

---

# Editors' Note

A furious torrent into which buildings collapse like houses made of cards; the horrified cry of a mountaineer at an Everest base camp –“where’s the camp?!” – With increasing frequency, images like these are flashed into our homes, disrupting our smug complacency about the world we live in, the world we have partly created for ourselves. Anthropocene, a term denoting the era of irreparable human influence on the earth, is soon to enter the official lexicon of geological ages. Starting from the last decades of the 20th century, we have been forced to acknowledge the effects of human activity on the environment that we live in. Our construction activities have changed the course of rivers, clogged the channels of sediment transportation, and despoiled natural beauty. We have become the meteors and comets of our own age. We cannot deny that our collective hubris, bred by our ‘conquest’ of nature, has been challenged by the disastrous consequences we are now encountering.

Are we then to retreat into a mindset which sees human beings as ‘victims’, helpless against the fury of the elements? Or, do we don the mantle of the co-creator of our environment? Should we plunder the earth as a consumer, or should we nurture its wealth as responsible custodians? Today, the choice can no longer be put off, for the crisis is already upon us. For centuries our conquests have ranged over nations, cultures and natural resources. The Darwinian idea that the fittest only survive the process of evolution, encouraged a competitive anthropocentrism which saw nature as the ‘other’, an entity which could be tamed and exploited for man’s increasing prosperity. The cycle is now turning towards a more inclusive vision of a living universe in which man is a co-creator. Elisabet Sahtouris in the Spring/Summer volume, 2014, of *Kosmos*, has written,

“The new view, revealing a conscious universe and a living Earth in which we are co-creators, takes us out of fatalistic victimhood to becoming consciously active agents of our destiny! It lifts the fog of

---

---

our self-image as consumers of stuff, giving us awesome rights and responsibilities to live out our full co-creative humanity.”

The ecological turn in humanities is a response to the complex issue of humankind’s relationship with the natural environment, and how this in turn affects aspects of our existence, ranging from politics to health. Eco-criticism, made popular by the likes of Cheryl Glotfelty, examines the ways in which our responses to nature reflect the larger power equations in society. The theme of this volume, ‘through the ecological lens’ is a general one which encompasses within it the various aspects of eco-humanities, such as, ecological history, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, deep ecology, and ecosophy. The articles in this volume have approached the subject from different perspectives, but together they show that the time has come for the idea of ecosophy, which has been defined by Arne Naess as a kind of *Sophia* or wisdom, which shows us how to live in harmony with our surroundings.

This multidisciplinary, multilingual, volume accommodates the responses of Indian scholars who have looked at environmental issues from the standpoint of their experiences as modern day Indians. Standing at the intersection of the global and the local, their articles reveal how the tools of a philosophy which originated in the west, may be adapted to gain insights and speak about some of our most immediate crises and choices. India being a developing nation has the added responsibility of treading a path of sustainable development, which will accommodate the aspirations of those millions who have never enjoyed the benefits of an industrialised society. In a country that is poor in many aspects, but rich in natural resources, the temptation to exploit them for immediate gain is acute. Since the 1990s, eco-criticism has been gaining ground as an interdisciplinary field of study. Analysing texts through the prism of ecology, scholars have revealed how attitudes towards nature and landscape reflect broader attitudes towards power equations involving gender, race and economics.

---

The need for ecological wisdom has been emphatically articulated by Mili Samaddar in her essay in Bengali, entitled *Bipanna Bismay*. The catastrophic flash flood in Uttarakhand is taken as the central episode which leads on to the debate between development and conservation. Dr. Samaddar has shown how attending a workshop for Rabindranath Tagore's *Muktadhara*, in a remote island in the Sunderbans had opened her eyes to the ways in which men can relate to nature. Tagore in his play *Muktadhara* had anticipated the crisis resulting from the mindless greed of an exploitative state, looking out for the interests of a few pressure groups. The spontaneous and passionate love for nature which Tagore had depicted in his play finds a deep resonance with the apparently unsophisticated villagers of Sunderban. This is contrasted with the greed of the state government which has allowed unsustainable tourism and urbanization of Uttarakhand's ecologically sensitive area.

Soumya Bhattacharya's article, which dwells on Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's novel *Aranyak*, explores the divided psyche of a man who has to work as a cog in the wheel of the State's developmental plans. Bhattacharya shows how a strong ecological consciousness works within the Romanticism of Bibhtibhusan, as he traces the protagonist Satyacharan's journey from the city to the village, which is presented as a journey from the centre to the margin. Satyacharan's initially romanticised vision of natural landscape and the people inhabiting it soon leads to a bitter realisation of the degradation wrought upon both by the forces of a capitalist economy. His own role in perpetrating this makes him feel guilty ever after.

Dr. Kavita Mehrotra, in her article entitled *Badalta Parivesh Aur Manushya*, has located the bond between man and nature in the context of the changing environment. She has explored the irony of man who despite standing helpless in front of nature and its infinity, assumes himself as superior to nature and continues to exploit it. Believing in materialistic existence, he considers physicality to be

---

---

the only truth. As a result of this, however, his outer as well as inner nature, are being affected adversely.

Professor Abha Jha, in her article *Paryaavaran Aur Aaj Ka Maanav*, has provided a beautiful account of the relationship between human beings and nature, and substantiated her view through the works of the famous poets in Hindi such as, Jaishankar Prasad, Pant and Nagarjun. Nature, always tries to maintain a balance with the drastic changes imposed upon it by human beings, but the latter tends to forget that his origin is rooted in nature, and it is nature which nurtures him. Man, instead, conceives nature as a consumable non-entity and tries to control it. This, in turn, leads to his fall.

In *Padmaavat Mein Prakriti Prem*, Dr. Vasundhara Misra, has described the beauty of nature with reference to Padmaavat, the famous work of Malik Muhammad Jayasi – an eminent Sufi poet in Hindi literature. Dating back to 1540, Jayasi, in his celebrated work, has provided the readers with a detailed portrayal of the beauty of the six seasons, as they change, and the way in which this reflects not only the transience of nature but also the psychological subtleties of the characters in the book.

In contrast to this, the following two eco-critical essays in this volume dwell on the representation of the schism between man and nature in the narratives of our times.

Somrita Ganguly's *Gendering the Greens: An Ecocritical / Ecofeminist Reading of Seamus Heaney's Works* provides an eco-feminist reading of Seamus Heaney's poetry. The conflation of landscape and woman in his metaphoric representation of Ireland reveals his perceptive realisation of the disastrous consequences of a phallo-centric culture propagated by the Judeo-Christian tradition. This has resulted in the hideous progenies of rape and degradation of women, as well as the blood-spattered history of Irish resistance to English colonisation.



---

Sonal Kapur's essay, *On Ghazala Meer: (Re) mapping the Land –as-Woman Metaphor in Vishal Bharadwaj's Haidar*, extends the land-as-woman reading of textual representation to the domain of cinematic narrative. Interpreting *Haidar* through the prism of semiotics, eco-feminism and performativity theory, she has examined how Bharadwaj's film, released in 2014, has used the land-woman equivalence to represent the subversive force of the absent referent. The central female character, Ghazala Meer, the object of desire and domination, is divested of individual subjectivity by the male protagonists. Even as they frame their actions with her as the centre of their greed for power, she annihilates herself in an act of defiance and self assertion, thereby disrupting the convenient male narrative. Kapur reads into this story, a metaphor for Kashmir itself, a land of mythical beauty, over whom nations play out games of domination. In the process the phenomenal existence of the land and its people become irrelevant. In Kapur's interpretation of the denouement of the movie, the snows catching fire symbolises the annihilation of the landscape, and the myth of its beauty is replaced by the actual reality of a scarred geography.

The article entitled *Nataraja – A Symbol of Harmony and Beauty in Nature* by Souraja Tagore has consciously been placed at the centre of this volume, as it talks about a past which is now irrevocably lost to us, but whose teachings remind us of an ecosophy which had once been envisaged in Ancient India. She examines the iconography of the Nataraja to explain how its combination of the five elements (*panchabhuta*), fire, air, earth, water and ether, expresses the desire for an existence in harmony with the rhythm of nature; a desire that finds expression in the perfect poise of the dancing Nataraja. In a post-industrialised world such a wonderful equipoise has become a distant ideal.

Stemming from the environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the impact of nature on man and the reverse, the impact of

---

---

technological interventions in nature and the effect of capitalism on the environment, has become the subject matter of historians. The narrative of continuous human progress is increasingly being challenged by studies which focus on conservation and environmental issues, and how ecological history impacts the course of human struggles. Gargi Chattopadhyay, in *Sagar: A Land of Promise? C. 1770-1850*, provides an overview of the role played by this island in the maritime history of India. Although associated nostalgically with our forefathers who used to brave the vagaries of nature to take the annual dip, the island also has a rich history moulded by natural and historical factors which have played their part in creating and recreating the island, in the course of time. Its worth as a deep-sea anchorage was noted in the mid-seventeenth century by European travellers and sailors. At present too, it is being considered as a mooring space cum port for ocean liners. Chattopadhyay's study spans the island's history from the late medieval period to the present day, providing insights into hitherto uncharted aspects of its history.

In *The Menace of Arsenic: Effects on the Common People of Bengal*, Paramita Chakrabarty argues how the effects of environmental pollution impact the weaker sections of society. In a comprehensive study of the problem, Chakrabarti has explored the social, psychological and medical viewpoints to show how alarm bells are ringing in various quarters with regard to this problem. The history of humankind is not only to be found in its mega events, but in these continuous everyday challenges which affect the life and habitat of people.

A gradual consciousness of the environment resulted in the emergence of *Environmental Sociology* in the 1970's. Neeparanya Guha quotes Riley E Dunlap in her article on Environmental Sociology, where she states that it arose from the widespread social awareness of environmental problems and the mobilisation of support for environmental protection. She traces the emergence of

---

Environmental Sociology linking it to traditional Sociology and goes on to show how it has become an immensely popular discipline. She touches upon its vast scope where she highlights the very real and at times cataclysmic environmental problems which are in actuality social problems that have to be dealt with, involving society as a whole.

Shreya Bhattacharya gives an insight into the human impact on biological diversity in her article entitled ***Globalization and wildlife: An insight into the human impact on biological diversity***, where she presents a picture of the very real threat that the environment is facing with the gradual encroachment of man upon it. Human intervention has had a ripple effect which is felt by nature, man and animals. She has briefly touched upon the problems brought about by destruction of the natural habitat by man in the name of globalisation.

Man has had to face certain consequences for every stride forward that he has taken. It brings to mind Newton's third law which states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Man has taken giant steps in technology which has looked after his well being; side by side it has thrown up certain adversities. Adrita Ganguly has looked into the effect of mobile radiation in her article on ***Tower Tension: Understanding the noxious effect of Mobile Tower Radiation***. Mobile phones play a very important and essential role in modern life, cutting across rural and urban populations. This has led to the mushrooming of mobile transmission towers all over the land. Ganguly's article cautions us about the dangers of radiation and how it is detrimental to man.

Modern day political and ecological activism seems to be fulfilling the forebodings of writers like Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. ***The Voice of the Subaltern against the Cacaphony of Industrialisation***, by Upasana Roy Barman deals with the various aspects of the ecological movement started in 20004 by the Dongria and Kutiya Kondh tribes, to save their Niyam Raja (The Niyamgiri Hills), from

---

the gigantic bauxite mining industry , The Vedanta Alumina Limited. The first part gives an overview of the whole process of industrialisation begun by the Vedanta Company. The second part talks of the symbiotic relationship between the hill and the people. The third part brings out the power relation that emerged out of the process of capitalist development and the resistance put up by the tribal population of the region. It is concluded that this struggle cannot just be termed as a mere conflict, but as an alternative discourse. Such a discourse is bound to become more vociferous, as the conflict between the subaltern and the privileged classes intensify in the post-globalised world.

A crisis of conscience regarding the geography and society we change in the name of development is not the preserve of literature alone. An ecological model of development through environmentally wise public policy was mooted by Fred Riggs. *Ecology and Administration: Revisiting the Prismatic model of Fred Riggs* by Souradeep Sen, accounts for the roots of the ecological approach within the area of public administration. Beginning by explaining the significance of the approach to the concept of bureaucracy, Sen follows with an analysis of Fred Riggs' treatment of the ecology of administration and his contribution to the development of this particular model. Lastly the article focuses on the criticisms levelled against the model with an aim to make alterations so as to make it suitable to the present times.

This volume, which has been a little over a year in the compiling, is the contribution of the Humanities Section of The Bhawanipur Education Society College, to the ongoing debates which are revolving round ecological concerns and their implications for the power equations and developmental concerns of our times.

**Dr. Suchandra Chakravarty**  
**Ananyya Banerjee**

---

# বিপন্ন বিস্ময় !

ড. মিলি সমাদ্দার

২০১৩ সনের ১৭ই জুন, অলকানন্দা - মন্দাকিনী - ভাগীরথীর পার্বত্য অববাহিকায় দেড় দিনে স্বাভাবিকের তুলনায় চারশো চল্লিশ শতাংশ বেশি বৃষ্টি হওয়ায়, অগণিত পূণ্যার্থী, পর্যটক ও বারোটি জনবসতি প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয়ে নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে গিয়েছিল! দেবভূমি রাতারাতি পরিণত হয়েছিল মৃত্যুভূমিতে! সাম্প্রতিককালে প্রাকৃতিক দুর্ঘটনার এ নিদর্শন মানব ইতিহাসের যন্ত্রণাদায়ক এক বিপন্ন অভিজ্ঞতা!

মেঘভাঙা বৃষ্টি, ধস, হড়কাবান, প্রাকৃতিক রোষ উত্তরাখণ্ড জুড়ে বেনজির ধ্বংসলীলা ও তুমুল ক্ষয়ক্ষতিতে, কোটি কোটি বছর ধরে তিল তিল করে গড়ে ওঠা সূক্ষ্ম - জটিল অকল্পনীয় বিরাট প্রাকৃতিক সংস্থানের সলিল সমাধি ঘটিয়েছিল নদীগর্ভে। দশদিনের বৃষ্টির পরিমাণ সঞ্চিত হয়েছিল দেড় দিনে। নদীর নিজের গতিপথ সরে গিয়েছিল প্রায় দেড়শো ফুট। পূণ্যার্থী ও পর্যটকদের অনেকেই ১৬ই জুন রাত্রিতে হয়তো লক্ষ্য করেছিলেন চোরাবারিতাল থেকে হিমবাহের ভার নিয়ে গোটা পাহাড়টাই কেমন তীরবেগে ছুটে এসেছিল উন্মত্ত ধ্বংসের মারণতৃষণ নিয়ে! আর অভাবনীয মুহূর্তে বন্যার চেহারা জলের ঢেউ প্রায় পনের ফুট উঁচু হয়ে আছড়ে পড়েছে পাহাড়চূড়া সহ কেদারনাথ প্রাঙ্গণের গায়ে।

ভয়ানক বৃষ্টির চাপে ফেটে গিয়েছিল চোরাবারিতাল, যার অন্য নাম গাঁধী সরোবর। সরোবর ছাপিয়ে জলের তুফান আছড়ে পড়েছিল কেদারনাথের পথে, গৌরীকুণ্ড ও মন্দাকিনীর খাতে। ধাক্কা এসে লাগে অলকানন্দা, কর্ণপ্রয়াগ, শ্রীনগর, দেবপ্রয়াগে। বাদ পড়ে না উত্তরকাশীর গ্রাম্য জনপদ যোশীয়াড়াও। বৃষ্টির মহাপ্রলয়ের তাণ্ডবে যোশীয়াড়াতেই প্রথম চারতলা হোটেল বাড়ি ধূলিসাৎ হওয়ার ছবি টেলিভিশনের পর্দায় জনগণ প্রথম লক্ষ্য করেছিল, কিন্তু অনুমান করতে পারেনি তার মারণলীলার পরিহাস! ঠিক পরের দিন ১৭ই জুন সংবাদ মাধ্যমে জানা গিয়েছিল জলপ্লাবনে নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে গিয়েছে কেদারনাথ সহ অসংখ্য প্রান্তর। যখন গৌরীকুণ্ড নামটা একটা ইতিহাস! মহাপ্রলয়ের তাণ্ডবে সেদিন নদীগর্ভে তলিয়ে গিয়েছে অসংখ্য জনবসতি এবং প্রায় হাজার দশেক মানুষ! আমরা জানি উত্তরাখণ্ডে এই সময়টায় চলে 'যাত্রাকাল'। তাই, দেশের অগণিত পূণ্যার্থী ভিড় করে আসে চারধামের অভিমুখে! (কেদার, বদ্রী, গঙ্গোত্রী এবং যমুনোত্রী নিয়ে

---

চারধাম) সুতরাং অনুমান করা কঠিন নয় ঘোষিত মূর্তের সংখ্যা আপাত গাণিতিক এক পরিসংখ্যান মাত্র! সংবাদমাধ্যম সূত্রে জানা যায়, সেই মারণ তাণ্ডবলীলার মধ্যেও অফুরান প্রাণের শক্তিতে বেঁচে থাকা কতিপয় প্রত্যক্ষদর্শী দেখেছেন, শান্তিদায়িনী বনলতা মন্দাকিনীর জলে মরনের বিভীষিকা! জলতলে বিলীন হ'য়ে গিয়েছে কেদার ও বদীনাথ মন্দিরের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা আদি শঙ্করাচার্যের সমাধি। কেবল হিমালয়ের অনন্ত রূপভৈরবের মধ্যে বেঁচে গিয়েছিল কেদারনাথের মন্দির, যেন প্রাচীন-তত্ত্বের স্মারক!

উত্তরাখণ্ডের পার্বত্য অববাহিকায় যে ধ্বংসলীলা মারণ - ইতিহাসের এক ভয়ঙ্কর শক্তি হয়ে উঠেছিল জুন মাসের সতেরো তারিখ, সন দু'হাজার তেরো, তা কি প্রকৃতির খেয়াল না প্রকৃতির প্রতিশোধ? - এ প্রশ্ন বারে বারে তোলপাড় করেছে 'সভ্য পৃথিবী'র পরিবেশ অসচেতন মানুষকেও। পরিবেশবিদরা জানিয়েছেন অতিবৃষ্টির ফলে এই দুর্ঘটনা তৈরি হয়নি! বৃষ্টির জলের চাপে কানফাটা আর্তনাদে 'চোরাবারিতাল' ফেটে গিয়েছিল এবং হিমবাহের ভার নিয়ে গোটা পাহাড়টা ধসে পড়েছিল পনেরো ফুট উঁচু জলের এক বিশাল চেউয়ের সঙ্গে যা নিমেষে মর্ত্যভূমিকে মৃত্যুভূমিতে পরিণত করেছিল তার পিছনে ছিল মানুষের অসচেতন আচরণের অসহায় পরিহাস!

প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলাকে মানুষ ছিন্ন করেছে বহুমুখী, প্রবল এবং শেষ পর্যন্ত অর্থহীন এক বিজ্ঞাপিত আধুনিকতার উন্নয়নের আগ্রাসননীতিতে। প্রকৃতির ভারসাম্য লঙ্ঘন করে আরও আরও বেশি ক্ষমতা আয়ত্ত করতে চেয়েছে পুঁজিবাদী ব্যবস্থায় বাজার অর্থনীতি ও মুনাফার প্রশ্ন! অথচ পৃথিবী নামক গ্রহটিতে যে প্রাকৃতিক সংস্থানে মানবপ্রজাতিটি বাস করে, তার প্রতি দায়বদ্ধতা বা সচেতনতা বিন্দুমাত্র অনুভব করার কথা বিবেচিত হয়নি বিপন্ন অস্তিত্বের খাদের কিনারে পৌঁছেও, 'সভ্য পৃথিবী'র ভারতবর্ষীয় জনগণের! আধুনিক ব্যবস্থাপনা গ'ড়ে তোলার সক্রিয় উদ্যোগে ও উদ্দীপনায় সরকারী - বেসরকারী বহু সংস্থা, পর্বতের অন্দরে কন্দরে গুঁজে দিয়েছে ডিনামাইট, পাহাড়কে দিয়েছে গুঁড়িয়ে। গ'ড়ে তুলেছে বাজারী সুবিধাজনক প্রশস্ত পথ, জলবিদ্যুৎকেন্দ্র ও আলোর রোশনাই! সেই তাণ্ডবলীলায় আশপাশের গ্রাম্য জনপদ থেকে মানুষ শুনতে পায় বিস্ফোরনের পর বিস্ফোরনে আমূল কেঁপে ওঠে পাহাড়! হয়তো তারই উত্তরে ১৬ই জুন রাতে প্রবল গর্জনে সভ্যতার মুখে পদাঘাত করে ফেটে গিয়েছিল 'চোরাবারিতাল'! বাজারী ব্যবস্থা ও দুঃসহ অসচেতনতায় প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলা অমান্য করে এবং সূক্ষ্ম স্থিতিস্থাপকতাকে অগ্রাহ্য করে দিনের পর দিন তৈরি হয়েছে প্রকান্ড সব বাঁধ আর জমা জলের বেসামাল ওজন এই

---

পাহাড়ের বুকে! ছিন্ন ভিন্ন করা হয়েছে প্রাচীন জঙ্গল, আর অন্তর্হিত হয়ে গেছে ঝরনাঝাল একে একে, প্রকৃতিকে রক্ষা করবার কোন দায়িত্ব আমরা নিইনি। গঙ্গোত্রী হিমবাহের বরফ গলে যাচ্ছে দ্রুত, কারণ বুঝতে পেরেও আমরা উষ্ণায়নের বিপদ সম্পর্কে উদাসীন! পাহাড়ের ঢাল কাঁপছে উঁচু উঁচু হোটেলের চাপে, প্রতিদিন বাড়ছে গাড়ির প্রবাহ আমাদের উন্মত্ত তীর্থদর্শনের মোহে, রাষ্ট্রব্যবস্থাও সে সম্পর্কে সম্পূর্ণ নিষ্ক্রিয়! নির্দেশিকা অমান্য করে বেশিরভাগ জায়গাতেই বিপজ্জনকভাবে পাহাড় নদীগুলোর অববাহিকা গজিয়ে উঠেছে যথেষ্ট বাড়িঘর, কিন্তু জনবিস্ফোরনের কোন বন্টনব্যবস্থা নিয়ে কিছুমাত্র সচেতন নয় সরকারী পরিকল্পনা! অথচ এই পার্বত্যভূমি গভীর, গহন, চিরহরিৎ সরলবর্গীয় গাছের আশ্রয়ে আবৃত ছিল ঐতিহাসিককাল ধরে। গাছের শিকড় পাহাড়ের পাথরকে আঁকড়ে থাকত। তখন ঋষিকেশ থেকে কেদারনাথ এই সাড়ে চারশো মাইল পায়ে হেঁটে পথ চলতে পূণ্যার্থী ও পর্যটকদের সময় লাগতো একমাস। পথের দুধারে চটিগুলি ছিল মানুষের দিনান্তের আশ্রয়। পথে ছায়া দিত আম, অশ্বথ, পিপুল গাছের সারি। তৃষণ মিটত পাহাড়ি ঝরনার ঠান্ডা জলে! কালিদাস থেকে উমাপ্রসাদ যাঁদের বন্দনগানে মুখর ছিল সেই ত্রিতাপহরা! এখন হরিদ্বার, ঋষিকেশ থেকে দুদিনে কেদারনাথ পৌঁছানো যায়। কাঠ ব্যবসায়ীদের দাপটে অরণ্য নিশ্চিহ্নপ্রায়, সঙ্গে আছে হোটেল মালিকদের দাপাদাপি! উপরন্তু অধিকাংশ পাহাড়ি নদীগুলির জলধারা রুদ্ধ করে বহু ছোট বড় জলবিদ্যুৎ প্রকল্প গড়ে তোলার সক্রিয় সরকারী ও বেসরকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান। পরিবেশ দপ্তরের কর্তারা জানিয়েছেন পূণ্যার্থী পিকনিকারদের ফেলা আবর্জনায় গলা পর্যন্ত ভরে গিয়েছিল চোরাবারিতাল! আর কত শাস্ত থাকবে প্রকৃতি! আশ্রয়হীনকে সে আশ্রয় দিতে পারে কিন্তু স্বখাত সলিলে ডুবে মরতে চাইলে প্রকৃতি তাকে রক্ষা করবে কোন মন্ত্রবলে! অসহায় কান্নায় ডুঁকড়ে ভেঙে পড়া ছাড়া আর কী করার থাকে তার! সভ্যতার লজ্জা ঢাকে তার কান্নায়! তাই, প্রকৃতির খেয়াল নয়, এক বিপন্ন বিশ্বময়ে আত্মবলিদানের ইতিহাস নিহিত আছে উত্তরাখন্ডের এই প্রাকৃতিক ধ্বংসলীলায়।

ঐতিহাসিককাল ধরেই লক্ষ্যনীয় যে, প্রকৃতি ও পৃথিবীর স্বাভাবিক গতিধারা বয় যে নদীর প্রাণপ্রবাহে, সে ধারায় আছে সব মানুষের সমান অধিকার, সেই অধিকার ছিনিয়ে নেয় রাষ্ট্রনীতি বাহুর জোরে। নদীর জলধারা রুদ্ধ করে তৈরি হয় বাঁধ। জলবন্টনের অসম বিভাজনে দেশের কোন অংশ হয় শস্যপূর্ণ আবার কেউ বা থাকে দুর্ভিক্ষপীড়িত, নিরন্ন। পুঁজিবাদী শাসনব্যবস্থায় প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলা এভাবেই বিপর্যস্ত হয়ে পড়েছে বারে বারে। এই

---

অসম ব্যবস্থা ও বিশ্বজ্বালা প্রসঙ্গে সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির পরিসরেও প্রশ্ন তোলা হয়েছে ঐতিহাসিক কাল ধরেই বিভিন্ন নাটকে, প্রবন্ধে, কবিতায় গল্পে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকেও আছে তেমনি এক সূত্র।

মুক্তধারার উৎসের কাছে কোন ঘরছাড়া মা একটি শিশুকে জন্ম দিয়ে ফেলে রেখে যায়। উত্তরকূটের রাজা রণজিৎ সেই শিশুর মধ্যে রাজ চক্রবর্তীর সুলক্ষণের ঈঙ্গিত পেয়ে নিজের সম্ভানের তুল্য প্রতিপালন করে যুবরাজের স্বীকৃতি দেন। নামকরণ করেন অভিজিৎ। কিন্তু অভিজিৎ জানে পৃথিবীতে সে এসেছে পথ কাটাবার জন্য, পথ রোধ করে অসহায় দরিদ্র প্রজাদের শাসনযন্ত্রে পেষণ করে রাজধর্ম পালন করার জন্য নয়। সে লক্ষ্য করে যন্ত্ররাজ বিভূতি মুক্তধারার বরনা বেঁধে তার বুকের উপর মুঘল পুঁতে বাঁধ নির্মান করে। শিবতরাইকে দুর্ভিক্ষ কবলিত ও নিরন্ন করে তোলাই তার লক্ষ্য। কোন্ চাষির কোন্ ভুটোর ক্ষেত জলের অভাবে শুকিয়ে যাবে সে কথা ভাবার প্রয়োজন নেই উত্তরকূটের রাজা ও যন্ত্ররাজের! বহু মানুষের অসহায় প্রাণের বিনিময়ে বহু ক্ষয়ক্ষতির মূল্যে তৈরি এই বাঁধে শিবতরাইয়ের প্রজাদের কঠিন শাসনে রাখার ষড়যন্ত্র রাজার। অভিজিতের জীবনে তাই সে বাঁধ দুঃসহ যন্ত্রণা। তার মন বিদ্রোহে অস্থির হয়! সে স্পষ্ট প্রত্যক্ষ করে যে, এই বাঁধের কারণে শিবতরাইয়ের চাষ বন্ধ হবে, বেঁচে থাকার জলটুকুও তারা পাবে না। অজন্মা আর খরা হবে নিত্যসঙ্গী! অভিজিৎ প্রাকৃতিক যুক্তিবুদ্ধিতে জানে মুক্তধারা প্রকৃতির, সকলের অধিকার আছে সেই জলে। রাজষড়যন্ত্রে, রাজনীতির কূটনৈতিক চালে মানুষের বেঁচে থাকার এই অবলম্বন কেড়ে নেওয়া অন্যায্য। সেই বাঁধা দূর করবার জন্য বন্ধপরিকর সে। অভিজিৎ বিশ্বাস করে ‘আমার জীবনের স্রোত রাজবাড়ির পাথর ডিঙিয়ে চলে যাবে এই কথাটা কানে নিয়েই পৃথিবীতে এসেছি’।<sup>১</sup> যন্ত্ররাজ বিভূতির সঙ্গে তাই আছে তার আদর্শের লড়াই। কারণ যন্ত্ররাজ বিভূতি ম’নে করেন, ‘দেবতা তাদের কেবল জলই দিয়েছেন, আমাকে দিয়েছেন জলকে বাঁধবার শক্তি।’<sup>২</sup> এক দ্বন্দ্বিক টানাপোড়েনে আমরা লক্ষ্য করি প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদে পৃথিবীর মানুষের সহজ স্বাভাবিক অধিকারের দাবিকে একজন স্বীকৃতি জানাচ্ছে, অন্যজন তাকেই ব্যক্তিগত সম্পদে পরিবর্তন করে দিতে চাইছে পেশীশক্তিকে সম্বল করে। ধনতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থায় মানব ইতিহাসে এই হ’ল চরম দ্বন্দ্ব এবং সংকট।

প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধের আগ্রাসননীতির চেহারা রবীন্দ্রনাথের কাছে এতটাই প্রত্যক্ষ ছিল, তিনি বারে বারে সে কথাই তাঁর নাটকে, প্রবন্ধে কবিতায় বলে গিয়েছেন। সচেতন করতে চেয়েছেন মানুষকে এবং শক্তিত হয়েছেন পৃথিবীর ভবিষ্যৎ সম্পর্কে! অভিজিতের মতন



চরিত্রের তাঁর সব নাটকেই মানুষের অধিকার, স্বাভাবিক দাবির মর্যাদা প্রতিষ্ঠা দিতে চেয়েছে। তাই, যুবরাজ হয়েও উত্তরকূটের সিংহাসন ছিল তার জীবনশ্রোতের বাঁধ। মুক্তধারায় বাঁধ তেরি হ'লে সে বুঝতে পারে রাজবাড়ি আর তার আশ্রয় বা বিশ্রামস্থল নয়। 'ধরনীর সংগীত রোধ করে দিয়ে আকাশে লোহার দাঁত মেলে অটুহাস্য করে যে যন্ত্রবাঁধ সেই দৈত্যের সঙ্গে লড়াই করার জন্য সে প্রস্তুত।'<sup>১০</sup> রাজবাড়ি ত্যাগ করে অভিজিৎ পথে বেড়িয়ে পড়ে। যন্ত্ররাজ বিভূতি মুক্তধারার গায়ে লোহার শৃঙ্খল পরালে অভিজিৎ বুঝতে পারে এই লৌহযন্ত্রই শিবতরাইয়ের মানুষের বিপন্নতার কারণ হবে। তাই নন্দিসংকটের পথ তাকে খুলে দিতেই হয়। সে বুঝতে পারে শিবতরাইকে সাহায্য করার প্রতিশ্রুতি রাজা রণজিতের এক মৌখিক ভাষণমাত্র। এক রাজনৈতিক চাল! স্পষ্ট ভাষায় সে জানিয়ে দেয়, 'দান-হাতের কাপণ্য দিয়ে পথ বন্ধ করে বাঁ-হাতের বদান্যতায় বাঁচানো যায় না। দয়ার উপর নির্ভর করার দীনতা আমি, দেখতে পারি না।'<sup>১১</sup> নিশ্চয়ই অভিজিৎ বুঝেছিল রাষ্ট্র রাজনীতির বোঝাপড়ার সম্পর্কে যেমন ঐতিহাসিক কাল ধরে জনসাধারণ যুপকাস্টে বলিপ্রদত্ত হয়েছে, শিবতরাইয়ের অবস্থাও তার ব্যতিক্রম হবে না! তাই, সে হয়ে উঠেছিল সাহসী ও দুর্নিবার। যে পথে অম্বার পুত্র সুমন হারিয়ে গেছে, যেখানে সূখ্যি ডোবে, দিন ফুরোয়, সেই অজানিত পথে দুঃসাহসই অভিজিতের একমাত্র সম্বল! এই দুঃসাহস সহ্য করতে না পেরে উত্তরকূটের রাজা রণজিৎ, রাষ্ট্রনৈতিক চালে ছল করে বন্দী করে অভিজিৎকে। অপরাধ তার, সে নিজরাজ্য বিরোধী। কারণ, রাজার রাষ্ট্রনৈতিক অধিকার কায়েমের পথে সেই প্রধান বাঁধ। তাই, রাষ্ট্র-রাজনীতির বিরুদ্ধে অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠা করার স্বেচ্ছাচারিতার বিরুদ্ধে তার লড়াই। বন্দী অভিজিৎকে মুক্ত করেন দাদাঠাকুর বিশ্বজিৎ। তিনি পরিকল্পনা করে পাকশালায় আশ্রয় লাগান। অভিজিৎ মুক্ত হয়েই সব পিছুটান অগ্রাহ্য করে গহন অন্ধকার পথে পশ্চিমের দিকে ছুটে চলে যদিকে রয়েছে সেই যন্ত্রবোধ! এই দানবকে ধ্বংস করতেই হবে এই তার পণ। অভিজিৎ জানত বাঁধের দেয়ালে বেশ কিছু দুর্বল অংশ আছে, সেখান থেকেই সে বাঁধ ভাঙবে। তার এও জানা ছিল বাঁধ গুড়িয়ে যাওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই জলস্রোত তাকে ভাসিয়ে নিয়ে যাবে। প্রাণের এই পিছুটান অগ্রাহ্য করাই তার লক্ষ্য। কারণ, এর ফলে শিবতরাইয়ের সব মানুষ বাঁচবে, তারা আবার জল পাবে, ক্ষেত আবার শস্যবতী হবে। অভিজিতের আত্মবলিদানের সিদ্ধান্ত তাই নিরন্ন মানুষদের জীবনধারণের সঙ্গে সম্পৃক্ত। এক তিমির গহন রাত্রিতে বাঁধ ভেঙে ফেলে অভিজিৎ তার প্রিয় মাতৃধারায় নিজেকে বিলীন করে দেয়। রাষ্ট্র-রাজনীতির ষড়যন্ত্রে বিপন্ন বিশ্বময়ে এমনই এক আত্মবলিদানের মূর্ত প্রতীক ছিল অভিজিৎ।

---

অভিজিতের প্রতিস্পর্ধী সাহসী পদক্ষেপ ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকে আধুনিক সভ্যতার দ্বন্দ্ব আত্মপ্রকাশ করেছে। অভিজিৎ প্রকৃতির সন্তান, মুক্তধারার বারনা তার কাছে মাতৃধারা, এই ধারায় সে মাতৃভাষা শুনতে পায়। তাই তাকে শৃঙ্খলামুক্ত করতেই হবে, আর বাঁচাতে হবে শিবতরাইয়ের দুর্ভিক্ষপীড়িত অসহায় মানুষদের। তারাও প্রকৃতির সন্তান, প্রকৃতির সম্পদে তাদের আছে সমান অধিকার। এ অধিকার কোন রাষ্ট্রীয় ষড়যন্ত্রে লুণ্ঠ হয়ে যেতে পারে না, এই ছিল অভিজিতের দর্শন। প্রাকৃতিক লীলার মাঝে অভিজিৎকে বেঁধেছেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর। প্রকৃতির সঙ্গে মানুষের সম্পর্কের এই লীলার গান বাঁধা থাকে যে প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলার বিন্যাসে, রবীন্দ্রনাথ বহু বছর আগেই সেই ইঙ্গিত পৌঁছে দিতে চেয়েছিলেন মানুষের বোধে, চেতনায়।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটক ও তাঁর দর্শন যে প্রকৃত সমাজবিজ্ঞানের পাঠ, সে সত্য আবার আমরা লক্ষ্য করলাম সাম্প্রতিককালে ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকের এক অন্য বিশ্লেষণে। ২০১৩ সনে সুন্দরবনের বালীদ্বীপে ‘আদর্শ বিদ্যামন্দির’ স্কুলে ‘রণন’-এর নাট্যকর্মীরা ছেলে-মেয়েদের নিয়ে কিছুদিন একটি কর্মশালা করে, যার লক্ষ্য ছিল রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে ছেলে-মেয়েদের পরিচয় করিয়ে দেওয়া এবং একটি নাটক প্রযোজনা করা। এই প্রযোজনায় বেছে নেওয়া হয়েছিল ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটক। ‘আদর্শ বিদ্যামন্দির’ স্কুলের একদিকে দুর্গাদুয়ানি নদী এবং অন্যদিকে বিদ্যানদী। প্রবল জলোচ্ছ্বাসে আশপাশের গ্রাম ও স্কুলটি যেন ভেসে না যায় তাই দুর্গাদুয়ানি নদীর উপর নির্মাণ করা হয়েছিল বাঁধ। বছর ছয়েক আগে আয়লার দূরস্ত তাস্তবে বাঁধ ভেঙে জল ঢুকে গিয়েছিল স্কুলবাড়ির মধ্যে এবং ডুবে গিয়েছিল একতলা পর্যন্ত। নদীর কাছে যাদের বাড়ি, সেসব ভেসে গেলে প্রাণ বাঁচাতে মানুষজন স্কুল বাড়ির দোতলায় আশ্রয় নিয়েছিল। নোনা জল চাষের জমিতে ছড়িয়ে যাওয়াতে সে বছর চাষ হয়নি, পরের বছরও চাষ খুব কম হয়েছে। এই অঞ্চলে প্রাকৃতিক অস্থিরতার কারণে দ্বীপবাসী মানুষের জীবনের নিরাপত্তা নদীবাঁধের উপরই অনেকটা নির্ভরশীল। অশক্ত ও জীর্ন নদীবাঁধগুলোই প্রাকৃতিক ভয়াবহতা প্রতিরোধে দ্বীপবাসী মানুষের বিরাট ভরসা। এই বালীদ্বীপের ছোট ছোট পড়ুয়ারা ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটক প্রযোজনার প্রস্তুতি নেয়। আমরা পাঠকেরা জানি, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকে আছে ঝরনা রোধকারী বাঁধ ভেঙে দেওয়ার গল্প। এক আশ্চর্য দ্বন্দ্ব আছে এই দুই অবস্থানে। সুন্দরবনের চারিদিকে জল নিয়ে যারা বাস করে, রাতদিন নদীর জলের মাত্রার ওপর যাদের নজর রাখতে হয়, বাঁধ ভেঙে দিয়ে অপরূদ্ধ স্রোতকে মুক্ত করার কথা নাটকের প্রযোজনায় ভাবছে তাই। কিন্তু কেমন

---

ক’রে, এই আমাদের আগ্রহ। ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকের ওয়ার্কশপের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে জানা যায়, নাটকের মূল কাহিনীর সঙ্গে কলাকুশলীর অনেকেই তাদের নিজেদের জীবনের অনেক মিল খুঁজে পেয়েছিল। উত্তরকূট তাদের দীপ নয়। সুন্দর স্বচ্ছল উত্তরকূট কলকাতার মতো কোনো বড় জায়গা। বরং দারিদ্রপীড়িত উপেক্ষিত শিবতরাইয়ের গল্প তাদের গল্পের কাছাকাছি। সেই গল্পে একমাত্র আধুনিক যন্ত্র হল স্কুলবাড়ির ঠিক পিছনে বিশাল মোবাইল ফোনের টাওয়ার, যা কিনা তাদের বিচ্ছিন্ন দ্বীপবাসী জীবনে বেশ খানিকটা সুবিধা এনে দিয়েছে। নাটকের চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে অস্বা ছিল তাদের খুব চেনা, কাছের চরিত্র। জঙ্গলে কাঠ বা মধু সংগ্রহ করতে গিয়ে বা নদীতে মাছ ধরতে গিয়ে যাদের বাবা, স্বামী, ভাই বা ছেলেরা কখনো ফিরে আসত না। তখন তাদের মা, স্ত্রী এবং মেয়েরা ওই অস্বার মতন অনেকেই পথে পথে কেঁদে ফেরে অনন্ত দিন ধরে।

প্রযোজনাটি স্কুলের বাঁধানো স্টেজে না হয়ে সামনের সারা মাঠ জুড়ে হল। এককোণে কিছু বালি ও জ্বালানি কাঠ রাখা ছিল, সেটা শিবতরাই। অন্য কোনো পাম্পকল - পানীয় জলের অফুরন্ত উৎস - আর এক সারি গাছ, সেটা উত্তরকূট। স্কুলের পিছনে মোবাইল টাওয়ার হল বিভূতির যন্ত্র। স্কুলবাড়িটা প্রতিমাশ্বরূপ ছিল ভৈরবের মন্দির। গোটা চত্বরটাই হয়ে উঠেছিল মঞ্চ। মাছ ধরা জাল, গামছা প্রভৃতি স্থানীয় মানুষদের নিত্য-ব্যবহার্য জিনিসই ছিল মঞ্চসজ্জার উপকরণ। ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকে উত্তরকূটের রাজা দুটি রাজ্যকে অর্থাৎ উত্তরকূট এবং শিবতরাইকে সমানভাবে দেখেননি। যন্ত্রবাঁধ নির্মাণ করে চাষের জল ও খাবার জল বন্ধ করে দিয়েছিলেন শিবতরাইয়ের। বালীদ্বীপের আদর্শ বিদ্যামন্দিরের পড়ুয়াদের ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকের প্রযোজনায় কলাকুশলীরাও অনুভব করেছিল রাষ্ট্রের অনেক কিছু করার ছিল তাদের জন্য, তাদের কোন সুরক্ষার দায়িত্ব পালন করেনি রাষ্ট্র। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর যেন তাদেরও এই সচেতনতা জাগাতে পারলেন যে, রাষ্ট্র ক্ষমতারক্ষার স্বার্থে জাতীয়তাবাদের ধুরো তোলে এবং মানুষের জীবনে একই সঙ্গে নিয়ে আসে অশনিসংকেত। যন্ত্র কীভাবে রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষমতার প্রতীক হতে পারে একথাও স্পষ্টভাবেই বুঝতে পেরেছিল সেদিন স্কুল পড়ুয়ারা। তাই ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকের প্রযোজনায় যখন তারা বাঁধ ভাঙার তোড়জোড় করে, তখন কোন্ বাঁধ সে সম্পর্কে সংশয় থাকলেও তাদের নিজেদের চেনা নদীবাঁধ বা ‘মুক্তধারা’ নাটকে বরনার গতিরোধ করা বাঁধকে ছাপিয়ে গিয়ে, তারা যেন সবরকম বাধার বাঁধ চূর্ণ করার পথে এগিয়ে যায়।<sup>৬</sup>

মনের আগল খুলে যখন মানুষ দৃষ্টি মেলে ধরে, উপলব্ধি করে পৃথিবীর সঙ্গে প্রকৃতির এবং

---

---

রাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে মানুষের সম্পর্কের পারস্পরিক বিন্যাস, তখন সমাজবিজ্ঞানীর বিশ্লেষণে আমরা গভীরতর স্তরে পৌঁছে বুঝতে পারি আরও — "in considering such revolutions the distinction should always be between the material revolution in the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science and judicial, political religious, aesthetic or philosophy, in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight if out"<sup>১</sup> হয়তো তাই, বালীদ্বীপের আদর্শ বিদ্যামন্দিরের স্কুল পড়ুয়ারা 'মুক্তধারা' নাটকের যে স্বতন্ত্র পাঠ নির্মাণ করেছিল তাদের প্রয়োজনায়, সেখানে বিন্যস্ত ছিল প্রকৃতির সঙ্গে পৃথিবীর সম্পর্কসূত্রের মৌলিক অবস্থান ও জিজ্ঞাসা।

সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতির প্রেক্ষাপট থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে আবার আমরা যদি প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয়ের অন্য এক ঐতিহাসিক উদাহরণের মুখোমুখি দাঁড়াই, লক্ষ্য করব কেমনভাবে একসময় হারিয়ে গেছে আদি গঙ্গার ইতিহাস।<sup>১</sup> যে গঙ্গার ইতিহাস ছিল একসময় দক্ষিণবঙ্গের ইতিহাস। যে গঙ্গার মোহনা অঞ্চল জুড়ে প্রাচীন 'গঙ্গারিডি সভ্যতা' র কথা বর্ণনা করা হয়েছিল প্রথম শতাব্দীর গ্রিক ভ্রমণবৃত্তান্তে। এমনকি ঐতিহাসিক তথ্যে একথাও আমাদের অজানা নয় যে, চাঁদ সদাগরের বাণিজ্যতরী সাগরে যাওয়ার পথও ছিল এই নদী। প্রায় সাড়ে চারশো বছর আগে নৌ-চলাচলের সুবিধার জন্য এখানকার খিদিরপুর থেকে হাওড়ার সাঁকরাইলে সরস্বতী নদীর প্রবাহকে গঙ্গার সঙ্গে জুড়ে দেওয়া হল একটি খাল কেটে। (এখনও এই কারণেই এই অংশের গঙ্গাকে লোকে বলে কাটি গঙ্গা)। এর ফলে নৌ-চলাচলের যাত্রাপথ কমে গেলেও গঙ্গার মূলধারা সরস্বতী ও হুগলি নদী বেয়ে চলতে শুরু করল। রূপ পেল আজকের গঙ্গা। আদিগঙ্গা ধীরে ধীরে লুপ্ত হতে থাকল। গড়িয়ার দক্ষিণে আদিগঙ্গা এখন স্থানে স্থানে বিচ্ছিন্নভাবে খাল-পুকুর-দিঘি হয়ে রয়েছে। এই আদি গঙ্গার বুকুর উপর দিয়ে মাঝনদী বরাবর কুড়ি মিটার তফাতে তিনশো চওড়া স্তম্ভ গেঁথে অলস কলকাতাকে মেট্রো রেল দিয়েছে গতির ডানা। আদিগঙ্গার মৃত্যু ঘোষণা করে দেওয়া হ'ল এই প্রকল্পে। তাই শেষ পর্যন্ত আদালতই ভরসা। হাওড়ায় গণতান্ত্রিক সমিতির সুভাষ দত্ত মেট্রো প্রকল্পের বিষয়ে ২০১১-এর মার্চ মাসে একটি জনস্বার্থ মামলা করলেন কলকাতা উচ্চ আদালতের গ্রিন বেঞ্চ। কিন্তু যুক্তি - তর্ক - আবেগ সব থমকে দাঁড়াল এক হাস্যকর আইনের প্যাঁচে। আমরা জানি নতুন রেলওয়ে আইন তৈরি হয়েছিল ১৯৮৯, যে ধারায় বলা আছে রেলওয়ের কোন নির্মাণ কার্যের জন্য অনুমতি প্রয়োজন হবে না। সমস্যা হল

যেহেতু পরিবেশ আইন চালু হয় ১৯৮৬ সালে কিন্তু রেলওয়েজ আইন ১৯৮৯ সালে, সেই কারণে পরবর্তী আইন হিসাবে রেলওয়েজ আইনই অগ্রাধিকার পাবে! সুতরাং ঐতিহ্যবাহী একটি নদীকে ধ্বংস করে আরম্ভ হ'ল মেট্রো রেলের কাজ! তিনশো মূঘল ধরে এখন আদি গঙ্গা একটি শহরের নালা; নিখর স্তম্ভরাজির বোঝা নিয়ে এখন নিশ্চল আদি গঙ্গা। এরপর কিছু পর পর রয়েছে মেট্রোর স্টেশন সেখানে আদিগঙ্গা প্রায় অদৃশ্য, যেখানে চির অন্ধকার কেড়ে নিয়েছে নদীর প্রাণ। শহরকে উন্নত এবং আধুনিক করার পথে এই গঙ্গা কি সত্যিই কোন বাধা ছিল? সম্ভব ছিল না কি এই স্রোতস্বিনীর কোন সংস্কার। প্রাণপ্রবাহ কি একেবারেই বন্ধ করে দেওয়া ছিল একান্ত পথ? এই প্রশ্নগুলি পার্বতীচরণ ভট্টাচার্যের মতন শহরের কতজন মানুষ জানতে চেয়েছেন সন্দেহ। অথচ এই পৃথিবীতেই দক্ষিণ কোরিয়ার রাজধানী সিওল শহরের বুকে চেঙ্গিচোন নদীর পুনরুদ্ধারের কথা আজ সকলের জানা। প্রায় বারো বছর আগে এই নদীটি ছিল না, সেখানে ছিল কয়েক মাইল লম্বা রাজপথ আর তার উপরে ছ'লেনের প্রশস্ত ফ্লাইওভার। যার নীচে ফল্গুধারার মতন অস্তঃসলিলা ছিল এই চেঙ্গিচোন নদী। এই নদীটি ছিল একসময় সিওল শহরের উত্তর (যেখানে ধনীরা বাস করে) এবং দক্ষিণের (যেখানে দরিদ্ররা বাস করে) জলবিভাজিকা। সিওল শহর ধনে মানে বড় হওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মৃত্যুদণ্ড ঘোষিত হয়েছিল সেই নদীর। কিন্তু নদী তো হারিয়ে যায় না। ২০০২ সালে সিওলের মেয়র সেই নদীর পুনরুজ্জীবনের দায়িত্ব অনুভব করলেন। রাজপথ, উড়াল পুল সব ভেঙে ফেলা হ'ল, ভেঙে ফেলা হল কয়েকশো মহাস্তম্ভরাজি। পিচ আর কংক্রিটের পাষাণে তৈরি রাস্তা খুঁড়ে পাতাল থেকে ফিরিয়ে আনা হল আট কিলোমিটার দীর্ঘ নদীকে। ২০০৬ সালে বইতে শুরু করল চেঙ্গিচোন নদী, শহরের মাঝখানে সবুজ পাড়ের এক ছোট নদী। ৩২টি ছোট বড়ো সেতু তৈরী হল এপার ওপার যাওয়ার। দু'পাশের পরিবেশ পাল্টে গেছে নদী ধারায় নিক্কমাত হয়ে। সিওল শহরে পঞ্চাশ বছর পরে আবার আট কিলোমিটার জুড়ে নদী প্রাণ ফিরে পেয়েছে।

আমরা পারব কোনদিন এভাবে আমাদের মজে যাওয়া, মৃতপ্রায় নদীগুলিকে ফিরিয়ে আনতে? উত্তরাখণ্ড জুড়ে ২০১৩ সালের অলকানন্দা আর মন্দাকিনীর প্রবল তাণ্ডবে যে ধ্বংসলীলার সাক্ষী আমরা, কখনো ভেবেছি সেখানেও মূল গঙ্গার স্রোত কেমন ভাবে হারিয়ে গেছে! হিমবাহ থেকে নিজের পথ গড়ে নিতে নিতে নদী যেভাবে সমতলে নেমে আসে শস্যপূর্ণ বসুন্ধরাকে আরও ফলবতী করে তোলায় আকাঙ্ক্ষায়, নাগরিক সভ্য পৃথিবীতে তার কোন মূল্য, কোন দায়িত্ব আমাদের চেতনায় আজও অনুপস্থিত। অথচ

---

প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলা বিনষ্ট করে চোরাবারিতালকে প্লাস্টিক আর আবর্জনায় ভরিয়ে তুলতে থাকায় মাত্র দেড় দিনের মাত্রাতিরিক্ত বর্ষণে জলস্তুস্ত যখন আর রোধ করা যায় না, তাল ফেটে পড়ে প্রবল যন্ত্রণায়, তখন তাকেই আমরা বলি প্রকৃতির প্রতিশোধ।

শেষ পর্যন্ত তাই একটি প্রশ্নের মুখোমুখি আজ আমরা দাঁড়িয়ে, তা হ'ল প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষা। আমরা ভুলে যাই, এই নীল সবুজ গ্রহটিই মানুষের একমাত্র বাসস্থান। তার অন্তরে অন্দরে আছে নিয়মানুবর্তিতা ও শৃঙ্খলার প্রশ্ন। সেই শৃঙ্খলাকে ছিন্ন করে আমরা মানুষ প্রজাতিকে ধ্বংসের কিনারায় নিয়ে চলেছি প্রতিনিয়ত। আশ্চর্যজনকভাবে এর পরেও আমরা সচেতন হইনা বড় বড় বিপর্যয়ের অভিজ্ঞতাসঞ্জাত হয়েও। তা নাহলে মাত্র এক বছরের মধ্যেই মন্দাকিনীর অন্য পার দিয়ে কেদারশৃঙ্গে পূণ্যার্থীদের পৌঁছে দিতে অন্য পথ প্রবল দ্রুততার সঙ্গে নির্মাণের কাজ শেষ ক'রে ফেলতে পারত না সরকারী সমর্থনে ব্যবসায়িক প্রতিষ্ঠানের উদ্যোক্তারা। দূভাগ্যজনকভাবে প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলারক্ষার শর্ত অচিরে বিস্মৃত হয়ে গেল জনগণ। আবার সেই একই আঘাত। একই আগ্রাসন। ঠিক যেমন পরিবেশ সংক্রান্ত কোনো নিয়মকানুন না মেনে আদিগঙ্গার খাতের উপর মূষল পুঁতে মেট্রো রেলের প্রকল্পকে স্বাগত জানানো হয়েছিল কলকাতা মহানগরীকে সৌভাগ্যবান করে তোলার লক্ষ্যে।

প্রাকৃতিক সত্য থেকে মুখ ফিরিয়ে রাখার সময় হয়ত আর নেই। বুঝতে হবে রাষ্ট্র শেষপর্যন্ত মানুষের জীবনরক্ষার দায়িত্ব নেয় না। প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলারক্ষার প্রশ্নও সেখানে নেই। পৃথিবী জুড়ে কেবল শাসন চালাচ্ছে বাজার ও পেশীশক্তি। তাই, বিপর্যয়ের কারণ কেবল মেঘভাঙা বৃষ্টি, ধস, হড়কাবান বা আয়লা নয়, সংকটের মূল কারণ মানুষের স্বার্থন্ধ অসচেতনতা এবং অসহায় নীরবতা। যে জল তৃষণ মেটায় সেই জলে মরনের বিভীষিকা মানুষকে যখন দেখতে হয়, তখন দায়িত্ব নিতেই হয় এ দায় নিজেরও। সচেতনভাবে অসচেতনতাকে লালন করার অবকাশ আর মানুষের নেই, কারণ অস্তিত্ব রক্ষার প্রশ্ন চরম বিপর্যয়ের মুখোমুখি দাঁড়িয়ে।

আমরা ভুলতে বসেছি পৃথিবীতে মানব প্রজাতি বৈজ্ঞানিক পদ্ধতিতেই বেঁচে থাকে, জীবনযাপন করে, নিজেদের জীবনকে নতুনভাবে আবিষ্কার করে এবং ব্যাখ্যা করে। 'সভ্যতা' যে শব্দটির অর্থে আমরা নিজেদের আধুনিক ও উন্নত করে তুলেছি এবং তার জন্য যে ক্রমাগত বিভিন্ন আবিষ্কার ও চর্চা মানুষকে আজ নতুনভাবে বাঁচতে শিখিয়েছে, তা সম্ভব হয়েছিল প্রকৃতি ও পৃথিবীর নানা সম্পর্কের বিন্যাস বিশ্লেষণের সূত্রে। বিজ্ঞানী

---

কোপার্নিকাস (১৪৭৩ - ১৫৪৩) রেভেলিউশন্ অফ দ্য সেলস্টিয়াল স্টিয়ারস ১৫৪৩), নিউটন (১৬৪৩ - ১৯২৭) নিউটনস্ ল অফ মোশন্ এবং নিউটনস্ ল অফ গ্রাভিটেশন্, গ্যালেলিও (১৫৬৪ - ১৬৪২) গ্যালেলিয়ান স্যাটেলাইট বা হাইড্রোস্ট্যাটিক ব্যালান্স এবং আইনস্টাইন (১৮৭৯ - ১৯৫৫) ফটো ইলেকট্রিক এফেক্ট বা রিলেটিভিটি থিয়োরী, ঐদের আবিষ্কারের পথ ধরে আমরা পৃথিবীর ভরকেন্দ্র ও গতিসূত্র বিশ্লেষণের পরিক্রমা লক্ষ্য করি। বিজ্ঞানীদের সূত্র বিশ্লেষণে আমরা জেনেছি পৃথিবীতে প্রাকৃতিক শৃঙ্খলারক্ষার যুক্তিসঙ্গত কার্যকারণ সম্পর্ক এবং সংকট ও উত্তরণের উপায়। তাই, কোপার্নিকাসের নিষ্ঠুর অসহায় মৃত্যুর পরেও ‘গ্যালেলিয়ান স্যাটেলাইটে’ দেখা বৃহস্পতির অবস্থান বা গতিধর্ম কিন্তু চার্চের পোপদের অনুশাসনে মিথ্যে হয়ে যায়নি। বরং মানুষের জ্ঞান নতুন দিশা পেয়েছে। ঐদের মতন সমাজবিজ্ঞানীরাও নানা ব্যাখ্যা ও বিশ্লেষণে মানুষকে পৌঁছে দিতে চেয়েছেন আর এক সত্যের সন্ধান, যেখানে মানুষ রক্ষা করতে পারবে নীল-সবুজ গ্রহের পৃথিবীটাকে, নিজেদের অস্তিত্বকে। যেখানে বিশ্বাস করবে দেশের নাম পৃথিবী। সমাজবিজ্ঞানী এঙ্গেলস্-এর একটি ব্যাখ্যা এই সূত্রে প্রাণিধানযোগ্য। ...state interference in social relations becomes in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself, the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of process of production. The state is not "abolished", it dies out ...”<sup>b</sup>

সমাজবিজ্ঞানের এই পাঠ আমরা পেয়েছিলাম আজ থেকে প্রায় একশো সাঁইত্রিশ বছর আগে। এই তত্ত্বে রাষ্ট্র এবং পৃথিবীর সঙ্গে মানুষের আগামী দিনের সম্পর্ক ও অবস্থানের দিকটি স্পষ্টভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করা হয়েছিল। এই তত্ত্ব ব্যাখ্যার বহু বছর বাদে সাহিত্যিক বুদ্ধদেব বসুর একটি বিশ্লেষণ আমাদের আরও সজাগ করে তোলে। “রাষ্ট্র একটা যন্ত্র হলেও তার অন্তর্গত প্রজাসমূহ যন্ত্র নয় — তারা মানুষ — পাঠ্য বইয়ের কাল্পনিক ‘economic man’ বা ‘political man’ নয় — রক্তমাংস হৃদয় - মন - সম্পন্ন জীবন্ত ও পূর্ণাঙ্গ মানুষ তারা শুধু খেয়ে পরে বাঁচতে চায় না, শুধু কম দামে মাল কিনে বেশি দামে বেচতে চায় না, চায় প্রকাশিত হতে, আনন্দিত হতে, দুঃখ পেতে, ত্যাগ করতে।”<sup>c</sup>

তাই, শেষ পর্যন্ত আমরা বিশ্বাস করি “সমগ্র দেশ বলে একটি জিনিস সমস্ত দেশের লোকের সৃষ্টি। এই সৃষ্টি তার সমস্ত হৃদয়বৃত্তি ইচ্ছাশক্তির প্রকাশে। এ হচ্ছে যোগলব্ধ ধন।

---

অর্থাৎ যে যোগের দ্বারা মানুষের সকল বৃত্তি আপন সৃষ্টির মধ্যে সংহত হয়ে রূপলাভ করে। যোগ নয়, সর্বশক্তির যোগ চাই।””

বাস্তবিক এই ‘সর্বশক্তির যোগ’ ও সচেতনতা থেকেই একদিন অস্তিত্বরক্ষার তাগিদে নিশ্চিতভাবে আমরা প্রকৃতি ও পৃথিবীর সামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ সম্পর্কের মৌলিক শৃঙ্খলাটি হয়তো রক্ষা করতে পারব। যখন আমাদের জন্য অপেক্ষা করবেন না কোন ‘বিপন্ন বিশ্বয়।’

### তথ্যসূত্রঃ

১. ঠাকুর রবীন্দ্রনাথ, ‘মুক্তধারা’, মহামায়া বুক এজেন্সী, ইউনাইটেড পাবলিশার্স, আশ্বিন ১৪২০, পৃ. ২১।
২. ঐ, পৃ. ৭।
৩. ঐ, পৃ. ২২।
৪. ঐ, পৃ. ২৪।
৫. দত্তগুপ্ত শর্মিষ্ঠা, মুখোপাধ্যায় শিপ্রা, রবীন্দ্রনাথের খোঁজে সুন্দরবনে, ‘আরেক রকম’, সম্পা, অশোক মিত্র, প্রথম বর্ষ, একাদশ সংখ্যা, ১ জুন, ২০১৩, পৃ. ৪৯-৫৪।
৬. Karl Marx, Preface, 'to a contribution to the critique of political Economy'. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1989...
৭. রায়, মোহিত, ‘আদিগঙ্গা’, ‘নবপত্রিকা’, ১৬ সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০১২, রবিবার।
৮. ঐ, পৃ. ৫
৯. Engles, Fredrich, Anti -Duhring, Marxists Interest Archive, 1996. <https://www.google.co.in/url?url=https://www.marxist.org/archive/marx,works,pg.199>
১০. (সংগৃহীত তথ্য সূত্র) ‘প্রতিদিন’, ‘ছুটি’, রবিবার, ১৪ জুলাই ২০১৩
১১. ঠাকুর রবীন্দ্রনাথ, ‘সত্যের আহবান’, কালান্তর, রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলী, ষষ্ঠ খন্ড, সুলভ সংস্করণ, বৈশাখ ১৩৯৫ঃ ১৯১০ শক, বিশ্বভারতী, পৃ. ১৯৮।

### সহায়ক সংবাদপত্রঃ

- ক) ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’, ২৪শে - ২৬শে জুন ২০১৩, কলকাতা, সোমবার - বৃহস্পতিবার।
- খ) ‘এই সময়’, ২৪শে - ২৮শে জুন ২০১৩।



---

# প্রকৃতি-স্থিতি-উন্নয়নঃ প্রসঙ্গ ‘আরণ্যক’

সৌম্য ভট্টাচার্য

সত্যান্বেষণ আর অনুসন্ধিৎসা যে প্রচলিত সামাজিক স্থিতাবস্থাকে, ব্যক্তিগত শান্তি স্বস্তিকে নষ্ট করে দেয় এমনকি ব্যক্তিজীবনেও চূড়ান্ত ট্র্যাজেডির নির্মাণ করতে পারে সাহিত্য পাঠকের তা অজানা নয়। অবশ্য তার জন্য সত্যান্বেষণে কোন খামতির সম্ভাবনা বিশেষ একটা দেখা যায়না। যদি ‘সত্য’ কি বা আদৌ তার কোন অস্তিত্ব থাকা সম্ভব কিনা, তা তর্কাতীত নয়। চারপাশের প্রাত্যহিকতায় প্রত্যক্ষদৃষ্টকে সাহিত্যে প্রতিফলিত করার যে দাওয়াই বাতলেছিলেন প্রাচীন গ্রিক দার্শনিকেরা, তাদের দেখানো পথকেই আপাতত যদি সত্যান্বেষণ বলে ধরে নেওয়া যায়, তবে সেই চেষ্টায় চলিত স্থিতাবস্থা লঙ্ঘিত হওয়ার সম্ভাবনাও যে সুপ্ত থাকে, এ কথা অস্বীকার করার উপায় নেই। যা কিছু প্রত্যক্ষ, ভীষণভাবে স্পষ্ট তা-ই যে সবসময় ‘সত্য’ নয়, এ বিষয়ে দলমত নির্বিশেষে প্রাচ্য-পাশ্চাত্যের নানা দর্শন-প্রস্থান প্রায় একমত। ‘সত্য’ কোন অজর, অক্ষয় ‘বস্তু’ নয়, তারও নির্মাণ সম্ভব; ‘সত্য’ নির্মাণের এই সম্ভাবনা প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধোত্তর কালে মানুষের কাছে একটি সংশয়হীন অবস্থান। যুদ্ধ পরবর্তী সাহিত্য কোনো বিশেষ চিহ্ন বা চিহ্নগুচ্ছকে নিজের মধ্যে বহন করে কিনা কিংবা যদি বহন করে তাদের স্বরূপলক্ষণই বা কি, এই বিতর্কের মধ্যে প্রবেশ করার অবকাশ এখানে নেই। তবু একটি কথা নির্দিধায় বলা যেতে পারে যে প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধ পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য ভৌগোলিক অংশের মতো তৎকালীন বাংলাদেশেও মানুষের ‘বিশ্বাস’ নামক বোধটিকে ধাক্কা দিতে সক্ষম হয়েছিল। যদিও উনিশ শতকে ইউরোপ পরিচিত হয়েছে শিল্পবিপ্লবের সঙ্গে। এই ঘটনার কিছুদিন আগেও যে কাজ করতে অনেক সংখ্যক মানুষের শ্রম নিয়োজিত হতো, যে কাজ ছিল অত্যন্ত ব্যয়বহুল তথা সময়সাপেক্ষ, তাকে তুলনামূলক অনেক কম পরিশ্রমে, তুলনামূলক কম ব্যয়ে এবং তুলনামূলক কম সময়ে করা সম্ভবপর হল। সমপরিমাণ শ্রম, পুঁজি এবং সময় ব্যয় করে আগের থেকে অনেক বেশি উৎপাদন করা সম্ভব হচ্ছিল, অর্থাৎ মুনাফার পরিমাণও বাড়তে বাড়তে প্রায় আকাশছোঁয়া। মানুষের মানবিক, সুকুমার প্রবৃত্তিগুলি অতিরিক্ত মুনাফার খোঁজে আরো বেশি সংকুচিত হতে শুরু করেছে সেই সময় থেকেই। পারা - না পারার সাধারণ বৃত্ত সম্বন্ধে সাধারণ সামাজিক ধারণার আমূল পরিবর্তনের সূচনা সেই থেকেই; আর সেই বৃত্তের নির্দিষ্ট ক্ষেত্রফলকে বেঁধে রাখার প্রয়াসের সমাপ্তি বোধহয় প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধে। এই বিশেষ প্রেক্ষাপটকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে বাংলা সাহিত্যে বিভূতিভূষণের চলাচল আরম্ভ।

১৯২৯ এ ‘পথের পাঁচালী’ বার হওয়ার বছর ছয়েক আগেই বাঙালি কল্পোলের’ সঙ্গে পরিচিত হয়েছে। সকলেই জানেন, মূলত রবীন্দ্রবিরোধিতাকে পুঁজি করে এই গোষ্ঠীর যাত্রা শুরু হলেও এই কালপর্বের অর্থনৈতিক, রাজনৈতিক ও সামাজিক বিপর্যয় এদেরকে যে তীব্র ভাবে নাড়া দিয়েছিল তা ধরা আছে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর ‘অতি আধুনিক বাংলা সাহিত্য’ শীর্ষক প্রবন্ধটিতে। তাঁর বক্তব্যটি সরাসরি তুলে দেওয়া গেল - “অতি- আধুনিক সাহিত্যকে post-war সাহিত্য বললে ভুল হয় না। আধুনিক লেখকেরা সকলেই post-war সামাজিক ও অর্থনৈতিক অবস্থার ভিতর দিয়ে বড় হয়ে উঠেছেন। লড়াইয়ের ফলে ইউরোপের যে দূরবস্থা ও মানুষের চিন্তা জগতে যতটা পরিবর্তন এসেছে, আমাদের দেশে তার চেয়ে অনেক কম হলেও উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর তুলনায় আমাদের দৈহিক স্বাচ্ছন্দ্যের পরিমাণ ও মনের ভাবধারার গতি সম্পূর্ণ বদলে গেছে। ... বর্তমানে যে বাংলা দেশে জীবন সংগ্রামে যে কঠোর প্রতিযোগিতা চলেছে তাকে মুখের গ্রাস নিয়ে কাড়াকাড়ি বললে অতুক্তি হয় না। দারিদ্র্যের তাণ্ডব নৃত্যের নিষ্ঠুর পদাঘাতে কোথায় উড়ে যাচ্ছে ধর্ম, সমাজ, স্বাস্থ্য, আনন্দ, আয়ু, ইহকাল-পরকালে .. সব । .. যৌথ পরিবার প্রথা ভেঙ্গে পড়েছে- আত্মনির্ভর হবার চেষ্টা সবার মধ্যেই দেখা যাচ্ছে। বাহ্যিক অবস্থার ওলোট-পালোট হলে চিন্তা জগতেও কিছু কিছু বিপ্লব আসতে বাধ্য। বর্তমান বাঙালীর চিন্তা ধারার বর্ণনা করতে গেলে এককথায় বলা যেতে পারে যে তথ্যের সম্পূর্ণ disillusionment এসে গেছে। আমরা মোটের উপর অনেক বেশি rational হয়েছি। অন্ধ ভক্তির উপর আমাদের আর আস্থা নেই; আমরা বিশ্বাস করতে শিখেছি বিজ্ঞানকে। ভগবান, ভূত ও ভালবাসা-এ তিনটি জিনিসের উপর আমাদের প্রাক্তন বিশ্বাস আমরা হারিয়েছি।”<sup>১</sup> এই আত্মসমীক্ষামূলক বক্তব্য থেকেই এই পর্বের অনেকখানি সত্য পরিচয় পাঠক পেয়ে যাবেন বলেই আমাদের ধারণা।

বিশ্বযুদ্ধোত্তর সংশয়, অস্থিরতা এবং নেতিবাদী জীবনদৃষ্টি - আশ্রিত কথাসাহিত্য চর্চার মধ্যে বিভূতিভূষণ যখন ‘পথের পাঁচালী’ নিয়ে দাঁড়ালেন, পাঠক স্বাভাবিকভাবেই বেশ খানিক চমকে উঠেছিল। কাহিনি পরিকল্পনা বা পরিবেশ একান্ত পরিচিত, অত্যন্ত সাধারণ এবং একেবারে বাস্তব বর্জিত। আপাতদৃষ্টিতে অনেকক্ষেত্রে বৈচিত্র্যহীন, নিতান্ত মামুলি এই প্রেক্ষাপট তার আগেই বহু ব্যবহারে জীর্ণ। তারকনাথ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের ‘স্বর্ণলতা’ (১৮৮৭) থেকে শুরু করে শরৎচন্দ্র এবং সমসাময়িক অন্যান্য লেখকের রচনায় ‘প্রকৃতি’ একটি বিষয় হিসাবে বিভিন্নভাবে এসেছে। সেক্ষেত্রে প্রশ্ন ওঠা স্বাভাবিক যে আরো একবার গ্রামবাংলা এবং সেখানে বসবাসকারী অতি সাধারণ মানুষগুলিকে সাহিত্যে কারবার করার

---

জন্য বিভূতিভূষণ বেছে নিলেন কেন? বহু ব্যবহারে ক্রমশ ক্লিশে হয়ে আসা বিষয়কে আশ্রয় করে কোনো কথাসাহিত্যিক তাঁর জীবনের প্রথম উপন্যাস লেখার এই ঝুঁকিটি নেন কোন প্রত্যয় থেকে? এই প্রশ্নগুলিকে সঙ্গী করেই চলুন ‘আরণ্যক’-এর দিকে তাকানো যাক।

বিভূতিভূষণ সম্বন্ধে প্রচলিত সমালোচনার ধারায় তাঁকে প্রকৃতিবাদী, রোম্যান্টিক পল্লী কথাকার বলে দেগে নেওয়ার সম্পর্কে অল্পবিস্তর প্রত্যেকেই জানেন। ‘কল্লোল’ (১৯২৩) পরবর্তী বিক্ষুব্ধ সময়ের প্রেক্ষাপটে আরণ্যকের মতের উপন্যাস কি নিছক নাগরিক চোখে পল্লীদর্শন? সমালোচক হয়তো আরণ্যকের প্রস্তাবনা অংশকে সামনে রেখে এর স্বপক্ষে যুক্তি খাড়া করবেন। যেখানে “সমস্ত দিন আপিসের হাড়ভাঙা খাটুনির পরে গড়ের মাঠে ফোর্টের কাছ ঘেঁষিয়া বসিয়া” কথক সত্যচরণের “বাদাম গাছের সামনে ফোর্টের পরিখার ঢেউ খেলানো জমিটা দেখিয়া হঠাৎ মনে হলই যেন লবটুলিয়ার উত্তর সীমানায় সরস্বতী কুড়ীর ধারে সন্ধ্যাবেলায় বসিয়া আছি।” যদিও “পরক্ষণেই পলাশী গেটের পথে মোটর হর্ণের আওয়াজে সে ভ্রম ঘুচিল।” ব্যস্ত শহরের বৃকে কলম পিষে দিনান্তে অবকাশের সময় নিসর্গযাপন কি রোম্যান্টিক মধ্যবিত্ত সুলভ নয়? এই অংশেই তো সত্যচরণের জবানিতে রয়েছে ফেলে আসা বন্য সৌন্দর্যের স্মৃতি যাকে সে “বুঝি কোনো অবসর দিনের শেষে সন্ধ্যায় ঘুমের ঘোরে এক সৌন্দর্য ভরা জগতের স্বপ্ন” বলেই মনে করতে চেয়েছে। প্রসঙ্গত পাঠকের মাথায় নিশ্চিতভাবে পাক খাবে তেলেনাপোতার ° সেই বিখ্যাত ন্যারেটিভ, যেখানে আপনি অনেকটা এই জাতীয় সান্ধ্যকালীন তন্দ্রামগ্নতার আবেশে আচ্ছন্ন হয়ে ঘুরেও আসতে পারেন তেলেনাপোতা, যদিও শেষমেশ তার ঐহিক অস্তিত্ব নিয়ে আপনি সন্দ্বিহান হবেন, সেই স্মৃতি ক্রমশ ‘স্বপ্ন’ বলেই মনে হতে থাকবে। কিন্তু, ‘আরণ্যক’ তেলেনাপোতা নয়।

একথা ঠিক, কেন্দ্র থেকে প্রান্তকে দেখা বা কিছু সময়ের জন্য সেই প্রান্ত জীবনযাপনের মধ্যে রোম্যান্টিক আবিলাতার অবকাশ থেকেই যায়। বস্তুত সত্যচরণ কখনোই তার নিজের অস্তিত্বকে অস্বীকার করেনি। আবার কেন্দ্রের প্রতিনিধি হিসাবে কর্মসূত্রে প্রান্ত জীবনযাপনের সময় তাই তাঁর মধ্যে একই সঙ্গে যুক্ত-বিযুক্তের বোধ জাগরুক থেকেছে। কিন্তু আরণ্যক উপন্যাসটিকে যদি একটি উপস্থিতের বিকল্প প্রস্তাব হিসাবে পাঠ করা যায় তাহলে বোধহয় কেবল নাগরিক নিসর্গ দর্শনের ভাবনাটি মান্যতা পায় না। উপন্যাসের শুরু থেকেই প্রকৃতির অসাধারণ আনুপুঞ্জিক বর্ণনা পাঠককে মুগ্ধ করলেও “আমার এ স্মৃতি আনন্দের নয়, দুঃখের। এই স্বচ্ছন্দ প্রকৃতির লীলাভূমি আমার হাতেই বিনষ্ট হইয়াছিল,

বনের দেবতারা সেজন্য আমায় কোনোদিন ক্ষমা করবেন না জানি। নিজের অপরাধের কথা নিজের মুখে বলিলে অপরাধের ভার শুনিয়াছি লঘু হইয়া যায়। তাই এই কাহিনীর অবতারণা।” সত্যচরণের এই স্বীকারক্তি আমাদের খানিক চিন্তার মধ্যে ফেলে দেয়। কেন্দ্র থেকে প্রেরিত প্রতিনিধির সাধারণত অপরাধবোধের অবকাশ কোথায়? কেনই বা সেই অপরাধবোধ স্থলনের জন্য এতগুলি শব্দ খরচের প্রয়োজন হয়। নগর কলকাতার মধ্যবিন্ত পাঠকের কাছে পশ্চিমের রক্ষ, উষর প্রকৃতির অপরাধ মহিমা কীর্তনের ক্ষেত্রে কী বা এমন অপরাধ রয়েছে? না, প্রকৃতির বর্ণনায় অপরাধ নেই, নিশ্চিত। কিন্তু ঔপনিবেশিক শিক্ষায় শিক্ষিত সত্যচরণ কেবল প্রকৃতি বর্ণনার জন্য পশ্চিমে যায়নি। পশ্চিমের জঙ্গলমহলের হাজার হাজার বিঘে জমি বিলি বন্দোবস্ত করার মধ্যে কেন্দ্রের আধিপত্যবাদ স্পষ্ট। সত্যচরণ সেই আধিপত্য বিস্তারের ক্ষেত্রে একজন ক্রিয়াশীল অণুঘটক, আরো স্পষ্টভাবে বললে এজেন্ট। প্রকৃতির উপরে যার যত বেশি দখলদারি, সমাজের ক্ষমতাস্তম্ভে সে তত বেশি শক্তিশালী। এই ঘটনা নতুন নয়। সভ্যতার প্রাক্ লগ্ন থেকেই ক্ষমতার মানদণ্ড বিচারে প্রকৃতি মাপক হিসাবে ব্যবহৃত। কিন্তু শিল্পবিপ্লব পরবর্তী অধ্যায়ে দখলদারির কাঠামোটিতে পরিবর্তন হয়েছে। এনলাইটেনমেন্ট বা আলোকপর্বের যুক্তিকাঠামোকে অস্ত্র বানিয়ে সারা দুনিয়ায় কলোনি কায়ম করেছে ইউরোপ, চাহিদা আরো বেশি মুনাফা। আলোকপর্বের যুক্তিকাঠামো তাই দখলদারির সংজ্ঞাকে আরো পুষ্ট করেছে। ব্রিটিশ কলোনি ভারতবর্ষে সেই যুক্তি কাঠামোতেই সত্যচরণদের জন্ম, বড় হয়ে ওঠা, ‘শিক্ষিত’ হয়ে ওঠা। কলোনির মুনাফাকে সুসংহত করতে চিরস্থায়ী বন্দোবস্তের অবতারণা, ফল কলোনির মধ্যে আরো অণু-কলোনির জন্ম। ‘আরণ্যক’ সেই দখলদারির ইতিহাসকে বিবৃত করে। সেই বিকল্প ইতিহাসের পাঠ পড়লে বিভূতিভূষণকে আর নিছক নিসর্গ সৌন্দর্য নির্মাণের কারিগর বলে মনে হয়না, বরং ভীষণভাবে একজন বিশ্বযুদ্ধ পরবর্তী আধুনিক লেখক বলেই মনে হয়, যিনি তাঁর অভিজ্ঞতা থেকেই সচেতনভাবে তথাকথিত উন্নয়নের প্রকল্পকে নাকচ করছেন।

স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই প্রশ্ন তৈরি হয় শিল্পবিপ্লব পরবর্তী সময়ে এই উন্নয়ন বা প্রগতির বিপ্রতীপ অবস্থান নেওয়ার প্রয়োজন হলো কেন? সভ্যতার স্বাভাবিক নিয়মেই তো উন্নয়ন তার নিজের মতো করে সমরোপযোগী রূপ নিয়ে হাজির হয়। তাতে উপস্থিতের পরিবর্তন সাধনও স্বাভাবিক প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্যে বলেই ধরা হয়। কি এমন বিশেষ প্রয়োজন পড়ল যেখানে বিশ শতকের বিশ-তিরিশের দশকে বসে আকাঁড়া যথাস্থিতবাদকে আরো নির্মমভাবে প্রকাশের প্রবণতার পথে না হেঁটে বিভূতিভূষণ একটি বিকল্প ইতিহাস লেখার ঝুঁকি নিলেন? এবং প্রায় নাকচ করলেন আলোকপর্বজাত উন্নয়নের প্রস্তাবিত কাঠামোকে। লেখক বিভূতিভূষণের এই প্রকল্প বিশ্লেষণের আগে একটি তথ্যের দিকে আমরা পাঠককে

নজর দিতে অনুরোধ করব। পাঠক দয়া করে ভাববেন কি যে ‘আরণ্যক’ উপন্যাসের খলনায়ক বা ভিলেন চরিত্রটি কে? বা কারা? সত্যচরণ গেছেন আধিপত্য বিস্তারের কাজের তদারকি করতে। পরিচিত হয়েছেন কুস্তা, নাটুয়া বালক ধাতুরিয়া, সরল মহাজন ধাওতাল সাহু, দরিদ্র ব্রাহ্মণ রাজু পাঁড়ে, গনোরি তিওয়ারি থেকে শুরু করে দেশীয় সভ্যতার আদিম প্রত্নচিহ্ন বহনকারী রাজা দোবরু পান্না বীরবর্দী, রাজকুমারী ভানুমতীর মতো বিচিত্র সব মানুষের সঙ্গে। কিন্তু আপনি কিছুতেই এই চরিত্রগুলিকে কেন্দ্রের আগ্রাসনের বিরুদ্ধে শক্তিশালী প্রতিপক্ষ হিসাবে দাঁড় করাতে পারবেন না। কারণ এরা ভীষণ অসহায় - ঐতিহাসিকভাবে, অর্থনৈতিকভাবে, সামাজিকভাবে, রাজনৈতিকভাবে। ফলে এদেরকে ভিলেন হিসাবে প্রতিপন্ন করার কোনো অবকাশই নেই। আলোকপর্বজাত শিক্ষায় শিক্ষিত সত্যচরণ এই সব প্রান্তবাসীদের জীবনের গল্প পাঠককে শোনাতেও শেষ পর্যন্ত সে এই আগ্রাসনের অভিমুখ নির্ধারণের একজন নির্ণায়ক প্রতিনিধি। যদিও এই প্রক্রিয়ার সঙ্গে তার প্রতি মুহূর্তে যুক্ত-বিযুক্তের সমান্তরাল ক্রিয়াশীল বোধ তাকেও ভিলেন হিসাবে প্রতিপন্ন করার ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিবন্ধকতা সৃষ্টি করেছে। আসলে ‘আরণ্যক’ কোনো ভিলেন নেই বলেই আমাদের ধারণা। একদিকে তথাকথিত উন্নয়নের সর্বগ্রাসী ভূমিকা, অন্যদিকে উপস্থিতির বিশালতা-এই দুয়ের মাঝে বিভূতিভূষণ নাগরিক পাঠককে দাঁড় করাতে চেয়েছেন। আরো সুনির্দিষ্ট ভাবে বললে তিনি মানুষকে আরেকবার মানুষের সামনেই দাঁড় করাতে চেয়েছেন। সম্ভবত এই কারণেই যথাস্থিতবাদের প্রকাশভঙ্গিকে গ্রহণ না করে অপরাধবোধজাত বেদনাই লেখকের কাম্য। আধুনিক মানুষের মধ্যে এই বেদনা বিরল নয়। বিভিন্ন কারণে ধ্বংসপ্রক্রিয়ায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে বাধ্য হলেও সকলেই যে শেষ পর্যন্ত সেই প্রক্রিয়ার যুক্তি কাঠামোকে আশ্রয় করবেন কিংবা সেই যুক্তি কাঠামোকে প্রায় বিশ্বাসে পরিণত করবেন এমনটা না হওয়াই স্বাভাবিক। দু-দুটি বিশ্বযুদ্ধ আধুনিক মানুষের সেই বেদনাজাত যন্ত্রণাবোধকে আরো বেশি পুণ্ড্র করেছে বৈকি। তার উদাহরণ ছড়িয়ে আছে বিশ্বের নানা সাহিত্যে, সিনেমায়, গানে, কবিতায়। যুদ্ধে অংশগ্রহণকারী সৈনিক থেকে যুদ্ধে নানা ভাবে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত নাগরিক সমাজে বসবাসকারী সাধারণ মানুষের আত্মহত্যার প্রবণতা বৃদ্ধির পিছনে সেই যন্ত্রণাবোধের ভূমিকা কম নয়। এই উপন্যাসে উন্নয়নের স্বরূপলক্ষণ নগ্নভাবে উন্মোচন করার মধ্য দিয়ে আধুনিকের সেই বেদনাজাত যন্ত্রণাই ক্রিয়াশীল থেকেছে। পাঠক প্রশ্ন করতে পারেন যদি বিভূতিভূষণের এই উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পনা এত ভীষণভাবে অপছন্দ হয় তাহলে বিভূতিভূষণ কি কোনো বিকল্প পথের সম্মান দিচ্ছেন? সত্যচরণ তো শেষ পর্যন্ত একরাশ ক্ষোভ আর গলায় আটকে থাকা একদলা গ্লানিবোধ নিয়ে শেষপর্যন্ত কেন্দ্রেই ফিরে আসছে। কেন্দ্র-প্রান্ত-কেন্দ্র এই বৃত্তে চলাচল

সম্পূর্ণ করে পুনরায় কেন্দ্রে বসেই প্রাস্ত-স্মৃতির পুনর্নির্মাণ ছাড়া সত্যচরণের আর বিশেষ কোনো সক্রিয়তা চোখে পড়ে কি? এর উত্তর খোঁজার আগে একটি বিষয়ে আমরা পাঠকের সঙ্গে সহমত পোষণ করতে চাই যে সত্যচরণ কোনো বিকল্প পথের সন্ধান দিতে পারেননি। সত্যচরণের বর্ণনা থেকে যদি কেউ বিকল্পের সন্ধান করতে যান তাহলে তা শেষমেশ নিতান্ত ধোঁয়াশা ছাড়া আর কোনো ধারণা পাবে বলে আমাদের মনে হয়না। কারণ সত্যচরণ কোনো বিকল্প দিতে চাননা। সত্যচরণের মতো চরিত্রেরা বিকল্পের সন্ধানে ব্রতী হতেই পারেন, কিন্তু না হলে তাকে আমরা দোষ দিতেও পারিনা যে। কারণ বিকল্প পথের সন্ধান বা নির্মাণে যুক্ত থাকার দায় কিন্তু বিভূতিভূষণের নেই। আরো একটি বিষয় এখানে বলে রাখা ভালো যে কেন্দ্র থেকে প্রাস্তে গিয়ে ফের কেন্দ্রে ফিরে আসা সত্যচরণের যাতায়াত পথটিকে একটি সরল বৃত্তের সঙ্গে তুলনা করাটাও বোধহয় ঠিক নয়। কারণ যে বোধ নিয়ে সত্যচরণ প্রাস্ত অভিমুখী হয়েছিল আর গড়ের মাঠে ফিরে এসে যে সত্যচরণ নাগরিক পাঠকের সামনে প্রাস্ত নির্মাণ করবেন তাদের দুজনের মধ্যে কিন্তু আকৃতিগত সাদৃশ্য থাকলেও বোধের হেরফের হয়ে গিয়েছে। প্রাস্তে পৌঁছে যে সত্যচরণের প্রাণ প্রাথমিকভাবে কেন্দ্রে ফেরার জন্য অস্থির হয়ে উঠেছিল, প্রাস্তের নিসর্গকে যে সত্যচরণ জাপানি চিত্রকর হাকুসাই-এর অপূর্ব তৈলচিত্রের সঙ্গে তুলনা করেছেন সেই সত্যচরণ আর গড়ের মাঠে বসে আক্ষেপ, প্লানি, হতাশা তথা বেদনায় প্রতিমুহূর্তে নিয়ত ভাঙতে থাকা, ডুবতে থাকা সত্যচরণ এক মানুষ নন। আধুনিকতার চিহ্নকে বহন করার যে যন্ত্রণা রয়েছে সেই যন্ত্রণা চিহ্ন সত্যচরণের প্রতিটি আচরণে তখন স্পষ্ট। ‘প্রকৃতি’- কে বিষয় হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে আধুনিকের নির্মাণে ব্রতী হওয়ার এই প্রয়াস বিভূতিভূষণের একান্ত নিজস্ব ভঙ্গিকেই আরো একবার সুস্পষ্ট করে, অন্যদের থেকে তাঁর স্বাতন্ত্র্যকে চিহ্নিত করে।

**তথ্যসূত্র :**

১. ‘কল্লোল’ সাহিত্য পত্রিকা, প্রথম প্রকাশ ১৯২৩।
২. গোপিকানাথ রায়চৌধুরি, দুই বিশ্বযুদ্ধ মধ্যবর্তীকালীন বাংলা কথাসাহিত্য, পৃঃ ১২২
৩. ‘তেলেনাপোতা আবিষ্কার’, প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্র।
৪. ‘আরণ্যক’ একটি বহুচর্চিত উপন্যাস। ফলত এর পাঠ সংক্রান্ত যে সমস্ত আলোচনাগুলি পাওয়া যায় সেগুলিকে ‘উপস্থিত পাঠ’ হিসেবে ধরে আমাদের নিবন্ধে তার একটি বিকল্প পাঠ নির্মাণের চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে। সেই প্রসঙ্গেই ‘উপস্থিতের বিকল্প পাঠ’ শব্দগুচ্ছের ব্যবহার।

বিশেষ উল্লেখ : নিবন্ধে ‘আরণ্যক’ থেকে ব্যবহৃত প্রাসঙ্গিক উদ্ধৃতিগুলি বিভূতিভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, ‘আরণ্যক’, মিত্র ও ঘোষ পাবলিশার্স প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড, ত্রয়োদশ সংস্করণ, কলকাতা, ২০০৭ থেকে গৃহীত।

---

# बदलता परिवेश और मनुष्य

कविता मेहरोत्रा

गत वर्ष दिल्ली जाना हुआ जिनके घर रूकी थी, वे सब हमारे आने से बड़े प्रसन्न थे, पर एक विषाद की रेखा उनकी प्रसन्नता पर हावी हो रही थी, क्योंकि उनके पुत्र का एक मित्र हादसे का शिकार हो गया था। वह २७ वर्षीय नौजवान वायुसेना का एक हौनहार पाइलट था, जिसे केदारनाथ में जो लोग मर गये थे उनके दाह-संस्कार के लिए लकड़ी पहुँचाने की ड्यूटी दी गई थी। इस दौरान ही वह हादसे का शिकार हो गया। एक घर का चिराग जलने से पहले ही बुझ गया। एक हौनहार युवक अपने जीवन में कुछ करने से पहले ही काल के गाल में समा गया। एक त्रासदी उसे लील गई, किन्तु पिछले वर्ष केदारनाथ में जो कुछ हुआ, जिसमें हजारों मनुष्यों ने अपनी जान गँवा दी। हजारों घर सूने हो गए। एक त्रासदी जिसने हमें पूरी तरह से झकझोर दिया। वह त्रासदी मनुष्य द्वारा ही निर्मित थी और स्वयं मनुष्य ही उसका शिकार हो रहा था। हमने अपने लोभ को इतना अधिक बढ़ा कर लिया कि वह अब हमें ही लील रहा है। हमारे धार्मिक स्थलों ने अब पर्यटन का रूप ले लिया है। धार्मिकता वहाँ केवल नाम मात्र की ही रह गई है। सैर-सपाटे के स्थल वे अब ज्यादा हो गये हैं। वर्तमान समाज भौतिकता से बहुत ज्यादा आक्रान्त है। घूमना-फिरना, मौज-मस्ती करना ही आज के जीवन का ध्येय बन चुका है। भौतिक संसाधनों की चाह और उसके बगैर बिलकुल नहीं रह पाना आज के जीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा बन चुका है। गत वर्ष केदारनाथ में मनुष्य की इसी मदान्धता ने एक प्रलय का रूप ले लिया। पर्वत-स्थल पर नदी किनारे इतने बड़े-बड़े होटल और नदी के पास एकत्रित होता कूड़ा ही मनुष्य के विनाश का कारण बन गया।

इस त्रासदी से ठीक से हम उबर भी नहीं पाये थे कि गत् २५ अप्रैल को नेपाल में आए भूकम्प ने हमें फिर से कँपा दिया। भूकम्प तो भारत में थी आया पर उसका स्वरूप भारत में उतना भयावह नहीं था जितना कि नेपाल में। नेपाल में तो उसने अच्छी खासी तबाही मचा दी थी। चारों ओर उजाड़ दिखाई देने लगा। एक कवि ने उसे हम प्रकार वर्णित किया है -

‘भूचाल से दहल गया  
बदल गया सब कुछ  
भय सफेद कागज बन  
सब चेहरों पर चिपक गया

---

जब धरती ही डोले  
बार-बार, रूक-रूक  
खाती हिचकोले  
तब थामने को कुछ

अपना दिल ही तो बचता है।<sup>1</sup>”

पूर्वकाल से हम सभी भारतीय लोग प्रकृति को ईश्वर सदृश ही मानते चले आए हैं और उसके विभिन्न स्वरूपों की पूजा भी करते रहे हैं। सच पूछे तो वे प्रकृति में ही ईश्वर का दर्शन करते रहे हैं। प्रसाद ने ‘कामायनी’में इसका वर्णन बड़े ही सुन्दर शब्दों में किया है -

‘महानील इस परम व्योम में,

अन्तरिक्ष में ज्योर्तिमान

ग्रह नक्षत्र और विधुत्कण किसका करते से सन्धान ।

छिप जाते हैं और निकलते आकर्षण में खिंचे हुए,

तृण वीरूध लहलहे हो रहे किसके रस में सिंचे हुए?

सिर नीचा कर किसकी सत्ता सब करते स्वीकार यहाँ,

सदा मौन हो प्रवचन करते, जिसका वह अस्तित्व कहाँ?

हे अनन्त रमणीय। कौन तुम? यह मैं कैसे कह सकता,

कैसे हो? क्या हो? इसका तो भार विचार न सह सकता।

हे विराट। हे विश्वदेव। तुम कुछ हो, ऐसा, होता भान।<sup>2</sup>’

प्रकृति हमें ईश्वर का दिया हुआ निःस्वार्थ वरदान है। मनुष्य की प्रकृति या प्रवृत्ति तो समय के साथ बदलती रहती है परन्तु प्रकृति अपनी टेक कभी नहीं छोड़ती, वह हमें नियत समय से सारी वस्तुएँ प्रदान करती रहती है। वर्षा के समय वर्षा, शीत में शीत, मौसम के अनुसार फल फूल अनाज इत्यादि और अगर वह जरा भी इधर उधर होती है तो हम बेसब्र हो जाते हैं। मानसून का देर से आना, कम आना हमारी-सारी अर्थव्यवस्था को लचर बना देता है। हमें चाहे अपने को कितना भी अधिक विकसित माने पर प्रकृति की मार हमें बार-बार ये याद दिला देती है कि उसके सामने हम कितने कमजोर और बेबस हैं, किन्तु मनुष्य अपने घमण्ड में यह मानने को तत्पर नहीं होता। कवि अज्ञेय ने अपनी एक कविता में प्रकृति और मनुष्य को सामने रख मनुष्य के स्वार्थ को बड़ी सुन्दरता से दर्शाया है -

‘सबेरे उठा तो धूप खिल कर छा गई थी

और एक चिड़िया अभी - अभी गा गयी थी।



---

मैंने धूप से कहा मुझे थोड़ी गरमाई दोगी उधार?  
चिड़िया से कहा; थोड़ी मिठास उधार दोगी?  
मैंने घास की पत्ती से पूछा: तनिक हरियाली दोगी  
तिनके की नोक भर?  
शंखपुष्पी से पूछा उजास दोगी किरण की ओक भर?  
मैंने हवा से माँगा थोड़ा खुलापन बस एक प्रश्वास  
लहर से एक रोम की सिहरन पर उल्लास  
मैंने आकाश से माँगी  
आँख की झपकी भर असीमता - उधार  
सब से उधार माँगा, सब ने दिया  
यों मैं जिया और जीता हूँ  
क्योंकि यही सब तो है जीवन-  
गरमाई, मिठास, हरियाली, उजाला  
गन्धवाही मुक्त खुलापन, लोच उल्लास, लहरिल प्रवाह  
और बोध भव्य निर्वास निस्सीम का।  
वे सब उधार पाए हुए द्रव्य  
रात के अकेले अन्धकार में  
सपने में जागा जिसमें  
एक अनदेखे अरूप ने पुकार कर  
मुझसे पूछा था; क्यों जी,  
तुम्हारे इस जीवन में  
इतने विविध - अनुभव है  
इतने तुम धनी हो  
तो मुझे थोड़ा प्यार दोगे, उधार, जिसे मैं  
सौगूने सूद के साथ लौटाऊँगा  
.....  
उसने यह कहा  
पर रात के धूप अँधेरे में

---

---

मैं सहमा हुआ चुप रहा, अभी तक मौन हूँ

अनदेखे अरूप को

उधार देते मैं डरता हूँ

क्या जाने यह याचक कौन है।<sup>3</sup>

यह सच है कि मानव सृष्टि का श्रेष्ठतम प्राणी है। ईश्वर ने उसे बहुत सारे वरदान दिए हैं और वह संसार का स्वामी बन बैठा है। उसने लगभग अपने आपको नियन्ता ही मान लिया है। वह समझता है कि वह सारे संसार का स्वामी है और वह जो चाहे कर सकता है। अपने इसी अभिमान के चलते उसने प्रकृति का दोहन करना प्रारम्भ कर दिया है? यह जानते हुए भी इसके सामने वो असहाय है। यदि हम सृष्टि के इतिहास की ओर दृष्टिपात करते हैं तो पाते हैं कि सृष्टि का विध्वंस भी मनुष्य की इसी दोहन प्रवृत्ति का परिणाम है। हिन्दी के प्रसिद्ध कवि जयशंकर प्रसाद की श्रेष्ठ रचना 'कामायनी' की बात की जाय तो प्रसाद ने अपने इस महान ग्रन्थ में मनुष्य की इसी दुष्प्रवृत्ति की ओर दृष्टिपात किया है। देव सृष्टि के विध्वंस का कारण उनकी अतिशय लालसा ही तो है -

‘प्रकृति रही दुर्जेय पराजित हम

सब थे भूले मद में

भोले थे, हाँ तिरते केवल सब विलासिता

के मद में

वे सब ढूँढे, ढूँढा उनका विभव, बन गया पारावार

उमड़ रहा था देव सुखों पर दुःख जलधि का नाद अपार।<sup>4</sup>

X X X X

‘विकल वासना प्रतिनिधि वे सब

मुरझाये चले गये

आह! वे जले अपनी ज्वाला से

फिर वे जल में गले जले।<sup>5</sup>

आगे प्रसाद कहते हैं कि क्या मनुष्य इतना भी नहीं समझता है-

‘जीवन तेरा क्षुद्र अंश है

नील घन माला में

सौदामिनी संधि सा सुन्दर क्षण भर रहा उजाला में।<sup>6</sup>

---

यह संसार केवल मनुष्य के लिए ही तो नहीं है। मनुष्य से इतर और भी प्राणी इसी विश्व के अंश है और जीवन उनके लिए भी उतना ही आवश्यक है जितना कि मनुष्य के लिए, लेकिन मनुष्य अपने दर्प में यह समझना ही नहीं चाहता। कवि प्रसाद उसकी इसी भूल का अहसास इन शब्दों में कराते हैं -

‘सुख को सीमित कर अपने में केवल दुःख छोड़ोगे  
इतर प्राणियों की पीड़ा लख अपना मुँह मोड़ोगे  
ये मुद्रित कलियाँ दल में सब सौरभ बन्दी कर ले  
सरस न हो मकरन्द बिन्दु से खुल कर, तो ये भर लें  
सूखे, झड़े और तब कुचले सौरभ को पाओगे  
फिर आमोद कहाँ से मधुमय वसुधा पर लाओगे।’

वे उसे याद दिलाते हैं -

‘पशु से यदि हम ऊँचे हैं तो  
भव जलनिधि में बने सेतु।’

किन्तु बार-बार को तबाही भी मनुष्य को सावधान नहीं कर पा रही है। वह अपने मद में अपना ही संसार उजाड़ रहा है और आने वाली संततियों के लिए भी नरक की सृष्टि कर रहा है। उसकी भौतिकता उस पर और उसकी आने वाली पीढ़ी पर कितनी भारी है वह यह क्यों नहीं समझ पा रहा है?

आज हम सभी अत्यधिक गर्मी की मार से मर्माहत हैं। गर्मी का बेतहाशा बढ़ते जाना, वर्षा का कम होना, जलस्तर का नीचे होते जाना, भूस्खलन होना, नदियों का सूखना - इन - सारी स्थितियों के जिम्मेदार हम स्वयं हैं। पेड़ों को काट-काट कर कंक्रीट के जंगल बनाते जाना, गाड़ियों की संख्या में निरन्तर वृद्धि होना ये सारी स्थितियाँ हमें विनाश की ओर ले जा रही हैं किन्तु हम सब जानकर भी अनजान बने हुए हैं। संसार सभी प्राणियों के लिए है, यह सोच दिन व दिन कम होती जा रही है। मोबाइल का अतिशय प्रयोग, उससे निकलने वाली तरंगे न केवल मनुष्य पर दुष्प्रभाव डाल रही है बल्कि अन्य जीवों के लिए भी घातक सिद्ध हो रही है। जीवन शैली बदल जाने के कारण मनुष्य की ब्राह्म प्रकृति ही नहीं उसकी अन्तः प्रकृति भी प्रभावित हो रही है। बच्चे सारा दिन टी०वी०, मोबाइल फोन और कम्प्यूटर से चिपके रहते हैं और इस वजह से उनमें मोटापा और मधुमेह जैसे रोग बढ़ रहे हैं। वे समय से पहले बड़े हो रहे हैं। उनकी मानसिकता आक्रमक हो रही है और दुःख का विषय

---

यह है कि इन सारी चीजों के जनक हम स्वयं हैं। सृष्टि को बचाए रखने के लिए हमें इन चीजों को समझना होगा तभी मनुष्यता बचेगी तभी हम बच पाएँगे, समाज बच पाएगा और आनेवाली पीढ़ियाँ स्वस्थ रह पाएँगी। कवि प्रसाद की इन पंक्तियों के द्वारा अपनी बात का समाप्त करना चाहूँगी -

‘संसृति के विक्षत पग रे  
वह चलती है डगमग रे  
अनुलेप सदृश तू लग रे।’

### संदर्भ - ग्रन्थ सूची

- १) आदर्श प्रकाश (नया ज्ञानोदय जून २०१५)
- २) कामायनी (पृष्ठ - १५)
- ३) अज्ञेय - (सबेरे उठा तो धूप खिली थी)
- ४) कामायनी (पृष्ठ - ८)
- ५) कामायनी (पृष्ठ - १०)
- ६) कामायनी (पृष्ठ - १३)
- ७) कामायनी (पृष्ठ - ५६)
- ८) कामायनी (पृष्ठ - ६१)
- ९) लहर (जयशंकर प्रसाद पृष्ठ - ५०)

---

# पर्यावरण और आज का मानव

आभा झा

पर्यावरण का तात्पर्य है हमारा वातावरण। जिसमें हम और हमारे बच्चे रहते हैं। इसी में सभी जीव-जंतु अऔर पेड़-पौधे पलते हैं। पर्यावरण में हमारी धरती, जल और वायुमंडल आते हैं। ये सभी प्रकृति के ही अंग हैं। प्रकृति एवं मानव का संबंध आदिकाल से है। प्रकृति आदि मानव से लेकर आधुनिक मानव तक उसकी सहयात्री रही है। सौन्दर्य और भावुकता की सबसे पहली शिक्षा उसी से मनुष्य को मिली है। रंग-विधान और उल्लास के साथ-साथ चक्राकार कालगति और सुख-दुःख की सबसे सरल और सार्थक अभिव्यंजना प्रकृति ही करती है। केवल वर्ण्य विषय ही नहीं कविता की प्रेरणा भी देती है। वह मनुष्य की सबसे पुरातन किन्तु सबसे जीवन्त सहचरी है। प्रकृति सहज और नैसर्गिक हैं। मनुष्य और प्रकृति दोनों एक दूसरे के पूरक हैं। प्रकृति और मानव का संबंध यानि साहित्य और प्रकृति का संबंध। क्योंकि साहित्य की रचना मानव ही करता है।

प्रकृति और मानव की तरह प्रकृति और साहित्य भी आपस में अटूट रूप से संबंधित है। प्रकृति की संस्तुति सर्वदा महाकाव्य, खंडकाव्य, कहानी, निबंध, संस्मरण तथा उपन्यास आदि के माध्यम से की गई है। वर्डस्वर्थ के 'डैफोडिल्स', टेनीसन की 'ब्रेक-ब्रेक', कीट्स और शैली के प्रकृति - चित्रण आदि प्रकृति की महत्ता को स्पष्ट करते हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त भारतीय साहित्यों में भी प्रकृति - चित्रण एवं उनकी महत्ता कूट-कूट कर भरी है। जैसे - कालीदास का मेघदुत और ऋतुसंहार, प्रेमचन्द के उपन्यासों में ग्राम्य-जीवन का प्रकृति - चित्रण, सुमित्रानन्दन पंत की लावण्यमयी प्राकृतिक कविताएँ, अज्ञेय की 'एक बूंद सहसा उछली' जय शंकर प्रसाद की कामायनी का प्रारंभ 'हिमगिरि के उत्तुंग शिखर से' आदि सभी प्रकृति की महत्ता को स्पष्ट करते हैं। विश्व के लगभग सभी महान साहित्यकारों ने प्रकृति की छटा का वर्णन मुक्त कंठ से किया है।

पंत का प्रारंभिक जीवन प्रकृति के गोद में बीता है। प्रकृति के सौंदर्य ने उसकी कवि प्रतिभा पर जादू किया और वे अपनी कविता में पर्वतीय प्रकृति की सरल और चंचल सुन्दरता को अभिव्यक्त करने लगे। इनकी रचना 'वीणा' में प्रकृति सौंदर्य के विभिन्न अंगों का सरस वर्णन है। प्रकृति की स्निग्ध सुन्दर गोद में उन्हें माता का वात्सल्यमय ममत्व दिखाई दिया और वे प्रकृति को ही माँ संबोधित करने लगे -

“माँ मेरे जीवन की हार,

तेरा उज्ज्वल-हृदय हार हो अश्रु-कणों का यह उपहार।”

---

कवि पंत ने प्रकृति को माँ व सहचरी रूप में देखा है। कवि प्रकृति को सहचरी के रूप में देखते हुए कहता है -

सिखा दो ना, हे मधुप कुमारि।  
मुझे भी अपने मीठे गान,  
कुसुम के चुने कटोरो से,  
करा दो न, कुछ-कुछ मधुपान।  
नवल कलियों के धीरे झूम,  
प्रसूनों के अघरों को चूम;  
मुदित, कवि-सी तुम अपना पाठ  
सीखो हो सखि! जग में धूम;  
पिला दो न, तब हँ सुकुमारि,  
इसी से थोड़े मधुमय गान;  
कुसुम के खुले कटोरे से,  
करा दो न, कुछ-कुछ मधुपान।

पंतजी विशेषतया प्रकृतिमूलक रहस्यवादी कवि माने जाते हैं' और आधुनिक हिन्दी काव्य में प्रकृति रहस्यवाद का प्रवर्तक भी माना गया है तथा प्रकृति की ओट में उन्होंने प्रिय की झाँकी निहारी है -

शरद् के निर्मल तिमिर की ओट में  
नव मिलन के पलक दल सा झूमता  
कौन मादक कर मुझे है छू रहा  
प्रिय तुम्हारी मुकता की आड़ से?

कवि प्रसाद को प्रेम और सौंदर्य का कवि माना जाता है। कवि ने अपने प्रेम और सौंदर्य भावना की अभिव्यक्ति प्रकृति के माध्यम से की है। प्रसाद ने प्रकृति के जैसे मधुर रमणीय दृश्यों की योजना अपने काव्य में की है, किसी दूसरे कवि ने नहीं। प्रसाद के लिए प्रकृति सजीव थी और उन्होने सर्वदा उसमें चैतन्य की अनुभूति की है। प्रकृति उनके लिए केवल मानव भावों को जाग्रत करने का साधन नहीं अपितु एक ऐसी सहचरी है जो मानव के साथ हँसती, रोती, उद्वेलित होती और उसको सांत्वना प्रदान करती है। तथा मानव उसके साहचर्य में प्रसन्न होता है। साथ ही प्रसाद का प्रकृति उन्हें परम तत्व के दर्शन कराता है। जैसे -

लहरों में यह क्रीड़ा चंचल, सागर का उद्वेलित अंचल।

---

है पोंछ रहा आँखें छल-छल, किसने वह चोट चलाई है?

प्रसाद ने रहस्यवादी कवियों की भाँति प्रकृति के माध्यम से प्रिय अर्थात् ब्रह्म को खोजने का सुन्दर प्रयास भी किया है।

चमकूँगा धूल कणों में सौरभ हो उड़ जाऊँगा।  
पाऊँगा कभी तुम्हें तो ग्रह पथ में टकराऊँगा।।

कवि ने प्रकृति का उपयोग उसका मानवीकरण करके भी किया है तथा उसे संध्या, उषा, चन्द्रिका आदि प्राकृतिक पदार्थ सचेतन व मुखर जान पड़ते हैं -

बीती विभावरी जाग री!  
अम्बर घनघट में दुबो रही  
तारा-घट ऊषा नागरी।

प्रसाद ने जीवन की विभिन्न अवस्थाओं, भावनाओं व व्यापारों का चित्रण करने के लिए प्रकृति प्रांगण से ही प्रतीक ग्रहण किए हैं। उदाहरणार्थ

झझा झकोर गर्जन था बिजली थी नीरद माला।  
पाकर इस शुन्य हृदय को सबने आ डेरा डाला।।

प्रसाद, पंत की तरह नागार्जुन ने भी अपने काव्य में प्रकृति चित्रण किया है। नागार्जुन किसान कुल के थे। किसान कुल में जन्म लेने के कारण कवि का प्रकृति से अंतरंग परिचय और सघन लगाव हो स्वाभाविक है। नागार्जुन अपने गाँव से दूर, देश से दूर पड़े हुए लंकावास के दिनों में जब अपनी पत्नी का 'सिन्दुर तिलकित भाल' याद करते हे तो काम क्रीड़ा उत्साह का उतना प्रदर्शित नहीं करते जितना उस गाँव से, उस देश से ममता व्यक्त करते हैं और लिखते हैं -

याद आता मुझे अपना वह 'तरउनी' ग्राम  
याद आती लीचियाँ, वे आम  
याद आते मुझे मिथिला के रुचिर-भू-भाग  
याद आते धान  
याद आते कमल, कुमुदिनी और तालमखान  
याद आते शस्य-श्यामल जनपदों के  
नाम-गुण-अनुसार ही रक्खे गए वे नाम  
याद आते वेणुवन के नीलिमा के निलय अति-अभिराम।

नागार्जुन बहुत दिनों के बाद जब अपने गाँव आते है तब जी भरकर 'पकी सुनहली फसलों

---

---

की मुस्कान' देखते है,

'अपनी गँवई पगडंडी की चन्दनवर्णी घूल' छूकर अपूर्व कृतार्थ अनुभव करते हैं। वे वहाँ रहते हैं और वहाँ के एक-एक पेड़ - पौधों को, प्रकृति को पहचानते हैं।

नये-नये हरे -हरे पात .....

प्रकृति ने ढँक लिए अपने सब गात

पोर-पोर डाल-डाल

पेट-पीठ और दायरा विशाल

ऋतुपति ने कर लिए खूब आत्मसात.....

हमारे कवियों की प्रकृति क्या आज सुरक्षित है? क्या वह हरी-भरी प्रकृति आज सही सलामत है? क्या नागार्जुन का गाँव आज है? क्या ये प्राकृतिक दृश्य हमें गाँवों में भी दृष्टिगत होते है? अगर हम सच्चे अर्थों में कहें तो नहीं। इसका मूल कारण कौन है? हम स्वयं यानि कि आज का मानव।

प्रकृति अपनी ओर से सभी संघटकों का अनुपात हमेशा ठीक बनाए रखने की कोशिश करती है पर मानव प्रकृति को छेड़कर उसकी मूल संरचना में व्यवस्था में दखल दांजी करता है फलस्वरूप पर्यावरण की दशा बिगड़ती है। वह भूल जाता है कि वह प्रकृति की संतान है और प्रकृति उसकी पोषक - रक्षक। मनुष्य उसे मात्र भोग्या समझकर उस पर अपना प्रभुत्व जामाना चाहता है। यही वह सबसे बड़ी भूल करता है और स्वामी बनने की लालसा में प्रकृति के पतन का कारण बन जाता है।

आज मानव आधुनिकता और औद्योगिकरण की दौर में इतना आगे बढ़ गया है कि प्रकृति की ओर उसका ध्यान ही नहीं जाता। वह विकास की दौड़ में होड़-सी लगाकर अधिकाधिक औद्योगिकरण करता जा रहा है जिसके कारण ऊर्जा के प्राकृतिक भंडारों का खुलकर अपव्यय हो रहा है और ये भंडार सीमित हैं। कुछ वर्षों में समाप्त हो जाएँगे। कोयला बनाने, खेती तथा बस्तियों के विस्तार के लिए वनों की अंधाधुंध कटाई हो रही है। जिसमे वायुमंडल में कार्बनडाइआक्साइड की वृद्धि हो रही है। पेड़-पौधे कार्बनडाइआक्साइड का उपयोग अपना भोजन बनाने में कर लेते हैं, लेकिन वनों की कटाई से इसकी वृद्धि रोकनी असंभव प्रतीत होती है।

वस्तुतः मानव द्वारा वनों की अंधाधुंध कटाई, कलकारखानों का अधिक से अधिक विकास, वैज्ञानिक उपकरणों का अधिकाधिक विकास ये सभी कारक है वातावरण के प्रदूषण के । फैक्ट्रियों से उठता धुँआ, रासायनिक दूषित जल का नदियों में बहाव विभिन्न बिमारियों का



---

वाहक है। पेड़ों की अंधधुंध कटाई, सिमटते जंगलों की वजह से रेगिस्तान का बढ़ता प्रसार, भूमि कटाव से बाढ़ का खतरा।

आज का युग पर्यावरणीय चेतना का युग है। हर व्यक्ति पर्यावरण की बात करता है, प्रदूषण से बचाव के उपाय सोचना है। पर ये बातें मात्र सोचने तक ही सीमित होकर रह जाती हैं। विकास की अंधधुंध दौड़ में पर्यावरण सुरक्षा महज एक नारा बनकर रह गया है।

### संदर्भ - ग्रन्थ सूची

- १) वायु एवं जल प्रदुषण - संजय कुमार गम्भीर
- २) प्रसाद, निराला, पंत, महादेवी की श्रेष्ठ रचनाएँ (आलोचना एवं व्याख्या) - दुर्गाशंकर मिश्र
- ३) कवि प्रसाद (आलोचनात्मक अध्ययन) दुर्गाशंकर मिश्र
- ४) हिन्दी पाठ संचयन

---

# पद्मावत में प्रकृति प्रेम

डॉ. वसुंधरा मिश्र

मानव और प्रकृति का संबंध अनादि काल से चला आ रहा है। मनुष्य को मनुष्य बनाने का बहुत बड़ा श्रेय प्रकृति को है। मलिक मुहम्मद जायसी को आचार्य रामचंद्र शुक्ल ने एकेश्वरवादी नहीं, अद्वैत वादी माना है। एकेश्वरवाद और अद्वैत वाद के बीच अंतर है। एकेश्वरवाद स्थूल एक देववाद और अद्वैत वाद आत्म वाद या ब्रह्म वाद। इसलिए वे सूफियों को अद्वैत वाद के करीब मानते हैं, सूफी प्रेम की पीर की अभिव्यंजना करते हैं। यह समाज के समन्वय का एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। सूफियों ने दिखा दिया कि एक ही प्रेम का तार सबके हृदय से होकर गुजरता है जो सभी आडबरो को नकारते हैं।

“छार उठाई लीन्ह एक मूँठी,  
दीन्ह उड़ाई पिरिथमी झूठी”

जायसी की प्रेम भावना मृत्यु पर विजय पाने वाला प्रेम है। वे सौंदर्य, संयोग, वियोग, सामाजिक दायित्वों के निर्वहन में और मृत्यु बोध सभी में प्रेम देखते हैं। यह प्रेम धर्म, जाति, मठ - मजार से ऊपर है, पर वह इसी लोक के रीति रिवाजों, जातीय संस्कारों और घरलू जीवन में है।

मध्य कालीन सूफी काव्य परंपरा के शीर्ष कवि मलिक मुहम्मद जायसी ने 'पद्मावत' महाकाव्य में प्रकृति -चित्रण किया है। इन्होंने प्रकृति के अनेक रूपों का बड़े बड़े ही मनोहारी रूप से वर्णन किया।

## आलंकारिक रूप में प्रकृति का वर्णन -

कवि जायसी ने पद्मावत में प्रकृति के अनेक उपमानों का प्रयोग करते हुए अलंकार रूप में प्रकृति का अंकन किया है। पद्मावती के रूप का चित्रण करते समय वे प्राकृतिक उपमानों का सहारा लेते हैं।

“कोई सिंगार, हार तेहि पाहों।  
कोई सेवती, कदम की छाहों॥

---

कोइ चंदन फूलहि, जनु फूली।  
कोई अजान बीरो तर भूली॥”

### उद्दीपन रूप में प्रकृति

मानव के सुख-दुख का उद्दीपन रूप में प्रकृति का चित्रण, निरूपण करती है।

राजा रतनसेन और पद्मावती को संयोग काल में प्रकृति सुखद लगती है। चमकती हुई बिजली सोने की चमक जैसी प्रतीत होती है और दादुर एलं मोर के शब्द सुहावने लगते हैं.....

“रितु पापस बरसे पिउ पावा।  
सावन - भादौ अधिक सोहावा।  
पद्मावति चाहत रितु पाइ ।  
गगन सोहावन, भूमि सोहाई।  
कोकिल वैन, पात बग घूटी।  
घनि निसरी जनु बीर बहूटी॥  
चमक बीज, बरसै जल सोना।  
दादुर, मोर सबह सुनि लोना॥”

कभी वियोग कालीन समय में प्रकृति नागफनी के समान अत्यंत भयकारक एवं दुख प्रतीत होती है।

“खड़ना बीजू चमकें चहुँ ओरा।  
बुंद बान बरिसहिं धन घोरा॥  
दादुर मोर कोकिला पीऊ।  
गिरे बीजु घट रहे न जीऊ।

वहीं दूसरी ओर नागमती का रससिक्त हृदय सूख जाता है, वह बेहोश हो जाती हैं। फिर होश आने पर वह कहती है कि -

प्रियतम के विरह मे किसने और क्यों मेरे प्राणो को उडने से रोका है। अब मेरी जैसी चातकी की आत्मा को प्रिय रूपो मेघ से कौन मिलन करवायेगा।

विरहिणी नागमती ने जब आह भरी तो आह के साथ आग भी निकलने लगी जिससे नागमती का हंस अर्थात हृदय जलने लगा। ग्रीष्म ऋतु के दग्ध वृक्षों को वसंत जिस तरह संभाल लेती है फिर उसमें नई कोपलें निकलने लगती हैं, वैसे ही वियोग के दिन भी बीत

---

जायेगें, नागमती की सखियाँ उसको आश्वासन देती है।

आषाढ़ का माह आने के बाद नागमती का विरह और बढ़ जाता है। आषाढ़ में बादलों की गर्जना सुनकर ऐसा लगता है मानो विरह ने युद्ध की तैयारी कर ली है और विरह सेना के लिए कूच का नगाड़ा बजा दिया है -

“चढ़ा आषाढ़, गगन घन गाजा।  
साजा विरह दुंद दल बाजा”  
वह कहती है ...  
“सावन बरस मेह अति पानी।  
भरनि परी, हौं विरह झुरानी”

वह पति रतनसेन के साथ नहीं है, उसके पति के बीच अनेक अगम्य पर्वत, समुद्र तथा बीहड़ वन एवं ढाक के सघन वन हैं।

इसी तरह भादौ मास में प्रकृति का कितना सजीव चित्र-

“भा भादों दूभर अति भारी।  
कैसे भरौं रैनि अँधिकारी॥”

माघ नक्षत्र में बरसात हो रही है और उसके बाद पूर्वा फ़ल्गुनी लग गया और धरती जल से भर गयी है।

ऐसे में विरहणी का शरीर उसी तरह सूख गया जैसे वर्षा ऋतु में आक और जवास के पौधे बिना पत्तों के होकर सूख जाते हैं।

“लागा कुवार, नीर श्रग घटा।  
☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆  
स्वाति बूंद चातक मुख परे।  
समुद्र सीप मोती सब भरे॥”

फिर कार्तिक मास में शरद के चंद्रमा का उजाला जहां सबको शीतलता प्रदान करता है, वहीं नागमती के लिए वह राहु के समान है। विभिन्न त्योहार हैं और अगहन मास में दिन छोटे हो जाते हैं।

प्रकृति के माध्यम से कवि ने जीवन के वास्तविक रूप का चित्रण किया है। षट-ऋतु र्वन खंड में कवि ने छः ऋतुओं के उदयास्त का सौंदर्य - वर्णन बड़े ही सूक्ष्म एवं मनोहारी रूप में

---

किया हैं तो पात्रों की मानसिक स्थिति को भी उजागर किया है। प्रथम वसंत ऋतु को कवि ने “नवल ऋतु” कहा, पावस ऋतु के लिए “रितु ग्रीष्म कै तपनि न तहाँ, जेठ-आषाण कंत घर जहां” आदि प्रकृति के अत्यधिक आकर्षक और प्रभावोत्पादक अभिव्यंजना है।

### **प्रतीकात्मक रूप में -**

कवि ने सिंहलगढ़ का वर्णन करते हुए कहा है “तौ पौरी पर दुसवं दुआरा” अर्थात् मानव शरीर के नौ चक्र हैं और दसवां दरवाजा ब्रह्म रंघ है, मोती चुर का कुंद हृदय जिसमें प्रेम रूपी अमृत और विरह रूपी कपूर भरा हुआ है।

### **रहस्यात्मक रूप में प्रकृति -**

जायसी अज्ञात सत्ता को प्रतिबिम्बित तेखत है। कवि ने पद्मावती (रूपी परमात्मा) के सौंदर्य एवं तेज को प्रकृति में व्याप्त दिखाकर रहस्यात्मक रूप में प्रकृति -चित्रण किया है। यथा -

“नयन जो देखा कंवल भा निरमल नीर शरीर।”

### **आलंबनात्मक वर्णन -**

कवि जायसी ने पद्मावत में एकऔर जहाँ बिम्बो के द्वारा प्रकृति के रम्य एवं भयानक रूपों का चित्रण किया है तो दूसरी ओर परिगणन शैली का प्रयोग कर प्रकृति की छटा चित्रित किया है। मानसरोवर खंड में कवि ने उसके निर्मल जल, सुंदर घाट, मनोहर एवं उसमें खिले हुए कमलों की शोभा वर्णित की है -

“मान सरोदक बरनों काहा । भरा समुद्र अस अति अवगाहा।

पानी मोती अस निरमल तासू। अमृत आनि कपूर सुवासु।

फुला कंवल रहा होइ राता । सहस-सहस परखुरिन कर छाता।।”

### **प्रकृति का मानवीकरण-**

मानसरोवर का मानवीकरण मिलता है। पद्मावती रूपी परमात्मा है जिसके चरणों का स्पर्श करके वह निर्मल हो जाता है। यथा -

“कहा मानसर चहा सो पाई। पारस रूप इहा लगी आई।।”

पद्मावती के सौंदर्य का वर्णन करते हुए कहा है कि “बरनै माँग सीस उपहारी, सेंदुर अबहि चढ़ा जोहि नाही।”

---

अनेक स्थलों में समासोक्ति के प्रयोग, प्रकृति उपादानो के अवलंबन लेकर अप्रस्तुत का संकेत दिया है।

“जेठ जरें, जग चलै लुभारा।  
उटहि बवंडर, परहि अंगारा॥  
चारिहु पवन झकोरे आगी।  
लंका दाहू, पलंका लगी॥”

“पद्मावती तो प्रकृति वर्णन का अगाध सागर है जिसकी गोद में अनंत धनराशि है। इस प्रकार मलिक मुहम्मद जायसी ने अपने काव्य में प्रकृति के अनेक रूपों में, अनेक प्रकार से वर्णन किया है जो आज भी जीवन और समाज के सांथ-सांथ प्रकृति के साथ धुल-मिला है।

**सदर्भ ग्रंथ -**

पद्मावत, मलिक मोहम्मद जायसी,

---

# Gendering the Greens: An Ecocritical / Ecofeminist Reading of Seamus Heaney's Works

Somrita Ganguly

The very beginning of Genesis tells us that God created man in order to give him dominion over fish and fowl and all creatures. Of course, Genesis was written by a man, not a horse. There is no certainty that God actually did grant man dominion over other creatures. What seems more likely in fact is that man invented God to sanctify the dominion that he had usurped for himself over the cow and the horse. (Kundera, 286)

Ireland like India is a land of contradictions – the land where on the one hand women get eulogized as the Caitlín Ní Uallacháins<sup>1</sup> and on the other get stigmatized as debauched Magdalenas<sup>2</sup>, just as in India where Bharat Mata<sup>3</sup> is worshipped but where female foeticide and infanticide are social problems confronting an enormous section of the country. Cathleen or Kathleen, daughter of Houlihan, a mythical Irish figure, a woman, is emblematic of Ireland. She has been used in Irish literature as a symbol of Irish nationalism, most famously so by William Butler Yeats in his play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* where she has been depicted as an old woman, urging the young, virginal men of Ireland to defend her and fight for her rights and freedom.

---

1 Cathleen Ni Houlihan

2 Magdalenes, deviant, dubious women like Mary Magdalene, who sold their flesh for money

3 Mother India

---

Simultaneously, in the politically weak, fledgling Irish Free State one also saw the establishment of Magdalene Laundries – asylums which were functional in Ireland for as many as two hundred years; veritable prisons where women whom the Catholic Church and the State deemed “fallen” or “deviant” were incarcerated, often for life, in accordance with the Biblical story of Mary Magdalene, the first archetypal Fallen Woman who had to perform severe penance to wash away the sins of the flesh allegedly committed by her in the Judeo-Christian world. The pagan Gaelic tradition, as most pagan religions, was one that lived in conjunction with nature. Historians across the globe have seen the advent of Christianity as one of the predominant factors responsible in eliminating the sense of regard that man had for nature in its debilitating mission to wipe away all traits of paganism from earth and civilize the world. This paper offers an ecocritical / ecofeminist reading of select works by Seamus Heaney – it looks at the poetics and politics of the Irish landscape as depicted by the Nobel Laureate in those select works while commenting on them from the environmental and ecological point of view.

In an article published on March 10th 1967, ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis’, Lynn White, Jr. asserted that the Judeo-Christian mandate expressed in Genesis played havoc with Man’s<sup>4</sup> consciousness. It gave him absolute power to suppress and subdue the earth. He argues –

Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen. ... By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. (1205)

---

4 “Man” (with an upper case M) in this paper alludes to mankind in general while “man” (with a lower case m) refers particularly to members of the male species.

---



---

Foregrounding this general mood I will commence this paper with the obvious – a formal definition of ecocriticism. Cheryll Glotfelty, the acknowledged founder of this field of study in USA, defines this still emergent theory thus, in her introductory note to *The Ecocritical Reader*–

What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective ... ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. (xix)

Richard Kerridge suggests in *Writing the Environment*–

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations whenever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. (5)

A cursory reading of these two definitions of ecocriticism will inform, even the most uninitiated reader, of the definitions pointing to two different approaches that this branch of study follows. The second definition as Greg Garrard puts it in his seminal work, *Ecocriticism*, is more “British”. This leads us to the essential difference between the two varied approaches to ecological studies. In America, the term used for this field of study is ‘Ecocriticism’; in UK it is ‘Green Studies’. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* mentions an inherent difference between these two approaches –

There is perhaps a tendency for the American writing to be ‘celebratory’ in tone (occasionally degenerating into what harder-left critics disparagingly call ‘tree-hugging’), whereas

---

the British variant tends to be more ‘minatory’, that is, it seeks to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governmental, industrial, commercial, and neo-colonial forces<sup>5</sup>. (242)

Man has tried to dominate nature and the consequences of it are apocalyptic. “Domination is one of our century’s most fruitful concepts for understanding human-human and human-nature relationships” (Merchant, 1). Carolyn Merchant’s is an ecocritical perspective of the present day situation. Francoise d’Eaubonne offers an ecofeminist reading of this tendency to dominate –

The earth, symbol and former preserve of the Great Mothers, has had a harder life and has resisted longer [than women]; today, her conqueror has reduced her to agony. This is the price of phallocracy. (d’Eaubonne, 188)

Heaney too imagines his troubled, turbulent Irish land as a woman –

a woman of old wet leaves,  
rush-bands and thatcher’s scallops,  
stooked loosely, her breasts an open –work  
of new straw and harvest bows.

Gazing out past  
the shifting hares. (48)

This poem, ‘Land’, from Heaney’s third anthology, *Wintering Out* (1972), deals with the uncertainties of exile looming large on the poet’s young self. Written between 1969 to 1971, at a time when Heaney was away from Northern Ireland, on a sabbatical in the University of California, Berkley, the poem deals with the anxiety of leaving behind one’s land. The land has been represented as feminine and Heaney writes –

---

5 In my paper, when I talk of Ecocriticism, I adopt a holistic attitude towards the study of the relationship between literature and nature, and include both the American and British approaches of looking at ecological studies.

---

---

I composed habits for those acres  
so that my last look would be  
neither gluttonous nor starved. (48)

The innuendo is unmistakable. It is man's wanton hunger that has made this world unsafe for women; it is Man's endless craving that has led him to rape the land that nourishes and nurtures him. Heaney, categorically referring to the uncomfortable, ubiquitous male gaze, mentions that while readying himself to leave his home, he would not look back at his land with a longing that could result in annihilation of the landscape.

In 'Act of Union' Heaney presents the metaphor of the land as a defenseless woman more poignantly than in anything that he composed before or after. Heaney writes –

I caress  
The heaving province where our past has grown.  
I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder  
That you would neither cajole nor ignore.  
Conquest is a lie. I grow older  
Conceding your half-independent shore  
Within whose borders now my legacy  
Culminates inexorably. (127)

Clearly, this is the voice of England – a male speaker, addressing Ireland. England is the "tall kingdom" (127) looking down on the woman that Ireland has been represented as, from "over her shoulder" (127). The "aloofness of the narratorial voice" (143) that Michael Parker talks about is suggestive of Ireland being the quiet victim of rape, by the traditionally powerful England –

I am still imperially  
Male, leaving you with pain ... (Heaney, 127)

Josep Armengol, in his essay 'Gendering the Irish Land: Seamus

---

---

Heaney's 'Act of Union' (1975)', sees this portrayal by Heaney of England raping Ireland as a part of a long tradition in Irish poetry – the aisling tradition. Armengol describes the tradition thus –

Two main features characterize the eighteenth-century aisling tradition of Irish national(ist) poetry: the personification of "Ireland" as a defenceless woman and the image of England as her rapist. (7)

However, Armengol mentions that Heaney moves away from this tradition to the extent that he mentions in his poem the consequence of this act of raping the woman – traditionally aisling poets stopped at only describing the actual physical act. Heaney on the other hand clearly stresses on the result of such an action –

The act sprouted an obstinate fifth column ... (127)

This "obstinate" (Heaney, 127), "parasitical and ignorant" (Heaney, 127) offspring, according to Parker refers to the birth of trouble in Northern Ireland as a consequence of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics. This poem, Parker suggests, was conceived during Heaney's wife's third pregnancy – he wanted to celebrate her "human geography" (142) while simultaneously acknowledging his "male clumsiness" (143). The poem, originally composed as 'A New Life', of course in the changed form changes direction and turns completely pessimistic in the end. Heaney's authorial voice combines with the imagined English narratorial voice to predict for Ireland an endlessly doomed, chaotic future –

No treaty  
I foresee will salve completely your tracked  
And stretchmarked body, the big pain  
That leaves you raw, like opened ground, again. (Heaney, 128)

It must be noted that in this poem the only voice that we hear is that of England's. Ireland remains quiet as she is "shamefully raped by a

---

very masculine England” (Armengol, 18). The strict binary division that Ireland has of women in its psyche – a point with which I began this paper – needs to be highlighted again. Heaney’s portrayal of Ireland is interesting. Ireland by remaining silent in this poem conforms to the image that the Irish have of women – they are seen less as people of flesh-and-blood with human wants and human desires and more as mythical creatures, traditionally feminine, long suffering. The Irish Free State, where people grew up with such unidimensional notions of femininity naturally could not come to terms with female sexuality, and they imagined the female body only in abstract terms, thus leading to the establishment of innumerable Magdalene Laundries throughout the country, where women who deviated from this strange, mythologized picture of the feminine and femininity were imprisoned and made to suffer for what the male, moralistic Irish State in conjunction with the dominant Roman Catholic Church considered “crimes of the flesh”.

Heaney continues writing in this aising tradition, deriving from it and reworking it, in other poems too. ‘Bog Queen’ was based on a real archaeological finding – that of “the first properly documented body ever taken from a bog”, writes Corcoran<sup>6</sup>, “that of the ‘queen’ discovered on the Moira estate, about twenty miles south of Belfast, in 1781”<sup>7</sup>. The feminization of the Irish boglands, the association that Heaney establishes between the female body and the Irish land is remarkable –

I lay waiting  
between turf-face and demesne wall,  
...  
My body was braille  
for the creeping influences:

---

6 As quoted in Armengol (p. 19)

7 Corcoran, as quoted in Armengol (p. 19)

---

dawn suns groped over my head  
and cooled at my feet,

through my fabrics and skins  
the seeps of winter  
digested me,  
the illiterate roots

pondered and died  
in the cavings  
of stomach and socket.  
I lay waiting

on the gravel bottom,  
my brain darkening.

...  
My skull hibernated  
in the wet nest of my hair.

Which they robbed.  
I was barbered  
and stripped  
by a turfcutter's spade

who veiled me again  
and packed coomb softly  
between the stone jambs  
at my head and my feet.

Till a peer's wife bribed him.  
The plait of my hair

...

---

---

and I rose from the dark,  
hacked bone, skull-ware,  
frayed stitches, tufts,  
small gleams on the bank. (112 - 114)

In ‘Act of Union’ while we heard England’s voice, here we possibly hear Mother Ireland speak, a figure almost like the legendary Kathleen ni Houlihan. Through the sustained analogy of the female body and the bogland, the implication that Mother Ireland will “rise from the dark” and avenge the wrongs that an exploitative England has done to her is evident. The description of course is “imbued with sexual undertones” (Armengol, 20).

Other “bog poems” by Heaney like ‘Strange Fruit’, ‘Bone Dreams’ and ‘Punishment’ continue to feed the image of Ireland as feminine, a bog woman, perhaps. ‘Punishment’ is about the discovery from the bogland the body of a young Irish girl who had been brutally punished and killed by the Irish Republican Army for going out with a British soldier. These amorous gestures seen by the IRA as acts of betrayal did not go unpunished, historically. What’s particularly notable about the poem is Heaney’s almost patronizing authorial voice –

I can feel the tug  
of the halter at the nape  
of her neck, the wind  
on her naked front.  
It blows her nipples  
to amber beads,  
it shakes the frail rigging  
of her ribs.  
I can see her drowned  
body in the bog,  
...

---

her shaved head  
like a stubble of black corn,  
her blindfold a soiled bandage,  
her noose a ring  
to store  
the memories of love.  
Little adulteress,  
before they punished you  
you were flaxen-haired,  
undernourished, and your  
tar-black face was beautiful.  
My poor scapegoat,  
I almost love you  
but would have cast, I know,  
the stones of silence.  
I am the artful voyeur  
...  
I who have stood dumb  
when your betraying sisters,  
cauled in tar,  
wept by the railings,  
who would connive  
in civilized outrage  
yet understand the exact  
and tribal, intimate revenge. (117 – 118)

Heaney relates sexuality to nationalist politics. While he feels pity for the young girl and the treatment meted out to her, he can also “understand” (118) the feeling of “tribal, intimate revenge” (118) that must have led the IRA to punish the girl. Heaney’s poetic sensibilities guide him to be conscious and sympathetic to the feelings of all parties involved instead of taking parochial stands or sides. Parker



---

writes—

Acutely distressed by the humiliations inflicted upon the ‘scapegoat’ victims of communal intolerance, he nevertheless recognizes the legitimacy of the community’s feelings of betrayal. (137)

However, “understanding” does not necessarily mean condoning. The vocabulary employed by Heaney to describe the girl almost exonerates her of her “crimes” – “little adulteress”, “frail”, “flax-haired”, “undernourished”, “poor scapegoat” and “beautiful”. The feeling of revulsion towards the poet aroused by his exceedingly condescending words “I almost love you” (118) are challenged the moment we realize that Heaney is possibly condemning himself for having been a mute bystander and not actively preventing the act from taking place – “I am the artful voyeur” (118). The fact that he did not intervene to save the girl, but “stood dumb when [her] betraying sisters ... wept by the railings” (118), was almost akin to the brutality meted out to the young scapegoat by the IRA – theirs were actual, physical stones of penalty; Heaney’s were the metaphorical “stones of silence”. Heaney, as an artist, had probably silently witnessed the girl being tortured because he wanted to exploit her body and situation and wean poetry out of it. Would a woman do the same and wean poetry out of similar situation, one might ask. The answer will obviously be a matter of conjecture. Heaney’s self-reproach at his complicity is something that we will choose to acknowledge depending on how critical we are of Heaney in particular and the role of Art in general.

When looking at Heaney’s representation of women or the representation of the Irish landscape as feminine one needs to focus on two other clusters of poems – constellations not as bright as some of the works that this paper commented on earlier, but important

---

nonetheless. ‘Limbo’ and ‘Bye-Child’ are two such poems which need to be probed into. ‘Limbo’ typically refers to the zone between hell and heaven in Catholic theology – an infant who dies before being baptized cannot go to heaven but the child should not also be made to suffer in hell because he had no hand over his untimely death – the infant’s soul remains in limbo. Heaney’s poem is about a young Catholic mother in the Protestant dominated Northern Ireland (Ballyshannon) who drowns her illegitimate infant to death – the act was perhaps an attempt on her part to protect her reputation, but in the process she was also freeing her child of the stigma of bastardy that would haunt him for the rest of his life, if he had lived. The heartless act therefore needs to be seen also as a gesture of extreme love, no matter how warped –

But I’m sure  
As she stood in the shallows  
Ducking him tenderly

Till the frozen knobs of her wrists  
Were dead as the gravel,  
He was a minnow with hooks  
Tearing her open. (75)

‘Bye-Child’ is about another mother who attempts to hide her sin by hiding the child in a hen-house. Michael Parker suggests –

Although at first sight ‘Limbo’ and ‘Bye-Child’ would appear to be concerned with private cruelties and guilt, these chilling tales can also be read as parables for the present state of Ireland and its moral paralysis. (112)

‘Mother of the Groom’, from another cluster of poems, in a Freudian way, talks of the mother of the groom recalling her son as a child, when he had played on her lap and she had bathed his glistening back.

---

Reminiscent of Paul and Mrs. Morrel's relationship from Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* the mother feels that her son slipped off her "soapy hold" (Heaney, 68) with the daughter-in-law coming into their family. The poem ominously ends with the mother predicting that the wedding ring would "ease off" (68) the bride's hand, just as soap had once eased off her grip on her son. The marriage, of course, does not last, as the next poem in the anthology (*Wintering Out*) informs us – 'Summer House'. The poem can be criticized for this unflattering portrayal of the mother; however, the work has to be commended because it is one of those rare instances in Heaney where the woman has been given a voice of her own, if not some definite agency. In 'Summer House' again Heaney quickly returns to the voice of the male narrator, taking stock of his life. He is undergoing midlife crisis, his marriage is falling apart. He wonders what led to this failure in obtaining familial bliss –

Was it wind off the dumps  
or something in the heat

dogging us, the summer gone sour,  
a fouled nest incubating somewhere?  
Whose fault, I wondered ... (69)

He does not wish to acknowledge that he was solely to blame for the relationship turning sour. In fact, he even claims that he had tried to restore the lost harmony – however, that was not to be. And through all this, the woman's voice is conspicuously absent; she is only shown to be weeping, pitifully –

I hear her small lost weeping  
through the hall, that bells and hoarsens  
on my name, my name. (69)

The image of the envious, strong, almost malicious, vicious mother

---

---

and that of the pathetic, sobbing wife are hard to reconcile. But then such has been the conception of the Irish landscape too in Heaney's gamut – Mother Ireland is either a forever brooding presence, waiting her turn to rise and retaliate, or she is the silently suffering victim, with hardly a voice of her own. The binaries are indeed hard to reconcile.

In this paper it has been my attempt to make readers pause over the very physicality of Heaney's metaphoric presentation of Ireland in poem after poem. In his works frequently he has personified Ireland as a woman offering us avenues to read into these works from an eco-feminist perspective. Celtic paganism existed before Ireland got Christianized by St. Patrick and this was a time when the role of the woman could not be undermined. The significance of the woman in so far as her companionship and cooperation with kings and other heroes is concerned is sufficiently evinced in early Irish literature. The power of the woman gradually deteriorated with the rise of the Catholic Church that tried to control women and tame the earth simultaneously. The immensely patriarchal attitude promoted by the Vatican for centuries led to the denigration of the woman from that of a *tour de force* to simply perhaps a temptress. The real identity of Mary Magdalene, the Jewish woman associated with the name of Jesus, has been a subject of debate for over twenty centuries. Magdalene most commonly has been dismissed as a prostitute – a reformed prostitute is the maximum benefit of doubt that religious clerics are willing to give her. She was represented popularly as a seductress, a sinner, a whore, her voluptuous breasts revealed for all to see. However, the discovery of some papyrus documents by certain unsuspecting Egyptian farmers inside a sealed, buried urn in the nineteenth century led to an entirely new dimension in Biblical studies. What was unearthed from that urn in Egypt was a manuscript on papyrus called 'The Gospel of Mary', which wholly redefines

---

Mary Magdalene's identity. The town whore is seen in a completely new light here – as a leader of the apostles, a devoted follower of Christ. This discovery offers us an alternative reading of Mary, differing from the one sold by the Vatican for around 1500 years. However, even before this path-breaking excavation Mary had occupied a position of sufficient centrality in the New Testament. She is said to have been the first person to witness Christ's Resurrection; she was the first person to have reported it to Christ's apostles. This unique appearance to Mary Magdalene, according to Professor Carolyn Osiek, a Christian theologian, gives her a status, it gives her an importance. Nevertheless, allegations of prostitution and adultery led to Mary Magdalene's reputation being tarnished for hundreds of years. The Church's deliberate and continued 'campaign' against Mary Magdalene, despite evidence showing Magdalene in a light far more positive than the Church was willing to give her credit for, is indicative of the puritanical, sectarian mindset of those who promised to preach the word of God. Not only had these men shrewdly usurped the rights of women and successfully undertaken devastatingly exploitative projects which led to the ruin of Mother Nature and Earth completely, but they also ensured that the figure of God, when translated to the common man, appeared as male and not female – their most astute strategy to not only take over others' rights but also to legitimize their cunning actions through the created image of God. The Derry-born Catholic poet, Heaney, throughout his life has battled against such conniving, totalizing attitudes. A poet of heightened sensibilities, he has tried in his humble way to not associate himself with camp politics but to explore every aspect of a problem – to dig out the past in its entirety and present it to posterity. His poems, in troubled times like ours, demand and deserve a close reading therefore from perspectives which are hitherto new and unexampled.

---

## Works Cited

Armengol, Josep M. 'Gendering the Irish Land: Seamus Heaney's 'Act of Union' (1975)'. *Atlantis* 23.1(2001): 7–26. Print.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 3rd Ed. Daryaganj, Viva Books, 2011. Print.

D'Eaubonne, Françoise. 'The Time for Ecofeminism' (1974). Trans. Ruth Hottell. *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980. Print.

Garrad, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. India: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Glotfelty, Cheryl. 'Introduction'. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. C. Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. London: University of Georgia Press, 1996. Print.

Heaney, Seamus. *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998. Print.

Kerridge, Richard. *Writing the Environment*. Eds. R. Kerridge and N. Sammells. London: Zed Books, 1998. Print.

Kundera, Milan. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Trans. Aron Asher. UK: Perennial Classics, 2000. Print.

Merchant, Carolyn. 'Introduction'. *Ecology*. Ed. C. Merchant. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994. Print.

Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993. Print.

White Jr., Lynn. 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis' (1967). *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*. Ed. Ian G. Barbour. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1973. Print.

---

# On Ghazala Meer: (Re) mapping the Land-as-Woman Metaphor in Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider

Sonal Kapur

The thing I came for: the wreck itself and not the story of the  
wreck the thing itself and not the myth

(Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck* 23)

The concepts of space and spatiality are amorphous and informed with complexities which render thinking, writing, theorizing and performing spaces and spatialities challenging and difficult to map. A wide range of disciplinary knowledge(s) and practices, from philosophy, natural sciences, social sciences to the arts, have increasingly engaged with the polysemic character of these concepts in an attempt to unravel their possible meanings, modalities and implications which inform such fluxional contexts as aesthetics, culture and politics, among others. Space has, indeed, emerged as an interface for diverse modes of inquiry and several concerns of literary and cultural scholarship such as nationalism, colonialism; gender and sexuality; urbanization and globalization; digital cultures; environmentalism and ecopoetics / ecocriticism / ecofeminism have, in recent times, posited a fundamentally spatial dimension. Literature has, in particular, played a crucial role in addressing issues pertinent to spatial studies and, the introduction of Ecocriticism to the study of literature in the past few decades has contributed a novel way of looking at space and understanding spatiality. Informed by ecological science, politics, ethics, women's studies, and history, among other academic fields, ecocriticism has

---

surfaced as a vehicle that has propelled notions of space beyond aesthetic expression and theoretical interdisciplinarity into the realm of activism. Under its aegis, our understanding of space has acquired new dimensions and consequently, agency to question, resist and remap the existing ontology, epistemology and character of issues imbued within it. One such dimension has evolved in the wake of Ecocriticism having branched out into Ecological feminism or Ecofeminism, a philosophical and political theory/movement combining ecological concerns with those of feminism and emphasizing on the fundamental connection between the domination of women and the domination of ecology as a result of patriarchal practices and discourse with respect to the two.

Since the 1970s, when the term “ecofeminism” was first conceived by Francoise d’Eaubonne in her 1974 book *Le féminisme ou la mort*, the feminization of space has increasingly generated the interest of geographers, feminists and ecocritics, alike. From the early ecofeminists advocating an essentializing link between women and the natural world to the censure of the view by such ecofeminist thinkers as Annette Kolodny who regard the metaphor of land-as-woman a patriarchal construct developed by the “male metaphors” of “erotic mastery or infantile repression” (8), gendering the landscape female remains a contentious issue. In her essay “Landscape in Drag: The Paradox of Feminine Space in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*”, Andrea Blair points out how categorical acceptance or dismissal of the land-as-woman metaphor are both dubious practices that generate enough confusion to render the more complex examples of the feminization of landscape in literature imperceptible. She emphasises the need to explore and define a middle ground in order to widen the debate and open further possibilities toward a new understanding of the metaphor and its implications (49). While an examination of the intricate relationship of gender and landscape representation in literature that escapes the



---

parochial nature of the debate would require a separate essay altogether, a close scrutiny of Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider*, a film adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which appeared in the year 2014 reveals an immensely nuanced and convoluted use of the land-as-woman metaphor which not only provides the 'middle ground' perspective but also reappropriates the structuralist-poststructuralist idea of the absent referent, already reworked for feminist and ecofeminist purposes by such scholars as Margaret Homans and Carol J. Adams, to reorient it toward a fresh analysis of the ontology of domination in relation to the contexts of gender and politics, in particular. The paper will, therefore, examine *Haider's* discreet and subtle representation of one of its central women characters, Ghazala Meer, and the landscape of Kashmir as the imbricated absent referents appropriated to reconceptualise the land-as-woman metaphor as a disruptive, anomalous, paradoxical, non-dominative space which could both, serve to subvert institutionalised approaches to Kashmir and provide a new language and set of metaphors to landscape and gender representation.

Set against the controversial scrim of insurgency-hit Kashmir of the 1990s, *Haider* is not just a fine example of intersemiotic translation, but one which successfully and rather disturbingly performs a figural operation, adapting *Hamlet* with its motif of revenge, moral dilemma and the ensuing ethical struggle to the ruptured and contentious socio-political-historical context of the valley of Kashmir. A film narrative in which the knotty personality of Shakespeare's tragic hero, Hamlet metamorphoses, as it were, into the titular character, Haider, a Kashmiri and a poet studying at Aligarh who returns to the valley experiencing the height of armed insurgency and rampant civilian disappearances, on learning of his father's 'disappearance' in the aftermath of a military raid and embarks on a dangerous journey to find his father; consequently, being drawn into the political turmoil of Kashmir, is inevitably bound to evoke strong emotions and

---

opinions. Seamlessly adapting the basic plot, characters, important soliloquies, the ‘play within the play’ technique, metaphors and themes of *Hamlet* to the fractured political climate of Kashmir, it is the first mainstream Indian film’s screenplay, jointly written by Bhardwaj and the Kashmiri writer, Basharat Peer, to go beyond the “cosmetic” and/or “rhetoric” to portray “Kashmir from the inside” (Bhardwaj, *The Indian Express*). Taking its cue from *Hamlet*, the film’s plot unfolds a tale of individual tragedies, fraught with repeated references to militancy, AFSPA, alleged human rights abuses in the state, civilian disappearances, and manipulation and victimization of Kashmir in the wake of political games played by two rival South Asian neighbouring countries: Haider returns home to seek answers for his *Abbuji*, (father) Doctor Hilal Meer’s disappearance. An idealistic doctor, Hilal, operates upon a militant at his home despite the threat of a military raid, a prevalent counter-insurgency measure in the 90s Kashmir and against his wife, Ghazala’s wishes. The next day, during a military swoop down, he is accused of sheltering terrorists in his house and is taken away for questioning. The militant is killed in the ensuing shootout at Hilal’s house and subsequently, his house is incinerated by rocket launchers. In just a few minutes, Ghazala finds herself surrounded with the ruins of her home and the uncertainty of her husband’s return. On his arrival, Haider already disturbed about his father’s disappearance, is further depressed to behold the growing intimacy between his *Mouji* (mother) and his uncle, Khurram. He undertakes an insidious journey to search for his father with the help of his love interest, Arshia, a journalist. During his search Haider encounters an enigmatic stranger Roohdar, later revealed as possessing several ghost identities, who claims to have met Haider’s father at one of the detention centres where, according to him, they were both tortured and where his father discovered he was betrayed by none other than his brother Khurram. Roohdar also tells him that his father’s last wish

---

---

was that his son should avenge his murder by shooting Khurram in both the eyes, the eyes with which he bewitched Haider's mother. Roohdar's words indirectly implicate Ghazala as well. Her fate was to be, however, left to divine justice. The successive scenes of Haider's struggle with conflicting emotions and myriad shades of truth, his accidental shooting of Arshia's father, police inspector Parvez Lone, Arshia's subsequent suicide interspersed with his decision to cross the border at the instigation of Roohdar in order to receive arms training lead to the film's final graveyard scene which turns the apparent narrative linearity of the adaptation on its head with Ghazala Meer's startling act of self-annihilation. Those familiar with the Shakespearean original would recognize both, the parallels drawn and the deviations made.

Shifting the geographical, cultural and temporal location of Shakespeare's tragic narrative from Elsinore castle in Denmark to Anantnag in Kashmir, Bhardwaj's film reiterates the transhistoricity of the Shakespearean play, manoeuvring it to cast an unflinching and unapologetic gaze on the uncomfortable political reality of Kashmir. It, predictably, locates *Haider* in a quagmire of controversies commensurate with the disconcerting interweaving of the complicated Shakespearean tale of revenge and its associated ramifications with a subject which continues to remain a sensitive flashpoint and touches several raw nerves, whenever invoked. Despite its apparently predominant political fabric, *Haider* discreetly offers something more exquisitely potent and urgent to our understanding of Kashmir: it offers a mechanism "for listening to the vibrations that things produce in detaching themselves [from] the nothing-being to which our blindness relegates them" (Cixous). In a single masterstroke, *Haider* draws attention to the 'nothing-beingness' shrouding the political, historical, cultural spatialities of Kashmir and the Kashmiri identity and unpretentiously makes a plea to let the bleeding, suffering landscape of Kashmir, "struggling with

---

[years of] indifference give [itself] to be heard”(Cixous 74). This coup de maître is secured through the portrayal of the landscape of Kashmir as the absent referent, Ghazala Meer, embedded in the narrative but distorted, dominated and relegated to the background against which the dominant narrative unfolds.

Classic Structuralist theory speaks of threefold signification: the absent referent, the signified and the signifier. These three concepts are applicable to any symbolic discourse, including art forms and cultural ideologies, which may be regarded as operating like languages. Carol J. Adams, for instance, brilliantly explores the cultural discourse of carnivorousness by establishing meat-eating as a text in which meat is the signifier and animal is the absent referent. The animal is absent from the text, its being elided and dominated by the signifier meat, which deadens the animal’s aliveness, turning him or her into an it (14). The process allows the signifier to dominate and transform the referent, facilitating the enactment of an ontology of domination. The signifier as an interpretant transforms the absent referent into an object for use or exchange in a human chain of signifiers, inscribing the referent as an exchange object within a symbolic commerce. (Donovan 6-7). Similarly in *Haider*, Bhardwaj’s Gertrude- Ghazala Meer- is like Adams’ absent “animal” dominated and commodified for a symbolic personal, cultural and political exchange by a chain of signifiers. Her ‘being’ is repeatedly redefined in accordance with the requirements of each of the signifiers; her living presence is ‘deadened’. She is objectified as the object of desire, ownership and exchange value. Her individual, independent “literal” reality is twisted, obscured and subdued to the claims of the “figurative” roles imposed on her. The disappearance of her husband, Doctor Hilal Meer bestows upon her the cultural signification of “half widow” but, even before his disappearance Ghazala’s ontological status is undermined by her husband’s complete disregard for her fears. In the scene where, distressed with

---

Hilal's decision to perform an appendicitis operation on the leader of a pro-separatist group at their home and fearing the worst for her family's safety, she confronts and questions her husband's allegiance. His irreverent dismissal of her opinion, fears and wishes inscribes on her living presence the 'nothing- beingness', passively waiting for her apprehensions to materialise and destroy her spatiality. As the screenplay progresses, Ghazala is recast as an object of desire and ownership by Khurram and Haider. Khurram's fascination with her leads him to conspire against his brother.

The Oedipus complex angle in *Hamlet* is reinstated in the relationship between Haider and Ghazala and becomes a signifier of Haider's act of domination. His sense of possession over her arises from it and makes him appear all too eager to believe in Roohdar's version of events. There can be located in his behaviour a singular focus to implicate and punish her for attempting to restore her 'owned', silenced 'being' as a living, liberated presence, and a subject with her own reality. He refuses to accord Ghazala any existence outside the limits of his perspective, determined by the praxis of dominance hierarchy. In a brilliant scene, as they meet amidst the ruins of their destroyed house, Ghazala explains to Haider how her marriage to Hilal was a loveless one but that she never wished him ill. She tries to convey to him, all she wanted was love, a home and a life which is not spent waiting for loved ones to return. Haider labels her Janus-faced for having dared to exercise agency that challenges the ontology of domination. For, only through the denial of agency can the referent be elided from discourse(s) and dominative practices institutionalised and perpetuated. Ghazala's 'being', thus, is contingent on her signifiers. Outside the purview of their signification, as she states during one of her conversations with Haider, she will remain "the villain" always; her ontological status reduced to that of a necessary evil, a backdrop against which the signifiers can define their ontological meaning and justify their

---

epistemological orientation and, a metaphor to validate their act of domination through warped signification.

Ghazala's objectification is brought to a full circle with Roohdar's imposition of a symbolic exchange value on her. Towards the end of the film's narrative, Roohdar, with evident links with terrorists from across the border agrees to take Ghazala, in exchange for her life, to Haider's hideout from where he is to leave for arms training across the border. She is given a suicide vest to; perhaps, kill Khurram, who had manipulated both the militant regime and the Kashmir government to strengthen his political position and who was Roohdar's prime target for which he manipulated Haider. "Consumption is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity." (Adams 73). Ghazala's metaphoric consumption as an implement and her altered, disembodied "nothing-being" eventually serves to disclose the structure of oppressive, violent domination. Her story framed by and juxtaposing the landscape of Kashmir, becomes the embodiment of the process of 'absenting' the Kashmiri landscape from the dominant historical and political narrative build around it. "The most striking feature [of the historical-political process] is the silence to which those dispossessed of the official language are condemned. Lacking the means of legitimate expression, they do not speak but are spoken to" (Thompson 46). Akin to Ghazala the landscape of Kashmir has been denied subjecthood. It is veiled, interpreted and defined in accordance with the locationality and convenience of its signifiers. With its lush green valleys, snow-covered mountain peaks, Dal Lake, Jhelum, and fresh springs Kashmir has long been marked as what Dr. M Ashraf Bhatt calls a pornotropic land, a celebrated "beauty myth". Thus objectified as a landscape of desire, the geographic spatiality of Kashmir has been continuously subjugated, controlled, manipulated, and defined as per the dominant 'nationalistic' narrative and religious discourse. The multiple political and cultural

---

claims on Kashmir has wreaked havoc on its ecology which has been cast in the passive form as the signified conflict zone and/or a romanticised paradisaal landscape that must be owned in order to preserve the existing dominant discourse(s).

Representing Kashmir through the land-as-woman metaphor, *Haider* first reflects Julia Kristeva's postulation that all space is initially enveloped in the semiotic chora and the dominant signifying subject desires to re-experience it by gendering the landscape female, and then problematizes this vocabulary of landscape gendering by first claiming the identity assigned to the two overlapping absent referents by the dominant culture and then rejecting the position. Ghazala along with the landscape of Kashmir symbolises a paradoxical space which is both inside and outside the parameters of the established cultural norms. As the 'silenced' background, Ghazala and Kashmir serve to first foreground the microcosmic and macrocosmic narratives and then subvert the narratives by seizing agency. In the process of reiterating dominative discourses, Ghazala's final act of self-annihilation disrupts and undermines their hegemony by reclaiming her space, free from masculinist significations. She rejects the nothing-beingness imposed on her by the dominant signifiers. Explaining her performativity theories in terms of gender representation in her essay *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Judith Butler argues how this representation is a performance, "a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo". Ruptures in the reiterative performance occur when the subject "fail(s) to repeat loyally cultural performatives" (95).

Ghazala's appropriation of agency constitutes this rupture and slippage that not only effectively subverts her role as an absent referent but also creates an alternative reiteration in portraying her as paradoxical, non-dominative, lived body spatiality. Ghazala's act of

---

rupture logically extends to the landscape of Kashmir. Just as we project reiterated norms onto ourselves and others, we also project them onto space, sexualizing and gendering landscape. And as we can fail to represent loyally cultural performatives, we can fail, in the repetition of landscape representation, creating representations that contest the status quo (Blair, 50). Bhardwaj's narrative challenges the status quo by representing the landscape of Kashmir as a paradoxical space like Ghazala. Bhardwaj's Kashmir is a paradisaal landscape but one constitutive of 'kruhun sheen' (black snow), open graveyards, a river Jhelum tainted with blood. It is not just a conflictual physical space within the dominant cultural praxis. It is an embodiment of individual and collective perceptions as well as the simultaneous reiteration and failure of the dominant cultural performatives that repeatedly challenge the dominant structure. His Kashmir is, thus, reconceptualised as a space which eludes a clear perception of what it is. The film's narrative thwarts every single attempt by the dominant signifiers from the government, military, militants to Khurram and Haider (besides others) to claim and define Kashmir through its concluding scenes: Ghazal's self-annihilation leads to Kashmir's snow literally catching fire and burning and the landscape of Kashmir turns into a physical and metaphorical graveyard for most of its signifiers, rejecting, disrupting and subverting the restrictive, hegemonic mapping of its landscape as a passive, malleable, monological space. Haider, first, connects the conventional dots between landscape and gender and then, reclaims it by tracing land-as-woman as an active, dialogic, subversive space where both Ghazala and Kashmir create alternative identities for themselves which escape the bind of singular, dominant paradigms and subsequently, turns the land-as-woman metaphor into an effective tool for expanding and reconceptualising the interpretive possibilities in the overlapping studies of landscape and gender. Explored through the prism of semiotics, performativity theory and

---



---

feminist geography, Ghazala Meer functions as a new philosophical discourse and linguistic index for the landscape of Kashmir and gives us a glimpse of the possibility of unmasking the masquerades of culturally constructed performatives to reveal the ‘living reality’ of its landscape, the silenced voice of Kashmiri womanhood and a new understanding of the praxis of Ecofeminism.

### **Works Cited**

Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 2010. 14,73.82. Print.

Bhardwaj, Vishal. “Kashmir is the Hamlet of my film”. *Indian Express*. 5th October.2014. Web. indianexpress.com

Bhat, Dr. M. Ashraf. Bollywood’s [Re]presentation of ‘Kashmir’ And ‘Kashmiri’: From Romance (Kashmir Ki Kali) To Tragedy (Haider). 8th May. 2015. Web. www.countercurrents.org.

Blair, Andrea. “Landscape in Drag: The Paradox of Feminine Space in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*”. *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory and the Environment*. Ed. Steven Rosendale. Iowa City:Univ. of Iowa Press, 2002. 49-50. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York. Routledge, 1993. 95. Print.

Cixous, Helen. “Vivre l’Orange” Reading with Clarice Lispector. Trans. Verena A. Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990. 74. Print.

Donovan, Josephine. “Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange” *Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Russell Whitaker. New York. Thomson and Gale, 2004. Vol. 140. 6-7. Print.

Koldony, Annette. “Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860”. *Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Russell Whitaker. New York. Thomson and Gale, 2004. Vol. 140. 8. Print.

Rich, Adrienne. *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-72*. New York. Norton and Company, 1994. 23. Print.

Thompson, John B. *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984. 46. Print.

---

# Nataraja – A Symbol of Harmony and Beauty in Nature

Souraja Tagore

*Before I leave, rouse my heart with the swing of thy dancing feet,  
the swing that wakens stars in the deep of night,  
frees the stream from the rocky cave,  
gives voice to clouds in thunder and rain...*

*Rabindranath Tagore<sup>1</sup>*

Ancient man was entirely dependent on Mother Nature to provide him with food and shelter. Therefore he began to observe her daily rhythms and seasonal cycles along with the recurring heavenly phenomena in order to understand the virtues of nature. The unexplainable phenomena within nature's myriad behaviours being not entirely comprehended by man encouraged him to name the different phenomena which, with the passage of time, translated into the names of various gods each associated with a phenomena or behaviour. As man progressed in time many of these Gods faced extinction while some managed to survive the ravages of time and still remain with us. One such is Nataraja, The Lord of Dance or The Lord of Actors. Nataraja is perhaps one of the most important and visually thrilling forms of the Hindu god Shiva. Appearing for more than a thousand years Nataraja's importance continues to exist not only as a temple deity or an idol worshipped by artists (especially

---

<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore 'Poems' (poem no. 86) in *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol 1, Poems*, Sisir Kumar Das eds. ( New Delhi: Sahitya Academi, 2004) Pg. 363

---

dancers), but also as a popular icon representing Indian tradition and cosmic principles.<sup>2</sup>

From ancient texts, manuscripts and other ancillary sources, one understands that Indian civilization was born on the lap of the forests.<sup>3</sup> The forests assisted her in acquiring a distinct character and spirit. The people of India were always surrounded by nature, fed and clothed by her and they had the closest and most constant intercourse with nature's varying aspects. The constant presence of nature within the environs of man enriched and encouraged his mind and helped him progress with nature in harmony. His mind became free from the desire to extend his domain by erecting boundary walls around his acquisitions. His aim was not to acquire, but to realise his surroundings and dwell in harmony with nature while appreciating its wonders and beauty.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequently man advanced from his primeval forest culture and adapted to developments of wealthy cities and modern concrete civilization. With the rapid advancement of technology and science, man became ignorant towards the importance of the preservation of nature and environments without which he would not survive. Today man works against nature rather than with it thereby seriously jeopardizing the wellbeing of both himself and the planet at large. He nurtures the idea that nature exclusively belongs to beasts and inanimate things. He considers everything that is low in the scale of being as merely nature while whatever has the stamp of perfection in it, be it intellectual or moral, is acknowledged as existing in the domain of the human. But this is a fairly recent development, for the

---

2 See Padma Kaimal (1999) Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon, *The Art Bulletin*, 81:3, 390-4193

3 See Alvina McCormick: *The Mystery of Creation* (Mumbai: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 2007), pg. 47

4 This is a standard anthropological development explained at <<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hunter-gatherer>> accessed on 6.7.2015

---

Indian mind never had (nor should have) any hesitation in acknowledging its kinship with nature.

The Indian iconographic representation of the Nataraja is perhaps one of the most significant symbols of the relationship between man and nature signifying the coexistence of man with the elements of nature resulting in his physical and spiritual emancipation.<sup>5</sup> The form of the icon of Nataraja which has gained popularity and familiarity was a canonical figure that was formed roughly during the tenth century AD as a series of bronze sculptures created through the later portion of the Chola period. It was this version of the image that Ananda K. Coomaraswamy frequently referred in his book *The Dance of Shiva*.<sup>6</sup> In this form, Shiva is portrayed as a four armed figure dancing within a ring of fire. He stands on his deeply bent right leg while his slightly flexed left leg lifts to waist height and crosses the hips. Parallel to the dramatic transverse line of the lifted leg, one of his four arms crosses the body in a relaxed *gajahasta* (elephant hand) suspended above an equally relaxed ankle. One of his right hands is placed just above the loose wrist in the *abhaya mudra* (open palm gesture). Behind these boldly disposed limbs, the hips twist slightly to Shiva's right but the torso remains straight. Long, matted tresses stream outwards from Shiva's head. On his right, among these locks sits a diminutive personification of the river Ganga, her body human above the waist and piscine below. She presses her palms together in *anjali mudra* (respectful address), while a crescent moon, the *datura* (a flower sacred to Shiva) and a cluster of spiky *kondrai* leaves crowns Shiva's topknot. Shiva stands on *apasmara purusha* (the prostrate body of an imp or dwarf like figure).

---

5 Heinrich Zimmer (1946), *Myth and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* Bollingen Series VI (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972)

6 See Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva: Essays on Indian Art and Culture* (New York: Dover Publications: 1985).



ICONOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION  
OF LORD NATARAJA  
Bronze , South Indian , Chennai Art Gallery <sup>7</sup>

While the above is a popular iconographic representation of Nataraja, the image had been conceived by artists based on a legend faithfully narrated in the *Chidambara Mahatmyam: The Greatness of the Supreme Divine Lord Nataraja*<sup>8</sup> by E. A. Sivaraman. According to the legend, once a number of sacrilegious sages lived in a pine forest and practiced rituals without any genuine devotion to Shiva. Shiva, dressed as a handsome ascetic along with Vishnu dressed as an enchantress Mohini,

descended on earth to teach them a lesson. While Vishnu-Mohini seduced the sages, Shiva did the same to their respective wives. Eventually the two Gods and their followers met in the depth of the forest where the sages were shocked and infuriated to find their naked wives sporting amorously with the ascetic. Finally on discovering the real identity of the young ascetic, they plotted to kill Shiva. With the help of magic they organised an elaborate ceremony from the sacrificial flame of which emerged a huge tiger. It pounced on Shiva to tear him to pieces but before it could do any harm, the Lord skinned it with the nail of his little finger and donned its skin. Next the

---

<sup>7</sup> See <<http://www.lotussculpture.com/mm5/graphics/00000001/1-bronze-nataraj-stature-32inches.jpg>> accessed on 6.7.2015

<sup>8</sup> E.A. Sivaraman, *Chidambara Mahatmyam: The Greatness of the Supreme Divine Lord Nataraja* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1993). This is a translation of Chidambaram Annaswamy Iyer's Tamil verse.

---

magical flame yielded a trident which Shiva caught in mid air and held tightly in his right hand. Following this a furious antelope rushed towards Shiva in an attempt to gore him but the lord caught it in his left hand. The perplexed sages created a number of snakes that Shiva draped on his hair and body as ornaments. A gang of demons followed but Shiva soon turned them into his supporters. A grinning skull jumped out of the fire pit which Shiva placed into his matted hair as a crown. Next the sages made an hourglass shaped drum or *damaru* to deafen Shiva with its sound. The *damaru* found its rightful place in Shiva's hand. Finally the sages made a deformed dwarf, an ignorant man without memory, to attack the lord. Shiva stepped on the back of the dwarf and breaking his neck danced on him the dance of bliss with the ring of fire around him and his mated hair flowing in the air. Though the image of Nataraja that we usually see does not usually have the complete details incorporated in the image (obviously to preserve the artistic beauty and balance in sculpture), they are definitely inspired from the myths and legends associated with the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

The iconographic representation of Nataraja undoubtedly has profound symbolic significance which is philosophical but at the same time the image can also be studied as an emblem of harmony in nature and man's natural kinship with its beauty resulting from such harmonious coexistence. It is interesting to note the five elements intricately synchronised into a single nataraja image. It represents man's intrinsic relationship with the *Panchabhuta* and in turn the nature within and around which man dwells and thrives.<sup>10</sup> The five elements namely Earth or *Prithvi*; Water or *Jal* ; Fire or *Agni*; Air or *Vayu* and then Ether or *Akasha* have individual characters of their

---

9 For a detailed discussion on this area, see Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (New York: MJF Books, 1996),pg. 118 and Coomaraswamy (1985), pg. 65

10 See Gautam Chatterjee, *Panchabhuta* at <<http://www.ibiblio.org/gautam/hind0003.htm>> accessed on 20.6.2015

---

own, the union of which leads to the formation of life. Nataraja is perhaps a representation of that life which if detached from the elements and their natural amalgamation leads to mayhem and ultimately death.

Earth or *prithvi* is one of the elements that can be touched as well as smelled. However, there are two types of earth one being eternal or *nitya* which are in the form of atom *paramanu*. The other is perishable *anitya* which exists in the form of *karya* or work the results of which are specially seen in the animate and inanimate levels. It is the latter which finds prominence in the image of Nataraja in form of the Snake (a reptile that crawls on earth), the Tiger (symbolised through its skin that the lord bears) and the antelope that he sometimes hold in one of his hands. The most prominent representation of the element earth may be found in the *apasmara purusha* on whose dwarfish and disfigured body Nataraja stands gracefully in complete balance signifying equilibrium in nature.

Water or *jal* is the second element which similarly has two characters. The eternal or *nitya* form of water exists in the form of molecules while the *karya* or *anitya* form exists as oceans, rivers and various water bodies which are perishable. Water from the sea or river evaporates to form clouds, which eventually comes down as rain on earth. So the eternal molecule only changes its *karya* or shape of work and what we see is the perishable form. It is that form which finds its due place on Nataraja's head as Ganga. While Shiva dances, from his matted locks flow the sacred river Ganga- the source of life and nourishment. There are innumerable legends associated with the descent of Ganga and symbolically it is often studied as an element that purifies human soul and provides man with his grace. But the incorporation of this water element in the Nataraja iconography fulfils the study of the image as an emblem of nature and enhances its worth as an ecologically faithful representation of Indian art.

---

---

The third element is air or *vayu* which once again has two levels, its eternal atom and perishable *karya*. Air can be felt through our breath, through the storms and the breeze. But air, in its elementary form, is present around us eternally. While the Puranas mention more than forty types of winds or *marut*, seven are essentially important including: *Pravaha* ; *Avaha*; *Udvaha*; *Samvaha*; *Vivaha*; *Parvaha* and *Paravaha*. *Vayu*, unlike the other elements, does not have a concrete shape or form and cannot be touched, preserved or seen. It has to be felt and its presence is measured through the effect it has on other animate and inanimate things (e.g. it causes ripples and waves on water). In the Nataraja iconography it is represented astutely through the flowing hair of the Lord .The matted curls flowing from the Lord's head asserts the presence of air around him and its significance in the process of creation.

Fire or *agni* is the fourth element of the *Panchabhuta*. The essential character of fire is to generate heat. According to Hindu mythology, Agni is one of the eight guardians who guards our universe and is known as *Asta- dik-palakas* (Asta-eight, dik--Zone, Palaka-Guardian). Fire is positioned in the south east of the universe. Although in Indian mythology there is mention of various types of fires, the four important ones are fire of the earth, fire of the sky, fire of the stomach (hunger and digestive power) and the fire we commonly use. In the Nataraja iconography the upper left hand holds a tongue of flame in a half moon or *ardha chandra* gesture. This flame is often considered as the flame of destruction transforming Shiva into a destroyer. But Coomaraswamy opines “*Shiva is a destroyer and loves the burning ground. But what does He destroy? Not merely the heavens and earth at the close of a world cycle, but the fetters that bind each separate soul.*”<sup>11</sup> Mrihanini Sarabhai while

---

11 Coomaraswamy (1985), pg. 61



---

explaining as to why Shiva holds the hope of creation in one hand and the flame of destruction on the other, states “*Creation and destruction are the counterparts of His own Being. They are the two aspects of our life, for as we are born, so do we surely die.*”<sup>12</sup> Irrespective of its symbolic reading, the image of Nataraja signifies the importance of fire as an element represented through the flame that the Lord holds in one hand as also through the flaming arch that provides the image with an aesthetic frame within which the image stands.

The last of the *Panchabhutas* or the five elements is sound or ether. Ether is unique as it has only one character i.e. eternal. Ether is the bearer of sound (artificial or otherwise). One can hear it. The concept of *akashvani* or the divine sound which sages often claimed to hear is related to ether or *akasha*. That sound is judiciously represented in the Nataraja image through the *damaru*. The *damaru* which is held in the upper right hand, is an hourglass shaped drum that symbolises *Nada* or the first sound from where begins the story of evolution. While the drum having the shape of two triangles joined together symbolises the union of nature and energy that work together to eventually give birth to life, it also affirms the presence and significance of *akash* in its iconographic representation.

Only recently has there been a surge in writings related to literature, iconography and the representation of nature. The emergence of ecological studies and eco-criticism have caused a revival of interest in viewing literary and cultural works from the perspective of nature and understanding how iconography is relevant in physically representing environmental symbols. Partly the reason surrounding this revival of interest in the condition of nature in cultural works is

---

12 Mrinalini V. Sarabhai, “Shiva-Nataraja” in *Symbolism in Hinduism*, compiled by Swami Nityanand (Mumbai: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 2008), pg. 138

---

connected to the problems inherently caused due to the progression of an industrial society. Climate change summits involved in reducing emissions, waste and controlling industrial effluents are aimed at creating a better future for human beings to survive on Earth under the auspices of nature. One way of furthering the case of ecological improvement lies in the teaching of history from an ecological perspective and this procedure, in turn, demands reference to cultural symbols. Mythical constructs and iconographic representations of Shiva, serve this principle and enable human beings to be aware of how civilizations that were not technologically advanced came to co-exist with nature and live in harmony. Shiva in short, appears to me to be a material manifestation of cultural ideas that were previously relegated but deserve attention all the more in today's scenario. Man is no more at one with nature, but is moving further away from his goal of sustainable development. Nataraja thus, is not simply a unique representation of Shiva, but a national symbol that represents the rich past of Indian heritage and culture with its seamless amalgamation of nature and culture.

---

# Sagor: A Land of Promise? c. 1770s—1850

Gargi Chattopadhyay

Figure 1: Situating Sagor Island



*Source: Author  
Map Not to Scale*

## Introduction

The first landfall at the mouth of the Hugli, the Sagor Island is located about 77 miles away from Calcutta and approximately 40 miles away from Diamond Harbour in the mainland. It is flanked by the Hugli in the west and Channel Creek in the east. It opens into the Bay of

---

Bengal from the southern side. The place has a special mythological significance connected to the story of the origin of the Bhagirathi, and its mingling with the sea. To commemorate this, the devotees from all over the places congregate yearly for a holy dip during the winter solstice when a *melas* held at the southern sea face of the island.

Sagor; a twelfth century island port known in history as Chandecan<sup>ii</sup>, was also associated with the Hindu superstitious ritual of human sacrifice, predators like crocodiles, sharks, snakes and the deadliest of them all—the Royal Bengal Tigers. It was a haunt of the ‘Mugg’<sup>iii</sup> pirates in seventeenth century as confirmed by the Jesuit priests Manrique<sup>vi</sup> and Cabral<sup>v</sup> in the 1630s. Though initially the *bhati*<sup>vi</sup> and eastern delta remained inaccessible to the Mughals; in the course of their eastward ho, they became familiar with Sagor and its neighbourhood. Arakan edged with fringes of eastern Bengal and Sagor stood as a buffer between expanding Arakan and Mughals. The Mughals checked Arakan and the major power blocs of *bhati*; Isha Khan and Pratapaditya. Some claimed that Pratap had a naval bastion in Sagor. Pratap’s decimation marked the high point of Mughal penetration into Bengal.

The history of Sagor was marked by a period of lull between late seventeenth and mid eighteenth centuries, till subsequent attempts were undertaken by the British to develop Sagor as a sustainable revenue generating land. This article attempts to explore how far it was possible to meet the particular objective within the select period. Did the Bhagirathi at its meeting point with the Bay play a proactive role?

### **Land Reclamation at Sagor**

The travel narratives and diaries had enumerated old history of human settlements and the natural bounties of Sagor despite being under tidal influences. As early as the 1670s, the areas along the

---

Channel Creek were dotted with Mughal apiaries and salt pans<sup>vii</sup>. The water bodies were full of varieties of fish which was very cheap<sup>viii</sup>. The forest had a rich reservoir of woods<sup>ix</sup>. But the area ‘had not been continuously inhabited except in modern times’<sup>x</sup>.

The eighteenth nineteenth centuries European accounts portrayed Sagor as a gloomy landmark as the European visitors at the river’s ingress were confronted with the ‘depressing sight of mud-banks, flooded forests and tangled vegetation’<sup>xi</sup>, empty stretches, floating corpses on their onward journey towards the mainland. Predators’ supposed presence definitely added to Sagor’s dark image. But the drive to amass revenue prompted the Company to penetrate the island of despair. In 1811 clearing of the island overrun by ‘matted undergrowth’<sup>xii</sup> and mangrove forests<sup>xiii</sup> had begun. The extensive forested land of the Sundarbans crowning the northern edge of the Bay of Bengal, was not incorporated within the framework of the Permanent Settlement<sup>xiv</sup>, so Sagor too was treated separately.

Lieutenant Blane computed Sagor’s area to be 143,550 acres<sup>xv</sup> which was to be brought under tillage. At this point, mention may be made of a map delineating the ‘Plan of Saugor Island Taken in May and June 1811’ by Lieutenant Engineer G.R. Blane<sup>xvi</sup>. The map showed the division of land into at least 16 units, each unit with a particular name, mostly of natives, and a number assigned. Probably this indicated that an early attempt was made in 1811 to distribute the Sagor land on lease involving the Indians. There weresome names with corresponding numbers of the allotted land<sup>xvii</sup>. For example:

Maharaj Sing, No. 32  
Gooropersad Cur, No. 37  
Durpnarain Cur, No. 36  
Radakaunt Deb, No. 12  
Ganganarain No. 6

For some reason it was abandoned. In November 1811 one

---

---

Mr. Beaumont got permission from the Board of Revenue to start a factory for buff leather on a hundred acres of land. In 1812 he applied for a land grant on a cultivating tenure as the Government offered favourable terms. He was permitted to hold 300 *begahs* of land<sup>xviii</sup>. In 1812, the Revenue Department was encouraging both the British and the locals to cultivate the island. The maximum holding offered was 10,000 *beeghas* and the minimum was 500 *beeghas*. The British believed that its early cultivation would lead to the 'future increase of the public revenue'<sup>xix</sup>.

But Beaumont's application got cancelled. Next, to involve the Indians in the reclamation of the Sagor island, Mr. Trower, the Collector of the 24 Parganas, formed a joint stock company comprising distinguished Indians and Europeans in Calcutta in 1818. Saugor Island Society began with a capital of two and a half lakhs. The committee of around thirteen trustees formed the core management. The Indians held out a quarter of the share<sup>xx</sup>. The entire island was leased out to it at an assessment of four *annas* per *bigha* to be paid even beyond thirty years.

The land held by the Society was exempt from revenue payment for a period of thirty years<sup>xxi</sup>. Trowerland, the central part of the island was made ready for cultivation. In the four northern segments namely Trowerland, Ferintosh, Mud Point, Shikarpur and Dhobelat in the south; considerable progress was made. The company had secured a grant of the whole island on the basis of certain terms, the failure of which entailed forfeiture of the grant.

The project had to be abandoned due to natural hazards<sup>xxii</sup>. In 1834, the northern part of Sagor was taken over by Messrs. Hare, Macpherson, Hunter and Campbell who began rice cultivation and salt manufacture. That part experienced some prosperity and human settlement. However natural disasters came in the way of its continued development. After the survey of 1863, around 31,190

---

*bighas* of land was reclaimed, but due to subsequent inundations only 2,750 *bighas* remained intact. The northern part of the island was brought under plough, though the southern portion remained under the cover of jungle<sup>xxiii</sup>. So till the 1860s, at best a haphazard progress was noted.

### **Various Discussions on Plans to Develop the Sagor Island**

Other than the revenue expected from rice cultivation and the making of salt<sup>xxiv</sup>; the Company officials had thought of setting up a fishery, anchorage, marine hospital, and nurturing Sagor as a tourist cum health resort.

#### **Fishery**

In the early 70s two European gentlemen named J. Bright and T. Hamilton had proposed to Warren Hastings and his Council of Revenue to start a fishery in the island ‘as Clearing and Cultivating waist Lands is for the Companys Interest as a successfull fishery will produce a considerable Revenue and be beneficial to the Publick’<sup>xxv</sup>. The correspondence further clarified that the senders had planned to pay the usual duties on fish and all productions of the island when brought to market, at the expiration of ten years, and also the usual rents for such part of the island as may be cultivated, and when required would officially declare an exact account of the quantity of land cultivated<sup>xxvi</sup>.

#### **Anchorage**

Cabral in 1630<sup>xxvii</sup>, the Agents for the factory at Bengal; Master<sup>xxviii</sup> and Hedges<sup>xxix</sup> in the 1670s, mentioned the island’s potentialities as a deep sea port. The Bengal Public Consultations<sup>xxx</sup> of 1715 acknowledged the strategic advantage enjoyed by Sagor.

By the early 18th century the bulk of the Dutch, British and Indian trade was being transported down the Bhagirathi-Hugli channel; though shoals and sandbanks hindered the passage of large cargo

---

ships up to Hooghly. This called for a safe anchorage of bulkier vessels at harbours closer to the sea and transshipment of the cargo up in smaller crafts. Initially big vessels loaded and unloaded at Balasore. Later Hijli at the confluence of the Rasulpore and Rupnarain rivers came to be preferred over Balasore. Subsequently the cargo was transported to the emerging metropolis of Calcutta in small vessels from Khejuri, then Falta and Diamond Harbour. But later those mooring stations were abandoned.

Again Sagor was mentioned as a suitable anchorage in 1776 by the Company's hydrographer John Ritchie<sup>xxxii</sup>. At Sagor the connectivity 'between the relevant channel and the sea was increasingly good'<sup>xxxii</sup>. Till the 1830s the large ships belonging to private parties lay moored in Saugor Roads<sup>xxxiii</sup>. But officially Sagor was not developed as a full fledged port.

### **Marine Hospital cum Health Resort**

Though there were no consistent plans to encourage Sagor as an anchorage; Sagor was looked upon as a prospective health resort of the Europeans in Bengal. The Europeans in Bengal had difficulty in getting acclimatized to tropical heat, sultry monsoon, lack of sanitation and associated diseases. Before the advent of the railways it was not easy to have a reprieve from the Bengal summer. The Himalayan hill stations were discovered mostly in the mid nineteenth century. At the most they went for brief vacations in 'the healthy situations'<sup>xxxiv</sup> of Barasat, Gyretty, Chandannagar and Chnuchura.

Moreover the sick in the marshes of Bengal looked for a retreat with an 'insular climate'<sup>xxxv</sup> and 'sea air'<sup>xxxvi</sup> in the neighbouring islands of Sagor or the small isle of the Sandheads. In a letter dated June 30, 1785, to the Governor General John Macpherson, from Messrs. I. Taylor, an estimate was proposed to build a marine hospital at Sagor on account of its healthy situation<sup>xxxvii</sup>.



---

## **Supporting Infrastructure to Develop Sagor**

The plan to ensure an easy accessibility to the island and develop it into a popular retreat called for forging an effective connectivity and building rest houses.

### **Lighthouse**

A lighthouse was built in the southern part of the island at Beguakhali as early as 1808<sup>xxxviii</sup>. But a lot of correspondences were exchanged post1808 regarding clearing a site for a lighthouse. Probably the previous one was abandoned and a better site was chosen.

The proposal for the lighthouse was the beginning of a chain of developmental strategies conceived by the EEIC. ‘It being the intention of Government to erect a Light House on the Island it may be necessary not only to retain the spot intended for the Light House, but likewise some additional ground in its vicinity’<sup>xxxix</sup> and also some other spots for public utility. It was further decided to cultivate the land kept aside ‘with the rest of the Island as it may otherwise prove a harbor of Tigers’<sup>xl</sup>.

### **Lodging House**

According to an archival record dated 1839, the important citizens of Calcutta proposed to lay out large sums for a ‘lodging house’ on Saugor island to which the agreeable accompaniments of baths, palanquins, horses and elephants were to be added—all ‘for the benefit of the sick who require sea air’<sup>xli</sup>.

### **Establishing Connectivity between Lower Bengal and Calcutta**

Diamond Harbour, Khejuri, Hijli, Kulpi; had served as anchorages to big crafts and functioned as rudimentary settlements for a while. So connectivity between those places and Calcutta had to be established. By the mid nineteenth century, the region between Calcutta and Sagor was networked by dak boats, horse drawn postal carts, *harkaras*, post offices (in Khejuri and Kulpi in 1774-76 and 1793-

---

95). Mails from Khejuri were initially brought to Kulpi in little boats and dispatched to Calcutta. Semaphoric connectivity<sup>xlii</sup> was forged between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour, Calcutta and Kaikhali to be extended later upto Sagor.

In 1852 the Superintendent of the Electric Telegraph in India, O'Shaughnessy forged telegraphic connectivity between Khejuri and Calcutta covering a distance of 82 miles<sup>xliii</sup>. In 1855 Sagor at the backwaters of hinterland, got linked up with the major army cantonments in north and central India and important towns like Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra till Peshawar<sup>xliv</sup>. Thus the British were planning to provide an infrastructural support to bring Sagor within the orbit of mainland.

### **Why Sagor Could Not Take Off as a Revenue Generating Land Between Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries?**

#### **Natural Hazards**

##### **Elemental Toll**

Being located at the edge of the delta, Sagor has been ravaged by cyclone, flood, associated epidemics, land depression that acted as hindrances to settled ways of life. Floods of 1684 and cyclone of 1688 that killed around 60,000 people<sup>xlv</sup>; cyclone and storm wave of 1707; a high intensity earthquake of 1737, cyclones of 1833, June 1842, October 1848, June 1852, 1864 and 1867<sup>xlvi</sup> need special mention.

##### **Tiger Menace**

Way back in 1776 official correspondences were exchanged on proposal for a new harbour along the Channel Creek. At the same time some doubts were expressed regarding its viability in an 'impenetrable state' 'infested with Tygers'<sup>xlvii</sup> along the eastern fringe of the island watered by the Channel Creek. In fact the notorious Sagor tiger was immortalised by a mechanical toy based on the real

---

life incident of the big cat mauling Hugh Munro<sup>xlviii</sup> at Sagor. It has been displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

### **Health Hazard**

The southern extremity of Sagor was chosen for building a marine hospital because of the fresh wind and excellent water and its proximity to Hijli, Kulpi, Khejuri<sup>xlix</sup>. Within less than four decades, the official letters spoke about ‘Saugor and its unhealthiness’<sup>1</sup> and its ambience was contrasted with that of Diamond Harbour which was termed ‘the Montpellier of Bengal’<sup>li</sup>. Indeed Sagor witnessed ‘many unfortunate instances of Europeans having fallen victims to the insalubrity of its climate’<sup>lii</sup>.

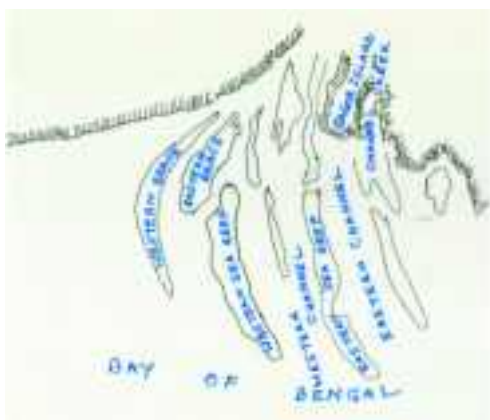
### **Hazards in the Realm of Water**

A maritime vessel had to touch certain milestones<sup>liii</sup> in a row; on its journey from Calcutta to the estuary. A craft started from Calcutta Reach—Hooghly Bridge to reach the terminal point at Outer Rungafullah Channel after crossing about twenty one milestones in between. Each milestone consisted of several landmarks.

### **Shifting Channels and Blockades like shoals, bars, restless sand banks**

The aquatic world was capricious in temperament. The contraction of deep channels and shoaling had taken place due to excessive siltation. That extended the dimension of

**Figure 2: Shifting Channels and Blockades at the Mouth of the River**



*Source: Author  
Map not to Scale*

---

the sand heads. Again, the continuous widening of the lower section of the Hugli ‘by the action of winds and currents on its banks’<sup>liv</sup> diminished the scouring power of the stream. This also left more room for the ‘channels to change from side to side’<sup>lv</sup>.

### **Channels**

Negotiating through the shifting channels was a problem. They were created due to the great disproportion between the two sections of the river. The upper section above Kulpi represented a full fledged river, while the lower section from Kulpi to the sea was more of an estuary. Water passing through the upper section could produce enough currents to clear out the lower section partially. The remaining portion turned into ‘a great shallow of loose half floating sand’ shifting along with the water. A channel formed by cutting through those loose solid particles cannot be permanent in nature<sup>lvi</sup>. In December 1776, though the middle channel was quite active and facilitated the passage of ships from the deep water anchorage at Sagor: the eastern channel too was slowly making its presence felt<sup>vii</sup>. In fact ‘this great depth of water about Sagor, clearly accounts for the shallow water at the Hidgelle side; and also for the decreasing depth of the middle channel, to the southward of Sagor since the year 1770’<sup>lviii</sup>.

But by 1813 it seemed that the western channels could open and facilitate the commerce<sup>lix</sup>. In the mean time the middle channel from Sagor became quite narrow. Also the head of the eastern channel had shrunk considerably. Further, there was an apprehension that the Hugli might choke up and lose its navigability. The Channel Creek could have offered passage at least to vessels of shallow draft and boats<sup>lx</sup>. The big vessels could not have passed ‘both from the shallowness of the water at the entrance near Mud Point and narrowness of the channel in the upper parts.

---

## Blockades

An official correspondence by Garstin, the Superintendent, Sagor Island, took note that the entrance to the Hugli by skirting Sagor needed skilled maneuverings because there existed various sandbanks and shoals below it, close to the Edmonstone's<sup>lxi</sup>. Then a major hurdle awaited at Khejuri close to the northern tip of Sagor as some change in Damodar led to the choking of the western passage leading to Khejuri<sup>lxii</sup>.

The most dangerous spot called the 'James and Mary Sand' was located just below Falta. The Rupnarain, Damodar and Hugli met each other randomly with their respective currents lashing at each other. The Hugli together with Damodar flowed south to meet with a point of land, then turned westward and merged with the Rupnarayan. The united course met the Haldi and flowed straight towards the Bay<sup>lxiii</sup>. The sediments of the two rivers located six miles apart from each other at their junction with the Hugli; used to get sprayed separately. Thus the dreaded moving shoals were created and named after the big ship 'James and Mary' that got wrecked there; apart from many other vessels. Thus reaching Sagor and proceeding upwards towards Calcutta involved crossing many hurdles.

## Conclusion

Such risks at the river's entrance triggered the concept of pilot service. Till at least 1792, the EEIC's pilot service was not standardized and efforts were on to include 'men of proper education and knowledge' so that when they tended to be thrown off the common tract, they were not entirely at a loss in what way to direct their vessels<sup>lxiv</sup>. Instances of frequent losses of vessels at the Hugli were common as they were manned by unqualified pilots<sup>lxv</sup>.

*The Asiatic Journal* noted in September 1800 that there was perhaps no part in the world where professional pilots suffered more anxiety

---

---

than those navigating towards the island<sup>lxvi</sup>. Even a fairly strong gale or a rapid tide could scour away some sand to deposit it to a different area. So a pilot having a clear passage one month might have to locate a completely new passage in his next trip after undertaking a ‘fresh survey’.

But the projectors overlooked the perils involved in travelling to and fro Sagor. Neither did they contain themselves only ‘to the banishment of tigers, the growth of rice and the making of salt’. Rather they imagined that ‘farms and granaries, and towns and busy population shall succeed’<sup>lxvii</sup> and that ultimately Sagor would blossom as the Brighton<sup>lxviii</sup> of Bengal despite its vulnerability to natural hazards and associated epidemics. Further the long term alterations in the river like its choking and diminishing flow; its loss of headwater etc, which came in the way of the connectivity between Sagor and Calcutta port; were not considered.

Despite the callousness towards geography and environment, the European penetration changed Sagor’s image from ‘noxious wilderness’<sup>lxix</sup> into a more hospitable space that awaited future explorations. In 2015, a deep sea port has been proposed at Sagor that would be the gateway to north east and South East Asia<sup>lxx</sup>. India’s first chunnel or under water rail and road tunnel is being planned for a run of three kilometers. That would connect the northern tip of Sagor with Kakdwip, at the Hugli in a stretch called Channel Creek as that would be crucial for the operation of the port<sup>lxxi</sup>. So the worth of Sagor is being assessed even today.

#### Works Cited

- i. P.C. Roy Choudhury, *Temples and Legends of Bengal*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, First Edition, 1967, p. 142.
- ii. Rila Mukherjee, ‘The Nawab’s Business: Agricultural and Commercial Practices in Eighteenth Century Bengal’, in C. Palit and P.K. Bhattacharya eds, *Business History of India*, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi, 2006, p. 143

- 
- iii. The Arakanese Portuguese collaborated in piracy on the riparian tracts and coastal villages of Bengal. They were called the 'Muggs' in the British archival records.
  - iv. Ecford Luarded, *Travels of Frey Sebastian Manrique: 1629—1643*, Oxford, Printed for the Haklyut Society, 1927 vol. 2, p. 316.
  - v. Extract of Father Cabral's letter has been cited in *Manrique*, p. 418.
  - vi. *Bhati* means low lying tracts of south eastern Bengal under tidal influence.
  - vii. R.C. Temple ed, *Streyنشam Master's Diaries : 1675-1680, and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto* Vol.1, India Records Series, John Murray, London, p. 15.
  - viii. *Streyنشam Master's Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 15.
  - ix. R. Burlow and Henry Yule eds, *The Diary of William Hedges esq, During his Agency in Bengal As Well As His Voyage Out and Return Overland*, vol. 1, Printed for the Hakluyt Society, London, p. 172.
  - x. James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore, its Antiquity, its History and its Commerce*, Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Office, Calcutta, 1871, p. 54.
  - xi. David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze, India, Landscape and Science, 1800-1856*, University of Washington Press, 2006, p. 71.
  - xii. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers, 24 Parganas*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 2009, p. 3.
  - xiii. Sunando Bandyopadhyay, 'Natural Environmental Hazards and their Case Study of Sagar Island, India', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol. 18, issue 1, June 1997, p. 21.
  - xiv. Sutapa Chatterjee Sarkar *The Sundarbans, Folk Deities, Monsters and Mortals*, Orient Blackswan, 2010, p. 76.
  - xv. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers; 24-Parganas*, p. 185.
  - xvi. NAI, Historical Maps of the Survey of India (1700- 1900), Plan of Saugor Island by C.R. Blane, 1811.
  - xvii. NAI, Plan of Saugor Island, 1811, by C.R. Blane.
  - xviii. NAI, Home Public, Consultation no. 24, May 15, 1812, p. 2.
  - xix. NAI, Home Public, Consultation no. 24, May 15, 1812.
  - xx. R.S. Rungta, *The Rise of Business Corporations in India, 1851-1900*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 10-12.
  - xxi. WBSA, Board of Revenue, Sunderbun Records Department, Consultation no. 160, September 29, 1829.
  - xxii. O'Malley, *Gazetteer*, p. 185.
  - xxiii. O'Malley, *Gazetteer*, pp. 257-258.
  - xxiv. WBSA, Appendix F to Report of Committee upon The Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements containing Miscellaneous Evidence and Papers,
-

- 
- Calcutta, Bishop's College Press, 1839, p. 493.
- xxv. WBSA, Revenue Department Proceedings, August 21-28, 1778, Letter dated August 25, 1778, p. 334.
- xxvi. P. 334.
- xxvii. The account of the fall of Hooghly appeared for the first time in 'Catholic Herald', Calcutta, 1918. The original account in Portuguese that was translated by the Rev. Father L. Besse, Tiruchirapalli, has been pictorially recreated from the eyewitness Father John Cabral 's letter from Ceylon, dated November 14, 1633, addressed to the Provincial of Cochin. It has been published in *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique*, vol. 2, pp. 419-20.
- xxviii. *Streynsham Master*, vol. 1, p. 15.
- xxix. *William Hedges* vol. 1, p. 133, p. 172.
- xxx. NAI, Bengal Public Consultations, Microfilm, Accession no. 1662, December 27, 1716.
- xxxi. NAI, Home Public, Consultation 19, December 23, 1776, pp. 1-2.
- xxxii. NAI, Home Public, Consultation 19, December 23, 1776, p. 1.
- xxxiii. WBSA, General (General) Proceeding, January 6—March 30, 1836, p. 88.
- xxxiv. WBSA, Appendix F of Committee upon The Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements containing Miscellaneous Evidence and Papers, no. 57, Calcutta, Bishop's College Press, 1839, p. 493.
- xxxv. P. 494.
- xxxvi. WBSA, General (General) Proceeding, July 6—September 28, 1836.
- xxxvii. NAI, Abstract, Home Public, Consultation no. 62, August 30, 1785.
- xxxviii. W.W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. 12, Trubner and Co, London, p.13.
- xxxix. NAI, Home Public, Consultation no. 24, May 15, 1812.
- xl. NAI, Home Public, Consultation no. 24, May 15, 1812, p. 2.
- xli. Appendix F, Fever Hospital, p. 493.
- xlii. Semaphoric connectivity meant a system of passing message with two flags in arms to transmit crucial navigational data to avert calamities.
- xliii. NAI, Home Public Proceeding, April 23, 1852.
- xliv. D.K. Lahiri Chaudhury, 'Beyond the Reach of Monkeys and Men'? O'Shaughnessy and the Telegraph in India, circa 1836—56', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 37, part 3, 2000.
- xlv. Satish Chandra Mitra, *Jashohar Khulnar Itihaash*, vol. 1, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 2013, p. 259.
- xlvi. Kamal Chaudhury, *Itihasheer Dhara*, p. 343.
- xlvii. WBSA, Calcutta Committee of Report, Proceeding, April 1—29, 1776, vol. 10, p. 831.
-



- 
- xlvi. Hugh Munroe was General Hector Munroe's son. The general had defeated HydarAli in 1781.
- xlix. NAI, Home Public, Consultation no. 62, August 30, 1785, P. 2.
- l. NAI, Home Public, July, 1822, no. 322, p. 68.
- li. NAI, Home Public, July 1822, no. 322, P. 79.
- lii. P. Home Public, 79. The Rev. J. Penney, of the Baptist Missionary Society and his wife were both attacked with the jungle fever on a visit to Sagor Island in 1828. Mrs. P. died within a few weeks of the attack, but Mr. P. partially recovered. Mrs. George Pearce, wife of the Rev. G. Pearce, who was also a passenger in the same ship, was taken very ill
- liii. S.R. Elson, *The River Hooghly; Calcutta to Saugor Island with Charts and Diagrams*, Printed at Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1884.
- liv. H. Leonard and J.G. Herons, *Selections from the Records of the Government of India in the Public Works Department*, no. XLV, Public Works Department Press, 1864.
- lv. H. Leonard and J.G. Herons.
- lvi. Selections, H. Leonard and J.G. Herons, *Selections from the Records of the Government of India in the Public Works Department*, no. XLV, Public Works Department Press, 1864, Leonard, Report, p. 9.
- lvii. NAI, Home Public Consultation, no. 19, December 23, 1776, p. 2.
- lviii. NAI, Home Public Consultation, no. 19, December, 1776, p. 1.
- lix. NAI, Home Public Consultation, no. 8, January 29, 1823, p. 1.
- lx. NAI, Home Public, Consultation no. 328, p. 101.
- lxi. NAI, Home Public, Proceeding, no. 328, July, 1822, p.101.
- lxii. Home Public, no. 328, July, 1822, P. 56.
- lxiii. Home Public, no. 328, P. 53.
- lxiv. NAI, Home Miscellaneous Proceedings, 204, December 9, 1792.
- lxv. NAI, Home Public, October 27, 1777, Consultation no. 8.
- lxvi. The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies, vol. 10, July to December, London, 1820, pp. 41-42.
- lxvii. Appendix F, Fever Hospital, p. 494.
- lxviii. William Huggins, *Sketches in India (Letters)*, London, 1824, p. 3. Refers to the twin health resort of Brighton and Hove in England.
- lxix. Huggins, p. 3.
- lxx. [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/bengal-summit-pact-signed-for-rs-12-000-crore-deep-sea-port-115010700796\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/bengal-summit-pact-signed-for-rs-12-000-crore-deep-sea-port-115010700796_1.html)
- lxxi. The Telegraph, Calcutta, Sunday, March 22, 2015.
-

---

# The Menace of Arsenic : Effects On the Common People of Bengal

Paramita Chakrabarti

The Government of India's (GOI) Environmental Hygiene Committee estimated in a 1949 report that cholera, dysentery and diarrhea were alone responsible for over 400,000 annual deaths in India from 1940 to 1950. Although India at that time had ample surface water, the necessary infrastructure for distribution, purification and storage was not widely available. The growing use of fertilizers and pesticides resulted in the pollution of many traditional drinking water sources. Now WHO and UNICEF proposed large scale use of tube wells for drinking water, anticipating that ground water would be relatively free of contaminants plaguing surface water. Though the initiative of GOI accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (1972) ground water utilization continued as this programme assisted states with rural drinking water provision. Increased ground water use led to numerous agricultural and health benefits but ground water arsenic contamination and the health effects resulting from chronic exposure were discovered as early as 1976 in north India but were not taken seriously.

The problem of arsenic contamination in ground water in large areas of West Bengal has received wide attention because ground water is the major source of drinking water in this part. This vast area is contaminated and locally populated and a large number of people are affected by this menace. Arsenic affected areas in Bengal basin are confined within the Ganga delta, mostly in the eastern part of arsenical dermatosis in the districts of North and South 24 Parganas ,

---

Nadia, Murshidabad, and Bardhaman were reported. By the end of December 2001, this problem spreads from few villages of 75 blocks in 8 districts. About 10% of the total population of the state is exposed to the above risk. Arsenic is generally found in water from the shallow aquifer, the deep aquifer has not so been found contaminated, except for rare cases where no perceptible clay layer separates the lower one from the upper aquifer. Different aspects of the problem, including the source of arsenic are being investigated by several workers. It is considered that excessive withdrawal of ground water induces oxidation of aquifer material, causing decomposition of pyrite and arsenopyrite and releasing of arsenic from them into the ground water.

All the arsenic affected river plains have the river routes originated from the Himalayan region. Over the years the problem of ground water arsenic contamination has been complicated at local and regional scale. It has far reaching consequences including its ingestion through food chain, which are in the form of social disorders, health hazards and socio economic dissolution and exploitation of ground water. The food crops grown in arsenic contaminated water are sold off to uncontaminated regions where the inhabitants may consume arsenic from the contaminated food which may give rise to a new danger.

As of 2008, West Bengal along with few other states have been exposed to drinking arsenic contaminated hand tube wells water. The maximum arsenic concentration was found in Ramnagar village in South 24 Parganas districts. The tube well was a private one and all 9 members of the owner's family has arsenic lesions, 7 other members with severe arsenical skin lesions had already died, 4 of them from cancer. Most of the highly arsenic affected districts of West Bengal are on the eastern side of the Bhagirathi river. Based on the intensity of arsenic concentrations West Bengal is demarcated into 3

---

zones—highly affected, mildly affected and unaffected. Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas, Bardhaman, Howrah, Hooghly and Kolkata are considered highly affected.

Kolkata, the capital of Bengal, is an urban area where the present drinking water demand is around 1262 million litres per day. From study it has been estimated that the southern part of Kolkata is more contaminated than the northern and central parts. During July-September 1989, some residents of Behala, in south west Kolkata, were found to have signs of chronic arsenic toxicity. There had been a chemical factory for the last 20 years in the locality from where the suspected cases of arsenic toxicity came and it had produced the insecticide Paris green. The factory's effluent was connected to drain and a canal about 400 miles away. The population around the factory uses water from 3 sources – shallow tube wells, deep tube wells, and tap water. Due to the availability of few tube wells and taps many dwellings have their own shallow tube wells whose water has been used for many years for drinking, cooking and washing. Out of 30 houses visited, 9 with 17 families were found to have cases of arsenical dermatoses. The people who lived close to the factory had used water from their own tube wells for drinking and cooking. The occupants of the few remaining houses close to the factory had used Calcutta Municipal Corporation's deep tube well or tap water whose arsenic concentration was on safe level. Those who drank contaminated water and resided near the factory were afflicted with skin pigmentation, thickening of palms and soles, peripheral neuropathy and gastro intestinal and pulmonary manifestations. The cumulative effect of the last 20 years dumping of arsenic waste was reason for the contamination. The removal of arsenic from the effluent by the factory authorities had been inadequate. After 8 years a follow up study in the affected areas was made and it was found that the total arsenic concentrations in hand tube wells decreased only 10% to 15%. Many new tube wells got arsenic contaminated.

---

However, local people no longer used tube well water for drinking and cooking.

Human health effects of chronic arsenic toxicity are designated by the term arsenicosis which was used by WHO to imply a chronic disease caused by prolonged exposure in humans to arsenic. Long term exposure to arsenic in drinking water is related to increased risks of cancer in the skin, lung, bladder and kidney and other skin change such as hyperkeratosis and pigmentation change, increased risk of lung and bladder cancer of arsenic associated skin lesions. Cases of gastro enteritis, hepatomegaly, cerebrovascular disease, conjunctival congestion and non pitting oedema of the legs and hands have been reported in patients of chronic arsenic toxicity in West Bengal. Duration of exposure, quantity of water consumed, availability of nutritious food etc. play important role in developing the symptoms. Most of the people suffering from arsenicosis, they belong to very poor family. Their socio economic status is very low, so they are unable to use costly technique for mitigation of arsenic in water. Researches at the School of Environmental studies, Jadavpur University, West Bengal, have observed from their last 18 years' field experience in West Bengal that poor people with poor nutrition have been suffering more. Arsenic affected people face serious social problems. Sometime other villagers force an arsenic affected patient to maintain an isolated life or avoid them socially whenever possible. Preliminary studies have shown the presence of elevated levels of inorganic arsenic in rice and vegetables, the staple food for villagers. Majority of the population living in the arsenic affected villages had inadequate education and were engaged in agricultural farming or physical labour who are marginal farmers. Many of them are unaware of contamination of their home tube wells with arsenic. Such farmers are reported to drink water from multiple sources, especially pumped ground water for irrigation purposes. Although arsenic free drinking water may be available in their locality, these

---

farmers have higher risk of arsenic exposure due to their occupational vulnerability. Most of the people suffering from arsenicosis, belong to very poor family. Their socio economic status is low and is unable to use costly technique for mitigation of arsenic in water.

Arsenic cripples the afflicted patient with his ability to labour , implying he is out of his source of livelihood that will bring less or no resources , greater expenditure for the cost of the treatment and subsequently leads to severe mental trauma. Often various forms of social exclusion and stigma add to the trauma. Wives are sent back to their parents, sometime together with their children. Boys and girls are barred from conjugal life and parents find themselves locked in despair when their efforts to marry off their daughters end in failure. During interview competent candidates are not offered jobs when their skin manifestations are discerned. Many people lose their jobs on account of widespread fear of disease mania. Ignorant villagers mistakenly suspect the skin manifestations as leprosy and therefore boycott the affected person.

In several villages of Murshidabad field study has been conducted where it has been found that the bulk of the population is under arsenic induced stress. For instance in Debipur village piped water supply had reached in 2011 after the persistence shown by the residents. However, water pipes were later damaged on account of widening of the roads in the region. Very few people were avid to invest in domestic water filtersbut unfortunately all popular products in the market were unable to successfully filter arsenic. As a consequence, it exacerbates their daily struggle to survive safely and impedes to afford for medical treatment after their investment into filter. On one hand they have made unwise investments based on improper information, on the other they have been robbed of benefits of development programs due to improper planning and execution. Arsenic has compelled many to leave the security of their homes.

---

---

Khidirpara, another village in Murshidabad, more than 70% of all households has atleast a single member living outside the state who send money to keep their families alive. They are unable to shift their entire families out of the district due to lack of earning capacity. Whatever they send back is exhausted because of health care or in search of safe water sources. Being poverty stricken they fail to cope with the problem unless they migrate to safer areas. In Mandra and Chak Rahatpur villages of Bardhaman district the villagers often depend on a few tube wells sunk by the government for drinking purposes. Most of the villagers cannot afford household electricity. Inadequate electricity supply keeps them away from mass media like television. Only around 10% of the households go through newspapers. Mandra is mainly inhabited by agricultural labourers or marginal farmers and female bidi binders, daily labourers and rickshaw pullers are also found. Both Mandra and Chak Rahatpur do not even have a primary health centre. Poor transport and medical facilities and insufficient nourishment primarily cause arsenic related health hazard in these villages. The better socio economic environment of Purbasthali and Parulia villages of Bardhaman district keep the villagers away from arsenic health hazard.

It has been surveyed and found that children and aged persons are more prone and succumb to arsenic hazard. A survey of UNICEF shows that women get subjugated to arsenicosis easily because they fetch water for domestic chores. Ignorance or lack of consciousness on part of the villagers hinders them to visit the health centres. Though campaigning on arsenic pollution is done seldom, they do not pay heed to it. Health hazards sometime brings social hazard especially to the women. Arsenicosis is a disease of poverty as well as a poverty aggravating disease. Women and children are often subjected to social attributes that are abandoned by their families leading to rift in family bondage. Uneducated rural communities are afflicted with superstitions such as arsenic is caused by 'evil spirit' or

---

it is a contagious disease and then accentuate agony and depression of the arsenic affected patients. They hesitate or participate less in socio cultural activities as they develop inferiority complex due to the spots developed on their skin and often their participation are disliked by their fellow unaffected neighbours. Hence the impact of arsenicosis has several psycho social implications. The arsenic affected victims have to confront discrimination and negligence also in the hands of their own family members. The worst victims have always been the women as they are ostracized by the community. They are looked down upon, kept isolated in separate room, reluctance of the neighbours to interact with them, restricted to share bed with non affected persons who resent cooperating with them. Unmarried girls having arsenicosis face difficulties to get married. Myths and misconceptions have deeper consequences in the lives of these afflicted people. Men suffering from arsenicosis are often not confident to marry. Alienation due to the lack of parental love cause retardation in Childs's psychological and physiological development, often they grumble about their peers in school who refuse to play with them. A 10 year field work conducted in West Bengal and Bangladesh (1989-1999) suggests that deficiency in protein, folate, and vitamin B in diet may cause skin lesions and other adverse health effects. Often corrupt ambience, lack of awareness or community solidarity in the both national and local level is a constraint for complete eradication of this menace.

To avoid social stigmatization of women and children with arsenic induced skin lesions, social counseling is required for the people in the community. It is imperative to persuade them about arsenicosis which is neither contagious nor hereditary and hence must not be alienated from others. Active community participation among the affected stake holders and full cooperation from the government are essential to create awareness. More research is required on the arsenic menace of ground water. Humanitarian efforts must be given



---

to ensure economic development, poverty reduction, social justice and sustainable community development. Though central and state governments have adopted and implemented several schemes such as Arsenic Removal Plant, Arsenic Removal Units and few others, coordination with village community is expected. The villagers must be given essential guide lines to colour the tube wells as unsafe or safe and safe tube wells should be regularly tested. For proper utilization of surface water resources the participation of villagers are fully required.

### **Bibliography:**

#### **Articles**

'High incidence of arsenic in ground water in West Bengal' report published by CGWB, Faridabad (July 1999)

D.N.Guha Mazumder – 'Chronic Arsenic Toxicity and Human Health', Indian J Med Res, October 2008.

M.D.Juel Rana—'Arsenic Contamination in West Bengal with Reference to Malda District', International Journal of Scientific Research, volume 2, February 2013.

Debkumar Bhattacharya, P.K. Mukherjee, A.K.Ray and S. Sengupta—'Arsenic Polluted ground water in West Bengal: A cost effective remedy', Current Science, Vol.86, May 2004.

Rahman, M.M.Mandal, B.K.Roy Choudhury, T.Sengupta, et al, 'Arsenic contamination and Sufferings of People in North 24 Parganas', J.Environ.Sci Health , 2003.

Nrshant Singh, Deepak Kumar and Anand P. Sahu—'Arsenic in Environment: Effect on Human Health and Possible Prevention', Journal of Environmental Biology, April 2007.

Dipankar Das, Gautam Samanta ,Badal Kumar Mandal, Tarit Roy Chowdhury, Chitta Ranjan Chanda, Partha Pratim Chowdhury, Gautam Kumar Basu and Dipankar Chakraborti – 'Arsenic in Ground Water in Six Districts of West Bengal, India, Environmental Geo chemistry and Health', 1996.

D.N. Guha Mazumder, J. Dasgupta, A.K. Chakraborty, A. Chatterjee, D. Das and D. Chakraborti – 'Environmental Pollution and Chronic Arsenicosis in South Calcutta', Bulletin of World Health Organisation, volume 70, 1992.

---

# Environmental Sociology: A Brief Introduction

Neeparanya Guha

The emergence of environmental sociology in the 1970s has been attributed to factors such as widespread awareness towards environment problems and large scale support for protection of environment during that decade. (Dunlap 2011:189) The mobilization of support towards environmental protection led to the celebration of the very first Earth Day in 1970. (ibid) The study of environmental problems has become a multidisciplinary phenomenon and the various disciplines are increasingly acknowledging the significance of sociology in the study of environmental problems. (Dunlap and Marshall 2007:329) This is due to increasing awareness regarding the point that environmental issues are essentially social issues i.e they are consequences of social behavior; they impact humans and other species and social effort is required for their solution. (ibid) Initially, sociologists focused on examining society's response to environmental issues but gradually they shifted their attention towards analyzing the relationship between the biophysical environment and modern societies which led to the emergence of environmental sociology as a distinct field of study. (ibid)

## **The Emergence of Environmental Sociology**

According to Dunlap, the energy crisis of 1973-1974 highlighting the industrialized society's dependence on fossil fuels as well as the expanding awareness towards water and air pollution during the 1970s contributed towards the development of the study of environmental problems within sociology. (Dunlap 2011:189)

---

Sociologists began to focus on the impact of societies on their environments and how in turn societies were being affected by environmental factors such as scarcity of resources and pollution. (ibid) Environmental sociology focuses on the point that the biophysical environment can influence human behavior and society as a whole. Thus, this can be seen as a deviation from the traditional sociological perspective that “social facts can be explained only by other social facts” (Dunlap and Catton, Jr. 1979:244). The importance given to environmental factors in impacting human behavior sets apart environmental sociology as a distinct field of study.

Sociology emerged as a distinct field of study through its emphasis on the social rather than physiological, psychological and geographical factors on human behavior. (Dunlap 2011:189) Its development took place during a period of technological progress, economic growth and resource abundance. Thus sociology grew with the contention that technological and scientific progress had liberated human societies from the influence of the biophysical environment. (ibid 189;190) Sociological enquiry regarding factors such as the societal effects on the shortage of energy led to the development of environmental sociology as an important discipline. (ibid 190) Earlier works in this field was soon supplemented by research on issues such as the impact of societal factors on various forms of pollution such as toxic contamination and also studies of social influence of environmental degradation. Within a decade, a number of sociologists deviated from traditional sociology’s emphasis on social factors; they took into account environmental factors as well. (ibid)

Environmental sociology as an expression first appeared in North America in the year 1971. (Vaillancourt 1995:11) In 1976, it appeared as a specialized subsection in the American Sociological Association. (ibid) In fact, in 1974, a research unit based on forestry

---

---

was created inside the Rural Sociological Society. Later, its name was changed to Natural Resources Research Group. (ibid) The unit formed the Environmental Sociology Group in 1972 within the Society and in 1974 within the American Sociological Association. (ibid) Later, in 1976, the American Sociological Association finally created the specialized subsection of Environmental Sociology. (ibid)

Environmental sociology also emerged as a critique of traditional sociology's ignorance to environmental factors. In their attempt to codify environmental sociology as a discipline, Dunlap and Catton criticized the Human Exemptionalism Paradigm (HEP) which influences mainstream sociology and provided an alternative perspective – New Ecological Paradigm (NEP). (Dunlap and Marshall 2007:330) They did not reject the point that human beings are exceptional species but argued that the special capabilities and skills of humans do not exempt them from the impacts of the natural environment. (ibid) The New Ecological Paradigm acknowledges the dependence of human societies on the ecosystem. (ibid)

Moreover, in order to delineate the scope of environmental sociology, an analytical framework had been proposed by Duncan. (Dunlap and Catton, Jr. 1979:251) It is based on the concept of 'ecological complex' which in turn is based on the biologist's idea of the 'ecosystem'. (ibid) According to the, Encyclopædia Britannica, an ecosystem is the "complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015). This definition is based on the biologist's definition of the ecosystem. Since this concept is based on a multispecies perspective, Duncan had developed an alternate version of it, which focuses only on humans. (Dunlap and Catton, Jr. 1979:251) Duncan's concept of ecological concept "focuses on the web-like interdependence among Population, Organization, Environment, and Technology (P, O, E, T); it stresses

---

---

that each element is reciprocally related to every other element” (ibid). It thus focuses on the interrelationship and interdependence among the four elements. (ibid)

### **The Link to Classical Sociologists**

Although the founder fathers of sociology have often been discredited for not acknowledging the interaction between society and environment, many scholars have argued that there are ecological aspects in the works of Durkheim, Marx and Weber. According to Hannigan, there is implicit mentioning of nature and society in the works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim. (Hannigan 2014:22) Humphrey and Buttel were also of the opinion that the traces of environmental sociology can be found in classical sociological thought. (Frederick H. Buttel 2000:20) They classified the ecological relevant works of the classical sociologists into four categories – “materialist ontologies....biological analogies...use of Darwinian/evolutionary arguments or schemes..and concrete empirical analyses of resource or environmental issues” (ibid).

The works of Marx and Engels are based on materialist ontology which implies that the predominance of social labour and production can only be understood in regard to nature. (ibid) In the philosophical works of Marx, there is mentioning of the dialectical relationship between the material world and nature. (ibid) Moreover, Marx and Engels in their later works have referred to capitalism’s penetration as a result of mammoth air pollution and many other such conditions which affects the health of the labours. (ibid) They were also of the opinion that political economy should acknowledge the relation between nature and society. (ibid)

Elements of the evolutionary scheme are found in the works of Emile Durkheim. (ibid 21) His concept of social change was based on evolutionary perspectives – a transition from primitive societies

---

---

based on low division of labour to modern societies based on complex division of labour which was also accompanied by a transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. (ibid) Moreover, biological concepts are found in the theories of evolution and solidarity (as found in the notion of organic solidarity). (ibid) In his explanation of the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity, he referred to factors such as population density, scarcity of resources and the competition for survival which strongly resemble modern concepts of human ecology. (ibid) Moreover, according to Catton, Durkheim's theory involved an attempt to provide a solution to an ecological crisis which was a result of rising population accompanied by scarce resources. (Hannigan 2014:24)

Max Weber strongly opposed the notion that the concepts and methods of social science should be based on the concepts and methods of the natural sciences. (Frederick H. Buttel 2000:21) However, he acknowledged the relationship between nature and society. For instance, in the *General Economic History* and *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, he had referred to "the impacts of social structures on natural resources or the impact of natural resources on social organization" (ibid 22). The environmentally relevant aspects of Weber's works have been examined by the neo-Weberian sociologists - Patrick West and Raymond Murphy. (ibid) West described that Weber's empirical work on ancient society and his sociology of religion contains traces of human ecology. (ibid) The historical and comparative method of Weber was based on the point that environmental factors play casually relevant roles in certain phases of human history. (ibid) On the other hand according to Buttel, "Murphy has developed a Weberian environmental sociology based largely on a completely different literature – Weber's concept of rationalization and his ideal types of rationality and orientations to action drawn primarily from *Economy and Society*" (ibid). According to Murphy, the increase of

---

formal rationality has led to an ethic which deals with the mastery over nature and also ignorance regarding human threats to ecology. (ibid)

### **The Scope of Environmental Sociology**

Environmental sociology achieved its legitimacy and credibility within the larger discipline through its emphasis on the fact that environmental problems are ultimately social problems. (Dunlap 2011:190) The scope of environmental sociology has been discussed elaborately by Dunlap. Environmental problems arise as a result of human action, such problems prove to be harmful for humans and the resolution of such problems requires collective human action. (ibid) These features of environmental sociology led to the development of four major areas of focus within contemporary environment sociology. These are: 1.) the analyses of social construction of environmental issues. 2.) the causes of such issues 3.) the impacts (potential and actual) of such issues. 4.) societal efforts towards the resolution of such issues. (ibid)

In analyzing the social construction of environmental issues, the environmental sociologists note that industrial wastes are ignored in one location while it is viewed as polluting in another location. Thus, environmental sociologists focus on how environmental issues can be constructed as problematic. (ibid) They analyze the roles of government officials, activists, the media and the scientists in defining situations as problematic; the methods used to legitimize such claims; and the challenges they face in obtaining acceptance of their claims. Such analyses point out that environmental issues do not simply develop from objective conditions but are defined as problematic through social construction. (ibid)

After the recognition of environmental problems, the causes of such problems can be analyzed. (ibid) Since environmental issues are

---

frequently generated by human action, environmental sociologists study the social forces behind such problems. (ibid) While some studies analyze the acts of particular government agencies and industries in generating such problem, others use cross-national data in order to figure out the relative effects of affluence, population and other features on indicators of the degradation of environment such as deforestation or CO2 emissions. (ibid) Contemporary cross-national analysis focuses on the relative significance of population growth and size, economic factors like trade patterns, consumption levels and affluence in creating environmental degradation. (ibid)

Environmental problems are seen to be problematic as they appear as threats to human beings. (ibid) A number of environmental sociologists study the multiple social impacts of such environmental problems. In the 1970s, when toxic waste was found at Love Canal in the Niagara Country, numerous studies were conducted on contaminated communities. (ibid) Moreover, researchers also started focusing on the social effects of a wide range of undesirable environmental conditions such as air pollution and leaking landfills. (ibid) A common feature found in the results of such research is that certain individuals such as those belonging in the lower socioeconomic strata and racial minorities are disproportionately vulnerable to hazardous environmental conditions as a result of which environmental justice has grown to be a dominant feature of environmental sociology. (ibid) Moreover, a number of studies also began to focus on how the wealthy and powerful nations exploit the poorer nations as pollution dumps and resource providers and thus highlight global environmental injustice. (ibid)

Environmental sociologists also focuses on the efforts provided in preventing or solving environmental problems through the examination of potential and existing environmental plans and policies. (ibid) They highlight how environmentally relevant actions are rooted in structural conditions. (ibid) Moreover, they point out



---

that promotion of pro-environmental action necessitates more than requests for voluntary transformation in lifestyle. (ibid) As described by Dunlap, “Developing effective mass transit systems and providing community-wide collection of recyclables, for example, are more effective than simply asking people to drive less and recycle more” (ibid). Moreover, environmental sociologists point out that promotion of energy-efficient standards for buildings are more effective than requesting for conservation of households. (ibid) While examining at the macro level, environmental sociologists focus on the features of nation-states and industries linked with environmental performance for determining the scope for improvements and also the roles of corporations, governments and non-governmental organizations in promotion of such improvements. (ibid 190; 191)

## **Conclusion**

After its inception in the 1970s, environmental sociology quickly became a burgeoning sub-discipline within sociology. By focusing on the interrelationship between the biophysical environment and society and emphasizing on the point that environmental problems are socially constructed, environmental sociology acquired its legitimacy and credibility within the larger discipline. Though the emergence of environmental sociology took place in the 1970s, it has also been pointed out that there are ecological components in the ideas and writings of classical sociologists. Contemporary environmental sociology focuses on a number of areas such as causes of environmental degradation and the resolution of such issues.

## **Bibliography**

### **Books and Encyclopedias**

Buttel, Frederick H. “Classical Theory and Contemporary Environmental Sociology: some reflections on the antecedents and prospects for reflexive modernization theories

---

---

in the study of environment and society.” *SAGE Studies in International Sociology, Volume 50: Environment and Global Modernity*. Ed. Spaargaren, Gert, Mol, Arthur P J and Buttel, Frederick H. SAGE Publications Ltd. 2000. 17-39. Print.

Dunlap, Riley E. “Environmental Sociology.” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Ed. Ritzer, George and Ryan, J. Michael. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2011. 189-191. Print.

Dunlap, Riley E. and Marshall, Brent K. “Environmental Sociology.” *21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook*, Vol. 2. Ed. Bryant, Clifton D and Peck, Dennis L. Sage Publications, Inc. 2007. 329-340. Print.

Hannigan, John. *Environmental Sociology*. 3rd ed. Routledge. 2014. Print.

Vaillancourt, Jean-Guy. “Sociology of the Environment: From Human Ecology to Ecosociology.” *Environmental Sociology: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Mehta, Michael D and Ouellet, Éric. Captus Press Inc. 1995. 3-32. Print.

#### **Online Periodical**

Dunlap, Riley E and Catton Jr, William R. 1979. “Environmental Sociology.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 5 (1979), pp. 243-273. Web.

Available from:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2945955>

#### **Weblink**

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. “Ecosystem.” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2015. Web.

Available from:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/178597/ecosystem>

---

# Globalization and Wildlife: An insight into the human impact on biological diversity

Shreya Bhattacharya

## **Introduction:**

History reveals that it was Man himself who protected and nurtured Mother Nature so that she in return would benevolently protect them. Sadly, times have drastically altered with the entire human race developing ruthless characteristics and unsympathetic behavior towards the ecology. Ulrich Beck (1992) produced a thesis that viewed us living in a 'community of danger' accepting medical and ecological side effects as a product of modernization, human glorification and material prosperity. His conception of 'risk society' gives us a brutal picture about how we are transforming into a society living constantly under threat and how our current pressing insecurities are because of overproduction and over consumption and not because of shortage of wealth or technology. In the recent years we have been quite familiar with the notion of Earth as a dying planet with artists all around the world busy depicting scary images of the planet as a result of human atrocities and aggressiveness on the beautiful calm and spiritual nature.

It has been well analyzed that environmental problems are the causes of miscalculation of forceful cultural infliction by over ambitious and over indulgent humans trying to prove their superiority by bringing in radical change. Along with global warming, the conservation of biodiversity was one of the two major issues at the June 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in

---

Rio de Janeiro. Twenty years before, the term biodiversity was unknown and it was not to be found in any compendium of threats to the environment. Now this issue is placed on the same platform as acid rain, ozone depletion and climate change. The shocking graph of biological diversity loss reveals how a ‘transnational epistemic community’ can assemble, present and successfully contest a global environmental problem (Hannigan 1995).

Tester (1991) elucidates the view of Social Constructionism by saying that environment is essentially a product of society and when it comes to animals they are what humans classify them to be, which means that they exist in the ways humans interprets them to be. This obviously emphasizes how the entire world is dependent on the classifications and descriptions by human beings. “Udall (1991: 83) uses the metaphor of a ripe pumpkin that has been hollowed out to describe the damage to our ecosystems which has been inflicted by trapping, ploughing, logging, damming, poisoning and other forms of human intrusion” (Hannigan 1995).

### **Religion and animals:**

Since ancient times, animals have occupied an important status in religions and sacred texts. Apart from being associated and worshipped as companions of Gods and Goddesses they have been thought of being reincarnations of ancestors who were believed to have returned to Earth in the body of an animal. This, being quite a popular belief in the Indus Valley Civilization, of course demanded that they be treated with respect. The notion of having a soft approach towards non human beings have been exemplified in the Vedas which preach that those who cannot accept life in lesser beings are failing to understand the meaning of life as well as losing their touch of humanity. Eastern religions like Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

---

have well elaborated their hatred towards destruction and harm towards living beings and expressed their preference for vegetarianism and friendliness towards all creatures. The concept of Karma in Hinduism teaches that any kind of wrongdoing would have negative consequences so cruelty towards animals should be avoided and kindness and love towards them would be rewarded. The central emphasis of Jainism and Buddhism is on ahimsa which means non-violence to any creature. According to Jain beliefs harm of any kind should not be done on any being and like humans, animals too have souls which should be treated with love and tenderness as welfare of animals is extremely valuable. Buddhism also emphasized that killing animals is as big a sin as killing humans and hunting animals would be an act of evil.

Sadly social ideas about animals have dramatically changed over the years. Erika Cudworth (2003) writes how changes in social notions towards animals have been accompanied with changes in human relations with animals with the onset of economic, social, scientific and political modernization. According to Thomas (1983) “society grew less dependent on animal power with the advent of mechanization, and the difference between humans and animals increased with the spread of urbanization”. Cudworth (2003) continues by saying that in contemporary society people interact with animals, everyday. We eat animals, wear animal products, watch them on television, pet them, trade them as well as engage in sports involving animals like hunting, shooting or fishing. Vandana Shiva, the Director of The Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy, has argued that in pre-colonial India, under the influence of Hindu philosophy, animals were known to have spirits. This concept only changed with the colonial spread of scientific rationalism that encouraged the idea of non humans being inert objects. Carolyn Merchant (1980) suggested that “modern

---

Western scientific culture established the notion of a hierarchy of species and legitimated human domination over animals”. Thus modernity established a hierarchy between humans and animals reinforcing the domination and superiority of humans over animals.

There is also the concept of ‘speciesism’ coined in 1970 by British psychologist Richard D. Ryder which believes in humans being entitled to behave in ways towards other species that would be highly inappropriate if the same kind of behavior was subjected to humans. As Singer (1990) puts it, speciesism is exactly like racism or sexism. In the same way as racism or sexism violate the laws of equality by favouring the interests of their own race or sex, speciesism, in the same way, look after their own interests overlooking the greater interest of other species and adopt discriminatory attitude towards them.

### **Globalization and wildlife:**

Because of globalization and the consequences of mass sabotage of natural habitat by humans we see the fragile physical environment getting altered jeopardizing the well being of humans as well as non-humans. Effects such as climate change are being observed everywhere, species are getting endangered and extinct, there is loss of diversity, habitat destruction, degradation, all of which threatens to erode the entire ecosystem.

The different kinds of species found in the natural environment provides us humans not only with food, clothes, fuel, medicine but also looks after the purification of water and air, regulates the climate, prevents soil erosion, helps in pollination of crops, beside many other such services. (Ed by Vie, et al. 2009). Animals are exploited in two ways: their labor is exploited (in the form of wool, honey, reproductive excretions such as milk or eggs, etc.) and they

---

themselves become commodities (in the form of their flesh, as companions, etc.) (Torres, 2007). As a result harming them would consequentially lead the human race towards doom.

During the twentieth century, according to Hall and Ruane (1993), “Of the 3831 breeds or breed varieties of ass, water buffalo, cattle, goat, horse, pig, and sheep . . . 618 are estimated to have become extinct”. Hall and Ruane continued that in Europe and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), breed extinctions have generally been highest in those countries, such as Switzerland, that have the highest per capita income. It has been roughly calculated that between half a billion and one billion songbirds are hunted in Europe every year in the name of sports and food (Bird Life International 2008f). Millions of sharks are trapped and targeted each year for their fins which are used to make the Asian delicacy shark fin soup. In the Mediterranean Sea, the increasing noise pollution due to marine traffic are inflicting harm on cetaceans by impairing their potential to communicate and locate their prey. Solid waste like thrown out plastic bags has resulted in the death of many marine animals such as turtles, birds or dolphins that mistake the bags for jellyfish and die from ingesting them. Runoff of agricultural fertilizers results in the formation of “dead zones”, where no oxygen is available and fish and crustaceans cannot survive (Diaz and Rosenberg 2008). Discharging of pollutants and waste in the water has revealed its hazardous consequences particularly in eastern Mediterranean for monk seals who are finding it difficult just to survive (IUCN 2007). Atlantic cod, formerly found in plenty, started to disappear in the 1970s, as an outcome of over fishing and increasing global demand. The Mediterranean bluefin tuna, a delicacy in Japan, has met with the same fate, threatened, again, by over fishing.

Occasionally, pressures of globalization can be shown to be causally

---

---

related to the loss of a particular kind of domestic livestock, as in the case of the near demise of Haiti's Creole pigs, which were small, black, long-snouted animals, who required very low maintenance and were the central component of both soil fertility and rural economy (Aristide 2000). But in 1982 and 1983 majority of these pigs were killed as a part of a plan for disease control which was initiated to integrate Haiti into the hemispheric economy. So these animals were substituted with pigs from Iowa, USA whose high maintenance led to a speedy miscarriage of the project. The poor peasants of Haiti lost an estimated US\$ 600 million.

There is also the issue of illegal trade which continues to flourish due to conditions of conflict, corruption poverty and the absence of livelihood alternatives, persistent demand for illicit wildlife products and a lack of public awareness of the consequences of such demand, as well as other environmental pressures that contribute to wildlife population losses (e.g., environmental degradation, habitat loss, and ecological fragmentation) (Wyler, Sheikh 2013). Despite trying to overcome the threats of overexploitation to species, the range and scale of illegal wildlife trade has increased to historic levels.

According to the data provided by the U.S. government, this felonious trade of wildlife products which include elephant ivory, rhino horns, and turtle shells, is worth at least an estimated \$7 billion to \$10 billion annually, and this does not incorporate the illegal logging and illegal fishing which can account, respectively, for roughly an additional \$30 billion to \$100 billion annually and \$10 billion to \$23 billion annually. Black market prices for these illegal products have reportedly risen up to \$90,000 for a live Lear Macaw, \$50,000 for a kilogram of rhino horn, \$8,000 for a luxury shahtoosh shawl, \$1,200 for a kilogram of tiger bones or beluga caviar, and \$1,000 for a kilogram of raw elephant ivory.

The water bodies of the planet are the homes to a whopping number

---



---

of species while generating 70 percent of atmospheric oxygen, absorbing most of the carbon dioxide and restoring fresh water to land through the formation of clouds which clearly states that any kind of trouble for the oceans would mean trouble for mankind. In recent times, there has been a spread of concern concerning the threat faced by marine species of becoming extinct because of over fishing, climate change, invasive species and coastal development (Dulvy et al. 2003; Roberts and Hawkins 1999). Governments have started displaying interest to conserve marine life though being faced by the challenge of deficit information. Population biologists now also cite the case of sea turtles which were being caught in shrimp nets. They revealed data to the WTO showing that turtle populations were declining drastically as a result of shrimping.

It would be inadequate to discuss just about animals when our existence depends on plants as well. It has been estimated that around 50,000 to 70,000 plant species are used for traditional and modern medicine (Schippmann et al. 2006). These medicines are extremely important for healthcare in less developed countries and according to World Health Organization 2008 upto 80% of the population of some Asian and African countries depends on traditional and herbal medicine for primary health care. But its not just restricted to developing countries. Developed countries have recognized the significance of these treatments and accepted these as alternate treatments. It has also been noted about the usage of amphibians have been quite valuable in traditional medicines with their diverse skin secretions being of particular interest (Stuart et al. 2008).

### **Conclusion:**

It is clear that environmental concerns do not have borders and its impact is felt globally. For instance, globalization has a very

---

empowering effect on India, home to over 90% of Hindus who accepted vegetarianism as a part of their religion, by encouraging her to move in tune with a meat eating world. McDonald has a menu dominated by chicken especially for Indian market which has created a bottomless demand for chicken spelling out the slaughter of billions of chicken to meet the rising demand (Kala, 2005).

Thus, regulated global governance is mandatory to manage globalization and the environment as well as the relation between the two. Another solution would be sustainable development which has been accepted as the new global goal. “Not only is sustainable development quintessentially about the linkages between environment and globalization, it is also a goal that has increasingly been adopted by various elements of the global system. For example, it is not only the overarching goal of all environmental organizations and instruments, it is also now a stated goal of the World Trade Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and many others” (Najam, Runnalls, Halle 2007).

Dada J P Vaswani, Spiritual Head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission remarked that animals also are entitled to rights and talking about animal welfare is not the solution; giving them their rights is. He continues by saying that the most fundamental right is the right to live and when we humans do not have the capacity to give life to the dead we absolutely do not have the right to take life either. Vaswani believed that the 21st century would give rights to animals and when all the killing would stop then only the Earth would attain peace. (Vaswani, 2003)

We need to comprehend the diversity and differentiation of species and we should indulge in care, love and affection for animals and tailor our actions that would respect all varieties of species living in the same world as us.

---

## Bibliography

Books, Articles and Online Periodicals:

Ehrenfeld, David. (2003) 'Effects on Biodiversity, Environment and Society', *Conservation & Society*, 1(1) pp.99-111.

Available at:

<http://www.conservationandsociety.org/article.asp?issn=0972-4923;year=2003;volume=1;issue=1;spage=99;epage=111;aulast=Ehrenfeld>

Hannigan, John. (2006) *Environmental Sociology*. 3rd ed. Routledge.

Jean-Yves, Huwart and Loïc, Verdier. (2013) *Economic Globalisation: Origins and Consequences*. OECD Publishing.

Najam, Adil., Runnalls, David. and Halle, Mark. (2007) *Environment and Globalization: Five Propositions*. International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Available at:

[https://www.iisd.org/pdf/2007/trade\\_environment\\_globalization.pdf](https://www.iisd.org/pdf/2007/trade_environment_globalization.pdf)

Szűcs, E., Geers, R., Jezierski, T., Sossidou, E.N. and Broom, D. M. (2012) 'Animal Welfare in Different Human Cultures, Traditions and Religious Faiths', *Asian-Australasian Journal of Animal Sciences*. 25(11) pp. 1499–1506.

Available at:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4093044/>

Vié, Jean-Christophe., Hilton-Taylor, Craig. and Stuart, Simon N. (eds.). (2009) *Wildlife in a Changing World: An analysis of the 2008 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Gland: IUCN.

Wrenn, Corey Lee. (2011) 'Resisting the Globalization of Speciesism: Vegan Abolitionism as a Site for Consumer-Based Social Change' *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, IX(3), pp.9-27.

Available at:

[http://www.asanet.org/sectionanimals/documents/Wrenn\\_C\\_.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/sectionanimals/documents/Wrenn_C_.pdf)

Wyler, Liana Sun and Sheikh, Pervaze A. (2013) *International Illegal Trade in Wildlife: Threats and U.S. Policy*. Congressional Research Service.

Available at:

<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34395.pdf>

---

# Tower Tension: Understanding the noxious effect of Mobile Tower Radiation

Adrita Ganguly

বিজ্ঞানের কল্যাণে জলে স্থলে আকাশে  
আজ এত পথ খুলেছে, এত রথ ছুটেছে যে,  
ভূগোলের বেড়া আজ আর বেড়া নেই।  
আজ কেবল নানা ব্যক্তি নয়,  
নানা জাতি কাছাকাছি এসে জুটল;  
অমনি মানুষের সত্যের সমস্যাও বড়ো হয়ে দেখা দিল।  
বৈজ্ঞানিকশক্তি যাদের একত্র করেছে  
তাদের এক করবে কে।  
মানুষের যোগ যদি সংযোগ হল তো ভালোই,  
নইলে সে দুর্যোগ।  
সেই মহা দুর্যোগ আজ ঘটছে।  
একত্র হবার বাহ্যশক্তি হু - হু করে এগোল,  
এক করবার আস্তর শক্তিই পিছিয়ে পড়ে রইল।  
— শিক্ষার মিলন - রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

Social constructionists argue that things in the world gained their character from social action rather than by virtue of any objective properties they may have. This means that our knowledge about the world depends on ‘who we are’ and ‘where we are’. Our knowledge of things does not have any objective basis, but is relative to the culture and the time in which it is produced – it is dependent upon its location in time and space. Keith Tester holds a strong constructionist position and argues that nature does not have objective reality. The many objects that make up the environment are products of society and what we know about reality is a social construct. So the relationship between environment and society is that the latter produces the former.

---

Talking about reality and social ways ensuing environmental alterations, the grace of Science and Technology has conferred us with *mobile handset* – a tool which has brought the distant so close, amazing things have happened since then. New age busy parents are getting in touch with their children frequently, in times of need friends and family is at your door step in just a moment, all at the relief of that elfin mobile handset. Lately it serves much more than a communication device. It has become a trouble fixer of all kinds. Its use is increasing like a conflagration. 1995 marked the formal introduction of mobile phones in India. According to the 2011 Census, 53% household use mobile phones resulting 4.4laks installation of mobile towers.<sup>1</sup>

As we speak on a mobile phone, the word collectives are converted to electromagnetic waves and reach the nearby tower. Then through the mobile towers near the listener at the other end reach the handset of the listener who then responds. This is how communication is build. So in this whole process the link between the mobile phone and the mobile tower is maintained by the electromagnetic radiation (EMR) wave. The technology behind the mobile phone is such that it is not mired by the increasing distance between the communicators. In fact its waves move from one tower to the other. In course of the discussion, it should be mentioned that every city has a central office (MTSO) of the service provider companies of the mobile phone connections. When a call is made the offices check it's under which provider and prepares the specific channel for dialogue between the speakers. The cell tower gets the signal subsequently. Till the process is done the word "*connecting...*" flashes on the mobile screen. Here lies the importance of the mobile towers.

The process remains active following the transmission of the electromagnetic radiation from both the mobile phones and the cell towers. The electromagnetic radiation is imperceptible, odorless, and

---

1. Kumar, Girish. "Report on Cell Tower Radiation" DOT Delhi, December 2010. (Web. 02 Jan. 2015.)

---

noiseless. Taking the advantage of these features the mobile towers are installed at the roofs of the high rise buildings, schools and hospitals in densely populated regions. The gargantuan formation of the mobile towers is not only a common scene in the cities but even in the suburbs and villages are observing its existence.

Technology secures our wellbeing. But we have to be watchful about the prospective adversities technology brings in and be prepared to resist it. Provided in many cases use of technology has to be bridled so that it doesn't turn into a pang in human existence. Still when technology breaks the barrier of daintiness and entertainment and becomes a way of life, adding into different vocations, it grows difficult to evade. Here's when vulnerability of mankind is captured before technology. Therefore we cannot shun the eventual difficulties for the use of mobile phones even if it is an important part of our pacing everyday life.

Although to maintain the mobile phone technology the significance of mobile towers cannot be discarded but the reality of high EMR has to be taken into account. A human body exposed to EMR absorbs radiation, because it consists of 70% liquid. Exactly like microwave cooking where the watery part in the food content is first heated. Microwave absorption effect is much more significant by the body parts which contain more fluid (water, blood, etc.), like the brain which consists of about 90% water. Effect is more pronounced where the movement of the fluid is less, for example, eyes, brain, joints, heart, abdomen, etc. Therefore there are several health hazards associated with cell phones and cell towers.

The minimum level of Radio Frequency (RF) waves can damage the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA), studies show that exposure at levels below the current Federal Communications Commission (FCC) exposure standard, produces single and double strand breaks in DNA. Children are more susceptible to mobile phone radiation as they absorb more energy than adults from the same phone due to their

---

smaller brain size, their cells reproduce more quickly than adults which makes cancers more deadly, their immune system is not well developed as adults, hence are less effective against fighting cancer growth. The radiation causes irreversible infertility in men and women, affects the skin, causes tinnitus and ear damage, affects the eyes, cell phone emission weakens bones, causes sleep disorders and more scarily increases cancer risk.<sup>2</sup>

Doctors in Naila, Germany examined 1000 people staying close to mobile towers for 10 years. The researchers found that the proportion of newly developing cancer cases was significantly higher among those patients who had lived within 400 meters from the cellular transmitter site during the past 10 years, compared to those patients living further away.<sup>3</sup> According to Biomedical Engineer, Mariana Pereira, EMR causes Vibroacoustic stimulation whose symptoms are joint pain, vertebral column pain, gastric problem, respiratory problem, irritation etc.<sup>4</sup> The first ever international conference in Sweden on the effects of mobile tower radiation reported that children exposed to cell phones are five times more vulnerable to brain cancer risks.<sup>5</sup> John Walker, scientist and member of Electromagnetic Radiation Research Trust, USA claims regions adjacent to mobile tower erections is multiple times more carcinogenic than others.<sup>6</sup> Based on the survey conducted by the researchers at the University of California, the children exposed to EMR in their mother's womb were studied to have unnatural

- 
2. Kumar, Girish. "Report on Cell Tower Radiation" *DOT Delhi*, December 2010. (Web. 02 Jan. 2015.)
  3. Chopra, Rajesh. "Stop Mass Killings! Cell tower Radiation." *Live India Dot Com*. 2009. (Web. 16 Dec. 2014.)
  4. Ibid.
  5. Lean, Geoffrey. "Mobile phone use 'raises children's risk of brain cancer fivefold'" *Independent, UK*, 23 October 2011. (Web 05 Jan 2015.)
  6. Walker, John. "Review of some current knowledge of the effect on people's health of telephone base station mast radiation - the path towards a safer level." Walker-Radiation Research Trust, 2007. Web 22 Feb 2015.
-

---

behavioral disorders when they grow up. A study in Israel informed that based on medical records of people living within 350 meters of a long established phone mast, showed a fourfold increased incidence of cancer compared with the general population of Israel, and a tenfold increase specifically among women, compared with the surrounding locality further from the mast.<sup>7</sup> Rehaan Dastur, one of the first users of mobile phones in India used a mobile phone which had a cracked end for three years and suffered a stroke that paralyzed his body, distorted and froze his face. The doctor treating him at Delhi's Apollo hospital told him he had Bell's palsy, caused by Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) emitted from the antennae in his cell phone. The EMR travelled through the crack in the phone, into Dastur's ears, nerves and brain. He returned to 95 % of his former self after a month's treatment and felt the recurring jangling in his nerves when passed a mobile tower.<sup>8</sup> Forty year old, Niru Bhutoria, resident of Natraj Building in South Kolkata has splitting headaches every other day. Other residents of the same building also suffered from headaches, nausea, diarrhea etc. Mrs. Bhutoria suspected that it happened since a mobile phone tower with as many as nine antennae of different service providers has been installed on the building opposite her residence.<sup>9</sup> Rishi Majumder from Tehelka reported in 2010 that Delhi is under new epidemiological threat due to cell tower installation in the city.

The EMR not only affects the human lives many studies and reports suggested it also concerns the animals in our surroundings. Dhanya R. scientist at The Selim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History stressed that EMR hurts the light bird skulls and heat up the

---

7. Wolf, Ronni, and Danny Wolf. "Increased incidence of cancer near a cell-phone transmitter station." *International Journal of Cancer* 1.2 (2004).

8. Majumder, Rishi. "Radiation City" *Thelka*. Delhi, 5 June 2010. (Web. 06 Jan 2015.)

9. Das, Sharmistha. "Towering Trouble" *The Telegraph*, 30 Oct 2013. (Web. 15 Mar 2015.)



---

small body fluids in them. So, hardly anyone witnesses pigeons, sparrows, swans in the close proximity of mobile towers. It also disturbs their navigational skills. Albert Einstein once said, “If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live.” Today due to EMR the bees cannot return to their hives. A sharp decline has also been noticed in commercial bee population in Kerala posing a serious threat to honey bees, hitting apiculture (the cultivation of bees on a commercial scale for the production of honey). The State has the highest density of mobile towers.<sup>10</sup> Punjab University reported that dairy cows exposed to magnetic field for more than two years resulted in sharp decline in milk yield. Also deformities were seen in hen eggs for the EMR hazard. Exposure to EMR affects the overall wellbeing of animal world. Other than domesticated animals even wildlife is also exposed to the harmful effects of EMR.

Let alone the bees, birds & animals, EMR emanating from mobile towers also affect vegetables, crops and plants in its neighborhood. Mobile phone EMF can block seeds, slow down germination and root growth, thus affecting the growth of agricultural crops & plants. Progressive weakening of trees close to phone masts is also observed.<sup>11</sup>

International Endeavour in controlling EMR – Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) helps in measuring the radiation rate in a human body. International Commission of Non-ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), Europe has limited the safe SAR of 2 watt/kg every 10 gram tissue of a human body. USA and England has fixed it as 1.6 watt/kg and 1.0 watt/kg respectively. For every base station the safe SAR is fixed at 100watt/kg internationally. There are more than 1.9 million Cell phone Towers and Cell Phone Antennas in the USA, all

---

10. Kumar, Girish. “Report on Cell Tower Radiation” *DOT Delhi*, December 2010. (Web. 02 Jan. 2015.)

11. *Ibid.*

---

of which emit wireless microwave radiation, also known as RF radiation. More than 25% of Cell Phone Towers are hidden, camouflaged as flag poles, chimneys, trees, water towers, light houses even tombstones. Although officials continue to deny there is any health risk associated with cell phones tower radiation, there are countless studies that say otherwise. However, in USA there is evidence of cell tower installation away from densely populated regions. Only in the downtown work areas the huge buildings have installed mobile towers for their personal use.

Indian government has also agreed to the ICNIRP supported safe SAR of 9200 mm watt per square meter. Telecom Operators' Radiation Auditors, Cogent and EMR Solution Ltd. announced 600 mm watt/square meter as a safe range of radiation emission.

West Bengal Government in EMR control - Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) reported till March 2014 the mobile phone consumer in Kolkata was 2crore 10 lakhs, few assigned to more than one connection. To enhance commerce, service providers are competing in installing mobile towers. In June 2014 an official of Cellular Operators Association (COA) in a Kolkata seminar, states that, ICNIRP guideline of the radiation rate of one-tenth of 4.5 watt per meter square is followed in the State. This calculation is slated to be harmless. Telecom Enforcement, Resource and Monitoring (TERM) cells of the Department of Telecommunications are in charge of monitoring this range in India. The COA official also adds that to stop 'call drop' 30% more towers have to be installed maintaining the ICNIRP standard. In August 2014 Telecom and IT minister, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad declared that in the financial year 2013-14 the government of India have collected a sum of rupees 12,957.42 crores as revenue from the service providers. This declaration strengthens the positions of the service providers and makes them big players of the India economy.

---

Nevertheless, the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) till date has published three guideline charters in controlling the installation of the mobile base stations. The first order came out on April 2008, next the directions were published in November 2009 and thirdly a statutory circular was made available in September 2010. The order, direction and the statutory circular accepted the installations of mobile towers on residential buildings, schools, hostels and hospitals can cause harmful EMR hazards in the neighborhood. It also mentioned to avoid setting up of mobile in narrow lanes to escape natural disasters like earthquake or cyclone. The guidelines also included formalities related to local and state authority for an installation etc. However, in reality many towers have been installed with multiple antennas of various service providers and seldom are the guidelines followed. In fact there are reports of unauthorized mobile tower installations in the city and around. Orders have been flouted just to gain few extra bucks from the service providers. There are instances of per head maintenance cost of a residential building being recouped by renting the roof of the building to the service provider companies for setting up mobile towers. But the authority is turning a deaf ear to the people's complain.

Again in West Bengal there are stories of achievements where the neighboring people have stopped mobile tower compilation in their locality. Shambhunath Ghosh from Bally and Anup Makhhal from Abada in Howrah district successfully resisted the unauthorized mobile tower installation.<sup>12</sup> Their movement faced with many challenges. They evaded life threats for the sake of their well being. Anup Makhhal asserts proudly that when the men of his village were out for work, women of his locality fought against the ultimate power heads and stopped the installations. In the dark of night they would throw the equipments of base station installations in the ponds. The

---

12. Qualitative Interview with Shambhunath Ghosh (08.04.2015.) and with Anup Makhhal (11.04.2015.)

---

claims of the Eco feminists for so many years again accurately describe this incident. However, there are few unsuccessful stories of Kishalay Mitra of South Kolkata who have been fighting legal battle since 2010 to dismantle the mobile tower in his opposite building, is awaiting a day of fortune.

A Kolkata based organization; *Sabuj Mancha* has taken up the issue of radiation from mobile towers as their agenda. The environmental activists firstly, aim to demand a public declaration of the recommendations made by the committee formed by the West Bengal government to understand the hazards related to mobile tower radiation. Considering the conjectures based on the recommendation was that, the radiation transmitted from the mobile towers has a close parallel to the incidence of cigarette industry and ‘Green House Gas’ effects on the warming of the planet. Currently, there is no specific law to deal with mobile tower installations and their ill effects, especially radiation. It neither falls under the Environment Act, 1986, nor the AIR Act, 1981. But WBPCB has published order, circulars at different point in time to counter the installations debate. So a specific law and a consequent act has to be demanded. Moreover, when the government of India acknowledges the rights of the service providers, the rights of the users should also be taken into account.

On one hand when the mobile phone practice is inlaid with modernity, on the other hand recurrently questions are asked, what is important in life? Modernity in lifestyle or a healthy, beautiful lifestyle? The mobile phones have gained prominence more as emotional objects than communicative devices. The clear line between ‘utility’ and ‘indispensability’ has to be drawn. The technology of mobile phones has many utilities in the present world. However, it shouldn’t be bound within the limits of ‘indispensability’. The ‘choice’ of what is important and what is not for us should not be decided by any profit seeking market economy but by us!

---

## Bibliography:

Abraham, Thomas. "Mobile Phones and Cancer: More Evidence Needed." *Economic & Political Weekly* 46.33 (2011): 17.

Dalela, Pankaj Kumar, et al. "Geo-intelligence based carbon footprint monitoring and prediction of suitable renewable energy technology system for mobile towers." *Advanced Networks and Telecommunications Systems (ANTS), 2014 IEEE International Conference on.* IEEE, 2014.

Kaushal, Mohit, Tanvir Singh, and Amit Kumar. "Effects of Mobile Tower Radiation & Case Studies from Different Countries Pertaining the Issue." *International Journal of Applied Engineering Research* 7.11 (2012): 1252-1255.

Sarkar, A. "Mobile Tower" *Manthan Samayiki*. (2012).

Sengupta, A. "Mobile Tower: Ek Choloman Bipod" *Aneek*. (2014).

## References:

Chopra, Rajesh. "Stop Mass Killings! Cell tower Radiation." *Live India Dot Com*. 2009. (Web. 16 Dec. 2014.) - <<http://www.liveindia.com/news/mobiletrowerradiation.html>>

Das, Sharmistha. "Towering Trouble". *The Telegraph*, 30 Oct 2013. (Web. 15 Mar 2015.) - <[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1131030/jsp/opinion/story\\_17510276.jsp#.Vj5rWNlrJdg](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1131030/jsp/opinion/story_17510276.jsp#.Vj5rWNlrJdg)>

Kumar, Girish. "Report on Cell Tower Radiation" *DOT Delhi*, December 2010. (Web. 02 Jan. 2015.) - <<https://www.ee.iitb.ac.in/~mwave/GK-cell-tower-rad-report-DOT-Dec2010.pdf>>

Lean, Geoffrey. "Mobile phone use 'raises children's risk of brain cancer fivefold'" *Independent, UK*, 23 October 2011. (Web 05 Jan 2015.) - <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/mobile-phone-use-raises-childrens-risk-of-brain-cancer-fivefold-937005.html>>

Majumder, Rishi. "Radiation City" *Tehelka*. Delhi, 5 June 2010. (Web. 06 Jan 2015.) - <<http://www.tehelka.com/2010/06/radiation-city/>>

Walker, John. "Review of some current knowledge of the effect on people's health of telephone base station mast radiation - the path towards a safer level." *Walker-Radiation Research Trust*, 2007. (Web 22 Feb 2015) - <[http://www.scram.uk.com/Docs/presentation\\_jwalker.pdf](http://www.scram.uk.com/Docs/presentation_jwalker.pdf)>

Wolf, Ronni, and Danny Wolf. "Increased incidence of cancer near a cell-phone transmitter station." *International Journal of Cancer* 1.2 (2004).

"Information Paper on Effects of Electromagnetic Field radiation from Mobile towers and Handsets." *Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)*, Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhawan Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, New Delhi, 30 July 2014. (Web. 05 Jan. 2015.) - <[http://www.auspi.in/emf/01\\_TRAI-Information-Paper-on-EMF\\_30.07.2014.pdf](http://www.auspi.in/emf/01_TRAI-Information-Paper-on-EMF_30.07.2014.pdf)>

Qualitative Interview with Shambhunath Ghosh on 08.04.2015.

Qualitative Interview with Anup Makhal on 11.04.2015.

Qualitative Interview with Kishalay Mitra on 11.04.2015.

---

# The Voice of the Subaltern against the Cacophony of Industrialization in Orissa

Upasana Roy Barman

*“Where will they put me to rest when I die? Perhaps you can ask the company to bury me under their chimney. It should be able to do this much as it has deceived us and pushed us to part with our Land”.*

*- An old Dongria woman.*

Introduction- The clattering sound of the iron gates of Vedanta Aluminium Limited marked the victory of the roaring voice of the subaltern power in the Lanjagarh district of Orissa. Power and resistance have a very interdependent understanding of its existence. Resistance is what eludes power, and power targets resistance as its adversary (1). Power can produce the very thing which comes to resisting it, but the moment it unleashes its mask it will provoke resistance by what it has produced. The struggle of the Dongria Kondh against the gigantic multimillion Vedanta Aluminum Limited was an act of power relation. As Foucault states- Power consists of actions which modify the actions of others. It treats subjects as free subjects- slavery is not a power relation where men are in chains (2), freedom acts as the condition for the exercise of power. In Vedanta Movement, the resistance of the Dongria Kondh was the idiom of free subjects which was concomitant against the very subjectification process of power.

The Politics of the Conflict- The struggle against the Vedanta Alumina Limited started when in October 2004 The Orissa Government signed an agreement with the Veedanta Alumina, a subsidiary of Sterlite Industries (India) Limited (SIL) to mine bauxite

---

deposit from the Niyamgiri Hill jointly with the Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) (3). In accordance with the memorandum signed on 7th June 2003 the SIL would set up an Alumina Complex, which includes a refinery plant with a capacity of 1MTPA (one million tonnes per annum), an open-pi, 3 MTPA bauxite mining plant at the top of the sacred Niyam Dongar Mountain with a captive power a capacity of 75 MW and Rs 4000 crore investment (4). The Niyamgiri is home to more than 8000 Dongria and Kutiya Kondh and other tribes for generations. The notice of the district administration stated that when the project materialized 12 villages with 60 families will be uprooted and 302 will lose their farmland (5). The Dongria Kondh protested against this plan because the mining will not only destroy the flora and fauna of the Niyamgiri Hill but it was also an attack towards their deity- Niyam Raja and their survival which was depended on the very fertility of the Forest. The anti- Vedanta protest began by the Dongria Kondh where in one incident a procession of around 350 people, including children and women from 6 villages were moving toward Lanjigarh police station, against the arrest of their leader. The muscle men of the company attacked the protester and they were beaten up by cricket bats and stumps (6).

On August 16, 2004 Vedanta submitted an application to the Forest Department of the MoEF for the reallocation of forest land. This was in direct contrast to the company's environmental clearance application for the alumina refinery, submitted on June 3, 2003 which stated that its forest land requirement was 'nil'. It also proclaimed that there were no reserve forests within a 10 km radius of the project site, which was contrary to the facts on record. Earlier, on March 24, 2004 the MoEF had informed Vedanta that the mining proposal was crucial to the refinery and therefore it would consider the environmental impacts of the two projects together. Six months later, on September 22, 2004 the ministry surprisingly reversed its decision and granted environment clearance for the construction of the

---

refinery, independent of the mining project (7). The tribal committee of Dongraï and Jhodia along with environmentalist and social activists filed a petition before Central Empowered Committee(CEC) of the Supreme Court indicating- 1- violation of environmental laws, forest conservation laws, 2- violation of 5th scheduled provision for protection of tribal rights, 3- negative effect of bauxite mining and alumina refinery and 4- imposing a project against the interest of the tribal's (Forest Right Act of 2006-emphasizes the issue of consent of the local and gram sabha as an important criteria for establishment of any project).

The CEC sends its fact finding team and based on their observation recommended the Supreme Court that the project hamper the ecology of Niyamgiri Hill. But it was a temporary reprieve because in August 2008 Sterlite, Vedanta Indian Subsidiary came back with a modified proposal and the project was given a green signal by the Supreme Court (8). October 20, 2008 witnessed hundreds of Dongria Kondh members dancing and singing along the streets of Bhubaneshwar, armed with traditional weapons. The huge procession marked their opposition against Vedanta, which had received the Supreme Court's permission to mine aluminum from Niyam Dongar. Reminiscent of earlier protests, on January 6, 2009 around fifty protestors mounted blockades and prevented the midnight entry of Vedanta workers into their land. The tribesmen stood against the imminent danger of bulldozers and faced off the harrowing threat of eviction. However, the tribe's biggest show of strength was when within 10 days, the Dongria Kondh gathered for two of their largest demonstrations. On January 17, 2009 up to 7000 demonstrators; including people from various tribal groups, women, farmers and day laborers, marched to the gates of the alumina refinery. Many protestors, carrying bows and arrows, destroyed the Vedanta branded sign boards spread across the Niyamgiri area. Subsequently, on January 27, 2009 more than ten thousand men,



---

women and children formed a 17 km long human chain around the Niyamgiri Mountains, preventing the Vedanta bulldozers from demolishing the mountain. The protesters carried placards bearing the slogans 'Vedanta, go back' and 'Stop mining in Niyamgiri'. October 5, 2009 marked the end of a week long march around the villages of Niyamgiri. The continuous protest puts the Government at stake and in order to resolve the crisis, it sets out a 4 member N. C Saxena Committee was formed by the Union Environment Ministry to assess the impact of the project on the tribes and natural habitat on June 30 2010 . The report of Saxena Committee stated that the project was in violation of the Environment Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act and the Forest Right Act 2006.

The decision of the team sent by Union Government came out on 21st August 2010 denying the permit for Bauxite Mining at Niyamgiri Hill. After denying the company Forest Clearance in 2010, Jairam Ramesh delivered a final blow by revoking Vedanta's Environment Clearance in July, 2011. The Supreme Court on April 18, 2013 rejected the appeal on the mining ban and decreed that the Dongria Kondh would have a decisive say in giving the go-ahead to Vedanta's mining project in relation to the Forest Right Act 2006. 12 Gram Sabhas (village councils) were chosen by the state government to make the crucial decision. In the three months after the Supreme Court ruling, amidst heavy police presence and persistent threats from Vedanta, 11 Gram Sabhas voted against the mining project and on August 19, 2013 the 12th and final Gram Sabha delivered a resounding 'No' (9). The decision of Ministry of Environment and Forest to close down the gigantic Vedanta Alumina Private Limited marked the triumph of the subaltern power and the ground for grass root democratic power.

The Symbiotic relationship with Niyamgiri-The triumph of the subaltern voice of Dongria Kondh in the Vedanta Movement got a boost because their claims reflected not only the violation of their

---

---

own right ( Forest Act 2006). But also echoed the symbiotic relationship between the Dongrai Kondh and the Niyamgiri Hill which in effect corroborate their rights over the pristine forest. Dongria Kondhs are one of the most traditional adivasi communities residing in the Niyamgiri Mountain Ranges spread across Rayagada and Kalhandi districts of Orissa. Dongria means residents of Hill and they consider themselves as descendants of of Niyam Raja. They worship the Niyamgiri Hill as – Niyam Raja- lord of law as a sole provider of life and sustenance They believe that the hill belongs to Niyam Raja penu, male deity represented by a sword and worshipped during Dussahera and Jura parah. The top of the hill is regarded as his seat and hence sacred to them (10). It is very interesting to note – that before a village is set up, they seek the guidance from earth goddess ‘Dharani Penu’- which is situated at the middle of the village. The popular belief is that if the grains are distributed in the morning, then Dharani Peru will give them permission to settle there (11). The tribes are depended on the Niyamgiri Hill not only for their livelihoods but also 40-50% of their income comes from selling of forest products like Amla, Myrobalans and Siali leaves. The Dongria Kondh knows more than 400 species of wild plant for their foods and medical properties. The taxonomist group which visited Niyamgiri reported in their preliminary report that around 7 plant species appearing to be rare/ endangered/ conservation dependent were found. According to them Niyamgiri flora is of ‘ great phyto- geographical importance’ and the REIA Report prepared by TARMS for SIIL stated that the fauna exhibit a well balanced ecosystem with a prey- predator relationship. In addition to that the Proctological Society of India during a survey found that Niyamgiri was among the four major spots of Orissa where medicinal plants were found in abundance and rich diversity (12).

One of the central issues that provided impetus to the movement and claims of Dongria Kondhs, was the huge disadvantages that Bauxite

---

---

Mining on the Niyamgiri Hills. The disadvantages that can be precisely stated are:-

- a. The Bauxite bauxite ore is covered by thick lateritic layer which acts as a source for groundwater ( around 30%) and are also the origin of streams and rivers. The bauxite-capped Niyamgiri hills, soak up the monsoon rain, giving rise to more than a hundred perennial streams and rivers, including the Vamshadhara river. These streams provide the water that is vital to the communities who live in the hills, and provide critical drinking and irrigation water for those in the plains, where drought and starvation have made national news (13). It mainly happens because in case of Bauxite Mining the lateritic zone is continuously removed to access the Bauxite ore below, thereby reducing the water retaining capacity of the soil. In fact the Fact finding team mentioned in their report- ‘...Any mining in this area is bound to destroy the biodiversity and affect the availability of water for local people. The question of pollution of Bansadhara river is also there” (14). S. M., the Dongria Kondh woman leader, said, “What will happen when they take away the bauxite from the top of the hill? We know that our water sources are dependent on the hill. Once you make holes in the hill and take away the bauxite, water storage will be affected. All water will run down the mountain instead of being stored. You have walked up to here, you have seen so many streams, you have taken baths in the streams – did you see any rain? So the water comes through all the year, regardless of the rain situation. If they mine, we are worried that this water will not be available.” (15)
- b. According to the Wildlife Institute of India in its 2006 study, as many as 1,21,337 trees will have to be cut if the mining lease is granted. Since the Kutia and Dongaria Kondh are heavily dependent on forest produce for their livelihood, this forest cover loss will cause a significant decline in their economic well-being.

---

Data collated from the DKDA (Dongria Kondh Development Agency, a government body) and the Forest Department shows that of the total Dongria population of the 7952, at least 1453 Dongria Kondh live in villages in and around the Forest Blocks of the proposed mining lease area.

Besides the Dongria and Kutia Kondh, the mining project is also going to affect the Dalit community of the Dom Scheduled Caste. The Dalits that the Committee met were landless; and earned their living by providing various services including trading in the horticultural produce grown by the Dongria Kondh. Since they are migrant and do not own land, so the disruption of Dongria agriculture will eventually affect their livelihood (16).

- c. The Mountain of Niyamgiri is protected under Section 18 of the Indian Wildlife Act and due to its rich wildlife population, it was proposed as a wildlife sanctuary by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1998. In 2004, the Orissa government declared the region an elephant reserve. The relentless mining activities will cause the numerous endangered species in the hills to abandon their homes. ( 17). The Hindu Business Line on August 2004 said that –“ a rich resource would be lost forever if the mines become operational (18).
- d. The United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples makes special reference to the unique spiritual relationship that Indigenous peoples, like the Dongria Kondh communities, have with their traditional lands. It has also ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957, which recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples to lands they traditionally occupy (19). The EIA report of 2002 and 2005 doesn't analyze the effect of the mining process on the religion, culture of the tribes. A Dongria Kondh man told Amnesty International: “Our language, the way we dress, songs, marriage rituals, worship of Niyam Raja, our livelihoods are all linked to

---

these Hills and the way we live here. We have seen what happens to other Adivasis when they are forced to leave their traditional lands, they lose everything” (20).

**Power, Knowledge, Resistance and Discourse** - Every social movement comes with a very definite Truth about the world they presume and the subject they are dealing with. In “Truth and Power” Foucault said- “Each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is the type of discourse which accept and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the mean by which each is sanctioned; the technique and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (21). According to Foucault Discourse refers to practices, statements which form the object of which we speak. Its structure, regulate what statement is possible to say and the conditions under which they are considered true or false, discourse is a form of power/ knowledge (22). Power is not only about domination, it is also about the shade of creativity which makes it a universal feature. Power creates subject, it creates the ritual of Truth, it induces a form of knowledge and produces Discourse (23). The medical practice of leeching was accepted in the eighteenth century as helpful despite the harmful effects that we recognize today because it was embedded in a network of ancient medical discourses that many accepted as “true.” Likewise, many medical practices commonly accepted today might have seemed like madness or even barbaric because they had no discursive support (24).

The Vedanta Movement was not only a subject of the Resistance but also an exposition towards the study of a new Discourse of a Subaltern Class. Power exercised through the Dominant Discourse uses disciplinary technique to create rational, responsible and productive subjects following the rules and contour of the Dominant Discourse. The disciplining act of the Dominant Discourse seeks to

---

reassure us a Truth of our identity (molded by the contour of Dominant Discourse) while Resistance seeks to bring out the differences of our claims and identity that exists within the society. Where there is Power there is Resistance (25).

The development of an alternative Discourse against the Dominant Discourse in the Vedanta Movement was seen in the Meaning of Space that holds for both. The term Space in West is a common symbol of freedom. Space lies open; it suggests the future and invites action. The Vedanta Resource interpreted the idea of Space in this fashion. They used a particular choice of words, as they describe hills as a 'vast bank' containing 'reserve' of bauxite that are 'rich' since they have 'accumulated over time'. For them Niyamgiri was an endless sea of possibilities, a bank waiting to be invested. Financial Growth demands expansion on a geographical scale. Tuan claims that the striving to attain more space is closely connected to a sort of power manifestation which is often performed in an aggressive way. This implies for instance, the exploitation and colonization of land.

While on the other hand the idea of Space differed completely for the Dongria and Kutia Kondhs. Forest was seen as a clustered environment, an antithesis to open space. In Amnesty International Report, on Dongria an elderly Women said –“ We are poor, but we get everything we need from the Hills, it gives us everything but salt”. Tuan points out that – “when people work together for a common cause, one man does not deprive the other of space”. However “conflicting activities generate a sense of crowding”. A Dongrai Man said- “...Those wanting to mine here will slowly take over all this”. As Tuan explains that in this case, the whole issues revolves around a struggle of power in the clash of the different meaning of Space. It is a struggle where one meaning of Space is trying to conquer over another, thereby shaping the Landscape for the future. Capitalism in today world is venturing out with the idea of Creative Destruction whereby the a new lifestyle, a set of cultural values are established for

---

new market and consumers at the stake of old cultural values and social structure. This anomaly is creating the conflict between Capitalism and Indigenous Cultural Identity. As Esteva said today is “robbing peoples of different culture of opportunity to define the forms of their life” (26).

Conclusion- This conflicting Truth about the understanding of Space in reference to Niyamgiri mirrors the two Discourses in the Vedanta Movement. Power is everywhere, it is relational and something that circulates within and through the Discourse. Each subject is produced within the discourse and exists within the knowledge produce by the Discourse. Knowledge is created by the Power of Discourse and this understanding of Space is also a Truth catered by the Discourse of Subaltern Class on one hand and the Industrial Group on the other hand. As Thucydies said- “War one doesn’t only defend oneself against a superior power when one is attacked; one takes measures in advance to prevent the attack from materializing”- Such measures are justified as form of Resistance and nevertheless an example of an exercise of Power, albeit by a nominally Subordinate Group (27).

The roaring voice of the Dongria Kondh calling for their rights, claims and their symbiotic relationship with their Niyam Raja was a Truth , shaped by the Power their Discourse. This Subaltern Discourse not only stood against the Dominant Discourse as an alternative to the understanding of Development. But also Resisted and unmasked the disciplinary act of Power to stamp a truth upon the norms and standard that defines our identities in order to resolve the paradox of Differences in favor of a True Indentity (28).

*Power relation are always two way’ that is to say however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of Power over the Other*

*- Anthony Gidden*

---

---

## End Notes

Brent Pickett.L. , Foucault and the Politics of Resistance, Polity, Volume 28, Number 4 (Summer, 1996), Palgrave Macmillan Journals, pp- 445-466

Michel Foucault. , The Subjects and Power, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982), The University of Chicago Press, pp- 777-795

Geetanjoy Sahu, Mining in the Niyamgiri Hills and Tribal Rights, EPW Commentary.

Kartik C Dash and Kishor C Samal, New Mega Project in Orissa: Protest by potential displaced Persons, Social Change: December 2008 Volume 38 Number 4, pp- 627-644

Mrutujanaya Sahu, Industrialization, Marginalisation and contemporary Peoples's Movement in Odessa, South Asian Journal of Socio- Political Studies (SAJOSPS), Volume 13 Number 1 (July- December 2012), pp- 49-59

Kartik C Dash and Kishor C Samal, New Mega Project in Orissa: Protest by potential displaced Persons, Social Change: December 2008 Volume 38 Number 4, pp- 627-644

<http://www.ritimo.org/article5471.html>- accessed on 9.06.2015

Mrutujanaya Sahu, Industrialization, Marginalisation and contemporary Peoples's Movement in Odessa, South Asian Journal of Socio- Political Studies (SAJOSPS), Volume 13 Number 1 (July- December 2012), pp- 49-59

<http://www.ritimo.org/article5471.html>- accessed on 9.06.2015

<http://www.cseindia.org/userfiles/Report%20on%20Niyamgiri.pdf>

Mamata Dash, Coalition For Environment and Development Sustainable Cultures- Culture of Sustainability, Conspiracy by the State Destruction of Culture and Livelihoods in Orissa, Background Paper 13, December 2008

<http://www.cseindia.org/userfiles/Report%20on%20Niyamgiri.pdf>

<http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/dongria> - accessed on 10.06.2015

<http://www.cseindia.org/userfiles/Report%20on%20Niyamgiri.pdf>

[http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/dont\\_mine\\_us\\_out\\_of\\_existence.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/dont_mine_us_out_of_existence.pdf) accessed on 10.06.2015

REPORT OF THE FOUR MEMBER COMMITTEE FOR INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY THE ORISSA MINING COMPANY FOR BAUXITE MINING IN NIYAMGIRI, August 16 .2010

<http://www.ritimo.org/article5471.html> accessed on 11.06.2015

<http://www.cseindia.org/userfiles/Report%20on%20Niyamgiri.pdf>

<http://www.ritimo.org/article5471.htm> accessed on 11.06.2015

[http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/dont\\_mine\\_us\\_out\\_of\\_existence.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/dont_mine_us_out_of_existence.pdf)

Pradip Basu, Postmodernism Marxism Postcolonialism, Avenel Press, ISBN- 81-902529-6-0

Raymond Cadwell, Agency and Change: Re- evaluating Foucault Legacy, Volume 1496:000-000, Birbeck College, University of London, London UK, ISSN- 1350-5084

Pradip Basu, Postmodernism Marxism Postcolonialism, Avenel Press, ISBN 81-902529-6-0

---



---

Clayton Wisnant, Foucault and Discourse, A Handout for HIS 389

Michael Foucault, The Subject and Power

Tove Stenius, Conflicts over Place Between Indigenous Communities and Modern Capitalism, The Case of Niyamgiri Orissa, Lunds University

Roger Deacon, Strategies of Governance Michael Foucault on Power, A Journal of Social and Political Theory, Number 92, Justice, Equality and Differences 9 December 1998), Berghahn Books, pp- 113-148

Peter Digeser, The Fourth Face of Power, The Journal of Politics, Volume 54, No 4 (November 1992), Cambridge University Press, pp- 977-1007

### **Bibliography**

Basu, Pradip, Postmodernism, Marxism, Post colonialism, Avenel Press, ISBN- 81-90252960

Barbalet, J.M, Power and Resistance, The British Journal of Sociology, Volume 36 Number 4 (December 1985), Wiley, pp- 531-548

Brent Pickett.L. , Foucault and the Politics of Resistance, Polity, Volume 28, Number 4 (Summer, 1996), Palgrave Macmillan Journals, pp- 445-466

Bone- Diaz Rainer, Andrea D Buhmann, Encarnacion Gutierrez Rodriguez, werner Schneider, Gavin Kendall and Francisco Tirado, The Field of Foucaultian Discourse Analysis Structures, Development and Perspectives, Historical Social Research, Volume 33, Number 1 (123), Discourse Analysis in Social Science, pp- 7-28

Cadwell Raymond, Agency and Change: Re-evaluating Foucault Legacy, Volume 14(6):000-000, Birbeck College, University of London, ISSN- 1350-5084

Dash C Kartick and Kishor C Samal, New Mega Project in Orissa: Protest by potential displaced Persons, Social Change: December 2008 Volume 38 Number 4, pp- 627-644

Dash, Mamata, Coalition For Environment and Development Sustainable Cultures- Culture of Sustainability, Conspiracy by the State Destruction of Culture and Livelihoods in Orissa, Background Paper 13, December 2008

Deacon Roger , Strategies of Governance Michael Foucault on Power, A Journal of Social and Political Theory, Number 92, Justice, Equality and Differences ( December 1998), pp- 113-148

Digeser Peter, The Fourth Face of Power, The Journal of Politics, Volume 54, No 4 (November 1992), Cambridge University Press, pp- 977-1007

Eder, Klaus, "The New Social Movement: Moral Crusader, Political Pressure Groups or Social Movements? Social Research Volume 52, Number 4 Social Movement (Winter 1985), pp- 869-890

Escobar Arturo, Imagining a Post- Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movement

Escobar Arturo, Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature? Biodiversity, Conservation and the Political Ecology of Social Movement, Journal of Political Ecology, Volume 5, 1998

Foucault, Michael, The Subject and Power. In Michael Foucault: Beyond Structuralism

---

---

and Hermeneutics, 2d ed eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Ricoeur. Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1983

Foucault Michael, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interview and Other Writing 1972-1977*. Ed Colin Gordon, trans, Leo Marshall, John Merpham and Kate Soper, New York: Pantheon- 1980

Foucault , Michael, *Truth and Power, Selected Interview and Other Writing 1972-1977*. Ed Colin Gordon, trans, Leo Marshall, John Merpham and Kate Soper, New York: Pantheon- 1980

Foucault Michael, *The Foucault Reader*. Ed Paul Rainbow. New York : Pantheon

Fraser, Nancy, *Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions*, *Praxis International* 1:272-87,1981

Haugaard Mark, Stewart R Clegg, *Power and Politics, Volume III*, Sage Publication, ISBN 978-0-85702-568-5

Hook Derek, *The Disorder of Discourse, A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, Number 97, *Globalization and the Demise of the Nation State* (June 2001), pp- 41-68

Karlberg Michael, *The Power of Discourse and the Discourse of power: Pursuing Peace Through Discourse Intervention*

Keenan Tom, *The Paradox of Knowledge and Power; Reading Foucault on a Bias*, *Political Theory* 15:5-37, 1987

Miler Seumas, *Foucault on Discourse and Power, A journal of Social and Political Theory*, Number 76, *The Meaning of 1989* (October 1990), pp- 115-125

Philip Mark, *Foucault on Power: A problem in Radical Translation*, *Political Theory* 11:29-52, 1983

Sahu Geetanjoy, *Mining in the Niyamgiri Hills and Tribal Rights*, EPW ,Commentary

Stenius Tove, *Conflict over Place Between Indigenous Communities and Modern Capitalism, The Case of Niyamgiri Hills*, Orissa, Lunds Universitet

Walzer, Michael, *The Politics of Michael Foucault, Foucault: A critical reader*. Ed David Couzens Hoy. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986

Warhurst Alyson and Ligia Noronha, *Environmental Policy in Mining, Corporate Strategy and Planning for Closure*, Lewis Publisher, ISBN- 1-56670-365-4

### **Web links**

<http://www.ritimo.org/article5471.html>- accessed on 9.06.2015

<http://www.cseindia.org/userfiles/Report%20on%20Niyamgiri.pdf>

<http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/dongria>-accessed on 10.06.2015

[http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/dont\\_mine\\_us\\_out\\_of\\_existence.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/dont_mine_us_out_of_existence.pdf) accessed on 10.06.2015

REPORT OF THE FOUR MEMBER COMMITTEE FOR INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY THE ORISSA MINING COMPANY FOR BAUXITE MINING IN NIYAMGIRI, August 16 .2010

---

# Ecology and Administration: Revisiting the Prismatic Model of Fred Riggs

Souradeep Sen

Administration and its environment influence each other to a great extent. The understanding of the dynamics of this process is imperative. This, in simple terms, is the very kernel of the ecological approach to public administration. The ecological approach to the study of administration was initiated by John Gaus and Robert Dahl in 1947. It was then followed by Roscoe Martin in 1952 and was greatly popularised by Fred W. Riggs since 1962. Riggs emerged as its greatest exponent in the domains of Comparative Public Administration and Development Administration. In the 1920s, Gaus drew upon the works of sociologists concerned with the interdependence of human life and its environment. The sociologists, in turn were inspired by the natural sciences which sought to explain how plants and animals adapt to their environments. According to Gaus, such an approach,

“builds... from the ground up; from the elements of a place –soils, climate, location, for example –to the people who live there –their numbers and ages and knowledge, and the ways of physical and social technology by which from the place and in relationship with one another, they get their living.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Ferrel Heady, Gaus was primarily concerned with identifying key ecological factors for an understanding of contemporary American public administration and explored a host of factors on which social understanding depends heavily: people, region, physical & social technologies, aspirations and ideas, catastrophe and personality.<sup>2</sup> This in sum, is the starting point of the ecological approach to public administration and this understanding

---

has undergone various modifications and alterations to suit it to changing circumstances. If Gaus was applying the ecological approach to understand public administration in early twentieth century America, Riggs and his followers, applied a modified version of it to gauge the levels of development and administration in the so-called ‘developing’ political systems during the second half of that century.

The present paper would first endeavour to account for the roots of the *ecological* approach to administration within the tradition of public administration itself; followed by an explanation of what it actually stands for, and the significance of that approach in developing the science of administration, especially with reference to the concept of bureaucracy. This would be followed by an analysis of Fred Riggs’ treatment of the ecology of administration, and his contributions to the development of an ecological model of public administration. Finally, the focus would be on the recent criticisms levied against the Riggsian model, as certain scholars believe that if we are not ready to abjure Riggs, we can at least strive to make his theories more scientific and technically suitable to the twenty-first century climate.

### **The Advent of Ecological Understanding in Public Administration**

The ecological approach to public administration was greatly popularised by the Comparative Administration Movement and the theory of development administration, which it engendered. The period 1948-1970 provides the perfect temporal reference point for comparative public administration (CPA). It was during this period that public administration faced a crisis of identity, owing to the rejection of the two defining pillars of early administrative theory, viz. the politics-administration dichotomy and the principles approach.<sup>3</sup> Evidently, the discipline was in search of an alternative

---

and this was provided by administrative sciences. The 1950s was a period of multi-focal conceptualizations and the emphasis of administrative writings resonated the prominent foci that were evolved in the 1940s, viz. behavioural, comparative, systemic, decisional, ecological and Weberian. There was a re-assertion of the relationship between political science and public administration and Fred W. Riggs opened up new vistas for cross-cultural administrative research during this period. The 1960s also saw the popularization of development administration by Weidner and Riggs, albeit the fact that George Grant actually coined the term in the mid-1950s.

Comparison has long since been acknowledged as the “very essence of scientific method”<sup>4</sup> in political science in general and public administration in particular. This scientific spur had gone into the making of CPA during the middle of the 20th century and a sustained effort to undertake comparative analysis in public administration has occurred since the end of the Second World War. The timing and vigour of this movement resulted from a combination of factors: the rather obvious need for this extension of range in public administration as a discipline; the large number of scholars and practitioners of administration to experience with administration abroad during wartime, post-war occupation and subsequent technical assistance assignments; the stimulation of the largely contemporary ‘revisionist’ movement in comparative politics; and the remarkable expansion of opportunities during the 1950s and 1960s for those interested in devoting themselves to research on problems of comparative public administration.<sup>5</sup>

The most tangible product of these early endeavours was an output of published writings on CPA which soon reached voluminous proportions and led, despite the short span of time, to several attempts to review and analyse the literature produced by early 1960s. F. Heady has divided this literature into: 1) modified traditional, 2) development-oriented, 3) general system model-building and 4) middle-range theory formulation.<sup>6</sup> Fred W. Riggs was

---

particularly interested in the general system approach. Drawing essentially upon concepts of structural-functional analysis developed by Parsons, Levy and Sutton, Riggs formulated and re-formulated a cluster of 'ideal-types' of societies, designed to contribute to a better understanding of actual societies, particularly those undergoing rapid social, economic, political and administrative change. This work culminated in the publication of *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society* by Riggs, which is the most notable single contribution in CPA.<sup>7</sup> Riggs identified three trends which continued into this period of expansion in his 1962 essay, *Trends in the Comparative Study of Public Administration*. Firstly, there was a shift from normative to empirical approaches. Secondly, there was a movement from what Riggs called 'ideographic' toward 'nomothetic' approaches; essentially this distinguished between studies concentrating on unique cases and those seeking generalizations. Model-building, particularly of the general system type, showed this nomothetic inclination. Thirdly, there was a shift from a predominantly non-ecological to an ecological basis for comparative studies. Riggs not only encouraged these trends but also went on record that his personal preference would be "to consider as 'truly' comparative only those studies that are empirical, nomothetic, and ecological."<sup>8</sup>

During 1960s, development administration became a term almost synonymous with comparative administration. There was a desire to assist developing countries to meet their overwhelming problems. From a scholarly point of view, strong arguments were made in favour of the benefits to comparative studies of a developmental focus. Since the beginning of the comparative administration movement, development administration had been a subject of perennial controversy, and has presented issues that seem to be intractable to resolution. The most important controversy had been regarding defining it. Grant was against setting any rigid definition of the sub-discipline, as he thought development to be a relative term

---

with the implication that no country was fully developed at any point of time. In tune with the same logic, development administration was simply “the administration of policies, programs, and projects to serve development purposes.”<sup>9</sup> Grant’s exhortations were almost unanimously agreed upon and later scholars followed his theses in suggesting that the label development administration could best be applied to designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes leading to socio-economic change.<sup>10</sup> In the 1970s, Riggs widened this understanding in his introduction to *Frontiers of Development Administration*. He found two foci of attention –the ‘administration of development’ and the ‘development of administration’. In the first sense, development administration referred “to the administration of development programs, to the methods used by large scale organizations...to implement policies and plans designed to meet their developmental objectives.”<sup>11</sup> The second meaning involved the strengthening of administrative capabilities, both as means to enhance the prospects for success in carrying out current development programs, and as a by-product of prior programs, such as in education.<sup>12</sup>

Ramesh K. Arora identified that the construct of bureaucracy drawn from the work of Weber is the single most dominant conceptual framework in the study of comparative administration and development administration.<sup>13</sup> The ecological approach is very basic to development administration, as we gather from the works of Riggs. Every administrative system –big or small, public or private, national or regional- has an environment, which is both internal and external to that system. For efficiency of an administrative system, it must recognize environmental variables, which are essentially socio-economic and politico-cultural in nature. The administrative system affects and is in turn affected by these variables. If ecological considerations were helpful in understanding one’s own administrative system, they would undoubtedly be even more important in a comparative study, which was recognized by Riggs

---

and his contemporaries.<sup>14</sup> R. K. Arora emphasized that cross-cultural administrative analysis,

“...should focus upon the interaction between an administrative system and its external environment, and also study the dynamics of socio-administrative change in the context of such interaction.”<sup>15</sup>

According to Arora, it is more worth-while to analyse socio-environmental impacts on the administrative system, rather than the reciprocal treatment of bureaucracy’s influence on the environment. Arora urged for a more balanced interactional analysis.<sup>16</sup>

Development administration asserts that a systematic effort must be made to relate public administration to its environment, insofar as the science of ecology is concerned with the mutual relations between organisms and their environment. The analogy is at the most suggestive, as social institutions are not living organisms; but, the point is that political and administrative institutions, such as bureaucracies can be better be understood, if the surrounding conditions, influences and forces that modify and affect them can be identified and ranked (as per their relative importance), and if the reciprocal impact of these institutions on their environment could also be explored.<sup>17</sup> According to Heady, the environment of bureaucracy may be visualised as,

“...a series of concentric circles, with bureaucracy at its center. The smallest circle generally has the most decisive influence, and the larger circles represent a descending order of importance as far as the bureaucracy is concerned. We may view the largest circle as representing all of society or the general social system. The next circle represents the economic system or the economic aspects of the social system. The inner circle is the political system; it encloses the administrative subsystem and the bureaucracy as one of its elements.”<sup>18</sup>



---

If the administrative subsystem or bureaucracy lies at the core of every modern society, it is nevertheless, an integral part of the environment as a whole and cannot exist independent of it. The environment of administration, comprising the general social system, subsumes the economic and political systems, in the same way as the bureaucracy is subsumed by the political. So, any analysis of administration cannot be complete without referring to its larger, environmental setup. This, briefly, is the basic understanding of the relationship between administration and its environment forwarded by CPA and development administration. Against this backdrop we can now proceed to analyse Riggs' understanding of ecology, and his contributions to the ecological approach to administration.

### **Riggs' Ecology of Public Administration**

In his *The Ecology of Public Administration* (1961), Riggs explored from a comparative perspective, the interaction between public administration and the environment in which it develops. In spite of following the tradition of Gaus, Dahl and Martin, Riggs proffered a very unique and optimistic understanding of the ecology of administration, aimed at empowering the 'developing', postcolonial nations to administer their respective societies. It was understood in the 1960s, that the market-driven assumptions and business-like models forwarded by New Public Management (NPM) were hardly compatible with the ground realities of the Third World countries. The alternative state-centric model of public management, provided by development administration, albeit coming under challenge by NPM could establish its theoretical superiority and contextual relevance, largely due to the efforts of Riggs. Riggs not only devoted his entire life's work to exploring how the administrative systems in developing societies are conditioned by their political, cultural and economic contexts, but also showed why the Western models are relatively irrelevant and dysfunctional in such 'developing' contexts.<sup>19</sup>

---

During the 1960s and 1970s, development administration was being popularised –as an applied part of CPA- largely due to the Comparative Administration Group’s penchant for understanding administrative problems in developing countries; also because it was the agenda set by the Ford Foundation –the CAG’s funding agency- to improve administration for economic prosperity in these countries. Riggs, was the chairman of the CAG during this time and emphasized that the study of Third World administration (or development administration) became the central concern for and synonymous with CPA. Throughout the following decades, a huge volume of literature was produced to articulate, identify and prescribe development administration oriented remedies for the Third World’s social ills. As most of the literature tended to be normative and Universalist in orientation, largely culled up within a non-ecological framework, Riggs was the first scholar to reject it, highlighting their potentially inappropriate and dysfunctional repercussions. Instead, Riggs devoted much of his work to configuring an ecological approach in order to explain the actual features of administration in developing countries conditioned by their own societal contexts; and to articulating nomothetic models of such administration in a new lexis created especially to explain the unique administrative scenarios in these countries.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to decipher Riggs’ understanding of ecology, especially as he is at times almost impossible to understand and often creates new words to suit his purpose. Almost all his written works suffer from the same handicap, as some authors point out that Riggs’ models could not be properly implemented as probably most practitioners of administration could not understand what he actually meant!<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, an attempt can be made to succinctly explain what Riggs means by ecology. For Riggs, the ‘environment’ of anything differs qualitatively from whatever is ‘enviromed’; and the relation between any environment and its enviromed system may be discussed by using the word ‘ecology’. This word can also be applied

---

to discuss the interrelation between authoritative decision-making systems and their environments. Terms such as ‘decision-making ecology’ or ‘politico-administrative ecology’ could precisely convey such an interrelation. In analysing the administrative system from an ecological point of view, Riggs followed the ‘structural-functional’ approach, which envisages that in every society certain fundamental functions must be carried out by various structures, with the application of certain specified methods. For Riggs, such functional requisites also apply to an administrative sub-system in which various structures carry out an array of functions in a specified manner. Riggs’ ecological approach is predicated on the very characteristics of ecology and takes into consideration the influence of recent developments in social science methodology, experience from technological aid to foreign developing countries, and the influence of social systems theory.<sup>22</sup>

For Riggs, ecology and interdependence are two parameters of administrative performance in the Third World. And while analysing ecology, it is imperative to distinguish between *environmental administration* and the *ecology of administration*. In one of his articles, Riggs clearly explains his idea of the ecology of administration:

“By the “ecology of administration” we may refer to ways in which the environment conditions the politico-administrative process. Let me say immediately that to “condition” is not to “determine”. The environment of anything sets parameters for whatever it environs, and parameters must be viewed as both constraints that limit what can be done and concurrently, as resources that may be used by decision makers. When making choices it is important to know what cannot be done as it is to see the alternative course of action that are, indeed, feasible. Not to recognize the constraints imposed by one’s environment is to risk attempting the impossible and, hence, to court frustration and defeat.”<sup>23</sup>

---

According to Riggs, although the environment is at a given moment a constant, but in the long run, it becomes a variable, insofar as decision-makers are aware of this fact and take into cognizance not only the existing environmental condition, but also the factor of environmental change. Inversely, the question of how environmental transformations (which are occurring by themselves) may be modified should also be answered. Riggs opines that considerations about the impact of a changing environment on politico-administrative systems invariably lead to considerations about how decision-makers can affect their environment, leading to 'environmental administration'.<sup>24</sup> As the complexities and urgencies of environmental issues increase, the need for decision-making systems (capable of administering and formulating policies) become apparent. Herein, the bureaucracy comes into focus and it is invariably thought that public bureaucracies obstruct the proper execution of environmental policies, not only in the industrialized countries, but also in the Third World. For Riggs, this problem could be addressed, without resorting to any form of nihilism, and without increasing the size of bureaucracy or tinkering with the governmental machinery. Riggs is against any form of administrative 'nihilism', opining that if we look at the environment simply as a set of constraints, we may soon resort to pessimism. We will only see how the lack of resources hampers the capacity of governments to implement their present policies. Riggs ominously points out that,

“As the burden placed on government increase and as bureaucracies expand, all too often the quality of administration declines while corruption, time-serving, nepotism, underemployment, and various bureau-pathologies increase.”<sup>25</sup>

Instead of dwelling on administrative nihilism, Riggs asserts that our outlook will become more positive if we look at the resource side of our environmental parameters. The focus would then be on choices available to policy-makers and leaders in developing countries

---

---

within the limits imposed by their respective systems. It is unrealistic to think only of constraints when our environment provides myriad opportunities to all the countries of the world. By contrast, if we think of the alternatives that are viable and the choices that can be made, then a more helpful perspective appears. Riggs, further opines that,

“The key question becomes how to make the best possible use of available resources and subsequently to evaluate... to appreciate the benefits of appropriate choices –i.e., the decisions that do need improve one’s condition in life and one’s administrative capabilities. This is the central import of an ecological approach to administrative development: the selection among feasible alternatives of those best calculated to serve one’s purposes.”<sup>26</sup>

Equipped with such an understanding of the ecology of administration, Riggs goes on to explain the possible occurrence of ecological relationships between public administration and other factors, with the help of certain models. For Riggs, ecological public administration can not only provide a solid basis of research, but can explain and predict public administrative behaviour as well. It is not only a tool for uncovering systemic ailments, but can also address and correct them.<sup>27</sup>

Following Waldo’s assertion that structural-functional analysis might provide some guidance in the construction of “a model of what an administrative system is like as a general type”<sup>28</sup>, Riggs –in 1956– came out with his bipolar analytical framework known as the *agraria-industria* model, which highlighted the contextual distinction of public administration between the traditional agrarian societies and modern industrial countries. While the *agraria* is characterised by self-contained, agriculture-based economic systems, family-based organizations, divine authority source and communalistic values; the *industria* has independent market economy, achievement-oriented organization, secular authority, individualistic values, etc. given such variations, the administrative

---

system of *agraria* is marked by politics-administration fusion, lack of specialization and ritualistic orientation. But in *industria*, it is based on politics-administration division, specialization, impersonal human relations and functional action. Riggs, while emphasizing the importance of contextual determinants of *agraria-industria*, he also developed –in 1957- an intermediate model called *transitia*, representing transforming societies, possessing the characteristics of both *agraria* and *industria*.<sup>29</sup>

However, as these ideal-types were inadequate to explain the real nature of society and administration in the postcolonial, developing nations, Riggs was in search of a more technically sound model. He came up with a new analytical construct –known as the fused-prismatic-diffracted model- to explain such transitional states. While conducting field-work in Thailand and Philippines during the late 1950s, Riggs articulated the ‘prismatic’ model of society based on the metaphor of a prism (whereby fused white light passing through a prism, becomes diffracted into separate colours). Here, the fused light signifies the fused (single) structure of traditional society performing all necessary functions. The diffracted colours represent the specialized or differentiated structures of modern society, created especially to carry out separate functions; and the condition within the prism –or the transition between fused & diffracted stages- represents the condition in developing countries, which Riggs marks as ‘prismatic societies’.<sup>30</sup> In explaining the nature of administration in such ‘prismatic’ societies, Riggs extensively uses the ecological approach to explore their non-administrative realms of society, politics, economy and culture.<sup>31</sup>

Following the ecological approach, Riggs conclude that prismatic societies are characterized by: a) formalism or the gap between theory and practice; b) functional overlaps, where similar functions are performed by different institutions.<sup>32</sup> These features are reflected in the prevalence of: distrust among communities or *polycommunalism*; the *bazaar-canteen* model of economy (caused

---

by the influence of social status, bargaining capacity and official position on economic behaviour); and *polynormatism* in decision-making process (representing the use of both rational & non-rational criteria).<sup>33</sup> These ecological factors, for Riggs, play a crucial role in shaping the nature of development administration, which he proffers as the *sala* model administration characterised by the coexistence of universal official norms and respect for traditions, reflected in the influence of family and community on official decisions, prevalence of both ascriptive and achievement criteria leading to the ‘attainment’ norms in public offices.<sup>34</sup> Although Riggs refined this prismatic model to make the understanding of development administration more rigorous (based on an appreciation of the unique ecological and contextual forces of the Third World), his fused-prismatic-diffracted model soon came under severe criticisms from different quarters of administrative experts.

### **Indictments against Riggs’ Model and Further Discussion**

Some major detractors of Riggs, such as La Palombara and others indict his ideas as too deductive and theoretical, far removed from empiricism; too static about the influence of external social forces, too indifferent towards social change and too over-simplified and based on few case studies.<sup>35</sup> It is indeed true, that like any theoretical work, Riggs’ models also have limitations which could be summed up in the following points. First, some followers of Riggs believe that the prismatic model could replace empirical studies in administration –which has little or no value-considerations attached to it. But, it must be understood that when scholars attach more emphasis on a model of administration rather than on the basis of broader empirical research, the results could be disastrous for any social research. Second, Riggs’ theory of prismatic society is indeed too broad and abstract. Some scholars have tended to denounce such middle-range theories, opting instead for thorough empirical investigations. Third, critics argue that while the prismatic model is deductive in nature,

---

there is little empirical evidence to support it. Moreover, Riggs often ignores certain variables in some cases, only to overemphasize them in others. Fourth, the Riggsian model profoundly ignores the ultimate goal of public administration, in its attempt to build a value-free science. Riggs' theory is predicated on a great many logical speculations and assumptions. Although the analytical pattern of the prismatic model is grounded on the structural functional approach, Riggs gives undue emphasis to societal factors. This prevents alternative explanations of phenomena including the psychological and cognitive aspects of a prismatic administrative system. In the name of ecology, Riggs overemphasizes the organic and unified nature of social systems. Fifth, like all constructional theorists, Riggs too had fallen prey to causal inferential errors. Riggs admits that his model is suitable only for examining the occurrences of social transformation; but, in real society, the independent variables and dependent variables are complex and causality is very difficult to establish. Sixth, Riggs uses too many novel terminologies and jargons, which make his theories unduly difficult to understand. He often takes refuge under non-existent words to explain his concepts; words which has no application whatsoever to other models. Seventh, from the structural perspective, the model is awkwardly divided into three sections, which makes it cumbersome and reflects its formal limitations. It must be recognized that causes of social transformation are latent, unstable and indefinite; hardly conforming to the logic prescribed by Riggs. Knowing this, if one insists on using the prismatic model for analytical purposes, the results might not be relevant to facts. Last, some scholars feel that Riggs' model presents a very pessimistic understanding of transitional societies. They surmise that Riggs might have been sceptical about the success of modernization projects in developing regions. They justify such indictments by proving that Riggs views the transitional, non-Western societies from the epistemological perspective of the West.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Riggs, in spite of his ecological approach, was not free from ethnocentrism, which was characteristic of the non-ecological

---



---

scholars. It is not only inappropriate to apply Western standards to non-Western societies, but it is highly retrograde and dangerous.

In spite of such shortcomings –which might have been uninformed, based on a misunderstanding of Riggs’s model<sup>37</sup> Riggs is indispensable for the study of public administration, and especially development administration, as his prismatic model still holds certain strengths, which could not be diminished despite huge onslaughts against it. As mentioned earlier, public administration in developing countries has gone through serious reforms based on the market-driven principles of NPM, which were largely ideographic, reductionist and non-ecological. The drawbacks of such models were unravelled by Riggs, who hankered for ecological or contextual diversity. The nomothetic approach of Riggs can provide valuable lessons in comparing, critically understanding and systematically generalizing public sector management and reforms. Moreover, the contemporary market-driven and Universalist reform models which are being thrust upon developing countries in the name of ‘structural adjustments’ are extremely detrimental for the economies of such weaker countries and the message inherent in Riggs’ ecological approach could be taken into account in this respect. Moreover, the practice of imitating the pro-market models of the developed countries by developing countries was something Riggs was always staunchly opposed to. He emphasized the importance of building the nationally or domestically suitable models of administration in developing countries based on their own contexts and ecological needs. Finally, unlike advanced industrial nations where major societal aspects enjoy a relative autonomy to each other, such domains are deeply interconnected in developing societies, which requires a multi-dimensional approach and inter-disciplinary approach to understand the embedded relationship between politics and society. Following Riggs in this respect would be highly profitable.<sup>38</sup>

---

Thus, Riggs' model, like any other in social sciences bears both strengths and weaknesses. And as one author has very astutely pointed out, that to take away Riggs from public administration would make the discipline barren and uninteresting, in the same way that to take Weber away from sociology would make it unbearable. Thus, we can at the most indict the theories of such greats and not make an attempt to abjure them to the dustbin of intellectual rubbish! In the same way, this work would end by suggesting ways in which the present generation of administrative scholars could build upon Riggs' model and make it suitable to the myriad needs of the developing countries in this era. First, in using the ecological model of Riggs, due emphasis must be given not only to the assertion that the environment can determine administrative behaviour, but also acknowledge the influence individuals have on the environment. Second, although the ecological approach attempts to explain the transformation process within the functioning of a particular environment, it unfortunately ignores the ultimate concern of public administration, viz. the evaluation of policies and the realization of administrative goals. Thus, rather than pointing out behavioural limitations, the ecological approach should instead emphasize strengths in problem-solving. Finally, ecological models are largely predicated on intuitive and a priori assumptions which make them inefficient and cumbersome, especially in the dearth of empirical knowledge. Thus, an ecological model of administration could employ statistical analyses and other quantitative research methodologies to study interrelated ecological factors that are deeply rooted in empirical experience.<sup>39</sup>

**Notes:**

1. John M. Gaus, *Reflections on Public Administration*, Alabama, University of Alabama Press, 1947, pp. 8-9
2. Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective*, New York, Marcel Dekker, Inc., 2001, p. 86

- 
3. Pardeep Sahni and Etakula Vayunandan, *Administrative Theory*, New Delhi, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2010, p. 86
  4. Marleen Brans, "Comparative Public Administration: From General Theory to General Framework", B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (ed.), *Handbook of Public Administration*, London, Sage Publications, 2003, p. 424.
  5. F. Heady, op. cit., pp. 13-14
  6. ibid. p. 14
  7. ibid. p. 16
  8. ibid.
  9. George Grant, *Development Administration: Concepts, Goals, Methods*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, pp. 19-21
  10. F. Heady, op. cit., p. 39
  11. Fred W. Riggs, *Frontiers of Development Administration*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1971, p. 6.
  12. ibid. p. 7
  13. Ramesh K. Arora, *Comparative Public Administration*, New Delhi, Associated Publishing House, 1972, pp. 5-29, 37
  14. [Internet Access] Fred W. Riggs, "The Ecology and Context of Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective", *Public Administration Review*, March-April 1980, pp. 107-115, [http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://hum.ttu.ee/failid/VAH/riggs-ecology-of-PA.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CB8QFjABahUKEwiWrtny\\_9THAhULV44KHbuHAWw&sig2=d-taToDMPLU8MNN1rLg-uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usq=AFQjCNHyjhBuHKq9CvDDa4VMYgPdV5Kxg](http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://hum.ttu.ee/failid/VAH/riggs-ecology-of-PA.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CB8QFjABahUKEwiWrtny_9THAhULV44KHbuHAWw&sig2=d-taToDMPLU8MNN1rLg-uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usq=AFQjCNHyjhBuHKq9CvDDa4VMYgPdV5Kxg;); Accessed on 20 August, 2015
  15. R. K. Arora, op. cit., p. 168
  16. ibid. p. 175
  17. F. Heady, op. cit., p. 86
  18. ibid. p. 87
  19. [Internet Access] M. Shamsul Haque, "Rethinking development administration and remembering Fred W. Riggs", *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 76 (4) 767-773, p. 767, [http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/polhaque/RAS394320.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CBsQFjAAahUKEwjagZmrgdXHAhVNHo4KHbOVDnQ&sig2=uaHXJ2X65I9u631dWVMkhw&q=fred+w+riggs+shamsul+haque&usq=AFQjCNFT9-MONmCDVW\\_\\_La5dWO6gnKDxXA](http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/polhaque/RAS394320.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CBsQFjAAahUKEwjagZmrgdXHAhVNHo4KHbOVDnQ&sig2=uaHXJ2X65I9u631dWVMkhw&q=fred+w+riggs+shamsul+haque&usq=AFQjCNFT9-MONmCDVW__La5dWO6gnKDxXA); Accessed on 20 August, 2015
  20. [Internet Access] ibid. p. 769
-

- 
21. Vayunandan and Sahni, op. cit., p. 246
  22. [Internet Access] Wen-shien Peng, "A Critique of Fred W. Riggs' Ecology of Public Administration", *International Public Management Review*, Vol. 9 Issue 1, 2008, p. 218, [http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://journals.sfu.ca/ipmr/index.php/ipmr/article/download/51/51&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CCQQFjACahUKEwiWrtny\\_9THAhULV44KHbuHAww&sig2=X4AQ\\_YAyWyRj4h2RPn22uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usq=AFQjCNFow\\_CZZv6vDX4CJQlgBu3IwnNQTw](http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://journals.sfu.ca/ipmr/index.php/ipmr/article/download/51/51&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CCQQFjACahUKEwiWrtny_9THAhULV44KHbuHAww&sig2=X4AQ_YAyWyRj4h2RPn22uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usq=AFQjCNFow_CZZv6vDX4CJQlgBu3IwnNQTw); Accessed on 20 August, 2015
  23. [Internet Access] Fred W. Riggs, op. cit., p. 108
  24. [Internet Access] *ibid.*
  25. [internet Access] *ibid.* p. 111
  26. [Internet Access] *ibid.*
  27. [Internet Access] Wen-shein Peng, op. cit., p. 218
  28. Sahni & Vayunandan, op. cit., p. 65
  29. Fred W. Riggs, "Agraria and Industria: toward a Typology of Comparative Administration", William J. Siffin (ed.), *Toward the Comparative Study of Public Administration*, Bloomington, USA, 1957
  30. Fred W. Riggs, *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society*, Boston, Hughton Mifflin Co., 1964
  31. *ibid.*
  32. *ibid.*
  33. *ibid.*
  34. *ibid.*
  35. La Palombara Joseph (ed.), *Bureaucracy & Political development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963
  36. [Internet Access] Wen-shein Peng, op. cit., pp. 219-222
  37. [Internet Access] *ibid.* p. 222
  38. [Internet Access] M. S. Haque, op. cit., pp. 771-772
  39. [Internet Access] Wen-shein Peng, op. cit., pp. 222-223

**References:**

1. Arora, Ramesh K., *Comparative Public Administration*, New Delhi, Associated Publishing House, 1972
  2. Gaus, John M., *Reflections on Public Administration*, Alabama, University of Alabama Press, 1947
-

- 
3. Grant, George, *Development Administration: Concepts, Goals, Methods*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979
  4. [Internet Access] Haque, M. Shamsul, "Rethinking development administration and remembering Fred W. Riggs", *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 76 (4) 767-773, pp. 767-773, [http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/polhaque/RAS394320.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CBsQFjAAahUKEwjagZmrgdXHAhVNHo4KHbOVDnQ&sig2=uaHXJ2X6519u631dWVMkhw&q=fred+w+riggs+shamsul+haque&usg=AFQjCNFT9-MOnmCDVW\\_\\_La5dWO6gnKDxXA](http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/polhaque/RAS394320.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CBsQFjAAahUKEwjagZmrgdXHAhVNHo4KHbOVDnQ&sig2=uaHXJ2X6519u631dWVMkhw&q=fred+w+riggs+shamsul+haque&usg=AFQjCNFT9-MOnmCDVW__La5dWO6gnKDxXA); Accessed on 20 August, 2015
  5. Heady, Ferrel, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective*, New York, Marcel Dekker, Inc., 2001
  6. Joseph, La Palombara (ed.), *Bureaucracy & Political development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963
  7. [Internet Access] Peng, Wen-shein, "A Critique of Fred W. Riggs' Ecology of Public Administration", *International Public Management Review*, Vol. 9 Issue 1, 2008, pp. 213-226, [http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://journals.sfu.ca/ipmr/index.php/ipmr/article/download/51/51&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CCQQFjACahUKEwiWrtny\\_9THAhULV44KHbuHAww&sig2=X4AAQ\\_YAyWyRj4h2RPn22uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usg=AFQjCNFOW\\_CZZv6vDX4CJQlqBu3IwnNQTW](http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://journals.sfu.ca/ipmr/index.php/ipmr/article/download/51/51&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CCQQFjACahUKEwiWrtny_9THAhULV44KHbuHAww&sig2=X4AAQ_YAyWyRj4h2RPn22uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usg=AFQjCNFOW_CZZv6vDX4CJQlqBu3IwnNQTW); Accessed on 20 August, 2015
  8. Peters, B. Guy and Pierre, Jon (ed.), *Handbook of Public Administration*, London, Sage Publications, 2003.
  9. Riggs, Fred W., *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964
  10. Riggs, Fred W., *Frontiers of Development Administration*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1971
  11. [Internet Access] Riggs, Fred W., "The Ecology and Context of Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective", *Public Administration Review*, March-April 1980, pp. 107-115, [http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://hum.ttu.ee/failid/VAH/riggs-ecology-of-PA.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CB8QFjABahUKEwiWrtny\\_9THAhULV44KHbuHAww&sig2=d-taToDMPLU8MNN1rLg-uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usg=AFQjCNHyjhBuHKq9CvDDa4VMYyGpdV5Kxg](http://www.google.co.in/url?url=http://hum.ttu.ee/failid/VAH/riggs-ecology-of-PA.pdf&rct=j&sa=U&ved=0CB8QFjABahUKEwiWrtny_9THAhULV44KHbuHAww&sig2=d-taToDMPLU8MNN1rLg-uA&q=fred+w+riggs+the+ecology+of+public+administration&usg=AFQjCNHyjhBuHKq9CvDDa4VMYyGpdV5Kxg); Accessed on 20 August, 2015
  12. Sahni, Pardeep and Vayunandan, Etakula, *Administrative Theory*, New Delhi, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2010
  13. Siffin, William J. (ed.), *Toward the Comparative Study of Public Administration*, Bloomington, USA, 1957
-