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सुमति.के

# Editorial

What distinguishes man from other beings on this planet is his intellectual faculty. With this innate power, he has adeptly transformed his challenges into opportunities to improvise, improve and conceptualise his environment. John Hick, a renowned philosopher writes in his book *The Fifth Dimension* that “Consciousness of our environment always involves a continuous transformation of information from one mode into another.” It is in this light that research journals like Baseliu s Researcher provide not just a platform for scholarly research articles from various disciplines but also an arena for transforming information that reiterates the flame of discovery and learning.

Baseliu s Researcher has been moving on for the past twenty years with unfailling diversity and vigour. The new team set sail from this academic year (2021-22). We are amply supported and guided by the Research Assessment Committee Members. In spite of being caught within the throngs of covid on one side and the hectic academic schedule on the other side, it’s with immense pleasure and heartfelt gratitude that we bring forth Volume XXII -Issue 1 (JANUARY -JUNE 2021) of the Baseliu s Researcher. There are twelve articles pertaining to various disciplines and we are grateful to all the contributors. Team Researcher is indebted to the peer reviewers for their valuable suggestions and timely help in helping with the review process.

**Dr. Vidya Merlin Varghese**  
Chief Editor



# From the Principal's Desk

**R**esilience is the strongest lesson that the vindictive covid pandemic has taught us. Any challenge can be abated through collective effort and positive thoughts. Adapting to the new normal is not an easy task but it has paved way for critical thinking, innovations and above, all re-viewing situations . Research journals provide an open forum for addressing and fostering new thoughts that will break down the shackles of rigidity and help analyze any crisis situation from an objective standpoint.

I would like to acknowledge the spirit and enthusiasm of the Baselius Researcher team for striving hard to bring out Volume XXII, Issue Number - I (JANUARY-JUNE 2021) of our journal in spite of being caught within the ebb and flow of the pandemic wave. Special kudos to the newly constituted team and may your team work help in extending the vistas of positive, enlightening and engaging academic research .

**Dr. Biju Thomas**  
Principal

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# **Translating Terror into the Beauty of Prose: Herta Muller**

**Dr Preethamol M.K.**

## **ABSTRACT**

Herta Muller is a Romanian born German novelist, poet, essayist and short story writer. She is the recipient of the coveted Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009. She is acclaimed as the first writer who published her works as a person belonging to the linguistic minority in Romania. The paper looks at the exclusive style of writing of Muller on the oppression and tyranny that she and her people had to undergo under Ceausescu's dictatorship. It is apt to title her writings a translation of terror but with the beauty of prose enamoured in it. This article aims to elaborate on how Muller has combined terror and beauty in her works – how distinctly and ingeniously she has employed language to the point of giving prose a beauty which is poetical.

**Key words:** terror – language – dictatorship – narrative structure – Muller, Herta.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Romanian born German writer Herta Muller's oeuvre, be it essays, fiction or collages, expound a life time of psychological oppression under the inhuman dictatorship of Nicholas Ceausescu of Romania. Her experiences are coated with

the language of surrealism which the Nobel Prize committee duly acknowledged as the deft combination of poetry and prose. While conferring the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009, the Swedish Academy elevated the stylistics of Muller to an elite level: 'who, with the concentration of poetry and the frankness of prose, depicts the landscape of the dispossessed.' (Nobel Foundation 2009) But it was only after Muller received the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009 that she was recognised as a renowned writer of the world, especially in the English-speaking countries.

But the publishing history of Muller began long back, with a couple of poems in the beginning stages followed by short stories and finally novels. The landscape of her writing depicted a familiar terrain of the oppressed minority group of the Banat region of Western Romania. It was an exclusive writing on the oppression and tyranny that she and her people had to undergo under Ceausescu's dictatorship. Thus it is apt to title her writings as the translation of terror but with the undeniable beauty of prose enamoured in it. This article aims to elaborate on how Muller has combined terror and beauty in her works – how distinctly and ingeniously she has employed language to the point of giving prose a beauty which is poetical.

Herta Muller was born in Nitzkydorf, the village in the Banat region of Romania. Her father was a Waffen – SS soldier and her mother had spent some years in the Ukrainian labour camp. She learned German and Romanian literature from the University of Timisoara. It was during this time that she got associated with *Aktiongruppe* a group of young writers of German language who severely criticised the Communist regime. Because of their rigorous criticism against the regime, they were harassed by the Secret Police. Muller's association with the group only made her strong, they influenced and changed her to the extent of mapping out her unique style of writing based on personal experiences and opinions and not on ideology alone. By 1982 Muller published in censored form, her first collection of stories titled *Nadirs*. It was an unsympathetic portrayal about a group of ethnic Swabians who are part of her childhood memories. She was successful in delineating the terror experienced by people under a dictatorship regime in the collection. Rural life as witnessed by a child is given the surrealistic touch in her unique style turning prose into poems.

This was followed by Muller's second collection of stories *Oppressive Tango* which came out in the year 1984. It also had the same line of depiction of Romanian country life as that of in *Nadirs*. By this time, she was banned from publishing any more of her works in Romania. She was forced to emigrate to Germany with her then husband Richard Wagner who was also her companion from the *Aktiongruppe*. She was subjected to brutal interrogation and questioning by the Romanian secret service. They reduced her life to hell but she did not lose her nerve. She was even called an informant. The emotional trauma that she had to undergo was channelized into her writings.

Muller had the companionship of language to express her true feelings in words. Her language had the strength to hide her true traumatic experiences which she had to endure under Ceausescu regime. The poetic effect of her language, though made the reader go an extra mile in trying to decipher what the writer originally meant in her stories, was precisely what bought glory and aura to her language. Her works were laced and embroidered with a lot of metaphors that added to the hue of her style. They had a life and a story to tell on its own. These metaphors left the reader to look for possible interpretations as the writer seldom made herself clear as to what she means by it. Literary scholars have observed that Muller sometimes creates metaphorical images whose meaning is unclear. She can invoke a scene or concept or image that has no obvious target domain. Her works had an exotic and enigmatic feel to it because of this. She had her own reasons for her literary style. After all, the real aim of her writings was to camouflage the terror behind the real and honest feelings of mental and emotional harassment that she had to endure during her life in totalitarian Romania.

By 1987 both Muller and Wagner left Romania for Germany. Muller continued to write about the totalitarian regime and the atrocities of an autocratic ruler in her works. She had the twin advantage of being a Romanian and a German and her proficiency in the languages helped her in her growth as a writer. Both the languages held different weightage to Muller. While she considered Romanian to be the language of the oppressed, German was the language in which she expressed her oppression and trauma. Romanian language had terms and phrases which has a poetic appeal to it. Müller was able to transfer all the resonances of her Romanian to her native minority language German. Marisa Siguan, the Professor of German literature at the University of Barcelona comments thus about Muller's language:

Her written language is German, and she says that it never would occur to her to write in Romanian, yet it is always on her mind. For her, having two languages in her head means that the two are independent, yet they question each other, illuminate each other, operate in parallel. This makes it possible to better appreciate the beauty of a given image or a joke in each language; it makes new images and unusual constructions possible; and it adds richness. (Siguan 133)

*The Passport* was published in 1986. It tells the story of a Romanian family of Windisch who has to succumb to amoral actions to secure their passage (passport) to West Germany. The story reminds us about the horror of surviving in a post war world. The language she uses is a true reflection of the themes of oppression, threat and fears that consume a person under dictatorship. She very cleverly instils objects with meaning which she can only unveil and then juxtaposes it in such a way as to bring about a surreal image as this which appears in *The Passport*:

Windisch hears a leaf on the stones in the hallway. It's scratching on the stones. The wall is long and white. Windisch closes his eyes. He feels the wall growing on his face. The lime burns his forehead. A

stone in the lime opens its mouth. The apple tree trembles. Its leaves are ears. They listen. The apple tree drenches its green apples. (Muller 22)

Another remarkable work was *Travelling on One Leg* (1989). This short novel gained attention as it was the first work of Muller that got published after her arrival in Germany. Irene of the novel is in fact Muller herself and she once again pours out her true feelings of being lonely and uprooted in a new place. The thoughts and dreams of Irene are pictured in a metaphorical style which are subjected to numerous construal. One such interesting interpretation about her style is by Kapur and Naik:

Herta Muller has written novels, poems, short stories and essays that deal with the experiences of subjugation in a totalitarian and hegemonic state, of exile, of homesickness, of conforming to family and of coming to terms with oneself. They depict the effects of violence, cruelty and terror that bring physical suffering and repression. (Kapur and Naik)

*The Land of Green Plums*, the landmark novel came out in the year 1994. It is about three friends and their testimony to life under dictatorship. The novel earned Muller the Kleist Prize and the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. It is considered deeply autobiographical since the story revolves around four friends in Romania and their life under a totalitarian rule. A life of total monitoring can leave you traumatic and vulnerable. You will have to strive very hard not to wither away like Lola. In 1997, she published *The Appointment*. This work had some negative reviews about it. The line of thought in this novel also was about life under dictatorship regime. Readers and critics grew a bit bored about her treatment of the same theme.

In 1999, *The Foreign View, or Life Is a Fart in a Lantern* and in 2003, a volume of essays *The King Bows and Kills*. Her volumes of poetry include *A Lady Lives in the Hair Knot*, from 2000, and *The Pale Gentlemen with their Espresso Cups*, in 2005. *The Hunger Angel*, was published in 2009. The novel is a take on the cruelty of the labour camp. Müller wrote this novel on the basis of the experience of poet Oskar Pastior, the Romanian born German poet and translator. Sabine Kieselbach comments thus in the article *Herta Muller: The Hunger Angel* about the significance of the title and the relevance of the beauty of the language in the novel:

The story is told in language so beautiful that it hurts. It pushes the reader to emotional limits. At the same time, Herta's images and words have something old-fashioned and excessive about them, as if they are from a different, long-lost world. The hunger angel, for example, is a type of spirit that is always there. Every person in the camp has a hunger angel. It watches over each woman and man as they sleep and accompanies them into the field, where they toil away until exhaustion – and sometimes until death. (Kieselbasch)

The major attraction that one has towards the works of Muller is her unique use of language. All her works trap the readers into the world of dictatorship that exerts absolute control over its subjects. Her style of writing is her defence mechanism to cope with the element of fear in her, though it was the element of fear which shaped her poetics. As an artist she renders different meanings into one image. It is the defence mechanism that helps her in cocooning herself. She codifies her hidden emotions into certain objects. In the novel *The Land of Green Plums* when the narrator of the story discovers that she has been betrayed by her close friend, she thinks:

I saw Tereza in two pieces: two little eyes, along neck, pudgy fingers. Time stood still; Tereza should go but she should leave her face here, because I missed it so. She showed me the scar under her arm where they'd cut out the nut. I wanted to take the scar in my hand and stroke it, without Tereza. I wanted to rip my love out of me, throw it on the floor and stamp on it. Quickly lie down where it was lying and let it crawl back through my eyes into my head. (Muller 149)

What unites Muller's work with her themes is the instrument of language wherein lies her advantage is commendable. Fragmentation and gaps rule her works. Some gaps are left for the readers to fill and picture with images that they want. In *Nadirs*, the story "The Funeral Sermon" ends with such a gap freezing some images which the reader is left to infuse into the thread of their reading narrative: "I suddenly opened my eyes. The room was spinning around. I was lying in a ball of tattered white flowers and was locked in. Then I had the feeling that the apartment building was tipping over and emptying itself into the ground. The alarm clock rang, it was Saturday morning, five- thirty." (5) Lyn Marven in her work *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German: Herta Muller, Libuse Monikova, Kerstin Hensel* comments thus about the fragmented style of her writing strategy:

This fragmentation of the psyche is a precondition of narrative self, and manifests in the first instance in staged disjunction and disrupted syntax. Gaps in the text, evident in both the linguistic and narrative structures of Muller's texts force the reader to (re)construct links between sentences or episodes; frequently, these gaps highlight violence ... which is of increasing importance in Muller's oeuvre. (Marven 96)

All works of Muller trap the readers into the world of dictatorship but at the same time there is a simplicity and complexity in her works which is captivating like the passage from *The Land of Green Plums*: "Because in this country, we had to walk, eat, sleep and love in fear, until it was once again time for the barber and the nail clippers." (2) The reader is sure about what the narrator is talking about which is in fact life under dictatorship. But the moment the narrator mentions "barber and the nail clippers" the simple language takes on the grade of complexity.

The episodic narration of her stories defying linear structure is best suited to her works as they display the hidden themes of dictatorship, totalitarianism, censorship and emotional restraint. Critics like Brigid Haines and Lyn Marven bring in the theory of trauma and fragmented narration in the narratives of Muller. They argue that her poetic language is an apt metaphor in delineating and articulating trauma from her haunted Romanian past.

The prosaic language of Herta Muller is remarkable for its poetic engagements. An excerpt from *The Land of Green Plums* proves how she uses language to carry tales of oppression and terror under dictatorship regimes:

I knew the dwarf lady on Trajan Square. She had more scalp than hair, she was deaf and dumb, and she wore a grass pigtail like the discarded chairs underneath the old people's mulberry trees. She lived off the rubbish from the greengrocer's shop. Every year she got pregnant by Lola's men, who came off the late shift at midnight. It was dark in the square. The dwarf lady couldn't run away in time, because she couldn't hear their approach. And she couldn't scream.  
(40)

Muller breathes the basic themes of totalitarian terror into the seemingly innocent images that are clothed in brilliant poetic prose that stares at the reader initially. On reading further the images make perfect sense to the reader once you get used to her fragmented linguistic structure. It is marked by strategies of resistance. It displays her political engagements and her absolute objection to a totalitarian government. Pavlo Shopin goes a step further and in his article *Injurious and Injured Language in Herta Müller* comments on Muller's language as injurious and injured. "Ultimately, the metaphorical conceptualization of injurious and injured language allows Herta Muller to convey to the reader the dangers and limitations of art and communication in the condition of oppression." (Shopin 1084) Lyn Marven in her article *Trauma, Fragmentation, and the Body in Herta Muller's Prose and Collages* highlights how Muller's prose narrative is a translation of the terror she has experienced in Romania. "Muller's prose continues to depict the horrors of the Ceausescu's regime – and bear witness to the further effects of repression – in increasingly readable form." (Marven 411)

## CONCLUSION

Literature cannot overcome pain but it sure can alleviate the suffering. Recreation and re-enacting were an impetus to writing for Muller as is evident from her works. Muller articulated and translated the terror she has undergone under Ceausescu's regime in the beauty of language. Her figurative language is grounded in surrealist images, and its study reveals that it is motivated by concrete experiences. Her works express vital ideas and conventions to deliver clear messages about suffering and oppression. Her works can be appreciated because she presents vivid images to her readers and engages their imagination by bringing pleasure through the beauty of her language and thus educate the reader about the pain that she has undergone in her past life.



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# Restructuring Through the Appetite: Food Symbolism in *The Hunger Games*

Deepa Sarah Mathew

## ABSTRACT

Food is an important part of the social, political, and economic structure of a culture. Food in literary narratives symbolize cultural issues of acceptance, resistance, and preservation of culture. It also serves as symbols of memory, emotions, narrative history, relationships, power, and consumption.

Introducing food in a work of fiction is an efficient way to acclimatize the reader to the fictional climate. Therefore, food is an effective, versatile symbol. Suzanne Collins in *The Hunger Games* trilogy employs food as a symbol of physical survival, emotional connection, psychological and political power, manipulation and rebellion. This paper attempts to analyse how food has successfully been employed as a symbol in *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins.

**Keywords:** Food Symbolism, Hunger Games trilogy, food culture.

## INTRODUCTION

To “eat is a behaviour that develops beyond its own ends, replacing, summing up, and signaling other behaviours, and it is precisely for these reasons that it is a sign” says Ronald Barthes (33).

From gastro-blogging to curated menus, the second decade of the new millennium has been an epoch of novel culinary culture. With the evolution of culture many changes have been brought about in the food habits as well as the types of food being consumed. It no longer serves as the source of nutrition alone; rather it is a symbol which shows the consumer's social, economic, religious and political standing. E. N. Anderson argues that "food is used in every society to communicate messages"(6). Food tells about the people, their lives, their setting, and their culture.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

*The Hunger Games* trilogy is abundant with food imagery and through the descriptions of food the author portrays the disparity of living conditions and culture in the poorer districts and the ruling totalitarian Capitol. Althusser's notion of ideological state apparatus points to the use of ideology in the functioning of a society. Throughout *Hunger Games* series, food is used as a powerful symbol. Suzanne Collins in *The Hunger Games* trilogy employs food as a symbol of physical survival, emotional connection, psychological and political power and rebellion.

### 1. Food as a symbol of Physical Survival

Hunger has played a major role right from the formation of the ancient civilizations to shaping the history of the world. It finds its way into the futuristic, dystopian, fictional Panem. The people in the Districts are starving and they were willing to do nearly anything for food. People often perished of starvation but this evident fact was never acknowledged by the Capitol. "Starvation's not an uncommon fate in District 12. Who hasn't seen the victims? ... Starvation is never the cause of death officially. It's always the flu, or exposure, or pneumonia. But that fools no one" (33).

The Capitol deliberately caused shortage of food in the Districts to eliminate the weakest and old who were no longer productive. The people were forced to enter their names for reaping and the 'tesserae' or meagre rations were provided based on this. This was Capitol's way of ensuring there was a distrust among the working people and the comparatively well to do people in the same district. This can be seen when Gale despises the mayor's daughter, Madge, because the chances of her name being drawn at reaping is very slim. Katniss despises Peeta, the Baker's son and many others comparatively well off than the miners at the Seam for the same reason; because he never has to enter his name more than once as his family owns the bakery and they can afford to feed themselves even without extra tesserae.

In the case of District 13, there is no starvation but food does not bring any pleasure or happiness or content either. The food is tasteless, dependable, and grown in underground farms. The citizens are not given a choice as to how much, what, and when they would like to have; everything functions as per the schedule. For them, survival is everything and food is seen as a source for their physical survival alone. This fact is emphasized through the incidents that takes place

when Buttercup, Primrose's pet cat, is brought to District 13. The cat is seen as an unnecessary entity as it serves no particular purpose and therefore is not issued rations of food. Physical survival is given chief importance and pleasure and leisure becomes secondary.

## **2. Food as a symbol of Emotional Connection**

Survival is not the key to living life to the fullest. Emotional connections make life worthwhile. Hunger is the emotion that unites the Districts. Food is the element that connects the protagonist and many others associated with her. This emotional bond built over sharing of food proves to be rather powerful. Gale Hawthorne and Katniss meet in the woods while hunting for their respective families and gradually realize the fact that if they hunt together, they are able to gather more food. They divide the game and the greens they hunt and gather between themselves and sell the excess food for good amount of money at the black-market in District 12. What makes them stick together as a team is the hunt for food which was repeated every day without fail.

The bond between Katniss and Rue is of a similar kind; it is hunger that binds them. After Rue's death, the people of District 11 reward this alliance with a loaf of bread. This gift is an unprecedented gesture and it solidifies Katniss's connection with Rue and her sympathy towards the citizens of District 11. This makes Peeta promise the tribute's families a share of their one month's winning thereafter. This promise and Katniss's words of gratitude touch the hearts of the people and they all are bound by a single emotion: hunger. Thus, food or rather the lack of it binds the starving thousands in the district together. Later this force gains momentum leading to several uprisings and eventually paving way for the rebellion.

Before getting to know Peeta, Katniss recognizes Peeta as 'the boy with the bread' as it was he who tossed two loaves of half burnt bread from his family's bakery. This gift of food formed their connection. "To this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark and the bread that gave me hope and the dandelion that reminded me that I was not doomed" (39). The most genuine moments of their relationship centre around food during the life in the arena. In *Mockingjay*, as they try to bring to bring back his real memories that had been manipulated in the Capitol using tracker-jacker venom, the positive memories that Peeta have of them centre around food they have shared. His memory of the bread incident is a big turning point; it was one of those memories that was left intact.

Collins uses the word 'hunger' to describe the moments when Katniss's feelings for Peeta are most real. In each book, Katniss refer this "new kind" (353) of hunger she feels for Peeta. This is a sexual hunger had she never felt for Gale. Even though, she had known Gale for a long time and had spent a major part of their time together, she had never this 'hunger' for him and he was never portrayed as having filled her hunger. It was always Peeta who quenched her hunger.

Sharing of the limited food resources, and the hunger caused by the lack of it binds the people of the district together and give them enough courage to raise their voices and revolt against the unjust Capitol that uses scarcity as a weapon to control and suppress the population in the districts. In contrast, in District 13, each family is assigned with their own seating during mealtime, which curbs the little opportunity there existed for building relationship within its hectic scheduled walls. And so, it is noteworthy that survival-oriented people in District 13 functioned mostly like pre-programmed machines and their feelings and emotions were given little importance.

### **3. Food as a symbol of Psychological and Political Power**

Every prominent character and political force in the series employs food as a method of control, manipulation or rebellion. Collins deliberately gave her fictional nation the name Panem, a reference to Roman 'panem et circenses', which literally means 'food and circuses'. The people in the Capitol had only two major concerns: they needed fancy food and fancier entertainment which would evoke in them some excitement. For these they exploited the poor people chiefly by restraining their food supply. By this method, President Snow was able to weaken the population both physically and psychologically so that they had no say in the politics of the country. As for the politically active citizens in the Capitol, Snow was able to distract their attention by keeping them engaged with bountiful supply of food and thrilling entertainment all at the cost of the lives of the people in the districts. Whereas in the districts, food is carefully controlled.

In case of the Capitol, President Snow demonstrates his power by providing plenty of everything; not only food but also the sexual hunger of people in the Capitol is fulfilled by Snow. Finnick Odair, the handsome young victor from District 4, was often sold by Snow to the wealthy people in the Capitol. After the games, to suppress uprisings and stifle the voice of the people, in *Catching Fire*, food shortages are further worsened and even the meagre supplies that were earlier provided are not delivered to the districts where there are signs of uprisings, especially in District 12. This was Snow's attempt to discourage the people and Katniss from creating another uprising.

The control of food in the arena propels the games forward. The Capitol controls supplies through the placement of the cornucopia. Even though there may be enough supplies for the tributes to survive, it is placed at a very tricky position and anyone who dares to get to the cornucopia is almost sure to be killed by some fellow tribute. The announcement of the feasts made by the game-makers is another such cunning way where all of the surviving tributes are asked to attend by offering them what each of them is in dire need of at that time and thereby, they are brought face to face, out of their respective hiding spaces and this most obviously quickens the pace at which they kill each other. "Feasts always result in fatalities" (279).

Collins continually shows an excess of food in the Capitol; a stark contrast to the state of things in the Districts. While food is survival in the Districts, it is expendable in the Capitol. The display of extensive wastage of food is depicted in the Capitol party for the victors, held in the banquet room of president snow's mansion in *Catching Fire*. Katniss says "...the idea of throwing away food, as I see so many people doing so casually, is abhorrent to me" (96). Collin's display of food within the Capitol firmly places it among dystopian societies, rather than utopian ones.

#### 4. Food as a symbol of Rebellion

Food becomes an ideal image with which the people express their discontent and dreams of a better world. Fighting for morsels had become a part of the common people's everyday life to the point that selflessness and generosity had become revolutionary acts. Such moments include District 11's gift of bread to Katniss and Peeta's pledge of his and Katniss's winnings to District 11, as a gesture of appreciation. The rebels also use food as a symbol. Baked rolls from District 3 are used to communicate important information to the tributes during the Games in *Catching Fire*. The escaped rebels from District 8 bake the mockingjay symbol into crackers to show their loyalty in a safe, easily disposable way.

Collins fills *The Hunger Games* with berry scenes which are a symbol of ultimate rebellion. Nothing compares to the berries when Katniss and Peeta choose mutual suicide over breaking their alliance; they ignite the spark of rebellion in Panem. To President Snow and the Capitol, the berries carry a deliberate attempt on Katniss's part to change the rules and not abide by the Capitol's plans. From the very start, Collins uses berries as foreshadowing to point readers to the end of the book or, rather, the impending revolution.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Semiotic analysis is the discipline of study that explores the signs and symbols and their respective attributed meaning in a certain society or context and how various elements combine in order to form a symbol which is then deciphered by an individual. Food in *The Hunger Games* no longer refers only to the act of eating but signifies something greater. The same object may be used to convey different meanings in different societies or contexts. The study further utilizes Northrop Frye's concept of archetypal criticism. For Frye, as William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks put it, "archetype, borrowed from Jung, means a primordial image, a part of the collective unconscious, the psychic residue of numberless experiences of the same kind, and thus part of the inherited response-pattern of the race" (709). Food scarcity and strict rationing were employed as means to coerce the citizens to toe the line. The surplus of food in the Capitol and the starvation in the Districts are equally used as tools for social control. Hence, food symbolises power in the fiction.

Viewed archetypally, literature turns out to play an essential role in refashioning the impersonal material universe into an alternative verbal universe. Archetypal

criticism can be used to trace the various food patterns. The symbolic imagery of food is, in a way, the prototype of the recurring patterns of imagery in literature, while at the same time exposes the convictions of cuisine. Despite the fact that *The Hunger Games* were set in fictional world, one of the major questions of this work points out is how far does the society exert power over individuals through a particular cuisine. Abundance and scarcity of food can be used to show the various concepts and interpretations of literary analysis.

## CONCLUSION

Food is an important part of the social, political, and economic structure of a culture. Set in the future dystopia of Panem, *The Hunger Games* follows the rise of a provincial rebellion against the wealthy and tyrannical Capitol. According to Jamey Heit, the novel, through the use of various images of food, explores the context of how one thinks about the nature of politics, the value of the individual and the importance of political action.

The research tries to analyze how food serves as the primary symbolic image. By analyzing the various ways through which food becomes a symbol, the research tries to show how food serves as a cultural construct. Food transcends all the geographical, lexical as well as regional disparities and emerge out as an archetype of seclusion. The research also examines the impact of a hegemonic ideological presence in the food culture. All of this goes to show that food is a means of not just survival, but also a platform for social change.

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# **Deconstruction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema**

**Anju Mathew**

## **ABSTRACT**

The term gender has initiated a number of debates and discourses over the past years and still continues the same . Judith Butler and other gender theorists interrogated the social and performative context of gender . The notions of gender changes overtime and is merely a repeated stylisation of the body . The concept of hegemonic masculinity emphatically marginalised the 'other' ways of being men and women. It always projects the 'complete man' expression who is physically and mentally dominant in every sphere. However most men and boys cannot live up to the notions of hegemonic masculinity . The French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser rightly stated that all ideologies fundamentally reflect and operate through media industry which in turn influences the society at large . Cinema being a great political tool can propagate the current trends in society . This paper entitled "Deconstruction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema" is intended to study the changing notions of masculinity and how it is being reflected in contemporary malayalam cinema. The selected movies for this study are *Moothoon* ( 2019) , *Kumbalangi Nights* ( 2019), *Trance*(2020) , *Joji* (2021) and *Bhoothakalam*(2022)

**Key words :** Gender , Masculinity , Hegemonic Masculinity , Homosexuality, Mental Health , Cinema , Queer.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In gender studies, hegemonic masculinity is part of R. W. Connell's gender order theory, which recognizes multiple masculinities that vary across time, society,



culture, and the individual. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a practice that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of the common male population, and other marginalized ways of being a man. ("Hegemonic Masculinity"). The nature of hegemonic masculinity derives from the theory of cultural hegemony by Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci which analyses the power relations among the social classes of a society. Hence, in the term hegemonic masculinity, the adjective 'hegemonic' refers to the cultural dynamics by means of which a social group claims and sustains a leading and dominant position in a social hierarchy. ("Hegemonic masculinity: combining theory and practice in gender interventions").

The conceptual beginnings of hegemonic masculinity represented the culturally idealized form of manhood. The characteristics of hegemonic masculinity includes men as the bread winner of home, possessing unquestionable rights. These characteristics include violence, aggression, stoicism (emotional restraint), courage, toughness, physical strength, athleticism, risk taking, adventure and thrill seeking nature, competitiveness, achievement and success oriented attitudes.

Art is a reflection of the society and film is no exception to this. The hierarchy, social systems, social division of caste, class and gender everything had been portrayed in cinema over the years. Bollywood with its exceptional benchmark have had films that reflected the varying trends in the society. The construction of gender and its practise are being precisely addressed in cinema. Bollywood had celebrated the concept of hegemonic masculinity in a number of cinemas. These heroes possessed super human characters and they are able to withstand any crucial circumstance with their unparalleled masculine strength and power. They were highborn males who enjoyed the privilege of brahmanical hegemony. Majority of them belonged to either, brahmin, shatriya or nair community and highlighted the idea of possessing innate intelligence, masculine strength, and audacity. They were all celebrated the purity of their lineage and thereby inherited innumerable wealth. With their Characters such as Bharathchandran IPS (*Bharathchandran IPS*). Mangalasseri Neelakandan (*Devasuram*) Arakkal Madhavanunni (*Valyettan*), Poovalli Induchoodan (*Narasimham*), (Nandagopal Marar (*Narasimham*)) were all stood as the flag bearers of hegemonic masculinity. Such characters enjoyed tremendous freedom to say cus words, abuse women and to highlight their brahmanical existence. They created norms and the society vehemently exhorted to follow their ideology indistinctively. The white dhoti, thick moustache, naalukettu, vermilion on the forehead were all considered as the bench mark of masculinity. These films maintained a particular spatio temporal dimension which focused the traditional landscape of 'tharavadu' and a particular period in the life of the hero. These heroes used the 'Valluvanadan' dialect and captured the premises of northern Malabar. Thus these films set forth a number of characteristics that male audience are encouraged to internalize into their own personal codes.

However the feminist studies and gender theories could bring a significant change in this view and it held the notions of hegemonic masculinity under

investigations over years. Such studies penetrated deep in the society and interrogated each and every traditionally accepted constructs of gender and its practices. In his work, *The Myth of Masculinity*, Joseph Pleck, the American author identified several negative social and psychological consequences of boys' and men's socialization according to historically situated and contradictory meanings of manhood. ("The Problem With a Fight Against Toxic Masculinity"). Contemporary Malayalam films with its unique themes initiated a revolutionary approach in this move and it started deconstructing the notions hegemonic masculinity. Such investigations in turn reinterpreted and redefined the concept of masculinity in general. Thus such contemporary Malayalam movies with its vivid portrayal of various societal issues and realistic treatment of characters inexorably blurred the popular notions associated with masculinity. The Malayalam movies witnessed a paradigm shift with the directorial as well as scriptorial excellence put forth by the 'Pothen - Pushkaran brilliance'. Dileesh Pothan and Shyam Pushkaran initiated a new wave in mollywood in terms of progressive themes and symbolic representation.

These films started to depict heroes who are timid, polite and those who are struggling with depression and other mental health issues. These heroes do not enjoy the privilege of caste or creed. They are not inheriting any familial wealth or status instead they are the descendants or left overs of a broken family. They exhibit physical as well as emotional weakness to its core. They are not winners or champions rather they are mere survivors. They always feel a sense of non-belongingness everywhere.

The movie *Kumbalangi Nights* directed by Madhu C Narayanan clearly deconstructs the traditional concept of family and masculinity. The brothers are the members belonging to a broken family who inhabit in a shabby environment. The character Saji is a wandering unemployed man who depends on others to lead his life. His solitary life causes serious psychological problems to him and Saji at the end of the movie openly declares that he is losing his mental stability and he wants medical treatment. This is a landmark point in the history of Malayalam cinema that a hero outwardly declares about his psychological problems and demands a solution for the same. The character Bobby is far behind his lover Baby Mol in terms of boldness. He is seeking guidance from Baby Mol with regard to marriage and their further life. However, on the contrary the character Shammy played by Fahad Fazil is an aggressive macho male in every positive way. Shammy is the personification of toxic male which is approved by hegemonic masculinity. In his first scene he is shown in the bathroom scrapping of a bindi stuck on the mirror. He doesn't want even a trace of femaleness to interfere with his idea of complete man. Shammy is class conscious and for this reason he is disturbed by the affair between Bobby and Baby Mol since Bobby is inferior to him in terms of social class. However Shammy's attempts to become a complete man fail miserably at the end, which in turn is another way the script writer is mocking at the hegemonic masculinity. Shammy is nothing but a failed hero at the end.

According to the film critic Dr. C.S Venkideshwaran , the protagonists of new generation films are weak , damaged , scared , devious and oftentimes impotent and castrated (“ Newgen Malayalam Cinema”) .In the movie *Joji* directed by Dileesh Pothan ,the protagonist Joji is a frustrated and young man .Joji is not only masking his crime but also his lack of audacity .Joji is not that superhero who seeks his revenge straight out by exhibiting his masculine strength. Rather he is manipulating everyone through his emotional vulnerability. He succumbed to guilt ,anxiety and overgrowing fear of trepidation. Joji is lean and is devoid of any such physiognomy. If the traditional heors enjoyed considerable freedom in smoking and drinking , joji has been denied to do that in public . He has to go to a place where he wont be visible from his father’s room on the top floor. His purposeless white horse can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of a bygone age’s glory and current obsolete state of existence which again is sharply echoing the deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity. Typically if characters of christian faith are portrayed in cinema , then they must be catholics. But in *Joji* , the director portrayed a Malankara Orthodox family.

There is evidence that depressive symptoms in men are often undiagnosed and untreated. It has been suggested that men may find it difficult to seek help because culturally dominant (or hegemonic) forms of masculinity are characterised by emotional control and a lack of vulnerability, while depression is often associated with powerlessness and the uncontrolled expression of emotion.

Usually Malayalam films were reluctant in portraying the psychological issues of heroes . However the movie *Trance* directed by Anwar Rasheed discussed the need of mental health awareness by employing the characters such as Viju Prasad and his mentally unstable younger brother , Kunjan . Kunjan used to commit crimes with pointed tools or taking his own life .This seriously hits the mental health of paster Viju Prasad also known as paster Joshua Carlton. Viju at the end of the movie is succumbed to psychedelic trance . After undergoing a psychiatric treatment , Viju recovers his sanity and restarts his life from the beginning. Thus Saji and Viju are actually exhorting the viewers not to be hesitant in seeking treatment for mental health issues . The movie *Bhoothakalam* directed by Rahul Sadashivan also portrays an emotionally vulnerable man who is struggling with depression.

Another aspect of hegemonic masculinity is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men. Gay masculinity was the most conspicuous subordinated masculinity and it never occupied a space within this discourse. Heterosexual men and boys with effeminate characteristics ran the risk of being scorned as well. The movie *Moothon* directed by Geethu Mohandas is a ground-breaking attempt at this direction. It is the first time where a malayalam movie portrayed the love affair between two men .Although Malayalam movies discussed lesbian love through movies such as *Randu Penkuttikal* , and *Sancharam* , it didn’t initiated a dialogue in this regard . The love affair between the characters Akbar and Ameer captures the ‘other’ ways of being masculine . However such masculinities are out of the discourse .

## CONCLUSION

The contemporary Malayalam cinema interrogates the popular notions associated with gender and its practises . It can be analysed that hegemonic masculinity embodies a form of social organization that has been sociologically challenged and changed. The mollywood is far ahead in terms of such revolutionary motives and interrogating absurd concepts prevailing in society comparing to other film industry in India . It is a landmark step that is capable enough to aware the coming generation since films play a pivotal role in shaping young minds and awaring people .It is definitely a hopeful attempt and envisages a significant transformation.

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# **Isolation and Identification of Litter Isolated Culturable Total Heterotrophic Bacteria from Ayiramthengu Mangrove Ecosystem, India**

**Mintu Ann Varghese, Anit M. Thomas  
and R. Sunil Kumar**

## **ABSTRACT**

The present study aims on the isolation and identification of total heterotrophic bacteria from the leaf litter surface of Ayiramthengu mangrove ecosystem. Three different sampling stations were selected, and the study period was from October 2018 to January 2019. The study revealed that the Station1 showed highest colony forming units ( $74.25 \times 10^4$  cfu/g) than the other two stations. Gram negative bacteria (80%) was abundant than Gram positive bacteria. 20 genera of bacteria were isolated during the study with *Acinetobacter* sp. and *Micrococcus* sp. (11% each) as the dominant. Hence this study gave an insight about the vast bacterial population found in mangrove litter, evidencing the importance of bacterial exploration in this ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Mangrove, Litter, Heterotrophic Bacteria, Isolation

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mangroves are complex ecosystem developing a transition between terrestrial and marine environment (Pupin & Nahas, 2014). They are highly productive ecosystem that have a major role in biogeochemistry and nutrient cycling in the ecosystem (Alongi, 1996; Bouillon et al., 2008). Microorganisms play a pivotal

role in decomposition of detritus thereby providing food supply to various organisms found in the mangrove ecosystem (Rajendran & Kathiresan, 1999).

Mangrove leaves consist of various group of elements including carbon, nitrogen and energy which actively take part in the various biogeochemical cycling with the help of microorganisms (Nordhaus et al., 2017). In mangrove forest, the fallen leaves from the plant were colonized by microorganism leading to the decomposition process (Kathiresan et al., 2011). Litter degradation is a multidimensional activity in which degradation is initiated and facilitated by different microbes that take over on the litter surface thereby converting into simple organic compounds (Van der Heijden et al., 2016). The process of degradation varied with numerous elements such as mangrove species, season, and its location in the intertidal zone (Mfilinge et al., 2002; Kristensen et al., 2017). Bacterial decomposition increases the nutrients through carbon mineralization and nitrogen assimilation. However, these organic materials will be absorbed by the plants and remaining will be carried by the tide to the surrounding waters (Holguin et al., 2001).

A dearth of information is found regarding the litter bacterial composition from Ayiramthengu mangrove ecosystem. Hence the present study focusses on isolation and identification of heterotrophic culturable litter bacteria from Ayiramthengu mangrove ecosystem of India.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

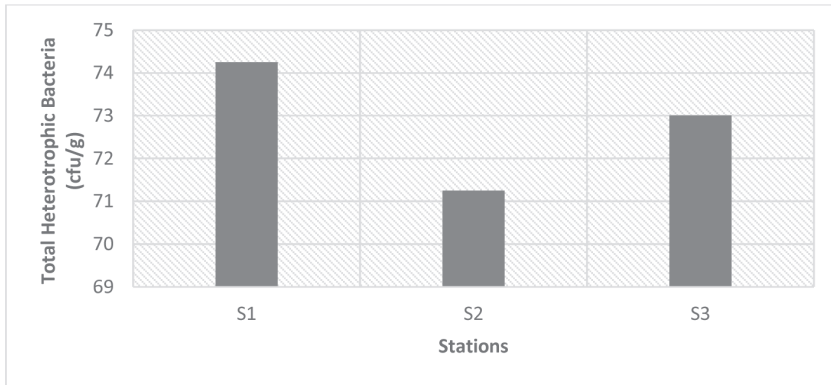
Ayiramthengu mangrove ecosystem (lat. 9° 07' 30"- 9° 07' 40" N and long. 76° 28' 40"- 76° 28' 50" E) was the study area, which was divided into three sampling stations. Station 1 lie close to the land area; Station 2 situated in the middle of the mangrove and Station 3 was the area adjoining the estuary. Sampling was done from October 2018 to January 2019.

Biofilm from decomposing litter was collected using sterile blade from three sampling stations and aseptically transferred into sterile bottles. Surface contaminants were removed using sterilized sea water. Samples were immediately preserved at -20°C and analyzed in the laboratory. The estimation of Total Heterotrophic Bacteria (THB) was done by standard plate method using Zobell Marine Agar (Hi Media). The plates were incubated for 48 hours at 28±2° C and number of colony forming units (cfu) per gram wet weight were calculated. Colonies were isolated and purified on saline nutrient agar. All the identification procedure was done by following Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology (2000) up to generic level. Cluster Analysis using PAST 4.0 was using to find the similarity/ dissimilarity of different stations based on the isolated bacteria.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

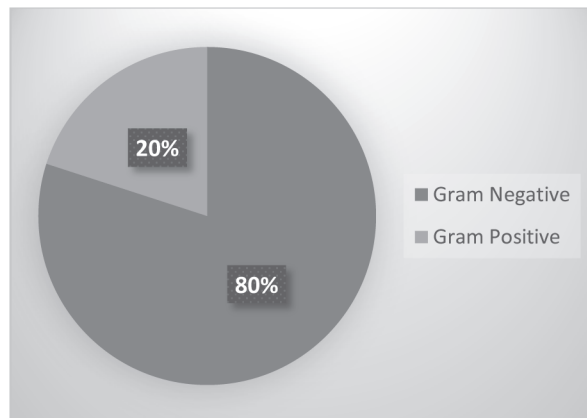
The total heterotrophic bacterial count recorded during the study was found highest at Station 1 (74.25 ± 1.25 cfu/g) followed by Station 3 (73 ± 4.0 cfu/g) and Station 2 (71.25 ± 1.75 cfu/g) (Fig 1). The highest bacterial count observed at

Station 1 may be because of the anthropogenic interaction from the nearby land area. Rajendran & Kathiresan (2007) stated that the decomposed leaves contain maximum number of microorganisms than the undecomposed leaves. Microbes play an important role in 40 to 70% hydrolysis of original material (Valiela et al., 1985).



**Fig 1 Total Heterotrophic Bacteria (cfu/g) population from litter along various stations**

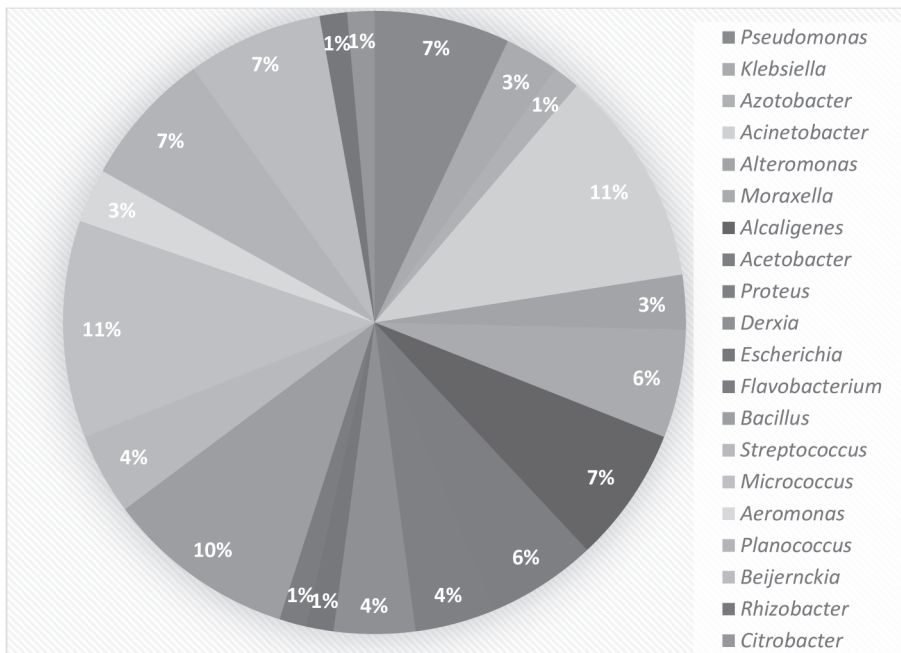
During the study, 80% of the isolated bacteria belongs to Gram negative forms with 16 genera of bacteria whereas 20% belongs to Gram positive forms with 4 genera of bacteria (Fig 2). This corroborates with the findings of Varghese et al. (2021) from Ayiramthengu mangrove ecosystem itself. Also, the result agreed with the general rule that 90% of bacteria in the marine environment are Gram-negative with different characteristics (Zobell, 1946).



**Fig 2 Percentage composition of isolated Gram negative and Gram positive bacteria**

Twenty genera of bacteria were isolated and grouped into various genus including *Pseudomonas* sp., *Klebsiella* sp., *Azotobacter* sp., *Acinetobacter* sp.,

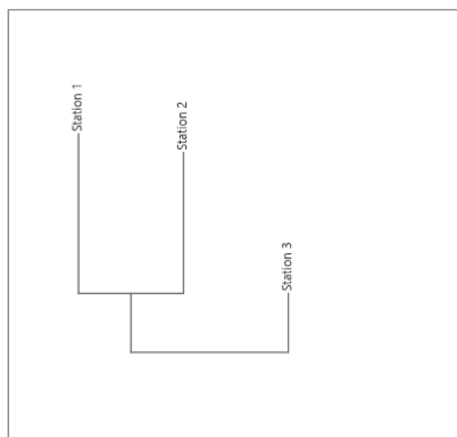
*Alteromonas* sp., *Moraxella* sp., *Alcaligenes* sp., *Acetobacter* sp., *Proteus* sp., *Derxia* sp., *Escherichia* sp., *Flavobacterium* sp., *Halomonas* sp., *Aeromonas* sp., *Beijerinckia* sp., *Xanthomonas* sp., *Rhizobacter* sp., *Bacillus* sp., *Streptococcus* sp., *Micrococcus* sp., *Planocococcus* sp. and *Citrobacter* sp. The relative abundance of isolated bacteria was represented in Fig 3. The highest percentage was observed for *Acinetobacter* sp. and *Micrococcus* sp. (11% each). Raghavendrudu & Kondalarao (2008) stated that the genera *Bacillus*, *Pseudomonas* and *Micrococcus* are the common heterotrophic bacteria in the mangrove habitats. *Pseudomonas*, *Acinetobacter*, *Escherichia*, *Flavobacterium*, *Bacillus* and *Micrococcus* were isolated from decomposing mangrove leaf litter (Ogbonna, 2011). Kathiresan et al. (2011) and Varghese et al. (2021) noted that the litter isolated bacteria could produce enzymes that help in the degradation process.



**Fig 3 Relative abundance of isolated bacteria**

Cluster analysis based on the isolated bacteria revealed that Station 1 and Station 2 showed more similarity than Station 1 to Station 3 and Station 2 to Station 3 (Fig 4). Taketani et al. (2018) stated that litter degradation was a dynamic process that leads to a complex interaction between various populations having different metabolic capabilities and ecological functions. These interactions result in co-existence and co-exclusion between the population and this ecological process is still unknown (Green et al., 2017).





**Fig 4 Cluster analysis showing similarity between stations**

In conclusion, the present study investigated the isolation and identification of bacterial in decomposing leaf litter of Ayiramthengu mangrove and it was found that this ecosystem contains a broad range of bacteria. However, further research is needed to explore more about the bacteria in relation to its ecosystem.

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# മലയാള ചെറുകഥയിലെ പെൺബുദ്ധി

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## ആമുഖം

മലയാള ചെറുകഥയുടെ നേർവഴികളിൽ ഏറ്റവും ഉജ്വലമായ നാമധേയമാണ് കെ. സരസ്വതിയമ്മ. പുരുഷനോടൊപ്പം എല്ലാ രംഗങ്ങളിലും സ്ത്രീ ഇറങ്ങിച്ചെല്ലേണ്ടത് സ്ത്രീസമുദായത്തിന്റെ മാത്രമല്ല മനുഷ്യവർഗ്ഗത്തിന്റെ തന്നെ ഉൽകർഷണത്തിനാവശ്യമാണെന്ന് വ്യക്തമാക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് മൗനത്തിന്റെയും സഹനത്തിന്റെയും പാരമ്പര്യത്തെ തകിടം മറിച്ച് സ്ത്രീയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രതയെ അപഗ്രഥിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ചോദിക്കുന്നതു പോലെയാണ് എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ സ്ത്രീ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ ഓരോരുത്തരും സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും ആദർശങ്ങളും സ്വന്തമായുള്ളവരും, ബുദ്ധിയും തന്റേടവും നിറഞ്ഞ മനസ്സോടെ ജീവിതത്തെ കാണുന്നവരും വാശിയും അമർഷവും തുറന്നു കാണിക്കുന്നവരും, കുടുംബത്തിലും അധികാരരംഗങ്ങളിലും ഔദാര്യത്തോടെ നൽകുന്ന രണ്ടാം പദവിയെ നിഷേധിക്കുന്നവരുമാണ്.

1938 മുതൽ 1970 വരെ അവൾ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച സ്ത്രീകഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ ഇന്നും സ്ത്രീസ്വതന്ത്രതയുടെയും വിമോചനത്തിന്റെയും മികച്ച മാതൃകകളാണ്. സ്ത്രീയെ അസ്വതന്ത്രയാക്കുന്ന സാമൂഹിക വ്യവസ്ഥിതിക്കെതിരെയുള്ള സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ സ്ത്രീസ്വതന്ത്രതയോടൊപ്പം എല്ലാ ചിന്തകളുടെയും ആകെത്തുകയാണ്, അവരുടെ 'പെൺബുദ്ധി' എന്ന കവിത. പെണ്ണിനു ബുദ്ധിയില്ലെന്നും വേണ്ടെന്നുമുള്ള നിരീക്ഷണങ്ങളോട് 'പെൺബുദ്ധി പിൻബുദ്ധി' എന്ന ചൊല്ലിനോട് ഒക്കെയുള്ള ബൗദ്ധികപ്രതികരണമാകുന്ന 'പെൺബുദ്ധി' എന്ന കഥയിലെ സ്ത്രീസ്വതന്ത്രതയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള കാലികതയെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്തുകൊടുക്കുന്ന പ്രബന്ധം.

സ്ത്രീയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രതയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അന്വേഷണങ്ങൾ മലയാള ചെറുകഥയിൽ ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത് സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ കഥകളിലാണ്. മലയാള സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ ധീരവും നൂതനവുമായ ഒരു ശബ്ദമുയരുന്നത് അവരുടെ രചനകളിലൂടെയാണ്. പുരുഷൻ എഴുതുന്ന സ്ത്രീയെക്കുറിച്ചു മാത്രം അറിവുണ്ടായിരുന്ന ജനതയ്ക്ക് സ്ത്രീ എങ്ങനെ സ്ത്രീയെക്കുറിച്ചെഴുതും എന്നറിയാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞത് സരസ്വതിയമ്മയിലൂടെയാണ്. ചിന്തിക്കുന്ന സ്ത്രീയെ മലയാള ചെറുകഥാരംഗത്ത് അവതരിപ്പിച്ച ഇവരുടെ എല്ലാ കൃതികളും സ്ത്രീപ്രധാനങ്ങളാണ്. സാമൂഹികജീവിതത്തിലുണ്ടാകുന്ന നവോത്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ഫലമായി ഉന്ന

തവിദ്യാഭ്യാസം നേടാനും ഉദ്യോഗം വഹിക്കാനും അതുവഴി സാമ്പത്തിക സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യ മാർജ്ജിക്കാനും കഴിഞ്ഞ സ്ത്രീകളുടെ തലമുറ കേരളത്തിൽ ഉയർന്നുവന്ന പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലാണ് സരസ്വതിയമ്മ എന്ന എഴുത്തുകാരി രൂപപ്പെടുന്നത്. സ്വന്തമായൊരു മുറിയും ഭാഷയും ആവിഷ്കരണവും തേടുന്ന പുതിയ സ്ത്രീ മുന്നേറ്റങ്ങളുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ സ്ത്രീനോട്ടങ്ങൾക്ക് പ്രസക്തി ഏരുന്നു. സ്ത്രീനിഷ്ഠമായ വികല വീക്ഷണങ്ങളെ നിശിതമായി വിമർശിക്കുന്ന സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ പുരുഷനും സ്ത്രീയും ഒരുപോലെ തെറ്റുകാരാകുന്നു. അവരുടെ കഥകളിലും ജീവിതത്തിലും സ്ത്രീസ്വത്വരൂപീകരണത്തിന്റെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ ആവർത്തിക്കുന്നതായി കാണാം.

**പെൺബുദ്ധി - സ്ത്രീസ്വാതന്ത്ര്യത്തിന്റെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ**

ആയിരത്തിത്തൊള്ളായിരത്തി അവത്തിയൊന്നിൽ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ട പെൺബുദ്ധിയിൽ സരസ്വതിയമ്മ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വിലാസിനിയിലൂടെ, ദാവത്യജീവിതത്തിൽ പങ്കാളി ആകാനും മാതാവകാനും വിധിയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ടവളാണ് സ്ത്രീ എന്ന പരമ്പരാഗത വിശ്വാസത്തെ അട്ടിമറിയ്ക്കാനും, സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് സ്വാതന്ത്ര ചിന്തയും അഭിപ്രായ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യവും നിഷേധിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹഘടനയുടെ അടിത്തറയിളക്കാനുമാണ് ശ്രമിച്ചത്. ഋജുവും വിവൃതവുമായ ആഖ്യാനത്തിലൂടെ അവർ സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് സ്വാതന്ത്രചിന്തയും അഭിപ്രായ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യവും നിഷേധിയ്ക്കുന്ന സമൂഹഘടനയുടെ അടിത്തറയിളക്കാനുമാണ് ശ്രമിച്ചത്. കഥയുടെ പേരിലൂടെത്തന്നെ എഴുത്തിന്റെ രാഷ്ട്രീയ ലക്ഷ്യം അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായും പ്രഖ്യാപിയ്ക്കപ്പെടുന്നുണ്ട്. സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ കഥകൾ പൊതുവെ സംവാദാത്മകങ്ങളാണ്. അവിടെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ അഭിമുഖ സംഭാഷണം നടത്തുന്ന രീതിയിലാണ് ആഖ്യാനം നിർവ്വഹിച്ചിരിയ്ക്കുന്നത്. അവരുടെ സംഭാഷണമാകട്ടെ സ്ത്രീയെന്ന പ്രമേയത്തിലാണ് ഊന്നിനില്ക്കുന്നത്. ഏറെ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ട കഥയായ പെൺബുദ്ധിയിലും ഈ രീതിയാണ് സരസ്വതിയമ്മ പിൻതുടർന്നിരിക്കുന്നത്.

വിലാസിനി, വിജയലക്ഷ്മി എന്ന് രണ്ട് സ്ത്രീ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ വിരുദ്ധ കുടുംബഘടനയ്ക്കുള്ളിൽ നിർത്തിയാണ് സ്ത്രീസ്വത്വരൂപീകരണത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് കഥാകാരി ചർച്ച നടത്തുന്നത്. അവിവാഹിതയും ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥയുമാണ് വിലാസിനിയെങ്കിലും വിവാഹിതയുടെയും ഒപ്പം ഭാര്യയുടെ അമ്മയുടെയും വേഷങ്ങൾ കെട്ടിയാടി തളർച്ച ബാധിച്ച സ്ത്രീയാണ് വിജയലക്ഷ്മി. നിഷേധാത്മകമായും ഒരു സമരമായും ജീവിതം സ്വീകരിച്ച വിലാസിനിയ്ക്ക് അതൊരു ഉത്സവമാണ് ഇന്നും. എന്നാൽ വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയാകട്ടെ കഥയ്ക്കുള്ളിൽ പറയുന്നതുപോലെ “ennuie ” എന്ന അവസ്ഥ ബാധിച്ച സ്ത്രീയാണ്. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ പൊരുത്തപ്പെടാത്ത രണ്ട് സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ അഭിമുഖമായി നിർത്തുകയും അത് കർശനമായി അപഗ്രഥിയ്ക്കുകയുമാണ് സരസ്വതിയമ്മ ഈ കഥയിലൂടെ ചെയ്യുന്നത്. പെണ്ണിന് ബുദ്ധി എന്തിന്? എന്നൊരു ചോദ്യവും ഈ കഥ പശ്ചാത്തലമായി അവതരിപ്പിയ്ക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. സ്ത്രീ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യമായി ചിന്തിയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ വിലാസിനിയുടെയും മറ്റുള്ളവർ അവർക്കുവേണ്ടി ചിന്തിയ്ക്കുമ്പോൾ വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയുടെയും ജീവിതമായി രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുന്ന കാഴ്ചയും പെൺബുദ്ധിയിലുണ്ട്.

പെൺബുദ്ധിയിലെ കേന്ദ്രകഥാപാത്രമായ വിലാസിനി അതിബുദ്ധിമതിയാണ്. ക്ലാസ്സിൽ ഒന്നാമതാകണമെന്ന നിർബന്ധം അവർക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ അധ്യാപകരുടെ കണ്ണിൽ മിടിക്കിയായി എങ്കിലും മരം കേറിയും ഓടിച്ചാടിയും നടന്നതിനാൽ പലരും അവളെ താന്തോന്നിയായി കണ്ടു. സ്കൂൾ ഫൈനലിനുശേഷം പണക്കുഴപ്പത്താൽ പഠനം

നിർത്തേണ്ടി വന്നപ്പോൾ “ഒരുമസ്ഥനെ വാങ്ങാൻ രക്ഷാകർത്താക്കൾ വിലപേശുന്നതിനിടയിൽ കൈയിൽ കിട്ടിയ പുസ്തകങ്ങളൊക്കെ വായിച്ചുതള്ളുകയായിരുന്നു അവളുടെ ജോലി.” വിലാസിനി പിന്നീട് ടൈപ്പ് റൈറ്റിംഗ് ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ടിൽ ചേർന്നു. ലജ്ജ തുടങ്ങിയ വാക്കുകളുടെ അർത്ഥം അവൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കിയിരുന്നില്ല. അധ്യാപകൻ ഉൾപ്പെടെ പലരും അവളോട് സൗഹൃദത്തിന് വന്നു. വിലാസിനിയോട് അടുക്കുന്ന പുരുഷന്മാർക്കെല്ലാം അവളോട് പ്രേമമായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ സൗഹൃദം മാത്രം കാംക്ഷിക്കുന്ന അവൾ ആരുടെയും പ്രണയത്തിൽ വീണതുമില്ല. തനിയ്ക്ക് അധ്യാപകനുമായുള്ള സൗഹൃദത്തെ “തലബന്ധമെന്നു മാത്രം വിശേഷിപ്പിയ്ക്കാനവൾ ഇഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു. താൻ ആരുടെയും പ്രണയാഭ്യർത്ഥനയിൽ വീഴാത്തതിന്റെ കാരണം തിരക്കിയ കൂട്ടുകാരിയോട് വിലാസിനി പറയുന്ന മറുപടി ഇതാണ്. “എങ്ങനെത്തവന്റെയും സ്നേഹം മാത്രം കൊണ്ട് കാമുകിയ്ക്ക് ആനന്ദിയ്ക്കാം. പക്ഷേ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വം നിറഞ്ഞ ഒരു തൊഴിലാണ് ഭാര്യത്വമെന്നത്. ജീവിതസമരത്തിന്റേതായ ഈ ലോകത്തിൽ സ്നേഹം മാത്രം കൊണ്ട് കൂട്ടികളെ വളർത്തിയെടുക്കാനാവില്ല.” ഉത്തരവാദിത്വത്തിലൂടെ അഭിമാനം ഉയർത്തിപ്പിടിയ്ക്കുന്ന സ്ത്രീയേ ഇവിടുള്ളൂ. വിവാഹത്തെ തികഞ്ഞ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യബോധത്തോടു കൂടിയാണവൾ കാണുന്നത്. പ്രേമം ദിവ്യവും ശാശ്വതവുമാണെന്നു പറഞ്ഞ കൂട്ടുകാരിയോട് വിലാസിനിയുടെ മറുപടി ഇതാണ്. “എനിയ്ക്കിതു തീരെ മനസ്സിലാകുന്നില്ല. ശാശ്വതവും ദിവ്യവുമായ പ്രേമത്തിന് നശ്വരമായ ശരീരത്തിന്റെയും ലൗകികമായ വിവാഹത്തിന്റെയും ആവശ്യമെന്താണ്? കാല്പനിക പ്രണയത്തിന്റെ മിഥ്യാബോധത്തിനുന്നേരെ കലാപത്തിന്റെ ശബ്ദമുയർത്തുകയാണിവിടെ വിലാസിനി. വിലാസിനിയ്ക്ക് വിവാഹത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഒഴിഞ്ഞുനിന്നുകൊണ്ട് മാത്രമേ തന്റെ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തെ സംരക്ഷിയ്ക്കാനാവുന്നുള്ളൂ. “സ്ത്രീഗുണങ്ങളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീത്വം നിർവ്വചിയ്ക്കപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ ഒഴിവാക്കപ്പെടുന്ന ഇച്ഛകൾക്കും താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കും ഇടം കണ്ടെത്താനുള്ള ശ്രമമാണിവിടെ” എന്ന് ജെ. ദേവിക ‘ലിംഗഭേദവിചാരം സരസ്വതീയമ്മയുടെ കൃതികളിൽ’ അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടുന്നു. (2001 : 1050). “പുരുഷന്റെ പ്രേമപ്രകടനങ്ങൾ വഞ്ചനയാണെന്ന് തിരിച്ചറിയാമെങ്കിൽ, തനിയ്ക്കുവേണ്ടി എന്തിനും തയ്യാറാണെന്ന് വാഗ്ദാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന അവനോട് കടലിൽ ചാടാൻ ആവശ്യപ്പെടണമെന്നും അതുകേട്ട് കടലിൽ ചാടിയാൽ അതവന് നീന്തലറിയാമെന്നതിന്റെ ലക്ഷണം മാത്രമായിക്കരുതിയാൽ മതിയെന്നുമാണ് വിലാസിനിയുടെ കഥാകാരി പറഞ്ഞു വയ്ക്കുന്നത്.

വിലാസിനിയുടെ സ്വാശ്രയതാബോധത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത ചില പുരുഷന്മാർ അവളിൽ പുരുഷത്വമാരോപിച്ചു വിലാസിനിയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രവും ധീരവും ആർക്കും വഴങ്ങാത്തതുമായ നിലപാടുകളോടുള്ള പുരുഷസമൂഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രതികരണം ഇത്തരത്തിൽ അവളുടെ സ്ത്രൈണസത്തയെത്തന്നെ അപമാനിയ്ക്കുന്ന രീതിയിൽ അവളിൽ പുരുഷത്വം ആരോപിയ്ക്കലാണ്. വിലാസിനിയുടെ കൂട്ടുകാരി അന്നപൂർണ്ണി ഇതുകേട്ട് ഇങ്ങനെ പ്രതികരിക്കുന്നു. “പുരുഷത്വം പോലും, ലാസിയിലെപ്പോലെ സ്ത്രീത്വം ഞാൻ ഒറ്റ ഒരുത്തിയിലും കണ്ടിട്ടില്ല.” സ്ത്രീയും സ്ത്രീയും തമ്മിലുള്ള തിരിച്ചറിയാലാണിവിടെ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നത്. ഇവിടെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുകയും മനസ്സിലാക്കപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. സ്ത്രീയെന്ന നിലയിൽ ആരോഗ്യപൂർണ്ണമായ ഒരു സ്വതന്ത്ര നിലനിൽപ്പ് നേടിക്കൊണ്ട് തന്റെ സ്ത്രൈണാസ്തിത്വത്തെ ഉറപ്പിച്ചെടുക്കുകയാണ് വിലാസിനി.

സോഷ്യലിന് പു കൊടുത്തവനോട് പൂമാല തരാൻ ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്ന വിലാസിനി അതിന്റെ ബലത്തിൽ അവൻ ചെയ്ത വിവാഹാഭ്യർത്ഥന ധീരമായി നിരസിയ്ക്കുന്നു.

സിഗർദ്ദ് വിതരണം നടത്തിയപ്പോൾ അത് ചോദിച്ചുവാങ്ങുന്നത് അവൾ “കണ്ടില്ലേ, സ്ത്രീത്വം പുകയായി വരുന്നത് പിടിച്ചോളൂ!” എന്ന് പറയുമ്പോൾ ഒരു കുറുത്തചിരി അവിടെ മുഴങ്ങുന്നുണ്ട്. ‘ബുദ്ധി സൗഹൃദത്തെ പ്രേമമായി പരിവർത്തിപ്പിച്ചാണെന്നും വിവാഹമായി പൂവണിയിപ്പിക്കാനും ശ്രമിച്ച സൗഹൃത്തിനെ അവൾ അന്തസ്സോടെ തിരുത്തുന്നു. ആ സ്നേഹബന്ധത്തെ “ബുദ്ധിശക്തികളുടെ ആകർഷണം കൊണ്ടുള്ള സൗഹാർദ്ദം” എന്ന് വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനപ്പുറം പോകാൻ തയ്യാറാകാത്ത വിലാസിനി തങ്ങളുടേത് സാഹോദര്യം പോലുമല്ലെന്നും അതിലും ലിംഗവ്യത്യാസമുള്ള നിലയ്ക്ക് “ബുദ്ധിശക്തികളുടെ ആകർഷണം” എന്ന വിശേഷണമാണ് നല്ലതെന്നും പറയുന്നു. സ്ത്രീപുരുഷ സൗഹൃദത്തെപ്പറ്റി സരസ്വതിയമ്മ പുലർത്തിയിരുന്ന വളരെ പുരോഗമനപരവും ആരോഗ്യകരവുമായ സമീപനമാണ് ഇവിടെ കാണുന്നത്. ജോലികിട്ടിയ സ്ഥാപനത്തിന്റെ മാനേജർ സ്ത്രീ വിദ്വേഷിയെന്ന തന്റെ മനോഭാവം മാറ്റുകയും വിലാസിനിയെക്കൊണ്ടുതന്നെ ടൈപ്പ് ചെയ്യിച്ച പ്രേമലേഖനം അവളുടെ സമക്ഷം സമർപ്പിച്ചുകൊടുക്കുകയും ചെയ്തപ്പോൾ അവൾ മാനുഷമായ രീതിയിൽ അയാളുടെ മുന്നിൽവെച്ചു തന്നെ അതുവാങ്ങി കാറ്റിൽ പറത്തുന്നു. സ്നേഹിതകൾ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഉപദേശപാഠങ്ങൾക്ക് വിലാസിനിയെ തേടിയെത്തി. ഭാര്യയും കുട്ടികളുമുള്ള ഒരാളുടെ പ്രണയക്കുരുക്കിലകപ്പെട്ട സാരാമ്മയെന്ന കുട്ടുകാരിയോട് വിലാസിനി പറയുന്നതിതാണ്. “കർത്തവ്യത്തിന് ഒന്നാം സ്ഥാനം കൊടുത്ത് ബുദ്ധി പൂർവ്വം നിയന്ത്രിയ്ക്കേണ്ടതിനുപകരം വികാരത്തിനടിപ്പെട്ട് എടുത്ത് ചാടുന്നത് എനിക്കിഷ്ടമല്ല. പിന്നെ സാരാമ്മയുടെ അച്ഛനമ്മമാരെയും കുറ്റപ്പെടുത്താതെ നിവൃത്തിയില്ല. ഇരുപത്തിരണ്ട് വയസ്സായ മകളുടെ ശരീരത്തിന്റെയും മനസ്സിന്റെയും ആവശ്യമറിഞ്ഞ് നിറവേറ്റാത്തതിന്റെ ഫലമാണിത്.”

വിലാസിനിയുടെ കുട്ടുകാരിയാണ് വിജയലക്ഷ്മി. വിവാഹിതയ്ക്ക് നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നതെന്തെന്ന് വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയുടെ അനുഭവത്തിലൂടെ കാട്ടിത്തന്നുകൊണ്ടാണ് വിലാസിനിയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രലോകത്തെ കഥാകാരി അവതരിപ്പിച്ചുകൊടുത്തത്. വിലാസിനിയെപ്പോലെ ബുദ്ധിമതിയായിരുന്നു വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയും. അവൾ ഭാര്യയും അമ്മയുമായപ്പോഴേയ്ക്ക് ബുദ്ധി മരവിച്ച് മടുപ്പിന്റെ ലോകത്തെത്തിയിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. വിലാസിനി തന്റെ മനസ്സോ ശരീരമോ തീറെഴുതപ്പെടാത്തതിനാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രയും സംതൃപ്തയുമാണ്. സ്വന്തം ബുദ്ധിയെക്കുറിച്ച് വ്യാകുലപ്പെടുന്ന വിജയലക്ഷ്മി ഒന്നാമതായി ജയിച്ചതിന് തനിയ്ക്ക് കിട്ടിയ സ്വർണ്ണമെഡലുകൾ കുട്ടികൾക്ക് മരുന്നുരച്ച് കൊടുക്കാനാണ് ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തിയത്. ഒന്നാമതായി ജയിക്കാൻ കാരണമായ അവളുടെ ബുദ്ധിശക്തിയാകട്ടെ തുരുമ്പെടുത്തു പോവുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. മടുപ്പും വിരക്തിയുമാണ് വിവാഹജീവിതത്തിൽ വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയ്ക്ക് അനുഭവിയ്ക്കേണ്ടി വരുന്നത്. ജീവിതത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് അവൾ വളർത്തിയെടുത്ത കാഴ്ചകൾ വിവാഹത്തോടെ അനാഥമാകുകയാണ് ചെയ്തത്. പ്രസവിക്കുന്ന ഒരുപകരണമായി അവൾ മാറുന്നു. “രാത്രികാലം നേരത്തെ വീട്ടിൽ വരാനും ശമ്പളപ്പണം കണ്ടമാനം കളയാതിരിക്കാനും അല്ലാതെ മറ്റെന്തിനാണ് ഭാര്യ” എന്ന വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയുടെ ചോദ്യം വിവാഹിതയ്ക്ക് നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നതെന്തൊക്കെയാണെന്ന് വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നതിനൊപ്പം ഭാര്യത്വത്തെയും വിവാഹത്തെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ പ്രതികരണങ്ങളും ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്നു. “എവിടെ ജനിച്ചാലും സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് ബുദ്ധിവേണ്ടെന്നും ഇല്ലെന്നും ഉള്ള വിശ്വാസം ഉറച്ചു പോയി. ഗൃഹഭരണം, പരദുഷണം, വേഷാലങ്കരണം ഇതിനൊക്കെ എന്തു ബുദ്ധിവേണം? തലച്ചോറുള്ള സ്ത്രീ നിയമമല്ല അപവാദമാണ്” എന്ന് വിജയലക്ഷ്മി പറയുന്നത് സ്വാനുഭവത്തെ മുൻനിർത്തിയാണ്. എം. അച്യുതൻ അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടുന്നു. “ബുദ്ധിപരമായ ഈ

സമീപനത്താൽ നമ്മുടെ സ്ത്രീത്വസങ്കല്പത്തെ ഒന്നുലയ്ക്കാൻ സരസ്വതിയമ്മയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞു. (1993 : 227). ബുദ്ധിയുള്ള സ്ത്രീകൾ വീട്ടമ്മമാരാകുന്നതോടെ അവർക്ക് ബുദ്ധി പരമായ തളർച്ച അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്നെന്നും പുരുഷന്മാർക്ക് അവസാനം വരെയും തലച്ചോർ ആവശ്യമുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഇത്തിളാകാൻ ജനിച്ച സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് അതിബുദ്ധി ഒരു ശാപമാണെന്നും തലച്ചോറുള്ള സ്ത്രീ അപവാദമാണെന്നും വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങളിലൂടെ കഥാകാരി കാട്ടിത്തരുന്നു. സി. എസ്. ചന്ദ്രിക അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടുന്നു. “സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് ബുദ്ധി ആവശ്യമില്ലെന്നും വികാരം മാത്രം മതിയെന്നുമുള്ള എന്നത്തേയും പ്രബലമായ സാമൂഹ്യവിശ്വാസത്തിന് വിരുദ്ധവും എതിർനില്ക്കുന്നതുമായ കഥാപാത്രമാണ് പെൺബുദ്ധിയിലെ വിലാസിനി” (2000 : 55). സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ മിക്ക കഥകളിലും ആവർത്തിയ്ക്കുന്ന ‘വിലാസിനി’ എന്ന ബുദ്ധിയും തന്റേടവും സ്വതന്ത്രചിന്താഗതിയുമുള്ള വിലാസിനി എഴുത്തുകാരിയുടെ തന്നെ പ്രതിരൂപമാണ്. സ്ത്രീയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്ര നിർമ്മിതിയിൽ എഴുത്തുകാരി സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള മാർഗ്ഗരേഖ കൂടിയായ വിലാസിനി പ്രണയം, വിവാഹം, ദാമ്പത്യം തുടങ്ങിയ വിഷയങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് വ്യക്തമായ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് പുലർത്തുന്നു. അതിരുകളില്ലാത്ത വ്യക്തിസ്വാതന്ത്ര്യബോധം പുലർത്തുന്ന വിലാസിനി എന്ന കഥാപാത്രത്തിലൂടെ കഥാകാരി ഉറപ്പിച്ചെടുക്കാനാഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന സ്ത്രീ സാമ്രാജ്യബോധത്തോടെ തെളിയിച്ചെടുക്കുന്നു.

കഥയുടെ നവോത്ഥാനകാല നിർവ്വചനങ്ങൾക്ക് വെളിയിലാണ് പെൺബുദ്ധി എന്ന കഥ. തുടക്കം മുതൽ തികച്ചും യഥാർത്ഥമായ ഒരാഘ്യാനഘടനയിലൂടെ തുടരുന്ന ഈ കഥ വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയുടെ വാക്കുകളിലെത്തുമ്പോൾ ബുദ്ധിപരമായ സമീപനം കൊണ്ട് നമ്മുടെ സ്ത്രീ സങ്കല്പത്തെ ഉലയ്ക്കുന്നു. ബുദ്ധിയോടും യുക്തിബോധത്തോടും സംവാദം ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ടാണ് സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ സാമാന്യബോധത്തെ അത് തകിടം മറിയ്ക്കുന്നത്. വിലാസിനി എന്ന സ്ത്രീയുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിലൂടെയല്ല തലച്ചോറിലൂടെയാണ് എഴുത്തുകാരി സംവദിയ്ക്കുന്നത്. ചെറുകഥ ഇന്നലെ ഇന്നിൽ എം. അച്യുതൻ അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടുന്നു. “സ്ത്രീയെന്ന നിലയിൽ വികാരസ്പർശങ്ങളായ എത്രയെത്ര അടരുകളുണ്ടാകും വിലാസിനിയുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ? സരസ്വതിയമ്മ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ തന്റെ സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങളുടെ വക്താക്കളാക്കുന്നതേ ഉള്ളൂ. അവർക്ക് ജീവചൈതന്യം കുറവാണ്.” (1993: 227). സമൂഹം സ്ത്രീയെ വികാരപരമായി മാത്രം സമീപിക്കുന്നു. തന്റെ യുക്തിപരമായ ചിന്ത സ്വരൂപിച്ചുവയ്ക്കുന്ന സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങൾ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മാധ്യമമാണ് സരസ്വതിയമ്മയ്ക്ക് തന്റെ കഥകൾ. അതിനാൽ തന്നെ സ്വാഭാവികമായും അതിന് വികാരസ്പർശകത്വം കുറവാണ്. വിലാസിനിയും വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയും ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ സമാന്തര പാതകളിലൂടെ സഞ്ചരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. എഴുത്തുകാരിയുടെ പക്ഷപാതമാകട്ടെ സ്ഥിരബുദ്ധിയും തന്റേടവുമുള്ള വിലാസിനിയോടും എം. അച്യുതൻ പറയുന്നു - ഈ കഥാകർത്രി നിശ്ചിതമായ അളവിലും തൂക്കത്തിലും ചിട്ടയിലും കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു. അവർ കഥാകർത്രിയുടെ ഇച്ഛയ്ക്കനുസരിച്ച് അനുസരണശീലമാർന്ന കുട്ടികളെപ്പോലെ നീങ്ങുന്നു. ഫലമോ? കഥകൾ ലഘുലക്ഷ്യപരമായ നിബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ ലോകം കൈവരിയ്ക്കുന്നു.” (1993 :227). ഈ അഭിപ്രായം കഥയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പരമ്പരാഗതവും അയുക്തികവുമായ ധാരണയാണ്. കഥ ആത്മപ്രകാശമാണ്, സ്വത്യാവിഷ്കരണമാണ്. ചെറുകഥ എന്ന മാധ്യമത്തിൽനിന്നുകൊണ്ട് സരസ്വതിയമ്മയ്ക്ക് തന്റെ ആശയലോകത്തെ അവതരിപ്പിയ്ക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുന്നു. എഴുത്തുകാർ എന്തിനെക്കുറിച്ചും സംസാരിയ്ക്കുന്നു എന്നത് ഒരു രചനയെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് വളരെ പ്രധാനമാണ്. അതുപോലെ തന്നെ എങ്ങനെ പറ

യുന്നു എന്നതും. മധ്യവർഗ്ഗ സമൂഹത്തിലെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസവും ഉദ്യോഗവുമുള്ള സ്ത്രീയുടെ മാനസിക ശാരീരിക പ്രശ്നങ്ങളവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ കഥാലോകത്ത് ഒരു പക്ഷേ ഏറ്റവുമധികം ചർച്ചകൾക്കും വിമർശനങ്ങൾക്കും വിധേയമായിട്ടുള്ളത് പെൺബുദ്ധി എന്ന കഥയാണ്. ഇത് ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ട ഒരു സ്ത്രീയുടെയും കഥയല്ല. വിലാസിനിയും വിജയലക്ഷ്മിയും ഒരേപോലെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസവും വിവേകവും നേടിയവരാണ്. പക്ഷേ വിവാഹം എന്ന ഉടമ്പടി അവരുടെ ബുദ്ധിപരമായ വളർച്ചയെ തകിടം മറിയ്ക്കുന്നു. ഒരു കൂട്ടം സ്ത്രീകളുടെ ശബ്ദമാണ് ഈ കഥയിലൂടെ കേൾക്കുന്നത്. അവിവാഹിതത്വം എന്ന അവസ്ഥയിൽ നില്ക്കുന്ന വിലാസിനിയ്ക്കെതിരെ സ്ത്രീ - പുരുഷ ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ വ്യത്യസ്ത ദൃശ്യങ്ങൾ കഥാകാരി നിരത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. ആ ബന്ധങ്ങളിലൊക്കെ വൈകല്യവും ജീർണ്ണതയും ബാധിച്ചിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു. വിലാസിനി വിവാഹിതയാകാത്തതു കൊണ്ടുതന്നെ തലച്ചോറുകൊണ്ട് അവൾക്കിനിയും ആവശ്യമുണ്ട്.

**ഉപസംഹാരം**

സ്ത്രീകൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള സംവാദങ്ങളിലൂടെ വളരെ അർത്ഥവത്തായ ഒരാശയത്തിന് സാധ്യകരണം നേടാൻ കഥകളിലൂടെ ശ്രമിയ്ക്കുന്നു സരസ്വതിയമ്മ. കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ വാദപ്രതിവാദങ്ങളിലൂടെ തന്റെ സ്ത്രീവാദ നിലപാടുകളെ സാമൂഹിക സന്ദർഭങ്ങളിലേക്ക് ഉയർത്തിക്കൊണ്ടുവരാനും അവർക്കു കഴിഞ്ഞു. സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ പരമ്പരാഗത മൂല്യബോധത്തിലേയ്ക്കുള്ള ഒരു ഇടപെടൽകൂടിയിരുന്ന അത്. പ്രണയം, വിവാഹം, ദാമ്പത്യം, കുടുംബം തുടങ്ങിയ വ്യവസ്ഥാപിത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ പെട്ടുപോകുന്ന സ്ത്രീസത്തയുടെ നിശ്ചലതകളെ കഥകളിലൂടെ തുറന്നെത്തിക്കുന്നു. സ്ത്രീയുടെ ലോകവും ജീവിതാനുഭവങ്ങളും വ്യക്തിത്വങ്ങളും ഇതുമാത്രമല്ലെന്നും ഇതു മാത്രമായിരിയ്ക്കരുതെന്നുമാണ് സരസ്വതിയമ്മ എഴുതിയത്. ഈ രചനകളിൽ യഥാർത്ഥ സ്ത്രീസ്വത്വം ദർശിയ്ക്കാനാവും. ഭാര്യ, അമ്മ എന്നീ അവസ്ഥയിൽ മാത്രം സ്ത്രീയെ ഒരുക്കിത്തീർത്തിരുന്ന പാരമ്പര്യത്തെ വെല്ലുവിളിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് അവിവാഹിതയും, ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥയുമായ സ്ത്രീയുടെ കരുത്ത് തന്റെ കഥകളിലൂടെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തി. വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ജീവിതാവസ്ഥകളിൽ, വ്യത്യസ്തമായ മൂല്യബോധത്തിൽ ജനിച്ചു വളർന്ന് പിന്നീട് സ്വന്തം സ്ത്രീ സത്ത തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ ബുദ്ധിയും വിവേകവും കരുത്തുമുള്ള സ്ത്രീ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളാണ് സരസ്വതിയമ്മയുടെ കഥകളിൽ പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെട്ടത്. സ്ത്രീ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് വികാസമാർന്ന ഒരു രാഷ്ട്രീയ ബോധം സരസ്വതിയമ്മ എന്ന കഥാകാരിയ്ക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്നു എന്നതിനുദാഹരണമാണ് അവരുടെ കഥാലോകം. സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് സരസ്വതിയമ്മ നല്കിയ നിർവ്വചനമായിരുന്നു അവരുടെ കഥകൾ. മാറ്റമില്ലാതെ ദുഷിച്ചുപോയ ഒരു സമൂഹത്തിൽ ചെളിക്കുണ്ടിൽ ആണ്ടുപോയ സ്ത്രീ ജീവിതത്തെ സ്വതന്ത്രേച്ഛയുള്ള ഒരു സ്വകാര്യനുഭവമായി ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു സരസ്വതിയമ്മ.

പുരുഷന്റെ അടിമയായിപ്പോകുന്ന സ്ത്രീ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസവും പ്രബുദ്ധതയും വിലക്കപ്പെട്ട സ്ത്രീ, പുരുഷനിർമ്മിത സദാചാരമൂല്യങ്ങളിൽ സ്വത്വം നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട സ്ത്രീ എന്നിങ്ങനെ വൈവിധ്യമാർന്ന മുഖങ്ങൾ കഥകളിൽ കാണാം. സ്ത്രീയുടെ ലോകത്തിന്റെ അകം കാഴ്ചകളെക്കുറിച്ചും പുറം ലോകത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും സംസാരിക്കാൻ ശേഷിയുള്ള, സ്വന്തമായ ആദർശങ്ങളും സ്വപ്നങ്ങളുമുള്ളവരാണ് ആ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ. വിദ്യാഭ്യാസവും ഉദ്യോഗവുമുള്ള, വിവാഹം വേണ്ടെന്നു വയ്ക്കുന്ന ബുദ്ധിമതികളായ സ്ത്രീകൾ അവരുടെ സംഭാഷണങ്ങളിൽ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നത് കഥാകാരിയുടെ നിലപാടുകളാണ്.



ഒരു സംവാദത്തിന്റെ ആഖ്യാനഘടനയുള്ള 'പെൺബുദ്ധി' തന്റേടവും സ്വപ്രത്യയ സ്വൈര്യവുമുള്ള വിലാസിനിയിലൂടെ സ്ത്രീയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രമായ നിലപാടുകളെ ഉറപ്പി ച്ചെടുക്കുകയാണ്. സ്ത്രീ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ സജീവമുഖത്തെ ദൃശ്യവത്കരിക്കുകയാണീ കഥ. പുരുഷന്റെ ഉപഭോഗ വസ്തുവാണു് സ്ത്രീയെന്ന ഫ്യൂഡൽ ബോധത്തിനെതിരെ കലാപമുയർത്തുന്നു. ഇവിടെ പുതിയ പ്രമേയ സങ്കല്പനത്തിലൂടെ കെ. സരസ്വതിയമ്മ. സ്ത്രൈണതയുടെ രാഷ്ട്രീയം ഉൾക്കൊണ്ട് പുതിയ മുഖ്യബോധത്തിലേക്ക് വളരുക യാണ് 'പെൺബുദ്ധി'.

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ഡോ. അശ്വതി എ. വി.,  
 ഗസ്റ്റ് ലക്ചർ, മലയാള വിഭാഗം  
 ബന്ദേലിയോസ് കോളേജ്

# **നവസംസ്കൃതിയുടെ കിനാവുകൾ - മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ രചനകളിൽ**

**ഡോ. ഷൈല ഏബ്രഹാം**

ഓരോ കൃതിയും പാരമ്പര്യത്തിന്റെ സന്തതിയാണ് എന്ന് പറയാറുണ്ട്. ചേർന്നു നിന്നോ, വിചേരദം വരുത്തിയോ അത് ആ പാരമ്പര്യത്തെ മുമ്പോട്ടു നയിക്കുന്നു. തന്നോളമെത്തി നിന്ന ജീവിത ചിത്രീകരണത്തിന്റെ ആദർശാത്മക പാരമ്പര്യത്തെ തച്ചുടച്ചുകൊണ്ട് യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തിന്റെ നവീന പാത അവർ വെട്ടിത്തുറന്നു. ആ പാതയിൽ മനുഷ്യ ജീവിതത്തെ ദുരന്തമാക്കുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളെല്ലാം വിമർശിക്കപ്പെട്ടു. അതിനെ സന്തോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നതെല്ലാം ആഘോഷമാക്കപ്പെട്ടു. സാമൂഹികമായ അസമത്വങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങി കുടുംബം തുടങ്ങിയ വ്യവസ്ഥകളും, പ്രണയം, സ്ത്രീ, ശരീരം എന്നിവയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ധാരണകളും മൊക്കെ മാധവിക്കുട്ടി തന്റെ കൃതികളിൽ പുതിയൊരു സംവേദനത്തിന് അരങ്ങൊരുക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് പുനരാവിഷ്കരിച്ചു.

കൽക്കത്തയും പുനയൂർക്കുളവും പരിചയിച്ചവളെങ്കിലും രണ്ടിടത്തും പൊതുവായുണ്ടായിരുന്ന ഘടകം ഗാന്ധിമാർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങളായിരുന്നു. അവിടെ കടുത്ത വർണ്ണങ്ങൾ മുതൽ ശരീരവും ലൈംഗികതയും വരെ സംയമനത്തിന്റെ നീതിയിൽ പാലിക്കപ്പെട്ടു. പക്ഷേ, അച്ഛനമ്മമാർ പാലിച്ച ഈ സംയമനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് കുതരിച്ചാടാനായിരുന്നു ‘ആമി’ ശ്രമിച്ചത്. അഥവാ അവരിൽ രൂഢമൂലമായൊരെതിർപ്പ് ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ബാല്യം മുതൽ ഗാന്ധിയൻ അച്ചടക്കത്തോടുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. സ്വകാര്യതകളിൽ ആ നിയന്ത്രണത്തിന്റെ ലംഘനം താൻ നടത്തിയിരുന്നുവെന്നു മാധവിക്കുട്ടി തന്നെ പറയുന്നുമുണ്ട്. ‘ഗാന്ധിജിയുടെ പ്രസക്തി’ എന്ന കഥയിലെ പെൺകുട്ടി എത്ര സംയമിയായിട്ടും ഒടുവിൽ പുരുഷാഭിമുഖ്യത്തിൽ വീണുപോവുന്നതു അവർ ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നുമുണ്ട്. തന്റെ അമ്മയെപ്പോലെയോ, അമ്മമ്മയെപ്പോലെയോ സംയമിതയല്ലാതെ ചുറ്റുമുള്ള സാമൂഹികാതിക്രമങ്ങളോട് അച്ചടക്കത്തോട് കലഹിക്കുകയാണവർ.

മനുഷ്യകാമനകൾക്കും സ്ത്രീശരീരത്തിനും അമിതപ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്ന ഒരു കവയിത്രി എന്ന പരിമിതപ്പെട്ട നിർവ്വചനമാണ് തന്റെ രചനാകാലത്തിനു ശേഷമുള്ള ഏഴെട്ടു പതിറ്റാണ്ടുകൾ പിന്നിട്ടിട്ടും സാഹിത്യലോകം പുലർത്തിപ്പോരുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ വിശാല

മായൊരു ലോകവീക്ഷണത്തിൽ ജീവിതത്തിനു അശാന്തി പകരുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളെല്ലാം വിമർശന വിധേയമാവുന്നുണ്ട് ഈ കലാലോകത്ത്. വ്യക്തിപരവും സാമൂഹികപരവുമായ ഇത്തരം ഘടകങ്ങളെ അനുകൂലമാക്കുന്ന ഒരു നവസംസ്കൃതിക്കുള്ള ആഗ്രഹമോ സ്വപ്നമോ ഒക്കെ വെച്ചുപുലർത്തുമ്പോഴും അവ സഫലമാകാതെ വരുമ്പോൾ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ആനന്ദത്തിലേക്ക് കടന്നു കയറാനാവാതെ മുന്നിലുള്ള മതിലുകളിൽ തലചേർത്തു വിങ്ങുന്നതേയുള്ളൂ ഈ കലാപ്രതിഭ. ജനനവും ബാല്യവും ജീവിതവുമൊക്കെ 'സുഖതലങ്ങളിലൂടെ'യെന്നു തോന്നുമ്പോഴും അതിനിടയിലൂടെ ചുറ്റുപാടുകളിലെ അസംതൃപ്തികളിലേക്ക് ഒളിഞ്ഞു നോക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ആ ബുദ്ധദൃഷ്ടി 'മതിലുകൾ എന്ന കഥയിൽ മാധവിക്കുട്ടി ഈ കാഴ്ച വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. "മനുഷ്യൻ എന്നും തനിച്ചാണ് നിലകൊള്ളുന്നത്. അവന്റേതായ അച്ചുതണ്ടിന്മേൽ അവൻ തനിച്ചു തിരിയുന്നു. താൻ തനിച്ചാണെന്നുള്ള ഈ വിചാരം, ഈ ഏകാന്തത, പ്രായമായിത്തുടങ്ങുന്ന ഈ മനുഷ്യൻ മാത്രമല്ല, എല്ലാ മനുഷ്യർക്കും അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്നു. മനുഷ്യർക്കിടയിൽ എന്നുമെന്നും ചെറിയ മതിലുകൾ ഉയർന്നു വരുന്നു. പണത്തിന്റെ, നിറവ്യത്യാസത്തിന്റെ, അഭിപ്രായവ്യത്യാസത്തിന്റെ അങ്ങനെ നൂറു നൂറു ചെറിയ മതിലുകൾ. അവ നീക്കാനോ സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ വഴിയിലിൽ തെറ്റുപറ്റാതെ പോവാനോ, ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യമായ ആനന്ദം നേടാനോ വഴികളുണ്ടാവണം." ഈ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിലൂടെ പരമശാന്തിയിലേയ്ക്കില്ല പക്ഷേ മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ പ്രയാണം. അത് ചുറ്റുമുള്ള അശാന്തികളിൽ സദാ ഭ്രമണം ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്.

സാമൂഹിക മാനങ്ങളിലധിഷ്ഠിതമായ ഉച്ചനീചത്വങ്ങൾ വ്യക്തിജീവിതങ്ങളെ നിയന്ത്രിക്കുന്ന ഒരു പ്രധാന ഘടകമായി മാധവിക്കുട്ടി തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ വിഷയം ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്ന കഥകളിൽ മിക്കവാറും സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന ആഖ്യാനരീതി ഒരു ബാലികയുടെ വീക്ഷണമാണ്. നിഷ്കളങ്കവും സത്യസന്ധവും തീവ്രവുമായ ഒരു സമീപനം ഈ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തെ കൂടുതൽ തീക്ഷ്ണമായി അനുഭവിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. 'വേനലിന്റെ ഒഴിവ്' എന്ന കഥയിൽ ദാസ്യവൃത്തി ചെയ്യുന്ന നാണിയമ്മയുടെ കുടുംബസ്ഥിതി തന്റേതിൽ നിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തമായി കൂട്ടി കാണുന്നുണ്ട്, തന്റെ ദാരിദ്ര്യത്തിനു പരിഹാരമായി അവർ എടുത്ത പുളിങ്ങ കണ്ടെത്തുന്ന അമ്മു അവരോടു പറയുന്നതാണ് "കക്കാൻ പാടില്ല, ഇനി ഈ വീട്ടിലേ വരരുത്. നാണിയമ്മേ, നിങ്ങള് ഒരു കള്ളനാണ്" പരിഭവിച്ചു തിരിച്ചേല്പിക്കുന്ന കൂട്ട വാങ്ങി മണ്ണിൽ വെച്ച് കൂട്ടിയ്ക്ക് ഉറക്കെ കരയാനാണ് തോന്നുന്നത്. അവളുടെ ചിന്ത "ആദ്യമായി ഞാനൊരു പാപം ചെയ്തു കഴിഞ്ഞുവെന്ന് എനിക്ക് ബോധ്യമായി" എന്നാണ്.

സമൂഹത്തിലെ അധഃസ്ഥിതവർഗ്ഗത്തിന്റെ ജീവിതരീതികളും നിസ്സഹായതകളുമെല്ലാമാണ് ജാനുവിയുടെ കഥകളിലൂടെ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നത്. 'ദൈവങ്ങൾ' എന്ന കഥയിലെ നാണിയുടെ ദുരവസ്ഥ ചെങ്കുത്താൻമാർ വരുത്തി വയ്ക്കുന്ന 'തലവിധി' എന്നു പറയുന്ന കൂട്ടി സമ്പന്നവർഗ്ഗത്തിന്റെ ചീത്തത്തം നിസ്സഹായരുടെ തലവിധിക്കു കാരണമാകുന്ന യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തെ ചിത്രീകരിക്കുകയാണ്. 'ചാലിയത്തി കുഞ്ഞുവും മകനും' എന്ന കഥയിലെ അമ്മയുടെ വാർദ്ധക്യത്തിന്റെ ദൈന്യതയും മുതലാളിത്തത്തിന്റെ ക്രൂരതയിൽ ദയനീയമാകുന്ന മകന്റെ ജീവിതാവസ്ഥയും സാമൂഹിക ഉച്ചനീചത്വങ്ങൾ മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തെ എങ്ങനെ ദുരന്തമാക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് കാട്ടിത്തരുന്നുണ്ട് 'കുറച്ചുമണ്ണ്' എന്ന കഥയിലെ ദാരിദ്ര്യം അതിന്റെ ഏറ്റവും ഭീഷണമായ അവസ്ഥയിലേക്ക് അനുവാചകരെ എത്തിക്കുന്നു. കഥയിലെ സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് അയൽപക്കക്കാരിയോടും കൂട്ടികൾക്ക് ധനസ്ഥിതിയുള്ള കൂട്ടുകാരോടും തോന്നുന്ന അസഹിഷ്ണുതയ്ക്ക് കാരണം തങ്ങളുടെ ദാരിദ്ര്യമാണ്.

ഒടുവിൽ മണ്ണ് തിന്നുന്ന മുത്തച്ഛനെ മോഷണത്തിന്റെ പേരിൽ കൊല്ലുമ്പോഴും അവളുടെ മനഃസ്ഥിതി ക്രൂരതയല്ല. നിസ്സഹായതയാണ് എന്ന് നാം തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നു. “മുത്തച്ഛൻ ആയിരുന്ന ആ വസ്തു കിണറ്റിൽ വീണപ്പോഴും ആരെയും ഉണർത്തുവാൻ പോന്ന ശബ്ദമൊന്നും ആ വെള്ളം ഉണ്ടാക്കിയില്ല” എന്ന് വായിക്കുന്നിടത്താണ് ഇത്തരം അസമതങ്ങളെ വികാരരഹിതമായി സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ നിലപാട് വ്യക്തമാകുന്നത്.

ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ ശൈഥില്യമാണ് മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തെ ദുരന്തമാക്കുന്ന മറ്റൊരു ഘടകം. സ്നേഹമാണ് ജീവിതത്തെ സുരക്ഷിതവും സുന്ദരവുമാക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്ന മാധവിക്കുട്ടി ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ തകർച്ചയിൽ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ വൈരുദ്ധ്യവും അസംതൃപ്തിയും വ്യക്തിജീവിതത്തെ ദുസ്സഹമാക്കുന്നതെങ്ങനെയെന്ന് വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നുമുണ്ട്. സാമൂഹിക ബന്ധങ്ങളെക്കാൾ കുടുംബബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ ദുർബലതയാണ് വ്യക്തിക്ക് കൂടുതൽ ആഘാതമുണ്ടാക്കുന്നത്. കുടുംബത്തിലെ മാതൃപുത്ര ബന്ധം മുതൽ ഭാര്യഭർതൃബന്ധവും പിതൃപുത്രബന്ധവുമെല്ലാം തകർച്ചയ്ക്ക് വിധേയമാകുന്ന ചിത്രം ആ കഥകളിലുണ്ട്. മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തെത്തന്നെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുന്ന അലിഖിതമൂല്യങ്ങളെ പുനർനിർണ്ണയം ചെയ്യുന്നത് ആധുനികതയുടെ കാലത്താണ് നാം ശ്രദ്ധിക്കുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ മാധവിക്കുട്ടി ഇത്തരം മൂല്യങ്ങളുടെ ശോഷണം വ്യക്തിജീവിതത്തിലുണ്ടാക്കുന്ന മാറ്റം ഒരു ദയനീയതയായി തന്റെ സർഗ്ഗസൃഷ്ടികളിൽ ആധുനികതയ്ക്ക് രണ്ട് ദശാബ്ദം മുമ്പ് മുതൽ തന്നെ ചിത്രീകരിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞിരുന്നു. ഉദാരമനുഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ നവോത്ഥാനകാലത്ത് നിന്നും നാലുകെട്ടുകൾ തകരുന്ന എം. ടി. യുടെ കാലത്തെത്തുന്നതിനു മുമ്പുള്ള കാലഘട്ടമായിരുന്നു അതെന്നു ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് ഈ ചിത്രീകരണം പ്രവാചകത്വത്തിലേക്ക് കടക്കുന്നത്.

മാതൃത്വത്തിന്റെ മഹനീയത സർവ്വതലങ്ങളിലും പ്രശോഭിതമായി നിലകൊണ്ട സാഹിത്യീയ കാലത്തിന്റെ പാരമ്പര്യലംഘനം എന്ന നിലയിൽ വേണം പതിവ്രത, ചന്ദനച്ചിത, അമ്മയും മകനും തുടങ്ങിയ കഥകൾ വായിക്കാൻ. ‘പതിവ്രത’യിൽ മകൾ തന്റെ രഹസ്യം സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള വ്യഗ്രതയിലാണ് അമ്മയെ അവഗണിക്കുന്നതെങ്കിൽ, ‘ചന്ദനച്ചിത’യിൽ ധനം നൽകുന്ന സുഖസൗകര്യങ്ങളിൽ ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ മൂല്യം അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന മക്കളാണ് പ്രമേയം. ‘അമ്മയും മകനും’ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ സ്വാഭാവിക പരിണാമങ്ങളിൽ ഈർഷ്യപ്പെടുന്ന മാതൃത്വത്തെയും അതിനപ്പുറം മകന്റെ നിസ്സഹായതയിൽ ഈർഷ്യ അലിഞ്ഞുചേർന്ന് പുത്രവാത്സല്യം ശക്തി തേടുന്നതും അനുഭവപ്പെടുത്തിത്തരുന്നു. പണവും പരിഷ്കാരവും ജീവിത മൂല്യങ്ങളെ പരിണമിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ചിത്രവും ഇതിന്റെ തുടർച്ചയാണ്. ഇത്തരം ബന്ധശോഷണങ്ങളുടെ മറുപുറമായി ‘മുത്തശ്ശി’ എന്ന ബിംബം ബാല്യത്തിനും കൗമാരത്തിനുമൊക്കെ സുദൃഢസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ സുരക്ഷിതത്വം പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട്. ‘മുത്തശ്ശി മരിക്കില്ല’ എന്നാവർത്തിച്ചുകൊണ്ടവസാനിക്കുന്ന ‘വേനലിന്റെ ഒഴിവ്’ എന്ന കഥയിലെ പെൺകുട്ടിയ്ക്ക് ആ പ്രതിജ്ഞ ജീവിതം മുഴുവൻ ആവശ്യമുള്ള സ്നേഹസുരക്ഷിതത്വമാണ്. ‘വേനലിന്റെ ഒഴിവ്’ എന്ന ശീർഷകം തന്നെ മാതൃസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ അഭാവത്തിലെ കഠിനാനുഭവം മുത്തശ്ശിയോടൊപ്പം ഹ്രസ്വമായ ഒരിളവേല്ക്കുന്നതിന്റെ ചിത്രം മനസ്സിൽ വിരിയിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. അലാവുദ്ദീൻ ‘ഗോസായിത്തന്ത്’ തുടങ്ങിയ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളും കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളെക്കാൾ വിശിഷ്ടരാകുന്നത് നിസാർത്ഥമായ സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലാണ്. പരിഷ്കൃതി നഷ്ടപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന സനാതന മൂല്യങ്ങളുടെ സംരക്ഷകൻ കൂടിയാണീ അപരിഷ്കൃതർ. അലാവുദ്ദീന്റെ കഥയിലും, ‘ദയ എന്ന വികാര’ത്തിലും പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെടുന്ന പാട്ട്, ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് സംസാരം തുടങ്ങിയ സിംബലുകൾ ഈ വസ്തുതയുടെ അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തലാണ്. ‘ദയ എന്ന വികാര’ത്തിൽ നായകൻ മാതൃസ്നേഹം

അനുഭവിക്കുന്നത് സുഹൃത്തിന്റെ അമ്മയുടെ പെരുമാറ്റത്തിലാണ്. സ്വന്തം ജീവിതം അയാൾ അളക്കുന്നതിങ്ങനെയാണ്, ‘അച്ഛൻ, അമ്മ, പാട്ടുകൾ, സുഗന്ധദ്രവ്യങ്ങൾ, പുസ്തക അലമാരികൾ, മീറ്റിംഗുകൾ, അസൂയകൾ, കലഹങ്ങൾ, ഇതാണോ തന്റെ ജീവിതം ? ദാമ്പത്യം, പ്രണയം തുടങ്ങിയ തലങ്ങളിലും വ്യവസ്ഥാപിതമായൊരു സങ്കല്പത്തിനപ്പുറത്തേക്ക് കടന്നു ചിന്തിക്കാനും പുതിയൊരു സംസ്കാരം ആവിഷ്കരിക്കാനും മായവിക്കുട്ടിക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞു. ഏറ്റവും കൂടുതൽ എഴുതപ്പെട്ടതും അങ്ങേയറ്റം വിമർശനവിധേയമായിത്തീർന്നതും ഈ വിധത്തിലുള്ള രചനകളായിരുന്നു. ആഗ്രഹങ്ങൾക്കൊത്തുള്ള ദാമ്പത്യം, സമൂഹവ്യവസ്ഥകളെ കാറ്റിൽപ്പറത്തുന്ന പ്രണയം, ശരീരത്തിന്റെ ആഘോഷം ഇതൊക്കെ ഒരു സ്ത്രീ എന്ന നിലയിൽ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുകയും അവയെ ചിത്രീകരിക്കാനൊരുങ്ങുകയും ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ അതിനെല്ലാം അടിസ്ഥാനമായി വർത്തിക്കുന്നത് സ്നേഹമെന്ന ഭാവമാണെന്നു തിരിച്ചറിയേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷ ബന്ധത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് മായവിക്കുട്ടി പറയുന്നുണ്ട് “ സ്ത്രീക്ക് ഒരു പുരുഷൻ ആവശ്യമുണ്ട് സ്ത്രീയെ കൂടുതൽ സ്ത്രീയാക്കാൻ ത്രാണിയുള്ള ഒരു പുരുഷൻ”<sup>1</sup>. ഒരു പുരുഷാധിപത്യ സമൂഹത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീയെക്കുറിച്ച് നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന ധാരണകളിൽപ്പെടുന്നതല്ല മേൽപ്പറഞ്ഞ സ്ത്രീത്വത്തിന്റെ ഉന്നമനം. സ്ത്രീയുടെ ആത്മാവേഷണത്തിനൊടുവിൽ കണ്ടെത്തുന്ന ആഗ്രഹങ്ങളും ആവിഷ്കാരങ്ങളുമാണത്. ഇത് നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന പാരമ്പര്യത്തിന്റെ വിചേദവുമാണ്. “സ്ത്രൈണതയെ വാത്സല്യത്തിലും ഉദാരതയിലും അനുസരണശീലത്തിലും ഒലുമ്പിയെടുത്ത പുല്ലിംഗസംസ്കാരവുമായി യാതൊരു ഉടമ്പടിക്കും”<sup>2</sup> അവർ തയ്യാറായില്ല. ഈ വ്യത്യസ്തത വിശദീകരിച്ചു കാണിക്കുന്ന കഥയാണ് “ലോകം ഒരു കവയത്രിയെ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നു” എന്നത്. അവൾ, അയാൾ എന്നീ നാമധേയങ്ങളിലൂടെ സാർവത്രികമായ ദാമ്പത്യത്തിന്റെ ചിത്രം വരയ്ക്കുകയാണിവിടെ. കഥയിലെ ചില പ്രസ്താവനകൾ “സ്നേഹമില്ലാത്ത ഒരു കുടുംബത്തിൽ വളർന്നു വന്ന അവൾ വിവാഹം ചെയ്തത് സ്നേഹിക്കപ്പെടാൻ മാത്രമായിരുന്നു. അവളുടെ കുറ്റങ്ങളെയും ഗുണങ്ങളെയും എല്ലാം സ്നേഹിക്കുന്ന ഒരാളെ കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ അവൾ ശ്രമിച്ചു കൊണ്ടിരുന്നപ്പോഴാണ് അയാൾ ചിത്രത്തിലേക്ക് കടന്നു വന്നത്.” അയാളാവട്ടെ “സ്ത്രീധനം അയാൾക്കിഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടു; അവളും തരക്കേടില്ലായിരുന്നു” എന്ന അവസ്ഥയിലാണ് വിവാഹത്തിലേർപ്പെടുന്നത്. “അയാൾക്ക് തിളങ്ങുന്നവരെയായിരുന്നു ഇഷ്ടം. എപ്പോഴും കിളികളെപ്പോലെ സംസാരിച്ചും പൊട്ടിച്ചിരിച്ചും കുലുങ്ങിയാടിക്കൊണ്ട് നടക്കുകയും പുരുഷന്മാരോട് കുറച്ചൊക്കെ ശൃംഗരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന മട്ടുകാരെ” അവൾക്ക് “യാതൊരും കുറവും കാണാൻ വയ്യാത്ത ഒരു കുടുംബ പശ്ചാത്തലം പണം, ബുദ്ധിശക്തി, പദവി” എന്നിവയൊക്കെയുണ്ടായിരുന്നിട്ടും അയാൾ പറഞ്ഞത്. “എനിക്ക് സ്ത്രീകളെപ്പോലെ പെരുമാറുന്നതാണിഷ്ടം” എന്നാണ്. കൊഴുത്തുരുണ്ട, ഭംഗിയുള്ള വളവുകളുള്ള അവളെ സ്ത്രീയായി കാണാൻ കഴിയാത്തത്, അയാളുടെ ഭൂതകാലങ്ങളിലെ ഒരൊറ്റ സ്ത്രീയും അങ്ങനെയായിരുന്നില്ല എന്നത് മാത്രമാണ്. ഈ പൊരുത്തക്കേടുകൾ കൊണ്ട് ദുസ്സഹമാകുന്നു. ദാമ്പത്യത്തെ തന്റെ വലയിൽ തന്നെ കൂടുങ്ങുന്ന എട്ടുകാലിയുടെയും കാരണമില്ലാതെ മരണത്തിൽ ചെന്നുവീഴുന്ന ജീവിതത്തിന്റെയും അവസ്ഥയായി ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നു ആ കഥയിൽ.

നൂണകൾ, ചതി, മാഹിമിലെ വീട്, ‘പതിവ്രത’ തുടങ്ങിയ കഥകളിലൊക്കെയും ദാമ്പത്യത്തിന്റെ ഈ ബന്ധനം അവതരിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടുന്നുണ്ട്. ഒരു കുട്ടിയുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിലെ നിഷ്കളങ്കതയോട് ചേർന്ന് അവതരിപ്പിച്ച് പുരുഷന്റെ അവിശ്വസ്തതയെ തീക്ഷ്ണാനുഭവമായി ‘നൂണകൾ’ അനുഭവപ്പെടുത്തിത്തരുമ്പോൾ ‘ചതി’യിൽ ലേഡീ ഡോക്ടർ “പാവം എന്റെ താലി” എന്നുദീരണം ചെയ്ത് അടങ്ങുന്നതേയുള്ളൂ. സമകാലത്തെ സാമൂഹിക ജീവിതത്തോടാണിവിടെ മായവിക്കുട്ടി കലമ്പൽ കൂട്ടുന്നത്. “വ്യക്തിയെ വലിയ സാധ്യ

തകളിലേക്ക് മോചിപ്പിക്കാതെ പിടിച്ചുവയ്ക്കുന്ന ഇത്തരം ദാമ്പത്യം, കുടുംബം എന്നിവയെ അപനിർമ്മിക്കുന്നത് വാസ്തവത്തിൽ സൂക്ഷ്മമായ വ്യവസ്ഥാവിമർശനമാണ്. കാരണം വ്യവസ്ഥ ഏറ്റവും സമർത്ഥമായും സ്വാഭാവികമായും സമ്മതി നേടിക്കൊണ്ടും പാർപ്പാക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നത് കുടുംബത്തിലാണ്<sup>3</sup> പൊരുത്തക്കേടുകൾ നിറഞ്ഞ ദാമ്പത്യത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഇറങ്ങിപ്പോവുകയല്ല മറിച്ച് നാട്യങ്ങളിലൂടെ അവയുടെ നടുവിൽ ജീവിക്കുകയാണ് എന്നതാണ് ഏറ്റവും ദുസ്സഹമായ അവസ്ഥയായി കഥാകാരി കണ്ടത്. കവിതകളിൽ കുറേക്കൂടി സൂക്ഷ്മമായി ആശയങ്ങളെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മാധവിക്കുട്ടി 'The Suicide' എന്ന കവിതയിൽ പൊരുത്തപ്പെടുന്നതിങ്ങനെയാണ്. "I must pose, I must pretend, I must act the role of a happy woman, happy wife" ഈ നാട്യങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തോടുള്ള കലമ്പൽ എന്ന നിലയിലാണ് അവരിലെ പ്രേമാന്വേഷിയെ കണക്കാക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ ആദർശാത്മക കാല്പനിക പ്രണയമല്ല, മറിച്ച് പ്രണയരഹിതമായ ദാമ്പത്യത്തിലെ ലൈംഗികതയ്ക്കെതിരെയുള്ള, പ്രണയവും കാമവും ഇഴപാകി നില്ക്കുന്ന സ്ത്രീപുരുഷബന്ധമാണ് അവരുടെ പ്രണയകൃതികൾ കാഴ്ച വെച്ചത്. ദാമ്പത്യത്തിലെ ഏകാന്തത മാംസഭോജികളായി തന്നെത്തന്നെ കാർന്നുതിന്നാനൊരുങ്ങുമ്പോൾ അതിനെ തീർത്തും ഇല്ലാതാക്കാനുള്ള ദിവ്യൗഷധം കൂടിയായിത്തീരുന്നു ഈ പ്രേമം. 'തരിശുനില'ത്തിൽ പ്രണയം നഷ്ടമായി എന്ന് തീർച്ചയാക്കി തന്റെ മുറിയിൽ തിരിച്ചെത്തുന്ന അവൾ "പിന്നീട് ആ മുറിയിൽ വളർന്നു നിന്നിരുന്ന കാട്ടുമരം, വീണ്ടും വളർന്ന് തട്ടിനോളം ഉയർന്ന് അതിന്റെ ചില്ലുകൾ ചുമരുകളിന്മേൽ തട്ടിയുറഞ്ഞു പോലുകളുണ്ടാക്കി എന്നിങ്ങനെ വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നത് തന്നെ ചൂഴ്ന്നു നിൽക്കുന്ന ഏകാന്തതയെയാണ്. അതിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ മരണവും അനുഗ്രഹമാകുന്നു. ചതുരംഗത്തിൽ സൗമ്യ മുർത്തി വ്യവസ്ഥകൾക്കുള്ളിലേക്ക് പിൻവലിയുമ്പോൾ അചല തീരുമാനിക്കുന്നു "ഇനി മുതൽ നിന്റെ കണ്ണുകളിൽ നിന്റെ സ്വന്തം മുഖം മാത്രമേ ഉണ്ടാവൂ. നിന്റെ കാതുകളിൽ നിന്റെ സ്വന്തം സ്വരവും. ഈ ഏകാന്തതയാവട്ടെ നിന്റെ ഇനിയത്തെ അനുരാഗം" മരണ നിർവൃതി പോലെ തന്നെ ജീവിതനിർവൃതിയും കാംക്ഷിച്ച മാധവിക്കുട്ടി പ്രണയത്തെ കുറിച്ചിങ്ങനെ കുറിച്ചു. "സ്നേഹത്തിൽപ്പെട്ട ഒരു സ്ത്രീയ്ക്ക് തന്നെ കാമുകൻ ശരീരത്തിന്റെ ഒരു ഭാഗം കൊണ്ട് മാത്രം സ്മരിച്ചാൽ തൃപ്തിയാവില്ല. അകത്ത് വേദനയും ബോധവും നിറയ്ക്കാൻ അവൾക്ക് അദ്ദേഹം ഒരു അർബുദമെന്നപോലെ വളരണം. അതാണ് സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകമായ ക്രൂരത (ചതുരംഗം) ഈ തീക്ഷ്ണമായ പ്രേമദാഹം ഒരിക്കലും ശമിക്കുന്നതല്ല. പുരുഷന്റെ സ്വഭാവസവിശേഷതകളും വ്യവസ്ഥകളുടെ തെരിച്ചമർത്തലുമൊക്കെ ഇതിനെ അവഗണിയ്ക്കുകയോ നിഷ്കാസനം ചെയ്യുകയോ ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട്. പക്ഷേ അപ്പോഴൊക്കെ ഈ പ്രേമഭിക്ഷു ചില ചില്ലറനാണയങ്ങൾ പോലും യാചിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. "മരണം വരെ നില്ക്കുന്ന ആ വലിയ സ്നേഹം തനിക്ക് എങ്ങും തന്നെ കിട്ടുകയില്ലെന്ന് അവൾക്ക് തോന്നിയിരുന്നു." "മദ്യം ശീലിച്ചു വരുന്ന ഒരാൾ നല്ല മദ്യം കിട്ടാതെയാവുമ്പോൾ വൃത്തികെട്ട പാനീയങ്ങൾ കുടിക്കുന്നത് പോലെയാകുന്നു എന്റെ സ്നേഹബന്ധങ്ങൾ ഓരോന്നും. (സൂര്യൻ). സ്നേഹരഹിതമായ പ്രേമബന്ധങ്ങളിലകപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ തന്നെത്തന്നെ കേടുവന്നതായി അവർ ചിത്രീകരിച്ചു. (ലോകം ഒരു കവയിത്രിയെ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നു)

സ്വന്തം ശരീരത്തെ ആവിഷ്കരിക്കാനൊരുങ്ങിയിടത്താണ് മാധവിക്കുട്ടി ഏറ്റവും വിമർശന വിധേയയായത്. കുടുംബം, പ്രണയം തുടങ്ങിയവയുടെ സാമ്പ്രദായിക ധാരണകളിൽ സദാചാരം ശരീരവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ഈ സദാചാരത്തെയാണ് തന്റെ ശരീരത്തിന്റെ തുറന്നെഴുത്തുകളിൽ അവർ വിമർശിച്ചത്. സാഹിത്യകാരിയായ

ചന്ദ്രമതി തങ്ങളുടെ കാലത്ത് നിലവിലിരുന്ന ശരീരധാരണകളെ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നുണ്ട്.

“എന്റെ തലമുറയിലെ എഴുത്തുകാരികൾ വളർന്ന് സ്ത്രീശരീരത്തെപ്പറ്റിയുള്ള രണ്ടു കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾക്കിടയിലായിരുന്നു. ഒന്ന്, വെറുമൊരു ഭോഗവസ്തുവായി, അതിനപ്പുറം ഒന്നുമില്ലാത്തതായ ശരീരത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പുരുഷന്റെ വീക്ഷണം.<sup>4</sup> രണ്ട്, നീചവും അശുദ്ധമാക്കുന്നതും മറച്ചുവയ്ക്കേണ്ടതും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം നിഷേധിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടതുമാണ് സ്ത്രീ ശരീരമെന്ന സ്ത്രീയുടെ തന്നെ വീക്ഷണം” ഇവ രണ്ടും നിഷേധിച്ചുകൊണ്ടാണ് മാധവി കുട്ടി തന്റെ കൃതികളിൽ ശരീരചിത്രണം നടത്തുന്നത്.

ശരീരത്തിനെ ആത്മാവിനോളംതന്നെ പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്നുണ്ട് മാധവിക്കുട്ടി. ‘തണുപ്പ്’ എന്ന കഥയിൽ സ്നേഹം ആത്മാവിനോടാണോ ശരീരത്തിനോടാണോ എന്ന സംശയം പ്രകടിതമാകുന്നുണ്ട്. തൊലിയും മാംസവും എല്ലും മജ്ജയും കഴിഞ്ഞുള്ള കേന്ദ്രത്തിലാണ് സ്നേഹം എന്ന് പുരുഷനും അതിനെ ആത്മാവായി കരുതി ആത്മാവിൽ നിന്ന് വേരുകൾ ശരീരത്തിലേയ്ക്കിറങ്ങി വരുന്നുണ്ട് എന്ന് സ്ത്രീയും സങ്കല്പിക്കുന്നുമുണ്ട്. “ജീവൻ വളരുന്ന, നമുക്ക് നിലകിട്ടുന്ന മണ്ണാണ് ശരീരമെന്ന് അതേ കഥയിൽത്തന്നെ വീണ്ടും മുഴങ്ങുന്നുണ്ട്. ഒരേ സമയം കാമുകനെ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന ഇടവും ഭൂമിപോലെ വിശുദ്ധവുമായ ഇടം. ആത്മാവിനോട് ചേർന്ന് ശരീരത്തെ കണക്കാക്കുന്ന ചിത്രീകരണങ്ങൾ എറേയുണ്ട്, ഈ കഥാലോകത്തിൽ “എന്റെ ശരീരത്തിന് പുരാതനക്ഷേത്രങ്ങളിൽ കാണാറുള്ള കരിങ്കൽ പ്രതിമകളുടെ തണുപ്പും ദുഃഖതയുമുണ്ട്.” എന്നിടത് ആത്മീയതയുടെ തെളിച്ചമുണ്ട്. ‘അവശിഷ്ടങ്ങൾ’ വെളിവാക്കുന്ന ശരീരചിത്രം സ്ത്രീസ്വത്വം തന്നെയാണ്. “ശരീരത്തിന്റെ വിലയിടിഞ്ഞു കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ സ്ത്രീ സതിയായി മാറുകയും ചെയ്യും. സാങ്കല്പികമായ ചിതാഗ്നിയിൽ അവൾ കത്തിനശിക്കും” ഇതിന്റെ മറുപുറമെന്നോണം സദാചാരം എന്ന സങ്കല്പത്തെ താനാദരിക്കാതിരിക്കുന്നത് അതിന്റെ അസ്തിവാദം ചീഞ്ഞളിഞ്ഞുപോകുന്ന ശരീരമാണ് എന്നുള്ളത് കൊണ്ടാണ് എന്നും അവർ പറയുന്നുണ്ട്. (ഒറ്റയടിപ്പാത) ചാമ്പലാവുകയോ പുഴുക്കൾക്ക് ഭക്ഷണമായിത്തീരുകയോ ചെയ്യേണ്ടുന്ന ശരീരമാനം അത്ര വിലപിടിച്ചതോ എന്ന ആശങ്ക ‘സൂര്യൻ’ എന്ന കഥയിലുണ്ട്.

ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ ഒരേ സമയം ശരീരം സ്നേഹാധിഷ്ഠിത ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പ്രമാണമായും മറ്റൊരിടത്ത് നശവുമായ നിസ്സാരവസ്തുവായും പരിഗണിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഈ രണ്ടവസ്ഥയും ശരീരത്തെ ദമനം ചെയ്യുന്ന പാരമ്പര്യത്തിനോടുള്ള കലാപം തന്നെയാണ്. പുരുഷനിർമ്മിത സദാചാരത്തിനെ എതിർക്കുന്നതിനു അതിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനമായ ശരീരത്തെ നിരസിച്ചാൽ മതി. ഒപ്പം മറച്ചുവയ്ക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടതോ അടിച്ചമർത്തപ്പെടേണ്ടതോ എന്നു കല്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ശരീരത്തെ നിർണ്ണായകമായി പരിഗണിക്കുന്നിടത്ത് ഒരു സാമൂഹിക വ്യവസ്ഥയെത്തന്നെ എതിർക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

‘എന്റെ കഥ’യിലെ ശരീരനിർമ്മിതി ഏറെ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. രോഗാണുക്കൾ ക്ഷമാപണത്തോടെ കയറി കുടിപാർക്കുന്ന ശരീരത്തിൽ അവർ മരണത്തെ അടുത്തു കണ്ട സന്ദർഭമാണിത്. കേവല മനുഷ്യനെപ്പോലെ തന്റെ ശരീരത്തിന്റെ നാശം കൊണ്ടു വരുന്ന മൃത്യുവിനെ മുന്നിൽ കാണുകയും ഇതുവരെയുള്ള ജീവിതത്തെ നഷ്ടബോധത്തോടെയോ, ഇനിയും ആസ്വദിക്കാനുള്ള മോഹത്തോടെയോ കണക്കാക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു മനസ്സിലേ ഇത്തരം ശരീരത്തിന്റെ ആഘോഷം സാധ്യമാകൂ. “പലർ വിരുന്നുണ്ടു പോയ മാളിക” എന്നൊക്കെയുള്ള കല്പനകൾ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്.

‘പക്ഷിയുടെ മണം’ എന്ന കഥയിലും തുണി ഡൈ ചെയ്യുന്ന ഇടം മരണമാണ് കൊണ്ടു വരുന്നത് എന്നറിയുമ്പോൾ “എനിക്ക് പോവണം”, ഉച്ചയായതേ ഉള്ളൂ” തുടങ്ങിയ പരാ

മർശങ്ങൾ മധ്യവയസ്സിൽ മരിക്കാൻ വിസമ്മതിക്കുന്ന സ്ത്രീ സ്വരമാണ് പക്ഷി, കൂട് എന്നിവ ആത്മാവിനെയും ശരീരത്തെയും സൂചിപ്പിക്കാൻ മാധവിക്കുട്ടി ആവർത്തിക്കുന്ന പ്രതീകമാണ്. ഇവിടെ വസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെ വർണ്ണം ചാർത്താൻ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ വർണ്ണാഭമായ ആസ്വാദനമായി വരുന്നു. ശരീര നിഷ്ഠമായ ലൗകികജീവിതത്തിന്റെ വർണ്ണശബളിമ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന ആൾക്ക് മരണം ഭീതിജനമാകുന്നത് സ്വാഭാവികം മാത്രം.

ഇങ്ങനെ നോക്കുമ്പോൾ മനുഷ്യജീവിതത്തിന് ഏർപ്പെടുത്തപ്പെട്ട എല്ലാ വിലക്കുകളെയും അതാവർത്തിച്ച് സ്നേഹാധിഷ്ഠിതമായ സുന്ദരജീവിതത്തിലേക്ക് കടക്കാനുള്ള ആഗ്രഹമാണ്, സ്വപ്നമാണ് മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകളോരോന്നും. ദമമല്ല ദാഹമാണ് ഇവിടെ ജീവിതത്തോട്. അതിന്റെ ഓരോ തുള്ളിയുടെയും മാധുര്യം ആസ്വദിക്കാനുള്ള തൃഷ്ണയാണ് ഈ കലാപങ്ങൾക്കെല്ലാം അടിസ്ഥാനം. പാരമ്പര്യം, ദമം ചെയ്യാൻ കല്പിച്ച ഓരോന്നിനേയും നിയന്ത്രണാതീതമായി ആഘോഷിച്ചാസ്വദിക്കാനുള്ള ആഗ്രഹമാണ്. ഈ സാഹിത്യലോകത്ത് കാണുന്ന പാരമ്പര്യ നിഷേധം.

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# **Determinants of Consumer Purchase Decision of Medical Insurance During Covid-19: Role of Awareness and Anxiety**

**Dr. Sindhu S. Nair, Dr. Sreedhar P. Nair ,  
Badusha Muhammed and Shaju Mathew**

## **ABSTRACT**

One of the most important assets in the world is human life. The society is currently facing a dramatic break-down of their lifestyle due to the intense progression of the Corona Virus disease (Covid-2019) pandemic. Insurance is a crucial financial tool for when extreme events like disasters occur; substantiating available financial safeguard for populations which will rather be economically exposed. This study explored the prime determinants that influenced the consumer decision of medical insurance by analysis of awareness of the policy holder, influence of medical insurance advertisement and benefits and their anxiety about life in this pandemic situation with the help of structured questionnaire by convenient sampling method. Study found that the existing and new customers' perception on awareness and anxiety very high and Covid-19 is the most important factor that pushed them to become an insurance holder during this pandemic.

**Keywords:** Medical insurance, Determinants, Purchase decision, Awareness, Anxiety

## **INTRODUCTION**

Medical insurance is a means of protection from risk of such pandemic situation by laying fencing from diseases as well as financial loss. In India, IRDAI

issued some directions for general insurers and health insurers on operating of claims reported under Covid-19 disease. Based on the regulation insurance companies from public and private sectors offers different sum assured plans. Some surveys in India reveals that unlike in the past, insurance has now become a product that consumers are likely to buy without the need for a big sales push (The Economic Times, 2020).

COVID- 19 progressed as a pathogenic virus infection that presents as contemporary public health disaster globally. As the pandemic evolves, rapidly in our India there is an urgent need to give protection against the life of the people. Healthful and competent workforce is that the biggest asset of any country. Therefore every progressive nation is keen on contributing access to healthcare to their citizens. World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease and injury (World Health Organization, 2020). Providing health care also features a cost component. Now more people are getting conscious towards the need of getting insurance during this pandemic situation. The insurance industry is witnessing a spurt in interest regarding health insurance policies, especially since a recent IRDAI notification has declared that the hospitalization due to COVID19 will be covered under existing health insurance policies (Asthana, 2020). The disease has spread all across the world and its treatment may require a prolonged hospitalization. Therefore, in such a situation, buying a health plan can prove to be very important as it will cover you against all the expenses that you may suffer in order to get the best treatment. This study explores the prime determinants that influenced the consumer decision of medical insurance by analysis of awareness of the policy holder, influence of medical insurance advertisement and benefits and their anxiety about life in this pandemic situation.

The Insurance Regulator (IRDAI), healthcare providers, and insurance companies are working hard, together; to deal with these unprecedented times (Asthana, 2020). Considering the graveness of this pandemic situation, the IRDAI had issued a premonitory to insurance companies to accelerate the processing of claims made in relation to Covid-19 pandemic. In light of this directive, all being health insurance programs extended their content by including Coronavirus without having any specific rejection. That means if a customer formerly has a health insurance policy in place, he'll be covered for claims related to Coronavirus complaint. Several general and medical insurance companies apart from Private and Public sectors have introduced an exclusive Coronavirus package for new policy holders and existing policy holders through top up plans to cover the risk of Covid-19. They are offering policies with a minimum sum assure amount of Rs.1 lakh and a maximum of Rs.6 crore (The Hindu, 2020). As a part of the coverage, the policyholder will be covered for pre and post hospitalization expenses, ambulance charges, and treatment expenses for Coronavirus related symptoms. There are no sub-limits for hospital room rent, which is a plus. Capping

of room rent usually leads to increased out-of-pocket expenditure. It also features a pertaining to other associated costs like nursing and doctors' fees. they need to not buy the value of private protective equipments (PPEs) and other hygiene-related consumables during their hospital days, which form a piece of the hospital bills, the regulator-mandated covid-19 indemnity policy will need to buy PPEs, gloves, masks and similar expenses. The policy also will cover the prices of at-home treatment. Policies called 'Corona Rakshak Policy' and 'Corona Kavach Policy' followed by the name of the insurance firm was introduced during this pandemic after the new regulation from IRDAI.

Customer awareness on insurance is increasing by the wide spreading of this covid-19 pandemic situation while different insurance firms in India initiates to contact with the customers about the advantages of their policies. Government of India has taken certain efforts to low income group of the country to supply some insurance policy schemes like Rashtriya Swasthy Bhima Yojana (National Health Insurance Scheme) and a few micro insurance schemes to direct an impression within the peoples from various parts of the society for creating a protective platform towards insurance. There could also be several factors which influence a person to require or to not take insurance policies which are quite unknown or unfathomed. Studies in the context of Covid 19 states that Consumer's willingness to pay for insurance schemes is influenced by Covid-19, risk and their past purchase experience of insurance (Choe, Kim, & Choi, 2022). Fear factors such as fear for health and fear on financial conditions have impact on the consumer behavioral pattern (Truong & Truong, 2022). Satisfaction level towards insurance fluctuates in line with the features of services rendered by the insurance company (Devi, 2013) and nowadays consumers put the insurance policy as a shield to cover the risk over contingencies (Jacob, 2018).

From the preliminary studies, it was observed that health care costs are on the rise, public awareness on health issues is growing, chronic diseases that necessitate long term treatment are becoming common and many health insurance companies are making a variety of offers (Varghese, 2013). This study examines the determinants of consumer purchase decision of medical insurance during covid-19 pandemic. This study also focused to identify whether anxiety and awareness influenced policy holders or not.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

There is a universal feeling that insurance is most important one, but not many of them take a health insurance cover until the misfortune stand in front of our door steps. Customers are seeking various plans on health insurance due to this covid-19 pandemic situation. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) instructed all general insurance and health insurance companies of India should offer a standard individual Covid-19 health insurance coverage. Currently Public sector and private sector insurance companies are

providing Covid-19 specific covers to the existing policy holders and new customers. Some surveys during this pandemic shows that there is a huge hike in health insurance industry while comparing with the past. This study is focused to identify whether the anxiety during covid 19 and awareness influenced policy holders or not. This study concentrates to find out the major determinants that influenced the consumer decision of medical insurance during this pandemic situation. And also analyses level of awareness of the policy holder on medical insurance and influence of medical insurance advertisement and benefits and their anxiety about life in this pandemic situation.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To analyze the major determinants of consumer purchase decision of medical insurance during Covid-19 Pandemic.
- To analyze the perception of insurance holders towards awareness on medical insurance and anxiety during Covid-19 Pandemic
- To find out the perception of different socio economic groups on influence of determinants of medical insurance

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature which tries to spot various characteristics of the research problem under study and therefore the present situation of the difficulty. The population of the study is limited to insurance holders in Kerala. Sampling frame and scope of this study is limited to insurance holders who take new insurance and those who renewed existing insurance during this pandemic. Sample size of the study is 130 insurance holders from various sectors in Kerala by convenient sampling method. Data collection of this study was done with the help of a structured questionnaire using ranking and interval scale. Both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze the collected data. Collected data has been coded, tabulated and analyzed with the help of descriptive and inferential statistical tools like Skewness, Cronbach's alpha, One way Anova, One sample t test, Independent sample t test, Friedman test, Mean and Correlation.

### **MEASUREMENT AND SCALING**

Independent variable measurements such as awareness, advertisement factors, benefits of medical insurance, was adopted from (Thomas, 2013) and the scale Anxiety was adopted from Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A)(1959). 5 point Likert scale of Agreement and Ranking methods are used in this study.

### **RESULTS**

**Table 1. Normality of Awareness and Anxiety**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	
					Std. Error
Awareness	130	3.00	5.00	-.720	.212
Anxiety	130	1.00	5.00	-1.090	.212
Valid N	130				

The values of skewness of Awareness on Medical insurance policies and Anxiety on the pandemic situation are -.720 and -1.090 respectively which lies between -2 and +2. The value for asymmetry lies in the middle of -2 and +2 can be considered as a normal distribution (George&Mallery,2010).

**Table 2. Reliability of Awareness and Anxiety**

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Awareness	5	.732
Anxiety	4	.849

The Cronbach's alpha of Awareness on Medical insurance policies and Anxiety on the pandemic situation are .732 and .849 respectively. Nunnally and Bernstein(1994) suggest 0.70 as an acceptable reliability coefficient. So, the scales such as awareness and anxiety were found to have high reliability.

**Table 3. Statistical significance of different variables**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3		
				t	df	P value
Awareness	130	4.1569	.47052	28.035	129	.000
Anxiety	130	4.1135	.76193	16.662	129	.000

Mean values of Awareness on Medical insurance policies and Anxiety on the pandemic situation are 4.1567 and 4.1135 respectively, which shows that the insurance holders' perception on awareness and anxiety is very high. The One Sample t test also affirms that there is significant difference in the insurance holders perception towards awareness and anxiety, so it can be interpreted that data is significant and it is suitable for generalizing(P value <.001).

**Table 4. Socio Economic Profile and Awareness of Policy holders**

Variable- Socio-economic groups	t	f	P value <sup>#</sup>	Inference
Age		3.117	0.029	Significant
Gender	2.481		0.014	Significant
Private sector/Public sector	-3.495		0.001	Significant
Started new policy during this pandemic/ Renewed existing policy during this pandemic	2.269		0.025	Significant

H0: There is no significant difference on perception of different socio- economic groups on awareness of policy.

There was a significant difference in level of awareness [p=0.028554] between different age groups. Independent sample t test also indicates that Insurance holders’ perception on Awareness has significant difference between different socio-economic variables as all the variables show p values less than 0.05.

**Table 5. Socio Economic Profile and Anxiety of Policy holders**

Variable- Socio- economic groups	t	f	P value <sup>#</sup>	Inference
Age		3.942	0.010	Significant
Gender	-.098		0.922	Not Significant
Private sector/Public sector	-5.195		0.000	Significant
Started new policy during this pandemic/ Renewed existing policy during this pandemic	1.926		0.056	Not Significant

H0: There is no significant difference on perception of different socio- economic groups on anxiety of policy

There was a significant difference in level of anxiety [p=0.009983] between different age groups and it is statistically significant. Independent sample t test indicates that Private/Public sector Insurance holders’ perception on Anxiety has significant difference. There is no significant difference between Gender groups and New/Renewed policy holders’ perception on Anxiety.

**Table 6. Influence of Medical insurance advertisements- Friedman Test**

Determinants	Mean Rank	Chi-square	P value
Coverage of Covid-19	2.05	204.671	< 0.001
Family security	2.15		
Risk cover	2.82		
Well being and health	3.62		
Low premium cost	4.37		

H0: There is no significant difference in the insurance holders perception on influence of medical insurance advertisements

Coverage of Covid-19 is the most perceived determinant of medical insurance advertisement influenced the insurance holder to make decision on Medical insurance. Family security is the second factor in their priority list. The Friedman test also affirms that there is significant difference in the insurance holders perception towards various determinants (P value <.001).

**Table 7. Socio economic profile and influence of Medical insurance advertisements**

Variable		Determinants				
		Coverage of Covid-19	Family security	Risk cover	Well being and health	Low premium cost
<b>Gender</b>	Male	1.99	2.18	2.87	3.63	4.33
	Female	2.22	2.03	2.66	3.59	4.50
<b>Age</b>	Below 30	1.94	2.53	2.74	3.51	4.28
	30 to 40	2.50	1.84	2.66	3.61	4.39
	40 to 50	1.70	2.09	2.96	3.74	4.52
	Above 50	1.62	1.94	3.25	3.81	4.38
<b>Health insurance Company</b>	Private	2.89	2.21	2.36	3.21	4.32
	Public	1.81	2.13	2.94	3.74	4.38
<b>Category of customer</b>	Started new policy during this pandemic	1.75	2.22	2.86	3.88	4.29
	Renewed existing policy during this pandemic	2.42	2.05	2.75	3.30	4.47

#Mean Rank

While comparing the mean rank of determinants with socio economic profile groups, Males, below 30 and above 40 age groups, insurance holders belongs to public sector and new policy holders have ranked Coverage of Covid19 as their most important determinant that influenced by the medical insurance advertisement variables. Females, age group of 30 to 40, insurance holders belongs to private sector and renewed policy holders ranked Family security as the most important determinant that influenced by the medical insurance advertisement variables and Coverage of Covid-19 as their second factor.

**Table 8. Socio economic profile and Benefits of medical insurance**

Variable		Determinants				
		Risk coverage against Covid-19	Tax planning measure	Avail good quality medical treatment	Existing illness	High cost treatment
Gender	Male	1.81	4.00	2.32	3.82	3.06
	Female	1.87	3.66	2.22	3.78	3.47
Age	Below 30	1.87	3.60	2.51	3.79	3.23
	30 to 40	2.11	4.05	2.05	3.82	2.98
	40 to 50	1.57	3.91	2.39	3.96	3.17
	Above 50	1.25	4.50	2.19	3.63	3.44
Health insurance Company	Private	2.71	3.64	2.18	3.64	2.82
	Public	1.58	3.99	2.32	3.85	3.25
Category of customer	Started new policy during this pandemic	1.66	3.96	2.47	3.96	2.96
	Renewed existing policy during this pandemic	2.04	3.86	2.07	3.61	3.42

#Mean Rank

While comparing the mean rank of determinants with socio economic profile groups, Gender groups, below 30 and above 40 age groups, insurance holders belongs to public sector, new and renewed policy holders have ranked Risk coverage against Covid19 as their most important determinant to make decision about medical insurance. Age group of 30 to 40 and insurance holders belongs to private sector ranked Avail good quality medical treatment as the most important



determinant to make decision about medical insurance and Risk coverage against Covid-19 as their second factor.

**Table 9. Benefits of Medical insurance- Friedman Test**

Determinants	Mean Rank	Chi-square	P value
Risk coverage against Covid-19	1.82	176.923	< 0.001
Tax planning measure	3.92		
Avail good quality medical treatment	2.29		
Existing illness	3.81		
High cost treatment	3.16		

H0: There is no significant difference in the insurance holders perception on benefits of medical insurance

Risk coverage against Covid-19 is the most perceived determinant of benefits of medical insurance that influenced insurance holder to make decision about Medical insurance. Second most determinant is to avail good quality medical treatment in their priority list. The Friedman test also affirms that there is significant difference in the insurance holders’ perception towards various determinants (P value <.001).

**Table 10. Relationship between Awareness and Anxiety**

		Anxiety
Awareness	Karl Pearson Correlation	.537**
	P value (2-tailed)	.000
	N	130

Karl Pearson’s coefficient of correlation was used to analyze the intra and inter-relationship among Anxiety and Awareness of insurance holders. The results indicate that, there exists significant high degree positive relationship between Anxiety and Awareness (.537\*\*). Based on the above results, the relationship between Anxiety and Awareness is positive and statistically significant (P value <.01).

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As per the research, it is founded that, the mean values of Anxiety and Awareness is above 4 which shows that the insurance holders’ perception on awareness and anxiety is very high. As the pandemic evolves rapidly in our country

people are worried about their life because the study shows most of the insurance holders are too anxious about the wide spreading of virus. They choose medical insurance because they are worried, have an anticipation of the worst, fearful anticipation and highly irritable because of the spreading of virus around them. But there is a significant difference between the perceptions of different socio economic variables towards awareness of medical insurance. While discussing with the Anxiety of insurance holders perception, different age groups and Private/Public sector insurance holders have significant difference in their perception. Gender groups and New/Renewed policy holders' perception on Anxiety has no significant difference. So their anxiety influenced them to make decision to purchase a Medical insurance during this pandemic. Medical insurance providers should fabricate their insurance policies by subsuming the features of home health, telemedicine and income protection features (Dutta & Singh, 2021) during this pandemic situation.

Friedman test indicates that Coverage of Covid-19 is the most perceived determinant of medical insurance advertisement influenced insurance holder to take decision to purchase Medical insurance and Family security is the second one in their priority list. The Friedman test also affirms that there is significant difference in the insurance holders perception towards various determinants (P value <.001). While comparing each mean rank of determinants with socio economic profile groups most categories ranked Coverage of Covid-19 as their most important determinant influenced by the medical insurance advertisement variables. But few groups such as females, age group of 30 to 40, insurance holders belongs to private sector and renewed policy holders ranked Family security as the most important determinant influenced by the medical insurance advertisement variables and Coverage of Covid-19 as their second factor. So the determinant Coverage of Covid-19 influenced the customers to newly purchase or to renew their existing policy by various top up plans to cover this pandemic.

Friedman test on determinants of benefits of medical insurance shows that Risk coverage against Covid-19 is the most perceived determinant influenced insurance holder to purchase Medical insurance. Avail good quality medical treatment is the second one in their priority list. The Friedman test also affirms that there is significant difference in the insurance holders perception towards various determinants (P value <.001). While comparing the mean rank of determinants with socio economic profile groups, majority of them ranked Risk coverage against Covid19 as their most important determinant to make purchase decision about medical insurance. Only Age group of 30 to 40 and insurance holders belongs to private sector ranked Avail good quality medical treatment as their most important determinant to make purchase decision about medical insurance but, Risk coverage against Covid-19 as their second factor. From these cross results of mean ranks, it is found that age group of 30 to 40 and insurance holder belongs to private sector ranked Coverage of Covid-19 and Risk coverage against Covid-19 as their second priority list and they much focused about to Family security and Good quality medical treatment.

Correlation analysis of relationship between Anxiety and Awareness of insurance holders shows that, there exist significant high degree positive relationship between Anxiety and Awareness (.537\*\*) and the relationship between Anxiety and Awareness is positive and statistically significant (P value <.01). Hence it is proven that the main reason which driven the insurance holders to become highly aware on their policies and the diseases covered under the policy was their increased level of anxiety in the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic.

## CONCLUSION

Medical insurance is a crucial sort of insurance and necessary for each individual largely during this wide spreading of Covid-19. The objective that this research work was haunted was to measure the anxiety and awareness level of different policy holders and to spot determinants that influence customers within the selection of medical insurance. Study shows that the insurance holders' perception on awareness and anxiety is very high and the relationship between Anxiety and Awareness is positive and statistically significant. Hence it is proven that the main reason which driven the insurance holders to become highly aware on their policies was Anxiety of insurance holders on ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic. Determinant such as Coverage of Covid-19 and Risk coverage against Covid-19 influenced the customers to newly purchase or to renew their existing policy by various top up plans to cover this pandemic. There are many factors which affect customers' investment decision in medical insurance and from the study it's been concluded that Anxiety and awareness also plays a significant and pivotal role for deciding the purchase of medical insurance policies. Furthermore there is a significant difference on the perception of determinants of purchase decision among youngsters and insurance holder belongs to private sector and it visualizes a scope to do further studies in this area to analyze why they much focused about to Family security and Good quality medical treatment rather than Risk coverage of Covid-19 especially during this pandemic.

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## एकान्त श्रीवास्तव की कविता में लोकसंस्कृति ( 'मिट्टी से कहूँगा धन्यवाद' संकलन के विशेष संदर्भ में)

डॉ. प्रिया ए.

**शोध सारांश :-** वैश्वीकरण ने भारत के आर्थिक और सामाजिक ढाँचे को पूर्ण रूप से प्रभावित किया है। आर्थिक उदारीकरण और भूमंडलीकरण ने एक नए पूँजीवाद के रूप को जन्म दिया, जो हमारे देश के लिए विपत्तिदायक है। इसका कुप्रभाव समाज के हर तबके पर अपना वर्चस्व जमा हुआ है। फलस्वरूप समाज केवल उपभोक्ता बनकर रह गया है। मनुष्यता के लिए हानिकारक बन गया है। ऐसे विकल सामाजिक परिवेश को सही मार्ग दर्शन देने के लिए समकालीन कवि प्रयास करते हैं। 'एकान्त श्रीवास्तव' अपने कवि कर्म की बुनियादी शर्त के रूप में आत्म सजगता को ही प्रमुख मानते हैं। बाज़ारवादी वर्चस्व के खिलाफ लोक संस्कृति का माहौल रचने का उपक्रम उनकी रचनाओं की विशेषता है। वे बाज़ारवादी हमलों के संक्रमण को साँस्कृतिक मूल्यों से प्रतिरोध करने का प्रयास करते हैं। लोकजीवन के बहुआयामी घटना क्रमों का वर्णन हम उनकी कविता में देख सकते हैं। उनकी कविताएँ लोकसंस्कृति की स्मृतियों से भरी, जाने-पहचाने सुखों और दुःखों के उजले - काले रंगों से रँगी हुई एक दुनिया का दस्तावेज़ प्रस्तुत करती हैं। विरोधी समय से संघर्ष करते हुए दुर्दम जिजीविषा से गतिशील होती है। पर्यावरण सजगता से ओतप्रोत होकर, सशक्त भाषा संसार रचकर पाठकों की संवेदना से सीधा संलाप करती है।

**Key Words:** - वैश्वीकरण, उदारीकरण, पूँजीवाद, लोकजीवन, लोक संस्कृति, बाज़ारीकरण, मानवीय मूल्य, औद्योगीकरण

## विषय प्रवेश :-

वर्तमान समय में हमारे देश में आर्थिक नीतियों के उदारीकरण के साथ भूमंडलीकरण और वैश्वीकरण के पदचाप उदारवाद, उपभोक्तावाद एवं बाज़ारवाद के रूप में हमारे सम्मुख उपस्थित हैं। वैश्वीकरण ने भारत के आर्थिक और सामाजिक ढाँचे को पूर्ण रूप से प्रभावित किया है। आर्थिक उदारीकरण और भूमंडलीकरण ने एक नए पूँजीवाद के रूप को जन्म दिया, जो हमारे देश के लिए विपत्तिदायक है। इसका कुप्रभाव समाज के हर तबके पर अपना वर्चस्व जमा हुआ है। फलस्वरूप समाज केवल उपभोक्ता बनकर रह गया है। मनुष्यता के लिए हानिकारक बन गया है। ऐसे विकल सामाजिक परिवेश को सही मार्ग दर्शन देने के लिए समकालीन कवि प्रयास करते हैं। 'एकान्त श्रीवास्तव' अपने कवि कर्म की बुनियादी शर्त के रूप में आत्म सजगता को ही प्रमुख मानते हैं। बाज़ारवादी वर्चस्व के खिलाफ लोक संस्कृति का माहौल रचने का उपक्रम उनकी रचनाओं की विशेषता है। वे बाज़ारवादी हमलों के संक्रमण को साँस्कृतिक मूल्यों से प्रतिरोध करने का प्रयास करते हैं। लोकजीवन के बहुआयामी घटना क्रमों का वर्णन हम उनकी कविता में देख सकते हैं।

जीवन और प्रकृति के प्रत्यक्ष अनुभवों से अलंकरित जन-समुदाय का सर्वमान्य पर्याय को लोक कहा जाता है। जो सहज आस्थाशील एवं प्राकृतिक साहचर्य में जीवन-यापन करता है। सामूहिकता, भावावेग की प्रधानता, जनकल्याण की भावना, संवेदनशीलता आदि लोक के जन्मजात गुण हैं। एकान्त श्रीवास्तव की रचनाएँ लोक से जुड़ाव से जन्म लेती हैं। उनकी कविताओं में लोकसंस्कृति के बहुआयामी मर्मस्पर्शी चित्र उभरकर आते हैं। पारिवारिक-सामाजिक जीवन से जुड़ी घटनाएँ, गाँव की महक, मिट्टी से सिक्त अनुभव यथार्थ एवं प्राकृतिक कणों के निकटतम संबन्धों का वर्णन ये सभी तत्व रचना में विद्यमान होते हैं। उनकी कविताओं में लोक संस्कृति एवं ठेठ स्थानीयता के प्रति मोह के साथ-साथ भूमंडलीकरण के समय के भारत का पूरा परिदृश्य भी उभरकर आता है।

लोकसंस्कृति, लोक अर्थात् जनसामान्य की संपत्ति होती है। जीवन में उसका अपना स्वतंत्र प्रवाह होता है, जो स्थायी रूप में विद्यमान होता है। लोक संस्कृति पर कृत्रिम सभ्यता का या अपसांस्कृतिक पहलुओं का आवरण नहीं होता। इसके सहज, सरल और अकृत्रिम रूप-माधुर्य पर रससिक्त होकर कवि अपने सम्मोहनकारी अनुभवों को 'आसरा' शीर्षक कविता में वर्णित करते हैं - "पके धान का खेत/आसरा है किसान का/मछुआरे का आसरा है जाल/बच्चों के आसरे हैं मुँगेसर हरी मेड़ों के/मेघ है आसरा मंजूर का/परदेश में घर की याद का आसरा"<sup>1</sup>

लोकसंस्कृति पर अधिक बल देने से ही हमारी स्थानीयता की भावना को उचित ढंग से प्रश्रय मिल सकता है। देश के कल्याण के लिए इसका संरक्षण भी बहुत ज़रूरी है। किसान

का आसरा, मज़दूर का आसरा, मछुआरे का आसरा सब प्राकृतिक तत्व ही हैं। लोक-संस्कृति के अनेक तत्वों को स्पष्ट करके कवि ने यह बताने का प्रयास किया है कि हमारे देश का आसरा हमारी लोक संस्कृति ही है। मूल्य संक्रमण के इस घातक परिवेश में स्थानीयता को बचाए रखना हर नागरिक का कर्तव्य भी बनता है। यह कविता इस कर्तव्यबोध का दायित्व भी निभाती है।

लोकजीवन में त्योहारों का बड़ा महत्व है। एकान्त श्रीवास्तव की कविता में लोकजीवन की सुन्दर जीवंत अभिव्यक्ति मिलती है। 'होली' का उत्सव लोकजीवन की रसधारा होती है। फागुन का महीना पूरी सजधज के साथ, अपने इन्द्रधनुषी रंगों को बिखेरता हुआ आता है। खेतों में सरसों के रंग बिखराकर, पीले फूलों पर तितलियाँ और भौरों मँडराने पर, त्योहारों का त्योहार होली का आगमन होता है। पर वर्तमान समय में पूरी धरती पर संकट का परिदृश्य व्याप्त है। प्रकृति पर मनुष्य ने अपना अधिकार जमाया है और प्रकृति का विध्वंस हो रहा है। ऐसी हालत में कई प्रकार की प्राकृतिक आपदाओं का सामना करना पड़ता है। प्राकृतिक संकटों से ग्रस्त परिवेश को 'होली का गीत' शीर्षक कविता यों दर्शाती है - 'जलते घरों की लपटों से/झुलस गए हैं पेड़/इनसे लिपटकर रोई हैं स्त्रियाँ/दुःख से भरे हैं ये पेड़/पेड़ों पर लगा दो गुलाल का टीका/यहाँ गूँज रहा है सूखे का अट्टहास/यहाँ डोल रही है अकाल की छाया/दंगाइयों ने खेली हैं यहाँ खून की होली।' <sup>2</sup>

उन्होंने अपनी आँचलिक कविताओं में लोकजीवन की यथार्थपरक व्याख्या के माध्यम से अपने गाँव की व्यथा कथा को बहुत ही मार्मिकता से अभिव्यक्ति प्रदान की है। प्रकृति लोक का बृहद रूप है, जिसके अन्तर्गत प्रकृति के पूरे कण समाहित हो जाते हैं।

भारतीय लोक संस्कृति श्रमशील समाज की संवेदनात्मक आवेगों की अभिव्यक्ति रही है। धरती के हर हिस्से के मूल निवासियों ने अपनी लोक संस्कृति की रक्षा की है। यह प्रकृति की गोद में पनपती है। लोक संस्कृति की शिक्षा प्रणाली में स्थानीयता के प्रति श्रद्धा भाव प्रमुख होता है। लेकिन वर्तमान समय में गाँव की संस्कृति मिटती जा रही है। 'अनाम चिड़िया के नाम' कविता के द्वारा कवि अयाचित रूप में आसन्न अपसांस्कृतिक परिवेश से मुक्त होने की आशा के साथ यों लिखते हैं - 'मूसलाधार बरसता है पानी/सजल हो जाते हैं खेत/तृप्त हो जाती हैं पुरखों की आत्माएँ/टूटने से बच जाता है मन का मेरुदंड/कहती है मंगतिन/इसी चिड़िया की आवाज़ से/आते हैं मेघ/सुदूर समुद्रों से उठकर/ओ चिड़िया/तुम बोलो बारम्बार गाँव में/घर में, घाट में, वन में/पत्थर हो चुके आदमी के मन में।' <sup>3</sup>

कवि आशा करते हैं कि अनाम चिड़िया की आवाज़ से मेघों की तरह पत्थर हो चुके मनुष्य का मन भी पिघलेगा। बाज़ारीकरण की प्रक्रिया में स्वार्थ-लोलुपता के साथ जीनेवाले

आदमी का दिल आर्द्र होगा। गाँव में, घाट में, वन में, घर में सब कहीं अपनेपन का भाव प्रकट होगा। यही कवि की कामना है।

उनकी रचनाओं में छत्तीसगढ़ अंचल के लोक जीवन के चित्र लगातार देख सकते हैं। छत्तीसगढ़ को धान का कटोरा कहा गया है। वहाँ की उपजाऊ मिट्टी में पसहर धान की खेती होती है। प्राकृतिक शोषण के कारण इस गाँव में सूखा, अकाल आदि व्याप्त है। गाँव की जनता गरीबी एवं विपन्नता का शिकार बनी हुई है। कामगार औरतों के जीवन को माध्यम बनाकर संपूर्ण लोकजीवन की त्रासदी को खींचनेवाली कविता है 'पसहर झड़ानेवाली स्त्रियाँ' - "वे आती हैं भूख की पगडंडियों पर चलकर/उनके पाँव घुटनों तक धूल में अँटे होते हैं/उनकी साँसों से ठण्डे चूल्हों की राख झरती है/उनकी आँखों में बुझी चिमनियों का कसैला धुआँ घुमड़ता है/उनकी साड़ियों से बहुत पहले उड़ चुके होते हैं रंग/उनके उलझे, भूरे और रूखे बालों से आती है/तालाब की काली मिट्टी की गंध/जिसमें वे धुले होते हैं।"<sup>4</sup>

यह कविता लोक की संपूर्ण जीवन गाथा को स्पष्ट करती है। ये स्त्रियाँ भूख की पगडंडियाँ चलकर, आमदनी की तलाश में आती हैं। इनका पूरा गहना साहूकारों के पास गिरवी रखा गया है। पानी में उगनेवाले पसहर के धान को वे आँचल फैलाकर झड़ाती हैं। अपने घर की गरीबी से लड़कर वे अपना काम करती हैं। समकालीन समय से मुठभेड़ करने पर ही जीवन गतिशील बनेगा। लोक जीवन की जीवन्तता को यहाँ बखूबी से देखा जा सकता है।

वर्तमान समय के बाज़ार केन्द्रित दुनिया में अपनेपन की भावना खो गई है। मानव का वस्तु में परिवर्तित हो जाने और मूल्यों का बाज़ारों के उत्तराधुनिक मंडी में बदल जाने के भयावह दृश्य को देखकर कवि चौंक जाते हैं। स्थानीय विशेषताएँ घट रही हैं। अपनी पहचान मिट रही है। ऐसे विकल परिवेश का उल्लेख 'महेन्द्र नहीं' कविता में किया गया है - 'ओह! वो महेन्द्र नहीं/आज दिखा जो अचानक/ग्यारह बरस बाद/xxxxxxx/हम बड़े हुए एक ही बीड़ी को बारी-बारी फूँकते/हम बड़े हुए/और रोज़ी-रोटी के अलग-अलग रास्तों पर खो गए/वह खो गया भूख और अपराध की अँधेरी गलियों में/मुझे बचाए रखा कविता ने अपनी संपन्न विपन्नता से।'<sup>5</sup>

उत्तराधुनिक समय में यह देश, नगर, गाँव सब कहीं तेज़ी से बदलाव हो रहा है। लोगों की मानसिकता भी तेज़ रफ़्तार से बदल रही है। कवि एक ओर अपनी अस्मिता व संस्कृति को सुरक्षित रखने का प्रयास करते हैं और दूसरी ओर भौतिक विकास की चपेट में ध्वस्त रहे मानवीय मूल्यों का उद्धार करना भी उनका दायित्व रहा है। वे अपने कवि कर्म को सामाजिक पक्षधरता के साथ निभाने का पूर्ण प्रयास कर रहे हैं।

उत्तराधुनिक समय में विलुप्त होते घर-परिवार के एहसास को बड़ी शिद्दत के साथ 'पिता के लिए कुछ शोकगीत' कविता के द्वारा महसूस कराया है - 'आदमी अकेला नहीं मरता/मरता है घर का एक-एक जन/थोड़ी-थोड़ी-सी



मौत/मर जाती है झोलों में भरकर/बाजार से आने वाली खुशी/आटे के बिना कनस्तर/और रोटी के बिना/चूल्हा मर जाता है।'<sup>6</sup>

चार भागों में विभक्त इस कविता में पिता की मृत्यु के बाद की यादों में होनेवाली कसक को स्पष्ट किया है। घर के एक व्यक्ति की मृत्यु के बाद उस घर-परिवार की वेदना और निराशा की गहराई का अंकन हम अनुभव कर सकते हैं। पारिवारिक संबन्धों को बहुत ही आत्मीय एवं सुखकर अनुभव के रूप में उन्होंने चित्रित किया है। उनकी कविताएँ लोकजीवन की झाँकियों को प्रस्तुत करके सामाजिक भाव-भूमि में प्रवेश करती हैं।

भूमंडलीकरण की बाज़ारवादी प्रक्रिया ने मानवीय सरोकारों और संवेदनाओं को पूँजी की सत्ता तले दबा दिया है। पूँजीवादी ताकतों से मानवता पर हमला किया जा रहा है। मानव समाज पर पैसों की खनक हावी हो रही है। मानव कल्याण की भावना को तिलाँजलि देकर मानव विरोधी बाज़ारी दुनिया व्याप्त हुई है। मनुष्य का जीवन सिद्धों के मूल्य पर ही आगे बढ़ रहा है। पूँजीवादी व्यवस्था के पंजे से जकड़ी हुई समाज की वास्तविक हालत को 'पैसों का गीत' शीर्षक कविता चित्रित करती है - '।।पैसे आओ। मगर वहाँ मत जाओ/जहाँ दृश्य में बदलने को तैयार हैं/एक चित्रकार के रंग/वहाँ नहीं, जहाँ पकते धान की/खुशबू से भरे हैं शब्द/और लिखी जाने वाली है एक कविता/वहाँ नहीं, जहाँ बाँसुरी से/उठने वाली है अभी एक धुन।'<sup>7</sup>

पूँजीवादी आर्थिक प्रणाली में मुक्त बाजार की प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक लाभ व्यवस्था ही मुख्य होती है। प्रस्तुत कविता मनुष्य-विरोधी गतिविधियों के खिलाफ खड़ी है। संवेदनशील कवि मनुष्य और मनुष्यता के पक्ष में ही खड़े होते हैं। पैसों के मूल्यों पर टिके हुई मुक्तबाजार व्यवस्था से समाज को उबारने का प्रयास कवि करते हैं। विश्वव्यापी प्रभुत्ववादी शक्तियाँ भूमंडलीकरण को नए-नए स्वरूपों में गढ़कर समाज पर थोप रही हैं। इस वातावरण से मुठभेड़ करते हुए एकांत श्रीवास्तव अपनी रचनाओं में लोक संस्कृति को उद्घासित करते हैं।

वैश्वीकरण, बाज़ारवाद, उपभोक्तावाद के विश्वस्तरीय संभावनाओं के खोखलेपन की खाद से समकालीन हिंदी कविता में असमंजसता, अनिश्चितता एवं अस्तित्व की प्रताड़ना की अभिव्यक्ति मुखरित होती है। 'बाँग्ला देश' शीर्षक कविता ऐसे विध्वंसात्मक हालत को खींचती है - '।।अभागे वृक्ष हैं हम/बह गई/जिनके जड़ों की मिट्टी/कभी महामारी कभी तूफान में/कभी युद्ध कभी दंगे में/कभी सूखा कभी बाढ़ में/हमीं मरे हमीं/और हमीं रहे जीवित/विध्वंस के बाद पृथ्वी पर/घर बनाते हुए।'<sup>8</sup>

एक ओर जनसामान्य की आस्था और आत्म-विस्तार को महत्व दिया गया है और दूसरी ओर साँस्कृतिक विकृतीकरण के फलस्वरूप उत्पन्न मोहभंग की हालत पर भी बल दिया है।

उपभोक्तावाद ने पूरी दुनिया को वैश्विक शिकार बनाकर अपने तले दबा दिया है। देश के पूरे संसाधनों पर वैश्वीकरण ने कब्ज़ा किया है। हमारे प्राकृतिक संसाधन, बहुराष्ट्रीय या पश्चिमी औद्योगिक देशों के गिरफ्त में जा रहे हैं। इस क्रम में हम देखते हैं कि इस लुटेरे दौर में नदियाँ बेची जा रही हैं। 'तीन नदियाँ' शीर्षक कविता नदियों की आपत्तिजनक हालत को चित्रित करती है - "तीन नदियाँ/बड़ी दूर से बहती हुई/आकर मिलती हैं इस जगह/जैसे तीन बहनें हों/ब्याह के बाद बिछुड़ी हुई/अपने-अपने दुःखों की गठरी उठाए/xxxxxxx/अरे देखो! शताब्दी के जलते हुए मानचित्र पर/बह रही हैं तीन नदियाँ/एक नदी की तरह/दंगाइयों! यह कितना सुखद है/कि तुम इन्हें चाकू से काटकर अलग नहीं कर सकते।"<sup>9</sup>

मनुष्य की दानवी हरकतों ने हमारी साँस्कृतिक विरासत को ध्वस्त कर दिया है। नदी को लोग अतीत की निरर्थक बात मानते हैं। आज के समय में बोटलबन्द पानी को खरीदकर पीने की विवशता में जी रहे हैं। यह हमारे समय की विडंबनात्मक सच्चाई है।

पूरे विश्व में बाज़ार का प्रभाव पड़ रहा है। बाज़ार ने मनुष्य को एक उपभोक्ता दर्शक के रूप में बना रखा है। बाज़ारवाद के कुप्रभाव के कारण व्यक्ति समाज से कटते जा रहे हैं। हमारी संस्कृति भी लुप्त होती जा रही है। बाज़ार हमारी आवश्यकताओं की परिपूर्ति करता था। पर समय के साथ-साथ बाज़ार का चेहरा और मूल्य भी बदल गया। बाज़ार में वस्तुओं की खरीदी-बिक्री तो लाजिमी है। पर साँस्कृतिक विरासत भी बाज़ार में बिकाऊ हो जाए तो वह मानवविरोधी समय की ओर संकेत देता है। ऐसी दर्दनाक हालत को स्पष्ट करनेवाली कविता है - 'सुनो जो सुनाई नहीं दे रहा' - "सुनो युद्ध में दम तोड़ते आदमी की कराह/दंगों में मारे जाते बच्चों और स्त्रियों की अंतिम इच्छाएँ/कमज़ोर सतह की खोज में/पृथ्वी के भीतर टहलते लावे की पदचाप सुनो/सुनो जो सुनाई नहीं दे रहा/बस एक बार/अपनी सारी कार्यवाहियाँ स्थगित करके/सुनो अपनी आत्मा को/जो सदियों से तुमसे कुछ कहना चाहती है।"<sup>10</sup>

उपभोग और उत्पाद बाज़ारवाद का अभिन्न अंग है। बाज़ारवादी परिघटनाएँ अनंतकाल से विद्यमान हैं और समयानुसार परिवर्तनशील भी है। समकालीन समय में मनुष्यत्व पर, प्राकृतिक उपादानों पर भी बाज़ारवाद का कब्ज़ा व्याप्त हुआ है। कवि समाज से आह्वान करते हैं कि जो सुनाई नहीं दे रहा हो, जो दिखाई नहीं दे रहा हो, वर्चस्ववादी ताकतों द्वारा दबाए गए उन शोषितों की वेदना को सुनो। मानवता को बचाए रखने के दायित्व बोध की ओर ज़ोर देकर कविता इशारा करती है।

उत्तर आधुनिकता के इस दौर में हमारे जीवन मूल्यों को भी दरकिनार कर दिया गया है। मूल्यहीनता ने इन्सानी वजूद को बौना साबित कर दिया है। बढ़ते हुए बाज़ारीकरण के दबाव को व्यक्त करनेवाली एक सशक्त कविता है - 'जब सो गए हैं दुआर में देव' - "इतनी रात गए/जब सो गए हैं दुआर में देव/और कोठार में अन्न/जब सरसराता नहीं एक भी रूख/जब सुनाई नहीं देती बोली चिरई-चुरगुन की/सुनाई देती हैं

मुझे/दंगाइयों के पाँवों की आहटें/जलते हुए भूगोल पर/सुनाई देता है भूखे घरों का विलाप।<sup>11</sup>

उपभोक्तावाद ने समाज को उपभोग का आदी बना दिया है। इसके फलस्वरूप लोगों के बीच मानसिक लगाव एवं आत्मीयता का संबन्ध टूट जाता है। दया, त्याग, प्रेम, भाईचारा, मैत्री भाव जैसे मूल्य आज उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृति के दलदल में फँस गए हैं।

बाज़ारवादी यंत्र युग के दौर में मानवीय संवेदनाओं पर कई-कई अजनबी संस्कृतियों का हस्तक्षेप लगातार हो रहा है। बाज़ारवाद की खरीद-फरोख्त की अपसंस्कृति के चंगुल में फँसकर लोकसंस्कृति तहस-नहस हो रही है। अपनी साँस्कृतिक विरासत को बचाए रखने के लिए बाजार से जूझना आवश्यक बन गया है। परंपरागत मूल्यों, मान्यताओं, आस्थाओं एवं निजी अस्मिताओं पर मँडरानेवाले खतरों के खिलाफ 'दुनिया के हाट में' शीर्षक कविता प्रहार करती है - 'मैं ज़मीन नहीं बेचता/बेचता हूँ हृदय/अपनी छाती से काटकर/मैं पेड़ की तरह कटकर गिरता हूँ/दुनिया के हाट में/बेमोल/मेघ की तरह बरसकर होता हूँ खाली/मैं ज़मीन नहीं बेचता/बेचता हूँ आँखें/जल और स्वप्न से भरी/अपनी दो अदद आँखें।'<sup>12</sup>

पूरी दुनिया भूमंडीकृत हो गई है। मानवीय संवेदनाओं एवं आकांक्षाओं को बचाए रखने के लिए कवि मन आँसू बहता है। निराशा व दुःखी हो जाता है। साँसों को छीनकर दुनिया के हाट में बिकनेवाली संस्कृति को बरकरार रखने का पूरा प्रयास कवि करते हैं।

नई विश्वव्यवस्था में वैश्विक बाजार एक क्रूर किस्म की व्यवस्था को बढ़ावा दे रहा है। वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था ने ही उपभोक्तामूलक संस्कृति को जन्म दिया। फलस्वरूप नव साम्राज्यवादी व्यवस्था फुट पड़ी। इसके तहत बहुराष्ट्र कंपनियों ने हमारे देश पर कब्ज़ा किया। ये बहुराष्ट्रीय निगम और औद्योगिक संस्थाएँ मिलकर देशीय संस्कृति को लूट रही हैं। खेत, नदियाँ, ज़मीन, जंगल सब खरीदकर हक जमा लेती हैं। खेत से अन्नदाताओं को बेदखल किया जाता है। ऐसी विदूपात्मक सच्चाई को 'हस्ताक्षर' शीर्षक कविता बयान करती है - 'सिर्फ एक हस्ताक्षर किया जाता है/और नीली पड़ जाती है धरती की देह/बुझ जाता है चाँद/सूख जाती हैं नदियाँ/अदृश्य हो जाते हैं हरे-भरे खेत/सिर्फ एक हस्ताक्षर किया जाता है/और छिन जाती हैं हमारी आँखें/कट जाते हैं हमारे हाथ/सिर्फ एक हस्ताक्षर किया जाता है/और खो देते हैं हम/अपना देश।'<sup>13</sup>

एकल विश्व की अवधारणा के अनुयायी बने हुए बहुराष्ट्रीय निगमों की साजिश को कवि ने यहाँ दर्शाया है। मुक्त बाजार की व्यवस्थाओं से चौपट होते देशी उद्योग और बेरोज़गार होते कामगारों एवं किसानों की बद्दहाली भी एक हकीकत बनी हुई है।

देश के औद्योगिक विकास में किसान की अहम भूमिका है। भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था की बुनियाद खेती का क्षेत्र ही है। वर्तमान समय में हमारा देश

समाजवादी भावना को नज़रंदाज़ करके बाज़ारवादी तंत्रों की ओर उन्मुख हो रहा है। ऐसी विडंबनात्मक हालत में देश की सबसे कमज़ोर आबादी यानी किसान, मज़दूर जैसे लोगों को अपना गाँव व खेत छोड़कर शहरों की ओर पलायन करना पड़ता है। वैश्वीकरण से दुष्प्रभाव से एक बड़ी आबादी को कई प्रकार के संकटों का सामना करना पड़ता है। ऋण के भार से पलायन करने के लिए अभिशप्त परिवार की जीवन गाथा को 'एक ऋणग्रस्त परिवार की प्रस्थान-कथा' शीर्षक कविता वाणी देती है - 'चले जायेंगे/इस घर को बेचकर/किसी अनजाने शहर के/धूल भरे रास्तों पर भटकने के लिए/इसकी नींव में/ईंट की जगह रखी हमने अपनी हड्डियाँ/इसके गारे में/पानी की जगह मिलाया हमने अपना पसीना/इसकी दीवारों पर/रंग की जगह लगाया हमने अपना खून/इसकी क्यारियों में/फूलों की जगह बोए हमने अपने स्वप्न/इस घर को बेचकर/हम चले जाएँगे।' <sup>14</sup>

उद्योगपतियों द्वारा किसानों, मज़दूरों एवं कमज़ोर आबादी को ऋण की जाल में फँसाकर उनका शोषण करने की कूटनीति के विरुद्ध लोकजीवन की संवेदनाओं से लड़ने का आह्वान यह कविता बहुत ही सजीवता से बुलंद करती है। गाँव की मिट्टी में उपजे फूलों की महक शहर में रहकर महसूस करने का प्रयास उनकी लोकोन्मुख अभिव्यक्ति को व्यक्त करता है।

बाज़ारीकरण से उत्पन्न सामाजिक वैषम्य की स्थितियाँ कवि मन को पीड़ादायी लगती हैं। कामगार वर्ग की नियति यही होती है कि उन्हें जीवन बिताने के लिए हाड-तोड़ मेहनत करनी पड़ती है। इस नियति को स्वीकारते हुए, उपेक्षित एवं वंचित वर्ग के प्रति अपनी सहानुभूति दर्शाते हुए 'काली मिट्टी में कपास की तरह' कविता में वे लिखते हैं - 'चला जाऊँगा वापस/भूख और प्यास की दुनिया में/गले में गमछा डाले/जहाँ के धूल भरे रास्तों पर/घूम सकता हूँ बेरोक-टोक/xxxxxxxxxx/तुम्हारी क्यारी के गुलाब की तरह नहीं/उगूँगा तो काली मिट्टी में कपास की तरह।' <sup>15</sup>

हमारे देश में कपास महत्वपूर्ण कृषि उपज में से एक है। प्राकृतिक रेशा प्रदान करनेवाली कपास भारत की सबसे महत्वपूर्ण रेशेवाली नकदी फसल है। जिसका देश की औद्योगिक व कृषि अर्थव्यवस्था में प्रमुख स्थान है। किसानों की चेतना को, लोक संस्कृति को सुरक्षित रखने की घोषणा इस कविता के द्वारा की गयी है। लोक जीवन को पूरी जीवंतता के साथ महसूस करने को कवि मन सदा उत्सुक रहता है।

भूमंडलीकृत परिवेश में साम्राज्यवादी ताकतें सारी सुविधाओं का भोक्ता बनी हुई हैं। वह उत्पादक-शोषित वर्ग को अपने वर्चस्व के तले दबाती है। आम जनता के वास्तविक जीवन का कोई भान उन्हें नहीं होता है। बुनियादी ज़रूरतों के निर्वाह करने के लिए

मेहनत करनेवाले, तरसनेवाले किसान-मज़दूर वर्ग के श्रम को अपनी कविता में कवि प्रश्रय देते हैं। शोषण की हालत से मुक्ति की कामना करते हुए वे 'मुक्ति' शीर्षक कविता में यों लिखते हैं - 'हक़ नहीं है कि मैं सुनूँ धरती के भीतर/वृक्षों की जड़ों से पानी का संवाद/सिवाय उस भूख के जो खाली बर्तन के/गिरने की झनझनाहट की तरह शुरू होती है/और हर आवाज़ को अपने में ढँक लेती है/ओ नवान्न/मैं कंडों और सूखी लकड़ियों के भीतर/कैद हूँ/अजन्मे धुएँ की तरह/तुम आओ और मुझे मुक्त करो।' <sup>16</sup>

मानवीय संवेदनाओं की सूक्ष्म पड़ताल की भावना यहाँ प्रकट हुई है। अपनी रचनाओं के माध्यम से कवि ने शोषण के नैरन्तर्य से जनता की मुक्ति का आह्वान किया है। लोकजीवन से अपना पूरा जुड़ाव दर्शाते हुए वे अपने रचना संसार को पाठकों के सम्मुख रखते हैं।

हमारे देश में गाँवों का बड़ा महत्व है। गाँव भारत के अभिन्न अंग हैं। यहाँ एक समृद्ध कृषि विरासत है और किसान वर्ग पूरे राष्ट्र के लिए भोजन के उत्पादन करने में सक्षम हैं। पर विकास के कारण और नौकरी की तलाश में लोगों को गाँव छोड़कर जाना पड़ता है। गाँवों का कुछ साँस्कृतिक महत्व भी होता है। हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था के निर्माण में अहम योगदान देनेवाले गाँवों की स्थिति बहुत ही दुःखद हो गई है। शहरीकरण के पनपने पर गायब होते हुए गाँव के दृश्य को 'नक्षे में ढूँढो वह गाँव' कविता दर्शाती है - 'नक्षे में ढूँढों हमारे दर्द का रंग/हमारे घर-गाँव की वनस्पतियाँ/इस ऋतु में खिलने वाले फूल/और बोलने वाली चिड़ियों के नाम नक्षे में ढूँढो/नक्षे में ढूँढो धूल-धूसरित रास्ते/जिन पर चलकर हम बड़े हुए/बगीचे आम के/खेत-खलिहान/और दियों की उजास में नहाई कच्ची दहलीज़ें।' <sup>17</sup>

वास्तविक बात यह है कि विकास प्रक्रिया के कारण गाँव का कलेवर ही अब बदल गया है और कोई विकास अभी भी कुछ गाँवों तक नहीं पहुँच पाया है। अच्छी सड़कें, स्कूल, अस्पताल आदि सुविधाएँ तक वहाँ उपलब्ध नहीं हो पाई हैं। ऐसे असुविधाओं से ग्रस्त गाँव औद्योगिकीकरण की आड़ में गायब कर दिए जाते हैं। इन गाँवों की खबर फिर सिर्फ मानचित्रों से ही मिल सकती है। उन गाँवों को नक्षे में ढूँढना होगा।

भारत एक समृद्ध विरासत का हकदार है जो अपने गौरवशाली अतीत के बारे में जानकारी देता है। हमारे पूर्वजों ने सदियों से हमारी साँस्कृतिक और प्राकृतिक विरासत को संरक्षित किया है और हमें इस परंपरा को बनाए रखना चाहिए। विरासत हमें अपनी जड़ों से जोड़ती है। अपनी सभ्यता, संस्कृति एवं प्रगति की जानकारी जीवंत रूप में भावी पीढ़ियों तक पहुँचाने के लिए विरासत का संरक्षण आवश्यक है। इससे देश एवं देश की जनता की पहचान प्रस्तुत होती है। वर्तमान समय में वैश्वीकरण और औद्योगिकीकरण की अधिकता के कारण होनेवाले प्रदूषणों से

सामाजिक एवं प्राकृतिक दोनों प्रकार के विरासतों पर खतरा व्याप्त हुआ है। ऐसे विपत्तिदायक समय के प्रति सतर्क करने हेतु 'विरासत' कविता लिखी है -  
'मुझे मिले विरासत में सूरज और चाँद/मुझे मिलीं ऋतुओं की/हरी-भरी डालियाँ/मुझे मिलीं नदियाँ गहरी और निर्मल/मुझे मिले ऋतुओं के सुंदरतम फूल/सूरज और चाँद को लग गया ग्रहण/डालियों में धँस गए विष बुझे तीर/नदियों में घुल गया हत्याओं का लहू/फूलों पर बैठ गई बारूद की गंध/क्या छोड़ जाऊँगा विरासत में आखिर/क्या छोड़ जाऊँगा।'<sup>18</sup>

हमारी संस्कृति में प्रकृति एवं ऋतुओं के साथ जीवन संगीत के राग का गहरा संबन्ध है। नदी, समुद्र, भूमि, पर्वत, जीवजंतु, मौसम, खनिज सभी प्राकृतिक प्रदत्त संरचनाएँ हैं जो आज क्षरण के कगार पर खड़ी हैं। लोकजीवन में ये सभी तत्व बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण होते हैं। घटते हुए पर्यावरण एवं विरासतों के प्रति लोगों में जागरूकता को संप्रेषित करने में भी यह कविता सफल होगी।

एकान्त श्रीवास्तव की रचनाओं में छत्तीसगढ़ अंचल के लोकजीवन की जीवन्त अभिव्यक्ति मिलती है। इसके द्वारा उस अतीत की खोज होती है, जिसकी परंपराएँ, प्रेरणाएँ एवं प्रतीकों ने आज भी उस संस्कृति को सुरक्षित रखा और गतिशीलता भी प्रदान की। वैश्वीकरण के इस विरोधी समय में कवि अपने विगत जीवन की पड़ताल करते हुए 'एक हरी टहनी पर' कविता में अपनी मानसिक पीड़ा को शब्दबद्ध करते हैं - 'एक हरी टहनी पर/मैं खिला/कई बरस पहले/मैंने चलना सीखा/और कुछ रास्ते मेरे इंतज़ार में बिछ गए/मैंने खाना सीखा/और वृक्षों ने बचाए रखा/मेरे हिस्से के पकते फलों को/खुशी यह कि/जैसे माँ बचाकर रखती है पकवान/इस पृथ्वी ने बचाकर रखी/मेरे लिए थोड़ी-सी जगह।'<sup>19</sup>

प्राकृतिक हरियाली के बीच कवि का जन्म हुआ था। पर इक्कीसवीं सदी में प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का शोषण बड़ी मात्रा में हो रहा है। हरियाली के स्थान पर तपता हुआ प्राकृतिक परिवेश दीख पड़ता है। वे अपनी कविताओं में लोक, लोकचेतना और उससे उपजी संस्कृति की चर्चा करते हैं। यह उनके रचना संसार की परिचालक शक्ति होती है। इस ताकत से उनका काव्यजगत जीवन का सच्चा प्रतिनिधित्व करेगा एवं कालजयी सिद्ध होगा; इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं।

आज के समय में भूमंडलीकरण के नाम पर उपभोक्तावाद एवं बाज़ारवाद को बढ़ावा मिल रहा है। इसके तहत राष्ट्रों की संस्कृति, सभ्यता, लोक सम्पदाएँ, कुटीर उद्योग एवं आर्थिक, सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, धार्मिक एवं दार्शनिक नीतियाँ समाप्त होने के कगार पर हैं। अर्थ तंत्र का यह नव उपनिवेशवाद मानवीय संवेदन शीलता, सहिष्णुता आदि को कुचल देता है। ऐसी विकल स्थिति में साहित्य का व साहित्यकार का दायित्व व्यापक हो जाता है। हिंसात्मक क्रूर समय के जिरह अपनी कलम को तीर बनाकर 'यातना-शिविर' कविता में वे लिखते हैं - 'कराहें! ये कैसी कराहें

हैं/जो इतनी रात गए सुनाई देती हैं/क्या फिर मरा कोई भूख से?/क्या फिर गिरा कोई गोली खाकर?/विध्वंस के इस दौर में/कम से कम बचा लूँ मैं//यदि और कुछ नहीं तो अपने पाँवों को/और अपनी आवाज़ को/इतने संवेदनशील न हो जाएँ मेरे पाँव/कि खो दें पत्थरों पर चलने का साहस/इतनी संभ्रांत न हो जाए मेरी आवाज़/कि खो दें चीख में बदलने की हिम्मत।''<sup>20</sup>

प्रस्तुत कविता में यातनाओं के कई दृश्य हमारे सामने उपस्थित होते हैं। इसके साथ ही चमकती हुई नव संस्कृति की उपेक्षा का भाव एवं ग्राम संस्कृति से ऊष्मा एवं लगाव का भाव भी गहराई से स्पष्ट होता है। लोक जीवन से संजीवनी शक्ति प्राप्त करके एक विशाल जीवन दृष्टि विकसित होती है। इसके बल पर भूमंडलीकरण के सशक्त माया जाल के खिलाफ चुनौती का संकेत अखितयार करती है। प्रतिरोध का एक नया संसार सृजित करती है।

इक्कीसवीं सदी में अर्थात् वैश्वीकरण के इस युग में हम पूरी तरह आर्थिक और मानसिक रूप से गुलामी की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं। हम अपनी संस्कृति को खोकर अपसंस्कृति को अपनाए हुए हैं। यह स्थिति बहुत ही भयानक होती है। ऐसी हालत में हमारी स्थानीय पहचान को खत्म करने का प्रयास हो रहा है। जिन वस्तुओं के प्रति हमारा लगाव था, जिन प्रतीकों से हम रागात्मक रूप से जुड़े थे वह सब हमारी नज़रों से दूर होते जा रहे हैं। मानव और प्रकृति के बिगड़ते रिश्तों का गहरा मूल्यांकन करते हुए 'अपराध' शीर्षक कविता एक विक्षिप्त नागरिक की वेदना को रेखांकित करती है - 'मैं हूँ इस ढलती शताब्दी का/एक विक्षिप्त नागरिक/यही है मेरा अपराध/कि मैंने कुछ सपने देखे/और एक नागरिक की तरह जीने की इच्छा की/मुझे जिजीविषा/और स्वप्न देखने के अपराध में मारो/मुझे शब्द और फूल और चिड़िया से/प्यार करने के अपराध में मारो।''<sup>21</sup>

भारतीय चिंतन परंपरा में पर्यावरण से प्रेम जीवन शैली का अभिन्न हिस्सा होता है। पर तथाकथित आधुनिकता और उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृति ने पर्यावरण को क्षति पहुँचाने की लगातार कोशिश की है। हमारे समाज में पारिस्थितिकी के प्रति आस्था और विश्वास का विशेष स्थान है एवं इसके प्राकृतिक संसाधनों जैसे पौधों, जन्तुओं, नदियों आदि को पूजनीय माना जाता है। हमारी साँस्कृतिक परंपरा में पर्यावरण संरक्षण की भावना पहले से ही निहित है। भारत के सच्चे नागरिक के रूप में अपने मौलिक कर्तव्यों का पालन करते हुए कवि देश की रक्षा एवं हमारे साँस्कृतिक मूल्यों की रक्षा करना चाहते हैं। विद्रुपात्मक समय के हाथों से जो कुछ बचा सकता है, उसे बचाए रखने की आखिरी कोशिश करते हैं। उनकी कविता बाज़ारवाद और वैश्वीकरण के बुरे प्रभावों के विरुद्ध एक चीख की तरह उभरती है; इस अपराध में वे मरने के लिए भी तैयार खड़े हैं। सामाजिक हलचलों के क्रमानुसार सृजन की प्रक्रिया को भी गतिशील रखना चाहते हैं।

**निष्कर्ष** :- एकान्त श्रीवास्तव की कविताओं का अनुशीलन करने पर अनुभव होता है कि उनकी कविताओं में बाज़ारवाद से उपजे संत्रास का ज्वलंत रूप दिखाई देता है। उनकी कविता अपने कठिन समय को व्यक्त करती है और पूरी दुनिया को तबाह करनेवाली बाज़ारवादी मुहिम का प्रतिरोध करती हैं। उनकी कविताएँ लोकसंस्कृति की स्मृतियों से भरी, जाने-पहचाने सुखों और दुःखों के उजले - काले रंगों से रँगी हुई एक दुनिया का दस्तावेज़ प्रस्तुत करती हैं। विरोधी समय से संघर्ष करते हुए दुर्दम जिजीविषा से गतिशील होती है। पर्यावरण सजगता से ओतप्रोत होकर, सशक्त भाषा संसार रचकर पाठकों की संवेदना से सीधा संलाप करती है। बाज़ारी संस्कृति के पंजे से लोकजीवन को बचाए रखने का पूरा आह्वान करती हुई, कठिन समय के आघातों से छटपटाती हुई, जूझती हुई लोकसांस्कृतिक विरासत से एक नया प्रति संसार गढ़ने का प्रतिरोधात्मक तेवर अपनाती है।

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# Plant Extracts as Natural Indicators in Acid-Base Titrations

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## ABSTRACT

The analytical potential of the flower extracts is very promising as seen in its application in acid-base titrimetry. Seven plant extracts from Violet cabbage, Beetroot, Red Hibiscus flower (shoe flower), Turmeric powder, Red rose flower, Henna Leaves and pink *Mirabilis Jalapa* flower (4 o'clock flower) were found to perform well in strong acid-strong base titrations. A sharp and clear colour change was observed from light pink to violet for Violet cabbage; dark brown to red for beetroot and pale yellow to pink for Red Hibiscus flower extract. The sharp contrast between their colours in acid and base made the pigment suitable for use as acid-base indicators. Out of the seven extracts, three were in good agreement with the titre values obtained using phenolphthalein indicator. These flower extracts have a very simple, inexpensive, environmentally friendly extraction procedure and excellent performance with sharp colour changes at the end points of the titration, which could replace the standard indicators being used in conventional laboratories with natural flower indicators.

**Keywords:** natural indicators, titrations, synthetic indicators, plant extract, titrations, pH range

## INTRODUCTION

In spite of the numerous instrumental techniques currently available for the chemical analyses of various samples, conventional methods of analyses are still relevant and find application in many situations. In titrimetry, the equivalence

point is determined by the end point in the titration is usually indicated by some substances added into the analytic solution, which change colour immediately after the equivalence point has been attained. Several types of indicators are available for different types of titrimetric analyses.

Most indicators are synthesised from chemical reactions, but some indicators can be easily extracted from plant materials e.g. red cabbage, beetroot, blackcurrant and black bean using water or an organic solvent. Today synthetic indicators are the choice of acid-base titrations. But due to environmental pollution, availability and cost, the search for natural compounds as an acid-base indicator was started.

Some of the organic compounds i.e. flavonoids, flavonols, acylated flavonoids, anthocyanins, quinines, imines, polymethines, naphthaquinone, anthraquinonoids, indigoids, carotene etc. imparts colours to the flower. Flavonoids are coloured compounds that can be isolated from various parts of plants like flowers, fruits and are pH sensitive and give different colours in acidic and basic conditions. The equivalence points obtained by using fruit extract matched with the equivalence points obtained by standard indicators. Therefore it has been hypothesized that the plant extract could be utilized as an indicator for different types of acid base titrations.

Earlier studies done on the synthetic indicators like phenolphthalein, methyl orange helped to identify their toxic and hazardous effects. Moreover, they also possess disadvantages like availability problems and high cost. This study was done with an aim of finding a suitable substitute to replace the synthetic indicators and to bring in the practice of using the flower pigments as indicators in neutralization titrations.

#### **Objectives of the study are:**

- To extract coloured compounds from Violet cabbage, Beetroot, Red Hibiscus flower (shoe flower), Turmeric powder, Red rose flower, Henna Leaves and pink *Mirabilis jalapa* (4 o'clock flower)
- To investigate the change in colour of plant extracts with pH
- To investigate the use of plant extracts as acid-base indicators
- To compare the indicator property of these plant extracts with synthetic acid-base indicators.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### Extraction of plant pigments

Two different procedures were used to extract the plant pigment from plant parts. The aqueous extracts of Violet Cabbage, Beetroot, Turmeric and Henna were prepared by the procedure given below.

#### A. Procedure:

1. The plant parts were washed thoroughly with distilled water

2. Plant materials were cut into small pieces.

3. A measured amount of materials were placed in a beaker and added 30 cm<sup>3</sup> of distilled water.

4. Using a hotplate the materials were boiled for 10 minutes. Stirred the materials occasionally while they are being heated.

5. After cooling down, the plant extracts were obtained by filtration.

The pigments of flowers Hibiscus rosa sinensis, Rose, and Four o'clock were extracted using the procedure given below using alcohol as the solvent.

B. Procedure:

1. The flower petals were washed thoroughly with distilled water

2. Flowers were cut into small pieces.

3. A measured amount of materials were placed in a beaker and added 30 cm<sup>3</sup> of 90% alcohol and kept for 10 minutes with occasional stirring.

4. The alcoholic extracts were obtained by filtration.

Test for variation in the colour of the pigment as a function of pH

Procedure:

1. Prepared 0.1M solutions of varying pH from 1-13.

2. Measured and recorded the pH value of the solutions using pH meter.

3. Labelled 6 clean test tubes with the pH values of the solution.

4. Filled each tube one-third full with the corresponding solution of known pH. Added approximately 1 cm<sup>3</sup> of the plant extract to each test tube and mixed the solution.

5. Recorded the colours of the plant extract at different pH values.

6. Repeated steps 1-4 with other plant extracts.

**Table.1. Solutions and their pH**

Sl. No	Solutions (0.1M)	pH
1	Con. HCl	1.26
2	Vinegar	2.4
3	Water	7



the two forms and the resulting colour is intermediate between that of HIn and In<sup>-</sup>. The exact concentrations of H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup> at which cases 1 - 3 will predominate depend on the structure of the indicator and the equilibrium constant for Equation 1. Different indicators change colour in different pH ranges. Natural indicator solutions are obtained through a process called extraction by treating flowers and fruits with a suitable solvent, such as boiling water, ethyl alcohol, chloroform. The colour of an acid - base indicator depends on the concentration of H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup> ions, which is most conveniently expressed using the pH scale. The mathematical relationship between pH and [H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup>] is given in Equation 2.

$$\text{pH} = -\log[\text{H}_3\text{O}^+] \quad (\text{Equation 2})$$

The H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup> concentration in water ranges from 1 M in 1 M hydrochloric acid to 10<sup>-14</sup> M in 1 M sodium hydroxide. In pure water, which is neutral (neither acidic nor basic), the H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup> concentration is equal to 10<sup>-7</sup> M. Thus, the negative logarithms (Equation 2) of typical H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup> concentrations are positive numbers from 0 - 14. The pH scale ranges from 0 - 14, with 7 being neutral. Acids have pH values less than 7, while bases have pH values greater than 7. Within the pH range of acid solutions, either a more concentrated or a strong acid solution will have a lower pH than a less concentrated or a weak acid solution, respectively.

### pH of the plant extracts

After the preparation of extracts, pH of these pure extracts are measured using a pH meter.

**Table.2. pH of plant extracts**

Sl. No.	Extract	pH
1	Violet Cabbage	7.38
2	Beetroot	6.54
3	Turmeric powder	5.19
4	Red Rose flower	5.06
5	Mirabilis jalapa flower (red)	5.30
6	Henna leaves	3.96
7	Red Hibiscus flower	6.60

The pH values indicate that except henna leaf extract which is acidic, all other extracts are almost neutral.

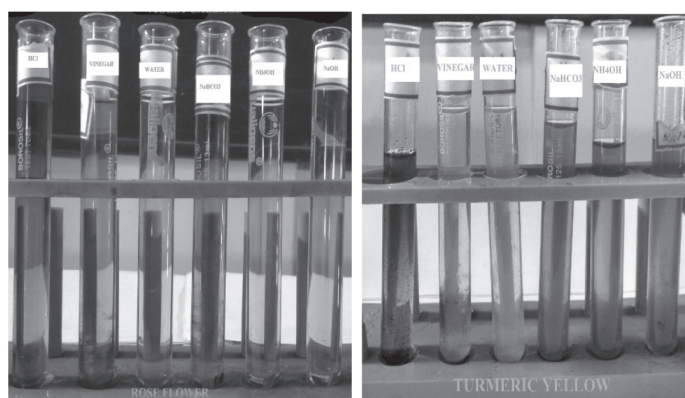
### Investigation of indicator colour change with pH

In order to study the colour change of the plant pigment with pH, six solutions of different pH were taken and 0.1ml of the extract was added and the colour change was recorded.

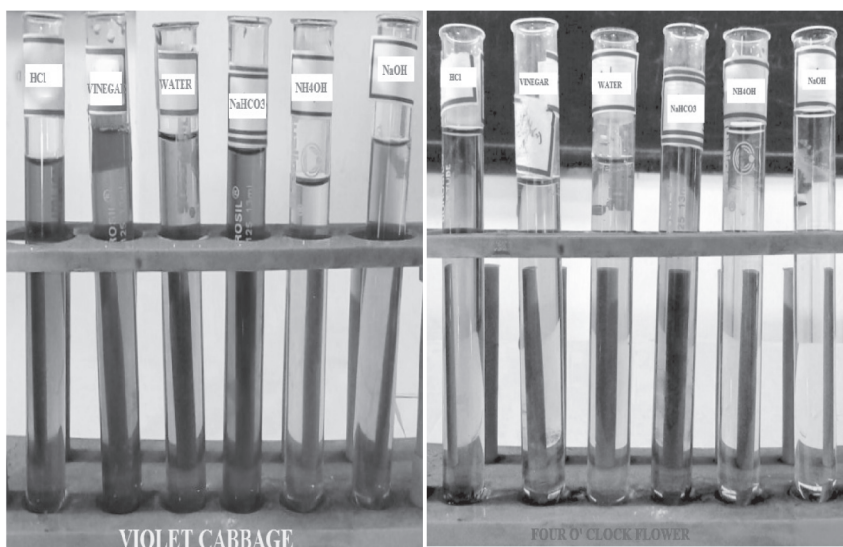
In order to study the colour change of the plant pigment with pH, six solutions of different pH were taken and 0.1ml of the extract was added and the colour change was recorded.

**Table.3. Indicator colour change with pH**

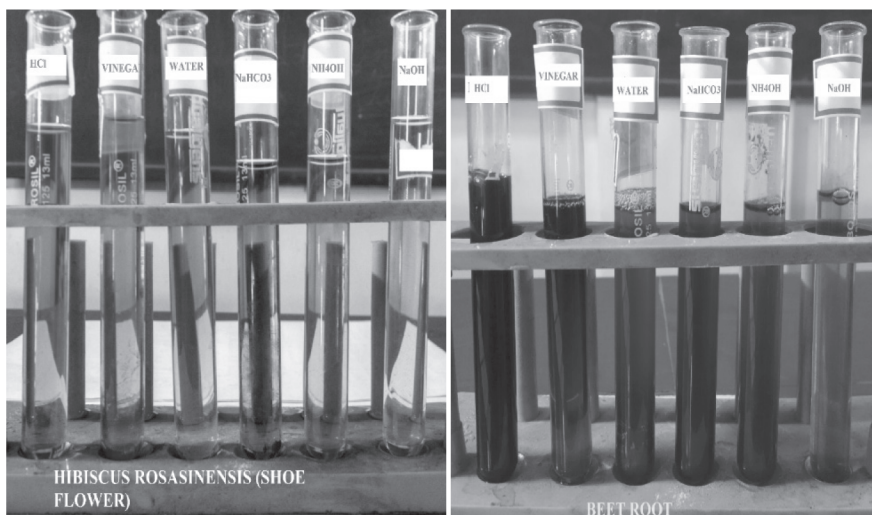
No	Plant material	pH	1.3	2.4	7.0	8.4	10.1	13
1	Violet Cabbage		Crimson Red	Light pink	Violet	Prussian Blue	Pale Green	Golden Yellow
2	Beet root		Blood Red	Red	Red	Magenta	Dull green	Pale Green
3	Turmeric		Violet	Fluorescent yellow	Fluorescent yellow	Orange	Dark orange	Dark orange
4	Henna		Light Green	Dull Green	Orange	Bright Orange	Light Brown	Brown
5	Hibiscus flower		Dark pink	Light pink	Violet	Light violet	Pale yellow	Pale yellow
6	Rose flower		Orange	Pink	Colourless	Dull green	Yellow	Light Yellow
7	Four o'clock flower	Colour	Violet	Violet	Violet	Pale Green	Pale Green	Pale Green



**Fig.1. Rose Flower and Turmeric Yellow**

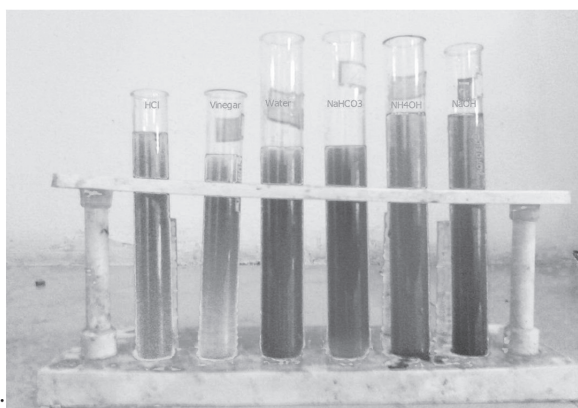


**Fig.2. Violet cabbage and 4 O'clock flower**



**Fig.3. Shoe Flower and Beet Root**





**Fig.4. Henna leaf powder**

### TITRATIONS

In order to evaluate the potential for the use of the dyes as indicators in acid-base titrimetry, a number of demonstrated titrations were conducted. The end points of the demonstrated titrations using 2 to 3 drops of the dyes are reported in Table 4. The end points of the demonstrated acid-base titrations using commercially available indicators are also reported in the table.

The results of the experiments for strong acid strong base (HCl and NaOH) are tabulated below:

#### a) Titration of a strong acid (HCl) against strong base (NaOH)

**Table. 4. Indicator end points**

*Volume of HCl using phenolphthalein indicator: 10.7ml*

No.	Plant extract	Colour of the extract in base	Colour of the extract at the end point	Volume of HCl (ml)
1	Violet cabbage	Light pink	Violet	10.8
2	Beet Root	Dark Brown	Red	10.2
3	Hibiscus	Pale yellow	Pink	11
4	Henna	Brown	Light green	13.1
5	Four o'clock flower	Pale yellow	Dull pink	7.1
6	Turmeric	Golden Yellow	Pale yellow	9
7	Rose	Dark brown	Dull brown	18.3

The violet cabbage, Hibiscus and Beet root extract had similar titre value with phenolphthalein and therefore can as well replace the commercial indicators. The colour changed from light pink to violet in the case of aqueous extract of violet cabbage, pale yellow to pink in the case of alcoholic floral extract of Hibiscus *Rosa sinensis* and dark brown to red in the case of beet root. The equivalence point of the titrations using the plant extract almost reached close to the equivalence point using the standard indicator, phenolphthalein for all the titrations. The results obtained showed that the routinely used chemical indicator can be replaced successfully by violet cabbage, Hibiscus and Beet root extracts. Henna extract, turmeric yellow, Four o'clock flower, Rose extracts were not in agreement with the end points obtained with other. This observation suggests that these extracts cannot serve as a suitable indicator in acid/base titrations.

Indicators should be chosen in such a way that the pH at equivalence point lies within the pH range of indicator. For a titration between a strong alkali and a weak acid, the pH at equivalence point is below 7, so the pH range of the indicator should be below 7 to give a sharp colour change at end-point.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results obtained from the present study reveal that the analytical potential of the dye extracts is very promising as seen in its application in acid-base titrimetry where it was discovered to perform best in strong acid-strong base titration with a sharp and clear colour change. The sharp contrast between their colours in acid and base made the pigment suitable for use as acid-base indicators. Out of the seven plant extracts prepared, violet cabbage, Hibiscus, Beet root extracts can serve as suitable indicators in acid-base titrimetry involving a strong acid and a strong base. Also for the fact that these plant materials are readily available and the extraction procedure is simple, with excellent performance, precise and accurate results would make a suitable substitute of presently available synthetic indicators. Thus the use of natural indicator in acid base titration is more beneficial because of its economy, easy to prepare, simplicity, easy availability, pollution free inert and accurate results.

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# Polyandry Revisited- the Nineteenth Century Debates on Female Chastity

Dr. E. Geetha

## ABSTRACT

colonial criticism urged the native Keralites to revise their system of marriage, inheritance and clothing. Nair polyandry has been in the gaze of travellers since 15<sup>th</sup> century. Colonial education convinced the educated intelligentsia that polyandry was a blot on the moral reputation of the land and should go. There were organized attempts to argue that polyandry was a fictitious tale devised by the Europeans. Criticism along with attempt to reform erased the custom from the social environment of Kerala.

**KEYWORDS:** polyandry, *tali*, *talikettukalyanaam*, *sambabdham*, Malabar Marriage Commission Report

## INTRODUCTION

Customs are human inventions, which evolve around the lives of humans in their natural environment and mutates under the influence of internal or external causes of social, economic, political or cultural in nature. Some customs may remain unchallenged for a long time but eventually will vanish from the body politic of the society under changing environment leaving no traces. Nair polyandry is discussed in medieval travelers' accounts, historical works and ethnographer's reports. Contemporary anthropological, sociological and administrative documents also find the mention of it. Travelers like Abdur Razak,

(15<sup>th</sup> C.), Nicolo conti(15<sup>th</sup>C., Stephano, (16<sup>th</sup> C.) Barbosa (16<sup>th</sup>C.), Linschoten (16<sup>th</sup>C.), Varthema (16<sup>th</sup>C.), Buchanan(18<sup>th</sup>C.) and Hamilton (18<sup>th</sup> C.) were unanimous in proclaiming the existence of polyandry in Kerala.

Interestingly, a natural custom, though not widely practiced, came under the scanner of the advocates of colonial modernity and waned away by the conscious efforts of collaborators. Interestingly, in the nineteenth century everywhere in India to refine and redefine the women were the main concerns of the social reformers. “Women’s bodies were the most common battle ground in the ideological struggle of colonial Indian society. Although Indian women themselves were for most part absent from the discussion, protectors of Hindu religious traditions, proponents of a modernized Indian national identity, colonial bureaucrats and humanitarian advocates engaged in prolonged dispute over what the female role should be in Indian society.”<sup>1</sup> Reflection of these thoughts had penetrated into the cultural sphere of Kerala too. The second half of the nineteenth century was a watershed in the history of Kerala. Diffusion of western liberal thoughts through English education and the print media along with missionary criticism of native religion and customs had developed critical attitude towards existing social set up. A vibrant public sphere, which had emerged by this time, had its role in this transformation. Religion, culture and politics were brought into this sphere for enthusiastic discussion and revisions were proposed. It was similar to the Bengali public sphere where “the women question was a central issue.”<sup>2</sup>

## **ORIGIN OF THE CUSTOM**

Human society has gone through unimaginable changes over millennia and the trajectories of changes were different for different people. Researchers and scholars like Lewis Morgan, John F M Lennan, John Lubbock and Friedrich Engels have observed the existence of the polyandry as a natural way among ancient people. As Lewis Morgan puts it on the basis of his comprehensive studies of decades: “As it is undeniable that portions of the human family have existed in a state of savagery, other portion in a state of barbarism and still other portion in a state of civilization. It seems equally so that these three distinct conditions are connected with each other in a natural as well as necessary sequence of progress, Moreover, that this sequence has been historically true of the entire human family, up to the status attained by each branch respectively is rendered probable by the conditions under which all progress occurs.”<sup>3</sup> For the origin of polyandry McLennan gives following explanation: “Foremost among the struggles for food and security, must have been an effect upon the balance of sexes. As braves and hunters were required and valued, it would be the interest of every hoard to rear, when possible its healthy male children. It would be less its interest to rear females, as they would be less capable of self support and of contributing by their exertions to the common good. In this lies the only explanation which can be accepted of the origin of those systems of female infanticide.... We may predicate of the primitive groups that they were all or nearly all marked by a want of balance

between sexes. The male being in the majority...when we shall have surveyed the facts connected with the polyandry- the origin of which must be referred to the same cause.<sup>4</sup> He adds: From ancient history we learn that polyandry at one time existed over ever a greater area.<sup>5</sup>

### POLYANDRY IN KERALA

Studies of scholars and observations of natives and travelers reveal that custom of having plural husbands were practiced among different castes differently. Some castes of Kerala had approved fraternal polyandry. Written accounts of sixteenth to nineteenth century say: "The practice among the communities such as carpenters, Karuvas and goldsmiths is for all brothers to marry just one woman. All brothers ought to be, if not brothers, at least of the same family."<sup>6</sup> "This custom prevails among five low casts of Teer, of Asaree or Carpenter, muzari or brass founders, Tattan or goldsmiths and Kollan Perumchellan or blacksmiths who live promiscuously with one or more women: and sometimes two three four or more brothers cohabit with one woman."<sup>7</sup> This custom said to be local and practiced only in a few of the southern districts- less rude polygamy- in which the husbands are brothers.<sup>8</sup> C D Maclane (1887) observes: The custom of polyandry itself is regularly practiced by carpenters, stone masons, and individuals of other occupation. This is usually done among brothers, several brothers living together unable to support a wife for each and take one amongst them, who resides them with all.<sup>9</sup> Francis Buchanan writes about the *Tiyya* custom of marriage in Malabar: "In wealthy families each man takes a wife, but this being considered expensive, in poor families the brothers marry one wife in common. And sleep with her by turns. ..Merely to save the trifling expense of several marriages."<sup>10</sup>

### NAIR POLYANDRY

Marriage as a religious sacrament was absent among the *Nairs* till the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Nair *sambandham* lacked features of conjugality, but in the wake of 19<sup>th</sup> century reform atmosphere it began to adopt the attributes of regular marriage. "The Nair customs with respect to marriage are of a most singular and licentious character. In early youth the girl goes through the ceremony of marriage by having the '*tali*,' or marriage cord, tied round her neck, but this is not followed by cohabitation. It is a mere formality, and simply sets her at liberty to exercise and follow out her own inclinations in more mature years. When arrived at a marriageable age suitors present themselves, and the favoured individual offers to the young woman a cloth and other presents, and either resides with her or visits her at intervals in her brother's house."<sup>11</sup> The same is attested by witnesses of same community to the Malabar marriage Commission (1891). "Marriage elsewhere is, or has been, the taking possession of the woman by the man. The custom of Malabar is an exception to the rule; the nuptials are here interposed only to emancipate the woman, and introduce her into the world. She takes a master to gain independence; with the contract of servitude in her hand she acquires personal liberty. Provided she wears her *tali* round her neck, she is free

of conjugal bonds. It is not the first time that a symbol has been seen to transform itself into its opposite, an institution that has changed its nature and reversed its significance. ... The more admirers a woman has the more she is esteemed — four, five, six, seven; but not more than ten or twelve.”<sup>12</sup>

## EVIDENCES

There are innumerable literary evidences to indicate the prevalence of polyandry among the *Nair* women. H W Winterbotham puts it: If by polyandry we mean a plurality of husbands publicly acknowledged by society and by each other as sharing between them a woman's favours by mutual agreement, - the legal and regulated possession, publicly acknowledged, of one woman by several men, who a real husband by the same title, - it may be truly said that no such custom is recognized by the *Marumakkathayam* castes in Malabar. If by polyandry we simply mean a usage which permits, a female to cohabit with a plurality of lovers, without loss of caste, social degradation or disgrace, then we apprehend that this usage is distinctly sanctioned by *Marumakkathayam*, and there are localities, where and classes amongst whom, this license is still availed for. Amongst our witnesses, an intelligent and candid minority most of them men of marks and position, admit the right of the woman to consort with more than one man.<sup>13</sup> A specimen account says: “There is no prohibition against a woman having *sambandham* with more than one man at the same time: but except in parts of Walluvanad and parts of the Native States, I do not think it is now practiced.”<sup>14</sup>

Shykh Zainuddin of 16<sup>th</sup> century observes: The women of the *Nair* community as well as those communities close to it in hierarchy usually have two or four or sometimes more husbands.<sup>15</sup> Duarte Barbosa writes in the first quarter of 16<sup>th</sup> century: The mother again goes and enquires among other younger nayers if they wish to support her daughter, and take her as a mistress. So that three or four nayers agree with her to keep her and sleep with her, each paying her so much a day, the more lovers she has the greater is her honour.<sup>16</sup> Among the Nayrs it is the custom for one Nayr woman to have attached to her to two males or four or perhaps more or among these a distribution of time is made. ..., and it but rarely happens that enmity and jealousy break out among them on this account.<sup>17</sup> Formerly too, it was common for *Nair* families, while residing at their brother's house to receive more than one visitors of the male sex, now is this altogether unknown at the present day.<sup>18</sup>

“When arrived at a marriageable age, lovers present themselves, and the favourable person offers to the woman a cloth and other presents and either resides with her or visits her at intervals in her brother's house. ... This custom is evidently the survival of polyandry, a system first tolerated in the absence of a sufficient check on the woman, and the n a national custom with the attendant consequences.<sup>19</sup> The same European authors are not hesitant to observe the decline of the custom of polyandry and general trend of switching towards monogamy: Sometimes a woman accepts the favours of many lovers but this is generally now

a day scouted by all respectable people.<sup>20</sup> Fidelity to a single husband is becoming common among the Nair women of the better classes.<sup>21</sup>

Whenever religious sanction is required to justify the Nair polyandry, Kerala *Mahatmyam* a Sanskrit text written by a Brahman probably in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is quoted. According to the text: "Parasurama at Vishabhadri (Trichur) pronounced his commandments to the women (not being of the Brahman caste) to satisfy the desire of the Brahmans enjoining on them to put off chastity and the cloths which covered their breasts and declaring that promiscuous intercourse with three of four men in common was void of the least taint of sin"<sup>22</sup> Many of the witnesses to the Malabar Marriage Commission agree that this was the only scriptural sanction which permits promiscuity among the Nair women.

There were organized attempts in the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century among western educated community members to portray that the *Nair* polyandry was a European imagination. "The assertion made by a few globe trotters and others who without careful enquiries took it for granted that the practice of a few disrespectable families is the practice of the whole community."<sup>23</sup> Dr. C Achuta Menon says: "There seems to be general impression that the relationship between men and women among the *Nairs* was rather loose and the practice of polyandry was usually associated with them. From the accounts of travelers who often generalize from a few stray cases that come to their notice without any reference to the social setting or background. Sometimes the travelers come into contact with the lower strata of the society and form impressions from their habits."<sup>24</sup> H M. Winterbotham writes in his separate memorandum: The *Kerala mahatmyam* or the *Might of the Malabar*, is an often-quoted chronicle in Sanskrit verse, ancient manuscript of which, one palm leaf, are believed to be possessed by some Nambudiri and royal families....in this the liberty of the Sudra women to indulge in amorous intercourse with a plurality of lovers is expressly asserted. There is a tendency now to declare that this alleged "*anacharam*" of polyandry is a sheer myth, which never existed but in the imagination of foreigners.<sup>25</sup>

O. Chandu Menon challenges: "If polyandry existed in a recognized form let it be proved, among the carpenter and blacksmith classes in Malabar, polyandry exists as an institution and we see every day the 4 or 5 chosen husbands among this class celebrating their polyandrous marriage openly according to their caste rules, and with much ceremony and pomp; but can even the worst and most uncompromising enemy of the Nair institution point to a *pudamuri* or *Uyam poruka* or *kidakora* or any other recognized form of Nair *sambandham* throughout the Keralam, at which a girl was wedded to more than one husband."<sup>26</sup> Chandu Menon takes pain to argue that there weren't polyandrous Nair marriages, and the Nair marriages were much similar to monogamous marriages. But he forgot to mention the fact that the Nair marriages were much different from marriages of other castes in rituals, obligations, residence and many more aspects and the changes he had hinted were contemporary changes arrived under the sway of colonial modernity.



## THE ROLE OF NAMBUDIRI BRAHMINS

The anthropological studies do not support the common belief that the Nambudiri Brahmin custom of hyper gamy was the cause of the origin and continuance of the system of polyandry. Kathleen Gough says: The theory that polyandry was indigenous in Malabar is not easily reconcilable with the fact that the Cherumars, Pulayars, panayars, Irulas, Kadars and numerous other servile jungle tribes who are looked upon by everyone as the undoubted aborigines do not follow *Marumakkathayam*. The theory that the first Nayar immigrants came as an army with very few women, who therefore had to be shared among the men, is also a mere conjecture.<sup>27</sup> The missionary accounts go with bitter criticism of Nambudiri manipulation of the Nair women: Whosever knows the degradation of womankind in Malabar through '*Marumakkathayam*' (Aliyasanthanam of the Tulu country)*i.e.* the right of inheritance of the nephews" will understand why the men oppose the enlightenment of their females and how then women must be inured to a loose life so as not to feel yet the heavy fetters with which their caste has been tied down by the carnal minded selfish Brahmans of the yore.<sup>28</sup>

The Brahmans of Kerala are migrants from North India. They arrived in Kerala through the western coast and established settlements in fertile river valleys centering temples built by them. On their coming to Kerala they had altered their system of inheritance allowing only the eldest son marrying from his own community and consenting to the younger members to enter in to marital alliances with women from *Kshatriya*, *ambalavasi* or *nair* communities They amassed considerable landed wealth in their own names and in the name of temples and grew into the biggest landed aristocracy in Kerala. "The *Nambudiris* ranked ritually above the Kings and were to some extent above and outside the political systems of the kingdom."<sup>29</sup> The Nairs were mostly tenants of the *Nambudiris*, and a proposal for *sambanddham* from a Nambudiri could not be rejected. "*Nair* women are proud of reckoning among their favoured lovers many Brahmans, Rajas or other persons of high birth."<sup>30</sup> "It is not always exactly the pleasure of the woman on which the practice is dependent. A plurality of *sambandhakkars* is often tacked on to the same woman at the express desire of or at least with the connivance of the head of the woman's family and often against her wishes.<sup>31</sup> "Hypergamous marriages like all Nayar marriages were tenuous and carried few obligations. Nevertheless, the dependence of aristocratic castes on each other for spouses and genitors must have strengthened relations between them."<sup>32</sup> It is safe to assume that with changing socio-economic environs, the *Nair* custom of polyandry took a different turn.

## CONCLUSION

The public sphere debates in India in the second half of the nineteenth century was animated with cries for social reforms. The missionaries, educated intelligentsia and the colonial government were the active stakeholders in this debate with own standpoints. The educated youth felt ashamed of certain natural customs hitherto practiced in the land and vigorously argued for reforms. The missionary

views of morality also were uncompromising. The colonial official views also had gone under mutations by this time. "As voyage to India became easier, wives and children joined their husbands, and the contrast between the two gender ideologies became more pronounced. The same colonial government, that in the eighteenth century tolerated religious customs in the nineteenth century sought to reform Indian society."<sup>33</sup>

The dominant discourse of the nineteenth century was in favour of monogamy. Kerala society was getting inclined towards this mode and variations of any kind were disapproved by the reformist brigade. All the arguments and justifications for reforms were centred on the concept of female chastity. Witnesses to Malabar Marriage Commission denounced polyandry as a dying out and isolated custom of disreputable families of remote areas. But the male polygamy was normal for them. Ironically, the homogenization process of the late nineteenth century forced polygamy too to go. Novels as a literary form has developed in Malayalam language in the second half of the nineteenth century and social issues were the main theme of discussion in them. Interestingly, neither Chandu Menon, the author of the first Malayalam novel, a judge, scholar and a member of the Malabar Marriage Commission (1891) nor any other author has brought polyandry for discussion in their novels. The word was a taboo even for debate. Liberal attitudes towards morals and freedom to practice any custom as a choice had erased from Kerala social scenario.

## Endnote

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# Child Induced Consumerism and Influence on Parent-Child Relationship: A Sociological Enquiry

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## ABSTRACT

Consumerism is considered the central aspect of modern society. The ability to purchase goods and services decides the status and identity of the people. Everyone is buying different kinds of goods and services to meet their comfort levels. The present study is based on Child induced consumerism and its influence on the parent-child relationship. In today's society children are often considered the nucleus of the family. Most parents make the shopping list based on the opinion of their children. The Media also has a great influence on the minds of children. Due to the influence of media and advertisements children are addicted to certain products and they also force and compel their parents to buy those products. Parents often were forced to purchase the products to satisfy their child's temper tantrums and sometimes due to love and affection. It also inquiries into the influence of consumerism on the parent-child relationship. This research is based on a quantitative method and a descriptive research design was used. The questionnaire was the tool for data collection. The study revealed that children were very much influenced by the advertisements and they demand goods lured by advertisements. Thus, consumerism has a pivotal role in the parent-child relationship. The parents manipulate consumerism to condition their child and make him/her behave in the way they desire.

**Keywords: consumerism, child-induced consumerism, parent-child relationship.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Culture of a Society is the way of life of its members, the Collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation - Ralph Linton (1945).

Globalization has paved the way for global Culture, it's nothing but becoming part of an all-embracing culture. This phenomenon is found all around the world. Anthony Giddens viewed socialization as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually become a self-aware, knowledgeable person, Skilled in which in the way of the Culture in which he or she is born. (Haralambos & Holborn, 2020). Hence, socialization is pivotal in the development of a child, in the fast-changing Contemporary society.

Today we live in a world of consumerism. Consumer society is surfacing faster. Consumer culture is creeping in fast and becoming the basis of personality formation and identification. Celia Lury, who has extensively researched the phenomena says that 'it's a type of material culture that is the culture of the use or appropriation of objects or things. In her definition, she also incorporates immaterial Culture, things produced by intellectual labor as well as physical labor. (Haralambos & Holborn, 2020). Consume Culture is also concerned with the norm, values & practices associated with those products. Hence Consumption goes hand in hand with constructing an identity and expressing membership in a social group. People in a consumer society often replace their racks with newer versions of the products. They buy things, use them, and then discard them. Nowadays even newer products become outdated in a couple of months, it's more of a use-and-throws culture rather than repair and use. People have the purchasing power hence don't mind spending on products.

India is emerging as one of the biggest consumer markets in the world, with the development of science, technology, and communication, the remote areas of the world have also become accessible to all. Globalization has broken the barriers between nations, thus resulting in the unprecedented choice of consumer goods in Indian markets. This accelerated the quest for unlimited wants. The advancement in media and ICT have altered the attitude of Indian people in a mass-mediated culture that converted India into a big market for multinationals. These medium often dictates false needs into human minds.

### **Consumerism and influence on children: Kerala context**

Kerala the southernmost state of India had contact with other cultures as it was close to the sea with trade links with many countries hence from time immemorial so its culture has been varied. Kerala culture has a synthesis of diverse religions, cultures, and philosophies. Kerala's socioeconomic climate changed dramatically as a result of large-scale migration. Massive remittances poured into the Kerala economy through migration completely altered the spending patterns of Malayalees which appear to be more severe than in any other state of India.

Despite migration, media and advertisements augmented the consumer tendency of Keralites. The development of urban sources of income and urban marketplaces widened the avenue of consumer preferences. The globalization and the entry of multinationals into the Kerala market completely transformed consumption patterns in Kerala. The shopping malls and hypermarkets that sprung up everywhere provide a plethora of goods. Today every family in Kerala is a consumer unit. And the decisive factor in family consumption patterns is children.

The present society and social environment encourage our children to enter the rat race at a younger age. They are oriented from infancy onwards to fancy commodities based on the price tag and brand preferences. The brand mediates the supply and demand of products through the organization, coordination, and integration of the use of information (Lury, 2004). The parents try to surround the kids with commodities that have more price value, preferably branded items as it's a status symbol. Thus, these younger generation kids are also enticed by the commercial advertisement and swayed to consume food that is unhealthy for them, and also, they become more demanding. Many times' parents are in a fix as they are restricted by limits imposed by their income and wealth to meet the need of their children. Consumption is also linked to the process of inclusion and exclusion (Bennett, 1981).

## **II. Review of Literature**

As Jennifer Ann Hill, examines in a study children in modern society were very much engrossed by the concept of the buy and consume modality. She also states that in the United States consumer culture is very deeply permeated among children and the effects of consumer culture are very visible in society (Hill, 2011). P. M Valkenburg Studies the influence of advertisements on children and how they create three kinds of effects namely cognitive, behavioral and affective changes in children. The study also analyses variations in consumerism based on age, parent-child communication, gender differences, and differences due to socioeconomic level (Valkenburg, 2000). Sandra L. Calvert studies the nature of marketing and advertisement support available in the US economy and how they target children and adults. Here the focus is given to the role of children to influence the purchasing decisions of the parents. The study also viewed the role of television channels in influencing children toward various products (Calvert, 2008) Philemon Oyewole examines the effect of children on their parents' consumption patterns in Malaysia. The study revealed that no gender differences were present in Malaysia in child consumerism. The Malaysian children also resort to various tactics to influence their parents including pressurizing parents, rational inducement, and appeal to higher authorities. (Oyewole et al., 2010). Based on this review of literature it is clear that children were playing an important role in the family's purchasing decisions and many marketers were strategically targeting children and pressuring the parents to buy a particular product.

### **III. Significance of the study**

Today phenomenon of consumerism is often a symbol of material development. Unlike yesteryear, the modern society parents are sacrificing their time and money for their children. Today's nuclear family is child-centered. The parents are willing to provide for their children with all the facilities and luxuries that they were deprived of in their childhood. The Media especially advertisements entice young minds towards consumerism. Children are attracted to certain products without knowing their harmful effects. The parents are also forced to get trapped in this consumerism as a means to display their love and affection towards the child in their busy working schedule. They often give gifts and promises to buy goods for their child to discipline them or show affection. The present study analyses the nature of demands put forward by the children and the responses of the parents to these demands. Thus, the study is very significant as it deals with child-induced consumerism and its influence on the parent-child relationship

### **IV. Methodology**

#### **Theoretical framework**

The study is based on Jean Baudrillard's idea of simulacra and hyper-reality. In "Simulacra and Simulation" Baudrillard asks what happens in a world that is ultimately denied all access to the real and in which only simulacra and simulation exist (Baudrillard, 2018). For Baudrillard, this is the world in which we live. Simulations take over our relationship with real life, creating a hyper-reality that is a copy that has no original (Baudrillard, 2018). Thus in applying these concepts, it is found that modern-day consumerism is mainly based on advertisements. The advertisements were the deciding aspects of consumption patterns and children were one of the major targets of marketers and advertisements. The advertisements create false needs for the children and they pressurize the parents to buy particular products based on the simulations in advertisements. Modern nuclear families are oriented towards children. This filo-centric nature of the family plays an important role in deciding consumer preferences. The advertisements were influencing the children's minds and they create demands for new goods in the family.

#### **Objectives**

1. To understand the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
2. To analyze the nature of demands made by children for consumer products.
3. To evaluate the response of parents towards the demands made by children.
4. To find out the influence of consumerism on the parent-child relationship

#### **Sample and method**

The universe of the study includes all the parents of children between the age groups of 5-9 in Kottayam Municipality. The sampling method used was snowball



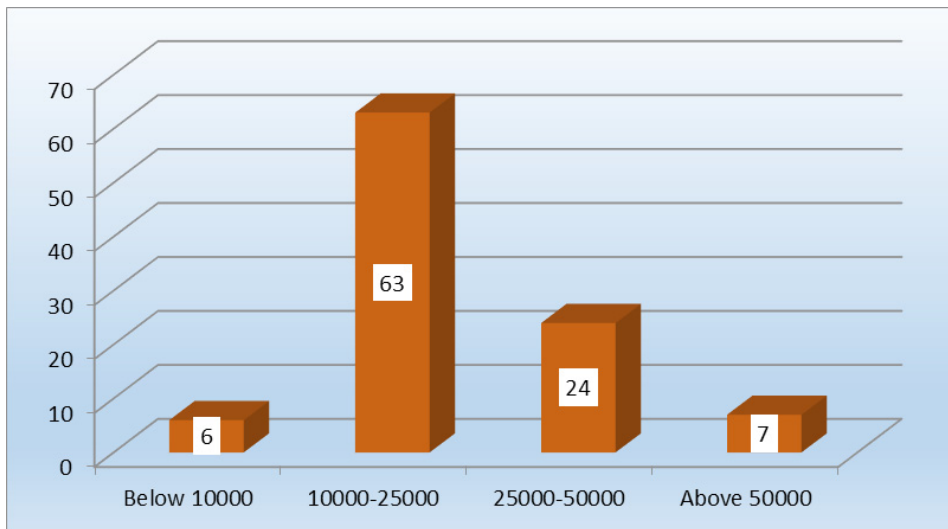
sampling. The sample size consists of 100 parents (either father or mother of the children between the age group of 5-9). A quantitative method and descriptive research design were used in this study. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, the internet, and newspaper.

## V. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study are divided into four sections based on the objectives of the study. The first section deals with the socio-economic profile of the respondents. Second section deals with the nature of demand made by the child, the third section analyses the responses of the parents, and the fourth section deals with the influence of consumerism on the parent-child relationship.

The socio-economic profile of the respondents revealed that 75 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 30-50 and most of the respondents are from the general category (54%). Among them 67 percent were Hindus.

**Figure 1**  
**Monthly income of the respondents.**



The above figure showed the monthly income of the respondents. It revealed that 63 percent belongs to 10000-25000 income categories. 24 percent of respondents had income between 25000 - and 50000 whereas only 7 percent of respondents were in the income group of 50000 rupees per month. 6 percent of respondents belonged to the income category below 10000 monthly incomes.

In this study majority of respondents had a degree as their basic qualification (41 percent) and 49 percent had a private job. About 61 percent of the respondents belong to the nuclear family. Most of the respondents had two earning members in their family.

**Table: 1**  
**Number of children of respondents**

No. of children	Frequency	Percent
1	30	30
2	62	62
More than 2	8	8
Total	100	100

Table 1 shows the number of children. From this it is clear that 30 percent of respondents had 1 child, 62 percent had 2 children, and only 8 percent of respondents have 3 children. And about 89 percent of respondents had 1 child between the ages of 5 to 9.

The analysis of the first section showed that the majority of respondents belonged to a good socio-economic background and showed homogeneity in socio-economic variables like education, age, income, nature of family, and the number of children.

Section two deals with the nature of the demands of the child. 90 percent of children get information about the items from advertisements and 70 percent express their demands politely rather than commanding/blackmailing. The majority of the children (60 percent) demand expensive items. This shows the influences of simulations in advertisements on children as stated by Jean Baudrillard.

**Table: 2**  
**Child's demand for new items by spoiling already existing goods**

Children demand new items by spoiling already existing good	Frequency	Percent
Yes	52	52
No	48	48
Total	100	100

Table 2 represents the child's demand for new items by spoiling already existing goods. 52 percent of respondents' children demand new items by spoiling the already existing goods. About 48 percent of respondents' children did not demand goods by spoiling the already existing goods. 58 percent of respondents' children are not getting agitated when their parents rejected their demands.

It is evident from the study that 84 percent of children demand new goods by comparing items with their peers, and 95 percent of children demand goods based on advertisements. We can infer from the studies that even young kids have inculcated the attitude of comparing their toys and other stuff with their peers and raising demand based on the latest arrival. As Baudrillard views the simulations create a list of false necessities in front of children and the children came to believe in this hyper-reality.

**Table: 3**  
**Child's demand for junk food/packet food**

Children demand Junk food/packet food	Frequency	Percent
Yes	76	76
No	24	24
Total	100	100

The above table 3 shows child's demand for junk food/packet food. From the table, it's clear that most of the children who demand Junk food/packet food were as high as 76 percent and 24 percent do not demand junk food/packet food. Contemporary society all over the world loves to dine out, be it for special occasions or just casually. This habit had permeated the minds of young ones who often prefer junk foods to healthy foods cooked at home. This also unearths the truth that parents feel comfortable buying processed food and consuming it rather than cooking at home after a day's work.

Section 3 deals with the responses of the parents. From this section, it is clear that 96 percent of parents always accept the demands of the child.

**Table: 4**  
**Parental denial of child's demands**

Parental denial of child's demands	Frequency	Percent
Always	3	3
Occasionally	95	95
Never	2	2
Total	100	100

Table 4 represents how often parents deny the demands of their children. 95percent of parents occasionally denied the demands from the analysis we can infer that children are given ample freedom to demand products as they are the nucleus of the family, unlike yesteryears their demands and decision are heard and often accepted.

Majority of the respondents that is 80 percent quarrel with their partners regarding the child’s demands. Most of the parents i.e. 85 percent buy expensive toys based on child’s demands, as they feel purchasing the demanded stuff would mean getting more love from children, but the paradox is that parents do feel that they are just people who purchase products which they want, the feeling of love does not increase as a result of this purchasing behavior as opined by few of the parents.

**Table: 5**  
**Purchase of low-quality goods regarding child’s demands**

Parents Purchase low-quality goods	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	55
No	45	45
Total	100	100

Table: 5 represents the purchasing of low-quality goods by parents regarding a child’s demands. From the above table, it is understood that about a 55percent of respondents buy low-quality items demanded by the child and a 45percent do not buy low-quality goods for children.

82 percent of parents scolded their children if they purposefully spoiled the goods. The majority of parents do not demand to use branded items (64 percent) and they also buy goods to get the affection of the child which is 72 percent. Most of the parents demand a price limit for the child (82 percent) and at the same time, 94 percent offer goods as a gift for academic performances.

From the above, findings we can infer that especially working parents comply with the demands of the children often overseeing the price tag or even compromising on the quality to pacify them or get things done like finishing homework, assignments, and even cleaning table, the value orientation of children are shifted to doing things for acquiring the product. This also points to the materialistic mentality of modern men, and the tendency of modern youth who were undermining the traditional value set forth by our preceding generations to “save money.”

Section 4 deals with the influence of consumerism on the parent-child relationship. From this, it was clear that most of the parents were not having any financial constraints (74 percent). 86 percent face emotional problems regarding child's demands. And about 54 percent have rejected the gifts by other persons to their child. The majority of the parents in this study do think that rejection of the demands reduces their importance in a child's life (63%). The majority of parents were becoming consumerists to make their children obey them (62percent). They always make promises to buy something for children for their achievements. For 52 percent consumerism is a means to express their love towards their children. Most of the parents were busy with their work schedule and often appoints caretakers for managing children and reach home very late. So they feel that by gifting new toys or goods they can reduce their guilt feeling.

This shows a paradigm shift in the parent-child relationships. Now the parent's role, love, and responsibilities towards children were measured through the money or facilities they provided to their children. Likewise, the children have also become materialistic and more demanding. Consumerism has invaded the most important primary group of our society i.e. family and altered its very existence from love and responsibility to a new materialist stance.

### **Conclusion**

In modern society, parents hardly get time to spend quality with children as in many households both parents are earning members hence purchasing goods to satisfy their kids is a means to reduce the gulf of quality time with them. Child-induced consumerism is the new norm, especially among working parents, this is not an ideal situation. Parents are propelled to purchase products to appease their kids. Parents opined that earlier generations even their generation gained products they like out of hard work or earned them when they started to work. Today even young kids demand products that are trendy and branded, which often the parents are unaware of, parents feel the kids do not have value for the money spent on them, as today's nuclear family is child-centred. A few decades ago, feeding all the children of a family was a hard task but since family structure underwent changes from joint to nuclear, even the number of kids in a family was reduced making it a single child or just two hence their needs are given priority over all other matters. The parents are ready to provide their children with all the facilities and luxuries that they were deprived of in their childhood. Adding fuel to the consumerist attitude are the advertisements that sway young minds towards consumerism. Children are attracted to certain products without knowing their harmful effects. The parents are getting trapped in this vicious consumerist culture probably due to fear of losing children's affection which is unbearable to parents hence giving into their child's tantrums thus forcing them to buy products. Thus the present study revealed that consumerism has a great influence on children. The children were having more knowledge regarding the new arrivals in the market than their parents. Thus, the role of children in consumerism is not a negligible aspect. Hence, parents should review their

spending patterns and try to spend more time with their children than spending money on them.

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# उत्तरे रामचरिते भवभूतिर्विशिष्यते ॥

सुमति.के

सागरवत् विस्तृते संस्कृतवाङ्मये काव्यनाटकादीनां मूलत्वेन विराजते भारतीयानाम् इतिहासग्रन्थौ – रामायणमहाभारतौ। वाल्मीकिरामायणम् आधारीकृत्य भारतीयसाहित्येषु शतशः रामायणकथाप्रतिपादकाः रचनाः द्रष्टुं शक्यते च। 'भिन्नरुचिर्हि लोकाः' इति कविवचनानुसारिणः कवयः तेषां काव्येषु काव्यमनोहारितावर्धकानि परिवर्तनानि कृतवन्तः।

सीतापरित्यागः

रामकथाप्रतिपादककाव्येषु सविशेषपरिवर्तनं सीतायाः परित्यागपरिग्रहणविषययोः भवतीति श्रद्धेयः कार्यः। विभिन्नासु रामायणकथासु सीतापरित्यागकथा विभिन्नरूपेण दृश्यते। विविधेषु रामायणेषु सीतापरित्यागकथा न विद्यते। आदिकवेः वाल्मीकेः कालादारभ्य इदानींतनकालपर्यन्तं विषयेऽस्मिन् चर्चा मतभिन्नत्वेन प्रचलन् अस्ति। अस्याः चर्चायाः आधारेण रामकथां त्रिधा विभक्तुं शक्यते।

- १.सीतापरित्यागकथायुक्तानि काव्यानि।
- २.सीतापरित्यागकथा रहितानि काव्यानि।
- ३.सीतारामयोः संयोगात्मकानि काव्यानि।

सीतापरित्यागवर्णनायुक्तानि प्रसिद्धानि काव्यानि-

- वाल्मीकेः रामायणम्।।
- वेदव्यासस्य अध्यात्मरामायणम्।
- कालिदासस्य रघुवंशम्।

सीतापरित्यागवर्णना रहितानि प्रसिद्धानि काव्यानि-

- वाल्मीकेः अद्भुतरामायणम्।
- हनुमतः हनुमन्नाटकम्।



- तुलसीदासस्य रामचरितमानसम्।
- मुरारेः अनर्घराघवम्।

सीतारामयोः संयोगात्मकानि प्रसिद्धानि काव्यानि-

- वाल्मीकेः आनन्दरामायणम्।
- राजशेखरस्य बालरामायणम्।
- दिङ्नागस्य कुन्दमाला नाटकम्।
- भवभूतेः उत्तररामचरितम्।

भवभूतिः

महाकवेः भवभूतेः रामकथाप्रसङ्गे विश्वविख्यातं नाटकद्वयं विराजते।

- महावीरचरितम्।
- उत्तररामचरितम्।

महावीरचरितम्

भवभूतेः महावीरचरितनामके नाटके रामस्य पूर्वचरितं वर्णितमस्ति। नाटकेऽस्मिन् रामस्य जननात् आरभ्य रावणवधानन्तरं राज्याभिषेकपर्यन्तं वर्णनं दृश्यते। महावीरः इत्यनेन शब्देनात्र रामस्य ग्रहणं सूच्यते। रामचरितमत्र वीररसभावेन चित्रितम्। महावीरचरितात् ऋते उत्तररामचरितं परिपूर्णतां न याति इत्यतः वीररसप्रधानस्य अस्य नाटकस्येतिवृत्तं संक्षेपेण अधः प्रस्तूयते।

अस्य नाटकस्य प्रथमाङ्के राजा दशरथेन विश्वामित्रयागरक्षार्थं रामलक्ष्मणौ नियुक्तौ। रामेण सुबाहुमारीचादयः निहताः। विश्वामित्रस्य निर्देशानुसारं शिवधनुर्भङ्गः रामेण कृतः। ताभ्यां सह विश्वामित्रः जनकपुरीमगच्छत्। सीतास्वयंवरार्थं स्पर्धारूपेण शैवचापभङ्गः जनकेन पूर्वमेव निश्चितः। ततः सीतारामयोः ऊर्मिलालक्ष्मणयोः माण्डवीभरतयोः श्रुतकीर्तीशत्रुघ्नयोः च मिथः विवाहः सम्पन्नः।

रावणप्रेरितः परशुरामः शिवधनुर्भङ्गवृत्तान्तमवगम्य क्रोधोन्मत्तः सन् मिथिलां प्राप्तवान्। सद्यः परिणीतः रामः सीतया सह वार्तालापे संलग्नः आसीत्। परशुरामस्य आगमनं ज्ञात्वा रामः सभामण्डपमागत्य तं दृष्टवान्।

परन्तु परशुरामस्तु रामस्य वधोद्यमने क्रुद्धचित्तः आसीत्। शतानन्दजनकप्रभृतयः परशुरामं विविधप्रकारेण सान्त्वयितुं प्रयतितवन्तः। तथापि परशुरामः शान्तो न बभूव।

रामवधार्थं कृतप्रतिज्ञःसन्नद्धः च परशुरामः रामेण पराजितः। पराजितः परशुरामः तपः कर्तुं गतवान्। अयोध्यातः कैकेयीदासी मन्थरा मिथिलां समायाति। मन्थराप्रेरिता कैकेयी दशरथेन पूर्वमेव प्रदत्तं वरद्वयं भरताय राज्यं, रामाय चतुर्दशवर्षं यावत् काननवासः च अपृच्छत्। पितुराजापालनाय रामो सीतालक्ष्मणाभ्यां सह वनं प्रस्थाय चित्रकूटं प्राप्तवान्। रावणेन मायामृगरूपधारिणं मारीचं संप्रेष्य यदा रामः तं मृगम् अनुगन्तुम् उद्युक्तः तदा छलेन संन्यासिरूपेण सीतां जहार। तत्र तत्र बहुधा सीतां अन्विष्य अन्तिमे सा लङ्कायाम् अस्ति इति ज्ञात्वा वानरसेनया सह लङ्कां समागतः। तत्र तुमुलं युद्धमारभत। अन्तिमे युद्धे कुम्भकर्णमेघनादरावणादयः रामेण निहताः।

अथ अशोकवनिकातः सीता रामान्तिकमानीता। रावणगृहे उषितायाः सीतायाः अग्निपरीक्षां विधाय विशुद्धां निष्कल्मषां तां रामः स्वीकृतवान्। यथा -

“पतिव्रतामयं ज्योतिर्ज्योतिषान्येन शोध्यते।

इन्द्रमाश्चर्यमथवा लोकास्थत्यनुवर्तनम्” ॥ १

अर्थात् पतिव्रतातेजः अन्यतेजः परिशोधयति। इदं सीतारूपीज्योतिः अन्येन ज्योतिषा, तेजसा शोध्यते। लोकमर्यादायाः पालने रामेण कृतम्। सीतालक्ष्मणसमेतः रामः अयोध्यां प्राप्तः। तत्र वसिष्ठपत्नी अरुन्धती सीतायै आशीर्वचनमेवं प्रददौ-

“लोपमुद्रानसूयाहमिति तिस्रस्त्वया सह ।

पतिव्रताश्च तिस्रोऽत्र सन्तु जानकि सांप्रतम्” ॥ २

अर्थात् अद्यपर्यन्तं लोपमुद्रा अनसूया अरुन्धती एता तिस्र एव पतिव्रताश्रेण्यां परिगणिताः। किन्तु अद्यारभ्य सीतायाः नाम अपि तत्र संयोज्यते। अद्यारभ्य चतस्रः पतिव्रताः सञ्जाताः

अथ रामः पुरोहितैः महर्षिभिः च अयोध्याधिपत्ये अभिषिक्तः। सीतासंयोगान्तमिदं भवभूतिः नाटकं पूर्वरामचरितम् इति नामकरणं सर्वथा श्रेयस्करं प्रेयस्करं च भवति ।

अस्य नाटकस्य कथावर्णनादिकं वाल्मीकिरामायणमाधारीकृत्यैव अस्ति। किन्तु तत्र तत्कथायाः परिवर्तनं विधाय नूतनघटना च वर्णिता। नाटकेऽस्मिन् कृतानि एतानि परिवर्तनानि श्रद्धेयानि।

- रामस्य वनगमनं विवाहानन्तरं मिथिलातः एव दृश्यते। किन्तु वाल्मीकिरामायणे वनयात्रा अयोध्यातो विद्यते।
- कैकेय्याः दासी मन्थरा मिथिलायां जनकपुरीं समागत्य तत्रैव वरद्वयदानं तथा याचितम्।
- नाटके अस्मिन् रावणेन रामवधार्थं बालिः प्रेषितः इति नूतना कथा विद्यते। या कथा अन्यत्र नैवास्ति।
- किष्किन्धायामेव विभीषणस्यागमनं, तेन सह मैत्री सुग्रीवाङ्गदयोः रामाय समर्पणादिकवर्णनमपि नूतनशैल्यामेव परिदृश्यते।

### उत्तररामचरितम्

‘उतरे रामचरिते भवभूतिर्विशिष्यते’ इति प्रथा प्रसिद्धा खलु। अनेनैव ज्ञायते यत् भवभूतेः उत्तररामचरितं नाम नाटकस्य श्रेष्ठत्वं लोकोत्तरत्वं च सर्वैरङ्गीकृतमिति। महाकवि कालिदासानन्तरं रामकाथावर्णनं स्वकीये प्रशस्ते नाटकद्वये भवभूतिना कृतमिति ज्ञायते। ‘महावीरचरितम्’ इति रामस्य राज्याभिषेकपर्यन्तं पूर्वचरितमस्ति। ‘उत्तररामचरितम्’ तु रामस्य उत्तरचरितम् अथवा सीतापरित्यागमारभ्य सीतासमागमपर्यन्तं वर्णनारूपं कथा भवति। सप्ताङ्केषु कविना करुणरससन्निवेशेन अस्य नाटकस्य रचना कृता।

### नाटककथा संग्रहः

रामाभिषेकानन्तरं सर्वे राजानः स्वस्वराज्यं प्रतिनिवृत्ताः। सीता तु गर्भिणी भवति। अत्र कविना भवभूतिना सीतापरित्यागस्य पृष्ठभूमिः महता

चातुर्येण विनिर्मिता इति दृश्यते। लोकरञ्जनार्थं राममुखेन कविः एवं कथयति -

“स्नेहः दया च सौख्यं यदि वा जानकीमपि।

आराधनाय लोकानां मुञ्चतो नास्ति मे व्यथा॥”

तत्रैव लक्ष्मणः सीतामनोरञ्जनार्थं प्राक्तनघटनामयचित्रं तां परिदर्शयन्नासीत्। तेषु चित्रेषु या सीतायां वह्निपरीक्षाकालिकं चित्रमागतं तदा रामेण एवमुक्तम्-

“उत्पत्तिपरिपूताया किमस्याः पावनान्तरैः।

तीर्थोदकं च वह्निश्च नान्यत शुद्धिमर्हति॥”

अर्थात् या सीता जन्मना एव पवित्रा, तस्यै अन्यस्य पावनप्रमाणस्य आवश्यकता नास्ति। तीर्थजलमग्निश्च स्वयमेव विशुद्धौ नान्यतः शुद्धियोग्यौ। आपन्नसत्त्वां सा सीता समस्तं चित्रजालं पश्यन्ती रामेण अकथयत्। यत् वनवृक्षलतागुल्मवतां भागीरथीं दृष्टुमिच्छामीति। झटित्येव रामेण लक्ष्मणः समादिष्टश्च। सीतां रथे नीत्वा तया ईप्सितं स्थानं परिदर्शयेति।

वनगमनस्येयं भूमिका पूर्वमेव निर्मिता कविना। तन्मध्ये दुर्मुखोनाम रामगुप्तचरः आगत्य सीताविषयिणीं लोकापवादचर्चां न्यवेदयत्। वार्तामिमां श्रुत्वा रामः सीतां वनविहारार्थं सम्प्रेषयन् तत्र परित्यक्तुं लक्ष्मणम् आदिदेश। रामस्य आज्ञापालकः लक्ष्मणः तां वने परित्यज्य अयोध्यां परावर्तितवान्।

एतन्मध्ये वाल्मीकिः तमसानदीतीरे क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकं व्याधेन निहतं दृष्ट्वा शोकातुर अभूत्। वाग्देवतायाः निर्देशानुसारं रामायणरचनायां निमग्नः च अभवत्।

महाकविना भवभूतिना कथायाः नाटकीयतायै नूतनकथाघटनाशैली अत्र समायोजिता इति दृश्यते। मुरलातमसयोः नद्योः भाषणात् जायते यत् रामनिर्देशानुसारं वाल्मीकेराश्रमे सीतां परित्यज्य यदा लक्ष्मणः प्रतिनिवृत्तः तदा प्रसूतिवेदनया पीडिता सा गङ्गायां प्रविष्टा। नद्यामेव पुत्रद्वयं प्रसूतवती। प्रसूत्यनन्तरं सीता पातालं प्रविष्टा। भागीरथी तौ बालकौ वाल्मीकेरन्तिके समर्पितवती च।

वाल्मीकेराश्रमे वसिष्ठः अरुन्धती रामस्य तिस्रो मातरः तथा जनकश्च समागतवन्तः। एतन्मध्ये एव आश्रमबालकाः रामस्य अश्वमेधिकाश्वं गृहीत्वा तत्रानीतवन्तः। अनन्तरं चन्द्रकेतुलवयोर्मध्ये तुमुलं युद्धं समारब्धम्। तदा तत्र रामः समुपस्थितः। लवकुशौ च तत्र दृष्ट्वा रामः मनसि चिन्तयति यत् प्रायः इमौ बालकौ सीतायाः एवेति।

एतेन्मध्ये बालकानां कोलाहलं ज्ञात्वा वाल्मीकिः, जनकः, वसिष्ठः, अरुन्धती, रामस्य तिस्रः भ्रातरश्च तत्र सन्निहिताः।

अस्य नाटकस्य सप्तमे अङ्के कविना नूतनपद्धत्या गर्भाङ्कस्य निर्माणं कृतम्। लवकुशसहितसीतासम्मिलनघटनां परिकल्प्य प्रदर्शिता भवभूतिना।

लक्ष्मणेन सर्वे जनाः सूचिता यत् वाल्मीकिना नाटकमेकं रचिता। यस्याभिनयः गङ्गातीरे अप्सरसां द्वारा परिदर्शयिष्यते इति। नाटकदर्शनार्थं रामादयः सर्वे सन्निहिताः आसन्। अरुन्धती समागत्य जनसमूहसमक्षं रामं आज्ञापितवती यत् 'जगत्पावनीं निषकल्मषां सीतां गृहाण' इति। नतशीर्षण रामेण लवकुशाभ्यां सह सीता स्वीकृता। इत्थं भवभूतेः सीतासंयोगात्मकम् उत्तररामचरितम् संस्कृतवाङ्मये विराजते।

### उत्तररामचरितम्- नाटकसमीक्षा

चतुष्पष्टिसंख्यकासु कलासु नाटकं अन्यतमं भवति। कलास्वादं तु सन्तोषदायकं सन्तापवर्जकं च भवेयुः इत्यस्ति सामान्यजनानाम् अभिलाषः। चिन्तेयं प्रत्यभिज्ञानेन भवभूतिना वाल्मीकिरामायणस्थं उत्तरकाण्डं स्वीकृत्य स्वप्रतिभया नाटकस्य आस्वादयतावर्धकानि परिवर्तनानि कृतानि। शुभकामानां जनानां मनोकामनानुगुणं सुखदसंयोगान्तं च रामायणकथा भवभूतिना विरचितम्।

वाल्मीकेः सीता लोकापवादभिया रामेण परित्यक्ता। परन्तु अग्निविशुद्धां सीतां वियोगाग्नौ दाहयितुं भवभूतिः नोत्सहे। तस्य परिणतिः तु रामायणनायिकायाः व्यतिरिक्ता नायिका भवति भवभूतेः सीतेति।

सीतारामयोः समागमेन कथां समापयितुं अनेकानि परिवर्तनानि कविना कृतानि। श्रद्धेयानि तानि-

- कथायाः शुभपरिसमाप्त्यर्थं भवभूतिना सीतापुत्रौ लवकुशौ मातृस्नेहात् अतिदूरं नीतौ। स्वमातरम् अदृष्ट्वा मातुः नाममपि अज्ञात्वा तौ बालकौ वर्षाणि यावत् दिनान्यनयताम्।
- रामेण परित्यक्ता सीता प्रसूतिवेदनाम् असहमाना सन् गङ्गानद्यां प्रविशति। तत्रैव सा पुत्रद्वयं प्रसूतवती।
- सीतां रसातलं नयति। गङ्गादेवी पृथ्वीदेवी च बालकौ वाल्मीकेराश्रमं प्रापयति च।
- सीतापरित्यागानन्तरकथा अन्तर्नाटकद्वारा सर्वान् बोधयति।

सीतापरित्यागविषये राजमातृणाम् अवस्था विवृणोतुं कविना नूतना एका कथा योजिता। सा तु ऋष्यशृङ्गस्य द्वादशवार्षिकसम्पद्यमाने यज्ञे सर्वाः मातरः आगन्तव्याः। सीताविहीनायाम् अयोध्यायाम् आगन्तुं ताः नैवोद्यताः।

- मातरः, वसिष्ठः, अरुन्धती, रामलक्ष्मणादयश्च नाटकस्य परिसमाप्त्यां वाल्मीकेराश्रमं प्रापयन्ति।

नाटकस्यास्य द्वितीयाङ्कस्य उत्तरार्धादारभ्य नाटकान्तं यावत् महाकविना कथाघटनाक्रमः संश्लिष्टः। येन कवेः वर्णनासामर्थ्यं भावनानैपुण्यं च अस्माभिः ज्ञातुं शक्यते। अस्य नाटकस्य घटना सर्वथा वाल्मीकिरामायणात् भिन्नचमत्कारिणी अद्वितीया च वर्तते। अतः एव पण्डितैः सहृदयैः च मिलित्वा एकस्वरेण उद्घोषितं यत् - “उत्तरे रामचरिते भवभूतिर्विशिष्यते” इति।

टिप्पणिः

१. भवभूतिः - उत्तररामचरितम् ७-४
२. भवभूतिः - उत्तररामचरितम् ७-३६

सहायकग्रन्थाः

भारतीय वाङ्मयेषु रामकथावर्णनम् - आचार्य आद्याचरण झा-तिरहुत

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