

Drishti: the Sight

Vol.V, Issue: II (November, 2016 - April, 2017)
ISSN 2319-8281

**A REFEREED (PEER-REVIEWED) BI-ANNUAL NATIONAL RESEARCH
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE/ASSAMESE LITERATURE/FOLKLORE /CULTURE**

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(A NON-PROFIT VENTURE DEDICATED TO THE CAUSE OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH
PARTICULARLY AMONG THE YOUNG SCHOLARS OF THE NATION)

Published by :

Ms. Rupjyoti Goswami

Editor (Hon.):

Dr. Dipak Jyoti Baruah

Price : # Single: Rs. 600/-

#One Year Subscription: Rs. 1200/-

(Price includes commissioning and postage charges)

Printed at :

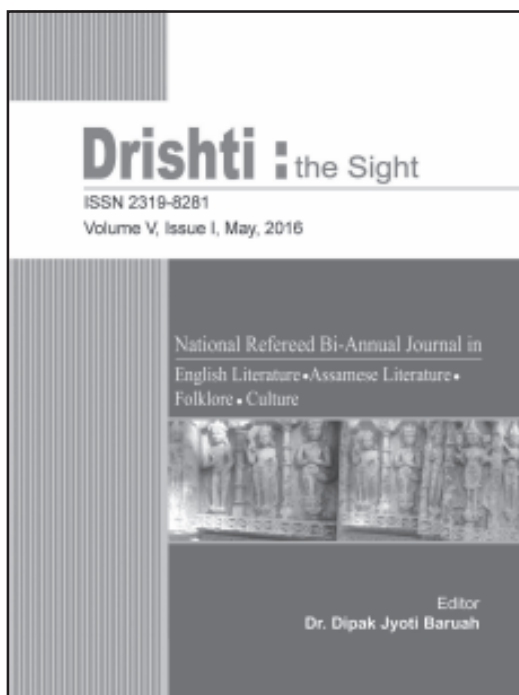
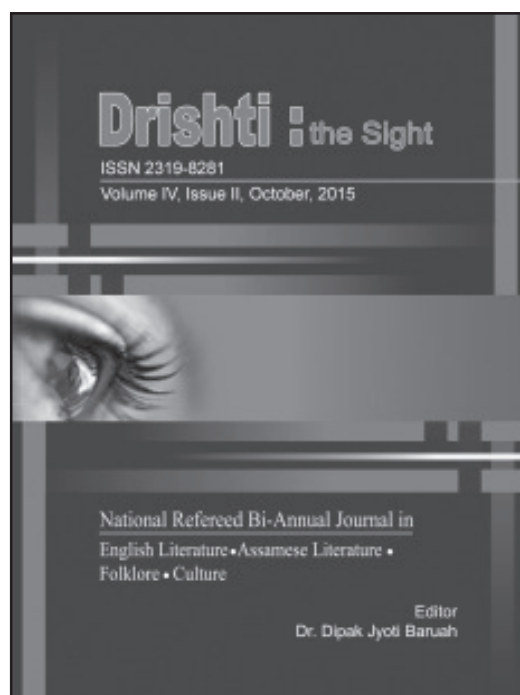
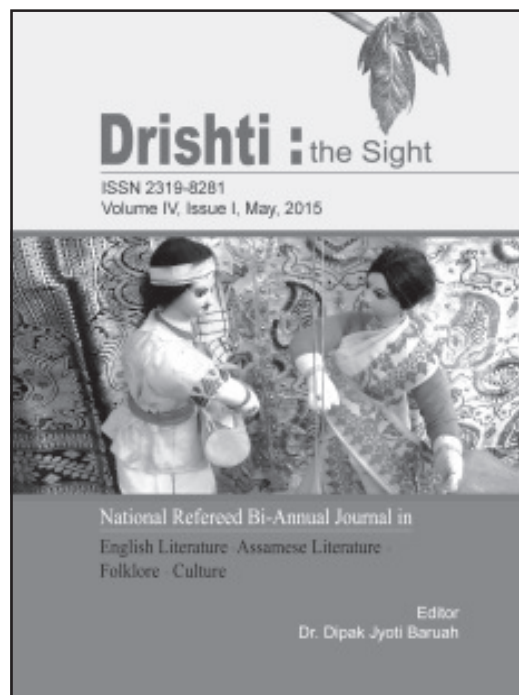
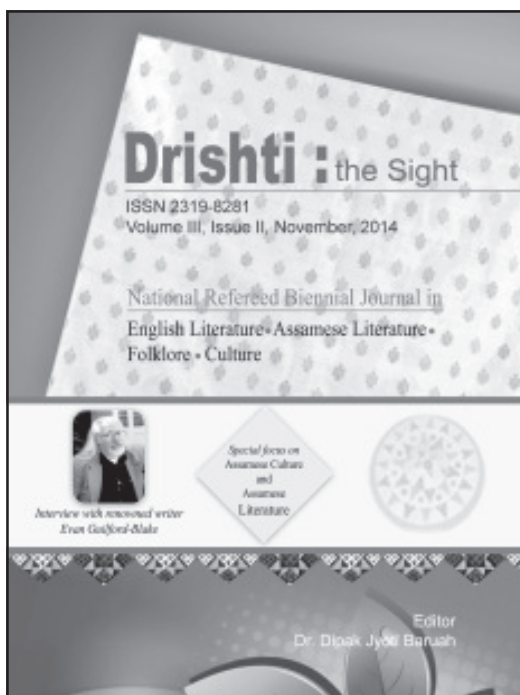
Sri Ganesh Printers, Noonmati, Guwahati-781020

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EDITORIAL

NOBEL TO BOB DYLAN

A MOMENTOUS JUDGEMENT

Selecting the name of Bob Dylan- the popular song-lyricist and singer who has his fans all over the world, for the Nobel in literature by the Swedish Academy, must be welcome as a momentous judgement.

His songs are linked to the civil society in more than one ways. Songs to him are the weapons to implant a 'voice' to those who feel the pressure within for a protest against the injustices. He has a voice and a pen to empower the common man who he longs to see awakened and to rise to the occasion. He has been eagerly on the wait for the writers and the critics to join him in his enterprise for ushering in a change and in the lyric: "The Times They Are A-Changing", he appeals: *Come writers and critics/Who prophesize with your pen/ And keep your eyes wide/The chance won't come again/ And don't speak too soon/For the wheel's still in spin/And there's no tellin' who/That it's namin'./For the loser now/Will be later to win/ For the times they are a-changin'.*

Songs by him are widely followed by the mass people mainly for their responsible approach to the social issues. Many of these songs relate to social rights while a good number are lucid and precise (lyrical) outbursts against passivity of the people against exploitations and suppressions meted out to them by the powerful few of the society. His is also essentially a voice against the war-mongers as he envisions a future free from any trace of death and suffering for the humanity. To stimulate a mass resistance against any war in future, he insistently sings: *Yes, how many years can some people exist/Before they're allowed to be free?/Yes, how many times can a man turn his head/Pretending he just doesn't see?/The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind/ The answer is blowin' in the wind/Yes, how many times must a man look up/ Before he can see the sky?/Yes, how many ears must one man have/Before he can hear people cry?/Yes, how many deaths will it take till he knows/That too many people have died?/ The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind/ The answer is blowin' in the wind.*

It is quite heartening to see that even in this era of cheap consumer culture when anything and everything- with the distinctive identities of gloss and glamour- are being dished out for public consumption, a few like Bob still successfully 'enlighten' us by their soulful numbers and enrich our minds with their priceless and fruitful insights. #

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(A PEER-REVIEWED NATIONAL JOURNAL)

ISSN 2319-8281

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Next issue (May, 2017) will be published in the month of April, 2017

Last date for submission of research paper along with abstract : February, 15, 2017

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Mapping the Geographical Concerns in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract:

Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide (2004) presents space, place, and landscape as having a palpable influence on history and memory, and the geographical context that runs through is not just confined to his fiction. This theme also runs through Ghosh's works of non-fiction like In An Antique Land and Dancing in Cambodia and at Large in Burma. In The Hungry Tide, the author, by way of references to history of the place to its spatial and geographical dimensions, try to capture the essentials and the nature of human society. The aim of this paper is to reveal that geographical descriptions and spatial imagery in this fiction is used by him to expose and challenge the hidden ideologies that shape the dominant representations of space, place and the landscape.

Keywords: *Map; Geography; Ghosh; The Hungry Tide*

In the work *Postcolonial Studies: Key Concepts* it has been asserted that maps inscribe their ideologies on the territory in numerous ways. The notion of identifying one plot of land and its residents as civilized, modern or progressive whilst the other is not is a form of neo-colonialism. The blank spaces of early maps are often identified as open and inviting ones on which the European imagination can project itself.¹ This identification of the space or territory with the ideologies of those in power is still at work. As such literature produced from the nations which had erstwhile undergone the experience of being under a

colonial rule, makes use of narrative strategies that mirror the intricate relationship between their identity and that of their immediate location. The eighteenth century saw the institutionalization of different sciences wherein "Knowledge was no longer mapped as a single general science of order but was instead distributed across a three-dimensional space." (Gregory, 27) Edward Said asserts that "the ideas of discourse and discipline are assertively European" and "that discipline was used...to administer, study and reconstruct – then subsequently to occupy, rule and exploit – almost the whole of the non-European world. (Said, 222)

During the 1960s and the 1970s, new critical theories and ideas such as Postmodernism challenged the disciplinary boundaries. The earlier traditional notions of separate disciplines such as Philosophy, Linguistics, History, Sociology and Psychoanalysis merged to form a new theoretical framework within which postmodern literature came to be read and written. A "spatial turn"¹ was achieved in the twentieth century as writers began to focus on the relationship between land and other aspects of the human society. Writers began to use geographic metaphors for multiple reasons as a part of their narratives. It was done so as to explore issues related to spatial identity.²

Prior to the onset of the "spatial turn" during the twentieth century, it was the eighteenth century thinker Immanuel Kant who contributed to the history and development of geographical thought. He can be placed at the intersection between the disciplines of philosophy and geography and on the threshold of the age of

scientific development and discipline-formation. In the 1750s, Kant introduced physical geography as a discipline in his lectures at the University of Königsberg. In these lectures, which were first published as *Physische Geographie* in 1802, Kant defined geography as an area in contrast to history. According to him, geography is related to description and space whereas history is related to narration and time. While Kant's *Physische Geographie* had little direct influence on the discipline of geography until the 20th century, it arguably had a far greater influence on 19th-century philosophy. Michel Foucault is also one of the critical theorists along with Henri Lefebvre who is almost synonymous with the spatial turn. Foucault focused on how history the role of active "becoming," while the descriptive science of geography was relegated to the passive role of "being." As a result, Foucault argues, 19th and early 20th-century philosophy largely ignored geography and space and concerned itself with studying history. However, in his 1969 work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault suggests an alternative, more spatially aware, method of historical and philosophical inquiry.

The word "mapping" in the title of this research paper is used to refer to the ground (or areas) to be mapped. The different areas mapped within the novel which will be discussed here include space, place, and landscape. It is necessary to look at space, place, and the landscape as they are represented in literature and to interpret them in a wider social, cultural and political context. Thus the aim of this paper is to reveal that geographical descriptions and spatial imagery in fiction is used to expose and challenge the hidden ideologies that shape the dominant representations of space, place and the landscape. Keeping this in mind, the novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) has been explored.

As a work written by an author from a nation that had a pretty long history of colonial encounters, Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* reflects on the nature and intriguing complexities of national boundaries. In the novel, Ghosh illustrates how the history and geography of a place mould lives and shape identities and destinies. Ghosh's narrative can also be

seen as an examination of how people of different nationalities and different social and cultural identities have struggled against political and ideological positions that have pertinently confined them to the fringes of human society. As a writer with a predominantly postcolonial consciousness, Ghosh attempts to reveal those stories and events that have deliberately been effaced from official government records. For example, in *In An Antique Land* he explores the history of Egypt where he introduces the story of Bama a person belonging to low caste from India who finds himself in Egypt while in *The Shadow Lines*, he deals with the colonial impact on the cultural, social and political lives of people in India and Bangladesh. The novel *The Hungry Tide* is bipartite comprising of – "The Ebb: Bhata" and "The Flood: Jowar" – and is set in the Sunderbans which is known as the world's largest mangrove ecosystem. . The name "Sunderbans" means "beautiful forest," and is located in the northern part of the Bay of Bengal. It stretches across coastal India and Bangladesh, from the Hoogly in West Bengal to the shores of the river Meghna in Bangladesh. It is the home of the Bengal tiger, and since the tiger is an endangered species, Government of India has taken steps to protect it by preserving its natural environments. This, however, has resulted in confrontations with the local populace, and that conflict is part of the history behind this novel. The narrative shows how history of the mangroves has itself undergone an analogous siltation process, where nothing is permanent and everything – the landscape, human society and relationships, is influenced by the precarious nature of the region.

The narrative revolves around the relationship between Kanai, Piya, and Fokir. Piya is a second-generation Indian-American cetologist who has come to the Sunderbans for her research on river dolphins. Due to her inability to speak the mother tongue of her parents, that is Bengali, she seeks the help of Kanai who is a professionally successful translator and interpreter and Fokir, a humble fisherman for searching river dolphins in the water bodies. Kanai was in the Sunderbans to visit his maternal aunt, Nilima. Decades

ago, Nilima's husband Nirmal had settled in one of the islands in Sunderbans in order to help homeless refugees. Fokir's mother Kusum was one of these refugees and it was the affection that Nirmal had for her which motivated him to help the displaced people in the island of Morichjhapi. Nirmal maintained a diary that was later passed on to Kanai by his aunt after his death. The narrative unveils the Morichjhapi incident that happened in the past and simultaneously describes Piya's relentless pursuit to work for the preservation of the rare aquatic species in the area.

In the novel, it is described that at the beginning of the twentieth century, a rich and visionary Scotsman called Sir Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton founded a settlement inspired by a Utopian vision. Hamilton wanted that in the area would be developed in a society where people of all races, classes and religions could live together 'without petty social distinctions and differences' (Ghosh, 53). He wanted to establish a new society, a new kind country: "It would be a country run by co-operatives.... Here people wouldn't exploit each other and everyone would have a share in the land" (Ghosh, 52). Soon people from other parts of the country such as Orissa and Eastern Bengal came to know about the news and migrated to the tide country in search of free land. The islands were populated with people who formed villages and Hamilton named these places. Necessities such as electricity, telephone, bank and currency were provided for them. It apparently seemed like the fulfilment of a utopian vision by a leading capitalist of Colonial India: "He dreamed of a place where men and women could be farmers in the morning, poets in the afternoon and carpenters in the evening" (53). However, Hamilton's vision could not be materialised as Sunderbans was not yet ready for Hamilton's progressive ideas. So, in his honour and memory, the names of the islands given by him and the estate he had founded were preserved. The geographical terrain of the Sunderbans as such serves as the chronotope¹ of the novel and is in itself a metaphorical representation of nature's resistance to be put into fixed categories and strict compartmentalization. In this tide country boundaries

collapse, diffuse, and become inconsequential: "...transformation is the rule of life...rivers stray from week to week, and islands are made and unmade in days." (Ghosh, 224) From Nirmal's journal, we come to know that:

These islands are the river's restitution, the offerings through which they return to the earth what they have taken from it, but in such a form as to assert their permanent dominion over their gift. The rivers' channels are spread across the land like a fine-mesh net, creating a terrain where the boundaries between land and water are always mutating, always unpredictable. Some of these channels are mighty waterways, so wide across that one shore is invisible from the other; others are no more than two or three kilometres long and only a few hundred metres across. Yet, each of these channels is a 'river' in its own right, each possessed of its own strangely evocative name. When these channels meet, it is often in clusters of four, five or even six: at these confluences, the water stretches to the far edges of the landscape and the forest dwindles into a distance rumour of land, echoing back from the horizon. In the language of the place, such a confluence is spoken of as a mohona – a strangely seductive word, wrapped in many layers of beguilement. There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea... (Ghosh, 6-7)

Thus continuously deceptive, the land bears a name, which is equally deceptive. Even though the place is called the Sundarbans, meaning *beautiful forest*, we are told, "At no moment can human beings have any doubt of the terrain's utter hostility to their presence, of its cunning and resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them"(Ghosh, 8) The siltation process is not only seen in the geographical terrain but also the history of the place. The narrative also gives the reader a glimpse of the myth of the forest deity Bonbibi and her nemesis Dakkhin Rai. The myth

and the local folk tales that simultaneously developed with it provide a fascinating history of the place. We are told that the Sunderbans has been known by various names. This multiplicity of names for the Sundarbans is also metaphor for its ephemeral state. The land itself is inconstant, subject radical transformation as a result of late summer storms and tide water. Whole islands are washed away by the cyclones that sweep in from the Bay with huge tidal surges. Thousands of human beings and animals routinely die here in natural disaster. As a character in the novel puts it: “*in the tide country, transformation is the rule of life: rivers stray from week to week and islands are made and unmade in days*” (Ghosh, 224). Here, for hundreds of years, only the truly dispossessed braved the tigers, crocodiles and sharks to eke out a precarious existence from the mud and the forest produce. The tide country is not simply a remote and hostile environment where nature can be studied in the raw. It is also a substantial human environment, where natural phenomena develop through interaction with mankind. It is in fact a zone of several different kinds of interaction, a zone of contact between different cultural, national, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities. The significance of the tide country is that it is a frontier territory, where different cultures have interacted for centuries. Initially, this takes the form of a particular challenge to a precise phase of European colonial history: the English imperialists are, as it were, the most recent generation of ghosts to have been erased from memory by the encroaching mangrove of the islands. Kanai explains to Piya that in the nineteenth century the area was taken over by British officials serving Lord Canning. The reason behind this was that the British were searching for a viable port in the Eastern part of India that would be as convenient for trade purpose as the Bombay port:

They got it in their heads...that they needed a new port, a new capital for Bengal-Calcutta's Hooghly River was silting up and its docks, they said, would soon be choked with mud. Jothariti, teams of planners and surveyors, went out and wandered the land,

striding about in wigs and breeches, mapping and measuring. And at last on the banks of the Malta they came to a place that caught their fancy, a little fishing village that overlooked a river so broad that it looked like a highway to the sea. (Ghosh, 284)

The town was named after Canning but it turned out to be a failed project for the British. Kanai's narration of the history of the island and his portrayal of the self-important officials in hats and wigs crossing and measuring the land shows a distinctive mockery of the whole phase of colonial rule when places would be named after the viceroys and other senior British officials. Thus Kanai's narrative etches out a new kind of cultural geography, in which the vestiges of the British rule not only survive as trace elements in place names but are also transformed into emblems of the defeat of British rule.

In the novel we find that there are different histories of dispossession and migration around the cultural significance of the island of Morichjhapi. Morichjhapi, with its past as the site of a major conflict between a group of powerless refugees and a dominant but brutal political force, becomes the focus for the novel's main conflict. When Kanai arrives at his Aunt Nilima's home in the tide country and begins reading his Uncle's journal where Morichjhapi is mentioned, he asks his aunt about the significance of the place. Nilima explains that the refugees were people without financial, commercial, or political power. Moreover, they are not only on the run from political displacement in their homes. Having arrived in India's frontier territory, the refugees soon discovered that they were not entirely welcome there either. They had thus been rounded up and taken to a “government resettlement camp in central India... to a place called Dandakaranya, deep in the forests of Mandhya Pradesh, hundreds of kilometres from Bengal” (Ghosh, 118). The revolution failed as the settlers were forcibly driven out of the island and it led to a large scale massacre where many men were killed and women were raped. The corpses of these people were thrown either into the rivers to be eaten by crocodiles and

sharks or into the tiger reserves. The ones who survived were sent back to Dandakaranya. It shows that the quest to reinvent their lives and make their own future proved futile. This narrative act on the part of Ghosh, locating political brutality in the depths of the dark jungle, suggests that *The Hungry Tide* is likely to enact its own voyage into a heart of political darkness:

The refugees were surrounded by security forces and forbidden to leave. Those who tried to get away were hunted down. (Ghosh, 118).

In this way, the challenge to colonial history becomes mapped onto an ongoing struggle of the weak against the tyrannical.

Thus *The Hungry Tide* is one of the most significant novels by Ghosh with its focus on certain issues of global concern. The narrative, however, provides no easy solutions as it ponders on the issue of man-nature conflict. Here, the author's greatest strength lies in the way he maps the geography of the human heart and the society and examines the nature of man's identity. Thus, it can be said that the novel depicts Ghosh's concern for the individual who is pitted against the broader geographical backdrop.

Notes:

- ¹ See the term "Cartography(Maps and Mapping)" in *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*

² It is used to describe an intellectual movement that took shape in the twentieth century especially reflected in the works of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre among others. It emphasizes on the significance on *place* and space in social sciences and the humanities. The critics associated with the spatial turn emphasized the power relations implicit in landscape.

³ Spatial Identity refers to the ways in which identities are constituted, articulated and contested in relation to space and place (Gregory, 712)

⁴ According to the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, Chronotope refers to a kind of matrix that allows cultural analysts to situate a work within its historio-geographical setting in order to facilitate its interpretation (Gregory, 83).

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Resonance of Parent-Child Relationship in Nadine Gordimer's Selected Novels

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Abstract:

Nadine Gordimer, a Nobel Prize winner for literature, is a distinguished South African literary intellectual and a social activist whose reputation has spread far and wide for her candid delineation of South African historical reality when the society has been crippled by the discriminatory policies of the Apartheid system. Along with Gordimer's keen awareness of the alterations occurred in socio-political ambiance, she is simultaneously responsive to the issues of individual lives and human relationships that have become more complex under the spell of prevailed socio-political conditions. Even the members of a particular family seem to disintegrate in this vortex of changed atmosphere as their aspirations, behaviors, and desires have been tremendously shaped by the external factors of life. The over imposition of parental authority upon the children has disturbed the warmth of the family ties as well as cast negative shadows on the young minds making their growth painful and full of disturbance. In this paper, with the help of two groundbreaking novels of Gordimer—The Burger's Daughter and The lying Days—a sincere attempt has been made to show how the problem of the parent-child relationships also have occupied a considerable volume in the overall body of her fictional world along with the most commonly discussed issues of racial segregation and the color issues of South African apartheid-ridden world.

Key Words: Race, Apartheid, Relationships and Family

Nadine Gordimer, one of the distinguished white African novelists is known for her authentic portrayal of the conditions of 'white' African minorities as being characterized by "state of isolation" since she has increasingly seen herself "as being separated from the majority of South Africans, in terms of race social environment and cultural heritage"(Herlitzius 97). She has condemned vehemently the atrocious apartheid system officially recognized by the white South African government trying to segregate the black people from the whites on the basis of color as being inferior to the latter to stand parallel in the global world. Her literary works appear to be the best embodiment that pragmatically portrays the cataclysmic consequences of the racial bigotry to the lives of the common people. Nadine Gordimer in her fictional works is very much genuine to represent the daughter-protagonists' relation to parental authority and tries to explore how families have conditioned the life of their children against their own needs and aspirations. In her novels like *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter* the common theme seems to be the inability and the powerlessness of a daughter to defy parents or the ideal as held by the family in spite of her bold attempts to defy it. The white colonial daughter in each case is enclosed within the family who feels alienated all the time and is always in search of a favorable global environment and the child protagonist under the repressive shadow of the family is deliberately forced to remain "mere raw human capital, primitive, untapped, not fully developed" (Boehmer 110) to cope up with the outer ambiance of apartheid-ridden South Africa.

Regarding the complex parent-child relationships Lynda Boose and Betty Flowers have appropriately written as,

Of all the binary sets through which we familiarly consider family relationships, the mother-daughter and father-daughter pairs have received the least attention, a hierarchy of value that isolates the daughter as the most absent member within the [social and cultural] discourse of the family institution.

(qtd in Boehmer 109).

Gordimer's two ground breaking novels—*The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter*—chart the common predicament of the two female protagonists namely Helen and Rosa, who sense the urgent need to find their own ways of life by liberating themselves from the parental claims in their respective familial world. A silent revolt against the parents seems to be the imperative issue in both the novels as their individual positions and subjective values are given less importance in the sphere of life. Like Nadine Gordimer, her protagonists also dream of the world where there is no controlling hand to curb the powers of the subjective views and opinions. They show an intense desire to smash every tie in the family asserting their own presence independently outside the authorial voice of their parents. But every endeavor is in vain as they eventually return to their own families.

The Lying Days is “a historical document of life in the Transvaal in the 1940s and early 1950s seen from the viewpoint of a young white nonconformist” (qtd in Nicholls 81) that records “the impotence of youthful decency” (81). It is a *bildungsroman* that focuses on growing socio-political consciousness and simultaneous personal development of a South African girl Helen Shaw who fervently criticizes racial discrimination and tyranny of apartheid regime leading to the oppression of the black people. It records the socio-political circumstances of the period that penetrate the personal life of a white family. It is seen that the most of Gordimer's novels are concerned with this fact whose writings are preoccupied with “interpenetration of public world of apartheid politics

and the apparently private spheres of the family, friendships, sexuality and indeed individual thought and feeling” (see McDonald). Even Gordimer herself has admitted the collision of the private life of people with the political life and circumstances of the age. She says,

“You see, in South Africa, society is the political situation. To paraphrase, one might say (too often) politics is character in SA... I didn't know what politics was about until I saw it all *happening to people*. If I've been influenced to recognize man as a political animal, in my writing, then that has come about through living in South Africa.”

(qtd in Zander 108)

The novel is unfurled in three parts explaining various stages of growth of the female protagonist Helen, the daughter of a mine official, starting from her secluded 'white' Mine community to the unexpected and shocking confrontation with the 'other' black ones in the concession store only used by the latter. The most significant aspect of the novel is the parent-child relationship that has shaped the whole course of action of the novel. Helen's mother strongly despises the neighbors of the black African community and she never wants her daughter to go to the “filthy kaffirs stores” (*The Lying Days*, Gordimer, 8) of those people containing “dirt and disease” (8). 'Kaffir' is an insulting and derogatory term meaning infidel, extensively used in Africa during apartheid in describing black people. Meeting these black people is “often condemned” (8) by her mother. The authorial voice of her mother has suppressed Helen's natural instincts of life making her mind crippled gradually. Her mother's “unrelenting imposition of ideals of white supremacy in all aspects of everyday life” (Carbajal 115) topples down the ideal mother-child relationship for which she becomes rebellious sometimes.

The tag like 'Kaffir' in it quite significant as it implicitly signals the network of racial segregation and spread out all over South Africa.

Gordimer in the novel has used a potent metaphor to mark out white Africa as, “a picnic in a beautiful

graveyard where the people are buried alive under your feet” (Gordimer 366). Helen’s mother plays a vital role giving the narrative its own shape who seems to possess an absolute control over Helen for which in spite of going out she always comes back to her mother due to her own powerlessness to go against the will of parents. As a white African woman, Helen is placed “on the pedestal of innocence and purity” (Visel 33) by her mother who is considered as a “vessel for the virtues of ‘whites civilization’ in the ‘heart of darkness’”. She is taught to hate and fear the black man” (Visel 33). It is a common feature of the portrayal of African white woman in the novels of Nadine Gordimer where the woman seems to be intellectually and emotionally alienated from white colonial society and at the same time physically barred from white Africa” (33). Even at the end of the narrative also Helen has not cut herself off from the legacy of her family or her race of colonizers and finally comes back to her own root. Though disregarding her mother’s advice Helen feels the need to ‘defect’ from South Africa to Europe her inability to do so signals about her acceptance of fate and to remain forever holding her own racial position as assigned by her family.

Again, Rosa Burger in *Burger’s Daughter* wants to grow independently who is quite unwilling to engage herself in political affairs that she has inherited from her parents. She has led a complicated relationship with her parents as she “must free herself from parental influence while also mourning parental loss” (Yelin 117). The tragedy that seems to haunt Rosa throughout the novel is that though she desperately tries to steer away from the political life by taking a job in an office but the inheritance of her father pursues her through all the time. She discovers that her own subjective position is not independent one; political situation, place and moment have created relational conditions around her own self thereby forcing her to compromise with them all. She falls between the division of political commitment and personal assertion of a sovereign identity. She has to resist every attempt of the people that want to put her in place of her parents. Rosa seems to be in a doubtful position as she is caught between

two different poles of life—the passionate desires to find her own self and the expectations of her parents and the people around her.

Rosa utters her predicament in the novel when she says, “I have lost connection” (*Burger’s Daughter*; Gordimer 171). She grieves that “she can neither come to terms with the past, nor let go of it; she can neither situate herself in the present political scene nor look toward the future” (Yelin 118). She seems to be “the most tragically affected of all Gordimer’s female protagonists” (qtd in Smith 174) who has realized that it is quite imperative for her to return to South Africa to assimilate herself with the revolutionary ideals upheld by her family and take up the social engagement she has all the way through tried to stay away from. Judie Newman has marked a dialectical paradigm in the life of Rosa saying that, “In the first movement we have Rosa together with her revolutionary inheritance; in the second she rejects this inheritance in favor of her personal life, in the third she reunites with that inheritance simultaneously finding her personal identity in becoming socially and historically committed” (Newman 63). The same incident has happened in Helen’s life also in *The Lying Days* as in spite of repeated desire to “defect” South Africa her life has experienced a complete circle to meet again with the center i.e. family. It is a pattern of “self-probation” (63) that can be perceived in Nadine Gordimer’s life as well as in her novels. In *Burger’s Daughter* the political life of apartheid has such a deep influence on personal and social life that it appears to be difficult to distinguish one life placing the other one on a separate platform. The parent-child relationships have been tremendously shaped by the political side of life as in the Burger’s family children appear to have a very few exclusive rights with their parents for whom any kind of close individual relationships is secondary to the ongoing apartheid movement. The protagonist feels so much alienated from the outer milieu that demands her commitment to getting engaged in the ongoing Communist movement led by her father Lionel Burger that she exclaims with sorrow and says, ‘I do not know how to live in Lionel’s country’ (*Burger’s*

Daughter, Gordimer, 213). Her community wants her to mold according to their own opportunities and political principles which are alien to a fourteen years old girl like Rosa. It is the white skin itself that torments her a lot among the black African majority. The extent of torment attains the peak point when her mother Mrs. Burger has convinced her for a fake engagement with a political hostage to carry messages into the jail regarding their movements.

The restlessness that can be perceived in the characters like Rosa and Helen is deeply embedded with the personal life of the novelist Gordimer. The simultaneous acting of the two forces—desire to leave South Africa and to stay with the family in South Africa—on these two white protagonists have also made a permanent place in Gordimer's thoughts and ideas. Her uncertain position as a white writer of Africa is manifested in the essay "Where do Whites fit in?"

I myself fluctuate between the desire to be gone—to find a society for myself where my white skin will have no bearing on my place in the community—and a terrible, obstinate and fearful desire to stay. I feel the one desire with my head and the other with my guts.

(qtd in Wagner 12)

The greatest misfortune of Rosa's life is that she is torn completely between the expectations of the family as well as of the communist society where she was born and her own need to lead a private life devoid of any commitments to her parents. Her entire life is shaped by the political canon of her parents that she cannot go against though she is the only surviving member of the Burger family. Her own demeanor and personality have been hammered and fashioned by the political necessities that obliquely have ruined their relationships. She is living "in the shadow" (Achiri 244) of her father who takes her rights away. Rosa's own distinctiveness is inseparably related to her father's identity as a white activist. She laments,

"I have no passport because I am my father's daughter" (*Burger's Daughter*, Gordimer, 59).

Rosa's final decision like that of Helen in *The Lying days* to stay with the family in South Africa signals her helplessness who cannot ignore socio-political realities of life. While depicting the subjectivities of the female protagonists like Helen and Rosa, the novelist appears to realize the fact that "the subject is... always already social, always connected with the contexts and histories of particular social and cultural worlds" and "any idea of subjectivity as individual consciousness, freedom and responsibility becomes problematic within a social context because what determines the individual being is not consciousness per se but the social and cultural world that shapes consciousness" (Sakamoto, 261). It is the socio-cultural situation of Apartheid in South Africa that has both directly and indirectly conditioned the individual lives living there. It is an inescapable force that directs all human actions in that tumultuous society. It can only be felt in the tears and sorrows of the people who have been tragically caught in this powerful force.

Like Helen in *The Lying Days*, Rosa also developed a kind of tendency to go away from her parental home in Africa in search of Katya, her father's first wife in France as she wants to 'defect' (*Burger's Daughter*, Gordimer, 272) from her father Lionel who was a white activist in the apartheid struggle and a leader of the South African Communist Party. But her attempt to go way from her parental bonds or from the demands of family to join politics like her parents seems to be futile as she realizes later her inability to do so. She believes that she cannot rid of "the ethical claims her father's political past places upon her" (Boehmer 109). As she is a progeny of an active communist leader, it is assumed by the other people that her individual views should echo her father's. Thus she appears to be trapped in a "hall of mirrors, an object in the eyes of other, her internal reality unknown" (Newman 69). Disregarding the aspirations of the people she has tried to unshackle herself from the inheritance of the Burger's family but finally failed. Rosa can be seen as having binary attitudes towards her family who sometimes seem to be proud of her father's work and dedication as a revolutionary, but

also occasionally she wishes to delink herself from the so called burden of her parental bequest. Her helplessness is reflected as she says, “No one can defect” (*Burger’s Daughter*, Gordimer, 343). The whole novel is identified by Louise Yelin as a “national family romance” (129) as it sets authentically a “family paradigm in a wider context” (173). The narrative is a lucid portrayal of the quest for the identity of Rosa; finding her own self amidst the apartheid regime of South Africa that has so much interfered with her family life making her parents a special part of it. The title of the novel “*Burger’s Daughter*” itself indicates the importance of seeing the protagonist Rosa as a daughter of someone who is not allowed to have own identity. Even in one of the chapters of it Rosa is introduced to the readers as a “schoolgirl in a brown and yellow uniform” (*Burger’s Daughter*, Gordimer, 3) and subsequently as “Lionel Burger’s daughter” (93). Throughout the novel, her tragedy is associated with the question of delinking herself from the supposed dictates of her parents. The question that seems to work in a pervasive design all through the novel is, “Can she become simply “Rosa” and not “Burger’s daughter”?” (145). The political ideology of Mr. Burger has emaciated her life destroying her dream of becoming someone special in the family as well as in the society. She exclaims with pain,

“I don’t know the ideology.

It’s about suffering.

How to end suffering.”

(*Burger’s Daughter*, Gordimer, 343-344).

The utmost tragedy for Rosa as depicted by Gordimer is that in spite her father’s physical nonappearance most of the time in the course of her life what resonates in the novel is the communist ideology of her father. But though she is all in all in her life and alive throughout the novel all people speak about her only in relation to her father’s political principles that she desperately despises.

One of the distinctive aspects of Gordimer’s presentation of female protagonists is that they are “more troubled about their moral position as citizens in

a racist country than they are about their position as women relating to men” (Roberts 45). Both Rosa and Helen seem to be preoccupied with the question that whether it is morally good to accept what their parents want them to do which is even though against their wishes. They seem to be in a dilemma as their “ideological commitments and political convictions are frequently in conflict with their personal needs and their place in the family” (Robert 45).

Exploring the differences in Gordimer’s portrayal of the two protagonists—Helen Shaw in *The Lying of the Days* and Rosa Burger in *Burger’s Daughter*—Robert Haugh is making a claim that though the two girls are of same ages there is a difference in their outlooks as unlike Rosa, Helen Shaw “does not ‘assume the dry harshness, the weary passivity and the scepticism which approaches misanthropy’ evident in the characters of the later novels” (qtd in Robert 46). Rosa seems to have more understanding of life who has boldly asserted her arguments when the question of parental legacy has come to the forefront. She represents the maturity of mind of the novelist also whose life has been permeated in the two novels. The legacy of family and parental influence on Helen is distinctly manifested in *The Lying Days* whose tragedy is that though she asserts her own freedom and independence and quarrels with her mother regarding the issue of racial problem “she herself suffers cruelly from the disaffection, especially in the knowledge that both parents love her” (46). Her final decision to stay with her parents in South Africa has marked the fact that parents are inalienable for her though oppressive sometimes. She cannot unshackle herself from the chain of the family. The novelist here identifies the parent-child relationship as “unkillable fibre” present in the body.

Making them over would be getting rid of them as they are. Well, you cannot do it. You cannot do it by going to live somewhere else, either. You can’t even do it by never seeing them again for the rest of your life. There is that in you that is them, and it’s that unkillable fibre of you that will hurt you and pull you off balance

wherever you run to—unless you accept it. Accept them in you, accept them as they are, even if you choose to live differently, and you'll be all right.

(*The Lying Days*, Gordimer 122)

The two novels *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter* may be regarded as “fictionalized [autobiographies]” (Newman 177) that possesses many elements of Gordimer's own life in South-Africa. The decisions taken by both Helen and Rosa of not leaving South Africa signals the same tendency in Gordimer who in an interview with *New York Time* herself declares, “To go into exile is to lose your place in the world” (Visel 35).

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Attia Hosain's Novel on Partition : Insights into Trauma, Loss and Change

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The Partition left both India and Pakistan devastated. The process claimed many lives in the riots. Many women (both Hindu and Muslims) were raped and many people were looted. Fifteen million refugees poured across the borders to regions completely foreign to them, for though they were Hindu or Muslim, their identity had been embedded in the regions where their ancestors were from. It is ironical that several years after the partition, the two nations are still trying to heal the wounds left behind by this incision to once-whole body of India.

There were umpteen violences in 1946 and 1947, the magnitudes of which were unprecedented, the kind of which had not even occurred previously during the British rule. The partition divided the Indian subcontinent into two separate sovereign states and there were mainly three principal 'players' behind this political event, namely: the British authorities, the leaders of the Indian National Congress, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League. All these three participated in greater or lesser degree in the creation of a communal discourse.

Attia Hosain is an early Muslim novelist and a short story writer. The experiences reflected in her novel and short stories express her nostalgia for the past. They also express the sordid realities of women's marginalization, and feudal exploitation. She had been much fascinated by the nationalist movements of her age.

Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*- first published in 1961, is a classic novel containing the portrayal of Muslim life and the traditional feudal society into which the author was born, during the pre-partition days. The work is based upon an insider's

view of her everyday experiences, who is an elite woman. Along with individual experiences of the novelist, national history too runs parallel to the narrative which impinges upon the identity of the Muslim women. A contextual reading is imperative in order to assess various other aspects of the novel. At the outset of the novel we are shown how the two institutions, namely: feudalism and patriarchy are conspicuous by their tenacious hold over the society.

The novel is to a great extent autobiographical in nature. Laila's observations of socio-political events of mid-twentieth century had their ramifications on the novelist's own life, her family and her community. They are indeed the extensions of Hosain's own experiences. The world of Laila is a reflection of Attia Hosain's contemporary society.

The realistic portrayal of the social life she draws contains scenes of gender oppression and marginalization and discriminations –that are results of the class-consciousness. This makes the readers convinced about the author's progressive outlooks. It is obvious that her personal faith or religion does not play any role in her political thinking. Of course, she never shuns religion altogether; she adopts the same in so far as it supplements to her humanitarian ethos. Attia's secular views can be comprehended fully in terms of the catastrophic effects of the partition – in which, millions of innocent beings had to fall prey to the religious dogmatism.

The writer makes a sensitive enquiry into the so called cultural differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. Taking a wider view of their separate national identities, she finds that the cultural difference indeed has been the false dichotomy which was an outcome of a political vision of parochial nature. She

argues that there were individual motives “of getting a better life” that led to the partition of India. It is in this context that the narrative brings out a realistic picture of the Hindu- Muslim relationship till 1930 along with a reference to the Shia - Sunni sectarian strife.

The society presented in the novel, comprising Baba Jan, his friends Mr. Freemantle, Raja of Ameerpur, and Thakur Balbir Singh exemplify the composite and secular culture of Lucknow elites. The beginning of intolerance, promoted by the vested interests of the colonizer is hinted at. Saleem’s remark can be illustrative of the same:

What can you expect from a religion which forbids people to eat and drink together? When even a man’s shadow can defile another? How is real friendship or understanding possible? (197)

The narrative also unfolds how an irreconcilable kind of schism between the two communities did appear and how with the passage of time the splendour of shared culture came to be eroded. In place of the ubiquitous multi-religious and plural social circle of Baba Jan, “...a new type of person now frequented the house. Fanatic bearded men and young zealots would come to see Saleem.”

The writer ingeniously implants the conversations of Hamid and Saleem as they bear the shades of communal politics and the different roles of Muslim League and Congress. By doing this, the narrator juxtaposes two different streams of thoughts of the Muslim community of the Pre-Partition India. Uncle Hamid as a true successor of Baba Jan’s secular ideology espousing peaceful co-existence of both the communities (“I always found it was possible for Hindus and Muslims to work together on a political level and live together in personal friendship.”)(234) Saleem echoes views of the nationalist Muslims represented by the Muslim League (Saleem : “ ...the Congress has a strong anti- Muslim element in it against which the Muslims must organize. The danger is great because it is hidden, like an iceberg. When it was just a question of fighting the British progressive forces were uppermost; but now that power is to be acquired, now the submerged reactionary elements will surface. Muslims must unite against them” (233).

The story of the novel has been narrated through the consciousness of Laila and it automatically unfolds her intellectual development (it virtually fulfils the criterion of bildungsroman: story of an individual’s growth and development within the context of a defined social order). The process of development is defined in terms of the individual’s quest for identity and meaningful existence in the contemporary social set up. Laila’s attainment of maturity, and her realisation of the quest of identity do not crystallize all of a sudden; it evolves through a process which also involves experiencing and witnessing of clashes between the individuals’ aspirations, needs, desires and the value system entailed by the social order in which the ‘participants’ live. The novel ends in the protagonist’s feeling of a reassurance regarding the stability and order of her society.

A plethora of specific events accentuates the narrator’s intellectual development from childhood to maturity. The protagonist (Laila) is a member of a highly patriarchal set up. Having lost her parents at an early age, she lives with her paternal grandfather and is cared for by her father’s unmarried sister: Abida. In this quasi- autobiographical novel, Laila’s social and political ideas bear the imprints of her creator Attia Hosain. Though the novel appeared in 1961, it covers as much as two decades: from 1932 to 1952, a crucial period for the Indian sub-continent, which is marked by a socio-political upheaval of unprecedented kind.

Laila’s awareness of the power politics played by the patriarchy is apparent in her vivid narration. The claustrophobic nature of the things inside the house, which is also an important keynote of the novel, is hinted at the very outset of the narrative in the description of the overall atmosphere prevailing inside the house: “ ...the sick air, seeping and spreading, through the straggling house, weighed each day more oppressively on those who lived in it.”(14) In this context reference may also be made to Laila’s remark about her grandfather: Surely he could not die, this powerful man who lived the lives of so many people for them, reducing them to fearing automatons(.31). These words reveal Baba Jan’s patriarchal authority, whose presence will prevail even after his death in the form of Uncle Hamid. Even the description of Baba Jan’s drawing room is metaphoric of the patriarchal

control. The coloured panes of the arched doors symbolize the patriarchal power of Baba Jan, whereas the light is symbolic of necessity of the freedom for the women of the house. The light of freedom is stymied by the patriarchal control. Instead of light, only shadows flicker in the vast room.

Into this vast room the coloured panes of the arched doors let in not light but shadows that moved in mirrors on the walls and the mantelpiece, that slithered under chairs, tables and divans, hid behind marble statues, lurked in giant porcelain vases and nestled in the carpets.(18)

In an argument, Laila's friend Nita accuses Laila of being a stereotypical Muslim woman. Laila's response evinces her distinctive and mature approach to education: "I believe my education will make me a better human being."(125) Nita's approach towards education is materialistic. She views it only as a dependable means to earn a living. For Aunt Abida, education means imbibing a sense of duty whereas Aunt Saira perceives women's education as an embellishment to fit in the new roles assigned to wives. Uncle Hamid views education as an instrument that can liberalize the individual. However, when it comes to personal matters like Asad's preferences in education and Laila's in marriage, he is very conservative. It is imperative to contextualize these views as in Attia's contemporary society emphasis was being laid on reforms even as there existed a widespread proclivity to safeguard Muslim identity from the cultural onslaught of British colonialism. The "responsibilities in this changing world" (109-110) meant women had to keep the family space uncontaminated. There was a dichotomy between female and male arenas. "Home" was destined as an arena for women, keeping them out of public realm and social sphere was the deemed space for their male counterparts. There was some slow growth of awareness about female education from the point of view of its role to prepare them as a blend of Eastern values and Western modernity so that women may enhance the social status of their husbands. Baba Jan's views on education echo various reform movements in the Muslim community of pre-partition era.

At the end of the last century Baba Jan had been influenced by ideas of reform among Muslims and had

sent his sons to English universities. He had thought the weapons of foreigners should be used against them to preserve inherited values and culture. To copy their way was abhorrent to him. (86)

The writer sheds light upon an important aspect of the Muslim elites of Lucknow through the depiction of Mushtari Bai: the courtesan. The houses of the courtesans were frequented by Muslim aristocrat youth in order to learn "...the manners, etiquette, and refinement of which there is no equivalent in Hindu society." Ironically, the courtesans were used as preservers of culture, and simultaneously were marginalized for the false notion of morality. The moral turpitude of the elite class males is not condemned. Mushtari Bai is sullenly treated by Hakimian Bua, and Ustaniji. She becomes the victim of pseudo morality in her old age. The money she earned was considered tainted. In order to expiate her sins, she doled out all her wealth to the charities. Making an oblique criticism of the so called cultured people visiting these houses(with an empathy to the Bais) the writer describes them as: "...young men and old, in silk and brocaded and embroidered achkans and rakish caps".(65) The dance performance arouses their sensuality that is expressed through their "naked eyes" (65) Attia glorifies the artistry of these singers in terms of "dignity of profession" (65), though as a matter of fact, the profession of a singer was subjected to the worst type of exploitation in the form of prostitution. The feudal landlords maintained these courtesans or singers as their mistresses. In spite of that, in the novel Mushtari Bai and a few other courtesans present themselves as the embodiments of profound humanitarian sensitivity and dignity. Saving of Asad's life by the courtesans and Mushtari Bai's maintenance of her dignity even in her utter penury can be read in this context.

Attia's is a subtle cultural study of her contemporary society. Laila's character can be better understood in relation to Zahra. She encounters a totally different world at school. Her predicament can be perceived through Nadira's remark: "we are paying for being the product of two cultures." (211) Though unlike Zahra, she never wears a veil, her life is encumbered by the diktats of patriarchy. Her in-between state is attributed to her education and the

atmosphere of the outside world: "I felt I lived in two worlds, an observer in an outside world and solitary in my own." (124) Unlike Laila, Zahra's appreciation of traditions assimilates her into the ethos of the society.

The novel is an account of the nature of the emerging Indian nation and the emerging national identities. Besides, as a narrative of partition, it presents a feminine view of the nation formation and national identities (the novel represents a Muslim woman's point of view in nation formation) contrary to the version of 'official' nationalism, which is in nature a 'male-narrative' of nationalism (where an 'author claims the authority to speak on behalf of the entire nation and its diverse inhabitants). The narrative is so written as to counter the British justification of the colonization of India (for instance, they claimed that they rescued the Indian women from a debauched and degenerating social system). Instead of treading the path of the British justification of the colonization, Attia attempts to show that British colonialism instead came to further aggravate the condition of the Indian women. In order to emulate the ethos of their western counterparts, women were subjected to a new and more strident patriarchal code of conduct in the public space.

In the second part of the novel the author focuses on the responses of Muslim elites to anti-colonial struggle. The narrative presents an account of the tumultuous period of anti-colonial resistance, marked by the conflict with the British. She also exposes the sectarian and communal divide. Laila's search for identity and her progress of individuation are concomitant to the nationalist struggle. She grows her awareness of her capabilities to get past the patriarchal set up simultaneously with the awakening of the Indian masses to a mass resistance against the colonizer.

In the novel, the writer's vision of shared identity and secularism dominates over the dissenting voices that espouse a separate nation on the basis of cultural and religious divides. About the basic objective behind the writing of the novel, the novelist states:

I wanted to write about that agonizing heart break when we were all split up and a brother could not see

a brother and a mother could not be with her dying son and families that had been proud to always collect together. When there were weddings or deaths or births or anything, cannot be together.

Sunlight on a Broken Column is the first novel, written by a Muslim centring around the theme of the divisions of Muslims between Congress and Muslim League.

What is shown in the novel is the fact that more than anything else, it was personal ambitions of a few that were at the root of partition. In order to fulfil the dreams of a better future, the people took recourse to religion as a tool. Thus Hosain in her novel: *Sunlight on a Broken Column* makes a graphic and poignant presentation of Partition from her own experiences. The novel sharply brings out the undergoing change; the individual lives suffer a change just as the country's political situation changes. It deals with a young woman's personal crisis set against the larger historical background of communal hatred.

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Earth as Home : Interrogating Place in the Selected Short Stories of Temsula Ao

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Abstract:

The concept of place has always been a fundamental aspect in literature-environment studies. Sense of place is always associated with home. The different approaches and perspectives to discuss the idea of home make the study of home quite interesting. Key- issues like colonialism, partition, nationalism, exile, post colonialism, gender, diasporic space among others make home both an interesting as well as a complex field of study. With so many theoretical view - points, the idea of home switches from the physical or concrete to both intellectual and ideological. The aim of this paper is to discuss the concept of home in the selected short stories of Temsula Ao from the ecological standpoint. It adopts the ecocritical perspective in showing that home is a place which is inseparable in shaping the idea of the self and the community.

Key words : Home, Environment, Self, Identity, De-territorialization.

According to the *Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary* a 'home' is "the house or flat/apartment that you live in, especially with your family". It also refers to "the town, district, country, etc., that you come from, or where you are living and that you feel you belong to". Therefore 'home' refers to the physical as well as the mental space where a person undergoes a sense of belongingness, a sense of familiarity.

The aim of this paper is to show that while Place as a physical, psychological and environmental

construct shapes one's identity, Temsula Ao alters these construction to create a sense of home in a trouble ridden place where only violence and destruction prevail. In this context my attempt will be to see how she presents her landscape, how the characters interact with their place or environment and could there be any clashes or conflicts in that interaction?

The concept of place has always been a fundamental aspect in literature-environment studies. Sense of place is always associated with home. We cannot separate the history of human culture, civilization and their way of life from nature. Nature, forests, trees become a home of faith, a source of spirituality and also of religion. To several indigenous people around the world the forests are their home. Thus nature can be instrumental for the construction of identities – both personal and social. The idea of home is not similar among all the writers of Northeast India. Some of them identify themselves within their own village while others locate themselves in the larger frame work.

In *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures* (2002), Donelle N. Dreese describes place as "a physical, psychological, ideological, historical, and environmental construct where writers challenge and alter these constructions in order to create a habitable place or home" (3). From the title of her short story collection: *These Hills Called Home* we can assume that for Temsula Ao home is an environmental construct. But the subtitle: *Stories from a War Zone*

contains a different suggestion and this gets her explanation in the preface of the book: “have their genesis in the turbulent years of bloodshed and tears that make up the history of the Nagas in the early fifties of the last century, and their demand for Independence from the Indian state” (*These Hills Called Home* x).

The thick jungle that pervades all over Nagaland is the home of those people who are fighting for their motherland. The first story of the collection, “The Jungle Major” is about Punaba who like many others is “caught in the new wave of patriotic fervor that swept the imagination of the people and plunged them in to a struggle...” to liberate their home land from foreign rule (*These Hills Called Home* 2). The core of this story is that once when Punaba, the leader of nationalist movement, is with his wife, Khatila, the guards have fallen asleep and the police are almost on the verge of catching him when Khatila’s creative plan of making Punaba pretend to be her dumb servant helps him flee into the very heart of Mother Nature, these very jungles. The jungles nurture him, give him the strength and refuge and allow him to work on till he retires. Thus, jungle became a place of familiarity, a place of security. He finds a sense of belongingness in these jungles rather than the concrete home where his family resides.

The theme of jungle is continued in another story entitled “Shadows”. The story begins as:

It was a sunny day. For the first time in six days, the sun’s rays had penetrated the thick foliage of the jungle. Washed clean by the heavy rains, the leaves were shining like the newly-washed hair of maidens spread out in the open to dry. Steam rose from the grounds as the dampness if the soil gave way.... (*These Hills Called Home* 69)

The above gives us a serene picture of the jungle. If the jungle is taken as a euphemism for the Nagaland movement, this exquisite representation gives us a clue of the movement; how they remain almost out of sight mostly in their home, i.e. the jungles.

Donelle N. Dreese in *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures* points out that there is no place more influential in the development of the human identity than the place where one grows up (2). Nature plays an important role in the life of these Nationalists. From the childhood they have seen these jungles, played in the jungles, went to collect their daily needs. So making jungle as their home is not difficult for them. During their stay in the jungles, they learn how to keep pace in the jungle without creating a single sound and reproduce the sound of birds and animals for communication. They become like the creatures of the jungle, one with the jungle. Punaba in the earlier story has become one such creature of the jungle. This is the case of every freedom fighter, each and every individual who are fighting for the Naga movement.

Forest here becomes the ‘collective home’ to all the Naga Nationalists who are fighting for their distinct identity. Thus Theano S. Terkenli in the essay “Home as a Region” rightfully asserts, “Collective home may be delineated by ethnic, nationalistic, civic or geographical parameters. As the sense of a collective home is connected to the past and to the future, ethnicity and nationalism constitute powerful poles of attachment” (326).

But what about the ordinary people who are living in the villages? Do they consider jungle as their home, a space for comfort and belongingness? In day to day lives, people interact with their surroundings personally as well as culturally. Therefore the concept of home differs from person to person as a result of their own individual choices that are “structured by purpose, custom, desire and circumstances” (Terkenli 324).

The background of the stories is the struggle going on for an independent Nagaland. To assert their distinct identity, the Naga nationalist resorted to arms and ammunitions disturbing the peace and serenity of the region. To combat with the nationalists government forces have been employed. In the combat between the nationalists and governmental forces the common people who are the civilians of this region get victimized.

Curfew, 'groupings' are daily routine of the governmental forces. "The word 'grouping' had a much more sinister implication; it meant that whole village would be dislodged from their ancestral sites and herded them into new ones..." (*These Hills Called Home* 11). This strategy employed by the governmental force forced the civilians to leave their homes and migrate in a new home collectively. This new home is the abode of mental torture and physical violence "denying them access to their fields, restricting them from their routine activities, and most importantly demonstrating to them that the 'freedom' they enjoyed could be easily robbed at gunpoint by 'invading' army" (*These Hills Called Home* 11).

One's physical home did not continue to be a secure place of peace and serenity. As a result of the mental and physical tortures meted by the forces of the authorities, the people living in the villages find a space for security in the jungles. The only voice that could heard was: "Run to the jungle, Run to the jungle" (*These Hills Called Home* 98), the only plea for survival and shelter. It was this jungle which sustained them, nourished them, which allowed them to survive and also provided unending defense in the times of troubles. Therefore, "Home not only encompasses the sense of place but also an environment in which people feel accepted and loved for who they are and where they are free from oppressive forces"(Dreese 47). Thus, we see that these villagers tried to recover the sense of home in these jungles where they find peace and security in response to the various forms of displacement caused by the oppression of the armed forces of the government. Apart from the sense of belongingness security also becomes fundamental in defining the concept of home. Thus we see that jungle as a home is structured by individual choices. For Punaba and other Nationalist the choice of jungle as a home is structured by purpose and desire where as for the villagers it is structured by the circumstances.

Forest or nature can also be a source for self-identification which differentiates the self from the other. In the story "The Pot Maker" Sentila wanted to be a pot maker like her mother. But her mother

wanted her to take the weaving tradition. The mother said, "Do you know how far is that wretched place from this village?" (*These Hills Called Home* 58). "wretched place" was the forest that she was referring to, but this "wretched place" was a place that her daughter longed for. She was at her home, but she always kept thinking of the forest where she could get the suitable mud for pot making. She was physically at home but mentally and emotionally she was at the forest. Thus, nature also becomes a mental and emotional space where Sentila could fulfill her dreams. At the end of her story she became the perfect pot maker like her mother. Forest thus becomes the home which provided her inspiration and also gave her an identity of her own.

Home is a space that indicates a sense of place for the dweller. In the story "Laburnum for my Head" we see that though Lentina is at home she constantly tries to find a space in the natural world. Lentina does not feel a sense of place in her home which is a comfortable place with all the luxuries. Her heart wants to remain outside and see the laburnum trees growing and blooming. Her every attempt of planting a laburnum tree fails and she decides to grow laburnum trees on her grave site instead of a headstone. As soon as the laburnum trees bloomed at her grave site her soul left her body to unite with nature.

Thus, physical landscape has an effect on human development along with culture, language, history, social practices and so on. If we do not find that sense of connection in a place, we tend to create our own space, our own home where we can find a sense of belongingness, where we are comfortable with ourselves as well as others.

From the above discussions we have seen that for the people of Nagaland nature becomes their home sometimes physically, at times mentally and emotionally. What about the attitudes of the people living in towns? Is there any conflict in their interaction with the environment? In the preface to *These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone*, Temsula writes:

The sudden displacement of the young from a placid existence in rural habitats to a world of conflict and confusion in urban settlements is also a fall out of recent Naga history and one that has left them disabled in more way than one. (x)

The writer feels that the young generations have swept away with the tides of modernization forgetting their ancestral history- the link between man and nature. They do not consider Nature as their home as they find comfort in the concrete homes in the urban areas. In the story “Soaba” Ao writes, “ a new environment was emerging and over taking the old ways, and young stars growing up in such places began to think as the new generation” (*These Hills Called Home* 10). People preferred “urban life to a life of hard work and meager returns in the villages” (*These Hills Called Home* 10). Forest which was once the provider, protector and giver of life is destroyed by the anthropogenic activities of the society. The forest is no longer the home of the ethnic people of Nagaland.

The sense of place is challenged by the ongoing process of development and globalization. The de-territorialization has started (de-territorialization refers to “the detachment of social and cultural practice from their ties to places” (Heise 158). As we have moved to a new world from the natural world, we are becoming alienated from nature and this alienation causes destruction to the natural world. We have become strangers to the same land which we once used to call our home.

In the story “Flight”, Tamsula Ao lends a voice to a caterpillar. Picked up from the wide open home it is then placed inside a shoebox. The caterpillar says: “At that instant, my former life of wide open spaces and bright sunlight vanished and the new one of intermittent light and darkness began” (*Laburnum for my Head* 105). The caterpillar feels alienated in the limited space and desperately longs to go out to the open – his own space. “I began to feel restless and longed for the open space of my earlier life” (*Laburnum for my Head* 106). The caterpillar is transformed in to a butterfly and flapping wings he flies away. While flying the worm

within him says, “Fly, you are on your own universe now, fly to your destiny” (*Laburnum for my Head* 107).

This story could be a metaphor to relate to both man and animals. Once we are uprooted or transferred from a long-time place of residence, we become restless; we feel alienated from our home and thus the memories of past haunts us.

Tamsula Ao pinpoints the aspects of spiritual connection that all living creature have towards their dwelling place. It reinforces the idea that earth is a vital place upon which we all live including man, animals and all other species. This connects the earth to a larger cosmic sphere.

Concluding remarks:

Thus, we can conclude that the idea – forest as the home is different from one character to another. These narratives are the evidence that the theme of forest is present in almost all the stories, but the attitudes of the characters are different. For the Naga nationalists, jungle becomes a perfect home. The common people accept forest as their home only in times of trouble and because of the circumstances. The memory of a peaceful home always haunts. They always return to their village after the trouble is over. So village is the home of the common people. To some people forest is the mental and emotional space where they could build their identity of the self. Yet for another section of people forest is the home providing profit.

Tamsula Ao in these stories has endeavored to reclaim a sense of home found in the natural setting in response to various form of displacements. Thus, we have seen that Tamsula Ao locates her idea of home in a place which offers a sense of security, sense of belongingness, a sense of mental peace.

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To like or not to like “Gauri” in Jhumpa Lahiri’s “The Lowland”

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Abstract:

Conventionality and accepting one’s fate and destiny without questioning is generally regarded to be the ideal way for a woman to conduct herself. Society bestows upon a woman a stereotypical role who needs to perform her duties within set patterns of relationships. It does not offer her any chance to voice her own opinion regarding her position, and is least bothered about whether she is happy and comfortable within that bond or not. In “The Lowland” by Jhumpa Lahiri, Gauri challenges this stereotype all the time. She is not a conventional wife to Subhash, nor she is a stereotypical mother to Bela. Her life is a compromise after the death of her first husband: Udayan. Udayan was killed by the Police for being an active member of the Naxalite Movement. Gauri is an interesting character of the novel who can be treated from different levels of perception. The un-motherly Gauri might have been a victim of Postpartum Depression; also, her life might have taken the traditional route, had Udayan been alive. The human Psyche, according to Sigmund Freud, is made up of more than ninety percent of the unconscious. In this article, an attempt has been made to give Gauri a fair deal with a special insight into her range of emotions expressed and displayed in specific situations without overlooking the drawbacks in her.

Keywords— *Conventionality, Stereotype, Un-motherly mother, Postpartum Depression, Insurgency.*

The identity of a woman is to a great extent Social Construct. She is expected to fall into the conventional line of behaviour and conduct, toeing the traditional tenets of role-play as handed down by the legacies of generations. However, women of today have come to question and challenge such legacies by refusing to follow the diktats of conventionality. Since literature mirrors the society, desires, repressed urges, cravings, ambitions, imagination, apprehensions of the women too find their apt representations through literature. In all forms and genres of literature, writers, especially women writers have been trying to catch these nuances. As one of the most recognized and respected names in the world of Fiction today, Jhumpa Lahiri has been able to carve a niche for herself for portraying realistic characters. In her fictions, the characters make themselves conspicuous by trying to break the mould of stereotypes all the time. Her “The Lowland” could be illustrative of this. The novel telling us the story of two brothers: Subhash and Udayan has as its setting the Naxalite Movement. Indeed, the idea of writing a novel at the backdrop of the Naxalite Movement dawned on her after she had heard a true story related to the Insurgent Movement during one of her visits to India.

Gauri is the common factor in the lives of both the brothers. Udayan (a Naxalite activist) marries her

and upon his killing by the Police, Subhash marries her and takes her to America (Rhode Island) with him (where he is a professor). Gauri gives birth to Bela (Udayan's daughter) and it is Subhash who tries his utmost to shower the warmth of parenthood upon Bela. Taking a divergence from the path of conventionality, Gauri does not hero-worship Subhash for rescuing her from the eventuality of widowhood. She flings herself into the pursuit of research and is able to secure both Ph. D and a teaching job. On her engagement she goes to California, leaving behind both Subhash and Bela in Rhode Island. Once the meek and reticent girl now transforms herself who pursues her dreams even at the cost of provisionally abandoning her family. The change in Gauri as the outcome of the circumstances makes an interesting reading, more particularly because this new appearance of her contains the syndrome of her preparing for challenging the stereotype.

In the photograph that Udayan had earlier sent to Subhash in America, Gauri looked "compelling without being pretty" {pg-46}; her complexion was deep enough to be considered a flaw; besides, "she prefers books to sari's and jewels" {46}. Udayan gave her to read Karl Marx's *Manifesto*, *Confessions* by Rousseau and Felix Green's book on Vietnam seeking intelligent inputs from her. To Udayan, she was a "person most at ease with her books" {59}. At Calcutta, She had been evidently most happy with her books of Philosophy, which she read on the terrace of the house that she shared with her brother: Manash.

We however ought not be surprised by the ease with which she could decide to leave for going away to California leaving behind Bela and Subhash, for in her childhood also she had never resented her parents for not raising her themselves. She had been brought up by her grandparents in Calcutta and "she appreciates them for letting her go her own way" {57}. According to Udayan, Autonomy to her came by circumstances from them. He too was much fascinated by her voluntarily opting for living apart from her parents.

Our sympathy lies with Subhash and Bela when Gauri leaves them with a casual letter. She writes: "I

have not made this decision in haste.....You tried your best. I tried my best too, but not as well....." {211}. We are appalled for she is not outright guilty for leaving her immediate family and she never feels the need to hear Bela's voice or to enquire about her. Subhash was warned by his mother against his marrying of Gauri, according to whom "she is too withdrawn, too aloof to be a mother" {114}. Age and experience might have enabled Bijoli, Subhas' mother to make such forebodings. Subhash too later feels awefully strange that while it was impossible for him 'to ration and restrict' his affection to Bela given her tenderly age, 'it was not the same on Gauri's end' {159}. Besides, whenever Subhash would bring up the topic of having a child from them both, Gauri restrained herself to yield to the former's desire: "though she had become a wife a second time. Becoming a mother again.....she was determined to prevent from happening" {161}.

Yet, Gauri apparently does not hesitate much in taking the supports from the other in Bela's upbringing who feels relieved at Subhash's cares of Bela. Subhash too tries to spare times for taking care of Gauri's daughter. Gauri is rather "afraid of dropping her daughter" {145} and recoils from taking practical care of her. She is afraid Bela might get her head snapped back and her neck broken and therefore seeks support from Subhash in holding the baby. The un-motherly Gauri might have been a victim of Postpartum Depression, something which affects a small percentage of mothers of new born babies. Some of the symptoms of this syndrome are: sadness, anxiety, irritability, feeling of emptiness and numbness and not feeling bonded to the baby.

Whenever Gauri would be alone with Bela, she felt a "dependence that restricted her mentally, physically" {163}. She would then accept the fact that the "task of raising Bela was not bringing meaning to her life" {164}. She is honest enough to admit that "she was failing at something that every other women on earth did without trying.....but Gauri feared

.....it was no longer possible to swim up to Bela, to hold on to her”{164}. Once when Bela had wanted to skip school and to stay at home with Gauri, she had not relented. The narrator says that another mother might have indulged her and yielded to her insistence to stay at home.{169}. Things take a gory turn as Gauri starts leaving Bela in the house alone for going out for errands (which could have been avoided) in the afternoons. Gauri in doing this enjoys a peculiar sensation of freedom: “devouring the sensation as a beggar devours food”{174}. This has made Subhash furious, but he controls his angst and just tells her that his mother was indeed right in her foreboding about her: “you don’t deserve to be a parent. The privilege was lost on you”{175}.

Though Subhash bestows upon Bela all the warmth that a parent could shower upon his child (It was Subhash who helped her brush her teeth, change her clothes and tuck her into bed), yet to Gauri, Subhash cannot fill the vacuum left by Udayan in her heart. She is yet to be dependent on Subhash because Bela needs a Father. His attachment towards her is but instinctive and based on genuine love. One may read Bela’s reassurance to him: “I love you more than anybody loves anybody” 156} in this context. After Gauri goes away, Bela refuses to admit her absence and sense of loss. Though she tries to cope with it, she fails to get rid of the feeling of abandonment and ultimately has to see a Psychiatrist for necessary consultations. Upon knowing her relationship with Udayan, Bela tries to make sense as to why Gauri had left. As for Gauri, she never cares to pretending her displeasure in front of Bela. The festering pain inflicted by her mother makes Bela to resolve never to marry herself. “The unhappiness between her parentsthe most basic awareness of her life”{258}. Thus, it is logical of Bela to be indignant and bitter towards Gauri when she comes in person to hand over the divorce papers after four decades. Bela says to her: “Get out. Go back to whatever it was more importantI can’t stand the sight of you.....Nothing excuses what you did”{312}.

Failing to control her anguish and rage, Bela bursts out: “You are dead to me as he is . The only difference is that you left me by choice”{313}.

However, in spite of all her weaknesses Gauri cannot be regarded as an evil person ; she is neither mentally sick nor a pervert. Jhumpa Lahiri in her portrayal of the character mainly focuses upon her unconventionality. She draws her with such sensitive details that the reader is convinced about presence of such people like her. Sigmund Freud had said that personality is constructed from Id, Ego and Superego. Id is the sexual and aggressive instincts concerned with immediate gratification. Ego is the rational part of the mind, and Superego is a person’s conscience and is concerned with moral judgements and guilt. Gauri’s Ego is not conventional, though her Superego is not entirely lost. The human Psyche, according to Sigmund Freud, is made up of more than ninety percent of the unconscious. The character of Gauri effectively relates to this very concept of the unconscious presented to us by Freud.

There is also the scopes for considering Gauri epitomizing the Indian Mythology’s Goddess of Power. The writer aptly names her as Gauri, for she in her own way has been consistently challenging the stereotype: challenging her role as a wife, mother and as a sympathizer of a movement. Though inwardly guilty of her participation in the Insurgent activities, she is strong enough not to tell anything to Dipankar , who is writing a book on the Naxalite Movement. She tries to assimilate, but always alienated. She leads an uncertain future. She does not fit into any system of conventionality. How can one, who has been made so by the circumstances, be censured right away for not discharging the ideal duties of a so called good wife and mother?

Gauri must be seen and perceived as an impulsive Feminist who could be matching only to Udayan (not to Subhash and Bela). Even in his death, Udayan remains omnipresent throughout the rest of the novel. She could find fulfilment in life only with Udayan. After

his death, life to her becomes nothing but a compromise. May be, should Udayan had been alive, Gauri would have behaved in a different manner. Bela - the worst sufferer of Gauri's actions is willing to compromise for the sake of her daughter, Meghna. She writes to Gauri: "My daughter will know the truth about you.....If then , she still wants to know you.....I'm willing to facilitate that.....maybe when Meghna is older, when she and I are both ready, we can try to meet again"{324—325}.

It is said that God in his infinite wisdom designed each and every individual differently. Gauri in "The Lowland" therefore ought not be ostracized for her unconventionality. Her "space" must be seen in a broader perspective and accommodate her into the ambit of the finer feelings and emotions indulged by Man.

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Power and Authority : A Reading of Achebe's *Arrow of God*

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Abstract:

The central issue in Arrow of God is more of conflict over the acquisition of power. Each character, whether it is Ezeulu, Nwaka, Winterbottom, the higher British officials, or the Christian Church, is constantly engaged consciously or unconsciously in the struggle for acquisition of power. In the course of the novel one can see that the traditional Igbo society is overpowered and dominated by the western colonizers. How could the western colonizers coming from so far a place overpower and dominate the Igbo people and their society? Was there any weakness in the traditional Igbo society? Did a fissure already exist in the traditional Igbo society? These are certain questions that this paper would make an attempt to analyze and find an answer to. Further, in this paper an attempt would be made to study the power struggles between: white colonial administrative authority and traditional African authority, the villages of Umuaro and Okperi, the clansmen, and family members as depicted in Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God. In the process, I would also be examining how these various power struggles bring about a radical transformation in the traditional Igbo society and in their identity. The interplay of power and resistance in the novel would be studied to see how it plays a significant role in the establishment of power structures in the course of the novel. In this paper an attempt would be made to use Foucault's theory on power to supplement and justify my arguments. The paper would also try to see if Achebe, in the novel, is

using his power as a writer to mirror the ills of the society so that the Igbo's learn from their mistakes and rectify the same?

Keywords: Conflict, power, society, identity, resistance

This paper is an attempt to study the power struggles between: white colonial administrative authority and traditional African¹ authority, the villages of Umuaro and Okperi, the clansmen, and family members as depicted in Chinua Achebe's novel the *Arrow of God*. Margaret Turner argues, as cited in Mala Pandurang edited *Chinua Achebe: An Anthology of Recent criticism*, that the central issue here is more of conflict over the acquisition of power. Each character, whether it is Ezeulu, Nwaka, Winterbottom, the higher British officials, or the Christian Church, is constantly engaged consciously or unconsciously in the struggle for acquisition of power. In the process I would also be examining how these various power struggles bring about a radical transformation in the traditional Igbo society.

For Foucault, the most succinct answer to the question- What is power? is - Power is a 'transformative capacity'², the ability of an individual to influence and modify the actions of other individuals in order to realize certain tactical goals. As he says, "the exercise of power ...is a way in which certain actions modify others...a total structure of actions brought to bear on possible actions. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome."(SP, 788-89) In this context we may say that the action of Ezeulu i.e. his decision of postponing the declaration of the New

Yam Festival to a great extent had disturbed the existing equilibrium of his society. The important question is whether it was in Ezeulu's power to control or put in order the possible outcome of his decision. Further for Foucault power is not a particular 'form' or 'type' of change, it is the 'medium' of change. Power is what makes change possible, whether that change limits human freedom or promotes it. Power and authority, however, are not necessarily synonymous. In Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick edited *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*, the seventeenth-century philosopher James Harrington draws a distinction between *de facto* power (the possession of power as a matter of fact) and *de jure* authority (authority by right, i.e. by means of justification). Harrington, notes that one may have the one without the other. For instance, a monarch may possess power and may not be answerable to the citizens who fall under his or her jurisdiction and thereby rule without the authority of their consent. This seems to be the case when White Colonial administration with an exclusively self-sanctioned privilege exercises judicial coercion and violence in its bid to gain control of the Igbos. Captain Winterbottom, along with his soldiers forcefully vindicates British authoritarian policies of pacification by collecting all the guns of Umuaro and breaking them in full public view. After this, Winterbottom holds a court and enacts his role of dispensing justice in a world alien to European values and culture.

Arrow of God is about the question of authority and also about the related question of whom or what is to be believed and obeyed. Ezeulu urges the people of Umuaro to accept Ulu, the chief deity, as the sole authority. But Nwaka does not agree with Ezeulu in this regard and questions the very identity of Ulu. The people of Umuaro are aware that Ulu is a creation of men. It is said that to protect themselves from the raids of Abam, six villages banded together and "hired a strong team of medicine-men to install a common deity to them. This deity which the fathers of the six villages made was called Ulu...The six villages then took the name of Umuaro, and priest of Ulu became their chief priest." (AG, 14-15). So, it is clear that Ulu is created

by men and hence the pertinent question: What is the status of gods created by men? What authority can they or their priests maintain? In this story we see how the people of the six different villages, when they left their petty differences behind and united their power to promote collectivity and social integration, could beat their common enemy. Here again is Foucault relevant and his theory justified. In Foucault's theory, power can be used to promote collectivity and social integration; as his work from *Discipline and Punish* through *The History of Sexuality* makes it abundantly clear, though power can just as easily be used for the fragmentation of collectivity and for fractional repression. As we shall see later, the colonizers exploited the internal conflicts of the Igbo society and consolidated their power; they used their power for the fragmentation of collectivity and for fractional repression of the Igbo society.

A close reading of *Arrow of God* reveals to us the power structure governing the Igbo community and the British community. A contrasting cultural perspective of Igbo and British communities as well as a series of contrasting views and voices within each community can be noticed. In the Igbo community of Umuaro as long as the threat of the raids of Abam tribes existed, Ulu, the chief deity reigned supreme and priest of Ulu remained unchallenged as the chief priest. However, with the onset of colonialism things changed. As the British ravaged the African hinterlands and brought the fierce Aro and Abam tribes under control, the traditional balance of power in distant Umuaro is severely disturbed. Thingnam Kishan Singh in *Rethinking Colonialism*, rightly suggests that with the cessation of Abam raids, strife in Umuaro emerges with the questioning of the traditional authority of Ulu. Invocation of the original power structure as it existed before the creation of Ulu seeks to undermine the supremacy of Ulu. The authority of Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, is threatened and challenged by the priest of Ezidemili through his wealthy and titled clansman Nwaka who also possessed all the skills of a gifted orator. Nwaka traces the origin of Umuaro and the creation of Ulu to destabilize Ezeulu's position which

is increasingly becoming weaker and irrelevant in the virtual absence of the Abam threat. Nwaka further differs with Ezeulu concerning the ownership right of the farmland Okperi. Ezeulu is convinced that his version is the authoritative one, because he got it from his father, who was also a priest of Ulu. But Nwaka argues that “Wisdom is like a goatskin bag: every man carries his own. Knowledge of the land is also like that.... We know that a father doesn’t speak falsely to his son. But we also know that the lore of the land is beyond the knowledge of many fathers....But he speaks about events which are older than Umuaro itself....My father told me a different story.”(AG, 16) We often see that power and resistance exist simultaneously. As Foucault says, “As soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance.” (“The End of Monarchy of Sex”, 153) If we acknowledge the power of Ezeulu, we should also not be surprised to see a resistance to that power. Here, to supplement my argument, I would like to cite how Kevin Jon Heller refutes the claim made by Peter Dews that power, “having nothing determinate to which it could be opposed, loses all explanatory content and becomes ubiquitous, metaphysical principle.” (“Power and Subjectivity in Foucault” *New Left Review*, No. 144, 91), arguing that power does indeed have a determinate opposite or other forms of power. The process of the formation of subject necessarily produces subject-positions with irreconcilable material and symbolic interests. Hence we see that when the questioning of Ezeulu’s power arises there arises simultaneously the question of Nwaka’s and the priest of Ezidemili’s resistance to it. But the sad thing for Ezeulu is that his exercise of power as the head of the family and as the chief priest of Ulu, though indirectly, produces internal conflict in his family. Say for instance his decision of sending his son Oduche to the Christians, invites silent protest from Oduche’s mother. And later his decision to postpone the declaration of the day of the New Yam Festival asks for the life of his son Obirika as a return.

In the power structure of the British community sent to serve in Nigeria, hierarchy is very much evident.

Any order should pass down the descending order of power, i.e. through the Lieutenant-Governor, the Resident, the Senior District Officer, the District Officer, the Assistant District Officer and so on. It is not that conflict or difference of opinion is there in the Igbo community alone, it is very much there in the British colonizing community as well. On government Hill, Wright is excluded from the bleak social gatherings of Winterbottom and Clarke; Clarke sees Winterbottom as a smug and old fashioned; Winterbottom is bitterly opposed to the Lieutenant’s Governors directives concerning indirect rule. But the most crucial difference between the two communities is that the British colonizing community can subdue their mutual differences to concentrate on greater and more urgent obligations and hence are more competent than the Igbo community, which cannot overlook their internal differences. This difference perhaps, is one of the most important factors which enabled the British colonizers, coming from a distant land to exploit and dominate the Igbo society. For Foucault asserts that “Power is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization.” (*TL*, 98) It is now evident that power comes from “a net like organization”, and without offending anybody I may perhaps interpret that power is best executed when it emanates from a ‘net-like organization’ and is least effective when it is ‘localized’ in the hands of a particular person. Foucault further asserts in his essay “The Subject and Power,” that the net-like organization that makes possible the exercise of power consists of,

...system of differentiations which permits one to act upon the actions of others: differentiations determined by the law or by traditions of status and privilege; economic differences in the appropriation of riches and good; shifts in the process of production; linguistic or cultural differences; differences in the know-how and competence, and so forth.(*SP*, 792)

It is seen in the course of the novel that the Church penetrates, disrupts and dominates the Igbo society. How could the Christian Church, coming from

a distant place dominate another culture and religion, more or less deep-rooted, is the curious question. It was perhaps because a cleavage all ready existed in the Igbo society which widens with the coming of the colonizing forces and the alien Christian culture and of which the latter took advantage of. The British colonizers could efficiently execute their power over the natives perhaps because of their ability to meticulously devise their policies of subjugating and controlling Igboland.² Lugard's experience in using troops and heavy guns to gain allegiance of the Fulani rulers in Northern Nigeria led him to the theory of indirect rule as an effective mechanism to control and subdue Africa. Hence, the Lieutenant Governor asks Winterbottom to implement the policy of indirect rule in distant Okperi on a secluded piece of land known as Government Hill. Winterbottom had to rake his mind to find a warrant chief who will not act in terms of personal greed and selfishness (for in the text an instance is given where one Ikedi misuses his power against the natives when made the warrant chief). Winterbottom cannot understand the logic behind this policy of indirect rule and rues, "The great tragedy of British colonial administration was that the man on the spot who knew his African and knew what he was talking about found himself being constantly overruled by starry-eyed fellow at headquarters." (AG, 56) Winterbottom, a typical colonial officer, who perceives Africans as liars and Africa as a land of degeneration cannot ultimately resist the orders of his superiors and chooses Ezeulu because of the testimony he gave against his own people five years earlier. It needs mention here that in the land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi, Ezeulu relying on the knowledge and information inherited from his father speaks against his own people of Umuaro and speaks for Okperi. Hence, in a social structure where people virtually had no idea of a chief or ruler, the colonial policy reinforces their belief that Ezeulu is an ally of the British. So, this is what can be seen as the clever execution of British colonial policy. This may serve as a good example of colonial 'divide and rule policy.' Here is the apparent difference between the power structure of British

community and the power structure of the Igbo community. Winterbottom might not agree with the policies of his higher British officials but he does not resist them, he executes the orders obediently. But unlike Winterbottom, Ezeulu or Nwaka cannot overlook their petty differences. Such inflexibility on the part of the natives enables the colonizing forces to exploit them rather easily. It won't be wrong to say that Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* is defeated for his inflexibility of will.

Ezeulu refuses to become the warrant chief and is consequently imprisoned by Winterbottom, who cannot tolerate the idea of a 'black' showing any kind of disrespect for the colonial administration. He is imprisoned in Okperi for two months and hence misses two occasions meant for consuming the sacred yams. During the gruesome days of his confinement Ezeulu nurtures vengeance against his people. He finally decides to hit Umuaro at its most vulnerable point-the Feast of the New Yam. Ezeulu decides that, since he could not eat two yams, he will delay the day of declaration of the New Yam Festival. Consequently, the people of Umuaro cannot harvest their crops and the ripe yams rot in the ground. The whole village suffers from hunger and starvation. It is here that we get to see how the Church cleverly and meticulously using the discourse of its God and religion succeeds in expressing and executing its power over the native culture and religion. Mr. Goodcountry, Catechist of St Mark's C.M.S. Church, Umuaro, sees the present crisis over the New Yam Festival as an opportunity for fruitful intervention. He uses the following discourse, "The new festival was the attempt of the misguided heathen to show gratitude to God, the giver of all good things. This was God's hour to save them from their error which was now threatening to ruin them. They must be told that if they made their thank-offering to God they could harvest their crops without fear of Ulu." (AG, 215) He further said that they could offer more than one yam to God. Moses Unachukwu says, "If Ulu who is a false (g)od can eat one yam the living (G)od who owns the whole world should be entitled to eat more than one." (AG, 216) It is interesting to note here that Achebe uses a small letter and a capital letter to write

the Igbo god and the Christian god respectively. By this, perhaps, he tries to mock at the colonizers habit of exaggerating their own position and denouncing the position of the natives. So the news spread that anyone who didn't want to wait and see all their crops ruined could take his offering to the God of the Christians who claimed to have the power to protect from the anger of Ulu. Such discourse at other times might have been treated with laughter but there was no more laughter left in the people of Umuaro. So a large number of the people participated in the Christian harvest. Here we see, how the Christians by employing the discourse³ of their god and religion tilts the balance of power in their favour, aided, no doubt by the internal conflicts in the Igbo community. Here we see how the irresponsible decision of a person in power (in this case, Ezeulu) can lead to the destruction of his entire community.

Blaming the colonizers alone for exploiting the natives will not serve as an adequate excuse. It must also be seen if the natives or the colonized were not themselves to a certain extent responsible for inviting the colonizers to exploit them. For instance, Captain Winterbottom was surprised by the kind of cruelty on the part of James Ikedi towards his fellow natives. After being appointed as the Warrant chief of Okperi he started behaving scandalously, exploiting the villagers. He, along with a notorious and drunken road overseer misused his powers and extorted a large sum of money from the villagers. For such acts Captain Winterbottom could have some excuse for the overseer for, "he was a man from another clan; in the eyes of the natives a foreigner. But what excuse could one offer for a man who was their blood brother and chief?" (AG, 57-58) It is such activities of persons like James Ikedi, which invites the colonizers to undermine the unity of the natives and hence encourages them to use their power in whatsoever way they wish.

Finally, we see that in the power tussle between the different contenders, viz. the Igbo community, the British community and the Christian Church (although the Church was just an extension of the British colonizing power); the Christian Church emerged victorious. How and why it has emerged victorious

has already been discussed. Now let us try to see if such a disaster to the Igbo community could have been avoided or delayed. If yes, through whom and how?

Let us assess the character of Ezeulu and see if it was in his power to delay the destruction of Igbo religion and culture, if not save it completely. That Ezeulu had an ambiguous attitude towards his power is evident from the very beginning. He often considered the immensity of his power over the years and crops and wondered if it was real. He further ponders that it is true that he named the day for the feast of Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam Festival; but he did not chose it. He was merely a watchman. "His power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his. As long as the goat was alive it could be his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know soon enough who the real owner was." (AG, 3). C.L. Innes in *Chinua Achebe*, suggests that there are many forces which limit and contest Ezeulu's power: Ezeulu has no power over the forces of nature; the moon and rain can obscure the moon. Further, Ezeulu has no power over the process of aging –his failing sight, his growing age and his unwillingness to acknowledge such limitations is evidenced in his delight in making young men wince from the power of his grip. It is ironic that Ezeulu records the months of the seasons, but in turn the months and the seasons gradually rob him of his strength and sight. It is in this context that we see Ezeulu questioning his power and nature of power and knowledge. "What kind of power was it if it would never be used?" (AG, 4) We are always apprehensive that, if given a chance, Ezeulu would not have hesitated to experiment with his power. By the end of the novel we see that Ezeulu does put his power to test: Ezeulu refuses to name the day of the New Yam Festival and hence delays the harvest in Umuaro. The consequence of his decision is partially suggested in the example he himself uses of the child and goat, for like the goat, Ulu will be destroyed by his real owner, in this case, the community which needs to survive. Ezeulu shows us a promising foresight when he sends his son, Oduche to the Christians to learn the ways of the

British colonizing power and be his eyes there. He further narrates the story of the bird, Eneke-nti-oto to Oduche and explains its moral to him. The bird says that it has learnt to fly without perching for the man of today has learnt to shoot without missing. But it is very sad and ominous for Ezeulu in particular and the Igbo community in general that his design was thwarted or in other words he failed to execute his intelligence and foresight. The abomination suffered in the hands of his own people combined with his long suppressed desire of exercising his power leads him to a blind alley where he is unable to see and distinguish between reality and imagination. And he out of his inflexible will and pride commits the unpardonable offence of going against his community. Igbo community regards that no individual is greater than the community. Mbiti, throwing light on the Igbo community says that the sense of community is very strong in Igbo culture. "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." (Mbiti, 1969, 108-109) Ezeulu justifies his action by saying that "he was no more than an arrow in the bow of his God," (AG, 192). It seems to be more of an excuse than a valid reason. For if he wished he could have definitely acted more patiently and responsibly. If once Ezeulu would have rethought that Ulu was created by man and that rules could be modified or changed for the greater benefit of the society or the community, he could have saved himself, his Ulu, and his community from losing its identity. Ezeulu could not control his vain pride, let alone sacrificing himself for the society. If Ezeulu could have acted more patiently and responsibly he could have at least delayed the process of his community facing disaster, if not save it completely.

A more responsible, a more patient action was required from Ezeulu, Nwaka, and the Igbo community. For we cannot deny the role of the community in instigating Ezeulu to such a base action though, as

mentioned earlier, he is himself is more to be blamed for it. They should have undermined petty differences for the greater benefit and well being of the community. There could be no difference of opinion with the claim that, if the power structure of the Igbo community lacked internal fissures, and if the subjects concerned could have exercised more restraint, then definitely the colonizers could not have so easily destabilized and dominated it.

Hence, when we study the power struggle between- White colonial administrative authority and traditional African authority, the villages of Umuaro and Okperi, and the clansmen- the role of 'power' in bringing about a radical transformation of the traditional Igbo society is very evident. *Arrow of God* (1964) was written at a time when the political rivalries in the newly independent Nigeria made the question of responsible leadership an urgent one. And through this novel Chinua Achebe, in keeping with what is generally said of African literature that there is no art for art's sake there, that every literary work has a social function, perhaps uses his power as a writer to entreat his community to act patiently and cautiously.

Notes:

1. African Continent is comprised of different countries and each country has many different power structures of their own. Here, by traditional African authority I am suggesting the authority of the Igbo community.

2. The term is borrowed from Anthony Giddens (1986, 88). (Giddens, Anthony. *Central Problem in Social Theory*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1986.)

3. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault points out that the supra-individual discourses involved in subjectification are inevitably multiple and contradictory.



Herman Melville's Moby-Dick : Towards an Ethical View of Nature

Neelasmita Barman

Abstract:

In the novel Moby-Dick Melville presents a story that illustrates what can happen when desire for revenge is allowed to take control. This paper explores the fundamental concern of the novel-the ethical concern on which the harmony between man and nature is formed. Captain Ahab and Starbuck had to face death due to their careless attitude towards nature but Ishmael was the lone survivor for he was free from all sorts of vengeance unlike Ahab and from the motive of economic profit unlike Starbuck. Ishmael was interested to explore the sea without disturbing the harmony between himself and the sea. Being devoid of any selfish notions about the sea, Ishmael survives.

Herman Melville's 'Moby-Dick' refers directly to the natural world. The outcome of the novel clarifies Melville's ecological concerns. It focuses on the issue of human beings exploiting the natural world. Melville exposes the American way of exploiting the whales in order to extract whale oil. The moral of the text is based on Ishmael's quintessential ethical concern on which harmony between Man and nature is formed.

Through 'Moby-Dick' Melville creates a powerful impression in the mind of the readers thanks to his technique of adoption of ancient and contemporary mythologies. He has a 'Shakespearean understanding of human condition'. He weaves his narrative into the historical, religious and social matrix of a particularly important period in the larger narrative of America. (Pritchard, 2004:203)

'Moby-Dick' presents to us the author's perspectives cum reflections on the human attitudes to the natural world. He also seriously ponders through the narrative over the cool acceptance of the American nationalistic project (a utilitarian acceptance) by his

fellow citizens who believe that whales need to be killed to cater to the needs of its oil for American industry (Pritchard, 2004 :14)

In his work, the novelist by describing the clash between whales and the Pequod, makes a thorough, intensive and unique probe into the relation between man and nature.

The novel mainly focuses on the emerging idea of mastering Nature through industrial technology. Ahab embodies contemporary American hope that technology would empower and free man. Ahab's quest becomes an allegory while it simultaneously makes a poser upon the industrial Capitalism in its new found confidence (Regin, 2004:1039)

Melville reveals that man and nature are closely inter-connected and can never be separated. In order to live on earth, one cannot help but to adapt himself into the ecosphere by respecting nature (by way of a harmonious co-existence with nature).

The novel revolves around three main human characters: Captain Ahab, Starbuck and Ishmael. Starbuck and Ishmael are the crew members of the Pequod. Moby-Dick, the great white whale, of course, plays the most important role in the story of the novel. Captain Ahab is perceptibly a monomaniac whose only aim seems to be taking revenge on Moby-Dick, as he believes it has snatched one of Ahab's legs in a previous encounter. Starbuck does not approve of Ahab's pleading in support of killing the animal. He thinks it is useless to think of taking revenge on such an animal which is a dumb-brute. However Starbuck wants to get richer by way of extracting the whale oil. Ishmael is however conspicuous by his unique self, who is unlike either of the two: Ahab and Starbuck. Ishmael is a seeker of knowledge and goes on to the sea to

explore it; he is free from any sort of revenge or economic concerns unlike Ahab and Starbuck.

Ahab, the monomaniacal captain is a man plagued by revenge. The prospect of loss of a leg in encounter with Moby-Dick led him continuously to search for the whale, thus concerned with a single unvarying mission. With the first appearance of Ahab on the deck, "He looked like a man cut away from the stake when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking away one particle from their compact aged robustness." (Moby-Dick, 127)

However, Lan Ousby believes that Ahab's chase is a daring probe into the heart of nature, a challenge to God's power which is a grand display of courageous heroism. (Ousby, 1985:89). Harold Bloom also sees in Ahab an idealist, a "wordly, godlike figure." (Bloom, 2006:103).

The war between Ahab and Moby-Dick symbolizes the live or die sort of existence in the animal world. Thus, despite repeated warning from his crew members as well as other whaling ships Ahab is absorbed in his revengeful desire to kill Moby Dick, but all the warnings go unheeded by Ahab for "Ahab never thinks, he only feels, feels, feels" (Moby Dick, 578)

Eventually, Ahab and Moby-Dick, the two with deep furrowed forehead confront one another, in which Ahab is dead. Ahab in a way degenerates himself into an animal. Instead of thinking rationally, Ahab behaves irrationally while putting up a clash with Moby Dick. He does something which the animals in the jungle only do. Thus, the root of Ahab's tragedy is his abandonment of the ethics of the human society. (Zhenzhao, 2009:3)

The monomaniac conducts of Captain Ahab are the results of his absolute opposition to nature. His conducts reflect his spiritual crisis. Consequently he loses his life. The message is: be contemptuous to nature, you will inevitably be punished by nature. In case of Starbuck, he knows how to balance interests and risks. When in the ship, Starbuck knows clearly that: "I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not be killed by them for theirs". (Moby Dick, 119)

The above line best explains Starbuck's ethics: economic concern prevails over everything else. Starbuck's being out on sea is simply for economic

concern but in Ahab's eyes, there is no interest worth his considering, but his vengeance over Moby-dick. Starbuck's ethical notion goes against that of Ahab.

Starbuck's attitudes as against that of Ahab are encapsulated by the following lines:

"Or waste in one day more oil than we make good in a year. What we come twenty thousand miles to get is worth saving, Sir." (Moby Dick, 390).

As a man of reason, Starbuck would interpret the man - nature relationship from the economic considerations. To his eyes, the sperm whale is nothing but a commodity while Ahab sees Moby-Dick as his sworn enemy.

Protesting against Ahab's selfishness, Starbuck retorts: "But I came here to hunt whales not my commander's vengeance, how many barrels will the vengeance yield thee even if thou gettest it, captain Ahab? It will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market" (Moby-Dick, 167)

Starbuck's sensibility is based on anthropocentrism, for in his eyes Moby-Dick is nothing more than a brute beast. To him, the existence of Nature only lies in its economic values, in the wealth it brings to man. (Bloom, 2006:140)

Contrary to Starbuck's economic concern and Ahab's vengeful monomania, Ishmael goes out to the sea to explore it. If vengeance is Ahab's concern, profit is Starbuck's pursuit. What Ishmael has towards Moby Dick is nothing but curiosity.

"I always go to the sea as a sailor, because of the wholesome exercise and pure air of the forecandle deck." (Moby-Dick, 4)

"Chief among the motives was the over whelming idea of the great whale himself..." (Moby-Dick, 5)

Though a common sailor, Ishmael is the embodiment of the dignity and sublimity inherent in Moby-Dick. On his first seeing Moby-Dick, Ishmael describes it as a-

"gentle Joyousness - a mighty mildness of repose in swiftiness, invested the gliding whale. Not the white bull Jupiter swimming away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns, his lovely, leering eyes sideways intent upon the maid, with smooth bewitching fleetness, rippling straight for the nuptial bower in Crete

, not Jove, not that great majesty, supreme did surprise the glorified white whale he so divinely swam.” (Moby Dick, 563)

A lowly common sailor on the Pequod, Ishmael knows he cannot change its course and its destiny. He is a reflective loner, who quietly broods on what he sees and knows and maintains his distance from the crew and Ahab. (McIntosh, 1986:23).

Ishmael's estimation of the value of the whale ranges from the depth of contempt to the peak of sympathy. This estimation turns out to be the mainstay of the meaning of survival for Ishmael after the sinking of the Pequod.

As regards to Moby Dick, it is quite impressive in its size and other features. The novel describes it as unique as it is conspicuous by its unusual back and snow-white hump. However, compared to other whales, Moby-Dick cannot yield much barrels of oil and hence it cannot be beneficial in terms of. So, Starbuck who is economically concerned believes it is unworthy of risking the interest of the owners and crew of the Pequod for such a while. But What Ahab desires is only revenge.

Melville calls Moby-Dick a “Job's whale” – a phrase which refers to the mysterious ‘Leviathan’ (a manifestation of Yahweh) in the Book of Job. The whale is also supposed to be one of the incarnations of Vishnu in the *Matse Avatar*. (Moby-Dick, 270) Besides, The sailor Gabriel pronounces the white whale to be the shaker god incarnate, associated with Jupiter; it is called a grand – god (Moby Dick, 562) Moby-Dick was ubiquitous in that he had actually been encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same instant of time. (Moby-Dick, 187) Thus, Moby-Dick is omnipotent and omnipresent. It is the reigning god of the great seas. It is divine; it is eternal, indefatigable and indestructible. Moby-Dick is the embodiment of nature at its most extreme, while Ahab symbolizes the mankind as a whole. The outcome of the battle are the consequences of not being in terms with the laws of nature. The death of Ahab and the entire crew of the Pequod seem to be suggestive of the consequence of disrespect to nature. Ishmael survives for he respects nature and adores it.

Ahab - the captain of the ship is significantly the ‘captain’ or the root of all the destiny of the others in the ship. As the leader of his company, his fate is their fate and all that happens to him is equally significant to the others. Ahab and Starbuck die. The Pequod sinks. It is Ishmael who survives to tell the tale and it is through him that Melville disseminates the values he holds.

In the novel the writer shows that Captain Ahab and Starbuck had to face death due to their careless attitude towards nature but Ishmael was the lone survivor for he was free from all sorts of vengeance unlike Ahab and from the motive of economic profit unlike Starbuck. They went against Nature as their minds were dominated by their selfish notions. Ishmael was interested to explore the sea without disturbing the harmony between himself and the sea. Being devoid of any selfish notions about the sea, Ishmael survives, while the others could not. Thus the novel has as its premise a moral: the harmony between man and nature is the ultimate solution to the fate of all human beings.

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Shri Jagannath ('Juggernaut' in English) Culture: A Humanistic Perspective

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Abstract:

Shri Jagannath (Juggernaut in English) of Puri is much more than a religious deity; He is the supreme Deity of the humans or more specifically of the marginalized (Patitapabana). The perception of Marx that religion acts as 'the opium' is not applicable in context of Shri Jagannath religion/culture because here is the Deity who is worshipped and glorified particularly 'by' and 'for' the have-nots. The culture of Juggernaut (Shri Jagannath in Sanskrit) is rooted in the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the whole world to be treated as family): the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the sisterhood of woman- a concept which is much more profound than that of globalization. The aim of this paper is to explore the quintessence of Shri Jagannath Culture, eclectic in nature: an attempt is made to revisit the literatures on Shri Jagannath: the legends, tales, songs, articles etc. and highlight certain avenues that promote communal harmony and act as the antithesis of culture shock that a modern man experiences in a materialistic world. The conception of Nabakalebara (the renewal of Jagannath's body) corresponds to cultivation of the fresh human values that the modern society with its combination of science and technology demands. Thus this paper addresses several issues connected with deterioration in moral standards in present society and suggests ways for the promotion of humanistic morals which lie at the root of the adoration of Juggernaut, the Lord of the Ecosphere.

Key Words: *Juggernaut, have-nots, eco-sphere, culture-shock, eclectic.*

Shri Jagannath (Juggernaut) is the form of Krishna; the handless and legless Deity of Shrikshetra Puri has been invested with an aura of inquisitiveness to experience the celestial in the terrestrial, the supernatural in the natural, the eternal in the temporal and the Divine in the wooden image. 'Juggernaut' means 'Jagannath' 'an incarnation of Vishnu, beneath the Car of whose idol at Puri devotees were supposed by Europeans to immolate themselves: hence any relentless destroying force or object of devotion and sacrifice' (Chambers:684). Thus it also refers to a huge, powerful and overwhelming force or institution.

Salabega, the devotee of Lord Jagannath sings:
*Oh, Lord of the Universe
I ask not anything material from you
Neither wealth nor woman
But beg for a handful of sands of love*

Salabega implores the blessings of Juggernaut in all walks of his life. He is not lured by the glitter of material prosperity but surrenders before the Lord of the Universe for love and bliss. Here is a man who spells out the source of morals-the morals that will make humanity a better place to live in. He is humble, simple, broad-minded, loving-freed from any kind of lust either the lust for power or property or position. He aspires for bliss that is spiritual and peace that is mental. Such kind of appeal is humanitarian in true sense of the term. If the poet in Salabega moves the people who have craving for accumulation of wealth he sets the brightest example of a man who can be the

harbinger of a new era upon this planet earth-the era of peaceful co-existence.

Gajapati Maharaja Divya Singh Dev in his message to the editors of *Sri Jagannath Special Volume of Cultural Heritage of Odisha Vol.XII* says:

In the context of modern society, where rank materialism and incessant conflict (even in the name of religion) is the order of the day, the tradition of Lord Jagannath propagates a spiritual vision and way of life with a distinctive emphasis on the principles of 'unity in diversity' and "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the entire human race is one family). This tradition stands as an infallible beacon lighting up the eternal golden path for the true welfare and upliftment of mankind.

Divya Singh Dev, the King highlights the essence of Jagannath culture that is primarily humanistic because such a culture strengthens the forces of integration and world unity. It is better than the concept of globalization which promotes commercial relation. The culture of Juggernaut aims at universal brotherhood.-the fraternity that is fostered through a persistence feeling-the feeling that there is a power-the invisible power which looks after us in weal and woe and unites us as humans. William Wordsworth views that human wisdom is linked with the spirit of the universe. In fact who we call Lord Jagannath is none but the spirit of the universe. Unless the humans perceive the spirit in all the natural phenomena around us they can't experience bliss and love which is the essence of life.

Padmanabha Mahapatra in his article *Daily Rituals of Sri Jagannath* writes:

Jagannath is a highly humanized deity. The gap between men and Divine has been bridged in Jagannath cult. Like daily happenings and day-to-day activities of a common man He brushes His teeth, takes bath, changes His

clothes, wears varieties of colourful dresses, adorns in definite time intervals, enjoys 56 varieties of food items, goes to bed and takes rest after light dinner (Sri Jagannath P.87)

If we observe the daily rituals of Lord Jagannath a feeling is created that being human is the stepping stone to be Divine. Divinity gets embedded in humanity. The experiences of a human, be it brushing the teeth or bathing or dressing or decorating oneself are a prelude to being divine. One should not dismiss them as menial or mechanical acts. In fact the men whom the human society have looked upon as divine beings could not afford to ignore these daily rituals. Spirit cannot be divorced from the body. If devotional music or meditation is the food of soul the body has its own food which is visible, tangible or gross.

Dr. Soma Chand in her article *The Socio Cultural Significance Of Car Festival* makes some pertinent observations:

The festival is a universal one. Here the untouchables, the social outcast, the downtrodden mingle together with the so-called upper castes on Badadanda. The system of Chhera-panhara done by the successive Gajapati Kings of Odisha reminds us of Rajadharma for the service of god and man. Thus, the concept that King as the first among the equals gets strengthened (Sri Jagannath P.111)

The Car Festival reminds the visitors of the primary attributes of Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe that is liberating the weaker sections of the society. Again this festival also instills the feeling that the King is not among the subjects but above the subjects. Thus grandeur around royalty is recognized. Thus this festival infuses into the minds and hearts of the common masses the idea of order, hierarchy, reverence, a set of virtues that a good human being should have.

W.W. Hunter is of the opinion that Lord Jagannath is known to every hamlet throughout India and every

civilized nations on earth. The word Juggernaut which finds place in the English Dictionary is derived from the word Jagannath. Again Juggernaut connotes a force that crushes because it is Lord Jagannath the presiding deity of the Universe crushes all evil. Thus many a word in Odia, Sanskrit and even English has been coined in the holy precincts. It is language that conditions human consciousness. Some of the prefixes like Maha(grand), Bada(great), Suna(golden) are added to words. e.g. Badadanda(grand road), Badamadira(great temple), Sunabesa(golden dress) are the expressions that can elevate the consciousness of the devotees.

Shri Jagannath consciousness poses an anti thesis to the superstitious practices like the Sati, the burning of the widow. W.W.Hunter writes:

...the gentle doctrines of Jagannath tended to check the once universal custom of widow-burning. Even before the Government put a stop to it, our officials observed its comparative infrequency at Puri. It is expressly discountenanced in the writings of the Vishnuvite reformers, and is stigmatized by a celebrated disciple as 'the fruitless union of beauty with a corpse.'

(Quoted in *Cultural Heritage of Odisha Vol.XII*, P.882-883)

Thus Shri Jagannath culture has resisted the inhuman practices.

Very often lascivious culture like that of coupling on the walls of Lord Jagannath has been misinterpreted by certain visitors. Even those religious conservatives have questioned the sculpture of dancing girl with rolling eyes but these sculptures amply testify the human culture because body below the waist or sexual postures cannot be considered to be dirty because sexual desire is a powerful urge in a human being because humans are born out of sexual intercourse. More so these sculpture on the walls of the Jagannath temple are varied. They satisfy the aesthetic sense of the onlookers. A perceptive visitor can have diverse kinds of aesthetic experiences: the

erotic('sringara rasa'), the heroic('vira rasa'), comic('hasya rasa'), bibhatsa('the disgusting') and above all the santa rasa('the serene'). In fact the blasphemers concentrate upon the scenes of sex and criticize the sculptors behind the walls but they ignore the sculptor's imagination and analysis of human nature.

Over the centuries Jagannath temple has given a great platform for the enrichment of Odishan song, music and dance. In the 12th century poet Jayadev appeared in the cultural arena as the ardent disciple of Lord Jagannath. Langula Narasinghadeva, the illustrious builder of Konark temple introduced the singing of *Gita Gobinda* in the temple. Mahari dance was introduced in the temple. This dance is the oldest form of modern Odissi dance. At the time of *Badasingara* ritual *Devadasies* (the servants of the lord) were allowed to sing *Gita Gobinda* and dance when Lord Jagannath goes to bed. Thus the tradition of odishan music and dance got enriched under the impact of Shri Jagannath culture.

Interesting legends that stir the imagination of the common people are in vogue. One such legend is about the recitation of 'Gita Gobinda' in the Jagannath temple. The legend goes like this:

Once Lord Jagannath got attracted by the recitation of Gita Gobinda of a young girl. The Lord followed her. The girl started running. In this process the garments of Lord Jagannath got torn. Next day the sevakas discovered the torn clothes of the Lord and intimated this matter to the Gajapati. God appeared in a dream to Gajapati and explained the whole incident. As a result the girl concerned was employed as a Devadasi.

This legend points to the fact that Lord Jagannath is not freed from human weaknesses like running after a girl who has a melodious tone but Lord Jagannath is above the humans in the sense that he can appear in the dreams and instruct the Gajapati to take care of the singing girl devoted to Him.

All down the ages woman has been the source of inspiration for spectacular achievements of man-be

it in the arena of arts. Stories and histories established this fact. Late Kedarnath Mahapatra has analyzed some of the verses of Gita Gobinda and tried to prove that Jayadev was inspired by Padmavati, the devotional dancing girl (devadasi) of Lord Jagannath but for her presence Jayadev would not have been able to compose this monumental work Gita Gobinda. Maithili Chandra Dutta, the biographer of Jayadev admits this fact. Thus a masterpiece in poetry, Gita Gobinda, has been possible because of Lord's grace. Divine inspiration acted as intoxication and led Jayadev to compose 'Gita Gobinda' which can be described in the language of W.B. Yeats: 'the monument of unaging intellect' .

Lord Jagannath , the prominent wooden God merits attention in the age of environmental pollution and deforestation. The need of the hour is to show respects for nature by way of planting trees. 'Daru Debata'-the wooden God instills such a feeling in the devotees. Again the wooden images of holy Trinity-Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath , made of wood titillate the intellect of the devotees. More so the wooden images puzzle the visitors. Balabhadra and Jagannath have two hands each projecting forward without ankle bends and fingers. Subhadra has no hands. None of these images have ears and portions of the body below the waist. Their faces are painted; their eyes, nose, lip and forehead are discernible. Such peculiarities have perplexed the minds of the devotees. One of the reasons is all human systems and endeavours are imperfect. Hence the deities appear in imperfect forms-a lesson for the humans not to lament for imperfections but to accept them and in the acceptance lies the human wisdom.

Nabakalebara, the new embodiment, is the ceremony of the periodical renewal, either in the 12th Or 19th year, of the wooden images in the Jagannath temple. Lord Jagannath is a human God. Every human is to accept the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Lord is not freed from this cycle. The ceremony of Nabakalebara involves the burial of the four statues, and installation of four worshippable images(the images of Balabhadra, Subhadra, Lord Jagannath and Sudarshan). Such replacement and worship makes one

reminded of Lord Tennyson that in human world 'old order changeth yielding places to new' .

Beni Madhab Padhee in his book *Daru Devata* has stressed the origin of Lord Jagannath to the Daru worship by the *Savaras* in the pre-historic times. Tree worship is a very ancient cult. Till today *Savaras* and *Sauras* of Ganjam and Koraput district worship tree as their *kitung* which in Saura language means God. They dare not cut the trees which they call *jaganta*(a special name of *kitung* or God). Some scholars view that the word 'Jagannath' is the Sanskritized form of *Jaganta*. Thus this tradition of *Daru Devata*(the wooden deity) has a message for the modern people who intend to accelerate the process of urbanization at the cost of trees which have been designed by God to maintain ecological balance. Thus behind the story of Lord Jagannath lies a serious note for the preservation of human civilization. More so the government now-a-days ascribes a special status to the tribals who are the original worshipper of Lord Jagannath. The government calls the aboriginal people as scheduled tribes. The importance attached to the tribes for the sake of social equality is nothing new because in Shri Jagannath culture tribals are as important as aryanas or brahmanas.

To sum up, to explore the essence of Shri Jagannath Culture is not without a specific purpose. Today when the modern man under the impact of scientific and technological advancement that has resulted in urbanization, industrialization and mechanization of life has invited environmental hazards a scholarly interpretation of the texts, legends, songs, dance etc. on Lord Jagannath is the need of the hour. Shri Jagannath culture is rooted in humanistic morals. When humanism gained prominence in the history of the world many a poet attempted to define it. Alexander Pope, a celebrated poet of the Age of Reason wrote in the *Essay on Man*:

*Know thyself ! presume not God to scan
The proper study of mankind is Man.*

Pope holds that human civilization should be Man-centred not God-centred. Man must try to know his own self, the complexity of his own psyche-the psychology must have supremacy over religious texts. It is the proper study of man that will open out the avenues for the solution to the problems and crises that man faces. The focus should be on Humanistic morals. 'Humanism' as defined in the *Collins Co-Build English Language Dictionary*, is 'a philosophy that believes in mankind's ability to achieve happiness and fulfillment without the need for religion' (P.710). 'Humanism' is rooted in 'principles and values based on what a person or society believes are right, proper or acceptable ways of behaving' (ibid: 937) . It is associated with ethical, virtuous and righteous norms. Literatures on Juggernaut describe and prescribe codes of conduct which can't be but accepted as righteous. This is the principal reason why Shri Jagannath temples are being constructed in different parts of the globe and the Car Festival at Puri draws lakhs of pilgrims across the country. Morals, appropriate human values, principles and behaviour differ from society to society

but Shri Jagannath culture is syncretic in nature; it amalgamates diverse religions, cultures or schools of thought in the light of humanistic principles, beliefs and values. Hence sincere efforts should be made to comprehend and promote it.

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Folklore “matters” in Literature

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Abstract:

If “literature” has etymologically meant to do with the written word, how can folklore belonging to the oral tradition be categorized as a piece of literature? This is precisely what this paper attempts to find an answer to; to find out how folklore “matters” in literature. Although folklore today is regarded as rich sites of sociological, psychological, anthropological, literary and cultural criticism, it “matters” more in the sense of creating a greater understanding of the world and beyond, of accommodating difference.

Keywords: Folklore, Matter, Literature, Myth, Memory

Introduction: Folklore and Literature:

J. Hillis Miller, a renowned literary and cultural critic, Professor of Comparative Literature and English at the University of California, rightly observes that ‘literature’ has always meant to suggest printed books that contain what most people ordinarily think of these days as ‘literature’, that is, poems, plays and novels. Again the origin of the word ‘literature’ from the Latin ‘*letter*’ indicates written word. Following the given premise one can then suppose that folklore, which exists primarily at the level of oral tradition, is precluded from the purview of literature. However, the primary argument that I would like to present is how folklore can be considered as literature because the ethos of both are similar making the medium of expression redundant. After all, literature in printed forms came into rampant existence only in the 15th century, with the invention of the printing press by one Johannes Gutenberg. On the other hand there are no details of

the origin of folklore because of their anonymous authorship and oral nature; but there are no two opinions on the antiquity of folklore. The first systematic collection of these folklore dates back to 1812 when Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm collected folktales and published them as *Children’s and Household Tales* which was in the German language. It comprised of 206 stories and 10 children’s legends added as an appendix. These tales were then translated into different European languages, and subsequently there have been variants of the original stories. These stories are known less for their elegance and more for their simplicity. One of the interesting observations from these tales is the focus on ordinary lives of people. The English word ‘folk’ is synonymous with the German word ‘*volk*’ meaning people. The English word ‘folklore’ means the lore of the people. Today folk tales are not simply about faeries but have broadened their meaning to include folk narratives. Their subject matter can be divided into three main groups or genres of myths, legends and folktales. However, it is a fluid categorization. Myth is the most fundamental kind of folk narrative, rich in symbolic imagery. These may deal with the origin of life, or define our relationship with the supernatural. Some of the aims of these folk tales are the restoration of justice; or achievement of simple cathartic pleasure.

Coming home, the Indian word *loksahitya* is used for folklore; *lok* meaning ‘people’ and *sahitya* meaning literature. Thus *loksahitaya* again would translate into literature of the people. It is precisely this preoccupation with people that makes folklore and literature similar. Again, the aim of both is the dissemination of

knowledge; knowledge not simply in the sense of knowing something new. Merely acquiring knowledge of the new is not enough, for in that case a cookery book should qualify as a piece of literature. According to Ranjan Ghosh, "Literature is about knowing man, the world, and knowing beyond man and the world". (36) It is the kind of knowledge which helps us to see the 'sacred' in the everyday that matters. Ghosh elaborates, "In literature, the sacred initiates a dialectical journey: it has the uncanny power both to eliminate desires (for instance, to avoid making literature a desire-machine of theoretical formulations) and to give rise to desires for greater manifestations (literature's ability to evoke multiple experiences of meaning, of roads not taken). The ways of literature are both the spoken and unnamed; neither is constant. Also, literature has revealed its sacred power as much through the contagion of theory as without it. Both are mysteries..." (35) The sacred in the folktales lies in the acceptance of the undecipherable. Thus both literature and folktales have more than just offering the mimetic 'realistic' paradigm. Both tread the same path in their pursuit of knowledge for wisdom and its ultimate aim for a greater understanding of the design of the Universe, which does not heed the specifics of religions but influences our view of it. If we were to see the world around us as possessing forms of intelligence apart from the human as well, it would, perhaps, lead to a cessation of meaningless strife and accord a place for us to live in harmony with those who claim a place similar to ourselves.

Folk Literature from Darjeeling Hills:

Folktales in Darjeeling, arising out of the mythic discourse, are as old as the hills. It is in these folktales that myth has emerged from the mire of theories that tended to deny it the sanction of truth into the sphere of where it should belong- to 'ancient' or 'ancestral' memory, a history that has been reinvented in the imagination. To trace the history of a people where no authentic history exists on record, or where 'authentic history' is controversial, the researcher needs to delve into the content of myths if an understanding of a culture is the aim. For myth and culture, one might say, are as

closely related as the *quarto* and *verso* of a sheet of paper, to borrow Ferdinand de Saussure's simile. The hill culture grew out of myths, which had a shaping influence on our views of Nature and man, and gave meaning to ritual and taboo. For people living in close communion with the natural world, these folktales are no doubt a rich site of sociological, psychological, anthropological and literary criticism. Handed down from one generation to another, these folktales are a product of oral history. They not only formed an intricate part of religious ritual; but they were also used for pure entertainment purpose at the end of a hard day; or to instill wisdom among the simpletons as part of a homiletic purpose; and also because these folktales provided an easy mode of 'wish- fulfillment' ideal. The primary aim of retrieving these folktales is to resist the monolithic homogenizing tendency of the hegemonic culture. Folklore has therefore emerged as a counter-discourse, an attempt to retrieve indigenous histories through memory.

Memory is spatial, meaning; it has to memory of and in a particular place. Every mythic folklore will have a history of and in a particular place. Myths itself are a source of collective memory. The native draws upon the indigenous myths to strengthen his self. Folk culture that has grown around these myths bears a close relation to the conditions of survival, both in ecological and social terms. Its intimate knowledge of the local natural flora and fauna offer a holistic view of life. Some of the modern critics of myth have focused on myth being related to creation and the unifying and harmonizing power of myth. Mircea Eliade says, "Myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the cosmos, or only a fragment of reality- an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth then is always an account of a 'creation'." (pp 5-6) The miracle of creation is the bringing of conflicting forces into the harmony of one. This power is the archetype or the eternal cosmic principle or what Levi Strauss calls the 'the universal law of human thought.' (10) Thus myth can be regarded both as a narrative to a way of thinking. It is first an

idea or an archetype and woven around it are the mythical story letting animals, plants, and inanimate objects take on human attributes. A look at a Lepcha folk tale *A Story of Two Rivers* will help illustrate this:

Mount Tendong stands majestically at a height of 8,675 feet in South Sikkim. It is a mountain venerated by the Lepchas. The legend goes that the two rivers descending from Mount Tendong, Rangnyoo and Rangeet- were lovers who agreed to meet at a place down in the foothills of the Himalayas. Rangeet, the male river, was guided by the bird Tut Fo, and Rangnyoo, the female river was guided by the snake, Paril Bo. The bird guiding Rangeet would stop at several places for food and sometimes flew off course and thus took a long time to reach the appointed place called 'Panzaok', in Lepcha meaning 'a dense forest'. Today it is called by its corrupt name, Peshok, a place near Teesta Bazaar. If one notices the course of the Rangeet one will see that it is marked by several zigzags, while the Rangnyoo took no time at all to reach their rendezvous. By the time Rangeet came, Rangnyoo was already waiting, which made him feel very ashamed. Filled with shame, he exclaimed, "This a tha?" meaning "When did you arrive?". It is from then on that Rangnyoo came to be called by the corruption of the exclamation, Teesta.

Disappointed with himself, Rangeet decided to punish himself by retreating to the Himalayas. As a result a great deluge spread over the land of the Lepchas. In order to save themselves from drowning, the Lepchas climbed Mount Tendong and prayed to Itboo Debo Rum, the creator of 'chi', or fermented beer. Miraculously the waters receded and once again the land was covered with vegetation, birds and insects. In order to express their gratitude the Lepchas till today pray to Mount Tendong with 'chi' and seek protection from future deluge.

Often these stories contain simple homespun wisdom, breaking down conventional ideas and habitual modes of thought. Another Tibetan folktale *The relic* shows how an object has no intrinsic value in itself but acquires one through the faith that is bestowed upon it:

"Sincere prayer and supplication can make a thorn a relic of adoration", goes a very famous Tibetan saying. Its origin goes back to the tale of an old woman asking a trader to bring back a saint's relic from his visit to India. The trader being a very busy man forgot the request of the old woman. Having completed his business affairs on his way back he suddenly remembered the old woman's request. Beside the road was a stinking skeleton of a dog. The trader off its tooth, thinking, as he did so, "A bit of the jawbone should do for her". Wrapping it in a silken scarf he gave it to the old woman saying it was a relic of the great saint, Sariputra, Lord Buddha's favorite companion. The old woman's joy knew no bounds. She placed the jawbone carefully at the altar of her shrine and worshipped it night and day with the greatest devotion. Soon word spread about this holy relic and people from far and wide came to her home to pay homage.

Meanwhile, the trader enjoyed the thought of having been able to fool not only an old, ignorant woman but also a whole lot of others. Then, one day news came of radiance emanating from the relic. Curious, the trader went to the old woman's home to verify the rumors he had heard. To his great astonishment he was nearly blinded by the light from the "relic". The jawbone of a dead dog had turned into a holy relic on the strength of people's faith alone.

Folklorist William Bascom states that folklore has many cultural aspects, such as allowing for escape from societal consequences to transmitting a culture's moral values. Psychologically speaking, folk literature validates self-confirmation and composure. In the process of storytelling, the story teller will achieve composure. But folk literature is not to be valued purely for its therapeutic function. Folktales can be used for sociological analysis, about how a particular custom or tradition is started as seen in the case of the Khambu Rai community and their custom of abstaining from the consumption of mutton:

Legend has it that once a Khambu family kept a goat as pet. The goat was well looked after and cared for. Unfortunately, one day the owner got drunk and in

a fit of drunkenness happened to kill it. Ever since then it is believed that whenever a Khambu happened to eat goat meat, he is surely to fall ill and suffer ill luck.

Cultural memories are most often silenced by the dominant culture; and in the case of Darjeeling hills it is also the double incursion of rational western forms of thought and Christianity. In her *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan has argued that the English wished to see a Europeanized improvement in the morals and manners of the natives basically to suit their administrative needs in India. However, it was nervous about interfering directly in the religious beliefs of the natives. Hence they sought to preach their culture through the setting up of various missionary schools imparting English education. The rapid proliferation of missionary activity through the establishment of English public schools resulted in the neglect of native culture and language. Also Darjeeling hills have been a favorable educational hub of the Westerners, as more and more wives of British officers posted in Darjeeling sought to accompany their husband with their children. Thus English education under the British colonial rule rightly became, as Gauri Viswanathan says became a mode of 'control' and 'containment' of indigenous native sensibility. In 1835, Anglicism proclaimed its definitive victory in the form of Thomas Babington Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education', a paean to English language and literature, where he writes that the goal of this cultural eugenics was to create 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.' In it he also attacked Orientalist education as 'useless' and 'unmeaning'. It was shortly followed by Lord Bentick's English Education Act of 1835 which formalized the teaching of English literature and science to the natives. It worked to a great extent in creating the 'Bengal Renaissance' with the rise of a new class of urban Indian elites who worked for the East India Company. Reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Henry Vivian Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and others espoused the cause of English education. At the same time they used this tool to create a search for cultural

and national identity. They also sought to unite various provincial groups into one India umbrella. Unfortunately, the hills were left out of this Cultural Revolution. Darjeeling was yet to be mapped as a negotiation of the Deed of Grant was taking place between the Sikkimese Chogyal and the East India Company in 1835 until the Chogyal 'presented' Darjeeling to the East India Company to set up a sanatorium. In 1841 Reverend William Stuart, a Baptist from England opened a school for the natives at Tukver in Darjeeling, but it soon died out. In 1846, the Loreto Convent was established only for the European girl children. The first Government school in Darjeeling was opened in 1856 with an intake of 33 native pupils. However all schools had a church within, implying a compulsory education in English of the Bible. By 1870-71 sixteen vernacular schools started in the district and the local languages taught were Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and only Lepcha. Nepali or *Parbate* the common language of conversation between the various tribes of Hills was not given a place until 1977.

Concluding Remarks: The "Mattering" of Folktales as Literature:

The 'matter' of these folktales 'matters' in literature in the sense of having an import or worth taking seriously primarily at the level of the imagination. However, folktales do suffer from 'contamination' as these tales are transmitted from one generation to another and from one place to another. Contamination can also occur because these tales rely heavily on the individual memory and subjectivities. Modern day 'contamination' can take place due to the invasion by popular culture and technology. But it is at the level of imagination that the empirical (beauty) and the rational (truth) can be realized. It is a state where the context will always predate the text. Literature being "*L'iterature*", finds in its iterability, its repeatability, its 'mattering'. It 'matters' in its intent to pleasure, a sort of Bacchanalian pleasure of the Dionysius, as opposed to the austere God of Reason, Apollo. It is the joyful affirmation of dwelling in the imaginative past.

Our cultural history is governed by the way our past is recovered and represented. It is through the

cultural circuit of folktales that the dynamics of culture and memory is worked out. Through folk literatures one can control self-representation. It is about discovering modes of survival in a globalizing culture. In an age riddled with ecological angst, it creates earth-consciousness by giving us an intimate knowledge of local flora, fauna and landscape promoting environmentalism and sustainable culture. Alternate forms of knowledge, from healing to agriculture, can be gleaned through this resource. Taken together, these folktales speak of a culture that has been marginalized by the mainstream but retains a living quality amongst those that belong to it. This very fact leads us to the question of margins: which is the margin and which is the centre? By bringing forward the hidden aspects of folk culture we can aim to provide a parable for a

greater and deeper understanding of life and thought, thereby overturning the accepted structure of ethics.

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A Historical Survey of Canon Formation in English Literature

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Abstract :

This paper is an attempt to establish the fact that the canon of English literature as we know it today is not a universal, apolitical given. Instead, it has emerged out of specific social, political, ideological and historical circumstances. The term canon has always signified a divide between the “genuine” and the “fake” or the “original” and the “apocryphal”. The literary canon stands for all those authors who by a general, cumulative consensus of critics, teachers and scholars are regarded as classics and are included in educational syllabi. A set of arbitrary criteria determine the validity of a certain author’s inclusion in the canon, criteria that are governed by the ideological biases and political affiliations of the people dominant during the process of canonization. Additionally, canonical literature/ high culture, while establishing its power and hegemony, creates its binary opposite, i.e., low brow/popular/mass culture. In the pre-Romantic era, literature could mean anything that catered to the values and tastes of the white upper class English. The Romantic age saw the emergence of newer concepts of literature as imaginative writing, mostly poetry, and as a critique of the utilitarianism of an industrial society. The autonomous creative artist was gradually expected to produce art which is not mere commodity but a superior reality that represents the universal truth. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that English was introduced in Oxford and Cambridge. Although initially it faced tough competition from the classics and other university subjects, it soon emerged as a

powerful discipline. English studies was soon bestowed with the “lofty” purpose of creating new leaders and of domesticating existing tensions in the society by attracting men from all classes to the universities.

Key words: Canonization, High culture, Mass culture, Institutionalization, Plurality

The term canon has always signified a divide between the “genuine” and the “fake” or the “original” and the “apocryphal”. Selected writings in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament were attributed the title of genuine Holy Scriptures by church authorities and these writings formed the Biblical canon. Writings which were kept outside the purview of this privilege constituted the Apocrypha. Similarly, the literary canon stands for all those authors who by a general, cumulative consensus of critics, teachers and scholars are regarded as classics and are included in educational syllabi. Thus, the process of the literary canon formation, as in the case of the Biblical canon, is ruled by a politics of inclusion and exclusion. Some of the criteria that determine the validity of a certain author’s inclusion in the canon include “universality”, “originality”, “genius” and “organicity”. These criteria are arbitrary features governed by the ideological biases and political affiliations of the people dominant during the process of canonization. It can thus be asserted that the process of canon formation while privileging some authors strategically and arbitrarily keeps out others as unworthy of being part of the “great” canon of English literature.

Raymond Williams has argued that from the seventeenth and eighteenth century onwards, literature, that earlier referred to any kind of printed books and a general reading ability and experience, began to embody new connotations. The term literature began to refer to printed works of a certain quality, signifying a shift from learning to so-called taste, sensibility, imagination and creativity (Williams, *Marxism* 47-48). There thus emerged the notion of a certain kind of literature/high culture and the idea of canonical literature as being able to transmit that culture. Canonical literature/high culture, while establishing its power and hegemony, creates its binary opposite, i.e., low brow/popular/mass culture. This implies that the making of canonical literature denigrates a wide variety of rich, diverse cultural forms like films, music, radio, television, pulp fiction and so on. The fact that millions of people engage with these cultural forms every day remains insignificant in front of the exclusive, elite, canonical literature confined to academicians, scholars and litterateurs.

The discipline of English was not particular about a rigid canon in the eighteenth century, a time period that witnessed a rapidly increasing rate of literacy, the growth of the press and an increase in the number of readers. Additionally, the concept of literature at that time was not restricted to creative or imaginative writing and comprised diverse subjects including non-fiction, scientific and philosophical writings. According to Terry Eagleton, what defined literature then was its ability to embody the values and tastes of a particular class, its value-ladenness (15). Thus, in the pre-Romantic era, literature could mean anything that catered to the values and tastes of the white upper class English. Additionally, literature was used as a weapon to instill those values among the middle classes with a view to incorporate them into the ruling ideology.

The Romantic age saw the emergence of newer concepts of literature. Literature came to signify not factual but only imaginative writing, mostly poetry. It is also around the same time that a new conception of culture emerged: as a critique of the utilitarianism of an industrial society. Eagleton traces the cause of the

rise of these newer meanings of culture and literature in the great contradiction between the revolutionary zeal (of which Romanticism was a product) of the middle classes that replaced old colonialist and feudal regimes in America and France on the one hand, and the harsh realities of the bourgeois regime on the other hand. As a defensive measure against the “baseness” of an industrial, the literary text was posited as the repository of what is called free, creative imagination and individual expression. The alleged wholeness and organic unity of the text were projected as a contrast to the characteristic features of industrialism including alienation, fragmentation and individualism (Eagleton 17). Related to this is the notion of the romantic artist as one who does not adhere to methods and commercial rules of art, and never imitates. Instead, he is governed by an original genius that enables autonomous, spontaneous and vital creativity. The autonomous creative artist is thus expected to produce art which is not mere commodity but a superior reality that represents the universal truth (Williams, *Culture* 56). Thus, as Eagleton notes, “Art was extricated from the material practices, social relations and ideological meanings in which it is always caught up, and raised to the status of a solitary fetish” (18-19).

Parallel to the fetishization of art ran another movement, that of the institutionalization of English literature in which Matthew Arnold played a significant role. Arnold posited English literature as the panacea for all the problems of “mankind”. According to Arnold:

... culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically. (6)

Like in the case of the Romantics, culture thus becomes synonymous with the development not only

of literary culture but of all sides of “humanity”. The seeds of the institutionalization of English literature as we know it today were sown by Arnold through his idea of the State governed by our best, cultured, humane selves and this idea found practical application in the system of national education. What made Arnold’s doctrines all the more effective and far reaching was his own involvement with the educational system. Thus, we see the germination of the idea of a national system of education upheld by an elite entrusted with the responsibility of transmitting culture and civilization to the unenlightened masses.

Until 1880, however, English education was meant only for workers and women. According to Eagleton, during this time period, literature was sought to be used as a strategy for making the workers rise above the contingent issues of livelihood, wages, dominance and exploitation and engage with “higher” ideas like universal human values, eternal truths and beauty to be found in works of literature(22). Thus, throughout much of the late nineteenth century, English education remained confined to provincial colleges for the middle class and the colleges of the working men, to women and to the colonial officials. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that it was introduced in Oxford and Cambridge. Although initially English faced tough competition from the classics and other university subjects, it soon emerged as a powerful discipline. Brian Doyle points out three major reasons behind this: firstly, this period saw a change in the concept of education fuelled by the English Association’s 1907 theory of the regeneration of the self through liberal or higher education to inculcate a higher subjectivity; secondly, there was a replacement of terms like English literature and history by the all-embracing term “English”; and thirdly, there began a project of cultural extension to enable lay persons who can never learn the classics to get a feel of Oxford (21-22, 26-30, 35). Thus, it can be argued that English studies was used as a tool both to create new leaders and to domesticate existing tensions in the society by attracting men from all classes to the universities. English proved convenient for this for a number of

reasons. Firstly, English, as the Romantics and Arnold have posited, is the “repository of humane, organic values”. Secondly, unlike the classics, English is accessible to people from all classes. Other factors that aided the “masculinization” of English include British capitalism being threatened by newer, more powerful rivals like Germany and America, England facing competition in its mission of acquiring newer colonies, and the growing need for administrators, soldiers, officials etc. travelling to the colonies to impress natives with their cultural superiority.

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that the canon of English literature as we know it today is not a universal, apolitical given. Instead, it has emerged out of specific social, political, ideological and historical circumstances. Therefore, as Colin MacCabe has argued, instead of looking at popular/mass culture as the binary opposite of high culture, the focus should be on breaking with all formulations which depend on a high/low or elite/mass distinction. Today, readers and audiences all over the world are irretrievably fragmented, be it technologically, historically, socially, economically, or psychologically. A universal literature and a national education cannot address such an explosion of differences because the high canon does not acknowledge plurality as well as regional, racial and other specificities.

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সম্ভকথা পৰম্পৰাত শংকৰদেৱ

(গুৰু চৰিত কথাৰ বিশেষ উল্লিখন সহ)

ৰীতা মণি বৈৰাগী

সহকাৰী অধ্যাপিকা, শ্বহীদ মণিৰাম দেৱান মহাবিদ্যালয়

অৱতৰণিকা : ধৰ্ম গুৰু সকলক পৱিত্ৰ আসনত প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত কৰি, তেওঁলোকে প্ৰচাৰ কৰা ধৰ্মক একমাত্ৰ শুদ্ধ আৰু পৱিত্ৰ বুলি গ্ৰহণ কৰা মানসিকতাৰ ভেটিতেই সম্ভ কৰাৰ সৃষ্টি। ভক্তসকলৰ মনত ধৰ্ম গুৰু আৰু ভগৱান অভিন্ন। গতিকে সেই সম্ভৰ আদৰ্শ পালন কৰি ভক্তিৰ প্ৰতি মন ধাৰিত কৰিলেই ভক্তই মুক্তি পাব পাৰে। আদৰ্শ গুৰুৰ জীৱন কথা চৰ্চন আৰু পালন কৰাই ভক্তৰ পৱিত্ৰ ধৰ্ম। গুৰু সকলৰ জীৱন কথাই তেওঁলোকক আপ্লুত কৰাৰ লগতে জীৱন যাত্ৰাত লাভ কৰা দুখ যন্ত্ৰণাকো সহজভাৱে গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ অনুপ্ৰেৰণা যোগায়। সম্ভকথা বা সম্ভ চৰিত্ৰক “Hagiography” বুলি কোৱা হয়। ইয়াৰ অভিধানিক অৰ্থ হ’ল Hagiography (n a book on lives of saint)’

Encyclopaedia Britanica ত Hagiography ৰ সংজ্ঞা এনেদৰে দিছে — “Hagiology (Hagiography) is the branch of historical studies dealing with the lives of saint and the devotion paid to them throughout the centuries” সম্ভকথাত জীৱনিক মহত্ব প্ৰদান কৰিবৰ কাৰণে কল্পনাৰ আশ্ৰয় লোৱা হয়। এই প্ৰসংগত জেইনচ্ এল্ ক্লিফোৰ্ডৰ মন্তব্য উল্লেখনীয়। তেওঁ এগ্লেলাছে লিখা জীৱনী গ্ৰন্থৰ এটি কথা উল্লেখ কৰিছে। এগ্লেলাছে লিখিছে যে কোনো সম্ভৰ জীৱন তথ্য সম্পৰ্কে যেতিয়াই তেওঁ তথ্যৰ অভাৱৰ সন্মুখীন হৈছে তেতিয়াই জীৱনী মালাত যাতে কোনো ফাঁক ৰৈ যাব নোৱাৰে, তাৰ বাবে মই নিজেই ঈশ্বৰৰ সহায়ত আৰু ভাই-বন্ধুৰ ইচ্ছাত কল্পনাৰ আশ্ৰয় লৈ সেই শূন্যতা পূৰণ কৰিছোঁ।^১

ইউৰোপত তৃতীয় শতাব্দীৰ পৰা চতুৰ্থ শতাব্দীত যিবোৰ জীৱনী ৰচিত হৈছিল সেই জীৱনীবোৰক প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থত জীৱনী আখ্যা প্ৰদান নকৰি ‘হেগিওগ্ৰাফি’ বুলি কোৱা হৈছিল। এই সময়ত ৰচিত বেছি ভাগ জীৱনীৰ নায়ক আছিল সম্ভ। এই

শ্ৰেণীৰ জীৱনীত ব্যক্তিৰ জীৱনৰ প্ৰকৃত সত্যক পোহৰলৈ অনাতকৈ কল্পনা, অতিৰঞ্জন, কিস্মদন্তী আদিৰ ভিত্তিত ঐশ্বৰিক গুণ আৰোপ কৰি সম্ভৰ মহত্ব আৰু ঐশ্বৰিকত্ব প্ৰকাশ কৰা হৈছিল। সম্ভকথা সৰ্বসাধাৰণৰ ভক্তিৰ উচ্ছাসৰ ফল। ইউৰোপত সৃষ্টি হোৱা ‘হেগিওগ্ৰাফি’ৰ শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্য ভাৰতবৰ্ষতো সৃষ্টি হৈছিল। ভাৰতীয় ইতিহাসত মধ্যযুগত ৰচিত এই শ্ৰেণীৰ চৰিত্ৰক বৃত্ত বা আখ্যায়িকা নামেৰে অভিহিত কৰা হৈছিল। মধ্যযুগীয় সাহিত্য পৰম্পৰাত ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্যৰ প্ৰাচীন যুগত ৰচিত দুখন গ্ৰন্থ ‘বুদ্ধ চৰিত’ আৰু ‘হৰ্ষচৰিত’। এই গ্ৰন্থ দুখনক ক্ৰমে কাব্য আৰু আখ্যায়িকা হিচাপে গণ্য কৰা হৈছিল।^২

অশ্বঘোষে ‘বুদ্ধচৰিত’ ৰচনা কৰিছিল খ্ৰীষ্টীয় প্ৰথম শতিকাত। এই খন গ্ৰন্থক ভাৰতীয় জীৱনী সাহিত্যত প্ৰথম গ্ৰন্থ ৰূপে স্থান দিয়া হয়। বাণভট্টই ‘হৰ্ষচৰিত’ ৰচনা কৰিছিল খ্ৰীষ্টীয় ষষ্ঠ শতিকাত। সংস্কৃত ভাষাত ৰচনা কৰা এই দুখন গ্ৰন্থই মুকলি কৰি দিয়া পথেৰে পালি আৰু প্ৰাকৃতৰ পৰা মধ্যযুগ আৰু আধুনিক যুগৰ আৰম্ভণিলৈকে ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ বিভিন্ন প্ৰান্তত জীৱনী সাহিত্যই জন্ম লাভ কৰে। অৱশ্যে এই সময়ছোৱাত সৃষ্টি হোৱা সকলো গ্ৰন্থক প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থত জীৱনী আখ্যা দিব নোৱাৰি। কাৰণ মধ্যযুগৰ এই শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্য সৃষ্টিৰ মূলতে আছিল ভক্তৰ উচ্ছাস, ভক্তৰ দৃষ্টিত গুৰু স্বয়ং ভগৱান। মধ্য যুগৰ সামৰণি আৰু আধুনিক যুগৰ প্ৰাৰম্ভণিৰ ভাৰতীয় সম্ভ সকলৰ চৰিতক সেই সম্ভ সকলৰ উপাস্য ৰাম বা কৃষ্ণৰ চৰিতৰ দৰেই পৱিত্ৰ গণনা কৰা হৈ আহিছে।^৩ এই অৱধাৰণাৰ ফলশ্ৰুতিত সৃষ্টি হৈছে আমাৰ চৰিত সাহিত্য সমূহ। মহেশ্বৰ নেওগে গুৰু চৰিতৰ ইতিকথা নামৰ গ্ৰন্থত গুৰু চৰিততকৈ Hagiography বা Hagiology অধিক আধুনিক আৰু বিজ্ঞান সন্মত বুলি উল্লেখ কৰাৰ লগতে গুৰু চৰিত আৰু Hagiography ৰ মাজত বহুত পাৰ্থক্য থাকিলেও, ‘মুঠতে গুৰু চৰিত আৰু Hagiography ৰ

মাজত বহু অন্তৰ যদিও গুৰু চৰিতো হ'ল Hagios (গ্ৰীক) অৰ্থাৎ সন্ত জীৱন কথা বুলি উল্লেখ কৰিছে।

অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠাপক শংকৰদেৱ মাধৱদেৱ আৰু বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ পুৰোধা ব্যক্তিৰ জীৱনক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি চৰিত সাহিত্যৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছিল। এই সাহিত্য সৃষ্টিৰ মূল লক্ষ্য হ'ল ভক্তৰ দৃষ্টিত গুৰুক ঈশ্বৰ ৰূপে প্ৰতিপন্ন কৰা। অসমতো শংকৰদেৱৰ তিৰোভাৱৰ পৰৱৰ্তীকালত ভক্তসকলৰ মাজত 'শংকৰদেৱক' এজন অলৌকিক অৱতাৰী পুৰুষৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ প্ৰয়াস লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়। তাৰ ফলশ্ৰুতিতেই ভক্তসকলৰ মাজত আৰু জন সমাজত শংকৰদেৱ পৰম পুৰুষ কৃষ্ণৰ অংশ ৰূপে প্ৰতিপন্ন কৰাৰ বাট মুকলি হয়। গুৰু চৰিত কথাৰ বক্তা চক্ৰপাণি বৈৰাগী আঁতৈয়ে মহাপুৰুষ শংকৰদেৱৰ দিনৰে পৰা চৰিত্ৰ কথনৰ ঐতিহ্য টানি আনিছে। "বৰদুৱাৰ পৰা পাটবাউসীলৈঃ কথা চৰিত্ৰ ঘোষা কীৰ্তনহে আছিলঃ সৰু ঠাকুৰ আতা প্ৰমুখ্যে সোধেঃ গুৰুজনে মুখ পদ্যে কীৰ্তন কৰেঃ দশ অৱতাৰ বাইশ্য অৱতাৰঃ শ্ৰী বামৰঃ কৃষ্ণ বলোভদ্ৰৰ চৰিত্ৰঃ আঁতৈসৰে মহাশ্ৰদ্ধাভাৱ কৰ্ণাঞ্জলি ভৰি পিত্ৰঃ গুণমালা লীলামালা ভটিমাৰ ক্ৰম নাছিলঃ মাত্ৰ কীৰ্তন ওজাহে গাইছিল।। (০১)

এইদৰে মহাপুৰুষ শংকৰদেৱৰ দিনত 'কথা চৰিত্ৰ' বুলিলে ভগৱন্তৰ চৰিত্ৰ কীৰ্তনহে আছিল; তাকো পৰ্যায়বদ্ধ নকৰি সুবিধা মতে চৰ্চা গৈছিল। গুৰুজনেই ঘোষণা কৰিছিল যে কৃষ্ণ চৰিত্ৰ আৰু ভক্ত চৰিত্ৰ সমান।"৬ মাধৱদেৱে শংকৰদেৱৰ তিৰোধনৰ পাছত গুৰুৰ উক্ত বাক্য শিৰোগত কৰি গুৰুৰ চৰিত্ৰ কীৰ্তন কৰি 'চৰিত তোলা' প্ৰথা প্ৰৱৰ্তন কৰে। "তেহে শ্ৰী মাধৱদেৱ গুৰুবাক্য শিৰে ধৰি সদা সৰ্ববদা চৰিত্ৰ কীৰ্তন কৰিছিল।"৭

এনেদৰে চৰিত তোলা প্ৰথাৰ যোগাত্মক পৰিণতিত গঢ় লৈ উঠে অসমত চৰিত পুথি ৰচনাৰ প্ৰক্ৰিয়া। প্ৰথমে ভক্ত সকলৰ মুখে মুখে চলি অহা চৰিত চৰ্চাই সপ্তদশ শতিকাত পদ্য ৰূপ লাভ কৰে আৰু অষ্টাদশ শতিকাত গদ্য ৰূপত প্ৰকাশ লাভ কৰে। চৰিত তোলা প্ৰথাৰ ফলশ্ৰুতিত ৰচিত চৰিত পুথিৰ সৃষ্টি সম্পৰ্কে কেশৱানন্দ দেৱগোস্বামীয়ে এনেদৰে উল্লেখ কৰিছে— 'সময় পাৰ হোৱাৰ লগে লগে অন্যান্য ধৰ্ম গুৰু সকলৰ জীৱন চৰিত আৰু সত্ৰৰো ইতিহাসৰ চৰ্চা আৰু আলোচনাদি হ'বলৈ ধৰিলে। সত্ৰৰ অধিকাৰ অভিষেক বা নিৰ্মালি লোৱা অনুষ্ঠানত এই সত্ৰৰ স্বৰ্গগত অধিকাৰ সকলৰ জীৱনী আৰু কাৰ্যাৱলীৰ একাদিক্ৰমে চমু বৰ্ণনা দিয়াটো নিয়মত পৰিণত হৈ পৰিল। সত্ৰৰ দৈনন্দিন প্ৰসংগৰ অন্তত কীৰ্তন ঘৰত

আৰু গাওঁ সমূহৰো নামঘৰত সেইদৰে গুৰুসকলৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ চৰ্চা হোৱাত অনেক কথা মুখে মুখেই শিলৰ ৰেখাৰ দৰে হৈ চলি আহিছে। সময় আগবঢ়া আৰু সত্ৰৰ সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি পোৱাৰ লগে লগে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত এবিধ নতুন শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি হ'বলৈ ধৰিলে।"৮

এই শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্যই শংকৰদেৱক কেৱল এজন ধৰ্মৰ গুৰু অসমীয়া জাতীয় জীৱনৰ প্ৰাণ প্ৰতিষ্ঠাতা ৰূপত প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰাৰ লগতে এই ভক্ত প্ৰাণ ব্যক্তিজন কালক্ৰমত অৱতাৰী পুৰুষ পৰম পুৰুষ ৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ প্ৰচেষ্টা আৰম্ভ হ'ল। তাৰ ফলত শংকৰদেৱৰ জীৱনীত অৰ্থাৎ চৰিত পুথি সমূহত সমাৱেশ ঘটিল অলেখ অতিবাস্তৱ, অলৌকিক ঘটনাৰ। এই শ্ৰেণীৰ সাহিত্যৰ অনেক কথা "Holy lie" বুলি ড° সুশীল কুমাৰ সেই মন্তব্য কৰিছে। অসমীয়া ভাষাত ৰচিত চৰিত পুথি সমূহৰ ভিতৰত 'গুৰু চৰিত কথা' এখন উল্লেখযোগ্য গ্ৰন্থ। এই সম্পদটি অধ্যাপক বাণীকান্ত কাকতি দেৱে ১৯২৭ চন মানত বৰপেটা সত্ৰৰ সত্ৰীয়া চতুৰ্ভুজ দেৱৰ পৰা শৰণ লবৰ বেলা নিৰ্মালী ৰূপে পাইছিল।"৯

এই গ্ৰন্থখন অধ্যাপক উপেন্দ্ৰ চন্দ্ৰ লেখাৰুৰ সম্পাদনাত ১৯৪৯ চনত প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ পায়। ১৯৪৯ চনৰ শেহভাগত চৰিতখনিৰ একাংশ ১৩৬ পিঠি প্ৰথম ভাগ 'কথা গুৰু চৰিত' নামেৰে (মন কৰিব যে এই নাম এতিয়া হয়তো কাকতিদেৱৰ ইচ্ছামতে নতুনকৈ দিয়া হ'ল।) অধ্যাপক উপেন্দ্ৰ চন্দ্ৰ লেখাৰু সম্পাদিত আৰু দত্ত বৰুৱা প্ৰকাশিত হৈ প্ৰকাশ পায়।"১০

মহেশ্বৰ নেওগদেৱে গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ৰ প্ৰকাশন বিভাগৰ উদ্যোগত ১৯৮৭ চনত সম্পাদনা কৰি প্ৰকাশ কৰে। গুৰু চৰিত কথা গ্ৰন্থত দুজনা গুৰু শংকৰদেৱ আৰু মাধৱদেৱ, দুজনা ঠাকুৰদেউ পুৰুষোত্তম আৰু চতুৰ্ভুজ, এজনা আতা আৰু পাঁচিশজনা মহন্ত, আচাৰ্য, আনো অনেক মহাভাগৱতৰ কথন চৰিত্ৰ বুলি গ্ৰন্থত উল্লেখ কৰিছে। এই গ্ৰন্থখন অসমৰ সমাজ আৰু সংস্কৃতিৰ ইতিহাসৰ এখন মূল্যবান দলিল। পঞ্চদশ শতিকাৰ শেষভাগৰ পৰা সপ্তদশ শতিকালৈকে এক বিস্তৃত সময়ৰ কথা গ্ৰন্থখতি সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈছে। এই আলোচনাত সন্ত কথনাৰ পৰম্পৰাত শংকৰদেৱক কেনেদৰে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰা হৈছে সেই কথা 'গুৰু চৰিত কথা' গ্ৰন্থৰ বিশেষ উল্লেখৰে আলোচনাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

বিষয় বস্তুৰ আলোচনা : 'যুগনায়ক'ৰ আসনত অধিষ্ঠিত মহাপুৰুষ শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱক চৰিত পুথি সমূহত

অলৌকিক অৱতাৰী পুৰুষৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ প্ৰয়াস পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। গুৰু চৰিত কথা পুথিৰ ছত্ৰে ছত্ৰে শংকৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ বিভিন্ন দিশ প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে আৰ্ক্ষণীয় আৰু আদৰ্শৰ ৰূপত। শংকৰৰ ঐশ্বৰিক শক্তি, মানৱীয়তা, আৰু মানসিক দৃঢ়তা আৰু কৰ্মনিষ্ঠাৰ পূৰ্ণ প্ৰতিফলন ঘটিছে গ্ৰন্থখনিত পৰম পুৰুষ কৃষ্ণৰ গুণানুকীৰ্তন কৰি কৃষ্ণৰ চৰণত নিজকে অৰ্পন কৰি এই ভৱ সাগৰৰ পৰা মুক্ত লাভৰ পথ নিৰ্ণয় কৰিছিল শংকৰদেৱে। সেয়েহে ভক্ত প্ৰাণ বৈষ্ণৱ সকলৰ মনত শংকৰদেৱ পৰম পুৰুষ ঈশ্বৰৰে অংশ ৰূপে উজলি উঠিছিল। শংকৰৰ ৰূপ গুণ শৌৰ্য-বীৰ্য সকলোতে যেন প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছিল ঐশ্বৰিকত্ব। শংকৰদেৱৰ জন্ম বৃত্তান্তৰ লগতো অলৌকিক শক্তিৰ কথা জড়িত হৈ আছে।

গুৰু চৰিত কথাত শংকৰৰ উপৰি পুৰুষৰ আখ্যানৰ বিস্তৃত বিৱৰণ পোৱা যায়। চতুৰ্থ অনুচ্ছেদৰ পৰা ত্ৰিশ অনুচ্ছেদলৈকে সন্নিবিষ্ট হোৱা শংকৰদেৱৰ উপৰিপুৰুষৰ জন্মবৃত্তান্তৰ লগত শংকৰদেৱৰ জন্মৰ বৃত্তান্তও বৰ্ণিত হৈছে। এই দীঘলীয়া বিৱৰণৰ মাজত ঐশ্বৰিক মহাত্ম্য চিত্ৰকৰ্ষক ৰূপত প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে।

“.....পাছে কৰ্ম ভোজ কাজক্ৰিয়া দান দখিনা কৰি বাৰেও ভূঞৰ উপৰি শিৰোমণি ভূঞ হল।। পুত্ৰ নাই দেখি আৰু এক কন্যা শ্ৰীপতিৰ গৃহৰ ভূঞৰ দুহিতা বিবাহ কৰালেঃ মহাসুন্দৰী দিব্য সান্তি অনুস্মৃতি নামে।। কতো দিন আছে তথাপি পুত্ৰ নাই দুও পত্নীৰ ঃ সকলো সম্পতিৰে লক্ষ্মী ঐশ্বৰ্যশালী বংশধৰ পিণ্ডমূলক পুত্ৰ নাই।। কুসুম্বৰ মনে কষ্টেৰে আছে ঃ পাছে বুঢ়া খা দলৈৰ এক কপি [লী] ধেনু আছে বান্ধে বাথানে নিতে ন ঘটি দুগ্ধ সৰে।। পঘা পোলুকা দি জাই পুন্দ সেই তন্ততে গল দি থাকেহি গাটি তিতা পাইঃ গুৱালে লক্ষ্য কৈ একদিনা যুপি আছেঃ দেখে চাই সিঙ্গেৰে জপনা কাতিকৈ গল ওলাইঃ পাছ ধৰি ইও গৈছে লুইত পাৰ হৈ সিঙ্গৰি গোপেশ্বৰত হান্না দিলেগৈঃ পূজাৰি উঠি ন ঘটি দুগ্ধ খিৰাই গোপেশ্বৰ সদাশিৱক স্নান কৰাই ভোগ দি এ পুনু আহি সেই তন্ততে বাথানে বলহি ঃ পাছে গুৱালো আহি নৌকা বাই ঃ পুৱা সবাতে কলে আচৰ্য অদ্ভুত কথা।। তাকে সুনি কুসুমদেএ জাগ্ৰৎ সদাশিৱ মানি জানি ঃ জৰা পুৰা দধি দুগ্ধ মধু আঁখে পিঠা পায়স পনস চেনি চুৰা ঘনখিজ খিৰিসা সবাকে নি পূজিলেগৈ পুত্ৰ অভিষেকেৰে সন্তোষ হৈ তুলসীৰ টো [প] ধাৰ পৰিল পূজাৰি বিপ্ৰে অশংসাকৈ দিলে হৰ্ষে বোলে পুত্ৰ হব গৌৰীনাথ সন্তোষঃ পাছে ৰজত সুবৰ্ণ বস্ত্ৰ দানকৈ আহিল হৰসে।।*।।১৯।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৩

শিৱৰ বৰৰ ফলত জন্ম হ'ল শংকৰৰ। সত্যসন্ধ্যা আইৰ গৰ্ভজাত সন্তান শংকৰদেৱৰ জন্মদিনৰ বিৱৰণত মহাপুৰুষ গুৰু অৱতাৰ বুলি স্পষ্ট ৰূপত বৰ্ণনা কৰা হৈছে।

“..... এই বিংশতি পঞ্চদশ বৈকুণ্ঠৰ ঈশ্বৰ চপাই ধবজপুৰ বৈকুণ্ঠত বৰমেল কৈলে।। কৰি বোলে মোৰ অংশে জত জীৱ দুখত আছেঃ আৰু পূৰ্বেও বাক্য বুলিলোঃ তেহে আঞ্জা কৰিলে; উত্তৰে হৰিব্যাসঃ পূৰ্বে ৰূপ সনাতন ঃ দ [৭খ] খিনে চৈতন্য ঃ বাইবো কবিৰঃ পচিমে বৃন্দাবন দাসঃ নৈৰিতে নিতানন্দঃ মধ্যত অনন্ত অচ্যুত শুদ্ধ সনাতন ব্ৰহ্মে ঃ চাৰি গুটি মাৰিঃ চাৰি পাত্ৰ নজনা মন্ত্ৰী একুৰি চৈধে বৈকুণ্ঠকে মুখ্যকৈ অযুত বৈকুণ্ঠৰ পুত্ৰ নাতি ঈশ্বৰে লগে লৈ অংশ কলা বিভূতিৰ শক্তি আদিৰো ঈশ্বৰ অনাদিৰ উপৰ শুদ্ধ সনাতন আদি অন্ত মধ্য জৰা মৃত্যু শিশু যুৱা পৰিচিন্ত পুৰুষ পৃথিৱীলৈ গমন কৰিলে।। স্নেহ শ্ৰদ্ধা মৰ [ম] প্ৰীতি শৰণ ভজন শ্ৰৱণ কীৰ্তন কেৱল সপ্ৰেম লৈঃ গুৰু সেৱকৰ আগ পাছৰ বাদকৈ আহি অযোনিজাত পুৰুষ নিজকুল তাৰণ হেতু ছদ্মমায়া নৰদেহা কাৰণকৈ ঃ সত্যসন্ধ্যা মাতৃঃ স্ত্ৰী মধ্য মহাৰত্ন ঃ কালৰ প্ৰমাণে মাঘৰ পৰা আশ্বিনলৈ ন মাহ সম্পূৰ্ণে।। কাৰ্তিকৰ সংক্ৰান্তি ঃ বাৰ বৃহস্পতি ঃ তিথি পূৰ্ণিমাঃ শ্ৰৱণো নৈক্ষত্ৰ মধ্য নিশা জ্যোতিষক [১৩৭১ তেৰশ একসতৰি শকত] শ্ৰীশ্ৰী মন্ত্ৰ ভক্তৰ তিনি নিবৰ্দ্ধৰ কল্পতৰু আত্মা মহাপুৰুষৰ গুৰু অৱতাৰ।।*।। ৩০।।”

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৬, ১৭

জ্যোতিষীৰ গণনাতো শংকৰক অলৌকিক অৱতাৰী পুৰুষৰূপেই প্ৰকাশ কৰা হৈছে। “.....পাচ দিনত সন্টৰা গৰ্গে গনিলেঃ বেদ জ্যোতিষত চাই দেখে ঃ পূৰ্ণে শক্তিধৰ ভগৱন্ত অৱতাৰ ঃ তেহে কুসুমক বোলে তোমাৰ পুত্ৰ হস্তে বহু জীৱ নিস্তাৰ হব ঃ তোমাৰো কুশল সাৱধানে পালি ৰাখা।। গনি চাই দিলে কোটিত গঙ্গাধৰ ঃ পিহদত শঙ্কৰ দাতা বৰ দেখি শঙ্কৰ।।*।। ৩২।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৭

শংকৰদেৱৰ জন্মৰ সময়ত মাংগলিক ধ্বনি বাজি উঠাৰ কথাও গ্ৰন্থখনত উল্লেখ আছে। শংকৰৰ জন্মৰ পাছৰ পৰা প্ৰতি দিনতে শংকৰে বিভিন্ন অলৌকিক কাৰ্য সংঘটিত কৰিছে। গুৰু চৰিতৰ কথাৰ অসংখ্য উদাহৰণৰ মাজৰ পৰা দুটামান উদ্ধৃতি তুলি অনা হৈছে।

[আৰু বাইশ দিনা নাৰদ এদিন আহিছে মগনিয়াৰ বেশ ধৰি বীণা বাই নামি বোলে আমাকো ভুৰুকুৰা প্ৰভু তোমাৰ

চৰণ সেৱা বলে তযু যোগমায়া জানো সকলেঃ] [অনন্ত তেইশ দিনা আহি ছত্ৰ ধৰিছেহি : আৰু চবিশ দিনা বতাহে মিঠা আম ভাঙ্গি গৃহ ভাগি এহাতৰ খাটৰ উপৰে বৈচে] [ছবিশ দিনে বজ্ৰপাত কৈলে সূৰ্যবৰ দিনৰে পোজ সপ্ত হাত বেৰে পান দিছিল : এফাল ভাগি গৃহে পৰিৱৰা ভাগি এযুলৈ উপৰে বৰখাটৰ সবে দেখি আচৰ্য অদ্ভুত হ'লঃ] [আৰু মাস সুধি হোম কৰিছে বাৰে ভূঞা অনেক বাদ্য গাই বাইচেঃ অগ্নি হোমোও ও দুলাই মুৰ্ত্তি ধৰি নামিছেঃ সবে দেখি আচৰ্য অদ্ভুত হৈ ঈশ্বৰ মানি নামি গৈছে..... ॥* ॥ ৩৭ ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৯,২০

লগৰ লগৰীয়াৰ লগত বিভিন্ন লীলা কৰাৰ কথা চৰিত পুথিখনিত পোৱা যায়। শংকৰদেৱৰ প্ৰতি কাৰ্যৰ মাজত ঐশ্বৰিকত্বৰ অৱতাৰণাত নিহিত হৈ আছে সাধাৰণৰ মাজত অসাধাৰণত্বৰ আৰোপ। শৈশৱ কালত লগৰ লগৰীয়াৰ সৈতে খেল-ধেমালি কৰি ফুৰা শংকৰৰ কাৰ্যত প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে বৃন্দাবনত 'কৃষ্ণই কৰা শিশুলালীয়াৰ প্ৰতিছবি। 'বৃন্দাবনত যি লীলা কৃষ্ণ দেৱে সেই ৰূপে গুৰুজনো কৰিব ধৰিলে। আৰু অষ্টমাসে উশা লঞাত চব শিশুৰ কথা বান্ধি কস্যপ ধৰি আনিছে বুৰ মাৰি ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰত একদণ্ডে ৰাই বনগঞা কান্দিছিল নোলাবৰ দেখি কিবা হ'ল বুলি' ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ৮

“আৰু একদিনা আত্ৰ অন বেঞ্জন চৰুত থৈছিল : অনিখাব দিলে বাৰজলা চাই দেখে দুটি হাতে অন্নৰ বাটি দুই হাতে আঞ্জা লৈ ওলাই আহে ঘৰ জ্যোতিৰ্ময় প্ৰকাশ কৈ : বিস্মই বিশ্ৰুতি হৈ ঈশ্বৰ যেন জানি মানি : পাচদিনা বস্ত্ৰ গুৱা আগে দি শৰণাপন হল।” ॥* ॥ ৪৭ ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ২১

গুৰু মহেন্দ্ৰ কন্দলিৰ টোলাত শিক্ষা গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ সময়তো শংকৰৰ ঐশ্বৰিকত্ব প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে। গুৰু মহেন্দ্ৰ কন্দলিয়ে ঈশ্বৰ মানি শংকৰক সেৱা কৰিবলৈ গৈছে আৰু ওজা ছাত্ৰ পাতিছে।

“..... একদিনা স্নান কৰি মহাপুৰুষ গুৰু এচলা শিল আচে বহাৰ মুখতে তাতে বহি চুলি ফালিছে : দুই হাতে দুই হস্তে গা মচিছে।। তেহে কন্দলিএ দেখি আচৰ্য হৈ পাৱত পৰিবলৈ জাই : পাচে দুই হাত ছদ্মকৈ বোলে গুৰু কি কৰাহু তেহে পাঠশালা মচিবৰ নিবাৰ কৰি ওঝা ছাত্ৰ পাতিলে তাৰে পৰা ঈশ্বৰবোধ মানে ॥* ॥ ৫০ ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ২২

শংকৰক ওজা ছাত্ৰৰ মৰ্যদা দিয়া কাৰ্যই কন্দলিৰ শিষ্যই সদস্য ৰাঘ আচাৰ্য্যত অভিযোগ কৰিলে। ৰাঘ আচাৰ্যই মহেন্দ্ৰ কন্দলিৰ পৰা স্পষ্টীকৰণ বিচাৰিলে কি কাৰণে শূদ্ৰ ছাত্ৰক ওজা পতা হ'ল। মাধ কন্দলিৰ শিষ্য ৰাঘ আচাৰ্য কলেগৈ; পাছে তেওঁ আহি মহেন্দ্ৰ কন্দলিক ধৰিলেহি : বোলে শূদ্ৰকহে ওজা কৈ বামুনক পাঠ দি ওআ দেউ বোলৰা কিয় নকৰাবা।। পাছে সেই নিশা ভগৱন্তে ভব্য ৰূপ ধৰি হেচিঃ টোকন খুন্দি দশন সৰাই ভিণ্ডাকাৰ কৈলেঃ ভই খাই সেই স্বপ্নতে চাৰি বস্ত্ৰ লভিছেঃ পুৱা সবে ছাত্ৰ আনি দি সবাতে কৈ নামি ঈৰিষা এৰি একৰাই গলহি বিপ্ৰে ॥* ॥ ৫০ ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ২৩

শংকৰদেৱৰ সৃষ্টিশীল জীৱনৰ আৰম্ভণিতো শংকৰ যে অলৌকিক অৱতাৰী পুৰুষ সেয়া প্ৰতিপন্ন হৈছে। গুৰুজনৰ নিৰ্দেশত পদ ৰচনা কৰি শংকৰে অসীম সম্ভাৱনাময় প্ৰতিভাৰ পৰিচয় প্ৰদান কৰাৰ লগতে ভক্তৰ দৃষ্টিত লাভ কৰিছে ঐশ্বৰিকত্বৰ মৰ্যদা।

“আৰু এক দিন অধ্যাপকে সবে ছাত্ৰক বোলে মোক একোটা শ্লোক কৰি দেহক ॥ পাছে আনসৱ ছাত্ৰে কৰিলে খনো এফাঁকি কতো গোটেখনো আদখানঃ তাৰো অৰ্থ নাইঃ গুৰুজনে কৰি দিলেঃ বৈকুণ্ঠৰ পৰা পাত কাপ মহি মৈলাম চাইটা বস্ত্ৰ নমাইছে ॥ আৰু সখং অক্ষৰ শক্তি নমাই গদ্য কৰিলেঃ খগম্বৰ নগচৰঃ আকাৰ ইকাৰ নাই সুদা অৰ্থে পৃথিৱী পাতাল বৈকুণ্ঠ স্বৰ্গ ভেদি গ'লঃ অধ্যাপকে চাই তৈল লোন নাই সুদা বেঞ্জনৰ এনে স্বাদ : বিনা জৰু বন্ধনঃ আৰা সুদা শক্তি মনুষ্য নুহিঃ কিবা হৰি হৰ ছদ্মে আছেহি ॥* ॥ ৫৩ ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ২৩

ভগৱানৰ অৱতাৰ ৰূপে মনুষ্য ৰূপ ধাৰণ কৰাৰ কথা গ্ৰন্থখনত বিভিন্ন ঘটনাৰ মাধ্যমেৰে উপস্থাপন কৰা হৈছে। ছাত্ৰ জীৱনত অধ্যয়ন কৰা গ্ৰন্থসমূহৰ এখন বিস্তৃত তালিকা গুৰু চৰিত কথা পুথিত সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈছে। চাৰিবেদ, চৈধ্য শাস্ত্ৰ, গুঁঠৰ পুৰাণ, শ্ৰুতি, স্মৃতি, উপনিষদ, ব্যাকৰণ, অভিধান আদি বিভিন্ন শাস্ত্ৰৰ অধ্যয়নৰ যোগেদি জ্ঞানৰ পৰিসৰ বৃদ্ধি কৰিছে। এই সকলো গ্ৰন্থ অধ্যয়ন আৰু তত্ত্বজ্ঞানেৰে সমৃদ্ধ হৈ উঠা শিষ্য শংকৰৰ বিষয়ে গুৰু মহেন্দ্ৰ কন্দলিৰ অভিমতৰ মাজতো সন্তু কথাৰেই উমান পোৱা যায়। “..... গুৰু কন্দলিএ বোলে জিখানি জানো পঢ়ালো একা নাও আৰঃ আৰু অনে শং বৰ্ষেও অত পঢ়ি ব নপাৰেঃ একা মই কাৰণেহে আপুনি নিৰ্ম্মলা শাস্ত্ৰ ॥* ॥ ৬০ ॥

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৮

শংকৰদেৱৰ জীৱনৰ কথাৰ লগত সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈ থকা অন্য এটি উল্লেখযোগ্য ঘটনা হ'ল 'আকাশী গংগা' নমাই অনা। বৰপেটা বিলৰ পানীৰে জীৱন নিৰ্বাহ কৰা শংকৰদেৱৰ ভক্ত সকলে বৰপেটা বিলৰ পানী শুকাই যোৱাৰ কাৰণে গুৰু শংকৰক কিবা এটা ব্যৱস্থা কৰিবলৈ অনুৰোধ কৰিলে। শংকৰে ভক্তৰ অনুৰোধ ৰক্ষা কৰি ভক্ত সকলক ভগৱানৰ নাম লবলৈ কৈ পঠালে। “ভক্তে হৰি গুণ গাই আছে পক্ষ তিনিঃ পূৰ্বে বৰপেটা বিল তাৰে জল খাই। দূৰ গৰ ভালুকৰ ভয় নিশা হবলৈ ধুতিৱ নপাৰে। কষ্ট পাই গুৰুজনত সবে ভক্তে প্ৰাৰ্থনা কৰিলে। বোলে তোমাসবে দিনে নিশা নাম ডাকা পালকৈ জল দিব ভগৱন্তে।। পাচে নাম গালে মহাপুৰুষ গুৰু। দুপৰ নিশা গৈ বৃদ্ধাঙ্গুষ্ঠে খেনুএ কাৰ কৰি উদ্ধ হস্তকৈ গোহৰ্নি মাৰিলেঃ গিৰিগড় শব্দে আকাশী গঙ্গা নামিলহি পূৰ্বৰো নিমাত।। পুৱা দেখে জাই ভক্তে বাকৰা বাৰিতে বিল জল হলঃ বট গল কলৈ আচাৰ্য অদ্ভুত হৈ গুৰুজনত কলেঃ বোলে ঈশ্বৰে কৃপাকৈ তোমাসৱক নাম জল দান কৰিছে।।*।।৭২।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ৩০

আকাশী গংগা বোৱাই অনাৰ নিচিনা অনুৰূপ কাহিনী টেম্বুৱানী জান বান্ধিবৰ কাৰণে এগৰাকী পৱিত্ৰ তিৰোতাৰ সন্ধানৰ মাজত সম্পৃক্ত হৈ আছে। ইয়াৰ লগতে নিহিত হৈ আছে অন্য এক অৰ্থ। সমাজত উচ্চ-নীচৰ প্ৰাচীৰ ভাঙি সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকৰ কাৰণে ধৰ্মৰ দুৱাৰ মুকলি কৰা শংকৰে নীহ কুলীয়া লোকৰ মাজত সততাৰ সন্ধান কৰিছে। শংকৰে ঘোষণা কৰিছে এগৰাকী শাস্তি তিৰোতাই পলেৰে পানী আনি জানৰ মুখত দিলে জান বান্ধিব পৰা যাব। এই কথাৰ গুণা গঁথা কৰি থাকোঁতেই নদীয়াল পূৰ্ণানন্দৰ পত্নী যোগমায়া [কোনোৱে কয় ৰাধিকা বুলি] ই শুনি সেই কাৰ্য কৰিবলৈ মন মেলে। এই কথা গৈ গুৰুৰ আগত বলভা মুদৈয়ে কোৱাত গুৰুৱে ধৌত বস্ত্ৰ প্ৰদান কৰি আৰ্শীবাদ কৰে।

“.....গৈ বেগে সেই মেলাত কলে বলভা মুদৈএ।। পাচে গুৰু তেতিক্ষণে মতাই নিয়ালেঃ পাই সেৱা কৈলে : গুৰু এজুৰি ধৌত বস্ত্ৰ পল দি আৰ্শীবাদকৈ পঠালে।। সেৱাকৈ গুৰু আজ্ঞা সিৰে ধৰি জল আনিলেগৈঃ চাকৰ চাৰি আঙ্গুলি কম হ'লঃ গুৰু সুধিলেঃ কিবা দোষে কম হ'ল্লু বোলে সুমথিৰা ভনি জমাইক পাত কাটিবলৈ কাঁচি দিএতে মুখ দেখা গ'ল : দাসীত এইখানি অপৰাধ : গুৰু বোলে এইখানি হ'লে আমি সৱেও লৈচো পুনু আনাগৈ : আনিলে চাকৰ পৰা চাৰি আঙ্গুল চাৰি আহিল : বাকি দিলে বেগ জুৰ হ'ল : [কিতো মুখে কই মাটিহে আনিছে পলৰে।।]

সবে লোকে মাটি দি খুন্দি বান্ধিলে শাস্তিজান নাম হ'লঃ।।*।।৭৮।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ৩৪

বাস্তৱিকতে শংকৰৰ কৰ্মদক্ষতা, শিল্পীসুলভ প্ৰতিভা আৰু খ্যাতিয়ে তেওঁক জীৱিত কালতেই সন্ত পুৰুষলৈ উন্নীত কৰিছে। গুৰু চৰিত কথা গ্ৰন্থত ইয়াৰ সুন্দৰ উদাহৰণ আছে।

‘পচিমে বাহুভূঞা চাপি দৌল বান্ধি যাত্ৰা পাতিলে : বৈকুণ্ঠৰ পৰা বৰ ধেমালি ঘোষা ধেমালি তালমান নমাই গালে ভিমা বৰলে : [লক্ষণ গায়ন : বলাই গাৱন তিমিৰ ৰাগ দিচেঃ গুৰু জনে বাউমগুলি ৰাগ দিলেঃ পাটি সোদৰ পাত সৰি গল : মেঘ মগুলি ৰাগ দিলে : লাগিলে পাতঃ] গুৰুজন সাত বৈকুণ্ঠৰ ঈশ্বৰ।।*।।৭৮।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ৩১

এনেদৰে গুৰুজনৰ প্ৰতিভা বৰ্ণনাত অলৌকিকতাৰ অৱতাৰণা কৰি সন্ত পুৰুষ ৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে। শংকৰদেৱৰ জীৱন কালৰ প্ৰতিটো মুহূৰ্ত্ত। সৃষ্টিশীল প্ৰতিভা, পাৰিবাৰিক, সামাজিক আৰু ধৰ্মীয় জীৱনৰ দক্ষতাৰ লগত অলেখ সন্ত কথা থূপ খাই আছে। শংকৰদেৱক পূৰ্ণ অংশী ভগৱানৰূপে কোচ ৰজা নৰনাৰায়ণেও স্বীকাৰ কৰাৰ কথা চৰিত পুথি সমূহত পোৱা যায়। আলোচ্য গ্ৰন্থও ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহয়। ৰজা নৰনাৰায়ণে তেওঁৰ ৰাজসভাত শংকৰদেৱক ঈশ্বৰৰ লক্ষণ বৰ্ণনা কৰিবলৈ কোৱাত শংকৰদেৱে যথাযথ ৰূপত পূৰ্ণ ব্ৰহ্ম ভগৱানৰ লক্ষণ বৰ্ণনা কৰিলে। ৰজাই ঈশ্বৰৰ লক্ষণ যুক্ত চিহ্ন কেনে লোকৰ গাত থাকে বুলি সোধা প্ৰশ্ন শংকৰদেৱে পণ্ডিত ব্ৰাহ্মণ, উত্তম বিশিষ্ট লোক মহন্ত, ৰজাৰ গাত দেখা যায় বুলি সমিধান দিলে। ৰজাই সভাত থকা পণ্ডিত, ব্ৰাহ্মণক নিৰীক্ষণ কৰাৰ লগতে নিজৰ শৰীৰতো চালে কিম্ব শংকৰদেৱক নিৰীক্ষণ কৰি ৰজা অভিভূত হ'ল। তেওঁ উপলব্ধি কৰিলে শংকৰদেৱ স্বয়ং ঈশ্বৰৰ অৱতাৰ পূৰ্ণব্ৰহ্ম স্বৰূপ।

“..... ৰাজা বোলে বাপ আপুনি উঠক : কস্মলতে উঠিলঃ ৰাজা চালে মস্তকৰে পৰা পদলকে দেখে ঈশ্বৰ লক্ষণঃ যি কৈছিল মানে সবেখানি আছে : বোলে বাপ দেখো ঈশ্বৰ চিনি আপুনাতো আছে [বতিস লক্ষণে সৈতে]”।।*।।৩৯৫।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৮৩

ৰজাই তেওঁৰ ছকুৰি মাদৈৰ আগতো শংকৰদেৱ যে ঈশ্বৰৰ অৱতাৰ সেই কথা ঘোষণা কৰাৰ লগতে শংকৰৰ ওচৰত শৰণ লবলৈ ক'লে— “শ্ৰী শঙ্কৰদেৱ ঈশ্বৰ অৱতাৰঃ ছদ্মকৈহে নৰভাও ধৰিছে : আজি হবিছে থাকহক শৰণ লবিঃ গা পতি টকা বস্ত্ৰ ঢোপ একু [টি] দিবিহকঃ সেই ক্ৰমে আচিল পালতে

সকলো আহি ঢোপ কটা পাৰত দি সেৱা কৈ জাইঃ এই ক্ৰমে ছওকুৰি সেৱা কৈলে : সেৱাত্ৰহে শৰণ গুৰুৱাক নাই : গুৰুজনে তাৰে এটি ঢোপ হাতে লৈ উঠি আহিল।।*।। ৩৯৫।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৮৩, ১৮৪

বজাই এইবাৰ নিজেই শংকৰদেৱৰ ওচৰত শৰণ লোৱাৰ ইচ্ছা প্ৰকাশ কৰিলে। শংকৰদেৱৰ বজা, স্ত্ৰী আৰু কৰ্মকাণ্ডী ব্ৰাহ্মণক শৰণ দিয়াৰ পক্ষপাতি নহয়। সেইবাবে শংকৰে বজাক বিমুখ কৰিলে। কিন্তু বজাই পুনৰ অনুৰোধ জনোৱাত শংকৰদেৱে জীৱনৰ মায়া এৰি পৰলোকলৈ গতি কৰাৰ কাৰণে মনস্থিৰ কৰি ইচ্ছামৃত্যু গ্ৰহণ কৰিলে। চৌপাশে কীৰ্তনৰ ধ্বনিৰে মুখৰিত কৰি পৰলোকলৈ গমন কৰিলে।

“..... এই বুলি সম্বোধনকৈ গৃহৰ বজাই কীৰ্তন গৃহৰ দ্বাৰ মুখে আসনে বহিলগৈঃ চৌপাশে ভক্তে আৱৰি আছেঃ অশ্বখৰ ছায়া দেখে ডালে পত্ৰে ঝলমলাই বৃক্ষ নেদেখেঃ আকাশে কিঙ্কণী ৰনৱন নাম [৬৯খ] কীৰ্তনৰ ধ্বনি সুনি নৌকাৰঃ চাইঃ নেদেখেঃ চক্ষু ঠাৰে সৰে চোৱাচুইকৈ আছৰ্য্য অদ্ভুত হৈ চাইছে তথা দিঃ তেহে গুৰুজনে ওপৰলৈ চাই মাত্ৰ লগালেঃ পএ পৰিহৰি গীত গাই স্তুতিকৈঃ বোলে ভকতক এৰি কেনেকৈ জামঃ তোমাসব জকগৈ সবাকে তুলি লৈহে জামঃ ঠাকুৰক বোলে এই নামতে তুলি ধৰিবা আমাকঃ এই বুলি মালা জাপ্যইকৈ ৰামকৃষ্ণ অবিচেদেঃ মূল গোপ্য ৰহস্য নাম লৈ নৰদেহা সম্বৰণ কৈলে।।*।। ৪০০।।

গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, পৃষ্ঠা ১৮৬

উপসংহাৰ :

শংকৰদেৱৰ অসমৰ জাতীয় জীৱনৰ অবিচ্ছেদ্য সত্তা। তেওঁ এহাতে ধৰ্মৰ গুৰু, সাহিত্যৰ গুৰু আৰু অসমীয়া জাতিৰ ঐক্য সংহতিৰ ভেটি গঢ়োতা। খৃষ্টীয় পঞ্চদশ শতিকাৰ পৰা অসমৰ জাতীয় জীৱন পল্লৱিত কৰি তোলা মহাপুৰুষ ৰূপে স্বীকৃত শংকৰদেৱৰ সমগ্ৰ জীৱনচৰ্যাৰ মাজত নিহিত হৈ আছে তেওঁ প্ৰতিভা, কৰ্মনিষ্ঠা, কষ্ট সহিষ্ণুঃ মনোভাৱ আৰু গভীৰ সাধনা। অসমৰ ধৰ্মাকাশ পোহৰ কৰি অসমীয়া জাতীয় জীৱনৰ মান নিৰ্ণয় কৰি থৈ যোৱা এই জনা অসামান্য ব্যক্তিক জীৱন কালতেই হৈ পৰিছিল কিম্বদন্তী পুৰুষ। তেওঁৰ আদৰ্শ আৰু প্ৰেৰণাই আছিল ভক্ত সকলৰ জীৱনৰ সমল। সেই বাবেই ভক্তৰ দৃষ্টিত তেওঁৰ প্ৰতিটো কৰ্ম, জীৱন ধাৰণৰ শৈলী, বাহ্যিক আৰু আধ্যাত্মিক আচৰণ সকলোতে প্ৰতিভাত হৈছিল অন্য এক সত্তা। সেই সত্তা তেওঁলোকৰ মনত ভগৱান। অৰ্থাৎ তেওঁলোকৰ গুৰুজন এজন সাধাৰণ মানুহ নহয় ঈশ্বৰ অংশী পুৰুষ। জীৱনৰ

পৰা মৃত্যু পৰ্যন্ত অলেখ অলৌকিক, অতিলৌকিক কথাৰ অৱতাৰণাৰে শংকৰক ভগৱানৰ অৱতাৰ ৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰিছিল ভক্তসকলে। প্ৰাকৃতিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক কাৰণত পৰিভ্ৰমী জীৱন যাপন কৰোঁতে শংকৰদেৱ যি ঠাইলৈকে গৈছিল, সেই ঠাইৰ ভক্তসকলে হিয়া উবুৰিয়াই তেওঁৰ শৰণাগত হৈছিল। অৱশ্যে শংকৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধবাদী লোকো আছিল। তথাপি শংকৰদেৱে নিজা দক্ষতাৰে সকলোবোৰ সমাধানৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰিছিল। শংকৰদেৱৰ মৃত্যুৰ পাছত তেওঁৰ ভক্তসকলে গুৰুৰ গুণানুকীৰ্তন কৰি পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত তেওঁৰ ধৰ্মীয় আদৰ্শক জনসমাজত প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ প্ৰয়াস অব্যাহত ৰাখে। সন্ত পুৰুষৰ শাৰীলৈ উন্নীত কৰিও এই কথা স্বীকাৰ কৰিবই লাগিব শংকৰদেৱ এজন আদৰ্শ পুৰুষ, কৰ্মমুখী এক সত্তা। অসমৰ জাতীয় জীৱনৰ নায়ক। অসমৰ সমাজ জীৱনৰ পটভূমিত শংকৰদেৱৰ সদায়েই আদৰ্শ আৰু প্ৰেৰণাৰ উৎস হৈ ৰ'ব।

প্ৰসঙ্গ সূচী :

- ১। Gohain Hiren, Anglo Assamese Dictnary, Compiled by Siddartha Baruah, Page - 359.
- ২। Clifford James L, Opcit, Introduction P. X.
- ৩। P.V Kanne, (Editor) Harsacarita (Banabhatta) 1965, Introduction, P.XIV
- ৪। নেওগ মহেশ্বৰ, গুৰু চৰিতৰ ইতিকথা, পৃষ্ঠা ২
- ৫। নেওগ মহেশ্বৰ (সম্পা) গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা ভূমিকা, পৃষ্ঠা ৪৯
- ৬। প্ৰাগুক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃষ্ঠা ৪৯
- ৭। দেৱ গোস্বামী, কেশৱানন্দ (সম্পা) ঠাকুৰ চৰিত, পৃষ্ঠা ৪
- ৮। নেওগ মহেশ্বৰ, গুৰু চৰিত কথা ভূমিকা পৃষ্ঠা ৬৭

সহায়ক গ্ৰন্থপুঞ্জী :

- ১। গোস্বামী উপেন্দ্ৰ নাথ, বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধাৰা আৰু সন্ত-কথা, মণি-মাণিক প্ৰকাশ, গুৱাহাটী, সপ্তম সংস্কৰণ, ২০১২
- ২। ঠাকুৰীয়া ৰামচৰণ, শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱ আৰু আন তিনিজন গুৰু, বাণী মন্দিৰ গুৱাহাটী দ্বিতীয় সংস্কৰণ, ২০০৯
- ৩। নেওগ মহেশ্বৰ (সম্পা) গুৰু-চৰিত-কথা, প্ৰকাশন বিভাগ গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ১৯৮৭
- ৪। নেওগ মহেশ্বৰ গুৰু চৰিতৰ ইতি কথা, অসম সাহিত্য সভা, যোৰহাট, ১৯৮৩
- ৫। শইকীয়া নগেন, বিষয় শংকৰদেৱ, কৌজুভ প্ৰকাশন, ২০১১



কলিয়াবৰৰ ক'লী বুঢ়ী নৃত্যঃ এক বিশ্লেষণাত্মক অধ্যয়ন

শাস্ত্ৰী বৰদলৈ

গৱেষক, লোক সংস্কৃতি গৱেষণা বিভাগ, গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

নগাওঁ জিলাৰ কলিয়াবৰ এক প্ৰাচীন ঐতিহ্যপূৰ্ণ আৰু এক গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ অঞ্চল। প্ৰাচীন কোনো শাস্ত্ৰ, শিলালিপিত কলিয়াবৰৰ নামোন্লেখ পোৱা নাযায়। সুদূৰ অতীতত এই ঠাইখণ্ডৰ নাম কালিকাপুৰাণ, যোগিনী তন্ত্ৰ, বনমাল দেৱৰ তাম্ৰ পত্ৰত ক্ৰমে বানেশ্বৰ, উড্ডিয়ানগিৰি, কন্যাকাশ্ৰম, দুৰ্জয়ানগৰ, কামকুট বুলি উন্লেখ আছে। আহোম যুগৰ দুখন তাম্ৰ পত্ৰত 'কলীয়াবড়' নামৰ উন্লেখ পোৱা যায়। ইতিহাসখ্যাত আশ্ৰেণী ভট্টাচাৰ্যক দিয়া টাই ভাষাৰ তাম্ৰ পত্ৰ (১৬৪৯) ত 'টুন-ৰুং-ডাম' (টুন- কলীয়া, ৰুং - বড়, ডাম- গছ) অৰ্থাৎ কলীয়া বড় গছৰ ঠাই- কলীয়াবড় (কলিয়াবৰ)। আন এখন তাম্ৰ পত্ৰত কলীয়াবড়ীয়া ভট্টাচাৰ্যক ১৬২৩ শকত মাটি দান দিয়াৰ কথা উন্লেখ আছে। তাৰোপৰি 'শ্ৰীশ্ৰী দুলালমাধৱ দেৱালয়' আৱিষ্কৃত শিলালিপিতো 'কলিয়াবৰ' নামৰ উন্লেখ আছে। এই দুখন তাম্ৰ পত্ৰৰ পৰা ঠাইখণ্ডৰ নাম অঞ্চলটো বড় গছৰ আধিক্যলৈ লক্ষ্য কৰি 'কলীয়াবড়' বখা হৈছিল বুলি অনুমান কৰিব পাৰি।

সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কলিয়াবৰে অতি প্ৰাচীন কালৰেপৰা অগ্ৰণী ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰি আহিছে। প্ৰাচীন টোলসমূহৰ সংস্কৃতজ্ঞ পণ্ডিত সমাজ সৰ্বজন সমাদৃত আছিল। লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ দিশতো কলিয়াবৰ চহকী অঞ্চল বুলি কব পাৰি। লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ বিভিন্ন উপাদানে (যেনে, লোকগীত, লোক পৰিৱেশ্য কলা, সাধুকথা, প্ৰবচন ইত্যাদি) ৰে পৰিপুষ্ট হৈ অসমৰ লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ পথাৰখনলৈ কলিয়াবৰে এক বিশিষ্ট বৰঙণি আগবঢ়াই আহিছে বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। প্ৰাক্- আহোম যুগৰপৰাই কলিয়াবৰৰ সাংস্কৃতিক ইতিহাস আৰম্ভ হৈ আহোম যুগৰ মাজেৰেই বৰ্তমানলৈকে বিভিন্ন দিশত এই ধাৰা পৰিৱৰ্তিত ৰূপত অব্যাহত আছে। অতীজৰেপৰা কলিয়াবৰৰ ধৰ্মীয় আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক উপাদানৰ সংমিশ্ৰণে সেই অঞ্চলৰ সামাজিক জীৱনক সমন্বয়ৰ এক আদৰ্শ থলী ৰূপে গঢ়ি তুলিছে।

পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে অতীজৰেপৰা চলি অহা নৃত্য-গীতৰ

অনুষ্ঠানবোৰকে আমি লোক অনুষ্ঠান বুলি ক'ব পাৰোঁ। কলিয়াবৰত লোক অনুষ্ঠান ৰূপে অতীজৰেপৰা যিবোৰ নৃত্য-গীত প্ৰচলিত হৈ আহিছে সেইসমূহৰ ভিতৰত প্ৰধান হৈছে - আইনাম, বিয়ানাম, বিহুগীত, বিহুনৃত্য ইত্যাদি। 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নাচ' বা 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নৃত্য'ও এই লোক অনুষ্ঠানৰে এক অংগ। ই কলিয়াবৰৰ একক সংস্কৃতি।

কলিয়াবৰৰ লোক সংস্কৃতি বিচিত্ৰ ৰূপেৰে জাতিষ্কাৰ। কৃষিজীৱী থলুৱা জনজীৱনৰ অকৃত্ৰিম ভাৱ-ভাষাই সেই অঞ্চলৰ লোক জীৱন সজীৱ আৰু প্ৰাণোচ্ছল কৰি ৰাখিছে। কলিয়াবৰৰ বাৰেবহনীয়া বিচিত্ৰ উপাদান আৰু অনুষ্ঠানেৰে সমৃদ্ধ সাংস্কৃতিক জগতখনৰ এটি উন্লেখযোগ্য লোক অনুষ্ঠান হৈছে 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নাচ'। কলিয়াবৰৰ সোণাৰি- কামাখ্যাগাঁৱত পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে মাঘৰ বিহুৰ সময়ত এই 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নাচ' অনুষ্ঠিত হৈ আহিছে। বছৰৰ অন্য বিহুৰ লগত এই নাচৰ সম্পৰ্ক দেখা নাযায় যদিও নৃত্য আৰু গীতৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ৰঙালী বিহুৰ কিছু সাদৃশ্য দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। সোণাৰি- কামাখ্যা গাঁৱৰ আঠ খেলৰ ৰাইজ লগ লাগি পথাৰৰ মূৰত হোকোৰাণ্ডিৰ নামৰ ঠাইত আঠটা মেজি সাজি তিনিদিন পাছত ৰাইজ-গোপিনীয়ে গা-পা ধুই আহি একেলগে মেজিকৈ ই টাত অগ্নি সংযোগ কৰে। পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে চলি অহা এই মেজি পোৰা স্থানৰ পৰা মহিলাসকলৰ ঘৰলৈ নগৈ হোকোৰাণ্ডিতে নৃত্য-গীত কৰে। পূৰ্বতে মেজি পোৰা ছাই মুখত সানি লৈ নৃত্য-গীত কৰিছিল বাবেই এই নৃত্যনুষ্ঠানৰ নাম 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী বা ক'লা বুঢ়ী নাচ'। উন্লেখযোগ্য যে, এই লোক অনুষ্ঠানত পুৰুষৰ উপস্থিতি নিষিদ্ধ।

মাঘ বিহু উপলক্ষে সজা হাৰলি ঘৰবোৰ যেতিয়া হৰিধ্বনি দি জুই লগাই পুৰি পেলোৱা হয়, তেতিয়া উৰি যোৱা কুকুহা-বোৰ ভক্তিপ্ৰাণ লোকে অঞ্জলি পাতি ধৰে আৰু শ্ৰদ্ধা সহকাৰে লয়। হাৰলি ঘৰৰ আধা পোৰা ক'লা ছাই লাগি থকা কাক বাঁহৰ

ৰুৱা বা মাৰলিৰ টুকুৰা ঘৰলৈ আনি বহুতো লোকে নাৰিকল, তামোল আদি লাগনী গছত ওলোমাই থয়। এই কাৰ্যৰ লগত এটি লোক বিশ্বাস জড়িত হৈ থকা দেখা যায়। এই লোক বিশ্বাস অনুসৰি আধা পোৰা ক'লা ছাঁই লগা মাৰলিৰ টুকুৰা আদি আনি এইদৰে লাগনী গছত বান্ধি বা ওলোমাই থলে ভৱিষ্যতে সেই লাগনী গছে ভাল ফল দিয়ে। কৃষি প্ৰধান অঞ্চল হিচাপে সোণাৰি আৰু কামাখ্যা গাঁও দুখনৰ লোকে অতীজৰেপৰা এই লোক বিশ্বাস অনুসৰি আজিও এইদৰে লাগনী গছত আধাপোৰা মাৰলিৰ টুকুৰা ওলোমাই বান্ধি ৰখা দেখা যায়। সেয়ে 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী' নামৰ লগত হাৰলি ঘৰৰ পবিত্ৰ ক'লা ছাঁইৰ সম্বন্ধ থকা যেন লাগে। সেই ক'লা ছাঁই গাত লৈ ধেমালি আৰু আনন্দতে নৃত্যত বয়সীয়া মহিলাই ভাগ লোৱাৰ পৰাই এই নৃত্যানুষ্ঠান 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নাচ' বুলি জনসমাজত প্ৰচলিত হ'ল বুলি ভবাৰ থল আছে।

সাধাৰণতে মূৰত কাপোৰৰ পাণ্ডৰি মাৰি প্ৰধান নাচনীগৰাকীয়ে নৃত্যানুষ্ঠানটিত ভাগ লয় আৰু এইদৰে গীত আৰম্ভ কৰে

“ৰাম বোলে ৰে মন,
হৰি বোল ৰে মন।”

তেওঁৰ পাছে পাছে অন্য তিৰোতা বা মহিলাসকলে গীত গায়। মন কৰিবলগীয়া যে, উপস্থাপন ৰীতিত ওজাপালি আৰু ভাওনাৰ কিছু সাদৃশ্য বিচাৰি পোৱা যায়। এই 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নাচ' ত ভাগ লোৱা নাচনীয়ে ভাওনাৰ ভাৱৰীয়াৰ দৰে খোজ-কাটল দি ভাৱ-ভঙ্গী প্ৰকাশ কৰা দেখা যায়। তেওঁলোকে ৰিহা আৰু মেখেলা-চাদৰ পৰিধান কৰি এই অনুষ্ঠান ভাগ লয়। উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, ন-বোৱাৰী বা কম বয়সীয়া বোৱাৰীয়ে 'ক'লী বুঢ়ী নাচ'ত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰা দেখা নাযায়। এই লোকে অনুষ্ঠানত মহিলাসকলে কাঁহৰ বাদ্য আৰু হাত চাপৰিৰ লগত তাল মিলাই বিহুগীতো পৰিবেশন কৰে।

“আটা দৈয়া পাটা দৈয়া
তামোল কটা কটাৰী
দয়ালনিৰ তুলাপাতৰ
নাহৰৰ তলত চকু চাম
তোমাৰ তালৈ গধূলি যাম।”
আকৌ,
“অ ডলাৰ বগৰী
হ'বা জানো লগৰী

দিবা জানো চেনেহৰ মাত” ইত্যাদি।

ওজাপালিত ওজা আৰু দাইনা পালিয়ে সমজুৱাৰ মনোৰঞ্জনৰ বাবে যিদৰে ৰসিকতা কৰে অথবা ভাওনাত দৃত আৰু বহুৱাই যেনেকৈ হাস্যৰসেৰে দৰ্শকক আশ্বস্ত কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰে, তেনেদৰে এই লোক অনুষ্ঠানতো অভিনয় আৰু ৰসাত্মক গীত-মাতেৰে হাস্যৰস সৃষ্টি কৰা দেখা যায়।

“কঁকালটো হেকেৰা
মুখখন পকা থেকেৰা
চুলি যদিও মোৰ পকা
মোৰ লগত ভাঙি দিলে
আগৰ দিনৰ ল'ৰাহঁতে শ শ টকা।”
তাৰোপৰি পোৱা যায়।
“হঁয় ক'লী বুঢ়ী
ককাই নুবুলিবি মোক
কলিকলীয়া সমাজিক
গাত ফলিয়াব
জানো বিয়া কৰাম তোক।”

সোণাৰি- কামাখ্যাগাঁৱত পূৰ্বৰেপৰা চলি অহা এই লোক অনুষ্ঠানত ৰঙালী বিহুৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰাৰ লগতে অসমীয়া লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ অন্য কেইটিমান অনুষ্ঠানৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰাও দেখা যায়। তেনেধৰণৰ অনুষ্ঠানবোৰ হৈছে- বিবাহৰ অনুষ্ঠান আৰু ৰাতি বিহু বা গাভৰু বিহু।

অসমীয়া মানুহৰ বিবাহৰ অনুষ্ঠানত অঞ্চলভেদে গোপিনীসকলে নাতিদূৰৰ কোনো নৈ বা জলাধাৰৰ পৰা পানী তুলিবলৈ গৈ উভতি পুনৰ বিয়াঘৰ পোৱালৈকে এই সময়ছোৱাত এটি হাস্যৰসাত্মক আনন্দদায়ক কৌতুকপূৰ্ণ অনুষ্ঠান সমাপন কৰে। দৰা বা কন্যাৰ কোনো সম্বন্ধীয় নবৌ, মাহী- পেহী বা গাঁৱৰ কোনোবা উৎসাহী বোৱাৰীক লগৰ তিৰোতাসকলে নচুৱায় আৰু মনৰ বিমল আনন্দ প্ৰকাশ কৰে। এনেধৰণৰ অনুষ্ঠানতো ঢুলীয়াৰ ঢোলৰ ছেঁৱে ছেঁৱে বিহুগীত গাই নৃত্য প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰা হয়। তদুপৰি হালধি, দৈ আদি গোপিনী সমাজত ইজনীয়ে সিজনীৰ গাত ঘাঁহি আনন্দ আৰু স্ফূৰ্ত্তি কৰা দেখা যায়।

অসমীয়া সমাজত পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে চলি অহা নোৱাই-তোলনি বিয়াসমূহতো তিৰোতাসকলে কন্যাৰ আত্মীয়সকলৰ যেনে, মাক, পেহীয়েক, খুৰীয়েক আদিক গালে-মুখে দৈ সানি এপাক নচুৱাই আনন্দৰ ভাগ লোৱা দেখা যায়। অসমীয়া সমাজৰ

এই নোৱাই তোলনি বিয়াবোৰতো পুৰুষৰ প্ৰবেশ নিষিদ্ধ। ই নাৰী সমাজৰ একেচেতীয়া সামাজিক অনুষ্ঠান হিচাপে আজিও প্ৰচলিত আছে। ‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ ত লোক অনুষ্ঠানৰ মাজেদিও গোপিনীসকলে অনুৰূপ নিৰ্মল আনন্দ উপভোগ কৰা দেখা যায়।

‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ ৰ লগত তাহানিৰ ‘ৰাতি বিহু বা ‘গাভৰু বিহু’ৰো কিছু সাদৃশ্য দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। ‘ৰাতি বিহু’ বা ‘গাভৰু বিহু’ গাভৰুসকলে নিভৃত ঠাইত আছুতীয়াকৈ অনুষ্ঠিত কৰে আৰু ইয়াতো পুৰুষৰ প্ৰবেশ নিষিদ্ধ। ‘ৰাতি বিহু’ ত গাভৰুসকলে নৃত্য-গীতৰ মাজেদি নিজৰ মনৰ ভাব- অনুভূতি মুকলিকৈ প্ৰকাশ কৰি ৰং-বহুইচ আৰু আনন্দ কৰে।

‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ কেৱল কলিয়াবৰতে নহয়, উজনী অসমৰো ঠাই বিশেষে এই লোক অনুষ্ঠান পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। যোৰহাট, শিৱসাগৰ অঞ্চলত এতিয়াও এই লোক অনুষ্ঠান প্ৰচলিত থকাৰ প্ৰমাণ পোৱা যায়। কিন্তু উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, এই অনুষ্ঠান কলিয়াবৰত অনুষ্ঠিত হোৱাৰ দৰে মাঘৰ বিহুৰ সময়ত অনুষ্ঠিত নহয়। মেলেং-কাকজান পৰ্যন্ত যোৰহাট অঞ্চলত সাধাৰণতে বিয়াৰ আগদিনা ৰাতি গাঁঠিয়ন খুন্দি কন্যাক যেতিয়া নোৱাবলৈ আয়োজন কৰি বেইৰ বৰপীৰাত বহুৱাই, তেতিয়া কন্যাৰ মূৰৰ ওপৰত এখন চাদৰ তৰি দিয়া হয়। সেই চাদৰৰ ওপৰত ধান, ক’লা ছাঁই, খোলাকটি আদি দিয়া হয় আৰু পাছত সেইবোৰ এগৰাকী বুঢ়ী মানুহে কুলা এখনত লয় আৰু লগৰীয়া তিৰোতা মানুহৰ লগত গীত গাই নাচে। এই অনুষ্ঠানতো এটি ধেমেলীয়া কৌতুকপূৰ্ণ পৰিবেশৰ সৃষ্টি হয়। এই অনুষ্ঠানত গোৱা গীত এনেধৰণৰ হয়।

“চৰাই চিৰিকটি পশু পতং
কুলা বুঢ়ী নাচিছে জপং জপং
নাচ কুলা বুঢ়ী নাচ
তয়ো ক’লী ময়ো ক’লী
একেখন বিলৰে মাছ।”

এই গীতফাঁকিৰ মাজেদি এটা কথা প্ৰতীয়মান হৈছে যে, হাতত কুলা লৈ থকা নাচনীগৰাকী বৰণ ক’লা অৰ্থাৎ স্বাভাৱিক বৰণ ক’লা নহ’লেও অনুষ্ঠান পৰিবেশনৰ সময়ত মুখত ক’লা ৰং বা ছাঁই সানি ক’লী হৈ লয়। সেইবাবে গীতটিত উল্লেখ আছে। “তয়ো ক’লী ময়ো ক’লী, একেখন বিলৰে মাছ।” গতিকে, কলিয়াবৰৰ সোণাৰি-কামাখ্যাগাঁৱত পোৱা ‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী’ উজনী অসমৰ ফালে পোৱা ‘কুলাবুঢ়ী’ৰেই নামান্তৰ মাত্ৰ। কেৱল ‘কুলাবুঢ়ী’ ক্ৰমে লোক চক্ষুত বিলীয়মান হৈ জনসমাজত ‘ক’লী

বুঢ়ী’ উদ্ভাসিত হৈ উঠিছে। নাম আৰু হাৰলিঘৰ সম্বন্ধিত ঘটনাৰ পাৰ্থক্যৰ বাহিৰে গীত-নৃত্যত পাৰ্থক্য বিচাৰি পোৱা নাযায়। গতিকে সেইফালৰ পৰা বিচাৰ কৰিলে ‘ক’লাবুঢ়ী’ আৰু ‘ক’লাবুঢ়ী’ ৰ নৃত্য-গীতৰ সাদৃশ্য আছে বুলি ক’ব পাৰি।

‘ক’লা বুঢ়ী নাচ’ কলিয়াবৰৰ একক সংস্কৃতি হ’লেও ই বহন কৰি আহিছে এক প্ৰাচীন পৰম্পৰা আৰু বিশ্বাস। ‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নৃত্য’ ৰ সৈতে অসমৰ অন্য ঠাইৰ লোক অনুষ্ঠানৰ সাদৃশ্য বিচাৰি পোৱা নগ’লেও উজনী অসমৰ বিশেষকৈ যোৰহাট, শিৱসাগৰৰ দুই-এক অঞ্চলত কিছু সাদৃশ্য থকা লোক অনুষ্ঠান আজিও বিদ্যমান। কিন্তু পাৰ্থক্য এইখিনিতে যে, এই অনুষ্ঠান কলিয়াবৰৰ দৰে মাঘ বিহুৰ সময়ত অনুষ্ঠিত নহয়। বিয়া-সবাহৰ সময়তহে কৌতুকপূৰ্ণ অনুষ্ঠান হিচাপে এই অনুষ্ঠানৰ উল্লেখ পোৱা যায়। কলিয়াবৰতো মাত্ৰ সোণাৰি কামাখ্যাগাঁৱতহে এই লোক অনুষ্ঠান হিচাপে এই অনুষ্ঠানৰ উল্লেখ পোৱা যায়। কলিয়াবৰতো মাত্ৰ সোণাৰি- কামাখ্যাগাঁৱতহে এই লোক অনুষ্ঠান অতীজৰেপৰা প্ৰচলিত হৈ আহিছে। কিন্তু মাঘ বিহুৰ সময়ত এই লোক অনুষ্ঠান অনুষ্ঠিত হ’লেও কলিয়াবৰ আৰু অসমৰ অন্য ঠাইত অনুষ্ঠিত হোৱা বিয়াৰ পানী তোলা অনুষ্ঠান আৰু নোৱাই-তোলনি বিয়াৰ সময়ত যি আমোদজনক ভাবে সৃষ্টি কৰি গীত-নৃত্য কৰা হয়, সেই গীত-নৃত্যৰ সাদৃশ্য ‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ত দেখা পোৱা যায়।

‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ত যি গীত পৰিবেশন কৰা হয়, সেই গীতৰ বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে আমি ইয়াক অসমীয়া লোকগীতৰ আপুৰুগীয়া সম্পদ বুলি ক’ব পাৰোঁ। ‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ত গোৱা গীতসমূহৰ দুটা বিশেষ মন কৰিবলগীয়া কথা হ’ল সুৰ আৰু কথা। সুৰ প্ৰধানতঃ বিহুসুৰীয়া যদিও এই গীতসমূহত ওজাপালিৰ সুৰো অনুভূত হয়। ওজাপালিৰ ওজাৰ দৰে প্ৰধান নামতীৰগৰাকীয়ে নাম লগাই দিয়ে আৰু লগৰসকলে গায়। গীতৰ কথাৰ বিশেষত্ব এয়ে যে, এই গীতসমূহ যৌৱনাৰস্থাত গোৱা গীত নহয়। গীতসমূহৰ মাজেৰে ধেমেলীয়া পৰিবেশ এটা গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হয় আৰু কিছুমান গীতত ভগৱৎ প্ৰীতিও দেখা যায়। নিদৰ্শন স্বৰূপে,

“এইখন কলিয়াবৰ ঔ মালতী
এইখন কলিয়াবৰ
ছত্ৰা সত্ৰ, বাৰখন থান
ধৰ্মই বেঢ়ি আছয়।
প্ৰথমে প্ৰণামো লক্ষ্মী সৰস্বতী,
দ্বিতীয় প্ৰণামো ৰাইজ।

সোণাৰি- কামাখ্যাই ক'লী বুঢ়ী নচুৱাই
ক'লা বুঢ়ী গীতকে গায়।
কলিয়াবৰীয়া দীঘল জলকীয়া
তললৈ মেলিলে সিয়া
সোণাৰি- কামাখ্যাই মাঘৰে বিহুটিত
গীত গাওঁ সবায়ে শুনা।”

‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ যদিও অসমৰ মাত্ৰ কলিয়াবৰতহে
প্ৰচলিত আছে, তথাপি ই বহন কৰি আহিছে এক ঐতিহ্য, এক
প্ৰাচীন পৰম্পৰা। সেইফালৰ পৰা বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে অসমৰ লোক
সংস্কৃতিত কলিয়াবৰৰ ‘ক’লী বুঢ়ী নাচ’ লোক অনুষ্ঠান মূল্য
অপৰিসীম বুলি ক’ব পাৰি।

- ১) বৰা, লীলাধৰ : ঐতিহ্যমণ্ডিত কলিয়াবৰ,
প্ৰকাশক : খগেন্দ্ৰ নাৰায়ণ দত্ত বৰুৱা, লয়াৰ্ছ বুক ষ্টল,
পাণবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী - ১
প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ : ১৯৭৯

- ২) বৰকটকী, উপেন্দ্ৰ (সম্পাদনা) : দাপোনত কলিয়াবৰ,
প্ৰকাশক : শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱ সংঘঃ কলিয়াবৰ জিলা শাখা,
কুঁৱৰীটোল, নগাঁও,
প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ : ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী, ২০১২
- ৩) ভট্টাচাৰ্য, বিপুলচন্দ্ৰঃ কৃষ্ণবটপ্ৰাম (১ ম খণ্ড),
প্ৰকাশকঃ কামধেনু প্ৰকাশন, কলিয়াবৰ, নগাঁও,
প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ : মাৰ্চ, ২০১২
- ৪) শৰ্মা, ড° নবীনচন্দ্ৰঃ অসমীয়া লোক- সংস্কৃতিৰ আভাষ,
প্ৰকাশকঃ শ্ৰী গিৰিপদ দেৱ চৌধুৰী, বাণী প্ৰকাশ প্ৰাইভেট
লিমিটেড, পাণবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী- ১
প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ - ১৯৮৯



পৰমানন্দ ৰাজবংশীৰ ‘নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ’ নাটকত লোক-নাট্যৰ আংগিক আৰু কলা-কৌশল প্ৰয়োগ : এক বিশ্লেষণাত্মক অধ্যয়ন

ৰুকুন্নিদিন আহমেদ

গৱেষক বিদ্যাৰ্থী, অসমীয়া বিভাগ, গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

সংক্ষিপ্তসাৰ

পৰমানন্দ ৰাজবংশী (১৯৫৮--) একাধাৰে এগৰাকী প্ৰৱন্ধকাৰ, নাট্যকাৰ, গল্পকাৰ, ঔপন্যাসিক, সাহিত্য আৰু লোক-সংস্কৃতিৰ সমালোচক আৰু বিভিন্ন গ্ৰন্থ, আলোচনী আদিৰ সম্পাদক। ‘অসম সাহিত্য সভা’কে মুখ্য কৰি বিভিন্ন সামাজিক-সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান-প্ৰতিষ্ঠানৰ সৈতে সক্ৰিয়ভাৱে জড়িত ৰাজবংশীৰ অন্যতম জনপ্ৰিয় পৰিচয় এগৰাকী বিশিষ্ট আধুনিক অসমীয়া নাট্যকাৰ হিচাপে। ‘নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ’, ‘কমলাকুঁৱৰীৰ সাধু’, ‘চক্ৰবেহু’, ‘সম্ভৱামি’, ‘তেজীমলা’, ‘জনক নন্দিনী’, তিনিটা বান্দৰৰ সাধু’, ‘শকুন্তলা’, ‘ফৰ্মুদ গৰীয়াৰ প্ৰেম গাঁথা’ আদি তেওঁৰ উল্লেখযোগ্য নাট্য-সৃষ্টি। নাট্যকাৰ হিচাপে ৰাজবংশীৰ বিশিষ্টতা ফুটি উঠাৰ অন্যতম দিশ জড়িত হৈ আছে তেওঁ আধুনিক নাটকত থলুৱা লোক-কলা তথা লোক-নাট্যানুষ্ঠানৰ সমল সংযোজন সম্পৰ্কীয় পৰীক্ষা-নীৰিক্ষাৰ সৈতে। বিংশ শতিকাৰ সপ্তম-অষ্টম দশকত আধুনিক অসমীয়া নাটকত লোক-নাট্যৰ আংগিক আৰু কলা-কৌশল প্ৰয়োগেৰে নাট ৰচনাত মনোনিৱেশ কৰা নাট্যকাৰসকলৰ ভিতৰত পৰমানন্দ ৰাজবংশীও এজন। তেওঁ নিজৰ সৰহসংখ্যক নাটকত লোক-নাট্যৰ বিভিন্ন উপাদান সংযোগেৰে আধুনিক অসমীয়া লোক-নাট্যধৰ্মী নাট ৰচনাৰ সফল প্ৰয়াস কৰিছে। থলুৱা কলা-শৈলীৰ আদৰ্শত ৰচনা কৰা ‘নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ’ নাটকত নাট্যকাৰগৰাকীয়ে দৰঙী খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়া আৰু লোকগীতৰ উপাদানৰ সংমিশ্ৰণ ঘটাইছে। স্থানীয় বৈশিষ্ট্যসমূহ ফুটাই তুলিবলৈ ভাষা প্ৰয়োগ, চৰিত্ৰাংকন, পৰিৱেশ চিত্ৰণ, গীত-পদ আৰু লোক-নাট্যৰ উপকৰণ প্ৰয়োগত সচেতনভাৱে আগবাঢ়িছে। লোক-নাট্যৰ আংগিক আৰু কলা-কৌশল

যথার্থভাৱে প্ৰয়োগ হোৱাটোৱেই নাটকখনৰ আটাইতকৈ উজ্বল বৈশিষ্ট্যপূৰ্ণ দিশ। উক্ত দিশটিয়েই ‘নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ’ক অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ এখন উল্লেখনীয় লোক-নাট্যধৰ্মী আধুনিক নাটক হিচাপে স্বীকৃতি প্ৰদানৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত শক্তিশালী ভূমিকা লৈছে।

লোক-নাট্যকলাৰ সমল প্ৰয়োগেৰে নাটক ৰচনা কৰি আধুনিক অসমীয়া নাট্য সাহিত্যৰ ধাৰাটোক পৰিপূৰ্ণতা দিয়া নাট্যকাৰসকলৰ ভিতৰত পৰমানন্দ ৰাজবংশী অন্যতম। ‘নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ’ তেওঁৰ এই ধাৰাৰ এখন উল্লেখযোগ্য নাটক। লোক-নাট্যৰ আংগিক আৰু কলা-কৌশল প্ৰয়োগ কৰি পৰিবেশন কৰাটোৱেই হৈছে নাটখনৰ এক উজ্বল বৈশিষ্ট্যপূৰ্ণ দিশ। ১৮৯৪ চনৰ পথৰুঘাটৰ বণৰ পটভূমিত ৰচিত নাটখনত দৰঙী খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়াৰ উপকৰণ আৰু বিভিন্ন লোক-কলাৰ উপাদান সংযোগ কৰা হৈছে। ‘নাট্যকাৰৰ টোকা’ অংশত ৰাজবংশীয়ে এই কথা স্পষ্টভাৱে উল্লেখ কৰিছে-

ঐতিহ্যমণ্ডিত দৰঙী “খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়া”ৰ বহিৰংগ নীতি আৰু পৰিৱেশন নীতিৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি নাটকখন মঞ্চ উপযোগীকৈ ৰচনা কৰা হৈছে। পৰাপক্ষত এই নাট্যানুষ্ঠানৰ বৈশিষ্ট্যসমূহ ৰক্ষা কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰা হৈছে। মৃতপ্ৰায় এই আনুষ্ঠানটিক সচেতন অভিনয়প্ৰেমী ৰাইজৰ আগত চিনাকি কৰাই দিয়াৰ ই এক বিনম্ৰ প্ৰয়াস (ৰাজবংশী-২)।

মূল নাট্য-দৃশ্য আৰম্ভ হোৱাৰ আগতে নাট্যকাৰে সংযোগ কৰা সূচনা দৃশ্যত ওজাই গায়ন-বায়নেৰে সৈতে পদৰ জৰিয়তে নাট্যকাহিনীৰ আভাস প্ৰদান কৰিছে-

বন্দো মন্দিৰ কৃষ্ণৰে চৰণ- নাৰায়ণ

পদ : মহাৰাণীৰ হুকুমে লৈয়া আহিল ইংৰাজ ।
বনিজ কৰি ভাৰতৰ কাটি লৈলা স্বৰাজ ।।
এহিমতে অসমৰো লৈলা শাসনভাৰ ।
কৰ তোলে জখে-মখে নিৰীহ জনতাৰ ।।
নাঙলৰ কৰ কঢ়াই কৰিলা দুগুণ ।
স্বাধীনচেতা দৰঙী প্ৰজাই কৰে গুণ-গুণ ।।
তিনি কুৰি আঠ বৰ্ষে কৰিলা বাদ ।
পথৰুঘাটৰ ডাক-বাংলাত দিলে মুৰ্দাবাদ ।।
কথমপি সাৰিল ইংৰাজ পৰান নগৈলা ।
পুনু মহাৰাণীৰ হুকুমত খাজনা বঢ়াইলা ।।
ক্ষুৰু হয় প্ৰজাগণে বিদ্ৰোহ আলচিলা ।
এহিমতে পথৰুঘাটৰ বণ আহি ভৈলা ।।
এই বণৰ কাহিনী শুনা সভাসদ ।
নাঙল মাটি আৰু মানুহ নামে কৰিলোঁ বেকত ।।

সূচনা দৃশ্যৰ এই পদৰ মাজেৰেই নাটকৰ পটভূমি আৰু বিষয়বস্তু স্বৰূপ পথৰুঘাটৰ বণৰ বৃত্তান্ত স্পষ্টভাৱে ফুটি ওলাইছে। সংস্কৃত নাটক, অংকীয়া নাট আদিৰ আৰম্ভণিতে সমগ্ৰ নাট্যকাহিনীৰ আভাস প্ৰদান আৰু নাট বচনাৰ উদ্দেশ্যৰ কথা প্ৰকাশ কৰাৰ ৰীতি অনুসৰণ কৰি নাট্যকাৰে এই পদ সংযোজন কৰিছে। প্ৰথম দৃশ্যত আঠিয়া কোচৰ ঘৰলৈ অহা গৰখীয়া ল'ৰাৰ দলক তেওঁৰ ঘৈণীয়েক মনেশ্বৰীয়ে চাউল-পাত আগবঢ়াই সেৱা কৰা দেখা যায়। গৰখীয়া ল'ৰাসকলে হৰধ্বনি দি প্ৰস্থান কৰাৰ পিছত আঠিয়া কোচৰ পুত্ৰ সনাতনৰ লগতে মনেশ্বৰী, আঠিয়া কোচ, খচনুৰ আদি চৰিত্ৰৰ কথোপকথনৰ যোগেদি নাট্যকাহিনী আগবাঢ়ে। আঠিয়া কোচ আৰু খচনুৰৰ কথোপকথনৰ যোগেদি মহাৰাণীয়ে নাঙলৰ খাজনা বঢ়োৱা 'সৰ্বনশীয়া খবৰ'ৰ কথা ওলাই পৰে (পৃ.৮)।

এই বিষয়ে আলোচনাৰ বাবে ৰাইজ মেললৈ যোগ দিবলৈ আঠিয়া কোচক কোৱাত তেওঁলোকে কৈছে-

আঠিয়া - যাম যাম, কিয় নাযাম কাকা ?
আমাৰ দেশ, আমাৰ মাটি, আমাৰ নাঙল । কোন
সাত সাগৰ তেৰ নদী পাৰ হৈ আহি বগা বঙালে
খাজনা বঢ়াব খুজিলেই কিয় দিম কাকা ? মৰি
গ'লেও এই আঠিয়া কোচে নিদিয়ে ।

খচনুৰ - তই ঠিকেই কৈছ আঠিয়া । আমাৰ
দেশ, আমাৰ মাটি, আমাৰ নাঙল । বিদেশী

বঙালে আমাৰ পৰা কৰ সোধাবলৈ কোন ?
পলমকৈ হ'লেও আমাৰ মাটি খোৱা কৃষক
ৰাইজে এইখিনি কথা বুজি পালে মই ভাবোঁ বগা
বঙাল মোগলৰ দৰে পলাই ফাট মাৰিব । ..(পৃ
৮-৯)

নাটকখনত ইংৰাজৰ বিৰুদ্ধে কৃষক প্ৰজাৰ বিদ্ৰোহৰ এয়াই
আগজাননী ।

নাটকৰ দ্বিতীয় দৃশ্যত ভদ্রেইশ্বৰী, মোস্তাক,
কণ্ঠীৰাম,ভেবেলা, খচনুৰ আদি চৰিত্ৰৰ কাৰ্য-কলাপ আৰু
কথোপকথনৰ যোগেদি নাট্যকাহিনী অগ্ৰসৰ হয় । ভদ্রেইশ্বৰী আৰু
মোস্তাকৰ মাজৰ ভালপোৱা, ইংৰাজৰ খাজনা বঢ়োৱাৰ প্ৰভাৱ,
হিন্দু-মুছলমানৰ সম্প্ৰীতিৰ প্ৰসংগ আদি এই দৃশ্যত অৱতাৰণা
কৰা দেখা যায় ।

তৃতীয় দৃশ্যত খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়াৰ বহুৱাই গায়ন-বায়নৰ
সৈতে দীঘলীয়া গীত এটি গাই দৰঙী প্ৰজাৰ আৰু নিজৰ দুখ-
দুৰ্দশাৰ কথা স্থানীয় উপভাষাৰে বৰ্ণাই হাস্যৰসৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে।
নাট্যকাৰৰ মতে “ ‘বহুৱা’ চৰিত্ৰ (খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়াৰ)
সমসাময়িক সমাজৰ প্ৰবক্তা স্বৰূপ। যিয়ে সেই সমাজৰ লঘু
দিশবোৰ হাস্য-ব্যংগৰূপত উদঙাই দেখুৱায়। এই নাটকৰ
'বহুৱা'ও ইয়াৰ পৰা মুক্ত হোৱা নাই (পৃ-২)।” গীতটোৱে সম্পূৰ্ণ
তৃতীয় দৃশ্যটোকে আৱৰি ৰাখিছে যদিও আৰু গীতটোৰ প্ৰথম
অংশটোৰ বাহিৰে পিছৰ দীঘলীয়া অংশই বহুৱাৰ ব্যক্তিগত
জীৱনৰ কথা ক'লেও ই অপ্ৰাসংগিক আৰু আমনিদায়ক হৈ
পৰা নাই। কিয়নো মহাৰাণীয়ে নাঙলৰ কৰ বৃদ্ধি কৰা ঘটনাৰ
সৈতে সৰ্বসাধাৰণ দৰঙী প্ৰজাৰ দৈনন্দিন জীৱন
ওতঃপ্ৰোতভাৱে সংযুক্ত হৈ আছে-

যাওঁ গ'ও ৰে ভাইহাত /আজিৰপে দেশ চাৰি যাওঁ গ'ও ৰে ।।

ভগেই নিলা ভগেই নিলা / হালৰ হালোৱা গৰু ।

অমুকাৰ ভাগত পৰিল/সান্দহ ভাজা চৰু ।।

কিনো ক'ম দুখৰ কথা/সীমা সংখ্যা নাই ।

ভাইকখোৱাহঁতে বেলেগ কৰি দিলা/চলবাৰ উপায় নাই ।।

মাটি গেল গৰু গেল/এই পেটৰ দায়ত ।

মহাৰাণীৰ নাঙলৰ কৰ/দিও কোনটো পাকত ।।

ভাবি-চিন্তি মই ভাইহাত/ঘৰ-মাটি এৰিলো ।

পাৰো যদি যৈণীক বেছি/পেটৰ চিন্তা মাৰোঁ (পৃ-১৩-১৫)।।

নাটকৰ চতুৰ্থ দৃশ্য ভদৌ পাগলাৰ সংলাপ আৰু আঠিয়া কোচ আৰু মোস্তাকৰ কথোপকথনেৰে পূৰ্ণ হৈছে। সিহঁতৰ কথা-বতৰাৰ পৰা বুজিব পাৰি যে বগা বঙালৰ অত্যাচাৰ-উৎপীড়নৰ কাৰণেই পত্নীৰ আত্মহত্যাৰ দুখত ভদৌ পগলা হৈছে আৰু সাধাৰণ মানুহেও বহু যাতনা ভুগিবলগীয়া হৈছে (পৃ-১৫-১৮)।

দৰঙৰ হিন্দু-মুছলমানৰ সম্প্ৰীতিৰ বিৰল নিদৰ্শন প্ৰকাশক আজানৰ ধ্বনি আৰু শংখ-ঘণ্টাৰ ধ্বনিৰে পঞ্চম দৃশ্যৰ পৰিবেশ সৃষ্টি কৰা হৈছে। সন্ধিয়াৰ ৰাইজমেললৈ অহা ব্যক্তিৰ কথা-বতৰাৰ আগতে নাট্যকাৰে ওজা তথা গায়ন-বায়নৰ পদৰ যোগেদি পঞ্চম দৃশ্যৰ সূচনা কৰিছে-

ৰাইজমেল পাতে প্ৰজাগণে গাঁৱৰ ভিতৰ হে
বগা বঙালক খাজানা নিদিওঁ কাৰো প্ৰতিবাদ।
আমাৰ নাঙল আমাৰ মাটি বিদেশী ইংৰাজ।।
ল'ৰা-বুঢ়া গোট খাই কৰে আলোচনা।
নিদিওঁ আমি বঙালক কৰ এহি শেষ কথা।।
এহি মতে পথৰুঘাট-ৰণৰ তৈলা আৰম্ভণ।
কৃষক ৰাইজৰ বীৰত্বৰ কথা অতি বিতোপন।।

(পৃ. ১৮-১৯)

খচনুৰ, পৰশু, অগনমোৰা, ভেবা সেখ, বৰলিকিৰা সেখ, কণ্ঠীৰাম, আঠিয়া আদি চৰিত্ৰৰ সংলাপ আৰু ৰাইজৰ সমস্বৰ সমৰ্থনসূচক কথাৰে ৰাইজমেলত কৃষক ৰাইজে ইংৰাজৰ মাটিৰ খাজানা বৃদ্ধিৰ প্ৰতিবাদ কৰে আৰু আন্দোলনৰ ছংকাৰ দিয়ে (পৃ-১৮-২২)। নাট্যকাহিনীৰ বিকাশত এই দৃশ্যটিৰ মূল্য বহুত বেছি যদিও ইয়াত লোক-নাট্যৰ কোনো উপকৰণ প্ৰয়োগ হোৱা নাই।

ষষ্ঠ দৃশ্যতো হৰেশ্বৰ, মণিৰাম, ভেবা সেখ, পৰশু শৰ্মা আদিৰ কথোপকথনৰ যোগেদি নাট্য কাহিনী আগবাঢ়ে (পৃ-২২-২৪)। মণিৰামৰ দেশদ্ৰোহীতাৰ অপৰাধৰ বিষয়ক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি এই দৃশ্যটো সংযোজন কৰা হৈছে। এই প্ৰসংগতেনাট্যকাৰে হৰেশ্বৰৰ মুখত স্থানীয় ফকৰা-যোজনা সংযোগ কৰিছে-

অলঠৌ মূৰা তলঠৌ মূৰা/মাগুৰ মাছৰ জোল,
অলঠৌ মূৰাই ভাত নেখায়/কাণত ধৰি তোল (পৃ-২৪)।
সপ্তম দৃশ্যত ঠাই পাইছে সনাতন, ভদ্ৰেশ্বৰী আৰু

মোস্তাকৰ কথোপকথনে। সনাতন আৰু ভদ্ৰেশ্বৰীৰ মুখত বিয়া-গীতৰ কলি সুকৌশলেৰে সংযোজন কৰি নাট্যকাৰে লোক-কলাৰ উপাদান প্ৰয়োগ কৰাত নিজৰ নাট্য-প্ৰতিভাৰ যথার্থ পৰিচয় দিছে (পৃ. ২৪-২৫)। উদাহৰণ স্বৰূপে-

সনাতন : হেইছো ভোমোৰা/শহৰীৰ ঘৰে

আহি আহি পালো আমি /কটাহ বাঁহৰ তলে।

অষ্টম দৃশ্যৰ আৰম্ভণিতে ওঝাই গীত পৰিবেশন কৰি থকা দেখা যায়। কৃষক ৰাইজৰ আন্দোলনৰ পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত পথৰুঘাটত আয়োজিত ৰাইজমেলৰ কথা গীতবোৰৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰকাশ পাইছে-

কৃষক ৰাইজে কৰে আন্দোলন।

/পথৰুঘাটত চাহাব আইহুৰো

সভাৰ আয়োজন।

/আমাৰ দেশ আমাৰ মাটি

বিদেশীৰ নাই অধিকাৰ।

/দেহত তেজ থকা লৈকে

নিদিও নাঙলৰ কৰ।।

/গাঁৱে-ভূঞে কৃষক ৰাইজে

পাতে ৰাইজমেল।

/পথৰুঘাটত বৰসভাত

সবে হ'ব যোৱা।

আগদিনা চিপাহী আহি

/সাজে সভাঘৰ।

উখল-মাঘল পথৰুঘাট

/প্ৰজাৰ হ'ব জয় (পৃ-২৭-২৮)।।

গীতৰ পিছত নাটকৰ মূল কাহিনী আগবাঢ়ে পথৰুঘাটৰ ৰাইজমেলত ওচৰ-পাজৰৰ সকলো গাঁৱৰ মানুহ যোগদান কৰাৰ কথাক লৈ। চৰিত্ৰবোৰৰ কথা-বতৰাৰ জৰিয়তে অঞ্চলটোৰ সাম্প্ৰদায়িক একতা, ভদ্ৰেশ্বৰী আৰু মোস্তাকৰ প্ৰেম সম্পৰ্কীয় কথাক লৈ পদ্মেশ্বৰ আৰু কণ্ঠীৰামৰ মনোভাৱ আদি ৰাইজমেলত প্ৰকাশ পাইছে।

নৱম দৃশ্যত ৰাইজমেলত তহছিলদাৰ তথা ইংৰাজ বিষয়াৰ সৈতে ৰাইজ আলোচনাত মিলিত হয়। ইংৰাজ বিষয়াই মহাৰাণীৰ হুকুম কোনোপধ্যে অমান্য কৰিব নোৱাৰে বুলি ক'লে। আনহাতে সমবেত কৃষক ৰাইজেও মাটিৰ খাজানা নিদিবলৈ বন্ধপৰিকৰ, কিয়নো তেওঁলোকৰ মতে নাঙল যাৰ মাটিও তাৰ

আৰু বিদেশী ইংৰাজ বা বঙালৰ তাত কোনো অধিকাৰ নাই।
 ৰাইজৰ প্ৰতিবাদ গুৰুতৰ হোৱাত পৰিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্ৰণ কৰাৰ স্বার্থত
 ইংৰাজ বিষয়ই উদ্ভেজিত কৃষক প্ৰজাক লাঠি চাৰ্জ কৰিবলৈ
 আদেশ দিয়ে। এনেদৰে দুয়োপক্ষৰ তৰ্কাতৰ্কিৰ শেষত সংঘৰ্ষৰ
 সূত্ৰপাত হয়। নাট্যকাৰে এই সংঘৰ্ষৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে ওঝা তথা
 গায়ন-বায়নৰ পদ সংযোজন কৰিছে যথায়থভাৱে -

বিবাদ কৰেই কৃষক ৰাইজে/ইংৰাজৰ লগতহে।।
 লাঠীৰ কোবত প্ৰজাগণে /কৰে আক্ৰমণ।
 কতই লৈলা লাঠী-জোং /খঙৰ কোবত।।
 ঠাইতে পোৱা দলি চপৰা/ মাৰে চহাবক।
 যাঁচি অহা বিদেশী ইংৰাজ /যোৱা নিজ দেশক।।
 কৃষক ৰাইজৰ ক্ষোভ দেখি/ চাহাবে কৰে গুলী।
 গুলীখোৱা প্ৰজাগণৰ /গাত নাই উলি।।
 কতই মাৰে লাঠি-জোং/কতই ফৰ্মুটি।
 গুলী খায়ো পিছ নপৰে/ দিয়ে হৰধ্বনি।।
 বন্দুকৰ শব্দ ভেদি/ভাহে প্ৰজাৰ চিঞৰ।
 আকাশ-বতাহ মিলি পৰে/আল্লাহ আকবৰ।।
 গুলী খাই কৃষক ৰাইজে/কৰে আৰ্তনাদ।
 নিদিও আমি নাঙলৰ কৰ/কৰোঁ প্ৰাণত্যাগ।।
 দৰঙী প্ৰজাই এহিমতে/দেখায় পৰাক্ৰম।
 পথৰুঘাটৰ ৰণ নামে/প্ৰজাৰ বিক্ৰম।।

গীতফাঁকিৰ বক্তব্যৰ প্ৰতি মনোযোগ দিলে সহজে বুজিব
 পাৰি যে নাট্যকাহিনী আগবঢ়াই নিয়াৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত, নাটকৰ মূল
 বিষয়বস্তু ৰূপায়ণ আৰু পৰিৱেশ সৃষ্টিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এয়া অতি
 প্ৰাসংগিক, যথার্থ।

নাটকখনৰ দশম দৃশ্যতে ইংৰাজ আৰু দৰঙী প্ৰজাৰ মাজত
 হোৱা ৰণৰ পিছৰ উৎকৰ্ণাপূৰ্ণ আৰু মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী অৱস্থাৰ পৰিচয়
 পোৱা যায় মনেশ্বৰী, ভদ্ৰেশ্বৰী, হৰেশ্বৰ, সনাতন, ভেবেলা
 আদি চৰিত্ৰৰ কথোপকথনৰ যোগেদি। হৰেশ্বৰৰ আচৰণ আৰু
 কথাৰ ভংগীৰ যোগেদি সকলোৱে আঠিয়া কোচ প্ৰমুখ্যে আন
 আন প্ৰতিবাদকাৰী পথৰুঘাটৰ ৰণত মৃত্যু আৰু আহত হোৱাৰ
 আভাস পায়। এনেতে কান্দোনৰ ৰোল উঠিল আৰু লগে লগে
 ওঝাই গায়ন-বায়নৰ সৈতে গীত পৰিৱেশন- কৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে-

এ ঘৰে ঘৰে আজি দেখো কান্দোনৰ মেলা
 পথৰুঘাটত গৈয়া ৰাইজৰ /হৈল কিনো দশা।
 বাটে-পথে পদূলি মুখে কৰে সৰে অপেক্ষা।
 কোনো আহিল কোনো নাহিল লাগিল ছৱাদুৱা।

ক'ত গৈলা স্বামী মোৰ ক'ত গৈলা পিতা।
 ইংৰাজৰ গুলী খায় উভতি নাহিলা।।
 সাত কুৰিয়ে এহিমতে প্ৰাণ তিয়াগিলা।
 স্বদেশ আৰু স্বজাতিৰ নাম জিলিকাইলা।।

এনেদৰে ওঝাই গীতৰ মাধ্যমেৰে ঐতিহ্যমণ্ডিত
 পথৰুঘাটৰ ৰণত ১৪০ জন কৃষক প্ৰজাই ইংৰাজৰ গুলীত প্ৰাণ
 বিসৰ্জন দিয়াৰ বৃত্তান্ত উপস্থাপন কৰিছে।

নাটকৰ একাদশ তথা শেষ দৃশ্যটিত এক দুখৰ পৰিৱেশ
 বিৰাজ কৰা দেখা যায়। বিভিন্ন চৰিত্ৰৰ সংলাপৰ যোগেদি ৰণৰ
 মৰ্মান্তিক ঘটনা, দৰঙী প্ৰজাৰ দুখ-দুৰ্দশা, বিদেশী বঙালৰ
 নিষ্ঠুৰতা, হিন্দু-মুছলমানৰ ঐক্য, সনাতনকে মুখ্য কৰি নতুন
 পুৰুষৰ মাতৃভূমি-প্ৰীতি আদি বিভিন্ন কথা প্ৰকাশ পাইছে।
 দৃশ্যটোত নাট্যকাৰে কোনো গীত সংযোজন কৰা নাই যদিও
 স্থানীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য পৰিস্ফুট কৰিবলৈ ছলাবাৰীৰ প্ৰসংগ উল্লেখ
 কৰিছে। উত্তৰ পুৰুষৰ কথা আৰু কৰ্মপ্ৰেৰণাৰ যোগেদি নিজৰ
 নাঙল, মাটি বক্ষাৰ স্বার্থত বিদেশী বঙালৰ বিৰুদ্ধে বিদ্ৰোহ কৰাৰ
 প্ৰতিশ্ৰুতিৰে নাটকখনৰ সমাপ্তি ঘটিছে (পৃ.৩৮-৩৯)।

এই আলোচনাৰ পৰা দেখা যায় যে নাট্যকাৰ পৰমানন্দ
 ৰাজবংশীয়ে 'নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ' নাটকত অতি
 সচেতনভাৱে লোক-নাট্যৰ বিভিন্ন উপকৰণ সংযোজন কৰিছে।
 'নাট্যকাৰৰ টোকা'ত তেওঁ উল্লেখ কৰিছে- "নাটকৰ পটভূমি
 (১৮৯৪)ৰ ওপৰত দৃষ্টি ৰাখি চৰিত্ৰ সমূহৰ আচাৰ-ব্যৱহাৰ,
 পোছাক-পাতিৰ পৰিৱেশন, খালি মুখে দিয়া আজান ধ্বনি,
 শংখ-ঘন্টা-ধ্বনি আদিৰ উপস্থাপনত কৃত্ৰিম ৰং সানিবলৈ যত্ন
 কৰা হোৱা নাই। 'খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়া'ৰ অপৰিহাৰ্য স্মাৰক, দলপতি,
 যুৰীয়া কলপুলি, হাৰিকেন লেম্প আদিকো মঞ্চত প্ৰৱেশাধিকাৰ
 দিয়া হৈছে। ওঝাৰ মুখত দিয়া গীত-পদবোৰো উক্ত নাট্যানুষ্ঠানৰ
 পৰম্পৰাগত সুৰৰ আৰ্হিত সজোৱা হৈছে (ওঝা-
 সূত্ৰধাৰ)[পৃ.২]।" নাটকৰ প্ৰতিটো দৃশ্যতে খুলীয়া ভাউৰীয়াৰ
 আংগিক তথা কলা-কৌশল প্ৰয়োগ নকৰিলেও যিকেইটাত
 ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছে-তাত তেওঁ সফলতা লাভ কৰিছে। স্থানীয় ভাষাৰ
 প্ৰয়োগ, বহুৱা চৰিত্ৰৰ অৱতাৰণা, বিভিন্ন সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰা
 আৰু উপাদানৰ সংযোজন, পৰম্পৰাগত সুৰৰ আৰ্হিত সজ্জিত
 ওঝাৰ গীত-মাতৰ উপস্থাপন ইত্যাদি সকলোবোৰে নাটকখনক
 এখন সাৰ্থক লোক-নাট্যধৰ্মী আধুনিক অসমীয়া নাটকৰ মৰ্যাদা
 প্ৰদান কৰিছে। "লোককলাৰ পৰিৱেশ পৰিস্ফুট কৰাৰ কাৰণে
 নাট্যকাৰৰ সজাগতা নাটকখনৰ প্ৰতিটো ক্ষেত্ৰতে দৰ্শক-পাঠকে

অনুভব কৰিব পাৰে। গীত-পদতেই নহয়, চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ কথা-বতৰাতো ইয়াৰ পৰিচয় আছে (ভৰালী, অসমীয়া নাটক : স্বৰাজোত্তৰ কাল ৯০)।” মুঠতে এয়া নিশ্চিতভাৱে ক’ব পাৰি যে লোক-নাট্যৰ আংগিক আৰু কলা-কৌশল যথার্থভাৱে প্ৰয়োগ হোৱা হেতুকে পৰমানন্দ ৰাজবংশীৰ ‘নাঙল, মাটি আৰু মানুহ’ নামৰ নাটখনে অসমীয়া নাট্য সাহিত্যৰ ইতিহাসত এক উন্নত নাট্যকৃতি হিচাপে সুকীয়া মৰ্যাদাৰ দাবীদাৰ।

প্ৰসংগ আৰু গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী :

মুখ্য উৎস :

ৰাজবংশী, পৰমানন্দ। নিৰ্বাচিত নাট্যসম্ভাৰ। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ।
গুৱাহাটী : জ্যোতি প্ৰকাশন, ২০০৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

গৌণ উৎস -

গগৈ, লীলা (সম্পা)। আধুনিক অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ পৰিচয়। বনলতা সংস্কৰণ। ডিব্ৰুগড় : বনলতা, ২০০২। প্ৰকাশিত।

চক্ৰৱৰ্তী, অখিল। “অসমীয়া নাটকৰ শেহতীয়া পৰীক্ষা-নিৰীক্ষা।” সাহিত্যৰ স্বাদ-বৈচিত্ৰ্য। সম্পা। দত্ত নেওগ, বিভা আৰু নিবেদিতা বড়া সন্দিকৈ। দ্বিতীয় প্ৰকাশ। ধেমাজি : কিৰণ প্ৰকাশন, ২০১৪। ১৪৪-১৫২ প্ৰকাশিত।

চেতিয়া, যোগেন। “অসমীয়া নাট্য সাহিত্যৰ পৰম্পৰা।” প্ৰবন্ধ বীথিকা। সম্পা। বৰুৱা, সোণাৰাম আৰু মনোৱাৰা বেগম। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। শিৱসাগৰ : শিৱসাগৰ ছোৱালী কলেজ, ১৯৮৯। ১১১-১২৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

দত্ত নেওগ, বিভা। সাহিত্য সমীক্ষা। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ।
ধেমাজি : কিৰণ প্ৰকাশন, ২০০৬। প্ৰকাশিত।

দাস, নাৰায়ণ আৰু পৰমানন্দ ৰাজবংশী (সম্পা.)। অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত পাশ্চাত্য প্ৰভাৱ। তৃতীয় প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৯। প্ৰকাশিত।

দাস, যুগল। বায়নৰ খোল। পঞ্চম সংস্কৰণ। বৰপেটা :
ৰংগবেদী প্ৰকাশন, ২০০৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

নাথ, প্ৰফুল্ল কুমাৰ। নাটক : প্ৰাচীন আৰু আধুনিক। প্ৰথম
প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : ৰুমী প্ৰকাশন, ২০০১। প্ৰকাশিত

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প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : বাণী মন্দিৰ, ২০১৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

পাটগিৰী, জগদীশ। “লোকনাট্য আৰু অসমীয়া নাটক।”
নাটকৰ ব্যৱহাৰিক দিশ। সম্পা। পাটগিৰী, জগদীশ আৰু অখিল
চক্ৰৱৰ্তী। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। যোৰহাট : অসম সাহিত্য সভা, ২০০৫।
১২৭-১৩৯। প্ৰকাশিত।

পাঠক, দয়ানন্দ। অসমীয়া নাটক আৰু পাশ্চাত্য প্ৰসংগ।
প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : লয়াৰ্ছ বুক ষ্টেল, ১৯৯৬। প্ৰকাশিত।

বৰুৱা, সত্যপ্ৰসাদ। নাটক আৰু অভিনয় প্ৰসংগ। প্ৰথম
বনলতা সংশোধিত সংস্কৰণ। গুৱাহাটী : বনলতা, ২০০১।
প্ৰকাশিত।

ভৰালী, শৈলেন। অসমীয়া লোক-নাট্য-পৰম্পৰা। প্ৰথম
প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : বাণী প্ৰকাশ প্ৰাঃ লিঃ, ২০০০। প্ৰকাশিত।

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প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৮। প্ৰকাশিত।

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গুৱাহাটী : বাণী প্ৰকাশ প্ৰাঃ লিঃ, ১৯৯৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

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প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : বাণী প্ৰকাশ প্ৰাঃ লিঃ, ১৯৯৯। প্ৰকাশিত।

মহন্ত, পোনা। প্ৰসংগ : নাটক। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। ডিব্ৰুগড় :
বনলতা, ২০০৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

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বনলতা, ২০০৪। প্ৰকাশিত।

ৰাজবংশী, পৰমানন্দ। সম্পা। অসমীয়া নাটক : পৰম্পৰা
আৰু পৰিবৰ্তন। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৫।
প্ৰকাশিত।

ৰাজবংশী, পৰমানন্দ, আৰু অন্যান্য। সম্পা। অসমীয়া
নাট্য সাহিত্য : পৰম্পৰা আৰু পৰিবৰ্তন। প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ।
গুৱাহাটী : অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, ২০০৭। প্ৰকাশিত।

শইকীয়া, বসন্ত। আধুনিক নাট্যসাহিত্যৰ সুবাস। প্ৰথম
প্ৰকাশ। গুৱাহাটী : নন্দন প্ৰকাশন, ২০০০। প্ৰকাশিত।

আলোচনী -

ডেকা, হৰেকৃষ্ণ, (সম্পা)। গৰীয়সী। অষ্টম সংখ্যা
 (“নাটক আৰু অসমত নাট্যচৰ্চা” বিশেষ সংখ্যা)। গুৱাহাটী :
সাহিত্য প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৭। মুদ্ৰিত।



Jahnavi Barua's '*Rebirth*' *Recreating narrative, Representing Nation (Assam)*

The states of North-East India are known for their lush green nature and this has been a pertinent topic in many writings from the region. The unique cultural identity and the singular way of life of the indigenous people living in the region too are subjects of attraction for many writers. Besides issues like identity crisis, search for roots, self-assertion, or claims for a political space, it is the ecology of the region, and an ecological concern that predominantly seem to unite these authors (writing in various languages of the region besides in English) in a common platform. One such writer is Jahnavi Barua. Her novel- *Rebirth* explores her homeland Assam in her multifarious dimensions: ranging from the abundant greenery in the grasslands of Kaziranga to the cosmic play of the nine planets in the Nabagraha temple. The novel touches on almost all such elements and features of the land that a contemporary Assamese may be able to relate himself to.

'Rebirth' is a novel with an unusual narrative plane. Shifting between the urban bustle of Bangalore and the placid quietness of the Brahmaputra along urban locales in Assam, Barua has weaved an absorbing narrative marked by its lucidity and the profoundness of all that is left unsaid. The narrator in the novel is a pregnant woman talking to her unborn child. This is an unusual framing device where the protagonist, all but to herself, realises she has no meaningful relationship to hold on to. It also means that the entire novel takes place within the space of Kaberi discovering that she is pregnant to before she gives birth, thus constraining



this meandering, almost timeless narrative inside the span of a few months. A sensitive Assamese woman, Kaberi has grown amidst the blue hills, verdant valleys and the lush green tea gardens of Assam, who has to move into the concrete and mortar space in Richmond Road of Bangalore city after her marriage with Ranjit (Ron). In Bangalore she has to assimilate herself into a corporate culture of which her husband is a part of. Even as she picks the right wooden furniture, furnishes the bathroom with branded towels and arranges the living area in the most sophisticated combination of colours, fabrics and flowers on every tabletop, she is feeling sad having to find her days spent under the *amlorkhi* trees admiring the mighty Brahmaputra river, the smell of the paddy fields and the morning sun atop the Kamakhya temple turning lifeless shadows. Darkness thickens in the form of

another bitter truth in the face of Kaberi when her husband walks out on the marriage for another woman.

Assam is brought alive by Jahnvi Barua in her book. The Grand River Brahmaputra and Kaziranga National Park stand together as the leitmotif, a symbol of the incredible beauty of the region. The Kaziranga National Park is rather quintessentially alive in the consciousness of the narrator:

Anyway, once we cleared the hills, still green then, not cut up and prone to landslides as they are today, we arrived at Jorabat, at the crossroads, from where one branch of the road veered off into the dark, alluring hills of Meghalaya, the land of clouds, and another turned left, climbed another hill stretch and then descended with a sigh into the green valley's that would lead us to Kaziranga.

The narrative style of the text is simple and straight forward. The mellifluous tone of the narrative is in sync with the descriptions of the natural beauty of the land. The following is a small excerpt in this context:

Once the road descended Burapahar, the forest opened up; patches of grassland now broke the monotony of the thick woods. This was rhino country and a few kilometers further on there was a swampy pocket they favored, lying half-submerged in the dark waters as if relaxing in a pool.

Use of certain Assamese words, particularly in representing relations, like- *Ma, Deuta, Moha, Mahi, Jethai, koka* etc. also adds a native grace to the narrative.

In the novel, we also get a robust flavour of the Assamese culture. Human conducts, appearances and relationships of this part of the Indian continent

are unique and these are presented in the text in a delicate manner. Following is an excerpt from the novel (conversation between Radhika and Kaveri) in this connection:

Well, all Assamese don't look like that although a large section does, the ones stemming from Tibeto-Burman and other Mongoloid stock. Some of us migrated from the Northern plains of India Centuries ago.

There are also several references to the state of insurgency being faced by Assam. References are also about revolutionary marches and other agitational programmes against the paramilitary and police authorities and about inexplicable sufferings faced by many youth at the hands of the armed forces. These all leave strong impacts in the mind of Kaberi. The unruly situations that become common sights for any onlooker come to perturb her sensitive soul too deeply:

Scenes of carnage-is it a riot, a bomb blast?" flash across the screen.... The newsreader confirms it: there have been serial bomb blasts in Guwahati she says, in the capital of Assam. High intensity bombs have exploded in six places around the city, several dead and countless injured.

Jahnvi Barua is one among the very few who have taken the pains to document the life and essence of the people living in Assam through fictions. What makes her an achiever is however that in spite of the local settings, she has ingeniously made the narrative to assume a universal appeal.

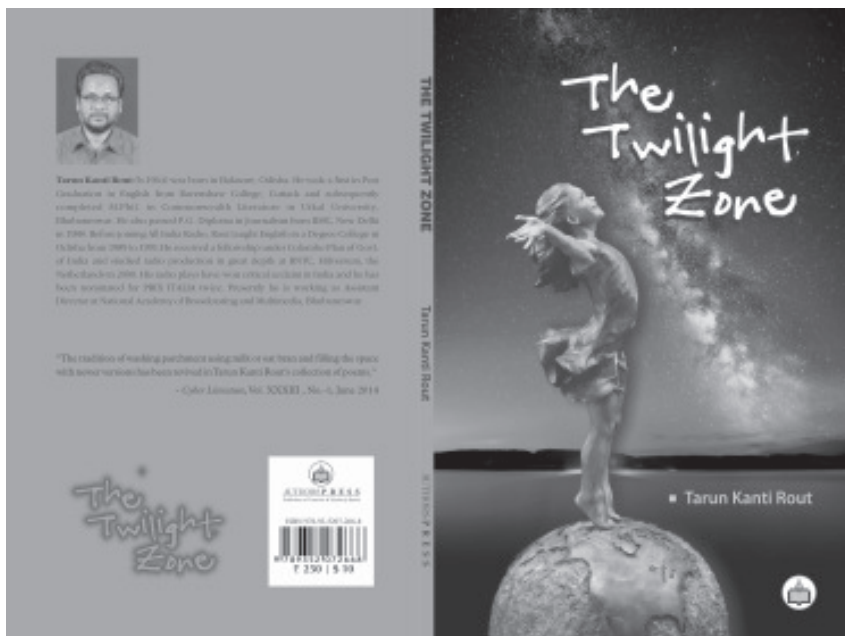
Jahnvi Barua. *Rebirth*. Penguin Books, 2010. Rs. 250/-

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Book Review

Tarun Kanti Rout's *'The Twilight Zone'* *Celebrating the Ineffable Mysteries of Relationships*

Tarun Kanti Rout's new collection of poems: *The Twilight Zone*, his second as of today, is a 'thriller' whichever way you see it. This does not mean that it is cast in the mould of Patricia D. Cornwell. Remember Patricia's description in her very first thriller *Post-mortem*: "... night dissolved into the foggy first hours of Saturday morning." But the book entitled *The Twilight Zone* celebrates the ineffable mysteries of relationships in a world where love dissolves into muck. Rout says:

*That is the twilight zone
 Between love and muck
 Whisking both friends and foes
 Off to illegal river beds. (15)*

The book opens with a dog's hair metaphorically alluding to a traditional belief of healing the wound caused by dog bite with the hair of the dog. But the dog's hair is not important. It is the dog that matters. It does not bark. Now that is a real poser. Remember Sherlock Holmes pointing out to Inspector Gregory "to the curious incident of the dog in the night-time" (Arthur Conan Doyle, *Silver Blaze*). The poems scoffing at our iniquitous system fill us with interest. Therefore we are compelled to invest in them significant amounts of time and energy to follow the poet's hidden rubric assiduously.

Like Ben Okri's opening of his most famous novel *The Famished Road* the first poem of the collection depicts a river. "The river flows like a dog's tongue." (Rout, 15) It may be mentioned that Rout's first collection of poems entitled *River in Impasto* (2014) charts the journey of a river from "infantile amnesia to misgivings of parthenogenesis" (Preface) In *The*

Twilight Zone, the river becomes a road - a road to more clues. In fact, each of the 70 poems included in the book is a clue about the conundrum of relationships. It is not known if Rout solves the riddle with the help of such clues. But it is certain that the clues entwine themselves endlessly to form the blurred area between love and muck. Even a kiss is not spared:

*My first kiss was nothing better the smell
Emitted from fish scales
Heaped on the road that goes
To her house of blood-red brick
Where I used to smoke and fret
Seeing so much slime as in an action flick. (56)*

The poems uphold the impregnable virtue of relationships that unmask the binary opposition pairing such as good and bad, light and darkness, pain and pleasure etc. in the crepuscular region of our life. Like the crippled girl Angela in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's German movie *Chinese Roulette*, the arrival of the daughter in the book brings the matter to a head. In the Preface to the book, Rout says: "Relationships probably grow to bridge the chasm between life and quietus." (7) And the poet justifies his claim by bringing to light as many as 20 odd actants, each one fulfilling an integral component of the narrative – a dog, mosquitoes, turtle dove, a homeless woman, a brother

who is dead, a father who writes a letter in his trembling hand, a close-minded microphone man, dung beetles, a daughter whose arrival is awaited, a man guarding the mouth of the cave, a frog, paddy field pipits, the wood pecker and so on. These actants may be the clues which help in demystifying life's multiple vicissitudes. And the poet, like S. T. Coleridge conjuring the youth, beseeches us to "turn away from those who live in the twilight between vice and virtue." Rout states this immutable truth in the poem *Ants*:

*Colonies die from the agony of prudish urge.
We will die too springing from unfertilized eggs. (36)*

The epigraph in the beginning "Two small people, without dislike or suspicion" taken from Ezra Pound's translation *Cathay* composes the *donnée* of the collection from which the poet foregrounds his points of view.

Tarun Kanti Rout. *The Twilight Zone*. Collected Poems. New Delhi: Authorpress, 2016. Pp. 86. Rs. 250/ \$ 10. ISBN: 978-93-5207-266-8

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