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Editorial

The present issue of Heritage Journal comprises fifteen scholarly articles. It is both multidisciplinary and multilingual in scope, featuring one article in Bengali, three in Hindi, and the remaining contributions in English. The issue encompasses a wide spectrum of subjects, ranging from literature and library science to economics and atmospheric science.

Anwesha Khan in her critical work has discussed how Rabindranath Tagore's English essays clearly express his love for humanity, spiritual ideas, and global outlook. In books like Sadhana, Nationalism, and Personality, he presented deep yet simple thoughts about human beings, society, and nationalism. He criticized Western materialistic thinking and emphasized unity among people and spiritual growth. His writings highlight individual freedom, the relationship between humans and the infinite, and the ideal of education. These essays made Tagore's ideas widely known and relevant across the world.

The article by Amrita Ghosal examines the marginalisation of Nachni performers in western Bengal and challenges the stigma that labels them as immoral rather than as artists. It traces the historical and cultural roots of the Nachni–Rasik tradition, highlighting its foundation in aesthetic mentorship and Jhumur performance. Using ethnographic and statistical evidence from Purulia, the study shows how social prejudice and institutional neglect continue to shape their vulnerability. The paper calls for recognition of Nachnis as legitimate cultural practitioners and for a shift in the dominant urban moral gaze.

Madhubanti Bhuin in her paper examines Hanuman Chalisa by Tulsidas as a literary and cultural text that constructs a model of disciplined, devotional masculinity rooted in humility, intellect, and service. It argues that the original bhakti ideal of Hanuman as a self-effacing devotee has been transformed in contemporary visual culture into a hyper-masculine nationalist icon. Drawing on gender theory and cultural studies, the study contrasts the ascetic, knowledge-centered Hanuman of the early modern period with the aggressive imagery popularized in recent decades. By tracing this shift from text to spectacle, the paper reveals how devotion has been re-signified within the politics of militant Hindutva and visual nationalism. Ultimately, it calls for a return to the Chalisa's ethics of balance, where strength is inseparable from wisdom and humility.

The article by Mandira Mitra discusses The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar and explains how Rupi's illness is connected to her difficult married life, social pressure, and cultural beliefs. It shows how both modern doctors and traditional tribal beliefs fail to truly understand her suffering. Using ideas from thinkers like Arthur Frank and Susan Sontag, the paper explains that Rupi's illness is not just physical, but also emotional and social. The story also compares her condition with the woman in The Yellow Wall-Paper, who suffers after childbirth. In the end, the paper suggests that Rupi slowly regains strength and dignity in her own quiet way.

The paper by Mehuli Roy and Piyali Gupta explores the common misidentification of Mary Shelley's Creature as "Frankenstein," contrasting it with the scientist Victor Frankenstein's canonical role. It argues this confusion stems from Shelley's subversive narrative, where Victor's unchecked ambition renders him monstrous, blurring creator-created boundaries. Victor's

mistreatment of his creation victimizes the Creature and shifts monstrosity onto the creator, validating popular intuition over strict textual identity. By analyzing Victor's irresponsibility, chauvinism, and blasphemy, the study defends the Creature's apparent villainy as reactive. Ultimately, the work reveals deeper moral ambiguities in Shelley's novel about knowledge, revenge, and destruction.

Atreye Chakraborty in her study examines how English language teachers in India understand and use feedback in classrooms to help students learn better. It shows teachers prefer oral feedback the most (72.2% use it often) because it is quick and personal, while written and peer feedback are used by half, but self-assessment is rare. Most teachers want to give feedback daily or weekly (over 70%) to fix errors fast and keep students motivated, but over half have no formal training on it.Key challenges include lack of time, large classes, and students not responding well, both at 44.4%.Teachers suggest timely, specific feedback, student involvement, and a friendly classroom to make feedback more effective.

Rahul Kumar Deb well documents how the Brahmo royal couple, Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and Maharani Sunity Devi, led social reforms for women in Cooch Behar from 1878 to 1949. They banned polygamy, introduced Brahmo marriage laws, fought dowry, and ended practices like purdah and professional mourning by women. Brahmo groups also supported widow aid through shelters and funds, promoted women's education, religious freedom, and public participation via fairs and prayers. These changes improved women's status in a conservative society, though some limits remained, like incomplete widow remarriage adoption. Overall, Brahmoism modernized Cooch Behar by empowering women against old customs.

The research article by अम्बर कुमार चौधरी offers a comprehensive chronological exploration of environmental consciousness in Hindi poetry, tracing its development from Vedic literature to contemporary voices and reflecting a deep and nuanced understanding of the Hindi literary tradition. The author effectively strengthens the analysis by incorporating relevant poetic excerpts from a diverse range of poets, including Tulsidas, Jaishankar Prasad, Nagarjun, Kedarnath Singh, Gyanendrapati, Kunwar Narayan, Viren Dangwal, Nirmal Putul, and Anuj Lugun, thereby enhancing the authenticity and depth of the study.

The research article “धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह और बाल मनकी मासूम दृष्टि :मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' कीकहानी 'सॉरीपापा' केसंदर्भमें” by Asha Hemant Singha effectively establishes the importance of children's literature and clearly presents the central theme of Manohar Chamoli 's Manu's story Sorry Papa. It successfully introduces the protagonist, Aparajita, and highlights her role in reflecting the narrative's core tension between religious prejudice and the innate innocence of a child's mind. The abstract also appropriately situates the analysis within the framework of child psychology, thereby providing a sound theoretical and scholarly foundation for the study.

The research article “हरिशंकर परसाई के व्यंग्य में युगबोध” by Diksha Gupta effectively establishes Harishankar Parsai's eminent position in Hindi literature, appropriately recognizing him as a leading figure in satirical writing. It clearly highlights the wide-ranging scope of his satire, encompassing the political, social, religious, economic, and cultural dimensions of society. The abstract also

acknowledges Parsai's keen understanding of the demands and complexities of the modern era, and his remarkable ability to expose and critique societal distortions through his incisive and thought-provoking satirical works.

Partha Chattopadhyay in his article " A Bibliometric Study on Publications of CALIBER Convention 2022" analyzes the conference papers of CALIBER 2022 using bibliometric indicators—authorship pattern, degree of collaboration, and geographical distribution. It examines state-wise contributions, identifies the most frequently cited document types and journals in the references, and highlights citation patterns.

Rhitabrita Mukherjee and Debalina Gupta in their article "Why GDP Fails in Wetland Ecosystems: Blue Carbon and Ecological Invisibility in the Indian Sundarbans" examines how GDP-centric national accounting systems and project-level carbon markets contribute to the economic invisibility of blue carbon . Using the Indian Sundarbans as a case study, the paper synthesizes evidence on mangrove carbon stocks, land-use change, and carbon loss, showing that significant climate-relevant values remain absent from national income accounts.

In his contribution titled "Contraction Principle and Fixed Point Theorems in Quasi-normed Linear Space," Gobardhan Rano defines contraction and non-expansive mappings in quasi-normed linear spaces within the framework of the contraction principle. He further establishes fixed point results in continuous quasi-normed linear spaces by employing non-expansive self-mappings.

In her article, "Decadal Trends in Atmospheric Methane Over India: Insights from GOSAT and Non-Parametric Analysis," Gopa Bhoumik analyzes temporal and seasonal variations in atmospheric methane concentrations across India from April 2009 to December 2021, using daily observations from GOSAT alongside emissions data from the EDGAR (Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research). The study identifies agricultural practices and biomass burning as major contributors to seasonal methane fluctuations and emphasizes the necessity of targeted, sector-specific mitigation strategies to reduce methane emissions in India.

Ananya Pal, Pooja Das, and Jana Chakrabarti In their article "Impact of Gut Microbiota on Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: An Overview" highlight emerging evidence implicating gut microbiota dysbiosis as a key contributor to the pathophysiology of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Their article outlines how alterations in gut microbiota influence PCOS development through interconnected hormonal, metabolic, and inflammatory pathways.

Nirmalendu Das & Sumanta Mukhopadhyay

(Editors)

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রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধ পরিচয়
English Essays by Rabindranath Tagore

ড. অন্বেষা খান
অ্যাসিস্টেন্ট প্রফেসর, বাংলা বিভাগ, বেথুন কলেজ

সারসংক্ষেপ- রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইংরেজি রচনাবলির এক বৃহৎ অংশ জুড়ে আছে তাঁর ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধসমূহ। Gitanjali Song-Offereings প্রকাশের পর বিশ্বজুড়ে যে রবীন্দ্রখ্যাতি প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল তা ক্রমপ্রসারিত হয় Sadhana Nationalism, Personality, Creative, Unity, Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Talks in China-র মতো প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থমালার প্রকাশের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে। জাপান আমেরিকা নিউইয়র্ক লণ্ডন চীন আরও নানা স্থানে বিশিষ্ট বিদেশি ব্যক্তিত্বদের আহ্বানে একাধিকবার আমন্ত্রিত হয়েছেন প্রাবন্ধিক। কখনও পশ্চিমের বিদগ্ধ মানুষকে ভারতীয় ঔপনিষদিক চেতনায় উদ্বুদ্ধ করতে চেয়েছেন তিনি। কখনও বা মহাযুদ্ধের ভয়াবহতা থেকে সমগ্র বিশ্ববাসীকে ত্রাণ করতে চেয়েছেন। বিশ্বমানবের ধর্মজিজ্ঞাসার বিবিধ সমাধান এনেছেন তাঁর 'Religion of Man' বা 'Sadhana'-র মতো গ্রন্থে উপনিষদ-স্নাত রবীন্দ্রনাথ। এমনকি প্রাচীন ভারতের সঙ্গে চিনের নিবিড় মৈত্রীবন্ধনের প্রসঙ্গ উল্লেখ করে রবীন্দ্রনাথ চীনা ছাত্রদের উদ্দেশ্যে তাঁর বক্তৃতা রেখেছিলেন। চিনা ছাত্রদের বস্তুতান্ত্রিকতার দিকটি উপেক্ষা করে আত্মিক পূর্ণতার পথে এগিয়ে যেতে উদ্বুদ্ধ করেন প্রাবন্ধিক। তাই মনে হয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের অন্যান্য সৃষ্টিসম্ভারের মতোই ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থসমূহ আজও আমাদের জাতীয় তথা বৈশ্বিক জীবনে অত্যন্ত প্রাসঙ্গিক।

পঞ্চাশোর্ধ্ব রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর জীবনের দ্বিতীয়ার্ধে ইউরোপ আমেরিকা তথা পাশ্চাত্যের বিভিন্নত্র ভ্রমণকালে নিজের জীবনে চিন্তনে মননে ও কর্মধারায় নতুন দিশা খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন। অন্যতম সঙ্গী অনুরাগী সি.এফ. এন্ড্রুজকে তিনি বলেছিলেন,- পূর্ব-পশ্চিমের প্রকৃত মিলন সাধনের কাজে তাঁর ডাক পড়েছে এবং সেই ব্রত গ্রহণেও তিনি প্রস্তুত। ফলত অলস অনুবাদের মধ্যে আটকে থাকেনি তাঁর বিদেশি ভাষার সৃষ্টিসম্ভার। বিদেশের মাটিতে প্রয়োজনের তাগিদেই অগণিত বক্তৃতা নিবেদন ও প্রবন্ধ রচনাও চলেছে কবিতা গল্প তর্জমার পাশাপাশি। তারপর মহাযুদ্ধের পটভূমিকায় দেশবিদেশের রাজনৈতিক আবহাওয়াও পরিবর্তিত হয়েছে। সৃজনশীলতাকে উপেক্ষা করে আত্মঅহমিকায় অন্ধ পশ্চিমদেশ যে মত্ততার পরিচয় দিয়েছে তা যে মানব সভ্যতার পরিপন্থী ও ধ্বংসের ধ্বজাবাহী - তা সহজেই উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন সেদিনের প্রাচ্যকবি। তাই বৌদ্ধিক ও সাহিত্যিক পরিপার্শ্ব যখন বিশ্বভারে আলোড়িত, আন্দোলিত, তখন উপনিষদ-স্নাত রবীন্দ্রনাথ আধ্যাত্মিক মুক্তির পথে আত্মানুসন্ধানের বার্তা দিতে চেয়েছিলেন। সে কখনও সরাসরি ইংরেজিতে লেখা প্রবন্ধে অথবা বক্তৃতায়। বাংলা ভাষায় লেখা যেমন রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রবন্ধ অসংখ্য অগণিত, তেমনি তাঁর ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধসাহিত্যের কলেবরও সুবিশাল। সংক্ষেপে তার সামগ্রিক প্রবন্ধপরিচয় প্রদানের প্রয়াস বর্তমান প্রবন্ধটি।

কবিতা নাটকের পাশাপাশি Gitanjali Song offerings এর পরের বছরেই প্রকাশিত হয় Sadhana : The Realization of Life, রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রথম ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থ। ১৯১৩, অক্টোবরে লণ্ডন ম্যাকমিলান থেকে বেরোয় এই বই। এখানে আছে মোট আটটি প্রবন্ধ। ১) The Realation of the Individual to the Universe (ব্যষ্টি ও সমষ্টি সম্বন্ধে) ২) Soul Consciousness (আত্মবোধ) ৩) The Problem of Evil (পাপবোধ) ৪) The Problem of Self (আত্মসমস্যা) ৫) Realization of Love (ভক্তিযোগ), ৬) Realization in Action (কর্মযোগ), ৭) The Realization of Beauty (সৌন্দর্যবোধ) ৮) The Realization of the Infinite (বিশ্ববোধ)। প্রাচীন ভারতে ধর্মসাধনার মূলতত্ত্বটি কবি ছয় সপ্তাহে ছ'টি বক্তৃতার মধ্য দিয়ে প্রকাশ করেন (১৯শে মে - ১৬ই জুন, ১৯১৩)। কোয়েস্ট নামে বিখ্যাত পত্রিকার সম্পাদক জি.আর.এস.মীড তাঁদের সমিতির তত্ত্বাবধানে ক্যাক্সটন হলে কবির ভাষণের ব্যবস্থা করেন। Sadhana-র বক্তৃতার বিজ্ঞাপনে লেখা ছিল- 'Rabindranth Tagore's Lecturs on the Search for God', উপনিষদের শিক্ষাবিষয়ক এই প্রবন্ধগুলি আমেরিকায় পাঠের সূত্রপাতের কারণ অজিত চক্রবর্তীকে লেখা কবির চিঠির কিয়দংশ উদ্ধার করা যায়। 'এখানে Mr. [Albert R.] Vail নামে একজন Unitarian পাদ্রি আছেন বলে ...Unity club, এঁদের একটি ক্লাব আছে- সেখানে প্রতি রবিবার ভিন্ন ভিন্ন ধর্ম্ম সম্প্রদায় ও ধর্ম্মগুরুদের সম্বন্ধে বক্তৃতা ও আলোচনা হয়ে থাকে।... উপনিষৎ সম্বন্ধে কিছু বলবার জন্যে ইনি আমাকে ধরেছিলেন। ... তাই উপনিষদের ঋষিদের প্রতি সাধ্যমতো আমার কর্ত্তব্য পালনের জন্য শেষ মুহূর্তে আমাকে রাজি হতে হল।' (১৫ নভেম্বর ১৯১২, পত্র সংখ্যা ৭৯, ভক্ত ও কবি, পৃ. ১১৮) আশৈশব ঠাকুরবাড়ির ঔপনিষদিক আবহে লালিত রবীন্দ্রনাথ উপনিষদের ঋষিদের প্রতি সাধ্যমতো নিজের কর্তব্য সম্পাদনের কারণে ইউনিটি ক্লাবের প্রতি রবিবারের বক্তৃতায় বক্তার ভূমিকা পালনে অংশগ্রহণ করেন। কবি পঠিত প্রথম প্রবন্ধটি (The Relation of the Individual to the Universe; সেখানকার অধ্যাপকদের সবার ভালো লেগে যাওয়ায় কবিকে তাঁদের উৎসাহে ক্রমান্বয়ে একে একে সব প্রবন্ধগুলি লিখে পাঠ করতে হয়। পশ্চিমের বিদগ্ধ মানুষকে ভারতীয় ঔপনিষদিক তত্ত্বেই কবি উদ্বুদ্ধ করতে চেয়েছেন। যে প্রবন্ধটির নাম ছিল 'Work Realisation', পরে পরিবর্তিত হয় 'The Relation of the Individual to the Universe' এ এবং 'Self Realization' নামে প্রবন্ধটি 'Soul Consciousness' নামে Sadhana গ্রন্থের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়। সেদিন The Nation, The Manchester Guardian, The Daily Citizen, The Times প্রভৃতি পত্রিকায় এই নতুন প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থ সম্পর্কে ভূয়সী প্রশংসা মুদ্রিত হয়। The Nation পত্রিকার রিভিউতে গ্রন্থটিতে প্রকাশিত দার্শনিকতামুক্ত একান্ত গভীর মনের সন্ধান পাওয়া যায় যা একইসঙ্গে কবির আত্মগত জাতীয় ও বৈশ্বিক চেতনায় সমৃদ্ধ। 'Sadhana is no philosophic treatise; it is a personal statement which makes free, but not exclusive use of the philosophic formulae of Indian religion, in the course of expanding its author's vision of life" (Rabindranath Tagore And The British Press, London, 1990, P. 48) নিজের

প্রথম জীবনীকার আর্নেস্ট রীজকে বইটি উৎসর্গ করেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। প্রাচীন ভারতের ধর্মসাধনা নিয়ে যে সমস্ত ভাষণ দিয়েছেন তিনি, তার সাধর্ম্য খুঁজে পাওয়া যায় শান্তিনিকেতন প্রবন্ধমালা গ্রন্থে। Sadhana গ্রন্থে তারই ভাবনির্যাস অনুভব করা যায়। ১৯১২-র শেষদিকেই বিলেত থেকে শান্তিনিকেতনের আশ্রম অধ্যাপক অজিত চক্রবর্তীর সঙ্গে কবির পত্রালাপে জানা যায়, 'শান্তিনিকতন থেকে বেছে বেছে তর্জ্জমা' তিনি বই আকারে ছাপাতে চান। কেননা কবি তাঁর ব্রহ্মচেতনা ও ধর্মবোধকে পৌঁছে দিতে চান আমেরিকা ও ইংল্যাণ্ডের কাছে। অবশ্য ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধগুলি লিখতে লিখতে কবিকে অনেক সংযোজনও করতে হয়েছে। The Problem of Evil প্রবন্ধটি লেখার সময়ে অজিত চক্রবর্তীকে লেখা চিঠিতে কবির কৈফিয়ৎটি শোনা যায়-'অজিত, গতবারে আমি যে প্রবন্ধ পড়েছিলুম সেই প্রসঙ্গে দুই একজন শ্রোতা প্রশ্ন তুলেছিলেন Evil সম্বন্ধে আমার কি বক্তব্য আছে? আমি বলেছিলুম প্রশ্নটি অত্যন্ত কঠিন এবং মুখে মুখে তার মীমাংসা হওয়া শক্ত অতএব আমি লিখে বলব। সেইটে লিখতে বসেছি। এমনি করে আমি দেখচি-ইংরেজি রচনার জাল ক্রমশই আমাকে ঘনিয়ে ধরবার উদ্যোগ করচে' (ভক্ত ও কবি, পৃ. ১২২)। তাই The Problem of Evil প্রবন্ধের গোড়াতেই মানুষের পাপবোধের নিগূঢ় পরিচয়ের কথা তুলে ধরেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। 'The question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or in other words, why there is creation at all. ... Why are we?' (the Problem of Evil, Sisir Kumar Das, English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, vol.III, Delhi Sahitya Akademi, P.298) 'শান্তিনিকেতন' গ্রন্থের 'পাপ' প্রবন্ধে রবীন্দ্রনাথ পাপ থেকে মুক্তির পথ নির্দেশ করেছেন। 'সমস্ত অন্তঃকরণ দিয়ে সেই নির্মল স্বরূপকে বলতে হবে, বিশ্বানি দুরিতানি পরাসুব - সমস্ত পাপ দূর করো- একেবারে বিশ্বদুরিত, সমস্ত পাপ - একটুও বাকি থাকলে চলবে না- কেননা তুমি শুদ্ধং অপাপবিদ্ধং, আত্মা তোমাকেই চায়- সেই তার একমাত্র যথার্থ চাওয়া, সেই তার শেষ চাওয়া?' (রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলী, বিশ্বভারতী সুলভ সংস্করণ ১৩৯৫, সপ্তমখণ্ড পৃ. ৫২৮)

এভাবেই একের সঙ্গে অপরের সংযোগের সূত্র খুঁজে পান প্রাবন্ধিক 'O thou Self revealing one, reveal thyself in me.' যাবতীয় অন্ধকার নিরাশা অসম্ভাবনাকে প্রাবহিত করতে হবে আলোর দিকে, উৎকর্ষের দিকে, অসীমের দিকে। তবেই তো তাঁর কাছে পৌঁছানো যাবে। 'Soul Consciousness' এ মানবজীবনকে ভূমার উপলব্ধিতে পূর্ণ করে তোলার জন্য রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেন 'We are in misery because we are creatures of self - the self that is unyielding and narrow, that reflects no light, that is blind to the infinite.' (ESRT, vol.vol, p.295) প্রাবন্ধিকের এই দার্শনিক ভাবনা পশ্চিমের পাঠককে অনেকটা আশ্রয় দিতে পেরেছিল সেদিন। তাই দু-একটি নয় যে বহুসংখ্যক সংবাদপত্রে এই বইয়ের রিভিউ বেরোয়, সর্বত্র ছিল প্রশংসা আর প্রশংসা। কেন? - এই প্রশ্ন ভাবায় একালের পাঠককে। বস্তুত ধর্মচেতনার কথা অনাবৃত হয়েছে এই প্রবন্ধগুলিতে, তা কোন ভড়ং নয়, আড়ম্বর নয়, বাহ্যিক উপচারময় নয়, এ তো আত্মিক উপলব্ধির বহিঃপ্রকাশ। প্রকৃতির প্রতি, অরণ্যের প্রতি, সভ্যতার বিনম্রতা প্রকাশিত হয়েছে যেভাবে তা বারংবার

উল্লেখ করেছেন প্রাবন্ধিক তাঁর লেখায়। প্রকৃতির কাছে মানবজাতি যে চিরকালের ঋণী, একথা স্বীকার করে না পাশ্চাত্যবাসী। এই পার্থক্যটিকে তুলে ধরে একটি বিদেশি পত্রিকা সেদেশের সমালোচনা করে 'In the West we are always talking about conquering nature, as if she were our foe and not our mother; and Tagore would trace our western attitude in aprt to our economic activities'... (The Friend, 13 Feb. 1913, Rabindranath Tagore And The British Press, 1990, P.67)

'শান্তিনিকতন প্রবন্ধমালা'র দশম খণ্ডের প্রবন্ধ অর্থাৎ 'বিশ্ববোধ' এর সঙ্গে 'Sadhana' এর 'The Realization of the Infinite' এর বক্তব্যের প্রায় সমধর্মী। ভারতীয় ঋষিদের মনুষ্যত্বের সাধনাকে বিশ্বের শ্রেষ্ঠ সাধনা রূপে প্রতিপন্ন করা হয়েছে। ভারতবর্ষের সাধনা বিশ্ববোধের সাধনা, সাত্ত্বিকতার সাধনা ও সারা বিশ্বকে ভালোবেসে নিজের করে নেওয়ার সাধনা, সর্বানুভূতির সাধনা। প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্যের অধ্যাত্মচিন্তার ক্ষেত্রে উঠে আসে সেই গূঢ় সত্যকথন 'For thou dwellest in me and I in thee. Thou without me or I without thee are nothing' (EWRT, vol.II, P.345) এভাবেই ভারতীয় সাধনার বীজমন্ত্র সঞ্চারিত করতে চেয়েছিলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ পাশ্চাত্যবাসীর কাছে তাদের বস্তুসর্বস্ব যান্ত্রিক জীবনের প্রতিষেধক রূপে। 'ভারতবর্ষের এই মহৎ সাধনার উত্তরাধিকার যা আমরা লাভ করেছি তাকে আমরা অন্য দেশের শিক্ষা ও দৃষ্টান্তে ছোটো করে মিথ্যা করে তুলতে পারবে না।... জিগীষা নয়, জিঘাংসা নয়, প্রভুত্ব নয়, প্রবলতা নয়, বর্ণের সঙ্গে বর্ণের - ধর্মের সঙ্গে ধর্মের - সমাজের সঙ্গে সমাজের - স্বদেশের সঙ্গে বিদেশের ভেদ বিরোধ বিচ্ছেদ নয়, ছোটোবড়ো আত্মপর সকলের মধ্যেই উদারভাবে প্রবেশের যে সাধনা সেই সাধনাকেই আমরা আনন্দের সঙ্গে বরণ করব।' (রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলী, বিশ্বভারতী সুলভ সংস্করণ ১৩৯৫, সপ্তম খণ্ড পৃ. ৭২৫) তাই এককথায়, Sadhana জীবনবোধের গ্রন্থ। জীবনের পাপ-পুণ্য, ব্যক্তি আত্মা ও বিশ্ব আত্মার সম্পর্ক, পাপবোধের সমস্যা কতখানি প্রভৃতি জীবনের বিবিধ কঠিন প্রশ্নের সহজ সমাধানের পথ নির্দেশিকা দিয়েছেন প্রাবন্ধিক তাঁর দার্শনিক ব্যাখ্যার সাহায্যে। প্রকৃতির নিয়মে যে ফুল প্রস্ফুটিত হয়, তার মধ্যেও থাকে সৃষ্টির আনন্দ। মানুষ বাধ্য হয়ে বা প্রয়োজনের বশে যে কাজই করে না কেন, সেখানেও আছে সৃষ্টির নিগূঢ় রহস্য।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের পরবর্তী দুটি প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থ Nationalism ও Personality প্রকাশিত হয় একইসঙ্গে ১৯১৭ সালে। জাপান ও আমেরিকায় তিনি যে বক্তৃতাগুলি দিয়েছিলেন সেগুলি সঙ্কলিত হয়েছে এই গ্রন্থে। গ্রন্থদুটি পরস্পর পরিপূরক ও প্রাবন্ধিকের দুই রূপের পরিচায়ক। একটিতে মানুসের কনস্ট্রাকশন ও অন্যটিতে ক্রিয়েশন এর রূপের প্রকাশ বলে মনে করেন রবীন্দ্রজীবনীকার প্রভাতকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়। দুটি বইয়ের প্রকাশের ব্যবধান মাস খানেকের। Nationalism এর প্রকাশ ১৯১৭ এর ফেব্রুয়ারিতে লণ্ডন ম্যাকমিলান থেকে। এই বইয়ের তিনটি প্রবন্ধ হল ১) Nationalism in the west ২) Nationalism in Japan ৩) Nationalism in India। এছাড়া বইয়ের শেষ পরিচ্ছেদে নৈবেদ্য কাব্যের অন্তর্গত পাঁচটি কবিতার অনুবাদ একত্রে The Sunset of the Century নামে সন্নিবেশিত।

১৯১৩ এর নভেম্বরে কবির জন্য নোবেল পুরস্কার ঘোষণার মাস ছয়েকের মধ্যে শুরু হয় প্রথম মহাযুদ্ধ। দু বছরের মধ্যে বিশ্বযুদ্ধের ভয়াবহ কুফল দেখে চিন্তান্বিত কবি বিবদমান জাতির উদ্দেশ্যে যে ভাষণ দিলেন তারই সঙ্কলন Nationalism। ম্যাকমিলান কোম্পানির নিউইয়র্ক সংস্করণের প্রিফেসে দেখা যায় 'Nationalism in the West is one of a series of lectures delivered throughout the United States during in winter of 1916-17. Nationalism in Japan is based upon the lectures delivered in Japan before the Imperial University and the Keio Gijuku University in June and July, 1916. Nationalism in India written in the United States late in 1916, is the poet's reflection upon the state of his own country and world wide completeness to the discussion of Nationalism'

১৯১৩ সালে রচেস্টারে রবীন্দ্রনাথ Race Conflict নামে যে ভাষণ দেন, তারই বৃহত্তর রূপ Nationalism গ্রন্থে দেখা যায়। Individualism বা মানুষের ব্যক্তিস্বাতন্ত্র্যবোধ বৃহদায়তন দানব মূর্তিতে কীভাবে জগতকে সন্ত্রস্ত করে তুলেছে তা এই গ্রন্থের মূল প্রতিপাদ্য। এই গ্রন্থের প্রথম প্রবন্ধে পশ্চিমের নেশন দানবের নৃশংস রূপটি কীভাবে ইওরোপকে ধ্বংস করেছে, তার পরিচয় আছে। দ্বিতীয় প্রবন্ধে জাপান Nation এর নতুন অস্ত্র পেয়ে কীভাবে চীনের ওপর তার ধার পরীক্ষা ক'রে আত্মপ্রসাদ লাভ করেছে সে বিষয়টি উদ্ঘাটিত হয়েছে। তৃতীয় প্রবন্ধে ভারতবর্ষ আধ্যাত্মিক ঐক্যের বাণী প্রচার করেও শেষ পর্যন্ত সামাজিক ভেদকে কীভাবে চিরন্তন করেছিল তা-ই প্রতিপন্ন হয়।

প্রথম মহাযুদ্ধের আকস্মিক পরিণামেই পশ্চিমের সনাতন বিশ্বাস ও আদর্শের ভিত প্রায় ধূলিস্মাৎ হয়ে যায়। মানবাত্মার সমূহ ক্ষতির প্রতিকারেই এই বক্তৃতা নিবেদন। নেশন দানবের নৃশংস রূপটি যেহেতু পশ্চিমেরই নির্মাণ ও নেশন তত্ত্বের আবিষ্কার ও তাদের হাতে তাই রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রথম বক্তৃতাটি পশ্চিমের নেশন কেন্দ্রিক। তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন সভ্যতার বস্তুতান্ত্রিকতার প্রাচীর নিজের ভারেই খসে পড়বে একদিন। আর সমগ্র জাতিসত্তা মানবসত্তারই সমষ্টি রূপে পবিত্রতা নিয়ে সৌন্দর্য নিয়ে জাগ্রত হবে। তখনও ভারতবাসী তার ধর্ম-সমাজ-রীতিনীতি নিয়ে মেতেছিল, নেশন শব্দের সঙ্গে তাদের পরিচয় হয়নি। ইংরেজের আগমনে ভারতবর্ষেও ক্রমশ নতুন সমস্যার সূত্রপাত হয়। ধীরে ধীরে তৈরী হওয়া জাতিসংঘাতের রক্তস্নাত অধ্যায় পেরিয়ে পবিত্র সুস্নাত জগতে উত্তীর্ণ হতে চান রবীন্দ্রনাথ। '... When the morning comes for cleansing the blood-stained steps of the Nation along the highroad of humanity, we shall be called upon to bring our own vessel of sacred water— and with its sprinkling make the trumpled dust of the centuries blessed with fruitfulness.' (Nationalism in the West, EWRT, vol.II. p.435)

১৯১৭ -এর ১১ই জুন টোকিয়ো ইম্পিরিয়াল ইউনিভার্সিটিতে রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'The Message of India To Japan' বক্তৃতাটি পাঠ করেন। সেই ভাষণটিই Nationalism in Japan নামে Nationalism গ্রন্থভুক্ত হয়। জাপান সম্পর্কে তাঁর অগাধ বিশ্বাস, বহুশতাব্দীর অভ্যস্ত মোহনিদ্রা

থেকে জাগ্রত হয়ে প্রাচ্যসংস্কৃতির যথার্থ উত্তরাধিকারী জাপান সাফল্যের সঙ্গে নিজেকে নেশন রূপে প্রতিপন্ন করে। তার এই শক্তিমত্ততায় খুশি হওয়ার বদলে আতঙ্কিত হয় পশ্চিমের দেশগুলি। এই সন্দেহ আর পারস্পরিক হিংসাই আধুনিক নেশনের ধর্ম, রাষ্ট্রনীতির মূল কথা। এই মহাযুদ্ধই একদিন নেশনদানবের মৃত্যু নিশ্চিত করবে ও মানবের নবজন্ম ঘটাবে।

'Nationalism in India' প্রবন্ধটি রবীন্দ্রনাথ আর্বানায় Marrow Hall এ ৩০-শে ডিসেম্বর ১৯১৬ তে পাঠ করেন। ভারতবর্ষের মূল সমস্যাটি কোথায় তা প্রবন্ধের শুরুতেই চিহ্নিত করেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। 'Our real problem in India is not political. It is social.' অন্যদিকে দুর্ধর্ষ ইংরেজের আগমনের পরেও পশ্চিমের সঙ্গে ভারতীয় সংস্কৃতির সংগ্রাম থাকে অব্যাহত। মহাযুদ্ধেই হয়তো নেশন দানবের মৃত্যু নিশ্চিত হবে ও মানবের নবজন্ম ঘটবে। 'Nationalism is a great menace'. বস্তুতান্ত্রিকতার চাপে প্রভূত উপকরণের অপরিমেয় সঞ্চয়ভারে পশ্চিমী সভ্যতার নিজেরই শ্বাসরোধ হওয়ার উপক্রম হয়। সমগ্র পৃথিবীকে ধ্বংস করার জন্য নখদন্ত বিস্তারেও সে উদ্যোগী। এই সমূহ সর্বনাশের মধ্যেও ভারতবর্ষের আধ্যাত্মিক ঐক্য নিজেকে রক্ষার সমূহ শক্তি অর্জন করে। বিশ্বব্যাপী হানাহানি রেষারেষি স্বার্থপরতার মাঝে ভারতবর্ষের শান্ত বিনম্র স্বরূপটি প্রকাশিত হয় 'The Sunset of the Century' কবিতাগুচ্ছে 'Till in the midst of its unholy feast descends the sudden heaven piercing its heart of grossness.' একই ভাবনায় লেখা নৈবেদ্য কাব্যের ৬৪ সংখ্যক সনেটটি 'শতাব্দীর সূর্য আজি রক্তমেঘ-মাঝে/অস্ত গেল।' কবির বক্তব্য মহাযুদ্ধের রক্তলীলায় মত্ত হয়েছে স্বার্থান্ধ মানুষ। এই ভয়ঙ্কর অন্যায়ের নাম দেওয়া হয়েছে 'জাতিপ্রেম' (self love of nations) পরপর লেখা অন্যান্য সনেটগুলিতেও কবি সারা বিশ্বের হানাহানি-রেষারেষি-স্বার্থপরতার ছবি তুলে ধরার পাশাপাশি দুঃখাহত ভারতবর্ষের ছবি এঁকেছেন। 'বীভৎস আহার / বীভৎস ক্ষুধারে করে নির্দয় নিলাজ--- / তখন গর্জিয়া নামে তব রুদ্র বাজ।' তৃতীয় কবিতাতেও পশ্চিমের স্বার্থলুব্ধ রক্তাক্ততার পাশে কবি ভারতবর্ষের অশ্রুসিক্ত শান্তিবাণীর প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। শেষ লাইনে আশাবাদী কবি নবপ্রভাতের ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন। 'Thy morning waits behind the patient dark of the Easts / Meek and silent'? 'তোমার নিখিলপ্লাবী আনন্দ-আলোক / হয়তো লুকায়ে আছে পূর্বসিন্ধুতীরে /- দীর্ঘকাল, ব্রাহ্ম মুহূর্তের প্রতীক্ষায়।' তবে সারা বিশ্বের হানাহানির মধ্যে শান্তিই একমাত্র কবির আকাঙ্খার। 'Come, peace, thou daughter of God's own great suffering'. 'এসো শান্তি, বিধাতার কন্যা ললাটিকা, / নিশাচর পিশাচের রক্তদীপশিখা / করিয়া লজ্জিত।' ভারতবাসীকে স্পষ্টত উদ্দীপিত করেছেন কবি। পশ্চিমের প্রকাণ্ড সঞ্চয়ের তুলনায় দারিদ্র্যের সিংহাসনেই ভারতের অনেক বেশি প্রতিষ্ঠা প্রার্থনা করেন কবি। তাই ভারতবাসীর নিজের দৈন্যের জন্য লজ্জিত হওয়ার কোন কারণ নেই 'Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful / with your white rob of simpleness' বৈবেদ্য-র ৯৩ সংখ্যক সনেটে একই অভয়বাণী উচ্চারিত। 'কোরো না কোরো না

লজ্জা, হে ভারতবাসী, / শক্তিমদমত্ত ওই বণিক-বিলাসী, / ধনদৃপ্ত পশ্চিমের কটাক্ষসম্মুখে / শুভ্র উত্তরীয় পরি শান্ত সৌম্যমুখে / সরল জীবনখানি করিতে বহন।'

১৯১৭ এর মে মাসে লণ্ডন ম্যাকমিলান থেকে প্রকাশিত হয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের Personality প্রবন্ধগুলি সরাসরি ইংরেজিতে লেখা এবং অনুবাদে জড়তা না থাকায়, জটিল হলেও বেশ স্বচ্ছ। এই বইয়ের অন্তর্গত প্রবন্ধ হল -- 1) What is Art? 2) the World of Personality (3) The Second Birth 4) My School 5) Meditation 6) Woman. রবীন্দ্রনাথের জীবন মনন ও দর্শনের এক অন্তরঙ্গ প্রকৃতি উদ্ঘাটনে এই বইয়ের বিশেষ ভূমিকা আছে। মানুষ তার মহত্তর জীবনবোধকে কিভাবে পরিপূর্ণ জীবনদর্শনের মধ্য দিয়ে অনুভব করতে পারে, তাই দেখিয়েছেন প্রাবন্ধিক। তাঁর মতে আমাদের জীবনে আছে এক সুষম ছন্দোবদ্ধ গতি, গতির ছন্দেই সৃষ্টি জেগে ওঠে। ছন্দব্যত্যয়ে ঘটে অনাসৃষ্টি। প্রথম প্রবন্ধে Art অর্থাৎ শিল্প কী বোঝাতে গিয়ে এই বিষয়ের অবতারণা করেন প্রাবন্ধিক। ভাব ও রূপের সমবায়ে Art এর সৃষ্টি। ভাবের একটি রূপ যেমন সাহিত্যসৃষ্টি তেমনি অপর রূপ হল কলা বা বস্তুসৃষ্টি। রূপ ও অরূপ, দৃশ্য ও অদৃশ্য জগতের সেতুটিই হল আমাদের অহংবোধ বা Personality টলস্টয় ও ক্রোচের মতামত ও উঠে এসেছে। তবে শিল্পের সংজ্ঞাদানে একক মতের মধ্যে সীমাবদ্ধতা থাকে। কারণ 'A bull's-eye lantern view, is a clear view, but not a complete view.' কবির মতে ধর্ম ও নীতিকে বিসর্জন দিয়ে সুষম শিল্পসৃষ্টি সম্ভব নয়, কল্যাণ ও সুন্দরের মিলনেই তা সম্ভব। Art-এর মধ্যে মানুষের চরম আত্মপ্রকাশ। এ বিষয়ে লেখকের উপলব্ধি মনে রাখার মতো। ''বিশ্বের যেকানে প্রকাশের ধারা, প্রকাশের লীলা, সেখানে যদি মনটাকে সম্পূর্ণ করে ধরে দিতে পার তা হলেই অন্তরের মধ্যে প্রকাশের বেগ সঞ্চারিত হয়-আলো থেকেই আলো জ্বলে। দেখতে পাওয়া মানে হচ্ছে প্রকাশকে পাওয়া। - বিশ্বের প্রকাশকে মন দিয়ে গ্রহণ করাই হচ্ছে আর্টিস্টের সাধনা।' (যাত্রী, রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলী, বিশ্বভারতী, সুলভ সংস্করণ, খণ্ড উনিশ, প-. ৪৫১)।

Personality-র প্রবন্ধ মূলত পশ্চিমের মানুষের সামনে পাঠ করার জন্য লিখলেও শান্তিনিকেতনের সভায় কখনও পড়েছেন লেখক। ১৩২৪ নববর্ষ উদযাপনে কবির আমন্ত্রণে শান্তিনিকেতনে সমাগত অতিথিদের কাছে Personality-র Woman ও Nationalism-এর The cult of Nationalism প্রবন্ধদুটি কবি পড়ে শোনান। পরেরদিনও ঐ দুই গ্রন্থেরই The Second Birth ও Nationalism in India প্রবন্ধদুটি পড়ে শোনান রবীন্দ্রনাথ। তাৎপর্য বিশ্লেষণের মধ্য দিয়ে The Second Birth প্রবন্ধটি নির্বাচনের কারণ স্পষ্ট হয়। মানবেতর প্রাণীর তুলনায় মানুষ স্বতন্ত্র গুণের অধিকারী তার চিন্তাশক্তির গুণে। ক্রমশ সে ব্যক্তিগত জগৎ থেকে বিশ্বগত সম্পর্কের মধ্যে প্রসারিত হয়ে যায়। 'একমেবাদ্বিতীয়ম' সেই পরম ব্যক্তিত্বই এই বিশ্বজগতের স্রষ্টা। তিনি স্বয়ং আনন্দ-স্বরূপ; আনন্দ থেকেই জগতের সৃষ্টি। 'That is the supreme Path of this. / That is the Supreme Treasure of this, / That is the Supreme world of this. / That is the

Supreme joy of this' (EWRT, vol.II, P. 389) কবি ও কর্মী রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিজের সৃষ্টিশীল নৈপুণ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত শান্তিনিকেতন ব্রহ্মচর্য্যাশ্রমকে যেভাবে রূপায়িত করেন বিশ্বভারতী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে, তা সত্যই বিস্ময়কর। বেদ-উপনিষদ গভীর তত্ত্ব উদ্ঘাটনে Meditation প্রবন্ধটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।

এই বইয়ের সর্বশেষ প্রবন্ধ Woman এ সভ্যতার ধাত্রী স্বরূপা নারী শক্তির অনন্যতা প্রতিষ্ঠিত। রবীন্দ্রনাথ এমন এক আগামী পৃথিবীর সম্ভাবনা দেখেছেন, যেখানে শুধু মানুষের মধ্যে অর্থনৈতিক বা রাজনৈতিক প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা নয়, সামাজিক সহযোগিতা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হবে, সেখানেই গড়ে উঠবে নারীর নিজস্ব জগৎ। ১৯১৭ এর মে মাস থেকে সেপ্টেম্বরের মধ্যে এই বইয়ের রিভিউ বেরোয় তেরোটি পত্রিকায় 'The Daily Chronicle' এ 'Book of the Day' বিভাগে ১৯১৭, মে মাসে 'An Eastern Prophet' শিরোনামে ও 'The Times Literary Supplement' এ এক দীর্ঘ সমালোচনা প্রকাশিত হয় ৩১ মে ১৯১৭ 'Man the Creator' শিরোনামে। ১৮ই জুলাই ১৯১৭ 'The Yorkshire Post' এ নিবন্ধের শেষে রবীন্দ্রনাথের উচ্ছ্বসিত প্রশংসা করা হয়। 'The book enables me to understand why, when the author lectures in California, the hall he speaks in is always crowded to the door'. (Imaging Tagore : Rabindranath and the British Press, P. 261)

১৯১৯ এ ব্যাঙ্গালোর শহরে একটি শিল্প প্রদর্শনী উদ্বোধন উপলক্ষ্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'The Centre of Indian Culture' নামে তাঁর প্রবন্ধটি পড়ে শোনান। এখানে তিনি তাঁর বিশ্বভারতীর আদর্শ ব্যাখ্যা করেন। প্রবন্ধটি মাদ্রাজের আডিয়ারের Society for the Promotion of National Education এর উদ্যোগে পুস্তিকা আকারে প্রকাশিত হয়। পঞ্চাশ পৃষ্ঠার বইটি আঠারো পরিচ্ছেদে বিভক্ত, নন্দলাল বসুর আঁকা সতেরোটি ছবি সমন্বিত। প্রবন্ধটি অনুবাদ করেন অমূল্যরতন প্রামাণিক ভারতের শিক্ষার আদর্শ নামে, সবুজপত্র পত্রিকায় (১৩২৮ বঙ্গাব্দে) এটি চার সংখ্যায় ছাপা হয়।

বর্তমান প্রবন্ধের সূচনায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর উদ্দেশ্যটি অকপটে স্পষ্ট ভাষায় ব্যক্ত করেন। 'The question which I intend to discuss in the proper is, what should be the ideal of education in India' (EWRT , VOL.II, P-469 অন্ধ ব্রিটিশ অনুকরণে যান্ত্রিক শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি যে এদেশের পক্ষে একেবারেই অনুপযোগী, সেই প্রসঙ্গের অবতারণা করে রবীন্দ্রনাথ National Council of Education এর ব্যর্থতার কথাও উল্লেখ করেছেন। নিজস্ব মেধাবলে ভারতীয় জ্ঞান ভাণ্ডারের সমৃদ্ধি প্রমাণ করেছেন জগদীশচন্দ্র প্রফুল্লচন্দ্রের মতো ভারতীয় বিজ্ঞানীরা। প্রাবন্ধিকের উপলব্ধি, প্রকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় গড়ে তুলতে হলে ছাত্রদের বৌদ্ধিক ও আধ্যাত্মিক শক্তির বিকাশ সাধনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তাদের বস্তুগত প্রয়োজন সাধনের দিকেও লক্ষ্য রাখতে হবে। ছাত্রদের বৌদ্ধিক ও নৈতিক জীবনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অর্থনৈতিক দিকের সমন্বয় করে সার্বিক জীবন গড়ে তোলার লক্ষ্যে বিশ্বভারতীর স্থাপনা। ভারতীয় শিক্ষাধারাকে সারা বিশ্বে পরিব্যাপ্ত করার অভিপ্রায়ে প্রবন্ধটির অবতারণা। তাঁর 'বিশ্বভারতী' প্রবন্ধের সঙ্গে বক্তব্যের সাধর্ম্য লক্ষ্য করা যায়। ইংরেজি ও বাংলায় লেখা দুটি প্রবন্ধেই রবীন্দ্রনাথ অন্তত তিনটি বিষয়ের ওপর জোর দিয়েছেন। প্রথমত তাঁর মতে

ভারতবর্ষের শিক্ষাব্যবস্থায় বৈদিক যুগ থেকে শুরু করে বৌদ্ধ, জৈন, মুসলমান, সকলের মনকে একত্রে সম্মিলিত করতে হবে এবং এভাবেই ভারতবর্ষ তার সমগ্রতা লাভ করবে। দ্বিতীয়ত, বিদেশি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অনুকরণ নয়, 'বিশ্বভারতী'তে বিভিন্ন মনীষীদের আহ্বান করে তাঁদের সাধনা ও সৃষ্টিকর্মের মাধ্যমে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিদ্যার উৎসধারা প্রবাহিত করতে হবে। তৃতীয়ত, রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর 'বিশ্বভারতী' বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অর্থশাস্ত্র, কৃষিতত্ত্ব, স্বাস্থ্যবিদ্যা প্রভৃতি পঠন-পাঠনের পাশাপাশি গো-পালন, বস্ত্রবয়ন, কৃষিকর্ম প্রভৃতি জীবিকার সঙ্গে ছাত্রদের ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে সংযুক্ত করার পরিকল্পনা করেন।

Nationalism ও Personality-র সঙ্গে সাদৃশ্য আছে Creative Unity নামে পরবর্তী প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থটির। ১৯২২-এ নিউয়র্ক ম্যাকমিলন ও প্রায় সঙ্গে সঙ্গে লণ্ডন ম্যাকমিলান থেকে প্রকাশিত এই বই। ১৯২০-২১-এ ইওরোপ আমেরিকা ভ্রমণকালে যে সব বক্তৃতা দিয়েছেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ সেগুলি আছে এই বইতে। এই বইয়ের প্রবন্ধগুলি হল - ১) The Poet's Religion ২) The Creative Ideal ৩) The Religion of the Forest ৪) An Indian Folk Religion ৫) East and West ৬) The Modern Age ৭) The Spirit of Freedom ৮) The Nation ৯) Woman and Home ১০) An Eastern University -- বিভিন্ন প্রবন্ধের মধ্যে কী বলতে চেয়েছেন সেকথা বইয়ের ভূমিকায় বলেছেন প্রাবন্ধিক। আমাদের ব্যক্তি আমির মধ্যে সেই 'অসীম' এক এর অস্তিত্বের অনুভবটি ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন তিনি। সমগ্র বিশ্বের কাব্য সঙ্গীত চিত্রকলা ইত্যাদির বহুমুখী দিক কীভাবে তাঁর মধ্যে এক ঐক্যে সমবেত হয়েছে তা তিনি উপনিষদের সূত্রে বুঝিয়েছেন।

'The Poet's Religion' প্রবন্ধে তিনি পাশ্চাত্যের একাধিক কবির প্রসঙ্গ এনেছেন এবং মানুষের দুঃখানুভূতির সঙ্গে পরমাত্মার স্বর্গীয় আনন্দবোধের ঐক্যস্থাপনার কথা বলেছেন। বিশ্বসৃষ্টির সঙ্গে আমাদের ব্যক্তিগত সৃষ্টির সম্পর্ক নিয়ে তাঁর মনে হয়- 'Through Creation man expresses his truth' এই সত্যতাই তাকে চালনা করে 'full realization of the divine in humanity'. যে কোন সৃষ্টির বিভিন্ন রূপভেদ থাকলেও শেষ পর্যন্ত তাদের মধ্যে ঐক্য তো থাকবেই। 'Unity' র সংযোগসাধন ছাড়া সৃষ্টিকার্য্য অসাধ্য। সার্থক শিল্পসৃষ্টির পিছনে যুক্তি বুদ্ধি ও নান্দনিক দিকের অনুপাত বজায় রাখা প্রয়োজন। তাই তাঁর প্রসঙ্গত মনে পড়ে কীটসের কথা ('Beauty is truth, truth Beauty')। সমগ্র বিশ্ব যেন একটি কবিতার মতো (World verse) যার মধ্যে ঈশ্বরের আনন্দের প্রকাশ। আনন্দই মূল কথা। মনে পড়ে ম্যাথু আর্নল্ডের কবিতার কথা। পাঠক অনুভব করে কবিতা কীভাবে তাকে বদ্ধ ক্ষুদ্র সীমা থেকে বিশ্বের উন্মুক্ত প্রান্তরে মুক্তি দেয়। 'An Indian Folk Religion' এ বাউলের চর্যা ও বোধের সঙ্গে বুদ্ধদেবের মতাদর্শের সাধর্ম্য খুঁজেছেন তিনি। The Modern Age প্রবন্ধে মহাযুদ্ধের বিভীষিকাময় পরিণামে উদ্বিগ্ন রবীন্দ্রনাথ সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন, বস্তুগত পৃথিবীর বিজ্ঞান ও বাণিজ্য মানুষকে শক্তি দিতে পারে, কিন্তু একমাত্র আধ্যাত্মিক ঐক্যবোধই আমাদের মনে শান্তি দিতে পারে। 'Woman and Home' প্রবন্ধে তিনি নারীশক্তি

সম্বন্ধে আশ্বাসের বাণী প্রচার করেছেন। অবশেষে 'An Eastern University' প্রবন্ধে বিশ্বভারতী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রতিষ্ঠার ইতিহাস বিবৃতির সঙ্গে সঙ্গে পাশ্চাত্যের বস্তুতান্ত্রিক সভ্যতা তার লোভ সন্দেহ অবিশ্বাস নিয়ে যে আত্মিক বিপদ ডেকে এনেছে সেকথাও জোরালো ভাবে জানিয়েছেন প্রাবন্ধিক। তাই ক্ষমতার জোর নয়, মানুষের নৈতিক শক্তিতে বিশ্বাসের প্রয়োজন অনুভব করেন তিনি। রবীন্দ্র-জীবনীকার প্রভাতকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায় এই বইয়ের নামকরণ সম্পর্কে হেনরি বার্গসঁর ক্রিয়েটিভ ইভোলিউশন তত্ত্বের কথা মনে করান। আদ্যন্ত দার্শনিক চিন্তা চেতনার অভিব্যক্তিতে মোড়া Creative Unity-র জনপ্রিয়তার কথাও স্বীকার করতে হয়। বই প্রকাশের এক মাসের মধ্যে সাতটি ও পরের মাসে তার এগারোটি রিভিউ প্রকাশিত হয় বিদেশের একাধিক নামী পত্রিকায়। পরিসংখ্যানের চেয়ে বড় প্রমাণ আর কী বা হতে পারে!

১৯২১ এর নিউইয়র্ক ম্যাকমিলান থেকে 'Thoughts From Rabindranath Tagore' বইটি প্রকাশিত হয় যা 'Thoughts Relics' এর পরিবর্তিত রূপ। সি.এফ.এণ্ড্রুজ-ই সম্পাদনা করেন 'Thoughts From Rabindranath Tagore বইটি। এখানে ১৯১টি অনুচ্ছেদ আছে। বিভিন্ন অনুচ্ছেদে প্রাবন্ধিকের চিন্তাভাবনা বিচিত্র বিষয় ঘিরে আছে। প্রকৃতিমাতাকে অবহেলা করেও মানুষ প্রকৃতির কাছে ঋণী- এবিষয়ে আলোচনা করেছেন প্রাবন্ধিক প্রথম খণ্ডে। আধ্যাত্মিক উপলব্ধির মধ্য দিয়ে আমরা জীবনের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ তাৎপর্য অর্জন করতে পারি - এমন সব দার্শনিক চিন্তাচর্চার মধ্যেই এই বইয়ের পরিসর সীমাবদ্ধ। জীবনকে প্রাবন্ধিক এক চিরন্তন প্রক্রিয়া বলে মনে করেন, তার চিরন্তনতার মূলে সত্যতা ও বিশ্বাসের ভূমিকাই প্রধান।

১৯১৩ থেকে ১৯২২ এর মাঝামাঝি সময়ে অ্যাণ্ড্রুজকে লেখা রবীন্দ্রনাথের পত্রাবলি নিয়ে গড়ে উঠেছে। 'Letters From Abroad' বইটি। এটি উইলিয়াম পিয়ার্সনের স্মৃতিতে উৎসর্গিত। আণ্ড্রুজ ও পিয়ার্সনের নাম রবীন্দ্রনাথের জীবন ও কর্মপ্রবাহে পাশাপাশি উচ্চারিত। রোটনস্টাইনের বাড়িতে অ্যাণ্ড্রুজের সঙ্গে প্রথম সাক্ষাৎ হয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের। তারপর আজীবন ভারতবর্ষের জন্য নিজেকে নিবেদন করেন অ্যাণ্ড্রুজ। দিল্লির সেন্ট স্টিফেন্স কলেজে যোগদান ও অধ্যাপনা, শান্তিনিকেতন আশ্রমে আত্মনিয়োগ, গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে সত্যাগ্রহে যোগ দিতে দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা যাত্রা, ইত্যাদির মধ্যে দিয়ে অ্যাণ্ড্রুজ যে কতখানি ভারতবর্ষের সঙ্গে একাত্ম হয়েছিলেন তা বোঝা যায়।

বইয়ের প্রথমেই অ্যাণ্ড্রুজের লেখা দুটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রবন্ধ আছে 'An Essay on the Bengal Renaissance' এবং 'An Essay on the Personality of Tagore' । এরপরে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বিভিন্ন জায়গা থেকে একাধিক চিঠি লিখেছেন তাঁকে। সেই সব পত্রে লণ্ডন থেকে ফিরে আসার ব্যাকুলতা, বা শিলাইদহে বিজনবাসের কথা, মহর্ষি ও সারদা দেবীর মৃত্যুর পরে মৃত্যু-উত্তীর্ণ শুভ্র সুন্দর জগতে প্রবেশের কথা-ইত্যাদি উঠে এসেছে। পরবর্তী চিঠিপত্রে বিশ্বযুদ্ধের সূচনায় কবিমনের যথেষ্ট উদ্বেগের প্রকাশ আছে। কবির The Fruit-Gathering কাব্যের The Boatman, The Trumpet, The Oarsman কবিতার প্রসঙ্গ এখানে আলোচিত হয়েছে। ১৯১৪ তে খ্রীষ্টের

জন্মদিনে রবীন্দ্রনাথ অ্যাণ্ড্রুজকে যে বাংলা কবিতাটি (বিচার, বলাকা) উপহার দিয়েছিলেন, তারই অনুবাদ 'Judgement' এই পত্রের অন্তর্গত। সেখানে যীশুখ্রীষ্টের বিচারশক্তি সহনশীলতা ও ক্ষমাপরায়ণতার প্রতি বিনম্র শ্রদ্ধাবনত রবীন্দ্রনাথ। 'Thy forgiveness was in the thunderstone,/ in the shower of blood; in the / angry red of the Sunset.' (EWRT, vol.III, Letters to a Friend, p.241, FruitGathering, No. 36) পরবর্তী অধ্যায়ের চিঠিপত্রে ভারতের জাতিবৈষম্য যে কবিকে কতটা পীড়িত করেছে তার প্রতিফলন আছে, তার মধ্যে এশিয়া আফ্রিকার ওপরে ইউরোপের নির্যাতনের ছায়া লক্ষ্য করা যায়। এছাড়া কোনো কোনো চিঠিতে কাশ্মীরের নৈসর্গিক বর্ণনার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মানবজীবনে শান্তম শিবম অদ্বৈতম এর তাৎপর্য্য ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন। এছাড়া শান্তিনিকেতন ব্রহ্মচর্যাশ্রমে ছাত্রদের শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থা গ্রন্থপ্রণয়ন ইত্যাদির মধ্যে কবির আনন্দ যাপনের কথা জানা যায়। অর্থাৎ একদিকে ব্রহ্মচর্যাশ্রম থেকে বিশ্বভারতী গড়ে ওঠার পরিকল্পনা ও তৎকালীন ভারতবর্ষের ওপরে ব্রিটিশ রাজত্বের দুর্বিষহ অত্যাচারের কথাও উঠে এসেছে তাঁর চিঠিপত্রে। তবে, অ্যাণ্ড্রুজকেই তিনি রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতা থেকে আশ্রমকে মুক্ত রাখার আহ্বান জানান। রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই আশ্রমের বিশ্বব্যাপী সাফল্যের স্বপ্ন দেখেছেন ও প্রাচ্য-পাশ্চাত্যের মেলবন্ধনের জন্য সচেষ্ট হয়েছেন। এর দ্বারাই মানব সভ্যতার সামঞ্জস্য ও পূর্ণতা আনা সম্ভব বলে মনে করেছেন তিনি। বন্ধুকে লেখা পত্রই কখন যেন লেখকের জীবনভাষ্য হয়ে পত্রসাহিত্যের আকার নিয়েছে।

১৯৩১ এ রবীন্দ্রনাথের 'The Child' কবিতা রচনার সমকালেই প্রকাশিত হয় "The Religion of Man" বইটি। ১৯৩০-এ ১৯, ২১ ও ২৬শে মে অক্সফোর্ডের ম্যানচেষ্টার কলেজে রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে হিবার্ট বক্তৃতা পরিবেশন করেন সেগুলিই এই বই-এর অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়েছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই বই উৎসর্গ করেন লিওনার্ড এলমহার্স্টের স্ত্রী ডরোথি এলমহার্স্টকে। এই বইয়ের প্রথম সংস্করণে ছিল মোট দশটি প্রবন্ধ। ১) The Prophet ২) The Vision ৩) The Man of My Heart ৪) The Music Maker ৫) The Artist ৬) Man's Nature ৭) The Meeting ৮) The Teacher ৯) Spiritual Freedom ১০) The Four States of Life। বইয়ের প্রিফেসে রবীন্দ্রনাথ লেখেন- 'The fact that one theme runs through all only proves to me that the Religion of Man has been growing within my mind as a religious experience and not merely as a pholosophical subject' এই হিবার্ট বক্তৃতাদানের পরে একাধিক পত্র-পত্রিকায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ সম্পর্কে উচ্ছ্বসিত প্রশংসা বেরোয়।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের উপরিউক্ত বক্তৃতাগুলি মূলত হিন্দুধর্মভাবাশ্রয়ী হলেও বিশ্বমানবের ধর্মজিজ্ঞাসা পূরণ করেছে। তাঁর ধর্মের নাম 'Religion of Man' । উপনিষদ-স্নাত রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনুভব যুক্তি ও বুদ্ধির সঙ্গে কল্পনাশক্তিও থাকা প্রয়োজন, যার সাহায্যে ঈশ্বরের প্রতি ভালোবাসায় ও সেবায় প্রণত হওয়া যায়। বিজ্ঞান দর্শন শিল্প বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে মানুষের চেতনার বিকাশে বৃহত্তর অর্থে মানুষের ধর্ম বিকশিত হয়েছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ তথাকথিত মুক্তিকামী ধর্মসাধকদের চিন্তাভাবনা থেকে সরে এসে গ্রাম্য

বাউলসঙ্গীত ও কবীরের দোঁহার মর্মার্থ নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন। এই বইয়ের পরিশিষ্টে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বাউল নিয়ে কথা প্রসঙ্গে নরহরি ঠাকুর, দাদু, রজ্জব, ছক্কু ঠাকুর নমঃশূদ্র গঙ্গারাম প্রমুখের গানের প্রসঙ্গ এনেছেন। এই বই সম্পর্কে খুব বেশি রিভিউ তেমন চোখে পড়েনা। বিদেশের সাপ্তাহিক Listner পত্রিকায় সমালোচক Edward Shillto বলেন, এখানে দেখতে পাবেন, বিজ্ঞান ও দর্শনের ক্ষেত্রে নয়, ধর্মের ক্ষেত্রে কবির কী কী বিশেষ অবদান আছে। বিভিন্ন দেশে শ্রেষ্ঠ ধর্মগুরুরা দূত হয়ে মানুষের অবয়ব ধরে আসেন ও মুক্তির কথা বলেন। তাঁদের ধর্মমত ও মতবাদ কালোত্তীর্ণ হওয়া প্রয়োজন। এই মূল বক্তব্যটি নানা উপমা দিয়ে বিচার বিশ্লেষণ করেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর 'The Religion of Man' গ্রন্থে।

'Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity' (১৯৩২) গ্রন্থটি কলকাতার ২১০ কর্ণওয়ালিশ স্ট্রীটের বিশ্বভারতী বুকশপ থেকে প্রকাশিত হয়। দেশ ও ছাত্রদের প্রতি অত্যন্ত স্নেহপ্রবণ আচার্য প্রফুল্লচন্দ্র রায়ের প্রতি বইটি উৎসর্গ করেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। এই গ্রন্থে আছে ১৯৩২ সালে পুনার ওয়ার্ধা জেলে গান্ধীজি থাকাকালীন তাঁকে লেখা রবীন্দ্রনাথের টেলিগ্রাম, মহাদেব দেশাইকে লেখা রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও অমিয় চক্রবর্তীর টেলিগ্রাম, বোম্বাই-এর আর্থার রোড জেলে মীরা বেনের প্রতি রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিঠি, শান্তিনিকেতনে প্রদত্ত কবির '20th September' ভাষণ , মহাত্মাজীর অনশনভঙ্গ, তাঁর জন্মদিনে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাষণ ইত্যাদি। ওয়ার্ধা জেলে অনশনকারী ত্যাগব্রতী গান্ধীজীর প্রতি রবীন্দ্রনাথের তাঁর অন্তরের গভীর দুঃখমিশিত শ্রদ্ধা জ্ঞাপন করেছেন। তিনি বুঝেছেন স্বদেশের মুক্তির জন্য গান্ধীজীর এই কঠিন অনশন ব্রিটিশ সরকারের কাছে গুরুত্ব না পেলেও দেশবাসীর কাছে ব্যর্থ হবে না।

'East and West' গ্রন্থের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়েছে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে লেখা অক্সফোর্ড থেকে গিলবার্ট মারে নামে এক অধ্যাপকের চিঠি এবং তার উত্তরে শান্তিনিকেতন থেকে লেখা রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিঠি (১৬ সেপ্টেম্বর ১৯৩৪)। ১৯৩৫-এ 'An International Series of Open Letters' নামে এই চিঠিগুলি প্রকাশিত হয় প্যারিসের এক আন্তর্জাতিক প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে। রবীন্দ্রভক্ত পূর্ব-পশ্চিমের কবি চিন্তাবিদ অধ্যাপক মারে দেশ-জাতি-নির্বিশেষে সমগ্র মানবের মধ্যে ঐক্যের আবেদন রাখেন। উত্তরে রবীন্দ্রনাথও প্রায় নয় পৃষ্ঠার দীর্ঘ পত্রে পশ্চিমী সভ্যতার শক্তির মদমত্ততা, বস্তুতান্ত্রিক বিজ্ঞানের অপব্যাবহার ইত্যাদি প্রসঙ্গ এনেছেন। পক্ষান্তরে প্রাচ্য সভ্যতার আধ্যাত্মিকশক্তি থাকা সত্ত্বেও দুর্বলতা জাতিভেদ প্রথার সংস্কারবদ্ধতা ইত্যাদির উল্লেখ করেছেন। পরিশেষে রবীন্দ্রনাথ মহাত্মাজীর সদিচ্ছা ও আচরণের পবিত্রতা ভারতবর্ষের মানুষের মনে যে উদ্দীপনা সঞ্চার করেছে, তার প্রশংসা করেছেন। সংস্কার মুক্ত আধুনিক যুগে জন্মগ্রহণ করে রবীন্দ্রনাথ গর্বিত এবং বিশ্বমানবের মেলবন্ধনে নতুন যুগের আগমনের উজ্জ্বল সম্ভাবনায় তিনি আশান্বিত। 'I feel proud that I have been born in this great age. I know that it must take time before we can adjust our minds to a condition which is not only new, but almost exactly the opposite of the old. (East and West, ESRT, vol.II, P355)

১৯২৫ এ কলকাতা অরুণোদয় আর্ট প্রেস থেকে বেরোয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের পরবর্তী বক্তৃতা সঙ্কলন 'Talks in China' নামের বইটি। ১৯২৪ এর এপ্রিল-মে মাসে চিনের বিভিন্নত্র তিনি যে সমস্ত বক্তৃতা দিয়েছেন, সেগুলি এই বইতে সঙ্কলিত হয়। বই-এর সূচনায় পিকিং এর ইউনিভার্সিটি এসোসিয়েশনের প্রেসিডেন্ট লিয়াং চি চাও প্রদত্ত ভাষণটি দীর্ঘ ভূমিকা রূপে স্থান পেয়েছে। সেখানে ছাত্রদের উদ্দেশ্যে তিনি প্রদত্ত ভাষণে রবীন্দ্রনাথ তথা ভারতীয় সংস্কৃতির প্রতি সশ্রদ্ধ অনুরাগ প্রকাশ করেছেন। চিন ও ভারতের দীর্ঘদিনের শিক্ষা-সংস্কৃতির আদান-প্রদানের সম্পর্কটি তিনি ব্যাখ্যা করেন। তাঁর মতে রবীন্দ্রনাথের এই চিন ভ্রমণ উভয় দেশের মধ্যে প্রেম ও সৌহার্দ্যের সম্পর্ক নতুন করে প্রতিষ্ঠা করবে এবং নতুন ইতিহাস রচনা করবে। তবেই তাঁর এই সফর প্রকৃত তাৎপর্যময় হয়ে উঠবে।

চিনের ছাত্রদের প্রতি বক্তৃতায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর আবির্ভাব কালের গুরুত্ব নিরূপণ করে, নিজেকে সাহিত্যিক আন্দোলনের অন্যতম পুরোধা বলে মনে করেছেন। পণ্ডিতী জড়তা থেকে বাংলা ভাষা ও সাহিত্যকে মুক্ত করে তাকে সার্বিক সহনক্ষমতা, শ্রী ও সৌন্দর্যে সমৃদ্ধ করতেই উদ্যোগী হয়েছিলেন তিনি। সেখানে একাধিক বক্তৃতায় তাঁর বক্তব্য ছিল ভারতবর্ষ তথা এশিয়ার চিরন্তন ঐতিহ্য বিশ্বকে বর্বরতা ও অন্ধ কুংস্কার থেকে মুক্ত করা। কারণ তিনি মনে করেছেন, "Reliance of power is the characteristic of barbarism" অন্য একটি বক্তৃতায় প্রাচীন ভারতের সঙ্গে চিনের নিবিড় মৈত্রী স্থাপনের প্রসঙ্গে রবীন্দ্রনাথ চীন ও বিশ্বভারতী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পারস্পরিক ছাত্র ও অধ্যাপক বিনিময়ের মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা-সংস্কৃতির আদানপ্রদানের সুযোগ তৈরী করেছিলেন তিনি। চিনা ছাত্রদের বস্তুতান্ত্রিকতার দিকটা উপেক্ষা করে আত্মিক পূর্ণতার পথে এগিয়ে যেতে উদ্বুদ্ধ করেন প্রাবন্ধিক।

এছাড়া রবীন্দ্রনাথের আরও অসংখ্য বক্তৃতা প্রবন্ধ আছে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইংরেজি সাহিত্যরচনাবলিতে। ১৯১২ থেকে ১৯৪১ পর্যন্ত শেষ ত্রিশ বছরের চিন্তা-ভাবনার আধার রূপে আত্মপ্রকাশ করে এই বক্তৃতা ও প্রবন্ধগুলি। ১৯৪১ এ লেখা 'Crisis In Civilisation' তাঁর উল্লেখযোগ্য বক্তৃতা। যথেষ্ট সাহিত্যমূল্য ব্যতিরেকে এই প্রবন্ধগুলি ভারতবর্ষের এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সময়ের সামাজিক রাজনৈতিক ও ঐতিহাসিক প্রচ্ছদ। বাংলা প্রবন্ধ সাহিত্যের মতোই রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধ বক্তৃতার সংখ্যা অগণন। এছাড়া হয়তো আরও অনেক খোলাচিঠি, সাক্ষাৎকার, শ্রদ্ধাজ্ঞাপন, বক্তৃতা আমাদের আলোচনার বাইরে থেকে গেল। একটা বিষয় স্পষ্ট, তাঁর এই অগণিত ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধ তো বাংলা থেকে ইংরেজিতে অনুবাদ সাহিত্য নয়, একই লেখকের দুটি ভাষার বক্তব্যে ভাবনা-চিন্তার সমধর্মিতা অবশ্য কাঙ্খিত। পঞ্চাশোর্ধ যে রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিজের দ্বিতীয় বাসভূমি খুঁজে নিয়েছিলেন পৃথিবীর আর এক প্রান্তে, সেই পাশ্চাত্য মননকে কতখানি গ্রহণ বর্জন ও সমালোচনা করেছেন, তার বিস্তৃত সুস্পষ্ট আলেখ্য নির্মিত হয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইংরেজি প্রবন্ধ পরিচয়ে। বিদেশি ভাষায় কবির এই বিপুল সংখ্যক প্রবন্ধ রচনায় এই বিষয়টিও স্পষ্ট, বস্তুতান্ত্রিক পাশ্চাত্য সভ্যতার শক্তির মদমত্ত রূপে আহত কবি বারংবার প্রাচ্যের শান্তিপূর্ণ আধ্যাত্মিক ব্যক্তিত্বের আদর্শটি তাদের

সামনে তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন। সুইডেন থেকে রবীন্দ্রনাথের নোবেল প্রাপ্তি নিঃসন্দেহে প্রাচ্য-পাশ্চাত্যের মধ্যে সাগর-অতিক্রমী সেতুবন্ধনে সহায়ক হয়েছে, যা পশ্চিমী মানুষের সেদিন বেশি প্রয়োজন ছিল। মহাযুদ্ধের বিভীষিকাময় পরিণামে উদ্বিগ্ন রবীন্দ্রনাথ উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন, বস্তুগত পৃথিবীর বিজ্ঞান-বাণিজ্য মানুষকে শক্তি দিতে পারে, কিন্তু একমাত্র আধ্যাত্মিক ঐক্যবোধই তাকে শান্তির সন্ধান দিতে পারে। এই আধ্যাত্মিক শক্তির অভাবই পশ্চিমী সভ্যতাকে যন্ত্রমুখী করে তোলে। তাই উপনিষদস্নাত রবীন্দ্রনাথ 'আনন্দরূপমৃতম্' ঈশ্বরের অপরূপ রহস্যময় সৌন্দর্যের সম্ভারে সমৃদ্ধ করেছেন তাঁর Sadhana ও অন্যান্য প্রবন্ধাবলি। কোনো নাস্তিক্যবাদ নয়, রবীন্দ্রনাথ আস্তিক্যবাদী। প্রাচ্য-পাশ্চাত্যের মেলবন্ধনের উজ্জ্বল সম্ভাবনার ছবিটি উদ্ভাসিত হয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের সুনিশ্চিত আত্মপ্রত্যয়ে- 'The East did once meet the West profoundly in the growth of her life. Such union became possible, because the East came to the West with the ideal that is creative, and not with the passion that destroys the moral bonds. The mystic consciousness of the infinite, which she brought with her, was greatly needed by the man of the West to give him his balance.' (EWRT, VOL II, P. 537)

সহায়ক গ্রন্থসমূহ ঃ (বাংলা)

১। প্রশান্তকুমার পাল, (প্রথম-নবম খণ্ড), আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, কলকাতা, ১৯৮২-২০০৩

২। নিত্যপ্রিয় ঘোষ, ইংরেজি লেখায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ, এবং মুশায়েরা, কলকাতা, ২০১০।

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To the So-Called Cultured Urban Gaze: Nachnis Are Artists, Not *Rakkhita* or *Patita*!

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the persistent marginalisation of the Nachni performers of western Bengal and critiques the cultural hierarchies that shape their social visibility. It argues that the widespread perception of Nachnis as *rakkhita* or *patita* arises not from the nature of their artistic practice but from entrenched prejudices that govern the urban understanding of rural performance traditions. The study examines the historical evolution of the Nachni-Rasik partnership, demonstrating that what is commonly interpreted as a morally compromised association originates in a system of aesthetic mentorship, regional patronage, and hereditary knowledge transmission. Through engagement with ethnographic evidence, cultural history, and contemporary visual documentation, the paper reveals how the Nachnis sustain an intricate performance tradition rooted in Jhumur music and agrarian ceremonial culture. It further examines how Nachni art remains excluded from state institutions, cultural registers, and mainstream artistic discourse, highlighting the contradiction between public claims of heritage preservation and the limited recognition or structural support actually extended to the community. By situating the Nachni within a wider South Asian framework that includes Baijis, Devadasis, and Jogti performers, the discussion highlights the cross-regional pattern of aesthetic appropriation combined with social stigmatization. The paper concludes that meaningful cultural justice for the Nachni community requires dismantling the urban moral lens through which they are viewed and acknowledging their role as bearers of sophisticated folk aesthetics and custodians of an endangered tradition.

Keywords

Nachni performers, Rasik tradition, Folk aesthetics, Cultural marginalization, South Asian performance cultures, Jhumur, Patriarchy and stigma, Heritage politics

Introduction

The cultural identity of Bengal is often projected as progressive, intellectually vibrant, and aesthetically mature. Yet, this celebrated image contains within it several unresolved contradictions. Beneath the surface of cultural pride lies a persistent hierarchy that differentiates between what is regarded as 'cultivated' and what is treated as peripheral. The urban elite along with the aspiring middle class frequently assume themselves to be the natural custodians of cultural sophistication. Their tastes, their educational background, and their access to institutional platforms allow them to claim authority over the definition of what constitutes refined cultural experience. Consequently, expressions that emerge from rural or marginal communities are seldom evaluated on their own artistic merit; rather they are subjected to judgement shaped by preconceived social biases. This hierarchical attitude becomes particularly visible when one examines the perception of traditional folk performers such as the Nachnis of western Bengal, especially in districts such as Purulia, Bankura, and parts of Jhargram. The evaluation of Nachni performance is rarely grounded in cultural understanding or historical awareness. Instead, the performers are viewed through a lens coloured by assumptions about class purity, social morality, and respectability. Their art is often dismissed as unsophisticated or morally suspect, not because of any inherent lack in technique or aesthetic value, but because of the social location of the women who perform it. Such perception reflects a broader pattern of symbolic domination. The urban sections, equipped with formal education, linguistic privilege, institutional platforms, and

economic security, hold the power to determine which cultural practices receive recognition and which remain excluded. This power is exercised subtly through language, through scholarship, through media representation, and through publicly accepted standards of what qualifies as 'culture'. Folk traditions, particularly those associated with economically vulnerable communities, frequently fail to negotiate this gatekeeping. Their exclusion, therefore, is not accidental but structurally produced. Moreover, the discomfort displayed by the middle class towards the Nachni tradition reveals an underlying anxiety about identity. To sustain the claim of cultural refinement, the middle class must constantly distinguish itself from what it considers 'rural' or 'unregulated'. The Nachni thus becomes a symbolic figure upon whom this distinction is projected. Her marginality allows the dominant classes to reinforce their own imagined superiority. In this process, the artistic labour, emotional resilience, and rich performative heritage of the Nachni tradition become subordinated to moral judgment and cultural prejudice.Recognizing these dynamics requires honesty rather than sentiment. The so-called enlightened urban gaze is not neutral; it is shaped by historical privilege and sustained through social power. To address the unequal treatment of marginal cultural practitioners, one must acknowledge the mechanisms through which cultural legitimacy is distributed. Only by questioning these inherited assumptions can the cultural labour of performers such as the Nachnis be recognised with fairness, respect, and rightful dignity within the broader cultural landscape of Bengal.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design supported by selective quantitative interpretation in order to understand the cultural position, lived experiences, and social perception of Nachni performers in western Bengal. The inquiry is structured around three complementary methodological strands: textual analysis, ethnographic interpretation, and statistical reading of available field data. Together, these approaches allow the research to move beyond descriptive accounts and instead offer a critical, historically grounded examination of the Nachni tradition. The first component involves the close reading of literary, historical, and cultural writings that engage directly or indirectly with Nachni performance. Texts by major scholars, creative writers, and cultural commentators were examined to trace the evolution of social attitudes towards the community. Emphasis was placed on identifying the linguistic and ideological frameworks through which urban and upper-caste perspectives have shaped public narratives about Nachnis. This textual study also enabled the researcher to situate the tradition within wider South Asian performance histories, especially in relation to other women-centred hereditary art forms.

The second component employs ethnographic interpretation grounded in long-term scholarly accounts, field notes documented by researchers, and verified testimonies from Nachni performers. Although the present study does not involve primary fieldwork, it draws upon established ethnographic material available in public academic sources. These narratives offer insight into kinship structures, patterns of labour, the Rasik-Nachni partnership, and the socio-economic constraints that continue to influence the lives of performers. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which gender, caste, and local power relations shape the cultural identity of the community. The third component involves the interpretation of a small but systematically recorded dataset that

documents a selection of practising Nachni performers from various regions of Purulia. The dataset was organised, standardised, and then used to generate simple statistical visualisations, including bar charts and pie charts. These visual tools were utilised not to produce generalisable claims, but to identify patterns of spatial concentration, partnership structures, and regional variations within the sample. The graphs serve as supportive illustrations that clarify how the tradition is distributed across specific micro-regions, and how the presence or absence of Rasik partners affects the cultural and economic positioning of the dancers. Throughout the study, triangulation was maintained by comparing literary accounts, ethnographic interpretations, and statistical observations. This ensured that no single source dominated the analysis, and that the conclusions emerged from a balanced and critically informed synthesis. The methods employed here therefore allow the paper to address its central research question: how the Nachni tradition has been shaped, misread, and marginalised by dominant social perspectives, and how it may be re-situated within a framework that acknowledges its artistic integrity and cultural value.

Analysis and Discussions

Historical Formation of the Nachni Tradition

In recent years, literary research in Bengal has shown a significant shift towards the study of marginal communities and their cultural expressions. Folk literature, oral performance traditions, and the narratives of economically and socially disadvantaged groups have gradually moved from the periphery of academic inquiry to a position of serious scholarly interest. This change reflects a broader intellectual recognition that literature is not solely the product of elite literary circles or institutionalised culture. Rather, literature is also generated in everyday life, within communities that have historically been excluded from formal cultural validation. Their songs, stories, and performative practices carry their world views, their struggles, and their collective memories. However, this growing academic engagement has not abolished the distance between the dominant urban cultural consciousness and the lived cultural presence of marginal groups. There remains a marked line of difference between the two societies. On one hand lies the world that claims cultural polish, institutional literacy, and metropolitan exposure. On the other hand lies the world of those whose cultural expressions emerge from labour, survival, and community memory. The relationship between the two is neither equal nor mutually respectful. The marginal communities are still often regarded as secondary, primitive, or culturally raw. The appreciation they receive through research does not necessarily translate into social dignity or equal cultural status. In the context of Bengal, this contrast becomes particularly visible in the study of the Nachni tradition. Although recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge the artistic relevance of Nachni performances and their contribution to the cultural identity of Purulia, the performers themselves continue to be treated with suspicion and disrespect in everyday social life. Academic research may highlight the cultural richness of their songs and performances, yet urban society often persists in seeing them as morally questionable. This duality reflects a troubling contradiction. The cultural product is praised, but the cultural producer is marginalised. The roots of this contradiction lie in the historical association of cultural legitimacy with caste and class privilege(Ghosh et al., 2016). Marginal cultural forms are often interpreted as belonging to the cultural sphere of Dalita communities and economically subaltern groups. While this association is factually grounded, it is

frequently used to justify the continued exclusion of their cultural practices from the mainstream notion of refined or respectable literature(Devi, 2007). Their art is seen as authentic and even aesthetically valuable, but still not allowed to occupy the same cultural space as canonical literature or institutional art forms. Thus, even as contemporary literary research seeks to bring attention to marginal voices, it must confront the deeper social hierarchies that continue to shape cultural perception. Without addressing the unequal power relations that determine which voices are heard and which are silenced, academic recognition alone cannot ensure respect or social equality. True cultural understanding requires dismantling the assumptions that rank cultural expressions according to the economic and social location of their practitioners. Only then can marginal cultural labour, such as the tradition of the Nachnis, be acknowledged with the dignity and authenticity it inherently carries (Ghosh et al., 2016).

Mahasweta Devi, whose writings remain among the most authoritative on the subject, noted the absence of a fully documented historical record but pointed to several significant strands that help trace the development of this art form. One of these strands concerns the long-standing custom of maintaining women performers in courts and noble households in Bengal. According to Dipak Barpanda of Durbar which is a prominent organisation working with women in sex work, the practice of engaging singing and dancing women can be located as early as the twelfth century in Bengal. These performers were attached to aristocratic lineages that valued courtly entertainment as a marker of political prestige and social authority.Over time, this tradition merged with local musical and folk practices and gradually produced a distinct style of performance that later came to be known as Nachni Nach(Devi, 2007). The consolidation of this form becomes more clearly visible with the rise of small feudal estates in the region that is now Purulia. Among these estates, Baghmundi holds particular significance. Historical accounts indicate that Ayodhya Prasad Singdeo, the ruler of the Baghmundi estate, played a formative role in shaping what eventually became the Nachni tradition. The political restructuring that followed the enactment of the Permanent Settlement of one seven nine three under Lord Cornwallis transformed the economic and administrative systems of Bengal. Feudatory estates such as Baghmundi attempted to reinforce their authority by cultivating distinctive cultural spheres. Patronage of music and dance served both aesthetic and political purposes by projecting the prestige of the ruling lineage and strengthening its local influence(Devi, 2007).

The Rasik as Artistic Mediator and Social Authority

It is within this context that women dancers associated with Jhumur music found increasing visibility. They travelled with Rasik or male accompanists and performed during festivals, social gatherings and seasonal celebrations. Over generations, these performers developed their own aesthetic vocabulary that blended local rhythms, devotional motifs and expressive bodily movement. Their art became integral to the cultural environment of Purulia and the neighbouring regions of present-day Odisha and Jharkhand. Yet, despite this deep-rooted presence, the historical significance of the Nachni tradition was gradually diminished. The decline of feudal patronage and the rise of new moral codes during the colonial and postcolonial periods resulted in the marginalisation of these performers. Their once celebrated skill was overshadowed by social stigma that conflated their labour with moral suspicion (Samal & Oraon, 2023).

The figure of the rasik occupies a central and historically significant place in the Nachni performance tradition of Bengal, particularly in the regions of Purulia, Jhalda, Balarampur and the adjoining cultural belts of contemporary Jharkhand and Odisha. The word rasik has its etymological origin in the Sanskrit term *rasa*, meaning refined taste or aesthetic appreciation. In theory, the rasik is the connoisseur of performance and the custodian of musical and narrative skill. In practice, however, the role expands far beyond this poetic definition and reflects the complex social structure within which the Nachni tradition evolved. Historically, Nachni performances were nurtured within the cultural ecosystems of local courts, zamindari estates, and seasonal rural festivities, where music and dance were part of community entertainment. As traditional patronage began to recede in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the responsibility for training, managing and presenting a Nachni performer gradually concentrated in the hands of individual male musicians who came to be known as rasiks (Samal & Oraon, 2023). These men composed and sang *jhumur* songs, played instruments, trained the dancers, and negotiated engagements with village organisers. The rasik thus emerged as the principal mediator between the performer and the public sphere. The rasik is often described in oral histories as mentor, guide and aesthetic companion. Yet this romantic image does not fully capture the social realities of the relationship. The majority of Nachnis entered the performance world due to severe economic insecurity, and many came from castes and tribal communities positioned at the margins of rural society. Within this unequal landscape, the rasik held significant authority. He made decisions about rehearsal practices, performance itineraries, and financial arrangements, while exercising considerable influence over the public identity of the Nachni.While some rasiks nurtured their performers with genuine artistic commitment, others treated the relationship as an extension of personal control rather than a collaboration rooted in artistic respect(Ansari, 2021). Documented accounts of Nachni communities reveal that many rasiks maintained what can be described as a parallel household with the dancer, even when they already possessed a socially recognised family. Although the rasik often lived with the Nachni, she was rarely granted the full dignity of a wife. Her social identity remained ambiguous and vulnerable. This ambiguity, combined with the absence of legal protection, made many Nachnis dependent upon the goodwill of their rasiks for basic financial stability and social acceptance. The economic structure of performances further reinforced this dependence. Payments were commonly routed through the rasik, who acted as manager for the troupe. Because the Nachni did not always have direct access to her income, the rasik served as both cultural representative and economic intermediary. In several recorded cases, Nachnis described receiving only a limited portion of their earnings. Such testimonies reflect the broader pattern of gendered and caste-based inequality that has historically shaped folk performance communities in the region(Ansari, 2021).

At the same time, the rasik cannot be assessed solely through a moral lens. His presence is essential for understanding the evolution of the art form. The rasik preserves musical lineages, transmits stylistic variations of *jhumur*, maintains performance traditions and ensures that the Nachni remains connected to networks of local organisers. He is a cultural archivist as well as a performer, and the Nachni tradition cannot be analysed without acknowledging this dual function.Nevertheless, the authority of the rasik also reveals the vulnerabilities inherent in the Nachni system. His control over artistic training, financial negotiation and social legitimacy reflects the larger structures of rural patriarchy. The cultural labour of the Nachni, though

aesthetically rich and historically significant, has often been diminished by the authority exercised by the rasik. Any contemporary study of this tradition must therefore examine the rasik not only as a figure of artistic importance but also as a symbol of the social mechanisms that govern access, recognition and exploitation within marginal performance cultures.The long-standing association of the dancer with her rasik has further shaped this misunderstanding. Outsiders who lack knowledge of the historical structure of patronage often assume that the Nachni is the prostitute, the kept woman, or the rakkhita of the rasik, ignoring the fact that the traditional relationship originally emerged within an artistic framework that involved instruction, accompaniment, and performance management. As formal patronage declined with the disappearance of feudal estates, economic insecurity pushed many Nachnis into deeper dependence on their rasiks, and this shift gradually altered public perception. Popular narratives gradually displaced the artistic essence of the partnership, redefining it as a marker of moral transgression. Such interpretations reflect the deep-seated prejudices of the so-called respectable classes rather than the lived realities of Nachni performers.When these women are viewed primarily through a moral lens, their artistic identity is deliberately obscured, and their historical role as bearers of a rich folk performance tradition becomes systematically erased. This social judgement continues to impede the recognition of their cultural labour and reinforces the inequalities that have shaped their lives for generations. Embedded within a structure of unequal gender relations, caste hierarchies, and economic precarity, the rasik becomes a pivotal and often contradictory figure in the life of the Nachni. Authority extends beyond artistic mentorship to encompass control over the performer's public identity, livelihood, mobility, and social reputation (Ansari, 2021).

The rasik is typically introduced to a Nachni in the formative stages of her career, when she is still learning the repertoire of songs, rhythms, and performative gestures that constitute her craft. If he is trained in music or dance, he provides instruction and guides her through a process of rigorous preparation. Even when his artistic competence is limited, he acts as the organiser of performances, negotiator of remuneration, and supervisor of the troupe. This managerial dimension grants him substantial power, since the Nachni relies on him for both economic survival and professional visibility. Unlike classical dance traditions, where a guru's authority is framed within institutional structures, the rasik's authority remains informal yet pervasive, sustained by custom and reinforced by the limited alternatives available to the dancer.This arrangement, however, is rarely confined to matters of artistry or management. The rasik is often a companion in the most intimate sense, forming a relationship that resembles cohabitation, though without the social legitimacy of marriage. Many rasiks maintain established families, and the position of the Nachni within such households is frequently fraught.It is common for her to live in a separate dwelling, sometimes on the margins of the village, where her presence does not disturb the social order of the lawful wife and her kin. This spatial separation reflects deeper social distinctions. The existence of the Nachni is tolerated but seldom honoured. Her identity remains suspended between the roles of artist, dependent, and companion, with no institutional protections to safeguard her rights or dignity(Ryzhakova & Bandyopadhyay, 2022).

The influence of the rasik also shapes how the Nachni is judged in public spaces. While the rasik may be admired for artistic involvement or for nurturing performance troupes, the woman at the centre of the art form is frequently subjected to suspicion and moral judgment. The unequal

terms of the partnership contribute significantly to this perception. Because the livelihood of the Nachni depends on a single male patron, society often interprets her dependence through a moralistic lens, seeing her not as a trained performer but as a person of diminished respectability. The association of the rasik with her can enhance his reputation as a man of taste or diminish it according to local attitudes, while the burden of stigma for the Nachni is far greater and more persistent. The vulnerability of the dancer becomes even more acute when the relationship ends. Illness, separation, or disinterest from the rasik can abruptly cut off her access to income and performance opportunities. Given the years of training invested in a Nachni, one might expect stability or loyalty, yet such assurances are rare. When a rasik withdraws his support, the dancer is left to negotiate survival alone, often without savings or family support. Instances exist where a Nachni has been forcibly taken by another man, compelled to join a different troupe, or abandoned after the blossoming years of her youth. These disruptions expose the stark insecurity inherent in a system that binds artistic labour to personal allegiance rather than institutional frameworks(Ansari, 2021).

Ageing presents an even harsher reality. The aesthetic appeal of performance is deeply tied to youth and physical vitality, and older Nachnis frequently find themselves excluded from the circuits of entertainment that once sustained them. Without children who might offer care or a recognised marital status that ensures social shelter, many are pushed into extreme destitution. Stories circulate in villages of elderly dancers walking from door to door for alms, carrying a stick for support and a small bowl to collect whatever food or coins the household can spare. Such scenes reveal the grim culmination of a lifetime spent in service of an art form that receives admiration on the stage but offers little security once the lights dim.The indignity does not always end with death. The stigma attached to the Nachni identity is so entrenched that even her body may not receive the respect customarily accorded in rural communities. Reports of deceased dancers being handled with reluctance, or even dragged away with ropes because no one wished to perform the rituals of cremation, speak to a deep-rooted social prejudice that denies the Nachni both dignity in life and honour in death. These extreme instances illustrate the moral contradictions of a society that applauds her performances yet rejects her humanity(Ryzhakova & Bandyopadhyay, 2022).

Statistical Patterns and Regional Distribution

In order to counter the persistent stigmatisation of Nachnis as *rakkhita*, *patita*, or illicit companions of the Rasik, empirical field-based evidence is indispensable. The dataset documented in IJCRT (Vol. 13, Issue 7, July 2025) offers a systematically recorded glimpse into the distribution and socio-professional structures of Nachnis in Purulia district.This subset is significant because it allows us to observe spatial clustering, relationship patterns with Rasiks, and the socio-cultural structures that continue to shape the Nachni tradition in the present century. More importantly, when read in the context of the broader argument of this paper, the data reinforces the central claim that Nachnis must be recognised as performers and custodians of Jhumur culture rather than mislabelled through the pejorative terms that mainstream society carelessly employs. The subset includes ten Nachni dancers distributed across six localities. The distribution reveals a noticeable concentration in Barabazar, which accounts for three of the ten cases. Kenda follows with two, while Balarampur also represents two when the spellings are standardised. Chakoltor, Puncha, and

Maguria are represented by one Nachni each. The bar graph, as shown in **Figure 1**,generated from this dataset clearly shows Barabazar as the most densely represented zone, followed by Kenda and Balarampur. Such clustering supports earlier ethnographic claims that Barabazar and adjoining regions have historically served as centres of Jhumur performance traditions, partly due to the patronage mechanisms established under feudal estates and partly due to migration patterns of folk artists during the late colonial and early postcolonial phases(Samal & Oraon, 2023).

The pie chart of **Figure 2** illustrates the proportional distribution of Nachnis across the

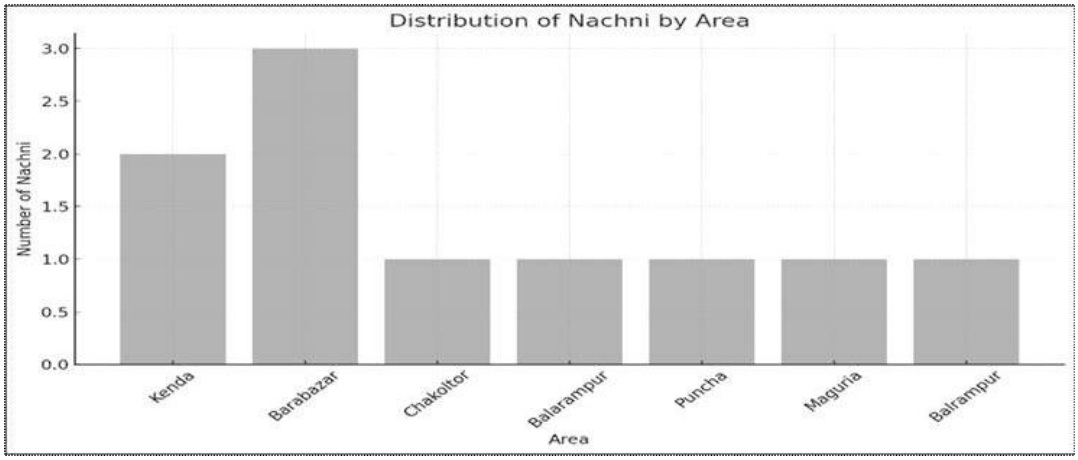


Figure 1. Spatial distribution of documented Nachni performers across Purulia district

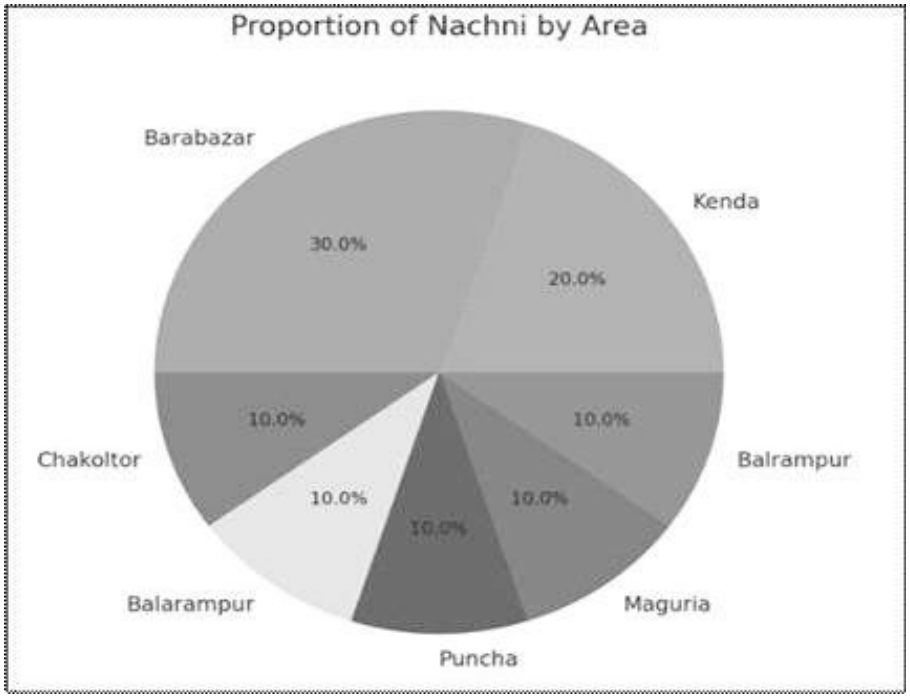


Figure 2. Proportion of Nachni performers with and without active Rasik partners

surveyed areas. Barabazar constitutes thirty percent of the sample, while Kenda and Balarampur each contribute twenty percent. The remaining thirty percent is shared equally among Chakoltor, Puncha, and Maguria. Even though this is a small sample, the proportions mirror larger historical accounts that identify Purulia as the living archive of Nachni and Rasik performances. The spatial distribution also reveals the persistence of micro-regions where folk traditions survive despite diminishing social and economic support (Samal & Oraon, 2023).

Alongside spatial distribution, the dataset notes the presence or absence of Rasik partners, the male counterparts who historically performed alongside the Nachnis and often assumed roles of informal patronage. Out of ten Nachnis, only five have Rasiks presently identified. The absence of rasiks in the remaining cases may indicate widowhood, separation, abandonment, or a conscious decision by the performer to dissociate from the historically exploitative Rasik-Nachni hierarchy. Importantly, such absences do not diminish the artistic identities of the Nachnis; instead, they highlight the socio-economic precarity under which these performers continue to sustain their traditions. As earlier sections of this paper have argued, society often interprets the Rasik-Nachni relationship reductively, erasing the artistic labour and cultural agency of these women. The statistic that half the dancers have no Rasik partner demonstrates the fragility of the older patronage model and underscores how many Nachnis navigate survival entirely without the support that

Rasiks once represented. Moreover, the locality-based distribution reinforces the argument that Nachni culture, though deeply rooted in Purulia, is concentrated around specific socio-economic clusters. The higher representation of Barabazar reflects the region's long-standing cultural circuits of Jhumur performance, its village melas, and its historical proximity to itinerant troupes. Similarly, repeated mention of Kenda in the chart suggests strong community-level retention of the Jhumur-Nachni tradition(Ryzhakova & Bandyopadhyay, 2022). These regions function not merely as geographical markers but as cultural ecosystems where music, memory, labour, and resistance intersect. Methodologically, the small sample size of ten out of a reported fifty-eight cannot claim exhaustive representational authority. Nonetheless, its value lies in precision as it provides a verifiable cross-section of Nachni life across specific regions of Purulia, enabling a grounded understanding of current socio-cultural dynamics. In this way, the statistical interpretation contributes meaningfully to the literature on folk performance cultures, gendered labour, and caste-mediated artistic marginality. It strengthens the paper's central argument that Nachnis are artists, whose lives must be interpreted within frameworks of labour, aesthetics, and cultural history, rather than through patriarchal or casteist moral codes. The statistics dispel stereotypes; the visuals reinforce patterns; and the interpretation reveals structural truths that the urban gaze has long ignored. The Nachni is not a rakkhita or patita, she is a bearer of indigenous aesthetics, a practitioner of complex performance traditions, and a survivor of entrenched social hierarchies (Samal & Oraon, 2023).

Contemporary Representations and Visual Documentation

A significant intervention in this process is Rajaditya Banerjee's documentary feature film *Acchyut*, released in 2019. The film, also known by the title *Acchut: The Untouchable*, explores the precarious existence of Nachni artists in Purulia. It foregrounds their material hardships, social

invisibility, and cultural contributions. The camera travels through their homes and performance spaces. It listens to their stories of exclusion and resilience. Banerjee's cinematic lens restores a sense of dignity to the women who perform within this tradition. It also challenges the moralistic vocabulary that historically shaped public perception of Nachni culture. The film therefore enters the broader framework of this paper. It provides a visual testimony that echoes the argument presented here. It asserts that cultural prejudice has systematically erased the artistic identity of Nachnis. It also demonstrates how their lives continue to be shaped by unequal social structures. Banerjee's documentary foregrounds the life histories of Nachni dancers such as Postubala Devi, Jyotsna Devi and Charubala Devi, allowing their voices to emerge within a narrative shaped by dignity rather than pity. Through his sustained engagement with rural Purulia and his sensitive understanding of its cultural ecology, he observes how these women negotiate survival in the absence of stable economic options. Their performances become both livelihood and legacy, yet the social world around them continues to respond with suspicion and contempt. Banerjee reveals that, despite this marginalisation, the Nachnis remain custodians of a refined and resilient artistic tradition that endures through their labour and perseverance (Banerjee, 2019).

The urban middle-class spectator has often perceived the Nachni tradition through a filter of cultural distance. This spectator has tended to view Nachnis less as artists and more as entertainment objects attached to male Rasiks. This relationship, often interpreted through moral judgment, has diverted attention away from the artistic labour of the performers. Their dance vocabulary, musical skill, and embodied memory of local traditions have rarely received scholarly attention. This paper seeks to correct that absence. It situates Nachnis within a broader cultural framework that recognises their performances as complex acts of artistic creation. It also highlights the need to re-examine the field through a historically grounded and ethically responsible lens (Banerjee, 2019).



Figure 3. Field interaction between Director Rajaditya Banerjee and a Nachni performer during the production of Acchyut (2019)(Roy, 2023)

Figure 3 encapsulates the grounded and empathetic methodology through which Banerjee approached the Nachni community, visually reinforcing the central argument that Nachni performers are cultural practitioners whose artistic labour has long been reduced in value by social prejudice and misrepresentation (Banerjee, 2019).

Comparative Framework: Nachni and South Asian Hereditary Performer Communities

Locating the Nachni tradition within a broader South Asian performance history enables a clearer understanding of how gender, caste and ritual labour intersect to shape systems of stigma. The marginalisation faced by Nachni performers in Purulia does not occur in isolation. Instead, it reflects a larger subcontinental pattern in which women who sustain hereditary or temple-linked performance practices are simultaneously celebrated as cultural bearers and discredited as morally suspect. This paradox becomes sharper when examined alongside Baijis and Tawaifs, Devadasis, and the Jogti and Kalavanthulu communities, all of whom have been historically subjected to similar structures of romanticisation and social exclusion.Baijis and Tawaifs, once central to the elite cultural life of Mughal and later colonial North India, embodied refined artistic competencies in music, dance, etiquette and literature(Chatterjea, 1996). Their salons shaped Hindustani classical performance traditions and nurtured several major musicians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet their artistic legitimacy was gradually dismantled under colonial morality, nationalist reform and the rise of the bourgeois family ideal. By the mid-twentieth century, Baijis and Tawaifs were recast as immoral women rather than as pedagogues or custodians of aesthetic knowledge. This shift mirrors the way Nachnis were relegated from respected performers in feudal Bengal to social outcasts, especially as modernity reframed rural entertainment traditions as regressive or corrupt. In both cases, women who shaped artistic repertoires were burdened with reputational violence.Similarly, the Devadasi communities of south India displayed an intricate blend of sacred service and artistic training (Hazra, 2020). Classical dance forms such as Bharatanatyam and Odissi owe much to Devadasi mastery, yet these women endured social abandonment following twentieth-century abolition movements that collapsed ritual dedication with sexual exploitation. While the circumstances differ in scale, the Nachni experience echoes this erasure. Nachni dancers also anchor their performances in long genealogies of embodied knowledge, but they remain defined by their association with Rasiks and thereby denied social dignity. The loss of ritual or institutional patronage further accentuates their precariousness, much as the Devadasi system's dissolution destabilised its practitioners.The Jogtis and Kalavanthulu performers of Maharashtra and Karnataka demonstrate another pattern of cultural labour entangled with caste-based discrimination (Chatterjea, 1996).. These women were responsible for maintaining regional narrative, musical and ritual traditions. Their contributions to folk repertoires have been substantial, yet they were frequently subject to social policing, mobility restrictions and exploitative mediation by patrons. The Nachni-Rasik relationship, although culturally specific, follows a related logic of asymmetric dependency in which the performer's artistic skill sustains the tradition while the patron's authority shapes her social positioning. The widespread assumption that Nachnis are “kept women” arises from this unequal relational structure, much as Jogti and Kalavanthulu performers were interpreted through narrow moral frameworks that obscured their creative agency(Khokar, 1987; Singh, 2014).

The persistent marginalisation of the Nachni community cannot be understood solely through the lens of social prejudice or cultural misrecognition. Their vulnerability is directly connected to the structural failures of state policy, inadequate cultural governance, and the long-term institutional neglect that characterises the official approach to folk performers in eastern India.

Although national and state agencies regularly celebrate terms such as *cultural heritage*, *folk arts*, and *intangible traditions*, the lived experiences of Nachni performers demonstrate a stark divergence between public rhetoric and administrative reality.Despite practising a historically significant performance tradition, Nachnis are not recognised as legitimate cultural workers in governmental registers (Chatterjea, 1996).. They are absent from the lists of state acknowledged folk artists maintained by cultural academies and zonal centres in West Bengal and Jharkhand. This exclusion has concrete consequences. Without official categorisation as performers, Nachnis are denied access to state sponsored schemes, pensions for artists, travel grants, and opportunities to participate in government curated cultural festivals. Their art is therefore not only socially devalued but also structurally unprotected. The result is a cycle in which the community's marginality is reproduced by the very institutions that claim to safeguard local traditions (Khokar, 1987; Singh, 2014).

The problem extends further into the domain of cultural representation. Mainstream folk festivals across India regularly highlight genres such as Baul music, Chhau, Jhumur singing, and Gambhira. Yet, Nachni dance, which shares the same geographical region and draws from the same composite historical culture, remains largely absent from these curated spaces. This systematic omission reflects how state institutions selectively determine which traditions are worthy of preservation and which are pushed into invisibility. The Nachni tradition becomes doubly disadvantaged: first by social stigma, and second by institutional silence.Governmental claims of cultural preservation often emphasise documentation, digitisation, and museum archiving. However, these initiatives rarely reach communities like the Nachnis whose performance practice is transmitted orally and embodied through rigorous apprenticeship with their Rasiks. Without direct investment, their knowledge remains vulnerable to disappearance. In contrast, state backed genres benefit from funding, research grants, and professional platforms, generating an unequal cultural economy that privileges certain forms while letting others wither at the margins. This contradiction exposes the gap between policy language and ground level implementation. Moreover, the absence of protective frameworks intensifies the precarity of Nachni performers. Without legal recognition, they remain unprotected labourers, negotiating performance payments informally at village fairs or seasonal rituals. Their lack of institutional visibility also means limited access to health insurance, social security schemes, educational support for their children, or infrastructural facilities available to other artist communities. As a result, their economic instability becomes intertwined with social stigma, reinforcing the stereotype that Nachnis are “kept women” rather than professional artists (Khokar, 1987; Singh, 2014).

Community Assertions and Cultural Revival Efforts

The year 2017 marked a significant moment in the modern history of the Nachni community and stands as an important counterpoint to the long trajectory of marginalisation outlined in this study. The three-day open-ground fair *Lokosanskriti Mela 2017*, organised from the first to the third of April at Surulia near Deer Park in Purulia, commemorated the tenth anniversary of the Government of West Bengal's formal recognition of Nachnis as folk artists in 2006.



Figure 4. Government order recognizing Nachni dance as a folk art tradition in West Bengal (2006)
Source: Samal & Oraon (2023)

Figure 4 illustrates the formal acknowledgement of the Nachni community as recognised folk dancers by the Government of West Bengal in 2006. The notification marks a significant turning point in the cultural history of Purulia, as it represents the first official attempt to classify Nachni performers within the state's framework of folk artistry. The event was jointly organised by ManbhumLoksanskriti O Nachni Unnayan Samiti and the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, an organisation widely known for its support of marginalised women's groups and for its sustained advocacy concerning rights, welfare, and recognition (Ansari, 2021).The fair offered a rare public platform where the nearly forgotten folk heritage of Purulia, including Nachni dance, could be experienced in its original cultural ecology. Although small in scale, the event symbolised a decade of struggle for visibility, institutional legitimacy, and cultural dignity. It stands in sharp contrast to the pervasive social prejudices that continue to frame Nachnis as socially fallen women rather than skilled performers. The recognition in 2006 was never merely administrative; it emerged from years of negotiation, activism, and community mobilisation. The 2017 celebration therefore functioned as a collective assertion of identity in the face of entrenched stigma.During the programme, Sabar Pita Gopi Ballav Singh Deo was felicitated for his long-standing contribution to the development of tribal communities in Purulia, including his support for marginalised cultural

workers. His recognition further highlighted the intertwined histories of patronage, social reform, and community upliftment in the region. The event also revealed the limited yet meaningful shift in public attitudes, where Nachni performers were acknowledged not as dependants of rasiks but as artists carrying generations of intangible cultural knowledge (District Information and Cultural Office, Purulia, n.d.).

Results

The findings of this study reveal a complex intersection of artistry, social position, and structural vulnerability within the Nachni community of Purulia. Field data, combined with historical analysis and secondary sources, demonstrate that the performance tradition survives through the persistent labour of women whose contributions remain largely unrecognised by mainstream cultural discourse. The statistical patterns derived from the sample offer important insights into the present distribution of Nachni performers and the nature of support available to them. The geographical mapping of the documented cases indicates a clustered presence of performers in specific pockets of Purulia, with Barabazar, Kenda, and Balarampur emerging as significant centres. Such clustering suggests that the continuity of the tradition depends heavily on community-level transmission rather than institutional backing. Smaller regions, represented by isolated cases, show a thinner cultural network where the art is vulnerable to disappearance. This uneven distribution hints at the gradual contraction of spaces where Nachni performances once thrived.

Another notable outcome concerns the role of the Rasik and the extent of his presence in contemporary practice. Only half of the documented performers currently have an active Rasik partner. This decline reflects a shifting social context in which the earlier patterns of informal patronage are breaking down. While this may be interpreted as a sign of increasing independence for some performers, it also signals a reduction in the structural support that once facilitated training, performance opportunities, and mobility. The absence of Rasiks in several cases reveals that many Nachnis continue their profession without a stable artistic companion, which may intensify their economic insecurity.

The study further illustrates that public perception plays a decisive role in shaping the performers' lived realities. Despite their technical skill and deep cultural knowledge, the majority of Nachnis remain subject to social suspicion. The results confirm that the association of the dancer with a male accompanist continues to mark her identity in ways that overshadow her artistic achievements. This pattern persists even in areas where the community has historical roots, suggesting that longstanding prejudices have not been effectively challenged by recent cultural initiatives.An important positive outcome appears in the community-based efforts that have emerged in recent years. Local organizations and cultural groups have started recognizing the artistic value of the tradition, offering platforms that provide visibility otherwise denied to Nachni performers. Although these initiatives remain limited in scale, they indicate the possibility of incremental change. The findings show that such interventions have encouraged some performers to reassert their identity as artists, shifting slightly away from the stigma that has shadowed their profession for generations.

The results highlight a striking imbalance between cultural contribution and institutional acknowledgement. The Nachnis continue to sustain a sophisticated performative heritage, yet their art has not been integrated into official cultural frameworks in any consistent manner. This disconnect confirms that systemic barriers remain deeply entrenched, reinforcing the need for policy reform, scholarly engagement, and comprehensive documentation.The empirical and interpretive findings together reveal a tradition that persists through resilience rather than support. The Nachni performers uphold an invaluable component of Bengal's cultural history, yet they do so under conditions that compromise dignity, recognition, and long-term sustainability. These results underscore the urgency of repositioning Nachnis within a framework that values artistic labour and challenges the entrenched biases of the dominant cultural gaze.

Conclusions

The examination of Nachni culture undertaken in this study reveals the persistent gap between public narratives of cultural pride and the lived realities of those who sustain some of eastern India's most fragile artistic forms. The inquiry began with an attempt to understand how a performance tradition shaped by agrarian history and intimate artistic labour came to be marginalized by the very societies that draw symbolic value from it. Through this process, it has become evident that the position of Nachni performers is neither the result of isolated prejudice nor the product of recent social change. It is rooted instead in long-standing hierarchies that continue to define who may serve as artistic representatives of the region and whose labour is dismissed as morally suspect. In tracing the social identity of the Nachni performer, the discussion foregrounded the tension between artistic agency and structural vulnerability. Despite generations of creative contribution, these women struggle against stigma that reduces their artistic expertise to a misread version of personal dependency. This stigma is not merely cultural but has material consequences, influencing access to opportunities, institutional recognition, and social dignity. The statistical evidence drawn from field documentation further demonstrates how precarious their circumstances remain, with a marked imbalance between the number of practicing performers and the level of community or institutional support available to them. The recent attempts at community mobilization and the modest institutional acknowledgements that have emerged in recent years represent a movement towards greater visibility, although they remain insufficient to alter the structural roots of marginality. What these developments do show, however, is that change becomes possible when the discourse surrounding Nachni artistry shifts from moral suspicion to cultural value. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that such shifts extend beyond commemorative events and become part of sustained cultural policy and scholarly attention. Ultimately, the Nachni tradition endures because its practitioners refuse disappearance. Their songs, their choreography, and their ability to transform everyday life into expressive performance demonstrate resilience that deserves far more than symbolic appreciation. By recognizingNachnis as artists in their own right, scholarship can play a crucial role in reframing the language with which society approaches them. Such reframing is essential not merely for historical accuracy but for the ethical imperative of acknowledging artistic labour that has long remained overshadowed by prejudice. The way forward must involve continuous listening, rigorous research, and frameworks of respect that place the Nachni performer at the centre of her cultural narrative.

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Tulsidas' Hanuman as an icon of evolving Masculinities

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Abstract

Few devotional texts in South Asian literature have achieved the mnemonic ubiquity of Tulsidas's *Hanuman Chalisa.* Composed in Awadhi sometime between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the forty-verse hymn fuses classical Sanskritic cosmology with the populist cadence of bhakti poetry. Hanuman, the monkey-god, emerges here not merely as an auxiliary warrior in Rāma's campaign against Rāvaṇa but as the very embodiment of self-disciplined service (dāsyabhāva). For centuries the *Chalisa* functioned as a portable theology of equilibrium: strength tempered by knowledge, courage restrained by humility. However, in contemporary India, mythic figures have often been refashioned as ideological emblems. Among them, Hanuman occupies a special place: his metamorphosis from a pliant servant of Rāma in Tulsidas's *Hanuman Chalisa* to the wrathful, sinewed "Angry Hanuman" of Karan Acharya's 2015 design signals a profound shift in the semiotics of devotion. This paper argues that the new iconography of Hanuman encodes a hyper-masculine nationalism that effaces the bhakti-centred intelligence celebrated by Tulsidas. Drawing on cultural theory, performance studies, and masculinity studies (Connell 1995; Butler 1990; Bandyopadhyay 2004), this paper traces how the devotional body in early modern North India has been reinterpreted within the visual grammar of militant Hindutva.

[1] *Dāsyābhava:* the devotional attitude of servitude toward the divine, central to Vaishnava bhakti traditions.

Keywords: Hanuman Chalisa; Hypermasculinity; Hindutva; Devotion; Tulsidas; Cultural nationalism; Visual culture, Masculinity; Judith Butler; Raewyn Connell; Indian aesthetics; Cultural semiotics; Devotional body

Introduction

Tulsidas's *Hanuman Chalisa* is one of those texts in the North-Indian devotional canon that resonates with the rhythmic universality of collective sentiments. Its forty verses, composed in the vernacular Awadhi register of the sixteenth century, are recited daily by millions whose cultural locations span caste, class, and nation. Yet, beyond its devotional superstructure lies a semiotic base that codes piety through gendered tropes of discipline, power, and surrender. This paper treats the *Chalisa* not as sacred literature or as a traditional prayer of protection, but as a literary construct that articulates what may be called the bhakti-masculine: a configuration in which obedience becomes a mode of agency and servitude, a route to transcendence. By reading the *Chalisa* as a textual performance of disciplined strength and humility, the discourse demonstrates that Tulsidas's Hanuman was an ascetic intellect rather than a belligerent hero. It argues that the current popular image of Hanuman exposes the nation's own anxiety about masculine sovereignty, translating the bhakta into an icon of anger. The present study investigates this shift through a dual lens: discursive close reading of the *Chalisa* and cultural dissection of its contemporary visual afterlife.

The argument proceeds from the premise that every act of devotion is also an act of representation. When representation changes, devotion itself acquires a new politicsAcharya's

vector image, shaded in saffron and black, has become a viral emblem of aggressive Hindu masculinity. Endorsed publicly by political leaders, the image circulates across car decals, T-shirts, and social-media banners as a shorthand for a militant faith. The same Hanuman who once knelt before Rāma with folded hands now stares outward, jaw set, eyes ablaze; a metamorphosis that mirrors the country's own performative nationalism. This paper re-examines Tulsidas's Hanuman Chalisa through an interdisciplinary lens that brings literary hermeneutics, cultural semiotics, and gender theory into conversation. Reading Hanuman as both 'bhakta' (devotee) and vir (heroic masculine archetype), the study explores how devotional affect, bodily discipline, and moral obedience coalesce into a performative model of idealized masculinity. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity and Raewyn Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity, the article argues that the *Chalisa* constructs a masculine devotional body that fuses servitude with strength and humility with hyper-virility. Simultaneously, it traces how the text's affective vocabulary of loyalty and sacrifice becomes re-mobilized in postcolonial and contemporary national anxiety, transforming the bhakta into an icon of militant faith. By locating Hanuman within a longue-durée continuum, from *Ramcharitmanas* to modern political spectacle, the paper interprets the *Chalisa* as a living script of gendered and cultural performativity within the South-Asian public sphere.

To unpack the discourse on masculine performativity, the paper maneuvers a hybrid theoretical trajectory. Connell's sociology of masculinities clarifies how strength and authority are institutionalized as moral capital, while Butler's performativity foregrounds repetition and embodiment as sites where devotional identity is enacted rather than possessed. Bringing these models into dialogue with the Chalisa enables a reading that recognizes devotion (bhakti) as a culturally specific form of performative masculinity, that is, non-competitive yet potent, self-effacing yet rhetorically heroic. Following the approach of scholars such as Sheldon Pollock and Sibaji Bandyopadhyay, this essay also treats Tulsidas as a producer of what Bandyopadhyay terms "the vernacular intellect," in which theology and rhetoric merge within a historically saturated aesthetic. Scholars such as Lutgendorf (2007) have shown how the *Rāmcharitmānas* and *Chalisa* enabled a new "vernacular modernity," wherein affect replaced scholasticism as the currency of spiritual truth. Within this milieu, Hanuman represented the ideal devotee whose might was inseparable from moral discernment. The discourse thus flows from text to context, tracing how the Hanuman figure has migrated from the private to the public, from an interior space of the bhakta to the exterior spectacle of nationalist iconography. Tulsidas wrote the *Chalisa* in an era marked by Mughal consolidation and vernacular efflorescence. His decision to compose in Awadhi rather than Sanskrit was both visionary and political. It democratized access to a traditional knowledge system that is conventionally held as sacred and/or esoteric.

In early North Indian wrestling akhāṛas, Hanuman is a tutelary deity symbolizing the disciplined body (Alter 1992). Strength was never an end in itself but a ritualized path toward self-knowledge. SibajiBandyopadhyay, reading the epic tradition as a contest between speech and spectacle, might describe Hanuman as a "voice that learns to inhabit its own restraint." (Bandyopadhyay, S. (2004). The Politics of Voice: Essays on Literature and Language. Kolkata: Papyrus.) Such restraint defined masculine virtue long before the rise of modern militarism. To lose that restraint as contemporary iconography does, is to invert bhakti's epistemology. Connell's (1995) model of hegemonic masculinity helps situate the devotional body within social hierarchies:

strength, when severed from ethical intent, becomes dominance. Tulsidas's text resists this severance by inscribing the body within a network of service. In this way the *Chalisa* anticipates modern debates on toxic masculinity; it offers a pre-modern template for re-imagining male agency as relational rather than coercive. Tulsidas's *Chalisa* compresses the Ramayana's vast narrative into a lyrical litany centered upon Hanuman's service to Rama. Each verse functions as a performative utterance that both praises and reproduces Hanuman's qualities, such as strength, speed, wisdom, and devotion. The repeated invocations starting from "Jai Hanuman gyan gun sagar" (Hail Hanuman, ocean of wisdom and virtue), not only set up a devotional rhythm but a pedagogic template for moral emulation. In reciting, the devotee does not simply remember Hanuman; she or he becomes one with the larger-than-life idea of Hanum through simple vibrations that words put in rhythmic order are able to produce. The verses of the Chalisa creates a sonic embodiment of the masculine body in devotion through language combined with the performance of chanting. This linguistic performativity transforms prayer into a corporeal discipline. Butler's formulation that identity is "an effect of reiterated acts" sheds light on how the Chalisa enacts masculinity as repetition. The bhakta's voice, breath, and posture reproduce the saintly-heroic comportment that the verses extol. Hanuman's power is derivative yet indispensable, subordinate yet central. His dāsyābhava, that is, his servitude, is not weakness but an alternate mode of authority. Connell's notion of "complicit masculinity" also becomes useful here.

The *Chalisa* begins with an invocation that foregrounds intellect: jaya hanumān jñāna guṇa sāgara, meaning, "Hail Hanuman, ocean of wisdom and virtue." The first masculine attribute is not muscularity but knowledge (jñāna). In Tulsidas's poetics, wisdom anchors strength, and not vice versa. Three clusters of verses of the chalisa under scores this logic.

Verses 1-4 act as an exposition of Hanuman's mastery of the śāstras and grammar. The young monkey who once disturbed the sages acquires self-control through study. This serves as an allegory of the intellect disciplining instinct. Verses 16–20 recount the encounter with Sita in AśokVāṭikā. Hanuman regulates his gigantic form to appear miniscule, exemplifying what this paper terms 'cognitive elasticity': the ability to calibrate power through empathy and emotional intelligence. Verses 31–34 act as a climactic point within the *Chalisa* when he carries the entire Sanjivanimountain. The narrative here suggests that when brute strength is moderated by a curative agency, the intellect is literalized as a life-saving breath (vāyu). These instances glorify a bhakti aesthetic that valorizes transformation over aggression. Hanuman's body is performative in the way Butler has seen it. Performativity is a product of repeated acts of service, it is not perpetuated through a fixed ontology of gender or species. Hanuman's masculinity is not hegemonic but heuristic: a means to attain Rāma's grace. Moreover, Hanuman's intellect (gyān) receives equal emphasis from Tulsidas alongside his superhuman strength (bal), subverting the binary between cerebral and corporeal masculinity. Tulsidas imagines the ideal male devotee as one whose physical prowess is tempered by moral regulation. Restraint is Chalisa's recurring motto. Control over one's senses, speech, and desire can be empowering, because ascetic virility is distinct from both martial aggression and erotic excess. In Bandyopadhyay's terms, this is a "textualization of temperance," where virtue is not absence but sublimation.

The text's motif of repetition can be traced in the forty quatrains following a uniform meter (chaupai). This is evidence of discipline in form and meter. Chanting it becomes a sonic asceticism;

meter becomes moral order. Thus, the *Chalisa* operates as a cultural technology that trains the body through language. Its liturgical circulation across generations transforms masculine virtue from narrative content into collective habitus. SibajiBandyopadhyay's reflections on epic utterance help articulate this paradox. In his reading of the Mahābhārata, voice is never autonomous; it is always mediated by the desire for ethical legibility. Applying that insight here, Hanuman's chant of Rāma-nāma becomes a mode of subjectivation that undoes the very ego the muscular iconography seeks to advertise. What the Chalisa performs, therefore, is a pedagogy of humility masquerading as power.

If the Chalisa textualizes devotion through rhythm and repetition, visual culture translates that discipline into an idiom of spectacle. Colonial-era lithographs and later mass-produced calendars present Hanuman's physique as a grammar of strength: the swollen biceps, the flaring chest, and the gaze fixed in absolute submission to Rama-nama. Christopher Pinney (2004) observes, nineteenth-century devotional prints re-encoded bhakti within the logic of visibility. In these images, bodily luminosity becomes the sign of moral transparency.

Through the twentieth century, Hanuman's iconography underwent a semiotic intensification. Independence-era nationalist art recast him as an emblem of indigenous power, an indigenous answer to colonial virility. The saffron body was now not merely devotional but militant, carrying the mountain as both mythic burden and patriotic emblem. Connell's notion of "hegemonic masculinity," founded on domination yet dependent on consent, helps interpret this transformation. The bhakta's subservience was inverted into command, but the moral vocabulary remained devotional. Film and television further amplified this transformation. Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* (Doordarshan, 1987–88) established Hanuman as a televisual presence whose exaggerated loyalty became a nationalistic signature. The serial's reach during the post-Emergency years converted devotional sentiment into collective sentimentality; as audiences folded hands before the screen, the private ritual of Chalisa recitation merged with a public pedagogy of faith. Later cinematic reinterpretations, such as *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), secularized the icon, projecting Hanuman's compassion as humanitarian universality. In both registers, the devotional body persisted as visual pedagogy: strength disciplined by surrender.

Digital culture extends this pedagogy through meme, animation, and smart phone application. The viral circulation of the Hanuman Chalisa on YouTube or in remixed devotional rap demonstrates what Arjun Appadurai calls "the production of locality"—a transnational affective space where the bhakta's voice resonates across algorithms. Here, sound and sight fuse into what Bandyopadhyay might call a "spectacular theology," in which faith survives by the images it inspires.

If Tulsidas envisioned the devotee's body as disciplined pliancy, the late-colonial and post-colonial centuries re-inscribed that body within new regimes of visibility. Joseph S. Alter's ethnography of North-Indian akhāṛas describes the wrestler's body as both "instrument and temple" (Alter, 1992). Hanuman, patron of wrestlers, represents brahmacharya—celibate vigor channelled toward spiritual balance. His pre-industrial physique signifies containment rather than display. The contemporary "Angry Hanuman," however, dramatizes an inversion: strength becomes exhibition.

This shift may be traced to the rise of somatic nationalism. As Mrinalini Sinha (1995) observes, colonial discourse produced the "effeminate Bengali" and the "martial Sikh/Pathan" as binary racial masculinities. Early nationalist thinkers responded by valorizing the muscular Hindu

male as an antidote to imperial emasculation. The akhāṛa thus morphed from a devotional gymnasium into a civic forge. Hanuman's mythic muscles lent legitimacy to this corporeal politics.

Kajri Jain (2004) notes that twentieth-century calendar art, disseminated through bazaar lithography, masculinized divine bodies through realist shading and proportional exaggeration. Painters such as P. Sardar from Kolhapur modeled their canvases on body-builder physiques, a devotional mimesis where performance becomes an act of narcissism. By the 1970s, Hanuman's visual grammar had acquired a modern musculature: broad chest, minimal waist, flexed biceps - features aligned with the gym rather than the yajña. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay's commentary on the politics of corporeality in epic narrative provides a useful counter-point. For him, "the epic body speaks its power only through injury and service" (Bandyopadhyay, 2004, p. 112). The wounded body is more eloquent than the triumphant one. In contrast, the current iconographic Hanuman suppresses vulnerability altogether, replacing seva with spectacle. The devotional wound becomes an armored jawline. Consequently, a semiotic slide occurs: 'bal' (strength) derives from 'buddhi' (intellect). Within the Chalisa, these were inseparable coordinates of spiritual health. Within visual consumer culture, they split into aestheticized aggression. This fragmentation of bhakti mirrors the neoliberal body project that Pierre Bourdieu or Bryan Turner describe as a self curated through endless fitness labor. The saffron musculature of the "Angry Hanuman" is thus both a theological icon and a lifestyle brand, marketed through slogans of nationalist fitness.

Cultural Resonances and Gendered Citizenship

The semiotics of Hanuman's devotion exceeds theology; it enters the civic imagination. In contemporary India, muscular religiosity and political rhetoric often invoke Hanuman as the prototype of loyal service to the rāshtra (nation). The chant "Jai Shri Ram" that frames many public demonstrations echoes the Chalisa's performative rhythm but reassigns its object, from divine servitude to ideological obedience. The *bhakta* thus becomes citizen-subject, and *dasyabhava* translates into political duty.

Butler's theory of performativity provides a diagnostic lens for this shift. Repetition does not only consolidate identity; it also opens the possibility of re-signification. Within feminist and subaltern readings, Hanuman's devotion can be re-imagined as a critique of domination: obedience without ownership, power without possession. When read against the grain, the *Chalisa* offers a counter-script to aggressive nationalism - a vision of strength contingent on humility and of speech disciplined by silence.

Within the transnational diaspora, Hanuman worship, besides being a religious practice, has likewise evolved into a populist cultural identity. The Chalisa's rhythmic recitation during crises ranging from pandemic anxiety to migrant precarity, reveals its capacity to translate affect into resilience. The masculine ideal it endorses, when stripped of chauvinist accretions, becomes an ethics of care. In that sense, Tulsidas's text anticipates what Connell later names "positive masculinity," grounded in relational rather than competitive agency.

The politicization of Hanuman intensified during the Ramjanmabhumi-Babri Masjid conflict of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sikata Banerjee (2005) has shown that "masculine Hinduism" emerged as the ideological spine of Hindutva, re-casting Rāma as a warrior-king and his allies as militant prototypes. The muscularization of Rāma's body in Vishwa Hindu Parishad posters created

the visual precondition for Hanuman's later metamorphosis. When Acharya's image appeared in 2015, the cultural ground was already primed for its reception. Narendra Modi's public praise of the design in 2018 certified its political capital. The "Angry Hanuman" became an emoji of patriotic rage, traveling from WhatsApp stickers to motorbike helmets. Its saturation across everyday triggets what Roland Barthes might call a mythologization of immediacy: the sacred turned into commodity while retaining the aura of transcendence. Theologically, the image resurrects Hanuman's lesser-known identity as the eleventh avatar of Rudra, known as the Raudrarūpa, the fierce aspect of Shiva. Yet, historically, this facet coexisted with his role as the humble servant. The selective emphasis on rage reflects what Bandyopadhyay terms "textual amnesia"—a forgetting engineered by over-citation. The repeated circulation of the angry face effaces the linguistic Hanuman who, in the *Chalisa*, is praised for eloquence: vidyāvānguṇīatichātur (meaning, learned, virtuous, supremely clever).

R.W. Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity describes a cultural configuration that legitimizes men's dominance and the subordination of alternative masculinities and femininities. The "Angry Hanuman" icon crystallizes such hegemony within a devotional register: it defines authentic piety as virile militancy. As a media object, it thrives on affect, specifically, the contagious affect of anger. Sara Ahmed's (2004) analysis of the cultural politics of emotion helps explain this phenomenon. Anger, when circulated, attaches itself to surfaces and subjects, transforming ideology into sensation. The saffron-black palette operates chromatically to encode both holiness and hostility. This chromatic rhetoric recruits the devotee's body as the interface of faith and nation. From a Butlerian perspective, the repetitive public display of the "Angry Hanuman" enacts gender performativity on a collective scale: each sticker or flag reiterates the nation's masculine script. The performative force of devotion is thus re-channeled into political choreography of bike rallies, marches, and online campaigns where shouting replaces chanting. Bhakti's submissive gesture (añjalimudrā) becomes the clenched fist.

An ethno-critical reading reveals how this hypermasculine semiotics intersects with caste and regional identities. Hanuman, often identified with South Indian or Dravidian ancestry, historically occupied the margins of Aryan orthodoxy. His re-centering as the emblem of pan-Hindu power enacts what Partha Chatterjee calls the "inner domain" strategy: appropriating subaltern deities to consolidate cultural hegemony. The very figure once representing subaltern devotion is conscripted into Savarna nationalism. However, this conscription also carries racialized undertones: the black hue of Acharya's design recodes darkness from stigmatized otherness into assertive virility. The visual therefore performs a double inversion of class and color while reaffirming hierarchy through control of the narrative. In this sense, the "Angry Hanuman" participates in a global circuit of militant religious iconography akin to the Christian crusader or the Islamist warrior, each translating spiritual passion into a weaponized aesthetic.

The interpretive chasm between Tulsidas's *Chalisa* and its twenty-first-century image may be summarized as the distance between intellectual devotion and affective aggression. The former is linguistic, dialogic, interior; the latter is visual, declarative, exterior. This displacement is symptomatic of what Jean Baudrillard called "the precession of simulacra": the copy precedes the original, and the angry visage now mediates the memory of the text. Ruth Vanita (2014) has argued that the *Chalisa* is essentially a "hymn to intellect," positioning Hanuman as an allegory of cognitive clarity. To recite it is to enact an epistemic discipline. When this discipline is supplanted

by spectacle, the politics of knowledge gives way to the politics of affect. The result is a devotional post-truth: belief measured not by comprehension but by display. Aesthetically, the visual Hanuman belongs to what Walter Benjamin described as the "age of mechanical reproduction," wherein aura migrates from object to mass circulation. The repeated reproduction of the angry face multiplies its aura instead of diminishing it, reinstating a paradox of digital religiosity. Every reposted image becomes a performance in an act of faith.

Tulsidas ended the Chalisa with a supplication: "Sada raho Raghupatike dāsā," May I forever remain the servant of Rāma. The devotee's humility forms the spiritual infrastructure of bhakti. In contrast, the contemporary imagination enthrones Hanuman not as a servant but as a sovereign. This reversal encapsulates the journey from bhakta to icon. The transformation also mirrors India's broader transition from the moral politics of self-restraint to the populist politics of visibility. As Sibaji Bandyopadhyay might suggest, the epic voice of surrender has been replaced by the cinematic shout. The angry visage, therefore, is not merely an aesthetic deviation but a historical symptom, a semiotic of surplus masculinity born from collective insecurity. Yet within this economy of anger, the Chalisa still offers resistance. Its verses insist that true power lies in awareness, not assertion; that intellect without humility decays into noise. To return to Tulsidas today is to recover an ethics of balance, a pedagogy of strength disciplined by compassion. Hanuman's leap across the ocean remains a metaphor not of conquest but of connection, the bridging of body and mind, devotion and reason.

If digital culture has deified anger, scholarship must re-humanize devotion. Reading the Chalisa alongside its avatars reveals that every icon carries within it the possibility of its own critique. The challenge for cultural studies lies in sustaining that critique while acknowledging devotion's affective depth. Between the bowed head of Tulsidas's Hanuman and the furrowedbrow of Acharya's image stretches the story of a civilization negotiating its masculinity.

Re-examining Tulsidas's *Hanuman Chalisa* through literary and cultural theory uncovers a dynamic interplay between devotion, embodiment, and ideology. Hanuman's figure oscillates between the poles of submission and sovereignty, creating a performative continuum that informs both spiritual discipline and civic imagination. The text's endurance from early-modern manuscript to digital chant attests to its adaptability within India's shifting moral economies. By reading Hanuman as both bhakta and icon, this study demonstrates how bhakti operates as a historical technology of gender and governance. The devotional body becomes a mnemonic device through which communities rehearse ideals of obedience, loyalty, and power. Yet, within that very repetition lies the potential for subversion: humility can undo aggression, service can re-articulate sovereignty, and faith can exceed its political appropriations. Such ambivalence, central to the Chalisa's semiotics, ensures its relevance not only as liturgy but as cultural philosophy. Tulsidas' poetry still continues to perform the Indian imagination to itself.

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Healing Against the Grain: Sexual Politics of Sickness in Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar 's "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey"

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Abstract

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar 's fiction "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey" borders on the strange and the bizarre in the backdrop of a domestic tribal family of Santhal tribe of Jharkhand. Bridging the gap of the postmodern divide, the story turns around sexual politics surrounding reproductive functions and patrilineality to expose the fault lines in the subjectivity of Santhali women, the tensions that result thereof, and the resultant health crises suffered by a body in the form of a so called "mysterious" ailment that comes and goes of its own. Caught between the conflicting worlds of a rich cultural imagination of deities and spirits, and a modern, westernized life of industrial labour subject to laws of the capitalist society, the Adivasi woman has recourse to a subtext of the body as a hallucinatory site of dahni-vidya and visions. This paper explores Rupi Baskey's situation from this subjective point of view.

Keywords: Ailment, Mysterious, Adivasi, Body, Dahni-vidya , Hallucinatory

Introduction:

This paper will examine a seminal text on illness from Jharkhand, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar 's "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey", with respect to its form and functioning and take the help of sociological theories of illness to uncover the subtext of the ill body as a mysterious force refusing to conform. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar who won the 2015Yuva Puraskar, was shortlisted for the 2014 Crossword Book Award, and the 2014 Hindu Literary Prize, longlisted for the 2016 International Dublin Literary Award, and jointly won the 2015 Muse India Young Writer Award, for his fiction "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey." This is an insider's account of Santhalis'(indigenous tribes of Jharkhand) experience of living between two worlds, the one ingrained in their own culture of the Sarna and Manjhi gushtis of Singbhum district of Jharkhand, and the other of machine-controlled progress in the form of industry, culture, medicine embodied in the "Government" which holds them at the margins and has no empathy for their deep connections with nature.

Storytelling has its uses in all cultures and narratives are a preferred mode of communicating experience in all areas of life. It is a culturally congruent way of transmitting know-how. Narratives of first person talk about experiences directly while third person omniscient narration often manages to convey the inner state of a character's mind by relating the experience, letting the reader construct meaning which is a pleasurable experience. In situations of illness too there is an exchange of stories albeit in a matter-of-fact way. Before treatment can begin the physician will often ask for an account from the patient and write a case history consisting of medicalese. These diagnostic practices often tend to dehumanize/ alienate/objectify the ill person and very often there is a struggle between these two accounts to negotiate some middle ground based on which successful treatment can take place. This is why the term "illness" is preferred as opposed to

“disease”, which according to Shlomith Rimmon Kenan in The Story of “I”: Illness and Narrative Identity, 'denigrates the subjective experience of living through a disease' whereas the former manages to avoid the depersonalized nature of an 'objective medical condition' and has been thus used in anthropological studies. (Kenan, 2002)

Arthur Frank, whose book “The Wounded Storyteller” (Frank, 1995) is useful in this context provides us with three observations. He is primarily referring to first person narratives of illness, but the observations apply for fictional texts with omniscient narrators as well. According to Frank, narratives of illness spring from the ill person's need to tell. By doing so, they are constructing new maps and routes of connecting with the world which they have suddenly found themselves inhabiting as ill persons. The ill body, directly confronting its own mortality, finds itself in a strange space where it must inhabit or construct a new identity. This relates directly to Susan Sontag's observation that we all hold dual citizenships, one in the kingdom of health and another of illness and that illness “is the night side of life” (Sontag, 1988).

Frank's second observation is that these stories are not just about the ill bodies, but told through them, that is, they are embodied stories. The story is told through the wound. The third observation is that social contexts proliferate the telling of these stories that often the texts negotiate between the modern and postmodern divide.

The reason I selected Rupi Baskey's story is the inclusion of the word “mysterious” and the manner in which it bridges the abyss between the rich culture of imagined beings in Adivasi culture and the matter-of-fact construction of her illness as “psychosomatic” by the Western daktar with whom Rupi's husband Sido consults; both knowledge systems construct metaphors for illness as laid down by Susan Sontag in “Illness as Metaphor.”

Susan Sontag says that in sixteenth and seventeenth century England it was believed that the happy man would not get plague. She expands the idea to conclude that theories that diseases can be under the control of emotional states and can be cured by exerting of will power fall far short of understanding the physical nature of illness. My conjecture in this paper is that western medicine does not set the ill body free by constructing chemical pathways for illness, but rather evades the question of healing by pathologizing the ill body on one hand and throwing the ill person under the bus by its broad definition of psychosomatic illnesses. Illnesses whose epidemiology is unknown or not yet fully scientifically traced are often termed psychosomatic; any problematic ailment is termed “idiopathic”. Not only are they evasive methods of the “I don't know” brigade, they are refusal to acknowledge other forms of illnesses which may require alternate modes of healing. They are also seen in punitive and transgressional terms. Arthur Frank talks about the postmodern divide as a gap which occurs in the subjective experience of falling ill and dying in the past and the new experience of having one's illness defined in medicalese as a malfunction, growth, tumor, infection etc. which laypersons fail to comprehend and remain baffled despite belonging to a technically advanced medical era.

Rupi Baskey falls ill. The source or origin of the illness cannot be medically defined. Compounded by very difficult situations in her life such as her husband's infidelity and a mother-in-law who suffers from alcohol addiction, the onset of illness is precipitated by a sudden realization that her husband's mistress actually controls her domestic life and her child. In the absence of any

definitive proof of her husband's infidelity, Rupi can neither accept nor dispel the situation. Passions move inward; she gradually develops a severe case of weakness and finally descends into a frightful mental state of derangement. The onset of illness of Rupi Baskey, its diagnosis by a daktar as psychosomatic and the final narratorial stand of not reaching a conclusion or trying to dispel the mystery but letting it remain open-ended is Hansda's technique in the novel.

Rupi Baskey's narrative stands in direct opposition to the Western medical tradition which must reduce complex phenomena to a simple interpretative level. If the phenomenon is natural it is reduced to an interaction between waves and particles at an atomic level. If the phenomenon is medical it is reduced to latent and manifest content, or, worse, at the genetic level to an interaction of DNA and RNA. "Mysterious" therefore stands as an adversary to reductionist approaches and tethers the narrative to the Adivasi's own system of thought, the rich cultural phenomena of the paranormal which governs their lives and provides them a resolution to health and illness in the backdrop of a hierarchical world animated by benevolent and malevolent forces of nature.

An overarching frame of the paranormal is seen to govern the Adivasi's lives. This paranormal is a complex network of ghosts, supernatural beings, ancestors and other mysterious forces. Rupi's lack of agency and her detached marital relationship are expressed through an ill body; however, the supernatural framework is not an all-consuming one. Rupi's story is ultimately her body's, and it is expressed through the several phases of her illness. The mystery anchors into Rupi's body and refrains from analyzing or providing any medical theories, indigenous or western, and the ending of her illness is not a resolution of her situation either. Her story does not rise above the "mysterious" causative forces of her illness or grant her voice or agency; as a matter of fact, her silence at the end of the narrative is symptomatic of closure and calm.

Regarding narration, or human beings' primary need to tell, Margaret Atwood says, "The thing about narration is, there's always a teller but there's always a listener – whether for an oral narration or for a written one, and the two interact. The nature of the listener changes the nature of the narration, or it influences the nature of the narration. Put another way – and this comes back to your identity question – every human being who hasn't(sic) lost his or her memory is always telling and retelling the story of his or her life. In that case the storyteller is you and the listener is also you. There's(sic) a lot of rewriting that goes on throughout your life.

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar 's debut novel "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey" ponders upon the strange nature of a malaise neither detectable nor provable. Rupi Baskey, daughter-in-law of Khorda-haram and Putki, prestigious members of the Majhi gushti of Jharkhand, and bride to Sido, Khorda and Putki's elder son, is a hard-working healthy girl who delivers a baby standing erect on a paddy field. Within a fortnight of her marriage, she starts to shoulder household duties like cooking, cleaning, tending to animals and even takes to threshing corn in the fields with the women folk of her gushti.

The precarious position of the Adivasi has been emphasized by Amitayu Chakraborty in "Problematising 'indigeneity'through Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar 's The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey":

"Because of a powerful self-fashioning (as a purely atavistic, homogeneous, ethnic community) by elite adivasi leaders, and the success of the iconic Jharkhand movement, an entire

non-elite population got reduced to a conflicted cultural imaginary: on the one hand, the adivasi was a "rebel", a threateningly disintegrative force vis-à-vis the nation-statist ideology, and thus it was situated outside the discursive paradigm of modernity; on the other hand, the adivasi was primitive and animist, a noble savage, and thus it was situated inside the discursive paradigm of modernity as a cultural artefact that requires preservation and 'proper' exhibition."

Women's lives are suppressed by hegemonic power structures in many indigenous societies. Mainly due to the double marginalization due to the vestiges of the power structure left by the British colonizer and their own patriarchal society Santhal women face oppression in both public and private spheres. Their belief in a supernatural world inhabited by creatures like Sima-Bonga, a spirit that enters the human body and causes death, are an attempt to negotiate the complex processes of subjecthood in Adivasi societies. Women are believed to wield supernatural powers to control others. In the novel, female characters such as Gurubari, Dulari, Naikay's wife, her daughter-in-law, Majhi's wife, and her aunts come across as skilled dahnis. Complex power dynamics are at play as women perform magical acts to harm, subjugate, control and influence each other and interfere in marital lives of couples like Rupi and Sido. Gurubari, the wife of Sido's friend, harms Rupi, Sido's wife, to keep her under her control. After moving to Nitra, Rupi constantly feels weak and exhausted. Similarly, Somi-haram's wife experiences repeated miscarriages due to Naikay's wife's blackmagic. Dulari, Sido's brother's wife, keeps her problematic husband under her control. Women who possess supernatural powers may be domesticated but never subjugated. They lead ordinary lives but dance naked on full moon komaoni nights and harbour the occult to "...suck the life out of humans and animals and, in the absence of prey, devour human or animal dung" (Shekhar, 2014, pp32).

For socially marginalized and otherwise disempowered Adivasi women, dahni vidya or witchcraft is akin to an underground movement. When Naikay's wife or daughter-in-law perform dahni vidya on the menfolk of Kadamdihi it seems that the age-old oppression of woman by Santhal men has simply come home to roost. Perhaps the writer wants to point out that long term subordination and oppression have their backlashes and transgressional acts take birth in a culture of suffocation. Thus, the novel points at the flaws and factions within the Santhal community; and in this way, it upholds a nuanced depiction contrary to the widespread homogenization and glorification of Santhals.

Rupi's troubles start when her husband is seduced by another woman in whose house he resides at his workplace. Unbeknownst to her, her husband Sido is already under the spell of Gurubari, his schoolteacher colleague Bairam Master's wife. Strange and circuitous structures of power inhabit this one-of-a-kind tale. "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey" is abundant with spells and charms. Whereas Somai-haram is the richest man in the Majhi gushti he is not the most powerful, that place being occupied by the Naikay who dares to tame Sima-bonga the deity of 'disease, infirmity, poverty, doom and finally, death.' Members of Naikay's household practise dahni vidya (witchcraft), casting spells, causing unborn foetuses to bleed out of pregnant women; neighboring women like Somai-haram's wife is only able to have a child after three miscarriages and then dies. Sin, punishment, and redemptive frameworks function in this text to move the plot forward. Naikay, the practitioner of evil dies and it is discovered that his corpse has the liver missing. In modern parlance the shrinking of a liver would be attributed to local hooch and handi-

paura sessions. But the villagers with their natural propensity for myths assumed that it is an incarnation of the Simabonga, the Dhonkundra Bhoot, that has vast engorging powers and has eaten away Naikay's liver and given him death.

Rupi is susceptible to hypnosis and surrenders to psychologically assertive women with paranormal powers. This is evident from the beginning when she is drawn in a trance like state across their boundary wall summoned by the Naikay's daughter-in-law. Her trance is broken by her sister-in-law Sonamuni who pulls her away from the powerful woman's summons but Rupi is not so fortunate every time. At Sido's workplace Nitra, she is completely overtaken by Gurubari's 'rolling eyes', and powerful persona. Hallucinations start as she is face to face with a seductive woman and she has visions of an elderly woman, not visible to others advising her against setting up a common kitchen with Bairam Master's wife, that is, Gurubari; instead telling her to cook independently. However, Rupi does not have enough will power to stand firmly in her convictions. After delivering Jaipal standing in a paddy field, she promptly returns to Nitra. There is no way she would know, that Gurubari will slowly take control not only of her husband but her son Jaipal as well in the future. Spaces she inhabits have a powerful effect on her. At Nitra she is afflicted with a strange enervation but once she is in back in Kadamdihi (her in-law's village), she feels her former self, see-sawing back to feeling useless when again living with Sido in Nitra supervised by Gurubari.

With each new episode of childbearing, Rupi Baskey becomes more and more susceptible to immobility and passivity. She loses interest in sex after her first delivery and though unwilling, conceives her second son Bishu. One afternoon, awakening from a deep slumber after a splitting headache, she chances upon Sido and Gurubari who have come out together from a locked room. On another similar occasion, suddenly awakening at night, and having suddenly missed Jaipal who was supposed to be sleeping with her, she found the child blissfully asleep in Gurubari's room. The metaphor used in the text with respect to Rupi's relationship with Gurubari is that of an Alakjari, the golden vine that is of a parasitic nature and entwines itself around a healthy, strong tree to slowly draw nutrition out of its heart and render it sapless. Sido's frequent intimacies with Gurubari and the significance of events cited above could not possibly have escaped Rupi Baskey, who as we see in the story, is illiterate, but not ignorant. However, although she is in shock, she does not confront either of them, and is completely under the spell of Gurubari's dahni vidya (witchcraft); when Romola suggests that she should avoid eating or drinking anything offered by Gurubari, Rupi, instead of adhering to the advice goes and immediately confesses to Gurubari who makes Rupi drink some potion ostensibly containing mohni medicine, (strong overpowering medicine). And then pregnant with her third child Puchu she has the most terrible of her visions. Modern psychiatry would call these hallucinations. Upon being forced to answer Nature's call early one morning, Rupi meets a terrible apparition of a 'man, taller than the door, almost as tall as the house itself...He was looking straight ahead, as if he was expecting someone or guarding the door. The man had long arms and legs and a stout, animal-like body.' (Shekhar, 2014, pp133)

A terrified Rupi's condition is described thus:

'Blood rushed to her head and she felt like tearing her hair out...never in her life had she been more afraid. Not even while giving birth in the middle of a rice paddy.'(Shekhar, 2014, pp133)

Strictly in terms of narrative similarity without any effort to offer a medical diagnosis as the

researcher is not a doctor, this paper would suggest that there are parallels between Rupi's story and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," a first-person account of a narrator afflicted with post-partum psychosis. Post-partum psychosis is a severe mental illness that affects new mothers, days or weeks after having a baby. The symptoms are many and may be different from one individual to another. Women can have severe mania, depression, confusion, hallucinations and delusions. Whereas Rupi, enmeshed in a world inhabited by dahni-vidya, evil deities like Sima-Bonga and naked women gambolling on full moon komani nights by the river side, is haunted by the silver haired aunt with a whiff of Jasmine hair oil, Gilman's narrator is compulsively obsessed with figurines she thinks emerge and walk about her room at night from the yellow wallpaper in her room. Gilman's narrator shows ambiguity in her attitude to the wall paper, hating it one moment and being thankful that her baby did not have to be put up in this room and endure the horrible wall paper, and being obsessed with it to the point of having nothing else to discuss. In this text as well as many other texts of a deranged state of mind the sentences are short and exclamation marks are used profusely at the end of almost every sentence. The state of the woman is beyond retrieval. At the end of the narrative we find her so enmeshed in the reality of her own construction that she is completely absorbed into the world of her own creation. She is found creepingall over the room with its yellow wallpaper as if she had entered a different world altogether far from the realities of the external world outside. Upon discovered by her husband creeping thus all over, she crawls over theman's body when he faints out of shock.

Rupi Baskey, however, is pulled out of her mysterious ailment subsequently. After having visited 'daktars' including homeopaths, and being prescribed a sufficient array of pills and potions which she consumes erratically, she is even taken to a renowned Ojha, who ironically points out to Sido the unmistakable presence of a woman in his life. The text, however, refuses to grant the Ojha any victory and Sido is seen finally living in Chakuliya with Gurubari in her house with Jaipal. Rupi, having spent the larger part of her prime thus and having given over to her enervation and hallucinations, finds a semblance of a voice toward the end of her story when her younger son Bishu marries Rupali, almost Rupi's namesake, a no-nonsense woman from a village near Jhargram in West Bengal.

Rupali is logical and knows her mind. She can take firm decisions, like building a separate house for Bishu and herself, pointing out that the present holding is insufficient for new brides of the house who will live and bear children of their own. Rupi's words of praise mark the beginning of an improvement in her health and her morale as she says to Rupali, "Well said, Baahu.Well said". In Rupali Rupi finds her absent voice, the voice subdued by dahni vidya and mohni medicine and the voice which whimpered and died upon finding her menfolk under another woman's power. This voice, once befuddled and lost, returns holding hands with the calm, self-assured voice of her daughter-in-law. The text ends with Rupi's dream, herself under the dogor tree, looking contentedly upon Bishu's wife pleasantly going about her household duties as she concludes with the iterative that Rupali is "Just like me...just like me." Gilman's narrator loses herself but Rupi Baskey escapes the circuitous tangles of her yellow wallpaper.

Result:

"The mysterious ailment of Rupi Baskey" is viewed in moral, punitive and transgressional terms as punishment for her mother-in-law Putki's crime. It finds expression finally in terms of ancestral curse. People are convinced that Putki is to blame for Rupi's ailment. Dulari's heated exchange with Putki, her mother-in-law, brings out the anger and frustration of this communally shared belief:

> "Dulari turns away, smirking. Putki is sure that Rupi has heard this exchange. She knows that Rupi is crying. She is convinced that this is her punishment for being a bad woman and a bad mother. What the people of Kadamdihi say is true; the immorality of Putki's youth has come back to haunt her. Rupi's disease does not originate in her. It is Putki's, it is Sido's, Doso's, and Dulari's. It will perhaps finish them all, their entire family."(Shekhar, 2014, pp98)

One of the doctors Sido takes Rupi to declares that it is all in her head:

> "'It's in her mind, I believe,' the doctor said, sighing heavily...'She is sick because she thinks she is sick', the doctor continued. 'All her tests, her blood pressure, temperature, pulse, heart rate, blood, urine, chest, abdomen, everything is normal. Everything seems all right. Tell me though,' he asked Sido, 'does she lead a stressful life?'"(Shekhar, 2014, pp126)

Susan Sontag in "Illness as Metaphor" continues to unravel the mysterious workings of the human mind when rationalizing mysterious diseases; the conclusion that a happy mind could fend off many diseases including infectious ones before infections were fully understood exists even today.

"Moreover", she writes, '...Psychologizing seems to provide control over the experiences and events (like grave illnesses) over which people have, in fact little or no control.' She further writes,

> "Illness expand by means of two hypotheses. The first is that every form of social deviation can beconsidered an illness...the second is that every illness can be considered psychologically. Illness is, interpreted as, basically a psychological event, and people are encouraged to believe that they can cure themselves by the mobilization of will; that they can choose not to die of the disease. These two hypotheses are complementary. As the first seems to relieve guilt, the second reinstates it."

The villagers interpret Rupi Baskey's mysterious ailment in various ways. However, their interpretations are delegitimizing and victim-shaming.Rupi herself is called adahni later when she hallucinates in a public place, a railway station full of people.

Upon struggling to escape the giant figure of a man she envisions one early dawn she runs to Romola's house as the nearest escape and:

> " 'I was about to tell you,' Romola said after Rupi had cried, composed herself and finished her story, 'how you are drying up like a tree around which an alakjari(a parasitic plant) has twined, how big and healthy you used to be and how sick you have become, how you are losing the blood from your cheeks and taking on the colour of burnt firewood.'"(Shekhar, 2014, 117)

Later, when Rupi has a violent episode of hallucination at the marwari's memorial near the railway station, gloom and ominous silence descend upon the people surrounding her.

"Why did she only see the ghost? Why didn't she tell them or her sons about it? Why did she run off like a madwoman?"

Among Santhals, it is taboo for women to become mediums. Even Jaaher-Ayo, the highest female deity of the Sarna pantheon, needs a man to manifest herself. A Santhal woman who behaves in the way Rupi did at the Marwar's memorial can do so only because of two reasons: “either a spirit or a dahni had ascended the woman; or, the woman herself is a dahni.” As Sontag writes, psychological theories of illness are a powerful means of placing the blame, medically this time, on the ill.

Rupi Baskey's story, from an omniscient narrator's voice is an embodied one as Arthur Frank has opined in The Wounded Storyteller. Time and again emphasis is placed on the pre and the post-illness phase, former healthy body which worked in her in law's house untiringly can no longer function as before and she becomes sexually passive even as her body continues to bear children as a mere matter of functionality. She does not even have power over her own children and is reduced to a mere presence. Her story is told through the wound; herailment is mysterious because it subsides in the same manner in which it had originally precipitated. Moreover her story negates the Cartesian mind-body duality because it exposes the age-old reactions of the human mind to the irrational, to the mysterious, the unknown. On the one hand a ritualistic scapegoating can occur, by heaping on numerous blames on the ill person or an obsequious bending and bowing may occur in front of the ill person if considered to be possessed of supernatural powers. Either way the ill body has been stamped different, and causality thrown out of the window. What is significant and to be observed in these cases is that the ill body hardly has a voice, literally and figuratively. Since Rupi has no idea what is happening to her, and because she is a female patient accompanied by her guardian husband the doctors who examine her hardly pay attention to any form of narrative emerging out of her. It is Sido who speaks, explaining to the “daktar' what is apparently wrong and it is the male driven medical narrative, as in case of Gilman's female protagonist, that declares that there is nothing the matter with her.

Conclusion:

Whereas the Santhal community demonizes her for occupying a paranormal state in the form of a dahni, as aligned to supernatural forces, Western medicine reduces her to a body sans voice, the voice belonging to the husband, the male owner in both cultures. Rupi has to heal against the grain, both cultures subdue and render her powerless. She has to wait for the right time, when she becomes a senior in the family and can now rest in the power structure provided to her as a maternal figure, her younger self now given over to her daughter-in-law, Rupali, who functions as her alter ego. In the sexual politics being played out as a woman in sick role, Rupi performs the role of the invalid only to come out at the other side of the storm as a calm and quiet maternal figure quite in possession of herself.

- Frank, pp. 4-5
- Dvorak, pp-17-25
- The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey.pp26

- The two texts are vastly different in the sense that one is a novel with an omniscient narrator and the other is a first-person account of an unreliable narrator. But both women have just attained motherhood, and both begin to have difficulties after their first delivery. No apparent cause may be traced to their conditions which are similar; both suffer from a world weariness, a sense of exhaustion so deep that they are unable to participate in household chores or look after the baby. In Gilman's text, the baby never emerges on the scene or is brought to the mother whereas Jaipal in Rupi's household is looked after and eventually taken over completely by her nemesis, Gurubari. Both their conditions baffle their husbands. John, the physician husband in The Yellow Wall-Paper 'does not believe that I am sick!' and Sido is equally clueless and asks, 'What problem do you have performing these small tasks for your own house? You were always ready to do anything, why are you so irritable now?'Rupi and the narrator in The Yellow Wall-Paper also hallucinate frequently.
- http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/postpartumpsychosis.aspx accessed on 16th May,2016 at 5:00pm
- The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey,pp9
- Parenthesis mine

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Frankenstein: The “wretched Victor”?

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Abstract:

The question, ‘Who is Frankenstein?’, presents a perplexing contradiction: readers recognise Victor Frankenstein as the scientist, yet popular culture identifies the Creature as Frankenstein. This study examines why this misidentification persists and what it reveals about the moral framework of Shelley's novel. Rather than dismissing this as cultural confusion, this paper argues that the discrepancy reflects Shelley's subversive narrative design. The scientist, Victor Frankenstein's ambition assumes monstrous dimensions that blur the Creator-Created binary. The mistreatment of the Creature by its Creator, inherently victimizes his position and transfers its villainous monstrosity to the latter. Those lacking factual ratification of the identity of Frankenstein, thus, take for granted this intuitive echo. Thus, this study aims to further enquire into this misidentification, through analysing the character of the titular Victor Frankenstein and also attempts to offer a defence for the seeming isolated villainy of the Creature. It delves into his irresponsibility as a Creator, chauvinistic and blasphemous outlook to certify the veracity of the misidentification.

Keywords: Frankenstein, Shelley, Creature, Creation, Ambition, Revenge, Knowledge, Destruction

“Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee”
(Blake,1789, lines 1-2)

William Blake's innocent inquiry in "The Lamb"—"Little Lamb who made thee / Dost thou know who made thee"—establishes the fundamental question of creator and created that haunts Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The fatal position of man in the Great Chain of Being has enabled his infinite potential. This acknowledgement often leads him to exalt his prospects as divine, inevitably leading to his Fall into the abyss of bestiality instead. Just as Blake's lamb knows its maker, the Creature seeks recognition from his creator, Victor Frankenstein. Yet unlike the benevolent shepherd-creator of Blake's pastoral vision, Victor proves to be a creator who recoils from his creation, refusing the very acknowledgement the Creature desperately seeks. In Shelley's novel, the protagonist, blinded by ambition and scientific hubris, dares to create life, life not breathed into but toiled after in the dark realms of decay. Rebelling against the natural order and subsequently denouncing responsibility, he lands himself from the bliss of domesticity to a vacuum of mourning. He becomes from all that his name implies to all that it does not. He becomes from a Victor to Frankenstein, the latter often misidentified for the monster. However, whether this is truly a misidentification or a moralistic intuition must be examined. Victor Frankenstein serves as the second narrator in the novel, with his voice nested in the epistolary narrative of Robert Walton. Much like the tragic hero, Frankenstein begins at the height of happiness and success only to fall because of his hubris and hamartia. His youth was spent in joyful communion with his friends and family. His “tender parents” allowed him to study at his own pace and discretion, thereby developing his affinity for learning. (Shelley, 2023, p.21) Discovering the volumes of Cornelius

Agrippa at the age of thirteen, which his father dismissed as “sad trash”, his interest in Natural Philosophy is aroused. (Shelley, 2023, p.24) He subsequently procured volumes of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus, diving into the depths of chimeric science. His quest for forbidden knowledge having ignited, he strives to search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. His naïve rejection of modern science proves fatal as he subsequently aspires to “break through” the “ideal bounds” of mortality. (Shelley,2023, p. 36)

Following the death of his mother, Caroline Beaufort and his journey to his University in Ingolstadt, he is for the first time removed from the society of his friends. However, his ardent desire for “the acquisition of knowledge” soon fills the vacancy and drives him towards his single-minded scientific ambition. (Shelley, 2023, p.29) Despite finally acknowledging the legitimacy of modern science, he fails to let go of “chimeras of boundless grandeur”. (Shelley, 2023, p.30) Being completely enticed by science, Frankenstein leaves the society of men bound to the singular task of seeking forbidden knowledge. He becomes yet another explorer who claims nature and its resources as his own. Shelley through the use of sexual language represents nature as virginal enduring the wrath and barbarity of men. Frankenstein's assertion that he “pursued nature to her hiding places” conceptualizes the theme of forbidden knowledge as well as shows how nature is sexualized. (Shelley,2023, p.36) His digging up the charnel houses with his “profane fingers” correlates him with Mammon, who ransacked the centre of the Earth for the building of Pandemonium. (Shelley,2023, p.37)

However, the “consummation” of his “toils” is anything but “gratifying”. (Shelley, 2023, p.35) Despite the rigorous labours of two years, his mortal faculties fall short. He fails to design a creature in his own physical image unable to reconstruct the intricate anatomy. However, it is his external faculties that he fails to replicate. His internal convulsiveness is translated into the repulsive externality of the Creature. Thus, he manages to create a “demoniacal corpse”, eight feet tall and proportionately large. (Shelley, 2023, p.39) He shudders at the sight of his own creation proving his incompetence as a parent. Despite having a youth of paradisiacal bliss, he fails to confer the same upon his creature. He fails to even name him, resorting to several variants of demon and monster. The creature who ought to be treated as his Adam is instead reduced to “the fallen angel”. (Shelley, 2023, p.75) The Creature is further dismissed as his enemy, whose responsibility he evades and whose destruction he yearns for.

The subtitle of the novel, "The Modern Prometheus," brings forth a multi-layered analogy. The Romantic identification of Prometheus with the alienated genius lays the basic foundation of Victor Frankenstein's character. The theme of rebellion against God and the lofty enterprise of the creation of life is also ushered in. His subsequent semblance with Satan further augments this motif of transgressive ambition. Like Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost, Victor possesses impressive rhetorical abilities that mask his fundamental moral corruption. His eloquent self-justifications throughout the narrative—blaming fate, circumstance, and even his own creation for his misfortunes—echo Satan's sophisticated arguments that shift responsibility away from himself. Moreover, Victor's ardent desire for revenge against the Creature, particularly after William's death, mirrors Satan's vengeful campaign against God's creation in Eden. Both figures, consumed by pride and refusing accountability, pursue destruction as recompense for their perceived grievances. Shelley thereby condemns Victor both biblically and classically to eternal suffering for his

transgressions. The parallel to Satan is complete when Victor, like the fallen angel, becomes a wanderer pursuing his creature across desolate landscapes, forever exiled from the domestic paradise he once enjoyed. These classical and biblical allusions do not merely frame Victor as a transgressor; they establish him as inherently monstrous in his rebellion, prefiguring the transfer of monstrosity from Creature to Creator that justifies the popular misidentification.

Believing himself to be the adversary of God, he established his parallels with him at multiple instances. He uses the word animate to describe the action of bestowing life. The word has been derived from the Latin word 'animare' meaning to fill with breath, thereby recreating the action of God in Genesis wherein he breathes life into man. However, this parallel is dismissed as his rigorous and laborious toil cannot be equated with the effortless conduct of God. This analogy also brings forth the dialectic between Blake's "The Lamb" and "The Tyger," wherein the lamb's idyllic creation is contrasted against the creation of the tiger forged through violent, industrial labour. Blake's innocent lamb is made by one who "calls himself a Lamb" and "became a little child"—a gentle, pastoral creator. (Blake, 1789, lines 14-16) In stark contrast, Blake describes the tiger's creation through images of hammer, anvil, and chains, asking "What dread hand? & what dread feet?" (Blake, line 12) could forge such "fearful symmetry". (Blake, line 4) This duality of creation methods directly parallels Victor's endeavour. Like Blake's tiger-maker, Victor does not breathe life gently into clay but rather constructs his creature through brutal physical labour in charnel houses, assembling parts with "profane fingers" amid decay and death. Blake's crucial question—"Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"resonates with the horror of Victor's creation: can the same natural order that produces innocent beauty also produce monstrous terror? (Blake, line 20) Victor's creature, like Blake's tiger, emerges not from divine breath but from the dark forges of transgressive science, his eight-foot frame and yellow eyes embodying the "fearful symmetry" that results when creation becomes a violent, hubristic act rather than a loving, divine one. The comparison reveals that Victor's method of creation predetermines his creature's monstrous appearance, making Victor himself responsible for the very monstrosity he later abhors.

Victor's monstrosity extends beyond his treatment of the Creature to encompass his broader worldview, particularly his chauvinistic dismissal of female autonomy and agency. Besides denying God's divinity, Frankenstein's creation of the creature also denies the female role in reproduction. Perhaps with his mother's death, he easily shirks off the role of the mother in the process of creation. His isolation from domesticity whilst creating the monster also brings in illicit connotations. The household of Victor Frankenstein being inherently gendered creates his phallocentric view of women. Elizabeth Lavenza, his cousin and fiancée has therefore been described in terms of the white goddess as being virginal, docile and needing protection. He denies her any autonomy by comparing her to a “favourite animal”. (Shelley,2023, p.22) Her purpose of existence is restricted to consoling him and his family. She is expected “to contribute to the happiness of others by entirely forgetting herself.” (Shelley, 2023, p.28) At any point should she be unable to restore him to tranquillity, he points out the inadequacy of her “gentle affection”. (Shelley, 2023, p.117) His male chauvinism reaches its peak with his treatment of the female creature. His destruction of the female monster shows the fate of women not submitting to Victorian femininity. A female susceptible to becoming a “thinking and reasonable animal” is destroyed before the realization of her dreams. (Shelley, 2023, p.131) Despite his disgust towards his Creature he equips

him with the ability to feel “greater abhorrence” to see “his own deformity” in a “female form”. (Shelley,2023, p.131) Her destruction is brought about by Frankenstein's scepticism regarding her obedience towards the male creature. She is also subjected to moral policing as she is expected to be moved by the “superior beauty of man”. (Shelley, 2023, p. 131) Victor's misogyny thus compounds his monstrosity: he is not only an irresponsible creator but a tyrannical patriarch who denies autonomy to any being, male, female, or creature—that threatens his control.

Nature, which is feminized in the novel, is expected to serve the purpose of Victor Frankenstein. She is not only expected to lay herself bare at his disposal and convenience but also expected to sooth his passions. At any point should she fail, she is also considered to be inadequate and a failure. She is only acknowledged by Victor Frankenstein when he needs to be consoled much like the other female characters in the novel. The sharp contrast between the treatment of nature between Henry Clerval and Victor Frankenstein shows the difference between a Romantic and a Pragmatic person. The demeanour of Frankenstein can be compared to Blake's mythological Urizenwhereas Henry Clerval to that of Albion Rose.This distinction presents itself distinctly through the acknowledgement of Frankenstein that while Clerval “was alive to every new scene” he was “haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment.” (Shelley, 2023, p. 122)

While Victor's monstrosity is established through his actions as Creator, the Creature's apparent villainy must be contextualized to understand the full moral inversion Shelley constructs. Unlike Victor, whose violence stems from selfish ambition and revenge, the Creature's destructive acts emerge from profound abandonment and social rejection. The Creature begins his existence with innocence and an innate desire for companionship and love. His early experiences reveal a being capable of profound emotion, learning, and moral reasoning. He educates himself through observing the De Lacey family, learning language, history, and social values. His reading of *Paradise Lost*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* demonstrates his capacity for deep intellectual and emotional engagement. The Creature's eloquent articulation of his suffering—"I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend" reveals a self-awareness and moral consciousness that Victor consistently lacks. (Shelley, 2023, p.75) Where Victor refuses accountability, blaming fate and his creation for his misfortunes, the Creature understands the causality of his own transformation from innocent to vengeful. His violence is reactive rather than innate; it is Victor's initial rejection and society's subsequent brutality that drive him toward destruction. The Creature's plea for a companion represents his final attempt at redemption and inclusion, which Victor's destruction of the female creature definitively denies. Thus, the Creature's villainy is not innate but manufactured, a direct consequence of Victor's monstrous abdication of responsibility. Shelley presents the Creature not as inherently evil but as a victim of his Creator's moral failure, further justifying the transference of the monstrous identity to Victor himself.

Through the character of Victor Frankenstein Shelley presents a critique of the single-minded ambition of men. She also critiques men's disregard for domesticity and family which is manifested in several instances through the character of Victor Frankenstein. He glorifies his cruelty and personal ambition to have heroic dimensions. His yearning for destruction is downplayed as “trembling with passion” while the voice of the creature is repeatedly demonized to victimize himself. (Shelley, 2023, p.132) The creature rightfully judges his feelings as being inconstant, as he oscillates between a guilty conscience, a victim complex, and a burning desire for revenge. He

continues to blame fate and the Creature for his own transgressions. Blinded by the hatred, he sets forth on the journey of revenge and what he deems as heroism, again deserting his family and responsibilities. His brother Ernest is no longer mentioned in his narrative as his revengeful purpose is realized.He therefore proves his inherent monstrosity and validates the popular misidentification. Blake's lamb receives the answer to its innocent question—"Little Lamb I'll tell thee, / Little Lamb I'll tell thee! / He is called by thy name" discovering a creator who shares its nature, gentle and mild. Victor's Creature receives no such answer, no such kinship. The creator does not share the created's name or nature; instead, the created must bear the creator's name as a mark of monstrosity. The name 'Frankenstein' rightfully evokes the monster because Victor Frankenstein, through his hubris, cruelty, and abdication of parental responsibility, embodies monstrosity far more profoundly than his abandoned Creature ever could. Where Blake's lamb finds divine love in its maker, Shelley's Creature finds only rejection and cruelty, transforming the question "who made thee?" from an innocent wonder into an accusation of abandonment. The 'misidentification' is, in truth, an accurate moral judgment: the Creature inherits not Victor's care but his monstrous legacy, making 'Frankenstein' the fitting name for the true monster of Shelley's narrative.

“Little Lamb I'll tell thee,

Little Lamb I'll tell thee!

He is called by thy name,”

(Blake,1789, lines11-13)

Acknowledgement

The first reading of *Frankenstein*, immediately struck me with the feeling of immense sympathy for the Creature, often addressed, quite undeservingly so, as the 'Monster'. Upon further perusal of the text and its subsequent ramifications in popular culture, I was acquainted with the seemingly arbitrary misidentification. That Frankenstein is the Creature and not the Creator is a normalized notion in the non-literary space. On subsequent re-readings of the text, this misidentification stood out more as an intuitive moral reflection rather than ignorance. The inherent monstrosity of Victor Frankenstein, warrants him the villainous title he wished to confer upon his rather innocent Creature. However, this study was not only meant to prove the veracity of the misidentification. It was also meant to offer a defence for the Creature and a consolation perhaps proving that he is “not shunned and hated by all mankind”.

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Self-Declaration of Originality

We, hereby declare that this Paper titled, “Frankenstein: A “wretched Victor” is our own original work. We certify that all the sources used have been properly acknowledged and cited according to the Heritage guidelines. We are aware that in case our work is proved to be plagiarised, it is liable to cancellation. Mehuli Roy & Piyali Gupta

Gender and social reform: The role of Brahmo royal couple and reformers in challenging existing gender norms and empowering women in the Princely state of Cooch Behar

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Abstract

The Princely State of Cooch Behar was a very popular and well-known name in the history of Brahmo social reform movement in India. The marriage of Keshab's daughter Sunity Devi with Maharaja Nripendra Narayan of Cooch Behar in 1878 led to the second schism of the Brahmo Samaj. Keshab was charged that the marriage violated the minimum age prescription of Act III of 1872 and that it condoned idolatry and was not a pure Brahmo marriage. But the Cooch Behar marriage incident or its aftermath should be considered not from the usual historical point of view of treachery and hypocrisy, but from the new and relevant perspective of the spread of Brahmoism in the Indian subcontinent. Keshab's main motive behind this marriage was to bring about social reforms in Cooch Behar and spread Brahmoism there. In his letter to Miss Cobbe, Keshab explained the purpose behind the British government's interest in marrying his daughter to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and why he agreed to it. In fact Keshab believed in the willpower of the British plans to modernize Cooch Behar and saw with them the need for a progressive wife for Maharaja Nripendra Narayan. Similarly, later Keshab wrote to Max Muller that "It was very like a political marriage… A whole kingdom was to be reformed….". But no historian has taken the initiative to examine how Keshab Chandra's above purpose was fruitful in Cooch Behar in the future. In fact, John Stevens, Kanailal Chattopaddhya and Jogananda Das said that after Cooch Behar marriage Keshab and his followers shifted entirely from social reform and promoting of Brahmo religion. They keep their mission alive by focusing only on study of comparative religion. But this opinion of the historians is not entirely true. The role and objective of the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj in the Princely State of Cooch Behar was entirely different. With the entry of Keshab's daughter Sunity Devi through matrimony with Maharaja of Cooch Behar and with her direct guardianship the activity of Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj was directed there. This new couple tried to introduce modern reforms in Cooch Behar and, indeed, opened the remote state to enlightened Bengali influence from Kolkata. Here, the Nababidhan Brahmo Temple was established in 1886, which David Kopf described as the largest Brahmo temple in Southeast Asia. In 1888, Nababidhan Brahmo religion was declared as the 'State Religion' of Cooch Behar. Besides, being a Princely State, they had their own legislature. Naturally, they wanted to incorporate the ideals of Brahmo Samaj into government regulations and legal systems to make them a reality. In this essay, my main topic of discussion is what steps were taken by Brahmo royal couple Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and Maharai Sunity Devi and other Brahmo activists for social upliftment among women and how they removed the long-lasting stagnation of Cooch Behar in the sphere of women's freedom and empowerment.

Keywords: Brahmo Samaj, Equality, Marriage Act, Religious freedom, Renaissance, Reformation, Social status, Upliftment, Violence, Empowerment.

Introduction:

Whenever the matter of women's status in 19th century society is brought up, it is almost always best described in one word: appalling. The main and most obvious cause for this is probably the widespread existence of patriarchal systems throughout the world at that time. This pitiful status that women usually held was no different than the one they held in Indian societies, including the royal class and upper caste women of princely state of Cooch Behar. Although the majority of the then population of the Cooch Behar state was belonged to the common *Rajbansi* community, who formed predominantly a matriarchal society and the women have almost full liberty both within and without the house.[1] However, it cannot be said that women's rights have never been violated. Even if women were not mistreated, they were not shown positive respect either.[2] The Brahmo Samaj played an important role in protecting the rights and dignity of women and in shaping the modern society. It played a crucial role in suppressing caste system, dowry system, and in improving the educational system among the women. It also encouraged women's empowerment. Like other places in India, the Brahmo Samaj was quite active in social reform among the women in the princely state of Cooch Behar also. The path they showed led to the disappearance of the traditional superstitious customs from the social life of Cooch Behar and progressive rationalist free thought changes the pattern of social structure.

Methods:

This research paper will highlight and identify the impact of the Brahmo religious movement on women's social reform in the Princely state of Cooch Behar during the period of 1878 to 1949. From a feminist perspective, it will also attempt to depict a socio-cultural and religious landscape of that contemporary period. This research will be a qualitative study depending upon the primary and secondary sources available in various institutions like, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Uttarpara Jaikrishna Public Library, The Chaitanya Library Kolkata, Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj Library, Sadharan Bramho Samaj Library, National Library Kolkata, West Bengal State Archive, Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha, Cooch Behar District Library, etc. This article has been compiled using information gathered from a range of sources, including the Brahmo Yearbook, various contemporary Bengali and English periodicals associated with the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj, the Annual Report of Brahmo Samaj, as well as biographies and autobiographies of Brahmo preachers and leaders. Additionally, the Brahmo Almanac, Cooch Behar State Gazette, Statistical Report and the Annual Administration Report of Cooch Behar State were utilized, along with letters from the personal collections of Brahmo individuals. Consequently, the social standing of women in the Cooch Behar state prior to and following the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj will be comparative analysis in this article. It is hoped that this study will be able to provide a qualitatively holistic picture of the expansion of Brahmoism and social reform among women of Cooch Behar, with fruitful historical understanding.

Results:

The steps taken by the Brahmo Samaj and the Brahmo royal family to bring social reform among the women in Cooch Behar are discussed in detail below.

❖ **Prohibition of polygamy and support for inter-caste marriages:**

It was a tradition in the contemporary Cooch Behar royal family that when Prince used to reach the age of maturity, relatives such as *Rajmata,* stepmother, grandmother used to bring one girl each of their own choice. Such girls were already collected and trained to be cultured and educated. The Prince used to choose one of these girls on the basis of their beauty and talent, and marry her as his *Patrani* (Maharani) according to the *Gandharva* tradition. Rest of those girls used to exchange garland with young prince and become his wife. They all used to the status of the Queen but their position was a touch lower than that of *Patrani.* All other Rani's were called *Gharani Rani* except the *Patrani.* All of these were under *Patrani.*[3] In addition, the Maharajas had several concubines who were referred to as *Pachhuas* in Cooch Behar. The next Maharaja always had to provide alimony for the living queens and concubines of the deceased kings. After the death of the king, the condition of the concubines was not good in most cases. In order to collect alimony, various witnesses, evidence and recommendations were required. To alleviate their plight, Maharani Vrindeshwari Devi appealed to the royal court to introduce a permanent settlement i.e. the payment of stomach allowance (*pet vata*) till death. A list of concubines living in different places and their heirs was prepared under her direction.[4] That was the horror of polygamy that overpowered Cooch Behar Royal family from olden time and it was spread even beyond the royal family. It is said that ancestors of this genealogy Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan had eleven wives.[5] Mention of 1200 wives of his son Maharaja Harendra Narayan is found in the writings of Major Clemons. The image of polygamy of the Cooch Behar royal family that presented by Clemons in his book, who has been in India for a long time while serving in the British military, may seem exaggerated but it is never negligible.[6] Besides, father of Nripendra Narayan, Maharaja Narendra Narayan had five wives and many concubines.[7] The Brahmo Samaj was the first to take initiative to protest against this abiding custom of polygamy and supported for inter-caste marriage in Cooch Behar. This was also one of the declared policies of Brahmo Samaj. It can be said that they were genuinely successful in their endeavor. Even Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, himself, established example regarding this. Before Nripendra Narayan, mostly women from their own caste i.e. Koch Rajbansi community had come as brides to the royal family of Cooch Behar.[8] But Nripendra Narayan got married to a middle class educated girl Sunity Devi from *Kayastha* family of South Bengal, that too after accepting monotheism. Not only this, he promised not to marry more than one. Nripendra Narayan wrote to Keshab Chandra Sen in a letter, "I have been asked to let you know what my honest opinion is on the subject of polygamy. In reply I beg to inform you that it has always been my opinion that no man should take more than one wife and I can assure you that I hold that opinion still."[9] This promise was a kind of revolution. Because it was, then, unimaginable that a Prince of royal family will marry only one girl, especially in context of long span social and cultural tradition of Cooch Behar State and other royal families across India. It was a very difficult thing to make this pledge after discarding the many temptations of caste, lineage, and Royal opulence.[10] Possibly due to impression of thoughts and ideas of Brahmo Samaj, Nripendra Narayan agreed to get into marriage with such condition. It can be explained that this was an impact of Brahmo Samaj and Brahmo Ideology. Nripendra Narayan was perhaps the first ruler of Cooch Behar who had married one wife.[11] Due to this promise of single marriage; long term old tradition of the polygamy of Cooch Behar royal family was broken. After Nripendra Narayan, no Maharaja of Cooch Behar got married to more

than one girl at a time.[12] Even when Raj Rajendra Narayan was four years old, as no other son had been born to Sunity Devi, the Maharajas Mother and the Dewan Kalika Das Dutta were most anxious for Nripendra Narayan and said if anything happened to the child and the Maharajah also died, then the throne would go to the hand of another branch of the family. They planned out very carefully that it was most necessary for Nripendra Narayan to marry again. But they could not persuade him to polygamy.[13] In those days, most of the royal families had a tendency to get married to more than one girl and no rulers except him were a professed Brahmo. So Nripendra Narayan thinks it is impossible for his daughter to find a husband of her own rank. That is why he never tried to get his daughter married to any Raja, Maharaja in any part of the country.[14] Not only that he rejected polygamy in the royal family, even in the state, he has equally tried to promote the same. According to the Brahmo writer it can be said that he was somewhat successful in his efforts. That is the reason Brahmo activist Gauri Prasad Majumdar, after a long time, wrote in this context, inspired by the instance of this God-ordained Cooch Behar marriage, the practice of monogamy continues among polygamous Rajgon people of Cooch Behar and the other castes.[15]

❖ Introduction of Brahmo marriage law:

In addition to this, a new marriage law was also introduced at this time for the neo adult Brahmos in Cooch Behar. Before, there was no royal code regarding Brahmo marriage in Cooch Behar. The Maharajah Nripendra Narayan himself was a Brahmo but could not marry under the Brahmo Marriage Act (Act III of 1872) as he had his own law in his State, besides he was an autonomous ruler and British marriage law was of no value in Cooch Behar. So his marriage was recognized by the Government and the State as a Hindu marriage.[16] To solve this problem, in 1901, Maharaja Nripendra Narayan introduced a marriage law in the state similar to the Acts III of 1872 (Brahmo Marriage Act) in British India. On the 6th of *Baisakh* in the same year, Cooch Behar had a Brahmo marriage ceremony in the capital town according to the 'New Samhita' theory. Sthitikarini Devi, the fourth daughter of Harimohan Chattopadhyay, an old Brahmo of Cooch Behar, was decided Bride, and Gadadhar Chakraborty a resident of Islampur, Mymensingh district was the Groom. In this marriage, Brahmo activist Bhai Trilokyanath Sanyal did the work of *Acharya* and Baikunthanath Ghosh did the priest's work. The marriage was registered according to the said royal code. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan himself was present at the wedding.[17] Later, Kedarnath Mukhopadhyay, secretary of Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj also gave his daughter Srimati Basana in marriage to Sriman Manoranjan, the youngest son of Scindia Yogasram resident Govinda Chandra Panda according to the Brahmo marriage law from Cooch Behar and after many years the people of Cooch Behar witnessed this kind of ceremony of Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj. The marriage was registered under the Act similar to the Act III of 1872.[18]

❖ Protest against the dowry system in marriage:

Besides, the Brahmos of Cooch Behar were also vocal against the practice of giving dowry or dowry custom in marriage. On 11th Kartik 1906, Brajanath Roy, an old innocent *Nazir* of the Judge's Court at Cooch Behar, became heavily indebted for the dowry of the marriage of his daughter and unable to pay the debt, embezzled several hundred rupees from the office, and after

being caught, committed suicide by hanging himself. Brahmo feminist journal 'Mahila' reported this incident and strongly protested it. The 'Mahila' wrote that it is not surprising that many brides' father commits suicide in such a hopeless situation, indebted to the cruel butchery treatment of grooms and groomsmen. Also, this magazine cites the behavior of a person in their community as an example of high-mindedness in this regard. The journal said that a Brahmo relative of theirs in Cooch Behar fixed the relationship of a poor man's daughter with his son. The daughter's father tells him, I am not rich, I cannot give my daughter more than three gold ornaments. Groom's father says, in your condition, I don't want you to give even a single ornament. Do not give anything; only send the girl to my house with conch bangles and Vermilion. This Brahmo journal thought that, as the kindness and greatness of the groom's father was revealed here, it should be exemplary for every family of the groom's party.[19] The 'Haldibari Samaj Sangsodhini Sabha', a prominent Brahmo association of Haldibari, a chief commercial center of Cooch Behar, took important steps to reform the society by carrying out some programs such as the prohibiting of the early marriage and polygamy among the Muslims, the form of the anti-liquor movement, spreading female education, and removal of dowry system and superstitions.[20]

❖ **Preventing violence against women in society and fighting for equal rights for women:**

At the initiative of Brahmos, measures were taken to prevent violence in women's society and evaluation of the place of women in the society, struggle for women's freedom and equal rights continued.[21] Nirupama Devi, the wife of Sunity Devi's Son Victor Nitendra Narayan also become vocal and protested against the increasing number of suicide of brides on those days. When an abused bride doused her clothes in kerosene and set herself on fire in the heart of the town in Cooch Behar, Nirupama Devi shared her indescribable agony in Brahmo Journal 'Paricharika'.[22] She said that, the victim's mother-in-law's torture was the cause of her death and her heartless husband was her mother in law's accomplice. It was his second wife. The first wife had also suffered excruciating physical pain and died without any treatment. However, Nirupama Devi raises the question of why the people of this country again give daughters to such families and to such grooms. Her point was that is it necessary to acquire moksha of *kanyadan* by offering one's daughter to such a family and to kill her? Society is condoning this tyranny. Doing marriage for the third time would not also be difficult for this groom. It is a must to offer the daughter as a pledge (*Kanyadan*) in Hindu Society. But Nirupama Devi felt that there was no way to remedy this until Bengali girls were taught to be self-reliant.[23] In fact, Nirupama demanded equality of woman with man in all spheres of life. She has been vocal against the oppression of women throughout the ages. She felt the pain of a women's heart within herself and used to say that helplessness due to torture in family life eventually leads to the exile of women in the dark and unknown path of prostitution. Nirupama's activities and writings awakened the women of Cooch Behar from the sleep of their ignorance and doubt. They then understood the value and importance of their lives in society.[24] Gajendra Narayan, the Secretary of Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj also inflicted heavy punishment on those who tortured wives and children.[25]

❖ **Social and economic upliftment of the widows:**

The Brahmo Samaj worked for the social and economic upliftment of the widows of Cooch Behar. In the year 1916 *Sebika Bhandar* was opened to financially help the local widows.[26] Its objectives are known from the proceedings of the Annual Session of the Cooch Behar *Sebika Bhandar*. It was written here that, hundreds of families in poor land of Bengal are living in a state of daily hunger and starvation, and compelled to remain half uncovered owing to inexplicable poverty. Especially the condition of widows in Bengal is deplorable in many places. Many of them from well-to-do families were reduced to such a helpless condition after demise of her husband that on the one hand, they could not accept alms out of the respect for their family honour and on the other hand were forced to live a life of absolute degradation and humiliation in the family of their relatives. Unlike in Eastern countries, the education of women in this country had not been such that they could provide their own bread. Even if any of these women tried to be self-reliant and economically independent, they were brutally condemned and humiliated by the people of the society, instead of being praised. If they manufactured some artifacts or any goods, no arrangement had been made for their sale and her relatives did not hesitate to obstruct them vigorously in fear of the injury to their family honour. The *Sebika Bhandar* was established to alleviate the suffering of these distressed women as much as possible.[27] It had been decided that if any self-employed women was unable to facilitate the sale of art assets, the secretary of the repository would be notified to attempt to sell her art. Brahmo activist Nirupama Devi was extremely kind-hearted and willing to work earnestly. She as the secretary of the *Sevika Bhandar* did her best to nourish the Bhandar with the income etc. of the 'Women's Association' she founded and it indeed earned the gratitude of many distressed people.[28] But not only financial support, *ashrams* were also built in Cooch Behar for the residence of widows. Kedar Nath Mukharjee, the third secretary of Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj possessed profound compassion for the widow, who had none to look after them. He established *Matri math* in Cooch Behar for them. Poor widow used to get shelter and financial assistance there.[29] In the year 1930, when the eminent poet Kaji Nazrul Islam came to Cooch Behar being invited in the occasion of the Annual *Milad* of school and college, he spent some time in the *Matri Mandir,* run by the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj, and sang the songs in that occasion.[30]

❖ **Extinction of the Maruna tradition:**

Another disgusting practice in Cooch Behar was the *Maruna* tradition. Written with the background of Rajasthan, *Rudaali* is the movie that astounds all the viewers. But it can be seen that here in Cooch Behar royal family, the tradition like *Rudaali* was there in the time of mourning. In Cooch Behar State, there was one group of female State Mourners who was known as *Maruna* in the local dialect, who took the burden of grief and sorrow of the Maharajas. The Maharaja wouldn't go to *Shamshan* or follow ritualistic restrictions during the time of his relatives' passing. These groups of mourners were given assets, and in exchange, they expressed their grief and sorrow at the deaths of the Maharaja's relatives. The Maharajas did not have to express their grief.[31] Through the long endeavor of Brahmos, this tradition of *Rudaali* was abolished in Cooch Behar royal family later.

❖ **Abolishing the Purdah system and socialization of women to enjoy a free society:**

In the nineteenth century, Indian society was conservative and woman used to be under *purdah.* On one side, at that time, Maharani Sunity Devi breaking her conservatory atmosphere opposed *purdah* system and set an example across India, similarly, initiatives were taken to protest against *purdah* system, and socialization of women in the state of Cooch Behar in the leadership of her Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj. Naturally, in 1880, the arrival of Sunity Devi as Maharani of Cooch Behar, and till 1932 she expressed herself in different forms in a long span of time. During this long period, she did not restrict herself only to the zenana part of palace like other Ranis of the *Zenana Mahal*. Due to being Brahmo, she was never under *purdah* since her childhood. She could meet outsiders freely and used to do the singing, dancing, and get an education. Even afterwards coming into the conservative Cooch Behar royal family as the queen, she somewhat relaxed the restrictions placed on her going out. In this context, she, herself, had said, "The Rajah's wives are not allowed to go out to other houses. It may be my weakness or my strength, but I have altered my position in this respect a little; I do see people if urged."[32] It goes without saying that co-operation and encouragement from the Maharaja helped her to show this courage. William Jennings Bryan, the famous democrat leader of America had written about Sunity Devi that at Kolkata he met several Indian ladies of high social rank who, in their home life, have felt the influence of western ideas and who have to some extent lessened the rigors of the zenana (seclusion). Two of these ladies – one a Princess – were daughters of the famous Keshab Chandra Sen. He mentions these ladies because they represent the highest type of Indian womanhood.[33] Most of the Raja, Maharajas of India had not allowed their Ranis to go outside of zenana. So it is difficult to get to know them, and without a special invitation one cannot visit their states.[34] Exactly during this period, Sunity Devi's foreign trip had taken her to the larger world. The Maharaja Nripendra Narayan was the first Indian ruler to take his Maharani to England and her presence there was greatly appreciated.[35] Padmini Sathianadhan had said regarding this,

> Her journey to Europe marked a definite epoch in the history of Indian women, for breaking all orthodox opinion; she braved public criticism in India and showed to the world that the zenana was not a place for women to live and to spend all their lives in. By her travels abroad, she paved the way for many another Maharanis to follow the path she had already trodden.[36]

Not only personal life, Sunity Devi also tried to abolish *Purdah* practice in Cooch Behar society.[37] It can be significantly mentioned in the movement of women's emancipation in the India. In that period women in Cooch Behar used to be under *Purdah*. They never used to go out from their residence; their education was obstructed as it was necessary to go out for the same. Consequently, women at that time were uneducated, superstitious and covered with evil practice. Sunity Devi took several ways to uplift the mental status and thinking pattern of women then. She was the first Maharani who often used to inspect the schools. For the first time, women openly participated in the prize distribution ceremony of the Sunity School.[38] Maharani was fond of acting like her father. In Kolkata and Cooch Behar, she often arranged beautiful performances and tableaus with small children. On the occasion of his father's birthday, during the *Kalpataru* festival, she used to float the festival with the fount of joy by arranging *Jatrapala, kirtan,* acting, and *kathakata* with the girls.[39] Only women used to take part in these programs and they were only in spectators and audience. In Cooch Behar Brahmo temple, there used to be other programs than *Upasana* due to the endeavors of

Maharani and notable among these were Memorial meeting of Keshab Chandra Sen on 8th January, the Annual Festival on 18th April, Foundation day on 15th August, *Upasana* on Saradia Purnima, Prayers and *Upasana* on Dol Purnima in Falgun, the celebration of Maghotsab, observation of Keshab Chandra's birthday on 19th November etc. In these programs, singers and preachers used to come from Kolkata, and women from the Cooch Behar royal family, as well as those from the families of royal employees, aristocrats, and the educated class, would participate.[40] To introduce zenana women to the outer world, she used to organize *Anandamela* on Magh festival day every year at her Kolkata residence Kamal Kutir. Similarly further, used to arrange *Anandamela* on the occasion of different Brahmo festival in Cooch Behar Lansdowne hall to bring some variation in the colourless and monotonous life of Cooch Behar women. Here women used to get a chance to sell articles made by them. At this fair, girls used to decorate their shops with various marketable items and the girls used to shop here at bargain prices. There was no lack of awareness and enthusiasm among the women centering on this fair. This had a great impact on their social life.[41] At that time, the fair had such an impact on the lives of schoolgirls in Cooch Behar that they did not forget the memories even when they were on the verge of their old age. Premlata Roy, an alumnus of Sunity School, recalled her school days and said that when they were reading in class IX, their hobby was to arrange *Ananda Mela.* The fair used to be held on behalf of the royal family of Cooch Behar and the women of all the famous houses of Cooch Behar cooperated. There was sewing and a variety of drawing exhibitions. She heard that the variety of food served was incomparable. They also had arranged such an *Ananda Mela* by requesting their teachers. In that, the price of 1 cup of tea was charged from all teachers at the tea-stall at 1 rupee. All the profits except the price of their goods were deposited by them in the poor fund.[42] It was like taking purdah-covered women out of the boundary of the house and making them conscious of their talent and be motivated to enjoy a free society. That means, it can be valued as the beginning era of empowerment of today's women. Besides this, the women of Cooch Behar used to have regular meetings and interaction in the Savitri lodge built by Kumar Gajendra Narayan. In this way, they created their own space to exchange their opinions and thoughts, similar to the current women-run clubs.[43] Apart from this, insider women were given opportunity to come out into open in *Arya Nari Samaj* conferences of Brahmo's.[44] In this way, the traditional *Purdah s*ystem was partially abolished among the women of Cooch Behar and women started joining various meeting committees.[45]

❖ Inception of Religious Freedom for Women:

It has also been noticed that scholars of *Shastras* has been describing for many years women were not allowed in the area of religion. This concept started changing when Brahmo Samaj declared, 'Equal rights to all men-women'. During the Magh festival of 1866, Keshab Chandra Sen provided the women a new taste of free presence in open spaces for the first time by arranging for them to sit openly with men in the prayer hall of Brahmo Samaj.[46] Later, under pressure from the 'Women's Independence Group', Keshab arranged for progressive women who had come out of the veil to sit openly in a corner of his Brahmo temple in Kolkata and take part in regular weekly prayers.[47] From that time on, many ladies from the respected Brahmo families participated independently in the prayer programs of the Brahmo Samaj. The interest shown in the weekly prayer programs of the Brahmo Samaj of Cooch Behar by the local ladies vindicates their new

orientation of mind. The *Upacharya* of Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj, Bhai Pran Krishna Dutta wrote in the journal Dharmatattwa, that the prayer programs are taking place full of splendor every Thursday night at the residence of Harimohon Chattopadhyay. The prayers are attended by many aristocratic families. So many ladies are assembled nowadays in the temple, that it is becoming difficult to arrange seats for each of them in the gallery of one side. Today bedcovers have been tucked in instead of chairs to meet the accommodation. Much interest is going to be noticed among the women devotees. The prayer and meditation program continues for two hours at Hari Babu's place, but in spite of that the women devotees are not quenched and ask why the prayer ends so early! In all these matters, if God himself is not working, then who is doing it?[48] In such a situation, Cooch Behar Brahmo Samaj was not ready to decrease such incredible interest among women devotees for any subtle reason. Women needed to pay much transportation fare for visiting the Brahmo temple, and for that reason, Kumar Gajendra Narayan, the Secretary of Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj arranged his own car for the ladies who could arrive at the Samaj temple by boarding on it.[49] But not only for the participation in the prayer, on various religious occasions ladies also executed the responsibility of *Acharya* and conducted the sacred ritual services. There is vindication or proof in favour of this statement. It seems to be really astonishing in the perspective of long time taste of the cultural and social practices of the people of Cooch Behar. It can be said that the religious liberty of the women became a reality in highly conservative *Purdah* covered society like Cooch Behar only with the ablest leadership of Maharani Sunity Devi. At the time of ascending of the throne, Sunity's elder son Raj Rajendra Narayan announced that *Abhisek* procedure cannot be performed by the Hindu royal priests because he was the believer of a progressive Brahmoism and as a result, he does not follow the Hindu caste system. At last, his mother Maharani Sunity Devi comes forward to perform the task of the priest for the coronation program and then only the entire rituals of *Abhishek* of the new king became possible according to the Nababidhan Brahmo principles. In the opinion of the majority Hindu people of Cooch Behar, especially the eyes of the priestly society, a woman and moreover widow is not eligible to perform the work of a worshipper in any sacred ceremony. In spite of all this difference of opinion, thus Sunity Devi introduced religious freedom of women by acting as *Acharya* in the inauguration of Raj Rajendra Narayan.[50] Sometimes again Sunity Devi set an example before the whole class of the women by executing the responsibility of *Acharya* by sitting herself at the altar in Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Temple. In 1916, it was mentioned in 'The World and New Dispensation' Journal that,

> Her Highness Maharani Sunity Devi conducted the Divine Service in the local Brahmo Temple on Sunday the 12th instant. This is the first time that Her Highness occupied the pulpit of the Cooch Behar Brahmo Temple. The evening preceding she gave *Kathakatha* on the 'Birth of Keshub' at the local Temple before a large gathering. May God's blessing be on her![51]

And after this, the tradition of conducting weekly prayers by women began at the Nababidhan Brahmo temple in Cooch Behar. Several respected women took the seat on the altar at the Brahmo temple for executing the responsibility of *Acharya* in prayer and impliedly gave evidence of the anti-purdah system mindset. In this context, Dharmatattwa journal wrote, they were glad to hear that, women are doing prayer and worship in the Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo temple. On 1st *Shravan* Smt. Premlata Deb, on 8th *Shravan* Smt. Kamla Kamini Basu, on 15th *Shravan* Smt. Premlata Deb, on 22nd *Shravan* mother of the Maharaja, Maharani Sunity Devi had performed

prayer and worship services. Mother Nature should declare victory of her great wish by appointing her daughters to serve Nababidhan in this way.[52]

❖ **Changes in women's dress code:**

Significant changes can also be noticed in the dress code of women during this time. But in this case, in the social life of Cooch Behar the costumes made according to the Brahmo culture and the local dress sense of Cooch Behar in the Brahmo social circle of Kolkata both influenced each other. As a result of the implementation of Brahmo ideology by the endeavor of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan in this state, the middle class tends to be accustomed to elegant tastes, modest dress codes, and sophisticated lifestyles.[53] In Cooch Behar, the Brahmo style became the style of the elitist Hindu *Bhadralok* of the society.[54] Some scholars believe that under the influence of Brahmo Samaj, the behavioral change in Cooch Behari girls could be noticed and a few of the village girls, as a symbol of modern civilization, started wearing *Saree* instead of 'Fota' (small piece of cloth).[55] Similarly, Sunity Devi made the local Cooch Behari dress popular in the Brahmo cultural circles of Kolkata. In fact, the second trend in the evolutions of wearing *Saree* for Bengali girls came after Delhi Durbar. In that Durbar, in the conference of Ranis Maharanis of all over India, Sunity Devi, the Maharani of Cooch Behar and Maharani of Mayurvanj Sucharu Devi started wearing *Saree* of the latest traditional style to keep the fashion consistent with them and continued the same after coming back to the state. It was the own trend of their respective father in laws house in Cooch Behar and Orissa that they kept at bay so long due to their Bengali pride. But then they accepted it in order to maintain equality and match with the other royal families of India. The beauty and elegance of the wearable style of this dress attracted the feeling of Bengalis and it became the fashion of Bangali *sarees* and this fashion united Bengal with the rest of India.[56] Harendra Chandra Dev also, has stated in this regard that the influence of Maharani Sunity Devi is spread in various ways around. He has heard that when the Maharani was in Cooch Behar she used to wear *sari* in the same way that a local women of that state did. Even when she used to come in Kolkata, she probably wore *sari* in similar fashion and that is why wearing *Saree* in the Cooch Behari style got popular amongst the women in Kolkata.[57]

Conclusions:

In this way as a result of the efforts of the Brahmo royal couple and Brahmo reformers for women's emancipation, women's liberation and women's equality, the people of Cooch Behar learned to re-evaluate the place of women in society. But in spite of all this, this social awakening of Cooch Behar's women was not entirely above criticism. In some cases, these social reform measures have created a contradiction with the personal behavior of the reformers themselves. As a result, questions have been raised about its acceptability. Sunity Devi criticized the *purdah* system and took several steps to eradicate it from the society. But she did not go completely against the *purdah* practice in her own life. With few exceptions, in deference to the customs of her husband's subjects, Sunity Devi and her daughters were remained in *purdah*, outside the palace in their state.[58] Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, the granddaughter of Sunity Devi, recapitulates the memory of her grandmother and said that, outside the state Sunity Devi worked diligently to encourage the emancipation of women in Bengal, but for some reason she did not attempt to put an end to purdah in Cooch Behar.[59] Major Gordon once visited the Annual *durbar* at Cooch Behar palace and saw the Maharani Sunity Devi and other royal ladies as covered behind the *purdah*.[60] Every Sunday and on the day of the festival at the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj Temple, Sunity Devi used to come wearing

a simple red *sari* like the housewives and wear a chemise and carry a conch shell, sit behind the curtain with the assembled women and discuss household chores with them.[61] Actually, she endeavoured from the first to gain the confidence and affection of her husband's subjects, and she never knowingly ran counter to their prejudices. In Darjeeling and Kolkata, Sunity Devi may be considered the Maharani with advanced western ideas, but in Cooch Behar, she was the zenana lady who entered into the lives of the people. Many who at first looked upon her marriage with disfavour took her to their hearts when they found that Sunity Devi was just like all their Maharanis and that she loved them.[62]

Besides, Nripendra Narayan, although in favor of monogamy and away from illicit relations with many women, but the Brahmo activist Gauri Prasad Majumdar's statement that the *Rajgon* people of his state also adopted the same ideal is not entirely true. On 7th August 1917 Maharaja Jitendra Narayan wrote a letter to his uncle Jatindra Narayan from the Rajmahal Palace Hotel in Bombay to awaken and motivated the youth of the *Rajgon,* who were afraid to join the British military during World War I but claimed to be *Kshatriyas*. Here the *Rajgons* are condemned for their character degradation and polygamous nature. Here the Maharaja of Cooch Behar wrote that he is not willing to sacrifice his self-respect and dignity by advising children and grandchildren of *Rajgons* to take up a respectable profession who are encouraging their children to take up regular visitor in wine shops and brothels. It seems extraordinary to him that people with the blood of a commander like Chilarai in their veins should prefer to waste their lives in mere sexual pleasures. He writes with disappointment that despite all this, if anyone questions him, he will surely say, his relations live very comfortably in their wine-shops and in the Prostitute quarter.[63] This letter from Jitendra Narayan proves that the Brahmo Samaj's ideal of monogamy did not have much influence among the *Rajgon* people of the state. On the other hand, despite the Brahmo Samaj being in favour of monogamy and against extramarital affairs, the personal life of Victor Nitendra Narayan, the third secretary of the Cooch Behar Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj, did not conform to this ideal. At the end of the year 1924 onwards, disaster came about in the domestic life of Victor and his wife Nirupama Devi. Nirupama was forced to leave Cooch Behar due to her marital dispute with Victor Nitendra Narayan and had filed for divorce in the Calcutta High Court. In this case, Nirupama Devi sought a separation on the grounds of Victor's cruelty and adultery towards her.[64] The Brahmo Samaj's responsible secretary, who spoke of women's empowerment and respect for women, was never above criticism, especially when he deviated from the ideals of religion in his personal life.

Now let's talk about the limitations of the practice of widow marriage in Cooch Behar. It is true that the countenance of a form of widow marriage was prevalent in natives *Rajbansi* of Cooch Behar.[65] But before Nripendra Narayan came to power, the inflow of upper-caste Hindu continuously to Cooch Behar from deferent parts of Bengal, in search of livelihood, instigated the sense of caste discrimination in the region, and from their point of view, widow marriage was the most objectionable practice. Meaning, those who came to Cooch Behar in the early stages of immigration prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, imported the anti-widow marriage sentiment with them. Although Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was immortal for introducing widow marriage, even before that some leaders of Brahmo Samaj were expressing their opinion in favour of the same. Raja Rammohan Roy supported widow marriage in terms of ethics. Keshab Chandra Sen acted in a play in support of widow marriage.[66] Vidyasagar also received the most support and encouragement from the Brahmo Samaj for introducing this social reform.[67] However, before the Brahmo Samaj entered the Cooch Behar, *Haitaishini Sabha* proposed to make the acceptance of widows as wives a common practice and universal among the upper-caste Hindus in Cooch Behar. The proponents did not stop at proposing only the abolition of child marriage and

polygamy. They also proposed the introduction of state rules to punish those involved.[68] Later, due to the efforts of the Brahmo Samaj, some laws were passed in Cooch Behar for introduction of widow marriage and prohibition the practice of child marriage.[69] Although, the Brahmo reformists of Cooch Behar succeeded in preventing child marriage and polygamy, but their success rate in introducing the remarriage of widows was much lower. So far no document of widow remarriage among the non *Rajbansi* upper caste Hindu in villages of Cooch Behar on the initiative of Brahmo Samaj has been found. Even if this happened, practically the results must have been so very little, that they are unequivocally negligible. The first widow marriage in the town of Cooch Behar was performed much later, around 1348 B.S. In the same year, on the 5th of *Ashar,* the twenty-year-old child widow Mrs. Kamala, daughter of Vrindavan Saha of Cooch Behar, married to forty-year-old Mr. Abinash Chandra Saha at her residence in Nuton Bazar, Cooch Behar. In the priesthood of Brahmo Dinesh Chandra Chakraborty, with the tireless efforts of Dr. Kshetromohon Saha and the encouragement of the local youth, it was possible to perform this first widow marriage in Cooch Behar town.[70] Why the Brahmos who talked about women's empowerment were so stingy in giving a taste of emancipation through the remarriage of widows in Cooch Behar? New research is needed on this matter.

Despite the above criticism, the role of Brahmo Samaj in social development and reform of women in Cooch Behar should not be underestimated. If we review the reforms, it can be seen that most of them were centered on marriage and its subsequent events in women's lives. Because women have to face the most problems based on this issue related to marriage. And for this reason, social and economic developments of widows are emphasized along with protests against evil practices like polygamy, dowry custom, and suicide of newly wed brides. An attempt was made to reform the marriage system by introducing the Brahmo Marriage Act. By removing the veil, women are given the opportunity to socialize in the outside world, and are also allowed to wear elegant clothes according to taste. And with this they also get freedom of religious practice in the social sphere. As a result, the status of women in the royal family and social life of Cooch Behar gradually changed from the first decade of the 20th century.

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Reassessing the Role of Feedback in Language Classrooms : An investigation into teacher awareness, practices, and pedagogical impact

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Abstract

Feedback plays a powerful role in helping students learn, especially when learning a new language. This study explores how English language teachers in India understand and use feedback in their classrooms. While education theories stress the importance of feedback for student growth, in practice teachers often face challenges that limit how well they can apply it. These include large class sizes, limited time, and a lack of formal training. This research focuses on what teachers really think about feedback, how they use it daily, and what makes it easier or difficult for them to give meaningful comments to their students. The study uses a qualitative approach, gathering insights from English language teachers through interviews. It looks at their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The findings show that most teachers value feedback as morethan just correcting mistakes, they see it as a way to guide, motivate, and support their students. Many teachers prefer oral feedback for its speed and personal touch. Teachers also shared useful suggestions, like involving students more in the feedback process and creating safe spaces where students feel free to express themselves and ask questions. These ideas show a growing interest in making feedback a two-way, thoughtful conversation instead of one-sided correction.

The study highlights the urgent need for teacher training programs to include better feedback strategies. It suggests that when teachers are supported and trained, feedback can become a tool for building confidence, encouraging learning, and shaping stronger language skills.

Key words : *Feedback, Indian education context, Language learning and Teacher awareness*

Introduction

Feedback is essential. A learner's motivation to work on themselves depends mostly on how feedback is delivered by the one who is guiding. Giving feedback is an art that needs significant understanding of the different stages of a learner's cognitive development. Experience as well as a professional training can accelerate the effectiveness of feedback. Since time immemorial theories of feedback has been widely discussed by academicians. This study grows out of the need to revisit how feedback is understood and used in English language classrooms. But how do teachers themselves view feedback? How do theyuse it in day-to-dayteaching? Andhowdo theyassess its impact? Whilethere's awealth of academic writing on feedback, from distinctions between formative and summative feedback to its corrective and motivational roles, what is less clear is how teachers understand and apply these ideas in real classroom settings. One of the key aims is to explore how teacher awareness influences pedagogy. Are teachers consciously drawing from feedback theory in their instruction? If not, what are the obstacles? In Indian classrooms, where factors like large class sizes, exam-driven teaching, multilingual dynamics, and limited professional development opportunities are common, these questions take on special urgency. Ultimately, the study hopes to contribute not only to academic conversations but also to real-world teaching practices, reframing feedback as more than a technique, and instead as a thoughtful, dialogic, and culturally rooted practice.

Significance of the study

This research is important for several reasons. First, it adds to the ongoing dialogue on how pedagogy intersects with teacher thinking, especially in relation to feedback. Second, it draws attention to a context that is often under represented in mainstream research, Indian classrooms, where teaching practices are shaped by unique cultural and institutional realities. Finally, the findings of this study are intended to be practical. By offering insights grounded in both theory and classroom experience, it aims to inform teacher education programs and suggest ways to make feedback more meaningful, effective, and responsive to local needs.

Objectives of the study

The research is guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the level of awareness language teachers have about the different forms and functions of feedback.
- To analyze the instructional approaches used by teachers to implement feedback in language classrooms.
- To identify challenges and misconceptions related to feedback in English Language Education and propose pedagogically sound alternatives.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative methodology to understand the role of feedback in language classrooms, focusing mainly on teacher awareness, instructional practices, and pedagogical outcomes. The use of semi-structured interviews with English language teachers provides rich, contextualized data on how feedback is perceived, applied, and reflected upon in diverse teaching environments. The socio cultural perspective of Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant. It emphasizes on the idea that learners develop best when guided by more knowledgeable others within a supportive, interactive environment. In this framework feedback becomes a process where learners move from what they can do independently to what they can achieve with assistance. Behaviorist theories, in contrast, have traditionally viewed feedback as reinforcement, shaping behavior through repetition and correction. Meanwhile, cognitive approaches emphasize the role of feedback in helping learners notice errors, process information more deeply, and internalize correct language forms. Recent developments in feedback theory also draw on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which suggests that feedback should be aligned with the learner's stage of cognitive readiness, ensuring that it is not only informative but also appropriately challenging and accessible. Second language acquisition (SLA) theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how learners develop proficiency in additional languages and the crucial role that feedback plays in this process. Central to SLA is the concept of inter-language an evolving linguistic system that learners construct as they acquire a new language. Feedback is instrumental in this development because it helps learners notice the discrepancies between their inter-language and the target language, prompting them to revise and refine their language use over time. Yet, despite how important feedback is in theory, its practical use in classrooms is often inconsistent. Teachers may not always be equipped to translate theoretical insights into meaningful classroom strategies. This gap between theory and practice

raises important questions about teacher awareness and the choices they make when giving feedback. The study is by qualitative research principles, which allow for in- depth exploration of individual experiences and classroom realities that cannot be captured through quantitative measures alone. The use of semi-structured interviews with English language teachers provides rich, contextualized data on how feedback is perceived, applied, and reflected upon in diverse teaching environments.

Problem Statement

A growing body of research suggests that the effectiveness of feedback in language learning is largely dependent on how well teachers understand its purpose, the methods they employ, and the contexts in which they deliver it. However the disparity between the theoretical value of feedback and its practical implementation in classrooms raises important questions about teacher awareness, professional training, and the pedagogical impact of feedback practices. In many educational settings, particularly in multilingual and multicultural countries like India, the classroom becomes a complex space where teachers deal with different learner needs, institutional demands, curriculum pressures. Within this complexity, feedback may either serve as meaningful learning or be reduced to routine correction, often devoid of pedagogical insight. Teachers, as the primary mediators of feedback, play a critical role in determining its quality and efficacy. However, what teachers know about feedback, its forms, functions, and impact, is often assumed rather than systematically examined. Therefore, it can be deduced that there's a critical gap in both teacher education and ongoing professional development.

Moreover, research in English Language Education (ELE) has shown that the intentions behind feedback are not always aligned with learner's interpretations or experiences of it (Lee, 2018). This misalignment may be traced back to teacher's limited exposure to formal training in feedback strategies and assessment literacy. While institutions may emphasize outcomes and standard assessments, they often overlook the need to equip teachers with aan in depth understanding of feedback as continuous, interactive process. As a result, many language teachers operate within feedback paradigms that are either outdated, ineffective, or disconnected from current research in language pedagogy. In India, the problem becomes more pronounced due to the heterogeneous nature of classrooms, a lack of structured teacher training programs on feedback, and systemic constraints such as large class, class sizes, limited time, and insufficient resources. This raises an urgent need to research whether teachers are actually aware of the pedagogical possibilities feedback offers, what practices they commonly use, and what institutional or contextual challenges hinder their effective application of feedback in language teaching. This study emerges from the need to reassess the place of feedback in language classrooms, not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a reflection of teacher's knowledge, beliefs, and training. While there are numerous studies on feedback from the learner's perspective, fewer have focused on teachers, particularly in the Indian ELE context.

Research Questions

1. How do language teachers conceptualize feedback and to what extent their perception aligns withestablished theoretical frameworks in language pedagogy?

2. What institutional and contextual factors influence the practical implementation of feedback practices in language classrooms, and how do these barriers affect the quality and consistency of feedback
   provided to learners?
3. What are the current opportunities and limitations in professional development related to feedback for language teachers, and how do teachers compensate for gaps in formal training when shaping their feedback practices?

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

With a particular focus on teacher awareness, classroom procedures, and the perceived pedagogical impact of feedback, this chapter presents and evaluates the data gathered to look at the function of feedback in language learning environments. Quantitative data is collected using statistical methods like frequencies and percentages, which are then evaluated using a thematic analysis to reveal recurring trends, contradictions and important teachings trategies. A deeper and more thorough knowledge of how feedback works in language classes is made possible by the convergence of these approaches. The section presents a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from 17 English language teachers. The challenges are identified, such as time constraints, large class sizes, and student disengagement, offer important context for understanding the limitations that can hinder effective feedback implementation. Finally, the voices of teachers are brought forward through their suggestions for improvement, underscoring a shared desire for more meaningful, timely, and interactive feedback processes. Overall, this section seeks to bridge the gap between theory and classroom realities by interpreting teacher experiences in light of established educational research and feedback frameworks.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

The findings are divided into quantitative and qualitative insights, with selected verbatim responses included where appropriate to illustrate emerging themes.

Feedback defined

Teachers produced comprehensive and extensive answers to the open-ended question, "How would you interpret feedback in the context of language teaching?" This indicated a thorough understanding of feedback as a tool for teaching and an instrument for encouraging learners.

- Feedback as corrective and instructional

  A significant number of teachers conceptualized feedback as a corrective response to language use, aimed at identifying errors and guiding students toward accurate usage. This corresponds strongly with B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory of learning, where correction plays important role in habit formation and error reduction (Gordan and Krishanan, 2014). Feedback was described as a way to provide information on grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, aligning with the micro-skills of language proficiency.

  "Feedback is essential as it identifies minute errors ensuring accurate language usage…"

  -Teacher1

Here, the teacher acts as the controller of knowledge, and the learner is the recipient of corrective input, reinforcing the idea of language as a set of correct responses. This perspective suggests that many teachers are still influenced by traditional, form-focused pedagogy, where language proficiency is measured by correctness, and feedback issused to reinforce target forms.

While effective for lower-order language accuracy, this model may limit learner's communicative and critical thinking skills unless integrated with more communicative and reflective practices.

- Feedback as Constructive and Formative

  Some of the teachers highlighted feedback as a supportive, formative process that guides student growth by identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. One of the participants replied, *"Feedback helps students recognize both their strengths and weaknesses, it is not only about pointing out errors but showing them how to do better."*

  This seems to be an overall approach that tends to empower learners, not just inform them. It reflects awareness that feedback should be meaningful, individualized, and growth-oriented. Teachers demonstrating this view appear to be integrating formative assessment principles into their teaching. They understand that feedback must support learning, not merely evaluate it.

  This aligns with Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982). Which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input (i+1), language slightly above the learner's current level, made understandable through context, support, or feedback. Teachers who framed feedback as encouraging, individualized, and reflective maybe unconsciously applying Krashen's principles, even if not explicitly aware of the theory. This supports a low-anxiety, student-centered learning environment, where feedback is part of meaningful input rather than punitive correction.

  "Feedback is the information provided to a learner about their language production ie speaking, writing, reading and listening, study skills attitudes, or effort, aiming to guide their learning and improve their language"

  The above response defines feedback not merely as correction but as a formative tool aimed at guiding learning and building overall language development. It reflects a comprehensive and student-centered understanding of feedback, viewing it as information provided across various language skills, such as speaking, writing, reading, and listening.

Frequency of Feedback delivery

Teachers' perceptions of feedback play a crucial role in shaping their instructional practices and interactions with learners. Many educators view feedback as a powerful tool for guiding student development, promoting self-reflection, and nurturing academic growth. However, the extent to which teachers value feedback is often reflected in how frequently they provide it and the manner in which it is delivered.

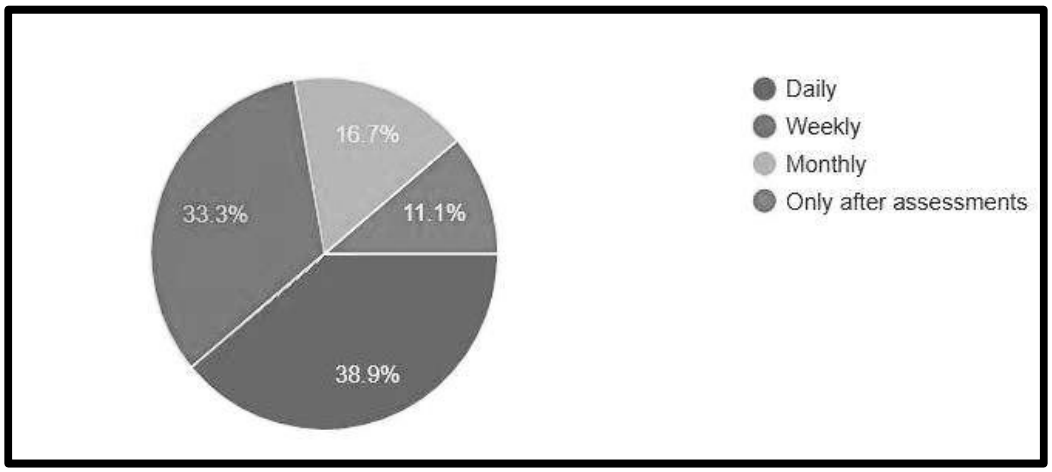


Fig1 : Frequency of feedback delivery

The above figure is the data on how often teachers think feedback should be provided to students in order to make them self-sufficient and support their language learning. The data on the frequency of feedback delivery reveals a strong preference among teachers for providing feedback on a consistent and ongoing basis. Specifically, 38.9% of respondents indicated that feedback should be given daily, while 33.3% favored a weekly schedule. This suggests that over 70% of teachers recognize the value of regular feedback in supporting student's continuous learning and growth. Frequent feedback motivates students to set higher goals, correct mistakes quickly, and remain engaged with their learning (Brook hart, 2017). Therefore, immediate responses help students understand both their errors reinforcing their learning and building confidence. Moreover, Daily and weekly feedback enables teachers to identify the mistakes made by students quickly and address gaps in knowledge before they become firmly developed (Sackste in, 2017). This makes sure that student stay on track. A smaller proportion, 16.7% preferred monthly feedback, which may reflect a more summative approach or constraints related to workload and time. However, the emphasis on daily and weekly feedback aligns with best practices in education, which highlight the importance of timely, actionable feedback in fostering student engagement and improvement.

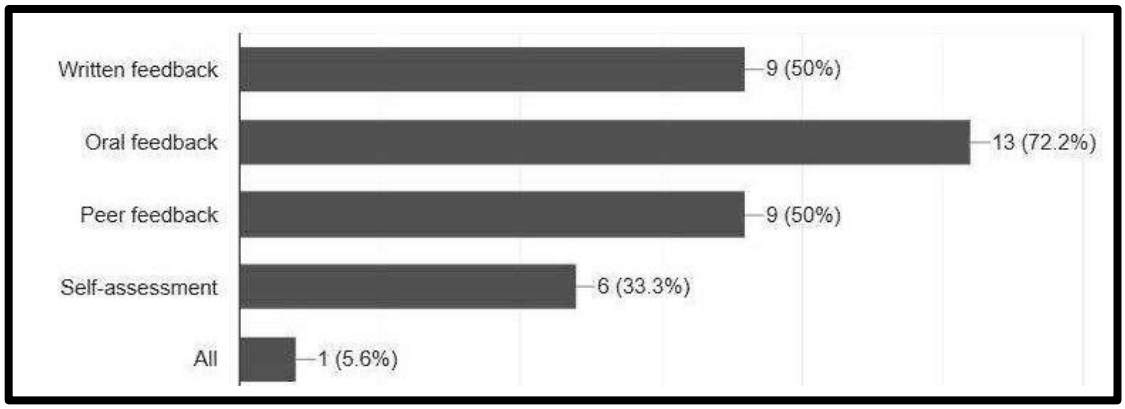


Fig 2 : Types of feedback most frequently used by teachers

Types of feedback

Having explored the frequency with which various types of feedback are used in the classroom, it is equally important to consider the effectiveness of these feedback strategies. While some forms of feedback are commonly applied than others, this does not necessarily indicate their impact on student learning. Shifting the focus from how often feedback is given to how effective it is allows for a more critical evaluation of classroom approaches.

The data on the types of feedback most frequently used by teachers reveals interesting trends in classroom practices. Oral feedback emerges as the most commonly employed method, with 72.2% of teachers using it frequently. This preference highlights the value teachers give on immediate, interactive communication, which allows for real-time clarification and personalized guidance. Teachers often prefer oral feedback over written feedback in student assessments because oral feedback is more immediate and allows for instant clarification and elaboration (Huxham et. al., 2012). Moreover, oral feedback can be delivered during class hours, making it timely and relevant to the learning process, which is often more effective than written comments provided after a task is completed. Written feedback and peer feedback are both used by half of the

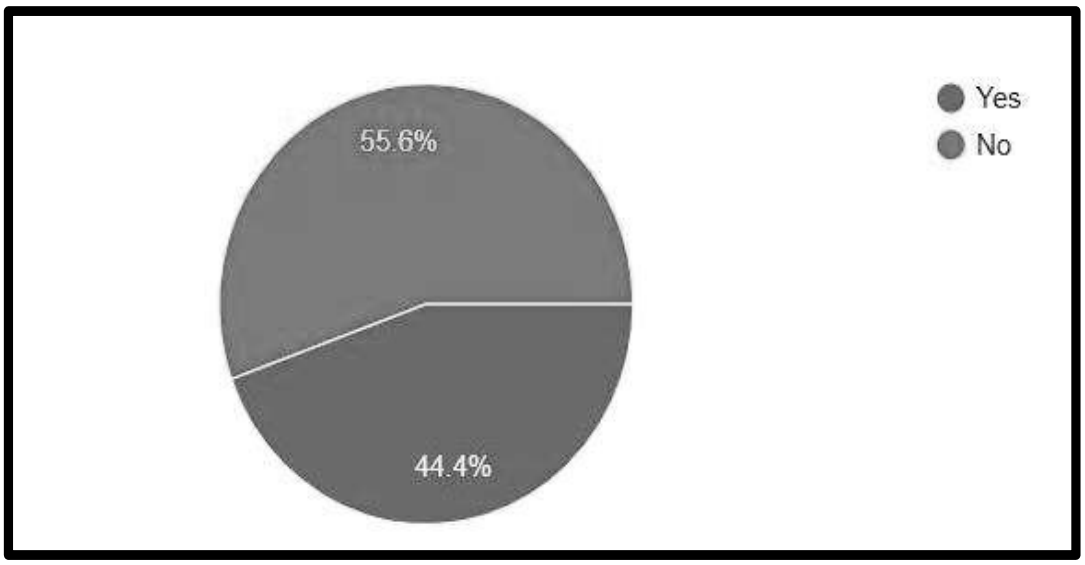


Fig 3: Percentage of teachers received formal training on giving feedback

teachers. This shows a balanced approach between traditional, documented responses and collaborative learning strategies. Written feedback provides students with a tangible record to reflect upon, while peer feedback encourages critical thinking and shared responsibility among students. On the other hand, self-assessment is the least frequently used, with only 33.3% of teachers incorporating it regularly. This lower usage may reflect challenges in guiding students to accurately evaluate their own work.

Formal training on feedback

While teachers give their insights on the types of feedback they prefer to give in class, it is also important to know if any professional training has been taken by them in order to implement feedback more effectively.

The above figure portraits the percentage of teachers who have received professional training on giving feedback. Out of all respondents, 44.4% answered "yes", indicating that they had undergone some form of structured instruction either during their teacher education programs or part of in-service professional development. In contrast, 55.6% answered "No", which reveals that

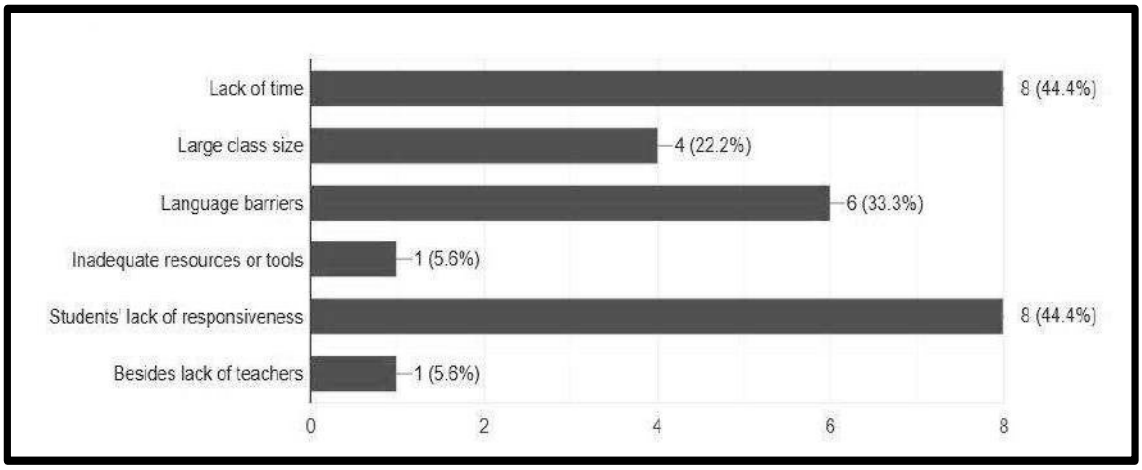


Fig 4: Challanges faced by teachers while giving feedback in the classroom

a majority of participants had not received any formal instruction in this vital area of pedagogy.

This numerical discrepancy is statistically and pedagogically significant. The difference of 11.2% points between those who have and have not received feedback training may appear numerically modest, but in practical classroom terms, it is a vital shortcoming. Over half of the teaching cohort potentially operates without an informed understanding of feedback principles, which is important for second language acquisition (SLA). Without formal training, teachers may resort to vague, overly general or even de-motivating forms of feedback. This not only compromises the quality of instruction but may also inhibit learner autonomy and affective engagement, two key constructs in communicative language teaching and learner-centered approaches.

More over, the absence of training raises important question about how teachers conceptualise the role of feedback. This finding also implicates pre-service training curricula and continuing professional development (CPD) structures. If teacher education programs treat feedback superficially or fail to provide opportunities to apply feedback strategies, new teachers may enter classroom under prepared. Hence, the data not only reveal a quantitative majority lacking formal training but also open up a critique of the structural marginalization of feedback literacy within teacher education.

Challenges faced while giving feedback

The lack of professional training gives rise to numerous challenges that teachers might face in classroom while giving feedback. A survey was conducted based on what challenges the teachers generally face. The figure below reflects the responses of the teachers.

The survey data presents a complex picture of the feedback landscape in classroom contexts, where both structural and interpersonal challenges are at play. The dual prominence of lack of time (44.4%) and student's lack of responsiveness (44.4%) points to a cyclical problem. Teachers may struggle to find adequate time for individualized or meaningful feedback, and students, in turn, may become disengaged or unresponsive due to the generality or delayed nature of the feedback they receive.

Time constraints are widely considered barrier in educational literature. Teachers often operate under rigid timetables, heavy teaching loads, and extensive administrative duties. In such situation giving a feedback becomes a luxury rather a norm. The equal percentage of teachers reporting student disengagement or non-responsiveness points to a significant pedagogical concern. Feedback is not unidirectional (Heslin and Latham, 2004). Hence, it requires the performance of both the learner and the guide. This raises questions about learner training. Are students being taught how to utilize feedback constructively? Do they see it as a tool for learning? These findings go with Carless and Boud's (2018) argument that feedback literacy must be cultivated not only among teachers but also among learners.

Another significant impediment reported by more than one-fifth of the teachers is large classsize. Large classrooms dilute teacher attention and make individualized feedback nearly impossible. This issue is generally prominent in public or government-funded institutions in India, where teacher-student ratios are often unfavorably high.

Improvements required according to the teachers

These findings on the challenges faced by the teachers would enable the curriculum makers develop an effective training program that would eventually minimize the barriers. Years of experience makes teachers proficient in handling the challenges firmly. A focus on their understanding of what changes must be done in a pedagogical setting can give rise to a better training program. In accordance to the mentioned fact, handful of responses was collected from the teachers in order to keep a record of their suggestions.

"To enhance feedback processes… focus on providing timely. Specific, and constructive feedback"

The above response is given by a teacher of a higher-secondary school with an experience ofover10 years. Teachers are clearly aware that delayed or vague feedback reduces its pedagogical value. The emphasis here is on real-time or near-immediate feedback, which allows learners to recall their thought process, connect feedback to their performance, and make meaningful revisions. Moreover, teachers are aware of the fact that being specific and avoiding generic or surface-level comments such as "good job!" or "Needs improvement!" is insufficient for language development. Teachers recognize that constructive feedback should point out what was done well,

what needs improvement, how to improve it, particularly in domains such as grammar, coherence, and lexical choice in language classrooms.

Another interesting suggestion given by a teacher of Kendriya Vidyalaya Cossipore for improved effectiveness of feedback was, *"encourage student participation in feedback process by allowing them to ask questions and discuss their work."*

This suggestion reflects an emerging pedagogical shift from monologic to dialogic feedback practices. Instead of viewing feedback as an unidirectional transmission from teacher to student, this response emphasizes the importance of creating interactive, student-centered feedback environments.

"Be constantly in touch with learners", an insightful statement given by one of the teachers, implies the importance of ongoing feedback as part of regular classroom interaction, not just periodic assessments. It recognizes feedback as a process, not a product, where continuous engagement allows teachers to track student progress, adjust instruction, and nurture learning incrementally.

There were teachers who pointed to the psychological safety, where students feel confident to speak, learn and make mistakes.

"Friendly atmosphere with complete freedom of expression".

This is a crucial effective component often under represented in feedback discourse. A classroom that supports freedom of expression fosters risk-taking and learner autonomy, both of which are essential for language development.

The strategies articulated by teachers show clear commitment to evaluate thinking, where feedback is seen not as a terminal act, but as part of recursive teaching-learning cycle. Importantly, the reliance on observation, questioning, and improvement tracking indicates a learner-centered orientation, in which teachers act as facilitators who are attuned to student responses and learning trajectories. These practices reflect an understand reflect an understanding that effective feedback must be followed by active monitoring, both to ensure it has been understood and to verify whether it has translated into improved performance.

However, these responses also give a pathway for certain preconditions for successful feedback evaluation;

- Meaningful observation and progress tracking require both time and focused attention.
- Teachers also need well-developed diagnostic questioning skills and a high degree of linguistic sensitivity, particularly vital in multilingual classroom settings.
- Critical self-assessment relies heavily on a teacher's capacity and opportunity to engage in critical self assessment.

Despite the challenges they face, ranging from time constraints to limited student responsiveness, teachers demonstrate a clear commitment to making their feedback purposeful and effective.

Evaluation of Objective

Based on the data analysis presented in section 4.2, the study's objectives have been met.

OBJECTIVE 1: To examine the level of awareness language teachers have about the different forms and functions of feedback.

The data clearly shows that the teachers have announced understanding of feedback. Many defined it not only as a tool for correction but also a constructive process. Teachers believe that feedback helps students grow by identifying both their strengths and weaknesses. Their responses demonstrated awareness of multiple functions of feedback, from improving grammar and vocabulary to nurturing learner autonomy and critical thinking. Teachers also acknowledged that feedback should be ongoing, individualized, and meaningful, showing that they understand its varied roles in the learning process.

OBJECTIVE 2: To analyze the instructional approaches used by teachers to implement feedback in language classrooms.

The research explored how often feedback is given (daily, weekly, etc.) and the types of feedback used. It showed that oral feedback is the most commonly used form, favored for its immediacy and clarity. Written and peer feedback were also fairly common, while self-assessment was less frequently practiced. The section also discussed how some teachers encourage student interaction and create a friendly atmosphere for open dialogue These responses reflect a mix of traditional and progressive instructional approaches, indicating that many teachers are trying to implement feedback in ways that are both effective and learner-centered.

OBJECTIVE 3: To identify challenges and misconceptions related to feedback in English Language Education and propose pedagogically sound alternatives.

The study successfully identified key challenges, such as, lack of time for providing detailed feedback, large class sizes, and inadequate formal training. These findings point to both structural and educational issues. Moreover, over half of the teachers reported not receiving formal training in feedback, which may contribute to misunderstandings about how to use it effectively. Despite these challenges, the teachers offered thoughtful suggestions for improving feedback practices, like giving timely and specific comments, encouraging student participation, and maintaining a safe classroom environment.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to explore how English language teachers understand and use feedback in their classrooms, especially in the Indian context. The main goal was to see how closely teacher's feedback practices match what educational theories suggest and to understand the challenges they face in applying feedback effectively. The study also looked at how much formal training they had received and what kind of improvements they felt were necessary. This study highlights the need to make feedback a stronger part of teacher training programs. Teachers need proper guidance on how to give feedback that is helpful, timely, and suitable for each student. Schools and educational leaders should also give teachers the time and support needed to offer

quality feedback, especially in large and busy classrooms. Feedback should not be limited to pointing out mistakes, it should be come part of a conversation between teachers and students. Teaching programs focusing on feedback training can make the teachers aware of a particular kind of vocabulary which is effective for oral feedback. Like any study, this one has its limit. First, it was done with a small group of language teachers, which means the results may not apply to all school sorregions in India. Also, the study is based only on what teachers said. They might have given ideal answers that sound good, but may not fully reflect what happens in their classrooms every day. Hence, it lacks classroom observation in order to know how in reality teachers tend to give feedback. The study does not analyse the current syllabus of teacher training programs. Finally, the study did not include student's opinions, which could have given a fuller picture of how feedback is received and used in learning. There are many ways this research could be continued in the future. More studies could include teachers from different types of schools, like government vs. private, or urban vs. rural settings, to compare how feedback is used in different environments. It would also be useful to do long- term studies to see how teacher's feedback practices change over time, especially after training. Future research could also focus on students and how they understand and react to feedback. Finally, with more classrooms using digital tools, it would be interesting to study how technology can support better feedback and improve communication between teachers and learners.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. K. Venkat Reddy, Professor at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) for his invaluable guidance, insightful feedback and constant encouragement throughout the course of this work. His mentorship greatly shaped the direction and depth of this study.

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Appendix : Questionnaire Used in the Study

Section 1 : Demographic Information

1. Name :
2. Email Id.:
3. Name of the Institution:
4. Years of teaching Experience:

Section 2 : Feedback Practices

5. Define "feedback"in the context of language teaching.
6. How important is feedback for developing English language skills?

a. Important b. Very Important c. Not important

7. Which type(s) of feedback do you consider most effective for language development?

a. Oral feedback b. Written Feedback c. Peer Feedback d. Self-assessment e. all of the above

8. Have you received any formal training or professional development on giving feedback in language learning?

a.Yes b. No

9. How often do you think teachers should provide feedback to students to support language learning?

a. Weekly b. Daily c. Monthlyd. Only after assessments

10. What challenges do you face when giving feedback to students?

a. Lackoftime b. Largeclasssize c.Language Barriersd. Student's Lackof responsiveness e. Inadequate tools or resources f. Others

11. Which types offeed back do you most frequently use in your classroom?

a. Corrective feedback b. Praise and Encouragement c. Descriptive Feedback

12. Do you believe students need training or guidance on how to understand and use the feedback they receive?

a.Yes b. No c. Not sure

13. How do you evaluate whether the feedback you give is effective in supporting student learning?
14. What suggestions or changes would you recommend to improve the feedback process in your classroom?

हिंदी कविताओं में पर्यावरणीय चेतना एवं जागरूकता

डॉ. अम्बर कुमार चौधरी,
सहायक प्राध्यापक, हिन्दी विभाग, रवींद्र भारती विश्वविद्यालय

शोध–सारांश:

हिन्दी साहित्य के अलग –अलग कालों मे प्रकृति आलम्बन, उद्दीपन, सखी, सहचरी, उपदेशक आदि के रूप में चित्रित हुआ है, पर वर्तमान परिस्थिति में प्रकृति चित्रण के स्वरूप में विशाल परिवर्तन आया है। आज प्रकृति केवल आलम्बन, उद्दीपन, सखी, सहचरी एवं उपदेशक के रूप में ही चित्रित नहीं हो रही है, बल्कि पर्यावरण प्रदूषण के विभिन्न रूपों जल प्रदूषण, वायु प्रदूषण, ध्वनि प्रदूषण प्रकाश प्रदूषण, मिट्टी प्रदूषण, रेडियोधर्मी प्रदूषण से मानव जीवन के साथ–साथ समस्त जीव–जन्तुओं, पेड़–पौधों, नदी–तालाबों, पर्वत–पहाडों एवं भौसम–जलवायु पर पड़ने वाले दुष्प्रभावों का भी चित्रण हो रहा है। मनुष्य की आदम्य लालसाएँ ही पर्यावरण प्रदूषण की मूल वजह है। इस प्रकार आदिकाल से लेकर आधुनिक काल तक पर्यावरणीय दृश्य हमें हिन्दी साहित्य की अलग–अलग विधाओं में देखने को मिलता है। समकालीन दौर में आए पर्यावरणीय चर्चा पहले के पर्यावरणीय चित्रण से पूरी तरह से भिन्न इस मायने में है कि आधुनिक काल तक जो पर्यावरण के संबंध में हिन्दी साहित्य में लिखा गया, वह पर्यावरण–विमर्श के तहत नहीं लिखा गया है। वहाँ मात्र उद्दीपन या आलम्बन रूप में प्रकृति चित्रण हुआ है। समकालीन दौर में जो साहित्य लिखा जा रहा है, उसमें पर्यावरण विमर्श सम्मिलित है। पर्यावरण में आए असंतुलन ने पर्यावरण विमर्श को जन्म दिया ऐसा कहना गलत नहीं होगा।

बीज शब्द:

पर्यावरण, परिवेश, प्रकृति, जलवायु परिवर्तन, शहरीकरण, बाजारवाद, जागरूकता

भूमिका:

मनुष्य जब से इस पृथ्वी में कदम रखा है तब से अपने समक्ष प्रकृति–पर्यावरण का मानव के साथ अटूट और अन्योन्यातभ्रि संबंध रहा है। मानव जीवन एवं पर्यावरण एक दूसरे के पर्याय हैं। जहां मानव का अस्तित्व पर्यावरण से है वहीं मानव द्वारा निरंतर किए जा रहे पर्यावरण नियंत्रण व विनाश से हमें अपनी भविष्य की चिंता सताने लगी है। 'पर्यावरण' शब्द को संकुचित अर्थ में देखना न्यायोचित नहीं होगा इसे हमें व्यापक अर्थ के संदर्भ में समझना होगा। पर्यावरण के आंतर्गत पूरा ब्रह्मांड समाया हुआ है। 'पर्यावरण' शब्द (परि + आवरण) से मिलकर बना है 'परि' का अर्थ होता है 'हमारे चारो ओर' और 'आवरण' का अर्थ होता है 'ढकता' या 'घेरा ' अथति् प्रकृति में हमारे चारो तरफ जो कुछ तत्व (वायु,

जल, अग्नि, आकाश, पेड़-पौधे, तथा जीव-प्राणी आदि) फैला हुआ है; प्रकृति में वायु , जल, मिट्टी, पेड़ पेड़-पौधों, जीव जंतुओं का जो संतुलन विद्यमान है, साधारण तौर पर उसे ही हम पर्यावरण कहते हैं। हिन्दी साहित्य में विमर्श का दौर जो चला है, उसकी आवश्यकता आज भी बरकरार है। पर्यावरण विमर्श को लेकर समकालीन दौर में हिंदी साहित्य के रचनाकार कविता,कहानी, उपन्यास व अन्य विधाओं में चिंता-चेतना-चिंतन के समीकरण से गुजर रहें हैं।

आलोचना: भारतीय संस्कृति सदैव पर्यावरण की पोषक रही है। पर्यावरण है तो हम हैं। पर्यावरण के साथ खिलवाड़ करेंगे तो हमारे साथ भी प्रकृति खिलवाड़ कर सकती है। इससे पूरे संसार का ही अस्तित्व खतरे में पड़ सकता है। वेदों, उपनिषदों आदि ग्रन्थों में मनुष्य के स्वस्थ जीवन के लिए पर्यावरण को बहुत महत्व दिया गया है। यजुर्वेद के शान्ति सूत्क में वर्णित प्राकृतिक चित्र को कुछ इस प्रकार उजागर किया गया है-

''ओउम् द्यो: शान्तिरन्तरिक्ष शान्ति: पृथिवी
शान्ति: राप: शान्तिरोषधय: शान्ति: ।
वनस्पतय: शान्ति र्विष्वेदेवा:
शान्ति ब्रेह्म शान्ति: सर्व शान्ति: ।
शान्ति रेव शान्ति: सा मा शान्ति रेधि ।
ऊँ शान्ति: शान्ति: शान्ति: ।।''

इस प्रकार हम देखते हैं कि प्राचीन युग से ही धर्म, दर्शन, कला और साहित्य जैसे सभी क्षेत्रों में प्रकृति को विशेष महत्व मिला है, परन्तु काव्य ने उसे सबसे ऊंचे मुकाम तक पहुंचाया है। यूरोप में भारतीय संस्कृति हमेशा प्रकृति से सामंजस्य स्थापित करने की परंपरा बनाई है, किन्तु यूरोप की औद्येगिक क्रांति, विश्व युद्ध, शीत युद्ध, परमाणु परीक्षण, पूँजीवादी विकाश, ओजोन संरक्षण, वैश्वीकरण, वैज्ञानिक उन्नति आदि ने प्रकृति के साथ हमारे रिश्तों को नष्ट करने में विशेष भूमिका निभाई है। मानव जाति की एकपक्षीय विकास ने प्रकृति को बहुत नुकसान पहुँचाया है। इसी वजह से पर्यावरण को बचाने की बड़ी जिम्मेदारी आ पड़ी है। यही पर्यावरण विमर्श की आधारभूमि है। अजय तिवारी लिखते हैं- ''आज के पर्यावरणवादी सरोकार ने हमें सचेत कर दिया है कि प्रकृति का विनाश करके मनुष्य भी सुरक्षित नहीं रहेगा। पानी की तंगी, पर्यावरण का प्रदूषण, बड़ती गर्मी, पिधलता बर्फ आदि मनुष्य समाज के लिए नहीं ब्रह्मण्ड के पमस्त जीव-जालों और वनस्पतियों के लिए खतरे हैं।'' २ प्रकृति के सभी उपादानों जल, सूर्य, चन्द्रमा, आकाश, वनस्पतियों एवं जीव-जन्तुओं को पूज्य मानने की परंपरा रही है जो पर्यावरण के संरक्षण से जुड़ी है। प्राचीन युग में कोई राष्ट्रीय वन नीति या पर्यावरण संरक्षण पर काम करने वाली संस्थाएँ नहीं थीं। पर्यावरण का संरक्षण हमारे नियमित क्रिया-कलापों से

ही जुड़ा हुआ था। पहले प्रकृति को ज्ञानस्थली, तपोस्थली तथा कर्मस्थली माना जाता था। भारतीय संस्कृति में वन और वनस्पति की महत्ता को अस्वीकार नहीं किया जा सकता है। प्राचीन युग में ऋषि मुनियों का आश्रय और ज्ञान का केन्द्र ही वनों में होता था। हजारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी ने अपने निबंध 'कुटज' में लिखने हैं– 'यह धरती मेरी माता है और मैं इसका पुत्र हूँ। इसीलिए मैं सदैव इसका सम्मान करता हूँ और मेरी धरती माता के प्रति नतमस्तक हूँ। (द्विवेदी ३२) इस प्रकार हिन्दी साहित्यकारों ने हिन्दी साहित्य के माध्यम से प्रकृति से तादात्म्य स्थापित कर प्राकृतिक विध्वंस को रोकने और प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का सम्मान करने की प्रेरणा दीया है।

हिन्दी साहित्य की काव्य परंपरा में आदिकाल से लेकर समकालीन युग तक पर्यावरण से जुड़ी रचनाएं वृहद मात्रा में उपलब्ध है। हिन्दी के आदिकाल में रासो साहित्य में प्रकृति का आलम्बन एवं उद्दीपन के रूप में चित्रण हुआा है। भक्तिकालीन कवियों की उपासना या साधना में आध्यात्मिक तन्मयता व एकनिष्ठता का भाव विद्यमान रहा है। ऋग्वेद के आनेक सूत्क, रामायण, महाभारत के आख्यान, सम्पूर्ण संस्कृत साहित्य एवं पाश्चात्य साहित्य की सर्जनाएँ प्रकृति से ही आरम्भ होती है। तुलसीदास ने रामचरितमानस के 'किष्किन्धा काण्ड' में यह लिखते हैं कि–

'क्षिति जल पावक गगन समीरा,
पंज रचित अति अधम सरीरा।'

अर्थात् हमारा शरीर पंचतत्व–पृथ्वी, आकाश, जल, आग्नि और वायु से मिलकर निर्मित हुआ है। यह पंचतत्व पर्यावरण के अंभिन्न अंग हैं। पर्यावरण तो मानव के तन व मन दोनों में व्याप्त है। इसके अभाव में मानव जीवन की कल्पना नहीं की जा सकती। मानव जाति पूर्णत: प्रकृति के ऊपर निर्भरशील है। मानव जाति की प्रेरणा प्रकृति की सहभागिता और साहचर्य से प्राप्त है। वह प्रकृति के रूप, रस, सौंदर्य एवं गंध से अभिभूत होकर ही कला एवं साहित्य की मर्मज्ञता को जान पाने में सक्षम हुए प्रकृति को धर्म, दर्शन, कला एवं साहित्य में विशिष्ट स्थान प्राप्त है। इस प्रकार हम देखते हैं कि भक्तिकालीन कवियों में तुलसी, कबीर, रहीम, गुरुनानक, रविदास, जायसी आदि जैसे कवियों ने अपनी रचनाओं के जरिए प्रकृति के प्रति प्रेम, रुचि और चिंतन का बोध दिखाया है।

रीतिकालीन कवियों ने प्रकृति की सौन्दर्य को निरूपित किया है। भूषण, केशवदास, बिहारी, देव, पद्माकर, सेनापति, आलम, घनानन्द आदि कवियों ने प्रकृति के सौंदर्य चित्रण के साथ–साथ प्रकृति के प्रति चिंता का भाव भी प्रकट किया। सूखा और जल संकट को निरूपित करते हए कवि भूषण लिखते हैं–

'सूखे वन, झरे वृक्ष, नदियाँ नीर विहीन।'

इस प्रकार हम देखते कवि भूषण ने तत्कालीन वास्तविक पर्यावरणीय समस्या को बड़े ही सार्थक तरीके से उठाया है। आगे चलकर आधुनिक हिन्दी कवियों में श्रीधर पाठक, हरिऔध, मैथिलीशरण

गुप्त, जयशंकर प्रसाद, सुमित्रानन्दन पन्त, सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी निराला की कविताओं में प्राकृतिक सौंदर्यों का चमत्कारी चित्रण हुआ है। कवि श्रीधर पाठक ने 'कश्मीर की सुषमा' कविता में प्रकृति के स्वरूप का बड़ा ही मनोरम दृश्य प्रस्तुत किया है तो वहीं अयोध्या सिंह उपाध्याय हरिऔध ने 'प्रिय-प्रवास' (महाकाव्य) में राधारानी की हृदय व्यथा का प्रकृति के उपादानों के माध्यम से हृदयस्पर्शी अभिव्यंजना किया है। छायावादी काव्य प्रकृति-पर्यावरण के वर्णन से भरा पड़ा है। इस युग की कविताओं में प्राकृतिक सौंदर्यों के साथ-साथ पर्यावरणीय खतरे की ओर भी संकेत देखने को मिलता है। जहाँ एक ओर 'प्रकृति' प्रेयसी, सखी, सहचरी एवं मानवीकरण के रूप में चित्रित हुआ है, वहीं दूसरी ओर प्रकृति के भयावह रूप को भी दर्शाया गया है। हिन्दी साहित्य में 'कामायनी' संभवत: पहली रचना है जिसमें प्रकृति और पर्यावरण को विविध नजरिए से प्रस्तुत किया गया है। 'कामायनी' में प्रसाद ने पुराकथा का सहारा लेकर सृष्टि के विनाश की कथा को बयां किया है। पर्यावरण में होने वाली समस्याओं व आसंतुलन पर विचार करते हुए उन बिन्दुओं को रेखांकित किया गया है कि

'हिमगिरि के उन्तुंग शिखर बैठ शिला की शीतल छाँह।
एक पुरुष भींगे नयनों से, देख रहा था प्रलय-प्रवाह।'

इस प्रकार जयशंकर प्रसाद के 'कामायनी' में प्रकृति के विकराल रूप का चित्रण हुआ है। प्रकृति के विकराल रूप से समस्त मानव जाति का विनाश हो जाता है और अंत केवल मनु और श्रद्धा का अस्तित्व रहता है। इसके अतिरिक महादेवी वर्मा, सुमित्रानन्दन पंत, जयशंकर प्रसाद और सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी 'निराला' की कविताओं में प्रकृति का सूक्ष्म और उत्कृष्ट रूप देखने को सहजता से मिल जाता है। कवि सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी निराला भी 'संध्या' की बेला को एक सुंदरी के रूप में वर्णन करते हुए कहते हैं-

'दिवसावसान का समय मेधमय आसमान से उतर रही है।
वह संध्या सुन्दरी परी-सी, धीरे, धीरे, धीरे।'

इस प्रकार सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी निराला कविताओं में प्रकृति का अनोखा मनोरम दृश्य देखने को मिल जाता है।

आधुनिकता के दौर में प्राकृतिक सौन्दय और उसके अस्तित्व पर काले बादल मंडराने लगे हैं। नागार्जुन ने अपनी कविता 'फुले कदंब' के द्वारा कहते हैं-

''सावत बीता
बादल का कोप नहीं रीता
जाने कब से वो बरस रहा
ललचाई आँखां से नाहक

जाने कब से तू तरस रहा
मन कहता है छू ले कदंब।''

'फुले कदंब' में पर्यावरणीय समस्याओं को उजागर किया गया है जिसमें जल प्रदूषण, वायु प्रदूषण तथा भूमि प्रदूषण मुख्य रूप से शामिल हैं जो, भारत की प्रमुख पर्यावरणीय समस्याओं को दर्शाता है। इस कविता में पर्यावरण–चिंता, मानवीय गतिविधियों और जलवायु परिवर्तन होने की वजह से पर्यावरण के वर्तमान और भविष्य की ओर इंगित करते हैं। यह इशारा प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का सटीक उपयोग और उनके संरक्षण से जुड़ा है। प्रकृति के प्रति अपनी चिंता व्यक्त करते हुए केदारनाथ सिंह पानी के संकट के ऊपर अपनी कविता 'पानी की प्रार्थना' में लिखते हैं–

अन्त में प्रभु

''अन्तिम लेकिन सबसे जरुरी बात
वहाँ होंगे मेरे भाई–बन्धु
मंगल ग्रह या चाँद पर
पर यहाँ पृथ्वी पर मैं
यानी आपका मुँह लगा यह पानी
अब दुर्लभ होने के कगार पर तक
पहुँच चुका है।''

बढ़ते हुए प्रदुषण की वजह से पर्यावरण असंतुलित होता जा रहा है जिसके प्रति कवि ने चिंता जताया है। आज इस संकट के दौर में हिन्दी कवियों में चिंता की भावना जागृत होना स्वाभाविक भी है जिसमें त्रिलोचन, केदारनाथ सिंह, रामदरश मित्र, अरुण कमल, ज्ञानेंद्रपति, अशोक पजपेयी, लीलाधर मंडलोई, मंगलेश डबराल, वीरेन डंगवाल, शिशुपाल सिंह जैसे कवियों ने अपनी कविताओं में बखूबी दर्शाया है।

ज्ञानेद्रपति ने पर्यावरणीय समस्या को एक जीवंत मुहदू के रूप में बड़ी संवेदनशीलता के साथ उभारा है। उन्होंने पर्यावरणीय समस्या को एक गंभीर विषय के रूप में आपनाकर ज्वलंत विषय बनाया है। पर्यावरण विमर्श से जुड़ी उनकी कई कविताएं हैं जो जो लोगों चेतना और जागरूकता फैलाने का कार्य कर रही है। वह गंगा प्रदूषण या पर्यावरण के दृश्य को दर्शाते हैं–

''गंगा मे स्नान कर रही
वह बूढी मेया....
अपने प्राणों तक को प्रक्षालित कर रही है, पवित्र कर रही है

महाप्रस्थान–प्रस्तुत, डगमग पांवो वाली वह बूढी मैया
तुम क्या जानों, क्योंकि तुम्हारे लिए नहीं बची है कोई पवित्र नदी
तुम्हारी सारी नदियाँ अपवित्र हो गई हैं–विषाक्त
तुम्हारे हत्पिंड की गंगोंत्री सूख ही गई है
पीछे और पीछे खिसकती, आखिरकार''

इसमें कवि बताने हैं कि आज नदियों की स्वच्छता व पवित्रता मलिन हो गई है। इसमें कवि ने एक बूढी, जर्जर स्त्री की गंगास्नान की आखिरी इच्छा के साथ–साथ पर्यावरण प्रदूषण भी को दर्शाया है। जल, जंगल, जमीन, हुवा, प्रकाश, अंधकार, अग्नि, जीव–जंतु, खनिज पदार्थ आदि हमारे पर्यावरण के अभिन्न अंग है। आज संकट उसी पर मंडरा रहा है। इसके लिए आवश्यक है कि हम आधुनिकता के दौर में प्रकृति के साथ सामंजस्य स्थापित करके प्रकृति को सर्वोपरि रखकर पुनः उसे प्रतिष्ठित करें। कवि ज्ञानेंद्रपति ने अपनी कविताओं के जारिए प्रकृति की भयावह त्रासदी का सजीव चित्रण किया है। इस प्रकार वर्तमान समय मे अन्य महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दों की तरह पर्यावरण के मुद्दों महत्वपूर्ण बन गए हैं। पर्यावरण मनुष्य के बाहरी जीवन के साथ–साथ शरीर के भीतर–बाहर भी समाहित है। इसलिए आदिकाल से लेकर आधुनिक काल के रचनाकारों ने इसे अपनी कविताओं में भी एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा बनाया है।

आज आधुनिकता के दैर में भूमंडलीकरण, औद्यौगिक क्रांति और बाजारवादी संस्कृति ने जिस रफ्तार के साथ प्रकृति का दोहन व शोषण किया है ; वह अतीत के कवियों ने इतना ज्यादा अनुमान भी नहीं लगाया होगा। इन सबको उजागर करते हुए कविताओं में वीरेन डंगवाल की 'बच्चा और गौरैया' कविता में पर्यावरणीय संवेदना को सुखरित करते हुए लिखते हैं–

'इस तरह बदहवास
मत टकराओ गौरेया
खिडकी के कांच से
शीशे से
तुम्हारी चोंच दूट जाएगी
और नाखून ओलट जाएंगे।'

पहले गौरैया प्रकृति की शान और चहचआहट की प्रतीक मानी जाती थी। बड़े–बड़े निर्माण कार्य और शहरीकरण ने गौरेया को मानों विलुप्त ही कर दिया है। आज प्रकृति शहरों के लिए एकदम अजनबी जैसा महसूस कर रही है। प्रकृति के बिगड़ते संतुलन को अपनी कविता के जरिए वीरेन डंगवाल जी ने बखूबी ही बताया है।

नरेश सक्सेना ने हमेशा से ही कविता में उन विषयों को शामिल किया है जो मानव का कल्याण करे। विज्ञान के विषयों को नरेश सक्सेना ने अपनी कविता का विषय बनाया है। यही वजह है कि पर्यावरण पर आने वाले संकटों को बड़ी संवेदना के साथ अभिव्यक्त किया है। वे अपनी कविता उसे ले गये शीर्षक के जरिए नीम वृक्ष के कदने पर अपनी दुख और व्यथा को बड़ी मार्मिक तरीके से दर्शाया है। वह लिखने हैं–

''अरे कोई देखो
मेरे आंगन में गिरा कट कर
गिरा मेरा नीम
वे आरा ले आये ले आये कुल्हाड़ी
और रस्सा ले आये उसे बांधने
देखो कैसी कांपी उसकी छाया
उसकी पत्तियों की छाया''

पेड़–पौधे जीवन और हरियाली का प्रतीक होता है। नीम वृक्ष का कटना मानो किसी प्राणी के जान जाने के बराबर माना गया है। नीम का पेड़ इंसानों को जीवन देने का कार्य करती है और हमारे शरीर में आक्सीजन की आपूर्ति करता है। इस प्रकार हमें कवि ने कविता के जरिए झकझोरने का प्रयत्न किया है।

चर्चित कवि कुँवर नारायण 'वृक्ष' के प्रति बेहद प्रेम, लगाव तथा संवेदना रखते हैं यही वजह है कि इन भावनाओं को वह अपनी कविताओं के जरिए जगजाहिर करने का प्रयास करते हैं। वह अपनी कविता 'एक वृक्ष की हत्या' के जरएि लोगों को चेताने का कार्य किया है। आने वाले भविष्य में एक वृक्ष की हत्या हमारे लिए कितना घातक सिद्ध हो सकती है जिसका चित्रण अपनी इस कविता के जारिए दर्शाया है। आधुनिकता के दौर में बढ़ती वृक्षों की कटाई की समस्या को देखकर वह अपने आप को रोक नहीं पाते हैं और अपनी पंक्तियों को कुछ इस प्रकार शब्दबद्ध करते हैं –

''अबकी घर लोटा तो देखा वह नहीं था
वही बूढ़ा चोकीदार वृक्ष
जो हमेशा मिलता था घर के दरवाजे पर तैनात।
पुराने चमड़े का बना उसका शरीर
वही सख्त जान
झुर्रियोंदार खुरदुरा तना मैला–कुचैला,

राइफिल–सी एक सूखी डाल,
एक पगड़ी फुल पत्तीदार,
पाँवों में फटा–पुराना जूता
चरमराता लेकिन अकखंड बल–बूता
धूप में बारिश में
गर्मी में सर्दी में
हमेशा चौकन्ना
अपनी खाकी वर्दी में।''

इस प्रकार अपनी कविता के जरिए यह दर्शाने का प्रयत्न करते हैं कि पेड़–पौधे जंगल मानव जीवन का एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा है। पेड़–पौधे और जंगल के बिना मानव के अस्तित्व की भी परिकल्पना नहीं की जा सकती है। इन पंक्तियों के जरिए कवि के दर्द, पीड़ा और वेदना को सहज ही समझा जा सकता है।

कवि लीलाधर मंडलोई के काव्य संसार में पर्यावरण के संवर्धन और संरक्षण की चिंता एक प्रमुख प्रश्न है। आाज तमाम संगठन एक तरफ पर्यावरण संरक्षण के लिए अनेक सभाएँ व सम्मेलन किए जा रहे हैं वहीं दूसरी ओर बाजारवादी नामक गिद्ध पर्यावरण का आंधाधुंध दोहन व शोषण भी कर रहा है। ऐसे में पर्यावरण संरक्षम के लिए प्रतिबद्ध कवि मंडलोई ने लोगों की सुरक्षा और पर्यावरण की महत्ता को वताते हुए अपनी 'आपत्ति' कविता के माध्यम से कहते हैं–

''मेरी उम्र सात ही बरस सही
दिमाग न हो दिग्गजों जैसा, मगर हक है मेरा कहता
आगर रेगिस्तान में बहे लहू का दरिया
आगर समुद्र में मरे अनगिनत जल–जीव
अगर जल उठें पेड़, पौधे, चत्तियाँ
अगर हवा में धुले जहर ओर–छोर
और कोई अगर चाहे करना इस धरती को तेस्तनाबूद
मुझे आपत्ति है, सख्त आपत्ति''

व्यापक मायने में पर्यावरणीय सुरक्षा और संवर्धन के बिना मानव की सुरक्षा और उसके आस्तित्व की बात करना अंधेरे में तीर चलाने जैसा है। आाज मानव अपनी सुख–सुविधा और आंधाधुंध विकास

के लिए जलवायु को क्षतिग्रस्त कर दिया है, जिसकी वजह से रोग और महामारी अपना साम्राज्य फैला रहा है।

अभी हाल के समय में कोरोना का कहर सबसे बड़ा उदाहरण है। इस वैश्विक महामारी के चलते लाखों–लाख लोगों ने ऑक्सीजन की कमी के कारण अपने प्राण गवा दिए हैं। इस प्रकार लीलाधर मंडलोई जी की कविताएं लोगों में जनचेतना जगाने का कार्य करती है।

प्रकृति का मनमाने ढंग से प्रयोग और पृथ्वी के प्रति असहिष्णुता के व्यवहार ने एक चिंताजनक परिस्थिति को पैदा किया है। प्रगति की दौड़ में भूमि का विसंगतिपूर्ण प्रयोग ने उसकी दुर्दशा बना दी है जिससे पृथ्वी विषाक्त होता चला जा रहा है। 'निर्मला पुतुल' पृथ्वी के प्रति अपने दुख को व्यतीत करने हुए अपनी 'बूढ़ी पृथ्वी का दुख' शीर्षक कविता में लिखती हैं कि–

''थोड़ा सा वक्त चुराकर बतियाया है कभी
कभी शिकायत न करने वाली
गुमसुम बुढ़ी पृथ्वी से उसका दुख ?
अगर नहीं तो क्षमा करना।
मुझे तुम्हारे आदमी होने में संदेह है।''

वह अपनी पंक्तियों के माध्यम से यह बताने का प्रयास करती हैं कि इन्सान पृथ्वी का जिस प्रकार प्रयोग कर रहे हैं लगता है कि मानों वह जवान से बुढ़ी बनने के लिए कोई कोर कसर नहीं छोड़ना चाहती है। आज प्रदूषण ओजोन परत में घूलित प्रदूषण इस पृथ्वी का कफन तैयार कर रही है। इस प्रकार निर्मला पुतुल पर्यावरण के प्रति लोगों को सावधान करने का कार्य किया हैं।

पर्यावरण की चिंता आदिवासी कवि अनुज लुगुन ने भी अपनी कविताओं के जरिए बखुबी ही रेखांकित किया है। उनकी कविताओं में प्रकृति के प्रति प्रेम और उनकी समस्याओं के प्रति चिंता, उनके काव्य को धारादार बनाती है। सुप्रसिद्ध कवि अनुज लुगुन 'शहर के दोस्त के नाम पत्र' कविता में उन समस्याओं को बया करते हुए लिखते हैं–

''हमारे जंगल में लोहे के फूल खिले हैं
बॉक्साइट के गुलदस्ते सजे हैं
अभ्रक और कोयला तो
थोक और खुदरा दोनों भावों से
मंडियों में रोज सजाए जाते हैं
यहाँ बड़े–बड़े बाँध भी

फुल की तरह खिलते हैं
इन्हें बैचने के लिए
सैनिकों के स्कुल खुले हैं''

'शहर के दोस्त' उस वर्ग का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है जो विकास और सुविधा की वाणी को प्रस्तुत करता है। वहीं जंगल और धरती का प्रतिनिधित्व कवि करता है, जिसे विकास और सुविधा के नाम पर दिन-प्रतिदिन खाए जा रहा है। कवि उक्त पंक्ति में 'लोहे के फूल' और बॉक्साइट के गुलदस्ते के जरिए आधुनिक सभ्यता के विकृत सौंदर्य की ओर इंगित करते हैं, जो आए दिन प्रकृति के वास्तविक सौंदर्य और उसके जीवन को विलुप्त किए जा रहा है। अभ्रक और कोयला जैसे महत्वपूर्ण खनिजों की बढ़ती खुदाई और उसका बाजारीकरण ने चिंताजनक हालात पैदा कर दिया है, जो पर्यावरणीय शोषण और औपनिवेशिक मानसिकता का प्रतीक है। बढ़ते शहरीकरण और उद्योगों ने जल, जंगल और जमीन के सांस्कृतिक आस्मिता को भी उद्वेलित करने का प्रयास किया है। 'बड़े-बड़े बाँध' को फूल की तरह खिलाकर कवि ने इस कृत्तिम विकास के ऊपर करारा प्रहार किया किया है। वे प्रस्तुत कविता के माध्यम से नदियों की हत्या, प्रकृति के विगड़ते संतुलन और जनजातीय निर्वासन के ऊपर तंज कसते हैं। आज़ विकास और सुविधा के नाम पर हमारे प्राकृतिक और सामाजिक परिवेश को ठेस पहुंचाया जा रहा है। प्रस्तुत पंक्तियों के माध्यम से बढ़ते प्रदूषण और उसके बदलते हालात के ऊपर सबका ध्यान आकर्षित किया है। इस प्रकार हम देखते हैं कि अद्यतन सभ्यता के नाम 'शहर के दोस्त के नाम एक पत्र' एक जज्बाती पत्र है, जो यह सवाल खड़े करता है कि क्या पर्यावरण के विनाश के बिना विकास संभव नहीं है ? इस प्रकार कवि अनुज लुगुन जी प्रस्तुत पंक्तियों के द्वारा लोगों को प्रदूषण के प्रति चेतना जगाने का प्रयास किया है।

निष्कर्ष :

वर्तमान दौर में पूरे विश्व को लगातार अगर किसी समस्या से सबसे ज्यादा ग्रस्त किया है वह है आधुनिकीकरण, नगरीकरण, औद्योगिकीरण और बाजारीकरण से बढ़ता पर्यावरणीय असंतुलन। आज विश्व भर के समस्त देशों ने पर्यावरणीय विमर्श को विशेष महत्व दिया है। पर्यावरण को संतुलित करने के लिए नायाब तरीक़े लाए जाने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है। आज पर्यावरणीय मुद्दे विमर्श के रूप में कार्य कर रही है जिसके सकारात्मक और नकारात्मक पहलुओं पर भी विचार-विमर्श किया जा रहा है। प्राचीन काल से, सभी काल में कविताओं के माध्यम से प्रकृति का वर्णन किया जाता रहा है। वर्तमान परिवर्तनशील परिस्थितियों को केन्द्र मे रखकर विभिन्न कवियों ने अपने-अपने तरीक़े से, समकालीन हिन्दी कविता में पर्यावरणीय चेतना एवं जागरूकता का बड़े ही सजीवता के साथ चित्रित

किया है। आए दिन बढ़ते हुए प्रदुषण के कारण पर्यावरण का संतुलन बिगड़ता जा रहा है जिसके प्रति बुद्धिजीवी, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता, वैज्ञानिक, सामान्य नागरिक आदि की तरह कवि और साहित्यकार भी काफी चिंतित हैं। वे अपनी कविताओं व रचनाओं के जरिए पर्यावरण के प्रति अपनी चिंता जताया है। समकालीन कविता वास्तव में पर्यावरण त्रासदी का युग है जिसे अनेक कवियों ने अपने काव्य का प्रमुख विषय बनाया है। हिंदी के लगभग सभी साहित्यकारों ने विविध विद्याओं के जरिए पर्यावरणीय मुद्दे और उनकी गहरी संवेदना को हमारे समक्ष प्रस्तुत करने का कार्य किया है। अगर हमें स्वस्थ वातावरण और बेहतर समाज चाहिए तो पर्यावरण को संतुलन बनाए रखना परम आवश्यक है। आज मानव अपने भोग–विलास एवं सुख की प्राप्ति के लिए प्रकृति के साथ खिलवाड़ कर रहा है, जिसका खामियाजा हमें तो भूगतना होगा। आज असमय बारिश, बाढ़, भूकंप, भूस्खलन ग्लेशियर पिघलना, महामारी का प्रकोप आदि जैसे विपदाएँ हमें प्रकृति के प्रति सचेत करती है। अत: हमारी भावी पीढ़ी को बचाने के लिए पर्यावरणीय चेतना एवं जागरूकता अति आवश्यक है।

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धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह और बाल मन की मासूम दृष्टि : मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' के संदर्भ में

आशा हेमंत सिंह
शोद्यार्थी, हिंदी विभाग, एस.एन.डी.टी.महिला विश्वविद्यालय, पुणे

शोध–सारांश

प्रस्तुत शोधपत्र में मनोहर चमोली मनु, की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' के माध्यम से धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों का बाल मन पर पड़ने वाले प्रभाव को प्रस्तुत किया गया है। यह अध्ययन धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों के बारे में मासूम दृष्टि को रेखांकित करता है। इस अध्ययन में यह भी दिखाने का प्रयास किया गया है कि एक बालक सामाजिक एवं धार्मिक जटिलताओ को किस रूप में ग्रहण करता हैं। साथ ही यह शोध वयस्क समाज में व्याप्त धार्मिक संकीर्णताओं पर भी प्रश्न उठाता है।

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन का मुख्य उद्देश्य बाल मन की मासूम दृष्टि और धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह के अंतर्संबंधों का विश्लेषण करना है। इसके साथ–साथ इसका एक और उद्देश्य बाल साहित्य की भूमिका को रेखांकित करना हैं, जो बालकों में करुणा समानता और मानवीय मूल्यों के विकास के माध्यम से सामाजिक भेदभाव और धार्मिक संकीर्णता पर प्रश्न उठाने की क्षमता प्रदान करता है।

प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में अध्ययन के लिए मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' को प्राथमिक स्रोत के रूप में लिया गया है। कहानी के कथानक बाल पात्र की जिज्ञासा और वयस्क पात्रों की प्रतिक्रिया का विश्लेषण बाल मनोवैज्ञानिक दृष्टि से किया गया है। समकालीन समाज में धार्मिक आधार पर बढ़ते भेदभाव के संदर्भ में बाल साहित्य का अध्ययन करना अतिआवश्यक हो जाता है। ऐसे में इन धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों के कारण बालक के मन पर पड़ने वाले प्रभाव का अध्ययन करना सामाजिक और शैक्षाणिक दृष्टियों से महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है। इस अध्ययन से यह भी रेखांकित होता है कि बाल साहित्य के माध्यम से किस प्रकार बालकों में सहिष्णुता, समभाव और नैतिक चेतना का विकास किया जा सकता है। मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' इस संदर्भ में एक प्रासंगिक उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करती है एवं समाज में व्याप्त धार्मिक संकीर्णताओं की आलोचना करने के साथ मानवीय मूल्यों कि पूनर्स्थापना का मार्ग भी सुझाती है।

अध्ययन से यह निष्कर्ष निकलता है की धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह बाल मन में स्वाभाविक नहीं होते बल्कि सामाजिक–पारिवारिक संरचनाओं द्वारा आरोपित किए जाते हैं, तथा बाल साहित्य इनके विरुद्ध मानवीय चेतना विकसित करने का प्रभावी माध्यम है।

मुख्य शब्द

बाल साहित्य, बाल मनोविज्ञान, धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह, सामाजिक भेदभाव, नैतिक चेतना, समानता, पारिवारिक संस्कार, मूल्य–बोध।

प्रस्तावना

बाल साहित्य बालक के बौद्धिक, भावनात्मक, सामाजिक और नैतिक विकास में महत्वपूर्ण रूप से मार्गदर्शक की भूमिका निभाता है। वैसे तो बालक स्वभाव से ही कल्पनाशील होते हैं, लेकिन बाल साहित्य उस की कल्पनाशक्ति को और अधिक विस्तार देना है। यह बच्चों मे संवेदनशीलता जाग्रत करता है तथा उन्हें सामाजिक जीवन के मूल्यात्मक पक्षों की पहचान करना सिखाता है। बाल साहित्य बालक को उसके परिवेश में घटित घटनाओं, मानवीय व्यवहारों और सामाजिक संबधों को सहज रूप में आत्मसात करने में सहायता करता है। इस आधार पर कहा जा सकता हैं कि बाल साहित्य का उद्देश्य केवल मनोरंजन प्रदान करना ही नहीं है, बल्कि बालक के व्यक्तित्व निर्माण एवं मूल्यों के विकास में भी इसका अभूतपूर्व योगदान है।

बालक का मन अत्यंत कोमल और जिज्ञासु होता है। वह अपने आस-पास होने वाले व्यवहारों को शीघ्रता से ग्रहण करता है और अपने अनुभवों का सामना करता है, तो उसके मन में स्वाभाविक रूप से भ्रम, विरोधाभास और मानसिक द्वंद्व की स्थिति उत्पन्न होती है। यही वह बिंदु है जहाँ बालक के मानसिक यथार्थ का परिचय आरंभ होता है, और बालक की निष्कपट दृष्टि समाज में व्याप्त गहरे पूर्वाग्रहों पर प्रश्नचिह्न लगाती है।

इस संदर्भ मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' कथा-साहित्य विशेष महत्व रखता है। उनकी बाल कहनियों में बालक की सहज संवेदनाओं, अनुभवों और प्रश्नात्मक प्रवृति को अत्यंत सरल और प्रभावी ढंग से प्रस्तुत किया गया है। कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' इसका उत्तम उदाहरण है, जिसमें एक नन्ही बालिका अपराजिता की भोली दृष्टि के माध्यम से धर्म आस्था और सामाजिक विभाजन जैसी जटिल आवधारणाओं को सहज रूप में अभिव्यकत किया गया है। यह कहानी संकेत देती है कि यदि बालक को निष्पक्ष दृष्टि और मानवीय मूल्यों का उचित पोषण मिले, तो उसके भीतर विवेक, करुणा और समभाव का विकास संभव है।

अत: 'सॉरी पापा' बाल साहित्य में बाल मन की जिज्ञासा, संवेदनशीलता और नैतिक चेतना की उत्कृष्ट अभिव्यक्ति प्रस्तुत करती है। यह कहानी न केवल धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों की आलोचना करती है। बल्कि बालक की निर्मल दृष्टि के माध्यम से समाज में समानता, प्रेम और सह-आस्तित्व का संदेश भी देती है।

शोध-पद्धति

प्रस्तुत शोधपत्र में वर्णनात्मक-विश्लेषणात्मक पद्धति को अपनाया गया है। यह अध्ययन गुणात्मक (Qualitative) प्रकृति का है, जिसमें साहित्यिक पाठ के माध्यम से बाल मनोविज्ञान और सामाजिक यथार्थ के अंतर्संवंधों का विश्लेषण किया गया है। शोध का केन्द्र मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' है, जिसे इस अध्ययन में प्राथमिक स्रोत के रूप में ग्रहण किया गया है।

अध्ययन के अंतर्गत कहानी के कथानक, पात्र-निर्माण, संवादों तथा प्रतीकात्मक तत्वों का सूक्ष्म विश्लेषण किया गया है। विशेष रूप से बाल पात्र अपराजिता की जिज्ञासा, प्रतिक्रियाओं और दृष्टिकोण

को बाल मनोवैज्ञानिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में समझने का प्रयास किया गया है। इसके साथ–साथ व्यक्त पात्रों के व्यवहार, दृष्टिकोण और धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों का विश्लेषण कर यह स्पष्ट किया गया है कि किस प्रकार सामाजिक एवं धार्मिक संकीर्णताएँ बाल मन की सहज नैतिक चेतना से टकराती हैं।

शोध में बाल मनोविज्ञान और बाल साहित्य की आलोचनात्मक दृष्टि को आधार बनाकर यह विवेचना किया गया है कि धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह समाज द्वारा आरोपित मानसिक संरचना हैं, जबकि बाल मन स्वभावत: निष्पक्ष, करुणामयी और समभाव से युक्त होता है। अध्ययन में सहायक संदर्भ सामग्री के रूप में बाल साहित्य, सामाजिक मनोविज्ञान तथा पूर्वाग्रह से संबंधित सैधांतिक अवधारणाओं का उपयोग किया गया है।

शोध–विश्लेषण

बाल साहित्य एक ऐसा माध्यम है जिसके द्वारा बालक समाज की जटिलताओं को बड़े ही सहज, प्राकृतिक और निर्मल दृष्टि से समझता है। बाल साहित्य बच्चों में सामाजिक नैतिक मूल्यों की नींव रखने का एक सशक माध्यम है। इससे बालक सामाजिक ज्ञान के साथ–साथ व्यवहारिक ज्ञान भी प्राप्त करता है।

बाल साहित्य बालक के बौद्धिक, भावनात्मक, सामाजिक और नैतिक विकास में महत्वपूर्ण रूप से मार्गदर्शक की भूमिका निभाता है। वैसे तो बालक स्वभाव से ही कल्पनाशील होते हैं लेकिन यह बालक की कल्पनाशक्ति को और विस्तार देता है। बच्चों में संवेदनशीलता जाग्रत करता है। सामाजिक जीवन के मूल्यात्मक पक्षों की पहचान करना सिखाना है। बाल साहित्य बालक को उसके परिवेश में घटित घटनाओं मानवीय व्यवहारों, सामाजिक संबधों आदि को सहजता से आत्मसात करना सिखाता है। इस आधार पर कहा जा सकता है की बाल साहित्य का उद्देश्य केवल मनोरंजन प्रदान करना ही नहीं है, बल्कि बालक के व्यक्तित्व निर्माण एवं मूल्यबोध में भी इसका अभूतपूर्व योगदान है।

हिंदी शब्दकोश के अनुसार– ''वाल का अर्थ है– बालक और साहित्य का अर्थ है–गद्य–पद्य के वे कल्पना प्रसूत ग्रन्थ जिनमें ज्ञान संबंधी स्थायी विचार लिखे हों।''

इस विषय में द्वारिका प्रसाद माहेश्वरी अपने आलेख 'बाल साहित्य की रूप रेखा' में इस पर प्रकाश डालते हुए लिखते हैं कि– ''स हितं हिताय: अर्थात् जिस लिखित कृति के अध्ययन, चिंतन और मनन से मानव मात्र कि भलाई हो, वही सच्चे अर्थ में साहित्य की कोटि में आयगा। जहाँ तक बाल साहित्य का प्रश्न है, सामान्यत: 6 से 14 वर्ष तक की आयु बाले बालक–बालिकाओं के लिए लिखा जाने वाला साहित्य बाल साहित्य माना जाता है।''

पूर्वाग्रह

पूर्वाग्रह शब्द अंग्रेजी शब्द 'Prejudice' का हिंदी अनुवाद है। 'Prejudice' यह शब्द लैटिन भाषा के 'Prejudicium' शब्द से बना है। 'Prejudicium' शब्द दो शब्दों के मेल से बना है जिसमें Pre का अर्थ होता है 'पूर्व' और 'Judicium' का अर्थ है लिया गया निर्णय। इस प्रकार इसका अर्थ हो

जाता है पूर्व में लिया गया निर्णय। अर्थात एक ऐसा निर्णय जो व्यक्ति, घटना, विचार आदि को जाने बिना पहले से ही ले लिया गया हो अथवा तय कर लिया गया हो। कई ऐसे पूर्वाग्रह होते हैं जो बिना किसी तार्किक आधार के बस चले आ रहे हैं या हमारे आस–पास बने हैं।

धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह

सेकर्ड तथा बैकमेन (Second & Backman, 1974) के अनुसार – (Prejudice is an attitude that predisposes a person to think perceive, feel and act in favourable and unfavourable ways towards a group or its individual members.)

हिंदी अनुवाद–''पूर्वाग्रह एक मनोवृति है जो व्यक्ति को किसी समूह या उसके सदस्यों के प्रति अनुकूल या प्रतिकूल सोचने, महसूस करने, अनुभव करने तथा क्रिया करने के लिए पहले से ही तैयार कर देती है।''

फेल्डमैन (Feldman, 1985) के अनुसार– ''पूर्वाग्रह एक मनोवृत्ति है जो समूह के सदस्यों के प्रति सकारात्मक ढग से व्यवहार करता है। यह मनोवृति प्राय: इस तथ्य पर आधारित होती है कि समूह के सदस्यों के विशेष गुण हैं।''

''धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह विभिन्न धर्मों पर आधारित होती है जिनसे व्यक्ति सम्बद्ध होते हैं। इसमें लोग अपने धर्म के प्रति सकारात्मक और अन्य धर्मों के प्रति नकारात्मक व्यवहार रखते हैं। यह उनकी विभिन्न धर्मों के लोगों के बारे में धारणाओं और प्रतीक्रियाओं की ओर ले जाता है।''

बालक का मन स्वभावत: निर्मल, भेदभाव से मुक्त और निष्कपट होता है। बालक के मन में किसी प्रकार के धार्मिक सामाजिक अथवा जातिगत पूर्वाग्रह जन्म से उपस्थित नहीं होते। बालक समाज, परिवार, अभिभावक, आस–पास के परिवेश से ऐसे पूर्वाग्रहो को आत्मसात करता है। धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह के संबंध में भी यही होता है। बालक अपने से वयस्क व्यक्ति अथवा अभिभावक के व्यवहार दृष्टिकोण, भाषा आदि के माध्यम से धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों को अपनाता है। इस प्रकार कहा जा सकता है कि धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह बाल मन पर थोपी गई ऐसी मानसिक संरचना है जो बालक के नैतिक विवेक को प्रभावित करने के साथ–साथ मानवीय संवेदना को भी प्रभावित करती है। बाल साहित्य ऐसी परिस्थितियों को बाल दृष्टि से प्रस्तुत कर धार्मिक विसंगतियों को उजागर करता है।

इस दृष्टि से मनोहर धमोली 'मनु की कहानी''सॉरी पापा' एक उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण है। प्रस्तुत कहानी में धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों, सामाजिक भेदभाव और पारिवारिक संस्कारों को बड़े ही बाल मनोवैज्ञानिक ढंग से प्रस्तुत किया गया है। इस कहानी में बच्ची अपराजिता बड़ी ही मासूमियत से यह प्रश्न उठाती है कि धर्म, परंपरा, जाति इत्यादि के नाम पर समाज में भेदभाव क्यों किया जाता है ? इस कहानी में माता–पिता के धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों एवं उनके व्यक्तिगत दृष्टिकोण के विपरीत बच्ची अपराजिता का हृदय करुणा, समानता और मानवता से प्रेरित है। कहानी का यह विरोधाभास पाठक की संवेदना को झकझोर देता है। कहानी इसलिए भी विशिष्ट है क्योंकि यह धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों के बीच पनपती विषमता को एक निर्दोष और सरल स्वभाव वाली बालिका के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत करती है।

कहानी का सारांश

प्रस्तुत कहानी एक छोटी बच्ची अपराजिता के अनुभवों के माध्यम से समाज में व्याप्त धार्मिक और सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रहों को बाल दृष्टि से उजागर करती है। कहानी के शुरुआत में अपराजिता अपने माता–पिता के साथ सैर के लिए निकलती है। रास्ते में जहाँ–जहाँ उसे ध्वज दिखाई देता है, वह सहज भाव से सोचती हैं कि यह ईश्वर का मंदिर होगा, क्योंकि उसके मम्मी–पापा वहाँ सिर झुकाते हैं। बाल मन की यह मासुम जिज्ञासा इस कहानी को आधार बनाती है, जो धर्म और आस्था की सामाजिक परिभाषाओं को स्वाभाविक ढंग से प्रश्नों के रूप में प्रस्तुत करती है। जब वह किसी पार्टी कार्यालय, होटल या स्कूल पर लगे झंडे में देखती है और उसके आगे सिर झुकाती है, तो माता–पिता उसे समझाते हैं कि वे ईश्वर के स्थान नहीं हैं बल्कि कार्यालय हैं और यहाँ पार्टी विशेष के झंडे लगे हुए हैं। अब अपराजिता के मन में यह प्रश्न उठने लगता जाता है कि ईश्वर का स्थान कौन–सा है ? और कौन–सा नहीं ? वह अपने पिता जनमेजय से पूछती है– ''पापा ईश्वर एक है तो उसके इतने सारे मंदिर क्यों ? थोड़ी देर के लिए गाड़ी में सन्नाटा छा गया।'' इसी क्रम में जब वह पहली बार मस्जिद को देखती है, तो सहजता से पूछ बैठती है– ''ये क्या है ? यह भी मंदिर है क्या ?'' पिता उत्तर देने हैं – ये मस्जिद है।''ये अल्लाह का स्थल है। अल्लाह भी ईश्वर का ही रूप है।'' बच्ची फिर जिज्ञासापूर्वक प्रश्न करती है– ''लेकिन पापा, आप दोनों ने मस्जिद को देखकर हाथ यों नहीं जोड़े ? सिर क्यों नहीं झुकाया ?'' यह प्रश्न बाल दृष्टि कि निष्कपटता को प्रकट करता है और साथ ही वयस्क समाज की धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों पर कठोराघात भी करता है। कहानी का चरम बिंदु तब आता है जब माता–पिता इस प्रश्न से असहज हो उठते हैं। यहाँ लेखक ने दिखाया है कि कैसे बाल मन की सरल जिज्ञासा वयस्कों के मन में निर्मित भेदभाव की दीवार से टकराती है और उन्हें निरुत्तर कर देती है। कहानी का अंत अपराजिता के मासूम वाक्य ''सॉरी पापा'' पर होता है, जो समाज की मानसिक संकीर्णता और धार्मिक विभाजन पर एक टिप्पणी बन जाता हैं। 'सॉरी पापा' कहानी केवल एक पारिवारिक प्रसंग नहीं, बल्कि समाज में पनपते धार्मिक भेदभाव की बाल दृष्टि से की गई आलोचना है। मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' ने अपराजिता के माध्यम से यह संदेश दिया है कि प्रेम, करुणा औंर समानता ही सच्चे धर्म के प्रतीक हैं।

परिणाम एवं विश्लेषण

मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' बाल दृष्टि से समाज में व्याप्त धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों, सांस्कृतिक विभाजन और नैतिक मूल्यों के पतन का गहन विश्लेषण करती है। लेखक ने एक सामान्य ही पारिवारिक घटना को कहानी का रूप देकर उसके माध्यम से धर्म और सामाजिक की जटिलताओं को सहज ढंग से उदघाटित किया है।

अपराजिता का मासूम प्रश्न कहानी में धार्मिक आस्थाओं की नींव को झकझोर देता है। उसके माध्यम से लेखक यह बताने में सफल हुए हैं कि धार्मिक आस्था से पहले मानवीय करुणा और समानता का भाव अधिक महत्वपूर्ण होता हैं पिता द्वारा मस्जिद के सामने सिर न झुकाने की घटना

समाज में प्रचलित धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों के भेद को स्पष्ट करती है। किंतु अपराजिता का निष्कपट प्रश्न इस भेद को चुनौती देता नजर आता है। वह अनजाने में ही सही लेकिन यह स्थापित करने में सफल होती है कि ईश्वर किसी स्थान या चिह्न तक ही सीमित नही हैं।

कहानी का मनोवैज्ञानिक पहलु अत्यंत सूक्ष्म है। बालिका द्वारा किया गया व्यवहार इस बात का प्रमाण है कि बच्चे स्वभाव से जिज्ञासा एवं समभाव नैतिक चेतना प्रवृत्ति के होतो हैं। अपराजिता की सोच से यह स्पष्ट होता है की बाल मन स्वभावत: समन्यवर्या और निष्पक्षता का पक्षधर होता है, जबकि समाज उसे पूर्वाग्रहों के सीमित घेरे में बाँध देना चाहता है। अपराजिता का 'सॉरी पापा' कहना, पश्चाताप नहीं बल्कि इस बात का प्रमाण बन जाता है कि बच्चों पर पारिवारिक दबाव भी उनके व्यवहार में परिवर्तन का कारण बन सकता है।

मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' ने अपनी इस कहानी में प्रतीकात्मक स्तर को भी प्रस्तुत किया है। झंडे यहाँ प्रतीक चिह्न ही नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक स्तर की पहचान के साथ-साथ सामाजिक विभाजन के चिह्न बनकर उभरते दिखते हैं। अपराजिता के माता पिता का व्यवहार धार्मिक सीमाओं में बँधा हुआ है, जो समाज की संकीर्ण एवं धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह से ग्रसित मानसिकता का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। वही अपराजिता का प्रश्न उस मानसिकता के विरोध का प्रतीक है, जो समता और सदभावना जैसे मूल्यों को सर्वोपरि मानता है।

इस प्रकार 'सॉरी पापा' कहानी केवल एक सामान्य कल्पनात्मक बाल कहानी नहीं है, बल्कि बाल मनोविज्ञान की दृष्टि से धार्मिक संकीर्णता की गहन समीक्षा करने वाली कहानी बन जाती है। कहानी यह संदेश देती है कि जब तक समाज बालकों की तरह सहजता और मानवीय दृष्टि को स्वीकार नहीं करेगा, तब तक करूणा और समानता पर आधारित समाज और सच्चे धर्म को स्थापित नहीं किया जा सकेगा।

निष्कर्ष

मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' एक ऐसी कहानी है जो बाल मन की निर्मल संवेदनाओं के माध्यम से समाज के धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों और विभाजित मानसिकता पर प्रश्न उठाती है। यह कहानी बताती है कि सच्चा धर्म करुणा, सहिष्णुता और प्रेम में होता है। कहानी यह भी स्पष्ट करती हैं कि यदि बाल जिज्ञासाओं को सही संवाद और विवेकपूर्ण तर्क से पोषित किया जाए, तो यह उनमें माननीय मूल्य और नैतिक चेतना का विकास करने में महत्वपूर्ण सिद्ध हो सकती है। कहा जा सकता है कि 'सॉरी पापा' कहानी सिर्फ धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह पर प्रहार नहीं करती, बल्कि यह बताती है कि बाल मन में निहित करुणा और निष्पक्षता ही समाज के सच्चे नैतिक पुनर्गठन का आधार है।

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के आधार पर यह स्पष्ट होता है कि धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह बाल मन में स्वाभाविक रूप से विद्यमान नहीं होते, बल्कि वे सामाजिक और पारिवारिक वातावरण के माध्यम से आरोपित किए जाते हैं। यह शोध स्थापित करता है कि बाल मन स्वभावत: निष्पक्ष, करुणामय और समन्वयी होता है तथा बाल साहित्य ऐसी मानवीय चेतना को आभिव्यक्त करने का सशक्त माध्यम है। मनोहर चमोली 'मनु'

की कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' के विश्लेषण से यह निष्कर्ष निकलता है कि बाल दृष्टि धार्मिक संकीर्णताओं पर सहज किंतु प्रभावी प्रश्न उठाने की क्षमता रखती है, जो समाज में नैतिक पुर्नसंरचण की संभावना को रेखांकित करती है।

शोध की मौलिकता एवं योगदान

प्रस्तुत शोध की मौलिकता इस तथ्य में निहित है कि इसमें धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रहों का विश्लेषण वयस्क सामाजिक दृष्टि से न करते हुए बाल मनोवैज्ञानिक दृष्टि से किया गया है। अब तक के मेरे अध्ययन में मैंने बाल साहित्य के संदर्भ में प्राय: धार्मिक विषयों का अध्ययन सीमित रूप में पाया है। इस शोध में एक बाल कथा के माध्यम से यह स्पष्ट किया गया है कि बाल मन स्वभावत: समन्वयी, करुणामयी और निष्पक्ष होता है, जबकि धार्मिक पूर्वाग्रह सामाजिक एवं पारिवारिक स्तर पर आरोपित किए जाते हैं। मनोहर चमोली 'मनु' कि कहानी 'सॉरी पापा' के सूक्ष्म पाठीय विश्लेषण द्वारा यह शोध बाल साहित्य में निहित नैतिक चेतना और सामाजिक आलोचना के आयामों को रेखांकित करता हैं, जो इस अध्ययन को पूर्ववर्ती शोधों से भिन्न और विशिष्ट बनाता है।

आभार

इस शोधकार्य के सफल संपादन में जिन व्यक्तियों, मार्गदर्शकों और संस्थानों का प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष सहयोग प्राप्त हुआ, उनके प्रति मैं हार्दिक कृतज्ञता प्रकट करती हूँ। सर्वप्रथम मैं अपने मार्गदर्शक एवं प्रेरणास्रोत प्रोफेसर डॉ रविंद्र रामदास खरे, महोदय को विशेष धन्यवाद ज्ञापित करता हूँ, जिनके निरंतर मार्गदर्शन, रचनात्मक सूझावों ने इस शोध को गहराई और दिशा प्रदान की।

मनोहर धमोली 'मनु' जैसे साहित्यकारों का भी हार्दिक धन्यवाद, जिनकी रचनाओं ने इस शाध की आधारभूमि को सशवत और सार्थक बनाया। अंतत:, मैं उन सभी पाठकों और समीक्षकों के प्रति आधार प्रकट करती हूँ जो इस शोध को समझने, परखने और आगे बढ़ने में योगदान देंगे।

यह कार्य यदि बाल साहित्य और बाल मनोविज्ञान के अध्येताओं के लिए उपयोगी सिद्ध हो, तो यह मेरी सबसे बड़ी सफलता होगी।

संदर्भ

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हरिशंकर परसाई के व्यंग्य में युगबोध

डॉ. दीक्षा गुप्ता

हिंदी विभाग, बंगवासी इवनिंग कॉलेज, पद–स्टेट ऐडेड कॉलेज टीचर्स-I

शोध–सारांश:

प्रस्तुत शोध आलेख हिंदी व्यंग्य साहित्य के शिखर पुरुष हरिशंकर परसाई के व्यंग्य में युगबोध की अभिव्यक्ति का विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन है। परसाई का व्यंग्य मात्र हास्य नहीं, बल्कि युगबोध का सशक्त माध्यम है। इस शोध का उद्देश्य परसाई जी के व्यंग्य साहित्य में स्वातंत्र्योत्तर भारत की राजनीतिक, सामाजिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक एवं सांस्कृतिक विसंगतियों के चित्रण का मूल्यांकन करना है। शोध में परसाई रचनावली एवं उनके विभिन्न निबंध संग्रहों का आलोचनात्मक विश्लेषण किया गया है। परसाई जी ने आम आदमी की पीड़ा, शोषण, भ्रष्टाचार, नारी की दयनीय स्थिति, जातिवाद, सांप्रदायिकता, शिक्षा व्यवस्था के विसंगतियों तथा पश्चिमी संस्कृति के अंधानुकरण को अपने व्यंग्य का विषय बनाया। शोध से यह निष्कर्ष प्राप्त होता है कि परसाई जी ने भारतेंदु और निराला की व्यंग्य परंपरा को विकसित करते हुए व्यंग्य विधा को एक निश्चित स्वरूप प्रदान किया तथा अपने युग की समस्त विद्रूपताओं को साहित्य में अमर कर दिया।

बीज शब्द:

व्यंग्य, युगबोध, अन्याय, शोषण, अवसरवादिता, जमाखोरी, महंगाई, भ्रष्ट आचरण, सामाजिक अंतर्विरोध, राजनीतिक विद्रूपताओं, रूढ़ियों, अस्वीकृतियों, असंगतियों, अन्याय, शोषण, स्वदेशी साम्राज्यवाद।

प्रस्तावना

हिंदी साहित्य जगत में परसाई का नाम बड़े आदर और सत्कार के साथ लिया जाता है। प्रत्येक युग की अपनी कुछ सीमाएं होती हैं और उन सीमाओं का खंडन व्यंग्य ही करती है। यह खंडन जब साहित्यिक रूप में अभिव्यक्त होता है तो वह 'व्यंग्य साहित्य' कहलाता है। परसाई जी का रचना संसार 'व्यंग्य साहित्य का पर्याय–सा' ही प्रतीत होता हो। इनका महत्व यही है कि उन्होंने आधुनिक युग की मांग को समझा और राजनीतिक, सामाजिक, धार्मिक, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक समस्त पक्षों की विकृतियों को ध्यान में रखते हुए व्यंग्य साहित्य का निर्माण किया। उनके लेखन में रचना शक्ति की गहनता है। उन्होंने शब्द को सत्ता दिया, अर्थ दिया और उन्हें मार्मिक वक्त एक क्षण बनाकर संधान के लायक बना दिया। वह अपने लेखन में तत्कालीन समय के व्यक्ति, समाज और देश में व्याप्त अन्याय, शोषण,

अवसरवादिता, जमाखोरी, महंगाई, भ्रष्ट आचरण, सामाजिक अंतर्विरोध, राजनीतिक विद्रुपताओं, रूढ़ियों, अस्वीकृतियों, असंगतियों को सामान्य जन के सामने लाने का सफल प्रयास किया। वे अपने लेखन काल में भारतीय जनमानस से सीधे तौर पर जुड़े हुए था। परसाई जी के युग की लड़ाई अलग थी। गैर से देखें तो भारतेंदुकालीन रचनाकारों की लड़ाई अंग्रेजी साम्राज्यवाद के खिलाफ थी जबकि परसाई जी की लड़ाई स्वदेशी साम्राज्यवाद के खिलाफ थी।

विश्लेषण

परसाई जी का जीवन बहुत ही संघर्षपूर्ण रहा है। उनके जीवन में धैर्य को विचलित कर देने वाली कई घटनाएँ घटी परंतु वे हताश नहीं हुए। दुख और पीड़ा के देखते हुए परसाई जी का व्यक्तित्व निखरता चला गया। उनका मन कठिनाइयों को झेलते हुए लेखन की ओर झुकता चला गया। वे अपने लेखन के विषय में कहते हैं– ''मैं बहुत भावुक, संवेदनशील और बेचैन तबीयत का आदमी हूँ। सामान्य स्वभाव का आदमी ठंडे–ठंडे जिम्मेदारी भी निभा लेता है, रोते दुनिया से तालमेल नहीं बिठा लेता है और एक व्यक्तित्वहीन नौकरी पेशा आदमी की तरह जिंदगी साधारण संतोष से भी गुजार लेता है। मेरे साथ ऐसा नहीं हुआ। जिम्मेदारियाँ, दुखों की वैसी पृष्ठभूमि और अब चारों तरफ से दुनिया के हमले। इन सबके बीच सबसे बड़ा सवाल था अपने व्यक्तित्व और चेतना की रक्षा। तब सोचा भी नहीं था कि लेखक बनूंगा। पर मैं अपनी विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्व की रक्षा तब भी करना चाहता था।[1]''

समाज में फैली विसंगतियों पर साहित्य के माध्यम से किया गया प्रहार 'व्यंग्य' कहलाता है। साधारण जीवन में इस प्रक्रिया को कटाक्ष या ताने देना भी कहते हैं। बाबूराम धोडू देसाई व्यंग्य के स्वरूप के विषय में कहते हैं ''आज के मानव को सुसभ्य तथा सुसंस्कृत बनाने के लिए जहां समाज, न्यायालय, सरकार हार जाती है तब प्रस्तुत व्यंग्य पिता ही एक अमोध शारग होता है, जो उनको अपनी स्थिति तथा मार्ग का सही दिग्दर्शन करा सकता है। आज की यथार्थ जीवन का प्रतिबिंब व्यंग्य में ही है। गद्य साहित्य की अन्य विधाओं की भांति हिंदी में व्यंग्य विधा भी आधुनिक युग की देन है।[2]

व्यंग्य एक सचेतक है जो अपनी कमजोरियों के प्रति सचेत करता है। व्यंग्यकार अपने तीक्ष्ण वाणों से समाज को जगाने का प्रयास करता है। परसाई जी ने भी बड़ी शालीनता से लिखते हुए समाज को जागृत करने का प्रयास किया। हरिशंकर परसाई व्यंग्य के विषय में कहते हैं– ''सच्चा व्यंग्य जीवन की समीक्षा होता है। वह मनुष्य को सोचने के लिए बाध्य करता है। अपने से साक्षात्कार करता है। चेतना में हलचल पैदा करता है और जीवन में व्याप्त मिथ्याचार, पाखंड, सामंजस्य और अन्याय से लड़ने के लिए उसे तैयार करता है। वह मनुष्य को बेहतर मनुष्य बनाना चाहता है।''[3]

परसाई के निबंधों के विषय अनंत निबंध हैं। उन्होंने अपने निबंधों पर विविध विषयों पर लेखनी चलायी है। उनका मानना है कि सच्चा व्यंग्य जीवन की समीक्षा होता है, वह मनुष्य को सोचने के लिए बाध्य करता है। यही कारण है कि इनका प्रारम्भिक निबंध लेखन अखबारों के माध्यम से शुरू

हुआ है जो 'सुनो भाई साधो' नामक निबंध संग्रह में संकलित है। इन्होंने तीन उपन्यास भी लिखे हैं– 'तट की खोज', 'जल और ज्वाला' तथा 'रानी नागफनी की कहानी'। 'तट की खोज' उपन्यास में परसाई जी ने पूरे उत्तर भारत के परिवेश का वर्णन किया है और स्त्री के विद्रोही स्वरूप को उभरा है। 'जल और ज्वाला' उपन्यास में पारिवारिक पृष्ठभूमि में सामाजिक परिदृश्य को प्रस्तुत किया गया है। 'रानी नागफनी की कहानी' उपन्यास में सामंती परिवेश और पात्रों के माध्यम से तत्कालीन समय के यथार्थ को प्रस्तुत किया है जिसमें सामाजिक पतन और राजनीतिक अवमूल्यन है। परसाई जी ने निबंध हो या उपन्यास जिस भी विधा को चुना उसे अपने व्यंग्य सार्थक और सफल बना दिया।

आधुनिक युग में नारी की स्थिति में बहुत अधिक परिवर्तन नहीं आया है। उसका शोषण आज भी जारी है केवल शोषण का तरीका बदल गया है। परसाई जी ने अपने कई निबंधों में नारी की सामाजिक स्थिति का मूल्यांकन किया है। भारतीय समाज में नारी के प्रश्न पर कथनी और करनी में अंतर ही देखने को मिलता है। नारी को सदैव ही कमजोर और असहाय समझकर उसकी सर्वत्र उपेक्षा की गई है। परसाई जी ने नारी की सामाजिक स्थिति को अच्छी तरह समझा है और उन्होंने अनंत गहराई में जाकर स्थिति का जायजा भी लिया है तथा परत दर परत उसकी जाँच–पड़ताल भी की है। हमारे आधुनिक समाज मे यदि स्त्री को थोड़ी–सी भी आजादी मिल रही है तो उसका कारण है– आर्थिक स्थिति। दिन–रात बढ़ती महंगाई के कारण नारी को बाहर जाने की छूट मिल गई है किंतु उसके ऊपर आज भी बहुत सारी पाबंदियाँ हैं। संस्कारों और शास्त्रों की लड़ाई नामक निबंध में परसाई जी ने इस विषय पर अपना विशद अन्वेषण प्रस्तुत किया है। इस निबंध की सरिता जी के पति महंगाई से त्रस्त होकर उन्हें नौकरी करने की इजाजत दे देने हैं तथा उन्हें स्वतंत्रता प्रदान कर देते हैं। संस्कारों और शास्त्रों की लड़ाई में उनके संस्कार पराजित हो जाते हैं। अर्थशास्त्र संस्कारों पर हावी हो जाता है। चुंकि हमारे समाज में स्त्रियों को बाहर निकल कर कमाने की इजाजत नहीं है और यह एक संस्कार है। परंतु इस निबंध में यह संस्कार टूट जाता है क्योंकि पति को महंगाई ने संस्कार को छोड़ने पर मजबूर कर दिया। परसाई जी ने लिखते है कि हमारे जमाने में नारी को जो भी मुक्ति मिली है, क्यों मिली है ? आधुनिक दृष्टि से ? उसके व्यक्तित्व की स्वीकृति से ? नहीं उसकी मुक्ति का कारण महंगाई है। नारी मुक्ति के इतिहास में यह वाक्य अमर रहेगा–एक की कमाई से पूरा नहीं पड़ता।

परसााई जी ने मध्यवर्गीय परिवारों में रहनेवाली नारी की स्थिति का सुंदर वर्णन किया है। वे जानते हैं कि मध्यवर्गीय व्यक्ति आधुनिकता की दौड़ में शामिल होना चाहता है वहीं दूसरी तरफ मान्यताओं, परंपराओं और रूढ़ियों मे भी लिपटा रहता चाहता है। इस तरह जीवन के दोहरे मापदंड रखने वाले परिवारों में सबसे दयनीय स्थिति एक स्त्री की होती है। 'वो जरा वाइफ है ना' निबंध में परसाई जी ने मध्यवर्गीय स्त्री की दसा का वर्णन किया है। आधुनिकता का ढोंग करने वाले यह पति स्वयं रूढ़ियों से जकड़े हुए हैं तथा मानसिक विकृति का शिकार हैं। जिन बातों को वह दूसरों के लिए

कहते हैं उसे स्वयं पर लागू करने में बहुत भारी पड़ता है। ऐसे पतियों के जीवन में जो दोहरा मापदंड है इससे मध्यवर्गीय स्त्रियों पीसती रहती हैं। वे लिखते हैं– ''मैंने कहा – हमारी मुश्किल यह है कि वह हमेशा दूसरों की बीवी की खोज करते रहते हैं। दूसरे की स्टेज पर आ जाए अपनी ना आए। दूसरों की नहीं आती तो कहते हैं बड़े पिछड़े हुए लोग हैं।''[4] हम पिछड़े हुए नहीं हैं, जिन्होंने उस का मुरब्बा बनाकर घर में रख छोड़ा है। पल्ली को आधुनिक पली शिक्षित बनाने वाले यह पति अंदर से कितने पतित और भयभीत हैं इन्हें पत्नी तथा मित्र किसी भी व्यक्ति पर भरोसा नहीं है। ऐसे समाज में नारी के स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व की घोषणा करना कितनी बेमानी बात है। इसी संदर्भ में अभी हाल ही में न्यूजं में हमने सुना उत्तर प्रदेश की ज्योति मौर्या एसडीएम पद पर रहती है और उसे एसडीएम बनाने वाले उसके पति यह दावा करते हैं कि उसे पढ़ा–लिखा कर एसडिएम उन्होंने ही बनाया है ऐसे में वह जो चाहे उसके साथ सलूक कर सकते हैं परंतु एसडिएम वह घर के बाहर है घर में वह सिर्फ उनकी पत्नी है। इस घटना के बाद कई पति जो आधुनिकता का स्वांग भरते हैं उन्होंने अपनी पत्नियों को पढ़ाना बंद कर दिया। यह कैसी आधुनिकता है ? जहाँ पति कुछ भी करें पर उस पर कोई पाबंदी नहीं लगती है परंतु पत्नी को किसी भी घटना से प्रभावित होकर उसके सारे अधिकार और स्वतंत्रता छिन ली जाती है। ऐसे समय में हमें परसाई याद आते हैं।

'विज्ञापन में बिकता नारी शरीर' नामक निबंध में परसाई जी ने आधुनिक नारी की स्थिति का सूक्ष्म विवेचन किया है। आज भी नारी का मूल्यांकन उसके शरीर के माध्यम से ही किया जाता है। नारी भी उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृति का माध्यम मात्र बनकर रह गई है। आज बड़ी कंपनियाँ अपने उत्पाद को बेचने के लिए नारी के शरीर का प्रयोग करती हैं। विज्ञापन के माध्यम से अपनी वस्तुओं की बिक्री ही नहीं बढ़ाते बल्कि नारी शरीर का विज्ञापन प्रस्तुत करते हैं। यह समाज का कितना घिनौना पक्ष है, जहाँ आहमियत वस्तुओं को नहीं बल्कि नारी शरीर को दी जाती है। परसाई इस निबंध में लिखते हैं– ''मैंने कोई विज्ञापन ऐसा नहीं देखा जिसमें पुरुष स्त्री से कह रहा हो कि यह साड़ी या यह स्नो लो। अपनी चीज वह खुद पसंद करती है, मगर पुरुष की सिगरेट से लेकर टायर तक में दखल देती है। ऐसा लगता है सारी अर्थव्यवस्था पर नारी सौंदर्य ने कब्जा कर रखा है।''[5]

हरिशंकर परसाई की रचनाओं में सामाजिक विकृतियों के अनगिनत वर्णन मिलने है। 'निंदा रस', 'कबीरा आप ठगाइए', 'स्नान और पगडंडियों का जमाना' आदि रचनाओं में विभन्न प्रकार के भ्रष्ट और शोषण से पीड़ित चरित्रों का वर्णन मिलता है। समाज के उच्च पदों पर विराजमान महान व्यक्ति अक्सर समाज को बदलने की, नव निर्माण करने की बात करते हैं। परंतु ऐसी बड़ी–बड़ी बातें करने वाले समाज के महान पुरोधाओं पर परसाई जी व्यंग्य करते हुए लिखते हैं– ''मेरे साथी ने कहा हमें समाज का नवनिर्माण करना पड़ेगा। बुद्धिवादी ने फिर हम दोनों को घूर कर देखा। बोला समाज का पहला फर्ज़ यह है कि वह अपने को नष्ट कर ले। सोसायटी मस्ट डिस्ट्रॉय इट सेल्फ, यह जाति, वर्ण और

रंग और ऊंच–नीच के भेदों से जर्जर समाज पहले मिटे तब नया बने। सोचा पूछुं–सारा समाज नष्ट हो जाएगा तो प्रकृति को मनुष्य बनाने में कितने लाख साल लग जाएंगे ?''[6]

नवजागरण और आजादी के इतने साल बाद भी हमारे समाज में जाति–पाति मौजूद है। परसाई जी हिंदू समाज में व्याप्त जाति–पांति को सबसे बड़ी बुराई मानते थे। उनके लिए दुनिया में एक ही जाति है वह है मनुष्य जाति। उन्होंने केवल नाम के लिए जाति–पांति का विरोध नहीं किया है बल्कि उन्होंने व्यवहारिक स्तर पर इसे माना भी है। उन्होंने 'प्रेम की बिरादरी', 'प्रेम प्रसंग में फादर', 'ऊंची जातियों का आरक्षण', 'हरिजन को पीटने का यज्ञ' आदि निबंधो में अपने तीखे व्यंग्य के साथ विचार व्यक्त किए हैं। उन्होंने केवल सतही स्तर पर अपने विचार नहीं प्रस्तुत किए हैं बल्कि उसका ठोस आधार भी बताया है। आज के इस वैज्ञानिक युग में इस तरह की मान्यताएँ न केवल समाज को जर्जर बनाती हैं बल्कि उसे खोखला भी करती हैं। 'हरिजन को पीटने का यज्ञ' निबंध में इंदौर के पास एक करोड की लागत से एक यज्ञ हुआ। उसी के पास से एक हरिजन दुल्हा घोड़े पर सवार होकर निकला तो सवर्ण ने दूल्हे और बारातियों को पीट दिया। हमारे समाज में इस तरह की घोर जातिवादी है कि वह एक दलित की परछाई भी बर्दाश्त नहीं कर सकता है। परसाई जी इस पर अपने तीखे व्यंग्य वाण चलाते हुए कहते है क्या यज्ञ के प्रताप से ही दुल्हा पीटा ? दोनों में संबंध है, यज्ञ करने और कराने वाले ऊची जाति के लोग होते हैं। वैदिक युग में ब्राह्मण ने यज्ञ की तकनीक पर एकाधिकार कर लिया था। तकनीक का मामला है, तब क्षत्रियों ने तत्व चिंतन से ब्राह्मणों को पीटा। मगर ब्राह्मण उस्ताद है। उसने फिर कर्मकांड फैलाया और सारे समाज को जकड़ लिया।''[7]

परसाई जी समाज के सबसे निम्न तबके मजदूर वर्ग को नायक की तरह अपने रचनाओं में स्वर देते हैं। उनका यथार्थ चित्रण अपने निबंधों में करते हैं। परसाई ने मजदूरों को उनके हक के लिए जाग्रत किया है। मजदूरों को उनका हक दिलाने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध परसाई जी ने उनके साथ हुए अन्याय का प्रतिकार करना चाहा है। हमारे समाज के पूंजीपति वर्ग अपने भाषणों में कहते तो जरूर हैं कि वह मजदूरों को उनका हक देंगे, सम्मान देंगे परंतु व्यवहार में ऐसा होता कुछ भी नहीं है। हमारे समाज में दोहरा मापदंड शुरू से रहा है। परसाई जी ने अपने कई निबंधों जैसे 'मुर्दे का मूल्य', 'जाति निरपेक्ष बलात्कार', 'आतिक्रांतिकारी', 'ऊंची जातियों का आरक्षण', 'सबको सन्मति दे भगवान' आदि में मजदूरों की स्थिति, दशा तथा शोषितों द्वारा उनके शोषण की प्रवृत्ति पर पूरी तरह से विचार करते हुए समाज के सुविधाभोगी वर्ग पर व्यंग्य भी किया है।

परसाई जी मार्क्सवादी विचारधारा के होते हुए भी मार्क्सवादियों के कुकृत्य पर व्यंग्य करने से पीछे नहीं हटे हैं। अति क्रांतिकारी निबंध में परसाई जी उन मार्क्सवादियों का पर्दाफाश करते हैं जो क्रांति की बातें तो करते हैं किंतु अपने सिद्धांतों को व्यावहारिक स्तर पर लागू नहीं करते हैं। सारी दुनिया के मजदूरों की चिंता करने वाले क्रांतिकारी महोदय अपने घर में ही न्यूनतम मजदूरी तय नहीं करते हैं। ऐसे

क्रांतिकारी महोदय की कलई खोलते हुए लेखक लिखते हैं– ''मैंने पूछा– कामरेड आपके फार्म पर मजदूर तो होंगे, उन्हें मिनिमम वेज आप क्या देते हैं ? मुझे पता नहीं हिसाब पिताजी देखते हैं। कामरेड, खेत मजदूरों से आप काम लेते हैं और मजदूरी पिताजी पर छोड़ देते हैं। आपके पिताजी न्यूनतम वेतन ही देते होंगे यह पक्का है और आप अपने पिता से न्यूनतम मजदूरी दिलाते नहीं है तो मार्क्सवाद, लेनिनवाद के हिसाब से क्रांति के लिए हमेशा दूसरे के बाप की तलाश करनी चाहिए। अपने बाप को खून चूमने की सुविधा दी जाती है, क्रांति में। उस खून का एक हिस्सा क्रांतिकारी बेटा भी पीकर सर्वहारा का नेतृत्व करने बढ़ जाता है।''[8] मजदूरों को न्याय न दिलाने वाले यह क्रांतिकारी झूठ, ढोंग और दिखावे का जामा पहने रहते हैं।

परसाई जी बहुत ही बेबाक और निडर लेखक हैं। वे अपने समय के नेताओं, राजनीतिज्ञों से भी लोहा लेने से पीछे नहीं हटते हैं। 'जाति निरेपक्ष बलात्कार' निबंध में लेखक नेताओं की हकीकत बताते हुए लिखते हैं– ''हरिजन सुरक्षा में हमने कितनी प्रगति की है कि चार हरिजन औरतों से बलात्कार होता है, तो लगे हाथ धोकर हरिजन औरतों से भी कर लिया जाता है। सरकार ने अत्याचारियों को इतना सिखा ही दिया है कि सिर्फ हरिजन औरतों से बलात्कार मत किया करों, साथ में संतुलन बनाए रखने के लिए गैर हरिजन औरत को भी निपटाया करो।''[9]

स्वतंत्रता न जाने कितने त्याग और बलिदान के बाद हमें मिली परंतु स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद लोगों का मोहभंग हो गया देश में राजनीतिक उथल–पुथल घर गई। स्थिति पहले से अधिक कष्टकारक हो गई अंग्रेजों के शासन काल से अधिक भारतीय सत्ताधिरियों के समय अंधेर नगरी की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो गई। परसाई जी इस विषय में कहते हैं– ''अंग्रेज छुरी कांटे से प्लेट में रखकर इंडिया को खाते रहे। देसी शाहब बचे भारत को खायाने लगे। देश 1947 में स्वतंत्र हो गया। अहिंसक क्रांति कहलाए विदेशियों ने द्रांसफर ऑफ पावरसत्ता का हस्तांतरण कहा। वास्तव में ट्रांसफर ओकं डिश हुआ। परोसी थाली एक के सामने से दूसरे के सामने आ गई। वे देश को पश्चिमी सलाद के साथ खाते थे और देसी सत्ताधारी जनतंत्र के आचार के साथ खाने लगे।''[10] परसाई जी की दृष्टि राजनीति में व्याप्त हर उस असंगति पर गई है जिससे सामान्य जन पीड़ित और शोषित है। इस संदर्भ में उषा शर्मा जी का कथन समीचीन प्रतीत होता है–''विकृत राजनीतिक परिवेश के प्रति हरिशंकर परसाई के मन में अत्यधिक आक्रोश है जिसकी खींज और भड़ास को उन्होंने व्यंग्य के शिल्प माध्यम और साधनों का भरपूर प्रयोग करते हुए निकाला है और लक्ष्यों पर चुन–चुन कर प्रहार किए हैं।''[11]

परसाई जी ने साहित्य और राजनीति के संबंधों को भी अच्छी तरह समझाया है। उनका मानना है कि जो व्यक्ति राजनीति के जितना निकट है उसका साहित्य उतना ही अधिक सार्थक समझा जाएगा। कोई भी व्यक्ति चाहे–अनचाहे राजनीति से दूर नहीं हो सकता है। वोट देना भी राजनीति का ही एक हिस्सा है। लेखक का मानना है कि यह साहित्यकार का दायित्व होना चाहिए कि वह सत्ता लोलुप और

भ्रष्ट लोगों से राजनीति को मुक्त करवाकर उसे सामान्य जनता के चरणों में प्रतिष्ठित करें। वे कहते हैं– ''लेखक, अध्यापक, बुद्धिजीवी अगर राजनीति से बाहर रहे, तो भीतर कौन बचे ? आप जैसे अनपढ़, गवार, असभ्य, असंस्कृत भ्रष्ट लोग। यह देश ऐसे लोगों के हाथ में सौंपना है या नहीं यह भी तो सोचना पड़ेगा।''[12]

'भोलाराम का जीव' निबंध में परसाई जी ने सरकारी संस्थानों, दफ्तरीं तथा राजनैतिक क्षेत्र में व्याप्त, भ्रष्टाचार, नौकरशाही, लालफीताशाही की कलई खोली है। इसके साथ ही भ्रष्टाचार के कारण आम आदमी की पीड़ा, मानसिक क्लेश, अभावों से भरी जदिंगी की त्रासदी को भी उद्घाटित किया है। भोलाराम के जीव की तलाश में नारद पृथ्वी पर आते हैं और अनेक स्थानों पर भटकने के बाद दफ्तर पहुँचते हैं और वहाँ के कर्मचारियों की रिश्वत लेकर काम करने की पद्धति से हैरान हो जाते हैं, तब उन्हें पता चलता है कि पेंशन पाने के लिए भोलाराम ने रिश्वत नहीं दी थी। आत्मा फाइलों में ही जकड़ी है। चित्रकूट के द्वारा परसाई जी भ्रष्टाचार की स्थिति का वर्णन करते हैं ''महाराज आजकल पृथ्वी पर इस प्रकार का व्यापार बहुत होता है, लोग दोस्तों को फल भेजते है, और उसे रास्ते में ही पार्सल वाले उड़ा लेते हैं। होजरी के पार्षदों के मोजे रेलवे के अफसर पहनते हैं, मालगाड़ी के डिब्बे रास्ते में कट जाते हैं। एक बात और हो रही है। राजनैतिक दलों के नेता विरोधी नेता को उड़ाकर कहीं बंद कर देते हैं। कहीं भोलाराम के जीव को किसी विरोधी ने, मरने के बाद भी खराबी के लिए तो नहीं उड़ा दिया।''[13]

आजकल सरकारी काम करवाने में विभिन्न तरह के अपव्यय करने पड़ते हैं। कोई भी सरकारी काम आासानी से नहीं हो सकता है। राशन कार्ड बनवाना है तो पैसे खिलाओ, पैन कार्ड बनवाना है तो पैसे खिलाओ, सरकारी मुआवजा लेना है तो मुआवजे से हिस्सा दो यानी घुस दो, किसी परिवार का व्यक्ति दुर्घटना ग्रस्त हो गया है तो मुआवजे को पाने के लिए सरकारी दफ्तर के चककर काटो और धुस दो अर्थात कोई भी कार्य एक आम आदमी बिना अपव्यय किए पूर्ण नहीं कर सकता है। परसाई जी अपने निबंध 'ग्रीटिंग कार्ड और राशन कार्ड' में सरकारी कामों में धन के अपव्यय, परेशानी और अकर्मण्यता पर व्यंग्य किया है। उनके 'विधायकों की महंगी गरीवी', 'नया खून पुराना खून', 'हरि अनंत हरि कथा अनंता', 'कहाँ है भारत–भाग्य विधाता', 'राजनैतिक स्लो पोयजंनिंग', 'छुट्टीवाला शोक', 'दर्द की दवा' आदि में राजनीति व्यंग्य मिलता है।

जनता नेताओं के लिए बस वोट बैंक है। नेताओं को चुनाव के पहले ही जनता की याद आती है परंतु जीतने के बाद, शपथ ग्रहण करते ही वे भूल जाते हैं कि वह जिस पद पर आसीन हुए हैं उसके दायित्व क्या हैं ? सत्ता पर आसीन होने के बाद ही जनता नेताओं के लिए सिरदर्द बन जाती है और जनता की समस्याएँ–एक चिलोंना। इस स्थिति पर परसाई जी कहते हैं– ''राजनीतिज्ञों के लिए हम नारे और वोट हैं बाकी के लिए हम गरीबी, भूख, बीमारी और बेकारी हैं। मुख्यमंत्रियों के लिए हम सिरदर्द हैं और उनकी पुलिस के लिए हम गोली दागने के निशाने हैं।''[14]

परसाई जी भ्रष्ट नेताओं से समाज को, सामान्य जन को बचाना चाहते हैं। इनके दिखावेपन, छल-कपट को समाज से दूर करना चाहता हैं और कहते हैं-''अगर वैज्ञानिक कुछ काम करना चाहते हैं तो एक काम करें। प्रदूषण को रोकने के उपाय करें। इनसे जनता नेताओं के शरीर से झूठ, फेरब, छल, कमीनापन की दुर्गंध निकालकर वातावरण में समा रही है। इससें जहर है, बीमारी फैलेगी। वैज्ञानिक इस जनता प्रदूषण को किसी तरह रोके।''[15] इस व्यंग्य के माध्यम से परसाई जी ने राजनीतिज्ञों के चेहरे से मुखौटे उतार कर उनके यथार्थ को पाठक के समक्ष प्रस्तुत कर दिया है। इसके आतिरिक्त मंत्री-नेताओं के काले धंधे, सांप्रदायिक दंगे करवाने, जनता की आँखों में धूल झोंकने, विलासी मंत्रियों के लिए सचिवालय में विश्राम घर की बात आदि अनेक पहलुओं पर परसाई जी के व्यंग्य दिखाई पड़ते हैं।

भारतीय संस्कृति विश्व की प्राचीनतम संस्कृति है। स्वतंत्रता के बाद जिस भारतीय संस्कृति को और अधिक फलना-फूलना था। वह भी विसंगतियों का शिकार हो गई। नई पीढ़ी ने पश्चिमी संस्कृति का इतना अंधानुकरण किया की पुरानी पीढ़ी और नई पीढ़ी में विवाद की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो गई। भारतीय संस्कृति पर पश्चिमी संस्कृति के हुए हमले जैसे आधुनिकता, फैशन परस्ती, संगीत, नृत्य, रेस्ट्रा, शराब, अंग्रेजी भाषा, रहन-सहन हर पहलू पर परसाई की दृष्टि गई है। वे कहते हैं- ''हमारी संस्कृति हजारों वर्ष पुरानी है और महान है। पूछा जा सकता है कि भारतीय संस्कृति क्या है? भारतीय संस्कृति कोई खाने की चीज नहीं है, पीने की चीज नहीं है। भारतीय संस्कृति, संस्कृति है और भारतीय है।''[16] आज के समाज की संस्कृति को परसाई ने कई नाम दिए हैं-सड़ी सुपारी की संस्कृति, और जेबकट की सभ्यता आदि। भारतीय संस्कृति का पालन किस तरह हो रहा है इस पर परसाई की व्यंग्य दृष्टि गई है।

परसाई जी आधुनिक पीढ़ी में हिंदी के बजाय अंग्रेजी को प्रश्रय देने पर भी व्यंग्य करते हैं। अंग्रेजी भाषी का प्रभाव हमारे भारत में बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। मध्यवर्ग अंग्रेजी को धड़ल्ले से अपना रहा है। अंग्रेजी जीवन का अभिन्न अंग बनती जा रही है। भाषा में जबरदस्ती अंग्रेजी शब्दों के प्रयोग पर परसाई जी कहते हैं-''कल तो रीगल गए थे फिल्म देखने। ओ रियली? ओ वंडरफुल !! हमें तो अब एक अच्छा कुक मिल गया है। ओ रियली? ओ वंडुरफुल!! ... सोचा, अगर एक कहे कि हमने तो आज खाना खाया था तो दूसरी कहेगी- ओ रियली? ओ वंडरफुल!!''[17] संस्कृति के नाम पर आज छल, छद्म, भ्रष्टाचार, अनैतिकता और आडंबर आदि पनप रहे हैं। परसाई जी प्राचीन संस्कृति को जीवित रखना चाहते हैं। वे चाहते हैं कि नई पीढ़ी भी संस्कृति के अर्थ को समझे। संस्कृति के नाम पर दिखावा या छल-कपट ना करें। वे उस संस्कृति को जिंदा रखना चाहते हैं जिसका लोहा पूरा विश्व मानती थी।

परसाई ने शिक्षा व्यवस्था पर भी व्यंग्य किया है। आज समस्त शिक्षा प्रणाली अस्वस्थ है। हर पहलू में व्याप्त विसंगतियों परिवर्तन की मांग कर रही हैं परंतु परिवर्तन की बात तो की जाती है पर परिवर्तन होता नहीं है। इस पर परसाई जी कहते हैं- ''वर्तमान शिक्षा पद्धति अत्यंत दूषित है। इसमें

आमूल परिवर्तन करना चाहिए। भारत के राष्ट्रपति, प्रधानमंत्री, शिक्षा मंत्री, राज्य के मंत्री, नेता, व्यापारी, सब कह रहे हैं शिक्षा पद्धति को बदलना चाहिए। बदलना चाहिए ही–बात राष्ट्रपति ने कम से कम पचास बार कही होगी, पंडित नेहरु ने दो सौ बार और हर मंत्री ने कम से कम पाँच सौ बार–बदलना चाहिए!''[18] इसके साथ ही परसाई जी ने वर्तमान परीक्षा पद्धति शिक्षा केंद्रों में व्याप्त भ्रष्टाचार प्रणाली में नकल, नंबर बढ़वाना, पेपर लीक करवाना आदि पर भी अपने तीक्ष्ण व्यंग्य बाण चलाए हैं।

कुछ ही सालों में शोध कार्य बहुत धड़ल्ले से हुए हैं। बेरोजगारी के कारण भी इसे बहुत प्रश्रय मिला है। परसाई जी डॉक्टरेट डिग्री पर व्यंग्य करते हुए कहते हैं– ''विश्वविद्यालय में रिसर्च करने लगा। वह नौकरी नहीं है फिर भी इज्जत देती है। बहुत से लोग पुलिस के डर से रिसर्च करते हैं। करने से नौकरी मिलने तक जो काम किया जाता है उसे रिसर्च कहते हैं। वह दफ्तर जाने से पहले किया गया हरि स्मरण है। इसलिए अधिकांश शोध प्रबंध विष्णु सहस्त्रनाम है यानी उसमें एक ही बात हजार तरीके से कही जाती है।''[19] स्बतंत्र भारत के नवीन युग में उभरी सामाजिक–राजनीतिक विसंगतियाँ जैसे भ्रष्टाचार, पाखंड, वर्ग–विभेद, और सत्ता का युरुपयोग–इनका वे खंडन करते हैं। मार्क्सवादी दृष्टि से प्रभावित होकर उन्होने मध्यवर्गीय नैतिक पतन और शोषण की कटु सच्चाई को उजागर किया, जो स्वातंत्र्योत्तर भारत की प्रमुख समस्या थी। उनकी रचनाएँ जैसे ''पुराना खिलाड़ी'' , ''नरक से बोल रहा हूँ'' और ''विकट कवि'' में युगीन विडंबनाएँ सरल भाषा में व्यक्त होती हैं। मुक्तिबोध द्वारा सराही गई ''खरापन और खुरदुरापन'' वाली यह शैली यथार्थ को दंतकथाओं या रोजमर्रा की घटनाओं के माध्यम से उद्घाटित करती है।

निष्कर्ष:

हरिशंकर परसाई जी के अपने जीवन की विसंगतियाँ उनके आपने साहित्य में प्रकट हो उठी हैं। उन्होंने आम आदमी को बहुत करीब से देखा और उनके आभाव और दुखों को आत्मसात करते हुए सत्ता के खिलाफ अपनी बुलंद आवाज उठायी। मानव के प्रति सहनुभूति और व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन के लिए परसाई ने राजनीति, समाज, धर्म, अर्थतंत्र, संस्कृति, साहित्य और मानव प्रकृति संबंधी व्यंग्य साहित्य का निर्माण किया। मानव और उसके आसपास के परिवेश की प्रत्येक विसंगति हरिशंकर परसाई के व्यंग्य की लक्ष्य बनी है। परसाई जी एक ऐसे व्यंग्यकार हैं जिन्होंने व्यंग्य विधा को एक निश्चित स्वरूप दिया है। इसलिए उनके साहित्य में व्यंग्य का अध्ययन वस्तुत: व्यंग्य विधा की गहरी पहचान करवाता है। 'व्यंग्य' हरिशंकर परसाई का स्वभाव है। उन्होंने ''वैष्णव की फिसलन'' व्यंग्य की भूमिका में कहा है– ''यह गंभीर विचारणीय लेख हैं– पर अपने स्वभाव के कारण इनमें जगह–जगह व्यंग्य भी आ गया है।''[20] परसाई की अधिक सफलता, प्रतिष्ठा और लोकप्रियता का कारण है कि व्यंग्य उनके साहित्य में गौण रूप में नहीं आया है वक्ति वह रचना के कण–कण में समाया हुआ है और रचना का मूल आधार है। उन्होंने निराला की परंपरा को सच्चे अर्थों में उद्दीप्त किया, भारतेंदु की परंपरा को विकसित किया और कबीर के व्यंग्य को व्यापकता दी। परसाई का युगबोध प्रगतिशील है, जो

विचारधाराओं– कांग्रेसी, समाजवादी या कम्युनिस्ट की कमियों पर प्रहार करता है। आज भी उनका व्यंग्य प्रासंगिक है, क्योंकि भ्रष्टाचार और अनैतिकता जैसे मुद्दे यथावत हैं। परसाई ने व्यंग्य को साहित्यिक विधा रूप में स्थापित कर युग चेतना को जन–जन तक पहुँचाया है।

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A Bibliometric Study on Publications of CALIBER Convention 2022

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Abstract:

By applying bibliometric methods which include authorship pattern, degree of collaboration, geographical distribution, this paper explores conference papers of CALIBER 2022. It also reveals state-wise contribution in reference of articles and specifically focuses on top-cited journals and outer forms of documents found in references of conference papers. This study found that each article of the conference cited more than 16 references in which "Journal Articles" appeared to be the most cited document and the "Library Hi Tech" emerged as the highly cited journal followed by "Library Philosophy & Practice".

Keywords:- Bibliometric Study; Authorship Pattern; Degree of Collaboration; CALIBER Convention; Geographical Distribution, Form of Documents

Introduction:

The evolutionary revolution in the field of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) forced to think University Grants Commission to set up Information & Library Network (INFLIBNET) at Gandhinagar, Gujrat for optimum utilization of information by using state-of-art technologies to promote scholarly communication among academicians and researchers in India. The objectives and functions of INFLIBNET Centre are manifold in nature. The major objectives of INFLIBNET Centre are to implement computerization of operation and services in Library & Information Centers of the country; to establish a national network for interconnecting various Library & Information Centers as well as to train and develop human resources in the field of computerized library operations and networking etc.

Among various objectives and functions one of the most important one is to facilitate academic communication amongst scientist, engineer, social scientists, academics, faculties, researchers and students through conferences. Convention on Automation of Libraries in Education and Research Institutions (CALIBER) is one such initiative from the end of INFLIBNET Centre. CALIBER conventions are held under a specific theme supported by many sub-themes to meet the requirements of library professionals as a whole. The latest convention was CALIBER 2022 with the theme "Envisioning Digital Transformation in Libraries for NextGen Academic Landscape" which was subdivided into 3 sub-themes. These were Bibliometric study helps to assist in the identification of the impact of the convention in terms of authorship patterns, state-wise distribution of the authors, referencing pattern, citation analysis and collaboration among authors and more other ways.

1 Inceptive Approach of Libraries for National Education Policy (NEP 2020).

2 Emerging Technologies and Trend in Libraries and

3 Open Science and Open Library.

Each of these sub themes covers different relevant aspects under the sub theme covered up. It was 13th International CALIBER 2022 which was held at Banaras Hindu University, Uttar Pradesh during 17.11.2022—19.11.2022.

Review of Literature:-

The relevant literature has been reviewed in bibliometric studies are mentioned below:-

- Shukla & Lalthlengliana (2019) bibliometrically analyzed total 319 papers of conference proceedings of CALIBER Conventions during the period 2008-2015.They analyzed themes & sub-themes , authorship patterns, the degree of collaboration, state-wise geographical distribution, country-wise geographical distribution, references per article, forms of documents, and top-cited journals. They found that Karnataka and India are the top-contributing state as well as country respectively. It was also revealed that Journal articles are the prevalent form of reference documents and the journal "Electronic Library" as the highly cited journal in that particular study.
- Alam & Shukla (2016) in their paper observed the growth of Solar Physics research in India and it is found that a total of 2066 works of literature had been brought out and total member of citations received all together were 22254.
- Chowdhury & Chowdhury (2016) studied the research output of Netaji Subhas Institute of Technology, Delhi and concluded with a remark that the institute has a great potentiality for maximization the levels of its publication output.
- Nagarkar et al. (2015) highlighted the productivity level of the faculty members of Life Science Department at the Savitribai Phule University. This particular study identified the authorship pattern and the most preferred journals by the faculty members of that particular university.
- Dash (2015) analyzed the research papers published in the Library Assessment Conference Proceedings (2006-2014). His study showed that the numbers of contributors are increasing over time and the contributors are considerably restricted to the theme of LAC and University of Washington contributed most papers in the LAC from 2006 to 2014.
- Doraswamy (2013) analyzed total 300 conference papers those were published in the National Convention on Knowledge Library and Information Networking (NACLIN) from 2001 to 2008.
- Panda et al.(2013) analyzed publications and citation patterns in the Journal of Information Literacy from 2007-2012 and found that single authored papers are largely dominant followed by two and three authors papers. Majority of the papers were from UK which can reduce the image of this journal as an international journal.
- Deshmukh (2011) studied the nature of information sources cited by the authors of Annals of Library and Information Studies, a premier journal in the field of Library 7 Information Science and also tend to establish a rank list of core journals in the field of LIS. It is found that journals are dominantly cited followed by books.
- Gupta (2007) investigated the growth of literature in LIS marketing, its publishing pattern and the type of information source in LIS marketing. It is also found that literature on LIS marketing is growing and most of the literatures are in the form of journal articles.
- Rajendiran & Parihar (2007) identified various bibliometric indicators of articles published by

the Indian Researchers in the field of LASER Science. This study reveals the slow growth of literature in LASER Science during 1995-2005.

- Sudhier Pillai (2007) studied the authorship pattern in Physics by taking a sample of 11,412 journals and 1,328 book citation in the Physics Doctoral dissertations awarded by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Scope of the Study:-

The study is mainly confined to assess the research contributions of LIS professionals from various institutions published as full-text in conference proceeding of CALIBER Convention 2022 organized by INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar. There are 45 published articles which belong to CALIBER Convention, 2022.

Objectives of the Study:-

- To recognize the theme and sub-themes that gains the attention of the contributors for different papers
- To find out the authorship pattern of contributors.
- To evaluate the degree of collaboration among authors.
- To trace the geographical distribution of authors.
- To assess an average number of references per article.
- To identify the various bibliographic forms of document used as a reference in articles.
- To prepare a list of top ranked journals referred by paper contributors.

Research Methodology:-

This study has been designed to investigate the research contribution in conference proceedings of CALIBER Conventions through the bibliometric analysis. The CALIBER Convention 2022 has been used for the study. The survey was conducted for retrieving 45 full-text papers from the Institutional Repository of INFLIBNET Centre. The obtained data were tabulated, organized and analyzed by using MS-Excel.

Data Analysis:-

(a) Theme and sub-themes of CALIBER, 2022

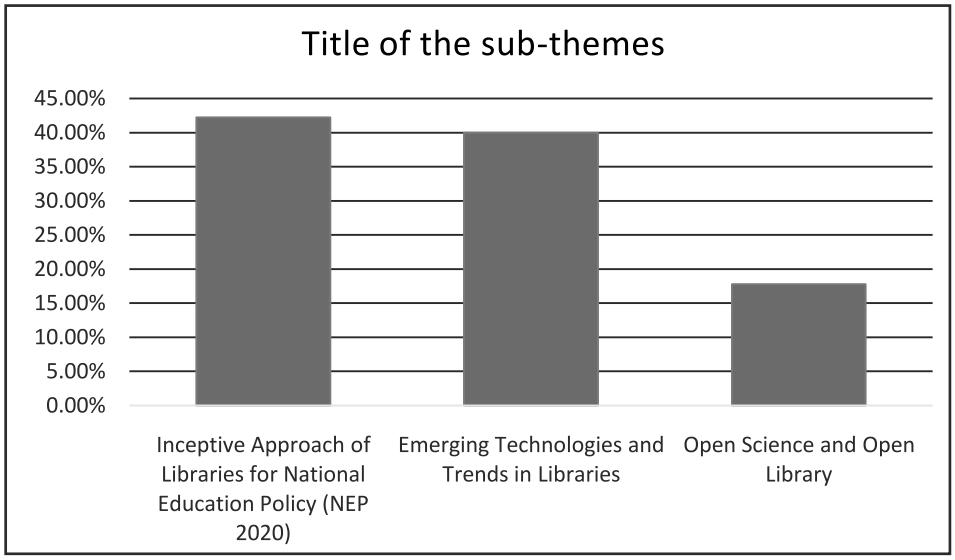
CALIBER 2022 had the main theme "Envisioning Digital Transformation in Libraries for NEXT Gen Academic Landscape" and three sub-themes for authors. The following table displays the sub-themes of CALIBER, 2022.

Table 1: **Distribution of articles among the sub-themes of CALIBER, 2022**

Sl. No.	Title of the sub - themes	No. of Papers	Percentage
1	Inceptive Approach of Libraries for National Education Policy (NEP 2020)	19	42.22%
2	Emerging Technologies and Trends in Libraries	18	40%
3	Open Science and Open Library	08	17.78%
Total		45	

(Source : CALIBER Convention Website)

Table 1 throws light on the distribution of papers among the different sub-themes of CALIBER,2022. Among the three sub themes, " Inceptive Approach of Libraries for National Education Policy (NEP 2020)" received the highest number of papers (19) i.e. 42.22% followed by " Emerging Technologies and Trends in Libraries" (40%), " Open Science and Open Library (17.78%).



(b)Authorship Pattern & Degree of Collaboration in CALIBER 2022

Table 2: Authorship Pattern in the CALIBER 2022

No. of Authors					Total No. of Authors	Total No. of Papers
One	Two	Three	Four	Five		
08(17.77%)	26(57.77%)	07(15.55%)	03(6.66%)	01(2.22%)	98	45

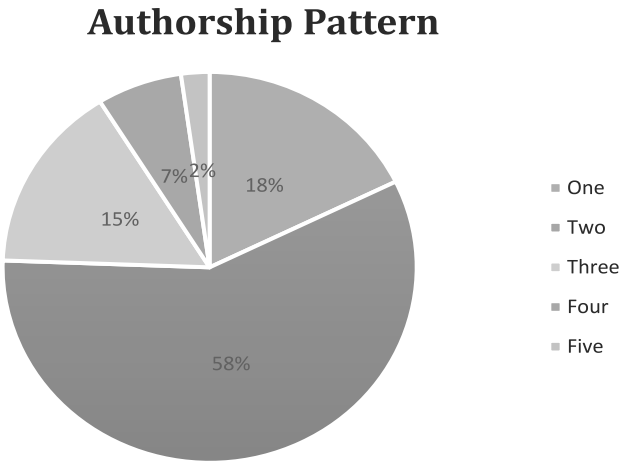


Table 2 reveals the authorship pattern of articles accepted for full-text publication in CALIBER 2022. In CALIBER 2022, double authorship pattern is found to be the most prevalent which is succeeded by single authorship pattern, three authorship patterns and so on.

(Source : Primary Data)

Table 3**: Degree of Collaboration in CALIBER Convention 2022**

Single Author (Ns)	Multiple Authors(Nm)	Total (Ns+Nm)	Degree of Collaboration
08	37	45	0.822

(Source : Primary Data)

The Degree of Collaboration (C) of the contributors has been calculated based on the Subramanyam (1983) formula.

Degree of Collaboration (C) = Nm/Nm+Ns

=37/45=0.822

Table 3 shows that the Degree of Collaboration for CALIBER 2022 is 0.82.The higher degree of collaboration indicates to the higher level of collaborative works and vice-versa.

(c) Distribution of Authors according to Geographical Location

State –wise distribution of the authors in CALIBER, 2022

Serial Number	Name of the State	No. of Authors	Percentage
1	Uttar Pradesh (UP)	17	17.17
2	Maharashtra	14	14.14
3	West Bengal(WB)	13	13.13
4	Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)	08	8.08
5	Mizoram	06	6.06
6	Gujrat	06	6.06

7	Orissa	04	4.04
8	Tamilnadu	04	4.04
9	Assam	03	3.03
10	New Delhi	03	3.03
11	Punjab	03	3.03
12	Bihar	02	2.02
13	Manipur	02	2.02
14	Tripura	02	2.02
15	Sikkim	02	2.02
16	Madhya Pradesh (MP)	02	2.02
17	Rajasthan	02	2.02
18	Haryana	02	2.02
19	Jharkhand	01	1.01
20	Arunachal Pradesh	01	1.01
21	Kerala	01	1.01
22	Karnataka	01	1.01
	Total	99	

(Source : Primary Data)

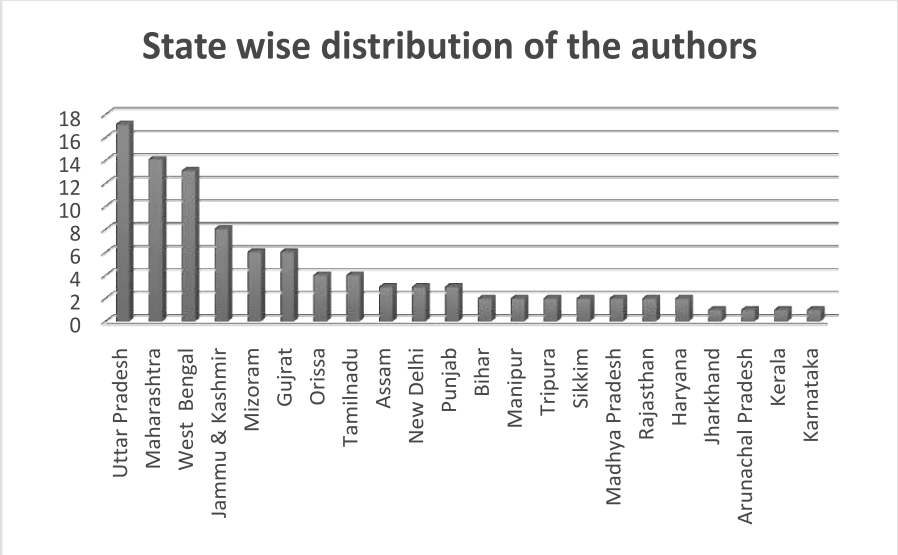


Table 4 shows the state wise distribution of authors in CALIBER 2022.Uttar Pradesh (UP) has the highest number of contributors (17.17%)followed by Maharashtra (14.14%), West Bengal (13.13%), Jammu & Kashmir (6.06%), Mizoram(6.06%) etc. In CALIBER 2022, total 99 authors from 22 different states of India contributed research articles.

(d) Reference Study of CALIBER 2022:

Table 5 depicts the number of references per article in CALIBER 2022.There are total 723 references found for 45 published papers. From the observation of Table 6, it has been found that CALIBER 2022 has 16.06 references per article.

Table 5: References per article in CALIBER 2022

Total Number of References	No. of Papers	References per Article
723	45	16.06

(Source : Primary Data)

(e) Formats of Documents used as Reference in CALIBER 2022

Table 6: Forms of documents used as a reference in CALIBER 2022

Forms of Document	No of References	Percentage
Web Resources	198	27.38%
Journal Articles	386	53.38%
Books	50	6.91%
Conference Papers	47	6.50%
Miscellaneous	26	3.59%
Reports	13	1.79%
Theses & Dissertations	03	0.41%
Total	723	

(Source: Primary Data)

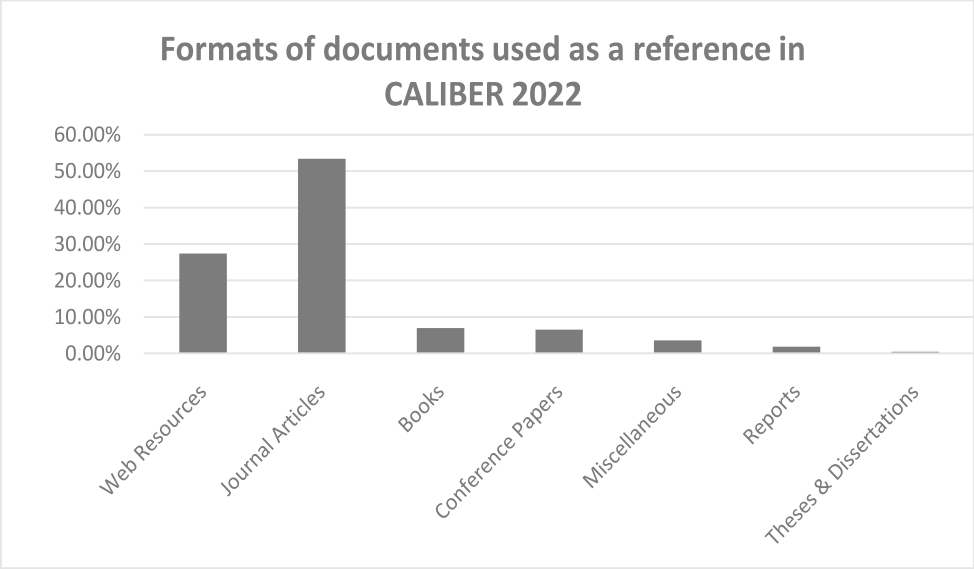


Table 6 shows the analysis of forms of document used as references in CALIBER 2022. Among the various forms of documents, Journal Articles (53.38%) are the most preferred source of reference followed by web-based Resources (27.38%), Books (6.91%), Conference Papers (6.50%) etc.

(f) List of Top 05 Journals cited in CALIBER 2022

Table 7: List of Top 5 Journals cited in CALIBER 2022

Sl No	Name of the Journal	Frequency of Citations Used
01	Library Hi Tech	16
02	Library Philosophy & Practice	15

03	DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology	13
04	Scientometrics	08
05	Technological Forcasting& Social Change	05

(Source : Primary Data)

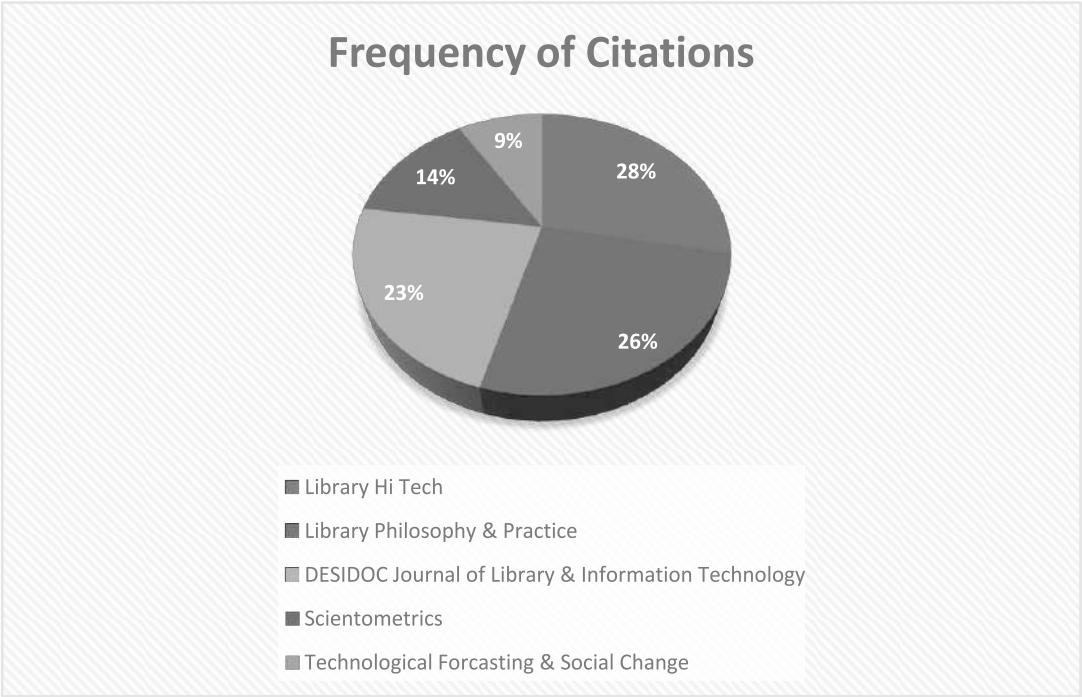


Table 6 shows the list of top 5 journals cited by the authors in their articles appeared in CALIBER 2022. Library Hi Tech has been stood 1st rank, followed by Library Philosophy & Practice(2nd); DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology (3rd) ;Scientometrics (4th) and Technological Forcasting& Social Change. Besides, there are some other journals.

Conclusions :-

The CALIBER Conventions are organized every alternate year by the INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujrat. This study critically analyzes the bibliometric aspects of CALIBER 2022 conference held at Banaras Hindu University, Uttar Pradesh. The recent growth dynamics of the respective field can be observed by conducting conferences and evaluated by the bibliometric studies of such conferences. The main theme of the conference was "Envisioning Digital Transformation in Libraries for Next Gen Academic Landscape" supported by 3 sub themes. Except the sub theme" Open Science and open Library" the two other sub themes have almost equal distribution of articles. The most prevalent form of paper presentation was double authorship followed by single and multiple authorship in which there was a considerable degree of

collaboration among the authors. Authors belonging to 22 states and Union territories of India took part in the conference. UP, Maharashtra and West Bengal are the top three contributing states in the conference. This study found that there were more than 16 references in each article of 45 papers presented at the conference. Among various document of references, journal articles are the most prevalent form of document followed by web resources etc. "The Library Hi Tech" and "Library Philosophy & Practice" are the top 2 journals which were the choices for references among the paper presenters.

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Why GDP Fails in Wetland Ecosystems: Blue Carbon and Ecological Invisibility in the Indian Sundarbans

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Abstract

Blue carbon ecosystems, particularly mangroves, play a critical role in climate change mitigation due to their exceptional capacity to sequester and store carbon in coastal sediments. Despite extensive scientific evidence documenting these functions, blue carbon ecosystems remain marginal within economic policy and development planning, especially in developing economies. This paper argues that such marginalisation is not the result of insufficient ecological knowledge, but of the economic accounting frameworks through which value is recognised and governed.

Drawing on a structured review of global and India-specific literature, the paper examines how GDP-centred national accounting systems and project-level carbon market mechanisms together contribute to the economic invisibility of blue carbon ecosystems. The study adopts a structured analytical lens that distinguishes between biophysical carbon storage, market-based carbon accounting, and macroeconomic measurement, highlighting the institutional disconnect between these domains.

Using the Indian Sundarbans as a focused case, the paper synthesises existing estimates of mangrove carbon stocks, land-use change, and disturbance-driven carbon loss to demonstrate how substantial ecological and climate-relevant values remain excluded from national income accounts and fiscal decision-making. While carbon markets increasingly recognise mangrove-based offsets at the project level, the absence of national blue carbon accounting limits their influence on development appraisal, conservation incentives, and long-term climate governance.

The paper concludes that improving the governance of blue carbon ecosystems requires institutional reform in economic measurement rather than additional biophysical data alone. Integrating blue carbon into environmental–economic accounting frameworks and aligning carbon market participation with national planning processes are identified as key steps toward enhancing policy visibility, safeguarding coastal ecosystems, and strengthening climate mitigation strategies in the Global South.

Keywords: Blue Carbon; Mangroves; Economic Valuation; Sundarbans; Carbon Markets; Ecosystem Accounting; Global South; Wetland Conservation

I. Introduction:

Blue carbon ecosystems—mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrasses—have emerged as critical components of global climate mitigation due to their exceptional capacity to sequester and store carbon in coastal and marine sediments. Although these ecosystems occupy less than two per cent of the global ocean area, they account for a disproportionately large share of long-term carbon storage, particularly through deep, anaerobic soils where decomposition rates are low (Donato et al., 2011; Howard et al., 2017). Mangrove ecosystems, in particular, store carbon at densities that

frequently exceed those of terrestrial forests, making them uniquely valuable for climate regulation.

Despite this ecological significance, blue carbon ecosystems remain marginal within economic policy and development planning. This marginalisation is not primarily the result of scientific uncertainty; rather, it reflects the dominance of gross domestic product (GDP) as the principal framework guiding economic evaluation. GDP was never designed to capture environmental degradation, ecosystem services, or long-term ecological risk. Yet it continues to function as the central metric shaping public investment priorities, infrastructure approvals, fiscal transfers, and development assessments. Ecological assets that do not generate immediate market transactions therefore remain institutionally invisible. Despite long-standing critiques, GDP continues to dominate policy decisions in countries like India, and this dominance renders blue carbon ecosystems effectively absent from formal economic evaluation.

The consequences of this invisibility are especially pronounced in the Global South, where the majority of the world's mangrove ecosystems are located and where rates of wetland degradation are highest. More than 80 per cent of global mangrove cover lies in developing countries, and these regions account for a disproportionate share of global losses driven by aquaculture expansion, land conversion, infrastructure development, and weak regulatory enforcement (Hamilton & Casey, 2016; Richards & Friess, 2016). In such contexts, wetlands are frequently treated as surplus land rather than as climate-regulating assets, because their ecological functions are not embedded within economic accounting systems.

India exemplifies this structural disconnect between ecological knowledge and economic governance. While the country participates actively in international and voluntary carbon markets, this engagement operates largely through project-level accounting based on carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2e). National economic planning, however, continues to rely on GDP-centred frameworks that do not account for ecosystem-based carbon stocks. India does not maintain a national blue carbon inventory, nor does it systematically integrate coastal ecosystem carbon into environmental or national accounts. Mangrove monitoring therefore focuses primarily on spatial extent and canopy cover, with carbon stock estimation largely absent from official reporting (Forest Survey of India [FSI], 2021). As a result, blue carbon ecosystems may contribute to global mitigation efforts through carbon markets while remaining economically invisible within domestic policy processes.

The implications of this disconnect are particularly evident in the Indian Sundarbans. As the country's largest contiguous mangrove system and one of the world's most carbon-dense coastal wetlands, the Sundarbans holds substantial potential for long-term carbon sequestration while simultaneously providing coastal protection and livelihood support. Yet its ecological value is weakly translated into policy incentives that could support conservation or restoration. Recurrent cyclonic disturbances have caused repeated biomass loss and soil disruption, directly affecting both above-ground and sedimentary carbon pools (Raha et al., 2020). Because these losses are not incorporated into national economic metrics or accounting instruments, they exert little influence on development priorities, compensation mechanisms, or resource allocation.

This institutional gap carries significant policy risks. As global interest in nature-based

climate solutions intensifies, carbon markets increasingly seek cost-effective mitigation opportunities in the Global South. Carbon markets operate through project-level carbon accounting, while national economies continue to rely on macroeconomic indicators centred on GDP. The disconnect between these systems creates conditions in which countries may sell carbon credits without adequately valuing, governing, or safeguarding the ecosystems that generate them. In the absence of robust domestic accounting instruments, carbon-rich wetlands risk being treated as tradable commodities rather than complex socio-ecological systems, with documented tensions emerging between external carbon investors and local communities in several countries (Wylie et al., 2016).

Against this backdrop, this paper examines how GDP-centred accounting frameworks contribute to the economic invisibility of blue carbon ecosystems, using the Indian Sundarbans as a focused case. Drawing on global and region-specific evidence, the study demonstrates that prevailing economic measurement systems generate policy blind spots that undermine the governance of carbon-rich wetlands. By situating blue carbon within debates on national income accounting and development planning, the paper argues that safeguarding coastal ecosystems requires institutional change in economic measurement, rather than improved ecological data alone.

II. Literature Review

Scientific research over the past two decades has firmly established blue carbon ecosystems as disproportionately important components of the global carbon cycle. Mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrasses exhibit high rates of carbon accumulation, particularly in waterlogged sediments where anaerobic conditions slow decomposition. Empirical studies consistently show that mangrove soils store substantially more carbon per unit area than most terrestrial ecosystems, with sedimentary carbon comprising the majority of total stocks (Alongi, 2012; Donato et al., 2011; Howard et al., 2017). This body of work has positioned blue carbon as a promising nature-based climate mitigation option.

Parallel to advances in biophysical measurement, an extensive literature has emerged on ecosystem services and environmental valuation. These studies attempt to monetise benefits such as carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and livelihood support. However, studies within ecological economics have repeatedly noted that valuation exercises alone have limited policy traction when they remain detached from formal accounting systems. Ecosystem services may be recognised conceptually yet continue to be excluded from national accounts, cost–benefit analyses, and fiscal decision-making processes, particularly in growth-oriented developing economies (Costanza et al., 2014).

This limitation is closely linked to long-standing critiques of GDP as a measure of economic performance. GDP does not account for environmental degradation, resource depletion, or the loss of regulating ecosystem services, and its conceptual shortcomings are well recognised. Alternative approaches, including green GDP, satellite accounts, and natural capital accounting, have been proposed to address these gaps. International frameworks such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) provide methodological guidance, yet adoption remains uneven and largely experimental (United Nations et al., 2014). In practice, GDP continues to dominate

policy discourse, rendering ecosystems that fall outside its accounting boundaries institutionally invisible.

Within India, research on blue carbon remains fragmented and predominantly ecological. Studies have documented mangrove extent, species composition, biomass, and vulnerability across regions such as the Sundarbans, Godavari, and Pichavaram, often using remote sensing and field-based measurements (Ghosh et al., 2015; Roy et al., 2020). However, national-level integration of coastal ecosystem carbon into economic planning remains minimal. Environmental accounts do not systematically include blue carbon ecosystems, and existing policy instruments rarely incorporate carbon storage or sequestration potential into land-use decisions (FSI, 2021).

The Sundarbans has received considerable scientific attention as a unique socio-ecological system, with literature highlighting its role in carbon storage, cyclone attenuation, and livelihood security. Yet much of this work remains disciplinary, focusing either on biophysical processes or local vulnerability without engaging directly with questions of economic measurement and governance. As a result, the region's ecological value is well documented scientifically but weakly represented within institutional frameworks that guide development and climate policy.

Taken together, the literature reveals a persistent gap between ecological knowledge and economic governance. While blue carbon science has advanced substantially, particularly in relation to measurement techniques and global mitigation potential, there remains limited engagement with how these ecological insights are incorporated into national income accounting and macroeconomic planning. This disconnect is especially pronounced in developing economies such as India, where GDP-centred policy instruments continue to dominate decision-making. Existing research on blue carbon remains largely disciplinary, focusing either on biophysical dynamics or local vulnerability, with relatively little attention to the institutional implications of economic measurement frameworks. As a result, the role of GDP-based accounting in rendering blue carbon ecosystems economically invisible, and the consequences of this invisibility for conservation and climate policy, remain insufficiently explored. It is this institutional gap that the present study seeks to address through a focused review centred on the Indian Sundarbans.

III. Analytical Framework: Blue Carbon and Economic Invisibility

This review is guided by the following analytical hypothesis:

H_1: GDP-centred national accounting frameworks, when combined with project-level carbon market mechanisms, systematically undervalue blue carbon ecosystems in developing economies, thereby weakening conservation incentives and policy prioritisation.

To examine this hypothesis, the framework brings together two interacting accounting domains. The first is national income accounting, where GDP continues to function as the dominant metric shaping development planning, public investment, and fiscal decision-making. The second is carbon market accounting, where emissions reductions and removals are quantified at the project level in terms of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2e) and traded internationally. The framework is used to assess how the lack of integration between these domains produces economic invisibility for blue carbon ecosystems, even as they contribute materially to climate mitigation.

India provides a particularly instructive context for applying this framework. While the

country participates actively in international and voluntary carbon markets, it does not maintain a national blue carbon inventory, nor does it integrate coastal ecosystem carbon stocks into environmental or national accounts. Official mangrove monitoring focuses primarily on spatial extent and canopy cover, with limited attention to changes in carbon stocks or carbon loss from degradation (Forest Survey of India [FSI], 2021). As a result, carbon-rich wetlands may generate mitigation value in global carbon markets without acquiring corresponding economic or policy relevance within domestic planning processes.

The Indian Sundarbans is selected as a focal case because it combines exceptionally high blue carbon density with acute ecological stress and weak institutional visibility. As one of the world's largest contiguous mangrove systems, the Sundarbans stores substantial amounts of sedimentary carbon while also being exposed to recurrent cyclonic disturbances, salinity intrusion, and erosion. Yet the economic consequences of carbon loss from these processes do not enter GDP-based indicators, climate loss assessments, or development appraisal frameworks. The region therefore provides a clear illustration of how the absence of macroeconomic recognition can undermine conservation outcomes in globally significant blue carbon ecosystems.

The next section evaluates the proposed hypothesis by synthesising global evidence on mangrove carbon stocks and loss patterns alongside Sundarbans-specific estimates, drawing on the data presented in the appendices.

IV. Evidence Synthesis: Global and Sundarbans-Specific Insights

Using the analytical framework outlined above, this section synthesises global and region-specific evidence to evaluate whether GDP-centred accounting frameworks, combined with project-level carbon market mechanisms, systematically undervalue blue carbon ecosystems in developing economies. The analysis draws on peer-reviewed studies, global assessments, and Sundarbans-specific estimates to demonstrate how substantial climate mitigation value remains institutionally invisible within national economic systems.

IV.a. Global Evidence on Blue Carbon Magnitude and Loss

Globally, mangrove ecosystems are recognised as among the most carbon-dense forests in the world. Empirical studies estimate total ecosystem carbon stocks ranging from approximately 800 to 1200 tonnes of carbon per hectare, with sedimentary carbon accounting for 70 to 90 percent of total storage (Donato et al., 2011; Alongi, 2014). In carbon dioxide equivalents, this corresponds to roughly 3,000 to 4,400 tonnes of CO_2 per hectare, highlighting the disproportionate mitigation potential of mangrove systems relative to their spatial extent.

Despite this, mangrove loss and degradation continue at significant rates, particularly in developing regions. Global assessments indicate that over 80 percent of mangrove forests are located in the Global South, which also accounts for the majority of historical and ongoing losses driven by aquaculture expansion, land conversion, infrastructure development, and weak regulatory enforcement (Hamilton & Casey, 2016; Richards & Friess, 2016). Appendix A.1 summarises global mangrove carbon stock ranges alongside documented loss patterns, demonstrating a concentration of both high carbon density and high degradation rates in tropical developing economies.

Appendix A.2 further situates these patterns spatially by illustrating the global distribution of mangrove soil carbon. High-carbon mangrove belts across South and Southeast Asia, including eastern India, Indonesia, and parts of Africa, coincide with regions experiencing intense development pressure. Together, Appendices A.1 and A.2 reveal a structural asymmetry: regions that provide globally significant carbon storage are incidentally those where institutional capacity to safeguard long-term ecosystem value is the weakest.

IV.b. Sundarbans - Evidence on Carbon Storage and Disturbance

Appendix A.3 synthesises available estimates of above-ground and soil carbon stocks for the Indian Sundarbans from existing ecological studies. While precise values vary due to methodological differences, the literature consistently identifies the Sundarbans as a major blue carbon reservoir within the global mangrove system (Gopal & Chauhan, 2020). The region's extensive mangrove cover, high sedimentation rates, and anaerobic soil conditions make it particularly effective at long-term carbon sequestration.

At the same time, the Sundarbans is subject to recurrent cyclonic disturbances, erosion, and salinity intrusion, which have been shown to cause substantial biomass damage and sediment disruption. Empirical studies document canopy loss ranging from approximately 20 to 40 percent in severely affected areas following major cyclones such as Aila (2009) and Amphan (2020), with significant mangrove mortality and uprooting reported across multiple islands (Ghosh et al., 2015; Raha et al., 2020). Storm-induced erosion has been observed to remove several centimetres of mangrove sediment in exposed zones, directly affecting carbon-rich soils that store hundreds of tonnes of carbon per hectare (Alongi, 2014; Lovelock et al., 2017).

Even modest disturbance to these sediments has significant climate implications. Studies suggest that partial oxidation of exposed mangrove soils can release between 5 and 20 tonnes of carbon per hectare, equivalent to approximately 18 to 73 tonnes of CO_2, depending on disturbance intensity and post-event recovery (Donato et al., 2011; Lovelock et al., 2017). These losses are ecologically significant, particularly when repeated across large areas and multiple storm events.

Beyond episodic climatic disturbances, long-term land use change plays a critical role in shaping carbon loss in the Sundarbans. Long-term land use and land cover (LULC) change further illustrates the mechanisms through which blue carbon ecosystems become economically invisible. Appendix Figure A.4, adapted from Hossain, Masiero, and Pirotti (2024), documents substantial shifts in land use across the Sundarbans between 1975 and 2020, including the expansion of settlements, agriculture, and aquaculture at the expense of mangrove cover. These transitions represent land uses that are fully captured within GDP through agricultural output, fisheries production, and infrastructure development, while the associated loss of sedimentary and biomass carbon remains unaccounted for. The figure thus demonstrates how GDP-centred accounting systems systematically register development gains while obscuring the carbon costs embedded in long-term ecosystem transformation.

IV.c. Economic Invisibility within National Accounting Frameworks

Crucially, these documented carbon losses do not register as economic costs within India's national accounting or fiscal systems. Mangrove monitoring frameworks emphasise changes in spatial extent and canopy cover, while changes in carbon stocks—whether through gradual

degradation or sudden climatic shocks—are not incorporated into national income accounts, disaster loss assessments, or development appraisal processes (Forest Survey of India [FSI], 2021). As a result, substantial carbon losses documented in the Sundarbans do not influence public investment priorities, compensation mechanisms, or land-use decisions, despite their implications for long-term climate resilience.

Within GDP-based frameworks, the economic contribution of the Sundarbans is recognised primarily through market-based activities such as fisheries, non-timber forest products, tourism, and agriculture in fringe areas. These flows are captured as output and income, while the regulating services of mangrove ecosystems—most notably long-term carbon storage and avoided emissions—remain entirely excluded from national accounts. This asymmetry means that ecosystem degradation can proceed without registering as an economic loss, reinforcing policy incentives that prioritise short-term revenue over long-term climate regulation.

IV.d. Implications for Carbon Markets and Valuation

The evidence also highlights a disconnect between project-level carbon accounting and national economic measurement. Carbon markets quantify emissions reductions or removals in terms of carbon dioxide equivalents at the scale of individual projects, enabling the generation and trade of carbon credits. Indicative voluntary market prices in recent years have ranged from approximately USD 5 to 10 per tonne of CO_2, suggesting that mangrove ecosystems embody substantial potential climate value even under conservative pricing assumptions (World Bank, 2023). However, because these valuations operate outside national accounting systems, participation in carbon markets does not translate into broader economic visibility or strengthened conservation incentives at the macroeconomic level.

Taken together, the global and Sundarbans-specific evidence supports the hypothesis that GDP-centred accounting frameworks, combined with project-level carbon market mechanisms, systematically undervalue blue carbon ecosystems in developing economies. While ecological science and carbon markets increasingly recognise the mitigation potential of mangroves, their exclusion from national income accounting limits their influence on development planning, budgetary allocation, and conservation policy. The Sundarbans exemplifies this institutional gap, where substantial ecological and climate value coexists with weak economic recognition, reinforcing the need for reforms in economic measurement rather than additional biophysical data alone.

V. Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

This review demonstrates that the marginalisation of blue carbon ecosystems in economic decision-making is not a consequence of limited ecological knowledge or data scarcity, but rather of the accounting frameworks through which economic value is recognised and operationalised in policy. Although mangroves and other blue carbon ecosystems are increasingly acknowledged within climate science and carbon markets, their exclusion from GDP-centred national accounting systems limits their influence on development planning, fiscal allocation, and conservation priorities. The Indian Sundarbans exemplifies this structural disconnect, where substantial carbon storage and climate regulation functions coexist with weak economic recognition.

Addressing this gap requires policy interventions that operate within existing economic and institutional systems, rather than relying on stand-alone conservation initiatives or additional

ecological valuation exercises. One practical step is the systematic integration of blue carbon ecosystems into environmental–economic accounting frameworks, particularly through satellite accounts aligned with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA–EA). India already maintains environmental accounts for land and forests; extending these accounts to include mangrove carbon stocks and changes in sedimentary carbon would therefore represent an expansion of scope rather than a departure from established practice. Recording physical carbon stocks and tracking changes resulting from land-use conversion, cyclonic disturbances, and erosion would allow carbon losses to be formally recognised, even in the absence of market transactions. When paired with conservative monetary estimates based on prevailing carbon price benchmarks, such accounts would provide an institutional mechanism through which blue carbon enters development appraisal and policy evaluation without replacing GDP as the primary macroeconomic indicator.

A second operational implication concerns the relationship between carbon markets and national economic planning. At present, carbon credits are generated and traded at the project level, while their implications for national carbon assets and long-term mitigation capacity remain largely unexamined. Aligning carbon market participation with national accounting objectives would require the creation of a coordinated framework through which blue carbon projects are recorded, monitored, and evaluated within a national registry. Such a mechanism would not restrict market participation but would enable policymakers to assess whether the transfer of carbon credits reflects long-term ecosystem value, opportunity costs, and domestic mitigation needs. For regions such as the Sundarbans, where cumulative ecosystem degradation may undermine future climate resilience, this form of oversight is essential to prevent short-term financial gains from eroding long-term ecological assets.

Economic invisibility also affects coastal development decisions, where GDP-centred metrics systematically register production gains while excluding environmental losses. Incorporating carbon stock changes into economic appraisal processes would allow development decisions in mangrove regions to reflect both immediate economic returns and longer-term climate costs. This can be achieved by requiring land-use conversion projects to account for estimated carbon losses alongside conventional financial indicators, treating large-scale carbon depletion as an implicit economic cost. Integrating carbon considerations into existing cost–benefit analysis and development appraisal frameworks would ensure that blue carbon degradation influences planning outcomes in the same way as fiscal expenditures or revenue projections, without necessitating the creation of parallel environmental assessment systems.

Beyond domestic policy, the recognition of blue carbon within national accounting frameworks has broader implications for India's position in global carbon governance. As international climate policy increasingly relies on offsets and nature-based solutions, countries that lack domestic valuation and accounting mechanisms risk undervaluing their ecological assets in carbon transactions and negotiations. Developing nationally recognised blue carbon accounts would allow India to better evaluate trade-offs between selling carbon credits, retaining ecosystem carbon for domestic mitigation, and safeguarding long-term development objectives. In this context, economic visibility becomes a matter of strategic policy autonomy, rather than conservation alone.

In conclusion, the central challenge highlighted by this review is not the absence of scientific evidence on blue carbon, but the failure of prevailing economic measurement systems to translate that evidence into policy-relevant signals. Integrating blue carbon into national accounting and economic appraisal frameworks offers a practical pathway to align climate mitigation, conservation incentives, and development planning. Without such institutional reform, carbon-rich ecosystems such as the Sundarbans will continue to provide global climate benefits while remaining economically invisible within domestic policy processes, undermining both environmental sustainability and long-term development outcomes.

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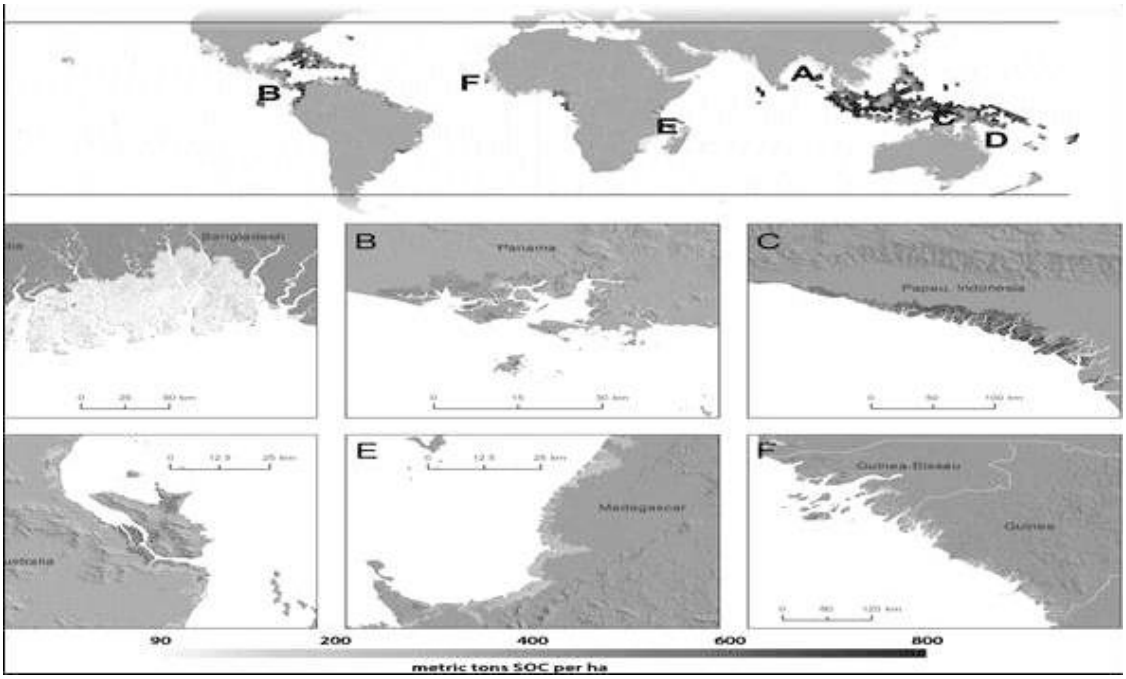
APPENDIX

Appendix A.1.: Global Mangrove Carbon Stock Ranges and Global South vs Global North Loss Patterns

Region / Category	Above-Ground Biomass (AGB) (tC/ha)	Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) (tC/ha, 1m depth)	Total Carbon Stock (tC/ha)	Recent Loss Rate (annual %)	Key Drivers of Loss
Global Average (tropics)	100–300	400–1200	500–1500	0.2–0.7	Aquaculture, agriculture, coastal development
Global South (aggregate)	120–350	500–1500	650–1700	0.4–0.9	Aquaculture expansion, fuelwood extraction, land conversion, weak regulation
Global North (aggregate)	40–120	200–600	300–700	0.05–0.2	Coastal engineering, limited natural recruitment
Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines)	150–300	800–1200	900–1500	0.6–1.0	Shrimp aquaculture, oil palm expansion, erosion
East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique)	80–200	300–800	400–1000	0.3–0.6	Fuelwood, settlement expansion
Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador)	90–250	400–900	500–1100	0.2–0.5	Urbanisation, hydrological alteration

Notes:

1. Global carbon stock ranges synthesised from Donato et al. (2011), Sanderman et al. (2018), Alongi (2012).
2. Loss rates and regional patterns drawn from Hamilton & Casey (2016) and Richards & Friess (2016).
3. Represents typical carbon density for mangrove ecosystems; actual ranges vary by species, geomorphology, sedimentation, salinity, and disturbance regimes.



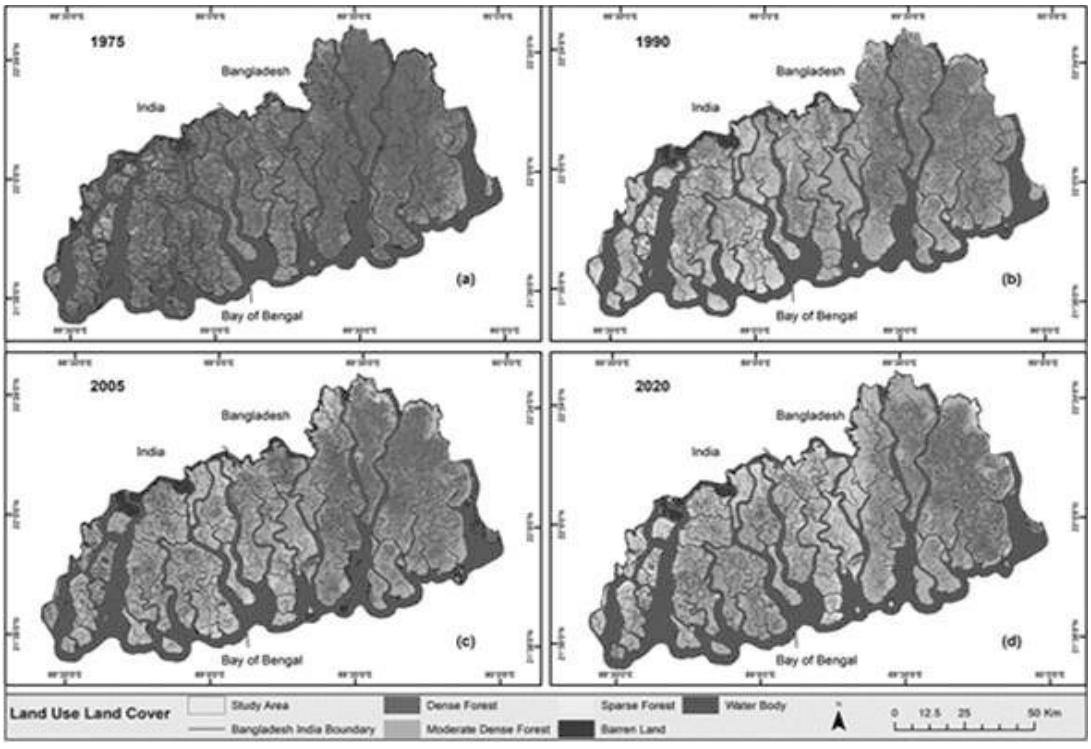
Appendix figure A.2.: Global distribution of mangrove soil carbon stocks for the top metre of soil, showing global hotspots such as the Sundarbans (India–Bangladesh), Papua (Indonesia), West Africa, and northern Australia.
Source: Adapted from Sanderman et al. (2018).
Note: Hexagonal bins (~19,000 km²) represent mean soil carbon density (Mg C ha^{-1}), with darker shades indicating higher carbon concentrations.

Appendix A.3.: Sundarbans Mangrove Carbon Estimates by Zone and Stress Indicators

Zone / Block Type	Above-Ground Biomass (AGB) (tC/ha)	Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) (tC/ha)	Dominant Species	Observed Ecological Stressors	Implications for Carbon Storage
Western Sundarbans (Lower Salinity)	180–250	700–1000	*Heritiera fomes*, *Excoecaria agallocha*	Moderate salinity, reduced freshwater inflow	High SOC, moderate vulnerability
Central Sundarbans (Mixed Salinity)	150–220	600–900	*Avicennia officinalis*, *Bruguiera gymnorhiza*	Increasing salinity, sedimentation imbalance	Declining AGB, moderate SOC stability

Zone / Block Type	Above-Ground Biomass (AGB) (tC/ha)	Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) (tC/ha)	Dominant Species	Observed Ecological Stressors	Implications for Carbon Storage
Southern/Eastern Outer Islands (High Salinity)	100–180	500–800	*Avicennia marina*, *Rhizophora mucronata*	Severe salinity, cyclone exposure, high erosion	High risk of AGB and SOC loss
Post-cyclone Impact Zones (Amphan, Yaas)	60–150	Highly variable, erosion-dependent	yMixed	Vegetation uprooting, embankment breach, saline inundation	Abrupt declines in AGB; rapid SOC release possible
Human-Modified Fringes (Agriculture/Aquaculture Adjacent)	80–160	400–700	Mixed degraded stands	Soil compaction, altered hydrology	Long-term SOC decline, reduced sequestration

Notes:
1. Values derived from Roy et al. (2020), Ghosh et al. (2015), Raha et al. (2020).
2.Reflect heterogeneity across salinity gradients, island clusters, and disturbance history.
3. Post-cyclone values incorporate AGB loss estimates reported in ecological monitoring studies.



Appendix Figure A.4.: Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) Change in the Sundarbans, 1975–2020.
Source: Adapted from Hossain, Masiero & Pirotti (2024).

Contraction Principle and Fixed Point Theorems in Quasi normed Linear Space

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In this paper, using quasi-index we define contraction of a mapping and non- expansive mappings in quasi-normed linear space. Using contraction principle we establish here a Banach type fixed point theorem in complete quasi-normed linear space. Defining compactness of a set we show that a non-expansive self mapping on a compact and convex set has fixed points in continuous quasi-normed linear space.

Key words: Norm, Quasi-norm, Quasi normed linear space, Completeness, Closed set, Compact set, Convex set, Non-expansive mapping, Banach type fixed point.

Subject classification number: 46E15, 54E35, 46S60, 54H25, 03E72.

Introduction

Metric and norm structure have fundamental role in the development of functional analysis. So the research in these spaces is a natural demand. Thousands of research work has been done by different authors in this subject. Different authors defines different kind of quasi- metric space ([1], [8]), generalized metric space ([2], [6]), two metric space ([3]), fuzzy metric space ([5], [7]), normed linear space ([4]), quasi-normed linear space ([9], [10]) etc. They prove various basic theorems of functional analysis and apply them in different branches of science. We also have got some developments in quasi-normed linear space ([9], [10]), fuzzy quasi-metric space [(11)] and fuzzy quasi-normed linear space [(12)] and in this paper we study the existence of fixed points for non-expansive mappings on compact and convex sets. In this manuscript, a brief introduction of the related works has been given in section 0. Section 1 comprises of some preliminary definitions and properties. In section 2, we define the compactness of a set in quasi-normed linear space and study some fundamental properties on it. We prove Weierstrass theorem for continuous real valued function defined on a compact set. We define non-expansive mapping and contraction in section 3 and prove Banach-type fixed point theorem with uniqueness. we also discuss here about the compact- ness of a set and existence of fixed points for non-expansive self mappings on a compact and convex set.

1. Some preliminary results:

In this section some preliminary results are given which are related to this paper. Definition of quasi-norm is taken along with some examples. Sequences and sub-sequences with its convergence are discussed. The ideas of bounded and compact set and different kinds of mapping are given.

Definition 1.1[9] Let X be a linear space over the field F and θ the origin of X.
Let $|.|_q : X \to [0, \infty)$ satisfying the following conditions:
(QN-1) $|x|_q = 0$ iff $x = \theta$;
(QN-2) $|ex|_q = |e||x|_q$ for $x \in X$ and $e \in F$;

(QN-3) there exists a $k \geq 1$ such that

$|x + y|_q \leq k\{|x|_q + |y|_q\}$ for $x, y \in X$.

Then $(X, |.|_q)$ is called a quasi-normed linear space (**qnls**) and the least value of the constant $k \geq 1$ is called the index of the quasi-norm $|.|_q$.

Example 1.2[9] Let $X = R^2$ be a linear space. For $x = (x_1, x_2) \in X$ define

$$|x|_q = (\sqrt{x_1} + \sqrt{x_2})^2$$

Then $(X, |.|_q)$ is a quasi-normed linear space but not a normed linear space.

Definition 1.3[9] Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be a quasi-normed linear space.

(i) A sequence $\{x_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty} \subset X$ is said

(a) to converge to $x \in X$ denoted by $\lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x$ if $\lim_{n\to\infty} |x_n - x|_q = 0$;

(b) to be a Cauchy sequence if $\lim_{m,\, n\to\infty} |x_n - x_m|_q = 0$;

(ii) A subset $B \subset X$ is said to be complete if every Cauchy sequence in B converges in B;

(iii) A subset A of X is said to be bounded if there exists a real number $M > 0$ such that $|x|_q \leq M \ \forall\, x \in A$;

(iv) A subset A of X is said to be closed if for any sequence $\{x_n\}$ of points of A with $\lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x$ implies $x \in A$.

Proposition 1.4[9] Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be a quasi-normed linear space. Then

(a) the limit of a sequence $\{x_n\}$ in X if exists is unique;

(b) every subsequence of a convergent sequence converges to the same limit;

(c) every convergent sequence in X is a Cauchy sequence.

Definition 1.5 Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be a quasi-normed linear space.

(a) The closure of a subset A of X is denoted by $\overline{A}$ and is defined by

$\overline{A} = \{x : \textit{if } \exists \textit{ a sequence } \{x_n\} \textit{ in } A \textit{ such that } \lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x\}$;

(b) The set of all convex combinations of points of a subset A of X is denoted by *convA* and is defined by: $convA = \{\lambda x + (1 - \lambda) y \ \forall\, x, y \in A, \ \forall \lambda \in [0, 1]\}$.

Definition 1.6[10] Let $(X_1, |.|_{q_1})$ and $(X_2, |.|_{q_2})$ be two quasi-normed linear spaces and $T : X_1 \to X_2$ be an operator. Then T is said to be continuous at $x \in X_1$ if for any sequence $\{x_n\}$ of X_1 with $x_n \to x$ i.e. with $\lim_{n\to\infty} |x_n - x|_{q_1} = 0$ implies $T(x_n) \to T(x)$.

i.e. $\lim_{n\to\infty} |T(x_n) - T(x)|_{q_2} = 0$. If T is continuous at each point of X_1, then T is said to be continuous on X_1.

Proposition 1.7[10] Let $(X_1, |.|_{q_1})$ and $(X_2, |.|_{q_2})$ be two quasi-normed linear spaces and $T : X_1 \to X_2$ be an operator. If T is continuous at a point $x \in X_1$, then T is continuous everywhere on X_1.

Definition 1.8[10] Let $(X_1, |.|_{q_1})$ and $(X_2, |.|_{q_2})$ be two quasi-normed linear spaces and $T : X_1 \rightarrow X_2$ be an operator. Then T is said to be bounded if $\exists \ M > 0$ such that

$$|T(x)|_{q_2} \leq M\ |x|_{q_1} \quad \forall x \in X_1.$$

Theorem 1.9[10] Let $(X_1, |.|_{q_1})$ and $(X_2, |.|_{q_2})$ be two quasi-normed linear spaces and $T : X_1 \rightarrow X_2$ be an operator. Then T is bounded iff T is continuous.

Theorem 1.10 The space $(X, |.|_q)$ is called a strong quasi-normed linear space if (QN-3) in Definition 1.1 is replaced by:

(QN-3$^{\prime}$): There exists a $k \geq 1$ such that $|x+y|_q \leq k|x|_q + |y|_q$ for $x, y \in X$.

Such type of definition has great importance because this strong quasi-norm $|.|_q : X \rightarrow [0, \infty)$ is a continuous function. We will prove it now.

Let $\{x_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty} \subset X$ be any sequence in $(X, |.|_q)$ converges to x then $\lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x$ i.e. $\lim_{n\to\infty} |x_n - x|_q = 0$.

Now $|x_n|_q \leq k|x_n - x|_q + |x|_q \Rightarrow |x_n|_q - |x|_q \leq k|x_n - x|_q$.

Again $|x|_q \leq k|x - x_n|_q + |x_n|_q \Rightarrow |x|_q - |x_n|_q \leq k|x_n - x|_q$.

Hence $||x_n|_q - |x|_q| \leq k|x_n - x|_q \Rightarrow \lim_{n\to\infty} ||x_n|_q - |x|_q| \leq k \lim_{n\to\infty} |x_n - x|_q = 0;$

$\Rightarrow \lim_{n\to\infty} |x_n|_q = |x|_q$. The quasi norm defined in Example 1.2 is continuous with quasi index $k = 2$ but it is not a strong quasi-normed. Because $|x+y|_q \leq 2|x|_q + |y|_q$ does not hold for $x = (1, 0)$ and $y = (0, 1)$.

Remark 1.11 Every strong quasi-norm is continuous but the converse is not true. Because there exists continuous quasi-norm which is nor a strong quasi-norm. This is justified by the above theorem.

2. Compactness in quasi-normed linear spaces:

We define here the compactness of a set in quasi-normed linear space and study some fundamental properties on it. We prove Weierstrass theorem for continuous real valued function defined on a compact set.

Definition 2.1 Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be a quasi-normed linear space. A subset A of X is said to be compact if for any sequence $\{x_n\}$ of points of A has a convergent subsequence which converges to a point in A.

Theorem 2.2 Any compact set A in a quasi-normed linear space $(X, |.|_q)$ is complete.

Proof. Let A be any compact set in the quasi-normed linear space $(X, |.|_q)$ and $\{x_n\}$ be any Cauchy sequence in A.

Then $\lim_{m,\, n\to\infty} |x_n - x_m|_q = 0$.

Since A is compact,

$\{x_n\}$ has a subsequence $\{x_{n_k}\}$ converging to some point x in A.

$\lim_{n_k\to\infty} x_{nk} = x$ i.e. $\lim_{n_k\to\infty} |x_{n_k} - x|_q = 0$.

Now $|x_n - x|_q = |x_n - x_{n_k} + x_{n_k} - x|_q \leq K\{|x_n - x_{n_k}|_q + |x_{n_k} - x|_q\}$

$\Rightarrow \lim_{n\to\infty} |x_n - x|_q \leq K\{\lim_{n\,,\, n_k\to\infty} |x_n - x_{n_k}|_q + \lim_{n_k\to\infty} |x_{n_k} - x|_q\} = 0.$

So every Cauchy sequence $\{x_n\}$ converges to some point x in A. Hence A is complete.

Theorem 2.3 Any compact subset M of a quasi-normed linear space $(X, |.|_q)$ is closed and bounded.

Proof. We consider a sequence $\{x_n\}$ of M such that $\lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x$.

Since M is compact,

$\{x_n\}$ has a subsequence $\{x_{n_k}\}$ converging to some point in M.

Now

$\lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x$ implies $\lim_{n\to\infty} x_{n_k} = x$ [Proposition 1.4(b)] and hence $x \in M$. So M is closed.

If possible let M be unbounded. Let $x_0 \in M$ be any fixed element. Then, because M is not bounded, there exists $x_1 \in M$ such that

$$|x_1 - x_0|_q > K.$$

Next, applying the same argument we can say that, there exists a point $x_2 \in M$ such that $|x_2 - x_0|_q > K(1 + |x_1 - x_0|_q)$.

By proceeding like this, we obtain a sequence of points $x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots\ldots$ of M such that

$$|x_n - x_0|_q > K\{|x_1 - x_0|_q + |x_2 - x_0|_q + |x_3 - x_0|_q + \ldots\ldots + |x_{n-1} - x_0|_q + 1\}. \quad (2.1).$$

So, for $n > m$, $|x_n - x_0|_q > K(1 + |x_m - x_0|_q)$. (2.2).

Now, $|x_n - x_0|_q \leq K(|x_n - x_m|_q + |x_m - x_0|_q)$

and using (2.1) and (2.2) we get $|x_n - x_m|_q > 1$ whenever $n > m$. Therefore neither the sequence $\{x_n\}$ nor any subsequence of it can converge. This is a contradiction because M is compact. This completes the proof.

Theorem 2.4 Every closed subset M of a compact set in quasi-normed linear space $(X, |.|_q)$ is compact.

Theorem 2.5 The continuous image of a compact set in a quasi-normed linear space is compact.

proof. Consider two quasi-normed linear spaces $(X, |.|_{q_1})$ and $(Y, |.|_{q_2})$ and a mapping $f : A \to B$ which is continuous where $A \subset X$ is a compact set in X. Let $f(A) = B \subset Y$. We have to prove that B is a compact. Let $\{y_n\}$ be any sequence in B. Then there exists a sequence $\{x_n\}$ in A *such* that $f(x_n) = y_n \quad \forall\ n \in N$. Since A *is* compact there exists convergent subsequence $\{x_{n_k}\}$ of $\{x_n\}$ which converges to some $x \in A$. Since f is a continuous function, $\{f(x_{n_k})\}$ converges to $f(x) \in B$ i.e. the subsequence $\{y_{n_k}\}$ of $\{y_n\}$ converges to $y = f(x) \in B$. Therefore B is a compact set.

Theorem 2.6(Weierstrass) Every continuous real valued function f defined on a compact set of a quasi-normed linear space is bounded and attains its least upper and greatest lower bounds.

proof. Let A be any compact set in a quasi-normed linear space $(X, |.|_q)$ and $f : A \to R$ be a continuous function. By Theorem 2.5, $f(A) = \{f(x) : x \in A\}$ is a compact subset of R and so it is closed and bounded set in R. So the least upper bound y_1 and the greatest lower bound y_2 of $f(x)$ exists in $f(A)$. Hence there exists $x_1, x_2 \in A$ such that $f(x_1) = y_1$ and $f(x_2) = y_2$. Hence the theorem.

3. Non-expansive mappings:

Definition 3.1 Let us take a quasi-normed linear spaces $(X, |.|_q)$ having quasi index K and an operator $T : X \to X$ satisfying

(a) $|Tx - Ty|_q \leq \delta |x - y|_q \ \forall\ x, y \in X$, where $\delta \in (0, 1/k)$ (3.1).

Such type of operator will be known as a contraction.

(b) $|Tx - Ty|_q < \frac{1}{k} |x - y|_q$ (3.2).

$\forall\ x, y \in X$

Then T is contractive. Clearly every contraction is also a contractive.

(c) $|Tx - Ty|_q \leq \frac{1}{k} |x - y|q \quad \forall\ x, y \in X$ *(3.3)*

Such type of mapping will be known as non-expansive mapping.

Remark 3.2 All the above three types of mappings are continuous. Next we shall show thatany contraction on a complete quasi-normed linear spaces $(X, |.|_q)$ has a unique fixed point.

Lemma 3.3 *Assume that* $(X, |.|_q)$ *is a quasi-normed linear space and* $T : X \to X$ *is a contraction. Then for any* $x_0 \in X$, $x_n = \{T^n(x_0)\}$ *is a Cauchy sequence.*

Proof. Let $x_0 \in X$ and $x_1 = T(x_0)$. Having defined x_1 we define $x_2 = T(x_1) = T^2(x_0)$ and in similar manner we get $x_n = T(x_{n-1}) = T^n(x_0)$ and so on. Suppose $m < n$, let $n = m+p$, then

$|x_m - x_{m+p}|_q \leq k|x_m - x_{m+1}|_q + k|x_{m+1} - x_{m+p}|_q$;

$\leq k\ \delta^m|x_0 - x_1|_q + k^2|x_{m+1} - x_{m+2}|_q + k^2|x_{m+2} - x_{m+p}|_q$;

$\leq k\ \delta^m|x_0 - x_1|_q + k^2\ \delta^{m+1}|x_0 - x_1|_q + k^3\ \delta^{m+2}|x_0 - x_1|_q + \ldots\ldots\ldots + k^{p-1}\ \delta^{m+p-2}|x_0 - x_1|_q + k^{p-1}\ \delta^{m+p-1}|x_0 - x_1|_q$;

$\leq k\ \delta^m|x_0 - x_1|_q[1 + k\delta + (k\delta)^2 + (k\delta)^3 + \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots + (k\delta)^{p-1}]$, since $k \geq 1$;

$= k\ \delta^m|x_0 - x_1|_q \frac{1-(k\delta)^p}{1-k\delta}$;

$\leq k\ \delta^m|x_0 - x_1|_q \frac{1}{1-k\delta}$, since $k\delta < 1$;

$\Rightarrow \lim_{m\to\infty} |x_m - x_{m+p}|_q = 0$. Hence the theorem.

Theorem 3.4(Banach) Consider $(X, |.|_q)$ as a complete quasi-normed linear space and $T : X \to X$ is a contraction. Then fixed point of T exists and unique.

Proof. Consider $x_0 \in X$ and so far we imitate the method employed in Lemma 2.3 and get $x_n = T(x_{n-1}) = T^n(x_0) \ \forall \ n \in N$.
By Lemma 3.3, the sequence $\{x_n\}$ is Cauchy. As $(X, |.|_q)$ is complete, there is a x in X so that $\lim_{n\to\infty} x_n = x$.
Since T is a contraction, it is continuous and $\lim_{n\to\infty} T(x_n) = Tx$.
Now $Tx = \lim_{n\to\infty} T(x_n) = \lim_{n\to\infty} x_{n+1} = x$.
Therefore x is a fixed point of the operator T.

Uniqueness: Suppose that $x, y \in X$ are any two fixed points of T. From (3.1) we obtain,
$|x - y|_q = |Tx - Ty|_q \leq \delta |x - y|_q$;
$\Rightarrow (1 - \delta)|x - y|_q \leq 0$;
$\Rightarrow |x - y|_q = 0$.
Therefore $x = y$.

Definition 3.5 Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be a quasi-normed linear space and $D \subset X$. Then the diameter of D is denoted by $\delta(D)$ and defined by: $\delta(D) = \bigvee_{x,\, y \in D} \{|x - y|_q\}$.

Lemma 3.6 Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be a quasi-normed linear space and $K \subset X$ is compact and convex. Let $T : K \to K$ be any non-expansive mapping. Then $\bigwedge_{x \in K} \{|x - Tx|_q\} = 0$.

Proof. Fix $z \in K$ and $\epsilon \in (0, \frac{1}{k})$, and consider the mapping $T_\epsilon : K \to K$ defined by:
$T_\epsilon x = \epsilon z + (1 - \epsilon) Tx$ then
$|T_\epsilon x - T_\epsilon y|_q = (1 - \epsilon) |Tx - Ty|_q \leq \frac{(1-\epsilon)}{k} |x - y|_q \ \forall \ x, y \in K$.
Therefore T_ϵ is a contraction. Since K is compact, it is complete and by theorem 3.4, T_ϵ has unique fixed point x_ϵ say. That is, there exists $x_\epsilon \in K$ such that $T_\epsilon x_\epsilon = x_\epsilon$.Hence

$$\begin{aligned} |Tx_\epsilon - x_\epsilon|_q &= |Tx_\epsilon - T_\epsilon x_\epsilon|_q \\ &= |Tx_\epsilon - \epsilon z - (1 - \epsilon) Tx_\epsilon|_q \\ &= \epsilon |z - Tx_\epsilon|_q; \end{aligned}$$

$\Rightarrow |Tx_\epsilon - x_\epsilon|_q \leq \epsilon \delta(D) \to 0$ as $\epsilon \to 0$.
Therefore $\bigwedge_{x \in K} \{|x - Tx|_q\} = 0$.

Theorem 3.7 Let $(X, |.|_q)$ be any complete strong quasi-normed linear space and $K \subset X$ is compact and convex. Let $T : K \to K$ be any non-expansive mapping. Then T has a fixed point in K.

Proof. The question of whether T has fixed point is equivalent to the question of whether the continuous function $\varphi : K \to R$ defined by $\varphi(x) = |x - Tx|_q$ attains its minimal value zero. The answer is yes because K is compact. The condition strong quasi-normed is not necessary, it is taken for getting the continuity of the function $\varphi(x) = |x - Tx|_q$. We need such type of quasi-normed linear space where $|.|_q : X \to [0, \infty)$ is continuous. The quasi-norm defined in Example 1.2 is continuous but not strong.

Note 3.8 Since T is non-expansive, proceeding similarly to the Theorem 3.4, we can show that this fixed point is unique.

Conclusion:

Metric and norm structure have a great role in the development of functional analysis. So the research in this space is a natural demand. Thousands of research work has been done by different authors in this subject. But quasi-normed linear is a relatively new subject. Knowing this, we think that there may be some possibility of successful research in this space.

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Decadal Trends in Atmospheric Methane Over India: Insights from GOSAT and Non-Parametric Analysis

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Abstract:

This study investigates the temporal and seasonal trends in atmospheric methane concentrations over India from April 2009 to December 2021, utilizing daily observational data from GOSAT and emissions records from the EDGAR (Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research). A Mann-Kendall trend analysis reveals a statistically significant upward trajectory in nationwide methane levels ($z = 63.39$, Kendall's tau = 0.6206, Sen's slope = 0.0257, $p < 0.0001$). Seasonal decomposition of the dataset into four climatological periods—Winter (December–February), Summer (March–May), Monsoon (June–September), and Post-monsoon (October–November)— further confirms significant increasing trends across all seasons. Notably, the post-monsoon period exhibits the steepest rate of increase (Sen's slope = 0.1542), while winter and summer show the strongest correlation coefficients (tau = 0.8141 and 0.8180, respectively). To identify sectoral contributors to these seasonal trends, methane emissions from rice cultivation and biomass burning were analysed using EDGAR data. Rice cultivation demonstrates bimodal emission peaks in February and August, aligning with winter and monsoon trends, whereas biomass burning peaks in April and October correspond to summer and post-monsoon increases. These findings underscore the role of agricultural and biomass combustion activities in driving seasonal methane variability and highlight the need for targeted mitigation strategies to address sector-specific emissions in India.

Keywords: Atmospheric methane over India, GOSAT data and EDGAR data, Trend Analysis

Introduction

Climate change is an escalating global crisis, primarily driven by the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the Earth's atmosphere. Among these, methane (CH_4) plays a particularly critical role due to its high global warming potential—approximately 28 times greater than that of carbon dioxide (CO_2) over a 100-year period [Mar et al., 2022]. Although methane has a relatively short atmospheric lifetime of about 12 years, its potency in trapping heat makes it a key target for near-term climate mitigation strategies.

Methane emissions originate from a variety of natural and anthropogenic sources, including agriculture [Jackson et al., 2020], fossil fuel extraction [Warmuzinski, 2008], biomass burning, natural wetlands [Tiwari et al., 2020], and shallow marine environments [Borges et al., 2016]. Many of these sources are prevalent across the Indian subcontinent. As a rapidly developing nation with diverse ecosystems and agricultural practices, India contributes significantly to global methane emissions. Major anthropogenic sources include extensive rice cultivation [Garg et al., 2011], large livestock populations [Chhabra et al., 2013], and expanding urban infrastructure [Jha et al., 2011]. Additionally, natural wetlands and seasonal climatic variations further influence methane dynamics.

Understanding the temporal and seasonal trends of atmospheric methane is essential for developing effective climate policies and emission control strategies. Long-term trend analysis enables researchers to distinguish between natural variability and anthropogenic influence, assess the effectiveness of mitigation efforts, and identify emerging emission hotspots. Among the various

statistical tools available, the Mann-Kendall (MK) trend test [Mann 1945; Kendall 1948] is widely recognized for its robustness in detecting monotonic trends in environmental time series data without requiring assumptions about data distribution.

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of daily atmospheric methane concentrations across India using data from the Greenhouse Gases Observing Satellite (GOSAT) for the period April 2009 to December 2021. By applying the MK trend test, both daily and seasonally decomposed trends are evaluated to understand the progression of methane levels over time.

Recent studies have highlighted the growing concern over methane emissions in India and their implications for climate change. Lohan et al. (2023) conducted a long-term trend analysis from 1970 to 2020, revealing a consistent increase in atmospheric methane levels and emphasizing the role of agricultural and waste-related sources. The Salata Institute's research brief [Osho Z., 2024] further underscores methane's outsized contribution to near-term warming, attributing approximately 30% of global temperature rise since the Industrial Revolution to methane. The report advocates for aggressive abatement strategies, particularly in rapidly developing countries like India. Singh (2023) also identified municipal solid waste as a significant and often overlooked source of methane, calling for improved waste management practices and policy interventions.

Collectively, these studies highlight the urgency of methane monitoring and the value of satellite-based trend analysis. Building on this foundation, the present study offers a granular, seasonally resolved assessment of methane trends across India using GOSAT data. The findings aim to inform national climate strategies, support evidence-based policymaking, and emphasize the importance of sustained satellite-based monitoring in addressing methane emissions.

Data

Greenhouse gases Observing SATellite (GOSAT) was launched in January, 2009 and is dedicated to measure the total column of global greenhouse gases CO_2 and CH_4 from the NIR/SWIR spectra of the reflected solar radiation. The measurements are sensitive to the concentration changes near to the Earth's surfaces. Thus, regional surface flux information is captured.

In the present analysis atmospheric methane gas concentration data obtained from GOSAT for thirteen years (from 2009 to 2021) has been used. The University of Leicester GOSAT ProxyXCH4 **[**Parker et al. 2020a**]**product (CH4_GOS_OCPRversion 9.0) is available from **[**Parker et al 2020b**]**. Daily XCH_4 data is available in netcdf format. Atmospheric methane concentrations over India have been extracted from the global dataset and subsequently analyzed.

Method of Analysis

Mann-Kendall Test

The Mann-Kendall (MK) test is a non-parametric statistical technique commonly applied to identify trends in time series datasets, particularly within environmental, hydrological, and climate research. Originally introduced by H.H. Mann [Mann 1945] in 1945 and later enhanced by M.G. Kendall in 1955 [Kendall 1948], the method evaluates the presence of a monotonic trend[Davis 1986, Rossi et al. 1992] without requiring assumptions about the underlying data distribution. Its non-parametric nature makes it robust against non-normality, missing values, and outliers. The MK test is often paired with Sen's slope [Sen 1968] estimator, which quantifies the magnitude of the detected trend, offering a comprehensive assessment of both direction and strength.

Mann Kendall's trend

For a time series $X(t)$ of n data points, MK (S) is given by

$$S = \sum_{k-1}^{n-1} \sum_{j-k+1}^{n} \text{sign}(X_j - X_k) \quad (1)$$

where, j is a time index in the series.

$$\text{sign}(X_j - X_k) = \begin{cases} 1 \; if X_j - X_k > 0 \\ 1 \; if \; X_j - X_k = 0 \\ -1 \; if \; X_j - X_k < 0 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

The S statistic represents the difference between the number of positive and negative pairwise comparisons in a given time series. Under the null hypothesis (H_0), which assumes no monotonic trend and no association between the variable and time, all possible orderings of the data are considered equally likely. In this context, the distribution of the S value tends to follow a normal distribution, characterized by its expected value, $E(S)$, and variance, Var(S), as outlined below:

$$E(S) = 0 \quad (3)$$

$$\text{Var}(S) = \frac{1}{18}\left[n(n-1)(2n+5) - \sum_{p=1}^{q} t_p(t_p - 1)(2t_p + 5)\right] \quad (4)$$

here n being the number of data points, q is the number of tied groups, having same value and t_p representing the number data in p^{th}group. The normalized MK statistics Z is calculated as follows:

$$Z = \frac{S-1}{[VAR(S)]^{1/2}} \; if \; S > 0$$

$$Z = 0 \; if \; S = 0$$

$$Z = \frac{S+1}{[VAR(S)]^{1/2}} \; if \; S < 0 \quad (5)$$

The Z statistic is used to assess the significance of a trend within a time series. It functions by testing the null hypothesis, which assumes that no consistent directional change exists over time. A positive Z value indicates a potential increasing trend, while a negative Z value points to a possible decreasing trend.

Sen's Slope estimator

Sen (1968) [Sen 1968] introduced a nonparametric method for estimating the slope of a trend within a dataset composed of n time-ordered observations. This technique involves computing the slopes for all possible pairs of data points and then determining their median, which serves as a reliable indicator of the overall trend. The direction of the trend—whether upward or downward—is indicated by the sign of the resulting slope. The mathematical expression used to calculate Sen's slope is provided below.

The slope of all n data pairs,

$S_i = \frac{x_j - x_k}{j-k}$ with $i = 1,2,3 \ldots \ldots n$, x_j and x_k being data values at times $j \; and \; k (j > k)$ respectively

When each time step in a time series contains a single observation, the total number of slope estimates is calculated as $N = n(n-1)/2$, where n denotes the number of time periods. If multiple observations exist within some intervals, the number of slope computations will be less than $N < n(n-1)/2$. The resulting slope values Q_i are sorted in ascending order, and the Sen's slope estimator is defined as the median of this ordered set.

$$Q_{med} = \begin{cases} Q_{[(n+1)/2]}, & if\ n\ is\ odd \\ \frac{Q_{[n/2]}+Q_{[(n+2)/2]}}{2}, & if\ n\ is\ even \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

The sign and value of Q_{med} reflects data trend direction and the steepness of the trend.

Results and Discussions

The variation of daily atmospheric methane over India for the period April 2009 to December 2021 has been plotted and shown in **Figure 1.**The Mann-Kendall trend test applied to the nationwide methane dataset revealed a statistically significant **increasing trend** in atmospheric methane concentrations across India. The test yielded a **z-score of 63.39**, a **Kendall's tau of 0.6206**, and a **Sen's slope of 0.0257ppb/day**, as shown in **Table 1** indicates a consistent upward trajectory in methane levels over time (**p-value = 0.0000**).

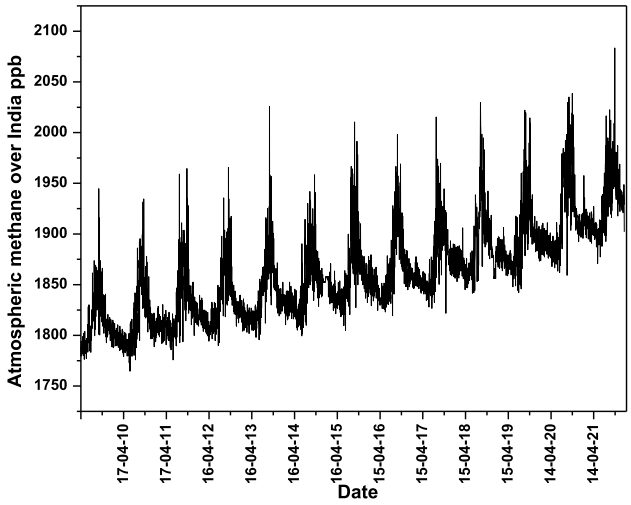


Figure1. Daily atmospheric methane over India

Table 1.MK results of atmospheric methane over India

Region	Z-score	Kendall's Tau	Sen's Slope(ppb/day)	P-value	Interpretation
Nationwide (India)	63.39	0.6206	0.0257	0	Strong, statistically significant upward trend in methane levels
North East India	60.23	0.5896	0.0261	0	Significant increasing trend, consistent with the national pattern

Seasonal Trends Across India

To assess how the observed trend in daily atmospheric methane over the considered period has been contributed from different drivers of distinct climatological seasons, daily methane data has been decomposed into 4 sets of different seasons. The seasonal decomposition includes four climatological periods: Winter (December–February), Summer (March–May), Monsoon (June–September), and Postmonsoon (October–November).

Daily GOSAT XCH_4 values were partitioned into these four climatological seasons. No detrending or filtering has been applied beyond seasonal grouping, ensuring that the decomposition is a straight forward partitioning of the daily dataset. For each seasonal subset, the Mann–Kendall test and Sen's slope estimator were applied independently to assess monotonic trends.

Statistics of the seasonal national data are given in **Table 2**, which shows that post-monsoon season drives to maximum atmospheric methane. MK test has been applied to each seasonal data. This approach allows for the identification of seasonal drivers and emission patterns that may be obscured in annual averages. Seasonal decomposition of the dataset further confirmed the presence of significant increasing trends in all four climatological seasons as shown in **Table 3**.Further, to figure out the contributors to the observed seasonal trend EDGAR (Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research)**[**Crippa *et al.* 2023**]**, emission database has been considered. The EDGAR database is a very useful global scale emissions inventory including methane emissions from different sectors on monthly time scale starting from 1970 to 2024. However, data for the considered period has been extracted for comparison. From **Table 3** it is observed that winter

Table 2 . Seasonal Methane Concentration Summary (India)

Season	Mean (ppb)	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Monsoon	1875.02	52.59	1764.6	2035.1
Post-monsoon	1879.31	44.3	1792.7	2083.5
Summer	1839.7	34.36	1776.3	1927.1
Winter	1851.57	35.44	1787.8	1957.6

Table 3. MK test result of Seasonal data.

Season	Kendall's Tau	Sen's Slope (ppb/day)	Z-score	Interpretation
Winter	0.8141	0.103	40.69	Strongest trend; robust seasonal rise in methane levels
Summer	0.818	0.0977	41.51	Similarly strong trend; elevated emissions during warmer months
Monsoon	0.558	0.0837	33.29	Slightly weaker but still significant trend
Postmonsoon	0.655	0.1542	27.61	Steepest slope; rapid methane accumulation during transitional period

exhibits the strongest trend with a **Kendall's tau of 0.8141**, **Sen's slope of 0.1030ppb/day**, and a **z-score of 40.69**, indicating a robust seasonal rise in methane levels.Summer also showed a similarly strong trend (**tau = 0.8180**, **slope = 0.0977ppb/day**, **z = 41.51**), suggesting elevated emissions during warmer months. Monsoonalthough slightly weaker than other seasons, the trend remained significant (**tau = 0.5580**, **slope = 0.0837ppb/day**, **z = 33.29**). Postmonsoondisplayed the steepest slope (**0.1542**) among all seasons, with a **tau of 0.6550** and **z-score of 27.61**, indicating rapid methane accumulation during this transitional period. Based on data from the EDGAR emission database, methane emissions from rice cultivation in India exhibit bimodal seasonal peaks, occurring consistently in February(winter) and August(monsoon) each year. Emission values corresponding to these months were extracted for the period 2009–2021 and are presented in **Figures 2(a) and 2(b)**, respectively. The analysis reveals a marked increase in methane emissions during both the winter and monsoon seasons over the study period, suggesting a significant upward trend in seasonal emissions associated with rice cultivation. Additionally, methane emissions from biomass burning, as reported in the EDGAR dataset, reach their annual maxima in April and October. Corresponding emission data for these months were similarly extracted and are illustrated in **Figures 2(c) and 2(d)**. The observed escalation in methane emissions from biomass burning appears to contribute to the increasing seasonal trends during the summer and post-monsoon periods across India. The comparison with EDGAR sectoral emissions is intended as contextual interpretation rather than causal attribution. Seasonal peaks in rice cultivation (February, August) and biomass burning (April, October) coincide with observed methane enhancements, but the analysis remains correlative. Methane concentrations reflect not only local emissions but also background levels, atmospheric lifetime (~12 years), and regional transport processes. Rigorous attribution would require inverse modeling or transport simulations, which are beyond the scope of this study.

The unusually large MK Z-scores reported in this study (e.g., $Z \approx 63$ nationally) arise from the

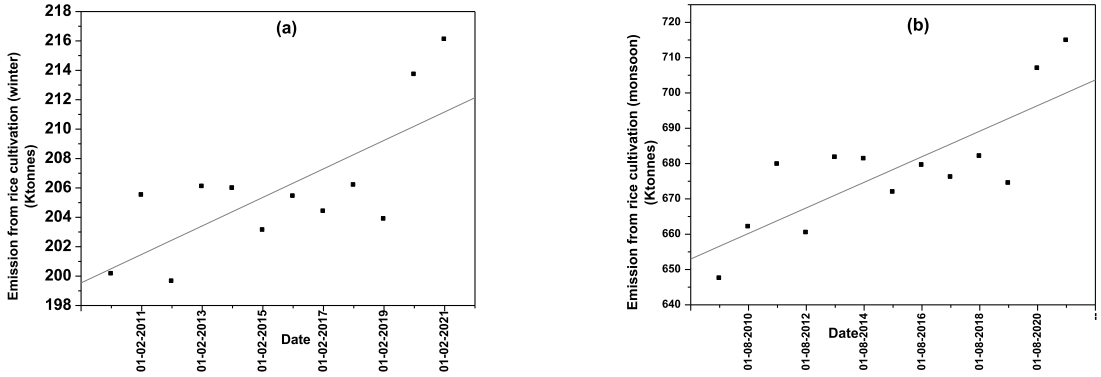


Figure 2(a). Monthly methane emissions from rice cultivation in India during February for the period 2009–2021, based on EDGAR data.

Figure 2(b). Monthly methane emissions from rice cultivation in India during August for the period 2009–2021, based on EDGAR data.

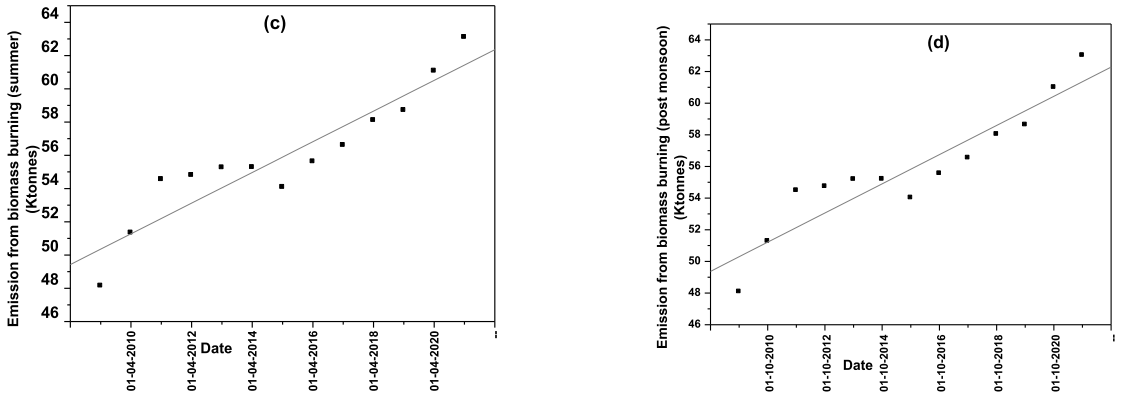


Figure 2(c). Monthly methane emissions from biomass burning in India during April for the period 2009–2021, derived from EDGAR data.

Figure 2(d). Monthly methane emissions from biomass burning in India during October for the period 2009–2021, derived from EDGAR data.

very high number of daily observations (>4,000 data points across 13 years). In the Mann–Kendall framework, the Z statistic scales with both sample size and the strength of monotoni city. Thus, long data sets with consistent upward trends yield large Z values. The methodology followed the standard MK formulation (Equations 1–5), and the resulting p-values (<0.0001) confirm the robustness of the detected trends.

Conclusion

The analysis of daily atmospheric methane concentrations over India from 2009 to 2021 reveals a robust and statistically significant upward trend, with seasonal decomposition indicating consistent increases across all climatological periods. The post-monsoon season exhibits the steepest rise in methane levels, while winter and summer show the strongest trend correlations. Sectoral attribution using EDGAR data identifies rice cultivation and biomass burning as key contributors to these seasonal patterns, with rice cultivation influencing winter and monsoon emissions, and biomass burning impacting summer and post-monsoon levels. These insights provide critical evidence for the formulation of seasonally adaptive and sector-specific methane mitigation policies, essential for achieving national and global climate targets.

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Impact of Gut Microbiota on Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: An Overview

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Abstract

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a complex but common endocrine disorder in women, characterised by hormonal imbalances, ovulatory dysfunction, and metabolic issues such as insulin resistance and obesity. Emerging evidences highlight the gut microbiota (GM) as a crucial contributor to PCOS pathophysiology. Gut microbial community regulates female reproductive functions through its involvement in nutrient processing, immune modulation, maintenance of intestinal barrier integrity, and by controlling hormone action through its bidirectional communication with the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis. Alteration in the composition of the gut microbiota, termed as 'gut dysbiosis'; disrupt these regulatory functions and have been linked to reproductive disorders. It can interrupt estrogen homeostasis *via* estrobolome-mediated pathways, promote insulin resistance through inflammatory and endotox in-driven mechanisms, impair metabolic signaling, and trigger chronic low-grade inflammation. The interplay among these manifestations creates a vicious cycle exacerbating disease progression. This review consolidates contemporary evidences elucidating how perturbations in the gut microbiota contribute to the development and progression of polycystic ovary syndrome, underscoring the multifaceted interactions among hormonal, metabolic, and inflammatory pathways.

Keywords : Female reproductive health, Gut-microbiota, Gut dysbiosis, Polycystic ovary syndrome

Introduction

Female reproductive system is a complex and highly coordinated biological system responsible for the production, maturation, transport, and potential fertilization of the female gametes, i.e. ova. But, beyond gamete production, it also provides the environment necessary for implantation, embryonic development, gestation, and childbirth. It constitutes a set of internal and external organs, each with specialized structures and functions and is coordinated through the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian (HPO) axis in order to work in synchrony to support reproductive capability [Andina I. 2023]. HPO axis, the central neuroendocrine regulatory system, governs female reproductive functions as well as ovarian steroidogenesis through intricate feedback loops. It begins with pulsatile secretion of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) from hypothalamic neurons, which stimulates anterior pituitary to release follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH) in a precisely timed manner. FSH primarily promotes ovarian granulosa cell proliferation and follicular maturation, enhancing aromatase activity to convert theca-derived androgens into estrogens, while LH drives theca cell androgen production and triggers the mid-cycle LH surge essential for ovulation and corpus luteum formation [Valera *et al.* 2025, Lonardo *et al.* 2024]. Female reproductive health is intricately regulated by a complex interplay of hormonal, anatomical, genetic, metabolic and environmental factors [Rojas *et al.*2015]. Reproductive

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functions, especially in females, can also be influenced by age, dietary habits, pharmaceutical products and underlying medical conditions, to name a few [Zubizarreta *et al*. 2020]. However, recent studies have demonstrated that human gut microbiota act as a potential regulatory factor in controlling female reproductive physiology. Gut Microbiota (GM) is a large, complex and dynamic population of microorganisms (bacteria, archaea, fungi, protists and viruses) present in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract of animals, especially humans, exhibiting complex interactions among themselves and also with various essential internal physiological (e.g. hormones, enzymes, etc.) substances to regulate and maintain homeostasis.

Initially, the source of GM depends upon the mode of child delivery, and thus, the microbial composition originates from the biological mother. In vaginal delivery, the child acquires its primary gut microbes from the mother *via* the faeco-oral or vaginal-oral route through the vagina. While in caesarean section, the baby comes in contact with the primary microflora *via* skin-to-skin contact. Later, breastfeeding and food intake play a crucial role in the accumulation of microflora [Victory *et al.* 2024]. Breast milk provides nearly 8 million intestinal bacteria daily [Browne *et al.* 2017], while 10^6 to 10^9 microorganisms can be transferred from consumed foods on a daily basis [Victory *et al.* 2024]. When a child starts consuming solid foods, its gut microflora becomes dominated by obligate anaerobes [Koenig *et al.* 2011, Yatsunenko *et al.* 2012]. As the child grows, its GM composition is influenced by family members, pets and other environmental factors like food availability, soil quality, water, etc. Various disease-causing pathogens can enter into human gut due to poor hygiene and consumption of contaminated food and water.

Gut microbiota contributes significantly in the regulation of metabolism, maintaining homeostasis as well as in hormone action [Qi *et al.* 2021]. Proper nutrient absorption by the microbes is necessary for energy production, hormone synthesis and other important cellular functions [Victory *et al.* 2024]. Marano *et al.* 2023 demonstrated that gut microbiota plays an important role especially in females across all life stages, from childhood and adolescence through reproductive years, pregnancy-postpartum till menopause and thus are crucial for female reproductive health.

A wealth of literature, published during the last few years, has displayed the multitude of effects of gut microbiota at multiple sites of the reproductive axis.

Gut microbes encode certain enzymes, which regulate the functionalities of female sex hormones, directly or indirectly through different metabolic pathways. For instance, some gut bacteria encode glucuronidase (GUSB) enzyme, which modulates the circulating estrogen and its bioavailability through host metabolism [Baker *et al.* 2017]. Menstrual cycle, ovarian folliculogenesis, and ovulation can be affected by GM as it can modify the action of FSH and progesterone [Plottel *et al.* 2011, Ervin *et al.* 2019]. Altered GM composition is associated with disrupted hormonal homeostasis, which may finally lead to reproductive disorders with reduced fertility. Investigations have shown that altered *Firmicutes*:*Bacteroidetes* ratio and decreased *Lactobacillus* spp. are associated with endometriosis [Garcia-Penarrubia *et al.* 2020], whereas an abnormal *Escherichia*: *Shigella* ratio and increased *Bacteroides* population are related to PCOS [Saad*et al.* 2016, Guo *et al.* 2022]. Besides, the gut microflora exerts pathogenic effects on low-grade inflammations and thyroid autoimmune disease, which affects reproductive organs as well [Victory *et al.* 2024].

Polycystic ovary syndrome represents one of the most frequently diagnosed endocrine disorder in women of reproductive age. Clinically, PCOS is not a single uniform condition, but a spectrum characterised by hormonal dysregulation, ovulatory dysfunction, and metabolic abnormalities. The disorder affects an estimated 5-10% of women globally, and the incidence continues to rise [Escobar-Morreale *et al*. 2018; Aversa *et al*. 2020; Azziz *et al*. 2004]. According to the widely adopted Rotterdam consensus, diagnosis of PCOS is made when at least two of the following features coexist: elevated androgen level, oligo-ovulation/anovulation, and polycystic ovarian morphology on ultrasound [Lizneva *et. al*.2016]. Most recognised manifestations of this syndrome are irregular menstrual cycles, anovulation, acne, hirsutism, hyperandrogenemia (HA), insulin resistance (IR), and obesity [Armanini *et al*. 2022; Sirmans & Pate, 2013; Palomba *et al*. 2015].

Women with PCOS have increased vulnerability to diabetes, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, endometrial hyperplasia, cardiovascular as well as cerebrovascular diseases [Sangaraju *et al*. 2022; Teede *et al*. 2010; Shawky 2022]. This wide range of co-morbidities reflects the complex and multifactorial etiology of PCOS, which is believed to involve genetic predisposition, neuroendocrine factors, metabolic disturbances, chronic inflammation, environmental triggers, and more recently recognized, gut microbiota alterations [Giampaolino *et al*. 2021; Sadeghi *et al*. 2022; Stener-Victorin *et al*. 2020; Wang *et al*. 2021; He & Li, 2020].

Although growing evidences associate gut microbiota to metabolic and endocrine dysfunctions in PCOS; existing studies remain fragmented and often focus on isolated outcomes rather than providing an integrated understanding of disease mechanisms. Pathways linking gut dysbiosis with reproductive, inflammatory, and systemic manifestations in PCOS are therefore not fully synthesized. Addressing these gaps, the present review aims to consolidate current evidences and highlight the mechanistic role of gut microbiota in PCOS pathophysiology.

Role of Gut microbiota on female reproductive health

Gut microbiota is involved in metabolism and control of hormone action that are crucial for female reproductive physiology [Qi *et al*. 2021]. Gut microbiota-gonadal steroid axis is a dynamic communication system that influences female reproductive functions by a number of pathways, including hormonal regulation, inflammation, immune system modulation, nutritional processes related to metabolism and the genital ecosystem [He *et al*. 2021]. Dysbiosis in gut microbiota is linked with altered hormone levels, which can further impair normal reproductive functionalities in females. It has been observed that the gut microbiota can generate or transform key reproductive hormones like FSH and progesterone [Wang *et al*. 2021], both crucial for maintaining the normal rhythm of the menstrual cycle, maturation of ovarian follicles, ovulation, and related physiological outcomes [Plottel & Blaser, 2011; Ervin *et al*. 2019]. Investigations have demonstrated that GUSB [Fabozzi *et al*. 2022], one of the key enzyme, secretes beta-glucuronidase to control host's metabolism, can de-conjugate estrogen; thus, enabling its binding to the estrogen receptor [Baker *et al*. 2017]. Shifts in the composition of gut bacteria possessing genes for the GUSB enzyme,

collectively known as the estrobolome [Maffei *et al*. 2022], have the capability to alter reabsorption and circulation of these reproductive hormones through the entero-hepatic pathway. Thus, alterations in the microbial community may interfere with estrogen regulation in the body, resulting in estrogen imbalance and potentially affecting reproductive health and fertility. [Ashonibare *et al*. 2024].

Gut microbiota is fundamental to immune regulation and reproductive well-being. Imbalance can cause immune irregularities and be sustained with low-grade inflammation [Ashonibare *et al*. 2024]. Such chronic inflammation can compromise female reproductive health, contributing to disorders linked with infertility; including endometriosis [Garcia-Peñarrubia *et al*. 2020; Jiang *et al*. 2021; Qi *et al*. 2019], polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), insulin resistance (IR) [Saad *et al*. 2016; Qi *et al*. 2019; Kriebs, 2019; He *et al.* 2020; Scheithauer *et al.* 2020; Yurtdas *et al.* 2020; Giampaolino *et al*. 2021], and obesity [Saad *et al*. 2016; Scheithauer *et al*. 2020]. These conditions are typically associated with immune imbalance and persistent inflammatory activity, both of which have adverse effects on fertility [de RiveroVaccari, 2020; Afolabi *et al*. 2022]. Loss of microbial diversity and distinctive alterations in the gut as well as reproductive tract microbiota are common in these disorders, resulting in weakened immune regulation, reduced immune surveillance, and abnormalities in immune cell functioning.

In addition to immune modulation, gut microbiota influences reproductive efficiency through its involvement in nutrient processing and absorption [Ashonibare *et al*. 2024]. It produces enzymes and metabolites that assist in the breakdown and utilisation of essential dietary components such as vitamins, minerals, and macronutrients [Martinez-Guryn *et al*. 2018]. Proper nutrient metabolism is crucial for reproductive health as it provides the foundation for hormone production, cellular energy, and tissue maintenance. Disturbances in microbial composition may impair nutrient assimilation, leading to deficiencies or excesses of key elements required for reproductive processes [Bhowmik *et al*. 2010]. Insufficient uptake of specific vitamins or minerals can, in turn, disrupt ovulation, hinder embryo formation, and interfere with implantation [Hostetler *et al*. 2003; Kumar *et al*. 2011].

Gut microbiota helps in maintaining microbial balance in the female reproductive tract through constant interaction between the gut, uterus, and vagina, essential for fertility [Benner *et al*. 2018; Amabebe *et al*. 2020]. Dominant vaginal microbes like *Lactobacillus* spp. are thought to originate from the gut and oral probiotics can modify vaginal flora and immunity [Amabebe *et al.* 2018].Gut dysbiosis disrupts this gut-vagina axis, leading to uterine and vaginal microbial imbalance that impairs endometrial receptivity and implantation [Wang *et al*. 2021; Benner *et al*. 2018]. It may also cause “leaky-gut” syndrome, allowing bacterial components to enter into circulation and disturb the genital tract microbiota [Amabebe *et al.* 2020].

While the GM composition keeps changing throughout life, a proper ratio still is maintained among the gut microbes to carry out an uninterrupted metabolic and physiological function [Victory *et al.* 2024], 'Gut dysbiosis' i.e. alteration in the gut microbes ratio, mainly includes the loss of beneficial microbial population in the gut [Elias-Oliveira *et al.* 2020, Fan *et al.* 2021, Qi *et al.*

2021]. Unbalanced food, some drugs and endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDC) can cause gut dysbiosis, leading to metabolic, enzymatic and hormonal dysfunctions in the host [Gemma *et al.* 2022] and subsequently results in the development of pathophysiological conditions like diabetes, obesity, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), as well as gut-related, autoimmune and various reproductive disorders [Bull *et al.* 2014]. As gut microbes play crucial roles in gonadal hormone regulation; gut dysbiosis certainly exerts negative impacts on reproductive health, especially in females contributing to fertility-related disorders including endometriosis and PCOS.

Role of Gut microbiota in the development of PCOS

Polycystic ovary syndrome represents one of the most frequently diagnosed endocrine disorders in women of reproductive age. Clinically, PCOS is not a single uniform condition, but a spectrum characterised by hormonal dysregulation, ovulatory dysfunction, and metabolic abnormalities. HPO axis dysregulation is the core pathophysiological driver in PCOS with increased GnRH pulse frequency leading to elevated LH relative to FSH (often LH/FSH > 2). This imbalance preferentially stimulates ovarian theca cells to overproduce androgens, resulting hyperandrogenemia, follicular arrest (with multiple immature cysts), followed by menstrual irregularities such as oligomenorrhea (cycles >35 days, <8-9/year) or amenorrhea, (absent menses 3 months) [*Rosenfield et al. 2016*]. Phenotypic analyses demonstrate that PCOS patients presenting with amenorrhea or oligomenorrhea exhibit more pronounced neuroendocrine and metabolic disturbances than those with regular cycles, highlighting these menstrual patterns as key indicators of disease severity and reproductive dysfunction [*Elsayed et al. 2023*]. Importantly, the severity of menstrual irregularity correlates with the degree of ovulatory impairment, underscoring amenorrhea and oligomenorrhea as key markers of disease burden [*Teede et al. 2018*].

Compounding this, insulin resistance, prevalent approximately in 50-70% of PCOS cases, exacerbates the cycle. Hyperinsulinemia further potentiates LH action on theca cells, suppresses hepatic sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG) production to increase free androgen bioavailability, and promotes peripheral aromatization of androgens to estrogens, which in turn disrupts negative feedback loop on the hypothalamus and pituitary [Valera *et al.* 2025, Lonardo *et al.* 2024].

Human gastrointestinal tract hosts trillions of microorganisms, with bacteria being the dominant group [Zhou *et al*. 2020; Guo *et al*. 2020] containing 800 species and >7,000 strains, collectively weighing approximately 1-2 kg and are often referred to as the 'second genome' [Fassarella *et al.* 2021], which contains extra genes for encoding enzymes to regulate host's physiological activities [Hooper *et al.* 2001]. These microbes survive by fermenting and metabolising undigested dietary components, forming a complex ecological system that functions in tandem with its host [Adelman *et al*. 2020; Mousa *et al*.2022; Zhang *et al*. 2021]. A proper mucus defense system throughout the intestinal barrier is maintained by GM. Imbalance in GM composition may cause the disruption of gut-vaginal crosstalk, leading to leaky-gut syndrome (LGS) where the intestinal barriers become permeable and hence result in leakage of gut microbial product into bloodstream [Amabebe *et al.* 2018, Afolabi *et al.* 2022]. During gut dysbiosis, intestinal barrier may become compromised, leading to increased susceptibility for inflammation and immune dysfunction [Li *et al*. 2022]. Several investigations have demonstrated that women

with PCOS exhibit characteristic shifts in their gut microbiota, with dysbiosis emerging as a common finding across studies (Table 1, table 2). Both gram positive and gram negative gut bacteria have significant role in the development of PCOS manifestations. Disruption of the bacterial species population in gut results in the loss of intestinal wall permeability, reduction of short chain fatty acid (SCFA) production, imbalance in LH & FSH secretion and other consequences that ultimately cause leaky-gut syndrome along with disrupted insulin sensitivity, elevated androgen level etc. Furthermore, altered gut bacterial population promote certain cytokine production that leads to inflammatory responses. Increased production of some bacterial

Table 1: Changes in Gram-positive Gut Bacterial Population in PCOS manifestations.

Bacteria	Affected Activities	Resulting Manifestations
Clostridium sp. (I) **(↓)**	Inhibition of intestinal aromatase activity	Androgen cannot be converted into estrogen, leading to HA
	Reduction of SCFAs production	Imbalanced insulin sensitivity, promoting IR
	Decrease of intestinal permeability	LGS allowing LPS to enter blood circulation, cause low-grade inflammation
Bifidobacterium sp. **(↓)**	Decrease of SCFAs production	Promote IR
	Inhibition of PYY production (due to lower SCFA)	Induce obesity and IR by disrupted fat and glucose metabolism; Dysregulation of LH & FSH secretion affecting normal androgen level
	Upregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines (TNF- a,NF-κB, IL17A, IL6)	Induce low-grade inflammation
	Disruption of intestinal permeability	Cause LGS & leads to inflammation
Lactobacillus sp. **(↓)**	Disruption of LH/FSH ratio	Imbalanced androgen to estrogen conversion, promoting HA
	Reduction of SCFAs production	Promote IR & type-2 diabetes
	Disruption of intestinal absorption	Cause body weight mismanagement and obesity
	Upregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines	Induce inflammation
	Intestinal barrier integrity disruption	Cause LGS, promoting inflammation
Enterococcus sp. **(↑)**	Degradation of GLP-1	Affect glucose homeostasis & cause IR
	Production of Tyramine, a bioactive metabolite (by E. faecium B6)	Increase fat accumulation & inflammation in liver which lead to IR
	Reduction of SCFA production	Promote IR
	Increased insulin production	Stimulate androgen secretion, causing HA
	Gut-lining permeability disruption	Cause LGS & hence inflammation
Streptococcus sp. **(↑)**	Decrease of FSH level	Decrease of androgen to estrogen formation, causing HA
	Increased BCAA production	Promote IR
	Damage of intestinal barrier proteins	Result in LGS & inflammation
Ruminococcus sp. **(↑)**	Disruption of bile acid metabolism	Disrupt gut-brain axis, leading to sex hormone imbalance, HA
	Production of Mevalonolactone (MVL) by R. torques	Disrupt glucose and lipid metabolism & affect PI3K-ATK signaling pathway BY GGPPS gene regulation, causing IR
	Gut barrier disruption	Cause LGS & chronic inflammation

(↑) : indicates the increase in the bacterial population in PCOS patients
(↓) : indicates the decrease in the bacterial population in PCOS patients

Table 2: Changes in the Gram-negative Gut Bacterial Population in PCOS Manifestations

Bacteria	Affected Activities	Resulting Manifestations
Escherichia sp. **(↓)**	LPS secretion from outer body wall & Decrease of intestinal permeability	Cause LGS, resulting in LPS entry into blood and activate chronic inflammation
	Upregulation of inflammatory pathways	Disrupt insulin signaling pathways, promoting IR
	Disruption of bile acid metabolism	InduceIR
	Stimulation of higher insulin production (as a result of IR)	Result in excess and rogen production in ovary, leading to HA
Shigella sp. **(↑)**	LPS secretion into blood stream	Induce low-grade chronic inflammation
	Upregulation of inflammation and insulin production	Promote IR & type-2 diabetes; Hyperinsulinemia causes HA
	Negative co - relation with ghrelin	Disrupt gut-brain endocrine axis, promoting HA
Prevotella sp. **(↓)**	LPS secretion into blood	Activate inflammatory pathways
	Imbalance of BCAA synthesis	Promote diabetes & IR
	Decrease of SCFAs production	Disrupt barrier integrity; Cause abnormal lipid metabolism, leading to obesity; Promote IR
	Disruption of SCFA metabolism	Disrupt gut-brain axis, resulting in imbalance of sex hormone secretions & finally lead to HA
	Positive correlation with androgen synthesis	Cause HA
Bacteroides sp. **(↑)**	Increase of LPS production	Induce chronic inflammation
	Reduction of SCFAs production	Disrupt gut permeability; Develop diabetes & IR
	Reduction of bile acid metabolism	Induce IR; Promote inflammation by IL-22 production
	Elevation of LH & androgen secretion	Cause HA

(↑): indicates the increase in the bacterial population in PCOS patients
(↓): indicates the decrease in the bacterial population in PCOS patients

metabolites may also lead to physiological irregularities like high fat accumulation, type 2-diabetes, IR, low-grade inflammation. Besides, these abnormalities affect various signaling, metabolic and hormonal pathways to develop PCOS manifestations.

Accumulated evidences studied so far suggest that gut microbiota contributes not only to the onset but also to the severity and progression of PCOS by actively participating in the pathological

processes. Gut microbiota imbalance is significantly linked to the major physiological features of PCOS, including hyperandrogenism (Fig. 1), insulin resistance (Fig. 2), chronic low-grade inflammation, and obesity [He *et al.* 2021; Jeanes *et al.* 2017; Fox *et al*. 2019; Chen *et al.* 2021].

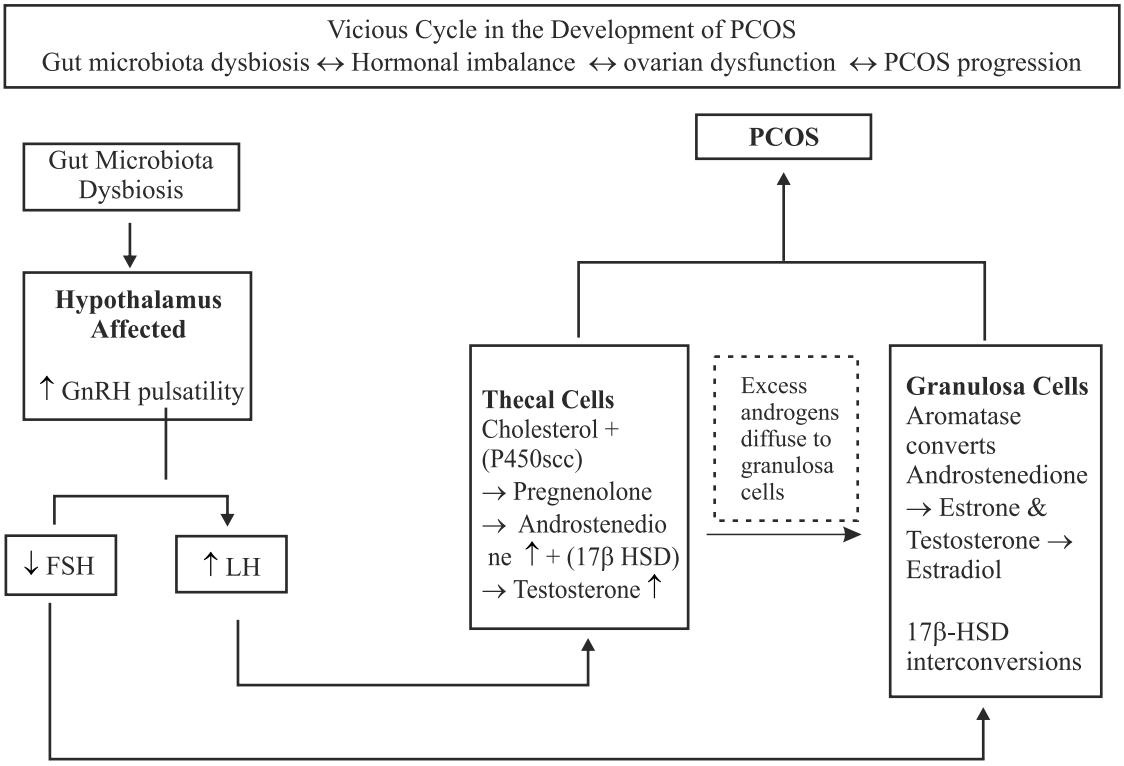


Figure 1: The interlinked pathways through which intestinal flora and hyperandrogenism (HA) interact to influence the onset polycystic ovary syndrome (Figure adapted from Liu et al. 2023).

↑ indicates increase in production ↓ indicates decrease in production

Role of Gut microbiota in different manifestations of PCOS

Apart from menstrual irregularities, PCOS has various other manifestations like hyperandrogenism (HA), insulin resistance (IR), inflammation and obesity. The gut microbes exert crucial effects on these manifestations as well.

A. Hyperandrogenism

In PCOS patients, androgen levels are higher compared to a normal female, which is mainly due to the disruption of the hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian axis. GnRH, secreted from the hypothalamus, induces the pituitary to secrete LH and FSH, which in turn stimulate androgen synthesis and its conversion to estrogen, respectively, in the ovary [Rosenfield *et al.* 2016]. An increased *Firmicutes*:*Bacteroidetes* ratio with decreased bacterial species diversity in the gut of PCOS females can affect the hormonal axis, leading to elevated androgen level in the body. On the

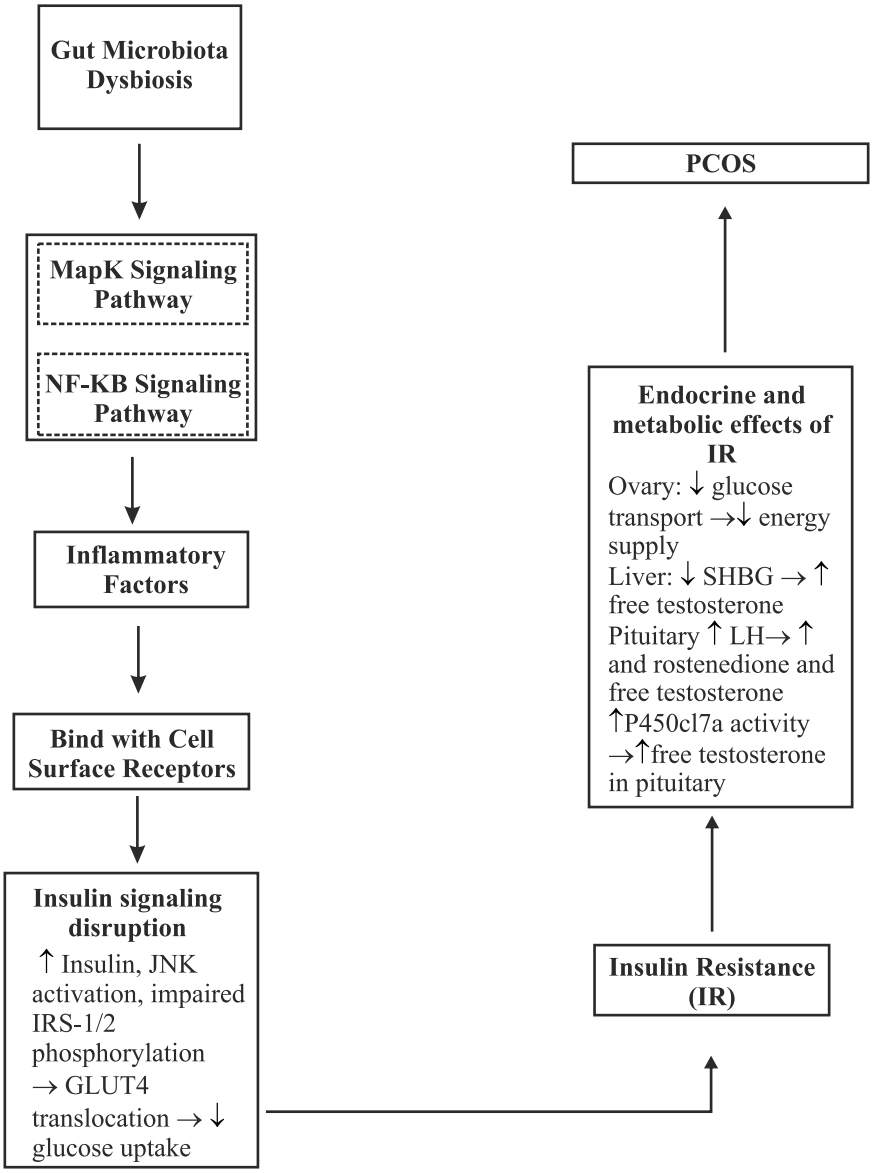


Figure 2: Relationship between insulin resistance, intestinal flora and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Schematic pathway illustrating how gut microbiota dysbiosis promotes systemic inflammation and insulin resistance, leading to hyperandrogenism and the development of PCOS. (Figure adapted from Liu et al. 2023).
↑ indicates increase in production ↓ indicates decrease in production

other hand, increased LH level, promotes testosterone synthesis in the theca cells of ovarian follicles by facilitating cholesterol conversion through the steroid biosynthesis pathway [Lebbe *et al.* 2013]. The high quantity of androgen then diffuses to the granulosa cells and gets converted into estrogen by the FSH-induced aromatase activity. As the elevated estrogen level exerts negative feedback on FSH secretion, the decreased aromatase activity in the ovary results in a reduction of the estrogen production from androgen [Laven 2019] and thus, the androgen keeps increasing.

Exposure to high androgen causes abnormal follicular growth or growth arrest [Laven 2019], which may results in cyst formation. Moreover, increased *Firmicutes* population in HA is associated with increased body fat and blood glucose level [Kelley *et al.* 2016]. Hirsutism and acne are the common symptoms of HA.

B. Insulin Resistance

Insulin resistance (IR) is very closely associated with the altered GM in PCOS females. Insulin, secreted from the pancreatic ″ cells, binds with specific receptors in target tissues and regulates glucose metabolism through phosphatidylinositol-(3,4,5)-triphosphate/protein kinase B (PI3P-PKB) and rat sarcoma / mitogen-activated protein kinase (RAS-MAPK) signaling pathways [Xu *et al.* 2018]. Both the pathways initiate when insulin binds to the transmembrane receptor tyrosine kinase (RTK) of the target cell. This binding results in the dimerisation and phosphorylation of RTK, which eventually activates PIP3 and RAS. Activated PIP3 and RAS subsequently regulate the physiological activities of the cells through cascade pathways.

Gut dysbiosis in PCOS results in disrupted intestinal barrier integrity, increased mucosal permeability and endotox in production from the intestinal wall. All these leads to a decline in the tyrosine phosphorylation [Mor *et al.* 2004]. Increased *Prevotella* in the gut of a PCOS patient synthesises branched chain amino acids (BCAAs), which induce inflammatory responses [He & Li 2020, Zhang *et al.* 2014]. More over, inflammations, as well as endotoxins, result in serine phosphorylation of insulin receptor substrate (IRS) through specific c-Jun N-terminal kinase (JNK) pathway and Nuclear Factor-κB signaling pathway. This further inhibits the tyrosine phosphorylation and therefore interferes with the cascade pathways in target tissues [Bremer *et al.* 2008]. Due to structural modulation and enzymatic changes of RTK, insulin cannot properly bind with the target receptor leading to elevate, blood insulin level, termed as insulin resistance (IR). Increased free insulin level stimulates the pituitary to secrete LH, which subsequently increases androgen production (HA) through enzymatic pathways [Ding *et al.* 2021]. Both HA and abnormal glucose utilisation negatively impact ovarian follicular growth [Li *et al.* 2022].

C. Chronic Inflammation

As GM exerts immune-modulatory effects, its disruption certainly produces low-grade chronic inflammation among PCO patients. Gut dysbiosis compromises intestinal barrier, allowing infiltration of lymphocytes and macrophages, which triggers inflammation [Jiayue *et al.* 2023]. Apart from this, due to leaky gut, improper diet and other GI tract-related issues, the gut bacterial ratio changes, which cause the production of endotoxins. The endotoxins further activate immune responses by stimulating immune cells to produce inflammatory factors like TNF-α, NF-κB, IL-17A, IL-6, C-reactive protein (CRP), etc., which result in chronic inflammation. In case of PCOS females, the increase in gram-negative bacteria like *E. coli, Bacteroides,* etc. results in elevated production of lipopolysaccharide (LPS), an endotoxin which is considered as a major inflammation-promoting substance. Damaging the intestinal mucus layer, LPS enters into blood circulation [Tremellen *et al.*2012] and binds with CD14 of immune (monocytes, macrophages, neutrophils, B-lymphocytes and dendritic cells) and non-immune cells (hepatocytes, enterocytes,

endothelial cells and pancreatic cells) with the help of a carrier protein: LPS-binding protein (LBP). Subsequently, CD14 transfers LPS to toll-like receptor 4 (TLR4) and thus activates it [Boutagy *et al.* 2016]. Activated TLR4 stimulate immune cells to produce pro-inflammatory cytokines (mainly TNF–α, IL6 and IL1β) through specific signaling pathways. In pancreatic β-cells, the activated TLR4 promotes the JNK pathway and, in turn, NF-κB signaling pathway, which results in pro-inflammatory cytokines production and thus β-cell malfunction, causing IR [Tak*et al.* 2001]. Various LPS-dependent pathways are found to cause HA, obesity, delayed ovulation and other PCOS symptoms.

D. Obesity

Women with PCOS are comparatively more obese than normal females. GM-derived metabolic pathway disruptions is one of the crucial factor in developing of obesity in PCO patients. As GM is directly influenced by diet, an unbalanced food consumption causes alteration in GM composition and promotes fat accumulation in the body. High-fat diet alters the intestinal flora in such a way that lipopolysaccharides (LPS) production increases and short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) production decreases, which leads to obesity through the LPS pathway and G-protein coupled pathways [Kimura *et al.* 2020, Ridaura *et al.* 2013]. LPS in systemic circulation develops leptin resistance in the arcuate nucleus (ARC) of hypothalamus through inflammatory responses and specific signaling pathways. Leptin, an adipocytes derived polypeptide hormone, binds with its receptors in the brain and promotes satiety. Elevated LPS disrupts the leptin-receptor binding in the brain, leading to a continuous increase in appetite followed by higher consumption of food than the body needs, and the consequence is increased body weight and obesity. On the other hand, lower SCFAs cannot bind with G-proteins properly and thus inhibit the intestinal cells from producing adequate Peptide YY (PYY) and Glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1) hormones. Decreased PYY and GLP-1 promote gastric emptying, which triggers the brain to induce hunger. The prolonged constant appetite results in increased food intake and finally in increased body weight. Decreased concentration of these hormones adversely affect glucose and fat metabolism, thereby increasing the risk of insulin resistance, type-2 diabetes and obesity [Lin *et al.* 2021]. Moreover, an increased LH: FSH ratio contributes to the elevated androgen levels and is a major cause of obesity. Abnormal bile metabolism by GM-encoded hydrolase enzymes, also disrupts glucose homeostasis, lipid metabolism and leads to obesity in PCOS patients [Jiayue *et al.* 2023].

Conclusion

Understanding GM-PCOS interactions has become a key focus in recent research, with increasing interest in microbiota-based interventions as a potential therapeutic approach.Taken together, the present information it can be stated that gut microbiota and its dysbiosis significantly contribute to polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) by driving different manifestations, including hyperandrogenism, insulin resistance, chronic inflammation and obesity by disrupting the normal metabolic pathways of the female reproductive functions. All these manifestations are interrelated, i.e., the development of one synergistically promotes the others. For instance, inflammations can change the conformation of the insulin receptor or may affect its phosphorylation by disrupting

signaling pathways [Solinas, *et al.* 2017], or even reduce the number of ″-cells [Gong *et al.* 2020], leading to IR. Elevated blood insulin in case of IR stimulates the pituitary to secrete higher LH, which in turn, increases the circulating androgen level and results in HA [Ding *et al*. 2021]. Higher androgen secretion from ovarian theca cells can also be directly influenced by the pro-inflammatory factors through enzymatic and signaling pathways, as well as oxidative stress. Besides, IR may cause hyperinsulinemia and promote the storage of glucose in the form of fat with a subsequent increase in the adipose tissue content of the body, which may lead to obesity. The abdominal fat tissues further produce inflammatory cytokines, resulting in chronic inflammation and an increase in body weight. Moreover, each manifestation can disrupt the intestinal microflora more significantly and thus the other manifestations get triggered.

The gut microbiome also communicates with the host genome [Jiayue et al. 2023]. As GM control cellular activities, change in GM composition can affect the cellular processes like transcription and translation, which further result in alteration of gene expression and the epigenetic modifications in the host. Alteration in the expression of the genes involved in female endocrine and metabolic pathways can disrupt the normal ovarian follicular growth and promote the development of PCOS.

However, although the pathways through which gut microbiota influence PCOS development are partially understood, the precise molecular and epigenetic mechanisms remain unclear till date. Further studies elucidating the GM–PCOS relationship are essential for improving awareness, diagnosis, affordable treatment options, and overall female reproductive health.

Conflict of interest: NIL

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