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सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका प्रयास एवं सबका विश्वास
के अन्तर्गत परिवर्तनकारी सामाजिक व आर्थिक नीतियां
संयुक्तांक



सत्यमेव जयते

डॉ० अम्बेडकर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केन्द्र

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार

15 जनपथ, नई दिल्ली - 110001

A list of important centrally sponsored welfare schemes of the Government of India

Scheme / programme	Starting date	Objective of Scheme
1. Jan Dhan Yojna	28 August, 2014	To connect more and more peoples from the banking services
2. Skill India Mission	28 August, 2014	Skill Development in Youth
3. Make in India	28 September, 2014	Promoting manufacturing Sector in the country
4. Swachh Bharat Mission	2 October, 2014	Making India a clean country
5. Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana	11 October, 2014	Development in the villages which includes social development, cultural development.
6. Shramew Jayate Yojana	16 October, 2014	Plan dedicated to labour development
7. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao	22 January, 2015	The goal of this scheme is to make girls socially and financially self-reliant through education.
8. Hridaya Plan	21 January, 2015	To take care of world heritage sites and to make these sites economically viable.
9. PM Mudra Yojna	8 April, 2015	Loan to small businessmen from 50 thousand to 10 lakh
10. Ujala Yojana	1 May, 2015	Distribution of LED bulbs at a low price to reduce electricity consumption
11. Atal Pension Yojna	9 May, 2015	Monthly pension for people from the unorganized sector b/w age of 18 to 40 years
12. Prime Minister Jyoti Bima Yojna	9 May, 2015	Life Insurance of Rs. 2 lakh for people b/w 18 to 50 years (@Premium of Rs. 330 per annum)
13. Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana	9 May, 2015	General insurance/accident insurance for people between 18 and 70 years of 2 lakh (at a premium of 12 Rs. / year)
14. Smart city scheme	25 June, 2015	Developing 100 selected cities of the country as smart cities from 2015 to 2020
15. AMRUT Plan	25 June, 2015	Developing all the basic amenities in more than 500 cities which have more than one lakh population
16. Digital India Mission	2 July, 2015	Making all government services electronically available to the public
17. Gold Monetization Scheme	5 November, 2015	Putting inoperative gold (lying at home and lockers) in productive works.
18. Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme	5 November, 2015	To check the real demand of Gold; government introduced the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme.
19. UDAY	20th November, 2015	Financial turnaround of Power Distribution Companies of Public Sector
20. Start-up India	16 January, 2016	To Promote new enterprises
21. Setu Bhartam Yojna	4 March, 2016	Construction of Over and Under Bridge to make National Highways Railway Crossing free
22. Stand Up India	5 April, 2016	Loans up to 10 lacs to 1 crore for establishment of new companies to Scheduled Castes / Tribes and Women Entrepreneurs
23. Gramoday Se Bharat Uday	14-24 April, 2016	Emphasizing the development of villages for proper development of the country
24. Prime Minister Ujjwala Plan	1 May, 2016	Providing the LPG connection to BPL families at subsidized rates
25. Namami Gange Yojana	7 July, 2016	Cleanliness of river Ganga



प्रकाशक

डॉ० अम्बेडकर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केंद्र
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सरंक्षक

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कार्यकारी मंडल

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श्री विकास त्रिवेदी

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श्री विकास त्रिवेदी

निदेशक

डॉ० अम्बेडकर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केंद्र,
(सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता
विभाग) के लिए मुद्रित।

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अस्वीकरण

“सामाजिक न्याय सन्देश” में प्रकाशित सामग्री में शोध पत्र, अभिमत, विचार, दृष्टि आदि लेखकों के हैं। डीएआईसी अथवा संपादक की सहमति अनिवार्य नहीं है। समस्त कानूनी मामलों का निपटारा केवल दिल्ली/नई दिल्ली के क्षेत्र एवं न्यायालयों के अधीन होगा।



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संपादकीय

अहम् से वयम की यात्रा

समय एक अविरल प्रवाह है। मानव ने अपनी सुविधा के लिए इसे काल खंड में विभाजित किया है। व्यक्ति, समाज और राष्ट्र के उत्थान और पतन में काल खंड की अपनी भूमिका है। यह बात स्वतंत्र भारत के लिए भी उपयुक्त है। भारत 'आजादी का अमृत महोत्सव' के माध्यम से अपने स्वर्णिम 75 वर्षों की यात्रा का मूल्यांकन कर रहा है और 'अमृत काल' के माध्यम से भविष्य-निर्माण का संकल्प ले रहा है। अपने राष्ट्रीय गौरव, धरोहर व नायकों को स्मृतियों में सजा रहा है और मानसिक दासता से मुक्ति व 'स्व' पर गर्व कर रहा है।

इस कालखंड में भारत पुनर्निर्माण व नवनिर्माण की प्रक्रिया से गुजर रहा है। यह निर्माण बहुआयामी है। इसका प्रभाव देश के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में प्रलक्षित हो रहा है। सरकार कला, संस्कृति, व्यक्तित्व-नेतृत्व, राष्ट्रीय नायक, भौतिक और मानवीय संसाधनों के उपेक्षित तत्वों को जनमानस के सामने ला रही है। देवालय से संग्रहालय तक, विद्यालय से औषधालय तक, पथ-परिवहन से पत्रालय तक, शौचालय से सचिवालय तक, भारत संवर रहा है। परिवर्तन सार्वभौमिक होता है लेकिन वर्तमान में परिवर्तन की गति में तीव्रता और सघनता है। इसका कारण सूचना और यातायात के साधनों में क्रान्तिकारी परिवर्तन से है। लेकिन परिवर्तन का सबसे बड़ा मापक होता है कि जन सामान्य उस प्रक्रिया में कैसे सहभागी बना और कितना लाभान्वित हुआ।

जनतंत्र में सत्ता उसके औचित्य पर निर्भर करती है। सत्ता का औचित्य सहभागिता पर आधारित होता है। वर्तमान, केन्द्रीय सरकार इस अवधारण को समझती है और उस दिशा में कार्य करने के लिए प्रेरित है। जिसका सार प्रधानमंत्री माननीय नरेन्द्र मोदी ने "मन की बात" के सौंवे कड़ी में कुछ इस तरह कही है कि पद के दायित्व का स्वरूप ऐसा है कि सभी से नहीं मिल पाता हूँ लेकिन 'मन की बात' के माध्यम से जनता-जनार्दन से जुड़ने की कोशिश करता हूँ। "मेरे लिए मन की बात आस्था, पूजा और व्रत है। जैसे लोग ईश्वर की पूजा को जाते हैं तो प्रसाद की थाल लाते हैं। मेरे लिए यह ईश्वर रूप जनता जनार्दन के चरणों में प्रसाद की थाली की तरह है। यह मेरे मन की आध्यात्मिक यात्रा बन गया है। यह अहम् से वयम की यात्रा है"।

जब जनता सरकार के पास अपने विषय लेकर जाती है तो 'शासन' कहते हैं, लेकिन सरकार स्वयं जन के निकट जाकर उनके समस्याओं को सुनने और निदान करने की कोशिश करती है, तो उसे 'सुशासन' कहते हैं। सरकार जनकल्याणकारी योजनाओं के माध्यम से नागरिकों के जीवन में गुणात्मक सुधार लाने के लिए प्रयासरत है।

इसी सन्दर्भ में सामाजिक न्याय सन्देश का यह अंक प्रस्तुत है। इस अंक में भारत सरकार के सामाजिक और आर्थिक नीतियों को समझने और वंचित समाज तक कैसे पहुँच रही हैं इसको उल्लेखित करने का प्रयास किया गया है। साथ में सतगुरु रविदास जयंती और डॉ. अम्बेडकर जयंती के अवसर पर व्यक्तित्व के दृष्टि से शोध लेख समाहित किया गया। दोनों ही महापुरुष समरसता और समता के अग्रदूत हैं।

शिव पूजन प्रसाद पाठक



अनेक धर्मग्रंथों का ज्ञान था।

सतगुरु रविदास ने रचना रागों में की है— “वर्तमान समय में इनकी वाणी 27 रागों में उपलब्ध होती है जो कि इनके ज्ञान का बहुत बड़ा प्रमाण है (शिक्षार्थी, 2014)।” कुछ राग इस प्रकार हैं—सीरी, गउड़ी, बैरागणि, पूरबी, आसा, गूजरी, सोरटा, धनासरी, जयश्री, सूही, बिलाबल, गौंड, रामकली, मारु, केदार, भैरव, बसंत, मलहार, असावरी, टोड़ी, सारंग, कानड़ा (द्रुपद) आदि। आम व्यक्ति के लिए इन रागों में रचना करना तो दूर, इन रागों के अर्थ भी नहीं पता होंगे। जो लोग सतगुरु रविदास अनपढ़ कहते हैं उनको इनके लिखे रागों के अर्थ बता देने के लिए बोल दिया जाएगा तो उनको समस्या हो जाएगी, उन रागों में रचना करना तो बहुत दूर की बात है। सतगुरु रविदास उच्च कोटि के संगीतज्ञ की तरह इन रागों में रचना करते हैं। आज के अर्थों में कहे तो सतगुरु रविदास बहुत पढ़े-लिखे विद्वान थे। इन्होंने अपनी विद्वता से पंजाबी भाषा की लिपि ‘गुरुमुखी’ का निर्माण किया। भाषा संबंधी इस मुद्दे पर 11 मार्च 1932 को अदालत का भी फैसला आया था जिसमें यह निर्णय दिया गया कि सतगुरु रविदास ने गुरुमुखी लिपि का निर्माण किया है (दरबारी, 1933)। गुरुमुखी के अक्षरों का निर्माण करना उनका महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान है (विरदी)। सतगुरु रविदास ने ही पंजाबी भाषा की लिपि गुरुमुखी लिपि का निर्माण किया (कुमार, 2014)। भाजपा के पूर्व राज्यसभा सांसद एवं वर्तमान में राष्ट्रीय महामंत्री श्री दुष्यंत कुमार गौतम ने 21 फरवरी 2021 ‘श्री गुरु रविदास विश्व महापीठ’ के वार्षिक कार्यक्रम में विज्ञान भवन (दिल्ली) में इस तथ्य के बारे में बताया कि सतगुरु रविदास ने ही पंजाबी भाषा की लिपि गुरुमुखी लिपि का निर्माण किया (Kovind, 2021)।

इनकी पत्नी लोना देवी बहुत अच्छी वैद्य थीं, वें लोगों को स्वच्छ और स्वस्थ रहने का संदेश देती थीं। उन्होंने सतगुरु रविदास को कभी समाज सेवा से नहीं रोका, बल्कि यथासंभव का सहयोग किया करती थीं। इन दोनों ने एक आदर्श युगल दम्पति का उदाहरण पेश किया।

धीरे-धीरे सतगुरु रविदास के ज्ञान की आभा समाज के सभी जातियों और धर्मों के लोगों में फैलने लगीय सब इनका सम्मान करने लगे। बड़ी-बड़ी सभाओं में ये अपने विचार रखने लगे इनके ज्ञान की खुशबू ऐसी फैली कि उसको पाने के लिए उस समय के अनेक राजा—रानी इनके शिष्य बने, जैसे— मीराबाई, राजा बेन सिंह, महाराणा सांगा, महाराजा जाला बाई, राजा हरदेव सिंह, राणा वीर सिंह बघेल, बीबी भानमती, महाराणा कुम्भा, राजा रतन सिंह, सिकंदर लोधी, अलावादी बादशाह, बिजली खान आदि (बावा, 2010)। लगभग 52 राजा—रानियों और विशाल जन-समुदाय ने सतगुरु रविदास का शिष्यत्व ग्रहण किया (जस्सल, 2009)। अनेक लोगों ने इनके सम्मान में लेखन किया, जैसे— कबीरदास, मीराबाई, झालाबाई, गुरु नानक देव, गुरु अर्जुन देव, भाई गुरदास, पीपा, धन्ना, बाबा फरीद, नामदेव, सधना, सेन, एकनाथ, पिथु साहिब, गुलाल, दरबारी दास, रज्जब, धूवदास, नारायण, रज्जब अली, नाभादास, प्रियदास, बालक राम, हरीदास, सूरदास, दयाबाई, जयगोपाल, चरणदास, दादू दयाल, गरीबदास, दर्शनदास, सेवादास, तुकाराम, पलटु दास, कमाल, कमाली, अनंतदास, कल्याणदास, सुन्दरदास, रुपराज आदि। हिंदी के प्रसिद्ध कवि सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी ‘निराला’ ने ‘अणिमा’ काव्य संग्रह में संकलित अपनी कविता में सतगुरु रविदास को चरण स्पर्श करके नमस्कार किया है (निराला, 2015)। बाबा साहब अम्बेडकर ने भी अपनी पुस्तक ‘अछूत कौन थे और वे अछूत कैसे बने’ सतगुरु रविदास को समर्पित की है (अम्बेडकर, 2013)। देश के राष्ट्रपति, प्रधानमंत्री, गवर्नर, मुख्यमंत्री, नेता अफसर आदि सभी सतगुरु रविदास के जीवन और विचारों की मुक्त कंठ से प्रशंसा करते हैं और इनके विचारों पर चलने का संदेश देते हैं। लगभग सभी राजनीतिक पार्टियों के नेता और सामाजिक संगठन इनको सम्मान देने और शीश झुकाने

इनके जन्मस्थान सीर गोवर्धनपुर जाते हैं। सिखों के पवित्र धार्मिक ग्रंथ ‘श्री गुरु ग्रंथ साहिब’ में इनके अनेक पद हैं। इनकी वाणी ही गुरु ग्रंथ साहिब का आधार है (Kanshi Radio, 2020)। सतगुरु रविदास और गुरु नानक देव के मध्य चुहड़ काने (पाकिस्तान) आज ननकाना साहिब के नाम से जाना जाता है वहाँ पर ‘सच्चा सौदा’ हुआ था। गुरु नानक देव ने सतगुरु रविदास की मंडली को उसी 20 रुपए का भोजन करवाया था जो पैसे उनके पिता श्री मेहता कालू ने व्यापार के लिए दिए थे। यह सच्चा सौदा भारतीय इतिहास में एक महत्त्वपूर्ण अध्याय के रूप में दर्ज है (SATGURU, 2020) इसी तथ्य को भाव रूप में प्रो. लाल सिंह ने बताया है— “गुरु नानक ने उनसे गुरु ज्ञान लिया और उनकी सेवा की (Ravidassia TV)।”

सतगुरु रविदास ने ही मीराबाई को पति की मृत्यु पर सती होने से रोका और सती जैसी क्रूर प्रथा को खत्म करने की नींव डाली। मीराबाई ने अपने सतगुरु के सम्मान में चितौड़गढ़ (राजस्थान) के किले में कुम्भा श्याम मंदिर के प्रांगण में सतगुरु रविदास की चरण पादुकाएँ भी बनवाई हैं। ये पुरातात्विक इतिहास आज भी मौजूद है (Mira Bai, 2020)।

तात्कालिक काशी नरेश के समक्ष सतगुरु रविदास की विद्वान ब्राह्मणों के साथ प्रतियोगिता हुई थी। उस प्रतियोगिता में सतगुरु रविदास विजयी हुए थे। सब ब्राह्मण नतमस्तक हो गए थे (श्री भक्तमाल, 2000)। शतानुसार ब्राह्मणों ने प्रेमपूर्वक सम्मान से सतगुरु रविदास को सजी हुई सुंदर पालकी में बैठाकर, पालकी को कंधों पर धारण कर करके सारे काशी नगर में ‘शोभा यात्रा’ निकाली थी, पूरे नगर में उत्सव जैसा माहौल था। इसी को आज रविदासिया समाज ‘शोभा यात्रा’ के रूप में निकालता है। विद्वान को सभी जगह सम्मान मिलता है उसी का उदाहरण सतगुरु रविदास हैं। कहा जा सकता है जाति-प्रथा उतनी कठोरता से काम नहीं कर रही थी जितना उसको विकृत साहित्य द्वारा प्रचारित किया जाता है। सतगुरु रविदास किसी जाति विशेष के ही नहीं हैं, ये दलितों, पिछड़ों, आदिवासी और सवर्णों सभी के हैं।

विचारक ओशो ने सतगुरु रविदास के व्यक्तित्व का तार्किक वर्णन किया है— “भारत का आकाश संतो के सितारों से भरा है। अनंत-अनंत सितारे हैं, यद्यपि ज्योति सबकी एक है। संत रैदास उन सब सितारों में ध्रुव तारा हैं। इसलिए कि शूद्र के घर में पैदा होकर भी काशी के पंडितों को भी मजबूर कर दिया स्वीकार करने को। महावीर का उल्लेख नहीं किया ब्राह्मणों ने अपने शास्त्रों में। बुद्ध की जड़ें काट डाली, बुद्ध के विचार को उखाड़ फेंका। लेकिन रैदास में कुछ बात है कि रैदास को नहीं उखाड़ सके और रैदास को स्वीकार भी करना पड़ा...ब्राह्मणों के द्वारा लिखी गयी संतो की स्मृतियों में रैदास सदा स्मरण किए गए। चमार के घर में पैदा होकर भी ब्राह्मणों ने स्वीकार किया— वह भी काशी के ब्राह्मणों ने! बात कुछ अनेरी, अनूठी है (ओशो, 2011)। ओशो के ये विचार विद्वता की स्वीकार्यता का उद्घाटन करते हैं।

कई लेखकों ने सतगुरु रविदास को किसी-किसी का शिष्य बताया यह बात भी शोध से खारिज हो चुकी है। सतगुरु रविदास का कोई गुरु नहीं था, वो स्वयंमेव गुरु थे (कुमार, 2014)।

चिंतक डॉ. चमनलाल ने लिखा— “...आधुनिक दलित साहित्य की जड़ें कबीर और रविदास की वाणी में देखी जा सकती है।”²⁷ इन्होंने अपनी पुस्तक का शीर्षक ही दिया है— ‘दलित साहित्य के अग्रदूत: गुरु रविदास’ (चमनलाल, 1998), सतगुरु रविदास ने अपनी वाणी में अपनी जाति को शर्म का विषय नहीं बल्कि विमर्श का विषय माना और अपनी स्वतंत्र पहचान पर जोर दिया। ये विचार आज दलित साहित्य में भी देखे जा सकते हैं। चिंतक डॉ. सोहनपाल सुमनाक्षर भी सतगुरु रविदास को दलित साहित्य का जनक मानते हैं— “संत गुरु रविदास जी पहले व्यक्ति थे जिन्होंने अपनी वाणी मातृभाषा हिंदी में लिखकर समाज

की सबसे नीचे की दलित, उपेक्षित और अधिकारों से वंचित जातियों को अभिव्यक्ति का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया। इसलिए वे दलित साहित्य के 'आदि कवि' और जनक हैं (सुमनाक्षर, 2003)।"

सतगुरु रविदास मानव मूल्यों के भी पैरोकार हैं। उनकी वाणी में मानव मूल्यों की स्थापना है जब वो कहते हैं- "मिले सबन को अन्न" (अमृतवाणी, 2010) यह भाव मानव मात्र के लिए है किसी विशेष जाति-धर्म के लिए नहीं है। यह अधिकार सबके लिए है अर्थात् अन्न के अधिकार से किसी को वंचित नहीं किया है। इसीलिए ब्रिटेन के निवासी देश राज मेहमी ने कहा- "ह्यूमन राइट्स के सच्चे पैरोकार हैं सतगुरु रविदास। (Desraj, 2011)।"

संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ का संविधान हो या भारत का संविधान हो सभी में मानव अधिकारों को सुनिश्चित करने की बात प्रमुखता से उभर कर आई है। सन् 2021 में सतगुरु रविदास का जन्मदिवस 27 फरवरी को था। अगले दिन भारत के प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने रेडियो पर 'मन की बात' कार्यक्रम में सतगुरु रविदास के विचारों पर प्रकाश डाला, उन्होंने कहा- यह कहने में कोई गुरेज नहीं कि उनके विचार आज के समय में सबसे प्रासंगिक हैं। आज जब देश-विदेश में आतंकवाद, मारकाट, नफरत का माहौल है ऐसे में गुरु रविदास के विचारों की जरूरत है जो प्यार का संदेश देते हैं, साथ मिलजुलकर रहने का संदेश देते हैं (PMO, 2021)। वैसे भी यह कोई जरूरी नहीं है कि मनुष्य अपने जीवन में किसी न किसी से हमेशा लड़ता ही रहे, हर वक्त अपने क्षणमंगुर जीवन को नफरत की आग में जलाता रहे। सतगुरु रविदास के विचार नफरत का अंत करते हैं और प्रेम और सोहार्द का संदेश देते हैं।

आजादी, मानवीय अधिकार व समानता का सुनहरी सिद्धांत सतगुरु रविदास ने 1789 की फ्रांस की क्रांति से भी पहले दे दिया था। इसी प्रकार समाजवाद के अनोखे रूप को भी कार्ल मार्क्स से भी पहले सतगुरु रविदास ने अपनी पावन वाणी के माध्यम से दुनिया के समक्ष रख दिया था। लेकिन विदेशों के व्यक्ति यह बताने में अक्षम रहे कि ये विचार सतगुरु रविदास के ही विचार हैं (अर्श, 2011)। ऐसा इसीलिए हुआ जब सतगुरु रविदास की वाणी यूरोप की भाषाओं में अनुदित होकर गई तब उस समय संदर्भ को चिन्हित करना और मूल विचारक को श्रेय देना प्रचलन में नहीं था। आज के डिजिटल युग में इस तरह की समस्या नहीं आती। जो कुछ भी लिखा जाता है वह दुनिया के सामने होता है और मूल विचारक को श्रेय दिया जाता है।

अध्यात्म के क्षेत्र में सतगुरु रविदास का नाम सम्मान से लिया जाता है। इन्होंने अपने 151 साल के दीर्घ जीवन में सारे देश के साथ-साथ अरब देशों की सामाजिक और धार्मिक यात्राएँ कीं।

सतगुरु रविदास की कुछ वाणियाँ

सतगुरु रविदास ने अनेक वाणियाँ लिखीं, लेकिन इनके अनुयायी उन वाणियों को सुरक्षित नहीं रख पाए, न ही इनके समाज में इनकी वाणियों को सुरक्षित रखने की कोई परम्परा थी। इसके साथ ही, इनके लेखन के साथ एक और बड़ी यह समस्या हुई कि इनके चिंतन को विकृत करने की भरसक कोशिश की गयी। इसीलिए इनकी वाणियों में कई जगह विरोधाभास भी मिलता है। ऐसा लगता है किसी उद्देश्य के तहत इनकी वाणियों में मिश्रण किया गया है। अब श्री गुरु रविदास जन्मस्थान मंदिर, सीर गोवर्धनपुर, वाराणसी, उत्तर प्रदेश द्वारा प्रकाशित 'अमृतवाणी सतगुरु रविदास महाराज जी' में इनकी वाणियों को विस्तृत रूप में संकलित किया गया है। सतगुरु रविदास ने अपने लेखन में समाज के अनेक पहलुओं को उजागर किया है, नई स्थापनाएँ दी हैं। इनकी कुछ वाणियों का अध्ययन यहाँ किया जा रहा है।

इन्होंने ऊर्जा/ईश्वर/परमात्मा/भगवान/सृजनहार की अवधारणा को खारिज नहीं किया बल्कि उसे नया रूप दे दिया, ये सृजनहार से वार्तालाप करते हुए कहते हैं-

"तोही मोही मोही तोही अंतर कैसा।

कनक कटिक जल तरंग जैसा।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(ऊर्जा/ईश्वर/परमात्मा/भगवान/सृजनहार से सीधी बात करते हैं कि तुममें और और मुझमें कोई अंतर नहीं है, हम एक ही हैं। सामान्य मनुष्य को सतगुरु रविदास और परमात्मा में जो थोड़ा-बहुत अंतर दिखाई देता है वह व्यक्ति का दृष्टि भ्रम ही है और कुछ नहीं है। यह अंतर केवल इतना ही है जितना सोना और सोने से बने आभूषण में होता है या फिर जल और जल में उठने वाली तरंग में होता है। जाहिर सी बात है यह अंतर सतही है, मूल रूप में दोनों एक ही हैं। यहाँ वो स्थापित कर रहे हैं कि वे परम तत्व के ही अंश हैं। यहाँ वे किसी ऐसी सत्ता को नहीं मानते देखते जो इनसे भी ऊपर हो अर्थात् यहाँ संदेश देना चाह रहे हैं कि अलग से कोई परम सत्ता या अलौकिक सत्ता नहीं है। और, अगर कोई है तो वे स्वयं ही हैं। सतगुरु रविदास स्वयं प्रकृति भी हैं और उसकी आराधना करने वाले भी। इनके एक ही व्यक्तित्व में दो सत्ताएँ समाई हैं। कई बार वे एक हो जाती हैं और कई बार वे अलग हो जाती हैं। जब वे एक हो जाती हैं तब 'तोही मोही मोही तोही अंतर कैसा' की ध्वनि आती है और जब वे अलग हो जाती हैं तब 'तुम चंदन हम इरंड बापुरे'³⁵ की ध्वनि आती है। कहा जा सकता है कि ये एक भी हैं और दो भी हैं अर्थात् अद्वैत भी हैं, द्वैत भी। यह एक नया चिंतन है, नई सोच है जो इनके सामाजिक स्तर और आत्मविश्वास की पराकाष्ठा को अभिव्यक्त करता है और दर्शन के स्तर पर नए चिंतन की स्थापना करता है। इसी से सतगुरु रविदास का 'सोहंग' (अमृतवाणी, 2010) अर्थात् 'जैसे आप वैसा मैं' की ध्वनि आती है। कहने का भाव है कि वे स्वयं ईश्वर भी हैं और ईश्वर को मानते भी हैं।)

सतगुरु रविदास ने सर्व समाज के लिए आदर्श समाज का ढाँचा (मॉडल) 'बेगमपुरा' दिया है-

"बेगमपुरा सहर को नाउ।। दूखु अंदोहु नहीं तिहि ठाउ।।

नां तसवीस खिराजु न मालु खउफु न खता न तरसु जवालु।।9।।

अब मोहि खूब वतन गह पाई।। ऊहा खैरि सदा मेरे भाई।।9।।

रहाउ।।

काइमु दाइमु सदा पातिसाही।। दोम न सेम एक सो आही।।

आबादानु सदा मसहूर।। ऊहां गनी बसहि मामूर।।2।।

तिउ तिउ सैल करहि जिउ भावै।। महरम महल न को अटकावै।।

कहि रविदास खलास चमारा।। जो हम सहरी सु मीतु हमारा।।"

(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(बेगमपुरा अर्थात् बिना गमों का शहर। वहाँ कोई दुःख और चिंता नहीं है। सामान पर कोई कर (टैक्स) नहीं लगता है अर्थात् कर रहित अर्थव्यवस्था (नो टैक्स इकॉनमी) है। वहाँ खौफ, धोखा, लाचारी और अभाव नहीं है। अब मुझे रहने के लिए उस सुन्दर और पृथक देश की गहरी पहचान हो गई है। वहाँ मनुष्य का सदैव ही भला होता है क्योंकि वहाँ सत्य विचारों का शासन है, जो सदैव अपने मूल्यों पर का निर्वाहन करता है। वहाँ कोई दूसरी और तीसरी श्रेणी का व्यक्ति नहीं है, सभी बराबर हैं अर्थात् समानता है। वहाँ कोई धर्म, नस्ल, वर्ण, जाति, लिंग, स्थान, भाषा आदि के आधार पर भेदभाव नहीं होता। अपने समझदार व्यक्तियों की वजह से आबादान की प्रसिद्धि है। वहाँ रहने वाले व्यक्ति कानून का पालन करने वाले हैं। वहाँ व्यक्ति को कहीं भी आने-जाने की आजादी है अर्थात् आवागमन की स्वतंत्रता है। प्रशासक और उसके कर्मचारी किसी को आने-जाने से नहीं रोकते हैं। बेखौफ चमार रविदास कहते हैं कि जो उस नगर अर्थात् बेगमपुरा के समर्थक हैं वही मेरे साथी हैं।)

'बेगमपुरा' सामाजिक-आर्थिक-राजनीतिक-सांस्कृतिक मॉडल है।



लेखिका गेल ओम्वेट ने इसी पद को अपनी पुस्तक का शीर्षक ही बना दिया है— 'Seeking Begumpura'³⁸, वे इस पुस्तक में सतगुरु रविदास को सम्पूर्ण भारतीय इतिहास में 'प्रथम व्यक्ति' का दर्जा देती हैं जिसने भारतीय आदर्श समाज का मॉडल दिया है— "In fact, the first formulation of an Indian version of utopia comes not from elite literature, but from one of the anticaste intellectuals with a mass following- The bhakti radical, Sant Ravidas (c-1450-1520), was the first to formulate an Indian version of utopia in his song "Begumpura"- Begumpura, the 'city without sorrow', is a casteless, classless society" (Omvedt, 2011) अर्थात् वास्तव में, आदर्श भारतीय समाज का 'यूटोपिया' तथाकथित उच्च वर्गीय साहित्य की देन नहीं है। बल्कि यह देन है— जाति का विरोध करने वाले एक व्यक्ति जिसका सभी लोग सम्मान करते हैं। संत रविदास संसार के प्रथम व्यक्ति हैं जिन्होंने अपने गीत 'बेगमपुरा' में आदर्श भारतीय समाज का 'यूटोपिया' प्रस्तुत किया है। 'बेगमपुरा' अर्थात् बिना गमों का शहर, जो एक जातिविहीन, वर्गविहीन आधुनिक समाज है। 'बेगमपुरा' के रूप में सतगुरु रविदास ने 'Social Welfare State' की स्थापना की है।

श्री ज्ञानी जैल सिंह राष्ट्रपति रहते हुए 25 मई 1984 को श्री गुरु रविदास जन्म स्थान पब्लिक चौरिटेबल ट्रस्ट (वाराणसी, यू.पी.) पर शीश नवाने गए तब उन्होंने सतगुरु रविदास के आदर्श समाज के मॉडल 'बेगमपुरा' को 'समाजवाद की प्रस्तावना' कहा था। इसी विचार को राष्ट्रपति श्री रामनाथ कोविंद ने भी अपने भाषण में समर्थन दिया।⁴⁰ 21 फरवरी 2021 को 'श्री गुरु रविदास विश्व महापीठ' का राष्ट्रीय अधिवेशन दिल्ली के विज्ञान भवन में हुआ, उसमें उन्होंने अपने वक्तव्य में यह भी कहा कि भारतीय संविधान की स्थापना गुरु रविदास के विचारों के आधार पर ही हुई है (Kovind, 2021)। डॉ. अंबेडकर ने अपनी पुस्तक 'अछूत कौन थे और वे अछूत कैसे बने' सतगुरु रविदास को समर्पित की है। लेखक संत प्रेमदास इस विमर्श को उच्च स्तर पर ले जाते हैं और लिखते हैं— "सतगुरु रविदास जी के संकल्प बेगमपुरा की विचारधारा संयुक्त राष्ट्र (United Nations) के सिद्धांत का एक हिस्सा बन चुकी है (प्रेमदास, 2005)।"

एक महत्वपूर्ण पक्ष यह है कि कुछ लोग सतगुरु रविदास के चिंतन को 'श्रमण परंपरा' का बताकर और उसको 'ब्राह्मणवाद या ब्राह्मणों' के खिलाफ बता रहे हैं। यह गलत है। क्योंकि, जब ये आदर्श समाज की परिकल्पना 'बेगमपुरा'⁴³ को प्रस्तुत करते हैं तब न तो 'श्रमण संस्कृति और परंपरा' की महानता का बखान करते हैं और न ही किसी 'ब्राह्मण' या 'ब्राह्मणवाद' को कोसते हैं। इनके विचारों को किन्हीं विशेष शब्दों की बायनरी में बांधना इनके चिंतन के साथ एक धोखा है। ये ही चमार/चर्मकार/रविदासिया दर्शन है जिसको खोजना, देखना और समझना बाकी है। रही बात कुछ लोगों द्वारा जातीय या धार्मिक भेदभाव करने की, निस्सन्देह वह समाज में कहीं-कहीं उपस्थित है, उसको दूर करने की कोशिश प्रत्येक मनुष्य की होनी ही चाहिए। और, जब तक वह भेदभाव दूर नहीं होता, समानता स्थापित नहीं हो जाती तब तक समाज में समरसता अति आवश्यक है। वैज्ञानिक तौर पर भी समाज में प्रेमपूर्वक सम्बन्धों के साथ रहना चाहिए, इससे मानसिक शांति भी बनी रहती है और जीवन की गुणवत्ता भी बढ़ती है।

सतगुरु रविदास इतिहास में पराधीनता (दूसरे की गुलामी) को पाप कहने वाले प्रथम व्यक्ति हैं—

"पराधीनता पाप है, जान लेहु रे मीत।
रविदास दास पराधीन सों, कोन करे है प्रीत।।"
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(इनके विचारों के आधार पर ही महात्मा ज्योतिबा फूले अपनी पुस्तक 'गुलामगिरी' लेकर आए, जिसका प्रभाव बहुत व्यापक रहा है।)

इन्होंने 'स्वराज' अर्थात् 'स्वयं का राज' के विचार को प्रतिपादित किया था—

"रविदास मानुष करि बसन कूं, सुखकर है दुई ठावं।

इक सुख है स्वराज महिं, दूसर मरघट गांव।।"

अच्छी और उच्च शिक्षा के महत्त्व को बताते हुए कहा है—

"सत विद्या को पढ़े, प्राप्त करे सदा ज्ञान।

रविदास कहे बिन विद्या, नर को जान अजान।।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

सच्ची धर्मनिर्पेक्षता की बात करते हैं—

"मुसलमान सों दोस्ती हिन्दुअन सों कर प्रीत।।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(सतगुरु रविदास के विचार के आधार पर बने रविदासिया धर्म का धार्मिक नियम ही है— "सभी धर्मों का सम्मान करना।")

ये जन्म आधारित किसी भी प्रकार के भेदभाव को स्वीकार नहीं करते हैं—

"रविदास जन्म के कारणे होत न कोऊ नीच।।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ ने 10 दिसम्बर 1948 को मानवाधिकारों की सार्वभौमिक घोषणा अंगीकार की। इस घोषणा के अनुच्छेद 1 के अनुसार— "सभी मनुष्यों को गौरव और अधिकारों के मामले में जन्मजात स्वतन्त्रता और समानता प्राप्त है। उन्हें बुद्धि और अन्तरात्मा की देन प्राप्त है और परस्पर उन्हें भाईचारे के भाव से बर्ताव करना चाहिए (OHCHR)।"⁵⁰ कहने का भाव यह है कि जन्म से सभी व्यक्ति समान होते हैं। सतगुरु रविदास भी स्थापित करना चाहते हैं कि सभी मनुष्य बराबर होते हैं। जन्म के आधार पर किसी को ऊंचा या नीचा नहीं कह सकते, सब बराबर हैं— "दोम न सेम एक सो आही"⁵¹)

सतगुरु रविदास जाति व्यवस्था को निरर्थक बताते हैं और कहते हैं कि ये मनुष्यता को खा रही है—

"जात पात के फेर महि उरझि रहइ सब लोग।

मनुषता कूं खात हइ रविदास जात कर रोग।।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

इन्होंने चली आ रही गली-सड़ी परम्परा में संशोधन किया है। जाति को नहीं गुणों को सम्मान दिया है—

"रविदास बाह्यण मत पूजिए, जउ होवे गुण हीन।

पुजहिं चरण चांडाल के, जउ होवे गुन परवीन।।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(विद्वान चाहे ब्राह्मण हो या चांडाल उसे सम्मान देना ही चाहिए। और, गुणहीन व्यक्ति चाहे ब्राह्मण ही हो क्यों न हो, उसकी पूजा नहीं करनी चाहिए।)

सृजनहार/परमात्मा के आशीर्वाद और इनकी विद्वता के कारण ब्राह्मण समाज के प्रधान भी इनको दंडवत प्रणाम करते हैं—

"जाके कुटुंब के ढेढ सभ ढोर दोवंत फिरहि अजहु बनारसी आस
पासा।

आचार सहित बिप्र करहि दंडउति तिन तनै रविदास दासान
दासा।।"⁵⁴

जिस राम को मानते हैं वह राजा दशरथ के पुत्र श्री राम नहीं हैं—
"रविदास हमारे राम जी दशरथ करि सुत नाहि।।" (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(राम शब्द सृजनहार के लिए प्रयोग हुआ है जो समूची प्रकृति को चलायमान रखता है।)

वाणी में शरीर विज्ञान की चर्चा—

“जल की भिती, पवन का थम्बा, रक्त बुंद का गारा।
हाड़ मास नाड़ी को पिंजर, पंखी बसे बिचारा।।”⁵⁶

(मानव शरीर में अधिकतर पानी ही है, पवन रूपी ऑक्सीजन का ही सहारा है। शरीर के निर्माण का कारण स्त्री का रक्त और पुरुष की वीर्य बूंद से होता है। शरीर हड्डी, मांस और कोशिकाओं से मिलकर बना है जिसके अंदर जीवन रूपी पक्षी रहता है। मनुष्य शरीर की वैज्ञानिक संरचना का ज्ञान वह भी मध्ययुग में, यह छोटी बात नहीं है। 21वीं सदी में भी अनपढ़ तो क्या बहुत से पढ़े-लिखे भी शरीर संरचना को नहीं जानते।)

उत्तम पुरुष को बहुत महत्त्व दिया है—
“सोहंग सोहंग उचारिये श्रेष्ठ पुरुष संग प्यार।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(सोहंग-सोहंग उचारते हुए उत्तम का चुनाव करना चाहिए क्योंकि उत्तम पुरुष ही उत्तम संस्कृति को जन्म देता है।)

नश्वर संसार के बारे में सचेत करते हैं—
“जो दिन आवहि सो दिन जाही।। करना क्यू रहनु थिरु नाही।।”

(जो दिन आएंगे वे दिन जाएंगे, जीवन नश्वर है। इस धरती पर कोई स्थाई नहीं है जो आया है उसे जाना ही होगा।)

इस धरती से जाने पर फिर आना नहीं होगा—

“कहे रविदास राम जपि भाई संत साखि दे बहुरि न आऊँ।”

व्यावहारिक ज्ञान देते हैं—

“तन मन धन अर्पण करो, बाणी जप हरि मीत।।
सत संगति कर संत की, दुष्ट त्यागो रीत।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(तन-मन-धन अर्पण करते हुए सृजनहार की अमृतवाणी का जाप करना चाहिए। सही व्यक्तियों की संगति करनी चाहिए दुष्ट से सदैव दूरी बनाकर रखनी चाहिए।)

अध्यात्म का ज्ञान और ध्यान लगाने का तरीका भी बताते हैं—

“सवास सवास सिमरन करो, जनम आमोलक जीत।।
सोहं नाम के भजन से दूर होए भ्रम भीत।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(प्रत्येक श्वास के साथ सोहंग का जाप करना चाहिए, इसी से जीवन अनमोल हो जाएगा इसी नाम से भ्रम और भय दूर हो जाते हैं।)

अपने हक के लिए पहले प्रेम से और बात न बनने पर हथियार उठाने का संदेश देते हैं। राग सोरठि जो कि नम्रता का राग है, उसमें लिखते हैं—

“सुख सागर सुरतर चिंतामनि कामधेनु बसि जाके।”

फिर इसी पद में कुछ शब्द बदल देते हैं जिससे वाणी का राग ‘सोरठि’ से ‘मारू’ हो जाता है। राग मारू युद्ध का राग है, इस राग में लिखते हैं—

“सुख सागर सुरतर चिंतामनि कामधेनु बसि जाके रे”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(इन पदों की व्याख्या चिंतक प्रो. प्रोफेसर लाल सिंह ने की है, उन्होंने बताया— सतगुरु रविदास ने तो तलवार उठाने का संदेश भी दिया है। ये फौजों के कमांडर थे, इन्होंने लड़ाई जीती थी। सतगुरु रविदास ने लोगों को संदेश दिया है कि— उठो! जब तुम्हारी कोई नहीं सुनता फिर तो तलवार उठाना भी जायज है। यह मन में न रखो कि हम कत्ल कर रहे हैं। आप मानव का कत्ल नहीं कर रहे हैं आप तो पाप का कत्ल कर रहे हैं और पाप का कत्ल तब होगा जब पापी का कत्ल होगा। दुष्ट लोगों को समझाने के लिए किसी भी हद तक जाना चाहिए

(Ravidassia TV, 2020)। एक अन्य जगह चिंतक प्रो. प्रोफेसर लाल सिंह लिखते हैं— “गुरु गोविंद सिंह का तलवार उठाने का सिद्धांत गुरु रविदास का ही सिद्धांत है (Kanshi Radio, 2020)।

ये बातें सही प्रतीत होती हैं क्योंकि सतगुरु रविदास लड़ने से पहले की तैयारी के तौर पर एकजुट रहने का संदेश देते हैं—

“सतसंगत मिली रहिये माधो जैसे मधुप मखिरा”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)।

(हमेशा अच्छे लोगों के साथ समूह बनाकर रहना चाहिए जैसे मधुमक्खियाँ रहती हैं। अगर कोई उनकी संपत्ति लूटने की या उस पर कब्जा करने की कोशिश करे तो सभी को मधुमक्खियों की भाँति मिलकर शत्रु पर हमला कर देना चाहिए।)

सतगुरु रविदास ने भौतिक संसाधनों के संग्रहण करने का संदेश दिया है—

“आज्ञा गुर की चित्त धर, साधन को रख पास”⁶⁷

(संसाधनों को जोड़ने की बात कही है, उनका संग्रहण करने का संदेश दिया है।)

सच्चे क्षत्रिय की परिभाषा दी है—

“दिन दुखी के हेत जो वारे अपने प्रान।
रविदास उह नरसूर कौ सांचा छत्री जान।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(जो व्यक्ति कमजोर और दुखियों दुखी के मान-सम्मान के लिए वीरगति को प्राप्त करता है, ऐसे व्यक्ति को ही सच्चा क्षत्रिय मानना चाहिए।)

सतगुरु रविदास अपनी वाणी में अलौकिक शक्ति, शक्ति के पुंज, ज्योति रूप, प्रभु, हरि, गोविंद, राम आदि अनेक नामों से संबोधन करते हुए अपनी भक्ति का प्रदर्शन करते हैं, लेकिन क्या इनकी भक्ति को नवधा भक्ति के रूपों में बांटा जा सकता है? उत्तर है— नहीं। इनकी भक्ति है— प्रेम भक्ति, जो सबसे अलग है। सतगुरु रविदास राग ‘पूरबी’ में प्रेम भक्ति के बारे में लिखते हैं—

“जोगीसर पावहि नहीं तूअ गुण कथनु अपार।।

प्रेम भगति कै कारने, कहो रविदास चमार।।”

राग ‘गोड़ी- बैरागणी’ में प्रेम भक्ति के बारे में लिखते हैं—

“अनिक जतन निग्रह कीए टारि न टरे भ्रम फास।।

प्रेम भगति नहीं उपजे ताते रविदास उदास।।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

प्रेम पंथ को सबसे आन्दमयी बताया है—

“प्रेम पंथ की पालकी रविदास बैठियो आय।

सांचे सामी मिलन कू आनंद कहो न जाय।।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

दार्शनिक ओशो ने भी सतगुरु रविदास के प्रेम पक्ष को चिन्हित किया है— “...बुद्ध की भाषा ज्ञानी की भाषा है, रैदास की भाषा प्रेम की भाषा है। शायद इसीलिए बुद्ध को तो उखाड़ा जा सका, रैदास को नहीं उखाड़ा जा सका। जिसकी जड़ों को प्रेम से सींचा गया हो उसे उखाड़ना असंभव है। बुद्ध के साथ तर्क किया जा सका, बुद्ध के साथ विवाद किया जा सका, रैदास के साथ तर्क नहीं हो सकता, विवाद नहीं हो सकता। रैदास को तो देखोगे तो या तो दिखाई पड़ेगा तो झुक जाओगे नहीं दिखाई पड़ेगा तो लौट जाओगे। प्रेम के सामने झुकने के सिवाय और कोई उपाय नहीं है, क्योंकि प्रेम परमात्मा का प्रकटीकरण है, अवतरण है (ओशो, 2011)।”

श्रम को ईश्वर का स्थान दिया है—

“श्रम कउ ईसर जानि कै पूजहि दिन रैन।



रविदास तिन्हहि संसार मंह सदा मिलहि सुख चैन।।”

(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

मेहनत की संस्कृति को मजबूत किया है—

“रविदास श्रम कर खाइए, जौ लौ पार बसाय।”

मेहनत करेंगे तो भगवान खुद आकर मिलेगा—

“जीहवा सों ओंकार जप हत्थन सों कर कार।

राम मिलहि घर आइ कर कहि रविदास बिचार।।” (अमृतवाणी, 2010)

सतगुरु रविदास ने आरती को नया रूप दिया है, जिसमें कोई सांसारिक चीज है तो ठीक नहीं तो सिर्फ 'नाम' ही सबकुछ है। इस नए तरीके से साधनहीन और गरीब व्यक्ति भी आरती कर सकता, सृजनहार से जुड़ सकता है—

“नाम तेरी आरती मजन मुरारे।।

हरि का नाम बिनु झूठे सगल पसारे।। रहाउ।।

नामु तेरो आसनो नामु तेरो उरसा नामु तेरो केसरो ले छिटकारे।। नाम तेरो अंभुला नामु तेरो चंदनो घसि जपे नामु ले तुझहि कउ चारे।। १।। नामु तेरो दिवा नामु तेरो बाती।। नामु तेरो तेलु ले माहि पसारे।। नाम तेरे की जोति लगाई भइओ उजियारो भवन सगलारे।। २।। नामु तेरो तागा नामु फूल माला भार अठारह सगल जूठारे।। तेरो कीआ तुझहि किआ अरपउ नामु तेरा तुही चवर ढोलारे।। ३।। दस अठा अठसठे चारे खाणी इहै वरतणि है सगल संसारे।। कहै रविदास नामु तेरो आरती सतिनामु है हरि भोग तुहारे।। ४।। ३।।”

सभी जाति-धर्म के लोगों के लिए खाद्य सुरक्षा की बात की है—

“ऐसा चाहूँ राज मैं, जन्हों मिलै सबन को अन्न।

छोट बड़ो सब सम बसै, रविदास रहे प्रसन्न।।”

(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

(यह कहा जा सकता है कि विश्व के महान चिन्तक कार्ल मार्क्स से भी पहले एक भारतीय ने आदर्श समाजवाद का विचार प्रतिपादित कर दिया था। सबको भोजन मिलने और छोटे-बड़े का भेद समाप्त होने पर ही इनको खुशी मिलती है। महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह भी है कि इस स्थापना में सभी जाति और धर्म के व्यक्ति शामिल हैं किसी को भी इस खुशी से वंचित नहीं किया गया है। मार्टिन लूथर किंग ने 'I have a dream' (King, 1963) भाषण दिया, ऐसा प्रतीत हो रहा है कि मार्टिन लूथर किंग का यह भाषण सतगुरु रविदास से प्रेरित है, जो कहते हैं— “ऐसा चाहूँ राज मैं”, दोनों का भाव एक ही है— एक आदर्श समाज की चाहत।)

सतगुरु रविदास की सामाजिक, राजनैतिक, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक और आर्थिक क्रान्ति ने समूचे विश्व में एक वैचारिक हलचल शुरू कर दी थी। पन्द्रहवीं शताब्दी के अंत तक सतगुरु रविदास को आदर्श समाजवादी राजनेता माना गया। ये किसी भी समाज, लिंग और वर्ग की गुलामी के खिलाफ आजादी का बिगुल बजाने वाले, अर्थशास्त्री, शिक्षा और संगठन को महत्त्व देने वाले, सामाजिक क्रांति और दलित साहित्य के अग्रदूत, रागों का प्रयोग करने वाले, सभी धर्मों का सम्मान करने वाले, प्रेम को प्रमुखता देने वाले, किसी से भेदभाव न करने वाले जैसे अनेक उदात्त विचारों के धनी थे, इनके विचारों को भारतीय संविधान के मौलिक अधिकारों में शामिल किया गया है।

आषाढ़ संक्रांति विक्रम संवत् 1584 को सतगुरु रविदास का शरीरांत हो गया (अमृतवाणी, 2010)। इनके विचार और व्यक्तित्व वर्तमान समय में भी प्रसंगिक हैं। विद्वान मीरा गौतम ने सही ही कहा है— “रविदास जैसे संत इस लोक में महानायक हैं। देशकाल और इतिहास के अंतराल को

लौंघते हुए ये महानायक अपने निर्णय स्वयं करते हैं। ऐसे निर्णय जिन्हें शताब्दियाँ नकार नहीं सकतीं और सहस्राब्दियाँ जिनकी प्रतीक्षा करती हैं। (गौतम, 2003)।” आज देश ही नहीं विदेशों में भी सतगुरु रविदास के नाम से अनेक धर्मस्थान/गुरुद्वारे/मंदिर निर्मित हुए हैं। इनके विचारों को प्रचारित-प्रसारित करने के लिए अनेक संगठन, संस्थाएँ और व्यक्ति लगे हुए हैं। इनके विचारों की महता लगातार स्थापित हो रही है। इनसे सम्बंधित गीत, कव्वाली, लेख, भाषण, संगोष्ठी, शोध-पत्र, एम.फिल., पीएच.डी. आदि की संख्या बढ़ती जा रही है जिससे इनका व्यक्तित्व निखर कर सामने आ रहा है। कितनी ही किताबें-कविताएँ इनको समर्पित की जा रही हैं। प्रमुख शैक्षणिक संस्थानों, बड़े-बड़े ऑडिटोरियम, फील्ड इत्यादि में काफी धूम-धाम से सतगुरु रविदास की जयंती सभी जगह मनाई जा रही है, इन कार्यक्रमों में भारत सरकार के राष्ट्रपति, प्रधानमंत्री, मंत्री, विधायक, सांसद सहित अनेक जन प्रतिनिधिगण उपस्थित हो रहे हैं। भारत के कई राज्यों में तो सतगुरु रविदास के नाम से कई कल्याणकारी योजनाएँ भी चलाई जा रही हैं। विश्वविद्यालय-महाविद्यालय-विद्यालय आदि के पाठ्यक्रम में सतगुरु रविदास के लेखन को शामिल किया गया है। देश के अनेक विश्वविद्यालयों से विद्यार्थी सतगुरु रविदास पर शोध कार्य कर डॉक्टर एवं पोस्ट डॉक्टरेट की उपाधि प्राप्त कर रहे हैं। आज बड़े-बड़े प्रतिष्ठानों, शैक्षणिक संस्थानों, मकानों, ग्रामों, चौकों, शहरों, सड़कों इत्यादि का नाम भी सतगुरु रविदास के नाम पर रखा जाने लगा है। कुछ लोग अपने नाम के आगे गौत्र (सरनेम) के रूप में रविदासिया लिख रहे हैं। यह सतगुरु रविदास की स्वीकार्यता है जो निरंतर बढ़ती जा रही है। इनके नाम से प्रेरणा लेकर ही रविदासिया धर्म बना है। भारत के विश्वगुरु बनने के दावे को सतगुरु रविदास की उपस्थिति मजबूत करती है। ऐसे महान व्यक्तित्व से मनुष्य मात्र की गरिमा में विकास ही होता है, इसीलिए ऐसे महान पुत्र को पैदा कर भारतधरा भी गौरवान्वित महसूस करती है।

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संत गुरु रविदास और मानवाधिकार

डॉ. शिवमंगल कुमर

स मन्व्य, समरसता और योग-साधना भारतीय संस्कृति का महाकुम्भ है। भक्तिकाल ही एक ऐसा काल है, जिसमें भारतीय संस्कृति की समग्र चेतनामयी वाणी को संगीतमय अभिव्यक्ति मिली। भक्तिकाल का निर्गुण और सगुण दोनों में समन्वय है। भारतीय संस्कृति का सौन्दर्य इस समन्वयवादी, सामरस्यपूर्ण भावना में सन्निहित है। भारतीय संस्कृति विघटन का शिकार भले बनी हो, उसने विघटन का कभी समर्थन नहीं किया। संघटन उसकी महत्त्वपूर्ण उल्लेखनीय विशेषता रही है। विघटन का क्लेश उसने सहा है। कई लोगों की दृष्टि में इस संघटन भावना को समालोचित होना पड़ा है, परन्तु फिर भी संघटन का दामन इसने नहीं छोड़ा। संघटन सदा विपरीत विचारों का होता है। विपरीत विचार अनेक बार अपना आदर्श स्थापित नहीं कर पाता। उसका परिणाम यह होता है कि आश्रय स्थल को उसके लिए अनेक बार हानि भी उठानी पड़ती है। भारतीय संस्कृति की इस विशेषता ने लांछन की पीड़ा सह ली, किन्तु इस आदर्श को नहीं छोड़ा। यही आदर्श भारतीय संस्कृति के प्रबल प्रहरी, दलितों, वंचितों के मान, स्वजाति के अभिमान, अखण्ड भारत की पहचान, समतामूलक समाज के अग्रदूत, प्रख्यात कृष्णभक्त कवयित्री मीराबाई के गुरु और कर्मयोगी संत रविदास की वाणी में प्रस्फुटित हुआ।

हालाँकि विगत सदी भयानक विध्वंस की सदी रही है और वर्तमान सदी भी अपने आरंभिक चरण में क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन की ओर संकेत कर रही है। एक ने दो विश्व युद्धों समेत अनेक भूचालों को समेटा, अनेक अकल्पित परिवर्तनों को महसूस किया, तो दूसरी भूमण्डलीकरण के रथ पर सवार होकर पूरी दुनिया के कोने-कोने में आमूलचूल परिवर्तन कर देने के लिए कृतसंकल्प है। विगत सदी में स्थानीय स्तर पर अथवा विश्व पटल पर जिनका कोई वजूद नहीं था, जो अकाल, गरीबी, भूखमरी, महामारी की मार झेलने के लिए अभिशप्त थे तथा जो शोषण-दमन-उत्पीड़न के शिकार थे, आज उनका वजन सहसा बढ़ने लगा है। आज उनमें अपने स्वत्व की रक्षा, अपनी अस्मिता की पहचान और अपने अधिकारों के प्रति चेतना जागृत हुई है। कुछ इसी तरह के परिवर्तन का प्रबल हिमायत करने वाले, कट्टरपंथियों, ढोंगियों से लोहा लेने वाले, प्रेम का पाठ पढ़ाने वाले, सत्य का मार्ग दिखलाने वाले और मानवीय मूल्यों का रक्षण-पोषण करने वाले कबीर, गुरुनानक जैसे प्रगतिशील यदि कोई संत हैं, तो वह हैं निर्गुनिया संत रविदास। उनका

साहित्य जन-जीवन की मुक्ति का साहित्य है। उनकी वाणी की धधकती मशाल का साहित्य है, जिसमें समतामूलक समाज की स्थापना हेतु निरन्तर प्रयत्न है, जिसके भीतर एक अजीब बेचैनी, असीम तड़प और छटपटाहट है। यही कारण है कि हर किस्म की दकियानूसी धारणाओं (चाहे वह पुरातनपंथी हो या आधुनिक अथवा चाहे उत्तर-आधुनिक) से विलग संत रविदास ने सम्पूर्ण लोक के समक्ष बेलाग रूप से अपनी बात रखी। 'वसुधैव कुटुंबकम्' की भावना और 'सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः' की संकल्पना से प्रेरित, सत्य-अहिंसा के प्रति निष्ठा व समर्पण तथा सामूहिक समरसता की आधारभूमि पर रविदास जैसे संत जिन मानवीय, सामाजिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक आदि मूल्यों के लिए आजीवन संघर्ष करते रहे, उन्हें आचरण में उतारने के लिए लोक समाज से आग्रह करते रहे और जन साधारण के हक की वकालत करते रहे, संभवतः वही मूल्य आज की दुनिया में एक नए पारिभाषिक पद के रूप में उभरा है, जिसे मानवाधिकार कहा जा सकता है।

वस्तुतः संत रविदास की चिंतन-दृष्टि मूल्य समर्पित दृष्टि है। इन्हीं मूल्यों से उनकी नीर-क्षीर-विवेकी दृष्टि विकसित हुई है, जिसके सहारे वे अपने युग-परिवेश की खामियों को पहचान सके, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक समस्याओं की जड़ों तक पहुँचने में कामयाब हो सके। उन्होंने इन समस्याओं से संबद्ध अनेक प्रश्नों को व्यवस्था के कर्णधारों के सामने रख सके, जिनका उत्तर या समाधान उनके पास नहीं था। संतों के ये कठोर प्रश्न तब भी प्रासंगिक थे और अब भी प्रासंगिक बने हुए हैं। जैसे कि भारत में या यँ कह लें सम्पूर्ण विश्व में इस निर्गुनिया संत के मानवाधिकार और वर्तमान मानवाधिकारों की वस्तुस्थिति क्या है? 21वीं सदी की यह भूमण्डलीकृत व्यवस्था संत रविदास के मानवाधिकारों का कितना प्रवर्तन करा पायी है? भारत की लगभग सत्तर प्रतिशत आबादी जबकि आज भी गाँवों में गुजर-बसर करती है, क्या इन गाँवों के किसानों, शिल्पकारों, धोबियों, नाइयों, कहारों, कुम्हारों, गरीबों, उपेक्षितों, वंचितों, शोषितों आदि के अधिकारों का प्रवर्तन ठीक ढंग से हो पाया है? संत रविदास के काल में जो लोग, जो समुदाय कुव्यवस्था के कुचक्र में सायास पीस दिए गए थे, जिन पर भयानक अन्याय-अत्याचार किया जाता था, आज उनकी समस्याएँ कम हुई हैं या बढ़ गई हैं? महिलाओं को ये मानवाधिकार कहाँ तक प्राप्त हो सके हैं? क्या अगली पीढ़ी मानवाधिकारों के इस उभार

को ठीक से समझ सकेंगी और 'सर्वधर्म समभाव' का आचरण कर पायेगी आदि। इन्हीं प्रश्नों के आलोक में शोध पत्र को स्पष्ट करने का प्रयास अभीष्ट है।

दरअसल संत रविदास का साहित्य लोक चेतना, लोक मानस और लोक जीवन का साहित्य है, जिसका केंद्रबिंदु मानव है। संभवतः इसीलिए प्रख्यात गद्यकार प्रेमचंद ने कहा है—“साहित्य जीवन की आलोचना है।” जिस प्रकार समाज मानव जीवन को सुव्यवस्थित और नियोजित करने का नियम निर्धारित करता है तथा व्यक्ति को सामाजिक-आर्थिक ढाँचे में रहकर उसे अपने अधिकारों का सदुपयोग करने पर बल देता है, उसी प्रकार साहित्य समाज और जीवन की आलोचना करके मानव को सत्य पथ पर चलने और सदाचरण करने की प्रेरणा देता है। लेकिन अगर किसी व्यक्ति को उसके नैसर्गिक अधिकारों से जबरन वंचित कर दिया जाता है अथवा किसी कारणवश सामाजिक विकास की प्रक्रिया में वह अपने अधिकारों से अछूता रह जाता है, ऐसे में उसी समाज के भीतर असमानता का अंकुरण हो जाता है। फिर समय के साथ वही असमानता ज्वालामुखी रूप में विद्रोहात्मक या प्रतिशोधात्मक तप्त लावा उगलने लगती है, तब व्यवस्था की चूलें हिला देती हैं, उसमें भूचाल आ जाता है।

जाहिर है कि काल चक्र से कोई नहीं बच सकता। काल की छलनी बड़ी बारीक होती है, बड़ी बेरहमी से उलटती-पलटती है और अंत में सत्य ही शेष रह जाता है। इसलिए प्रत्येक सामाजिक को सत्य पथ का अनुसरण करना चाहिए। सम्पूर्ण संसार की विभिन्न नैसर्गिक क्रियाएँ सत्य, काल और समाज के संदर्भ में ही संचालित होती हैं। इन पर किसी का एकाधिकार नहीं होता। ये नैसर्गिक अधिकार मानव के मूल अधिकार हैं। ये ही मानव ऊर्जा के अक्षय स्रोत हैं। इनसे ही मानव उत्साहपूर्वक जीवन जीने की कला में प्रवृत्त होता है और संवेदनशील बनता है। संवेदनशीलता से करुणा उत्पन्न होती है और करुणा मनुष्यत्व की पहली शर्त है। इसी से व्यक्ति में सामाजिकता आती है और सामाजिकता से मनुष्य प्रत्येक प्राणी से न्यायपूर्ण आचरण करने के लायक बनता है। अतः किसी भी समाज में समरसता बहाल करने के लिए उस समाज के प्रत्येक व्यक्ति की सर्वप्रथम जिम्मेदारी व जवाबदेही यह बनती है कि जो अधिकार विहित हैं या अपने अधिकारों से अनभिज्ञ हैं, उन्हें अधिकारों का बोध कराये, उन्हें जागरूक बनाने का प्रयास करे। चाहे वे अधिकार बुनियादी आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति से जुड़े हों अथवा धर्म को अबाध रूप से मानने की स्वतंत्रता से जुड़े हों। इसीलिए भारतीय संविधान के भाग-3 और अनुच्छेद 36 से 51 में छः मौलिक अधिकारों, यथा- समता का अधिकार, स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार, शोषण के विरुद्ध अधिकार, धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार, संस्कृति तथा शिक्षा का अधिकार और संवैधानिक

उपचारों का अधिकार, को विशिष्ट स्थान दिया गया है और धर्म, जाति, लिंग या जन्मस्थान के आधार पर किसी भी प्रकार के भेदभाव का निषेध किया गया है।

संत रविदास ने मानवाधिकार संबंधी विभिन्न मुद्दों को बड़ी तलखी से उठाया है, जिनमें धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता विषयक अधिकार सर्वाधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण है। प्रायः समस्त संत कवि अपनी रचनाओं में एक ऐसे धर्म की वकालत करते हैं, जो एकदम शुद्ध और पवित्र हो तथा जिसमें किसी भी प्रकार का अधर्म यानी रूढियाँ, अंधविश्वास, कर्मकाण्ड, बाह्याडम्बर, अन्याय, अत्याचार, साम्प्रदायिक वितंडावाद आदि न हो। संत कवि रविदास की केवल 'धर्म इति धारयते' अर्थात् जिसे स्वेच्छापूर्वक और सहजता से धारण किया जा सके, में अटूट आस्था है। उनकी मान्यता है कि जब एक सामान्य नागरिक अपने अधिकारों को लेकर सजग और जागरूक होता है, तब वह मानवीय मूल्यों को प्रमुखता देते हुए सभ्यता-संस्कृति की नव निर्माण-प्रक्रिया में महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है। संस्कृति के निर्माण में भौतिक और अभौतिक दोनों ही तत्त्वों का बराबर का योगदान होता है। इन दोनों में से किसी भी एक तत्त्व की अधिकता से स्वार्थपरता या निष्क्रियता बढ़ जाती है। इसलिए दोनों का संतुलन जरूरी है। भौतिक-अभौतिक दोनों के संतुलित योग से सामासिक संस्कृति का निर्माण होता है, जो व्यक्ति के आचरण में ढलकर उसे सुसभ्य बनाती है तथा सम्पूर्ण मानव समाज एक-दूसरे की मंगल कामना करते हुए सुकर्म और सुख-शांतिपूर्वक जीवन जीते हैं।

अब बात आती है मानवाधिकार की अवधारणा की, तो इसके बारे में विभिन्न विद्वानों में आज भी मतभेद जारी है। कोई इसे आधुनिक काल की देन मानता है, तो कोई प्राचीन काल की। कोई पाश्चात्य देशों में इसका उद्भव बताता है, तो कोई पूर्व यानी भारत में इसका जन्म मानता है। लेकिन ध्यानपूर्वक देखा जाए तो मानवाधिकार न तो पश्चिम की देन है और न ही पूर्णरूपेण पूर्व की। यह पूर्णतः आधुनिक भी नहीं है, बल्कि इसकी संकल्पना काफी प्राचीन है। भारतीय संस्कृति में इसके अनेक लक्षणों को देखा जा सकता है। उदाहरण के लिए विश्व का सबसे प्राचीनतम ग्रंथ ऋग्वेद में एक स्थान पर कहा गया है—

“संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम्।

देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते।।” (ऋग्वेद,)

अर्थात् हम सब एक साथ चलें, आपस में सम्यक संवाद करें, हमारे मन एक हों। जिस प्रकार पहले के विद्वान अपने नियत कार्य के लिए एक होते थे, उसी प्रकार हम भी साथ में मिलते रहें। इसी प्रकार अथर्ववेद में कहा गया है—



“समानी प्रपा सहवोऽन्भागः समाने योषत्रो सहवो युनाज्मि ।

सम्यंचोऽग्नि सपर्य्यतारा नाभिमिवा भितः ।।” (विप्लव, पृ. 97)

अर्थात् भोजन-पानी में सबको समान अधिकार है। सबके ही कंधों पर इस जीवन रूपी रथ का जुआ समान रूप से टिका हुआ है। कहने का आशय यह है कि जिस प्रकार रथ के पहिए आरे, रिम और धुरी से जुड़कर एक-दूसरे की सहायता करते हैं, उसी प्रकार सारे मनुष्यों को अपना-अपना वैरभाव भूलकर सामंजस्यपूर्ण तरीके से एक-दूसरे की मदद करनी चाहिए।

मानवाधिकार से जुड़ा श्लोक महाभारत में भी देखा जा सकता है—

“प्रिया प्रिये परित्यन्त्रय समः सर्वेसु तन्त्रुसु ।

काम क्रोधो य लोभ य मानं योत्सृत्य दूरत्रः ।।”

(विप्लव, पृ. 96)

अर्थात् प्रिय-अप्रिय को ध्यान में न रखकर, बल्कि उसका परित्याग कर समस्त प्राणियों में समभाव रखते हुए काम, क्रोध, लोभ तथा मान यानि अहं से दूर रहकर इसी नीतिशास्त्र का पालन करें।

कौटिल्य के अर्थशास्त्र में भी यह वर्णित है—

“प्रजा सुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ।

नात्मप्रियं हितं राज्ञः प्रजानां तु प्रियं हितम् ।।”

(सुब्रह्मण्यम्, पृ. 3)

उपर्युक्त श्लोक में प्रजा सुख में ही राजा के सुख की बात कही गई है, जो एक तरह से कल्याणकारी राज्य की संकल्पना को साकार करता है।

स्पष्ट है कि भारत में मानवाधिकार की अवधारणा अत्यंत ही प्राचीन है। ऋग्वेद में तो तीन मौलिक अधिकार दिए भी गए हैं— ‘तन’, ‘स्कृति’ (वास) और ‘जीवासी’ (जीवन)। महाभारत में मानव की स्वतंत्रता पर बल दिया गया है। कौटिल्य के अर्थशास्त्र में तो ‘सिविल’ और ‘विधिक’ अधिकारों का व्यापक एवं विस्तृत वर्णन किया गया है, जिसमें आर्थिक अधिकार शामिल है। इससे प्रमाणित हो जाता है कि हमारे भारत के लगभग सभी प्राचीन धर्मग्रंथों में व्यक्ति, वर्ग, जाति, समुदायों के अधिकार और कर्तव्य वर्णित हैं। इसी तरह हिन्दू धर्म के बहुत करीब बौद्ध धर्म की शिक्षाओं में भी मानव-मानव के बीच भाईचारा और मर्यादा का संकेत मिलता है। अतः कहा जा सकता है कि भारतीय संस्कृति मानवाधिकार की संकल्पना से सम्पन्न और समृद्ध रही है। इसके बावजूद प्राचीन भारत में ‘मानवाधिकार’ नाम का कोई शब्द देखने में नहीं आता।

आधुनिक इतिहासकार मानवाधिकार के उद्भव का श्रेय इंग्लैंड के ‘मैग्नाकार्टा’ (1215 ई.) को देते हैं, जो कि महज एक

याचिका-भर था। इसमें राजा से यह मांग की गई थी कि वह जनसाधारण के कुछ विशिष्ट वर्गों को ज्यादा अधिकार प्रदान करे। सामान्य व्यक्ति की मूलभूत स्वतंत्रता से इसका कोई सरोकार नहीं था, इसलिए यह प्रासंगिक नहीं रहा।

1776 ई. में संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका में स्वतंत्रता संबंधी घोषणापत्र में ‘मानवाधिकार’ शब्द का सर्वप्रथम प्रयोग किया गया था, जिसे बाद में उनके संविधान में शामिल कर लिया गया। इसके बाद 1789 ई. की फ्रांसीसी क्रांति के दौरान नागरिक अधिकारों से संबंधित एक घोषणापत्र आया। सन् 1929 ई. में अंतरराष्ट्रीय विधि संस्थान (न्यूयार्क) ने मानवाधिकारों तथा कर्तव्यों का एक घोषणापत्र तैयार किया, फिर 1945 में इंटर अमेरिकी कॉन्फ्रेंस में इसे पारित किया, जिसमें मानव जाति के अधिकार को बढ़ावा देने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय फोरम तैयार करने का प्रयत्न किया गया।

द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के समय धुरी राष्ट्रों (जर्मनी, इटली, जापान) ने राजनीतिक तथा जातिगत अल्पसंख्यकों पर ऐसे नृशंस अत्याचार किए, जिससे सम्पूर्ण विश्व काँप उठा। फलतः मित्र राष्ट्र विश्व व्यवस्था में मानवाधिकार तथा मूलभूत स्वतंत्रता की गरिमा को बनाए रखने के लिए आगे आए और संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की प्रस्तावना में यह घोषणा की गई—

“हम संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के सदस्य देश मूलभूत मानवाधिकारों, मनुष्यों की गरिमा तथा गुणों, पुरुषों एवं महिलाओं, छोटे-बड़े राष्ट्रों के समान अधिकारों में अटूट विश्वास रखते हैं।” इस चार्टर में यह भी घोषणा की गई कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र का उद्देश्य आर्थिक, सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक या मानवतावादी स्वरूप की अंतरराष्ट्रीय समस्याओं के समाधान तथा जाति, लिंग, भाषा या धर्म का भेदभाव किए बिना सभी के मानवाधिकारों और मूलभूत स्वतंत्रता के प्रति आदर की भावना प्रोत्साहित करने में अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग प्राप्त करना है। इसे ही संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ ने 1948 ई. में सार्वभौमिक घोषणापत्र के रूप में जारी किया था।

भारत में मानवाधिकार संरक्षण अधिनियम, 1993 में मानवाधिकारों को संविधान के मूल अधिकार तथा नीति-निदेशक तत्त्वों में शामिल कर लिया गया। अंतरराष्ट्रीय अध्यादेशों के अनुसार ही भारत के संविधान में भी व्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता, समानता और प्रतिष्ठा से संबंधित अधिकारों के रूप में मानवाधिकारों की परिभाषा दी गई है। जबकि यूएनओ द्वारा दी गई इस शब्द की परिभाषा भी स्पष्ट नहीं है।

इससे साबित हो जाता है कि मानवाधिकार एकदम से आधुनिक युग की देन नहीं है, बल्कि सामाजिक, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक परिवेश और समय की उपज है। इसीलिए इसकी परिभाषा भी सतत बदलती रही है और जीवन-स्तर एवं जीवन

शैलियों के अनुरूप इसके पहलुओं में परिमार्जन होता रहा है। अतीत से सीख लेते हुए तथा वर्तमान परिस्थितियों को ध्यान में रखकर ही मानवाधिकार आयोग की स्थापना की गई है। अपनी स्थापना दिवस से लेकर आज तक यह आयोग अनेक संस्थाओं के सहयोग से प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को जागरूक बनाने, उसका हक दिलाने आदि के लिए संघर्षरत है। संत गुरु रविदास भी समतामूलक समाज-निर्माण हेतु आम आदमी को उसका हक दिलाने के लिए मठाधीशों, सत्ता के दलालों से मुठभेड़ करते हैं, लेकिन कबीर की तरह नहीं, बल्कि पूरे विनम्र भाव से।

बहरहाल, मानवीय मूल्यों की जो परम्परा हमें भारतीय साहित्य में दृष्टिगोचर होती है, वह अध्यात्मप्रधान, धर्मप्रधान और भावप्रधान है। निर्गुण-सगुण ब्रह्म की उपासना के लिए जिन कुछ विशिष्ट प्रकार के मूल्यों की सर्जना की गई थी, वे मूल्य थे-ज्ञान, कर्म, योग और भक्ति। लेकिन युग ने अंगड़ाई ली और आधुनिक मनीषियों ने इसे प्रेम, श्रद्धा और विश्वास के रूप में स्वीकार कर लिया। फिर धर्म, अर्थ, काम और मोक्ष को मूल्यों की श्रेणी में रखा गया। इसके बाद एक सांस्कृतिक आंदोलन के रूप में मूल्य संबंधी अवधारणा लोगों के सामने अपने नवीन रूप में मुखर हुई, जो सत्य-शिव-सुंदरम् के रूप में प्रतिष्ठित हुई। लेकिन बाद के चिंतकों ने इसका विरोध कर सामाजिक स्वरूप प्रदान किया और उसे मनुष्य केंद्रित माना, क्योंकि समाज के भीतर से ही इनका दर्शन-चिंतन प्रस्फुटित हुआ था। लेकिन काल का प्रवाह किसी के रोकें नहीं रुकता। शनैः-शनैः कर्मकाण्ड, बाह्याडम्बर आदि ने दबे पाँव प्रवेश किया, जिनका प्रबल विरोध जैन-बौद्ध मतावलंबियों ने किया और जनता का समर्थन प्राप्त किया। चार्वाक, लोकायत आदि दार्शनिक संप्रदायों द्वारा आध्यात्मिक मूल्यों के स्थान पर भौतिकवादी मूल्यों की स्थापना हुई। उनकी स्पष्ट मान्यता थी कि आर्थिक दृष्टि से संपन्न मनुष्य ही इच्छित फल की प्राप्ति कर सकता है। फलतः सभी प्रकार की लालसापूर्ति का साधन धनार्जन हो गया। इस प्रकार सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों के निर्धारण में इनकी भूमिका को भी नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जा सकता। इन मूल्यों को ही व्यक्तिगत मूल्य के रूप में देखा जाता है।

दरअसल संत रविदास का मानुष सत्य ही वास्तविक काव्य सत्य है। इसी सत्य के द्वारा वे संसार के सभी मनुष्यों को विकास पथ पर बढ़ते देखना चाहते हैं। उनकी दृष्टि में वही मूल्य सार्थक हो सकता है जो मनुष्य को विकास की मुख्य धारा से जोड़े या जोड़ने का प्रयास करे। ये मूल्य सामाजिक, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक, राजनीतिक, आध्यात्मिक कोई भी मूल्य हो सकते हैं। इन्हीं मूल्यों से मनुष्य में मनुष्यत्व पैदा होता है। इन्हीं से मनुष्य आत्मनिर्भर बनता है और अपने अधिकारों का दुरुपयोग किसी अन्य पर नहीं करता। संत गुरु रविदास

ने इसी संदर्भ में मानवीय मूल्यों यानी मानवाधिकारों की बात की है।

वास्तव में संत रविदास जनसाधारण को सुरक्षा का अधिकार प्रदान करते हैं। मध्यकाल में हमारी सांस्कृतिक विरासत पर जो हमले हुए और पुरोहितवाद ने या कट्टर इस्लामी ताकतों ने जो नृशंस अत्याचार किए, उन्हीं के खिलाफ संत रविदास की वाणी जनसामान्य की सुरक्षा के लिए ढाल बनकर आई। लेकिन आज के इस ग्लोबल परिदृश्य में तथाकथित बौद्धिक वर्ग उच्चाधिकारियों, नेताओं की चापलूसी और पिछलग्गू बनने की दौड़ में शामिल है। भेदभाव की प्रवृत्ति बढ़ी है, जिससे सहिष्णुता और बंधुता को गहरा आघात पहुँचा है।

संत रविदास ने पाया कि यह समाज विभिन्न वर्णों, जातियों, जातियों की उपजातियों में विभक्त समाज है, जहाँ मनुष्य और मनुष्यता की पहचान इसी वर्ण-व्यवस्था पर आधारित है। उन्हीं वर्ण-व्यवस्था को लेकर जो प्रश्न उठाए, वह आज भी उसी नुकीलेपन के साथ जीवित है। आज जाति राजनीति की मुख्य धुरी बनी हुई है-वोट बैंक का असली हथियार, ऐसा क्यों? उनकी स्पष्ट मान्यता है कि जब ईश्वर ने सभी को बराबर बनाया है तो मनुष्य-मनुष्य के प्रति, एक जाति का दूसरी जाति के प्रति इतना भेदभाव क्यों? एक में श्रेष्ठता की भावना और दूसरे में हीनता की भावना क्यों? असमानता की इतनी गहरी खाई क्यों? इन प्रश्नों को खंगालते हुए रविदास इस निष्कर्ष पर पहुँचते हैं कि वर्ण-व्यवस्था दरअसल ईश्वरीय व्यवस्था में एक वर्गीय षडयंत्र है। ईश्वर द्वारा निर्मित व्यवस्था में दारार डालने की साजिश है। इसी कारण यह व्यवस्था सर्वाधिक अधार्मिक और अमानवीय है। आगे यही बात जहाँ एक ओर गांधी ने कही- अस्पृश्यता वर्ण-व्यवस्था पर एक कलंक है, तो दूसरी ओर अंबेडकर ने कही- "आखिर हम कब तक अपने सामाजिक और आर्थिक जीवन में समता को नकारते रहेंगे? अगर हम ज्यादा समय तक उसे नकारते रहते हैं, तो अपने राजनीतिक जनतंत्र को खतरे में डालकर ही ऐसा कर रहे होंगे।" (योजना, 2016) जाहिर है कि इस प्रकार की व्यवस्था आचरण की शुद्धता, मानवीय चरित्र को जड़ बना देती है तथा चारित्रिक मूल्यों में परिवर्तन की सभी संभावनाओं को नष्ट कर देती है। जो व्यवस्था मानवता की रक्षा नहीं कर सकती, वह ईश्वर विरोधी, समतामूलक विरोधी व्यवस्था है। यही कारण है कि संत रविदास ने जातिवाद की शानदार शल्य-चिकित्सा की है और पाखंडियों के प्रपंच पर प्रहार किया है।

"जात-जात में जात है, ज्यों केलन में पात।

रविदास न मानुष जुड़ सकें, जो लों जात न जात।।"

(अमृतवाणी, 2010)



“थोथा पंडित थोथी वाणी, थोथी नाम बिन सबै कहानी।
थोथा मंदिर भोग विलास, थोथी आन देव की आस।।”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

वे जाति के आधार पर नहीं, बल्कि गुण के आधार पर
सम्मान देने की बात करते हैं—

“रविदास बामण मत पूजिए, जउ होवे गुण हीन।
पुजहिं चरण चांडाल के, जउ होवे गुण परवीन।।”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

पूरे भक्तिकाल में रविदास ही वह संत हैं, जिन्होंने सबसे
पहले पराधीनता को पाप कहा —

“पराधीनता पाप है, जान लेहु रे मीत।

रविदास दास पराधीनता सों, कोन करे है प्रीत।।”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

मध्यकाल के इस मनीषी की चिंतन-दृष्टि तो देखिए, सम्पूर्ण
विश्व में जहाँ-जहाँ स्वतंत्रता, समानता और भाईचारा के आध-
ार पर पुरातन व्यवस्था के खिलाफ क्रांतियाँ हुईं, उनसे काफी
समय पहले ही रविदास ने ‘स्वराज’ की नींव रख दी थी —

“रविदास मानुष करि बसन कूं, सु कर है दुई ठांव।
इक सु है स्वराज महिं, दूसर मरघट गांव।।”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

इतना ही नहीं, खाद्य सुरक्षा की बात भी पहले पहल इन्होंने
ही उठाई—

“ऐसा चाहूं राज मैं, जहां मिलै सबन को अन्न।
छोट बड़ो सब सम बसै, रविदास रहे प्रसन्न।।”
(अमृतवाणी, 2010)

आज जिस ‘स्मार्ट सिटी मिशन’ के तहत स्मार्ट भारत के निर्माण
की ओर वर्तमान सरकार अग्रसर और प्रतिबद्ध है, उसकी आध-
ारशिला संत गुरु रविदास ने 14वीं सदी में ही ‘बेगमपुरा’ नाम
से रख दी थी, जो उस समय के सम्पूर्ण भक्तिकालीन संतों
के विचारों का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है और जो हिन्दू संस्कृति में
तुलसीदास के ‘रामराज्य’ के रूप में प्रसिद्ध है—

“बेगमपुरा शहर को नांव, दुख अंदोह नहीं ठांव।
न तसवीस, खिराज न माल, खौफ, खता न तरस जवाल।
कायम दायम सदा पातसाही, दोग न सोम, सब एक सो
आही।

आबादान सदा मसहूर, वहाँ गण बसैं मामूर।
वहाँ सैर करो जहाँ जी भावै, महरम, महल न कोय अटकौवै।
अब मोहि खूब वतन गहि पाई, वहाँ खैर सदा मेरे भाई।
कहे रविदास खालस चमारा, जो हमसहरी सो मीत हमारा।।”
(पदावली)

स्वतंत्रता, समानता और बंधुत्व पर आधारित गुरु रविदास का
यह बेगमपुरा एक ऐसे आदर्श राष्ट्र (लेकिन यूटोपिया नहीं) का
नमूना है अथवा एक ऐसे दुःखविहिन समाज की प्रस्तावना है,
जिसमें उँच-नीच, अमीर-गरीब, छूत-अछूत का भेदभाव नहीं
है। जहाँ नागरिकों से जबरन लगान वसूला नहीं जाता, जहाँ
कोई भी सम्पत्ति का मालिक नहीं है। जहाँ न तो किसी प्रकार
का भय है, न चिंता, न अपराध और न ही कोई पश्चाताप।
सबवुफ़्छ न्यायसम्मत है। कोई भी व्यक्ति दूसरे-तीसरे दर्जे का
नहीं है, बल्कि सब एक समान हैं। सभी को आजीविका का अधि-
कार प्राप्त है। प्रत्येक नागरिक को अबाध संचरण की स्वतंत्रता
का अधिकार प्राप्त है। राजशाही की जगह गणतंत्रात्मक शासन
की व्यवस्था है। इस वतन के समस्त नागरिकों में सुख-शांति,
सौहार्द और परस्पर दया की भावना व्याप्त है।

लेकिन सवाल उठता है कि गुरु रविदास आखिर बेगमपुरा को
ही विकल्प रूप में क्यों तलाशते हैं? चूँकि मध्यकालीन भारत
में आम आदमी, किसानों की हालत अत्यंत ही दयनीय थी।
इन दीन-हीनों की दशा दासों से बेहतर न थी। उनकी इसी
पीड़ा से मुक्ति दिलाने हेतु संत रविदास इस नयी व्यवस्था
की कल्पना करते हैं, ताकि समतामूलक समाज का निर्माण
हो सके। किंतु उनकी यह संकल्पना आज भी प्रासंगिक बनी
हुई है। आजादी के 75 वर्ष बाद भी विकास से वंचित तबकों,
किसानों के जीवन-स्तर में कुछ बेहतर बदलाव नहीं हो सका
है। कृषि विज्ञान व प्रौद्योगिकी के इस उन्नत दौर में भी
किसानों के नाम पर राजनीति की गंदी रोटियाँ सेंकी जा रही
हैं। हालाँकि वर्तमान सरकार किसानों की हालत सुधारने के
लिए पूर्णतः प्रयासरत है। तमाम तरह के कार्यक्रम और योजनाएँ
भी चलाई जा रही हैं। इसके बावजूद किसानों की दुर्गति हो
रही है। किसान आत्महत्या कर रहे हैं, कीटनाशक पीकर अपनी
जीवन लीला समाप्त कर रहे हैं। आखिर इसके पीछे का सच
क्या है। सहज ही अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि आज जो
लोग तथाकथित रूप से जनता के रक्षक बने हुए हैं, दरअसल
वहीं भक्षक हैं। भक्षक इसलिए क्योंकि दशकों से जन-कल्याण
हेतु जो अनुदान राशि मुहैया करायी जाती थी, उन राशियों को
सीधे डकार जाते थे। अब सहायता राशि सीधे आम आदमी,
किसानों के खाते में पहुँच रही है, तो इन दलालों को दिक्कत
हो रही है। क्योंकि उनकी दाल नहीं गल रही है, मंसूबों पर
पानी फिर गया है। और मीडिया भी सच को झूठ और झूठ
को सच बनाकर अंधाधुंध खबरें परोस रहा है। इसी भ्रमजाल में
पँफसकर आम जनमानस भी किंकर्तव्यविमूढ़ हो गया है। ऐसे
में मीडिया को सत्यमार्ग का अनुसरण करते हुए जनहित को
लेकर पक्षपात रहित खबरें दिखाना चाहिए। किसानों का शासन
के प्रति आस्था बनी रहे, सरकार का यह दायित्व है कि उनकी
वास्तविक समस्या का निराकरण करे, गलत या भ्रामक समस्या
का नहीं। अन्यथा गरीबों, उपेक्षितों, किसानों की आत्महत्याओं

का सिलसिला जो कि संतो के समय से लेकर अब तक जारी है, आगे भी जारी रहेगा और मानवाधिकार जैसे मूल्य कलंकित होते रहेंगे।

संत रविदास की धड़कन में प्रेम और भक्ति जैसे मानवीय मूल्यों का वास है। उनकी भक्ति केवल भावना का विषय नहीं है, कर्म भी है, जिसमें प्रेम की भूमिका महत्त्वपूर्ण है। प्रेम और भक्ति की पहली सीढ़ी विनम्रता है। विनम्रता से सादगी आती है। सादगी से ईमानदारी, दया, क्षमा, शील, संतोष, निर्भयता आदि सद्गुणों का विकास होता है और काम, क्रोध, लोभ, मोह, मद, मत्सर का विनाश हो जाता है। इसीलिए संत रविदास ने सहज प्रेम को सच्चा प्रेम कहा है, क्योंकि इसी से सामाजिक रिश्ते टिकाऊ और मजबूत बनते हैं— 'भाई रे सहज बन्दी लोई, बिन सहज सिद्धि न होई।' (पदावली)

“चलत चलत मेरो मन थाक्या, मो पै चलयौ न जाई।

साई सहज मिल्यौ सोई सन्मुख, कह रैदास बताई।।”

(शास्त्री और पाण्डेय)

निस्संदेह सहज प्रेम का संबंध लोकमानस, लोक जीवन से है। इस प्रकार के प्रेम की प्राप्ति समता के आधार पर ही संभव है। जबकि सामंती व्यवस्था में उपजा प्रेम सहज नहीं, विशेष प्रेम होता है। यह विशेष प्रेम ही ढोंग है, जिसमें वासना, भोग-लिप्सा, कुटिल स्वार्थ शामिल होता है। परिणामस्वरूप समाज का पतन हो जाता है। पति पत्नी की, पत्नी पति की, भाई भाई की, पुत्र-पिता की हत्या तक कर देते हैं। इतिहास गवाह है कि नवाबों, सामंतों ने अपनी विलासी जीवन के लिए ही नारी को अपने हवस का शिकार बना डाला। इसी नारी के खातिर राजाओं-महाराजाओं ने परस्पर युद्ध किया और अपना सब कुछ बर्बाद कर दिया। और आज का युग तो तर्क-ताण्डव का युग है। सब कुछ बुद्धि का खेल बन गया है। बुद्धि आधारित प्रेम 'यूज एण्ड थ्रो' होता है। इसीलिए संबंध करक-दरक और सिसक रहें हैं। तलाक की समस्या तेजी से बढ़ रही है। अतः समाज को सुदृढ़, समतामूलक बनाने एवं शांति-सौहार्द स्थापित करने के लिए संत रविदास के सहज प्रेम को अपना अत्यावश्यक है, क्योंकि सहज प्रेम ही आत्मीय प्रेम है।

एक और बात, कबीर, रविदास जैसे संतों पर यह आक्षेप लगाया जाता है कि यदि वे समाज सुधारक थे, तो नारी को माया, पापिनी, डाकिनी, काली नागिन क्यों कहा? जब वे इतने सजग थे तो नारी मानवाधिकारों की आवाज समाज में क्यों नहीं उठायी? इसका मतलब तो यही निकलता है कि भक्तिकाल के संत भी अपने सामंती मोह से बाहर नहीं निकल सके। लेकिन जिन महानुभावों के मन में इस तरह के प्रश्न उठते हैं, उन्हें इस बात पर भी थोड़ा विचार कर लेना चाहिए कि संतों

का अवसान हुए तो छः-सात सौ साल हो गए, फिर भी आज के सशक्त और आधुनिक राष्ट्र में नारी के प्रति पितृसत्तात्मक समाज का नजरिया क्यों नहीं बदला है और यदि कुछ बदलाव हुआ भी है तो उसके पीछे मंसूबा क्या है? नारी की दशा-दिशा को प्रत्यक्ष-अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से किस तरफ धकेला जा रहा है? क्या आज के परिवेश में महिलाएँ सुरक्षित हैं? यह कैसा समाज है, जहाँ नारी मानवाधिकार की बजाय कुछ और ही बातें पूछी जाती हैं। दरअसल नारी को जाँचने-परखने की यह मंशा ज्यादातर बाजार के हित में है, जो नारी को समुचित अधिकार दिलाने के स्थान पर बाजार को ही अधिकार सम्पन्न बनाती है। यह नारी को अंततः बाजारवादी वस्तु में तब्दील करने की सोची-समझी रणनीति है। कहीं दहेज के नाम पर तो कहीं पुत्र-लालसा में, कहीं भोग की वस्तु समझकर तो कहीं निम्न समझकर, उसे प्रताड़ित किया जाता है। दिन-दहाड़े उसकी हत्या कर दी जाती है। तमाम तरह के कानून एवं दण्ड-व्यवस्था होने के बावजूद आज बाल-विवाह, बलात्कार, कन्या-भ्रूण हत्या, बालिकाओं की तस्करी जैसी समस्या जोरों पर है। कहा तो जा रहा है कि महिला सशक्तिरण का युग है, मगर सच्चाई यही है कि नारी कहीं भी सुरक्षित नहीं है। यही कारण है कि लिंगानुपात की समस्या बढ़ गई है। ऐसे जघन्य अपराध मध्यकालीन सती प्रथा से भी ज्यादा भयावह दृश्य उपस्थित करते हैं। जबकि एक लोक प्रचलित मान्यतानुसार जब मीराबाई के पति की मृत्यु हुई तो रविदास जी ने ही उन्हें न केवल सती होने से रोका था, अपितु भक्ति-साधना की शिक्षा देकर सद्गुरु की भूमिका निभायी। इस आधार पर कहा जा सकता है कि भारत में सती प्रथा के उन्मूलन का सर्वप्रथम प्रयास संत रविदास ने ही किया था। वे सच्चे अर्थों में शिक्षा के अधिकार के पुरोधा थे। अतः हमें कमियाँ न गिनाकर सुधार के उपाय करने चाहिए। इस दिशा में वर्तमान सरकार सम्पूर्ण भारत में 'बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ', 'जननी सुरक्षा योजना', 'उज्ज्वला योजना' 'तीन तलाक बिल' जैसे कई अभियान चलाकर नारी को रूढ़िवादी, कट्टरपंथी मानसिकता के चंगुल से मुक्त होने तथा एक स्वस्थ समाज का निर्माण करने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है। संत रविदास ने नारी को पति-पत्नी के मधुर प्रेम संबंधों के माध्यम से सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा प्रदान की। उन्होंने समस्त नारी जाति को अपने अधिकारों के प्रति सजग, सतर्क एवं जागरूक रहने की सीख दी, न कि माया मानकर उसे त्याज्य समझा। साहित्य का इतिहास इस बात का गवाह है कि भक्ति-साधना में लीन और जीविका-साधन जुटाने में दीन होने के कारण ही माता-पिता ने उनकी पत्नी लोना के साथ घर से निकाल दिया था। ऐसी विकट स्थिति में भी रविदास न तो अपनी पत्नी को त्यागते हैं और न ही लोना अपने पति को। दोनों ही एक-दूसरे के प्रति पूर्ण उत्तरदायित्व एवं निष्ठा के साथ गृहस्थ जीवन का



निर्वाह करते हैं। क्योंकि संत रविदास को पता है कि अभाव में तो जीवन जीया सकता है, मगर भाव बिना मनुष्य, मनुष्य नहीं रह जाता। उसके भीतर की मनुष्यता मर जाती है। तो फिर माया क्या है? रविदास की दृष्टि में 'अहं' यानी 'मैं' ही माया है, जो सत्य तक पहुँचने नहीं देता। अहं वह मदारी है जिसके इशारे पर लगातार मन नाचता रहता है। इसीलिए मन माया के पंजे में जकड़ा रहता है—

“मैं का जानूँ देव मैं का जानूँ।
मन माया के हाथि बिकांनूँ।।” (पदावली)
“तुझा देव कवलापति सरणि आया।
मंझा जनम संदेह भ्रम छेदि माया।।” (संत रविदास)

यही कारण है कि रविदास माया से हमेशा सावधान रहने को कहते हैं। इस चेतावनी का मूल संदर्भ आध्यात्मिक है। आधुनिक काल में वहीं संदर्भ शारीरिक और आर्थिक है। उनकी यह माया ही आज का विज्ञापन है। माया की दुनिया मन से संबंधित है। बाजार और मन में भी संबंध है। मन अब एक जरूरत का खेल है, जहाँ आदमी धीरे-धीरे असली क्रेता बन गया है। जिंदगी भी जरूरतों, दुकानों, रेस्तराओं के बीच आवाजाही के रूप में बदल गयी है। इसी बिंदु पर जिंदगी का अर्थ भी सिकुड़ गया है। अतः संत रविदास के आध्यात्मिक पक्ष को नजरअंदाज करके उनकी नारी दृष्टि का उचित मूल्यांकन करना असंभव है। उन्होंने तो अपनी भक्ति का आदर्श ही सुहागिन, सौभाग्यशाली नारी को माना है। सिर्फ विवाह संस्कार से ही कोई नारी सौभाग्यवती नहीं हो जाती, बल्कि जिसे अपने पति का पूर्ण प्रेम प्राप्त हो, वही नारी सौभाग्यशाली है। ऐसी नारी अपने पति के बिना अकेले नहीं रह सकती।

समग्रतः संत रविदास की वाणी अमृत वाणी है। वह ऐसे धर्म की वकालत करती है जो मनुष्य को मनुष्य से जोड़े। उनका धर्म ऐसा धर्म नहीं है, जो व्यक्ति को अफीम पिलाकर सुलाता है, बल्कि यह तो प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को उसका कर्तव्य बोध कराते हुए, उसे नैतिक पाठ सिखलाते हुए, सर्वजन में सहभागिता

बढ़ाते हुए, एकता के सूत्र में बाँधते हुए समष्टि की यात्रा करता है। उनका धर्म कोई जड़ धर्म नहीं है, प्रगतिशील धर्म है। यह व्यक्ति की मुक्तिमात्र नहीं चाहता, सामूहिक मुक्ति चाहता है। सिर्फ अपना हक नहीं, प्रत्येक मनुष्य के हक की बात करता है। नर हो या नारी, दाता हो या भिखारी, सबके आचरण की शुद्धता पर जोर देता है। अतः इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि दिव्य संत रविदास नर से नारायण और नारायण से नर तक की व्यापक एवं विस्तृत यात्रा करते हैं। जरूरत है तो बस उनकी अनमोल वाणी को मनसा-वाचा-कर्मणा धारण करने की, तभी भारतीय संविधान में वर्णित समता का अधिकार और लोक कल्याणकारी राज्य का सपना साकार हो सकेगा।

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Maternal & Child Health Policies and transitions among the impoverished population with reference from NFHS-5: A Review

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Abstract

Health can be accounted as a parameter for the socioeconomic transformation of different segments of people. The effect is vicious and transfers from one generation to another. Maternal and child health is essential if we talk about the socioeconomic development of a particular community. Here we are examining different government policies introduced to transform the maternal and child health landscape in India through socioeconomic interventions. The factors such as education, family income, and healthcare access will be scrutinized to posit the importance of women's empowerment at the forefront of making a difference in maternal and child Health in India. The inequalities in healthcare and nutritional access when it comes to antenatal care, reproductive care, and sanitation facilities, and yet patterns are being ameliorated by various government policies. The social intervention schemes are at work, such as Janani Suraksha Yojana, Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, LaQshya, Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, Poshan along with government programs such as National Rural and Urban Health Mission (2005 & 2008) will be reviewed to evaluate the effectiveness of the policies among the poor. Further, the coverage level of these policies will be scrutinized, and suggestions as to how India can reach its Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will be provided.

Keywords: Maternal Health, Child Health, Indian Government Policies, Socioeconomic interventions, Rural and Urban Health

Introduction

Socioeconomic transformation can be defined as the concomitant changes in a person's socioeconomic position through which a significant impact can be observed on their Health, social security, and family welfare. Most of the communities in India are going through socioeconomic transformation (Sikdar, 2012).

As a result, it is regarded as a tool for influencing resource accessibility, cost acceptability, and use. Socioeconomic status (SES) includes income, but it also includes educational achievement, financial security, and subjective views of social position and social class (Pikkety, 2018). Socioeconomic status may refer to a person's quality of life and the chances and privileges they have in society. Poverty, on the other hand, is characterized by several physical and mental stresses. Globalization, labour market reform, and economic liberalization have contributed to growing income and wealth disparity since the 1980s. Inequality has a geographical footprint in the form of socioeconomic segregation. When we talk about socioeconomic segregation, we are talking about the uneven distribution of various occupational or income groups among residential neighbourhoods of a region. Therefore growing levels of inequality have ramifications for social and spatial organization. Health is one of the best criteria for understanding the socioeconomic disparity across human populations (Alfredo, 2018). Therefore we have targeted the topic of Health as a parameter to understand the disparity and transformation of the population groups across India. We will confine our paper to maternal and child Health. We will discuss the policies available in India for enhancing maternal and child health in different population groups.

The World Health Organisation (1948) described Health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely absence of disease or infirmity". Within this vast array of Health, maternal Health is defined as the Health of a woman during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. Ideal maternal Health is pivotal for a healthy birth outcome for both the mother and the fetus. Staying healthy during pregnancy is essential for the child and the mother for their future well-being and to reduce the socioeconomic

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burden; WHO recognizes that healthy offspring result from a healthy mother. Health parameters of the mother are highly interlinked with the child's Health. The foetus's survival depends upon the mother's nutrition and other obstetrics factors. Therefore investment in maternal health care is fundamental to human beings. Anthropological perspectives on Health bring together individual and collective realities in how they are organized, narrated, contested, and lived as social trajectories (Kleinman, 1995).

The maternal mortality ratio declined by 44% over the last two decades. In 1990, the rate was 385 per 100,000 live births, which declined to 216 per 100,000 in 2017. This global data indicate a developed health facility in recent years with the development of medical research. Early onset of parental health problems increases the socioeconomic burden of the family, under which it is highly impossible to maintain a good social order (Hogan and Shandra, 2007). Along with that, the income-expenditure decreases with time. This is not limited to the microeconomic part, which also increases stress between the parents and the children (Osborn, 2007). Harknett and Harknett in 2011 showed that maternal Health also reciprocates with decreased social support, which will lead to a further decline in interpersonal relationships and economic resources.

India has a long way to go, crossing many hurdles to decline its Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), which was 174 per 1,00,000 in 1990 and that came down to 113 per 1,00,000 in the 2018 census. Notable improvement is achieved due to the consistent and flexible intention of the Government of India to bring down maternal and child mortality. Various policies and schemes related to institutional deliveries and financing for the public health institution's infrastructures related to maternal Health and child care were formed. According to the sample registration survey 2016-2018 report, significant variations in MMR were found across the state ranging from 215 per 100,000 live births in Assam to 43 per 100,000 live births in Kerala. Risk parameters for women during pregnancy vary from age, the incidence of diabetes mellitus, Anaemia, vaginal bleeding, urinary tract infection, thyroid dysfunction, fever, and other obstetric-related problems, which lead to the faulty outcome like neonatal infection, asphyxia, preterm birth, intrauterine growth restriction, low birth weight and different congenital abnormalities.

The MMR rate has declined in India, but it still needs to progress to achieve the SDG goals of 2030, specifically the Empowered Action Group (EAG) states of maternal mortality. Khadilkar *et al.* (2016) administered a retrospective study to determine the growth standards

for early gestational age among the children of India, grouped from two categories of socioeconomic strata from Pune, Maharashtra. Data was gathered from 618 children. Inferences signify that 65.7% of the babies had short gestational age, implying that 34.5% were from upper socioeconomic strata and 65.5% were from low socioeconomic strata. From this study, we can infer that maternal factors such as improper diet strategy, intrauterine infection and inflammation contributed to a considerable percentage of neonates having short gestation age under the category of low socioeconomic strata when compared to upper socioeconomic strata.

The Government of India introduced policies that directly benefit the mother by reducing the inequality of rural and urban health services. This has been achieved along with reducing neonatal and under-five mortality rates. National Rural Health Mission (NFHS, 2005) is one of the significant health infrastructure projects the Government of India created in 2005. After that, the national urban health mission 2008 was included along with the reproductive, maternal newborn, child adolescent health (RMNCH+A) programme. This RMNCH+A strategy is pivotal in putting maternal care in a concrete position. Now the services are in proximity to the mothers and other family members. This will also upgrade the family's socioeconomic status and provide the mother with medical supervision.

Government schemes will reach out to more families by raising awareness about the policies. Education is essential as it will automatically create the necessity to know about the Government's ongoing policies. That is why education is also considered a socioeconomic measure for counting a developmental stage for the population. Many studies have inferred that education and maternal health services have a significant relationship. From all these studies, we understand that a mother's education is as crucial as the implemented policies because, without the knowledge of those policies, there is no clear-cut perception of its utilization. That is why it continues to be the principal determinant and most homogenous variable of socioeconomic factors.

Further research has observed that educated mothers have a low mortality rate by reducing the number of children and ameliorating family planning. The Diet pattern of an educated mother is significantly related to the required daily nutrition allowances designed specifically for maternal Health. It requires multivitamins, minerals, and other essential needs that can be supplied to the foetus, leading to healthy offspring. Education also helps to promote efficient childcare practices as well as sanitation services.

Mothers can manage disease management for common ailments for their children and themselves. Many research and Health reports from various countries showed an indicative relationship between institutional deliveries and maternal education, which leads to the direct involvement of government policies and schemes for the beneficiaries. Traditional management of birth procedures also declined one step below by breaking unscientific norms and moving towards a modern scientific way of delivering a baby. This became possible due to increased education levels and proper implementation of policies. Family planning and the involvement of women have enhanced the management of childbirth. The decision-making power is fully concentrated on the mother. It subsidizes the primordial parameters regarding the health planning of new-born children. Through this process, the MMR rate and NMR slowed down stochastically. Education indirectly leads to empowerment and individual sensitivity concerning health awareness. The more awareness, the more the Health of the mother and child will improve, and it will cluster out the problems or any further intervention regarding the schemes. Besides everything, paternal education plays another critical role in maternal care and Health seeking behaviour. Considering the Indian context, mostly the household chores are taken care of by the women, whereas the male member contributes monetary assistance and will also be the chief decision-maker on behalf of the family. Therefore in a rural setup, the father's education is the deciding factor in predicting whether the mother and the child will have a healthy outcome during pregnancy. Here, the father also needs to recognize all the schemes and policies given by the Government. By following paternal awareness, the socioeconomic stress of the family will decrease and lead to a healthy outcome. Here the father's education level becomes a significant variable for childcare practises.

The family's income is another significant factor to which we can relate health-seeking practices. It can be considered the most crucial factor of economic status and can substantiate the family's basic needs through which a better future can be propagated. Modern Medical supervision and facilities can be availed if the particular family has well-structured monetary security. Moreover, the relationship between family wealth and pregnancy care is relatable in multifactorial indexes like availing health facilities, medicinal usage and institutional deliveries. These wealth indexes play an essential role in nutrition patterns by providing enough sustenance for the pregnant mother and the new-born child. Income parameters, upliftment and utilization of health facilities are directly proportional. We have observed in many evidence-based studies that higher

occupation status opts for limited children and avails best medical services, under which maternal and child mortality rates can be checked over time. Access to better healthcare will be easy if the family wealth index is higher. According to the World Health Organisation, representative populations from developing countries are less likely to utilize antenatal care than the affluent representative population. Other beneficiaries of the family wealth index can be observed where a woman contributing to the family expenditure has better control over the utilization of healthcare services. Women are more likely to utilize more healthcare services if their economic status and autonomy level increase. The importance of women's empowerment comes into play wherever the decision-making authority and self-payment for healthcare services validate the results. This also signifies that childcare practices will be more sophisticated and scientific. Opting for better health care is not limited to the individual's will, but it depends on various cultural and societal norms of that specific community, their belief system, and taboos related to maternal and child care.

Another impact of improper healthcare systems is the feasibility of healthcare facilities situated long distances from the settlements, particularly in rural regions. Whether living in a city, the chances of having a baby in a hospital and getting help during delivery are higher. The disparity in the usage of maternal health care services between rural and urban areas is projected to widen in many statistics, but in recent years the trends are declining as the Government of India introduced several schemes to reduce this gap. If we follow the dataset of the National family health survey (NFHS) in different time frames, we can find the differential status of its outcome. **In NFHS-3, the percentage of women who received antenatal care was 37% (4 visits), whereas, in NFHS-4, it reached 51.2%. In comparison, total antenatal care reached 11.6% in NFHS-3 to 21% in NFHS-4. Institutional deliveries increased from 38.7% in NFHS-3 to 78.9% in NFHS-4.**

Available Policies And Schemes For Maternal and Child Health At National Level

India has the second largest population globally, with the largest democracy in the world. After the independence, public health policy transformed immensely, mainly concentrating on the upgrade following five-year planning. In 1951 India became the first country to introduce a family planning program to check the growth of the population while providing the necessary health benefits to every individual.



Family welfare programs are targeted so maternal health and child care can be upgraded with declining mortality rates. As we know, the progress of a country directly depends on their healthy citizens and their productivity towards building the nation, and this can be reached only when the mother of the country gets proper nutrition and health care benefits. Education and awareness related to Health became the primary vision of the Government. The national health policy of 1983 significantly improved the reduction of infant mortality rate, neonatal mortality rate and child mortality rate. Diarrhoea became a menace to child health in 1983. Under the Reproductive & child health program, oral rehydration solutions were distributed to all the districts and the headquarters. The results were impressive. This structure is grounded due to proper health planning and the Government's strategies. This was the central turning point in the public healthcare sector for the first time after introducing health policies. The Child Survival and Safe Motherhood programs (CSSM) generated a remarkable triumph by improving the health parameters of pregnant women, infants and children.

Community health awareness programs by the Government contributed to a significant change in the lifestyle of the mass because the life quality of ordinary citizens enhanced to a quality living. In this modern era of the health system, more and more people benefit from this. The Government of India also introduced several programs which involved monetary funding for world-class medical facilities. This paper will concentrate on the policies and programs specifically for the mother and child. Globally maternal Health pointed out a decline in its rate from 43 %. Strikingly, India also showed a decline of 20 % in maternal mortality from 1990 to 2015 (Ghosh & Ghosh, 2020).

National Health Mission (NHM) incorporates two of its sub-programmes under one umbrella; the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the National Urban Health mission (NUHM). The principal strategy of the two missions was to strengthen the reproductive and maternal health and childcare policies. National Health Mission proposed a holistic approach and access towards the feasibility, unbiased and standard services related to health care of ordinary citizens.

From table 1.1, we can draw a favourable inference of opting for health facilities along with the mother and child. If we consider the Antenatal care visit, which was 43.9 in 2005- 06 from 58.6 in 2015 -16, and it leapt in 2019-21, which is 70.0 per cent, there is a high upward trend of ANC visits among pregnant women during the first trimester. ANC visits' importance is strengthening

the opportunity to give priority interventions by destroying cultural barriers and providing immense coverage. The percentage of full ANC visits also increased from 11.6 per cent in 2005-06 to 21.0 per cent in 2015-16 and huge in 2019-21, that is 58.1 per cent. This indicates that more women are aware of the medical facilities and pre-pregnancy Health. We can also observe an increased statistical trend regarding the mothers who received postnatal care from health personnel within 2 days of delivery, which is a 62.4 per cent increase over 34.6 per cent and a consistent increase in the year 2019-21, which is 78.0 per cent. Health facility upgradation and feasibility of doctors and health personnel are essential in the post-pregnancy period to secure priority interventions needed for the mother and the child. So the children delivered at home should be taken to a medical institution for a general checkup within 24 hours. That percentage also increased from 0.3 per cent in 2005-6 to 2.5 per cent in 2015-16; in 2019-21, it increased to 4.2 per cent. From the above database, if we concentrate on institutional birth, it has increased from 38.7 per cent in the 2005-06 period to 78.9 per cent, which signifies a giant leap towards the betterment of Health, which reflects in overall health statistics of mothers and children. In the low socioeconomic category, government delivery facilities are essential, which also increased over time. Institutional birth in public health facilities increased from 18 per cent to 52.1 per cent to 88.6 per cent from 2005-06 to 2015-16 and 2019-20, respectively. IMR and U5MR have shown a declining trend from 57 to 74 respectively from NFHS 3 TO NFHS 4 and 41 and 50 in the following NFHS 3 to NFHS 4, but in NFHS-5, it decreased to 41.9 per cent, which shows a radiant health awareness. This is a significant change when one considers the following point regarding literacy. As we have discussed the relationship between literacy and health awareness in this paper, it will be apparent if we consider the gender participation in literacy, we can notice there is a massive leap from 55.1 per cent in 2005-06 to 68.4 per cent in 2015-16 among Females whereas 78.1 per cent of 2005-06 to 85.7 per cent of 2015-16 among males.

Following are some of the Maternal health programs by the Government of India

Janani Surakshya Yojana (JSY):- Janani Surakshya Yojana scheme was launched in April 2005. The central targets of the scheme are to provide security assistance to pregnant women and promote safe delivery in institutions where the mortality rate can be decreased. JSY provides round-the-clock assistance and medical aid, counting anaesthesia and ASHA for assisting and

Table 1.1:- Comparing maternal and child health factors with education from NFHS 3 and NFHS 4, and NFHS-5 reflecting improvement in health facilities.

INDICATORS	NFHS-3 (2005-06)	NFHS-4 (2015-16)	NFHS-5 (2019-21)
Maternal and Child Health			
<i>Mothers who had antenatal care for the first trimester (%)</i>	43.9	58.6	70.0
<i>Mothers who had full ANC (%)</i>	11.6	21.0	58.1
<i>Mothers who received postnatal care from a doctor/nurse/LHV/ANM/midwife/other health personnel within 2 days of delivery (%)</i>	34.6	62.4	78.0
<i>Children born at home who were taken to a health facility for a checkup within 24 hours of birth (%)</i>	0.3	2.5	4.2
<i>Institutional births (%)</i>	38.7	78.9	88.6
<i>Institutional births in a public facility (%)</i>	18.0	52.1	61.9
<i>Infant mortality rate (%)</i>	57	41	35.2
<i>Under 5 mortality rate (%)</i>	74	50	41.9
<i>Literate women (%)</i>	55.1	68.4	71.5
<i>Literate men (%)</i>	78.1	85.7	84.4

guidance during pregnancy. Pregnant women aged 19 or above in low-performing states (LPS), and women below the poverty line of high-performing states, are eligible for the Janani Suraksha Yojana. Monetary assistance is another essential part of this scheme which is availed by the pregnant women enrolled for JSY. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (2015) declared that the scheme's progress could be marked by the number of Institutional deliveries increased and aided by low-income families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Not only does increasing delivery, but it is also responsible for decreasing the monetary stress on the family through which a healthy child can be achieved without burdening the parents. It created a bridge between inaccessible faulty birth and health facilities.

Janani Shishu Suraksha karyakram (JSSK):- The Government of India initiated a Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram on 1 June 2011, through which all pregnant women are eligible to deliver in public health institutions with a zero cost. Standard deliveries and caesareans are also entitled to avail of this scheme. This Suraksha initiative prescribes no-cost drugs, diagnostic facilities, tailored nutrition for others and colds, transportation of pregnant women, and a holistic approach to ensure safe delivery while promoting institutional birth. From 2013 ailing infants' postnatal complications are also eligible for JSSK.

Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A): Foundation of maternal Health should follow a structure through which the proper application can be monitored and intervene whenever needed. In 2013 the Government

introduced this framework mainly to mark the causes of mortality and morbidity patterns among women and children. This framework followed the previous RCH program, whose target was to administer proper maternal Health, child care, nutrition strategy, family planning, and adolescent Health. Interventions in these sectors can be monitored from time to time, along with it being able to measure any lag or faulty services. These programs and strategies are developed by various specialists manoeuvred by the central funding considering equality, universalization and scientific procedures towards the health care system.

Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN):- From the ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Government of India launched this recent initiative to take strong measures against the mortality and morbidity of women and children. Assurance, respectful, Unbiased and incomparable health care services had given top priority under these schemes at zero cost. The scheme's modus operandi is "**Zero Preventable Maternal and Newborn Deaths and high quality of maternal care delivered with dignity and respect**". Refusal of health services is strictly restricted under this scheme to whoever is eligible for delivery or natal care at the public health facility. Respect is another step of these schemes because we have seen that ANC visits are stigmatized to some communities or for some groups of people.

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA): In 2016, this scheme was introduced by the Hon'ble prime minister to take forward the concept of declining maternal mortality and morbidity due to pregnancy. The aim and objective of the program were



to provide guaranteed, unprejudiced and standard antenatal care without any cost and to detect any risk of pregnancy in women on the 9th Day of every month.

PMSMA's Goal is to improve the quality and quantity of antenatal care with additional diagnostic and family planning counselling services as an integral factor of **“Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A).”**

Major health factors to be covered in the program are as follows:-

As WHO prescribed 8 ANC visits for pregnant women, this program ensures that at least one ANC checkup can be done in the second or third trimester by a health specialist.

To enhance the quality of health care along with the ANC visits.

Modern diagnostic system to check any complications.

Regular screening of pregnant women.

Tailored management for individuals if diagnosed with Anaemia, pregnancy-induced hypertension, and gestational diabetes.

If some women miss a visit to ANC care, proper management should be given.

To scrutinize maternal obstetric history for better family planning and clinical assessment.

Women with malnutrition should be given proper nutrition management of their diet.

Labour room quality improvement Initiative (LaQshya):- Government of India concentrated on institutional delivery as it is the best possible way to check the mortality and morbidity of mother and child. After the introduction of the National Health Mission (NHM), there has been a notified decline in MMR, NMR, and U5MR. An estimation trend shows that 46% of maternal deaths, more than 40 % of stillbirths and 40% of newborn deaths coincide during delivery. Socioeconomic security during the process of health care during delivery is essential to intrapartum and postpartum care. Under that health, security can be achieved in less period.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare introduced the “LaQshya” programme. The goal of this program is to restrict maternal and newborn mortality, morbidity and stillbirth and association with delivery care and to establish maternity care with esteem. The main aim was to improve the quality of the labour room and maternity operation Theatre (OT).

The principal objective of the LaQshya program are as follows:-

To decrease maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity for a reason, Antepartum bleeding (APH), Postpartum bleeding (PPH), Preeclampsia and Eclampsia, Obstructed labour, Sepsis, Newborn Asphyxia.

To increase the standard of delivery and Postpartum care, awareness regarding the follow-up system and to reduce complications during pregnancy time.

Respectful Maternity Care for eligible pregnant women who are attending public health institutions.

Comprehensive Abortion Care Services (CACS):- Comprehensive and safe abortion services which facilitate public Health, which include 24*7 Public Health centres, specifically maternal and child care. Nischay Pregnancy detection kits are distributed from PHCs. Endowments are provided to state and Union territories for Operation and safe abortion in any complications. Drugs and medical abortion are also prescribed and supplied to the women's access to service. NGOs and all private sectors can also provide and endorse the facilities in district-level committees. Methodical monitoring and evaluation of the procedure are being managed.

Provision of Reproductive Tract Infection(RTI)/ Sexually Transmitted Infection(STI):-

STI and RTI which is other major issue of the family planning program. The National Health Mission focuses on maternal Health in all aspects, so the infection and ailments must be monitored. This strategy also helps to prevent HIV infection among women and newborn children.

A significant cause of concern regarding ill health in India and the world is the increasing numbers registered for STIs/RTIs. Among the adult population of India, about 6% of the population suffers from an STI/RTI, which translates to about 40 million cases per year. Cervical cancer is one of the severe consequences Indian women face if an STI/RTI is untreated or not treated adequately. Proving quality RTI/STI case management procedures encouraged by all the public health institutions, NGOs, private sector health facility providers, and medical franchises who are thought to decrease the Infection rate are also allowed to contribute to the program.

The following objectives are intervened:-

To increase the perimeter of the service by making it more available and feasible for every woman and concerned person.

I am maintaining a primary protocol to maintain the practice by reducing anti-drug effects.

Prevention is the primary focus rather than retention of the infection, as it is hard for some people to access RTI services as societal stigma is profoundly related to this area.

I was counselling for behavioural change while making more awareness about the problems, which will lead to a decent trend in the RTI/STI decline.

Particular reference is given for healthy preventive practices by encouraging partner management, condom use, and follow-up procedures for any side effects.

Screening of asymptomatic women who are contraceptive users.

Special assistance is also provided to the most hazardous professionals like sex workers, MSM and IDU

Village health and nutrition Day:- Village health and nutrition day (VHNDs) is held at the Anganwadi centre once at least every month, preferably on Wednesday. VHND is essential in the aspect of communication between the community and the health specialist, or we can say that this is the base of the health upliftment of India. This program focused on assisting from the ground itself, providing counselling and service on antenatal and postpartum care for pregnant women, promoting institutional deliveries, proper immunization requirements, nutrition strategies and family planning.

Midwifery:- Indian government 2018 introduced a brand new program based on midwife practises throughout the country. This program is mainly targeted in the rural areas where hospitals and other healthcare services are not nearby. This program ensures an unbiased and respectful delivery suite by trained midwifery only. This will also reduce the over-medical usage of birth delivery. This will also reduce complications due to the complicated hospital procedure. The principal objective of these schemes was to create a cadre of Nurse practitioners in midwifery who are professional with the association of ICM procedure.

Maternal Death Surveillance and Response (MDSR):- Maternal Death review and its process has been administered and augmented throughout India among its states and Union territories since 2017. In this program, the respective states have to report the death of the women and analyze the reason for the death. The maternal mortality rate is the prime target of this scheme, as we have the proper death database,

and it will be easy to intervene in the primary cause of death for the mother. It is a continuous procedure of identifying, analyzing and reviewing, followed by standardization of the procedure to reduce MMR. Community participation in these schemes is crucial as it is connected from the root level of every household. Steps for community-based maternal death surveillance and response are

- a. Notification of maternal death
- b. Investigation
 - I. Data transmission
 - II. Analysis
 - III. Review

Reproductive and Child Health Portal:- One of the many essential steps the Government has taken to reduce MMR, this digital initiative is one of a kind which gives assurance to connect every mother to a single portal, from where it is easy to reach those particular pregnant women and to identify any ailments or complications. To comprehend the information regarding MMR, this integrated reporting system is valuable for the whole nation. This will also help in the early detection of pregnancy complications and the timely delivery of ANC services, including family planning, maternal Health, Child health and immunization. The RCH portal proves that the small steps towards MMR to reduce it are much more efficient than all the big schemes, so a down-to-top approach is highly significant and efficient.

Child Health Programmes and Interventions

India plays a crucial role globally, endeavouring to decrease child mortality and morbidity. In particular, the Indian Government facilitates health infrastructure in a new dimension. Newborn Stabilization Units (NBSUs), Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) and New Born Baby Corners (NBBCs) are being situated at different district and village levels under the National Health Mission of 2013. Steady performance and strategic efforts signified a reduction in Under-5 Child Mortality, 59% from 1990. From the Polio eradication programme, it is clear that India can reach the hard-to-reach and vulnerable children in the remotest part of the country. The Government of India considers child survival and development the first step towards developing a nation. We can observe its policy and intervention strategy, which is committed to the care and necessary services for infants, from the mother's womb to the entire childhood. All is secure under some



policies. The policies cover their overall physical, mental and social development. Through this, the poor sector of India is now getting world-class medical facilities. This also relieves the family's socioeconomic stress by reducing the monetary authorization.

In June 2014, the World Health Assembly initiated the India Newborn Action Plan (INAP), a step towards response to Women's and Children's Health. Globally Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) targets reducing newborn deaths and stillbirths.

Some of the development strategies and programs under INAP are the following:-

Facility-Based Newborn and Child Care:-

Infrastructure plays a pivotal role in eradicating neonatal mortality, which is one of the significant factors for infant mortality. For that modern diagnostic facility is required. For that, the Government built up a Special newborn care unit, newborn stabilization units and newborn baby corners in different clusters in each state and union territory. State policy regarding this program is versatile and spread into different categories. Each district has to build at least one SNCU.

Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs):- All the states and union territories are equid with SNCUs in each district. SNCU consists of a maximum of 20 beds where 4 trained medical practitioners and 12 nurses provide service every day.

Newborn Stabilization Units (NBSUs):- NBSUs are introduced at all the community health centres, and the First Referral Units contain 4 beds and trained medical practitioners and nurses.

Newborn Care Corners (NBCCs):- Single bed facility is attached to the labour room and operational theatre in public health institution for essential care of the

2. Navjat Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (NSSK):- NSSK is focused on training and managing health personnel for early diagnosis of Hypothermia, an infection of a newborn. This program facilitates the upgradation of health personnel precisely to control the mortality of newborns and children. This program is an upgrade for the low socioeconomic cluster because the family level can not have special treatment in multispeciality hospitals.

3. Infant and Young Child Feeding:- Feeding practices are a significant variable for child mortality that needs to be checked periodically to ensure better health outcomes. Low birth weight babies need ultimate care regarding feeding practice. From this intervention, Breastfeeding is promoted just after one

hour of delivery, and also, till 6 months, it is prescribed to continue.

4. Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre (NRC):- Malnutrition is a severe problem in India and most Southeast Asian countries. To deal with this menace, strong management is needed. Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is an integrated factor contributing to the most deaths in a state. We can observe this in Rural areas where the nutrition deficit is high. These centres provide guided nutrition counselling that benefits the low socioeconomic class.

5. Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP):- National Reproductive and child health programme in 1992 included immunization programs as their prime sector to endorse vaccination. The Government of India provides vaccines for various preventable diseases like Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, childhood Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis B.

6. Pulse Polio immunization:- Globally strong initiative was taken against Polio in 1988. The pulse polio Immunization programme was launched in 1995, and age groups from 0-5 were considered for immunization management. Two rounds every year, national and sub-national, have been organized, through which 172 million children have been immunized during each National Immunisation day.

POSHAN:- The Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition or POSHAN Abhiyaan or National Nutrition Mission is a programme launched by the Government Of India, an emblematic management program to improve the nutritional outcome of the country by providing special assistance to lactating mothers, pregnant women. The main objective is to reduce stunting, Anaemia and low birth weight in higher concentration regions. On the occasion of Women's day on 8 March 2018, the Hon'ble Prime minister launched this fantastic scheme. POSHAN Abhiyan directed to the malnutrition problem, which the country has been coping for a century.

The National Nutrition strategy provided by NITI Aayog in September 2017 furnished a microanalysis of the malnutrition problem and approved a multi-strategy program to eradicate it. The functioning and monitoring of the program are under NITI Aayog. They produce periodic evaluation reports to GOI for further interventions.

POSHAN Abhiyaan contains a four-point strategy for the mission, which are:-

Convergence of sectors for improved service delivery

Technology (ICT) monitors women's and children's growth in real-time.

For the first 1000 days, health and nutrition services will be enhanced.

Jan Andolan, which is the People movement, means the connections from the community level.

Table 1.2:- Interventions of the POSHAN Abhiyan program. (POSHAN Abhiyan - Ministry of Women and Child - ICDS." 17 June. Accessed 19 August 2021.) 2021, <https://icds-wcd.nic.in/nnm/home.htm>.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS FOR POSHAN ABHIYAN		
GIRL/ ADOLESCENT/ WOMAN	NEWBORN AND CHILD	WASH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care and education of the girl child. <i>Beti bachao, beti padhao</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New-born care:- Care at birth, hygiene, cord care. Breastfeeding: within one hour, exclusive for six months, continuing for two years or more. Extra care of a low birth weight baby. Kangaroo mother care Care of the sick and small neonates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search:- Sanitation-safe water hand washing, toilet use (mother) and safe disposal of faeces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adolescent girl care: food, micronutrients, healthcare, lifestyle, preparation as adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete immunization: Including rotavirus and pneumococcal Vaccines. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The right age for childbirth: Marriage after 18 years, childbirth after 20 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breastfeeding feeding up to 2 years and more 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-pregnancy care: Food micronutrients, contraception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complementary feeding: From 6 months onward, culturally appropriate recipes, hygiene, increasing amount, adequate nutrition. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Birth spacing: Gap between births more than 2-3 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth monitoring 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Antenatal care: Checks for complication detection, food, iron folic acid, tetanus immunization, birth preparedness, treatment of complications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care of the undernourished child 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric care: Facility birth, emergency obstetric care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care in severe acute malnutrition 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early stimulation and child development 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early detection and care of illness:- For diarrhoea (including ORS and zinc), pneumonia (including antibiotics and other illnesses). 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplements:- supplementary nutrition, iron folic acid 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deworming 	

Institutional births		
India states and Union territories		
	NFHS4	NFHS5
INDIA	78.9	88.6
CENTRAL ZONE		
<i>Madhya Pradesh</i>	80.8	90.7
<i>Chhattisgarh</i>	70.2	85.7
NORTH EAST ZONE		
<i>Arunachal Pradesh</i>	52.2	79.2
<i>Assam</i>	70.6	84.1
<i>Manipur</i>	69.1	79.9
<i>Meghalaya</i>	51.4	58.1
<i>Mizoram</i>	79.7	85.8
<i>Nagaland</i>	32.8	45.7
<i>Sikkim</i>	94.7	94.7
NORTH ZONE		
<i>Haryana</i>	80.4	94.9
<i>Himachal Pradesh</i>	76.4	88.2
<i>Punjab</i>	90.5	94.3
<i>Uttarakhand</i>	68.6	83.2
<i>Uttar Pradesh</i>	67.8	83.4
EAST ZONE		
<i>Bihar</i>	63.8	76.2

Institutional births		
<i>Jharkhand</i>	61.9	75.8
<i>Odisha</i>	85.3	92.2
<i>West Bengal</i>	75.2	91.7
WEST ZONE		
<i>Rajasthan</i>	80.4	94.9
<i>Goa</i>	96.9	99.7
<i>Gujarat</i>	88.5	94.3
<i>Maharashtra</i>	90.3	94.7
SOUTH ZONE		
<i>Andhra Pradesh</i>	91.5	96.5
<i>Karnataka</i>	94	97
<i>Kerala</i>	99.8	99.8
<i>Telangana</i>	91.5	97
<i>Tamil Nādu</i>	98.9	99.6
UNION TERRITORIES		
<i>Chandigarh</i>	91.6	96.9
<i>Delhi</i>	84.4	91.8
<i>Jammu And Kashmir</i>	85.5	92.4
<i>Dadra And Nagar Haveli AND Daman & Diu</i>	88.5	96.5
<i>Andaman and Nicobar</i>	96.4	99
<i>Lakshadweep</i>	99.3	99.6

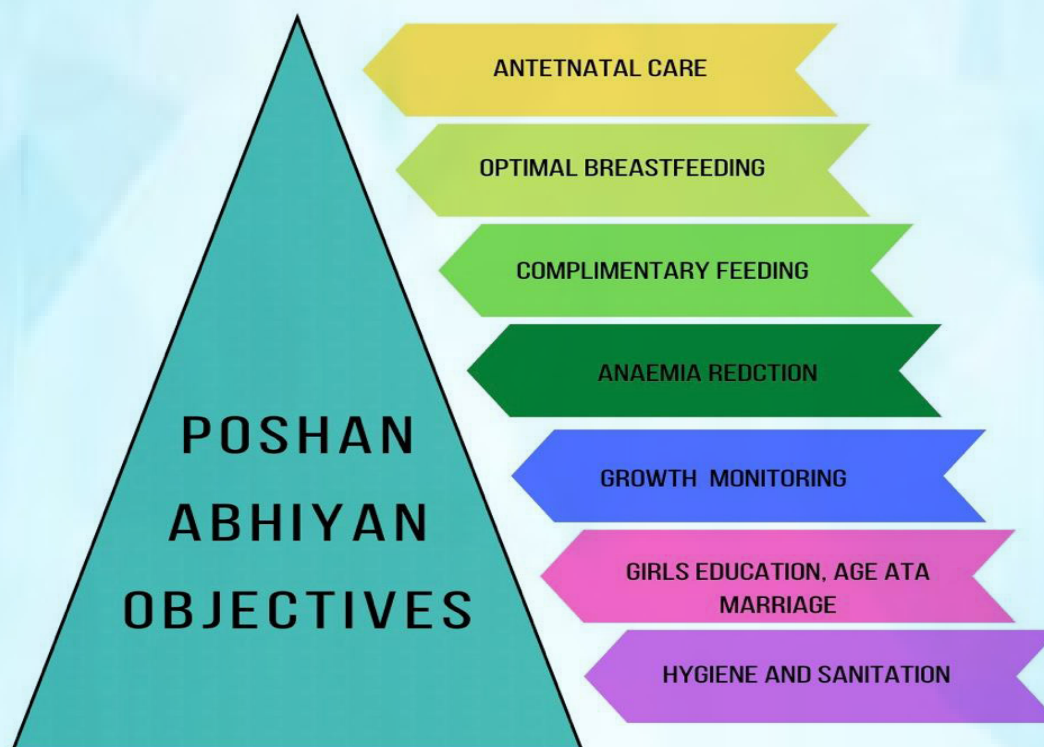


Fig 1. POSHAN Abhiyan and its major objectives. POSHAN Abhiyan - Ministry of Women and Child - ICDS." 17 June. Accessed 19 August 2021.) 2021, <https://icds-wcd.nic.in/nnm/home.htm>.



reflected the stochastic values if health parameters like JSY have improved the urban health condition, like in Goa which is 7%, whereas in Assam, where the rural population is more number which is 66%, and Odisha, which is 73%. Janani Sishu Suraksha Karyakram helped to achieve the target by declining the maternal mortality rate with childbirth. Such beneficiary schemes have helped the lower socioeconomic category of the population to opt for better medical facilities without facing financial distress. This aspect is indicated by the NFHS data provided in this paper, where the overall health factors have increased considerably upwards. Another essential element we can infer from the national statistics is the education stratum. We can conclude that if organizations provide better access to education, this will result in increased health awareness among the people, specifically the rural population.

Additional schemes and programs are also needed to craft to counter the obstacle in health sections. Digital India programs have benefitted and connected millions of citizens and remote areas. As India is a vast land with numerous follow-ups, schemes were a little resistive. Good testament towards Health can take our country to a new level of health opportunity for low socioeconomic levels. Following some years when road and digital connectivity increases drastically, which are helping to raise awareness among mother and child inevitably. The monetary assistance during pregnancy and post-delivery created an upsurge in statistical nodes. The decrease in the mother and child mortality rate signified the success rate. Modern medical facilities and educational awareness programs the Government also substitute gender discrimination. Gender discrimination was a huge factor regarding child mortality and morbidity in India. ASHA workers whose efforts toward eradicating mortality are immense not only this, but mothers and pregnant women are also equally benefited from the health workers. Access to health facilities for a low economic cluster population can lead to a progressive state of development.

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Empowerment of Women in India: Policies and Perspectives

Dr. Deepthi*

Abstract

Women who are half of the population enjoy fewer rights and face many problems not only in India but in the world as well. Women and men are two wheels of a cart but still women face discrimination in the male dominated society. Hence, Women Empowerment is the vision of any government all over the world because it is the symbol of progress of country. And it is the need of hour. The efforts from various governments through progressive policies and programmes are trying to provide them equal space in the society and get rid of their miserable life however these efforts are not enough to resolve their issues. This paper is trying to understand various policies to empower women and perspectives to eradicate discrimination against women. In this context, the paper addresses the issues of social status of women, inequalities and education.

Keywords: Empowerment, Women, Policies, Perspectives, discrimination, Education

Introduction

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said that “if you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family.”

Dr. Ambedkar rightly said, “I measure the progress of a community with the degree of progress women have achieved.” In a democratic country like India which works on the idea of equality and justice, every individual has equal rights and enjoy their freedom and get empowered. Women are the backbone of any country and development of the country depends on the quality of life of women and their participation in this process. Though they are half of the total population yet they are always considered inferior to men and most vulnerable in the society. In India, they are socially marginalised, economically backward and face low participation in politics. According to census 2011, total population of India is 1210.2 million in which 623.7 million are males and 586.5 million are females. The sex ratio of India is 940 females per 1000 males, that is lower than other South Asian countries like Myanmar (1048) and Sri Lanka (1032). The government

introduced many policies and programmes to improve their status and empower them but this empowerment process is very slow. There are two points to consider that these policies are not much adequate to increase their participation in country's progress and provide them equal status in the society. Secondly, though many programmes have been launched to empower women but there is gap between policies, programmes and its implementation. Women continue to suffer due to many problems like malnutrition, illiteracy, gender discrimination, violence against women etc. They face violence, discrimination not only outside homes but inside also. Although they are succeeding to achieve milestones but male dominated Indian society always tries to snub them. This fact is revealed by day to day crimes against women, not only in India but all over the world. UNO announced eight goals for millennium development in 2000 in which women empowerment is one of them. Indian Constitution gives many rights to every citizen equally. As well as centre and state government take many steps to empower women in India but could not gain trickledown effect and gender discrimination continued. And much concerning point is violence against women cannot stop till now. They are not feeling safe at any place. India is the fourth most dangerous country for women in the world according to a report given by Thomson Reuters in 2011 (Hindustan Times). The paper basically focuses to understand the various policies and perspective to eradicate the discrimination against women and ensure equity participation of women in every spheres of life. It will also identify the challenges that confront their empowerment in the society.

Social Status of Women

Empowerment means the capacity of individuals control of their circumstances, achieve their own goals. They are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008). Any society cannot become progressive until we eliminate disabilities and violation of rights of citizen. As mentioned above, the situation of women is worst therefore government itself

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wants to improve the condition of women and empower them by taking initiatives. It is well known fact that women are facing discrimination since centuries but it is also important to remember the initiatives taken by some social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayanand to improve the condition of women. In the post independent period, Dr. Ambedkar as a law minister took initiatives to give protection and empower them through 'Hindu Code Bill'. He introduced Hindu Code Bill to provide rights to women but after the refusal by then government, he resigned as law minister in the protection of bill.

In the 21st century, global era seeks development and progress of every human being with the approach of liberalization but women could not benefit from this approach. In India, women always live under male dominated and patriarchal society which believes that women are only for domestic work. Various programmes were initiated to empower women and the important one is National Mission for Empowerment of women (NMEW) was approved in 2012 during the 12th five years Plan. It is an initiative to protect, empower and development of women with the help of centre as well as states government. It cover many areas like health, nutrition, education, poverty, gender equality social empowerment and empowerment of all marginalise groups. However, women are succeeding to gain some progress due to their sheer hard work and also Constitution of India provide equal rights to every citizen of India but ground reality and condition of women laid stress to rethink and feel the pain of being a woman. Violence or crime against women cannot stop and they always have been a victim of violence for centuries. Traditionally they considered as grahani and perform domestic work. They live in worst conditions and crimes are increasing against them. Studies speak the truth and ground reality. Despite governmental efforts to provide them safe life and empowering them, many types of crimes enlist that are committed against women as they are face rape, murder, modesty, honour killing, kidnapping and abduction for specified purposes, domestic violence, dowry system that sometimes lead the deaths, mental and physical torture, assault on women, importation of girl from foreign country etc.

Crimes against women are broadly classified into two categories: physical and psychological. A survey conducted by ICRW revealed that 65% of Indian men believe that women should have tolerance power for violence only to keep the family together. The fact revealed in the questionnaire of the 'International Men and Gender Equality Survey' (IMAGES) that 24% of Indian men in their lives had committed sexual

violence. The 'National Crime Record Bureau' reports revealed that crime against women rose 313 per day in 2015 as compared to 237 per day in 2001. According to crime reports in 2011, rape committed 28,878 as against women and its range was in 2012, 31,116 percentage variation between 2012 and 2011 on rape related crimes in alarmingly as high as 8%. Visaria (2008) studies the domestic violence against women in India and argued that it is not a new phenomenon; they always become victim of violence. Even they themselves accept the rode behavior of their husband and justified it. They believe that their husbands are right even when they are beaten up. They have never complaint against their husbands. Moreover, educated women and women from well off do not talk anything against their husband. She also revealed that education cannot help them to get rid of violence. She used the term culture of silence for explaining the inner fear of women. Here the data reveals the truth itself.

Table -1

Proportion of crime against women

Sr. No.	Year	Crime Against women
1	2015	3,29,243
2	2016	3,38,954
3	2017	3,59,849
4	2018	3,78,236
5	2019	4,05,861

Source- Various reports by National Crime Record Bureau

Table-1 revealed the proportion of crime against women in India. It shows that crime cases against women are constantly increasing as per NCRB reports.

Table-2

Crime against women

Sr No	Crimes	Cases reported
1	Cruelty by husbands and relatives	9,09,713
2	Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	4,70,556
3	Kidnapping and abduction	3,15,074
4	rape	2,43,051
5	insult to modesty of women	1,04,151
6	dowry death	80,833

Source: Scroll. in Tuesday, March 6th 2018



Table -2 shows the types of crime against women and its number. As per NCB report, table revealed that the most committed crime against women by husbands and relatives. Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty is on second type, kidnapping, rape and insult are on number third, fourth and fifth respectably and least committed crime against women is dowry death in India that is always much highlighted in society.

Table-3

Top five leading states regarding crime against women in India

Sr. no	Name of the State	No of cases
1	Uttar Pradesh	59,853
2	Rajasthan	41,550
3	Maharashtra	37,144
4	West Bengal	30,394
5	Assam	30,025

Source: NCRB, 2019

Table-3 shows the most affected states in India on the bases of crime against women. As per NCRB, table revealed that Uttar Pradesh is the most unsafe state to living for women because of highest crime reports highlighted. Rajasthan is on second worst place, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Assam are number third, fourth and fifth respectively. In the Union Territories (UTs), Delhi is most affect and unsafe place for women in India.

In spite of various provisions and programs, the condition of women is not much improving. Mere policies cannot improve their condition or empower them, until the core problem is solved that is behaviors and attitude of the society towards them. And this attitude is developed in male domination. Further education can play important role in this process. Therefore second part discusses the educational status of women.

Educational Status of Women

The goal of women empowerment gets vital place in the Constitution of India. The most important way to achieve this goal is education. Many constitutional provisions and time to time formation of the policies are operational for achieving this goal. In education sector, National Policy on Education (NPE), Sarva

Shiksha Abhyan (SSA), Right to education (RTE), Mid-Day meal and awareness generation camps are most vital steps that have been taken for empowering minorities especially Women and Dalits. These policies launched to upliftment of women by providing them quality education, self occupation and safe and respectful life. The present the centre government lead by NDA launched a scheme that is called Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) (Save Girl Child, Educate Girl Child) on 22 January, 2015 on International Day of Girl Child. This scheme basically works on the agenda of gender equality to achieve the goal of welfare of girl child in India. Another scheme that is called *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana* (girl child prosperity scheme) also launched for helping the parents to save money for child' marriage. However, this scheme helps to prevent early child marriage yet the only impediment in their path that it is restricted for just two girl children. Not only centre government but state governments also take many initiatives for women empowerment on the basis of education and employment self sufficient. Scholarship schemes for girls, free education, financial help, technical training to start own occupation and organizing awareness camps are some important instruments in this regard. But the condition of women in India is far away from satisfactory results as per data revealed. As per the 2011 census, total literacy rate of India is 74.04% including 82.14% males and 65.46% females.

Table-4

Percentage of Literacy rate in India

Year	Literacy rate	Male	Female
1971	34.45	45.96	18.70
1981	43.57	56.38	29.85
1991	52.21	64.13	39.16
2001	64.83	75.26	53.7
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India

Table-4 revealed the percentage of literacy rate in India as per census reports. Despite the fact that literacy rate is increasing in India, but female literacy rate is always low as per male literacy rate as well as total literacy rate.

Table -5

Percentage of Literacy rate of women in India

Year	Literacy rate of women	Rural	Urban
1971	18.70	13.08	42.05
1981	29.85	17.96	47.82
1991	39.16	30.62	64.05
2001	53.7	46.58	72.99
2011	65.46	58.75	79.92

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table-5 revealed the percentage of Literacy rate of women in India. It revealed that women literacy rate in rural areas is low than urban areas as well as total literacy rate of women over the years.

Table-6

Average Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

School level	2015-2016 (%)	2018-2019 (%)
Elementary	96.9	91.64
secondary level	80	79.55
senior secondary	56.2	58.56

Source: <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-national-education-policy-2020-provides-multi-pronged-strategy-to-check-school-drop-out-rates/357769>

Table-6 revealed that average Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India. It compared the data from 2015-16 to 2018-19. In various school levels GER is decreasing.

Various studies (Sen, 2001) reveal that literacy rate is increasing but dropout rate is also increasing. The most alarming factor is dropout rate of the girl students is more than 70% as compared to boys. Importantly, this dropout rate starts after 8th standard. (Weiner, 1985) revealed that girls are likely to not attend schools at any age due to hesitation. Further, society based on orthodox ethos is the huddle in girls' education. Girls enjoy less freedom as compared to boys. It revealed the attitude of the society towards girls, norms of the society for girls to live a passive life, ready for marriage and help family in domestic work. These barriers affect their capabilities and suppressed their aspirations to live life independently. Many reasons of this decline are highlighted by ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India.

Table-7

Reason for not attending the school for girls

Sr. No.	Reason for not attending the school
1	School too far away
2	Transport not available
3	Education not considered necessary
4	Required for household work
5	Required for outside work for payment
6	No proper school facilities for girls
7	Required for case of siblings
8	Not interested in studies
9	Got married

Therefore panel of NPE has recommended the government to provide effective and sufficient infrastructure to school up to 12th standard at least (Outlook, 2020). Further studies also revealed that girl students face discrimination at both places in homes as well as in schools. In most of the cases especially in rural areas, home environment also create problems with regard to girls education as parents preferably interested to educate their sons as compared to their girl child. They are least interested to provide education to their daughters and spend less money on their education. They believe that girls are basically for domestic help and take care of their siblings and girls help their parents for earning sources like beedi making, candle making etc. Early marriage of girls is a tool to get relief from their burden. Moreover, parents emphasize the education and development of their sons because they believe that boys will protect us in old age especially they will perform last rituals of their life journey. Moreover, they earn income for family and also get dowry in marriage but if they educate their girls, it is beneficial for their in laws. So they spend less money on their daughters' education (Kingdon, 2005). Considering this fact, the governments provide free education to girls and provide them other benefits like scholarships, free books, uniforms to girls, laptop and bicycles etc.

Despite government policies, gender discrimination and educational inequalities is more visible in caste and religions. Many studies (Deshpande, 2008) argued that Dalit girls face discrimination in educational institutions. The dropout rate of Dalit girls is 80% up to 5th standard. Also in many countries Muslim girls are barred to get education. In India, they also face discrimination to get education. In the regards, Nobel Prize winner Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai's efforts are unforgettable who becomes an inspiration for girls to fight for their rights.



Concluding Remarks

“To be a woman in South Asia is to be a non-person,” In India; where violence against women is common thing, women empowerment is the need of the hour. Although government made policies to empower women and protect their rights but their condition is not much improved as they always feel the burden of being women at every place in and outside their home. Any society and country cannot be progressive until women face disabilities and painful life. One thing should be under consideration that every positive step or scheme can only be useful if it is implemented properly or delicately. It is everyone’s duty to change their attitude towards women, provide them space and empower them for progressive India.

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Ecotourism and Sustainable Livelihoods: A Review of Policies and Practices Surrounding Nature-based Tourism in India

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Abstract

Ecotourism has been lauded all over the world for its key focus on local development and biodiversity conservation. As a responsible form of tourism, ecotourism promises to strike a balance between biodiversity conservation and development and serve as an effective measure for empowering local communities around the world to fight against poverty and also promote sustainable development. The current study focuses on the impact of ecotourism in the protected areas of India on local communities that are mostly poor and marginalized. The study has been divided into two parts, i.e., an analysis of policies surrounding nature-based tourism and the impact of community development aspects of ecotourism on local communities in protected areas. Studies conducted between 1990 and 2020 focussing on various aspects of ecotourism such as socio-economic development of marginalized communities, alternative livelihood strategies for local communities, attitudes, and perceptions of local communities towards conservation, and ecotourism have been selected for the review. The policy analysis aims to identify shortcomings in the existing policy framework and provide suggestions for effective policy formulation to ensure a sustainable economic sector. The descriptive review of the studies concerning the community aspects of ecotourism brings forth the positive and negative impacts of ecotourism on local communities in protected areas and suggestive measures to improve the community outreach of ecotourism.

Keywords: Ecotourism, policies, sustainable development, India, communities.

Introduction

Environmental degradation and poverty are two related challenges in protected area management in the 21st century. Most of the world's protected areas are in developing countries as they are home to rich biodiversity and unique cultures (Naughton-Treves et al., 2005; Adenle, 2015). On a global scale, the land area under conservation has grown tremendously, i.e., from 1950 to 2013, the ratio of protected areas to the total land area increased from 2.55% to 13.40%, and 72% of this increase was reported in developing countries (Ma et al., 2019). These protected areas contribute to biodiversity conservation by preventing the use of these biodiversity-rich areas for industrial, agricultural, or residential purposes. Moreover, they tend to be situated in remote natural areas and rural regions where conservation efforts usually lead to local conflicts and disturbances. Biodiversity degradation, pollution, climate change and other aspects of ecological changes are not only environmental in nature but also social and economic. From an ecological perspective, both poverty and unsustainable patterns of resource uses are causing ecological degradation. At the same time, environmental degradation and climate change can drive people into poverty. Thus, poverty and environmental degradation are inextricably linked. Sustainable development is one such concept which was introduced in the 1970s during the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD), which opined for a rethinking of institutional mechanisms at different levels (global, local and national) to promote a form of economic development that could ensure the "well-being of the planet" (Pujar & Mishra, 2020). This

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chapter will focus on a manifestation of sustainable development, i.e., ecotourism, which has gained traction around the world as a “responsible” form of tourism that is almost environmentally benign and pro-poor. In 2013, the UN General Assembly passed a landmark resolution recognizing ecotourism as being pivotal in the fight against environmental protection, poverty, and promotion of sustainable development (Kala, 2013).

The travel and tourism industry is a significant player in the world economy and is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors contributing nearly 9 trillion dollars and also 319 million jobs to the global economy (Report on Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism, WTTC, 2018). Although tourism has existed for centuries, it received a significant boost after World War II and saw an increasing movement of people across different parts of the globe for recreation. The coming decades saw an unbridled growth of tourism and also witnessed its propensity to affect the natural and social environment of the visited areas in both positive and negative ways. In the 1980s, concerns about the detrimental effects of tourism came to the fore, and planners and researchers began to look for ways to mitigate the problems posed by mass tourism.

Ecotourism comes from the broader form of tourism known as alternative tourism, which developed in the 1980s as an answer to the numerous problems caused by mass tourism such as resource degradation, cultural commoditization, crime, and marginalization of poor local communities. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education” (Karst, 2017). Ecotourism has often been touted as a responsible form of tourism that focuses on the inclusion of local communities in the developmental processes. Major developing and developed economies around the world have embraced ecotourism and other forms of nature-based tourism as an excellent option for economic development and biodiversity conservation. Ecotourism has been especially successful over the decades as a responsible and environmentally successful tourism sector that can effectively fulfill conservation, sustainability, and economic development goals. One of the most crucial reasons contributing to the widespread popularity of ecotourism is its ability to provide a form of tourism that promises to be almost environmentally benign, and its potential to incorporate local culture and economy as being central to the tourism model. Ecotourism acts as an effective vehicle for empowering local communities around the world to fight against poverty and achieve

sustainable development by increasing local capacity building and employment opportunities.

The travel and tourism industry continues to maintain sustained growth with the movement of people and the generation of foreign and domestic revenues, which is often at the expense of degrading the social and ecological integrity of destinations. Although governments and tourism experts have shown increasing concern over such degradation, not much has been accomplished to stimulate policy development or reinvention of existing policies. Policy and planning are especially relevant to the ecotourism industry because of what this industry values, i.e., ethical management practices, importance to local communities, and biodiversity and natural heritage protection. There is an urgent need for improved industry organization because of a general absence of policy planning and the fact that ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors.

Ecotourism in India

Ecotourism in India began in the late 1990s with the Thenmala Ecotourism Project in Kerala and had witnessed immense growth in different parts of the country, with almost every state promoting some form of nature tourism. Ecotourism has had a hit-and-miss record of addressing several problems such as poverty, outmigration, alienation of local communities and unemployment, etc. While ecotourism has found some success by introducing alternative livelihood strategies in rural areas which were otherwise dependent on agriculture and manual labor, it has, more often than not, given rise to resource use conflicts, land alienation, unequal distribution of wealth, and erosion of cultures in the protected areas inhabited by poor and marginalized communities. From 2002 to 2008, nature-based tourism saw growth by about 15%, in India where 80% of all tourists consisted of domestic visitors (Karanth, 2012). From a socio-economic perspective, ecotourism has immense potential to ensure equitable distribution of resources, women empowerment, upliftment of marginalized communities, and promote sustainable development.

This paper aims to examine the performance of ecotourism in the upliftment of marginalized communities and review various policies and legislations surrounding nature-based tourism in India and their impact on the ecotourism industry with an objective to identify shortcomings and provide suggestions for effective policy formulation. Ecotourism can only flourish and assist in fulfilling the goals of sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and economic development

when it is supported by robust policy formulation which promotes responsible tourism practices.

Methodology

Despite a remarkable growth of ecotourism, India still lacks concrete and effective policies which can support and help sustain the ecotourism industry in India. Ecotourism is especially important for India as it has the necessary tools to address various problems posed by mass tourism such as resource conflicts, marginalization of local communities, erosion of local cultures, and outmigration and also promote responsible environmental behavior. The policy analysis has been conducted by acquiring policy documents from the central government and state government websites. In addition to these documents, policy reviews undertaken by academicians and NGOs' have also been collected using Google Scholar and JSTOR. Policies surrounding nature-based tourism have been examined using fundamental analysis to bring forth critical issues in these policies.

The study reviews the performance of ecotourism with respect to the development of poor and marginalized communities. The findings have been categorized according to ecotourism principles, i.e., minimization of benefits to local communities, environmental impacts, fund generation for conservation and local development, and environmental education. Using e-databases of scientific journals, various studies on community development and conservation aspects of ecotourism were shortlisted. The main databases accessed were Scopus, Google Scholar and Web of Science.

Policies surrounding nature-based tourism in India

As the global tourism industry continues to see a trend of sustainable growth with increasing movement of people and more generation of domestic and foreign revenues, it has more often than not achieved such change at the expense of the social and ecological integrity of the destination regions. As a response to such unbridled growth, tourism planners, particularly governments, have come up with various new approaches (for example, guidelines, certifications, and regulations) to ensure that local communities, the environment, tourists, and tourism businesses remain unaffected by the negative impacts of the industry. However, there has not been much progress to stimulate sound policy development or enforcement of policies currently in use (Fennell & Dowling, 2003). Policies are fundamental to

the ecotourism industry because of what this 'type' of tourism values and supports. The very nature of the ecotourism industry advocates an effective balance between conservation and development, benefits and costs, demand and supply, and people and the environment.

Tourism planning and its implementation should be based on sound ecological and socio-economic principles, failing which could be disastrous in the long run with some of the negative effects such as extinction of flora and fauna and the irreversible breakdown of social institutions. Unplanned and uncontrolled tourism can destroy the very resources on which it depends. Some of the negative impacts of unplanned tourism can be seen in various parts of India, such as worsening landscapes in Jammu, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh; serpentine traffic jams in Rohtang Pass, a mounting pile of horse dung in Lonavla, and a general biodiversity loss in several protected areas of the country. In general, there is an absence of a concrete policy, guidelines and regulations, which has resulted in ecotourism affecting local communities and biodiversity in India negatively.

There are a number of policies that have a direct and an indirect effect on ecotourism in India. Policies such as the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Forest Conservation Act, 1980, although not directly related to ecotourism, can shape the type of ecotourism in a protected area as they can regulate, hinder, or result in unchecked growth. At the central level, there is only one policy, "Ecotourism Policy and Guidelines, 1998," that has remained the same since its inception barring a few changes in the recent past. Many states in India have set up their ecotourism boards to develop policies and guidelines based on regional requirements and demands. Kerala, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Tamilnadu, and Maharashtra are some of the states pioneering ecotourism infrastructure in India. The south Indian state of Kerala is considered the model state for ecotourism due to its people-centric approach and a community-based model.

The following are some of the policies that indirectly impact ecotourism and its implementation in and around protected areas.

• Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

The Wildlife Protection Act 1972 is an umbrella act to protect flora and fauna. As a matter of national heritage, the Act called for tiger conservation in 1973 with the launch of "Project Tiger" which specially designated protected areas with a substantial population of tigers as tiger reserves. The tiger



reserve network in India has since then grown from 11 reserves in 1970s to 50 covering an area of almost 71000 km² (Project Tiger, 2018). These tiger reserves have been given a higher priority with enhanced protection measures and funding (Rangarajan, 2001). By opening up tourism, wildlife photography, onus on tiger conservation and scientific research in protected areas, the Act opened up a number of possibilities for the evolution of ecotourism in the future. In the present context, ecotourism is usually centred around tiger-based tourism.

• Forest Conservation Act, 1980

This Act was passed with a view to check deforestation and it barred the use of forest land for 'non-forest purposes'. This Act has the power to regulate ecotourism, however, because ecotourism is considered to be environmentally benign, it has become a stumbling block in the implementation of the Act.

• The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

The two important notifications under this Act that are closely linked with ecotourism development have been reviewed below, viz:

a) Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991- This Act focuses on the regulation of anthropogenic activities in coastal areas. However, over the course of 20 amendments to this notification have rendered many of its protective clauses meaningless and diluted.

b) Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006- Although this notification called for environmental clearance from state governments for the establishment or expansion of various projects, tourism projects are not included in the list unlike in the previous notification in 1994. Even more controversial is the 2020 amendment to EIA which has exempted almost 40 different projects from prior EC or EP. The new draft notification allows for post-facto approval for projects which waives off any environmental damage caused by the project as the violations get legitimised.

• Ecotourism Policy and Guidelines, 1998

The first national-level exclusive policy on ecotourism was introduced by the Government of India in 1998. It stressed on careful planning in ecotourism development such as estimation of physical and social carrying

capacity, cost-benefit analysis prior to implementation and highlighted the need for continuous monitoring (Banerjee, 2012; Cabral & Dhar, 2020). However, the policy seemed vague in highlighting social aspects of nature-based tourism in that it did not highlight the type of and level of involvement of local communities in ecotourism projects and they remained mere service providers to tourists. Despite showing a conservation bias, the policy lacked an action plan for continuous monitoring of projects or even environmental impacts.

Key Drawbacks of the policy:

- There is no conscious effort in the policy to balance conservation and development which is a key driving force behind ecotourism.
- The policy does not factor-in resource-use conflicts arising out of ecotourism development in protected areas and the need for their mitigation ensure sustainable use of resources.
- The policy is devoid of social cost-benefit analysis which side-lines local people.
- The policy ignores a key tenet of ecotourism i.e. maximising benefits to local communities. The policy has a non-participatory, top-down approach which is market-oriented and any benefit to local communities only seems incidental. Moreover, there are no measures to sensitize local communities with respect to the benefits arising out of conservation of resources and ecotourism development to elicit their active participation.
- The greatest weakness of the policies surrounding ecotourism development are that the guidelines are not legally binding which has resulted in rampant greenwashing.
- Along with a focus on the maintenance of ecological integrity, a way forward for ecotourism policies should be to come up with provisions conducive to establishing a synergistic relationship between various stakeholders- particularly government agencies, private entities and local peoples to ensure a sustainable tourism model. Legislations should place an equal emphasis on local community development in aspects such as capacity building, promotion of local culture and economy and recognition of local communities as equal stakeholders in ecotourism planning and management.

Table 1: Key highlights of ecotourism policies in India

No.	Policy	State	Key Highlights
1.	Ecotourism in India: Policy and Guidelines 1998	National Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified key stakeholders in ecotourism planning and management. The approach of the policy shows a clear conservation bias. The role of local communities is not clearly identified.
2.	Policy for Ecotourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas, 2018	National Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of TIES definition of ecotourism. Does not reflect a balance between conservation and development. Local communities are confined to being service providers. Suggests a benefit-sharing mechanism for stakeholders.
3.	Karnataka	Karnataka Tourism Policy 2020-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No distinction between ecotourism, nature tourism and wildlife tourism. Public sector has a monopolized access to forest areas (JLR). Stresses on involvement of local communities but overlooks the extent of their involvement. Development of ecotourism circuits.
4.	Kerala	Participatory Forest Management Guidelines 2006 Kerala Tourism Policy 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Called for promotion of non-invasive ecotourism in forest areas. Thrust for village-level PFM institutions. Set benefit-sharing mechanism. Red-tapism. Active involvement for local self-governments. Strong community focus. No mechanism for regulation of tourists to PAs.
5.	Madhya Pradesh	Ecotourism Policy as per MP State Forest Policy 2005 MP State Tourism Policy 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls for ecotourism management plans prior to the development of ecotourism. Prioritizes income generated from tourism activities to be allocated for further development and conservation. Creation of State Ecotourism Development Board. Push for private sector investment in ecotourism. More private investment and PPP in ecotourism.
6.	Odisha	Odisha Forest Sector Ecotourism Policy 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of local communities in planning and management not clearly defined. Ecotourism operations are viewed from a viable business standpoint which diminishes the balance between conservation and development.
7.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Ecotourism Policy Guidelines for Andaman & Nicobar Islands, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls for the development of an Ecotourism Certification Programme. Provision for ploughing back tourism revenues for ecotourism management.
8.	Sikkim	Sikkim Ecotourism Policy, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of ecotourism on the basis of Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC). Increased focus on community-based ecotourism. Formation of Ecotourism Directorate to oversee planning and development, financing, and monitoring, evaluation and research.
9.	Tamil Nadu	Tamil Nadu Ecotourism Policy 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic evaluation of the Ecotourism Policy. Use of SWOT analysis for formulating ecotourism management plans.
10.	Himachal Pradesh	Himachal Pradesh Ecotourism Policy 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy does not address the problem of excessive litter in tourist spots. Lacks a clear methodology on designing tourist experiences which can contribute to local communities' incomes. Lack of synergy between stakeholders.

Source: Author's compilation



Ecotourism Practices and the Impact on the Poor

The Indian government has been promoting ecotourism as an effective tool for ensuring responsible tourism practices, biodiversity conservation, and also socio-economic development of the poor. However, ecotourism practices in India have generally fallen short of its conservation and development goals owing to a weak policy infrastructure and a lackadaisical implementation of existing tourism policies. This section comprises of a review of ecotourism practices in different national parks of India with a special focus on the development of the poor and marginalised. The findings of the review have been categorised according to the important principles of ecotourism i.e., benefits to local people, minimization of environmental impacts, environmental education, and fund generation for conservation and local development.

Minimization of Environmental Impacts

The Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA), 1972 launched “Project Tiger” which was one of the earliest steps taken by the Indian government to step up its biodiversity conservation efforts. “Project Tiger” designated protected areas having a substantial number of tiger population as tiger reserves and accorded a high level of protection to these reserves (Rangarajan, 2001). These reserves practiced a ‘fortress conservation’ approach where conservation was given the utmost importance. Though this approach resulted in a remarkable recovery of the big cat species, it did so at the cost of poor, marginalised communities living in these protected areas. The project resulted in a large-scale involuntary migration of forest-dwelling communities to the fringes of the protected areas (e.g. Rajiv Gandhi National Park, Karnataka and Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan). According to a response by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to a Right to Information (RTI) Act query, a total 18,493 families inhabiting 215 villages across various protected areas in India were displaced in the 48 years following the launch of “Project Tiger” (Kukreti, 2020). Also, in the long run, population explosion, mining activities, conflicts arising out of resource use patterns gradually offset the remarkable progress in conservation through the fortress conservation approach.

In order to overcome the displacement of marginalized communities due to conservation activities, the Government of India along with World Environment Facility and the World Bank introduced

a new Integrated Conservation and Development Programme (ICDP) called the India Eco-Development Project (IEDP) in the mid-1990s (Banerjee, 2012). Periyar Tiger Reserve was one of the seven chosen protected areas under the project which introduced community-based ecotourism (CBET). This initiative witnessed the successful rehabilitation of tribal communities through a slew of remedial measures such as rehabilitation of illegal cinnamon bark poachers and smugglers and also ensured biodiversity conservation through the provision of alternative livelihoods to marginalized communities which in turn minimized their dependence on forest resources (Thampi, 2005).

A shortcoming of ecotourism with respect to conservation and development is that policy makers have largely ignored the significance of tribal communities in these aspects. Tribal communities are considered to be the original inhabitants of vast forest lands in India and are the custodians of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) passed down from generations of forest-dwelling ancestors. In recent times, tribal communities have come to be seen as a stumbling block in the conservation and development processes and have been alienated from their traditional homelands. Planners and policy makers have also remained oblivious to the immense potential possessed by tribals in aiding biodiversity conservation which has given rise to the unfair assumption that tribal communities are at the prime reason of exploitation and environmental degradation (Gadgil & Guha, 1993). This view is reflected in the policies surrounding ecotourism which hardly have any mention of such immense conservation potential possessed by tribal communities. For example, Ramchurjee (2013) explored the impact of ecotourism in Rajiv Gandhi National Park in Karnataka and outlined that the forest department has mostly overlooked the role of tribal communities in management of forest resources on the pretext that the mere presence of tribals in protected areas is harmful for the biodiversity. Similarly, state authorities in Rajasthan held tribal communities responsible for the local extinction of the big cat population in Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR) between 2003-04. Between 2005 and 2020, 135 families which housed more than 15,000 families have been displaced from STR. Such conflicts between local communities and state authorities are evident in many protected areas of India such as Rajaji Tiger Reserve (RTR) and Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve (NBR) in Uttarakhand and Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in Tamil Nadu (Kukreti, 2020). From the above mentioned studies, it is evident that traditional “fortress approaches” which relied on the exclusion of local, marginalized communities need to be replaced by ICDPs which give importance to local communities

by taking care of their socio-economic needs within the protected areas and beyond their limits (Nepal & Weber, 1995; Singh & Singh, 2004). This is especially important for both biodiversity conservation and inclusive development and there are examples of success stories across the world such as Annapurna (Nepal), Bosoca (Costa Rica), Sian Ka'an (Mexico), and Zimbabwe which have relied on local participation that provided 'information' and 'traditional ecological knowledge' which increased the effectiveness of these projects.

• Benefits to Local Communities

Ecotourism's principle of fostering socio-economic benefits for local communities while ensuring biodiversity conservation can be cited as the main reason behind the growing popularity of ecotourism over the decades (Scheyvens, 1999). Providing benefits to local communities situated in ecotourism sites is an important aspect of ecotourism and can be considered as the cardinal principle determining the success or failure of ecotourism in protected areas (Vinodan & Manalel, 2018). Generally, ecotourism occurs in and around national parks and sanctuaries where there is a general lack of infrastructure, limited employment opportunities and illiteracy (Tao & Wall, 2009). If local communities are excluded from ecotourism or any other developmental activity, it usually leads to conflicts between local communities and state agencies (Dandapath & Mondal, 2013). Thus, ecotourism seeks to overcome these problems stated above by introducing a responsible and sustainable economic activity which provides a harmonious balance between social empowerment and conservation (Arjunan et al., 2006). Positive spin-off effects of ecotourism on local communities in general and women in particular have been reported in several studies, e.g. Das & Hussain (2016) observed that ecotourism had a positive impact on the local economy in Kaziranga National Park (KNP) in Assam and outcompeted agriculture. De (2013) revealed that ecotourism resulted in an increased participation of tribal women in ecotourism and conservation-related livelihood activities and benefitted more from the growth of tourism in North-East India. Another positive example can be cited from PTR in Kerala where tribal communities showcased their culture via tribal museums and scripted dances and were engaged in ecotourism activities such as tour guides, eco-development committee members etc. (Sebastian & Rajagopalan, 2009).

Several studies have revealed that in India, the CBET model has been very successful in eliciting the participation of local communities and ensuring social

empowerment by providing increased employment opportunities, alternative livelihood strategies, equitable benefit sharing mechanisms etc (Banerjee, 2012; Kala, 2013; Bhalla et al., 2016). A study conducted by Das & Chatterjee (2015) revealed that only an effective balance between local development and resource conservation would ensure an inclusive ecotourism approach, one which is socio-economically effective and sustainable. However, a study conducted by Sinha et al., (2012) found that there was an unequal distribution of benefits which were derived from ecotourism in Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR). The authors further found that only a few influential and rich pocketed maximum benefits while the poor, marginalized communities who mostly belonged to tribal communities were bereft of gainful employment and economic benefits of ecotourism. Although the tiger reserve has seen increasing number of tourist visits and a regular flow of revenue, it also presents a social crisis of inequitable sharing of economic benefits with tribal communities. This shortcoming was attributed to a lack of capacity and assertion in local self-governance.

The above mentioned studies reveal that the participation of local communities as equal stakeholders in ecotourism management is crucial for its success. Local communities should represent all groups of people and not just the rich and influential. However, due to the lack of robust ecotourism policies at the central and state levels, ecotourism has become ineffective in ensuring conservation and social empowerment.

• Environmental Education

A study conducted by Cobbinah (2015) found that increasing the knowledge of environmental conservation among local communities could have the scope to elicit their support for biodiversity conservation. While many protected areas generate environmental awareness among visitors using a variety of interpretive media, only a few ecotourism facilities in some tiger reserves across India routinely organize training programmes, awareness programmes, workshops for local, marginalized communities to help them assert their voices as stakeholders in ecotourism planning and management processes (Bhalla et al., 2016). Although, tribal communities live in one of the most resource rich areas of the country with mineral deposits and diverse flora and fauna, they are mostly confined to being service providers in tourism without having any representation in the decision making processes in ecotourism management (Banerjee, 2012).

There is an urgent need to generate environmental awareness among marginalized communities living in and around protected areas which



will help in garnering their support for conservation, increase their knowledge of their rich surroundings and also ensure a responsible form of development.

• **Generation of Funds for Local Development and Conservation**

Owing to an outdated and ineffective national-level policy on ecotourism, many facilities have been indulging in “greenwashing” and unsustainable tourism practices. Greenwashing implies the use of marketing to portray products, activities or policies as environmentally friendly when, in fact, they are not. This is especially harmful for the development of marginalized communities in tourism sites as such facilities would merely exploit locals and harm the local resource base while causing revenue leakages. None of the ecotourism policies at the national and state level offer a benefit sharing formula or mechanism for equitable distribution of economic benefits. These policies consist of guidelines without any legal ramifications and businesses can follow the guidelines at their discretion.

Many of the reviewed studies pointed revenue leakages brought about by private tourism establishments in PAs, with no interest in local development (Sinha et al., 2012; Bhalla et al., 2016; Ghosh & Ghosh, 2019). Despite such shortcomings, many PAs in India have some or the other form of benefit-sharing mechanisms for conservation and local development such as PTR, and Dhanolti Ecopark and Kumaon region in Uttarakhand. Eco-development committees in PTR are incentivised for introducing various initiatives such as river rafting, hiking, tribal museums, and jungle inns. These Eco-development committees are mostly comprised of local communities, mostly tribals and other marginalized people. Despite a few successes in several PAs, local communities have largely been ignored and their development has taken a backseat while tourism development and revenue generation is given higher importance. There seems to be a clear-cut monetary and conservation bias in ecotourism where any benefits to the marginalized poor is merely incidental.

Research Gap

The following research gaps have been identified on the basis of a review of ecotourism policies and a review of studies conducted in the Indian context.

- There is a dearth of studies focussing on conflict issues surrounding resource use and non-representation of local, marginalized communities

in tourism. Marginalized communities are seldom involved in ecotourism planning and management as equal stakeholders. Future studies should focus on such issues to ensure equitable distribution of economic benefits and increase the participation of marginalized communities in ecotourism planning and management.

- Policies surrounding nature-based tourism have a clear-cut monetary and conservation bias. There needs to be a greater focus on the social development aspects of ecotourism at the policy level as well in order to create a responsible and sustainable ecotourism infrastructure.
- Future studies need to explore further ways of inclusion of marginalized communities in planning and management processes which will result in a transition of the ecotourism industry from a monetary and profit-driven sector to a responsible and inclusive one.

Conclusion

Ecotourism is gaining increasing popularity which is evident from its growth, both domestically and internationally in the last few decades. The present paper seeks to review policies and practices surrounding nature-based tourism in order to bring forth critical issues in the industry and also hurdles in the transformation of the poor and marginalized by establishing responsible tourism infrastructure. A concrete policy, replete with regulations, and guidelines are lacking in India, which has led ecotourism to negatively impact biodiversity and the lives of local communities negatively. The approach towards ecotourism, as outlined in these policies, show a clear-cut conservation and monetary bias. Several articles on ecotourism have highlighted the gaps in policies which have exacerbated several problems such as low employment potential of the industry, alienation of tribal communities, revenue leakage, greenwashing and inequitable distribution of economic benefits. There are certain limitations to this study that require the attention of future research. First, the studies selected for the review of ecotourism practices were classified according to the socio-economic and environmental impacts due to ecotourism in India. However, there are various other aspects that future research needs to focus on such as political and legal areas. Second, there is scant data with respect to marginalized communities and their involvement in the ecotourism sector in India. For example, there are no public records of rehabilitated families from protected areas, rehabilitation measures undertaken by the government and NGOs. If such data is available to researchers, future research can

explore various issues surrounding marginalized communities and their representation in conservation and development activities.

These drawbacks mentioned in the above paragraph with respect to the ecotourism sector in India can be overcome by following the ambitious goals of ecotourism to the letter and appropriate policy support. The development of a sustainable form of ecotourism can have a positive effect in fulfilling SDGs. By creating jobs at a grassroots level and supplementing rural incomes, ecotourism can prove crucial in reducing poverty and hunger and promote clean and affordable energy and potable water, quality education, economic growth, gender equality, and foster general well-being. Due to the integrated nature of SDGs, ecotourism has the ability to assist both directly and indirectly in fulfilling all 17 goals by promoting sustainable tourism activities and practices which curtail the footprint of tourism and usher in development that creates a balance between economic, social, and environmental sustainability, thus bringing about a positive change.

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Equality is only Possible through Education

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Abstract

Equality can only be achieved through education and that doesn't mean something concise to a particular number of pages of books. Gurukul system strongly believes in this but on the other side, books and pens have been the only hope in times of Renaissance which also shows the improvisations education has gone through. Equality was the biggest sword which education has acuminated. Education has been fuelled by equality that leads to adequate opportunities for the needy and every person becomes self-dependent through education. The beautiful process of education makes a person a resourceful asset for the nation, which in times of need, will prove to be beneficial in its growth and development (invention, increase in economy, etc). Education is the most powerful medium through which every individual is made aware of their rights and duties; it develops the ability to take right and wrong decisions, thus helps in its all over development. The Government policies should be transformed in such a way that everyone gets equal opportunity. In this way this paper is relevant in today's society demonstrating the need for changes in the policies of education, considering the shifts in educational philosophy, impending difficulties, and a variety of other factors. The presented article mentions the importance of equality through education, its impact in education policies.

Keywords: Education, Equality, Government Policies, academic performance, opportunities.

Introduction

“All human beings are created equal”

Society owes it to all children to provide them with the educational opportunities and training necessary to grow up to be morally responsible members of society. Additionally, society as a whole would benefit from this because some children not receiving a solid education would be a societal waste. It suggests that people are not encouraged to develop their abilities,

which may benefit society. Of entirely things in the world, knowledge is something one cannot buy but can possess with sheer will and dedication to learn. Education isn't comprised of bookish knowledge which, for now, has become quite the benchmark for a growing individual but it is, rather an equal proportion of all the humanly behavior comprising of values, ethics, and morals. With increasing experience in the world, education has been recognized as an effective means of liberation, equality, and justice, teachers, thinkers, experimenters, policymakers, implementing agencies, and society at large have been concerned for centuries for reforms in the field of education. It is said that education is the science of liberation. Education is free from all kinds of constraints; it is not just a set of skills and abilities of skills. It is not only a much larger area than functional literacy alone but it is also a science to build man and society, which itself depends on the worldview of education as well as the perspective and idea of social progress.

Through our conscience, we know that education has no age limit or any criteria like what we have made for the schooling process. Education comes with experiences and observations which are just another couple of branches of this huge, everlasting tree. As everything in this mortal world is somehow interconnected, interdependent to each other, no matter how blurred the roots are. On the contrary, education is directly and more fiercely inter-connected to equality, one can say both are siblings, one grows with the other, and with time, they make each other strong as a mountain. As mentioned above, education and equality are interconnected and interdependent. For which, the history itself is the only proof we need to look up to. Taking reference from the 14th century, Renaissance stands its ground for both, education and equality. Renaissance; as per *Thetcher* (Khurana, et al., 2019) “The Renaissance had taught the importance of the individual, had urged the need of criticism and inquiry and weakened the respect for long-established authority.” The need for criticism and inquiry comes

to an individual only when they have the educational background that is needed for the same and education only comes when equality flourishes among the general mass. These things blossomed with the invention of the printing press (Gutenberg et al., 1440).

The father of the Indian constitution ' Late Dr. B.R Ambedkar ' : When India was going through the curse of inequality, the latter, with the mighty weapon of knowledge and education, lead the people to fight against inequalities and at last, managed to get over it with certain crucial ways (reservations). The study of fairness, justice, and impartiality in education is known as educational equality. These outcomes guarantee that each person's educational demands are addressed. The ideals of fairness in the distribution of resources, opportunity, treatment, and achievement for each and every student serve as the foundation for educational equality. Equality doesn't only mean to have equal opportunities but, from a broader yet concise perspective, it means to have a common eye for all, irrespective of the gender, caste, color, or creed that they possess. Equality can only blossom when it's been watered by education and education can only be useful, when there are equal opportunities and equal opportunities will only come through a sense of responsibility which is a bi-product of education. Different definitions of educational equality have come under fire since it appears that they only pay attention to one or a select few aspects of the equality idea. (Campbell and Klein et al.,1982). They argue in the way that "the meaning of equality cannot be limited to having admittance to education, methods used in education or outcome of the education process." Beyond providing educational assistance to the most disadvantaged, equal educational opportunity produces results. It entails providing people with the chance to maximize their skill development. (Genç & Eryaman et al., 2006).

True equality entails that variations in academic performance are not the product of disparities in money, wealth, authority, or possessions. The relevance of this concept is that each child's education shouldn't be based on the money and educational attainment of his or her family. This implies that a child's failure in school is not due to their lack of resources or opportunity for achievement relative to their classmates. Additionally, this implies that a child's socioeconomic, ethnic, or geographic background has no bearing on the type of education they need to get. In terms of what they require to achieve any desired level of accomplishment, students differ from one another. Due to their social disadvantage or specialized educational requirements, some pupils may have different fundamental needs than others. Simply said, nothing should ever prevent

a youngster from having the chance to follow their interests and skills. Everyone should receive education at the same level.

If pupils are receiving the same opportunity depends on a variety of factors. There may be certain resource disparities (textbooks, qualified teachers), especially those that are related to socioeconomic class. The question of whether a student has equal access—which refers to fairness in opportunity and typically pertains to physical or legal barriers—is another viewpoint. Every student is guaranteed equal access to all aspects of the educational process, including learning materials, learning facilities (classrooms and labs, schools), and extracurricular and curricular programmers. As a result, each kid will have access to the same tools, opportunities, and treatment, leading to equitable educational chances. Schools and universities choose, categorizes, and stratify students all around the world using a hierarchically structured procedure. They not only exert influence over pupils during this process, but they also place them in positions of relative strength and weakness.

Free and Mandatory Education:-

Mahatma Gandhi and his idea of education

The need for compulsory and free education was underlined by Gandhi ji in 1937 itself. He believed that education should be compulsory and free. He wanted the state to take responsibility for the education of children aged 7 to 14 (Harijan et al.,1937), but when he was under house arrest at the Aga Khan Palace during the Quit India Movement of 1942, he pursued lifelong education considered.

Following were considered:-

1. Pre-Basic Education for children below 7 years of age
2. Basic education for ages 7 to 14
3. Answer Basic Education for more than 14 years
4. Adult education for older men and women (Suman et al., 1968).

The free and mandatory primary education of children in the modern world at their school-going age (below the age of 14) predates the history of human development for almost a century and a half. The issue was an initial raised in Great Britain with the "Foster Education Act" in 1870, by which the state assumed liability for primary education and made school attendance compulsory until the age of ten in 1880.



By 1918 Secondary education was not clearly defined as the responsibility of the state. About 100 of the 198 countries in the world have democratic governments. The passage of the Right to Education Act, India joined the group of 130 countries Constitutional provision for free and non-discriminatory education for all in 135 countries, according to UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report 2010 of Education for All This was also mentioned in the 2005 World Bank survey, which stated that only 13 countries provide completely free primary education.

There are seven countries, namely Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Norway, in which children have the provision of free mandatory education for their entire schooling period. The demand for universal education was raised during the British colonial rule and envisaged in the Constitution of independent India (Article 45), which reads: The State shall make every effort to provide every child with free and compulsory education until they turn 14 within 10 years of the Constitution's inception. The Central Government, after the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1975, included it in the "Concurrent List". It was used to promote primary education in a legal case against. Arrange for free and mandatory education to the children, as the State may, by law, prescribe "India has adopted the mandate of providing free and compulsory education to children in age group of 6 to 14 years to achieve rapid inclusive growth." Rights Act (RTI) 2009' enacted. Through this Act, it has been made mandatory for the states to implement it with effect from April 2010.

Quality Education for all

Education for all and quality education have been the concern of intellectuals, policymakers, and social activists across the world. Much progress has been made since independence in terms of the education system and outcomes, quantity, and quality. The question that begins is what is the quality of education? And what do we want to achieve through quality education? Is functional literacy a means of providing skills, employment, and income for poverty alleviation? Various initiatives have been taken to ensure quality education for all through various schemes and programs like National Policy for Education, 1968, 1996, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mid-Day Meal, Right to Education Act. Initiatives like Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, National Higher Education Campaign, etc. are also important. However, their implementation has been a serious challenge. As a consequence, although the

nation has made great strides in both the quantity and quality of education, there is still a long way to go before it reaches its objective. (Diwakar et al., (2017).

Inequalities in education that are supported by economic disparities and resource equity

In two separate ways, education is tightly linked with the economic structures of society. On the one hand, having the financial means to take full advantage of the opportunities that education presents is a prerequisite for both having access to and successfully participating in education. As significant institutions of selection and stratification for the labor market, schools and colleges mediate options for life within the economy. Education is such a strong predictor of life chances due to the importance of economic resource distribution in influencing educational quality that it is impossible to discern between economic and educational equality. Economically induced inequality in capitalist nations mostly takes the form of a social class issue in the educational system, a problem of unequal access, contribution, and outcome brought on by unequal access to resources. (Ball et al.,2004).

The inability of students from low-income (typically working class) backgrounds to compete on an equal footing with other classes for educational benefits, and consequently for the benefits and privileges that accrue from education, is the primary cause of the lower rates of attainment among these students. Their educational marginalization is monetarily driven, despite the fact that it may later materialize in cultural and political ways. (Fischer et al., 1996).

Recognition of equality and diversity in education

Lack of respect and acknowledgment is one of the major educational inequities that many individuals encounter. Age, sexual orientation, religious views, handicap, language, gender, class, race, and ethnicity status-related inequities need to start being addressed through status-related activities. They are crucial not just for their own sake, but also because failing to take into account disparities across schools and colleges can lead to resource imbalances...(Connellet al., 1993).

Cultural outcasts are labelled as "other" and are viewed as a status group that is irrelevant and inferior. They are victims of a specific form of cultural imperialism that makes them either invisible or, if

they are visible, makes them vulnerable to negative stereotypes or misidentification. (Lynch and Lodge et al., 2002). Negative stereotypes present lower populations as 'native,' naive, aberrant, inferior, or menacing. They therefore justify their disregard, contempt, and hatred. Members of oppressed groups have their lives viewed via the dominant group's lens, which is referred to as "common," since dominating groups' values, views, and life-worlds pervade institutional and cultural standards. (Harding et al., 2003)

Class, sexuality, and silence are all treated with devaluation

One of the most frequent instances of non-recognition in academia is when a group is left out of the conversation because it is not well-known or named. When a group is named on rare times or exceptional occasions, it is only done so to depreciate them. This type of non-recognition is frequently coupled by an underlying devaluation or condemnation. According to the actual data we have, many other nations' educational policy and practice are assumed to be heterosexual. As a result, the transgender or bisexual group encounters severe types of non-recognition in schools. (Cole et al., 2000; Harris et al., 1990). They must 'pass' as heterosexual and endure the psychological and interpersonal anguish that comes with maintaining a deception they don't want to live with. They are frequently the targets of homophobic taunts and jeers. (Mason and Palmer 1995). Teachers who identify as transgender or bisexual are likewise impacted by the stigma surrounding sexual orientation and are compelled to hide or deny their own experiences. (Gowran et al., 2000). While there is place for lesbian studies in higher education, either within current programmers or as independent courses, education often continues as if lesbians or transgendered individuals are incidental to its fundamental mission. (Epstein, O'Flynn, and Telford et al., 2003).

The unwillingness to acknowledge the reality of socioeconomic class is another silence that is common of many educational environments. Schools are frequently referendums that are essentially middle-constitutions in terms of culture. (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody et al., 2001). They operate under the assumption that middle-class and upper-class people have access to the same resources. Outside this framework, parents and pupils are differently characterized as lacking in middle-class culture. Students are expected to possess class-specific abilities that are not provided by the institutions themselves. (Bourdieu and Passeron et al., 1977). Pupils from various social classes experience scholastic failure

and a sense of alienation from the educational process as a whole when schools fail to recognize the cultural mismatch between their mores and practices and those of those students. (Archer et al., 2002).

There is a severe absence of rigorous instruction concerning social class, which serves to further worsen the actually stratified ethos of institutions and, particularly, universities. In essence, there isn't a social class-related programmer in the majority of countries. Some European nations offer formal education of social and political institutions and processes, such as the human rights education curriculum in Ireland's fairly brief civic, social, and political education (CSPE) course. But neither of these has a clear mandate to educate about social class. The processes of education are impacted in a number of indirect ways by the failure to recognize social class disparities. It shows little care for how kids and instructors feel about class disparity. When concerns arise, there is no non-stigmatized terminology for class inequalities. Both students and teachers fall back on the clichés of so-called common sense, frequently personalizing blame for performance inequalities that are primarily structurally determined. They lack an analytical vocabulary to identify category-based differences, allowing them to go unnamed for a longer period of time. (Lynch and Lodge et al., 2002).

Segregation

Institutional responses to managing educational inequalities have frequently included segregation. The extent of residential segregation, selection practices, and parental preferences vary historically and culturally for different socioeconomic groupings, and it frequently happens covertly. However, most countries use overt forms of educational segregation, particularly for children and persons with impairments. (Ballard et al., 1999). People with disabilities have reportedly received non-standard, lower-quality education as a result of their segregation into different schools. Long-term consequences have been overwhelmingly severe, leading to lower educational requirements, less work prospects, a lack of career choice, poorer income, and increased unemployment. (Barton et al., 1996).

Mostly applicable to the equality of education, The act of segregation known as appreciation and recognition stops persons of various religions, cultures, abilities, beliefs, or genders from casually learning about one another's distinctions. Segregation itself is anti-education because it deepens the ignorance of differences which are already present in the society.



Emotional equality in education

Education is a form of human services that relies on communication between students and teachers as well as between students and their fellow classmates. Education includes emotional effort, like other human service activity. (Hargreaves et al., 2000). Effective instructors encourage their pupils to learn in their own ways. They inspire and enthuse their pupils by being motivated and passionate about the things they teach. In addition to being essential to the practice of teaching and learning, poignant work is also crucial to the field of human services as a whole. Students participate in education not just academically, but also emotionally. Without allowing the vocabulary of emotions to enter educational discourse in a positive way, the feelings of failure, purposelessness, incapacity, and loneliness that many kids experience in schools cannot be addressed. Education and emotional guidance are necessary to uphold a child's rights. (Epp & Watkinson et al., 1996).

For students and instructors to be able to talk about their feelings and worries, it is crucial to have an understanding of the inherent role that emotions play in the teaching and learning process. It is essential to create educational opportunities that will allow pupils to cultivate their emotionally driven personal intelligence as a distinct domain of human potential. This subject matter plays a crucial role in educating pupils and training them for caring, love, solidarity, etc. However, it may also play a significant part in improving the quality of education for all parties involved. (Lynch and Baker et al., 2004).

Indian Government Policies for the betterment of Education:-

The National Policy on Education (NPE)

Firstly Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the NPE to the Indian government in 1968, and secondly

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi first established the NPE in 1986, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi most recently declared it for the year 2020. India's newest educational system is described in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Indian Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020. This strategy provides a thorough framework for education from pre-kindergarten through higher education, as well as for vocational training in both urban and rural India. The literacy rate has been increased from 18.33% in 1951 to 77.7% in 2020. Thus it can be said that the day is not far when everyone will be educated. The aim of this particular policy aids India's education system by

2040. The governments, schools, and institutions are in charge of deciding how to implement the language policy in the NEP, which is a much broader guideline and advisory in nature.

India's education system is one of the topics in the concurrent list:

- As a basic right, all children between the ages of six and fourteen are entitled to free and compulsory education, as stated in Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution.
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), which was established in 2009 to advance secondary education; the National Program for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL); and
- Saakshar Bharat (Saakshar Bharat/Adult Education), which uses a variety of pedagogical learning programmers for non- and neo-literate people 15 years of age and over to develop a literate society.
- The 2013-launched Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), which promotes higher education.
- Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Launched as a comprehensive initiative for school education to guarantee fair educational outcomes.
- Secondary Level Inclusive Education for the Disabled (IEDSS).
- The District Primary Education Program (DPEP), which was established in 1994 as a significant effort to revitalize the primary education system and realize the goal of primary education universalization.

Suggestions:-

Equality can only be brought with the help of new education policies, following are some suggestions that can be used for the betterment of the education policies:-

- Syllabi needs to be revised, imposing an auricular syllabus on students for 16+ years of their life studying what is not of their interest, should be changed.
- Skill development should be focused on. Interest in work leads to development in that sector.
- Reservations, it shouldn't be moved but certain measures can be taken, like:- one who, on their own can get to something, shouldn't be given

the benefits of the former and needy should be provided. Reservations shouldn't be conserved only to castes but broadened to those lacking financial security and etcetera.

- Offering free education up to a particular level, which is a crucial stepping stone for entering the workforce.
- No of their backgrounds, all students should have access to a similar curriculum.

Conclusion:-

The social environment it exists in is tightly woven with the educational system. Without progress toward equality in the economic, cultural, political, and emotional institutions in which education is enmeshed, we cannot expect equality in education. But in a similar vein, changes in education have a significant role in those developments. It is an essential component of the egalitarian movement. The staff and students at schools and universities need to be educated about the challenges related to equality that come with gender, color, nationality, ethnicity, ability, religion, and other distinctions. The curriculum must be certified in terms of class, gender, competency, etc. To allow reading, identifying, and critique the lives of all people in a significant intercultural way.

In today's context, new education and updating its new version, teaching and learning methods for self-development and character building, sector-center strategies, and cultural enrichment and peace, through public unemployment, poverty and Education is useful for finding practical solutions to inequality. The instructions need to be implemented on a priority. This will lead to the development of new education to sure their participation in building India of the last man's aspirations towards building an egalitarian non-violent society, which can be a step forward in building the India of Mahatma Gandhi's dreams. Today everyone agrees that education is the most important equitable resource and tool.

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Tribal Community and Human Rights: Identity Crisis, Cultural Assimilation and the Concept of Development through Culture

Debabrata Roy

Abstract

In present era, the concept of aboriginal people is a source of much debate. The ILO is legally responsible for implementing Convention No. 107 on the Protection and Integration of Native and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries. Nonetheless, the concept of tribal people has been questioned on numerous occasions. They only used labels like “tribal people” or “hill tribes” instead of the typical expression in the Asian subcontinent. The tribal population is made up of native people who go by the appellation “Adivasi” in their native land, as is in India. The prime reason for this is their refusal to comply with the recently enacted Constitution of the city. A slew of new studies emphasize the importance of learning more about the devolving forest rights to tribal communities which could help achieve the twin aims of forest conservation and sustainable forest-based livelihoods. The tribal people occupy 20 percent of the earth’s surface, supporting the world’s richest and healthiest bio reserves. They care about conserving and protecting their homeland, culture, and traditions. But in the current global scenario, acclimatization has become a part of their lives; they are in a constant battle to adapt and adjust to the constantly changing social order. The present paper will look into the matter of identity crisis, cultural bereavement, and the concept of development through the eyes of the tribal population and will try to relate how it differs or corroborates with the concept of development as conceived by the so-called mainstream society. The paper will focus on the effect of migration upon the tribal population. The article also aims to understand the sustainable development methods practiced by these communities, which further reflects the culture and dignity of that particular traditional group. The tribal people’s fundamental rights will be linked to the human rights de-acclimatization of development through identity and dignity.

Keywords: identity crisis, cultural assimilation, tribal people, aboriginal community, human rights.

Introduction

There are several social groups or communities in India that have tribal traits. None of them, on the other hand, are considered tribal organisations. In India, the term tribe has a more practical meaning. The goal of the country’s constitutional provision is to declare or recognise some civilizations as tribal communities. When we speak of tribes, we’re referring to the Scheduled Tribes, which are social groups recognised or specified under the Indian Constitution’s Schedule. As a result, Scheduled Tribes refers to tribal groups and communities that are recognised as Scheduled Tribes in the Constitution under Article 342. This demarcation demonstrates that our Constitution contains no specific designation of tribal communities in India. The recognition is based solely on the purpose or function of the item. However, it is commonly considered that primitive characteristics, distinct culture, remoteness, aversion to contact with the outside world, and deprivation are emphasized in the selection of tribal people.

Despite the fact that the prerequisites are not stated explicitly in the Constitution, they are commonly acknowledged. The explanations from the 1931 census, and information from the First Backward Classes Commission in 1955, the Advisory Committee (Kalelkar) on Revision of SC/ST Lists (Lokur Committee), 1965, and the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 (Chanda Committee), 1969 are all included (Sonowal, 2008). The conceptions about tribal peoples in the modern world are fraught with debate. Since millennia, people of numerous languages, races, civilizations, and religions have been migrating (Sabharwal, 1996). The ILO is legally responsible for implementing The Convention on the Protection and Integration of Tribal and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (Convention No. 107). Nonetheless, the concept of tribal people has

been questioned on several occasions. Only in the Asian subcontinent has the phrase 'tribal people' or 'hill tribes' been used instead of 'tribal people'; the tribal population is made up entirely of tribal people, with some even referring to them as "Adivasi" in India (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). Many variables in one's tribal existence influence how tribal people describe their cultural identity². In recent years, researchers, activists, and authors have placed a greater emphasis on tribal people's identity politics and life experiences, there seems to be little discussion of how and why tribal people chose their identities (Miheuah, 1998). Many will undoubtedly point out the condition of contrast between the original population of particular land or territory and the civilised society which is taking over. It is clear that the tribal population is treated differently in the social order, necessitating the development of an appropriate strategy for this vulnerable but unavoidable segment of society (Singh *et al.*, 2015). Their defiance to the city's newly approved Constitution is the first explanation that springs to mind (Mahapatra and Bajpai, 2016). A plethora of recent studies highlight the importance of learning more about the conditions in which forest rights devolution to local communities and Tribal peoples could aid in achieving the twin aims of forest protection and forest-based economic viability (Sudtongkong and Webb, 2008; Barsimantov *et al.*, 2011 and Persha *et al.*, 2011). The world community has indeed been drawn to the detrimental implications of territorial invasions, cultural and identity discrimination, and fundamentally historical colonisation of/on tribal groups. It can be seen in the adoption of international principles and norms, as well as the establishment of institutions that specifically address the same issues. Additionally, these rights are supported by regional human rights mechanisms. (Mahapatra and Bajpai, 2016).

Loss of identity, assimilation, and the concept of progress can all be understood differently depending on whether one is an tribal people, government official, environmentalist, economist, or social activist. Tribal community perceives well-being and development through a variety of elements. In the name of development and modernization, the urban set-up often expels and excludes the tribal/traditional value system and thus racts the resource base to almost nothing. The development concept itself embraces individuals' overall growth and well-being in their original structure within its domain. A considerable number of the tribal

population gets evicted and displaced in the name of pseudo-development. Displacement results in loss of livelihood and forces the tribal people to migrate in search of other relatively new options to their knowledge and perception. Migration often gives way to an identity crisis, and they are forced to adjust or assimilate into the unique culture and tradition. This creates a loss of self-determination and a feeling of being lost both morally and socially. The present paper will look into the matter of identity crisis, cultural bereavement, and the concept of development and will try to relate how it differs or corroborates with the concept of development as conceived by the so-called mainstream society. The study will focus on the effect of migration upon the tribal population. The paper also aims to understand the sustainable development methods practiced by the tribal community, which further reflects the culture and dignity of that particular traditional group. Tribal peoples' fundamental rights will be linked to human rights discourse in terms of development, identity, and dignity.

Identity crisis, cultural bereavement, and concept of development

Tribal peoples make up societies that see themselves as distinct from the societies that govern them. The tribal people occupy 20 percent of the earth's surface, supporting the world's richest and healthiest bio reserves. They care about conserving and protecting their homeland, culture, and traditions. But in the recent global scenario, acclimatization has become a part of their lives; they are at a constant battle to adapt and adjust to the constantly changing social order. The tribal population has witnessed documented evidence of mass exploitation and alienation and was displaced from their place of origin merely under the provisions of several unfriendly acts and legislations passed around the world, be it international or region-specific. An ecologically balanced environment once managed by the tribal populace for a millennium had been damaged overnight just in the name of organised plundering of natural resources by different Corporations and Multinationals. The life of the citizens, who once lived in harmony with the natural world, had to manage with a pitiable existence with the new culture, thus adjusting within the new order and getting assimilated into the more urbane culture. The scarce resource base and the lack of livelihood facilities have often forced the

²In previous studies of aboriginal peoples in the United States, the titles American Indian, Indian, and Native American were used to describe this group. Instead of using the term "indigenous peoples," this article defies convention by using the term "indigenous peoples." Because these terms are proper nouns (individuals) rather than adjectives, they are capitalised (words describing nouns). It's also capitalised to represent and acknowledge Indigenous Peoples' cultural diversity and political sovereignty in the Western Hemisphere (Yellow Bird, 1999).



tribal people to migrate to other places, searching for new job opportunities. Migrants encounter different challenges like cultural traits, religious ceremonies, and social support systems, as well as cultural adjustment and changes in identity and self-concept (Bhugra and Becker, 2005). The tribal people migrating and settling in a different societal set-up find it difficult both ways- lose their cultural identity and get partially or fully assimilated within the new society. Migration thus affects the very concept of identity, cultural bereavement, and the subsequent loss of mental and social peace.

Many tribal peoples are still enduring from historical injustices such as prejudice, marginalisation, and land and resource expropriation, and their right to development is frequently overlooked (United Nations Permanent Forum on Tribal Issues, 2010). The right to development is supported by the United Nations Charter, the UDHR, and the two international human rights treaties. The concept of development is frequently interpreted solely in economic terms. On the other side, progress is a process in which everyone has the right to aid from economic, social, cultural, and political development, thus fulfilling their fundamental rights and obligations. tribal people's political, cultural, social, economic, health, spiritual, educational and knowledge systems have frequently been wiped by modernization and industrialization ideals, as well as their access to natural resources (United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Tribal Peoples' Issues, 2008). We need new methods of thinking and striving for advancement because the mainstream development paradigm has failed as evidenced by the economic crisis, environmental convulsion connected with climate change, and the loss of biological variety, among others (UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, Poverty Practice, 2009). The concept of development as conceived by the tribal people is based on the holistic approach, which reciprocates the idea of collectively, solidarity, equilibrium, and living within the boundaries of nature. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Tribal Peoples confined that tribal peoples now have a solid platform on which to assert rights and articulate aims in talks with authorities and enterprises over identity development and culture. Declaration confined self-determination rights as Article 3. Another crucial paragraph is Article 32, which encapsulates culture's essence in terms of progress and identity. The tribal peoples' lobbying and concerns at the United Nations resulted in these articles (12-14 January 2010, Articles 3 and 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Tribal Peoples addressed in International Expert Group Meeting on Tribal Peoples: Development with Culture and Identity).

Concept of inclusion and exclusion

Politicians, social scientists, and the general public have been progressively using the terms "social exclusion" and "social inclusion" in recent years. In the 1970s, French social policy coined the concept "social inclusion". All through the 1980s economic crisis, (Benn, 2000; Pp 310) it was initially used while the state-sponsored republican unity tradition was popular. (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997; Pp 414). Scholars such as Bourdieu and Luhmann had theorised the phrase by 1990.

"The term 'inclusion' refers to the complete population's engagement in the performance of distinct function systems. This also concerns both access to these benefits and individual ways of life's reliance on them. Groups that do not or only partially participate in social life fade to the extent that inclusion is attained. (Luhman, 1990; Pp 34)."

Social exclusion became a political issue in Europe in the 1990s as a result of this acceptance. Social exclusion arises by merging the values of two key political traditions: social democracy and Catholicism.. The word "social exclusion" is debatable and vague (Burchardt et al., 1999; Pp 228). According to the 1994 Social Summit, There is little doubt that this notion can be used to combat poverty and injustice in developing nations. The Institute of International Labour Studies (IILS), Asian Development, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and World Bank have all taken note of its potential. (IILS, 1994; Figueiredo and de Haan, 1998).

Although it is commonly assumed that exclusion has a detrimental influence on tribal communities and that inclusion is beneficial to them, this may not be the case in actuality. Inclusion through coercion, whether by a market or a powerful social institution, may jeopardise a group's or community's identity. Forced labour in the unorganised sector and wage labour places tribal peoples in an unprotected labour force and as immigrants. Exclusion is not always negative for similar reasons. Voluntary exclusion from those entities should be absolutely acceptable for people who do not accept the forced predicament in a completely unfamiliar environment and who rely on the conventional way of life. It has often been said that exclusion and poverty or more significant development are interrelated. Traditional poverty indicators show a substantial link between being tribal or tribal and being severely impoverished (Sonowal, 2008). However, just a mere inclusion of the tribal people within the trending market economy without understanding their comfort level in accepting the new set-up discarding the traditional system, creates a cloud of uncertainty which eventually leads to an identity crisis and cultural assimilation.

Levels of transition and the process of absorption

The dynamic nature of culture and society are dependent on several factors- change in the surrounding environment, intervention, and experimentation. The tribal society is also not an exception. Traditional processes evolve when new elements of the modern world, such as education, economic structure, clothing, food habits, health-seeking behaviour, and worldview, are absorbed. The social status and the cultural factors differ as we go across different tribal groups in different parts of India. Each tribal group perceives the different components of development and allied factors differently. For instance, the level of education among the tribal communities of north-eastern India (say, Mizoram) is more than that of the groups inhabiting the Jharkhand, Bihar, and Rajasthan regions. Other social measures of progress among tribal tribes across the country are in the same boat. Thus, the policies meant towards the uplift of the tribal communities should be region or group-specific. Policies that are too broad may not be effective. The earliest known social organisation in human history is tribal societies and economy.. Tribal cultures were hardly mentioned in ancient literature, although we do find allusions of primitive tribes of people living on the outskirts and on the edges of civilization. They were the self-contained tribal groups who hardly keep in touch with the non-tribal society.

There were also instances in human history where the non-tribal population, as in, king, or a prince or any hero, got married to a tribal woman and thus started a new genealogy, through their children, with some non-tribal traits. The colonial regime's integration of tribal societies was marked by the disintegration of the old political structure and the denial of certain rights to tribal communities. The forests of India, where most of the tribal population inhabited, were gradually taken under British control. The East India Company, through several acts and legislations, became the sole authority to extract the forest resources. The British introduced the excluded area policy, which kept the tribal areas and people at bay. Though these were excluded areas, the administration still did not penetrate their set-up, mainly the socio-political institution.

General discussion

The process of tribal civilizations being absorbed into larger Indian society took a long time and unfolded gradually through time, particularly on the social and cultural front. The inclusion of the tribal communities started during the colonial days and days still present

in some form or other in the present Indian context. The Hindu religion infiltrated the tribal domain during the period of political integration, granting credence to tribal gods and goddesses and attaching them to local traditions and legends. There were also considerable changes on the social and economic fronts, in addition to religious absorption. The concept of an identity crisis was born from the word "detrribalisation." When a community is left with nothing special to call their own, but the pathetic and unwelcome discriminatory treatment they receive from the rest of the population, an identity crisis occurs. According to Eisen Bruch, the loss of cultural qualities and social structures can produce a grieving atmosphere (1990 and 1991). The inclusion of the tribal domain into the non-tribal realm was primarily intended at economic exploitation, particularly resource extraction, which the tribal community relies on for survival. The customary rights of tribal peoples to land, forest, and other resources were taken away. The land reforms, land acquisition acts, and forest policies and measures deprived the tribal population of their livelihoods. The laws enacted after independence can be treated as a reflection of the colonial acts and policies and thus fail to recognise the community ownership over forest and land resources. The Forest Rights Act (2006) recognised the usage rights of tribal people and other traditional residents more recently, although the implementation process still has to be clarified.

Since the tribal people were unfamiliar of the economy, they were unable to adapt to the changing circumstances and were forced to become landless labourers, wage labourers, or migrate to other areas. Wherever the tribal community has been displaced or has faced a livelihood crisis, large-scale migration and ethnic warfare have become typical occurrences. Thousands of tribal people have been uprooted from their homes, correspondingly State's post-independence incorporation of tribal regions in its development map, leaving them at the mercy of others (Sonowal, 2008). Traditional knowledge systems and cultural practises of tribal peoples are increasingly being acknowledged as critical for conservation and climate change as the face of sustainable development goals. Despite this acknowledgement, development programmes and a number of companies and multinationals have harmed tribal cultures more often than not. They often ignore the importance of the traditional cultural priorities and fail to respect their regrets over the resources, primarily land. The tribal people's ways of life and traditional knowledge have evolved in tandem with the natural resources available on their territory. Unfortunately, forest policies that regard forest lands as if they were empty spaces waiting to be turned into multinational



ventures never examine the interest of the traditional dwellers. Development policies that take into account the tribal knowledge practices and customs are beneficial to the tribal people and the community as a whole.

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Linking, Connecting and Integrating North Eastern Region in India's Development: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

The North Eastern region of India is one of the most diverse and complex regions of the country, comprising eight states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. Despite being rich in natural resources, the region has faced several developmental challenges due to its geographical isolation, limited connectivity, and inadequate infrastructure. In recent years, the Indian government has initiated various measures to link, connect, and integrate the North Eastern region with the rest of the country to enhance its socioeconomic development. This paper reviews the progress made in this direction and examines the challenges and opportunities for the region.

Keywords: North East Region, Linking India, Indian government, socioeconomic Challenges, Sustainable Development, infrastructure projects and ethnic conflicts.

Introduction

The North Eastern region of India is unique and diverse, home to over 45 million people belonging to several ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. The region is characterized by its rugged terrain, dense forests, and abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, and minerals. The region is also known for its cultural and linguistic diversity, but also faces several socio-economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services. However, despite its rich resource base, the region has been facing several developmental challenges, including poor infrastructure, inadequate connectivity, and limited access to markets. As a result, the region has lagged behind in terms of economic growth and human

development indicators compared to other regions of the country.

Since 2014, the Indian government has initiated several measures to link, connect, and integrate the North Eastern region with the rest of the country to enhance its socioeconomic development. These measures include covering peoples of the Northeast under several social welfare schemes, construction of new highways, railways, airports, and seaports, as well as the development of digital infrastructure and promotion of tourism. However, the region still faces several challenges in realizing its full potential, and much more needs to be done to bridge the development gap.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To review the progress made in linking, connecting, and integrating the North Eastern region with the rest of the country.
2. To examine the challenges and opportunities for the region in terms of economic, social, and environmental development.
3. To suggest policy measures to address the challenges and harness the opportunities for the region's sustainable development.

Methodology

This paper is based on a review of existing literature on the North Eastern region of India and its development challenges. The literature review includes government reports, academic articles, and research papers, as

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well as media reports and other secondary sources. The paper also draws on the author's observation of the government policy and development efforts for the North Eastern region of India.

Socio-Economic Challenges of North Eastern Region

The North Eastern region of India comprises eight states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. The region is known for its natural beauty, biodiversity, and cultural diversity. However, the region also faces several socio-economic challenges such as poverty, poor economic growth, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, agricultural challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and ethnic conflicts. Some of the major challenges are:

Poverty: The North Eastern region has a higher incidence of poverty compared to other parts of India. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), recently released by NITI Aayog, alarmingly reveals that Assam and Meghalaya in Northeast India are the two poorest states in the entire nation. However, there was a bright spot in the shape of Sikkim, a Himalayan state that has among the lowest rates of poverty. Only 3.8% of the population of Sikkim is considered to be poor, making it the area of Northeast India with the lowest poverty rates. There are 9.8% fewer poor people in Mizoram than in Tripura (16.7%) or Manipur (17.9%), which are the next two states in line. Next on the list are the poorest states, Arunachal (24.3%) and Nagaland (25.2%). Both Assam and Meghalaya have 32.7% of their population living in poverty ('What Is the Percentage of Poor People in Each Northeast State?', 2021).

- **Healthcare:** Inadequate healthcare infrastructure, a low doctor-to-patient ratio, and a high prevalence of communicable diseases like malaria and tuberculosis are just a few of the region's healthcare issues. The region's doctor-patient ratio is 1:3139, which is significantly lower than the 1:1445 national norm, according to the National Health Profile 2019.
- **Agriculture:** Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in the North Eastern region. However, the region faces several challenges in the agriculture sector, such as low productivity, inadequate irrigation facilities, and lack of market access. The farmers are trapped in traditional low-output agricultural practices and face economic unviability due to low and uncertain productivity, vulnerability to natural disasters, lack of market opportunities, and isolation. The low usage of growth augmenting inputs also contributes to low

income and agrarian distress. The region's past model of economic development has failed, and revitalizing the economy by promoting growth and re-building agricultural development models is a great challenge. According to the National Sample Survey Office, the average landholding size in the region is small, which makes it difficult for farmers to adopt modern agricultural practices.

- **Infrastructure:** There is widespread agreement that the northeast lacks the fundamental administrative, social, and physical infrastructure needed to unleash development dynamics in the area. The region faces several infrastructure challenges, such as inadequate road and rail connectivity, lack of electricity and telecommunication facilities, and inadequate water supply and sanitation facilities. The inadequacy of all this is reflected in poor market incentives and thus in low output and growth in various sectors of the economies of the region. However, there are two significant aspects to the development of some of the essential infrastructure. First, in addition to building intra-state markets and basic service accessibility, it is crucial to develop a good network of inter-state transport and communication due to the interdependence of the economic systems in the northeast. The other thing is that, in addition to the previously mentioned substantial investments, effective flood control also necessitates mutual understanding and collaboration between the various units of the northeast (Sarma, 2001).
- **Ethnic conflicts:** The North Eastern region of India is home to more than 200 ethnic groups and tribes, each with its own distinct culture, language, and history. However, this diversity has also led to several ethnic conflicts in the region, which have been a major challenge to the socioeconomic development of the region. Ethnic conflicts are a major challenge to the socioeconomic development of the North Eastern region of India, fueled by historical grievances, competition for resources, political power struggles, and cultural differences. The conflicts have led to the loss of life and property, displacement of people, and disruption of economic activities. There is a need for greater efforts to address the root causes of ethnic conflicts, promote social harmony, and build a more inclusive and equitable society in the region.

The socioeconomic progress of the area is negatively impacted by these challenges. Given its natural resources and cultural diversity, the area also has enormous economic growth potential.

Government's Initiatives for Developing North Eastern Region

The Indian government has started a number of policy initiatives to encourage the development of the area. In order to ensure the area's sustainable development, the efforts are aimed to address the issues it is currently facing by the region and capitalise on the opportunities provided by its natural resources and cultural diversity. The progress made in linking, connecting, and integrating the North Eastern region with the rest of the country has been significant in recent years. Some of the major initiatives include the following:

1. BharatNet project: One of the key initiatives is the BharatNet project, which aims at providing broadband connectivity to all villages in the country. The project aims to bridge the digital divide by providing high-speed internet connectivity to rural areas, which is essential for promoting economic growth, digital education, and e-governance. In Lok Sabha statement Shri Devusinh Chauhan, the minister of state for communications, has announced that as of November 28, 2022, the nation's internet infrastructure had been made service ready in 1,84,399 Gram Panchayats, under BharatNet Project (Outlook, 2022). In the North East states of India, the BharatNet project has been implemented with the aim of improving internet connectivity in remote and underdeveloped areas. The initiative is anticipated to improve digital connectivity and give people in rural areas, including the North Eastern region, access to information and services. The project is expected to have a significant impact on the region's economy, education, and healthcare sectors by providing high-speed internet connectivity to schools, hospitals, and other institutions.

Under this scheme, a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) has been developed by the government to provide mobile connectivity in unconnected villages and along national highways in Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh in the North Eastern region. This plan calls for the installation of 1,358 towers. As of October 2021, a total of 1,358 towers had been installed, encompassing 1246 villages and 283 National Highway sites. The projects are currently being carried out ('YEAR END REVIEW-2021', 2022).

2. North Eastern Region Vision 2020: Another important initiative is the development of the North Eastern region itself, which has been a key focus of the Indian government. The government

has launched several initiatives to promote the socioeconomic development of the region, including the North Eastern region Vision 2020, which aims to promote growth, connectivity, and stability in the region. The government has also launched several infrastructure projects, including highways, railways, and airports, to enhance connectivity within the region and with other parts of the country.

There has been a significant increase in the amount of funds allocated by Central Ministries to the North Eastern Region since 2014. This is due to the mandatory earmarking of at least 10% of the Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) of Central Ministries/ Departments for the North Eastern Region and the creation of the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR), which has increased the flow of resources to the region. The provisional expenditure by Central Ministries in the North Eastern Region has risen sharply by 83%, from Rs.24819.18 crore in 2014-15 to Rs.45,518.14 crore in 2018-19, subject to final vetting by the Ministry of Finance. For the year 2019-20, an allocation of Rs.59,369.90 crore (BE) has been made for the North Eastern Region, including the Ministry of DoNER ('North Eastern Region Vision 2020', 2019). Numerous actions have been made since 2015 in this direction. In the past five years, the Ministry of DoNER has approved road projects of Rs. 1711.19 crores, and the North Eastern Council (NEC) has approved grants for Rs. 1573.56 crores for the development of infrastructure for roads and bridges, railway, airports, and ISBT in the North Eastern Region (PBNS, 2021).

3. Act East Policy: The "Act East Policy" replaced the "Look East Policy," which the PV Narasimha Rao administration had enacted in 1991. The Look East policy was implemented at a time when the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War caused great unrest throughout the entire globe (Dutta, 2021). After Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, the "Look East Policy" was rebranded as the "Act East Policy" (AEP). The Act East Policy aims to enhance economic and cultural ties between India and the countries of Southeast Asia. The policy is expected to boost trade and investment in the North Eastern region, which shares borders with several Southeast Asian countries.

This shift in policy resulted in the Indian government prioritizing the improvement of its relationships with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian countries. The foreign



policy was given more structure and specific goals were established, with a focus on achieving India's domestic developmental objectives, particularly in the Northeastern states. The Northeastern states have historically been a challenging area for development due to their landlocked location, inadequate infrastructure, and past insurgencies.

Under the AEP framework, the Indian government aims to achieve deeper political and economic development in the Northeastern states by creating new markets and improving infrastructure. This includes widening roads, expanding air connectivity, extending railway networks, and improving connectivity between the Northeastern region and Southeast Asia by opening new trade routes and reactivating dormant ones. The objective is to use the Northeastern states as a bridge to connect mainland India with Southeast Asian nations.

4. **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):**

The Border Area Development Programme (BADP) is a government initiative aimed at promoting the socio-economic development of India's border areas including the North East states of India. As a major initiative to meet the developmental needs and well-being of the people living near the border, the Government of India is implementing the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) through the State Governments in 396 border blocks of 111 border districts in 17 States, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand.

The North East states of India share borders with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, and are therefore strategically important for India's security and economic interests. The implementation of the BADP in the North Eastern region has been aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by the region, including geographical isolation, ethnic diversity, and underdeveloped infrastructure.

Under the BADP, the Government of India provides funds to the state governments for the implementation of various development projects in the border areas. These projects are aimed at promoting infrastructure development, enhancing the standard of living of the local population, and improving the security situation in the region.

The programme aims to promote infrastructure development in the border areas, including the construction of roads, bridges, and other transport

infrastructure, as well as the development of power and water supply infrastructure.

The programme also focuses on improving access to education and healthcare in the border areas, including the construction of schools, hospitals, and other healthcare facilities.

The programme aims to promote agricultural development and enhance livelihood opportunities for the local population in the border areas. This includes the promotion of horticulture, fisheries, and animal husbandry.

The implementation of the BADP in the North Eastern region has had a significant impact on the socioeconomic development of the region. The programme has contributed to the improvement of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities in the border areas, and has helped to enhance the security situation in the region.

However, there are still several challenges that need to be addressed, including the need for greater investment in infrastructure development, and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for the local population.

5. **North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS):**

The North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS) is a government initiative aimed at promoting industrial development in the North Eastern region of India. The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in 2017 and is a part of the larger "Act East Policy" of the Government of India.

The NEIDS provides various incentives and benefits to promote the setting up of new industries and the expansion of existing industries in the North Eastern region. The industrial and service sectors are included in the scheme. It will support MSMEs in services and products. Information technology will be used to process, approve, and issue payments for proposals. 46.00 billion rupees have been distributed to the NE states since inception. A total of Rs. 30.00 crores had been given to the NE states during the Financial Year 2021-22. There is a provision of Rs. 150.00 crores under NEIDS, 2017 in BE for the present FY 2022-23 (North East Industrial Development Scheme |, 2022).

The NEIDS has been instrumental in promoting industrial development in the North Eastern region, by providing various incentives and benefits to new and existing industries. The scheme has helped to attract investment in the region and

has contributed to the creation of employment opportunities for the local population. However, there is still a need for greater investment in infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in order to fully realize the potential of the North Eastern region.

6. Special Category Status

The Special Category Status (SCS) is a classification given to certain states in India that have been identified as having unique and difficult conditions that require special attention and support from the central government. The North East states of India, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, have been granted SCS due to their unique socio-economic and geographical conditions.

Under this scheme states with SCS status receive higher share of central government funding for development projects in the form of financial assistance. This includes a higher proportion of centrally sponsored schemes, as well as additional grants for specific projects. These states with SCS status are eligible for various tax incentives, including exemption from central excise duty, exemption from income tax, and a reduced rate of customs duty. The central government provides greater funding for the development of infrastructure in SCS states, including road, rail, and air connectivity, as well as the development of power and water supply infrastructure. The SCS status is also expected to promote employment opportunities in these states, by promoting investment and industrial development, as well as by enhancing the skills and education of the local population.

The SCS status is of significant importance for the North East states, as these states face unique socio-economic and geographical challenges that require special attention and support from the central government. The SCS status has helped to promote the development of infrastructure, education, and healthcare in these states, and has contributed to the overall socio-economic development of the region.

Tourism Promotion

The Indian government has launched several initiatives to promote tourism in the North Eastern region, which is known for its natural beauty and cultural diversity. This includes the development of new tourist circuits, the promotion of eco-tourism, and the creation of tourism infrastructure:

- **Development of Infrastructure:** The government

has been investing in the development of infrastructure in the North Eastern region, including the development of roads, airports, and railways. This has improved connectivity within the region and has made it easier for tourists to visit and explore the area.

- **Promoting Eco-Tourism:** The government has been promoting eco-tourism in the North East states, by highlighting the region's natural beauty and biodiversity. This has helped to attract tourists who are interested in exploring the region's forests, wildlife, and other natural attractions.
- **Cultural Festivals and Events:** The government has been promoting cultural festivals and events in the North East states, in order to showcase the region's unique cultural heritage. This has helped to attract tourists who are interested in exploring the region's traditional music, dance, and crafts.
- **Marketing Campaigns:** The government has been running marketing campaigns to promote tourism in the North East states, both within India and abroad. This has helped to raise awareness about the region's attractions and has helped to attract more tourists to the area.
- **Development of Tourist Circuits:** The government has been developing tourist circuits in the North East states, to make it easier for tourists to plan their trips and explore the region. This includes the development of circuits that cover multiple states, and that showcase the region's diverse cultural and natural attractions.

Overall, the government's efforts to promote tourism in the North East states have been successful in attracting more tourists to the region, and in showcasing the unique beauty and cultural heritage of the area. However, there is still a need for greater investment in infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices, in order to fully realize the potential of the North Eastern region as a tourist destination.

Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat

The government has also focused on promoting cultural integration and national unity. One of the key initiatives in this regard is the "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat" program, which was announced by the Hon. Prime Minister on the occasion of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 140th birthday celebration, that aims to promote cultural exchanges and interactions between different regions and states in the country. The Ek Bharat



Shrestha Bharat programme seeks to actively improve the interaction between individuals from various cultural backgrounds residing in various Indian States and UTs with the goal of fostering deeper intercultural understanding. According to the scheme, every State/UT in India would be paired with another State/UT for reciprocal human interaction each year. Through this exchange, it is hoped that knowledge of the languages, cultures, customs, and practises of various states will strengthen interstate ties and mutual understanding, preserving India's unity and integrity. The program is expected to enhance national unity and promote a sense of shared identity and belonging.

Road and Rail Connectivity

Improving road and rail connectivity in the North East states has been a key priority for the Indian government in recent years. The region's rugged terrain and difficult terrain have historically made it challenging to build infrastructure, but the government has been investing in a range of initiatives to improve connectivity in the area. North East Road Sector Development Scheme (NERSDS) was launched in 2017 to improve road connectivity in the North Eastern region. The scheme aims to improve the quality and safety of roads in the region and promote economic growth by improving access to markets and services. The Indian government has launched several road and rail projects to enhance connectivity within the North Eastern region and with other parts of the country. This includes the construction of new highways, the expansion of railway networks, and the development of inland waterways.

- **National Highways:** The government has been investing in the construction of national highways in the North Eastern region to improve connectivity between different states and to connect the region with the rest of the country. Several major highways are currently under construction in the region, including the East-West Corridor and the North-South Corridor.
- **Railways:** The government has been working to expand the railway network in the North East states, with several major projects currently under development. These include the construction of new railway lines, as well as the expansion and modernization of existing lines.
- **Bridges and Tunnels:** The government has been investing in the construction of bridges and tunnels in the North Eastern region, in order to overcome the challenges posed by the region's

rugged terrain. For example, the construction of the Bogibeel Bridge over the Brahmaputra River in Assam has helped to improve connectivity between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Overall, the Indian government's efforts to improve road and rail connectivity in the North East states are aimed at boosting economic growth in the region, promoting tourism, and improving access to basic services for local communities. While there is still a long way to go, these initiatives have already begun to make a significant impact on the region's infrastructure and development.

Conclusion

"Bharat" is a term used to refer to India, and the idea of linking, connecting, and integrating Bharat has been a key priority of the Indian government in recent years. The initiatives aimed at promoting connectivity, infrastructure development, and cultural integration are expected to contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the country and promote a more inclusive and united society. The government has focused on several efforts to promote connectivity and integration across the country, including in the North Eastern region. The North Eastern region of India has long been a focus of the Indian government's development efforts, with a range of initiatives aimed at promoting economic growth, infrastructure development, and social welfare. However, the Indian government's policy on the integration and development of the North Eastern region has undergone a significant shift since 2014-15. Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Indian government has taken several measures to promote the development of the North Eastern region, with a focus on infrastructure development, economic growth, and social welfare. These initiatives have contributed to the overall development of the region and improved the quality of life of its people. Therefore, the key to the integration and development of the North Eastern region lies in enhancing the region's road, rail, and air connectivity, preserving and promoting cultural heritage by supporting local artisans, promoting cultural festivals, and maintaining historical sites, promoting tourism in the area by creating new tourist routes, promoting eco-tourism, and investing in tourism infrastructure, and encouraging entrepreneurs in North Eastern region by giving them access to financing, training, and other forms of support to develop a thriving startup ecosystem in the area that can spur innovation and development.

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सामाजिक न्याय संदेश सदस्यता कूपन

मैं, डॉ० अम्बेडकर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केंद्र द्वारा प्रकाशित त्रैमासिक पत्रिका "सामाजिक न्याय संदेश" का ग्राहक बनना चाहता/चाहती हूँ/शुल्क; वार्षिक सदस्यता शुल्क ₹ 200/ डिमांड ड्राफ्ट

नम्बर दिनांक..... संलग्न है।

कृपया ध्यान रखें, आपका डिमांड ड्राफ्ट 'डॉ० अम्बेडकर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केंद्र' के नाम नई दिल्ली के नाम पर हों

नाम (स्पष्ट अक्षरों में)

पता

..... पिन

फोन/मोबाईल न. ई. मेल :

इस कूपन को काटिए और डिमांड ड्राफ्ट सहित निम्न पते पर भेजिए:

डॉ० अम्बेडकर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय केंद्र:

15 जनपथ, नई दिल्ली-110 001





Analyzing Equality Framework for Underprivileged in J&K: A Study of Sweepers Community Post Article 370 Amendment

Pankaj Jamtani¹

Abstract

This paper attempts to highlight the socio-economic transformation in the lives of thousands of families in J&K belonging to Valmiki Safai Karmchari (Sweeper) community which are forced to live in sub human conditions. This is a marginalized population group of J&K living in dingy slums there. Unfortunately, there has been a continuous denial of fundamental rights to these People. They are today forced to live in Kacha houses in "Kacchi" Basti with almost no water and limited electricity. These people have been deprived of housing in J&K; they have been long deprived for employment in State. Further, until 2019, people hailing from this population group were not even allowed to vote in J&K, despite being born there. It seems, there is not only a violation of basic constitutional rights of these citizens of India, entire humanity has been denied. With a view to identify the internal dynamics at work, which are hampering the process of social integration of people and communities within India, a study has been conducted on marginalized Valmiki (Sweeper) group of J&K.

Keywords: Valmiki Safai Karmchari, Sweeper community, fundamental rights, marginalized group, Constitutional framework, Socio economic profile, Jammu and Kashmir.

In J&K - Valmiki Entitled for Sweeper Job Only:

In the year 1957, the Chief Minister of Jammu Kashmir invited hundreds of Dalit Safai Karmcharis (Valmiki) from Punjab region to work as sweepers in Jammu on account of a sanitation crisis in the State (Memorandum).

On account of sanitation exigency, contemporary head of the State scheduled a distress meeting of ministerial members and staff to ease out the situation. Ultimately after long hours of deliberation and conversations it was decided that civic manual laborers from the nearby States should be invited to resolve the

health crisis in the State. Hundreds of dalit karmcharis namely Malo, Koli and many others who were engaged in cleanliness work in corporations were called in Jammu and Kashmir from Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts of Punjab State. Task of bringing these Safai Karmcharis was assigned to the minister dealing with health bureau of J&K. Conveyance services were offered and permit system was also relaxed for these Safai Karmcharis.

These people who were brought to the land of J&K were not the original residents of J&K, so they didn't possess the certificates of permanent residency of J&K. But due to urgency of the situation, these people were granted exemption to pick a job in municipal office and improve the condition of streets and localities.

These folks belonging to sweeper community installed their dingy set ups for the purpose of habitat. Erstwhile State administration also offered a small portion of land to build their huts in the jurisdiction of Jammu region. Here, since the fundamental right to acquire and hold property and fundamental right to reside and settle had been reserved in favor of the J&K residents termed as "Permanent Residents" under various State legislations on the basis of Article 35A, such 272 sweepers (RTI, 2013) were not provided any documents of their possessory rights over such properties.

These Safai Karmcharis were promised that they will be rehabilitated and their sons and daughters will be taken care of and will be granted the Govt. jobs too in the State. But after the repeated requests, all that, this poor Valmiki community granted was a conditional resident certificates, which specifically mentioned that it is valid for getting the job of sweeper only. The current number of these people is around fifteen – twenty thousand in State, who are awaiting justice. Some young members of this community have graduated from the colleges and universities outside the State, few have even completed their post-graduation. But in J&K they are just good enough for a sweeper's job only. In an age when un-touchability is crime, it was being protected and promoted in the J&K indirectly. Doing Sanitation work is no longer a social custom among these Valmiki Safai Karmchari, but a tyranny forced upon a helpless community (Kaul & Sagar, 2017).

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“In some communities, women inherit the keys to the jewelry locker,

In the Valmiki community they inherit the work of cleaning excrement from toilets.” (Ghanwari, 2014)

Socio-Economic Profile of Valmikis In Jammu Kashmir:

A large part of the population belonging to this safaikaramchari community consists of Dalit and marginalized people, where a majority fits into the age group of 28-52 years. If castewise categorization is to be done, Mehtar and Dom are in majority. Most of the Valmikis are living in a joint family of 6-12 members in contrast to nuclear family system in their neighbouring regions.

Dingy Infra and Housing:

The conditions of the locality i.e. “Basti” where they reside is very poor. Narrow lanes are filled with dirt and garbage. “Kutchra” houses, these valmikis live in, may crumble any time. Foul smell and filth is spreaded in every lane. At many places, Valmiki families fulfill their water needs from local hand pumps as there is scarcity of potable water in their Basti. People here have become habitual to open manholes and lack of public sanitation facilities. Overflowing sewerage water running past stingy lanes is daily sight.

Electricity here only comes for limited hours with frequent power cuts of 4-6 hours. As far as healthcare

facilities are concerned, Valmikis in both rural as well as urban area don't earn much to afford private healthcare, whereas in government medical colleges absenteeism is a big problem, those who are present ask for fees for medical services rendered.

Falling Literacy level:

For the last seven decades, literacy level has been at its lowest amongst this marginalized section of Society. Despite having the caliber and credentials, children and youth of valmiki section of State was never offered required educational opportunities in the State govt. institutions. Unemployment, Lack of property and other economical constraints have created a block and inflicted poverty in their life cycle and Bastis, which these Valmikis feel hard to come out. They are forced to survive on bare minimum despite having potential to grow in public life.

Vanishing Dreams:

Dreams and aspirations of young generation of these valimikis are vanishing due to apathy and indifferent attitude of government of State of Jammu Kashmir. Children of Valmikis, who have somehow even after surviving hardships, passed the senior secondary education level are forced to take up the manual works and other menial jobs. Those houses in the Bastis, where no member of the Valmiki family is working as a sweeper in municipality has no option except to take up other supplementary works like agricultural labor or farm worker to earn their livelihood.



(Pic.1 – on the left shows open sewage lines.

Pic.2 display the signboard of Valmiki colony)



(On the left is Gharu Bhatti, a social activist of valmiki community in pic.3 and on the right is the condition of houses in locality in pic.4)

Only a handful in this Valmiki community has permanent job of sweeper in Municipal Corporation of Jammu Kashmir. This number further, declines to almost nil when it comes to rural population of Valmiks in the State.

Living conditions of Valmiks though clearly better off in other States of India when compared to the State of Jammu Kashmir, the problems and discrimination they face prevail everywhere of similar nature.

DISCRIMINATION FACED BY VALMIKI SAFAI-KARAMCHARIS:

1) Non Issuance of Caste Certificates:

Demographical report of the year 2001, shows that the population of S.C's doing the work of cleaning and manual scavenging in the state of J&K was 3855, and it is mentioned in the data that they belong to 'Chooda' or 'Chuhra' (as mentioned earlier) community (Singh, 2012). There is no mention of these Safaikaramcharis of Jammu in any caste based census. This leaves no doubt to the claims of Gharu Bhatti that though Valmiki Samaj belongs to Schedule Caste in the rest of India but they have never been treated the same because of the fact that they didn't get the authentication documents that could authorize them legally to avail the benefits offered to S.C's in State. This state of affairs made their life more difficult in terms of living and getting employment in the State.

2) Refusing Admissions:

Students from Valmiki Community in Jammu Kashmir have been denied admissions in State's Engineering colleges, Medical Colleges. Wards of Safai Karamcharis have been prohibited for decades from taking admission

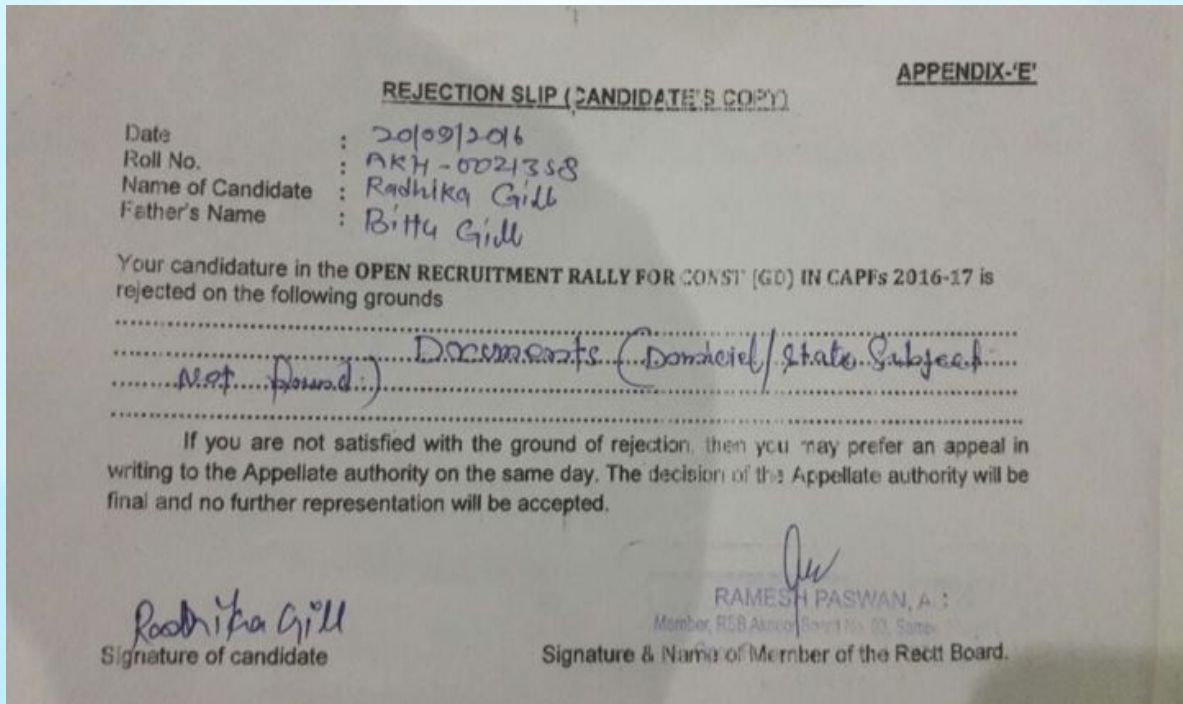
under any Polytechnic colleges or opt for courses like B.ED and others. Raj kumar (born in Jammu), hailing from the Safaikaramchari group in State has completed his Post graduation, but unwillingly forced to do a Peon work in the nearby school for the livelihood. He cannot chose his career in any government job of J&K as youth like him from his community is destined to work as sweepers by erstwhile J&K government.

3) Denial of opportunity:

To the blatant infraction of Article 14, 15 and 16(3) of Indian constitution, Government of Jammu Kashmir denied the opportunity of employment to those permanent residents of State who are born in Jammu Kashmir. Radhika Gill is a dalit girl, dwelling in the U.T of J&K. She has gained many echelons in sports while stuying simultaneously. She also clinched medals in Athletics in tournaments organized by government in J&K at zonal and district levels. After completing her studies, now she wants to join Indian Army. But she couldn't., she was not allowed to do any job in the State of J&K except of Sweeper. Though she has competent and eligible for different level of positions in administration services of State, but unfortunately she couldn't even come under the zone of consideration for any of the State's services because of not having a permanent resident certificate.

4) Non-Representation:

These Safai Karamcharis in Jammu Kashmir were not allowed to elect their own political leaders in the State until year 2019. They were not allowed to vote either in Assembly election or Panchayat elections. Erstwhile State govt. had excluded the names of these Safai Karamcharis from electoral list due to non issuance of Permanent Resident Status to them. They have been



(Pic. 5 Display the rejection letter to Radhika Gill mentioning State subject as a reason)

denied the basic right to vote and elect their M.L.A or Panchayat leader. Such inhuman treatment towards these Safai Karamcharis is a violation of Article 21 and Article 32 of Indian Constitution.

5) Prohibition on Acquiring Property:

Safaikaramcharis of J&K have been kept out of the ambit of authorization letter issued to the original residents of erstwhile State i.e. PRC. People belonging to this community have also been deprived of eligibility to buy land here, which was a violation of fundamental right to acquire and hold a temporary immovable property to build a home for shelter under Article 19(1) (f) and (e). It created major problems for Safai Karamcharis, as they required at least a small property to start any small business in State.

Thus, for marginalized Valmiki (Safai Karamchari) Community in Jammu Kashmir, principles of democracy seemed to remain on paper only. Actions and decisions of erstwhile State Government (JK) in respect to SafaiKaramcharis are in reflection of Aristotle's idea of Democracy. For him, "democracy was the corrupt form of rule by the many and was seen as 'mob rule', modern understanding of democracy, however use democracy in similar ways to his use of the term polity." (Landman, 2013) Demand for legal recognition to basic human rights of these Safai Karamcharis to vote in assembly elections, apply for government jobs, to own immovable property in the State of Jammu kashmir have been ignored for seven decades continuously.

POST ARTICLE 370 AMENDMENT:

After the amendment in constitution of India under Article 370, a barrier which prevented the extension of welfare legislations in the erstwhile State of J&K was extinguished and it paved the way for application of progressive legislations framed by Parliament of India to J&K. Following are the few of such legislations which has the potential to bring a holistic change in the lives of marginalized people belonging to underprivileged section in the erstwhile State of J&K.

Application of Progressive Legislations:

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, was introduced in the statutory framework of Indian legal regime to prevent the offences against the marginalized community. "The Act, specifies some types of offences (verbal, physical etc.) as atrocities, provides for imposition of stricter penalties for the guilty and setting up of special courts for speedy trial of such cases. The main objective of the Act is to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The Act was further strengthened, in relation to manual scavengers by amendments done in 2015 that came into enforcement on 26 January 2016. The amended act makes it a punishable offence to employ, permit or make any person belonging to SC/ST



community to do manual scavenging” (The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act of 1993). This act is now applicable in the U.T of J&K.

The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 has been brought up with the stipulation of retribution for the impermissible act of untouchability and also for the enforcement of any disability arising from such practice. Though, the act was already in application in U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir. Administrative machinery of State did not take their duty seriously in sharing the data on violation rights of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in J&K, Erstwhile govt. of J&K’s attitude remained reluctant in past too over sharing of data with central government (GoI Report, 2013), despite several reminders issued to J&K on many occasions over the issue of “Action Taken Report” under statutory provisions of PCR Act.

In the year 1993 (The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act of 1993) was enacted to put the stop line upon the unpalatable profession of manual scavenging besides erection of dry latrines. This measure is a welfare step enacted for the persons involved in cleaning jobs in numerous government divisions. State was required to pass a resolution under Cl. (1) of Art. 252 of the Constitution of India for the adoption of this Act, but J&K government didn’t felt the need to adopt this act. After the amendment in Article 370 of Col, barrier of extension was removed. Before 5th Aug, 2019, this act too was not applied to J&K.

Manual Scavengers Act (The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013) introduced in the year 2013 was not applied on Jammu & Kashmir before amendment in Article 370, due to which the rehabilitation guidelines observed by Hon’ble apex court of India in Safai Karamchhari Andolan Case for manual scavengers could never come in force in J&K.

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAME-WORKS ON EQUALITY:

A new era began for the people of India in the year 1950, when the Dominion of India became a republic. People of India gave unto themselves a Constitution. Gradually numerous laws, rules and statutes were enacted at both Centre as well as State level keeping the Constitution of India in backdrop. Few provisions of this Constitution relating to safeguards for backward classes are as follows:

Article 341 of Indian Constitution deals with Schedule Caste. Under this article, the President of India has been given powers to issue a public notification whereby he shall specify certain castes, races or tribes

or subgroups of such caste, race and tribes to be an enlisted scheduled caste under COI.

Directive Principles of State Policy: Under part 4 of the Constitution of India, Article 38 creates a responsibility upon administration to secure strata where in welfare of the general public is to be promoted.

Article 38 states,

“38. State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people

(1) The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life

(2) The State shall, in particular, strive to minimize the inequalities in income, and endeavor to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations” (Constitution of India).

Article 46 says, that State need to protect the schedule caste and schedule tribe from all forms of atrocities and exploitations as well as ensure social justice for them apart from promoting the educational and economic interest of the deprived classes in general public.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS:

Article 14 talks of equality, where men and women, irrespective of their Caste, creed, race or religion are equal in the eyes of law. Rich or poor, both are to be accorded equal treatment and equal safeguards within India.

“**Article 15** prohibits discrimination by State against any citizen of India, solely on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them” (Part III of Constitution of India). Nothing prevents in this article for State to formulate any law or take any affirmative action for the advancement of schedule caste and schedule tribe or any socially and economically backward classes.

Equality in the matter of opportunities for employment under local or government office is ensured by article 16 of the Constitution. **Article 16** thus prohibits the discrimination in the opportunities for employment on stipulated grounds. Under this article, legislature is not prohibited to develop law or any rules for reservation in appointment or post for government office for the benefit of backward classes.

Article 17 abolished a societal sin from India and abolished the stigma of untouchability from the customs and practices of ordinary resident.

Article 25(2) (b) provides that all the public institutions in Hindu religion are accessible to all communities and groups of Hindus. Administration is free to make any law or reform for social welfare in this regard.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS:

All the welfare provisions mentioned above were not in application in the U.T of J&K prior to 5th Aug, 2019. As previous governments in J&K were reluctant to apply those constitutional provisions, which were incongruent to interest of political parties in J&K. So many of these enabling provisions of Col were either not applied or those which were applied, got amended substantially in their application to J&K. This in effect, rendered the effect of even applied articles to nullity. But post amendment in Article 370, whole of the Col got extended to the U.T of J&K as well As U.T of Ladakh. People of J&K will now be able to benefit of all the constitutional provisions mentioned above as like any other citizen of India in different States across the territory of subcontinent.

SUGGESTIONS:

The mitigation of life struggles of these Safai Karamcharis toiling in the State from decades depends upon the will power of the Government in Jammu Kashmir and the people of J&K themselves. The government and voluntary organizations working in the direction of public welfare need to make a combined effort in synergy to bring this Valmiki community of Jammu Kashmir out of vicious circle of poverty.

Following are some of the suggestions that can be looked upon:

1. Documentaries and Short-Movies should be prepared by division of films under information and technology ministry, Government of India, so that masses can be made aware of the deplorable plight of Valmiki community in Jammu Kashmir.
2. State Government of Jammu Kashmir should proactively grant the domicile certificated to Valmiks under the new domicile policy and include them in State funded schemes and policies at the earliest.
3. Safai Karamcharis should be allotted more land due to increasing size of families as they are currently prohibited to own and acquire property in the State and no land has been allotted to them since 1957.
4. Colonies of these SafaiKaramcharislike Bakshi Nagar, Dogra Hall, Christian Colony, ReshamGhar, Gandhi Nagar, where these Valmikis are settled in large no. should be regularized.

5. Housing conditions and Sanitation facilities to be improved in their colonies.
6. State Government should ensure that children of Valmiki communities do not face any discrimination in taking admissions under medical and engineering courses in the colleges funded by State.
7. Community centers should be opened at municipal ward level for women and girls in Valmiki Colonies and Professional training on vocational courses like stitching and Art & Craft to be provided by State by engaging local self-help groups.
8. State government should undertake a campaign through its Health Directorate in association with local NGOs and its workers to prevent health problems in SafaiKaramcharis due to vulnerable nature of their profession. Periodical medical surveys should also be conducted in their colonies.
9. Banks should be directed to grant loan at subsidized rates to these Schedule Caste people for marriage of their daughters or educational purposes and others.
10. Specific fund to be earmarked in State's budgetary allocation to establish cooperative societies of Valmiki Safai Karamcharis.

*N.B.: On 5th August, 2019, erstwhile State of J&K has been transformed into U.T of J&K and U.T of Ladakh. For the purpose of convenience, wherever the term "State" appears in this research article, it shall be referred to as U.T of J&K.

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