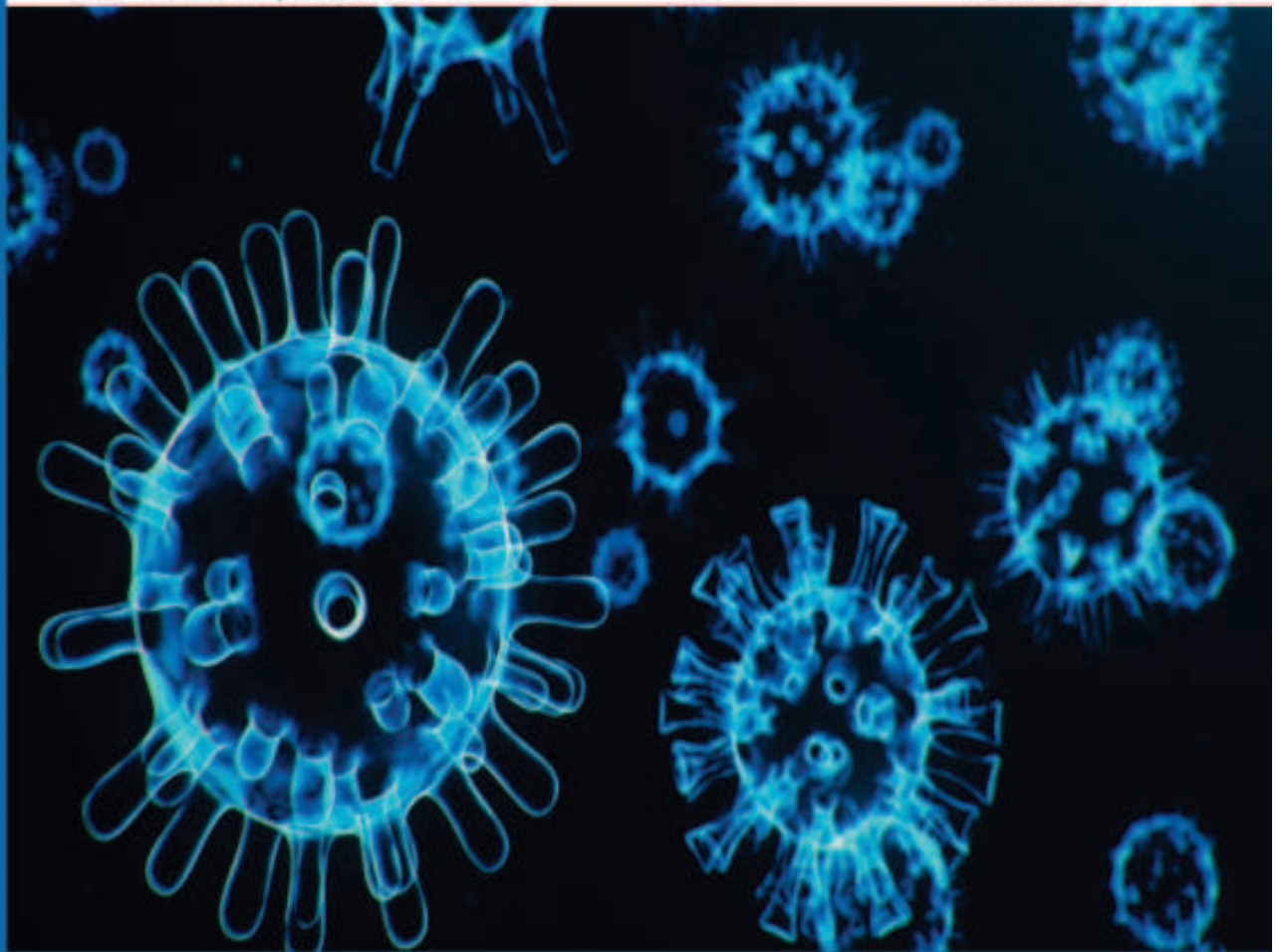


RETHINKING 21ST CENTURY (COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION)

SEPTEMBER, 2020

Volume - II



KULTALI DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR COLLEGE

RETHINKING 21ST CENTURY

(Covid-19 Special Edition)

EDITED BY :

Dr. Rupam Kumar Dutta (Convenor)

Dr. Sumita Dutta

Dr. Sujata Banerjee

Tapoban Bhattacharyya

Mintu Patra



SEPTEMBER, 2020

KULTALI DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR COLLEGE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to announce that Kultali Dr. B.R. Ambedkar College is publishing the 2nd Edited Volume "Rethinking 21st Century (Covid-19 Special edition) 2020". I congratulate the college on this noble endeavour. The faculty of the college has contributed enriching articles for it. I hope this will reach far and wide, so that the larger populace can be benefited from it.

I wish it success.



**Signature of President
Kultali Dr. B.r. Ambedkar College**

From Principal's Desk

"Man is not only a product of Socio-economic forces acting upon him but is also an agent who affects the tempo of social change and determines the direction of the historical process" - Jean Paul Sartre.

It gives me immense pleasure to see the successful launch of the Rethinking 21st century , the second edition of the journal published by our college . journey is ceaseless in life and in every turn life cope with new ideas stemmed from those dreams . The research and articles published in this volume are specially on Covid - 19 , a pandemic of this century which has its impact on educational system , socio economic system and also on other spheres of life.Modernisation has awarded us with opportunities in abundance making our lives easier than ever before but with the boons emerged the bane.With rapid advancement of civilisation world are facing loss of biodiversity and it affects the present and the future world. It is important to recognise that our planet's environment represents a complex web of interrelated systems one affecting the other in a delicate balance. So we should worship our Mother Nature. Education is not a preparation of life, it is life itself. An institution reflects society and its values . I sincerely expect that the present edition shall serve the academic and research pursuits of academic fraternity."reading is a part of generosity between author and reader". We cordially accept critical and scholastic comments on our various articles, which are product of important thinking.

Siuli Saha Dalal

Dr. Siuli Saha Dalal

Principal

Kultali Dr. B.R. Ambedkar College

Message

One of the most effective ways of improving thought process and academics is thorough research and passion of creating and analyzing facts. This pandemic situation has laid down very hard struggles for the academicians and stake holders to build their credibility and facilitate actions. This is a very proud moment for me to state that overcoming all the adversities of this pandemic situation KULTALI DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR COLLEGE is going to publish the second volume of the book " RETHINKING 21ST CENTURY, Vol - II". Beyond the regular teaching learning activities and other administrative work of the college, the teachers of this college have taken the great initiative of publishing this volume which will certainly reflect various relevant research findings and highlight some specific social, cultural and educational issues. We are proud that this volume will include views of some respectable specialists Doctors of our country that will create special awareness among the academicians and the students as well. I believe in heart that this great attempt will brighten the academic atmosphere of our college, will become an inspiration for the serious readers and will energize researchers and students to think in a new way in this new normal situation. I express my heartiest gratitude to the Honorable President of our Governing Body Sri Shaktipada Mondal and our Honorable Principal Dr. Siuli Saha Dalal for their continuous support and cooperation. I congratulate the whole team along with the Publication Sub Committee whose tireless efforts and sleepless nights have led to the grand success of this book.

All My Warm Wishes for the Future Endeavour.

Dr. Chandrani Acharya

Coordinator

IQAC

*Kultali DR. B. R. Ambedkar College,
South 24PGS*

Message

It's my great pleasure to state that "Kultali Dr. B.R. Ambedkar College" is going to publish an Edited Volume entitled "Rethinking 21st Century ,vol.II, enriched with the writings of our teachers of various departments and of our honourable speakers of various webinars organized by our college. It exposes their talent, creativity in learning and express deep feelings, new thoughts and innovative ideas. It reflects academic growth and development of the faculties of various department. Hope , it will boost up the academic and cultural atmosphere of the college.

With best wishes

Dr. Sumita Dutta

Assistant Professor in Philosophy
& NAAC Co-ordinator

Preface

Present volume, "Rethinking 21st Century - Covid-19 Special Edition, Vol-II is meant for everyone. The volume is edited and published by the publication committee of Kultali Dr. B.R. Ambedkar College in September, 2020. The aim of the Edited Volume is to foster the growth of research in various aspects of human society and management of human resources. In the present volume special emphasis has been given on pandemic environment of the year 2020.

The comprehensive content of the volume has attracted immense attention and wealth of information, spread out over all papers. The present volume would be extremely useful to academicians, professionals and policy makers working in these related fields.

The authors have contributed a great deal in terms of effort and creativity to produce this edited volume and I am grateful and happy that the college authority specially my respected Principal Dr. Siuli Saha Dalal spontaneously helped me for publishing the "Rethinking 21st Century Vol. II" as the platform for the resource persons of the College.

Hope this volume would be of great help to academicians, scholars and professors.

Dr. Rupam Kumar Datta

Convenor

Publication Committee

Kultali Dr. B.R. Ambedkar College

Acknowledgement

About all the papers of the edited volume "Rethinking 21st Century - Special edition Covid-19, Vol. - II, are the research outcomes from the esteemed ends of the authors with their honest efforts.

The editors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the authors who submitted their valuable research papers with their hardwork and patients under pandemic environment. We would like to express our deep gratitude to our respected president of the college Mr. Shaktipada Mondal and all members of the Governing Body and IQAC of the college for their active cooperation. We express our special thanks to Dr. Siuli Saha Dalal, Principal, Kultali Dr. B.R. Ambedkar College, who constantly supported us in different ways for the publication of the volume-II, inspite of many adversities during pandemic situation.

Dr. Rupam Kumar Datta (Convenor)

Dr. Sumita Dutta

Dr. Sujata Banerjee

Mr. Tapoban Bhattacharyya

Mr. Mintu Patra

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আকুল মন

ডঃ শিউলি সাহা দালাল

কুলতলি ডঃ বি. আর. আশ্বেদকার কলেজ
e-mail : siulisahadalal@gmail.com

অনেকদিন তো হল মা যে
পাঠাস না কেন আর ইস্কুলে
ভোরের বেলায় বাসের কাকুও আর
ডাক দেয় না 'বাবু' বলে ?
দুপ্তমি যদি করেই থাকি
একটু না হয় বকেই দিস,
কাল সকালে বাসটা আসলে
দোহাই মা আমায় পাঠিয়ে দিস।
পড়া অনেক করব আমি
ক্লাসে কথা বলব না,
তবেই আন্টি Report Card-এ
Too talkative লিখবে না।
টিফিন একটুও করবনা নষ্ট
Promise করছি দেখে নিস।
সময় থাকলে একটু শুধু
সবুজ মাঠে খেলতে দিস।
জামায় কাদা লাগেই যদি
ধুয়ে ফেলব আমিই নিজে।
ফ্যানের হাওয়ায় শুকিয়ে নেব
মোজা যদি যায়ই বা ভিজে।

ধাক্কাধাক্কি আর করব না তো
শুধুই দোলনা চড়া নিয়ে,
দোলনা বন্ধুরা চড়ে চড়ুক
আমি খেলব ঘোড়া নিয়ে।
পেন্সিলবক্স, জলের বোতল আর টুপিটা
গুছিয়ে আনব আমিই নিজে
একটাও আর হারাব না আমি
ভাবিস না যেন বলছি মিছে।
মারামারি আর করব না তো
জানালার ধারে বসা নিয়ে
ছোটরা না হয় বসে বসুক
আমিই বড়দের দেব সরিয়ে।
কাল যে হিয়ার জন্মদিন
একটা কার্ড মা কিনে দিস,
বাগান থেকে শুধুই না হয়
একটা ফুলই তুলে দিস
যতই শীত লাগুক না কেন
খুব ভোরেতেই তুলে দিস
ইউনিফর্মটা নিজেই পরব
একবার শুধু দেখিয়ে দিস।
খেয়ে আমি নিজেই নেব
খাইয়ে দিতে হবে না,
ব্যাগটাও আমি নিজেই নেব
বাপির কাছে দেব না।

ভোরেরবেলাতেই করব না বায়না
লজেন্স কিনে দিতে হবে
কয়েকটা বিস্কুট ওদের দেব
যে ডগিরা লেজ নাড়বে।
বাসটা যখন স্টার্ট নেবে
বোনকে আমি করব টাটা
বোনও যেন আর কোনোদিন
না ছেঁড়ে আমার ড্রয়িং খাতাটা।
মন খারাপ মা করিস না যেন
আমি যখন যাব ইস্কুলে।
তুই যখন মা অফিসে যাস,
থাকিস না কি আর
আমার মনের অতলে?
বাসটা যদি নাই বা আসে
হাওয়া গাড়িতেই পাঠিয়ে দিস,
পাখিরা সব মেলবে ডানা
আনন্দে ওরা দেবে শিষ।
ডগিরা যখন লেজ নাড়বে
ভাল লাগবে আমার মন,
বেড়াল ছানাটা দৌড়ে পালালে
বলব ওরে কথা শোন্।
সবসময় যে মনে হয় মা
বন্ধুরা শুধুই ডাকছে আমায়
আমিও কি আর ভুলেছি ওদের
জড়িয়ে আছি ওদেরই মায়ায়।

BENDING THE CURVE OF COVID-19: ECONOMIC SNAPSHOTS

Dr. Anita Chattopadhyay Gupta

Principal,

Deshbandhu College for Girls, Kolkata

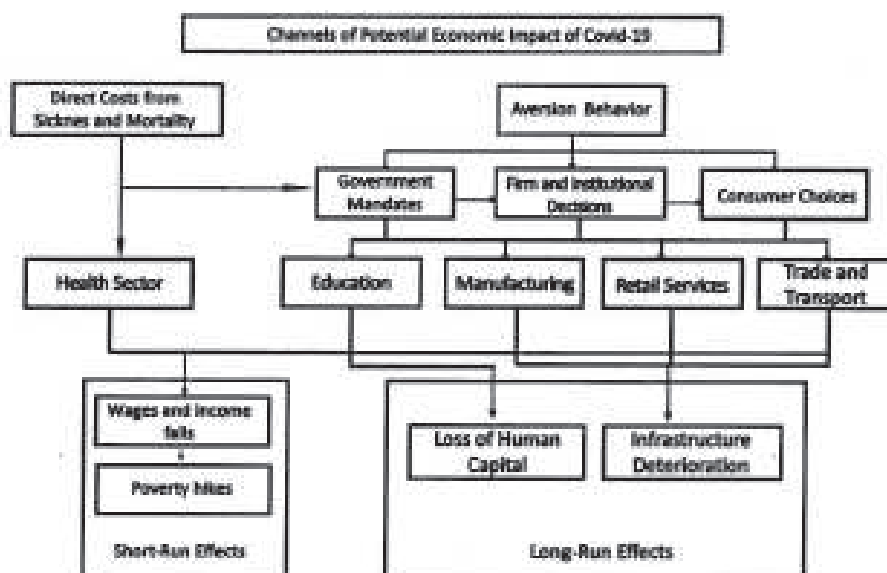
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INTRODUCTION:

The virus that happened to trigger a localized shock in China is now delivering a significant global shock. It has had a detrimental effect on global healthcare systems with a ripple effect on every aspect of human life. With the coronavirus emergence in China and spreading globally, authorities have acted swiftly to limit its spread. In a response to 'flatten the curve' governments have enforced border shutdowns, travel restrictions and quarantine in countries which constitute the world's largest economies. This has sparked fears of an impending economic crisis and recession though its short and long-term consequences will be difficult to appraise with the prolonged country-wide lockdown, global economic downturn and associated disruption of demand and supply chains occurring. Reduced workforce across all economic sectors have been created by self-isolation, social distancing and travel restrictions, causing many jobs to be lost. Educational institutions have closed down, and the need for commodities and manufactured products has decreased. In contrast, the need for medical supplies has significantly increased. The food sector is also facing increased demand due to panic-buying and stockpiling of food products.

SURVEY OF STUDIES:

Experience with similar diseases that has occurred previously had revealed that both human and economic costs are significant (Brahmbhatt and Dutta, 2008). Current experience is no different. As the virus is spreading internationally, many countries have already taken action to limit the spread, through social isolation policies. The preventive actions have had an immediate and significant impact on all economies, and through trade and tourism, on partner economies. The following flowchart traces the channels of potential economic impact of Covid-19.



The quickly evolving nature of the COVID-19 crisis creates a number of issues that make it difficult to estimate the full cost to global economic activity. These issues include, but are not limited to the following:

- ♦ How long will the crisis last?
- ♦ How many workers will be affected both temporarily and permanently?
- ♦ What is the number of countries that will be infected and the amount of economic activity that will be reduced?
- ♦ When will the economic effects peak?
- ♦ How much economic activity will be lost as a result of the viral outbreak?
- ♦ What are the most effective monetary and fiscal policies at the national and global level to address the crisis?
- ♦ What permanent and temporary effects will the global crisis have on how work forces are organized by businesses?
- ♦ How are the tradeoffs between public health and the economic impact of policies to contain the spread of the virus being weighed? (Lynch, 2020)

Economic models have tried out modelling of the consequences of pandemics (Bloom et al. (2005), McKibbin et. al. (2006), Evans et. al. (2014)). Building on previous studies, four channels can be recognised, (i) the direct impact of a

reduction in employment; ii) the increase in costs of international transactions; iii) the sharp drop in travels; and iv) the fall in demand for services which require proximity between people.

The shocks have been divided into four sets, but all are assumed to occur simultaneously, i.e. the final shock encompasses all shocks. The duration of the shocks is currently unknown, though, based on prior events, it is likely to last from 8-12 weeks and most likely unsynchronized across countries.

1. The first shock is a drop in employment. With lower availability of labor, we would expect wages to rise. Less labour also translates to lower demand for capital, as firms need a combination of labor and capital to produce goods and services. Underutilization of capacity takes place due to factory closures (workers stay home, leaving capital and natural resources idle) as well as so there is generally underutilization of the labor force. Of course the country-specific employment effects will depend on the duration and intensity of the pandemic and containment measures, the sectoral composition of employment, and the flexibility of the labor market.
2. The second shock (cumulative with the supply shock) is of a raise in the international trade costs of imports and exports of all goods and services. Trade costs arise when goods cross borders. The increase in transport and transactions costs in foreign trade is driven by additional inspections, reduced hours of operation, road closures, border closures, increases in transport costs, etc. Evans et al. (2015) had estimated that the outbreak of Ebola lead to an increase in trade costs of 10%. Since COVID-19 is affecting more countries and the containment measures seem more severe due to the efforts to contain the virus, an amplification of the shock suggests an increasing international trade costs of imports and exports.
3. The third shock entails a sharp drop in international tourism. The effects of COVID-19 in the tourism, hospitality and recreation sectors have been unprecedented. In the accommodation and lodging sectors, quarterly revenues are down. Travel agents has seen a slowdown since March of 2020. Airlines worldwide are expected to lose in billions in revenues for 2020. As of mid-March 2020, international travel has ground to a halt, with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimating that global travel would decline at least 25 percent in 2020.

4. The fourth shock represents a demand switch by households who purchase fewer services requiring close human interaction, such as domestic tourism, restaurants, and recreational activities, while redirecting demand towards consumption of goods and other services. Demand for the targeted services will drop. This results in a reallocation of household demand across sectors, while total expenditures are still driven by previous shocks and relative prices of goods in the consumption basket. It is difficult to absolutely estimate the impact of social distancing and overall decline of economic activity on those selected sectors, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it is likely to be significant.

Hence the scenarios emerging are:

- a. Underutilization of labor across all sectors in the global economy results in declining capital usage.
- b. Trade costs of global imports and exports increase applied across all goods and services.
- c. Sharp drop in international tourism
- d. Reallocation of demand away from sectors requiring human interaction.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC LOOK:

The pandemic has posed a challenge to the UN Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating poverty by 2030 since global poverty could rise for the first time since 1990 and depending on the poverty line, this surge could represent a reversal of approximately a decade in the world's progress in lowering poverty. The adverse impacts, in some regions, could result in poverty levels which are similar to those that were recorded 30 years ago. The amount of people living in poverty could surge by 420-580 million, compared to the latest official recorded figures for the year 2018, under the most extreme case of a 20 per cent consumption or income contraction,.

COVID-19 has revealed structural inequalities across every aspect, from health to the economy, security to social protection. It is during times like this with resources being strained and institutional capacity being limited, women and girls have to face disproportionate impacts which has far reaching cumulative consequences on fragility, conflict, and emergencies. There is also a threat on hard-fought gains for women's rights. Responding to the crisis is not just about correcting long-

standing inequalities, but also about creating a resilient world considering the interest of everyone, with women at the centre of recovery. Most assessments also note the disproportionate impact on the poor and women as a cross-cutting theme, including the loss of livelihoods, the inadequacy of coverage and fragility of social protection systems, the high burden on informal workers, the impact of remittances flows reduction, vulnerabilities based on demography, and social stratifications. The fact that pre-existing inequalities make certain population groups less able to cope to the impacts of the pandemic is an underlying theme in various country assessments. Migrants, refugees and stateless people, and the most vulnerable are mostly in the informal sector. As a result, formal social safety nets completely miss them. Many recommend rethinking social protection measures, which in many cases will need to include universal health coverage, a universal basic income (even if temporary), as a means of extending the coverage of the social safety net with well-articulated targeting measures. A bottleneck for many countries in designing a recovery plan is the need for adequate real-time data, as most affected segments of society are in the informal areas of employment or outside formal help channels which are difficult to identify or target.

IMPACT ON GOVERNANCE:

The impact of the pandemic has been felt across countries, societies and the economy. The pandemic has changed the lives of people in the world prompting governments and citizens to start rethinking how life should be in a new normal. Governance face the hard choice between public safety and reviving the economy (The Economist, 2020). This is particularly prominent in countries where workforces are comprised largely by informal workers, where countries lack in capacities to economically balance the effects of the lockdown, and with the vulnerable and marginalized communities bearing the brunt of the economic and the health losses. As countries start to ease their lockdown measures in a phased approach to reopen their economies and societies, investments in personal protective equipment, cleansing and hygiene products, widespread COVID-19 testing, and contact tracing of those with the virus are essential basic measures. Key elements for the immediate re-opening phase include business continuity measures, strengthening public service delivery (including e-services), and building resilience of business and people towards shifting to a new normal that includes safe "co-existence with COVID-19." Some countries are now turning their attention to the socio-economic recovery phase and laying-out what the building back better strategy

should be. It will be felt differently across countries depending on their underlying economic, demographic and governance structures with deep impacts at the local level. The two key issues are the continued loss of jobs and livelihoods, the inadequate coverage of social protection and the challenges to address the needs of the informal economy and workers. The health and economic crises triggered by COVID-19 are essentially affecting all countries simultaneously. Assessments that will feed the future development portfolio is important because it sets the course for response and recovery, focusing for now on issues that are context specific.

The pathway to recovery is highly dependent on the manner in which a particular economy is embedded in the global value-chain (demand/supply), the lack of economic diversification (dependency on one particular sector, including tourism), the dependency ratio on foreign exchange, commodity dependence (demand and prices), the debt levels of countries and the implications of sovereign credit ratings for a quick economic recovery. In many developing countries, the informal economy is the backbone of the economy. A key finding is that they are bearing the greatest burden of the pandemic shocks on the enterprise side. Add to this daily wage earners, migrants iX both internal, also mostly informally employed (on the order of 100 million both in India and China, proportionally equally large in several other Asian, African and Latin American countries) and external (bringing in the issue of downward remittances flows). As countries design their stimulus packages, not large enterprises need to get the bulk of support.

Immediate emergency restrictions has been set by many countries which include enforceable orders, directives or recommendations within an often human rights-restricted framework. In this context, maintaining a system of check and balances in governance cannot be undermined, especially while the government plans service delivery, builds trust in public institutions, develops clear socio-economic recovery policies and rebuilds social connectivity. It has affirmed the role of the state, given that this crisis impacts directly on its relation to citizens and communities as providers of health services and grants during the crisis and, importantly, policy environments for conducive internal and external economic engagement. A COVID-19 response must integrate a comprehensive governance response, beyond meeting the public health needs, as an investment into future pathways for recovery, with the vision of leaving no one behind. This is in alignment

with the UNO urgent call for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. Building back better means the COVID-19 response should be risk informed and conflict-sensitive so as not to exacerbate drivers of conflict, and build a clearer understanding of peace capacities crucial for inclusive recovery and sustaining peace during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

SOME RELATED STUDIES:

WHO stand:

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a world health emergency in January 2020. Since then, it has turned into a global public health and economic crisis that has affected the global economy beyond anything experienced in nearly a century. Governments are attempting to balance often-competing policy objectives between addressing the public health crisis and economic considerations that encompass:

- ♦ Confronting increasing budget deficits to support unemployed workers and social safety nets.
- ♦ Providing financial support for national health systems that are under work to develop vaccines while also funding efforts to care for and safeguard citizens.
- ♦ Implementing monetary and fiscal policies that support credit markets while also assisting businesses under financial distress.
- ♦ Implementing fiscal policies to stimulate economic activity, while consumers sharply increase their savings as a form of involuntary saving or precautionary saving
- ♦ Fiscal and monetary policies that are been adopted to date to address the immediate impact of the health crisis compared with the mix of such policies between assisting households, firms, or state and local governments. (www.who.int.2020).

Policymakers generally have been hopeful of a global economic recovery starting in the final months of 2020, assuming there is not a second wave of infections. Some forecasts feel that the pandemic could negatively affect global economic growth more extensively and for a longer period of time with a slow, drawn-out recovery. Without a quick resolution of the health crisis, the economic crisis may persist longer than most forecasters have assumed and require policymakers to weigh the most effective mix of additional fiscal and monetary policies that may be required. The pandemic-related economic and human costs could have long-

term repercussions for economies through the tragic loss of life and job losses that derail careers and permanently shutter businesses. Fiscal and monetary measures implemented to prevent a financial crisis and sustain economic activity may also inadvertently be adding to income and wealth disparities. Within some countries, the economic fallout is widening racial and socio-economic cleavages and increasing social unrest.

While the level of economic effects is becoming clearer, the response to the pandemic could have a significant and enduring impact on the way businesses organize their work forces, on global supply chains, and how governments respond to a global health crisis. As a result of the rapidly spreading virus and its compounding effects on global and national rates of economic growth, forecasting the impact of the virus will be especially challenging.

OECD stand:

The OECD's single-wave scenario projects a global economic contraction of 7.6% in 2020 and a growth rate of 2.8% in 2021, delaying a return to full recovery until 2022. Among developing and emerging economies, the economic downturn is projected to most negatively affect countries that rely on commodity exports to support annual economic growth. In addition to lower prices for commodity exports and reduced global demand for exports, developing countries are projected to be negatively affected by reduced remittances, weaker currencies and tighter financial conditions. The OECD (OECD Interim Economic Assessment, 2020) also concluded that

- ♦ Real per capita income in 2020 is projected to decline by 8% and 9.5%, respectively, depending on a one- or two-wave contagion, with substantial declines in all economies. Even with an economic recovery in 2021, real per capita income is projected to rise to only that of 2013.
- ♦ Unemployment is projected to rise to its highest level in more than 25 years, while the average unemployment rate is projected to rise to 9.2% and 10%, respectively under a single or second-wave scenario. The OECD concludes that, "scarring effects from job losses are likely to be felt particularly by younger workers and lower-skilled workers, with attendant risks of many people becoming trapped in joblessness for an extended period."
- ♦ Net productive investment (business and government) was weak prior to the pandemic, falling behind the average rate of investment during the previous

decade. Investment was forecast to contract by half as a percent of real GDP, falling from 4.7% to 2.3% and 2.0%, respectively for the one-wave and two wave scenarios. The OECD estimated in its March 2020 forecast that increased direct and indirect economic costs through global supply chains, reduced demand for goods and services, and declines in tourism and business travel mean that, "the adverse consequences of these developments for other countries (non-OECD) are significant." Global trade, measured by trade volumes, slowed in the last quarter of 2019 and had been expected to decline further in 2020, as a result of weaker global economic activity associated with the pandemic, which is negatively affecting economic activity in various sectors, including airlines, hospitality, ports, and the shipping industry.

According to the OECD's forecast (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020):

- ♦ The greatest impact of the containment restrictions will be on retail and wholesale trade, and in professional and real estate services, although there are notable differences between countries.
- ♦ Business closures could lessen economic output in advanced and major emerging countries by 15% or more; other emerging economies could experience a decline in output of 25%.
- ♦ Countries dependent on tourism could be affected more severely, while countries with large agricultural and mining sectors could experience less severe effects.
- ♦ Economic effects likely will vary across countries reflecting differences in the timing and degree of containment measures.

IMF stand:

Labeling the projected decline in global economic activity as the "Great Lockdown," the IMF released an updated forecast on June 24, 2020. The IMF came to a conclusion that the global economy is about experience its "worst recession since the Great Depression, surpassing that seen during the global financial crisis a decade ago. The IMF also stated that many countries were facing a multi-layered crisis that included a health crisis, a domestic economic crisis, falling external demand, capital outflows, and a collapse in commodity supply. The impact of changes to strengthen workplace safety"such as staggered work shifts, enhanced hygiene and cleaning between shifts, new workplace practices relating to proximity of personnel on production lines which incur

business costs. As a result, the IMF indicated that the forecast depends on a number of factors, including

- ♦ The length of the pandemic and required lockdowns
- ♦ Voluntary social distancing, which affects consumer spending
- ♦ The ability of displaced workers to secure employment, possibly in different sectors
- ♦ The long-term impact of firm closures and unemployed workers leaving the workforce, compounding the ability of the economy to recover
- ♦ The impact of changes to strengthen workplace safety" such as staggered work shifts, enhanced hygiene and cleaning between shifts, new workplace practices relating to proximity of personnel on production lines" which incur business costs
- ♦ Global supply chain reconfigurations that affect productivity as companies try to enhance their resilience to supply disruptions
- ♦ The extent of cross-border spillovers from weaker external demand as well as funding shortfalls
- ♦ A resolution of the current disconnect between rising asset values, as reflected in market indices, and forecasts of a synchronized downturn in global economic activity

The longer the economic effects persist, the greater the economic impacts are likely to be as the effects are spread through trade and financial linkages to an ever-broadening group of countries, firms and households (Kristalina, 2020).

Concluding remarks:

A COVID-19 recovery plan needs to look beyond the immediate (short-term) impacts and explore the second and third order effects. Over time, a global economic recession is expected to unfold with a full-blown financial crisis. The sequencing of policy responses is critical. Appropriate fiscal and financial incentives must lead to income and job creation, and the restoration of livelihoods, targeting the most vulnerable. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the unsustainability of the pre-pandemic development path. Its socio-economic impacts feed on pre-pandemic vulnerabilities and inequalities across societies, which must be addressed if countries are to build a more resilient future from the perspective of sustainable and people-centred development. The pandemic has also shown that development is no longer going up the ladder, the direction has changed. Based on the socio-

economic impacts seen across countries, the recovery path must include a new human rights-based, just and fair social contract between governments and people, and advocate for social safety nets with a broader reach, universal health insurance, and affordable access to digital connectivity, as the part of the new normal. Global collaboration and solidarity are needed for an effective response, as no country will be able to address the challenges alone. The recovery path from vulnerable and marginalized groups if they are to succeed.

COVID-19 is spreading fast across the globe. The main focus is undoubtedly on containment, treating the sick and helping communities cope with the COVID-19 epidemic. Scenarios indicate that the potential loss of income in affected countries could be significant, with global GDP declining by up to 3.9%, and developing countries hit the hardest (4% on average, but some over 6.5%). Governments will be required to offer considerable support to businesses and households that are going to be. Several potential channels need to be seen in the long run like uncertainty-driven contraction in demand and FDI, and other real effects of a financial shock. The effects of raising domestic trade costs as well as demand switching away from activities requiring direct contact with other people need to be analysed. Early indications of the economic costs and the magnitude of estimated impacts demonstrate the need for a coordinated international response to the crisis. A global crisis requires a global response and there is a need for global collaboration not just on health, but also on trade, finance and macroeconomic policies. Fortunately, global institutions are beginning to catalyze and coordinate global efforts, as well as to provide technical and financial support to countries coping with the health and economic consequences of the outbreak.

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অতিমারীর প্রাদুর্ভাব ও আমফানের প্রকোপ : মানুষের বেঁচে থাকার সংগ্রাম

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২০২০ সালের পৃথিবীকে বিপর্যয়ের বছর বললে ভুল কিছু বলা হবে না। নোবেল করোনাভাইরাসের সর্বগ্রাসী বিস্তারে সমগ্র মানব জগৎ এক ভয়ানক বিপদের মোকাবিলায় তার সংগ্রাম চালিয়ে যাচ্ছে। আকস্মিক এই মারণ ভাইরাসের আক্রমণে বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ভারতবর্ষও সমান বিপর্যস্ত। 'কিভাবে' এর উৎপত্তি হল, 'কোথা' থেকে এটি ছড়ালো, 'পশু পাখির শরীর' থেকে এর বিস্তার কিনা, নাকি কোনো দেশের গবেষণাগারে কোনো নেতিবাচক উদ্দেশ্যে এর সৃষ্টি - তা নিয়ে এতদিনে বহু তর্কবিতর্ক, আলোচনা সমালোচনা হয়েছে, খরচ হয়েছে অনেক নিউজপ্ৰিন্ট, কিন্তু প্রকৃত সমাধান এখনো হাতে আসেনি। সাবধানতাই আপাত সমাধান হয়ে আমাদের সামনে পথ দেখাচ্ছে। হাঁচি, কাশির ড্রপলেটের মাধ্যমে অতি দ্রুত এই কোভিড করোনা ভাইরাস এক মানব শরীর থেকে অন্য মানব শরীরে এর বিস্তার ঘটায়। শরীরের ভেতরের কলকজা গুলিকে নিঃশব্দে অকেজো করে দিতে এর খুব বেশি সময় লাগে না। ফলে আক্রান্ত ব্যক্তির বুঝে উঠতেই সময় লেগে যায় যে করোনা তার শরীর অধিগ্রহণ করে ফেলেছে। এই ভয়ঙ্কর ভাইরাসটির অতর্কিত আক্রমণের ফলে, এর ক্রমাগত চরিত্র বদলে ফেলার অদ্ভুত কৌশলী ক্ষমতার প্রকোপে আমরা দেশে বিদেশে অগনিত সাধারণ মানুষের পাশে হারিয়েছি বহু বিশ্ব বিখ্যাত ব্যক্তিত্বদের, হারিয়েছি বহু চিকিৎসক, স্বাস্থ্যকর্মী, পুলিশকর্মীদের, এখনো এই ভাইরাসটির গতিপ্রকৃতি ও স্বভাবচরিত্র সম্পর্কে জানতে দেশে বিদেশের গবেষণাগারে নিরলস পরিশ্রমে রত বিজ্ঞানীমহল। অতএব, আমরা মনুষ্যজাতি মাস্ক ও স্যানিটাইজারকে পার্স ও মোবাইলের থেকেও আবশ্যিক বলে ভাবতে শিখতে বাধ্য হয়ে উঠছি।

সর্বশক্তি দিয়ে এই নোবেল করোনা ভাইরাসের কবল থেকে দেশবাসী তথা রাজ্যবাসীকে রক্ষা করবার জন্য বিভিন্ন জরুরী ও প্রয়োজনীয় সতর্কতা গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে আপৎকালীন জরুরী ভিত্তিতে। সাধারণ মানুষ হঠাৎ 'লকডাউনের' মতো আবশ্যিক ব্যবস্থাগ্রহণের ফলে যে যে সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হতে পারে তার একটা পরিকল্পনা করে যতটা সম্ভব তার সমাধানের ব্যবস্থা করা হয়েছে। কাঁধে কাঁধ মিলিয়ে বিভিন্ন স্তরের সচেতন মানুষেরা এই আকস্মিক বিপদের দিনে দাঁড়িয়েছে মানুষের পাশে। ২০২০ সালের মার্চ মাসের মাঝামাঝি সময় থেকেই বন্ধ রাখা হয়েছে সমস্ত স্কুল, কলেজ ও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়গুলি। ছাত্র ছাত্রি

স্বার্থ তথা দেশের ভবিষ্যৎ প্রজন্মকে সুরক্ষিত রাখতে এই যুগান্তকারী সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে বাধ্য হয়েছেন দেশের কর্ণধারগণ। লকডাউন উঠে গেলেও, ভাইরাসের সংখ্যাভিত্তিক প্রকোপ কমলেও, এখনো প্রতিদিনের কোভিড মৃত্যু ও আক্রান্তের মত ঘটনার বিরাম ঘটছে না। তাই যতদিন না এই মারণ ভাইরাসের যথার্থ প্রতিষেধক সর্বসাধারণের জন্য প্রস্তুত করা যাচ্ছে, ততদিন আমাদের সচেতন নাগরিক হিসেবে, দায়িত্ববান নাগরিক হিসেবে সাবধানতা অবলম্বন করেই এর যাপনকে নিয়ন্ত্রিত করতে হবে তা নিয়ে দ্বিমতের অবকাশ নেই।

লোকমুখে প্রচলিত প্রবাদটি সকলেরই জানা যে ‘বিপদ কখনো একা আসে না’ পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বাসী তা অতি সম্প্রতি রন্ধ্রে রন্ধ্রে টের পেয়েছে। ‘একা রামে রক্ষা নেই সুগ্রীব দোসর’ - এই প্রবাদটিও এখানে সুপ্রযুক্ত হবে। আমফান নামক যে ভয়াবহ ঘূর্ণিঝড়ের দাপটে আমাদের ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হতে হল সেই দিকে এবার এই আলোচনায় অভিমুখটি ফেরানো যাক।

ঘূর্ণিঝড় একটি ভয়াবহ প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগ যার ফলে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয় বিস্তীর্ণ এলাকার মানুষ প্রাচীনকাল থেকে জীবকুল এই ঘূর্ণিঝড়ের মুখোমুখি হয়েছে। এটির ধ্বংসলীলার সাক্ষী কম বেশী আমরা সবাই। ঠিক সেইরকমই সম্প্রতি অত্যন্ত ভয়ঙ্কর ঘূর্ণিঝড় ‘আমফান’ আছড়ে পড়ে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের গাঙ্গেয় উপকূলবর্তী এলাকায় এবং তার ভয়ঙ্কর রূপ নিয়ে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তোলপাড় করে ওড়িশা এবং বাংলাদেশে তান্ডব চালায়, আমফান, প্রথমে একটি সাধারণ ঘূর্ণিঝড় হিসাবে সৃষ্টি হয়েছিল ১৩ই মে ২০২০তে এবং পরে এটি আরও গতি বাড়িয়ে ভয়ঙ্কর রূপ ধারণ করে ১৫ই মে ২০২০ Severe Cyclone এ পরিণত হয়। ঘূর্ণিঝড়টি, ২০শে মে, ২০২০ গাঙ্গেয় পশ্চিমবঙ্গের কুলবর্তী এলাকা অর্থাৎ দঃ ২৪ পরগনা, কোলকাতা, হাওড়া, হুগলী, উঃ ২৪ পরগনা ও পূর্ব মেদনীপুর, সর্বাধিক গতি ছিল প্রায় ১৬০ কিমি ঘন্টা এবং সর্বোচ্চ বৃষ্টিপাত ৮৯ মিলিমিটার পর্যন্ত হয়, যার ফলস্বরূপ বহু অঞ্চল বিধ্বস্ত হয়েছে। জমির ফসল নষ্ট হয়ে গেছে, রাস্তায় বড়ো বড়ো গাছ ভেঙে পড়েছে, বহু এলাকা বিদ্যুৎবিহীন হয়েছে। ঘর-বাড়ি ভেঙে গেছে। আমফানের ফলে সবথেকে বেশি প্রভাবিত হয়েছে দঃ ২৪ পরগনা জেলার মানুষ। তীব্র ঝড় ও বৃষ্টিপাতে বাঁধ ভেঙে গিয়ে সমুদ্রের নোনা জল গ্রামে ঢুকে গেছে, ফলে ঘর-বাড়ি চাষের জমি জলের তলায় চলে গেছে, হাজার হাজার মানুষ অসহায় গৃহহীন, খাদ্যহীন হয়ে আজও এক-একটি দিন বহু কষ্টের সাথে কাটাচ্ছে। এমনকি, নোনা জলের ম্যানগ্রোভ গাছের পাতা হলুদ বর্ণের হয়ে গেছে, জমির পর জমি নোনা জলের প্রভাবে নষ্ট হয়ে গেছে, বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে, আগামী তিন-চার বছর ওই জমি চাষাবাদের অযোগ্য হয়ে থাকবে, কৃষিজ ফসল ও আনাজের অভাবে এলাকবাসী প্রায় অনাহারে দিন কাটাচ্ছে। শুধু দঃ ২৪-পরগনার ৫৫০০র মতো ঘরবাড়ি ভেঙে ধ্বংস হয়ে গেছে, প্রায় ১০ জন মারা গেছে বড়ো বড়ো গাছ রাস্তায় পড়ে গিয়ে যাতায়াত প্রায় অসম্ভব হয়েছিল, সর্বত্র বিদ্যুৎহীন হয়ে মানুষ

অসহায় অবস্থায় দিন কাটাচ্ছে, জমির ফসল নষ্ট হয়ে যাওয়ায় চাষীরা যেমন আর্থিক দিক থেকে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে, সেরকমই অনেক সাধারণ মানুষ আনাজ, খাদ্যশস্যের অভাবে সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হয়েছে। এমনকি আমফানের হাত থেকে রেহাই পায়নি কোলকাতা বিমানবন্দরও। বিমানবন্দরে প্রচুর ক্ষতি হয়েছে। রানওয়েতে জল ঢুকে বিমান চলাচল অনির্দিষ্ট কালের জন্য বন্ধ ছিল।

আমফানের পর প্রায় একমাস কেটে গেলেও এর প্রভাব এখনও অনেকটাই জীবন্ত। এখনও ভুগছে সুন্দরবন ও তার চারপাশের এলাকাসী, এখনও বিদ্যুৎবিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে আছে বহু এলাকা। শুধুমাত্র ক্ষয়ক্ষতিতেই থেমে যায়নি। আমফান ঝড়ের বিধ্বংসীতায় প্রাণ হারিয়েছে বহুজন। সরকারী গননা অনুযায়ী মৃতের সংখ্যা অন্তত ৭২জন। এই সময় সমুদ্রের জলোচ্ছ্বাসও ছিল অকল্পনীয়, সুন্দরবন লাগোয়া ৬২টি ওয়াচ টাওয়ার ও ১৬টি টহল স্টেশন তলিয়ে গেছে জলের তলায়। বহু স্থাপনার টিনসেড উড়ে গেছে। যেহেতু এই সময়টা মধু আহরনের সময়, তাই স্থানীয় কয়েকজন নিখোঁজ হয়েছে, আমফান দুর্যোগে। সরকারী হিসাব অনুযায়ী মোট ১৩০০ কোটি মার্কিন ডলারের বেশী ক্ষতি হয়েছে। ২০০৮ সালের ঘূর্ণিঝড় নাগিসের রেকর্ডকে ছাপিয়ে ভারত মহাসাগরের উত্তরভাগে রেকর্ড করা সবচেয়ে ব্যয়বহুল ঘূর্ণিঝড় আমফান।

আমফান ঘূর্ণিঝড় ২০শে মে বিকালে দিঘা ও হাতিয়ার মধ্যে অবতরণ করেছিল, আমফান ঘূর্ণিঝড় হিসাবে প্রতি ঘন্টায় ১৫৬-১৬৫ কিমি বেগে আছড়ে পরেছিল বাংলার বুকে। বাতাসের সর্বোচ্চ বেগ হিসেব করা হয়েছিল ১৮৫ কিমি। শুধু বাংলা নয় এটির ভয়ঙ্কর তাড়বের শিকার হয়েছিল ওড়িশা এবং প্রতিবেশী দেশ বাংলাদেশও।

ভারতের ২০১১ সালের জনগননা অনুযায়ী ঘোড়ামারা দ্বীপটির জনসংখ্যা প্রায় ৫০০০-র বেশী, সরকারী বয়ান অনুযায়ী আমফান তাড়বের ফলে দ্বীপটির গড় জনঘনত্ব আরও কমে গেছে, এলাকায় প্রচুর ক্ষয়ক্ষতির সম্মুখীন হয়েছে অবশিষ্ট দ্বীপটির অধিবাসীরা, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের উত্তর ও দক্ষিণ ২৪ পরগনার মানুষ সবথেকে বেশী ক্ষতির সম্মুখীন হয়েছে। বিভিন্ন জায়গায় নদীর বাঁধ ভেঙে প্লাবিত করেছে বহু অঞ্চল, বহু অস্থায়ী বাড়ি-ঘর নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে গেছে মুহূর্তের মধ্যেই, রাজ্য সরকারের তরফ থেকে ক্ষয়ক্ষতির বিবরণ সংগৃহীত হয়েছে। বেশীরভাগ হতাহতের সংখ্যা বেড়েছে বিদ্যুৎ পোস্ট আর গাছ পড়ে যাবার কারণে। শুধু মৃত্যুই নয় এই ঝড় অন্তত ১০ কোটির বেশী মানুষকে প্রভাবিত করেছে। আমফান তাড়বে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকা ফসলের ক্ষতির পাশাপাশি, রাজ্য রাজধানী কোলকাতার বিদ্যুৎ ও জল সরবরাহের ব্যঘাত ঘটেছে।

পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মালদা ও মুর্শিদাবাদ জেলার আমচাষীরাও ব্যাপকভাবে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে, তাদের বয়ান অনুযায়ী চলতি বছর ফেব্রুয়ারী - মার্চ মাসে শিলাবৃষ্টির ফলে ফসলের ৭০% ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছিল, তারপর আমফান দুর্যোগের সবটাই শেষ করে গেছে। সরকারী সূত্রনুযায়ী প্রায় ৩৮,০০০ টন আম নষ্ট হয়েছে, এই আমফান তাড়বে।

রাজ্যেরমন্ত্রী ও কোলকাতার মেয়র সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে আমফান তাড়বে শহর ও পার্শ্ববর্তী এলাকায় প্রায় ১৫০০০ গাছ ধ্বংস হয়ে গেছে। তাই ঘূর্ণিঝড় আমফানের ফলে হারিয়ে যাওয়া সবুজ আবরণটি পুনরুদ্ধার করার জন্য কে.এম.সি কর্তৃক ৩০০০০ থেকে ৪০০০০ গাছ লাগানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে। শুধু কোলকাতাই নয়, আমফান ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত সুন্দরবনে পাঁচ কোটি ম্যানগ্রোভ গাছ লাগানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার। ম্যানগ্রোভগুলি শুধু যে পরিবেশ রক্ষা করে তা নয়, এই গাছ বাঁধগুলিকেও সুরক্ষিত রাখে, মাননীয়, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মমতা ব্যানার্জীর অনুপ্রেরনায় ৫ই জুন, বিশ্ব পরিবেশ দিবসে পাঁচ কোটি ম্যানগ্রোভ গাছ লাগানো হয়।

ভয়াবহ দুর্যোগ আমফান কয়েক মাস আগে হলেও তার প্রভাব আজও জীবন্ত। বহু মানুষ অসহায় গৃহ-হীন পথিকের মতো দিন কাটাচ্ছে। সুন্দরবন প্রায় জলের তলায় চলে গেছে, একশোর উপর মানুষ মারা গেছে। যদিও আস্তে আস্তে পরিস্থিতি স্বাভাবিক হচ্ছে কিন্তু আগের মতো স্বচ্ছন্দতা মিলবে নাকি তা যথেষ্ট সন্দেহ। সরকারের দিক থেকে প্রচুর সাহায্য এসেছে, জায়গায়, জায়গায় শিবির বসেছে, মানসিক দিক থেকে ভেঙে পড়া মানুষগুলো সাহায্যে পাচ্ছে যথাসাধ্য। আশা করা যায়, আগামী দিনে আবার আমরা অতিমারী ও আমফান এর ভয়াবহ স্মৃতি কাটিয়ে দৈনন্দিন জীবনে ফিরে আসবো।

GENOME SEQUENCING OF SARS COV-2 ITS PRESENT AND FUTURE AND POSSIBLE OUTCOME

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INTRODUCTION :

Since the emergence on December 2019 in Wuhan China, 2019-nCoV or COVID-19 is spreading rapidly infecting over 18.4 Million people worldwide with 1.91 Million confirmed cases in India (as on August 5, 2020). With the inflow of people returning home or resuming work in India from different parts of the world, the number of confirmed cases is also rising. As on August 5, 2020, there are 21 lakh reported confirmed cases with 69% recovery rate among patients and 3% deaths.

Covid-19 caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) belongs to the family Coronaviridae, genus Betacoronavirus. It is spherical in shape enveloping single stranded positive strand RNA of approximately 26.4-31.7 kb genome size (1). The viral genome contains several Open Reading Frames (ORFs) in a 5'-3' order. Two thirds of the genome are spanned by a conserved region ORF1a/b which encodes for non-structural polypeptides pp1a and pp1ab collectively known as replicase (1). These polypeptides are cleaved by chymotrypsin-like protease (3CLpro)/ mainprotease (Mpro) and papain-like protease (PLpro) into 16 non-structural proteins including RNA dependent RNA polymerase (RdRp). These proteins form the replication complex of the virus (1). One-third of the genome encodes for the essential structural proteins Spike, Envelope, Membrane and Nucleocapsid and other accessory proteins like 3a/b protein, 4a/b protein and HE protein responsible for genome maintenance. ⁽¹⁾

Whole Genome Sequencing of the virus has proved to be an important tool in understanding the mechanism and lineages of SARS-CoV-2. Acquiring knowledge on the virus SARS-CoV-2 is a prior and a crucial step in battling with the global pandemic. Genome sequences of the coronavirus all over the globe have been made publicly available through a database called Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) (www.gisaid.org). Analysis of these sequences have led

to an identification of variants and classification into different clades/lineages accounting for specific geographical distributions. In March 2020, Forster et. al. had classified SARS-CoV-2 into three major clades from 160 SARS-CoV-2 genome (2) These clades are distinguished into B and C based on amino acid change observed from the A clade which was derived as ancestral clade with 96.2% sequence similarities with a bat virus. Clade B has two mutations - synonymous mutation T8782C and a nonsynonymous mutation C28144T (amino acid change leucine to serine). Clade C differs from the first two with a mutation G26144T (which changes a glycine to a valine). Interestingly, clade B was found to be the most common type in Asia particularly China while A and C were predominant in Europe and America (2). Korber et al. in April 2020 reported a mutation A23403G resulting in D614G (Aspartate to Glycine change in amino acid in position 614 in the spike protein).⁽³⁾ It was hypothesized that this mutation might aid the virus entry and resistance to immune system. This mutation was also observed to be the most prevalent in Europe in an analysis of 48,635 SARS-CoV-2 genome.⁽⁴⁾ This mutation was classified as A2a clade (currently known as 20A and 20B). Another common mutation observed is the ORF8 C8782T causing L84S, found predominant in America. In an isolate from Bangladesh, a unique mutation A1163T was observed which was not found previously in other isolates.⁽⁵⁾

In India, as per the guidelines of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), PAN-INDIA 1000 SARS-CoV-2 RNA Genome Sequencing Consortium was formed under the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. This consortium has isolated and sequenced over 1000 SARS-CoV-2 genomes in India. After analysis of these sequences along with sequences from GISAID database, the haplotype distribution of SARS-CoV-2 in India could be classified into five clades 19A, 19B, 20A, 20B and 20C.⁽⁶⁾ The sequences were obtained from different regions of India - Northern India comprising of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Eastern India (Odisha, West Bengal), Western India (Maharashtra) and Southern India comprising of Telangana, Karnataka. The highest frequency of Clade 20A was found in Northern India and Eastern India while 20B was found in Western India. It was also observed that 19A and 19B haplotype mostly introduced from China and the predominant haplotypes 20A, B and C were from United Kingdom, Italy and Saudi Arabia. Mutations D614G along with RdRp P323L were predominant in most of the states. Although the mutations and their corresponding clades were found in more than one state, the geographical location from where they were introduced were not of the same country (6). Apart

from D614G mutation, higher frequency of RdRp A97V, nsp3 T1198K, NP13L mutations were observed in Delhi whereas ORF3a Q57H mutation was higher in Gujarat. Although a small countable property of this virus has been recognised, there are still many unanswered questions in this fast-evolving SARS-CoV-2.

The new genome sequence was obtained by first mapping reads to a reference SARS-CoV-2 genome using BWA-MEM 0.7.5a-r405 with default parameters to generate the consensus sequence. In addition, the assembly produced by MEGAHIT 1.2.9 (de novo assembly), using default parameters, was used to cross-validate with the reference-based method as an internal control. The two results were consistent, and our final sequence is based on the reference-based method. The reference sequence we used was from the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Database (GISAID; strain identifier EPI_ISL_405839). The reads mapped to the reference sequence were then curated in a pileup alignment file to obtain the consensus sequence (minimum coverage threshold, 10). FastQC 0.11.8 was used to assess the sequence quality before trimming and after alignment to prevent potential errors. There were 5,246,584 paired-end sequences in the raw data. A total of 9,891,431 records were included in the reference-based alignment after trimming, and 9,887,093 (99.96%) of them were mapped to the SARS-CoV-2 reference genome. We generated a consensus sequence of 29,811 bp with no gap and high average coverage (77,000). Primer binding sites at the 5' and 3' ends were removed, resulting in this genome being 59 nucleotides (nt) shorter than a reference genome in GenBank (accession number NC_045512), excluding the poly(A) tail of the genome. For phylogenetic analyses, SARS-CoV-2 full-genome sequences were aligned with CLUSTAL W (6) using MEGA 10.0.5. (7). The new SARS-CoV-2 sequence was compared to existing genomes using online NCBI BLAST (<https://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi>). Full-genome comparison of the isolate revealed 99.99% identity with two previously sequenced genomes available at GenBank (MN988668 and NC_045512) for SARS-CoV-2 from Wuhan, China, and 99.9% with seven additional sequences (MN938384.1, MN975262.1, MN985325.1, MN988713.1, MN994467.1, MN994468.1, and MN997409.1). The final genome of sequenced SARS-CoV-2 consists of a single, positive stranded RNA that is 29,811 nucleotides long, broken down as follows: 8,903 (29.86%) adenosines, 5,482 (18.39%) cytosines, 5,852 (19.63%) guanines, and 9,574 (32.12%) thymines. The sequence of BetaCoV/Nepal/61/2020 from coordinates 1 to 29811 is identical to the sequence of isolate 2019-nCoV WHU01 (Gen Bank accession number

MN988668) from 15 to 29825 (29810/29811), except at site 24019, with a substitution of a C, from 2019-nCoV WHU01, for T. The sequence of BetaCoV/ Nepal/61/2020 from coordinates 1 to 29811 is identical to the sequence of isolate Wuhan-Hu-1 (GenBank accession number NC_045512) from 16 to 29826 (29810/29811), except at site 24019, with the same substitution of a C from isolate Wuhan-Hu-1 for T. The C24019T mutation corresponds to C24034T if we use the sequence located under GISAID strain identifier EPI_ISL_405839 as a reference. This was a silent mutation at the spike gene (codon AAC to AAT). Based on the reference sequence, the following five mutations were also identified: T8782C (in ORF1a, codons AGT to AGC, silent mutation), T9561C (in ORF1a, codons TTA to TCA, nonsilent mutation), C15607T (in ORF1b, codons CTA to TTA, silent mutation), C28144T (in ORF8b, codons TCA to TTA, nonsilent mutation), and T29095C (in nucleocapsid, codons TTT to TTC, silent mutation).

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC - A LOT MORE THAN A HEALTH CRISIS!

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Corona virus disease (Covid19) pandemic, caused by SARS-COV2, is of unprecedented global public health concern. After the first human cases of Covid19 were identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, the virus has now been reported in more than 188 countries already. Pandemics are not merely serious public health concern, rather these trigger serious socio-economic, cultural and political crises in the world.

To prevent rapid transmission of corona virus, countrywide lockdowns had been enforced through the restriction on economic production and mobility of the citizens. Physical distancing, wearing masks, frequent hand sanitization and following sneezing/coughing etiquettes are the new normal. The outbreak of pandemics causes fear and anxiety among people, which could lead to enhanced hostility, chaos, extreme social, cultural and economic disruptions globally.

'We can try and be socially and globally connected even while we are physically distant'

Physical distancing is the need of the hour but the paranoia in people makes them act in a hostile fashion. With so much social stigma associated with Covid19, people may try to conceal their symptoms. They may also escape quarantine facilities and isolation wards at hospitals, creating difficulty in tracing them and leading to spread of the virus. People need to be convinced through campaigns that although it is very difficult to be separated from one's family members and spend time in isolation, it represents the only road to cure and protection of others.

Fear brings out the worst in each one of us. This often leads to ostracism of the family suffering from Covid19. Not only have they had to deal with the illness but also the social stigma and rejection. In such situation of distress, the patient and their family need support, cooperation and acts of altruism from neighbours.

Blatant acts of racism and intolerance, as well as more covert feelings of enmity, are often driven by panic and uncertainty caused by the pandemic. Reports of discrimination against the Chinese and other Asians elsewhere around the world and calling it a Chinese virus due to its origin, showed the deteriorated levels of sensitivity among the world population. With faces hidden behind masks, acts of aggression and violence might damage the social fabric more than ever before.

Healthcare workers, police, sanitary workers involved in Covid care are being pelted with stones, abused, threatened with eviction and discriminated against in various parts of the world, due to the fear that they might spread the infection. We must understand that the frontline Covid warriors are rendering selfless service and playing critical roles during this period of crisis and they all deserve our support, praise and appreciation rather than discrimination.

Ever since the declaration of the pandemic and resultant lockdown, demand for sanitizers, soaps, medicines and other essential commodities have sky-rocketed with people doing panic buying and hoarding essentials. Several pictures and stories have been shared on social media about how people are unnecessarily buying items in bulk quantities with little consideration for fellow citizens. With supply of essential items being already irregular due to lockdowns hoarding will cause more problems.

Restriction of cultural celebrations, physical distancing with friends and family, closure of places of entertainment, leisure, worship and educational institution has led to immense societal and psychological stress. Women and children are at greater risk. Lack of security, money and health is leading to increased domestic violence and child abuse.

To top it all, social media platforms are getting flooded with fake news and pseudo-scientific information misleading people. We must use science, data and fact-based information only and get rid of the baseless misinformation that is causing panic and negativity in the world. We need to correct the rumours, raise awareness and challenge those whose words promote bias. We should celebrate and spread stories of recovery and correct information. Hence, medical professionals, governments and the public in general must work hand in hand for containment of the pandemic.

Transnational solidarity had initially suffered a blow with nations sealing their borders in haste, stopping international flights and restricting international trade and tourism. Though these were implemented to contain the virus spread but in a way these actions are against the ideology of a modern multipolar world with free movement of people, goods and services.

But soon we realized that fighting the Covid19 crisis essentially requires a holistic approach from all the nations displaying unity. We saw this in the form of telemedicine and 'medical diplomacy', where countries have been sending doctors, paramedics, medicines and medical equipment across borders to those countries hit most severely by the pandemic and that lacked certain medical expertise and supplies.

'Dealing with uncertainty and flat growth is the new business normal'

The normal rhythm of world's economy, socio-cultural ethos, national and global political waves and academic atmosphere has been disturbed due to the pandemic to an unimaginable extent.

There were painful visuals of unemployed migrant workers stranded without food and proper shelter, moving across the country's highways and railway tracks to return to their native places, some meeting with accidents and deaths on their way. Countries with geographical vastness and poor social indicators, such as higher fertility, illiteracy, and poverty will find it more difficult to cope up with the pandemic's collateral damage.

Due to shrinkage of the economy, massive job loss will occur. Production in agricultural, industry and service sectors will plummet. Various small-scale businesses in the informal sector would shut down due to this shock. There is serious threat of uncontrolled inflation. Lack of money in the hands of people, already devastated by the pandemic, might lead to lawlessness.

Industries suffered a lot specially during the lockdown periods as many of these, excluding those related to essential amenities, are closed for a long time. People linked with the tourism and transportation industry are also facing utmost difficulties.

Post-Covid, small offices or work from home may well be the new norm. Organizations may attempt to formulate such policies that will motivate employees to work from home. Such policies would be of immense help for employees, enabling them to manage home and the office at the same time. This will increase productivity for the company and cut its expenses in managing big corporate offices with hefty electricity, phone, and infrastructure maintenance bills. This cost saving can be used in employee welfare and other developmental activities of the company.

'Environment - a silver lining'

The lockdown strategies due to Covid19 are a great opportunity for all the countries to restore the environmental quality and the natural ecosystem stability. Due to restrictions on transport, constructional activities and industrial works, the health of the environment has been significantly improved. The discharge of manufacturing waste, emission of greenhouse gasses, release of pollutants had been curtailed during complete lockdown periods which promotes clear blue sky in city areas, clean water, repair of ozone layer and restoration of bio diversities in forest areas.

Due to the rapid industrialization, population growth, unrestricted wildlife trade and anthropogenic nuisance in name of development, we have neglected Mother Nature since the early days of human civilization and specially since industrial

revolution. In doing so we are in constant conflict with the wild flora and fauna invading and destroying their habitat. This leads us to come in close contact with the wild animals resulting in viral outbreaks. Easy transportation and globalization results in rapid spread of the virus and in no time, epidemics turn into pandemics. To prevent and manage this outbreak, huge money and resources are being spent to develop diagnostics, medicines and vaccines. But we are neglecting the basics of prevention such as forestation and banning wildlife markets and trades. Such necessary steps would help to protect humans from future pandemics.

'This too shall pass'

Every crisis teaches us something new and we have plenty to learn from this pandemic. It is like a pause in our fast-paced daily life to introspect and rebuild the connection between human and nature. There will be immense changes in our personal, social lives, our work-culture and in our hygiene and health. It has taught us to live with adversities and to live for others. Rapid digitalization of economy and online teaching and video conferencing are the new normal. The outbreak of the coronavirus and its rapid spread across the world, underscores the urgent need for more transnational cooperation in the fields of economy, medicine, technology and environment. This will bring in real wellbeing, feeling of mutual fellowship and sense of responsibility among the global citizens. Subsequently this will help us to grow in a more sustainable manner. Together we can and together we will win over this pandemic and prevent similar crisis in future.

COLLABORATIVE AND BLENDED TEACHING- LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS- A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE IN PANDEMIC SITUATION

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INTRODUCTION :

The pandemic has significantly disrupted not only the school education but the higher education sector as well, which is a critical determinant of a country's economic future. Sometime in the second week of March 2020, state governments across the country (India) began shutting down schools and colleges temporarily as a measure to contain the spread of the novel Coronavirus. It's close to half of a year and there is no certainty when they will reopen. This is a crucial time for the education sector-board examinations, nursery school admissions, entrance tests of various universities and competitive examinations, among others, are all held during this period. As the days pass by with no immediate solution to stop the outbreak of Covid-19, school and university closures will not only have a short-term impact on the continuity of learning for more than 285 million young learners in India but also endanger far-reaching economic and societal consequences.

The structure of schooling and learning, including teaching and assessment methodologies, was the first to be affected by these closures. Only a handful of private schools could adopt online teaching methods. Their low-income private and government school counterparts, on the other hand, have completely shut down for not having access to e-learning solutions. The students, in addition to the missed opportunities for learning, no longer have access to healthy meals during this time and are subject to economic and social stress.

Measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic such as a shift to online learning have affected higher education worldwide. As colleges across the country pivot

online on very short notice, there are a host of complications - from laptops and Internet access to mental health and financial needs.

Therefore there is currently strong and widespread support among university administrators for Blended Learning and Collaborative work at the college level, or courses that incorporate some degrees of online instruction. As instructors are called on to incorporate online and face -to-face elements into their instructions, they face the critical question of how to intentionally connect the two modalities in ways that strengthen learning. This article first outlines the historical contexts through research findings and the present a rationale for the use of cross over discussions protocols that connect online forum and face -to -face discussions. The article set over some practical strategies for facilitating conversations across the two modalities. These strategies were developed by authors of English and Education discipline for the school level, under graduate and post graduate level courses and are now adaptable across various course levels and other disciplines.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Digital learning experts have some surprising advice: do less.

"Please Do A Bad Job Of Putting Your Courses Online" is the title of one popular blog post by Rebecca Barrett-Fox, an assistant professor of sociology at Arkansas State University. Her point: "your class is not the highest priority of their or your life right now." She suggests not requiring students to show up online at a particular time and making all exams open-book and open-Internet.

A study explores perceived anxiety and stress and investigates student attitudes toward online learning, including the interactions among learning skills, student life, attitudes toward online learning, with anxiety levels, and perceived stress. Study uses exploratory mixed method design. First, researchers administered a series of questionnaires with closed-ended questions about student life, student skills, and levels of anxiety and perceived stress. Student attitudes toward online learning were explored through open-ended questions. Second, a focus group discussion was conducted concerning the first phase findings and issues the

university must address when the COVID-19 lockdown ends. A convenience sample of (n=78) students partook in the current study. Most were women (n=71, 91%) and pursuing bachelor's degrees (n=72, 92.3%); the average age was 19.5 years (SD = 1.45). Most students reported moderate levels of perceived stress and mild psychological and somatic anxiety. The perceived stress was evidenced by the average positive correlation with student skills, specifically time management and procrastination, as well as student life. Psychological anxiety was predicted by perceived stress, which was predicted by student life. Students found that engaging in online learning enabled them to shift attention away from the pandemic while the emotional support from teachers facilitated for them to cope with this period. However, lack of attention and focus, decreased motivation to attend lessons and study, limited availability of space at home, distraction from family, and having multiple assignments during the lockdown were major challenges facing students' online learning.

Sean Michael Morris says that in this unprecedented time, "Recognizing that we're also human, we also have to figure this out together is incredibly important. The idea of being able to just port what you're doing in a classroom into an online environment has its own problems. But trying to do that in the midst of a pandemic is another problem altogether."

Morris and other colleagues have a tongue-in-cheek name for what they're doing right now: "Panic-gogy" (for panic + pedagogy).

On one level, Panicgogy means understanding students' practicalities. Some only have smartphones. Some have family responsibilities. Some have been sent home and need to find a new place to live, new job, and new health insurance. Professors may feel that the simplest option would be transitioning to class over video chat, but for all these practical reasons "It's not really realistic to think that students can just show up and start taking class at the same time every day in an online environment," says Morris.

Morris also suggests that professors not rely solely on the university's official software, known as a learning management system, but that they make themselves

reachable by as many means as possible while preserving privacy: Facebook, Twitter, email, WhatsApp group. And make sure that students have the opportunity to be connected to each other as well.

He also suggests that professors make themselves as familiar as possible with all the types of help universities and communities are offering: from counseling, to emergency loans and other financial assistance.

Robin DeRosa is director of the Open Learning and Teaching Collaborative at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire. She says, "I think the first thing is we are not building online courses or converting your face to face courses to online learning. Really, what we're doing is we are trying to extend a sense of care to our students and trying to build a community that's going to be able to work together to get through the learning challenges that we have."

DeRosa points out that creating an excellent online course can take a year of development and collaboration among people with different skills."So if people think that in three to five days they're going to rejigger their course and build some super amazing online platform, that's probably unlikely to happen," she says. DeRosa suggests that we ask students for their own suggestions on the best ways to keep in touch. DeRosa also suggests that professors bring COVID-19 onto the curriculum.

Rethinking Education

The idea here is really to help our students feel included in the process of Rethinking Education for a challenging time. Whatever field you teach, I think it's worth asking how is that field affected by the public health crisis and what contributions could the field be making right now to help people in their communities.

Even though the focus can sometimes be on technology, tools, and logistic, what is really required from professors at this time is compassion.

The real skill that Panicgogy requires is sort of a critical compassion, if you will the ability to look at the situation as it really is. Figure out what's going on, how

you can operate within that, and how you can be compassionate in that as well.

E-learning: Modes Of Teaching - Learning

- ◆ Facebook
- ◆ Twitter
- ◆ Flipboard
- ◆ Email

It is now a well known fact that online learning is a kind of education that takes place over the Internet. It is often referred to as "e-learning" among other terms. However, online learning is just one type of "distance learning" - the umbrella term for any learning that takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom.

Distance learning has a long history and there are several types available today, including:

- ◆ Correspondence Courses: conducted through regular mail with little interaction.
- ◆ Telecourses: where content is delivered via radio or television broadcast.
- ◆ CD-ROM Courses: where the student interacts with static computer content.
- ◆ Online Learning: Internet-based courses offered synchronously and/or asynchronously.
- ◆ Mobile Learning: by means of devices such as cellular phones, PDAs and digital audio players (iPods, MP3 players).

Blended and Collaborative Teaching Learning Strategies

By far the most popular approach today is online learning. According to the Sloan Consortium, online enrollments continue to grow at rates faster than for the broader student population and institutes of higher education expect the rate of growth to continue increasing. Some of the key findings:

- ◆ Over 1.9 million students were studying online in the fall of 2003.
- ◆ Schools expect the number of online students to grow to over 2.6 million by the fall of 2004.
- ◆ Schools expect online enrollment growth to accelerate - the expected average growth rate for online students for 2004 is 24.8%, up from 19.8% in 2003.

- ◆ The majority of all schools (53.6%) agree that online education is critical to their long-term strategy.
- ◆ A majority of academic leaders believe that online learning quality is already equal to or superior to face-to-face instruction. (The "no significant difference" phenomenon.) (From: <http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/index.asp>)

Introduction to Blended and Collaborative Teaching- Learning--- How It Works:

One of the most prominent features of blended learning is the virtual meeting or synchronous class meeting. If you want students to be engaged in the class meetings, it must be meaningful.

Collaborative work can be meaningful when students' problem-solve together, plan, and apply their learning in new contexts.

In years past, instructors had to create their "**virtual classrooms**" from scratch which was difficult and often led to poor results. Today, an entire industry has emerged to do this for us. **Course Management System (CMS)** software is utilized by almost about all colleges today. CMS allow instructors to design and deliver their courses within a flexible framework that includes a number of different tools to enable learning and communication to occur.

Popular for-profit CMS include:

- ◆ Blackboard (www.blackboard.com)
- ◆ WebCT (www.webct.com)
- ◆ eCollege (www.ecollege.com) Low cost alternative and open source CMS include:
 - ◆ ETUDES-NG (<http://etudesproject.org>)
 - ◆ Moodle (<http://moodle.org>)
 - ◆ Angel (<http://angelllearning.com>)

Any of these CMS offer functionality which allows instructors to deliver course content, enable communications, and conduct evaluations. The most common tools offered by CMS include:

Schedule - For posting and viewing deadlines, events, etc.

Announcements - For posting current information to all students.
Syllabus - For creating and posting the course syllabus.
Modules - For publishing and viewing course content in sections.
Assignments - For posting, submitting, and grading student work.
Discussion Board - For asynchronous discussions, group work, and collaboration.
Private Messages - For private communication between students and/or the instructor.
Chat - For real-time, synchronous conversation in written form.
Tests & Quizzes - For authoring and administering exams, quizzes, surveys, etc.
Gradebook - For posting and managing student grades.

A New Paradigm shift for Teaching and Learning:

Online learning is catalyzing a pedagogical shift in how we teach and learn. There is a shift away from top-down lecturing and passive students to a more interactive, collaborative approach in which students and instructor co-create the learning process. The Instructor's role is changing from the "sage on the stage" to "the guide on the side."

Constructivism -This point of view maintains that people actively construct new knowledge as they interact with their environment. This is a student-centered approach in which students "co-create" their learning experience. This approach empowers students as active learners instead of just passive recipients absorbing information and reproducing it for standardized tests.

Derived from the work of Swiss philosopher, Jean Piaget, constructivism emphasizes:

- ◆ The learner as a unique individual.
- ◆ The relevance of the learner's background and culture.
- ◆ Increased responsibility for learning belongs to the student.
- ◆ Motivation for learning comes from successful completion of challenging tasks.
- ◆ Instructors as facilitators helping learners develop their own understanding of content.
- ◆ Learning is an active, social process.
- ◆ The dynamic interaction between task, instructor and learner.

Constructionism - A doctrine or theory based on construction of knowledge, asserts that learning is particularly effective when constructing something for others to experience. This can be anything from a spoken sentence or an internet posting, to more complex things like a painting or a presentation. For example, you might read this page several times and still forget it by tomorrow - but if you were asked to explain these ideas to someone else in your own words, or produce a slideshow that explained these concepts, you would gain a deeper understanding that is more integrated into your own ideas.

Blended learning Approach- Successful blended learning educators and schools are focusing on engagement as they work towards students' achievement. We have the unique opportunity to not replicate a system that has not served all students. Instead we need to look at flexible time and place to innovate through blended learning. The methods and models for implementing blended learning - from the flipped classroom to the flex model, are all on the continuum of just how much time is spent online and in the online classroom. Blended learning can provide a unique way of not only engaging students in collaborative work and projects, but also personalizing and individualizing instruction for students.

As experienced online teachers of both K-12 and higher education students, educators are quite familiar with the challenges of engaging students in virtual work. Fortunately the blended learning model still demands some in-person, brick-and-mortar learning, so there is a unique opportunity to use this structure to engage students.

- ◆ Leverage virtual class meetings or synchronous class meetings with collaborative work where the meeting is recorded and available for students anytime they wish to watch.
- ◆ Create the Need to Know through relevant and authentic projects and serious game based learning.
- ◆ Reflect and set on student centered goals for active participation of students and creating personal connection to the learning and personalized goals.
- ◆ Differentiate instruction through online work in a blended learning classroom through formative assessments on some specific content, in an effort to

individualize instruction to meet students' personal needs. Students are no longer engaged in uninteresting busy work but focused, individualized learning.

- ◆ Use of tools for Mobile learning- Edutopia recently published the guide, Mobile Devices for Learning. The guide provides variety of Apps and Tips proposing teachers use mobile learning as part of the learning environment. Blended learning can partner well with many strategies and apps. Flipped classroom model and You Tube are incredibly useful.

Collaborative Approach - As an instructor, the teacher focuses on the experiences that would best generate learning from the learner's point of view, rather than just publishing and assessing the information he or she think they need to know. Each participant in a course can and should be a teacher as well as a learner. Teachers' job changes from being the sole source of knowledge, to being a guide and role model. Teachers connect with students in ways that address their own learning needs by moderating discussions and activities in a way that collectively leads students towards the larger learning goals of the class. Online distance learning meets the needs of an ever-growing population of students who cannot or prefer not to participate in traditional classroom settings. These learners include those unable to attend traditional classes, who cannot find a particular class at their chosen institution, who live in remote locations, who work full-time and can only study at or after work, and those who simply prefer to learn independently. The minimum requirement for students to participate in an online course is access to a computer, the Internet, and the motivation to succeed in a non-traditional classroom. Online courses provide an excellent method of course delivery unbound by time or location allowing for accessibility to instruction at anytime from anywhere. Learners find the online environment a convenient way to fit education into their busy lives. The ability to access a course from any computer with Internet access, 24 hours a day, seven days a week is a tremendous incentive for many of today's students. Some of the main advantages of online learning include: (From Introduction to Online Teaching and Learning Joshua Stern)

- ◆ Convenience: 24/7 access from any online computer; accommodates busy schedules; no commuting, no searching for parking.

- ◆ Enhanced Learning: Research shows increased depth of understanding and retention of course content; more meaningful discussions; emphasis on writing skills, technology skills, and life skills like time management, independence, and self-discipline.
- ◆ Leveling of the Playing Field: Students can take more time to think and reflect before communicating; shy students tend to thrive online; anonymity of the online environment.
- ◆ Interaction: Increased student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction and discussion; a more student-centered learning environment; less passive listening and more active learning; a greater sense of connectedness, synergy.
- ◆ Innovative Teaching: Student-centered approaches; increased variety and creativity of learning activities; address different learning styles; changes and improvements can translate to on-ground courses as well
- ◆ Improved Administration: Time to examine student work more thoroughly; ability to document and record online interactions; ability to manage grading online.
- ◆ Savings: Accommodate more students; increased student satisfaction = higher retention and fewer repeats.
- ◆ Maximize Physical Resources: Lessen demand on limited campus infrastructure; decrease congestion on campus and parking lots.
- ◆ Outreach: Give students options; reach new student markets; appeal to current students thus increasing enrollments.

Online Learning FAQs

People who are new to online learning are often unclear about what to expect. Below are some answers to frequently asked questions about online classes.

- ◆ Is an online class the same as a self-paced class?
Answer: No. While some online classes are similar to independent study, most online classes are not self-paced classes. The due dates for documents and class participation reflect those of a "regular" campus class. Homework, other activities, and online class participation must be completed by preset dates and times.
- ◆ How much time do I have to spend online?
Answer: You should plan to spend at least the same amount of time you would

spend on a face to-face class. And probably more, at least at first, as you get oriented to the online CMS.

- ◆ Do I have to log on to class at a particular time?

Answer: No. You will have deadlines by which to post your work, but when you complete that Introduction to Online Teaching, work is up to you. You should try to do your work on a daily basis so as to avoid being overburdened at the end of each unit.

- ◆ Is taking a class online easier than a "regular" class?

Answer: No. The course content in an online class is usually identical to that of a face-to-face class on the same topic.

Some people think the workload is even more demanding than a regular face-to-face class in that you have to be a self-directed learner, stay motivated, and stay on top of your workload independently. It has been shown that the most successful online students/teachers tend to share the following characteristics:

- ☐ Self-motivation/self-starter.
- ☐ Good organization and time-management skills.
- ☐ Familiar with computers and the Internet.
- ☐ Resourceful and actively seek answers and solutions to questions and problem.

- ◆ What Internet skills would be helpful in an online class?

Answer: The most successful students have the following Internet skills:

- ☐ Familiarity with Web browsers and an email program.
- ☐ Some familiarity with Web-based interactions such as email, discussion boards, list servers, and chat rooms.
- ☐ Proficiency with typing and word processing.
- ☐ Experience in successful Internet searches using a variety of search engines.

- ◆ How is online teaching different from traditional classroom teaching?

Answer: The online model emphasizes an interactive learning environment,

designed to stimulate dialogue between instructor and students and among students themselves. The online process requires both instructor and students to take active roles. The instructor will often act as a facilitator, organizing activities that engage students directly rather than relying too heavily on lectures and memorization.

- ◆ When and where do classes take place?

Answer: We don't really "meet" in a real-time or physical face-to-face sense. Instead, we interact regularly through the CMS and via email. Courses take place wherever your computer is: at home, at work, on the road - anywhere you can connect to the Internet. Courses are typically organized by week with specific due dates. The model is primarily asynchronous, which means that within each week you and your students may log in whenever it is most convenient. Generally, logging in four to five times per week is necessary to give timely feedback and interact sufficiently with students. Although communication is primarily asynchronous, real-time chat is also available.

- ◆ How will I be able to communicate with my students?

Answer: A lot of instructors mistakenly assume that they'll feel isolated from their online students. To their surprise, most instructors find that online courses actually provide a high degree of personal contact, and many say that they get to know their online students much better than their students in on-ground courses. This is because asynchronous, online courses offer many more opportunities for reflection, in-depth discussion, and interaction than traditional courses that meet only once or twice a week. Not only will you and your students communicate directly, everyone in the class can be involved in group- and class-level discussions contributing as much and as often as they want. Far from being an impediment to communication, the online format facilitates and enhances communication and interaction in ways that would be impossible in other situations. (Adapted from: FAQ created by Dr. Marsha Conley, American River College and <http://www.onlinelearning.net>)

Important Questions for New Online Instructors to Consider

- ◆ How can you accommodate different learning styles online?

- ◆ How might you convert the learning activities you use in the traditional classroom to the online environment? Is it possible to use your materials "as is" or will you need to rethink how your material is presented?
- ◆ Lecturing is the most common method of presenting content in college classrooms. Why is lecturing a less productive method of teaching in the online environment?
- ◆ In the virtual classroom, lectures are short and few. With this being the case, where are the students going to get the information they need to obtain the learning objectives?
- ◆ Are video, audio, and real-time activities a benefit in a text-based asynchronous online course? Why or why not?
- ◆ How will you inform your students of online expectations and realities and help ensure their success?
- ◆ What problems can you anticipate that students might have when beginning your course? How might you smooth the way for your students?

MAJOR QUESTIONS---

Is Online Teaching Right for Me?

The online instructor plays a vital role in developing and maintaining an effective online learning environment and must possess a unique set of tools to perform successfully. Some instructors from the traditional classroom environment will easily adapt to the online model, while others may find the transition challenging. Reflect on your teaching style, circumstances and technical skills to see if teaching online is right for you.

Computer skills??

- ◆ Do you have (or are you willing to obtain) access to a computer and Internet connection at home and/or at work?
- ◆ Are you willing to upgrade your computer equipment or purchase new software if needed?
- ◆ Do you know how to use email and access the Web using a browser?
- ◆ Can you download files from the Web and save them to your own computer?
- ◆ Can you attach a document to an email message?
- ◆ Can you cut/copy and paste from one program into another?

- ◆ Have you ever taken an online course as a student (i.e. the ETUDES-NG training course)?
- ◆ Have you used Webpages to supplement your on-the ground course or seminar?
- ◆ Have you used online quizzes, a discussion board or chat room as part of your teaching?
- ◆ Do you believe that high-quality learning can take place without interacting with your students face-to-face?
- ◆ Do you believe lecturing is the best, or only, method for delivering education in your field?
- ◆ Do you feel that discussion is an effective teaching strategy for your subject matter?
- ◆ Do you believe it is important to structure activities so that students can learn from each other via interactivity and collaborative learning?
- ◆ Can you dedicate a significant number of hours per week (any time during the day or night) to participate in the online teaching process?
- ◆ Are you able to create schedules for yourself and stick to them? In other words, are you a self-disciplined, independent worker?
- ◆ Are you flexible in dealing with students' needs (due dates, absences, make-up exams)?
- ◆ Are you willing to spend time rethinking and redesigning your teaching materials to fit the needs of the online environment? o Are you willing to invest time in professional development to continue learning new online teaching and/or technical skills in the future?

Feedback:

If you have had first-hand experience as an online student, you will likely have greater insight into your own online students' needs and a better understanding of the unique requirements of the online environment. Experience using the Internet and the Web to enhance your teaching in the traditional classroom can be a good first step to teaching entirely online. An online instructor should be able to accept the value of facilitated learning as equal to the traditional model. If a teacher feels the only way that true learning can take place is through the traditional means of educating in a classroom, the person is generally not a good fit for the online paradigm. This is OK, but we must be honest with ourselves. Both an

accelerated learning model and the online process depend on facilitative techniques for their success. The online classroom requires new teaching strategies and instructional techniques; you should not try to recreate the on-ground classroom in the online paradigm. The person leading a successful online class must be a proponent of facilitative learning, and have confidence in the system in order to make it work. Changes and modifications in the Teaching style and habits are needed to teach online. The online facilitator should be open, concerned, flexible, and sincere. An online instructor must be able to compensate for the lack of physical presence in the virtual classroom by creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable participating and especially where students know that their instructor is accessible. Failure to do this can alienate the class both from each other and from the instructor and would make for a very weak learning environment. Online students are as busy, or busier, than anyone else in today's hurried world. An online instructor should be willing to give individual attention to students who may need extra help. Being sensitive, open and flexible is mandatory for success in the online realm.

Seven Principles of Good Teaching Based on considerable educational research

Chickering and Gamson (1987) outlined Seven Standards of Good Practice for Undergraduate Education, principles that have been widely accepted as measures for judging the effectiveness of classroom teaching. ETUDES-NG incorporates elements in each of the seven areas, as demonstrated below:

Principle 1: Encourage student-faculty contact-- Through Private Messages students and faculty can communicate. Among other things, this allows instructors to be proactive by following up on students who are not participating in chats, discussions, etc. Students and faculty can also communicate through the discussion forums.

Principle 2: Encourage student cooperation - The same areas of ETUDES-NG that allow for student-faculty contact can also be used for student-to-student contact. Assignments can be created to take advantage of this. Furthermore, the discussion forums can help foster group work and collaboration among students. Consider incorporating peer reviews, project sharing, and thread-leaders to moderate discussions. Student collaboration leads to a sense of community and higher learning outcomes.

Principle 3: Encourage active learning -Instructors can take advantage of the rich interactivity on the Web by designing assignments around appropriate Websites. When students come to these sites, they make choices, and they learn from their choices. Active learning also takes place when students work cooperatively. Give students more control, leadership roles, and options in what assignments to complete. Leave the center stage and transform yourself into a guide on the side.

Principle 4: Give prompt feedback - In ETUDES-NG, students can see results of their tests and view solutions to graded assignments immediately after submission. Instructors can and should promptly respond to student questions. ETUDES-NG allows you to provide both acknowledgement and information feedback.

Principle 5: Emphasize time on task - For example, give students something specific to respond to in each module via the discussions. Build in a reward system of points for each post and reply to the discussion forums. In other words, make posting and responding mandatory. Create a structure that can be followed, broken down week by week or unit by unit, allowing for acceleration of pace.

Principle 6: Communicate high expectations - In your syllabus you should include course goals and performance objectives. You might include model assignment submissions that can serve as examples for students to follow. The bottom line is that you must be explicit and clear in communicating your expectations to students.

Principle 7: Respect diverse talents and ways of learning - Create assignments that offer students options. Giving students choices in their learning experience increases satisfaction and retention. Consider giving students options as to what format to submit assignments or projects. For example, they might design a Webpage, write an essay, or develop a PowerPoint presentation. There is no reason why all students should submit the exact same homework or participate in one discussion topic. Variety is the spice of life and your online class; teach to the various learning styles of your students.

CONCLUSION :

The increasing availability of Internet connectivity and interactive WEB applications have contributed to the growth in the number of educational institutions implementing Blended Learning and Collaborative work. Although this kind of implementation is a complex process because educators must determine the perfect blend of face-to-face activities and online learning activities when designing

courses. Early research indicates that students have favorable opinions in participating in Blended Learning and Collaborative work versus the traditional classroom. In the future, teachers and students will need to work collaboratively and take equal ownership in determining the best principles for an approach that redefines what it means in order to teach and learn. The educational institutions should continue to implement new technologies and innovations that are affordable and will provide engaging and effective instruction that personalizes learning for ALL students. Successful Blended Learning Educators are focusing on engagement as they work towards student achievement. We have the unique opportunity to not replicate a system that has not served all students. Instead we need to look at Flexible Time and Place to innovate through Blended Learning.

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IMPORTANCE OF VALUE DEVELOPMENT AND VALUE EDUCATION IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The present scenario almost forces us to think about the importance of value development and value education. The lockdown which has been made by Central and State Government in order to check the spread of Novel Corona Virus and the damages caused by the super cyclone Amphan smashed the poor people totally, leaving them without food, shelter and clothing. They have lost their minimum livelihood. On humanitarian ground we should support them and help them as much as possible. It is a kind of human values. It's a prime time to re-think about value development and value education. In this paper I wish to focus on this fact and not only this, in modern society degradation of values or value crisis becomes a common phenomenon. It is marked by corruption, cynicism, disparity, disruption, hypocrisy, violence, etc. Common people forget to respect their elders, to cooperate with their fellow beings, to think of national integration. They fail to discriminate between right and wrong. They run after material needs. Spirituality has lost. These activities and their consequences left us at a stake. In the light of this situation I think 'Value development and value education' is the most relevant topic to deal with.

In fact values are the standards or guidelines according to which an individual moves. It sets an individual's character. These are the basic pillars upon which our society is based. No science and technologies can be its substitute. Development of a society and of a nation almost depends on these values. Development or upliftment of values are essential for making a sound society. Without inner development, outer development is not possible. Development of values will bring a change in the mode of thinking, beliefs, and also in the behaviour and attitude of an individual. In this paper I wish to show that value development and value education is very much essential in order to protect and preserve our society and it should be done only by imparting value education from the grasshooter level.

Key words : *values, value education, society, value degradation, development of values, inculcation*

INTRODUCTION :

On the face of the situation caused by the spread of Novel Corona Virus or covid -19 and the damages caused by the super cyclone Amphan, the topic: 'development of values and value education' is most pertinent. Not only that, in the age of globalization, degradation of values or value crisis is a common phenomenon. Modern society is marked by corruption, cynicism, disparity, disruption, hypocrisy, violence, etc. Man runs after material riches and needs. Man becomes so selfish and self-centred that he felt to do anything good to others and of the society at large. Common people forget to respect their elders, to cooperate with their fellow beings, to think of national integration. They felt to discriminate between right and wrong. Hence, it is necessary to inculcate values through value education from the grasshooter level. For without inner development, outer development is not possible. Without good thoughts, ideas and beliefs, nothing good can be achieved for the society at large. Self-centeredness, selfishness, egoism can only lead to destruction and devastation. Presently we all are facing the consequences of Novel Corona Virus. Due to lockdown many peoples have lost their livelihood. They are forced to stay at home. Thousands and thousands of peoples are dying everyday due to corona virus. Until and unless proper vaccines and medicines are invented, we are puppet in the hands of fate. Even the most affluent country of the world like U.S.A, Russia, Italy etc became helpless with the impact of corona virus. Human existence are at stake. Doctors, scientists are asking to increase our immunity. Those people who have good immunity power will survive and others fail. That is the caption which draws our attention is "Survival of the fittest". We all are struggling for our existence. Not only this, the super cyclone amphan smashed the poor people of sundarban areas. According to the assessment report of an Inter-Ministerial Central Team damages worth Rs 2,02,442 crores in west Bengal. Approximately 28.56 lakhs houses were damaged. Agricultural lands, electric post, transformer etc has been damaged violently. In this situation, on humanitarian ground we should help and support the victims irrespective of caste, creed and colour. We should leave all negative attitudes like selfishness, jealousy, egoism etc towards others. On the contrary we should develop 'we - feelings', which will make us united and this 'we - feelings' or 'sense of togetherness' will help us to fight against corona virus, various natural calamities and other social evils and weaknesses of the society.

It is said that, good will must precede all actions. Immanuel Kant rightly says, "good will alone is good". An action will be treated as good if it accompanies good will. So, he stresses on the inner development, good mentality etc. Great leaders like Gandhiji, Subhas Chandra Bose, Khudiram, Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Swami Vivekananda, etc and many others are still memorable for their great ideals and

values. They fight against various social evils and weaknesses of the society, which in turn lead to the development of the society. Hence, value development is extremely essential for the development of the society and of the nation as a whole. In this paper I will focus on the development of values and value education, which is essential to protect and preserve our society and it should be imparted from the initial stage of learning. Before starting our discussion let us make clear the concept of values.

1. The Concept of Values

Values are the standard or guidelines which influence or guide a person's life. They guide us in taking all kinds of decisions in life. It forms an important element in the development of personality and character of an individual. It influences his thought and behaviour in an unconscious manner. It sets the goals which an individual tries to achieve in his life. Values are not static. They change with the change of situation. They also vary from person to person. There are different kinds of values, like moral values, personal values, universal values, social values, spiritual values etc. Inculcation of values in an individual is necessary not only for the development of an individual but for the society and of the nation at large.

2. Importance of Values

In the modern democratic society values are most indispensable. According to Swami Vivekananda, "To be happy is the universal urge of all beings and at all times. One has to be at peace with oneself to be happy. There can be no peace for a turbulent mind. 'Vasanas' (undesirable wants) take away the peace of mind. It is only when we follow a value system that we can have a serene, contemplative mind. When mind is calm, we can turn it within to 'see' the treasure of pure consciousness. No treasure, on earth is equal to a slice of that 'tattva' (element)."¹

Shrimad Bhagavat Gita states, 'Mind, has to be loosened from 'durtyapara'(misdeeds) and engaged in acquiring 'sadgunas' (virtues). A mind which has 'daivi sampati' (divine qualities) has 'Shanti' (peace). These values make us introspective and correct our personality."² About two thousand years ago, Thiruvalluvar a great saint said, "Achievement of a human being is proportionate to how high he or she thinks."³

Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of the world has observed, "A positive aspiration and effort for an ethical and moral configuration of our common life is of overriding importance. Here, no science can save us. I believe, indeed, solely the practical and factual in our education has led directly to the importance of ethical values."⁴

In the words of our first Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru , " Let us pursue our path to industrial progress with all our strength and vigour and at the same time remember that material riches without tolerance and compassion and wisdom may turn to dust and ashes."⁵

Development of a society and of a nation almost depends on these values. Without inner development , outer development is not possible. These are the main backbones of our society. Development of values will bring a change in the mode of thinking, beliefs, and also in the behaviour and attitude of an individual. Thus Gandhiji has said that," society should be marked by simple living and high thinking." On the face of the spread of covid 19 and damages caused by the super cyclone Amphan ,we should follow Gandhian principle of ahimsa, sarvodaya and trusteeship. Gandhian concept of ahimsa prescribed that we should not hurt others either mentally or physically. Jaina philosophy also echoes the same principle. It states that we should adopt this kind of attitude not only against one another but also against smaller animals. Not only this , in the present situation we should help one another and the poors and the victims by following Gandhian principle of sarvodaya and trusteeship. Gandhian principle of 'sarvodaya' means 'upliftment or progress of all'. It highlights on moral values, stateless society, party-less democracy, non-violence and self-sufficient and decentralized village or communities. The principle of trusteeship provides a means by which the wealthy people would be the trustees of trusts that looked after the welfare of the people in general. Gandhi believed that the wealthy people could be persuaded to part with their wealth to help the poor. That is, wealthy people should keep that much of wealth which is essential for his livelihood and the rest must be used for the welfare of the community. These are the human values which everyone should take note of. So , values are very much important in the present development of the society and of the nation at large.

3. Different Kinds Of Values

Values start from the family , which is the child's first classroom and these are called family values. Family values , such as respect for elders , helpfulness, cooperation and mutual affection, etc. influences in developing one's character and personality.

Besides , there are societal values which include courtesy, punctuality, consideration and helpfulness to poors and deprived , cooperation with others , tolerance ,honesty, humanism, justice, self-control, national unity, concern for others etc. After the family, it is in the school and colleges that these values need to be inculcated.

Associated with these lies environmental concerns. In the twenty first century , our existence is in danger due to environmental imbalance created by exploitation of nature for human needs, industrialization etc. So , it is necessary to develop an awareness of preserving and improving the environment.

Another most important set of values involves inter-religious understanding. Every person should respect another's religion. Every religion are the different paths leading to the divine. This leads to spiritual values. Religion and spirituality are closely related. Spirituality attempts to access the divine power that resides within the deeper processes of our consciousness. It is this inner light which we try to achieve through prayer, yoga, meditation etc.

Swami Vivekananda speaks of the following values: fearlessness, non-injury, purity, self-sacrifice, service to others . Gandhiji also mentions the following values like, ahimsa, satya, astaya, brahmacharya, aparigraha , fearlessness, sarva dharmasambhava, swadeshi, abolition of untouchability etc. Inculcation of these values are highly needed to make a better society .

4. Degradation of values

Value crisis or degradation of values is a common phenomenon in our society. Modern society is marked by corruption, cynicism , disparity, disruption , hypocrisy , violence, etc. Common people forget to respect their elders, to cooperate with their fellow beings , to think of national integration. They felt to discriminate between right and wrong. Poors and the weaker section of the society are deprived. Man run after material riches and needs. They becomes selfish, self-centred and egoistic and this is reflected in their outward behaviour. Spirituality has lost. They forget their oneness with Brahma (main tenet of Sankara's advaitavada). According to Sankara's advaitavada , "Brahma satya , jagat mithya".Brahma is ultimately real.We have empirical reality and will be identical with Brahma , with the death of the body (i.e. when maya disappears).We are all parts of the same Brahman. Hence, there should not be any discrimination, disparity on the basis of sex, caste, creed , religion etc.Swami Vivekananda also believed in Vedanta philosophy, which maintains that the ultimate goal of life is to attain 'Unity with the Creator'. According to him , God resides in every individual and so best worship of God is service to mankind. Shreemad Bhagavat Gita also speaks of performing 'niskama karma'. That is , we have to do our duties for duties sake. We should not think about the results or consequences of action. Every thing is pre-destined. We are only instrument in the hand of God. We should act with complete devotion to God. Modern people has felt to realize the core meaning of these

teachings. Thus, value degradation or value crisis or value erosion seems to keep its hold. These activities and their consequences left us at a stake. Present situation demands that, values need to be inculcated through value education. Development or upliftment of values are essential for making a sound society.

5. Need For Value Education

It is very essential that from the school level a deliberate, planned method should be followed to inculcate human values among the students. They should be taught to respect their elders like father and mother. In Indian tradition top most priority should be given to father and mother. They should be worshipped like God. Activities, attitude, behaviour of father and mother influenced greatly in building the character of an individual. After that, teacher should always be respected. A teacher's teaching, character, attitude, behaviour often sets the goal in a children's life. It also influences in building up his character. Values like truth, sincerity, punctuality, cleanliness, courtesy, equality, non-discrimination on the basis of sex, caste, creed etc should be inculcated among children.

Besides, these personal values there are certain social values which ought to be imbibed among children. For example, concern for others, for the aged, handicapped, deprived, co-operation, etc need to be inculcated in the young mind. They should also be aware of the national values like patriotism, national integration, cultural heritage, social obligation, constitutional obligations etc. The teacher is the key person who can inculcate all the required values in the mind of the children.

In a culturally plural society, education should foster universal values like peace, love for humanity and moral values like truthfulness, self-control, sincerity, honesty, devotion to duty, among children. The Education Commission 1964-66 has observed, "We believe that India should strive to bring science and the values of the spirit together in harmony and thereby pave their way for the eventual emergence of a society which would cater to the needs of the whole man and not only to particular fragment of his personality."⁶

5.1. Constraints in Value Education

There are some constraints in imparting value education. Mass media unfortunately, as matters of fact, has corrupting influence on the youth. Through various programmes it often highlights domestic violence, corruption, crimes in a manner which has some ill-effect upon the children. They become so conditioned and influenced by cinema, television, radio and sometimes by newspapers and magazines that value education

given in the school becomes ineffective. They often admitted, before the police that in committing crimes, they got their ideas and inspiration from these sources. So, measures should be taken to make the programmes of value education effective.

Socio-economic conditions also influence moral behaviour. Poverty and morality cannot co-exist. Value education has no meaning to those people who are deprived of the basic human needs like food, shelter, clothing etc. If the society is just, i.e. having equal distribution of wealth, free from discrimination and disparity, free from unhealthy competition etc., then an environment exists which promotes value-education. But if the society is unjust, that is based on exploitation, corruption, discrimination on the basis of sex, caste and creed, then values taught in the schools have no effect in the minds and actions of the students who see the negation of those values in the world outside. They realize that there is inconsistency between precept and practice. So, steps should be taken to resolve the dichotomy between precept and practice of morality.

6. CONCLUSION:

These constraints do not provide a pessimistic view about the value of moral education. It just states the realities. A strategic plan should be adopted to impart value education and it will be appropriate to start from the school level for from this stage it will motivate the child to choose the right path to realize their ideals.

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নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাস বা কোভিড ১৯ বিষয়ে একটি ব্যক্তিগত পর্যালোচনা

ড. সুজাতা ব্যানার্জী

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মহামারী বা অতিমারী যে নামেই নির্দিষ্ট করা হয়ে থাক না কেন আজ এই কোভিড ১৯ বা নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের ভয়ঙ্কর প্রকোপে সমগ্র বিশ্বে যে ত্রাহি ত্রাহি রব উঠেছে তা অস্বীকার করবার উপায় নেই, মূল সমস্যার জায়গাটা হল আমরা চেনা শত্রুর সঙ্গে লড়াই করে অভ্যস্ত। মহামারী বা অতিমারীর কথা এতদিন পড়ে এসেছি ইতিহাসের ও গল্পের বই এর পাতায় বা খবরের কাগজে অন্যদেশের খবরে ('ইবোলা' ইত্যাদি), সে যে এভাবে আমারই বাড়ির চৌকাঠ পেরোতে চাইবে তা কখনো দুঃস্বপ্নেও ভাবতে পারিনি। বিশেষত যখন এই শত্রুর ধরণ ধারণ সম্পূর্ণ অচেনা। বিশ্বের তাবড় তাবড় বিজ্ঞানী ও চিকিৎসককুল যে হিমসিম খেয়ে যাচ্ছেন এর প্রতিষেধক বার করতে তার অন্যতম কারণই হল করোনা ভাইরাসের এই শ্রেণিটির চরিত্র সম্পূর্ণরূপে ধরা যাচ্ছে না এখনো। সমস্ত হিসেব গুলিয়ে দিয়ে প্রচণ্ড ঠান্ডার দেশে যেমন সে তার সংক্রমণ-ক্ষমতা দেখাচ্ছে তেমনি আবার প্রাচ্যের গরম দেশগুলিতেও তার করাল ছায়া বিস্তারে সে অদ্ভুত ভাবেই সক্ষমতা দেখিয়ে চলেছে। 'প্লেগ' বা 'স্প্যানিশ ফ্লু' সম্পর্কে ইতিহাসে পড়ে আমরা যে জ্ঞান অর্জন করেছিলাম তার সঙ্গে অনেককিছুই যে মিলছে না এই নতুন অতিমারীটির ক্ষেত্রে তা বলাই বাহুল্য। আবার যে বিজ্ঞান আমাদের কাছে আশীর্বাদ হয়ে আমার বাড়ির উঠোনে বিশ্বকে এনে ফেলেছে অতি সহজে, তাই এই নতুন ভাইরাসটির ক্ষেত্রে অভিশাপ হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে, কেননা যাতায়াত বৃদ্ধির সূত্রেই এই রোগ চিনের উহান শহর থেকে আজ বিশ্বজুড়ে ছড়িয়ে পড়েছে।

নতুন এই ভয়াবহ ভাইরাসের আসের কবলে থাকতে থাকতে আমরা এতদিনে মোটামুটি বেশ কয়েকটা নতুন অবস্থা বা পরিস্থিতির সঙ্গে মানিয়ে নিতে শিখছি। নতুন নতুন শব্দও ঢুকে পড়ছে নিত্যদিনের বেঁচে থাকায়, যাপনে - যেমন 'লকডাউন', 'সোশ্যাল ডিস্ট্যানসিং', 'মাস্ক', 'হ্যান্ড স্যানিটাইজার', 'কোয়ারান্টাইন' 'অনলাইন' পঠন পাঠন প্রক্রিয়া প্রভৃতি। এই শব্দগুলি অচেনা ছিল না, কিন্তু সর্বস্তরের মানুষের কাছে অবশ্যপালনীয় বা করণীয় হয়ে উঠবে এগুলো তা ছিল ধারণার অতীত। যদিও স্বীকার করতে দ্বিধা নেই যে এখনো আমাদের দেশে সর্বস্তরে উল্লিখিত ব্যবস্থাগুলি অবশ্যপালনীয় করতে আমরা পারিনি। পারিনি তার কারণও বহুবিধ। একটা ছোট ঘরে যেখানে বহু পরিবার ১০ জনে মিলে

বসবাস করে সেখানে ‘ডিসট্যান্স’ মেনটেন করবার কথা বলা বাতুলতা। সেখানে একটি দরিদ্র পরিবারে একটা মাত্র কাপড় কেচে কেচে, বা সেলাই করে করে চলে সেখানে ‘মাস্ক’ পৌঁছে দেবে কে? বাড়ির কথা ছেড়েই দিলাম, আমাদের দেশে অনেক বিদ্যালয়েই হাত ধোবার মতো জলের ব্যবস্থা নেই!!! ঘন্টায় ঘন্টায় সেখানে হাত ধোবার কথা বলবার সাহস থাকাটাও জরুরি!

অর্থের প্রাচুর্যে শিক্ষায়, চিকিৎসায়, বিজ্ঞানে পাশ্চাত্যের অহঙ্কারী দেশগুলো যখন ধরাশায়ী এই নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের দাপটে তখন ভারতবর্ষের মতো দরিদ্র ও পিছিয়ে থাকা দেশের অবস্থা যা হওয়া উচিত আমরা বাস্তবিকই এখন সেইখানে দাঁড়িয়ে। তবু আশ্চর্যের কথা এই যে আমরা এই দরিদ্র ভারতবাসী, মূর্খ ভারতবাসী প্রথম দিকে খুব একটা খারাপ জায়গায় ছিলাম না। বরং অনেকেই বিস্মিত হচ্ছিল এই ভেবে যে কি জাদুতে এমন হচ্ছে যে এখানে করোনার দাপট অতটা দেখা যাচ্ছে না, বিভিন্ন চিন্তাভাবনায় ও বিশ্লেষণে যে প্রাথমিক সত্যিটা সবাই মেনে নিয়েছেন তা হল আমাদের ‘ইমিউনিটি পাওয়ার’ বিদেশীদের থেকে বেশি, হতে পারে ব্যাপারটা সঠিক, কেননা, যে নেই এর মধ্যে বসবাস করে ভারতবাসী অভ্যস্ত তা ভাবতেই পারবে না প্রথম বিশ্বের অধিবাসীরা। ধুলোময়লা, বাসী পচা - এগুলো এক বিরাট অংশের ভারতবাসীর বেঁচে থাকাকে বিঘ্নিত করে না। কিন্তু সেই ম্যাজিক বা ভারতবর্ষের জাদুতে যে স্বস্তি পাবার কিছু নেই তা আমাদের দেশের প্রাজ্ঞ, সুবিবেচক চিকিৎসক গণ বরাবর প্রায় পাখিপড়ার মত করে বুঝিয়েছেন। যাঁরা তাঁদের মূল্যবান বক্তব্য বিভিন্ন টি.ভি চ্যানেলে ও খবরের কাগজে শুনছেন বা পড়েছেন দিনের পর দিন, তাঁরা নিশ্চয়ই খেয়াল করতে পারবেন যে সেই বক্তব্যের মধ্যে ছিল কাতর অনুনয় ও অনুরোধ -- নির্দিষ্ট কিছু বিষয় পুংখানুপুঙ্খ মেনে চলার বিধি। কিন্তু আমরা স্বভাবতই একটু বেশি ক্যাজুয়াল থাকতে পছন্দ করি। সন্ধ্যাবেলা মুখরোচক খাবার খেতে খেতে আমরা সে সব বেশ উপভোগই করছিলাম একরকম, কেননা যে হিসেবগুলো তখন সামনে আসছিল বিশ্বের নিরিখে তা অবশ্যই অতি নগন্য। কিন্তু গুঁরা সাবধান করেছিলেন, দেবতার দুয়ার বন্ধ হয়ে গেছে ততদিনে। লকডাউন ব্যাপারটা বেশ ছুটি কাটাচ্ছি সবাই মিলে গোছের হয়ে উঠেছে জনসাধারণের কাছে - আর চিকিৎসককুল সাবধান করছিলেন প্রাণপণ..

আমরা সন্ধ্যাবেলা শুনছি আর ...

আর সকালবেলা বাজার যাচ্ছি।

গলদাচিৎড়ি তখন বাজারে বেশ সস্তা। বাইরে চালান যাচ্ছে না তো, আর প্রত্যেকবারই মুরগিগুলো ‘মুরগি’ হয় এই বলে পরিহাস করতে করতে আমরা চিকেন কিনেছি ৮০টাকায়, যারা স্বাভাবিক সময়ে সপ্তাহে একদিন বাজার যেতেন, এবং সেদিন বাজার করে এলে নিজের বাড়ি লোককে ধন্য করে দিচ্ছেন বলে মনে করতেন, তারা এই ক্রান্তির সময় রোজ বাজার যাচ্ছেন বীরের মতো, এবং মনে করে চলেছেন

‘এই তো গেলাম, কই কিছু হল! খালি সবার বাড়িয়ে বলা স্বভাব’। আসলে দোষও দেওয়া যায় না, অন্যের কথা মানার অভ্যেস আমাদের চলে গেছে, আর তাছাড়া আমাদের ভাবনার দৌড় বেশি দূর না হবার ফলে ‘অতিমারী’ বা ‘মহামারী’র আসল রূপটা ঠিক কি তা আমরা ধারণাতেই আনতে পারিনি। ওই ‘উহানে’ চিনারা বাদুড় খেয়ে কি রোগ বাঁধিয়েছে বা পরবর্তীকালে বহু চর্চিত চিনারা গবেষণাগারে কি একটা ভাইরাস বানিয়ে ফেলেছে আর তাতে পটাপট লোক মারা যাচ্ছে - ‘ও আমাদের এখানে কিছু হবে না’ গোছের একরকম ধারণার মাঝে থেকে আমরা মজা দেখতে দেখতে ঘুমতে গেছি। বিশেষজ্ঞ চিকিৎসকেরা দেবতাদের জয়গা নিয়ে বারবার সাবধান করে চলেছেন -- কেননা তাঁরা ততদিনে দেখছেন যে ভাইরাসটি চরিত্র বদলাচ্ছে, ধরা ছোঁওয়া যাচ্ছে না তাকে, বেশ কিছুদিন পার হয়ে যাবার পর বোঝা যাচ্ছে ভারতে সে তার হামলার প্ল্যান বদলে ফেলছে দ্রুত। উপসর্গহীন আক্রান্তের সংখ্যা বাড়ছে নিঃশব্দে। আর বাড়ছে লকডাউনের সময়সীমা।

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের দেওয়া বিশেষণগুলো কি ভীষণভাবে সত্য ভারতবাসীর ক্ষেত্রে তা আরো একবার প্রমাণ করল এই কোভিড ১৯ বা নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাস, ‘মূর্খ ভারতবাসী’, ‘দরিদ্র ভারতবাসী’, ‘নিরন্ন ভারতবাসী’। তাই শিক্ষায়, বোধে, জ্ঞানে আমরা অন্যান্য দেশের সঙ্গে লড়াই করার মতো অবস্থায় থাকলেও অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে আমরা এত অসহায় জায়গায় অবস্থান করছি যে ঠিক যে সময়টাতে লকডাউন আরো জোরদার ভাবে করার দরকার ছিল, সংক্রমণ যখন হু হু করে বাড়ছে প্রতিদিন, যখন দ্রুতগতিতে পনেরো নম্বর স্থান থেকে দশ ও তারপর অতি দ্রুততায় তখন ষষ্ঠ স্থানে এবং বর্তমানে এই লেখা যখন প্রেসে যাবার জন্য তৈরি হচ্ছে তখন রেকর্ডগড়ে সংক্রমণের নিরিখে দীর্ঘদিন ধরে প্রথম স্থান তার অবস্থান করেছে বিশ্বের মানচিত্রে, তখনই লকডাউন বিভিন্ন ভাবে শিথিল করে দেওয়ার ব্যবস্থা নিতে হল, খুব পরিস্কার ভাবে বলতে গেলে না খেতে পেয়ে বিপুল মৃত্যুর থেকে অচেনা ভাইরাসে তুলনায় কম মৃত্যু অনেক ভালো - এই সত্যের সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে এখনকার ভারতবর্ষ।

পরিকল্পনার অভাব একটা ছিল, হয়ত সেটা সদিচ্ছার অভাব এমনটা নয়। কেননা সবার কাছেই পরিস্থিতি ঠিক কতটা জটিল তা অনুধাবন করা ছিল কঠিন। আর ‘অনুমান’ - করে নিয়ে কাজে অভ্যস্ত আমরা কোনোদিনই ছিলাম না। ফলে মাস্ক পরা কেন জরুরি, বা লকডাউনের আসল অর্থ কি সে সম্পর্কে সঠিক ধারণাই জনগণকে দিয়ে ওঠা হয়নি। আর টাকাপয়সার সংস্থান না থাকায় মানুষ এর মধ্যেই না খেতে পেয়ে মৃত্যুকে দেখতে শুরু করেছে। এই চরম পরিস্থিতিতে অব্যবস্থা ও অপরিিকল্পনার ফল কি হয় তা দেখতে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে সংক্রমণের বাড়বাড়ন্তে।

আর্থিক দুর্াবস্থার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আরো যে বিষয়টি নিয়ে ইতিমধ্যেই বিশেষজ্ঞরা চিন্তিত তা হলো

জনগণের মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য। দেশে লকডাউনের আঁচ যাদের মধ্যে প্রথম এসে পড়ে তারা হল ছাত্র সমাজ, খুবই দ্রুততার সঙ্গে, আকস্মিক তৎপরতায়, সুবিবেচকের মতো প্রথমেই দেশের শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানগুলি বন্ধ করবার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছিল। ফলে উল্টোদিক থেকে দেখতে গেলে সব থেকে দীর্ঘদিন ঘরবন্দি দশার মধ্যে অবস্থান করছে এই বিরাট শিক্ষার্থীকুল।

প্রাক-প্রাথমিক থেকে শুরু করে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পর্যন্ত এই পড়ুয়াদের পড়াশোনার মধ্যে রাখার জন্য সরকারী প্রচেষ্টা শুরু করা হয়েছে তাই কিছুদিন পর থেকেই। তারই ফলশ্রুতি অনলাইন পাঠ। বিদ্যালয়, কলেজ ও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়গুলিও নিজস্ব উদ্যোগে এই প্রচেষ্টায় সামিল হয়েছে। কিন্তু সমস্যা সেখানেও। কেননা বহু দূর দূরান্তের গ্রামগুলিতে এখনো প্রাথমিক সুবিধাগুলো পর্যন্ত পৌঁছতে পারা যায়নি, স্মার্টফোন তাদের কাছে অধরা স্বপ্ন বৈ কিছু নয়। ইলেকট্রিক না থাকায় কারণে, টি.ভি. না থাকার কারণে সরকারী উদ্যোগে পড়ানো শুরু হলেও সেই পরিষেবা তারা গ্রহণ করতে পারেনি, এটা আমাদের ভারতবর্ষের কর্ণধারদের অক্ষমতা। এখনো শিক্ষা ও স্বাস্থ্যের বেশির ভাগটাই নগরমুখী, অথচ মেধার দিক থেকে কোনো অংশে যে তারা পিছিয়ে নেই, তা গ্রাম বারবার প্রমাণ করেছে। এই দীর্ঘ লকডাউনের মধ্যে ব্যক্তিগত প্রচেষ্টায়; অবশ্য কিছু ক্ষেত্রে এই প্রত্যন্ত এলাকার কিছু পড়ুয়াকে পড়াশোনার মধ্যে সংযুক্ত রাখার প্রয়াস দেখা গেছে যা অবশ্যই উজ্জ্বল ব্যতিক্রম। যেমন গ্রামের স্কুলে মাইকের মাধ্যমে পড়ানো। বা কোনো একক শিক্ষকের পড়ুয়াদের বাড়ি বাড়ি গিয়ে উঠোনে বসে পড়া বুঝিয়ে আসা ইত্যাদি, তবে এগুলি প্রয়োজনের নিরিখে একটা দুটো বিশেষ ব্যতিক্রমই মাত্র।

এই বিশাল শিক্ষার্থীকুল আরো যে বিশেষ সমস্যার সম্মুখীন তা হল পরীক্ষা ও পরবর্তী পর্যায়ে পৌঁছানো, যেমন ক্লাসে বা সেমিস্টারে ওঠা, বিভিন্ন পন্থতিতে এই বাস্তব সমস্যাটির সমাধানের কথা আলোচনা হলেও তা কার্যকর করে তোলার ক্ষেত্রেও শিক্ষককুল বিশেষ চিন্তিত। কেননা কবে পরিস্থিতি স্বাভাবিক হবে তারই কুল কিনারা দেখতে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে না। বছর নষ্ট হতে পারে এই আশঙ্কায় বহু পড়ুয়া মানসিক ভাবে ভেঙে পড়ছে। এদিকে যে নির্মম সত্যটির সামনে দাঁড়াতে ভয় পাচ্ছে বা ভেতরে ভেতরে যা দুর্বল করে দিচ্ছে তা হল সবাই থাকব তো ততদিন; যতদিনে, সব কিছু স্বাভাবিক হবে! এমতাবস্থায় শরীর ও মন একই সঙ্গে বিকল হয়ে আসাটা কিছুমাত্র অস্বাভাবিক নয়।

আমরা এক্ষেত্রে একটু অন্যরকম ভাবে শুরু করি। ফিরে যাই সেই ১৪ই মার্চ শনিবারের দুপুরে। যখন বিশেষ সরকারি নির্দেশে হঠাৎ করেই ছুটি ঘোষণা করা হয়েছিল রাজ্যের সমস্ত শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে, মনে রাখা দরকার তখন কিন্তু অফিস কাছারি খোলা। বাস ট্রেন চলেছে আরো বেশ কিছুদিন। ভেবে দেখার খুব একটা দরকার নেই, সাধারণ ভাবেই বোঝা যায় যে যারা আগামীদিনের সৈনিক, যারা দেশের ভবিষ্যৎ।

যাদের বুদ্ধি, মেধা ও স্বপ্নের ওপর নির্ভরশীল উন্নতকামী ভারতবর্ষ, তাদের সুরক্ষার ব্যাপারটা সবার আগে দেখা হয়েছে। সবার আগে নিশ্চিত নিশ্চিত করার চেষ্টা হয়েছে বর্তমানের স্বপ্নকে ভবিষ্যতে বাস্তবে পরিণত করতে পারবে যারা, তাদের নিরাপত্তা, আর সেই কারণেই স্কুল কলেজ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের দরজা প্রথমে বন্ধ করা হয়েছে।

এভাবেই ভাবা দরকার ছিল, উৎকর্ষিত, চিন্তিত পড়ুয়াদেরও সেই সঙ্গে বোঝা দরকার যে তাদের ওপর দায়িত্ব অনেক, শুধুমাত্র এর পরের ক্লাসে বা সেমেস্টারের ভালো রেজাল্টটাই তাদের একমাত্র লক্ষ্য হতে পারে না। জীবনের লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্য আরো বিস্তৃত। তার ব্যাপ্তি বিশাল। সময়ের মূল্য আছে এটা যেমন চরম সত্য, তেমনি ভাবা দরকার যে ‘সময়ের মূল্য’ শব্দদুটির অর্থ অন্য দিক থেকেও সত্য। এই বর্তমান সময়ে তাই সময়ের মূল্য অন্যভাবে দিতে হবে বা হচ্ছে সবাইকেই। এই সময়ের দিকে তাকিয়েই ছাত্রছাত্রীদের তাই ভাবতে হবে একটু অন্যরকমভাবে। এই সময়ের যে মূল্য তাকে চোকাতে হবে বৈ কি, এতো সময়েরই দাবি, সেই দাবিকে মান্যতা দেওয়াটাই এখন সবথেকে আবশ্যিক। চার ছয় মাস পরে একটা বদলে যাওয়া পরিপার্শ্ব নিয়ে শুরু হবে সবার যাপন প্রক্রিয়া। ভবিষ্যের অঙ্গীকার যাদের হাতে তাদেরই গড়ে নিতে হবে এই নতুন জীবন যাপনকে। মেনে নেওয়া আর মানিয়ে নেওয়ার পার্থক্য বুঝে নিতে হবে তাই সবার আগে, বদলে যাবে আমাদের পরিপার্শ্ব, সেই বদলে যাওয়া পৃথিবীকে নতুন ছন্দে বাঁধবার জন্য চাই নতুন দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী, যা ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের কাজ থেকেই পাওয়া সম্ভব। কাজেই এত বড় গুরুদায়িত্ব যাদের তাদের শুধুমাত্র পরের ক্লাসের মার্কশীটের গ্রাফ কেমন থাকবে, এত সামান্য বিষয়ে চিন্তাকে আটকে রাখলে চলবে না। গভীর ভাবে ভাবার সময় এসেছে আজ, ১৪ই মার্চের আগের পরিবেশ আর লকডাউন পরবর্তী আগামী পরিবেশ এক হবে না। এমন কি আর কোনো দিনই হয়ত এক হবে না - এই চরম সত্যকে স্বীকার করে নেওয়া ভাল যে, মাস্ক ও স্যানিটাইজার কে এবার থেকে নিত্য সঙ্গী করে নিতে হবে।

‘মুখ ঢেকে যায় বিজ্ঞাপনে’ কবির এই আপ্ত বাক্যকে আমরা হয়ত বাস্তবিকই দেখব চোখের সামনে মুখগুলি যখন বিজ্ঞাপনে ছাপা মাস্ক পরে দেখা যাবে, সম্পূর্ণ বদল আনতে হবে পঠন পাঠন পদ্ধতিতে, পড়াশোনার পরিধি আর হয়ত ছোট গন্ডিতে আবদ্ধ থাকবে না। অনলাইন পরীক্ষা ব্যবস্থা বা পড়া সবটাই যা এখনো সর্বক্ষেত্রে বিস্তার দেওয়া সম্ভব হয়ে ওঠেনি, পরিকাঠমোগত ভাবে যত দ্রুত সম্ভব বাস্তবায়িত করতে হবে, তার জন্য যে বিপুল পরিকাঠামোর বদল দরকার তার প্রয়োজনীয়তা ইতিমধ্যেই বিভিন্ন মহলে আলোচনার বিষয়বস্তুও হয়ে উঠেছে। অবশ্যই কোনো জাদুমন্ত্রে কয়েকমাসে তা করে ওঠা সম্ভবপর নয়। তবে সদৃষ্টি জোরে অনেক আপাত অসম্ভবকে সম্ভব করে ফেলা যায়, সে কথা বিশ্বাস করতে হবে, সেই অনুযায়ী কাজে নেমে পড়তে হবে - ক্ষমতার অলিন্দে যাদের বসবাস তাদের প্রত্যেককে,

এ এক অসম লড়াই-ই তো আমরা লড়াইতে নেমেছি। অচেনা ভয়ঙ্কর মারণ ভাইরাসের বিরুদ্ধে। অনেক প্রতিকূলতার মধ্যে দিয়ে প্রয়োজনীয় যুদ্ধাঙ্গের অপ্রতুলতায় কত চিকিৎসক নিজের জীবনকে বাজি রেখে এই যুদ্ধে জয়ী হবার জন্য প্রাণপাত করে চলেছেন। বেশ কয়েকজন চিকিৎসক এই নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের কবলে প্রাণ পর্যন্ত দিয়েছেন, কত নার্স, স্বাস্থ্য কর্মী আক্রান্ত হচ্ছেন দিনের পর দিন। পর্যাপ্ত মাস্ক ও পিপিটি না থাকায়। নিজের রাজ্যের ডাকে সাড়া দিয়ে কত ভিনরাজ্যের নার্স সঠিক সুরক্ষা এখানে না পেয়ে নার্সিংহোম গুলি ছেড়ে চলে যাচ্ছেন নিজেদের রাজ্যে। কাজেই অসম লড়াই তো বটেই। আর এই লড়াইটা শুধু মাত্র আর স্বাস্থ্য-পরিষেবার মধ্যে আবদ্ধ নেই, সেই লড়াই চলছে আর্থিক ক্ষেত্রে, সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে, মানসিক ক্ষেত্রে, কাজেই শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রও এতে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হতে বাধ্য, তবে এ এমন এক ক্রান্তিকাল যখন এই অজানা শত্রুর দাপটে চূপ হয়ে মাথা গুঁজে অপেক্ষা করা ছাড়া গতি নেই, সংক্রমণের হার যখন উত্তোরোত্তর বৃদ্ধি পাচ্ছে তখন খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কাজ না থাকলে বাড়ি থেকে বের হবার প্রয়োজন নেই - শিক্ষার্থীদের একথা মেনে চলা দরকার নিজের জন্য, দেশের জন্য, কেননা তাদের নিরাপত্তা আসলে ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের নিরাপত্তা, বর্তমানে অফিস, রেস্টোরাঁ, শপিংমল খুলে দেওয়া হচ্ছে এবং এ নিয়ে বিতর্ক রয়েছে। সংক্রমণের ভয় এবং অর্থনীতিকে রক্ষা করার দায় - এই দুটির টানাপোড়েনে দ্বিধাগ্রস্ত সরকারি পদক্ষেপের সমালোচনা না করেও ভাবা দরকার যে আমরা কতটা সাবধানতা অবলম্বন করে চলতে পারি তা এই পরিস্থিতিতে নিজেদেরই দেখতে হবে। স্বাভাবিক জীবনে ফেরার জন্য এই সব উদ্যোগগুলি হয়ত জরুরি, টাকাপয়সার সংস্থান না থাকলে, কাজকর্মের গতি না ফেরালে অর্থনীতি ধসে যাবে। আমাদের মত গরিব দেশে যার ফলাফল ভয়াবহ।

সেই ভয়াবহ ফলাফলের মধ্যে আমরা হয়ত খানিকটা ঢুকেই পড়েছি। লকডাউনের ফলে আর একটি স্বল্পপরিচিত শব্দবন্ধ সবার কাছে পরিচিত ও চর্চিত হয়ে উঠেছে তা হল - 'পরিযায়ী শ্রমিক', পরিযায়ী পাখি শব্দ দুটির সংগে আমরা বেশি পরিচিত ছিলাম এতদিন। কিন্তু নিজভূমে পরবাসী হয়ে গেল কবে থেকে এই শ্রমিকেরা তারা তা নিজেরাও জানে না, লক্ষ লক্ষ শ্রমিক যাঁরা বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে কাজের জন্য গিয়েছিলেন তাঁরা কাজ হারিয়ে, খেতে না পেয়ে দিনের পর দিন চরম অব্যবস্থার শিকার হয়ে ঘরে ফিরেছেন। এতদিন প্রায় সবাই জানি তাঁরা কি ভাবে ফিরেছেন। পায়ে হেঁটে, দীর্ঘপথ পাড়ি দিতে গিয়ে কত ভয়ানক পরিনতি হয়েছে তাঁদের বহু জনের। দীর্ঘ রাজনৈতিক টানাপোড়েনের পর, ট্রেন বাসের ব্যবস্থা হবার পর তাঁরা যেভাবে ফিরেছেন সেখানে সোশ্যাল ডিসট্যান্সিং শব্দ দুটির থেকে হাস্যকর শব্দ আর হয় না। এই ভাবে ফেরার ফলে তাঁরা অনেকেই করোনায় আক্রান্ত। এদিকে তাদের 'কোয়ারেন্টাইন' থাকার ব্যবস্থাও সঠিক পদ্ধতি মেনে করে দেওয়া সম্ভবপর হয়ে ওঠেনি, ফলে যা হবার তাই হচ্ছে। সংক্রমণ তার পরিধি বাড়াচ্ছে। সমস্যা এইখানেই শেষ নয়, বরং শুরু। কেননা এই লক্ষ লক্ষ শ্রমিক যাঁরা ফিরেছেন নিজের নিজের রাজ্যে, তাঁরা কাজ হারিয়েই ফিরেছেন। তাঁদের ভবিষ্যৎ কি?

মুশকিল হচ্ছে যে শুধুমাত্র করোনা-ভাইরাস সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিয়েই যে আমরা নাজেহাল তা নয়, সম্প্রতি পশ্চিমবঙ্গে আমফান বা উম্পুন নামক ভয়াল ঘূর্ণিঝড়ের তাড়বে শহর থেকে গ্রামে যে ধ্বংসলীলা চলেছে তা এক কথায় ভয়াবহ, শহরেই গাছের পর গাছ পড়ে যে বিপর্যয় দেখা দিয়েছিল সেখানে গ্রামের অবস্থা সহজেই অনুমেয়। গ্রামকে গ্রাম ধ্বাস্ত প্লাবিত হয়ে গেছে। নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের প্রকোপে অতটা নয়, যতটা এরাঙ্গ্যের পড়ুয়াদের একটা বড় অংশ এই ভয়ানক ঝড়ের প্রকোপে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে। ভাগ্যের মার এবং সেখানে থেকে উঠে আসার লড়াই - এ নিয়ে বেঁচে থাকতে অভ্যস্থ আমাদের দেশের একটা বড় অংশ, কিন্তু অভ্যস্থ নয় বিশ্বজুড়ে চলা এই ভয়াবহ পরিস্থিতির মোকাবিলা করবার। লড়াইটা চলছে আসলে অনেকটাই অপরিকল্পিত ভাবে, তাই যে যে সমস্যাগুলি প্রথমে সামনে আসছে তার সমাধান করবার চেষ্টা করতে করতেই চলতে হচ্ছে। আমরা অনেকে তাই হয়ত ভাবতেই পারছি না পরবর্তী জীবন-যাপন পশ্চাতে ঠিক কতখানি পরিবর্তন আনতে হবে! কতখানি বদলের দুনিয়া দেখতে চলেছি আমরা আগামীদিনে।

এই অভূতপূর্ব পরিস্থিতিতে তাই প্রথমেই মনের জোরকে সম্বল করে এগিয়ে যেতে হবে। নিজের মনের জোর ও সচেতনতা ছাড়া আর কিছু এই মুহূর্তে সাধারণ মানুষের কাছে নেই। যতদিন না এই কোভিড ১৯ বা নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের ভ্যাকসিন আবিষ্কার হচ্ছে, যতদিন না দেশের সাধারণ মানুষের কাছে সেই ভ্যাকসিন সহজলভ্য হচ্ছে, ততদিন এ লড়াই আমাদের লড়তে হবে। আর আমরা খুব সত্যি কথা বলতে কি কেউ-ই জানি না এই লড়াইটা ঠিক কতদিনের। ইতিমধ্যেই বিশ্বের বিজ্ঞানীমহল জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন অতসহজে যাবার নয় এই ভয়ানক ভাইরাস, সে তার ত্রাসের রাজত্ব দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই চালাবে, হয়ত বছর বছর ফিরে আসবে রূপ বদলে। কাজেই এই লড়াইএর মনোভাব আমাদের বজায় রাখা প্রয়োজন।

সেই কারনেই আগের পৃথিবী আর ভাইরাস পরবর্তী পৃথিবীর আমূল বদল অবশ্যম্ভাবী, আর সেখানেই সব থেকে জরুরি মনের স্বাস্থ্যের পরিচর্যা, অবসাদ কে গ্রাস করতে না দেওয়া, আমরা অনেকেই দীর্ঘদিন ধরে পরিচিত কর্মবৃত্তের বাইরে অবস্থান করছি, যারা বেড় হচ্ছি তারাও এক আতঙ্কের মধ্যেই যেতে বাধ্য হচ্ছি, এই আতঙ্ক আজ আর দূরে অবস্থান করছে না, সে পাশেপাশেই হাঁটবে, কাজেই তার সঙ্গে লড়াইটা আগে প্রয়োজন, সহজ হয়ত নয়। হয়ত একটু বেশিই কঠিন। কিন্তু অসম্ভব কে সম্ভব করাই তো মানুষের কাজ। যেখানে দিনরাত এক করে বিজ্ঞানীরা এর প্রতিষেধক বার করার চেষ্টা করছেন, যেখানে রাতদিন এক করে চিকিৎসকেরা ফিরিয়ে আনছেন আক্রান্তদের, যেখানে সবরকম আপতকালীন সহযোগিতা দিয়ে চলেছেন নিজেদের সুরক্ষার কথা না ভেবে পুলিশকর্মীরা - সেখানে আমাদেরও কর্তব্য মেনে চলা ও মানিয়ে চলা। অবশ্যপালনীয় সুরক্ষাবিধিকে হাতিয়ার করে নিজেদের অন্তরের শক্তিকে

জাগরুক রেখে এই ক্রান্তির সময়কে পার হতে দেওয়া। মনে মনে সেই অমর পঙ্ক্তিগুলি কে বিশ্বাস করা। আমরা করব জয় নিশ্চয়, বিশ্বাস মানুষকে শক্তি দেয়। সেই শক্তিকে সম্বল করে আমাদের দরকার অপেক্ষা করা। অপেক্ষা এক নতুন বদলে যাওয়া পৃথিবীতে নিজেদের এবং ভবিষ্যৎ প্রজন্মকে নিয়ে পথ চলবার, সেই পথ চলায় হয়ত আগের ছন্দ থাকবে না। নতুন ছন্দে আমাদের অভ্যস্ত হতে হবে। তবে অঙ্গীকার থাকবে নতুন বিশ্বের, যা আমাদের শিক্ষা দিয়েছে এই নোভেল করোনা ভাইরাস। সেই শিক্ষাকে অবলম্বন করে এক নতুন সূর্যোদয়ের প্রতিক্ষায় থাকার শপথ নেওয়াই এখন বেশি প্রয়োজন।

LANDFALL OF TROPICAL CYCLONE-AMPHAN IN THE INDIAN SUNDARBAN AREA UNDER PANDEMIC SITUATION

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is concerned with landfall of tropical cyclone-Amphan in the Indian Sundarban area under Pandemic situation. The Covid situation has made the socio economic condition of the people of Sundarban very miserable. Under this vulnerable condition ,landfall(20.05.2020) of the cyclone Amphanhas totally changed the lifestyle of dwellers of the area.According to the local people after cyclone Amphan, the Sundarbans have become unrecognisable.The Gosaba block was one of the worst affected in the Sunderban islands by cyclone Amphan. Both Pandemic and Amphan have enhanced economic vulnerability of the poor people of the Indian Sundarban many folds.

Key words : *Pandemic, Amphan, Economic vulnerability*

INTRODUCTION

Indian Sundarbans was recognised as **UNESCO** World Heritage Site in **1987**, 'Wetland of **International Importance**' under the **Ramsar Convention** in **January 2019** and also a **Biosphere Reserve** in 1989. **The dwellers of the Sundarban have been already suffering from acute economic and social stress due to pandemic condition.** In this difficult situation, Sundarbans dwellers, life changed on Sunday afternoon(20.05.2020) when cyclone Amphan whose wind speed beat that of Aila in 2009 and Bulbul in 2019. Hence the present researcher has tried to discuss the impacts of the cyclone Amphan in the Indian Sundarban area under Pandemic situation. The present research paper has a great significance in respect to the study area ; Sundarban and its adjacent area where occurrence of landfall of many sever cyclone is observed.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the paper is to discuss the characteristics of tropical cyclone with special reference to cyclone-Amphan in the Indian Sundarban area under Pandemic situation.

AREA AND LOCATION :

The present paper is about the Indian Sundarban which is called active delta. The land is drained with numerous tidal creeks and rivers. The area is experienced with frequently tropical cyclones which cause widespread damage of the area.

TROPICAL CYCLONE AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS:

About 15 percent of the world's population is at risk from tropical cyclone. Tropical cyclones are intense circular storms that originate over the warm tropical oceans with more than 119 kilometres per hour speed and heavy rains. Mainly, the greatest damage to life and property caused not from the wind but from other secondary events including storm surges, flooding, landslides and tornadoes.

Tropical cyclones are characterized by low atmospheric pressure, high winds and heavy rain. It is originated over sea and terminated on land surface. In extreme condition, the winds may exceed 240 km per hour and gusts may surpass 320 km per hour. These strong winds may cause torrential rains and devastating phenomena known as the storm surge. Basically, it is an elevation of the sea surface that can reach 6 metres above normal levels. In tropical and subtropical areas of the world, such cyclones with a combination of high winds and water cause a serious hazard for coastal areas. Globally the formation zone (fig:1)of this cyclone is extended

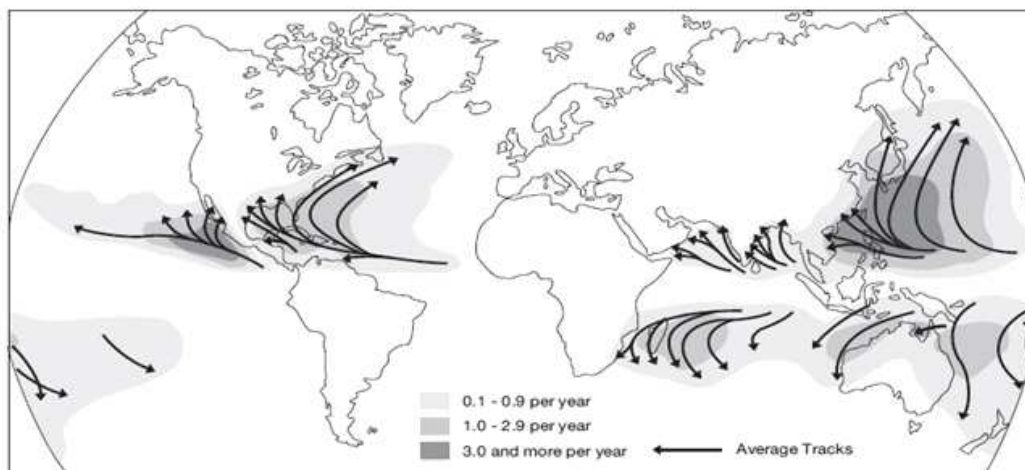


Figure 1. World map showing the location and average annual frequency of tropical cyclones. This emphasises the importance of the western North Pacific region and the way in which the storm tracks curve pole wards to threaten populated coastal areas. After Berz (1990).

within tropical climatic belt(30° N to30°S). Depending on geographical location (fig-2) tropical cyclone has various names like: hurricanes, cyclone, typhoons etc.

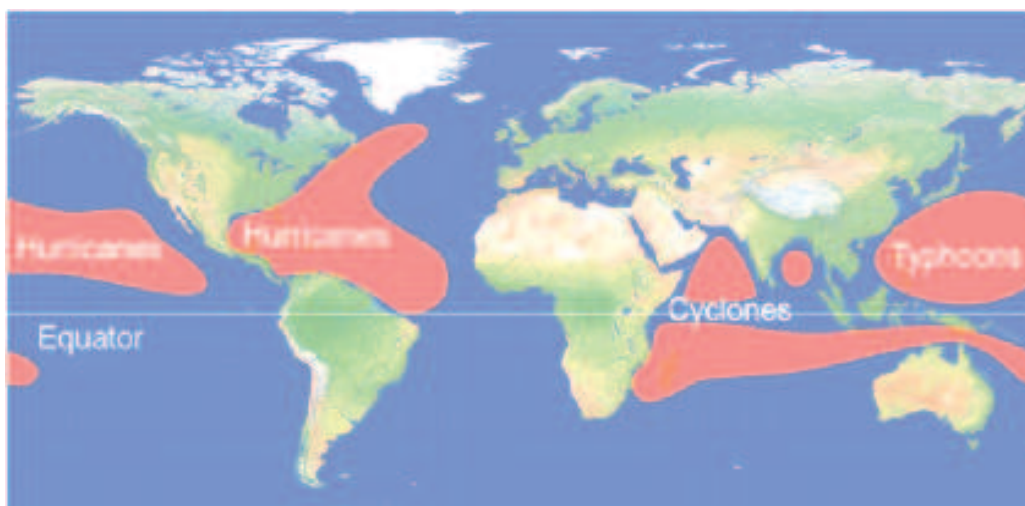


Fig:2: Different names of tropical cyclone in different geographical areas.

Category of different cyclonic condition:

According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) there are some categories of different stages of cyclonic condition based on the wind speed (table:1).

Table:1: different types of cyclonic condition.

Category	Wind speed (km per hour)
Super Cyclonic Storm	>222
Very Severe Cyclonic Storm	119 to 221
Severe Cyclonic Storm	89 to 118
Cyclonic Storm	62 to 88
Deep Depression	50 to 61
Depression	31 to 49
Low Pressure Area	<31

Significance of the Study:

The study has a great significance regarding the understanding of the formation and necessary awareness about tropical cyclone in Sundarban and its adjacent areas. Tropical Cyclones are among the most destructive natural hazards in the world(table:2). Therefore, large fluctuations in tropical cyclone activity are of obvious importance to society, particularly in those coastal areas where populations are affected. One estimate of the global economic loss from such storms was US\$10 billion annually at 1995 values (Pielk and Pielke, 1997).

Table 2 : The World's ten deadliest tropical cyclones in the twentieth century

Year	Location	People killed
1970	Bangladesh	300,000
1991	Bangladesh	139,000
1922	China	100,000
1935	India	60,000
1938	Central America	14,600
1937	Hong Kong (China)	11,000
1965	Pakistan	10,000
1900	United States	8,000
1964	Vietnam	7,000
1991	Philippines	6,000

Structure of a cyclone:

There are a number of structural characteristics common to all cyclones. A cyclone is a low-pressure area. A cyclone's center (often known in a mature tropical cyclone as the 'eye'), is the area of lowest atmospheric pressure in the region. Near the center, the pressure gradient force(PGF) (from the pressure in the center of the cyclone compared to the pressure outside the cyclone) and the force from the Coriolis effect(CF) must be in an approximate balance, or the cyclone would collapse on itself as a result of the difference in pressure.

Because of the Coriolis effect,(fig:3) the wind flow around a large cyclone is counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere. In the northern hemisphere, the fastest winds relative to the surface of the earth therefore occur on the eastern side of a northward-moving cyclone and on the northern side of a westward-moving one; the opposite occurs in the southern hemisphere.

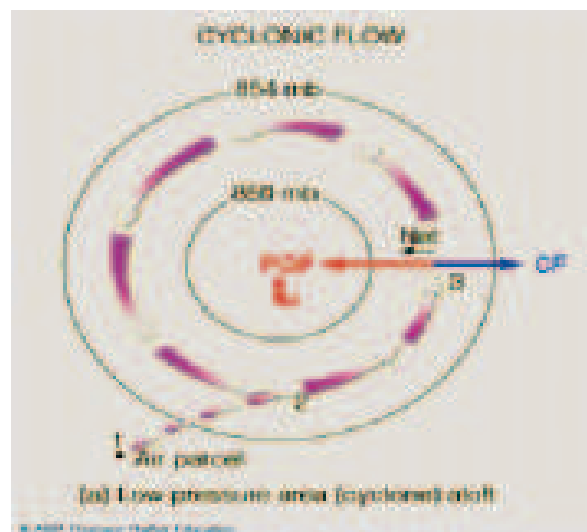


Fig:3:Different wind forces to develop cyclonic flow.

Naming of the tropical cyclones: Tropical cyclones can last for a week or more; therefore there can be more than one cyclone at a time. Weather forecasters give each tropical cyclone a name to avoid confusion. Each year, tropical cyclones receive names in alphabetical order. Women and men's names are alternated. The name list is proposed by the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of WMO Members of a specific region (table:3) and approved by the respective tropical cyclone regional bodies at their annual/bi-annual sessions. Nations in the western North Pacific began using a new system for naming tropical cyclones in 2000.

Table - 3 : List of Northern Indian Ocean tropical cyclone names (effective from 2020)

List	Contributing nation												
	Bangladesh	India	Iran	Maldives	Myanmar	Oman	Pakistan	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Sri Lanka	Thailand	U.A.E.	Yemen
1	Nisarga	Gati	Nivar	Burevi	Tauktae	Yaas	Gulab	Shaheen	Jawad	Asani	Sitrang	Mandous	Mocha
2	Biparjoy	Tej	Hamoon	Midhili	Michaung	Remal	Asna	Dana	Fengal	Shakhti	Montha	Senyar	Ditwah
3	Amab	Murasu	Akvan	Kaani	Ngamann	Sail	Sahab	Lulu	Ghazeer	Gigum	Thianyot	Afoor	Diksam
4	Upakul	Aag	Sepand	Odi	Kyarhit	Naseem	Afshan	Mouj	Asif	Gagana	Bulan	Nahhaam	Sira
5	Barshon	Vyom	Booran	Kenau	Sapakye	Muzn	Manahli	Suhail	Sidrah	Verambha	Phutala	Qurifal	Bakhur
6	Rajani	Jhar	Anahita	Erdheri	Wetwun	Sadeem	Shujana	Sadaf	Hareed	Garjana	Aiyara	Daaman	Ghwyzi
7	Nishith	Probaho	Azar	Riyau	Mwaihout	Dima	Parwaz	Reem	Fald	Neeba	Saming	Deem	Hawf
8	Urmi	Neer	Pooyan	Guruva	Kywe	Manjour	Zamata	Rayhan	Kaseer	Nimada	Kraison	Gargoor	Balhaf
9	Meghala	Prabhanjan	Arsham	Kurangi	Pinku	Rukam	Sarsar	Anbar	Nakheel	Vidulli	Matcha	Khubb	Brom
10	Samiron	Ghurmi	Hengame	Kuredhi	Yinkaung	Watao	Badban	Oud	Haboob	Ogha	Mahingsa	Degl	Shugra
11	Pratikul	Ambud	Savas	Horangu	Linyone	Al-jarz	Sarrab	Bahar	Bareq	Salitha	Phraewa	Athmad	Farak
12	Sarobor	Jaladhi	Tahamian	Thundi	Kyeekan	Rabab	Gulnar	Seef	Alreem	Rivi	Asuri	Boom	Darsah
13	Mahanisha	Vega	Toofan	Faana	Bautphat	Raad	Waseq	Fanar	Wabil	Rudu	Thara	Safar	Samhah

Within the North Indian Ocean between 45°E - 100°E, tropical cyclones are named by the India Meteorological Department (IMD/RSMC New Delhi) when they are judged to have intensified into cyclonic storms with 3-minute sustained wind speeds of at least 34 kn (39 mph; 63 km/h).

Before the formal start of naming, tropical cyclones were named after places, objects, or saints' feast days on which they occurred. The credit for the first usage of personal names for weather systems is generally given to the Queensland Government Meteorologist Clement Wragge, who named systems between 1887 and 1907. This system of naming weather systems subsequently fell into disuse for several years after Wragge retired, until it was revived in the latter part of World War II for the Western Pacific. Formal naming schemes and naming lists have subsequently been introduced and developed for the Eastern, Central, Western and Southern Pacific basins, as well as the Australian region, Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean.

Super Cyclonic Storm Amphan and records of other severe cyclones :

Super Cyclonic Storm Amphan was a powerful and deadly tropical cyclone that caused widespread damage in Eastern India(fig:4), West Bengal to be specific, and also Bangladesh in May 2020. It was the strongest tropical cyclone to strike the Ganges Delta since Sidr of the 2007 season and the first super cyclonic storm to occur in the Bay of Bengal since the 1999 Odisha cyclone. It was also the 3rd Super Cyclone that hit West Bengal since 1582, after 1737 and 1833. Causing over US\$13 billion of damage, Amphan is also the

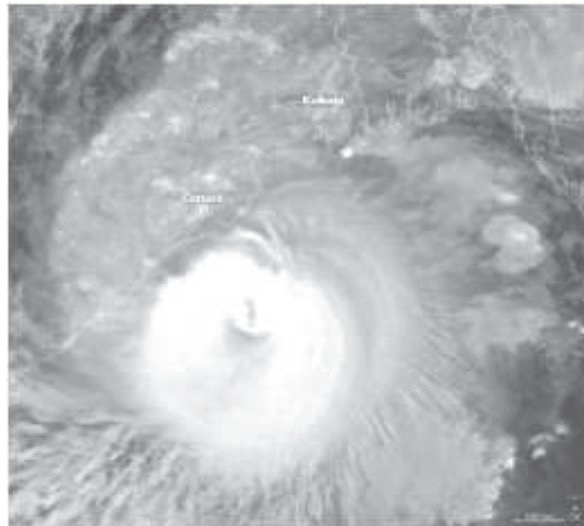


Fig:4 :NASA Earth Observatory image by Lauren Dauphin, using MODIS data from NASA EOSDIS/LANCE and GIBS/Worldview and using Black Marble data from NASA/GSFC

costliest cyclone ever recorded in the North Indian Ocean, surpassing the record held by cyclone Nargis of 2008.

Affected area of Amphan:

Coastal areas in West Bengal comprising East Midnapur, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Hooghly and Howrah as well as Odisha were affected by the cyclone. It also caused significant destruction in Bangladesh. Amphan made landfall near Bakhali (fig :5) in West Bengal at 2:30 p.m. IST on 20 May, buffeting the region with strong winds and heavy rains. Although the extent of fatalities was less than initially feared, the cyclone's effects were nonetheless widespread and deadly. West Bengal, the epicenter of the cyclone's landfall, saw the most widespread damage from Amphan. The storm was considered the strongest to hit the region in over a decade.

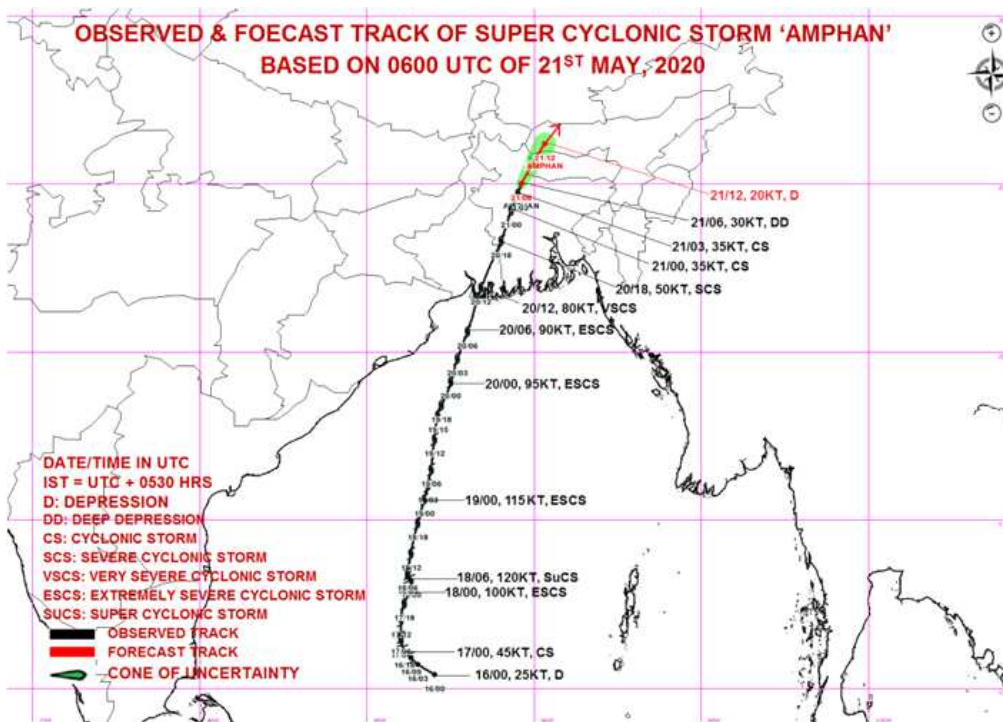


Fig: 5; Observed track of cyclone Amphan till 21st May, 2020.

Impact of the cyclone on the Indian Sundarban area:

Rangabelia (West Bengal): According to 63-year-old Shabitri Midha of Pakhiralaya village "I have become a beggar now. All I had was a small hut, God snatched even that from me,". In the last 30 years, Midha, dweller of the village lost nine bighas (60,840 square metres) of ancestral land as the Bidyadhari river engulfed parts of the delta. Pointing to the waters, Midha said, "This river took almost everything we had. Now, this storm has just finished us."The Gosaba block was one of the worst affected in the Sunderban islands by Cyclone Amphan.



Plate:1: Destruction of a launch boat at Gosaba ferry ghatt



Plate:2:A family in a temporary tent at Rangabelia.

According to the local people after Cyclone Amphan, the Sundarbans have become unrecognisable. Gosaba ferry ghat was badly damaged by the storm. A wrecked launch boat on the right, half of it submerged (plate- 1) clearly indicates the severity of the storm. Many parts of the embankment is totally obliterated. Hundreds of houses were wiped out in Rangabelia's Uttor Para, about one km from the primary school. Ananta Mondal, 67, lost three bighas (20,280 square metres) of farmland and is now living with his family in the local school, which is being used as a shelter house. Saltwater has inundated all the farmland in the village - creating another big concern for the villagers . Cultivation is not possible over the lands in the next 2-3 years. Though a senior officer at the Gosaba Block Development Office has stated that the change in direction of Cyclone Amphan, and better preparedness, helped the Gosaba area, or else the destruction would

have been far worse. "We have zero casualties in the block. Some of our major embankments were breached and thus, a lot of areas here were flooded. However, considering the intensity of the cyclone, the damages could have been far worse," Rangabelia's Uttar Para is caught between two rivers - Bidyadhari on the right and Gormor on the left. This further aggravated the scale of destruction in Rangabelia. A stretch of road from Gangamandir to Jotirampur ghat was completely washed away and looked like one vast lake.

A local dweller, Lakhan Dutta sitting inside a makeshift tent (plate-2), made of tarpaulin given by the panchayat, has lost his house which is totally submerged. His family got a cooked meal after six days of the cyclone hit Bengal. They were getting dry food from the camp. Cyclone Aila, which had struck in 2009, devastated this eco-sensitive part of Bengal. Sundarban dwellers took several years to get back to their feet. Cyclone Amphan, which was more powerful and created widespread devastation, throws a larger challenge for the island people. There is also considerable loss of property - whether it is agriculture, the power sector, telecommunication, or the houses that have been damaged. There have been losses of different infrastructure, and also in the business world and the agriculture sector; everyone has suffered great losses.

Impacts on Mangroves: 1,200 sq km of that mangrove forest has been destroyed. Mangroves not only reduce wind speed but break the waves during a storm surge caused by a cyclone. Trees turned yellow and red after the cyclone mostly due to salinity and trees can only survive if the salinity of the soil comes down. The damage has been much on the Indian side of the Sundarbans and not on the Bangladesh side. The CM has directed the Forest Department to be prepared to plant 3.5 crore mangroves by 14th July which is celebrated as the World Forest Day. Recently, the Chief Minister of West Bengal highlighted that about 28% of the Sundarbans has been damaged by cyclone Amphan and launched a drive for planting mangroves and trees to mark the World Environment Day (5th June).

Preliminary Report from the State Government:

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee described the storm's effects there as worse than that of COVID-19. The death toll due to cyclone 'Amphan' in West Bengal has

risen to 98. An estimated storm surge of 5 m (16 ft) inundated a wide swath of coastal communities and communications were severed. The greatest inundations were expected in the Sundarbans, where flooding could extend 15 km (9.3 mi) inland. Embankments in the region were overtaken by the surge, leading to inundation of the islands in the Sundarbans. Bridges linking islands to the Indian mainland were swept away. The cyclone produced sustained winds of 112 km/h (70 mph) and gusts to 190 km/h (120 mph) recorded by Alipore observatory, Kolkata, West Bengal, damaging homes and uprooting trees and electric poles. Wind speed along coastal areas were measured up to 150-160 km/h (93-99 mph). In Canning a wind speed of 157 km/h (98 mph) with gusting up to 185 km/h (115 mph) was recorded, while nearby Nimpith and Sagar Island observe 155 km/h (96 mph) and 111 km/h (69 mph) wind speed. The storm also triggered widespread flooding around the city. 236 mm of rain was recorded in Kolkata.

Aerial survey by the Prime Minister:

The Honourable Prime minister with the Chief Minister, and the Governor of WestBengal had done a primary assessment on 22nd May,2020 with an aerial survey. Widespread destruction by the cyclone Amphan was witnessed by the aerial survey. The prime minister said "The whole world is struggling with a crisis. India is also constantly fighting a battle against the corona virus. The Mantra of winning the battle against corona virus and the cyclone are completely opposite to each other.The mantra to fight the corona virus is - do not get out of the house and stay wherever you are; do not get out of the house if not required. But the Cyclone's mantra is - be at a safe spot as soon as possible. Shift to a safe site, try to get there and leave your houses. That is, both are different types of battles that have to be fought by West Bengal simultaneously". One thousand crore rupees have be arranged by the Government of India as an advance assistance to help the State Government in this hour of crisis. At the same time, the Central Government also provided assistance of up to two lakh rupees from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to the families who have lost their loved ones and up to 50 thousand rupees to those who have suffered injuries.

Nature of Cyclone in Bay of Bengal:

Tropical cyclones and storms are very common in the Bay of Bengal. They severely

affect the eastern coast of India as compared to that of the Arabian Sea. According to Koteswaram , there were about 346 cyclones that include 133 severe ones in the Bay of Bengal, whereas the Arabian Sea had only 98 cyclones including 55 severe ones between the year's 1891 and 1970. Cyclones with tremendous speed hit the coastline and inundate the shores with strong tidal wave, severely damaging the coastal resources (Mitra, Halder, Banerjee, 2011).

Roxy Mathew Koll, a scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and lead author of IPCC Oceans and Cryosphere, said: "Our research shows that high ocean temperatures are conducive for rapid intensification of cyclones in the north Indian Ocean. In the current case, the Bay of Bengal has been particularly warm. Some of the buoys in the Bay of Bengal registered maximum surface temperatures of 32-34 degrees Celsius consecutively for the first two weeks of May. These are record temperatures driven by climate change - we have never seen such high values until now" (Mitra, Halder, Banerjee, 2011).

According to the scientists if the sea surface temperature (SST) is about 28 degrees Celsius then favorable condition for cyclone is developed. It has been found that from the previous records that the occurrences and magnitude of tropical cyclone over Bay of Bengal is maximum than the Arabian Sea. Some scientists think that the ratio of the occurrence of severe cyclone in Bay of Bengal and Arabian sea is 4:1. As sea surface temperature (SST) is greater over the Bay of Bengal, the occurrence of cyclone is maximum here. Experts think that due to less definite mountain system and the altitudinal difference around the Bay of Bengal, pressure gradient force is comparatively weaker and wind velocity is not enough to minimize the sea surface temperature (SST). As a result, sea surface temperature (SST) is maximum over Bay of Bengal and that leads to increasing frequency of cyclone over Bay of Bengal.

Impact of pandemic on cyclone affected Sundarban people:

A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity. Viruses that have caused past pandemics typically originated from animal influenza viruses (WHO).

The nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has forced the four million inhabitants of West Bengal's Sundarbans area - famous for its mangrove cover - to choose between their lives and their livelihoods. The Sundarbans have a unique geographical character; the area spans across 102 islands and has a thick forest cover that has become the source of livelihood for the area's inhabitants and is also home to man-eating tigers and other wild animals. The people of the region - who usually subsist from cottage industries across the area - were forced to venture into the thick forest cover, at the risk of their lives. They were strictly prohibited from venturing into the forest during the lockdown, but often do so and lose their lives in the process. Three people died in a week after they were attacked by man-eaters, according to local media reports. The youngest among them was 36-year-old Rathin Sarkar, a resident of Lahiripur village in Gosaba block who was killed on April 20, 2020. According to local people the lockdown put an end to alternate livelihood schemes being run by non-profits and the administration to prevent people from going into the forest, that runs a thread-spinning unit in the area. Most of the villagers now have no alternative but to bring something from the forest for their livelihood.

Sourabhi Roy has been out of work since a thread-spinning unit in her village shut soon after the lockdown was implemented on March 24. The 65-year-old widow used to eke out a livelihood by working in the unit. She is now, however, dependent on free ration kits distributed by the administration and non-profits, for her sustenance.

In some forest adjoining villages, villagers are facing the extreme fear of tiger attack as the protecting net along the forest zone has been badly damaged due to Amphan and tigers have easily entered the adjacent villages and attacked the dwellers.

In order to fight with corona virus ,maintainance of social distancing is a crucial step during the pandemic situation but during cyclone Amphan thousands of dwellers had been evacuated from the vulnerable areas and they have been sheltered at different cyclone centers. In these cyclone centers it was impossible to maintain social distancing. So there was a possibility of spreading coronavirus from infected people to others.

Conclusion:

From the over going discussion it can be said that Nearly half of the villages in the deltaic fragile islands of the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve area are highly vulnerable to tropical cyclone and tropical cyclone induced storm surges. Both Covid-19 virus and Amphan cyclone have enhanced the economic vulnerability of the people of the Indian Sundarban manyfolds. Storm surges cause massive property damage in the islands of the Sundarbans. Villages located near river creeks and low-lying areas of the Sundarbans are more vulnerable to storm surges, whose frequency is projected to increase due to global warming. The scientists assessed people's vulnerability as a function of exposure, sensitivity and resilience capacity, and developed a composite vulnerability index (CVI) based on the three factors. Villages located in the lower and southern parts of the study area were found to be the most vulnerable to storm surges. Scientists and policy analysts are already reporting some long-term impacts of storm surges in the study area that has undergone major economic and social changes during the last 15 years and witnessed the displacement of an estimated 70,000 people. For example, agriculture was heavily affected after the 2009 cyclone Aila that devastated the Sundarbans deltaic area, with most of the agricultural land lying fallow till date. Similarly, fish production has declined significantly. World Bank studies also predict that the progressive salinisation of water and soil in a changing climate will significantly impact the fragile ecosystem of the Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and affect the people living in and around the forest .

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LIFE UNDER COVID-19 : THE MUSINGS OF A REFLECTIVE MIND

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ABSTRACT

Human life and living under the present pandemic has been severely challenged, threatened and distorted in numerous ways. Adapting to the NEW NORMAL is both difficult and complicated and a return to the state of pre corona normalcy is but a Utopia. The entire globe it seems has come to a point of stagnation politically, economically, socially and most importantly psychologically. In this respect a plethora of terminologies have resurfaced in our lives and are in vogue. This paper tends to address the various terminologies through snapshots which depict varied facets of living life today. In doing so it will highlight the paradox of human existence in the present era and explore how best the Corona crisis can be dealt with.

Key words : *mask, quarantine, corona, covid19, survival, existence, extinction, paradox, irony.*

INTRODUCTION

Life is a montage...It is an endless journey of gathering experiences...Some that will gradually seep in...some will stir you...some others will teach you, change you or simply pass by. But what if all these happen at successive intervals tossing your life in thin air and shake you to the core with a wakeup call making you realize how powerless, miniscule and fragile humans are. The belief that we as a race is the most intelligent, advanced and powerful of all gets shattered in a moment of a COVID 19 attack and all that is left is to peer through our naked selves which stripped of its inflated ego have lost its shine. The supposed halo, the aura around mankind all have disappeared; the questions which reiterate now are- is this the end of our race? Is this the beginning to our end? Will the world end in the Eliotic sense in a whimper instead of a bang? Will life ever return back to its wholeness? It is time we rethink our position in the universe and ponder over the fact were we really living in the truest sense of the term so long. Human lives have turned upside down during the present pandemic. The twelve sections henceforth are certain snapshots of life which in slices and glimpses take us into

a metaphorical journey of the self. These very relatable slices of life take the Indian context in the 21st century in particular and the world in general.

1.Wearing masks

Since last March with the onset of the inaugural lockdown in India life and living have slowly come converging to a point from where it apparently seems to be a dead end. Wearing masks have become an integral part of our life. N95, KN95, 2 Ply, 3 Ply, surgical masks etc. have flooded the market like never before. Plethora of colours , variety of designs and various kinds of patterns on the masks have made them more attractive no doubt, however, the primary purpose of wearing the masks has been lost somewhere in the process of glitz and glamour. But isn't a substantial section of the human race wore masks since time immemorial and have changed their colour to suit their vested interest and selfish purposes? People across the globe had always wore masks to camouflage their murky hearts. So, wearing masks is not a new phenomenon, the only difference being the masks worn earlier being invisible were not easily detected.

2. Am I audible?

In the post COVID situation the question 'am I audible?' has assumed the status of being the new tagline in e-conferences, e-meetings and webinars. The pandemic has turned human lives upside down and changed them inside out. The more we claim to be technologically upgraded and updated the closer we are on the verge of losing human touch. 21st century boasts of being the age of connectivity encapsulating the entire world in a chip of a handset. However, we still find few who will really hear us out and even fewer who will really make an effort to understand. Seminars have given way to webinars and meeting and conferences have added a prefix 'e' to them. Today, being audible has thus become as important as being alive but wasn't it since long that it was the human craving of being heard! Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and various other forms of social media lands you amidst crowd but the paradox is we are alone and no one to hear us even if we want to be audible. The irony is each person, whether with millions of followers in social media or with so social account, is equally 'alone'.

3. Sanitizing

In Act 2 scene 2 of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth after the murder of king Duncan comments in respect to the blood stains on their (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth) hands : 'A little water clears us of this deed'⁽¹⁾. In the recent pandemic crisis not only a little water but in addition to it hand wash, soap bars and sanitizers have made their permanent appearances in our home and the world. Sanitization has been the norm of the day and its magnum opus impact is evident with the rising demand of the above so much so that all known and unknown companies have started to manufacture sanitizers which are ready to take on the virus head long. But like Lady Macbeth sanitization of our hands will not clear us of the deed until sanitization of our souls can be done. The crime rate globally still has not decreased much. Even in this critical situation the social still abounds in news of rape, domestic violence, theft, fraud, trickery and most important of all crimes in the present scenario - inhuman behaviour with the Covid19 affected patients. So sanitization of the soul has become much more necessary than mere sanitization of our thresholds, households and body parts. Food for thought my friends!

4. Social distancing/distancing the social

Maintaining of social distance have become a pivotal and significant aspect of living today. The age old proverb of 'united we stand, divided we fall' have changed its inherent meaning in this crisis phase. Man is a social being, the proof of it is glaring if we look at the various social networking sites. The paradox that has cropped up is that instead of maintaining social distance man has now become more interested and concerned in distancing the social being that is ironically man himself. For all the soldiers who are fighting in the front line to provide public service today and the people who are or might be Corona affected, sympathy, compassion and empathy are largely lacking and man has thus, been successful in distancing his fellow social beings from himself.

5. Happy World Environment Day

The crow perching on the branch of the tree is quite amazed. The dog on the road, the butterfly in the garden, the ant in the rack of the sweet vendor, the sparrow on the rooftop and millions other flora and fauna are all amazed today. They are still

wondering where did the humans go! Has the world changed while they were sleeping or busy gathering food or fighting for their existence or saving their race from extinction. For the first time in their lives there are no humans to bother them to discard them or to inflict brutality upon them...indeed the world has changed and changed for better. Is today the world environment day that suddenly a world which has become so brutal to them has turned into such an ecofriendly space? If indeed it has then happy world environment day to all humans. Please keep this space such friendly for us so that we can live and let live.

6. Time together

'What is this life if full of care?/We have no time to stand and stare'⁽²⁾ -had so long been the jingle of our lives. Humans have taken the proverb 'time and tide wait for none' so seriously that the above oft quoted lines have become a reality in their lives. In our busy schedule we have in a way turn into faceless automatons hurriedly rushing through lives. In the process we failed to recognize and feel the inherent beauty of life. Making time for one another has become so difficult that the shared space of human bond have become constricted and reduced to a pin hole. Has COVID turned our life from worse to worst? Each action has its corresponding reaction and each cloud has its silver lining. So when we are home quarantined for so long there is a certain sense of monotony and boredom no doubt, but it has also given us the opportunity to spend time together, to revive and renew our fragmented lives into wholeness. Probably for the first time we can sip our morning tea at ease and look around and appreciate the beauty of Nature. The empty dining table or the sofa is now filled with echoes of human voices enjoying a movie together or delving deep into nostalgia with the daily soaps of the 90s. We blame the virus for disrupting our lives, quite paradoxically it has provided us the chance to 'LIVE' life again which we had forgotten once upon a time.

7. Cuisine

Cuisine is an important cultural marker but most of us, with little time at our disposal, we either prefer to renew our taste buds in restaurants or preparing the famous two minutes Maggie. With time at our disposal and as an effective stress buster cooking suddenly has become a current favourite with most. The Dalgona

coffee has become a rage and posting various recipes in the social media have taken it by storm. Whether it is to get social visibility or to utilize our time to cater to the gastronomical urges of our near and dear ones or to reduce stress and boredom or for the very practical reason that our maid remains unavailable in this situation, culinary skills have hogged the spotlight.

8. Autobiography of attire and accessory

We are extremely disappointed to see the selfishness of our owners. It has been several months and they have not brought us out of the wardrobe or the cupboard or the dressing table. How are they managing without us!! We hear some corona or otherwise some virus have wrecked human lives but its hard to tell because behind the closet there are network issues and audibility problems. It is disheartening to own how our status has changed from being favourite and indispensable to being discarded into a world of oblivion. Such cruelty, insensitivity and step motherly treatment will not be accepted and taken along. We will retaliate and write back to the humans in our own style. Stylish masks alone can never wipe out our existence. We promise to pay back when our time comes!

9. Vaccines

'Through all the chaos that is our history, through all of the wrongs and the discord, through all of the pain and suffering, through all of our times, there is one thing that has nourished our souls, and elevated our species above its origins, and that is our courage'⁽³⁾ - It is indomitable will and immense courage of the humans in face of adversity that have over the years helped mankind to resurface with renewed hope that the battle is not lost forever. The entire globe today is busy finding a solution to this pandemic. The world in rapt attention is eagerly waiting for the moment - the auspicious moment as it can be called when the first vaccine to protect mankind against Covid19 virus is within our reach. All the nations are sincerely searching for a cure, an antidote. Never before had there been such a wide global search not even for the holy grail. The rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the centre and the margin, the intellectual and the commonplace and all other existing binaries are for the first time in history praying alike for a common cause. It will be not wrong to say in this respect that Corona

virus has in a way levelled the inequalities in society and brought about an equilibrium which was so long an absentee character in the world's stage. The invention of vaccines to curb this crisis has already been started and we can only hope and pray for their success to free the world of the incessant fear that has taken our lives in its grip. We are fighting today not only for our existence but also to make the world a surviving space for our future generations.

10. Quarantine

The very word, quarantine, in the present context has been the most widely used term. Originating from the Italian word 'Quarantina' meaning '40 days', it was in practise in the 14th and 15th century and referred to a period of isolation of the crew and the passengers of a ship before they went ashore during the Black Death plague epidemic.⁽⁴⁾ In present times to curb the chain of Covid19 transmission quarantine of at least two weeks, whether self imposed or otherwise, is in practise. Ironically, long before the Corona virus wrecked havoc in our lives, mankind at different crucial junctures of historical time and space had been in quarantine without the term being popular as it has been today. In any tangible space if your freedom to live, to express, to move and your social, political and cultural rights are hindered the free flow of life is hindered, well whether you admit it or not you were quarantined already. When your words and actions could create a stir and overthrow the people in power, you were termed as 'infectious' and throughout the courses of history the state machinery has strategically or forcefully put you into quarantine. The Big Brother's surveillance has always loomed large. Only thing that differed was that the term quarantine had not so long achieved its cult status.

11. Education

Covid19's adverse effect on the Education sector has been phenomenal worldwide and more so in a developing nation like India. Online education still needs to cross a series of hurdles to cater to all. Appropriate infrastructure for such education is still a far cry in the developing nations. Even in the age of digital India such incidents like the suicide of the Kerala girl who could not access to online education happen. This bears testimony to the fact that education is still compartmentalized

and has not reached the masses. But what education are we talking about. Whether online or offline the term education mostly addresses to what constitutes the syllabus. It is time we come out of the set pattern, shift the paradigm of education being constricted to syllabus only and think of it in a more macrocosmic way to lay emphasis on value education, vocational education, mixed learning education and so forth. Real education build a sound character and infuse human beings with the feelings of compassion, empathy, selflessness and make them 'humane'. These are lacking greatly in the present scenario. So the paradox is we all are expressing our despair for the education field being affected so deeply yet very few actually pay attention to the real education system whose structure has been demolished long ago.

12. Fluidity of time

When the mechanical ticktock of the clock no longer bothers you and you feel eternity has opened its gates before you, then time past, present and future seems to have coalesced together and fluidly merged the cyclical change of the morning, afternoon, evening and night. The dates on the calendar appear to be one and the same and Sunday has lost its so longed privileged position. It feels like we are in eternal waiting for the Godot to come and pick us out of this abysmal cage of time.

The present pandemic has led us into an introspective journey. Today we fight for our survival, we fight for our own existence, we fight a strenuous battle so that man does not join other species in the least of 'Extinction'. In such face of adversity we are on the verge of losing our indomitable will, the spirit to fight against all odds, the zeal never to submit under pressure. Fear, anxiety, despair, monotony have engulfed us but all is not lost if you have yourself ... all can't be lost if there is hope that better days awaits us...all will not be lost if the belief that grass will once again sing in the wasteland is still alive. As long as our mindscape and mental health are healed, maladies can never jeopardized our existence and life will returned back to its wholeness in a new and improved way instead of the world ending with a bang or a whimper. The experiences gathered from this pandemic can change our life for better if they are valued and the lessons learnt.

We can never be defeated unless we accept defeat psychologically. It is all in the mind which can make a heaven out of hell and vice versa. To stay motivated and hopeful is the key to survival and anybody or anything which can rejuvenate and revitalize us must be internalized. The 'infodemic'⁽⁵⁾ is a greater pandemic than Covid 19 has led us to. It is time we come out of it and this can be made possible only self belief and the love generated from the familial space and Nature around. Yes, we are all alone but do remember 'if we are all alone, we are together in that too.'⁽⁶⁾

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ANTHROPOCENE, ECOLOGICAL DISORDER, VIRUS TRANSMISSION AND COVID-19: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Our present geological era is termed as the Anthropocene. Humans are here the most dominant species. They are the moderator of nature and ecosystem. Technological progress, by disrupting natural system has become a basic feature of the Anthropocene. The man-made technological development is now the key factor of several catastrophes. Humans have made their own Frankensteins by disrupting nature and ecosystem. Climate change, global warming, devastating wildfire, serial super-cyclones and rapid transmission of viral diseases are now the Frankensteins of human civilization. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has become the deadliest Frankenstein of the Anthropocene.

Key words : *Anthropocene, Ecosystem, Virus, COVID-19*

INTRODUCTION

Anthropocene is the modern geological era when human beings are the dominant species of the Earth. Ecological, hydrological, biological and atmospheric cycles of this planet are now controlled by human beings. Paul Jozef Crutzen (Nobel Prize-winning Dutch atmospheric chemist) has popularized the idea of Anthropocene. The Anthropocene epoch had started with the beginning of capitalism and the advent of the industrial revolution. But, according to some archaeologists and historians, the Anthropocene epoch had started from the age of the Neolithic revolution. In the prehistoric age, proto-humans had used several kinds of stone tools. Yuval Noah Harari has opined that prehistoric humans had used stone tools to crack bones and collect marrow from the carcasses of the several animals, hunted by deadly fierce carnivorous animals. Historically and psychologically, the collection of marrow from the bones was the original niche of human beings. In the food chain system, the position of the prehistoric humans

was in the middle. Because at the beginning humans were small game hunters and food gatherers. But 400000 years ago humans had become big game hunters. And, 100000 years ago with the rise of Homo sapiens, modern humans had reached the top of the food chain. This great leap of the humans from the middle to the top of the food chain had a deep impact on the ecosystem. Other large predators like lions and sharks had reached the top of the food chain gradually by maintaining the balance of ecology. But, humans, in contrast, had ascended to the top so quickly that the ecosystem had failed to adjust with them. Simultaneously, humans were also failed to adjust themselves with the natural ecosystem. In the twenty-first century, human beings are still failed to adjust and have become scared and anxious over their positions. The coexistence of fear and anxiety has made them the cruelest and dangerous creature in the world. In the history of humankind, from deadly wars to ecological disasters all the calamities have generated from the fear and anxiety of human beings.

Humans were gradually accustomed to the use of fire. The human knowledge of the controlled use of fire was one of the greatest discoveries in history. Archaeologist J.A.J Gowlett had sketched the outline of controlled use of fire by a human being. At first, humans had managed the opportunistic use of fire from wildfire, lightning sparks and burning meteors. Then humans had managed to conserve the natural fires. Subsequently, they had started the use of cattle dung or other slow-burning substances to maintain fires in rainy or winter seasons. And finally, they had masterminded in the use of fire. The earliest evidence of fire using associated with humans come from Oldowan hominid sites in the Lake Turkana region, Kenya.¹ But humans were not satisfied with the use of fire only. They had discovered more powerful energy from fossil fuels like coal, petroleum. The transformation of the use of energy has introduced the development of technology. As a result, human species has come to dominate the ecology of the earth. This kind of human-centric dominance is the key feature of the Anthropocene era.

The rapid increase of human numbers, the extension of agriculture and the consumption of fossil fuels by humans have disrupted the balance of the

ecosystem. It is expected that in the twenty-first-century human population on the earth will reach 10 billion. Agriculture and cattle farming have already increased the emission of methane gas. Almost 50% of the earth's surface is exploited by humans in the epoch of the Anthropocene. The extension of human exploitation on the earth's surface helps to disappear tropical rainforests. As a result, the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) has increased and several endangered wild animals are facing the extinction. Dam building and diversion of river courses, upwelling for artificial fisheries, waste of animal husbandry, use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture - all have increased the rate of pollution and the disruption of the environment. The emissions of toxic sulphur dioxide and nitric oxide have increased. Fossil fuel burning and chemical fertilizer based agriculture are responsible for the unlimited emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane. These sulphur dioxide, nitric oxide and greenhouse gases are responsible for acid raining, photochemical smog and global warming.

According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), the earth is gradually getting warmer and its consequences are climate change and global warming. Several toxic and nontoxic substances are released into the environment. Some nontoxic substances like the chlorofluorocarbons have devastating damaging powers. The chlorofluorocarbons are the destroyer of Ozone molecules in the ozone layer of the stratosphere. So, the ozone depletion by the chlorofluorocarbons has created 'ozone hole' on the earth and as a result the surface temperature of the earth is increasing. In the twenty-first century, the 'ozone hole' is a scary global phenomenon.

Climate change, environmental crisis, ecological disorder - all are the very relevant themes of contemporary history. Industrialized use of the animal stock, severe burning of fossil fuels, emission of greenhouse gases, global warming, rapid melting of the ice fields the North and South poles are all now the part of modern history. The birth of the modern new world in the era of globalization and global warming is questioning us about the modernity of the Anthropocene. Actually, the modernity in the era of Anthropocene is a conglomerate of several imbroglios. Economy, Politics, Science, Nature, Culture, Books, Religion, Globalization, Local

Events - all are mixed up in these imbrolios. Modernization has destroyed the near-totality of cultures and natures, driven by the force and the bloodshed. But still nature, culture, society are not separated and partitioned from each other. They all are mixed up with each other. According to Bruno Latour, the nature of our modernity in hybrid.

In the recent trends of the discourse, human history can not also be separated from natural history. From the prehistoric age to the Anthropocene age, Humans have started to do a lot of unnatural things: cultivate crops, make tools, build cities, create societies and cultures, innovate ultramodern technology, make nuclear bombs etc. So, those kinds of human behaviour have transformed themselves into a supreme species in the world. But, these supreme behaviour is also responsible for the disruption of ecology, destruction of nature. Its result is climate changing, global warming in the late epoch of the Anthropocene. The power of human behaviour and technology is now comparable with the forces of Earth's orbital permutations, plate tectonics. That's why, eminent post-colonial thinker and subaltern historian Dipesh Chakrabarty opines that in the Anthropocene era, humans are become a 'geophysical force' of the earth. But still, now humans have failed to establish their perennial dominance over nature. In the dawn of the twenty-first century, Paul Jozef Crutzen has argued his speculations that human being will remain a major environmental force for many millennia unless there is a global catastrophe - a meteorite impact, a war or a pandemic.

The present embarrassing situation of human civilization due to the Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19 proved the relevance of Paul Jozef Crutzen's speculation. Apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of disasters - from Australia's deadliest bushfire, America's wildfire to West Bengal's (India) super cyclone AMPHAN - make it clear that humans are not able to tame all the forces of nature. So, the Anthropocene is not always controlled or tamed by human beings. The Guardian magazine has published: "We, the humans, have created the Anthropocene, and now the Anthropocene is biting us back."²

In the late Anthropocene epoch, we have seen significant increases in several neglected tropical diseases. The changes in ecosystem done by humans are responsible for it. Those neglected tropical diseases transmitted to the human body by vectors like mosquitos, bugs, snails. Sometimes those diseases also transmitted by several dangerous zoonotic virus infections from the body of bats and other mammals. In 1980s decades dengue fever emerged again and again in America. In 1980s Chikungunya and Zika virus have spread across the Caribbean islands and the entire Latin America. Increase in malaria fever and aggressive spread out of the neglected tropical diseases like Chagas disease, Schistosomiasis, Zika virus infection have disrupted the urban life of Venezuela. In the late Anthropocene epoch, Greece has faced reemergence of malaria fever. West virus infection and chikungunya in Italy and Spain, Dengue in Portugal, Schistosomiasis in Corsica island have become phenomena of epidemics. Several countries of the Middle East and North Africa are now the hotspots of various neglected tropical diseases and other infectious diseases caused by various lethal viruses. In 2014-2015 West African countries including Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone have witnessed thousands of demises due to the Ebola virus. East Africa has faced the emergence of Kala-azar in recent years. The whole Africa continent is now the hot spots of the AIDS epidemic. In recent past, Several southeast Asian countries have seen the rise of Nipah virus, Hendra virus (from bats), Enterovirus 71 etc. These viral infectious diseases are caused by human activities. Now, this virus dominated phenomenon characterizes the Anthropocene. According to Nathan Wolfe (American virologist), viruses evolve more rapidly than any organism on the planet. But in reality, humans understand less about them than any other forms of life. In a recent booklet titled "The Loss of Nature and Rise of Pandemics: Protecting Human and Planetary Health" (March 2020) the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) has published the contemporary biography of virus:-

'Viruses are incredibly simple organisms: essentially genetic material coated with a protein capsule. Their origin is unclear. Since they possess genetic material, reproduce and evolve through natural selection, they are considered by some biologists as real life forms. However, viruses are not able to reproduce autonomously: they always require a host cell, which can be an animal, plant, fungi, bacteria or archaea. Because they possess some, but not all, of the

characteristics of other living beings, viruses have been described as "organisms on the edge of life". However, at an ecological level, viruses perform an essential task, regulating the populations of host species and ensuring their balance within ecosystems. Depending on the type of genetic material they contain, viruses can be distinguished as DNA or RNA viruses, composed respectively of double- or single-strand nucleic acids. SARS-CoV-2 is an RNA virus, one of at least 158 known to infect humans; other particularly dangerous RNA viruses include HIV, SARS, Hendra, Nipah and MERS. Mainly shared among mammals and sometimes birds, RNA viruses rapidly mutate, meaning they can evolve, adapt to new hosts and develop resistance to drugs. This is especially the case when a cell is infected with different viruses which exchange genetic material, giving rise to a new virus. The mixing of species typical of markets in Southeast Asia can favour such situations, increasing the probability of the appearance of new viruses capable of infecting new species, including humans. Like all organisms, viruses try to maximize their survival and ability to reproduce. A virus in equilibrium with the species through which it has evolved does not cause excessive fatalities amongst that species, as the death of the host would most often mean the death of the virus itself. When there is a substantial change in the virus and it becomes able to infect a new species, this balance is lost. In the new host species, the initial rates of fatality are likely to be much higher until equilibrium between the pathogen and the host species is eventually reached.¹³

The whole world's focus is now on the COVID-19 pandemic. Climate change and the reduction of biodiversity have deep connectivity with the outbreak of COVID-19. Actually bats are the reservoir of several lethal viruses like Ebola virus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Coronavirus 1, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) Coronavirus, Nipah virus and Hendra virus. These viruses often cause severe morbidity and mortality in various species of wild and domestic animals. But bats remain clinically asymptomatic upon infections caused by those viruses. In a recent essay published in the Danish Medical Journal, the authors has explained the mystery of asymptomatic bats. The mystery is:-

'It has been suggested that the quiet co-existence of bats and viruses is an immune adaptation to high and prolonged metabolic increase during flight that would otherwise trigger a detrimental immune response due to, among other things, high

levels of free radicals. Elevated basal heat-shock protein expression and the loss of the interferon-inducible protein 20X/16(PYHIN) protein family which, among mammals, coincidentally only observed in bats, are believed to be important elements of bat adaption to body heat during flight.¹⁴

In the late Anthropocene era, the destruction of the natural habitat of the wild animals is the main driver of decreasing biodiversity. Climate change has also played a crucial role to shift the habitat of the wild animals. Wild animals are forced to survive in semi-natural habitats closer to humans and livestock. Caves, trees are the natural habitat of the bats. But, humans are continuously destroying their natural habitat. So, they are forced to settle in a new semi-natural habitat that may be close to a human habitat (either urban or rural). In this new semi-natural habitat, the interaction by various species of bats helps to increase the risk of trans-species transmission of viral diseases. Especially in the wildlife trade markets of Thailand, China, Venezuela and many African countries where bats, pangolins and other exotic wild animals (who are the carriers and transmitters of Coronavirus) are sold especially for bush-meat, the risk of viral disease transmission is too high. In 2020, a wet wildlife market in Wuhan city, China, named Huanan market is believed to be the source of the Covid-19 pandemic caused by the Novel Coronavirus.

In this context, Chennai based Nigerian intellectual Bayo Akomolafe writes:

'Likewise, somewhere within the Wuhan matrix of stalls, bargaining, trading, and bloodletting, from within the mangle of human and animal bodies tied intimacy, a process called "Zoonotic spillover" made it possible for the novel coronavirus to jump from bat or pangolin (ideally from a reservoir host to an amplifier host) and then to humans. With zoonotic transfers, a bat's immune system would have to be stressed enough and compromised by biological and environmental factors for the virus it already carries to be 'expressed' and excreted, leading to infections.

The rest is now recent history. From the presumed epicentre in Wuhan, the virus jumped across bodies, slinked its sensuously shaped protein exterior across handshakes, slipped into nostrils and cracks on skin surfaces, got spat out and sneezed out on doorknobs and presumptuously clean surfaces, flew in first class

from terminals in Europe and Asia and the Americas, floated in the air awaiting human vehicular rides to brand new locations, melted through our affection and hugs as we latched ourselves to those we left behind, and settled in our lungs. And all of this without a visa. Or a brain.¹⁵

On 11th March 2020, the WHO (World Health Organization) had declared the rapid and global outbreak of the COVID-19 as a pandemic. On 18th April 2020, the WHO announced that COVID-19 had spread more than 200 countries including China, Iran, South Korea, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, UAE, Japan, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia, Switzerland, Taiwan, USA, UK, Italy, Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands and Germany. Still now, the USA is top in the world concerning the number of the COVID-19 infected patients. The first case of COVID-19 outbreak in India was reported on 30th January 2020 in Kerala's Thrissur district when a student had returned home from Wuhan University in China. The Health Ministry of India has confirmed 14,378 cases of Coronavirus infection and 480 deaths in the country so far on 18th April 2020. India has faced approximately 6,73,165 cases of COVID-19 and 19,268 deaths until the first week of July, 2020 and the whole world has faced approximately 1,11,87,193 COVID-19 cases and 5,28,364 deaths.⁶

Humans are today prosperous and dominant species in the earth. We, the humans live now in large cities, use smart-phones and high-speed Internet. But, simultaneously we completely dominate the life of wild animals. Today, all the major vertebrates on this planet are made up of human-controlled animal farming and all the original wild animals are endangered. So, today the wild animals have to survive at the mercy of humans. In the Anthropocene epoch, Cities and several types of human habitats are increasing and habitats of wild animals are decreasing. As a result, many wild animals have faced extinction. Some wild animals are trying to accustom with human-dominated urban life or starting to live near human populations. So, gradually the interface between humans and wild animals is becoming larger and larger. In the late Anthropocene, 60% of the emerging human diseases have come from animals.

For all these conditions, humans are the sole responsible. From the stone age, proto-humans had tried to establish themselves as a dominant biological species. The evolution of human behaviours and activities through several ages has made this attempt successful. Now in the late Anthropocene age, the modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) are the most dominant biological species of this planet. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that today, fierce wild animals are no longer humankind's predators. But the microbes in their bodies are becoming the predators of humankind. And those microbes like bacteria, viruses are far more difficult predators to manage, compared to lions and tigers.⁷ At present, we have only one solution and that is the restoration of the ecosystem. We have to understand the value of maintaining biodiversity. Because the earth is not only for us (humans). Wild animals and other life-forms have also their rights to survive properly. Humans have to give them more space on this planet so that they can maintain a safe distance from human habitats. Humans and wild animals will be safe if both of them can maintain a safe distance from each other. Now, it is our duty to save the nature. Conserving and restoring our ecosystem should be a fundamental part of maintaining human and planetary health. That's why the UN (United Nations) has dedicated the 2020s (2021-2030) as the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.⁸

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DWINDLING OF INSTITUTIONAL DELIVERIES IN WEST BENGAL DUE TO COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Institutional childbirth is an important tool to decrease complications and death resulted thereof. Several schemes and interventions are, therefore, being taken up in India for the purpose. But the process in our country including West Bengal has been shrinking a lot as a result of COVID-19 attack. The phenomenon is occurring both in Government and Non-Government Hospitals and health centres. Such COVID-19 attack may lead to amplification of unauthorized institutional and traditional deliveries in West Bengal which may in turn swell both complications and death-rates during and in relation to deliveries.

Key words : *COVID-19, Institutional Delivery, Complication.*

INTRODUCTION:

Institutional childbirth has a pivotal role in decreasing birth-complicacy, child & mother-mortality rate etc and overall sustainable development in gender-community. Though world-wide maternal mortality has declined by almost 50% since 1990, but maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births) in developing countries is still 14 times higher than the developed regions (<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-3-good-health-and-well-being/targets.html>) and Sustainable Development Goal 3 is aimed to decrease global mortality rate to less than 70 by 2030 (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). Though a great percentage of pregnant women in developing countries breathed their last due to complication resulted during childbirth (Tadele, N., & Lamaro, T. (2017). India and vis-a-vis West Bengal (WB), at the same time, are not exceptions also. In WB institutional delivery is (75.2%) far less than the national percentage (78.9%) ranking 19th position among all the states and union territories in India (NSHS-4).

Whatever the case may be, the COVID-19 situation has worsened the matter of institutional delivery badly during the recent couples of months. But institutional delivery is very much essential since maternal death occurs mostly at labour, delivery and within one week after birth (Habte, F., & Demissie, M. (2015).

OBJECTIVE:

The present paper aims to highlight the reduction of authorized institutional delivery which is an eventual effect of COVID 19 environment.

METHODOLOGY:

Only secondary data are used for the study collected from the Department of Health, Government of West Bengal.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

COVID 19 has affected the ongoing health-system globally. But here the study area is limited to authorized maternal delivery in West Bengal, India. Further both Kolkata and other than Kolkata areas have been considered in the study, though all the health-institutions have not been covered. As random only five institutions in Kolkata area have been selected and they are: Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital, Chittaranjan Sevasadan, Calcutta Medical College and Hospital, Nilratan Sirkar Medical College and Hospital and SSK Medical College and Hospital. Where as Bankura Sammilani Medical College and Hospital, Murshidabad Matrima, Diamond Harbour Medical College and Hospital, Krishnanagar District Hospital, Burdwan Medical College and Hospital and Midnapore Medical College and Hospital in the districts have been brought under the study as random choice. Again data have been considered for April and May in 2019 and 2020 in case of hospitals situated in Kolkata where as April-May, March-April, January-June (average) and April-May in 2019 and 2020 have been considered against the hospitals in the districts.

Determinants of Institutional Delivery:

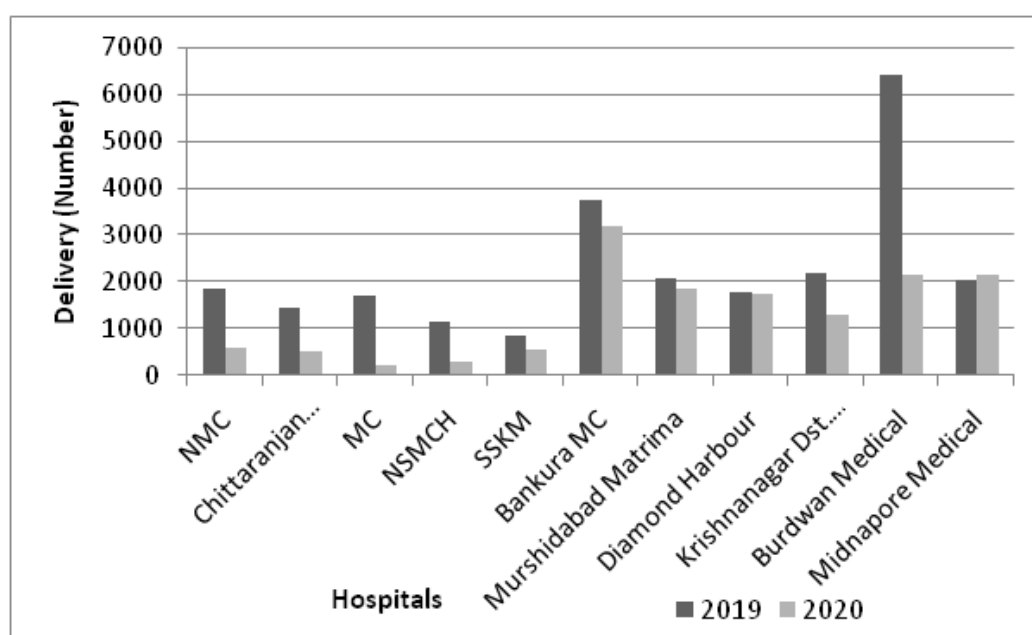
There are so many determinants of institutional delivery which are broadly covered in socio-demographic parameters, economic solvency, cultural aspects, availability of infrastructural and transport facilities, psychological alignment and traditional practices, religious factors, educational status, ease of access to the facilities etc.

DISCUSSION:

In Kolkata zone all the five hospitals contributed both normal delivery and delivery by caesarean process. In figure-1 normal delivery has been depicted in case of hospitals both in Kolkata and districts. It is evident from the figure that in all the hospitals normal delivery has decreased in 2020, that is during COVID-19 period in 2020 as compared to that in the period of non-COVID (2019) except in Midnapore College and Hospital which is an exception and unexplained. Percentage decrease respectively are: 67, 63, 87, 75, 35, 15, 11, 1.5, 41, 66 and -5.88. That is maximum percent decrease is

in Kolkata Medical College and Hospital, minimum is in Diamond Harbour Medical College and Hospital and in Midnapore Medical College and Hospital the delivery has increased in 2020 as compared to that in 2019. Where as in absolute figure maximum decrease has occurred in Burdwan Medical College and Hospital. In general, the attack of COVID-19 in 2020 may be attributed to such decrease in institutional delivery.

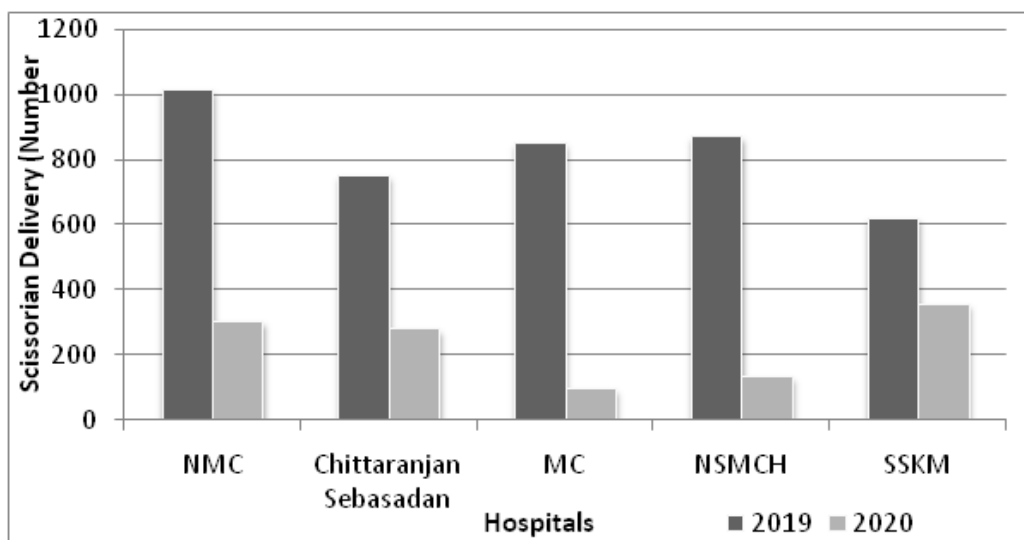
Figure 1: Normal delivery in the selected hospitals in 2019 and 2020



Source: Department of Health, Govt. of WB.

The figure 2 shows that caesarean delivery has decreased in all the five selected hospitals in Kolkata and the percentages respectively are 70, 63, 89, 85 and 43. That is in percentage maximum decrease has occurred in Kolkata Medical College and minimum in SSKM. And in absolute figure maximum and minimum delivery has occurred in Kolkata Medical College and SSKM respectively.

Figure 2: Caesarean delivery in the selected hospitals in 2019 and 2020



Source: Department of Health, Govt. of WB.

Here one very interesting phenomenon is that in case of Kolkata percentage decrease is much more than that in the district. That is in Kolkata the would be mother approached less towards institutional delivery as compared to district, inspite of having better infrastructural facilities.

In general the average delivery rate in each hospital does not vary too much, which has occurred in Midnapore Hospital. But all the other hospitals are showing exceptional trends which may be attributed to COVID-19 situation. To combat covid-19 attack lockdown was imposed all over the country and transport system was very poorly organized to carry the pregnant and upcoming mother to hospitals. Not only that the rate of transport for the purpose was also a factor. That may be the reason of such low number delivery in those hospitals. Another reason might be the corona fobia. When any one goes to the hospital, he may have a chance to be attacked by covid-19. That is why the upcoming mother would have been reluctant to go to hospitals for delivery. Another reason may be a huge hit in Integrated Child Development Services, nutrition and immunisation services and community health-workers had to stop visiting homes to immunise children to a great extent because they had to engage themselves to

corona-virus related works.

Conclusion: This less number of delivery in recognized institutions means increase of non-institutional delivery or unauthorized institutional delivery, since total number of delivery may not decrease abruptly. In the unauthorized institutions cesarean and delivery-system is not proper and hygienic. Hence, this may lead to increase the rate of fatality in case of mother or baby or both. Again, health problem of both mother and baby may increase as a result of less authorized institutional delivery. And all of them may worsen the future of the nation at a massive pace.

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MY YEAR OF REST AND RELAXATION : JOURNEY OF A FRAGMENTED PRINCESS

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INTRODUCTION

The setting of the book published in 2018, is two decades earlier. It treats its time through the eyes of a young woman. The said young woman is a pretty, thin, blonde Columbia graduate with a very comfortable inheritance, living in a well-furnished apartment in the premium Upper East Side area. This unnamed protagonist can be regarded with acute envy by many for she has the required ingredients for a so-called perfect life, which is chased by plenty of people in our society and especially by her best friend, Reva. Though people can label her as a desirable young woman, ironically, she is bereft of all happiness or satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The narrator fails to be in any available work or relationship and is unable to find solace in her expensive designer wardrobe. Ottessa Moshfegh does not clearly state the reason for her disorientation and maladjustment. The writer makes both of her parents suffer unnatural deaths, while she was in college, and she is left unable to resolve the terrible dysfunctional relationship she shared with her parents. She was not close to anyone. She is scathing of her only friend Reva, her college roommate. The protagonist finds Reva shallow and superficial and does not reciprocate her feelings of friendship and just barely, manages to tolerate her passively. She gets employed in a posh and coveted art gallery named Ducat in Chelsea.

Nevertheless, she loathes it entirely and realises it is useless and pretentious in nature. Amid the chronicle is the protagonist's acquaintance with Trevor, a banker.

He is her romantic interest. However, the readers notice that he nonchalantly exploits her physically, whenever he appears, without the least bother or investment in her. He acts in a predatory manner whenever the protagonist seeks his support in her vulnerability.

Surrounded by such dismal lack of motivation, inspiration and with nothing worthwhile in her empty life, she discovers a seeming escape in sleeping. Nevertheless, sleep does not nourish her and bring for her vital energy. Still, she gets addicted to it and clutches at it. She uses it to disengage from the reality of the world around her. She focuses her efforts in locating an extremely questionable psychoanalyst, Dr Tuttle. Then both of them happily and seamlessly supply each other's need and requirement, which are money and prescription sleeping medications. These were not easily accessible to Dr Tuttle and the narrator otherwise. The protagonist muses, "...the ease with which I'd found her, and the immediate relief that her prescriptions provided, made me feel that I'd discovered a pharmaceutical shaman, a magus, a sorcerer, a sage."(Chapter One)

The young woman, immensely happy with her purchases, starts to sleep in a closet at work, for prolonged periods. She is more involved and motivated about her sleep than she is with her work. Thus her work suffers, taking setbacks. The fashionable art gallery fires her. The narrator is not at all unhappy about it and makes a grand plan of sleeping more. She would sleep all the time if possible. However, her blissful planned routine is interrupted by visits from her concerned friend Reva and her subconscious, which manifests in her sleepwalking. The sleepwalking throws up interesting insights, which though intrigues her, she finds extremely irritating and disruptive of her routine of perfect sleep. She buys lavish clothes, splurges on costly beautification services, parties and interacts with doubtful men while asleep. She dislikes these discoveries and wants to put a complete stop to it.

The pretty protagonist can sense the hollowness of her life. She is aware also of her lack of emotional connection with anyone or anything. It reminds one of the failures of communication and connection in Edward Albee's, "The Zoo Story." In

the play, one of the characters, Jerry failed to connect with anyone despite repeated attempts. He too had lost his troubled parents at a young age and lived a life of alienation and isolation. He even tried to establish a connection with animals and objects, but he was always in vain. Nevertheless, unlike Jerry, Moshfegh's narrator's response is different. She chooses sleep over consciousness.

As Dwight Garner states in, 'A Sleeping Beauty Hopes Hibernation Is the Answer to All Life's Problems' in 'The New York Times', the protagonist did not have suicidal desires. She wanted to believe that she would be renewed and rejuvenated at the end of her prolonged sleep and would be adequately equipped to accept life. She contemplates, "I was growing less and less attached to life. If I kept going, I thought, I'd disappear completely, then reappear in some new form. This was my hope. This was the dream." (Chapter Two)

She realises that she is unable to achieve this on her own. So she enlists the help of an artist, Ping Xi whom she used to work with and had no respect. Like with her psychoanalyst, this too is a purely materialistic connection. This connection is devoid of any emotion or sympathy. Xi understands her situation and agrees to her proposal to further his end in the predatory pursuit in the creation of art. He does not offer mental support or sound advice. However, Xi keeps his word and provides the narrator with food and other necessities in return for voyeuristically filming her entire sleep period. He plans to use this as his innovative project in the art exhibit market. Both the characters agree, and our protagonist embarks in her quest of uninterrupted sleep.

The novel can remind one of the famous fairy tale, 'The Sleeping Beauty.' In the famous tale, the young and beautiful princess magically slept, safely fortified in her castle for a hundred years until true love woke her, completing and fulfilling her life. Moshfegh's rich, young and beautiful narrator too, sleeps in her expensive Upper East Side apartment, safely locked up. The sleep of the fairy tale was an effect of the curse of a slighted female. Here it is a conscious choice, and the unnamed protagonist goes at great lengths to procure the sleep drugs. She is aware that she did not earn her gorgeous beauty and her trust fund, and she

cannot achieve meaning and value based on it. She grasps 'her hibernation project' desperately, seeking some clarity at its end.

It seems she has managed to find something. She is grateful for Reva's acquaintance and tries to connect with her. However, ironically it is now Reva who is aloof and distant. The narrator had given away her much envied and well-curated complete wardrobe to Reva and her rich furnishings of her apartment as well. She does not regret giving up her great possessions and tries to live on the bare minimum. However, Reva gets promoted to work in the World Trade Centre and has no use for her at this fateful turn of events. The protagonist too, has discovered something new. She seems to have arrived at some meanings and ways to connect. Her toxic need for Trevor is now not essential, and the debilitating relationship is now redundant. She had hitherto turned to him, deep in her troubles. The reader can understand that as the nameless narrator watches Reva leap from The World Trade Centre, on a television screen on that fateful day, it will be imprinted in her being, forever. She would not be able to brush it off as none of her business as her previous nonchalant self.

So her planned project of chemically induced long deep sleep seemed to have achieved particular success. She picks up the pieces of her self and tries to move forward. The beautiful fairy tale princess had famously woken up to a life catered to and waiting for her. It is a life of picture-perfect and flawless happiness, filled with true love. The protagonist of this novel wakes up to the same murky world, which rattles off news of famines, floods and poverty on television screens to an unthinking and passive audience, "floods in India, an earthquake in Guatemala, another blizzard approaching the northeastern United States, fires burning down million-dollar homes in Southern California, "but sunny skies in our nation's capital today..." (Chapter Five)

CONCLUSION

This world had pushed her into taking this drastic step of forced hibernation and her only friend, who had wanted to live life to the full and gather its fruits, is brutally denied that. The protagonist can be hard to like for many, and her actions

can be hard to justify as well. However, the author throws up questions of who is in the right or wrong and whether someone can be so quickly condemned. The reader looks at the society and reviews the position allotted to various things by everyone within it.

It is also interesting to note that the present condition of the whole world, because of the COVID pandemic situation, is also one of being completely locked up. Most of the people are locked up in their homes and not allowed to venture outside freely as before. Nevertheless, again this is an enforced conditioned burdened on everyone by the world, whereas the beautiful narrator chooses incarceration on facing the world.

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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS : AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Today the world is engulfed by covid-19 which has completely altered our daily lifestyle. It has impacted every aspect and sphere of human activity and it is in this connection impact on International Relations is also noteworthy. The tiny microscopic coronavirus has far-reaching effects and consequences. International relations in this connection has witnessed destabilizing markets and power shift in world affairs. It has created an atmosphere of uncertainty especially with issues like stringent territorial restrictions, apprehensions about strengthening state sovereignty, doubts regarding the present state of globalization, presumable food crisis and many more in the broader maze of International affairs.

Keywords : Covid-19, International Relations, World, State, Pandemic, Power

INTRODUCTION :

The origin of the "novel" coronavirus which has infected millions of people across the world, is taken to be in Wuhan of China in the late 2019s. There are a number of claims and counter claims regarding this particular fact - for some it has spread from the Chinese wholesale food market ,for some the host have been ranging from bats to human beings while for some it is man made biological weapon which is being spread intentionally by China. On a whole, there is a large shroud of mystery over this issue and is still being debated. But at this present moment, something which is beyond debate and doubt is that it has taken the shape of a pandemic and is affecting millions of people's life. This common invisible microscope enemy has altered every aspect of human activities and in turn we are standing in a situation of changed reality.

Within the wide array of human activities another sphere which has undergone or may be undergoing huge changes will be the realm of International Politics in particular and international relations in general. The question is whether the

patterns of relationship in international affairs has truly changed or these are certain transitory changes which we are witnessing due to the pandemic. One thing which is very important in this particular period of the covid-19 situation is that we are witnessing a changed social behaviour especially in the context of economic crisis across the world as millions of people are getting infected and affected(approximately more than 15 million people) , economic activities facing a transitory standstill accompanied by territorial restrictions in order to prevent further infection across borders, so as not to aggravate the situation. But the issue that we need to delve is that : "Are our fundamental perceptions and relations in the realm of international affairs really experiencing changes?"

Nature of International Relations and the Contemporary Dominating Themes in International Relations (IR) :

Men, by nature are social animals and in words of famous Political Philosopher "Aristotle" , Man, is by nature Political animal." At the same time human beings are highly dynamic and so is International Politics. It had never accepted any particular order as permanent. It is because of the present situation there has been certain changes at the level of International Politics. To understand the impact of international relations in the pandemic era, we need to look back at the themes which dominated International relations in the last three decades. Within the plethora of themes and issues in international relations, three important broader themes emerge out as important and pertinent in this perspective. The first theme that dominated International Relations has been the question of "polarity and power transition" in International Relation. Soon after the end of Cold War it was initially assumed that the new International order was unipolar with United States as the remaining superpower but with the beginning of the 21st century a number of other states in International Relation posed a challenge to the superiority of United State, specially the United Europe ,China, Japan and even Russia. It was therefore argued that the present world politics is characterized by a pertinent unipolarity loaded with multipolar characteristics or tendencies. International order at the same time also witnessed a rise in a host of other non military issues like cross border terrorism, proliferation of nuclear weapons ,rise in rogue or failed States, Human Rights violation issues and others. Amidst these, we also witnessed a rising China with pertinent economic stability posing a serious threat to the position of United States in the world politics and to counter-balance it, a number of initiatives in the forms of alliances and dialogues took place. An initiative worth

mentioning in this regard has been the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue(among United States, India, Japan and Australia).

In this connection the Second theme which influenced International politics was the emergence of the "Complex interdependence and the importance of non traditional security issues" in international affairs. It was increasingly felt that International politics was devoid of any hierarchy of issues and non traditional security issues were as important as the other aspects in world politics. In the words of Keohane and Nye, we now belong to a "world in which actors other than the states participate directly involved politics, in which a clear hierarchy of issues does not exist...one would expect world politics to be very different than under the realist conditions." Thus, issues like climate change, migration, Refugee crisis, concept of Sustainable Development, Human security issues and a plethora of others drew more attention than anything else. Not only this, the rise in lingering intrastate conflicts, ethnic conflicts, civil wars had a clear reflection in world politics which increased our faith in Non-governmental organizations, transnational organizations, international organizations and Elites. In short, the essence of this dominant theme was our focus in International affairs shifted from national security issues to non traditional Security issues. Further, there were apprehensions that all these has led to the deterritorialization of the world.

In the realm of international politics, the third theme that had overarching influence and is said to have directly emanated from the effects of globalization is the concept of borderless world characterized by free interplay of capital, goods, labour, technology and communication facilitating higher levels of interconnectedness. This has further given impetus on the part of the nation-states to enhance their infrastructure capabilities, which reached its zenith with "Economic Corridors" - be it the BRI(Belt and Road Initiative) - CPEC (China–Pakistan Economic Corridor) , BBIN (Bangladesh- Bhutan- India- Nepal) Initiative and many others.

The Changes in the Pandemic Era

It is in this backdrop the changes that occurred in the Covid period with regards to International Relations were striking. At the face of the initial challenges posed by the Covid pandemic, diplomatic tensions with regard to the origin and spread and containing of the disease were evident. It was alleged that China's Wuhan was the epicenter of covid-19 and like many International leaders , Brazilian

Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, tweeted a message saying, The blame for the global coronavirus pandemic has a name and surname: "the Chinese Communist party." But, within the atmosphere of claims and counter claims characterized by rising enormity of the pandemic situation, the States opted for collaborative and collective measures to combat the disease and most importantly they opted for Self- help and insularity. The States also imposed strict territorial and border restrictions in terms of movement and connectivity. At the same time, there was also a pledge for International cooperation to combat the economic crisis, food shortages and on a larger plane the virulent virus which has given rise to the pandemic. Approved measures to streamline operations for quicker and more flexible delivery of assistance were reflected from various International Organizations and transnational actors, for instance the Asian Development Bank contributed \$20 billion in the time of need. Even G20, pledged 5 trillion USD to the global economy as an attempt to forge a 'united front' against the pandemic. But what became evident is the fact that such efforts were sporadic and apart from procurement of medicines and protective gears, a common platform of international cooperation among States were clearly and evidently lacking.

Another thing which became clear in the pandemic situation, that the States more than any other actors in World affairs dominated the center stage of International Relations. With this the notion of Globalization and deterritorialization of the world received a major setback in this period. This period also witnessed clear revival of the Realist school of thought which talked about "high politics". To quote Mearsheimer, "States operating in a self-help world always act according to their own self-interests and do not subordinate their interests...to the interests of the so-called international community" - saw its true manifestation in the pandemic period. In short, all States in the International System wanted to focus only on their own survival and became more inward looking. A Global strategy to combat the pandemic, leaving aside the research ventures for a Vaccine, clearly lacked as each State thought about their own survival. It is evident that even if the intensity of the pandemic subsides the impact of coronavirus will linger in our lifestyle and this would certainly mean that travel in the near future is going to be highly restricted and States would pursue a policy of stringent territorial restrictions. This would mean borders will no longer act as bridges but act as greater barriers in terms of interconnectedness. It will make the economy much narrower and nationalistic. The table below reflects the drastic impacts of the pandemic on world trade and the possible future projections by analysts in world affairs.

Table 1: Merchandise trade volume and real GDP, 2018-2021 Annual % change

	Historical		Optimistic scenario		Pessimistic scenario	
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2020	2021
Volume of world merchandise trade ²	2.9	-0.1	-12.9	21.3	-31.9	24.0
Exports						
North America	3.8	1.0	-17.1	23.7	-40.9	19.3
South and Central America	0.1	-2.2	-12.9	18.6	-31.3	14.3
Europe	2.0	0.1	-12.2	20.5	-32.8	22.7
Asia	3.7	0.9	-13.5	24.9	-36.2	36.1
Other regions ³	0.7	-2.9	-8.0	8.6	-8.0	9.3
Imports						
North America	5.2	-0.4	-14.5	27.3	-33.8	29.5
South and Central America	5.3	-2.1	-22.2	23.2	-43.8	19.5
Europe	1.5	0.5	-10.3	19.9	-28.9	24.5
Asia	4.9	-0.6	-11.8	23.1	-31.5	25.1
Other regions ³	0.3	1.5	-10.0	13.6	-22.6	18.0
Real GDP at market exchange rates						
North America	2.9	2.3	-2.5	7.4	-8.8	5.9
South and Central America	2.8	2.2	-3.3	7.2	-9.0	5.1
Europe	0.6	0.1	-4.3	6.5	-11.0	4.8
Asia	2.1	1.3	-3.5	6.6	-10.8	5.4
Other regions ³	4.2	3.9	-0.7	8.7	-7.1	7.4
	2.1	1.7	-1.5	6.0	-6.7	5.2

1. Figures for 2020 and 2021 are projections.
2. Average of exports and imports.
3. Other regions comprise Africa, Middle East and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) including associate and former member States.

Source: WTO Secretariat for trade and consensus estimates for historical GDP. Projections for GDP based on scenarios simulated with WTO Global Trade Model.

Not all analysts, however, are pessimistic with regard to such prospects. The crux of their arguments is that the globalization process is so deeply entrenched that a mere virus cannot undo the years of interconnectedness that the world has gotten used to and it cannot be easily quarantined. At the same time, analysts feel that a trend of moving away from a US-centric globalization to China-centric one is likely to happen. Trump led USA's unpreparedness to lead a global response has dealt a body blow to its carefully crafted image of a global order not just militarily but also as a provider of global public goods. The possibility of China stepping in and filling the vacuum of global leadership has raised the talks of an imminent reshaping of global order, as it has lend a helping hand to Italy, Iran, Philippines, Spain, Cambodia, and a host of African countries. But, this is also subjected to two broader limitations. Firstly, China has been accused of concealing information about the virus at the very initial stage, which allowed it to snowball into a worldwide catastrophe, thus giving way to apprehensions that China intentionally devised it to turn a health crisis and thereafter into a geopolitical opportunity and China's counter-pandemic activities are just a cover-up. This crisis has also revealed how China is using its increasing clout to maneuver international organizations like WHO as questions have been raised about WHO's independent functioning. Secondly, China's debt trap diplomacy and it's rising aggressiveness in the world affairs, which got reflected in the Indo-Chinese Relations with the recent Ladakh issue and furthermore, the States' own xenophobic tendencies in the pandemic period taint all apprehensions about China with uncertainty. Moreover, the fact that the emergence of China as a dominant player in International politics is also accompanied by the rise of regional powers, India, Japan, Australia, France, Germany, and South Korea is noteworthy. Their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and their subsequent regional outreach is worth mentioning. For instance, New Delhi has set up a USD 10 million SAARC COVID-19 emergency fund and has dispatched tonnes of vital medical supplies across the world. Tokyo has also pledged USD 18.6 million in aid to Vietnam to help fight COVID-19 pandemic and has reportedly offered anti-flu drug Avigan for free to almost 20 countries ranging from Southeast Asia, Middle East, and Central Asia. Other East Asian countries such as South Korea and Taiwan are being hailed as model case studies in combating the COVID-19 pandemic while Australia and New Zealand have pulled a commendable performance in containing the COVID-19 pandemic and are also jointly funding the World Health Organizations regional coronavirus pandemic plan. In the final analysis, certainly time is required for the world to reinstate its faith in

the interconnectivity and free flow of people, goods, and services across borders. And given the unfolding of the social crumbling and economic setback coupled with the citizens' reliance on their respective governments, it is unlikely that the world would immediately go back to being more open and free once the crisis is over. As stated before, International Relations is never static; though the Covid experience has registered changes but a completely new world order in the future is something unlikely. Last but not the least, if Covid-19 is used by world leaders as a justification for their increasingly xenophobic policies and strict migration restrictions thus acting as political fodder for the nationalists, it is time to rethink and introspect. Undisputed commitment to sovereign territoriality has hardly favored mankind and it is certainly not an antidote to the pandemic; global solidarity is.

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REJUVENATING PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF WEST BENGAL IN POST COVID-19 SITUATION

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ABSTRACT

The study has tried to theoretically present the overall scenario of the public libraries in West Bengal in the wake of Covid-19 and suggested some alternative approaches to residue the problems. The research has accumulated vivid range of literatures and official statistics and related works to realize the present situation. Theoretical reviewing has confirmed that the public libraries in West Bengal are suffering already due to existing problems but there are numerous possibilities to serve the community in the pandemic situation. The author has crafted several measures regarding re-opening of library, library staffs, materials and documents of the library. Later, couple of innovative approaches are instrumented by the author to serve the community in this context. These approaches can help the library to reconnect itself with the larger community and also give a chance for reincarnation as an integral part of the society. Proper implementation of the suggested possibilities may fulfil the expectations and information needs of the users.

Key words : *Public Library, Covid-19, safety, new normal, service, West Bengal*

INTRODUCTION

Since last year December, diseases were reported due to a new variety of coronavirus (later named as SARS-COV-2) in Wuhan city in Hubei province in China which within a short period of time spread over the whole world (Guan et. Al., 2020). World Health Organization (WHO) named the disease as coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), followed by announced it as a global pandemic. As of 17th June, 2020, globally 8.4 million people have affected and the death toll spiked up to 4.5 lakhs (Worldometers, 2020). India is also badly hit by this pandemic causing death of more than 12 thousand people; number of affected cases raises up to 3.6 lakhs here in India. Regulatory released by WHO advised to maintain some sharp guidelines as the precautionary measures in order to combat this virus; use of mask, gloves and face shields, washing hands frequently with soap, use of hand

sanitizer are couple of them but most important guideline referred by WHO is maintaining the social physical distance for curbing the chances from being affected by Covid-19. As a result, like other world leaders Government of India (GOI) announced the biggest nationwide lockdown in the history of mankind from 25th of March onwards which drastically reshaped the daily life and transcend the race towards new normal.

Every stakeholder of the society is trying to coup up with this new situation and rethinking closely while performing their normal life activities and services. Lots of regulations, precautionary measures and changes have already been enforced by GOI in this case. As an integral organ of the society, public library system in India should also starts rethinking about how they can perform their services and comes out as an inevitable part that can cater a larger community with varieties of services. But in reality, earlier researches have allegorically represented public library system as "Dodo" birds and calls for its extinction in near future Sharr (1974), Vallandingham (2003). Indian scenario has also accorded with this concept; being a habitat of 1.21 billion people the primary literacy of India is still struggling and the public library system severely failed to gear it up. In India there are almost 31563 public libraries, but most of them are not in the condition of functioning and the system is suffering with the mound of problems (Ghosh, 2005). One of the major issues in India is the implementation of the national policies to develop the Information Communication Technology (ICT). Apart from that other issues like the political aspects, cultural diversity, language barriers, poor quality of services and budget have also tangled the Indian public library system. In West Bengal almost 2,500 public libraries are remained vacant. Here, this article is focused on the context of West Bengal in particular and raised following research questions. In the later part, the study tries to give a theoretical understanding followed by some doable solutions that can be fruitful to tackle this unforeseen situation while answering these questions.

Q1) *How the public libraries can start their operations in this situation?*

Q2) *What are the precautionary measures should be taken by the public libraries?*

Q3) *What are the services that the public libraries can provide in this situation?*

What is the reality telling...

There are numerous studies which have identified the problems in the path of improvement of the public library system in West Bengal and most of the studies have established improper education, staff problems, inadequate funding, overall developments and lack of policies as the fundamental issues. Meanwhile, GOI has enacted several policies and established Raja Ram Mohan Library Foundation (RRRLF) to overcome the situation but all the ideas remained unsuccessful. In reality a good number public libraries in West Bengal have no library building; residual infrastructures are also below the level of the service and the collection strength is also very minor compare to the community needs. Apart from it scarcity of efficient staff is also a major lacuna of the West Bengal public library system. But this study has tried to zoom in the reality to find the causes behind the failures.

India is the second largest country in the world in number of population. As per the Census of India (2011) 68.8% of the Indians are belonging from rural areas. The basic education is still out of reach of the 287 million Indians which is proven to be the highest in respect to global scenario. A more concerning issue in respect to the education that the number of illiterate has increased to 13 million in a decade. The manifestation of UNESCO regarding the public libraries has forwarded that the public library should play a key role in basic education and the lifelong learning for the remote community. In 2005, Ghosh has ascertained some unique approaches to develop the condition of the public library and also provided the service to the larger community. But the economy has created the barrier in between the idea and the implementation. Apart from that 12% of the Indian villages have no electrification and in those places ICT development is in dreams. According to the report of Rangarajan committee (July, 2014), in India the BPL limit for a person is Rs. 32/- per day. In this situation it is quite obvious for a villager to give his/her full involvement to the work for arranging food rather than visit to the library.

After the theoretical analysis it is clear that along with the formal reasons some of the crucial factors like that unplanned growth rate in population, socio-economic diversity, illiteracy and economic poverty have affected the public libraries of West

Bengal. Along with these perennial issues Covid-19 brings series of impediments that helps to propel the chances of collapsing.

Welcoming the new normal...

All kind of libraries throughout the globe are facing more or less same problem, broadly maintenance and what will be measures for reopening the libraries and what the services that a library can provide in this situation. Drawing on experience from it International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has forwarded some general guidelines:

- Ensuring access to soap and warm water
- Ensuring they have a supply of hand sanitizer
- Keeping surfaces clean, including toys and library computers
- Ensuring that staff and users are encouraged to take time to recover if they are feeling ill, rather than coming in to work
- Providing pages with useful links to reliable information for users on their websites and promoting media literacy faced with potential misinformation online.

Apart from that, some restrictions are put by IFLA in this situation:

- Reconsidering programming such as storytimes or workshops, especially for groups at risk such as older users. Additional efforts to ensure hygiene, including through disinfecting hard surfaces. Removing riskier items such as toys or virtual reality headsets from circulation.
- Considering whether to close study spaces where people may spend a longer time in the company of others.
- Preparing for potential further restrictions, for example by ensuring that all staff have the skills and tools to work remotely (if this is possible) and that services, as far as possible, can still be provided digitally.

The study opines that for the librarians of the public libraries in West Bengal some measures should be considered as mandatory, they are:

- a) Librarian should always use the 3 layer mask (n95 preferable) in his/her duty hours.

- b) Use of face shield and gloves should be mandatory.
- c) Hand sanitizers should be used frequently.
- d) It is preferable to setup a counter shield.
- e) Thermal gun and hand sanitizer should be used at the entry point of the library.
- f) Disinfection process should be conducted daily with disinfectant sprays.
- g) Signs and posters can be used by the librarian for giving visual instructions to the user.
- h) Standing area should be marked for the user.
- i) Implementing quarantine policies on returned books by using three separate boxes.

Apart from the library personnel there should be a massive change to adopt for reopening and resuming the services of the library. Here, the study proposes some measures that should be taken account in this regard, they are:

- Necessary changes in rules related to library opening hours and services should be taken.
- Setting limits on user in the library at any one time. It will be preferable to allow no user for availing reading facility within the library. Only lending process should be remained open.
- There should be a rearrangement in the furniture setup. Ergonomics of the library should be changed drastically to keep a safe distance of 2 metres between each person within the library.
- Stringent cleaning policy for the library should be followed. Surfaces that are touched frequently by people especially where the virus can last for longest (plastics, metals other than copper) should be identified and sanitized in an interval of 30-35 minutes.
- Protocols for screening of every patron who are entering the library should be formed. Person with fever or mild symptoms will not be allowed to enter in the premises of the library.
- Extension of loan periods for books should be implemented due to this pandemic. Renewals for lending books should be done automatically, and fine which are due should be waived for this interim period.

Reconnecting the community...

Chakraborty (2018) has visualized public libraries as "Third Place" by describing how essential the public library is for the rural communities in India at rudimentary level and also tried to forward some feasible suggestions for libraries which are more than relevant in this context of covid-19. Here, the study opined about some initiatives that the public library can perform in this situation to engage and empowered the community properly.

Academic assistance for students

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) has propounded several measures to develop the rural people in various ways. A prime goal of MDG is the elevation of the rural community by providing the basic education (Beyond Access, 2012). The manifestation of UNESCO regarding the public libraries has also forwarded that the public library can play a key role in basic education and the lifelong learning for the remote community by tagging itself with the basic education programmes to fulfil the aim. Apart from this general approach, in this time of Covid-19 specific measures can all be taken by libraries to serve the community. Public library can help the students in doing their project assignments for school and colleges by providing resources and academic helps. The librarian can allow them to use the computer and internet facility to complete the project or for any online assignments but that should be done by maintaining guidelines.

Assistance in official works

Due to this lockdown many government and private offices physically will be remained close for a while. There are several official works are pending which compel the government to incline towards e-governance for performing the services. But, in rural belt still digital divide strongly visible and that could impede the larger section of the community from availing the services. In this occasion, public library can play a major role by assisting local people in their e-governance works. There are several micro level works like panchayet related works, PDS services and other official works can be done with the cooperation of public libraries. This in one hand help in the continuation of the flow of the services and in the other hand build a strong connection between the library and the community.

Awareness programme

Outbreaks of covid-19 helps to generate a huge amount to news out of that maximum are fake news. Fake news get spread through social media and rumours which creates misconceptions regarding this virus that can cause wide range of problems within the community and also hamper the policy execution of government in ground level. It can also develop negligence about the diseases among the society; so circulation of proper information within the society should be ensured. In 2005, Ghosh has ascertained that the public libraries have the potential to spread certain information to create awareness among the people. Public libraries can turn out to be a strong node in the circulation of health information. Public library in a ground level information dissemination centre which normally arrange events, video campaigning, storytelling competitions, awareness campaign, street dramas, discussion programmes, health seminars to diffuse the proper information among the community. For covid-19, by maintaining social distancing norms public library can conduct health camp for primary check up and screening for the common people. Miking, postering, video campaigning and spreading official information through community networks public library can create awareness and make the community aware of the palliative measures.

Fund raising programme

Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) report shows that the unemployment due to the lockdown has raised up to 27.1% in May, 2020 and most of them are from rural India. Maximum of these people are daily wage labours who have not savings to spend in this lockdown period. Although government tries to feed them by providing more aid through PDS but it is not penetrated properly in the reality. Therefore, public library can raise fund from the locality through campaigning to distribute dry foods, essential stuffs and medicines to the needy people at this time of lockdown.

Librarian at your door

It is quite common thing that the basic two elements in the public library system are the library and its community. Therefore, maintaining the harmony between these two is the essential obligation of a librarian. This initiative is a kind of

improvised approach of Barefoot Librarianship where the librarian's job is not confined within the four walls of the library. Librarian has to develop a continuous connection with his/her community by disseminating the information to the door step of the user. The places of the remote communities where the rate of illiteracy is high, there this kind of approach will be fruitful. Along with this Newspaper circulation or creating a book chain in the community by circulating books (Krolak, 2006) can also improve the engagement of the people with the library. Initiating extended home library service (if offered) or returns outreach services in this situation.

CONCLUSION...

Covid-19 is a big threat to world and it will remain in near future too but the mankind should bounce back to new normalcy with new measures for this global pandemic. Public library is also a inseparable stakeholder of the society with a great responsibility to work as a facilitator for the community in this hard time for smoothening the daily life of common people. The study tries to re-introspect the role of the public libraries in West Bengal and tries to forward some feasible suggestions which can be quite easily in the reality. In the end, the paper has tried to ascertain that the problems are concerning but they can be solved through the proper executions of the unique and sustainable approaches. Above all it is clear that the interventions of both central and state government have needed for the holistic development of the situation; beside that the mentality of the librarian should also be constructing and development oriented for the proper and exhaustive execution of the programmes.

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কোভিড - ১৯ ও আশ্বানের সামাজিক ভূমিকা

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“নানা ভাষা নানা মত নানা পরিধান
বিবিধের মাঝে দেখো মিলন মহান”

সার্বিক ক্ষেত্রে বহুত্ব বাদী দেশ ভারতবর্ষ তার ঐতিহ্য ও মহিমা অটুট রেখেছে। ভারতবর্ষে হিন্দু রাজত্বের সময় থেকে বহু আক্রমণকারি নানা ভাবে থাবা বসালেও ভারতকে তারা ম্লান করতে পারেনি। ঠিক সেভাবেই আজকে আমরা একবিংশ শতাব্দিতে এক দানবের আক্রমণে পড়েছি। এই দানবের নাম কোভিড - ১৯ এবং প্রচলিত নাম করোনা ভাইরাস। ভাইরাস আমাদের কাছে কোনো অজানা বিষয় নয়, এর আবির্ভাবের আগে আমাদের পরিচয় ঘটেছে সার্স জিকা ভাইরাস, চিকুনগুনিয়া, নিপা, আভিয়ান ইনফ্লুয়েঞ্জা ইত্যাদি। কিন্তু ভাইরাস পরিবারে কোরোনা হল খুবই বিস্তারিত এবং ক্ষমতাবান। তাই বিশ্বব্যাপি সে তার আক্রমণ শানিয়েছে। এই বিশ্বায়নের যুগে সমস্ত ভেদাভেদ ঘুঁচিয়ে দিয়ে সবাইকে এক ছাতার তলায় নিয়ে এসেছে। প্রথম বিশ্ব, দ্বিতীয় বিশ্ব এবং তৃতীয় বিশ্ব সকলে তার বিরুদ্ধে একজোট। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও, ২০২০র জানুয়ারিতে আবির্ভূত হয়ে ২৮শে জুন ২০২০ পর্যন্ত সে সারা পৃথিবীর ৫ লক্ষ লোককে পরপারে পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছে। বহু মানুষকে আহত করেছে। কিন্তু সারা বিশ্বের নিরিখে ভারতকে সেভাবে পরাস্ত করতে পারেনি। ভারতের জনঘনত্ব অনুযায়ী ফলাফল এখনও আক্রমণের দিক দিয়ে আশাপ্রদ।

তবে একটি বিষয় পরিষ্কার, চীন এখন সস্তায় সবকিছু জিনিষ রপ্তানি করেছে বিশ্বব্যাপি। সেক্ষেত্রে করোনা ভাইরাস ও অন্যতম। এই দানবের অপর একটি নামও আছে সার্স কভ-২ (SARS COV-2) এর জন্ম চীনের উহান নগরীতে ২-১৯এর ডিসেম্বরে। এখন এটি সারাবিশ্বে মহামারিতে (Pandemic) পরিনত হয়েছে। এর আগেও একদানব গোটা পৃথিবীকে মহামারীর কোপে ফেলেছিল ১৯১৫-১৯২৬ এনকেফেলাইটিস লেথারজিকা (Encephalistic Lathargica) এই ভাইরাসটি মানুষের কেন্দ্রীয় স্নায়ুতন্ত্রকে আক্রমণ করেছিল। কিন্তু অত্যন্ত আনন্দের বিষয় গোটা পৃথিবীব্যাপি এটি মহামারীর

রূপ নিলেও ভারতে তা হয়নি। এর মধ্যেই আর এক দানবের আক্রমণে মানুষ অতিষ্ঠ হয়েছিল যার নাম স্প্যানিশ ফ্লু এটি অ্যাভিয়ান ইনফ্লুয়েনজা (Avian Influenza) আকারে প্রথম বিশ্ব যুদ্ধের কারণে ছড়িয়ে পড়েছিল, সেদিক থেকে আবার জানিনা কোভিড-১৯ আবার তৃতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ ডেকে আনবে কিনা? (আমাদের কোলকাতা যেমন করোনা মহামারীর পিঠস্থান হয়েছে। ঠিক একইভাবে ১৯৬১-১৯৭৫ খ্রীঃ এ যখন বিশ্বব্যাপি মহামারীর আকার নিয়েছিল তখন পশ্চিমবঙ্গের কোলকাতা ছিল এর উৎস স্থল ভারতের মধ্যে অস্বাস্থ্যকর শৌচকর্মের কারণে। ১৯৬৮-৬৯ ফ্লু মহামারি হংকং এ ছড়িয়ে পড়েছিল H₃N₂ ভাইরাসের কারণে যা ভারতে পৌঁছতে সময় লেগেছিল ২ মাস।)

যাইহোক, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের প্রেক্ষাপটের দিকে তাকালে অবাক হতে হয় কারণ পশ্চিমবঙ্গের যে জেলাগুলি ভাল মানব সম্পদ উন্নয়ন সূচক (HDI) এর ভালো যায়গায় নেই এবং দারিদ্র নিত্য সঙ্গি সেখানে করোনা দাপট দেখাতে পারছে না তাহলে করোনা কি সামাজিক শ্রেণী বিন্যাস দেখে সম্পর্ক তৈরি করছে। বাকুড়া, পুরুলিয়া, ঝাড়গ্রাম, আলিপুরদুয়ার ইত্যাদি জেলাগুলিতে করোনার প্রকোপ বেশ কম। আবার এই জেলাগুলি আদিবাসী অধ্যুষিত। আসলে করোনার উৎপত্তি ও কার্যকলাপ চীনে এবং বিকাশ ঘটেছে প্রথম বিশ্বের ধনী দেশগুলিতেই ফ্রান্স, আমেরিকা, গ্রেট ব্রিটেন, ইতালী, স্পেন ইত্যাদি দেশগুলিতে তাহলে কি করোনা নিম্নবর্গীয় জাতী গোষ্ঠীর প্রতিনিধি! (ইতিহাস ঘাঁটলে দেখাযাবে ইতিহাস কিন্তু দরিদ্রদের মধ্যে বেশি প্রভাব ব্যাকটিরিয়ার আর ভাইরাস অপেক্ষাকৃত বিত্তশালী লোকদের বেশী আক্রমণ করে এবং ব্যাকটিরিয়া দরিদ্রদের ও নিম্নবর্গীয়দের।)

সুতরাং জাতী ও শ্রেণিগত ভেদাভেদ শুধু সমাজিক মানুষের আচরনের মধ্যে নেই রোগব্যাধির মধ্যেও আছে আসলে ভাইরাস বিলাসবৈভবে থাকতে পছন্দ করে আর ব্যাকটিরিয়াসাধারণ জীবন যাপন করে। রোগবিজ্ঞানে যে কোন রোগই জীবন যাপন মান (Standard of living) এবং ধারা (Culture of Living) এর উপর নির্ভর করে। তাই করোনাও তার ব্যতিক্রম নয়। যে যেমন কর্ম করবে সে তেমন ফলপাবে। তারপর একটি নিমিত্তও থাকে সরকারি পরিকাঠামো এবং নীতি।

পশ্চিমবঙ্গে করোনার প্রব্রজন বা অভিবাসন (Migration) ঘটেছে পরিযায়ী শ্রমিকদের থেকে। ভারতবর্ষের বিভিন্ন রাজ্য থেকে করোনা অভিবাসিত হয়ে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে এসেছে এখানে Push ও Pull factor কাজ করেছে।

এই করোনায় অর্থনীতি আন্তর্জাতিক দুনিয়া তথা ভারতে ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গে ও ভেঙে পড়েছে, ফলে অর্থনীতির ক্ষেত্রে (great depression) বা মহা মন্দার দিকে দেশ এগোচ্ছে।

অর্থনীতির বিপর্যয়ের ক্ষেত্রে ভবিষ্যতে কেইনশিয় অর্থনীতির তাত্ত্বিক দিক লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে তার ওপর আরও এক বড় ধাক্কাই বেসামাল হল পশ্চিমবঙ্গ যার নাম আন্দোলন। এই ত্রিফলা আক্রমণে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বেশ কাহিল। তবে তাতে কি এসে যায়, প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয় হলে আমাদের নেতারা দুহাত তুলে নাচেন কারন কারোর পৌষমাস, কারোর সর্বনাস। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের রাজনীতি, স্বজন পোষণ, অর্থনীতি ও দুর্নীতির ত্রিবেণীসঙ্গমে নিমজ্জিত।

তবুও আশার কথা বর্তমান পশ্চিমবঙ্গ অনেকটা নিজেকে সামলে ফেলেছে। আর করোনার এখানে গোষ্ঠী সংক্রমণ হয়নি। ১৩৬ কোটির ভারতবর্ষে এখানো এই জুলাই ২০২০তে ২০ লক্ষ পেরোয়নি। ভারতবর্ষে গোষ্ঠী সংক্রমণ হলে ভারতবর্ষের যা জনঘনত্ব (Population density) তাতে আক্রমণের সংখ্যা দৈনিক ২ লক্ষ হত। তাহয়নি আর হওয়া সম্ভব নয়। ভারতের মানুষের মধ্যে প্রতিরোধ ক্ষমতা আসতে আসতে তৈরি হয়ে যাচ্ছে।

ওইযে আবার ইতিহাসে ফিরে যেতে হয় যে দেশের জনগনকে অত্যাচারি মুসলমান শাসকরা পর্যুদস্ত করতে পারেনি, সাম্রাজ্যবাদী উপনিবেশিক ইংরেজরা পর্যুদস্ত করতে পারেনি। করোনাও তাদের কিছু করতে পারবে না। ওই যে কথায় আছে “রাখে হরি মারে কে, মারে হরি রাখে কে”। আর অন্যদিকে “যে করে পরের মন্দ তার মন্দ করেন গোবিন্দ”।

ভারত বিশ্বের কোন দেশের খারাপ কোনদিন চায়নি সবাইকে নিয়ে ভাতৃভের বন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হতে চেয়েছে। সমাজতাত্ত্বিক দুরখাইময়ের প্রবর্তিত সামাজিক সংহতির মধ্য দিয়ে বিশ্বয়ানের যুগে বিশ্বসমাজকে এক ডোরে বাঁধতে চেয়েছে। ভারতের অতিহ্য হল “বসুধৈব কুটুম্বকম”

তাই ভারতের প্রতিবেশী শত্রু চীন এবং পাকিস্তান ভারতের কিছুই করতে পারবেনা তারসাথে চীনের দোসর করোনাও ভারতে সাফল্য পাবেনা।

আগামীদিনে গোটা পৃথিবীরকাছে ভারতের বার্তাহবে

অসতোমা সদগময়

তমসোমা জ্যোতির্গময়।

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE RAJBONGSHI IN NORTH BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

The paper is an attempt to sociologically understand the socio-cultural identity of the Rajbongshi or 'the people of royal lineage' who have been living for ages in the entire region of the today's North Bengal (barring its hilly areas), north eastern districts of Jharkhand, eastern Nepal, Assam and their adjoining areas.

Key words : *Rajbongshi, Koch, Kshatriya, Identity, Descendants, Tibeto-Burman group & Mongoloid group.*

INTRODUCTION

About their social identity there are found the following two views:

- 1) The Rajbongshi and the Koch belong to the same community (Koch-Rajbongshi)
- 2) The Rajbongshi and the Koch belong to separate communities.

The Rajbongshi was known as the Koch, Mandai, Desi and Paliya in the year 1891. But they did not accept their ancient identity of the Koch. Thus, the word 'Rajbongshi' appeared in 1901 when they identified themselves as the Rajbongshi. They introduced themselves as the Kshatriya in 1911. Presently, the Rajbongshi of North Bengal are a Scheduled Caste whereas in Assam they are struggling to get the Scheduled Tribe status. The Rajbongshi comprises two sub-communities; viz., Chotobag and Barabag, each of which is divided into many Kaumas (parts). The clans such as Kashyap, Bashistha, Bharadwaj, Madgaul and Gautam are all included in a Kauma. The Rajbongshi use various titles as their surname, including Sarkar, Barman, Roy, Das, Adhikari and Thakur. Their community includes several caste people such as Brahmin, kamar, dhoba, Paliya etc. A great commonness is found in the matter of drinking water and food eating among the paliya, Kshatriya and

Kamar, but the higher caste people never accept the food from the people of Hari and Dom communities (Dasgupta 2000:62-65).

The Rajbongshi of Assam has two sub-communities; namely, Koch and Saru Koch. They use Assamese language and script. The Rajbongshi who live in Assam are of short stature. Their overall height is 161 cm. The head is somewhat of long type in look. Nose is flat. Like the Rajbongshi of North Bengal they are also non-vegetarian. They have two clans; namely, Kashyap and Vyas (Dasgupta 2000: 62-65).

The socio-cultural identity of the Koch is a controversial issue in North Bengal. They have become similar to the label of Rajbongshi, a Hinduised caste, and they are often called Koch-Rajbongshi in North Bengal and Assam (Nandi & Vasanti 1997: 446). The literature of the Koch history, particularly the Buranjis (chronicles) and Vansavalis (genealogies) have categorically identified the Rajbongshi as the Koch. According to these sources, the ruling family of the Koch kingdom was the descendant of the Koch tribe and Biswa Singha, the founder of the Koch kingdom, was son of the first Koch lady Hira. Therefore, the Rajbongshi is a branch of the Koch as they are the descendants of the Koch kings. More interestingly, the ruling family has been described as the Shivabongshi and not as the Rajbongshi because a prominent male deity named as Lord Shiva was a close relative of the Koch lady Hira (Das 1994:99-142).

After visiting the areas of Rangpur and some parts of North Bengal in the early 19th century (1807-1814 AD), Buchanan Hamilton remarked that the Koch were the same as the Rajbongshi. He also argued that all the Koches were the Rajbongshi but all Rajbongshi were not the Koch (Martin 1976:545). From the argument of Buchanan Hamilton it is clear that the term 'Rajbongshi' is very significant where the Mongoloid tribes become 'Rajbongshi' just after giving up their tribal status and by receiving Hindu customs and rituals. Hamilton supported the argument of B.H. Hodson that the Koch, Mech, and Kachari, all belonged to the great Mongolian race, and among them the Koch Rajbongshi were a distinct Hinduised form of the common stock. Thus, it appears that in the early 19th century the Koch having been Hinduised received the title Rajbongshi (Hodson 1847: vii).

The title Rajbongshi was not suitable for the Koch; rather, they liked the Kshatriya status. The first census report of 1872 revealed that the social identity of the Koch was like that of the Rajbongshi named as the Bhanga Kshatriya or Bharatiya Kshatriya (Risely 1981: 492).

Dalton said that in 1550 CE a kingdom was established under the leadership of Haju, a Mech, by defeating the Kachari. Subsequently, the descendants and the followers of Haju started to settle in the present Kamrup district of Assam which lasted for almost 200 years. Later, they were compelled to leave the west and east Kamrup because of torture by the Muslim and the Ahom. As a result, the descendants of Haju established their capital at Cooch Behar. Grandson of Haju, BishwaSingha, along with all his relatives and followers, adopted Hindu religion and received the title Rajbongshi. Thus, each of the Hindu Koch, except a great part of the Muslim Koch, claimed the Rajbongshi identity and gave up the Koch identity. While describing the physical features of the Koch, H. Beveridge remarked, "face flat and giving rather appearance of squareness, eyes black and oblique. Hair black and straight, in some curling, nose flat and short, cheek bones prominent, beard and whiskers rather deficient.....colour of skin in most instances black, hide of head rather flattened, forehead retreating" (Gangopadhaya 2003: 70).

In the Census report of 1911 the Rajbongshi received the Kshatriya status and the subsequent Census report of 1921 the Koch also got the Kshatriya status. However, in Census 1931 the Rajbongshi population increased while the Koch population decreased. According to the Census reports, in 1921 the Rajbongshi population was 17, 27,111 which increases to 18, 06,390 in 1931. On the other hand, in 1921 the Koch population was 1, 31,273 which decreased to 81,299 in 1931. Thus, the population figures of, both, the Koch and the Rajbongshi changed as a result of the classification of the Koch as the Rajbongshi (Dutta 1969: 139). In the post-colonial period the Koch and the Mech, both, were included in the same social identity on the linguistic grounds. At present, there are more Rajbongshi than the Koch in North Bengal and its adjacent areas whereas a few of the Koch are living in Lower Assam and its adjacent area. The Koch of West Bengal, western Assam and Teesta-Brahmaputra valley have merged with the social identity of either the

Rajbongshi or the Koch-Rajbongshi, to a great extent. On the other hand, linguistically the Koch have been included in the Tibeto-Burman group of the Mongoloid race and the Rajbongshi have been considered either a caste or a linguistic community (Grierson 1969: 61). The Guru Charita of Ramcharan Thakur, the 16th century biography of Sankaradeva, mentions that the Rajbongshi were different from the Koch. Thus, according to the Guru Charita, there were separate ethnic identities of the Rajbongshi and the Koch, though both were known as the Kshatriya (Thakur 2001: 687).

On 1 May 1910 about 400 participants joined a great conference, held at Rangpur in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), in which PanchananBarma announced that the Rajbongshi and the Koch were two different races and there was no blood relationship and similarity of social customs and culture of the two. The Rajbongshi are not the Koch, rather they are the Kshatriya. In the concluding speech at the conference the leader of the Rajbongshi-KshatriysSamiti, Panchanan Sarkar, later, known as Thakur Panchanan Barma, said that the Rajbongshi had known themselves as the Kshatriya, forever, and they had frequently struggled for achieving the Kshatriya status in the society and, in fact, they were separate from the Koch (Biswas 2006: 279; Upendranath Barman 1994).

Views of the Contemporary Rajbongshi Intellectuals

There are differences between the Koch and the Rajbongshi in language and culture. Koches introduce themselves as Rajbongshis. But the Rajbongshi do not accept that Koch are the same as the Rajbongshi. On the other hand, the Rajbongshi introduce themselves as Rajbongshi-Kshatriya and demand their complete separateness from the Koch. Again, the Rajbongshi are different from the Paliya, Mech, Rabha, Toto and Bodo by language, culture and customs. Besides, body structures of the Mech and the Rabha of Naxalbari and Banarhat are almost to look like Nepalese (Sources: Rabin Goap, a school teacher, interviewed on 03.11.2011 at Lembutari, Siliguri).

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A SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHT INTO THE DIMENSIONS OF A HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP IN THE POST MODERN ERA AS PORTRAYED IN THE MOVIE DOSAR: THE COMPANION

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Rituparno Ghosh's *Dosar* is an astounding real portrayal of husband wife relationships that is marred by infidelity, which is a simple and an old subject, but is portrayed with a completely different story.

Shot entirely in black and white, *Dosar* (The Companion) opens with Kaushik Chatterjee (Prasenjit) and his colleague and lover Mita Roy checking out of their weekend retreat in a riverside resort. On their way back to Kolkata they meet with an accident. She dies on the spot while he is critically injured.

Kaushik's wife Kaberi (Konkona Sen Sharma) is torn apart between her sense of duty as a wife and a deep sense of individuality as a betrayed woman. Cut to a dingy hospital corridor, Kaberi is trying to find the right expression to mask her anguish and display her indignation over her husband's infidelity. She even tries hiding behind dark glasses and refuses to sign the hospital form as a mark of protest. Her friends from the theatre troupe where she works, Bobby (Parambrata Chattopadhyay) and Brinda (Pallavi Chatterjee), are by her side and try to persuade her to be reasonable and take her husband's responsibility at such a crisis hour.

Next we see a very poignant slow motion shot of Mita's body being taken away as her husband and little son look on. Kaberi goes home that night and sits behind the living room sofa crying by herself. Her neighbour drops in to console her, but primarily to find out details of the affair and to inform her that the news was all over the television. We see various people around Kaberi reacting in different ways to the disclosure of the affair and to Kaushik's painfully slow recovery.

We also see Kaberi alternating between being rude, unresponsive and grudgingly considerate. She tells her brother-in-law that she wants nothing to do with Kaushik anymore and wants a divorce. But she still goes to visit him in the hospital that day with her brother-in-law and when she finds out, that night, from her brother-in-law, that Kaushik has had an attack of breathlessness, she gets extremely worried. With these contradictory feelings she begins to fight her days and tries to control emotional outbursts in a way that only a woman can do. Her mother tells her she must be patient and work things out with Kaushik and that it was just a mistake on his part. However Kaushik's mother, surprisingly, tells Kaberi that has all the right to take her own decision regarding their marriage and whatever may be her decision, she will be there to support her.

Kaberi informs Kaushik that his lover is dead, quite unexpectedly, when his boss Mr. Sanyal and his wife come to visit him at the hospital. Later, she calls up the boss's wife to apologise. It is quite evident that she doesn't know how to deal with the situation and relate to a bed-ridden husband whose infidelity she has stumbled upon under such bizarre circumstances. Nor does Kaushik know how to cope with his grief and try to pacify his angry wife at the same time.

Then, one day, Kaberi pays a visit to Mita's husband. He keeps his eyes fixed on a football match on television, while she conducts an almost one-sided, awkward conversation. Mita's son is sitting at the dining table in the background, covering his books. Mita's husband gives Kaberi a book that has been found among her personal effects. Kaberi tells him her husband doesn't read that author, but he points to Kaushik's name written on the book in Mita's handwriting. Kaberi keeps the small talk going and offers to help Mita's husband recover her provident fund money. He doesn't respond to this offer but gets up again and gives her a packet of condoms-his retort to her offer and another unpleasant residue of the affair. Kaberi's friends Bobby and Brinda are themselves in the midst of an extra-marital relationship. Their interaction forms the film's sub-plot and the ups and downs they go through give us a measure of what may have happened if Mita had lived or what could have been the provocation behind the Mita-Kaushik affair. Brinda talks of a husband who's uncaring and occasionally violent. But more than once,

she likens Bobby to him. Bobby doesn't like this comparison with his rival, but what Brinda's comments suggest is that her husband was a different man when she decided to marry him and that Bobby may become a different person if she continues her relationship with him. It alludes to the ever-changing, constantly evolving nature of human relationships.

Meanwhile, Kaushik comes home and Kaberi continues with her overtly indifferent behaviour with him, but eventually gives in from time to time. Kaushik knows he must rebuild his bridges with his wife and tries asking her if she wants to know why he had the affair, while she's giving him a sponge bath and opening up his bandages. She says she doesn't because she isn't sure if he's capable of being entirely honest.

Kaberi often threatens divorce but ultimately is overpowered by the wife in her and cannot resist fulfilling her duties towards her husband at the time of crisis. On the other hand, Kaushik is also caught in his own predicament. He has to not only come to terms with the loss of a loved one but is faced with the daunting task of winning back his wife's trust.

Mita's husband gets a prostitute home and there is a violent scene where he tries venting his frustration and helplessness on her. His hand reaches for her throat and she slaps him hard before abusing him and walking off. He spends the rest of the day hovering outside Kaberi's house and when she finally comes back in the evening, he confesses to her about the incident, hoping that she would truly understand his situation.

We find two sides of Kaberi in the movie- the wife who loves her husband and wants him to get well soon, while on the other side, there is this agonising grief and betrayal by her husband. She struggles, fights and tries to explain herself in her own way. Finally the wife in her wins and she cannot restrain herself from doing the duties as a wife.

The film ends on a reconciliation of sorts. We know that the relationship between Kaberi and Kaushik will never be the same again. For Kaushik and Kaberi the accident is the beginning of a whole new world of discoveries of love, companionship and lust. In a film that's deliberately shot in black & white, the answers lie in the grey areas and Ghosh leaves a lot to our own interpretation. He tries to portray through this the colourlessness in the husband wife relationship, the darkness implying that the individuals involved in the relationship might often want to hide something from each other.

Satyajit Ray famously said once that, villains didn't interest him, and a lot of Dosar's power comes from the recognition that the worst qualities on view here are basic human failings that any of us are vulnerable to. There was also a touch of 'Charulata' in the last scene, with its hint of a wife's acceptance or reconciliation to the social order.

Through this movie Rituparno Ghosh comes with his deep understanding of the complexities of relationship between a husband and a wife, an anti-patriarchal view added with the emotional dimension of humans. But at the same time we see that Kaberi is a modern, 21st century woman, tied to the traditional patriarchal values, presenting herself as a typical Indian dutiful wife, in a sari, bindi, and the traditional 'bun'.

The husband -wife relationship that has been portrayed in this movie can be analysed in the backdrop of the various studies on marriage which helps to provide a sociological relevance to this movie as a content of my analysis.

Marriage is generally defined as a union of two individuals which gives them sexual legitimation. Jessie Bernard in her book 'The Future of Marriage' says that in every marital union there are two marriages-'his' marriage and 'her' marriage and 'his' marriage is always better than 'her' marriage. Marriage in our society is structured in such a way that we fail to differentiate between his or her marriage and more so how worse her marriage is. More wives than husbands suffer from marital frustration and dissatisfaction. But in spite of that, a large proportion of

married women consider themselves and their marriages to be happy and never let the society feel the dissatisfaction with which they live within a marriage. This aspect is clearly visible in the context of this movie whereby Kaberi, though she is absolutely torn by the revelation of her husband's infidelity, knows how to conceal her emotions in such a state for example the initial scene where Kaberi is wearing her black shades in the hospital and also tries not to be directly involved with the process of her husband's treatment by refusing to sign his medical forms. There are instances where she loses her temper and react especially in front of her brother in law, Bubul, or in front of her husband's boss and his wife. But just immediately after, she controls back her emotions. Through this it is observed that whatever may be the situation, a wife must know how to maintain her husband's honour and status.

Jessie Bernard also puts forward her 'Shock Theory of Marriage', whereby a woman by being a wife experiences a cultural shock and the need to redefine herself completely, conforming to the needs and demands of the husband. This leads to a phenomenon termed as the 'Pygmalion effect' where after marriage a woman starts living for her husband losing her own self esteem. Kaberi even though she is in a completely shattered state, she does not step back from fulfilling her duties towards her critically ill husband.

Kaberi tries hard to be a responsible wife and she doesn't even open up to her own mother.

Women through marriage learn to internalise the norms and adjust and accept to any form of discomfort within the marriage. It is the process of socialisation that helps to structure marriage in such a way for the women. In this movie we see how Kaberi's own mother tried to make her succumb to the patriarchal structure of marriage. She tries to make her understand how she shouldn't hold back any grudges against Kaushik and should forgive him for all that he has done for it was just an honest mistake on his part. She almost subtly forces Kaberi to start a new life with Kaushik not considering her feelings and emotions.

Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard through their study on the variety of work done by the wives show that how they commonly contribute to their husbands work by actually doing some of it for him or with him. They also perform what Finch calls 'peripheral activities' which are not central demands but which still helps in the smooth conduct of his work and success. Wives also need to take care of most of the household tasks. Here we can draw the examples of how Kaberi helps her husband in taking a bath and shaving and all other such activities. Even though she hires two nurses to take care of Kaushik at home she could not keep herself from fulfilling her duties towards her husband.

In a marital relationship wives mostly engage in active relationship work whereby she needs to observe and moderate the husbands emotions, be a silent listener and her husband's confidante. She is expected to listen to all his woes and console him. In this movie Kaberi initially turns a deaf ear to all her husband's problems as she says that all that Kaushik does not interest her. She does this to emotionally distance herself from Kaushik. But ultimately she gives in to Kaushik's recurring attempts to win her back. She listens to all that he had to say and thereby starts a new life afresh with Kaushik.

Marriage is thus an unequal contract where by the wife's love make sure that 'his' marriage is taken for granted. Since in most cases it is observed that within marriage it is the husband who has the authority and the wife is docile and submissive. But quite contrary to this idea this movie portrays Kaberi as an extremely strong, level headed bold woman who ultimately succumb to the societal norms and pressures. Even though the scenario in the contemporary society is changing, yet the norms of being a 'good wife', who fulfils all her husband's wants and need, remain the same.

But the patriarchal form of society still continues by adding to the value of the men involved within a marriage and thereby ensuring them of the following rights which are Economic, Domestic, Sexual and Right over the Offspring.

But we see in context of this particular movie, made in the 21st century, that the contemporary form of marriage and the husband wife relationship especially within a nuclear family moves ahead of this patriarchal structure and none of the above mentioned rights are absolute for the man in the marriage. Here we see that Kaberi was partially dependent on her husband in terms of economy as she works with a theatre group herself. Kaushik also doesn't have absolute domestic rights over Kaberi and more so after the mishap. Kaberi has total control over their sexual life, and since they do not have a child the question of right of the man over the offspring becomes invalid in this context.

Anthony Giddens is of the opinion that the trend towards the Pure Relationship is paralleled by the emergence of a more responsive and creative form of sexuality which he terms as Plastic Sexuality, which is a new way of looking at sexuality that is not simply restricted to marriage. Giddens gives emphasis to the fragile form of personal intimacy in the highly self reflexive modernity. An individual in this post modern period enters into relationships to fulfil their own sexual desires, needs and wants. This is evident in the relationship that Kaushik shared with Mita.

The relationship between a husband and a wife has always remained quite a complex one. Thereby in my analysis of the movie Dosar, I have tried to bring out such wide array of relationship vitalities in and out marriage.

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RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY AND EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE 19 TH CENTURY BENGAL:

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ABSTRACT

Raja Rammohan Roy, father of modern India, is worldly appreciated for his dynamic activities in favour of welfare of mankind. His strive against all forms of corruption, injustices and inhumanities in the name of religion and discriminatory factors in society seated him at the apex of great honour. One of the dimensions of his social activities was his endeavour of women liberation from all sorts of social injustice and discrimination. This present paper seeks to explore the various aspects of Roy's activities in favour of women's liberation in all spheres of social life from liberal perspective.

Key words : Liberty, Idolatry, Ancestor

Roy appeared perhaps at the darkest age of Indian history (1772), when the whole nation was submerged under mediaeval customs, superstitions and misdeeds. National unity was absent in people's mind and the worthless acts, ceremonies and rituals were taken place in name of tradition. Priestly tyranny was prevalent in all spheres of social lives. The destructive social norms crushed the status of women in atrocious manner. The worst social evils like caste system, suttee, infant marriage, polygamy, purdah were highly existed in 18th century Bengal. Several injunctions were imposed in name of religious norms in women's lives which were heavier challenge to the spheres of women's rights and liberties. Roy, the ardent reformer visualized this horrible condition of the society and came forward as a savior to rescue the nation from all sorts of degradation.

Roy realized the key role of idolatry and priesthood behind the declination of human ethics and values. He argued that the practice of idolatry was opposite to the rituals of earlier ancestors. "I endeavoured to show that idolatry of the Brahmins was the contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient

books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey" Roy's letter to Mr. Gordon in 1832 from London. Roy felt the importance of socio-religious reforms in order to achieve social unity and political advance (Biswas, 2011) .

Roy witnessed the grievous condition of women and put his huge efforts to eradicate all impediments in the women's lives. He undertook several agenda to rescue women lives from the prevalent social norms and injunctions of the patriarchal society. He was aware of that, "...women constituted a substantial part of the society both numerically and qualitatively and any discrimination against them would be harmful to the social interest" (Das & Mahapatra, 1996) . He felt the inevitability of the social reforms from the grassroot level to uplift women status in society. He took several attempts to enhance mass awareness of gender-equality. He felt the importance of civil society in this context and published various articles, books, pamphlets in different languages to acquaint people with the original spirit of ancient socio-cultural heritage of India.

Suttee, the woman burning practice at the funeral pyre of her husband was the most inhuman and heinous practice which was prevalent at that time in many regions in India and was perpetuated at a large scale in Bengal. This sacrifice of women's lives was highly preached and appreciated by the orthodox section as well as the priesthood. In this barbarous practice a women was motivated to sacrifice her life by her own will or sometimes by force. Suttee was considered as the expression of a wife's devotion and love to her husband. Sometimes this practice was preached to the women section as a tactic of the expiation of the misdeeds by the deceased husbands and the family members. And this merit of self sacrifice was propagated to the women section from very early age of their lives. Rammohan revealed the greedy intention of the priests and the family members of the women behind their sanctity towards suttee. He explored the motive of deprivation of women's rights from property as the main reason behind the support of suttee. He vigorously campaigned against this murder in the name of religion. He firmly argued that, suttee was not sanctioned in ancient Hindu scriptures; rather the life of Brahmacharya got more importance to the ancient law-makers for the women, after the dismissal of their husbands. Roy cited many

quotes from the ancient texts and tried to form public opinion in support of the abolition of the Suttee rite. He wrote three treatises in this case, 'Sahamaran Visayak Prabartak - Nibartak Sambad' (1818), 'Sahamaran Visayak Prabartak - Nibartak Sambad'(1819) and 'Sahamaran Visaya' (1820) (Nazir, 2011) . Brahma Sabha also played an important role in supports of women's rights and liberties. Despite facing lot of obstruction and criticism from the orthodox section, Roy successfully expressed his opinion in favour of the eradication of the barbarous practice of Suttee to the Governor General Lord William Bentinck and finally this shameful practice was legally banned by the British government in 1829. With an utilitarian outlook Roy inquired the usefulness and aptness of all socio-religious norms and stood against every discriminatory factors of the society.

Infant marriage is a severe issue in the context of child's life. It is a vigorous challenge towards child's health, education and potentiality. This practice was very common in the 19th century Bengal. Roy himself was a victim of infant marriage and polygamy as he was given to marriage thrice in his childhood. He was aware that the women were the main prey of these practices. He realized the awkward consequences of infant marriage towards society. Roy strongly opposed this sinister practice of infant marriage and argued for women's right to education and property to elevate their status in all wings of society.

Polygamy was a common phenomenon in Bengal at that period. The practice of polygamy was deteriorated women status in enormous manner. Roy raised his voice against this practice and argued that, polygamy was not supported by the ancient authorities. This shameful practice of polygamy supported the marriage of Kulin Brahmins in many times in their lifespan by taking money from the spouse's houses. Roy traced the practice of polygamy as a major threat towards women's lives and opposite to the main spirit of marriage. In his personal life, Roy clearly mentioned in his property will that if any member of his family would violate this rule of marriage, he would be disinherited from his right to property (Mitra, 2002). He also requested the British ruler to introduce a stringent law to abolish this depraved practice from society.

The deprivation of women's rights to property was another determinative factor for the marginal position of women in society. Different injunctions were imposed time to time to restrict their rights to property. The Dayabhaga and Dayatatwa which were prevalent in Bengal, awfully constrained women's right to property from their paternal and husband's sides. The modern commentators of Dayabhaga totally denied wives share of their husband's possessions whether she had any issue or not. In his tract 'Brief Remarks Regarding Modern encroachment on the Ancient Rights of Females' (1822) Roy argued in favour of women's right to property and cited several excerpts from ancient texts in this regards. He quoted the principles of Yagnavalka, "after the death of a father let a mother also inherit an equal share with her sons in the division of the property left by their father" (Upadhyaya,1990) . Roy was anxious about the consequences of the misguiding and misinterpretation of the ancient texts by the priest of the Hindu society. He firmly stood in support of women's right to education and property to make them self sufficient in decision making process and financially independent.

Roy rejected the argument of the patriarchal society that women were inferior to men, ineligible to trust. He challenged the validation of such beliefs (Collet, 1914) . He supported all progressive initiatives in favour of women's rights and liberties and advocated the introduction of modern education to increase the awareness of the masses towards gender-eguality in light of rationality and scientific reasoning.

Roy was one of the prominent figures of the women's liberation movement in India. His progressive activities and stand for upliftment of women's status in all segments of society will always be remembered and he will be acknowledged as one the great leaders of women's journey towards empowerment in India.

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সারসংক্ষেপ

সাহিত্যের কবিতাই প্রথম সন্তান। আদি কবি বাঙ্গালীর অন্তর থেকে উৎসারিত শোক জন্ম দিয়েছিল শ্লোককে। ছন্দে বন্দ্য ভাষাময়, ভাবপ্রগাঢ় কবিতা বেদের স্তোত্রের লেখা হয়েছে। অতঃপর নব্যযুগের অর্বিভাব। ভাবুক মানুষকে চিরকাল কবিতায় টেনেছে, টেনেছে তার অন্দরে, নিয়ে গেছে এক ঘাট থেকে অন্য ঘাটে। জাগিয়ে তুলেছে তার ভিতরে আপন সত্ত্বার নিজস্ব অনুভূতি। ভাবপ্রবণ বাঙালীর-কাছে কবিতাই পার্শ্বসহচর। তাই নিজেদেরকে নিভূতে খুঁজতে কবিতার কাছে বারবার ফিরে আসা।

সূচক শব্দ - আরক্তিম, কব্যপুরুষ, অনুকরন, ভূমা।

সাহিত্যের অন্যতম প্রধান ও সূক্ষ্মতম শিল্প শাখা হল কবিতা। অনুভূতি ও বুদ্ধির মেলবন্ধনে জাত ভাবই কবিতার মূল অবলম্বন। সেই ভাবে একেবারে সরল ও স্পষ্ট না হলেও চলে। তবে ভাবের মধ্যে এক অনির্বিচলিত রহস্যময়তা না থাকলে চলে না পোষ্ট মর্ডান কবিতা ব্যতিরেকে। সেই ভাব যখন কবির অনুভূতি ও কল্পনার আরক্তিম সংরাগ অথবা বুদ্ধির প্রখর লীলায় নতুন মূর্তি নিয়ে কবির দ্বিতীয় ভূবনে উদ্ভাসিত হয়ে ওঠে তখনই জনন শুরু হয় কবিতার। এরপর প্রকাশ-সেক্ষেত্রে একথা সত্যি-যথার্থ ভাব তার যথার্থ আঙ্গিকে খুঁজে নেয়।

কালে কালে কবিতা নিয়ে যত কথা হয়েছে সাহিত্যের অন্য কোন শাখা নিয়ে তা হয়নি। কবিতার জনন ও জন্ম যে সহজ হয়নি-তা নিয়ে কবিতা আছে যে পুরানে উল্লেখিত পুত্র কামনা করে দেবী সরস্বতী যখন হিমালয়ে কঠোর তপস্যায় মগ্ন, তুষ্ট ব্রহ্মা দেবীকে বর দিলেন পুত্র লাভের এবং সরস্বতী 'কাব্যপুরুষ'কে প্রসব করলেন। লক্ষ্যনীয় 'কাব্যপুরুষ' অথচ আমরা সেই পুরাকাল থেকেই কবিতার উপমানে নারীকে বসিয়েছি। সেই তর্কে না গিয়ে মহাপণ্ডিত অ্যারিস্টটল কি বলেছেন কবিতার সম্পর্কে? অথবা তাঁর গুরু প্লেটো, কবি এবং কবিতাকে তাঁর আদর্শ রাষ্ট্র থেকে কেন নির্বাসন দিতে চেয়েছিলেন? 'রিপাবলিকে'র দশম খণ্ডে প্লেটো জানিয়েছেন-শুধু কবিতাই নয়, যে কোন শিল্প অনুকরনের অনুকরন। প্লেটোর অভিমত- 'বস্তুর মূল সত্ত্বার স্রষ্টা হচ্ছেন ঈশ্বর-বস্তুকে অনুকরন করেন শিল্পী-অতএব তা ছায়ার অনুকৃতি মাত্র। কিন্তু তাঁর সুযোগ্য শিষ্য অ্যারিস্টটল স্পষ্ট ভাবে জানান মানুষ অবশ্যই অনুকরন প্রিয়। অন্যান্য প্রাণীর কাছে যা অননুকরণীয় মানুষ তাকেই করে অনুকরন, আর তার সেই অনুকরণ মানসতা থেকেই জন্ম নেয় কবিতা। সুতরাং কবিতা বলতে আমরা যা বুঝি তা হল আসলে বাস্তব জীবন এবং ঘটনার একধরনের অনুকরন।

ঈশ্বর অথবা বিশ্বপ্রকৃতি যাই বলি না কেন-তাঁর শ্রেষ্ঠ সৃষ্টি মানুষ। মানুষের শ্রেষ্ঠতার অভিজ্ঞান তাঁর মন। সেই মনের স্তর স্তরে সজ্জিত অনুভব, চিন্তা ও সংকল্প এই তিন মৌলবৃত্তি। তাই ঈশ্বর নয়, মানবসৃষ্টি সৃষ্টি শিল্প। সৃষ্টি মানে যা ছিল না-একেবারে নতুন অভিনব। অপূর্ববস্তুনির্মানক্ষম প্রজ্ঞার অধিকারী যে মানুষ, যাঁকে আমরা শিল্পীর অভিধা দিই, তাঁর সেই সৃষ্টিটাই শিল্প বলে পরিগণিত হবে, যা আনন্দদানে সক্ষম। আর আনন্দ কি? এর উত্তরে বলা যায়, যা মানুষের চেতনাকে ‘ভূমার বা সমগ্রতার উপলব্ধি থেকে এক উন্নত বোধে নিয়ে যায় তা-ই আনন্দ। ইংরাজীতে এই আনন্দকে বলা হয়ে থাকে ‘Ecstasy’। এই যে আনন্দ তার পথ সুখের, দুঃখের, শোকের, বেদনার, যন্ত্রনার কিংবা ভয়ের অর্থাৎ যে কোন কিছু মধ্য দিয়ে প্রসৃত হতে পারে। আসলে এক নতুন বোধের সৃজনই আনন্দ। অর শিল্প উপভোগের মধ্যে দিয়ে আমরা ভোক্তারা তারাই আনন্দ গ্রহন করি। শিল্পের সূত্রে আনন্দের সঙ্গে আর একটি শব্দ জড়িয়ে আছে, তা হল সৌন্দর্য বা beauty। এই সৌন্দর্যের লক্ষ স্থান ও কালগত সীমাবদ্ধতা থেকে মুক্তি দিয়ে অসীমের উপলব্ধি সঞ্চার। যিনি শিল্প সৃষ্টি করেন, তিনি শিল্পী। শিল্পী তাঁর বিশেষ উপলব্ধিকে রসিকের কাছে পৌঁছে দিতে চান। এবং রসিকও সেই শিল্পবস্তুর আনন্দে আনন্দসূত্রে একাত্ম হয়ে যান শিল্পীর সঙ্গে। সুতরাং কবিতা হতে গেলে সর্বোপরি তাকে শিল্প হতে গেলে, তার মধ্যে থাকবে-মৌলিকতা, আনন্দ-সঞ্চারশীলতার শক্তি এবং ভাবসঞ্চারের ক্ষমতা। আমাদের পৃথিবীর প্রথম কবিতা -

“মা নিষাদ প্রতিষ্ঠাং ত্বমগমঃ শাস্বতীঃ সমাঃ

যৎ কৌঞ্চমিথুনা দেকমবধীঃ কামমোহিতম্।।”

মিথু তো তাই বলে। এবং এ শ্লোকবৃষের উৎসারন এক দুঃখিত ঋষির হৃদয় ভূমি থেকে। একদা কোন এক প্রাগ ঐতিহাসিক সময় পর্বে এই যে একটি কবিতার জন্ম হল, এই সৃষ্টি কর্মটির মূলে ছিল কি তেমন কোন বেদনাময়তা-মা যেমন তার সন্তানের জন্ম দিতে গিয়ে প্রগাঢ় যন্ত্রনায় আচ্ছন্ন হয়ে যান - চরাচরের সমস্ত বোধ যেমন লুপ্ত হয়ে যায় তাঁর। অনুরূপভাবে একটি প্রেমের মৃত্যুতে যে বেদনা বাস্তবিক, সেই বাস্তব বেদনা আমাদের চোখে বড় জোর অশ্রু এনে দিতে পারে, পারে না এমন বিনীত উচ্চারণে দীপ্ত করে দিতে :-

এক জীবনের অশ্রুপাতে

একটি বর্ণও মুছবে সখী।

(শক্তি চট্টোপাধ্যায়)

অথবা

সে ভুলে ভুলুক কোটি মন্বন্তরে

আমি ভুলিব না, আমি কভু ভুলিব না

(সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত)

পংক্তি দুটি যখন আমাদের পাঠ দাবি করে তখন নিশ্চয়ই কাঁদি না, বরং এক বিষাদময় আনন্দে ক্রমশ ভিজে যেতে থাকি। সুতরাং বহিঃবিশ্ব এবং ইন্দ্রিয়ঘন জগত যখন কবি মনের মায়ায় জারিত হয়ে ছন্দোবন্ধ এবং শিল্পময় শরীর লাভ করে পাঠকের কাছে এক নান্দনিক অভিজ্ঞান বয়ে নিয়ে আসে তখনই জন্ম হয় কবিতার। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখলেন - “বহিঃপ্রকৃতি এবং মানবচরিত্র মানুষের হৃদয়ের মধ্যে অনুক্ষণ যে আকার ধারণ করিতেছে যে সংগীত ধ্বনিত করিয়া তুলিতেছে, ভাষা রচিত সেই চিত্র এবং সেই গানই সাহিত্য”। আইয়ুব আরো সহজ করে জানালেন - “সুস্পষ্ট অনুভূতির সুদক্ষ প্রকাশই হল কবিতা”। পবিত্র সরকার মনে করেন - “অনুভূতির অস্পষ্টতাও কবিতা তৈরি করতে পারে”। তবে কবিতা বলতে বুঝি সমিল বা অমিল পঙ্ক্তি সমন্বিত স্তবকবন্ধ রচনা এবং সেই রচনা যতটা ব্যক্ত করে তার চেয়ে পাঠককে প্রাণিত করে অনেক বেশি।

প্রায় অস্তবিশীন পথ পেরিয়ে কবিতার ক্রম অগ্রসরণ। সেই চলতাকেই ভাষায় প্রকাশ করতে গিয়ে কবিরা ছন্দের হাত ধরেছিলেন। বাংলা ভাষায় প্রথম কবিতা চর্যা থেকেই শুরু হয়েছিল বাংলা ছন্দের অভিনব অভিযাত্রা। যাত্রাপথে অজস্র রঙ আর বহুখা বৈচিত্র্যকে অঙ্গীকার করে বাংলা ছন্দ ক্রমে ক্রমে তার অপূট বাকল পরিণত থেকে পরিণত তর হয়েছে। মধ্যযুগের শেষ কবি রায়গুনাকরে এসে বাংলা ছন্দ যখন নোঙর ফেলেছে তখন সংস্কৃত ছন্দের আলো গোধুলির মতো অস্পষ্ট, স্নান। প্রবল রাত্রি নেমেছে দুকুল ঝাঁপিয়ে ইতিহাসে এবং শিল্প সাহিত্যে। সেই ভয়ংকর রাত্রির তীব্রতা মুদ্রিত হয়ে সাক্ষ্য বহন করে চলেছে আজও। পাতা ওলটালেই টের পাওয়া যায় কবিওয়ালাদের অপূট কবিত্ব আর শস্তা চটক-নাগরবিলাস। বাংলা কবিতার ঘোরতর দুর্দিন সেদিন। ‘হরুর চেলা ময়রা ভোলা’দের প্রবল আধিপত্যের কারণে যুগসন্ধির কবি ঈশ্বর গুপ্তও বাংলা ছন্দের পুরনো গলি ঘুঁজির মধ্যেই ঘুরে বেড়িয়েছেন। নতুন পথ কেটে বেরিয়ে আসার শক্তি এবং সামর্থ্য-কোনটাই তাঁর ছিল না। অবশেষে নতুন আলোর দৈগন্তিক বিস্তার নিয়ে এল উনিশ শতক, সমস্ত অপেক্ষার অবসান হল।

বাংলা কবিতা অবং তার ছন্দের ভূ-প্রকৃতি বদলে দিলেন সাহিত্যের অঙ্গনে সেই প্রবল প্রতিভাধর পুরুষটি আর কেই নয় তিনি ‘দত্তকুলোদ্ভব কবি শ্রী মধুসূদন’। মধুসূদনই সেই যাজ্ঞিক, যিনি বাংলা কবিতার জন্য সমিধ সংগ্রহ করেছিলেন পূব ও পশ্চিমের বহু ফুলবন, উপবন, অরন্যানি থেকে। তাঁর পরিণত কলম যে কাব্য ভূবনকে সৃজন করে তুলল তার মধ্যে দিয়েই শুভযাত্রা সূচিত হল আধুনিক বাংলা কবিতার। বাংলা সাহিত্যের প্রথম আধুনিক কবি মধুসূদন-এ অভিধাটি তাই অত্যন্ত সঙ্গত। এ ব্যাপারে দ্বিমতের অবকাশ নেই। সমকালীন হেমচন্দ্র কিংবা নবীনচন্দ্র তাঁদের কবিতার শরীর নির্মাণে বিশেষভাবে ভাবিত হননি। এর মধ্যে গিরিশচন্দ্র অন্বেষণ করে ফিরছিলেন এক ছান্দিক নাট্যভাষা যা মধু কবিতা-ই পয়ে গেলেন তাঁর কাঙ্ক্ষিত সংবেদ। তার আরো পরে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘বলাকা’র পাতায়

প্রতিষ্ঠিত করলেন কবিতায় মুক্তক ছন্দের স্বাধীনতা। সাহিত্যের বিশেষত কবিতার শাখায় বৈদূর্যমনি
তো রবীন্দ্রনাথ।

আরো কত দূরে নিয়ে যাবে মোরে
হে সুন্দরী!
বলো কোন পারে ভিড়িবে তোমার সোনার তরী।
(রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

কবির জীবনের শেষ লগ্ন পর্যন্ত সে তরী কোথাও তো ভিড়ল না। সহৃদয় চিন্তে তার চির আশ্রয়। মনে
পড়ে ছিন্ন পত্র এর বহু চর্চিত কথাটা- ‘কবিতা আমার বহু কালের প্রেয়সী’ - সেই নিতান্ত শিশুকাল
থেকেই তিনি তাঁর লীলা সঞ্জিনী সুদীর্ঘ সাহিত্যিক জীবনে কখনও তাঁর প্রেয়সীর সঙ্গে বিচ্ছেদ ঘটল
না। এই প্রেয়সী কথায় তিনি বলেছিলেন, ‘যাকে বরন করেন তাকে নিবিড় আনন্দ দেন কিন্তু এক এক
সময় কঠিন আলিঙ্গনে হৃৎপিণ্ডটি নিংড়ে রক্ত বের করে নেন’। আমরা তারই প্রমাণ পাই ‘লিপিকা’
কাব্যগ্রন্থে। আসলে রবীন্দ্র সৃষ্ট সমুদ্রে ‘লিপিকা’ সেই বাতিঘর যেখানে থেকে ভিন্নপথের দিগদর্শনের
সূচনা হল। ছন্দের প্রশান্ত বন্দরের স্থিতধী আরাম ছেড়ে কবি নোঙর তুলে যাত্রা শুরু করলেন প্রাত্যহিক
জীবনের অকৃত্রিম, জীবন্ত গাঢ়িক অভিমুখের দিকে। ‘পুনশ্চ’র বেলাভূমিতে যখন এসে পৌঁছালেন
তখন ঘটে গেল বাংলা ছন্দের পূর্ণমুক্তি, যথার্থ ছন্দমুক্তি। যেমন ‘কোপাই কবিতাটি’।

‘বর্ষার ওর অঙ্গে অঙ্গে লাগে মাতলামি
মহুয়া মাতাল গাঁয়ের মেয়ের মতো
ভাঙে না, ডোবায় না
ঘুরিয়ে ঘুরিয়ে আবর্তের ঘাঘরা
দুই তীরকে ঠেলা দিয়ে দিয়ে
উচ্চ হেসে ধেয়ে চলে।

(রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

স্বদিক থেকেই মুক্ত হওয়া এসে লাগলো কবিতার পালে। স্বাভাবিক বাকস্পন্দনকে মান্য করে ভাবযতিকে
মর্যাদা দিয়ে এমনিভাবে ‘পুনশ্চ’র পাতায় পাতায় ফুটে উঠলো। ছন্দোহীন নির্ভার কবিতা, ইতিহাসের
ধারায় যাকে আমরা ‘গদ্যকবিতা’র অভিধা দিয়েছি।

‘পুনশ্চ’ থেকে ‘শ্যামলী’ ১৯৩২-১৯৩৬ চারটি বছর ধরে রবীন্দ্রকাব্যের তরী গদ্য কবিতার স্বর্ণশস্যেই

পরিপূর্ণ হয়েছে। সেই সোনার ফসলই উত্তরাধিকারীদের হৃদয়-বলয় মেধায় পরিমার্জিত হতে হতে বাংলা কবিতাকে বিশ্ব কবিতার সমীপবর্তী করেছে।

বাংলা কবিতায় অনুভূত সত্যকে বানীমূর্তি দান করার জন্য যখন পদ্যছন্দের বাঁধাপথ ত্যাগ করে পরীক্ষা নিরীক্ষার মধ্য দিয়ে শুরু নতুন পথের অন্বেষণ। রবীন্দ্রনাথ বুঝলেন ‘গদ্যেই আজ সম্ভব। বাস্তব জগৎ আর রসের জগতের সমন্বয় সাধন, গদ্যেই সঞ্চার করা যায় আজকের দিনের যোগ্য ‘অরণ্য পাহাড় মরুভূমি সমতল অসমতল প্রান্তর বা কান্তারের নানা মেজাজের রূপ’। এই কারণেই পুনশ্চের কবিতাগুলো লেখা হল ‘পদ্যছত্রিক গদ্যরীতি’তে-সুধীমহল যার অভিধা দিয়েছেন ‘রবীন্দ্রিক গদ্যছন্দ’।

যেমন -

নাম রেখেছি কোমলগান্ধার

মনে মনে

যদি তার কানে যেত অবাক হয়ে থাকত বসে

বলত হেসে মানে কী

মানে কিছুই যায় না বোঝা সেই মানেটাই খাঁটি

(রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

কবিতাগুলির মাধ্যম গদ্যভাষা হলেও কবিতার নিহিত অন্তঃস্থলে পদ্যের আবেগ ক্রিয়াশীল। রবীন্দ্রনাথের হাতে গড়ে ওঠা গদ্যছন্দ এবং বাকস্পন্দিত ছন্দকেই রবীন্দ্র উত্তরকাল পরিমার্জিত, পরিবর্ধিত, রূপান্তরিত করে কালের উপযোগী করে নিয়েছে। তারই ফলশ্রুতিতে নির্মিত হয়েছে বিশুদ্ধ ‘গদ্যরীতির’ গদ্যকবিতা। বিশ শতকের তিনের দশক থেকে বাংলা কবিতার যে ভিন্নমুখী পদসঞ্চার অনেকক্ষেত্রেই তার উপযোগী হয়েছে ছন্দোহীন, নির্ভর এই গদ্যরীতি। একথা নিঃসন্দেহে স্বীকার্য বাংলা কবিতার পালাবদলের রূপকার ‘কল্লোল’ এবং তার পরবর্তী পত্রিকা গোষ্ঠী।

- ১) রবীন্দ্রনাথ/কবিতার সাজঘরে-অমিত্রসূদন ভট্টাচার্য (আশাদীপ)
- ২) অনুবাদিত পদ্য - শক্তি চট্টোপাধ্যায় (সিগনেট)
- ৩) পোস্টমর্ডানিজম সম্ভবনা ও ভবিষ্যত - বিপ্লব মাজী
- ৪) বাংলা ছন্দশিল্প প্রসঙ্গ-অনুষঙ্গ-অপূর্ব কোলে (দেজ)
- ৫) ছন্দগুরু রবীন্দ্রনাথ - প্রবোধ চন্দ্র সেন (আনন্দ)

FEMALE IDENTITY IN 20TH CENTURY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK AND BELOVED

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ABSTRACT

Violence of women is a universal phenomena representing man's aggressiveness, hostilities, conflicts, and brutalities. The plight of woman is harrowing against their freedom and existence. The emergence of feminist thought in Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Simon de Beavoir's The Second Sex and Kate Millet's Sexual Politics are remarkable. Literary writers all over world has focussed around women's issues of identity, alienation suppression and protests attached to her lot. Doris Lessing, Nobel Prize Winner, a most powerful socially conscientious writer of our times has drawn our attention to trials and tribulations of women in a patriarchal society. The Golden Notebook by Lessing is a powerful critique on women issues. Through portrayal of women like Anna, Molly, Ella, Julia, Marrion, Lessing seems to suggest that what it means to be a free woman in the complex and fragmented socio-political atmosphere of mid-twentieth century. This paper aims to analyze major as well as minor female characters to present woman's vision of life as delineated by Doris Lessing in The Golden Notebook. On the other hand Toni Morrison's Beloved as African-American literature, has become more attentive to historical and social context and slavery system of America. Here the female characters are presented as Sethe, the main character in Beloved is a free slave from "Sweet Home" and other characters Beloved is mysteriously died, Denver is isolated, and Baby Suggs is totally freedom in domestic work. Now I want to discuss why these female characters both these novels are oppressed in society by socio-economical-political condition and inhuman social systems. So I want to analysis in my point of view why a woman want to come out from social system or family bondage to be free and expresses her own identity in society like Ann, Molly, Ella, Sethe and Denver.

Key words : *Female identity, 20th century, The Golden Notebook.*

INTRODUCTION

Doris Lessing was well known as a writer of novels and short stories; The Golden Notebook, published in 1962, solidified her reputation. This novel was regarded as a controversial for its fragmented and postmodern style of narration, criticism of radical politics, directly discussion for female sexuality and their

ultimate freedom. On the other hand Toni Morrison, an American writer wrote her famous novel, *Beloved*, won Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988, set after the American Civil War (1861-65), inspired the story of African-American slavery system. Morrison's texts as African- American Literature has become more attentive to historical and social context with specific places and moments in time.

Writing:

Male oppression, disillusionment and betrayal are the main theme of the novels, *Beloved* and *The Golden Notebook*. In this novel *The Golden Notebook*, Anna and Molly are presented themselves "Free Women". They believe that to be free means to be single, free of marriage obsession and to have physical relation whenever they even with married men. In this context Molly said " Free. Do you know, when I was away, I was thinking about us and I have decided that we're a completely new type of woman". On the other hand, Sethe , the main character of the novel *Beloved*, escaped from slavery " Sweet Home" and reaching of waiting children at her mothe-in- law's home, but Sethe was found by her master who attempted to reclaim her and her children.

Doris Lessing represents all Families in the novel as broken ones. There was no responsibility of parents to their children. This break down is due to the twisted relationships between fathers and mothers. First of all Anna got married to Max and gave birth to a daughter , named Janet, and then got divorced. Anna's friend Molly, was married to Richard, gave birth to a son named Tommy and Likewise, they got divorced. On the other hand the mental bond between Sethe and her children in Morrison's *Beloved*, prevent the development of herself. Sethe develops a dangerous maternal passion that result in murder of one daughter, her own " best self".

Both these novel *The Golden Notebook* and *Beloved*, show us that Ann and Sethe are break down and tried to free-women. Anna's breakdown came to an end when Saul supported her and encourage her to write a novel through providing her with its theme, as well as, its first sentence " the two women were alone in the London flat." Escaping from Sweet Home and reaching her waiting children at her mother-

in-law's home, Sethe was found by his master, who reclaimed her and her children. Sethe grabbed her children, ran in to the tool shed, and tried to kill them all. She succeeded only in killing her eldest daughter. Sethe claimed that she was "trying to put my babies where they found safe."

Lessing's protagonist Anna Wulf resembles her in every aspect physical as well as a psychological alienation, a state that result from the political situations giving rise to the superiority of men over women. Moreover, the sense of fragmentation result from the heroines' usual attempts to be "free women", to free themselves completely from men. Sethe, Paul D. and Denver all experience this loss of self which could be reminded by the acceptance of the past and memory of their original identities of their repressed memories and the reintegration of their selves.

CONCLUSION :

Now the question naturally comes both of these novel *The Golden Notebook* and *Beloved*, why most of the female character are suffering, oppressed by male, disillusion, betrayal, mental breakdown and fragmentation from the society? What was the cause of their mentally, physically, politically and morally disillusionment? Why are they not stapled in their family life and had not responsible to their children? In modern times women are suffered by the identity crises and when they could not tolerate, they tried to freewoman just like Sethe and Anna Wulf. Same derogating picture we note through the character of Alka and Dolly in Mahesh Dattani's novel *Bravely Fought the Queen* and through the character of Matangani in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Rajmohan's Wife*. I want to come out the problem of women by which they are suffered, ultimate their freedom as a freewomen and exile from the society.

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ভারতীয় ইতিহাস চর্চা যে প্রেক্ষাপটে আলোচিত হোক না কেন আর্থ-সামাজিক তথা জাতি বিষয়কে উপেক্ষা করা অসম্ভব। প্রাচীন বঙ্গদেশের অবস্থান বা তার নানা পরিমন্ডল আজও আলোচনার কেন্দ্রবিন্দু। গৌড়-বঙ্গের নামকরণ বা ইতিহাসগত তাৎপর্য এক প্রবাহমান ধারা। যাই হোক ইতিহাস পর্যালোচনায় জাতিগত স্বরূপ প্রসঙ্গে বলা যায় যে, প্রাচীন শাস্ত্রকারদের বর্ণিত জাতি-বর্ণ ব্যবস্থা এখানে কোন অংশে কম ছিল না। ধর্মীয় পরিমন্ডলে বা আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপটে কিভাবে জাতি-বর্ণ ধারা সুদূর প্রাচীন কাল থেকে প্রবাহমান হয়ে আসছে, সে সম্পর্কে বিতর্কের শেষ নেই। সকলেই একমত যে, গৌড়-বঙ্গে আর্ষীকরণের প্রয়াস বিলম্ব হয়েছিল। আবার আর্ষ-অনার্য ধারা সংমিশ্রণের ফলে যে সমাজ কাঠামো সৃষ্টি হয়েছিল তা সমাজের চালিকাশক্তিকে বহুলাংশে প্লাবিত করেছিল। নৃ-তাত্ত্বিক দিক থেকে বাঙ্গালী নর গোষ্ঠী কোলিড, মেলানিড বা পূর্ব ব্রাকিড ধারা কিভাবে সামাজিক ইতিহাসকে জাতপাত-ভেদাভেদ হিসাবে জীবন্ত করে রেখেছে তা আলোচ্য বিষয়। চতুর্বিংশ শতাব্দীর কাঠামোয় ধর্ম না বর্ণ কোন ধারা সক্রিয় তা আজও বিবেচ্য বিষয় হয়ে রয়েছে। গৌড়-বঙ্গের রীতির যে জাতিগত বৈশিষ্ট্য লক্ষ্য করা যায় তা হল জাতি ও বর্ণ কি একই বিষয় না কোন প্রভেদ আছে? এর উত্তর আজও গবেষকদের খুঁজে বার করতে অনুসন্ধিৎসা যোগায় তাই জাতি বৈষম্যের বিষয়টি সুদূর প্রাচীন কাল থেকে গৌড়-বঙ্গে অতি জাগ্রত।

শব্দ সূচক : গৌড় বঙ্গ, কোলিড, মেলানিড, আর্ষীকরণ

প্রাচীন ভারতীয় উপমহাদেশের একটি অন্যতম অঞ্চল বঙ্গদেশ^১ যা গৌড়-বঙ্গ নামে চিহ্নিত হত। প্রাচীন গৌড়-বঙ্গের অন্যান্য বৈশিষ্ট্যের মধ্যে জাতি বৈষম্য একটি অন্যতম বিষয়। এ সম্পর্কে আলোচনার প্রাক্কালে ‘গৌড়-বঙ্গ’ কোন অঞ্চলকে নির্দিষ্ট করে সে সম্পর্কে জানা প্রয়োজন। সে ক্ষেত্রে বলা যায় কত লক্ষ বছর আগে গঙ্গা, পদ্মা ও ব্রহ্মপুত্রের স্রোত ধারায় বাহিত পলিমাটি সঞ্চিত হতে হতে দক্ষিণ ও পূর্ব বঙ্গ গড়ে উঠেছিল সমুদ্রের জল সরে যেতে যেতে, তা আজও আনুমানের বিষয়। ভূ-তত্ত্ববিদদের মতে ‘প্লাওসিন’ যুগে সমুদ্রের ক্রম সঙ্কোচের সূত্রপাত হয়েছিল। তা না হলে পরবর্তী ‘প্লাইস্টোসিন’ যুগে বঙ্গদেশের বিভিন্ন স্থানে মনুষ্য বসতির নিদর্শন প্রাগৈতিহাসিক আয়ুধ আবিষ্কৃত হওয়া সম্ভব ছিল না। আধুনিক কালে ‘বঙ্গ’ নামে পরিচিত দেশটির। সামাগ্রিক রূপ প্রাচীন বৈদিক সাহিত্যে ধরা পড়ে না। তবে

বিক্ষিপ্ত ভাবে কোন কোন কৌমের নাম পাওয়া যায়। এই সব কৌম বাস করত আৰ্য সংস্কৃতির পরিমন্ডলের বাইরে। এরা ছিল বৈদিক আৰ্যদের দৃষ্টিতে ‘দস্যু’ বা সংস্কৃতিবিহীন। যেমন ঐতরেও আরণ্যকে ‘বঙের’ উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায়। বোধায়ন ধর্মসূত্রে ‘পুন্ড’ ও বঙের উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায়। মহাভারতের সভা পর্বে ভীমের দিগ্বিজয় উপলক্ষে পুন্ড, বঙা, তাম্রলিপ্ত, কাবট, সুক্ষ্ম, প্রসুক্ষ্ম, প্রভৃতি কৌম ও জনপদের নাম পাওয়া যায়। এই ভাবে প্রাচীন সাহিত্যে যে সব কৌম বা জনের উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায়, তারা প্রাচীন বঙের বিভিন্ন জনপদের আধিবাসী ছিল মনে হয়। এই রূপ একাধিক জনপদ গুলির মধ্যে ‘গৌড়ের প্রাচীনত্বের কথা জানা যায়। পাণিনির ‘অষ্টাধ্যায়ী’, কৌটিল্যের ‘আর্থশাস্ত্র’, বাৎসায়নের ‘কামসূত্র’ প্রভৃতি সূত্রাবলীর পাশাপাশি গৌড়ের আধিপতি শশাঙ্কের (৬০৬-৬৩৮) নাম জানা যায়। উল্লেখ্য এ সময় সম্ভবত ‘বঙাঙ্গদের’ সূচনা হয়। বরাহমিহিরের ‘বৃহৎ সংহিতায়’ ‘গৌড়কে’ স্বতন্ত্র জনপদ বলা হয়েছে। পাল-সেন যুগে গৌড় ও বঙের একটি বিশেষ সম্পর্ক নির্ণয় করা যেতে পারে। প্রতিহার রাজ দ্বিতীয় নাগভট্টের সমসাময়িক ধর্মপালকে মিহির ভোজের গোয়ালিওর প্রশস্তিতে ‘বঙাপতি’ বলে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে অথচ ধর্মপালের সময় থেকে পাল রাজারা ‘গৌড়েশ্বের’ উপাধি ধারণ করত। প্রথম আমোঘবর্ষের কানহেরি ও নিলগুন্দ লেখ থেকে বঙা জনপদের স্বাভাবিকতা ও রাজনৈতিক-শাসনতান্ত্রিক দিক থেকে বঙা জনপদের স্বাভাবিকতার কথা জানা যায়। কার্করাজের (৮১১-১২) বরোদা তাম্রশাসনে গৌড় ও বঙের পাশাপাশি উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায় কিন্তু একই শাসক যখন ‘বঙাপতি’ ও ‘গৌড়েশ্বের’ রূপে স্বীকৃত হন তখন গৌড় ও বঙা রাজনৈতিক দিক থেকে সমার্থক হয়ে পড়ে। পরবর্তী কালে গৌড়-বঙা সংজ্ঞায় পরিবর্তিত হতে থাকে।

প্রাচীন গৌড় বঙা জনজাতি প্রসঙ্গে নীহাররঞ্জন রায় মহাশয় বলেছেন “সুদীর্ঘ জাতি প্রবাহের ইতিহাস আলোচনায় একটি তথ্য সুস্পষ্ট ধরা পড়ে, সেটি এইঃ নরতত্ত্বের দিক থেকে বাংলার জনগোষ্ঠী মোটামুটি দীর্ঘমুন্ড, প্রশস্থনাস আদি-অস্ট্রেলীয়, ‘কোলিড’, দীর্ঘমুন্ড, দীর্ঘ ও মধ্যোন্নতনাস মিশর-এশিয় বা ‘মেলানিড’, এবং বিশেষ ভাবে গোলমুন্ড, উন্নতনাস অ্যালপাইন বা ‘পূর্ব-ব্রাকিড’, এই তিন জনের সমন্বয়ে গঠিত। নিগ্রোবটু রক্তের ও স্বল্প প্রভাব উপস্থিত, কিন্তু তা সমাজের খুব নিম্নস্তরে এবং সংকীর্ণ গন্ডির মধ্যে আবদ্ধ। মঙ্গলীয় রক্তের কিছুটা প্রভাব আছে, কিন্তু তাহাতে উত্তর ও পূর্ব দিকে সঙ্কীর্ণ স্থান গন্ডির সীমা অতিক্রম করে নাই। আদি - নর্ডিক বা খাঁটি ‘ইন্ডিড’ রক্ত প্রবাহ অনস্বীকার্য, কিন্তু সে ধারা অত্যন্ত শীর্ণ ও ক্ষীণ। মোটামুটি ইহাই বাঙলা ভাষাভাষী জন-সৌখের চেহারা, এবং এই সৌখের উপরেই বাঙালীর ইতিহাস গড়িয়া উঠিয়াছে। এই বিচিত্র সংকর জন লইয়াই বাঙালার ও বাঙালীর ইতিহাসের সূত্রপাত”।

যে জাতি বর্ম প্রথা^(৩) ভারতীয় সমাজ ব্যবস্থা অনন্য সাধারণ বৈশিষ্ট্য এবং আজও পর্যন্ত যার প্রভাব ভারতের রাষ্ট্রীয় ও সমাজ জীবনে আসীম। সেই প্রথার সুনির্দিষ্ট পরিচয় পাওয়া যায় বৈদিক সাহিত্যে। যদিও বলা হয় জাতি প্রথা ও বর্ণভেদ একই মুদ্রার দুই দিক। একই ব্যবস্থার প্রয়োগমূলক ও তাত্ত্বিক

অভিব্যক্তি, কার্যত কিন্তু দুটি পৃথক বিষয়। বর্ণভেদ বলতে বোঝায় একটি বিশেষ আদর্শগত দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে সমগ্র সমাজকে কয়েকটি বিভিন্ন মর্যাদার শ্রেণিতে বিভাজন। পৃথিবীর সর্বত্রই শাস্ত্রজ্ঞ ও বুদ্ধিজীবী শ্রেণি, শাসক ও যোদ্ধা শ্রেণী, উৎপাদক ও বণিক শ্রেণী এবং শ্রমজীবী শ্রেণি- এই চার ভাগে জনসাধারণকে বিভাগ করার প্রয়াস সর্বযুগেই দেখা যায়, এবং প্রাচীন ভারত এ ক্ষেত্রে ব্যতিক্রম নয়। সমাজকে ব্রাহ্মান, ক্ষত্রিয়, বৈশ্য, শূদ্র এই চাতুর্বর্ণ্যের বিভক্ত করার যে প্রচেষ্টা শাস্ত্রকারেরা করেছেন, তা নিছকই আদর্শমূলক, কোন যুগেই যার বাস্তব অস্তিত্ব ছিল না। এ বিষয়ে নীহাররঞ্জন রায় মনে করেন, “বর্ণশ্রম প্রথা ও অভ্যাস যুক্তি পন্থতিবন্ধ করিয়াছিলেন প্রাচীন ধর্মসূত্র ও স্মৃতি গ্রন্থের লেখকরা, ব্রাহ্মান-ক্ষত্রিয়-বৈশ্য-শূদ্র এই চাতুর্বর্ণ্যের কাঠামোর মধ্যে তারাই সমস্ত সমাজ জীবনকে বাঁধিতে চেষ্টা করিয়াছিলেন। এই চাতুর্বর্ণ্য প্রথা অলীক উপন্যাস এ সম্বন্ধে সন্দেহ নাই। কারণ ভারতবর্ষে এই চাতুর্বর্ণ্যের বাইরে অসংখ্য বর্ণ, জন ও কৌম ছিল। প্রত্যেক বর্ণ, জন ও কৌমের ভিতরে আবার ছিল অসংখ্য স্তর, উপস্তর। ধর্মসূত্র ও স্মৃতিকারেরা নানা অভিনব অবাস্তব উপায়ে এই সব বিচ্ছিন্ন বর্ণ, জন, কৌমের স্তর, উপস্তর ইত্যাদি ব্যাখ্যা করিতে এবং সব কিছুকেই আদি চাতুর্বর্ণ্যের কাঠামোর যুক্তি পন্থতিতে বাঁধিতে চেষ্টা করিয়াছিলেন। “কিন্তু তৎসত্ত্বেও বর্ণভেদের বিষয়ই বরাবরই অলীক ও অবাস্তব থেকে গেছে। বাস্তবে যা আছে তা হচ্ছে অসংখ্য জাতি। এই জাতি বলতে একটি বিশেষ পেশার ভিত্তিতে সংঘবদ্ধ জন গোষ্ঠী, যারা নিজেদের গোষ্ঠীর মধ্যেই অস্ত্রবিবাহ করে, সমাজ কাঠামোয় ছোট, মাঝারি, বড় যেমনি হোক না কেন যাদের একটি নির্দিষ্ট স্থান ও ভূমিকা আছে, যাদের অধিকার ও কর্তব্যের ক্ষেত্র সুনির্দিষ্ট, অভ্যন্তরিন ক্ষেত্রে যারা তাদের নিজেস্ব সামাজিক আইনের দ্বারা পরিচালিত এবং পেশাগত ও অপরাপর ক্ষেত্রে একটি বিশেষ ধরণের সার্বভৌমত্ব ভোগ করে। একটি জাতির কর্ম বা অধিকারের ক্ষেত্রে অপর জাতির হস্তক্ষেপ বা অনুপ্রবেশ নিষিদ্ধ, যদিও বিশেষ পরিস্থিতিতে কৌলিক বৃত্তির পরিবর্তন ঘটতে পারে, অথবা কৃষি কর্মের মত ব্যাপক বৃত্তির ক্ষেত্রে একাধিক জাতি আসতে পারে।

আধুনিককালের বহু লেখকের মতই প্রাচীন যুগের শাস্ত্রকারেরাও বর্ণভেদ ও জাতি প্রথার মৌলিক পার্থক্যটি উপলব্ধি করতে পারেনি। তাই তারা জাতিকে বর্ণের উপবিভাগ বলে মনে করেছেন। ভারতবর্ষে ইংরেজ অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠিত হওয়ার পর ইংরেজ লেখক ও ঐতিহাসিকেরা জাতিবর্ণ প্রথাকে বোঝাবার জন্য কাস্ট সিস্টেম (cast system) নামক পরিভাষাটি ব্যবহার করেন, যা পর্তুগীজ ‘কাস্তা’(castus) থেকে গৃহীত। যার অর্থ, ‘পবিত্রতা’। পর্তুগীজরা ওই শব্দটি দ্বারা এমন একটি প্রথাকে বোঝাবার চেষ্টা করেছিল যার উদ্দেশ্য রক্তের পবিত্রতা বজায় রাখা। জাতি প্রথা অর্থে গার্সিয়া দে ওর্তা ‘কাস্তা’ শব্দটি প্রথম ব্যবহার করেন। জাতি প্রথার উদ্ভব সম্পর্কে স্যার হার্বার্ট রিজলী অতি সরলিকৃত ব্যাখ্যা দিয়েছেন। তিনি জাতি প্রথার কয়েকটি উপাদানকে সনাক্ত করেছেন যেগুলি আমাদের পক্ষে প্রয়োজনীয়। প্রথমটি, হচ্ছে উপজাতীয় উপাদান। বহু ক্ষেত্রেই দেখা গেছে, যে একটা গোটা ট্রাইব বা উপজাতি বা তাদের উল্লেখযোগ্য

একটি অংশ কোন পেশাকে অবলম্বন করে বৃহত্তর হিন্দু সমাজের আশ্রয়ে নিজস্ব উপজাতীয় নামে অথবা কোনও গৃহীত নামে একটি জাতিতে রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে। দ্বিতীয়টি হচ্ছে পেশাগত উপাদান। এমন কোন জাতি নেই যার কোনও জাত ব্যবসা বা কৌলিক বৃত্তি নেই। আজও পর্যন্ত ভারতের জাতিসমূহের বৃহত্তম অংশ স্বয়ং নিযুক্ত ও কৌলিক বৃত্তির অনুসারী। কৌলিক বৃত্তির পরিবর্তনের ফলে এক জাতির মানুষ ভিন্ন জাতিতে যে পরিণত হয় তারও নিদর্শন আছে। তৃতীয়টি, হচ্ছে ধর্মীয় বা সাম্প্রদায়িক উপাদান যেখানে দেখা যায় যে বহু ধর্মীয় সম্প্রদায় স্বনামেই জাতি কাঠামোয় স্থান লাভ করেছে। চতুর্থটি কোন কোন ভাষা গোষ্ঠীর স্বতন্ত্র জাতি হিসাবে পরিচিতি ঘটে। পঞ্চমটি, স্তানান্তরগমন ও প্রথাবদলের ফলে এক জাতি থেকে আর এক জাতি গড়ে ওঠে এমন বহু নজীর আছে।

গৌড়-বঙ্গে আর্ষীকরণ^৪ অর্থাৎ বৈদিক আর্ষ সংস্কৃতি বিস্তারের পূর্বে যে সমাজের অস্তিত্ব ছিল, তার হৃদয় পাওয়া যায় প্রত্নতাত্ত্বিক অনুসন্ধানের ফলে আবিষ্কৃত আয়ুধ গুলি থেকে। অর্থাৎ নিশ্চিত যে আর্ষ আগমনের পূর্বে যে জনগোষ্ঠী বাস ছিল তা অনাৰ্য। এই অনাৰ্যকে নানা তথ্য প্রামানের ভিত্তিতে দ্রাবিড় বলে ধরে নেওয়া হলেও বলা যায় না প্রাক-আর্ষ বা প্রাক-দ্রাবিড় যুগে গৌড় বঙ্গের আদিম অধিবাসীরা বর্বর, অসভ্য, দস্যু ছিল। আর্ষদের প্রাধান্য সমাজের সংস্পর্শে আসার ফলেই বাংলার সুসংস্কৃত সভ্য সমাজের আবির্ভাব হয়েছিল - এ কথাও গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। তবে আর্ষীকরণের ফলে সমাজের গড়ন পাল্টে ছিল। আদিম কৌম সমাজ রূপান্তরিত হয়েছিল ক্রমশ বর্ণ-জাতি ভিত্তিক সমাজে। ঠিক কোন সময়ে কিভাবে আর্ষীকরণ সম্ভব হয়েছিল এবং বর্ণভিত্তিক সমাজের গোড়াপত্তন হয়েছিল তা নিশ্চিত করে বলা দুঃসাধ্য। এটুকু বলা যেতে পারে যে, সুপ্রাচীন কাল থেকে গৌড়-বঙ্গে আর্ষাবর্তের বিভিন্ন শ্রেণির মানুষের আসা যাওয়া ছিল। তারা শাসক, বণিক, তীর্থযাত্রী, ধর্ম প্রচারক ইত্যাদি। আবার যদি কোন পরিব্রাজক বা পর্যটক মাঝে মাঝে এসে পড়তেন স্লেচ্ছ দেশে এবং তারপর তাদের প্রায়শ্চিত্ত করতে হত। আর্ষদের দাবি ছিল তাদের রক্তের সংমিশ্রণ ঘটেছিল প্রাচ্য দেশবাসীর বিশেষত বর্ণ, পুন্ড, সুন্ড প্রভৃতি জনপদবাসীর ধমনীতে। সম্ভবত এই ধরণের দাবি তখনি করা হয়, যখন কৌম গুলিকে আর্ষ বর্ণ প্রথার মধ্যে নিয়ে আসা স্থিরীকৃত হয়েছিল।

গৌড়ের সামাজিক বিষয়^৫ আলোচনার ক্ষেত্রে অন্যতম ক্ষেত্র জাতি ও বর্ণ বিন্যাস প্রসঙ্গে বলা যায় যে গৌড়ের সূচনা পূর্বে এই অঞ্চলে কোন জাতি বর্ণ ভেদ ছিল না। অর্থাৎ বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজ গড়ে ওঠেনি। ভারতীয় সমাজ চিত্র, কৌম সমাজ থেকে বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজ, সেখানে থেকে জাতিভিত্তিক কিছুটা ব্যতিক্রম এখানে লক্ষণীয়। এখন অনুসন্ধান করা যাক যে কখন এবং কোন বিষয়কে কেন্দ্র গৌড়ে বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজ গড়ে উঠেছিল কি না, এবং এই বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজ ব্যবস্থার চরিত্র ও বৈশিষ্ট্য ভারতের অন্যান্য অঞ্চলের বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজ ব্যবস্থার অনুরূপ ছিল কি না। এই প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখ্য যে বৈদিক যুগে

গাত্র বর্ণ অনুযায়ী আর্য ও অনার্য দুটি বিভাগ ছিল। পরবর্তী বৈদিক যুগ পর্যন্ত ভারত ছিল দাস বা দস্যু অধিকৃত অঞ্চল। এই সময়েও গৌড়াঞ্চল আর্য বহির্ভূত অঞ্চল হিসাবে বর্ণ ভেদহীন অঞ্চল ছিল। পরবর্তী সময়ে আর্ষীকরণের মাধ্যমে এখানে শ্রেণি ভিত্তিক সমাজের উদ্ভব ঘটে। অবশ্য প্রাথমিক পর্বে এটি ছিল কেবলমাত্র উচ্চ (ব্রাহ্মণ) নীচ (শূদ্র) বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজ। অর্থাৎ ভারতীয় চতুর্বর্ণ ভিত্তিক ব্যবস্থা এখানে অনুপস্থিত।

বঙ্গদেশে ব্রাহ্মণরা বহিরাগত অঞ্চল থেকে এসেছিল বা আদিশূর ও শশাঙ্ক কর্তৃক বিশেষ কারণে এই অঞ্চলে ব্রাহ্মণদের জমি দান করে বসতি স্থাপন করানো হয়। পরবর্তী কালে রাজা ও অভিজাতরা ব্রাহ্মণদের ভূমি দান করা হয়েছিল, তা ভূমিদান পট্টলি বা লেখমালা গুলি থেকে প্রমাণিত। এই ঐতিহাসিক মতটিকে মেনে নিলে বিষয়টি আরো সহজতর হয়ে ওঠে। অর্থাৎ চতুর্বর্ণ নয় দ্বিবর্ণ ও শূদ্র এই দুই ভাগে গৌড়ীও সমাজ বিভক্ত ছিল। গৌড়ে সর্বপ্রথম ছিল উপজাতীয় সমাজ ব্যবস্থা। পরবর্তী পর্যায়ে আসে জাতি ভিত্তিক সমাজ এবং তৎপরে Class বা শ্রেণি ভিত্তিক সমাজ। এই শ্রেণি ভিত্তিক সমাজ আবার গ্রামীণ ও নাগরিক দুটি পৃথক সত্তা ও বৈশিষ্ট্য নিয়ে গড়ে উঠেছিল। আধুনিক মতবাদের প্রয়োগ করলে দেখা গেছে যে উপজাতীয় সমাজ (Tribal Society) ছিল এই পর্যায় গুলির প্রাণ পরিচালক স্বরূপ। যার অস্তিত্ব ভারতবর্ষের তথা বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলের জনগোষ্ঠীর মধ্যে লক্ষ্য করা যায়। বিশেষ করে প্রান্তবর্তী প্রত্যন্ত অঞ্চল গুলিতে। গৌড়ের প্রত্যন্ত অঞ্চলেও এর সুস্পষ্ট প্রমাণ বর্তমান।

বর্ণ ভিত্তিক সমাজের প্রসঙ্গে স্বরণীয় যে ‘মনুসংহিতার’ তত্ত্ব অনুসারে বর্ণে বর্ণে মিলনের ফলে জাতির উৎপত্তি হয়েছিল। ভারতীয় মূল চারটি বর্ণ, ব্রাহ্মণ, ক্ষত্রিয়, বৈশ্য, শূদ্র বর্ণের মধ্যে অনুলোম ও প্রতিলোম বিবাহের ফলে রক্তের সংমিশ্রণের দ্বারা সৃষ্টি হয় বিভিন্ন জাতি। গৌড়ে বিভিন্ন পেশার মানুষ বিশেষত মৃৎপাত্র প্রস্তুতকারক, লৌহ দ্রব্য প্রস্তুতকারক সহ বিভিন্ন ব্যক্তিবর্গের মধ্যে দেখা যায়। আবার এই জাতিগুলির সাথে অপর জাতির বিবাহের ফলে ক্রমশ জাতির সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি পেতে থাকে, এ গুলিকে বলা হয় মিশ্র জাতি। পূর্ব ভারতে এই জাতিগুলির পরিচয় পাওয়া যায় বৃহদ্রম পুরাণ ও ব্রহ্ম বৈবর্ত পুরাণে। বৃহদ্রম পুরাণে ব্রাহ্মণ ব্যাতিরেকে অন্যান্য বর্ণগুলিকে সংকর বলে অভিহিত করা হয়েছে এবং এদের তিনটি বিভাগ ও বৃত্তির কথা বলা হয়েছে।

প্রাচীন জাতিগুলির বিচার বিশ্লেষণ করলে প্রাচীন সমাজ ব্যবস্থার চারটি স্তর বিভাগ পরিলক্ষিত হয়, যথা (ক) আদিম কৌম সমাজ থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে আসা কোন একটি গোষ্ঠী। (খ) বৈদেশিক জাতি থেকে উদ্ভূত গোষ্ঠী। (গ) ধর্মীয় সম্প্রদায় জাতিতে পরিণত হওয়া গোষ্ঠী এবং (ঘ) পেশা বা বৃত্তিকে অবলম্বন করে সৃষ্ট গোষ্ঠী। গৌড়ের উপাদানের ভিত্তিতে বলা যায় প্রথম বিভাগ কৌম সমাজ থেকে

বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে আসা গোষ্ঠী। যার সম্পর্কে বলা যায় যে বৃহস্পতি পুরাণ অনুযায়ী ব্রাহ্মণের শূদ্র বর্ণের ব্যক্তিদিগকে বর্ণ বিভাগ অনুযায়ী তিনটি শ্রেণিতে বিভক্ত করা হয়েছে, উত্তম সংকর, মধ্যম সংকর ও অধম সংকর বা অন্ত্যজ যাদের অন্তর্ভুক্ত নয়টি শ্রেণির কথা বলা হয়েছে, মালগ্রাহী, চন্ডাল, বরুড়, চর্মকার, ঘন্টজীবী, মল্ল তক্ষ প্রভৃতি। গৌড়াঞ্চলে ক্ষেত্র সমীক্ষায় বর্তমান পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মালদহ, মুর্শিদাবাদ এবং রাজশাহী জেলায় দেখা যায়। দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ বৈদেশিক জাতির থেকে উদ্ভূত গোষ্ঠী সমাজের অন্তর্ভুক্ত একটি জাতিতে পরিণত হওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে বলা যায় যে এরা সমাজে স্থান পেয়েছে মধ্যম সংকর বা অসৎ শূদ্র হিসাবে। বৃহস্পতি পুরাণ অনুযায়ী রজক, স্বর্নকার, আভীর, তৈলকারক, ধীবর, জালিকা, প্রভৃতি শ্রেণী মধ্যম সংকর ভুক্ত। অন্যদিকে উত্তম সংকর ভুক্তকরণ, অম্বুষ্ঠ (বৈদ্য), কাংস্যকার, কুম্ভকার, গোপ, দাস (চাষী), মোদক, মালাকার, তাম্বুলী ও তৌলকগন। বর্তমান গৌড়াঞ্চলে ক্ষেত্র সমীক্ষায় এই গোষ্ঠী রাজশাহী অঞ্চলে নমঃশূদ্র, শূদ্র হিসাবে বর্তমান। তৃতীয় বিভাগ ধর্মীয় সম্প্রদায় একটি জাতিতে পরিণত হওয়ায় ক্ষেত্রে যুগী, নাথ ও বৈষ্ণব প্রভৃতির কথা বলা যায়। এরা সাধারণত সমাজ মধ্যবর্তী স্তরের মধ্যম স্তরের সংকরভুক্ত। বর্তমান ক্ষেত্র সমীক্ষায় মালদহের আশ্রম পাড়া, মুর্শিদাবাদের কুপিগ্রাম, রাজশাহী অঞ্চলে দেখা যায়। চতুর্থ বিভাগে একটি শ্রেণিকে দেখা যায় পেশা বা বৃত্তিকে অবলম্বন করে একটি গোষ্ঠী জাতির নাম ধারণ করেছে, যেমন কুম্ভকার, কাংস্যকার, মালাকার, তন্তুবাঁয়, সন্ধিক, স্বর্ণকার প্রভৃতি। আবার যদি অভিনিবেশ সহকারে বিশ্লেষণ করা যায় তাহলে দেখা যায় যে এই বৃত্তিগুণি তিন প্রকার - কৃষি, শিল্প এবং বাণিজ্যকে ভিত্তি করে গড়ে উঠেছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখ্য যে, মূলত সমাজের যারা উৎপাদক শ্রেণি (Producer Class) তারাই এই সকল জাতিভুক্ত।

খ্রিস্ট পূর্ব যুগ থেকেই বঙ্গদেশ^৬ ব্রাহ্মণ্য ধর্মের অনুপ্রবেশ ঘটেছিল, তথাপি গুপ্তযুগের পূর্বে ব্রাহ্মণ্য ধর্মের বিশেষ প্রতিষ্ঠা লাভ করতে পারে নি। কিন্তু গুপ্তযুগের পর পাল রাজাগনদের সময়ে বৌদ্ধ ধর্ম দ্বারা বঙ্গদেশে প্লাবিত হয়ে গিয়েছিল। সুতরাং সে যুগে জাতিভেদ যে বিশেষ কড়াকড়ি নিয়ম ছিল না, তা সহজেই অনুমেয়। পাল রাজাগনের পর সেন রাজাগন বাঙলায় আবার ব্রাহ্মণ্য ধর্মের পুনঃপ্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। সুতরাং নতুন করে আবার একটা জাতি বিন্যাসের প্রয়োজনীয়তা অনুভূত হয়। কিন্তু পাল রাজাগনের চারশত বছর রাজত্বকালে সর্বত্রই একাকার হয়ে গিয়েছিল এর ফলে বহু সংকর জাতি সৃষ্টি হয়েছিল। বৃহস্পতি পুরাণ থেকে জানতে পারি যে একমাত্র ব্রাহ্মণ্য ছাড়া বালরার সব জাতিই সংকর জাতি। তবে সকল সংকর জাতি সমূহ বিভিন্ন শ্রেণিতে বিভক্ত।

বস্তুত পুরাণ ও ধর্মশাস্ত্র সমূহে বর্ণিত জাতি সমূহের উৎপত্তি কাহিনী যে একেবারে কল্পনা প্রসূত, সে বিষয়ে কোন সন্দেহ নেই। কেননা প্রথমত পরস্পর বিরোধী মতবাদ ও দ্বিতীয়ত উত্তর ভারতের বর্ণ বাচক জাতি হিসাবে ‘ক্ষত্রিয়’ ও ‘বৈশ্য’ জাতি কোন দিনই বাঙলায় ছিল না। গুপ্ত যুগের বহু লিপিতে

ব্রাহ্মণ ব্যতীত বহু লোকের উল্লেখ আছে। কিন্তু এই সকল লিপিতে কেহ নিজেকে ক্ষত্রিয় বা বৈশ্য বলে দাবী করে নি। তবে পুরাণ ও ধর্মশাস্ত্র সমূহের বর্ণনা থেকে পরিষ্কার বুঝতে পারা যায় যে বাঙলার জাতি সমূহ যে নানা জাতির রক্তের মিশ্রণের ফসল, তা নয়; পুনঃ মিশ্রণেরও ফল।

পরবর্তী কালে বাংলায় যে সমাজ বিন্যাস রচিত হয়েছিল, তা হচ্ছেঃ (ক) ব্রাহ্মণ (খ) বৈদ্য (গ) কায়স্থ (ঘ) নবশাখ ও (ঙ) অন্যান্য জাতি। যে সব জাতির হাতে ব্রাহ্মণরা জল গ্রহণ করত, তাদেরই নবশাখ বলা হত। তাদের অন্তর্ভুক্ত ছিল তিলি, তাঁতি, মালাকার, সদগোপ, নাপিত, বারুই, কামার, কুস্তকার, গন্ধবনিক ও মোদক। অন্যান্য জাতিসমূহ ছিল জল অনাচরণীয়।

এ বিষয়ে কোন সন্দেহ নেই যে অধিকাংশ তপশীলীভুক্ত জাতির উৎপত্তি হয়েছে উপজাতি থেকে। হিন্দু ধর্মে ধর্মান্তরিত হবার পর থেকেই তারা বর্ণ ও জাতি সঙ্ক্লেষে বিশেষ ভাবে সচেতন হয়েছে। রাজবংশীদের উৎপত্তি সঙ্ক্লেষে বলা হয় যে, তাদের উৎপত্তি হয়েছে কোচ উপজাতি থেকে। রিজলে বলেছিলেন, রাজবংশী কোচ ও পালিয়াদের উৎপত্তি হয়েছে একই উৎস থেকে। রাজবংশীদের প্রধানত দেখতে পাওয়া যায় কুচবিহার, পশ্চিম দিনাজপুর, জলপাইগুড়ি, মালদাহ, মুর্শিদাবাদ ও চব্বিশ পরগণায়। পোদেরা এখন নিজেদের পৌত্র-ক্ষত্রিয় বলে অভিহিত করে থাকে। তবে ব্রহ্মবৈবর্ত পুরাণ অনুযায়ী তারা বৈশ্য ও শূত্রের সংমিশ্রণে উৎপন্ন সংকর জাতি, মনে হয় প্রাচীন সাহিত্যে উক্ত পুত্র জাতি হতে তারা অভিন্ন। যদি তাই হয় তাহলে তারা বাংলার অতি প্রাচীন জাতি কেননা পুন্ড্রদের উল্লেখ বৈদিক সাহিত্যে আছে। পোদেরদের আবাসস্থল প্রধানত চব্বিশ পরগণা, মেদনিপুর ও হাওড়া জেলায়। বাগদীরাও এখন নিজেদের ব্যগ্রক্ষত্রিয় বলে দাবী করে। ওলডহামের মতে, তারা মাল জাতিরই এক উপশাখা মাত্র। তবে বাগদীরা যে ভাবে নিজেরদের গোষ্ঠী বিভাগ করে তা থেকে মনে হয় যে এ গুলি এক সময় উপজাতি সংক্রান্ত 'টোটম' ছিল। উত্তর বঙ্গ ছাড়া বাগদীদের পশ্চিম বঙ্গের সর্বত্রই দেখতে পাওয়া যায়। সেন বংশের রাজা বল্লাল সেনের রাজ্যের দক্ষিণংশের নাম ছিল বাগড়ি। মনে হয় এটি বাগদী অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চল ছিল। রিজলের মতে পোদ, কয়াল, কোটাল, নুলিয়া ও বেবুয়া-এর সকলেই হচ্ছে নমঃশূত্র গোষ্ঠীর উপশাখা। অনেকে নমঃশূত্র ও চন্ডাল সমার্থক শব্দ বলে মনে করেন; কিন্তু নমঃ শূত্ররা নিজেদের চন্ডাল থেকে উচ্চ সম্প্রদায়ের লোক বলে দাবী করে। বস্তুত দেশজ উপজাতি সমূহ যখন হিন্দু ধর্মে দীক্ষিত হয়ে হিন্দু সমাজে অনুপ্রবেশ করে, তখন তারা সকলেই এক-একটা উপকথার সৃষ্টি করে নিজেদের গৌরবান্বিত করার চেষ্টা করে। যেমন চামাররা নিজেদের রামানন্দের শিষ্য রবিদাস বা বুইদাসের বংশধর বলে দাবী করে। এইভাবে জাতি সমূহ বিন্যাসের দ্বারা পরিবর্তিত হতে থাকে। এই ভাবে প্রাচীন গোড়-বঙ্গে, এই জাতি বৈষম্য সামাজ্যে যে ভাবে গ্রথিত হয়েছে তার পরিবর্তন ঘটানো দূরহ হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে।

তথ্যসূত্র

- ১) চট্টোপাধ্যায়, ভাস্কর, গৌড়-বঙ্গেের ইতিহাস ও সংস্কৃতি, প্রথম ভাগ, গ্রন্থেসিভ পাবলিশার্স, কলকাতা, ২০০৩, পৃঃ ২-৯।
- ২) রায় নীহাররঞ্জন, বাঙ্গালীর ইতিহাস, আদি পর্ব দে'জ পাবলিশিং কলকাতা, ১৯৪৯, পৃঃ ৩৬।
- ৩) ভট্টাচার্য, নরেন্দ্রনাথ, প্রাচীন ভারতীয় সমাজ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ রাজ্য পুস্তক পর্ষৎ, কলকাতা, ২০০১, পৃঃ ২৬-২৮।
- ৪) চট্টোপাধ্যায়, ভাস্কর গৌড়-বঙ্গেের ইতিহাস ও সংস্কৃতি, দ্বিতীয় ভাগ, গ্রন্থমিত্র, কলকাতা, ২০০১, পৃঃ ৪।
- ৫) চট্টোপাধ্যায়, রুপশ্রী, গৌড়-বঙ্গেের গৌড়ীয় সংস্কৃত বীক্ষা, প্রগতিশীল প্রকাশক, কলকাতা, ২০১৪, পৃঃ ৯৫।
- ৬) চট্টোপাধ্যায়, ভাস্কর, ভারতের আর্থ-সামাজিক ও রাষ্ট্রীয় ব্যবস্থা-প্রাচীন যুগ, গ্রন্থেসিভ পাবলিশার্স, কলকাতা ১৯৯৫, পৃঃ ১৬২।
- ৭) তদেব, পৃঃ ৯৬।
- ৮) সুর, অতুল, ভারতের নৃতাত্ত্বিক পরিচয়, সাহিত্য লোক, কলকাতা, ১৯৮৮, পৃঃ ১৯৩ - ১৯৭।



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