with a heavy heart
>
> towards my burning land,
>
> the hills, woman, scream your name.
>
> Soldiers with black scarves
>
> like mime artists
>
> turn them in seconds into shrouds. (Ngangom, 1997, p. 11)

The poem thus chronicles the saga of pain, pathos and despair born out of disillusionment and helplessness.

For the people of Manipur, "independence" does not connote the same thing as it connotes for the larger part of the Indian nation-state. The citizens here are bound by the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA since 1958, which endows undue power on the military

forces and has resulted in a large-scale violation of the fundamental rights of the citizens. The poet is very much critical of the excessive military repression of the Indian armed forces for turning his "fabled land" into a hellhole. The (mis)use of power by the military and the dishonest politicians have badly affected ordinary people's morality, security, and safety. The "scars appeared on [the beloved's] body" make "wound" on the conscience of the lover. The poet finds no hope since the morning newspaper brings no respite for the day:

> Morning papers like watered-down milk
>
> hawk the same bland items:
>
> rape, extortion, ambushes, confessions,
>
> embezzlement, vendetta, sales,
>
> marriages, the usual. (Ngangom, 1997, p. 11)

The deadly weapons used to crush the insurgents resulted death, destruction and devastation—

> For the trucks carrying
>
> the appliances of death and devastation,
>
> […]
>
> the graves of youths who died in turmoil
>
> are the only milestones to the city. (Ngangom, 1997, p. 11)

Not only the human loss but also the ecocide has been a matter of mourning by the people of this part of the nation-state: "Instead of the musk of your being/ I inhale the acrid smoke/of gelignite and pyres." (Ngangom, 1997, p. 11)

Essential commodities like oil, lentils and food for babies are uncertain because of social, political and economic instabilities. Even the poet accentuates, "fire water and air are slowly becoming commodities" (Ngangom, 1997, p. 11). Hence, the "patriotic" urge of the youths leads them to "fondle grenades" to defend their native customs and traditions, literature and performing arts. Needless to say, "patriotism" connotes different significations based on the subject positions of the inhabitants in a nation-state. The "patriotism" of the youths, fighting for secession and mourning the accession of the native state (Manipur) to the newly independent nation-state (India), to preserve the native rights ("native customs and traditions, / [our] literature and performing arts") and the patriotism of the Indian military fighting to preserve the "national" integrity of the Indian nation-state are in complete conflict. This can be termed as a clash between civic / political nationalism and ethnic nationalism.

Thus, Ngangom's poem brings to the fore the problematics of nationalism and patriotism in a multi-national state like India. It documents the sorrowful "history" of the people of Manipur amidst the conflict between a nation-state and an erstwhile native Indian "free" state. The poem invites parallelism with William Butler Yeats's poem "Easter 1916" where there was a conflict between the Irish rebels fighting for the Independence and the British soldiers. In both the poems, the poets expressed their moral support for the brave youths fighting for "freedom". Ngangom believes that the present Manipur does not guarantee freedom for its people, and hence as a poet, he must address the "the double challenge of truth and liberty":

> When a man of even an iota of conviction is in immediate danger if he speaks up, when a gun points at you if you don't observe a prescribed code of behaviour, how can I claim that I am living in a free society? … I think the task that literature of the Northeast must address is what Camus called "the double challenge of truth and liberty." (Ngangom, 2005, p. 173)

Besides the North-East Indian states, Kashmir is another conflict zone that has been a matter of concern for a long period. Ananya Jahanara Kabir describes the plight of Kashmir in the following words: "locked within inhospitable terrain, but professed by all to be a singularly beautiful place, the Valley has, in the course of the twentieth century, emerged as a bone of contention for three nationalisms, Indian, Pakistani and aspirant Kashmiri." (Kabir, 2009, p. 1) The literature that has emerged from this "territory of desire" often uses resistance as a tool for aesthetic and socio-political engagement. Like Manipur, Kashmir's troubled state is embedded in the various historical forces which date back to the pre-independent and undivided India (comprising present India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) under British rule. Like Manipur, Kashmir was also a native Indian state when India got Independence. In 1947, the last Dogra king Hari Singh consented to merge Kashmir with India under dubious circumstances without taking the people on board. This pushed Kashmir into a perpetual political crisis.

Agha Shahid Ali, the diasporic poet who prefers the sobriquet "Kashmiri-American", hails from this unfortunate part of the world. Like every diasporic writer, his nationality (national identity) is engaged in the politics of homeland-host land dynamics in a broader context and Kashmir and America in a specific context. Though Ali's poems are preoccupied with the lay of his homeland (Kashmir), his early volumes of poetry are not overtly political; rather, they express the poet's nostalgic remembrances of his idyllic homeland. However, as things

became bad to worse during the 1990s, he explicitly took a political position and stressed only on his national identity as a Kashmiri through evoking images and objects associated with Kashmir— paisley, saffron etc. In a painful but powerful poetic voice, Ali has penned down the plight of ordinary people. Amitav Ghosh, Ali's friend and admirer, argues, "Kashmir's current plight represented for him the failure of the emancipatory promise of nationhood and the extinction of the pluralistic ideal that had been so dear to intellectuals of his father's generation" (Ghosh, 2017, p. 216). It is futile to debate whether Ali was a Kashmiri-nationalist poet, as few people have argued, but it is evident that Ali's poetry powerfully portrayed the unheard and lost voices in the war-torn state, highlighting the atrocities and acts of violence suffered by the ordinary people.

Ali's *The Country without a Post Office* (1997) most effectively captures the violence and savagery (through excessive military repression and ruthless terrorist violence) in 1990s Kashmir. The title poem of the eponymous volume, "The Country without a Post Office", was originally published as "Kashmir without a Post Office". The poem and the volume were evocative of an actual happening when post offices were not functional in Kashmir for quite a long time, and they (post offices) became "archive for letters with doomed addresses". The addresses are doomed because — "each house buried or empty. / Empty? Because so many fled, ran away, / and became refugees there, in the plains," (*The Veiled Suite* [*VS*], 2009, p. 202). "Papier-mâché" is an exquisite Kashmiri handicraft that Ali refers to in this poem, though ironically. The burning of the houses by the midnight soldiers creates for the poet an impression of papier-mâché, "inlaid with gold, then ash" (*VS*, 2009, p. 202). In this context, Ananya Jahanara Kabir remarks:

> Summoning the weight of a community's experience of violence, Ali moves the fragile flammability of papier maché from a metaphoric substitute for the burnt houses to metonymic contiguity with the Kashmir conflict itself. … His [own] poem approximates papier maché to not the living Kashmiri habitus, but its destruction by Indian soldiers … (Kabir, 2009, p. 111)

As post offices are non-functional, there is no communication possible. In a desperate attempt, the speaker brings "cash, a currency of paisleys/ to buy new stamps, rare already, blank, / no nation named on them" (*VS*, 2009, p. 203). The absence of any name of nation suggestively indicates the Kashmiri people's non-acceptance of India as their nation and their aspiration for a new nation of their own. The poetic sympathy and solidarity with the

Kashmiri separatist nationalism hinted in the lines prove the poet's anger at and disillusionment with the postcolonial Indian nation-state, which turns violent on its own Kashmir providing gross injustice to the people in Kashmir. The speaker imagines himself going through the messages of undelivered letters of people in this crisis and then sending his messages which sound like "cries countless, cries like dead letters sent / to this world whose end was near, always near" (*VS*, 2009, p. 205). The apocalyptic image, however, is accompanied by the metaphor of "rain" which for Ali signifies a life living force, and the poem ends on a note of resolution resisting the oppressions of the tragic world— "And I want to answer: / I want to live forever. What else can I say? / It rains as I write this. Mad heart, be brave" (*VS*, 2009, p. 206). By sending messages of the misfortune of his homeland to "addresses, across the oceans" and "across continents" (*VS*, 2009, p. 205), the poet-speaker connects Kashmir with the rest of the world and thus compensates for the loss of communication created by the absence of post offices in his homeland.

Nation has multiple narratives— each one going against the grain of some other. Ali's narratives of the nation-space (both of Kashmir and India) bring to the fore the narratives of an individual who hails from this troubled part of the world and bears witness to the injustice meted out to the ordinary people of his beloved land (Kashmir). Notwithstanding the grief and pain of "paradise lost", his verse never mentions resorting to any violent means. Ali was a life-ling believer in the principles of hospitality and generosity that "Kashmiriyat" upholds. This is obvious in the elegy "Hans Christian Ostro", which he wrote in memory of Hans Christian Ostro, a Norwegian traveller taken hostage by Al-Faran militants in August 1995 and later beheaded. The poet, deeply pained at the traumatic turn of the event, laments, "I cannot protect you: these are my hands" (*VS*, 2009, p. 236).

In fine, nationhood for both the poet Robin S Ngangom and Agha Shahid Ali is problematic since their homeland, Manipur and Kashmir, respectively, are "marginalized" territories and, more than often, are treated as "other". Whatever the "official" and / or "grand narrative" propounds, in practice, so-called "mainstream" nationalism always tends to be exclusive, giving rise to the marginalized and dissenting voices, which, in turn, goads separatist nationalism(s). The people of these two places get affected by the violence and counter-violence of state-sponsored forces and Militant forces. Coming from these conflict zones, the poetry of these two poets cannot help being the "poetry of witness".

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# পুনর্বিবাহ: একা সমীক্ষা

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## Structured Abstract:

**সারসংক্ষেপ:** প্রাচীন ভারতীয় জীবনযাত্রা চারটি আশ্রমে আবদ্ধ ছিল । চারটি আশ্রমের মধ্যে গৃহস্থাশ্রমই সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ, কারণ গৃহস্থই অন্য তিনটি আশ্রমের ধারক ও পোষক । এই গার্হস্থ্যাশ্রমের প্রবেশপথ হল বিবাহ । বৈদিকসাহিত্য থেকে শুরু করে রামায়ণ, মহাভারত, পুরাণ, স্মৃতিশাস্ত্র সর্বত্রই বিবাহের নিয়ম-নীতি, আচার প্রভৃতির বিস্তৃত আলোচনার পাশাপাশি পুরুষের বহুবিবাহের উল্লেখ পাওয়া গেলেও নারীর দ্বিতীয় বিবাহ প্রসঙ্গে নিশ্চুপ থেকেছেন প্রায় সকলেই । যদিও সজাতীয় পুরুষ বা দেবরের দ্বারা সন্তান ধারণের কথা জানা গেলেও নারীর দ্বিতীয় সংসারজীবনের কথা অন্ধকারেই বিদ্যমান । পরাশর, নারদ প্রমুখ স্মৃতিশাস্ত্রগণ নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ বিষয়ে কিঞ্চিৎ আলোকপাত করেছেন তারই প্রতিফল বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ার প্রচেষ্টায় বিধবা বিবাহ আইন পাশ ।

**সাংকেতিক শব্দ:** বিবাহ, বিবাহের প্রয়োজনীয়তা, নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ, গ্রহণযোগ্যতা।

**প্রণালী (Methodology):** গবেষণাপত্রটি বর্ণনামূলক ও তুলনামূলকভাবে লিখিত হয়েছে । প্রাচীন সংস্কৃত গ্রন্থগুলির উপর নির্ভর করে ও বর্তমান সমাজে কতটা ফলদায়ক তা তথ্যভিত্তিক পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ বর্ণনা করা হয়েছে ।

**প্রকল্প (Hypothesis):**

- স্মৃতিকারগণ কর্তৃক বিবাহের সংজ্ঞা ও প্রয়োজনীয়তা।

- কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ সমাজস্বীকৃত।

- বিধবাবিবাহ আইন বর্তমানে কতটা ফলদায়ক ।

## ভূমিকা

মানবসমাজকে সভ্য সুশৃঙ্খল ও আনন্দময়রূপে গড়ে তুলতে প্রাচীনকাল থেকে নানা রীতি-নীতি, বিধি-বিধান ও সামাজিক অনুশাসন তৈরী হয়েছে । ভারতীয় সমাজদর্শনও এর ব্যতিক্রম না । প্রাচীনকাল থেকে ভারতীয় প্রজ্ঞাবান ঋষিগণ মানবজীবনকে মাধুর্যমণ্ডিত করে তোলার জন্য নানাবিধ আচারবিধির উপদেশ দিয়েছেন । মানবজীবনের চারটি আশ্রমের মধ্যে শাস্ত্রকারগণ অত্যন্ত গুরুত্ব দিয়েছেন গার্হস্থ্যাশ্রমকে । এই আশ্রমেই একজন মানুষ তার জন্মসূত্রে প্রাপ্ত ঋণ পরিশোধের সুযোগ পায় । আচার্য মনুর মতে গার্হস্থ্যাশ্রম সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ । গৃহস্থই অন্য তিনটি আশ্রমের ধারক ও পোষক - 'গৃহস্থ উচ্যতে শ্রেষ্ঠঃ স ত্রীনেতান্ বিভর্তি হি' (মনুস্মৃতি - ৬.৮৯) । এই গার্হস্থ্যাশ্রমের প্রবেশপথ হল বিবাহ । ঋষিগণ উপদৃষ্ট মানবজীবনের ষোড়শ সংস্কারের মধ্যে অন্যতম হল বিবাহ সংস্কার । বিবাহ হল বহুজনস্বীকৃত একটি অনুষ্ঠান, যার দ্বারা কোন বিশেষ উদ্দেশ্য সাধিত হয় । এটি একটি বৃহৎ কর্মযজ্ঞ । ব্যক্তির সঙ্গে গোষ্ঠীর সম্পর্ককে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করার নিমিত্ত কতকগুলি স্থায়ী ও অনুমোদিত কার্যাবলি হল বিবাহ । পারিবারিক জীবনকে সুন্দরতম করে গড়ে তোলার জন্য শাস্ত্রকারগণ বিবাহবিধি নিজ নিজ গ্রন্থে ব্যক্ত করেছেন ।

## বিষয়বস্তু

'বিবাহ' শব্দটি বহ্-ধাতু সহ ঘঞ্ প্রত্যয় যোগে নিষ্পন্ন হয়েছে । বহ্-ধাতুর অর্থ বহন করা । বিশেষরূপে বহনই হল বিবাহ । স্মৃতিকার রঘুনন্দন তাঁর 'উদ্বাহতত্ত্ব' গ্রন্থে বিবাহের সংজ্ঞা করেছেন - 'ভার্যাত্বসম্পাদকগ্রহণং বিবাহঃ' 'এই নারী আমার ভার্যা' এইরকম প্রতিজ্ঞা করে পুরুষ কর্তৃক নারীকে গ্রহণ করাই হল 'বিবাহ' । এর তাৎপর্য হল স্ত্রীর আত্মাকে বর কর্তৃক আত্মসাৎ করার যে সংস্কার তারই নাম বিবাহ । এই বিবাহানুষ্ঠানের মধ্য দিয়ে স্ত্রী ও স্বামী একাত্মতায় ও একাঙ্গে রূপান্তরিত হয় এবং তার স্বামীর অর্ধাঙ্গিনীরূপে পরিচিত হয় । মেধাতিথির মতে ব্রাহ্ম প্রাজাপত্য প্রভৃতি উপায়ে যে কন্যা লাভ করা যায় তাকে ভার্যা করার জন্য সাঙ্গোপঙ্গ যে সংস্কার অনুষ্ঠান করা হয় তাই বিবাহ - 'স্ত্রীসংস্কার্থা বিবাহ ইতি স্ত্রীবিবাহঃ । কা পুনরয়ং নাম উপায়তঃ প্রাপ্তায়াঃ দারকবনার্থঃ সংস্কারঃ সোতিকর্তব্যতাঙ্গ সপ্তর্ষিদর্শনপর্যন্তঃ

পাণিগ্রহণলক্ষণঃ' (মেধাতিথি, মনুসংহিতা - ৩.২০ ) । 'বিবাহ' শব্দের প্রতিশব্দ বা সমর্থকশব্দ রূপে ঋথ্বেদে হস্তগ্রাভ (১০.১.১৮.৮), বহতুম্ (১০.২.১৩.১) প্রভৃতি শব্দ উল্লেখিত আছে । বিবাহ সংস্কারের কতকগুলি প্রয়োজনীয় অনুষ্ঠান ভিন্ন ভিন্ন নামে উল্লেখিত হয় কিন্তু এগুলি প্রত্যেকটি সম্পূর্ণ বিবাহকেই নির্দেশ করে । যেমন উদ্বাহ, বিবাহ, পরিণয়, পরিণয়ন, উপযম, পাণিগ্রহণ । 'উদ্বাহ' পদের অর্থ বিবাহের পর নারীকে তার পিতৃগৃহ থেকে বর কর্তৃক নিজগৃহে আনয়ন । নারীর সাথে হোমাগ্নির চতুষ্পার্শে পরিক্রমণ হল পরিণয় । উপযম অর্থাৎ নারীকে নিজের কাছে নিয়ে আসা এবং হোমাগ্নিকে সাক্ষী রেখে নিজের করে পাওয়া । কন্যার হাত ধরা এবং তাকে নিজের বলে মনে করা হল পাণিগ্রহণ । পাণিগ্রহণবিষয়ে ঋথ্বেদে উক্ত হয়েছে - 'গৃভনামি তে সৌভাগাত্বায় হস্তম্' (১০.৮৫.৩৬) । তৈত্তিরীয়সংহিতাতে (৭.২.৮৬) বিবাহের পরিবর্তে 'উদ্বাহ' শব্দের প্রয়োগ দৃষ্ট হয় । লিখিতসংহিতা (১.৩৫) ও সংবর্তসংহিতাতে বিবাহ শব্দের নামান্তর করা হয়েছে সপ্তপদী ।

## বিবাহের উদ্দেশ্য

'বিবাহ' সংস্কারের মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য সম্বন্ধে প্রাচীন শাস্ত্রকারগণ নিজ নিজ গ্রন্থে স্বকীয় মতামত ব্যক্ত করেছেন । 'বিবাহ' সংস্কারের মূল উদ্দেশ্য হল এই পবিত্র অনুষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে গার্হস্থ্যাশ্রমে প্রবিষ্ট পুরুষদ্বারা তার পরিণীতা স্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেবতা পূজা, যজ্ঞাদির অনুষ্ঠান, সন্তানাদি উৎপাদন প্রভৃতির মাধ্যমে সমাজের মঙ্গল বিধান করা । স্ত্রী ব্যতীত পুরুষের ধর্মীয় আচার অনুষ্ঠানে অধিকার নেই । বেদে প্রায়শঃ শোনা যায় সপত্নিক যজমান কেবলমাত্র যজ্ঞকর্মে অধিকারী । এই কারণে মনু স্ত্রীদের রক্ষা করা একান্ত কর্তব্য বলে নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন ।

পতিভার্যাং সংপ্রবিশ্য গর্ভো ভূত্বহ জায়তে ।

জায়ায়াস্তদ্ধি জায়াত্বং সদস্যাং জায়তে পুনঃ ।। (মনুসংহিতা - ৯.৮)

মহাভারতের শান্তিপর্বে স্ত্রীই হল প্রকৃত গৃহস্বরূপ । পতি পত্নীর মধ্যে কোনও একজন বিচ্ছিন্ন হলে ধর্মানুষ্ঠানে কোন অধিকার থাকে না - 'ন গৃহং গৃহমিত্যাহুগৃহিণী গৃহমুচ্যতে' (মহাভারত, শান্তিপর্ব -১৪৪.৬৬) । আপস্তম্বধর্মসূত্রে (২.৬.১৩.১৬-১৭) ঋষির মুখে ধ্বনিত হয়েছে –

'জায়াপত্যোর্ন বিভাগো বিদ্যতে ।

পাণিগ্রহণাদ্ধি সহত্বং কর্মসু ।।

শতপথব্রাহ্মণে ঋষি বলেছেন স্ত্রী হল পুরুষের অর্ধাংশ; গার্হস্থ্যধর্মপালনে ইচ্ছুক পুরুষ বিবাহসংস্কার না করে এবং যতদিন পর্যন্ত সন্তানের জন্ম না হয়, ততদিন পর্যন্ত সেই পুরুষ 'অসর্ব' অর্থাৎ অপূর্ণ থাকে । স্ত্রী গ্রহণে এবং তার মাধ্যমে সন্তানের জন্ম হলে সেই পুরুষ হয় 'সর্ব' অর্থাৎ পূর্ণ - 'অথ যদেব জায়াং বিন্দতেঽথ প্রজায়তে তর্হি সর্বো ভবতি' (শতপথব্রাহ্মণ – ৫.২.১.১০)  আচার্য মনু বলেছেন স্ত্রীর মাধ্যমেই গৃহস্থের নিত্য শুভ লোকযাত্রা নির্বাহ হয় । সন্তানজন্মের সহায়িকা হবার জন্য স্ত্রী হল গৃহের দীপ্তিস্বরূপা, মহা-উপকারিণী এবং পূজার যোগ্যা । গৃহে স্ত্রীই হল শ্রী - মনু মনে করেন । ধর্মকর্মানুষ্ঠান, অপত্যলাভ, শুশ্রূষা, উত্তমা গতি, পিতৃপুরুষের স্বর্গপ্রাপ্তি – এই সবই ভার্যার অধীন (মনুসংহিতা-৯.২৮) । বিবাহবন্ধনের দ্বারাই মানুষের সকল প্রকার ঋণমুক্তি ঘটে । আচার্য মনুর মতে এই সংস্কার হেতু পুত্রোৎপাদনার্থ পিতার 'পুৎ' নামক নরক থেকে পরিত্রাণ লাভ হয় –

পুন্নাম্নো নরকাদ্ যস্মাৎ ত্রায়তে পিতরং সুতঃ ।

তস্মাৎ পুত্র ইতি প্রোক্তঃ স্বয়মেব স্বয়ম্ভুবা ।। (৯.১৩৮)

সংহিতাকার অত্রি ও বিষ্ণু এবিষয়ে মনুর মতানুসারী । আচার্য মনু পুত্র বিষয়ে এও বলেছেন পুত্রের জন্মের দ্বারা মানুষের স্বর্গপ্রাপ্তি ঘটে । শুধু পুত্রোৎপাদন নয়, দৈহিক চাহিদা পরিতৃপ্তি, ধর্মীয় আচার অনুষ্ঠান প্রভৃতির উদ্দেশ্যে বিবাহসংস্কার করণীয় ।

বিবাহ বিষয়ে সকল স্মৃতিকারগণ অল্পবিস্তার তদীয় শাস্ত্রে লিপিবদ্ধ করেছেন । আমাদের প্রবন্ধের মুখ্য বিষয় বিবাহ না, নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ, তাই বিবাহ প্রাসঙ্গিক বিস্তৃত আলোচনা না করে মূল বিষয়ে মনোনিবেশ করা হল ।

## পুনর্বিবাহ

সুপ্রাচীন বৈদিকযুগ থেকেই ভারতীয় ঐতিহ্যে একপত্নী গ্রহণকে সর্বাঙ্গীন মর্যাদা দেওয়া হলেও ঐ একই সময় থেকে আবার বহুপত্নী গ্রহণের নিদর্শন বিস্তৃতরূপে পাওয়া যায় সংস্কৃতসাহিত্যে । যথা – চ্যবন ঋষির বহুপত্নী (*ঋগ্বেদ* – ১০.১১৬.১০), বৃহদারণ্যকোপনিষদে যাজ্ঞবল্ক্যের দুই

পত্নী, রামায়ণের দশরথের একাধিক পত্নী, মহাভারতে বিচিত্রবীর্য, পাণ্ডু, অর্জুনের একাধিক পত্নী, লৌকিক সাহিত্যেও এর ঝুরি ঝুরি প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায় । তৈত্তিরীয়ব্রাহ্মণে স্পষ্টভাবে উল্লিখিত হয়েছে – 'তস্মাদেকো বহ্বীর্জায়া বিন্দতে' (৬.৫.১.৪) অর্থাৎ একজন পুরুষ বহু পত্নী গ্রহণ করতে পারে । শতপথব্রাহ্মণে উক্ত হয়েছে একজন পুরুষ সাধারণভাবে বহু স্ত্রীর প্রভু হতে পারে । আবার ঐ ব্রাহ্মণেই অন্যত্র (১৩.৪.১.৯) বলা হয়েছে রাজার চারজন রাণী থাকবেন – মহিষী, বাবাতা, পরিবৃক্তা, পালাগলী । রামায়ণের বালকাণ্ডে (১৪.৩৫) অশ্বমেধযজ্ঞে যজমান রাজার সাহায্যকারিণী মহিষী, পরিবৃক্তা, বাবাতা – এই তিন রাণীর উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায় । তবে এই বহুবিবাহ প্রথাকে কখনোই সর্বজন স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া হয়নি । সামাজিক দিক থেকে কখনো কখনো এই প্রথাকে উদারদৃষ্টিতে দেখা হলেও ক্ষেত্রবিশেষে এটিকে অবাঞ্ছিত ও নিন্দার চোখে দেখা হত । সপত্নীদের মধ্যে পরস্পরের প্রতি ঘৃণা ও বিদ্বেষের অসংখ্য উদাহরণ এই বক্তব্যের প্রমাণ দেয় । ঋগ্বেদের মন্ত্রে (১০.১৫৯.৫-৬) ইন্দ্রপতি শচী সপত্নীদেরকে দমন করে আত্মপ্রভুত্ব প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা সগর্বে ঘোষণা করেছেন । আপস্তম্বগৃহ্যসূত্রেও (৯.৯) বলা হয়েছে ঋগ্বেদের উক্ত মন্ত্রটি সপত্নী দমনের জন্য পাঠ করবে । পুরুষের ক্ষেত্রেও যে সর্বদা বহুপত্নী সঙ্গলাভ সুখকর ছিল না তার প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায় ঋগ্বেদের একটি মন্ত্রে যেখানে আপ্তত্রিত নামক এক ব্যক্তি কূপমধ্যে পতিত হয়ে বিশ্বদেবগণের উদ্দেশ্যে নিজের দুঃখ জানাতে গিয়ে বলেছিলেন – সপত্নীদ্বয় স্বামীর দুই পাশ থেকে যেমন তাকে সন্তাপ দেয় কূপের এই দুই পাশ আমাকে সন্তাপ দিচ্ছে (ঋগ্বেদসংহিতা – ১.১০৫.৮) ।

স্থান, কাল ও অবস্থা বিশেষে আমাদের দেশে পুরুষের বহুবিবাহ প্রাচীনকাল থেকে প্রচলিত ও সমর্থিত থাকলেও স্বামী জীবিতাবস্থায় নারীর পক্ষে অন্য স্বামী গ্রহণ অত্যন্ত নিন্দাজনক ছিল । প্রকৃতপক্ষে মহাভারতে দ্রৌপদীর পঞ্চপতির প্রসঙ্গ ছাড়া অন্যত্র, এমনকি উদার বৈদিকযুগেও এক নারীর একাধিক পতি গ্রহণের কথা স্পষ্টভাবে শোনা যায় না । পুরুষের বহুপত্নী গ্রহণ সমর্থিত থাকলেও নারীর বহুপতি গ্রহণ নৈব নৈব চ । তৈত্তিরীয়সংহিতায় (৬.৬.৪.৩) স্পষ্টভাবে উল্লেখিত আছে – 'যদেকস্মিন্ যূপে দ্বে রশনে পরিব্যয়তি তস্মাদেকো দ্বে জায়ে বিন্দতে, যন্নৈকাং রশনাং দ্বয়োর্যূপয়োঃ পরিব্যয়তি তস্মান্নৈকা দ্বৌ পতী বিন্দতে' অর্থাৎ একটি যূপকাষ্ঠ যেমন দুটি রজ্জু দ্বারা বেষ্টন করা সহজসাধ্য তেমনি একজন পুরুষ দুজন পত্নী সহজেই গ্রহণ

করতে পারে । কিন্তু একটি রজ্জু দ্বারা যেমন পৃথকভাবে দুটি যূপকাষ্ঠ বেষ্টন করা যায় না তেমনি একজন নারী দুইজন পতি গ্রহণ করবে না । একই রকম উক্তি ঐতরেয়ব্রাহ্মণে (১২.১২) পাওয়া যায় – 'তস্মাদেকস্য বহ্ব্যো জায়া ভবন্তি, নৈকস্যেবহবঃ সহপতয়ঃ' অর্থাৎ একজন পুরুষের বহু স্ত্রী থাকতে পারে কিন্তু একজন নারীর একসাথে বহু স্বামী থাকতে পারে না । যদিও ঋগ্বেদের কয়েকটি মন্ত্রে (১০.৩৭, ১০.৩৮, ১০.৮৫) এক নারীর একাধিক স্বামীর সাথে সহবাসের ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া যায় । প্রকৃতপক্ষে বৈদিক সাহিত্যে এমন কোনও মন্ত্র পাওয়া যায় না যেখানে এক নারীর বহুবিবাহের কথা স্পষ্টভাবে উল্লিখিত হয়েছে । কিন্তু মহাভারতে যুধিষ্ঠিরাদি পঞ্চভ্রাতাকে স্বামী রূপে গ্রহণ করা যুধিষ্ঠিরের দৃষ্টিতে কখনই অধর্ম নয় । এইরকম বিবাহ সমাজে প্রচলন ছিল তার উদাহরণও যুধিষ্ঠির দিয়েছেন – গৌতমবংশ জাতা এবং ধর্মে নিষ্ঠাবতী জটিলা নামক এক নারী সাতজন ঋষিকে পতিরূপে গ্রহণ করেছিলেন । কণ্ডু নামক ঋষিকন্যা বার্ক্ষী দশজন প্রচেতার সাথে সমাগম করেছিলেন (মহাভারত, আদিপর্ব – ১৯৫.১৩-১৫) । যাই হোক, মহাভারত ছাড়া বৈদিকযুগ বা তৎপরবর্তী সাহিত্যে নারীর বহুপতি লাভের পূর্ণাঙ্গ বিবরণ কোথাও পাওয়া যায় না ।

ভারতীয় সমাজে নারীর একসাথে বহুপতিবরণ ব্যাপারটি কখনোই স্বাভাবিকভাবে স্বীকৃত হয়নি। কিন্তু আমাদের ভুললে হবে না বিবাহের প্রধান উদ্দেশ্যই হল সন্তান উৎপাদন অর্থাৎ বংশধারা বজায় রাখা । তাই নারীর বহুপতিবরণ স্বীকৃত না হলেও সন্তান উৎপাদনের জন্য স্বামী ভিন্ন অন্য পুরুষের সাথে সহবাস বৈদিককাল থেকেই সমাজে প্রচলিত ছিল । আপস্তম্বধর্মসূত্রে (২.১০.২৭.২-৪) স্পষ্টভাবে উল্লিখিত হয়েছে সন্তান উৎপাদনে অক্ষম পতি পিতৃপুরুষের উদ্দেশ্যে পিণ্ডদানের বাসনায় নিয়োগ প্রথার মাধ্যমে সন্তান উৎপাদনের জন্য তার স্ত্রীকে দেবর বা অন্য সগোত্র-সপিণ্ডের মধ্যে স্ত্রীরূপে দান করতে পারতো । কিন্তু কখনোই এই দান সগোত্রীয় নয় এমন ব্যক্তিদের মধ্যে করা হত না । কিন্তু এসব ক্ষেত্রে ঐ স্ত্রী যে অন্যান্য পুরুষদের সাথে বিবাহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হত তার কোনও স্পষ্ট উল্লেখ নেই ।

নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ বিষয়টি বারংবার শাস্ত্র থেকে শাস্ত্রান্তরে সমালোচিত । স্বামীর জীবিতাবস্থায় সন্তানোৎপাদনে অক্ষম পতি ও শ্বশুরগৃহের সম্মতি ক্রমে বিবাহিত নারী পুনরায় অন্য পুরুষের প্রতি গমন করতে পারে এবং তাদের মিলন জাত সন্তান সমাজে স্বীকৃত ছিল । মহাভারত এর

প্রকৃষ্ট উদাহরণ । কিন্তু সন্তানহীনা বিধবা নারীর ক্ষেত্রেও কি একই বিধান বলবৎ কিংবা বিধবা নারী কি পুনরায় বিবাহবন্ধনে অধিকারী এই নিয়ে স্মৃতিকারদের মধ্যে মতভেদ আছে । অধিকাংশ স্মার্তকারগণ এইরকম বিবাহের বিরোধিতা করলেও কেউ কেউ আবার অবস্থাবিশেষে সমর্থন করেছেন । বিধবা বিবাহিতা নারীকে 'পুনর্ভূ' বলা হত । ঋগ্বেদের সময় বিধবাবিবাহের প্রচলন ছিল বলেই মনে করা যায় । ঋগ্বেদের দুটি মন্ত্র এই প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখযোগ্য–

ইমা নারীরবিধবাঃ সুপত্নীরাঞ্জনেন সর্পিষা সং বিশন্তু ।

অনশ্রবোহনমীবাঃ সুরত্না আ রোহন্তু জনয়ো যোনিমগ্রে ।।

উদীর্ষ নার্য্যভি জীবলোকং গতাসুমেতমুপ শেষ এহি ।

হস্তগ্রাভস্য দিধিষোস্তবেদং পত্যুর্জনিত্বমভি সং বভূথ ।। (১০.১৮.৭-৮)

সায়ণাচার্য মন্ত্রদুটির ভাষ্যে বলেছেন, জ্যেষ্ঠভ্রাতার মৃত্যুর পর দেবর তার শোকসন্তপ্ত ভ্রাতৃবধূকে তার সাথে বিবাহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয়ে সংসারধর্ম পালনের জন্য শ্মশানভূমি থেকে গৃহে প্রত্যাবর্তনের আহ্বান জানাচ্ছেন । কেউ কেউ এই মন্ত্রদুটিতে সহমরণ প্রথার ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন। কিন্তু সায়ণের মতানুসারে স্বামী মারা গেলে সন্তানহীনা বিধবা স্বামীর কনিষ্ঠ ভ্রাতাকে পতিরূপে গ্রহণ করতে পারতেন । মনে রাখতে হবে 'দেবর' শব্দের অর্থ দ্বি-বর অর্থাৎ দ্বিতীয় বর । সায়ণের এই উক্তির সামঞ্জস্য দেখা যায় পুরাণ ও পরাশর প্রভৃতি স্মৃতিকারদের রচনাতে । অথর্ববেদেও পুনর্ভূ শব্দের এবং বিধবা বিবাহের স্পষ্ট ইঙ্গিত ও সমর্থনও পাওয়া যায় –

যা পূর্বং পতিং বিত্ত্বাহথান্যং বিন্দতেহপরম্ ।

পঞ্চৌদনং চ তাবজং দদাতো ন বি যোষতঃ ।।

সমানলোকো ভবতি পুনর্ভূর্বাপর পতি ।

যোহজং পঞ্চৌদনং দক্ষিণাজ্যোতিষং দদাতি ।। (৯.৫.২৭-২৮)

স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পর যে নারী অন্য কোনও পুরুষকে বিবাহ করে, সে যদি তার দ্বিতীয় স্বামীর সাথে একত্রে দেবতার উদ্দেশ্যে পাঁচ পাত্র অন্ন ও একটি ছাগ দান করে তাহলে তারা একে

অন্য থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হবে না । এই দ্বিতীয় স্বামী যদি দেবতার উদ্দেশ্যে পাঁচ পাত্র অন্ন, একটি ছাগ ও সামান্য কিছু দক্ষিণা নিবেদন করে, তাহলে মৃত্যুর পর সে তার ঐ স্ত্রীর সাথে একই স্বর্গে অবস্থান করে । 'পুনর্ভূ' শব্দের অর্থ স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পর যে নারী পুনরায় বিবাহ করে । এইরকম বিবাহে নিন্দার স্পর্শ থাকলেও যজ্ঞ প্রভৃতির মাধ্যমে বিবাহকে শুদ্ধ করে নেওয়া হত। তৈত্তিরীয়সংহিতাও বিধবাবিবাহকে সমর্থন করে তার প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায় 'দৈবিষব্য' (৩.২.৪.৪) শব্দের দ্বারা, যার অর্থ বিধবা নারীর পুনর্বার বিবাহের পর উৎপন্ন পুত্র । স্মৃতিশাস্ত্রে এইরূপ পুত্রকে পৌনর্ভব বলা হয় । গৃহসূত্রগুলিতে বিধবাবিবাহের প্রসঙ্গে আলোচনা তেমনভাবে পাওয়া যায় না । এরপর স্মৃতিশাস্ত্রের যুগে নানা প্রসঙ্গে বিধবাবিবাহ আলোচিত হয়েছে ।

বিধবা বিবাহিতা নারীকে 'পুনর্ভূ' আখ্যা দেওয়া হলেও যাজ্ঞবল্ক্য 'পুনর্ভূ' সম্বন্ধে বলেছেন – 'অক্ষতা বা ক্ষতা চৈব পুনর্ভূঃ সংস্কৃতা পুনঃ' ( ১.৬৭) অর্থাৎ যে নারীর বিবাহ সম্পূর্ণ হয়নি এবং কেবলমাত্র বাগদান জাতীয় ব্যাপার অনুষ্ঠিত হয়েছে অথবা যে কন্যা বিবাহিত অবস্থায় কিছু কাল স্বামীর সাথে কাটিয়েছে তারা যদি বিধবা হওয়ার পর পুনরায় বিবাহ করে তারা পুনর্ভূ নামে অভিহিতা । স্মৃতিচন্দ্রিকা গ্রন্থে কশ্যপের অভিমতে সাতরকমের পুনর্ভূর উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায় । যথা, (১) বাগদত্তা কন্যা, (২) কন্যার জ্ঞাতসারে পিতা মাতা যে কন্যাকে কোনও পাত্রের হাতে সম্প্রদান করবেন বলে মনে মনে সংকল্প করেছেন, (৩) ভাবী স্বামী যে কন্যার হাতে মঙ্গলসূত্র বেঁধে দিয়েছেন, (৪) যে কন্যার পিতা জল স্পর্শ করে কোনও পাত্রের হাতে দান করার সংকল্প করেছেন, (৫) যে কন্যার বিবাহকালে তার ভাবী স্বামী তার পাণি স্পর্শমাত্র করেছে কিন্তু বিবাহের অন্যান্য কাজ সম্পূর্ণ হয়নি, (৬) যে কন্যাকে অগ্নিপ্রদক্ষিণ করানো হয়েছে কিন্তু বিবাহের কাজ সম্পূর্ণ হয়নি, (৭) বিবাহের পর যে কন্যাসন্তান প্রসব করেছে । মহামতি কশ্যপের মতে উক্ত সাতটির মধ্যে প্রথম পাঁচটির ক্ষেত্রে বিবাহানুষ্ঠান সম্পূর্ণ হওয়ার আগেই অথবা সপ্তপদ গমনের আগেই বর মৃত্যুমুখে পতিত হয় এবং ঐ কন্যা যদি অন্য পাত্রের সাথে বিবাহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয় তাহলে সেই কন্যাকে পুনর্ভূ আখ্যা দেওয়া হয় । ষষ্ঠটি ও সপ্তমটির ক্ষেত্রেও পুনর্ভূ বলা যায় । কশ্যপ যদিও বলেছেন পুনর্ভূ নারী কুল ও বংশ দগ্ধ করে কিন্তু বাস্তবতার বিচারে এই ধরনের বিবাহের উল্লেখ থেকে বোঝা যায় এইরকম বিবাহ সমাজে কেবলমাত্র অস্বাভাবিক ছিলই না সমাজস্বীকৃতও বটে । বৌধায়নও কশ্যপের উক্তির অনুরূপ

বলেছেন । বিবাহ সম্পূর্ণ হওয়ার আগে অর্থাৎ বিবাহের অংশমাত্র অনুষ্ঠিত হলে তাকেও বিবাহের সমতুল্য মনে করা হত এবং দ্বিতীয় বিবাহের পর এইরূপ নারী পুনর্ভূ নামে অভিহিত।

এখন প্রশ্ন দ্বিতীয়বিবাহে কীরূপ পাত্র উপযুক্ত ? ভগবান মনু বলেছেন কোন বাগদত্তা কন্যার ভাবী স্বামীর মৃত্যু হলে ঐ বরের ছোট ভাই বিবাহবিধানের নিয়মানুসারে ঐ কন্যার পাণিগ্রহণ করবে এবং সুসন্তান লাভের আশায় ঐ কন্যা শুদ্ধচারিণী ও বিধবার চিহ্নযুক্ত সাদা কাপড় পরে দেবরের কাছে উপস্থিত হবে (৯.৬৯-৭০) । মনুর এইরূপ উক্তি থেকে সহজেই অনুমান করা যায় মনু বিধবা নারীর পুনর্বিবাহকে সরাসরি স্বীকার করেননি বরং মনুসংহিতার পঞ্চমাধ্যাপঞ্চমাধ্যায়ে তিনি স্পষ্টভাবেই উল্লেখ করেছেন – 'ন দ্বিতীয়শ্চ সাধ্বীনাং ক্বচিদ্ ভর্তোপদিশ্যতে' (৫.১৬২) । অন্যত্রও মনু বলেছেন - 'সকৃৎ কন্যা প্রদীয়তে' (৯.৪৭) এবং 'ন বিবাহবিধাবুক্তং বিধবাবেদনং পুনঃ' (৯.৬৫) । এথেকে স্পষ্টই অনুধাবন করা যায় মনু প্রধানতঃ বিধবাবিবাহ বিরোধী ছিলেন । বিবাহের মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য সন্তান উৎপাদন । বিবাহবন্ধনে জাত সন্তানের দ্বারাই পিতা 'পুৎ' নামক নরক থেকে উদ্ধার করে এবং পূর্বপুরুষেরও মুক্তিলাভ ঘটে । কিন্তু সন্তান জন্মানোর আগেই যদি স্বামী মারা যায় তাহলে নরক থেকে মুক্তিলাভ কীরূপে সম্ভব ? অতএব পুত্রহীনা বিধবা নারীর পুত্র লাভার্থে বিবাহের প্রয়োজনীয়তা লক্ষ্য করা যায় । কিন্তু এইরূপ যুক্তি খণ্ডিত হয় মনুর উক্তির দ্বারা

মৃতে ভর্তরি সাধ্বী স্ত্রী ব্রহ্মচর্য ব্যবস্থিতা ।

স্বর্গং গচ্ছতি অপুত্রাপি যথা তে ব্রহ্মচারিণঃ ।। (৫.১৬০)

অপত্যলোভাদ্ যা তু স্ত্রী ভর্তারমতিবর্ততে ।

সা ইহ নিন্দামাপ্নোতি পতিলোকাচ্চ হীয়তে ।। (৫.১৬১) ।

মনু এখানে স্পষ্টই বলেছেন পতিহীনা বিধবা স্ত্রী ব্রহ্মচর্য পালন করবেন । সেই স্ত্রী পুত্রহীনা হলেও নিশ্চয়ই স্বর্গে যাবেন । বরং পুত্রলোভে মৃতস্বামীকে অপমানিত করে দ্বিতীয়বার অন্য পুরুষকে পতিরূপে বরণ করেন, তিনি ইহলোকে সকলের নিন্দাভাজন তো হয়ই, স্বর্গলোক থেকেও বঞ্চিত হন । মহাভারতের আদিপর্বে সধবা বা বিধবা নারীর পুনরায় বিবাহকে দীর্ঘতমা ঋষি কঠোরভাবে নিন্দা করেছেন । তিনি বলেছেন স্ত্রীলোকের পক্ষে আজীবন পতিই একমাত্র

পরম অবলম্বন । পতির মৃত্যু হলে বা পতির জীবিতাবস্থায় স্ত্রী অন্য কোনও পুরুষকে আশ্রয় করবে না । সধবা বা বিধবা স্ত্রী যদি অন্য পুরুষকে আশ্রয় করে তাহলে সে সমাজে পতিত হবে । বিধবা রমণী যদি অন্য পুরুষের সাথে সংসর্গ করে, তাহলে তার মৃত পতির প্রচুর ধন থাকলেও তা ভোগ করার চেষ্টা তার পক্ষে নিষ্ফল হবে । বলপূর্বক ঐ ধন ভোগ করলে সে নিন্দনীয় হবে এবং আত্মীয় স্বজনেরা তাকে ত্যাগ করবে (মহাভারত, আদিপর্ব – ১০৩.৩৫-৩৮)।

টীকাকার অপরার্ক ব্রহ্মপুরাণে থেকে বিধবাবিবাহ সম্বন্ধে একটি শ্লোক উদ্ধৃত করেছেন –

স্ত্রীণাং পুনর্বিবাহস্তু দেবরাৎ পুত্রসন্ততিঃ ।

স্বাতন্ত্র্যং চ কলিযুগে কর্তব্য ন কদাচন ।।

<div align="right">হিন্দুশাস্ত্রমতে বিবাহ, পৃ. -৫৭</div>

স্ত্রীলোকের পুনরায় বিবাহ বা নিয়োগপ্রথার মাধ্যমে দেবরের দ্বারা সন্তান ধারণ এবং যথেচ্ছচারিতা এই কলিযুগেও করা উচিত নয় । এই প্রসঙ্গে অপরার্ক ব্রহ্মপুরাণের আরও একটি উদাহরণ দিয়েছেন –

যদি বা বালবিধবা বলাৎ ত্যক্তাঽথবা ক্বচিৎ ।

তদা ভূয়স্ত সংস্কার্যা গৃহীতা যেন কেনচিৎ ।।

<div align="right">হিন্দুশাস্ত্রমতে বিবাহ, পৃ. -৫৮</div>

বালবিধবা নারী বা স্বামী পরিত্যক্তা নারীকে বিবাহের জন্য নির্দিষ্ট মন্ত্র ও আচারাদি প্রয়োগ করে তাকে উপযুক্ত যে কোনও পাত্রের সাথে বিবাহ দেওয়া যেতে পারে । এথেকে বোঝা যায় অবস্থা বিশেষে বিধবা বা সধবা নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ অপরার্কর মত স্মার্তপণ্ডিত স্বীকার করেছেন ।

পবিত্র বৈদিকযুগেও বিধবা নারীর পুনর্বিবাহের ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া যায় । ঋগ্বেদের দশমমণ্ডলের একটি মন্ত্রে ঋষি অশ্বিদ্বয়কে আহ্বান করার সময় উপমা হিসাবে ব্যবহার করেছেন - 'বিধবা রমণী শয়নকালে দেবরকে সমাদর করে ...' । এতদ্বারা বোঝা যাচ্ছে বিধবার অসচ্ছরিত্র

অবলম্বন করা প্রকটিত হচ্ছে না, স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পর বিধবা রমণী স্বামীর ভ্রাতাকে বিবাহ করার প্রথাই উল্লিখিত হচ্ছে । অথর্ববেদেও এইরূপ ধ্বনি শোনা যায় ।

ইয়ং নারী পতিলোকং বৃণানা নিপদ্যত উপ ত্বা মর্ত্য প্রেতম্ ।

ধর্ম পুরাণমনুপালয়ন্তী তস্যে প্রজাং দ্রবিণাং চেহ ধেহি ।। (১৯.৩.১)

অর্থাৎ হে মনুষ্য যে বিধবা স্ত্রী পতির জন্য অর্থাৎ গৃহাশ্রমের সুখ পেতে ইচ্ছা করে তাকে সনাতন নিয়মানুসারে সন্তান ও ধন দান কর । এখানে আরও স্পষ্ট হল সন্তানোৎপাদনে ইচ্ছুক বিধবা নারী পুনরায় বিবাহ করতে পারবে । এই সূক্তে পুনরায় উল্লেখিত হয়েছে -

অপশ্যং যুবতিং নীয়মানাং জীবাং মৃতেভ্যঃ পরিনীয়মানাম্ ।

অন্ধেন যত্তমসা প্রাবৃতাসীৎ প্রাঙ্কো অপাচীনয়ং তদেনাম্ ।। (১৯.৩.৩)

বিধবা যুবতী নারীর জীবন কীরূপ দুর্বিসহ, অশান্তময় তা অনুধাবন করে ঋষি কবি সমাজকে অনুরোধ করে বলেছেন বিধবা যুবতী নারীকে বিবাহবন্ধনে পুনরায় আবদ্ধ করে তার জীবনকে সুন্দর মধুময় করে তুলুন । তৈত্তিরীয় আরণ্যকেও শোনা যায় বিধবা নারী পুনর্বিবাহের ইচ্ছা করলে দ্বিতীয় পতির হাত গ্রহণ করবে । যদিও বৌধায়নধর্মসূত্রে (১.১.১৭-১৮) বিধবানারীর পুনর্বিবাহ অনুমোদিত হয়নি কিন্তু বিশেষ বিশেষ ক্ষেত্রে বিধবানারীর পুনর্বিবাহ গৃহীত হয়েছে । যথা বলপূর্বক কন্যাহরণে বিধিগতভাবে বিবাহ না হলে সেই কন্যা বিধিপূর্বক অন্যের বিবাহযোগ্যা হয় । বৌধায়ন মতে এইরূপ কন্যা কুমারীকন্যাবৎ । অথবা বিবাহকালে বিবাহহোমের পর পতি মারা গেলে সেই বিবাহিতা কন্যা পিতৃগৃহে ফিরে পুনরায় বিবাহযোগ্যা হয় ।

মহাভারতের নল-দময়ন্তী উপাখ্যানেও দেখা যায় বহুকাল স্বামী নলের কোন সন্ধান না পাওয়ায় রাজা ঋতুপর্ণ পুনরায় দময়ন্তীর স্বয়ম্বর সভার আয়োজন করেছেন (বনপর্ব – ৭০.২৫-২৭) । আরও স্পষ্ট উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায় অর্জুন নাগরাজ ঐরাবতের বিধবাকন্যার পাণিগ্রহণ করেন (ভীষ্মপর্ব – ১১ অধ্যায় ) ।

যাজ্ঞবল্ক্যসংহিতায় (১.৬৫) দেখা যায় বাগদত্তাকন্যাকে পূর্ববর অপেক্ষা শ্রেষ্ঠবরে দান করা যায়। মুনিবর এখানে বিধবা নারীর বিবাহ প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখ করেননি যদিও বাগদানকে বিবাহের সমতুল্য মনে করা হত প্রাচীনভারতে ।

কৌটিল্যের অর্থশাস্ত্রে স্বামী পরিত্যক্তা বা বিধবা নারীদের পুনর্বিবাহ প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখযোগ্য নির্দশন পাওয়া যায় । মহামতি কৌটিল্য বলেছেন স্বামী বহুকাল প্রবাসী বা সন্ন্যাস গ্রহণকারী বা মৃত হলে সন্তানহীনা স্ত্রী সাত মাস অপেক্ষা করবে এবম সন্তানবতী স্ত্রী একবছর অপেক্ষা করবে । এই সময়ের মধ্যে স্বামীর কোন খবর পাওয়া না গেলে সেউ স্বামীর ভ্রাতাকে পতিরূপে গ্রহণ করবে । মৃতপতির বহুভ্রাতা থাকলে পতির ঠিক পরবর্তী সহোদরকে বা স্ত্রীকে প্রতিপালন করতে সমর্থ এমন অন্য কোনও ভ্রাতাকে বিবাহ করতে পারে । মৃতপতির কোন ভ্রাতা না থাকলে পতির বৈমাত্রেয় ভ্রাতাকে বা পতির বংশোৎপন্ন ও নিকট সম্বন্ধযুক্ত কোনও পুরুষকে বিবাহ করতে পারে । মহামতি কৌটিল্য আরও স্পষ্ট করে বলেছেন বিধবা পুনর্বিবাহিতা নারী 'বিন্ধমানা' এবং দ্বিতীয় বিবাহ 'নিবেশ' নামে খ্যাত (অর্থশাস্ত্র – ৩.৪.৯) । এই উক্তি থেকে পরিস্কার বোঝা যায় কৌটিল্য বিধবা নারীর পুনরায় বিবাহে উদার মনোভাবাপন্ন ছিলেন ।

বিধবাবিবাহের স্বপক্ষে একই অভিমত দিয়েছেন পরাশর (পরাশরসংহিতা – ৪.৩০), নারদনারদ (নারদস্মৃতি, স্ত্রীপুংসযোগ – ৯৭) এবং অগ্নিপুরাণ (১০৪.৫) । পরাশরসংহিতায় স্পষ্ট করে উল্লেখিত হয়েছে –

নষ্টে মৃতে প্রব্রজিতে ক্লীবে চ পতিতে পতৌ ।
পঞ্চস্বাপৎসু নারীণাং পতিরন্যে বিধীয়তে ।। (৪.৩০)

স্বামী নিরুদ্দেশ হলে বা মারা গেলে বা সন্ন্যাস গ্রহণ করলে বা ক্লীব বলে প্রমাণিত হলে অথবা চরিত্রভ্রষ্ট হলে – এই পাঁচটি আপৎকালে স্ত্রীর পুনর্বিবাহ শাস্ত্র অনুমোদিত । এই একই সুর শোনা যায় নারদস্মৃতি ও অগ্নিপুরাণে । যদিও পরাশর পরক্ষণেই বলেছেন বিধবা নারী ব্রহ্মচর্য পালনে মৃত্যুর পর স্বর্গবাস করেন । মানবশরীরে বিদ্যমান সাড়ে তিন কোটি সংখ্যক সংবৎসর স্বর্গবাস করবে মৃতস্বামীর সহমৃতা স্ত্রী (৪.৩১-৩২) ।

আধুনিককালে ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় নারীদের বিশেষত বিধবা নারীদের উন্নতিসাধনে তৎকালীন ব্রিটিশ সরকারের নিকট হতে 'বিধবা বিবাহ আইন' পাশ করেন । তাঁর 'বিধবা বিবাহ বিষয়ক প্রস্তাবে' বিধবা নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ শাস্ত্রসম্মত কর্তব্য কর্ম বলে যে সিদ্ধান্ত করেছেন তার মূল ভিত্তি হল পরাশরের 'নষ্টে মৃতে ...' ইত্যাদি শ্লোক । স্মৃতিকারগণপুনর্বিবাহিতা নারীকে 'পুনর্ভূ' ও তার পুত্রকে 'পৌনর্ভব' বলে যে নির্দেশ করেছেন তাতে কিছুটা তাচ্ছিল্যের ভাব বিদ্যমান । বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় এই অভিমতের বিরুদ্ধে দেখিয়েছেন পরাশর মুনি পৌনর্ভব পুত্রকে স্বীকার করেননি । তিনি কেবলমাত্র চতুর্বিধ পুত্রের উল্লেখ করেছেন – ঔরসঃ ক্ষেত্রজশ্চেব দত্তঃ কৃত্রিমকঃ সুতঃ (পরাশরসংহিতা – ৪.২২.১) । বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় পরাশরের অভিমতকে স্বীকৃতি দিয়ে বলেছেন বিবাহিতা বিধবার গর্ভজাত সন্তান 'ঔরসসন্তান' কোনভাবেই অবৈধ্য নয় ।

বিধবা নারীর পুনর্বিবাহের ক্ষেত্রে দুটি প্রশ্ন স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই উঠে আসে – (ক) দ্বিতীয়বিবাহে বিধবা নারীর গোত্র কী ? (খ) স্ত্রীর দ্বিতীয় বিবাহে মন্ত্রই বা কী ? যাজ্ঞবল্ক্যসংহিতার টিকাকার বিশ্বরূপ (যাজ্ঞবল্ক্যসংহিতা. ১.৬৭ শ্লোকের ব্যাখ্যা প্রসঙ্গে ) বলেছেন পিতা হল কন্যাপ্রদ অর্থাৎ তিনি কুমারীকন্যাকে পাত্রের হাতে দান করেন । এই দানের পূর্বপর্যন্ত কন্যা পিতৃগোত্র দ্বারা পরিচিত এবং বিবাহের পর পতির গোত্রান্তর্ভুক্ত হয় । কিন্তু কোথাও কোথাও দেখা যায় কন্যার কুমারীত্ব না থাকলেও অর্থাৎ দ্বিতীয় বিবাহে সম্প্রদানের সময়ও পিতাকে কন্যাপ্রদ বলা হয় ।

'কন্যাপ্রদ ইতি বচনাদ্ অক্ষতায়া এব নৈয়মিকং দানম্ ।

পিতা তু অকন্যামপি দদ্যাৎ ইতি কেচিৎ ।।'

(মানবেন্দু বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, *হিন্দুশাস্ত্রমতে বিবাহ* - পৃ. ৬০ ।)

দ্বিতীয় প্রশ্নের উত্তরে বলা যায় বিবাহের মন্ত্রে কোথাও উল্লেখ নেই এই মন্ত্র কেবলমাত্র প্রথম বিবাহের ক্ষেত্রেই প্রযোজ্য দ্বিতীয় বিবাহের ক্ষেত্রে নয় । সুতরাং যে সমস্ত বৈদিক মন্ত্র দ্বারা প্রথম বিবাহ সম্পন্ন হয় দ্বিতীয় বিবাহেও সেই কার্যকরী হবে ।

স্মৃতিশাস্ত্রের বিধান অনুসারে বিধবা নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ প্রায় নিষিদ্ধ হয়েছিল । যদিও কয়েকজন স্মৃতিকার (পরাশর, নারদ ) বিধবা নারীর বিবাহে সম্মত ছিলেন কিন্তু তাঁরা এবিষয়ে সুদীর্ঘ

আলোকপাত করেননি । যাজ্ঞবল্ক্যসংহিতায় (আচারাধ্যায় – ৬৭) বলা হয়েছে – 'অক্ষতা চ ক্ষতা চৈব পুনর্ভূঃ সংস্কৃতা পুনঃ' । এখানে 'পুনর্সংস্কৃতা' অর্থে পুনর্বিবাহ বলেছেন টীকাকার । আচার্য মনুও ১৭৬নং শ্লোকে বলেছেন 'পুনঃসংস্কারমর্হতি' । এর অর্থ কুল্লুকভট্ট করেছেল 'পুনর্বিবাহাখ্যং সংস্কারমর্হতি' । তবুও বলা যায় সুবৃহৎ বৈদিকসাহিত্য, স্মৃতিশাস্ত্র, পুরাণসাহিত্য, মহাকাব্য সর্বত্রই বিবাহ নিয়ে সুদীর্ঘ আলোচনা থাকলেও নারীর পুনর্বিবাহ বা বিধবাবিবাহ বিষয়ে দু-একটি কথা ছাড়া তেমনভাবে কিছু পাওয়া যায় না । সমাজসংস্কারক রঘুনন্দন এপ্রসঙ্গে নীরব থেকেছেন । বরং দেখা যায় প্রত্যেকেই বিধবার ব্রহ্মচর্য পালনকেই বেশী গুরুত্ব দিয়েছেন । আধুনিকযুগে বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ের পরিশ্রম সাধ্য ফসল Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act (1856) অনুসারে জাতিধর্মনির্বিশেষে সকল বিধবা নারী পুনর্বিবাহে অধিকারী এবং পুনর্বিবাহ দ্বারা জাত সন্তান বৈধ । কিন্তু এই আইন চালু হওয়ার দেড়শ বছর পরেও বিধবা নারীকে বিবাহ করার জন্য পুরুষদের মধ্যে খুব সাড়া পড়েছে বলে মনে হয় না । শাস্ত্রের কঠোর বিধান যে এর কারণ তা মনে করলে ভুল হবে । আসল ব্যাপার হল মেয়েদের স্বাভাবিক একটা অনিচ্ছা থেকেই এর ব্যাপক প্রসার হয়নি । কারণ এখনও পর্যন্ত বিবাহের ক্ষেত্রে পুরুষের তুলনায় মেয়েরা বেশী গুরুত্ব আরোপ করে থাকে এবং বিবাহকে কেবল একটা বায়োলজিক্যাল ব্যাপার না মনে করে তাকে একটা 'আধ্যাত্মিক কান্ড' এইরূপ ধারণা মনে পোষণ করে সন্তোষ লাভ করে । তাই দেখা যায় ইংরেজ আমলে বিধবাবিবাহ আইন প্রচলন হলেও সমাজের বিধবারা খুব একটা সুযোগ গ্রহণ করেননি ।

## সিদ্ধান্ত

সবশেষে বলা যায়, ভারতবর্ষের বহু আদিবাসী সমাজে স্বামীর মৃত্যু হলে বা স্বামীর দ্বারা পরিত্যক্ত হলে বা স্বামী নিরুদ্দেশ হলে নারীদের পুনর্বিবাহ প্রচলন দেখা যায় । যে সমাজে মেয়েদের তুলনায় পুরুষের সংখ্যা কম সেখানেই এই ঘটনা দেখা যায় । মহামহোপাধ্যায় পি.ভি কানে তাঁর গ্রন্থে মহারাষ্ট্র, গুজরাট ও কর্ণাটক অঞ্চলে এইরূপ বিবাহের কথা বলেছেন ।

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# Aims and Objectives of the Journal

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