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- Contributors Are Answerable For Their Contents.

CHIEF EDITOR'S MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure that Arya Mahila P.G College, Varanasi is bringing out the Volume IV No. 3, 2015 of its journal, *CREATION*. This journal is an inter-disciplinary, bilingual research journal which includes articles in Hindi and English Languages. It is being published annually in October every year.

I am happy that this research journal of Arya Mahila P.G . College, Varanasi has received encouraging response from all corners by its readers and contributors, This issue includes articles on the concept of gender and its various representations and manifestations

With immense gratefulness once again, I would like to express my deep and humble gratitude concern to the readers and the contributors of this volume, who are the real ambassador of this journal to make it so popular in the academic community. Once again, I request t all the readers and contributors of our journal to encourage us with the same supporting spirit. Each suggestion and comment for improving the quality of the journal is always welcome.

Best wishes

Volume IV No. : 3, 2015 October


Prof. Rachana Dubey
Chief Editor
CREATION

EDITORIAL

Gender is a manifested principle of social life and its representation is a direct expression of that social reality. Thus it is obvious that the social construction of space is not only gendered but also steeped in power relations. Undoubtedly then gender politics becomes absolutely central to the very idea of representation. The concern of scholars is the systemic omission of women from the theme of representation. The debate over the difference in equality between genders reminds us that fight for equality is not a straightforward one in a world driven by inequalities across ethnicities and social arrangements. Gender was used as a representative category to accentuate biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviors and competencies, which are then assigned as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Gradually social scientists have acknowledged that there cannot simply be one model of equality.

Keeping in tune with the global trend, the narrative in India too is changing and at the heart of the change are its women. The change is widespread and varied, individual and collective and is reflected across the spectrum of women's lives whether in politics or in economics, in their daily lives, or the field of work within the home and outside. In this context, political and social life in India in the last decade has given rise to a variety of questions concerning the nature and resilience of gender inequality in a transitional and post-colonial society. Therefore gender justice is a redressal that requires urgency.

Creation, the Interdisciplinary Journal of Arya Mahila PG College began its journey in 2010. The present special Issue explores the gender perspective from various angles including the new formations of gender identity that are emerging. It covers a wide range of issues such as the relationship between women and the world.

We are very thankful to the contributors for using masculinity and femininity as analytical tools to question the social, political, economic and cultural processes and their impact on gender equations. We convey our gratitude to the members of the Advisory as well as the Editorial Board for their genuine involvement and valuable suggestions.

**Bhavana Trivedi
Bhanumati Mishra**

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ARYA MAHILA P.G . COLLEGE

A JOURNEY TOWARDS WOMEN EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT

SINCE 1956

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With pleasure we invite you to contribute research paper/article to CREATION an annual, bi-lingual journal of the Arya Mahila P.G. College, Chetganj, Varanasi.

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Socio-economic Activities & Status of Women in Island Society : An Assessment

Hema Bannerjee

The progress of any nation is inevitably linked with the social and economic plight of women and as such the role of women in nation building effort needs no special emphasis. The principles underlying the SHGs are financing the poorest of the poor and achieving holistic empowerment. SHG phenomenon certainly brings group consciousness among women, sense of belonging and adequate self- confidence. Womenfolk constituting about half of the population of India and possessing high degree of multifarious skills in all aspects of industry business and commerce need a conducive environment so as to enable them to play an important role in the economic development of the country.

Backdrop of welfare programme to womenfolk : Six decades of independence has seen a plethora of laws passed by the states and Union government to protect women from violence and discrimination and to strengthen their entitlements in the social and economic fields. Numerous committees and commissions have x-rayed the position of women, the advances made by them and the obstacles faced by them and they have made umpteen recommendations to improve the situation. The Central Women Welfare Advisory Board and State Social Welfare Advisory Board have become a platform to come up with their personal and family problems and solve it positively. The Board has been set up both at centre as well as state level as autonomous body to look after the entire problem of womenfolk. The Nineties saw the setting up National Commission for Women (NCW) and state level commission in various states to inquire into the working of various legal and constitutional provisions concerning women, to investigate cases of violation of women's rights and generally to advice on the socio- economic policy framework in order to include women's concern in the mainstream.

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Andaman & Nicobar Profile : In Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as per 2011 census, 177710 of the women population constituted 45.8% of the total population (380581) .Majority of them live in rural areas. Besides, only 152535(40.07%) are working population , of which 31646(20.74%) is women. Majority of agriculturists are engaged in agricultural related activities. The non- agricultural activities are very limited. Their source of income is very limited. Though female literacy is very high (86.83%) , job opportunities and other activities are very scarce. Therefore with the increase in the scope in the islands, there was a need to encourage empowerment of women by promoting more number of women SHGs by ensuring flexible access to institutional credit for undertaking various activities ranging from tailoring, readymade garment units, handicrafts, coir products, pickle making etc .

Like rest of the states and UTs, in the A & N Islands social welfare Advisory Board (SWAB) was established in 1957 .SWAB has confined its responsibility exclusively towards welfare of female and girl children. The Board has been looking after the objectives relating to education, health, nutrition and means of livelihood, domestic violence and personal problems. Lot of welfare schemes have been launched by the board & sponsored by central government for the welfare of women community.

Social security and Women development : From the very beginning, the UT administration has been very serious about the women related issues. The state social welfare advisory board has directed its activities towards the mission. The Board has undertaken so many projects and set up many net works at grass-root level. Every village consists of a Mahila Mandal, Anganwadi Centres. As a small unit of self regulated system, Mahila Mandal is representing the womenfolk of every village/ unit. The Mahila Mandal basically looks after the basic problems of females and girl children. It has encouraged them to march towards self reliance and self-dependence besides helping them to organize themselves and motivate them for a better economic prosperity. Each Mahila Mondal has Family counseling centre to look after domestic violence and family disputes. Special attention is given to drug or alcohol addicted problems faced by women involving their husband or other male members in the family. Professionally trained family workers with the family counseling aid solve these types of serious problems faced by poor family members.

Anganwadi Centre : It is a centrally sponsored scheme run by educated female workers for the welfare of the local females. They run

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nursery schools for kids of the villages. The centers provide basic training related to hygiene to children and mothers as well as sanitation benefits. A preliminary education is given to children of poor families specially working women in village areas. Nutritious food and snacks are provided to the children of these centers. In city areas, Crèches are run for the benefit of working women who leave their children in these crèches during working hours. Like Anganwadi Centre, the Crèche also gives basic education on health, hygiene and sanitation knowledge to the children as well as the mothers. In the mission, women empowerment and social justice Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Programmes has sanctioned 51 Crèches units in the current financial year 2010-2011. Under the scheme, each unit is provided a grant of Rs. 42,384 to about 25 children of working women and ailing mothers.

Awareness Generation Programme (AGP) : The registered voluntary organization/ Mahila Mandals are given grant to organize camps under AGP for rural and poor women. An amount of Rs. 10,000 is provided for a camp of ten days for upliftment of status of women's, education, health- sanitation, income generating activities, campaign against domestic violence, atrocities, discrimination etc.

Condensed course of Education : This scheme brings the drop out girl child in the mainstream of education. Women/ girls in the age group of 15 plus are enrolled in Primary, Middle, Metric/ Secondary level courses and pursue further education.

Family counseling Centers (FCC) : Family Counseling Centers are sanctioned financial assistance in order to combat the atrocities on women. Counseling Centers deal with marital and mal-adjustment, desertion, property disputes, dowry demand, extra-marital relation and domestic violence. Three NGOs are functioning with the financial assistance from Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi.

Voluntary Action Bureau: (VAB) : The Action Bureau primarily provides counseling and rehabilitation activities for women and victims of family harassment. Since 1987, the VAB has registered 1195 cases out of which 1184 cases has been settled amicably out of court. During the year 2010 alone, the Bureau has registered 139 cases out of which 128 cases have been settled.

Economic Empowerment of women through self Employments : From the very beginning, the local administration with

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the help of Banks and other governmental agencies has undertaken many projects related to income generating activities for women. Majority of the population are not only economically weak but also socially backward. These migrated families have been exposed to critical financial hardships in their home states. Hence they migrated to these islands in search of employment. The population from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal , Kerala, Bihar (undivided), now Jharkhand and other parts of India show that they are socially and economically backward. Mostly landless families from Andhra Pradesh have undertaken fishing as profession. Most of them are agricultural and non- agricultural laborers from Tamil Nadu, Bengal and Jharkhand. Telugu and Tamil communities are mostly settled in city areas and are engaged in various low profit works as wage laborers and in fishing activities. However the Bengal and Ranchi Tribal are engaged in agricultural and non- agricultural activities .Both male and female in Tamil and Telugu communities are equally engaged in the economic activities such as fishing, as wage laborers in construction line and agriculture related works. Hence, females have a special contribution towards the male income in particular and islands economy in general. A good number of educated females are also engaged in various duties in government establishments.

The social welfare Advisory Board with an active initiative and cooperation of banks as well as department of rural developments has initiated so many schemes related to upliftment of poor backward females in these islands. Under rural development project, DWCRA was started to organize economically poor women under income generating activities.

DWCRA : DWCRA scheme provides income generating activities to women and also an organizational support in terms of serving system for the assisted women so that they become effective recipients of goods and services available in that area. The scheme envisages formation of groups of 10-15 women. Women are expected to come together for activities of mutual interest to all. Before starting an income generating activity, women are made aware of the objectives and benefits of DWCRA and how they can supplement the family income with the help of economic activity and thereby raise the help, nutritional and educational standards of these children. One women member from the group functions as group organizer who would help in the choice of activity, procurement of raw materials and marketing of products.

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The activities undertaken by groups are mainly fishing business, running restaurants, canteen, bakery and supply of snacks to school children, producing cane and Bamboo, envelope making, Embroidery and knitting activities. Even piggery and poultry have been started by various groups of women under this scheme.

Credit Package for Women : NABARD has provided financial assistance for the constitution of women developmental cell in the Andaman & Nicobar State Cooperative Bank (ANSCB) for catering to the developmental needs of women through formation, nurturing and up scaling of women Self Help Groups. Under the centrally sponsored SGSY, 30% of the identified beneficiaries are required to be women folk. Besides in RBI guidelines, 5% of the incremental bank credit shall be earmarked for women beneficiaries. While the access of women to institutional credit by the Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank (ANSCB) has shown encouraging trends, the coverage of women by the commercial banks could not be gauged on account of the absence of an established system (NABARD P.10)

DWCRA is the door to success in the mission of women group activities. Hence, the local branch of NABARD has undertaken the road map of SHGs activities under the guidelines of RBI. As the SHGs were informal entities and the nature of their savings and credit operations represented a considerable departure from traditional norms and practices of banking, after extensive consultations with RBI, commercial Banks and NGOs, NABARD launched the pilot project of linking SHGs with commercial banks in 1991-1992.

Objectives of Pilot Project :

1. To evolve supplementary credit strategies for meeting the credit needs of the poor by combining the flexibility, sensitivity and responsiveness of informal credit system with the strength of the technical and administrative cooperatives and financial resources of the formal credit institutions.
2. To build mutual trust and confidence between the bankers and the rural poor.

Andaman Nicobar State Cooperative Bank : In nineties, the NABARD in these islands launched micro finance delivery policy to encourage SHGs activities. NABARD has successfully managed to make the financial institution like ANSCB as nodal agency which has made good

links with SHGs and banking institution to deliver sufficient funds to SHGs to start micro-entrepreneurs in rural as well as urban areas. The lead bank, State Bank of India has been asked to maintain all accounts and official documents of other commercial banks.

The ANSCB as pioneer institution has extended financial help to SHGs. Apart from that the cooperative banks has opened a special cell called women development cell with a special lady officer to look after the financial linkage with women SHGs and give all possible guidelines, training, marketing facilities to women and their groups as a whole. Since its inception, the bank has linked 808 numbers of SHGs aggregating an amount of RS. 500.52 lakhs as compared to 150 SHGs by commercial banks amounting to Rs. 279.74lakhs. During 2009-2010, the bank had linked 230 SHGs and extended credit facilities to the tune of Rs. 210.47 lakhs, of which Rs. 207.75 lakhs was extended to 219 women groups.(p.14, annual reports, 2010, ANSCB,).

District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) towards SHG

SHGs have also been formed by District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) with an active financial involvement of cooperative banks. Under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), the bank has also provided credit assistance to SHGs and individual beneficiaries in the form of revolving fund and project loan to the tune of RS. 16.33 lakhs.

Various agencies engaged in Micro-finance promotion to SHG

: Since 2000 onwards, the activities of the NGOs and other agencies have gained momentum to promote SHGs financing bankers. At present four banks, NGOs and mini finance institutions are pursuing the programs for upliftment of the poor in the UTs. There has, however, been a spurt during 2009 with the number of SHG registering an increase from 1356 as on 31.3.2008 to as much as 2171 as on 31 March 2009. Out of the 13 banks functioning in the UTs, only 7 banks had been participating in the SHG- bank linkage programme as of March 2009.

Mata Amritanandmayee(Amrita Sree Micro. Finance Project) : CARE India, a national organization is working in the line of NGO has initiated micro-finance and livelihood programme in A&N islands. Since Dec. 2005, several hundred SHGs have been formed by CARE India in the islands. NABARD, ANSCB, Syndicate banks, SBI are the major bankers in the islands involved in the task of ensuring empowerment of women in the islands through promoting SHGs. After the project period

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of three years, the project was handed out to Mata Amritanandamayi Math under the name of Amrita Sree micro- finance Project. The Project team comprises project director, program coordinator, 3. P.O (station in three region- South- Middle and North Andaman). 16 CRPs (community level research person) are currently working on the project under the Amrita Sree micro-finance to manage the SHGs in the islands.

Amrita Sree is currently managing 733 groups in the islands of which 373 are credit

linked. The main banks with which the SHGs are credit linked are ANSCB, SBI and Syndicate bank. Amrita Sree is supported by NABARD in giving capacity building trainings to SHGs with regard to leadership, microfinance and book keeping. The project is regularly monitored by care- India on a bimonthly term and technical inputs are given from time to time. Amrita Sree has also initiated a new SHG promotion project funded by NABARD keeping in view, the scope and need for SHGs in the islands. There is still a huge rural population in the islands which needs support to be financially stable and be empowered. Amrita Sree project aims at making them self reliant and is seeking collaborative support with the NABARD to promote 1400 SHGs and ensure livelihood opportunities to Tsunami affected population in A&N islands by providing sustainable bank linkage with SHGs/ CBO's through process of facilitation by Community Level Resource Persons (CLRPS).

The objective of the project intends to promote and strengthen 1400 SHGs, provide capacity development training and livelihood opportunity through initiating income generation activities to wider range of poor and marginalized women in Andaman Islands. The Mata Amritanadamayi Math was sanctioned grant assistance of Rs. 63.00 Lakhs during 2009-2010 for promotion and linkage of 1400 SHGs, including the 708 SHGs taken over by the NGO from CARE- India, under the project banner Amrita Sree, in the villages of South Andaman, North and Middle Andaman districts of the islands over a period of three years, which is one of the largest Micro- Finance projects sanctioned by NABARD in the country.

Promotion and linkage of SHGs to banks in the UT are undertaken by limited number of NGOs operating in A&N islands of which Amrita

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Shree, the association of Catholic A&N islands (ACANI), national cooperative union of India (NCUI) and Yuvashakti are the major contributors in the formation and nurturing of SHGs. The other NGOs operating in the islands include UNNATI and strategic urban rural advancement banking institute (SURABI). Of the fifteen NGOs operating in the ANI, only ACANI and UNNATI have made their presence felt in the Campbell Bay and Nicobar islands. The NCUI was the first NGO in the islands to commence promotion and nurturing of SHGs since June 1992.

The Yuvashakti : The Yuvashakti, has been functioning as SHGs promoting institution (SHP) in the islands. Since 2001-2008, it has extended micro- finance to the tune of Rs. 96.00 lakhs to 67 SHGs consisting of 459 members. Organization as Micro- finance institution has conducted 23 Micro- Enterprise Development Programmes (MEDP) for the benefit of the group members, enabling 21 of them to set up micro- enterprises. The NGO was sanctioned a grant assistance of Rs. 1.00 lakh towards promotion and linkage of 50 SHGs in the South Andaman district and for a period of two years, a grant assistance of Rs 6.00 lakhs was incurred towards promotion and linkage of 200 SHGs in the same district.

UNNATI : The UNNATI, an SHPI was sanctioned a grant assistance of Rs.3.00 lakhs for promotion and credit linkage of 100 SHGs in Nicobar, South Andaman, North & Middle Andaman districts of the islands during 2001-08.

The CARE- India : The CARE- India, to which NABARD had sanctioned a grant of assistance of Rs 33.92 lakhs towards training inputs for capacity building and skill up gradation of 2500 SHGs in 27 months, had only promoted 708 SHGs by the end of the project period. The agency, which had exited from the islands during Aug. 2009, entered into a MOU with the Mata Amritanandmayi math for providing further assistance by ANSCB for the 708 SHGs promoted by them. The status of micro finance practices in the ANI is given in the following table, from where it may be seen that while over 90% of the SHGs formed have been savings- linked, about 80% of the SHGs have resorted to internal lending. However, credit linkage of about 40% is an area of concern. The banks and the NGOs have to play a major role in facilitating areas for credit by the SHGs.

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Details of progress in SHGs-bank linkage (position as on 30.9.2010)

Name of NGO	No. of SHGs formed	Member ship	Savings mobilized (Rs. Lakh)	No. of SHGs having SB A/C	No. of SHGs undertaking internal lending	Amount of internal loans (Rs. Lakh)	No. of SHG's Credit linked	Amount of Bank loans (Rs. Lakh)	Average loan per SHG (Rs. Lakh)	% of credit linkage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
NCUI	392	4437	365.71	375	388	400.86	194	345.10	1.78	49.5
Yuva Shakti	414	4968	134.33	308	295	268.05	149	65.91	0.44	36.0
CARE India	708	7386	191.09	708	689	145.34	355	142.72	0.40	50.1
Amrita Shree	56	591	2.23	56	17	0.70	0	0.00	0.00	0.0
ACANI	531	6080	144.14	463	393	61.31	147	72.82	0.50	27.7
UNNATI	110	1165	16.24	109	51	7.52	45	6.65	0.15	40.9
SURABI	114	1372	22.69	114	83	12.29	30	10.07	0.34	26.3
ANSCB	103	1236	1.23	103	60	58.32	34	8.38	0.25	33.0
Total	2303	25030	781.67	2139	1908	894.70	925	613.49	3.72	40.2
Percentage				92.9	82.8	-	-	-	-	-

Source: NABARD report, p. 4, 2010-2011, P/B.

The status of credit-linkage of SHGs with banks functioning in the UTs as on 31.3.2010 has indicated that ANSCB has played a prominent role in linking 83.9% of the SHGs credit-linked with 57.2% of the total disbursements made to SHGs.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND CREDIT- LINKAGE

Sl.	Bank	SHG's credit linkage (Rs. Lakh)			
		Number		Amount	
1.					
2.	ANSCB	759		316.5	
3.	SBI	130		68.87	
4.	UCO	10		207.20	
5.	Canara Bank	10		8.60	
6.	Syndicate Bank	7		1.00	
7.	Indian Overseas Bank	4		2.50	
8.	Vijaya Bank	2		5.80	
9.	UBI	2		2.44	
10.	PNB	1		0.50	
	Total	925		613.49	

States of micro- Finances in India 2000-2010 NABARD –P. 120.141

The status of the Islands women is commendable. The literacy rate among women is high as compared to national average. Placement of jobs among women in government department is also high. They receive high respect in the island society. However the plight of rural women especially the economically poor families is a serious issue. The National commission for Women, New Delhi has made a survey on Situational analysis of Women and children in Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 2004. The commission has highlighted few important challenging issues related to women folk of these islands. It is reported that there is a large incidence of alcoholism in the islands. Alcoholism is a cause for domestic violence and affects women adversely. Alcoholism has ruined mainly the lives of lower and middle class families. Large number of cases of polygamy has been observed. Number of women has been abandoned by males after they have had children. Social problems like dowry, child marriage, female feticides, trafficking of girls normally faced by society in mainland India are by and large absent here.

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Understanding Gender

Madhu Kushwaha

The distinction between sex and gender is important one and it was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy or biology. For ages it was believed that the different roles, characteristics, and status accorded to women and men in society, are determined by biology (i.e., sex), that they are natural, and therefore not changeable. In a way women and women's bodies were and are held responsible for their subordinate status in society. Once this is accepted as natural, there is obviously no need to address the gender inequalities and injustice which exist in society.

Gender is a socio-cultural concept. It deals with what does it mean to be a man or woman in a particular social context? How does society discriminate between men and women? What kind of expectation it has from men and women? What role they are supposed to perform in order to become man or woman? Whereas sex is the biological aspect of being a man or woman. Sex is determined on the basis of genitalia and these characteristics are universal and have definite reproductive functions. But gender is set of masculine and feminine attributes which are taught and learned. And we should remember that there is huge diversity in gender roles across cultures and time.

Then the question arises that, is it different to be male and masculine? Is it possible that one is male but not masculine or female but not feminine? The answer is 'yes'. In her book *Sex, Gender and Society* (1985) Ann Oakley writes, " 'Gender' is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine'." She further writes that "people are male or female can usually be judged by referring to biological evidence. That they are 'masculine' or 'feminine' cannot be judged in same way; the criteria are cultural, differing with time and place. The constancy of sex must be admitted so also must be the variability of gender."

Differences between Sex and Gender : In feminist discourse the following distinctions are made between sex and gender;

a. Biological / Socio-Cultural : Sex is biological concept whereas gender is a socio-cultural concept. Sex is determined on the basis of presence or absence of specific genital organs while gender is a set of attributes which are learned through the process of socialization. Socialization is the process of learning of gender specific roles. Sex refers to male and female whereas gender is about being masculine and feminine. Thus, it is quite possible that a person is biologically male or female but lacks 'masculine' or feminine attributes completely or partially. Gender roles and attributes also get changed a lot with respect to time, place and culture. It is self evident that gender is socio cultural concept.

b. Natural / Social Construction : Sex is given and gender is socially constructed. Though we are born with a body i.e., that it is naturally made but the changes in body or its uses are governed, regulated and controlled by socio-cultural demands. We can change our body's shape, size, and strength by physical training, its use and abuse. Female athletes, boxers, body builders and male dancers, yoga trainers' body are an example of social construction of body. Traditionally and socially we associate physical toughness with male body and flexibility and softness with female body but there is nothing innate about being tough and soft. Because if it is innate then how will we explain very flexible body of a male dancer or very athletic and tough body of female boxers? So, we learn socially that being 'soft' or 'tough' is considered feminine or masculine in our culture and consciously try to build or train our bodies as per social demands.

c. Universal / Local : It means that the nature of biological differences between male and female body is universal and it has universal function of reproduction. But masculine and feminine attributes, characteristics, norms, and standards are of local in nature. For example a North Eastern male is essentially not supposed to be provider or bread winner of his family but for a north Indian male being a provider of the family is the most important masculine attribute or defining attribute. Consider other example in Teeva tribes of Karbi Onglong district of Assam, child rearing is male's responsibility whereas females are supposed to plough the fields. Unlike a north Indian adolescent girl a tribal girl is not supposed to confine within the home and for her running, climbing trees, using bow and arrow, hunting are seemed very natural tasks. A Sikh male are not allowed to cut their hair but other males are prohibited to keep long hairs. In India fifty-forty years back having moustache was a sign of masculinity but now days it is not the marker of masculinity but became a matter of choice for males. All these diversities in masculine and feminine roles relates to local socio-cultural tradition.

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d. Constant / Variable : It refers that the sex which we get by birth does not change till death. Sex change operations with the help of modern medicine are exceptions. Normally we are born with a sex and die in that sexed body too. Whereas gender roles are variable; it changes not only from culture to culture but in the same culture across time, sometimes it even changes from family to family also.

Generally men are considered to be head of the households, bread winners, owner and managers of the property, and active in politics, religion and business, women, on the other hand are expected and trained to bear and look after children, to nurse infirm and old, do all the household work and so on. This determines their education or lack of it, preparation for employment and nature of employment etc. However, the degree of differentiation between male and female roles varies widely. Sometimes the rules are merely preferential, and very little anxiety is shown by either sex over temporary role reversal.

“Cora du Bois reports that in Alor, there are distinctions between the economic roles of the sexes, it is not thought unhealthy for anyone to take on the other sex’s work- rather they are admired for possessing a supplementary skill. The women control the subsistence economy and the men occupy themselves with financial deals, but many men are passionate horticulturist and many women have financial skills” (Oakley, 1985, p 149).

Other societies imposed rigid sex roles.

“The Mundurucu Indians of Central Brazil are an example of society in which the polarization of sex roles and sex groupings has become a primary social element. The physical and social separation of sexes is virtually complete: men and boys live in men’s house separate from females. Each sex group, (with the exception of small children) interacts only within oneself, and antagonism between the two is shown on many rituals and other social occasions” (Oakley, 1985, pp. 149-150).

Famous anthropologist Margret Mead study ***Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*** (1935) shows that there is no definite pattern of sex based gender roles. She studied the three tribes of Sepik region of Papua New Guinea and found that in **Arapesh**- both males and females displayed, what we consider “feminine” temperament. In **Mundugamoor**- both males and females displayed “masculine” temperament, and in **Tchambuli**- men and women displayed different temperament but opposite to our own pattern. In that society, men were emotional and expressive while women were active and instrumental. On the basis of her study she concluded that,

“There are no necessary differences in traits or temperament between the sexes. Observed differences in temperament between men

and women were not a function of their biological differences rather than they resulted from differences in socialization and the cultural expectations held for each other”.

It is evident that in place of any fixed sex-gender role pattern there are varied pattern of sex based gender roles prevalent in the world which we learn. There is one simple rule in science that we cannot explain variable with the help of constant. In other words unequal gender roles of contemporary society and resulting inequality cannot be explained with the help of sex or cannot be attributed to sex differences. So, biology (sex) is not the root cause of inferiority of women but manmade social structure (gender) is responsible for inequality between sexes.

e. Gender is a Learned Behaviour / Sex is not : It refers that gender roles are learned through the long process of socialization which is also called gendering. Parents, school, society, mass media are important agencies through which a child learns to confirm the gender norm of his/her culture.

In principle if anything is learned it can be de-learned or re-learned also. If one can learn unjust, inequalitarian gender roles he/she can also learn just and egalitarian social roles based on equality and mutual respect. Thus, the sex-gender distinction gives us a hope for a future which would be free of gender based discrimination and inequality because we cannot change sex but can change gender roles. ***Contrary to popular misbelieve and propaganda that feminists want to change women into men, feminist discourses, movements is focused to change the unequal gender relations into equal one.***

In every culture men and women are supposed to perform different roles. But the problem is that masculine and feminine social roles are not accorded equal status and do not bring equal rewards. Feminine attributes and gender roles are not valued much in the comparison of masculine traits. Further, gender division of labour in which women are supposed to work inside home and men do outside paid jobs relegates women primarily to unpaid or underpaid jobs. Though women work longer hours than men but own less than 10 percent property of world and have less control over economic resources. In comparison to men they are given less rights in all the societies, for example customary rights (personal laws related with marriage, divorce, inheritance of property) granted in most of the religions including Hindu religion favours men over women or are discriminatory. In the contemporary world scenario very few women are represented in economic and political institutions. Claudia von Werlhof, 1988 says,

“No social order in history has extended, distorted, and used the natural differences between the sexes as brutally and systematically as

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ours. This order first transformed natural sex into a social artificial gender, made 'men' out of men, and 'women' out of women—in fact, turned men into 'human race' and women into simply a sex as such....And finally, having created these differences, it declares them to be 'natural' again, in order to render them economically exploitable.”

Gender is related to sex but only to some extent. Because of their bodies women, but not all women, bear children, feed them and menstruate but other than this there is nothing that they do that men cannot do or men can do women cannot. Biologically women are different but it does not make them deficient. A woman may well have children but that should be no reason for her inferiority and subordination; nor should it determine her education, training, job or life opportunities. Moreover biological difference does not explain the diverse social roles men and women play across cultures and times. If it is only the biology, (bodies) men and women around the world must be doing the same work but we know for sure that this not the case. If biology alone determined our roles, every woman in the world should be cooking, washing and sewing but this is clearly not the case because most professional cooks, launderers and tailors are men.

What I am saying is that neither sex nor nature is responsible for the unjustifiable inequalities that exist between men and women. It can be said that unequal social status of men and women is a social construction and nature has very little to do in this matter. Thus, gender not the sex is responsible for inequality between sexes. Like the inequalities castes, classes, and races, gender too are man made; they are historical construct and therefore they can be questioned, challenged and changed.

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Discourse on Human Rights in Context to Tribal Women of Jharkhand

Rajendra Bharati

Jharkhand is a new state have nearly 26% of population of it is tribal. The state was created for the welfare of the people of the region, particularly the tribal population. After the separation from Bihar this state has to face different kind of problem from political to socio-economic. In such a scenario protection human rights of every individual is a tough challenge, when the tribal society is influenced by dogma, belief in tradition in name of orthodox and superstition such as witchcraft. This paper will discuss the problem that come in way availing the human rights by the tribal women of Jharkhand and means to which that can be made available to them.

Human Rights are the “basic rights and freedom to which all human-beings are entitled”.¹ In fact all human-beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in spirit of brotherhood.² The doctrine of human rights aims to identity the necessary positive and negative prerequisites for a “universal” minimal standard of justice, tolerance and human dignity that can be considered the public moral norms owed by and to individuals by the mere virtue of their humanity. Such prerequisites can exist as shared norms of actual human moralities, as justified moral norms or moral rights supported by strong reasons, as legal rights at a national level, or as a legal rights within international law. Human rights advocates seek the strong protection of human rights through their effective realization in each of these ways. The claim of human rights is therefore they are universal, in that they are possessed by all by virtue of the fact that they are human, and independent in that their existence as moral standards of justification and criticism is independent whether or not they are recognized by a particular national or international legal system or government.

The general idea of human rights has widespread acceptance, and it has been argued that the doctrine of human rights has become the dominant moral doctrine for regulating and evaluating the moral status of contemporary geo-political order.

The universal declaration of human rights has acted as the predominant modern codification of commonly accepted human rights principles and many national many international documents, treaties and instruments that have expanded on its principles and act as a collective expression of wide spread conceptions of human rights by the international communities, such as civil rights, political rights, right to life, freedom of expression etc.

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin colour, religion, language or any other status. In fact all are entitled to their human rights without discrimination. In nut shell these rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. Principle of human rights believes in principle of universality of human rights as emphasized in Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948. The 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, for example, noted that it is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their political, economic and cultural system.

All States have ratified at least one, and 80% of States have ratified four or more, of the core human rights treaties, reflecting consent of States which creates legal obligations for them and giving concrete expression to universality. Some fundamental human rights norms enjoy universal protection by customary international law across all boundaries and civilizations.

Human rights are inalienable. They should be taken away, except in specific situations and according to the process. For example, the right to liberty may be restricted if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law.³

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International convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination against Women is based on the principle of equality and non- discrimination. This principle applies to everyone in relation to all human rights and freedoms and it prohibits discrimination on the basis of a list of non-exhaustive categories such as sex, race, colour and so on. The principle of non-discrimination is complemented by the principle of equality as stated in Article-1 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁴

Human rights entail both rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under the international law to respect, to protect and fulfill human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires states to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfill means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights.⁵

Individual rights vs. Group rights : A discourse among political philosopher always taken place regarding predominance of one among both the rights i.e. individual right or group rights. Some time they are discussed about complementary to or opposite to each other. In relation to human rights, it is both individual as well as group rights. Individual rights are considered to individual rights in contrast to group rights. An individual right is the sanction of independent action. Both natural and legal conceptions and rights may distinguish between individual and group right. While civil and political rights are predominantly concerned with the rights of individuals, leaving the rights of groups to the realm of economic, social and cultural rights, those set of rights are not identical with the set of individual rights and group rights either.⁶

Individual rights advocates tend to argue for increased codification of individual legal rights to protect individuals from state infringement of their natural rights. This is traditionally associated with liberalism.

In the modern context, ‘group rights’ are argued for by some as an instrument to actively facilitate the realization of equality. In a society where there is already equality before the law for all citizens, ‘equality’ is often a euphemistic reference to material equality (money and resources). This is where the group is regarded as being in a situation such that it needs special protective rights if its members are not to enjoy living conditions on terms equal with the majority of the population. Example of such groups may include indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, women,

children and the disabled.⁷ This discourse may take place in context of negative and positive rights in that some commentators and policy makers conceptualize equality as not only a negative right, in the sense of ensuring freedom from discrimination, but also positive right, in that the realization of equality requires redistributive action by others or the state. In this respect group rights may aim to ensure equal opportunity and/or attempt to actively redress inequality.⁸ It is, therefore, government in different states started the policies of positive discrimination towards achieving these goals. In India reservation in education, service and in legislature and panchayat or municipal- corporations, is the example of it.

Group rights in such a context may aim to achieve equality of opportunity and/or equality of outcome. Such affirmative action can be controversial as they are in conflict with absolute application of right to equality, or because some members of the group that is intended to benefit from such programs criticize or opposes them.

Human Rights and Women : The recognition of women's human rights have come lately. This is because certain kinds of human rights and entitlements have received recognition as basic rights of human kind relatively recently. A strong reiteration of women's human rights were made at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. It said "the human rights of the women and of the girl child are inalienable, integral and indivisible part of the Universal Human Rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, and cultural life at the national, regional, and international level and eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are the priority objectives of international community."⁹

The Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing very strongly highlighted the fact that throughout the world there has been traditionally, discrimination both overt and covert, against women. The path to the future must clear this jungle of discrimination and bring about a more fair and just society where the women can play more effective roles free from obstructions, biases and prejudices which today prevent their effective participation in public activities.¹⁰ The basic problem come from the society at large is due to the traditional attitudes and customs. Despite the laws and liberal interpretation of these laws women continue to suffer from serious family and social handicaps reflected in practices such as female foeticide and female infanticide and witch-craft in tribal society of Jharkhand.

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Violence : The word violence has changing meaning in context to purpose. The violence is considered good when it occurs during a war to save a nation, is considered morally good but when it takes the colour of terrorism in name of self-determination is considered morally wrong. It is a fact that concept of public violence is elusive, complex & multidimensional. It has moral overtones. Violence in Gandhian philosophy is to hurt any one's genuine sentiments; it is a fact that it occurs both at public place as well as at private or home inside or outside. If violence is the act of aggression, it is seen everywhere in the world. It is evident the communities collide in riots. It is seen when rich and powerful countries or cultures dominate the lesser countries in war in trade and in peace. It is seen in the form of cultural aggression on the indigenous communities. It is experienced in the way majority population intrudes the cultural spaces of minorities. If violence is one kind of exploitation, it is also experienced everywhere. The exploitation of poor by rich or powerless by powerful and exploitation based on caste, gender or religion.¹¹

Women obviously are the most affected with this violent social structure, they are major victims and objects of this violence, aggression, discrimination and exploitation. The issue of violence therefore should be seen as the issue at the core of the social structure, at the basic existence of today's society.¹² It is true that any form of violence actually violates basic human rights from individual to group. While addressing the issue of violence against we confront with one basic character of society, which discriminates people on gender – developed during human evolution. It is right against something so intrinsic to the social fabric that it goes much beyond the issue of 'human rights'.¹³ If it is mixed with only human rights, we may dilute the issue and need to analysis but the core issue of human rights would be the focal point.

Witchcraft : Witchcraft broadly means the practice of, and belief in, magical skills and abilities that are able to be exercised individually, by designated social groups, or by persons with the necessary esoteric secret knowledge. Witchcraft is a complex concept that varies culturally and societally, therefore it is difficult to define with precision¹⁴ and cross cultural assumption about the meaning or significance of the term should be applied with caution. Witchcraft often occupies a religious, divinatory, or medicinal role¹⁵, and is often present within societies and groups whose cultural framework includes a magical world view.¹⁴ Although witchcraft can often

share common ground with related concepts such as sorcery, the paranormal, magic, superstition, necromancy, possession, shamanism, healing, spiritualism, nature worship and the occult, it is usually seen as distinct from these when examined by sociologists and anthropologists.

India is a country enjoying ancient culture and living practices in world. One thing we can see the prevalence of orthodoxy, superstition and belief in super natural power along with scientific and rational belief. The tribal society at large is not enjoying the light of modernity as well as rational approach towards observing the things in that form. They are continuously feeling alienation from modern world and modern world view & culture. This continuous alienation of our culture and superstition prevailing over the time has led our society to act inhuman with women, in the name of dowry, child marriage, female foeticide, female infanticide or domestic violence and so on. But the most unfortunate aspect of violence against women came up in the name of witchcraft in Jharkhand, particularly in tribal society.

Jharkhand more than 14 years old state, still lack basic amenities in village which are dominated by tribal population. In this tribal dominated state, tribal are becoming the main victim of the violence against women, sometimes in the name of trafficking or sometimes in the name of 'witch'. Due to illiteracy and other development strata, superstition has made its room in the heart & mind of the people, especially in the villages. This particular superstition of claiming women, as witch is so intense that people do not bother even kill that women. The illiterate people of the village are mainly depended upon the Ojha/ Guni for health services and ojha/ guni mainly declare any women witch. Health becomes major factors for declaring any women as witch. Other factors responsible for declaring women as a witch & violence against them are their property, their adolescents etc. Usually, widow, old age ladies, dependent ladies, single ladies are considered as witch.¹⁶

Jharkhand is the biggest sufferer State, where women were being killed in name of witch. More than 600 women were killed during last 5 years alone in Santhal Pargana division of Jharkhand. Figures in other division are almost similar. The intensity of problem can be seen with approach of state government by implementing an act against the witchcraft in the year 2001. But the implementation of this act is still awaited in its true sense and spirit.

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Observation: Human rights are violated of tribal women in Jharkhand in such a manner as is being violated of women in other part of India. The unique thing in Jharkhand regarding human rights violation of women of tribal society is that they are not only exploited physically, economically but also socially in form of witchcraft. This curse is deeply rooted in the society in form of accepted norm. This is due to lack of education, unavailability of proper medical care and deep rooted belief in superstition in the name of tradition and culture. The witches are identified by ojha/guni, are the master of identifying witches through their latent knowledge which they gained through various difficult methods of devotion for god of evil. This particular superstition is so intensely roomed into the heart of people, especially rural people that they prefer of going to ojha/guni instead of doctor at the time of sickness or emergencies. Since ojha possesses knowledge of local herbs and they use it for the curing patients. Apart from using local herbs they use their superficial power for the treatment of ailing people. Apart from these practices, they also declares witch in the community who exercise her black evil knowledge for her evil lusts. There is feeling in our society that if any children or person or die due to any unknown diseases, it is expected that they have died because of witch. Then they contact ojha/guni to know if there was any such showered her evils on their lost relatives. Based on detail provided by ojha /guni, women from the community are identified as witch and are tortured in front of whole community. No one dares to oppose such incidents. Relatives of the women declare witch were suppressed by community leaders and dominating peoples. Usually attempts were made to kill women declare as witch. (17)

The nature of human rights violation in Jharkhand among the tribal women needs to be looked with different view in which it should not be considered as only law and problem but from social and economic angle. The measures to tackle such menace are proper awareness and education among tribal women, right of tribal women in the property of parents and husband, availability of health services and proper care at village level, development of ojha/ guni as health care worker through trainings, improvement in the economic status of people, greater role of media on disseminating information about harms and laws. The agencies of the government such as panchayat, municipal coporations, agents of ananganbari, educational institutes and NGO's required to educate the

people about their rights and if they feel that has been violated ; they should informed to proper forum either through these agencies or directly to the designated office. 7

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Role of Women in glorifying Carnatic Classical Music

R. Aruna Sri

Women of India have always been the cultural back bone of this country. Despite this, there was a great taboo about women singing in public, and it took over 600 years of silent struggle, by the hidden nightingales of India, to be freed off the golden shackles of social restrictions, and be showered with praise for their melodic distinction.

The purpose of this paper is to open up the panorama of the lives and contributions of these blessed and distinguished females and represent a collective view of, struggles and contributions of these talented women who glorified and continue to glorify the tradition of Carnatic Classical music. Even male singers will invariably accept that their mother's singing was the source of inspiration for them. Hence, I would first salute those unknown mothers who, by singing lullabies in Kuranji, Neelambari^[20] and Chandrajyothi^[17], innocently and adorably inspired their children to choose this art and anonymously contributed towards growth and survival of this tradition.

When we refer to history of Indian Music, the earliest appearance of women as musician dates back to the 5th century A.D. Till 12th century A.D this trend of accepting musical genius among women folk continued. But somewhere down the line there arose a tradition of offering a girl child as Devadaasi to temples. This girl was taught music and dance, by senior Gurus under kingly patronage. Offering music and dance based worship, was part of the aagama puja vidhi of the temple and she used to dedicatedly perform as part of Shodasopachara puja(worship) done in temples. The Divya Prabhandaas of early Tamizh music and the Drupad of Hindustani music were composed specially for this purpose only.

As we all know about the political history of our country, there used to be many wars among our kings for expanding their territory. If the

ruling king lost out in battle field and the new king, if happened to be a worshipper of a different deity, stopped giving patronage to the existing temple whose deity may not be of his choice. Such narrow minded approach of rulers, in turn affected the livelihood of the staff, who had been previously employed to conduct pujas in the temple. While men folk could survive seeking alternate means, the Devadaasis who knew only music and dance were the most vulnerable. These helpless ladies had to submit to the entertainment and sexual demands of those landlords who were local representatives and authorities for the temple. Those who refuted this demeaning approach, by the wealthy lot, had to run in order to save their chastity and life. Hence, the once revered Devadaasis came to be looked down upon by the society as prostitutes or concubines. To complicate this more, a girl child born to a Devadaasi had no choice but to follow her mother's path. As her mother was never systematically wedded to a man, this child was called illegitimate, despite being known well to the local residents as who the father was. One may be wondering what happens if a boy was born. Life of this male child also was difficult, with lack of social status.

The knowledge of swara, raga, taala can be acquired only by few who are blessed. In many cases, because of the heredity factor, a musician's child is blessed with fundamental aptitude for Shruti and taala. Whereas their capacity to master this art varies depending on their intelligence quotient. Also her aspirations to get educated and pursue any other profession was discouraged. Hence, a girl child born to a Devadaasi, continued to learn music despite lacking aptitude for excellence. In such cases, the Devadaasi willingly or forcibly submitted to become the "aasai Naayaki" (concubine) of the wealthy. This scenario of musicians leading a socially unacceptable life started affecting the growth of music, in that, ladies of respectable families were discouraged from learning Classical music. Those ladies who were born to distinguished male artists invariably acquired knowledge of Classical music due to repeatedly hearing music at their home as part of Saadhana. But once they got married they were barred from singing, for neighbors and elders at home said "Don't make us feel that we are living near a Devadassi's house". For a singer who feels elated while singing, not to sing is a punishment and can depress them badly. This harassment or taboo on expression was suffered by many ladies till 20th century also in orthodox Brahmin families. A similar experience was counted by my maternal Grandmother Veena Vidhushi Smt Saroja Narayanan. She was taught Veena by her father Vedhachalam Iyer. He was a very strict teacher. It was compulsory for all children to wake up at

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4am and do vocal and instrumental Saadhana. When she got married to my grandfather and was staying in a small shared apartment in Thiruvannamalai, she used to continue her music Saadhana which had become an indispensable part of her life, courtesy, her father's uncompromising efforts to teach her Classical music. One day, another lady who was her neighbor commented in front of my grandfather, "Your wife is creating the ambience of a thevidiya veedu (means devadaasi's house) by constantly singing. This is not a worthy practice for people living in respectable community." The word "thevidiya" was also used to indicate Devadaasis. Many still use it as an abusive word. Ironically the word is a deformed version of "Devudaiyaal" which again means one who is married to the God. After this incident my Grandmother never sang in her house, but used to eagerly await an opportunity to go to her Mother's place for she could sing loudly, open throated there.

There were some unique compositions like the Thiruppugazh , most of which were known to these Devadaasi's only. Since nobody other than their own off springs learnt these compositions, these unique verses started getting lost at one time.

It is during the first half of twentieth century that a revolution started to bring Devadaasi system to an end wherein some of these ladies were blessed with an opportunity to marry broadminded youth , who dared to break the social conditioning. These liberated nightingales set out to redefine the world of Classical music. This period of history saw an explosion of feminine musical talent which has made this music world more interesting than before. In those days, maestros never sang for gramophone records. They perceived it demeaning to sing in records for it would undermine the value of their live concerts and the livelihood of their students who copied their singing style. Once my Hindustani Guru Pt. Narendra Kumar Jha, while referring to Param Guru of Banaras Gharana, Sangeet samrat Bade Ramdas, shared this information. When Bade Ramdas ji was asked to sing for Gramophone Company, he firmly denied saying "My shishyaas are my record". In this period, it was the Devadaasis who came forward to sing in gramophone records. Gauhar Jaan^[18] was the first one to sing on Gramophone records in India. Hence women had become the leaders in singing for audio recording in India. M.S Subbulakshmi gave her first recording in 1927, when she was just 10 yrs old. But if we move in Chronological order we find that, after 600 yrs of hidden struggle, the first woman who emerges prominently in Carnatic music is Veenai Dhanammaal(1867-1938).

With this introduction now it will be appropriate to learn in detail about women musical geniuses in chronological order.

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Also we can see that in spite of most of the female musicians being Performing Artists, there have been enough contribution to other branches of Classic Music. Hence, we have a wide category of women musicians like, Saint Composers, Master composers, composers, Musicologists, academicians, researchers, authors, Bhagavathars (Sampradhaya Bhajan exponents), music therapy proponents and cultural entrepreneurs.

The following list contains names of the most prominent women musicians who contributed to these various disciplines of Classical music.

Sl.no.	Name of Musician	Year of existence ^[1]	Category
1.	Kaaraikal Ammaiar^[1]	5 th century A.D	Saint Composer
2.	Andaal^[1]	740 AD -790AD	Saint Composer
3.	Akka Mahadevi	1130AD-1160AD	Saint Composer
4.	Helvanakatte Giramma	Around 1750AD	Saint Composer
5.	Veenai Dhanammal	1867- 1938	Veena & vocal
6.	T. Brinda & T Mukta	1912-1996 1914-2007	Vocalist Duo
7.	Ambhujam Krishna	1917-1989	Composer
8.	M S Subbulakshmi	1916-2004	Vocalist
9.	DK Pattammal	1919-2009	Vocalist
10.	M L Vasanthakumari	1928-1990	Vocalist
11.	Sikkil Sisters -Kunjumani & Neela	1930-2010 1940-living	Flautist-duo
12.	Radha & Jeyalakshmi-Sisters	1932-2014 1932-living	Vocalist duo
13.	Dr. N Rajam	1938-living	Violinist
14.	A.Kanvakumari	20 th century, living	Violinist
15.	D. Pattammal	20 th century	Master Composer
16.	Bombay Sisters Saroja & Lalitha	20 th century	Vocalist duo
17.	Dr Bhagvadekshmi	living	Musicologist, Author
18.	E.Gayathri	Living,	Veena Vidhushi
19.	Aruna Sairam	Living	Vocalist
20.	Sudha Raghunathan	Living	Vocalist
21.	Dr. R N Sreelatha	Living	Vocalist
22.	Dr. Padma murthy	Living	Music Therapist
23.	Dr. Nithya shree	Living	Vocalist
24.	Dr. Radha Bhaskar	Living	Vocalist, cultural entrepreneur
25.	Kanthimathi Santhanam	Living	Harinaamam exponent & composer

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The list is not complete for there are innumerable musicians who have anonymously contributed to glorify this tradition. With this, we shall see the contributions of these musicians in brief.

Karaikkal Ammaiar : She lived even before the famous Devaaram trinity, in 5th century AD. Born to a merchant Dhanadattha in Karaikaal, she married Paramadattha of Nagapattinam. Her maiden name is Punidavathi. Her husband feared her as a godly woman due to her miraculous mango feat and left her. In the history of Tamizh music she is the first one to have sung in “Pann”(melodic scales) like Nattapaadai and Indalam.

Hence, she is glorified as “Mother of Dravidian music” and “Pioneer of Tamilisai”(Tamil Classical music). Her songs are compiled as part of the 11th Thirumurai in Devaaram. She walked upside down, on her palms, to Kailash. She is said to have received a pair of Taalam(musical instrument) from Shiva and had Shiva dance to her taalam’s beats.

Andaal Periyazhvaar : She lived between 710-790AD. She is said to be incarnation of Bhudevi, one of Vishnu’s wives(Sridevi & Bhudevi). She was found by her father Periyazhvaar under a Tulsi Plant. Her maiden name was Kodai Naachiyar and her life’s aim was to marry MahaVishnu. She has sung 143 songs in Naachiyaar Thirumozhi and 30 songs in Thiruppavai.

In Dhanur month she kept a vratha called “Paavai nombu”. Every day she used to wake up her friends by singing Thiruppavai, take them along to the temple and do puja. MahaVishnu came in human form and married her. She walked with him into the Sanctum sanctorum and disappeared. Till date women folk of Tamilnadu follow her path, keep Paavai vratha in the Dhanur month of hindu calendar, sing the 30 Thiruppavai verses to be blessed with a husband like Vishnu himself. These verses are even now taught as part of cultural grooming in many Hindu families.

Akka Mahadevi : Akka Mahadevi was a prominent figure of the Veerashaiva Bhakti movement of 12th century Karnataka. She was born in 1130CE and lived until 1160. Her Vachanas in Kannada, a form of spontaneous mystical utterances, are considered her most notable contribution to Kannada Bhakti literature. It is not clearly mentioned as in what raagas she sang. But her poems called Vachanas are favourites in every household in Karnataka till date. She rejected a life of luxury to live as a wandering poet-saint, travelling throughout the region and singing praises to her Lord Shiva. A true ascetic, Akka Mahadevi is said to have refused

to wear any clothing which was a common practice among male ascetics, but shocking for a woman. Legend has it that due to her true love and devotion with God Mallikarjuna, her whole body was protected by hair. One of her famous vachana translates as

People,
male and female,
blush when a cloth covering their shame
comes loose
When the lord of lives
drowned without a face
in the world, how can you be modest?
When all the world is the eye of the lord,
on looking everywhere, what can you
cover and conceal?

Helavanakatte Giriyamma (Around 1750 A.D): Helavanakatte Giriyamma was one of the Haridasa women, the other being Harapanhally Bhimava who had Ankitha nama as “Bhimesha Krishna”, basically from Ranebennur of Dharwar district. She lived around the early 18th Century and was having poorna anugraha of Sri Sumateendra Theertharu, Sri Gopala Dasaru and Sri Satyabodha Theertharu. Helavanakatte Giriyamma was a strong devotee of Ranganatha Swamy, and used to compose keerthanaas on him. As she was a lady and further she had no children, people were against her composing keerthanaas. But later on she came to be adored by everyone as Yasoda maa herself.

Veenai Dhanammal : Veenai Dhanammal was a highly accomplished Carnatic musician, and the torchbearer of the School of Carnatic Music that goes by her name. She was both a vocalist and a performer on the veenai. She lived between 1867 and 1938.

Dhanammal was born in George Town, Madras (now Chennai), into a family of professional musicians and dancers. Her grandmother Kamakshi was a reputed dancer, and her mother was a vocalist who trained under Subbaraya Sastri, the son of Syama Sastri of the Carnatic music composer trinity.

In addition to training by her family members, Dhanammal also learned from Walajapet Balakrishna Das (“Padam Baladas”), a blind

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musician who was a repository of the *padams* of Kshetrappa, and Satanur Pancanatha Iyer.

Regarding the veenai as an instrument complete and perfect in itself, she played it without plectrum, often accompanied by her own singing. Her music is documented in a set of historical recordings. Her personal style, known as the *Veenai Dhanammal bani*, is still regarded as a yardstick in terms of adherence to traditional values and profundity of music expression. Her legacy was being carried forward by her grandchildren, T. Sankaran, dancer T. Balasaraswati, T. Muktha, T. Brinda, and T. Viswanathan. In the present generation Padma Sri (Smt) Aruna Sairam, who is a disciple of T. Brinda is carrying forward this tradition.

A commemorative postage stamp on her was issued on 03-December-2010

Ambujam Krishna (Composer) : Smt Ambujam Krishna was born on 21st May 1917, as the daughter of KV Ranga Iyengar, a leading advocate of Madurai. Her parents, being great lovers of music, put her under the tutelage of Karaikkudi Ganesan and Ganesa Bhagavata. Married at a young age to her cousin TS Krishna, of the famous TVS family, she continued her education post marriage and went to graduate from the Lady Irwin College at Delhi to acquire a degree in Home Science.

In August 1951, during her visit to the Samadhi of Tyagaraja at Tiruvayyaru she was blessed with the inspiration to compose songs. Her first kriti was Unnai allal on Goddess Meenakshi, patron Goddess of her home town. Later, she composed in several languages such as Telugu, Kannada, Sanskrit, Hindi and Tamizh. Somewhat hesitantly she gathered courage to show her creations to her husband, who encouraged her to consult Musiri Subramania Iyer about their quality.

Musiri was very much impressed with the lyrical content and praised her. He then offered to set them to music. While Smt Krishna had sung the songs to herself in tunes that occurred to her, she was most happy that these were to be set to tune by a renowned musician. Later, she was to have her songs tuned by several leading vidwans and vidushis such as Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, VV Sadagopan, Sattur AG Subramaniam, Madurai Krishnan, Dr S Ramanathan, KC Tyagarajan, KR Kedaranathan, TN Seshagopalan, R Vedavalli, Ananthalakshmi Sadagopan and Charumati Ramachandran.

Dismayed by the lack of facilities for learning music in Madurai, Smt Krishna began the Sadguru Sangeeta Vidyalaya with well known musician Ramanathapuram CS Sankarasivam as its head. She went from house to house encouraging parents to send their children to the music school. Her efforts bore fruit and today the institution is a flourishing college. Smt Krishna also provided Madurai with its first auditorium, Lakshmi Sundaram Hall, named after her mother in law.

Leading a life of simplicity, Smt Krishna devoted her time to composing and singing. Her songs were compiled and released in four volumes titled the Gitamala. Several songs still exist in manuscript form. Smt Krishna passed away on 20th October 1989, having led a contented life of artistic expression.

M. S. Subbulakshmi (Classical Vocalist) : Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi^[6], also known as M.S., was a renowned Carnatic vocalist. She was the first musician ever to be awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

Born: September 16, 1916, Madurai

Died: December 11, 2004, Chennai

Spouse: Kalki Sadasivam (m. 1940–1997)

Children: Radha Viswanathan, Vijaya Rajendran

Awards: Bharat Ratna, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan

She is also the first Indian Musician to receive Ramon Magsaysay award in 1974. M. S. Subbulakshmi was born to ShanmukhaVadivu Ammal(veena player) and Subramania Iyer. Her mother belonged to Devadaasi community. A revolutionary journalist Kalki Sadasivam married her and was instrumental in bringing out her prodigal talent to be seen by the entire world.

Subbulakshmi (Kunjamma to her family) was born in Madurai, which was part of Madras Presidency. Her grandmother Akkammal was a violinist. She started learning Carnatic music at an early age and trained in Carnatic music under the tutelage of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and subsequently in Hindustani music under Pandit Narayanrao Vyas. Her mother, from the devadasi community, was a music exponent and a regular stage performer, and Subbulakshmi grew up in an environment very conducive to musical learning. Her musical interests were also shaped by regular interactions with Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer, Mazhavarayanendal Subbarama Bhagavathar and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar.

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Subbulakshmi gave her first public performance, at the age of eleven, in the year 1927, in the 100 pillar hall inside the Rockfort Temple, Tiruchirappalli; with Mysore Chowdiah on the violin and Dakshinamurthy Pillai on the mridangam.

In 1936, Subbulakshmi moved to Madras (now Chennai). She also made her film debut in *Sevasadan* in 1938. Subbulakshmi gave her first performance at the prestigious Madras Music Academy in 1929, when she was 13 years old. The performance consisted of singing bhajans (Hindu hymns). The academy known for its scrupulous selection process broke the tradition by inviting a young girl as a key performer. Her performance was described as spellbinding and earned her the admiration as musical genius from critics. Soon after her debut performances, Subbulakshmi became one of the leading Carnatic vocalists.

By the age of seventeen, Subbulakshmi was giving full-fledged solo concerts at the Madras Music Academy. She travelled to London, New York, Canada, the Far East, and other places as India's cultural ambassador. Her concerts at

- Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama in 1963
- Carnegie Hall, New York; the UN General Assembly on UN day in 1966
- Royal Albert Hall, London in 1982
- Festival of India in Moscow in 1987

were significant landmarks in her career. In 1969 she was accompanied by Indian Railways Advisor SN Venkata Rao to Rameshwaram, where she glorified each deity in the Rameshwaram temple by singing in front of them.

After the death of her husband Kalki Sadasivam in 1997, she stopped all her public performances. M.S. also acted in a few Tamil films in her youth. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had this to say about M.S. Subbulakshmi- "Who am I, a mere Prime Minister before a Queen of Music". While Lata Mangeshkar called her *Tapaswini* (the Renunciate), Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan termed her *Suswaralakshmi* (the goddess of the perfect note), and Kishori Amonkar labelled her the ultimate eighth note or *Aathuvaan Sur*, which is above the seven notes basic to all music. The great national leader and poet Sarojini Naidu called her "Nightingale of India". Her many famous

rendition of bhajans include the chanting of Bhaja Govindam, Vishnu sahasranama (1000 names of Vishnu), Hari Tuma Haro and the Venkateswara Suprabhatam (musical hymns to awaken Lord Balaji early in the morning). The Kancheepuram Saree shade known as MS Blue was named after her by the well known Congress party member and philanthropist, Sri Muthu Chettiyar when they met at the residence of Sri R. Aiyadurai and Smt. Thangam Aiyadurai at Lady Desikachari Road, Madras, who were close friends of MS and Sadasivam.

A commemorative postage stamp on her was issued on 18-December-2005.

She was bestowed with enormous prize moneys with these awards, most of which she donated to charity. She has given more than 200 charity concerts and raised well over Rs. 10,000,000. She was awarded honorary degrees from several Universities. She was an ardent devotee of Kanchi Mahaswamigal and she rendered his composition *Maithreem Bhajatha* (O World! Cultivate peace) in her concert at the UN in 1966., The royalty received from Venkatesa Suprabhatam in Gramophone record of HMV has been donated to the Veda Patasala run by the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam. She donated many of the royalties on several best sold records to many charity organisations.

D K Pattammal : Padma Bhushan Damal Krishnaswami Pattammal^[7] is one of the legendary exponents of Carnatic music. She is also one of the most adored Female Trinity of Carnatic Music, the other two being MS Subbulakshmi and M L Vasantha Kumari.

Born: 19 March 1919

Place of Birth: Kancheepuram

Parents: Sri Krishnaswamy Dhikshithar and Smt Kanthimathi

Maiden name: Alamelu, Pet name: Patta

She was just nine when she first appeared on the dais. She went on to secure a permanent place in a field that was once considered a male bastion. When the country's tryst with destiny began on the midnight of August 15, 1947, it was D.K. Pattammal's voice on All India Radio (AIR) that called upon people to sing 'Aduvome pallu paduvome.' But what has remained a little known secret is that Pattammal may have lent her voice to the background score of Hollywood film *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941). Carnatic Vocalist Nityashree Mahadevan is her

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granddaughter. She was the first Brahmin woman to have performed Carnatic music publicly, both on stage and on AIR, when there was a big taboo in society that Brahmin woman should not perform on stage. A commemorative postage stamp was issued on her on 03Sep 2014. Her perfect rendering of Ragam Tanam-Pallavi, a musical form that had been a male bastion, earned her the name of “Pallavi Pattammal”.

She lived a balanced and fulfilling life thanks to her husband Ishwaran Iyer who supported her in all her pursuits. An Electrical Engineer, who was working with Electricity department, he resigned his job, so that he can take care of all her organizing, administration and travel requirements. With many achievements in her career, she also did not fail to bring out her successor in Music, Dr. Nithyashree Mahadevan, who is her granddaughter. She lived a prosperous family life and had the privilege of getting Kanakaabhishekam done by her great grandson (4th generation). Gifting this world, her divine music, she left for the heavenly abode on 16July2009.

M L Vasantha Kumari : Madras Lalitangi Vasanthakumari^[8], was a Carnatic musician and playback singer for film songs in many Indian languages. MLV and her contemporaries D. K. Pattammal and MS were adored as the female trinity of Carnatic Music.

Born: July 3, 1928, Chennai

Spouse: Krishnamurthy (m. 1951)

Children: Srividya, Krishnamurthy Sankararaman

Died: October 31, 1990, Chennai

Born on July 3, 1928, to a Brahmin father and a mother of devadasi origin, MLV was naturally inclined to singing, and learnt many Dasar kritis from her mother Lalitangi. Keen on studies, MLV's academic plans, however never fructified thanks to fate, and guru G.N.Balasubramaniam.

She seemed to absorb GNB's tutelage like a blotter, soaking up every nuance. Carried away by her enthusiasm, she presented in a concert, the song 'Kaaranam Kettu Vaadi' in Purvikalyani, at a time when this song, tuned and sung by GNB, was to be released shortly on plate. GNB was quite upset and cut off ties with her for some time. Of course, guru and sishya were later reunited. To quote GNB, "Vasanthi typifies real

discipleship — she absorbs all, but presents her own glorious creations.” Truly, no one could have summed up MLV better.

MLV’s foray into films brought her more fame and money. Her Dasar kritis were sublime expressions of melody. Her eloquent rendition of Dikshitar kritis gained her great appreciation. She would clear doubts in Sanskrit with Embar Vijayaraghavachariar. The month of Margazhi (Dec-Jan) acquired a special charm with her renditions of Andaal’s Thiruppavai. Her renditions to support Bharathnatyam by her daughter Srividhya were cherishable. In 1976, MLV was honoured with a doctorate degree from Mysore University for her work with regard to Purandaradasa’s contributions to music. MLV also received the third highest civilian honour from the Indian Government, “Padma Bhushan”. In 1977, at age 49, MLV became the youngest woman to earn the award and title in Carnatic music, *Sangita Kalanidhi*. She also received the Sangeetha Kalasikhamani award given by The Indian Fine Arts Society, Chennai in 1987. MLV was a front ranking artiste for more than 50 years. Padma shri Smt Sudha Raghunathan^[13], renowned vocalist and Violinist A kanyakumari are her students.

Twentieth century Carnatic duos : Performing classical music as duos started with T Brinda & T Mukta. **Radha and Jayalakshmi**, popularly known as **Radha Jayalakshmi** were Indian Carnatic music vocalist duo as well as playback singers in films in the 1940s and 1950s, before they became music teachers. The person who did playback singing was Jayalakshmi but was named as Radha Jayalakshmi in the cine field. Actually, Radha was her cousin sister and singing partner on the stage performances. They were early singers in the trend of duo singing in Carnatic music, which started in the 1950s, with performers like Soolamangalam Sisters, and later continued by Bombay Sisters, Priya Sisters, Mambalam Sisters and Ranjani-Gayatri . The duo were awarded the 1981 Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in Carnatic Music – Vocal, given by the Sangeet Natak Akademi,^[11] India’s National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama. Vidushi Jayalakshmi died in Chennai on 27 May 2014.

Radha and Jayalakshmi learnt music from G.N. Balasubramaniam himself. Priya Sisters (Haripriya and Shanmukhapriya) are their students. Sikkil Sisters – Kunjumani & Neela

Sikkil Kunjumani, the elder of the sisters, was born on June 15, 1930 and **Sikkil Neela**, the younger was born on September 6, 1940.

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Together they are famously known as the **Sikkil Sisters**. Their father *Azhiyur Natesa Iyer* was a mridangist. Kunjumani started learning music from her father initially and then learnt flute from her maternal uncle **Azhiyur Narayanaswami Iyer**. Neela learnt flute from her sister Kunjamani. Kunjamani, began giving concerts from the age of nine and Neela from the age of seven. Sikkil Sisters have been giving concerts together, since 1962. They are top artistes of the All India Radio and they have been giving hundreds of performances at sabhas, television and elsewhere, both within India and abroad. The sisters blend the tone and play on their flutes and the merger total and effect remarkable. They are known for the chaste, orthodox style in rendering raga, kriti and swara.

Sikkil Kunjumani died on November 13, 2010, in Chennai, aged 83 and her sister is alive. Sikkil Mala Chandrasekar, the daughter of Sikkil Neela is following her mother's footprints as flautist.

Honours and awards they received include *Kalaimamani* by the Tamil Nadu Sangeetha Nataka Sangam – 1973, *Sangeet Natak Akademi Award* – 1989, *Sangeetha Kalasikhamani* by The Indian Fine Arts Society, Chennai – 1997, *Sangeetha Kalanidhi* – 2002, *Padmashree* – 2004.

Contemporary Classical MusiciaHarinama Sankeertan Exponent: *Bhagavatha Shironmani* Smt Kanthimathi Santhanam^[14] is a renowned Classical music Guru and Sampradhaya Harinama Sankeertan exponent. Harinaam Sankeertan is called mother of Classical music for it provides all nourishment and support for Classical music to survive the tests of time. Trained in Carnatic classical by Sangita KalaNidhi Mudikondan Venktrama Iyer, Smt Kanthimathi Santhanam has compiled and authored many books like *Bhakti Ranjani*, *Shodasa Ganapathy*, *Ambaal Divya Naamam* and *Naama Ratna maala*^[14] to propagate this tradition. Also, she has written and composed many bhajans and Naamavalis in her *Naama Ratna Maala*. She was awarded the title *Bhagavatha Seva Mani* by Shankaracharya. She is a great achiever, for she has proved her excellence in Sampradhaya Bhajan, which has been a male bastion for centuries. She is also my beloved Guru from whom I learnt this tradition and also Classical music.

Kalaimamani D Pattamaal is the only woman composer to have written compositions in all 72 Melakartha raagas. She has published it as *Mela Raga Kriti Maala*, authenticated by Dr. S Ramanathan and Veenai S Balachander.

Dr. S Bhagyalekshmi has compiled and published a book Raagas in Carnatic Music which serves as an authentic source of reference for learners, researchers and performers.

Violinists : Dr. N. Rajam (born 1938) is an Indian violinist who performs Hindustani classical music. A Professor of Music at Banaras Hindu University, she eventually became Chair of the department and the Dean of the college. She was awarded the 2012 Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, the highest honour in performing arts conferred by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama.

Avasarala Kanyakumari is a renowned female Carnatic music violinist from South India. Kanyakumari is a native of Vijayanagaram, Andhra Pradesh and has been living in Chennai for more than 4 decades. She was fortunate to be a sishya (disciple) of 3 great legendary gurus, Ivaturi Vijeswara Rao, M. Chandrasekaran and M. L. Vasanthakumari.

Innovations and Challenging Feats- She has many successful creative innovations to her credit. "Vadya Lahari" her brain child is a new combo of the violin, veena and Nadaswaram. "Tristhayi sangamam," is a Confluence of 3 violins playing in different octaves portraying a special dimension. Others were, "Carnatic Music Ensembles" of 25, 50, 75 and 100 violins as well as 100 instrument ensemble commemorating the millennium, A music piece "100 ragamalika swarams" which exposes her dexterity in bringing out the raga swaropam in just one avarthana each and 29 hours nonstop marathon performance. Many prestigious awards and titles have been bestowed upon her including *Kalaimamani* from Govt. of Tamil Nadu, *Dhanurveena Praveena*, a title bestowed on her by M.S. Subbulakshmi, *Sangeeta Kala Nipuna* from the Mylapore Fine Arts Club, 2002, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, 2003, Sangeetha Chudamani Award from Krishna Gana Sabha, 2012.

Dr. M. Narmadha is a violinist in the Carnatic and Hindustani traditions. Narmadha is the daughter of violinist M. S. Gopalakrishnan. She trained with her grandfather, Parur A. Sundaram Iyer, and later, her father. Her doctoral thesis compares North and South Indian music styles. Born into a family of accomplished musicians, Dr M Narmadha is the third gen of Parur-MSG tradition with formal training from her grandfather Shri Parur A Sundaram Iyer from the age of four, father Padmashri M.S. Gopalakrishnan and mother Smt. Meenakshi

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Goplakrishnan. With the rare privilege of learning both Karnatak and Hindustani systems simultaneously from her father in violin and from her mother in vocal she has proved her excellence in both styles.

A career gold medalist, top grade artiste of All India Radio, Narmadha won her Doctorate from Delhi University as a Senior U.G.C fellow for her unique thesis on Comparative study of Raagas of Indian Music later published as a book titled. 'Indian Music and Sanchara in Raagas' under the guidance of Sitar maestro Prof. Debu Chaudhuri and vocalist Dr.K.G.Ginde.

In the present generation we have **Lalitha and Nandini**, duo in violin.

Other disciples :

E. Gayathri, a prodigal artist, also known as Veena Gayathri, is a Saraswathi veena exponent. She was appointed as Honorary Director of Tamil Nadu Government Music Colleges (in Chennai, Thiruvaiyaru, Madurai and Coimbatore) by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, J. Jayalalithaa, in 2011.

Padmashri Aruna Sairam is a noted vocalist of repute, who is dedicatedly carrying forward the musical tradition of Dhanammal lineage received from her Guru T Brinda.

Dr RN Sreelatha, who hails from the Rudhrapattanam tradition of Karnataka, is a renowned Vocalist and academician and musicologist who has great number of research and lecture demonstrations to her credit. She has been awarded Karnataka Kala Shri. She retired as Principal, College of Fine arts, University of Mysore. She is a purist in that her rendition of Ragam Tanam Pallavi is incomparable. She has been encouraging learners by conducting hundreds of mikeless concerts through her Shrutimanjari Foundation.

Dr. Padma Murthy is a disciple of the stalwart Mysore K. Vasudevachar. She also learnt from D K Jayaraman and RK Srikantan. Between 1973 and 1978, Padma carried out in-depth research on the Psychology of Music and Music Therapy at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru. She served as the Professor and Chairperson, Department of Performing Arts, Bangalore University. Later, she served as Dean and Visiting Professor at the Sri Padmavathi Mahila University, Tirupati. Her work on music therapy has brought her international repute.

Dr. Radha Bhaskar is a woman of unique combination. She is an accomplished musician. Also, she is a cultural entrepreneur and journalist, who is managing a monthly magazine on classical music, called **Samudhra**, since last 11 years.

In this article I have tried to bring focus on those trendsetters who swam against social current to secure recognition for feminine contribution towards Carnatic music. I also acknowledge the fact that I have many names in mind which I could not pen for lack of data and proof about the same, as well as paucity of space. Also, I have deliberately avoided life details of living musicians for it is their own right and choice to share their personal details. But time and again, I happen to witness situations where women were discouraged from choosing Classical music as profession by their parents, one classic example being myself. I was groomed to be an Engineer. But the spark of Classical music in me grew so big a flame that as time passed it did not let me do anything but classical music. As I came out successfully to perform Kheyal of Bade Ramdas Gharana on stage, my Guru revealed to me that he had broken the social conditioning to teach me this Keyal form, for it has been the unwritten rule not to teach Keyal singing to female artists, in this musical lineage. Even today I have come across several cases where the parents put their heart and soul to groom the girl to be a performing Classical musician, but the in-laws curb her interests for it was not in their family tradition. There are many living revolutionaries who got a divorce for they did not want to compromise with narrow minded social restrictions being imposed on them. Unpredictability in career progression, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and social restrictions are main factors which are still being valiantly fought against by the present day woman musicians. Let the inspiration and blessings of these trend setters guide us to explore greater possibilities.

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Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the role of Education

Arti Srivastava

Even though women have made real gains we are constantly reminded of how far we have to go to be able to realize equality between men and women. World leaders recognized the pervasiveness of discrimination and violence against women and girls when they signed the visionary Millennium Declaration in 2000. Among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), they included gender equality and women's empowerment.¹

The goal of gender equality and women's empowerment tracked progress of school enrolment, women's share of paid work, and women's participation in parliaments. It triggered global attention and action. It sought to hold government accountable, mobilise much needed resources and formulate new laws, policies, programmes and data. But there are glaring omissions. Noticeably absent are fundamental issues, such as women's right to own property and the unequal division of household and care responsibilities.

By failing to address the structural causes of discrimination and violence against women and girls, progress towards equality has been stalled. Of all the MDGs, the least progress has been made on MDG5, i.e., the reduction of maternal mortality. To make greater progress, we need to give further importance to the goals of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, all of which are grounded in human rights and tackle unequal power relations. Three areas require urgent action. First, ending violence against women and girls must be a priority. Second, women and men need equal opportunities, resources and responsibilities to realise equality. Equal access to land and credit, natural resources,

*UNDP, UNESCO, NICEF and the World Bank were the sponsors. UNFPA joined as the fifth UN sponsoring agency after the conference (UNICEF, 1999)

decent work and equal pay needs to be addressed with renewed urgency. And third, women's voices must be heard. For democracy to be meaningful and inclusive, women's voices and leadership must be amplified in all public and private spaces. Despite progress in recent years women comprises just 20% of parliamentarians and 27% of judges²

France and India have a strategic partnership of prime importance. We cooperate on the most sensitive of subjects like social matters. To know about French experiences towards gender equality and whether reservations are enough to ensure women sharing equal space in Parliament and corporate boardrooms, the views of Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, France's minister for women's rights may be shared. She says –

“Cooperating on the situation of women now is also about carrying common initiatives on the international stage. Important challenges lie ahead of us- the 20th anniversaries of the Beijing and Cairo conferences and the review of the Millennium Development Goals. We must ensure that promoting women's full rights remains an uncontested goal for the international community”³.

Belkacem believes that along with financial measures, a change of mentalities will be necessary to bring about progress in the situations of women. She believes that the state is responsible for guaranteeing equality between men and women. She is convinced that the school, and more generally, education must contribute to the fight against discrimination. She has pointed toward the positive signs sent by India, such as the recent appointment of a women to head the State Bank of India. Another example is Cap Gemini subsidiary in India which has a workforce of 40000 in nine cities and is helmed by a women. She has also pointed towards several political parties and important states which are led by women⁴...

For increasing representation of women in political and corporate worlds reservation of seats as a solution is not promoted in France. They chose to take the legislative road to improve the situation i.e. if political parties do not respect parity in legislative elections, they have to pay fines. At least 40% representation of women in executive boards of big companies is required otherwise fines will be exacted. President Hollande of France has appointed, for the first time, a strictly parity-based government. This has set an example of sincere concern for women and their empowerment.

Our country has done a lot for the welfare of women under both women-specific and women-related legislations. The government of India

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has set goals of gender equality and empowerment of women, and prescribed policies and operational strategies to ensure the progress of women. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. In the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001, there are nine goals for women's welfare and empowerment along with action plans to achieve those goals.

However, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes, and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality on the status of women in India, on the other. This has been analyzed extensively in the Report of the Committee on status of women in India, "Towards Equality", 1974 and highlighted in the National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000, the Shramshakti Report, 1988 and the Platform for Action, Five Years After-An Assessment"⁵.

We are not satisfied with the present state of women and girl child. The reason is we have failed to change the mentality of common men at the grass-roots level who deny any privilege to women. The authorities concerned need stronger will and more sincere efforts to promote the cause of women. Apart from this, parents, teachers and women themselves are responsible for women's empowerment because it is they who are supposed to utilize the facilities provided by the State for the benefit of women. It is imperative that women across India be sensitized about their legal rights as a starting point for their safety, security and empowerment. The message to the government is clear. Simply making laws is not enough. Awareness and enforcement are equally, if not more necessary, to ensure their success.

In the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment, education has also an important role to play. The multiple dimensions of gender equality like equality of access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes and equality of external results need to be heeded and dealt carefully to achieve equality in education.

Equality to access means that girls and boys are offered equitable opportunities to gain admission to formal, informal or alternative approaches to basic education. Actual attendance rather than enrolment is better indicator of whether access has been achieved.

Equality in the learning process means that girls and boys receive equitable treatment and attention and have equal opportunities to learn.

This means that girls and boys are exposed to the same curricula, teaching methods and materials that are free of stereotypes and gender bias. Both of them should have the freedom to learn, explore and develop skills in all academic and extracurricular offering.

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and outcomes are based on their individual talents and efforts. Where tests or examination are used to determine promotion into future grades, or other types of educational opportunities, the extent to which there may be bias in these mechanisms is an important consideration when trying to ensure equality of access and equality of outcomes.

Equality of external results occurs when the status of men and women, their access to goods and resources, and their ability to contribute to, participate in and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal. This implies that career opportunities, the time needed to secure employment after leaving full time education and the earnings of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal.

The above mentioned four dimensions of gender equality in education are related. Women's equality cannot be attained only through education but it cannot be attained without education. This education may be formal or informal, it may be directly dialectic, analytic, merely information based or communicating its message through entertainment, but education in a wide sense is a pre-requisite for value change and without value change no new social objectives can take root.

If education is to be one of the instrument to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, the attitudinal and behaviour modifications needed to be achieved need to be understood and explained. The text books should be free of gender bias and the teachers themselves should overcome their own biases so that they can become instruments of change.

It is, therefore important, that if we expect education to be a means of promoting women's equality, we should ensure that in the text books, and in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities there are themes and topics which will make the young think and discuss the subject, while we need not in fact should not, promote particular stereotypes of a free and equal women we should be able to indicate that equality is an important value that needs to be realized in our society in respect of men-women,

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rich-poor and as between different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. We should be able to explain the various aspects or dimensions of the concept of equality in civic, political, economic and social familial sphere of life. Upto this point the task of promoting the concept of women's equality through education may be relatively simple. What we are attempting is to put forth the idea at the rational, intellectual level and it is possible to find teachers who accept it and can speak about it competently.⁶

While exercising caution in advocating female education as a policy goal purely on the basis of calculating the wider social returns to such investment, it is important to reorganize that investing in girls' education has intrinsic value, and opens up possibilities or opportunities for transformation of gender relations, even though focus on quality, content and process is unarguably important⁷.

Recent policy shifts in education have been articulated around and after the 1990 Jomtien Conference, which gave rise to the "World Declaration on Education for All", backed by major international* and bilateral donors as well as national governments. International consensus post Jomtien places high expectations on education, viewing the right to education as "a matter of morality, justice and economic sense (UNICEF, 1999:7) and its effects as "the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth" (UNICEF, 1999:13).⁸

A strong global goal can push our societies to the tipping point of rejecting discrimination against women and girls and unleash the potential of half the population for more peaceful and a sustainable planet.

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Diasporic Selves in the Making: Reflections on Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines*

Manjari Shukla

The often-stated objective of writing autobiographies and memoirs is the pursuit of identity. Memoirs are ought to be thought of as a “narrative of an author’s quest for her/his identity rather than a chronicle, a catalogue of events, or a bildungsroman wherein the author attains a fixed-frame identity” (Tudor 87). The text thus produced by such a writer is an exploration of possible meanings, contradictions, constructions, deconstructions, re-constructions, re-memberings and forgettings, which constitutes the texture of life. Under such a parameter of Autobiography/ memoir writing, it is given that the process of weaving the story of one’s life necessarily changes the texture of that life in a major way. The author’s entanglement in the text causes him/her to lose something as s/he is learning through it. The identity is not the end product only, but is rather a continuous process of constructions and reconstructions in a new atmosphere. Tudor in her article further expresses this through paradigm of Foucault’s thinking about the self, which occupies three subject positions simultaneously: past, present and future, and the movement of the self within these positions; best explains this phenomenon of identity formation(87) and its search by the author, who is writing the memoir.

The concept of identity formation and the attempt to define and share the identity is perhaps the most challenging textual exercise that any author confronts while writing an autobiography. Meena Alexander’s *Fault Lines* attempts to locate the diasporic self numerous ‘constructions’, ‘deconstructions’ and ‘re-constructions’. This paper will chiefly evaluate how

(a) Meena Alexander’s *Fault Lines* explore the various dimensions of her memoir and (b) how the other memoirs by contemporary writers focus on the genre of autobiography in contemporary diasporic discipline.

It is a known fact that the literature of diaspora, involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of compulsions or choices. It is through experiences of dislocations, translocation and re-locations that diasporic or migrant writers learn to live with multiple selves and communities. These writers find solace in Autobiography/memoir writing and are seen to find an escape from complex diasporic realities. The crossing of borders, dispersal, nostalgia for the homeland and feelings of alienation in the context of diaspora are used to express not only spatial perplexity but also ideological and existential disintegration.

According to Susheila Nasta, South Asian diasporic writers in general draw from their subcontinental, multicultural, and multilingual heritage, resulting in a sensibility which “is adapt not only in daily transitions (between and across languages and cultures), but in the broader translations of a linguistic process that has historically inscribed such heteroglossic transformations,” which enables them “not only to adapt, to assimilate and appropriate, but also to hybridize, reshape and sometimes deliberately misappropriate” (240). The South Asian American women writers reflect South Asia’s diversity in terms of religions, languages, and cultures while sharing the experiences of direct or indirect migration – life in the U.S. as members of visibly different citizen groups, and postcoloniality. However, some of them experience an ambiguously worded diasporic world while teaching and writing abroad, having supposedly benefited from the West’s hungry appropriation of South Asian cultural expressions.

The transnational perspective and shifting localities mark the settings of the majority of South Asian American women’s writing. They are seen to be trademarks in the writings of Abbasi, Alexander, Divakaruni, Sidhwa, Suleri, Badami, Lahiri, and Naqvi, whose narratives are partly set in the U.S., and partly in their homelands. Christiane Schlote remarks in her article entitled “Interpreters of Transnationalism: South Asian American Women Writers” that “this transnational perspective (often marked by an increased code-switching from English to native languages which takes the monolingual reader out of familiar territory) irrevocably highlights issues of economic disparity, political conflicts, and culturally diverse gender relations” (397).

As an expatriate writer, Meena Alexander describes herself as a “South-Indian-woman-poet who makes up lines in English, a postcolonial language [...] a Third World-woman-poet, who takes as her right the

inner city of Manhattan” (The Shock of Arrival 127). In terms of her multilingual position and her multiple migrations (from India to Sudan, Britain, the U.S. and back again), Alexander can be seen as exemplary of a number of South Asian American women writers (Schlote, “Shred of Memory”). She is exemplary when she contextualizes her own very different travel trajectory in an essay entitled “No Nation Woman”: “I did not leave my motherland because of terror or political repression. I was not torn away from my ancestral home. I did not come from a shtetl [...]. On the brink of turning five, I left with my mother on a ship [...] because my father got a job he wanted to take, for a few years, far away in another country” (The Shock of Arrival 116).

As a traveller of various traditions and cultures, the literary corpus of Meena Alexander is seen to have traversed almost three decades and “lies at the intersection of ethnic American, post-colonial and women’s studies” (PTM 1). Similar to her life since birth, which is inclusive of multiple border crossings, her writings cross the traditional boundaries and are influential to generate interdisciplinary dialogues. She is one among the prolific writers of diaspora who creates new hybrid literary forms in her various genres of writing, be it poetry, memoir, fiction. There is an incredible blend of western notes and Bhakti as well as Sufi poetry of non-western tradition in her writings. Her works have received worldwide accolades and project her as one of the promising writers of Indian Diaspora with the potential to unleash the unnoticed. Her writing attempts to move beyond the restrictive national and locally bound traditions and have the power to create their own literary niche. The ongoing engagement of her works is the question of cultural legacy of colonialism and its continuing after-effect in the aftermath of decolonization. Lopamudra Basu and Cynthia Leenerts in the ‘Introduction’ of the book entitled *Passages to Manhattan* write:

Although Alexander’s works originates in the very specific location of her Kerala childhood and is shaped by the context of postcolonial Indian history, it also simultaneously inhabits the realm of transnational and migrant experience. From the age of five, Alexander experienced multiple and continuous border crossings, from Kerala to Sudan at first, followed by travelling to England and returning to India, and culminating in her migratory journey to the United States (11).

As mentioned above the continuous border crossings by Alexander got reflected in her literary oeuvre. While tracing the genealogy of women

writers in India, Alexander finds a particular affinity with writers who have sought to explore the complex issues stemming from the embodied nature of female sexuality. Lopamudra Basu and Cynthia Leenerts in the 'Introduction' of the book entitled *Passages to Manhattan* further explicate:

Like the epics and stories containing Sita and Parasurama's mother, Alexander's own writing is peopled by female bodies that bear the shame and punishment of sanctioned and illicit sexuality. *Fault Lines* includes the character of the Stone eating girl, who is subjected to public shame. Alexander's own connection with this girl highlights her own repressed history of sexual abuse, trauma and buried shame. In *Manhattan Music* after the coruscating affair that Sandhya has with Rashid, she is left with a sense of bodily shame which brings close to the verge of self destruction. (10-11)

One of the conspicuous features of Alexander's writing is that she does not stop by merely recording the traumas and turmoils of female body and soul, but tries to delve deep into female sexuality in the newly emerging patriarchies of South Asian diasporic communities. Her vision possibly stems from the multiple Indian Women's Movements which she witnessed in her formative years as a writer. Inspired by these movements, it appears that her writings in various genres bring to the fore, the intellectual legacy of 1970s French and American feminism into a productive dialogue with so many struggles for social justice organized by women in India. There is a productive synthesis in the writings of Alexander which establishes a connection between the experiences of postcolonial subjectivity, (carrying the burden of the colonial past and the splintered present) along with racial experience and ethnic minority in the United States of America. Though the turmoil and trauma of the new unfamiliar land is there around her, still a "fragile peace" (PTM 13) by Bhakti and Sufi poetry gives her satisfaction and inspires her to, piece together the brokenness and move forward to create a niche for her new identity.

Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines* is her autobiography and the title of the book comes from her feelings of dislocation and displacement. She wrote this memoir so as to find and locate her own self. Her childhood days are chiefly traced in the memoir with multiple flash forwards to the present day. Most of the parts of the memoir, deal with Alexander's life in India and Sudan covering the period from 1950s to 1960s. The text proves to be of comfort for all those migrants who feel unfamiliar in a new land and are trying to locate their selves in diaspora. Her purpose of writing the

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memoir was not only to reiterate her past, but also to figure out who she is now and to uncover a buried trauma that changed the basic thinking of her childhood. Starting with a positive note about her childhood, *Fault Lines* takes her to a mournful state of being. In the opinion of Stella Oh, as a memoir, Alexander's text contends with a "gendered and racialized subject occupying a slippery position which cannot be neatly incorporated into the American white patriarchal, national imaginary" (PTM 20). Within this narrative frame of the American nation, the figure of the South Asian Indian American woman occupies a problematic position in which her 'un-American body' does not fit with conditions for the U.S. citizenship.

Alexander's notion of producing an identity is never wholly spelt out. She writes in *Fault Lines*: "What I have forgotten is what I have written: a rag of words wrapped around the shard of recollection. A book with the torn ends visible. Writing in search of a homeland." (4) The contact zones and fault lines inherent in Alexander's transcultural and transnational subjectivity are also riddled with inconsistencies. She expresses this again, in her *Fault Lines*: "There's no ideal of poise in its construction, just the basting together of bits. Sometimes bits burst open, split apart, and one does not quite know how to go on. How to construct a provisional self to live by. How to make up memory". (177)

It is in her memoir that she claims herself to be a woman "cracked by multiple migrations" (FL 3). The text begins with constructing fictive points of origin from which she can tell her story. Another important feature of her writing is the ability to question about the normative criteria pertaining to nation, race and gender. This interrogation provides a basis for stable self-positioning. She offers a particular inscription of the body as a figure of loss, an inscription, as Gayatri Gopinath suggests in *Impossible Desires* to be indicative of specifically gendered and racialized narrative that at once crosses, troubles, reinforces, and reproduces the borders of different 'home' spaces. Mohanty and Martin in their article entitled "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to do with it?" hold the opinion of Alexander's memoir that makes the reader aware of various "exclusions and repressions", which both support and are derived from "the marginalization of differences within as well as without". Alexander's memoir exceeds the function of autobiography, social history and political memoir as expressed by J. Wigfall in her article "Rise Over Fault Lines: Comparative Creativities." Alexander visualizes the diasporic stay differently from other South Asian diasporic authors. Though

she is fragmented and cracked by multiple migrations, she does not lose the unified identity, which she has created on her own.

Here it is pertinent to put in context, Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* and Rehman Rashid's *A Malaysian Journey*, in the same tradition of memoir writing. For Sara Suleri, the memoir *Meatless Days* is seen to be a conundrum. She too articulates the process of identity formation through remembrance(s), analysis of historical and theoretical contexts, and explores idea(s) from different and multiple perspectives. Through her memoir, she is never seen to reach a destination, but is always on the move; for her the journey seems to be more important and there is a continuous usurpation of hegemonic discourses of ascribed identity in her autobiographical work. The characters that are real life beings are sketched in such ways that they prove to be the guiding lights for the searching of her own self. While exploring and talking about the family members, a journey of self discovery starts and it ends with a juxtaposed image of a body which is at once a fixed identity and a fluid substance simultaneously.

Another important memoir which traces the formation of an identity is *A Malaysian Journey* by Rehman Rashid. It is a novel with detailed and recorded Malaysia's journey as a country from its pre-independence era until the time of the novel's publication in 1993. But more than that, it was a novel of Rashid's personal journey as he rediscovered his country and his own identity. As such, it was a highly personal memoir which reflected Rashid's state of mind, his condition, and the problems which he faced through the years. Alienation was one of the problems that Rashid encountered throughout his life. This sense of alienation manifests in many forms, which could be through his ethnicity, language, religion as well as location. This alienation could occur due to the isolation that others forcefully impose on him, or it could be from his rejection towards his contemporaries. Rashid's sense of alienation only further fuelled his condition as both an external and internal exile of his country, whereby he was unable to feel at home wherever he was. It was only after he discarded his foreign view of the country, casting off his state of mind as an exile at the end of the story that he was able to finally feel at home without being plagued by thoughts of alienation. By rediscovering his homeland, it can be said that Rashid was still keeping the stance and perspective of an exile and was viewing Malaysia from the eyes of an exile and not a native.

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Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* and Rehman Rashid's *A Malaysian Journey* are two examples of memoir writing by two different writers, written by keeping in consideration two different contexts of exile, alienation, and being an immigrant. When they are studied in context with the memoir of Meena Alexander, we observe a different tone and texture in her writing. Both the memoirs try to establish the concept of an I-identity in an unfamiliar land, far from the home country. The memoir by Alexander takes into account many issues of her personal turmoils and establishes her as a victorious being in unfamiliar circumstances which were difficult for her. Still there was a need to establish the identity and Alexander succeeded in transforming herself. The stressful childhood memories she talks about in her memoir were capable to build her stronger tarnishing the ill effects by her continuous struggles with her own being.

The outcome of this reading establishes the fact that how memoir becomes an instrument for the writers, especially for those, who are far from their homeland(s). The conditions and circumstances for remembering the homeland(s) are different, the issues of I-identity formations are varied, but the effect of memoir writing gives a kind of solace to both, the memoir writer, and to the reader(s) who feel(s) a connection with similar situations. Be it Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*, Rehman Rashid's *A Malaysian Journey* or Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines* for that matter; all these autobiographical texts express how an immigrant encounters so much of stress and turmoils; how situations themselves become stepping stones for the realisation of being; and how through writing, an attempt is made to express and release multiple emotions of exile, alienation and belongingness. The genre of autobiography thus, becomes a device for these and for many other contemporary writers, who use it to get rid of the traumas and sufferings they faced. The concept of memoir writing also establishes the notion that the immigrant/diasporic writers never succumbed to any situation(s) but fought victoriously to establish their I-identity in a land far from their abode.

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Gender Inequality, Education and Economic Development

Rekha Gupta

Man and woman are both equal and both play a vital role in the creation and development of their families in particular and the society in general. Indeed, the struggle for legal equality has been one of the major concerns of the women's movement all over the world. In India, since long back, women were considered as an oppressed section of the society and they were neglected for centuries. Gender inequality refers to the obvious or hidden disparities among individuals on gender basis. This problem in acute term emerged from gender biased ness within the families & society which means the gender stratification or making difference between a girl and a boy i.e. a male or a female. However, inequality between men and women can take many different forms. Indeed, gender inequality is not one homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems. The issue of gender inequality is one which has been publicly reverberating through society for decades. In the world in general and in the underdeveloped countries [UDCs] in particular, the women are inadequately served in terms of education, health, social status, opportunities and legal rights [G. Moheyuddin, 2005]. In our society there are many way for gender inequality such as inequality in providing basic facilities, health facilities, education, job opportunity, political and social opportunity etc. The problem of inequality in education being one of the most pressing issues today. Traditionally, a boy's education has been seen as an investment, increasing the earnings and social status of the family, however, different standards applies for girls. According to Dollar and Gatti, 1999, in the poorest quartile of countries in 1990, only 5% of adult women had any secondary education, one-half of the level for men. In the richest quartile, on the other hand, 51% of adult women had at least some secondary education, 88% of the level for men.

So we can see that there is gender inequality in education all over the world. An extensive literature shows that gender inequality in education contributes to higher fertility, child mortality and low economic growth [Hill and King, 1995, Klasen, 1999, Murthi & Drez, 1995, Schultz 1994, World Bank, 2001]. In making biasness among the gender India has 10th rank out of 128 countries all over the world which is a matter of deep concern for us. The main factor behind the gender inequality in education in Indian society is mainly cultural and economical aspects. Most of the parents viewed the education of male child as a source of social and economical security for themselves in the future. We can see gender difference in the level of education or school attainment for boys and girls. There can be clear cultural reason behind these type of notion that most of the parents are expected to live with their male child in their old age. In India there is also the cost of education of children seen as a burden on the household. If the financial condition of household is not strong then they sacrifice the education of girl child, because due to the cultural practices a female child take a substantial part of household's wealth to their in laws house at the time of her marriage, which is a clear cut set back to the financial condition of the family. Therefore the parents don't have any incentive to invest in the education of girl child. Along with that the benefit of the education of a girl will went to the other family where she will be living after her marriage.

Further, sometimes the discrimination in educational attainment also came from the self motivated decision of women itself by putting low value to the education, as they reflect what society expect to them. These entire phenomenons indicate cultural and economic reason behind gender inequality in education in India, all most all the Indian state face the same problem of gender inequality in all the parts.

But no country can progress if its half of the population left behind i.e. women. Women constitute to be a significant part of human resources in any society which is still waiting to get its due. There have been several studies conducted on this issue, which show that the women education play very significant role in any economy. In the connection with the above idea the present paper tries to make an attempt to look at the phenomenon of gender inequality in education in India. Further the paper also tries to analyses the association between women education and economic development of India.

Review of Literature : Economic Development is the primary objective of the majority of the world's nations. This truth is accepted almost without controversy. Most of the economists agree that there is a

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strong relation between education and economic development. The concept of the relationship between education and economic development has developed rapidly since the 1960s but has a much longer history. Investment in education is most important source for improvement of human capital which is the most important factor of economic development [Schultz, 1961]. Many researchers [Noor, 1980, Cochrane, 1988, Tilak, 1989(b), Jeffery and Basu, 1996] have recognized education as a basic need that helps in the fulfillment of other basic needs such as better utilization of health facilities, shelter, water, and sanitation and helps in improving the quality of life. Education plays an important role in “process of expanding the capabilities of people” [Sen, 1984: 497]. Education plays an important and significant role in economic development [Tilak, 2005]

In present era each and every nation of the world is willing to be a developed nation. But no country can progress if half of the population is left out. It is sheer wastage of human resources and it has seriously hampered economic growth. In the beginning of third millennium it has become the focal agenda of global debate as to what role women are playing and can play in development. Prior to 1970's when Esther Boserup published her landmark book on women and development, it was thought that the development process affected by men and women in the same way. There have been a number of theoretical and empirical studies that find that gender inequality in education and employment reduce economic growth. Hill and King [1995] study the effect on income of gender inequality in education. Instead of trying to account for GDP growth, they relate gender inequality in education to GDP levels. They find that a low female-male enrollment ratio is associated with lower GDP per capita, over and above the impact of female education levels on GDP per capita.

Barro [1998], find that female secondary education (as measured by the share of female adults with some secondary education) is positively associated with growth, whereas male secondary education is negatively associated with growth.

Knowles and others [2002] estimate the impact of gender inequality in education on GDP per capita in an explicit Solow framework, treating male and female education as separate factors of production. They find that gender inequality in education significantly reduces GDP per capita. Where Klasen, Stephan [2002], finds that gender inequality in education undermines economic growth directly by lowering average human capital

and indirectly through its impact on investment and population growth. He also found that gender inequality in education has a persistent effect on economic growth.

Klasen& Lamanna [2003] finds that gender equity in education and employment is not only an equity issue, but also a growth issue. Gender inequality in education reduces economic growth. Many other researchers have also contributed in this collected work. It has a long plethora which concludes gender inequality in education effect economic development as well as earning of a nation.

Gender inequality in Education : India got her independence on 15th August 1947 with the characteristics of underdeveloped economy and the so called hindu growth rate of development. But it was fortunate for India that after independence the Indian politics and policy making power came under the hand of some talented and pragmatic leaders. They lead India on the path of development and result is in front of us that now India has become a faster growing economy. India got her independence with all socio-economic characteristics of underdeveloped economy like, gender discrimination or inequality on the basis of sex i.e. male or female. Following table indicates gender inequality in India through sex ratio and

Year	Literacy Rate			Sex Ratio
	Total	Male	Female	
1951	18.3	27.2	8.9	947
1961	28.3	40.4	15.4	941
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	930
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	934
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	929
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	933
2011	74.04	82.1	65.5	943

Source- Census of India, Primary Census Abstract (1951: 1961:1971:1981:1991:2001:2011).

Table-1 shows sex ratio of India has declined from 947 in 1951 to 929 in 1991. After 1991 it can see increasing trend but still has reached 943 in 2011, which is still less than sex ration in 1951. This declining trend of sex ratio reflect that over the period of time mass has given birth preference for male child.

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Data of literacy rate among female has increasing trend. Female literacy rate was 8.9 in 1951 which has increased 65.5 in 2011 but still has far behind male literacy rate which is 82.1 in 2011. Data indicates that over the period of time female literacy rate has increased, may be result of several educational programmes introduced by Indian Government like, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, focused programmes for girl education, etc.

Table-2: Enrolment in Primary and Middle/Upper Primary Classes in India						
(In Million)						
Year	Primary (I-V)			Middle/Upper Primary (VI-VIII)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1950-51	13.8	5.4	19.2	2.6	0.5	3.1
1955-56	17.1	7.5	24.6	3.8	1.0	4.8
1960-61	23.6	11.4	35.0	5.1	1.6	6.7
1965-66	32.2	18.3	50.5	7.7	2.8	10.5
1970-71	35.7	21.3	57.0	9.4	3.9	13.3
1975-76	40.6	25.0	65.6	11.0	5.0	16.0
1980-81	45.3	28.5	73.8	13.9	6.8	20.7
1985-86	52.2	35.2	87.4	17.7	9.6	27.1
1990-91	57.0	40.4	97.4	21.5	12.5	34.0
1995-96	60.9	46.2	107.1	22.7	14.8	37.5
2000-01	64.0	49.8	113.8	25.3	17.5	42.8
2005-06	70.5	61.6	132.1	28.9	23.3	52.2
2010-11	70.1	64.6	134.8	32.7	29.2	61.9
2011-12	72.6	67.2	139.9	33.1	29.9	63.0

Source- MHRD, Selected Educational Statistics

The above table shows enrolment data in primary and middle school by sex. Data indicates that till 1990-91, it was huge difference between male and female enrolment but after 1990-91 we can see reducing inequality trend in enrolment at primary and upper primary level. Latest data of year 2011-12 indicate that female enrolment is 29.9 million and male enrolment is 33.1 million at upper primary level where it is 67.2 million and 72.6 million respectively at primary level.

Table-3: Enrolment in High/Higher Secondary/Inter/Pre-Degree (IX-XII) Schools in India						
(Figures In Million)						
Year	Class IX-X			Class XI-XII		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1950-51	-	-	-	1.3	0.2	1.5
1960-61	-	-	-	2.7	0.7	3.4
1970-71	-	-	-	5.7	1.9	7.6
1980-81	-	-	-	7.6	3.4	11.0
1990-91	10.0	5.0	15.0	12.8	6.3	19.1
1995-96	10.7	6.1	16.8	5.4	2.7	8.1
2005-06	14.5	10.5	25.0	7.8	5.6	13.4
2009-10	16.9	13.8	30.7	9.9	7.9	17.8
2010-11	17.5	14.3	31.9	10.9	8.6	19.5
2011-12	18.6	15.5	34.1	11.6	9.4	21.0

Source- MHRD, Selected Educational Statistics

The above table shows that it was about only 33 percent female enrolment of total enrolment at high secondary level in 1990-91 but this discrimination has reduced rapidly and in the year 2011-12 it has been around 45 percent female enrolment of total enrolment at high secondary level. We can also see this trend at higher secondary level, data shows only 31 percent female enrolment in 1990-91 which raised 42 percent in 2011-12. This trend shows that gender discrimination in education has reduced over the period of time in India at high/higher secondary level of education.

Table-4: Enrolment of All Categories of Students in Higher Education in India (Above XII)			
Year	(Figures In Million)		
	Male	Female	Total
1950-51	3.5	0.5	4
1960-61	8	2	10
1970-71	26	7	33
1980-81	35	13	48
1990-91	34	15	49
2000-01	54	32	86
2005-06	88	55	143
2009-10	124	83	207
2010-11	155	120	275
2011-12	162	130	292

Source- UGC, Annual Reports

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The above table shows that overall enrolment in higher education has increased over the period of time. Data represent enrolment at higher level which indicates that at higher level of education percentage of female enrolment was only 12.5 percent in 1950-51 which has increased 44.52 percent in 2011-12.

The above discussion indicates and concludes that it was huge gender inequality in education in India at each level of education, but over the period of time it has reduced. The reason behind this reduction in inequality may traced because of several government efforts, increasing economic prosperity of nation, worldwide expansion of educational infrastructure, worldwide expansion of educational awareness among mass etc. But still equality in education among male and female has far behind which we have to achieve for rapid economic growth.

Selection of the variables, Data & Methodology : The term Economic Development is more comprehensive. It implies a progressive change in the socio-economic structure of a country. Economic Development refers to a sustainable increase in living standards. It implies increased per capita income, better education and health as well as environmental protection. Thus, Per Capita Gross Domestic Product as whole and also sector wise has taken in the present study as indicator of Economic Development.

The term Education also has a broad sense. There is using Enrolment at different level of Education as indicator of Education such as Enrolment in Secondary Education, Enrolment in Higher Education, in the study. Enrolment in Education has not immediate effect on Economic Development. So here is using the variable, Enrolment at different level of Education with time lag. The average year of completing Higher and Secondary Education is five year, so there has taken five year time lag for Higher and Secondary Education.

Data of the variables has come from secondary sources, such as U.G.C Annual Report, Selected Educational Statistics, R.B.I Report. In the present study time series data has taken. The data of indicator of Economic Development like, Gross Domestic Product/pc, Agriculture Sector Domestic Product/pc, Industrial Sector Domestic Product/pc, Service Sector Domestic Product/pc at constant prices, has taken from Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy, R.B.I from year 1996-97 to 2009-10. The data of Enrolment in Higher Education has taken from U.G.C

annual report from year 1990-1991 to 2004-05 (because of time lag of five years mention above). The data of Enrolment in Secondary Education has taken from Selected Educational Statistics from year 1990-1991 to 2004-2005 (because of time lag of five years mention above).

To establish the association between female education and economic development, the simple Correlation analysis has been used in the present study.

Findings : The output of analysis with above mention methodology shows that there is a strong correlation between women's education and economic development.

Table-5: Correlation between different proxies of development and different proxies of education at different level

	Enrolment in Secondary Education		Enrolment in Higher Education	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Gross State Domestic Product	0.980**	0.929**	0.985**	0.969**
Agriculture Sector Domestic Product	0.778**	0.701**	0.756**	0.756**
Industrial Sector Domestic Product	0.953**	0.900**	0.964**	0.946**
Service Sector Domestic Product	0.981**	0.936**	0.988**	0.972**

Note -** = Correlation is significant at the 1% level

* = Correlation is significant at the 5% level

The above table shows that every proxy of female education is significantly correlated with each proxy of development which reflect important role or contribution of female education in economic development. Main outputs of analysis are –

- Female education enrolment at Higher and secondary level has positive and statistically significant association with India's economic development, i.e. GDP/pc.
- Female education enrolment at higher level has positive and statistically significant association with India's economic development

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and female education enrolment at higher level has higher association with GDP/pc compared to secondary education enrolment.

- Female education has highly association with economic development rather than male education.
- Female education has positive and statistically significant association with each sector of development, i.e. ASDP/pc, ISDP/pc, SSDP/pc. female education has higher association with service sector compared to industrial and agriculture sector.

The above finding and discussion indicates that female education has positive and strong association with economic development of a nation like, India. Many researchers has prove that importance of education for the development or earning of a nation is increasing day by day. Many policy makers has emphasized for the development of education system in India for faster economic development. But the question remain can we achieve faster economic growth if we left our half of the population behind, definitely no. In the present state of affairs the nation is being increasingly driven by service sector, and growth of service sector is highly depended on enrichment of education. Our analysis also proves that female education is positively and significantly associated with service sector. So we can say that if India has to achieve faster economic growth then first of all have to reduce inequality in education and have to promote entry of female in service sector as productive tool through expansion of female education at higher level.

Recently India has achieved the benefit of demographic dividend, so it seems that India have opportunity to earn more and more income and can achieve greater economic growth with about more than 65% youth population. But India should not forget that among this youth population about half are women and if India don't want to loose this golden opportunity has to give more emphasis on the expansion of overall education in general and female education as particular.

The contribution of education to development is widely recognized. It was interesting to examine whether female education has any role in economic development or not. This question has been examined in the present paper, using some of the recent statistics available. A careful review of the research and fresh analysis of secondary data clearly leads us to conclude that women education plays a positive and significant role in economic development at higher and secondary level of education. Further

the study also concludes that there is persistent gender inequality at different level of education which has reduces over the period of time. To conclude we can say that female education plays highly significant role in economic development. On the basis of output it can be said that as female education will increase the economic development of India will increase respectively and India should reduce gender inequality as whole in general and gender inequality in education in particular to achieve faster economic development.

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The age-old tales of silent sufferer: A close reading of Short fictions of Ashapurna Devi and Mahasweta Devi

Joyita Shaw

It has been a tough call for Indian women to assert their voice against a society whose gender based discriminating attitude is in its psyche. It started in 6th century BC when Lord Buddha denied place to women in his *sangha* and women started their struggle for equality. 21st century Indian women are fighting like never before to suppress their fear of being criticised, castigated or dishonoured for seeking their rights, breaking all sort of stereotype notions which act as mechanisms of oppression. Yet she is struggling to find her voice and to breathe in fresh air of equality. However, she sometimes voluntarily enters inside dark chasm of slavery for the sake of love, relationship, security, peace, and home.

Born in the year 1909, Ashapurna Devi is one of the greatest women writers in Bengal. Her writings are burning example of a liberal woman voicing protest against gender based discriminating patriarchal society of her time. Ashapurna Devi's writings are at once regional and universal. A prolific writer, Ashapurna Devi has written one hundred and eighty nine novels and nearly a thousand short stories.

Ashapurna Devi's "Opium" begins with omniscient narrator's announcement of Susmita's comparatively mediocre appearance-"The complexion of Susmita's aging in-law was fantastic even now. Her mother-in-law and aunts-in-law were devastatingly beautiful...In Comparison, Susmita's appearance was nothing to write home about."(P-9). The narrator ironically commenting on physical beauty of women, which is of prime importance than their interior virtues, reveals the mentality of patriarchal society towards women that treats them as a sexual object and nothing else. Sudhiranjan the groom of susmita, who brings her as his wife

gives utter shock to all family members by choosing not any “gori mem” but simply picking Susmita for the “virtue of her talent.” Susmita a popular university student had all feminine skills including cooking. Apart from her skills in painting, writing poetry, editing journals and organising social clubs. As Susmita’s in-laws are only concerned about physical beauty so Susmita’s talents rather than being a matter of appreciation becomes a matter of criticism, her in-laws being jealous of her extraordinary qualities even tries to show her down by criticising her skills as not good skills for any respectably married woman. Susmita, culturally shocked and marginalised by other members of the family felt more embarrassed not by Birja’s criticism but by her husband’s callousness who seemed to be enjoying the company of Birja and even flirted with her in front of Susmita. Birja a distant relative joked at Susmita’s dark complexion even tried to make her personal life public. After she left Susmita felt terribly helpless to understand her husband’s behaviour. To aggravate Susmita’s confusion her long known husband appears to be completely unknown - lacking sophistication and refinement for what he was known to Susmita – “It seemed Susmita was seeing Sudhirranjan for the first time. Sudhi had never seemed so unrestrained and rural before... Was that merely a mask? An acquired veneer?” (p-14)

Susmita was confused, shocked, embarrassed, and angry so she refused to let her husband touch her body raising silent protest thinking that her husband will cajole her and will try to pacify her anger but in her utter surprise, Sudhi took Birja’s side breaking Susmita’s illusion about her foreign educated husband. Susmita realised her husband’s psyche, his male ego, and typical male attitude behind the facade of liberal minded man-” Just because you happen to have several university degrees don’t imagine you are superior to her, OK?”. ”(p-17)

As much as Susmita enters into the interior of her new existence she starts unfolding the patriarchal construction where a woman is only an object of gratification of male lust, a mere show piece, she realise she does not have any dignity, any honour; she is only a bleating goat to be sacrificed on the altar of male ego. Patriarchal agencies create a cobweb which entangle all its members including women’s minds where a woman unknowingly participates in torturing, molesting, suppressing their own folk without understanding what harm they are doing to themselves. Giving importance to physical beauty above education, they indirectly open a path to men to maintain their superior status over women, keeping them ignorant.

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Susmita being educated, self-conscious woman realise the duality of patrilineal society but her feminine tenderness overpowers her rationality, making her confused between “passive daytime...confused and sensuous nights. When finally Susmita fails to cope up with her degrading ambience she decides to go back to her former life. Susmita’s father being a liberal minded man supports his daughter’s decision, even refuses to take alimony offered by Susmita’s in-laws giving a sharp reply on Susmita’s behalf. Susmita’s father behaviour may appear to be quite surprising in a patriarchal construction where women are trained to bear all humiliation and to be in a husband’s house being a good woman and to maintain family honour. As he says “How on earth could you live with these yokels for the past seven, eight months, my dear?”

Any feminist would have felt a sense of triumph by re-establishing Susmita in her former life of dignity but in utter surprise Susmita starts longing for her husband, she pines for sensuous nights and for marital bliss. She finds herself unfit in her former life so she starts writing to her husband in a tone unknown to any self-esteeming woman. She appears to be a common woman, restless in her lonely bed. Thus, the story ends in Susmita’s declaration of self-imposed lifetime imprisonment where she expects her husband’s supremacy knowingly because of her addiction for his companionship.

Mahasweta Devi is a well-known Bengali writer and one of the most appreciated too. Born in the year 1926, has written specially for oppressed tribal people. Recipient of Padma shri and Sahitya Academy award, Mahasweta Devi is of a rebellious mind who is genuinely sympathetic towards the under privileged people whose writings are real testimony of her love and concern for them.

The reason behind taking Mahasweta Devi’s “Chinta” is that it throws light on universal predicament of women. Chinta in contrast to Susmita is an illiterate, maidservant from Midnapur, a god-forsaken land that has failed to provide bread to its residents compelling people to go to several nearby cities to make their living and Chinta is one of them. Chinta- “Short and fair with broad silver bangles and a tattooed chain around her neck.”

Chinta being a single mother carries her two daughters with her to work but instead of getting co-operation, she gets only repulsion and aversion from her employers. Struggling against poverty, loneliness, and male lust, Chinta is like a beast without any sign of protest. She worked merely for eight rupees coping with exploitation of her employer who

took advantage of her helplessness-”Understanding how helpless Chinta was the landlady bargained stridently till the rate of the twelve rupee job was forcibly lowered to eight.”

Chinta being alone and single, aroused matter of sexual lust among local men folk who tried to molest her knowing her defenceless situation. Chinta’s plight is a burning example of how patriarchy treats single women and given a chance, they even pounce upon woman violating one’s right over one’s body. Thus, the flow of the story breaks with sudden revelation of Chinta’s past, story of ill fate, love, lust, deceit, exploitation betrayal, beating, and finally abandonment. Chinta herself depicts her tale of widowhood, her fight of being young widow; how her own relatives try to take advantage of her young age to capture her property. Chinta’s case of being harassed by her own relatives is a strategy of patriarchal society to keep women always depended on men by never letting them handle any financial issue so as to never let her assert financial independence. Chinta refuses to handover her property to anyone becomes a victim of their rage who tries to pollute her by sending unknown men to her house. Chinta’s fight did not end there but later it gets doubled by a man called Utsav who by doing fake promise to marry her continues to exploit her financially as well as sexually and after making her pregnant for second time he abandons her in a city ,after taking away her valuable belongings. Thus, Chinta ends up in the city away from her legal son and property to struggle alone with two illicit girl children-”He escaped after ruining me. He did not marry me , nor did he give me any jewellery. Instead he beat me up, took my money and then disappeared after giving me two kids.”(p-41)

Realising her inability to ever return to her village, Chinta decides to work as house cleaner for her two daughters. Nevertheless, life did not spare her even then; soon her situation turns grave with her son’s sudden appearance, wishing to get back his property. Chinta was told to abandon her two infants and do penance for her sin of being with a man without marriage. Thus, the story ends in a tragic note, Chinta being helpless, afraid of her sin sells off her two girls for mere eight rupees. Later Chinta’s returns to her village among her own folks not to get solace in death but to burn herself like thousand modern Sitas , in the fire of eternal inferno . Lastly, the author ends the story with discussion of local upper middle class people where Chinta used to work where the matter of human trafficking becomes a hot topic of debate. Everyone claimed Chinta too

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be a cruel mother who has done heinous crime by selling her own children but no one bothered to extend their hand to help or rescue Chinta from her predicament or tried to understand her agony of selling her own daughters. "The girl trafficking racket is a big business...Just see the state which we live. None of you have any sense of social responsibility. If only all of you had taken up social work on a locality basis!" having made the remark he began walking briskly towards a gentleman, a Customs official, who was strolling a little ahead of us." Apparently, he had been greatly tickled by the comedy and humour of the incident."(p-4)

Women are fragile ,incapable to fight for their dignity and honour, therefore they need protection and men to keep their honour intact, these are some tricked sentences well-known in patriarchal society by which men trick women to remain submissive all their life and to bow their head against endless humiliation they face in their everyday life. The irony is that men who claim they are protectors of women actually turn into oppressor or exploiter eventually. The question is why women need protection. Are they not human? In addition, what is honour, dignity, chastity? Why patriarchy glorifies women chastity, honour, and dignity? Why it is so much important to men to project themselves as saviours? Is not it a way to keep their status always superior from women?

Women do not want saviours but they want an equal society where they can walk, wear, eat, and do what they wish to, where they can feel free to live life to the fullest. Thus, one needs to understand that by abusing women mentally and sexually we not only harm women but also indirectly create obstruction in social progress because they are the other half of the population. If we do not let women to assert their will freely, how can they work for better future of their society and nation? Thus, in Indian patriarchal system women are second class citizens forever, ill treated, abused and misused by not only men but by women too . Indian myths have very strong influence over social construction where women are always Devi or slut, beyond that two identities a woman can also be a human being is hard to imagine.

Both Ashapurna Devi and Mahasweta Devi wrote in 90's and that too in colonial era but the sad part is that the predicaments of women portrayed by these two literary artists has remained unchanged. Although modern Indian women are aware of the unjust humiliation, harassments, mental and physical torture they face every day due to their lower status in patrilineal society but very few women actually get opportunity to voice

their pangs Today issues like domestic violence, dowry, female foeticide, prostitution, human trafficking, and gang rape has become rampant. More than thousand Indian girls under sixteen every day get cheated, sold, or forced in prostitution due to poverty or being victims of male lust. Hundreds of Indian women make adjustments with their in-laws only being incapable to break their silence against male hegemony. Even marital rape, which is part of domestic abuse, is yet to be recognised by Indian constitution making Indian women incapable to have her right over her own body. While Ashapurna Devi's focus was on inequality and gender based discriminating Indian patriarchal society, Mahasweta Devi differs in her keen interest on issues related to tribal women for whom she had great empathy. However, the reason, which makes their writing universal, is the apt projection of bleak condition of female folk in their creation, which still prevail, in the gloomy sky of male supremacy.

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Women's Malnutrition and Health: Indian Context

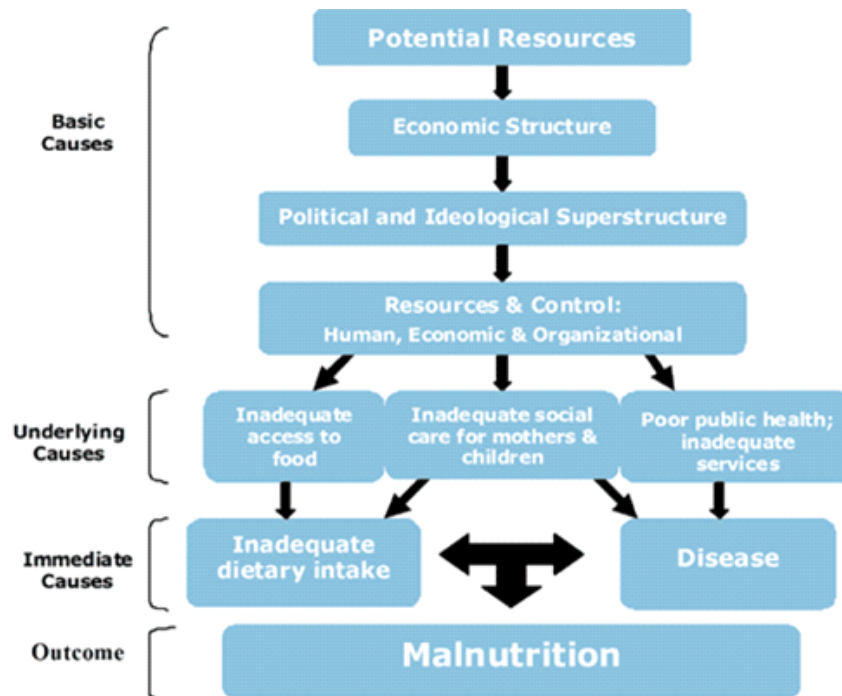
Anup K. Mishra

Women's nutrition affects a wide range of health and social issues, including economic development, poverty reduction, work-capacity, physical and mental development, pregnancy outcomes, family care, and household food security. Education enhances women's status and power, which in turn leads to improved self and child nourishment. Underweight is often the result of under nutrition. In impoverished developing countries, underweight is a factor in increasing household food insecurity, poor childcare, maternal under nutrition, unhealthy environment, and poor health care.

Underweight is a serious issue for women of reproductive age whose prevalence of under nutrition in the poorest countries measured from 27–51 percent. It can cause major complications during childbirth and adversely affect productivity.

Under nutrition is generally caused by inadequate diet and chronic infection, and is attributable to inseparable direct, indirect and basic causes. Maternal and child under nutrition – too few nutrients to sustain growth and development – contributes to 3.5 million deaths each year and is responsible for about 11 percent of the total global disease burden. As adults, malnutrition in women can cause thinness, lethargy, heart disease, hypertension, anemia or diabetes. Direct causes of under nutrition include productivity loss by physical weakness and illness due to inadequate dietary intake. Indirect consequences are insufficient household food security, physical and cognitive stunting, compromised schooling, and increased healthcare cost or inadequate health care services. Human, financial and technical resources are the potential basic causes in development of under nutrition. Following flow diagram shows the causes of malnutrition.

Framework for Understanding Causes of Malnutrition (UNICEF, 1990)



Pregnancy and Malnutrition :

About 210 million women become pregnant each year, most of them in developing countries. Many of these women suffer from both ongoing nutritional deficiencies and cumulative effects of long-term under nutrition.

poor health and nutrition during pregnancy can lead to maternal anemia, and, in newborns, can result in low birth weight, high risk of infection and various disorders or complications, such as neural tube defects, stunted growth and decreased immune function. High rates of maternal malnutrition and low birth weight may also underlie the high burden of non-communicable diseases in adults, such as coronary artery disease, hypertension, and diabetes.

Women's Malnutrition: Consequences :

The ability to be well-nourished, or freedom from malnutrition, is one among a relatively small number of centrally important human freedoms.

Being a centrally important element of well-being, adequate nutritional attainment is essential “equally” for women and men. However, women’s nutrition assumes greater significance due to its critical association with other aspects of their well-being and human development in general. These aspects, discussed below, call for according an order of priority to the nutrition of women than that of men. Yet, it is women’s nutrition which is much less cared for, or discriminated against, due to a complex web of factors.

How important is women’s nutrition for their well-being? How does it affect human development? Maternal malnutrition tends to increase the risk of maternal mortality. Maternal short stature and iron deficiency anaemia, which increase the risk of death of the mother at delivery, account for at least 20% of maternal mortality. In Asia, although haemorrhage is the leading cause of maternal mortality, anaemia is the second leading cause accounting for about 13% of maternal deaths.

Maternal malnutrition is associated with an elevated risk of intrauterine growth retardation leading to the birth of low birth weight (below 2,500 grams) babies. Though poor foetal growth is rarely a direct cause of death, it can make a child vulnerable to malnutrition and mortality. An analysis suggests that the higher incidence of low birth weight babies is primarily responsible for the higher prevalence of child malnutrition in south Asia. Malnutrition – which makes a child susceptible to, and enhances the progression of, infections – is responsible for 60%, 52% and 45% of child deaths from diarrhoea, pneumonia and measles, respectively (Caulfield et al 2004). Also, maternal malnutrition relates intricately to the rising burden of chronic diseases, and thereby, lends credence to the “foetal origin of adult disease” hypothesis, in south Asia. The hypothesis postulates that maternal malnutrition during pregnancy forces the baby in uterus to adapt to survive, but with a permanent disadvantage at the later life. The evidence, though far from conclusive, suggests that intrauterine growth retardation leads to fatal, often irreversible, health outcomes. These include, inter alia, cardiovascular diseases, type-2 diabetes, blood pressure and some forms of mental illness during adulthood or later. Far more vulnerable are children who are undernourished in the first two years, but who put on weight rapidly in childhood or adolescence.

How does India fare in these aspects of human development? Though India’s maternal mortality ratio (540) was lower than that of the whole of south Asia (560) in 2000, the number of maternal deaths

(1,36,000) was the largest in the world, accounting for about 26% and 66% of world's and south Asia's maternal deaths, respectively (WHO 2004: 24-27). Also, nearly 7.8 million children born in India in 2000 have had low birth weights, accounting for more than 40% of low birth weight births in the developing world and more than half of those in south Asia (UNICEF and WHO 2004: 8).

India continues to have a higher level of, even by the recently revised methodology on, child malnutrition: 48% of children under-five years of age are stunted in 2005-06 (IIPS and Macro International 2007: 271). Though India ranks 54 in under-five mortality rate, the number of child deaths (24, 02,000) in 2000 was the largest in the world. Chronic diseases account for 53% of deaths and 44% of disability-adjusted life years lost in 2005 in India (Reddy et al 2005). It is important to note here that women's malnutrition is *not* singularly responsible for these torments of old and new. Yet, its role, both individually and cumulatively, is no less significant either.

These aspects prompt us to ask: What is the extent of under nutrition among women in India? The National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3) carried out in 2005-06 reveals that 55.3% of women in the age group of 15-49 years in India are anaemic in terms of iron deficiency. Also, 35.6% of women suffer from chronic energy deficiency (CED) indicated by the body mass index (BMI) below 18.5. This is much higher than the incidence in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, of the 23 countries of sub-Saharan Africa for which comparable data exists, with a singular exception of Eritrea, all other countries have much lower incidence than that of India. With closer to 40% of women suffering from CED, "the situation can be considered critical in India" (Black et al 2008). Therefore, it is important to identify the primary causes and more so the factors that would potentially reduce women's under nutrition in India.

Causes and Cures:

What makes a large proportion, and indeed, number of women in India undernourished? The answer for this simple question is not so simple. Nonetheless, there is a fair measure of consent that...under nutrition is associated with a cluster of related, often coexistent, factors which together constitute what may be termed the 'poverty syndrome', the major attributes of which are (1) income levels that are inadequate to meet basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; (2) diets that are quantitatively and often

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qualitatively deficient; (3) poor environment, poor access to safe water and poor sanitation; (4) poor access to healthcare; and (5) large family size and high levels of illiteracy – especially female illiteracy. Thus, poverty emerges as the primary cause of under nutrition, and this would be true for women as well.

Additionally, various analyses also suggest that there is something regressive in the culture of the south Asian region that leads to the excessive neglect of women's nutrition, in addition to the usual determinants. These regressive aspects include, but by no means are limited to, the discriminatory practices against women in the allocation of healthcare and food and the excessive demands made on the time and energies of women (Ramalingaswami et al 1996; Osmani and Bhargava 1998).

Arguably, public policy can play a progressive role in attenuating the above poverty syndrome, though actual results leave a lot to be desired. "Poor sanitation" is one of the elements of the above poverty syndrome, which not only blights the nutrition of women and men significantly through infections and ill-health, but also public policy would have a strong influence on it. The question that becomes relevant here is: how does lack of access to toilet facilities, which make both women and men equally vulnerable to numerous infections, affect the nutrition of women more than that of men in India?

An additional number of factors make women in India far more vulnerable to the adverse health effects ensuing from lack of access to proper sanitation. For instance, in many regions of rural India, where households use open spaces or fields for defecation, women have to wait till late evening, if they were not able to manage to go before dawn. This not only makes them especially vulnerable to numerous health problems, but also often forces them to eat less well. What is more, together with cultural constraints and biological reasons, lack of access to sanitation becomes sometimes a source for reduced physical safety and dignity for women. Unlike sanitation, the potential role of public policy in enfeebling the efficacy of regressive social norms against women remains far from sure. Nonetheless, one of the regressive aspects which public policy can possibly influence is "the excessive demands made on the time and energies of women". That fetching firewood and drinking water is primarily the task of women in India goes without saying. For instance, in 81% of households in India which do not have a source of drinking water on the premises, it is the primary responsibility of women to fetch drinking water

(IIPS and Macro International 2007). How does fetching drinking water and biofuels (straws, shrub or grass, agricultural crop residues and animal dung, and so on) impair the nutrition of women in India? Estimates suggest that fetching biofuels and water drains a sizeable amount of women's physical energy. Also, biofuels, which remain at the low end of the energy ladder in terms of combustion efficiency and cleanliness, not only consume long hours for cooking, but also make the physical presence of women almost a necessity. This leads to a close and unequally long exposure of women to the toxic gases and pollutants, including carbon monoxide, and particulate matter, emitted during the combustion of bio-fuels, while cooking. An analysis suggests that exposure to the smoke from the bio-fuels is associated significantly with the incidence of asthma among elderly women and men (60 years and above) in India, and the influence is much higher among women than men.

What is more, besides blighting women's nutrition severely and unequally, lack of access to drinking water on the premises and clean cooking fuels helps to sustain the gender-based hierarchy at the household. That is, since these aspects belong to the realm of activities considered typically as women's domain in India, collection of biofuels and drinking water becomes primarily the responsibility of women. Viewed in this way, lack of access to these aspects of social infrastructure also serves to sustaining the gender-based regressive roles and responsibilities, which undermine women's well-being, including nutrition, in substantive ways.

These multiple implications, together with higher incidence of women's under nutrition in India, make it important and relevant to assess whether access to these aspects of social infrastructure reduces women's under nutrition in India. Specifically, we examine whether, and to what extent, access to toilet facilities, drinking water on premises and clean cooking fuels goes along with a significant decline in under nutrition among women in India. By doing so, we intend to assess the role of public policy in reducing women's under nutrition in India.

BMI as Measurement of under nutrition :

The BMI, one of the very commonly used measures of nutrition, presumes that the weight of a well-grown adult should be equivalent to the square of her height. A BMI, the ratio of weight to squared height (W/H^2), below 18.5 is considered as an indication of under nutrition or CED, though more rigorous measurement on under nutrition would also require

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detailed information on physical activity levels. Following this, we consider a BMI below 18.5 (CED, hereafter) as a measure of under nutrition.

Women's access to social infrastructure is assessed in the following way: Women who (1) use open spaces, fields or bushes for defecation are considered as lacking access to toilet facilities and others as having access to toilet facilities; (2) have access to drinking water on premises or not. Women who do not have access to drinking water on premises are classified further based on the time spent, up to 15 minutes (median time) and above 15 minutes, on fetching drinking water; and (3) women who use wood, straws/shrub/grass, agricultural crop residues or animal dung, coal/charcoal and lignite (biofuels, hereafter) as main source of cooking fuels or not. Note that more than access to drinking water on the premises, studies emphasise the importance of access to safe drinking water, as poor quality of water is a known cause for numerous health problems. However, we have considered drinking water on the premises primarily because of the gender dimension associated with fetching drinking water, if there is no access to it on the premises.

The analysis makes use of the unit-level data from the third round of the NFHS-3, carried out in all the Indian states during 2005-06, data which contain information on aspects of under nutrition and access to social infrastructure. It merits a mention here that since the nutritional status relates to women (15-49 years), access to each of these aspects of social infrastructure is also assessed for women, rather than at the household level. Hence, women for whom the information on social infrastructure is unavailable (mainly visitors) are excluded from the analysis.

Role of Social Infrastructure :

Various studies present the descriptive statistics on women's access to social infrastructure in India. For about 53% of women (15-49 years) in India, who lack access to toilet facilities, the inherent biological process of defecation is in itself a potential source of embarrassment and infections. The fact that over 55% of households in India do not have access to toilet facilities, and thereby, defecate in the open spaces or fields indicates the extent of generalised deprivation which is an inherent part of, though stands far away from, the contemporary (Rising!) India. That the rural households (74%) and women (72%) in India bear the brunt of this deprivation more than urban households and urban women is a reality that speaks for itself. Over 70% of women (and an equal percentage of

households) in India depend on bio fuels, which are not only time and energy consuming, but also have adverse health consequences. Yet again, the rural-urban divide is large here – the rural figure being three times higher than the urban, though the percentage of women depending on these sources in urban India is not so low either. Only on access to drinking water on the premises, does the situation improve marginally. Here too, around 46% of women have to spend, almost every day, some time and of course, energy in fetching drinking water. Of them, 16% of women spend more than 15 minutes. Unlike in the other two aspects of social infrastructure, the rural-urban gap is relatively lower here. The access to toilet facilities goes along with an impressive difference, nearly 20% points, in the incidence of CED among women in India. What is more, the gap in the incidence of under nutrition tends to get almost halved, if women have access to clean cooking fuels. Though access to drinking water on premises goes along with a noticeable difference in CED among women in India, the extent of gap (hovers around 12% points) is relatively smaller. However, an increase in the time spent by women in fetching drinking water tends to go with only a marginal increase in the incidence of CED. Both rural and urban parts of India allude to the above broad pattern: that access to these aspects of social infrastructure tends to go with a significant difference in the incidence of CED among women. While in rural India, the access to clean cooking fuels tends to register the largest difference (around 20% points), it is replaced by access to toilet facilities in urban India (around 16% points). An access to drinking water on the premises turns out to be the aspect that goes with the lowest gap in both rural and urban India: varies from 8 to 11% points. Note here that the difference in CED coexisting with access to toilet facilities and drinking water on the premises is relatively lower, though marginally, in rural India. Yet, the sheer magnitude of the incidence of CED in rural India makes such a difference quite important.

Thus, we may observe that Women's nutrition affects a wide range of health and social issues, including economic development, poverty reduction, work-capacity, physical and mental development, pregnancy outcomes, family care, and household food security.

We must attack on the basic, underlying and immediate causes of malnutrition, especially for the Women. We have to address the potential resources, economic structure, political and ideological superstructure of the society for the betterment of women's nutrition position.

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Adequate access to food and adequate social care for mother and children could strengthen the health of women which should be supported by better public health and services. We should also ensure the dietary intake to overcome the immediate cause of malnutrition among women. Last but not the least; we should surely ensure the education for women as it enhances women's status and power, which in turn leads to improved self and child nourishment.

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Gender Issues in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

Amit Kumar Shukla

Literature is a truthful expression of life through the medium of language. Its success lies in blending both art and morality in such a beautiful way that art, in the long run, becomes the thought. Novel is a product of post colonialism in India. It has come through English Language and western education. Its progress in India is due to the liberal thought from the west, which again a product of post colonialism. The image of women in Indo-English novel is based on the traditional ancient literature of India, which showed woman as a devoted wife or a devoted mother. The post-colonial writers of Indo-English novels equipped with a new education and sociability have different perspective of the images of women. In the post-colonial period liberal thought was brought into our country and it was also propagated by western education. The women novelists were responsible for the new image of women struggling against the oppressive social norms of the male dominated society. The image of the women as a custodian of extraordinary moral virtues incorporated with devotion and sacrifice has become an archetype. The image of women in quest of her identity has emerged from the archetype. In this respect, Indian novelists deal with the society in its rich and varied customs and view the predicament of women in different dimensions. The attitude to women has changed in recent times. Their writings are based not only on observations of external behaviour but also on the internal journey in the psychological realm of feminine sensibilities. The imaginative and creative responses of the writers are related to the changing world view and the questioning attitude thereby developed by it. A few women novelists like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande make straight journey into the psyche of their women characters that are

torn on account of the tensions generated by the discord between the individual and the surroundings. They have started trying to understand Indian women and portray her in their novels.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the famous feminist writers of today. Her writings got great fame for their inclinations towards the gender issues and the graphic depiction of their pursuits and attitudes. These raise a protest against the male dominated Indian society where women are denied the freedom to act according to their will and continue to suffer. Women are treated as subaltern and mere man's shadow. However, the role of women in society has been changing with each decade of a century, always with a deal of social conflicts and ideological struggle. She does not believe in describing her women characters as inferior to men or mere helpmates at home. Shashi Deshpande strives to undo the tilted and distorted image of woman who cries for freedom and equality which still goes unheard in patriarchal society. From this perspective, the women in her works are more powerful than men. Women are essentially represented revolting against the norms and rituals of the society. Her female characters, especially only after they have gone through their own experiences, come to the real self. Her fiction explores the search of the women to fulfil herself as a human being, independent of her traditional roles as daughter, wife and mother. This paper focussed on the need for women to break free from the shackles of their traditional position and see their own need for self-fulfilment as more important than the duty of sacrificing themselves for their husband and children. The novel is divided in four parts. It is done purposefully as each part deals with one particular aspect of Saru's problems. The first part describes the crisis when Sarita (Saru) comes to her father's house. The second part is her realization – her feeling that quest for identity is really necessary. The third part is the deepening the crisis for her. She compares her experiences with that of her friends and gets a shocking realization that they have accepted life as it is. She has even lost her awareness of femininity. The novelist has deftly manipulated the identity crisis with its origins through this narrative.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is a very powerful novel that depicts the life of Saru, a lady doctor who happens to escape to her father's house in the beginning being tortured by the sexual extreme of her husband Manohar but this parental home equally brings

back for her the horrible memories of the cruel attitude of her mother. The novel reveals the life of Sarita (Saru) who is always neglected and ignored in favour of her younger brother, Dhruva. She felt that her mother blamed her for the death of Dhruva, who died by drowning when he was just seven and her mother lashes at her: "Why you are alive, when he is dead." p.191. As for her mother's behaviour, she always keeps two different treatments, one for the son and other for the daughter. Here is one compact example to prove it- "Don't go out in sun. You will get even darker." p. 45. The feeling of hatred is so overpowering that her mother disowns her and dies unforgiving. Saru is left struggling with her life although there is no link with her mother- "I hate her, saping me of happiness of everything." p.109. On the other hand, Saru is tortured by her husband, Manohar, mentally and physically just to satisfy his male ego. Saru's success as a doctor was greatly resented by him and expresses his hatred over her at night making her life miserable. But now she hates herself for letting her husband do it to her - "What he does to me he does it not because he hates me but because he hates himself. And I hate myself more for letting him do it to me that I hate him for doing it to me." Here men-women relations are almost hollow. They are ineffective and compromising. Saru is quite gross and repulsive. She is comfortable with whatever she does. She goes by her mind and does not lead her life which is defined by her mother, husband and society. She follows her natural instincts and makes her own rules. She hardly cares for the institution called 'society'. Saru's decision to become a doctor arose her mother and she opposes it extremely because she is a girl. Saru, however, knows the truth - "Yes I am a girl. But It is more than that." p.144. Saru protests and says - "Is that all I am a responsibility?" p.144. She is not emotional, subdued or weak, like traditional Indian women. On the contrary, she is assertive, pragmatic and strong. Saru challenges the usual orthodox vision of society and she is so tough woman to break the rules and regulations of society without any sense of guilt.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande's female characters are mature in comparison of their mates. Her male characters have an implied code of stoic manliness, which does not assure success to women. Men seem very passive in response to women: they are indifferent or insensitive, unwilling or unable to take action or to accept responsibility. Saru's friend,

Nalu complains – “There’s always time to do all the things “he” wants to do, but never any time for doing the things you want to do.....”p.117. Though in the male dominated society, women are marginalized by their husbands but Shashi Deshpande’s women are heroic in their deeds. They have the ability to face the indifferent and callous attitude of the husbands. Saru realizes how Indian women have been assigned a subordinate and relative position in the family. They are taken for granted as well as their needs are secondary to their family, husbands and above all the so called civilized society.

The Dark Holds No Terrors as novel on the life of a woman is a self-quest and hopes to posit the view that women in the novels of Deshpande have established themselves as autonomous beings. Free from the restrictions imposed by society, culture, nature and free from their own fears and guilt: that women have reached a stage of understanding the fundamental truth: you have to find it for yourself. The women do not wish to look back and vehemently reject the orthodox traditions to make a place of their own in the male dominated society. Saru’s impetuous speech in the women’s college highlights her reaction against such traditional norms which are expected to be followed by every girl and never think to reverse them or to ignore them as they are the primary lessons for a girl’s life – “Listen girls Have you seen an old fashioned couple walking together? Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That’s important, very important, because it’s symbolic of the truth. A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A., you should be B.A. . If he is 5’4" tall, you should not be more than 5’3" tall. If he’s earning Rs.500, you should never earn more than Rs.499, that’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t even try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous.”p.137.

Shashi Deshpande, however, feels that her brand of feminism, if it must be called so, is not the militant feminism adopted by western writers. The problems of her protagonists rise mostly from situation in the Indian context and differ from those of their Western counterparts. She does not think it necessary to refer to western feminist ideology in her novels and regrets the fact that many in our country have no clear idea of the concept of feminism. In an interview entitled - ‘*Everyone Has a Right to choose*

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a *Language*’, Deshpande tells Stanley Carvalho that: “Perhaps being a woman, I find myself sympathizing with women. If others see something feminist in my writings, I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world is viewed in different ways by men and women.”

The Dark Holds No Terrors has an open ending. Saru, during her brief stay in her father’s house, receives many letters from her husband which remain unanswered, as she is still in an undecided state. Towards the end of the novel, however Saru receives a telegram and prepare herself to confront Manu. Thus free from fears and pain, the final picture of Saru is appealing indeed. When she confidently waits for what used to be the greatest terror of life, her husband, she is ready to face him and she is ready to face life.

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Combating Gender Problems and Solution: Bapsi Sidhwa's point of view in *Ice-Candy-Man*

Manjari Jhunjhunwala

Since the birth of literature, female authors have continued to develop many different ways to present their respective point of views and in many single work even exhibit a diversity of methods. The question of 'point of view' has always been a pertinent concern of the novelist, and there have been scattered observations on the matter in critical writings since the emergence of modern feminist novel in the twentieth century. Point of view signifies the way a story gets told-the mode/s established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with characters, dialogues, actions, consequences, setting events and so on which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction. M.H. Abrams talks about such modes that serve as a preliminary frame of references for analyzing traditional types of narration and for determining the predominant type in mixed narrative modes. Talking about first and third person narrative Abrams says that the former is someone outside the story who refers to the all the characters by name, the later speaks as 'I' and is himself to a greater or lesser degree a participant in the story.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988, published in USA as *Cracking India*) is an interestingly powerful story, written in first-person narrative and from a child's point of view-the story Sidhwa carries inside her almost all her life-that of terrors and traumas of partition as she reveals in the essay:

Yet the ominous roar of distant mobs was a constant of my awareness, altering me, even at the age of seven, to a palpable sense of evil that was taking place in various parts of Lahore...(and when) the dread roar of mobs has at least ceased, terrible sounds of grief and pain erupt at night. They come from the abandoned servants' quarters behind the

Singhs' house...why do these women cry like that? Because they are delivering unwanted babies, I am told or reliving memory. (The New York Times, google.com)

Sidhwa, therefore, chooses first-person narrative to relive those distant memories of ferocity of Partition during her childhood. She "wasn't very clear about death but (I) knew that what was happening around (me), the fire, looting and killing were evils." (Literary Encyclopedia, google.com)

Bapsi Sidhwa (b. 1938), a feminine, a Parsee, a Pakistani brings out the psychology of a child through an ironic, elegant and vigorous writing, characters and stories of a far world of which one can discover her to be a fascinated observer and compassionate accomplice. She was born in Karanchi into an eminent family. Her parents Peshotan and Tehmina Bhandara belonged to the Parsee community, which Sidhwa has mentioned in her novel *The Crow-Eaters*. Soon after she was born her family moved to Lahore, the city, central to all her novels. Her childhood was difficult as she contracted polio at two, which paralyzed her leg and affected her entire life. Sidhwa was nine when Partition took place. She has memories of fires and flames and of people chanting and roaring. She recalls her Muslim cook charging out of the kitchen, swearing and cursing at the group of men, until they went away sheepishly. They had come to loot the house thinking it to be Hindu home. In an interview, Sidhwa tells, "the scene was to provide her with the nucleus of the plot for *Ice-candy-Man* and some of its characters". (Shamsie, Dawn, Karanchi, 23.03.1989) In a piece titled "New Neighbours" (TIME Essay, August 11, 1997, vol.150, No. 6) she shares her fragmented but awful memories:

My brother and I rush out of gates and depending on the affiliation of the flag-bearer, our childish voices echo the words of the mobs. My father, who has never held a firearm, returns one afternoon with a long box. He opens it to display an enormous double-barreled gun-nestling in a bed of red-stain... When it becomes clear that Lahore will go to Pakistan Mr. Singh and our other Hindu Friends pile their belongings into trucks and cars, and store with us the things they hope to retrieve when they return to their bungalows... Muslim refugees from India swamp the city, looking for work...

Sidhwa shocks the readers with memories when she writes that for her "the British raj was imposed by the massive statue of Victoria that over-looked Queen's park. Resplendent in gun-metal, she held a large

iron-ball in one hand and an iron club in the other, her billowing raiment filling the delicate marble canopy that framed her statue". Later on "her place... has been taken by a splendidly calligraphic edition of the Holy Koran". Amidst 'glow of fires beneath the press of smoke' which bloodied the horizon in a perpetual sunset' she again recalls that seldom she felt at risk partly because "we live in a safe neighbourhood far from the savaged heart of the inner city, partly because we are Parsee Zoroastrians... we are not directly in the path of the political and religious inferno" that engulfed the three major player in the communal stakes. Sidhwa has used all these childhood memories of Partition in her third novel *Ice-candy-Man*, which is narrated by young protagonist, Lenny, a skinny-Parsee girl. In an interview Bapsi Sidhwa comments on actual point of view:

I started writing *Ice-candy-Man* using the first-person narrative voice of a child; I had to at once distance myself from the character of Lenny. Had I not done so, I would have been too self-conscious to write the circumstances of my life, but Lenny is a very different child. She is feisty... when I was quiet and docile. I have based some characters, like Mother, Father, Grandmother, people I've known intimately, but I've put them through all sorts of fictional situations... The earlier parts of *Ice-candy-Man* are perhaps closest to autobiography.

The present article is an attempt to bring out the point of view in the first-person narrative voice of a child, which is in fact of the novelist herself. Using this mode she tries to acquaint the contemporary world with the slow awakening of the child to grown-up pains and pleasures and to the particular historical disaster that overwhelms her world.

Before the Partition takes center-stage, the novel glories in the beautifully endowed world, which as evoked by Sidhwa's luminous present tense prose is laminated with the magic of childish wonder: moving between her own house and that of her dynamic Godmother, who live with her "docile old husband and her Slave sister"(1) in her one-and-a half room abode. Lenny describes it as her heaven and her 'refuge from the perplexing unrealities' of her home on Warris Road. The child-protagonist-Parsee and polio-stricken Lenny is an extremely observant narrator. The novel opens with a detail account of her polio-contracted leg and her undergoing a painful treatment. Though later in the novel she stops limping. The

characters that surround her 'private world' are her parents, brother Adi, Ayah (her name is Shanta), godmother, Electric-aunt, Cousin, Rosy-Peter, Ice-candy-man, Masseur, Imam din, (the cook), Yousaf, Hari (the gardener), Muccho (the sweeper) and her daughter Papoo. But Lenny's dearest soul mate is Ayah:

... who is chocolate brown and short. Everything about her is eighteen years old and round and plump. Even her face. Full-blown cheeks, pouting mouth and smooth forehead curve to form a circle with her head. Her hair is pulled back in tight knot... Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretense to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, car-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes... (3)

Lenny declares that the 'covetous glances Ayah draws educate me'. (3) Besides, she loves to visit Godmother who lives across the jail road and for her Lenny has excessive admiration as the "bond that ties her strength to my weakness, my fierce demands to her nurturing, my trust to her capacity to contain the trust and my loneliness to her compassion—is stronger than the bond of motherhood". (3-4) Even after her leg is operated Lenny cries for her company. "I feel only she can appreciate my pain and comfort me". (7-8) Lenny knows that she has to suffer the unbearable pain:

The bitter truth sinks in. He never phoned the doctor. He never went to fetch him. And my mother collaborated in the betrayal. I realize there is nothing they can do and I don't blame them. (7)

The night passes and so passes the memory of further pain. Lenny starts to go for strolling with Ayah but is 'uncertain of her future'.

What will happen once the cast comes off? What if my foot emerges immaculate, fault-free? Will I have to behave like other children... while other children have to clamour and jump around to earn their candy. I merely sit or stand, wearing my patient, butter-wouldn't melt... and displaying my calipers and I am showered with candy. (9)

Lenny appears to enjoy these privileges and is perhaps reluctant to come out of her 'troublesome reverie'. Lenny tells that she has even access to her mother's bed in the middle of the night for she thinks that having "polio in my infancy is like being born under a lucky star". Lenny can almost feel 'a languorous happiness' settled in her mother's heart.

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In outside world, she is aware to the maltreatment Muccho, a low-caste woman, gives to her daughter, Papoo. She also gets personally involved into Indian politics, for the first time, in Col. Bharucha's clinic, when she listens to latter's shocking roars:

And except for a few designated renegades, the Parsee has been careful to adopt a discreet and politically naïve profile... We have served the English faithfully, and earned their trust... So, we have prospered! But we are the smallest minority in India... Only one hundred and twenty thousand in the whole world. We have to be extra wary, or we'll be neither here nor there...(16)

Days pass by and Lenny loves to be still pushed in pram when her Ayah takes her up Queens Road, past the YWCA, past the Freemason's Lodge and across the Mall to the Queen's statue in the Park opposite the Assembly chambers. "Queen Victoria, cast in gunmetal, is majestic, massive, over-powering, ugly. Her statue imposes the English raj in the Park". (18) Lenny confesses that she loves to take advantages of ayah's admirers. She "intuits the meaning and purpose of things". She also learns to detect the subtle exchanges of signals and some of the complex rites by which ayah's admirers co-exist. As Lenny narrates:

I keep an eye on Ice-candy-man's toes... once in while I pre-empt the big toe's romantic impulse and, catching it mid-crawl or mid-strike, twist it. It is a pleasure to keep the candy bribes coming. (19)

Lenny receives lot of affection and care because of her handicapped state. She is denied school but "I have many teachers", informs the young narrator. Besides, Ayah's 'goodwill and capacity and Godmother's strength and action' she has Cousin, who has just returned from Quetta where he had a hernia operation. He leads her to a hole in small white china object struck to the wall. Lenny follows him and pokes her finger into the small depression and an AC current teaches her everything she will "ever need to know about gullibility and shock". (21) She gives a queer description of another creature of her narrow world, Electric-aunt, who is 'a resourceful widow, addicted to quick decisions and swift results'. Lenny's account of her aunt is really witty:

The speed at which she moves from spot to spot-from dawn to dusk-have earned her a citation. She is called, in movements of need and gratitude, *bijli*...(21)

Lenny has a brother, Adi, who is four and for whom she has her own amazement, “I don’t recall him learning to crawl or to walk. Where was he? It doesn’t matter”. (22) Readers are left to amaze as well. According to the narrator Adi is aloof, vital and alert and inhabits ‘another sphere of interests and private thoughts’ He is beautiful, rather “the most beautiful thing, animal, person, building, river or mountain that I have seen. He is formed of gold mercury...” (24) Ayah is so proud of Adi’s paucity of pigment that sometimes she takes him to garden and encourages running across the space ‘separating native babies and English babies’.

Life is moving on and one bitterly cold day when ice sales plummet, Ice-candy-man transforms himself into a birdman. The narrator with her brother and Ayah watches the new performance with concealed glee:

At strategic moments he plants the cages on the ground and rages: ‘I break your neck, you naughty birds! ...I cut your throat! He flourishes a barber’s razor...Clutches of tender-hearted Englishwomen...abandon their garden chairs and dainty...sandwiches to rush and scold...They buy the birds by the dozen...After the kissing and cuddling...they release them one by one. (25-26)

Ice-candy-man cum bird-seller longs for Ayah’s company and wants to talk to her to give her the news of the world and pleads her to come to the cinema with him. Ayaha declines the invitation. To her surprise he dangles Adi in the air and threatens to drop the boy. Only after when she gives her consent, Adi released.

Rich men’s wives and children soar to Simla or Kashmir Hills in summer. “We (narrator and her family) also soar, but too lesser, Muree Hills at the foot of the Himalayas”. (31) But their stay has been cut short because the Parsees of Lahore hold a *Jashan* prayer to celebrate the British Victory in the Second World War. Lenny’s quick observation of the gathering inside the Fire- temple is amusing:

Both the priests stand up, smoothing their beards and garments. Chairs squeak as the ladies greet each other and gradually converge on the fruit trays. Slavesisters waddles plumply forward on painful bunions, smiling her patient, obliging smile, securing her sari border to her hair. The women shoo us from the benches and sit down to peel and cut the fruit. (33)

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After the prayers all Parsees congregate in the main hall and a heated discussion starts on the role of Parsee community in the Indian struggle for Independence. Lenny records and tells readers about the impending anxieties of her community:

Does it matter where they look or where they leap? Enquires the impatient voice. 'If we're stuck with the Hindus they'll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargains. If we're stuck with Muslims they'll convert us by the sword!

And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs! (37)

What is most remarkable about Sidhwa's perspective on the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent is her religious distance from its most immediate effects as a member of the Parsee community. In *Ice-Candy-Man* she recounts the traditional story of the Parsee arrival from Iran to India in the 8th century in which an Indian prince sent Zoroastrians refugees a messenger with a glass of milk, signifying that Indian people were a united and homogeneous mixture that should not be tempered with. In response, the Zarathushties carefully stirred a teaspoon of sugar into the milk and sent it back:

The Prince understood what that meant. The refugees would get absorbed into his country like the sugar in the milk... And with their decency and industry sweeten the lives of his subjects. (39)

Thus Sidhwa's heritage allows her to witness the Partition from a safe distance, since Parsee holds a neutral position religiously and politically. Col. Bharucha roars over the mike, "As long as we conduct our lives quietly, as long as we present no threat to anybody, we will prosper right here..." (40) Lenny minutely but dispassionately observes all the commotion in the air.

Further, she acquaints us with her 'new neighbours' at the back of her house, Shankars, who are 'newly married fat and loving'. Lenny often drops in on Gita and finds her always cooking something and mixed up with the fumes of vegetables and lentils in the steam of their nightlong ecstasy. It is a daily fun for Lenny to approach the servants' yard, accompanied by Ayah and sure enough, to see quarrelling and fighting. Amongst them are Yousaf, 'the odd-job man, Greek profiled, curly-haired', Hari, the gardener, Moti, the sweeper and 'genial-faced' cook, Iman Din.

Muccho's merciless beating of her daughter Papoo more often follows this. The narrator in the beginning of the novel gives an account of a pathetic state of Papoo. Her father Moti, the sweeper even does not interfere, enough to infuriate the narrator. Lenny feels disgusted towards Papoo's parents and is afraid that some day 'she will kill her'.

It is not yet winter and Lenny has been badgering Imam Din for the past week to take her on his next junket to his village home. Imam Din, the cook is sixty-five and according to the narrator "possesses a sixth sense-a sensitive antenna that beams him a chart of our movements... (and) is allowed a certain latitude..." (48-49) He surrenders to her wish and Lenny, seated on his legs, has "an illuminating experience—my first glimpse of the awakening metropolis of the two million bestirring itself to face a new day". (51) Both of them reach Pir Pando rolling into Wagah, a village halfway to Amritsar. Lenny meets Imam Din's grandson Dost Mohammad and his wife, Chidda and their children Ranna, Khatija and Parvven. Both the sisters "already wear the responsible expression of much older women" (53-54) but barely two or three years older than Lenny and ranna. Lenny can smell fragrance of communal harmony in each and every corner of Pir Pando when in blue winter afternoon a bunch of bearded Sikh peasants visit the village. The men of Pir Pando—those who have not been working in the fields then come from their barns and courtyards and sit with Sikhs beneath a huge *Sheesham*. The Sikh priest, a *granthi*, Jagjeet Singh and Dost Mohammad indulge in all sorts of conversation including marriage of Ranna's sisters. There is a hint to Hindu-Muslim and Sikh-Muslim troubles, too. But Sikhs and Muslims of Pir Pando take an oath on their Holy Books to protect each other like brothers. Next day, Lenny takes leave of this harmonious world with a heavy heart.

Ayah has acquired two new admirers—a Chinaman and a Pathan. Lenny informs readers about their infatuation for Ayah in following manner:

Mother wonders why we are suddenly swamped with such a persistent display of embroidered bosky-silk and linen tea-cozies, tray clothes, trolley sets, tablecloths, counterpanes, pillowcases and bed sheets. (73)

And:

The attentions of Ayah's Patahn admirer also benefit our household. All our kitchen knives, Mother's scissors and paperknife and Hari's garden shears and Adi's blunt penknife suddenly develop glittering razor edges. And it is not only

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our household the Pathan services. Gita Shankar's, Roy-Peter's, Electric-aunt's and Godmother's houses also flash with sharp and efficient cutting implements. Even ... the servants' quarters acquire redoubtable edges: for the Pathan is a knife-sharpener. (74)

Lenny's observation is sharp but innocent, wise and witty. The Pathan's name is Sharbat Khan and for the first time tries to alert Ayah of, "... bad times—Allah knows what's in store. There is a big trouble in Calcutta and Delhi: Hindu-Muslims trouble". (75) Shifting closer to her he discloses, "*Funny* (italics mine) things are happening inside the old city...stabblings...several bodies are found in the gutters and gullies of the Kashmiri, Lahori and Bhatti Gates and Shalmi...no one knows who they are". (76) Followed by this Pathan makes love to Ayah and latter also responds, this makes the narrator (who is sitting on Ayah's lap), "feel stomach muscles retract to create a warm hollow...something happens within me". (78) The novel has many such excerpts, which are considered to be indecent by the critics. Bapsi Sidhwa in one of her interviews rules out the blame:

If a writer writes about a boy's sexual urges it is perfectly natural; but girls also experience the same feelings, the daze and the dazzlement, so how does that become ribald and indecent? (*The Hindu*, 06 November 2005)

Lenny goes to Mrs. Pen to receive education:

The whiff of Mrs. Pen enlightens me. It teaches me the biology of spent cells and ageing bodies—and insinuates history into my subconscious ... of things past and of the British Raj... of human frailties and vulnerabilities—of spent passion and lingering yearnings. (81)

Lenny recalls Gandhiji's visit to Lahore. "I'm surprised he exists"(85), exclaims the child's heart. She goes with her mother to see him, whom she thinks 'almost...a mystic figure'. (85) Lenny describes Gandhiji thus:

He is small dark, shriveled, old. He looks like Hari, our gardener, except he has a disgruntled, disgusted and irritable look, and no one dare pull off his dhoti! ...I am puzzled why he's no famous—and suddenly his eyes turn to me. My brain, heart and stomach melt. (86-87)

The young Lenny adds further that some years later when she realizes the full dimension of the massacre then she “comprehended the concealed nature of the ice-lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic femininity of Gandhi’s non-violent exterior”. (88) Lenny’s untainted reactions are genuinely of a child who gradually learns about its surroundings. Sidhwa, thus, to a great extent is successful in reliving those days of resistance in her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*.

The April days are lengthening, beginning to get warm. The narrator with Ayah and her admirers from different religions and castes goes to Queen’s Park. There the discussion on ‘inevitable Partition’ starts. Lenny listens to all of them and later on when she meets Cousin, asks him very innocently about it. “There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris road? How will I ever get to Godmother’s then? (92) There is no satisfactory answer then. She therefore, approaches Ayah, who ventures, “they will dig a canal. . . This side for Hindustan and this side for Pakistan. If they want two countries, that’s what they’ll have to do—crack India with a long, long canal. . .”(93) Ayah also tells Lenny, about Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh and Mountbatten, about whom she often comes to hear. The child is now onwards sentient to ‘religious differences’. She cries:

It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, people shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu. . . Iman Din and Yousaf, turning into religious zealots. . . While the Sharmas and the Daulatrams, Brahmins like Nehru, are dehumanized by their lofty caste-marks. . . English Christians. . . look down their noses upon the Pens who are Anglo-Indians, who (in turn) look down theirs on the Phialbuses who are Indian-Christians. . .

Godmother, Slavesister, Electric-aunt and my nuclear family are reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures—we are Parsees.

What is God? 993-94)

Lenny even feels a ‘subtle change’ in the Queen’s Garden. Ice-candy-man reappears but in a new role. And, interesting enough, this time as a ‘Allah’s telephone’. Through Cousin she happens to see a black box in her parents’ bathroom and one day it disappears as it had appeared mysteriously. Amidst bizarre events Lenny misses her friend Ranna:

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... When I close my eyes and I wish to—I see us squatting
beneath the buffalo, our mouth open and eyes closed, as
Dost Mohammad directs squirts of milk straight from the
udder into our fodder sweetness. (104)

Lenny's wish is fulfilled and again she visits Pir Pando to see Baishakhi fair in its neighbouring village, Dera Tek Singh, where all the members of Imam Din's family go every year, "before Ranna was born—before his great-grandfather was born". (105) Jagjeet welcomes them all but tension already lurks in the village, as the narrator senses. Jagjeet Singh informs his friend about Akalis who are up to drive Muslims out of East Punjab for they won't live with Muslims 'if there is to be a Pakistan'. He even suggests Dost Mohammad to leave Dera Tek Singh before it gets dark. Back to Lahore, Imam Din keeps restless and one day blurts out his worries:

Even suppose dost Mohammad and his family leave Pir Pando, which they can't...how can they abandon their ancestors' graves...No, I have seen myself; they cannot throw the Mussulmans out! (109)

Imam Din's perceptions prove to be wrong in days to come.

Lenny, the narrator of the novel dramatizes the amiable textures of multi-cultural Indian life and increasing hints of 'Hindu-Muslim trouble', while she 'learns to tell tales' and becomes 'aware of religious differences' and that 'one man's religion is another man's poison'. (117) Violence escalates and India is divided. The narrator is astounded and her heart aches, "I am Pakistani. In a snap, Just like that. A new nation is born. India is divided after all". (140) In chapter 13 Sidhwa quotes Iqbal, the Urdu poet:

The times have changed; the world has changed its mind.

The European's mystery is erased.

The secret of his conjuring tricks is known:

The Frankish wizard stands and looks amazed. (111)

Lenny sobs asking Ayah how long does Lahore burn because "the air on my face is so hot I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire". (137) Things are upside down and Lenny stops going to Queen's Park altogether. There is dissension in the ranks of ayah's admirers. Lenny watches, "Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimensions: there are no Brahmins with cast-marks—or Hindus in dhotis with bodhis. Only hordes of Muslim refugees". (175) Lenny is a forced-witness to betrayal and beastliness. And one day her Ayah is kidnapped and to her awe kidnappers were led by Ice-candy—man!

Lenny's life does not stop moving on. Hamida, a refugee from India is a substitute of Ayah. The 'harmonious world' of Pir Pando crumples and Lenny finds Ranna in Lahore, half-dead. . . orphaned! Ayah is finally found in the red-light district an Ice-candy-man has become a pimp, the worst part he had ever played! He has married ayah and loves her and is repentant of what he has done with her beloved during riots. On Godmother's imploring him to restore ayah to her family in Amritsar, he crestfallen, opens his heart, "I can't exist without her. . . I'm less then the dust beneath her feet! I don't seek forgiveness. . . (251) Nevertheless, Ayah is ultimately rescued through Godmother's influence but it is clear that along with India and Lenny—"she will never be the same":

Where have the radiance and the animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they've seen and felt: wider even than the frightening saucers and dinner plates that describe the watchful orbs of the three dogs who guard the wicked Tinder Box, witches' treasures in underground chambers. Colder than the ice that lurks behind the hazel in Ice-candy-man's beguiling eyes. (260)

Ayah gone and Ice-candy-man is now a moonstruck fakir who has renounced the world for his beloved and one day he disappears across the Wagah border into India, informs the narrator.

From the beginning to the end the narration is both realistic and magically evocative and over all consistent that brings to life two nations that have 'less to do with fate than with the will of men'. Sidhwa, on being asked why she chooses the point of view of a child to combat the problems and consequences, replies that "a child sees the world through the eyes of innocence. A child has not yet learned the prejudices of elders, or how to hate other people or communities". (Interview, Literary Encyclopedia, Google.com)

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Female Foeticide: An Overview

Garima Gupta

The term “foeticide” is a combination of the Latin words foetus and caedo which means destruction of a foetus or to kill an unborn child. The practice of female foeticide involves the detection of the sex of the unborn child in the womb of the mother and if it is a female foetus, then is selectively being aborted after pre-natal sex determination, and hence denying a girl’s ‘RIGHT TO LIFE’. It is also defined as killing of female foetus through induced abortion. In other words, it implies the barbarous act of killing the girl child in the womb itself, unseen and unheard, only for the fact that she is female.

In India, female foeticide has been practiced for centuries with the earliest evidence being provided by Sir Jonathan Duncan in 1789 (Pakrasi&Halder, 1971). Initially, in India, female foeticide was under practice in medieval age. But was limited to some communities only. In that period marriage of a girl was very costly and if a girl remains unmarried due to the lack of money it was considered as the worst thing. It was also a violation of religion, so the girl children were killed in mother’s womb and this was carried out in Rajput community. The poorest things were that the girls were left unfeed or mothers would apply opium on their breast and would kill the girl children. These things were practiced in Rajkumar and Rajbanshi community in Waranasi in 1789. Under the rule of 1795 and 1804 killing girl child was declared to be an offence but still it was practiced in Rajput community in Kachha and Gujrat. Near about 20,000 girls would be killed from 1, 25,000 families.

In Indian culture, social ethics and family set up are different compared to other culture in the world. In Indian culture, women and men are considered as the two wheels of a vehicle. It is believed that men-women ratio is important for shaping a healthy society. According to the population rule, there should be an equality in number of male and female. But due to the misuse of modern technology this symmetry is not met with. With the use of modern medical technology many people use sonography to determine the sex of foetus and if a female child is found then it is killed in mother's womb. This is the main reason why female are in less number than the male and girl child is denied a birth. Today's male-female ratio compels us to introspect. Sex-ratio is considered as an important tool to assess the prevailing equity in society between male and female. It is a ratio of females to males in a given region or in more technical terminology; it is defined as no. of females /1000 males. Sex ratio is supposed to be a consequence of sex differentials in mortality, sex selective migration, sex ratio at birth and at times the sex differential in population enumeration. Census of India, 2001 reported that sex ratio of India stands at 933, which has further decreased to 914 as per provisional 2011 census. In 2001 Census, the sex ratio among the major states ranged from 861 in Haryana to 1058 in Kerala (Census of India, 2011). Further, the sex ratio had dropped in four of the five districts namely Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, compared to 2001 census data. And worst of all, there were only 300 girls for every 1,000 boys among upper-caste Hindus in urban areas of Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib District. There was a squeeze on family size which affected the number of daughters (Action Aid and Canada's International Development Research Centre, 2008).

A report by UNICEF says that per day 7000 girls are killed in India by abortions. And as a consequence of selective abortion between 35 and 40 million girls, and now women are started missing from the Indian population. Generation of the women are wiped out and the society works as a mute observer to this organised crime (George, 2008). Using the NFHS data, it is assessed that in Northern India, girls currently constitute about 60% of the unwanted births and that the elimination of unwanted fertility has the potential to raise the sex ratio at birth to 130 boys per 100 girls (Bhat & Xavier, 2003). According to United Nation's report, in India 750,000 girls are aborted every year. Besides this, more than 10,000 girl babies are victims of infanticide each year in India. Punjab and Haryana

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are those states where the highest numbers of abortions (80%) are carried out every year. If these cases of foeticide and infanticide continues, no longer a day will come when Mother India will have no mothers, potentially, no life (Indianchild.com, 2012).

Furthermore, it was mentioned in the literature that in 1991 the number of girls were found 945 after every 1,000 male. In 2001 it was 927 and in 2011 it was 940. In Maharashtra this ratio was 946 in 1991, in 2001 it was 913, and in 2011 it was 924. In between the 1991 to 2011 the sex ratio was identified in various cities and it was found that number of girl children is less in developed districts and it is more practiced in undeveloped districts. For example, the detailed survey sex ratio in various cities are as follows, Beed-801, Jalgaon – 829, Ahmadnagar- 829, Buldana – 842, Kolhapur – 845, Jalana-847, Aurangabad 848. Sex ratio between 850 and 900 includes districts like Usmanabad-853, Washim-859, Sangali 862, Parbhani 866, Hingoli – 868, Solapur – 872, Mumbai -874, Dhule -876, Satara 881, Nashik -882, Nanded -897. The ratio between 900 to 925 includes the districts like – Akola-900, Sindhudurg -910, Thane-918, Raygarh -924, and the districts above 925 are Nagpur – 926, Amravati -927, Nandurbar 932, Bhandara -939, Ratnagiri -940, Gondia -944, Chandrapur -945, Gadchiroli – 956.

It is evident from the preceding paragraphs, that sex ratio has declined a lot over ten years from 1991 to 2001 and skewed sex ratios has been observed closely to Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh cities. It is estimated that death of young girls in India exceeded those of young boys by over 3, 00,000 each year, and every sixth infant death is especially due to gender discrimination. Shukla (2011) reported that of the 15 million baby girl born in India each year, nearly 25 percent do not live to see their 15th birthday.

Further, Gujarat, Western Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh, Maharashtra are considered as a well-educated, prosper and developed cities but the sex ratio is between 830 to 912. *“After adjusting for excess mortality rates in the girls, it has been estimated that the number of selective abortion of girls rose from 0.2 million in the 1980s to 1.2 million-4.1 million in the 1990s and to 3.1 million-6 million in the 2000s. Each one per cent decline in child sex ratio at 0-6 year age implied between 1.2 million more selective abortions of girls”* (Dhar, 2011). Bhan (2003) conducted a study in the Department of

Community Health (Medical Institution in South India) where he reported a case study of “Revathy, a 28 year-old lady holding her new born baby who jumped into a well in early morning, just 12 days after her delivery; the baby died but the mother survived with a fracture calcaneum. The reason was the third girl child in the family and her husband had been threatening to remarry on this issue. Moreover, she had no obvious social support either from the family or from within the community.

Diaz (1988) reported that out of the 15,914 abortions were performed during 1984-85 almost 100 percent were those of girl fetuses in a well-known Abortion Centre in Mumbai, after undertaking the sex determination tests. Similarly, a survey report of women’s centre in Mumbai found that out of 8,000 fetuses aborted in six city hospitals 7,999 fetuses were of girls (Gangrade, 1988). It is reported that about 4,000 female babies are aborted in Tamil Nadu (southern India) every year. Sex determination tests are commonly resorted to even in the remotest rural areas. Since, most deliveries in rural areas take place at home there is no record of the exact number of births/deaths that take place. Hence, it is difficult to scale the magnitude of the problem (Snehalatha& Sharma, 2006).

In an article on “Down with low sex child ratio” it was stated that high mortality amongst female children continues from age 1-6 hence pushing the child ratio in favour of male children. In India excess female mortality among children was visible at ages beyond first month of life. It is found that during the post-natal period (age 1-11 months) female mortality exceeds male mortality by 10%. Lal, Vashisht, and Punia (2002) cited that sex differential in mortality ranges from age one to exact age five years in both rural and urban areas but more severe in rural area. Institute for Development and Communication (2002) conducted a study on identifying and controlling female foeticide and infanticide in 3 districts (Amritsar, Jalandhar, and Bhatinda) Punjab Chandigarh with an intent to explore the income strata and rural – urban variations in extent and justification for female foeticide/ infanticide, and to seize the linkages between male child preference with the gender system and the practice of female foeticide/ infanticide. The study was conducted in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Punjab. Data was collected from 3 income groups’ upper, middle, and lower class, through interviews. Findings indicated that 19.4% of the respondents opted abortion because a female foetus was detected, and they wanted a male child. Resort to female foeticide was reported mostly

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by the middle income group (23.2%), followed by upper income group (18.3%) and least by the lower income group (15.5%). The extent of sex determination tests was found to be highest in the region Majha (38.2%) of Amritsar district, followed by 37% in Malwa, and 30.2% in Doaba (Jalandhar). Data revealed that if the first child was female, 63.4% women reported miscarriages during the second pregnancy; in contrast, when the first child was male only 36.5% miscarriages were reported. Moreover, 88.8% of people stated the necessity for having a male child.

In another survey, Dr. Agarwal reported in his survey that 90% of the respondents agreed that boys were given preference in society. Seventy one percent of the respondents went for aborting a girl as they previously had daughters and wanted a son. Similarly, Ashu (2012) conducted a study on the six villages of Ludhiana. The findings revealed that 78% of women approved of female foeticide since the female child would not be happy in this world. According to study, 64% women feel that the parents should decide if they want a girl or a boy. So that they can have one girl and one boy. As far as mother-in-laws are concerned, 12% believe that female foeticide are not wrong and 78% neither approved of female foeticide nor did they call it wrong, 77% of daughter in-laws disapproved of female foeticide.

Therefore, it is evident from the preceding paragraphs that declined sex ratio has been a potential threat for the society and it has been decreasing every year. Further, changes in sex-ratio reflect underlying socio-economic, awareness or education, cultural patterns of a society. Preference for a son and female foeticide continues to be a prevalent norm in traditional Indian household resulting in declining sex-ratio, which has dropped to alarming level. Henceforth, the researchers have identified several predominating factor behind the skewed or declined sex-ratio between men and women. It is an open secret that the status of a women is a complex issue and is not pliable to any simplistic explanation of social reality.

Education is considered to be the necessary base for all socio-economic and cultural development (Sen, 1994) that advances the human capital and economic prospect of a country (UNFPA, 2005). Researchers have stated that investment in women education contributed in various improvements such as an improved status through improved economic prospects, greater decision-making autonomy, control over resources, exposure to the modern world, husband-wife communication, self-reliance

in old age, and reduced restriction on physical mobility (Moser, 1998). UNFPA (2005) reported that a mother's education is associated to better reproductive health and decline in young children's mortality rate. Education is related with the decline in sex ratio too. For example, the decline was much greater in families where mothers have 10 or more years of education than in those where mothers have no education (City Trend Data Bank). A community based survey in Maharashtra, attributed illiteracy or uneducation as a reason of induced abortions. The survey reported husbands of the women undergoing sex selective abortions were less educated than the husbands of other abortion seekers. Further, women who seek abortions for sex selective reasons appears to differ from other abortion seekers; they have lesser autonomy, weaker decision making power within the households and hence more subjected to produce male heirs (Ganatra, Hirve, & Rao, 2001). The reason for the son over daughters is for the defence of the family and its interest, especially in rural areas. An interview of a North Indian village women, resident of Ludhiana responded "*The first obligation of a wife is to produce sons for her husband's family, for her husband and herself of course, but more importantly for the good of the extended family group – to add to the earning power, to uphold family prestige by word and deed, and if necessary by physical strength*" (Baligar, 1999). Earlier and to some extent in the present scenario, a girl is considered to be economically unproductive to her family and this is a major reason that accounts for negative attitude towards girls. In India, a woman's status is accompanied not only with her reproductive capability but also on her success in delivering a male child. By the birth of a son, the Indian woman gains her identity and status so her position changes to a position of prestige and respect from being only a provisional member in her husband's family. The gain in status, security, influence and desire to please the husband by giving him an heir is enough motivation for a woman to crave to be mother of male children (Baligar, 1999).

However, other contradictory studies have reported that education is related with increased sex selective abortions. Researchers have reported that sex selective abortions were more pronounced in wealthier and educated households than poorer households. If the first child has been a boy, there is no fall in the girl-boy ratio for the second child over the study period, strongly suggesting that families mainly those that are wealthier and educated, shows preference for aborting girls if their firstborn child is girl (Jha, Maya, Kesler, Kumar, Ram, Ram et al., 2011). A report pertaining

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to the prevalence of sex selective abortions in rich and educated Indian families was published in 'The Lancet', a medical journal, on 4th June, 2011 (Jha et al., 2011). According to the report which is based on review of data of three rounds of the nationally representative surveys (National Family Health Survey – 1, 2, & 3) carried out during the years 1990 to 2005, it was found that the conditional sex ratio for second-order births when the firstborn was a girl child, fell from 906 per 1000 boys in 1990 to 836 in 2005. Another study (attributing education playing role in female foeticide) conducted at St. Michael's Hospital, University of Toronto and the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh on Sex selection test in India discovered that 'girl deficit' was more common among educated families, especially in homes where the first born was a girl. They also found that when the first child was a boy, the number of second children was equally split among girls and boys. But if the firstborn was a girl, the number of girls born later fell off quickly. Among second children, only 759 girls were born for every 1000 boys, and among third children there were 719 girls for every 1000 boys (Picard, 2006). Sen (2001) reported that indeed, traditional routes of changing gender inequality through using public policy to influence female education and female economic participation, may not serve as a path to the removal of natality inequality. Evidence in this direction comes from countries in East Asia, where high level of female education and economic participation exist. Despite these achievements, compared with the biologically common ratio across the world of 95 girls being born per hundred boys, Singapore and Taiwan have 92 girls, South Korea only 88, and China a mere 86. In comparison, the Indian ratio of 92.7 girls for 100 boys still looks far less unfavourable. Recently a study conducted by Singh and Singh, 2014 confirmed that education plays a significant role for acquiring the knowledge & awareness. They reported that declining son preference has found among the most of the couples, mostly who are well educated and belong to urban areas. In the context, low sex ratio among the (0 - 6 yrs.) age group of the children in Rohtak, Jhajjar, Sonapat, Faridabad district indicate relatively lower sex ratio. It is because of higher level of literacy within these districts. The highly educated group has more exposure and awareness regarding sex determining technique etc.

Additionally, the fear of escalating demands of dowry was cited as another main reason. Marriage of a girl child, is also considered as a process whereby the burden of the father is passed on to the husband for

a very high price. The dowry or groom price is so staggeringly high irrespective of the class structure that generations may have to toil to repay the debts incurred during marriage. Due to the dowry system daughters are problems for parents. So instead of facing dowry problem at the time of daughter's marriage, parents prefer to prenatal sex-determination tests and if it is proved to be female sex, she is killed in mother's womb. A study conducted on Gender Preference and Awareness Regarding Sex Determination among Married Women in Slums of Chandigarh — The study done in the age group of 20-35 years included married women belonging to poor socio-economic groups residing in rural area. Dowry is a major reason for parents to resent a daughter birth and moreover they think it is pointless to spend so much on a girl's education and upbringing only to leave for another's home, without repaying (Puri et al., 2007). Hence, marriage of a girl is thought as a reason for the indebtedness of poor families, while son bring dowries into the family (Grewal & Kishore, 2012). In the south Indian communities people believes that "*Grooming a girl is like watering a neighbour's plant.*" Daughters are unable to provide social security to parents. Most couples especially the middle class think, it appears that 'paying Rs. 500 at present is better than to pay Rs.5,00,000 in future'. Thus, an exorbitant dowry demand is one of the central reasons for female foeticide. A documentary film entitled '*Let Her Die*', produced for female foeticide stated that "*India is short of 25 million women*". It starts by reporting 'Many individuals in Indian society consider that if in the first instance they have a baby girl it would be considered bad luck, in the second a disaster and in third a catastrophe'. With these conditions Indian women justify female foeticide to be the only solution to discrimination that exists for the 'Girl child' from the minute she is born. A study conducted on 200 married men and women to elicit their attitude towards the girl child and the declining sex ratio in Bhopal, found that the reasons for not wanting girls include that bringing up girls is a costly affairs and a wasted investment, they have to be married off, arranging for dowry is difficult, there is fear of providing safety even inside home, and she is subjected to harassments (Srivastava, Das Gupta, & Rai, 2005).

The other reason is the technological advancement. The recent technological developments in medical practice combined with a vigorous pursuit of growth of the private health sector have provided space for mushrooming of a variety of sex-selective services. This has happened not only in urban areas but deep within rural countryside also. The sex of

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the foetus is determined by methods like amniocentesis, chorion villus biopsy, Foetoscopy, Placental tissue sampling and now by the most popular technique ultrasonography. Hence, with the help of above mentioned technologies it is easier to opt the sex selective abortions (Patel, 2007). The misuse of medical science has promoted the rapid growth of this heinous crime in today's society. Whatever the method, the truth is that these methods have made sex determination quite easier and cheaper, thus encouraging the growth of female foeticide at a high rate. Though, the government is putting several impositions on these sex determination technologies.

Another reason is traditional cultural practices reflect deeply rooted values and beliefs. Son preference is exhibited in many cultures and is not unique to developing countries or rural areas, although it is stronger in countries where patriarchy is prevalent. Societies expect women to live and express themselves within narrowly defined gender roles also often exhibit cultural practices that benefit men and harm women and girl children. Family lineage and the family name are carried on by male children in many societies, leading parents concerned about their family's future generations to hope for a son and possibly murder or abort girl children in order to get an heir. Some societies practice rigid social customs that make girls much more expensive to raise than boys. In parts of India, for example, families are expected to hold religious or social ceremonies for a girl that would not be held for a boy. These ceremonies can be very expensive—often requiring a family to provide a feast or gifts for everyone in their village. “Proper” ceremonies for even one girl can ruin an already poor family, and inadequate ceremonies are grave social disgraces. A family may choose to kill a girl child rather than take on the expense, indicating the belief that a family's social status outweighs the value of a girl child's life.

Various socio-cultural, economic, demographic factors, religious reasons (birth and death rituals and beliefs about religious duties and salvation), old age security, property inheritance, dowry, family lineage, prestige and power, (Basu, 1989; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1990; Das Gupta & Bhat, 1997; Das Gupta, 1987; Dyson & Moore, 1983; Kishor, 1993; Miller, 1981) have been traced out as a deep-rooted cause of son preference. Further, several researchers have reported (Chen, Huq, & d' Souza, 1981; Das Gupta, 1987; Zhirong, 2000) that in South Asian countries such as India, South Korea and China not only do sons have important roles in rituals, but they are also taken as a source of support for

the parents especially the old age. Further, the mentality of the people to insist on boy child, society's view towards girls, changing lifestyle, scars on characters, rape, and domestic violence are also promoting factors of female foeticide.

The killing of women exists in various forms in societies the world over. It is an extreme manifestation of violence against women. From the preceding paragraphs it has been clear that there are several potential causes that exists both at the level of society and the person that facilitate the need for son and opt a choice of aborting a girl. Despite this, several other measures have been implemented to check on the female foeticide. Various laws have been implemented to put a hold on female foeticide. For example, the government is implementing a widespread legislation; the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 and the Rules mounted thereunder, for prohibition of sex selection before or after conception, regulation of Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques and prevention of their misuse for sex determination leading to female foeticide. In 2003, both the Act as well as the Rules were amended and further, amendments were done in the Rules were further in 2011 and 2012 with a view to make the provisions more stringent to act as deterrent. But still this heinous crime is taking place in the desire of a baby boy. The government should make stronger laws about a change in the mind-set of the people at large across the country. Female foeticide should be treated as murder and punishment should be given as to a murderer. Further, empowerment of the women and strengthening of women's rights through campaigning against practices such as dowry should be encouraged with assurance of strict implementation of existing legislation. The encouragement of daughters to participate in social and religious rituals may be promoted and the question may be raised stereotyping the man and the women's role in society. The government should check and monitor time to time the facility that they provide for the good health care services, educational facilities to women. Wide attempt is needed time to time to scale the seriousness of the practice of female foeticide. Regular assessment of indicators of status of women in society, such as sex ratio, and female mortality, literacy, and economic participation etc. should be done. Stronger ethical code of conduct among medical professionals, beginning with their training as undergraduates should be inculcated. Medical professionals who are mal-practising, their registration should be cancelled. With the help of media awareness can be created on this sensitive issue. People belong to

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labour class and BPL (below poverty line) should also be provided with some social security measures which may orient them in favour of girl child. The government programme like “Laadli” should be promoted in all the low sex - ratio affected states. And if all such steps are carried out sincerely and effectively, then it would have a positive impetus to the curbing out of this social handicap. With a combination of monitoring, education campaigns, and effective legal implementation and by advocating of a scientific, rational, and humanist approach, the deep-seated attitudes and practices against women can be eroded.

From the preceding overview it can be said that female foeticide is one of the gravest issue that needs to be addressed and tackled efficiently by all human beings. The steady decline in the ratio is surprising, and counterintuitive. Unless paid attention on existing rate, it will bring numerous associated social problems in near future. Due to the shortage of female sex, there will be increased instances of rape, molestations, rampant of homosexuality, trafficking, polyandries etc. And in addition to that, there will be a biological disturbance affecting one and all. Further, we all human should not forget this that as bird cannot fly with one wing, similarly, nature cannot survive on the shoulders of men-folk alone. Harmony, coordination and cooperation are needed for both men and women. Saving the girl child therefore, becomes totally important as in the long run man cannot survive alone. Man needs his all-time inspiration, “the lovely woman”.

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The road less travelled : An Assessment of Saros Cowasjee's Campus Novel *Goodbye to Elsa*

Swati Rai

The Campus novel originated in the West, but the genre in the recent years has crossed over the boundaries of the Anglo-American World and has enriched Indian English fiction as well. The campus novel has gained global readership and popularity because of its subject matter and setting. John E. Kramer writes that the campus novel: "...incorporates an institution of higher learning as a crucial part of its total setting and ... includes, among its principal characters, graduate or undergraduate students, faculty members, administrators, and/or other academic personnel"(ix). One of the main features of the campus novel is its satiric style where satire is used to ridicule the academic world with all its peculiar habits. In fact the corrective purpose of these novels primarily makes them an academic satire.

Though campus novel is basically academic satire intended to expose the high rhetoric professed at universities, it is not only comic but also serious and sad where the element of pain is also inexorably found. In this regard Elaine Showalter says:

... what appeals to me most in academic fiction is its seriousness, even sadness. Perhaps we professors turn to satire because academic life has so much pain, so many lives wasted or destroyed.... Like the suburbs, the campus can be the site of pastoral, or the fantasy of pastoral - the refuse, the ivory tower. But also like the suburbs, it is the site of those perennials of the literary imagination John Updike names as "discontent, conflict, waste, sorrow, fear". (3)

The present paper is focused on the satirical portrayal of campus life as depicted in Saros Cowasjee's campus novel, *Goodbye to Elsa*,

published in 1974. The novel is a perfect example of bleak and gloomy portrayal of campus life. The novel is distinct in the sense that Cowasjee has unfurled a tragic theme in a facetious manner and has pertinently made use of black humor to illustrate this. It deals with the misery of a perturbed academic who turns mentally unstable at the end of the novel. Discouraged in India, in love and life, he goes for higher studies to England, and later, takes up the job of an Assistant Professor in Canada. The novel thus traces the journey and presents the point of view of the protagonist both as a student and as a teacher. The present paper aims to bring out the various aspects of campus fiction in this novel.

Goodbye to Elsa is experimental in the sense that it examines the peculiarities of academia in three different campuses namely - National Defence Academy in India, The Leeds in England and The College of Liberal Arts in Erigon, Canada. The protagonist, Tristan Elliot's first encounter with a campus happens when he joins the National Defence Academy at Dehra Dun. This section of the novel deals with Tristan's experience as a cadet in the National Defence Academy. Although he joins the Defence Academy under the influence of Colonel Melvin Rose, his neighbour, Tristan is soon disillusioned by the despotic and harsh atmosphere of the Academy. In this section of the novel, the novelist deals with the issue of ragging which is experienced by most of the students who are new to campus life:

'Come here,' called out someone. I turned round to see who was in trouble. 'You there! Run up,' he said to me. He was, as I learnt later, like everybody else under training, a Gentleman Cadet. 'You mean me?' I asked, sceptically. 'No, your granny,' he barked...I ran up and stood before him. I saluted smartly. 'You are not supposed to salute in that bloody rigout of yours. What's your name?' 'Tristan Elliott, sir.' 'Tristan Ediot! That's what you are! Aye, what's my name?' 'I don't know, sir.' 'You don't! And you know your fukin' name. Conceited bastard. I will teach you who I am. Now run round the block and touch all the lamp-posts and be back here in two minutes. If you are late, God help you!' (124)

Because of the humiliation and harassment meted out by the senior Cadets, Tristan fails to adapt himself to the atmosphere of the Academy. He ultimately walks out from there and leaves for Britain for higher studies. The next campus that *Goodbye to Elsa* deals with is that of The Leeds in England. This section of the novel very pertinently portrays the life and

conduct of Indian students on the campus abroad. Some of the vital facets of campus life like campus politics, mannerism of Indian students on a foreign campus and romance are also depicted here from the student's point of view.

Ridiculing the activities and behaviour of Indian students on a foreign campus, the novelist points out how some of the very important ideals of Indian culture are being violated by the Indians themselves under the influence of western culture. For instance Rajeshwar Dayal and Shituloo Raman, the president and secretary of 'The Indian Association' are shown as philanderers who promote premarital and extramarital affairs among Indian students on the campus. When Tristan tells Rajeshwar Dayal that he already has a girlfriend in India, "Dayal laughed. 'Girl in India! *Yar* (friend), what has that got to do with enjoying life here? I have a wife in India. No life without a woman in this cold country, I repeat'" (30). In a very satirical vein the novelist points out how in the name of safeguarding interest of the Indian students in the foreign campus, forums like 'The India Association' disseminate self-alienation and derailment in the Indian students.

This section of the novel also sketches Tristan's academic advancement and his strict course of study for his Ph.D. degree quite elaborately. Tristan is shown as a research scholar working on the topic "Henry II's Conquest of Ireland" for his Ph.D. degree in History in the University of Leeds. His supervisor's critical comments on the standard and quality of his work demonstrate one of the various experiences of student life on campus: "My supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Adams, failed to appreciate the first chapter I had submitted. 'Not only is there not one, single original idea,' he complained, 'but even the rehash of others' opinions makes no sense'" (53). Tristan's research methodology and strategy is also depicted here:

I had planned on making the best use of my trip. I saw my supervisor the morning of my departure.... My first task was to map out Henry II's itinerary in Ireland. ...I had also to establish the authenticity of 'The Bull *Laudabiliter*' of which Henry made such good use. My professor commended my goal, but doubted my ability to improve on Eyton. He wished me the very best of luck and a happy voyage. Early next morning I was at the National Library on Kildare Street. My briefcase was stuffed with note paper and index cards, and I had a most impressive bibliography. ...I spent the day turning over the pages of journals and by the evening had managed to consult some thirty volumes. I had also taken

down two pages of quotations (these my supervisor deleted from the final draft of my thesis). (68-69)

The whole description of this kind reminds one of Makarand Paranjape's novel *The Narrator: A Novel* where similar kind of description of the research methodology is found.

Love affairs are a crucial aspect of the campus life and so forms one of the important aspects of Saros Cowasjee's *Goodbye to Elsa*. It is in the campus of Leeds that Tristan meets the two very important women who leave a deep and powerful impact on his life. Heather, a British girl, studying for her Honors in Biology becomes Tristan's first real lover on this campus. Though Tristan loves Heather, he is petrified by the idea of leading his entire life with her: "The idea of spending a life-time with Heather chilled me and on reflection I found that apart from sex, there was very little in common between us" (53).

When Tristan is confronting his quandary regarding his relationship with Heather, he meets Elsa and feels himself getting attracted towards her. But after much introspection he makes up his mind that he belongs with Heather. He returns to her, only to find that Heather was cheating on him with a Syrian student from the campus. Rejected by Heather, Tristan marries Elsa only to realize that he is now relegated to a life with a woman he never loved. After this Tristan accepts the post of Assistant Professor with a university in Canada and moves there with Elsa, thus ending his journey as a student and starting his expedition as a teacher.

The novel now showcases the new experiences and a new outlook towards life that Tristan acquires after he takes up the teaching position in Erigon College, Canada. This section of the novel exposes the severe break down of morality and the proliferation of perversion in thought, conduct and action with reference to the faculty.

Highlighting the sorry state of education in the campus, the novelist points out how the teachers perform their tasks perfunctorily and neglect their foremost duty of imparting knowledge to the students. Tristan tells Marie that "Lecturing is the least important of our jobs, and the preparation still less. Our job is to keep the college going, except for the five months when we are in London, Paris, Rome, Zurich, Madrid for research" (118-119). The novel also demonstrates how the incapable academicians, with their hypocritical behaviour and deceitful tactics hide their incompetence and inability to teach their subject from the students. For instance, Tristan

tells Marie: "When we couldn't check on the facts our students gave us, we corrected their English. And this is at the best of times a tricky job" (118).

The novel also highlights various mechanisms of power politics prevalent in Erigon College. For instance, Faculty Wives' Association, is shown to be the most powerful body on the campus: "As the highest body of the college, it was above lobbying, and its decisions could not be influenced by anybody less than the President of the Faculty Wives' Association" (119). Its importance is emphasized by the incident where Cursetjee, despite of his acumen was denied editorship of *Notikeewin Historical Review* because "...he didn't have a wife to promote his case..." (91), and instead Dr. Horace Peabody, who did not have any experience of editing was selected because "...his wife owned an art shop and was the President of the Faculty Wives' Association- a most powerful body on campus" (91). The novelist ironically points out that because of the dominance and interference of Faculty Wives' Association, *Notikeewin Historical Review* which was started as a serious research journal, "had begun publishing stories and poem on historical themes" (91).

The novelist also directs bitter satire towards the objectionable and noxious atmosphere of the academia. The moral and ethical degradation in the campus is explained through the episode in which Tristan discloses how wives can play imperative part in promotion of their husbands' academic careers:

For one, she can let her bottom be pinched by his immediate superior, and that is worth one special salary increase in most cases. A pretty girl like you could get me a full professorship in two years....A wife can blackmail her husband's boss and force him to promote her husband. (115)

Tristan further exposes the corrupt and unethical practices of the faculty:

The divorce rate among professors is higher than in any other profession. And because of the professors' preoccupation with matters that are academic, adultery is looked upon as a minor aberration. And it is generally settled out of court by the wronged person seeking redress through visiting the other's wife. (118)

It is ironical to see such kind of uncouth and uncivilised behaviour coming from the members of an educated society. In fact a severe kind of satire is directed towards the fraternity of teachers whose perverse and immoral behaviour do not qualify them to be part of a civilized society

Being part of this fraternity which is replete with perversions, corruption, expediency, ethical degeneracy and all kind of menacing politics, Tristan ultimately gets disillusioned and the reality of the world that he is inhabiting becomes evident to him:

The big, happy family- The History Department- was a fiction. It was torn with envy and strife. Everyone hated someone, and I hated them all. Murder, betrayal, perfidy, treachery, rebellion, massacre, cruelty, rage, madness, lust, malice, rape, plunder, extortion, these were the lessons of History. (94)

The novel *Goodbye to Elsa* gives a considerably gloomy and forbidding view of the world of academia. Tristan's experiences in none of the campus could be called an amiable one. The surfeit of damaging components present in the campus like infidelity, deceitfulness, viciousness and covetousness makes him feel completely forlorn and isolated. Various facets of campus life like the behavior of the students, their misadventures, romance, marriage, divorce, power politics, teacher's loyalty towards his profession etc. are described in a very conducive way in the novel. Saros Cowasjee has been able to throw sufficient light on all these aspects of campus life along with protagonist's views both as a student as well as a lecturer. So with the points discussed so far, *Goodbye to Elsa* can be considered to be one of the most notable contributions to the genre of Indian campus novel in English.

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***Pinjar*: Transferring the Woes of Women to Celluloid**

Sangeeta Jain

Amrita Pritam, recipient of Bhartiya Gyan Pitha Award and Sahitya Academy Award, is a Punjabi writer who has voiced the silence of millions of women. As a novelist her most distinguished work *Pinjar* (1950) is originally written in Punjabi and has been translated in more than eight languages along with its English Translation as *The Skeleton* by eminent writer Khushwant Singh.

A moviemaker while adapting a work of literature must demonstrate faithful adherence to the textual source or he should utilize his directorial creative urges to mould and remould to recreate and create it in reel life. The text as a source demands integrity because it is a promise of the author to the reader. Celluloid presentation is performance of the text and requires a deft reworking in a different media as an art form. The one has the complex domination of verbal structure and the other one has the highly influential audio-visual structure. Translating the verbal nuance into the visual feast can either make or mar the objectives of the source-text created by its first creator- the author. Director is a reader first and creator second. Making a movie is a response of reader-director to the source-material and then it is a creation, an adapted one which demands elision (cutting story) and interpolation (creating, mixing scenes and characters) for being a successful venture.

Pinjar as a novel is highly emotive and lays bare the soul of many women across boundaries at the time of Partition of India and Pakistan. *Pinjar* connotes skeleton i.e. a fleshless, bloodless soulless bony structure which has existence but it is not alive. *Pinjar* symbolizes a person whose soul has undergone traumatic experiences of life that reduced one to merely bodily existence. Although title is singular yet it refers to plurality of skeletons in the narrative whose wounds of soul Amrita has tried to touch with her pen.

Thematically *Pinjar* is a story of a young sixteen year old girl named Pooro but it intertwines several other touching subplots revolving around the major plot. The narrative starts with the story of a family revenge resulting in the abduction of Pooro and traverses towards various ways of exploitation of women during Partition, Hindu Muslim inter-communal relations, dominations, riots and feuds. It is also a story of shattered dreams of many, dreams of many young girls, dreams of a strong united nation, dreams of Hindus and dreams of Muslims.

Amrita herself has undergone the travails of Partition which inscribed long lasting effects on her reminiscences. She very desperately interrogates the aftermath of Partition and responds to the violence and pain generated out of communal disharmony resulting in multiple forms of brutalities. As she narrates, “the partition of India continued to become a festered wound in the bosom of history. Nobody would ever know how the dreams of so many girls of this country were slaughtered . . . Then I had written a long poem, “Tavarikh”(History), which echoes the voice of a young girl, who like thousands of such other girls lost somewhere.” Here she compares Punjab’s partition with the anguish of an abducted woman:

“I don’t know where that courtyard is
Or where the toys . . .
Where is the henna meant to be painted on my hands?
Where is my red wedding veil?
The honour of the house was crushed in the bazaar . . .
Who can I tell what happened to me- . . .
Duty and faith were put on sale

The women of the country were put on sale”.(Roy and Bhatia:2008:11)

Pritam does not employ the term ‘religion, community and caste’, yet accentuates many women’s trauma of partition as ‘universal and irreparable’. ‘Who can sense the pain of such a girl – a youth, whose body is forced into motherhood’ or wifehood. Women’s experiences at the time of partition were ‘multiple, fragmented and historical’ which reduced them to skeletons. She has tried to portray women’s brutal experiences into a string in this narrative which showcases the central protagonist Pooro with other women Kammo, Taro, Pagli, Laajo who suffer mental and physical agony and anguish .

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Pooro/Hameeda, a woman with dual identity is a young Punjabi girl abducted by a Muslim Boy Rasheed as he wanted to take a family revenge. Rationalizing his act Rasheed tells Pooro that he brought her forcibly because his family goaded him to abduct the daughter of the Shahs (Punjabi) in order to avenge the abduction of Rasheed's paternal aunt by Pooro's uncle who kept her for three days and thereafter abandoned. The Shekhs (Muslim) vowed to take revenge resulting in the kidnapping of Pooro. Disheartened, broken and desperate Pooro wanted to meet her parents but Rasheed tells her:

“O nekbakht ! ab us ghar me tere liye koi jagah nahin. Unki biradari ka kaun Hindu fir shaho ke ghar ka pani piyega? Tu mere ghar me pure pandrah din rah chuki hai.”(20)

(O dear !you don't have any place in that house. All hindus will never take water from Shah family. You lived here for 15 days in my house.)

Rasheed emphasizes that Pooro a Hindu girl after living 15 days in a muslim house will never be accepted by her parents and if they accept her all Hindus will ostracize her family. Such was the dire consequences of Hindu- muslim inter communal relationships that even parents felt social inhibition in accepting their own tormented and tortured daughters. Where else was the shelter if not their own homes?

Somehow after 15 days Pooro runs away from Rasheed's house to her parental home but to her surprise her parents also reject her under social pressure and in fear of the shekhs:

“Hum tujhe kahan rakhegnge ? kaun tujhe byahkar le jayega ?tera dharm gaya , tera janam gaya .

Beti janamte hi mar gayi hoti . ab yahan se chali ja”.(23)

(Where will we keep you? Who will marry you? You have lost your religion , you have defamed your life.)

(Dear daughter, you should have died at the time of your birth. Go from here.)

Surrendering to the fate and rejected by her parents under social pressure, she was forced into marriage with Rasheed:

“Pooro ko laga ki in pandrah dino ne uske sare sharir par se sara maans utaar liya hai , ab vah nira pinjar hai. Uski na koi aakriti hai,na koi man , na marji”.(24)

(Pooro felt that these fifteen days have reduced her to mere skeleton, fleshless, shapeless, emotionless, without wish and will.)

Emotionless Pooro enters into forced marriage with Rasheed thereby becomes Hameeda as this name was inscribed on her hand. The lifeless soul of Pooro lives in the body of Hameeda who feels like a fleshless skeleton and views other women suffering from the pain of existential dilemma of body and soul, mere structure of bones, devoid of heart and soul. Although she has a social identity of Hameeda but -

“Pooro ab Hameeda ban gayi . Kintu abhi tak jab raat ko vah so jaati thi, uske sapno me uski saheliya milti thi, sapno me vah aapne mata pita ke ghar khelti –kudti sab use Pooro hi pukarte the. Din ki roshni me Pooro hameeda ban jati thi , raat ke andhkar me vah Pooro rahti. kintu Pooro sochati thi vah vaastav me na hameeda thi , na Pooro . Vah keval ek pinjar thi, keval pinjar ,jiska koi roop na tha, koi naam na tha.”(25)

(Pooro has become Hameeda. Yet when she sleeps at night. She meets her friends, plays at her home with parents and all address her Pooro in dreams. At daytime Pooro becomes Hameeda, at night she remains Pooro. But she thinks that she is neither Pooro nor Hameeda completely. She was merely faceless, nameless skeleton.)

Pooro in the text dies many times whenever she finds other young girls undergoing the tumultuous socio-cultural and religious pangs. Hindu Muslim chasm is reflected in Pooro and Kammo’s sympathetic relationship. Kammo, a young orphan girl is also leading a very pathetic life as her mother is dead, remarried father has left her as parentless therefore living a loveless, disgraceful life with her aunt:

“Paida karke hamare liye chhhod gaye. Pooro ne kai bar Kammo ki chhachi ko kahte suna tha . kammo ke mata pita koi na tha ...Pooro soch rahi thi , jab maye mar jati hai to baap bhi paraye ho jate hai. . .sochte sochte uska dhyan aapni or chala gaya, mayen jivit ho fir bhi pita parayen ho jate hai, maayen bhi parayee ho jati hai.”(37)

(After giving birth they left her for me. Pooro listened many times Kammo’s aunty speaking this. Kammo had neither mother nor father. Pooro was thinking when mothers die fathers also become strangers...eventually she thinks about

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herself, if mothers are alive , still fathers turn strangers, mothers also turn their faces away.)

Kammo reminds Pooro that she has her parents alive but they have left her in lurch. What kind of relationship parents have with their daughters?

Another lifeless skeleton newly married woman Taro turns epileptic whenever she has to go to her in-laws house because she finds her husband in love with another woman but he establishes relationship with Taro also without any love and affection. She has to suffer and live in his house as she is married to him and they give her clothes to wear and food to eat:

“Mere man me aag si dhadhak udhati hai. Tu nahin dekhti sab dekhte hai. Do baras ho Gaye hai, roti aur kapde ke liye mai use ye Sharir bechati hun . . . kehte kehte Taro gir padi, uska sharir lakadi ke fatte ki tarah akad gaya.”(43)

I am burning inside. Don't you observe, all observe it. Two years have passed , I exchange my body for food and clothes...while speaking this Taro fell down, her body tightened as a Log of wood.

A mad woman socially named Pagali is another young girl whose inconceivable physical torture forces one to think whether she is insane and skeleton or patriarchal society is insane or skeleton. Dressless, senseless , girl runs on the streets of village one day raped by someone and after certain period of time delivering a beautiful baby-boy and ultimately dies in the child birth process. Pooro deeply thinks:

“Uske sukhe hue, jale hue sharir se uski aayu ka koi anuman nahi lagaya ja sakta tha, bas ek pinjar tha ,jo dorta firta tha. . .(50)

Vah kaisa purush tha !avashya hi koi pashu hoga , jisne is jaisi pagal ki yeh durdasha bana di! . . .jiske paas na husn tha , na jawani thi . . .cheelon ne use bhi noch noch ke kha liya. . .’ pagali ka pet din din badhta ja raha tha. Pinjar me pinjar”. (52-53)

(Nobody could guess her age seeing her lean thin without skin a structure of dry bones, just a skeleton moving here and there.

Who was that man, he must be an animal, who has made the condition of this mad woman worse. . .the mad woman who had no beauty no youth. . .eagles have pounced upon her. . .the belly of that mad was increasing day by day. Skeleton within skeleton.)

Amrita pritam has made her “nakedness a metaphor for her non-religious identity.” Hindus claim for the child of mad woman as she was a Hindu. People in the name of religion almost killed the boy and returned to Pooro almost a lifeless baby. Once again Pooro rears the child as her son without being affected by caste, class, religion and community. She is first a woman and mother and probably never adopts communal identity of a Hindu or a Muslim or in between both.

Laajo is Pooro’s sister in law who is also abducted by another Muslim and is being exploited. Pooro saves her and very courageously she convinces her:

“Mai to jeeti mar chuki hun, mujhe ab kaun kubul karega?

Nahin laajo, mai apne jeete yeh anyay na hone dunga, tu apne ghar jayegi, tera isme kya dosh hai?” (109)

(I am living dead body, who would accept me?

No Laajo, I won't bear this injustice as long as I am here. You will go to your home. It is not your fault.)

Amrita Pritam voices the feeling of such women as ‘I am the symbol of that accident’ (Partition generated cruelties). She recognizes ‘the birth of an accursed child from the womb of mad woman with partition’. She felt disenchantment with the concept of independence, nation’s newly drawn territorial boundaries that destroyed the musical cadence of everyday life. The narrative of Pinjar is critical of people’s mad belief in the religion. As the author has crafted a poem ‘Frenzy’ on the madness of religion which is acclaimed high above religion of humanity :

“When religion goes to people’s heads-

Steel is sharpened

People’s tongues grow cruel

The tongues of love grow dull...

Vultures gather, their beaks tearing at the bodies

They don’t care if it’s daughter or the daughter-in-law of the house. . .

The frenzy of religion goes to people’s head”. (Roy and Bhatia: 2008:16)

The poet condemns the politics of religions, conversion and reconversion. She creates a powerful critique of assertive religious identities and writes, ‘when politics becomes manipulative, people are soaked in each other’s blood in the name of religion . . . I had not known that religion

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could be such a potent weapon to spread hate and to use ill will for hatching political conspiracies.’

Pinjar is transference of a written work into a feature film therefore it is a derivative work. Inevitably the question of accuracy, faithfulness, genuineness crops up, and the higher the stature of the source novel, the more persistent are the questions of trustworthiness. But if the complete novel is transferred to the big screen, the resulting film would be more than ten hours long or in modern times with latest techniques it can be shortened also. But, elision is almost obligatory. Here along with film adaptation interpolation of scenes is also indispensable.

Alteration and modification in adaptation is vital and practically inevitable, necessitated both by the limitations of time and medium, but how much, it requires the judicious sense of balance. Some film theorists have argued that a director should be wholly indifferent to the source-material, as a novel is a novel, whereas a film is a film, and the two works of art must be seen as disconnected units. Since copying of a novel into film is impracticable even imagining a target of “exactness” is ridiculous. Other critics argue that what a film adaptation demands is transformation to fit into limited hours (literally, adapt), and the film must be truthful to either the end product (aesthetics) of a novel or the matter of the novel or the significance of the novel and that the film maker must introduce changes wherever mandatory to suit the requirements of time and to enhance the faithfulness of /to any one of these points.

Pinjar on big screen is also equally touching, emotive, impressive adaptation and therefore received the national acclaim and reflects the spirit of the fiction genuinely. The plot, characterization, action, conflict, dialogue, setting, theme, poetry, song, dress and other paraphernalia with certain modifications catch the true spirit of the text. If we compare these aesthetic elements of *Pinjar* text and *Pinjar* Movie, we will find similarities and dissimilarities which certainly force us to think in different perspectives ie. the perspective of the Film and the perspective of the book. The text is for learned readers who relish in private the verbal nuances and cinema is for all viewers who enjoy the visual feast and its effects. The intention of the director is to convey his message by catching the full attention of viewers. If it conveys easily, it distracts audience more easily on account of its easy accessibility and comprehensibility. Here the risk of distraction is closer and it is vulnerable. Therefore, the filmmaker has to be more subtle, and minute in deletion and addition.

The novel Pinjar as a whole is more tragic, has plots and subplots, resonant imagery, presents such dire consequences of partition on Hindu and Muslim women that a reader can comprehend but a viewer cannot view it on screen which demands restrictive adaptation. The naked women followed by boys running on the street may be objectionable on screen and affect the effect of the theme. Similarly, beautiful songs like ‘marudari chiri’ and ‘beto ko de mahal uttariya aur beti ko pardes’ have no similar effects in the text.

The character of Pooro throughout the novel is reflective, introspective and the novel ends also with Pooro’s introspective reflection “ Koi Ladki Hindu ya Musalman, jo bhi apne thikane pahunchati hai, Samjho usi ke saath meri aatma bhi thikane pahunch gayi.” But Pooro in the film is a struggling woman who sporadically becomes reflective. The thinking Pooro is speaking Pooro on the screen.

In the novel Pooro gives birth to a son and rears the other boy of a mad women raped by someone. In the movie she has an intentional miscarriage as she doesn’t want to deliver. She rears the raped mad woman’s baby who is forcibly taken away by Hindu Fundamentalists on the ground that the madwoman was a Hindu.

The novel starts with Pooro hating herself and living in the flashback, remembering her old happy days. Film starts with Pooro’s marriage ceremony preparations and moves chronologically event-wise. Some of the events the filmmaker has removed for practical purpose, if it had been so tragic as the novel is, the film wouldn’t have been a successful enterprise. Half of the film is devoted to Pooro’s happiness, her imaginary dreams of wearing bridal dress, putting henna on hands, dreaming about her in-laws house, half of the film portrays struggling Pooro with intermittent reflective spirit and disappointed Pooro taking care of and saving other women from their tragic fate in the hands of rioters and exploiters.

Few questions, although impertinent may seem, remain unanswered both in text as well as in film. In text question arises like Pooro meets all Hindu women in Sakkadaali like pagali , Kammo, Taro, Lajjo no muslim woman was in dangerous situation. It alludes to the communal feelings like only Muslims were exploiters. In the film, fundamentalist Hindus take away the mad woman’s son from Pooro, but what happened to him, it has not been shown. In the text Pooro’s brother was very young and no other reference except once was there but in the movie Pooro’s brother was an

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active participant of congress party. By and large the text creates word pictures therefore, the use of the appropriate language is more important and film creates visual images therefore a tight plotting to engross the viewers is necessary. Pinjar as a film and Pinjar as a work of literature both have been acclaimed with prestigious award and high praise. Undoubtedly both the media are different but the message has been conveyed successfully to readers and viewers. The trauma, agony, rape, forced marriages, unwanted motherhood, social humiliation, personal estrangement, family rejection, religious conversion and various other kinds of cruelties in the wake of partition left thousands of nameless women skeleton whose wounds of soul are irreparable.

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Korean Buddhism: Women Within its Fold

Sanjeev Kumar

Buddhism is the common link and bonding between India and Korea since ancient times. Buddhism travelled from India to China and from there to Korea. Each country adopted Buddhism incorporating its indigenous elements into it. Korea was no exception to this phenomenon. Buddhism as a religion and philosophy preached that women and men are inherently equal, but the fact remains that the two sexes never had equal opportunities to a large extent as far as ordination to the sangha, the monastic order was/is concerned. As we all know that Buddha reluctantly accepted women within the sangha. The position of women within the three strands of Buddhism—Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana are different.

Buddhist perspectives on gender are many, diverse and also at times contradictory, varying widely over time and space. The contradictory images of the feminine are seen within the texts of all Buddhist sects. The views on gender expressed in the Buddhist textual discourse may be different from the actual status of Buddhist men and women historically. Women are described in various contexts as being able to attain spiritual goals including nirvana. The age of Buddha attracted many women adherents and many attained arhathood and were known for their learning, meditation and moral conduct. But the gender differentiation in the day to day affair of the Buddhist monastic order was there. The Buddha himself established the Buddhist community in four groups as a 'fourfold community' - the monks (bhikkus), the nuns (bhikkunis), laymen (upasaka) and laywomen (upasika). In this grouping, the differentiation by gender is as fundamental as the differentiation between the laity and the monastic. Thus, in the early Buddhist literature the marginalization as well as the complementarities of the two genders is well marked. One's gender was

to be declared at the time of ordination as people of ambiguous genders were not allowed entry into the sangha. The early Buddhist attitude toward women and gender take different forms. In the Mahayana Buddhism, the views on gender were a continuity of the previous period.

Korea following the Mahayana Buddhism accepted women within its fold and had a long history. The position of the nuns and the laity women within Korean Buddhism will be examined in this paper and wherever possible comparison with other countries can be made. Korea has the distinction of having the first all women Buddhist monastery and perhaps the identity still survives even today. The women within the monasteries and their daily chores, meditation, the monastic education will form the part of the paper and shift, if any with the passage of time will also be examined.

Buddhism preached that women and men are inherently equal, but the fact remains that the two sexes never had equal opportunities to a large extent as far as ordination to the sangha, the monastic order was/is concerned. Within the male dominance of Buddhism, many women lived as educated nuns and laity as is attested by the Buddhist text Therigatha. Buddhist perspectives on gender are many, diverse and also at times contradictory, varying widely over time and space. The contradictory images of the feminine are seen within the texts of all Buddhist sects. In some passages, the women are depicted as weak intellectually, sexually uncontrollable and fit only for wife's role. The Anguttara Nikaya says: "Monks, women end their lives unsatiated and unreplete with two things. What two? Sexual intercourse and child-birth. These are the two things." Then, we have the views on early bhikkunis which counteract this andocentric view. We have references to nuns who were well versed in the teachings of Buddha. The Therigatha being just one example and it was perhaps the earliest texts in the world to have been composed by women. It "presents strong, liberated women who gave voice to the central Buddhist message that enlightenment was not gendered."¹

The views on gender expressed in the Buddhist textual discourse may be different from the actual status of Buddhist men and women historically. Women are described in various contexts as being able to attain spiritual goals including nirvana. The age of Buddha attracted many women adherents and many attained arhathood and were known for their learning, meditation and moral conduct. But the gender differentiation in

the day to day affair of the Buddhist monastic order was there. The Buddha himself established the Buddhist community in four groups as a 'fourfold community' - the monks (bhikkus), the nuns (bhikkunis), laymen (upasaka) and laywomen (upasika). In this grouping, the differentiation by gender is as fundamental as the differentiation between the laity and the monastic. Thus, in the early Buddhist literature the marginalization as well as the complementarities of the two genders is well marked. One's gender was to be declared at the time of ordination as people of ambiguous genders were not allowed entry into the sangha. The early Buddhist attitude toward women and gender take different forms.² In the Mahayana Buddhism, the views on gender were a continuity of the previous period. The goal of 'arhat' in early Buddhism gave way to achieving the status of 'bodhisattva'. The bodhisattva path was open for both men and women. The Mahayana texts are not clear on the issue of the level of bodhisattva hood a woman can attain without changing into a man. Some texts claim that women can achieve bodhisattva hood at an advanced stage, but they ultimately have to become a man. The issue of sex change from female to male has been interpreted in different ways within the Mahayana notion of Sunyata (emptiness).³ The Tantric or Vajrayana Buddhism lays emphasis on the category of gender in a totally different way. The tantric thought is closely linked to gender ideology. "The gender symbolism involving the union of male with female qualities to produce the ultimate goal of enlightenment comes to full force and becomes explicitly sexual in tantric Buddhism, especially in the highest and most esoteric class of tantras, the Anuttarayoga Tantras (Highest Yoga Tantras). . . Even monastic tantric practitioners bound by the vow of celibacy engage in this sexual yoga-although in their case, the union takes place within the mediator's own mind. The symbolism of sexual union is thus basic to tantric ideology and practice."⁴

Spiritual life is open for women either as a layperson or as a member of the sangha. Here, we need to differentiate between bhikkunis as per Buddhist canons and women who live like bhikkunis but are not bhikkunis according to the Buddhist law or tradition. A bhikkuni is a woman who has received both the lower ordination [pabbajjai (Pali)/pravrajya (Skt.)] as well as the higher ordination [upasamadas] in the sangha and was required to follow the Vinaya rules of monastic life strictly.⁵ The other category of women living like nuns without full ordination is anagarikas, who renounce worldly life and live as per the ten precepts of novices.⁶ The system of fully ordained bhikkunis went from India to Sri Lanka during

3rd century BC during the reign of King Asoka and later spread to China, Korea, and other regions. In both Theravada and Mahayana traditions, the transmission of Buddhist monastic ordination of men has been unbroken and strong compared to that of valid transmission for the ordination of women. Specifically, in the Theravada countries, it is certain that transferring full monastic ordination for women was no longer continued. It is generally believed that the tradition of valid ordination of nuns ended in Theravada traditions in 456 A.D. After the lineage of nun ended in Sri Lanka, women in Southeast Asia were never ordained. Instead of fully ordained nuns, there are local nuns in each country who hold much lower position in comparison to monk.⁷ In contrast to this, in all Mahayana countries there have always been women in religion. For example, in countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam, the full monastic ordination for women is available. The nuns' monastic orders have been important institutions in China, Japan, and Korea. It historically provided an opportunity to women to live an active and respectable life outside the traditional family structure.

Origin of nunneries during the early Buddhist period :

With the establishment of Sangha by Lord Buddha and then the adaptation of monastery at the later period, Bhikshuni-nun and the community of nuns was also organized in similar way except that their Sangha were dependent on the monks. History also reveals that Lord Buddha was reluctant in recognising the creation of an order for nuns. This was out of fear of the disruption of Bhikshu Sangha. However, the lineage of Buddhist nuns began in the early time of Buddha when the Buddha's aunt Mahaprajapati Gautami approach him for the Bhikshuni Sangha after the Bhikshu Sangha was made. This will be discussed in detail in chapter four of this work. Like other renunciants in the Buddha's day, Buddhist monks and nuns lived a simple celibate life, limiting desires, attachments, and worldly distractions in order to focus on spiritual practices and learning.

In the early years of Buddhism, there was a greater emphasis on the correct ordination of monks and nuns followed by proper training in the vinaya rules-the monastic regulations. This was seen in regions beyond the Indian areas of Buddhist influence (which in the beginning was mainly northern India) – like China, Korea and Japan.

The Bhikkuni sangha outside India: a case study of Korea :

The bhikkuni lineage or order started in India when Mahapajapati Gotami received this heritage directly from the Buddha. From India, it first

went to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Asoka in the 3rd century BC. It is recorded in literary account (Dipavamsa, the Sri lankan chronicle of the 4th century AD) that Sanghamitra, the daughter of Asoka accompanied by 18 bhikkunis went to Sri Lanka and initiated the bhikkuni sangha. This was the first bhikkuni lineage outside India. This heritage then spread from Sri Lanka to China in about 433 AD when a group of Sri Lankan bhikkunis led by Devasara went there. The Chinese Bhikkuni order began with some three hundred committed nuns when they were ordained at the Southern Forest in Nanking. This formed the kernel of the bhikkuni sangha in China and later on diffused to Korea and has survived up to the present time in both the countries. The Chinese lineage of bhikkunis survives up to the present, but their stronghold is Taiwan where nuns outnumber the monks. There are interesting biographical details of Chinese bhikkunis recorded by a monk Pao Sheng/ Pao Chang. Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan⁸ (Lives of the nuns) is the first of the two biographical accounts of Buddhist nuns in China and points to the early history of Chinese Buddhist women. It deals with lives of 65 nuns from the fourth to fifth centuries (326 AD- 457 AD) and shows that the Bhikkuni sangha for the women was well established in China. Some of the details point to their spiritual activities and monastic education including meditation within the nunnery. Biography 1 says, "Gentle and intelligent, [Chin-sha] cultivated meditation and chanting all along" (p.18). Biography 22 says, she "taught the book of monastic rules orally" (p.46). Biography 23 says, "Later [Fa-sheng] travelled to the capital, where she furthered her study of meditation and monastic rules and became thoroughly versed in contemplation and perfect wisdom" (p.49). The reviewer of the translation work had made certain changes and is quoted above in support of the practice of meditation and monastic rules which formed a vital component of the monastic education whether of men or women in China and in other Buddhist countries as well including Korea.

The bhikkunis at Taiwan too received the second and full ordination, which was brought from China at the time of the Cultural Revolution. In other countries, invasions and famines resulted in lesser number of long-term ordained women members to officiate. Thus, women could have only the lower ordination in Sri Lanka, Burma/Myanmar and Thailand till recent times. In Sri Lanka, the bhikku and bhikkuni sangha faced a dark phase for almost five decades with the Chola invasion in 1017 AD. The bhikku lineage was revived from Burma/Myanmar and Thailand but the bhikkuni sangha could not be revived as it did not exist in both countries. The beginning of 20th century saw renewed efforts when Catherine de

Alwis, daughter of a missionary who embraced Buddhism in 1905 and brought Silmata ordination from Burma. Renewed efforts took place in 1988 and again in 1996.⁹ In December 1996, the first group of Sri Lankan women received higher ordination and, although it is seen as highly controversial, the movement is gaining popularity and more and more Theravada women are becoming bhikkunis. But now, Theravada bhikkuni sangha is strong in Sri Lanka.

Korea :

One remarkable point regarding the monastic life in Korea is that the life-styles of monks and nuns are almost identical and the educational curriculum as discussed in is common to both. Since the introduction of Buddhism in Korea, many Korean women have become bhikkunis. There are examples including records of queens and women members of the court being ordained in the sixth century AD. Korea is perhaps the only country to have a clear, unbroken tradition of women receiving both ordinations - that of a novice and later full ordination. Pomun-jong is the only all women Buddhist sect (Bhikkuni sect) in the world founded in Korea in 1972 by the Korean Buddhist nun Eunyeong Sunim (1910-1981).¹⁰ Since 1981, the traditional Chinese system of ordination, known as the Double Platform, requiring ten bhikkus and ten bhikkunis, all of ten years ordination, has been reinstated as well.

The history of bhikkunis in Korea is an unbroken one since the inception of the Korean bhikkuni sangha. The low position of Korean women in society and the five hundred years of persecution of Buddhism during Choson rule (1392-1910) were probably responsible for the obliteration of most of the information that was recorded. Even regarding the Bhikkuni Sangha of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, there are no existing records of Koguryo bhikkunis and we can only make a general assessment of their way of life and activities thorough the records of the Bhikku Sangha. A Japanese record Nihon shaki compiled in 720 AD, states that in 587 AD Koguryo Master Hyep'yon ordained three bhikkunis¹¹ for the first time in Japan who then travelled to Paekje for study. Thus, there certainly existed an ordination ceremony for bhikkunis in Koguryo. Bhikkuni Popmyong of Koguryo taught these three Japanese bhikkunis in 587 AD. This shows that the Koguryo Bhikkuni Sangha has formed its own system to practice and educate the people through their bhikkunis who were sufficiently experienced to become teachers. Some Japanese records show that Koguryo bhikkunis came to Japan to educate people there. The fact is that Buddhism diffused from Korea to Japan.

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In the Kingdom of Paekje, its 27th ruler, Widok (554-593) in the year 577 AD sent sutras, Abhidharmas, the Vinaya, a meditation monk, bhikkunis, a magician, and technicians for building temples to Japan. The official dispatch of bhikkunis to Japan is worth noting. It is presumed that the Paekje's bhikkuni sangha was well established and was in a position to send their representatives to other countries. In Silla, it's not clear when Silla women began accepting Buddhism. It is presumed that it must have been some time after the official recognition of Buddhism in Silla in 527 AD. The first recorded bhikkuni in Silla was Sa-ssi, sister of a laity named Morye. It appears that she was ordained before the official acceptance of Buddhism in Silla. A Korean record says: "Morye's sister, Sa-ssi, was ordained by master Ado who was being hidden in her house because he wished to spread Buddhism. She lived in a temple called Yonghung-sa at Samch'ong-gi which was built by her. Later, when King Mich'u passed away (284 AD), people tried to kill Ado and so he returned to Morye's house and eventually, died there. Buddhism could not be taught in Silla anymore."¹¹

Later, there is reference to bhikkuni Myobop, queen of King Pophung (514 AD-546 AD), the 23rd Silla ruler. He supported Buddhism and built Hungryun-sa temple and became a monk. According to Samguk-yusa, he was given the dharma name of Pop-un (Dharma Cloud) and also the name of Popkong (empty Dharma). King Pophung's queen also wanted to become a bhikkuni. The queen was also ordained and she went to live in Younghung-sa temple built by Sa-ssi. She was given the dharma name Mypbop, meaning Marvelous Dharma. The queen would not have been ordained alone and lived in Younghung-sa temple alone. There may have been other women from aristocratic and the royal family who followed in the footsteps of Myobop. We don't have any mention of ordinary women being ordained. Thus, the Bhikkuni Sangha was established in the kingdom of Silla. Later, during the reign of King Chinhung (540 AD-576 AD), special positions were created within the sangha. His queen, Pak-ssi also became a bhikkuni and lived in Yonghung-sa temple after her husband became a monk.

The Bhikkuni Sangha of Silla developed rapidly due to the great devotion towards Buddhism of the queens of Kings Pophung and Chinhung. This greatly influenced many aristocratic women of Silla and gradually Buddhism percolated down and reached ordinary women, and many of them must have been ordained. Some probably became bhikkunis when they were young and unmarried, and some, like Chiso, the wife of General Kim Yu-shin, became bhikkunis after the death of their husbands. The

Bhikkuni Sangha must have held a high position in the contemporary society due to the presence of several royal and aristocratic women. The Sangha developed rapidly, particularly the Bhikkuni Sangha during the reign of King Chinhung.

King Chinhung officially permitted everyone men and women, to be ordained in the 5th year of his reign. The same year also marked the completion of Hungnyun-sa, a great temple. The king also initiated a rank system of monks and nuns. This was meant to promote the wellbeing of ordained persons and also to organize the Sangha in a better way. He himself became a monk later on and chose Sammaekchong (meaning sami, sramanera) as his posthumous designation. King Chinhung appointed monks to various important positions beginning from the 11th year of his rule. These officials were required to superintend other monks and nuns.

Toyunarang was the head of the Bhikkuni Sangha. The presence of this post points towards the fact that the number of bhikkunis must have been considerable and also the greater institutionalization of the Bhikkuni Sangha. But, there are no record regarding their duties and activities. The word 'Ani' was used in Korea with the names of king's mothers, queens, or king's sisters. Originally the word 'Ani' is related to women used either as a proper noun indicating particular women, or used in reference to bhikkunis. Ani is the title used for bhikkunis (nuns) in Tibetan Buddhism today. Likewise, according to the Korean text Kyerim-yusa, the bhikkunis during the Koryo Dynasty were called 'Ani' depicting that this was a usual way of referring the bhikkunis. The Buddha added eight extra rules especially for women along with the already existing rules. This was prevalent in Korea too. Due to this reason, bhikkunis were considered inferior in the social order than the bhikkus, even in Korea during that period.

With the emergence of Unified Silla kingdom, the Bhikkuni Sangha of Kogurya and Paekje seems to have been absorbed into the Silla Bhikkuni Sangha without any difficulty. As most of the bhikkunis were from aristocratic families, it can be presumed that the Bhikkuni Sangha probably enjoyed high status in Silla society. The Koryo and Choson periods witnessed a shift in the sense that more and more ordinary women became bhikkunis. The reasons behind it were both secular as well as philosophical.¹³ Some were ordained simply to spend their lives praying for their dead fathers; some were forced to be ordained by their fathers, for they had no money for their daughters to get married; wives and daughters of rebels were also ordained or became lifelong servants.¹⁴

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The positive influences of Buddhism underwent change with passage of time. In the late Koryo period, Buddhist temples accumulated wealth due to the patronage by kings, and this had an adverse effect on the sangha as it became corrupt. The impact was also felt on the bhikkuni sangha. The Bhikkuni sangha too became rich as it now focused its energy on producing various goods such as hemp cloth rather than on the meditative practices. The Choson Period was marked by anti-Buddhist approach of the ruling dynasty. The womenfolk were more concerned with preserving their chastity more than their lives. Many young bhikkunis were forced to disrobe during this period. The Choson law which prohibited bhikkus and bhikkunis from entering the capital for almost five hundred years was revoked when Korea was colonized by Japan in 1910. The sangha was able to regain some of its freedom. The bhikkunis in Korea followed almost all the rules set by Buddha. The ordained Buddhists in Korea wore grey monastic dress as in China and unlike Sri Lanka where the monks wore saffron/yellow.

The history of nunneries or convent for women is recorded in Korea. Pomun-sa was the largest convent established in 1115 at Seoul by Tamjin for the bhikkunis. Tonghak-sa was another nunnery famous as an educational center for bhikkunis. The nuns generally received the ten precepts and were ordained first as a sramanerika, that is, a novice. Four different levels of monastic curriculum were followed and among the Buddhist texts, the reading of Lotus Sutra was and still is very much emphasized.¹⁵ The intensive study of Sutras and Vinaya was stressed in the nunneries. Meditation was also an important part of the life and learning in nunneries.

Concluding we can say that the Buddhist tradition in Korea which is the closest link between India and Korea still survives and will continue to survive. The women followers of Buddhism in Korea are substantive in numbers as lay followers but the Bhikkuni sangha is strong and still survives unlike some other countries as discussed above.

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- Reiko Ohnuma, *op.cit.*, pp.304-305
- *Ibid.*, p.305
- Many Buddhist sects arose and faded away with passage of time and each sect had its own Vinaya rules including ordination tradition for bhikkunis. The bhikkunis' ordination tradition of the Dharmaguptaka school of China has survived until today and bhikkunis of this tradition are found in China, Taiwan and Korea where the bhikkuni tradition is still surviving and is strong.
- We do not find fully ordained bhikkunis in Theravada countries like Sri Lanka, Burma/Myanmar and Thailand most probably since 10th century AD. The present day nuns in Sri Lanka call themselves *dasa sil matava* or *dasa sil maeniyo* (ten-precept mother), those in Thailand *mae jiand* in Myanmar *tilashin* (one who possess morality). Many of them live and behave like a bhikkuni and reside in nunneries.
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In Japan too, (where Buddhism went from Korea), by the mid-Heian period (794 AD-1185 AD), most educated women were expected to become Buddhist renunciants during the final years of their life. The Heian-period literature emphasizes renunciation as a step towards attainment of personal salvation, the Kamakura period onwards literature shows renunciation as a display of household loyalty. Some scholars have viewed the practice of female renunciation as evidence of female subservience and patriarchal oppression. Refer Lori Meeks. *op.cit.*, pp.1-59
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Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Manju Rani Chaudhary

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown a disproportionate sex ratio where female population has been comparatively lower than males and their social status is of real concern they are not treated as equal to men at all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today.

Women in India now enjoy a unique status of equality with the men as per constitutional and legal provision. But the Indian women have come a long way to achieve the present position. First, gender inequality in India can be traced back to the historic days of Mahabharata when Draupadi was put on the dice by her husband as a commodity.

Moreover women has very little share in political, social and economic life of the society. Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and various other social reformers laid stress on women's education, prevention of child marriage, withdrawals of evil practice of sati, removal of polygamy etc. Their reformatory activities of such greats brought forward "The National Movement and various reform movements" which paved the way for their liberations from the social evils and religious taboos. The constitution makers and the national leaders recognized the equal social position of women with men. Several acts tried to bring about the change in the position of women in India, the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961.

Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to

participate in the process of decision making. The concept of empowerment flows from the power.

Challenges

There are several challenges that are currently plaguing the issues of women's rights in India. A few of these challenges are presented below. While a lot of these are redundant and quite basic issues faced across the country, these are contributory causes to the overarching status of women in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

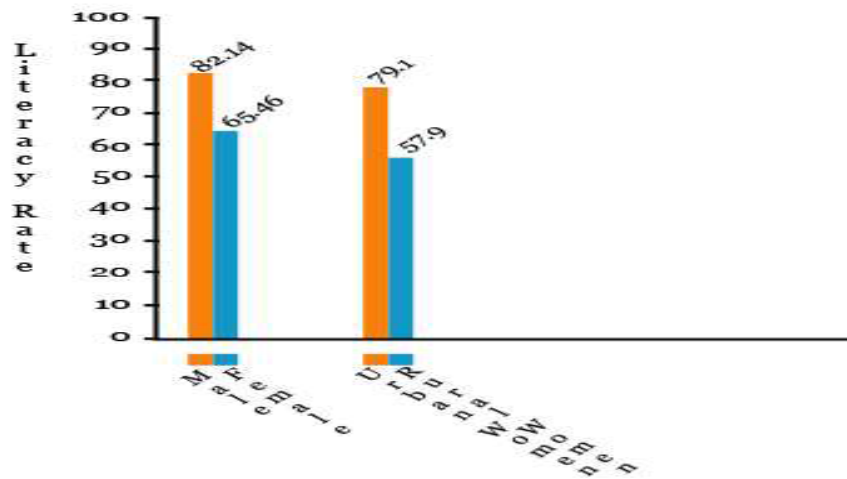
The crimes against women fly directly against orchestrating women empowerment in India. A report on the crimes against women by the National Crime Records Bureau comes up with some alarming statistics:-

Sl No.	Crime Head	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Percentage Variation in 2012 over 2011
1	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	19,348	20,737	21,467	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	3.0
2	Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)	17,414	20,416	22,939	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	7.6
3	Dowry Death (Sec 302/304 IPC)	7,618	8,093	8,172	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	-4.5
4	Torture (Sec. 498-A IPC)	63,128	75,930	81,344	89,546	94,041	99,135	1,06,527	7.5
5	Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)	36,617	38,734	40,413	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	5.5
6	Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)	9,966	10,950	12,214	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	7.0
7	Importation of Girls (Sec. 366-B IPC)	67	61	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3

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8	Sati Prevention Act, 1987	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	-100.0
9	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	4,541	3,568	2,659	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	5.3
10	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	1,562	1,200	1,025	845	895	453	141	-68.9
11	Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	4,504	5,623	5,555	5,650	5,182	6,619	9,038	36.5
	Total	1,64,765	1,85,312	1,95,856	2,03,804	2,13,585	2,28,650	2,44,270	6.8

Literacy Facts of Women in India



*Literacy rates relate to the population aged 7 years & above

Road Map to Women Empowerment

EDUCATION : According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is very important in empowering them along with eradicating workplace harassment of women.

While the India has grown by leaps and bounds since its independence but where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. Not only is an illiterate woman at the mercy of her husband

or father, but at the same time she is also not aware that this is not the way of life for women across the world. Additionally, the norms of culture that state the man of the family is the be-all and end-all of family decisions is also slowly spoiling the society of the country.

The United Nations Development Programme constituted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for ensuring equity and peace across the world out of which the third MDG is directly related to the empowerment of women in India. The MDGs are agreed-upon goals to reduce certain indicators of disparity across the world by the year 2015. The third MDG is centred towards promoting gender equality and empowering women: "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015"

India missed the 2005 deadline of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education. However, the country has hastened progress and the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in primary and secondary education has risen. Given current trends, India is moderately or almost nearly on track. However, as the Government of India MDG Report 2009 notes, "participation of women in employment and decision-making remains far less than that of men, and the disparity is not likely to be eliminated by 2015." Achieving GPI in tertiary education also remains a challenge. In addition, the labour market openness to women in industry and services has only marginally increased from 16-21 percent between 2004-05 and 2009-10.

The Ministry for Women & Child Development was established as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the year 1985 to drive the holistic development of women and children in the country. In 2006 this department was given the status of a Ministry, with the powers to:-

Formulate plans, policies and programmes; enacts/ amends legislation, guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of Women and Child Development.

It delivers such initiatives such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) which is a package of services such as supplementary nutrition, health check-ups and immunisation.

The Government is also implementing the Swayamsidha programme - an integrated scheme for the empowerment of women at a

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total cost of initially Rs. 116.30 Cr to Rs 350 Cr. Core to this programme will be the establishment of women's self-help groups which will empower women to have increased access to all kinds of resources that they are denied, in addition to increasing their awareness and skills. This programme will benefit about approx. 1.5 mn women with the setting up of more than 53,000 self-help groups, 26,500 village societies and 650 block societies.

The health and safety concern of women are paramount for the well being of a country, and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

UNICEF in its report came up with some shocking figures on the status of new mothers in India. The maternal mortality report of India stands at 301 per 1000, with as many as 78,000 women in India dying of childbirth complications in that year. Today, due to the burgeoning population of the country, that number is sure to have multiplied considerably. While there are several programmes that have been set into motion by the Government and several NGOs in the country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.

Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications with local quacks giving ineffective and downright harmful remedies to problems that women have. The empowerment of women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.

National Commission for Women : The National Commission for Women is a Department within the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It was set up exclusively to help women via the Constitution - by reviewing Legal and Constitutional safeguards for women, recommending remedial legislative measures, by facilitating quick redresses of grievances and by advising the Government of India on all policy matters affecting women.

India as a country is still recovering from years of abuse in the time of the British Raj and more years of economic suffering at the hands of the License Raj. It is only now that globalisation, liberalisation and other socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.

To truly understand what women empowerment is, there needs to be a sea-change in the mind-set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier rather than later, for our own good.

Swami Vivekananda once said "arise away and stop not until the goal is reached". Thus our country should thus be catapulted into the horizon of empowerment of women and revel in its glory. We have a long way to go, but we will get there someday. We shall overcome.

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रवीन्द्र साहित्य में भविष्य की नारी

बिन्दु लाहिड़ी

19वीं शदी में नारी व्यक्तिस्वतंत्रता का उद्बोधन होता है जिसकी सूचना भारत में सर्वप्रथम बंगाल से ही हुई है। बांग्ला साहित्य इसका प्रधान धारक व वाहक था। माइकेल मधुसूदन दत्त के वीरांगना काव्य, बंकिम के उपन्यासों में इसका हस्ताक्षर मिलता है, पर पूर्ण आत्म स्वाधीनता के लिए नारी को 20वीं शताब्दी तक प्रतीक्षा करना पड़ा था। अब तक नारी की स्वाधीनता को स्वीकारोक्ति तो मिली थी लेकिन वह स्वाधीनता समाज पर निर्भर थी। समाज को अस्वीकार कर नारी को केवल नारी के रूप में देखने की दृष्टि हमें मिलती है। पाश्चात्य साहित्य के सान्निध्य से इस प्रसंग में हमें नॉर्बे मनीषी हेनरिक इबसेन का नाम हमेशा याद रखना चाहिए। इबसेन के साहित्य में जिस नारी से हमारा परिचय होता है, उसका लक्ष्य केवल विप्लव करना नहीं है उसके साथ जुड़ी है नारी का स्वतंत्र बोध व उसकी स्वकीयता वासना कामना को आश्रय करके नारी के वास्तविक अस्तित्व अस्मिता के विपरित शक्तियों का जो विचित्र एवं प्रचण्ड संग्राम चल रहा था उसी विचित्र संग्राम के घात प्रतिघात के मध्य से उनकी नारी अपनी महिमा को खुद प्रतिष्ठित करती है। 'Dalls House' की 'Nora' इसकी एक उज्ज्वल उदाहरण है। पाश्चात्य के इसी भाव-संघात का प्रभाव तथा तत्कालीन बांग्लादेश का युग प्रभाव, जहाँ राममोहन राय, विद्यासागर जैसे महान समाज सुधारकों द्वारा चलाया गया सामाजिक व शैक्षिक गतिविधियों ने मिलकर रवीन्द्रनाथ सोचने तथा बांग्ला कथा साहित्य में प्रवेश कर अपनी लेखनी चलाने के लिए बाध्य किया।

रवीन्द्रनाथ एक कवि थे, कवि हमेशा क्रान्तदर्शी होता है, तभी तो उनका सृष्टि धर्मी कविमन नारी मन का सूक्ष्म विश्लेषण कर उसके भविष्य को कथा साहित्य के माध्यम से हमारे सामने प्रस्तुत करता है। रवीन्द्र साहित्य में मानव मन का सूक्ष्म तिसूक्ष्म विश्लेषण मिलता है जिससे पता चलता है कि कवि गुरु केवल कवि ही नहीं अपितु मानव मन के सूक्ष्म विश्लेषण के अनन्य साधक थे,

वह अपने ही रचनाओं का रूप से रूपान्तर कर चिरनवीनता प्रदान करते थे और हमें समझाने की कोशिश करते हैं कि इस विश्व चराचर में कुछ भी स्थिर नहीं है, परिवर्तन ही सृष्टि की नियति में स्थित है अतः मनुष्य किसी भी चीज को अपनी थाती न समझे, उसे कर्म को जीवन की प्रधान पूंजी मानना चाहिए। क्योंकि उन्होंने जब भी विश्राम की बात सोची है—

तोमार काछे आराम चेये

पेलेम शुधु लज्जा (शंख कविता— बलाका)

अर्थात् आपसे आराम की उम्मीद ने मुझे हमेशा शर्मसार किया है।

रवीन्द्रनाथ जिस समय कथा साहित्य जगत में प्रविष्ट होते हैं उस समय तक बंकिमचन्द्र उपन्यास जगत में पूर्ण मर्यादा के साथ प्रतिष्ठित थे। रवीन्द्रनाथ के लिए ऐसे में बंकिमचन्द्र का प्रभाव अस्वीकार करके अपना पथ बनाना सम्भव ही नहीं था। अतः उसी पथ का अनुसरण कर उन्होंने उसी युगानुसार सामाजिक एवं ऐतिहासिक उपन्यासों की रचना की। करुणा सामाजिक पटभूमि में रचित उपन्यास है तथा बोउठाकुरानीर हाट' और 'राजर्षि' ऐतिहासिक कहानी पर आधारित है।

क्रान्तदर्शी कविगुरु के विषय में याद रखना होगा कि उनकी रचनाएं भारतीय संस्कृति व सभ्यता को पाश्चात्य सभ्यता व दृष्टि के साथ तुलनात्मक विश्लेषक के रूप में प्रतिष्ठित करती हैं क्योंकि उन्हें यह पता था कि कालान्तर में यहीं सभ्यता संस्कृति व दृष्टिभंगी के द्वारा भारतीय समाज भी आक्रान्त होगा और उनका साहित्य उस परिस्थिति से भारतीय पाठक समाज को पहले से ही आगाह करने का कार्य किया है।

रवीन्द्रनाथ की पहली उपन्यास है, जो सन् 1880—81में भारती पत्रिका में प्रकाशित हुई थी, रवीन्द्रनाथ की करुणा एक प्राकृति कन्या है। जो कर्ण्व ऋषि की पालिता कन्या शकुन्तला की तरह अकेले ही प्रकृति के साथ खेलती है, बात करती है, पौधों को सजाती संवारती है, उन्हें खाना लाकर देती है, पत्तिया या फूलों के झड़ने पर दुःखी होती है। वास्तविक दुनियाँ की मलीनता उसे स्पर्श नहीं कर पाता है। संगीनी के अभाव में करुणा को हम कभी भी दुःखी नहीं देखते हैं। यहाँ रवीन्द्रनाथ प्रकृति के परिप्रेक्ष्य में करुणा के मनोधर्म को प्रस्तुत किये हैं, क्योंकि जिस द्वन्द्व मूलक पार्थिव जगत के मनोविश्लेषण के साथ बंकिमचन्द्र चट्टोपाध्याय ने हम सबका परिचय करवाया था रवीन्द्रनाथ उसमें परिवर्तन की सूचना देते हैं अपनी प्रथम उपन्यास 'करुणा' के माध्यम से प्रकृति

के आलोक में मानव मन की पूंजीभूत वेदना किस प्रकार से और ज्यादा स्पष्ट हो सकता है। करुणा चरित्र इसका उदाहरण है।

करुणा एक पूर्णांग चरित्र है। उपन्यास के प्रारम्भ में ही करुणा को पाठक एक उच्छ्वसित आवेग प्रवण बालिका के रूप में देखते हैं। वह वास्तविक जगत से दूर एक कल्प राज्य में विचरण करती है। बचपन से ही उसे नरेन्द्र से लगाव है। पिता की मृत्यु के बाद नरेन्द्र के साथ ही उसका विवाह भी होता है, उसका सपना साकार हो जाता है वह अपने आपको अत्यन्त सौभाग्यशाली मानने लगती है किन्तु विवाह के बाद जब वास्तविक दुनियाँ से उसे वह निष्ठुरता और अपमान मिलता है जिसकी उसने कभी कल्पना ही नहीं की थी तो उसका स्वप्न भंग हो जाता है। नरेन्द्र के व्यवहार से वह बहुत आहत होती है किन्तु समझ नहीं पाती कि आखिर उसका अपराध क्या है? यह भी सच है कि वह इस बात को भी स्वीकार नहीं कर पायी थी कि नरेन्द्र उसके प्यार को कभी अस्वीकार कर सकता है। इस स्तर पर आकर रवीन्द्र ने अपनी प्रकृति कन्या करुणा को निष्ठुर संसार के यातनाओं से जर्जरित एक यन्त्रणाकातर नारी के रूप में रूपान्तरित किया है। करुणा के जीवन का कोई अन्तिम अध्याय लेखक ने नहीं लिखा है। अन्त में केवल करुणा कांपते हुए हाथ से नरेन्द्र का हाथ पकड़ती है लेकिन कुछ नहीं कहती। यहां भी केवल मात्र अनुभूति की व्यंजना है, उसके हृदय की वेदना, विषन्तता अभिमान, मानो उसकी इस अभिव्यक्ति से ही सहृदय पाठक के मन में संचरित हो यही उपन्यासकार की एकान्त इच्छा है। क्योंकि इसी भाव में उन्होंने कई छोटी कहानियाँ भी लिखी जिनमें— शुभा, छुटी, पोस्टमास्टर इत्यादि प्रमुख हैं।

रवीन्द्रनाथ का कविमन करुणा के इस बेदना को भूल नहीं पाया उनकी यात्रा तो अभी शुरू ही हुई थी। इस विषय में उन्होंने कहा है कि— अन्तर्विषयी भावों ने कवित्व से वहिर्विषयी कल्पलोक में एक बार जो मन प्रविष्ट हुआ, वहाँ भी वह इधर—उधर भटकने लगा, ये शायद कोतूहलवश ही प्राचीर से घिरा हुआ मन बाहर की ओर निकल पड़ा, तब संसार के विचित्र पथ में उसका यातायात प्रारम्भ हुआ। इसके पश्चात ही उन्होंने 'बोउठाकुरानीर हाट'(1883) नामक उपन्यास लिखी। इस उपन्यास में आगामी नारी की या यों कहें भविष्य के नारी का बीज मिलता है। यद्यपि इस उपन्यास के चरित्रों में जीवन का लक्षण अत्यन्त ही कम दिखाई पड़ता है, ये मानों शोपीस के तरह निर्दिष्ट स्थान में ही स्थित हैं। लेकिन रवीन्द्रनाथ का अल्प वयस्क मन अपने मन मुताबिक जिस प्राचीर की नींव डाला उसी के गर्भ से कालजयी रचनाओं ने जन्म लिया ('बहुठाकुरानीर

हाट' उपन्यास में ही कालजयी नाटक 'रक्तकरवी' नामक नाटक का बीज मिलता है)। इस उपन्यास के प्रारम्भ में नायिका विभा सरल, सीधी तथा संसार की बुराइयों से अनभिज्ञ एक बालिका है। वह अपने पति के साथ सुख-स्वप्न में विभोर थी लेकिन जीवन के उतार-चढ़ाव ने जीवन के रूढ़ता ने अपने पति राममोहन के साथ सुखी जीवन के लिए बाहर गांव जाना अस्वीकार कर उदयादित्य के अविचार और अत्याचार के विरुद्ध एक सशक्त नारी के रूप में खड़ी होती है। करुणा का मौन विरोध यहाँ शब्द लेता है और यही विभा प्रायश्चित तथा परित्राण में व्यक्तित्वमयी रूप में दिखाई देती है।

"The shy and so silent Bibha of (1881&82) has become a dignified Lady of iron will, strong determination and forceful speech in 1929." (Biman Bihari Majumdar Heroins of Tagore-Ist edition. Page-9)

राजर्षि (1857) एक ऐतिहासिक उपन्यास है। इसका बाद में नाटकीय रूपान्तरण विसर्जन नामक नाटक के रूप में हुआ। इसके बाद बहुत दिनों तक रवीन्द्र नाथ ने किसी उपन्यास की रचना नहीं की। सन् 1903 रवीन्द्र ने 'चोखेर बाली' नामक उपन्यास की रचना करते हैं नष्टमीड़' नामक कहानी भी इसी समय में रचित हुई थी।

'चोखेर बाली'(1903) से रवीन्द्रनाथ की लेखनी बंकिमचन्द्र के मुक्त होकर परिचालित होती हुई प्रतीत होती है। यहां से रवीन्द्रनाथ उपन्यास की गतिधारा में एक नयी कड़ी का समावेश होता है। जो इन चरित्रों में नाटकीयता के साथ-साथ मनस्तात्विक विश्लेषण यहां से रवीन्द्र की उपन्यासों में नयी तीन बातें जुड़ती हैं: (1) उपन्यास का नया रूप, (2) वाह्य आडम्बरों से वर्जित मानव के अन्तर्मन में दृष्टिपात, (3) मानव चरित्र के विभिन्न पहलूओं का वर्णन। रवीन्द्र उपन्यास के प्रथम पर्याय में करुणा, बहुरानी विभा इत्यादि चरित्रों के माध्यम से रवीन्द्रनाथ ने जिन नारी चरित्रों का चित्रण पाठक के समक्ष प्रस्तुत किया है, ये सभी त्याग, धैर्य, करुणा की प्रतिमूर्तियाँ थी लेकिन विनोदिनी के साथ ही साहित्य जगत में एक नयी नारी ने स्थान लिया। विनोदिनी के साथ ही शुरू हुआ रवीन्द्र के नारी के मानसिक क्रम विकास का क्रम।

विनोदिनी सुन्दरी, बुद्धिमती, कर्मनिपुणा तथा अपने प्रति अत्यधिक सचेतन नारी है, अपने छोटे से वैवाहिक जीवन की स्मरण रखने योग्य कोई ऐसी घटना उसे आज याद नहीं है जिसे याद कर वह दुःखी हो। आज उसका जीवन अपने घर के छोटे-छोटे कामों को कर के बीत रहा है, वह खुश है, लेकिन जब वह आशा महेन्द्र के घर आकर उनके सुखी दाम्पत्य जीवन को देखती है तो वह

अपने जीवन के उस अपूर्ण पहलू के प्रति सचेत हो जाती है इससे विनोदिनी के चरित्र में जो परिवर्तन होता है उसका एक सुन्दर चित्र रवीन्द्रनाथ ने 'चोखरे बाली' उपन्यास में प्रस्तुत किया, महेन्द्र को वह चाहती है लेकिन—उसने यह स्वीकार किया है—

“हे जीवन सर्वस्व, मुझे पता है तुम मेरे लिए नहीं हो, लेकिन आज एक मुहूर्त के लिए मुझे प्यार करो।” लेकिन अन्त में अपना प्रेमार्थ्य बिहारी को दान करती है और दृढ़चित्त होती है कि बिहारी ही उसके हृदय का यथार्थ पुजारी है।

'चोखरे बाली' के बाद रवीन्द्रनाथ की अगली उपन्यास 'नौकाडुबि' (1906) है। जिसके प्रारम्भ में ही उन्होंने कहा है कि इसकी चरम साइकोलॉजी यह है कि हमारे देश की साधारण लड़कियों में पति के प्रति निष्ठावान संस्कार का मूल इतना गहरा है जो अज्ञान जनित प्रथम प्यार के तार को भी धिक्कार कर दिन्न विच्छिन्न कर सकता है। इस उपन्यास का प्रारम्भ एक दैव दुर्घटना से होता है, जिसमें दो नव विवाहित दम्पति नाँव डूबने के कारण नाँव से बह जाते हैं। इस नौकाडुबि में एक तरफ रमेश की जान बचती है तथा ऐसी ही घटना में दूसरी तरफ कमला की जान बचती है, दोनों इस बात से अनभिज्ञ हैं कि वह पति—पत्नि नहीं है। जब कुछ समय बाद रमेश को यह पता चलता है कि कमला उसकी नहीं वरन् किसी और की पत्नि है तो वह कमला से कटा—कटा रहने लगता है, इस बात से दुःखी कमला इसका कारण पता लगाने में जुट जाती है, कमला को सच्चाई पता लगने पर रमेश के प्रति उसका अभिमान वितृष्णा में बदल जाता है और वह तुरन्त अपने पति नलिनाक्ष को ढूँढ़ने में लग जाती है, कमला को जैसे ही पता चलता है कि रमेश उसका पति नहीं है, उसका पति कोई और है तुरन्त उसका चित्त इतने दिनों के परिचित व्यक्ति से छिन्न होकर अपरिचित व्यक्ति के लिए धावित होता है जिसे वह जानती नहीं, पहचानती नहीं, यहाँ रवीन्द्र हमें अपने संस्कारों की मजबूती के तरफ हमारा ध्यान आकर्षित कर याद दिला रहे हैं कि यह संस्कार इतने मजबूत हैं कि हम कहीं भी जाये उससे हम विच्छिन्न नहीं हो सकते। कमला ने भी अपने पति के खोज के द्वारा इसी बात को प्रान्ति स्थापित किया है।

'सुचारिता' रवीन्द्रनाथ की अद्भुत सृष्टि है। जिसके द्वारा रवीन्द्र यह स्थापित करना चाहते हैं कि स्त्री के बिना पुरुष अधुरा है। सुचारिता गोरा (1909) नामक उपन्यास की नायिका है। गोरा रवीन्द्र साहित्य का एक विशिष्ट उपन्यास है। रवीन्द्र कथा साहित्य के 'करुणा' से 'नौकाडुबि' के करुणा, विभा, विनोदिनी, हेमानलिनी, कमला आदि चरित्रों का विश्लेषण करने पर पता चलता

है कि इन चरित्रों के माध्यम से उपन्यासकार नारी मन के विभिन्न भावों का विभिन्न स्तरों में उजागर करने की कोशिश किये हैं। यहाँ किसी भी चरित्र के मनोभावों की पुनरावृत्ति नहीं हुई है, करुणा की वेदना से विभा की वेदना भिन्न है। चोखरे बाली के विनोदिनी के अन्तर्द्वन्द्व के साथ नौकाडुबि के कमला के मनोजगत का कोई सम्पर्क ही नहीं है। अतएव ध्यान देने योग्य बात यह है कि रवीन्द्र मानव-मन की विश्लेषण करते समय भी स्थिर नहीं है यहाँ भी उन्होंने विकास की गति का प्रत्यक्ष अनुभव किया है। सुचारिता इसी श्रृंखला की अगली कड़ी है। सुचारिता गोरा नामक उपन्यास की नायिका है। इस उपन्यास का केन्द्रीय चरित्र गोरा है लेकिन इस केन्द्रीय चरित्र की परिचालिका सुचारिता है। गोरा और सुचारिता के विचार बिल्कुल एक दूसरे के विपरीत है केवल देशभक्ति तथा स्वदेश प्रेम के विचार दोनों के मिलते हैं। गोरा हमेशा उसकी उपेक्षा करता है किन्तु हारान बाबू व गोरा के तर्कशुद्ध ने गोरा को सुचारिता के और पास ला स्थापित किया। "आज सुचारिता उसे एक टक निहारती रही। मानव क्या है? मानव की आत्मा क्या है? सुचारिता यह पहली बार मानो जान पायी थी, और इस अपूर्व अनुभूति में मानो वह अपना अस्तित्व ही भूल गयी।" अन्त में गोरा ने भी यह स्वीकार किया और सुचारिता को आह्वान कर कहा है— "तुम्हारे बिना नहीं होगा।.... तुम्हें लेने के लिए ही आया हूँ, तुम्हें निर्वासित करके रखने से यह यज्ञ सम्पूर्ण नहीं होगा।"

रवीन्द्र की अगली उपन्यास चतुरंग (1916) की नायिका दामिनी है। दामिनी के साथ पाठकों का परिचय शिवतोष की विधवा पत्नी के रूप में हुआ है किन्तु रवीन्द्रनाथ दामिनी के इस परिचय को नेपथ्य में रखना चाहते हैं, दामिनी के जीवन का कोई सामाजिक परिचय हमें उपन्यास में नहीं मिलता उसका केवल एक मात्र परिचय है कि वह नारी है। उसके वैवाहिक जीवन के विकृति में ही दामिनी के विद्रोही सत्ता का परिचय मिलता है। यद्यपि दामिनी तथा विनोदिनी में इस बारे में समरूपता है फिर भी दोनों के कष्ट वेदना में बहुत पार्थक्य है।

Damini is much rebel than Binodini. The Spain of married life of Binodini was so brief that it left little or no impression on her mind. Damini spent considerable number of years with her husband indeed but as he devoted almost all his time and energy to religious practices to her remained utterly indifferant to his wife. His obsession with the problem of securing emancipation from the bondage of rebirth during his life time make his callous to her needs. He deprived her, her reghtful claims on the praperty which came to him by way of dowry. All these conspired to

alinet her from him. Damini was not the type of woman to lead the humdrum life of a widow or that of vegetative disciple of Guru, while Binodini refuse to marry Behari Lest. She should lower down his social prestige. Damini was bold enough to accept the offer of marriage from Srivilas. In utter disregard of social opinion she engaged herself in the uplift of Mosterm tanners. The difference between Binodini and Damini measures the degree of liberalism and Universalism to which Robindranath moved between 1901 and 1915. (Biman Bihari Majumdar- Heroins of Tagore 245).

अतः उक्त कथन से स्पष्ट है कि दामिनी के मन में अपने पूर्व वैवाहिक जीवन का कोई संस्कार नहीं था। श्री विलास को विवाह करने में दामिनी के मन में जो संशय या समस्या शिवतोष के कारण हो सकती थी वह कहीं भी नहीं दिखा। शचीश के लिए दामिनी के मन में अन्तर्द्वन्द्व उत्पन्न हुआ है जिससे दामिनी का चरित्र एक मनस्तात्विक चरित्र के रूप में अंकित हुआ है। दामिनी के विद्रोही प्रकृति का परिचय हमें दामिनी शिवतोष की वैवाहिक जीवन की जो एकाध घटनाएँ उपन्यास में मिलती हैं। उसी से पता चलता है। लीलानन्द स्वामी भी उसे एक आँख नहीं भाते, लेकिन शचीश को पाने के लिए वह लीलानन्द स्वामी के साथ जाने के लिए भी तैयार हो जाती है। पर दामिनी के आत्म निवेदन का शचीश के हृदय में कोई स्थान नहीं है यह जानकर दामिनी के जीवन का द्वन्द्व शुरू होता है, क्योंकि दामिनी वास्तव में बुद्धि सम्पन्न नारी है, उसे कोई बहला फुसला या डरा नहीं सकता। जब वह शचीश को ढूँढ़ती हुई नदी के उस पार रेतीले जमीन पर जाकर पहुँचती है और सूर्यास्त तक वहीं रहकर लौटती है तो वहाँ का परिवेश और शचीश के व्यवहार से उसे कुछ भी नहीं मिलता वहाँ से वह खाली हाथ ही लौटती है, वहाँ वह अनुभव करती है— “यहाँ मानो सबकुछ धुलकर एकदम प्रारम्भ जैसा साफ हो गया है। पाँव के नीचे के पसरा है—सन्नाटा। उसमें ना तो कोई आवाज है, ना है गति, ना ही रक्ते प्रवाह है, ना है पौधों की हरियाली, ना है आसमान का नीला रंग, और ना ही माटी का गेरु रंग, मानों एक ऐसा शरीर जिसकी मुस्कान ओष्ठहीन हो, मानो दयाहीन इस तप्त आकाश में तृष्णा का साम्राज्य फैलाता एक विशाल शुष्क जीभ। दामिनी में भविष्य की वह नारी है जो यह अनुभव कर सकती है कि शचीश को आश्रय कर उसकी प्रणयवासना सफल नहीं हो सकती, क्योंकि जिस पार्थिव सजीवता को आधार बनाकर वह मुक्तिलाभ का स्वप्न देख रही थी मानों आज वह सजीवता ही वर्णहीन हो गया है। सम्पूर्ण प्रकृति ने भी मानो आज निष्ठुर रूप धारण कर लिया है। रवीन्द्र ने ही बांग्ला साहित्य में सर्वप्रथम इस प्रकार प्रकृति के परिप्रेक्ष्य में दामिनी के अवचेतन मन को अंकित करने का प्रयास

किया है। दामिनी अब आत्मोपलब्धि कर पूर्ण आत्म प्रतिष्ठित हो चुकी है। वह अनुभव करती है जिस बेपरवाह शचीश के लिए वह उन्मत्त है, वह तो उसके प्रति इतना निष्ठुर है। अब तक श्री विलास के प्रति उसका कोई ध्यान नहीं था। वह उसकी इतनी नीरवता के साथ देखभाल करता है अब दामिनी श्री विलास के मौन प्रेम को अनुभव करती है और वह श्री विलास से विवाह करती है श्री विलास से विवाह कर उसका जीवन उन्मुक्त पक्षी की तरह मानो खुले आसमान में विचरण करने लगता है यदि उपन्यास का यही अन्त होता तो ठीक था लेकिन रवीन्द्र को तो नारी के भविष्य को तय करना था इसीलिए उनकी दामिनी का एक साल बाद निधन हो जाता है, और मृत्यु के समय वह कहती है— “मन की इच्छा पूरी नहीं हुई, जन्मान्तर अगर होता है तो मुझे फिर तुम्हारा ही साथ मिले”

दामिनी में जिस नारी को हम अपने प्रेमास्पद शचीश के लिए व्याकुल देखते हैं और अन्त में श्री विलास को जो सचमुच उसे चाहता है उसे आत्मसमर्पण करते हुए पाते हैं। घरे-बाइरे (1916) की नायिका विमला का चरित्र, सोच इससे पूर्व की नारियों से पृथक है वह विमोदिनी दामिनी की तरह केवल मात्र अपने प्रेमास्पद को ही एकमात्र सत्य नहीं मानती या हेमनलिनी तथा सुचरिता की तरह अपने अन्तर्द्वन्द्वों से उबरकर प्रतिष्ठित नहीं होना चाहती। वह तो अपने पति निखिलेश की नीरवता और प्रेम तथा संक्षेप के संस्पर्श से प्रभावित अपनी प्रवृत्ति की ताड़ना दोनों को अस्वीकार नहीं कर पाती है। इन उभय अन्तर्द्वन्द्वों के संघर्ष से विमला जर्जरित होकर एक प्रलयकारी कदम तो उठाती है लेकिन नारी का कल्याणकारी चित उसे प्रलयकारी से कल्याणी रूप में प्रतिष्ठित करता है। उसके चरित्र को अंकित कर रवीन्द्र यही सिद्ध करना चाहते हैं नारी का यह परिवर्तन जितना प्रयोजनीय है उतना ही कल्याणकारी भी।

‘शेषेर कविता’ (1930) की लावण्य ने अनुभव किया कि प्रेम का परिणति केवल विवाह नहीं है। लावण्य विमला की तरह नहीं सोचती, उसके लिए प्यार कोई खरीद-फरोक्त का पैक किया हुआ सामान नहीं है। लावण्य के प्यार में भोग-विलासिता नहीं है इसीलिए वह है स्वच्छ निर्मल, स्वतः-स्फूर्त। लावण्य का प्रेम है ससीम जीवन को असीम में व्याप्त करने के लिए वह है ऐश्वर्यदायिनी महीमामयी। यही बात हमें अमित के मुंह से भी सुनाई पड़ता है— केतकी के साथ मेरा प्यार का ही सम्बन्ध है, वह मानो घड़ा का पानी है, मुझे पानी पीने के लिए उसे प्रतिदिन भरना होगा, और लावण्य का प्यार है जलाशय, वह घर के अन्दर तो नहीं हो सकता, मेरा मन हमेशा उसमें तैरकर तर होगा।

जब लावण्य को पता चलता है अमित उसके पूर्व किसी केतकी से प्यार करता था और आज भी उसके मन में उसके प्रति आकर्षण है तो वह तुरन्त फैसला लेती है। लावण्य स्वप्न लोक में विचरण नहीं करती क्योंकि उसे पता है कि एक पुरुष के साथ दो स्त्री कभी भी सुखी नहीं रह सकती और वह अपने आप को सुरक्षित रखना चाहती है इसीलिए वह अमित से दूर होकर अपने पूर्व परिचित शोभनलाल को विवाह करने का प्रस्ताव देती है।

कुमुदिनी रवीन्द्र साहित्य की अपूर्व सृष्टि है। योगायोग (1929) उपन्यास की नायिका कुमुदिनी न तो किसी की प्रेयसी है और न ही माता वह है नारी। लावण्य के तरह वह उच्च शिक्षिता नहीं है, विमला की तरह पुरुष का स्थूल आकर्षण उसे आकर्षित नहीं किया है, न तो वह विनोदिनी है न ही कमला के तरह सरल है और न ही सुचरिता के तरह आत्म समर्पण कर सकती है। कुमुदिनी नारी है— वह अपने अस्तित्व एवं अधिकारों के प्रति सचेत है। उसने मधुसूदन के साथ विवाह किया था उसकी सेवा करने के लिए, भक्ति करने के लिए वहाँ से उसे क्षुद्रता मिलती है, सहानुभूति का अभाव मिलता है जिसे देखकर वह कुन्टाग्रस्त हो जाती है। मधुसूदर व्यापारी व्यक्ति है, उससे सभी डरते हैं, वह जो चाहता है वही करता है, सभी उसके वश में है लेकिन कुमुदिनी पर उसका वश नहीं चलता। क्योंकि कुमुदिनी प्यार के सामने बिकने को भी तैयार है मालिक के आदेश को सुनने के लिए भी तैयार नहीं। कुमु स्वाधीनता चाहती है यदि उसे वह स्वाधीनता नहीं मिलती तो वह अपना हृदय द्वारा बन्ध रख कर दासी की तरह जी लेना पसंद करेगी।

तभी तो उसने कहा है— जानती हूँ, पति की श्रद्धा के साथ आत्म समर्पण नहीं कर पा रही हूँ, यह मेरा महापाप है, लेकिन उस पाप के लिए भी मुझे उतना डर नहीं लग रहा, जितना की श्रद्धाहीन आत्म समर्पण की ग्लानि की बात सोचकर कुमुदिनी ने सोचा— 'इस विशाल पृथ्वी पर मेरे रहने के लिए एक छोटा सा ठिकाना नहीं होगा' लेकिन तभी उसे पता चलता है कि उसके गर्भ में मधुसूदन का आगामी वंशज पल रहा है, उसे घर लौटना ही पड़ता है।

घर लौटने से पूर्व उसने अपने बड़े भाई से कहा था— "मुझे वे लोग जानबूझकर दुःख दे रहे हैं, ऐसा मत सोचना। मुझे वह सुख दे नहीं सकते, मैं ऐसी ही हूँ। मैं भी तो उन्हें सुखी नहीं कर पाऊँगी।.....एक दिन उन्हें मुक्त कर खुद को भी मुक्त करूँगी, चली आऊँगी ही, ये आप देख लेना, झूठ बनकर, झूठ के बीच नहीं रह पाऊँगी। मैं उन लोगों की बड़ी बहू हूँ, इसका मतलब यह नहीं है कि मैं कुमु न रहूँ?"

कुमु की दृष्टि भंगी Ibsen ds Doll's House के Nora की तरह है।
जब नोरा के पति ने उससे पूछा, Have you not been happy here?

नोरा ने उत्तर दिया – No, never, I thought I was, but I never was. नोरा के पति थोड़ा उत्तेजित होकर पूछते हैं– Before all else you are wife and mother.

नोरा उत्तर देती है– That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being. Just as much as you are, or at least I should try to become one. I must make up my mind which is right. Society or I.

इस भौतिकवादी समाज व्यवस्था में मनुष्य ने बहुत कुछ खोया है। आज सबकुछ कार्य निर्वाहक यन्त्र में परिणत हो गया है नारी भी उसी भोगवादी समाज में यन्त्रवत ही हो गयी है, यही अप्रिय सत्य भी है इसी वास्तविक सत्य को प्रस्तुत करता है 'योगायोग' उपन्यास।

रवीन्द्रनाथ अपनी 'साधारण मेये' नामक कविता में भविष्य की नारी की परिकल्पना प्रस्तुत किये है, जिसमें उनकी साधारण लड़की ने महान उपन्यासकार शरत्चन्द्र चट्टोपाध्याय से अनुरोध किया है

नरेश को रखिये न सात साल लन्दन में,
बार-बार फेल करे अपनी परीक्षा में,
शौक से जिये अपनी उपासना मण्डली के साथ,
इस बीच आपकी मालती उत्तीर्ण हो,
कलकत्ता विश्वविद्यालय से प्रथम श्रेणी में,
गणित लेकर स्नातकोत्तर

लेकिन यहीं यदि अन्त हुआ तो,
आपका साहित्य सम्राट नाम होगा कलंकित,
मेरी दशा जो हो पर आपकी कल्पना छोटी ना हो
यूरोप भेज दीजिए मालती को,
जहां हैं ज्ञानी, विद्वान, वीर, कवि, शिल्पी, राजा,
घेर कर उसे मानो एक ज्योतिर्विद के
तरह उसका करे अविष्कार!
मात्र विदुषी की तरह नहीं,
एक नारी की तरह!

नारी अधिकार : मानव अधिकारों के सन्दर्भ में

अमिताभ कुमार मिश्रा

प्रारम्भ से ही किसी समाज में नारी की स्थिति दूसरे दर्जे की रही है। प्रत्येक समाज में पुरुषवादी वर्चस्व की ही प्रधानता रही है। एक ऐसी व्यवस्था में जो कि पितृसत्ता के नाम से जानी जाती है, जिसमें पुरुषों का स्त्रियों पर वर्चस्व रहता है तथा जिसमें नारियों का शोषण और उत्पीड़न होता रहा है। पितृसत्ता की सबसे संपूर्णात्मक और उपयोगी परिभाषा लर्नर ने दी है "उनके अनुसार पितृसत्ता परिवार में महिलाओं और बच्चों पर पुरुषों के वर्चस्व की अभिव्यक्ति तथा संस्थागतकरण और सामान्य रूप से महिलाओं पर पुरुषों के सामाजिक वर्चस्व का विस्तार है।" इसका अभिप्राय है कि पुरुषों का समाज के सभी महत्वपूर्ण सत्ता प्रतिष्ठानों पर नियंत्रण रहता है और महिलाएँ इससे वंचित रहती हैं। देखा जाये तो ये न केवल नारी अधिकारों का हनन है, बल्कि मानव अधिकारों की दृष्टि से भी निंदनीय एवं अवांछनीय है।

यह माना जाता है कि इसका कारण लिंग भेद है, जबकि वास्तविकता यह है कि कोई भी सभ्यता और संस्कृति का विकास पुरुष और नारी के सहयोग पर टिका है न कि संघर्ष पर, एक के बिना दूसरे का अस्तित्व नहीं है। इसके बाद भी समाज में नारियों को वह सम्मान और आदर प्राप्त नहीं हुआ जिसकी वो हकदार थी। वास्तव में नारी अधिकारों को निम्नलिखित आधार पर मूल्यांकन किया जा सकता है :-

(1) सैद्धान्तिक आधार पर (2) व्यवहारिक आधार पर

सैद्धान्तिक आधार पर महिलाओं के अधिकार — सैद्धान्तिक आधार पर नारी अधिकारों का क्षेत्र काफी व्यापक है। जैसे संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा प्रदान किये गये अधिकार, भारतीय संविधान द्वारा प्रदान किये गये अधिकार भारत में विभिन्न कानूनों के द्वारा घोषित महिलाओं के अधिकार तथा समय समय पर उच्च न्यायालयों तथा सर्वोच्च न्यायालयों द्वारा घोषित महिलाओं के अधिकार।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा घोषित महिलाओं के अधिकार — द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के बाद मानवाधिकारों की सार्वभौमिक घोषणा के द्वारा मानव अधिकारों की बात कही गयी, परन्तु ये सामान्य प्रकार के अधिकार थे। वास्तव में 1979 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने विशिष्ट रूप से “महिलाओं के प्रति सभी प्रकार के भेदभावों की समाप्ति के लिये कदम उठाये, इसे ‘सेडा’ के नाम से जाना जाता है।¹ इसमें 30 अनुच्छेद हैं जो सर्वत्र महिलाओं के लिए समान अधिकारों की प्राप्ति के लिये अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर स्वीकृत सिद्धान्तों तथा उपायों को वाध्यकारी बनाते हैं। 3 सितम्बर 1981 को बोंस राष्ट्रों की सहमति से यह अभिसमय लागू हुआ² और अधिकांश राष्ट्रों ने इस पर अपनी सहमति दे दी है, जिसमें भारत भी शामिल है।

इसमें मनुष्य की गरिमा, प्रतिष्ठा, लैंगिक आधार पर किसी भी प्रकार का भेदभाव न करना, गरीबी में महिलाओं को भोजन, स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, प्रशिक्षण, रोजगार, इत्यादि की बात कही गयी है। इसका प्रमुख उद्देश्य था कि पुरुषों और महिलाओं के समान अधिकारों में आस्था रखी जाये। इसमें यह माना गया कि किसी भी दृष्टि से महिलाओं के प्रति भेदभाव उनकी गरिमा और प्रतिष्ठा का हनन करता है। जो कि महिलाओं की राजनीतिक सामाजिक आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक जीवन में भागीदारी में बाधक है।

साथ ही इसमें यह भी कहा गया कि बच्चों के पालन पोषण में माता पिता दोनों की समान रूप से भूमिका हो, तथा समाज एवं परिवार में पुरुषों और महिलाओं की पारम्परिक भूमिका में परिवर्तन होना चाहिये। इसमें यह भी कहा गया कि सभी राष्ट्र महिलाओं के प्रति होने वाले किसी भी प्रकार के भेदभाव की निंदा करते हैं।

इस अभिसमय के अनुच्छेद 14 में उपबंध किया गया है कि ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं के साथ ज्यादा भेदभाव होता है। अतः राज्यों से यह अपेक्षित है कि वे ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं के साथ किसी भी प्रकार का भेदभाव न हो, ऐसी व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित करें।⁴

यहां तक कि 7 अक्टूबर 1999 को महासभा ने महिलाओं के विरुद्ध सभी रूपों में भेदभाव की समाप्ति के नये प्रावधान इसमें शामिल किये। इसका उद्देश्य लैंगिक आधार पर सभी प्रकार के भेदभाव को समाप्त करना था।

उपर्युक्त अभिसमयों के अतिरिक्त संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा पोषित अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय महिला दशक (1976—1985) के दौरान तीन सम्मेलन आयोजित किये गये, जिसमें पहला 1975 में मैक्सिको सिटी, दूसरा 1980 में कोपेन हेगन तथा तीसरा 1985 में नैरोबी में आयोजित किया गया। चौथा विश्व महिला सम्मेलन 1995 में

बीजिंग में हुआ। इन सम्मेलनों के माध्यम से नारी अधिकारों की मांग पुरजोर ढंग से उठायी गयी। नैरोबी सम्मेलन में महिलाओं के लिये वर्ष 200 तक “आगामी दृष्टि सम्बन्धी रणनीति” प्रस्तुत की गयी।⁵

संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा ने सन 2000 में महिलाओं के मुद्दों पर प्रगति का निर्धारण करने के लिये इक्कीसवीं शताब्दी हेतु “महिलाओं पर विशेष सत्र 2000 : लिंग, समानता, विकास एवं शांति का आयोजन किया। इसमें बीजिंग सम्मेलन द्वारा अंगीकार किये गये प्रावधानों का नवीनीकरण किया गया। इस तरह अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर नारी अधिकारों से जुड़े मुद्दों पर व्यापक रूप से सहमति तो बनी, पर इसका प्रभाव उस तरह से नहीं हुआ जैसा कि सोचा गया। क्योंकि जब तक हमारी सामाजिक मान्यताएँ एवं मूल्यों में यह असमानता विराजमान है, तब तक किसी भी अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय संविदाओं के परिणाम स्वरूप इसे परिवर्तित नहीं किया जा सकता।

भारतीय संविधान में महिलाओं के अधिकार — भारत के संविधान में वर्णित मानव अधिकार दो भागों में विभक्त है — पहले भाग में वे अधिकार आते हैं जो मौलिक अधिकारों के रूप में संविधान के अध्याय 3 के अनुच्छेद 12 से 35 में वर्णित हैं तथा दूसरा भाग संविधान के अध्याय 4 के अनुच्छेद 35 से 51 तक नीति निदेशक तत्वों के रूप में वर्णित है। जहाँ तक मौलिक अधिकारों की स्थिति है तो इन्हें कानूनी संरक्षण प्राप्त है और सरकार इसे लागू करने को बाध्य है, वहीं नीति निदेशक तत्वों को कानूनी स्वीकृति प्राप्त नहीं है और इन्हें लागू करना या न करना राज्य की इच्छा पर निर्भर है। जहाँ मौलिक अधिकारों का उल्लंघन होने पर नागरिक उच्च न्यायालय या सर्वोच्च न्यायालय की शरण में जा सकता है। वहीं नीति निदेशक सिद्धान्तों को लागू करवाने के लिये न्यायालय की मदद नहीं ली जा सकती। देखा जाए तो नीति निदेशक सिद्धान्तों को संकुचित अर्थ में मानवाधिकारों की श्रेणी में नहीं रखा जा सकता।

अतः नारी अधिकारों के सन्दर्भ में भारतीय संविधान के द्वारा दिये गये मौलिक अधिकारों की चर्चा के द्वारा यह देखने का प्रयास किया जायेगा कि वास्तव में भारतीय संविधान के द्वारा महिलाओं के कौन कौन से मानवाधिकार हैं।

अनुच्छेद 14 — भारतीय संविधान के अनुच्छेद 14 में यह स्पष्ट उल्लेख है कि कानून के समक्ष सभी समान हैं और उन्हें कानून का समान रूप से संरक्षण प्राप्त है।

यह ब्रिटेन के संविधान की देन है। इसका तात्पर्य है कि सभी लोगो पर राज्य का कानून समान रूप से लागू होगा। इसमें किसी को विशेषाधिकार प्राप्त नहीं है अर्थात् पुरुष एवं महिला दोनों को कानून का समान रूप से संरक्षण प्राप्त है।

अनुच्छेद 15 — दूसरा महत्वपूर्ण अधिकार है धर्म, जाति, भाषा, लिंग, जन्मस्थान इत्यादि के आधार पर राज्य अपने नागरिकों के साथ किसी प्रकार का भेदभाव नहीं करेगा अर्थात् सार्वजनिक स्थानों जैसे दुकान, होटल, मनोरंजन स्थल, कुंआ, तालाब, स्नान घाट, सड़क इत्यादि जो सरकारी विधि से पूर्णतः या आंशिक रूप से संचालित है या आम जनता के लिए घोषित हो, किसी भी आधार पर इसके उपयोग से वंचित नहीं किया जायेगा। अर्थात् इस अनुच्छेद के द्वारा महिलाओं को लैंगिक आधार पर भेदभाव से सुरक्षा मिली है।

अनुच्छेद 16 — इसके अन्तर्गत राज्य के अधीन सेवाओं में सभी नागरिकों को समान अवसर प्रदान किया गया है। इससे यह स्पष्ट है कि राज्य के अधीन किसी रोजगार या कार्यालय में किसी नागरिक के साथ लिंग, जाति, नस्ल, वंश, जन्म स्थान, निवास इत्यादि के आधार पर भेदभाव नहीं किया जायेगा। यह मौलिक अधिकार भी नारी अधिकारों को संरक्षण प्रदान करता है।

अनुच्छेद 23 — इसी तरह अनुच्छेद 23 में मानव व्यापार, बेगार या अन्य प्रकार की बंधुआ मजदूरी का निषेध किया गया है। इसका उल्लंघन दण्डनीय अपराध होगा। यहां यह उल्लेखनीय है कि मानव व्यापार में महिलाओं का अनैतिक देह व्यापार भी शामिल है।

अनुच्छेद 25 से 30 के अन्तर्गत महिलाओं को भी वो सभी अधिकार प्राप्त हैं, जो पुरुषों को प्राप्त हैं। चाहे वह धार्मिक स्वतन्त्रता का अधिकार हो या किसी धर्म का प्रचार प्रसार करने का अधिकार, यहाँ तक कि अल्पसंख्यक महिलाओं को भी अपनी शैक्षणिक संस्थाएँ खोलने का अधिकार है।

जहाँ तक नीति निदेशक सिद्धान्तों की बात है इसमें सबसे महत्वपूर्ण अनुच्छेद 39 है, जिसके अनुसार राज्य इस प्रकार की नीति बनायेगा की सभी नागरिकों (पुरुषों एवं महिलाओं) को जीविका के समुचित साधन उपलब्ध हो सकें। साथ ही महिलाओं और पुरुषों को समान कार्य के लिये समान वेतन का भी अधिकार प्राप्त है। इसमें किसी भी प्रकार का भेदभाव लैंगिक आधार पर नहीं किया जायेगा।

अनुच्छेद 49 के तहत यह स्पष्ट प्रावधान है कि राज्य काम करने की न्यायपरक एवं मानवीय परिस्थितियों पैदा करेगा तथा मातृत्व लाभ से किसी भी महिला को वंचित नहीं किया जायेगा। इतना ही नहीं बल्कि संविधान के द्वारा मौलिक कर्तव्य अनुच्छेद 51 ए में कहा गया है कि प्रत्येक नागरिक महिलाओं के सम्मान को आघात पहुंचाने वाली रीतियों और परम्पराओं का त्याग करें।

संविधान के 73वें संविधान संशोधन के द्वारा यह प्राविधान किया गया कि पंचायतों में एक तिहाई सीटें महिलाओं के लिए सुरक्षित की जाये। इसी तरह अनुसूचित जातियों/जनजातियों के लिए भी आरक्षित सीटों में से एक तिहाई सीटें उसी श्रेणी की महिलाओं के लिये आरक्षित की गयी। पंचायत अध्यक्षों की कुल संख्या की एक तिहाई संख्या महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षित रहेगी। 74वें संविधान संशोधन के द्वारा नगर निकायों में भी इसी प्रकार की व्यवस्था लागू की गयी।

कानूनों के द्वारा दिये गये महिलाओं के मानव अधिकार — दंड प्रक्रिया संहिता 1973 में महिलाओं को कई प्रकार के मानवाधिकार प्रदान किये गये हैं। जैसे किसी महिला अभियुक्त की तलाशी किसी महिला पुलिसकर्मी द्वारा ही की जा सकती है। साथ ही ऐसी तलाशी के दौरान पुरुष उपस्थित न हो।⁶ यदि किसी महिला अभियुक्त के शरीर की मेडिकल जांच की जरूरत है तो ऐसी जांच कोई महिला चिकित्सक ही करेगी अथवा महिला चिकित्सक के निरीक्षण में ही जांच की जायेगी।⁷

इसके अतिरिक्त कुछ अन्य महत्वपूर्ण कानून भारतीय दंड संहिता इंडियन पीनल कोड (1860) के तहत है, जिसमें महिलाओं को कई प्रकार के मानव अधिकार प्राप्त हैं। जैसे यदि कोई पुरुष किसी महिला का बलात्कार करने के इरादे से उस पर हमला करें तो उस महिला को अपने बचाव में उस हमलावर को जान से मारने का अधिकार है। इसी तरह पहली शादी छुपाकर विवाह करना, किसी महिला को अपशब्द कहना या अश्लील टिप्पणी करना, किसी महिला की सहमति के बगैर उसका गर्भपात करवाना इत्यादि भारतीय दंड संहिता के तहत दंडनीय अपराध हैं।

1961 के दहेज निषेध अधिनियम (1961) के तहत दहेज मांगना या देना दंडनीय अपराध बना दिया गया। इसी तरह 1956 में महिलाओं को वेश्यावृत्ति के अभिशाप से मुक्त कराने के लिये “अनैतिक व्यापार निवारण अधिनियम” लागू किया गया है।⁸ इसके तहत महिलाओं का अनैतिक व्यापार करना एक दंडनीय अपराध बना दिया गया।

इसी तरह महिलाओं के आर्थिक हितों को सुरक्षित रखने के उद्देश्य से सरकार द्वारा समय समय पर कई कानून बनाये गये जिसमें प्रमुख रूप से 1948 का न्यूनतम मजदूरी अधिनियम, 1958 का कारखाना अधिनियम, 1976 का समान पारिश्रमिक अधिनियम इत्यादि प्रमुख हैं।⁹

सामाजिक रूप से महिलाओं को प्रतिष्ठा दिलाने के उद्देश्य से भी समय समय पर कई अधिनियम पारित किये गये जैसे कुटुंब न्यायालय अधिनियम 1984, गर्भ का चिकित्सीय समापन अधिनियम 1971, हिन्दू विवाह अधिनियम 1955, हिन्दू उत्तराधिकार अधिनियम 1956 (वर्ष 2005 में यथा संशोधित) भारतीय विवाह विच्छेद अधिनियम 1969 प्रमुख हैं।¹⁰

कामकाजी महिलाओं से संबंधित अधिनियम एवं न्यायालय का दृष्टिकोण — कामकाजी महिलाओं का शारीरिक और मानसिक रूप से शोषण न हो सके, इसके लिये भी समय समय पर कई अधिनियम एवं न्यायालय के निर्णय प्रभावी हुये हैं। जैसे उच्चतम न्यायालय ने डी एस नकारा बनाम भारत संघ के वाद में निर्णय देते हुए कहा था कि यदि अनुच्छेद 14 व 16 का निवेचन उद्देशिका और अनुच्छेद 39 (ड) को ध्यान में रखकर किया जाये तो समान कार्य के लिये समान वेतन का सिद्धान्त इन प्रावधानों में स्वतः सिद्ध है।

इसी तरह विशाखा बनाम राजस्थान राज्य (1997) के बहुचर्चित विवाद में उच्चतम न्यायालय ने नियोजन के दौरान यौन शोषण के विरुद्ध कानून बनाने की आवश्यकता पर बल दिया जिससे कि कामकाजी महिलाओं का यौन शोषण न हो सके।

महिला अधिकारिता को मजबूती और स्थापित्व प्रदान करने के लिए संसद के द्वारा राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग अधिनियम के अर्न्तगत 1990 में राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग का गठन किया गया। यह आयोग महिला अधिकारों के हनन को रोकने के उद्देश्य से सराहनीय रूप से कार्य कर रहा है। ताकि महिलाओं के साथ भेदभाव पूर्ण व्यवहार को रोका जा सके।

व्यवहारिक पक्ष — यहाँ इस बात से इन्कार नहीं किया जा सकता कि नारी अधिकारों के संदर्भ में सैद्धान्तिक रूप से काफी सराहनीय प्रयास हुए हैं। चाहे वह अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर हो या फिर राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर, लेकिन यह देखकर दुख होता है कि इन सबके बावजूद व्यवहारिक रूप से आज भी महिलाओं की स्थिति में सुधार संतोषजनक रूप से नहीं दिखाई देता। देखा जाये तो इन सबके पीछे कहीं न कहीं हमारी पुरुषवादी सोच एक प्रमुख कारण रही है। हमारे यहाँ प्राचीन समय से ही यह कहा जाता है कि नारी बचपन में पिता के अधीन, युवावस्था में पति के अधीन और बुढ़ापे में बच्चों के अधीन रहती है। वह स्वतन्त्र होने के योग्य नहीं है।

यह सोच कहीं न कहीं नारी अधिकारों की राह में एक बड़ी बाधा है। प्रसिद्ध विद्वान प्रो० आशीष बोस ने एक अध्ययन में पाया कि परम्परा (महिलाओं

को दोयम दर्जे का मानना, पराया धन मानना आदि) और तकनीक (भ्रूण के लिंग की जांच कर मादा भ्रूण की हत्या करना) के अपवित्र गठबंधन से समाज का काफी अहित हो रहा है।¹¹ लड़कियों की घटती संख्या, उनके साथ बढ़ता, यौन अपराध, इत्यादि नारी अधिकारों की जमीनी सच्चाई को प्रदर्शित करता है।

यहां तक कि विश्व की 73 प्रतिशत महिलाएं अपने पतियों और सगे संबंधियों द्वारा ही प्रवाहित की जाती हैं। यह स्थिति केवल विकासशील देशों की ही नहीं बल्कि अपने को सम्य कहने वाले विकसित देशों की भी है। समाज का कोई ऐसा क्षेत्र और विश्व का कोई ऐसा भाग नहीं है जहां महिलाओं को प्रताड़ित न किया जाता हो।

बोसनियों के गृहयुद्ध में सैनिकों द्वारा लाखों महिलाओं के साथ बलात्कार होता है। ये लाचार और पीड़ित महिलाएं अवैध सन्तानों को जन्म देती हैं। उन्हें समाज के द्वारा बहिष्कृत किया जाता है। विश्व के कुछ नेता, कुछ संगठन, कुछ समाचार पत्र उनकी दुर्दशा पर घड़ियाली आंसू बहाते हैं और फिर सारा मामला विस्मृतियों की राख के नीचे दबा दिया जाता है।¹² यहाँ तक कि भारत के छोटा नागपुर क्षेत्र के संथाल परगना के आदिवासी सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के आदेश के बावजूद आज भी अपनी महिलाओं को सम्पत्ति के अधिकार देने पर सहमत नहीं है।¹³

प्रश्न यह उठता है कि यह स्थिति किस प्रकार बदले यह विश्व महिलाओं के साथ कब तक भेदभाव करता रहेगा। देखा जाये तो कहने के लिए महिलाओं के लिए बहुत कुछ किया जा रहा है परन्तु स्थिति संतोषजनक नहीं है। समाज में बलात्कार वेश्यावृत्ति बढ़ रही है। एक आंकड़े के अनुसार भारत में साढ़े तीन लाख से ज्यादा छोटी उम्र की लड़किया वेश्यावृत्ति में लगी हैं। यहाँ तक कि दहेज विरोधी अधिनियम पारित होने के बाद भी दहेज जैसी कुप्रथा आज भी चल रही है। यहाँ तक कि बलात्कार की घटनाओं में तेजी से वृद्धि हो रही है। दिल्ली में घटित निर्भया कांड ने तो पूरे देश को हिला दिया, जिसके बाद महिलाओं के अधिकारों पर एक नई बहस शुरू हुई, लेकिन कुछ समय बाद स्थिति यथावत हो गई। कहने का तात्पर्य यह है कि यदि कोई घटना घटती है तो हम कुछ दिनों तक उसकी आलोचना, निंदा, कैंडिल मार्च इत्यादि निकाल कर यह समझते हैं कि हम नारी अधिकारों के प्रति काफी सजग हैं। परन्तु समय बीतने के साथ हम नारी के सम्मान और उसके अधिकारों के प्रति संवेदनहीन हो जाते हैं।

निष्कर्ष रूप से कहा जा सकता है कि कोई भी कानून या संवैधानिक प्राविधान तब तक नारी के अधिकारों की रक्षा नहीं कर सकता, जब तक समाज

का नजरिया उसके प्रति नहीं बदलता। नारी अधिकारों पर संवैधानिक एवं कानूनी प्रावधान तब और भी सफल होंगे जब महिलाएँ स्वयं भी आगे बढ़कर अपने अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक हो। महिलाओं को अपने अधिकारों के प्रति सकरात्मक दृष्टिकोण विकसित करना होगा, तभी नारी अधिकारों का वास्तविक उद्देश्य न केवल सैद्धान्तिक स्तर पर बल्कि व्यावहारिक स्तर पर भी प्राप्त हो सकेगा।

यहाँ यह भी ध्यान देने योग्य है कि महिला शोषण का निदान मात्र कौमार्य या यौन शुचिता जैसे परम्परागत पितृसत्तात्मक दृष्टिकोण से कदापि नहीं किया जा सकता। इसके लिए नारी विमर्श व समस्या का नारीवादी विश्लेषण भी नितान्त आवश्यक है जिससे अब तक बचा जाता रहा है। जैसे – बलात्कार या यौनजन्य हिंसा की कार्यवाही फास्ट ट्रैक कोर्ट में शत प्रतिशत महिला वकीलों व जज की उपस्थिति में होनी चाहिये। साथ ही यह कहा जा सकता है कि इन सबके बावजूद महिलाओं को सम्मानजनक स्थान दिलाने के लिये अभी बहुत कुछ करना बाकी है। हमें नकारात्मक विचारों से ऊपर उठकर एक सकारात्मक वातावरण बनाना होगा जिससे एक ऐसी वाटिका विकसित हो जिसमें हमारी बेटियाँ व महिलाएँ अपने को पूर्ण रूप से सुरक्षित समझें तभी हमारे समाज की सार्थकता होगी।

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प्राचीन भारतीय समाज में स्त्रियों का अवदान (शिक्षा एवं धर्म के संदर्भ में)

रंजना मालवीय

“यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः”

स्मृतिकार मनु का यह वाक्य हमारे प्राचीन भारतीय समाज में नारी महत्ता की एक झलक प्रस्तुत करता है। वस्तुतः कोई भी समाज नारी की अवहेलना करके प्रगति के पथ पर आगे नहीं बढ़ सकता है। इस तथ्य से हमारे प्राचीन मनीषी भली-भाँति परिचित थे। वैदिक काल से ही हम पाते हैं कि वैदिक ऋषियों ने समाज के हर वर्ग और हर क्षेत्र में पुरुषों और स्त्रियों को समान रूप से सहभागी होने की प्रेरणा दी, परिणामस्वरूप भारतीय समाज में प्राचीन काल से ही स्त्रियों ने अपने तेजपुंज से देश, समाज, धर्म, संस्कृति, राजनीति, सभ्यता तथा साहित्य को निरन्तर उज्ज्वलित एवं चमत्कृत किया है। उन्होंने अपने विविध रूपों में समाज एवं राष्ट्र को बहुत कुछ दिया है। जिससे आज भी हम गौरवान्वित हैं।

वैदिक काल में स्त्रियों को पुरुष के समान अधिकार प्राप्त था। इस समानता तथा स्वतन्त्रता से स्त्रियों ने स्वयं में उच्च सामर्थ्य का विकास किया और समाज के सभी क्षेत्रों के अभ्युत्थान में समान रूप से सहयोग दिया। आज इक्कीसवीं शती का समाज कल्पना भी नहीं कर सकता कि वैदिक काल में नारी की कितनी भागीदारी थी।

भारतीय इतिहास में वैदिक काल सर्वोत्कृष्ट और सर्वोन्नत काल है। इस काल में स्त्रियाँ वैदिक शिक्षा प्राप्त करती थीं एवं मन्षोच्चारण करती थीं। भारतीय परम्परा में वैदिक शिक्षा उपनयन संस्कार के पश्चात् प्राप्त होती थी। प्रश्न उठता है कि क्या स्त्रियों का उपनयन संस्कार होता था? अथर्ववेद में कन्या द्वारा ब्रह्मचर्य आश्रम में शिक्षा प्राप्ति का उल्लेख है।¹ वे ब्रह्मचर्य का पालन करती हुई यज्ञोपवीत, मौञ्जी तथा मेखला आदि धारण करती थीं।² शुक्ल यजुर्वेद में शिक्षित स्त्री-पुरुष को ही विवाह के उपयुक्त बताया गया है।³ इससे प्रमाणित होता है कि स्त्रियों का उपनयन होता था। तत्पश्चात् वे ब्रह्मचर्य आश्रम

में प्रवेश करती थीं और वेद शास्त्रों तथा विविध विद्याओं का अध्ययन करती थीं। अन्त में उनका समावर्तन संस्कार भी होता था। शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाली स्त्रियों की दो श्रेणी थी – सद्योवधू तथा ब्रह्मवादिनी। प्रथम श्रेणी की स्त्रियाँ विवाह के पूर्व तक अध्ययन करती थीं। दूसरी श्रेणी की आजीवन ब्रह्मचारिणी रहकर वैदिक साहित्य, अध्यात्म चिन्तन में संलग्न रहती थीं। वृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् में विदुषी कन्या की कामना करने वाले पिता द्वारा धार्मिक कृत्य करने का उल्लेख है। इन उल्लेखों से स्पष्ट है कि साधारण शिक्षा तो सभी कन्याओं को प्राप्त थी।

समाज में स्त्रियों की सक्रियता दो रूपों में थी – एक कौटुम्बिक तथा दूसरा सामाजिक। कुटुम्ब या परिवार समाज की प्रारम्भिक इकाई थी तथा कुलवधू कुटुम्ब की गृहस्वामिनी या साम्राज्ञी। गृहस्वामिनी के रूप में स्त्री परिवार के सदस्यों को लगन, श्रद्धा तथा स्नेह से सिंचित करती थी। सन्तान के पालन-पोषण का कार्य पूर्ण रूप से उसी पर था। शिक्षित एवं सुसंस्कृत स्त्रियों ने माता के रूप में अपनी संतति में श्रेष्ठ गुणों का बीजारोपण कर स्वस्थ समाज के विकास में योगदान किया।

स्त्रियों ने समाज के अन्य क्षेत्रों में भी श्रेष्ठता प्राप्त की। कुछ स्त्रियाँ उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त कर परम विदुषी बन जाती थीं। विश्ववारा, घोषा, रोमशा, लोपामुद्रा, शाश्वती, इन्द्राणी और अपाला आदि अनेक विदुषी स्त्रियों ने वैदिक मन्त्रों की रचना कर वैदिक साहित्य को समृद्ध किया। वे वेद में ऋषि उपाधि से विभूषित हुई थीं। अपने विशेष ज्ञान के कारण विदुषी स्त्रियाँ अध्यापिका का कार्य भी करती थीं। उन्हें आचार्या कहा जाता था। शतपथ ब्राह्मण में सामवेद को स्त्रियों का विशेष कार्य बताया गया है।⁴ इससे पता चलता है कि वे मन्त्रों का शुद्ध पाठ तथा स्वरों के उचित आरोह-अवरोह को जानती थीं। इस काल की स्त्रियाँ अपने चरित्र से समाज का मार्गदर्शन भी करती थीं। मन्त्रद्रष्टा, अपाला, विश्ववारा, लोपामुद्रा और रोमशा आदि स्त्रियों का ही प्रभाव था कि परिवर्ती-साहित्य में सुलभा ने दर्शनशास्त्र में, गार्गी तथा मैत्रेयी ने अध्यात्मिक क्षेत्र में और मदालसा ने ब्रह्मविद्या में ख्याति प्राप्त की। ब्रह्मवादिनी अपाला ने अपने पिता के संतप्त हृदय को जहाँ अपनी अगाध ज्ञानरूपी जलराशि में निमग्न कर शान्त किया वहीं अपने पति के इस भ्रम को भी दूर किया कि नारी नर के बिना नगण्य है। इस प्रकार उन्होंने अपने ज्ञान एवं तपोबल से तत्कालीन समाज को चमत्कृत किया तथा यह सिद्ध किया कि नारी-शक्ति समाज को दिशा प्रदान करने में अहम् भूमिका निभा सकती है।

उत्तरवैदिक काल में नये दार्शनिक प्रश्नों पर चिन्तन की जो प्रवृत्ति उद्भूत हुई, उसमें स्त्रियों ने भी भाग लिया। काशकृत्स्नी नामक विदुषी स्त्री ने मीमांसा दर्शन पर एक ग्रन्थ रचित कर दर्शन-पद्धति की एक नयी परंपरा का विकास किया।⁵ उपनिषदों में वर्णित गार्गी एवं मैत्रेयी दर्शन, तत्त्व ज्ञान तथा तर्क में पारंगत थीं। गार्गी के विद्वता के समक्ष तो याज्ञवल्क्य अकस्मात् हतप्रभ रह गये थे।⁶ मैत्रेयी और गार्गी ने ज्ञान के विकास में बहुमूल्य कार्य किया था। इन्हें तो

भारतीय समाज की सांस्कृतिक चेतना और स्मृति में शाश्वत स्थान मिला। ब्रह्मयज्ञ में प्रतिदिन जिन ऋषियों को तर्पण दिया जाता है उनमें इनकी भी गणना है।⁷

वैदिककाल के अनुसार महाकाव्य काल में भी स्त्रियाँ वेदों का अध्ययन करती थीं। सीता प्रतिदिन वैदिक सूक्तों द्वारा प्रार्थना करती थीं। कौशल्या और बालि की पत्नी तारा को मन्त्रविद् कहा गया है।⁸ महाभारत के अनुसार पाण्डवों की माता कुन्ती अथर्ववेद की ज्ञाता थीं।⁹

आश्वलायन गृह्यसूत्र में स्त्रियों के समावर्तन का उल्लेख है। इससे स्पष्ट है कि गृह्यसूत्रों के काल तक स्त्रियों को वेदाध्ययन का अधिकार पहले के समान ही प्राप्त था। यह काल रचनात्मक काल है। इस काल में जब हिन्दू व्यवहार शास्त्र की रचना हुई तो इस नवीन क्षेत्र में भी स्त्रियों ने समाज का मार्ग दर्शन किया। वे धार्मिक एवं सामाजिक अनुष्ठानों, नियमों एवं विधि-निषेधों को पुरुषों से अधिक जानती थीं। आपस्तम्ब धर्मसूत्र के अनुसार अलिखित कर्तव्यों का ज्ञान स्त्रियों से प्राप्त करना चाहिए।¹⁰ इस प्रकार सूर्य काल तक हम स्त्रियों को वेदाध्ययन करते हुए पाते हैं परन्तु शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में उनका यह अधिकार चिर स्थायी न रह सका। उत्तरवैदिक काल में ही उन्हें याज्ञिक अधिकारों से वंचित करने का प्रयास किया गया। जिसका दुष्प्रभाव स्त्रियों की शिक्षा पर पड़ा। प्रथम शताब्दी के प्रारम्भ तक स्त्रियों का उपनयन संस्कार रस्मी रह गया और अन्त में उसे समाप्त कर दिया गया। मनुस्मृति के अनुसार स्त्रियों का विवाह ही उनका उपनयन है।¹¹

बौद्धकाल में स्त्रियों ने उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त कर साहित्य एवं दर्शन के क्षेत्र में अमूल्य योगदान दिया। बौद्धधर्म के प्रसिद्ध ग्रन्थ 'थेरीगाथा' के बहुत कुछ अंशों की रचना 32 विदुषी कवियषियों ने की थी।¹² बौद्ध साहित्य से पता चलता है कि इस काल में स्त्रियाँ स्वयं को समाज का एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग समझती थीं। वे विद्या के विकास के लिए व्याख्यान, वाद-विवाद तथा शास्त्रार्थ आदि में बद्ध-चढ़कर भाग लेती थीं। विदुषी भद्रा कुण्डल केशा विविध आश्रमों में जाती थीं और विद्वान् ब्राह्मणों से शास्त्रार्थ करती थीं। संयुक्त निकाय में वर्णित सुक्का की वक्तृत्व शक्ति अपने समय में अद्वितीय मानी जाती थी। सुक्का के व्याख्यान की सूचना नगर निवासियों को इन शब्दों में देना कि – सुक्का अमृत वर्षा कर रही हैं, जो लोग बुद्धिमान हैं, वे जायें और अमृतरस का पान करें। प्रमाणित करता है कि विदुषी स्त्रियाँ अपने ज्ञान से समाज पर सकारात्मक प्रभाव डालती थीं। संघमित्रा तीनों विद्याओं की ज्ञाता थीं। अंजलि 'विनय-पिटक' में इतना पाण्डित्य प्राप्त कर चुकी थीं कि दूसरों को इसकी शिक्षा दे सकती थीं। इस काल में धर्म एवं दर्शन का चिन्तन-मनन करने वाली स्त्रियों की संख्या पर्याप्त थी।

दक्षिण भारत की कवियषियों ने भी प्राकृत-साहित्य को अपनी काव्य रचना द्वारा समृद्ध किया। 'गाथासप्तशती' इसका उदाहरण है। आठवीं शती में महान् कवियत्री विज्जा ने मानव, प्रेम एवं प्रकृति पर प्रमुख रचनाएँ कीं। इन्होंने 'कौमुदी महोत्सव' नामक ग्रन्थ की अन्विति की। मण्डल मिश्र की पत्नी भारती मीमांसा,

वेदान्त तथा साहित्य की पंडिता थीं, अपनी बौद्धिक विलक्षणता के कारण शंकराचार्य तथा मण्डल मिश्र के बीच हुए शास्त्रार्थ की निर्णायिका नियुक्त की गयी थीं।¹³

वैदिक समाज में स्त्रियाँ धार्मिक कार्यों में स्वतन्त्रतापूर्वक भाग लेती थीं। विश्ववारा प्रातःकाल स्वयं यज्ञ प्रारम्भ कर देती थीं।¹⁴ अथर्ववेद में स्त्रियों को यज्ञ का अधिकारिणी कहा गया है।¹⁵ यज्ञ में पत्नी पति के साथ मन्त्रोच्चारण करती थी। अविवाहित व्यक्ति यज्ञ नहीं कर सकता था।¹⁶ रामायण काल में राम को सीता की अनुपस्थिति में यज्ञ करने में असमर्थ पाते हैं। सूत्र ग्रन्थों में स्त्रियों द्वारा यज्ञ के अनुष्ठान का वर्णन है। स्त्रियाँ स्वयं विभिन्न यज्ञों को करती थीं। इसीलिए बहुत सी स्त्रियों के नाम के साथ विभिन्न यज्ञों का नाम जुड़ गया, जैसे — सीता यज्ञ। पारस्कर गृह्यसूत्र से पता चलता है कि शस्य वृद्धि के लिए पत्नी सीता यज्ञ करती थीं।¹⁷ इस प्रकार धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों के विकास में स्त्रियों ने रचनात्मक योगदान दिया परन्तु उत्तरवैदिक काल से स्त्रियों के धार्मिक अधिकारों को सीमित एवं संकुचित किया जाने लगा। इस काल में स्त्रियों के लिए नये-नये विचार उत्पन्न हुए और उनके याज्ञिक अधिकारों को छीनने का प्रयास किया गया। शांखायन ब्राह्मण में कहा गया कि स्त्रियाँ यज्ञ की अधिकारिणी नहीं हैं। उनका स्थान यज्ञ की वेदी से बाहर होना चाहिए।¹⁸ बाद में स्त्रियों का उपनयन समाप्त हो जाने पर उनके धार्मिक अधिकारों पर गहरा आघात लगा। वे मन्त्रोच्चारण तथा यज्ञ सम्पन्न करने में असमर्थ हो गयीं। परिणामस्वरूप धार्मिक क्षेत्र में उनका योगदान सीमित हो गया। तत्पश्चात् स्त्रियाँ ब्रह्मज्ञान एवं आध्यात्मिक क्षेत्र में रुचि लेने लगीं। पुराणों में आध्यात्म में रुचि रखने वाली स्त्रियों का वर्णन है। ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण में वृहस्पति की भगिनि को ब्रह्मवादिनी कहा गया है, जिन्होंने योग में सिद्धि प्राप्त कर आसक्ति-रहित हो समस्त पृथ्वी का पर्यटन किया था। महर्षि वशिष्ठ की पत्नी अरुन्धती के लिए कहा गया है कि उन्होंने ऋषियों, देवताओं और पितरों को धर्म का रहस्य बतलाया जिससे सन्तुष्ट होकर उन्होंने अरुन्धती को साधुवाद दिया और ब्रह्मा ने उन्हें वर दिया कि उनकी तपस्या सदा वृद्धि को प्राप्त होती रहे। इस समय अनेक स्त्रियों ने अपने तापस जीवन में जीव, जगत् एवं ब्रह्म का ज्ञान प्राप्त कर उनकी शिक्षाएं भी दी।

बौद्ध काल में बौद्ध संघ की क्षत्रछाया में अनेक स्त्रियों ने अपने उच्चतम आध्यात्मिक ज्ञान से संघ को गौरवान्वित किया। इस काल की स्त्रियों को ही यह श्रेय प्राप्त है कि उन्होंने अपनी उत्कट इच्छा से महात्मा बुद्ध को इस बात के लिए विवश किया कि वे स्त्रियों को भिक्षुणी बनायें तथा उनके लिए पृथक संघ की व्यवस्था करें। ये स्त्रियाँ ज्ञान को अपने तक सीमित न रख धर्म के प्रचार एवं प्रसार के लिए देश-विदेश जाती थीं। एक उदाहरण मौर्य सम्राट अशोक की पुत्री संघमित्रा का है, जो बौद्ध धर्म के सिद्धान्तों के प्रचार के लिए लंका गयी थी। जातक कथा में चार विदुषी स्त्रियों का उल्लेख है जो देश में पर्यटन करते हुए जहाँ भी जाती थीं वहाँ विद्वानों को शास्त्रार्थ के लिए आमन्त्रित करती थीं।

भिक्षुणी खेमा विनय में पण्डिता थीं। कोशल राज प्रसेनजित स्वयं उनके समक्ष उपस्थित हुए और दार्शनिक विषयों पर विचार-विमर्श किया। उन्होंने अपनी शंकाओं का संतोषजनक उत्तर प्राप्त किया। इसी प्रकार धम्मदिन्ना धम्म में पारंगत हो गयी थीं, जिससे महात्मा बुद्ध उन पर प्रसन्न हुए। उन्होंने अपने जीवन का एक बड़ा भाग बौद्ध धर्म के प्रचार में व्यतीत किया। संघमिषा, अंजली, उत्तरा, काली, चन्ना, उपला तथा रेवती आदि अनेक स्त्रियों ने बौद्ध धर्म के प्रचार में सहयोग किया। इस प्रकार स्पष्ट है कि प्राचीन काल में स्त्रियों ने अपने जीवन में अनुसंधानों एवं अलौकिक कार्यों से समाज को लाभान्वित किया। जिनकी स्मृतियों से परवर्ती समाज प्रेरित एवं गतिशील बना हुआ है।

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गांधी-दर्शन में नारी

श्वेता कुमारी

प्राचीन भारत में नारी सच्चे अर्थों में पुरुष की अर्द्धांगिनी थी, सहधर्मिणी थी और देवी अथवा माता व गृहलक्ष्मी के रूप में पूजी जाती थी। कालांतर में वह उपेक्षित होती गयी। वह समाज में हेय समझी जाने लगी तथा अंधकार में डूबी, चरणों की दासी या कामवासना की पूर्ति का साधन मात्र मानी जाने लगी। महिलाओं की दयनीय स्थिति भारतीय समाज के लिए एक बहुत बड़ा कलंक थी। गाँधीजी ने महिलाओं को पुरुषों के समान अधिकार और स्वतंत्रता प्रदान करने का समर्थन किया। उन्होंने नारी को चरित्र की दृष्टि से उच्च तथा प्रेम, मूक तपस्या, श्रद्धा और ज्ञान की और साक्षात् त्यागमूर्ति कहा।¹

भारतीय नारी उत्थान की दिशा में गाँधी युग स्वर्ण युग के समान था। आधुनिक भारतीय इतिहास में गांधी जी पहले व्यक्ति हुए जिन्होंने बड़ी निर्भिकता तथा साहस से समाज के सामने यह बात रखी कि शताब्दियों से शोषित और उत्पीड़ित नारी अब पुरुष के अनैतिक प्रभुत्व को किसी प्रकार नहीं सहेंगी। गांधी जी का यह विश्वास था कि समाज के आधे भाग की उपेक्षा कर हम किसी भी प्रकार की सामाजिक, राजनीतिक और आर्थिक प्रगति नहीं कर सकते हैं।

गांधी जी ने कहा कि अहिंसा के नैतिक शास्त्र का प्रयोग महिला पुरुष की अपेक्षा अधिक क्षमता से कर सकती है।² गांधी जी का विचार था कि अहिंसात्मक जागरण की दिशा में वास्तविक कोई कार्य कर सकना तब तक सम्भव नहीं है, जब तक नारी शक्ति को उसकी पूर्ण गरिमा को जागृत न कर दिया जाय। महात्मा गांधी ने नारी के स्वाभिमान को जगाया और सब प्रकार के बलात् आरोपित बंधनों से उसे बाहर निकाला। सार्वजनिक जीवन में सहभागिता और, गृह जीवन में स्वच्छन्दता का संदेश देकर उन्होंने नारी को मुक्ति की दीक्षा दी। उसे दासी नहीं अर्द्धांगिनी माना, उसे दिल बहलाव की वस्तु नहीं, जीवन की निरन्तर साधना में प्रेम और साहचर्य की दीपशिखा समझा।

गांधी जी ने स्त्रियों से पुरुषों के द्वारा छीने गये अधिकारों को मांगने का आग्रह किया। स्त्री-पुरुष के पारस्परिक सहयोग और सद्भाव से ही समाज का संतुलित और सर्वोत्तमोन्मुखी विकास सम्भव है। गांधी जी स्त्रियों की मर्यादा और सम्मान की रक्षा के लिए पुरुषों को भी प्रेरित करते रहे। गांधी जी

स्त्रियों को मतदान³ का अधिकार और समान कानूनी दर्जा देने के प्रबल समर्थक थे। उनका कहना था— “मेरी राय में कानून की तरफ से स्त्री के लिए ऐसी कोई रुकावट नहीं होनी चाहिए जो पुरुष के लिए नहीं है। वे स्त्री को पुरुषों से निम्नतर मानने या उसे अबला कहने से सहमत नहीं थे, उनका मानना था कि स्त्री को अबला कहना उसकी मानहानि करना है।⁴

गांधी ने राजनीति में स्त्रियों को व्यापक भागीदारी प्रदान करके राष्ट्रवादियों से स्त्रियों के हितों को मान्य करने तथा स्त्रियों के हित में कार्य करने को प्रेरित किया। इसके साथ ही, भारत की स्वतंत्रता के लिए चल रहे संघर्ष में शामिल होने के लिए स्त्रियों का आह्वान करते हुए गांधी ने कहा कि अपनी धार्मिक निष्ठा तथा ‘मौन एवं गरिमामय’ सहनशीलता के कारण स्वराज को हासिल करने की लड़ाई में स्त्रियों की भागीदारी पुरुषों के समान ही होनी चाहिए और इसमें वे पुरुषों को मीलों पीछे छोड़ सकती हैं। उन्हें विश्वास था कि यदि भारत की स्त्रियाँ उठ खड़ी हुईं तो स्वतंत्रता की राह पर भारत के प्रयाण को कोई रोक नहीं सकता। यदि अहिंसा हमारे अस्तित्व का विधान है तो भविष्य स्त्रियों के हाथ में है।

राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में उच्च या मध्यमवर्गीय, किसान, श्रमिक वर्ग की, धनी और निर्धन परिवारों की स्त्रियाँ लाखों की संख्या में—सरकारी आदेश की अवहेलना करते हुए शामिल हुईं और पुलिस की लाठियों का सामना किया। इसमें उन्होंने अद्भुत साहस व दुःसाहस के साथ ही संगठनात्मक क्षमता का भी प्रदर्शन किया। सविनय अवज्ञा आन्दोलन के दौरान पूरे देश में स्त्रियों ने जुलूसों में, प्रभातफेरियों में, मदिरा और विदेशी वस्त्रों की दुकानों पर धरना देने में व अन्य गतिविधियों में आगे बढ़कर भाग लिया। नमक सत्याग्रह के सिलसिले में बन्दी बनाये गये अस्सी हजार व्यक्तियों में स्त्रियों की संख्या सत्रह हजार थी।⁵

सविनय अवज्ञा आन्दोलन में स्त्रियों की भागीदारी आधुनिक भारतीय इतिहास एवं राजनीति का महत्वपूर्ण अंश है। भारत में नशाबंदी आन्दोलन से चालीस वर्षों से जुड़ी मिस मेरी कैम्पबेल ने 22 जून, 1931 के ‘मैनचेस्टर गार्जियन’ में दिल्ली की महिलाओं में व्याप्त जागृति का वर्णन करते हुए लिखा कि यहाँ सोलह सौ स्त्रियाँ कारगार में डाली गयीं। निम्न वर्गों की स्त्रियाँ भी, दारिद्र्य एवं अशिक्षा की बावजूद, अपने अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक हुईं और हजारों की संख्या में किसान—मजदूर वर्गों की स्त्रियाँ हड़तालों, प्रदर्शनों तथा सभा सम्मेलनों में और स्वतंत्र—लोकतंत्रीय—समाजवादी भारत के लक्ष्य को लेकर किसान व मजदूर संगठनों में भी शामिल हुईं। बड़ी संख्या में राजनीतिक जन आन्दोलनों में भाग लेती हुई शराब की दुकानों पर धरना देती हुई, प्रदर्शनों में मार्च करती हुई, जेल जाती हुई, लाठी और गोलियों का सामना करती हुई स्त्रियों का दृश्य भारतीय इतिहास में अभूतपूर्व था। एक ही बार में भारतीय स्त्रियाँ अपनी सदियों पुरानी सीमाओं का अतिक्रमण कर आगे बढ़ गयीं। पहले

वे आज्ञाकारी घरेलू सेवकों जैसी थीं, किन्तु अब वे नागरिकों के रूप में उठ खड़ी हुईं और उन्होंने राजनीतिक कार्यक्रम पर अपना मत देना और बड़े राजनीतिक आन्दोलनों में भाग लेना आरम्भ किया। सरोजिनी नायडू, कमलादेवी चट्टोपाध्याय, विजयलक्ष्मी पण्डित जैसी कुछ स्त्रियों ने तो अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय ख्याति प्राप्त की।⁶

सामाजिक क्षेत्र में महिलाओं की दयनीय स्थिति पर गांधी जी के विचार इस विश्वास पर आधारित हैं कि वर्तमान हीनता की स्थिति ऐतिहासिक भेदभाव का परिणाम है न कि हीन क्षमताओं का।⁷ गांधी जी को परम्परावादी कहने के पीछे उनका भारतीय संस्थाओं एवं परम्पराओं के प्रति लगाव है, जो इनमें किसी क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन का विरोध तो करता है, परन्तु यहाँ के परम्पराओं के तार्किक विश्लेषण को महत्व देते हैं। यही कारण है कि बाल-विवाह, बाल विधवा विवाह, सहशिक्षा आदि पर उनके विचार क्रांतिकारी प्रतीत होते हैं।

गांधीजी ने नारी उत्थान में रूकावट डालने वाली कुप्रथाओं की कठोर भर्त्सना की और उन्हें दूर करने का सफल प्रयास किया। उन्होंने पर्दा प्रथा पर कठोर आघात किया। उन्होंने पर्दे की प्रथा को हर तरह से अकल्याणकारी बताया, जो स्त्री की रक्षा करने के बदले स्त्री के तन और मन को हानि पहुँचाती है। उनका कहना था कि “पवित्रता कुछ पर्दे की आड़ में रखने से नहीं पनपती। बाहर से यह लादी नहीं जा सकती। पर्दे की दीवार से उसकी रक्षा नहीं की जा सकती। उसे तो भीतर से ही उत्पन्न होना चाहिए और अगर उसका कुछ मूल्य है तो वही सभी प्रकार के आकर्षणों का सामना करने में समर्थ होनी चाहिए।⁸

गांधीजी ने दहेज प्रथा⁹ की भी कटु निन्दा की। उन्होंने कहा कि “जब वर कन्या के पिता से विवाह करने की कृपा के लिए दण्ड लेता है तब नीचता की हद हो जाती है। पैसे के लालच में किया गया विवाह, विवाह नहीं, वह एक नीच सौदा है।” कोई भी युवक, जो दहेज को विवाह का शर्त बनाता है, अपनी शिक्षा को कलंकित करता है और नारी जाति का अपमान करता है।¹⁰ उन्होंने विवाह की मितव्ययिता पर जोर दिया।

गाँधीजी विधवाओं के पुनर्विवाह को एक आदर्श व्यवस्था नहीं मानते थे, परन्तु अल्पायु बालिकाओं पर वैधव्य थोपना वे बहुत बड़ा पाप मानते थे।¹¹ अतः उन्होंने कम आयु वाली बाल विधवाओं के विवाह का समर्थन किया। उनकी धारणा थी कि “स्वेच्छापूर्वक विधवा रहना धर्म का शृंगार है। यदि एक स्त्री स्वेच्छापूर्वक वैधव्य स्वीकार करती है तो उससे जीवन में गरिमा तथा गौरव आता है, उससे गृह में पवित्रता आती है और स्वयं धर्म का उत्थान होता है।” किन्तु गांधीजी ने प्रथा द्वारा थोपा गया वैधव्य एक असहनीय मार माना। गांधीजी ने नवयुवकों को बाल विधवाओं से विवाह करने के लिए प्रेरित किया। इसके अतिरिक्त गांधीजी ने बहु-विवाह तथा अनमेल विवाह का भी घोर विरोध किया।

गांधीजी ने अन्तर्जातीय विवाहों और अन्तर्साम्प्रदायिक विवाहों का भी समर्थन किया। अस्पृश्यता को हटाने के उद्देश्य उन्होंने सवर्ण हिन्दुओं को परामर्श दिया कि हरिजन कन्याओं के साथ विवाह करें। तलाक के वे घोर विरोध थे। वेश्यावृत्ति और धार्मिक प्रथाओं से अनुमोदित देवदासी प्रथा के विरुद्ध भी उन्होंने आवाज उठायी। सामाजिक समस्याओं के निराकरण को गाँधी ने अपने राजनीतिक जन-आन्दोलन का एक अंग बनाया और उनके विरुद्ध जनमत तैयार किया।

गांधीजी ने नारी शिक्षा¹² का भी प्रबल समर्थन किया। भारतीय महिलाओं की प्रगति का बहुत बड़ा श्रेय महात्मा गांधी के प्रयासों को है, जिनके फलस्वरूप महिलाओं को सार्वजनिक जीवन में महत्वपूर्ण उत्तरदायित्वों के निर्वाह का अवसर प्राप्त हो सका।

स्त्रियों के शिक्षा के बिना कोई समाज उन्नति के पथ पर अग्रसर नहीं हो सकता, उन्होंने स्त्रियों से यह अपेक्षा की कि वे स्वयं अपने में गुणात्मक प्रगति करें और समाज में स्वयं ही अपना स्थान निर्धारित करें।

गांधी जी के अनुसार सम्पत्ति को शक्ति तथा उच्चता का स्रोत मानने के पितृसत्तात्मक अवधारणा को सम्पत्ति को सभी बच्चों में समान रूप से बाँटकर खत्म किया जा सकता है। हिन्दू विरासत कानूनों में मूलभूत परिवर्तन करने की मांग की थी। इस दृष्टिकोण से गांधी जी ने ऐसी व्यवस्था के निर्माण की बात कही जो समान आर्थिक अधिकार देकर स्त्री-पुरुष को समान दर्जा दे।

गाँधी जी चाहते थे कि ग्राम्य जीवन के उत्थान और विकास में स्त्रियों को खुलकर भाग लेना चाहिए। वे ग्रामों को अपने रचनात्मक कार्यक्रमों की इकाई बनाना चाहते थे। उनका विश्वास था कि ग्रामों के विकास¹³ के माध्यम से भारत का वास्तविक विकास हो सकता है। नगरीय सभ्यता और संस्कृति से आधुनिक युग में क्षीण प्रगति विकसित हो रही थी, उससे वास्तविक विकास सम्पूर्ण समाज का नहीं हो सकता।

गांधी जी की धारणा थी कि हमारे समूचे समाज में कानून और रूढ़ि की वजह से औरतों को जो दरजा मिला है, उसमें कई खामियाँ हैं और उन्हें जड़मूल से सुधारने की जरूरत है।¹⁴ औरतों को यह सिखाया गया है कि वे अपने को पुरुषों की दासी समझें, इसलिए हमारा यह फर्ज है कि स्त्रियों को उनकी मौलिक स्थिति का पूरा बोध कराये और उन्हें इस तरह की तालीम दें, जिससे वे जीवन में पुरुषों के साथ बराबरी के दर्जे से हाथ बटाने लायक बनें और सामाजिक आचार-व्यवहार के नियम स्त्री और पुरुष दोनों आपस में मिलकर और राजी-खुशी से तय करें।¹⁵

गांधी की धारणा थी कि एक शील-गुण-सम्पन्न स्त्री का सौंदर्य उसके सुंदर वस्त्रों में नहीं, बल्कि उसके शुद्ध हृदय और पवित्र जीवन में है।

भारत-भर में लाखों स्त्री-पुरुष प्रातःकाल सीता का पवित्र और अमर नाम स्मरण करते हैं, ताकि वह नाम कवच की तरह अपनी रक्षा-शक्ति से दिनभर उनलोगों की रक्षा करे। सीता का नाम वे इसलिए स्मरण नहीं करते कि सीता बहुमूल्य रत्न पहनती थीं, बल्कि इसलिए कि उनका हृदय शुद्ध स्वर्ण और शुद्ध हीरे की तरह था।¹⁶

मैं चाहता हूँ कि आप सीता के गुणों को, सीता की विनम्रता को, सीता की सादगी को और सीता की वीरता को अपनायें। आपको समझना चाहिए कि अपने शील की रक्षा के लिए सीता को अपनी स्वामी और प्रभु राम की सहायता की आवश्यकता नहीं पड़ी थी। सीता और राम के जीवन का इतिहास लिखनेवाला हमें बताता है कि सीता की पवित्रता ही उनकी रक्षा-कवच, उनकी सुरक्षा थी और अगर आप अपने हृदय में छिपी शक्ति को पहचान लें तो आप अपनी पवित्रता, प्रेम और आत्म-त्याग की भावना से अपने पुरुषों के दर्पीले स्वभाव पर काबू पा सकती हैं।¹⁷

गांधी जी आध्यात्मिकता और नीतिपरक समाज के पोषक थे। पश्चिम की कोरी भौतिकवादिता से भारतीय नारी समाज को दूर रखना चाहते थे। गांधी जी भारत के राष्ट्रीय चरित्र का निर्माण सत्य, अहिंसा, सादगी, सात्विकता आदि के आधार पर ही करना चाहते थे। राम के पहले सीता और कृष्ण के पहले राधा के नाम का उल्लेख अकारण नहीं है, बल्कि उसका उचित कारण है। उन्होंने आगे लिखा है कि स्त्री को मैं देवी समझता हूँ, अबला नहीं। स्त्री आज भी बलिदान, कष्टसहन, नम्रता, श्रद्धा और ज्ञान की प्रतिमा है। इसलिए स्त्री-पुरुष दोनों में मात्र स्त्री ही अधिक उच्च और श्रेष्ठ है।¹⁸

गांधी जी ने महिलाओं को सार्वजनिक जीवन में एक नवीन आत्म विश्वास, आत्म सम्मान और नवीन आत्म छवि दिलाई। वे निष्क्रिय वस्तु के समान समाज में पड़ी थीं, उन्हें सक्रिय नागरिक और सुधारक का रूप गांधी जी ने प्रदान किया। वस्तुतः गाँधीजी ने पारस्परिक प्रतीकों को सकारात्मक तरीके से प्रयोग करके महिलाओं को स्वाधीनता आन्दोलन में आने के लिए प्रेरित किया, जिसके फलस्वरूप राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर महिलाओं के सम्बन्ध में लोगों की सोच बदलने लगी। वस्तुतः गाँधीजी ने महिला मुद्दों को समर्थन दिलाया। गाँधी जी के विचारों को सुनने के पश्चात् महिलाएँ स्वयं अपने गुण को पहचानने में सक्षम होने लगीं और नारी उत्थान के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में विशिष्ट योगदान देने लगी। इस प्रकार गांधी के चिन्तन ने नारी चेतना जागृत करने में अभूतपूर्व कार्य किया।

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स्वरों की लक्ष्मी एम एस सुब्बुलक्ष्मी

अनामिका दीक्षित

भारतीय संगीत की ध्वजा पताका सात समुद्रों के पार लहराने फहरानेका श्रेय हमलोगों0 रविशंकरजी को देते हैं परन्तु रविशंकरजी के पहले भी अपने सौम्य और सात्विक स्वरों के लिये परदेश में रसिकजनों के मन में भारतीय शास्त्रीय संगीत का प्रकाश फैलानी वाली मतलब एम एस सुब्बुलक्ष्मी ये प्रसिद्ध दक्षिणभारतीय गायिका थी। उम्र के दसवेंसालसेलेकरउम्र के बयासी साल की उम्र तक उन्होंने अपने सात्विक स्वरों से लाखों नहीं वरन् करोड़ों लोगों को आत्मिक समाधान व आनन्द पहुंचाने वाली ये गायिका सचमुच ही एक चमत्कार ही कहा जायगा भारतरत्न की पदवी को धन्य करने वाली ये महानगायिका।

दक्षिण भारत के मदुराई गांवमें 18 सितम्बर 1916 को जन्म लेने वाली ये महान गायिका अल्पायु में ही संगीत के स्वरों से खेलने लगी उनके कान पर अपने मां के वीणावादन के मधुर स्वर जन्म के साथ ही सुनाई पड़े उसमे मीनाक्षी के मंदिर में रात दिन बजने वाले नादस्वरम के स्वर भरते थे उपज के स्वर समझने वाली छोटीसुब्बु वो सभी स्वर अपने कानों में भरकर उसे सही समय गुनगुनाती उनको स्वर ईश्वर प्रदत्त है ये सब उनकी मां के साथ ही सबलोगों को समझ में आ गया था अपनीमां के साथ वीणावादन के स्वरों में अपना सुमधुर स्वर प्रयोग कर सबको आश्चर्यचकित ही कर दिया और उसके उपरान्त ही वह अत्यधिक लोकप्रिय हो गयी और दस वर्ष की उम्र में आपने अपना पहला डिस्करिकार्डकिया। इसके बाद आपने शेम्मंगुडी श्रीनिवास अय्यर से कर्नाटक संगीत में तथा पंडितनारायणरावव्यास से हिन्दुस्तानी संगीत में उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्तकी। आपने सत्रह साल की आयु में चैन्नैई में विख्यात म्यूजिक अकाडमी में संगीत कार्यक्रम पेश किया। इसके बाद आपने मलयालम से लेकर पंजाबी तक भारत की अनेक भाषाओं में गीत रिकार्ड किये।

अत्यन्त महत्वाकांक्षी युवा देश प्रेम से ओतप्रोत सदाशिवम उनके जीवन में प्रवेश करते ही उनकी संगीत यात्रा और बहरने लगी। इसी समय उनको

संगीत चित्रपट सिनेमा से काम करने का आग्रह शुरू हो गया था पर स्वभाव से ही बेहद शर्मीली होने के कारण एम एस को सिनेमा में काम करना पसन्द नहीं था पर सदाशिव जी का उतना ही आग्रह था जो वो अस्वीकार नहीं कर सकती थी बाद में उन्होंने हाँ कह ही दिया उनका पहला सिनेमा सेवासदनम् था जो 1938 में प्रदर्शित हुआ था कई फिल्मों में काम करने के उपरान्त उनकी आखिरी फिल्म भक्तमीरा तमिल और हिन्दी दोनों ही भाषाओं में खूब लोकप्रिय हुई । मीरा के भजनों ने तो लोकप्रियता की उच्चतम शिखर भी लाँघ ली उन भजनों का भक्तिभाव लोगों के अन्तःकरण तक जा पहुँचा । इस चित्रपट की भक्तिभाव एवं सात्विक प्रतिमा एम एस जी की हमेशा ऋणी है । इस प्रतिमा के स्थावर व्यक्तित्व के कारण उन्होंने सिनेमा से संन्यास ही ले लिया उसके कारण उनकी वो भक्तिपूर्ण एवं सात्विक प्रतिमा लोगों के मन में कायम की बस गई ।

एम0 एस0 मतलब निर्मल स्वर भक्ति भाव मूर्ति युक्त सात्विकता सौजन्य ऐ सी इस मूर्ति का समीकरण प्राप्त हुआ जो अन्त तक ऐसा ही कायम रहा । मीरा ये चित्रपट बहुत से प्रमाण में कारणी भूत हुआ ऐसा कहने में कोई अतिशयोक्ति नहीं है । इस चित्रपट के बाद इस महानगायिका ने फिर कभी सिनेमा में काम नहीं किया अपना संपूर्ण जीवन समय संगीत की सेवा में समाज सेवा में और ईश्वर की सेवा में अर्पण कर दिया । इस महान गायिका ने न जाने कितनी ही महफिलों में गाया होगा जिसकी कोई गिनती ही नहीं है, कीर्ति के शिखर पर पहुँच कर गायिका ने समाज कल्याण के लिये अपने निष्ठा से धन इक्कठा कर दान किया जिसकी तो कोई तुलना ही नहीं है । सदाशिवजी उन्हें राष्ट्रपिता महात्मागांधी जी के यहां लेगये उनके सामने उन्होंने कुछ भजन प्रस्तुत किये भजनों से महात्मागांधी बहुत प्रभावित हुये 1944 के बाद इस गायिका ने विभिन्न प्रकार के सामाजिक कार्यक्रमों के लिये देश भर में भ्रमण कर के खूब धन अर्जित किया और वो धन उदार अंतःकरण से सभी संस्थानों को बांट दिया सामाजिक संस्थानों के अलावा अपनी श्रद्धा स्थान और धार्मिक स्थानों को भी वो नहीं भूली । व्यंकटेश सुप्रभातम् विष्णुसहस्रनाम और अनेकों स्त्रोतों की ध्वनि मुद्रिका रायेल्टीराशि सचमुच लाखों रुपये की धनराशि एकत्र कर उसमें अपने पास के और रुपये लगाकर धर्म संस्थानों को दान में दे दिया अपने उम्र के आखिरी पड़ाव तक वो ऐसी धनराशि दान में देती आयी । आपकी प्रशंसा में अनेक मशहूर संगीतकारों ने आपकी की कला की भरपूर प्रशंसा की है । सुरमयीलतामंगेशकरजी ने आपको तपस्विनी कहा, उस्ताद बडे गुलाम अली खाँ ने आपको सुस्वरलक्ष्मी पुकारा तथा किशोरी अमोनकर ने आपको आठ्वांसुर

कहा जो संगीत के सातसुरों से उंचा है। भारत के कई माननीय नेता महात्मागांधीपंडितनेहरू भी आपके संगीत के प्रशंसक थे एक अवसर पर महात्मागांधी ने कहा कि अगर श्रीमतीसुब्बुलक्ष्मी हरि तुम हरो जन की भी रइस मीरा भजन को गाने के बजाय बोल भी दें तब भी उनको वह भजन किसी और के गाने से अधिक सुरीला लगेगा। एम एस सुब्बुलक्ष्मी जी कोकला क्षेत्र में 1954 में पद्मभूषण 1956 में संगीत नाटक अकादमी पुरस्कार 1968 में संगीत कलानिधि 1974 में मै ग्सेसे एवॉर्ड 1975 में पद्म विभूषण 1988 में कालीदास सम्मान 1990 में इंदिरागांधी एवार्ड से सम्मानित किया गया। आप पहली भारतीय हैं जिन्होंने संयुक्तराष्ट्र संघ की सभा में संगीत कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत किया तथा आप पहली स्त्री हैं जिनको कर्नाटक संगीत का सर्वोत्तम पुरस्कार संगीत कलानिधि प्राप्त हुआ।

आप भारत का सर्वोत्तम नागरिक पुरस्कार भारत रत्न से सम्मानित होने वाली पहली संगीतज्ञ हैं।

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