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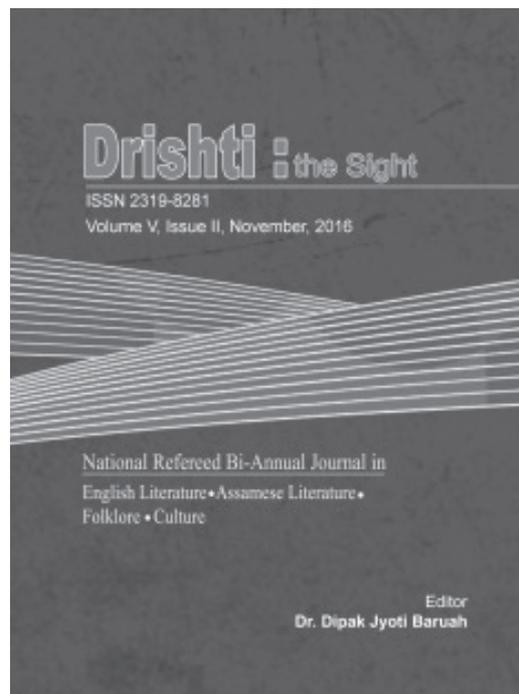
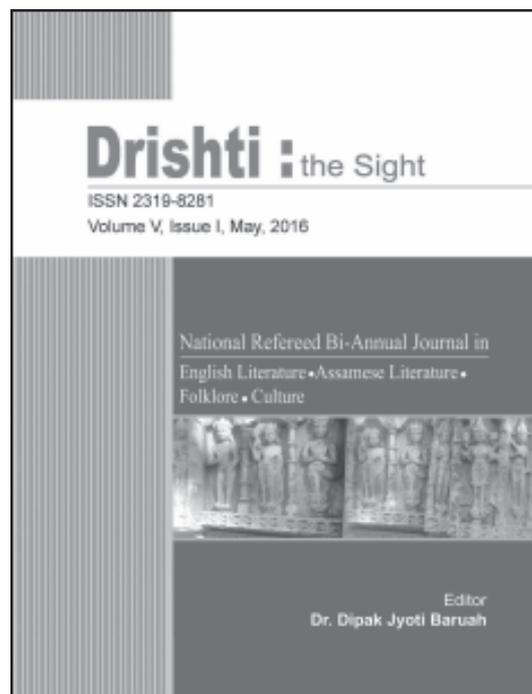
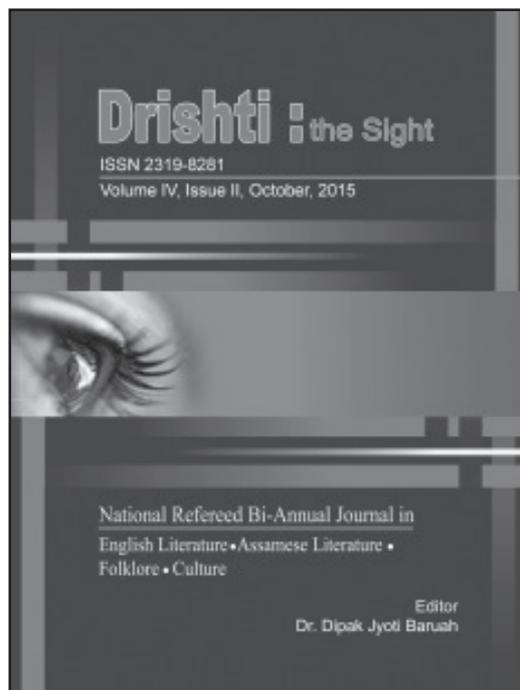
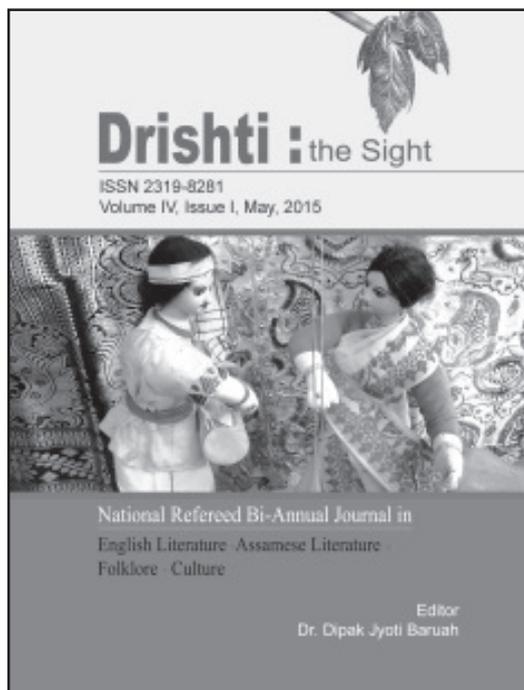
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EDITORIAL

Postmodern Aesthetic and the Fabric of Indian Literature

The contemporary Indian literature- which is a composite term to denote literatures in English, Hindi or in any regional language written in Indian soil, needs to crystallize a movement to keep pace with the latest diversity of trends in writing fictions manifested by the literature of the world as a whole. For example, there are a number of postmodern writers of novel who would create an ambience in their narrative where the real world may dissolve into a hyper-real ('a real without origin or reality': Baudrillard Jean).

In Indian literature, there are not too many narratives written in this line. Although there is a feeling growing in the mind of the readers of the European mainstream literature that literature has already 'used up' the conventions of 'fictional realism', in the Indian literature, especially in its regional landscape, the feeling is not too sharp.

Yet, work of the new genres like- which could make the reader feel the presence of a tension between reality and fiction, or a mode of construction which may reveal that there is indeed nothing in this life that can be ideologically constructed, too are slowly gaining ground. Since the readers and writers in India are being increasingly introduced to the gems of the world fictional literature that are written with an idiom and approach prompted by the postmodern trends (such as those written in terms of latest semiotics), there is emergence of a body of the *turn- of- the- millennium* readers of creative literature, - readers who follow the new trends and keep themselves updated with the essence of the various strands of postmodernism.

This paradigm shift in taste must be encouraged by any means. Cultivation of such a new taste ought not to be regarded as something which may only be instrumental in quickening the 'death' of the certain forms of literature. For one thing, contrary to the popular belief, postmodernism in literature does not as such fundamentally separate itself from the overall current of the 'heritage of literature'. All said and done, it is indeed just an extension from all the different 'preceding' movements of literature that through successive courses have culminated into the modernism. Postmodernism in literature has a broad textual or narrative universe. The essential which lends singularity to a postmodern kind of narrative is the fact that here the author consciously makes the world and /or the self 'decentred'. It is significant to note that the postmodern narratives of Salman Rushdie, Timothy Mao and Garcia Marquez, to name a few, are being able to get warm receptions from among the Indian readers. A general characteristic of the texts of all very works by them is either displacement of the real or dissolving real to hyper-real, in which the decentring of the language plays an undeniably effective role.

To say the least, the post modern text's is an attempt to contextualize the 'change', ironically though, in a broader view, it does not besides mean any break with the modernism or with any other preceding literary movement. Getting rid of an arrogance or misconception about this 'break' could only do well for all our literature and therefore, the Indian literature- chiefly its 'regional' varieties must come out of any orthodoxy which it may still be nurturing against the practice of postmodern aesthetic of the literary realm. #

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Literary Translations and Translator's Predicament in the Context of Globalization

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Translation is a creation, born in the process of a target oriented negotiation made between two languages linguistically, culturally and emotionally. The art of translation can have two compartments – the oral compartment in which the source language is just interpreted into the target language and the written compartment, in which the original text is rewritten. It is said to be a ‘text about a text’ therefore it is a ‘meta text’. The huge bulk of translated works refer to the written translations that stand on a long glorious past starting from the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek in which seventy or seventy two translators worked separately in separate rooms and the whole text was translated by them surprisingly coming out with identical translations. Those translations were sent to Alexandria by the high priest of Jerusalem at the request of Ptolemy II, the ruler of Egypt. The translation was made for the benefit of those Jewish community in Egypt who could no longer read the original. It forms the basis of translation and the Old Testament was then translated into old Latin, Armenian, Georgian etc. This implies that translation is a creation of necessity. Andre Lefevere rightly points out this when he says: “Translation fills a need”(Lefevere:14). A lot of water has flown down the stream since then. The same cultural, lingual and objective conditions on which translations were foregrounded have undergone a sea change. Colonialism, post-colonialism, modernism, postmodernism, diasporas and recently the concept of globalization have not only reconfigured the limits of literary writings but also changed the tastes of translation altogether. The

changed scenario has made the translator’s role more crucial and stiffer. The paper intends to focus on the predicament of the translator in the context of globalization.

The basic aim of translation is to reproduce the source language in the best possible way as a result of which the translator not only reproduces what the author has said but also what he means as well. The translator being a bilingual reader and writer enters to the domain of a language from another, struggles to clear off the cultural and linguistic barriers to reach at a nearly similar land in the form of a new text. The new text or the translated text retells the original text. By doing so, the translator possibly transfers the content of the original text into the new text but in the matters of transferring the emotion of the author is a herculean task. The translator’s success depends upon his creative and linguistic competence. As per cannibalistic theory the translator devours the text in the source language and vomits out the same content in a new form. The translator makes a ‘communication between two languages’ and combines ‘the best of the sensibilities between two languages’-the source and the target .

The translator like a sensible lover falls in love between two languages of the texts and deeply involves himself in their cultural and emotional melliflence in order to reach at the desired language and delicacy of the new text. The translator with a view to put the author and the text in the right perspective, as a good imitator, imitates and recreates the original. For the purpose, he applies the best of his sensibilities, linguistic

expertise and critical vision to make the new creation. Necessarily with a positive mindset towards the original text, as an enabling friend of the author, as an unbiased critic and a good scholar tries his best to transfer the 'tenor and tone' of the original text. In the course of remaking the text, the translator has to take up several issues relating to language, culture and tradition of both the languages with a view to present his product in an acceptable and appreciable manner. The target is to make the new text a 'nearly equal' of the original. The translator imitates the style, diction and form carrying forward the content of the text with an objective to remake the original text in an appreciable and better manner.

'Globalization' is a new term, though we find the terms like 'globe' and 'global' in the old editions of Oxford Dictionary. It is a term mostly used in the corporate world, in the affairs of the world trade organization, international policies and broadly in the discipline of Economics. In literature it implies intermixing or coexistence of literatures and cultures cutting across all regional binaries. The Kenyan author and critic Ngugi wa Thiong'o coins a new term 'Globaletics' for 'globalization' of literature. He points out the interconnectedness of literatures and cultures in the global scenario. He is of the opinion:

Globaletics is derived from the shape of the globe. On the surface, there is no one center; any point is equally a center. As for the internal center of the globe, all points on the surface are equidistant to it-like the spokes of a bicycle wheel that meet at the hub. Globaletics combines the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-ligue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space that's rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region. The global is that which humans in spaceships or on the international space station see: the dialectical is the internal dynamics that they do not see. Globaletics embraces wholeness, interconnectedness, equality or potentiality of parts, tension, and motion. It is a way of thinking and relating to the world,

particularly in the era of globalism and globalization (Thiong'o,8).

Thiong'o's concept of globaletics is synonymous with what Rene Wellek and Austin Warren term as 'world literature' taking clue from Goethe's 'Weltliteratur'. Wellek and Warren say:

A third conception ovitates, however, all these criticisms, by identifying 'comparative literature' with the study of literature in its totality, with 'world literature', with 'general and 'universal' literature. There are certain difficulties with these suggested equations. The term 'world literature' a translation of Goethe's Weltliteratur, is perhaps needlessly grandiose, implying that literature should be studied on all five continents, from Newland to Iceland. Goethe, actually, had no such thing in mind. 'World Literature' was used by him to indicate a time when all literatures would become one. It is the ideal of unification of all literatures into one great synthesis, where each nation would play its part in a universal concert. But Goethe himself saw that this is a very distant ideal, that no single nation is willing to give up its individuality. (Wellek and Austin: 48).

It is discernible from the above observations that study of literature is fast moving from local to national, from national to global and from personal to universal. Literature is changing its contours accordingly. Globalization has provided the suitable platform to expand the scope of literature on global basis. With emergence of multinational I.T. companies, cross cultural marriages among the employees, growing number of young masses preferring to work abroad, increasing number of tourist visas, global issues, multicultural hangovers are creeping into literature, as a result of which it is now getting difficult to trace the locale of any literature. This sort of cultural ambivalence has given a new face to literature. A translator is a farmer who grows crops out of the seeds of literary texts with a hope of reaping similar crops, if soil and climate change, reaching at the target becomes difficult. B.K. Das questions the point of cultural interconnectedness in globalization as stated by Ngugi

and substitutes the term 'transference of culture' due to globalization. The transference of culture bring culture and local together which he terms as 'glocalization'. He points out the complicated cultural web created for literature on which literary texts are foregrounded in the globalized world scenario. He says: "We know that in the age of globalization there is transference of culture from one end to the other end leading to cultural aporia. Export and import of culture bring the local and the global together resulting in glocalization (a portmanteau word consisting of globalization and localization). Changing of the names of cities like Calcutta to Kolkata, Bombay to Mumbai, Madras to Chennai and Bangalore to Bengaluru is an example of glocalization. If globalization is interconnectedness, what does globalitics mean. It means global plus dialectical affecting mutual communication across languages" (Das:14).

In a globalised and liberalised world situation where multiple cultures interface with one another, multiple faiths synchronize, the importance of translation is very much felt. Because the cultural gap created in such a situation is filled up by translation works. There is no doubt that in the changed global scenario trans-writings have triggered up resulting in creation of a vast mass of literature in translation, literature in translation as a separate genre has gained momentum and has moved from the periphery to the centre and keeping in view the changes, translation theories have changed to provide new frame works for the study of these works but the question arises how does it suit or ease the translator's job. It is therefore required to estimate the parameters or guidelines framed for the translator by the theorists at different points of time.

In 1540, a French author named Etienne Dolet laid down five principles of translation which the translator need to keep in mind in his publication "La Maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre(How to Translate well from one Language to Another)". The principles are : "1. The translator must fully understand the sense and meaning of the original author, although he is at liberty to clarify obscurities. 2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both

Source Language and Target Language. 3. The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings. 4. The translator should choose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone"(qtd. in Das:134). If these points are put for a translator to translate in the globalized context, the first three points will have no problem as it is basic for a translator to understand the sense and meaning of the source text. But as regards to the fourth point, to put the right tone to the target text, he is to have mastery over multiple cultures on which the text has been constructed and the text he wants to create.

Critics like Bassnett-MacGuire appreciate the guidelines as "Dolet's principles , ranked as they are in a precise order, stress the importance of understanding the SL text as a primary requisite. The is far more than a competent linguist, and translation involves both a scholarly and sensitive appraisal of the SL text and an awareness of the place the translation is intended to occupy in the TL system."(Bassnet-McGuire, 1991:54).

In 1791 Alexander Fraser Tytler in his book *The Principles of Translation* stated out the principles of translation processes in which he stated three points: 1.The translation should have a complete transcript of the idea of the original work; 2.The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original;3. The translation should have all the ease of the original composition. If Tytler's model principles are taken into consideration by a translator in the present globalised situation he must not feel so easy to transcript the ideas of the original text owing to the self contradicting multicultural ideas. theories to conclude that a translation work is both an imitation and remaking of the original. George Chapman who is a great translator of Homer opined in the same line of Dolet by upholding the idea of avoiding word-for-word translation and reaching at the real spirit of the original text.

In the seventeenth century John Dryden in his preface to Ovid's Epistles(1680) underlines three basic types of translations:

"1. Metaphose, or turning an author word by word

and line by line, from one language into another; 2. paraphrase, or translation with latitude, the Ciceronian 'sense-for-sense' view of translation; 3. Imitation, where the translator can abandon the text of the original as he sees fit." (Ibidem:60).

G. N. Devy's observations on attitude to translation during Renaissance and during Romantic age is remarkable. He says, "while the Renaissance translations were attempts to raise the status of the translators' culture, the Romantic translations were aimed at raising the cultural status of the works translated. Their minimum requirement was to seem exotic without being essentially un-English or un-German. (1993:137).

In the Post-Romantic period translators like Friedrich Schleiermacher, F.W. Newman, Carlyle and William Morris pleaded for a separate sub-language for translation (i.e. translation language) and wanted the translator to retain the peculiarity of the original whenever possible. Matthew Arnold laid emphasis on the S.L. Text and wanted that the translation to be committed to it (i.e. a close fidelity to the S.L. Text). In his first lecturer on Translating Homer, Arnold says:

"Let not the translator, then, trust to his notions of what the ancient Greeks would have thought of him; he will lose himself in the vague. Let him not trust to what the ordinary English reader thinks of him; he will be taking the blind for his guide. Let him not trust to his own judgement of his own work; he may be misled by individual caprices. Let him ask how his work affects those who both know Greek and can appreciate poetry". (1914:247)

On the other hand, it was Edward Fitzgibbon, well known for his translation of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (1858) who pleaded for taking liberty with the original text and creating a new T.L. text. He made the 'famous remark that it were better to have a live sparrow than a stuffed eagle.' Translation is a scholarly activity and the translator has to be instinctively bilingual. He must have an inwardness with both the languages (i.e. the S.L and the T.L), while some translators have advocated close fidelity to the text and emphasized literal translation, other have

pleaded for taking some liberty with the S.L. text and creating a new T.L. text. This was the nature of debate on the art of translation from the earlier times to the First World War. I am inclined to agree with Susan Bassnett-McGuire's view on this point expressed in the following words:

"The main currents of translation typology in a great age of industrial capitalism and colonial expansion up to the First World War can loosely be classified as follows:

1. Translation as a scholar's activity, where the pre-eminence of the SL text is assumed de facto over any TL version.
2. Translation as a mean of encouraging the intelligent reader to return to the SL original.
3. Translation as a means of helping the TL reader become the equal of what Schleiermacher called the better reader of the original, through a deliberately contrived foreignness in the TL text.
4. Translation as a means whereby the individual translator who sees himself like Aladdin in the enchanted vaults (Rossetti's imaginative image) offers his own pragmatic choice to the TL reader.
5. Translation as a means through which the translator seeks to upgrade the status of the SL text because it is perceived as being on a lower cultural level.

From these five categories, it can be seen that types (1) and (2) would tend to produce very literal, perhaps pedantic translations, accessible to a learned minority, whilst types (4) and (5) could lead to much freer translations that might alter the SL text completely in the individual translator's eclectic process of treating the original. The third category, perhaps the most interesting and typical of all, would tend to produce translations full of archaisms of form and language, and it is this method that was so strongly attacked by Arnold when he coined the verb to newmanize, after F.W. Newman, a leading exponent of this type of translation," (1991: 71-72).

Edwin Gentzler underlines five different approaches to translation beginning with mid-sixties till date:

(1)“American translation workshop, (2) the ‘science’ of translation, (3) early translation studies, (4) polysystem theory and translation studies, and (5) Deconstruction,” (1932:2)

Till 1963 there was no translation centers, no association of literary translation, no journal exclusively devoted to translation studies in U.S.A. Paul Engle, Director of Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa, hired a full time director for the first translation workshop in 1964 and gave, as it were, ‘a local habitation and a name’ to translation studies by recognizing the academic merit of literary translations.

I.A. Richards expounded his theory of translation in a paper titled, “Toward a theory of Translating” (1953), which discussed how to compare translations to original texts. Richards feels that if translators agree on their purpose, it would not be difficult to evolve the appropriate methodology. Richards reinforces this view when he says, “Translation theory has not only to work for better mutual comprehension between users of diverse tongues; more central still in its purposing is a more complete viewing of itself and of the Comprehending which it should serve,” (1953:261).

Important translation theories of different countries of the world in the post-1970 period (i.e. from seventies to nineties) includes James Holmes, Anton Popovic, Andre Lefevere, Gideon Toury, Jacques Derrida, Sussan Bassnett- McGuire, and Jose Lambert, who have given a new dimension to translation studies. Translator, Holmes draws our attention to the dual nature of translation in the following words:

“All translation is an act of critical interpretation, but there are some translation of poetry which differ from all other interpretative forms in that they also have an aim of being acts of poetry. It might be helpful if for this specific literary form with its double purpose as meta-literature and as primarily literature, we introduced the designation ‘meta poem’ (1970:93).

Andre Lefevere in his book, *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blue Print* (1975) outlines the major task of the translator in the following words:

“The translator’s task is precisely to render the source text, the original author’s interpretation of a

given theme expressed in a number of variations, accessible to readers not familiar with these variations, by replacing the original author’s variations with their equivalents in a different language, time, place and tradition. Particular emphasis must be given to the fact that the translator has to replace all the variations contained in the source text by their equivalences” (1975:99).

Poly system theory that came up as a major translation theory in 1970s sees translated literature as a system operating in a larger social, literary and historical system therefore, undergoes a dynamic process of evolution. It expands the scope of the new work from a mere imitation to a new creation. The Cannibalistic theory of translation developed in 1960s in Brazil. The theory likens the translator to a cannibal who takes in or devours voraciously the source text and vomits the metamorphosed text. The feminist theory of translation originated in Canada in 1980s sees a parallelism between a female who gets a low status in the society like a translated work. The paper intends to study the contemporary translation.

The above parameters set by different theorists for a translator do not hold good in the globalized context. The problem is that the network of computers and internets provide opportunity for communication across the geographical boundaries and across the cultural boundaries. Individuals join groups and also charts with people around the globe, automatically he becomes a part of the international public. In such situations when the individual becomes a part of the global community, the language of the literary text the translator to translate is one. This stands a great hurdle on the path of the translator to have a mental make-up as well as additional skill for better understanding of the source text. The traditional forms of translation and interpretation are faced with challenges that come from new contexts of multiculturalism and human communications and interactions afforded by technology. To sum up the challenges faced by the translator in the global context include i. The internationalization of communication ii. The blurring of the subject of territory iii. Culture outgrowing

territorial boundaries iv. The losing ground of common association between a nation, a territory, a language and a culture v. Cross-cultural socializations and overlapping cultural ideologies.

To overcome these challenges the translator is required to acquire a new set of skills and adequate global knowledge. Knowledge on dynamic technology that the text talks about to avoid the mismatch between the static print media and the digital world. The translator's task is precisely to render the source text. The interpretation of the source text may have certain variations, the translator need to replace with equivalences all the variations contained in the original text. To find equivalences in the cross cultural situations is the greatest predicament of the translator.

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Translating Kabir: Textualizations, Interpretations and Appropriations in the Colonial Context

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It is a general perception that the existing studies on Kabir bring us to realisation of the variety of ways and spaces by which the persona of the mystic poet has been represented. An archaeological inquiry into the colonial writings on and English translations of Kabir by researchers have made us think and rethink about our existing understanding of the poet and the sect/s he has been associated with. His presence reaches a wide range. Early missionaries and Orientalists have found in him the traces of Christianity when they project Kabir as 'influenced by the writings of Saint John'. Muslims associate him with a certain Kabir Shah whereas Sikhs and *Kabirpanthis* remember him as 'Kabir Sahib'. The *sufis* recall him as a *pir* whereas Hindus refer to him as Kabir Das. It would not be wrong to say that each of these groups had its own Kabir to remember and its own version of Kabir's verses to sing.

The extant researches on kabir also exhibit a variety of issues for example, Kabir and his contribution to Bhakti sahitya, relation of *Kabirpath* with *nathpanth* and *sufis*, Kabir in oral tradition, and Kabir and his language etc.

In this paper, I have limited my focus to early colonial accounts, missionary narratives and translations of Kabir's works. These works (specifically introductions, prefaces, commentaries and other para textual elements), while situating him in a particular historical context, start the praxes of interpretations and interpolations—his life, his works, his sect and different traditions around him. It is needless to say that these interpretations influence our present understanding of Kabir and his reception in the Hindi

public sphere.

I have divided this paper into two parts; in the first part, I wish to look at different narratives, historical accounts, missionary records and commentaries on Kabir and the way they project him; whereas, in the second part of this paper, I have attempted to look into the early translations of Kabir's poems and the issues that ensue.

I

Marco Della Tomba, the Italian missionary who lived at Bettiah in Bihar from 1761 to 1773, seems to be the first person to mention Kabir in his essay '*Piccoladescrizione dell'India orientale, o Industan (A short description of East India, or Hindustan)*'. However, he was not much concerned with Kabir but with the *Kabirpanthis*, who, according to him, represented a different religious belief system. Although, taking a clue from Tomba's works, it is difficult to say much with certainty, but two facts can be asserted with conviction—he lived sometime in 15th century and he spent a substantial part of his life in Benares. Tomba also calls Kabir a 'Muslim religious reformer'. It is said that Tomba translated a work which he described as "Kabiristi" Ramayana. Charlotte Vaudeville terms this Ramayana as "a Cabirist (i.e. Kabir Panthi) version of the Ramayana legend, in which Rama appears as a great penitent and ascetic resembling the Buddha" (Vaudeville, 1993:15). The fact however remains polemical whether Tomba translated *Ramcharitmanas* of Tulasi Das or *Ramayana* of Valmiki. It is noteworthy that David N. Lorenzen dismisses the idea that Tomba ever made any claim of Rama "resembling the Buddha" in this Ramayan. Interestingly, Tomba didn't

associate Kabir with any religious sect other than *Kabirpanthis*. Another important work, though not specifically on Kabir, is *Bhaktamal* (c.1600), a poem composed by Nabhadass in Braj language. The poem existed in oral tradition and was intended for oral elaboration until 1712 when a Hindi commentary of the work titled *Bhaktirasbodhini* was authored by Priyadas. It seems like Tomba did not come across with this commentary because he does not mention about it in his work. However, the *Bhaktamal* continued to gain popularity thereafter and was circulated in manuscripts. In his commentary Priyadas presents a conception of the Vaishnava community to which all the *Bhakti* poets seem to be a part of. Most of the colonial writers referred to *Bhaktamal* for their source of information on Kabir because Tomba wrote in Italian and he was not known up to the last decades of 20th century. Consequently, *Bhaktamal* determined the understanding of British on Kabir and of Indian society and becomes decisive in the projection of the concept of *Bhakti*. There must have many other versions of Kabir's poems in the oral tradition but these are the two earliest accounts of Kabir. However, from early to late 19th century, there are a number of works by colonial administrators, which have built upon the *Bhaktamal* tradition. These works were intended either to provide account of the lives of natives to the colonial administrator or were designed to understand different religious belief systems and thereby to help missionary objectives. I shall take up these early works and engage with issues that ensue. An early colonial record describes:

The *Kabir Pantis* form a sect of *Beragis*, who follow the tenants of KABIR, a holy man, who lived about 300 years ago. They deny, in general, the authenticity of *Sastras & Vedas*- and assert that God is one and indivisible; possessing in himself every attribute ascribed by the *Hindus* to different deities. They deny the *avataras*, or incarnations; and they place no confidence in the efficacy of the ceremonies of worship and purification by washing in rivers; they put their whole trust of the sincerity of devotion, and in

good works (Moor, 1811: 63).

The same work addresses Kabir as “a Mohomedan by caste and a weaver by profession”.

The two noteworthy aspects emerge from the above passage; first, it gives us an insight into the principles and practices of *Kabirpanthis*. Secondly, it places great significance to *kabirpanthis* ‘the sincerity of devotion’. As we progress further, we shall have occasions to return to this formulation of ‘devotion’ proposed here.

Asiatick Researches, Volume 7, published in 1803 addresses Kabir as ‘a *Soofee* or *Deist* of the most exalted sentiments’ and points out about the *Kabirpanthis*:

From the disinterested yet alluring doctrines they contain, a sect has sprung up in *Hindoostan* under the name of *Kubeer-punthee*, who are so universally esteemed for variety and other virtues among both *Hindoos* and *Moosulmans*, that they may be with propriety considered the *Quakers* of this hemisphere (Asiatick Researches, Volume 7: 453).

However, this study also states that there was no translation of Kabir's works and it was considered an urgent requirement by the author:

A translation of Kubeer's works, with the life of that sage, and an account of his followers, relative to their tenets and societies, remain still as desiderata in the history of India (Ibid, p.453).

Another noteworthy aspect of this study is that it does not state anything about Kabir's affiliation with Sikh community with which he is commonly associated primarily in the works which refer to Sikh's revered book *Adi-Granth* as their source:

...it is certain that his name is held in great veneration by these two very different people; those called Kubeer-puntee seem nevertheless to have rather more of the *Hindoos* than *Mosulman* in their composition, which so far decides the contest in their favour (Ibid, p.453).

A translation of *AdiGranth* by Colonel Malcolm in the year 1812 reveals some interesting facts about Kabir. First, it describes Kabir as a contemporary of

Sher Shah (1472-1545), as opposed to *Bhaktamal* tradition which places him in the times of Sikandar Lodi (c.1465-1515). Further it describes Kabir as a *sufi* who inculcated religious toleration, particularly between the Mohammedan and the Hindus and Nanak by taking inspiration from Kabir preached of love and toleration (Malcolm, 1812:145-146).

In addition to the colonial accounts discussed above, we have missionary narratives which add to our understanding of Kabir. 'The Missionary Herald', published in 1843, in a section titled 'Letters from Mr. Ballantine', describes a *Kabirpanthi* as "a follower of the system of Kubeer, a heretical Hindoo, who teaches that all the incarnations and idols of Hindooism are false and that God alone should be worshipped" (Missionary Herald, Volume 39, 1843:51). It accommodates the experiences of a certain Ram Krishna, a pundit converted to Christianity. Rama Krishna happens to converse with a *Kabirpanthi* and, as a result, was led to realise some of the errors of Hinduism and was convinced that the system of Kabir was much more correct than that which he had hitherto believed. Further, he goes on to compare what he had learned from the *Kabirpanthi* with what he had learned in the Christian school books, which he was daily teaching.

He was astonished to find that Christianity agreed with the system of Kubeer, but he also found that it differed from it in other things; and, on further reflection, he thought Christianity better than either of the other two (Ibid, p.51).

Extending the discussion on these lines is a work titled *Hinduism* (1877) by Monier- Williams which was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The reference of Kabir occurs in a chapter titled 'Medieval and Modern Sects'. After a brief discussion on different sects, he comes to the concept of *Bhakti*:

One most noticeable feature in the Sampradayas founded by these reformers has been the exaggeration of the principle of faith and love (*bhakti*), so that even caste was subordinated to it; in other words, the making devotion to

Krishna (Vishnu) or Siva, but especially an enthusiastic love for the former, a bond of union stronger than all social distinctions....In the practice of this *Bhakti* they knew no distinction of caste (Williams, 1877:136).

He places Kabir as disciple of Ramananda who was one among six reformers who formed the core of Vaishnavism in the middle ages. This reformist phase is preceded by 7th century religious reformer Shankaracharya who did not have any adherence to either Shavism or to Vaishnavism. However, coming to Kabir he writes:

This Kabir became the founder of a distinct sect. He assailed idolatry with great boldness, and ridiculed the religious practices of his fellow countrymen, though he allowed adoration to be paid to Vishnu or Rama, as names for one god. He promulgated a high moral code, declaring that life was a sacred gift of God, and that the blood of men or animals ought never to be shed by his creatures. He laid great stress on truthfulness, and advocated retirement from the world for attainment of control over passions (Williams, 1877:142).

We can observe that the studies on and translations of Kabir in 19th century seem to consolidate some preconceived notions like—Kabir as a representative *Bhakti* poet, Kabir as a radical within the Hindu religious hierarchy, and Orientalist attempt to assimilate *Bhakti* into Christianity.

Horace Hayman Wilson, in his work *Sketch of Religious Sects of the Hindus* published in 1828, continues this practice. He, like his predecessors, was more concerned about the *Kabirpanth* than Kabir himself. A very brief description given about the poet is based on the accounts of *Bhaktamala*. Wilson relates Kabir to Vaishnavite tradition which he inherited from 'the founder of the sect' Ramananda. But he questions the very existence of Kabir as well:

"Indeed I think it not at all improbable that no such person as Kabir ever existed and that his name is a mere cover to the innovations of some free thinker amongst the Hindus...."

In addition to this, Wilson finds a connection between the tenants of Kabir and that of Nanak Shah. He also adds that *DaduPanthis* and *DeryaDasis* were equally indebted to Kabir.

However, at the turn of the century, there was a significant change in the way Kabir was perceived. In the subsequent writings the reformist stature of Kabir starts getting more emphasis. An important study in this regard was George Herbert Westcott's¹⁰ book which was published in 1907. It was probably the first printed book on Kabir. The book, while endorsing some of the tenants of *Kabirpanth*, portrays Kabir as an apostle of religious liberalism:

We have probably in the KabirPanth, a religious system that owes something to Hindu, Muhammadan and Christian influences. If Christ had been an Indian, would not his Gospel have been welcomed by many who now refuse to listen? (Westcott, 1907).

For many, as we have already seen earlier, Kabir was a medium to imagine some kind of Christianity without Christ in early India.

Westcott tries to highlight the contribution of Kabir by drawing analogies with some well known Reformation figures. In the chapter 1, he calls Kabir 'a Hindu Reformer' and places him in a list of reformers along with their European equivalents:

It is generally allowed that of all the great Hindu Reformers Kabir and Tulsi Dass have had the greatest influence for good among the uneducated classes of Northern and Central India. Kabir has been fittingly described by Sir W.W. Hunter as the Indian Luther of the 15th century (Westcott, 1907:1).

A few decades later, Frank Ernest Keay published his book *Kabir and his followers* (1931). It had some interesting insights to offer. In the chapter titled 'The environment of Kabir', the book provides a brief account of Ramanada's life and his tenants. It seems to have subscribed to a reductionist approach as it credits Ramananda for the reformist initiatives taken up in the 15th century and projects Kabir as a mere follower of his *Guru*. To say the least, Kabir's views

were represented largely in conformity with Ramananda's:

Among those who worshipped Rama, it was Ramananda who gave the greatest impulse to the movement in north India in the period in which Kabir lived. Ramananda lived probably from about 1400 to 1470. He was an ascetic who about the year 1430 began to preach at Benares that the eternal God should be worshipped under the name of Rama, that Rama alone is the source of release from the evils of transmigration, and that release should be sought by fervent devotion (*bhakti*) towards him....The bhakti set had recognised that not only persons belonging to the high casts, but even those reckoned as outcasts, could by means of bhakti obtain salvation, but Ramananda seems to have gone one step in advance of this in admitting such persons as *bairagis*, or ascetics. Among his personal disciples are said to have been Sena, a barber, Dhana, a simple peasant who was a jat, Rai Das, the Chamar (a leather worker and therefore an outcaste) and even a woman; while of special interest to us is the mention, among Ramananda's disciples, of Kabir, the Muhammadan weaver.

However, the second part the above passage makes more problematic statements. It implies that *Bhakti* as a social category was all inclusive. Does it mean that other bhakti voices like Surdas, Tulsidas were also as critical of the caste hierarchies as Kabir? At least the existing body of work of these poets does not suggest so. The difference is visible among them even at the level of language. Surdas and Tulsidas both wrote in a language which was refined, arcane and probably the language of the court poetry as well. But Kabir's language was very unrefined, rustic and replete with the popular idioms and sayings.

II

Now, having analysed divergent narratives on Kabir, let me move on to the second part of this paper which focuses on the English translations of Kabir.

The first printed edition of kabir's works, which

is called *Bijak*, was printed at Banaras in 1868. It was printed in Hindustani and consists of a commentary. The second printed edition of the *Bijak* was printed in Calcutta in 1890 and was edited by Rev. Prem Chand of Baptist Mission of Monghyr. It is again a collection of Kabir's poems with recurrent footnotes. Unfortunately I could not find either of the editions. However, I had the opportunity to look at the translation of Kabir's poems titled *The Bijak of Kabir* by Rev. Ahmad Shah. This translation was published in 1917 and was based on a Hindi text published in 1911 by the same author. The translation gives a brief account of a myth which underlies the cosmology of the *Bijak*. It describes that in the beginning there was 'One Essential Being', Sat Purush, who existed without any passions. He created six Brahmas to rule the world—Onkar, Sahaj, Ichchha, Sohag, Achint and Achchhar. To each was given a world and souls to populate it. When Sat Purush found that the six Brahmas failed to preserve discipline in the universe he created seventh son—Niranjan and later a wife for him namely Maya. As a result of the union between Niranjan and Maya, Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh were born. Maya created three daughters who were to be the wives of his sons. Along with this she created thirty six kinds of music and thirty three tunes. When the souls of men got so involved, Sat Purush sent Kabir in the world to teach men to look beyond Niranjan and his progeny to the one, the Sat Purush himself. And the teachings of Kabir came to be known as *Bijak* or 'Bij-Khet' (a field to sow the seeds) as he calls it. Now, what is important here is for the first time we see a shift from the *Kabirpanth* to Kabir the poet and collection of his poems *Bijak*. The mythical poet Kabir is actualised and realised as an individual, as an author, with a hierarchy in his works and all this by the virtue of yet another myth.

Rabindranath Tagore's English translation of Kabir titled *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* (1915) was the first translation that became well known outside India. It was so partly because of Tagore's world wide acclaim as a Nobel laureate. The introduction written by Evelyn Underhill provided the

readers, inside and outside India, with a conceptual model for the reading of Kabir's poems. Underhill situates him in a context of western mystical tradition which transcends the boundaries of culture and religious monism (Burger & Pozza, 2010). She emphasizes Kabir's humble origin and his secular vision—stories around his birth and death, his 'destined teacher Ramananda and his devotion to the infinite, alternative Mohammedan legends of the sufi *pir* Takki of Jhansi, his reconciliation of the intense and personal Mohammedan mysticism with traditional theology of Brahmanism, Kabir the craftsman who knew how to combine vision and industry, and his contempt for the institutionalised religion and external observance.

She defines the nature of the poetry of mysticism as combined with 'a temperamental reaction to the vision of reality' on the one hand and 'a form of prophecy on the other'. She sees in Kabir's way of expressing the Eternal a 'missionary objective'. She puts western readers' imagination at work when she draws parallels between Kabir's poetry and that of Jacopone da Todi's and Richard Rolle's. The commonality in their poetry, as she notices, was that it was addressed to the people and not to the professionally religious class. Furthermore, her comparison of Kabir with other mystics was something which was obviously aimed at western audience:

"Kabir belongs to that small group of supreme mystics—amongst whom St. Augustine, Ruysbroeck, and the sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi are perhaps the chief...."

However, a humble prophet of Universal spirituality would not have been unfamiliar to western audience, because, by then, they had already been introduced to *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam in 1859. What is more important here is that the Tagore's translation seems to represent a more monologic Kabir—the prophet of religious unity and secularism.

Another aspect of this study, which I would like to incorporate in my paper when I rework on it, is the issue of language. The questions like—what was the language in which Kabir wrote? How do Kabir's works achieve a canonical status? In what way emerging

linguistic communities appropriated him?—these are some questions which have something to do with our notions of language and dialect. It is important because that 19th century is also a period in the history of north Indian languages when linguistic identities were undergoing a change; from a hazy and liquid state to a more defined categorized state.

The anthologized Kabir marks the disappearance of a *panth* and appearance of *Bhakti* as a tradition. It can be said that our existing scholarship on Kabir is largely determined by early collections of Kabir's poems from oral traditions and manuscripts, translations, commentaries and colonial narratives. Translations formed and were part of different channels of dissemination and the sites of reception. Translation as a medium of textual production was embedded in the socio-cultural contexts in which they were produced. Translations gave fixity to the myths—either related to the *Bijak* or to Kabir himself— which were prevalent in the oral literature. But above all, the colonial narratives and translations were crucial for the nationalist elites to imagine of *Bhakti* as a uniform category. And kabir becomes counterfoil to assert not only a national idea of devotion but also the antiquity of Hindi, the aspired national language.

Notes :

1. Kabirpanthis are a religious community who practice the philosophy and the teachings of Kabir.
2. Scholars agree on the point that Nabhadass, an important Bhakti poet, lived in the last decades of 16th century and died in the first quarter of 17th century.
3. It is generally believed that Nabhadass, a poet in Braj language, lived in the late 16th and early 17th century.
4. Nothing much can be stated with certainty about the life of Priyadas except the fact that he lived in Brindavan. But the date of his commentary is certain as he mentions the date in VikramiSamvat. For details see Hare, 2011:91-96
5. A Rajasthani commentary titled *Dadupanthi Bhaktamal* was written by a certain Raghavdas in 1720. Marathi poet Mahipati refers to the manuscript of Priyadas for his work *Bhaktavijaya*, which he wrote in 1762. Two other commentaries titled *Bhaktakalpadrum* and *Bhaktapradeepan* came in the last decades of 18th century in Braj bhasha and Hindi respectively. However, in this paper, I have referred to two editions; first a translation by Pandit Kalicharan from Brajbhasha to Hindi in 1874 and second, a translation published by Kashi Chandraprabha Press in the year 1905.
6. See *Hindu Infanticide, an Account of the Measures adopted for suppressing the practice of the Systematic murder by their parents of female infants (1811)* edited by Edward Moor F.R.S. The work gives a reference to the *Kabirpanthis* while narrating the story of Jarejah Mokaji.
7. James Robert Ballantyne (1813-1864) was a Scottish scholar who served as the principal of the Sanskrit College of Benares from 1846 to 1861. He also authored several books like, *Hindustani Grammar and Exercises (1838)*, *Elements of Hindu and Braj-Bhakhha Grammar (1839)* and *Christianity Contrasted with Indian Philosophy (1859)*.
8. *Kabirpanthis* are a religious community who practice the philosophy and the teachings of Kabir.
9. He was an English Orientalist who served as secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1811 to 1817.
10. *Bijak* is a compilation of Kabir's poems *Sakhi*, *Shabda* and *Ramaini* are the three most significant sections of the composition.
11. Evelyn Underhill was an Anglo-Catholic writer who generally wrote on the themes of Christian mysticism. Her best known work effort was a philosophical work titled *Mysticism* which was published in 1911.
12. Jacopone da Todi was an Italian Franciscan friar who lived in the 13th century. He wrote *laudi*

(songs in praise of the Lord) in Italian, Whereas, Richard Rolle was an English religious writer, Bible translator and hermit, who lived in the late 13th and early 14th century.

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The Single Independent Working Woman in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe

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Abstract:

India boasts of the new Indian woman who is educated, empowered, self-sufficient and contributing to the development of the nation. But the truth is far from it. The inclusion of women into the work force has always been there but underlying it the tight controls that the families have on the income, labour and sexuality of the women have remained unchanged. Marriage only perpetuates this state. In recent times, we see a welcome shift. Many educated, working women are making conscious decisions to remain single. Marriage for working-women has become a liability and once they have tasted the freedom of singlehood they seldom want to bind themselves to the bonds of a marriage. Unmarried, divorced, separated or widowed- the single woman now constitutes 21% of India's female population above the age of 20 as reported by Joeanna Rebello Fernandes & Shobita Dhar in their article "All the single ladies...73m & growing" published on Nov 22, 2015 in Times of India. Thus, we find ourselves in the crossroads of an ever evolving and ever changing society. This change could usher the society towards a more liberal setup which accommodates single-women into it rather than attaching a taboo with the singlehood of women.

This paper intends to study Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe and the train journey she undertakes leading to a self-realisation and also her

psychological journey and her eventual emergence as a woman aware of her self-worth. This is an attempt to study the relation between women education, employment, economic independence of women and the nuances of singlehood and theoretically connect the ongoing trend in the society to its portrayal in the above mentioned works.

Keywords: Singlehood, working woman, marriage, self worth, financial mobility.

Indian women have been contributing to the economy of the country for a long time now and have made advances in various fields. The inclusion of women into the work force has always been there but the income of the women has belonged more to their families than themselves. Nirmala Banerjee, a Professor of Economics who has been actively associated with women's movements in India, in her essay titled "Between the Devil and the Deep Sea: Shrinking Options for women in Contemporary India" makes a note that in India, decisions of the level of education of the women and also of the kind of work they would engage in is decided by the girls' families and post-marriage, their marital families. She writes, "The highly disadvantaged economic position of Indian women is thus mainly due to the tight controls that families still impose on their bodies, their sexuality and their labour." (54) In India where marriages arranged by the family are a norm, it is considered to be the inability on the part of the family rather than the woman to secure a

husband. In such a society, a woman living alone is always seen as a magnet for troubles and scandals. Divorced, separated and widowed women too face the societal stigma. They are treated as castaways of the society, bad influence on nubile girls, suspected as snatchers of husbands, suspected of having secret liaisons, gossiped about and at times pitied. They lack the security of a husband and thus lack the symbols of marriage and are not respected in the society: "I am a curse. I am the shadow of the evil. I am the ghoul that dams gene pools and feasts on husbands." (Nair 135). A woman being single and living alone especially points to the fact that she has no protector or someone to provide for her which also means that she might not be economically affluent and hence has to fend for herself which is more often than not suspected to be of dubious nature. Moreover if she lives alone she would only be looked at with suspicion and hatred. In recent times, however this trend is somewhat shifting. Many educated, working women are making conscious decisions to remain single. Marriage for working-women has become a liability and once they have tasted the freedom of singlehood they seldom want to bind themselves to the bonds of a marriage. We find her representations in the contemporary Indian novels, movies and popular culture.

In the past few decades scholars from various disciplines have contributed to a large body of works on singlehood and single women which are interesting and inspiring. This literature locates singlehood as one of the dimensions of the structural transition in family life in late-modern societies and centers on exploring the everyday lives of single women and examining stereotypical labeling attached to and experienced by them. Of the many books that speak of the single woman's experiences, Trimberger's book *The New Single Woman* is a case study of women in their mid life trying to come into terms with a life which might be without partners. While discussing the experiences of women she raises certain essential questions about

singlehood and the stigma associated with it. Jill Reynolds book *The Single Woman: A Discursive Investigation* is another attempt to understand the notion of singleness and it takes into account popular culture, statistical records and interviews with single women. While discussing why the study of singleness is worth studying she writes, "There has been little sustained analysis of the marginalization of women who live alone without a long-term intimate partnership with another adult. While not all women who are alone would consider themselves to be feminists, it is likely that a better understanding of this group will have important lessons for feminism." (13)

Most of the studies locate this newly defined singleness in the change that has come over the society in the recent times. Many of them grapple with the stereotypical labelling attached to this state and the experiences faced by the single women. Their identity is typically cast into the category of outcasts from the society which seems to be a residue of an earlier age. But there are examples of women, both real and literary characters, who have tried to defy the norms and unshackle themselves from the chains of society and live as independent single women by choice without any qualms against their state. There have been lesser studies on singlehood in India but Indian feminists have been debating on the issue of individualisation that feminism seeks to bring and the eventual autonomy that it provides the women. Seemanthini Niranjana has suggested, for example, that the concept of the individual self is fundamentally a Western imposition, at odds with Indian preferences for a more relational model of identity (32). On the other hand, Nivedita Menon has noted that many feminists in India 'feel the need to reject community identity as an overriding one ... [because] the rights claimed by communities vis-à-vis the state – autonomy, selfhood, access to resources – are denied by communities to "their" women' (31). Indian feminist discourse tends to agree with the radical Western feminist view of sexuality as

central in maintaining women's subordination – the notion, as Viswanath puts it, of 'how patriarchy rests on the foundation of the controlled female body' (318). Patriarchy is based on exploitation of the female body and of the female labour.¹

In the light of this emerging trend, this paper seeks to study Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* and try to analyse the changing attitude of the society towards the single woman and also the women's changing self assessment. Also the education the women have received, their desires to live independent lives and their witnessing the subordinate position of women in marriages will be looked into as this paper delves into the causes that make these women averse to marriage. *Ladies Coupe* follows a middle-aged unmarried working woman, Akhilandeshwari or Akhila's train journey and also her psychological journey to a self realization. It is interesting to note how a woman gathers self worth which had been shattered by the societal attitudes after listening to stories of other women. The term 'single women' in this paper is intended to describe the women, never-married, divorced, separated or widowed who are not in a long term partnership with another individual.² Household works, helping the family in agricultural and farm work and caring for the family take up a major portion of women's lives. But as The Census of India defines, 'Work' is the various tasks that an individual does for wages or profit³ and the 'working woman' is one who does those paid tasks.

Jill Reynolds while discussing the role of self-help books as one of the earliest literature on singlehood mentions their evolution with time comparing the different books on the subject over the ages. She takes into account the 1936 book on the subject *Live Alone and Like it* by Majorie Hillis and compares it to the *Single and Loving it* by Wendy Bristow published in 2000 and notices how the latter keeps in mind the present day readers who are influenced by recent feminist ideas. Books on single women tend to be those

which illustrate the lives and ideas of women living alone and succeeding in doing so. The exemplary anecdotes, success at work and social lives, statistics and interviews are expected to lead the women walking down the same path. Anita Nair's book *Ladies Coupe* strikes a similar chord as the novel combines accounts of six women from different age groups and walks of life and their answers to the central character, Akhila's question whether a woman can live alone or not.

This myth that a single woman is unfulfilled and mostly unhappy is prevalent in Indian societies where a good marriage is treated as the goal of a woman's life. Akhila, who goes on a journey travelling in a *Ladies Coupe* with other ladies is asked whether she is happy or not by an elderly co-traveller, Janaki (21). She is also suggested that she would be able to get a suitor from the matrimonial columns where men in the mid forties or fifties seek suitable matured women to get married to (20). Therefore, the negative associations and the stigma associated with singlehood of women are not denied.

Their whole lives of women in India prior to marriage are only a preparation for it. As Banerjee writes, "The pattern of families training their daughters as housewives usually meant that girls also acquired the necessary skills for women's tasks..." (Banerjee 55), the women in the novel in discussion are shown going through the ordeal from a very young age. Akhila in *Ladies Coupe*, goes through a childhood which is supposed to prepare her for a life of a blissfully married woman. It is her mother who trains her to do the household works. Raised by a mother who considered husbands superior to wives and that a wife should not take a man's role and work to earn, Akhila is ingrained to believe that a woman's most important duty is to marry. (14,15) Even school education was a preparation to become a good wife where even the teachers laid emphasis of the duty of a woman to become a good wife. (Nair, 48, 49) The other

characters we are introduced to in the novel too voice same ideas and upbringings. The elderly lady, Janaki who has been married for forty years tells how she was raised to believe that it is a woman's duty to get married and that the home is a woman's kingdom. (23). Prabha Devi, another of the travellers in the ladies coupe Akhila was on, has a very similar upbringing in terms of values and lessons imparted to her. Born to a family of jewellers she was from a very young age moulded to be a fashionable young lady fit to secure a good marriage alliance. She was sent to a convent school after she passed her tenth standard with a hope that she would learn to speak proper English which would further improve the chances to get a good husband. (170)

The characters as they narrate their stories tell about their loss of individuality in marriage and their own quest to get what they wanted. Janaki, who has been married for forty years, started hating her husband after she reached a certain age. Apparently in the story she tells, there is nothing wrong with her husband, she is helped by him in her daily works. But the realisation that she was wholly dependent on her husband and incapable of managing on her own gnaws her (34, 35) and because of that she looked down upon women who could cope by themselves. (23) This perhaps goes to illustrate the hatred that the society fosters for single independent women. She says that she got tired of being the fragile woman and started believing that she could manage by herself. (23) Another character is Prabha Devi who after marriage goes on a trip to New York and gets inspired and transforms herself from a coy Indian wife to a gay spirited woman modelled after those she had seen on the tri She is jarred when an admirer almost molests her and she withdraws and reverts back to her old self losing herself in the service for her family until the day she realises that ceasing to want more for herself she had lost her self and also her worth in the eyes of her husband. (184,185) The act of learning to swim was what

liberated her from the confines that she had created for herself. It made her realise that to want something for herself and attain it freed her from the fear of rejection that she anticipated (195). Familial responsibilities and duties had led to her self-obliteration, lowering of her worth and her husband taking her for granted.

The story, that Margaret Shanthi tells is of a similar vein who is a Chemistry teacher and is married to the headmaster of a school. Her husband with whom she fell in love was a domineering and self-willed person not only in the marriage but also in his dealings with his colleagues and students. He forces his opinions on her and she does for a time until she decides to plot a vengeance and succeeds in subduing his aggressiveness. He was a man who took pride over his looks and she destroys his pride by over-feeding him till he grows to become a fat man low in self esteem. (131, 133)

The example of the married life of Akhila's parents show the role of a woman as expected in the Indian society. Her mother looked after all the needs of her father and always placed him above all even her children. There exists no identity of her mother without her father. Her life is just a corollary to her husband's. With these examples in the book, Anita Nair tries to emphasise that it is easy for a woman to lose herself in a marriage unless she learns to hold her worth. The novel without a glamorous portrayal of marriage goes on to set an image of marriage which is uninviting.

Akhila, after her father, is left to look after her family (48) and gets so busy getting into the shoes of the sole bread-earner of the family that she never gets married. However, the decision to remain single, unmarried, divorced and away from family is not a easy or natural as one thinks it to be. "Becoming a new single woman at midlife—that is, accepting and being happy with one's singleness—is a long and often conflicted process. We do not choose to be single, but we have made a number of choices that have led us

here.”(Trimberger 53). She takes up the job and starts looking after her family which comprised of her mother and three younger siblings: two brothers and a sister. She turns thirty-four by the time she is helps each of her siblings to settle down. She, a single-woman at that age is left to do nothing more. ‘I didn’t choose to remain single. It happened that way,’ she says when asked by her co-travellers why she didn’t marry (20). Padma, her younger sister is married off only when she promises not to “forsake her”- an assurance of lifelong monetary assistance to the prospective bridegroom. The security is the fact that Akhila is too old to get married (79).

Akhila’s position as a bread-earner doesn’t, whatsoever, give her the position of the decision-maker. She feels that she by playing the provider in the family has got stuck with that role. She wishes to live by herself and by this time marriage has become unimportant for her (21) When she voices her desire to live alone there is a uproar in the family and her younger brothers and sister tell her how difficult it is for a lone woman to survive in the society managing on her own. She becomes unnerved and goes off on a journey to Kanyakumari expecting to meet other women and learn from then their experiences with life and try to find if it was possible for a woman to live alone. She listens to the stories the women tell and comes to the realisation that she is a whole and not wanting in anything and takes over the reins of her own life. Akhila had become what she says the “cash cow” of the family- a mere provider. When the novel closes, we find a confident and different Akhila who is sure about living alone. She weighs all the pros and cons and decides that it was time enough to live life on her own terms- ‘to wrest the reins of her life back’ (276).

Ladies Coupe by tracing the physical and psychological journey of Akhila opens up an opportunity to study the psychology of the single woman in Indian societies. Financial security and education becomes an important factor for liberating such women from

the cultural and societal constrains and provides them a security which they otherwise seek in a marriage.

Notes :

1. Nirmala Banerjee discusses at length about the controls exerted on women’s wealth, earning, choice of labour by their families before and after marriage. (Banerjee. P. 43-68)
2. Jill Renolds writes, “The meaning of ‘singleness’ is elusive” taking into consideration cohabitation which is problematic and also the age-related aspect of ‘singleness’. One aim in her book, she says, “is to consider these new and different associations now linked to the category ‘single’ and their relationship with continuing and more long-standing notions of the single status. (Reynolds. P. 13, 14, 15)
3. “Work is defined as participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Such participation may be physical and/or mental in nature.” – Census Data 2001

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Nature and the Great War : An Ecocritical Reading of *The Palace of Illusions*

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Abstract:

*Nature has always sustained man, catering to both his aesthetic and material needs. Yet, in spite of it, man has adopted an attitude of subjugation, exploitation and destruction towards Nature. Ecocriticism voices concerns against such human attitudes by drawing attention to these issues in literary works. This paper will attempt to study Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), a re-reading of the Mahabharata, from an ecocritical standpoint. Divakaruni re-tells the Indian epic Mahabharata with Draupadi as her protagonist and narrator. An analysis of the narration shows the novel as a critique of war and environmental destruction. She censures men whose ego and insatiable greed resulted in the extensive destruction of both his kind and nature in the War of Kurukshetra. The writer further contemplates how man's ego can blind him to the sufferings of other creature as reflected in the acts of the archer-warrior Arjun and his brothers. Such acts are exemplars of the hierarchy that man creates for himself and nature where he himself places at a higher plane, a hierarchy that has come under intense criticism at the hands of the ecocritics. Moreover, Divakaruni delves into the psyche of her protagonist to uncover how her change in attitude towards her fellow beings is accompanied by a corresponding change in outlook towards nature. Furthermore, Bheeshma's relationship to his mother, the river-goddess Ganga calls for ecocritical*

*analysis as it reflects the role ascribed to Nature by man as well as a rejection of the cultured life. So, this paper will attempt to bring out the issues of environment as voiced and treated in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*. For this, the paper will rely on the tenets of ecocriticism to underscore these issues.*

Keywords: nature, man, ego, exploitation

Literature and Nature share an intimate and intricate relationship across the globe and down the ages. While, at times it has inspired poets and writers with its beauty, inherent peace and overpowering presence, at other times it has served as a reflection or mirror to human's inner turmoil and yearnings. Here, we can recall poems of antiquity such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* wherein gods and Nature in her benign and malignant forms have determined the course of human action. At home, epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* too serve as testimonies of it. Additionally, closer readings of these texts reveal the human attitude towards nature as well as concern for it. The inherent human streak of exploitation of nature is seen time and again in these texts. Moreover, this human trait is criticised too. Ecocriticism studies such aspects of literature. A literary critic tries to explore and bring to the forefront the textualization of this close yet complex relationship between Literature and Nature.

This paper will attempt to analyze Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) from an ecocritical standpoint. In her "mythic tale brimming

with warriors, magic and treachery”, Divakaruni both implicitly and explicitly voices concern for nature and criticizes man’s anthropocentric attitude.

Ecocriticism studies the relationship between literature and the environment. While, other theories limit their scope among writers, texts and the society; ecocriticism extends its reach to include the entire ecosystem within it. It draws from a number of critical approaches including structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, postcolonialism and Marxism in its approach.

Michael P. Branch traces the term “ecocriticism” to William Rueckert’s ‘Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism’ (1978). The publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), a collection of essays, by Cheryll Glotfetty and Harold Fromm, is often considered as a decisive moment for Ecocriticism.

It first arose in the late 1970s, though it became a full-fledged literary movement in the United States in the late 1980s and in the UK in the early 1990s. Renowned literary critic, Peter Berry, traces Ecocriticism in USA to the writings of the three major 19th century American transcendentalists— Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). These writers tried to analyze, in detail, life in wilderness, away from the concrete life that civilisation offers. While on the other hand, in UK, Ecocriticism takes its root from the British Romanticism, primarily from the writings of William Wordsworth and S.T Coleridge. Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991) is one of the foundational texts of the ecocritical movement. But, it is important to note that issues raised by ecocriticism were voiced in the past as well, as for instance in Raymond Williams’ *The Country and the City* (1973).

Within the ambit of ecocriticism lies ecofeminism. Ecofeminism combines the tenets of feminism with ecocriticism. It is best summed up in Mary Mellor’s definition who defines it as:

Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and

degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism brings together the elements of feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women.

(Mellor, 01)

Annette Kolodny has emphasized on the penchant of man to turn to nature for indulgence, pleasure and recuperation in much the same way as he turns to woman. As a theoretical framework, Ecocriticism provides critics and readers an opportunity to analyse and read texts from an ecological and feminist point of view to discern the gendered treatment of nature.

Chitra Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions*, a re-telling of the *Mahabharata* has given rise to a lot of intellectual debates and discussions, particularly for its portrayal of Draupadi. The novel traces her life from her birth to her “mahaprasthan, the path of the great departure” (344) and presenting the readers with a feminist narrative of the entire chain of events that led to the War of Kurukshetra resulting in death of millions and widespread destruction of man and his environment, and thereby marking the end of Dvapara Yuga.

An analysis of Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions* reveals her acute awareness of Nature, its relationship to humankind and the human attitude towards it. The Great War caused immense havoc to human civilisation leaving behind decaying corpses, wailing mothers, widowed brides and orphaned children. But, in saying so, one cannot overlook the destruction it caused to nature. In fact, by revolving the entire story around Man’s ego and its consequent war, Divakaruni brings in the focus to nature. War from prehistoric times has devastated nature and with time

its devastation has increased manifold. In the novel, the author recounts how Yudhishthir went into depression after his victory in Kurushetra “staring at the devastated land where nothing would grow, thinking of the millions whose death-anguish had poisoned the air” (Divakaruni, 318). This protest against man-made ruin finds its most unequivocal voice in Vyasa, the author of the epic itself. Unable to remain a mere spectator, the protagonist-narrator, Draupadi narrates how Vyasa emerges in the narrative when both Aswatthama and Arjun released their Brahmasheershastras:

As the two flames coursed along the sky, oceans began to dry up and mountains to crumble. Men and beasts screamed their terror, for the fabric of the world was about to be ripped apart. Watching from the edge of the tale, I was forced to intervene, though that is not my preference. I stepped out between the flames and raised my hands. By the power of penances, for a moment the astras were rendered immobile. I chided the two warriors for forgetting themselves and their responsibilities toward the earth-goddess. I demanded that they recall their weapons. (307)

Such intervention on the part of Vyasa bears testimony of the text as a critique of war and environmental devastation. Divakaruni is also critical of the greed and exploitative streak in man that destroys, subjugates and exploits nature for his selfish needs or rather to satisfy his ego. Arjun’s act of setting on fire the entire forest in Khandav is a proof of it. So widespread was the destruction that hardly any cries of animals were heard when the Pandavas came to build their kingdom, Indrapastha, in it. This imperialist instinct of humankind finds echo in Krishna’s words to Draupadi alias Krishnaa:

But Krishna said, “How else could you have settled here? Built your kingdom? Gained all that fame? Changed the direction of history’s wheel? Someone has to pay a price for that. You of all people should know this, Krishnaa.” (144)

And in this case, it is Nature who has to pay a price for it. Krishna’s argument does not hold ground for nature cannot be made to pay for an individual’s yearning for greatness, fame and wealth or even to change the course of human civilisation. Even, any kind of settlement in the wilderness is anthropocentric since by using natural resources according to their whims and fancies, man reduces nature in a hierarchy, as if they subsist for humans. Such a human attitude that regards nature as its subordinate is vehemently condemned by Ecocriticism. During their exile in forest, the Pandavas recklessly used forest resources not only for their survival but also for indulgence. In the novel, Draupadi recounts how Nakul and Sahadev brought fawns for her to pet. They felt no remorse to separate a new born from its mother thereby reflecting their anthropocentric attitude.

Moreover, treatment of human beings and nature by individuals evinces their own nature. In the novel, King Draupad is found adopting a hostile attitude towards nature, treating it as his enemy or as aiding his enemy. Draupadi says, “I hated most of all that the ground had neither trees nor flowers. King Draupad believed the former to be hazard to security... the latter he saw no use for— and what my father did not find useful, he removed from his life” (6). It corresponds to his treatment of fellow beings as evident from his treatment of Drona. In fact, his initial reluctance to accept Draupadi further substantiates this notion for he thought that it was Dhristadyumna alone who was supposed to revenge his insult from Drona.

Nature brings with it the ideas of freedom from the constraints of life. Draupadi often loathes her existence within the concrete palace walls of Kampilya and Hastinapur. She wants to escape to a world of flowers, trees and birds for her company. Even when Dussasan tried to unclot her after her husbands, the Pandavas lost her in the infamous game of dice, she thinks of Krishna and finds herself in a tranquil garden:

The sounds of the courtroom faded— Dussasan’s grunts, the whispers of the watchers. Suddenly I was in a garden. There were swans in a lake, a tree that arched above,

dropping blue flowers, the sound of water falling as though the world had no end. The wind smelled of sandalwood. Krishna sat beside me on a cool stone bench.

(193)

So, it can be said that nature is a healer of pain as well as an abode of freedom. Yet, in the initial chapters of the novel, we find Draupadi preferring human planted gardens to the feral nature as she herself admits “I, who preferred gardens to wilderness” (134). This can be interpreted as her own confinement to the societal norms as well as her own craving for authority, a typical human trait. Her avidity for greater authority in administrative matters, loathing of her husbands and her voracity for revenge— are proofs of it. But in the last moments of her life, her hatred gives way to a liking for the wild, untamed nature:

Nature, whom I’d encountered often enough in my wanderings, had always seemed my enemy, her only purpose to add to my discomfort. But today I couldn’t keep my eye off the peaks, the way the light slid and shimmered along them, turning them into different shades of gold as the day grew older. There was a sharp sweetness to the air. I breathed it in great gulps, holding it until my lungs ached, and still I couldn’t get enough. (345)

This change in preference of the two forms of nature can be seen as her own change of perspective regarding life. After witnessing the ravages of war, the horrifying ends of her loved ones as well as her foes who had their egos as the cause of their downfalls. Draupadi learns to let go of her own ego. She no longer tries to govern over affairs but discusses things with her elders, even with Kunti whom she had despised ever since she got married to her sons. Thus, this change is evident in her attitude towards nature for she no longer tries to tame neither men nor nature. Further, the relationship of Bheeshma with Nature

deserves a critical examination in the text. Bheeshma is the son of the river-goddess, Ganga, so an intimate relationship between him and Nature is implicitly suggested. The despondency and apprehensions resulting from court affairs and particularly the enmity between the Kauravas and Pandavas often led him to find peace and solace in nature. Speaking to Draupadi, Bheeshma says,

She kept me until I was eight— my happiest years, I think. She taught me everything I know that’s of any value. She still comes to me sometimes, here in the river, if I have a really serious problem or need her opinion.” (136)

To it, she observes

Did he mean them literally? Or did the river soothe his mind, helping him to think better? (136)

Such statements and observations in the novel once again highlight the ecocritical concerns of Divakaruni’s novel. Draupadi’s remark echoes the role that Nature has been ascribed by men. However, it can also be read as a defiance and rejection of the life of glory and gory offered by civilisation in favour of a life of simplicity and contentment amidst nature.

To conclude, it can be said that Divakaruni’s retelling of the epic raises serious concerns about environment. Though the novel has been mainly read as a feminist text, it has possibilities to be read with an ecocritical approach. In fact, Divakaruni seems to assert that the root of the problems of man and environment is the same and it is human ego.

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A Postcolonial Critique of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

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Abstract:

Postcolonial literature refers to the work written by authors with roots in those countries that were once colonies established by the European nations. Ever since this genre sprang up, it has expanded to incorporate many representational and political strategies. Amitav Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines (1988) can be seen from the postcolonial aspect as it has been critical of the many issues that are being debated in contemporary India. Here, the author has beautifully interwoven the temporal and spatial dimensions into a personal texture where the unnamed narrator builds his own identity. The various characters regulate and determine the course of the action in the narrative. The novel describes violence and riots at various levels and deal with the effect of fear on memory where the arbitrariness of the physical distance is aptly illustrated by the narrator. It is ultimately the narrator's growth as a person that has led to the investigation and deeper understanding of the various themes in the novel. The novel has been highly critical in presenting the history of the colonised people written by them in the language of the coloniser.

Key words: *Postcolonial, Identity, Colonisation, Narrative*

“At the origin of India and Pakistan lies the national trauma of Partition, a trauma that freezes fear into silence, and for which *The Shadow Lines* seeks

to find a language, a process of mourning, and perhaps even a memorial” (Suvir Kaul in “Separation Anxiety”)

Postcolonial literature in its strictest term refers to a body of literature that were written by authors with roots in those countries that were once colonies established by the European nations. This genre of literature sprang up during the 1950s as a counter to the imperial ideology of the colonial era; it negotiates with, contests, and subverts Euro-American ideologies and representations. The very process of decolonization and postcolonial movement questions the imperial ideology of considering the rest of the world as mere dark libidinal self of Europe and eulogizes the native's identity and culture. The intertwinement of the political ideologies in postcolonial fiction is much more pungent compared to the other literary genres.

Postcolonial deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. The prefix ‘post’ and the ‘hyphen’ in the term have raised vigorous debates amongst critics. When spelled without a hyphen, this term refers “to writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonial perspectives”, both before and after colonisation. When spelled with a hyphen, the term implies “a chronological order”, that is, a change from a colonial to a postcolonial state. However, the most common orthographic variant is ‘postcolonial’. Many critics have also suggested that there are two divisions of the term.

The first one is ‘a set of diverse methodologies that possess no unitary quality’, as maintained by Homi Bhabha and Arun P. Mukherjee. The other division

includes critics like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Barbara Harlow who viewed postcolonial as a set of cultural strategies “centred in history”. The ‘postcolonial’ specifies ‘a transformed historical situation, and the cultural formations that have arisen in response to changed political circumstances, in the former colonial power’ (Young, 2001: 57). Sam Durrant, a contemporary critic writes in *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* (2003), “Post-colonialism as a praxis is grounded in an appeal to an ethical universal entailing a simple respect for human suffering and a fundamental revolt against it”. Helen Gilbert’s definition of ‘postcolonial’ arrests the diverse contours of the term:

The term indicates a degree of agency, or... a programme of resistance, against cultural domination; ... signals the existence of a particular historical legacy... a ... stage in a culture’s transition into a modern nation-state; [or] to suggest a form of co-option into Western cultural economies... ‘postcolonial’ has become a convenient... term to describe any kind of resistance, particularly against class, race, and gender oppression. (*Thieme 2003: x*)

Postcoloniality has been expanded to incorporate not only the narrative, representational and political strategies of formerly colonised nations, but also the modes of negotiation adopted by various groups when dealing with the legacies of colonialism. Postcolonial writing, therefore, can be defined as the ‘literary processes through which formerly colonized people assert their difference from, resistance to, and negotiation with, European colonial masters and cultures while attempting to develop similar strategies to tackle contemporary globalizing and neo-colonial process of domination by Euro-American powers’ (Nayar, 2008). In one of the first major theorizations about ‘postcolonial literature’, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin defined it thus:

We use the term ‘postcolonial’ ... to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the

present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. (1989: 2)

The seeds of postcolonial aesthetics were sown in Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and its theory in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). Through his writings, Fanon argues about the problem of “native bourgeoisie” and also articulates the key postcolonial concept, viz. that of “Otherness”, subject formation and emphasis on linguistic and psychoanalytic framework. However, the critical assessment of it dates back to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin’s epoch making book, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989). Edward Wadie Said is a Palestine-American theorist and critic whose book, *Orientalism* (1978) is said to be the most celebrated and debated work which seeks to study the post-colonial texts in the former colonies in the context of European imperialism. He has defined Orientalism as “a western Style for dominating, restructuring, having authority over the Orient”. Gayatri Spivak almost corroborates this view in her book, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993) by stating “post-coloniality – the heritage of imperialism in the rest of the globe as a deconstructive case” where she goes on to explain the political claims that are urgent in decolonised space. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said captures the basic assumption behind colonialism and imperialism. “‘They are not like us’, and for that reason deserve to be ruled”. The colonized, Said argues, becomes the “Other” and therefore, he says that the established binary opposition of ‘the West’ and ‘the Other’ must be eradicated.

Homi K. Bhabha, one of the leading postcolonial theorist and critic, building on Said’s notion of the Other and Orientalism, emphasises the concerns of the colonised through his work *The Location of Culture* (1994). His work challenges the ambivalent attitude of the colonisers between hatred and longing for the

natives. He argues on the feeling of homelessness, of being caught in between two clashing cultures, which he rightly calls 'unhomeliness'. Thus, the colonial subject, because of this dislocation becomes a psychological refugee. Bhabha's work discusses the theme of hybridity, colonial ambivalence and contingency. Unlike Said and Spivak, who emphasised culture and imperialism as the notable forces influencing postcolonial literature, Fredric Jameson talks of the allegorical nature and highlights the history of the erstwhile British colonies. He says that "all third world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical and in a very specific way, they are to be read as what I will call national allegories [...]" (1986: 69). Aijaz Ahmad questions Jameson by arguing that the latter's concept of 'national allegory' would be 'positivist reductionism' (1994: 97). Thus, Post-colonial theory repudiates anti-colonial nationalist theory and implies a movement beyond colonialism. Therefore, it is 'transnational in dimension, multicultural in approach and a movement beyond the binary opposition of the power relations between the colonizer/colonised and centre/periphery' (Das, 2012).

Amitav Ghosh, born in the year 1956 in Kolkata, is an Indian author and an academician who was educated at the University of Delhi and Oxford. He grew up in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Sri Lanka, Iran and India listening to the stories of partition, Second World War and the struggle for independence. Therefore, history becomes a perennial theme in his fictional narratives and his work is imbued with both political and historical consciousness. Memories play an important role in his novels. These memories are being used to explain the notion of freedom, nationhood, violence, otherness, subalternity, imagination, partition, community and the idea of home and homelessness. The novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988) exploring the effect upon a family of the partition of Bengal, won the Indian Sahitya Akademi Award in the year 1989. *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (1996) won him the Arthur C. Clarke Award for best science fiction novel in 1990. These apart, Ghosh is also known for his other works like *The*

Circle of Reason (1986), *In an Antique Land* (1992), *The Glass Palace* (2000) etc. In his writings, we often find traces of post-colonial consciousness, a crucial element in the continuum of our cultural process and self-awareness.

Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988) can be seen from the postcolonial aspect. The novel has been highly critical of the many issues that are being debated in contemporary India. Ghosh in his novel, "sees history as that trajectories of events that causes dislocations, disjunctions, movements and migrations, eventually replacing solid markers with shadow lines, destabilising our nations of the past in the reverberations of the present" (Bose, 2003). He also discusses the notion of 'imagined communities'. Benedict Anderson in his essay "Imagined Communities" (1983) raises a few questions fundamental to the history of idea, which helps to look at the concept of 'nation' and 'nationalism' as evolving through constructs. He argues by stating that, 'nation is imagined as community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation always conceives as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for so much limited imaginings'. Thus, nation is an imaginative phenomenon which is unanimously accepted by its people and supposed to be their common legacy and property. It unites its people in the past and even in the present. Nation does play the role of an adhesive element in collective consciousness of its people. Ernest Renan calls it 'a soul and spiritual principle'.

Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Shadow Lines* weaves the temporal and spatial dimensions into a personal texture where the unnamed narrator builds his own identity. The novel is a *bildungsroman* (coming of age) novel, and is divided into two sections: *Going Away* and *Coming Home*. The novel, gyrating around the diaspora of East Pakistan after partition, narrates the story of an Indian family residing in Calcutta, which is rooted in Dhaka. The plot of the novel revolves around the two families: the Datta

Chaudhuris of Bengal and the Prices of London where the narrator's relationship with them becomes crucial. The narrator, an anonymous 'I' is Tridib's alter ego. Tridib, the narrator's eccentric uncle went to London and lived with the Prices during the war. The metaphor of 'travel' is used as a means of bridging the cultural boundaries. The author gives liberty to his characters to create their own imaginative world and perception of reality. The various characters like Tridib, Ila, May Price, Nick, Robi, the anonymous narrator, Grandmother (Tha'mma) and Mayadebi regulate and determine the course of the action in the narrative.

The narrative is not told in a contextual vacuum, it instead corresponds to the growth of Calcutta as a city and India as a nation over a period of three decades or more. It is through Tha'mma that the issue of Bengal partition and the entire idea of nation and nationhood get discussed. Tridib problematizes the notion of history; Ila brings to the fore the issues of diaspora and race. The narrator plays a central role to the extent that it is he who articulates the ideas held by these characters and also integrates their subjective viewpoints. The narrative begins with the eight-year old narrator talking about his experiences as a school boy living in the GolePark neighbourhood in Calcutta. He introduces the readers to the two branches of his family tree; one is the family of his Grandmother, Tha'mma and the other of the Grandmother's sister, Mayadebi. Tridib, one of Mayadebi's sons is the repository of all the esoteric knowledge, one who can talk at length and it is he who transfers to the young narrator a profound sense of love for knowledge. Tha'mma's world view and her perception of historical events are important aspects to be taken into consideration. Her critique on the partition, idea of nation and narration are rooted in her anecdotes. She is remarkably free from the traces of cynicism so evocative of the victims of partition.

The story exquisitely juxtaposes by depicting the life in Dhaka before partition, life in London during war and the life that the narrator leads in Calcutta during the 1960s. The unnamed narrator recounts in flashback the various places and people described by Tridib, some twenty years back. He lived through the stories of other

people and believed that the actual present alone can serve as an impulse for the narrative construction of memories. Ghosh represents the characters in the novel as being caught in two different worlds and rejects the artificially created boundaries as mere shadow lines. While reading about the experiences of Tridib, the narrator "lives a truer life in his memory and imagination". Some intrinsic details about Tridib are provided to the narrator by May Price who had been a witness to the violence in Bengal and Dhaka. The narrator's experience is reflected through his mind and imagination, whereas, Ila's experience of travelling is based on actual travel experiences in person. He admits that he has created his own secret map of the world around him. Their memories, states the narrator, "became part of my own secret map of the world, a map of which only I knew the keys and the coordinates, but which was not for that reason any more imaginary than the code of a safe is to a banker" (p. 214).

The historical consciousness in the novel is portrayed through the depiction of the freedom movement in Bengal, the Second World War, the partition of India and the miasma of communal hatred breaking out into riots in East Pakistan following the 'Hazratbal' shrine incident in Srinagar in 1964. It has reflected the emotional and psychological trauma, not limited to a particular community, but across geographical boundaries. These are mere shadow lines that reveal the fragility of partition violence, borderline disputes and the catastrophic lines that claim to separate people and communities. Towards the later part, when the narrator recalls the newspaper report in 1964 describing the ghastly communal riots and curfew in Calcutta, he remarks "... sitting in the air conditioned calm of an exclusive library, that I began on my strangest journey: a voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distances; a land of looking-glass events" (p. 247).

The novel describes violence and riots at three different levels: one, between religious communities within one nation or state, two, riots between two states, and three, between different communities and the government. 'There are no reliable estimates of

how many people were killed in the riots of 1964. The number could stretch from several hundred to several thousand; at any rate not very many less than were killed in the war of 1962' (p. 253). Towards the end, May meets the narrator and gives him an account of what happened with Tridib who ran after her, feeling guilty to be the cause of his unfortunate death. 'Tridib ran into the mob, and fell upon their backs. He was trying to push his way through to the old man, I think. Then the mob dragged him in. He vanished. I could only see their backs... Then the men began to scatter. I picked myself up and began to run towards them. The men had melted away, into the gullies. When I got there, I saw three dead bodies. They were all dead. They'd cut Khalil's stomach open. The old man's head had been hacked off. And they'd cut Tridib's throat, from ear to ear. That was that; that's all there is to tell' (p. 276).

The Shadow Lines is thus a novel dealing with the effect of fear on memory where the arbitrariness of the physical distance is aptly illustrated by the narrator. It is ultimately the narrator's growth as a person, his imagination, responsiveness and intellectuality that has led to the investigation and deeper understanding of the various themes in the novel — be it the treatment of history, partition, communal strife or the notion of home and homelessness. It is pertinent to cite Robert Dixon's comment: "*The Shadow Lines* is therefore, a fictional critique of classical anthropology's model of discrete cultures and the associated ideology of nationalism. The reality is the complex web of relationships between people that cut across nations and across generations".

The Shadow Lines also presents history of the colonised people written by them in the language of the coloniser. Harish Trivedi has rightly stated that the subaltern can speak and has always spoken for in his or her own modes of expression, which was difficult for the elite, bourgeois intellectual to grasp. He argues that the issue is not whether the subaltern can speak; rather it is whether they can speak the language of a metropolitan centre that is English and the language of high theory. Thus, the antipathy against the colonial

regime is overtly presented in the novel. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay 'Maps and Mirrors: Coordinates of Meaning in *The Shadow Lines*' concludes by stating that 'the apparently simple narrative of *The Shadow Lines* is in fact a complex jigsaw puzzle of varied time and place segments including some magic pieces that mirrors others ... The reiterative use of the two images—mirrors and maps—interact in the novel to stretch the narrative beyond mimetic realism to incorporate an element of mystery, a bafflement at the frontiers of knowing'.

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MAKING INDIA AWESOME : Literary Perspectives

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India is not a country (*desa*), it is a perspective (*darsana*); it is not a climate but a mood (*rasa*) in the play of the Absolute – it is not the Indian who makes India but “India” makes the Indian, and this India is in all. (17-18)

Chetan Bhagat feels with some difference what Raja Rao writes in *The Meaning of India*. Bhagat is pre-occupied with the social, the political and above all the material but Raja Rao goes beyond and turns metaphysical. Bhagat is undoubtedly a patriot and in his latest work *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* (2015) he focuses on many voices, touches controversial issues and presents the kaleidoscopic image of India. He acquires ‘almost cult status’ (International Herald Tribune). *India Today* depicts him as ‘a symbol of new India’ and ‘a torch-bearer for an unafraid generation...’ Bhagat defines ‘awesome’ and his dream of India:

Awesome is something that is cool, worthy of respect, and essentially inspires awe. That is what I want India to be.

Bhagat is a dreamer and a down-to-earth writer and this book is the blockbuster. As a writer in the twenty-first century he develops the frame work of ideas of Salman Rushdie about India. What Rushdie comments on the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence is worth quoting here:

India has taken the modern view of the self and enlarged it to encompass almost one billion souls. The selfhood of India is to capacious, so elastic, that it manages

to accommodate one billion kinds of difference. It agrees with its billion selves to call all of them “Indian”. This is a notion far more original than the old pluralist ideas of “melting pot” or “cultural mosaic”. (179)

Bhagat is quite sensitive to ‘one billion kinds of differences’ which are rooted in language, culture, religion, political ideologies and above all, the mind set of the average Indians. He discusses the differences in a practical and novel way. He raises the questions like pro-poor or pro-poverty? Can India’s backward polity provide a pro-growth. Fifty shades of fair: why colour gets under our skin? Bhagat’s questions are not rhetorical but practical and mind blowing.

The aim of this paper is to analyse Bhagat’s views on the nature and culture of Indians and the suggestions he extends for the betterment of India. It also attempts to analyse his literary style that contributes to his immense popularity in our times. It focuses on the merits of the book that enriches Indian writing in English. A comparison is also made with Francis Bacon the father of Modern English prose in order to evaluate Chetan as an essayist in English of first-rate importance. It is also shown that historically and conceptually this book contributes to the realm of post-colonial literatures. This paper comprises three sections: the first section spells out the objectives, the second section deals with Bhagat’s message and style and the third section evaluates it as a literary text.

II

In the first page of *MAKING INDIA AWESOME*

Bhagat makes clarification about his stand before the readers that the current political environment and public sentiment are so cynical that it becomes difficult on the part of a sensible person to dream of a better India but an impartial and objective evaluation of his book would reveal that he does succeed to a great extent. In this context we must agree with Oscar Wilde an aesthete that a good book is moral and a bad book has a moral. It is the artistic presentation of ideas that can create moral consciousness provided the writer has a moral vision. The design of the book is as much important as the vision it embodies. Doubtless the author aspires to make India a better place and designs the book in such a way that his message reaches the readers. The author deals with governance, politics, society, equality and resources which can be awesome. By the epithet 'awesome' he means setting things better, fixing societal values, enforcing minority and utilizing best resource pool. Thus, he emerges as the champion of liberty, equality and fraternity- a revolutionary in his own style. He classifies Indians into three types: 'self focused and indifferent', 'caring but aligned' and above all 'caring objective'. In his opinion the Indians who are self-centered and are indifferent to the needs of their fellow beings form the majority. His notion of 'caring but aligned' Indians belong to the 'taking sides category'. They are not indifferent to what is happening around them but are neither impartial nor objective in the assessment of human situation. Only the 'caring objective Indians' assess the situations objectively and dream of a better India. Thus this book dwells upon the nature of Indians, the problems of India and offers solution to the problems and crises India our motherland faces. Thus this book is very sacred for a lover of literature who believes that the society can be transformed through literature and literary artists are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'.

Bhagat's India is more than a country; it is a perspective and to make this perspective clear he raises several pertinent questions. One of the questions is:

If a father buys his child toffees instead of books for School, it may make for a

happy child. But does it make a good father? (P-23)

'The father' can be symbolic representation of a leader and 'the child', the common people. If the leader does something to please the people and win votes due to cheap popularity and does not take concrete steps for the real progress of the nation he cannot be rated as an efficient leader. Bhagat not only sets right questions but also gives right answers in order to titillate the intellect of the readers. In the chapter the "Revenge of the Oppressed: Why Corruption Continues to Be Around Despite the Outcry Against It" he states that "Everybody wants to remove corruption. However, not every Indian feels it is the number one priority. Thus Bhagat creates a unique dialogic situation in his book in which he answers the question he poses. Such a style of writing is easily intelligible. In this context A.R. Rahman's remark on him is quite appropriate:

Many writers are successful at expressing what's in their hearts or articulating a particular point of view. Chetan Bhagat's books do both and more.

Bhagat expresses his emotion as well as his point of view on any burning situation like corruption. He is witty and his mind is progressive and iconoclastic.

The titles of the chapters and sub-chapters of *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* are quite interesting and brainstorming. For example, in the section **politics** he deals with 'seventeenth commandments for Narendra Modi' and 'Rahul's New clothes, and the Naked Truth'. He is not a propagandist of any party; hence, he sheds light upon the activities of both Modi and Rahul. Many titles like 'We are the Shameless', 'Let us talk about sex' and 'Ladies stop being so hard on yourself', and 'Open letter to Indian Change Seekers' and so on capture the imagination of the readers. The Russian formalists and the stylisticians would approve of such style of writing. They will call it 'foregrounding'. The 'foregrounding' is a stylistic device in which the writer arrests the attentions of the readers. Bhagat uses expressions for the titles and sub-titles of the chapters in such a manner that the readers would be inquisitive to go through the text.

Bhagat entitles the book , *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* . The followers of the theory of deconstruction would argue why Bhagat omits the word progressive or developing or guru of the world after the word 'India.' The answer is that Bhagat does not believe in stereotyped responses. He is seeking novelty. Bhagat states that he writes for the youths and it is the youths who frequently use the term awesome. Hence he uses it and to him the youth is the embodiment of awesome resources. Perhaps this is the reason why he is so popular.

Bhagat uses colloquial language and states unpleasant truth. For example, in the chapter **Rescue the Nation** he writes:

Our bureaucracy runs our country. Our politicians have little interest in the nuts and bolts of running the county. Politicians like symbolism – meals at Dalit homes, presidential selections and cartoons. Or they like issues that appeal to vote banks-religious quotas, temple locations and dividing up states. (p-59)

Bhagat candidly pictures the roles of the politicians and bureaucrats of our country. In a democratic system the politicians are the bosses of the bureaucrats but in our country it is bureaucrats who are the real rulers. They frame the rules and govern the people right from the grass-root level. The politicians are more concerned with publicity than the public. Hence, he ironically calls it 'symbolism'. Symbolism is a movement in which the use of symbols is justified. Politicians of our country are just like symbols. They represent certain ideas but it is the bureaucrats who translate these ideas into action. Bhagat waxes eloquent on the loopholes of the democratic system.

Like Bacon, the father of Modern English prose, Bhagat uses aphoristic expressions. Usually he puts these expressions just below the title of the chapter. In the chapter, 'Ladies, Stop Being so Hard on Yourself' he writes ' When you have reasonable expectations from yourself, you can be happy. And being happy is, above all else, having it all '. In the

chapter entitled , "Five Things Women Need to Change about Themselves" he writes, ' For all the talk of women being denied their proper place in society, ladies need to do some self-reflection too' . In the chapter titled "Home Truths on Career Wives" he writes 'Choosing a capable, independent and career-oriented woman can also bring enormous benefits'; in the chapter "Wake up and Respect Your Inner Queen" he writes, 'Every girl in India deserves a journey of self-discovery like Rani'. Thus, a reader comes across many an epigram while he goes through the book. An epigram is a short pointed witty saying and Bhagat is adept in using it. It is the use of epigrams that makes Bhagat's text highly readable, popular and raises it to the level of the classic.

The final chapter of *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* is illuminative:

The road to awesomeness is long and difficult for India. The journey may be tough, but it is not impossible. If we fix our governance, societal values, equality and resources, we will get there. There will be noises, dirty politics, indifference and aligned biases all around us. The challenge will be for us to keep our dream alive despite all these hurdles. To be singularly focused on what will make India a better place, and base our opinion on any issue only on that criterion. There will be no villains and messiahs, and there won't be any place for mindless fandom or hatred. To fix India, we need to be practical, rational and scientific. It does not mean we lose our humanity and compassion, but that we don't let emotions sway decisions taken in the national interest. (P-175)

Bhagat gives the true picture of India – Indians are not broad- minded nor patriotic. It is difficult on their part to visualize a world beyond the world of selfish interest. Hence any Indian who longs to make it a better place is sure to experience troubles, face public criticism but he will have to brave all hazards. Hence

he urges the readers not to be swayed by emotions but strengthen the will power and sharpen the intellect to do what is desirable for the sake of motherland. In the concluding chapter he instructs the common reader to choose a particular field of work and excel in that arena. He asks them to have a realization that they have certain commitments to make India better. Haphazard action won't do. He reiterates that the Indians should 'cut the negativity', use the 'social network with best possible intention' (P-177) and be 'modern scientific and open minded'. He advises them to 'back the issue and not the person'. (P- 176) Thus Bhagat's counsel is not from satan's kingdom rather than from a patriots' world. None but a true lover of India can instruct or advise or persuade the readers like this.

III

MAKING INDIA AWESOME needs to be studied in the light of post-colonial theories. Basically they deal with three basic issues: history, language and theory. History has to do with the context; language with medium and theory with approach. In the book *The Conquest of America* Todorov post-colonial writer and theorist defines the view of the Other as 'psychic configuration' (p-3) Bhagat depicts this psychic configuration in his own inimitable style:

Our political class inherited a British colonial system, which had zero accountability to the colonized. Quite cleverly, they didn't change laws to bring in accountability, the cornerstone of any democracy. Till date, our netas try to rule us like colonial rulers and hate any proposals that reduce their powers or demand accountability. (P-33)

Bhagat disapproves of colonial mentality and advocates the harmonious relationship between the leaders and common people.

In the book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* the authors in their first chapter *Getting Started: The Precritical Response* makes some pertinent remarks about the skill and

efficacy of reading:

the precritical response employing primarily the sense and the emotions is the aim of art. Without it the critic might as well be merely proofreading for factual accuracy or correct mechanical form. It may be said to underlie or even to drive the critical response. (p-6)

The authors of this book view that the employment of senses and cultivation of right emotions for a text are necessary prerequisites for the understanding and enjoyment of the text. Such a view corresponds to the *Rasa* and *Dhvani* theory of the Indian aestheticians like Ananda Vardhana and Bharata who hold that the reader should have a heart to understand (Sahridaya). In other words the readers should have the genuine curiosity, passion and mental makeup to appreciate the text lest the text should be misunderstood. Infact Bhagat's *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* needs to be studied with genuine patriotic feelings and inquisitiveness to discover India- the real India, the progressive India.

Bhagat subscribes to the Bacon's utilitarian view of language that is 'words are but the images of matter' and this very idea focuses on clarity of expression. Bhagat's expression are not only clear but also witty. What Edmund Gosse observes about Bacon's use of language is true of Bhagat. John Strachan in the introduction to the book *Francis Bacon; Essays* writes;

Edmund Gosse, for example, contends – in words which would have appalled the author- that Bacon, 'who thought it the first distemper of learning that men should study words and not matter, is now in the singular condition of having outlived his matter, or, a great part of it, while his words are as vivid as ever'. (XVI)

What Gosse speaks about Bacon is true of Bhagat. It is not accurate to say that Bhagat's essays are absolutely sparse, Unadorned and meditative dispersions.

To conclude, *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* is a guide for those who dream of making it a unique nation – a nation which will be a model before other countries of the world. Bhagat’s style is persuasive rather than argumentative. He is the source of inspiration for the youths to go ahead with the programmes in which they can excel. The author has taken care to touch all the vital issues; social, political, religious, communal and humanistic. If the aim of literature is to instruct and delight the readers Bhagat does both. On many occasions he has been satirical, critical but never cynical. He has understood the pulse of the Indians and depicted his experience, vision and aspiration in a language that is quite appropriate. His book has been subtitled as new essays and columns. Indeed the essays and columns are new because he has juxtaposed diverse ideas in a proper way. Had Dr. Johnson the literary dictator of eighteenth century gone through these essays and columns he would have hesitated to comment in the way he passed remarks on John Donne, that is ‘heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence’. Indeed Bhagat has analyzed the diverse issues that have cropped up in the independent India in such a manner that a sensitive reader gets the picture of real India. He not only focuses on the failure of agency but also the agency of failure and suggests how to make the system: social, political, religious, cultural, more effective and vibrant. In the twenty-first century as science advances

literature declines but the publication of *MAKING INDIA AWESOME* attempts to reverse this notion. This book belongs to both the domains: Literature of knowledge and Literature of power.

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Journey from Past to Present: The Book of Secrets

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The diasporic writers in Canada are primarily concerned with the experience of being an immigrant. They look back to the land they had left behind in nostalgia. But at the same time they look forward to confront new challenges in their new lands. When they “write about the past, the present always matters” (Vassanji 12) to them. History and memory define and limit their creative, fictional works. M. G. Vassanji (b.1950-), Rohinton Mistry (b.1952-), Neil Bissoondath (b.1955-), Bapsi Sidhwa (b.1938-) and Michael Ondaatje (b.1943-) have come from different lands to settle in Canada. They set their works in different countries and in different milieu. Their works are essentially multi-regional and multi-cultural. First, there is a conscious attempt at synchronization of the inherited culture and adopted culture. Then memory plays a significant role in these works. Through the histories of individuals a re-collectable past is created and then juxtaposed with the present. The concept of diaspora, in itself, “places the discourse of ‘home’ and dispersion in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins” (Brah 192-193).

M. G. Vassanji (the pen name of Moyez Ghulamhussein Vassanji), a Toronto based Indian diasporic writer, settled in Canada in 1978. In each of his novels he presents the Asian immigrants trapped in two different worlds, fitting in neither. He deftly portrays complicated relations existing between the centre and the periphery, the present and the past, and the personal and the public histories. Personal histories often merge into national histories in most of his novels. In the words of Harish Narang, “History fascinates

Vassanji. If there is one common thread running through all his fiction- novel as well as short stories- it is his concern for history- history of individuals, communities and nations” (7). Like most of his protagonists, Vassanji has himself experienced the anguish of dislocation and relocation. He expresses this feeling effectively in his fictional world. The present paper is an attempt to explore and analyse the various nuances of the diasporic experience as thematised by M. G. Vassanji in *The Book of Secrets*.

In *The Book of Secrets* – published in 1994 – Vassanji narrates the experiences of the Shamsi community in East Africa in colonial and postcolonial times. The focus is on the interaction between the Shamsis and the native Africans as well as the colonial administrators (both the British and Germans). The narrative has multiple points of view and complex backward-forward movement. Through various secrets a recollectable past is created and is juxtaposed with the present. In fact, the novel is the journey from past to the present.

It is a retired Goan school teacher Pius Fernandes, an expatriate in East Africa, who gets from one of his pupils a diary – *The Book of Secrets* – belonging to Alfred Corbin, the British administrator in the colonial times. This diary enthralls him to join the various loose ends in an attempt to comprehend the connections between the present and the past. With the help of the diary entries, visits to the places mentioned in the diary, meetings with various persons, official documents, Appendices, memoranda, letters written by Corbin and his wife to Richard Gregory, an expatriate British poet-teacher, and his own observations and reminiscences,

he constructs the history of nations, communities and people almost simultaneously. The structure of his history is symmetrical: the novel begins with a prologue, followed by two sections, the first having two parts, and the second, three, each supplemented with a Miscellany, and ends on an epilogue.

The story of the novel is worked out at different levels, each skillfully dovetailed into the other. On the individual level, it is the story or history of Mzee Pipa Nurmohamed, referred to Pipa throughout the novel—an urchin from Moshi in German East Africa (Tanganyika, or Tanzania now)—and this family. On the social level, it is the history of the Shamsis and other Indian expatriate communities—the Goan Christians, the Gujrati Hindu—the British and German colonialists, the expatriate British, the Arabs, the half-castes and the native Africans. On the Political plane, it shows political developments during the colonial and postcolonial rules in East African nations as such Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, with references to England, India and even Canada. Thus the personal history coalesces with the public and the past and the present interact in peculiar ways.

The story of Pipa is at the centre of the novel. Pipa enters the novel quite early and the novel ends practically with his death in Dar-es-Salaam. It is from German East Africa (Tanganyika) that he comes to British East Africa (Kenya) with the sole purpose of fixing the date of his marriage to Mariamu, the niece of the Mukhi Jamali. Unwittingly and unwillingly, he falls a prey to the vicious machinations of the Germans and later of the British administrators, and does some sort of spying work on behalf of the both on the eve of the Second World War, and luckily escapes a sure and brutal death, when exposed as a double agent. His marriage to Mariamu leads to complications in his life. He creates a ruckus on his wedding night as he finds his wife already deflowered, allegedly by the British ADC Alfred Corbin in whose house she lived for some days. But he soon reconciles himself to this sad occurrence. Mariamu gives birth to a son who is fair and has grey eyes. Pipa is tormented by the thought of his fatherhood. The thought continues to haunt and

bewilder him even after Mariamu's mysterious murder which is the main secret of the book. After the war, he is relieved of his spying work. He moves to Moshi in the German side, and then finally settles in Dar-es-Salaam. In spite of his second marriage to Remti and having children, he remains devoutly attached to the memory of Mariamu.

When Mariamu's apparition mysteriously appears before Pipa, he begins to converse with it. He assigns a whole room to the mementoes left by Mariamu—a box with the Englishman's diary and his pen. Nobody is allowed to enter the room where he reads the diary and tries to discover the secrets contained in it, particularly about his fair son's fatherhood. The narrator, Fernandes, calls him a "Latter-day Orpheus" (228), a well known mythical Greek hero, who underwent strenuous difficulties and intense sufferings and sorrows to keep the memory of his beloved Eurydice alive. Financially, he continues to flourish until the new rulers decide to take over all the rented properties of the migrants, without paying any compensation. The loss of his and Remti's only son and the confiscation of his property prove to be fatal for him. Unable to bear the loss, he dies all of a sudden.

The story of Akber Ali, the fair son of Mariamu, is as much interesting and mysterious. Smart and handsome, Ali is quite ambitious. By marrying the daughter of a big businessman in Dar, he acquires name, fame and money. But soon he falls in love with a Shamsi beauty called Rita and elopes with her to London. In London, he is a literally rags-to-riches story. Through sheer ingenuity and diligence he comes to be the owner of a big finance company, enters international trade in real state, and becomes a business tycoon. But, then, he deserts Rita in preference to Rosita, an Argentinean woman with British ancestry. During his stay in London he meets Corbin, now retired from the British Colonial Service after having served as Governor in Uganda. We come to know nothing about their conversations. It remains a mystery if Corbin accepts or even acknowledges him as his son.

It is in the story of Akbar Ali that the story of the narrator, Fernandes, fits in. A teacher from Goa in India,

he serves the Shamshi Boys' School. He gets Corbin's diary from one of his pupils and does his best to unravel its secrets. He is intrigued to find his own life connected with the past life of Pipa, Ali and Rita, one of his favourite students. The arrival of Rita from London makes him connect the present and the past. He hands over the diary to Rita, promising not to divulge its secrets. We learn a lot about his loneliness in an alien country, his fondness of Rita, his liking of the British expatriate poet-teacher Gregory and his nostalgic feelings about India.

The dislocation and migration of the Shamsis to Africa is elaborately dealt with in this novel, as in other novels of Vassanji like *The Gunny Sack* and *No New Land*. The coming to Kikono in British East Africa (Kenya) of Abdul Jamal Meghji, the son of Jamal Dewji of Lamu, his settlement as a shopkeeper and his subsequent rise to the status of the Mukhi of his community reminds us of Dhanji Govindji's story of migration in *The Gunny Sack* and that of Haji Lalani in *No New Land*. It is significant to note that behind the migrant communities' dislocation are primarily economic or political factors, or both. Corbin discovers this fact in his conversation with Mukhi Jamali:

I asked him what his people sought in this country, in the wilderness, so far from their own country and culture. "Peace and prosperity" he said. I repeated his words. "Yes, sir", he asserted "with your protection. We seek but little. Already we have contributed to the Uganda Railway. (49)

The narrator in *The Gunny Sack*, too, underlines more or less the same motives which lie behind the dislocation of the immigrant people. In *The Book of Secrets*, the Shamsis are shown to be preoccupied with their own family and community interests, their safety and economic well being. When the War starts, Jamali and his people deliberately shift to a neutral prayer. They do not want to offend either of the warring parties, the British and the Germans. Their loyalty is confined to themselves as they desperately want a safe haven

during the troubled times of war.

The thought of immigrants being perpetually dislocated is brought home by the author again and again. The work at Sheth Samji involves Pipa driving a blindfolded camel running the oil mill. The metaphor of the camel walking in circles is used to relate the plight of a man who, like the camel, does not know where he is going and where his destination is. It is subtly employed to bring home the feelings of homelessness among the immigrants. "We were intensely aware of our homelessness", (274) rues the narrator at one point.

The terror of new policies of the new government in Tanganyika and the consequent assaults on the dignity, status and identity of the diasporas lead to the second-generation migration. Most of the migrants leave for England, the USA or Canada. Fernando's fellow expatriate teachers also opt out. The rich become paupers overnight. They go to other alien lands, almost empty-handed. It is ironic that only a few make the conscious decision to go back to India, the land of their ancestors. It is characteristic of Indians that they create "India", whether they are in London or Toronto. In the initial days of Africanization, the new generation of Indian migrants think they will adapt to the new conditions, but they soon lose hope and faith.

Vassanji mixes fact and fiction adroitly in this novel while dealing with the colonial and the postcolonial history of the East African countries, Kenya and Tanzania. He uses main historical events as an essential background to impinge upon the lives of his fictional characters and events. The suppression of the Black natives by the colonialists and the subsequent violent reaction to it by the natives in movements like Mau Mau have been depicted vividly. The consequences of such a volatile historical event as World War I have been clearly brought out in the lives of Pipa and Mariamu.

Among the members of the settler communities, it is Pipa who forms an interesting relationship with the colonial administrators. Unwittingly and unknowingly, he comes to play in the hands of the crafty Germans whose Arab agent Hamisi uses him

to send some crucial letters of strategic importance secretly to some German agents in the British East Africa. When Maynard, the ruthless British ADC, learns of Pipa's activities just before the beginning of war between the German and the English colonies, he threatens him to work for the British. Pipa has to acquiesce in, and thus, becomes a double-agent. When either of the warring side suffers during the brief war due to the alleged leaks of information, the likes of Pipa become suspect. The Germans want to eliminate him. The English actually arrest him, and intend to kill him. Luckily, he comes out safe from their custody. Thus, the novel dramatized the way the diasporas are victimized by the ruling classes in every manner possible.

Pipa's whole life gets painfully and inextricably linked with Corbin and Mariamu. He loses self-respect and self-assurance as he moves from one compromise to another. He tries to reconcile to the loss of his wife's virginity before marriage. Then he tries to make compromise with the fact that the child his wife has borne is not his. But he fails in his futile efforts at such compromises. He continues to be pained and haunted by these two dark spots in his life. Corbin's diary, given to him by his wife Mariamu, becomes a sort of battlefield where every time he goes to fight, he gets defeated. The secrets of his life remain unexposed. He lives and dies in pathetic conditions. He is a glaring example of the White man's victimization and exploitation.

Vassanji shows how native culture comes to be subverted in the hands of the alien rulers who claim to have "arrived" to civilize the "barbarian" people under their rules. It is significant to note that even the mild and somewhat generous Corbin, too, shares the colonial view that Indians and Africans are uncivilized and that it is the duty of the civilized Whites to civilize them. He believes that they have been sent to Africa and other colonies for civilizing the backward communities. In the Governor's Memoranda for PCs and DCs (1910), the native policy is explicated on the same lines. Corbin's diary entry of 23-24 June shows an awkward attempt made by the colonial master to make his

mission known to Mariamu, a poor, illiterate girl of the Indian community:

...I found myself explaining the political map to Europe to her – the countries, the languages – drawing crude comparisons. How to explain my reason for being here, leaving that fairyland to come to this darkness... where I have no one of my kind. To help you, your people, I offered. She looked nonplussed. On orders from my Sultan, then. That, she understood. (80)

This diary entry is significant in the way it shows the gap between the levels of understanding of people of different races and nations. In her innocence or ignorance, Mariamu fails to understand why a person like Corbin would willingly give up his "fairyland" to help the people of this dark land. She understands him better when he refers to his Sultan on whose orders he has come here. Even an ignorant person like her knows that the white man's presence in the dark land cannot be entirely without a selfish motive. In fact, white man like Corbin and Maynard wrongly dub all the natives as savages. Though they have somewhat patronizing attitude towards Indians, they still think of them as backward, ignorant and superstitious orientals. Harish Narang, while discussing the novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, castigates the colonial thinking that denies cultural attributes to African and other so-called undeveloped societies:

After colonizing Kenya-as also some other parts of Africa-the British asserted that they had come to bring enlightenment and progress to a people who had no social, political, economic or cultural traditions. Not only was this an obviously false contention, but it is also contrary to the very origin and development of a society- any society. (39)

What Narang suggests is that every society has its own system of growth and development. Among the Gikuyu community in Kenya (British East Africa – the centre of action in *The Book of Secrets*), several customs have interesting background and import. Piercing of ears signifies the advancement from childhood to boyhood; circumcision of both boys and girls marks their ‘coming of age’ and raises the social status of a father; nature worship suggests the people’s intimacy with natural phenomena. Unable to appreciate such subtle cultural nuances, the colonialists indulge in dismantling the indigenous systems, giving rise to natural public anger and protest. Narrativizing such colonial practices is, however, “an act of liberation from the bondage of anger” (Barat 28-29). In *The Book of Secrets*, Corbin objects to many customs and rituals being followed by the Shamsis and the Black natives. He considers them as savage practices. At one point, he stops an exorcist using his whip to relieve a girl (Mariau) of a devilish spirit. The maalim openly tells him that he should not interfere in matters which he does not understand.

The relationship between the Indian migrants and the Africans, as depicted in the novel, is not free from problems born of culture, racial and religious differences and political exigencies. The Shamsis, being practical and business-minded, lose no time in making necessary adjustment accommodation. The earliest migrants which include Mukhi Jamali learn native languages, mix up with local people and even marry native women. Jamali has the native wife in Khanoum and has half-caste children.

But Despite the cultural mix-up at the familial level, the problems persist on the community level between the Indians and the natives. In the colonial era, these problems remain dormant. The fields of operation being different, there arise no serious disputes or violent clashes between the Indian shopkeepers and the native tribal people who are mainly porters, soldiers or farmers. The members of both the communities, despite apparent apprehensions, depend upon one another for their daily needs. The exploited, over-worked and under-paid African porters are always

thought to pose a danger to an isolated Englishman or an Indian. The under-currents of tensions between Indians and Africans come to the fore when Khanoum finds herself deserted by the Indian community after her husband’s death. To hurt her self-pride and self-respect some elders of the Shamsi community approach her to give the child to some Indian family, if she so desires. She reminds them that once she, too, was the leader of the community, looked after its welfare, helped run its mosque, buried its dead and welcomed new arrivals.

The Book of Secrets shows the well-entrenched mutual feelings of dislike and hatred in the minds of both the Indians and the Blacks. Indians and Africa show their colour prejudice while dealing with the blacks even today¹. In the novel, even the enlightened narrator Fernandes displays his aversion for the Blacks while referring to the freedom struggle being waged relentlessly by the natives in the neighbouring Kenya. Obviously, the Indians, representing the business class, prefer stability and like to be ruled by the British. The Blacks want self-rule, and hate Indians for being the British agents for furthering their interests. But still there are people on both sides who are above such prejudices. It is not very strange that the Indian diaspora has always passively borne the brunt of racial oppression. Racism, in the words of Dan Glenday and Ann Duffy, “is an inherently political phenomenon and race relations are essentially group power contests” (112). To diminish racism, the migrants need to politicize their response by vesting their interests in political parties and state institutions, and thus consolidate and demonstrate their political power. Unluckily, the Shamsis do nothing of the sort.

The idea of dislocation, marginality and the loss of identity are interrelated. When people feel dislocated, they feel marginalized and also fear for their identity. In the colonial world of Africa where the rear centre of the power is formed of the expatriates (the British or the Germans), The Indian and other migrant communities are somehow able to keep their culture-specific identities intact. There is no doubt that the threats to their modes of living are many and real, but

they face and overcome them boldly and tactfully. The English missionaries Miss Elliot and Mrs. Baily have worked on many a native Africans to make them Christians and, by and large, have succeeded in their so-called “civilizing” mission. But they fail with Indians and call them “half-savages”.

The Indian Shamsis are always zealous to guard their religious identity. Cultural memories “do not allow the individual to snap ties with the past” (Jain xii). They set up mosques and insist on prayers. Friday prayers are special for all of them. In order to commemorate the sixty years in office of their spiritual leader Suleiman Pir, they decide to celebrate the event as a jubilee. Thousands of Shamsis from different parts of the world come to Dar-es-Salaam, the site for the celebration. They contribute millions into a fund meant for new schools and homes for every family. The children born during the year are given names connected with the celebrated event such as Diamond, Almas, Jubilee Begum, Jawahir, etc. When Suleiman Pir passes away, the whole community weeps in unison. He had been around so long that nobody ever thought that he was mortal. For forty days the Shamsis pray and wail for the man who “advised them on everything, from what was a good thing to eat for breakfast to the hazards of too much tea-drinking, from throwing away the burkha-veil to adopting English in schools” (266).

Though identity remains more or less stable, it undergoes perceptible changes at time. With the change in the value-system, nothing remains the same. Vassanji shows in this novel how the traditional Shamsis shed many of their inhibitions. They begin to insist on the education of their girl-children. They open the girl’s school for the purpose. They want their boys to be well-educated, for which purpose they arrange the best faculty and infrastructure for the Boy’s School. Teachers come from India and England to provide quality education. The forward-looking Shamsis give up their insistence on “pudah/burkha” for their women. The new generation of Shamsis boys and girls is all set to acquire modern, liberal outlook. The girls openly discuss tabooed topics like films, romance, love and

sex. The Hindi film songs are a craze with them. They talk openly about film stars like Garbo, Betty Grable, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Gary Cooper, Gene Kelly, Carry Grant, Rita Hayworth and Nargis. The lines from Hindi film *Anarkali*- “Yeh Zindgi Usiki hai...(the world belongs to the one who loves...)” hummed by the young girl reflect the new mode and mood of living. Rita, in particular, is a model of a liberated woman. She is unlike any other traditional Shamsi girl exemplifies in her elopement with an already married man.

The Indian diaspora, on the community level, thus shows a remarkable urge to look progressive and forward in spite of their conservatism in certain religious and cultural matters. In order to fit themselves in the complex social structure of their adopted land, some of them, particularly among the second and third generations of Shamsis, speak Swahili fluently. They also begin to learn English and play cricket. For the welfare of their community, the Shamsis arrange to open dispensaries, welfare organization, community councils, sports clubs, youth organizations, and other such associations. For entertainment Dar-es-Salaam comes to have theatres where current Hindi films are shown. In Girls’ school opened by the Shamsis, there is an air of openness and modernity.

Through Rita’s account of racial discrimination and oppression in London, Vassanji parallels racism of the Black Natives in independent Africa with that of the Whites in a developed country like England. Thought details are not given, there are casual references to the maltreatment of the migrants in London. Ali, too, has to bear the brunt of racial behaviour. Though proud and handsome, he begins his career by being a waiter. As he keeps his spirits high and exploits every opportunity, he soon succeeds in his ambitions and becomes a highly rich and powerful person. However, other immigrants are not so lucky as he is. A few even “gassed themselves... in error or deliberately, who knows” (284) Even Rita feels ill at ease, and regrets her coming to London: “Did I have regrets? Yes who wouldn’t? From Dar’s favourite girl, coddled and pampered, to this –a drudge” (284).

Ali’s meteoric rise in an alien land is one of those

pleasant diasporic experiences which make other potential migrants to sit up and take note of. His ability to quickly adjust to new surroundings in a foreign land is remarkable. He reminds us of Jamal, a successful lawyer from Africa in Canada, in Vassanji's *No New Land*. Ali and Jamal are both aggressive, go getters and goal oriented. Nothing deters them from moving ahead on the path of success Unlike Jamal, however, Ali is ruthless in his approach to life. The London society, of course, influences Ali's moral values. Being a half-caste, he is not bothered about his past identity. He becomes derisive of Indian ways. He begins to avoid the mosque and consider himself to be outside the community.

It is characteristic of Vassanji to give expression to the socio-political changes that shape the lives of the diaspora in different countries. He parallels the cases of racism in Africa with those in developed countries. He shows in concrete terms how history influences cultural and social systems. In *The Gunny Sack*, there are elaborate references to the historical events –the Maji Maji revolt, the Mau Mau upsurge, riots in Kenya, the violent reaction against Indians in Uganda- that changed forever the lives of the Indian communities in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. In *No New Land*, too, there are references to these events. In *The Book of Secrets*, the focus remains on the main characters – Pipa, Corbin, Ali and the dead Mariamu—even thought are references to the winds of change on the political plane that shake the whole migrant communities. Interestingly, there are Mzee Pipa and Pipa store in *The Gunny Sack* as also in *The Book of Secrets*. Salim Juma, the narrator in *The Gunny Sack*, has the same strong historical sense as that of Pius Fernandes, the narrator in *The Book of Secrets*.

It is remarkable how in the novel the individual, social, historical and political levels are linked together through the story of Pipa - Mariamu - Corbin, three main characters of the story. To forge a complex of these links Vassanji has used various narrative devices – the diary entries, Fernandes' explanatory narrative, letters, recollections of the past, Appendices, memoranda

and the omniscient narration by the author himself. The author retains some secrets at the end of the book for the reader to ponder. All these devices “go on to make the text a magnificent tapestry of narratives devices – all in effort to capture the history of a community...” (Narang 74).

What Vassanji has shown through the simple story of the Shamsis in *The Book of Secrets* is that the colonial past is not an aberration: the colonial situation recurs through time, as becomes evident from the colonial behaviour of exploitation and victimization of the diasporas by the new rulers in South Africa. Corbin's diary – which has captured souls of people and their secrets in its pages – becomes a metaphor for never-ending mysterious relationships that come to develop between persons, races and nations, as also between the past and the present.

Notes

1. According to a news report, a Durban-based cashier of Indian origin “insulted” the Black V.C. of a technical college “by not putting the change in his hand after serving him, but instead placing it on the counter.” See *The Tribune*, Nov. 25, 2004. 20.

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অসমীয়া শিশু-কবিতা : এক বিশ্লেষণাত্মক অধ্যয়ন

(পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিভুক্ত পদ্য, গীতিধৰ্মী ৰচনা আৰু কবিতাৰ আধাৰত আলোকপাত)

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মৌখিক সাহিত্যৰ ৰূপত উন্মেষ ঘটা শিশু সাহিত্যই আধুনিক সাহিত্যৰ এক সুকীয়া শাখা হিচাপে স্বীকৃতি লাভিছে। আধুনিক অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত ঊনবিংশ শতিকাত সূচনা হোৱা শিশু সাহিত্যৰ লিখিত পৰম্পৰাই যুদ্ধোত্তৰ যুগত সবল ৰূপত প্ৰতিষ্ঠা লাভ কৰে। শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াসকলৰ উদ্দেশ্যে ৰচিত পদ্য, গীতি-কবিতা, কবিতা আদি কাব্যধৰ্মী ৰচনাই অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্যৰ এটা ভাগ সামৰিছে। অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ আন শাখাৰ তুলনাত শিশু-কাব্য তথা সামগ্ৰিকভাৱে শিশু সাহিত্যৰ পৰিমাণ কম। কিছু সংখ্যক কবি, গীতিকাবে এই শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্য ৰচনাত মনোনিৱেশ কৰিলেও শিশু কাব্য-পুথিৰ সংখ্যা নিচেই তাকৰ। সি যি কি নহওক, শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াসকলৰ উপযোগীকৈ ৰচনা কৰা এনে পদ্য, গীতি-ৰচনা আৰু কবিতা আদিয়ে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যক সমৃদ্ধি আৰু বৈচিত্ৰ্য প্ৰদানত গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ অৰিহণা যোগাইছে। মনকৰিবলগীয়া যে এনেধৰণৰ বহু ৰচনাই অসমীয়া পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিসমূহৰ এক বহল অংশ সামৰিছে। স্কুলীয়া পাঠ্য আৰু অভ্যসন পুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট এই শিশুপোযোগী ৰচনাৰাজিৰ কিছু অংশ হৈছে ৰচয়িতাৰ নামোন্লেখ থকা পদ্য বা কবিতা, আন একাংশ হৈছে ৰচয়িতাৰ নামোন্লেখ নথকা পদ্য বা কবিতা আৰু এটা ভাগ হৈছে গীতিধৰ্মী ৰচনা। এইবোৰৰ আকৌ কিছুসংখ্যক ৰচনা শিৰোনামযুক্ত আৰু কিছুসংখ্যক শিৰোনামহীন। তদুপৰি পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত কাব্যধৰ্মী ৰচনাসমূহ সম্পূৰ্ণ আৰু খণ্ডিত অংশ মূল পাঠ হিচাপে অথবা মূল পাঠৰ পৰিপূৰক হিচাপে পাঠৰ আৰম্ভণি, মধ্যাংশ, সামৰণি আৰু পিছত সংযোজন কৰা দেখা যায়। এই ৰচনাসমূহৰ নৈতিক তথা মূল্যবোধ শিক্ষা প্ৰদানত ভূমিকা, শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াৰ উদ্দেশ্যে সন্নিবিষ্ট কৰা ৰচনা হিচাপে ৰূপগত আৰু গুণগত মানদণ্ডৰ বিচাৰ, ভাষা আৰু প্ৰকাশভংগী আদি

বিভিন্ন দিশৰ ওপৰত আলোকপাত কৰাৰ যথেষ্ট সম্ভাৱনা আৰু প্ৰয়োজন আছে। এনেবোৰ দিশ বিবেচনাৰে এই গৱেষণামূলক নিবন্ধত বৰ্তমান অসমৰ চৰকাৰী বিদ্যালয়সমূহত প্ৰচলিত নিম্ন প্ৰাথমিক পৰ্যায়(প্ৰথম শ্ৰেণীৰ পৰা পঞ্চম শ্ৰেণীলৈকে)-ৰ অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পাঠ্যপুথিত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত পদ্য, গীতি-ৰচনা আৰু কবিতাৰ আলোচনা আগবঢ়োৱা হ'ব।

১.০১ : অৱতৰণিকা :

শিশু আৰু কিশোৰ বা চেমনীয়া সাহিত্যক আধুনিক সাহিত্যৰ এক সুকীয়া ধাৰা হিচাপে চিহ্নিত কৰা হৈছে যদিও এই শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্যৰ বীজ প্ৰাচীন সাহিত্যত নিহিত থকাৰ কথা সৰ্বজন স্বীকাৰ্য। বিশ্বসাহিত্যৰ প্ৰেক্ষাপটত বিচাৰ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে পৃথিৱীৰ সকলো ভাষাৰ মৌখিক পৰম্পৰাশ্ৰয়ী ৰচনাৰাজিত শিশু সাহিত্যৰ চানেকি সহজে বিদ্যমান। লোকসাহিত্যৰ অন্তৰ্গত মৌখিক গীত-মাত, লোক-কথা বা সাধু কথা, ফকৰা-যোজনা, প্ৰবচন-পটন্তৰ, সাঁথৰ আদিৰ এটা অংশই শিশু-উপযোগী ৰচনাৰ গুণ-বৈশিষ্ট্য সাৰটি ধৰিছে। মুখ-পৰম্পৰা প্ৰচলিত মৌখিক বা লোকসাহিত্যত শিশু সাহিত্যৰ অৱস্থিতি সম্পৰ্কীয় ওপৰোক্ত কথাখিনি অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো প্ৰযোজ্য। ধাইনাম বা নিচুকনি গীত, ওমলা গীত, সাধুকথা, সাঁথৰ আদি মৌখিক সাহিত্যই অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্যৰ প্ৰাৰম্ভিক স্তৰৰ শিশু-উপযোগী গীত-মাত আৰু কাহিনীমূলক ৰচনাৰ কথা সোঁৱৰায়। এয়া হৈছে বাচিক বা মৌখিক পৰম্পৰাৰ কথা। বিশ্বসাহিত্যত লিখিত পৰম্পৰাৰ শিশু সাহিত্যই পাতনি মেলে খ্ৰীষ্টীয় চতুৰ্দশ-পঞ্চদশ শতিকাত। উক্ত কালছোৱাৰ পৰা ঊনবিংশ শতিকাৰ প্ৰথমমাংশলৈকে ৰচিত শিশু আৰু কিশোৰোপযোগী ৰচনা-ৰাজি আছিল মূলতঃ নীতি শিক্ষা আৰু ধৰ্মীয় শিক্ষামূলক। এই সম্পৰ্কে 'Illustrated Family Encyclopedia' ত উল্লেখ আছে-

“Written literature has existed for more than 3,000 years, but it is only in the last 300 years that literature has been created especially for children. Before then, children listened to oral fables and folk fables. Early children's book were educational, but in the 19th century many new forms, or genres, developed such as adventure and fantasy stories and picture books.” (P.203)

উনবিংশ শতিকাৰ দ্বিতীয়াৰ্ধ আৰু বিংশ শতিকাৰ প্ৰথমার্ধৰ কালছোৱাত শিশু সাহিত্যৰ ৰচনা সংখ্যাগত, গুণগত আৰু শ্ৰেণীগত ইত্যাদি সকলো দিশৰ পৰা প্ৰচুৰভাৱে বৃদ্ধি পোৱা দেখা গৈছে। সেই হেতুকে উক্ত সময়ছোৱাক ‘শিশু সাহিত্যৰ সোণালী যুগ’ (Golden Age of children's literature) বুলি কোৱা হয়। উল্লেখযোগ্য যে লিখিত পৰম্পৰাত শিশু সাহিত্যৰ জন্ম আৰু ক্ৰমবিকাশৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ছপাশালৰ উদ্ভাৱন তথা উন্নত ছপায়ন্ত্ৰৰ ব্যৱহাৰে বিশেষভাৱে অৰিহণা যোগাইছে।

১.০২ : লিখিত পৰম্পৰাত অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্য :

অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত শিশু সাহিত্যৰ লিখিত পৰম্পৰাৰ প্ৰসংগ বিচাৰ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে খ্ৰীষ্টীয় ত্ৰয়োদশ-চতুৰ্দশ শতিকাৰ পৰাই অসমীয়া লিখিত সাহিত্যৰ ইতিহাসৰ সূচনা হ’লেও শিশু সাহিত্য বুলি কোৱা সুকীয়া সাহিত্যশ্ৰেণী প্ৰাচীন অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত পোৱা নাযায়। অৱশ্যে শ্ৰীধৰ কন্দলীৰ ‘কাণখোৱা’, শংকৰদেৱৰ ‘কীৰ্তন’ৰ শিশুলীলা আৰু প্ৰহ্লাদ চৰিত্ৰ আদি খণ্ড, ৰাম সৰস্বতীৰ ‘ভীম চৰিত’, মাধৱদেৱৰ বুমুৰাসমূহ আদি ৰচনাত শিশু-উপযোগী সাহিত্যৰ কিছু লক্ষণ-বৈশিষ্ট্য ৰক্ষিত নোহোৱা নহয়। সেয়ে হ’লেও, বিশুদ্ধ শিশু সাহিত্যৰ আৰম্ভণি হয় উনবিংশ শতিকাৰ পৰাহে। এই সন্দৰ্ভত সত্যেন্দ্ৰনাথ শৰ্মাৰ মন্তব্য উল্লেখনীয়-

“পুৰণি অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্য বুলি বেলেগ এক শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্য নাছিল যদিও ‘ভীম চৰিত’, ‘কাণখোৱা’, ‘শিশুলীলা’ আদি ৰচনাই শিশু আৰু বয়স্ক দুয়োশ্ৰেণীৰে মানসিক খোৰাক যোগাইছিল। এই ধৰণৰ পুথিৰ যোগেদি আখ্যান শ্ৰৱণৰ কৌতুহল নিবৃত্তি হৈছিল আৰু লগে লগে নৈতিক আৰু ধৰ্মীয় আদৰ্শৰ লগত শিশুৰ সহজ পৰিচয় ঘটিছিল। বৰ্তমান যুগৰ শিশু সাহিত্যই পাতনি মেলে ‘অৰুণোদই’ত (অসমীয়া

সাহিত্যৰ সমীক্ষাত্মক ইতিবৃত্ত, পৃ.৪৪২)।”

উনবিংশ শতিকাত আধুনিক শিশু সাহিত্য ৰচনাৰ ধাৰা আৰম্ভ হয় যদিও যুদ্ধোত্তৰ কালছোৱাতহে ই পূৰ্ণগতি আৰু পৰিপক্বতা লাভ কৰে। অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ‘অৰুণোদই যুগ’তে কেইবাগৰাকী খ্ৰীষ্টান মিছনেৰীৰ লগতে অসমীয়া লেখকে, ‘জোনাকী যুগ’ত বহুকেইজন অসমীয়া লেখকে শিশু আৰু কিশোৰ উপযোগী পুথি ৰচনাত মনোনিৱেশ কৰিছিল। কিন্তু এই ক্ষেত্ৰত সচেতন দৃষ্টিনিষ্ক্ৰেপ কৰা লেখকৰ আৱিৰ্ভাৱ হয় যুদ্ধোত্তৰ যুগতহে। সেয়েহে মহেশ্বৰ নেওগে লিখিছে-

“শিশুসকলৰ বাবে সুকীয়াকৈ সাধুকথা বা গল্প কোৱাৰ সচেতন যত্ন যুদ্ধোত্তৰ যুগৰ এটি বিশেষ লক্ষণ। দেশ-বিদেশৰ পৌৰাণিক লৌকিক আখ্যান, আমাৰ দেশৰ বুৰঞ্জী-লোকগীতি আদিৰ পৰা গৃহীত কাহিনী, কাল্পনিক চৰিত্ৰৰ কথা আদিৰ পৰিৱেশন এটি ৰীতিত পৰিণত হৈছেহি (অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ৰূপৰেখা, পৃ.৩৩৭-৩৮)।”

পুৰণি সাহিত্যত যিদৰে শিশু সাহিত্য বুলি কোনো সুকীয়া সাহিত্য ধাৰা নাছিল, তেনেদৰে শিশু সাহিত্যৰ সকলো লক্ষণ-বৈশিষ্ট্য সামৰিব পৰা একক আৰু সৰ্বজনস্বীকৃত তথা বহুল ব্যৱহৃত নিৰ্দিষ্ট সংজ্ঞা এটিও সহজতে নিৰূপণ কৰিব পৰা হোৱা নাই। তথাপি সাধাৰণ কথাত ক’বলৈ হ’লে- শিশু আৰু কিশোৰৰ ৰুচি, বয়স, অভিজ্ঞতা আদিৰ প্ৰতি সচেতন লক্ষ্য ৰাখি তেওঁলোকে পঢ়ি আনন্দ পোৱাৰ লগতে শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াৰ বৌদ্ধিক, মানসিক আৰু নৈতিক দিশৰ বিকাশত বিশেষভাৱে সহায় কৰা কবিতা, নাটক, গল্প, উপন্যাস, কাহিনীমূলক ৰচনা, জীৱনীমূলক ৰচনা আদিক শিশু সাহিত্যৰ গণ্ডীত ধৰিব পাৰি। নেপ্তি এণ্ডাৰচন নামৰ এগৰাকী পাশ্চাত্যৰ শিক্ষাবিদে শিশু সাহিত্যৰ সংজ্ঞা দাঙি ধৰি এনেদৰে কৈছে-

“...all books written for children, excluding works such as comic books, joke books, cartoon books and non fiction works that are not intended to be read from front to back, such as dictionaries, encyclopedies, and other reference materials.”

অৱশ্যে এটা কথা স্বীকাৰ্য যে শিশু সাহিত্যৰ পৰিধি সীমিত গণ্ডীভুক্ত নহয়। শিশুক মনোৰঞ্জনৰ মাজেৰে শিক্ষা প্ৰদানৰ বাবে, শিশুৰ বয়স আৰু মনস্তত্ত্বৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব আৰোপ

কৰি ৰচনা কৰা শিশু-উপযোগী কবিতা, উপন্যাস, নাটক, কল্পবিজ্ঞানভিত্তিক ৰচনা, জীৱনী সাহিত্য, ভ্ৰমণ সাহিত্য, অনুবাদমূলক ৰচনা, আলোচনী আদি সকলোকে এই ধাৰাত সামৰিব পাৰি। এইবোৰক বহলভাৱে গদ্যধৰ্মী, পদ্যধৰ্মী আৰু গদ্য-পদ্য মিশ্ৰিত ৰচনা হিচাপে ভগাব পাৰি।

১.০৩ : অসমীয়া শিশু-কবিতাৰ ৰচয়িতাসকল :

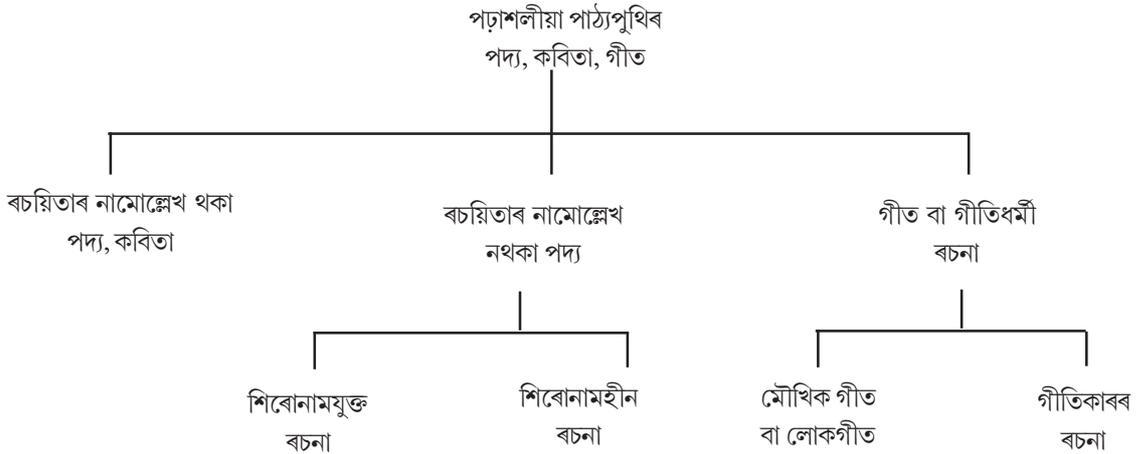
অসমীয়া শিশু আৰু কিশোৰ সাহিত্যৰ এটা ভাগ সামৰিছে শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াসকলৰ উপযোগীকৈ ৰচনা কৰা পদ্য আৰু কবিতাসমূহে। শিশু সাহিত্যৰ আন আন ভাগৰ লগত ৰিজাই চালে দেখা যায় যে সেইবোৰৰ তুলনাত শিশু কবিতাৰ সংখ্যা কম নহ'লেও বেছিও নহয়। আকৌ কেবাজনো কবিয়ে শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াৰ বাবে কবিতা, পদ্য, গীতিধৰ্মী কবিতা আদি ৰচনাত হাত দিলেও কবিতা পুথিৰ সংখ্যা কিন্তু তাকৰ। সি যি কি নহওঁক, অসমীয়া শিশু কাব্য-কবিতাৰ শাখালৈ অৰিহণা যোগোৱা কবিসকলৰ ভিতৰত বলদেৱ মহন্ত, মহম্মদ চোলেইমান খাঁ, দুৰ্গাপ্ৰসাদ মজিন্দাৰ বৰুৱা, আনন্দ চন্দ্ৰ আগৰৱালা, ধনাই বৰা, এম. ইব্রাহীম আলি, হেমচন্দ্ৰ গোস্বামী, জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালা, অতুলচন্দ্ৰ হাজৰিকা, ৰঘুনাথ চৌধাৰী, নলিনীবালা দেৱী, যতীন্দ্ৰনাথ দুৱৰা, মিত্ৰদেৱ মহন্ত, নৱকান্ত বৰুৱা, ভৈৰৱ চন্দ্ৰ খাটনিয়াৰ, লীলা গগৈ, গগন চন্দ্ৰ অধিকাৰী, বিষয় বিশ্বাসী, যজ্ঞেশ্বৰ শৰ্মা, অনন্ত দেৱশৰ্মা, অচিন মোমাইদেউ, প্ৰেমধৰ দত্ত, ডিম্বেশ্বৰ চলিহা, ভূপেন হাজৰিকা, নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈ, ৰাজেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভূঞা, সুৰেন্দ্ৰনাথ মেধি, ফুলকুমাৰী কলিতা, কৰবী ডেকা হাজৰিকা, ভাৰতী বৰুৱা, মহেন্দ্ৰ বৰা, শশীন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ অধিকাৰী, বিৰিঞ্চি কুমাৰমেধি, ইন্দ্ৰপ্ৰসাদ শইকীয়া, চম্পকলাল বৈশ্য, মনোৰমা বৰগোহাঞি, নগেন বৰা, মুকুট গগৈ, গোপী তামুলী,

বীৰেন্দ্ৰ নাথ দত্ত, বেণু মিশ্ৰ আদি বহু কবি-সাহিত্যিকৰ নাম উল্লেখ কৰিব পাৰি।

১.০৪ : পঢ়াশলীয়া পুথিৰ অসমীয়া শিশু - কবিতা :

অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিসমূহৰ এক বহুল অংশ আগুৰি আছে শিশু উপযোগী গদ্য-পদ্য ৰচনাই। অসমৰ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিসমূহত সোণত সুৱগা চৰোৱা পদ্য, কবিতা, গীত বা গীতিধৰ্মী ৰচনা আদিৰ একাংশত ৰচয়িতাৰ নাম উল্লেখ পোৱা যায়, একাংশত ৰচকৰ নামোল্লেখ নাথাকে আৰু এইবোৰৰ বিপৰীতে আন একাংশ পাঠ আছে যিবোৰ পাঠ্যপুথি সংকলন আৰু সম্পাদনা সমিতিয়ে যথোপযোগীকৈ সংযোজন কৰা পদ্য বা কাব্যধৰ্মী ৰচনা। পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত যিসকল কবিৰ ৰচনাই ঠাই পাই আহিছে তেওঁলোকৰ ভিতৰত বলদেৱ মহন্ত, মহম্মদ চোলেইমান খাঁ, দুৰ্গাপ্ৰসাদ মজিন্দাৰ বৰুৱা, ধনাই বৰা, আনন্দ চন্দ্ৰ আগৰৱালা, এম. ইব্রাহীম আলি, হেমচন্দ্ৰ গোস্বামী, জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালা, অতুলচন্দ্ৰ হাজৰিকা, যতীন্দ্ৰনাথ দুৱৰা, নৱকান্ত বৰুৱা, ভৈৰৱ চন্দ্ৰ খাটনিয়াৰ, মিত্ৰদেৱ মহন্ত, গগন চন্দ্ৰ অধিকাৰী, ভূপেন হাজৰিকা আদিৰ নাম বিশেষভাৱে উল্লেখযোগ্য।

সম্প্ৰতিক কালত প্ৰচলিত অসমৰ নিম্ন প্ৰাথমিক পৰ্যায়ৰ অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিসমূহত (এই পাঠ্যপুথি শ্ৰেণীৰ নামকৰণ কৰা হৈছে 'অংকুৰণ' হিচাপে) বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ শিশু উপযোগী পদ্য, কবিতা, গীত আদি সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈ থকা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। এই সমগ্ৰ কাব্যিক পাঠ বা ৰচনাসমূহক বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ কৰি আমি এনেধৰণে শ্ৰেণীবিভাজন কৰিব পাৰোঁ-



নাই আমাৰ ভাত”

“কিয় কৰ তেনে দুখ লগা কথা?”

সুতুলীয়ে দিলে মাত।”

পদ্যটিৰ বিষয়বস্তু খুবোই সময়োপযোগী আৰু ইয়াৰ ৰচনা শৈলীয়েও শিশুসকলক আকৰ্ষণ কৰে।

অসমীয়া ভাষাত শিশু উপযোগী কবিতা ৰচনা কৰা আন এগৰাকী প্ৰখ্যাত কবি হৈছে মহম্মদ চোলেইমান খাঁ (১৮৭০-১৯৩৫)। আগৰে পৰা তেওঁৰ বহু কবিতাই ভালেমান বছৰ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত ঠাই পাই আহিছে। নীতি-উপদেশমূলক শিশুপোযোগী কবিতা ৰচনাত নিপুণ শিশু-সাহিত্যিক খাঁৰ ‘কবিতা পুথি’ (১৯০২) আৰু ‘মতিৰ যোকা’ (১৯২৪) অসমীয়া কাব্য-সাহিত্যলৈ লেখৰ অৱদান। প্ৰথমখন কবিতা-পুথি বহুবছৰলৈকে পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথি হিচাপে চলিছিল; দ্বিতীয়খন ইছলামীয় ভাৱধাৰাসম্পন্ন পদপুথি। নৈসৰ্গিক প্ৰকৃতি-বৰ্ণনা, নৈতিক শিক্ষামূলক কথাৰ অৱতাৰণা আদি খাঁৰ কবিতাৰ লক্ষণীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য। সম্প্ৰতি অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পাঠ্য আৰু অভ্যাসন পুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট তেওঁৰ এটি উন্নত শিশু - উপযোগী পদ্য হৈছে ‘ৰাতিপুৱা’। নিভাঁজ অসমীয়া মাতৃ কথাবে সহজ-সৰলভাৱে শিশুৰ বাবে কবিতা ৰচনা কৰা কবিসকলৰ ভিতৰত মহম্মদ চোলেইমান খাঁৰ নাম জনপ্ৰিয়তাৰে পৰিচিত। প্ৰাকৃতিক নিয়ম অনুসৰণ কৰি ৰাতিপুৱা সোনকালে টোপনিৰ পৰা জাগি নিজ কামত আত্মনিয়োগ কৰিবলৈ কবিয়ে শিশুসকলক আহ্বান জনাইছে ‘ৰাতিপুৱা’ শীৰ্ষক পদ্যটিত—

“বীণা, বীণা, মীনা উঠিল আটাই

এলাহতে কেও শুই থকা নাই।

সকলোৱে চোৱা পুথি মেলি লই

শিকে নিজ পঢ়া মন থিৰ কই।”

‘ছাত্ৰনাং অধ্যয়নং তপঃ’— লিখা-পঢ়া বা পুথি অধ্যয়ন কৰাটোৱেই শিক্ষার্থীৰ মূল কৰ্তব্য। ছাত্ৰ হিচাপে ৰাতিপুৱা সোনকালে শুই উঠি নিজৰ কৰ্তব্য পালন কৰিবলৈ তপৰ হোৱা একান্ত আৱশ্যক। সময়মতে আমাক নিজৰ কাম কৰিবলৈ আমাৰ চৌপাশৰ নানান উপাদানে অনবৰত সোঁৱৰাই থাকে। এই কথা কবি মহম্মদ চোলেইমান খাঁই ৰঙা বেলি, চৰাই, ফুল, বতাহ, মৌ-মাখি আদিৰ লগতে শিশুহঁতৰ লগৰীয়াস্বৰূপ মহিম, কৰিম আদিৰ কাৰ্যকলাপৰ উদাহৰণেৰে বিৱৰি কৈছে। এনেদৰে কবিয়ে শিশুসকলক কৰণীয় নীতি প্ৰাতঃকৰ্ম সম্পাদনৰ জৰিয়তে সু-অভ্যাস গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ প্ৰেৰণা-পৰামৰ্শ

আগবঢ়াইছে—

“এতেকতে তুমি উঠা লৰা-লৰি

পানী লই ধোৱা হাত মুখ ভৰি।

কিছুপৰ ফুৰি পুথি মেলি লই

শিকা নিজ পাঠ মন থিৰ কই।”

ভাঙনিকোঁৱৰ আনন্দচন্দ্ৰ আগৰৱালা (১৮৯৪-১৯৩৯) ‘জোনাকী’ আৰু ‘বিজুলী’ আলোচনীৰ অন্যতম প্ৰধান কবি আছিল। নিভাঁজ অসমীয়া ভাষাৰে সহজ-সৰল বিষয়বস্তুৰ আধাৰত আগৰৱালাই কেইবাটাও সুন্দৰ কবিতা ৰচনা কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ দ্বাৰা ৰচিত ‘মৰমৰ আই’ শীৰ্ষক শিশু কবিতাটিৰ আৱেদন সাৰ্বজনীন আৰু চিৰন্তন। সন্তানৰ প্ৰতি মাতৃয়ে কৰা অপৰিসীম স্নেহ, ত্যাগ, কষ্ট উপলব্ধিৰ জৰিয়তে শিক্ষার্থীক মূল্যবোধ শিক্ষা প্ৰদানৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত পদ্যটি এক সাৰ্থক প্ৰচেষ্টা বুলিব পাৰি—

“কোনে মোক তুলি-তালি কৰিলে ডাঙৰ

মউসনা মিঠা মাতে পাহৰি ভাগৰ;

কৰিছিল স্নেহ মোক দুগালত চুমা খাই

—তেঁৱে মোৰ পূজনীয়া মৰমৰ আই।”

জননীক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি লিখা পদ্যটিৰ জৰিয়তে শিশুসকলে নিজ মাতৃৰ লগতে আনৰ মাতৃসকলৰ প্ৰতি শ্ৰদ্ধা-ভক্তি প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰাৰ নৈতিক শিক্ষা লাভ কৰিব পাৰে। সন্তানৰ প্ৰতি মাতৃৰ সীমাহীন মৰমৰ কথা বৰ্ণাই কবিয়ে পদ্যটিৰ প্ৰথম চাৰিওটা স্তৰকৰ শেষত সংযোজন কৰা “তেঁৱে মোৰ পূজনীয়া মৰমৰ আই” বাক্যশাৰীয়ে জননীৰ প্ৰতি পুনঃ পুনঃ কৃতজ্ঞতা জ্ঞাপন কৰিছে।

পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত আন এটি শূৱলা পদ্য হৈছে হেমচন্দ্ৰ গোস্বামী (১৮৭২-১৯২৮) বিৰচিত ‘বৰদৈচিলা’। ‘জোনাকী যুগ’ৰ প্ৰধান ৰমন্যাসিক কবি গোস্বামীৰ উক্ত পদ্যটিত বসন্তকালীন ধুমুহা-বতাহক বৰদৈচিলা বুলি ব্যক্তি-আৰোপকৰণ (Personification) কৰা হৈছে। হিল-দল ভাঙি লগৰীয়াৰ সৈতে মাকৰ ঘৰলৈ বুলি ঢাপলি মেলা বৰদৈচিলাক—

“মাৰাই দিব মাধৈ ফুল

বাপেৰাই দিব খাৰু,

ককায়েৰাই দিব কাপোৰ-কানি

ভায়েৰাই দিব কেৰু”

এই বুলি সান্তনা দি লাহে - ধীৰে যাবলৈ অনুৰোধ কৰিছে। পদ্যটিৰ জৰিয়তে ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীয়ে ব’হাগকালীন অসমৰ প্ৰকৃতি, চ’তৰ বিহু আদিৰ উপৰি ধুমুহাৰ দৰে প্ৰাকৃতিক দুৰ্যোগৰ কথা জানিব পাৰিব।

অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্যৰ জগতত নৱকান্ত বৰুৱা (১৯২৬-২০০২) ৰ স্থান আগশাৰীত। শিশু আৰু চেমনীয়াৰ উপযোগীকৈ তেওঁ কেবাখনো পুথি ৰচনা কৰাৰ উপৰি শিশু-কবিতাৰ পুথি আৰু শিশু-আলোচনী সম্পাদনাৰেও অসমীয়া শিশু-সাহিত্যলৈ বহুমূলীয়া অৱদান আগবঢ়াইছে। তেওঁৰ দ্বাৰা ৰচিত এটি বহুল জনপ্ৰিয় শিশু উপযোগী ধেমেলীয়া পদ্য হৈছে ‘লঘোণ’। পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যভুক্ত এই পদ্যটিৰ জৰিয়তে শিশুসকলে স্থানীয় খাদ্যৰ বিষয়ে জানিব পাৰিব। প্ৰথম পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা বৰ্ণিত পদ্যটিৰ একাংশ দৃষ্টান্ত হিচাপে উদ্ধৃত কৰা হ’ল-

“ একোকে নেখাওঁ আজি

একেবাৰে ভোক নাই

আছে যদি আধাসেৰ

চিৰা দিবা ভাল চাই।”

বহুমুখী প্ৰতিভাৰ গৰাকী অম্বিকাগিৰী ৰায়চৌধুৰী (১৮৮৫-১৯৬৭) অসমীয়া সাহিত্য জগতত ‘অসম কেশৰী’ নামেৰে জনাজাত। এইগৰাকী জাতীয়তাবাদী কবি-গীতিকাৰৰ একশ্ৰেণীৰ ৰচনা মূলতঃ স্বদেশ প্ৰেমমূলক ভাৱধাৰাসম্পন্ন। শিশু আৰু কিশোৰসকলৰ মাজত আত্মনিৰ্ভৰশীলতা, আত্মসমালোচনাৰ ভাব গঢ়ি তোলাৰ যোগেদি মূল্যবোধ শিক্ষা প্ৰদান কৰা এটা উন্নত কবিতা হৈছে ৰায়চৌধুৰীৰ ‘আগতে নিজে নিকা হ’। কবিতাটিৰ যোগেদি কবিয়ে আনক পৰামৰ্শ দিয়াৰ পূৰ্বে নিজৰ হিয়া-মনৰ মলি ধুই-পখালি লৈ নিকা হ’বলৈ উপদেশ দিছে। কবিতাটিত ‘সত্যৰ সদায় জয়’, ‘আপোন ভালেই জগত ভাল’, ‘কৰ্মই ধৰ্ম’, ‘যত্ন কৰিলে ৰত্ন পায়’ আদি বহুল ব্যৱহৃত বাণীৰ অনুৰণন শুনিবলৈ পোৱা যায়-

“আনক কোৱাৰ আগখিনিতে

নিজে সাঁচা ক’

নিজ সত্যত নিজৰ ৰূপত

দৃঢ়তাৰে ৰ’

তেহে হ’ব হোৱা, লোৱা কোৱা, ৰোৱা ঠিক—

জীৱন ভৰাই জমা হ’ব ধন-সোণ-আত্মিক।”

ভৈৰৱ চন্দ্ৰ খাটনিয়াৰ (১৮৮৯-১৯২৭)ৰ ‘সৰু ছোৱালী আৰু পখী’ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট আন এটি সাৰ্থক পদ্য। আমাৰ সাহিত্য জগতত ‘মানিমুনি শাকৰ কবি’ হিচাপে পৰিচিত এইগৰাকী কবিৰ উক্ত পদ্যটিৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰকাশ পাইছে চৰাই-চিৰিকতিৰ প্ৰতি শিশুৰ মৰম-স্নেহৰ ভাব—

“আহ, পখী আহ,

ফুল দিম কোঁচ ভৰি

খুৱাম উদৰ পুৰি,

সাজি দিম সোণোৱালী বাহ,

আহ পখী, উৰি উৰি আহ।...”

মূল পাঠ হিচাপে পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত এই পদ্য বা কবিতাবোৰৰ বাহিৰেও কিছুমান কবিতা মূল পাঠৰ পিছতো সংযোগ কৰি দিয়া দেখা যায়। যতীন্দ্ৰনাথ দুৱৰাৰ ‘ককা আৰু নাতি ল’ৰা’, হৰিনাৰায়ণ দত্তবৰুৱাৰ ‘যেতিয়াৰ যিটো বন’, অম্বিকাগিৰী ৰায়চৌধুৰীৰ ‘ভাঙিব লাগিব শিল’, জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালাৰ ‘অন্ধৰমানিৰ গান’, নৱকান্ত বৰুৱাৰ ‘আমাৰ ভাৰতবৰ্ষ’, ‘ৰঙৰ খেলা’ আদি এই শ্ৰেণীৰ ৰচনা।

এইখিনিতে শিশু কাব্য-কবিতাৰ ভাষা সম্পৰ্কে কিছু কথা উলুকিয়াব পাৰি। শিশুৰে পদ্য আৰু কবিতা আওৰাই, গীত গাই আমোদ পায়। সহজে আবৃত্তি কৰিব বা গাব পৰাকৈ শিশুৰ উদ্দেশ্যে ৰচিত পদ্য, কবিতা বা গীত আদিৰ শব্দৰাজি কোমল আৰু প্ৰকাশভংগী উপযুক্ত ছন্দপূৰ্ণ, লয়যুক্ত হোৱা উচিত। এই সন্দৰ্ভত সত্যেন্দ্ৰনাথ শৰ্মাৰ মন্তব্য প্ৰণিধানযোগ্য :-

“শিশু সাহিত্যৰ প্ৰকাশভংগী আৰু ভাষা সম্পৰ্কেও সতৰ্ক দৃষ্টি ৰখা একান্ত প্ৰয়োজন। ভাষা সৰল কিন্তু আকৰ্ষণীয়, বয়স অনুসৰি নতুন শব্দ প্ৰয়োগৰ সুপৰিকল্পিত আঁচনি, বিমূৰ্ত ভাব আৰু ধাৰণা সূচক শব্দৰ যথাসম্ভৱ পৰিহাৰ, ছড়াজাতীয় বা সুৰ লগাই গাব পৰা বা সহজে মুখস্থ কৰিব পৰা পদজাতীয় ৰচনাৰ সঘন প্ৰয়োগ, ভাষাৰ উৎকৰ্ষা সৃষ্টি কৰিব পৰা ক্ষমতা, জটিল বাক্য বা involved বাক্যৰ পৰিহাৰ, শ্ৰুতিমধুৰ, অনুপ্ৰাসযুক্ত বাক্য বা ছড়াৰ প্ৰয়োগ আৰু বিষয় বস্তুৰ লগত খাপখোৱা চিত্ৰৰ ব্যৱহাৰ— এইবোৰৰ সমাৱেশে শিশু-সাহিত্য গ্ৰহণীয় কৰি তোলে (পৃ.৪৪২)।”

বৰ্তমান প্ৰচলিত পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিৰ অন্তৰ্গত পদ্য, কবিতা আদিৰ অধিকাংশৰে ভাষা আৰু ৰচনামূলক ওপৰোক্ত কথাবোৰৰ সৈতে ৰজিতা খোৱা বিধৰ। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে মূল পাঠৰ পিছত অতিৰিক্ত প্ৰাসংগিক পাঠ হিচাপে সংযোজন কৰা নৱকান্ত বৰুৱাৰ ‘ৰঙৰ খেলা’ পদ্যটিৰ পৰা উদ্ধৃতি দিব পাৰি-

“ৰঙা নীলা হালধীয়া

অকলসৰীয়া

ৰঙা নীলা মিলি দুয়ো

হ’ল বেঙুনীয়া।”

উল্লেখযোগ্য যে এইধৰণৰ কিছুমান পদ্য বা কবিতাত কেতবোৰ শব্দ প্ৰয়োগ হোৱা দেখা যায়, যিবোৰক আপাত দৃষ্টিত শিশুৰ বাবে কঠিন যেন লাগে যদিও দৰাচলতে এনেবোৰ শব্দৰ ব্যৱহাৰে নতুন শব্দ শিকাৰ যোগেদি শিশুৰ শব্দ-ভাণ্ডাৰ টনকিয়াল কৰাত সহায় কৰা বুলি ধৰাটোহে সমীচীন হ'ব যেন লাগে। নিদৰ্শন হিচাপে হৰিনাৰায়ণ দত্তবৰুৱাৰ 'যেতিয়াৰ যিটো বন' কবিতাত ব্যৱহৃত 'গহৰি', 'সমূলে', অম্বিকাগিৰী ৰায়চৌধুৰীৰ 'ভাঙিব লাগিব শিল' কবিতাৰ 'ক্ষত-বিক্ষত', 'সুৰধুনী', 'শতধাৰ' 'কলঙ্ক' আদি শব্দলৈ আঙুলিয়াব পাৰি।

১.০৪.২ : বৰ্তমান প্ৰচলিত প্ৰাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ৰ অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পাঠ্য আৰু অভ্যসন পুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট আন এক শ্ৰেণীৰ পদ্য বা কবিতা আছে যিবোৰত ৰচয়িতাৰ নামোল্লেখ পোৱা নাযায়। তদুপৰি এইবোৰৰ কিছুমান পদ্য বা কবিতা শিৰোনামযুক্ত আৰু আন কিছুমান শিৰোনামবিহীন। এই পৰ্যায়ৰ ৰচনাৰ সৰ্বসংখ্যকেই মূলতঃ পদ্যধৰ্মী আৰু এনেধৰণৰ নানান শিশু-উপযোগী পদ্য মূল পাঠ হিচাপে সংযোজন হোৱাৰ উপৰিও মূল পাঠৰ পিছতো সন্নিবিষ্ট হোৱা দেখা যায়। ৰচয়িতাৰ নামোল্লেখ নথকা শিৰোনামযুক্ত পদ্য আৰু কবিতাৰ ভিতৰত 'খেল খেল নানা খেল', 'জেউতি', 'বেলগাড়ী', 'চিলনী আৰু মাছ', 'পখিলা', 'গুৱাহাটীলৈ যাওঁ', 'জোনলৈ যাওঁ বলা', 'মই গছ', 'আমাৰ পঢ়াশালি', 'বোন্দাৰ বিলৈ', 'ৰাফনিঘৰৰ আলাপ', 'ঋতু আহে ঋতু যায়', 'আগলি বাঁহত বগলীৰ বাহ', 'গছে যদি খোজ কাঢ়ে' আদি পদ্যৰ নাম ল'ব পাৰি। এই পদ্যবোৰৰ বিষয়বস্তু, প্ৰকাশভংগী, ৰচনাৰীতি আদি সকলো দিশ প্ৰাথমিক স্তৰৰ ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীসকলৰ বাবে অতি খাপ খোৱা বিধৰ। শিশুসকলৰ ৰুচি-অভিৰুচি, বয়স, জ্ঞান-অভিজ্ঞতা আদি সকলো দিশৰ প্ৰয়োজন পূৰাব পৰাকৈ অনুকূলভাৱে, সচেতনভাৱে এনেবোৰ পদ্য ৰচনা আৰু সংকলন কৰা হৈছে।

শিশুৰ বাবে ৰচিত পদ্য বা কবিতাৰ লক্ষ্যণীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য হৈছে- অন্ত্যমিল ছন্দৰ ব্যৱহাৰ, বিষয়বস্তু আৰু প্ৰকাশভংগীৰ সৰলতা। সচৰাচৰ দেখি থকা বিষয়বোৰ আমোদজনকভাৱে উপস্থাপনেৰে শিশুসকলৰ কল্পনা আৰু মৌলিক চিন্তাশক্তিৰ বিকাশ সাধনৰ সচেতন প্ৰয়াস প্ৰায়বোৰ পদ্যতে প্ৰচ্ছন্নভাৱে নিহিত আছে। 'খেল খেল নানা খেল' পদ্যটিৰ জৰিয়তে শিশুৱে বিভিন্ন খেলৰ বিষয়ে জানিব পাৰিব। পৰিয়ালৰ বিভিন্ন সদস্যৰ সৈতে সম্পৰ্ক আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ কাৰ্য সম্পৰ্কে পৰিচয় কৰাই দিয়া এটি ভাল পদ্য 'জেউতি'। উল্লেখযোগ্য যে নিচুকনি গীত, ওমলা গীত আদিৰ আৰ্হিত ৰচিত এই পদ্যবোৰত অন্যতম লক্ষ্য

হৈছে- শিশুসকলৰ শুদ্ধ শব্দ উচ্চাৰণ আৰু আবৃত্তি কৰাৰ ক্ষমতাৰ বিকাশ সাধন কৰা। 'বোন্দাৰ বিলৈ' পদ্যটিৰ জৰিয়তে সাধুৰ আমেজ প্ৰদান কৰা হৈছে। তেনেদৰে 'ৰাফনিঘৰত আলাপ' নামৰ খুছটীয়া পদ্যটিৰ জৰিয়তে শিশুসকলে ৰাফনিঘৰৰ থকা নিত্য-ব্যৱহাৰ্য বাচন-বৰ্তনৰ নাম আৰু সেইবোৰৰ ব্যৱহাৰ সম্পৰ্কে অৱগত হ'ব পাৰিব। 'ঋতু আহে ঋতু যায়' পদ্যটি অসমীয়া মাহ আৰু ঋতুবোৰৰ নাম শিশুসকলক শিকোৱাৰ এক সুন্দৰ প্ৰয়াস। পদ্যটিয়ে আমি প্ৰাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ত পঢ়িবলৈ পোৱা 'মাহবোৰৰ গীত' পদ্যটিৰ কথা মনত পেলাই দিয়ে-

“চ'ত ব'হাগত ঋতু বসন্ত
বিৰিখে সলায় পাত,
জেঠ আহাৰত গ্ৰীষ্ম ঋতু
কল পকে নানা জাত।” (ঋতু আহে ঋতু যায়)
আকৌ—
“ব'হাগ মাহত গছৰ ডালত
ফুলে কপৌ ফুল,
জেঠমহীয়া ৰ'দৰ তাপত
শৰীৰ বিয়াকুল।” (মাহবোৰৰ গীত)

বিচিত্ৰ কথাৰ সমাৱেশ ঘটাই 'আগলি বাঁহত বগলীৰ বাহ' পদ্যটিয়েও শিশুসকলক বৰকৈ আমোদ দিয়ে। শিশুৰ কল্পনা আৰু চিন্তা শক্তিৰ অসামান্য বিকাশ ঘটাব পৰা এটা ভাল পদ্য হৈছে 'গছে যদি খোজ কাঢ়ে'। কল্পনাৰ আধাৰত বাস্তৱ চিন্তাৰ খোৰাক যোগোৱা পদ্যটিত আছে-

“হাবি এৰি গছ যদি
আমাৰ লগত যায়,
চাইকেল, বিস্মা, গাড়ীবোৰৰ
কি হ'ব বিলাই।”

এইবোৰৰ উপৰিও দুটা-এটা গদ্য পাঠৰ মাজতো এনে পদ্যধৰ্মী ৰচনাই স্থান লাভ কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।

১.০৪.৩ : ইতিপূৰ্বে আলোচিত ভাগ দুটিৰ উপৰিও বৰ্তমান প্ৰচলিত পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিৰ এটা অংশ সামৰি আছে গীতিধৰ্মী ৰচনাই। এই শ্ৰেণীৰ গীত-মাতবোৰৰ একাংশ মৌখিকভাৱে চলি অহা গীত বা লোকগীতৰ অন্তৰ্গত আৰু আনটো ভাগ বিভিন্ন গীতিকাৰৰ ৰচনা। মৌখিক পৰম্পৰাত প্ৰচলিত হৈ অহা যিবোৰ গীত অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পাঠ্যপুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈছে, সেইবোৰ মূলতঃ নিচুকনি গীত, ওমলা গীত, মালিতা বা বেলাড, বিয়াগীত, বিহুগীত, বনগীত শ্ৰেণীৰ। নিচুকনি গীতৰ ভিতৰত 'ছৰে কাণখোৱা নাহিবি ৰাতি',

‘আমাৰে মইনা শুব এ’ আদি গীত মূল পাঠৰ পিছত সংযোগ হৈ আছে। ‘গাই গাই যাওঁ’ পদ্যটি দৰাচলতে এটি উৎকৃষ্ট ওমলা গীত। বহু প্ৰচলিত এই গীত কেইফাঁকিয়ে শিশুসকলক বৰকৈ আকৰ্ষিত কৰে-

“ৰ’দালি এ ৰ’দ দে
আলি কাটি জালি দিম
বৰ পীৰা পাৰি দিম
তাতে বহি বহি ৰ’দ দে।”

‘ফুলকোঁৱৰৰ গীত’ এটি আখ্যানমূলক গীত বা মালিতা শ্ৰেণীৰ ৰচনা। ই জনশ্ৰুতিমূলক আখ্যানধৰ্মী গীত, য’ত ফুলকোঁৱৰৰ কাহিনী বৰ্ণিত হৈছে-

“ কাঠৰ পখী ঘোঁৰা জেউতি চৰিলে
উৰি যাওঁ কৰিল,
ছমাহৰ বাটকে যায় একে দিনে
মালিনীৰ বাৰীতে পৰিল।”

উক্ত পাঠটিৰ পিছত বিয়ানাম, বিহুগীত, বনগীত আদিৰ একোটাকৈ ফাঁকি সংযোজন কৰা হৈছে।

অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষাৰ পাঠ্যপুথিসমূহত জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালা, বিষ্ণুপ্ৰসাদ ৰাভা, ভূপেন হাজৰিকা আদি কবি-গীতিকাৰৰ সুৰাৰোপিত গীতি-কবিতাই শোভাবৰ্ধন কৰিছে। এই ধৰণৰ গীতি-ৰচনাৰাজি মূল পাঠ হিচাপে সম্পূৰ্ণৰূপে, মূল পাঠৰ মাজত আংশিকভাৱে আৰু মূল পাঠৰ পিছত আংশিক আৰু সম্পূৰ্ণভাৱে সন্নিবিষ্ট কৰা দেখা যায়। ৰূপকোঁৱৰ জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালা (১৯০৩-১৯৫১) ৰ এটি বহুল জনপ্ৰিয় ৰচনা ‘গাঁৱলীয়া সেৱকৰ গীত’, য’ত গাঁৱৰ সৌন্দৰ্য আৰু মাতৃভূমিৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেম সুন্দৰভাৱে প্ৰকাশ পাইছে-

“অ’ আমাৰ গাওঁ
আমাৰ গাঁৱৰ মান ৰাখি
মৰিবলৈ যাওঁ।
সেউজীয়া পথাৰতে
ভৰপূৰ তামোলেৰে
দূৰৈত জিলিকি থকা
অ’ আমাৰ গাওঁ।”

মূল গদ্য পাঠৰ আৰম্ভণিত সংযোজিত এটি গীত হৈছে-
“গছে গছে পাতি দিলে ফুলৰে শৰাই” শীৰ্ষক গীতটি।
আগৰৱালাৰ এইধৰণেৰে সংযোজিত আন এটি উৎকৃষ্ট গীত হৈছে- “নুপুৰে মাতে ৰুণজুন” শীৰ্ষক গীতটি।

কলাগুৰু বিষ্ণুপ্ৰসাদ ৰাভা (১৯০৯-১৯৬৯) ৰ

এটি জনপ্ৰিয় তথা বহুল প্ৰচলিত গীত হৈছে “বিলতে হালিছে ধুনীয়া পদুমী” শীৰ্ষক গীতটি। পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট এই গীতটি বিশেষকৈ শিশুসকলৰ বাবে অতি উপযোগী। শিশুৰ মনোজগতত কল্পনাৰ বোল সানি ফুল, চৰাই, জুৰি, বননিৰ ৰূপচিত্ৰ দাঙি ধৰা এনে ৰচনা বিৰল-

“... দূৰ দূৰণিতে জুৰিটি নাচিছে
তিৰ বিৰ তিৰ বিৰ কই
নিজান বননিত কেতেকী চৰায়ে
সুহৰি মাৰিছে ৰই।”

ভূপেন হাজৰিকা (১৯২৫-২০১১) অসমৰ সংগীতসূৰ্য, সুধাকৰ্ণ। সুৰ-সংযোজিত গীতি-কবিতা ৰচনাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অসমীয়া সাহিত্য জগতত তেওঁৰ স্থান একক আৰু অনন্য। অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যপুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট হাজৰিকাৰ এটি বিখ্যাত গীত হৈছে- ‘অসম আমাৰ ৰূপহী’। অসমৰ ঐতিহ্য প্ৰকাশক ৰচনাবোৰৰ ভিতৰত এই গীতটি অন্যতম শ্ৰেষ্ঠ। গীতিকাৰৰ স্বদেশপ্ৰীতি, প্ৰকৃতি প্ৰীতি ভাৱৰ অকৃত্ৰিম প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে এই গীতটিত। ‘ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ’ নামৰ গদ্য পাঠ এটিৰ সামৰণিত ভূপেন হাজৰিকাৰ আন এটি বিখ্যাত গীতৰ এটা ফাঁকি সংযোজিত হৈছে-

“মহাবাহু ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ
মহামিলনৰ তীৰ্থ
কত যুগ ধৰি আহিছে
প্ৰকাশি সমন্বয়ৰ অৰ্থ।”

১.০৫ : উপসংহাৰ :

অসমীয়া শিশু কাব্য কবিতা তথা শিশু সাহিত্যৰ কেতবোৰ দোষ-দুৰ্বলতা আছে। সততে চকুত পৰা এনে আসোঁৱাহ আৰু অভাৱৰ ভিতৰত কেইটামান উল্লেখ কৰা হ’ল-
(ক) বয়সৰ স্তৰৰ প্ৰতি মনোযোগ নিদি শিশু সাহিত্য ৰচনা কৰা।

(খ) শিশুৰে নিজে লিখা শিশু-উপযোগী সাহিত্যৰ একান্ত অভাৱ। তদুপৰি যিখিনি ৰচনা কৰিছে তাৰো সংকলন আৰু প্ৰকাশৰ বিশেষ ব্যৱস্থা নাই।

(গ) শিশু সাহিত্য ৰচনাতে একান্তভাৱে আত্মনিয়োগ কৰা লেখকৰ অভাৱ।

(ঘ) শিশু সাহিত্য, বিশেষকৈ শিশু-কবিতাসমূহ সংকলন কৰি পুথি আকাৰে প্ৰকাশ কৰাত প্ৰকাশকৰ অনাগ্ৰহ ভাব।

(ঙ) বিষয় আৰু পাঠকৰ পৰ্যায় অনুযায়ী ভাষা আৰু ৰচনাসৈলী প্ৰয়োগৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অপাৰগতা আৰু অসামঞ্জস্যতা।

(চ) শিশু-উপযোগী ৰচনা বা পাঠৰ সৈতে যথাযথ চিত্ৰ সংযোগৰ অভাৱ আৰু ছপা কৌশলৰ ত্ৰুটি।

মনকৰিবলগীয়া কথা এয়ে যে- ইতিপূৰ্বে আলোচনা কৰা পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্যভুক্ত শিশু-উপযোগী কবিতা, পদ্য, গীত আদিত এনেধৰণৰ দোষ-ত্ৰুটি তুলনামূলকভাৱে খুব কমকৈ দেখা যায়। বিশেষতঃ বক্তব্য বিষয় আৰু ভাব স্পষ্ট কৰি তোলাৰ বাবে পাঠৰ সৈতে যথাযথভাৱে সংযোজন কৰা ৰং-বিৰঙৰ চিত্ৰই সেইবোৰৰ শিশু-উপযোগী গুণ-বৈশিষ্ট্য আহৰণত বাৰুকৈ সহায় কৰিছে। সামগ্ৰিক বিচাৰত ক'ব পাৰি, অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ পঢ়াশলীয়া পাঠ্য আৰু অভ্যসন পুথিসমূহত সোণত সূৰগা চৰোৱাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বিবিধ শিশু আৰু কিশোৰ-উপযোগী পদ্য, কবিতা আৰু গীতিধৰ্মী ৰচনাই অনবদ্য বৰঙণি যোগাইছে।

শেষ টোকা :

১. নিবন্ধটিত সংযোজিত পদ্য, কবিতা আৰু গীতৰ উদ্ধৃতিসমূহ অসম চৰকাৰৰ ৰাজ্যিক পাঠ্যপুথি প্ৰণয়ন আৰু প্ৰকাশন নিগমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰকাশিত তথা সম্প্ৰতি প্ৰচলিত প্ৰাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ৰ অসমীয়া মাতৃভাষা বিষয়ৰ (প্ৰথম শ্ৰেণীৰ পৰা পঞ্চম শ্ৰেণীলৈকে) পাঠ্যপুথিসমূহৰ পৰা লোৱা হৈছে।

প্ৰসংগ সূচী :

১। গগৈ, লুইচ। *ভবেন্দ্ৰনাথ শইকীয়াৰ শিশু-সাহিত্য : এটি বিশ্লেষণাত্মক অধ্যয়ন*। অপ্রকাশিত এম.ফিল. গৱেষণা

গ্ৰন্থ-কণিকা। গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় : আধুনিক ভাৰতীয় ভাষা বিভাগ, ২০০৭-০৮।

- ২। ডেকা, নমিতা (সম্পা.)। *অসম দৰ্পণ*। পুনৰ মুদ্ৰণ। গুৱাহাটী : বাণী মন্দিৰ, ২০০৯।
- ৩। তামূলী, শান্তনু। *অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্য সমীক্ষা*। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। যোৰহাট : মৌচাক প্ৰকাশন, ২০১০।
- ৪। নেওগ, মহেশ্বৰ। *অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ৰূপৰেখা*। নৱম তাঙৰণ। গুৱাহাটী : চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, ২০০০।
- ৫। বৰগোহাঞি, হোমেন (সম্পা.)। *অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ বুৰঞ্জী (ষষ্ঠ খণ্ড)*। দ্বিতীয় প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী: আবিবেক, ২০১২।
- ৬। বৰুৱা, নৱকান্ত (সম্পা.)। *মৰুৱা ফুল*। ষষ্ঠ প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, ২০১৪
- ৭। শৰ্মা, সত্যেন্দ্ৰ নাথ। *অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ সমীক্ষাত্মক ইতিবৃত্ত*। নৱম সংস্কৰণ। গুৱাহাটী: সৌমাৰ প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৬।
- ৮। Parsons, Jayne (ed.). *Illustrated Family Encyclopedia*, Reprinted, London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2007
- ৯। en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/children's_literature.



সূৰ্য কুমাৰ ভূঞাৰ গল্পত মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিভংগী

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সংক্ষিপ্ত সাৰ

সাহিত্যিকসকলৰ সমাজৰ প্ৰতি দায়বদ্ধতা থাকে। কাৰণ তেওঁলোক সমাজৰ একো একোজন সদস্য। সেইবাবে জোনাকী যুগৰ গল্পকাৰ সকলৰ থকা সমাজ দায়বদ্ধতা গল্পসমূহৰ মাজেৰে পূৰ্ণ মাত্ৰাই প্ৰকাশ হৈছিল। লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাৰ পৰা সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞালৈকে সকলোৱে সমকালীন সামাজিক সমস্যাসমূহক চুটিগল্পত ৰূপায়ণ কৰি মানৱতাৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। আনহাতে জীৱনৰ ঘাত-প্ৰতিঘাত সমূহ যেনেদৰে প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰিছিল, তেনেদৰে দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছিল। জোনাকী কাকতৰ যোগেদি আত্মপ্ৰকাশ কৰা অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পই সেই সময়ত বিভিন্নজন লেখকৰ হাতত জীপাল হৈ উঠিছিল। তেনে এগৰাকী গল্পকাৰ হ'ল সূৰ্য কুমাৰ ভূঞা। কম সংখ্যক চুটিগল্প ৰচনাৰে এগৰাকী গল্পকাৰ ৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা লাভ কৰা ভূঞাৰ গল্পসমূহ নিঃসন্দেহে লেখত ল'বলগীয়া। গতিকে এই গৱেষণা পত্ৰৰ জৰিয়তে ভূঞাৰ গল্পসমূহ বিশ্লেষণ কৰাৰ লগতে সেই গল্পসমূহত মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিভংগী কেনেদৰে প্ৰকাশ পাইছে, তাৰ বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ আগবঢ়াবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

মানৱতাৰ ধাৰণাঃ

মানৱতাবাদ বুলি ক'লে এক বিশাল ধাৰণাক বুজায়। ই এক স্বতন্ত্ৰ মতবাদ বা দৃষ্টিভংগী। য'ত মানুহ হিচাপে মানৱীয় ভাব-অনুভূতিবোৰে সৰ্বাধিক গুৰুত্ব পায়। মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ অন্তৰ্ভুক্তি মনৱতাবাদৰ ধাৰণাটো নিহিত হৈ আছে। মানৱতাবাদৰ আৰম্ভণি ইউৰোপীয় সভ্যতাৰ মাজত গঢ় লৈ উঠিছিল যদিও প্ৰাচ্যৰ সভ্যতাতো মানৱতাবাদৰ সূচনা বহু শতিকাৰ আগতে হৈছিল। মানৱতাবাদৰ ধাৰণা পশ্চিমীয়া সভ্যতাৰ পৰা আহিলেও ভাৰততো মানৱতাবাদৰ ধাৰণাৰ ইতিহাস পুৰণি।

ইতিহাসৰ পাত লুটিয়ালে এনে বহু উদাহৰণ পোৱা

যাব যিবোৰ সাহিত্য আৰু চিন্তাবিদৰ মাজেৰে মানৱতাবাদৰ উন্মেষ ঘটিছিল। অসমৰ বুৰঞ্জীতো মানৱতাবাদৰ সূচনা পাশ্চাত্য চিন্তাধাৰাৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰৱেশ কৰিলেও বহু আগতেই সাহিত্যৰ মাজেৰে অসমত মানৱতাবাদৰ মাজত নিহিত ধাৰণাৰ সূত্ৰপাত ঘটিছিল। মহাপুৰুষ শংকৰদেৱে অসমত যি নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কৰিছিল, সেই ধৰ্মৰ অন্তৰ্ভুক্তি লুকাই আছিল মহৎ উদ্দেশ্য। অসমলৈ কঢ়িয়াই অনা নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ জৰিয়তে মানুহৰ মাজত এক নৱজাগৰণ সৃষ্টি কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছিল। ভক্তি ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ উদ্দেশ্যে মহাপুৰুষজনাই যি সমূহ সাহিত্য ৰচনা কৰি গৈছে, সেই সাহিত্যৰ মাজেৰে তেওঁ মানুহৰ জয়গান গাইছে। তেওঁ কোৱা —

“কুকুৰ চঙাল গৰ্দভৰো আত্মাৰাম

হেন, জানি সবাকো কৰিবা প্ৰণাম।”

পদফাঁকিয়ে তাহানিতে মানৱতাৰ পূৰ্ণ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছিল।

মানৱতাবাদৰ পূৰ্ণ বিকাশ বহু আগতে হ'লেও জোনাকী যুগৰ সাহিত্যৰ মাজেৰেহে মানৱতাবাদে পূৰ্ণ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা লাভ কৰিলে। অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ বিকাশৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত জোনাকী কাকতে যেনেদৰে অৰিহণা যোগাইছিল, ঠিক একেদৰে মানৱতাৰ বিকাশ আৰু প্ৰতিষ্ঠাত জোনাকী যুগৰ সাহিত্যই মুখ্য ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। কবিতা, নাটক, গল্প, উপন্যাস আদি সাহিত্যৰ বিভিন্ন বিভাগবোৰৰ মাজেৰে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত মানৱতাবাদে ভুমুকি মাৰে।

সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞাৰ চুটিগল্পত মানৱতাবাদঃ

সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞা (১৮৯৪-১৯৬৪) অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ আৰম্ভণি কালছোৱাৰ আন এগৰাকী গল্পকাৰ। জোনাকী যুগৰ চুটিগল্পক বিশিষ্টতা দান কৰা ভূঞাই মাত্ৰ পাচটা গল্প অসমীয়া সাহিত্যলৈ আগবঢ়াই থৈ গৈছে। যিখন পিছত ‘পঞ্চমী’ নামেৰে প্ৰকাশ কৰা হৈছে।

কম সংখ্যক গল্প ৰচনাৰে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত গল্পকাৰ হিচাপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা লাভ কৰা ভূঞাৰ গল্পসমূহ কলা কৌশলৰ ফালৰ পৰা দুৰ্বল হ'লেও গল্পসমূহৰ সাহিত্যিক মূল্য আছে।

সাহিত্যত মানৱতাবাদৰ ধাৰণা অতি প্ৰাচীন হ'লেও মানৱীয় চিন্তা ধাৰণাক গভীৰভাৱে চোৱাৰ প্ৰয়াস অবাচীন। অৰ্থাৎ মানুহৰ মানসিক স্থিতি কোনে কেনে ধৰণে চিন্তা কৰে, এইবোৰ কথাৰ ওপৰত নকৈ চোৱাৰ পৰীক্ষা-নিৰীক্ষা সাহিত্যৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰৱেশ কৰিছিল নতুনকৈ। বিশেষকৈ জোনাকী-যুগত অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ আৰম্ভণিকাল হ'লেও ইয়াতেই প্ৰথম মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে গল্পকাৰ সকলে গল্প ৰচনা কৰিছিল।

সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞাৰ প্ৰাক বা সমকালীন সময়ত নকৈ গঢ় লৈ উঠা মধ্যবিত্ত সমাজখন আছিল বিভিন্ন সমস্যাত ভাৰাক্ৰান্ত। প্ৰাচীন মূল্যবোধৰ অবক্ষয় এই সময়ছোৱাৰ উল্লেখনীয় দিশ। আনহাতে মানৱ কল্যাণ সাধন কৰা আৰু মানৱৰ পূৰ্ণাংগ কল্যাণেই মানৱতাবাদৰ মূল উৎস। গতিকে মানৱতাবাদী লেখকসকলে মানৱতাৰ দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে গল্পসমূহৰ চৰিত্ৰ চিত্ৰণ আৰু কাহিনীত গুৰুত্ব দিছিল। চৰিত্ৰসমূহ মানৱতাৰ আদৰ্শৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ হোৱাটো তেওঁলোকে বিচাৰিছিল। এনে মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিকোণেৰে ৰচনা কৰা 'মানিক বৰা' সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞাৰ এটা উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প। গল্পটো আহোম শাসনৰ পটভূমিত ৰচিত।

ইতিমধ্যে মানে দুবাৰকৈ আক্ৰমণ কৰি যোৱা অসমৰ ছবিখন মানিক বৰা আৰু সলাল গোহাঁইৰ কথোপকথনৰ মাজেৰে দাঙি ধৰাৰ লগতে গল্পটোত চৰিত্ৰৰ মানসিক সংঘাত, প্ৰতিহিংসা আদি সুন্দৰ ৰূপত দাঙি ধৰিছে।

মানিক বৰা সূতাৰ গাঁৱৰ সম্ভ্ৰান্ত বিষয়া আছিল। ৰাইজৰ হিতাৰ্থে তেওঁ সকলো ব্যক্তিগত স্বার্থ ত্যাগ কৰিবলৈ সাজু আছিল। কিন্তু একে গাওঁৰে বিষয়া হৰিগতি নেওগৰ কোপদৃষ্টি মানিক বৰাৰ ওপৰত আছিল। যাৰ কোপদৃষ্টি আৰু উচতনিত মানিক বৰাক দেশদ্রোহী সজাই হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। হৰিগতিৰ ব্যক্তিগত স্বার্থই মানিক বৰাৰ দৰে সং বিষয়াৰ মৃত্যুৰ কাৰণ। গল্পটোত ব্যক্তিগত স্বার্থ আৰু প্ৰতিহিংসাক হৰিগতি চৰিত্ৰটিৰ দ্বাৰা সুন্দৰ ৰূপত দাঙি ধৰিছে। আনহাতে আনৰ অহিত চিন্তা কৰিলে নিজৰো যে ক্ষতি হয়, সেই কথাও হৰিগতিৰ শেষ পৰিণতিৰ দ্বাৰা দেখুৱাব বিচাৰিছে। হৰিগতিৰ স্থলিত মানৱতা আৰু মানিক বৰাৰ দেশহিতৈষী মনোভাব, মানুহৰ প্ৰতি থকা সহানুভূতিশীল হৃদয়ে মানৱতাৰ উজ্বল দিশবোৰ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। মানৱতাবাদৰ অন্যান্য বৈশিষ্ট্যৰ ভিতৰত মানুহক এক দায়িত্বশীল ব্যক্তিকৰূপে গণ্য কৰা, মানুহৰ সমস্যাসমূহক মানৱীয় শৈলীৰে

সমাধান কৰা ব্যক্তি আৰু সমাজৰ মাজত সংহতি স্থাপন কৰা” এনে গুণৰাজিৰে মানিক বৰা চৰিত্ৰটি সমৃদ্ধ।

মানিক বৰাই মান আক্ৰমণৰ আগতীয়াকৈ সন্তোদ পাই অসমখনক মানৱ কবলৰ পৰা ৰক্ষা কৰিবলৈ ৰণুৱা আৰু বৰঙণি তুলি জনৰোষত পৰিছিল। ইয়াৰে সুবিধা লৈ হৰিগতি নেওগে পোতক তুলিবলৈ ৰাইজক উচতনি দিয়ে। কাৰণ ৰজাঘৰ আৰু প্ৰজাঘৰত মানিক বৰাৰ যশস্যা আৰু প্ৰতিপত্তি দেখি হৰিগতিৰ চকুত টোপনি নহা হৈছিল। একমাত্ৰ হিংসাপৰায়ণ মনোভাৱৰ বাবেই মানিক বৰাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে হৰিগতিয়ে যত্ন কৰিছিল। আমাৰ সমাজত এনে হিংসা পৰায়ণ ব্যক্তি নথকা নহয়। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত ত্ৰৈলোক্যনাথ গোস্বামীৰ কথাষাৰ উল্লেখযোগ্য। গোস্বামীৰ ভাষাত -

“মানিক বৰাত অকল এজন নিঃস্বার্থ কৰ্মপৰায়ণ লোকেই অন্যায়াৰে নিহত হোৱা নাই কিন্তু পৰশ্ৰীকাতৰ আৰু স্বার্থহেৰী হৰিগতি নেওগৰো জীৱন লীলা শেষ হৈছে মানিক বৰাৰ ভৃত্য ধনবৰৰ তৰোৱালৰ কোবত।”^২

সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞাৰ 'তেতিয়া আৰু এতিয়া' মানৱতাৰ আদৰ্শৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ আন এটি গল্প। জিলাৰ নামজ্বলা উকিল পীতাম্বৰ হাজৰিকাৰ একমাত্ৰ পুত্ৰ নীলায়ৰে ১৪ বছৰ বয়সতে পৰিয়ালৰ সকলো লোককে হেৰুৱাই ঘৰৰ একমাত্ৰ ভৃত্য ৰামবতনৰ কৰুণাৰ সম্বলত জীৱনৰ বাট উলিয়াব লগা হৈছিল। আনহাতে নীলাম্বৰৰ পঢ়া-শুনাৰ ভাৰ গাঁৱলীয়া হোজা শুকুলা গাওঁবুঢ়াই মূৰ পাতি লৈছিল। ইয়াৰ বিপৰীতে এসময়ত নীলাম্বৰৰ বাপেকৰ লগত সুমধুৰ সম্পৰ্ক থকা ৰত্নধৰ মুন্সিফে বিপদৰ সময়ত সহায়ৰ হাত আগবঢ়োৱাৰ সলনি নীলাম্বৰক তিৰস্কাৰ কৰিছিল। গল্পটোত মুন্সিফ ৰত্নধৰৰ দৰে স্বার্থপৰ, উদাৰহীন ব্যক্তিৰ স্বৰূপ দাঙি ধৰাৰ লগতে ৰামবতন আৰু শুকুলা গাওঁবুঢ়াৰ দৰে মানৱতাৰে সমৃদ্ধ চৰিত্ৰকো অংকন কৰিছে। গল্পটোৰ জৰিয়তে গল্পকাৰে মানৱতাৰ ছবিখন এনেদৰে দাঙি ধৰিছে -

“কেতিয়াবা প্ৰতাপী ক্ষমতাৰন্ত মানুহৰ অন্তৰত দয়াধৰ্মৰ একেবাৰে অভাৱ দেখা যায়। কিন্তু দুখীয়া-নিছলা গাঁৱলীয়া মানুহৰ অন্তৰত কৰুণাৰ উৎস ফুটি উঠে, দীন দুখীয়াৰ দুখ দেখিলে সমবেদনাৰ সুৰত তেওঁলোকৰ হৃদয়ৰ তন্ত্ৰীবোৰ এটি এটিকৈ বাজি উঠে, দুখ মোচন কৰিবলৈ প্ৰাণ বিয়াকুল হয়, কৃতজ্ঞতাৰ আৰেগত প্ৰাণ-মন সকলো উত্ৰাৱল হৈ উঠে।”

(সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞা, 'তেতিয়া আৰু এতিয়া')

এনেদৰে ৰামৰতন আৰু শুকুলা বুঢ়াৰ নীলাম্বৰৰ প্ৰতি থকা উদাৰতা আৰু মহান চিন্তাই মানৱতাৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। নীলাম্বৰেও ঠিক একেদৰে শুকুলা বুঢ়াৰ প্ৰতি কৃতজ্ঞতা স্বীকাৰ কৰিবলৈ পাহৰি যোৱা নাই। উচ্চ শিক্ষা গ্ৰহণ কৰি মুম্বাই পদত নিযুক্ত হৈও গাওঁবুঢ়াৰ ছোৱালী শীতলাৰ পানিগ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ পিচ হুকি যোৱা নাছিল। সমাজৰ গৰিহণা আওকাণ কৰি নীলাম্বৰে ৰত্নধৰৰ জীয়েকৰ সলনি শুকুলা বুঢ়াৰ ছোৱালী শীতলাক পত্নীহিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। নীলাম্বৰ চৰিত্ৰটো এইফালৰ পৰা মানৱতাৰ আদৰ্শৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ।

‘আমিনা’ ভূঞাৰ আন এটি লেখতল’বগীয়া গল্প। গল্পটোৰ কাহিনী সাধাৰণ হ’লেও গল্পকাৰে মানুহৰ মাজৰ যি সৰল মনোভাৱ আৰু ভাব-অনুভূতিবোৰক সুন্দৰ ৰূপত গল্পটোৰ মাজেৰে চিত্ৰিত কৰিছে। গল্পটোৰ আকৰ্ষণীয় আৰু মুখ্য চৰিত্ৰ হ’ল আমিনা। ঘৰখনত থকা বুঢ়া বাপেক, ককায়েক ওছমান আৰু সৰু ভায়েকৰ সৈতে আমিনাৰ পৰিয়াল। ঘৰখনৰ প্ৰতিজন সদস্যই গাওঁৰ হোজা আৰু সহজ-সৰল প্ৰকৃতিৰ চৰিত্ৰক প্ৰতিনিধিত্ব কৰিছে। অতি দৰিদ্ৰতাৰ মাজত আমিনা আৰু আমিনাৰ পৰিয়াল থাকিলেও চৰিত্ৰ আৰু মনৰ ফালৰ পৰা দৰিদ্ৰ নহয়। গল্পকাৰৰ গভীৰ মানৱতাবোধ গল্পটোৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰকাশ হৈছে। আনহাতে গল্পটোৰ বক্তা হিচাপে অংকন কৰা চৰিত্ৰটিও যেন মানৱতাৰ আদৰ্শৰূপে থিয় দিছে। আমিনাৰ দৰে সাধাৰণ পৰিয়াল এটিক বিপদৰ সময়ত উদ্ধাৰ কৰি চৰিত্ৰটোৱে মহানতাৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। আমিনাৰ ককায়েক ওছমান কেইবাদিনো নৰিয়াৰ বাবে বিছনাত পৰি আছিল। দৰিদ্ৰতাই গ্ৰাস কৰা ঘৰখনত নাছিল উন্নত চিকিৎসাৰ বাবে ধন আৰু এনে সময়তে সহায়ৰ হাত আগবঢ়াই মূল নায়কে মহান হৃদয়ৰ পৰিচয় দাঙি ধৰিছে। গল্পকাৰে আমিনাৰ ঘৰখনৰ আৰ্থিক অৱস্থাৰ ছবিখন সহহৃদয়তাৰে অংকন কৰিছে। আনহাতে ৰোমান্টিক আদৰ্শৰে প্ৰেৰিত গল্পকাৰে আমিনাৰ প্ৰতি মূল নায়কজনৰ প্ৰেমৰ ছবিখনো দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ পাহৰি যোৱা নাই।

ঠিক একেদৰে ‘শিলা নহয় ফুল’ আৰু ‘বিজুলী’ ভূঞাৰ দুটা প্ৰেমৰ গল্প। ‘শিলা নহয় ফুল’ত মাকৰ ইচ্ছামতে শিক্ষিত যুৱক পুষ্পই কমবয়সীয়া বৰুণাক বিয়া কৰালে যদিও অপৈনত বয়সৰ বাবে প্ৰেমৰ গভীৰতা বুজি নোপোৱা বৰুণাৰ ব্যৱহাৰত পুষ্পই ক্ষুব্ধ হৈ কলিকতালৈ গুচি যায়। প্ৰেমাকুল পুষ্পৰ বৰুণাৰ প্ৰতি যেনে ভালপোৱা, ঠিক একে ব্যৱহাৰ বৰুণাৰ পৰা বিচাৰিছিল। কিন্তু প্ৰেম কি বস্তু বুজি নোপোৱা বৰুণা পুষ্পৰ প্ৰতি আছিল সম্পূৰ্ণ উদাসীন আৰু বৰুণাৰ মানত “পুষ্প প্ৰেমৰ

প্ৰতিমা নহৈ ধেমালি কৰাৰ এটা ডাঙৰ পুতলাহে” হৈ পৰিল। যাৰ ফলত বৰুণাৰ উদাসীনতাই পুষ্পক কলিকতালৈ যাবলৈ বাধ্য কৰালে। লাহে লাহে সময় আৰু বয়স বাঢ়ি অহাৰ লগে লগে বৰুণাই বুজি পালে প্ৰেমৰ মহত্ব আৰু চিঠিৰ জৰিয়তে সেই প্ৰেম নিবেদন কৰিলে। এনেদৰে স্বামী-স্ত্ৰীৰ শেষত মিলন হ’ল। চুটিগল্প হিচাপে গল্পটোৰ প্লট আৰু কাহিনী তেনেই সাধাৰণ হ’লেও ৰোমান্টিক প্ৰেমৰ আদৰ্শ দাঙি ধৰা বাবে গল্পটোৰ উদ্দেশ্য সফল হৈছে। আনহাতে মানৱীয় প্ৰেমৰ মহত্বও গল্পটোৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰকাশ হৈ উঠিছে।

ঠিক একেদৰে ‘বিজুলী’ প্ৰণয়মূলক আন এটা উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প। ‘বিজুলী’ত প্ৰেমৰ মাজত থকা দুটি হৃদয়ৰ সহজ-সৰল মনোভাৱৰ প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে। ভূঞাই মানুহৰ মাজত থকা সৰলতা আৰু অকৃত্ৰিম ভালপোক দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। ‘শিলা নহয় ফুল’ত পুষ্পৰ বৰুণাৰ প্ৰতি থকা অকৃত্ৰিম ভালপোৱাক যেনেকৈ দাঙি ধৰিছে, তেনেকৈ ‘বিজুলী’তো বিজুলীৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেমিকজনৰ সৰল ভালপোৱা আৰু অকৃত্ৰিমতাক অকৃত্ৰিমভাৱে দাঙি ধৰিছে। আচলতে মানৱতাবাদী গল্পকাৰে মানুহৰ মাজত থকা সৰল প্ৰেম আৰু সেই প্ৰেমৰ মহত্বই যে মানুহৰ মাজৰ মলিনতা দূৰ কৰিব পাৰে, তাকে ক’ব বিচাৰিছে। গল্পটোৰ আৰম্ভণিতে প্ৰেমিকজনৰ মনত সৃষ্টি হোৱা অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বৰ মাজেৰে মানুহৰ স্বাৰ্থপৰতাক গভীৰ মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে চাবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছে এনেদৰে -

“মানুহে কয় মই বোলে বলিয়া। কিন্তু সেইবুলি কাৰোবাৰ অন্তৰত কৰুণাৰ কোমল বীনা মোৰ হস্তে কেতিয়াবা বাজি উঠিছেনে? সেইবুলি মোৰ দুখত কাতৰ হৈ কোনোবাই এটুপি চকুলো টুকি মোক সুধিছেনে।”

(সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞা, ‘বিজুলী’)

গল্পটোত শৈশৱৰ প্ৰণয়ৰ লগৰী বিজুলীক হেৰুৱাই উন্মাদ হোৱা প্ৰেমিক এজনৰ মানসিক দ্বন্দ্বক সুন্দৰ ৰূপত অংকন কৰিছে। বিচ্ছেদ ঘটিলেও কেতিয়াও পুনৰাই বিয়া নকৰাই বুলি প্ৰতিজ্ঞা কৰা প্ৰেমিকজনে এদিন বিজুলীৰ কথা পাহৰি মোহিনীক বিয়া কৰালেও ‘প্ৰণয় সদায় সকলো ঠাইতে জয়ী’ হোৱাৰ দৰে প্ৰেমিকৰ মনগহনত বিজুলীৰ স্মৃতি মাৰ নগ’ল। মোহিনীৰ মাজত প্ৰেমিকজনে বিজুলীৰ সামঞ্জস্য প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰিলে। আনহাতে বিজুলীৰ স্মৃতিয়ে অস্থিৰ কৰি পেলোৱা প্ৰেমিকৰ মনত অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বৰ সৃষ্টিও কৰিলে। নিজকে দোষী বুলি ভবা প্ৰেমিকে বিজুলীক অন্তৰৰ পৰা ক্ষমা বিচাৰিছিল। এনেদৰে গল্পটোৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰেমৰ মহত্ব দাঙি ধৰিছে। প্ৰকৃতিৰ মাজত

ডাঙৰ দীঘল হোৱা সাধাৰণ যেন লগা প্ৰেমিকজন মানৱীয় গুণৰ ফালৰ পৰা মহৎ হৈ উঠিছে।

মুঠতে জোনাকী যুগৰ মানৱতাবাদ সূৰ্যকুমাৰ ভূঞাৰ গল্পত প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰা যায়। এগৰাকী মানৱতাবাদী গল্পকাৰ হিচাপে তেওঁৰ নাম অসমীয়া গল্প সাহিত্যৰ ইতিহাসত চিৰস্মৰণীয় হৈ ৰ'ব।

সামৰণিঃ

অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত পাশ্চাত্য সাহিত্যৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰৱেশ ঘটাই মানৱতাবাদে জোনাকী যুগৰ লেখকসকলত প্ৰভাৱান্বিত কৰিছিল আৰু সেইবাবে তেওঁলোকৰ দ্বাৰা সৃষ্ট চুটিগল্পসমূহত ইয়াৰ সুন্দৰ প্ৰতিফলন ঘটিছিল। যি সাহিত্যত মানৱতাবাদী দিশটো শক্তিশালী ৰূপত ৰূপায়ণ ঘটে, সেই সাহিত্যই সাধাৰণতে স্থায়ীত্ব লাভ কৰে। জোনাকী যুগৰ চুটিগল্পসমূহ এতিয়াও প্ৰাসঙ্গিক হৈ থকাৰ মূল কাৰণ হৈছে এই চুটিগল্প সমূহৰ অন্তৰালত নিহিত হৈ থকা মানৱ কল্যাণ সাধনৰ প্ৰৱণতা। বেজবৰুৱাকে ধৰি 'জোনাকী যুগ'ত যিসকল গল্পকাৰে

তেওঁলোকৰ সৃষ্টিৰাজিত মানৱতাবোধৰ দিশটোৰ সংযোগ সাধন কৰিলে, সেই পৰম্পৰা পৰৱৰ্তী আৱাহন, ৰামধেনু, সাম্প্ৰতিক কালৰ চুটিগল্পলৈকে সম্প্ৰসাৰণ ঘটিল। আমাৰ এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ গৱেষণা-গ্ৰন্থখনিত জোনাকী যুগৰ চুটিগল্পত প্ৰতিফলিত মানৱতাবাদ সম্পৰ্কেহে বিশ্লেষণ আগবঢ়োৱা হৈছে। আশা কৰা হৈছে এই বিশ্লেষণে জোনাকী যুগৰ চুটিগল্পৰ এটা অতি গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ দিশত পোহৰ পেলোৱাত সহায়ক হৈছে। লগতে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ আন-আন বিভাগ বা দিশসমূহতো মানৱতাবোধক বিশ্লেষণ কৰি চোৱাৰ পথ মুকলি হৈ আছে।

প্ৰসংগসূচীঃ

১। কলিতা, নগেন(সম্পাঃ)। আধুনিক অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত মানৱতা। গুৱাহাটীঃ অসমীয়া বিভাগ, ছয়গাঁও মহাবিদ্যালয়, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০১৫। পৃ.৫১

২। গোস্বামী, ত্ৰৈলোক্যনাথ। আধুনিক গল্প সাহিত্য। গুৱাহাটীঃ বাণী প্ৰকাশ, পঞ্চম প্ৰকাশ, ২০১৬। পৃ.১০৫



নীলমণি ফুকনৰ কবিতাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদ : এটি পর্যালোচনা

নন্দিতা দেৱী

গৱেষিকা, আধুনিক ভাৰতীয় ভাষা আৰু সাহিত্য অধ্যয়ন বিভাগ, গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
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১.০০ অৱতৰণিকা :

চিত্ৰকল্পবাদ হৈছে এটা বিশেষ কাব্য আন্দোলন। ই মূলতঃ ফ্ৰান্সৰ প্ৰতীকবাদী আন্দোলনৰে এক পৰিৱৰ্তিত ৰূপ। অৰ্থাৎ ফ্ৰান্সৰ প্ৰতীকবাদী আন্দোলনৰ মাজতে চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ বীজ নিহিত হৈ আছিল। এই আন্দোলনৰ মূল উৎস আছিল চাৰিটা— (ক) প্ৰাচীন গ্ৰীক, চীন আৰু হিব্ৰু কবিতাৰ পৰা অহা ধ্ৰুৱবাদী প্ৰভাৱ। (খ) ৰোমাণ্টিকতাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে গঢ়ি উঠা বাস্তৱতা। (গ) ভেলেইন, মালাৰ্মেৰ নেতৃত্বত প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত ফ্ৰান্সৰ প্ৰতীকবাদী আন্দোলন। (ঘ) জাপানৰ হাইকু কবিতাৰ প্ৰভাৱ।

চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী আন্দোলনৰ পিতৃস্বৰূপ বুলি কোৱা হয় টি. ই. হিউমক। কিন্তু চিত্ৰকল্পবাদে প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত ৰূপ লাভ কৰিছিল এজৰা পাউণ্ডৰ হাততহে। সেয়েহে বহুতে পাউণ্ডকহে এই আন্দোলনৰ পুৰোধা ব্যক্তি বুলি ক'ব খোজে। লণ্ডনৰ পৰা প্ৰকাশিত The Egoist নামৰ পত্ৰিকাখনি এই আন্দোলনৰ মুখপাত্ৰস্বৰূপ আছিল। এজৰা পাউণ্ডে লণ্ডনলৈ গৈ 'চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী স্কুলো গঠন কৰিছিল। চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী আন্দোলনৰ কেইটামান বৈশিষ্ট্য হ'ল— অলংকাৰময় শব্দৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে প্ৰচলিত শব্দৰ ব্যৱহাৰ, মুক্তক ছন্দৰ প্ৰয়োগ, ভাবৰ স্পষ্টতা, আৱেগঘন মুহূৰ্তৰ সৃষ্টি ইত্যাদি।

২.০০ আলোচনাৰ উদ্দেশ্য, পৰিধি আৰু সমল :

অসমীয়া কাব্য জগতত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী কবি হিচাপে নীলমণি ফুকনৰ স্থান নিঃসন্দেহে উল্লেখযোগ্য। তেওঁৰ সকলো কবিতাতেই কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে চিত্ৰকল্পৰ প্ৰয়োগ দেখা যায়। তেওঁ চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ পিতৃস্বৰূপ টি.ই.হিউমৰ আটাইকেইটা কবিতাই অসমীয়ালৈ অনুবাদ কৰিছিল। আধুনিক অসমীয়া কবিতাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ প্ৰৱৰ্তক হেম বৰুৱা যদিও প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী ধাৰাটোৰ সাৰ্থক প্ৰয়োগ ঘটে নীলমণি ফুকনৰ কবিতাতহে।

তেখেতৰ কবিতাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ প্ৰয়োগ কিদৰে হৈছে তাৰ এক বিশ্লেষণাত্মক আলোচনা আগবঢ়োৱাৰ উদ্দেশ্যে 'নীলমণি ফুকনৰ কবিতাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদ' শীৰ্ষক বিষয়টো নিৰ্বাচন কৰি লোৱা হৈছে।

আমাৰ এই আলোচনাত নীলমণি ফুকনদেৱৰ ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰত সূৰ্যাস্ত, ওলমি থকা গোলাপী জামুৰ লগ্ন, আৰু মুঠি মুঠিকে কাটি তোৰ টেঁকীয়াৰ আঙুলি— শিৰোনামাৰ কবিতাকেইটাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ প্ৰয়োগ সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হ'ব।

আলোচনা কৰ্মৰ সহায়ক ৰূপে মূল কবিতাপুথিৰ লগতে অন্যান্য বহুতো গ্ৰন্থ পাতিবো সহায় লোৱা হ'ব।

৩.০০ সূচক শব্দ :-

আমাৰ এই আলোচনাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদ, গোলাপী জামু, টেঁকীয়া, আন্ধাৰৰ পাগলাদিয়া, সামুদ্ৰিক চৰাই ইত্যাদি সূচক শব্দৰ প্ৰয়োগ কৰা হৈছে।

৪.০০ অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি :-

আলোচ্য কৰ্মৰ অধ্যয়নৰ বেলিকা বৰ্ণনাত্মক আৰু বিশ্লেষণাত্মক দুয়োটা পদ্ধতিয়েই অৱলম্বন কৰা হ'ব।

৫.০০ মূল বিষয়বস্তু :-

ইংৰাজী 'Imagery' শব্দটোৰ প্ৰতিশব্দৰূপে অসমীয়াত চিত্ৰকল্প শব্দটো ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হয়। অৱশ্যে কিছুমানে বাক-প্ৰতিমা শব্দটোও ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে।^১ চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী কবিতাত চিত্ৰকল্পই হ'ল কবিতাৰ আত্মা বা প্ৰাণ। চিত্ৰকৰে ৰং-তুলিকাৰে ছবি এখন অংকন কৰি উলিওৱাৰ দৰে, চিত্ৰকল্পবাদী কবিয়েও শব্দ আৰু ব্যঞ্জনাৰ সমাৱেশেৰে বৰ্ণনীয় বস্তু সম্বন্ধে কল্পনাৰ ৰেখাচিত্ৰ পাঠকৰ মনত স্পষ্ট কৰি তোলে।

নীলমণি ফুকনৰ 'ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰত সূৰ্যাস্ত' কবিতাটি 'গোলাপী জামুৰ লগ্ন' শীৰ্ষক কবিতাপুথিৰ অন্তৰ্গত। কবিতাটোৰ শিৰোনামটোতেই চিত্ৰকল্পৰ সমাৰেশ ঘটিছে। 'ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰত সূৰ্যাস্ত' শিৰোনামেৰে কবিয়ে মানুহৰ অন্তৰ্গামী জীৱনৰ চিত্ৰ এখন দাঙি ধৰিছে। সূৰ্য্য অস্ত গ'লেও তাৰ এটা ৰেঙণি বহু সময়লৈ থাকি যায়, যিদৰে শিলগুটি এটা পানীত পৰিলে তাৰ বুৰবুৰণি লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়। একেদৰে মানুহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো বহু আশা-আকাংক্ষা পূৰণ নোহোৱাকৈয়ে জীৱন নাটৰ পৰিসমাপ্তি ঘটে। কিন্তু মৃত্যুৰ আগমুহূৰ্তলৈকে বিভিন্ন আশা-আকাংক্ষা, কামনা-বাসনা মনত লৈ জীয়াই থকাটো যেন মানৱৰ এক চিৰন্তন প্ৰবৃত্তি। কবিতাটোত কবিয়ে মানুহৰ অপূৰণ কামনা-বাসনাক বুজাবলৈ— "মৰ্মস্তদ তাৰ উজ্জ্বলতা/মানুহৰ অন্তিম লালসাৰ/কি প্ৰজ্জ্বলন" শীৰ্ষক চিত্ৰকল্পৰ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছে। অন্তৰ্গামী সূৰ্য্যটোৱে বিকিৰণ কৰা শেষ ৰশ্মিকণৰ দৰে মানুহৰ কামনা-বাসনাবোৰেও জীৱনৰ শেষ নিশ্বাস পৰ্যন্ত মানুহক লালায়িত কৰে। সূৰ্য্যটোক কবিয়ে 'হিৰণ্ময় হৃদয় পাত্ৰ' বুলি অভিহিত কৰিছে। ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰত সূৰ্য্য ডুব যোৱাৰ অৰ্থ হ'ল মানুহৰ আশা-আকাংক্ষাৰ পৰিসমাপ্তি ঘটা। মুঠৰ ওপৰত কবিয়ে কবিতাটোৰ যোগেদি মানুহৰ জীৱন যাত্ৰাৰ চিত্ৰখনকেই সাৰ্থক ৰূপত তুলি ধৰিছে। মানুহৰ জীৱন-যাত্ৰাৰ এই চিত্ৰকল্পটো কবিয়ে কিমান অৰ্থপূৰ্ণৰূপত তুলি ধৰিছে তাৰ নিদৰ্শন পোৱা যায় কবিতাটোত এনেদৰে—

“ শূন্যতাৰ হাতৰ পৰা সৰি পৰিল
দিনৰ হিৰণ্ময় হৃদয়-পাত্ৰ
নিঃশব্দে সৰি পৰিল
আৰু বুৰ গ'ল।
বুৰবুৰণিত বিৰিঙি উঠিল
পাত্ৰৰ ৰক্তিম আধেয়
মৰ্মস্তদ তাৰ উজ্জ্বলতা
মানুহৰ অন্তিম লালসাৰ
কি প্ৰজ্জ্বলন।”

উক্ত কবিতাটোৰ যোগেদি কবিয়ে মানুহৰ জীৱনৰ গভীৰ শূন্যতাবোধৰ চিত্ৰ এখনো মূৰ্ত কৰি তুলিছে।

নীলমণি ফুকনদেৱৰ 'ওলমি থকা গোলাপী জামুৰ লগ্ন' শিৰোনামৰ কবিতাটোতো চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ সুন্দৰ প্ৰয়োগ দেখা যায়। নটা স্তৱকেৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ এই কবিতাটোৰ প্ৰতিটো স্তৱকেই একো একোখন চিত্ৰ স্পষ্ট ৰূপত তুলি ধৰিছে। কবিতাটোৰ শিৰোনামটোৱেও আমাৰ মনলৈ এখন ছবি আনি দিয়ে।

'গোলাপী জামুৰ লগ্ন' শিৰোনামেৰে কবিয়ে আশা আৰু সম্ভাৱনাৰ চিত্ৰ এখনি তুলি ধৰিছে।

কবিতাটোত সাম্প্ৰতিক জগতৰ বিপন্ন, অৱক্ষয়ী পৰিৱেশে কবিৰ হৃদয় যন্ত্ৰণাত দগ্ধ কৰিছে। হৃদয়ৰ যন্ত্ৰণাক ব্যক্ত কৰিবলৈ কবিয়ে বাট বিচাৰি পোৱা নাই। জীৱনৰ নিৰাশা আৰু হতাশাৰ মাজতো কবিয়ে আশাৰ ক্ষীণ ৰেঙণি এটা দেখিবলৈ পাইছে। সেয়েহে তেওঁ কৈছে—

“হে হৃদয়ৰ ভগাডালত ওলমি থকা
গোলাপী জামুৰ লগ্ন”^৪

উক্ত শাৰী দুটিয়ে কবি হৃদয়ৰ যন্ত্ৰণাৰ চিত্ৰকেই তুলি ধৰিছে।

সাম্প্ৰতিক জগতৰ অৱক্ষয়ী ৰূপ বুজাবলৈ কবিয়ে কবিতাটোত বিভিন্ন দিশৰ পৰা চিত্ৰকল্পসমূহ সংগ্ৰহ কৰিছে। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে নদী, সামুদ্ৰিক চৰাই, বৰফ, ভগাডাল, গোলাপী জামু ইত্যাদি চিত্ৰকল্পৰ প্ৰয়োগ কৰিছে। মুঠৰ ওপৰত এই চিত্ৰকল্পসমূহে কবিৰ হৃদয়ৰ বিষাদবোধ আৰু যন্ত্ৰণাৰ ছবিয়ৈ পঠকৰ মনত তুলি ধৰিছে। এই যন্ত্ৰণাই কবিক ক্ৰমে ক্ৰমে মৃত্যুৰ মুখলৈ ঠেলি দিছে। শৰীৰৰ আঙুলিটো মৰি অহাৰ দৰে, জুৰিৰ পানীখিনি বৰফ হৈ অহাৰ দৰে কবিৰ অন্তৰখনো যেন ধ্বংস হৈ পৰিছে। পাগলাদিয়াৰ বানপানীয়ে ৰাতিৰ ভিতৰতে পথাৰ - ঘাট সকলো ধ্বংস কৰাৰ দৰে, সাম্প্ৰতিক ভয়াবহতাই যেন কবিৰ বৰ্হিজগতৰ সমস্ত নিশ্চিন্ত কৰাৰ উপক্ৰম কৰিছে। কবিয়ে জীৱনৰ দুখ-বেদনাৰ, আশা-নিৰাশাৰ, প্ৰাপ্তি-অপ্ৰাপ্তি, জীৱন-মৃত্যুৰ চিত্ৰকল্প অতি অৰ্থপূৰ্ণ ৰূপত তুলি ধৰিছে—

“ জুই জলি থকা নগৰৰ ওপৰত উৰি ফুৰা
এটা সামুদ্ৰিক চৰাই
ক্ৰমশঃ মৰি অহা এটা আঙুলি
বৰফ হৈ অহা এটা জুৰি
অন্তৰৰো অন্তৰ খহাই বৈ যোৱা তপত লাভাৰ
আন্ধাৰৰ পাগলাদিয়া।

.....”^৫

নীলমণি ফুকনদেৱে তেওঁৰ 'মুঠি মুঠিকৈ কাটি তোৰ টেকীয়াৰ আঙুলি' শীৰ্ষক কবিতাটোৰ যোগেদি দৰিদ্ৰতাই কোঙা কৰা এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ যন্ত্ৰণাময় জীৱনৰ ছবি প্ৰতিফলিত কৰিছে। কবিতাটোত গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ চিনাকী ছবি কেতবোৰ প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে যেনে— পুখুৰীত মাছ পোহা, ঢাপত আকণ গছ ৰোৱা, মুঠি মুঠিকৈ টেকীয়া ৰন্ধা ইত্যাদি। গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ লগত

অংগাংগীভাৱে জড়িত এই চিত্ৰকল্পবোৰে এফালে নাৰী জীৱনৰ যন্ত্ৰণা আৰু আনফালে গ্ৰাম্য চহা জীৱনৰ ওপৰত নগৰীয়া জীৱনৰ কুটিল প্ৰভাৱৰ কথাও দাঙি ধৰিছে। কবিতাটোত চিত্ৰকল্পৰ প্ৰয়োগৰ নিদৰ্শন—

“বাই তোৰ কোন গাঁৱত ঘৰ
মৰেনে মানুহ তাত
ঢাপত ৰোৱনে আকণ গছ
পুখুৰীত জীয়াৱনে মাছ
মানুহটো বাৰু তোৰ
আহিলনে ঘূৰি”^৬

কবিতাটোৰ সেই নিৰ্দিষ্ট নাৰী গৰাকীক কবিয়ে ‘বাই’ বুলি সম্বোধন কৰিছে। মূল মানুহজনৰ অনুপস্থিতিত তেওঁ (বাই) অতি কষ্টৰে দিন অতিবাহিত কৰিছে। দৰিদ্ৰতাই কোঙা কৰা সেই বাইজনীয়ে যেন নিজৰ হাতৰ আঙুলি কেইটাকে কাটি টেকীয়াৰ দৰে মুঠি মুঠিকৈ বান্ধি বেচিবলৈ নিছে। কিন্তু তথাপিও তেওঁ নিজৰ মানুহটোৰ অপেক্ষা কৰিছে। আখলৰ লাওখোলাত গৃহীণীয়ে প্ৰয়োজনীয় বস্তু সঞ্চিত কৰি থোৱাৰ দৰে বাই গৰাকীয়ে স্বামীৰ অপেক্ষাত উজাগৰী নিশা কটাইছে। কবিতাটোত অপেক্ষাকৃত বাইৰ নিঃসংগতা আৰু বিষাদবোধৰ চিত্ৰ কবিয়ে অৰ্থপূৰ্ণৰূপত তুলি ধৰিছে —

“বাই তোৰ আখলৰ লাওৰ খোলাত
সাঁচ দিন
উজাগৰ দুচকুৰে জ্বলাৰ
পদূলিৰ কাঞ্চন গছৰ আন্ধাৰ”^৭

৬.০০ সামৰণি :-

গতিকে দেখা যায় যে সাম্প্ৰতিক যুগৰ কবিসকলৰ ভিতৰত নীলমণি ফুকনদেৱৰ কবিতাত চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ সাৰ্থক প্ৰয়োগ ঘটিছে। অসমীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ থলুৱা শব্দৰে নিৰ্মিত চিত্ৰকল্পসমূহে তেওঁৰ কবিতাক এক বিশেষ মাত্ৰা প্ৰদান কৰিছে। মৃত্যু-চেতনা, বিষণ্ণতাবোধ, জীৱনৰ যন্ত্ৰণা, শূন্যতাবোধ ইত্যাদি তেওঁৰ কবিতাৰ মূল বিশেষত্ব বুলি ক’ব পাৰি। প্ৰতীকবাদৰ প্ৰয়োগো তেওঁৰ কবিতাত সমানে দেখা যায়। তেওঁৰ কবিতাত প্ৰতীকবোধৰ মাজেৰেই বহু সময়ত চিত্ৰকল্প একোখন স্পষ্ট হৈ

পৰা দেখা গৈছে। নীলমণি ফুকনদেৱৰ উপৰিও অসমীয়া সাহিত্য জগতত হেম বৰুৱা, নৱকান্ত বৰুৱা, হীৰেণ ভট্টাচাৰ্য ইত্যাদি কবিসকলো চিত্ৰকল্পবাদৰ অনুগামী। শেষত ক’ব পাৰি যে প্ৰতীকৰ দৰে চিত্ৰকল্পৰ বহুল প্ৰয়োগেও সাম্প্ৰতিক কবিতাক দুৰ্বোধ্য কৰি তুলিছে।

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