

# GLIMPSES of RESEARCH

## গৱেষণাৰ জিলিঙনি

Edited by  
Kamal Ch. Saikia



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গৱেষণাৰ জিলিঙনি

critical essays on humanites

**Kamal Ch. Saikia**

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Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee  
Dr. B. K. B. College, Puranigudam, 2017

## **Glimpses of Research**

**গবেষণাৰ জিলিঙনি**

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## *Preface*

**Glimpses of Research** as the title suggests is designed to make a concentrated focus on some specimen of research in the emerging field of humanities conducted by individual researchers. Bilingual in form and content it was originally intended to introduce the basic concept, subject and scope of research works already completed or being pursued till date by our teaching fraternity of Dr. B. K. B. College, puranigudam, Nagaon as a part of the institution's golden jubilee celebration in 2017. But finally we decided to include some more selected works by other faculties of our acquaintance on the basis of their doctoral theses. Readers will find in the dissertations only a core area of the research, an organized critical investigation into different aspects of our society, culture, history and literature in both theoretical and empirical approaches. The book that synchronizes the institution's fifty years of academic journey in a purely rural ambience nevertheless presents a very humble effort at understanding academic deliberations dedicated to expansion of knowledge and interpretation of facts that a typical research work is understood to have undertaken.

It is generally believed that research programmes on rigorous empirical setup dealing with technology, biochemistry, industry, trade and commerce, rare medicinal remedies and many others have direct impact on growth - a policy advocacy. They provide some innovative and cost-effective ways which amply meet the needs of business and industry in the post-materialist era. Apart from commercialization of technology, market oriented control over the products, rampant consumerism and sheer waste of earth's scarce resources further



deteriorating the ailing planet most of such research projects have little to boost humanitarian values and enduring progress. In other words, there has been a tendency for immediate corporate appropriation of research findings capable of ensuring huge business prospect but cannot protect values underpinning welfare, environment and mobility. So far basic academic research is concerned, its policy relevance and social-impact analysis is hard to assess. Ideological polarization and a valorized bias in accepting facts contrary to prevailing notions make honest research unreachable. Thus, it is pertinent to note in this context that genuine research expertise separating myth from facts and overcoming ideological bias and business motif can contribute to social and mental growth in a unique way if it is made accessible to the readers. But very often than not we allow many of such research documentations to lie idle in the bookshelves once the degree is obtained.

Besides commemorating an institutional event, the present volume on specific research problems will invite our readers to acquaint themselves with some academic engagements exploring the light and sheds of human achievements, pedagogical tools of exploring and understanding identity, myth of nation, authority, gender discrimination, apartheid and also some restatements recovering minor histories out of the grand narratives of history. This anthology covers roughly a period of more than two decades from 1994 when one of the selected research projects by Bhupen Saikia was accepted for conferring the degree to 2017, the time of acknowledging the latest research works by Arani Saikia and Jatin Sharma included in this volume - making a diverse field of studies accessible to the upcoming young batch of researchers.

**Glimpses of Research** contains essays on a fairly diversified themes arranged in four different categories e.g. *Literature, Society and Politics of Representation* (part I), *Historical contour, Life writings and heritage studies* (part II), *Culture, Folk life and Values* (part III), and *Empirical Studies: Plantation Labour, Economy, and Rural Empowerment* (part IV). Most of the essays being based on their respective theses reveal a long term academic engagement and investigative insight amounting to a conclusive proposition while

some others in the process of completion are speculative in nature and quite tentative about their thematic concerns. However, the essays though randomly selected without conforming to any principal thematic design deal with issues traversing a vast space of time. Its focus lays on a corpus of assorted materials and shifts from literature and society of medieval Assam to realignment of innovative ideas and complex modes of narrative representation in the twentieth century. The thematic forage touches upon subjects like metafiction that predicate a host of social and psychic issues, values that surface in retelling folktales, Tantra literature articulating indigenous worldview, socio-historical dynamics of sankarite tradition, prophecy of a nation and rise of a middleclass, life writings recreating fundamentals of social history, anthropological perspective of the rich heritage of Assam and some current issues concerning market valuation of the one horned rhino, micro analysis of labour in tea plantation industry, woman empowerment and rural development.

We must admit that each of the critical essays though primarily based on the thesis or subjects already finalized has got quite a small space to deal with its original research problem. Hence a difficult job to synthesize all the relevant issues under question. Secondly, the opinions expressed in the respective essays are all owned by the authors; we have not interfered here in any form except a few editorial corrections where it deserves. **Glimpses of Research** is planned more as a reader than a critique on the themes and issues so identified. We also regret our inability to use a uniform research format of critical references. Finally we are thankful to the Golden Jubilee Steering Committee and the Principal, Dr. Bhupen Saikia for the task entrusted to us for bringing out this commemorative volume. All our colleagues, contributors and members of the Publication committee deserve our sincere thanks for their support and cooperation. Mr. Kailash Rajkhowa and his dedicated team made us rest assured that the book will see the light of the day as per our plan. Thanks to all of them.

Dr. B.K.B. College  
Puranigudam, Nagaon  
October/ 2017

**Kamal Ch. Saikia**

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## **Part I**

***Politics of representation, Literature and Society.***

# **The Politics of Representation in Cotemporary Metafiction**

**(With Specific Reference to Selected Novels of Salman Rushdie Boman  
Desai, Vikram Chandra, and Amitav Ghosh)**

**Dr. Mridul Bordoloi**

## **Introduction**

The research work completed in 2008 examines the range and scope of representation and revision in "contemporary metafiction" with reference to select novels of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Boman Desai and Vikram Chandra. The primary texts chosen are *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *Memory of Elephants* (1988), *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), and *The Glass Palace* (2000). Apart from these, other novels written by these authors that adhere to the category of contemporary postcolonial metafiction, have also been used. However, the primary texts have been examined and analyzed more rigorously to arrive at some important conclusions and latencies. These texts problematize the documentation of "facts" related to such charged fields as nation, race and ethnicity, cultural memory and so forth.

This work aims to examine the possibility of working at two terms that may look oxymoronic and tautological: "postmodernist postcolonialism" and "postcolonial postmodernism." Leaving aside this semantic problem, one could, perhaps, identify areas of convergence

between postcolonialism and postmodernism. This is insofar as postmodernism, with its preoccupations with questions of epistemology and solipsism, appears to be non-political in content. This is not to deny the intervention of critics like Jonathan Arac who relate postmodernism into politics and insist on "the political condition of postmodernism." Having said that, the link between postmodernism and politics has remained an area led by doubt and contradictory impulses. Here again, the role played by Linda Hutcheon's *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989) must be noted, for Hutcheon extends the project of postmodernist "poetics" to postmodernist "politics."

It is natural that what is at stake is the mediation of historical understanding by cognitive, interpretative and ideological registers. It is contended here that the efforts made by metafictionist to re-vise the frames of representation arises from and results in a politics of representation, which, in turn, is predicated on attempts to frame the "unframable" referent. The act of framing being the condition and consequence of the politics of representation, it is further contended that metafiction by framing the referent, firstly, critiques the very process of representation, and secondly, refers back simultaneously to its own revisionary status.

The objective of the fictional world thus framed would be to subvert ordinary perceptions of reality and its representation in everyday life. Linda Hutcheon, discussing those postmodernist fictions that attempts at representing history by indicating its own self-reflexive status, terms them as "historiographic metafiction". It is, thus, a type of narrative that gives ample scope for its practitioners to represent history in its multipolar aspects. Hayden White has suggested that "[h]istoriography is an especially good ground on which to consider the nature of narration and narrativity because it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual ..." (White 1973: 4). Postmodern fiction, especially historiographic metafiction, celebrates this duality in order to pose certain pertinent questions relating to



the representation of the "actual" vis-à-vis the "imaginary." Since self-reflexivity and parodic reprisal of the past happen to be the trademark of this particular genre, contemporary political criticism tends to undermine its socio-political engagements. In fact, the "narcissistic and ironic appropriation of existing images and stories" (Hutcheon 1988: 3), seen in such metafictional texts is seen as the reason for its poor reputation. But such a view seems to be politically naïve, and as Hutcheon says: "Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations - its images and stories - are anything but neutral, however 'aestheticized' they may appear to be in their parodic self-reflexivity. While the postmodern has no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political action, it does work to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of de-naturalizing critique." (Hutcheon 1989: 3)

As already stated earlier, this thesis aims at framing the referents from a postcolonial position. Hence, notions of "identity", "authority", "alterity" etc., would be of particular interest to this dissertation. It is not a matter of mere co-incidence that all the narrators in the novels taken up for discussion constitute part of what Homi Bhabha calls "locational hybridity", or what Julia Kristeva calls "subject-in-process." The identities of the narrators go through a process of continuous deferral, making the act of saying who they are problematic. These figures, while unraveling the history of their nation or their race, self-reflexively articulate as well as question their own existential predicament, which may be summed up in Bhabha's rhetorical assumption: "How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?" (Bhabha 1994: 2). Given the fact that the demography of the contemporary world is grounded in the history of postcolonial migration, that is, in the narratives of diasporic culture

and politics, the boundary becomes the place from which, according to Bhabha, "something begins its presencing..." (Bhabha 1994: 5). Edward Said sees this in terms of the politics and poetics of exile that continually opens up issues of home and hyphenation, and thereby enables articulations of homelessness and heroism at the same time.

This notion of the "nation" when articulated in the wake of diasporas' migration or exile becomes a metaphor of loss, which can perhaps best be expressed through writing in the form of what Frederic Jameson terms as "national allegory" where "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the collectivity itself" (see Jameson 1986: 65-88). Jameson, while making this observation in this essay (later attacked by Aijaz Ahmed because of falling into the trap of essentializing by using terms like "Third World Literature") perhaps had Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in mind. This "myth" of the nation has been taken up for discussion in this thesis while dealing with the task of framing the unframable referents.

### **The Poetics and Politics of Framing: Representation and Revision**

Given the ambivalent trails of the history and reception of "representation," it is not surprising that the term has emerged as a hugely charged area in postmodernist theory and practice. In contemporary parlance, it has been treated at par with mimesis in its range of meanings and associations. Given further that mimesis is traditionally associated with the "innocent" presentation of events, postmodernist fiction often returns to the politics of representation either by way of self-reflexive denials or of metafictional excesses. It is possible that postmodernism's disaffection with representation per se may arise out of this mimetic notion of representation.

In each of the texts taken up for discussion, there is an authorial persona, who intervenes in and interrupts the narrative process from time to time. The texts also problematize the already suspect grand narrative(s) of history by bringing in minor histories, foregrounding a

certain otherness about historical representation. These little narratives are pitted against the arboreal centre. It ensures that the narrativization of "others" decenter the historical grand narratives, resulting in narrative dispersal. If history is metaphorically imagined as a tree, the trunk would represent the authority of the grand narrative. The endless branching-off into rhizomatic formations would then be the little narratives. The countless branches moving in different trajectories, would have their own vantage (or disadvantageous) points/position to look at the arbor. The view would always tend to be partial, different from the other branches and not a panoptic one (see Arac 8-19; Deleuze and Guattari, 92-120; Docherty 140-48).

In the same way, it can be said that representation involves interpretation. But the act of interpretation here gets colored due to a number of factors. These factors relate to the "politics" at play in the task of documenting events. These factors may be related to identity, nation, race, class, and gender. They play determining roles in constructing the version that becomes their representation. The politics of representation also involves other over-deterministic criteria. For instance, it involves "selection" of referents. It goes a long way in demonstrating how such particularity of focus affect a holistic view of things. Iser says:

The act of selection which is integral to fictionality is a form of doubling. Each text makes inroads into extratextual fields of reference and by disrupting them creates an eventful disorder, in consequence of which both structure and semantics of these fields are subject to certain deformations and their respective constituents are differently weighed according to the various deletions and supplementations. Thus each one is being reshuffled in the text, and takes on a new form - a form which nevertheless includes, and indeed depends on, the function of that field in our interpreted world. (Iser 218)

Thus, representation may be considered a performative, Janus-headed field in which parallel and contradictory discourses enact a dialogic which, in turn, enables the production of newer meanings/

interpretations. In other words, the inter-and intratextual binary oppositions that obtain both in language as well as in meaning seems to create an "intentional" interplay which results in radical instability. This, paradoxically, has the potential to open up range of significations. Iser's analysis of this ambivalence is instructive.

In contemporary epistemic inquiry of the "real" (i.e., events pertaining to the past and/or the present), representation seems to be the dominant mode adopted by both historians and fictional writers. It would be instructive to examine the analysis of historical inquiry offered by the historian F.R. Ankersmit, who says that in contemporary terms representation seems to have replaced two other modes of evaluation of truth: "explanation" and "interpretation" (Ankersmit 205). Given that this dissertation is about the politics of representation in contemporary postcolonial metafiction, it would be necessary here to look at the disciplinary dialogues initiated by the subject of representation, which, in turn, cannot be separated from the representation of the subject. To this extent the question of representation in history and historiography, given its relation to truth and method, would be a good point with which to enter the arena. An overview of the trends in twentieth-century historiography would be helpful in order to see how the very insistence on truth in representation is grounded in politics.

Ankersmit identifies three approaches to historical analysis in terms of a diachronic mode of evaluation. These three approaches correspond to three essentializing parameters that he terms "explanation", "interpretation" and "representation." "Explanation" is supposed to be predicated upon assumptions such as the logical-positivists' stand of "verification", the Popperian idea of "falsification," or the Kuhnian model that privileges scientific rhetoric at the cost of mere historical causality. Modern philosophy of history (since the 1940s) has, according to Ankersmit, "almost exclusively used the vocabulary of description and explanation. The essentialist presupposition involved was that the past [happened to be] a sea of

historical phenomena that [had] to be described and explained" (Ankersmit 206). This model of evaluation of truth is quasi-scientific in that it attempts to understand historical phenomena through cognition and rationalization, and by way of arriving at certain inferences that are individually generated.

Further, this method of cause-effect explanation is fraught with the danger of valorizing the grand narrative tradition of analysis (historical or otherwise). In fact, every interpretive frame begins by referring to what Scholes once tellingly called "fallibilism" (Scholes 1979: 32). Such frames claim that they are exempt from the traps of fallibilism by presenting themselves as critiques of the fallible. This claim to exemption, however, is interrogated in postmodernist theory and foregrounded with great power in metafiction, especially postcolonial metafiction. It is suggested that any grand narrative, however seminal to what is seen as the ongoing project of Enlightenment, is bound to resort to various types of essentializations. In other words, the search for comprehensive models of truth-telling is bound to be enmeshed in ideological or narrative imperatives that limit the very process of historical investigation, more so when it is based on chronological explanation.

However, the hermeneutical analysis of historical phenomena done by way of the analysis of the "meanings" related to the phenomena is fraught with dangers of over-interpretation. For, it cannot be ruled out that there are things in the past that do not offer any conceptual, logical or ideological meaning, viewed from the moment of interpretation. Hence, attempting to force meaning into events that resists it would be counter-productive. This is more so as twentieth-century historiography prefers to "see the past from a point-of-view different from that of the historical agents themselves" (Ankersmit 207). To this extent at least, hermeneutics appears to be singularly unhelpful in historical analysis. Finally, given that contemporary intellectual history, generally seen as the "histories of mentalities," does not attach much value to meanings appropriated



by a system, it is no longer possible to uncritically privilege meaning over historical phenomenon.

It is helpful therefore to look at historiography and historical analysis in terms of what Ankersmit calls "representation." Representation is grounded as we shall see in a processual dialogic that involves epistemological and ethical issues, self-consciously worked into postmodernist fictional texts. It seeks to displace or at least battle with traditional notions of establishing "truth" through *aletheia*, *eidos*, *arche* or *telos* (see Derrida "Structure" 91). It is often held that postmodernist notions of truth are non-deterministic. It follows that postmodernist thought does not believe in any grand narrative, whether of philosophy, history, science, religion, etc., as each discursive arena tries to establish particular hypotheses through the simultaneous process of selection as well as exclusion. It may, thus, be argued that the postmodernist conception of truth is representational, and it being so, is subject to multiple version/s, thereby making the site an open domain for more and more epistemological engagements or incursions. It can be suggested that representation is best seen as coterminous with critical inquiry that relies on what Barbara Johnson calls "critical difference."

It is possible to link these formulations to what has been presented in this dissertation as a "critical representation" or a "new" representationalist reading of culture. This new representationalist approach to history or culture does not require the past to have a comprehensive or definite meaning (Hunt 18). Instead, it is possible that a number of meanings may arise out of the same event. These meanings may not automatically have affinities whatsoever with one another. This would, in turn, spawn multiple latencies of theoretical and scholarly expositions generated at a given point of time around a particular represented event. Such multiplicities, it is believed, would give rise, in due course, to other representations, thereby making representation an endless process. Ankersmit aptly says in this context that "representation is indifferent to meaning" (Ankersmit 209), even though the historical text itself may have a meaning. Elaborating further on this point, he says:

Meaning is originally representational and arises from our recognition of how other people (historians, painters, novelists etc.) represent the world. It requires [one] to look at the world through the eyes of others - or, at least, to recognize that this can be done. (Ankersmit 210)

### **Representation in Historiographic Metafiction**

Hutcheon defines "historiographic metafiction" as a "kind of novel that asks [one] to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time" (Poetics 105). Such a form of fiction attempts to break down the walls between literary fantasies and the actualities of the world. Hence the representation of events seems to be determined not by "truth" and "falsehood"; rather, the interaction between the historiographic and the metafictional "foregrounds the rejection of the claims of both "authentic" representation and "inauthentic" copy alike, and the very meaning of artistic originality is as forcefully challenged as is the transparency of historical referentiality." (Lutcheon 1988: 110) Trying to establish points of affinity as well as departure from that of the other non-fictional novels of the 1960s, Hutcheon states:

For one, both stress the overt, totalizing power of the imagination of the writers to create unities (Hellmann 1981, 16); yet, for another, both refuse to neutralize contingency by reducing it to unified meaning (Zavarzadeh 1976, 41). I would agree with the former as a designation of the non-fictional novel, though not of all metafiction; and the latter certainly defines a lot of contemporary self-reflexive writing...Historiographic metafiction, of course, paradoxically fits both definitions: it installs totalizing order, only to contest it, by its radical provisionality, intertextuality, and often, fragmentation. (Hutcheon 1988: 116)

It can be argued that historiographic metafiction attempts to bridge the gap between "art" and "historiography" by suggesting the possibility of a "collaborative" engagement as suggested earlier. The

traditional distinction of fiction as "non-factual" and history as purely based on "facts" appears inadequate now. Historiographic metafiction, such as Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, for instance, address the question of the relation of "story" and "history writing" to "truth". In this novel, the narrator resorts to lies, exclusions, telescoping of events, forgetting, selected re-membling, errors, prejudices, silences etc. The history of a family becomes the history of writing itself that includes among other things, the history of the Indian subcontinent since inception. This might suggest, on the one hand, the inconsistencies of an entity burdened with suffering the same fate as that of the nation. On the other hand, it might be a window to the very process of fictionalizing that historians resort to in order to fill in the gaps that remain beyond them. Historiographic metafiction, by deliberately playing on public history and memory by way of parodic and defamiliarized re-telling(s), intends to show the fallacy of representation. At the same time, it also refers to the necessity of re-visioning the process of arriving at "new" perspectives. Brenda K. Marshall's comments on this dual as of postmodernism can be cited here:

The critique of representation translates into a refusal to see the past as constituted by events which we can innocently recapture and re-present through language. We no longer are able to think about absolute and unquestionable 'facts' or 'truths' of history, speaking now of 'histories' instead of History. (Marshall 147)

**Marshall cites Hayden White's positioning of "historiography as a poetic construct":**

In the realm of historiography we see suggested answers to these questions in concepts such as Hayden White's concept of 'metahistory', which posits historiography as a poetic construct. That is, the historian works within a 'metahistorical' paradigm which exists on the poetic, or linguistic, level and which determines what, for that historian, constitutes historical explanations. (Marshall 147)

It is clear that the claims of fiction in the representation of the "real" cannot be denied. Postmodern fiction, especially historiographic

metafiction, plays upon this element by attempting to frame referents which are politically, ideologically and ethically constituted, and therefore remain bound in a process of construction. This boundedness of the discourse makes such representation unframable. Yet this unframability provides historiographic metafiction with its subject and object. In attempting to represent the "real", what also gets represented is the "unreal". This conflation of the "real" and the "unreal" pushes the narrative into the fabular mode. Having said that, the use of the term "magic realism" cannot address the paradoxical politics of representation at work. For, what is called magical realism covers only one aspect of metafictional engagement with the fabular or the fantastic. In the postmodern texts discussed in this dissertation, the fantastic is deconstructed in the same way as the fabular is re-inserted into the familiar world.

It can be said that the postmodernist project seems to have taken a turn from the "poetics" to "politics" of representation. It is a shift that is inevitable considering the nature of recent poststructuralist theories that attempt to legitimize notions that are "rhizomatic", and not fixed around an "arboreal" centre. Such a position is seen as constitutive of a politically-conscious postmodernism that marks a shift from the "epistemological" to the "ethical." It would be instructive to cite Hutcheon in this context:

Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations - its images and stories are anything but neutral, however 'aestheticized' they may appear in their parodic self-reflexivity. While the postmodern has no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political action, it does work to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of de-naturalizing critique. (Hutcheon 1988: 119-20)

The shift from "poetics" to "politics" has also opened up the possibility of locating certain values that were not given much consideration earlier. To this extent, this thesis would focus on the constitution of what could be called the postcolonial imaginary. This

invocation of a Lacanian frame within a revisionist category of historical understanding is not meant to insert a sexual frame into "political" readings, but to highlight the very constructedness of postcoloniality as understood or discussed. In this sense, this dissertation sees how historiographic metafiction compels postcolonialism to recognize that in the same way as it revises colonial history and politics, it remains open to re-vision the moment it articulates itself. In other words, critical inquiries into the process(es) of representation would open up representation as fact and figure. This opening-up, it is argued, is not to be seen as anarchic or excessive but as ethical and corrective. The politics of representation would examine the constitutive categories of "postcolonial condition" that would include, among other, "identity," "authority," "alterity," "nation," "race" etc. These categories shall undercut public history (of the nation, race etc.) as well as the personal narratives (with the frequent intervention of the authorial persona).

### **Representation and Postcolonialism**

While it is difficult to locate the originary moment of what has come to be regarded as "postcolonial theory," Edward Said's *Orientalism* is conveniently treated as a foundational text which subsequent commentators have built on. Said's discourse on colonialism, what he termed "orientalism" is based on the epistemological constructions of the East that the West has, through the corresponding ages, created. Said's work is eclectic, drawing inferences from continental theorists (such as Foucault), Western Marxism (Althusser, Macherey), Anglo-Saxon cultural criticism (Raymond Williams) as well as anti-colonialist critics (Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon). His work is theoretically engaging and persuasive, but does not have much practical import insofar that it is merely an eclectic survey of the fallacies, the exclusions, the essentializations in representation that the Occidentals have produced in their notions regarding the "static" nature of the Orient. It is from the epistemological ground of Western discursive practices that Said problematizes his discourse of colonialism. Benita Parry comments about this paradox :



Said's own writings can be seen to negotiate an alliance between Western theory and the analyses developed by liberation movements, in the process producing elaborations which were not in the metropolitan sources. This conjoining of disparate intellectual spheres has provoked criticism from those who find that Said's attempt to graft Foucault's anti-humanism on to appeals to a transcendent human reality remains involved in the ethical and theoretical values it criticizes, and hence fails to decolonize western thought." ( Parry 7)

Peter Hulme, on the other hand, considers Said's indebtedness to continental theorists, especially Foucault, to be a recognition of the "scrupulously ethnocentric nature of Foucault's undertaking, [that] chooses to emphasize the possibilities inherent in this work, in the interests of extending to a global terrain the concept of discourse with the constant implication of textuality within networks of history, power, knowledge, and society." (Benita Parry 7) Another problem seems to be that by foregrounding the politics of essentialism that the west has resorted to; Said also falls into the trap of essentializing the west as a homogenized entity filled with obscurantist presuppositions. Ahmed states:

It was by assembling a monstrous machinery of descriptions - of our bodies, our speech acts, our habitats, our conflicts and desires, our politics, our socialities and sexualities, in fields as various as ethnology, fiction, photography, linguistics, political science - that [metropolitan] discourses were able to classify and ideologically master colonial subjects, enabling the transformation of descriptively verifiable multiplicity and difference into the ideologically felt hierarchy of value. (Ahmed 99)

Moreover, Ahmed finds the bracketing-off postcolonial literature as a "Third World" phenomenon that is moreover concerned with representations of what Frederic Jameson terms as "national allegory" to be falling into the same essentialist trap.

Said's magisterial critique of colonial discourse, it can be suggested, has been both enabling and restrictive insofar as discursive

practices in the field are concerned. Even as critics such as Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman have effectively canonized Said's text as central to the concerns of postcolonial theory and practice, there is a growing body of critiques against the recognition of Said's works as definitive or all-encompassing. For instance, Aijaz Ahmed terms the Saidian discourse of colonialism as the "metropolitan theory's inflationary rhetoric." In fact, a vast body of postcolonial writing has emerged from Said's theory and has attempted to address the imbrications of knowledge and power beginning with the Renaissance (reff). These writings have, however, given rise to misleading and limiting totalizations and self-legitimizing categories.

Another tradition traces the origin of this theory to Frantz Fanon's critique of "national consciousness." But the term "national consciousness", in Fanon, cannot be reduced to "nationalist" versus "anti-nationalist." Rather, according to Bhabha, on account of its loaded signification, it enables any discourse of nationalism, by providing, an "international dimension" (Nation 4). Fanon's work, on the other hand, can powerfully inform theoretical figurations of transnational cultures. In a way, his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) have enabled, despite the revolutionary credo, the making of a particular type of colonial subjectivity. Fanon's work has also facilitated formulations of certain postcolonial concepts as "mimicry" and "hybridity" developed by Bhabha, for example. Unlike Said, however, Fanon is not content with assembling a catalogue of how the Western civilization uses its power of appropriation over the other(s) in discursive terms. Rather, Fanon considers his project as an emancipatory drive that would propel the subjected people a programmatic anti-colonial resistance.

Yet another traces the originary moment of postcolonialism to the interpretative analysis of colonial discourse by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) or Bhabha in his "Signs Taken for Wonders," (1994) if only to emphasize the interconnectedness of postcolonialism with post-structuralist theory.

Here, postcolonialism becomes a complex, discursive site that gets or is sought to be linguistically reconfigured. Spivak points to the possibility of counter-knowledge systems such as those constructed around Subaltern Studies, getting to speak a language that cannot be described or codified in a given frame. Her aim has been to retrieve a subaltern history that rewrites a received account both of the colonizing academics and the native ruling elite. This would produce a history of the occluded, or the voiceless, of those who were previously the subject/object of colonial knowledge. Bhabha challenges the totalizing effect of Said's discourse that assumes too readily that an unequivocal intention on the part of the west was always realized through its discursive productions. Bhabha's move, perhaps prompted by Fanon, was to add Lacanian psychoanalysis to Said's Foucauldian discourse. He distinguishes between a "manifest" Orientalism, the conscious body of "scientific" knowledge about the Orient, and a "latent" Orientalism, an unconscious positivity of fantasmatic desire. Bhabha's contribution to the field of postcolonialist thought has been to develop the implications of the idea by stressing the extent to which, according to Robert J.C. Young, "the two levels fused and were, in operation; inseparable; he has shown how colonial discourse of whatever kind operated not only as an instrumental construction of knowledge but also according to the ambivalence protocols of fantasy and desire." (Postcolonial Discourses 75-6)

The usefulness of Bhabha's postcolonialist discourse lies in his locating an "interstitial", "third space" of articulation which enables the critic to re-consider the colonialist archive in ways which are attentive to "the more complex cultural and political borders that exist on the cusp" (Bhabha 1994: 173) of contestatory political spheres. The demography of the present being fashioned by the history of migration, by the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, by the politics and poetics of exile etc., the boundary becomes the place from which, according to Bhabha, something begins its "presencing." Hence, Bhabha's postcolonial rhetoric is concerned with articulations

from a hybrid position, and it being so, presupposes a discursive practice that is already always mediated. He articulates about this predicament, thus:

How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?" (Bhabha 1994: 2 )

Bhabha identifies a paradigm shift that had occurred within contemporary critical traditions of postcolonial writing, i.e., taking a linguistic trajectory that continuously valorized the poststructuralist critique of subjectivity as a theory bound to the metaphysics of presence. Bhabha seems "to expose the myth of the transparency of the human agent, and to dispose of the discourse of the intentional subject or collectivity...[proposing]...a subjectless process of significations and discursive mechanisms" (Parry 8). Bhabha is clearly interested in exploring the linguistic construction of a subject-less universe that enunciates not from the position of authority or alterity, but from the position of the "third space." This "third space" does not have a common rhetoric, as there are inherent contradictions in the heterogeneities that separate groups in a situation, and the consciousness of it being so.

Gayatri Spivak's position in the voice of the postcolonial subject takes off from where Foucault and Said have left. For her, the postcolonial condition is a legacy of imperialism to which the postcolonial responds intimately but deconstructively, making interventions "of which [s/he] is a part" and trying to "change something that [they] are obliged to inherit" (Post-Colonial 173). Elsewhere, she sees Derridean deconstruction as a useful discursive ground from which the postcolonial critic could take analytic and interventionist positions to examine "how to keep the ethnocentric Subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an Other" (see "Can the Subalterns Speak?" 271-313).

Like Bhabha, Spivak, too, is doubtful about notions of "consciousness-as-agency" and rejects the search for the colonized's determining "subjectivity." She shows how the epistemic violence of imperialism effaced the subject from "cathectizing" the space of the Imperialists' self-consolidating other. ("Deconstructing", Subaltern 18). The clearest evidence of this epistemic violence is the "remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other." ("Can the.." 76) In a way, Spivak's postcolonial position may arguably be called absolutist in that it does not believe in the existence of an alternative space for the colonized, not even outside the essentialist constructions of imperialism. Spivak's theory of subalternity does not "seem to be a theory of "native agency" at all, but a theory of the way in which disenfranchised elements of the native population are represented in the discourse of colonialism." (Lazarus 10)

In recent times, postcolonial theory has had various proponents who have given their critique in their own individual fashion. According to Kwame Antony Appiah, postcoloniality is "the condition of what [one] might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery." He also says that this privileged class resorts to making certain generalized, patronizing comments about the Other culture which they try to legitimize upon, and in that way, becoming some sort of an authority upon it, in such a way that, for example, "in the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa"(Appiah, "Is the Post ..." 348). He also feels that the post- in "postcolonial," like the post-in "postmodern" is "a space-clearing gesture" (348), not overtly concerned with transcending coloniality.

### **Interrogating the Discourse of the Nation**

There are certain areas of exploration that have attracted much

attention among postcolonial theorists. These are notions related to "nation," "race," "memory," "history," and their imbrications into the "narrative" discourse of colonialism and postcolonialism. This thesis frames the above in chosen historiographic metafiction related to authors of Indian origin. Although nation, race, memory and otherness are predominant referents in all these texts, it is seen that specific texts valorize particular referents, while subsuming the others. It is also clear that these texts are primarily engaged in the process of tracing the textuality of histories that go into the making of nation, memory, race and otherness. This implies that history is therepresentational locus in which the other conceptual frameworks get reflected.

For instance, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are more orientated towards locating "nation" through a metafictional version of the subcontinent's history. While doing so, these texts continually "lay bare" the claims of representation of "memory", "race" and/or "otherness". In Boman Desai's *The Memory of Elephants*, it is the politics of "memory" and "hybridity" that gets highlighted. Similarly, Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth* and *Pouring Rain* focuses at length on "race" as the determinant of "alterity." This is especially so when "miscegenation" happens to be the very basic of one's identity. Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* represents the history of colonial Burma from the perspective of the man away from the king's palace or the colonial office. In doing so, the public history of the king is displaced to the margins of the frame, while the "heroic" life of a commoner is valorized. These works address a wide array of issues that concern the discourse not only of postmodernism and postcolonialism, but also the referents (nation, race, memory and history) that undercut these categories.

The term "nation" has been theorized widely by sociologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, historians, political thinkers and even poststructuralists theorists. This dissertation argues for the "reality" of the nation as not merely an imaginary concept. Instead, it is claimed to be a realizable goal, having a material basis for its existence. Salman

Rushdie's two novels, *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* show how two nations formed out of a huge subcontinent through notional boundaries can yet identify themselves as distinct from each other. That this distinction is made merely on basis of religious differences, and the construction of hatred arising out of it, becomes the very site of postcolonial signification. These two novels, between them, challenge any attempt to construct holistic or homogeneous ideas that go into the making of India and Pakistan. The novels also challenge attempts to interrogate the legitimacy of the two nations by way of bringing in discursive frames that cannot relate to the palimpsestic tapestry of history's made and unmade over centuries.

The discourse of the "nation" seems to be the site of an ongoing dialectic that has polarized theorists in different camps. While one attempts to locate it in collective "will" and cultural homogeneity, another locates its origin from the coming of "modernity". A third "imagines" it into existence. A brief incursion into the various ideologies that has shaped the concept of nation, as well as its disfiguration into a faced" conceptual chimera needs to be made. Since Ernest Renan's classic essay, "What is a Nation?" (1882) is generally claimed to be the foundational text behind the origin of the concept, any discussion into the phenomenological survey of the term has to begin with Renan.

Renan's essay "What is a Nation?" historicizes the evolution of the "nation" from a liberal-democratic perspective. While doing so, it rejects the reductionist claims of "race", "religion" and/or "language" being determinants of forging a nationalist frame-of-mind. Saikat Maitra, discussing Renan's essay, feels that, for Renan "the act of codification of the past (so far as its centrality to the emergence of the nation is concerned), lies not only in remembering but also in forgetting. It is in the nebulous, shimmering twilight zone of memory and amnesia, of recuperating and seising upon elements of the past, even while purposely, or otherwise, letting go of other moments that history performs its instrumental role in forging the national identity, in providing the fecund grounds for the seed of national unity to germinate." (Dasgupta 4)

The above idea is central to this thesis in that the discussion of the texts, to a great extent, is about documentation of histories through unreliable narration where the unreliability is mostly due to forgetting. What is particularly useful about Renan's essay is its prognostic value - its capacity to anticipate the harm that a reductionist position, viz., the possibility of "nationhood" through racial purity, might be able to do.

Renan rejects the idea of homogeneity (of race, religion or language) being an essential attribute for a nation. He also rejects Geography as a determinant of nation. Rather, the existence of the feeling of nation is dependent upon a large aggregate of men creating "a kind of moral conscience" ("Nation," Dasgupta 21), "a spiritual principle" (19). It necessitates consent and "the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life" (20) on the part of the people. The subjection of people through force/coercion to make them conform/submit to the idea of nation will not be of much consequence. Renan's often-cited statement illustrates the democratic spirit: "A nation's existence is ... a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life" (20). What is of especial interest to postcolonial metafiction is the concept of nationhood as a moral-ethical universal that guarantees equality to all the national subjects, despite their narrow ideological differences.

Anderson identifies the major institutional forms through which this imagined community comes to acquire a reified form. Anderson is particularly interested in the institution of "print-capitalism". It is important to note that, according to Anderson, that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, in the Americas, and in Russia have supplied for the rest of the world a set of "modular" forms from which they have chosen the ones they liked. However, Anderson is criticized for his reductionist formulations by postcolonial critics. For, this notion that certain modular nationalisms could be transplanted from one setting to another implies a certain lack of sensitivity that Western intellectuals display in their formulations. This becomes dangerous when one uses it in terms of Asian and African



social formations. Hence, Anderson's hypothesis of nation has increasingly come under severe criticism, especially from discourses emanating from postcolonial theorists, Partha Chatterjee being the most vociferous in his refutation.

Postcolonial theory critiques these ideas of the nation as they are modeled on formulations by Western theorists, and hence take the European experience as the norm. For non-European nations, especially those subjected to colonization (and later de-colonization), the rhetoric of nation takes on a radical, anti-imperialistic trajectory (of Fanon and Cesaire). However, unlike Anderson who sees that the European "modular" norms may be planted in the rest of the world, Gellner, at least, identifies the problematic of cultural homogenization in non-European countries even after the establishment of the nation.

Hannah Arendt held a similar view a long way back when she regarded nation as a "... hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance" and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other "like waves in the never-ending stream of the life-process itself" (Arendt, *The Human Condition* 33-5). Tom Nairn, the Marxist theorist, goes to the point of terming nation as "the modern Janus" (*The Break-up of Britain* 348) which implies its ambivalent, dualistic and multipolar aspect. This indeterminacy of the concept is what interests Bhabha. He explores the concept in purely epistemological terms, stressing the importance of the "in-betweeness" in the "event" of attempts being made to locate the "presence" of the idea, that is, nation.

This thesis aims to examine the justification of Partha Chatterjee's position on the "nation" not being merely a Western discursive construct that finds its way into the discourse of postcolonialism. Rather, postcolonialism legitimizes "nation" as an entity that has relevance in other parts of the world and is not entirely hyperreal. It seems to have a concrete manifestation through the collective will of the people, who in their own way devise local means to feel themselves part of a composite whole. Benedict Anderson's study can therefore be said to fail to explain this particular phenomenon.

## **The Politics of Memory in Representation**

Memory happens to be an important tool for historiographic metafictionists insofar as they deal with the reconstruction of past events through what looks like subjective representation. In postcolonial fiction, memory becomes a tool of reliving the past through processes that may include selection, forgetting, amnesia, aphasia, trauma, reconstruction, etc. Related to it is the "collective" remembrance of a group or community termed as "racial memory" and/or "ethnic memory." For instance, the slave history related to the inhuman pain and brutalities of the middle passage has become a part of the collective unconscious of the African-American race. The three hundred years of the most abject subjugation that the blacks had to experience is too painful to be documented. There has been a tendency even among the blacks to attempt to forget the painful history related to the rite of the middle passage.

Re-membering also entails a point of intersection between individual memory and collective memory. In Boman Desai's *The Memory of Elephants*, this intersection between both results in the narrator-protagonist reliving an epiphanic moment which he wants to re-enact repeatedly. But, in the process, he also relives the painful events relating to his race, which he had not experienced personally. The difference between the pain of remembering things related to slave history (Morrison's *Beloved*) and that of immigrant history (Desai's *Memory of Elephants*) lies in the nature/degree of the experience that the subjects had to undergo. Perhaps, those ontologically hybrid communities, such as, the Parsees in India, who have been, more or less, able to assimilate themselves with the mainstream do not have to experience the same amount of marginalization that the blacks have had to face. But even for such de-ontologized races (the Parsees, for one), memory is the only means left for them through which they are can reclaim their identity.

In a sense, memory and history although interrelated, may be in fundamental opposition from one another. Hence, in the process of

remembering history, there might be collisions between history and memory, thereby making the act of retrieval ambivalent. It would be useful to look at the fundamental differences between memory and history identified by Pierre Nora :

1. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.
2. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.
3. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism.
4. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. Memory is blind to all, but the group it binds - which is to say ... that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority.
5. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal communities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. ( Nora 8-9) Nora talks about "sites of memory" and

contends that "there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally" (12). In this sense "the defense by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of lieux de memoire - that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away." (12) History may be responsible for the constitution of the "sites of memory". This is because "if history did not besiege memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would be no lieux de memoire (sites of memory). Indeed it is this very push and pull that produces [it]" (Nora 12). Thus, the dialectic bonding between history and memory causes a rupture in the latter, thereby producing sites of memory that create hierarchies in the very act of re-membering events of the past.

It can be seen from the above that memory and history are problematic sites that deal with the reconstitution of "truth," with both coming together in a collaborative relationship. But it is also true that there tends to be a dialogical, "intensional" relationship between them, with history trying to appropriate over the "deformations" of memory which it acknowledges to be unreliable and politically-motivated. This is something that it cannot dissociate from. Nora's comment sums up the issue: "At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it" (9). It has been shown in this dissertation how this dialectical nexus between history and memory gets reflected in Desai's *The Memory of Elephants*, where, aside from collaboration between collective memory and individual memory - for a true historical documentation (of the Parsee genealogy/hagiography), there are collisions and obfuscations in the site of mediation. This in turn, confirms the proposition regarding their tensional bonding.

## **The Politics of Identity/Race in Representation**

"Race" and "identity" may unarguably be considered conterminous with one another insofar as they are vitally linked. It is race that situates, in the first instance, one's identity whether one is black, white, mulattoe, Asian, African-American, Indian, South-Indian Brahmin, Bangladeshi and so on. Hence, a study of the politics of identity necessarily presupposes the study of the politics of race as well. It is natural that in postcolonial/historiographic metafiction, questions of race and identity assume prime importance. This is due to the fact that the narrative tends to be, most often, a resistant subversive account of a subject's past. It is not only related to recovery/recuperation, but also to locational interpretations of subject positions. Hence it is seen that the postcolonial study of identity is mostly perceived as constructed in terms of the "other," at least insofar as any subject position needs non-subject positions articulate itself.

Since the area of inquiry related to race/identity in this dissertation is concentrated primarily upon those constituting the diaspora, the theoretical concerns would be limited to the imbrication of epistemic (both ontological and teleological) problematic related to this particular group. The text which discusses the politics and problematic of race and identity is Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. This novel tries to re-examine the figure of what is generally termed narrative or historical "authority." What this implies is that Chandra is not merely satisfied with representing race/identity from the position of alterity; rather, he makes an attempt to frame race/identity in the context of de-ontologized foreigners whose encounter with the subcontinent results in what could be called a double dislocation. They are doubly displaced in the sense that the first displacement is at "home" and the subsequent displacement take place "abroad."

Given that postcolonial fictions are predominantly counternarratives, they deal with the way in which the colonized subject frames a corrective, resistant narrative in order to subvert the claims of the essentialized constructions (of the West/colonizers). This is

done from the position of alterity, and naturally involves the decentering of authority. If the colonizer happens to be situated in a liminal, ambivalent space that cannot be identified with "home," the act of defining/locating one's "being" becomes even more problematic. Thus, it can be argued that it is not only the colonized, but the colonizer as well that is compelled to re-visit the spot. Stuart Hall clearly defines this position :

We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context,' positioned. I was born into and spent my childhood and adolescence in a lower-middle-class family in Jamaica. I have lived all my adult life in England, in the shadow of the black diaspora - 'in the belly of the beast.' I write against the background of a lifetime's work in cultural studies. If the paper seems preoccupied with the diaspora experience and its narratives of displacement, it is worth remembering that all discourse is 'placed', and the heart has its reasons" (Hall/Mongia 110).

Hall suggests that that diasporic identity cannot merely be constructed in/against reductive, homogenized concepts, such as, nation, race, culture, ethnicity, ideology etc., but is more of a continuous process without closure:

As already indicated, this thesis seizes upon the "ethical" moments in the texts under discussion. While attempting to frame the unframable referents, and thereby engage in the politics of representation, the responsibility of the text comes to the fore. This is despite the playful, serio-comic tone underlying the surface form. To this extent, this dissertation presents what is perceived as the "saner" side of postmodernism, taking it as a project that has much value to represent the "degrees" of truth, related to the contemporary culture and society, in short, the human condition.

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# **Tantra in Early Assamese Literary Culture**

## **A Study with reference to Mankar, Durgabar and Pitambar**

**Dhurjjati Sarma**

### **Introduction**

Assam has been identified as the womb and heartland of Tantra culture and its textuality. Saktaism and Shaivism were the two major non-Aryan faiths in Assam. In the words of Hugh Urban

The form of Tantra that we find in Assam is very different from the elite, highly philosophical, and brahmanic Tantra of traditions like Kashmir Saivism or South Indian Srividya... The Assamese Tantric tradition is heavily infused with non-Hindu and often highly un-Vedic elements drawn from the many indigenous religions of the northeast... The situation is far more complex and most likely involved a more subtle kind of interaction, negotiation and mutual transformation between Vedic brahmanic and local non-Hindu tradition (2010:10, 43).

Along with the Sakta and Shaivite cults, there also existed an equally ancient tradition of Vishnu worship in Assam-Kamarupa. In fact, there was the coexistence of multiple cult practices (Sakta, Shaiva, Vaishnava, Ganapatya and Surya) under the rubric of ritualistic Hinduism. The Kalika-Purana (circa tenth century) and Yogini-Tantra (circa sixteenth century) were the chief Sanskrit texts of Saktaism

composed in Assam-Kamarupa, but no less significant from the pan-Indian perspective as texts signifying Assam's position as a cultural geography within a certain religious-social cosmology.

With the composition of the Bhagavata-Purana in Sanskrit as a pan-Indian phenomenon around the ninth-tenth century AD, the avataras (incarnations) of Vishnu achieved visible manifestation in concrete iconographies with most of them being embodied with one or the other characteristic 'powers' of Vishnu. The specific configuration of bhakti, propagated by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva in Assam, known as ekasarana namdharma which prescribed unmediated devotion to Krishna through sravana and kirtana, was the radical manifestation of the Vaishnava cult of worship based on the teachings of the Bhagavata-Purana. In order to propagate ekasarana namdharma, Sankardeva composed a large number of devotional songs (borgeets), half-a-dozen plays (ankiya bhaonas) and translated several books (skandhas) of the Bhagavata-Purana into Assamese.

There existed two modes of knowledge in Assam: the native-grown Tantra tradition in Assam with a clearly developed epistemology as enunciated in the Kalika-Purana and Yogini-Tantra on the one hand and the regional manifestation of the pan-Indian Bhakti movement based on the Bhagavata-Purana, in the form of ekasarana namdharma on the other. This epistemological opposition was also mediated by corresponding modes of socialization. Thus, in spite of being texts with avowed religious importance, the texts, namely, Kalika-Purana and Yogini-Tantra as well as the Bhagavata-Purana were primarily concerned with what we may term as charya (conduct). This textualisation of conduct lay at the heart of fashioning the 'culturality' of the people adhering to the socialization practices prescribed by these two modes of knowledge production. Further, with respect to the aforementioned modes of knowledge production, we find two corresponding traditions of literary composition in Assamese in the historical period from the ninth to the sixteenth century. The

Charyapadas, recognized as poems of a high mystic nature, were composed by the Buddhist Siddhacharyas in Assam-Kamarupa at various periods between the ninth and the twelfth century. Considering the Charyapadas and the Kalika-Purana together, we may argue that by the beginning of the second millennium, there developed a strong and well-defined epistemological order of Tantra in Assam which laid the ground for the flourishing of a rich tradition of Sakta-Shaiva literature in Assamese at the hands of vernacular poets like Mankar, Durgabar and Pitambar. The composition of Yogini-Tantra in Assam attests to the continued relevance of the epistemological structure of Tantra at the heart of a sustainable Sakta-Shaiva literary culture in the sixteenth century. On the other hand, even though the translation of the Bhagavata-Purana into Assamese by Sankardeva commenced only from the first half of the sixteenth century, literary compositions in Assam that were primarily based on the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata date back to the fourteenth century with the earliest rendering of Valmiki's epic into Assamese by Madhava Kandali. Hem Saraswati (Prahlada Carit), Harivara Vipra (Ashwamedha Parva), Kaviratna Saraswati (Jayadratha Vadha) and Rudra Kandali (Drona Parva) of the pre-Sankardeva period composed episodic kavyas in Assamese, which were based on the stories from the Mahabharata. All these texts could be seen as precursors to the radical formulization of the Assamese Vaishnava literary culture by Sankardeva through *ekasarana namdharma*.

### **Tantra: Some Key Concepts**

The term 'Tantra', as defined in Saran (2008: 14), is understood as the "centuries-old South Asian cults of erotic yoga (mystical union) which use ritualised sexual intercourse, either physically performed or only visualised, as a means to attain to the mystical experience. The former can be broadly categorised as left-handed (*vamachara*), and the latter as right-handed (*dakshinachara*).<sup>1</sup> These practices entail the crucial involvement of a lot of yogic technology, including mantra and visualisation, which are predicated on the body-mind continuum

(unlike the corresponding duality perceived in the Western philosophy from Plato to Augustine to Descartes) as the basis of religious experimentation. Even in the twentieth century, the efficacy of this body-mind continuum is evinced through the writings of Sri Aurobindo who, according to Kees W. Bolle (1962, 1965; quoted in Saran, 2008: 50), clearly makes the characteristically Tantric equations between nirvana (spiritual enlightenment) and samsara (worldly existence) and between mukti (spiritual liberation) and bhukti (sensual enjoyment).

References to the Tantric practices were also found in the Kirttan Ghosa with respect to the prevalence of Buddhism in Assam. In this regard, Sankardeva says:

buddha avatare veda-patha kari chana /  
bamanaya sastre mohi acha sarvajana //  
nisine charan naam nology tumar /  
xodaye promotta lok pashanda asar //

In the above remark, Sankardeva associated the non-acceptance or the rejection of the Vedas within Buddhism to his castigation of its contemporary manifestation in Assam as Vajrayana Buddhism (referred to as bamanaya sastra [left-oriented treatise] entailing pashanda asar [corrupt life-practices] by Sankardeva above). Within Tantricism, however, Vajrayana is considered as an essential part of the life of the householder and has to be integrated into one's charya (day-to-day practice) as well as one's personality. There are three doctrinal aspects of the Tantra marga (path): drishti, which is the direct experience of shunyata; bhavana (meditation), which is the attempt to stabilise that experience in one's daily life; and charya (conduct), which refers to the specific techniques for integrating that experience into all of one's varied daily activities (Saran, 2008: 149).

Tantra can also be understood with respect to the key concepts of kama (desire) and shakti (power). In the words of Hugh Urban (2010: 19): "Whereas most South Asian traditions see kama as the primary obstacle in the religious life, the sensual attachment that binds us to this temporal world, Tantra is the path that seeks to harness,

transform, and redirect desire toward the aims of both this-worldly power and spiritual liberation." On the other hand, "shakti is the divine energy of the goddess, the power of both life and death, creation and destruction, which flows through the cosmos, the social order, and the human body alike" (Urban, 2010: 21). Within the world of Tantra constitutive of kama and shakti, there is the manifestation of 'social energy' that has propelled non-Sankari poets like Mankar, Durgabar and Pitambar to keep themselves aligned with the native-grown Sakta-Shaiva mode of social, linguistic and cultural epistemology.

### **Panchali Kavya Tradition as a Literary Subculture of Tantra**

The Panchali Kavya tradition was associated with the ancient and popular amusement of puppet-play, especially prevalent in the countryside of eastern India. One of the early references to this tradition is found in the Kalika Purana with respect to the ritual of worshipping Goddess Chandika.

pushya nakshatrajukta tu tritiya jadi labhyate /  
tashyang puja sada devi chandika sankarena saha //  
panchalikaviharadyah shishunang koutukoistatha /  
baivahiken bidhina mohayocchandikang shivam //

The ritual comprises the enactment of the marriage act between Shiva and Chandika through the medium of puppet-play and children jokes. It is worth mentioning here that the Panchali Kavya tradition had attained popularity in Assam long before the advent of Sankardeva. The puppet play, as part of the Panchali tradition, had a strong audio-visual-performative component, and the performances based on the Puranas gained added impetus through the medium of puppets or the panchalikas.

It is also worthwhile to note with regards to the Panchali Kavya tradition that its representative poets, namely, Mankar, Durgabar and Pitambar are considered as part of 'pre-Sankardeva' literature (Neog, 1959: 17), despite them being the contemporaries of Sankardeva. Durgabar composed a version of the Ramayana which he called Giti-Ramayana. Maheshwar Neog (1959: 56) maintained that: "With all

its original lyrical beauty Giti-Ramayana is for the most part only a popular version of Madhava Kandali's work, meant for the use of the oja of oja pali chorus." It would be important for us to move beyond Neog's assessment mentioned above and not look at Durgabar's Giti-Ramayana as a mere 'pastiche' version of the Kandali Ramayana. A close textual and cultural analysis of Giti-Ramayana would, I believe, surely bring out the 'culturization' process at work with respect to the religious sub-culture of Saktatism at an age when the "entire field of [Assamese literature] was covered by Vaishnavism and its ramifications" (Neog, 1959: 17).

Considering the avowed objective of the Sankari Vaishnavite literature towards propagating the devotion of Vishnu through the ekasarana cult of worship, it is understood that such a mission necessitated the composition of a large volume of literature, including poems, plays and prose narratives, as mentioned earlier, so that the word of the Lord might reach out to the various sections of the populace, including the tribal and the so-called 'primitive' inhabitants of the society. In a short yet thought-provoking essay titled 'Puroni Sahityar Seemaboddhota', Banikanta Kakati laments at the absence or the neglect of free thinking or the free play of the imagination in the compositions of the Vaishnava poets. For such poets, any passage in the Bhagavata Purana or the other Puranas which does not reflect upon the divinity of the Lord or contribute to the greater objective of the ekasarana mode of worship ought not to be commented upon or translated into the language of the masses. Against such a phenomenon, it would be interesting to see how works such as Manasa Kavya, Giti-Ramayana and Usha-Parinaya obtained and amplified the 'social energy' generated from the epistemological order of Tantra in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Assam.

### **Analysis of Select Poets and Texts**

The narratives of both Giti-Ramayana and Usha-Parinaya are taken respectively from the Valmiki Ramayana (via Madhava Kandali's vernacular rendition) and the Harivamsa (Vishnu-parva,



chapters 116-128). In spite of being based upon themes and sources which were canonised and revered within the Hindu tradition, these narratives were re-inscribed within the social, linguistic and cultural world of Assam-Kamarupa along with the latter's own unique and native 'configurations of learning'. In this, they were posited in opposition to the Sankari culture which was inscribed within the pan-Indian order of Bhakti devotionalism. As against the homogenising and unifying purpose avowed by the ekasarana cult of worship through sravana and kirtana as well as the ankiya bhaonas, texts like Manasa Kavya, Giti-Ramayana and Usha-Parinaya could reveal the subtle forms of interaction, negotiation and mutual transformation between the Vedic and local non-Brahmanical Hindu traditions with their respective theological orders in the literary cultures of early Assam.

### **Mankar's Manasa Kavya**

Based on the evidence culled from textual sources like Darrang Rajvamshavali, it has been surmised that Mankar lived and composed during the first half of the sixteenth century. And, like Durgabar and Pitambar as we shall see below, he too received patronage from the king Vishwasinha of Kamatapura (present-day Cooch Behar) who ruled between the years 1515 and 1540 AD. It is worthwhile to note hereby that Vishwasinha was instrumental in undertaking reconstruction of the Kamakhya temple atop Nilachal hill and brought in Brahmins from Kanauj, Benaras and Bengal for the purpose of facilitating the daily rituals of worship in the Kamakhya temple. Under the patronage of king and priestly class, the worship of Manasa found prominence within the precincts of the temple.

His literary composition Manasa Kavya (also referred to as Manasa Geet), though centres on narrativization of the Manasa cult of worship, also pays homage to other gods and goddesses, including, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Parvati and Saraswati, and also to Buddha and Brahmaputra (Louhitya). With respect to the books comprising the Manasa Kavya, it becomes clear that Mankar was a Shaivite. The three books, namely, Shristi-tattva, Hara-Gauri Vivah Khanda

and Padmaa-Janma Khanda, revolve around the primacy of Lord Shiva as he is depicted as orchestrating the genesis of the universe, entering into marriage with Parvati and, also, being the one whose sperm released into water causes the birth of Padmaa, i.e. Manasa. The influence of Kalika-Purana is perceptible in Manasa Kavya, particularly in the second book Hara-Gauri Vivah Khanda. On the other hand, his theory of creation bears many similarities with Ramai Pandit's Shunya Purana. The primacy of Shiva in the genesis of the universe can be seen from the following lines from the first book Shristi-tattva:

apuni dhorila adi anadir roop/  
navit upojila brahma jagatar bhup //28  
upojiya brahma deve karanta bhakati/  
brahma vishnu dui jan bhoila utpatti//...29

[You (i.e. Shiva) have taken upon the incarnations of both the one that has a beginning and the one that has none. From your navel, Brahma, the progenitor of the universe, springs forth. And, soon after his birth, Brahma pays homage to you. And, similarly, Vishnu too is born out of your body. (My translation)]

While Mankar posits Shiva as the brahmarupi shiva thereby referring to his agency in the creation of the universe, Sankardeva, in his description of Caturvimsati Avatar Varnana (twenty-four incarnations of Vishnu) from the first book of the Kirttan-Ghosa, begins in the following manner:

prathame pranamo brahma-rupi sanatana /  
sarva avatarara karana narayana //  
taju nabhi-kamalata brahma bhaila jata /  
yuge yuge avatara dhara asamkhyata //

[First do I bow unto Thee, O Eternal Narayana,  
Thou art Brahma manifest, the cause of all incarnations;  
From Thy Lotus-navel Brahma sprang forth,  
Innumerable Incarnations though ages Thou hadst.  
(Translation from Kirttana Ghosa: An English Verse Rendering, p. 4)]

The Caturvimsati Avatar Varnana has occupied the centre-stage as the main argument of the Sankari discourse-as the basis of subsequent poetic compositions as well as the plots of a number of Ankiya Bhaona performances, particularly focussing on the Rama and Krishna incarnations of Vishnu. On the other hand, the Manasa Kavya too was considered as a performative text among the oja palis and disseminated within the community space, mostly during the Manasa or Maroi Puja. This attests to the popularity and relevance of the Shiva-centric theological order in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Assam. However, unlike the Sankari Vaishnavite narratives like Kirttana-Ghosa where Vishnu is portrayed as the purusa par excellence, the character of Shiva at the hands of Mankar is represented through diverse and conflicting characteristic manifestations, which qualify him more as a *loukika* figure within the social-religious cosmology explicated in Manasa Kavya.

### **Durgabar's Giti-Ramayana**

Much in the line of Madhava Kandali, Durgabar composed his epic poem in seven books. However, the first two books-Adi Kanda and Ayodhya Kanda-have become extinct or not available so far. Of the remaining five books, namely, Aranya Kanda, Kiskindha Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Lanka Kanda and Uttara Kanda, the poet has composed Aranya Kanda with singular emphasis, as can be gauged from the fact that this book itself contains 490 out of the total 994 passages comprising the poem.

In the Aranya Kanda, Durgabar describes the abduction of Sita after relating a few episodes of his own invention: Sita's offering sand as *pinda* (food) to the deceased apparition of Dasaratha; Rama's indignation upon hearing of Sita's aforementioned act; Sita cursing the Moon, the Sun, the Air, the Earth, the river Phalgu and the Brahmanas for false deposition against Sita before Rama; Dasaratha's eventual reappearance and confession; Rama and Sita playing at dice; creation of Maya Ayodhya by Sita in the forest at the behest of Rama; and the celebration of the Caitra-caturdasi festival in the company of

the citizens of Maya Ayodhya (Neog, 1959: 57; S. Sarma, n.d.: IX).

From the aforementioned description, I would particularly like to emphasise on the position of Sita vis-a-vis the ideological importance of the female principle in Tantra which, in turn, constitutes the base of Shaiva-sakti cult of worship in Assam. With respect to the act of Sita offering sand as pinda (food) to the deceased apparition of Dasaratha, I would like to quote the relevant lines from Giti-Ramayana. As for the context, Rama and Lakshmana, upon hearing of their father Dasaratha's death, decided to solemnise the last rituals on the banks on the river Phalgu in Gaya. Upon reaching the bank of the river, Rama asked Sita to remain there while he and Lakshmana would go and fetch the requisite materials (shradda dravya) for the last rituals of his father. Meanwhile :

dhonu-xar dhoriya solila dui bhai /  
sishurupe khele kheri jagatar aai //7//  
tirthar tirat tuli bali mahashanti /  
pindar akriti kori kheri khelawanti //  
kaya-klesha kori ase kosta-brat dhori /  
dekhi dasarath aaila moharanga kori //8//  
aagot aasiya raja dila xomidhaan /  
sattvar koriya bodhu kora pinda-daan //  
ehi bollukar pinda ami jodi pau /  
swarga mandalak lagi tusta huya jau //9//...  
jen ram ten tumi nahi bhinna bhav /  
pinda-daan diya muk swarge soli jau //  
ehi pinda panchamrit diyoka gangata /  
swargato bhunjibo goiya bhog oxonkhyata //12//

[Armed with bows and arrows, the two brothers left Sita-child-like yet a mother-figure to the whole universe-on the bank of the river. Sita, in her play, creates an artifice out of sand resembling the sacred food-offering made to the deceased. At the instant, Dasaratha appears out of nowhere and demands her sand-offering. Sita refuses, citing the impropriety of such an offering and also Rama's possible

indignation following such an act. Dasaratha insists on receiving the offering, thereby refusing to differentiate between her sand-ball offering and that of Rama. He refers to the pinda received from her hand as panchamrita which will guarantee his place in the heaven with all its sensual enjoyment. (My translation)]

To contextualise the passage quoted above with respect to the female principle in Tantra, I would like to refer to Prem Saran who, in his book *Yoga, Bhoga and Ardhanariswara*, talks about the bipolar view of gender within the Indic civilisation in South Asia. He says:

The male and female principles are inseparable and indivisible. This bipolarity is evident in the ancient Samkhyan metaphysics that underlies yoga and Tantra, in the profuse iconography of male and female deities in sexual union, and in the equitably-gendered ritual and meditative praxis of Tantra. This fundamental Indic appreciation of gender- and other bipolarity is instantiated by the figures of divine androgynies like the Hindu Ardhanariswara and the Buddhist Avalokiteswara. These androgynous worthies are emblematic of the enstatic state of the successful yogic adept. (Saran, 2008: 194)

The signal role of the female principle can thus be summarised through the central dictum of Hindu Tantrikas: *Shakti vihinah Shivay shavah* (Shiva without Shakti is nothing but a mere corpse). Catherine Thompson (1983, quoted in Saran, 2008: 197) says that the involvement of women in the worship of the deities is as significant as that of men because of their intrinsically privileged linkages, in the Indic imagination, with fertility and the wellspring of life.

### **Pitambar's Usha-Parinaya**

Next, I would like to analyze Pitambar's Usha-Parinaya in the light of the observations made in the foregoing pages. Besides Usha-Parinaya, four other works are ascribed to Pitambar: *Bhagavata Purana Book I*, *Bhagavata Purana Book X*, *Markandeya Purana* (Candi Akhyana) and *Nala Damayanti*. Pitambar composed his Usha-Parinaya in Kamatapura (present-day Cooch Behar) around 1533

AD. Considering the literary oeuvre of Pitambar, it may not be unreasonable to speculate upon his possible inclination towards the Vaishnava worldview. And the same could be asserted in the case of Durgabar with respect to his retelling of the Ramayana narrative. However, as mentioned earlier, both the narratives have been refashioned with the 'social energy' derived from kama (desire) and shakti (power). This is made evident from the opening lines of Usha-Parinaya which go on as follow :

harinaam xune jewa hari bole mukhe /  
dhan putra paribaar wade nana xukhe //  
barhe paramayu sampada otishoy /  
anto kale rathe chorhi swargaloke jai //5//

[Whoever intently listens to as well as chants the name of Hari is bestowed upon with fortune, son and family along with myriad avenues of happiness; he/she is blessed with a long life and bountiful resources; and, in the end, mounts the chariot as it makes its way onto heaven.]

In Usha-Parinaya, Pitambar departs from the Harivamsa narrative in many ways than one. He takes a great deal of liberty in the description of Usha's youthful beauty and the voyeuristic pleasure she elicits while visualising the erotic play of Shiva and Parvati, Aniruddha's sexual fantasies with the Yakshi Kamasena in a dream, and Usha's erotic dream and attainment of puberty. Chitrlekha, Usha's friend and confidante, in fact, remains the central figure of action in most parts of the poem. She is invested with magical powers through which Aniruddha is brought as captive to the inner palace of Usha. She also presides over the gandharva marriage of Usha and Aniruddha.

The character of Yakshi Kamasena is the unique creation of Pitambar, since no mention of her is found either in Harivamsa or Bhagavata-Purana. She, in fact, is instructed by Parvati to impersonate the character of Usha and appear in Aniruddha's dream, thereby arousing feeling of love-in-union (sambhoga rasa) within the heart and mind of the prince. The mythical-fictional representation of Yakshi

Kamasena as being endowed with the power of magic is part of the larger epistemological order of Tantra, particularly enunciated in the Yogini-Tantra.

The answer to this mystery lies in the fact that most of the writings pertaining to the Sakta and Saiva cults of worship also belonged to what we may term as the 'mantra' literature, the references to which may also be found in the Mantrayana School of worship, a sub-sect of Mahayana Buddhism. S.R. Goyal, in his book *A History of Indian Buddhism* (1987: 347), defines Mantrayana as follows:

Strictly speaking, the mantrayana concerns itself with mantras (word of a certain combination, pronounced in a certain manner) and yantra (magic circle) and includes such things as dharanis (memorized prayers), mala mantras (garland of charms), hridaya mantras (short charms), etc. It believes that mystic forces are generated by the recitation of mantras and that, with the help of these mystic forces, the worshipper can obtain whatever he desires, such as wealth, victory, siddhis and even mukti.

The esoteric nature of 'mantra' literatures necessitated the use of a symbolic language which could be comprehended only by the initiates of the faith. Also, these mantras were often invested with meanings that were open to multiple interpretations.

Further, when Chitrlekha undertakes the secret mission of entering the palace of Aniruddha in Dwarka for the purpose of abducting him, she is aided by tamashi haraluki mantra-a black charm which renders the 'victim' unconscious-made known to her by none other than Narada. Under the cover of darkness, both literal and symbolic (meaning hereby the effect of the mantra which also makes her invisible to others), Chitrlekha completes her mission successfully.

### **Implications**

The esoteric nature of the 'culturization' process within Saktism might not have had the 'egalitarian' spirit as understood within the Sankari culture. Also, the loukika element embedded within the desi

idiom of such regional vernacular cultures as Saktism has, as discussed earlier, often been explained away as 'pastiche' versions of the Sankari texts meant only for performances at best and 'primal' or 'sensual' creations of Sakta tamashik poets not qualified enough to preach the name of God. Also, socio-religious texts like Kalika-Purana and Yogini-Tantra were often seen as representing a decadent and abstruse moral order with respect to the harmonizing and cohesive worldview propagated by the Neo-Vaishnava order in Assam. Consequently, the Sakta-Shaiva genres of literatures were relegated to the margins of literary history.

Nevertheless, these elements have sustained themselves within the living traditions of poetry and performative (sub)-traditions in Assam. Texts like Manasa Kavya, Giti-Ramayana and Usha-Parinaya can actually help us to understand those cultural textures that got submerged beneath the overwhelming master-narrative of Neo-Vaishnavism. And with these texts, we will also be in a position to explore the alternative pedagogies of 'culturization' referred to within the Tantra marga as drishti, bhavana and charya.

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# Birinchi Kumar Barua and His ideas on society, culture and history in the context of colonial modernity in India

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## Introduction

The research project completed in 2015 is designed to study critically Birinchi Kumar Barua and his ideas on society, culture and history in the context of colonial modernity in India. Birinchi Kumar Barua (November, 1908 - March, 1964) had spent his most fruitful periods of life in contact with the emerging Indian Intelligentsia (the obituaries of renowned scholars in *Professor Barua Commemoration Volume*, 1966 may be a point of reference) and the reputed academia across the country and abroad, particularly the ones in Calcutta. Obviously, no creative and critical mind could remain aloof from the intellectual temperament of colonial modernity in the first half of the twentieth century. Birinchi Kumar Barua (hereafter B K Barua) and his creative and critical energies can be analysed in the domain of colonial modernity following the resurgence brought about by Bezbaroa and his generation. His mental adjustment, albeit with ideological difference, can be situated in the line of Jyotiprasad Agarwalla and Bishnuprasad Rabha. All roads being opened towards awakening of a national consciousness and orchestration of new values and

ideologies, participation of common masses and intellectual elite community in the process had moments of ambivalence and privilegisation. The Assamese intelligentsia while exploring different avenues of nationalistic restatement had also focused on the regional resonance of language and culture, forging identities complementary to the emerging national sentiment. Thus B K Barua pioneered the cause of an Assamese identity through creative insight and critical enquiry into our history, society and culture. Native elements, classical inheritance and peripheral realities forged into a point of cross fertilization find a harmonious fusion in him. B K Barua's lifelong academic engagement and scholarship has placed him in the mainstream of the liberal humanitarian democratic ideology.

### **B. K. Barua and 20th century colonial situation:**

Eric Habsbawm has pointed out that the basic foundation of a society and other institutions run by a progressive elite minority, tolerated by the majority so long as peace and stability were guaranteed had to face a challenge from 'the combined triple blow of the twentieth-century revolution in science and technology'. The first was to transform 'old ways of earning a living' followed by creation of a mass consumer society; and thirdly, the 'decisive entry of the masses on the political scene as customers as well as voters' (*Preface. Fractured Times*, 2013: xiii). Habsbawm's findings of the three basic features of the twentieth century when applied to Indian context bear additional importance. Relatively lower attention paid to agriculture and wellbeing of the peasantry created confusion and then a shift to alternative modes of occupation. For the vast majority of the agrarian-community, the shift was rather crucial; because without training and the required skill they were bound to be exploited as bonded labor. Thus, the colonial modernity in Indian context followed a hidden agenda to render the agricultural community helpless and to create a consumer society being dependent upon a system controlled by the elite colonizers. Lack of educational institutions in the rural areas was subservient to the new regime.

Birinchi Kumar Barua is found to be deeply concerned with this process of rural degeneration and through his creative writings he deals with the crisis faced by the social subalterns and his critical writings too explore a substantial area of culture and language - both being the creations of the peoples' long-time community engagement. The Assamese rural society as it is portrayed had got little motivation from the 'progressive elite minority' and the legacy of a protracted feudal regime could still be seen in their behavior and manners both in terms of arrogance of the rich and submissive prostration of the poor. Nowhere the writer is found to be indulgent in his attitude towards tradition and modernity. The relative weakness and strength of them do really epitomize the underlying tragic poignancy, the lingering impression of waste in the midst of enormous human potentiality. A major focus of the creative world view lies here in situating peripheral realities of the social subaltern. The same concern may be equally discernible in his other works of critical enquiry. We may find it really interesting to explore B. K. Barua's concept of a mosaic Assamese identity and perhaps the fact that Assam and other participatory racial components have something unique and significant to contribute to the formation of an Indian identity. The makers of modern India, a phrase used by the historian Ramchandra Guha, had widely divergent views right from Rammohan Roy, M. K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore to Jyotirao Phule and Syed Ahmad Khan. Interestingly Guha picks up Jotirao Phule who wrote in Marathi while dropping quite influential and brilliant personalities like S. Radhakrishnan. However In one of his writings Phule held the government responsible for supporting a rule of racial discrimination. Caste apartheid as he argued has caused much injustice to the farmers of Sudra community. Phole's debate bears significance in other areas though the caste discrimination is not that serious in the Assamese society due to cultural exchange between the Aryan and non-Aryan racial segments since long (a proposition very clearly reached by B. K. Barua). Jyotirao Phule points out that ....

"the shudra and atishudra (untouchable) farmer is slaving on his

(owner) farms, along with women and children, day and night, until he is exhausted, and paying the various taxes, funds, etc. but our charitable government does not even think of educating the farmers' children enough to enable them to read a book on farming or relevant notices in newspapers, and while lakhs of farmers do not have enough cloth and enough food, our government spends inordinate amounts of money on the salaries and pensions of people in the army, the police, the justice department who are employed to protect and ensure the farmer's happiness and security" (Excerpt, Guha, Ramchandra (edit), 2010: 97).

The makers of modern India including those that produced critical and relevant intellectual debates in regional literature tried to situate colonial modernity in Indian context. Moreover, there is scope to investigate whether B K Barua identifies Assam as a land culturally shaped in the process of diffusion or one that reshapes the diffused materials of thought and faith with those of indigenous practices. The latter seems to be more perceptible in our own situation. Besides his standard academic activities, he published against many constraints a monthly children magazine named *Ronghar* and the editorials contain B K Barua's serious concern for the emerging socio-political situation at that time and sufferings of the peasants.

B. K. Barua had got opportunity to serve in some of the leading institutions like Calcutta University, Cotton College, Gauhati University in different capacity and finally in Indiana University, U.S.A. as a visiting faculty. Besides, he had been there in London University for a couple of years to complete his research programme on the cultural history of Assam (early part) and on his way back home he visited some of the leading centres of folklore research in the Scandinavian countries, particularly the Swedish folklore Archive at Uppsala University. The mid century International Folklore Conference at Indiana University was held from July 21 to August 4, 1950 and a symposium on Folklore was organized. Stith Thompson edited *Four Symposia on Folklore*, the academic content of the conference. In this book (now available in several new editions) B. K. Barua's name

appears in the editorial panel along with other reputed world figures. Birendranath Datta has also informed us how one Eke Campbell of Uppsala University recalled 'a person from Gauhati, Assam' visiting that part of the globe for a genuine orientation in folklore research. We should bear in mind that Folklore studies in these places were not entwined around any hidden colonial agenda. Instead, it was a part of the growing interest in the study of human sciences. Besides, an internationally acclaimed folklorist Prof R. M Dorson had planned several collaborative projects on Indian folklore with him and in one of his often quoted obituaries Prof Dorson had paid a rich tribute to his scholarship. To begin with such clichés to introduce B. K. Barua in the milieu of colonial modernity is not far to seek.

We can certainly presume that his involvement and association with so many different academic projects throughout his brief career dedicated to a study of the past history and culture of Assam, reflect on the growing consciousness borne out of colonial modernity. Western modernity came to India as an integral part of the British colonial design. Though the basic tenets of modernity remains the same, its application in a non-western social space with the politics of dominance and rule points to an ideological character, a phenomenon of a discursive nature. The most obvious initial impact was a resistance built up around the view that western modernity would rob the people of their own identity, indigenous worldview and the long cherished spiritual tradition. The situation was really ambivalent. The nationalist ideology revolved around the western knowledge, rational approach, civil society, democracy, emancipation of women, franchise, secular education and a liberal, humane endeavour for realization of the material wellbeing; but it opposed at the same time the colonial design of dominance and exploitation. What appears from such paradoxes is that the enlightenment-induced supremacy of knowledge pushing the frontiers of human achievement to still further zone has adaptability to the different ideologically polarized thought. Though some of modernity's contesting ideas came to be greatly challenged and

arrogance of rationality began to blacken the face of humanity, it nevertheless offered a great moment for resurgence of a nation with necessary realignment and revaluation. The Indians who felt an earnest zeal to reform the old ways of belief and notions about life and society found our traditional society full of evils and "privileges based on birth, social hierarchies and economic constraints. They accepted western package of colonial modernity e.g. liberal education and rational worldview" (Basu, Pradip (edit), 2011: 6-7). Now, what is precisely B. K. Barua's response? He was neither a revivalist with apprehension towards the new ideological shift, nor a hardcore reformist favouring recovery of a society from the mire of old and stale worldview. Instead of joining hands with the political activists and their clamour for liberty and freedom, his mission, as may be argued, was to reinterpret the past of an otherwise stagnant society in the light of the modernist epistemological tools, to find out the lingual, cultural and historical roots to which a growing nation owes its origin. This then has been projected as the starting hypothesis of the research project.

B. K. Barua and his creative and critical worldview still remains a virgin soil. It is yet to be fully explored to its real merit which may be a significant addition to understand the complex evolutionary process of an Assamese identity. Even a cursory glance at his area of interest encompassing history, culture, folk culture, language, literature and medieval society may provoke an intellectual enquiry. The thesis establishes the fact that B. K. Barua is an accomplished creative writer and chronicles with a fine relish of artistry a typical Assamese society at a very difficult transitional period. He is remembered, above all, as an authority on the socio-cultural history of the province and its subtle links to the ancient Indian tradition and cultural heritage including Pali-Prakrit language and the Buddhist literature. His critical works on the little and great traditions i.e. folk culture and cultural historiography depending mostly on inscriptional, epigraphic materials and the authoritative Sanskrit texts, appear to have a penetrating insight into peripheral realities, the worldview



created by the people at the margin, and is enthused to see a rare fusion of materials both classical and folk. This harmonious blend of the creative and critical powers in him perhaps made him freely move in the domain of the elite and the folk as well. Nagen Saikia in this respect makes an interesting comment when he writes, "At the news of Barua's death, I wrote a letter named 'Birinchī Bhabawn' to the Asam Bani. I felt the need of establishing a memorial centre in the name of this man in whom there is a harmonious blend of scholarship and creativity. I thought there was only one man in Assam capable of writing a comprehensive history of the Assamese people and he was Birinchī Kumar Barua. In later periods, this idea was all the more confirmed when I had gone through the book *Bangalir Itihas* by Niharranjan Roy" (rough translation, Prakash, Feb., 2015: 12). Folklore studies among its other great objectives gives recognition to the potentiality and creativity of the folk, the bottom layer of the human society (the idea of the bottom layer in reference to the subaltern is dealt with by Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay *Can the subaltern speak - a silent interview*, in *During* edit., 2010).

In the Scandinavian countries, folklore research had got reoriented with a sociological vision and at Uppsala there began a process of archiving the folklore materials for preservation. Its study was not to focus on the neglected 'Other' to promote the colonial machinery of exploitation; but perhaps to create an empirical field of folkloristics (Bhattacharya, Kishor, 2003: Viswakos, Vol. 5). Birendranath Datta has made the point clear elsewhere that B. K. Barua was not satisfied with the colonial anthropological approach of British folklore studies (*Katha Barenya*, 2006). B K Barua had visited the folklore archive at Uppsala University during his Scandinavian tour and came back with some concrete plans and ideas to introduce in Assam an internationally acclaimed branch of epistemology i.e. folklore research. He implemented various programs of research with a group of young talented research-scholars in this field. Prafulla Dutt Goswami was the pioneer of the group who had successfully



conducted folklore research i.e. the ballads of Assam under Barua's supervision. An Assamese scholar conceptualized in his indigenous way the European critical theory and epistemological tools to review the vast domain of our cultural tradition, the folk-heritage with its lineage to the present form of our socio-linguistic and cultural identity was really fascinating.

It is, broadly speaking, the *bkkbian folkloristics* or the accepted manner of folklore studies introduced in Assam that facilitated an enquiry into the morphology of an Assamese identity. What is precisely meant by an Assamese mind and for that matter an Indian mind? What are the diverse materials and their sources that go to the making of his/her physical shape and inner, emotional make-up? Who are the people that may be identified as his/her remote and immediate ancestors? Cross fertilization of issues and an interest in discovering the evolutionary logic began to play a role while preparing for massive nationalist agenda. Both western modernity and its politico-economic avatar of colonialism sensitized at the same time bottom-up resurgence - importance of the micro focus in nation building. There is perhaps no doubt about the fact that scientific study of folklore can answer most of these questions. So this is one dimension of using the intellectual package of modernity in the field of socio-cultural and historical studies.

Colonial modernity entails many epistemological packages subsequent to the age of enlightenment. It is coterminous with the civilizing mission of European imperialism in terms of rationality, liberal education, scientific enquiry, urban values causing rapid dislocation of traditional social order and folk life. Thus, Indian society in the early decades of twentieth century was in fact a virgin soil for introducing modernity. Its colonial lineage, exploitation of resources both human and natural posits a serious moral question. Along with this, modern health care facilities, rule of law and transportation facilitated further mobility across physical and cultural spaces (Ashcroft, Bill et al, 1998). Exploitation, overt and covert, affected all

the people but the benefits and facilities did not percolate down to the masses. If the front door was opened obliquely to the intellectual resurgence abroad our back doors remained wide open to the colonizers for rampant exploitation of resources. It was obviously a paradoxical and extremely complicated situation.

The Assamese intelligentsia while accepting this western epistemological tool devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the study and research of our society, culture, language and socio-economic dynamics. Some of them like Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Banikanta Kakati, Birinchi kumar Barua, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla had been engaged in diverse activities aimed at scientific enquiry and research, resurgence of political ideology etc. There is no doubt that western epistemological tools were used to promote scholarship and also to resist colonial regime (Gohain, 2013). Resistance is not a matter of mere political confrontation or rejecting modernity as something alien to the native. It is basically an outlook, an ingenious way of looking at things and a liberal intellectuality that should be fashioned in the image of everyone on earth. Precisely speaking, it is more a part of human heritage than an epistemological specialty and intellectual privilege of Europe. Native scholars of the colonized land acquired the intellectual apparatus and liberal, secular democratic worldview from the west and valorized their search for the preservable assets of their tradition and identified at the same time the despicable and disposable feculence. Bezbaroa's satire, as for example, is the product of a modern worldview - as it were, the farmer's spade used to remove dirt and weed from the cornfield. B. K. Barua's fictional narrative engages a sustained pull between modernity and tradition. The contesting ground of both tradition and modernity has been focused to drive home the point that the former is not a matter of worship nor anything sacred; the best in tradition is to be cultivated and the worst of it is to be left out as something naïve and uncritical. Modernity, on the other hand, is destined to be solipsistic, devoid of any social commitment whatsoever, if its intellectual subtleties

degenerate into sheer consumerism and a cult of privilegisation of the few. This is what B. K. Barua's creative world of fictional prose has left for us as its final impression. Accordingly, his critical investigation too does not centre on the metanarratives of the classical tradition. The folk and the classical interpenetration has been the major focus and thereby points to the importance of peripheral importance. My attempt in the research project is to show this and other points about a society seen from below and caught in the contrary pull of tradition and modernity.

B K Barua had his upbringing, academic training and career in the colonial milieu; and couldn't live long to see India's post-colonial destiny. Less than one and half decades of the post-independence period seem to have appeared excruciatingly painful to him. As has been pointed out, motifs of death and extreme form of human sufferings of his fictional characters constitute an allegory of a nation's autobiography, the author's own perception of treacherous deal and degeneration of human values. Ironical enough, B K Barua, one of the great founders of Gauhati University was victimized in the politics of power and compelled to leave the university campus bearing the charge of corruption and so on (Goswami, P.D. , Bora, 2013). What P. D. Goswami terms as 'an over dose of democracy' frustrated all noble efforts and sincere dedication behind the establishment of the highest institution of post-graduate education (for detail information, *Phali Lowa Buranji*, by Dileep Kumar Dutt may be consulted). If a university, a centre of learned community, cannot integrate great thought with noble action, it bears heavily on the psyche of the nation. As B. K. Barua's birth, upbringing, education and occupation of an academician suggest his excellence in the changing milieu of colonial/postcolonial dynamics, his career of a scholar-literateur has been rich in humanist concern, imaginative energy, and scholarship in medieval Assamese literature, literary and cultural historiography. Broad and diverse as it appears to be, a critical study of his work and thought may be quite illuminating and may enable us at the present situation to seek answers to some of our disturbing questions.

### The Core Area of the Research Project:

B. K. Barua is yet to be introduced in the full length of his merits. Certain vital aspects of his research into the field of socio-cultural historiography, some pioneering root-searching initiatives which were subsequently developed into major projects by his talented students, his creative use and theoretical analysis of the Assamese language are a few of them. His novels and short stories too reveal those powerful aspects of serious sociological concerns. The multifaceted dimensions of a colonial society confronting the challenges of a new capitalist economy, polity and the rise of a powerful middleclass mentality have been focused at the centre. What we try to project without cliché is that B K Barua's creative writings situate a social logic - the gradual entry of a capitalist economy acts like a double-edged sword. It strengthens the landed gentry and creates an educated middleclass most of them being selfish and non-committal on the one hand, and dislocation of the peasant society without any alternative mode of livelihood on the other. In such typical circumstances, the narratives articulate the peripheral realities of the social subaltern to focus on the privileged center. The village ecology in terms of both nature and manners gradually degenerate and is terribly inflicted by the growing tension and the mounting misery of the common people. But social ecology has for years together sustained the major portion of the culture we inherit today. In a broad sense of the term, social ecology, it has been the foundation of the central human values too; for values are the products of a community life. No culture is produced in isolation. The folk in a multicultural ethos apply their imaginative and highly creative mind to the works they produce. Weaving is both a means of earning and an art that the young girl must learn before marriage. They procure their needs of life by dint of their labour. The *Ahat* and the *Jari* trees are found in abundance in the village site which provide food and shelter to the birds. Inculcation of values, felicity of expression, creation of art and craft all these keep the village life self sufficient. B. K. Barua finds in

this what Mazharul Islam calls 'the pulse of the people'. Spread of education has little impact upon the general wellbeing of the people. On the contrary, it leads to the formation of new social units with the least concern for social and moral values. On the threshold of a nation in the making such complexities bear a disturbing prophecy and as a social chronicler B. K. Barua peeps deep into the collective consciousness.

Critics seldom refer to or make just a casual comment on the folk-paradigm so centrally connected even in a total evaluation of his career. The folk is not just his passion for retrieving and preserving certain relics of the past. The thesis analyses in some details how the entire social history can be arranged from his initiatives in folkloristics. At least, the recent ideas on social history revamping a bottom-up tendency to resist the top-down predilections prepare folklore to play a vital role. When we allow folklore to emerge in the discourse, questions of subalternity and importance of peripheral realities in nationalist perspective of historiography stands out clearly. A pioneer cultural historiographer happened to be the first scientific investigator of folk culture and declared unequivocally that the cultural history of a nation cannot be compiled correctly depending on data gleaned from copper inscriptions and other epigraphic sources. Folklore studies could be an indispensable corollary for reliable and impartial historiography. B. K. Barua's great work *Asamar Loka Samskriti* (Folk Culture of Assam) and some of the basic tenets of his *A Cultural History of Assam* deserves further studies in this regard. All his works taken together can perhaps be viewed as an expanded metaphor of a soul in its making, a self undergoing a complex process of historical evolution. Eric J Evans, the Emeritus Professor of modern history in Lancaster University, wrote in an introductory essay on social history that "the primary fields of enquiry were social groups which lacked both wealth and power. Social history was widely considered to have a 'bottom-up' approach, offering a welcome and necessary corrective to a dominant 'top-down' historiography overwhelmingly concerned



with the doings of emperors and elites" (The Institute of historical Research (c)2008, <http://www.sas.ac.uk>). Folklore materials if scientifically studied may provide the valued information of the nature of social labour and behaviour of the social groups.

As observed by Probhat Bora, B. K. Barua adds a great dimension to cultural historiography by introducing an Indian perspective to it. The objective analysis of a folklorist and the inventiveness and profound insight of a creative genius, all synthesized into a harmonious balance to make his cultural history a unique model for all time. With concrete evidence of the unique character of Assamese culture, it is postulated to be an integral part of India and Prof Bora identifies such intellectual and imaginative exercises at finding out the regional nuance and variety as the avowed goal of Assamese intelligentsia (2007, in Viswakos; 279, Vol-V11 (history), edit. Dr. Rajen Saikia). We can deduce a basic proposition from it that a folklorist well trained in creative imagination is capable of creating a great space for trans-cultural mobility and redeem historiography itself from its aristocratic lineage. It would not be a fair judgment to project B. K. Barua as championing the cause of Aryanisation in total disregard to his long time engagement in folklore research and study of the Buddhist tradition. In fact it is true to all folklorists in a multicultural zone. Articulation of peripheral realities through folk culture gives new dimension to the patriarchal dominance of Sanskritised cultural values. It is very much clear in his works, be it folklore or literary and cultural historiography. Even in his estimate of the early Vaisnavite period he takes note of the presence of the regional folk mind and the typical Assamese rural ethos, as for example, in the rendering of the Sanskritised epic into the vernacular, and Sankardeva's entire cultural renaissance.

### **Creative and Critical worldview**

In a critical ambience of colonial modernity B. K. Barua turned his mind to issues sociological and historical. He has been successful while applying his insight and scholarship to evaluate Assamese

literature on the one hand, and produce hitherto unsurpassed creative works on the other. His own comment in his *History of Assamese Literature* (1964) is that Bina Barua in *Jivanar Batat* 'tries to assess unique social value' by turning his eyes to those who are neglected by society. Such articulation of neglected marginality is also brilliantly portrayed in his *Seuji Patar Kahini*. The wider socio-cultural-political issues as subsumed into his narrative structures produce a strong moral sense, sociological vision and subaltern realities. We see here a society in its transitional period caught between the opposite pulls of tradition and modernity. Hiren Gohain's analysis of the treatment of tradition in *Jivanar Batat* is significant in this context. As he suggests, the novelist does not prove his alliance to socialism or Marxist way of social transformation; but he had that moral uprightness and intellectual curiosity to reveal the bedrock of the Assamese social psyche and review with accurate historical sense the usable past and its disposable mire of tradition as well (op cit, *Oitihya aru Jivanar Batat*, 2013). Thus, it appears that his novels can be read as an allegory that transcends its fictional world.

B. K. Barua's originality both in the creative and critical worldview lies in finding out Assam's own cultural and socio-historical resources and a unique regional variety to secure its own place in the Indian scenario. It is in this context, we find in B K Barua's interest in folklore studies an extra dimension of historical and sociological importance. Many innovative approaches to cultural studies and unorthodox perception of the growth of an Assamese mind are involved in his illustrious academic and literary career. The creative and critical faculty blended in a unique balance and got involved in exploring the roots of our social and cultural life which at the same time lay a solid foundation to our history. Assam as the frontier outpost of the newly formed Indian territorial and cultural identity can by no means ignore interpenetration of Aryan and non-Aryan elements. What is Assam's contribution to the Indian culture and nationality? What is precisely there in our own history that represents the people and the land? His

works in its totality seek answers to many such questions. Obviously, his critical research and imaginative foragings cannot be alienated from the root-searching efforts of the Assamese intelligentsia in the context of colonial modernity.

Thus, B K Barua's creative and critical ideas follow a simple categorization of history, society and culture which however do not equally arrest our intellectual curiosity. In some cases what one may be inclined to think is that the visionary organizer in him took the better of the critical mind. The constant worries and tension, constraints of time and fund in realizing so many different projects, pressing works of academic administration did seldom allow him sufficient rest and peace of mind to concentrate in pure intellectual pursuit. The obituaries in the commemoration volume (1966) are loaded with such references of organizational works and academic administration. This has been B K Barua's unparalleled contribution to the growth of multidimensional infra-structures that sustained and replenished the twentieth century Assamese life with cultural coordination, introduction of new area for research. His dream was to make the University a perfect centre of excellence; unfortunately no genuine publication on the history and growth of the premier institution pays attention to this aspect. Nevertheless his critical faculty in cultural historiography and folklore studies is of high standard and reveals the rigor of academic excellence and objective analysis of facts as well. Even in his study of the Assamese language he proves his integrity in and clear perception about the ways a language replenishes itself drawing substantially from its racial milieu and social environment. Sociolinguistics finds in him an open and unprejudiced academic orientation. A genius that had an interdisciplinary penetration and the depth of a liberal humanist perception had put him ahead of his time.

As is the case with all scholarly pursuits particularly in the transitional period of colonial mobility in India, it has been inspired with a resurgent spirit of probing deep into the human consciousness and societal values. B. K. Barua's position is that of a nationalist



who, as it appears, believes that socio-cultural links need to be discovered in the light of new premises so as to strengthen the emerging political aspiration. The concept of political freedom can be free from colonial legacy and high-class hegemony even after decolonization of polity only through a clear perception of the so called national character. Contrary to orthodox revivalist attitude, what we notice here in B K Barua is a rare harmonious blend of traditional worldview with the modernist perception of man and his social environment. We however do not trace any serious misgivings about the metanarratives of progress, rationality and liberal humanist ideology which built up an iron cage of power and refined sensibility most clearly seen in these days of globalisation. He appears to have accepted the liberal humanist outlook as parcolated through his understanding of a plural Assamese self constituted with the mosaics of different racial and cultural components and freely applied tools of modernity to explore their various dimension. That modernity ushering in an industrial capitalist economy is bound to impinge upon the indigenous worldview and peasantry has an artistic reflection in his fictional negotiation with village life and its rapid transformation. He appears to have adhered to Gandhiji's agenda of Gram-swaraj; has portrayed characters like Dharani, Golap Doctor, Tagar, who dedicate their time and energy against formidable challenges to the cause of rejuvenating indigenous values, skills and industry. Dharani's failures, as for example, in organizing the weavers and the volunteers point out inter alia modernity's incomplete and immature agenda; lack of institution for basic and primary education mostly of the backward classes remind us of what Jotirao Phole resented against in Marathi language. She complained against the sad plight of the farmers that belong to the disadvantaged social groups due to sheer neglect by the colonial government. We find that B K Barua appeared in the role of a social chronicler in his fictional narratives addressing host of issues mostly concerned with the peasants, widowed, tea-garden labourers. Besides, the subaltern condition is more a construct than an irreversible destiny.

The growing middleclass pursuing a course of money and power is shown to be involved in corrupt practices which far from being a moral crisis bear a prophecy of national chaos. Thus, he is aware of the anti-heroes of a newly emerging democratic set-up as much as he takes interest in the heroic cult of the old political regimes.

Finally, we find B K Barua as the pioneer in the field of gendered narrative - the creator of a feminized narrative of the womenfolk both in their civic and rural milieu. The social canvas of his fictional narratives is filled with a wide variety woman characters thoroughly colored with tears. A seemingly Hardiesque in planning and execution the narrative does not confine them to a destiny of life's inscrutable excesses; instead we find here a social logic, a man made destiny exceedingly harsh to human dignity. Tagar, Aghoni Bai, Sonia, Ahini, Suprobha are the representatives of different social classes and different mental make-ups. Though poor, agonized and lost, each of them is culturally oriented. Their acceptance or resentment in a given situation points to some secrets of society and modernity as well. Tagar is the delicate creation of silence that prevails around her - more sculptural than musical. We see in and around her situations which hardly allow her to speak. But Sonia makes others listen to her injured self born out of her loss of nativity - the erasure of her blackness, a racial trait through sheer abuse of colonial power. In Seujee Patar Kahini Sonia's consciousness and her body bear a duality of nativity and its impingement. Her blackness is erased through colonial authority seducing her virgin mother which remains an impinged nativity with Sonia, the living witness of sexual violence. Sonia's fiery temperament, heart deep arrogance at and intolerance of patriarchy is arguably groomed by her loss of nativity or erasure of blackness. Thus, her personality reveals among other details a racial memory of suppression and slavery. Her growing up is the maturing of a consciousness that her skin color is an undue gift of the racist colonial power but ironically enough the authority fails to obfuscate the bedrock of her identity - her nativity. Sonia's whiteness, an imposed

identity rather than a mimicked one, unmasks the racist's blackened soul. As Homi K Bhaba argues, creation of mimicry though immediately ensures durability and expansion of the empire lowers in the long run the very image of a civilized nation (1994, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Indian Edition).

The nativity of an almost feminized narrative is captured through the inalienable vicissitudes, dignity and disgrace in order to prepare the sculpture of the text rich in poetry, artistry of articulation. But the fiction of her sufferings contains the embryo of a social discourse and her body dominates as much as the agonized crisis of her mind. Tagar, Sonia, Aghoni Bai in their spatial confinement reminisce the different images of Maud Gonne's beauty and vitality in Yeats' poetry. It is her body that speaks the motley of color, love, passion, agility and elder hood. Poverty and insecurity rob Aghoni Bai late in her life of her agility and nativity, so jealously preserved during her early widowhood. The body matters even when the mind gets agonized. Sonia quite enigmatically keeps her body as the untouched virgin beauty of mother earth concealing her passion while expressing her mind in empathy. Here in lies the aesthetics of language, the verbal beauty of a feminized narrative. The social canvas is filled with the resonance of speech of a large assembly of men and women representing motley of social positions, indigenous ethos and exotic experiences. The idiomatic speech variety, rich in proverbial and allusive expression contrasts with that of the newly rich gentry. The womanhood as articulated in the entire range of his creative writings except the few that belong to the gentry has been cast against the rural ethos and natural ambience. Sometimes the resonance is audible more clearly in silence as in Tagar; for, her the external situation leading to sufferings and anguish informs the character from within.

With characters drawn from different social strata mostly of rural milieu the author fictionalizes on the emerging social compulsion and the inadequacy of social inheritance to cope with it. The fictional social space of the two novels ranging from the mainstream agrarian

vaishnavite community to the marginality of a tea garden location represents the mosaic of a typical Assamese society in the process of forging its basic socio- cultural identity.

The 20th century Assamese literary tradition set by Lakshminath Bezbaroa and his contemporary had its cradle in the religious and cultural resurgence of the Vaisnavite movement and an indigenous response to the western package of colonial modernity. B K Barua has also carved a niche into this typical colonial environment and pre-colonial socio-cultural dispensation through his scholarship, creative writings and organizational capacity. We notice in him a fruition of both creative and critical faculties with a rare combination of the traditional and modern worldviews. Most of his critics, however, place him in an undefined shadowy corner of Banikanta Kakati's giant intellectual focus and achievement, albeit with full approval to and recognition of the creative excellence of B K Barua. Our findings throughout the project speak in the contrary.

B K Barua had the privilege of coming into close contact with Banikanta Kakati while working together in the Cotton College and Gauhati University. The fact remains that B K Barua had already attained his academic excellence in a diverse field of human sciences and in later period, got himself involved in almost all the major social, educational and cultural organizational activities that had tremendous impact upon the post-colonial destiny of the nation as a whole. Besides, Banikanta Kakati had his forte in linguistics and cultural anthropology; and possessed a rare critical insight and 'an extraordinary capacity for deciphering unity among a large group of assorted materials' (Gohain, translated). His literary criticism was fully charged, to quote B. K. Barua himself, with "the appropriate use of emotive language rich in poetic quality" (in Datta, Karuna, 1994: 61, translated). B K Barua, on the other hand, has revealed in his non-fiction prose his 'minute observation and objective analysis'. It is the merit of a person having clarity of thought and a tendency to represent facts avoiding all loose ends. He found himself engaged in so many different projects

not in the spirit of glorifying the national and spiritual heritage of India, but only with the sole aim of introducing Assam and her history, culture, language, people, polity and literature in the Indian perspective so that the postcolonial national aspiration could remain well harnessed in its own ethos. Unlike many of his predecessors and contemporary Assamese thinkers B. K. Barua had rather a balanced view of the Assamese identity to be entwined around the Indian national character. The outstanding contribution of B. K. Barua in this respect is that Assam emerges in the national scene with her long-time experience of diverse racial and cultural contacts with the countries and people of the north, east and the southern borders along with the Aryan worldview. Consequently, Assam attains a unique distinction in matters of religious beliefs and practices, social customs, language, literary creations and so on.

The fine image of a gentleman-scholar fathoming the antiquarian uncertainties of our remote past and the present realities in Banikanta Kakati is the unique point of Assamese scholarship. There are yet another set of scholars who would apply the intellectual findings to the interpretation of the human and social issues. The pure academic scholarship of Banikanta Kakati and K.K.Handique had its honest and faithful representation in B. K. Barua with still greater clarity in some vital issues. A bottom-up gaze in Barua has been so prominent that distinguishes him from other scholarly personalities. Considering his sustained interest in Sankardeva and other Vaisnavite poets, medieval literature; and keeping in view his scholarship in Pali Sahitya and phenomenal cultivation in folkloristics we can discern in B. K. Barua not only a different direction towards history and culture, but also a new dimension to peripheral realities. Put on this perspective, B. K. Barua stands closer to Bishnu Prasad Rabha and Jyotiprasad Agarwalla; and as a whole he bears the legacy of a tradition that had already been championed by Lakshminath Bezbaroa i.e. a liberal humanist perception.

We notice in him a passionate, rather romantic zeal to harness

ideas from various sources and putting the parts into a whole. The society under influences of colonial modernity which was being shaped gradually during his time is sought to be given a historical mooring. B.K. Barua adds a relatively new dimension to historical research in Assam by exploring the racial make-up, political regimes that excelled in diplomacy, catholicity and liberal attitude moving ahead towards an Indian identity by patronizing Aryan Hindu culture, socio-religious dynamics behind the ancient remains of temples, its architectural designs, sculptural beauty, masonry, religious practices characterized by the belief and customs of the indigenous people, his study of folk culture and Buddhist literature and its philosophy as a source of social history, the socio-cultural renaissance brought about by Sankardeva's new Vaisnavite movement. These are some of the issues in which B.K. Barua had been involved for long adds a new dimension to history. However, it is true that in most cases, he is only a pioneer pointing to, or opening up a new vista below the palace paradigm of history. No historians in the same nationalist tradition could enliven the Assamese mind in its totality, in its cultural and racial heterogeneity.

### **Conclusion**

B. K. Barua offers an exciting and inspiring career. It can be seen from different angles first as a student who was simply brilliant and could be engaged with social activities like founding a club and a library while in school; second, as a hardworking committed teacher who was ever ready to inspire aspiring students with all sorts of help. it is said that with B. K. Barua's joining the cotton College, the Assamese department got rejuvenated with activities; third, as an educational and cultural organiser he has rendered his service to foundation of a number of institutions right from the Gauhati University to the Academy for Cultural Relations, from the Gauhati Commerce college to T. B. Hospital in Shillong. Fourth, as the pioneer of folklore and cultural studies with the latest information of folklore archiving at Uppsala University which had helped him in planning a folklore

department in Gauhati along with other academic works. Finally, through his creative and critical faculty the history, society and literature of Assam had received an integrated intellectual focus. We have so far been able to explore some fundamental aspects of his 'creative energy'; but the basic tenets of B K Barua's critical mind is yet to be explored on broad and critical outlines. Hence, a humble attempt has been made to deliberate on such issues very intimately connected with an Assamese identity - its history, society and culture. All the ambivalence and irony of colonial modernity appear to have found a representation in his negotiations. In retrospect some of his works will cease to have their significance in the fast changing socio-political scenario. It would be rather very essential to keep in mind the typical situation that prevailed during the closing decades of British colonialism and the early decade of our postcolonial destiny while evaluating B. K. Barua and his works.

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# Colonialism, Apartheid and Exile: A Study of Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*

**Jitya Ranjan Saikia**

Literature offers far-reaching insights into human nature and conditions that connect people with the real events recorded in history. It brings into focus the history and socio-cultural identity of a nation. The events that change the identity of a nation are always documented in literature. It has the power to relocate the reality lying behind the formation of history with the amalgamation of different events. The practical account of events makes history important in literature. It reflects the consciousness of a group of people, its cultural heritage as well as historical experience. A nation creates its own history through the experience of events and conflicts that determine the identity of its people. History records the changes of socio-political values of a nation. European colonialism in South Africa transformed the history of the nation. Colonialism in South Africa originally started in 1652. The initial model of colonialism was the Slave Trade and Forced Labour. It was the Dutch who first introduced this model to establish colonies in different parts of Africa. They regulated the Africans by engaging them in slavery and projected forced labour. By 1900, the other European colonisers from Britain, France, Germany and other countries established their colonies and dominated the Africans. The Cape Colony, Natal Colony, Orange Free State and

Transvaal Colony were some of the European colonial settlements in South Africa. The discovery of diamonds in these colonies resulted in an English invasion that sparked the Boer War. Following independence from England, the Afrikaner National Party got strong majority in 1948 and the government introduced apartheid to racially segregate the blacks. South Africa being the center of apartheid, dominated the life of the South Africans and exploited them for a long time. The expansion of apartheid changed the identity of South Africans who were later compelled to migrate to the bordering nations. The European colonialism came to Botswana as the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The entire northern territory of this country came under British Protectorate. The southern territory became part of Cape Colony. The British protected this land from the invasion of other colonizing forces and safeguarded the territory from colonial domination. Actually, Botswana was never colonized with a purpose to exploit the identity of its people. It was the ultimate destination for the South Africans during the time of apartheid. Apartheid policies brought catastrophic social change among the oppressed blacks. Botswana, in spite of being a land of low fertility, became a heaven for people seeking to escape the repression under apartheid in South Africa. The pre-independent identity of Bechuanaland changed after its independence in 1966 which is a process of historical recreation for the people of the nation. In my research work, I have framed some prospective arguments which are attempted to justify in terms of the structure of Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968). The first argument is the process of recreation of history and culture in both South Africa and Botswana which is constructed on the basis of people's encounter with colonialism and other dominating forces. The second argument is the nature and identity of tribalism as well as apartheid which can be considered nothing but the offshoots of colonialism. It is because of the colonial expansion of the European forces that these concepts are aroused in literature. The third argument is the condition of exile which has regenerated the lives of the blacks

during colonialism and apartheid. The fourth argument is the treatment of gender violence and women empowerment in Botswana which is unique in terms of progress as reflected in Head's novel. All these arguments are framed to justify the reliability and relevance of the novel.

Being a process of domination and power, colonialism changed the identity of South Africa and its neighbouring nations. The European forces established different colonies in different parts of Africa initially for commercial purposes, but gradually they understood the backwardness of the Africans and converted their business policies to colonialism. The exercise of power determined the intention of the Europeans. The condition of South Africans during colonialism was very critical and they had to suffer a lot under the white regime. Colonialism first started in South Africa in 1652. Prior to it, the Portuguese discovered South Africa in 1488, but their settlement was not permanent. The Dutch ruled South Africa for a long time until the British revolted against them in 1881. This resulted in the Boer War occurred during 1899 to 1902. Colonialism had greater perspectives towards human suppression. The powerful Europeans formulated some policies which had recreated their individual image of being a superior nation dominating the subalterns. The originality about the beginning of colonialism in Africa itself is a complex situation in terms of existence. From anthropological point of view, people first entered Africa from the direction of Syria. They penetrated into tropical Africa in the train of those large mammals which still form the most striking feature in the African fauna; many of which however were evolved not in tropical Africa but in southern Europe or western Asia as well as in Egypt and Cis-Saharan Africa. These great apes, elephants, giraffes, and antelopes sought a refuge in tropical Africa not only from the cold of the glacial Pleistocene, but from the incessant attacks of carnivorous man. Later on, but still in more remote times, there were migrations of Europeans from the northern side of the Mediterranean. But it seems more likely that the bulk of African

humanity as represented by its modern types passed from Syria and Persia into Arabia, and thence into north-eastern Africa.

The trace of colonial expansion reached its culmination around the second half of the 19th century. Moreover, despite the different directions taken by it, the focus of this expansion was centred in Africa. This continent was almost entirely dominated by Europe. Besides the two major forces, British and French, the remaining territories came under German, Italian, Belgian and Portuguese domination. The size of the areas occupied by a state on European territory and the areas that were exploited by them overseas were strikingly dis-proportionate. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, primarily of an economic order. This period of expansion at any cost co-insides with the development of capitalism and industrial growth. This was accompanied by considerable technical progress as well as a marked increase in the European population during this very period. Along with this cyclical reasons, political reasons can also be included, like the rivalry among the European powers. Each nation feared that it would be left behind if it did not participate with all its strength in the race of territories. A state without a colony was a second rater. The grandeur of France would have been nowhere without its participation in colonial expansionism. This competitive atmosphere explains the incidents that took place particularly between France and Germany as well as between France and England. Regarding racial inequality, some ideological reasons are necessary to be included inside the framework of colonial expansion. The white race, for example, undertook the mission of civilizing the inferior races and it did its mission with courage which was the white man's burden. The same plea of holy mission was adopted by the Churches, both Catholic and the Protestant, with the variant of evangelization. From this postulate of the inequality of races, the power of the existing authorities was invalid. Therefore, it was natural for the colonizing nation to seize this power. The existing institutions were only used if they served the purpose of transferring power to the colonial

administration. Colonialism was expanded through its military and technological prowess and its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order. These hierarchies opened up new vistas for many, particularly for those exploited or cornered within the traditional order. For them, the new order looked like the first step towards a more just and equal world. That is why some of the finest critical minds in Europe and in the East were to feel that colonialism, by introducing modern structures into the barbaric world would open up the non-west to the modern critical analytic spirit. The great thinker, Karl Marx felt that history would produce out of oppression, violence and cultural dislocation not merely new technological and social forces but also a new social consciousness in Asia and Africa. It would be critical in the sense that western tradition of social criticism from Vico to Marx had been critical and it would be rational in the sense that post-Cartesian Europe had been rational. Colonialism cannot be identified with only economic gain and political power. It can be characterised by the search for economic and political advantage without concomitant to the real economic or political gains, and sometimes even with economic or political losses. The first characteristic of colonialism is a state of mind in the colonisers and the colonised which includes the unrealisable wish to make economic and political profits from the colonies. The variables used to describe the states of mind under colonialism have themselves become politicised since the entry of modern colonialism on the world platform. Colonialism is also a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in case of both the colonisers and the colonised. It represents a certain cultural continuity and carries a certain cultural baggage. Colonialism never seems to end with formal political freedom. As a state of mind, it is an indigenous process released by external forces. Its sources lie deep in the minds of the rulers and the ruled. The culture of colonialism presumes a particular style of management. The colonial system perpetuates itself by inducing the colonised, through socio-economic and psychological rewards and

punishments, to accept new social norms and cognitive categories. It produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women. It is a real fact that the colonisers came from complex societies with heterogeneous cultural and ethical traditions. It is by underplaying some aspects of their culture and over-playing others that they built the legitimacy for colonialism. (Memmi 12) It is not possible to find legitimacy for the colonial theory of progress in the tradition of Johannes Eckhart, John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy, based as it is on the rejection of the ideas of an omnipotent high technology, of hyper competitive, achievement oriented, over-organised private enterprise, and of aggressively proselytizing religious creeds operating on the basis of what Erik Erikson calls pseudo-species. One must find that utilitarian legitimacy in writers like Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, in the socialist thinkers conceptualizing colonialism as a necessary step to progress and as a remedy for feudalism, and in those generally trying to fit the colonial experience within the mode of a doctrine of progress. Colonialism dutifully picked up these ideas of growth and development and drew a new parallel between primitivism and domination.

With the introduction of apartheid, the European forces found a new way to racially segregate the South Africans. Apartheid etymologically refers to the Dutch words, apart meaning separate and heid meaning hood. Collectively it implies, as evident in Afrikaans language, separateness or the condition of being stayed apart. Apartheid is pronounced as apart-hate which aptly signifies the policy of the whites that had brutally oppressed a large number of people discriminating solely on the basis of skin color. It was commonly a racist policy in the politics of South Africa which demanded divisions among the whites and non-whites of the nation. The complex apartheid practice compelled more than three million blacks in South Africa to move from their residents and to migrate nearby segregated places. With the starting of electoral process in South Africa in 1994, the



apartheid laws came into force upon the blacks. It was because of the apartheid rules that the blacks were dominated and exploited. It was a system of institutionalised discrimination upon the blacks in South Africa happening around 1948 and continued till 1991. Under this policy, the whites exploited the blacks by controlling their rights and segregating them from public facilities, social responsibilities, cultural events, housing, employment opportunities and so on. From historical point of view, apartheid originally started in South Africa. But, prior to its formal beginning, especially before 1940, some policies were applied upon the blacks in the form of minority rule which enforced apartness of blacks from the other races. These policies were later converted into laws and domination. The ascension of the National Party during the general elections in South Africa practically transformed the racial policy into law and thereby applied it upon the blacks. Before the implementation of apartheid as a law, an informal form of racial segregation was present in the society due to social conflicts between the Dutch colonists and the creolised, the ethnically diverse slaves in South Africa. But, the Dutch Empire introduced the codification of racial discrimination and established the Cape Colony towards the later part of the eighteenth century. As the process of growth and industrialisation of the Cape Colony developed, the policies as well as the laws of the whites became increasingly fixed till the nineteenth century. The legislation body of Cape Colony discriminated the black Africans critically and the policies were implemented with a rapid force. The Boer republics also applied racial policies which were distinct to some extent. For instance, the constitution of Transvaal strictly barred the participation of the blacks in the rituals of the church along with other social activities. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 was the first apartheid act. This act was followed by The Immorality Act of 1950. According to these acts, the South African blacks were restricted to marry or establish any kind of sexual relationship among people of different races. In 1950, The Population Registration Act was launched. As a part of apartheid system, this

act demanded the classification and registration of each inhabitant of South Africa in relation to his/her racial features. The notions of black, white and coloured were emerged out of influence under this act. The residential locations were determined according to racial identities. The area where the whites lived was separated from the domain of the blacks. Between 1960 and 1983, more than 3.5 million black South Africans were removed from their initial locations and compelled them to live in the segregated areas that were allocated specially for the blacks. The primary purpose of this kind of removal was to decrease the number of blacks from the white dominated areas. The newly formed black area was commonly known as the Bantustan. During apartheid, this was the ultimate homeland for the blacks where they lived with unity and integrity. Literally, the term Bantustan is derived from two words, Bantu meaning people and stan meaning land. That is, the land resided by the black people of South Africa is regarded as the Bantustan. A total number of ten Bantustans were formed in South Africa for the purpose of separating people of different ethnic groups. The government also announced that the people living in these places would be separated from having the South African citizenship in the future.

The gradual formation of apartheid as a legalized system of racial discrimination was influenced by the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism, an ideology that promoted Afrikaner's supremacy and pride in response to British invasion as well as the threat from blacks, who were resisting subordination. During this period, the Afrikaner people had endured British Colonial rules and throughout the 19th century, they were sustained only by maintaining their cultural identity in terms of language and religion. In this way, they cultivated a sense of group nationalism. By perceiving political power through national unity, the Afrikaners led them to a position to guide the country in the direction they desired. The greatest desire of the Nationalist Party was to take over the major institutions like economy, politics and education. In order to achieve its goals, the National Party had designed

a system which elevated the whites over other racial groups through economic and political appropriation. In comparison to the apartheid policies in South Africa, there were little instances in Botswana. This place was originally a British Protectorate which was most of the time taken as the refuge for the South African blacks victimised under apartheid. It was a fertile ground where farming was the ultimate source of human livelihood. People from South Africa were exiled in this land in search of security and safety from the cruel nature of apartheid. Botswana being a refuge had suffered a lot under tribalism showed off some of the critical perspectives of the white rule. The tribal leaders had occupied a major place in ruling the people of this nation and they followed most of the critical policies of apartheid. They traumatised the common folk and removed their individual liberty to live peacefully. But, the troubles of apartheid as seen in South Africa were much larger in the hardships of tribalism as applied in this peace-oriented nation. Apartheid changed the socio-cultural identity of the blacks in South Africa and the neighbouring countries. Bessie Head, being a victim of this policy reveals her inner experiences through her famous novel *When Rain Clouds Gather*. The novel deals with the themes of colonialism, apartheid, exile, racial difference, gender inequality, women empowerment and other social issues. All these are centred on the structure of the plot. The political circumstances as presented in the novel are quite significant. The characters in the novel are exiled in Botswana due to apartheid troubles of South Africa. Their most difficult tasks are their own adaptation and their acceptance inside the community. Head practically experiences the social evils going on in the society and she practically examines the facts with realistic fervour. She writes the plot taking an account of her past experiences. The protagonist Makhaya is presented as a South African refugee. The novelist uses her husband's struggle against the system, his determination to escape it, his exciting flight across the border into Bechuanaland to introduce the character of Makhaya. (Eilersen 96) Makhaya's new settlement in Botswana is the beginning of a quest

for psychic wholeness. He does not find happiness and peace in a country which forces him every day to fill his heart with hate in order to survive. He leaves South Africa because he refuses to marry and have children in a country where black men are called 'boy', 'dog' and 'kaffir' (16). He "simply feels like moving out of a part of Africa that lies mentally and spiritually dead through the constant perpetuation of false beliefs". (16). He leaves his country in the hope of finding a better place where he would be free and would find at last "the road of peace of mind" (20). However, he is deluded by the illusion that everything is going to solve itself out from complexities, because he is living in a free country. But additional disintegration and more shattering of his soul occur before he attains psychic wholeness. The concepts of refugeeism and tribalism threaten his quest, on the kindness of some villagers, and the struggle for food. When Makhaya arrived for the first time in Botswana, he became stateless. He could not return to South Africa and had no proper identity in Botswana. He was kept in specific villages to restrict their movements. They had to report regularly to the police station and their exile status kept them always poor. But Makhaya's story is optimistic in the sense that in spite of the interruptions from the politicians, he was well accepted by the villagers while most of the time refugees were not always given proper places with the local population (Eilersen 88). It is nevertheless time that has recreated the setting of the story in the village of GolemaMmidi that plays an important part in the process of exploration.

The concept of exile is critical in terms of its justification about human progress. Generally, exile means to be away from one's home, while either being explicitly refused permission to return or being threatened with imprisonment or death upon return. It can be understood as a form of brutality and separatenss. There are primarily two types of exile. One is, internal and the other is external. Internal exile is a forced re-settlement within the country and external exile is expulsion outside the country. Though it is used to describe an individual's situation, it is also used for especially ethnic or national

groups or for an entire authority. Terms such as diaspora and refugee describe group exile, both voluntary and forced. Exile can also be a self-imposed departure from one's homeland. Self-exile is often depicted as a form of protest by the person who claims it, to avoid persecution or legal matters, an act of shame or repentance, or isolating oneself to be able to devote time to a particular pursuit. In Article 9 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is stated that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile." (UN General Assembly art.9) During the 1960s, South Africa became the scene of armed struggles between white minority regimes and national liberation movements which had been forced to employ violence to achieve freedom and independence. The struggles were not confined to these countries alone but extended into neighbouring countries and eventually into other parts of Africa and gradually the world at large. Botswana played an important role in the formation of a society resulted from the concept of exile. For many years, Botswana was a secured haven for political activists and exiled members of banned political organizations in white minority ruled territories. Many Batswana risked their lives by providing safe hideouts for political activists fleeing imprisonment, torture, and death threats by the white minority regimes. Botswana had to bear the costs of hosting political refugees, administering refugee centres and providing travel expenses, education, and medical care. It was affected by the events of the armed struggle both in terms of security and economy. Botswana supported a peaceful settlement to the problems in South Africa. It endorsed the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto crafted by presidents Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania to liberate South Africa. Botswana was also a member of the Frontline States and participated at the Lusaka Commonwealth Conference of 1979 and in the same year hosted negotiations between the South African Prime Minister P.W Botha and Kaunda. It also provided a forum for talks between the apartheid regime and independent African states. Furthermore, Botswana participated in the Lancaster House talks that resulted in

the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980. There was a great deal of pressure on Botswana from the white ruled territories to stop support for the liberation movements. Botswana was attacked on several occasions by its neighbours for allegedly harbouring terrorists. Although Bechuanaland stayed outside the direct conflict between the South African white minority regimes and the nationalist forces, yet it was engaged in regional conflicts emerged out from the geographic position. With the war progressing, security inside Botswana deteriorated and areas along the border were attacked on several occasions by Rhodesian and South African security forces.

Apartheid and Tribalism were no less destructive than the impact of colonialism. These evil practices were very harsh for the blacks in South Africa and Botswana. As part of colonial expansion, the whites dominated the blacks brutally. Unable to bear the troubles and atrocities of the whites, the blacks of South Africa migrated to Botswana. There, they encountered a new environment and started to live happily than their past. This new life of the blacks encouraged them to form their own cultural identity. The condition of exile played the role of a catalyst in historical recreation. An enquiry about the source of the nation's unique socio-historical existence finds its place in various constructed and inherited identities of race, tribe and gender that controlled Botswana for a long time. Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* is written on the basis of this reality of Botswana. The novelist presents the interconnectedness of apartheid, exile and tribalism towards the formation of history in this country. She not only acts as an advocate for racial tolerance and equality, but also evidently puts herself forward as a crusader for justice. Her writing clearly attempts to present women in history from where they have been resolutely and conventionally excluded on the basis of their otherness. Though she confronts the issue of gender discrimination in patriarchal society, yet she courageously restores and rehabilitates the image of woman in Botswana. She presents herself from the inconceivable and seems particularly drawn to women whole heartedly. The identity of her

women is portrayed as strong, decisive, intelligent, dignified and rational, quite capable of confronting their male counterparts bravely. She observes the social stereotypes on women very minutely and creates a vision to transcend such stereotypes by introducing a new world for women. The women in Botswana are presented as good competitors in the patriarchal set up. They follow some stereotypical rules which define their identity. The novelist encourages her women in all the fields. She advocates a universal vision of humanism to be established in this country. In my research, I have attempted to assert the above ideas and thereby tried to analyse the characters of the novel who struggle to overcome their troubles and adapt to their new situations during exile. In the process of recreation, the historical identity of Botswana is also shaped in accordance with the changes in socio-political scenario.

The literature of South Africa has primarily been concerned with the brutality of apartheid. For long, this kind of inhuman practice dominated all spheres of life in this land from material to spiritual and thereby infused the people with the trauma of the colonial past. The treatment of apartheid degraded the inner identity of these people who were troubled and lost in the horizon. In his *The African Image*, published in 1962, Es'kia Mphahlele suggests,

As long as the white man's politics continue to impose on us a ghetto existence, so long shall the culture and therefore literature of South Africa continue to shrivel up, to sink lower and lower; and for so long shall we in our writing continue to reflect only a minute fraction of life. (Mphahlele 109).

Mphahlele claims that there exists a realistic zeal of disclosing the real facts behind writing fiction in black South African literature. According to him, writers in this nation have strictly followed tradition without expecting anything beneficial from the modern European life. The literature of Africa is heavily dependent upon the creativity of the writers who have greatly contributed to free the common folk from the oppressive rule of the whites who governed them for long.

Bessie Head being one of the most well-known and challenging novelists of South Africa was born in 1937. She was born in a mental asylum where her white mother was confined due to madness. She acclaims her mixed parentage in "The preface to Witchcraft" as below.

I was born on the sixth of July in 1937, in Pietermaritzburg Mental Hospital. The reason for my peculiar birthplace was that my mother was white and she had acquired me from a black man. She was judged insane, and committed to the mental hospital while pregnant. Her name was Bessie Emry Head and I consider it the only honour South Africans ever did me - naming me after this unknown, lovely and unpredictable woman. (Head 72)

The conditions of Head's birth are really inauspicious. After birth, she was offered to be adopted to a white family, but because of her strange look, they did not accept her. After this incident, she grew up in a coloured foster-family and achieved her younger stage without any troubles. Eilersen has commented:

She sometimes explained to her friends that she was often forced to reel off the facts of her early life: "I was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1937. My mother died in a mental institution. I was educated at a mission school outside Durban. So mechanically that these events more and more unreal to her." (Eilerson 7)

Head is conscious about the ill-treatment of the whites and it is from her practical suffering under apartheid that she becomes realistic in presenting the racial negativities. She has proved herself to be a social realist by examining all the illegal activities projected upon the blacks. She puts forward her view that the static concept of death for the white minority is not the ultimate story of South Africa, beneath that death there exists a new life. She emphasizes on the survival of the blacks who are recovered under the changing structure of time. The biographical work entitled *Thunder Behind Her Ears* by Gillian Stead Eilersen, first published in 1995, provides a clear and accurate analysis about Bessie Head as a prominent writer leading the blacks in Africa. Her nature of writing includes theoretical descriptions of



Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud etc. and her notions about humanism, feminism, psychoanalysis and nationalism are really apparent. Many critics have commented that Head's first novel *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968) deals extensively with the agricultural changes in Botswana and its impact upon the mass protest against the whites. The novel has an underlying tone of both romance and pastoralism. In most of her novels, the spiritual transformations are evident in case of the protagonists which deal with the conditions of women in the midst of troublesome African environment and the recreation of a new world. Her other two significant novels of the trio, *Maru* (1971) and *A Question of Power* (1973) have been analysed in terms of the exploration of individual politics. The noteworthy qualities behind the narrative of *When Rain Clouds Gather* are the presentation of optimistic and expressive resilience, reconstruction of society and perfection of social ghetto. The famous critic Lloyd Brown has commented that the negativity in her morality and world-view are really distinct. Some critics do not consider Head in using her life events and practicalities in the literary works. They find the novelist to be centred on the exilic consciousness deeply involved inside the institution of apartheid. Head has clarified that she observes a large number of people from South Africa including the writer Nadine Gordimer who have used the framework of exile with sensibility. The newly created identity of home in Botswana paves a logical way for fulfilling her expectations in life. The basic argument that she tries to justify is the notion of exile which is the ultimate survival strategy for those who are victimised under the strict laws of apartheid. She criticises apartheid laws and feels that lack of interconnectedness between her feelings and her belonging to the native land has developed her ideas on exile and reformation.

In her novel, Head focuses on the formation of history during the period of apartheid. The racial discrimination between the blacks and the whites provides a new way of looking at history which encompasses issues of nation, identity and nationalism. The narrative

of the novel develops around different characters taken from diverse sections of the society in Botswana. It brings new aspects of unity and harmony amidst diversity. The cruelty of racial discrimination is primarily projected as a mental construction where the term black becomes useless without the projection of white. As Franz Fanon puts in, not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man (Fanon 110). It is not confined to the colour consciousness of the Negroes from European vision. Rather, it is a constructed mode of domination which gives birth to the concept of other. Fanon argues that the Negro plays the role of other for the Europeans. It is analogous to the role of other played by the female with regard to the male. This kind of identity crisis had for long divided mankind. In Botswana, the people before independence lived under British protectorate. The country got its name from the Tswana, the largest ethnic group during British colonialism. The savage and cruel practice of Tribalism continued in Botswana even after its independence in 1966. This form of Tribalism is nothing but an offshoot of colonialism which is much like the British rule and which was implemented through power and authority. Gender violence is the unfavourable treatment of a society which is based on prejudice, race, tribe, place and sex. It is often assumed to mean the use of physical, emotional and mental oppression applied in order to cause emotional, physical and mental domination. The story of the novel starts with the protagonist Makhaya Maseko. He is found anxious in separating himself from his past. He is determined about his desire to leave his past behind, but has become uncertain about his future. As a young Zulu activist, he recently came out of prison and planned to leave South Africa unable to bear the inhuman treatment under apartheid. His sole desire is to live in a free and liberal country where he can enjoy the basic needs of life. Although he has no extreme desire about the quality of freedom he enjoys in another country, yet he wants to be free from his present troubles in South Africa. He opts for a future in Botswana that grants him the basic human rights. His

new life in Botswana is to seek for peace and happiness. His experience in South Africa made his life bitter and distrustful. As a refugee, he finds peace in Botswana. He meets an old woman who provides him shelter for the first night of his arrival. The selfish attitude of the old woman towards this hapless refugee informs that Botswana is no paradise, but a place that has its humane qualities of life. After being formally registered as a refugee, Makhaya meets Dinorego, a wise old man of GolemaMmidi, a village in Botswana. Dinorego helps him settle down to a quiet search for peace and contentment. GolemaMmidi is a unique location for refugees of South Africa who are exiled and who have faced unbearable tragedies in their lives. Though geographically the place is dry and arid, yet it is well suited to Makhaya. Here, he finds the rural community radically distinct from his urban ghetto existence in South Africa. After being ruthlessly divorced by her husband, the old woman of the locality, Mma-Milipede sought refuge in GolemaMmidi. She, like Dinorego, exemplifies a systematic settlement of life in Botswana. Gilbert planned something new and helped the villagers in starting a co-operative farming project that is to yield a good production and his only dream is to see GolemaMmidi becoming a globally recognised agricultural community. Though Gilbert's background and lineage is English, yet he comes forward to do everything good for the people of Botswana. It's a positive sign of mixture between the culture of the high society and the low. Makhaya is appointed as the leader of the women. He comes to the forefront and engages himself in the process of cultivation along with the women. Paulina Sebeso, a widowed woman having two children leads all the women of GolemaMmidi to form a concrete frame in agricultural development. She also desires to have Makhaya as her future life partner which is symbolic of women's activeness and empowerment in building the nation. The tribal chiefs like Chief Matenge and his brother Sekoto often disturb the activities of the people, but to no avail. People under the guidance of Gilbert, Dinorego and Makhaya became so strong that in the end they removed the

entire process of tribal rule in the village. Chief Matenge committed suicide under the pressure of the people which is an evidence of unity in diversity in the socio-cultural construction of Botswana. Head throws light on the changing nature of history which records the documentation of events in different periods and situations.

Head speaks more appropriately about her individual experiences. It is due to the heterogeneous reality of society that her works become cross cultural. In the post-modern world, the social issues are treated differently that have re-formulated the human perceptions. The genre of autobiography has a tradition of writing originally by the male writers ignoring the females. But, Head has proved to be an established woman writer who breaks the traditional model and thereby recreates literature of the blacks. She understands that the journey of a woman writer in literature is all the time unwelcome and it leads to complex criticism upon the reductive nature of individualism. It is her lack of imagination and aesthetic control over issues that leads her to concentrate on her personal experiences. Head's works are full of artistic techniques and they are connected to the mobility of human life. She suggests that art is inharmonious with autobiography. The fiction along with autobiography is rigid to the conventional forms and models and they stick to the norms of the society. The language is the medium which binds the relations among different aspects of the society. But, in relation to women's writing in Africa, there is a complexity about using language to expose the inner feeling of the female writers. This is mostly visible in terms of writing autobiography. Here, women become perplexed in finding the proper language to explore the hidden realities as the society is rooted in male tradition. Head comments that tradition interrupts writing and blocks all the possibilities of women's feelings to disclose publicly. Tradition is ramparted against the appropriation of women's ideas and it hardly provides the scope for logical presentation of women's issues. Head feels that life has taught her how to fight against the social evils and she portrays her individual image on that ground. She

does not use the conventional form of writing autobiography. Her writing is unique in the mode of declining the conventional identities and she constructs a new form of autobiography of her own. Concerning novels, she uses the fabular form in maximum number of her fictions that is pertinent. The use of fables has increased the beauty of her novels and the purity of her writing. In this context a comment by the Athenian aristocrat Phaedrus can be mentioned. As long as the first century A. D., Phaedrus said about the fables like this.

The slave, being liable to punishment for any offence, since he dared not say outright what he wished to say, projected his personal sentiments into fables and eluded censure under the guise of jesting with made-up stories. (Birberik 133)

The oppression that Head faces in her individual life projects a clear picture about the influence of power which arises from a hierarchical system existing among different categories of people. Being a writer of mixed origins, she plays different roles in life - an orphan, the daughter of a white mother and a black father, an exiled woman in Botswana, a victim of apartheid and so on. After going through the hurdles of life, she establishes herself as a black African writer who proves to be suspicious about the white rule. She is categorised in this black writing with the specific purpose of writing for the blacks who suffer a lot. The strict and destructive structure of South Africa has most of the time interrupted the struggles of Head towards liberty and literary development. There was small amount of chances for survival inside the brutality of apartheid. She took good care of those chances and thereby re-presented the realities long suppressed under the white regime. Her exile in Botswana is a platform through which she formulated her policies to fight against apartheid laws. It is because of her critical nature of existence that she, in Foucauldian terms, has become someone who - assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles: he becomes the principle

of his own subjection. (Foucault 202-203) My research work is an exploration of the evils of apartheid policies in South Africa and its expansion to the nearby countries. Efforts are made to understand the cruelties under apartheid and the conditions of people becoming the victims. Actually, apartheid had shattered the common life of the blacks in the southern part of Africa. Originating in South Africa, apartheid had ruled out the identity of the blacks and they were racially differentiated from the whites in participating the public affairs. In my study of Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, I have found out the issues like colonialism, apartheid, tribalism, exile, women empowerment etc. as relevant to the structure of the novel and have gathered proper evidences in their justification. The novel is set up in the backdrop of colonialism practiced by the Europeans. Apartheid was also relevant in terms of the construction of history in South Africa and Botswana. The cultural identity of people in these two nations is also explored in terms of the changing social scenario. The cruel nature of Tribalism is also analysed in the context of the story of the novel where it is found that due to the impact of some Tribal chiefs like Matenge and Sekoto, the progress in Botswana had become slow. Regarding women empowerment, the case of Botswana is unique. Here, the women are found struggling hard to make a change in the patriarchal set up. They have come forward in spite of having tribal domination and the apartheid cruelties. They, with the help of their male counterparts, have reshuffled their individual identities and thereby make a total change in the socio-cultural atmosphere. The notion of exile is also justified in terms of the practical experiences of the novelist during her hard days in South Africa. It is in her exile in Botswana that she has become able to write about the realistic aspects of the blacks. My present research work includes the analysis of such a perspective that contributes not only to a better understanding of her work, but also to a more distinct concept of African feminism in global context. It is clear that Head is propagating an African vision of feminism in Southern Africa, not a radical, exclusionist vision of

the world, but one in which men and women are equal partners, and work together in harmony. African feminism is a strategy that the women in Africa have had to consciously adopt for their own survival and identity in the face of race, class and gender oppression. The necessity to be self-reliant, resourceful, and to some extent, even militant, forms the core of their feminism. While retaining the traditional privileging of family and community, Head's women characters nevertheless succeed in asserting their own individualism and independence, and this enables them to carve out an independent identity for themselves in society. In logical terms, the present research work can be considered as a fruitful step towards understanding the conditions of people, especially the women in South Africa as well as in Botswana who are changed in accordance with the changing of time and circumstances.

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## Part II

*Historical contour, Life writings and  
heritage studies.*

# **Archaeological and Anthropological Perspective of Heritage in Assam and Adjoining States.**

**Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah**

From the perspective of cultural heritage Assam is one of the few places bestowed with remarkable diversities. It is the abode of a good number of ethnic groups besides the caste and religious communities with distinct history, linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics. Its openings on one hand to the southeast Asian territories and on the other to the mainland India have acted as a major catalyst in turning the state into a repository of diverse cultural heritage through ages. This plurality in the cultural heritage of Assam can be sensed in its history, archaeology, art, architecture, performing arts, oral tradition and numerous tangible and intangible aspects of the culture to mention few. The Neolithic and early cultural beginnings as evident from the findings from the erstwhile North Cachar hills and foothills of Assam-Meghalaya border which continued to that of megalithic and early historic tradition flourished to a phase of artifactual grandeur indicated by the famous Ambari site of ancient city of Guwahati. This unique cultural heritage of Assam having its root in the prehistoric past regained vitality in the ancient Kamrupa and in the subsequent period with the advent of the Ahom kings. In fact, the

germination of the geocultural concept of Assam is considered as a contribution of the long sixteen hundred years of existence of the Ahom monarchy. This legacy of the tradition was refurbished with a touch of eternal retouching through the propagation of the doctrine of neo Vaishnavism by the iconic saint Sankardeva in the fifteenth century medieval Assam. The mainstream socioreligious life of the region was shaped by this historic event which culminated in the establishment of the significant cultural institutions surrounding neo Vaishnavite dormitories-the satras, the largest river island Majuli being its focal seat.

The region is also endowed with palpable natural diversities which as understood anthropologically has its impact on the manifestation of multiple ethnographic entities. The hills and the valleys, the floodplains and the plateaus, the forests and the wetlands each endowed with distinct cultural entities speaks of the oft-quoted phenomenon of nature culture relationship. The ethnodiversities of the region can hardly be separated from the faunal and floral diversities, rather it needs to be understood in its totality for a meaningful reconstruction. Several symposia and colloquium organised in the past have highlighted these aspects partially but what is needed is a concerted effort on the part of scholars transcending disciplinary boundaries and embracing beyond academic circle the cultural activists and performing artist to formulate an action plan highlighting areas and ways to augment the discourses on cultural heritage of Assam. The term heritage has in the recent past seems to have been generously used particularly in the field of culture and archaeology. Academia as well as government and other executing authorities have developed a considerable leaning towards heritage and allied studies. International agencies like United Nation Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has also given considerable importance to heritage perspective and we are well aware of the craving for being accorded the heritage status to places of significance. Sites and places with cultural, historical and archaeological significance tops the list of UNESCO heritage sites. State agencies like the Archaeological Survey

of India and department of Archaeology and Culture in the states have assiduously been performing the task of ascribing heritage status to monuments, relics and sites in different nook and corner of the country. The country has a state funded Institute of Heritage Research and Management in the National capital. When we speak of our own state of Assam heritage in common parlance signifies alongwith other signs and symbols the Ahom relics of Sibsagar and the temple of Kamakhya as far as history and archaeology of the region is concerned. Although a number of International and National seminars and symposium on Heritage of Assam has been organised there has been less discussion on the theoretical and empirical implication of heritage in the context of the Assam and adjoining states.

Heritage is a concept that has its development and expansion in the lap of the modern nation state. UNESCO's charter on heritage site in the very beginning declares "Considering that deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world". The definition of cultural heritage by UNESCO begins with the term monuments of archaeological significance. The national culture is therefore very much emphasised by UNESCO in its delineation of heritage. Benedict Anderson believes that museum allowed the state to appear as the guardian of tradition, and this power was enhanced by the infinite reproducibility of the symbols of tradition (Anderson, 1991, pp. 163-184). The idea of heritage can also be viewed in the same perspective in the present context when the state defines and arbitrates the national culture. The Indian state also tries to delimit the monuments, relics and sites of archaeological significance through legislation. There is also a division of administrative jurisdiction over the monuments and sites between the central and the state government. The interpretation becomes somewhat more sanctified with added glorification when interpreted in terms of fundamentalist national history. Very often core archaeology is also invoked to own or disown myths of history. The engagement

of archaeologist in the bygone days in resolving the much debated complex issue of Ram Janambhumi-Babri Masjid is a glaring example in this regard. Archaeological history is a Complex multifaceted process of which the present bespeak very little and anthropology unveils tip of the iceberg ultimately providing a very myopic perspective of heritage.

Museum which is a colonial innovation acting as defining parameter of a nation state has very well been utilised for showcasing of culture and heritage. The definition of the museum according to International Council of Museum was adopted by the 22nd General Assembly of ICOM in Vienna, Austria on 24th of August 2007.

"A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment".

The definition of museum by ICOM thus goes beyond the national boundaries and tries to universalise the concept with incorporation of tangible and intangible aspects of heritage.

### **Heritage Perspective in North Eastern Region**

North Eastern region is a territory of cultural and social assortment where historical and cultural boundaries transcend political borders. The region intercedes the southeast Asian territory and the mainland India the effect of which is evident in the sociocultural domain. The region can roughly be divided into two physiographic zones, the Himalayan belt in the north of the Brahmaputra and the non Himalayan tract in the south of the Brahmaputra basin. Majority of the Stone Age sites recorded till date lies in the non Himalayan belt in a high altitude with high concentration of megalithic remains. The plains of the Brahmaputra and the Barak, the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh and the Imphal valley is dotted by some of the monuments of early and late historical phases. Community association with most of the archaeological relics is what make situation more pertinent with many

of the stone age tradition still continuing to the present. For example the ground stone celts which is related to the neolithic phase is very often collected by village folk from jhum fields, foothills, forests and agricultural field. Known commonly as Braja Sila in the villages of Assam. the Karbis term it as Choterachu while the Garos term it as Goiri Gitchi. Each of the society has magicoreligious beliefs associated with the celts.

The megalithic remains which are abundant in the Naga and Khasi Hills have deep rooted sociocultural context that can hardly be ignored. Mention can be made of Hutton (1926) who records four types of commemorative stones among the Angamis namely Dahu (rectangular pyramidal building), Tehuba (A raised stone space surrounded by separate points on which man can sit), Kwehu (memorials to the dead built in the form of a mound of earth paved with stone) and Baze (rectangular stone platform usually with stone steps). Similarly S N Rao (1993) has recorded the local terms the Khasis use to refer to the megaliths. Rao classifies the megaliths among the Khasis into two categories viz the memorial and funerary and records eight types of funerary stones among them and common among them are Mawkynroh or a small stone burial cist for the individual, mawbah the rectangular clan tomb, mawlanti or three upright stones erected on the way leading to the tomb, mawksing or set of five upright stones erected by the clan members along the path and mawbyinna or set of five upright stones with a flat table stone in front. Similarly he records four types of memorial stones as mausmai or stone for peace settlement at mausmai, mau-in-lu the stone of the salt, mau-flong the grassy stone, mau-flong, the grassy stone and mau-mlu or the upturned stone. The megalithic remains in the Karbi Anglong hills of Assam are associated with water sources and structurally consist of single standing stone with a stone platform in front similar to the structures erected as a part of death ritual by the Karbis residing the plains termed respectively as Longe and Longdang (Bezbaruah;2005). The historical remains are mostly temples and

worshipping places with sculptures of gods and goddesses with few monarchical settlements. The anthropomorphic and non anthropomorphic features of the temples and other worshipping places needs to be studied for getting a holistic picture of the communities and their social background which ultimately shaped the historical trajectory in this region. Another significant part of understanding anthropo-archaeological aspect of heritage of the region is rock art manifested in the form engravings not only in megalithic remains but recorded in open rock surfaces which the present author have tried to document and study for the first time in the academic history of the region (Bezbaruah 2016).

The fluidity of sociopolitical situation is surcharged with reinvention and assertion of ethnic self where history and archaeology can be effective tool as cultural marker. After locating many of the megalithic sites in Karbi Anglong the KAAC in the last decade of the twentieth century took up the project of organising megalithic heritage conservation day and the first and the second megalithic monument conservation day were observed in 1997 and 1998. The Karbi leaders who assiduously organised the event with the conviction of the megalithic remains as patrimonial heritage useful for tracing back the past of the community. However, with the dislodging of ASDC from power the organisation instrumental to expanding the Karbi solidarity, the event was no more organised by the changed political leadership. Thus it is evident that the understanding of heritage in Assam and NE India is a complex issue and the backdrop discussed should be carefully considered for that heritage usage in this region.

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# Life Writing: Some Aspects of Historical Quest

**Arani Saikia**

## **Introduction**

Personal accounts of individual lives are alternatively known as life story, life history and life sketch. The term 'life writing' is perhaps, more appropriate to describe collectively the different forms of life writing - autobiography, biography, memoirs, diaries, personal letters and essays. It has become one of the most immediate and accessible modes of writing about any public figure or a literary giant. Biography is defined in other a number of ways in different periods of literary, social and cultural history. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED, Vol II) defines biography as the history of the lives of individual men as a branch of literature. Comparatively a later phenomenon or a literary form other than poetry or drama, biography emerged in late seventeenth century. The name connotes a relatively full account of a person's life, involving the attempt to set forth character, temperament and social milieu, as well as the facts of the subject's activities and experiences. Autobiography is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the writing of one's own history, the story of one's life written by himself (OED, Vol. I). Autobiography is literally a person's recording of his own life through introspection. Here the subject is the author himself; it is generally written in the first person

and covers most or an important phase of the author's life. The term 'autobiography' was first used in 1809 at the height of the Romantic period. The first formal use of the word in print was W.P. Scargill's volume *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister* in 1834 (Abbs,1984,513).

The French critic Philippe Lejeune gives modern definition of autobiography as 'a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality' (Birch,2009,83). Its importance is recognised as a means of self-examination, self-creation and self-regeneration. This self-conscious act 'aspires to capture the process of self-recognition and hopes that it would assist the pilgrim towards self-realisation' (Suhud,2009,8). The nature of autobiography was first discussed by Roy Pascal in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960). He defined, Autobiography is historical in method and at the same time the representation of the self in and through its relations with the outer world. (Pascal,1960,8) is to be distinguished from memoir, in which the emphasis is not on the author's developing self but on the people and events that the author knew or had opportunity to observe and experience. Private diary or journal, which is a day-to-day record of the events in a person's life, written for personal use and pleasure, with little or no thought of publication are also important sources (Abrams,1957,15). An autobiographer is expected to be impersonal and objective in self-portrayal. A memoirist may sound more personal and subjective. The voice of any auto/biographical work brings together narration and interpretation of the author.

The most important aspect of an autobiography is the individuality of the experience and expression. The narrative can be a powerful means of communicating various experiences which might give different meaning to different readers. It is the means by which the autobiographer recounts, understands and expresses his or her own identity (Eakin,1999,100). Autobiographies have always been a popular form of writing because the unique experiences of an individual provide

the readers a sense of joy in knowing others in addition to instructional values contained in them. Some autobiographies have universal appeal. For example, autobiographies of M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Benjamin Franklin have retained the universal appeal long after they were published.

No person is blessed enough to write a complete account of his or her life. Biography is a relatively full account of a man's life and, therefore, biography is as important as autobiography. The biographer carries in his voice the power to define people and their places in history, to characterise a nation and transmit its value and to support or undermine accepted cultural values (Backscheider, 1999,8). A biography makes human nature understandable to others. It tries to open up the reasons behind a particular life-style and way of thinking. Biographer's selection of his subject as an extraordinary individual does not mean that he is confined to that individual only, a person is known also in terms of his time and involvement with the social environment. He or she is mostly the product of the circumstances and, therefore, social, cultural, literary and political influences cannot be ignored. It is the biography that raises question such as how a particular person's personal and public life relate to and effect one another. The political and economic factors as well as the cultural achievements of the people, their traditions, needs and aspirations come under observation of the biographer. The biographers situate themselves in between the readers and the subjects from a distant time and inexperience. The major missions of humanity being religion, politics, literary and cultural activities, they are the basic inspiration for most of the life-writings (Mishra, 2004, Introduction). The biographer collaborates facts with some amount of imagination. The proportion of facts and imagination is maintained by the biographer's skill of balancing the evidence with the interpretation.

Be it biography, autobiography, a memoir or even a life sketch, there is always a hidden element of inspiration. Behind every life writing there must be an instinctive urge from within. An external

stimulus may also play the trick and produce a positive result. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) explicated the purpose of writing life-stories in a straight forward way, - first, they showed how some people overcame immense obstacles to achieve great things; and second, they illuminated the cultural, social, and historical backdrops against which such persons played out their lives (Dasgupta, 2010,178).

There are different ways in which an autobiography or a biography can be read:

- ▶ As the repository of the understanding of a person
- ▶ As description of time and endeavours of individual life which usually becomes an inspiring experience for others
- ▶ As a source of information to be used by professional historian subject to verification
- ▶ As an expression of world-view of a particular individual or a generation

## **II. Life Writing and History**

Life writing is a dependable source of history. They are naturally good source for reconstruction of the lives of the celebrities. Its relation with history is a subject for research. 'Biography is a study of time, not just of a person' (Nanda,2009,250). The forces causing change and progress in human life and history, are portrayed in a biography. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in his three part distinctions among the kinds of history, spoke of biography, two others being chronicle and narrative. The lives, according to him, represent people containing 'a more true, native, and lively representation' (Parke,2002,13). For most of the time, the biographer studies the individual as a text, and for a complete analysis of the character, the whole society turns to be the text. In this process, the biographer records time with all its distinctiveness. As such biographical studies are a distinct way to comprehend and analyse historical moments. Research on life writings may be considered as 'a nuanced methodology that allows the historian to shift gaze from the general theme and theory to the particular and precise experience of people and groups' (Brown, 2011, 4).

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), the philosopher historian famously remarked that the history of the world is but the biography of great men. He asserted in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* that heroes shape history through both their personal attributes and divine inspiration (Carlyle, 1840). This kind of certainty demonstrates the general idea of the time that biographies help to understand society. The German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) utilised memoirs, diaries, letters, diplomatic reports and original narratives of eye-witnesses as primary sources to gather information for his historical writings. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) remarked that there is properly no history, only biography. Sunil Khilnani recently explored the lives of fifty historical figures who according to him shaped India and commented that it is the lives of individuals that offer a useful thread to enter into the labyrinth of Indian history, to know better its creativity and conflicts (Khilnani, 2015, 12). Sunil Khilnani's *Incarnations* is focused on what he called 'the afterlives of historical figures'. He admitted that 'India's non-fictional past is sufficiently complex'. Yet he picked up fifty lives 'to see how they navigated the intellectual confluences and the practical constraints of their times, and made choices that changed, in small and large and sometimes unintended ways, the circumstances of the figures who succeeded them' (Khilnani, 2016, Introduction).

Personal lives are particularly reflected in autobiographies. Though certain gestures are often repeated in daily life without a single thought on logic behind it, they cannot be ignored as trivial details. In his book, *The Automaticity of Everyday Life* (1997), John A Bargh studied the practice of everyday life and examined the ways in which people individualise mass culture, alerting things, from utilitarian objects to street plans, to rituals, laws and language, in order to make them their own. A definition of culture goes, 'the sense of ultimate values which a certain society has and according to which it shape its life' (Husain, 1978, Introduction). Culture is closely related to the ultimate values of life. These values influence individual qualities and attitudes. They are, at

the same time, embodied in the physical objects or the material aspect of life. From this point of view, culture is reflected in the everyday life. Individual personhood is culturally constructed and accounts of personal lives are culture specific. The author reflects upon the life-conditions, problems and promises relating to the immediate society. Understanding of his or her social activities and explanations of his or her psychological world conform to society's norms.

Life writing of a woman is all the more useful for manifold roles of the subject and the dynamics of society that act upon her. It has the scope to be interpreted in the light of gender perspectives. The term gender is understood as a constitutive element of social relationship based on perceived differences between the sexes, and as a primary way of signifying relationships of power (Scott, 1988, 42). Since gender itself is a socially constructed definition of women and men, hence it has social and symbolic expressions. Autobiography of a woman is, therefore, a reflection of her culturally defined behaviour. 'Women's autobiographies', says Aparna Basu, 'are becoming increasingly important as sources of self-perception as well as providing insights into gender relations, social structure, political and social change and so on' (Basu, 2009, 263). The 'woman's text' in colonial India made use of the domestic space and its inhabitants to commemorate a certain version of traditional culture at a time when culture was believed to be both in transition and in crisis. It is also important to see that woman, who was often taught to be submissive and docile, was attempting at self-expression by revealing her innermost feelings. A woman's autobiography generally deals with the various relationships like those with her parents, siblings and also with her spouse, children and other women of her family. Her identity is established on the basis of these relationships. Someway differently, a man's autobiography is mainly concerned with his work and achievements. It is seen that man is less concerned of his relationships and record external events, whereas women concentrate on daily life, relationships, and personal feelings (Hooten, 1992, 33). Writing gives



a kind of 'inward freedom' to the woman in releasing emotions; when it is life writing. Social history is in no way complete without taking the achievements and experiences of the women in any region at any given moment of time. To quote Gerda Lerner (1920-2013), an American pioneer in the field of women's history, 'History must include an account of the female experience over time' (Lerner, 1979, 52).

The scope of history is getting wider with time. What had been traditionally considered anti-historical is treated now as contribution to historical knowledge. Myth, for example, was rejected in history. Arthur Marwick considered the objective of history as to challenge and subside myths (Marwick, 1989, 14). Now a days, memory, fantasy, narrative and myth are found to be continuously in interaction with history. A cultural history of any nation can be built upon narratives, anecdotes and other relevant information of its biographies. As a source of history, memory has recently become an important category. Memory based historical studies prescribe for analysis of the past representations. Along with time, several characters and events gain significance, they grow larger than life. A theoretician of social memory, Maurice Halbwachs contrasted memory and history as two contradictory ways of dealing with the past. In his view, history starts when social memory and continuous tradition stop operating. As such, there is only one history, but there are as many collective memories as there are human communities (Halbwachs, 1980). Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) published his *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* in 1995 and *Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life* in 2003. The time frame of both these books is the same. But he calls one a history and the other a memoir. In his view, history is what happens, seen from outside, memoirs about what happens seen from inside (Hobsbawm, 2003, Introduction). It is possible to understand the implications of a memoir only when we study the subject with some reliable tools available to us.

An autobiographer's treatment of facts is different from that of a historian. The autobiographer seeks origin of the present condition

and considers those facts helpful in the evolution of the self. The life is recreated through creative arrangement of facts. The historian also tries to understand the past, constituted of events and experiences. But he is concerned with the explanation of events while an autobiographer is concerned with the events themselves. Biography, likewise, differs from history in form and content. Long time ago, Plutarch (c. 46-120) said that history describes what people do, while biography reveals who they are. The biographer treats man as an individual and the historian generally treats man as a part of the whole. In an interesting essay, 'The Historian as a Biographer', A.J.P. Taylor very famously said 'the individual is a great problem for the historian'. Every life writing is centred on an individual, but the historian is more concerned with the 'profound forces' and 'movements' which give shape to the individual and his or her world (Taylor, 1995, 24, 35). It is also possible for the historians to draw appropriate conclusions about the state, society and the environment under which the individual lived, worked and made a mark in life. SuryyaKumar Bhuyan (1892-1964), was an extraordinary example of 'the historian as a biographer' in Assam. He began his literary career as a biographer. Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1916), Rabindranath Tagore (1920), Anundoram Barooah (1920), An Assamese Nurjahan (1926), Jonaki (14 eminent men) (1928) and Chaneki (7 eminent women) (1928) are some of his early biographical works. Judged by his study of the lives of Bismarck and Lord Beaverbrook, we may say that A.J.P. Taylor was also a very popular biographer. Obviously he believed in the historic potentiality of Life writing. Historians look at the world of the subject and relate the surrounding events with the viewpoint of the subject. Historians hesitate to express anything not supported by evidence. But the reminiscences are not based on any definite source. They are accounts of the world as seen and experienced by the individual.

### **III. Historical Background of Life Writing**

The form of life writing as perceived by the west was quite alien to the Indians before the arrival of the British. From the thirteenth



century, the Ahoms introduced in Assam the tradition of recording the Buranjis which were chronicles centring round the Ahom royalty in the capital. They were not individual accounts. The tradition of chronicle writing both in the Tai-Ahom language and Assamese continued down to the early twentieth century. It might indirectly have inspired the Vaishnava followers to write down the lives of their gurus in the fifteenth century. The first form of biography in Assamese was the Caritas - life accounts of the Vaishnava saints of Assam. The Guru Carita Katha is a famous compilation of biographies covering the lives of twenty five Vaishnava saints, more particularly of Sankaradeva (1449-1568) and Madhavadeva (1489-1597). Alokaranjan Dasgupta, observed that in the Caritas, 'the identifying trait is that of fervent devotion' (Dasgupta, 2004,158). Going beyond the debatable points in the Caritas, the Guru Carita Katha is an invaluable source of history (Saikia, 2013,4).

The autobiographical literature in English inspired some Indians to write about their life histories in the western mode. Bengal being the first province to come in contact with the English, most of the early Indian autobiographies were written by Bengali elites. Rammohun Roy's (1772-1833) Autobiographical Letter (1832-33) was a pioneering example. Rammohun was considered a 'valuable product' of the complex interactions between a literate, multi-lingual Indian culture and English language and European print culture (Pollock,2004,220). Modern Assamese literature was influenced by the intellectual movement centering Calcutta, known as Bengal Renaissance.

Perhaps, the true spirit of the Bengal Renaissance is captured in Shivanath Shastri's classic work Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangasamaj. Ramtanu Lahiri (1813-1898) was an educationist remarkable for his integrity of character and moral courage. First published in 1904, this biography has run into many editions. Such a biography as this is as complete and connected both as a biography and history. Sushobhan Sarkar (1900-82) observed that the impact of

British rule, bourgeois economy and modern western culture was felt in Bengal and produced an awakening known as the Bengal Renaissance (Sarkar, 1946, 3). Subrata Dasgupta explained the term 'Bengal Renaissance' as the revolutionary awakening of the Indian mind in the nineteenth century (Dasgupta, 2010, 2, 352). The new way of writing about one's own life, was also a part of nationalist consciousness. In *A History of Indian Literature*, S. K. Das observed that biographies were becoming popular in all Indian languages by the end of the nineteenth century (Das, 1991, 261). The lives of social reformers and national heroes were widely read. M. K. Naik was of the view that biography, like prose fiction gained a distinct identity in India with the spread of western education (Naik, 1985, Introduction). After the coming of the Eminent Victorians by Lytton Strachey in 1918, it became for many, the major western model in this field. But the literary gift of Strachey is not given to all. Over the years, life writing has come of its own and captured the imagination of readers.

#### **IV Emergence of Modern Assamese Life Writing**

Modern life writing in Assam, like in most parts of India, emerged as a new genre in the late nineteenth century. Far from the Carita tradition of eulogising lives, there was an attitude of self-revelation and self-explanation. Some major Assamese writers embodied in their life writings different aspects of life in colonial period. These authors with remarkable insight depicted an image of their land and people. They knew that they were living in an age of transition and they responded it in a positive manner. H. K. Barpujari observed that the Christian missionaries along with the Assamese elites not only emphasised development of the Assamese literature but also modernised it, rediscovered Assamese tradition and inspired the social reformers and the educated class with patriotic feelings (Barpujari, 1996, 13). The term elite is used to describe a 'segment which included scions of the old landed classes, industrial entrepreneurs, highly successful professionals as well as middle and low level functionaries in the apparatus of colonial government and

often school teachers, journalists, lawyers, medical licentiates and preachers propagating the new religious reforms' (Raychaudhuri, 2005,3). A traditional society stood face to face with colonial modernity. By the term colonial modernity, I refer to the state of affairs different from that of the western because it was mediated by colonialism. Social conventions confronted unfamiliar experiments. Rural and subsistence economy of the land was exposed to many avenues of colonial economy. It was conceived variously as an age of modernisation, reforms, revivalism and identity formation. It was visible through a growing public space, the foundation of educational and cultural institutions, growth of literature and communicative media. It was, in fact, a period of remarkable change in the history of Assam.

Assam was then in need of a stimulation. The pride of this land had suffered under the devilish rule of the Burmese. British rule replaced Burmese rule. Within a short period rule of law was established. The British had their own priorities but there is no doubt that Assamese got a new lease of life under them. There was a colonial tendency to homogenise regional cultures. The British had a fair acquaintance with Bengal and had a tendency to treat people around Bengal as distant cousins of the Bengalis. Thereby a feeling of cultural superiority of everything by the name Bengali determined and dominated the scene. There was the cultural need of a people claiming to represent the Assamese community. Vaishnavite revivalism was an important site of representation of the educated generation's search for a cultural identity. It was part of the 'awakening' within the community. The way Harakanta Sarma Majundar Barua, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Padmanath Gohain Barooah and others responded to their world brought about cultural rejuvenation and respectability to the people. Their life writings may be accepted as the condensed versions of their vision of Assam. If not explicitly, ideological moorings spontaneously came up in their narratives.

## **V. An Outline of My Quest**

As life studies have assumed new proportions in the state as well as the national level, I have made a humble effort to understand a few remarkable Assamese lives. Scholars have been able to draw a general conclusion on the spirit of the age. But historians have made very little use of biographies and autobiographies in Assam. The Assamese life writings have great possibility in documenting the social and political history of Assam. My present concern is social history. I have taken a few select lives for study. It is partly an exercise to explore their attitude towards tradition and modernity. They symbolise Assamese life and culture at the threshold of modernisation. In carrying out this study, modernisation is taken to mean a popular term for the changes brought about in a country like India by contact, direct or indirect, with a Western country (Srinivas,2005,53). The 'modern' is an elusive construct. Modernity is, therefore, used to mean 'articulation of some variety of different elements, a multiplicity of institutional structures, cultural logics and social experiences' (Grossberg,2012,77). The formulation made by Alex Inkeles appears to be suitable for our purpose. According to Inkeles the salient features of modernity are:

1. Disposition to accept new ideas and try new methods;
2. A readiness to express opinion;
3. A sense of time that makes men more interested in the present and the future than the past;
4. A better sense of punctuality;
5. A greater concern for planning, organization and efficiency;
6. A tendency to see the world as calculable;
7. A faith in science and technology and
8. A belief in distributive justice. (Quoted in Murshid,1983,6)

There are precise and defining attributes which fit more into a backward colonial structure like India than any western society. We reckon them as the touchstone of novelty and progress.

A few remarkable lives are to be studied through the prism of

literature, particularly life writing. From a galaxy of successful figures, I have chosen nine 'representative' lives namely, Harakanta Sarma Majundar Barua (1815-1902), Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-59), Haribilash Agarwala (1842-1916), Anundoram Borooah (1850-89), Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1864-1938), Padmanath Gohain Barooah (1871-1946), Benudhar Rajkhowa (1872-1955), Rajabala Das (1893-1985) and Nalinibala Devi (1898-1977). Individually and collectively, they were interesting characters. They crossed the common frontiers of life. The names in the list are memorable for anyone familiar with the pulse of the Assamese nationality at its crucial stage of development. Assamese intellectual history has variously classified them; Harakanta Sarma Majundar Barua was a scion of the old gentry. He entered colonial bureaucracy at an early age. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was a pioneer of ideas and a lone upholder of community grievances; Haribilash Agarwala was a venture merchant and a literary enthusiast; Anundoram Borooah, a civilian and an erudite Sanskritist; Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Padmanath Gohain Barooah, the foremost literary figures with substantial contribution to Assamese literature and growth of what can be described as cultural nationalism in Assam; Benudhar Rajkhowa, a bureaucrat and author with dilemmatic social positions; Rajabala Das was a freedom fighter and a champion of women education; and Nalinibala Devi was a poet with a deep spiritual orientation and a commitment for nationalism. They knew that they were living in an exciting period of history when nationalists and a nation were clearly in the process of making. The accounts of their daily life, their world view, ties of kinship, creative and recreational activities, attitude to work and occupation, and response to nationalism produce a vast and colourful corpus of literature.

Assam became a Chief Commissioner's province in 1874. Its well-defined geography is etched in mind. For the purpose of my research 'Assam' means Assam in the Brahmaputra valley. Different cultural elements led to the making of Lakshminath Bezbaroa's extraordinary personality. It is beyond doubt that Bezbaroa would not

have become what he did had he not moved to Calcutta for higher education. Calcutta life provoked the reactive element of his mind, Calcutta gave him an opportunity to rediscover Assam and to explore its rich heritage.

John Eakin approached autobiography not only as a literary genre but also as a part of a lifelong process of identity formation (Eakin, 2008, 34). Lakshminath Bezbaroa's life in Calcutta seen through his autobiography was an interesting account of 'unhappy consciousness', reflection and brilliant endeavours. Other lives are also equally rich in variety and colour. Every single life calls for separate treatment and analysis and we have made modest effort to do justice to all of them. Each life tells us something in general about the socio-political issues of colonial Assam. They did not belong to the same age but they shared a common concern for Assam and the Assamese society. They came from some well-known families and made use of their worldly positions for the good of the land and its people. Compared to the previous generation, they had a lot of opportunities; they experienced social mobility under the colonial rule. They had the exposure to English education and were influenced by the Bengal Renaissance and 'Indian awakening'. They devoted their lives, in different ways for the improvement of Assamese life and culture. There was a gap of half a century between Harakanta Sarma Majundar Barua, the first autobiographer and Nalinibala Devi, the youngest one in the list. Collectively speaking, their 'after life' is longer than their real life and that is the defining qualification. Through their successful endeavours in different fields of work they earned a badge of immortality about them. They made their time meaningful. The life stories delineate characters and coherently bear out the spirit of the age. They are read and quoted extensively even today for illustration and inspiration. They correspond to a cross-section of the Assamese middle class and no history of Assam is complete without them. They looked back upon a segment of history in which they were participant observers. The review of those particular texts is carried out from

two angles viz; as works belonging to the genre of life writing and as historical documents prepared under a colonial context. While considering all the auto/biographers, one is aware of the warning wisely pronounced by Walter Jackson Bate that, 'it is through his eyes we see' (Backscheider,1999,4). So the praxis of the present study is cultural studies and social history.

Prosopography is a key tool for exploring any aspect of social history that involves an investigation of the common background of a sample group of personalities. It is a collective biography, describing the external features of a population group with something common in them. As a historical research tool, it developed in the late nineteenth century. It is an attempt to bring together all relevant biographical data of groups of persons in a systematic and stereotypical way (Verboven, n.d., 42,37,39). It is a collective study of a set of traits such as, birth and death, marriage, family, social origins, inherited economic and status position, place of residence, education, personal wealth, occupation, and religion. All kinds of biographical information found at hand from the select Assamese life writings are to be analysed and explained to reconstruct history. The making and being of a person is easily discussed in his family background. Prosopography illuminates the social context of a family and its members. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, an avid reader of European history was most likely aware of this. Very likely he partially experimented this approach in recreating the life of Anundoram Borooah; he visited all possible places, met people once having some contacts with him. He organised the scarce data, used his analytical power and historical imagination; after all he revealed connections and patterns that influenced the nineteenth century awakening.

Lawrence Stone highlighted the contribution of prosopography in understanding the social and political history of England during 1500-1660. In his view, it is more useful in social history, which is concerned with groups rather than individuals, ideas, or institutions. He also noted the limitation prosopography because almost everything

is known only about a well-documented section of people (Stone, 1987, 57, 66-73). Since the objective of the present study is to account for ideological affiliations and social contexts, therefore, this approach may be suitable as far as it goes.

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# ভক্তিদৰ্ম আৰু সমন্বিত অসমীয়া জাতিসত্তা

ড° মিলন নেওগ

ভক্তিদৰ্মৰ দ্বাৰা জনজাতীয় জীৱনধাৰাৰ ন-ৰূপ :

অসমৰ সমাজ জীৱনত বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিদৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ কেৱল ধৰ্মীয় দিশতে সীমাবদ্ধ নহয়; বৰং ধৰ্মীয় সংস্কাৰৰ মাজেদি এই ভক্তিদৰ্মই অসমত এক সাংস্কৃতিক জাগৰণৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিলে। ঔপনিবেশিক শাসন প্ৰতিষ্ঠা হোৱাৰ আগলৈকে অসমত জাতীয়তাবাদৰ বিকাশ হোৱাই নাছিল। তথাপি আহোম যুগৰ প্ৰশাসনিক শৃংখলাৰ মাজত ক্ষুদ্ৰ ক্ষুদ্ৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহ সোমাই পৰাৰ পিছত এক সমন্বিত জাতিসত্তা বিকাশৰ বুন্যাদ ৰচিত হৈছিল। ভক্তিদৰ্মই এই ক্ষেত্ৰত এক ঐতিহাসিক ভূমিকা পালন কৰিছিল। হীৰেন গোঁহায়ে কৈছে —

বস্তুগত, ভাবগত আৰু আৱেগিক তিনিও প্ৰকাৰ উপাদানেৰে এই আন্দোলনে অসমীয়া সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন অংশৰ মাজত নিবিড় বন্ধন ৰচনা কৰি গ'ল। আজি সেয়ে ধৰ্মবিশ্বাসৰ পিনৰ পৰা বা বীতি-নীতিৰ পিনৰ পৰা যিসকল মহাপুৰুষীয়া নহয়, তেওঁলোকেও গভীৰভাৱে উপলব্ধি কৰে যে তেওঁলোকৰ অসমীয়া পৰিচয়ৰ পটভূমিত মাত-কথা, আচাৰ-ব্যৱহাৰ, চিন্তাধাৰা আৰু মূল্যবোধত মহাপুৰুষীয়া ধৰ্মান্দোলনৰ এক প্ৰবল প্ৰভাৱ আছে।

আহোম ৰাজত্বৰ মূল ভিত্তিয়েই আছিল শোষণধৰ্মী সামন্তীয় ব্যৱস্থা। পাইক প্ৰজাৰ শাৰীৰিক শ্ৰমৰ ওপৰতে ৰাষ্ট্ৰৰ শক্তি-সামৰ্থ্য গঢ়ি উঠিছিল। ৰাজতন্ত্ৰই বুমিয়া জনজাতিসকলক গোষ্ঠীবন্ধন ভাঙি খেল-পাইক ব্যৱস্থাত সোমোৱাই লোৱাৰ জৰিয়তে স্থায়ী কৃষি ব্যৱস্থাৰ সামন্তবাদী স্তৰলৈ লৈ আহিছিল। কিন্তু সামন্তবাদী স্তৰলৈ অহা কৃষক সমাজে মানসিকভাৱে বহল আৰু উন্নত সংস্কৃতিৰ পৰিচয় পোৱা নাছিল। এনে পৰিবেশত

ভক্তিদৰ্শই আপেক্ষিকভাৱে উন্নত ধৰ্মীয় সাংস্কৃতিক আদৰ্শৰ লগত জনজীৱনক পৰিচয় কৰাই দিলে মূলত দুটা দিশেৰে। প্ৰথম, ভক্তিৰ আদৰ্শৰ মাজেৰে, দ্বিতীয়তে গণতান্ত্ৰিক সাম্য আদৰ্শৰ মাজেৰে। ইয়াৰ ভিত্তিতে স্থানীয় সংস্কৃতিৰ বসায়নেৰে শিল্পসুলভ ধৰ্মীয় ব্যৱস্থা এটা তুলি ধৰা হৈছিল। নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ ভক্তিৰ আদৰ্শৰ প্ৰধান দুটা দিশ হ'ল এজন মাথো ভগৱন্তৰ কল্পনা আৰু এই ভগৱন্তৰ ওচৰত নিৰ্চৰ্ত আত্মনিবেদন। ভক্তি-সাহিত্যত ভক্ত চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ এই আত্মনিবেদনৰ ভংগীবোৰৰ শিল্পমণ্ডিত আৰু আৱেগিক উপস্থাপনে ভক্তিৰ আদৰ্শক জনপ্ৰিয় কৰি তুলিছিল। ইতিমধ্যেই হিন্দু ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য সংস্কৃতাৱলম্বী প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ যোগেদি শাসকশ্ৰেণীক দেৱকুলীয় বা ক্ষত্ৰিয় বুলি উপাখ্যান ৰচনা কৰি প্ৰচাৰ কৰা হৈছিল। গতিকে ব্যক্তিসত্তাৰ স্বতন্ত্ৰ গৰিমাক তল পেলাই ভগৱন্তৰ সৰ্বময়, সৰ্বশক্তিমান স্বৰূপৰ উপলব্ধিৰে সেই শক্তিমান ভগৱন্তৰ চৰণত নিজকে অৰ্পণ কৰাৰ আদৰ্শই ৰজাৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰজাৰ আনুগত্য বৃদ্ধিত পৰোক্ষভাৱে সহায় কৰিলে।

অসমৰ মধ্যযুগৰ সত্ৰসমূহেই আছিল ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠানগত কেন্দ্ৰস্বৰূপ। ৰজাঘৰেও জনজাতীয় গোষ্ঠীজীৱনৰ পৰা অহা স্বাধীন মনা প্ৰজাক সামন্তীয় শোষণ ব্যৱস্থাৰ লগত সহায়স্থান কৰোৱাৰ স্বাৰ্থতে সত্ৰসমূহক নিজৰ মিত্ৰ কৰি ৰাখিব খুজিছিল আহোম শাসনতন্ত্ৰত হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰা বিশেষকৈ প্ৰভাৱ পৰা বিশেষকৈ আহোম ৰজাসকল সত্ৰৰ শৰণ-ব্যৱস্থাৰ সৈতে অংগীভূত হোৱাৰ পিছৰে পৰা। আহোম ৰজাৰ অভিষেকত সত্ৰাধিকাৰে নিৰ্মালি দান কৰা এক প্ৰকাৰ নিয়ম হৈ পৰিছিল। সত্ৰাধিকাৰৰ নিৰ্বাচনতো (বা অধিষ্ঠানত) ৰজাঘৰে অনুমোদন জনাইছিল। আনকি বিদ্ৰোহৰ সত্তাৱনা থকা জনজাতীয় প্ৰজাক শৰণ লগাবলৈ ৰজাঘৰে সত্ৰক নিয়োগ কৰিছিল। গতিকে সত্ৰৰ শৰণ ব্যৱস্থাৰ জৰিয়তে জনজাতীয় প্ৰজা আহোম প্ৰশাসনিক শৃংখলাৰ অনুগত হৈ পৰিছিল। এনেদৰেই সত্ৰক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি আহোম প্ৰশাসনৰ মাজত বিভিন্ন জনজাতিৰ সংমিশ্ৰণ আৰু সমন্বয়ৰ মাজেৰে অসমীয়া জাতিসত্তাই ঠন ধৰি উঠিছিল।

আহোম শাসনৰ শেষৰ ফালে ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ হাত সন্মিলিতভাৱে আশ্ৰয় লোৱা জনজাতীয় প্ৰজাই ৰাজতন্ত্ৰৰ শোষণ-অৱদমনৰ বিৰুদ্ধে মাৰ বান্ধি ঠিয় দিলে। সকলোবোৰ সত্ৰ ৰাজতন্ত্ৰৰ মিত্ৰ হোৱা নাছিল। বিশেষকৈ কালসংহতিৰ মায়ামৰা সত্ৰসমূহত ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ গণতান্ত্ৰিক উদাৰ ধাৰাটো তেতিয়াও সক্ৰিয় হৈ আছিল। গুৰুৰ প্ৰতি একান্ত আস্থা আৰু অবিচল ভক্তি আছিল এই সত্ৰসমূহৰ অন্যতম প্ৰধান আদৰ্শ। সেয়ে ঐতিহাসিক মায়ামৰীয়া বিদ্ৰোহৰ যোগেদি এই সত্ৰসমূহৰ আশ্ৰয়তে বিক্ষুব্ধ প্ৰজাই শক্তিশালী আহোম ৰাজতন্ত্ৰৰ ভেটি কঁপাই তুলিলে। অৱশ্যে, বিদ্ৰোহৰ নেতৃত্ব দিয়াসকলেই শেষলৈ গণতান্ত্ৰিক উদাৰতা আৰু মানৱতাবাদী সাম্যৰ চেতনা ধৰি ৰাখিব নোৱাৰিলে।

আহোম শাসনৰ অৱক্ষয়ৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে সত্ৰসমূহৰো গতিশীল ভূমিকা কমি আহিল আৰু ঔপনিবেশিক যুগত সত্ৰসমূহৰ সৰহ অংশ নিজেই জাতপাতৰ প্ৰথাপুষ্ট বিচাৰেৰে ধৰ্মীয় সংকীৰ্ণতাৰ খোলাত সোমাই পৰিল (পঞ্চম অধ্যায় দ্ৰ.)। পণ্য অৰ্থনীতিৰ লেহেমীয়া বিকাশ আৰু বাণিজ্যৰ প্ৰসাৰ নোহোৱাৰ বাবেই ভক্তিধৰ্মক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি জনজাতিসকলক সামৰি এটা জাতিসত্তা গঢ়াৰ প্ৰক্ৰিয়া অসম্পূৰ্ণ হৈ ব'ল।<sup>১</sup> কিন্তু মধ্যযুগত ভক্তিধৰ্মই ৰাজতন্ত্ৰৰ সহায়ত গঢ়ি তোলা বুনিয়াদৰ ভিত্তিতহে ঔপনিবেশিক যুগত অসমীয়া জাতীয়তাবাদৰ বিকাশ হোৱাটো সম্ভৱপৰ হ'ল।

অসমীয়া জাতিসত্তা বিকাশত অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ প্ৰসংগটো মন কৰিবলগীয়া। অসমৰ বিভিন্ন ভাষিক গোষ্ঠীৰ নিজা নিজা ভাষা থকা সত্ত্বেও ঐতিহাসিকভাৱেই অসমীয়া ভাষা সংযোগী ভাষা হিচাপে ব্যৱহাৰ হৈ আহিছে। আহোম শাসনতন্ত্ৰইও অসমৰ ভাষিক পৰিস্থিতি অনুধাৱন কৰি অসমীয়া ভাষাকে প্ৰশাসনিক ক্ষেত্ৰত ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছিল। প্ৰাক্ ঔপনিবেশিক কালত অসমীয়া ভাষাক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি ভাষিক চেতনা বিকাশ হোৱা নাছিল। কিন্তু আহোমসকলে অসমীয়া ভাষাক জাতীয় ভাষা হিচাপে বিকাশৰ ৰাজনৈতিক পৰিবেশ ৰচনা কৰাৰ দৰে নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মইও সাংস্কৃতিকভাৱে অসমীয়া ভাষাক সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ উমৈহতীয়া ভাষা হিচাপে বিকাশত সহায় কৰিছিল। ৰুছী ৰজা মহামাণিক্যই মাধৱ কন্দলিক 'ৰামায়ণ'<sup>২</sup> ৰচনাত পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা আগবঢ়োৱাৰ পৰা কোচ ৰজা নৰনাৰায়ণৰ পৃষ্ঠপোষকতাত শংকৰদেৱে কাব্যচৰ্চা কৰাৰ কথাও এই প্ৰসংগত উল্লেখযোগ্য। সত্ৰসমূহৰ জৰিয়তে জনজাতিসমূহে ভক্তিধৰ্ম আকৌৱালি লোৱাৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে শংকৰদেৱ-মাধৱদেৱ আৰু অন্যান্য সন্তসকলৰ ভক্তিমূলক সাহিত্যৰ যোগেদি অসমীয়া ভাষা ধৰ্মীয় চৰ্চাৰ মাধ্যম হৈ পৰিছিল। চৰিত-তোলা আৰু ভাওনাৰ মাজেদিও ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ নৈতিক-আধ্যাত্মিক আদৰ্শৰ চৰ্চা হৈছিল। ভক্তিধৰ্মই অসমৰ জনজীৱনক ক্ষুদ্ৰ গোষ্ঠীগত পৰিচয়ৰ অতিৰিক্ত বহল 'অসমীয়া' পৰিচয়ৰ মাজলৈ উত্তৰণ ঘটাইছিল আৰু আদৰ্শগত আৰু আচাৰপ্ৰধান দুয়ো দিশতে ভাৰতীয় ঐতিহ্যৰ লগতো পৰিচয় কৰাই দিছিল।<sup>৩</sup> ধৰ্মীয় আখ্যানসমূহৰ সৰ্বভাৰতীয় পটভূমি এই ক্ষেত্ৰত এটা উদাহৰণ। এনে প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ মাজেদি টাই আহোম, চুতীয়া, মৰাণ, সোণোৱাল কছাৰী, ঠেঙ্গাল কছাৰী আদি গোষ্ঠীয়ে নিজৰ ভাষা পাহৰি অসমীয়া ভাষাকে মাতৃভাষাকাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰিলে। অসমীয়া ভাষী হৈ পৰাৰ জৰিয়তে তেওঁলোক গভীৰভাৱে অসমীয়া জাতিৰ আধাৰ হৈ পৰিল।<sup>৪</sup>

নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰচাৰ কেন্দ্ৰ স্বৰূপ সত্ৰসমূহৰ শৰণ ব্যৱস্থাৰ যোগেদি জনজাতিসকলৰ সংস্কৃতিয়ন প্ৰক্ৰিয়াটোৱে নতুন গতি লাভ কৰিছিল। ফলত জনজাতি সমাজখনত সামাজিক স্তৰ বিভাজনৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছিল।

শৰণীয়া জনজাতীয়ৰ পৰা সৰু কোঁচ, সৰু কোঁচৰ পৰা বৰকোঁচ, আনকি বেলেগ ঠাইত (ঠাইলৈ) উঠি গৈ বৰকোঁচৰ পৰা কেওট-কলিতাৰ শাৰীলৈকে উঠি অহাৰো দৃষ্টান্ত আছে বাস্তৱ জীৱনত।

সামাজ জীৱনত ঘটা এনেধৰণৰ উৰ্দ্ধমুখী সামাজিক সচলতাৰ ধাৰাতে অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহ ঝুমিয়া জনজাতি স্তৰৰ পৰা হিন্দু জাতিলৈ ৰূপান্তৰ হৈ অসমীয়া ভাষা গ্ৰহণৰ যোগেদি ভাৰতীয় ঐতিহ্যৰ লগত পৰিচিত হৈ পৰিছিল। অসমীয়া জাতিসত্তা গঠনত ই এক তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ ঘটনা।

আনহাতে, পৰিৱৰ্তিত সামাজিক পৰিস্থিতিত এনেধৰণৰ উৰ্দ্ধমুখী সামাজিক সচলতাৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠানিক স্বীকৃতি এসময়ত বন্ধ হৈ গৈছিল। ফলত শৰণীয়া, মদাহী, বিতলীয়া, কোঁচ আদি স্তৰত বৈ যোৱা গোটবোৰ একো একোটা সুকীয়া নৃগোষ্ঠী হিচাপে লাহে লাহে পৰিচিত হৈ পৰিল। কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্ৰত বাস্তৱ জীৱনত উল্লিখিত একোটা স্তৰৰ আটাইবোৰ লক্ষণ বা বৈশিষ্ট্য অতিক্ৰম কৰাৰ পিছতো সেই সেই স্তৰৰ আনুষ্ঠানিক পৰিচয়েৰে পৰিচিত হৈ ৰ'ল। উদাহৰণ স্বৰূপে, উজনি অসমৰ কোঁচসকলৰ লগত বৰ্ণহিন্দুসকলৰ আচাৰ-ৰীতি, ধৰ্ম-সংস্কৃতিৰ বিশেষ কোনো পাৰ্থক্য নাই যদিও তেওঁলোক নামনিৰ কোঁচ (কোঁচ-ৰাজবংশী) সকলৰ লগত একে গোষ্ঠী পৰিচয়েৰে অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত হৈ বৈ গ'ল। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এনে সামাজিক সচলতাৰ বিষয়টো অত্যন্ত স্পষ্ট হৈ আছে—

It is true that before Sankardeva came and propagated his Vaisnabism in Assam at that time this tribe was not called Saranias.... There were majority of Saranias who performed religious ceremonies according to Vaisabite rules without Brahmin priests. It should be noted that before Sankardeva propagated his Vaisnabism, these Sarania Kacharies were converted to Hinduism and called themselves Kshatriya.

উল্লিখিত সামাজিক সচলতাৰে 'জাতত উঠা' প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ বিপৰীতে উজনি অসমত কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্ৰত জনজাতি লোকে নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণ কৰি কেইটামান প্ৰজন্মৰ ভিতৰতে (জনজাতীয় আচাৰ-সংস্কাৰ ত্যাগ কৰি, বৰ্ণহিন্দু উপাধি গ্ৰহণ কৰি) পোনে পোনে হিন্দু সমাজখনত মিলি গৈছিল। ৰজাঘৰীয়া চাৰিসত্ৰ আৰু ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য আচাৰপ্ৰধান সত্ৰসমূহৰ বাহিৰে অব্ৰাহ্মণ সত্ৰসমূহৰ মাজত ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ উদাৰ গণতান্ত্ৰিক ধাৰাটো প্ৰবল হৈ থকাৰ ফলতে আৰু জনজাতিসকলৰ সংখ্যাগৰিষ্ঠতাৰ কাৰণে এনে স্তৰহীন সামাজিক সচলতা ঘটিব পাৰিছিল। মটকসকলৰ কথাও এই প্ৰসংগত উল্লেখযোগ্য। নৱবৈষ্ণৱ

ভক্তিদৰ্মৰ কালসংহতি খাৰাৰ অনিৰুদ্ধদেৱৰ পৰা বঢ়া সত্ৰসমূহ মায়ামৰা আৰু এই সত্ৰসমূহৰ শিষ্যসকল মোৰামৰীয়া সম্প্ৰদায় হিচাপে পৰিচিত হৈ পৰিছিল। মায়ামৰা সত্ৰত মৰাণসকলৰ উপৰি কছাৰী, আহোম, চুতীয়া আদি জনগোষ্ঠীৰ লোকেও শৰণ লৈছিল। এই আটাইবোৰ শিষ্যই কালক্ৰমত 'মটক' নামেৰে পৰিচিত হৈ পৰিল। ভক্তিদৰ্ম গ্ৰহণৰ জৰিয়তে এনেদৰে নৃগোষ্ঠীয় সত্তাৰ প্ৰসাৰণ অসমৰ সামাজিক ইতিহাসৰ অন্য এক তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ ঘটনা।

উনবিংশ শতিকাও অসমীয়া ভাষিক জাতীয়তাবাদৰ বিকাশৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে 'জোনাকী'ৰ আলোচনীৰ মাজতে শংকৰদেৱক জাতীয় ঐতিহ্যৰ আদৰ্শ হিচাপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰাৰ প্ৰচেষ্টা আৰম্ভ হ'ল। বিংশ শতিকাৰ দ্বিতীয় দশকতে লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাৰ 'শ্ৰীশ্ৰীশংকৰদেৱ আৰু শ্ৰীশ্ৰীমাধৱদেৱ' গ্ৰন্থ দুখন প্ৰকাশ হৈ ওলায়। চৰিত পুথিৰ পৰম্পৰাৰ পৰা আঁতৰি আধুনিকতামুখী দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে শংকৰদেৱ চৰ্চাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এই গ্ৰন্থ দুখন প্ৰথম মাইলৰ খুঁটি। আৰ্থ-সামাজিক, ৰাজনৈতিক আনকি ধৰ্মীয় ক্ষেত্ৰতো নেতৃত্ব বহন কৰা মধ্যবিত্ত শ্ৰেণীটোৱেই শংকৰদেৱৰ ধৰ্ম আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক অৱদানবোৰক অসমীয়া জাতীয় জীৱনৰ আটাইতকৈ মূল্যবান সম্পদ হিচাপে দাঙি ধৰিলে। আনহাতে, লোক-সাংস্কৃতিক দিশত জনজাতিসমূহৰ এক বৈভৱস্বাদ পৰম্পৰা থাকিলেও তেওঁলোক শৈক্ষিক আৰু আৰ্থিকভাৱে ভক্তিদৰ্ম অনুগামী বৰ্ণহিন্দু সমাজখনৰ তুলনাত যথেষ্ট পাছ পৰি আছিল। ভাষিকভাৱেও তেওঁলোক দ্বিভাষিক হ'বলৈ বাধ্য হৈছিল। আধুনিক ধ্যান-ধাৰণা আৰু পৰিবৰ্তনৰ চেতনাও তেওঁলোকে অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ মাধ্যমেৰেহে লাভ কৰিব পাৰিছিল। এনে ক্ষেত্ৰত অসমীয়া-ভাষী সমাজখনৰ ধৰ্ম, কলা-সংস্কৃতি তথা জীৱন-পদ্ধতি জনজাতীয় সমাজখনে অনুসৰণ কৰিবলৈ লৈছিল। ফলত, ভক্তিদৰ্মৰ আধ্যাত্মিক চিন্তা-চেতনা, আচাৰ-ৰীতি, কলা-শিল্প পৰম্পৰা, খাদ্যাভ্যাস, মাত-কথা আদিও জনজাতীয় জীৱন প্ৰবাহত সোমাই পৰিল। এনেদৰেই মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তিদৰ্ম গ্ৰহণ নকৰা লোকসকলৰ মাজতো ভক্তিদৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ বিয়পি পৰিছিল।

শংকৰদেৱে নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিদৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কৰাৰ পৰা একবিংশ শতিকাৰ আৰম্ভণি পৰ্যন্ত অসমৰ মংগোলীয় মূলীয় নৃগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰো জীৱনধাৰাৰ গতি সলনি হৈ আহিছে। মধ্য যুগৰ (আহোম শাসন কালৰ) আৰ্থ-সামাজিক, ৰাজনৈতিক প্ৰেক্ষাপটত ধৰ্মৰ যিধৰণৰ গভীৰ তাৎপৰ্য আছিল আধুনিক সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থাত সেইয়া নোহোৱা হৈছে। আধুনিক শিক্ষা, ন্যায় ব্যৱস্থা, চিকিৎসা পদ্ধতি, যোগাযোগ-পৰিবহন ব্যৱস্থাৰ সম্প্ৰসাৰণ আদিৰ যোগেদি স্বাভাৱিকতেই পৰম্পৰাগত বহু আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠান, যাদুমূলক বিশ্বাস, তথা সামাজিক গাঁথনিৰ ব্যাপক পৰিবৰ্তন ঘটিছে।

এনে ক্ষেত্ৰত জনজাতীয় সমাজ আৰু সংস্কৃতিৰ কোনবোৰ উপাদান ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ পৰম্পৰাৰ পৰা আহৰণ কৰা সেই কথা বহু সময়ত নিশ্চিতভাৱে বাচি উলিওৱাটো সম্ভৱ নহয়। সুদীৰ্ঘকালীন সমন্বয়-সংমিশ্ৰণৰ স্বাভাৱিক প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰে জনজাতীয় আৰু অ-জনজাতীয় জীৱন-সংস্কৃতিৰ দ্বৈতধাৰাৰ সংযোগতে অসমীয়া সংস্কৃতিৰ বিকাশ হৈছে। মহাপুৰুষীয়া সংস্কৃতি এই অসমীয়া সংস্কৃতিৰে এটা গহীন সুঁতি। সময়ৰ সোঁতত নানা ঐতিহাসিক পৰিস্থিতিত মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তিদৰ্শতো নানা পৰিবৰ্তন ঘটি গৈছে। এই ভক্তিদৰ্শ দৃঢ়ভাৱে একেশ্বৰবাদী। স্মাৰ্ত-বিধি ব্যৱস্থাৰ শুদ্ধিকৰণ (অশৌচ)-ৰ ঠাইত একান্তভাৱে নাম-কীৰ্তনেৰেই সকলো ধৰণৰ শুদ্ধিকৰণৰ আদৰ্শ ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ বিশেষত্ব। এই ধৰ্মত হৰিনাম কীৰ্তনত জাতি-বৰ্ণভেদ নাই, যোগ্যতা অনুসৰি শূদ্ৰইও উচ্চস্থান পাব পাৰে। কিন্তু সময়ত দেখা গ'ল একে ভক্তিদৰ্শ পৰম্পৰাৰ ভিতৰতে হিন্দু দেৱ-দেৱীকো পূজা-সেৱা কৰা, তন্ত্ৰপ্ৰধান দীক্ষা ব্যৱস্থাবে স্মৃতি আচাৰ-ৰীতিক প্ৰাধান্য দিয়া সবল সুঁতি এটাও প্ৰবাহিত হ'ল। এই ধৰ্মৰ গণতান্ত্ৰিক পৰম্পৰাটোত বহুক্ষেত্ৰত বংশানুক্ৰমিক গুৰু পৰম্পৰাৰ সূচনা হ'ল; গুৰু-শিষ্যৰ সম্পৰ্কটোতো পৰিবৰ্তন আহিল। ইয়াৰ ফলতো জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ কিছুমান মৌলিক পৰিবৰ্তন সত্ৰৰ মাজেদিয়েই ঘটিল। সেই পৰিবৰ্তনবোৰে জনজাতীয় সমাজখনত হিন্দু সমাজ-পদ্ধতি দৃঢ়ভাৱে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিলেও ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ একেশ্বৰ-বাদী সবল আচাৰ-ৰীতিৰ গণতান্ত্ৰিক দিশটোৰ ঘনিষ্ঠ কৰাব নোৱাৰিলে।

সত্ৰসমূহৰ মাজেদিয়েই বাস্তৱতে ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ সাংস্কৃতিক ৰূপ আৰু আদৰ্শবোৰ প্ৰবাহিত হৈ আহিছে। কিন্তু সময়ৰ লগে লগে সত্ৰসমূহৰ মাজতে চাৰি সংহতিৰ উপৰি অত্ৰাস্ৰাগ সত্ৰ, ব্ৰাহ্মণ সত্ৰ, শাক্ত সত্ৰ, মায়ামৰীয়া সত্ৰ আদি কেবাটাও শাখাৰ সৃষ্টি হ'ল। সেয়ে কুৰি শতিকাত লিখিত পাঠ (মহাপুৰুষৰ ৰচনা)ৰ ভিত্তিত পুনৰ নিৰ্মাণেৰে ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ পৰম্পৰাটোৰ সংস্কাৰ জাগৰণ হ'ল। এনে অৱস্থাত আলোচ্য বিষয়টোৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ ঐতিহ্যৰ কোনোটো ধাৰাকে একমাত্ৰ আদৰ্শ হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰা হোৱা নাই। এই ঐতিহ্যটোৰ আটাইকেইটা ধাৰাৰ যেনেধৰণৰ প্ৰভাৱে জনজাতীয় সমাজ গাঁথনি, ধৰ্মীয় শৃংখলা আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱন ধাৰাত গভীৰ ছাপ পেলাইছে, সেই দিশবোৰহে আলোচনাৰ মাজলৈ অনা হৈছে।

### ধৰ্মীয় আদৰ্শ

সত্ৰসমূহেই ভক্তিদৰ্শ পৰম্পৰাৰ কৰ্তৃত্বশীল কেন্দ্ৰ হিচাপে জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত ভক্তিদৰ্শ প্ৰচাৰ কৰি আহিছে। উল্লেখ যে সত্ৰ এখনৰ মান-মৰ্যাদা আৰু শক্তি-সামৰ্থ্য শিষ্যৰ সংখ্যাৰ ওপৰত ভালেখিনি নিৰ্ভৰ কৰিছিল। সেয়ে সত্ৰাধিকাৰসকলে শিষ্যৰ সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধিত যথেষ্ট গুৰুত্ব দিছিল। শিষ্য সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধিৰ লগে লগে 'গুৰু কৰ'



আৰু দান-বৰঙণিৰে সত্ৰৰ ঐশ্বৰ্য্যও বৃদ্ধি পাইছিল। মিছিংসকলৰ ওপৰত সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱ সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰোঁতে নোমল পেগুৱে কৈছে—

বিংশ শিতকাৰ চম্ভিছৰ দশকলৈ কেবাখনো সত্ৰৰ সত্ৰাধিকাৰে সাজোপাজ লৈ নাৱেৰে উজাই আহি ‘গুৰু কৰ’ সংগ্ৰহ কৰিছিল। গুৰু কৰ’ বুলিলে সেই সময়ত দুই সেৰ চাউল, দুই সেৰ সবীয়হ, দুই সেৰ মাটিমাহ আৰু নগদ এশিকিৰ পৰা ৫ টা পৰ্যন্ত দিব লগা হৈছিল। অকাল মাৰি-মৰকৰ দিনতো এই নিৰ্দিষ্ট পৰিমাণৰ গুৰু কৰৰ পৰা বেহাই পোৱা নাছিল। আৰু অৱস্থাই বাধ্য নকৰিলে ধৰ্ম প্ৰাণ মিছিংলোকে গুৰু কৰ দিয়াত আওহেলা নকৰিছিল।\*

সৰলচিঠীয়া জনজাতীয় লোকসকলে সত্ৰৰ গোসাঁইসকলক জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ পুৰোহিতৰ দৰেই ঐশীশক্তিধৰ লোক বুলি সন্মান কৰিছিল। শৰণ দিওঁতেও সত্ৰাধিকাৰসকলে নিজকে গুৰু ৰূপেই পৰিচয় কৰাইছিল। কোনো কোনো সত্ৰই শঙ্কৰদেৱ মাধৱদেৱ নাম গুৰুস্থান ৰখাই নাছিল।\* এনেদৰে সাধাৰণ শিষ্যবৰ্গৰ বাবে সত্ৰাধিকাৰ হৈ পৰিছিল প্ৰভু ঈশ্বৰ।

সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱত জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনত হিন্দু আদৰ্শ বিভিন্ন পৰ্যায়ত গভীৰভাৱে শিপাই গ’ল যদিও ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ সৰল একেশ্বৰবাদী আদৰ্শই জনগোষ্ঠীয় পৰম্পৰাক ঢাকি পেলাব নোৱাৰিলে। সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱৰ ফলত জনজাতীয় সমাজখনত ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ একোটা জনজাতীয় সংস্কৰণ সৃষ্টি হ’ল। সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱত মিছিং সমাজত গা কৰি উঠা এনে ধৰ্মক ‘কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্ম’ বুলি জনা যায়। কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্মত গাঁওখনৰ লগত সত্ৰৰ যোগাযোগ ৰক্ষাকাৰীজনক সাধু বোলা হয়।\*\* সাধুৰ তলতে সাতোলা, মেধদি আদি কেতবাতপৰীয়া ভকত থাকে। কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্মানুগামী বহুলোকে শঙ্কৰদেৱ বুলিলে শিৱ-শঙ্কৰকহে বুজে। এই ধৰ্মৰ আধাৰগ্ৰন্থও ‘কীৰ্ত্তন-ঘোষা’ বা ‘নামঘোষা’ নহয় বৰং ‘কেৱল-ঘোষা’ আদি অৰ্বাচীন গ্ৰন্থহে (চতুৰ্থ অধ্যায় দ্ৰ.) কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰধান অনুষ্ঠান হ’ল ‘বৰসেৱা’। নৰেন্দ্ৰ নাথ দত্তই ক্ষেত্ৰ অধ্যয়নৰ ভিত্তিত কৈছে যে মাজুলীৰ ষাঠি শতাংশ মিচিংলোকে ‘বৰসেৱা’ পাত।† অৱশ্যে আহোম, মৰাণ, তিৱা আদি জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতো প্ৰায় একে ধৰণে ‘বৰসেৱা’ অনুষ্ঠান পতা দেখা যায়। বৰসেৱা অনুষ্ঠানৰ মনসকবিলগীয়া দিশ হ’ল ইয়াৰ গোপনীয়তা আৰু মদৰ ব্যাপক ব্যৱহাৰ। মিছিংসকলে গাঁৱৰ ৰাজহুৱা নামঘৰতে চাৰিওফালে বেৰা দি এই অনুষ্ঠান পাতে।

অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ভিতৰত মিচিং, আহোম, মৰাণ, মটক, তিৱা, কোচ আদি যিবোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত ভক্তি ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ তুলনামূলকভাৱে ব্যাপক, সেইবোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতে বৰসেৱাৰ দৰে ৰাতি অনুষ্ঠিত হোৱা গোপনীয় অনুষ্ঠানৰ প্ৰচলনো

বেছি। এই গোপন পন্থা সম্বন্ধে আগ্ৰহী পাঠকে চাব পাৰে (N.N. Dutta ৰ 'Obscure Religious practices among some Vaishnavas of Assam') বৰসেৱাও লোকাৱ্যত ধৰ্মাৰ ওপৰত বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱৰ ফলত সৃষ্টি হোৱা গোপন ধৰ্মপন্থাৰে অংশ।<sup>১০</sup> সত্ৰসমূহৰ শিষ্য বঢ়োৱা নীতিৰ ফলত জনজাতিসকলৰ ওপৰত বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ গভীৰ নহৈ উপৰোৱা হৈ ব'ল। এনেদৰে, মিছিংসকলৰ কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্মৰ অনুৰূপ ধৰণে বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত কিছুমান সুকীয়া ধৰ্মপন্থাৰ সৃষ্টি হ'ল। হাজংসকলৰ দুটা স্বীকৃত বিভাগ এন্ডেলে আলোচনা কৰিছে,<sup>১১</sup> সেই দুটা হ'ল— ব্যৱসাৰি আৰু পাৰমাৰ্থি। পাৰমাৰ্থিসকল বৈষ্ণৱ আৰু তেওঁলোকে মদ-গাহৰি নাখায়। বৰসাৰিসকল শাক্ত, গাৰোসকলৰ দৰে সমধৰ্মী পৰম্পৰাগত ধৰ্মই পালন কৰে। শৰণীয়া জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতো পূৰ্ণধাৰা (মাসংহাৰী) আৰু পুঠিমেইছা (শাকাহাৰী) নামেৰে দুটা ধৰ্মী পন্থা আছে। কাৰ্বিসকলৰ একাংশ 'লখীমন ধৰ্ম'ৰ অনুগামী। আদৰ্শগতভাৱে এই ধৰ্ম একেশ্বৰবাদী বলি বিধানো নাই আৰু কোনো সামাজিক বা ধৰ্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানতে মদৰ ব্যৱহাৰ নাই। এই ধৰ্ম মূলত মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ অনুপ্ৰেৰণাত হিন্দু কাৰ্বিসকলৰ পৰম্পৰাগত লোকধৰ্মৰ সংস্কাৰমূলক সংস্কৰণ বুলিব পাৰি।

কুৰি শতিকাৰ তৃতীয় দশকত শংকৰ সঙ্ঘৰ নেতৃত্বত জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত ভক্তিধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ নতুন প্ৰচেষ্টা চলিল। ইতিমধ্যে জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজৰ পৰাও শিক্ষিত শ্ৰেণী এটা বিকাশ হ'ব ধৰিলে। ইয়াৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে বৈজ্ঞানিক চিকিৎসা-ব্যৱস্থাৰ প্ৰসাৰ, যোগাযোগ-পৰিবহন ব্যৱস্থাৰ সম্প্ৰসাৰণ আৰু আধুনিক নাগৰিক জীৱনৰ লগত পৰিচয় লাভ কৰাৰ ফলত জনজাতীয় জীৱনধাৰালৈ স্বাভাৱিকতে পৰিৱৰ্তন আহিল। এনে পটভূমিতে কুৰি শতিকাৰ মাজভাগৰ পৰা মিছিং সমাজত ধৰ্মীয় সংস্কাৰ জাগৰণ এটাৰ সূচনা হৈছিল। ইয়াৰ ফলত মিছিং সমাজত ভাগৱতীয়া, হৰিধনীয়া, নিগুণীয়া আদি ধৰ্মীয় পন্থাৰ বিকাশ ঘটিল। শদিয়া চিলাপথাৰ অঞ্চলত ভাগৱতীয়া পন্থী লোক আছে।

তেওঁলোকৰ নিজস্ব নামঘৰ আছে কিন্তু স্বয়ম্ভু গুৰুৱে শৰণ আদি দিলে। সাজপাৰ, থকাঘৰ বা বাহিক, ব্যৱহাৰ আন মিছিঙৰ দৰে। কিন্তু ধৰ্মীয় আচাৰ পদ্ধতি শংকৰী ধৰ্মৰ অনুগামী যেনেই লাগে। কুকুৰা-গাহৰি বলি নিদি নাম কীৰ্ত্তন গাই সকলো পূজা সম্পন্ন কৰে। অৱশ্যে আনে প্ৰস্তুত কৰি দিয়া কুকুৰা গাহৰি আৰু আপং বিনা দ্বিধাই গ্ৰহণ কৰে। তেওঁলোকে চাংঘৰতে থাকে আৰু বিয়াবাৰুৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অপূৰ্ণ বিচাৰ মানি চলে।<sup>১২</sup>

ধেমাজি অঞ্চলৰ মিচিংসকলৰ মাজত শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সঙ্ঘৰ আৰ্হিৰ 'শ্ৰীমন্ত

শঙ্কৰদেৱ সৰ্বোদয় সংঘ' নামৰ অনুষ্ঠান এটা আছে। এওঁলোকে মদৰ ব্যৱহাৰ নকৰে, বলি বিধান নামানে, নাম কীৰ্ত্তনেৰে ধৰ্মীয় কাম-কাজ কৰে। অৱশ্যে পৰম্পৰাগ ধৰ্ম সংস্কৃতিৰো ভালেখিনি সংস্কাৰৰ মাজেদি পালন কৰে। এওঁলোকে শৱ দাহ নকৰি পুতি থয়।<sup>১৬</sup> একেদৰে ১৯৮০ চনত শোণিতপুৰ জিলাৰ গহপুৰৰ দক্ষিণ-পূৱত বালিগাঁও হৰি মন্দিৰত মূলত মিছিং জনগোষ্ঠীৰ লোকেৰে 'শ্ৰীশ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ নামধৰ্ম জনজাতি সমাজ' নামৰ অনুষ্ঠান এটা জন্ম হয়। অনুষ্ঠানটোৰ সাংগঠনিক গাঁথনিও শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সঙ্ঘৰ অনুৰূপ। এই অনুষ্ঠানটোৰ বিস্তৃতি চিলাপথাৰৰ পৰা গহপুৰলৈকে বিয়পি আছে। মনকৰিবলগীয়া যে এই অনুষ্ঠানটোৰ নীতি-আদৰ্শ, সাংগঠনিক গাঁথনি শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সঙ্ঘৰ আধাৰত হ'লেও অনুষ্ঠানটোৰ ভালেকেইখন সত্ৰ আছে। ধেমাজি জিলাৰ ৰাজাখানা গোবিন্দপুৰ সত্ৰ, গহপুৰৰ বেলগুৰি সত্ৰ আদি। এই সত্ৰসমূহৰ সত্ৰাধিকাৰো মিছিং জনগোষ্ঠীৰ লোক। এই অনুষ্ঠানৰ অনুগামীসকলে মাটিৰত বাস কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে।

নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিদৰ্শ স্বৰূপতে এটা সাংস্কৃতিক জাগৰণ আছিল। প্ৰথাপুষ্ট কঠোৰ আচাৰ-ৰীতিৰ আৱৰণ ভেদি মানৱীয় সাম্যৰ বাণী প্ৰচাৰ কৰাৰ উপৰি ভক্তি আন্দোলনে ধৰ্মীয় প্ৰকাৰ্যবোৰৰ মাজেদিও এক সাংস্কৃতিক চেতনা সঞ্চারিত কৰিব পাৰিছিল। সংগীতযুক্ত পৰিশীলিত উপাসনা পদ্ধতিৰ (নাম-কীৰ্ত্তন) শিল্পসুৰমাই ভক্তি ধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণ নকৰা লোককো আকৰ্ষিত কৰিব পাৰে। একে ভৌগোলিক পৰিমণ্ডলত বসবাস কৰা বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠী মাজত সাংস্কৃতিক আদান-প্ৰদান তথা প্ৰভাৱৰ জৰিয়তেই জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতিত ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ উপাসনা পদ্ধতিৰ অছেদ্য প্ৰলেপ পৰিল। জনজাতীয় ভাষাৰ তুলনাত অধিক শক্তিশালী আৰু প্ৰভাৱশালী অসমীয়া ভাষাই সেই নাম-কীৰ্ত্তন বা গীত-পদবোৰৰ মাধ্যম হোৱাত ভাষিক প্ৰভাৱৰ জৰিয়তেই জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতিত ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ উপাসনা পদ্ধতিৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰিল।

ভক্তিদৰ্শৰ প্ৰভাৱৰ এটা তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ দিশ পৰিলক্ষিত হয়— জনজাতীয় উপাসনা থলীবোৰৰ (থান) ক্ষেত্ৰত। বহুক্ষেত্ৰত এই থানবোৰ এলাগী হৈ পৰিছে, কেতিয়াবা নোহোৱা হৈছে আৰু তাৰ ঠাই লৈছে নামঘৰে। কেতিয়াবা থানবোৰৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে একোটা নামঘৰ গঢ়ি উঠিছে। কোনো কোনো ঠাইত জনজাতীয় পূজা-থানবোৰৰ স্থাপত্য ৰীতিত আৰু পৰিচালনা ৰীতিত নামঘৰৰ আৰ্হি সোমাই পৰিছে। সৰুপেটাৰ মাজাৰগাঁও (পূৰ্বতে শন্যাপাৰা, শৰমীয়াপাৰা বুলি কৈছিল,) তাঁতীকুঁচি, শিয়ালমাৰি, গেদমাৰা, কটলপাৰা, বৰতাৰী আদি বড়ো বসতিপ্ৰধান গাঁওবোৰত একোটাকৈ নামঘৰ আছে। গাঁৱৰ কাৰোবাৰ বিয়া-বাৰু হ'লে নামঘৰত তামোল-পাণ দি যায়, কইনা নামঘৰত প্ৰথমে সেৱা কৰায়।

বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলিৰ পৰা প্ৰায় পোন্ধৰ কিঃমিঃ উত্তৰে থকা পাউৰৈ ওচৰৰ কাৰ্বিগাঁৱৰ পূজাথলীৰ আৰ্হি নামঘৰৰ দৰে। মুখৰফালে খোলা দুচলীয়া এটা ঘৰৰ এমূৰে পথালিকৈ এটা সৰু একোঠলীয়া ঘৰ আছে। ঘৰটোৰ ভিতৰত এটা মাটিৰ টিপ আছে বঙ্গাইগাঁও চহৰৰ পৰা কিছুদূৰ দক্ষিণে শৰণীয়াপাৰা গাঁওখনত (শৰণীয়া কছাৰী বসতিপ্ৰধান) ভগৱতী পূজা থানৰ লগতে নামঘৰ আৰ্হিৰ এটা ঘৰ দেখা যায়। এইটোত কোনো পূজা নহয়, ভকত বহিবৰ বাবেহে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হয়।<sup>১৭</sup> বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলিৰ গেলাপুখুৰী ডিচিৰিগাঁৱৰ (বড়ো বসতিপ্ৰধান) বাধৌ মন্দিৰটোও দেখাত নামঘৰ লেখীয়া তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ যে ব্ৰাহ্মধৰ্মী বড়োসকলেও মাজে সময়ে শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ ভাগৱত পাঠ কৰে। এই ভাগৱত পাঠৰ সুৰটো কিন্তু তেওঁলোকৰ নিজা। অঞ্চলভেদে এই সুৰ একেবাৰে বেলেগে বেলেগ। উজনি অসমৰ প্ৰয়ভাগ মিছিং গাঁৱতে একোটা নামৰ দেখা যায়। কিন্তু বহু নামঘৰৰ মণিকূটৰ থাপনাত শাস্ত্ৰ নাই, তিনিখলপীয়া মাটিৰ টিপ এটা মাথো গামোচাৰে ঢাকি ৰখা হয়। শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সঙ্ঘৰ সঙ্গী হোৱা জনজাতীয় লোকসকলৰ বহুতে নিজৰ ঘৰতো সুকীয়াকৈ নামঘৰ পাতি লোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে।

ধেমাজি অঞ্চলৰ তিৱাসকল বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণৰ জৰিয়তে ব্যপকভাৱে পৰম্পৰাগত সাংস্কৃতিৰ পৰা আঁতৰি গৈছে।

ধেমাজীবাসী তিৱাসকলৰ তিথি, শুভ-কৰ্ম,, হাই-কাজিয়া বিচাৰ কৰাৰ কেন্দ্ৰ স্থল হ'ল নামঘৰ।.... তাৰোপৰি গাঁৱত কাৰোবাৰ বেমাৰ-আজাৰ আদি হ'লে নামঘৰত এগছি চাকি আগবঢ়ায়। শৰণ-ভজন লোৱা ব্যক্তি জনকহে ৰাইজৰ মাজত চাৰি বিষয়াৰ বাব হয় আৰু তেতিয়াহে তেওঁৰ হাতেৰে সকলো ৰক্ষা-বঢ়া আদি আনে গ্ৰহণ কৰিব পাৰে।<sup>১৮</sup>

মধ্য অসমৰ তিৱাসকলৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো দেখা গৈছে যে তিৱাসকলৰ ধৰ্মীয় জীৱনৰ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ পবিত্ৰ স্থান 'বৰঘৰ'ৰ ঠাইত ক্ৰমশঃ গাঁৱে গাঁৱে নামঘৰ গঢ়ি উঠিছে। এনেদৰে বলি বিধানো প্ৰায় উঠি গৈছে। তেজৰ সলনি লোক দেৱ-দেৱীলৈ মাহ প্ৰসাদৰ নৈবেদ্যহে আগবঢ়াবলৈ লৈছে। তদুপৰি ঘৰুৱাভাৱে কৰা পূজাৰ সংখ্যাও কমি গৈছে।

পূৰ্বৰ দৰে আজিকালি মাল আৰু শনি এই দুজন দেৱতাক সন্তুষ্ট কৰিবলৈ বলি বিধান কৰি মালডকা আৰু শনি ডকাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে তেওঁলোকে শনি চৰিত পঢ়ি নামঘৰতে এই কামফেৰা সমাধা কৰিবলৈ লৈছে।<sup>১৯</sup>

জনজাতিসকলৰ ডেকাচাং ক্ৰমাৎ নোহোৱা হোৱাৰ দৰেই বহু দেৱ-দেৱীৰ পূজা নোহোৱা হৈছে আৰু সম্প্ৰতি যিবোৰ দেৱ-দেৱীৰ পূজা পালন কৰি থকা হৈছে,

সেইবোৰো আচাৰ-ৰীতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত পৰিৱৰ্তন আহিছে। আহোম, চুতীয়া, কোচ, মৰাণ, মটক, সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সত্ৰৰ সৈতে পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে চলি থকা সম্বন্ধ আৰু নামঘৰকেন্দ্ৰিক সামাজিক ব্যৱস্থাৰ বাবে ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ সাংস্কৃতিক প্ৰকাশবোৰ এই জনগোষ্ঠীকেইটাৰো উমৈহতীয়া পৰিচয় হৈ পৰিছে। এই জনগোষ্ঠীকেইটাৰ প্ৰতিটোৱেই ধৰ্ম সংস্কৃতিৰ দিশৰ পৰা প্ৰধানকৈ শাস্ত্ৰধৰ্মী আৰু বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মী এই দুভাগত বিভক্ত হৈ পৰিছে। তেনেই সামান্য একাংশইহে জনজাতীয় পৰম্পৰা পালন কৰি আহিছে। মনকষিৰলগীয়া যে শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সংঘৰ অনুগামী একাংশৰ বাহিৰে শাস্ত্ৰধৰ্মী আৰু বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মী লোকসকল ধৰ্মীয় আচাৰ-ৰীতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত যথেষ্ট মুকলি। নামঘৰ সকলোৰে বাবে পূজা-সেৱা পালন কৰা পবিত্ৰ থলী। কেতিয়াবা জনজাতীয় কোনো দেৱীৰ পূজাতো নামঘোষাৰ প্ৰাৰ্থনা গোৱা হয়। প্ৰায়ভাগ গৃহস্থৰ পাকঘৰৰ এচুকত এখন উপাসনা স্থল থাকে। কোনোৱে যদি গুণমালা স্থাপন কৰিছে, কোনোৱে শিৱ, সৰস্বতী বা কৃষ্ণৰ ফটো ৰাখি তাতেই চাকি জ্বলাই প্ৰতি সন্ধ্যা নামঘোষাৰ প্ৰাৰ্থনা গাইছে।

ৰাজেন ৰাভাই ৰাভাসকলৰ ধৰ্মৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰোতে কৈছে— ৰাভাসকলে জন্মান্তৰবাদ বিশ্বাস কৰে। ইহলোক আৰু পৰলোক বুলি যে জীৱৰ স্থান আছে— ইহলোকৰ পাপ-পুণ্যৰ বিচাৰ যে পৰলোকত হয়— ইহলোকৰ কৰ্মফল অনুযায়ী পৰলোকৰ বিচাৰক্ৰমে এই সংসাৰত পুনঃ মানুহ, জীৱ-জন্ম, কীট-পতঙ্গ, তৰু-তৃনাদি ৰূপ লাভ কৰিব লগা হয়— এই সকলোকে ৰাভাসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে। তেওঁলোকে জীৱাত্মা পৰমাত্মাৰ অস্তিত্ব স্বীকাৰ কৰে। যম দেৱতাই যে মানুহৰ পাপ-পুণ্য বিচাৰ কৰি জীৱাত্মাক শাসন কৰে, তাক ৰাভাসকলে দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১০</sup>

জনজাতীয় ধৰ্ম আৰু হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ দেৱ-দেৱীৰ কল্পনা, পূজা, আত্মাৰ ধাৰণা আদিৰ যথেষ্ট মিল আছে। কিন্তু জনজাতীয় ধৰ্ম কোনো গ্ৰন্থভিত্তিক নহয় আৰু যাদুধৰ্মী আচাৰবোৰৰ তাত্ত্বিক-দাৰ্শনিক ব্যাখ্যাৰ বহল ভিত্তি নাই। গতিকে ৰাভাসকলৰ ইহলোক-পৰলোক, জন্মান্তৰবাদ, যমৰ ধাৰণা আদি ধাৰণাবোৰৰ ৰাভাসমাজত ইমান পদ্ধতিগত ৰূপত হয়তো প্ৰচলিত নাছিল। সংস্কৃতায়ন প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ ফলত হিন্দুধৰ্মীয় ধাৰণাবোৰ জনজাতীয় সমাজত প্ৰচাৰিত হয় আৰু সেই ধাৰণাৰে মিল থকা জনজাতীয় আচাৰ-ৰীতিবোৰক হিন্দু ব্যাখ্যা মতেই ব্যাখ্যা কৰা হয়। অসমৰ জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত হিন্দু ধৰ্মীয় তত্ত্ব-দৰ্শন পৰিচিত কৰোৱাত ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ এক ডাঙৰ ভূমিকা আছে। অসমীয়া সংযোগী ভাৱে ৰামায়ণ-মহাভাৰত, পুৰাণাদিৰ কাহিনী গীত-মাত, ভাওনাৰে আৰু ছন্দেৰে ভক্তি-সাহিত্যই দাঙি ধৰে। জনজাতীয় ধৰ্মীয় বিশ্বাস আৰু আগৰ ৰীতি

শাস্ত্ৰপছাৰ সময়ধৰ্মী হোৱাত জনজাতি লোকসকলৰ সৰহভাগ শাস্ত্ৰ হিন্দু ধৰ্মৰ ফালেই গতি কৰিলে। ইয়াৰ মাজতো ছমৰীয়া, হেৰামদ, উৰুপাত, কৈমাৰি আদি সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱত একাংশ ৰাভা-গাৰো আৰু কছাৰীলোক ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ ফালেও আকৰ্ষিত হ'ল। সত্ৰ প্ৰভাৱিত এই লোকসকলৰ জীৱন সংস্কৃতিত জনজাতীয় আচাৰ-ৰীতি, ধৰ্ম, পৰম্পৰা বৰ্তি থাকিলেও অস্ত্ৰশ্ৰোতে ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ ধাৰাটোও অনুভৱ কৰিব পাৰি। নাহেন্ত্ৰ পাদুনে কৈছে—

জনজাতিসকলে বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ মূলধাৰা গ্ৰহণ আৰু পালনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত যিমানেই তাৰতম্য নঘটাওক লাগে, এই ধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণ কৰা পিছত তেওঁলোকৰ ধৰ্মীয় বিশ্বাস আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনত যে এক পৰিৱৰ্তন সাধিত হ'ল সেই কথা নুই কৰিব নোৱাৰি। জনজাতীয় আদিম বিশ্বাসত হাষ্টিক কল্পনা আৰু জন্মান্তৰবাদৰ ধাৰণা সুকীয়াকৈ থাকিলেও বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণৰ পিছত তেওঁলোকৰ ব্যক্তিমানসত এই বিশ্বব্ৰহ্মাণ্ডত এজন মাথো সৃষ্টিকৰ্তা আছে, জন্ম-মৃত্যু ৰহিত আত্মা, জন্মান্তৰবাদ, দেহ আৰু সংসাৰ অনিত্য-এনে ধৰণৰ সৰ্বভাৰীয় হিন্দু দৰ্শনৰ সৈতে মিল থকা ধাৰণাই বদ্ধমূলক ভাৱে শিপাই গ'ল। আদিম ধৰ্মীয় ক্ৰিয়াকাণ্ড পালন কৰিলেও ব্যক্তি মানসৰ আন্ত্ৰশ্ৰোতে এই ধাৰণাক সহজে উঘালি পেলাব নোৱাৰি। ইয়াকেই আমি শংকৰী সংস্কৃতিৰ সবাতোকৈ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ প্ৰভাৱ বুলিব পাৰো।<sup>২১</sup>

#### খ) সামাজিক লোকাচাৰ :

সামাজিক লোকাচাৰবোৰ কোনো এটা জনগোষ্ঠীৰ সংস্কৃতিৰ এক গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ অংগ। আদিম কৃষিজীৱী সমাজে কৃষিৰ উৎপাদন বৃদ্ধি আৰু গোষ্ঠীজীৱনৰ নিৰাপত্তাৰ বাবে ভালেমান যাদুমূলক আচাৰ-ৰীতি পালন কৰিছিল। সমাজ বিকাশৰ বিভিন্ন পৰ্যায়ত এই আচাৰ-ৰীতিবোৰৰ আঁৰৰ মনোগত ধাৰণাৰ বৈজ্ঞানিক ভিত্তি নোহোৱা হোৱাৰ পিছতো পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে এইবোৰ পালন কৰি আহিছে। মাথো সময়ৰ ছাপ পৰি পালনৰ ধৰণ-কৰণত বিভিন্ন মাত্ৰাত পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটিছে। যেনে— কৃষিৰ উৎপাদন বৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে নৰবলিৰ ঠাইত পশুবলি বা পশুবলি বা পশুবলিৰ ঠাইত কেৱল উৎসৱ (পূজা-উপাসনভিত্তিক) পালনতে সীমিত হৈছে। সামাজিক লোকাচাৰবোৰৰ পৰা ধৰ্মীয় চেতনাক পৃথক কৰিব নোৱাৰি। এনেদৰে উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানবোৰো লোকাচাৰৰ লগত অবিভাজ্যভাৱে সংযুক্ত।

The tradition of the modern festivals emanated from the beliefs and magical rituals of the ancient communities.<sup>22</sup>

আদিম বিশ্বাস, পুৰাকথা (Myth), পূজা-উপাসনা, নৃত্য-গীত আদিৰ সমষ্টিয়েই উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠান। কৃষিমূলক আৰু সংস্কাৰমূলক চেতনাৰ আধাৰত পালন কৰা উৎসৱৰ উপৰি পশ্চিকাশ্ৰয়ী উৎসৱ কিছুমানো অসমৰ হিন্দুবৃন্দৰ লোক-জীৱনে পালন কৰি আহিছে। এইদৰে সামাজিক লোকাচাৰসমূহে লোক-জীৱনৰ বিভিন্ন দিশক পোহৰাই তোলে।

অসমৰ জনজাতিসমূহ হিন্দুবৃন্দলৈ সোমোৱাৰ পৰাই তেওঁলোকৰ পৰম্পৰাগত লোকাচাৰসমূহত পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটে। মন কৰিবলগীয়া কথা হ'ল হিন্দু শৃংখলাত সামাজিক লোকাচাৰবোৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কোনো সুনিৰ্দিষ্ট মানকপ (Standard form) পোৱা নাযায়। ভৌগোলিকভাৱে যিদৰে লোকাচাৰৰ তাৰতম্য আছে; একেদৰে হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ বিভিন্ন সম্প্ৰদায় বা পন্থাৰ মাজতো লোকাচাৰৰ বৈচিত্ৰ্য আছে। অসমৰ বৈচিত্ৰ্যপূৰ্ণ নৃগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ সাংস্কৃতিক সংমিশ্ৰণ-সমাহৰণৰ ঐতিহাসিক প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ হেতু অসমৰ লোকজীৱনত লোকাচাৰৰ বৈবিধ্যও লক্ষণীয় হৈ পৰিছে।

এনে পটভূমিতে জনজাতীয়সমূহৰ সামাজিক লোকাচাৰসমূহৰ ওপৰত ভক্তিদৰ্শন হ'ল অধ্যয়নৰ বেলিকা এটা কথা মনকৰিবলগীয়া যে প্ৰাচীন কালৰ পৰাই অসমত সংস্কৃতায়ন প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰে হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ বিস্তাৰ ঘটিছিল যদিও ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ উদ্ভুত প্ৰাৱণেহে জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহক ব্যাপকভাৱে হিন্দুবৃন্দলৈ আদৰিলে। সত্ৰসমূহৰ মাজেদি ব্যাপ্তি লাভ কৰা ভক্তিদৰ্শনত ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য বিধি-ব্যৱস্থা আৰু অবৈষ্ণৱীয় হিন্দু সংস্কাৰেও স্থান উলিয়াই লৈছিল। পূৰ্বতে কেবাটাও প্ৰসংগত আলোচনা কৰি অহা হৈছে যে ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ পৰম্পৰাত ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য ৰীতি-নীতিৰ সংমিশ্ৰণৰ লগত জনজাতি সমাজৰ বৈষ্ণৱায়ণৰ সম্পৰ্ক নুই কৰিব নোৱাৰি। কাৰণ, জড়বাদী জনজাতিসকলৰ পৰম্পৰাগত জীৱনধাৰাই ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ অভিনৱ আদৰ্শসমূহ দৃঢ়ভাৱে গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম নহয়। কিন্তু জনজাতীয় ধৰ্ম-সংস্কৃতিৰ পৰম্পৰাগত প্ৰবাহটো ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য হিন্দু-ধৰ্মৰ লগত মিলিব পাৰে সহজে।

নৱ-বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিদৰ্শনই জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকাচাৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত পেলোৱা প্ৰভাৱৰ অন্ততঃ দুটা স্পষ্ট পৰ্যায় পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। প্ৰথম; সত্ৰানুষ্ঠানৰ জৰিয়তে হিন্দুবৃন্দলৈ অহা জনজাতিসমূহৰ লোকাচাৰত ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ প্ৰভাৱ, দ্বিতীয়তে শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ সংঘৰ জৰিয়তে হিন্দু হোৱা জনজাতীয় লোকাচাৰত ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ প্ৰভাৱ। দ্বিতীয়তো পৰ্যায়ত প্ৰভাৱৰ উপৰি বহুক্ষেত্ৰত 'আত্মীকৰণ' (absorption) শব্দটোও ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিব পাৰি। কাৰণ, শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ সঘৰ সঙ্গী হোৱা জনজাতীয় লোকসকলে স্বগোষ্ঠীয় ধৰ্মীয় পৰম্পৰাৰ ঠাইত বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ পৰম্পৰা আঁকোৱালি লৈছে। স্বগোষ্ঠীয় উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠানবোৰ পালন কৰিলেও তাৰ লগত জড়িত ধৰ্মীয় অনুসংগবোৰ (পূজা, বলি আদি) নাম-কীৰ্তনেৰে সলাই লৈছে। ইয়াৰ মাজতো চাৰিওফালে জনজাতীয় পৰিৱেশৰ মাজত

থকা দুই-চাৰিঘৰ সংঘভূক্ত জনজাতীয় লোকে অৱশ্যে পৰম্পৰাগত সংস্কৃতি সমূলে ত্যাগ নকৰাকৈও বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি আদৰ্শ পালন কৰি আছে।

অন্য এটা মনকৰিবলগীয়া দিশ হ'ল নামনি অসমৰ জনজাতিসমূহৰ মাজত গৌড়ীয় বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ। হাজং কোচ-ৰাজবংশী, ৰাভা, কোচ (ৰাভা), বড়োসকলৰ মাজত এই প্ৰভাৱ লক্ষণীয়। উজনি অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত গৌড়ীয় বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ পোনপটীয়া প্ৰভাৱ পৰিলক্ষিত নহয়।

সংস্কাৰমূলক লোকাচাৰসমূহৰ ভিতৰত জন্ম আৰু মৃত্যু সম্পৰ্কীয় লোকাচাৰে সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতে প্ৰাধান্য পাই আছে। জন্মৰ অশৌচ খেদিবলৈ কুকুৰা, গাহৰি বলি দি মদ-পানী উলিওৱা জনজাতি সমাজৰ সাধাৰণ লোকাচাৰ। কিন্তু সম্প্ৰতি মদৰ ঠাইত মাহ-প্ৰসাদ আগ কৰি ধৰ্মগ্ৰন্থ পাঠ কৰি অশৌচান্ত ৰীতি পালন কৰা ৰীতি কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে সকলো জনজাতিৰ মাজতে পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। চুতীয়া, আহোম, সোণোৱাল কছাৰী, মৰাণ, মটক আৰু ভৈয়ামৰ তিৱাসকলৰ মাজত কীৰ্তন পাঠ বা নাম-কীৰ্তনেৰে সকলো ধৰণৰ সংস্কাৰ কৰ্ম সম্পন্ন কৰা ৰীতি দেখা যায়।

হিন্দুধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণৰ পিছত জনজাতিসকলৰ প্ৰায়ভাগেই মৰাশ দাহ কৰিবলৈ লয়। মটকসকলৰ মাজত মৰাশ পুতি থোৱা আচাৰ এতিয়াও বৰ্তি আছে। মিচিংসকলৰ ভক্তিধৰ্ম অনুগামী 'ভাগৱতীয়া' সকলে সৱদাহ কৰে, অনাভাগৱতীয়া সকলে পুতি থয়। মৃত্যু অশৌচৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তিনিদিনত তিলনি আৰু দহ দিনত দহা অনুষ্ঠান পালন কৰাটো সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতে এতিয়া সামাজিক লোকাচাৰ। 'মিচিংসকলৰ সাম্প্ৰতিক কালত কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱত বহু ঠাইত পাঁচদিনীয়া ওচৰ ঠাইত তিনি দিনত তিলনি পাতি ওচি অনুষ্ঠান এমাহ দুমাহলৈ পিচুৱাই নিয়া দেখা গৈছে।'<sup>১৩</sup>

সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ মৃত্যু অশৌচ পালনৰ প্ৰথাও ওচৰচু বুৰীয়া অজনজাতিৰ সৈতে মিলে। এই অনুষ্ঠান পৰিচালনা কৰা মেধি গৰাকী প্ৰকৃততথত সত্ৰৰ প্ৰতিনিধি। পাতি ৰাভাসকলৰ শ্ৰাদ্ধ অনুষ্ঠানত ৰামায়ণ-মহাভাৰত, ভাগৱত বা কীৰ্তন ঘোষা পাঠ কৰা হয়।<sup>১৪</sup> তিৱাসকলেও তিলনি, দহা, শ্ৰাদ্ধত মাহ-প্ৰসাদেৰে নাম-কীৰ্তন কৰি চুৱা খেদা লক্ষণীয়। মিচিংসকলৰ মাজত সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱ থাকিলেও পুৰণি পৰম্পৰাৰ শিপা অত্যন্ত গভীৰ। তথাপি শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সংঘৰ অনুগামী মিচিংসকলে নিজা পৰম্পৰাগত ৰীতি-নীতি প্ৰায়ভাগ ত্যাগ কৰি নাম-কীৰ্তন কৰি মাহ-প্ৰসাদ নৈবেদ্য আগ কৰি শ্ৰাদ্ধ পাতে।

হিন্দুবৃন্দলৈ অহা সময়ৰ প্ৰায়বোৰ জনজাতিৰ একাংশ শাক্তধৰ্মী। আনহাতে বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মী জনজাতীয় লোকসকলেও অন্যান্য হিন্দু দেৱ-দেৱী আৰু পৰম্পৰাগত দেৱ-দেৱীৰ পূজা-অৰ্চনা কৰে। কিন্তু শাক্তপন্থীয়েই হওক বা বৈষ্ণৱপন্থীয়েই হওক মাংগলিক



অনুষ্ঠানত ৰাম-কৃষ্ণ নামেৰে জয় ধ্বনি (হৰি ধ্বনি) দিয়া প্ৰথা সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতে সম্প্ৰতি লক্ষ্যীয়। অন্য এটা মনকৰিবলগীয়া কথা, অসমীয়া ভাষাকে মাতৃভাষা ৰূপে গ্ৰহণ কৰা মৰাণ, মটক সোণোৱাল কচাৰী, আহোম, শৰণীয়া কছাৰী আদি জনগোষ্ঠীৰ সামাজিক বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত বিয়া নাম গোৱা প্ৰথা মূলতঃ বৰ্ণ হিন্দু সমাজৰ প্ৰভাৱ। মূলসূঁতিৰ বৰ্ণহিন্দু অসমীয়া সমাজখনত যিহেতু ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱ স্বাভাৱিকতে গভীৰ, গতিকে জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ বিয়া নামবোৰতো ৰাম-কৃষ্ণ হৰিৰ উল্লেখ পোৱা যায়। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলৰ বিয়া নামবোৰো ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহয়।

‘ৰামকৃষ্ণ আগৰখন ভাৰতে

ৰামকৃষ্ণ কি কি আনিছা

হৰি মোৰ ঐ ৰাম..’ ২৬

শৰণীয়া কছাৰীৰ বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত গোহাই পূজা কৰা হয়। ‘গোহাই পূজা হ’ল ৰভাৰ তলত চাৰিটা কলপুলি পুতি সেই কলপুলিকেইটা এৰী সুতাৰে বান্ধি দিয়া হয়। সন্মুখৰ পিনে খোলা ৰখা হয়। সুতাত আমৰ পাত আৰু কপাহ মাজে মাজে বান্ধি দিয়া হয়। ইয়াৰ মাজত শৰাই এখন, তামোল-পাণ এযোৰ, পইচা, এটা আৰু ইয়াৰ ওপৰত কীৰ্তন পুথি এখন থোৱা হয়।’<sup>২৭</sup> এই পূজাত পুৰোহিতে মণ্ডল পাতি পূজা কৰে। কিন্তু কীৰ্তন পুথি স্থাপনে বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাৰ প্ৰভাৱ স্পষ্ট কৰে। তদুপৰি এই পূজা চলি থকা সময়ত আয়তীসকলে গোৱা গীতবোৰত কীৰ্তনৰ পদৰ একোটা চৰণ মাজে মাজে গোৱা হয়—

‘তয়ুনাভী কমলত ব্ৰহ্ম ভৈলা জাত

যুগে যুগে অৱতাৰ ধৰা অসংখ্যাত

কলা কলা তুলসীৰে চাকলীয়া পাত

তগ তুলী বহি বাপুই জলে দিয়া হাত।’<sup>২৮</sup>

বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলিৰ ডিচিৰি গাঁৱৰ বাথৌধৰ্মীসকলেও বিভিন্ন সামাজিক উৎসৱ পাৰ্বনত নামকীৰ্তন কৰে, মহাপুৰুষীয়া ৰীতিৰে শৰাই আগবঢ়ায়। বহুবছৰ ধৰি এই অঞ্চল খেৰাই পূজা অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা হোৱা নাই।<sup>২৯</sup>

বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলিৰ উত্তৰে বসবাস কৰা কাৰ্বিসকলৰ মাজত কাৰ্বি ভাষাতে নামকীৰ্তন কৰা পলিলক্ষিত হয়।<sup>৩০</sup>

উজনি অসমৰ সোণোৱাল কছাৰী আৰু মৰাণ-মটকসকলৰ লোক-উৎসৱবোৰত নামঘৰে গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ স্থান অধিকাৰ কৰি আছে। সোণোৱাল কছাৰীৰ লখিমী সৰাহ<sup>৩১</sup> প্ৰকৃততে সমৃদ্ধিৰ দেৱী (শস্যৰ দেৱী) লক্ষ্মীৰ পূজা। উৎসৱৰ দিনা নামঘৰত গোট খাই নিয়মিত পূজা সেৱা কৰাৰ পিছত গায়ন-বায়নে নামঘৰটো সাতপাক বা পাঁচপাক

ঘুৰাই পাছত আইসকল লখিমী ঘাটত উপস্থিত হয় আৰু তাতে লখিমী নাম গায়। ভক্তিধৰ্মত লক্ষ্মীপূজাৰ স্থান নাই। কিন্তু হিন্দু জনগোষ্ঠীৰ পৰম্পৰাৰ সমৃদ্ধিৰ দেৱী গৰাকী এনেদৰে মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তি আদৰ্শৰ মাজত লালিত হৈ থকাটো অতীৰ তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ ঘটনা। একেদৰে সমাজৰ পৰা মাৰি-মৰক খেদিবলৈ (নাৱত তুলি) পালন কৰা ভূৰ উটোৱা সবাহো নামঘৰতে আৰম্ভ হয়।

কৃষিমূলক উৎসৱ ৰঙালী বিহুটোৱেও বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱেৰে মৰাণসকলৰ মাজত নতুন ৰূপ পৰিগ্ৰহণ কৰে। মৰাণসকলৰ ‘ধৰ্ম হুঁচৰি’<sup>১০</sup> নৃগোষ্ঠীটোৰ বাবে আধ্যাত্মিক তাৎপৰ্যযুক্ত পৰম পবিত্ৰ অনুষ্ঠান। ‘ধৰ্ম হুঁচৰি’ৰ বাবে সত্ৰৰ অধিকাৰৰ পৰা বিশেষ আজ্ঞা ল’ব লাগে। এই হুঁচৰিত বিহুনাৰমৰ সলনি ফুলকোৱৰ, মনিকোঁৱৰৰ গীতহে গোৱা হয়। সত্ৰ বা নামঘৰতে প্ৰথম বিহু জুৰি বিহু নমাই অনা হয় আৰু নামঘৰ বা সত্ৰতে বিহু উৰুৱা হয়। ধৰ্ম-হুঁচৰি দলক আদিৱিবলৈ ভকতবৃন্দই গায়ন-বায়নেৰে নামপ্ৰসঙ্গ কৰি নামঘৰত বৈ থাকে। এই হুঁচৰিৰ নামবোৰ আধ্যাত্মিক ভাবাপন্ন, গহীন। হুঁচৰি দলত অংশ লোৱা প্ৰতিজন বৈবাহিক সদস্যই বিহু কেইদিন সহবাস কৰিব নোৱাৰে, আমিষ খাদ্যও নাখায়।

ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ সুদূৰ প্ৰসাৰী প্ৰভাৱতে জনজাতীয় সমাজতো জন্মাষ্টমী, নন্দোৎসৱ, ৰাসাত্ৰা, দোলযাত্ৰা আৰু হোলি উত্ৰ জনপ্ৰিয় হৈ পৰিছে।

নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি জাগৰণে জনপ্ৰিয় কৰি তোলা কৃষ্ণ কাহিনীৰ আধাৰতে সূত্ৰপাত হোৱা এই উৎসৱসমূহ সম্প্ৰতি ধৰ্মীয় উৎসৱ হৈ থকা নাই, বৰং শান্ত-শৈৱ নিৰ্বিশেষে হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ প্ৰতিটো পন্থাৰ অনুগামী লোকৰ মাজত সাধাৰণ লোকউৎসৱ ৰূপে ব্যাপ্তি লাভ কৰিছে। পশ্চিম কামৰূপৰ হাহিম অঞ্চলৰ জনজাতীয় লোকসকলে ৰাজহুৱা ভাৱে দৌল উৎসৱ উদ্‌যাপন কৰি আহিছে।<sup>১১</sup> মাজুলীৰ জেংৰাই বৰগঞা মিচিং গাঁওবোৰত নিয়মীয়াভাৱে নহ’লেও ৰাস উৎসৱ পালন কৰা হয়। তামোলপুৰ অঞ্চলৰ বৰবেলবাৰীৰ শৰণীয়া কছাৰী আৰু বড়োসকলে বাকদবা সত্ৰৰ প্ৰভাৱতে জন্মাষ্টমী উৎসৱ পালন কৰা দেখা যায়। এই উৎসৱত মহিলাসকলে নাম (কৃষ্ণ বিষয়ক) গাই আউলী-বাউলী হৈ গোপিনী নৃত্য কৰে।<sup>১২</sup> মৰিগাঁৱৰ বনপৰা দন্দুৱা গাঁৱত প্ৰায় তিনিশঘৰ গৃহস্থী আছে, আটাইবোৰেই তিৱা জনজাতিৰ লোক। ইয়াৰে পঞ্চাশ ঘৰমান অনুকূল ঠাকুৰ পন্থাৰ অনুগামী। এইসকলক বাদ দি বাকী থকা সকলে পৰম্পৰাগত পূজা-পাতল, কুকুৰা-গাহৰি পালন, মদৰ বৰহাৰ কৰি আছে। কিন্তু গাঁৱত ৰাজহুৱা নামঘৰ আছে। এই নামঘৰতে প্ৰতি বছৰে শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ তিথি, জন্মাষ্টমী পালন কৰা হয়। তদুপৰি ব্যক্তিগতভাৱে ঘৰে ঘৰেও ভাগৱত পাঠ আৰু নাম-কীৰ্ত্তন পাতে।<sup>১৩</sup>

অসমৰ জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত বৈষ্ণৱ-অবৈষ্ণৱ নিৰ্বিশেষ ভাওনাৰ জনপ্ৰিয়তা লক্ষ্যীয়। অসমৰ প্ৰায়বিলাক মিছিং গাঁৱতে বছৰি একোখনকৈ ভাওনা পতা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। 'ভাওনাক মিচিংসকলে পবিত্ৰভাৱে গ্ৰহণ কৰে আৰু নামঘৰত থাপনা স্থাপন কৰে। ১৯৮৯ চনত ঢকুৱাখনাৰ এখন মিচিং গাঁৱত কেলিগোপাল নাটখনি মিচিং ভাষালৈ অনুবাদ কৰি মঞ্চস্থ কৰি আলোড়নৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছিল।'<sup>৪০</sup>

গহপুৰ অঞ্চলৰ ৰঙাজান গাঁৱৰ চাহ মজদুৰসকলেও মাজ সময়ে ভাওনা পাতি আহিছে। সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ভাওনা, জন্মাষ্টমী, শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ তিথি, ৰাস আদি উৎসৱবোৰ তেওঁলোকৰ সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰাৰ এবাৰ নোৱৰা অংগ হৈ পৰিছে।

গোৱালপাৰা জিলাৰ পূব প্ৰান্তত বসবাস কৰি থকা ৰাভাসকলৰ (পাতি ৰাভা) মাজত সম্প্ৰতি ভাগে ভাগে নামদল গঠন হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। এই নামদলবোৰে খোল-তাল-নাগাৰা সংগত কৰি বিভিন্ন উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানত দিহা নাম পৰিৱেশন কৰে।<sup>৪১</sup> এনে ধৰণৰ নামদল বিজনী, বঙ্গাইগাঁও অঞ্চলৰ কোচ-ৰাজবংশীসকলৰ মাজতো দেখা যায়।

অসমৰ জনগাঁথনিৰ বৈশিষ্ট্যই হ'ল বিভিন্ন জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠী আৰু বিভিন্ন ধৰ্মপন্থাৰ অনুগামীৰ সহ অৱস্থান। ফলত ধৰ্মীয় ভাবপ্ৰধান লোকঅনুষ্ঠানবোৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো সকলো লোকৰ অংশগ্ৰহণ লক্ষ্যীয়। বিবিধ কুমাৰ বৰুৱাই কৈছে—

গাঁৱত সকলো ধৰ্মৰ মানুহে একেলগে বাসকৰে, তদুপৰি এই পূজা-পাৰ্বণবোৰৰ লগত লৌকিক আনন্দ-উৎসৱ সাঙোৰ খাই আছে। গতিকে বহুক্ষেত্ৰত শাস্ত্ৰৰ পূজা-পাৰ্বণত বৈষ্ণৱে যোগ দিয়ে, সেইদৰে বৈষ্ণৱৰ উৎসৱত শাস্ত্ৰসকলে সহযোগ কৰে। সমিল মিলভাৱে এইবোৰৰ পালনত ধৰ্মবিদ্ৰোহ বা বিৰোধ নঘটে।<sup>৪২</sup>

নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাৰ সাংস্কৃতিক ৰূপবোৰ, এই পৰম্পৰাৰ সাহিত্যৰাজি অসমৰ জাতীয় জীৱনৰ পৰিচয়বাহক অংগ হৈ পৰিছে। ধৰ্মীয় দিশত শঙ্কৰদেৱ-মাধৱদেৱক, দামোদৰদেৱ-হৰিদেৱক, গোপাল আতা-অনিৰুদ্ধদেৱক গুৰু বুলি নমনাজনেও এই পৰম্পৰাৰ সাংস্কৃতিক অৱদানক অস্বীকাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। বহল অসমীয়া জাতি সত্তা নিৰ্মাণত বৰঙণি যোগোৱা প্ৰতিটো সৰু-বৰ নৃগোষ্ঠীয়েও সেয়ে পৰোক্ষ বা প্ৰত্যক্ষভাৱে ভক্তি ধৰ্মৰ ভাবাদৰ্শক, ইয়াৰ সাংস্কৃতিক সংৰূপবোৰক বিভিন্ন স্তৰত সাবটি ধৰিছে।

গ) শিক্ষা, খাদ্যাভ্যাস আৰু অন্যান্য

অসমৰ ভক্তিদৰ্শক পৰম্পৰাটোৱে বহল ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্য আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক

মূল্যবোধৰে প্ৰতিনিধিত্ব কৰে। কিন্তু, স্থানীয় জনগাঁথনিৰ বৈশিষ্ট্য আৰু জীৱনচৰ্যাকো এই পৰম্পৰাটোৱে গভীৰভাৱে বহন কৰি আনিছে। সেয়ে ক্ষুদ্ৰ ক্ষুদ্ৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সম্ভাৱ্যৰ এই পৰম্পৰাটোৰ মাজেদি বহুল হিন্দু শৃংখলাৰ মাজত সোমাই পৰাৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে ভাৰতীয় সম্ভাৱ লগতো একাত্ম হৈ পৰিছে। ভক্তিধৰ্ম পৰম্পৰাটোৰ কেইটামান বৈশিষ্ট্য এই প্ৰসংগত মনকৰিবলগীয়া প্ৰথম, গ্ৰন্থ আধাৰিত ভাবাদৰ্শ, দ্বিতীয়তে পুৰাণ, বেদ, আদি ভাৰতীয় ঐতিহ্যৰ পুথিসমূহ অসমীয়া ভাষালৈ অনুবাদ, ভাবানুবাদ বা আংশিক অনুবাদ; তৃতীয়তে, গীত, নৃত্য অভিনয়, চিত্ৰৰ সংযোগত নিৰ্মাণ কৰা এক উপাসনা পদ্ধতি আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক পৰিমণ্ডল চতুৰ্থতে, আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠানৰ বাহ্যিকভাৱে সৰল আৰু মিতব্যয়ী ব্যৱস্থা; পঞ্চমতে, মদ, মাংস আৰু ৰক্তৰ ব্যৱহাৰশূন্যতা। এইকেইটা প্ৰধান বৈশিষ্ট্যৰ বাবেই ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ তুলনাত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মই জনজাতীয় সমাজ শৃংখলা আৰু জীৱনচৰ্যাক অভিন্ন গতি দিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে।

ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ গ্ৰন্থ আধাৰিত ভাবাদৰ্শই পৰম্পৰাগত ধৰ্মানুগামী জনজাতিসমূহৰ মনত ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ প্ৰতি আস্থা বৃদ্ধি কৰিছে। আনহাতে, গ্ৰন্থক উপাসনাবেদীত স্থাপন কৰা ব্যৱস্থাই গ্ৰন্থৰ প্ৰতি শ্ৰদ্ধা ভক্তি আৰু সন্মানৰ জন্ম দিছে। আধুনিক জ্ঞান-বিজ্ঞানৰ জগতখনত নিজকে যোগ্য ৰূপে প্ৰতিপন্ন কৰিবলৈ গ্ৰন্থৰ বিৰুদ্ধ নাই। ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ কীৰ্ত্তন, নামঘোষা, ভাগৱতৰ কাহিনী, সুৰ আৰু মনোৰম কথনভংগীমাৰ মাজত নিৰক্ষৰ কৃষিজীৱী লোকমনে এক লৌকিক অলৌকিক জগতৰ সন্ধান পাই পুলকানুভূতি লাভ কৰে। সেই নিৰক্ষৰ কৃষিজীৱী সমাজখনে ইয়াৰ মাজতে জীৱন-জগতৰ নতুন ব্যাখ্যা বিচাৰি পায়।<sup>১০০</sup> জনজাতি সমাজখনত ইয়াৰ প্ৰভাৱ লক্ষণীয়। দেউৰীসকলৰ প্ৰসংগত ইন্দিৰ দেউৰীয়ে কৈছে—

মহাপুৰুষীয়া ধৰ্ম সংস্পৰ্শৰ সৱাতোকৈ উল্লেখযোগ্য প্ৰভাৱটো হ'ল শিক্ষা আহৰণ। কীৰ্ত্তন দশম নামঘোষা পাঠৰ বাবেই বহুতে পঢ়িবলৈ লিখিবলৈ শিকিলে।<sup>১০১</sup>

ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য হিন্দুধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ পিছতো সাধাৰণ জনজাতীয় লোকসকলে হিন্দু ধৰ্মৰ কোনো তত্ত্ব পোৱা নাছিল। ব্ৰাহ্মণ পুৰোহিতৰ নিৰ্দেশনা অনুসৰি কেৱল আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠান পালন কৰিছিল। ৰামায়ণ-মহাভাৰতৰ কাহিনীবোৰৰ লগত পৰিচিত হ'লেও এই পৰিচয় তেনেই সীমিত আছিল। ভক্তিধৰ্মই অসমীয়া ভাষাত সেইবোৰ বিষয় সহজ বোধগম্য কৰি তুলিলে। তদুপৰি এইবোৰ সুৰ ধৰি পাঠ কৰা ৰীতিৰ বাবে আখৰ জ্ঞান নোহোৱাকৈও বুজিব পৰা হ'ল।

বিভিন্ন উপলক্ষে নৃত্য-গীতৰ মাজেৰে আনন্দ উল্লাস কৰি ধৰ্মীয় কৃত্য সম্পন্ন

কৰাটো জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতিৰ অন্যতম বৈশিষ্ট্য। কিন্তু সুনিৰ্মিত অভিনয় জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতিৰ মাজত দেখা নাযায়। ভক্তিধৰ্মই ভাওনাৰ মাজেৰে এক অভিনয় অভিজ্ঞতা দান কৰিলে। গীত-নৃত্য অভিনয়ৰ এই অভিনয় অভিজ্ঞতাৰেই জনজাতিসমূহে ভাৰতীয় পৰিবেশ্য কলা পৰম্পৰাৰ মাৰ্গীয় ৰীতিৰো পৰিচয় লাভ কৰিলে। ভাওনা পৰিবেশনৰ মাজত নিহিত গণতান্ত্ৰিক আদৰ্শ জনজাতিসমূহৰ পৰিচিত। কিন্তু গোষ্ঠীগত পৰিসীমা অতিক্ৰমি বহল মানৱসমাজৰ অংগীভূত হৈ শিক্ষণীয়, উপভোগ্য আৰু আধ্যাত্মিক প্ৰয়োজন পূৰাব পৰা ভাওনাৰ অভিজ্ঞতা জনজাতিসমূহৰ বাবে নতুন।

ভক্তিধৰ্ম গ্ৰহণৰ ফলত জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত বিভিন্ন মাত্ৰাত খৰছী পূজা-পাতলৰ ব্যাপকতা হ্ৰাস পাইছে। পূজাত বলি দিয়া ব্যৱস্থাৰ ঠাইত নাম-কীৰ্ত্তনৰ জৰিয়তে ধৰ্মীয় সামাজিক কৃত্য সম্পন্ন কৰিব পৰা হোৱাত পশুধন ৰাহি হৈছে। অন্যহাতে, ঘৰুৱা মদৰ ব্যৱহাৰ সামাজিক আৰু ঘৰুৱাভাৱে জনজাতিসকলৰ একাংশৰ মাজত চলি থাকিলেও একাংশৰ মাজত বন্ধ হৈ পৰিছে। এই প্ৰসংগতে উল্লেখ কৰিব পাৰি যে বাটলাৰে (J. Butler) সত্ৰৰ গোসাঁই সকলে কাৰ্বিসকলৰ মাজত ভক্তি ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কৰাৰ ফলত কাৰ্বিসকলে মদ ত্যাগ কৰাৰ উল্লেখ কৰিছে। কিন্তু তেওঁ লগতে কৈছে যে মদ ত্যাগ কৰিবলগা হোৱাত কাৰ্বিসকলৰ কানি খোৱাৰ অভ্যাস গঢ়ি উঠিল— They are, however, required to give up the use of spirituous liquors, and in lieu they acquire the pernicious habit of eating opium.<sup>46</sup>

বাটলাৰৰ এই মন্তব্যৰ আধাৰত প্ৰসেনজিৎ চৌধুৰীয়ে কৈছে—

বাটলাৰৰ এই ব্যাখ্যা যদি নিৰ্ভৰযোগ্য হয় তেন্তে যুক্তিসংগত ভাৱেই অনুমান কৰিব পাৰি যে জনজাতীয় সমাজত কানি সেৱনৰ কু-অভ্যাসৰ যি ব্যাপক বৃদ্ধি যোৱা শতিকাত (উনবিংশ শতিকা) দেখা গৈছিল তাৰ সৈতে বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ সম্প্ৰসাৰণৰ পৰোক্ষ সম্পৰ্ক নথকা নহয়।<sup>47</sup>

এই প্ৰসংগত মনকৰিবলগীয়া কথা হ'ল, উনবিংশ শতিকাত খ্ৰীষ্টিয়ান মিশ্যনেৰীসকলৰ কানি বিৰোধী স্থিতিৰ বিপৰীতে ভালেকেইজন প্ৰভাৱশালী সত্ৰাধিকাৰে কানিৰ পৃষ্ঠপোষকতাহে কৰিছিল। আফুখেতিৰ পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা কৰাৰ অপৰাধত আউনীআটী আৰু দক্ষিণপাট সত্ৰৰ গোসাঁয়ে পাঁচশ টকাকৈ জৰিমনা ভৰিব লগা হৈছে।<sup>48</sup> হেমচন্দ্ৰ বৰুৱাই 'কানিয়াৰ কীৰ্ত্তন' গ্ৰন্থত সত্ৰীয়াসকলৰ কানি আসক্তিক বিদ্ৰূপ কৰিছে। গতিকে, জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত কানি সেৱনৰ ব্যাপকতাত এচাম সত্ৰাধিকাৰৰ কানীয়া চৰিত্ৰৰহে সম্পৰ্ক থাকিব পাৰে। ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ আদৰ্শত মদৰ দৰে কানিৰো কোনো স্থান থাকিব নোৱাৰে। গতিকে ভক্তিধৰ্ম সম্প্ৰসাৰণক প্ৰত্যক্ষভাৱে জনজাতিসকলৰ কানি সেৱনৰ অভ্যাসৰ বাবে জগৰীয়া কৰিব নোৱাৰি।

অসমৰ মংগোলীয় জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ভিতৰত মৰাণ-মটকসকলৰ পিছতে সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ মাজত ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ ব্যাপকতা অধিক। ২০০১ চনৰ লোকপিয়লৰ তথ্যমতে জনজাতিসকলৰ ভিতৰত সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ মাজতে সাক্ষৰতা হাৰ সৰ্বাধিক (৮১.৪ শতাংশ)। ক্ষেত্ৰ অধ্যয়নৰ পৰা দেখা গৈছে। মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তিদৰ্শন গ্ৰহণ কৰা জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত শিক্ষা আৰু আধুনিক জীৱনচৰ্যাৰ প্ৰতি আগ্ৰহ অধিক। টীয়কৰ গন্ধিয়া মিচিং গাঁৱৰ লোকসকলৰ শিক্ষা-দীক্ষাৰ ফলৰপৰা অতিশয় আগবঢ়া। তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণভাৱে ষাঠিৰ দশকতে এই গাঁওখনত শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ সঙঘৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰে। এইখন গাঁৱতে জন্ম লোৱা যতীন মিপুনে নিজৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ কথা এনেদৰে লিখিছে—

১৯৬৫ চনত মই ক্লাছ ছিন্ধত থাকোঁতে মোৰ দেউতা আৰু আমাৰ দহঘৰমান মানুহে শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ সঙঘৰ সঙ্গী হৈ শৰণ ল'লে বুলি গম পাইছিলো। শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ সঙঘত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত হৈ শৰণ লোৱা বছৰটোত মোৰ দেউতাৰ লগতে গাঁৱৰ দহঘৰ মানুহে ঘৰুৱা মদ আৰু আন নিচায়ুক্ত বস্তু খোৱা একেবাৰে বাদ দিলে। ফলত আমাৰ অজ্ঞাতেই আমাৰ ঘৰখনৰ ঘৰুৱা পৰিৱেশ সম্পূৰ্ণৰূপে সলনি হৈ পৰিছিল। ঘৰুৱা মদ খাই দেউতাই মাক মাৰপিট কৰা, দেউতাৰ এছাৰিৰ কোব খাই ঘৰুৱা মদৰ নিচাত হৰাও হৰাওকৈ কন্দা মাৰ ঠাইত আমি পাবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিছিলোঁ, শান্ত-সৌম্য, ধীৰ স্বীৰ (স্থিৰ) ভাৱৰ কথা-বতৰা হোৱা মা-দেউতাক।.... ফলত আমাৰ অজ্ঞাতেই আমি আৰ্থ সামাজিক, শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য আদি দিশত উপকৃত হৈছিলোঁ।<sup>১০</sup>

শিক্ষা আৰু সংস্থাপনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত মাজুলীৰ দেউৰীসকলৰ ভিতৰতে আগবঢ়া বালিদেউৰী গাঁৱত ১৯৭৬ চনতে ৰাজহুৱা নামঘৰ হয় আৰু গাঁওখনৰ পঞ্চাছ শতাংশ মানুহে মহাপুৰুষীয়া ধৰ্ম লয়।<sup>১১</sup>

কামৰূপ শৰণীয়া সন্মিলনৰ ১৯৫১ চনৰ দ্বিতীয় বাৰ্ষিক অধিৱেশত গৃহিত হোৱা কামৰূপ শৰণীয়া জাতিৰ বিবাহ পদ্ধতি<sup>১২</sup>ৰ অন্যান্য নিয়মৰ ৩ নং নিয়ম অনুসৰি 'কাজ কৰ্ম আদিত কোনো প্ৰকাৰে মদ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰিব।' এই নিয়মৰ আঁৰত মহাপুৰুষীয়া ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ প্ৰভাৱ আছে। একেখন বিবাহ পদ্ধতিৰ অন্যান্য নিয়মৰ ২৩ নং নিয়ম অনুসৰি 'কন্যাঘৰীয়াই ইচ্ছা কৰিলে কন্যাদানৰ ভোজত মাছ নাইবা মাংস দিব পাৰিব।' এই নিয়মৰ পৰা ভাবিবৰ থল আছে যে সেই সময়ত বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত কন্যাদানৰ ভোজত মাছ, মাংসৰ ব্যৱহাৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এটা সামাজিক প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া সৃষ্টি

হৈছিল। মনকবিবলগীয়া, শ্রীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সংঘৰো কোনো আনুষ্ঠানিক কৃত্যত মাছ-মাংসৰে ভোজ দিয়া নহয়। শৰণীয়া কছাৰী সকলৰ কন্যাদানৰ ভোজত মাছ-মাংস ব্যৱহাৰ প্ৰসংগত শ্রীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সঙ্ঘৰ আচাৰ ৰীতিৰ সম্বন্ধ থাকিব পাৰে।

### ভক্তিধৰ্ম্মলৈ স্থানীয় জনজাতিৰ বৰঙনি

মধ্যযুগৰ ভাৰতীয় ভক্তি জাগৰণটো মূলতঃ সমধৰ্মী আদৰ্শ আৰু বৈশিষ্ট্যৰে ভাৰতৰ বিভিন্ন প্ৰান্তত প্ৰায় একেসময়তে বিকাশ হোৱা বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ সংস্কাৰমুখী জাগৰণৰ সমষ্টি। আঞ্চলিক বিভিন্নতাৰ বাবে এই প্ৰান্তীয় জাগৰণবোৰত কিছু মৌলিক বৈশিষ্ট্যও পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। অসমত শঙ্কৰদেৱ নেতৃত্বাধীন ভক্তি জাগৰণটোও ইয়াৰ ব্যক্তিক্ৰম নহয়। অসমৰ সুপ্ৰাচীন মংগোলীয়মূলৰ গোষ্ঠীৰ সংস্কৃতি আৰু পৰম্পৰা, অনাৰ্যমূলীয় শাসকৰ নেতৃত্বত ভাগে ভাগে প্ৰশাসনিক এলেকা আৰু ইয়াৰ মাজত হিন্দু ব্যৱস্থাৰ ক্ৰমশঃ ব্যাপ্তি লাভৰ প্ৰক্ৰিয়া— এনে পৰিৱেশত অসমৰ ভক্তি জাগৰণটোৰ বিভিন্ন স্তৰ বা তৰপত স্থানীয় লোকজীৱনৰ সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰাৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰিছিল। দ্বিতীয় আৰু চতুৰ্থ অধ্যায়ত আলোচনা কৰা হৈছে যে বিভিন্ন গোষ্ঠীৰ লোকসকলৰ প্ৰতি শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ আছিল অফুৰন্ত স্নেহ আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ জীৱনচৰ্যাৰ প্ৰতিও আছিল এক সদৰ্ধক মনোভংগী। যিসকল মানুহৰ বাবে তেখেতে ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কৰিছিল, সেইসকলৰ মানুহৰ সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰাক সমূলে উপেক্ষা কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। আনহাতে, জনজাতীয় লোকজীৱনৰ ছন্দোময় সংস্কৃতি আৰু গণতান্ত্ৰিক ব্যৱস্থা শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ শিল্পীমনৰ দৃষ্টিত ধৰা নপৰাকৈ থকা নাছিল।

অসমৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ সুদীৰ্ঘকালীন পৰম্পৰাটো বিভিন্ন ঐতিহাসিক ঘটনা প্ৰবাহৰ মাজেৰে পাৰ হৈ আহোঁতে স্বাভাৱিকতে ইয়াৰ বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্ৰত পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটিছে। আনহাতে, আধুনিক প্ৰশাসনিক ব্যৱস্থা, শিক্ষা আৰু ধ্যান-ধাৰণাই জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতি আৰু পৰম্পৰাকো পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটাইছে। এনেক্ষেত্ৰত ভক্তিধৰ্ম পৰম্পৰা আৰু জনজাতীয় পৰম্পৰাৰ পাৰস্পৰিক প্ৰভাৱ বহু ক্ষেত্ৰত স্পষ্ট হৈ থকা নাই। অসমৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মই সৃষ্টি কৰা সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰাটোৱে জাতি-বৰ্ণ-গোষ্ঠী-ধৰ্ম নিৰ্বিশেষে সকলো স্তৰৰ লোকজীৱনৰ ওফৰত এনে গভীৰভাৱে প্ৰভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰি আছে যে ঘোৰ শান্ত এজনেও নামঘৰত বহি উচ্চস্তৰে নাম-কীৰ্ত্তন কৰা, বা মদ-মাংস উপচাৰ আগ কৰি কীৰ্ত্তন পাঠ কৰা এক সাধাৰণ দৃশ্য হৈ পৰিছে। এনে কাৰণতো আলোচ্য প্ৰভাৱৰ বিচাৰ কৰাটো জটিল হৈ পৰিছে। তথাপি কিছুমান ক্ষেত্ৰত ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ পৰম্পৰাটোত জনজাতীয় বৰঙনি অনুমান কৰিব পাৰি।

নামঘৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাৰ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ উপাদান। এই নামঘৰ মাজত

নিহিত গণতান্ত্ৰিক আদৰ্শ, স্থাপত্য আৰ্হি আৰু ধৰ্মীয় অনুষ্ংগৰ লগত অসমৰ জনজাতিসকলৰ সমূহীয়া উপাসনা থলী আৰু ডেকাচাঙৰ গঠন আৰু ব্যৱহাৰ সাদৃশ্য লক্ষ্যনীয়। গণেশ চন্দ্ৰ শৰ্মা ঠাকুৰে সেয়ে কৈছে—

The 'Thanghar' of the Deoris or the 'Barghar' of the Tiwas might have attracted the attention of Sri Sankradeva in formulating the idea of Namghar which is the nucleus of socio-religious life of Assamese peasantry.<sup>52</sup>

‘থানঘৰ’ দেউৰীসকলৰ বিভিন্ন ফৈদৰ (clan) সমূহীয়া উপাসনা গৃহ। আনহাতে ‘বৰঘৰ’ তিৱাসকলৰ একেটা ‘বংশ’ৰ লোকসকলৰ ধৰ্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানৰ সমূহীয়া গৃহ। সঞ্জীৱ কুমাৰ বৰকাকতীয়ে অৱশ্যে মিচিংসকলৰ মুৰংঘৰৰ পৰাই নামঘৰৰ বিকাশ হৈছে বুলি অনুমান কৰিছে।<sup>৫৩</sup> এই মুৰংঘৰ হ’ল—

ডেকা-গাভৰুসকলে গাঁৱৰ আকস্মিক দুৰ্ঘটনা, শত্ৰুৰ বিপক্ষে হঠাতে হ’ব লগা যুদ্ধ, জুই লগা ইত্যাদিৰ বাবে সদা প্ৰস্তুত হ’ব পৰাকৈ নিজৰ ঘৰত নাথাকি গাঁৱৰ এটা উমৈহতীয়া ঘৰত থকাৰ নীতি আছিল। তেনে ৰাজহুৱা ঘৰক ‘মুৰং’ বুলি কোৱা হয়।.... এই মুৰং ঘৰবোৰ ডেকা-গাভৰুসকলৰ সামাজিক শিক্ষা আৰু জীৱনৰ বিষয়ে অভিজ্ঞতা লাভ কৰাৰ প্ৰধান থলী।<sup>৫৪</sup>

মুৰংঘৰত সন্ধিয়াপৰত বয়োবৃদ্ধসকলে সামাজিক আৰু ধৰ্মীয় আচাৰ-নীতিৰ উপৰিও অনুশাসনৰ শিক্ষা নতুন পুৰুষক দিছিল। এই ঘৰটো ৫ ফুট ওখ চাংঘৰ। আকৃতিত বহলে ২০ ফুট আৰু দীঘলে ৪০/৪৫ ফুট।<sup>৫৫</sup> তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণভাৱে নামঘৰো সাধাৰণভাৱে এই জোখৰে সম্প্ৰতি মিচিংসকলৰ মাজত মুৰংঘৰ নোহোৱা হৈছে, আৰু নামঘৰে মুৰংঘৰৰ ঠাই অধিকাৰ কৰিছে।

ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ মাজত জনজাতিসকলৰ অন্তৰ্ভুক্তিয়ে অসমৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাটোত নতুন নতুন শাখাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিলে। মায়ামৰা বৈষ্ণৱ সম্প্ৰদায় ইয়াৰ এটা উৎকৃষ্ট উদাহৰণ। চাৰি সংহতিৰ সত্ৰ ব্যৱস্থাৰ পৰা মায়ামৰা বৈষ্ণৱ সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ নীতি-আদৰ্শ কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্ৰত সুকীয়া।<sup>৫৬</sup> যেনে— শৰণ দিয়া প্ৰথা, নামঘৰৰ নিৰ্মাণ পদ্ধতি, ধৰ্মীয় আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠান, তামোল-পাণৰ গুৰুত্ব আদি। আনহাতে মায়ামৰা সম্প্ৰদায়ৰে অন্তৰ্গত টিপুক থুলৰ বাৰখন সত্ৰৰ সংগঠন প্ৰণালী, উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠান, আচাৰ-নীতি আদিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ভালেমান সুকীয়া বৈশিষ্ট্য পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।<sup>৫৭</sup> ইয়াৰ কাৰণ, উজনি অসমৰ মৰাণ অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চলতেই টিপুক থুলৰ সত্ৰসমূহ অৱস্থিত আৰু এই সত্ৰসমূহৰ



প্ৰায় সকলো শিষ্যই মৰাণ নৃগোষ্ঠীৰ লোক। একেদৰে, মিচিংসকলৰ মাজত কেৱলীয়া ধৰ্ম, ভাগৱতীয় ধৰ্ম আদি নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰসাৰিত ৰূপবোৰো জনজাতীয় সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰাৰ প্ৰভাৱে ফল।

ভক্তিধৰ্মত জনজাতিসকলৰ বৰঙণিৰ দুটা সুকীয়া ধাৰা লক্ষণীয়। প্ৰথম, সংস্কৃতায়ন প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ মাজেৰে হিন্দবৃত্তলৈ সোমাই পৰা জনজাতিসকলৰ বহু সাংস্কৃতিক উপাদান বিভিন্ন পৰ্যায়ত বিভিন্ন ৰূপত হিন্দুধৰ্ম আৰু সংস্কৃতিৰ অংগীভূত হৈ পৰিছিল। এনে বহু জনজাতীয় উপাদান আৰু বৈশিষ্ট্য বৈষ্ণৱ-অবৈষ্ণৱ নিৰ্বিশেষে অসমৰ হিন্দু সমাজৰ উমৈহতীয়া উপাদান আৰু বৈশিষ্ট্য ৰূপে বিকাশ লাভ কৰিছিল। আনহাতে, সত্ৰ অনুষ্ঠানৰ বিস্তাৰ পৰ্বত, বিশেষকৈ আহোম ৰজাৰ পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা লাভ কৰাৰ পৰা সত্ৰানুষ্ঠানসমূহত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ মৌলিক বৈশিষ্ট্যসমূহ বিভিন্ন মাত্ৰাত পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটিছিল আৰু ব্ৰাহ্মণ্য হিন্দু-ব্যৱস্থাৰ স্থান ক্ৰমশঃ দৃঢ় হৈ আহিছিল। এনেক্ষেত্ৰত হিন্দুধৰ্মৰ অংগীভূত হৈ পৰা জনজাতীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য আৰু উপাদানো ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাত সহজে সোমাই পৰিব পাৰিছিল।

দ্বিতীয়তে, মূলতঃ কালসংহতিৰ জৰিয়তে ব্যাপক হাৰত জনজাতীয় লোক ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ সাংস্কৃতিক পৰিমণ্ডললৈ সোমাই অহাৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে জনজাতীয় পৰম্পৰাৰ ভালেমান উপাদান ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ মাজলৈ আহিল।

জনজাতীয় সমাজত গাম বা গাঁওবুঢ়াৰ ভূমিকা, ডেকাচাং আৰু ভাগৰং চাং, সমূহীয়াভাৱে চাঙত থকা ডেকা-গাভৰুসকলে ৰাইজৰ কাম-কাজ কৰা নিয়ম- এইবোৰ বৈষ্ণৱ যুগৰ অসমীয়া সমাজত যথেষ্ট প্ৰভাৱ পেলাইছে।<sup>৫৮</sup>

এই অসমীয়া সমাজখনেই নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাবোৰো আধাৰভূমি।

বৃক্ষপূজাক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি অসমত ভালেমান লোকাচাৰ প্ৰচলিত আছে, এই বৃক্ষপূজা মূলত জনজাতীয় লোকাচাৰ —

Tree worship which is commonly practiced by the caste Hindus,, no doubt is a tribal custom.<sup>59</sup>

তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ যে, নামনি অসমৰ বিভিন্ন ঠাইত পালন কৰা সুঁৱৰি, ভঠেলী আৰু দেউল উৎসৱৰ প্ৰাচীন উৎসৱ বৃক্ষপূজাই যদিও সম্প্ৰতি এই উৎসৱবোৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তি পৰম্পৰাৰে প্ৰসাৰিত ৰূপ হিচাপেই বিকাশ লাভ কৰিছে। জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতিত বাঁহৰ ভূমিকা সৰ্বাধিক। হিন্দু জনজাতিসকলৰ বাঁহকেন্দ্ৰিক লোকাচাৰবোৰ আৰ্য ধাৰণাই ঢাকি পেলালেও ৰাজবংশীসকলৰ বাঁহপূজা উৎসৱত ইয়াৰ সামান্য আভাস পোৱা যায়। চেমা নগাসকলৰ বিশ্বাসত বাঁহে যাদু সম্পাদন কৰিব পাৰে। ৰাভা আৰু হাজংসকলৰ

মাজতো পাওৰা বা পাৰ তোলা উৎসৱ প্ৰচলিত। ত্ৰিপুৰাৰ জনজাতিসকলৰ মাজত চ'ত-সংক্ৰান্তিত বাঁহপূজাৰ (নাগ্ৰী পূজা) প্ৰচলন আছে। গতিকে জনজাতিসকল হিন্দুবৃন্দলৈ অহাৰ সমান্তৰালভাৱে জনজাতীয় বাঁহপূজাই আৰ্য ধাৰণাৰে নতুন ৰূপত ভৰ্চেলি, দেউল আদি উৎসৱ ৰূপে বিকাশ হোৱাৰ সম্ভাৱনা নুই কৰিব নোৱাৰি। নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰসাৰৰ বিভিন্ন স্তৰত এই উৎসৱবোৰে ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ প্ৰভাৱেৰে পুনৰ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ পৰম্পৰাটোকে সমৃদ্ধ কৰি অধিক জ্ঞানমুখী কৰি তোলে।

মন কৰিবলগীয়া যে, নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ অনুগামী বৰ্ণ হিন্দু লোকসকলেও আইসবাহ, লখিমী সবাহ, কামাখ্যা গোসাঁনী পূজা, তুলসী পূজা আদি কৰা দেখা যায়। তদুপৰি বিভিন্ন দেৱ-দেৱীৰ থানত শৰাই আগ কৰা, মন্ত্ৰ মাতি মুখ লগা ভঙা আদি আচাৰ পালন কৰে। বহল অসমীয়া সংস্কৃতিত জনজাতীয় সংস্কৃতিৰ সুগভীৰ প্ৰভাৱৰ ফলতে অসমৰ বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ পৰম্পৰাটোৰ এনে ধৰণৰ শিথিলতা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে বুলি ভাবিব পাৰি। ভাৰতৰ অন্য ঠাইৰ উচ্চবৰ্ণৰ হিন্দুৰ উপৰি বৈষ্ণৱসকলে মাছ-মাংস নাখায়। কিন্তু অসমৰ শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সংঘৰ অনুগামীসকল বাদ দি সত্ৰ প্ৰভাৱিত জনসমাজৰ ধৰ্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানতো মাছ-মাংস দিয়া হয়। বিবিধি কুমাৰ বৰুৱাৰ মতে মাছ খোৱা অভ্যাস প্ৰাক-আৰ্য মংগোলীয়সকলৰ বৰঙণি—

Fish eating is probably a pre-aryan custom and in Assam it might have been borrowed from the mongolian people.<sup>৯০</sup>

মায়ামৰা সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ মাজত আনকি শুকান মাছে খাদ্য হিচাপে ব্যৱহৃত। একেদৰে, বৈষ্ণৱ ভক্তিধৰ্মৰ বিভিন্ন ধৰ্মীয় অনুসংগত তামোল-পাণৰ গুৰুত্ব মন কৰিবলগীয়া। গুৰু আসনৰ সন্মুখত চাকি-বস্তিৰ লগতে গুৱা-পাণ আগ কৰিহে ধৰ্মীয় কৃত্য সম্পন্ন কৰা হয়। এই তামোল-পাণৰ ব্যৱহাৰ অষ্টমংগোলয়ডসকলৰ অৱদান বুলি ভবা হয়।<sup>৯১</sup>

বিয়াৰ সময়ত দৰাই কন্যাৰ ঘৰলৈ তামোল-পাণৰ ভাৰ নিয়া। ....দৰা-কইনাই বাটত হেঙাৰ দি টকা-পইচা বা তামোল-পাণৰ শৰাই লৈ আশীৰ্বাদ দিয়াৰ প্ৰথা এইবোৰো আৰ্যভিন্ন জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ পৰা অহা।<sup>৯২</sup>

বৰপেটা সত্ৰৰ গুৰু আসনখনৰ স্থাপত্য ৰীতি অতি সৰল। এইখন মাধৱদেৱৰ সময়তে তৈয়াৰ কৰা বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। আনহাতে, অসমৰ গাঁৱে গাঁৱে থকা নামঘৰবোৰৰ গুৰু আসন যথেষ্ট আলংকাৰিক। এই আসনবোৰত থকা উৰনীয়া সিংহৰ প্ৰতীক মংগোলীয় সংস্কৃতিৰ প্ৰভাৱত পৰৱৰ্তী কালৰ সংযোজন বুলি ভবাৰ অৱকাশ থাকে।<sup>৯৩</sup>

গোলাপ মহন্তৰ মতে, মহাপুৰুষীয়া পৰম্পৰাৰ নাম-প্ৰসঙ্গৰ সুৰত জনজাতীয় গীতৰ সুৰৰ সাদৃশ্য আছে।<sup>৯৪</sup> একেদৰে, সোণোৱাল কছাৰীৰ গায়ন-বায়নৰ সাম্প্ৰতিক ৰূপত শংকৰী সংস্কৃতিৰ গায়ন-বায়নৰ প্ৰভাৱো হ'ব পাৰে। সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ

হয়দাং গীত গোৱাৰ সময়ত 'হয়দাং গীতৰ ছেৱে ছেৱে বাঁহীৰ সুৰে সুৰে, খুটিতাল আৰু বাঁহৰ মাৰিৰ তালে তালে তাল মিলাই এগৰাকী নৰ্তকীয়ে জেমা টঙালি পিন্ধি হাতত ম'ৰা চৰাইৰ পাখি লৈ চালি ধৰি নাচে।'" সত্ৰীয়া চালি নাচৰ লগত এই নাচৰ কোনো কোনো ভগী-চালনাৰ সাদৃশ্য অনুভৱ হয়। সত্ৰীৰ কুমাৰ বৰকাকতীয়ে বৰগীতৰ সুৰৰ লগত তিৱাসকলৰ 'লালী হিলালী' গীতৰ সাদৃশ্যলৈ দৃষ্টিপাত কৰিছে।"

এনেধৰণৰ সাদৃশ্যমূলক উপাদানক একে আধাৰে প্ৰভাৱ বুলিব নোৱাৰি। কিন্তু, এই সাদৃশ্যবোৰে সৰ্বস্তৰৰ সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজলৈ ভক্তিদৰ্শন প্ৰসাৰিত হোৱা, পৰম্পৰাৰ মাজত ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ মাধ্যমেৰে উভয়মুখী চলাচল আৰু ধৰ্মবিশ্বাসৰ পৰিধিৰ বাহিৰৰ নানান ক্ষেত্ৰতো আন্তঃসংযোগী প্ৰবাহ এটা সূচনা হোৱাৰ তাৎপৰ্য বহন কৰে।

### পাদটীকা :

১. হীৰনে গোহাঁই, *অসমীয়া জাতীয় জীৱনৰ মহাপুৰুষীয়া পৰম্পৰা* (১ম খণ্ড), পৃ. ১১
২. টকাৰে খাজনা দিয়া ব্যৱস্থা ঔপনিবেশিক যুগৰ পৰাহে আৰম্ভ হয়। টকাৰে খাজনা দিয়াৰ প্ৰয়োজন নহ'লে উৎপাদিত সামগ্ৰী হাটত বিক্ৰী কৰাৰো প্ৰয়োজন নহয়। ফলত বাণিজ্যৰ বিকাশ নহয়।
৩. 'ৰামায়ণ' পোনপটীয়াকৈ ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ সাহিত্য নহ'লেও আদৰ্শগতভাৱে ইয়াৰ ভাববস্তু ভক্তিদৰ্শনৰ ফালেই ঢাল খোৱা। সেয়ে কবীন ফুকনে মাধৱ কন্দলিক 'আদি বৈষ্ণৱ যুগ'ৰ কবি বুলি কৈছে (*অসমীয়া কবিতাৰ প্ৰবাহ*, ১ম খণ্ড, পৃ. ৩০২)
৪. সত্ৰৰ চৰিত তোলা অনুষ্ঠানত শংকৰদেৱে দুবাৰকৈ ভাৰতৰ তীৰ্থস্থানসমূহ দৰ্শন কৰা কথাও নিশ্চয় আলোচিত হৈছিল। ইও ভাৰতীয় চেতনা সম্প্ৰসাৰণত সহায়ক হৈছিল।
৫. ঊনবিংশ শতিকাৰ আদি ভাগত বংগত ইংৰাজী ভাষাই শিক্ষা আৰু প্ৰশাসনিক কাম-কাজৰ মাধ্যম আছিল। ফলত 'ধৰ্মৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো ইংৰাজীৰ প্ৰভাৱে বেভাৰেণ্ড কৃষ্ণমোহন বেনাৰ্জী, মাইকেল মধুসূদনৰ দৰে আন আন উদীয়মান তৰুণ প্ৰতিভাক খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্মলৈ আকৃষ্ট কৰিব পাৰে বুলি বহুতৰ ভয় হৈছিল।" (*হীৰনে গোহাঁই, ঐতিহ্যৰ কপান্তৰ আৰু অন্যান্য প্ৰবন্ধ*, পৃ. ১৩২) ভাষাৰ লগত ধৰ্মৰ এই সম্পৰ্কটো তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ। শিক্ষাৰ মাধ্যম অসমীয়া হোৱাৰ লগে লগে অসমৰ শৈক্ষিক পাঠ্যক্ৰমত শংকৰদেৱ আৰু মহাপুৰুষীয়া ঐতিহ্য-পৰম্পৰা বিষয়ক পাঠ অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত হৈ আহিছে। বিদ্যালয়সমূহত 'নামঘোষা'ৰ প্ৰাৰ্থনাৰে দৈনিক পাঠদান আৰম্ভ হয়। এই বিদ্যালয়বোৰত বৰহিন্দু অসমীয়াৰ লগতে জনজাতীয় ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীয়েও একেলগে শিক্ষা লাভ কৰে।
৬. অমনেন্দু গুহ, *বৈষ্ণৱবাদৰ পৰা মায়ামৰীয়া বিদ্ৰোহলৈ*, পৃ. ১০
৭. Satish Chandra Das, "The Sarania Kacharis", *স্মৃতিত্ৰয়*, সদৌ অসম শৰণীয়া কছাৰী ছাত্ৰ সন্থাৰ ১০ম দ্বিবাৰ্ষিক বৰিমাখা অধিবেশন, ২০০৭, পৃ. ৬০
৮. নোমল পেণ্ড, *মিহিংসকলৰ ইতিবৃত্ত আৰু সংস্কৃতি*, পৃ. ২৬৭
৯. সোণাৰাম চুতীয়াই দক্ষিণপাট সত্ৰত শৰণ লওঁতে গোঁসাঁয়ে শংকৰদেৱক গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ স্থান নিদিয়াত তেওঁ শৰণ নোলোৱাকৈ উঠি আহিছিল, (*সোণাৰাম চুতীয়া, বিদ্যোদগাৰৰ বিচিত্ৰ কাহিনী*, পাতনি)

১০. নোমল পেণ্ড, পূৰ্বোক্ত, প. ২৬৭
১১. *Obscure practices*, 123-24pp.
১২. *ibid*, 124p.
১৩. দেবীপ্ৰসাদ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ে লোকায়াত জনসমাজত প্ৰচলিত অবৈদিক ধৰ্মধাৰাক তাত্ত্বিক ধাৰ বুলিছে। *লোকায়াত দৰ্শন*, পৃ. ৩৬৯
১৪. S. Endle, *The Kacharis*, p. 86
১৫. নোমল পেণ্ড, পূৰ্বোক্ত, প. ২৭২
১৬. সংবাদ দাতা, দেৱ চুতীয়া (৪৫), ধেমাজি
১৭. ৰুদ্ৰমোহন শৰণীয়া, (৬০), শৰণীয়া পাৰা, বঙ্গাইগাঁও
১৮. নগেন দৌল, 'ধেমাজীৰ তিৰা (লালুং) জনজাতি সম্পৰ্কে একাধাৰ', *বিংছাং* (সদৌ অসম তিৰা (লালুং) সন্মিলনৰ মুখপত্ৰ), ২০০৪, সম্পাদনা- গণেশ সেনাপতি, পৃ. ৪৭১
১৯. শ্ৰদ্ধানন্দ দুৱৰা, 'পাৰ্চৌৰজীয়া তিৰাৰ (লালুঙৰ) ধৰ্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানৰ ওপৰত সামান্য আলোকপাত', *বিংছাং*, পৃ. ২৩৭
২০. ৰাজেন ৰাভা *ৰাভা জনজাতি*, পৃ. ৮৫
২১. পাদুন, নাহেন্দ্ৰ, *অসমীয়া সংস্কৃতিতলৈ জনজাতীয় বৰঙনি*, পৃ. ৭০
২২. Birendranath Datta et. al., *A Handbook of Folklore Materials of North East*. 151p.
২৩. নোমল পেণ্ড, পূৰ্বোক্ত, পৃ. ২৫৯
২৪. B.N. Bordoloi & G.C. Sharma Thakur, *Tribes of Assam, Part-II*. 105p.
২৫. B.N. Bordoloi et. al. *ibid*, 57p.
২৬. নলিনী ডেকা, *শৰণীয়া কছাৰী সমাজ আৰু সংস্কৃতি*, পৃ. ৬৭
২৭. উক্ত, পৃ. ৭৯, ২৮. উক্ত,
২৯. যোগেন গয়াৰী, (৫৮), ডিচিৰিগাঁও, বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলি
৩০. লক্ষ্মণ ইংতি, (৪০), ভৰালীজুলি, বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলি
৩১. ধৰণী বড়ো, 'সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলৰ লখিমী সৰাহ', *সোণোৱাল সৌৰভ*, সম্পা-মোহন সোণোৱাল, পৃ. ২১২
৩২. দীপক গগৈ, 'মৰাণসকলৰ বহাগ বিহু', *প্ৰান্তিক*, ১ এপ্ৰিল, ২০০৯; বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ গোঁহাই, *পূৰ্বোক্ত*, পৃ. ৫২
৩৩. গগন চন্দ্ৰ অধিকাৰী, 'শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ আৰু উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ জনগোষ্ঠী জনজাতীয় আৰু পিছপৰা সমাজত নৱ বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ আৰু প্ৰসাবত ছমৰীয়া সত্ৰ আৰু দক্ষিণ কামৰূপৰ অন্যান্য সত্ৰসমূহৰ ভূমিকা', *শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ আৰু উত্তৰ পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ জনগোষ্ঠী*, সম্পা-প্ৰদীপ হাজৰিকা, পৃ. ৪৯
৩৪. ৰাজীৱ পেণ্ড, (৪২), জেংৰাইমুখ, মাজুলী
৩৫. হেৰম্বৰ পাটৰ, (৩২), বনপৰা দন্দুৱা গাঁও, মৰিগাঁও
৩৬. সদানন্দ পায়েং, 'মিচিং সমাজত শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱৰ প্ৰভাৱ', *আকাশী গঙ্গা* (স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থ) শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ সংঘৰ মহাবজ্জত জয়ন্তী অধিবেশন, ২০০৬, পৃ. ৩৪

৩৭. ধনেশ্বৰ বাভা, (৬৫), ধূপধৰা
৩৮. প্ৰমোদচন্দ্ৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য, *অসমৰ লোকউৎসৱ*, পৃ. ৬
৩৯. বিৰিঞ্চিকুমাৰ বৰুৱা, *অসমৰ লোকসংস্কৃতি*, পৃ. ১৭২
৪০. গাঁৱৰ নামঘৰবোৰত শাস্ত্ৰ পাঠ হওঁতে পাঠেক আৰু ভকতৰ মাজৰ বিভিন্ন জনে একেটা প্ৰসংগতে ভিন ভিন ব্যাখ্যা দাঙি ধৰে। দাৰ্শনিক ভাবৰ পদৰ অৰ্থ কেতিয়াবা দেহতত্ত্বৰ আধাৰত ব্যাখ্যা কৰাও শুনা যায়।
৪১. ইন্দিৰা দেউৰী, *জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমস্যা : অতীত বৰ্তমান ভৱিষ্যত*, পৃ. ৮৩
৪২. উদ্ধৃতি প্ৰসেনজিৎ চৌধুৰী, *অৰুনোদই*, পৃ. ৭৯
৪৩. উক্ত
৪৪. তীৰ্থনাথ শৰ্মা, *আউনিআটী সত্ৰৰ বুৰঞ্জী*, পৃ. ২৫০
৪৫. যতীন মিশ্ৰ, 'মোৰ জীৱন পট আৰু শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱ সংঘ', *মণিকাঞ্চন*, নৱেম্বৰ, ২০০৪
৪৬. প্ৰশান্ত কুমাৰ মহন্ত, *মাজুলী*, পৃ. ৮৫
৪৭. লোহিত চন্দ্ৰ দাস (সম্পা), *স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থ*, ১০ম বাৰ্ষিক বৰিমাখা অধিবেশন, সদৌ অসম শৰণীয়া কছাৰী ছাত্ৰ সন্থা, ২০০৭
৪৮. G.C. Sarmah Thakur, *Selected Essays on Tribes and Castes of Assam, Part-I*, 21p
৪৯. Sanjib Kr. Barkakati, 'Interaction between 'Tribal Mising Culture and Vaisnavite Culture of Assam,' *Mahapurana Jyoti*, Vol-vi, 2004, ed. Suresh Ch. Bora, 27.p.
৫০. নাহেন্দ্ৰ পাদুৱা, *পূৰ্বোক্ত*, পৃ. ১২২
৫১. নোমল পেগু, *পূৰ্বোক্ত*, পৃ. ১৭৫
৫২. এনি হাজৰিকা, *অসমৰ ইতিহাসত শ্ৰীশ্ৰীঅনিৰুদ্ধদেৱ আৰু মায়ামৰা বৈষ্ণৱ সম্প্ৰদায়*, পৃ. ১১৭-১৩২
৫৩. উক্ত, পৃ. ১১৫
৫৪. নাহেন্দ্ৰ পাদুৱা, *পূৰ্বোক্ত*, পৃ. ২৪
৫৫. G.C. Sarmah Thakur, *op.cit.* 20p.
৫৬. B.K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam*, 137p.
৫৭. লীলা গগৈ, *অসমৰ সংস্কৃতি*, পৃ. ৩৪
৫৮. নাহেন্দ্ৰ পাদুৱা, *পূৰ্বোক্ত*, পৃ. ২৩
৫৯. Sanjib Kr. Barkakati, 'Srimanta Sankardeva and the Tribes of North-East India.' *Souvenir*, Silver Jubilee, Commerce College, Kokrajhar, 2009-10 (ed. Milan Neog) 82p.
৬০. গোলাপ মহন্ত, 'শংকৰী সংগীতৰ উপাদান', সৰ্ব গুণাকৰ (স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থ), (সম্পা- শিৱনাথ কাকতি), নগাঁও, ১৯৯৮, পৃ. ৬৯

# ব্ৰিটিছ-শাসিত অসমৰ গ্ৰাম্য-অৰ্থনৈতিক অৱস্থা আৰু জনগাঁথনি : এটি প্ৰাৰম্ভিক পৰ্যালোচনা

সোমনাথ বৰা

১৮২৬ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দৰ ২৪ ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী তাৰিখে ব্ৰিটিছ আৰু ব্ৰহ্মদেশৰ ৰজাৰ মাজত হোৱা ইয়াণ্ডাবু সন্ধিৰ ফলত অসমৰ শাসনভাৰ ব্ৰিটিছ ইষ্ট ইণ্ডিয়া কোম্পানীৰ হাতলৈ যায়। তেতিয়াৰপৰাই অসমৰ সমাজ জীৱনত পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ সূচনা হয় বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। এই সময়ছোৱাৰ অসমৰ গ্ৰাম্য সমাজখনত এহাতে আহোম শাসনৰ সময়ৰ পৰা চলি অহা বহু ৰীতি-নীতি, পৰম্পৰা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা গৈছিল আৰু আনহাতে সামাজিক, ৰাজনৈতিক, অৰ্থনৈতিক ক্ষেত্ৰত বহুত পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটিছিল। ব্ৰিটিছ শাসনৰ আৰম্ভণিৰ মাজেৰেই আধুনিক অসমীয়া সমাজ জীৱনৰো আৰম্ভণি ঘটে।

ভাৰতৰ ব্ৰিটিছ প্ৰশাসনৰ উত্তৰ-পূব সীমান্তৰ প্ৰথম বিষয়া ডেভিদ স্কটৰ প্ৰস্তাৱমতে ব্ৰিটিছে নামনি অসম ব্ৰিটিছৰ প্ৰত্যক্ষ শাসনলৈ নিলে আৰু উজনি অসমত বছৰি পঞ্চাশ হাজাৰ টকাৰ বিনিময়ত পুৰন্দৰ সিংহক থাপিলে। (*H.K. Barpujari (Ed.) P. 28, 1977*) ইতিমধ্যে স্কটৰ মৃত্যু হোৱাত তেওঁৰ উত্তৰসূৰী শাসক হিচাপে অভিষিক্ত হোৱা টি.ছি. ৰবাৰ্টছনে প্ৰশাসন আৰু অৰ্থনৈতিক ব্যৱস্থাত বিশেষ পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটালে। ১৮৩৩ চনৰ মাৰ্চ মাহত তেওঁ ব্ৰিটিছ প্ৰশাসনৰ অনুমোদনক্ৰমে নামনি অসমক গোৱালপাৰা, কামৰূপ, দৰং আৰু নগাঁও— এই চাৰিখন জিলাত বিভক্ত কৰি প্ৰত্যেক জিলাতে কৰ সংগ্ৰহ, বিচাৰৰ কৰ্তৃত্ব দি একোজন প্ৰধান সহায়ক নিযুক্ত কৰিলে। [On his recommendations in March 1833 the Supreme Government accorded its approval for the division of the province into four districts

- Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong, over each was placed a Principal Assistant (P.A.) vested with the powers of a Collector, Judge and Magistrate. [H.K. Barpujari (Ed.) P. - 28, 1977] পুনৰ ১৮৩৮ চনত উজনি অসমৰ শাসনভাৰ পূবদৰ সিংহৰ পৰা কাটি লৈ পাইক প্ৰথাৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ বিলোপ ঘটাই পৃথক অৰ্থনৈতিক ব্যৱস্থা প্ৰৱৰ্তন কৰি সমগ্ৰ অসমতে ব্ৰিটিছে শাসন কৰিবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিলে। এই সম্পৰ্কে প্ৰফুল্ল মহন্তই লিখিছে—

পাইক প্ৰথা উঠাই দি নতুন ভূমি বন্দবস্তি (ৰায়তৱাৰী)ৰ  
যোগে প্ৰতিজন পাইকক মাটিৰ মালিকীস্বত্ব দিছিল।  
নতুন ভূমি ব্যৱস্থাই আগৰ পাইকক ৰায়তত পৰিণত  
কৰিছিল। আগৰ খাত, পাম উঠাই দি নগদ টকাৰে মাটিৰ  
খাজনা দিয়াৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰিছিল। (প্ৰফুল্ল মহন্ত, পৃ. ১৪৪-  
৪৫ : ২০০৯)

মহন্তই আঙুলিয়াই দিছে যে নতুন ব্যৱস্থাত আহোম ডা-ডাঙৰীয়াসকল সাধাৰণ  
প্ৰজাৰ শাৰীলৈ নামিছিল আৰু বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ কৰৰ বোজাত সাধাৰণ প্ৰজাসকল কোণ্ডা  
হৈ পৰিছিল।

নতুন শাসন ব্যৱস্থাৰ আৰম্ভণিৰ সময়ছোৱাৰ পৰা 'জোনাকী যুগ'লৈ ব্ৰিটিছসকল  
কেইবাবাৰো সাধাৰণ প্ৰজা আৰু পূৰ্বৰ আহোম ৰজাঘৰীয়াৰ বিদ্ৰোহ, বিক্ষোভ আদিৰ  
সন্মুখীন হ'বলগীয়াত পৰিছিল। ১৮২৮ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত গোমধৰ কোঁৱৰৰ বিদ্ৰোহ, ১৮৩০  
খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত ধনজয়, পিয়লি আৰু জীউৰামৰ বিদ্ৰোহ আৰু ১৮৫৭ চনত মণিৰাম দেৱানে  
কৰা বিদ্ৰোহৰ মাজেদি আহোম ৰাজত্ব বা অভিজাত শ্ৰেণীৰ পুনৰুদ্ধাৰৰ চেষ্টা চলিছিল।  
ইতিমধ্যে থলুৱা লোকে কৰা কানি খেতি বন্ধ কৰি ব্ৰিটিছে নিজে চৰা দামত কানি বিক্ৰী  
কৰিবলৈ লৈছিল। তাৰ উপৰি তামোল-পাণৰ বাৰী আদিতো কৰ লগাব বুলি সাধাৰণ  
ৰাইজৰ মাজত প্ৰচাৰ হৈছিল। ফলত 'ফুলগুৰি ধোৱা' নামেৰে জনাজাত ৰাইজ বিদ্ৰোহৰ  
সূচনা হৈছিল। "এই ঘটনাত ভাগ লোৱা প্ৰায়খিনিয়েই জনজাতি বড়ো, কছাৰী আৰু  
তিৱা-লালুং সাধাৰণ প্ৰজা আছিল।" (অনিল ৰায়চৌধুৰী, পৃ. ১৩৯ : ২০১২) ১৮৬১  
খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত অসমৰ কমিছনাৰ হপকিনচ চাহাবে খাজনা দুগুণ কৰাৰ যি প্ৰস্তাৱ দিছিল ১৮৯৩  
চনত সেই প্ৰস্তাৱমতে মাটিৰ খাজনাৰ নিৰিখ বলৱৎ কৰা হ'ল। "খাজনা কমোৱাৰ বাবে  
আবেদন-নিবেদন দি ফল নোপোৱাত কামৰূপ আৰু দৰঙাৰ বহুতহচিলৰ ৰায়তে আইন  
হাতত তুলি ল'লে।" (When memorials, prayers and petitions bore no fruit,  
the aggrieved ryots of several tahsils of Kamrup and Darrang took  
the law into their own hands. (H.K. Barpujari, P. 30 : 2007) প্ৰজাই

‘বাইজ মেল’ বহুৰাই খাজনা নিদিবলৈ থিৰাং কৰিলে। কামৰূপৰ ডেপুটি কমিছনাৰে কোনো ঠাইত অসন্তুষ্টি কৰিব পাৰিলেও পাতি দৰং, নলবাৰী, বৰমা, বজালী, উম্মৰ বৰভাগ, সৰুক্ষেত্ৰী আদি অঞ্চলৰ সাধাৰণ প্ৰজাক শাস্ত কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। বঙিয়া, লছিমা আৰু পথৰুঘাটত বাইজ ব্ৰিটিছৰ সৈতে প্ৰত্যক্ষ সংঘাতত লিপ্ত হয়। “এই প্ৰতিবাদী আন্দোলন ১৮৯৩ চনৰ ডিচেম্বৰ মাহত আৰম্ভ হৈ ১৮৯৪ চনৰ জানুৱাৰী মাহত পথৰুঘাটত কৰুণ সমাপ্তি ঘটে।” (The protest movement started at Rangiya in December 1893 and it came to a tragic end at Patharughat in January in 1894. (Rajen Saikia, P. 106 : 2001) ব্ৰিটিছে কঠোৰ হাতেৰে এই বিদ্ৰোহ দমন কৰে।

ব্ৰিটিছ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত গাঁও অঞ্চলত নতুন মধ্যবিত্ত শ্ৰেণী এটাৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছিল। এই শ্ৰেণীটোৰ বিষয়ে প্ৰফুল্ল মহন্তই লিখিছে—

মৌজাদাৰ, মণ্ডল, গাঁওবুঢ়া, সত্ৰাধিকাৰ, ব্ৰাহ্মণ, পণ্ডিত, পুৰোহিত দৈবজ্ঞ, শিক্ষক ইত্যাদি এই সকলোকলৈ নতুন মধ্যশ্ৰেণীটো গঠিত হৈছে। জীৱিকাৰ উপায় নতুন হ’লেও আৰু নতুন সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ বতাহ লাগিলেও, এওঁলোকেই আছিল মধ্যযুগ সুলভ সামন্তীয় সমাজ সম্পৰ্কৰ ধৰণীস্বৰূপ। ব্ৰিটিছৰ একান্ত অনুগত মধ্যবিত্তৰ এই অংশটোৱে গ্ৰামাঞ্চলত ব্ৰিটিছৰ প্ৰতিনিধি হিচাপেই কাম কৰিছিল। (প্ৰফুল্ল মহন্ত, পৃ. ১৪৮ : ২০০৯)

এই শ্ৰেণীটোৱে গাঁৱৰ দ্বন্দ্ব-খৰিয়াল লাগিলে বিচাৰ কৰা আদি কামবোৰো কৰিছিল। খাজনা শোধাব নোৱাৰিলে খেতিয়কসকল মৌজাদাৰ, মণ্ডল আদিৰ ওচৰ চাপিবলগীয়া হৈছিল। তাৰ সুবিধা লৈ কম মূল্যত কৃষকৰ মাটি কিনি বা বন্ধকীত লৈ তেওঁলোক যথেষ্ট মাটি-সম্পত্তিৰ গৰাকী হৈছিল। সেই মাটিকে আকৌ কৃষকক আধি দি বহু টকা উপাৰ্জন কৰিছিল। এই শ্ৰেণীটোৰ বহুজনৰ গাত শোষক চৰিত্ৰ পৰিস্ফুট হৈছিল। এই শ্ৰেণীটোৰ বিষয়ে অমলেন্দু গুহই লিখিছে—

মৌজাদাৰসকলৰ নিযুক্তিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ব্যক্তিজন সেই মৌজাৰ এজন প্ৰভাৱশালী আৰু অৱস্থাপন্ন লোক হ’ব লাগিছিল। তেওঁৰ পাছত তেওঁৰ পৰিয়ালৰ কোনোবা এজন লোকেই মৌজাদাৰৰ উত্তৰাধিকাৰ পাইছিল। এই পদ্ধতিয়ে প্ৰশাসনক শক্তিশালী কৰিব পৰা অচলা আনুগত্য থকা গাঁৱলীয়া সমাজ এখনৰ বিস্তাৰত সহায়



কৰিছিল। গ্ৰাম্যাঞ্চলত তেওঁৰ স্থান চাহমালিকৰ পাছতে আছিল। প্ৰত্যেক মৌজা কেইবাটাও চক্ৰত ভাগ কৰি একোজনকৈ মণ্ডলক তাৰ দায়িত্ব দিয়া হৈছিল। (For appointment as mauzadar one had to be an influential and well-to-do-resident of the mauza itself. He was ordinarily succeeded in the office by one of his family. The system helped the growth of a stable and loyal rural gentry that could be relied upon as strong ally of the administration. In rural area this position was next to the planters. Each mauza was divided into a number of circles headed by mandals or village-surveyors. Amalendu Guha, P. 39 : 2014)

ব্ৰিটিছ প্ৰশাসনে টকা পইচা সংগ্ৰহ কৰাৰ দায়িত্বত থকা লোকৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো হীনডেটি ঘটিলে কঠোৰ ব্যৱস্থা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। যোগেন্দ্ৰনাৰায়ণ ভূঞাই ১৮৫৭ চনৰ কথা উল্লেখ কৰি লিখিছে—

খিং মৌজাৰ ৰুদ্ৰসিংহই দুশ একাৰন টকা ছ অনা দহ পাই (২৫১.৪১ টকা) বাকী পৰি থকা খাজনা বৰ্ষিত ম্যাদৰ ভিতৰতো ৰাচিল নকৰা হেতুকে ২০ এপ্ৰিলৰ আজ্ঞাৰে মৌজাদাৰজনক বৰ্খাস্ত কৰা হৈছে আৰু মৌজাদাৰৰ জামিনৰ মাল-বস্তু ক্ৰোক কৰাৰ পৰোৱানা জাৰি হৈছে। একে ধৰণৰ অপৰাধতে (“দফায়েত মেয়াদ” দিয়া সত্ত্বেও দুশ সাত টকা চাৰি অনা পাঁচ পাই খাজনা অনাদায়) একেটা তাৰিখৰে আজ্ঞান্তৰত মিকিৰভেটা মৌজাৰ মৌজাদাৰকো বৰ্খাস্ত কৰা হৈছে, আৰু জামিনক হাজিৰ হ’বলৈ পৰোৱানা জাৰি কৰা হৈছে। (যোগেন্দ্ৰনাৰায়ণ ভূঞা, পৃ. ২০-২১ : ১৯৯৮)

গাঁওবুঢ়াৰ দায়িত্ব পোৱা লোকৰ কামৰ হেঁচাত কি অৱস্থা হৈছিল, সেই কথা পদ্মনাথ গোহাঞিবৰুৱাই লিখা *গাঁওবুঢ়া* নাটকত ভালদৰে ফুটি উঠিছে।

ব্ৰিটিছে অসমত চাহ খেতিৰ বাবে ১৮৩৯ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত ‘অসম কোম্পানী’ গঠন কৰিছিল। চাহখেতি কৰিবৰ বাবে অসমত পৰ্যাপ্ত পৰিমাণৰ বনুৱা নথকা বাবে উৰিষ্যা,

বংগ, উত্তৰ প্ৰদেশ আদিৰ পৰা বনুৱা আমদানি কৰিছিল। অসমৰ মানুহে তেওঁলোকক কুলী নাম দিলেও পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত এই বনুৱাসকল অসমৰ স্থায়ী বাসিন্দা হৈ পৰিল।

‘জোনাকী যুগ’ৰ আৰম্ভণি কালৰ অসমৰ অৰ্থনৈতিক ব্যৱস্থা আছিল ব্ৰিটিছ প্ৰৱৰ্তিত। আহোমসকলৰ পৰা অসম ব্ৰিটিছৰ অধীনলৈ যোৱাৰ পাছত ব্ৰিটিছে পুৰণি অৰ্থনৈতিক ব্যৱস্থাৰ সাল-সলনি কৰিছিল। ব্ৰিটিছ শাসনৰ আৰম্ভণি কালৰ পৰা ‘জোনাকী যুগ’লৈকে এই ব্যৱস্থাত নানা সাল-সলনি ঘটিছিল আৰু এই সাল-সলনি স্বাধীনতাৰ আগলৈকে চলিয়েই আছিল।

ব্ৰিটিছৰ নতুন ব্যৱস্থাৰ ফলত অসমৰ মানুহো এই অৰ্থ-ব্যৱস্থাৰ মাজত সোমাই পৰিল। আহোম যুগৰ মন্দিৰত দেৱমূৰ্তি কটা, শিলৰ দুৱাৰ, শিলৰ খুঁটা কটা লোকসকলৰ কাম নোহোৱা হ’ল। গংগাসকল খেতি-বাতিৰ মাজত সোমাই পৰিল। কিন্তু কৃষকৰ অৱস্থা উন্নত নাছিল। বিনন্দ চন্দ্ৰ ফুকনে জোনাকীত লিখা ‘অসমীয়াৰ খেতি’ প্ৰবন্ধত উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে অসমত হোৱা ধানেৰে তিনিভাগৰ এভাগ লোককে খাবলৈ নুজুৰিছিল। (নগেন শইকীয়া, সম্পা. পৃ. ১১৭ : ২০০১) তেওঁ একেটা প্ৰবন্ধতে আৰু উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে অসমীয়াসকলে বছৰেকত দুটা, কোনোৱে মাত্ৰ এটাহে ধানৰ খেতি কৰিছিল। ধানৰ খেতি কৰোঁতেও সাৰৰ ব্যৱহাৰ বা উন্নত পদ্ধতি ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা নাছিল। তাৰ মাজতে গৰু-ম’হ কিনিবলৈ ধন ধাৰে দিব পৰাকৈ ধনী মানুহো দুই-এজন আছিল, কিন্তু সাধাৰণতে ধাৰলৈ নিদিছিল। “তাৰ কাৰণ এই যে, ধাৰ শুজাৰ সময়ত টনাটনি পৰে। ছল পালে কোনোৱে ধাৰো নুশুজে।” (নগেন শইকীয়া, সম্পা. পৃ. ১১৮ : ২০০১)

সেই সময়ত চৰকাৰে কুঁহিয়াৰ বা আন খেতিৰ বাবে কৃষি বিভাগৰ পৰা কিছু অবৈতনিক যোগাযোগকাৰী নিয়োগ কৰিছিল। তেওঁলোকে পৰীক্ষা-নিৰীক্ষাত সক্ৰিয়তা দেখুৱাইছিল আৰু কৃষিৰ অগ্ৰগতিৰ বিষয়ে চৰকাৰক জনাইছিল। বৈঠালাখুৰ বাবু জ্ঞান চন্দ্ৰ ৰায় নামৰ নগাঁৱৰ যোগাযোগকাৰীজনে ১৯১৫-১৬ চনত চৰকাৰে যোগান ধৰা সঁচৈৰে এক তৃতীয়াংশ একৰ মাটিত কুঁহিয়াৰ খেতি কৰিছিল। “এই কুঁহিয়াৰ প্ৰায় ১৪ ফুট দীঘল আৰু বৰ শকত হৈছিল। এই খেতিৰ পৰা তেওঁ প্ৰায় ৪৩ মৌন গুৰ পাইছিল।” (The cane grew about 14 ft. long and were very thick. About 43 maunds of gur were obtained from the cultivation. (Rajen Saikia, P. 115 : 2001) অৱশ্যে এই অৱস্থা সাধাৰণ কৃষকৰ নাছিল।

মৰাপাটৰ খেতি পমুৱা মুছলমানসকলে ব্যাপকৰূপে কৰিছিল। অহিজুদ্দিন শ্বেখে চৰ-চাপৰিৰ ইতিবৃত্তগ্ৰন্থখনত উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে ১৯০২-০৩ চনত অসমত ২৫,৮৫০ একৰ মাটিত মৰাপাটৰ খেতি কৰা হৈছিল। ১৯১৮-১৯ চনত ৮৪,৭৭২ একৰ মৰাপাটৰ খেতি কৰা মাটিৰ ভিতৰত ৫০,৮৯২ একৰ আছিল গোৱালপাৰা জিলাৰ মাটি। ১৯৫০-৫১ চনত

২,৪১,৭৬৮ একৰ মাটিত মৰাপাটৰ খেতি কৰা হয়। কামৰূপ আৰু নগাঁও জিলাত এই সময়ত মৰাপাটৰ খেতিৰ পৰিমাণ বাঢ়ে। (অহিজুদ্দিন শ্বেখঃ পৃ. ৫৭, ২০১৩)

হস্তশিল্পৰ ভিতৰত বং উৎপাদনকাৰী, সোণ কমোৱা, কাঠত খোদাই কৰা শিল্পকৰ্মী আদি কমি আহিছিল। কিন্তু আগৰ পৰা প্ৰচলন থকা হাতীৰ দাঁত, ম'হৰ শিঙৰ পৰা তৈয়াৰ কৰা খৰমৰ চুলা, কাকই, ফণি, কাণ-খজুৱা আদি শিল্প প্ৰধানকৈ যোৰহাট আৰু বৰপেটাতে চলি আছিল। কনকলাল বৰুৱাই উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে কাঁহী, বাতি, লোটা, চৰিয়া ইত্যাদি তৈয়াৰ কৰা কামো কমি আহিছিল। সেইবোৰ গঢ়াৰ মূল স্থান আছিল বহা আৰু সৰ্থেবাৰী। (নগেন শইকীয়া, সম্পা. পৃ. ১৬৪-৬৫ : ২০০১)

বস্ত্ৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো অৱক্ষয়ে দেখা দিছিল। অসমীয়া মানুহে পলুৰ লেটাৰ পৰা পাট, মুগা আৰু এৰী সূতা উলিয়াই লৈ কাপোৰ বয়। ইয়াৰ ভিতৰত এৰী কাপোৰেই সস্তা আৰু শীতকালত ব্যৱহাৰৰ উপযোগী। কিন্তু ক্ৰমে বঙ্গদেশৰ পৰা কম দামত জকমকীয়া কাপোৰ আহিবলৈ লোৱাত আৰু তাৰ বিপৰীতে পাট, মুগাৰ দাম অধিক হোৱাত সৰ্বসাধাৰণে পাট-মুগা ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিবলৈ কিছু পৰিমাণে কমাই দিছিল। মানুহে এৰী সূতাৰে কাপোৰ ববলৈ কমাই দি সূতা বেপাৰীক বেচিছিল। কাৰণ “পাঁচ সেৰ এৰিৰ বেচ যদি ১০ টাকা হয়, সেই পাঁচসেৰ এৰিৰ সূতা কাটি কাপোৰ বৈ বেচিলে ১২ টাকাৰ ওপৰ নহয়।” (নগেন শইকীয়া, সম্পা. পৃ. ১৬৪ : ২০০১)

অৱশ্যে অৱক্ষয়ে দেখা দিলেও বয়নশিল্পৰ অৱস্থা সিমান বেছি বেয়ালৈ যোৱা নাছিল। বেছিভাগ তিৰোতা মানুহে ঘৰতে কাপোৰ বৈ পিন্ধিছিল। তাঁতশালখন তিৰোতাৰ লগৰীয়াৰ দৰে আছিল। ছোৱালী বিয়া হৈ গ'লে লগত এখন তাঁতশাল দিয়াৰ নিয়মেই আছিল। তাঁত বব নজনা তিৰোতাক ‘থুপৰী’ বুলি যোৱা শতিকাৰ ষাঠিৰ দশকলৈকে উপহাস কৰিছিল। মহাত্মা গান্ধীৰ বিদেশী বস্ত্ৰ বৰ্জন আন্দোলনে শিপিনীৰ মাজলৈ আকৌ উদ্যম আনিছিল। গান্ধীয়ে ১৯২১ চনত মন্তব্য কৰিছিল—

অসমৰ একোগৰাকী তিৰোতা জন্মাবধি বোৱনী।  
যি ছোৱালীয়ে বব- কাটিব নেজানে তেওঁ গৃহিণী  
হ'বলৈ আশা কৰিব নোৱাৰে। তেওঁলোকে  
কাপোৰত পৰীৰ কাহিনী তুলি ধৰিব পাৰে। মই  
থকা ঘৰৰ গিৰীহঁত শ্ৰীযুত ফুকনে তুলনাৰিহীন  
সৌন্দৰ্যৰে ভৰা কিছুমান পুৰণি ধৰণৰ এনে কাপোৰ  
দেখুৱাইছিল। (Every woman of Assam is a born-  
weaver. No Assamese girl who does not weave  
can expect to become a wife. And she weaves

fairly tales in cloth. Some of the old pattern that our host, Mr. Phookan, showed me were of matchless beauty. [ Arun Bhuyan (ed.), p. 370-371 :2000)

এই মন্তব্যই অসমত চলি থকা বস্ত্ৰশিল্পৰ ছবি তুলি ধৰে। অৱশ্যে তিব্বতাসকলে সূতা কাটিবলৈ বাদ দি বিদেশী সূতা কিনি কাপোৰ বোৱা কথাটোও মহাত্মা গান্ধীয়ে লক্ষ্য কৰিছিল।

বেহা-বেপাৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অসমৰ গঞা উদ্যমী নাছিল। মাত্ৰ কামৰূপ জিলাৰ মুদৈসকল এই ক্ষেত্ৰত ব্যতিক্ৰম আছিল। কিন্তু গ্ৰাম্যাঞ্চলৰ বেহা-বেপাৰত মাৰোৱাৰীসকলে দৃঢ়ভাৱে খোপনি পুতিছিল। তেওঁলোকে ভিতৰুৱা অঞ্চলৰ গাঁওবোৰলৈও সোমাই গোলা পাতি বহিছিল। গাঁৱত উৎপন্ন হোৱা ধান, মাহ, সবুজ তেওঁলোকেই কিনি ৰাখিছিল। অসমৰ গ্ৰাম্য অৰ্থনীতিত মাৰোৱাৰীসকল কিমান শিপাইছিল, সেই কথা জোনাকীত এইদৰে পোৱা যায়—

মাৰোৱাৰী ভাইহঁতে আমাৰ দেশত বেহা-বেপাৰ কৰি  
লাখে লাখে টকা কৰিব লাগিছে। তেওঁলোকে আমাৰ  
দেশতে ইমান প্ৰতাপী হৈছে যে, ক'বলৈ গ'লে  
অসমীয়াৰ জীৱন তেওঁলোকৰ ওপৰতেই নিৰ্ভৰ কৰিছে।  
আমাক তেওঁলোকে খাবলৈ নিদিলে খাবলৈ নেপাওঁ,  
পিন্ধিবলৈ নিদিলে পিন্ধিবলৈ নেপাওঁ। (নগেন শইকীয়া,  
সম্পা. পৃ. ৭১২ : ২০০১)

গ্ৰাম্যাঞ্চলত মাৰোৱাৰীৰ গোলা স্বাধীনতাৰ পৰৱৰ্তী 'ৰামধেনু যুগ'তো সমানেই সক্ৰিয় আছিল। কোনো ভিতৰুৱা ঠহিত আজিকালিও মাৰোৱাৰী ব্যৱসায়ী সক্ৰিয় হৈ আছে।

চাহ বাগানবোৰত থলুৱা বনুৱা বৰ কম আছিল বাবেই অসমৰ বাহিৰৰ পৰা বনুৱা আনিবলগীয়া হৈছিল। যিসকল থলুৱা লোকে চাহ বাগানত বনুৱা হিচাপে কাম কৰিছিল, তাৰ বেছিভাগেই কামত বিশেষ দক্ষতা দেখুৱাব পৰা নাছিল। এওঁলোকৰ বেছিভাগেই আছিল অসমীয়া, নগা আৰু চিংফৌ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ; কিছু সংখ্যক আছিল কছাৰী।

ব্ৰিটিছ প্ৰথমতে অসমীয়া ভাষাৰেই শিক্ষাদান আৰম্ভ কৰিছিল যদিও ১৮৩৬ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দৰ পৰা বঙলা ভাষা চলায়। ১৮৭৩ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দৰ পৰা অসমৰ স্কুল আৰু আদালতত বঙলা ভাষাৰ সলনি পুনৰ অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ প্ৰচলন হ'ল। এইক্ষেত্ৰত আমেৰিকান খ্ৰীষ্টান বেণ্ডিষ্ট মিছনেৰীৰ লগতে আনন্দৰাম ঢেকিয়াল ফুকনে মাত মতি আহিছিল। “১৮৭৪ চনত অসমক বংগদেশৰ পৰা আঁতৰাই নতুন প্ৰশাসনিক গাঁথনি এটাৰ অধীনলৈ অনা হ'ল।

অসমৰ আয়তন আছিল তেতিয়া ৪১,৭৯৮ বৰ্গ মাইল, জনসংখ্যা আছিল ৪১,৩২,০১৯।” (যোগেন্দ্ৰনাৰায়ণ ভূঞা : পৃ. ৬২ : ১৯৯৮) ১৮৮০ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত জনসংখ্যা পঞ্চাশ লাখ। তাৰ এক-চতুৰ্থাংশহে অসমীয়া। (যোগেন্দ্ৰনাৰায়ণ ভূঞা : পৃ. ৬২ : ১৯৯৮)

‘জোনাকী যুগ’ৰ আৰম্ভণিৰ কেইবছৰমানৰ পাছত অসমৰ জনগাঁথনিৰ ব্যাপক পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটে। ১৮৮৫ চনত অসম উপত্যকা জিলাৰ কমিছনাৰ জনছনে ৰেল আৰু জাহাজত কম পইচাত প্ৰব্ৰজনকাৰী লোকৰ ভ্ৰমণ ব্যৱস্থা আৰু তিনি বছৰৰ বাবে খাজনা নোহোৱাকৈ মাটি পটুনিৰ সুবিধা দিয়াৰ বাবে প্ৰস্তাৱ দিছিল। (অহিজুদ্দিন শ্বেখ : পৃ. ২৭ : ২০১৩) ১৮৯১-৯২ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত অসম বঙ্গৰ মাজত ৰেল চলাচল আৰম্ভ হোৱাত পূৰ্ববঙ্গৰ পৰা বহু কৃষক আহি গোৱালপাৰা, কামৰূপ আৰু নগাঁও জিলাৰ চৰ অঞ্চল, নৈৰ পাৰ আদিত থিতাপি লয়। “১৯১১-২১ চনৰ ভিতৰত প্ৰব্ৰজনকাৰীৰ সংখ্যা মুঠ ৭,৪৮,৬৫০ জন হৈছিল আৰু ই আছিল মুঠ জনসংখ্যাৰ ৫৫.৬ শতাংশ।” (During 1911-21 of the total increase 7,48,650 in the population, 55.6 percent has been attributed to immigration., H.K. Barpujari, (ed.) P. 51 : 2007) ১৯২১-৩১ দশকত ৫,৭৫,০০০ জন পূৰ্ববঙ্গৰ পৰা অহা প্ৰব্ৰজনকাৰীয়ে অসমত থিতাপি লয়। (অহিজুদ্দিন শ্বেখ : পৃ. ২৮-২৯ : ২০১৩) বঙ্গদেশৰ বাহিৰেও চীনদেশ, মাদ্ৰাজ, উৰিষ্যা আদি ঠাইৰ পৰা চাহবাগানৰ বনুৱাৰ কাম আৰু ব্যৱসায় আদি কৰিবলৈ অসমলৈ মানুহ আহিবলৈ লয়। ১৯০৫ চনৰ ‘বঙ্গ ভঙ্গ’ অহিন্দাৰ ফলত পূৰ্ববঙ্গৰ পৰা অধিক প্ৰব্ৰজনকাৰী আহি অসমত থিতাপি ল’বলৈ সুবিধা হৈছিল। পূৰ্ববঙ্গৰ প্ৰব্ৰজনৰ ফলত ‘লাইন প্ৰথা’ সৃষ্টি কৰিবলগীয়া হৈছিল। এই সম্পৰ্কে নিৰ্বোধ কুমাৰ বৰুৱাই লিখিছে—

...৪ নৱেম্বৰ (১৯৩৯) তাৰিখে এই লাইন প্ৰথা সম্পৰ্কে প্ৰস্তাৱটো চৰকাৰী ঘোষণা পত্ৰত প্ৰকাশ হ’ল। বৰদলৈ চৰকাৰৰ প্ৰস্তাৱ মতে (১) গাঁৱৰ ভিতৰৰ অঞ্চলত আৰু গৰু-ম’হ চৰোৱা পথাৰত ন-পমুৱাৰ বসতি নঘটিব, (২) খালী পৰি থকা মাটিত ন্যায়-সংগত পমুৱাকে ধৰি মাটিহীন লোকে মাটি পাব, কিন্তু কোনো পৰিয়ালেই ত্ৰিশ বিঘাতকৈ অধিক নাপাব; (৩) ঘোষিত জনজাতি অঞ্চলৰ পৰা আইন অসংগত সকলো পমুৱা দখলদাৰী বহিস্কৃত হ’ব। (নিৰ্বোধ কুমাৰ বৰুৱা : পৃ. ১১৯-১২০ : ২০১০)

নেপালীসকলেও অসমৰ জনগাঁথনি সলনি কৰিছিল। ১৯০১ চনত অসমৰ মুঠ

জনসংখ্যাৰ ০.৩৫ শতাংশ আছিল নেপালত জন্ম গ্ৰহণকাৰী লোক। ইয়াৰ তিনিটা দশকৰ পিছত এই হাৰ ১.০২ শতাংশলৈ বৃদ্ধি হৈছিলগৈ।

এই প্ৰব্ৰজনকাৰীসকলে নৈৰ পাৰত, নদীৰ চৰত, মুকলি পথাৰত বাস কৰি এক পৃথক গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিলে। অৱশ্যে প্ৰব্ৰজনকাৰীৰ গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ লগত থলুৱা গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ নিকট সম্পৰ্ক গঢ়ি উঠা নাছিল। সৰহ পইচাৰ লোভত কিছু সংখ্যক থলুৱা লোকৰ নিজৰ মাটি বেচা প্ৰব্ৰণতাৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছিল যদিও সামাজিক, সাংস্কৃতিক দূৰত্ব এটা বজাই ৰাখিছিল। অৱশ্যে তাৰ মাজতো ছোঁচা-চোৰোকাঁকৈ সংমিশ্ৰণ নঘটাকৈ থকা নাছিল।

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# **Historical Study of Sufi Movement and Bhakti-Movement in Medieval Assam**

**Dr. Assaduz Zaman**

The mystics and Saints belonging to various Bhakti and Sufi religious sects and groups promoted love and affection among the people of different religions. They had trodden a new path. They followed "unconventional and anti-ritualistic" ways and ignored the age-old restrictions of caste and creed. In their theological discourses the principles of "Love for God, human brotherhood and service" to mankind were highlighted . They opened the gateway of spiritual realization to one and all. They also stimulated liberalism, humanism and nationalism based on religion for which areas of conflict prevailing in different spheres of life were narrowed and ingredients of mutual appreciation and assimilation developed. (De : 2003-4)

The Bhakti movement which originated in the Southern parts of India through the Tamilian mystic-Saints of the 7th-9th centuries A.D. Ramanuja one of the earliest exponents of this movement systematized it. He taught that even the Sudras and the out castes could attain salvation through the Bhakti. (Ibid : 5) Besides he endeavoured to reconcile the thought of Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahman sudras with the faith and belief of the vaishnava Saints.(Chand : 1946-145)

Being influenced by Ramanuja's philosophy of vishdistadvaita,

Ramananda, a seer of 14th century A.D. took the initiative in spreading the Bhakti movement in the North.( De : 2003-5) In Northern India Bhakti was popularised by Ramananda, the celebrated Saint of Ramanuja's school. He substituted the worship of Rama as the incarnation of God himself. He admitted disciples from all castes, from both sexes and even from among Musalmans.(Chand : 1946-145) The experiences which Ramananda acquired through discussions with different scholars, including some learned Musalmans in varanasi during his travels about the country, is said to have greatly influenced his preachings. We may, therefore, presume that it was perhaps not during the time of the Alwar Saints but only after words that Islam might have some influence on the Bhakti movement in India. But by that time, as we have already noticed , the elements of Hinduism had already found place in the texture of Islam.(Panikkar 1965-131)

A strong monothesis and absolute surrender to God and a direct realisation of God through devotion were the cardinal tenets of Ramananda's preachings which his disciples, Tulsidas and Kabir, popularised. But it was actually under the healing shade of Kabir's towering personality that a convenient compromise between Hinduism and Islam became possible.

It is however true that like his preceptor, Kabir also made a bold departure from the original school to which he belonged. Being born of a Brahmin women and adopted in a Muslim family Kabir's personality grew as a holy confluence of Islam and Hinduism. It was again from that there flowed the sacred stream of the new and long awaited harmonious religious life of the Hindu-Muslim India. Though Kabir selected from Hinduism and Islam their common elements and similarites and found analogies in their philosophic ideas, their dogma and ritual; yet he had no preference for their religion.(Chand 1945-147)

On the contrary, he rose and condemned in strong terms the idolatry as well as the distination of caste, colour and country.(Hussain 1958-58) He asked the Muslims to forsake their blind trust in one prophet and his book and also condemned the Hindu doctrine of divine



incarnation.(Choudary Mazumder -403) To him "God is not conception but an experience beyond the grasp of intellect." In some of his preachings we hear an echo of the Sufi Saint Jilis doctrine. It is said that the expression of Kabir's teachings was shaped by that of Sufi Saints and poets.' It may, therefore, be said that in the preachings of Kabir, the ancient Bhakti philosophy of the Hindus merges harmoniously with the Sufi doctrines of Islam. Kabir preached through Bhasa or the Hindi language. As in the case of religious thought, so also in the case of language we find that Kabir brought about a harmonious compromise between Sanskrit and Persian having conveniently used words and expressions from both the languages side by side in his preachings. (Saikia 1978-18)

The Bhakti movement was in a real sense the movement of the people as the reformers preached their teachings to the masses through their mother tongue. In this way they also enriched the modern Indian languages. They kept alive the spirit of harmony through the principles of 'love and devotion' for several centuries. As a result of this movement the Hindus and the Muslims could come close to each other.(De :2003-7)

The eastern parts of the country also came under the influence of vaishnava philosophy and Bhakti cult. In Assam, the Bhakti cult was spread by Sankardeva (1449-1569 A.D.), who was a Kayastha by caste. He had Brahmin, Sudra, Naga, Mikir and Muslim disciples. His followers enjoyed equality in the vishnava congregation. He could tone down much of the stigma attached to the existing caste division.( Ibid :7)

The Muslim mystics called Sufis, attached great importance to the ideals of service to mankind and generated the spirit of love and affection among the people depending on the teachings of Islam. Though they arrived long before, they organised Sufi Silsilas. Since then a large group of Sufis migrated from Islamic countries and settled in different parts of the region of our study. In course of time the Sufi saints promoted the 'conception of a loving god', imbibed the ideals of

'Pacifism and non-violence'. During this time the Hindus were acquainted with the weath of Islam through the activities and teachings of the Sufi Saints. Being influenced by their teachings the lower stratum Hindus who were the victims of caste ridden society embranced Islam. Several powerful Muslim Silsilah played very important part in the expansion of Islam as well as in the formation of Muslim demography in this country. The female Sufis like Bibi Sara, Bibi Zulaykha, Bibi Fatima Sam, Syeda Jainab Khatun and some other women saints were venerated by the people. (Ibid :8)

From all that has been said above it becomes clear that in the fields of social and religious thoughts, a process of give and take have been continuing between Hindus and Muslims from long before the rise of the Muhamadan empire of India, "In philosophical and religious thought, as Dr. RadhaKrishnan observes, "there were a number of school both among Hindu and Muslim thinkers some borrowed elements from one another, but others tried to find a synthesis between the two.(Saikia :1978-219) Dr. Tara Chand has also justly observed that " in the give and take of culture between the Muslims and Hindu, it is difficult to asses accurately the share of each:"

Islam does not seem to have provided the expansion of Vaishnava Bhakti movement in Assam with a source or incentive. The speedy expansion of this movement appears to have been an inevitable result of prolonged sufferings of the people under the oppression of a professional priestly class and the pressure of ritualism which gained great importance in the Country in the period of its unstable political conditions prevailing from the downfull of King Jayapala in the early twelfth Century to the ascendancy of Ahom rule in the Sixteenth Century. During this period the ancient Kingdom of Kamrupa broke into a number of small and independent principalities. Perpetual conflicts, jealousies, and infiltrations culminating in wars become the dominant factors to determine the relation among these principalities, and the people of the country as a whole become overwhelmed with feelings of uncertainty, terror and despair so much so that they were

bound to seek solace in religion. But when the greater part of the people was ignorant they were bound to be attracted towards the ritualistic aspect of religion. This again in its turn helped the growth of a strong priestly class which finally brought about a state of religious anarchy in the country. Thus with the disappearance of a strong, central government, the people of Kamrupa became the easy prey of all sorts of oppression and exploitation so much so that their hope for peace and progress in the political, Social and spiritual spheres was curbed. To save the people from such a sickening state and to enthuse them with new hopes a great social reformer and saint like Sankardeva (1449-1568 A.D.) became the crying need of the hour.

In an age when religion formed the basis of all social and cultural life and even of political thought of a people, any reform mooted for them would inevitably require a reformer to concentrate his endeavours first of all on the reorientation of the religious system followed by them. This is what exactly happened to Sankardeva in Assam. He was a great protagonist of the Vaishnava Bhakti faith. For his countrymen who had so long been stumbling in the darkness of ignorance and under the pressure of extensive ritualism, his preachings of monotheistic cult through the direct, easy and practical system of Bhakti (consisting of Sravana and Kirtana) ushered in a new hope for peace, unity and progress in their spiritual life. Sankardeva does not appear to have been a follower or agent of any of the Vaishnava reformers of other parts of India. With his own interpretations of the text of the sastras, he evolved his own faith of Vishnu-bhakti which, it appears, is distinct from those followed in different parts of India. The cardinal tenets of his preachings are:

- (1) It preaches supreme surrender to one god, Vishnu or Krishna, who "is the central reality of soul and matter" and 'the first and final cause of creation',
- (2) Lord Krishna is the full incarnation of God on earth. Unlike some of the Vishnu Bhakti Schools in other parts of India, it banishes the dualistic conception of God as Krishna and

Radha or Krishna and Gopi. It upholds that Madhava is the controller of both Prakriti and purusha'.

- (3) It provides 'only one mode of worship of God' and that is through love and intense devotion. It indicates the idea that Bhakti is superior even to Mukti or final release and strictly prohibits the idolatry of any kind.
- (4) This religion knew no caste, and universal spirit is the main principle of this faith. ( Rahman 2002 \_V)
- (5) It attaches utmost importance to the preaching of the Bhagawat-Gita.

Another noteworthy feature of this school of Bhakti appears to be that, like Islam, it also urges its adherents to accept this world and life respectively as the best place and time to prepare for the selfless services to god through love and devotion. In some of their Bargits Sankardeva and Madhavadeva sing the glory of life (Narajanma), human body (naratanu) and the world in the shape of Bharatvaisha.

With the abrogation of idolatry of any kind and the dualistic conception of God as Radha-Krishna or Gopi-Krishna and also with the glorification of human life and the world, the Bhakti cult of Sankardeva seems to have conformed greatly to Islam. It was probably for such qualities that it could not only attract several Muslims to be its votaries, but also rouse the profound feelings of administration as well as respect among the Hindus and Musalmans of Assam for each other's religion, and thus succeeded in forging a sustaining fraternity between the communities even during the long period of evergrowing hostilities and wars of Assam with the Muhamadan powers of India. Whether these affinities of the Bhakti preached by Sankardeva with Islam were mere coincidences or an out come of any direct or indirect influence of the latter, cannot be established with absolute certainty. But the influence of the Vaishnaves on the Assamese Muslims can perhaps be inferred from the reverentail references to Sankardeva and Madhavdeva and the occurrence of the word 'nama' (cf; nama-dharma the official name of the faith

preached by Sankardeva) as a substitute for 'Kalima' (qalma) in the Assamese Zikirs.

In some aspects the Vashnavism preached by Sankardeva appears to have a close affinity to Islam. But there is no evidence to show that he ever studied any Islamic work or came into close contact with any Muslim Saint before he began to preach his doctrines in Assam. It is, of course, found that the name of Kabir has been held in high esteem by the followers of Sankardeva. In the *Katha-Guru-Charit* it is stated that during his second pilgrimage he visited the place of Kabir but met his grand daughter only. According to this biography, this act of Sankardeva was not liked at first by his followers, who held Kabir as a mere Yavana. But Sankardeva stated that Kabir was the son of a Brahman and was himself a worshipper of Vishnu. This shows that a hatred for Yavanas was prevalent during the time among the Vaishnavas of Assam. We have noticed earlier the influence of Islam and Hindusim or Kabir's preachings. We have also noticed that the language and style of Kabir's preachings were shaped by that of Sufi Saints and poets. It is therefore, not unlikely that some elements of Islam found place, if at all, in the preadings of Sankardeva through the songs of Kabir and others he heard in different holy places in India. Chand Khan, the Muslim disciple of Sankardeva is sometimes identified with or known as Kabir. All this shows that Kabir is held in esteem in Sankardeva's school, at least from the second pilgrimage of the Saint.

From the biographical details of Assam's vaishnava Saints and from all the different religious texts it would, however, be hard to establish any direct influence of Islam on the sect. Sankardeva always insisted that all practical efforts even if it be just a basis in some authoritative text so far as it is practicable. Particularly in the doctrinal aspect of the faith, this dictum was most strictly adhered to. It is true that Vaishnavism as a whole had at least something to do with the Islamic ideal of monotheistic principles, etc, but Sankardeva, Madhavadeva and others in Assam always fell back upon the old Sanskrit texts like the *Bhagawatpurana* and the *Bhagawatgita* for

the enunciation of the doctrines of the faith and even for poetic inspiration. About the identity of thought and sentiment of the Assam Vaishnavas on the other, we have spoken elsewhere, but these appear to be more chance coincidences than any deliberate community of philosophy.

The cardinal tenets of new Vaishnavism preached by Sankardeva under the patronage of the Koch King Naranarayana being as simple, straight forward and practical as those of the Islamic faith. People in the lower stratas of Assamese society, felt more attracted to it than to the latter. To this again was added the rise of the Vaishnava fraternity which the Saint had stirred up by the social reforms through the new Institutions like Namghars (temples) and Satras (residential establishments). The new hopes and aspirations which Sankardeva thus gave to the people of Assam, whose social life did not suffer from so much wider horizontal divisions as that in the Hindu society in the rest of India, removed the probability of failing under the spell of Islam.

The blessings of Islam was gradually deepening into the heart of Assamese society, alike other parts of India, the wave of Bhakti movement washed over the Assamese socio-religious atmosphere in the form of Vaishnavite Movement under the leadership of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva the former one of whom is said to have visited twice throughout Bengal and Bihar. With a view to gathering deep knowledge on Bhakti Movement and returning back from these tours he started the Vaishnavite Reformation, the sole belief of which concentrated to the existence of one and only creator, in the country and consequently the pious activities under the leadership of Vaishnavite Gurus and the Sufi Saints proceed together side by side. This was possible only because both the religious groups adopted the principle of "Wahadatul Wuzud" the existence of one god as at an atmosphere where the principle of "Wahadat-us-Shuhud" existence of many Goddesses was prevailing among the masses. This joint venture of Sufism and Vaishnavism may be ascertained from the following verses of Zikir and of Borgit:

hindu, musalman, ek allar farman

gorasthane kabar sari sari  
hinduk puriba musalmanak gariba

(Hindus and Muslims are boured by the same self of the divine rules of Allah. The act of cremating a Hindu and the entombing of a Mumin only signify one end of all.)

"Santa mahanta auliya sakale  
eketi namate khate"

(The Sants, Mahantas, that is, the Hindu holy man and the Awliyas also suplicate to one name, the name of god.)

mor manat an bhab nai o Allah  
mor manat nai an bhab;  
hindu musalman ek Allar forman  
akherat ek Allar man.

(In my mind, oh Allah; I have no different throught, save that the Hindus and different throught, save that the Hindus and Muslims are under one law, the will of Allah, and the final word of all services of Allah.)

In the same tone Sufi Saint Sultan Baba used to sing that-  
moi musulmano naho, hinduo noho,  
mollao nohoi, qazio nohoi  
mur manat mrityu bhayu nai.

(Malik :1958-102)

I am neither a muslim nor a hindu, nor even a Mullah or a Qazi.  
I am also not afraid of death.

The Assamese Zikir, though filled with the spirit of Sufism, sing the glory of Gurus or religious preceptors and urge upon the detachment from mundane pleasure for the sake of the selfless services of God, (Saikia 1978-221)

The conception of Maya (illusion) appears to become repugnant to Islam, which does not deprecate the value of this world and life, as the field of action and the training ground for life of the world to come, therefore the present world is of great importance to man. Similarly in the doctrines preached by Sankardeva, we find constant

references to Maya. His Ibn Sina's conception of ultimate reality as eternal beauty, seeing reflection in the mirror of the universe.(Ibid : 222)The Assamese Zikirs also seems to have brought in a similar conception. It is not possible to ascertain whether their authors were directly inspired by the conception of Ibn sena, which is believed to have found an echo in the thoughts of Kabir(Ibid : 223-224)or whether they received such ideas from the doctrine preached by Sankardeva. It may, however be presumed that they were inspired by the latter. In order to prove this contention the following illustration would be helpful. In one of the Bargit Sankardeva says :

narayan lila janaba koi  
jita dekhu kaya suta viltā jaya  
mayako sava dhandha

(who can understand the divine sport of Narayana ? All that you see the body, children, wealth and wife- are agencies of Maya.)  
A similar view is found expressed in some Zikirs :

dhana jan putra bharya sabe akaram  
chaya muthe beri ache mayar kasam.

(The wealth, firnds as well as wives and children are all futile. They are only shadows that surround you on account of Maya.)

It was perhaps for such persistent endeavours on their part that many of the Zikir look like attempts at a synthesis of Hindu and Islamic thoughts and ideals, which was an utmost need for the survival and growth of both the religious groups in scenario of the country.(Ibid : 187)

At this context, it may be mentioned that there are many combined Hindu and Muslim villages in Assam where the two communities do not reside seperately. They used to live together having different prayer houses, Namghars, Temples, Mosques and Dargahs, in different places in the same village, but they jointly take part in the welfare of the particulars village. In these villages the communal relations are so harmonious that Muslim villagers are often found visiting their Hindu friends in Namghar and delighting them



having unhasitatingly accepted "Mah-Prassad" that is part of offerings made during prayer of the latter. Similarly, the Hindu villages are also often seen visiting the Mazars of Pirs, Khanqahs and Dargahs and making offerings as well as having threads on trees or posts in such places indicating their wish to obtain fulfillment of their prayers.( Ibid 187)

The ancient custom which is said to have been followed till today in the chamariya sattra, the renowned Hindu vaishnava temple in the Kamrupa district, is that once in a year the Hindu and Muslims meet together in the Namghar or the prayer house of the Sattra and a large quantity of "Prassad" prepared for the occasion of "community prayer" is served to them all in a large basin from where everyone take his own share with his own hands and enjoy it sitting all huddled together.(Malik : 1958-267)

In this way, the close relation which developed between "Sufism and the Vaishnava Bhakti Movement" helped not only in the growth of a deeper sense of mutual respect and tolerance in the minds of their adherents, but also mutually exchanged and adopted the religious rituals of each other. Thus alike Sufism many rituals are found in Vaishnavism, which has their origin in Islam. Perhaps imbibed with this influence, Vaishnavism laid stress on honest earning and plain living; both ends and means, must be justified. Those who do not abide by the rules of morality or religion in earning for the maintenance of his family, must suffer from deficiency. It also stressed upon external purity of men. After sleeping, eating, sexual intercourse etc. One became impure and should take bath. a Vaishnava should not be addicted to intoxicating drops and should keep honest company. It also advised women not to mix with other male persons freely and they should cover their body from head to foot with cloth.( Chand : 1946-71)So that nobody can see any part of their body. All these teachings of Socio-economic factors in Vaishnavism is assumed to be imported from Islamic teachings, which became possible only as a result of harmonious relations between the two pious groups. The impact of this harmonious relation between sufism and Vaishnava

bhakti Movement pervaded the fields of fine arts and material culture of the people. Such a fine relation between the Hindus and Muslims of Assam, greatly helped the germination of a deep rooted secular outlook in Assamese social life since the beginning till today. If any riot took place, this was absolutely due to dirty politics but not due to religious, social and cultural assimilation. This secular social trend waxed ever stronger and stronger as it passed through the long corridor of centuries. So much so that even in the hectic days of Hindu-Muslim riots in different parts of India, Hindus and Muslims of Assam could assemble in courtyard of a Namghar or a Mosque or Dargah to express their disapproved of any hostility among the people of the same land. Rather in the present times, such a non-communal feeling is gradually being developed in the Brahmaputrs valley of Assam.

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# **Than and Sattra : The Pillar of Vaishnava culture of Assam**

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## **Introduction**

The 15th century Assamese society was characterized with a rough phase of socio-political chaos, differences and disintegration among people and witnessed the birth and rise of Sankaradeva (1449-1568 A.D), one of the greatest Assamese ever born, the religious preacher and social reformer with extraordinary literary and musical talents. He set out on a pilgrimage to other parts of India in search of knowledge and wisdom in 1481 and returning from pilgrimage he started preaching his philosophy of life and his new religious faith called 'Bhagawati Vaishnav Dharma' or 'Ek-Saran Nam Dharma' a branch of 'Nava Vaishnav Bhakti Movement' through which he worked on integrating the scattered Assamese society. He questioned brahminial tyranny, hierarchy and discrimination in the name of caste, creed and religion and started a revolt at the grass root level ensuring equality among all. Sankaradeva, in the mission of preaching his religious faith with the vision of establishing a unique and uniform Assamese society, established institutions like Namghars, Sattras and thans etc. After Sankaradeva these indigenous institutions, especially 'Than' and 'Sattra' extend their network in entire North Eastern part

of India and have been playing a crucial role in shaping the Assamese society and providing a dimension to it.

### **Than and Sattra**

The word 'Than' is derived from the Sanskrit word "Sthan" which means place. According to Chandrakanta Abhidhan - 'Than' means a place of residence, a seat of religious head of the vaishnavas, a place of worship, a place of worship established at the cremation ground of a religious man. Therefore, those Sattras which have been preserving some relics of the early saints are also called Than. In 'Kala Samhati', the places of cremation of religious heads are also called 'Than' or 'Agnithan' by the disciples (Sarmah, 1999: 140). Bardowa is the first 'Than' founded by Sankaradeva in 1509. He says thus -

Tumara charan chinti jathat

Bhakat thake sehi punya sehi tirtha sthan

(Kirtan Gosha, Vedastuti: 20)

It is said that Sankaradeva established 'Than' while the institutions established by his followers are known as Sattra (Borkakati, 2007: 76). During the time of Sankaradeva the 'Bordowa Than', 'Patbaushi Than', 'Gangamou Than', 'Belguri Than' were established (Bhuyan 2007: 75). The compound 'Than Sattra' could also be substituted for 'Than' or 'Sattra' (Neog, 1998: 312). The term "Sattra" is a Sanskrit word, used in two senses - firstly in the sense of an alms house or charitable institution and secondly in the sense of a sacrificial session lasting for several days. The etymological meaning of the word 'satra' is a sitting or a session (Sad + tra). 'Sad' means good and 'tra' means liberate (Sarmah 1999: 74). The Sanskrit word "Sattra" very naturally became 'Sattra' in Assamese. Bhattacharya, one of the eminent scholars and preceptors, define a 'Sattra' in the following lines:

Yatracaranti Saddarman Kevala Bhagavat- priyah/

Navadha Bhagavadbhaktih Pratyaham yatra vartate//

Tad-Satram uttamam ksetram Vaisnavah sura-vanditam/

Tatrstha- Vaisnavah Sarve harinam parayanah//

(Translation - The place where the gods' favourite staunch devotees perform their religious and nine fold devotional duties to God, is the supreme place Sattra, highly admired by the Vaisnavas

and the gods; there live the Vaisnavas, the lovers of Harinama.) (Rajguru 1972: 268)

According to Bap Chandra Mahanta the institution established by Sankaradeva to propagate his religious faith is known as a Sattrā (Mahanta 2005: 57). "The Sattrā is a unique religious institution of Assam which gives religious food to the thousands today and keeps the masses within one religious brotherhood" (Rajkhowa: 1923: Introduction). According to Bishnuram Medhi "He gave us universal religion, culture, music, dance and drama and a well-knit democratic social institution of Sattrā, through which he preached his religious tenets. In these Sattras people of all classes and castes whether devotees, disciples, followers or sympathizers meet together and perform social and religious functions (Neog 1998: IX).

Whether it is 'Than' or 'Sattrā' or 'Than Sattrā', the truth is that it is one of the inevitable part of 'Vaishnavism' in Assam. Sankaradeva's 'Vaishnava' movement aimed at teaching the people simple ways of living, equality of man irrespective of caste and community in the field of religion, practicing non-violence and discarding sacrifice of birds, animals and human beings in the name of religion the prevailing practice of that time (Nath 2007 : 7). In the 'Vaishnavite' culture of Assam 'Than' and 'Sattrā' own special socio-religious connotation and refer to the religious place where 'vaishnavas' and their 'Gurus' practise and preach their religious faith and cultivate their culture. Initially 'Than' and 'Sattrā' were the places where the daily sittings of the monks and their disciples were held and later became the prime means of integrating the scattered people into one society marked with equality, uniform social codes and unique cultural components. Thus 'Than' and 'Sattrā' contributed to the process of making of greater Assamese community with its own socio-cultural religious ways of life and have been preserving the same throughout the centuries.

### **Structure of 'Sattrā'**

An Assamese 'Vaishnava Sattrā' proper consists of a square enclosure wall, varying according to its strength, with four openings or gateways called 'Karapat' and containing four rows of huts (hati) or long houses and the central temple is composed of shrine called

'Manikut' or 'Bhajghar' and an assembly hall (Neog 2004:309). The eastern row is bigger than others because 'Satradhikar' and other principal office bearer stay there. The arrangement of 'Sattras' can be compared with the Buddhist monasteries or 'Viharas' with the provision of Monk dwellings. The main structure of 'Sattras' can be divided into four parts: Namghar, Manikut, Hati, Batcora.

The centre of the main activities of a 'Sattra' is 'Namghar'. The 'namghar' serves the purpose of a prayer hall as well as hall for religious meetings and discussion and also stage for dramatic performance and a venue of village panchayats. Namghar is open for all caste and creed.

In the 'Manikut' the sacred scripture is kept. Literally 'Manikut' means Jewels house. It is adjoined to the eastern end of the 'namghar'. All the valuable things, jewels and sacred idol are kept here. In a separate house adjacent to the 'manikut' is known as 'padsila' where the foot prints of early saints are kept. In 'Bordowa Than' the foot print of Sankaradev in a stone is still seen.

There are four rows of huts centering round the 'manikut' and 'namghar' as residence of devotees. Each devotee is allotted one or more rooms according to his status. The quadrangle on which the temple of Jagannatha at Puri is situated, having residential quarters of sevaites on the four sides; may have influenced the reformers to build their Sattra on the same model (Sarmah 1999:148).

The entrance leading to the interior of a 'Sattra' is usually marked by a small open house known as 'Batchora' or 'Karapat'. Distinguished guests are first received here and then escorted to the 'Sattra'. The 'Batcora' of Sattra is a miniature imitation of 'torangriha' of Hindu temple (Sarmah 1999:148).

Each 'Sattra' generally constitutes four principal parties - the 'Adhikar' or the 'Satriya' who is the head of the Sattra, the 'Deka Adhikar' the assistant, the Bhakats the clerical devotees residing within the walls of the 'Sattra' and the 'Sishyas' the lay devotees or disciples living in the villages and leading household life.

### **Types of 'Sattras'**

There are different types of 'Sattras' seen in Assam. 'Udasin Sattra' is one of those in which the 'Adhikar' and clerical devotes live

within the 'Sattra' and lead a celibate life. The Adhikar and the devotees lead married life in 'Grihasthi Sattra'. There is Sattras where only the 'Adhikar' leads a celibate life. (Rajguru, 1988: 68). After the death of Sankaradeva 'vaishnavism' order got divided into four divisions which are known as 'Samhatis'. The main religious principles are not so different, only the external rules and some ideological differences are seen among those. (Goswami, 2014: 1). The 'Samhatis' are as follows - Brahma Samhati, Kal Samhati, Purush Samhati and Nika Samhati. The most important 'Brahma Samhati Sattras' (founded by Damoderdeva & Harideva) are - Kuruwabahi, Auniati, Dakhinpat, Gormur, Vyaskuchi etc. while the 'Kal Samhati Sattras', founded by Gopaldeva, are Bar Yadumoni, Dihing, Mayamora, Kathpar etc. The 'Purush Samhati Sattras' founded by successor of Sankaradeva are Narowa, Kowamora, Samaguri, Salguri, Balisatra etc. and a few 'Nika Samhati Sattras' founded by Madhabdeva are Borpeta, Kamalabari Sundaridiya etc. (Goswami : 179 to 201).

### **Location of 'Sattra'**

Selection of site for a 'Sattra' also deserves attention. Usually 'Sattras' were established on the bank of the Brahmaputra or its tributaries, because the rivers were at that time the prime means of communication and transport. The fertility of land and availability of fish were also contributory factors in site selection. The nature and attitude of local people were also taken into consideration while selecting a place or site for a 'Sattra' (1999:153). Sankaradeva left 'Dhwahat' a place under Ahom Kingdom because of their brutality and Bardowa for the brutality of Kacharies. Sankaradeva and his family members and devotees left Kapala for unhygienic condition.

### **Function of 'Sattra'**

The functions of a 'Sattra' have been classified into two categories. Primarily these are to propagate Sankaradev's 'Ek-Saran Nam Dharma', the vaishnava faith to initiate disciple, to provide ethical - devotional codes and rules of conduct for neophytes and to hold daily as well as occasional divisional services. The second function of the 'Sattra' is to see how good social relation is maintained among fraternity, to develop the spirit of co-operation, to provide adequate



facilities for the dissemination of ancient and traditional learning, and to ensure cultivation of art and craft. Educational and cultural activities fall within the second category. (Tamuli 2013:237).

Sankaradeva believed in purity of physical, mental and spiritual selves and 'Sattras' were the place to ensure the same of his followers. In 'Vaisnavite' culture emphasis has always been on the matter of personal cleanliness both inward and outward, and on appropriation of social behavior for the purpose of establishing social harmony (Bora Ed:2013:10). In a 'Sattras' institution there found hygienic food (Prasad) with hygienic distribution, physical exercise in the forms of 'Nritya', 'Clapping' etc. for physical and mental development. According to Sankaradeva -

Devar durlavh                      ihena janamak  
Byathe kara kuna kame,  
Grihate thakia                      Harik smariya  
Mokha Sadhe hari name (214)

(Kirton ghosa - Ajamil Upakhyan)

Living a simple life in contemplation of noble thoughts is the main motto of vaishnavism. The 'vaisnavas' use banana leaves or mat to sit in the 'namghar' and wear simple cloth and take simple food. Again honesty remain the prime principle in 'Sattras' culture. Vaishnavism lays stress on honest earning and honest living. It is believed that those who do not abide by the rules of morality or religion in earning for the maintenance of his family must suffer from deficiency. In Kathaghur Charit (Lekharu 1952: 543 ... 545) it is clearly narrated how Madhav and Damodar suffer for their immoral actions done for livelihood. According to Dr. K.N.Goswami, to control the indiscipline among Bhakatas and Sishyas there are some punishments known as 'Danda' and 'Prayachitta' in 'Sattras' and 'Thans' (Goswami 2014 : 118). So the 'Sattras' can also be called the early courts of the Assamese people. 'Sattras' help the people when they are in mishap (Rajguru : 1990:113).

The 'Sattras' institution did not grow to a full-fledged religious institution during Sankaradeva's time. It took nearly fifty years after his death to reach its institutionalized form with the contributions of Madhavadeva, damodordeva and Vangsigopaldeva as well as the royal

patronage extended to this institution from time to time, who helped it develop and extend its spheres of influence on the villagers (Sarma 2001 : 210) The role of 'Sattra' in the propagation of the spiritual and moral education and organizing religious cultural activities is confined not only to the boundaries of a 'Sattra'; it extends far beyond into the villages and cities lying far and wide. People come to 'Sattras' to attend religious festivals, for example the 'Doulyatra', 'Gurutithi', 'Palnam' etc. 'Satradhikar' or 'Medhi' with some Sattra-functionaries gives periodical visit to the villages where follower of 'Sattras' live and gives 'Saran' and 'Bhayan' to disciples. According to Dr. K.N. Devgoswami "Sattras are the hub of Vaishnava art, culture and literature of immense value". (Hazarika, (edit): 2013 : 1).

### **Conclusion**

'Than' and 'Sattras' are the pillar of Vaishnava culture of Assam. Those are the institutions which have been pivotal in ensuring social cohesion among the people of Assam and integrating them as a greater Assamese community. 'Than' and 'Sattras' made the people of Assam free from religious tyranny, unjust social hierarchy and racial discrimination of Brahminical order and provided them religious identity of their own with Sankaradev's 'Ek-Saran Nam Dharma'. Those are the places that have been used for creation, practice and preservation of Assamese art and craft, painting and literature. 'Than' and 'Sattras' have not been merely the means of propagating religious faith but instrumental in organization and reformation of Assamese society, transmission and preservation of culture and inculcation of human and environmental values. At present there are more than one thousand 'Than' and 'Sattras' in Assam and have been contributing to the greater Assamese society from their end. Sorry to say, many 'Sattras' and 'Thans' in Assam are now in a wretched condition owing to financial problem or environmental hazards. It is the moral and sacred duty of the people of Assam to preserve and follow the philosophy and ideology of Sankaradeva and also foster the Than and Sattra's contribution to all over the world. Each and every Assamese people should realize his or her uniqueness and richness as an individual and as a member of the community with 'Thans' and 'Sattras' and Government should protect and preserve the 'Thans' and 'Sattras' as

our national heritage. Again researchers and educationist should give due importance to these indigenous institutions for further studies with a view to developing ethics for sustainability of Assamese community and its culture.

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**Part III**  
*Culture, Folk life and Values*

# **Values in Karbi Folk Tales and Songs: An Evaluation**

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The study of folklore covers everything which is a part of the traditional life of a folk and throws considerable light on the modes of life and thoughts of the people. Folklore or folk life of a community is studied in terms of folk literature, material culture, and social folk custom and performing folk arts of the community concerned (Richard M. Dorson, 1972: 2-5). And folk literature has its own components - folk prose narratives, songs, proverbs, riddles, chants and charms. Karbi folk literature like that of any tribe of North-Eastern India is very rich and varied and is reflective of certain values on which a Karbi folk society rests. In a natural environment inclusive of socio-cultural religious aspects of a society values are certain desires and goals, aspirations and standards, norms and codes, morals and disciplines which are considered fundamental to lead the community's approved way of life. Values, relying on a state beyond the question of being moral or immoral, may be individual or social, cultural or religious, environmental or material standards used to judge or compare, approve or disapprove things in relative terms as desirable or undesirable, correct or wrong, useful or harmful, necessary or not. The values remind the folk of his or her own duties, liabilities, responsibilities as individual and as a member of the community for the survival of their culture and heritage, their society and its social

system. These values are the causes of the sort of uniformity seen in the behavioral pattern of the members of the folk society of the community, constitute a lofty part of the heritage of the society and are expected to be inculcated in by all the members of the community. The Karbi folk tales and folk songs, accessible in primary and secondary sources, are reflective of an environment embedded in diverse ways of folk life which sustains the collective life of the community and their folk values. Karbi folk literature provides exposure of their folk values to their younger generations in working situations. It does not mean that these values are meant to keep them primitive and away from modern knowledge but to let them live as the Karbis committed to their culture and tradition and indigenous environment and identity. In the present technology based world characterized with moral chaos, obsession with money and machine, non-accountability to human and non-human others, the values are in crisis and in a state of degeneration. Sustenance of human quality and values ensure the inner growth of a human being. The folklife of any human community is never a distant outpost of the past and orchestration of folk values can inspire a society in its way to a new worldview and socio-economic realities. It has greater relevance to the present, and its values can motivate the younger generations, the future leaders and citizens of their land. In changing circumstances the Karbi folk literature, the working constitution of values may play an educative role, inculcate their folk values in the minds of the members of the community right from the early part of their lives and make them proud modern Karbis living with their values and heritage.

### **Oneness with Nature and Environmental Values:**

Karbi folk life cannot be separated from nature, the most comfortable zone for them. They love nature, live with nature and learn from nature the best tricks to address their problems and thus the best way to live on. If the "Legend of Creation" (Sir Charles Lyall, 1997:70-72) and 'KarbiKeplang' (Jorsing Bey, 2004:84-89) stress on the importance of plantation and non-human beings for sustainability of human life, 'Lo Keplang' (Dharamsingh Teron, 2011:27) refers to the importance of bio-diversity. Similarly the myth of Be Langbe and Har Langbe (L. Teron & D. Gogoi, 2004:36-41) raises a

voice against pollution of drinking water and for cultural assimilation, and the legends of Rongpherpi and Thong Nokbe (Longkam Teron, 1998:51-61) reflect a sense of love for their land and community and a revolt against any form of exploitation and marginalization. If these properties of their heritage, portraying the total environment at the centre loaded with environmental ethics, are read or told from environmental point of views, will make their young generations understand their land with its beauty and richness, its relation to their life, language and culture.

The greatest challenge before the human race in the new millennium is to pass on a safe and healthy earth for the generations to come. Mere formal environmental education will not work much if the young generations are not made environmentally-oriented before. Here, in the field of environmental education, selected Karbi folktales will be a handy and effective tool. In changing scenario the storyteller needs to be an environmentalist who listens to the voice of the environment projected and communicate the same to the listeners in a systematic and scientific way with a view to socializing and assimilating them with their own land and its features, their folklore, their socio-cultural, political and linguistic identities, introducing them with the environmental issues and its effects, and bringing about necessary changes in their attitude towards human and non-human aspects of their environment and inculcating in them acceptable behavior and environmental values. For example, the tale 'An Orphan and a Vulture' (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso, 2012:307-310) can be retold to give exposure and commitment to its indigenous non-human environment and a 'give and take' way of life which makes the total environment congenial to live in. The tale 'Vokronso' (Ibid: 167-169) shows how sustainability of human life depends on existence of non-human beings and coordination between the human and non-human environments. The tales like 'The Tiger's Revenge', 'Mangbon the Brute', 'The Tiger and His Human Twin' (Ibid:239:296) are reflective of a Karbi indigenous environment with its folk way of life propagating environmental values like importance of tiger and maintenance of bio-diversity in sustenance of human life on earth. The tale 'The Hog-deer of Pantisang' (Ibid: 10-11) with an exposure

to the conflict between human and non-human environment is meant to promote the idea that in a Karbi folk society none but the ecosystem is at the centre; the human is not meant to finish the other species nor to exploit the natural resources but to live in harmony with nature, help the needy and save the bio-diversity for sustainability of their home. These tales can effectively reorient the children to build an emotional bond between human and nature, to understand and get them involved in their environment around and make them learn the skills to act responsibly well for protection of their environment. It will surely make them come forward to feel, understand and preserve and fall in love with their own land, soil, air, river and water, wet lands and agricultural fields, forest and hills, indigenous species and its varieties, the beauty of their own language, culture and folklore and be proud of their own identity. Karbi folk tales and their textuality construct such great ideas as conservation of wetland and hazards of works detrimental to environment. Modern readers of this type of literature can share their concerns with the unfortunate environmental issues - the endangered species of our flora and fauna, man-animal conflicts, loss of habitat and so on. The man within is so trained and nurtured by folk culture that it can feel the agonies of marginalized sections, consequences of unequal and unsustainable developments. Such values through their orchestration creating a genuine sense of eco-consciousness, respect for their total environment with their language and culture, folklore and identity will be safe. Folk values can contribute to the global objective of keeping the 'earth' a sustainable home for the existing lives and the generations to come.

#### **Articulation of Sub-alternity:**

The term 'subalternity' here consciously avoids the critical notions associated with and simply refers to the underprivileged Karbis subdued and marginalized by internal or external forces or living at the bottom layer of their society. Two types of subalternity are articulated in Karbi folk literature- the sufferings of the Karbis as a community and the poor and powerless, rural and ignorant Karbis as individuals. The migration song 'MucheraKehir' (Jorsing Bey, 2004: 84-89), the legends of Thong Nokbe, Rongpherpi Rongbe (Longkam Teron, 1998:51-61), Larbin and Lirbon (Padumi Gogoi, 2011:49) por-



tray the Karbis the subalterns as a community and record the plight of the community in the hands of their strong political neighbours like Ahoms, Jayantias etc. The tales of Dengrali, Larta, Didi, Dimmir etc. (Longkam Teron, 1998:74-89) reflect the plight of the marginalized Karbis in patriarchal social structure and in the names of tradition and social norms. Didi and Larta are compelled to lead a humiliated life and marginalized by the male friendly strict rules of 'Jirsong' and society. Dengrali gets herself reduced to a tree out of shame caused by her socio-culturally strong maternal uncle and raises a voice against any sort of exploitation either of human or non-human environment. Dimmir spitting at the mouth of economically and socially strong village head protests against strong male's conspiracy and marginalization of women. The tales of Hi-mu (BonglongTerang: 1937), Kave and Kadom (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso, 2012:92-94) etc. are the tales of pain and suffering of women at the hands of socio-culturally strong males. The Karbi women, obsessed with hesitation, a sense of loss and tragic consciousness, can be read as the unfortunate victim of patriarchal authority. They are the means or objects of sustenance of the anti-women patriarchal norms and ironically the subjects of execution.

The tale 'How the Monkeys were born' (Rongbong Terang, 1976:31-33) is reflective of the atrocities done to the members of bachelors' dormitory by heartless leaders in the name of providing training or work culture which took away the pleasure of life from them. The tale 'A frog and a Tiger' (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso, 2012:207-209) is meant to inculcate such values of their folk society that none is born to be marginalized and even the weakest with self confidence, boldness, cleverness and intelligence can raise his or her voice against the exploitative forces. The trickster tales like 'Tenton and the Ploughman' (Informant: BinaTokbipi) show cheating of the powerful by the powerless and inculcates sympathy toward the poor and needy and develops a platform for them to raise a voice against the powerful. The tale 'The Crow and the Snake' (Informant: Rumila Beypi) is meant to inculcate in the young minds of the community that no one is born to be made subordinated forever, rather the marginalized ones should fight for their right and establishment of their identity.

Love and sympathy for the needy, subdued, exploited and marginalized ones characterizes the Karbi folk society seen in their tale world. Jangrecho, the orphan, the dominant character of the Karbi folk tales is loved, taken care of and rewarded with beautiful heroine's hand and kingdom. Jangrecho, the orphan in different roles is always approved, appreciated and rewarded. Even the deity who betrayed the orphan after getting married is never excused by their society in the tale 'Orphan and King of Vices' (S.N.Barkataki, 1970:105-107). The society is very much critical towards those who do wrong to the needy people and go against the values of the society. Karbi folk literature with such expression owns ability to make the younger generation understand the causes of sufferings of the community and of the marginalized groups within and feel oneness with the plight of the community and of the Karbis living at the bottom layer of the society. Thus the subalternity articulated in their folk literature as referent to the wronged community and the underprivileged ones may reorient the target groups towards a better understanding of the right and equality, justice and identity of all irrespective of gender, socio-religious position and status, economic condition etc. and may contribute to the reconstruction of the value-based cultural selves of the young ones through their folk literature who will not be merely sympathetic towards but fight for the underprivileged Karbis in true spirit.

### **Representation of Women and the associated Values:**

Karbi folk literature is reflective of how the women self is constructed and voiced in their narratives, society's attitude towards and her socio-culturally structured roles, her reaction to those roles etc. The women-oriented Karbi folk tales, myths, legends, love songs, ballads, proverbs etc. are meant to socialize the girls, make them disciplined and complete adult women, to mould their behavior in the expected way to suit the patriarchal society, to teach them how to live for others, to make them bearer of tradition and culture. The woman world seen in the Karbi ballads and woman-centered tales is essentially a tragic one. These narrate the tales of unending woes and sufferings, pain and agony, anger and anguish of Karbi women and are reflective of the Karbi folk society's perception of and attitude towards women. The society has no objection if the strong male

having a wife at home goes in search of a beautiful lady (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso: 228-230), but punishes the faithless wife to roam forever with the cloud in the sky (S.N. Barkataki, op.cit.). The husband is not sympathetic towards the pains of the overworked woman but physically assaults her for being pitiless towards the males wasting time in idle (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso: 107-112). Looking through a vulture feather the husband discovers animal spirit in mother and wife and considers them the real source of familial and domestic disorder. He never looks at himself through the feather believing in the society's conviction that the male is always right, and finally restores his life getting rid of the old one and married to a new one (Ibid: 259-260). The maternal uncle who made Dengrali pregnant and left her to a state of committing suicide goes unpunished (Basanta Das, 2010: 252). The beautiful girls without a brother or brother-in-law are bound to suffer whose parents are poor and ignorant and the male leaders of 'Jirsong' are not considered the guilty who even sexually seduce the beautiful girl members and compel them to commit suicide or make their life pathetic (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso: 92-94, 289). In spite of taking separation from the careless husband the wife cannot get herself fully free from the so called emotional-sexual bond of marital relationship and makes her husband happy assuring that he would be the first to suck her nectar in her next life (Ibid: 274-275). The society is indifferent towards the pains of the young mother feeding a baby who is compelled to work harder (Ibid: 289). The wise old women of wit and intelligence, practical knowledge and wisdom, secret and special knowledge who can play crucial role in changing other people's lives are marginalized by the society and let to live like beggar women living all alone in a wretched hut in a deep forest. These tales of women's sufferings not merely reflect the loss of womanhood and dishonor to her inner self but mirror the Karbi folk society from sociological perspective. The male chauvinistic Karbi folk society appears biased against women and leads the young girls to read critically the unequal man-woman relationship and their uneven social position and provides them scope to construct their character in their own way.

Karbi folk literature is also reflective of the fact that the Karbi women, in spite of living in a male chauvinistic and male dominated

society, enjoy certain advantages as compared to their counterparts among the non-tribals. After father's death the daughter inherits property but can never be the household. Karbi marriage system is devoid of bride price and dowry system. Divorce is permissible, child marriage has never been a practice and widow marriage is preferred in Karbi society. After marriage the girl does not change her surname though her children take her husband's surname. A married woman in a Karbi tradition maintains the rule 'Kaservi', i. e. while walking she is always in front of her husband. 'Nihu Sarkan' is one of such rule through which males are compelled to respect the ladies like the wife of maternal uncle. The tale 'Vokronso' (Ibid: 167-169) projects woman the protector of husband and 'The Legend of All Women's Village' (Ibid:255-56) projects women the protector of the village. In the tale 'Mangbon the Brute' (Ibid: 295-296) the female force in the form of an old tigress makes the end of the life of the strong Brute who brought danger to the lives of the Karbis and their culture. The tales like 'The Sunbird and his Wife', 'Dog, Hyena and She-Elephant' (Ibid: 107-275) etc. are reflective of female expressive behavior different that of the males. The tales show that women are capable of leading their life being free from the conventional order, pose a challenge against the patriarchy and male domination and leave their husband's house in search of herself. The 'Tale of a Dove' (Rongbong Terang: 34-35) portrays the Karbi woman, represented by the female dove, as the voice raised against colonization, exploitation and humiliation of woman self. The simple and submissive female force in the tale suffers a lot in the hands of her strong male neighbour, the intruder who consumes her children again and again, compels her to shift from one place to another and kills her husband and is finally killed and colonization is overthrown by the so called weak female force and metaphorically raises a voice against marginalisation of woman self and asserts respect and dignity of women, equal place and position of women in their society. These tales, if retold from women's perspective, may lead the girls to probe into the causes of women's sufferings and finally to locate their place in the male made society and to transgress their situation into a means of 'search for self' for themselves.

### **Values of Historicity:**

Study of Karbi folk literature is the study of the masses of the community, their worldview, migration and their earlier socio-economic cultural religious and political affairs which may reorient the young minds of the community as well as outsiders to understand the history of the community from the below. The Karbi myths and creation songs which are all about gods and goddesses, folk belief, folk religion and origin of objects are also expressive of the earliest worldview of the Karbis. There are folk songs celebrating the existence of their earliest villages like 'Amsikacho', 'Klahupacho' and 'Lamthamkep', Miring Rongchopi, TeronRongchopo, AkliRongchopi, Boroli-e etc. which shaped and organized the earliest forms of the Karbi society. The 'Rukasen Alun' (PhulmatiTeronpi:113-118) and the 'Sar Kebat Alun' (Jorsing Bey:24-29) are reflective of how Grandfather Kashen and Harbamon with gracious presence of Hemphu gave birth to deities, rituals, worship, incantation, ways of purification, ways of life right from birth till death and from their accumulated knowledge, wisdom and imagination formulated rice-beer, bachelors' dormitory, village chief, village administration, tales, songs, dance, rites and rituals etc. and gradually established the Karbi folk society and its sociology. 'Muchera Kehir', sung on the third day of 'Chomangkan', can rightly be called the Oral History of the Karbi community with the sense of historicity prevailed throughout, historical life of the community with reference to their legendary figures, historical characters, events and relation with other communities of the region, their establishment of kingdom and migration, of their battles won and lost, their socio-cultural custom, economic condition, cultural assimilation etc.

The Karbi society is proud to have a good number of legends constituting the oral history of the community. These are the records of reality, expression of woes and sufferings, anger and anguish, exploitation and humiliation, valour and freedom of the community and its members. The characters in Karbi legends like 'Thong Nokbe', 'Waisong', 'Rongpherpi Rongbe', Larbin and Liorbon instead of hanging after knowledge about the unknown are more concerned with the well being and security of the Karbis, freedom and identity of the community and remain busy in conflict with the oppressive neighbours.

These legendary figures sacrificed their lives in their conflict with outsider oppressors while internal conflict is shown in the legend of Rongkhang. Further the Karbi kings like Har Pokkang, Kadeng Chiri, Rongkhang, Rengbonghom, Waisong etc. are seen establishing or ruling liberal Karbi state establishing capital at Socheng, abolishing capital punishment, extending boundary up to Kapili Dhonsiri etc. and are concerned with well being, happy and peaceful living of their people (Jatin Sharma,2016:80).

The Karbifolk tales are reflective of the early socio-cultural history of the community. For example, the tale 'Ghalakghatk' (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso:35-37) reflects a Karbi land with 'Ronghidi', 'Kowansi' and 'Chukcheng', river 'Lut', folk festival 'Dumahi', community fishing, indigenous fish and fishing instruments like 'polo', 'dupani' etc., indigenous animals and insects, folk deities like 'Mosondhori' and 'Langbar', indigenous musical instruments like 'chen' and 'murut' and their folk wisdom that one is the master of one's own will. The tale 'The Crow and the Snake' (Informant: Rumila Beypi) is metaphorical of the painful historical past of the community and their ever longing for a peaceful life. The historical tales of the community are characterized with local historical elements. The 'Legend of All Women Village' (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso:255-256) gives exposure to 'Arloso Arong', the village of all women which had its trace in the time of Karbi legendary hero Thong Nokbe. The tale records two neighbouring villages 'Miring-Murong' and 'Arkli-Arklo' and deals with a long-running environmental dispute over the sharing of the water of 'Marle' river. The tale projects Karbi women as expert weaver, protector of village and community and leaves scope for research in relation to the mythical women kingdom at Kondoli of Nagaon District. The 'Legend of Baby Hill' (Ibid: 289) narrates the historical background of calling the 'Putsari' range of hills in western Karbi Anglong the 'Baby Hill'. The tale also records factual account of sexual abuse and exploitation of women members in a bachelor's dormitory by the male leaders. Further the names like 'Mikir-Hat', 'Ling-Lang' market; 'Kaziranga' etc. are expressive of the fact that the region from Kaziranga to Puranigudam and from Kathalguri to Kandoli via Chapanalla and Bamuni were initially in-

habited by the Karbis. (Jatin Sharma, 2016:102-103). A scientific and systematic study of the historical tales and legends will be instrumental in constructing early history of the community.

### **Moral Values:**

Hemphu incarnated among the Karbis as Langmingpo and taught the community certain moral ethics considered necessary for leading a healthy social life and enjoying heavenly blessing. He neither quarreled with any villager nor envied others and inculcated in the community the values of non-violence. According to him one should always consider own self inferior to others, but perform own duty the best and thus should show instance to others. He stressed on equality of all and purity of body and mind and advised all to live together in peace with love and affection for each other. According to Langmingpo people should always work with patience, self-control, farsightedness and perseverance, faith on god and work with confidence. The principles advocated by Langmingpo or Hemphu for the well being of the Karbi people and their society as well are - purification of body, mind and spirit, purity in whole life, nobility, humble and amiable nature, rejection of ill temper, self dependent, competitive spirit in mind and good sense, obedience, good dealing and self confident (Mondal Sing Bey, 2009:11). However in present day context the concept of purification and purity can hardly attract the younger generation and remain relevant basically in ritual and religious activities. No doubt these values constitute the backbone of the Karbi folk mind and Karbi folk society. Most of the Karbi myths, legends and tales appear tradition bearer, didactic and may be used to provide moral lesson. For example, the village head SarMangbi is punished by the villagers for not respecting Karbi tradition 'Honjengkek' and Dengrali suffers for not being moral (Longkam Teron:80-89). The tales are meant to inculcate traditional moral values like innocence, constancy, righteousness, fidelity, honesty, faithfulness, goodness in the young Karbis and establish triumph of goodness over evil forces. The tales reflect that the way of life approved by their folk society is the only road to happiness and violation of which invites only punishment.

### **Socio-Political Values :**

The traditional Karbi society is characterized with good governance, democratic ideals, equality, fellow-feeling and a sense of co-operation. 'Mei' the Village Council is the traditional socio-political institution at the ground level in the Karbi state with distribution of works to the portfolios like 'Sarthé', the village Headman, 'Kurusor', the priest, 'Richobacha', the Assistant village chief, 'Ferangke', the messenger and 'Webarim', the coach. The 'Mei' under the leadership of the 'Sarthé' performs various functions related to the socio-economic, judicial and religious activities of the villagers. The 'Sarthé' not only controls the day to day affairs of the villagers but also the inter-village and intra-village issues. The villagers can remove a 'Sarthé' if he is found inefficient. The bachelors' dormitory of the Karbis 'Jirkedam' or 'Jirsong' is meant to train up the youths in all aspects of life -socio-cultural, economic, religious and agricultural, handicrafts, community-oriented etc. and to inculcate in them the democratic values, sense of cooperation, fellow-feeling, work culture, folk art and craft and aesthetic sense. The Karbis strictly follow clan exogamy and consider a marriage between a boy and girl of the same clan a sin. The Karbis worship their respective totem and at no circumstance they kill the bird or the animal or cut the tree if it represents their totem. Karbi Customary Laws are the properties of the community. There are certain Codes of Conduct traditionally followed by the Karbis in their folk society. The Karbi folk society is characterized with equality of all and always longs for equal growth for all and is naturally free from high or low caste politics, exploitation and suppression in the name of caste, colour and race. People especially the elders and office bearers are honoured in a traditional way according to their social designation, role played in the cultural and religious activities (Jatin Sharma, 2016:38-43).

### **Folk Religious Values**

Karbi Religion is animistic in nature characterized with its own philosophical base, system of purification, worship of nature and its objects, ancestors' worship, worship of household, varying beliefs and practices, religious experiences and behavior, deities and demons, priests and sermons etc. The Karbis do not believe in the concept of



heaven and hell but think that the final destination of the Karbis is their ancestors' land. The souls are considered immortal and can take rebirth to the corresponding clans. They believe in the concept of unity of all things- earth, man, nature and ancestors' land. Within this unity there is a duality between 'demon' and 'deity' well represented by 'Hi-i' and 'Arnam' respectively. The unity and duality of the negative and positive forces and the balance between them are what constitute the philosophical basis of the Karbi folk religion (Dharamsingh Teron, 2011:58-77).

Under the strong Assamese ego or Hinduised centre the Karbis with their own religion are compelled to remain in the periphery with suppressed identity. People immediately start to identify the Karbi deities with Hindu gods and read them from the centre. It brings crisis to the deities of the Karbis and makes them suffer from colonial ideology of the centre. Whatever the situation made by the outsiders, the reality is that most of the Karbis are still with their indigenous religion and happy to take part in their religious activities.

### **Folk Medicinal Values**

Karbi Folk Medicinal values imply their traditional viewpoints about and attitudes towards health and disease and the aspects associated with. They worship their household deities like Hemphu, Peng and the deity 'Hi-i' for the well being of their family members ensuring a balance between the good and evil forces of nature. They also celebrate the ritual 'Vo Kartap' for curing 'maternal uncle searching disease' of a child. They also worship a few deities taking names from diseases. It is not surprising that folk medicine is still the only answer for a poor Karbi living in a remote village suffering from a killing disease. Karbi folk medicine is not merely a means of curing a patient but a socio-psychological therapy providing health to the entire environment. To what extent worship to a household deity or the ritual 'Vo Kartap' can save the life of a Karbi is doubtful, but one cannot deny the structural unity that it provides to the family or the community. The meaning and significance of Karbi folk medicine cannot be reduced reading it from the desk of modern medical science but lies in own cultural background and its function in its folk society. Waning of popularity of folk medicine among the Karbis in

the context of spread of modern education and dissemination of scientific knowledge is a fact. Plantation and preservation of the medicinal plants will surely contribute to bio-diversity and to have a sustainable home.

### **Social cohesion and integration**

In present days celebration has become the life force of most of the rituals of the Karbis. The limited participation festivals like marriage, purification or worship of a deity are of immense significance in the sense that these moments are not merely meant to assign new role to the individuals or to ensure welfare of a family member or for abundance of harvest but celebrated with a view to cementing the individual's membership in the society and providing opportunity to develop oneness with culture and community. The general participation festivals like 'Chumangkan', 'Rongker' etc. let the Karbis to take part in large number by virtue of their membership and belongingness to the community and provide them opportunities to associate themselves with their greater socio-cultural occasions and to develop oneness with their folk ways of life. No doubt it promotes social cohesion integrating the individuals to the society and culture. For example, in 'Chomangkan', whether the souls of the dead are safely led to the 'ancestors' land' or they are made free to take rebirth to their respective clans or whether the boys and girls after taking part in 'Nimcho-Kerung' are sexually united to ensure new birth to compensate the loss caused by death etc. are not so relevant as it were before. Its prime significance lies in the fact that it provides opportunity for the individuals to identify and associate themselves with their rites and rituals, folk belief and tradition, art and craft, songs and music etc. and helps them to develop oneness with the community and its culture. Thus 'Chomangkan', a celebration of death and rebirth, fertility and regeneration, appears one of the prime means of social cohesion in a greater Karbi folk society. In the present crucial juncture of time for the community sustaining a struggle for long for right and identity, the real meaning and significance of 'Chomangkan' lies in its sociological function promoting the individuals' integration to the community, developing a sense of community consciousness and right and identity. Another important feature seen in their social cus-

tom is the collective spirit and energy seen on the part of the entire community. Most of the festivals of the Karbis start at family or individual level but ends at the community level transforming a personal matter into a matter of community concern. In the structural line, a proper understanding of the interrelations of the components in relation to the complex whole certainly leads the young generation of the community to understand the real meaning of their social folk custom, its significance as a living and unifying force and its role in their growth and development as a community.

### **Socio-Ethical Values**

Karbi folk literature is not merely the source of transmission of their socio-ethical values from one generation to another but also expected to be the prime means of inculcating those values in the young ones of the community. Goodness and honesty, justice and righteousness and triumph of good, moral and honest over the evil, immoral and dishonest are the prime values of life nourished in Karbi folk society is well reflected in the world of Karbi folk tales and songs. Cultivation is the prime recognized profession in their tale world symbolizing work culture where all even the king with his subjects are involved in the profession. That is why everyone whether the king's son or a common man must work at the paddy field and look for luck, name and fame in the rice produced, not in a world beyond human limitation. Love and sympathy for the poor and the needy characterizes the Karbi folk society as seen in their tale and song world. Betrayal, especially to husband, is never tolerated in Karbi society. The Karbi is a peace loving community and they hate war and believe in living together in peace, equality of all, equal growth for all and stress on acquisition of human qualities like love, affection, fellow-feeling, kindness, help, sympathy and a sense of endurance. Further love for tradition, respect for their glorious past, and respect for their historical figures, acknowledge of the contributions of their elders are the loftiest Karbi folk values transmitted through their folk literature (Jatin Sharma, 2016:116-120) They need to live with their history, the pleasures of the triumphs and agonies of their painful past.

### **Way to scientific thinking**

Sustaining Tradition and continuity, pervasiveness and variation and travelling through time and space Karbi folk literature becomes historically resourceful, culturally inter penetrating and socially representative of their local features and national glory. It provides insight into a collective psyche, accumulated thought and wisdom. The human civilization or its surface growth does not necessarily segregate the people from its root. Viewed historically, the study of folklore presents before us a roadmap of a community's growth from antiquity to modernity, from religious belief to scientific thought. The point is that the so called unscientific past is not at all disposable, rather the legend of creation reflecting their understanding of plantation and other beings before human life on earth, teachings of Hemphu constituting the inner self of a human being, village centered ways of social development undertaken by Harbamon, the tale of We Longbi and Har Longbi protesting against environmental pollution, teachings of grandmothers like 'Marongpi', the tiger tales metaphorically suggesting the importance of bio-diversity, the folk belief that fowl came into being from serpent, the 'Muchera Kehir' preparing for the present through their past etc. are enough to give birth to reasonable, rational or scientific thinking in terms of the present total environment and lead the young generation of the Karbis to look forward and cultivate scientific way of thinking.

### **A Sense of Duality among the Karbis**

The Karbi folk literature depicting the existence of opposite forces like spiritual and erotic in the socio-cultural, religious folk custom of the Karbis, sense of submission and aggression in their mythical and legendary characters, love for humour and obsession with a sense of tragedy, longing for order and living in chaos, hopes and aspirations for a change with a sense of hesitation, wish to go to the final destination the ancestors' land only to come back to the same clan for living on earth, death and rebirth, degeneration and regeneration, purity and impurity, 'demon' and 'deity' represented by 'Hi-i' and 'Arnarn' respectively, 'Jangrecho' the Orphan the honest and the trickster, the tiger the means of savior or damnation, the grandmother the wicked and the wise, encouragement of women participation in

bachelors' dormitory and their subsequent exploitation, projection of demon's village at the vicinity of that of the Karbis metaphorically suggesting the co-existence of good and evil, positive and negative forces etc. is reflective of a sense of duality inbuilt among the Karbis. Now a days, the manipulation of folk self witnessed in the caretaker of nature destroying a forest, savior of community betraying the race for individual benefit, bearer of tradition becoming instrumental in degenerating the values and indigenous environment has not originated from that sense of duality the philosophical base of the community, but is the result of pollution of folk mind with rootless materialistic zeal.

### **Negative Folk Values among the Karbis**

From outsider's point of view Karbi folk literature is also reflective of a certain negative folk values such as ethnocentrism, obsession with a sense of hesitation, fear and timidity, obsession with a sense of tragedy, use of tricks and violence against the wrong-doers, violation of human rights in the name rules and community works, marginalization of women to a certain extent, anti-environmental jhum-cultivation and forest-fire, deforestation, hunting of wild animals, community fishing pouring poison to river water etc. which appear detrimental to the welfare and development of the individuals and the community as well. The tales and the songs reflect that the Karbis right from their creation seen in 'Karbi Kaplang' are obsessed with a sense of hesitation and tragedy, a feeling of unease and uncomfortable, a sense of sadness of being unfortunate which may give rise to a sense of complexity in the minds of the young ones. A sense of hesitation towards something or somebody new is seen in the characters of the tales which is peculiar to the national character of the Karbis. Such negative traits may be responsible for developing unfriendly forces within.

### **Conclusion**

Karbi folk literature reflects their worldview, the way of life approved and the values of life fostered by the community. The folk tales and songs are reflective of a value-based Karbi folk society and violation of the rules laid down by society invites only pains and suf-

fering. The real value of the folk tales and songs, as a source of sociological data, lies not in its concern with particular persons or incidents, but in its typical portrayals of situations, relationships and attitudes towards life. These tales and songs are reflective of typical pictures of Karbi familial relationships, social institutions, relation between an individual and society, society and nature etc. and these pictures, when synthesized, provide a more balanced and comprehensive view of the Karbi folk society and its values. Their folk values whether moral, socio-ethical, cultural, aesthetic, religious or environmental ones constitute the backbone of their folk society. Whether their folk values are personal or community concerned, egoistic or universalistic, hedonistic or utilitarian, good or bad, relevant or irrelevant, in present day context these are realized in relative terms and are undoubtedly the properties of the cultural heritage of the community and naturally its future never lies in the attitude of the outsiders.

The values in a Karbi folk society whether familial, social, cultural, religious or environmental ones are not inborn characteristics of an average Karbi folk but are taught to and acquired by the folk through oral literature, the process of socialization, interaction with nature and others, participation in community activities etc. In a traditional Karbi society the values are significant not simply for shaping the folk's behavior and individuality but for constituting the texture of their folk society and nature of their approved way of life. Some of their traditional values may be no longer relevant in present day society. But those values whether good or evil, relevant or irrelevant, right or wrong, are the properties or cultural heritage of the community and should be preserved in a scientific way if cannot be practiced or inculcated in. Now it is the duty of the community and the students of folklore around to ensure sustenance of the indigenous nature of the Karbi folk tales and songs along with its traditional values especially the human, cultural and environmental ones from the influence of the technology and moral depravity of the modern world with a view to reorienting their present generations to their indigenous environment, adjusting them with their own culturally constituted world and thus enabling them to be not the rootless modern but the proud Karbis of the global world living with their own culture, history and identity.

Assamese culture and language belong to none but to all communities who have been living in the region since pre-independence era contributing to the growth and development of Assamese culture and language, formation of Assamese community and identity. No one should ignore the interpenetration of the Karbi elements in formation of cultural and linguistic, anthropological and sociological identity of Assam and the greater Assamese community. This study simply exposes the richness of Karbi folk tales and songs in terms of their folk values sustained and its roles in reorientation of their younger generation towards proper understanding and sustenance of their environment in totality, culture and language, right and identity, but leaves certain questions unanswered - what are the contributions of the Karbis to the Assamese culture and folklore, language and nationality? And the same question needs to be extended and scientifically addressed in the context of global India. What is precisely there in the cultural and political history of Assam and India as well that represents the Karbis and their land? No doubt they like to be a part of Bihu celebration, but when the beauty and strength of their Chomangkan will be realized by others? They strengthen themselves with the teachings of Lachit Boephukan and Shivaji, but is there no lesson from the margin to the centre through Rongpherpi, Thong Nokbe or their tiger tales? The Karbis are not happy with the occasional recognition of their needs and rights and carefully made explanation of their culture and history by the advocates of the elite centre. Rather it should be acknowledged that they are undoubtedly a strong peripheral reality contributing to constitute Assamese and Indian culture and nationality with their own uniqueness, folklore and identity.

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# ডিমাচাসকলৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱ

## মল্লিকা বৰা

অসমত বসবাস কৰা মংগোলীয় জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ভিতৰত অন্যতম ডিমাচাসকলে প্ৰধানকৈ ডিমাহাচাও জিলা (উত্তৰ কাছাৰ), কাছাৰ, কাৰ্বি আংলং জিলা, নগাঁও (বৰ্তমান হোজাই জিলা)ৰ লংকা, কোমোৰাকটা, নভঙা আৰু কম পৰিমাণে নাগালেণ্ডৰ ধনশিৰি, মহংডিজুৰা আদি ঠাইত বসবাস কৰে। ভৌগলিক ক্ষেত্ৰভেদে ডিমাচাসমাজক সমাজক চাৰিটা ভাগত ভাগ কৰা হয়। ডিমাহাচাও, এই পাহাৰীয়া জিলাখনৰ ডিমাচাসকলক ‘হাচাওচা’, নাগালেণ্ডৰ সকলক ‘ডিজুৰাচা’, লংকা, হোজাই আদি ঠাইৰ লোকসকলক ‘ডেব্ৰাচা’ আৰু কাছাৰৰ সকলক ‘হাৰাচা’ বুলি অভিহিত কৰা হয়।” (দুৱৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্বৰ, ১৯৮৮, পৃঃ ৪)। ডিমাচা সমাজৰ এই চাৰিওটা গোটে উমৈহতীয়া কৃষ্টি-সংস্কৃতিৰ লগতে নিজা নিজা সামাজিক-ৰীতি-নীতি, ভাব-ভাষা আদি বৈশিষ্ট্য বহুপৰিমাণে অটুট ৰাখি আহিছে বুলি ক’ব পাৰি। ভাষিক গোষ্ঠী হিচাপে ডিমাচাসকল বৃহৎ চীন-তিব্বতীয় ভাষাগোষ্ঠীৰ তিব্বতীয় ভাষাৰ অসম-বৰ্মী শাখাৰ।

অসমত বাস কৰা প্ৰতিটো জাতি-উপজাতি বা ভাষিক গোষ্ঠীয়ে নিজ নিজ লোক সংস্কৃতি ঠেক পৰিমাণলৰ মাজতো জীয়াই ৰাখিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰি অহা দেখা যায়। লোক উৎসৱ হৈছে একোটা জনগোষ্ঠীৰ ঐতিহ্য-পৰম্পৰা আৰু সংস্কৃতিৰ প্ৰাণ স্পন্দন। সেয়ে পৃথিৱীৰ প্ৰায় সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে বিভিন্ন সময়ত ভিন ভিন উৎসৱৰ মাজেৰে নিজস্ব জাতীয় ঐতিহ্য পৰম্পৰা আৰু সংস্কৃতি উজ্জীৱিত কৰি ৰাখে।

পাহাৰ ভৈয়ামত বসবাস কৰা ডিমাচাসকলৰ সমাজ-সংস্কৃতিৰ স্বকীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য সমূহ ডিমাচাসকলৰ নিজস্ব সংস্কৃতিৰ মাজেদি প্ৰতিফলিত হৈ আহিছে। ডিমাচা সকলৰ সমাজ-সংস্কৃতিৰ কিছুমান বিশেষ ৰীতি-নীতিৰ বিষয়ে এতিয়াও অনুসন্ধান আৰু অধ্যয়নৰ

থল আছে। হাচাওচা, হাৰাৰচা, ডিজুৰাচা আৰু ডেব্ৰাচাসকলৰ বিবাহৰ লগত জড়িত ৰীতি-নীতি, জন বিশ্বাস, গীত-মাত, খাদ্যভাষ, সাজপাৰ আদিৰ বিষয়ে এতিয়ালৈকে যিখিনি আলোচনা হৈছে সেয়া পৰ্যাপ্ত বুলি ক'ব নোৱাৰি। সেয়ে এই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰাৰ যথেষ্ট সুবিধা আছে বুলি ক'ব পাৰি আৰু তাৰেই পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত ডিমাচাসকলৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱৰ বিষয়ে গৱেষণা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুত কৰাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

এই ক্ষেত্ৰত ডিমাচাসকল বাসকৰা পাহাৰীয়া জিলা ডিমাহাচাওৰ উমৰাংচু, মাইবং আৰু লংকা, হোজাই কোমোৰাকটা আদি অঞ্চললৈ গৈ সেই অঞ্চলৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰি ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ লোকসকলৰ সৈতে প্ৰত্যক্ষ যোগাযোগ কৰি আৰু ডিমাচা সমাজ-সংস্কৃতি বিষয়ক বিভিন্ন গ্ৰন্থ-প্ৰবন্ধসমূহৰ সহায় লৈ এই আলোচনাটি যুগুত কৰা হৈছে। এই আলোচনাত পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামৰ ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱৰ এটি থুলমূল আলোচনা দণ্ডি ধৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰা হৈছে। সেয়ে এই আলোচনা কোনো ক্ষেত্ৰতে সম্পূৰ্ণ বুলি ক'ব নোৱাৰি।

মানৱ সমাজত জীৱন বৃত্তৰ লগত জড়িত সংস্কাৰমূলক উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠান সমূহৰ ভিতৰত বিবাহ এক অন্যতম প্ৰাচীন সামাজিক অনুষ্ঠান। বিবাহক বৈদিক যুগতো আন আন সংস্কাৰতকৈ অধিক গুৰুত্ব প্ৰদান কৰা হৈছিল। বিবাহে দুটা ভিন্ন পৰিয়ালৰ এহাল যুবক-যুবতীক সামাজিকভাৱে মিলন সংঘটিত কৰি স্বামী-স্ত্ৰী হিচাপে স্বীকৃতি প্ৰদান কৰে। বিবাহৰ মূল উদ্দেশ্য হৈছে বংশ ৰক্ষা। সম্ভৱত প্ৰাচীন মানৱ সমাজত সন্তান প্ৰাপ্তিৰ লগতে সমাজ এখন নিয়াৰিকৈ চলাই নিবৰ বাবে বিবাহৰ প্ৰয়োজন হৈছিল। বিবাহ স্বৰূপাৰ্থত স্থায়ী সমাজভূক্ত কৃতৰ সমষ্টি মাথোন। বিবাহ মূলত সামাজিক ক্ৰিয়া। দ্বিতীয়তে, বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানে নিৰাপত্তামূলক আৰু প্ৰজনন কৃত আদিও সামৰি লয়।” (কায়স্থ, পুতলী, সম্পাঃ, ২০১১, পৃঃ ৭)

ডিমাচা সকলে বিবাহ উৎসৱক ‘জুখুবা’ বুলি কয়। ডিমাচা সমাজত পিতৃ-মাতৃ উভয়ৰেই ফৈদ বা বংশ আছে আৰু পুৰুষ-তিৰোতাভেদে ফৈদবিলাক পৃথক পৃথক হয়। যিকোনো ডিমাচা ডেকা-গাভৰুৱে তেওঁলোকৰ পিতৃ-মাতৃ কুলৰ কোনো ছোৱালী বা ল’ৰাক বিবাহ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। পুৰুষৰ ফৈদক ‘চেমফং’ আৰু তিৰোতাৰ ফৈদক ‘জুলুক’ বা ‘জাদী’ বুলি কোৱা হয়। ডিমাচা সমাজত চল্লিশটা চেমফং আৰু বিয়াল্লিশটা জুলুক আছে। ডিমাচাৰ দ্বৈতকুল প্ৰথা সম্পৰ্কে লোকসংস্কৃতিৰ গৱেষক তন্ময় ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ মতে তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত প্ৰচলিত দ্বৈতকুল ধাৰাই তেওঁলোকৰ ইতিহাস, নৃত্ব আৰু পৰিবেশৰ লগতে সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাক পুষ্ট কৰিছে। এয়া উত্তৰ পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ আদিভাগ গোটীৰ এটি ধাৰা।” (সম্পাঃ মলিনা দেৱী ৰাভা, ২০১১, পৃঃ ৪০৮) ডিমাচাৰ দ্বৈতকুল বা গোত্ৰ বা গোটী

প্ৰথা তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজৰ এক বিশেষ বৈশিষ্ট্য। সেয়ে ডিমাচা নাৰীৰ অন্যতম বৈশিষ্ট্য হ'ল 'জুলুক' বা জাদী; যিটো সাধাৰণতে আন জনজাতীয় নাৰীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দেখা নাযায়।

ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ 'হাচাওচা'; হোজাইজিলা (পূৰ্বৰ নগাওঁ জিলা)ৰ কোমোৰাকটা, নভঙা আৰু লক্ষাৰ 'ডেম্ৰাচা'; কাছাৰৰ 'হাৰাৰাচা' আৰু নাগালেণ্ডৰ 'ডিজোৱাচা' সকলৰ বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত প্ৰায় ভাগ নিয়ম একে যদিও হাৰাৰাচা, ডিজোৱাচা, ডেম্ৰাচা, আদি অঞ্চলৰ ডিমাচাসকলে বিয়াৰ সম্প্ৰদান কাৰ্য দ্বাদশ আদিত্য ব্ৰাহ্মণসকলৰ দ্বাৰা পূজা-পাতালেৰে কৰা দেখা যায়। ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ 'চেমছা' সকলেও পৰম্পৰাগত ৰীতি-নীতিৰে বিবাহ কাৰ্য সম্পন্ন কৰে। চেমছা সকল সাহসী ডিমাচা যোদ্ধা সকলৰ বংশধৰ।

ডিমাচাসমাজৰ 'জুখুবা' (বিবাহ) অনুষ্ঠানত দৰা (দামান) কন্যা (কেইনাজিক) দুয়োৰে পিতৃ-মাতৃ বা অভিভাৱক সকলৰ মাজত কৰা আলোচনাৰ মাধ্যমত বিবাহ স্থিৰ কৰা হয়। অৱশ্যে ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীৰ মতামতকো গুৰুত্ব সহকাৰে বিবেচনা কৰা হয়। ল'ৰা বিবাহযোগ্য হ'লে মাক-দেউতাকে বা অভিভাৱকে উপযুক্ত ছোৱালী আলেঙে আলেঙে লক্ষ্য কৰে আৰু পছন্দ হ'লে ছোৱালীৰ ঘৰত খবৰ দিয়ে। ছোৱালীঘৰীয়াই সম্বন্ধীয় লোকসকলৰ লগত এই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰিহে সেই ল'ৰাজনলৈ নিজৰ ছোৱালীক বিয়া দিবলৈ মন কৰা-নকৰাৰ সিদ্ধান্ত পাছত জনাব বুলি সেই বাৰলৈ ল'ৰাঘৰীয়াক বিদায় দিয়ে। ডিমাচা সমাজত ছোৱালীৰ ঘৰৰ পৰা বিবাহৰ প্ৰস্তাৱ দিয়া নহয়। ল'ৰা আৰু ছোৱালীৰ 'চেমফং' আৰু 'জুলুক' বিবাহ কৰি পৰা ফৈদ বা কুলৰ হ'লে বিবাহৰ যোগ আহিছে বুলি ল'ৰাৰ ঘৰলৈ নিৰ্দিষ্ট তাৰিখত মানুহ পঠায়।

ডিমাচাসকলে সাধাৰণতে শুক্লপক্ষত বিবাহৰ দিন স্থিৰ কৰে। হাচাওচা সকলে বিবাহৰ দিন তাৰিখৰ বাবে পঞ্জিকাৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্ভৰ নকৰে। সাধাৰণতে চ'ত আৰু ভাদ মাহত বিয়া নাপাতে। দুয়োপক্ষৰ আলোচনা-বিলোচনাৰ অন্তত বিয়াৰ বন্দবস্ত হ'লে পাছৰ কামখিনি তিনিটা পৰ্যায়ত সম্পন্ন কৰা হয়—

★ ছান্দিদাংছেংবা (বিবাহ প্ৰস্তাৱক স্বীকৃতি জনোৱা)

★ লাউঠাই লাংবা (লাউত ভৰোৱা জুডি কন্যাৰ ঘৰলৈ নিয়া)

★ লাউঠাই লাংগাগিনি (দ্বিতীয়বাৰ লাউঠাই নিয়া কাৰ্য)

ছান্দিদাংছেংবা (বিবাহ প্ৰস্তাৱক স্বীকৃতি জনোৱা) :

ডিমাচা বিবাহ এখন অনুষ্ঠিত কৰাৰ প্ৰথম পৰ্যায় হ'ল ছান্দিদাং ছেংবা। 'ছান্দিদাং ছেংবা' প্ৰথমতে দৰাপক্ষৰ পৰা কন্যাপক্ষলৈ দিয়া হয়। এই প্ৰথা বা নিয়ম বিয়াৰ প্ৰস্তাৱৰ স্বীকৃতি স্বৰূপ। ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ ডিমাচাসকলে নিমখ এক কিলোগ্ৰামান কলপাতত পাঁচ বা সাত পাক দি বান্ধি ছোৱালীঘৰলৈ নিয়াৰ প্ৰথা আছে। ইয়াকে 'চেমজু' বুলি

কোৱা হয়। ডিমাচা ভাষাত ‘চেম’ মানে নিমখ আৰু ‘জু’ মানে হ’ল টোপোলা। এই নিমখ খিনি বিয়াৰ দিনা ৰন্ধা আঞ্জাত ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হয়। ‘হাচাওচা’ আৰু ডিজুৱাচা সকলৰ মাজত এই নিয়ম প্ৰচলিত।” (তথ্যদাতাঃ ৰিনা কেম্পাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু) কাছাৰৰ ডিমাচা সমাজত সেইদিনা তামোল পোন্ধৰটা আৰু পাণ দুগুটি আগলিকলপাতত সাতডাল তমাল বা সুতাৰে বান্ধি এখন গামোচৰে মেৰিয়াই ছোৱালীৰ ঘৰলৈ নিয়ে। কাছাৰত ইয়াকে “গোওয়াইজু ডাং ছেংবা” (পান-তামোলৰ টোপোলা) বোলা হয়। ডেম্ৰাচাসকলেও কাছাৰৰ দৰে তামোল-পাণৰ টোপোলা নিয়ে আৰু ইয়াকে ‘কইজু’ বুলি কোৱা হয়।” (তথ্যদাতাঃ মীনা লাংথাচা, কোমোৰাকটা, হোজাই)

**লাউঠাই লাংবা (লাউত ভৰোৱা জুডি কন্যাৰ ঘৰলৈ নিয়া) :**

‘লাউঠাই লাংবা’ মানে লাউত ভৰোৱা ‘জুডি’ (ঘৰুৱা মদ) কন্যা-ঘৰলৈ নিয়া কাৰ্য। বিবাহ উপলক্ষে পালন কৰা এইটো দ্বিতীয় উৎসৱ। ডিমাচা বিবাহৰ অনুষ্ঠানত লাউঠাই লাংবা অতি গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ অনুষ্ঠান। সোমবাৰ, মঙ্গলবাৰ, বুধবাৰ আৰু শুক্ৰবাৰে এনেধৰণৰ নিয়ম পালন কৰা হয়। ডিমাচাৰ মতে এই কেউটা দিন পবিত্ৰ দিন। ছান্দিদাং ছেংবাৰ পিছত শুভ দিনবাৰ চাই ‘লাউঠাই লাংবা’ দৰাপক্ষৰ পৰা কন্যাপক্ষৰ বাবে নিয়া হয়। ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ হাচাংগুচাং সকলৰ মাজত ‘জুডি’ সৰু লাউৰ খোলাত ভৰাই আগবঢ়োৱাৰ নিয়ম। পাচি (খামল্লু) এটাত ভৰাই জুডিৰ পাত্ৰ কলপাতেৰে মেৰিয়াই তমালেৰে পাঁচটা বা সাতোটাকৈ বান্ধ দি ওপৰত পুৰুষে গাত লোৱা বৰকাপোৰ (ৰিমচাউ ৰামাই)ৰে ঢাকে। এনেদৰে ঢাকনী দিয়াটো সন্মান জনোৱা কাৰ্য। ইয়াকে ‘লাউঠাই’ বোলে। দৰাৰ সম্বন্ধীয় ভায়েক দুজনে সজাই পৰাই থোৱা লাউঠাই কান্ধত তুলি সঁজাতি দলৰ সৈতে কন্যাৰ গৃহলৈ যাত্ৰা কৰে। তেওঁলোকে বগা ধূতি-কামিজ আৰু কান্ধত হালধীয়া ৰঙৰ গামোছা লৈ কন্যা ঘৰলৈ গৈ কন্যাৰ মাক-দেউতাক আৰু সম্বন্ধীয় মান্য লোকসকলক সেৱা জনায়। দৰাপক্ষই ভোজন কাৰ্য সমাপন কৰে আৰু দ্বিতীয়বাৰ ‘লাউঠাই লাংগাগিনি’ নিয়াৰ দিন-বাৰ ঠিক কৰি আহে। লাউঠাই লাংবাত মাংসৰ আঞ্জা খোৱাৰ নিয়ম নাই। এই অনুষ্ঠানত মাছ, শাক-পাচলিৰ আঞ্জাৰে এসাজ খোৱাৰ নিয়ম।” (শৰ্মা, ৰাজীৱ, পৃঃ ৫৩)

নগাঁও জিলাৰ হোজাই, কোমোৰাকটা আৰু দাঁতিকাষৰীয়া অঞ্চলত বসবাস কৰা ডিমাচাসকলৰ বহুসংখ্যক লোক অনুকূল ঠাকুৰৰ অনুগামী আৰু নিৰামিষভোজী। ডেম্ৰাচা সমাজত বিবাহত মদৰ প্ৰচলন নাই। তেওঁলোকে লাউঠাই লাংবাত জুডিৰ পৰিবৰ্তে গাখীৰ, চিৰা আৰু গুৰ আদি কন্যা-ঘৰলৈ নিয়ে।” (তথ্যদাতা : শিৱ বৰ্মন, কোমোৰাকটা, হোজাই)

লাউঠাই লাংগাগিনি (দ্বিতীয়বাৰ লাউঠাই নিয়া কাৰ্য) :

‘লাউঠাই লাংগাগিনি’ হ’ল ডিমাচাসমাজৰ কন্যা খোজাৰ তৃতীয় পৰ্ব। ‘লাউঠাই লাংগাগিনি’ত ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ ডিমাচাসকলে আগৰ বাৰতকৈ বেছি পৰিমাণে জুডি কন্যাৰ ঘৰলৈ নিয়াৰ নিয়ম। সম্বন্ধীয় সকলোকে সেইদিনা নিমজ্জন জনোৱাৰ নিয়ম। কন্যাৰ ঘৰ পোৱাৰ লগে লগেই দৰাৰ সম্বন্ধীয় ভায়েক দুজনে পৰম্পৰাগত সাজ পৰিধান কৰি মাননীয় সকলক সেৱা জনায়। তাৰ পাছত সকলোৱে ভোজন পৰ্ব সমাপন কৰাৰ পাছত বিয়াৰ দিন-বাৰ ধাৰ্য কৰা হয়। দৰাপক্ষৰ পৰা লাউঠাই আগবঢ়োৱাৰ পাছত দুয়ো ‘বাজামাই’ (বিয়ে)য়ে শিত্ৰাইৰ স্তুতি আৰম্ভ কৰে। ইয়াৰ পিছত দৰাঘৰীয়া আৰু কইনাঘৰীয়া পুৰুহিতৰ মাজত ‘গাৰাও খানডি’ (যুক্তিপূৰ্ণ ফকৰা)ৰে উভয়-পক্ষৰ মাজত বিবাহৰ দিন আৰু ‘কাল্টি’ দিয়াৰ শেষ সিদ্ধান্তলৈ আহে। আজিকালি ডিমাচাসকলৰ বেছিভাগেই এবাৰতেই লাউঠাই লাংবা নিয়ম ভাগ সম্পন্ন কৰে।

কাল্টি (গা-খন লোৱা) প্ৰথা :

ডিমাচাসমাজত কাল্টি (গা-খন-লোৱা) প্ৰথা প্ৰচলিত। এই প্ৰথামতে দৰা পক্ষই কন্যাপক্ষক কিছু পৰিমাণে টকা দিয়াৰ নিয়ম প্ৰচলিত আছে। সেই টকাৰ পৰিমাণ দুয়োপক্ষৰ বুজাপৰাৰ মাজত নিৰ্দ্ধাৰণ কৰা হয়। অৱশ্যে টকা-পইচা নোলোৱাকৈ বিয়াবাৰু কৰাব পাৰে যদিও এই প্ৰথা নমনাসকলক চেমফং আৰু জুলুকৰ বাহিৰত থকা বুলি ধৰা হয়। সেয়েহে যিমান সম্ভৱ কাল্টি গ্ৰহণ কৰাই শ্ৰেয় বুলি বিবেচনা কৰা হয়। ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ ‘হাচাওচা’ আৰু নগাঁও জিলাৰ ‘ডেম্ৰাচা’ সকলেও যৎসামান্য কাল্টি গ্ৰহণ কৰা দেখা যায়। ডিমাচাসমাজত নাৰীক এক বিশেষ মৰ্যদা বা উচ্চ স্থান দিয়া হয়। কইনাঘৰৰ পৰা কোনো ধৰণৰ টকা-পইচা বা যৌতুক আদি লোৱাৰ নিয়ম নাই।

ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বিবাহ প্ৰথা তিনি প্ৰকাৰৰ—

★ ডিচিংবা (সামাজিক বিবাহ) প্ৰথা

★ হাৱিবা (পলুৱাই নি পিছত বিয়া পতা) প্ৰথা

★ জুখুগাওলেম (বিয়াৰ পূৰ্বৰ কোনো ধৰণৰ আনুষ্ঠানিকতা পালন নকৰি কেৱল বিয়াৰ দিনাহে নিয়ম কৰা) প্ৰথা।” (তথ্যদাতাঃ সুশান্ত লাংথাচা, দামাদি হাৱাৰ, মাইবং)

ডিচিংবা (সামাজিক বিবাহ) প্ৰথা :

ডিচিংবা বিবাহ হ’ল ডিমাচাসকলৰ সামাজিক বিবাহ প্ৰথা। এই বিবাহৰ সকলো প্ৰথা ডিমাচাসমাজত প্ৰচলিত ৰীতি-নীতি মানি পালন কৰা হয়।

হাৰিবা (পলুৰাই নি পিছত বিয়া পতা) প্ৰথা :

হাৰিবা বিবাহ প্ৰথাক প্ৰণয়মূলক বুলিও কোৱা হয়। ডেকা গাভৰুৰ মন মিলিলে দুয়ো পলাই গৈ যুগ্মজীৱন আৰম্ভ কৰাৰ পিছত দুয়োখন গাঁৱৰ গাঁওবুঢ়া আৰু দুই এক আত্মীয়ৰ উপস্থিতিত অনুষ্ঠপীয়া কৈ এই বিয়া পতা হয়। এই বিয়াত দৰাই মূৰত পাণ্ডৰি নাবাঞ্জে।

জুখুগাওলেম (বিয়াৰ পূৰ্বৰ কোনোধৰণৰ আনুষ্ঠানিকতা পালন নকৰি কেৱল বিয়াৰ দিনাহে নিয়ম কৰা) প্ৰথা :

এই বিবাহ প্ৰথাত বিয়াৰ পূৰ্বৰ বিবাহ সম্পৰ্কীয় নিয়ম (ছান্দিদাং ছেংবা, লাউঠাই লাংবা) সমূহ বিয়াৰ দিনাই পালন কৰে। কমদিনৰ ভিতৰত খৰখৰকৈ বিয়া পাতিবলগীয়া হ'লেই এনে বিবাহ সম্পন্ন কৰা হয়। এনেধৰণৰ বিবাহত দৰাই মূৰত পাণ্ডৰিটো 'ডিচিংবা' বিয়াতকৈ বেলেগ ধৰণে বাঞ্জে।

গিলিম (গুলুম) গাছা নাইবা :

'গিলিমগাছা নাইবা'ৰ অসমীয়া অনুবাদ হ'ল খা-খবৰ লোৱা। ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ ডিমাচাসকলৰ মাজত বিয়াৰ আগদিনাখন দৰাপক্ষৰ পৰা বয়সস্থ পুৰুষ মহিলা কেইগৰাকীমান কন্যাৰ ঘৰলৈ গৈ কিবা অসুবিধা বা অসুখ-বিসুখ হৈছে নেকি তাৰ খা-খবৰ লয়। এনে নিয়মকে 'গিলিম (গুলুম) গাছা নাইবা' বুলি কোৱা হয়। সেইদিনা দৰা-কইনা দুয়োপক্ষৰ মাজত বিবাহ সম্পৰ্কে নানা আলোচনা হয়। পূৰ্বৰ দৰে দুজন ডেকাই গলবস্ত্ৰ লৈ কন্যাৰ মাক-দেউতাক আদি মাননীয় লোকসকলক সেৱা কৰে। কইনাঘৰীয়াই এই লোকসকলক জুডিৰে আপ্যায়ন কৰে। গিলিমগাছা নাইবাৰ দিনাখনেই দৰা-কইনা দুয়ো খন ঘৰতে পুৰুষসকলে দৰা-কইনা ঘৰীয়াৰ হৈ হাবিত ত্ৰাই শিৱাইৰ উদ্দেশ্যে কুকুৰা চৰাই বলি দি আৰু জুদি উচৰ্গা কৰি 'মিডোগাৰবা' পূজা পাতে। আনহাতে মহিলাসকলে বিয়াঘৰতে 'চিমাং গাৰবা' নামৰ পূজা ভাগ কৰি পূৰ্বপুৰুষসকলৰ উদ্দেশ্যে জুদি আৰু মাংস উচৰ্গা কৰে।

ডেমাচাসকলৰ ওপৰত স্থানীয় জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বিবাহৰ ৰীতি-নীতিৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰিছে। তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত 'গিলিম গাছা নাইবা'ৰ দিনাখনেই দৰাৰ মাকে কন্যাক কঁপালত সেন্দূৰৰ ফোঁট দিয়ে আৰু আঙুঠি পিন্ধায়, সাজপাৰ আৰু আ-অলংকাৰ আদি সামগ্ৰী দি আহে। এই অঞ্চলৰ ডিমাচাসকলে নবদ্বীপৰ পৰা অহা বাৰঘৰীয়া ব্ৰাহ্মণসকলৰ উত্তৰ পুৰুষৰ যযমানী কৰা ব্ৰাহ্মণেৰে বিবাহৰ সকলো নীতি-নিয়ম কৰা দেখা যায়। সেইদিনা ৰাতিয়েই ব্ৰাহ্মণে অধিবাস কৰে। অধিবাসৰ দিনাখন দৰা কইনা দুয়োকে মাহ হালধিৰে নোওৱাৰ নিয়ম আছে। অধিবাস আৰু বিয়া দুয়ো দিনাই পানী তোলে আৰু দৰা-কন্যাক তিনিবাৰলৈ বেইৰ তলত নোওৱাৰ নিয়ম আছে।" (তথ্যদাতা : দময়ন্তী থাওচেন, টিছ'গাঁও

কাৰবি আংলং) অৱশ্যে বৰ্তমান সময়ত হাচাওচাসমাজতো কোনো কোনোৱে গিলিমগাছ নহিবাৰ দিনাই ডেপ্ৰাচাসকলৰ দৰে কইনাক সাজপাৰ, আ-অলংকাৰ আদি সামগ্ৰী দি আহে।

নথাও :

ডিমাচা ভাষাত 'নথাও' মানে আলহী ঘৰ। ডিমাহাচাও জিলাৰ 'হাচাওচা' সমাজত দুৰ্গীবটীয়া বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দৰাঘৰীয়া সকলো লোকেই গিলিম গাছ নহিবাৰ দিনাই দিনৰ ভাগতে আহি কইনাঘৰৰ আশে-পাশে থকা দৰাপক্ষৰ নিজ চেংফং বা সম্বন্ধীয় এঘৰত জিৰণী লয়। এই ঘৰখনকেই 'নথাও' বুলি কোৱা হয়। হাচাওচা সকলৰ বিবাহকাৰ্য আগবেলাৰ ভাগত অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা হয় বাবে দুৰ্গীবটীয়া বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত আগদিনাই 'নথাও'ত আশ্ৰয় লয়হি। দৰাঘৰীয়াই সকলোৰে বাবে থকা আৰু খোৱাৰ যা-যোগাৰ কৰি আনে। সেই দিনা গাহৰি কাটি সকলোকে 'জু' আৰু মাংসৰে ৰাতিৰ ভাতসাজ খুৱায়। কাছৰৰ 'হাৰাৰচা' আৰু ডেপ্ৰাচাসকলৰ মাজত এনে নিয়মৰ প্ৰচলন নাই। কাৰণ তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত বিবাহ কাৰ্য ৰাতিহে অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। কেতিয়াবা আকৌ একেখন গাঁও বা ওচৰতে দৰা-কইনাৰ ঘৰ হ'লে দৰাঘৰীয়াই নিজ চেংফংৰ মানুহৰ ঘৰত জিৰণী লয়। এই ঘৰখনক 'গাথাও' বুলি কোৱা হয়।" (তথ্যদাতা : দিচুদি কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু)

ডিমাহাচাও জিলাত ডিমাচাসকলৰ মাজত বিবাহৰ কামকাজ দিনৰ বাৰ বজাৰ ভিতৰত অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা দেখা যায়। জনবিশ্বাস মতে এই সময়খিনিত দৰা-কন্যাৰ যুগ্মজীৱন মধুৰ হয়। বিবাহৰ দিনা পুৱাৰ ভাগতে দৰাপক্ষৰ বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ পুৰুষ-মহিলা কেইগৰাকী মানে কইনাঘৰলৈ 'কাল্টি' লৈ যোৱাকে 'ৰাংৰিমনি থাংবা' বুলি কোৱা হয়। ডিমাচা ভাষাত 'ৰাং' মানে পইচা, 'ৰিমনি' মানে দিবলৈ আৰু 'থাংবা' মানে যোৱা। মুঠতে দুয়োপক্ষই নিদ্ধাৰিত কৰি ৰখা 'কাল্টি' সেই দিনা দিয়া হয়। ডিমাচাসমাজত দৰাঘৰীয়াই কইনা ঘৰীয়াক কাল্টি দিয়া আৰু দুয়োপক্ষৰ মাজত তামোল পান আদান প্ৰদান কৰা এক অন্যতম পৰম্পৰা।" (তথ্যদাতা পদ্মা হাম্বু, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু) কন্যাঘৰৰ পৰা দৰাঘৰীয়া লোকসকলক জুদিৰে আপ্যায়ন কৰে আৰু দৰাঘৰীয়া লোকসকল পুণৰ দৰাঘৰলৈ ঘূৰি আহে। এই অনুষ্ঠানত দুয়োপক্ষৰ লোকে যুক্তিপূৰ্ণ ফকৰাৰে কথা পাতে। সমাজৰ এজন মুখিয়াল ব্যক্তিৰ দ্বাৰা বিবাহ কাৰ্য সমাপন কৰা হয়। দৰাৰ লগত 'খাউয়া' অৰ্থাৎ দৰধৰা বা সখী থাকে। খাউয়াঃ (দৰা বা কন্যাৰ সখীয়েক) নহ'লে ডিমাচাৰ বিবাহ কাৰ্য সম্পন্ন নহয়। বিয়াৰ দিনাখন দৰাক নতুন সাজ-পোছাকেৰে সজাই-পৰাই কন্যা ঘৰলৈ অনা হয়। দৰাই কইনা ঘৰলৈ বুলি ওলাওঁতে প্ৰথমে সোঁভৰি আগুৱাই সূৰ্য দেৱতাক সেৱা জনাই যাত্ৰা কৰাৰ নিয়ম। যাতে যাত্ৰা পথত কোনো বিপদ আপদ নহয়। দৰাঘৰীয়া ছজন কিশোৰে পৰম্পৰাগত সাজ পিন্ধি 'লাউঠাই' (জুডি আৰু গাহৰিৰ মঙহৰ টোপোলা)

পাচি ভৰাই সুন্দৰকৈ 'ৰিকাউচা'ৰে ঢাকি মুৰত লৈ যায়। এই লাউঠাইৰ পাচি কেইটা নিয়ম নীতিৰে মুৰৰ পৰা মাটিত নমাই থোৱা হয়। চাৰিজন ডেকাই পৰম্পৰাগত সাজ পৰিধান কৰি ক'লা ছাতি মেলি দৰাৰ সৈতে কইনা ঘৰলৈ যাত্ৰা কৰে।" (তথ্যদাতা : বিকন লংমাইলাই, উমৰাংচু)

দৰাঘৰীয়াই কইনাঘৰলৈ যাত্ৰা কৰাৰ পাছত পুৰুহিতে পথৰ কাষত 'লামাফংবা' বুলি এটা কলী (দাউডিদাইবা) কাটে। দাউডিদাইবা কৰিলে বিয়াৰ যাত্ৰাপথত থকা অমঙ্গল দূৰ হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। হাচাওচাসকলৰ বিবাহত মুঠতে ছবাৰ লামাফংবা নিয়ম কৰে। ইয়াৰে চাৰিবাৰ দৰাঘৰীয়াই আৰু কইনাঘৰীয়াই দুবাৰ এই নিয়ম কৰে। দৰাৰ পিছে পিছে ক্ৰমে ছয়োৰ গাভৰু ছোৱালীয়ে বিগু, ৰিজামফাইবেৰেন পিক্সি কইনাঘৰলৈ যোৱাৰ নিয়মো আছে।" (শৰ্মা, ৰাজীৱ, পৃঃ ৫২)

**খৰংখাবা :**

বিবাহৰ দিনা দৰাঘৰীয়াক কইনাঘৰীয়া বিবাহিত পুৰুষ (হাইংগাৰাও) মহিলা (হাইংগা) ই ধেমালি কৰিবৰ কাৰণে বাঁহ বান্ধি দৰা আগছে। দৰাঘৰীয়া বিবাহিত পুৰুষ-মহিলাই সেই বাঁহ ডাল ভঙাৰ নিয়ম। এই সময় খিনিত উভয় পক্ষৰ মাজত হোৱা প্ৰশ্নবান মনকৰিব লগীয়া। বৰ্তমান কইনাঘৰৰ পদুলি মুখত ফটকা আদি ফুটাৰা দেখা যায়।" (তথ্যদাতা : দিপালী কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু) জনশ্ৰুতি অনুসৰি এটা সময়ত অসুৰৰ বৰ উৎপাত আছিল আৰু কেতিয়াবা দৰা অহাৰ পূৰ্বতে দৰাৰ বেশেৰে কইনাৰ ঘৰত উপস্থিত হৈছিল। সেয়েহে শিবাৰায়ে বিবাহৰ সময়ত এই 'খৰংখাবা'ৰ প্ৰচলন কৰিছিল বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। খৰংখাবাত দৰাঘৰীয়াই তিনিটা 'লাওঠাই' (মদ ৰখা তিতালাওৰ পাত্ৰ) কইনা ঘৰীয়াক আগবঢ়াব লগিছিল। দৰাঘৰীয়াৰ এই তিনিটা লাওঠাইৰ জু (সাজ) যথাক্ৰমে পনীয়া, টেঙা আৰু মিঠা হলে প্ৰবেশ কৰিবলৈ দিয়া হৈছিল, অন্যথা যদিহে লাওঠাইৰ 'জু' পনীয়া, টেঙা আৰু তিতা হয় অসুৰ বুলি প্ৰবেশ কৰিবলৈ দিয়া নহৈছিল। এই তিনিটা লাওঠাইৰ ওপৰিও দৰাঘৰীয়াই আৰু তিনিটা কামফ্ৰা (পাচি)ত যথাক্ৰমে মাছ, মাংস আৰু তৰকাৰী খাংখা (খাং)ত ভৰাই আনিব লাগে। এইবোৰক যথাক্ৰমে কোৱা হয় নগ্ৰাই জো নিখাংখা (মাছৰ খাং)-মগং জো নিখাংখা (মাংসৰ খাং) আৰু চামলাই জো নিখাংখা (তৰকাৰীৰ খাং)। (ৰাভা হাকাচাম, উপেন, পৃঃ ২৪০)

**সাজপাৰ :**

ডিমাচাৰ বিবাহত দৰা-কইনা উভয়ে পৰম্পৰাগত জাতীয় সাজ-পাৰ, আ-অলংকাৰ পৰিধান কৰা দেখা যায়। বিবাহৰ দিনা দৰাহ (ধুতি) 'গাইনথাউ' (ধুতি), 'বিছ' (হাত দীঘল বগা কামিজ), বগা পাগুৰী (চাউখা) ডিঙিত হালধীয়া ৰঙৰ ৰেমচ'ৰানাই (গামোচা)



‘ৰিমচাও’ লোৱাৰ ৰীতি আছে। দৰাৰ ওপৰিও দৰাৰ সখিয়েও ‘ৰিমচ’ ৰামাই’ বস্ত্ৰখন ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে। বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ পুৰুষ সকলে পৰম্পৰাগত সাজ পৰিধান কৰে।

ডিমাচা পুৰুষসকলৰ ‘ইয়াওচাৰ’ বা ‘য়াউচেৰ’; ‘কৃ’ আদি ৰূপেৰে নিৰ্মিত অলংকাৰ আছে যদিও বৰ্ত্তমান সময়ত এইবোৰৰ ব্যৱহাৰ নাই বুলিয়েই ক’ব পাৰি। ডিমাচা কইনাই বিয়াত ‘ৰিশু’ (মেখেলা), ‘ৰিজাঙ্কাই বেৰেন ৰামাই’ (জটিল শাৰীকৈ ফুল তোলা চাদৰ) বুকুৰ পৰা আঁঠুলৈকে মেঠনি মাৰে আৰু ৰিখাউচা (বিহা) পৰিধান কৰে। কইনাই পিছা ৰিজাঙ্কাই বেৰেন ৰামাই নামৰ মূল্যবান সাজযোৰত যিমানেই শাৰী শাৰীকৈ ৰঙ-বিৰঙ (হালধীয়া, সেউজীয়া, ৰঙা)ৰ পাৰি বাচে সিমানেই সাজযোৰৰ মূল্য বাঢ়ে। বিয়াৰ দিনা কইনাই ডিঙিত চন্দ্ৰবাল (ৰূপৰ নেকলেছ), ৰাংবাৰচা (ৰূপৰ মুদ্ৰাৰ মনি), জংচামা (পোৱাল মনি), হাতত খাডুডিমা (খাৰু), খাদু (ৰূপেৰে তৈয়াৰী খাৰু), কানত ‘চামথক’, খাসাইহাও (ৰূপৰ থুৰীয়া) লংবাৰ, নাকত ‘আনচিদাম’ (ৰূপৰ নাকফুলি), আগুলিত ‘য়ওচিদাম’ (আঙুঠি) আদি পৰম্পৰাগত আ-অলংকাৰ পৰিধান কৰে।” (তথ্যদাতা : দিচুদি কেন্দ্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু) বৰ্ত্তমান ডিমাচা মহিলাসকলে আধুনিক আৰ্হিৰ সোণ-ৰূপৰ অলংকাৰ পিছা দেখাযায় যদিও উৎসৱ পাৰ্বন, বিয়া বাকত পৰম্পৰাগত জাতীয় সাজ-পাৰ, আ-অলংকাৰ পৰিধান কৰি জাতীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য ৰক্ষা কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। ডেমাচা সকলৰ বিবাহৰ অভ্যৰ্থনা অনুষ্ঠানত কইনাই অসমীয়া পাট-মুগাৰ চাদৰ মেখেলা আৰু হাচাওচা সমাজৰ অৱস্থা সম্পন্ন ঘৰৰ কইনাই আধুনিক আৰ্হিৰ লেহেংগা চলি সাজ-পাৰ আৰু দৰাইও কুৰ্টা-পায়জামা, কোটি-পেণ্ট আদি পিছা দেখা যায়।

### খামবেন-খামবা :

ডিমাচা সমাজৰ হাচাওচাসকলৰ বিবাহৰ এটি তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ অনুষ্ঠান হ’ল ‘খামবেন-খামবা’। ডিমাচা সমাজত কন্যাঘৰৰ চোতালত সমজুৰাসকল বহাৰ নিৰ্দিষ্ট নিয়ম আছে। দৰাঘৰীয়া মাননীয় ব্যক্তিসকল সোঁফালে আৰু কন্যাঘৰীয়া মাননীয় লোকসকলক বাওঁফালে বহাৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰা হয়। পতি আৰু পত্নী যোৰে যোৰে বহাৰ নিয়ম। এনে ৰীতিনীতিকে ‘খামবেন-খামবা’ বোলা হয়। ডিমাচা ভাষাত ‘খামবেন’ মানে শাৰী পতা আৰু ‘খামবা’ মানে বহা। অৰ্থাৎ দৰা আৰু কইনাঘৰীয়া লোকসকল শাৰী পাতি বহা কাৰ্য। শাৰী শাৰীকৈ পাৰি থোৱা বাঁহৰ পিৰা (বাখী খামফ্লাই য়েনবা)ত বঢ়াৰ পাছত দৰাক নিয়ম শৃংখলাৰ মাজেদি ৰভাৰ তললৈ অনা হয় আৰু দৰাৰ সৈতে যোৱা চাৰিজন ডেকাই ক’লা ছাতি ধৰি দৰাক কইনা ঘৰলৈ আগবঢ়াই নিয়াৰ নিয়ম। এই চাৰিজন ডেকাই ক’লা ছাতি মেলি ধৰি দৰাই কন্যাঘৰলৈ যাত্ৰা কৰোঁতে ছাঁ দি লৈ যোৱাৰ ওপৰিও সেৱা পৰ্বৰ গোটেই সময়ছোৱাতে দৰাৰ মুৰব্বী ওপৰত ছাতি ধৰি থাকে। এনেদৰে কৰাৰ

তাৎপৰ্য হ'ল যাতে কোনোধৰণৰ অপশক্তিয়ে দৰাৰ ওপৰত কু-দৃষ্টি পেলাব নোৱাৰে তাৰ বাবে বক্ষনাবেক্ষণ দিয়া। দুজন ডেকাই দৰাই আঠ লবৰ বাবে শীতল পাটি পাৰি যায় আৰু অন্য দুজন ডেকাই দৰাৰ পাছফালে 'বিমচাউ' কাপোৰ এখনেৰে আঁৰ কৰি যায়। বিমচাউৰে আঁৰ-বেৰ দিয়া মানে পৰম্পৰাক সন্মান জনোৱা। দৰাই ক্ৰমে নিজৰ মাক-দেউতাক, কন্যাৰ মাক-দেউতাকক, সমজুৱাৰ বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ আৰু সম্বন্ধত ডাঙৰসকলক সেৱা জনাই আশীৰ্বাদ লয়। ভালকৈ আশীৰ্বাদ দিব জনা বৃদ্ধসকলে আধাঘণ্টামান সময়লৈকে আশীৰ্বাদ দিয়ে। ইয়াকে 'বাচিবা' বুলি কোৱা হয়। (তথ্যদাতা : সুশাস্ত লাংথাচা দামাদি হাবাৰ, মাইবং)

ডিমাচা সমাজৰ এফাঁকি আশিষ বচন এনেধৰণৰ—

খ- গ্ৰি- থ- সি জাঠিং, খা- গ্ৰি- মা সি জাঠিং ৱিজিং সিক- বিজিংনী বুমা-বুফা জাঠিং মি- খো- মী গান্নায়টিং।" ইয়াৰ অসমীয়া অৰ্থ হ'ল— দুটি মন্তুক এটি মন্তুকত ৰূপান্তৰিত হওঁক, দুটি মন এটি মনত পৰিণত হওঁক, ধানৰ আগ ভৰি উঠক ..... ইত্যাদি।" (সম্পাঃ মলিনা দেৱী ৰাভা, অসমৰ জনজাতি আৰু সংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ৪১২) এই সেৱা পৰ্বই হ'ল হাচাওচাসকলৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱৰ মূল অনুষ্ঠান। এই অনুষ্ঠানত বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ সকলক মান অনুসৰি যাতে একাদিক্ৰমে সেৱা জনোৱা হয় তাৰ ওপৰত যথেষ্ট গুৰুত্ব আৰোপ কৰা হয়। এই সেৱা পৰ্বতো দৰাঘৰীয়া মাননীয় লোকতকৈ কইনাঘৰীয়া লোকৰ সংখ্যা অধিক হ'ব লাগে। দৰা-কইনা উভয় পক্ষৰ জনা বুজা লোক আগভাগলৈ অনুষ্ঠানটি আগবঢ়াই নিয়ে।" (তথ্যদাতা : বিকন লংমাইলাই, উমৰাংচু, ডিমাহাচাও) আশীৰ্বাদ লোৱা পৰ্ব শেষ হ'লে কন্যা আৰু দৰাই কাগজ বা ফুলৰ মালা সলনা-সলনি কৰে। অতীজতে কন্যাক ৰভাতললৈ নিয়াৰ নিয়ম নাছিল। কন্যাৰ দেউতাকে দৰাৰ দেউতাকক শুৱলা ছন্দোবদ্ধ কথাৰে কন্যাক আদৰি ল'বলৈ অনুৰোধ জনায় আৰু কিবা কামকাজ নাজানিলে শিকাই বুজাই ল'বলৈ অনুৰোধ জনায়। ইয়াকে 'য়াওপাবা' বুলি কোৱা হয়। এই য়াওপাবা কাৰ্য শেষ হ'লেই বিয়াৰ মূল কাৰ্য সম্পন্ন হোৱা বুজায়।

বিয়াত ৰাইজক ভোজ্যভাত খুউৱা হয়। বিয়াত দৰা কইনা আৰু সখীক বেলেগে ৰান্ধি ভাত পানী খুওৱাৰ নিয়ম। বিয়াৰ বাবে বলি দিয়া মাংস দৰাক খুওৱাৰ নিয়ম নাই। বিয়াৰ দিনা দৰাঘৰত আত্মীয় স্বজন আৰু গাঁৱৰ বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ পুৰুষ-মহিলা, ডেকা-গাভৰু সকলোকে গাহৰি মাৰি ভোজ্য ভাত খুওৱা হয়। কন্যাঘৰলৈ জুু আৰু মাংস লৈ যোৱাৰ নিয়ম। হাচাওচা সকলৰ বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দেখা এক বিশেষ বৈশিষ্ট্য হ'ল বিয়াৰ দিনা দৰাপক্ষৰ লোকসকলক কইনা ঘৰত কেৱল 'জুদি' আৰু মাংসৰে আপ্যায়ন কৰে। হাচাওচাসকলৰ বিবাহ কাৰ্য সম্পন্ন হৈ যোৱাৰ পিছত কন্যাঘৰত দৰা-কইনা দুয়োজনে কাম-কাজ কৰা সকলো ডেকা-গাভৰুকে খাদ্য পৰিবেশন কৰে। হাচাউচা সকলৰ বিয়াত

‘মা-খাম’ (ভাত), খাৰী (খাৰ-তৰকাৰী), ছামলাই (তৰকাৰী) ‘যাওয়াবা’ (ভজা), ‘মগং’ (মাংস), ‘না’ (মাছ), ‘সাপুনয়াক’ (চাটনি) আদিৰে আলহীক অভ্যর্থনা জনোৱা হয়। গাহৰি (হনো) বুকুৰ (ছাগলী) কুকুৰা (দাউনো)ৰ মাংসৰ কেইবাখনো আঞ্জা বন্ধা হয়। বিয়াত জুডিৰ প্ৰচলন অধিক যদিও বৰ্ত্তমান জুডিৰ ওপৰিও চেনি নিদিয়া ৰঙা চাহৰ ব্যৱহাৰ দেখা যায়। অৱশ্যে বৰ্ত্তমান ডিমাচাসকলৰ বিবাহত পৰম্পৰাগত খাদ্যৰ ওপৰিও কোনো কোনোৱে পোলাও, মাংস, পুৰি-ভাজি আদিৰে অতিথিসকলক আপ্যায়ন কৰা দেখা যায়। ভোজ-ভাত খোৱাৰ আগতে পুৰুষ-মহিলা উভয়ে পৃথকে পৃথকে ‘মিডোগাৰবা’ পূজা কৰে। এই পূজাত দেৱতাৰ বাবে মাংস আৰু জুডি উচৰ্গা কৰা হয়। দৰা-কন্যাৰ মঙ্গলৰ কাৰণে ব্ৰাহ্মিৰাইৰ উদ্দেশ্যে ‘মাইয়াউফাগাৰ্বা’ পূজা আগবঢ়োৱা হয়। ‘মাইয়াউফাগাৰ্বা’ হ’ল শাস্তিৰ বাবে কৰা পূজা।” (হাগজেৰ, নিৰুপমা, পৃঃ ৫৬, ১৯৭৪)

ডিমাহাচাও জিলাত বিয়াৰ দিনা দৰাক কন্যাঘৰত এৰি বাকী লোকসকল ঘৰলৈ ঘূৰি আহে। দৰাৰ সখীয়েও দৰাৰ পৰা তামোল-পাণ সলনি কৰি বিদায় লয়। তেওঁলোকৰ বিয়াত তিনি, পাঁচ বা সাতদিনৰ পাছত শুভবাৰ এটি চাই দৰাই কন্যাৰ সৈতে নিজৰ ঘৰলৈ আহে। কেতিয়াবা একে দিনাখনেই ঘূৰি অহাৰো নিয়ম আছে। এই নিয়মক ‘ফিৰাটাংবা’ (দৰাৰ গৃহলৈ উভতি যোৱা) বোলা হয়। দৰাঘৰলৈ ঘূৰি যোৱাৰ পাছতে আকৌ কন্যাৰ গৃহলৈ উভতি যোৱাৰ প্ৰথা আছে। ইয়াকে ‘ফিৰাচা’ বোলে। দুনাই দৰাৰ ঘৰলৈ উভতি গ’লেই বিবাহ কাৰ্য সম্পূৰ্ণ হয় বুলি জনা গৈছে। ইয়াৰ অন্তত দৰা-কন্যাই য’তে ইচ্ছা ত’তে থাকিব পাৰে। ইয়াৰ পিছত দৰাৰ ঘৰত ‘মাইয়াউফা’ অনুষ্ঠান পাতি কন্যাক দৰাৰ কুলত গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ নিয়ম প্ৰচলিত আছে যদিও ডিমাচা সমাজত বিয়া হোৱাৰ পিছত মহিলাৰ ‘জুলুক’ বা ‘জাদী’ নিজ নিজ মতেই থাকে। অঞ্চলভেদে বিয়াৰ দিনা বা বিয়াৰ পিছদিনা ৰাতিহে ফুলশয্যা কৰা দেখা যায়। ফুলশয্যা কৰাক ডিমাচা ভাষাত ‘ডিছিংবা’ বুলি কয়। সেইদিনা দৰা-কন্যাৰ সৈতে ডেকা-গাভৰুসকলে নানা ৰং-ধেমালি কৰে।

কাছাৰৰ হাৱাৰচা আৰু ডেমাচাসকলৰ মূল বিবাহ কাৰ্য ৰাতিহে অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। হাৱাৰচাসকলে মঙলচাৰণৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি চতুৰ্থ মঙল বৌ-ভাতলৈকে সকলো ক্ৰিয়া কাৰ্য বঙালীসকলৰ দৰে সম্পন্ন কৰে। বাংলা ভাষাতে বিয়া গীত গায় আৰু বিয়াত কাল্টি প্ৰথাৰ অৱসান ঘটাইছে। বিয়াৰ পিছদিনা ফুলশয্যাৰ ব্যৱস্থা আছে। হাৱাৰচা সমাজত বিয়াৰ দিনা ৰাইজক ভোজ-ভাত খুওৱা হয় যদিও জুডিৰ প্ৰচলন নাই।” (কায়স্থ, পুতলী, পৃঃ ১০৩) তেওঁলোকে ছান্দিদাং ছেংবা আৰু এবাৰতে লাউঠাই লৈ কন্যাঘৰলৈ যায়। ডিজুৱা অঞ্চলত ছান্দিদাং ছেংবা, লাউঠাই লাংবা আৰু কাল্টি প্ৰথাৰ প্ৰচলন আজিও আছে। এই অঞ্চলৰ ডিমাচাসকলে ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ মানুহৰ দৰে অসমীয়া ভাষাতে বিয়া নাম গায়। ঠাইভেদে আকৌ কাছাৰৰ দ্বাদশ আদিত্য ব্ৰাহ্মণৰ যযমানীৰ প্ৰচলন

আছে।” (গট্গে, লোকেশ্বৰ, পৃঃ ৮৭) ডেসাচা সমাজত বিয়াৰ দিনা আগবেলা দৰাৰ মাক-দেউতাক আৰু কেইজনমান দৰাপক্ষৰ লোক কইনা ঘৰলৈ যায়। দৰা-কন্যা দুয়োপক্ষৰ মাক দেউতাকে তামোল-পাণ আদান প্ৰদান কৰে। ইয়াৰ পিছত ‘লাউঠাই’ দি দৰাৰ মাক-দেউতাকে কন্যাপক্ষক মান আগবঢ়ায়। এই অনুষ্ঠানটিক ‘হৰাই লাউঠাই ঝাওৰা’ বুলি কোৱা হয়। ইয়াৰ পিছত দৰা কন্যা উভয় পক্ষৰ পৰা দিয়া খোৱা বস্তুৰে উপস্থিত সকলোকে আপ্যায়ন কৰে আৰু দুপৰীয়া ভাগতে দৰাপক্ষৰ লোক কন্যা ঘৰৰ পৰা প্ৰস্থান কৰে। বিয়াত ৰাইজক ভোজভাত খোওৱা হয় যদিও জুদিৰ প্ৰচলন নাই। ডেসাচাসমাজৰ কিছুসংখ্যক লোক অনুকূল ঠাকুৰৰ অনুগামী আৰু নিৰামিশ ভোজী। সেয়ে বিয়াত নিৰামিশ আহাৰ খুৱায়।” (তথ্যদাতা : শিৱ বৰ্মন কোমোৰাকটা, হোজাই)

বিয়াৰ দিনা সন্ধিয়া লগ্ন ক্ষণ মতে দৰাই বৰযাত্ৰী সৈতে কন্যাঘৰৰ পদূলিমুখ পোৱাৰ পিছত এজন দূতৰ দ্বাৰা তামোল-পাণ দি আগমনৰ বাৰ্তা পঠিয়াব লাগে। যেতিয়া কন্যাৰ অভিভাৱকে অনুমতি দিয়ে তেতিয়াহে বৰযাত্ৰী প্ৰবেশ কৰিব পাৰে। কন্যাৰ মাকে পদূলি মুখৰ পৰা ভৰি ধুৱাই দৰাক আদৰি আনে আৰু নিৰ্দিষ্ট কৰি বখা ঠাইত দৰাক বহিবলৈ দিয়ে। বাঁহ আৰু ফুলেৰে গোলাকাৰ কৈ নিৰ্মাণ কৰা ‘কুঞ্জ’ নামৰ ঠাইক দৰা-কন্যাই কাগজ বা ফুলৰ মালা সলনা-সলনি কৰে। এই কুঞ্জৰ ভিতৰত কন্যাৰ ওপৰি কন্যাৰ সমবয়সীয়া পাঁচ বা সাতগৰাকী গাভৰু ছোৱালী থাকে আৰু এই গোটেই কামখিনি ব্ৰাহ্মণৰ দ্বাৰা পৰিচালিত হয়। এই কুঞ্জৰ ভিতৰতে দৰা-কন্যাই আঙুঠি সলনা-সলনি কৰে আৰু দৰাই কন্যাক শিৰত সেন্দূৰ পিন্ধায়। ইয়াতে জয়ধ্বনি আৰু উৰুলিৰে এই অনুষ্ঠানটিৰ সামৰণি মাৰে। তাৰ পিছত সেই কুঞ্জৰ ভিতৰতে ব্ৰাহ্মণে হোমযজ্ঞ কৰি কন্যাৰ দেউতাকৰ হাতেৰে কন্যা দান কৰাই বিবাহ কাৰ্য সম্পন্ন কৰে। পিছদিনা দৰা কইনা দুয়ো আত্মীয় স্বজনৰ সৈতে দৰাঘৰলৈ যাত্ৰা কৰে। কন্যাৰ সখী আৰু কিছু আত্মীয় লোকে কন্যাক দৰাঘৰত থৈ যায়হি। তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত বিয়াৰ প্ৰথম ৰাতিয়ে ফুলশয্যা কৰা ৰীতি আছে। ডেসাচাসকলৰ বিয়াত ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ মানুহৰ নিচিনাকৈ অসমীয়া ভাষাত বিয়ানাম, জোৰানাম গায়।

ডিমাচাসকলক বিয়া এখন পাতিবলৈ হ’লে ছোৱালী খোজা বঢ়াৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি বিয়াৰ শেষ দিনলৈকে কৰা সকলো কাৰ্য ছন্দোবদ্ধ কথোপকথনৰ জৰিয়তে সমাধা কৰা হয়। এনেধৰণৰ ছন্দোবদ্ধ কথোপকথনক ‘গ্ৰাউখানডি’ বুলি কোৱা হয়। ডিমাচা বিয়া এখন পাতিবলৈ হ’লে দুয়ো পক্ষৰ আৱশ্যকীয় কথোপকথন এনেধৰণৰ-

ডিমাচা : বাহামজিক চাইনবাসী

মিয়ানি বুমা-বুপা :

খুড়িচিক দেবা দংকাদ জামাদি নাংৰে থিবুদ্ধ,

খুড়িচা দেবা দংকাদে হামাজিক নাংৰে থিবুদু।  
 পানাথাওপাং জোয়ইবা দংকাদে গাইচামা-নাংৰে থিবুদু।  
 মৰ্শাইপাং জোয়াইক দংকাদে গাইচামানাংৰে থিবুদু।  
 খুড়িবিহীজাং খুড়িবাচাইজাং  
 যামনী বাচাউহা ঝিণী বাক্সাজা  
 বাওহাচিনী বাওকাবো, ঠাইচিনী ঠাইখা  
 বাওহাচিনা বাওকা, ঠাইহাচিনী ঠাইখাবো  
 নিনিহানিং ঠাই প্লাংদু, নিনিহানিবাও প্লাংদু।

মাচইন জিকনি :

বুমা-বুপা :  
 খুড়িচিক দংবাদে গিবীনিং  
 খুড়িচা দংবাদে গিবীনিং  
 ছাগৰপাংবো কামলাইপাই  
 চাংগিজুবো ঢংলাপাই।” (দুৱৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্ব, পৃঃ ২৬)

অসমীয়া অনুবাদ :

দৰাপক্ষ :  
 উপযুক্ত গাভৰু থাকিলে জোঁৱাই লাগে বুলি কয়।  
 উপযুক্ত ডেকা থাকিলে বোৱাৰী লাগে বুলি কয়।  
 বেঙেনা গুটি পচালে ৰুব লাগে বুলি কয়  
 জলকীয়া গুটি পচালে ৰুব লাগে।  
 ল'ৰাৰ মাক-দেউতাকে  
 পাটীৰ ওপৰত কাপোৰৰ তলত  
 সাতবাৰ চিন্তা কৰি চালোঁ  
 আপোনাৰ ঘৰখনকহে পালোঁ।

ছোৱালী পক্ষ :

উপযুক্ত গাভৰু সঁচাই আছে  
 উপযুক্ত ডেকা সঁচাই আছে  
 জুইশালত আহি বহকহি  
 ঘৰলৈ আহি জিৰাওকহি।” (দুৱৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্ব, পৃঃ ২৯)  
 হাচাওচাসকলৰ বিয়াত যুক্তিপূৰ্ণ ছন্দোবদ্ধ কথোপকথন পুৰুষ সমাজহে কৰা দেখা

যায় আৰু মহিলাসকলে কোনো বিয়া নাম নাগায়। বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত বিয়াৰ দিনা ৰাতি কন্যাঘৰত আৰু দৰাই কন্যালৈ ঘূৰি অহাৰ পিছত দৰাঘৰত গাঁৱৰ বুঢ়া-বুঢ়ী (গ্ৰেচা-গ্ৰাজিক) আৰু বোৱাৰী (হাঁইংগাজুক) আৰু পুৰুষ (হাঁইংগাৰাও) সকলে মুড়ী (পেঁপা) আৰু ত্ৰাম (ঢোল) বজাই 'বাইডিমা' নাচি আনন্দ উল্লাস কৰে।" (তথ্যদাতাঃ মোলাল কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাণ্ডু। হাৰাৰচা, ডেম্ৰাচাসকলৰ ওপৰৰ দাঁতি কাষৰীয়া অঞ্চলৰ বঙালী আৰু অসমীয়া বিয়া গীতৰ প্ৰভাব পৰা দেখা যায়।

ডিমাচাসকলৰ মাজত 'মিনহাব্বা' (ঘৰ জোঁৱাই ৰখা) আৰু 'ন-জাপিনবা' (পুনৰ বিবাহ) প্ৰথা আছে। কেতিয়াবা কোনো ডেকাই বিয়া কৰাই শহুৰেকৰ ঘৰত থাকিবলৈ লয়। এনে কাৰ্যক 'মিনহাব্বা' বোলা হয়। এক বা দুইবছৰৰ পাছত নিজাকৈ ঘৰ সাজি তাত তেওঁলোকৰ পৰিয়াল থাকিবলৈ লয়। নতুন ঘৰত থাকিবলৈ যোৱাকে 'নগ্দাইং জাইবা' (ন-ঘৰ) বোলে। ডিমাচাসকলৰ মাজত পুনৰ বিবাহ প্ৰথাও আছে। কমবয়সত বিধবা হলে নতুবা বৰলা হলে পুনৰ বিবাহ কৰিব পাৰে। এনে বিবাহ কাৰ্যক 'ন-জাপিনবা' বোলা হয়। ইচ্ছা কৰিলে দেওৰেকে বিধবা বোয়েকক বিয়া কৰাব পাৰে কিন্তু বিধবা ভাইবোৱাৰীক বিয়া কৰাব নোৱাৰে। সেইদৰে খুলশালীয়েকক বিয়া কৰাব পাৰে যদিও জেশাথুৰেকক বিয়া কৰোৱা নিষেধ। ডিমাচাসমাজত বিবাহ বিচ্ছেদ অতি কম। দম্পতিৰ মাজত কিবা মতানৈক্য হলে মুখিয়াল লোকসকলে তাৰ বিচাৰ কৰি দিয়ে আৰু এৰাএৰি হবলগীয়া হলে সমাজক মাতি বিচাৰ কৰিবলৈ কোৱা হয়।

ডিমাচা সমাজত বিবাহ (জুখুবা) উৎসৱ স্বকীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য সমৃদ্ধ। সমাজ আৰু সংস্কৃতি পৰিবৰ্ত্তনশীল। ডিমাচাৰ হাচাওচা, হাৰাৰচা, ডিজুৱাচা আৰু ডেম্ৰাচাসকলৰ সমাজতো লাহে লাহে প্ৰচীন বিবাহৰ বহুখিনি নিয়ম নীতিৰ পৰিবৰ্ত্তন ঘটিছে আৰু কিছুপৰিমাণে সংস্কাৰ সাধন হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। অৱশ্যে বৰ্ত্তমান ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত আধুনিকতাৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰা দেখা যায়। আধুনিকতা আৰু বিশ্বায়নৰ আগ্ৰাসনে অন্যান্য জাতি জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বিবাহৰ দৰে ডিমাচাসমাজৰো পৰম্পৰাগত বিবাহৰ ৰীতি-নীতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কিছুপৰিমাণে পৰিবৰ্ত্তন আনিছে বুলি কব পাৰি। বৰ্ত্তমান সময়ত দেখা যায় যি ডিমাচা জনজাতিৰ বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত সাজ-পাৰ, আ-অলংকাৰ, খোৱা-বোৱা, ৰতাথলীৰ জাকজমকতা তথা ৰঙ-বিৰঙৰ বিজুলী বাতিৰ পোহৰৰ ব্যৱস্থা আদিয়ে বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানত পৰিবৰ্ত্তন আনিছে।

উপৰোক্ত আলোচনাত ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱৰ লগত সম্পৰ্কিত নীতি-নিয়মসমূহ যথাসম্ভৱ অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত কৰাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে। ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বিবাহ প্ৰথাৰ পৰম্পৰাগত নীতি-নিয়মসমূহ আৱশ্যে ঠাই বিশেষে কিছু পৰিবৰ্ত্তন হোৱা দেখা যায়। যদিও ল'ৰাঘৰীয়াই ছোৱালী খোজাৰ পৰম্পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি কাল্টি (সাধন) লোৱা বিবাহৰ

মূল নীতি-নিয়ম সমূহ সকলো অঞ্চলতে একেধৰণে পালন কৰা দেখা যায়। গিলিম গাছা নাইবা আৰু বিবাহৰ দিনৰ অনুষ্ঠানিকতাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ঠাই ভেদে কিছু পৃথকতা আৰু স্থানীয় প্ৰভাৱ দেখা যায়। সেয়ে হলেও ক'ব পাৰি যে ডিমাচাসমাজৰ বিবাহ উৎসৱে তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজ জীৱনত ঐক্য-সম্পীতি তথা সংহতি গঢ়ি তোলাত বিশেষ ভূমিকা পালন কৰিছে।

### পাদটীকা :

- দুবৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্বৰ, উত্তৰ কাছাৰ পাহাৰৰ লোকসংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ৪  
 কায়স্থ, পুতলী (সম্পাঃ), অসমৰ বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বিবাহ পদ্ধতি, পৃঃ ৭  
 বাভা, মলিনা দেৱী (সম্পাঃ), অসমৰ জনজাতি আৰু সংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ৪০৮  
 তথ্যদাতা : বিনা কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু  
 তথ্যদাতা : মীনা লাংথাচা, কোমোৰা কটা, হোজাই  
 শৰ্মা ৰাজীৱ আৰু অন্যান্য (সম্পাঃ) লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ সঁফুৰা, পৃঃ ৫৩  
 তথ্যদাতা : শিৱ বৰ্মন, কোমোৰাকটা, হোজাই  
 তথ্যদাতা : সুশান্ত লাংথাচা, দামাদি হাবাৰ, মাইবং  
 তথ্যদাতা : দময়ন্তী থাওচেন, টুম্প্ৰং টিছ' গাঁও, কাৰবি আংলং  
 তথ্যদাতা : দিচুদি কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু  
 তথ্যদাতা : পদ্মা হাফু, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু, ডিমাহাচাও  
 তথ্যদাতা : বিকন লংমাইলাই, উমৰাংচু  
 শৰ্মা, ৰাজীৱ আৰু অন্যান্য : লোকসংস্কৃতিৰ সঁফুৰা, পৃঃ ৫১  
 তথ্যদাতা : দিপালী কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু  
 বাভা হাকচাম, উপেন আৰু কনক চহৰীয়া : অসমৰ বাঁহ সংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ২০০  
 তথ্যদাতা : দিচুদি কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু  
 তথ্যদাতা : সুশান্ত লাংথাচা, দামাদি হাবাৰ, মাইবং  
 বাভা, মলিনা দেৱী : অসমৰ জনজাতি আৰু সংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ৪১২  
 তথ্যদাতা : বিকন লংমাইলাই, উমৰাংচু,  
 হাগজেৰ, নিৰুপমা : ডিমাছা, পৃঃ ৫৬  
 কায়স্থ পুতলী (সম্পাঃ) অসমৰ বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বিবাহ পদ্ধতি পৃঃ ১০৩  
 গগৈ, লোকেশ্বৰ : ডিমাছা সংস্কৃতিৰ ৰূপৰেখা, পৃঃ ৫৬  
 তথ্যদাতা : শিৱ বৰ্মন, কোমোৰাকটা, হোজাই  
 দুবৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্বৰ : উত্তৰ কাছাৰ পাহাৰৰ লোকসংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ২৬  
 দুবৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্বৰ : উত্তৰ কাছাৰ পাহাৰৰ লোকসংস্কৃতি, পৃঃ ২৯  
 তথ্যদাতা : মোলাল কেম্প্ৰাই, ডংজেনৰাজি, উমৰাংচু

**সহায়ক গ্রন্থপঞ্জী :**

১) কায়স্থ, পুতলী (সম্পাঃ)

: অসমৰ বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বিবাহ পদ্ধতি, ভবানী  
প্ৰিন্ট এণ্ড পাব্লিকেশ্যন, গুৱাহাটী, ২০১১

২) গগৈ, লোকেশ্বৰ

: ডিমাছা সংস্কৃতিৰ ৰূপৰেখা, চুকাফা গৱেষণা কেন্দ্ৰ,  
গুৱাহাটী, ১৯৮৯

৩) দুৱৰা, ধৰ্মেশ্বৰ

: অসমৰ লোক-সংস্কৃতি ৩, ত্ৰাণ্ডিকাল প্ৰকাশন,  
নগাঁও, ২১০৩

৪) পাটৰ, পদ্ম (সম্পাঃ)

: উত্তৰ কাছাৰ পাহাৰৰ লোকসংস্কৃতি, সাংস্কৃতিক  
সঞ্চলকালয়, গুৱাহাটী, ১৯৮৮

৫) বৰুৱা, নগেন্দ্ৰ নাথ

: জনজাতি সমাজ সংস্কৃতি, বিংচাং পাব্লিকেশ্যন,  
গুৱাহাটী, ২০১৩

৬) বাভা হাকাচাম, উপেন (সম্পাঃ)

: ডিমাচা সকলৰ গীত-মাত, অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ,  
গুৱাহাটী, ১৯৯১

৭) বাভা মলিনা দেৱী (মথ্য সম্পাঃ)

: অসমৰ বাঁহ সংস্কৃতি, চহৰীয়া, কনক চন্দ্ৰ, ২০১২  
: অসমৰ জনজাতি আৰু সংস্কৃতি, অসম সাহিত্য সভা,  
২০১১

৮) শৰ্মা জয়কান্ত (সম্পাঃ)

: অসমৰ জনজাতিসকলৰ ধৰ্মীয় আচাৰ আৰু  
সংস্কৃতি, হেৰিটেজ ফাউণ্ডেশ্যন, গুৱাহাটী, ২০১১

৯) শৰ্মা ৰাজীৱ (সম্পাঃ)

: লোক-সংস্কৃতিৰ সফুৰা, অসম জাতীয় বিদ্যালয়  
শিক্ষা সংসদ, গুৱাহাটী

১০) হাগজেৰ, নিৰুপমা

: ডিমাছা, অসম সাহিত্য সভা, ১৯৭৪



# ব্রহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ধানখেতিৰ লগত জড়িত লোক-বিশ্বাস আৰু পৰম্পৰা

ড° পুণ্য লতা গোহাঁই

অৱতৰণিকা :

পুৰাণখ্যাত প্ৰাচীন প্ৰাগজ্যোতিষ, কামৰূপ বা অসমৰ ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ নদীৰ উপত্যকাৰ দুয়োপাৰে পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামত অতীতৰ পৰাই বিভিন্ন জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীৰ ভাষা-ভাষীলোকে বসবাস কৰি আহিছে। এই লোকসকলৰ প্ৰধান কৃষি হ'ল ধানখেতি। প্ৰধান কৃষি খানখেতি হোৱা হেতুকে এই জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীসকলৰ সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনো ধানকেন্দ্ৰিক কৃষি সংস্কৃতিৰে স্বকীয়ৰূপত মহীয়ান হৈ আছে। সেয়েহে ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ বিভিন্ন জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীসকলৰ সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনত ধানকেন্দ্ৰিক কৃষি সংস্কৃতিৰ গুৰুত্ব কোনো কালেই এৰাই চলিব নোৱাৰিব।

ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাত বসবাস কৰি থকা জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীসকলৰ সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনত থকা ধানকেন্দ্ৰিক বৰ্ণিল কৃষি সংস্কৃতিৰ ওপৰত বৰ্তমানেও প্ৰণালীবদ্ধ বিদ্যায়তনিক অধ্যয়ন তথা বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ হোৱা নাই। সেয়েহে ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ ধান সংস্কৃতিৰ বিচিত্ৰতা লক্ষ্য কৰিবলগীয়া। বিশেষকৈ ধান সংস্কৃতিৰ লগত জড়িত লোকজীৱনৰ পৰম্পৰা আৰু লোক-বিশ্বাসবোৰে দেশৰ সাংস্কৃতিক সমন্বয়ৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ঐক্য সাধন কৰাত গুৰুভাৰ বহন কৰি আছে। না না জাতি- জনগোষ্ঠী আৰু ভিন্ন সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোকৰ বসতিৰ স্থল এখন বৈচিত্ৰপূৰ্ণ ৰাজ্য। ইয়াত নানা ভাষা-ভাষী লোকে বসবাস কৰে। সেইফালৰপৰা ডেওঁলোকৰ থকাৰ ধৰণ-কৰণ, ৰীতি-নীতি এইবোৰৰ মাজতো ভিন্নতা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। কিন্তু সকলো লোকেই কৃষি অৰ্থাৎ ধানক লখিমী জ্ঞান কৰি মানি চলে। সেয়ে

প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতেই 'ধান'ক লৈ কেতবোৰ স্বকীয় পৰম্পৰা আৰু বিশ্বাস মানি চলা দেখা যায়।

লক্ষণীয় যে, বৰ অসমৰ ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ দুয়োপাৰত বসবাস কৰি থকা পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামৰ জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত আদিম কালৰ পৰাই নানা বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত হৈ আহিছে। বিশেষকৈ কৃষিকেन्द्रিক জীৱন-ব্যৱস্থাত অভ্যস্ত ৰাভা, মিচিং, বড়ো, সোণোৱাল কছাৰী, মেচ-কছাৰী, শৰণীয়া-কছাৰী, আহোম, মৰাণ, চুতীয়া, দেউৰী, গাৰো, তিৱা, কাৰ্বি, ডিমাচা, হাজং, নেপালী আদি জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত কৃষিক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি বহুবোৰ লোক বিশ্বাস চলি আহিছে। এনে লোক বিশ্বাসৰ আধাৰ বিচাৰি নবীন চন্দ্ৰ শৰ্মাই 'অসমীয়া লোক-সংস্কৃতিৰ আভাস' (২০০৫) গ্ৰন্থত উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে— পূৰ্বগামীৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ ওপৰত আশ্ৰয় নকৰাকৈ পশ্চাদ্গামীৰ আৱয়বিক অথবা মানসিক বিকাশ সম্ভৱ হ'ব নোৱাৰে। গতিকে পাৰম্পৰীয় ধ্যান-ধাৰণাৰ ওপৰত বিশ্বাস, ক্ৰিয়া-কাণ্ড আদি গঢ়ি উঠে। নিজৰ চাৰিওফালে দেখা নানা জীৱ-জন্তু, গছ-গছনি, আকাশ-বতাহ, নৈসৰ্গিক ব্যাপাৰাদিয়ে আদিম মানৱৰ অন্তৰত ভয় আৰু কৌতুহলৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছিল আৰু তাৰ পৰিণতিত তেওঁলোকৰ অন্তৰত সেইবোৰক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি নানা প্ৰশ্ন, সন্দেহ, সংকোচৰ যথাযোগ্য আৰু সম্ভাষণজনক উত্তৰ বিচাৰি নাপাই সেইবোৰক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি নানা লোকবিশ্বাসাদি চলি আহিছে।' ক'ব পাৰি পৃথিৱীৰ প্ৰত্যেক সু-সভ্য জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীৰ ধৰ্মীয় আৰু দৈনন্দিন সামাজিক জীৱন পৰিচালিত হৈছিল লোক-বিশ্বাসৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি। সেয়েহে তেওঁলোকৰ জীৱনত প্ৰকৃতি শক্তিৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি কৃষিৰ লগত জড়িত বিভিন্ন লোক-বিশ্বাসসমূহ গঢ় লৈ উঠিছে বুলিব পাৰি। আলোচনাৰ সুবিধাৰ্থে এনে লোক-বিশ্বাসবোৰক কেইবাটাও ভাগত ভগাই লোৱা হৈছে।

(ক) ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ লগত জড়িত,

(খ) পথাৰৰ লগত জড়িত,

(গ) খোৱা-বোৱা আৰু ৰান্ধনিশালৰ লগত জড়িত,

(ঘ) সংস্কাৰৰ লগত জড়িত আদি। ইবোৰৰ উপৰিও জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকসকলে কৃষিৰ শুভা-শুভ কামনা কৰি নানা পূজা-পাতল কৰে। এনে পূজা-পাতল আৰু উৎসৱ-পাৰ্বণবোৰৰ মাজতো কৃষিৰ বিশেষকৈ ধান সম্বন্ধীয় নানা লোকাচাৰ চলি আহিছে।

**ভঁৰাল ঘৰ আৰু অন্যান্য সঁজুলিৰ লগত জড়িত :**

ভঁৰাল হ'ল কৃষক ৰাইজৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয় সম্পত্তি। ভঁৰাল পথাৰৰ পৰা দাই-চপাই অনা গছি ধান থ'বলৈ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হয়। জনগোষ্ঠী ভেদে গুটি ধানৰ ভঁৰালো ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে। অৱশ্যে পাহাৰীয়া তিৱা, কাৰ্বিসকলৰ মাজত ভঁৰাল ঘৰ কিছু সুকীয়া। ভঁৰাল

নথকা ঠাইত ভঁৰালৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে ঘৰৰ ভিতৰত এটা কোঠাত ডুলি, পাচি, বস্তা আদিত গুটি ধান ৰখাৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰে। এনে ব্যৱস্থা ৰাভা আৰু গৰিয়া/মৰিয়া মুছলমান সমাজত দেখিবলৈ পোৱা গৈছে।<sup>১২</sup> এওঁলোকক বাদ কৰি অসমৰ সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই ভঁৰাল ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে। ভঁৰালক লক্ষ্মী দেৱী ৰূপে সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই জ্ঞান কৰে। প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে পূব দিশত ভঁৰাল ঘৰ নিৰ্মাণ কৰে। লক্ষ্মী স্বৰূপ ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ লগত জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠী উভয়ে বহু লোকাচাৰ মানি চলে। লোক-সমাজৰ বিশ্বাস অনুসৰি ভঁৰাল ঘৰত প্ৰবেশ কৰাৰ আগতে সেৱা কৰি ল'ব লাগে। অন্যথা লক্ষ্মী আয়ে দোষ ধৰে। ধান ভঁৰালৰ পৰা উলিয়াওঁতে পাছিত নমাই। ধানৰ পাছিটো মূৰত লৈহে ভঁৰালৰ পৰা নামে। ইয়াৰ জৰিয়তে লক্ষ্মী আইৰ প্ৰতি সন্মান প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰে।<sup>১৩</sup> ভঁৰালৰ পৰা ধান নমাওঁতে শেষৰ পাছি ধানৰ পৰা এটা মুঠি নি আকৌ ভঁৰালৰ ভিতৰত ৰখাৰ নিয়ম। অন্যথা লক্ষ্মী আই ভঁৰাল এৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস। ভঁৰালৰ পৰা সোম, বুধ আৰু বৃহস্পতিবাৰে কোনো লোকেই ধান নুলিয়ায়। কাৰণ এই দিন কেইটাক লক্ষ্মীবাৰ হিচাপে জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজে মানি চলে। সেয়েহে এই দিনকেইটাত ঘৰৰ পৰা ধান-চাউল দিয়াতো নিষেধ। কেতিয়াবা কোনো কাৰণত ভঁৰালৰ পৰা ধান উলিয়াব লগা হ'লে চাকি-বস্তি জ্বলাই সেৱা-সৎকাৰ কৰিহে ধান উলিয়ায়। মিচিংসকলে আলি-আই-লুগাং উৎসৱৰ আৰম্ভনি দিনটোৰ পৰা সাতদিন ধৰি গেনা (চুৱা) লগা বাবে ভঁৰাল ঘৰ নোচোৱে। অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু আৰু জনগোষ্ঠীয় উভয় সমাজেই ভঁৰাল ঘৰ নিৰ্মাণৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো কিছু নিয়ম মানি চলে। তেওঁলোকে মাঘ বা পুহ মাহত ভঁৰাল ঘৰ নলয়। সেয়েহে আহিন-কাতি মাহতেই ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ ধান আজৰি কৰি নতুনকৈ ভঁৰাল সাজে। সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকেই বিশ্বাস কৰে যে ভঁৰাল ঘৰত উঠি খং-ৰাগ কৰিলে লক্ষ্মীয়েও খং কৰি সেই ঠাই এৰে। সেয়েহে এনে নকৰে। ভঁৰাল ঘৰত উঠি বা সন্মুখত বৈ 'ইমান ধান আছে' এনে বাক্য ক'ব নাপায়। এনে বাক্য ক'লে লক্ষ্মী ৰুপ্ত হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। পথাৰত ধান দোৱা দাৱনী গৰাকীয়ে পথাৰত ধান দোৱা দিনকেইটাত ভঁৰালত উঠি ধান জাপিব নাপায় বা নাজাপে। এনে কৰিলে দাৱনীৰ লগতে লক্ষ্মীও ভঁৰালৰ পৰা পথাৰলৈ গুচি যায় বুলি চুতীয়া, আহোম আদি জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে বিশ্বাস কৰে।

বড়ো-কছাৰীসকলে আঘোনৰ পৰা ফাগুন মাহ পৰ্যন্ত ভঁৰাল নুচুৱে। পূৰ্বতে বড়ো-কছাৰীসকলে নোমানোৰ 'ইচিং' ঘৰতেই ডুলি ভৰাই থোৱা গুটি ধানৰ ভঁৰাল ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছিল। কিন্তু বৰ্তমান ধনী খেতিয়ক লোকসকলে বেলেগাকৈ বাথ্ৰি অৰ্থাৎ ভঁৰালঘৰ সাজি লৈছে। কিন্তু এতিয়াও দুখীয়া বড়োসকলে ইচিঙকেই বাথ্ৰি হিচাপে মানি আহিছে। তেওঁলোকে আমঠি চুৱা দিনা ভঁৰালঘৰৰ পৰা ধান নুলিয়ায়। কাতি বিহুৰ দিনা ভঁৰাল ঘৰত চাকি-বস্তি জ্বলোৱা নিয়ম আছে। তেওঁলোকে প্ৰথম ভঁৰাল ঘৰত যিজনে ধান

ভৰায়; সেইজনেই শেষলৈকে ভঁৰালত ধান ভৰাব লাগে। ভঁৰালত উঠাৰ আগতে গা-মূৰ ধুই গোৱৰ পেলাই লয়। তাৰ পিছত ভিজা চুলিৰে চুলি মেলিয়েই ধুনা জ্বলাই এঘটি পানী, এযোৰ কেঁচা তামোল-পাণ, এযোৰ কণী লৈ বাত্ৰীৰ আগত পানী ছটিয়াই সেৱা কৰে। তাৰ পিছত ভঁৰাল ঘৰত উঠি ধান চুই সেৱা কৰি প্ৰথম ধানখিনি দোণেৰে উলিয়াই ধান উলিওৱাৰ পিছত শেষত জহা ধানত এটা কণী আৰু তামোল-পাণ দি সেৱা কৰে। এই ধান তেওঁলোকে খুজনীয়াকো নিদিয়ে। আনকি জহা ধানৰ তুঁহো নিদিয়ে।<sup>১</sup> জনগোষ্ঠীয়-অজনগোষ্ঠীয় দুয়োখন সমাজেই পৰিয়াল বৰ্গৰ কোনো লোকৰ মৃত্যু হ'লে ভঁৰালৰ দুৱাৰ মুখত এখন বগা কাপোৰ দি ঢাকি দিয়ে যাতে ওলাই যোৱা ব্যক্তিৰ লগত লক্ষ্মী গুচি নাযায়। ইয়াৰোপৰি ভঁৰালৰ পৰা এথোক ধান উলিয়াই আনি মৃত ব্যক্তিজনৰ হাতৰ আঙুলিৰ ফাঁকেৰে সৰুকাই সেই ধান এটা বাঁহৰ চুঙাত ভৰাই লক্ষ্মী ধৰি ৰাখে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভঁৰাল ঘৰক লক্ষ্মী হিচাপে জ্ঞান কৰা হেতু উভয় সমাজেই কাতি বিহু, মাঘ বিহু, বহাগ বিহুত ভঁৰালত এগছি বন্তি জ্বলায়। কোনো কোনো বৈষ্ণৱ পন্থী লোকে কাতি বিহুত লক্ষ্মী দেৱীৰ নামত মাহ-প্ৰসাদৰ শৰাই এভাগো আগবঢ়াই লক্ষ্মী দেৱীক আদৰণি জনায়। পথাৰৰ পৰা প্ৰথম ন ধানৰ লক্ষ্মী আনি ভঁৰালত স্থাপন কৰাৰ দিনাও চাকি-বন্তি জ্বলাই লখিমীক মান ধৰে। ঠিক একেদৰে বছৰটোৰ বাবে প্ৰথম ভঁৰালৰ পৰা ধান উলিওৱা এদিন বা ঞ্জপ্তাহৰ আগতেই শ্ৰদ্ধা-ভক্তিৰে গুৱা-পাণেৰে চাকি-বন্তি জ্বলাই লখিমীৰ দোষৰ পৰা মুক্ত হয়। জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত ভঁৰাল ঘৰত খেৰ নুসুমুৱায়। এনে কৰিলে লখিমীয়ে কষ্ট হৈ ভঁৰাল ঘৰ এৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভঁৰাল ঘৰত অন্য বাহিৰা লোকক প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব দিয়া নহয়। কেৱল গৃহস্থইহে গা-পা ধুই পৱিত্ৰ মনেৰে ভঁৰালৰ পৰা ধান উলিয়াব পাৰে। অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু আৰু জনগোষ্ঠীয় উভয় সমাজেই ভঁৰাললৈ লক্ষ্মী অনাৰ দিনা আগলি কলপাতত তিনি মুঠি ধান কাটি ফুলাম গামোচাৰে মেৰিয়াই মূৰত লৈ আনে। এনেদৰে ভঁৰাললৈ লক্ষ্মী আনোঁতে বাটত কাকো মাত নিদিয়ে। ৰাভা নাৰীয়ে এনেদৰে লখিমী আনিবলৈ যাওঁতে তিতা গাৰে যায়। দুপৰীয়া বেলা কোনো লোকেই ভঁৰাল ঘৰত ধান উলিয়াবলৈ নোসোমায়। ৰাভাসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে শগুণে কোনো মৰা শ' খাই আহি যিজন ব্যক্তিৰ সন্মুখত বমি কৰি দিয়ে; তেওঁৰ বাবে সেই ক্ষণটো শুভ তথা সেই বমিখিনি যদি তেতিয়াই নতুন কাপোৰ এডোখৰত বান্ধি আনি ধানৰ ভঁৰালত থৈ দিব পাৰে তেন্তে গৃহস্থৰ ঘৰৰ আৰ্থিক অৱস্থা ক্ৰমে টনকিয়াল হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>২</sup> অজনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত ভঁৰাল ঘৰলৈ মুখ কৰি ধান-চাউল আদি জৰা-পোচা নকৰে। কাৰ্বি সমাজত গৃহস্থৰ জন্ম বাৰ আৰু বৃহস্পতিবাৰে ভঁৰালৰ পৰা ধান নুলিয়ায়।

কাৰ্বি আৰু ৰাভা সমাজত পথাৰৰ পৰা ন-লখিমী আনি প্ৰথমে বৰঘৰৰ খুঁটাত বান্ধি থোৱাৰ পৰম্পৰা আছে। কাৰ্বিসকলে ভঁৰালৰ তলত পোহনীয়া জীৱ-জন্তু আদিও

নাবান্ধে। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, এনে কৰিলে লখিমীয়ে এৰা দিয়ে। ঠিক একে  
 ৰীতি আৰু বিশ্বাস গাৰো সমাজতো আছে। অৱশ্যে এওঁলোকে শনি আৰু মঙ্গলবাৰে  
 ভঁৰাল নুচুৱে। ডিমাচা সমাজত বিশ্বাস আছে যে, যদি কিবা কাৰণত ভঁৰাল অশুচি হয়  
 তেন্তে তুলসী মিশ্ৰিত পানী ছটিয়ালে ভঁৰাল ঘৰ শুচি হৈ পৰে। তিৱাসকলে বৰঘৰ  
 সাজিবৰ বাবে বুধবাৰ দিনটো নিৰ্বাচন কৰে। তিৱাসকলে বছৰটোৰ বাবে প্ৰথম ধান  
 ভঁৰালত সোমোৱাৰ দিনা ভঁৰালৰ সন্মুখৰ বেৰত পানী ছটিয়াই আৰু কুকুৰা চৰাই বলি দি  
 তাৰ তেজ বেৰত সানি বলি পাখিবোৰ বেৰত গুজি বা আঁৰি থয়।<sup>১০</sup> ইয়াকে লখিমী  
 আদৰা পূজা হিচাপে পালন কৰে। এনেদৰে ভঁৰালত কুকুৰা বলি দি লখিমী আদৰা প্ৰথা  
 দেউৰী আৰু আহোমসকলৰ মাজতো আছে। দেউৰী সমাজত পুৰোহিতৰ দ্বাৰা ভঁৰালত  
 প্ৰথম লখিমী অনাৰ দিনা পিঠাগুড়ি, কল, তামোল-পাণ, তংলতিৰ লগতে এহাল ৰঙা  
 ডাকুৰা কুকুৰা আৰু এজনী ৰঙা কুকুৰা লখিমীৰ নামত বলি দিয়ে। এই পূজাত পূজাৰীয়ে  
 বলি দিয়াৰ পিছত কুকুৰা কেইটা ধানৰ ওপৰলৈ দলিয়াই দিয়ে। পিছত কুকুৰা কেইটা  
 নমাই তাৰ পাখি, মূৰ আদি বাঁহৰ খাং এটাত ভৰাই ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ সন্মুখত আঁৰি থয় আৰু  
 ঘৰৰ গৃহিণীয়ে ভিতৰৰ পৰা এখন বগা চাদৰ গায়ে-মূৰে লৈ ভঁৰালৰ আগত কোঁচ পাতি  
 ৰয় আৰু পূজাৰীয়ে ভঁৰালৰ ভিতৰত আগবঢ়োৱা তামোল-পাণ গৃহিণীৰ কোঁচত পেলাই  
 দিয়ে। ইয়াকে গৃহিণীয়ে লখিমীৰ দান হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰে। দেউৰী সমাজত বিয়া হৈ অহা  
 ন-কইনাক দৰাৰ সৈতে প্ৰথমে নি ভঁৰাল ঘৰ দেখুৱাৰ নিয়ম আছে।<sup>১১</sup> ইয়াৰ বিপৰীতে  
 অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু সমাজত বিয়াৰ দিনা কইনা উলিয়াই দিওঁতে ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ দুৱাৰত কাপোৰ  
 আঁৰি দিয়াৰ নিয়ম আছে। কন্যা উলিয়াই দিওঁতে দুৱাৰ দলিৰ বাহিৰৰ পৰা ঘূৰি নোচোৱাকৈ  
 ঘৰলৈ পিছফাল দি চাউল চটিয়াই লখিমী থৈ যোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। তিৱা সমাজত  
 প্ৰথম ধান মৰণা মাৰি এঠাইত দম খোৱাই দমৰ ওপৰত খেৰৰ গাঁঠি বা কাঁচি এখন থয়।  
 যাতে অপদেৱতাবোৰে বস্তুবোৰে লখিমী আইক চুই অশুচি কৰিব নোৱাৰে। যিদিনা  
 তেওঁলোকে প্ৰথম ধান ভঁৰালত সুমুৱায় সিদিনা চোতালত এটিও ধান থাকিবলৈ নিদিয়।<sup>১২</sup>  
 ডিমাচাসকলৰ বিশ্বাস অনুসৰি ভঁৰাল ঘৰত পৰিয়ালৰ বাদে অন্য মানুহক উঠিব নিদিয়।  
 তেওঁলোকৰ ঘৰৰ মুৰব্বীজনেহে স্নান কৰি পৱিত্ৰ মনে ভঁৰালত উঠে। এওঁলোকে  
 ভঁৰালঘৰৰ তলত পোহনীয়া জীৱ-জন্তু নাবান্ধে। কেনেকৈ ভঁৰাল অপৱিত্ৰ হ'লে তুলসী  
 পানী ছটিয়াই পৱিত্ৰ কৰে। ঘৰৰ মুৰব্বীৰ অনুপস্থিতিত ভঁৰাল ঘৰত সোমাব লগা হ'লে  
 কেৱল বোৱাৰীয়েকহঁতেহে সোমাব পাৰে।<sup>১৩</sup> গাৰোসকলেও একে নিয়মেই ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ  
 ক্ষেত্ৰত মানি চলে। এওঁলোকে শনি, মঙ্গলবাৰে ভঁৰালঘৰ স্পৰ্শনকৰে। তদুপৰি ভঁৰালত  
 গোৰ মাৰিলে লখিমীয়ে এৰা দিয়ে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৪</sup> এনেদৰেই অসমৰ জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠী

সকলোৱে কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে ভঁৰাল ঘৰ সম্পৰ্কীয় বিশ্বাসবোৰ মানি আছে। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, সদায় সন্ধিয়া ভাখৰীৰ সন্মুখত এগছি চাকি জ্বলালে লক্ষ্মীৰ বসতি হয়। এওঁলোকে ভাখৰীত এটি শিল থয়। ইয়াৰ কাৰণ হ'ল যাতে পথাৰৰ ধান শিলৰ দৰে গুটি হয়। প্ৰথম যেতিয়া ভাখৰীটো নতুনকৈ সাজে তেতিয়াই ভাখৰীৰ সন্মুখত এখন ঠগি দি শিলটো ধুই-পখালি ঠগিৰ আগত দি সেৱা জনায় আৰু শেষত শিলটোত সেন্দূৰ অলপ লগাই ভাখৰীৰ ভিতৰত থৈ দিয়ে। এই শিলটোক শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে লক্ষ্মী দেৱীৰ প্ৰতীক হিচাপে মানে। এনে পৰম্পৰা কাৰ্বি আৰু ৰাভাসকলৰ ৰোস্তাক /ৰস্তকৰ সৈতে একে। বিশ্বাস আছে যে এই শিলটো ভাখৰীৰ পৰা ওলাই যাব নাপায়। যদি কেতিয়াবা আনক ধান দিওঁতে এই শিলটো গুচি যায় তেন্তে লক্ষ্মীয়ে সেই গৃহস্থৰ ঘৰ এৰি নিওঁতাৰ ঘৰলৈ যায় আৰু সিদিনাৰ পৰাই গৃহস্থ দুখীয়া হৈ গৈ থাকে বুলি পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে বিশ্বাস চলি আহিছে। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে প্ৰথম ধানৰ আগ অনা বা লক্ষ্মী আনিবলৈ যাওঁতে গামোচাৰ বিপৰীতে খৰাহীহে ধুই-পখালি নিয়ে। এওঁলোকে শনি বা মঙ্গলবাৰে ধানৰ আগ আনিলে ভাখৰীত এগছি বস্তি জ্বলাই লক্ষ্মীদেৱী ৰুষ্ট নহ'বলৈ প্ৰাৰ্থনা কৰে। পুহত ভঁৰাল নুচুৰে বাবে আঘোণ মাহতেই পুহ মাহৰ বাবেও ধান উলিয়াই লৈ ভাখৰীত এখন শৰাই দি ফুল চতিয়াই মাঘ মাহলৈ ভাখৰী বন্ধ কৰি থয়।<sup>১১</sup>

অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, ভঁৰালত বাস লোৱা সাপ ঘৰ-জেউতি স্বৰূপ। সেয়েহে এনে সাপ নামাৰে। অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু আৰু জনগোষ্ঠীয় দুয়োখন সমাজেই ৰজস্বলা হোৱা মহিলাক ভঁৰাল ঘৰলৈ সোমাবলৈ নিদিয়। আনকি ভঁৰালৰ তললৈও যাবলৈ নিদিয়। ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ উপৰিও জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকসকলৰ মাজত ধান-চাউল, খেতি-পথাৰৰ লগত জড়িত হৈ থকা বিভিন্ন সা-সঁজুলিবোৰৰ সন্মুখত নানা বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত হৈ আহিছে। যি কোনো জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকেই খুজনীয়া-মগনীয়াক ধান-চাউল দিওঁতে খৰাহীত দুটামান ৰাখিহে দিয়ে। নহ'লে লক্ষ্মীয়ে এৰি যায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ডলাৰে অন্য লোকক যি কোনো বস্তু নিদিয়। ভৰিৰে ডলা-চালনী গুড়িয়াব নাপায়। এনে কৰিলে লক্ষ্মীয়ে দোষ পায়। ধান-চাউলক সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে লক্ষ্মী জ্ঞান কৰে। সেয়েহে ধান-চাউলৰ ওপৰত নবহে। ধান-চাউল পৰি থকা দেখিলে তাক বুটলিহে নিয়ে। উজনি অসমৰ প্ৰায়বোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, কঠীয়াৰ ধান চালনীৰে চালিলে ধান বাচে। অৰ্থাৎ গোটেইবোৰ ধানৰ গজালি নোলায়। পথাৰত ধান সিঁচিবলৈ নিওঁতে খৰাহী বা পাচিত লৈহে সিঁচে।<sup>১২</sup> ধানৰ কঠীয়া লোৱা খেৰবোৰ পুৰিলে আগলৈ কঠীয়াবোৰো জ্বলি যায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। তদুপৰি কঠীয়া লওঁতে প্ৰত্যেকটো ধানৰ মুঠি কোটালি (বাচি) শকত-আবট ধানৰ মুঠিটোহে লয়। এনেদৰে ধানৰ কঠীয়া

ল'লে আগলৈ ধানবোৰৰ থোক বলী হোৱাৰ লগতে কোটোলা ধান গছৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে ধানৰ গোছাবোৰ সবল হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১০</sup> এনেবোৰ খেতিৰ লগত জড়িত লোকবিশ্বাস প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতেই ককম-বেছি পৰিমাণে আছে। বৰো-কছাৰী, সোণোৱাল-কছাৰী, মেচ, কোঁচ, ৰাভা, লালুং বা তিৱা, কাৰ্বি, মিচিং, মৰাণ, আহোম, ডিমাচাকে আদি কৰি প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই খেতি সম্পৰ্কীয় বহুবোৰ লোক বিশ্বাস মানি চলে। তাৰ ভিতৰত কোনো কোনো লোক-বিশ্বাস উমৈহতীয়া হ'লেও দুই-এটাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কিছু সাল-সলনি হোৱা দেখা গৈছে। যেনে বৰো-কছাৰীসকলে মানুহৰ অঙ্গ-প্ৰত্যঙ্গত জন্মগত শুভ চিন লক্ষ্য কৰি তেনে ব্যক্তিৰ দ্বাৰা ধানখেতি বোৱা কাম আৰম্ভ কৰে। এনে শুভ লক্ষণৰ ভিতৰত হাতৰ আঙুলি মূৰত ঘূৰণীয়া দোণ আকৃতিৰ চিহ্ন থকা, আঙুলিবোৰ পোণ কৰি ধৰিলে আঙুলিৰ মাজত ফাঁক নথকা, খোজ দিওঁতে ভৰিৰ তলুৱা সমানে মাটিত বহা, মূৰৰ পিছফালে তলৰ চুলি ফিছাৰ দৰে অংশত শেষ হোৱা আদিবোৰেই উল্লেখযোগ্য। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে এনে লক্ষণযুক্ত লোকৰ দ্বাৰা খেতিৰ আৰম্ভণি কৰিলে সুফল পায়।<sup>১১</sup>

প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতেই টেকী বা উৰালক লৈ বহুবোৰ লোক-বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত হৈ আহিছে। সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, টেকী বা উৰালত বহিব নাপায়। বহিলে ধান এন্দুৰে খায়। বহুতে টেকীশালক লক্ষ্মীশাল বুলি গণ্য কৰে। টেকীৰ কেতবোৰ গুণো আছে। যেনে চকুত আচিনা হ'লে বাটি এটাৰে চকুৰ পৰা আচিনা কাড়ি নি খুবলিৰ ওচৰত বাটিটো ওলোটো কৰি— 'হ'লে আচিনা ইমানটো হ' নহ'লে আচিনা ইয়াতে ৰামৰি যা' বুলি কৈ আচিনা কাড়িলে আচিনা ভাল হয় বুলি লোক বিশ্বাস আছে। দুপৰীয়া আৰু সন্ধিয়া টেকী দিব নাপায়। ঘৰৰ লক্ষ্মীয়ে এৰা দিয়ে বুলি বিশ্বাস থকাৰ দৰে ভাত খাই উঠি কঠীয়াৰ ধান ল'ব নাপায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰাৰ লগতে ধানবোৰ নগজে (গেঠেলা মাৰে) বুলি বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন আছে।

খেতিৰ লগত জড়িত এবিধ আহিলা হ'ল হালোৱা এচাৰি। অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু আৰু জনগোষ্ঠীয় আহোম, সোণোৱাল-কছাৰী, দেউৰী আদিৰ মাজত এটি বিশ্বাস আছে যে, কোনো কেঁচুৱাৰ নাৰী ফুলা ৰোগ হ'লে বা নাৰী বাহিৰলৈ উঠি আহিলে পথাৰত হালবাই অহা হালোৱাজনে এচাৰি পাতেৰে কেঁচুৱাৰ নাৰী হেচি দিলে নাৰী সোমাই যায়।<sup>১২</sup> পথাৰৰ পৰা আহি হাতৰ এচাৰিৰে লাও আদিৰ গছত কোবাই দিলে গছত লাও লাগিবলৈ ধৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। কেতিয়াবা পিঠা খুন্দাৰ শেষত ৰৈ যোৱা অৱশিষ্টখিনি লাও আদি গছত দলিয়াই দিলে গছত পিঠাগুড়িৰ দৰে লমা-লমে লাও-কোমোৰা লাগে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ডলাৰে ভঁৰালত ধান ভৰাব নাপায়। বতাহ-ধুমুহা মাৰিলে বৰ চালনী উলিয়াই

দিলে বতাহ-ধুমুহা শাম কাটে বুলি সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে বিশ্বাস কৰে। জাপি ভিতৰত ল'ব নাপায়। এনে কৰিলে কাণ কলা হয় বুলি লোক-বিশ্বাস আছে। সৰু চালনী বা চাউল চলা চালনীৰে মানুহৰ মুৰত দি পানী কাটিলে বেমাৰ-আজাৰ দূৰ হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। ধান কটা কাঁচিৰে তামোল-পাণ, টেঙা আদি কাটি খাব নালাগে বুলি বিশ্বাস আছে। তেনে কৰিলে গাত গোসাঁই নথকা হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। সেয়েহে লোক সমাজখনত মুখলগা পানী জাৰোঁতে, গ্ৰহ-গতিৰ দোষ খণ্ডাৰ বাবে পানী কাটিবলৈ কাঁচি ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে। কাৰণ কাঁচিয়ে বেয়া দিশবোৰ খণ্ডন কৰিব পাৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। চাউল সান্ধাৎ লক্ষ্মী আৰু লক্ষ্মী দেৱীলৈ বেয়া অপদেৱতাই ভয় কৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি যি কোনো সকাম-নিকাম, ভোজ-ভাত আদিত ৰান্ধনি গৰাকীক এবাটি চাউলৰ সৈতে এটকা /চাৰিঅনা আৰু গুৱা এযোৰ আগবঢ়াই মাননী যাচে। এনেদৰে জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত ধান-চাউলৰ লগত জড়িত ভঁৰালঘৰ আৰু অন্যান্য সা-সঁজুলিবোৰক লৈ নানা লোক-বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন হৈ আছে।

**পথাৰৰ লগত জড়িত বিশ্বাস :**

কৃষি অৰ্থাৎ ধানখেতিৰ উৎসই হ'ল পথাৰ। পথাৰ উৰ্বৰতাৰ প্ৰতীক। পথাৰখনক ধৰিত্ৰী মাতৃ আৰু প্ৰজননৰ প্ৰতীক হিচাপে বহু জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই মানি আহিছে। আদিম কালৰে পৰা লোক-সমাজখনত পথাৰক লৈ বহু বিশ্বাস চলি আহিছে। পথাৰখনৰ লগত জড়িত প্ৰতিটো দিশেই লোক-সমাজখনৰ গভীৰ বিশ্বাসৰ ওপৰত বৰ্তি আছে। সেয়েহে অসমৰ সৰহসংখ্যক জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকে পথাৰত প্ৰথম হাল যুৰিবলৈ হ'লে বহাগ মাহটোহে নিৰ্বাচন কৰে। ঠিক একেদৰে শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে আঘোণৰ ন তাৰিখে ন-ধানৰ ভাতখোৱা পৰ্ব অনুষ্ঠিত কৰে। কাৰণ মাহটোৰ ন তাৰিখে ন-ভাত খালে নটা ভঁৰালৰ গৰাকী অৰ্থাৎ বহু সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰী হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৬</sup> অৱশ্যে শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলৰ মাজত আঘোণ নতুবা মাঘ মাহত হাল জোৰাৰ পৰম্পৰা আছে। তেওঁলোকে আছধানৰ গোছ শনিবাৰক বাদ কৰি আৰু শালিধানৰ গোছ শনি বা মঙ্গলবাৰক বাদ কৰি অন্যবাৰে লয়। গোছ লোৱাৰ দিনা তেওঁলোকে গোছ লোৱা মাটি ডৰাৰ পূব চুকত আলিৰ ওপৰত এজোপা তুলসী গছ পুতি লৈ এখিলা কলপাত পাৰি এগছি মাটিৰ চাকিত তেল-শলিতা জ্বলাই পাণ-তামোল, আলা-চাউল (আৰৈ), তুলসীৰ পাত আদিৰে এভাগি শৰাই আগবঢ়াই গৃহস্থ ঘৰৰ লোকে বাওঁহাতেৰে প্ৰথম গোছ পুতে। গোছ পুতৌতে তেওঁলোকে বাওঁ হাতেৰে লয়।<sup>১৭</sup> গোছ লোৱাৰ শেষত পানী খোৱা কলহত ঘৰলৈ একলহ বোকা আনি প্ৰথমে বৰ ঘৰৰ আৰু ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ বেৰত বোকা মটি দি পিছত ঘৰত থকা সকলোকে গাত বোকা সানি ৰোবনীসকলে ৰং-ধেমালি কৰে।<sup>১৮</sup> শেষত গা-পা ধুই গোছ লোৱা উৎসৱৰ সামৰণি মাৰি সকলোৱে মাছ-মঙহেৰে এৰাঁজ ভাত খায়।



অতীততে হাবিতলীয়া ঠাইত বসবাস কৰা মৰাণসকলে ঝুম খেতি কৰিছিল। ঝুমখেতি বা আছখেতি শস্য সিঁচা প্ৰাক্‌মুহূৰ্ত্তত ‘ধান যতোৱা’ পৰ্ব যথাৰীতিৰে সূচনা কৰি ধানৰ লগতে কপাহ, তিৰুঁহ, চিৰাল, ৰামজিকা আদি বীজ সিঁচিবলৈ যাওঁতে কেঁচুমটা, ঘিলা, শুকান মাছ, শিল আদি লগত লৈ গৈছিল। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, শস্য সিঁচাৰ প্ৰাক্‌মুহূৰ্ত্তত আই লখিমীলৈ বুলি খনিয়া তামোল এভাগি আগবঢ়ালে লখিমী আই শিল যেন গুটি, ঘিলা যেন ফাক, শুকান মাছৰ দৰে নিৰোগী, কেঁচুমটাৰ দৰে সাৰ-পানী যোগাই শস্য নদন-বদন কৰি তোলে। এই নিয়ম এতিয়া মৰাণ সমাজত প্ৰায় নোহোৱাৰ দৰেই। শালিখেতি ৰোৱাৰ সময়ত ‘গছা’ লোৱা লোকজন বৰ্ষৰ ৰাশি উঠা পৰিয়ালৰ ব্যক্তিহে হয়। প্ৰথা মতে তেওঁ গা-ধুই তামোল-পাণ, কল, শিকিল (কেঁচা) পিঠাগুড়ি, গুৰ আদি লৈ কঠীয়া এটেপা উভালি মূৰত ছাতি বা জাপি লৈ গোছা ল’বলগীয়া পথাৰ ডবাৰ এচুকত ৰুৱে। গোছা লওঁতে লখিমীলৈ শিকিলী পিঠা-গুড়ি আৰু খনিয়া তামোল এভাগ আগবঢ়াই প্ৰথম কচুপুলি ৰুৱে যাতে ধান লহপহকৈ বাঢ়ে, তৰাৰ গজালিৰ দৰে পুলি-পোষা হ’বলৈ তৰাপুলি ৰুৱে, মেটেকাৰ পুলি ৰুৱে যাতে ধানফুল মেটেকা ফুলৰ দৰে ফুলে আৰু জেওৰা খুঁটি পুতি দিয়ে ৰখীয়া-পলীয়া হ’বৰ বাবে। মন কৰিবলগীয়া ‘ধান যতোৱা’ বা ‘গছা লোৱা’ ব্যক্তিজনে অহা-যোৱা পথত মাত-বোল নকৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি তেওঁলোকে পথাৰৰ কঠীয়াত বেমাৰ ধৰিলে লখিমী আইলৈ বুলি খনিয়া তামোল এখন আগলি কলপাতত আগবঢ়াই ল’ৰা-বাপেকী এজনে কঠীয়াডবাৰ জাকৈ বালে বেমাৰ নিৰাময় হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। পথাৰৰ শস্যডবাৰ বেমাৰ-আজাৰ লাগিলে, থুৰি পোকে ধৰিলে, ভাটো চৰাই আদি পৰিলে গোপিনীসকলে লখিমী সকাম পাতি তাৰ পৰা পৰিত্ৰাণ পাব বিচাৰে। ধাননি ডবা গোঁৰ ধৰা সময়ত টেকীৰ নেজত নবহে। মাছ-মাংস পুৰি নাখায়, কলডিল নাখায়, ধানৰ খেৰ নজ্বলায়। এনে কৰিলে ধান পতান হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। খেতি-বাতিৰ সময়ত বতৰ খৰাং হ’লে নাঙলৰ ডিলা গোজ মাৰি নাঙল ওপৰলৈ কৰি থ’লে বৰষুণ দিয়ে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি ভৰভৰকৈ ভাত উতলিলে, বাটত টেকী ওপৰলৈ কৰি থ’লে বৰষুণ দিয়ে বুলি মৰাণসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে। অত্যাধিক শিলাবৃষ্টি হ’লে তিৰোতা মানুহে চোতাললৈ চালনী (ধান-চাউল চলা) দলিয়াই দিলে শিলাবৃষ্টি দূৰ হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৯</sup> নাঙল, যুঁৱলি আদি খেতিৰ সঁজুলিৰে জুই জ্বলালে ধান শস্য নষ্ট হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>২০</sup> অসমৰ প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে গৰুৰে গোহালিৰ খুঁটাত নেজেৰে পকাই ধৰিলে পানী হয় বা অমজলৰ চিন বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।

দেউৰী-চুতীয়াসকলে খৰাং বতৰ হ’লে টেকী চুৰ কৰি বোকাত উভটাই পোতাৰ উপৰিও চোতালত হালবাই লেতেৰা কৰে, জপনা উভটাই পোতে, নঙলা নি দূৰত পেলাই থয়, জাবৰেৰে চোতালত ভেটা দিয়ে তথা গৃহস্থই গম নোপোৱাকৈ জকাই-খালৈ

গছত ওলোমাই ৰাখি খেতি সময়ত খৰাং বতৰ দূৰ কৰি বৰষুণ মাতে। এনেবোৰ কাৰ্য্য কৰিলে বৰষুণ হয় বুলি আজিও তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১১</sup> দেউৰীসকলে কঠীয়া ধানৰ খেৰ আৰু কৃষিৰ সঁজুলিবোৰ জুইত পুৰিলে কঠীয়া ৰঙা পৰে আৰু বতৰ কুৰীয়া হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১২</sup> এনে বিশ্বাস টাই-আহোমসকলৰ মাজতো আছে। টাই-আহোমসকলে ধান গৈৰ মেলা সময়ত কেঁকোৰা পুৰি নাখায়, ঢোল নবজায়। এনে কৰিলে ধান পতান হয় আৰু পোকৰ দ্বাৰা আক্ৰান্ত হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৩</sup> দেউৰীসকলে মৰাণ সমাজত থকাৰ দৰেই শস্যৰ বীজ সিঁচিবৰ সময়ত খৰাহীত ঘিলা এটি ভৰাই লয়। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে এনে কৰিলে শস্য ঘিলাৰ দৰে হয়। ধানৰ গৈৰ ধৰা সময়ত ঘৰৰ দুৱাৰডলিত নবহে। কাৰণ ধানত পোকে খাই বুলি বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছে।<sup>১৪</sup> সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলে পথাৰত প্ৰথম ভুঁই ৰোওতে বা গোজ লওঁতে তৰা গছ, কচুগছ আদি পুতি মাটিমাহ আৰু ফল আদি খালে পথাৰৰ শস্য শ্ৰীবৃদ্ধি হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। খেতি চপাই শেষ কৰি মাঘ মাহত ভঁৰালৰ পৰা ধান উলিয়ালে লক্ষ্মীচাৰা হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। পথাৰত ন-ভুঁই ৰোৱা ৰোৱনীয়ে খাই বৈ উঠি দিনত শুলে পথাৰত ধান আগলৈ শুই পৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৫</sup> মিচিংসকলে ধানৰ গৈৰ ওলোৱা সময়ত ঢোল, পেঁপা বজালে ধান পতান হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। আনফালে গুমৰাগ নাচ প্ৰদৰ্শন নকৰিলে ধানৰ থোক লেৰেলি যায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৬</sup> প্ৰথম ধান সিঁচিবলৈ যোৱাৰ সময়ত যদি খৰাহীৰ পৰা কঠীয়া মাটিত পৰে তেন্তে খেতি ভাল নহয় বুলি মিচিং ৰাইজে বিশ্বাস কৰে। প্ৰথম সিঁচিবলৈ লোৱা কঠীয়ামূঠি আঁঠুত কেনেকৈ পৰিলে সেই বছৰটোৰ খেতি নষ্ট হোৱাৰ সম্ভাৱনাই দেখা দিয়ে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। লতাৰ দৰে পাক ধৰি ধান গজিলে খেতি বেয়া হয় বুলি মিচিং ৰাইজে বিশ্বাস কৰে। ধান পূৰঠ হোৱাৰ পিছত বলী থোক এডালৰ ধান হিচাপ কৰি যুগ্ম সংখ্যাত ধান পালে বছৰটোৰ বাবে নিজৰ ঘৰৰ ভাতে আতে আৰু অযুগ্ম সংখ্যা হ'লে আনৰ ঘৰৰ ভাত খাব লগীয়া হয় বুলি মিচিংসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰি আহিছে। যি বছৰত ধানৰ পাত দীঘল হয় সেই বছৰত বানপানীয়ে খেতি-বাতি নষ্ট কৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি কঠীয়া ৰুই ৰাহি হ'লে ধানো ৰাহি হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৭</sup> অসমৰ আহোম সম্প্ৰদায় লোকসকলে পথাৰত প্ৰথম গোছ লোৱাৰ দিনা কঠীয়াই জুৰিলে খেতি উঠা পৰ্যন্ত কঠীয়াই প্ৰতিদিনেই বোকা দিয়া মাটি ৰুবলৈ যোৱা মৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৮</sup>

অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু সমাজত লখিমী অনা, গোছা লোৱা, কাতি বিহুৰ লক্ষ্মী পূজাৰ দিনা ঘৰত মাছ খোৱা নিয়ম আছে। এনে কৰিলে ঘৰলৈ লক্ষ্মী আহে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। গোছা লোৱাৰ দিনা ঘৰৰ পৰা কোনো বস্তু উলিয়াই দিয়াৰ নিয়ম কোনোখন সমাজতেই নাই। জনজাতীয়-অজনজাতীয় উভয় সমাজেই বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, প্ৰথম গোছা লোৱাৰ দিনা যদি কঠীয়াই নোযোৰে তেন্তে হাল উঠালৈ কঠীয়াৰ জোৰা নমৰে। সেয়েহে এই দিনটোতে পথাৰৰ বোকা মাটি সম্পূৰ্ণ ৰূপে ৰুই শেষ কৰি থৈ অহা হয়। এই দিনটোত

পথাৰত গোছা ৰুবলৈ যোৱা ৰোৱনীসকলে ঘৰলৈ আহি খোৱা-বোৱা কৰি উঠি শুৱাটো নিষেধ। কাৰণ গোছা ৰুই আহি ৰোৱনীয়ে শুলে ধানবোৰো আগলৈ গুই পৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। যদি পথাৰত গোছা লোৱাৰ দিনা আলি কাষত সেৰেঙাকৈ গোছা দিয়ে তেন্তে বছৰটোলৈ আলহী ঘনকৈ আহে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। সেয়েহে আলি কাষৰ গোছাবোৰ ঘনকৈ দি আলহী-অতিথিৰ আগমন কৰাব পাৰি বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১০</sup> কঠীয়া ৰুই শেষ হোৱা পিছত এমুঠিমান কঠীয়া এঠাইত পাক দি ৰোৱা হয় আৰু কঠীয়াৰ মাজত বহল কৰি খালী ঠাইত এচপৰা মাটি দি ভঁৰাল প্ৰস্তুত কৰা নিয়ম বহু জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত আছে। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে ইয়াকে লক্ষ্মী ৰখা বুলি কয়। মাটি ৰুই শেষ কৰি ৰোৱনীসকলে কঠীয়া ৰোৱা মাটিডৰালৈ কাষৰ মাটি ডৰাৰ পৰা হাতেৰে কাজলী কাজলীকৈ তিনি / পাঁচ / সাতবাৰকৈ পানী ছটিয়াই মুখেৰে উচ্চাৰণ কৰে— ‘হাত সজাল ধৰিবি, পাত সজাল ধৰিবি আৰু কাঁচি সজাল ধৰিবি’ আদি। এনে কৰিলে ধান সোনকালে সঁজাল ধৰি লহ-পহকৈ বাঢ়ি আহে বুলি লোক - বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন আছে।<sup>১১</sup>

অসমৰ ভিন ভিন জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকসকলে স্বকীয় পৰম্পৰাৰে পথাৰত প্ৰথম গোছা লয়। পাহাৰৰ তিৱাসকলক বাদ কৰি ভৈয়ামৰ তিৱাসকলে বিশেষকৈ উজনি অসমৰফালে প্ৰথম গোছা লোৱাৰ দিনা অমিতাৰ বাকলিত সাতখন মিঠাতেলৰ শলিতা জ্বলাই, তামোল-পাণ দি তৰাগছ আৰু কচুৰ পুলি পোতে। সাত গছি মিঠাতেলৰ লগতে সাতভাগে কলপাতত ধুই খোৱা আৰৈ চাউল, গুৰু-গোসাঁই, ডকত, দেৰ-দেৱতা, আলহী-অতিথি, আত্মীয়-কুটুম্ব, পূৰ্ব পুৰুষৰ নামত আগবঢ়ায়।<sup>১২</sup> এই দিনটোত গৃহস্থই ৰোৱনীহঁতক মদ-মাংসৰে ভোজ-ভাত খোৱাব লাগে। এওঁলোকৰ দৰে বড়ো, হাজং, দেউৰী, মেচ-কছাৰী আদিয়ে কলপুলি, কচুপুলি, তৰাগছ, বাঁহৰ ঠানি আদি ৰোৱাৰ উপৰিও কোনো কোনো অঞ্চলত ফুল, ধূপ-চাকি জ্বলায় প্ৰথম গোছা লয়। জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত অশৌচি বা ৰজস্বলা তিৰোতাই গোছা ল'বলৈ নাযায়। তেওঁলোকে এনে অশৌচীয়া মহিলাক ধাননি পথাৰলৈও যাবলৈ নিদিয়। কাৰণ এনে অশৌচীয়া মহিলা পথাৰলৈ গ'লে ধান ক'লা পৰি নষ্ট হৈ যায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। তেওঁলোকৰ দৰে আন বহুতো জনগোষ্ঠীয়েও শস্য বাঢ়ি অহা সময়ত তিৰোতা মানুহক ধাননি পথাৰ চাবলৈ যাব নিদিয়। অতীতত পাৰ্বতীয়ে শিৱই কৰা ধান খেতি চাবলৈ যাওঁতে পথাৰৰ ধান নষ্ট হোৱাৰ দৰে তিৰোতা মানুহৰ ঈৰ্ষাং ধান নষ্ট হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস আছে। কিন্তু তিৱা, আহোম, মেচ-কছাৰী, সোণোৱাল-কছাৰী, মটক আদিৰ মাজত কতিবিহুৰ দিনা তিৰোতাসকলে পথাৰৰ শস্য চাবলৈ যোৱাৰ নিয়ম আছে। তিৱা গৃহিণীসকলে এই বিশেষ দিনটোত পথাৰলৈ যাওঁতে লগত ৰবাব টেঙা লৈ গৈ পথাৰতে কাটি খাই বাকলিবোৰ ধাননি পথাৰলৈ দলিয়াই দিয়ে। এনেদৰে পথাৰত ৰবাব টেঙা খালে টেঙাৰ কোঁহৰ দৰেই ধানৰ শীহ হোৱাৰ উপৰিও টেঙাৰ

বাকলিৰ গুহ্ৰ পথাৰৰ পোক-পৰুৱা আঁতৰাই পঠায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১২</sup> মটকসকলে ঘৰৰ গৃহিণীৰ ভৰিৰ পৰশ ধাননি পথাৰত পৰিলে ধান দুগুণে লহপহকৈ বাঢ়ে বুলিহে বিশ্বাস কৰে।

বড়োসকলে কতিবিহুৰ দিনা আৰিয়ে গাভৰু বা অকুমাৰী ছোৱালীক তাঁতৰ চিৰিত মিঠাতেল সানি ধাননি পথাৰৰ ওপৰে ওপৰে আলফুলে চোচৰাই নিবলৈ দিয়ে। এনে কৰিলে ধান থোক ভৰি লাগে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি ধান গঁৰ মেলা সময়ত শোকোতা আৰু চাউলৰ গুড়িৰ আঞ্জা খাই ধাননিলৈ গ'লে ধান পতান হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। আহোমসকলে পথাৰত খাবলৈ নিয়া ভাত-জা-জলপান ঘূৰি আহিলে সেই জা-জলপান ঘৰৰ ল'ৰা-ছোৱালী কাকো খাবলৈ নিদিয়ে। আনকি ঘৰৰ বাহিৰতে সেই আহাৰ জীৱ-জন্তুক খাবলৈ দিয়ে। অন্যথা তেনে জলপান খালে খাওঁতাৰ বেমাৰ আৰু বতৰকুৰীয়া হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৩</sup>

গাৰো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ লোকসকলে কুমখেতিৰ বাবে তৈয়াৰ কৰা মাটিত জুই লগোৱাৰ পৰা কণীধান পকালৈকে কোনো বাদ্যযন্ত্ৰ নবজায়। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, এনে কাৰ্য কৰিলে ধানৰ অনিষ্ট হয়। ইয়াৰোপৰি নোকমাৰ ঘৰত অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা বানগালা উছৰত যি ধূপ-ধূনা জ্বলোৱা হয়; তাৰ ধোঁৱা যদি পোনে পোনে নোকমাৰ ঘৰৰ মুখৰফালে ওলায় যায়; তেতিয়া সেই বছৰৰ খেতি ভাল হয় বুলি গাৰোসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৪</sup>

আদিম কলাৰ পৰাই মানুহে সময়ে সময়ে খেতি-পথাৰৰ পোক-পৰুৱা নিয়ন্ত্ৰণ কৰিবৰ বাবে বিভিন্ন ঔষধি গছৰ ডাল-পাত ব্যৱহাৰ কৰি আহিছে। সেইদৰে পথাৰৰ পৰা পোক-পৰুৱা আঁতৰ কৰিবলৈ কিছুমান লোকবিশ্বাসৰো সহায় লৈছিল। ৰাভা, আহোম, মেচ-কছাৰী, সোণোৱাল-কছাৰী আদিয়ে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, ওভোতাকৈ জন্ম হোৱা ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীয়ে খেতি-পথাৰত বাওঁ ভৰিৰে পানী ছটিয়ালে পথাৰৰ পোক নিয়ন্ত্ৰণ হয় আৰু খেতি লহ-পহকৈ বাঢ়ি আহে।<sup>১৫</sup> পথাৰত হালোৱাই মঙ্গল বা শনিবাৰে হাল নোযোৰে। কিন্তু চাহ-বনুৱাসকলে 'শুক্ৰ, শনিয়ে বৃষ, বুধে গৃহবাস' বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত বিশ্বাস আছে যে, প্ৰথম হাল বাওঁতে নাঙল-যুঁৱলি ভাগিলে-ছিগিলে খেতি ভাল নহয়। চাহ-বনুৱা সমাজত এনে হ'লে তেওঁলোকে নতুনকৈ সঁজুলি তৈয়াৰ নকৰালৈকে লঘোণে থাকে। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে হালবাই থাকোঁতে জুংলি (যুঁৱলি) আৰু দীলা (ঈহমাৰি) ভাঙিলে সেই জুংলি বা নাঙল দীলা মাটিত চোচৰাই নি দূৰত পেলাই অমঙ্গল দূৰ কৰে আৰু হালোৱাজনেও এসাজ ভাত লঘোণ দি অমঙ্গল দূৰ কৰাত আগভাগ লয়।<sup>১৬</sup>

পথাৰত সহজতে দাৱনীয়ে ধানৰ থোক নেৰে। সেয়েহে দাৱনী গৰাকীয়ে ধানৰ মুঠিটো বন্ধাৰ সময়ত তিনিবাৰ পিছলৈ ঘূৰি চাব লাগে যাতে এৰি থৈ যোৱা থোকটো চকুত পৰে আৰু লক্ষ্মীয়ে দোষ নধৰে। একেদৰে ধান চিৰি চাউল খাব নাপায়, হাতেৰে

ধানৰ থোক চিৰিব নাপায় আদি বহুবোৰ বিশ্বাস অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয়-অজনগোষ্ঠীয় উভয় সমাজেই মানি চলা দেখা যায়। দাৰনীয়ে পথাৰত ধান দাওঁতে বগা পৰি জ্বলি যোৱা মৰা ধানৰ থোক মুঠিত নলয়। কাৰণ লক্ষ্মীয়ে মৃত ধানৰ থোকৰ সৈতে একেলগে বসবাস নকৰে বুলি আহোমসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৭</sup> কৃষকে পথাৰত পূবৰ পৰাই প্ৰথম হাল যোৰে। অন্যথা সূৰ্য্য দেৱতাৰ লগত জেদ মৰা হয় আৰু এডৰা মাটিতেই বহু সময় লাগে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। আউসী, পূৰ্ণিমা, জোনমৰা, পানীতোলা সবাহ, আই নাম উঠোৱা বা ভদীয়া নাম গাঁৱৰ নামঘৰত স্থাপন কৰা কেইদিন গাঁৱৰ কৃষক ৰাইজে পথাৰত হাল বোৱাৰ পৰা বিৰত থাকে। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, এই দিনবোৰত হালবাই কৰা খেতিৰ ধান অন্য শুভ কামত নাখাটে।

ঠিক একেদৰে জনগোষ্ঠীয়-অজনগোষ্ঠীয় উভয় সমাজে আঘোণ মাহৰ শুক্লপক্ষত কঠীয়াৰ বাবে ধানৰ সঁচ নলয়। কাৰণ শুক্ল পক্ষত কঠীয়াৰ সঁচ ল'লে কঠীয়া ৰঙা পৰে আৰু পথাৰত পোকে ধৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। খেতিয়কসকলে পুহ আৰু মাঘ মাহটো মতা মাহ হোৱা বাবে এই মাহত ধানৰ সঁচ বা কঠীয়া নলয়। কাৰণ মতা মাহত কঠীয়া ল'লে সেই কঠীয়াই পুলি-পোখা নধৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৮</sup>

পথাৰত কঠীয়া সিঁচাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো কিছু পৰম্পৰা লোক সমাজখনে মানি চলে। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত কঠীয়া সিঁচাৰ সময়ত গৃহস্থই মুখেৰে— ‘গুৰুক দিম, ডকতক দিম, পিছতহে গেধা শৰীৰটোক পূজিম’ বুলি কৈহে কঠীয়া সিঁচাৰ নিয়ম। ধানৰ বিধান চতিয়াওতে বাওধানৰ কঠীয়াই আগতে চটিয়ায়। বাওধানৰ কঠীয়া সাধাৰণতে আমতী (হাত) লগাৰ আগতে চটিওৱাৰ নিয়ম। আমতী বা হাত লগা কেইদিন উজনি-নামনি সকলো ঠাইৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকেই হালখতি কৰে। খেতিয়কসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে আহুই (আউসী), কৃষ্ণ, একাদশী, দোমাহী, পূৰ্ণিমা আৰু শুক্ল একাদশী, ভাদ মাহৰ কৃষ্ণ জন্মাষ্টমীত হাল বাব নাপায়। ঘৰৰ কোনো লোকৰ মৃত্যু হ'লে পথাৰত হাল নেবায় বা ধানো নাদায়।

উজনি অসমৰ আহোম সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ কিছুমান লোকৰ মাজত বিশ্বাস আছে যে, পথাৰত যদি হালবোৱা হালোৱাজনে কঠীয়া এটিপা হ'লেও ৰুই দিয়ে; তেন্তে মাটি ৰোৱা টুটে। পথাৰত কঠীয়া তোলাতে হাতত কোবাব নালাগে। তেনে কৰিলে ধান পতান হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। পথাৰৰ বোকা মাটিত কঠীয়া ৰোওঁতে হাতৰ পৰা পৰি যোৱা কঠীয়াৰ ফিটবোৰ তুলি আকৌ ৰুব লাগে। যদি বুটলি নলৈ সেইবোৰ এৰি থৈ অহা হয়; তেন্তে সিবোৰ কঠীয়াৰ ধানৰ ঠোকে ভৰিষাতে ধান দোৱাৰ দিনত দাৰনীৰ চকুত কোবায় বুলি অসমীয়া সমাজে বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভুই ৰুই যাওঁতে এগৰাকী ৰোৱনীয়ে আন গৰাকী ৰোৱনীক ওলাই অহা বাট মাৰি ৰুব নালাগে। এনে কৰিলে বিশেষকৈ কুমাৰী ছোৱালী হ'লে পুষ্পিতা নহয়, গাভৰু ছোৱালী হ'লে দৰা নাহে, গৰ্ভৱতী মহিলা হ'লে সন্তান জন্ম দিব

নোৱাৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১০</sup> সেয়েহে এই কথা জনা ৰোৱনীসকলে কেতিয়াও বাট মাৰি কঠীয়া নোৰোৱে। অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত প্ৰচলিত পথাৰ কেন্দ্ৰিক এনে লোক বিশ্বাসবোৰে অসমৰ ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনত গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰি আছে।

**খোৱা-বোৱা আৰু ৰান্ধনীশালৰ লগত জড়িত লোক বিশ্বাস :**

লোক বিশ্বাসসমূহে জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজ জীৱনত পুৰাৰ পৰা ৰাতি শুৱালৈকে প্ৰতিটো দিশতেই প্ৰভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰি আছে। ইয়াৰ ভিতৰত ভাতেই প্ৰধান আহাৰ হিচাপে গণ্য হোৱা জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনত খোৱা-বোৱা আৰু ৰান্ধনীশালখনক লৈ মানি চলা ৰীতি-নীতি, লোক-বিশ্বাস আদিবোৰে ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ ধানকেন্দ্ৰিক সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনত গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰি আছে।

অসমৰ ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ ভৈয়াম অঞ্চলত বসবাস কৰি থকা মৰাণ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত খোৱা-বোৱা আৰু ৰান্ধনীশালখনৰ লগত বহুবোৰ লোকবিশ্বাস জড়িত হৈ আছে। মৰাণ মহিলাসকলে ৰান্ধনি শালত গা-পা ধুই নিকা বস্ত্ৰ পিন্ধিহে প্ৰৱেশ কৰে। ৰান্ধনি ঘৰত সোমোৱাৰ সময়ত তেওঁলোকে সেন্দুৰৰ ফুট নলয়, কানৰ ফুলি, হাতৰ খাৰু আদি অলংকাৰ পাতিবোৰ খুলি লয়। মূৰত গামোচাৰে খোপা বান্ধি বুকুত মেথনি মাৰি লোৱা পৰম্পৰা আজিও মৰাণ, মটকসকলৰ মাজত আছে। অন্য কেতবোৰ ৰীতি-নীতিৰ ভিতৰত যেনে— প্ৰসূতি মাতৃয়ে চুৰা নোযোৱা পৰ্যন্ত ৰান্ধনিশালত প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। কোনো মহিলা ঋতুস্ৰাৱৰ সময়ত সাতদিনৰ লৈকে ৰান্ধনি ঘৰত প্ৰৱেশ নকৰে। পৰিয়ালৰ কোনো লোকৰ মৃত্যু হ'লে তিনিদিনৰ লৈকে চৰুৰ তলত জুই নিদিয়ে।<sup>১১</sup> ভাতৰ চৰুৰ ওচৰত পেট বজালে পেট ডাঙৰ হয়। চৰু শালিৰ ঘাই উধান ভাগিলে ঘৰৰ মুৰব্বীজনৰ মৃত্যুৰ আগজাননী দিয়া বুলি মৰাণসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১২</sup> মৰাণসকলে ধাননি ডৰা গোঁৰ ধৰা সময়ত টেকীৰ নেজত বহা, মাছ-মাংস পুৰি খোৱা, কলডিল খোৱাৰ পৰা বিৰত থাকে। এনে কৰিলে ধান পতান হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৩</sup>

অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু আৰু জনগোষ্ঠীয় উভয় সমাজেই ঘৰত সন্তান জন্ম হ'লে অশৌচ নোযোৱা পৰ্যন্ত জন্ম দিওঁতা গৰাকীক পাকঘৰলৈ সোমাবলৈ নিদিয়ে, কোনো তিৰোতাৰ মাহেকীয়া সময়তো পাঁচ বা সাতদিনলৈ ভাতৰ চৰু চুৰালৈ আৰু পাকঘৰত প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব নিদিয়ে। পৰিয়ালৰ কোনো লোকৰ মৃত্যু হ'লে তিনিদিনলৈ কোনো জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে ভাত ৰান্ধি নাখায়। ইবোৰৰ উপৰিও মেকুৰী বা কুকুৰ আদি পাকঘৰত সোমালে চুৰা হয় বাবে চৌ-হাড়ি ধুই ঘৰ-দুৱাৰ মচি শুচি কৰে। অসমীয়া সমাজত মঙ্গল, শনিবাৰে ৰাতি কেতিয়াও ভাতৰ চৌকাৰ চুই নোদিয়াই নেপেলায়। বিহু সংক্ৰান্তিত, ভাদ মাহ আৰু পূহ মাহ যোৱাৰ

দিনা হাত, ভগাৰ দিনা চৰু-বাটি ধুই চৌকা মটি শুদ্ধি কৰি লয়। বহুতে আঁঠে-খোলা, চিৰা-খোলা, চাউল-ধান ভজা বা সিজোৱা কয়ম মঙ্গল আৰু শনিবাৰে নকৰে। বান্ধনিশালত লক্ষ্মীপূজা, তিনিটা বিহুৰ সংক্ৰান্তিত, দীপাৱিতা আদিত এগছিকৈ চাকি-বস্তি জ্বলাই লখিমী আইক সন্মান জনায়।<sup>১০</sup> অসমীয়া সমাজৰ দৰে বহুবোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজে ব'হাগ বিহুত মানুহবিহুৰ দিনা পানী তিওঁৱা পইতা ভাত খালে বছৰটোলৈ গা শাত পৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১১</sup>

সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলে গৰু বিহুৰ দিনা সন্ধ্যাবেলাৰ ভাত সাজত যদি এশ এবিধ বিভিন্ন গছ পাতৰ আঞ্জা খাব পাৰে তেন্তে বছৰটোলৈ বিভিন্ন ৰোগৰ পৰা হাত সাৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। এওঁলোকে পথাৰত প্ৰথম ভুই ৰোওতে বা গোছ লওঁতে তৰা গছ, কচু গছ আদি ৰোৱাৰ পিছত কপাহ লগাই দিয়া মাটি মাহ আৰু ফল আদি খালে শস্য বৃদ্ধি হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১২</sup> কেতিয়াবা ভাত খাই থাকোঁতে চৰ-চৰণি খালে কোনোবাই বতনা তৰা বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। এনে বিশ্বাস দেউৰী, আহোম, চুতীয়া সকলোৰে মাজত আছে। সোণোৱাল কছাৰীসকলে ভাতখোৱা মজিয়া খলা-বমা হ'লে ঘৰত লক্ষ্মী বাস কৰে আৰু গৃহস্থ চহকী হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৩</sup> শৰণীয়া কছাৰী, সোণোৱাল-কছাৰী, দেউৰী, চুতীয়া, আহোম, লালুং, মেচ কছাৰী, মৰাণ-মটক আদি সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে প্ৰথম ন-ধানৰ ভাত খোৱাৰ দিনা নিজৰ নিজৰ পূৰ্বপুৰুষলৈ এভাগ আগবঢ়ায় লৈহে বাকীসকলে খায়। মিচিং আৰু শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলৰ মাজত প্ৰথম ন-ধানৰ ভাত এসাঁজ কুকুৰক খাবলৈ দিয়া পৰম্পৰা আছে। আনহাতে প্ৰত্যেক জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই আলহী-অতিথিক আহাৰ খাবলৈ দিয়াৰ পিছত এখনি গুৱা-পাণেৰে মুখ মুছদি কৰিবলৈ দিয়ে। অন্যথা লক্ষ্মীয়ে গৃহস্থৰ ঘৰ এৰে বুলি লোকবিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন আছে। শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলৰ মাজত বৰঘৰক লৈ বহুবোৰ লোকবিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছে। তেওঁলোকে বৰঘৰৰ মুখত শগুণ পৰিলে বা শগুণে শ খাই আধা এৰি গ'লে বা বমি কৰি থৈ গ'লে গৃহস্থৰ মঙ্গল আৰু ঐশ্বৰ্য্যশালী হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। গাই গৰু পাকঘৰত সোমালে গৃহস্থৰ মঙ্গল বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। বৰঘৰৰ মুখত ফেঁচা পৰিলেও মঙ্গলৰ চিন দেখুওৱা বুলি কয়। বৰঘৰৰ মুখত কপৌ চৰাই পৰি ৰমলিয়ালে গৰখীয়াৰ দোষ বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে বাবে ঘৰলৈ গৰখীয়া ল'ৰাক মাতি ভাত এসাঁজ খোৱাই দোষ খণ্ডন কৰা পৰম্পৰা আছে। বৰঘৰৰ মাটিক লৈয়ো শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে কিছুমান বিশ্বাস মানি চলে। কেতিয়াবা কোনো তিৰোতাই নাবালক ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীক লৈ ঘৰৰ বাহিৰলৈ যাব লগা হ'লে পাকঘৰৰ দুৱাৰডলিৰ মাটিৰে কেঁচুৱাৰ কপালত এটা ফোঁট দি নিয়ে। এনে কৰিলে কেঁচুৱাৰ মুখ নালাগে বুলি তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে। কোনো কোনো অঞ্চল বিশেষে চৌকাৰ মাজৰ মাটিও ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা দেখা যায়। ঘৰলৈ নতুনকৈ কিনি অনা গৰুক ভৰি ধুৱাই গোহালীত বন্ধাৰ পিছত গৰুটোক চৌকাৰ মাজৰ মাটি অলপ কলপাটত লৈ তাত নিমখ আৰু জাৱাং মিহলি কৰি খুৱালে

গৰুৱে সোনকালে ঘৰ লয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। কেতিয়াবা চৌকাৰ আধাপুৰা খৰি বাহিৰত পেলাই দিলে গৃহস্থৰ খোৱা-লোৱাত টান পৰে আৰু টকা পইচাৰ ধাৰ লাগে বুলি শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে আজিও বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৪৭</sup>

পাকঘৰ বা ৰান্ধনিশালখনক লৈ থকা বিভিন্ন বিশ্বাসবোৰৰ দৰেই খোৱা-বোৱা সম্পৰ্কেও তেওঁলোকে কিছু বিশ্বাস মানি চলে। ইবোৰৰ ভিতৰত খাই থাকোঁতে গলত গাঠি লাগিলে কোনোবাই মনত পেলোৱা বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা, খাই থাকোঁতে জিভাত কামোৰ খালে কোনোৱে অন্যায় কৰিছে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা, তিৰোতাই গিৰিয়েকতকৈ আগতে ভাত খালে গিৰিয়েকৰ আয়ুস টুটে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা আদিবোৰেই উল্লেখযোগ্য। ইয়াৰোপৰি তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, ভাত খাই থাকোঁতে টেকীত ধান বনা, তাঁতশাল বৈ থকা কামবোৰ কৰিব নাপায়। এনে কৰিলে খাওঁতাৰ দুখ হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভাতৰ পাতৰ পৰা ভৰদি উঠিলে, ভাত খাওঁতে জিভা উলিয়াই তৰ্জ্জনী আঙুলি পোন কৰি জিভাত পেলাই খালে লক্ষ্মীচাৰা হয় বুলি শৰণীয়া কছাৰীসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৪৮</sup> এনে বিশ্বাস অসমৰ বড়ো কছাৰী, মেচ কছাৰী, হাজং কছাৰী আদিকে ধৰি প্ৰায়বোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতেই দেখিবলৈ পোৱা গৈছে। ঠিক একেদৰে বড়োকছাৰীসকলে ভাতখোৱাৰ সময়ত কঁকাল বান্ধি ভাত নাখায়। কঁকাল বান্ধি ভাত খালে লক্ষ্মী আইৰ লগত যুঁজ কৰিবলৈ সাজু হোৱা অৰ্থ বুজায় বুলি তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৪৯</sup> বড়ো-কছাৰীসকলৰ মাজত তিনি কোঠলীয়া নোমানো পাকঘৰৰ প্ৰচলন আছে। ইয়াৰে পূৰ্ণফালৰ ইচিং কোঠাত ভাত ৰান্ধে, অ'খংত খাই আৰু খোফ্ৰাত শোৱে। পাক ঘৰক বা ৰান্ধনি ঘৰক 'ইচিং' বোলে। ইচিং তেওঁলোকৰ মতে লক্ষ্মীৰ কোঠালী। ই হ'ল মাইনাওৰ স্থান। 'মাই' মানে ধান 'নোৱাও' মানে ঘৰ অৰ্থাৎ ধান থকা ঘৰ। ই অপভ্ৰংশ হৈ 'মাইনাও' হৈছে। আগতে ইচিঙ ঘৰতেই ধানো ৰাখিছিল। আজিকালি মাইনাও ইচিঙৰ পৰা আঁতৰাই বেলেগকৈ সাজি লয়। ইয়াক তেওঁলোকে 'ৰান্ধী' বুলি কয়। বড়োসকলৰ ইচিঙত মাইনাও (লক্ষ্মী) বুঢ়ীৰ নামত ডাঙৰ কলহত ৰন্ধা মদ সদায় সাঁচি ৰাখে। কামৰূপ, দৰং, নগাওঁ আৰু দক্ষিণ গোৱালপাৰা আদি ঠাইৰ বড়ো কছাৰীসকলে ইচিঙতে ৰন্ধা-বঢ়া কৰে। ইচিঙত পৰিয়ালৰ বৰপুত্ৰ আৰু বোৱাৰীয়েহে থাকিব পাৰে। পৰিয়ালৰ মানুহৰ বাহিৰে অন্য লোক ইচিঙত সোমাব নোৱাৰে। আনকি উলিয়াই দিয়া জীয়াৰীও তাত প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। নতুন ধানৰ আগ আনি প্ৰথম বৰ বোৱাৰী বা ডাঙৰ জীয়াৰীয়ে (বেলেৰাই) ইচিঙৰ ভিতৰত পূৰ্ণফালে থকা বুল্লিবুঢ়ী আৰু মাইনাও বুঢ়ীৰ ঢাপত আঁৰি থোৱা নিয়ম আছে। আলহী-অতিথি আহিলে নোমানোৰ অ'খংত ভাত খাবলৈ নিদি অন্য কোঠাত দিয়ে। তেওঁলোকে নিজেও ৰান্ধনিঘৰত ভাত নাখায়। এনে কৰিলে লক্ষ্মীয়ে লগ এৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। কেৱল ঘৰখনৰ বৰবোৱাৰীয়েহে নোমানোত থকাৰ অধিকাৰ লাভ



কৰে। বড়োকছাৰীসকলৰ মতে নোমানোৰ ইচিং হ'ল অতি পৱিত্ৰ। সেয়েহে তাত সোমোৱাৰ আগতে বৰবোৱাৰীয়ে হাত-ভৰি ধুই লয়। এনেদৰে যিমানবাৰ ইচিঙত সোমাব খোজে সিমানবাৰেই ভৰি-হাত, মুখ ধুই নিকা হৈ লোৱা দেখা যায়।<sup>৭০</sup>

ৰাভাসকলৰ মাজতো খোৱা-লোৱা, ৰান্ধনিশালক লৈ কেতবোৰ বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন আছে। পূৰ্বৰ পৰাই ৰাভাসকলে দিনত তিনি সাঁজ ভাত ৰান্ধি খায়। মন কৰিবলগীয়া যে, প্ৰতি সাঁজ ভাত ৰান্ধিবৰ বাবে জীয়ৰী-বোৱাৰীয়ে গা-ধুই লোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। ভাত-শাক ৰান্ধি হ'লে পৰিয়ালৰ প্ৰত্যেকৰ বাবেই ভাত বাঢ়ি দিয়াৰ দৰে অনুপস্থিত থকাজনলৈও এভাগ বাঢ়ি আতালৰ ওপৰত দোণেৰে ঢাকি থোৱাটো পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে চলি আহিছে। আনহাতে ৰাজহুৱা ভোজত ভাত খাবলৈ লোৱাৰ আগতে এগৰাহমান জোখাৰে ভাত দেৱ-দেৱতাৰ নামত উৰ্গা কৰিহে আহাৰ গ্ৰহণ কৰা নিয়ম আছে। ভাত খাই উঠি খৰিকা লগোৱাৰ নিয়ম ৰাভা সমাজত এতিয়াও আছে।<sup>৭১</sup> এওঁলোকৰ দৰেই মিচিং সমাজত প্ৰচলিত ৰান্ধনিশাল সম্পৰ্কীয় লোকবিশ্বাসৰ ভিতৰত যেনে— মিচিং তিৰোতাই ৰান্ধনিশালত ভাত সিজাই থাকোঁতে কেনেকৈ ভাতৰ চৰু বা কেৰাহিৰ কাণত হেতাখন পৰিলে আলহী-অতিথি আহেবুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ধোঁৱা চাঙৰ পৰা হঠাতে কোনো বস্তু পৰি ভাঙিলে বিপদৰ আগজাননী পায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। স্বামীৰ মৃত্যুৰ তিথিৰ দিনা পত্নীয়ে ভাত খালে মৃত স্বামীজন ভোকাতুৰ অৱস্থাত থাকে বুলি মিচিং তিৰোতাসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭২</sup>

উক্ত জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ দৰেই গাৰোসকলৰ মাজতো খোৱা-বোৱা আৰু ৰান্ধনীশালক লৈ বহুবোৰ লোক-বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছে। গাৰোসকলে ভাতখোৱাৰ আগত জোন দেখা পালে অশুভ বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে বাবে জোন দেখিলে সেই সাঁজ ভাত লঘোণে থাকে। গাৰো সমাজত বেলি ডুবাৰ আগে আগে আহাৰ গ্ৰহণ কৰা নিয়ম আছে।<sup>৭৩</sup> ডিমাচাসকলেও গাৰোসকলৰ দৰেই এই ক্ষেত্ৰত কেতবোৰ বিশ্বাস মানি চলে। তেওঁলোকে ভাতখোৱা মজিয়াত কোনোদিন গোৰ নামাৰে। গোৰ মাৰিলে মাৰোঁতাৰ অনিষ্ট হোৱাৰ লগতে ঘৰৰ পৰা লক্ষ্মী দূৰ হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ঠিক একেদৰে খোৱা বাচন-বৰ্তন মাজোঁতে বা ৰন্ধা-বঢ়া কৰোঁতে ডাঙৰ শব্দ হ'লে লখিমী আয়ে মনত দুখ পায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। তেওঁলোকে সন্ধ্যা বেলা ভাত নাখায়। খালে খাওঁতাৰ অনিষ্ট হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৪</sup> এওঁলোকৰ দৰে পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামৰ তিৱাসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, ভগা-ছিগা পাত্ৰত বহি ভাত খাব নাপায়। দুৱাৰদলিত, বিছনাত, বাঢ়নী বা সূতাত বহি হাত ভৰি মেলি ভাত খালে লক্ষ্মীচাৰা হয়। অসমান ঠাইত বহি ভাত খোৱাটো অমঙ্গলৰ চিন বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। বাঢ়ি থোৱা ভাত এৰি গ'লে বিপদ হয় বুলি তিৱাসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৫</sup> এওঁলোকে বৃহস্পতিবাৰে ধান বিক্ৰী নকৰে। ভিক্ষাৰীকো ভিক্ষা দিলে লখিমী যায় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৬</sup> তিৱাসকলে ভাত খাই উঠি গা নুধোৱে। কাৰণ ভাত খাই উঠি গা ধুলে

স্বাস্থ্যৰ অৱনতি ঘটে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভাত খাই থকা অৱস্থাত চিঞৰ-বাখৰ বা হাঁহি-খিকিন্দালি মাৰি থাকিলে লক্ষ্মী আই আঁতৰি যায় বুলি তিৱাসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভাত খাঁওতে চৰ্চৰ্ণি খালে আনে সমালোচনা কৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভাত বন্ধা-বঢ়া কৰোঁতে হেতাত লাগি থকা ভাত এৰুৱাবলৈ যদি চৰুৰ কাষত টঙনিয়াই তেস্তে সি কুলক্ষ্মৰ চিন বুলি বিবেচনা কৰে। সন্তান জন্ম হোৱাৰ পিছত অশৌচ খেদা পৰ্ব মনশ্ব তেওঁলোকে বৰঘৰত অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা নিয়ম আছে। ইবোৰৰ উপৰিও ৰাতি ধানৰ তুঁহ, ভাতখোৱা চোৱা আদি বাহিৰত পেলালে তেওঁলোকৰ পূজ্য দেৱতা বিতুষ্ট হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৭</sup> তিৱাসকলৰ মাজত থকা উক্ত লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰেই কাৰ্বিসকলৰ মাজতো প্ৰচলন হৈ আছে।

অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত প্ৰচলিত এনে লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰ অজনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনতো প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছে। অৱশ্যে ইবোৰৰ উপৰিও তেওঁলোকে খোৱা-বোৱাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অন্যান্য কিছুমান বিশ্বাসো মানি চলা দেখা যায়। সেইবোৰৰ ভিতৰত যেনে— ভাত খাঁওতে মাটিত হাতেৰে ভেজা দি নলয়, ভাত খাঁওতে কঁকালৰ গাঁঠি খুলি খাব নালাগে, জিভা দীঘলকৈ মেলি ভাত নাখায়, গৰুৰ দৰে দীঘলকৈ ডিঙি মেলি ভাত নাখায়, গৰুৰ দৰে দীঘলকৈ পৰি লৈ ভাত নাখায়। এনে অকাৰ্য কৰিলে লক্ষ্মীচাৰা হয় বুলি অসমীয়া সমাজে বিশ্বাস কৰে। ভাত খাঁওতে টিকা দাঙি খালে ভাত কুকুৰৰ পেটলৈ যোৱা বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। আঠুমূৰত ভাতৰ কাঁহী লৈ ভাত খাব নাপায় ইত্যাদি লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰ আজিও অজনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত প্ৰচলন হৈ আছে। তদুপৰি অশৌচ গাৰে পাকঘৰত প্ৰৱেশ নকৰে। পৰিয়ালৰ কোনো লোকৰ মৃত্যু হ'লে তিনিদিনলৈকে চৌকাত জুই ধৰি ভাত ৰন্ধাৰ পৰা বিৰত থাকে। বিয়াদি উলিয়াই দিয়া কইনাক বিয়াৰ দিনা দৰাৰ সৈতে পাকঘৰৰ চৌকাৰ কাষত বহুৱাই একেলগে জলপান খাবলৈ দিয়া পৰম্পৰা আহোমসকলৰ মাজত আজিও আছে। একেদৰে কইনাগৰাকীয়ে দৰা ঘৰত প্ৰৱেশ কৰা পিছত প্ৰথমে পাকঘৰলৈ নি খৰাহীৰে ঢাকি থোৱা একাঁহী ভাত শাহুৱেকে তিনিবাৰ দাঙি ধৰি এই ভাতে জুৰিবনে বুলি ন-বোৱাৰীয়েকক প্ৰশ্ন সোধাৰ নিয়ম আছে। তেতিয়া বোৱাৰীয়েকে তিনিওবাৰেই উত্তৰত 'জুৰিব' বুলি কয়। এনে কাৰ্য সম্পাদনৰ জৰিয়তে ন-বোৱাৰীয়ে ভৱিষ্যত জীৱনত ধানে-ধনে জুৰা মাৰি খাব পাৰিব বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>৭৮</sup> অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত পাকঘৰত ভাত ৰান্ধিবলৈ যাওঁতে প্ৰথমে চৰুত তিনিমুঠি চাউল দিয়াৰ পিছতহে কাজলী কাজলীকৈ বাকী চাউল চৰুত দিয়ে। সাধাৰণতে সকাম-নিকামৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো এনে নিয়ম মানি চলা দেখা যায়।

অসমৰ জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত খোৱা-বোৱা আৰু ৰান্ধনিশালৰ লগত জড়িত এনে বিশ্বাসবোৰৰ সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰি দেখা গ'ল যে প্ৰায়বোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই

ৰান্ধনিশালখন, খোৱা-বোৱা আদিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত স্বকীয় ৰূপত কিছুমান বিশ্বাস মানি চলে যদিও ইবোৰৰ মাজত প্ৰায় একেবোৰ বিশ্বাসেই কিছু ইফাল-সিফালকৈ প্ৰচলন হৈ থকা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা গৈছে।

**সংস্কাৰৰ লগত জড়িত :**

অসমৰ সকলো জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই জন্ম, মৃত্যু, বিবাহ আদিৰ লগত বহুবোৰ নিয়ম মানি চলে। এনে বিশ্বাসবোৰৰ লগত বহু সময়ত ধান-চাউলৰ সম্পৰ্ক আহি পৰে। তেনে বিশ্বাসবোৰৰ ভিতৰত সন্তান জন্মৰ লগত জড়িত বিশ্বাসবোৰ অন্যতম। অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু আৰু জনগোষ্ঠীয় বহুবোৰ সমাজে এনে বিশ্বাসবোৰ মানি চলে। ইবোৰৰ ভিতৰত যেনে— ছোৱালী জন্ম হ'লে কুলা বজায়, টেকী দিয়ে। কাৰণ কুলা আৰু টেকীৰ লগত ছোৱালী জীৱনৰ ওতঃপ্ৰোত সম্পৰ্ক আছে বুলি গ্ৰাম্য সমাজখনে বিশ্বাস কৰে। একেদৰে সন্তান জন্ম দিওঁতা গৰাকীক সন্তানৰ নাই নসৰালৈকে বা অশৌচ নোযোৱালৈকে ৰান্ধনি শালত সোমাবলৈ নিদিয়ৈ। মিচিং সমাজত গৰখীয়া ল'ৰাৰ দ্বাৰা বিৰিণা পাত ফালি গৰ্ভৱতী মহিলাৰ ল'ৰা নে ছোৱালী সন্তান জন্ম হ'ব তাক পৰীক্ষা কৰি চোৱা এক প্ৰকাৰৰ বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন আছে।<sup>১০</sup> তিৱা সমাজত বিশ্বাস আছে যে, সন্তানৰ দাঁত নগজা পৰ্যন্ত ধানখেৰেৰে শৌচ পৰিষ্কাৰ কৰিব নেপায়। তেনে কৰিলে সন্তানৰ দাঁত দীঘল হয়।<sup>১১</sup> চুতীয়াসকলৰ মাজত সন্তান জন্ম হোৱাৰ পিছত সন্তানটিৰ পিতৃয়ে প্ৰথমবাৰ চাবলৈ হ'লে চালনীৰ বিন্ধাইদি চোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে এনে কৰিলে দেউতাকৰ গাত থকা পাপবোৰে সন্তানক স্পৰ্শ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি বাজলৈ ওলোৱাৰ দিনা হাজামে (নাপিতে) সন্তানটিৰ চুলি খুৰাই দিয়াৰ বাবত তেওঁক অন্যান্য বস্তুৰ লগতে চাউল মাননি হিচাপে দিয়াৰ পৰম্পৰা আছে।<sup>১২</sup> ডিমাচা সমাজত সন্তান জন্ম দিয়া প্ৰসূতি গৰাকীক জালুকৰ গুড়ি মিহলি মাৰ ভাত আৰু জুড়ি (মদ) খাবলৈ দিয়ে। তেওঁলোকৰ বিশ্বাস এনে কৰিলে প্ৰসূতি প্ৰসৱ বেদনা দূৰ হয়।<sup>১৩</sup> সন্তান জন্মৰ লগত জড়িত এনেবোৰ বিশ্বাসৰ উপৰিও বাজ নোলোৱালৈ প্ৰসূতিক ভঁৰাল ঘৰ চুবলৈ নিদিয়া, অন্য শুভ কাৰ্যত অংশ গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ নিদিয়া সংস্কাৰবোৰ সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতেই আছে। সন্তান জন্ম হোৱাৰ পিছত কেৱল সন্তানৰ পৰিয়ালটোৱেই নহয় গোটেই বংশ-পৰিয়ালেই ভঁৰাল ঘৰ নুচুৰে। সন্তানৰ বাজ ওলোৱাৰ পিছত ঘৰ-দুৱাৰ মচি-কাঁচি শুচি হৈহে ভঁৰাল স্পৰ্শ কৰে।

জন্ম সম্পৰ্কীয় সংস্কাৰৰ দৰেই বিবাহৰ লগতো বহুবোৰ ধান-চাউলকেন্দ্ৰিক সংস্কাৰ জড়িত হৈ আছে। অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনত ছোৱালীৰ কন্যাকাল বা পুষ্পিতা অবস্থাত থাকোঁতে ভাত খোৱাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে অন্য ফল-মূল খাবলৈ দিয়ে। কাৰণ এই সময়ত

ছোৱালীগৰাকীয়ে ব্ৰত পালন কৰি ভৱিষ্যৎ জীৱনৰ দোষ খণ্ডন কৰি ঈশ্বৰৰ পৰা আশীৰ্বাদ বিচাৰিব লাগে বুলি বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন আছে।<sup>১৩</sup> কন্যাগৰাকীক চাৰি দিনৰ দিনা বা শেষৰ দিনা (১১, ১৩, ১৫) অৰ্থাৎ বিয়া উঠোৱাৰ দিনা বেইৰ তলত গা ধুউৱাৰ পিছত কন্যাৰ মূৰত চাউল ছটিয়াই অপদেৱতা দূৰ কৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত আছে। কইনাগৰাকীক গা-ধুউৱাৰ সময়ত ভৰি থ'বলৈ দিয়া আগলি কলপাতত ধান খেৰৰ জুমুঠি দুটা দিয়াৰ নিয়ম আছে। বিয়াৰ সময়ত পুষ্পিতা হোৱা কইনাগৰাকীয়ে দোণৰি (দোলনি)ত সজায় লোৱা চাউলৰ পৰা এমুঠিক চাউল অন্য চাউলৰ লগত মিহলি কৰি ভাত সিজাই খোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। কাৰণ সেই দোণৰি চাউলে কইনাগৰাকীৰ শৰীৰৰ পৰা ৰোগ-ব্যাধি, অপদেৱতা দূৰ কৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৪</sup> কইনাগৰাকীয়ে বেইৰ তলতে গা ধুই উঠি সূৰ্য দেৱতালৈ চাই দুখন আগলী কলপাতত পিঠাগুড়ি আৰু আঠৈ লৈ দলিয়াই দিয়া ৰীতি আহোমসকলৰ মাজত আছে। ইয়াৰ জৰিয়তে কইনাগৰাকীয়ে সূৰ্য দেৱতাৰ পৰা নৱ-যৌৱনৰ বাবে আশীৰ্বাদ মগা হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। ইয়াৰোপৰি পুষ্পিতা কইনাগৰাকীক এই সময়খিনিত পাকঘৰ, ভঁৰাল ঘৰ, গোহালি ঘৰত প্ৰবেশ কৰিবলৈ দিয়া নহয়। এনে কৰিলে কইনা কালৰ দোষ লাগে বুলি অসমীয়া বৰ্ণহিন্দু সমাজে বিশ্বাস কৰে।<sup>১৫</sup> আহোম, চুতীয়া আদি জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে কইনাৰ পুষ্পিতা বিয়া উঠোৱাৰ দিনা ৰভা তলত তিৰোতাসকলে কেঁচা পিঠাগুড়ি এগৰাকীয়ে আন গৰাকীৰ মুখত ঘহি দি আনন্দ ফুৰ্তি কৰে।

ইয়াৰোপৰি বৰ বিয়া এখনত কইনাগৰাকীক গা ধুৱাওঁতে মূৰত চাউল দিয়া, দৰা ঘৰৰ সাজ-পোছাক পিন্ধাবলৈ পাৰি লোৱা পাতি বা আসনখনত চাউল ছটি মাৰি অপদেৱতা দূৰ কৰি লোৱা পৰম্পৰা আহোমসকলৰ মাজত আছে। ইয়াৰোপৰি বৰ বিয়া এখনত দৰাক কইনাৰ ঘৰৰ পদূলি মুখত চাউল ছটিয়াই অপদেৱতা দূৰ কৰি আদৰি অনা পৰম্পৰা আছে। ৰভা তলৰ পৰা দৰা-কইনাক একেলগে নি কইনাৰ মাকে পাক ঘৰত দুয়োকে একেখন কাঁহীত ভাত খাবলৈ দিয়া পৰম্পৰা আছে। ইয়াৰ পিছতেই কইনাগৰাকীক উলিয়াই দিওঁতে দুৱাৰ মুখ পাৰ হৈ ঘৰলৈ পিছফাল কৰিয়েই হাতেৰে কাজলী কাজলীকৈ ঘৰস্থ ফালে চাউল ছটিয়াই যোৱা ৰীতি আছে। বিশ্বাস যে এনে কাৰ্য কৰি ছোৱালীগৰাকীয়ে ঘৰৰ লখিমী ঘৰতে থৈ যায়। এনেদৰে বিয়া হৈ ওলায় যোৱা কইনাগৰাকী একেবাৰে ঘৰৰ পদূলিৰ পৰা বাহিৰ হৈ যোৱাৰ আগতে ভঁৰাল ঘৰৰ দুৱাৰমুখত বগা কাপোৰেৰে ঢাকি দিয়ে যাতে কইনাৰ লগত ঘৰৰ লখিমী গুচি যাব নোৱাৰে। অসমৰ কাৰ্বিসকলৰ মাজত বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দৰা-কইনাৰ সন্মতি ক্ৰমে আগবঢ়াৰ আগতে সৃষ্টিকৰ্তালৈ মদ আগবঢ়াই দুয়োৰে যুগ্ম জীৱনৰ বাবে মঙ্গল আৰ্শীৰ বিচৰাৰ পৰম্পৰা আছে।<sup>১৬</sup>

বিবাহ আৰু জন্ম সম্পৰ্কীয় লোক-বিশ্বাসবোৰৰ দৰেই অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসকলৰ মাজত মৃত্যুৰ লগত জড়িত সংস্কাৰৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো ধান-চাউল জড়িত হৈ থকা দেখা গৈছে।

অসমৰ প্ৰায়বোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই সময় আৰু বাৰ অনুসৰি নিজৰ নিজৰ প্ৰথা মতে  
কাতি বিহুত পথাৰত লখিমী চাবলৈ যোৱা আৰু ঔটেঙাৰ চাকি জ্বলোৱাৰ নিয়ম আছে।  
ঠিক একেদৰে ভূবানেশ্বৰৰ সন্মুখতো চাকি জ্বলাই লখিমী আইৰ বাসস্থানৰ প্ৰতি সন্মান

প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰা নিয়ম আছে। সকলো জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই আঘোণ মাহৰ আগেয়ে পুৰণি ধানবোৰ উলিয়াই নতুন ধান ভৰাবৰ বাবে ভঁৰালঘৰটো মচি-কাচি শুচি কৰি লোৱা দেখা যায়। অসমৰ প্ৰায় প্ৰত্যেক জাতি-জনজাতিয়েই মাঘ বিহুত প্ৰথম ন-ধানৰ পৰা প্ৰস্তুত কৰা পিঠা-পনা মেজিৰ জুইত অৰ্পণ কৰিহে লোকে খায়। উল্লেখনীয় যে যিকোনো বিহুত পিঠা প্ৰস্তুত কৰোঁতে প্ৰথম পিঠাটো জুইত দি অগ্নি দেৱতালৈ আগবঢ়াই লোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। বিশ্বাস যে এনে কৰিলে অগ্নি দেৱতা সন্তুষ্ট হৈ ভৱিষ্যতেও পিঠা পোৱাৰ আশাত খেতি-বাতি ভাল হোৱাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বা তাপমাত্ৰা নিয়ন্ত্ৰণৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সহায় কৰে। অৱশ্যে আজিকালি জুইশালৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে গেছ ষ্ট'ভ আদি ব্যৱহাৰ হোৱা বাবে এনে পৰম্পৰা কিছু কিছু ঠাইতহে ৰক্ষিত হৈ আছেগৈ। মাঘবিহুৰ দৰেই বহাগ বিহুতো কৃষি প্ৰধান জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজে বহুবোৰ নিয়ম মানি চলে। সাধাৰণতে খেতি-পথাৰ আৰম্ভণিৰ আগেয়ে অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজে আগন্তুক কৃষিৰ বাবে প্ৰস্তুত হয়। সেয়ে এই সময়ত কৃষিপ্ৰধান ৰাইজে আগতীয়াকৈ নাঙল-যুঁৱলি সাজি লয় বা তৈয়াৰ কৰি লয়। তদুপৰি কৃষিপ্ৰধান ৰাইজৰ খেতিৰ সঁজুলি গৰুহালকো অনাগত কৃষিকাৰ্যৰ বাবে সাজু কৰি লোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। সেই অনুসৰি অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয়-অজনগোষ্ঠীয় উভয় সমাজেই বহাগ বিহুৰ সময়ত গৰুহালক মাহ-হালধি, তেল-টেঙা আদি পৱিত্ৰ আৰু ঔষধি গুণযুক্ত বস্তু গাত ঘঁহি গা ধুৱাই। তদুপৰি পিঠা খোৱাই ন-পঘা (বস্ত্ৰ) দিয়ে। যাতে অনাগত খেতিৰ সময়ত গৰুহাল কোনো বেমাৰ-আজাৰত আক্ৰান্ত নহৈ নিৰাপদে থাকে। ইয়াৰ উপৰি বহাগ বিহুত গৰুৰ গাত লাও-বেঙেনা দলিওৱা, দীঘলতি-মাখিলতিৰে কোবোৱা নিয়ম আছে। বিশ্বাস আছে যে দীঘলতি-মাখিলতিৰে কোবালেই গৰুৰ গাত চিকৰা, ম'হ-ডাঁহ আদিৰ উপদ্ৰৱ কম হয় আৰু লাও-বেঙেনা দলিয়ালে গৰু সবলী আৰু শকত-আৱত হয়। এই সম্পৰ্কে এষাৰ প্ৰবচন আছে —

“লাও খা, বেঙেনা খা, বছৰে বছৰে বাঢ়ি যা।

বাপেৰ সৰু, মাৰে সৰু, তই হবি বৰ বৰ গৰু।।”

এই প্ৰবচন ফাঁকি অসমৰ প্ৰায় জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই মানি চলে। কিন্তু পাহাৰীয়া কাৰ্বি, তিৱা, ডিমাচা আদিৰ দৰে ৰুম খেতি কৰা লোকসকলে প্ৰথম ৰুমখেতিৰ মাটি বা ঠাই নিৰ্বাচন কৰিবৰ বাবে মঙ্গলচোৱা নিয়ম কৰে।

অসমৰ পাহাৰ-ভৈয়াম উভয় সমাজেই খেতিৰ বাবে ৰ'দ-বৰষুণৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্ভৰ কৰিব লগা হোৱা বাবে তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত ইন্দ্ৰ দেৱতাৰ পূজা, ভেকুলীৰ বিয়া আদি অনুষ্ঠান পালন কৰে। পূৰ্বে অসমৰ গোৱালপাৰা জিলাৰ নাৰীসকলে বৰষুণৰ বাবে নিবস্ত্ৰ হৈ হুদুম দেও পূজা কৰিছিল। বৰ্তমান এই পৰম্পৰা কিছু শিথিল হ'বলৈ ধৰিছে। কাৰণ পূৰ্বৰ দৰে বৰ্তমান হুদু চৰাই বন্ধা নিয়ম আঁতৰিছে। তাৰ সলনি কলগছৰ পুলি এটা

পুতি তাকেই হুঁদুম খুঁটি ৰূপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰি এই পূজা পালন কৰে। বিশ্বাস আছে যে এই পূজাৰ জৰিয়তে ইন্দ্ৰদেৱতাক সন্তুষ্ট কৰি ধৰালৈ বৰষুণ নমাব পাৰি। অসমৰ প্ৰায়বোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় আৰু অজনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত খেতিৰ সময়ত বৰষুণ নহ'লে বৰষুণৰ বাবে ডেকুলী বিয়া পাতি দিয়াৰ নিয়ম আছে। বিশ্বাস কৰা হয় যে ডেকুলী বিয়া পাতিলে বৰষুণ হয়, কাৰণ ডেকুলী আৰু বৰষুণৰ মাজত এক ৰহস্যময় সম্পৰ্ক আছে বুলি জন সমাজত বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলন হৈ আছে। ইয়াৰোপৰি টেকীথোৰা ওপৰমুৱাকৈ পুতি থোৱা, নাঙলেৰে কোনো গৃহস্থৰ চোতালত হাল বাই বোকা কৰা আদি কাৰ্যৰ জৰিয়তেও বৰষুণৰ আবিৰ্ভাৱ হয় বুলি অসমৰ কেতবোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজে বিশ্বাস কৰি আহিছে। গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ কথাটো হ'ল যে আজিও কৃষিপ্ৰধান অসমৰ সমাজত এনেবোৰ বিশ্বাস তথা কাৰ্য প্ৰচলন হৈ আছে।

অসমৰ সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই নিজা নিজা কৃষ্টি-সংস্কৃতি আগত ৰাখি পৰম্পৰাগত ৰীতি মতে ন-ভুঁই ৰোৱা, হাল উঠোৱা আদি উৎসৱবোৰ পালন কৰে। সেই অনুসৰি ন-ভুঁই ৰোৱা দিনা হাৰিয়া দিন-ভুঁই ৰোৱা, প্ৰথম ঘৰৰ গৃহিণী গৰাকীয়ে ভুঁই ৰোৱা, ন-ভুঁইৰ লগত কচুপুলি, তৰাপুলি, হেলচ, তামোল-পাণ দিয়া আদিবোৰ পৰম্পৰাগত ৰীতি। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও কোনো কোনো জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত হাল উঠোৱাৰ দিনা কেঁচা পিঠাগুৰি থোৱা, নাঙল পিঠাথোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। নাঙল উঠোৱাৰ দিনা দিন-বাৰ চাইহে উঠায় আৰু সেই দিনা নাঙল, যুঁৱলি আদিবোৰ ভালকৈ ধুই মেলি বছৰটোলে সামৰি ৰখাৰ পৰম্পৰা আছে। একেদৰে প্ৰথম ন-খানৰ কাঁচি লগাওঁতে প্ৰথম তিনিটা মুঠি বা তিনি গুজা ধান কাটি পথাৰৰ পৰা লখিমী অনাৰ পৰম্পৰা আছে। আকৌ কাঁচি চিঙা বা নৰা চিঙাৰ দিনা জনগোষ্ঠীভেদে গামোচা বা দাঙৰি কঢ়িওৱা ব্যক্তিৰ ধান ভাৰতেই লখিমী আনে। অৱশ্যে এনেক্ষেত্ৰত জনগোষ্ঠী ভেদে পুৰুষজনে (গৃহস্থ) একেটা উশাহতে তিনি গুজা ধান শিপাৰে সৈতে উভালি খানৰ ডাঙৰি এটাত বান্ধি ঘৰলৈ আনি ভঁৰালৰ সন্মুখৰ খুঁটা এটাত বান্ধি থোৱা পৰম্পৰা আছে। কোনো কোনো জনগোষ্ঠীয়ে নৰা চিঙা দিনা লখিমী দোণত আনে। বহুতে পথাৰতে তিনি গুজা লখিমী এৰি আহে। চৰাই-চিৰিকতিৰ বাবে। দেখা যায় যে এনেদৰেই অসমৰ প্ৰায়বোৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয়েই কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে নানা এনেবোৰ পৰম্পৰা আৰু বিশ্বাস যুগে যুগে মানি আহিছে। অৱশ্যে সময়ৰ সোঁতত বিৱৰ্তন আৰু পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ মাজেদি যুগ সভ্যতাত এনেবোৰ পৰম্পৰাই ৰূপ সলনি কৰি সংস্কাৰতিভাৱে চলি আছে।

### সামৰণি :

ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ধানখেতিৰ লগত জড়িত লোকবিশ্বাস আৰু পৰম্পৰা শীৰ্ষক বিষয়টি অধ্যয়ন কৰি দেখা গ'ল যে, অসমৰ কৃষি সভ্যতাৰ লগত এনে

পৰম্পৰাবোৰ এৰাই চলিব নোৱাৰাকৈ অসমৰ জনজীৱনৰ আঁহে আঁহে সোমাই আছে। অসমৰ কৃষি সম্বন্ধীয় লোকবিশ্বাস সম্পৰ্কে সময়ে সময়ে বিভিন্নজন পণ্ডিতে না না অধ্যয়ন আগবঢ়াই গৈছে। তাৰ ভিতৰত — পণ্ডিত লোকসংস্কৃতিৰ গৱেষক ড° বিৰিঞ্চি কুমাৰ বৰুৱা, কলাগুৰু বিষ্ণুপ্ৰসাদ ৰাভা, জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালা আদিৰ নাম ল'ব পাৰি। এইসকলৰ উপৰিও ড° নিৰ্মলপ্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ 'অসমৰ লোক-সংস্কৃতি' লীলা গগৈৰ 'অসমৰ সংস্কৃতি' ড° নবীনচন্দ্ৰ শৰ্মাৰ 'অসমৰ লোকসংস্কৃতিৰ আভাস' আদি গ্ৰন্থতো অসমৰ সমাজ জীৱনত পূৰ্বৰে পৰা প্ৰভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰি অহা লোকজীৱনৰ লোক বিশ্বাস সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰা দেখা গৈছে। কিন্তু বৰ অসমৰ কৃষিপ্ৰধান জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনে পালন কৰা কৃষিভিত্তিক বা কৃষিৰ লগত জড়িত লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰৰ সম্পৰ্কে এক শৃঙ্খলাবদ্ধ আলোচনা পোৱা নাযায়। সেয়েহে আমাৰ সামান্য প্ৰয়াসেৰে অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজৰ কৃষিৰ লগত জড়িত লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰৰ সম্পৰ্কে এই অধ্যয়নত আলোচনা কৰা হ'ল।

ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাত বসবাস কৰি থকা পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামৰ সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীৰেই প্ৰধান আহাৰ হ'ল ভাত। সেইফালৰ পৰা তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰধান জীৱিকা হ'ল কৃষি। কৃষিৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্ভৰ কৰিবলগীয়া হোৱা হেতুকে হয়তো তেওঁলোকে কৃষিকাৰ্যত বাধাৰ সন্মুখীন নোহোৱাকৈ কৃষিকাৰ্য যাতে সমাপন কৰিব পাৰে তাৰ ব্যৱস্থা হিচাপে আদিম জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজখনে প্ৰকৃতিৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্ভৰ কৰি এনে কৃষিকাৰ্য সম্পন্ন কৰিছিল। সেয়ে আদিম সহজ-সৰল সেই সমাজখনে প্ৰকৃতিৰ বিভিন্ন সত্ত্বাসমূহক গীত-নৃত্য, জন্তু বলি আদিৰে পূজা-অৰ্চনা কৰি সন্তুষ্ট কৰি তেনে প্ৰকৃতি সত্ত্বাসমূহৰ কৃপাতে সুফল লাভ কৰিছিল বুলি ধাৰণা কৰিছিল। যাৰ ফলস্বৰূপে পিছৰ পৰ্যায়ত তেওঁলোকৰ ভৱিষ্যত প্ৰজন্মই সেই নিয়মসমূহ মানি চলিছিল আৰু ক্ৰমান্বয়ে এনে পূজা-অৰ্চনা, বলি-বিধানবোৰেই পৰম্পৰা হিচাপে পৰিগণিত হ'ল। আটাইতকৈ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ কথাটো হ'ল যে, এনে পৰম্পৰাসমূহ গঢ় লৈ উঠিছিল তেওঁলোকৰ মনত জাগ্ৰত হোৱা বিশ্বাসৰ জৰিয়তে। এনেদৰেই আদিম লোকসকলে যি বিশ্বাস মানি চলিছিল, পিছলৈ সিয়েই লোকসমাজৰ আভ্যন্তৰত প্ৰৱেশ কৰি খোপনি পুতিলৈ লোকবিশ্বাস হিচাপে পৰিগণিত হয়। অৱশ্যে পৰিৱৰ্তন আৰু বিৱৰ্তনৰ মাজেৰে সৰকি আহোঁতে এনে লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰৰ প্ৰকৃত স্বৰূপ যে সলনি হ'ব ধৰিছে তাত সন্দেহ নাই।

দেখা যায় যে, প্ৰাচীন কালৰ পৰা বৰ্তমানলৈকে ধাৰাবাহিকভাৱে অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠীয় সমাজত পালিত হৈ অহা এনে কৃষিকেন্দ্ৰিক লোকবিশ্বাসবোৰ অমূলক ধাৰণা নহয়। ইয়াৰ মাজত এক ইন্দ্ৰজালিক ৰহস্য তথা জনজীৱনৰ আত্মবিশ্বাস আৰু বিজ্ঞানসন্মত কিছু কাৰণো লুকাই আছে। সেয়েহে এই দিশবোৰৰ প্ৰতি লক্ষ্য ৰাখি লোকবিশ্বাসৰ অন্তৰালত লুকাই থকা সত্যাসত্য আৰু বিজ্ঞানসন্মত কাৰণবোৰ বিচাৰি উলিয়াবৰ যথেষ্ট থল আছে।



আশা কৰিব পাৰি যুগে যুগে চলি অহা এনে কৃষিভিত্তিক ৰীতি-নীতি, লোক-বিশ্বাসবোৰে লোকসংস্কৃতিৰ পথাৰখন যিদৰে চহকী কৰি ৰাখিছে, সেইদৰে ই লোকসংস্কৃতি অধ্যয়নৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো বিবিধ বিষয়ৰ সমল যোগান ধৰি নতুন অধ্যয়নৰ পথ মোকলাই দিব।

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## Part IV

*Empirical Studies: Plantation Labour, Economy,  
and Rural Empowerment.*

# Tea Plantation Labour of Sonitpur District, Assam A Geographical Study

**Dr. Bhupen Saikia**

## **The Problem**

In Assam tea plantation was the first capitalist enterprise introduced by the British colonialists in the early part of the nineteenth century. The British occupied Assam in 1826 and explored the possibilities of growing tea. Initially attempts were made to recruit labour from within Assam as that would have entailed much lower cost in the recruitment of labour. But it did not succeed as the number of landless agricultural workers in Assam were few and was not readily available. There was virtually no labour force in Assam to work as a fulltime worker in the plantations. During its teething period, the local people, particularly the plain tribal people, were almost the sole source of labour. Some skilled labourers were also brought from China and engaged them in the tea estates of upper Assam mainly in Chabua. But quick inflow of Sterling for the extension of tea plantations rapidly increased the demand for labour. This resulted in a mad search for labour. It was because of this labour shortage that a contractual system of labour supply developed. Therefore, by 1853 indentured labour from outside the province of Assam had to be recruited. The labourers were families or families engaged in other primary occupations. They were hailing from the provinces of Bihar,

Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madras and Uttar Pradesh.

The system of recruitment of plantation labourers and the condition under which they were recruited and transported to the tea plantations was ruthless. However, a sufficient number of labourers were brought and children born to the recruited labour multiplied the labour force resulting in surplus labour. After some years, repatriation of time expired labourers was started (Awasthi, 1975, 226).

Thus, the number of recruited labour for the plantations in Assam far exceeded the demand. A massive migration of such labourers gradually created surplus plantation labourers who settled in the adjacent villages after a short span of work in the tea plantations. This section is called the 'ex-tea garden labour'. The planters and the British Government allowed them to settle in the nearby wasteland areas so that they might be recruited seasonally at the time when their labour was needed. As a matter of fact, both the Government and the planters encouraged the ex-tea garden labourers by giving them land for settlement. The Government was interested to settle them in the unoccupied land to collect more land revenue. The planters or more precisely the tea estate managers who were mostly British encouraged this process of creation of a labour reserve for meeting additional recruitment of labour during the peak plucking season. The time expired labourers started settlement as ex-tea garden labourers from about 1860's. They took the opportunity of taking possession of land for cultivation of crops and thus emerged as cultivators and formed new villagers where such an opportunity existed. The time expired labourers came back mostly to the agricultural activities as there were no other alternative means of their livelihood.

Both the tea plantation workers and ex-tea garden labour together constitute a separate social group known as the 'Tea labour community' (the word 'labour' includes both workers and non-workers). This labour community has several distinctive socio-economic traits by virtue of the demands made upon it by the plantation system. The plantation

system is essentially an elaborate economy which exhibits a combination of both agricultural and industrial characteristics. Nearly less than a tenth of the working force on the plantations are factory labour and the rest are engaged in plantation works which are agricultural in nature. The very nature of the plantation system is crucial in shaping the life of the plantation labourers and determining their evolution and character as a social group. It is estimated that the total population of the tea plantation labourers and the ex-tea garden labourers would be around 30 lakhs in 1971. Out of this, 14 lakhs belonged to the tea plantation labour population and 16 lakhs were ex-tea garden labourers. At 20 percent decadal rate of increase, the total population of the tea labour community in Assam is estimated at 36 lakhs and that of the ex-tea garden labour at about 19.2 lakhs in 1981. Tea labour community constitutes about 20 percent of the total population of Assam.

The tea labour community had come across a long way to be recognised themselves as a separate social group in Assam. Because of its origin from heterogeneous and backward sections of society and also because of its rural habitation and basically pressurised service condition, it is still largely under the influence of a backward culture. Thus the tea plantation and ex-tea garden labour population in Assam exhibit complex social characteristics. A complex process of adjustments among the different elements has taken place in the tea plantation and in the ex-tea garden villages. In such a living condition, literacy among the tea labour community is fairly low. The caste tribe identity still persists. The tea plantation labour being confined for considerable period of time have not found enough opportunity for their exposure to the local culture. Labour management system of the planters also prevent their social mobility.

### **The Study area**

Sonitpur<sup>1</sup> occupies the third place among the tea growing districts of Assam. The credit for introduction of tea plantation in this district goes to Mr. Martin who opened a plantation at Balipara in 1854 and started another estate at Haleswar in 1987. The Assam company



also started its plantations at Singri Parbat and these were the only plantations till the year of 1859 (Allen, 1905, 136). The next four years were a period of steady growth and after this, the tea plantation went through a severe crisis when the speculating class came in. Many of the promoters took advantage of fee simple rules of 1861 regarding land ownership according to which an applicant could have larger estates for tea cultivation. Thus instead of promoting the industry, the speculators used to sell their estates at exorbitantly high prices. By 1878, this trend was checked and the tea industry began to grow.

According to 1971 census, there were 92 tea estates in the district including divisions and sub-divisions. But according to the tea Directory (1982), there were 61 major tea estates in the district covering a gross area of 45,313 hectares. The actual area under tea cultivation was about 24,980 hectares. The total annual production was about 450 lakh kg. According to 1991 census, the total number of plantation labour households in the district was 42,665. Within the tea plantation area, there were 2,22,878 labourers including institutional and houseless population, out of which 1,14,064 were males and 1,08,814 were females. The number of male population is higher than that of the female. The sex ratio was 954.

According to 1991 census, there was 95,012 workers in the district and out of this 8,016 were engaged in subsidiary occupations like cultivation and other allied activities to cultivation and 5,310 were agricultural labourers. The rate of female participation in work is also high. There are 41,438 female workers against 53,574 male workers. Thus the ratio was 773 female worker per thousand male workers.

The literacy among tea labour population is very low. About 18 percent of the population could read and write only. The total number of literate persons was 40,437 (1991). Out of this 29,102 were males and 11,335 were females. The literacy among females is remarkably low i.e. against 3 literate males there is only one literate females.

The religious life of the tea labour population has been moulded mainly by two principal religions—Hinduism and Christianity. Hinduism

is professed by more than two thirds of the total population. Christianity by less than one third, and others (viz. followers of Kabirpanthi sect, etc.) are less than 0.50 percent of the total population. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population stand at 1774 and 1957 persons respectively according to 1991 census. Out of 128 castes (56) and tribe (72) Kurmi, Karmakar, Bhumij, Parja, Mundra, Oraon, Gond, Gour, Bhuyan, Santal, Tassa, Kharia, Mahli, Mali, Sawara, Sabor, Sawashi etc. are common tribes and Baraik, Hari, Lohar, Panika, Tanti, Nayak, etc. are common castes and each of them has its own cultural trait.

The prolonged association of the plantation labourers with the local people has made some change in the social life, culture, religion and outlook of the former. Besides, the same managerial system and more or less similar economic condition of the labourers have contributed to reduce the differences among themselves. The inter-caste understanding developed to some extent due to mutual help and trust has widened their attitude and outlook towards a common socio-economic life. Because of such a growing feeling of commonness in their social outlook, they like to call themselves as 'tea tribes' to the outside world rather than to show the identity of their separate castes and tribes.

The settlement pattern of the labour in the plantation of the district was developed as per colonial policy of the planters in the preindependence period. The labourers were settled at different distatnt barrack lines separately according to their castes and ceed. Though real barrack lines are ansent now a days, yet the line system is still prevalent. In some cases, houses are clustered in a village, while both the line system and clustered patterns are found in some states.

As regards the size of the family it is seen that small family consisting of less than four mebers is less in number. As such very big size families consisting of more than ten members one also rare. Families having four to ten members are common among the plantation labour of the district. The size of the family has its empact upon the

participation in economic activities. The economic condition compels the labourers to grow a tendency to live together so as to lessen the economic suffering.

In almost all the estates, about 40 percent of the population are below 15 years of age. A large number of children falls in this age group which means a very high dependency ratio. The sex ratio varies estatewise. The average sex ratio is 931 which is less than the average figure of the district, but the female outnumber the males in some estates.

The occupational structure of the tea plantation labour is more or less uniform. On the average about 72 percent of the workers are engaged in plantation activities. The number of workers in other economic activities except cultivation is remarkably less. In some estates, more than 97 percent of the working population work in plantations. The percentage of non-workers in different estates varies from 37 to 56. Due to the lack of alternative sources of employment within the tea estate, the workers could not engage themselves in other economic activities.

The main occupation of the labourers within the tea estate is wage earning in plantations. On the average, about 33 percent of the total labour population are engaged in the plantation. It is seen that atleast one member of the family is engaged in the plantation either permanently or temporarily. The number of temporary labourers is more than half of the permanent labourers in almost all the estates. On the average, 21 percent of the total working force are engaged in the subsidiary activities, such as cultivation, livestock rearing and petty shop keeping. Almost every resident family has got some sort of subsidiary occupations. A very significant feature is that, on the average, almost 60 percent of the labour families have been practising cultivation side by side their main occupation in the tea plantation.

Among the labour families, the family income increases if the wife and the children enter the labour force. On the average, the women and children labourers employed comprise about 43.7 percent and 8.4 percent respectively.

Both the wage and the salary systems are prevalent in the tea estates. The mode of payment for the wages of the labourer is weekly. The weekly wage of a labourer is not uniform and it varies slightly from estate to estate. The number of salaried sub-staff is less than that of the wage labourers. Only 3 to 4 percent of the labourers have been employed as salaried sub staff.

There is a good deal of variation in income among the families of the same size located in the estates under different ownerships. The family income is related to the family size in such a way that larger the family size, larger is the income. Further, the family income varies as the number of children. On the average, the families having 3 children have the highest income and income decreases as the number of children increase. Most of the families have medium annual income from Rs. 5000.00 to Rs. 15,000.00 in the tea estates under the study (1990). About 24 percent of the families are living below the poverty line.

The size of land holding has a direct influence on the family income. A general trend is that when the size of landholding increases, the family income also increases. The per capita income of the labourers in different tea estates is 2 to 4 times less than that of the per capita national income at 1989-90 prices. As regards expenditure of labour families, the average annual per capita expenditure is marginally less than the average per capita income. It is found that the families consisting of 5 to 10 persons have shown a balanced income-expenditure pattern. But in the case of very small (less than 5 persons), the family expenditure sometimes surpasses the income. It has been observed that, larger the size of landholding, higher is the income and surplus in the family budget.

The life of the plantation labourers is very much simple. As a whole, they spend 85 percent of the total expenditure on food and clothing together. Naturally, they can hardly afford money for meeting higher needs and other requirements. The income and expenditure pattern clearly shows that the living condition of the labourers is at a hopelessly substandard or subsistence level.

As regard housing condition, the facilities which are provided by the estate authorities to the labourers are not adequate and satisfactory. The same is the case for sanitation facilities.

The landholding types is such that only 25.1 and 6.1 percent of the lands are annual and periodic in nature. Others are government ceiling surplus land and garden land provided by the estate owners. The household property (both moveable and immovable) of the labour is meagre and less valuable. The luxurious goods are almost nil among the labour families. Most of the labourers have not yet developed the habit of saving. Family life in the tea plantation has been remaining almost primitive. Among the labourers, scope for recreation is very limited. The value and importance of entertainment as a means to relieve the drudgery and monotony of life after work of the ignorant workers can not be underestimated, absence of which owes addiction to alcohol and intoxicant. They spend their hard-earned money for these bad habits.

Among the labourers, the problem of surplus labour and unemployment is very grave. The percentage of unemployed population varies from 10.1 to 20.7 to the total population in different status. The problem of unemployment has been increasing due mainly to high rate of growth of population, lack of mobility, limited scope for alternative employment, inability of absorption in the estates, inadequate skill and education for other jobs outside the estates, and lack of occupational mobility.

The working condition of the labourers is not satisfactory. The works of the labourers are tough. Holidays and leaves are strictly limited. The labourers do not get wages for the days of weekly rest. Plantation works are essentially agricultural in nature and are generally done by hand. Most of the works are very hard and cannot be performed with the help of machines and modern techniques. So the labourers are compelled to be more laborious and painstaking.

Though the tea plantation is often regarded as an industry, yet the labour management relation is not like that of any other industry.

In the pre-independence period, a paternalistic labour management system prevailed. A dominance dependence relationship was prevalent among them. Till today, labourers are maintained and supervised by the untrained and uneducated persons in a manner unheard of in any other industries. A non-industrial labour management system has been still prevailing.

Although the condition of the labourers are not satisfactory in the tea estates under any kind of ownership patterns, yet the pattern of labour management in the tea plantations differs in some important aspects. Tea estates under the company ownership (both Indian and non-Indian) being generally large, operations are based on a division of labour and specialisation in certain areas. The individually owned or partnership tea estate being small, the owner himself performs all the major tasks of the management. The tea estate which are managed by the corporation of the government are inefficient small and expensive. The bigger companies due to their sound economic background can provide comparatively better welfare facilities to the labourers more speedily which cannot be provided by the smaller ones.

Considering the hapless condition of the labourers and growing possibility of small scale farming which has been encouraged by the government of Assam, it is expected that small scale production of tea (green leaf) by the small holder farmers under 'directed body' can be a farming alternative as it has been pursued in Fiji for tobacco production. Since 1972, southern Development company has been successfully directing local farmers in growing tobacco on small farms in Fiji. The tea plantation in Assam can also be developed through this farming alternative of 'directed small holder system'.

### **Findings**

1. The tea plantation labour population form the sizeable section of the Assam's population constituting a distinct social group known as the 'Tea Tribe' or 'Tea labour community'. The very nature of the colonial plantation system has shaped the lives of the tea labourers and their evolution as a social group.

2. The tea plantaion in Assam being an enclave economy and colonial in nature could not pay proper attention for the well being of the labourers. The study has conclusively established that the socio-economic conditions of the labourers are not satisfactory.
3. There is a spatial variation in demographic characteristics. Welfare facilities vary ownership wise. The Indian Assamese (native) owned and Government corporation managed estates being small in size are unable to extend satisfactory facilities to the labourers.
4. The tea industry is a major employer of labour, but absorption of surplus labour in the plantations is an increasing problem. Lack of occupational mobility of the labourers is a contributing factor to this problem. Due to inadequency in training, skill and educational qualification, the labourers are found to depend on the wage-based economy in the plantations.
5. Due to basically pressurised service condition, non-industrial production relation, wage-based economic system, low income, rural habitation and isolation from urban influence, diversified casteist behaviour, lack of opportunity for exposure to the outer world and deplorably low literacy, the plantation labour population has been still largely under the influence of background pre-capitalist culture.
6. In view of multi-tribe, multi-caste and multi-lingual composition of labour force, the plantation labourers of Assam cannot be identified as a proletariannised working class. The labourers are in a state of semi-proletarianised class, basically semi-peasants and semi-industrial wage-workers. They form a class combination of both peasantry and proletariats. Thus, dualism is a significant characteristic of the labourers.

### **Suggestions**

The present study has brought to light many of the hitherto unknown aspects of tea plantation labour population. The findings

suggest that concerted efforts are called for the solution (both short term and long term) of their problems. On the basis of the findings of the work, the following suggestions are put forward for the solution of the problems of the plantation labourers and to the future researchers as well as planners.

1. The wages and salaries of the plantation labourers should be increased with an immediate effect in parity with those in other industrial sector in order to raise their income level.
2. In order to increase the employment opportunities, the tea plantations should be spatially expanded for which there is ample scope in the tea estates of Assam.
3. As the tea plantations of Assam are mainly controlled by the non-native Indian big houses and non-Indian companies, the profit derived from the plantations goes outside Assam. So the region has not been deriving the desired benefit out of it. At least a part of the profit should be reinvested for the regional development of Assam in general and plantation labour in particular. As the government of Assam has declared that any income from tea is spent on setting up other industries in Assam would be totally exempted from agricultural tax, the tea planters should not hesitate to reinvest their profit for regional development of Assam.
4. To absorb surplus and unemployed labourers, the planters should pay attention to establish other allied industries pertaining to tea plantations, such as light engineering industries, spare parts of various types of implements, citronella oil pressing industry, cane and bamboo products producing factories, furniture houses and other productive sectors.
5. Special importance should be given to extend proper welfare facilities to the labourers particularly the provisions of educational as well as health facilities. Eradication of mass illiteracy and malpractices is urgently needed, which are found to exist with the lives of the labourers.
6. The government should formulate effective laws with an intention



to uplift the socio-economic condition of the labourers and to ensure the implementation of the welfare measures by the planters. A strong vigilance and proper monitoring should be the responsibility of the government in order to ensure that the plantation workers are not deprived of social amenities as enjoyed by the workers engaged in other industries.

7. The mode of payment i.e. weekly paid wage system should be abolished at least in the case of permanent labourers and monthly payment system should be introduced.
8. So long the colonial plantation system is allowed to continue, an all round development of the labourers could not be expected. Therefore, an alternative farming system should be developed.
9. The ownership pattern of the tea plantations has been changing frequently. To know the changing pattern, an indepth study should be made.
10. In view of the distinction between the tea plantation labour and ex-tea garden labour population, a comparative socio economic study should be made.
11. The decision of the Government of Assam to conduct a separate census during 1994 for the tea labour population should be carried out immediately and elaborately so that various unknown facts are brought into light on the basis of which a realistic planning strategy for the socio-economic development of the plantation labour can be adopted.

#### Notes

1. In 1983, the erstwhile Darrang district was divided into Sonitpur and Darrang district and the former Tezpur Sub-Divison was upgrade to the present Sonitpur District.

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# **Problem and Prospect of Community Development Programmes**

**Dr. Nakul Chandra Sarma**

The community Development Programme (CDP) is an integrated rural reconstruction welfare scheme undertaken by the Government of India. The purpose of this scheme is to ensure comprehensive development of the rural areas, the people as well as to bring about qualitative change in the standard of living. The Community Development Programme has greater bearing in sustainable improvement of social and economic conditions of the people in the rural areas. In the Indian scenario, this programme approaches at initiating pragmatic development programmes in the field of agriculture, education, health, animal husbandry, sanitation and cottage industries at the grassroots level. More than 70% of Indian people live in village. But the rural masses are still in the trap of marginality despite having 65 years of development efforts of the Govt. of India. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are already functioning in decentralised and democratic manner to empower the common people politically, improving the living standard economically. The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. added an unprecedented dimension in empowering rural people and ensuring economic development by decentralizing sufficient power to the local bodies with added phillip to resource mobilization. But

experiences reveal that even this new dispensation is yet to bring about positive results in this direction. The successful implementation of the proposed programmes depends largely upon the active participation of the people and the Government. The Government of India is aiming at the implementation of the developmental schemes in the name of Community Development Programme through the newly constituted Panchayati Raj Institutions. The CDP is based on the assumption that social and economic development schemes would not be successful unless the village people were convinced of the need of participating activities in the development schemes.

Theoretically, the basic objective of the CDP is to make the rural people as development Participants. Development is recurring theme in the vocabulary of the third world countries. The leaders used every platform, legislature, executive decision making, popular addresses and International forum to articulate their concept of development. Development is not mere modernization. It is basically intended to bring in a desired change in various sectors of social life, extending its effects to larger social areas, and at the same time taking roots in the national soil so as to make the whole process of change indigenous and legitimized. Politically, it introduces structural differentiation and a drive for developing their capabilities. Administratively, it calls for a functional specialization and need for professional efficacy. Economically, it directs its efforts for an increase in the gross net product and aims to improve the standard of living. Socially, it encourages secondary structure and strives to vitalize these structures through social mobilization. Participative association of people in the process of development is strengthened by social context of development. Mahatma Gandhi initiated a people centered process of development with mobilization and organization of community forces. The aim was to mobilize people and make them aware of the process of change, to politicize the machinery and make it responsive to the needs of the community. (SAJOSPS : 2006 : Page 47)

The concept of community development based in the developed

countries is not similar with the developing countries. Because the developed countries used it for both rural and urban areas, whereas, the developing countries used it only in the rural areas. However, the concept of CDP of the present form is mainly an American concept. But no effort was made by the Indian state to decentralise powers to the grassroots level in rural India until 'Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report'. The B.M. Committee recommended for setting up three-tier Panchayati Raj in our country to ensure people's participation in the process of development. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee was in fact, the first in post-colonial India to raise the issue of democratic decentralization for development as a means for working people's initiative and mobilizing their voluntary and spontaneous participation. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee was accepted by National Development Council in 1959. But there are certain difficulties in PRIs which suffered from initiating development process since its implementation.

In 1977 the Janata Dal came to power and the Janata Government appointed the Asok Mehta Committee to review the existing Panchayati Raj Institutions. The most significant recommendation of the Committee is for the creation of two-tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions. One remarkable feature of the Asok Mehta Committee recommendation was that it emphasized the political parties to participate in Panchayati Raj Institution's affairs. Again the Committee also suggested to provide for reserved constituencies for the SCs and STs. Interestingly Asok Mehta Committee observed that Panchayati Raj Institutions were exclusively dominated and controlled by the socio-economically advanced sections of the society and it appears that Panchayati Raj Institutions of India function marginally and largely fail to fulfil popular expectations.

Possibly because of such loopholes in the administration, the Govt. of India was in hurry to give it a new dimension. Hence the first half of 1993 witnessed a flurry of activities at the level of Central Government aimed at remedying this dismal situation. As is indicated,

the Govt. of India passed 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment bill which brought about a new innovation in the grassroots level but also for entrusting them with a greater role in decision making and development functions in matters of their immediate concern. Significantly the Act. seeks to make Panchayats not only as instruments of rural development and decentralized planning but also as institutions of self Government. However, after a gap of 14 years, the Assam Congress (I) Govt. held Panchayat election in Feb/1992. To keep conformity with national pattern, Assam Panchayati Raj Bill 1994 was passed by the Govt. of Assam in March 1994. Following the new dispensation again Panchayat elections were held in March 2001 and elections was fought completely on party basis. The new arrangements should have reduced the burden of the Government and increase the responsibilities of the people. But still the development process in the Panchayat level has not been spearheaded and up to the popular expectations.

The literature available on the topics can be classified into two broad categories as (i) theoretical studies and (ii) empirical studies of the participation of the people through Panchayati Raj Institutions in the rural development programmes.

S.R. Maheswari (1996) in his book 'Local Government in India' made a specific context on the programme of community development. The author stated that the community development programme is certainly new but the idea underlying it, is not new to this country. As a matter of fact the idea is as old as the Vedas and was probably a notable feature of the Mohenjodaro civilization. He pointed out that the present form of community development programme is an American concepts (Maheswari 1996).

A book 'Rural Development and Social Change in India' (1983) written by S.S. Thekkamalai has made an attempt to trace out the changing political system in rural India which can be observed in various types of changes particularly in development programmes. The book is significant contribution to the study of village leadership. (Thekkamalai, 1983)

Harichandran's (1983) book 'Panchayati Raj and Rural Development' has studied Panchayati Raj with main objective of evaluating the role of these bodies in rural development with particular reference of Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that Panchayati Raj bodies enjoyed delegated powers and functions. Resources were inadequate to meet the responsibilities. Panchayati Raj bodies could be the instruments of rural developments only if they are provide with adequate resources. (Harichandran, 1983)

An empirical study was conducted by A. Bose (1986) of the movement for people's planning process in mindnapore District of West Bengal. The author has emphasised that the starting point of decentralization from the bottom should be the village and the framing of rural development plans should statrt with listing by villagers themselves. (Bose, 1986)

E.D. Setty (1994) in this book 'Effective Strategies for Rural Development' stated that rural development is a generic concept subsuming several fields of development that fall under economic development, democratic growth and social injustice. The book emphasies that the planners, organizers, the administrators and the field workers have to take care of and be sensitive in understanding people, their needs and problems and working with them for their advancement and welfare. (Setty, 1994)

Hariprasad Chetris (2007) 'Panchayati Raj System and Development Planning' is a study that carried out to the functioning of the Panchatai Raj Institution in Sikkim particularly after passing of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act. 1992. The book provides a platform for sharing the author's experiences about functioning and faults of the PRIs. These experiences can prove useful for rural leaders while managing fiscal resources or taking decisions with for reaching and lasting consequences on the life of the villagers. The author made an attempt to study the structure and functioning of Panchatai Raj in the state of Sikkim with special references to empowerment of women, devolution of powers, participation of weaker sections of people in

the developmental process, resource mobilization by the Gram Panchayats, the extent of autonomy enjoyed the Gram Panchayats, state of benefits from the developmental schemes and the role of bureaucracy etc. (Chhetri, 2007)

M. Aslam (2007) in his book 'Panchayati Raj in India' states that impartial social and economic development gets accelerated when common people identify themselves as active partners in the process of development. Though we feel proud of our achievements and development in various fields, but large majority of our people in the rural area still not active participants in the process of development. The primary reason for this imbalance is that the grassroots level democratic institutions do not have any significant role in determining the directions of development. The revival of the Panchayati Raj Institutions through the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the constitution of India was to correct this imbalance and to endow PRIs with the strength and prestige associated with self governance structures sanctified by the constitution itself. (Aslam. 2007)

Sonit Kr. Bhuyan (2008) in his book 'Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development' stated that in India where majority of the population live in rural area, the development of rural economy is a must for overall economic development of the country. Poverty and enequality are the two major issues which affect the path of development of our country specially in rural areas. The Poverty alleviation has become one of the major objectives of Indian planning since the inception of First Five Year Plan in 1951. Accordingly a number of schemes and programmes have been introduced for alleviation of poverty during all the successive plan periods. (Bhuyan. 2008)

J.K. Das (2009) has brought out a most unique and significant empirical research work entitled 'Social Base of Grass-roots politics in Assam' which made attempt to analyse the social bases of Panchayati Raj Institutions after the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment Act. He made an attempt to fillup the vacuum of our knowledge regarding the sociological appraisal of grass-roots politics in Assam.

The author has grouped some very pertinent issues through an inquiry of social background features of the representative of Panchayats of a specific universe based in Assam for a broader understanding and generalization of grass-roots governance. The book deals with intensively the Panchayati Raj Institutions of Assam with a special reference to the district of Kamrup from a sociological perspective. (Das, 2009)

In the specific context of Assam Padma Lochan Bhuyan in his Ph.D. Thesis, 'A study of the Community Development Programme on Rural Development' in Golaghat district of Assam stated that community development is a process for changing the traditional way of life. Again it is a method by which people can be assisted to develop themselves and for the welfare of the rural poor. The 'Development' and 'Democracy' both have a closed relationship. The value of democracy could be judged only when the people will get an opportunity to participate in the development process. The rural Development programme for development of rural poor was started in 1958. For last 37 years the Government has been lunching various types of programme form multipurpose approach to integrated Rural Development approach. But the result of these approaches is not satisfactory due to loopholes of the implemnting agencies.

In the thesis it was stated that the New Panchatai Raj Institutions and the Jawahar Rojger Yojana are and effort of the government to disseminate the democracy at the grassroot level. In India a series of programme have been implemented to improve the socio-economic condition of the rural areas and to ameliorate the condition of the poorest of the poor. The people oriented government function, often called community revolution, has its impact on Rural Development. Inspite of various measures for community Development to Integrated Rural Development, it has been seen that the rich become the richer and the poor become poorer. It has happened mainly, due to the faulty implementation of the programme at the grassroot level. Because the real benefits could not reach the target group or lager section of



the society. Finally the author stated the community development is a movement for progress of the country as a whole. (Bhuyan, 1998)

Dev. S Mehandra has examined some important indications relating to rural India in the pre and post liberalization periods and finds the Rural India is not 'Shining' in his article. 'How to make Rural India Shining'. To make rural development more board based and balanced, investment, technology and appropriate institution are needed. To make Rural India 'Shine' this paper has suggested 10 (ten) important areas viz. employment, increase in public investments, agriculture sector, water management, rural institutional reforms, Rural non-farm sector, Health and Education, Reduction in regional, Personal and Gender disparities, PURA model and basic services, decentralization and Governance where policy attention is needed in order to make Rural India 'Shine'. India cannot 'Shine' without the 'Shining' of rural India. He adds that the President of India APJ Abdul Kalam has been advocating implementation of the scheme PURA—(Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas). PURA is a scheme to enhance physical, economic, knowledge, social and electronic connectivity in rural areas. The Union cabinet has recently approved the PURA scheme. This scheme should be taken up seriously throughout India. Generally the performance of many basic services like drinking water, health, education, sanitation, electricity, transport are weak in rural areas. Effectiveness of these services have to be improved by a rights based and participatory approach. The demand to improve the performance of these basic services should come from the people. (Dev. 2004)

It has also been argued that Community Development programme raised implemense expectations. But there was a lack of enthusiasm among people in the community development programme because of the non-association of the people, particularly the disadvantaged rural poor and their representatives in the planning and execution of development schemes meant for them. The people were not sufficiently motivated and there was a lack of strong commitment to

the interests of the people among the inadequately trained development workers. As a result dependence of the people on the Government for material resources continued and self help did not take roots at the expected level.

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# **Economic Value of Kaziranga National Park, Assam: Existence of the One-Horned Rhinos**

**Dr. Abinash Bharali**

## **Introduction**

Kaziranga National Park (KNP) is the pride of North East India and is one of the resourceful national parks in the globe. It is not only the single habitat of the one-horned Indian rhinos, but also provides shelter to a variety of wild lives. The Brahmaputra River flows on the north and the range of Karbi Anglong Hills situates on the south of the park. Its unique geo-physical aspects facilitating rhino breeding promotes the Park to a world famous biological hot spot. About ninety percent of the total population of one-horned rhinos is found in KNP and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary of Assam. With passing of the Assam National Park Act of 1968, Kaziranga became a National Park with an area of 429.93 km<sup>2</sup> from 01 January, 1971 and in 1985, it is notified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Kaziranga is also declared as the 29th Tiger Reserve in 1999.

The Forest Department of KNP carries out census from time to time to calculate the total numbers of important and endangered wild animals of the park. The census report of KNP is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Population of Important Wild Animals in KNP**

Species	Years														
	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2015	2016
Rhino	-	1552	-	-	-	-	1855	-	-	2048	-	2290	2329	2401	-
Elephant	945	-	-	-	1048	1246	-	-	1293	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tiger	80	-	86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	106	-	-	-	-
Swamp Deer	-	398	468	-	-	-	-	681	-	-	-	-	-	1129	1148
Wild Buffalo	-	1192	-	1431	-	-	-	-	1943	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Census Report of Wild Animals of Forest Department of KNP

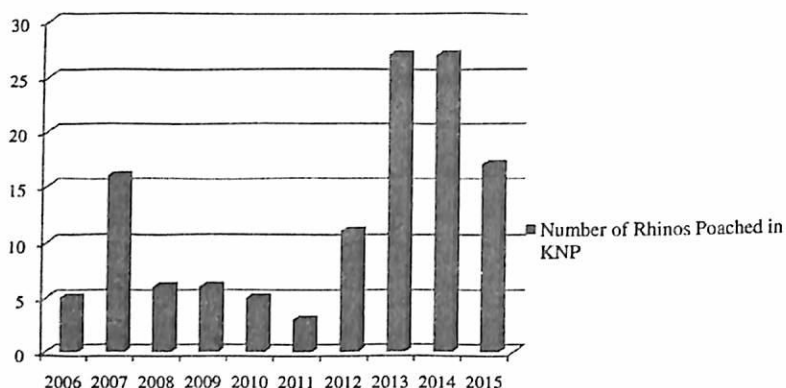
When the status of wildlife population of the country as well as of the globe have declined due to destruction of habitat and indiscriminate killing, there has been at the same time a growing awareness amongst the people in general and some groups of wildlife activists and environmentalists in particular to plan and execute programmes for conservation and protection of the wide diversity of wild lives. As a part of this growing phenomenon, Kaziranga National Park has been able to attract the attention of a greater segment of people across the globe. Kaziranga was opened to the interested visitors in 1937 for viewing its unique wildlife. Kaziranga is one of the best spots for viewing wildlife and its related eco-system. Its popularity amongst the tourists has been growing since then. It is opened for the visitors only for six months, i.e., November to April in a particular year because the Brahmaputra and its tributaries over flow and inundate most of the areas of KNP during monsoon. Tourist's inflow pressure has increased from 52,336 in 2000-01 to 131,354 in 2014-15 and about five to six percent of the total tourists are foreigners (Forest Department, KNP). The tourists use elephant safari and Jeep (four wheelers vehicle) safari for viewing its unique wildlife and biodiversity.

The Legislative Assembly of Assam passed the Assam

(Rhinoceros) Bill in 1954 for giving legal protection to rhinos and imposed heavy penalties for killing any of them, but it does not give fruitful results till now. Poaching of wild animals especially rhinos has been a great challenge to the authority of KNP and it is continuously going on because of superstitious beliefs of people regarding aphrodisiac and medicinal value of rhino's horn and these are sold in the black international market at a very high rate. A kill may net the hunter the equivalent of \$2,200, and horn can sell for \$33,200 a kilogram (Anon, 2005). But most of the tourists visiting the park for viewing this unique endangered wild animal have an escalating influence on economic value of the park. Total numbers of rhinos poached during the period of 2006 to 2015 are one hundred twenty three (123) (Source: [kaziranga.assam.gov.in/wp/rhino-poaching-summary/](http://kaziranga.assam.gov.in/wp/rhino-poaching-summary/)). Unregulated tourism infrastructure, flood, establishment of tea gardens and stone quarries on the peripheral area of the park, extensive use of land for harvesting, human settlement, etc. help the poachers directly or indirectly in achieving their targets. During the last 50 years surroundings of the Karbi plateau (i.e. the southern boundary of the park) are drastically changed - dense forests of the plateau are altered into tea gardens, inhabited areas and harvesting fields, which destroys the suitable habitat of wildlife of KNP. As a result, the gap between the park and the plateau has enlarged manifold and poaching has also gradually increased in these areas and several wild animals have lost their lives. It also faces the problem of river bank erosion on the northern part due to Brahmaputra River. River erosion and migration has resulted in the loss of some 5,000 ha. of the Park between 1925 and 1986 (Kushwala & Unni, 1986). Accordingly, Government of Assam had notified a number of proposed Addition to the Kaziranga National Park since mid 1980s to preserve the ancient wild animal corridors and routes in case of high flooding, but poaching of rhinos is still continuously going on. In the present study, the influence of the one-horned rhinos on economic value of KNP is estimated by using

dichotomous choice of contingent valuation method, which is a direct method of non-market valuation method.

Figure 1: Number of Rhinos Poached in KNP



Source: <http://kaziranga.assam.gov.in/wp/rhino-poaching-summary/>

Highest numbers of rhinos are reported to be killed by poachers in KNP during the period of 1980s to late 1990s and a total of 524 rhinos have been killed for their horns in Assam between 1986 and 2011 (<http://www.rediff.com/news/report/one-hundred-and-fifteen-rhinos-killed-in-assam-in-10-years/201209>). The numbers of rhinos poached in KNP during the period of 2006 to 2015 are shown in Figure 1. The rhino population growth rate was thought to have declined in the 1980's (Choudhury, 1987): since 1986 about 30 animals has been killed each year although numbers are now increasing despite losses from flooding and from the heavy poaching (Milne, 1997; IUCN, 2001; Anon, 2005).

### Review of Related Studies

Since 1970s a large number studies have been devoted to developing the literature on non-market valuation methods and its applications in various fields of environmental economic studies, especially in valuing environmental goods and services.

Bowker and Stoll (1988) estimated individuals' economic surplus associated with preservation of the whooping crane resource (*Grus Americana*), an endangered species using dichotomous choice of contingent valuation method. The authors got an annual estimate of willingness to pay from \$5 to \$149 for the preservation of this resource.

Cook and Cable (1990) have measured economic value of windbreaks for hunting in the state of Kansas using contingent valuation method. A windbreak is a row or rows of trees planted adjacent to a field to break the force of wind. Net economic value for windbreak hunting in Kansas was \$21.5 million per year and local economies also benefit when hunters spend money on their trips to windbreaks.

Regens (1991) estimated the environmental benefits of Norway's Kristiansand Fjord via Contingent Valuation Method. The Norwegian public was willing to pay, on average, approximately 963.3 million NOK.

Cameron (1992) developed a new conceptual framework to estimate value of non-market goods by combining contingent valuation and travel cost data and it forms a prototype approach for a whole spectrum of non-market resource valuation tasks.

Jabarin and Damhoureyeh (2006) quantified recreational value of Dibeen National Park (DNP) in Jordan using contingent valuation and travel cost method. Using TCM estimates the average value of recreation in DNP was JD 71.55 (US\$ 100) per person per recreation day. The average willingness to pay for conserving and improving the services in DNP via open-ended willingness to pay approach was JD 5.53 (US\$ 7.8). The value of DNP to its users could be estimated at approximately JD 13.6 million (US\$ 19.2 million) in a year using TCM.

Chaudhary and Tewari (2006) estimated recreational benefits of urban forestry of Chandigarh in India via open-ended (OE) contingent valuation (CV) method and zonal travel cost method (ZTCM). The study found that consumer surplus estimated by ZTCM is around Rs. 308 and it is Rs. 6.73 by OE-CV format.



## Methodology

Contingent valuation method (CVM) is most widely used for estimating economic value of environmental resources and services since mid-1970s. In the present study, dichotomous choice of CVM is used to estimate economic value of KNP or to estimate willingness to pay for preservation of the park in two different hypothetical environmental situations of the national park and from these two estimates influence of the existence of rhinos on economic value of KNP is measured. Dichotomous choice (DC) or referendum approach is recommended by the NOAA (U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Panel for a CV type study; because they thought it minimizes possible biases and also familiar to the respondents who often vote yes/no in public decision making process. In the CV method, at first a hypothetical market scenario is set up and here the hypothetical market is constructed according to the recommendations of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

In the present study, two different environmental situations or conditions of the park are put forward in front of the visitors: one situation is the present situation [question no (c) is asked to represent the present situation], i.e., rhinos are exist in KNP and the another situation in which all the rhinos are killed by poachers, means this wild animal is missing in the park (question no (d) is asked to stand for the second situation). In these two different alternative situations, tourist's willingness to pay for preservation of KNP is calculated to estimate influence of existence of rhinos on economic value of the park. When the DC type of CV method is applied to KNP, the hypothetical market scenario is designed as follows:

"Kaziranga National Park is suitable for the growth and survival of unique and diverse wildlife and forest biodiversity. For our economic benefit we are destroying all the natural resources like the forest resources and wildlife without thinking about the future. It creates many environmental problems. For this reason Government has

introduced various policies to preserve the quality of the park and introduced the instruments like income tax, property tax, entry fee, etc. to collect the necessary funds for implement these policies, but the Government do not achieve the objectives of these policies till date. Remember that you have limited income and you have to do many personal works with this limited income. Suppose at this time a private agency or NGO comes forward to preserve the park and giving their services very efficiently and after visiting the park, the members of this organization ask you

Do you think contribution from tourist for the maintenance of the park is important? ..... Yes/No

(b) In spite of your limited income would you want to contribute any small amount for park maintenance? .....Yes/No

(c) If yes, will you voluntarily contribute Rs. X for KNP maintenance apart from your actual expense in the tour? ... Yes/No

(d) Poaching of the one horned rhinos in KNP has been a great problem. Assume that all the rhinos of the park were poached and you have not seen any rhinos during the trip, then will you voluntarily contribute Rs. Y for conservation of KNP? ... Yes/No

(where bid amount 'X' is larger than the bid amount 'Y', because it is assumed that tourists want to contribute large amount money in a better environmental condition than in a worse situation.)

In the dichotomous choice of CV method, each respondent (i.e., visitor of the park) is offered with a randomly assigned price for conservation of KNP (question no (c) and (d) are asked to the respondents for DC type of CV method). There are ten (10) different offer prices, which starts from Rs. 10.00 to Rs. 100.00 with an equal interval of ten and these are fixed with the help of a pilot survey. In the pilot survey, twenty (20) different offer prices or bidding levels have been fixed, but in the final survey only ten different bidding levels have been kept by excluding the extreme offer prices. In this study, total sample size is 300. So at first all the 300 schedules are equally divided into 10 different sets and each set has a common bid

amount. With the help of this method, mean willingness to pay is calculated by estimating a statistical model for predicting the probability that an individual with specific characteristics will accept an offer of given size. Individuals know which choice maximizes their utility. It is assumed that individuals will accept or donate a specified donation amount to maximize their utility under the following condition (Hanemann, 1984):

$$v(1, Y - A, S) + \varepsilon_1 \geq v(0, Y, S) + \varepsilon_0$$

$$\text{or, } v(1, Y - A, S) - v(0, Y, S) \geq \varepsilon_0 - \varepsilon_1$$

where  $v$  is the indirect utility, which is assumed here to equal the utility;  $Y$  is the individual's income;  $A$  is a donation amount to preserve the KNP;  $S$  is other socioeconomic characteristic vectors; and,  $\varepsilon_1$ ,  $\varepsilon_0$  are the identically, independently distributed random variables with zero means. If the condition does not hold, they will decline to donate.

The utility difference ( $\Delta v$ ) can be expressed as follows:

$$\Delta v = v(1, Y - A, S) - v(0, Y, S) + (\varepsilon_1 - \varepsilon_0)$$

Most of the literature on dichotomous choice of CVM [Lee, Mjelde, Lee, Scott & Kim (2009)] assumed that the individual's WTP follows a logistic distribution and therefore in this study it is also assumed that WTP follows a logistic distribution, the probability ( $\pi_1$ ) that the individual will accept a donation bid ( $A$ ) can be expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_1 &= \Pr(i = 1) \\ &= \Pr [ v(1, Y - A, S) - v(0, Y, S) \geq \varepsilon_0 - \varepsilon_1 ] \\ &= \Pr(\Delta v \geq 0) \\ &= F[A, Y, S; \beta, \gamma, \delta] \end{aligned}$$

where  $\text{Pr}(-)$  is the probability function,  $F[-]$  is the cumulative density function, and  $\beta, \gamma$  and  $\delta$  are the parameters to be estimated for donation bids, income and demographic variables, respectively. This relationship holds good because if ?? is assumed to have a logistic cumulative density function is equal to

$$P_i = \text{Pr}(i = 1) = \frac{1}{(1 + e^{-\Delta v})}$$

Where  $P_i$  is the probability of accepting the offered bid amount then the probability of not accepting the bid amount can be expressed as  $1 - P_i$ . So,

$$1 - P_i = \text{Pr}(i = 0) = \frac{1}{(1 + e^{\Delta v})}$$

$$\text{Therefore, } \frac{P_i}{1 - P_i} = \frac{(1 + e^{\Delta v})}{(1 + e^{-\Delta v})} = e^{\Delta v}$$

By taking natural log in both side of the equation

$$L_i = \ln \left( \frac{P_i}{1 - P_i} \right) = \Delta v$$

The natural-log of the odds ratio in favor of accepting the bid amount or the ratio of the probability that a visitor will accept a bid amount to the probability that it will not accept that particular bid amount (it is also called 'logit') is not only a linear function of the explanatory variables but also linear of the parameters, because ?? is a linear function of income level, bid amount and socio-economic characteristics of the visitors.

The estimated model is logit regression, which helps to sketch the relationship between offer price and probability of acceptance by individuals with specific socio-economic characteristics. Probability of acceptance of a certain amount of bid [which is coded as Yes (1) and no (0)] is considered as the dependent variable and particular amount of bid and socio-economic determinants of the tourists are recognized as the independent variables in the economic model developed for the

study. The regression model designed for the present study to estimate economic value (i.e., use value) of KNP is formulated as

$$\text{Logit}(Y) = f(\text{BID}, \text{MHI}, \text{EDU}, \text{AGE}, \text{FAMSZ}, \text{SEX})$$

where, Logit (Y) = Probability of accepting the offered bid amount

BID = Offered bid amount

MHI = Monthly Household Income

EDU = Educational Level

AGE = Age in Years

FAMSZ = Family Size of the Respondent

SEX = Sex or Gender

The mean WTP will be calculated by dividing the intercept by coefficient of the bid level. Mathematical derivation of this method is given by Haneman in 1991. The mathematical derivation of the formula to calculate mean WTP from the econometric model is shown below:

Assume that an individual's utility depends on a compositing commodity, X and left over income that is kept for purchasing environmental goods. Utility has a deterministic component and a random component,  $\epsilon$ . Utility of the individual before answering the CVM question is:

$$U_0 = X_0\beta + \gamma Y + \epsilon_0 \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

If the individual accepts the bid given to him, his utility is:

$$U_1 = X_1\beta + \gamma(Y - \text{WTP}) + \epsilon_1 \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

From (1) and (2):

$$U_0 - U_1 = X_0\beta - X_1\beta + \gamma \text{WTP} + \epsilon_0 - \epsilon_1 \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

$$\text{Or } U_0 - U_1 = \alpha + \gamma \text{WTP} + \epsilon_0 - \epsilon_1 \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

Taking the expectation from both sides:

$$E(U_0 - U_1) = E(\alpha) + E(\gamma) \cdot E(\text{WTP}) + E(\epsilon_0 - \epsilon_1) \dots (5)$$

The individual accepts the bid if and only if  $U_0 \leq U_1$ . Assuming that the individual is indifferent between  $U_0$  and  $U_1$ ,

$$E[U(X_1, Y - \text{WTP}) + \epsilon_1] = E[U(X_0, Y) + \epsilon_0] \dots\dots\dots (6)$$

Then,  $0 = \alpha + \gamma E(WTP)$

Or  $MWTP = -\alpha/\gamma$  ..... (7)

### Survey Design and Sampling

In the present study, primary data is used to estimate economic value of the park and secondary information for sketching the present scenario of KNP. The study collects secondary data from the Forest Department and Tourism Department of KNP and primary data from the visitors of the park. The set of data collected from the visitors comprises of willingness to pay (WTP) for preservation of the park and other individual and household level information, which are collected in the month of December, 2015 and January, 2016 because these two months are considered as the peak season for visiting the park.

Sampling is a critical issue in this respect because tourist is a flow concept and there is no certainty for how long the park is opened for tourists because of the flood situations in Assam. While some researchers used stratified sampling from the total population (Choe, 1996; Rosenberger & Loomis, 1999), others prefer random sampling from user group only (Farber, 1988). The last year's (i.e., 2014-2015) visitors data revealed that average 718 numbers of tourists were visited the park per day during November, 2015 to April, 2016 (Table 2). In the present study, 300 visitors are interviewed randomly using a structured schedule with a single respondent from each group or family chosen in the sample.

Table 2: No. of Visitors Visiting KNP and Revenue Collection

Year	Number of Visitors per Annum			Revenue Collection per annum in Rs.
	Indian	Foreigner	Total	
2001-02	44162	2144	46306	34,94,084.00
2002-03	59811	2055	61866	53,60,425.00
2003-04	57864	3773	61637	61,38,657.00
2004-05	68412	5144	73559	66,75,037.00
2005-06	49116	5210	54326	76,15,169.00
2006-07	67968	5748	73716	79,80,949.00
2007-08	53640	6106	59746	87,34,185.00
2008-09	100284	5767	106051	1,12,20,698.00
2009-10	105264	7580	112844	1,21,67,974.00
2014-15	123360	7994	131354	2,86,10,134.00

Source: Forest Department, KNP

The interview is conducted at the Jeep safari stand when the visitors are coming back after visiting or enjoying the esthetic pleasure of the park. Generally one group or family or even a single person do not share the Jeep safari with another group or family or person for viewing the park. In order to ensure randomness in selection of samples, visitors of the first two returning jeeps in every hour of the visiting hours are selected and information is collected from the representative of these groups or families.

## **Results and Discussions**

Existence of the one-horned rhinos in the national park has an influence on the economic value of KNP, which is estimated by using dichotomous choice of contingent valuation method in the present study. The study has created two different alternative environmental situations or conditions of the park to quantify this particular influence: one situation is the present situation and another situation is in which all the rhinos are poached and this endangered wild animal is erased from the picture of the park. Consequently in these two different hypothetical market scenarios, tourist's willingness to pay for preservation of KNP is calculated and the difference between these two estimates reflects the influence of existence of rhinos on economic value of the park.

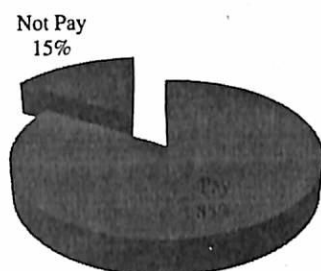
When the average level of WTP is calculated in both the situations, only those visitors are considered who want to contribute some amount. And from Figure 2, it is found that 85 percent of the tourists want to pay some amount for the preservation purposes and for this reason only these tourists are taken as observations in this analysis. But 15 percent of the total tourists do not want to pay any amount, because-

Firstly, they think that it is Government responsibility. The Government collects revenues from them through various fiscal measures every year and should allocate larger budgetary resources for preservation purposes.

Secondly, they have already paid entry fee, guard fee and road

tax for visiting the National Park. If these amounts are properly used for preservation purposes then it should arguably be a sufficient amount.

**Figure 2: Willingness to Pay of the Tourists**



Source: Author's Calculation based on selected sample of tourists in KNP, 2015-2016.

Thirdly, visitors also thought that corruption is so much high in Assam and therefore their little contributions are also misused and does not help in preservation purposes of KNP.

Source: Author's Calculation based on selected sample of tourists in KNP, 2015-2016.

At the present scenario, tourist's WTP for conservation of the park is shown in Table 3. It is found that average WTP of the visitors is around INR 74.01 and economic value of the park is estimated as INR 8.35 millions.

The estimates of WTP for conservation purposes in the second scenario of the park are also shown in Table 3. The table revealed that all the socio-economic variables of visitors affects in the same way as in the present condition regarding WTP for conservation purposes. In the second hypothetical situation, tourist's average level of WTP is around INR 50.71 when the entire population of one-horned rhinos in KNP is absent and economic value of the park is approximately INR 5.72 millions.



Table 3: Estimates of logit Regression

	Scenario I (Rhinos are found in KNP)			Scenario II (Rhinos are absent in KNP)		
Prob. of WTP	Coefficient	Z	P> z	Coefficient	z	P> z
BID	-0.0502996	-6.08	0.000	-0.0510143	-6.11	0.000
HHI	0.0000235	2.29	0.022	0.0000102	1.91	0.056
EDU	0.5948792	2.53	0.011	0.4636653	1.91	0.056
AGE	-0.0411431	-1.97	0.048	-0.0458379	-2.26	0.024
FAMSZ	-0.1800624	-1.04	0.297	-0.1351869	-0.77	0.439
SEX	0.3881598	0.88	0.380	0.6347869	1.42	0.154
CONS	1.529111	0.77	0.440	1.725059	0.86	0.389
No. of observation	195			195		
LR chi2(6)	93.00			89.17		
Prob > chi2	0.0000			0.0000		
Log likelihood	-86.78853			-90.574998		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.3489			0.3299		

Source: Author's Calculation based on selected sample of tourists in KNP, 2015-2016

The difference between these two WTP amounts reflects the amount of contribution for protection and conservation of rhinos and it is about INR 23.30 per visitor per visit. By comparing these two alternative situations it can be concluded that value of KNP is reduced by INR 2.63 million, if the Government fails to conserve this unique wild animal of the national park and it also reflects the existence value of rhinos of the park. So, the Government should take various scientific steps towards the protection and conservation of one-horned rhinos of the national park to sustain eco-tourism in KNP.

### Conclusion

Kaziranga National Park is a famous eco-tourist destination of North East India. Tourists from various parts of the globe visit the park for viewing its unique wildlife and biodiversity, especially one-horned Indian rhinos. But poaching of rhinos is a great threat in front

of the management authority of KNP. The existence of this unique wild animal in the park has an influence on economic value of KNP, which is estimated by using DC type of CV method, and it is found that mean WTP for protection of rhinos is around INR 23.30 and value of the park is reduced from INR 8.35 million to INR 5.72 million, if poaching of this wild animal continues unabated. So, the Government should develop and implement proper scientific management policy for preservation of this unique wild animal and as well as of the national park. The Park's management plan is being finalised, and improved management, financial and technical support and community strategy, awareness, education and involvement in planning are all still necessary (UNESCO, 2002). It should be mentioned that this endangered wild animal is not only a valuable resource for India only, but also for all SAARC countries. All SAARC nations should develop a scientific protection and conservation policy for rhinos through bilateral and/or multilateral talks among the members of SAARC. Without the co-operation and help of the neighbouring countries, India may not stop poaching of rhinos because its horns have an international black market. It will also help in developing co-operation among the members of the SAARC. It is hoped that this study will pave the way for future research work in the field of valuation of environmental resources, endangered species or animals and places of historic interest of SAARC nations.

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# **Influence of Modernization among Undergraduate level Mishing students - A study**

**Ghanashyam Taid**

## **Introduction**

Modernization is a complex process which influences all aspects of human life. It is a process or a movement from a traditional or quasi-tradition order to a new order based on new process in science and technology associated forms of social structure, value orientation, motivations and norms. Modernization is a process of change of behavior. The very concept of modernization warrants radical changes - changes in the traditional society in different walks of life.

Modernization aims, amongst other things at creating an economy of plenty which will offer to every individual a larger way of life and a wide variety of choices. Modernization is a disquieting positive spirit which has spread in comprehensive way. It also means a revolutionary change leading to transformation of an advanced economically prosperous and relatively politically stable society. In another sense modernization reveals that one vital qualitative differences between traditional and modern is the difference between a unified social system in which all activity is subordinated to politics; and a modern society in which politics does not dominate all activities, but in which there is

instead a fundamental and continually-increasing functional specialization such as ever more division of different types of job.

In the concept of modernization no evolutionary universalism is implied. Modernization, in its specific content and form, is treated as a historical rather than a universal evolutionary reality. The specific form that modernization might take in different cultural traditions may have distinctive features. Modernization is both a theory and a process. As a theory it has given place to the condemnation of a large number of traditions; as a process it has landed itself to post modernity, which is, in fact, hypermodernity or late modernity. Modernization is generally viewed as extensive in scope, as a 'multifaceted process' which not only touches at one time or another virtually every institution of society, but does so in a manner such that transformations in the order. Lerner (1958) defined the term as, "modernization includes disquieting positivist, a revolution in communication, increasing urbanization, economic and political participation, social mobility, rationality, and achievement.

Modernization starts with take off which is one of the main stages of economic growth (Rostow (1960). Levy (1966) defines modernization on the increasing use of inanimate sources of power.

"The main feature of modernization is the building up an "open society" in which individuals of talent, enterprise and training can find places in the society appropriate to their achievement... The process of Modernization involves an increase in social unrest till the social system is responsive to the new aspirations built up by the Modernization process." (B. Kuppaswamy) Author Ram Ahuja narrated through his "Indian Social System" that Modernization includes—"a temple science, reason and rationalism, secularism, high aspiration and achievement orientation, overall transformation of attitudes norms and values, creation of new functional institutions, investment in human resources, a growth oriented economy, a national interest rather than kin, caste, religion, region or language oriented interests, an open society, and a mobile person." M.N Srinivas, however, criticizes the concept of Modernization. According to him, it is a value-

loaded term. He says that, "Modernization normally used in the sense that it is good. He; therefore, prefer to use the term "Westernization" which characterizes the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years British rule". Yogendra Singh on the other hand, defended the concept of modernization. According to him, it is broader than the two processes of Sanskritisation and Westernization. It is, indeed a 'cultural universal' and not necessarily confined to any single society. Like science, modernity is not an exclusive possession of any one ethnic or cultural group. It belongs to the humanity as a whole. This does not mean that everywhere it should reveal the same pattern.

In another sense modernity represents substantial break with traditional society. Stuart (1997:40) has referred to distinctive characteristics of modernity: emphasis on reason, belief in progress, control over nature and environment, domination of secular authority and marginalization of religious influence from political matters, economy in which money system provided the medium for exchange, decline of religion and the rise of secular materialistic culture of traditional social order and development of new division of labour and the emergence of new classes. Thus, modernity refers to cluster of new social, economic, political, religious and intellectual system, which is totally different from traditional system.

Modernization in India started mainly with the Western contact, especially through the establishment of the British rule. This contact brought about many far reaching changes in culture and social structure of Indian society. Not all these changes could be called modernizing. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process, good number of traditional institutions got strengthened. There was, however, one important feature of Indian modernization during the British period. The growth of this process was very much selective and partial. It never encompassed the micro structures of Indian society such as - family, caste, kin group and village community. British people intelligently followed the policy of

"least interference" especially at these micro-levels. But at the micro-level, the components of modernization such as a universalistic legal system, expansion of Western form of education, urbanization and industrialization, spread of new means of communication and transport and social reforms - led the way in the transformation of Indian society. Along with these, aspect of structural modernization such as - rational bureaucratic systems of administration and judiciary, army and industrial bureaucracy, new classes of business elite and entrepreneurs - came into being. There was the emergence of political elite and a nationalist leadership. These modernization structures had a uniform character throughout the country. (Rao, p-321)

Modernization encompasses all the aspects of our life. It is very broad in its scope. However, in the present investigation four dimensions e. g Socio-religious, Marriage, Position of a Woman, Education have been taken in to consideration.

The present study assumes significance in the context of modernization that is taking place in the tribal society. The phenomenon of the modernization in the tribal society was accelerated in post independence period and especially with the launching of community development programme. Sociological studies have been made to assess the impact of community development programme as a whole on the modernization of Indian tribe. But specific and detailed studies on the impact of education, in particular, and on the various parts of the modernity are scarce. The present study attempts to analyze in a detailed fashion the influence of modernity on the Mishing tribes of Lakhimpur District.

Lakhimpur is a flood prone district of Assam. A major proportion of Mishing people are inhabited in the district. The Mishings formerly known as the Miri, belonging to the family of the Indo-Mongoloid is an aboriginal tribes of the north-eastern region of India. Originally dwelling in the northern hills, they subsequently came down to the valley in the medieval period by following the river courses. The tribe was earlier settled in Arunachal Pradesh and gradually came down



to plain since 13th century. Now the Mishing is the second largest ethnic tribe of the region next to the Bodo.

The present study adopts normative survey method for collecting required data. This study has represented all undergraduate level Mishing students studying in provincialised degree colleges of Lakhimpur district as its population. The Sample comprises 364 Mishing students pursuing higher education in undergraduate level in Lakhimpur district. The Stratified Random sampling procedure is followed for collecting sample. As the study Level of Education and Locality as variables, a 2 x 2 factorial design was prepared and the whole population was stratified into four stratum. These are Rural and Urban students, and the Boy and Girl students. Thereafter, 30% of populations from each stratum were randomly selected as samples for the study.

A standardized Scale of modernization developed by R.S. Singh, A.N. Tripathi and Ramji Lal Ojha is adopted as its tool. The Modernization Scale measures modernization in four areas. These are i) Socio-religious ii) Marriage iii) Position of Women iv) Education. The reliability and validity of this scale were found out at high level as per authors' report. The data that are being gathered for the present study is of quantitative type. Hence, only quantitative approach of treating data is useful in the present context. Quantitative approach is a set of numerical observation obtained as a result of counting or measuring some characteristics. As the present study is mainly based on examining group performances and relationships, the statistical technique suited for the study are 'Mean', 'Chi Square', 'SD', 't-test', 'Correlation.

Mean Scores of each of the four dimension of Modernization.

Dimension of Modernization	Scores and Ranks of Modernization			
	Mean (N=364)	SD	SzD	Ranking Order
Socio-Religious	31.66	6.032	.316	II
Marriage	31.37	5.295	.278	III
Position of Women	38.36	6.679	.350	I
Education	31.09	5.756	.302	IV

The table shows that the Mishng students in undergraduate level education in Lakhimpur district are highly modernized in the dimension of Position of Women (38.36) followed by the dimensions of Socio-Religious (31.66), Marriage (31.37), and Education (31.09) respectively. The mean scores of the dimension of Position of Women are significantly higher than the dimension of Socio-Religious, Marriage and Education. The minute table analysis clearly shows that there is very little difference between the mean scores of the dimension of Marriage and Position of Women.

Mean Scores and Significance of each of the four dimensions of modernization in Rural and Urban area.

Dimension of Modernization	Rural Group (N=290)				Urban Group (N=74)				T	Status
	Mean	SD	SeM	Ranking order	Mean	SD	SeM	Ranking order		
Socio-religious	31.85	6.071	.372	II	31.16	5.926	.602	III	.953	NS
Marriage	31.52	5.453	.334	III	30.97	4.838	.491	IV	.872	NS
Position-of women	37.91	6.905	.423	I	39.58	5.875	.597	I	2.111	S
Education	30.60	5.832	.357	IV	32.43	5.344	.543	II	2.711	S

Note: S= Significant at .05 level; NS= Not Significant at .05 level

The detail analysis of the table shows that students of both rural and urban area are high modernized in terms of the dimension of Position of Women. The students of urban block recorded higher modernized in Position of women than those of rural block. There is almost equal status of modernization in the dimension of Socio-religious and Marriage. In except Marriage, the students of urban block have been seen high modernized than rural block.

There is significant difference between urban and rural block in Education (t-value 2.711) and Position of Women (t-value 2.111). But regarding Marriage (t-value .872) and Socio-religious (t-value .953) there is no significant difference between urban and rural block.

Mean scores and Significance of difference between Rural and Urban boy.

Dimension of Modernization	Rural Boys (N=173)				Urban Boys (N=32)				t-value	Status
	Mean	Sd	SEM	Ranking order	Mean	Sd	SEM	Ranking order		
Socio-religious	32.16	5.832	.483	II	30.28	5.532	.922	IV	1.749	NS
Marriage	31.14	5.736	.475	III	31.39	5.039	.840	III	.235	NS
Position-of women	36.12	6.674	.552	I	38.11	6.008	1.001	I	1.631	NS
Education	30.21	5.355	.443	IV	31.64	4.917	.820	II	1.461	NS

Note: S= Significant at .05 level; NS= Not Significant at .05 level

The table analysis shows clearly that the urban and rural blocks boys are high modern in dimension Position of women. There is variation between urban and rural boy in terms of dimension of Marriage. The Rural boys are high modernized in dimension of Socio-religious than urban boys. On the contrary urban boys are high modernized in terms of dimension of Education and Marriage respectively.

The further analysis of the study showed that there is no significant difference between the urban and rural boys in terms of dimension Socio-religious (t-value 1.749), Marriage (t-value.235), Position of women (1.631) and Education (t-value1.461).

Mean scores and Significance of difference between Rural and Urban girls.

Dimension of Modernization	Rural Girls (N=118)				Urban Girls (N=42)				t-value	Status
	Mean	Sd	SEM	Ranking order	Mean	Sd	SEM	Ranking order		
Socio-religious	31.47	6.351	.577	III	31.69	6.351	.577	III	.221	NS
Marriage	31.97	5.078	.462	II	30.72	4.740	.607	IV	1.597	NS
Position of women	40.07	6.577	.598	I	40.44	5.667	.726	I	.373	NS
Education	31.07	6.350	.577	IV	32.90	5.567	.713	II	1.908	S

Note: S= Significant at .05 level; NS= Not Significant at .05 level

According to the table the rural and urban girls are high modernized in terms of dimension position of women. The urban girls

are recorded high modernized in terms of dimension *socio-religious* and education while rural girls are high in *marriage*. Again the urban and rural girls are less modernized in terms of marriage than other three dimensions.

There is significant difference between rural and urban girls in terms of dimension education (1.908). But regarding the *dimension* of socio-religious (.221), marriage (1.597) and position of women (.373), there is no significant difference between rural and urban girls' students.

Mean scores and Significance of difference between Boys and Girls.

Dimension of Modernization	Boys (N=204)				Girls (N=160)				t-value	Status
	Mean	Sd	StM	Ranking order	Mean	Sd	StM	Ranking order		
Socio-Religious	31.79	5.808	.430	II	31.54	6.262	.464	IV	.382	NS
Marriage	31.19	5.592	.415	III	31.55	4.989	.370	III	.643	NS
Position of Women	36.52	6.579	.488	I	40.20	6.273	.465	I	5.463	S
Education	30.49	5.289	.392	IV	31.69	6.144	.455	II	1.993	S

Note: S= Significant at .05 level; NS= Not Significant at .05 level

According to the above table the boys and girls both are highly modernized in dimension Position of Women than the rest. The girls are seen more modernized than boys in dimension Position of Women. Accepting of modernization by boy in Socio-religious and Marriage are placed second and third in ranking order followed by Education. The girls are high modernized in Education than Marriage and Socio-religious.

The further analysis showed that there is significant difference between boys and girls in Position of Women (t-value=5.463) and Education (t-value=1.993). But in Socio-religious (t-value=.382), and Marriage (t-value=.643) there is no significant difference between boys and girls in degree level.

## Mean scores and Significance of difference between Urban Boys and Girls.

Dimension of Modernization	Urban Boys (N=32)				Urban Girls (N=42)				t-value	Status
	Mean	Sd	SeM	Ranking order	Mean	Sd	SeM	Ranking order		
Socio-religious	30.28	5.532	.922	IV	31.69	6.131	.785	III	1.134	NS
Marriage	31.39	5.039	.840	III	30.72	4.740	.607	IV	.655	NS
Position of women	38.11	6.008	1.001	I	40.44	5.667	.726	I	1.914	S
Education	31.64	4.917	.820	II	32.90	5.567	.713	II	1.126	NS

Note: S= Significant at .05 level; NS= Not Significant at .05 level

The table explains that urban boys and girls are highly modernized in Position of Women. There is variation between urban boys and girls in Socio-religious, Marriage and Education. The urban girls are highly modernized than urban boys in Socio-religious, Position of Women and Education and on other hand urban boys are highly modernized than rural girls in Marriage. The mean scores of urban girls students are higher than urban boy student in Socio-religious, Position of Women and Education while it is exceptional in terms of dimension Marriage as less than of it.

Further, the table showed that there is significant difference between rural boys and girls in Position of Women (1.914). But regarding the dimension of Socio-religious (1.134), Marriage (.655) and Education (1.126) there is no significant difference between rural boys' and girls'.

## Mean scores and Significant differences between Rural Boys and Girls.

Dimension of Modernization	Rural Boys (N=172)				Rural Girls (N=118)				t-value	Status
	Mean	Sd	SeM	Ranking order	Mean	Sd	SeM	Ranking order		
Socio-religious	32.16	5.832	.483	II	31.47	6.351	.577	III	.920	NS
Marriage	31.14	5.736	.475	III	31.97	5.078	.462	II	1.229	NS
Position of women	36.12	6.674	.552	I	40.07	6.577	.598	I	4.848	S
Education	30.21	6.350	.577	IV	31.07	6.350	.577	IV	2.320	S

Note: S= Significant at .05 level; NS= Not Significant at .05 level

The analysis of the table shows that rural boys and girls of undergraduate level of Lakhimpur district are highly modernized in position of women. In dimension of position of women the rural girls are highly modernized than the urban boy. In another three dimensions there is variation between rural boys and girls. The rural boys are less modernized in socio-religious and marriage than the rural girl and on other hand rural boys are highly modernized in education. The rural girls are counted higher mean score in dimension of socio-religious and marriage than rural boy except in education.

There is significant difference between the rural boys and girls in position of women (4.848) and education (2.320). But in marriage (.609) and socio-religious (.920), there is no significant difference between the rural boys and girls students.

Co-relation between Educational Level and Modernization  
Relationship between Educational level and Modernization.

Relationship between Educational level and Modernization.		
Dimension of Modernization	r-value	Status
Socio-Religious	.485	Significant
Marriage	.422	Significant
Position of Women	.349	Significant
Education	.147	Significant

Note: Correlation was significant at .01 levels.

In above table it is seen that there is significant relationship between Educational Level and the dimensions Socio-religious (.485), Marriage (.422), Position of Women (.349) and Education (.147). So our hypotheses 'There is significant difference of Modernization in relation to level of Education' is accepted.

Modernization levels of Boys and Girls.

Lel of Modernization	Boys	Girls	Total	
	%	%	Count	%
Highly Modernized	5	5	2	5
High Modernized	6.6	11.5	33	9.1
Above Average Modernized	22.0	26.4	88	24.2
Average/Moderate Modernized	35.2	35.7	129	35.4
Below Average Modernized	14.8	13.7	52	14.3
Conservative	19.8	11.0	56	15.4
Highly Conservative	1.1	1.1	4	1.1
Total	100	100	364	100

The level or range of modernization between boys and girls in all six blocks are different. The range of modernization is covered highly modernized to highly conservative. In range of highly modernized there is no difference between boys and girls (.5). The girls score higher than boys in level of high modernized as (11.5) and boys 6.6. The total percentage is (9.1). In level of above average modernized, there is difference between boys (22) and girls (26.4) and total is (24.2). There is no significant difference between boys (35.2) and girls (35.7) in average level modernization and total score is (35.4). In level of bellow average modernized, boys score high than girl's where the total score is (14.3). The boys are high conservative than girls and the total percentage of conservative is 15.4.

#### Modernization levels between Rural and Urban block

Level of Modernization	Rural	Urban	Total	
	%	%	Count	%
Highly Modernized	.7	-	2	.5
High Modernized	8.2	11.3	33	9.1
Above Average Modernized	25.8	19.6	88	24.2
Average/Moderate Modernized	32.2	44.3	129	35.4
Below Average Modernized	14.2	14.4	52	14.3
Conservative	17.2	10.3	56	15.4
Highly Conservative	1.5	-	4	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	364	100.0

The rural block scored as (.7) in highly modernized level and no

score for in urban block. In the level of high modernized, the urban block (11.2) scored high than rural (8.2). The rural block (25.8) is recorded high modernized in above average while urban is only 19.6. The total of this range is 24.2. On the other hand, urban block (44.3) is high modernized than rural blocks (32.2) in average level. The average level of modernization is scored (35.4) in two blocks. Below average modernized is 14.2 in rural and 14.2 in urban along with 14.4 in total. The conservative range is counted 17.2 of rural and 10.3 of urban block.

### **Conclusion**

In common parlance modernity represents substantial break with traditional society. Modernity refers to a cluster of new social, economic, political, religious and intellectual systems, which is totally different from its traditional counterparts. On other hand social change is change in established pattern of social relations, or change in social values, or change in structures and subsystems operating in society. The above attempt is made on Mishing students of degree level education to examine their acquaintance with modernity in four dimensions of modernization. Study report made it clear that in the 21st century the Mishing students are able to embrace modernization at average level. The undergraduate Mishing students are more modernized in Position of Women (38.36) and Socio-religious (31.66) and less modernized in Marriage (31.37) and Education (31.09). It is a significant difference between rural and urban students in terms of Position of Women (2.111) and Education (2.711) but there no significant difference between rural and urban students in terms of dimension Socio-religious (.953) and Marriage (.872). There is significant difference between boys and girls in terms of dimension Position of women (5.46) and Education (1.993) and no difference in dimension of Socio-religious (.382) and Marriage (.643). There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys in terms of dimension Socio-religious (1.74), Marriage (.235), Position of women (1.631) and Education (1.461). Between rural and urban girls, there



is significant difference in terms of dimension Education (1.908) and no significant difference between rural and urban girls students in terms of dimension Socio-religious (.221), Marriage (1.597) and Position of women (.373). In case of rural boy and girl students, there is significant difference in terms of dimension Position of women (4.848) and Education (2.320). But on the contrary there is no significant difference in terms of dimension Socio-religious (.920) and Marriage (1.229) between rural boy and girl students. There is no significant difference between urban boy and urban girls in terms of dimension Socio-religious (1.134), Marriage (.655) and Education (1.26) except Position of Women (1.914). In ranking order the dimension Position of Women placed at first both in urban boy and urban girls students. The rate of average or moderate modernization is 35.4% and above average is 24.2%. The .5% is highly modernized and 1.1% is highly conservative. There is no difference between boys and girls in level of 'highly modernized' and 'highly conservative'. The 15.4% is identified in conservative category where 24.2 % is above average modernization.

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# **Women's Livelihood Option and Empowerment in Rural Areas of Nagaon District**

**Dr. Lakhimi Nath**

## **Introduction**

Livelihood represents the actions and the capabilities to maintain the basic necessities of life. The study is conducted to examine the empowerment level of women and to study its linkage with the women's livelihood pattern. The study is based on primary data and the target group population selected for the study is women belonging to 18-60 years age group. The size of the sample is 180. Multistage sampling technique is used for drawing the sample and the interview method is applied for collection of data. The empowerment level of women is measured by taking into consideration three components of empowerment, viz. women's decision making ability, their freedom of movement and political participation. The results show a low level of empowerment of rural women and also reveal that the income based livelihood pattern of women has a positive impact on their level of empowerment.

In a male dominated rural society, women have always been underestimated and discriminated in almost all spheres of life. That has adverse effect on the social, cultural, economic and political development of women. The traditional duties of managing households including care services given by the women are mostly unvalued and considered traditionally as the responsibilities of the women in developing world. Such traditional role of women creates obstacles in achieving their social and economic empowerment. Empowerment is fundamentally about power i.e. the power to redefine possibilities and options and to act on them, the power which enables people to have the courage to do things they never thought themselves to be

capable of, and the power to claim what is rightfully theirs (Kabeer et al, 2008). Since 1990s, empowerment of women has been increasingly recognized as a prerequisite for the success of development programmes. The World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction and also as a primary development assistance goal and therefore suggested that empowerment of women should be a key aspect of all social development programs (World Bank, 2001). One development of recent decades that has contributed to the elevation of the status of women in the society is the increasing participation of women in valued works. The government of less developed countries including India has been careful about making provisions for jobs for women in the formal sector of the economy. The joining of jobs in formal sector by women in large number has increased their decision making power both within and outside family, their freedom of movement etc to a great extent. But the link between the nature of women's occupation and their empowerment level is not very clear. From different studies it is also found that the status of women in rural areas is generally low as compared to that of the women of urban areas. Without raising the status of women in rural areas the development of that society is not possible.

### **Empowerment vis-à-vis Occupation pattern**

Keeping this perspective in view, the present study aims at analyzing the level of women empowerment and its link with their occupation in a remote economically backward region of Assam. The geographical area selected for the study is rural areas of Nagaon district of Assam. Thus the main objectives of the study are to measure the empowerment level of women in rural areas of Nagaon District of Assam and to examine the linkage between women empowerment and their livelihood pattern in the study area.

The study is based on primary data and the target group population comprises of adult women belonging to 18-60 years age group in the rural areas of Nagaon district. The sample size selected

for the study is 180. A structured household survey schedule is prepared and used for collecting data from the rural areas of Nagaon District. Direct interview method is followed here for collection of data from the respondent target group women. The data are collected from both employed and unemployed women.

Literature claims that the basic elements which constitute the level of women empowerment are her ability to take decision within family, her freedom of movement and her political participation. Women empowerment level, therefore, is measured in this study by taking into consideration these three basic constituent parts of empowerment. The overall empowerment of women is the aggregate of women empowerment in the areas of decision making within family, freedom of movement and political participation. The variables which are used in this study to measure women empowerment in its above mentioned three constituent parts are defined below.

**Decision making within family :** The decision making ability of women within the family is judged by her decision making power in regard to family health care, larger household purchase, routine household purchase, family size, family planning, job of women, going outside home by any member, family day to day expenditure and spending out of personal income.

**Freedom of movement :** The variables representing freedom of movement are women's ability to move freely to local market for purchase, local health centre/clinic, gossiping in the neighborhood, visiting home of relatives/friends, visiting other city or village, recreation in cinema hall, club, festival or village fair etc., visiting parental home, participating in cultural programmes of village/town , participating in religious programmes of village /town , participating in the meeting of women organizations, doing job/work outside home for self earnings.

**Political participation :** The following variables define the constituent part of Political Participation of women empowerment. ability to - cast vote in election, vote for a candidate of choice, attend the speeches of the contesting candidates, update self about the

political system and speaking to political leaders/representatives in need.

**All the above variables are quantified as**

- Entirely by the women respondent-1
- ⊕ Partially by the women respondent- 0.5
- Entirely by others- 0

Fuzzy set technique is used to analyze and interpret the data in the study. Let  $X$  be a set and  $X$  some elements of  $X$  and  $E$  is the fuzzy subset which represents the set of empowered women (Kubi et al, 2007). The degree of membership to the fuzzy set  $E$  of the  $i$ -th individual ( $i=1, \dots, n$ ) with respect to the  $j$ -th attribute ( $j=1, \dots, m$ ) is defined as

$$\mu_E(X_j(a_i)) = x_{ij} \quad 0 \leq x_{ij} \leq 1$$

Where

- i.  $x_{ij} = 1$  if the  $i$ -th individual is fully empowered with respect to the  $j$ -th attribute;
- ii.  $x_{ij} = 0$  if the  $i$ -th individual is not empowered with respect to the  $j$ -th attribute
- iii.  $0 \leq x_{ij} \leq 1$  if the  $i$ -th individual is partially empowered with respect to the  $j$ -th attribute with an intensity belonging to the open interval  $(0,1)$ .

The empowerment index of the  $i$ -th individual  $\mu_E(a_i)$  i.e. the degree of membership of  $i$ -th individual to the fuzzy set  $E$  is defined as the weighted average of  $x_{ij}$ ,

$$\mu_E(a_i) = \sum_{j=1}^m x_{ij} w_j / \sum_{j=1}^m w_j$$

Where  $w_j$  the weight attached to the  $j$ -th attribute. The empowerment index measures the degree of empowerment of the  $i$ -th individual as a weighting function of the  $m$  attributes. Hence, it

measures the intensity of empowerment of the i-th individual subject to decision making, freedom of movement, political participation.

It is possible to get the multidimensional empowerment index of the population  $\mu_E$  as the weighted average of  $\mu_E(X_j)$  with weight  $w_j$ :

$$\mu_E = 1/n \sum_{i=1}^n \mu_E(a_i) = \sum_{j=1}^m \mu_E(X_j) w_j / \sum_{j=1}^m w_j$$

### **Data analysis, Results and discussion**

Now the women empowerment index (WEI) is calculated by using the following formula

$$\begin{aligned} WEI &= \sum_{j=1}^m \mu_E(X_j) w_j / \sum_{j=1}^m w_j \\ &= 0.4516/0.9265 \\ &= 0.4874 \end{aligned}$$

Thus we can say that the level of women empowerment in rural areas of Nagaon district is 0.4874.

### **Sub group empowerment decomposition**

For sub-group women empowerment, total 180 respondents are divided into four groups on the basis of their level of monthly income.

The groups are divided as follows-

1. Group A (Income more than Rs.30000)
2. Group B (Income between Rs.10000 to Rs.30000)
3. Group C (income between Rs.500 to Rs.10000)
4. Group D ( Those who are unemployed and those whose income is less than Rs.500)

Occupation-wise women empowerment index value is shown in Table- 1.

Table-1  
Occupation-wise Women Empowerment

Group	Women Empowerment Index Value
Group A	0.6292
Group B	0.5980
Group C	0.4935
Group D	0.4269

From the above table it can be said that the women of group A whose income is more than Rs.30000 have higher empowerment value than the others and the women of group D who are unemployed or having income less than Rs. 500 have lowest empowerment value. The income-based occupational position is found to have strong linkage with women empowerment because those women who are working as Group A workers have more decision making power within family, freedom of movement and also active in political participation than those women who are unemployed or low income earner.

The level of women empowerment in rural areas of Nagaon district is found to be low. The average women empowerment index of women in rural areas of the district is only 0.4874. Besides this, when we talk about the occupation groups the results show that higher income groups in higher occupations have higher empowerment level than lower income and unemployed groups. Therefore higher livelihood pattern (in terms of income) results in higher empowerment of women. This is probably because of higher prerogatives and position associated with higher occupations that enable a woman to raise her voice in household decision making process, to move around with more freedom and also to participate more actively in political system. Thus we can say that there is positive correlation between occupational status of women and their empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

The results show that the level of women empowerment in rural areas of Nagaon district is not satisfactory. The average women empowerment index of women in rural areas of the district is only 0.4874. The reason for this appears to be the limited livelihood options



for the women of the district. Another reason for low level of empowerment is that the women section of rural areas is less aware about the various development policies and programmes of the government. The link between women empowerment level and their occupation is very clear from the study. Women belonging to higher income groups have higher empowerment level than lower income and unemployed groups. The implication of this result points towards the importance of higher and quality education for women, diversification of livelihood options for them and implementation of governmental affirmative programmes for the social development of women.

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