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# NEPALI JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

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<b>Coping with Disaster: Nepal's Devastating Earthquake and State Response</b>	Uddhab Pd. Pyakurel & Indra Adhikari	1-22
<b>April Earthquake: Spectacle, Aftermath and Awakening</b>	Hem Raj Kafle	23-32
<b>Participation of affected communities in humanitarian actions</b>	Roseena Gautam	33-44
<b>Human Nature, Studies about Brain and World Politics</b>	Shiva Prasad Tiwari	45-54
<b>जीवनको अर्थ : अर्थमय जीवन</b>	अनुपम मिश्र	55-72
<b>वैदिक आर्यहरूको कृषिभूमि, उर्वराशक्ति, बालीनाली क्रम र वर्तमान नेपालको कृषिको स्थिति</b>	नीलप्रसाद पन्त	73-90

# Coping with Disaster: Nepal's Devastating Earthquake and State Response

❖ **Uddhab Pd. Pyakurel & Indra Adhikari**

An earthquake of 7.6 Magnitude in Richter Scale hit Nepal on Saturday, 25 April, 2015 at 11:56 AM, local time. The epicentre was Barpak in historic district of Gorkha about 76 km northwest of the capital city, Kathmandu. The number of aftershocks measuring more than 4.0 in Richter Scale has reached more than 500. Among these aftershocks four measured more than 6.0 magnitudes. The largest aftershock that hit 17 days after the major shock measured 6.8 magnitude. The devastating earthquake affected 49 out of 75 districts of the country. Thirty one districts lying mid hills of Nepal were affected most. According to the degree of loss and damage the most affected 14 of the districts were declared 'crisis-hit' and comparatively less effected other 17 neighbouring districts were categorized as partially affected.

The devastating earthquake resulted in a huge loss of lives and property. It has affected lives of eight million people which constitutes almost one-third of the country's population. According to official statistics, 8,790 people were killed and 22,300 were injured. The earthquake also resulted in physical damages. Hundreds of thousands of structures were reported damaged. About 761,273 personal houses were damaged which included 269,653 partially damaged houses<sup>1</sup>. A total of 10,803 government buildings were reported to be destroyed and some 15,034 partially damaged. Around 41 percent (7,532) schools out of total 18,289 were completely destroyed in 49 districts and 4,650 schools were affected in 14 worst affected districts. Additionally, 2,106 toilets and 1,363 drinking water tapes have been destroyed in schools. More than one thousand monasteries collapsed in the most affected 14 districts and killed around 200 Buddhist monks

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.icimod.org/v2/cms4/files/images/e92e3b0202d11e51262a6e2cb1ed6f2d.jpg>, accessed by the authors on December 30, 2015.

and nuns. Similarly, out of a total of 4,468 public and private health care facilities<sup>2</sup>, the April earthquake destroyed 446 public health facilities that included hospitals, primary health care centers and health posts and 16 private ones were also destroyed. Furthermore, 701 public health facilities and 64 private health establishments are partially damaged<sup>3</sup>. According to the UNFPA, about a million children and more than 1.4 million females of reproductive age living in the 14 districts have been adversely affected<sup>4</sup>.

The effects have not been limited up to human and physical destruction only. It has had a very bad effect on the country's economic sector. Tourism has been adversely affected as every nine in ten planned foreign arrivals were cancelled. It has affected popular trekking routes and seven out of 10 World Heritage sites in the Kathmandu Valley have also been damaged. Similarly, other infrastructures like road damages worth NPR 1.38 billion have also happened. As a result of disrupted business activities, the government's revenue growth has slowed down in short term. The total value of disaster effect is reported NPR 706 billion which is equivalent to US \$ 7 million. The earthquake has definitely pushed more Nepalese below the line of poverty. According to the World Bank, the earthquakes is assumed to push additional 2.5 to 3.5 percent (700,000) Nepalese population into poverty in fiscal year 2015-2016.

Immediately after the country was rocked by the earthquake, an emergency cabinet (Council of Ministers) meeting was held under the chair of acting Prime Minister Bam Dev Gautam due to the absence of the Prime Minister Sushil Koirala. Gautam declared all earthquake affected areas crisis zones. It was also decided that the government's mechanisms for rescue and relief of earthquake victims would be mobilized. The government appealed to all government bodies, I/NGOs,

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<sup>2</sup> Ojha, Anup, "At Least 200 Deaths in 1,000 Quake Flattened Monasteries," *The Kathmandu Post*, May 22, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aufbauhilfe-nepal.de/miserable-health-care/>, accessed by the authors on December 30, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Nepal earthquake 2015: post Disaster Needs assessment, National Planning Commission, available at [http://www.npc.gov.np/images/download/PDNA\\_volume\\_BFinalVersion.pdf](http://www.npc.gov.np/images/download/PDNA_volume_BFinalVersion.pdf), accessed by authors on November 23, 2015.

political parties and civil society members to assist in the rescue and relief works and requested all hospitals and health institutions, including those owned by private sectors and the community to work for the treatment of the injured. All the helicopters available in the country, including those owned by private entrepreneurs were kept standby round the clock to respond to emergency rescue calls and media were asked to inform and support the government for rescue and relief works. The government also decided to release Rs. 500 million as a preliminary fund to carry out rescue and relief works. After 72 hours of devastating earthquake and aftershocks, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, on April 29, 2015 addressed the nation in which he said that all the government agencies were being deployed to rescue victims and provide them with relief packages. However, Koirala, who had returned home by shortening his Indonesia visit did not announce any relief package to the quake-affected people. He however assured people of prompt treatment for the injured and relief packages for the affected people. Later, the government drew criticism from all walks of life for not taking strong and timely measures to deal with the crisis. Before his address to the nation, Koirala had called an all-party meeting at his official residence in Baluwatar where the parties suggested him to make the state mechanism more responsive, effective and strong. They also expressed dissatisfaction at the government's slow responses. On April 28, 2015, the State Affairs Committee (SAC) of the Parliament directed the government to speed up relief efforts.

Amidst all this, many domestic and international helping hands showed readiness to help. On Nepal's request for help, 134 international Search and Rescue (SAR) teams from 34 countries responded. The Ministry of Home Affairs reported that "for SAR altogether 4,236 helicopter flights were necessary. (Out of 7,558 persons rescued by air and 4,689 were rescued by land." More than 90 percent of the strength of all security forces were mobilized. There were 65,059 from Nepal Army, 41,776 from Nepal Police and 24,775 from Armed Police Force mobilized to focus on SAR. Similarly, 22,500 civil servants and 4,000 health workers both government and private health services were mobilized to aid to rescue and relief efforts. Singapore also sent a search and rescue team of 55 people to Nepal and donated \$100,000 to the Singapore Red Cross.

### **Rescue and initial initiatives: time of commitments and promises**

After emergency rescue works, the Government of Nepal took further actions for the rehabilitation and recovery of the earthquake affected citizens. On 8 May 2015, PM Sushil Koirala addressed the parliament where he pledged some of the relief funds with the aim of making lives normal. According to the address, Rs. 40,000 would be provided to each family who had lost their family members for performing the death rituals of their kin. A monetary support of Rs 100,000 per family would be provided for those who had lost their family members. An immediate relief of Rs 25,000 per family would be offered for those who wished to repair their houses that were partially-damaged by the earthquake. Similarly, Rs. 200,000 would be provided to those victims whose houses were destroyed and who wished to reconstruct their houses themselves in line with the standard set by the government. For building new houses, loans of up to Rs 2.5 million for households inside Kathmandu and Rs. 1.5 million for households outside of Kathmandu Valley was announced at a concessional interest rate of 2 percent per annum.

Apart from monetary help, the government promised to provide free treatment to injured people in all public and private hospitals, residence and free education to those who had become homeless and had lost their relatives. In addition to these, full waiver on land tax for a year, and the waiver of interests on loans of up to Rs 50,000 depending upon the losses suffered by the victims were also promised. Further, the government committed to restore the historical, religious, archeological and cultural heritages to their original style within five years.

The government of Nepal through annual budget speech on 14 July 2015 made further commitments. The budget speech by the then Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat in the parliament for the fiscal year 2015/16 made the following announcements on behalf of the government:<sup>5</sup>

- to move ahead with strong commitment for the completion of reconstruction work within next five years.

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<sup>5</sup>See more at: <http://southasiacheck.org/earthquake-promise-check/promise-tracker/#sthsh.jiNyr48W.dpuf>, accessed by the authors on December 30, 2015.

- to have the reconstruction authority fully operational earliest the possible with very effective leadership, special authority, guaranteed financial resources, specific terms of work, provision of citizen's feedback mechanism and efficient professional structure.
- to manage the cost for the first phase of reconstruction which according to the Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) conducted by the National Planning Commission would be Rs. 667 billion, from the "National Reconstruction Fund" for carrying out the reconstruction works smoothly. Under this fund, projects would be carried out by the internal and external resources.
- To allocate Rs. 74 billion in this fund for the next fiscal year. Out of this, Rs. 50 billion would be for housing, Rs. 3 billion for public buildings, Rs. 2 billion for archeological structures, Rs. 7 billion for other physical infrastructures, Rs. 6 billion for production sector and Rs. 6 billion for the social sector.
- to carry out the works related to rehabilitation and reconstruction of individual houses, governmental buildings, schools and health institutions, archeological and cultural heritages and physical infrastructures by the sectoral ministries and agencies until the works would be started by the reconstruction authority. Rs. 17 billion was allocated for this purpose in addition to the expenditure made from National Reconstruction Fund.
- To make arrangements to provide up to Rs. 200,000 on the basis of approved procedures for those who wish to construct the completely damaged houses by the earthquake on their own under the specified norms. There had already been provision of providing loans of Rs. 2.5 millions and Rs. 1.5 millions at concessional interest rates of 2% for households inside the Kathmandu Valley and outside the Valley respectively as "special housing loan for earthquake affected". Such loan would be provided through the banks and financial institutions under the simple procedures formulated by Nepal's central bank- the Nepal Rastra Bank.

- to establish Economic Rehabilitation Fund under the Nepal Rastra Bank for providing refinancing facility and interest subsidy for earthquake affected residential homes, agriculture, business and tourism. Already announced measures, such as the loan loss provision, loan rescheduling, additional time for the account keeping of income and expenditure and capital calculation for the earthquake affected, would be continued.
- to allocate necessary budget for the immediate reconstruction and restoration of damaged infrastructure of water supply and sanitation in earthquake affected areas to address the adverse effects to the sources of water supply.
- to bear 30.0 percent of the contribution by the government in water supply and sanitation projects.
- to conduct skill development trainings in the district level to 50 thousand youths so as to produce trained masons, plumbers and electricians to make earthquake resistant houses and structures through skill development centers. Such skill and knowledge would be accredited. Skill development centers would also evaluate the trainings conducted by non-government organizations.
- to arrange rehabilitation and resettlement immediately for the displaced people. Relocation would be done from the high risk areas to the safer places which would be as close as possible from their initial settlement.
- to construct historical heritage sites, temples, monasteries, mosques and infrastructures damaged by the earthquake maintaining their original and cultural shape but with new earthquake resistant technology. For this, local goods and labor would be utilized as far as possible. For such construction, "Ours Heritage-Ours Responsibility" campaign would be launched. For this, a separate Heritage Fund would be provisioned under the National Reconstruction Fund. Nepalese living in Nepal and abroad could deposit money in such fund. In order to enhance ownership and contribution by the general Nepalese people, the then Minister of Finance Ram Sharan Mahat made the provision of additional one percent telecommunication service fees which would be deposited in that fund.

- To give permission to construct cultural heritages to national and international organizations if they wished to construct the cultural heritages according to design approved by the government. The organizations would also have to maintain quality of such heritages as per the standards set up by the Government of Nepal. Private houses in the surrounding of the damaged archeological and cultural heritages would be motivated to reconstruct in such a way that they should reflect the cultural importance of that place.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation costs were estimated to be at least NPR 669 billion (which equivalent to US\$ 6.7 billion). To meet these costs, the government set up a National Reconstruction Fund and released NPR 200 billion, and committed NPR 20 billion. Furthermore, the Government of Nepal came with an agenda for long term recovery based on the principles of Build Back Better (BBB) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Main aspects of DRR and BBB were ; measures to improve preparedness, response, relief and logistics systems; measures to strengthen information and communication capacities for relief, response and recovery and measures to enhance multi-hazard risk monitoring, vulnerability assessment, risk information dissemination and awareness. Improvements in legal and institutional arrangements included measures to mainstream DRR into the developmental sector, particularly housing, private and public infrastructure, social sectors (health and education), and livelihood and measures to improve integration of climate change adaptation and DRR were the other agendas to be implemented in medium and long run.

A meeting of foreign donors –The International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction (ICNR)– was held in Kathmandu in June 25, 2015 was concluded with the commitment of overwhelming financial support by Nepal's neighbors, friendly countries and development partners. In the meeting a total amount of US \$ 4.4 billion was committed by donors for the reconstruction. Of the pledged amount, half the commitments were in grants and the other half consisted of concessional loans. The government said that the assistances in the conference, in which there were delegates from 60 countries and agencies, were generous because total sum committed exceeded the Nepal government's expectations.

India pledged US \$ 1 billion, out of which 25 percent was grant. In addition India converted 40 percent of the existing US \$ 1 billion line of credit into grant. China expressed a commitment to provide an amount equal to US \$500 million as grants. In addition to the commitments from multilateral donors, assurances came from Germany, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Switzerland, Norway, South Korea, Finland, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan<sup>6</sup> as well.

### **Rehabilitation and rebuilding: power politics and negligence**

Once there was enough commitment from donors to rebuilding process, an unhealthy power politics was witnessed among ruling parties to see their own “yes man” as leader of the rebuilding authority. Even former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai<sup>7</sup> expressed his interest to lead the authority. The authority which should have been formed through long deliberations with the public and in the parliament accommodating expert opinions, was formed through 'back channels' through an ordinance. The then government introduced an ordinance, formed the National Reconstruction Authority, and appointed Govinda Pokharel as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the authority on 13 August, 2015. Since the ordinance was brought without much calculations of power politics, it could not be replaced by an act passed from the parliament because two main ruling parties CPN(UML) and then UCPN (Maoist) did not agree to appointment made by the Prime Minister who was from Nepali Congress. As a result Reconstruction Authority lost its legality and became defunct. The ordinance which was issued by President Ram Baran Yadav on June 30 was to be replaced by an Act passed by the parliament by 29 August, 2015. A new Bill was tabled in the parliament on 23 July, but parliamentary meeting was called by the Speaker of the House only after the cut-off date. It is said that the parliamentary secretariat which had been dominated by pro-UML bureaucrats, did not bother to alert the government as they were not happy with the CEO. Moreover, it is assumed that they were waiting for an opportunity to make the authority defunct so that the next government led by K. P. Oli of CPN(UML)

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<sup>6</sup>See more at: <http://www.myrepublica.com/economy/story/23437/india-china-pledge-rs-376-billion-aid.html#sthash.1DWDs5h3.dpuf>, accessed by the authors on December 30, 2015.

<sup>7</sup>He was the senior leader of the then opposition party-United Communist Party of Nepal –Maoist (UCPN-M).

would get a chance to appoint their 'own man'. The following statement by Giriraj Mani Pokhrel, the Chief Whip of the UCPN-M hints that the then main opposition party UCPN-M also played a politics to stop the government to table the new bill before the ordinance would expire. said :

*“The government had two months to consult the opposition parties, prepare a new bill with every one’s consent and table it in the parliament before the ordinance expired. But neither the government nor the ruling parties realized the urgency to replace the ordinance with the new bill. They woke up only after the ordinance expired and now want to push a bill without our consent.”*<sup>8</sup>

The political parties that failed to form a consensus for formation of a mechanism to address the issues of earthquake victims due to power battles and personal reasons , suddenly resumed discussion on issues of constitution leaving the issue of reconstruction on backburner . While earthquake affected people expected some immediate relief packages from the parties on the issue of rebuilding the earthquake affected areas, the top brass of the major parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (CA) – NC, UML, UCPN-M and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Democratic) – came up with a deal on constitution drafting on 8 June 2015. This move ended years of political uncertainty. In the constitution political parties agreed to federate the country into eight provinces and promulgate a constitution. The names of the provinces were to be decided later by two-third majority of the state assembly of respective provinces. The political parties also agreed to form a Federal Commission to delineate the boundaries of the federal provinces. These political developments and focus on constitution development clearly made the the reconstruction issue of lesser priority. The following events which occurred along with and after the agreement to promulgate the constitution diverted politicians , policy makers, and even security forces from reconstruction process towards constitution making process. The following points help to understand that constitution drafting and promulgation was clearly prioritized over the rehabilitation of the earthquake victims and reconstruction process.

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<sup>8</sup> “Hard to reconstruct”, *Nepali Times*, September 8th, 2015 <http://www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/thebrief/2015/09/08/hard-to-reconstruct/>, accessed by the authors on December 30, 2015.

- New draft of the constitution adopted by the CA on 7 June 2015 and put forward for a two-week public consultation period
- The United Democratic Madhesi Front met on July 10 and decided to launch protest programmes demanding the major parties to correct the 16-point agreement. The protests included putting black flags in public areas and organising rallies in Kathmandu and other major cities across the country. The parties announced that they would place black flags at public places in Kathmandu on 12 July and organise a protest rally on 14 July. Likewise, the front scheduled to hold protests and corner meets in districts headquarters on 17 July. Their protests also included meets on July 21-25 at Biratnagar, Janakpur, Birgunj and Bhairahawa.
- Pushpa Kamal Dahal UCPN-M Chairman visited India from 14 to 18 July at the invitation from the Government of India in order to discuss constitution related issues.
- Former Prime Minister and leader of Nepali Congress Sher Bahadur Deuba visited India to discuss constitution related issues from 29 July 3 August, 2015.
- A meeting of United Democratic Madhesi Front was held on 4 August 2015 and announced a five-day protest programmes against the draft of the constitution. According to them, they would organise corner meetings in all election constituencies from 4 August to 8 August and protest rallies in Dhankuta and Nepalgunj on 5 August 2015.
- The special committee of the Constitutional-Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee signed a new agreement to carve out six federal units and incorporate the 'or' provision in the citizenship clause on August 8 but this decision triggered the demonstration. Strikes by Civic Struggle Committee to challenge against putting Surkhet, Jajarkot and Dailekh of Bheri zone and the districts of Karnali zone to Province 6. Anger flared over the police killing of demonstrators during a protest against a new constitution. On the 10 August 2015, 2 civilians were killed there.
- An alliance of four Madhes based parties held a meeting at the office of the Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party on 18 August 2015 and announced an indefinite strike and protests in the Nepal's Tarai.

- One person was killed and dozens were injured during a clash with police in Saptari district which is around 460 km from the capital.
- The Nepal Sadbhavana Party, with 5 members in the Constituent Assembly, announced that it quit the House.
- On 21 August, The Constitutional Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee revised its 8 August decision, and decided to add one more federal unit there by making seven provinces in total .
- on 24 August seven police personnel including one Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) and a two-year-old boy were killed in an attack by the demonstrators demanding Thaurhat province in Tikapur of Kailali ,
- The CA started passing the articles of the Revised Bill of the Constitution of Nepal from 13 September 2015.
- The CA passed the Constitution Bill on 16 September 2015. A total of 507 votes were cast in favor of the bill while 25 votes were cast against it. According to the interim constitution, two thirds majority was required to endorse the bill which means a total of 399 out of the 598 CA members would have sufficed to pass the bill.
- Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar visited Nepal to “understand the situation ” as Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s special envoy from 18 September 2015.
- Nepal's new constitution comes into force after its promulgation by the President on 20 September 2015.

The long pending new constitution as an outcome was a milestone achievement for the major political parties, which includes the ruling coalition. If one follows the movements and activities of the major political parties after the 16-point agreement, it is clearly evident that they were optimistic about ending the political transition along with the constitution promulgation. This is one of the major reasons why many politicians expressed the promulgation of constitution as “ ‘70-years’ dream come true”<sup>9</sup>. But the post-constitution situation seems to have become worse. While the half of Nepal , hill origin Nepalese and Nepalese Diaspora celebrated the

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<sup>9</sup> For details, see: <http://myrepublica.com/politics/story/28498/70-years-of-dream-comes-true.html>, accessed by the authors on November 23, 2015.

constitution promulgation people belonging to the Tarai region of Nepal, especially Madhesis went on to mourn it by observing a blackout. It is surprising that political parties could not sense the situation before they concentrated on bringing the new charter. The following statement by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai helps in understanding their justification for the resumption of constitutional debate while the earthquake survivors were expecting rehabilitation and rebuilding programs from the political parties and the government.

*“Ultimately, everything boils down to politics. The sooner we implement the 16-point deal and expedite the constitution process, and thereby end the prolonged transition, easier it will be to undertake disaster management and reconstruction plans.”<sup>10</sup>*

Pyakurel<sup>11</sup> analyses why political parties hurried to promulgate the constitution. He writes:

*“The logic behind it was that there was a strong national and international anxiety against Nepali leadership questioning whether the second time elected CA will be able to bring the new constitution in place. The leaders were under pressure to address this public concern, because of their failure to meet the deadline and words time and again in the past. Once they saw the possibility to pass the constitution through due process, they considered it a golden opportunity to capitalize it for promulgating a new constitution...If it was delayed further, leaders might have faced the revolt of their own cadres, and eventual loss of the required vote to pass the constitution. Take an example of May 15, 2012, when the 11 province federal model was agreed upon by major parties, but the agreement eventually led to the dissolution of the CA on May 27, 2012 without having promulgated.”*

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<sup>10</sup>A concept paper "Vision for Reconstruction" presented by the former prime minister of Nepal at a gathering of experts in Kathmandu - See more at: <http://www.myrepublica.com/opinion/story/23342/a-new-vision.html#sthash.tlcCFu0Z.dpuf> See more at: <http://www.myrepublica.com/opinion/story/23342/a-new-vision.html#sthash.tlcCFu0Z.dpuf>, accessed by the authors on November 23, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Uddhab Pyakurel, "Nepal-India relations after 2015 New Constitution", available at <http://www.southasiawatch.tw/detail/964/1>, accessed by the authors on November 23, 2015.

It may be appropriate to take help of idea by Khagendra N Sharma who states in one of his pieces, *"We showed the world that the Nepalese are resilient people"*<sup>12</sup>. In fact it was big surprise for the world to see the patience of earthquake victims, in the sense that they have not reacted harshly against the government of the day.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the reality that they got almost nothing, not even basic support promised by the government, the victims have been tolerant. Uddhab Pyakurel, the co-author of the paper also spoke to the Editor of an online (<http://www.aftershocknepal.com>), in similar lines. According to Pyakurel:

*"I could say that my society is a society of resilience; they can and have to cope with any difficult situation they face. Since there is an absence of government in rural areas, people have compulsion to manage their day-to-day life on their own even during and after every crisis including natural calamities. While doing so, they generally rely on their own limited resources and skills and manage it"*<sup>14</sup>.

Prof. Subatra Kumar Mitra's comment also buttresses our proposition. He says, - "Nepal is a society of resilience"<sup>15</sup>. According to him, too much resilience is also counterproductive for the development of a society. It appears that Nepalese have become so much resilient that they have not been pushing government mechanism to effectively carry out the rebuilding process. It is important to understand factors behind such a resilience the Nepalese (usually villagers) have. One of the major reasons behind resilience was their traditional way of living in their houses which are built by using locally available materials and skills of local

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<sup>12</sup>For details, see: Khagendra N Sharma "Lost in transition, *The Kathmandu Post*, December 20, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> There was a symbolic protest witnessed in Dhading District. According to a report, earthquake survivors in Dhading have sent warm clothes to top political leaders in a symbolic protest after the local bodies delayed the distribution of winter relief in the district. The quake survivors sent woolen shawl to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, a woolen cap printed "I love Nepal" to Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala and woolen gloves to UCPN-M Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. A group of displaced people in Dhusha VDC handed over the winter items and a piggy bank to Chief District Officer Bishow Prakash Subedi. They requested him to hand over the materials to the political leaders. The CDO had at first refused to accept the goods.

<sup>14</sup>For details, browse <http://www.aftershocknepal.com/story/people-manage-day-day-life-even-crisis/>, accessed by the author on May 31, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Prof. Mitra made this comment while he was chairing a session at Institute of South Asian Studies on October 12, 2015.

people. When the authors visited earthquake-affected villages just after a few days of the earthquake, those who had lost their houses and other precious belongings were found normal as if they were not hit by the disaster. The villagers could cope with the post-earthquake situation easily as most of the houses were made traditionally with locally available materials and skills. It had become easier for them to build a temporary shelter as many construction materials could be taken out from the collapsed houses and reused. The villagers reused the zinc sheets of the roofs from the collapsed houses, and managed to build a temporary but congested shelter. Once they had shelters to protect from open sky, the Sun and the rain they ignored other things and tried to be engaged by playing cards, attending local level discussion about politics in the tea-shops and in various other activities.

### **Post-constitution slowed rebuilding process: nationalistic tones as pretext**

Whatever were the reasons to promulgate the constitution hurriedly, the fact was that Nepalese could not celebrate the post-constitution situation as expected. Rather, people across Nepal started facing acute fuel shortages, hospitals were running out of essential drugs and oxygen, and schools shut down for months directly affecting the future of millions of children. While more than ten districts in the Nepal's southern plains were virtually shut off for months due to the protest of Madhes based parties. Nepal's southern neighbor (India) imposed "unofficial blockade"<sup>16</sup>, citing the "prevailing unrest" inside the Nepal and it further deteriorated the situation of Nepal and Nepal-India ties at the same time. However, major political parties continued to carry forward their post-constitution political agenda such as to elect President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Speaker and Deputy-Speaker of the House among others. As an outcome of such process, CPN-UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli got elected as the 38th Prime Minister of Nepal on 11 October 2015.

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<sup>16</sup> India on September 21, 2015 issued a press statement stating, "our freight companies and transporters have also voiced complaints about the difficulties they are facing in movement within Nepal and their security concerns, due to the prevailing unrest". This was an indication of India to impose "unofficial blockade" to Nepal. Following Indian government's green signal, the agitating Samyukta Loktantrik Madhesi Morcha (SLMM) decided to concentrate their protest in the bordering area on the September 23, 2015 and started sit-in various entry point to Nepal from India.

Then onwards, the Oli government used fuel shortage as a result of the “unofficial blockade” as a pretext for its inability to reach to the earthquake victims. Instead, the Prime Minister took more time to form cabinet than to engage actively to bring the crisis in the country under control. Prime Minister Oli, with six Deputy Prime Ministers (DPMs) in the cabinet, not only made a new record of having the most number of DPMs<sup>17</sup>, but also has projected a very bad image of governance. This is because they have simply ignored criticisms of forming a big cabinet and splitting ministries randomly. Critics say that the Prime Minister went against the recommendations of the Administrative Reform Commission, to maintain lesser number of ministries. However, PM Oli put unnecessary burden on state coffers in crisis situation by splitting ministries just to accommodate people who wanted to be ministers<sup>18</sup>.

On 15 November 2015, after more than a month of taking oath of office as Prime Minister, Mr. Oli addressed the nation but stated nothing<sup>19</sup> about how his government is responding to the earthquake victims who have been waiting for rehabilitation and rebuilding for more than seven months. As per the promise of PM's address to the nation, the government came out with a White Paper on 25 November 2015 where it was mentioned that its plans to issue the first installment of proposed assistance of Rs 200,000 to earthquake victims “immediately”. However, the white paper could not say how it could deliver immediate relief to the people especially those who had been trying to return to normalcy after the

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<sup>17</sup> <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-11-06/oli-has-record-6-dpms.html>, accessed by the authors on December 23, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> According to an estimate, the creation of new ministries alone adds a burden of about Rs. 3 billion to the exchequer every year. It needs no reminding that a large amount of the tax payers' money in the country goes to maintaining the ministries, ministers and their hangers-on (see Narayan Upadhyay 'Jumbo Cabinet - A Compulsion', *The Rising Nepal*, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/8351>, accessed by the authors on December 23, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> PM Oli stated that Nepali society and the economy were badly hit by the April earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people, left hundreds of thousands homeless and caused damage of over Rs 7 billion to the economy, Oli said the ongoing blockade has caused greater losses than even the recent natural disaster. (See more at: <http://myrepublica.com/feature-article/story/31097/pm-oli-addressing-nation.html#sthash.10VsEcZo.dpuf>), accessed by the authors on November 23, 2015.

earthquake and the India's blockade<sup>20</sup>. The government could cite the additional declarations of providing NRs 10 thousands each to earthquake affected displaced families to buy warm clothes and decisions to provide Rs. 300,000 in loan in addition to Rs. 200,000 donation as its program of assistance to earthquake affected people<sup>21</sup>. While government was announcing more and more supports, there were reports of substantial number of the victims who had not received the initial amount of Rs 15,000 given by the government for immediate relief and to build temporary sheds<sup>22</sup> immediately after the earthquake. It was previous government led by Sushil Koirala which had announced Rs 200,000 in aid to each of the families rendered homeless by the earthquake and Rs 15,000 cash package for building temporary shelters. Since there was no serious attempt to introspect and retrospect the whole rebuilding process so as to find the weakness it was difficult for the earthquake affected people to rely on government's promises. The government during the earthquake and the government formed after the promulgation of constitution did not seriously attempt to improve the poor delivery system at the local level. The lack of enough manpower at the local level and absence of politically elected representatives in local bodies were also cited as reasons that hindered the distribution of relief materials to the earthquake victims. The Village Development Committee (VDC) secretaries are also not usually in the villages. Only 780 out of about 3,200 VDCs are providing services from their designated offices<sup>23</sup> in the villages. Instead of appointing new secretaries or fulfilling the vacated posts of VDC Secretaries in all earthquake affected VDCs by transferring from other departments of the government, the government is trying to survive with its "nationalistic rhetoric". It appears that government is using this 'nationalistic rhetoric as solution to everything.

### **State of rehabilitation and rebuilding at present**

*"We are forced to spend sleepless nights, as it gets extremely cold after the sunset."*

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<sup>20</sup> See more at: <http://www.onlinekhabar.com/2015/11/354687/#sthash.F5CcxdeP.dpuf>

<sup>21</sup> For details, <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-11-25/critics-term-white-paper-damp-squib.html>, accessed by the authors on November 23, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Khagendra N Sharma "Lost in transition, *The Kathmandu Post*, December 20, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Bhadra Sharma, "Absence of VDC secys paralysing local govt" *The Kathmandu Post*, December 20, 2015.

*Sanukanchi Tamang, an earthquake victim, 18 November 2015*<sup>24</sup>

This statement of an earthquake victim is just an example. Hundreds of thousands of earthquake victims are suffering from such problems.. This paper, however, has tried to engage with the efforts made by the Government of Nepal to address situation in the country after the great earthquake. While finalizing this write up at the end of December 2015, reports received from earthquake-affected districts stated that more than 25 earthquake survivors had died and thousands other had fallen sick in various places because of severe cold in the winter . News reports and information from various other sources state that people have been seriously affected due to cold of the winter . This is due to the fact that the affected people are living under tents and temporary shelters in poor living conditions after their houses were destroyed by the April earthquake. Earthquake survivors have accused that the government has not been providing adequate food, medicines, permanent shelters and immediate reliefs for them. However, earthquake affected people are in left in lurch. They are languishing under tents and temporary shelters because of government's apathy and sluggish response. This situation has arisen due to the lack of institutional arrangement to respond to crisis like the great earthquake. The Supreme Court and the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) have directed the government to reach out to the survivors of April/May earthquakes with relief assistance as early as possible. The government had been directed to provide Rs 10,000 which was announced by the Oli government by issuing a "White Paper" on 23 November 2015 to purchase winter clothes to the earthquake survivors. Reports show that there are still a substantial number of victims who had not been able to receive an initial support of Rs 15,000 from the government <sup>25</sup>. It was previous government led by Sushil Koirala which had announced Rs 200,000 in aid to each of the families rendered homeless by the earthquake and Rs 15,000 cash package for building temporary shelters.

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<sup>24</sup> Sanukanchi Tamang is originally from Lachyang village of Nuwakot who currently lives in a temporary camp for earthquake victims in Simutar, near the district headquarter for more than past seven months( For more details, see Prakash Adhikari, "Earthquake-hit await warm clothes, shelter", The Kathmandu Post, November 19, 2015

<sup>25</sup>Khagendra N Sharma "Lost in transition, *The Kathmandu Post*, December 20, 2015.

As discussed in the previous sections, the three major parties could not reach to an agreement to pass the long awaited “National Reconstruction Bill” for a long time, which could pave the way to formulate a separate authority to look after the reconstruction work. Though they agreed to present a new Bill on National Reconstruction Authority in the meeting of Parliament on 15 September 2015, it took 235 days after the devastating earthquake to endorse the bill by parliament. Meanwhile, all development partners had to pressurize the political parties to bring the bill without delay . The newly appointed CEO of the National Reconstruction Authority (former Vice Chairperson of National Planning Commission) Govinda Raj Pokhrel made an appeal on 8 September 2015 for an immediate revival of the Authority. In the appeal he said, *“I make a humble appeal to revive the Reconstruction Authority. If I am the problem, bring someone new, but for sake of the survivors let’s expedite the reconstruction process of our villages and cities”*<sup>26</sup>. An INGO acting in the field of poverty alleviation , Oxfam, had also requested the Nepali government to reinstate National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) at the earliest to *“get earthquake recovery and reconstruction efforts back on track”*. Oxfam Launched a policy paper titled “Rebuilding a More Resilient Nepal” on 29 October 2015 with some key recommendations. Among the recommendations made revival of NRA was the most important one. Some donors even warned of not being able to support if the government did not take immediate steps to help the earthquake affected people.

As of now, the parliament has already endorsed the Bill on 16 December 2015, and government appointed Sushil Gyawali as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Authority on 25 December 2015. As per the newly passed act by the parliament, the main task of the authority will be to assess the damage caused by the earthquake, prioritize reconstruction works, approve the reconstruction projects and direct the agencies responsible for reconstruction. The authority has been given mandate to acquire land by preparing a working procedure for reconstruction and resettlement, mobilise private sector and non-government

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<sup>26</sup> His tweet statement which was published by the national daily, The Kathmandu Post (see: <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-09-08/pokhrel-appeals-for-immediate-revival-of-reconstruction-authority.html>, accessed by the authors on November 23, 2015.

organisations, prepare and implement standards for settlement development, and house pooling and remove structures that are risky. The act has also expanded the scope of the authority. The act has provisioned that it should not follow existing laws on land acquisition, land registration, trust, public procurement, forest, archaeology and environment.

The defunct ordinance had given the authority exemption from laws on land acquisition, public procurement and environment clearance only. The provision of allowing the Cabinet the power to dissolve the Authority anytime it sees necessary, that was there in the ordinance has been removed in the act. According to the act, the NRA is a three-layer structure consisting of National Reconstruction Consultation Council, Steering Committee and Executive Committee. The first two committees are headed by the Prime Minister, while the executive committee is headed by a CEO. The consultation council's main job is to provide consultation to the steering committee on policy and plans while the steering committee will approve of reconstruction plans prepared by executive committee, direct the executive committee to make reconstruction effective, approve budget of authority, and approve organisational structure of authority. The executive committee will implement the plans and make government agencies execute them. The authority will constitute Development Assistance Coordination and Facilitation Committee headed by the authority's CEO to effectively utilize the financial resources received from donors. Representatives from donors and civil society will also be in this committee. The act has retained the provision on formation of Reconstruction Fund and Appellate Committee headed by current or ex-judge of appellate courts to register complaints against the works of the authority.

The recent actions such as passing of the NRA Act by the parliament, appointing Gyawali as CEO of the authority are to be considered positive steps. However, people including these authors still doubt about the effective and timely response to the earthquake victims. First, it is incorrect to argue that all works regarding rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction work were disturbed due to lack of one specific authority-The National Reconstruction Authority. Rather it was taken as an excuse by the ruling elites and bureaucrats through which they tried to cover their

weaknesses and shield themselves from strong criticism. There were line ministries and departments of the government that could have continued their respective works in the earthquake affected areas even if there was no NRA. According to the government data, it has already spent 15.14 billion Nepalese rupees from Prime Minister Relief Fund. Relief materials of almost 3 billion Nepalese rupees have been imported by using 14 custom points of Nepal-India border<sup>27</sup>. Second, people again have to wait more to see the full-phased functioning NRA as the act itself conceived an idea of having a three-tier structure under the reconstruction body— Directive Committee, Advisory Council and Executive Committee to govern the authority. Since Nepal has to do with the current composition of the hung parliament for two more years, there are chances that sometimes these authorities may become defunct and sometimes without leadership because of unnecessary 'politics' especially if there is change of governments in the future .

According to the progress report published by the NRA on 2 June 2016<sup>28</sup>, NRA has prepared and launched the Post Disaster Reconstruction Framework, trained and mobilized engineers in reconstruction and begun enrolment of households eligible for Government support in 11 districts most affected by the earthquake. The report says that NRA has completed damage assessments and household surveys in 11 districts – Gorkha, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Ramechhap, Dhading, Kavrepalanchok, Dolakha, Rasuwa, Okhaldhunga, Sindhuli and Makawanpur – that had suffered most damages in the 25 April 2015 earthquake. To date, the NRA has published names of 300961 households who are eligible for housing grants. Housing grant agreements have been signed with 47925 households. The reconstruction of earthquake safe houses has begun in Dolakha, Ramechhap, Sindhupalchok and Gorkha districts, and more constructions are expected to begin because the NRA has already transferred NRs. 12.44 billion to the District Development Committees (DDCs) through the Central- Level Project

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<sup>27</sup> For details, see: *Nagarik Daily*, December 28, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> For details see progress report prepared by NRA at <http://nra.gov.np/uploads/docs/pBL95TvAMn160604110550.pdf>

Implementation Unit (CL-PIU) at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD).

According to the report, the NRA has placed technicians at VDC level, has focused on construction of temporary residences and community shelters, reconstruction of cultural heritages and reconstruction of schools. For these, NRA plans to have partnerships with INGOs in construction of schools and health services.

Though NRA claims that it has done so much of work, field observations and media reports show that every earthquake affected people have received the grants. Though achievement reported by NRA may be good, if each and every earthquake affected people do not get the relief that too in time, reconstruction work cannot be said to be effective.

### **Rebuilding and the issue of sustainability**

While talking with the villagers who lost their houses due to the earthquake, most of them say that their houses were damaged because they were built by using local materials mostly. That is why they have a strong desire to make concrete buildings which according to them are far safer. Time and again media, social activists and politicians also came up with such views that only 'modern' houses with pillar systems are durable. Therefore aspirations of village people to have durable and strong concrete houses are genuine ones. However, the issue is how to make it? From where the villagers can manage extra expenditure beyond the government grant of Rs 200,000 per household to fulfill their dream? Media, social activists and politicians do not seem to have exact answers to these questions. They have to carry materials like sand from the river, cement, steel, glass and all other extra materials from the towns and cities. This type of houses cost at least a couple of million Nepalese Rupees and cost of materials can be more than 70 percent of the total cost<sup>29</sup>.

The best option for the villagers is to go for modified traditional houses. This will allow them to mobilise most of the money they receive as compensation to hire

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<sup>29</sup> For details, see: Indra Adhikati & Uddhab Pyakurel "Material Benefits, *The Kathmandu Post*, January 6, 2016.

local labourers, masons and carpenters and to buy locally available construction material like mud (clay), uncooked bricks, stones and raw timbers among others. This will not only ensure sustainable reconstruction but also revive the rural economy of Nepal by creating more jobs at the local level.

To conclude, Nepali society is different and unique compared to other societies in the world. After the great earthquake Nepalese could make the temporary shelters immediately because they could be made with locally available materials. This helped earthquake survivors to recover quickly along with a temporary shelter and hence they could become resilient. If it was a modern house with cement, concrete and pillar it would have been very difficult for villagers to cope with the situation as they did after the earthquake. If these facts are ignored and promote and motivate the villagers to make 'modern' houses of cement, concrete and pillar, rehabilitation even if temporary would not be that easy. The government has to take actions to provide relief amounts and rehabilitate the earthquake victims immediately. If all the suffers speak up at once against government apathy and indifference, consequences can be disastrous.

# April Earthquake: Spectacle, Aftermath and Awakening

❖ Hem Raj Kafle

By luck or chance, I am in a condition to speak of three earthquakes, which Nepalese who lived during the last eighty two years narrate with some familiarity and confidence. As is natural for the people of my generation, the earthquake of 1934 came to my share only as a historical reality. I heard first-hand accounts of it from my grandparents, who lived 103 and 96 years, till a few years ago. But I did not sense much amazement or anguish in their description of the calamity. Their narratives sounded like the mention of a lightning or gush of wind – something that had just come and gone as a rule. The earthquake was one of the numerous ordeals they had undergone in their century-long survivals. It was perhaps less remarkable than other occurrences that had actually shaped their lives: malaria, smallpox, snakebites, falling off trees.

I experienced the earthquake that hit eastern Nepal in 1988. I was preparing for SLC send-up examinations around that time. It was the morning of August 21, when something that sounded like a hailstorm slowly approached our house and shook it from the ground to the roofs. The shouts of Grandfather confirmed that it was it. I had no fear, no revelation about the nature of the disaster until I began to hear stories of houses damaged and lives injured and killed.

Radio Nepal reported extensively about the losses in Udayapur, Sunsari and other neighboring districts. In my own place, the most shocking damage was of a three-story house of one of my classmates. The house had sunk to the ground burying two of my friend's sisters and nephew. His younger sister was rescued alive. She lived visibly traumatized for a long time in my own neighborhood. After I saw this devastation and the condition of the girl who survived it, and heard of more deaths and damages in the surrounding places, earthquake went into my nerves.

But, like many people of my generation, I lived unawares for twenty seven succeeding years. It never came to the extent of upsetting my understanding of life as it did early 2015.

### **Spectacle**

April 25, 2015, was not a very good day, from the morning. It was misty and unusually cold, and unappealing by all measures. A Saturday of this type is a day wasted, for working people. My wife, who considered as ever that Saturday was her day with me, had from the morning expressed some discomfort. She knew that in such atmosphere of gloom it would be difficult for her to coax me into leaving home for some kind of family trip around Dhulikhel. Some instinct induced me to remind her that her mood resembled the atmosphere outside, and both indicated a sinister.

That day I was invited to join a hymn-singing troupe at the Naimisharanya shrine, which stood on the hilltop about one and half kilometers north from the Kathmandu University (KU) premises, my workplace and residence. My people were willing to join me in the walk uphill to participate in the singing and to take their time further uphill up to the tower. But going to the shrine was by no standards a tempting idea for me, and I was groping for a plea to avoid walking.

I proposed a new idea, which was to visit the residence of a colleague and friend who had kept his ailing nephew for treatment for some time.

The quake started just as we had finished sipping tea. It started like a light quiver that you feel when a child hops on the upper floor of a wooden house. It was unlike the ones that had come intermittently sometimes, because it intensified and lasted much longer. It reminded me at once of the message of earthquake-related programs and posters that had been in vogue in the recent years. I forgot for half a second that my wife was in the other room and the kids were with me. The safety instructions heard from the said programs and posters, which I had never cared to internalize, had vanished from my memory long ago and did not return when they were most needed now.

I tried in vain to open the door to the porch with a vague idea of escaping the house. I did not find the latch, for good. If I had, I would have jumped down with my boys and hurt or kill all of us in frenzy. So, I gathered the children in my arms and squatted by the sofa feigning to be able to hide our heads. I constantly stared at the ceiling and the beam praying to God, for the first time in my life, that they would not crack and crash upon us.

My older boy was only a bit bewildered but carefully poised on my right. The younger chuckled under my left arm at the sudden joy of being shaken with the whole house. When I saw their faces in their bowed heads seconds later, there was no fear, no sense of death. There was just a confused smile. The innocence amid this sudden outbreak was somehow revealing and relieving. I wished I was as innocent.

The quake subsided and we rushed out. Only when all of us came to the open we realized it was a disaster far bigger. The house, because it had managed to stand unmolested, did not allow us to know how big the misfortune had been.

Out in the open more than a dozen people had already chanced to arrive and chant names of their respective gods. Two young females were taking turns to fall unconscious and get their senses back. Then aftershocks of various magnitudes shook the ground and crackled the RCT buildings of the neighborhood, giving the frightened ladies more reasons to scream and show fits of oblivion. A couple of students of medical sciences, who stayed at a hostel to the west-end of the opening, attended these untimely patients with water and good words.

I again valued the innocence that my boys had borne a couple of minutes before, which the spectacles outside were now causing to dwindle slowly.

The effect became intense outside. We could not move an inch for about half an hour. The rattling in adjacent houses made me anticipate that my own apartment could have turned into rubbles because the building where we lived was

occasionally lampooned as the most poorly built among all of KU structures in Dhulikhel. I prayed if anything should remain untainted, it should be my laptop because it carried my life's works. What a wish!

Right then a youngster shouted in dismay that the Bhimsen tower in Kathmandu had fallen. Since it had fallen on Saturday, it meant a big calamity. There must have been several hundred climbers on and inside it and fallen flat to the ground with the falling structure.

A police officer jogged past the place warning us not to enter our houses without inspecting them sufficiently from outside. Suspense began to accumulate. But our apartment was about three hundred meters away through half a dozen houses that might crash on us if we dared to walk past.

The hilltop with the shrine, which we did not visit that day, was regarded by some myth-makers one of the epicenters of a soon-to-come earthquake. So, if my wife had remained adamant about walking uphill, we could have got an opportunity to behold one of those grotesque spectacles of trees swaying and houses quivering, crackling and falling to the ground. Then the myth could be confirmed for a reality, at least for some time. Maybe my reflections on the disaster would lead a different perspective.

### **Aftermath**

We chose to be thrown out of our homes, injured with terror and uncertainty. Nothing had happened to my apartment but some cracks, which looked big at the outset. But after having witnessed houses turned into debris, and people scattered in makeshift huts, the cracks only spoke of the disaster gone by, and a potential damage if similar one were to hit again. The only loss my family bore was a bottle of outdated tomato sauce stored in a kitchen rack. It had fallen off its place and crashed on the floor.

I was not a victim, but considered myself a partly traumatized sufferer for some days. Partly, because you could not tell people that you were fully safe and sound. All of us stuck in the KU premises were in the same frame of mind. The spectacles

reported by onlookers, tabloids and television channels sufficed to make us revisit our understanding of safety. And aftershocks would keep poking at our sleeps.

Uncertainty inflicted greater pains than occurrences. Caws of crows, howls of dogs, cries of kids – all burned our superstitious selves. Every one of us left home, even the unharmed homes, to evade uncertainties. What could be more agonizing than abandoning homes like frightened sheep? I saw enough reasons to question my education and upbringing, and of other inmates. Classes, books and degrees had not made us bold and reasonable. We perhaps needed to undergo a couple of other disasters of this magnitude to wake ourselves up to the commonsense and clarity of scientific thinking.

But some of us who lived inside the University did not have much time to bemoan our own moral, mental losses and dilemmas. Many hundreds of students from outside Kathmandu lived in the hostels and the vicinity. Before they could manage to go their homes, they needed to be fed, sheltered outside their usual shelters, and counseled for volunteering activities rather than being engrossed in the thought of strict personal safety. I was myself assigned to take charge of communication within the University. So, for days following the first jolt, and another of May 12, I was busy updating KU inmates with important administrative decisions and helping to document volunteering activities of faculties, staffs and students.

Life, in its dismal part, occasionally felt like a big burden despite being in the comfort of the barely insecure environs of KU. I underwent an acute feeling of retardation. I was waiting to defend my PhD; I was expecting that I would be called any day within April. The date was going to be pushed farther now. The School which was administering my viva voce was semi-dilapidated and the officials were looking for alternative venues to operate. It was morally inappropriate for me to demand an early examination and release. My future largely depended on the aftershocks, or shocks of larger kinds which tabloid reporters and fortune-tellers said were imminent.

As days passed, every survivor appeared to contribute something. I also visited the households of Naya Gaun, Dhulikhel, a few days after the first quake, along with KU students and faculties. We wanted to help the affected villages in the proximity of the University. Our group rescued foods and other important belongings of a number of households. Some people still lived in vulnerable structures unable to devise alternatives. I met up a teen-age girl reading a 'guess paper' outside a half-damaged house. She appeared to be preparing for board examinations. Upon my query why she was attending the house which was almost falling, she said with nonchalance, "Where else shall I go?"

In another place, a man and his wife were attending a heap of debris, completely unsure of the way to erect a shelter. They asked if we could find some of their utensils in the rubbles. Our team, which comprised students assigned to develop tangible relief materials on behalf of the University, preferred to give the family an early shelter while the inmates could remove debris and rescue the possessions of secondary usage. Surprisingly though, this family showed ignorance about the condition of their neighbor, perhaps a close relative, next door.

No wonder some relations did not get mended even after this calamity. The earth shook all of us without discrimination, but we were shaken differently.

### **Awakening**

I began to see a house as a living thing. My ancestral home in Morang, which I visited after the second major jolt, felt much more venerable and appealing than ever before. My own residence, the apartment in quarter no. 32, was filled with love and life despite more than two dozen cracks on the walls. I empathized more with the houses than those who made and lived in them. I thought, despite appearing slightly responsible for the losses of life and properties, houses spoke of the attitude of their makers and dwellers. Houses were as innocent as my boys.

It was really heart-touching to witness many houses standing derelict, abandoned by their dwellers. Our own quarter looked so strange yet unhappy when the families rushed out with beddings to the canteen sheds close by. We dared to enter it only for some minutes to gather tidbits during the daytime.

My younger boy kept on asking: “Will it really fall down if we go in to pee or gather our toys?”

Hope was an elixir. Those who said further quakes were unlikely gave us enough reasons to believe that life was going to turn normal soon. But despair was a contagion. Non-believers in optimism were the biggest causes of irritation. There were more people who believed disaster was on the threshold than those who reasoned that a disaster could be as unsure as no disaster. Or, say, the optimists were far inaudible. A good number of my friends and colleagues went around carrying a print of tabloid predictions on fatal recurrences. Even when lunatics experimented with rumors of deadly quakes, Kathmandu and its vicinity reverberated with the talks of annihilation.

Those who could read a number of languages were the unhappiest lot, in fact.

I did not want to be shaken off my faith that the chance of occurrence was as small or big as that of non-occurrence. I wished for the first time that our government had strict bans on rampant tabloidization and internet had been less accessible and more expensive in Nepal. If we were left alone to mind our businesses and mend our wounds, we could have remained happier and more productive at serving the needy. I also wished that digital skills and access to technology had accompanied adequate literacy and commonsense. Bloggers were trying to make fortunes fulfilling our anticipations for dark news. Ironically, even the most educated people appeared the most illiterate at times in matters of deciding through proper reasoning that information available in online platforms needed high critical judgment on the part of the consumer.

We read Juddha Shamsher’s accounts of the 1934 earthquake with greater veneration than Sushil Koirala’s address to the nation.

But there was one positive development. Our mainstream media outlets, which mostly featured politicians and political analysts earlier, gave space to structural engineers, architects, geo-scientists, psychologists, anthropologists and historians.

These people, at least, tried to inculcate some sensibility in the educated mass that was otherwise turning more and more superstitious and susceptible.

I was also amazed at the spectacle of people leaving Kathmandu as if Kathmandu would turn into a graveyard very soon. The sight reminded of the dark myths of lice leaving a dying body, or rats deserting a famished house. I even expected that Kathmandu would have a fortune of being less populated because many would go back to revive their households in the villages or suburbs which they had forsaken in the passion for being more modernized in the capital city.

This was perhaps why the lines of makeshift huts looked so pathetic on the roadsides of Kathmandu. I had never felt so critical yet sympathetic towards my countrymen. Not because they had learned lessons of life but that they may not have learned at all.

I received constant calls from parents and relatives with counsels of such intensity that I had lived enough in the seismic zone of Kathmandu and its vicinity. They claimed that now was the time to go back to the village and start a more secure career!

I do not claim I did anything substantial in the aftermath. My role as a teacher and an informed individual was to help people around me to remain intellectually prepared for the aftershocks and the aftereffects. This could be through organizing motivational lectures and workshops for students and faculties of KU. This was through asking students to write assignments recounting their experiences of bad times following the earthquake. I could host Don Morreale, American author and teacher, in KU during September. Don spent a month teaching oral history to undergraduates and trying to get first-hand narratives on the earthquake written. Consequently, stories of my students have come out in Don's book titled *Aftershocks: Survivor's Tales of the 2015 Nepal Earthquake*. Don plans to donate proceeds of the sale to an organization working for rehabilitation in Nepal.

I have never dreamt of living in high-risers. The chance of having such dream in future is nil after the quakes. The most notable aftereffect on my life was that I

have bought a piece of land at my birthplace in Morang. I am planning to build there a beautiful bamboo-hut some day to spend my vacations now and retired days later – composing poems and singing songs. But it is only a plan amid many other life's aspirations. Who knows it may have to wait for another catastrophe before getting materialized.



# Participation of affected communities in humanitarian actions

❖ **Roseena Gautam**

## **Introduction**

Humanitarian response is followed by a disaster, disregard to the scale and impacts upon local population. Humanitarian actions are needed in order to “address the needs and rights of people affected by armed conflict or natural disaster” (IASC, 2006). In the time of disaster (man-made or natural) humanitarian actions ensure safety and well-being of the affected communities, “building on their strengths a capacities, and preventing further harm” (IASC, 2006). There should be two-way communication between affected communities and humanitarian partners to identify the needs of affected individuals and communities. Affected communities are not passive recipients of aid. Humanitarian partners should involve local affected communities in “program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation”

Participation is defined in diverse ways by various humanitarian organizations. As discussed by Aguaconsult Ltd.<sup>1</sup> (2012) some defines participation based on their “pre-defined target population of beneficiaries, - for instance: children, elderly, disabled or those affected by a disaster event”; while, other humanitarian actors comprises of “comprehensive group of stakeholders”. Such stakeholders include beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, host populations, different levels of community leadership, official or de facto authorities, and others.

Another definition of participation put forward by ECHO explains participation as being “both a universal right and good management practices” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012). Likewise, IAWG has cover a wide range of direct or indirect beneficiaries of

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<sup>1</sup>Aguaconsult Ltd. has prepared ‘Review of Existing Practices to Ensure Participation of Disaster Affected Communities in Humanitarian Operations’ for Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO)-Evaluation Sector in May 2012

disaster in their definition of participation stating that participation consists of “the involvement of key stakeholders in all aspects of the program cycle- assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Opportunities for involvement should be transparent, free of coercion and open to all. It is essential to assure the participation of all groups, including women, men and adolescents (both male and female). It may be necessary to seek out the active involvement of often-marginalized groups such as minorities, young people, widows, and the disabled” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012).

Aguaconsult Ltd. Adds that Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) has defined participation of affected communities as “the engagement of crisis-affected people in one of more phases of a humanitarian project or program: assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, or evaluation” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012). According to ALNAP (2003) participation cannot be imposed on anyone; rather it is the “product of what you want to do and what the affected people want to do and what activities are possible in a given context”. It stresses on achieving program goals, exchange between affected people and agencies, and support of agencies towards affected people to strengthen the capacity of local communities to ensure participation of affected people.

Additionally, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) regards participation of affected communities as a “standard principle”, a “standard benchmark”, and as a “principle of accountability” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012). Therefore, participation is about “establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations” and with “key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian” intervention in order to enable affected communities to “play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2013).

Participation is contextual based on geography, region, humanitarian need and affected communities. It simply starts providing available information to the affected population. It is mentioned by Aguaconsult Ltd. (2012) that participation enables communities to share what they want and front-line workers follow or

challenge until reaching an agreement. The document adds that in Somalia participation is frequently about “reaching a consensus”. Participation is one of the effective activities during any humanitarian actions to safeguard engagement of affected communities. Some literatures have used ‘participation’ interchangeably with ‘engagement’ and involvement; and sometimes even with ‘empowerment’ (ALNAP, 2014). As mentioned by ALNAP (2014) participation is first of all a “state of mind” according to which “members of affected populations are at the heart of humanitarian actions –as social actors-, with insights on their situations, and with competencies, energy and ideas of their own”.

Nepal has always been prone to natural hazards. Due to mountainous terrain, there are probabilities of landslides and erosion in rainy season. Besides, Nepal is located at the juncture of Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates and hence is very prone to earthquakes as well. Most of the natural disasters that occurred after 2000 AD were not of big scale. It hadn’t witnessed any big natural disaster (spreading over a large geographic area) during this period. However, this situation changed when earthquake of magnitude 7.8 with epicenter in Barpak of Gorkha district struck the country. To make situation worse, aftershock of 7.3 magnitude struck again in Dolakha district. This earthquake and its subsequent aftershocks have claimed lives of 8,942<sup>2</sup> people and loss of infrastructures (more than 6,00,000 public and private houses damaged fully or partially) worth billions of dollars.

### **Why is participation of local affected communities vital?**

The ECHO has highlighted the high importance of active and result-oriented involvement of disaster affected communities expressing that “all affected people should be treated as dignified, capable human beings, rather than as helpless objects. The way aid is provided may be as important as the aid itself. Affected populations should participate in the making of decisions that affect their lives. Participation is both a universal right and good management practice” (Aquaconsult Ltd., 2012). It

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<sup>2</sup> According to an article published on May 19, 2015 on the Kathmandu post.

Participation is about “listening as well as talking, and taking the first steps together in resolving the humanitarian issues” (Aquaconsult Ltd., 2012). Therefore, participation of affected communities involves “removing the sense of otherness” (Aquaconsult Ltd., 2012). As stated by ALNAP (2003A) in Aquaconsult Ltd. (2012) participation “provides the basis for a dialogue with people affected by crisis, not only on what is needed but also how it might best be provided”.

In post-disaster scenario, in most of the cases people get frustrated of waiting for assistances because they reach to people ‘too late’. In most cases they are too little as well. Declaration and distribution of relief and grants by governments takes long time, and formulation of policies supporting recovery and rebuilding process takes even longer time. Members of affected communities may experience feelings of helplessness, worthlessness and powerlessness. Affected by a disaster and unable to do anything for themselves and their loved ones, that situation may push people to psychological problems. All these setbacks result in loss of sense of dignity and meaningfulness.

In short, participation of affected individuals (in conflicts or during disasters) helps “identifying needs, designing and implementing relief programs to address” (IASC, 2006) the real problems of affected communities and significantly improve effectiveness and sustainability of the humanitarian intervention.

### **Who needs to participate?**

“Engaging affected populations in humanitarian actions” is quiet challenging task (ALNAP, 2003). Basically, all affected individuals (men, women, youths, and elderly people as well), local organizations and networks, and community as a whole should be actively involved and participate in coordination with UN agencies, INGO, local implementing partners, media, political parties and security forces. They can participate directly or indirectly. Individuals<sup>3</sup> can participate directly in

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<sup>3</sup>In traditional societies women normally have less say and less access in decision-making process, lesser mobility and lesser time in post-disaster as they look after damaged house and household duties, livestock, and terrified children. In some cases they simply just don't know whom to talk, where to participate, and who to seek in case of help as information hasn't reached to them. Likewise, young

focus group discussions, surveys, registration exercises and wherever there are possibilities of individual participation. Similarly, some of the representatives of communities such as political leaders, teachers, health workers and other significant people can also be actively engaged. During inter-cluster coordination and DDRC meetings, representatives of political parties are always present. They usually can clearly express their opinion and ask questions on latest updates in relief and recovery to INGOs and local NGOs without much hesitation.

Meanwhile, local NNGOs, CBOs and loose networks coordinate with other humanitarian partners to work for “service delivery, human rights monitoring, community awareness, sharing issues of common interest”, and design and implement humanitarian actions in coordination with UN agencies and INGOs (IASC, 2006).

### **Benefits of participation of communities**

Participation of affected communities ensures that voices of affected people have reached and are heard by front-line workers in humanitarian support, and ultimately by humanitarian partners. Participation ensures inclusion of local people during design and implementation of any humanitarian actions and delivery of goods and services in the field. According to IASC (2006) participation would “allow for a more holistic understanding and subsequently more effective response” by humanitarian actors. Likewise, it would assist local communities and people to “identify actions to take on their own behalf” (IASC, 2006). Most importantly, it ensures “that participation is meaningful and effective for the individual and the humanitarian action” (IASC, 2006). Participation among people would develop a sense of ownership and make (humanitarian) actions sustainable and more meaningful.

According to Aguaconsult Ltd. (2012) effective participation causes various benefits, “many of which represent the practical delivery of fundamental policy aims”. Some of the benefits as per Aguaconsult Ltd. are discussed below:

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people’s involvement would develop a sense that they have also contributed in emergency and in recovery phase.

- **Stronger monitoring and evaluation**

Participatory monitoring and evaluation is effective tool to understand impact and “an effective way of measuring it through beneficiary surveys” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012). It has resulted in the development of various tools and techniques “including Participation Learning and Action” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012).

- **Stronger advocacy**

Participation of local people during intervention enable them to be more aware towards “minimum humanitarian standards and indicators” (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012). Likewise, it also provide a ground on which local CBOs or other community-based networks can advocate for themselves and for better humanitarian assistance. Eventually, it makes communities more cohesive, more empowered and build back stronger. Local people will be able to effectively advocate and bargain with concerned agencies for their needs and rights even after humanitarian interventions are ended.

- **Contributing to security and safe humanitarian access**

One of the most fundamental processes to analyze local security context effectively is engaging with affected communities and other relevant stakeholders. Analysis of local security context helps to reveal unmet and dissatisfied humanitarian concerns prevail in affected communities. Such unmet and dissatisfied concerns often blamed for triggering tensions, unrest, and insecurity; which would eventually hamper affected communities that is struggling to get back to its feet.

Similarly, some more benefits of participation of affected populations put forward by ALNAP (2003) are given below:

- Participation of local people helps in making humanitarian assistance better adapted to the needs of the people in communities and the local context. Humanitarian action scan be more relevant, efficient, and effective. It can help to develop a sense of ownership of the program among local people

- Participation can ensure smooth access to vital security information and staffs of the humanitarian agencies can have better sense of security
- Agencies can get access to areas, groups, and people who are inaccessible to non-local people

### **Bottleneck in participation**

Participation of communities is quite difficult task during emergency (due to conflict or disaster)situation. Most of the times, humanitarian actions fail to involve representatives of local communities in their decision-making process. Even if they ensure participation, agencies end up working with few, limited representatives of the communities. For instance: when I attended cluster<sup>4</sup> meetings I usually end up meeting same colleagues, same district level representatives of political parties, and representatives of government agencies. However, some agencies regularly collect feedback from affected community where they are working to ensure real voices of community are being heard. Such feedback is expected to improve the quality of humanitarian actions making them based on the real needs of the communities. Most of the staffs of humanitarian agencies are non-local; therefore, these agencies should hire local qualified staffs whenever possible.

Some of the constraints to effective participation have to “do with the security and political pressures associated with the conflict”; while, other arises out of “contrasting social and cultural values” (INTRAC, 2002). Meanwhile, some constraints are results of psychological, emotional and emotional difficulties or “negative perceptions of humanitarian aid” (INTRAC, 2002). Likewise, targets, working areas, available resources and objectives of organizations are also constraints to participation of local populations. As put forward by INTRAC (2002) “degrees and forms of beneficiary participation vary considerably according not just to environmental opportunities and constraints but also to the objectives and underlying theoretical perspectives of humanitarian agencies”. Additionally, “perceived arrogance and highly direct approach can discourage local people and cause them to disengage, rather than participate in consultations and other

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<sup>4</sup> General coordination or inter-cluster meetings

participator processes. And even when they participate, they feel that there often is no follow-up; some even feel used” (ALNAP, 2014).

Jacobs (2015) has outlined some of the barriers of participation of local communities. According to Jacobs the following can be some of the barriers:

- International agencies, engaged in humanitarian support, execute their activities based on already determined range of goods and services which might not address the real needs of the affected people;
- International agencies and local implementing partners compete for winning the grant from donor agencies. So, they might compromise the practical aspect in planning and executing projects. It would result in limited influence of “affected people in decision-making”
- “There usually are lack of mechanisms to hold agencies accountable for the quality of their work” (Jacobs, 2015). During the time of crises and chaos there is usually no or rudimentary arrangement to closely monitor the effectiveness of work undertaken by any humanitarian partners. Only concern is whether relief materials have reached to the affected communities. If basic relief materials reaches to the desired people, despite of the delay (by months) the agencies offering the assistance are said to be successful. For instance, there were some VDCS in Dolakha district that distributed immediate relief of amount NRs. 15,000 provided by government for earthquake affected population in December of that year. Though the assistance reached quite late, the organizations may boast for being able to support the affected people.

Nevertheless, political intervention in humanitarian action, high turnover in staff, inflexible and short funding cycles, competition over beneficiary populations, and conflicting organizational aims and strategies are some of the areas where serious problems remain to be addressed. In many instances, humanitarian actors are major players in decisions and impacts that have long-lasting impacts on the lives of the affected population and “yet they make no effort to consult or keep impacted population informed” (INTRAC, 2002) about the latest developments.

### **Practices from the field**

Some of the international humanitarian agencies have been engaging communities in their cash for work and food for work programs. Most of the agencies prioritize women over men, in a sense to empower women. Local infrastructures like taps, dirt road, temples have been rebuilt under the participation of local communities with support of humanitarian agencies. Local communities have been involved in demolition and clearing of destroyed public and private houses. Nepal Red Cross Society maintains direct communication with local because local themselves are members of its local network<sup>5</sup>. For example: during earthquake its local member distributed relief items to local beneficiary. However, they also did not ensure local's say-so in their planning during emergency. Some agencies are working together with local people to transport food in rural areas. In this way, local communities get food and daily wage when their livelihood is threaten. Therefore, agencies working after the disasters are indeed contributing towards betterment of livelihood, providing employment opportunities and increasing effective participation of local communities in such difficult situations.

Those organizations who do not directly go to the communities engaged with affected communities via local implementing partners like local NGOs and CBOs. So, a connection between such organizations and community is absent in such cases. All in all, from what I have observed humanitarian approaches remain largely traditional in terms of community participation. However, in one instance, an international organization did ensured local people's participation in its post-disaster monitoring in Jiri municipality.

### **Legal aspect**

From legal perspective in international context "the fundamental legal instrument which might apply to a disaster or conflict affected community include International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law" (Aguaconsult Ltd., 2012). Basic elements of these international laws are reflected in disaster-related national laws. Likewise, international disaster-related conventions and treaties recent being Sendai Framework for Action are also signed and ratified by Nepal.

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<sup>5</sup> Its local network is called sub-chapter

In context of Nepal, Natural Calamity Relief Act, 1982 is the fundamental legal document that governs post-disaster scenario. Other supporting policies and guidelines includes Local Self-governance act, 1999, National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management, 2009, Local Disaster Risk Management Planning Guideline, 2011, National Reconstruction Act, 2015, and various provisions mentioned in 5 year Plans and 3 year Plans among others.

### **Conclusion**

Involving affected people in humanitarian action in post-disaster or during crisis is a “challenging undertaking, which seems dangerous and complex, or even impossible due to evident constraints” (ALNAP, 2003). However, if provided with more time and if carefully handled by skilled field workers, participation of local people would be rewarding to all concerned parties, local people, humanitarian agencies (UN agencies, INGOs, local implementing agencies, and CBOs), political parties, government agencies and local media. Engagement of community is effective only when local populations believes that they are “being listened to and their questions, concerns, problems” (ALNAP, 2014) and queries are dealt by concerned stakeholders.

Humanitarian partners needs to invest “time, skills, trust” (Jacobs, 2015), understand needs, and interact and coordinate with local partners to communicate with affected individuals and communities. Therefore, approaches to reach-out to communities should be different based on case-by-case basis. There is no a fit-to-all single approach. The bright side is donor agencies are increasing their focus on “effective and interlinking elements of participation” (Aguaconsult, 2012) as AUSAID stresses on active participation of people affected by disaster in humanitarian assistance so that interventions can be effective.

So far, humanitarian assistance in context of Nepal has traditional during emergency and early recovery having no directly involvement in development and implementation of any projects. Affected People remain recipient of humanitarian support, these support are one way with no say of locals. This leading to the not addressing the need of the community people and making the support unsustainable. On the bright side, NRA has made mandatory for enhancing

involvement of local in long term initiatives of any organizations. Humanitarian partners need to give more priority to local ideas and norms for survival during emergency, and work in the field in coordination with local representatives.

Nonetheless, organizations are increasingly giving priority to communities and their participation. Therefore, it high time to envision a future when affected communities are well informed and connected technologically to understand all the aspects of humanitarian aid and decide the ways to utilize the aid for reconstruction and rebuilding their destroyed livelihoods.

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# Human Nature, Studies about Brain and World Politics

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## Abstract

*This paper will try to discuss about the “human nature” as assumed and understood by different philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Jean Jacques Rousseau and importance of such assumptions in various political domains even in contemporary world politics. The assumptions of these philosophers and thinkers form the basis of social contract theories and significant international relation theories which are used to explain the nature of nation-state and their relation with each other. After brief discussion about understanding of human nature by psychologists and hope offered by cognitive neuroscience and Brain Activity Mapping Project, the paper will conclude with probable impact these projects can have in unraveling the “real human nature”, in understanding of social contract theories, international relation theories and conduct of international relations.*

## Human nature: the concept

Almost all political doctrines and beliefs are based upon some kind of theory of human nature, sometimes explicitly formulated but in many cases simply implied. Assumptions about the content of human nature structure political system in a number of important ways (Heywood 2011: 21-22). Human nature refers to the essential and immutable character of all human beings. It highlights what is innate and ‘natural’ about human life, as opposed to what human beings have gained from education or through social experience. This does not, however, mean that those who believe that human behavior is shaped more by society than it is by unchanging and inborn characteristics have abandoned the idea of human nature altogether (Heywood 2004: 16). To try to understand human nature does not mean, however to reduce human life to a one-dimensional understanding. Most political thinkers are aware that human beings are complex, multifaceted creatures, made up of biological, physical, psychological, intellectual, social and perhaps spiritual

elements. The concept of human nature does not overlook this complexity (Heywood 2004: 16-17).

### **Human nature according to philosophers**

Nation-states have become unique and important political community in the contemporary world and they have become one of the most important sources of our identity. The necessities of the nation states have been explained by the social contract theories. Different philosophers have given different explanation of social contract theories based on different conceptions of human nature. Similarly major international relation theories such as realism, liberalism and constructivism (social constructivism) are also based on the assumption of human nature by their intellectual predecessors. Thomas Hobbes , John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Jean Jacques Rousseau are some of the worth mentioning philosophers whose philosophies and conception of human nature therein are used to explain different type of social contract theories and international relations theories. Among international relations theories realism is said to be based on Hobbesian notion. Liberalism itself is called a meta-theory with contribution of many thinkers and philosophers like John Locke, Immanuel Kant and J.S. Mill, who have certain conception of human nature. Locke and Kant also can be called the intellectual predecessors of social constructivism as well when it comes to the assumptions of human nature and functioning of human society and political community for this theory.

Thomas Hobbes rejects Aristotle's famous claim in that man is by nature a political creature born fit for society. Instead he portrays mankind as naturally self-centered, competitive, and aspiring to domination, needing to be fit for society by education and driven by multiplicity of emotions, desires, aversions, fears and passions (Zagorin 2009: 32).. He stresses that men do not seek society for its own sake or love of their fellows but for honor or profit and love of themselves. Of all their desires and passions the most basic was self-preservation and avoidance of death (ibid).

Rousseau concludes that man is good by nature and that social inequality is artificial. To show this Rousseau presents the portrait of a man according to nature,

biologically like any other human being but deprived of all learning or education (Reisert 2010: 1220).. He assumes that such men are like animals, moved only by innate passions of self –love and pity. According to Rousseau their first aim is to seek their own well being; the second is a modest disinclination to witness suffering in others of one’s kind. Moved by these passions and having only the simple needs of foods , rest and the occasional mate, Rousseau’s solitary and mindless natural men would have had few occasions for conflict an no motive to intend harm to other fellow humans (ibid).

Immanuel Kant disagreed with Thomas Hobbes in that he believed that the gradual transformation of human beings was possible. In other words Kant shared Jean Jacques Rousseau’s more optimistic assessment of prospects for altering the human condition. Over time, Kant maintained, conflict among human beings will lead them to learn ways to avoid future wars. As reasoning beings concerned with self-preservation and self-improvement, people will learn that states of republican (democratic) form are essential to securing internal peace and realizing justice in society. This emphasis on learning is also shared by many present-day liberals (Viotti and Kauppi 2012: 134).

### **Human nature and social contract theories**

By portraying human nature negatively, Hobbes advances the claim that life in a state of nature will be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” The result is a war of all against all, which does not mean constant fighting but the constant threat of fighting. Not only our lives become lonely and brief, but we will have little scientific and artistic development. As a result of inconvenience of the state of nature, humans agree to a social contract that will establish a leviathan, an absolute sovereign authority, over us and protect us from the constant threat of violent death. So, for Hobbes, the social contract is a means of escaping the state of nature (Reiner 2010: 1289).

According to Locke state of nature need by no means be warlike. In his view, the state of nature is one of liberty to do as one pleases, but is not one of license. Rather, the state of nature is governed by a law of nature that can be applied by anyone in cases of breaches of it. Sovereignty could only originate in an

agreement made by the people to whom it was to apply. He was against the state of nature of that Hobbes and his disagreement with Hobbes stemmed in large part from a different conception of the state of nature (Reiner 2010: 1289).

Jean Jacques Rousseau insisted that no previous writer had drawn an accurate picture of the state of nature, because they had attributed to natural human beings character traits that were in reality the product of society. According to him state of nature in which human beings were originally, had little contact with each-other, then lived in harmonious “primitive” villages and only later became enmeshed in a state of war after the development of agriculture and metallurgy led to inequalities that were hitherto impossible (Reiner 2010: 1290).

Social contract theories envision different form of political communities (what are now called nation-states) and justify the contract on the basis of human nature and human condition that could arise in absence of it. Similarly, major international relations theories also try to explain the nature of international politics on the basis of human nature explained by these philosophers and their followers.

### **Human nature in significant international relations theories**

Realism is based on negative portrayal of human nature and views the international politics as the anarchic something like state of nature as described by Hobbes because world lacks central legitimate governance synonymous to powerful sovereign leviathan in domestic politics. State is viewed as unitary and rational actor. Realists also assume that within hierarchy of issues facing the state, national or international security tops the list. Military and related political issues dominate the world politics. To the realists, military and security or strategic issues are sometimes referred to as “high politics” whereas economic and social issues typically are viewed as less important-“low politics”. Given the state’s objectives, goals or purposes in terms of security, it seeks and uses power. As an image of politics, realism focuses on power and power politics for survival or avoidance of death (Viotti and Kauppi 2012: 39-42). The states go to the extent of mutually assured destruction (MAD) by realist logic. Therefore realism paints pessimistic picture of world politics based on its assumptions of Hobbesian human nature.

Liberalism is premised on Rousseau's and Locke's notion of human nature that human beings are good by nature or can be transformed to cooperative beings by virtue of learning or education. Liberals are primarily interested in explaining the conditions under which international cooperation or collaboration becomes possible. Liberals see economic or other forms of interdependence or interconnectedness among both state and non-state actors as tending to have pacifying and moderating effect on state behavior. The liberals reject the notion that the agenda of international politics is dominated only by military security issues. They assume that the distinction between high and low politics is falsely drawn. Liberals try to discover under what conditions international collaboration if not peace might be achieved. (Viotti and Kauppi 2012: 129-130).

Constructivism has its roots on understanding of human nature as formulated by Rousseau, Kant, and Locke. Constructivism gives importance not only to the material power but also to ideas. Ideas can change through learning and socialization. So, it does not believe in static notion of human nature. Therefore, Constructivism seeks to problematize the identities and interests of the states. Constructivists view international structure in terms of social structure infused with ideational factors to include norms, rules and law. This structure can influence the identities and interests of agents. Constructivism views the world as a project always under construction, a case of becoming as opposed to being as explained by Locke about change that can be brought in human ways, as a result of socialization (Viotti and Kauppi 2012: 278-279).

But most of the assumptions of human nature on which different explanations of social contract theories and international relations theories are based were not empirically and scientifically proven. They were intuitive assumptions of the philosophers which were formed on the basis of their life experiences and orientation. So, when their basic assumptions are not proven, it is obvious to question the explanations offered by the theories premised on those assumptions. It would then be a wise to try to ascertain human nature that could be empirically and scientifically proved. However, even psychologists who take pains to empirically corroborate their findings about different aspects of human nature remain deeply divided when it comes to issue of human nature.

### **Psychologists too remain divided**

Human nature in psychological understanding is innate species specific behavior of human beings. According to Morgan et al. “the concept of species-typical behavior is fruitful one for understanding much of what lower animal do ,when it comes to human beings and to some extent higher primates, the situation is greatly complicated by the tremendous flexibility in behavior, because of learning and by unique events of each individual’s life. Learning, memory, and thinking play important role in what human beings do” (Morgan et al. 1993: 41). For example, human nature provides humans with ability to produce and understand language but whether humans communicate in English, French, Russian or Swahili is a matter of learning (Morgan et al. 1993: 42). Hence it might be difficult to know what comes from human nature and what comes from learning. Morgan et. al. add , “psychologists tend to emphasize the importance of unique circumstances of an individual’s life in determining behavior and to give less weight to the role of human nature (Morgan et al. 1993: 44). Thus Morgan et al. give more emphasis to learning than the innate human nature.

According to another psychologist Richard Joyce, “the idea that the human mind is nothing but all purpose flexibility is obviously wrong. In reality the thesis of the human *tabula rasa* (that human mind is like blank slate) has never been held in pure form. The word “*tabula*” has to be a imply something that at the very least has innate abilities pertaining to acquisition, manipulation and storage of beliefs. So the very capacity to acquire beliefs from the environment demands a complex array of inbuilt mental mechanisms” (Joyce 2007: 7). So, he argues that, even for learning, minimum condition required is innate capacity to be able to learn it. Similarly, psychologists also remain divided on the role of nature versus nurture in different aspects of human behavior such as language, competition and cooperation and aggression.

### **Offer of hope: cognitive neuroscience and brain activity mapping project**

Cognitive neuroscience has offered some hope in understanding of the brain and behavior. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and other non invasive techniques, the brain structures and neurotransmitters (and sometimes genes) linked to specific behavior can be identified (Masters 2010: 467). The

understanding of human nature of modern thinkers like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau is inconsistent with wide range of recent observations in neuroscience. For instance, experimental studies using fMRI sometimes show that human beings might be cooperative or altruistic (Masters 2010: 467).

However investigation in neuroscience is not very easy. The biological brain is made of delicate organic tissue that, at the molecular and cellular levels, requires overwhelmingly precise homeostatic regulation and, produces an expansive range of adaptive human behavior and experience. A unified theory of brain function must bring together these separate observations into a comprehensive understanding of how the brain accomplishes such impressive function. Earlier, there were not proper tools or institutions to sustain such comprehensive effort, so the foundation of the field was built by reducing grand mysteries to tractable puzzles, mainly by associating specific structures, with observed functions (Gazaniga 2009: 1249). Therefore there is extremely long and tough way to go to fully unravel the association of brain structure with function.

American President Barrack Obama's present administration was planning a decade-long scientific effort to examine the workings of the human brain and build a comprehensive map of its activity, seeking to do for the brain what the Human Genome Project did for genetics (Makroff 2013). The project which is being called Brain Activity Mapping project is expected to cost billions of dollars. The project was announced by President Obama on 2 April 2013 (Pappus 2013). It is hoped that this project is hoped to let scientists know about 'nitty-gritty' brain circuits and functioning and find answers to many questions about functions of brain hitherto unknown (ibid). The project included federal agencies of the US government, private foundations and teams of neuroscientists and nano-scientists in a concerted effort to advance the knowledge of the brain's billions of neurons and gain greater insights into perception, actions and, ultimately, consciousness (Makroff 2013).

## **Conclusion**

Of course this study might give better insight into different aspects of human behavior and its connection to brain structure and function even if it might not ascertain what "human nature" exactly is. If on the basis of this project, human

beings are proved to be cooperative and altruistic unlike assumed by Hobbes and other philosophers, will theories like realism or other theories premised on negative or unfounded portrayal of human nature change? Will the states which have accumulated weapons of mass destructions ( including nuclear bombs ) sufficient to destroy the whole Earth, because of their belief on self help logic of realism, go for disarmament because of such findings ? These remain million dollar questions, answer of which most probably might be (but not surely) found after the billion dollar project of Brain Activity Mapping will be over.

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# जीवनको अर्थ : अर्थमय जीवन<sup>१</sup>

❖ अनुपम मिश्र

हिजोआज कुनै सभासम्मेलन हुनुअघि प्रायजसो दीयो बालेर प्रज्वलित गरिन्छ । सायद यो अँध्यारो हटाउनुको प्रतीक हो - दीयो बालेर उज्यालो पार्ने । यसको एउटा अर्थ हो- हाम्रो वरिपरि ज्यादै अँध्यारो छ । अरू बेला यो अँध्यारो त्यति देखिन्न, जति कि साथीहरूसँग यस्ता सभामा बस्दा देखिन्छ । दीयो बालेर धेरथोर अँध्यारो हट्छ होला । सायद सँगै बसी राम्रा-मीठा कुरा गरेर तथा विचार- विमर्श गर्नाले अँध्यारो छाँटिन्छ होला । अफ भन्नुपर्दा जलपान गरेर पनि अँध्यारो हट्ला । यो हलुको कुरा हुन सक्छ । यसैले संस्कृतको एउटा सुक्ति यहाँ दिइएको छ । 'ओम सहना ववतु, सहनौ भुनक्त' आदि । कहिलेदेखि दीयो प्रज्वलित गर्ने सुरु भएको थियो, थाहा छैन । यसै भन्न पनि सकिन्न । तर यस्तै प्रथा भने भएको पाइन्छ । पुराना जमानाका सभागोष्ठीमा आउने अतिथि स्वागतका निम्ति मञ्च अगाडि एउटा दीयो बालेर राखिन्थ्यो ।

एकपटकको कुरा हो । विनोबा भाषण गर्न कतै गएका थिए । उनको स्वागतका निम्ति मञ्चमा एउटा दीयो बालेर राखिएको थियो । हावा अलि जोडले चलिरहेको थियो । बत्ती निभ्छ कि भन्ने आयोजकहरूको चिन्ता थियो । बत्ती वरिपरि उभिई हत्केलाले छेकेर उनीहरूले बत्ती जोगाउने प्रयास गर्दै थिए । यतैतिर सबैको ध्यान थियो । किनकि अँध्यारो हटाएर उज्यालो पार्नु थियो । तर यति गर्दा पनि बत्ती जोगिएन, निभिहाल्यो ।

यही घटनालाई लिएर विनोबाले आफ्नो भाषण सुरु गरेका थिए । उनले त्यहाँ यस घटनाका बारेमा सङ्क्षिप्त कुरा गरेका थिए, " वरिपरि हावा शान्त

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<sup>१</sup> यो लेखलाई पदम बहादुर थापाले नेपालीमा अनुवाद गर्नुभएको हो ।

छ भने मात्र बत्ती बल्छ अन्यथा बल्दैन । यदि हावा प्रतिकूल छ, हावाको गति तीव्र छ भने दीयो जोगिन सक्दैन, त्यो त निभ्छ नै ।" यसपछि उनले दीयोबारे भने, " हावा शान्त छ । दीयोमा तेल थोरै छ भने पनि जोगिँदैन ।" यसरी विनोबाले पहिले हावा र त्यसपछि दीयोको बारेमा आफ्नो कुरा राखेका थिए । अन्तमा यही विषय लिएर उनी मानिसतर्फ आए । तेल अर्थात् चिल्लो पदार्थ वा भनाँ स्नेह । तैपनि यो यही अर्थमा बनेको शब्द हो । त्यसपछि आफ्नो कुरा अगाडि सार्दै उनले यसरी भने, "जसरी दीयोमा तेल र स्नेह चाहिन्छ, त्यसरी नै हामी सबैमा स्नेह हुनु जरूरी छ । दीयो बल्न बाहिरी हावा शान्त हुनुपर्छ र तेल पनि चाहिन्छ । ठीक यस्तै समाजको संरचना पनि शान्तिमय वातावरणमा हुनुपर्छ । र, हामी सबैमा स्नेहको मात्रा पर्याप्त हुनु जरूरी छ ? त्यसपछि मात्र हाम्रो जीवनको दीयो निरन्तर प्रज्वलित भइरहन्छ ।

आज हामी जीवनको अर्थ बुझ्न यहाँ उपस्थित भएका छौं । हामी सबैको जीवन त छँदैछ । तैपनि विजयजीले यस जीवनको अर्थबारे केही कुरा राखिदिन मलाई जिम्मेवारी दिनुभएको छ । त्यो पनि अरु कसैलाई नभनी मलाई मात्र भन्नुभएको छ । सर्वप्रथम म तपाईं सबैका अधित्तिर आफ्नो पोल आफैँ खोल्न चाहन्छु : मलाई स्वयं जीवनको अर्थबारे थाहा छैन । दास साहेब सेडेड संस्थासँग सम्बन्धित व्यक्ति हुनुहुन्छ । यस्तै अमृताबहन गान्धी शान्ति प्रतिष्ठानकी सदस्य हुनुहुन्छ । उहाँहरूजस्ता दुई-चारजनाले मलाई जीवनको अर्थबारे भाषण गरिदिन हुन अनुरोध गर्नुभएको थियो । एकपटक मात्र होइन, धेरैपटक । तर मलाई उहाँहरूले गर्नुभएको अनुरोधलाई अस्वीकार गर्दै टार्दै गएँ । उहाँहरूले नै साक्षीका रूपमा यो कुरा भन्नु हुनेछ । तर यहाँ त विजयजीको कुरा छ । उहाँलाई लागेको कुरा उहाँले पूरा गराएर नै छोड्नुहुन्छ । एक किसिमले सोच्ने हो भने उहाँको यो तानाशाही नै हो । तर जे होस्, उहाँको इच्छा र आदेश पूरा गर्नु नै छ । अस्वीकारकर्ता (disclaimer) का रूपमा ।

मेरो अधिल्लिटर कोही मभन्दा कम र कोही मभन्दा बढी उमेरका साथीहरू हुनुहुन्छ । आजको विषय छ-जीवनको अर्थ के हो ? तर यस प्रश्नको उत्तर हाम्रो उमेरले दिन सक्दैन अर्थात् उमेर काम लाग्दैन । सायद हामीले आफ्नो जीवनमा बटुलेको अनुभव काम लाग्ला । मैले जसरी जीवन बिताएँ, एक हिसाबले यस किसिमको अनुभव मैले प्राप्त गरेकै छैन । मसँग त्यो अनुभव छँदैछैन । पछिल्लो हप्तामा म अठसठ्ठी वर्षको भएँ । अब कति बाँचिएला, त्यो थाहा छैन । तर तपाईंहरूमध्ये कतिपयले अझै लामो उमेर पार गर्नुछ । तपाईंहरूलाई आजको विषय काम लाग्न सकोस् भन्ने इच्छा विजयजीको छ । मैले यस्तै बुझेको छु । र, यो राम्रो कुरा पनि हो । तर हरि इच्छा, भगवानको इच्छा के छ ? यो त मलाई पनि थाहा छैन । खैर, छाडौं यी सबै कुरा । तर यति त भन्नैपर्छ, जसले पौडी खेलन जान्दैन, उसले नै पौडी खेलन सिकाउने ? यस बारेमा मेरो त्यति गहिरो अनुभव पनि त छैन । यसो हुँदा यति थोरै पानीमा पौडी खेलन सिक्दा र सिकाउँदा खासै डराउनुपर्ने कुरा पनि त भएन ।

एकपटक फेरि मैले सुरु गरेको कुरातर्फ फर्कौं । पछिल्लो २००/३०० वर्षदेखि सारा संसारमा तीव्र गतिले हावा चलिरहेको छ । हावा त पहिले पनि चलिरहेकै थियो । तर तिनताका सारा संसार एक-अर्कासँग निकै टाढा थियो । कुनै एक देशको अर्को देशसँग खासै सम्पर्क थिएन । अरु देशको नामको अत्तोपत्तो नै थिएन । सङ्क्षिप्तमा भन्नुपर्दा सम्बन्ध-विच्छेद नै थियो । त्यो बेला हावा पनि टुक्रिएर बाँडिएको थियो । मानिसको जीवन पनि आजभोलिको जस्तो त्यति सजिलो र सहज थिएन । एउटा ठूलो जनसङ्ख्याका निम्ति । यति हुँदा पनि मानिसको जीवन त्यति कठिन र निरुद्देश्य पक्कै पनि थिएन । जस्तो कि हिजोआज देखिन्छ । यतिखेर हामीले यस संसारमा महान उद्देश्य र लक्ष्य लिएका छौं । हामीले यसका निम्ति दीयो बाल्छौं । तर तीव्र हावाको गतिले गर्दा त्यो त निभ्छ- निभ्छ । हामीले जाने जति सबै तरिका प्रयोग गर्छौं, प्रयास गर्छौं । हामीले आफ्ना हत्केलाले छोपेर बालेको दीयो जोगाउन खोज्छौं । तर यो हावा नै यस्तै छ, जति

प्रयास गरे पनि निभिहालछ । सायद हाम्रो जीवनरूपी दीयोमा पानी नै पानी छ । तेल छैन, स्नेहको कमी छ । यसैले जीवन शिखा निरन्तर भ्रिभ्रि गरिरहन्छ, निम्न खोज्छ । एकैनाससँग संयमित भएर बल्दैन । यसले गर्दा हामीले न त आफ्नो अँध्यारो हटाउन सक्छौं, न त अरुको अँध्यारो नै । यही नै दुर्भाग्यको कुरा हो ।

हामी शिक्षित भनाउँदाहरूले नै जीवनको अर्थ बुझ्न खोज्छौं । यो बुझ्ने प्रयास पनि गर्छौं । हामीलाई यसको अर्थ बुझ्ने प्रबल इच्छा पनि छ । अर्थमय जीवन कसरी प्राप्त गर्ने ? यही प्रश्नले कसैलाई पिरोलेको पनि छ । कसैको मनमा यसबारे खुल्लुली मच्चिरहेको पनि होला । यस प्रश्नको सही उत्तरका निम्ति आ-आफ्नो अन्तरात्मालाई सोधौं, ध्यान दिएर अन्तरात्मालाई हेरौं, अनि थाहा पाइन्छ- हामीमध्ये धेरैजसोको जीवन कोलको गोस्त्रँ भएको छ । यसो हुनुमा हाम्रो हात छ कि छैन ? अथवा अरु कुनै अदृश्य शक्तिको हात पो छ कि ? म यसबारे केही भन्न सकिदैन । भनाँ, मलाई यसबारे रत्तिभर पनि थाहा छैन । अरु कसैले कोलका गोस्त्रो आँखामा पट्टी बाँध्छ । यहाँ त हामीले आफैँ आफ्ना आँखामा पट्टी बाँधेका छौं । फेरि के हुन्छ भने हरेक दिन एकैखालको उस्तै जीवनले गर्दा मानिस थाक्किन्छ । उसले थकाइ मार्न सक्दैन । दिल्लीमा गुड्ने गाडीलाई जोर-बिजोर आडईवन नम्बर दिइएको छ । यस नयाँ नियमले गर्दा गाडीले केही आराम गर्ने मौका पनि पाएका छन् । तर हाम्रो जीवनरूपी गाडीको कुनै नम्बर छैन । नम्बरबिनाको जीवन छ । र, यो जीवन निरन्तर चलिरहेकै छ । आधार कार्ड छ होला । यस्तै प्यान कार्ड र मतदाता परिचय होला, नागरिकता पनि होला । यति भएर पनि हाम्रो जीवनको नम्बर छैन । यसैले नदेखिने अदृश्य कोल वरिपरि कोलका गोस्त्रँ हामी फनफनी घुमिरहेका छौं ।

कुरा के भने एकैखालको जीवन व्यतित गर्दै जाँदा थकाइ लाग्छ । यसले गर्दा हामीले नयाँ-नयाँ कुरा सोच्छौं । कोलको गोस्त्रे आफ्नो उन्नति,

अवसर र नयाँ सार्थक अवसर खोज्छ । नयाँ प्याकेज ल्याउँछ । विजयजीले हिर्काउनुभयो भने गोस्ले कोल वरिपरि फनफनी घुम्दै आफ्नो जीवनको अर्थ पनि खोज्न लाग्छ । कोलको गोरू त भइहाल्यो । यसै पनि त्यो घुमिरहन्छ । त्यसले यस विषयमा वक्तव्य दियो भने पनि अनौटो नमान्नु होला ।

कोल अनेक किसिमका हुन्छन् । कुनै महँगा हुन्छन् र कुनै सस्ता पनि । कसैमा कम घेरा हुन्छ भने कुनैको घेरा ठूलो हुन्छ । कैयन् किसिमका विचार र अनेक थरीका धर्म हुन्छन् । अरूभन्दा आफूलाई हरेकले श्रेष्ठ ठान्छ । सर्वोत्तम भएको कुरा गर्छ । र, यही कुरा गरेर उसले आफ्नो जीवन सफल र सार्थक भएको दाबीसमेत गर्छ ।

समाजको मूल (फेद) कमजोर हुँदै जान्छ । शाखाको सङ्ख्या बढिरहन्छ । रूखका हाँगाहरू हुन् भनी नसोच्नु होला । ती त सङ्घ, सङ्गठन र मञ्च आदिका हाँगाहरू हुन् । हरेक विचार र धर्मले आ-आफ्ना भण्डाहरू फहराइरहेका हुन्छन् । र, अरू भण्डाभन्दा अघि बढ्न चाहन्छन् । हामीले केही विचार मन पराउँछौं, राम्रो मान्छौं । केही विचार भने तिरस्कार गर्छौं । नराम्रो दृष्टिले हेर्छौं । आफ्नो विचार कसरी फैलाउने ? यसैमा हाम्रो ध्यान गइरहेको हुन्छ । आफ्नो विचार फैलाउनु नै जीवनको सारा सार्थकता हो भन्ने ठम्याउँ हामीमा छ । कोही हिसाको बाटोमा हिँड्छन् । उनीहरूले यसलाई परिवर्तनको साधन बनाएका हुन्छन् । उनीहरूले पनि आफ्ना शाखाहरू बढाइरहेका हुन्छन्, थपिरहेका हुन्छन् । र, अहिंसावादीमा पनि यही प्रवृत्ति देखिन्छ । यसरी सबैलाई आफ्नै सङ्गठन बढाएर ठूलो बनाउनुपरेको छ । सबै सङ्गठनको बजेट वृद्धि गर्न लागिपरेका छन् । कार्यकर्ता बढाउनु छ, कार्यक्रम र गतिविधि पनि बढाउनु छ । सबैलाई दिन दुना रात चौगुनाका हिसाबले उन्नति गर्नुपरेको छ । हामीले यसैमा आफ्नो जीवन सफल भएको ठान्छौं ।

हामीले आफ्नो विचारका कमीकमजोरी देख्दैनौं, त्यो देखिँदैन पनि । किनभने हाम्रो आँखामा पट्टी छ र त्यो पट्टी सधैं लागिरेहेकै हुन्छ । तर

हामीले अरूका विचारलाई एकसरे गरेभैँ प्रस्ट देख्छौं । हामीले सारा संसार देखौं वा नदेखौं । तर गीत त रचिएको हुन्छ । र, मन लगाएर त्यो गीत गाइन्छ पनि- 'सारे जहाँ से अच्छा ...।' विनोबाजीले यस गीतमा एउटा महत्वपूर्ण कुरा थपेका छन्- 'सारे जहाँ से अच्छा क्योंकि हिन्दोस्ता हमारा ' यस 'क्योंकि' लाई आफ्नो जीवनबाट अलग गर्न सकिन्न । यो निकै कठिन काम हो । किनकि मेरो विचार, मेरो धर्म, मेरो संस्था, मेरो सङ्गठन, मेरो घर, मेरो समाज, मेरो देश र मेरा छोराछोरी । कतै-कतै त ज्वाइँ पनि ।

सयौं वर्ष पहिलेको कुरा हो । त्यतिखेर संस्कृत भाषामा एउटा नाटक लेखिएको थियो । त्यस नाटकको नाम 'मृच्छकटिकम्' थियो । त्यसमा एउटा यस्तै सम्बन्ध देखाइएको छ । त्यो सम्बन्ध राजा र उनका सालाबीच हुन्छ । सङ्क्षेपमा भन्नुपर्दा किनकि मेरो कोल फनफनी घुमिरहँदा केही परिणाम त निस्कन्छ नै । केही तेल निस्कन्छ । धेरथोर पिना पनि पाइन्छ । भोलि गोस्लाई नार्नु छ, घुमाउनु छ । यसैले आज उसले पेटभरि खान पाउँछ । पेटभरि खान नपाए ऊ रिसाउँछ, असन्तोष पनि हुन्छ ।

विनोवाले कतै कुनै प्रसङ्गमा भनेका छन्- वेदमा युद्धको एउटा नाम 'मम सत्य' पनि राखिएको छ । मेरो सत्य, बस- मेरो सत्य । यहाँ युद्धको भ्रमको देखिँदैँन । तर विवादको बीउ भने पक्कै पनि लुकेको छ, रोपिएको छ । गत वर्षको कुरा हो । त्यो बेला अफ्रिकाको कुनै भूभागमा एउटा भयङ्कर भाइरस फैलिएको थियो । त्यो भाइरसको नाम ई-बोला थियो । यस महामारी रोगले गर्दा कति हो कति मानिस मरे । त्यसको कुनै लेखाजोखा छैन । विवरण तयार गरिएन । मेरा एकजना मित्र हुनुहुन्छ । उहाँको नाम दिलिप विँचालकर हो । त्यतिखेर उहाँले ई-बोलाको नाम फेरेर आई-बोला भाइरस पनि भन्नुभएको थियो अर्थात् म बोला भाइरस ।

हाम्रो यो यति प्रिय सत्य कति बेला एक्कासि अर्धसत्य लाग्न थाल्छ, भन्न सकिन्न । त्यसलाई छोडेर हामी बिलकुलै यसको उल्टो कुनै सत्यसँग जोडिन्छौं । आफ्नो वरिपरि खोजखबर गर्दै हेरौं । सानादेखि कहलिएका

ठूला नामधारी मानिस पनि विचार परिवर्तन गर्दै यताउता भँतारिँदै गरेका देखिन्छन् । यसो हेर्दा यसलाई गलत भन्न पनि नसकिएला । मनुष्यको जीवन एउटा यात्रा हो । यस यात्रामा एउटा विचार यात्रा पनि गाँसिएको छ । राम्रो अर्थमा हेर्ने हो भने यो मनमस्तिष्कको खुलापन हो, स्वतन्त्रता पनि हो । हिजो हामी एउटा विचार लिएर हिँडेका थियौं । आज त्यस विचारका केही सीमा देखेर हामीले त्यसलाई चटकै छोड्यौं-बिस्थौं । यसलाई त गुण नै भन्नुपर्ला, गुण नै भनिएला । कोही बडो असल मानिस पनि छन् । उनीहरूले बम र बारूद बनाउँदै आफ्नो जीवन सुरु गरेका थिए । तर पछि गएर उनीहरूमा आध्यात्मिक ऊर्जा थपिएको देखिन्छ । यदि यो गुण हो भने अरुलाई पनि यस्तै छुट र अवसर दिनुपर्छ । तर हामीले त्यो दिन चाहन्नौं । पहिले कुनै एउटा विचारसँग मित्रता गर्छौं । त्यसपछि फेरि भिन्नता हुन्छ । यसरी विछोड हुनु वा अलिंगु षड्यन्त्र हो रे ! मात्र षड्यन्त्र !

जीवनको अर्थ के हो ? हामीले बुझ्नु जरूरी छ । हामीले कुनै एउटा विचार, एउटा समाज, एउटा परम्परामा निहित रहस्य खोजिरहन्छौं । यसो गर्दा सायद हामीलाई सन्तोष होला । तर यसरी सबैले अर्थमय जीवन बाँच्ने बाटो पाउँदैनन् । असल जीवन यदि आफैँमा साध्य वा गन्तव्य भयो भने सायद हामी त्यहाँसम्म पुग्न पनि पाउँदैनौं । यसमा बारम्बार भड्किने स्थिति भइरहन्छ ।

केही वर्षदेखि एउटा खास किसिमको नयाँ पढाइ हुँदैछ । र, दुई पुस्ताले यो पढाइ सकिसकेका पनि छन् । यस्तो शिक्षा पाएका धेरैजसो मानिस बंगलोर, हैदराबाद, पुणा संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका र युरोप आदि ठाउँमा गएर बसेका छन् । सार्थक जीवनको अर्थ मात्र अर्थ अर्थात् रूमैयाँ-पैसा कमाउनु भएको छ । यस अर्थमा समाजको यस तर्फलाई कुनै कमी छैन । तर उनीहरूको लागि पनि जीवनको अर्थ आकाशको फल आँखा तरी मरभैँ भएको छ । यिनीहरूको कमाइको एक भाग जीवन चलाउने कला सिक्नमै खर्च हुन्छ ।

यो कला सिकाउने मानिस पनि एक होइन, अनेक छन् । उनीहरूले लगाउने लुगाको रङ पनि शुद्ध सेतो, गेरू वा कलेजी रङको हुन्छ । संसारका लाखौं मानिसले योग वा योगा गर्छन् । यस्तै ध्यान, जप र भजन-किर्तन पनि गर्छन् । अहिलेको संसार धर्मको नयाँ संसार पनि हो । धर्मको नयाँ बजार र धर्मको नयाँ मल पनि हो । कहिलेदेखि डोसा र पराठा नखाएको ? सोध्ने गुरूसमेत भेटिन्छन् । सामाजिक कार्यमा संलग्न भएका मानिसहरूलाई 'चेन्ज' (परिवर्तन) जस्ता शब्दबाट विशेष आकर्षण प्राप्त हुन्छ । धर्मरूपी यस बजारमा पनि 'चेन्ज' शब्द प्रचलित भइसकेको छ । यस आई क्यान चेन्ज (हो, म बदल्न सक्छु पनि चलनचल्तीमा छ । र, अब त 'न्यु' (नयाँ) पनि यसमा लागेकै छ ।

हजारौं मानिसले यी सब काम गरेर केही न केही फाइदा उठाएकै छन् । यसमा कुनै शङ्का छैन । उनीहरूको चञ्चले मन पनि शान्त र स्थिर भएको हुनुपर्छ । कलियुगमा धर्मको यस किसिमको अवतरण पनि राम्रै मानिन्छ । तर धर्मयुगसँग मिल्दोजुल्दो अर्को एउटा शब्द युगधर्म पनि छ । यस युगको प्रमुख धर्म हो, यस समयको प्रमुख विचार हो - विकास । प्रत्येक कुराको विकास । जस्तै सङ्गठन विकास, देश विकास, सहर विकास, गाउँ विकास, बाल विकास र महिला विकास आदि । प्रत्येक विचारका भण्डा यही विकास भण्डामा आएर समाहित हुन्छन् । यस युगधर्मले जीवनको अर्थलाई पनि प्रभावित गरकै छ । हामी सबैले केही न केही काम त गरेकै हुन्छौं । चाहे जुनसुकै काम गरौं, हामी सबैमा जानी नजानी यस विकासको छायाँ परेकै हुन्छ । यो अनायास र अकारण परेको भने होइन । हरिद्वारमा एउटा बाबाले 'फुड पार्क' बनाउँछन् । यस्तै अर्को एकजना बाबाले अमेठीमा यसै नामको मिल्दोजुल्दो नाम होइन, यही नाम राखेर फुड पार्क बनाउँछन् । एउटा बाबाको फुड पार्क बनेर तयार हुन्छ । तर अमेठीको फुड पार्क राजनीतिक खिँचलोमा फस्छ । तर ती दुवै बाबाको मन एउटै छ । विकाससम्बन्धी यस दौडमा हामी सबैलाई दुगुर्नु नै पर्छ ।

यस मुसा दौडमा दुगुर्तु नै पर्छ । पछि परौं वा अधि बढौं । यस किसिमको विचित्र दौडले हामीलाई मुसा बनाएको छ ।

अर्थमय जीवनको चर्चा निकै गम्भीर रूपले गर्नुपर्छ । यहाँ कोल, गोरू र मुसाजस्ता तल्लोस्तरको चर्चा गरिएको छ । यसैले तपाईंहरू सबैसँग क्षमा माग्दछु । र, यस चर्चालाई अलिकति लिफ्ट दिन चाहन्छु । यसलाई थोरै माथि उठाउँछु । तीन दिन पहिलेको कुरा हो । 'लिफ्ट करा दे कंका गायक अदनान सामीलाई भारतीय नागरिकता प्राप्त भएको छ । उनले आफ्नो बयानमा भनेका छन्, " यो मेरो जीवनको सबभन्दा ठूलो उपलब्धि हो ।" यसबाट के बुझिन्छ भने उनको जीवन सफल भएको छ । र, उनको जीवन पनि अर्थमय बनेको छ ।

के साँच्चिकै यस्तै कुरो हो त ? अर्थमय जीवनसम्बन्धी यी मेरा आफ्नै साना परिभाषाहरू हुन् । भारतको आफ्नै जन्मसिद्ध नागरिकता त्यागेर अनेकन् मानिसहरू युरोप, अमेरिका, क्यानडा आदि देशको नागरिकता प्राप्त गर्न आतुर छन् । ती देशको पीआरका लागि मरिहते गर्छन् । अर्कोतिर संसारमा आफ्नो नागरिकता सुरक्षित गर्न नसकेका मानिसको सङ्ख्या धेरै छ । एकातिर संसारमा युद्ध र गृहयुद्ध चलिरहेको छ । दादा देशहरूको थिचोमिचो पनि भइरहेको छ । यसले गर्दा केही लाख मानिस शरणार्थी हुन बाध्य छन् । उनीहरू यताउता भौँतारिँदै छन् । उनीहरूमाथि के गुज्रिरहेको होला ? उनीहरूको अवस्था कस्तो होला ? हामीले यसको कल्पना पनि गर्न सक्दैनौं । संसार यस्तो छ । र, यस्तो संसारमा टाउको ढाक्ने छत हुनु त टाढाको कुरा हो । टाउकोमा एउटा ओत छैन र पेटभरि खान पनि पाउँदैन । एक छाकमा एक गाँस प्राप्त गर्नु नै उनीहरूको नियति बनेको छ । उनीहरूका निम्ति यही नै जीवनको अर्थ भएको छ । भारतीय स्वतन्त्रता सङ्ग्रामको मध्यतिरको कुरा हो । तिनताका गान्धीजीले भोकाका भगवानको कल्पना गरेका थिए । उसका अधिल्लिर भगवान पनि ढिँडोका रूपमा आउँछन् । यसबाहेक उनले अरू कुनै रूप धारण गर्न सक्दैनन्,

हिम्मत पनि गर्न सक्दैनन् । संसारका कैयन् विचारक, चिन्तक, क्रान्तिकारी आदिले अर्थमय जीवनसम्बन्धी यस ढिँडोको रूपबारे अनेक शास्त्रहरू बनाएका छन् । उनीहरूले यसलाई व्यवहारमा परिणत गर्नका निम्ति सङ्गठन पनि खोलेका छन् । तर ती समाजमा पनि जीवनको अर्थ बिल्कुलै प्रस्टिएको छैन । यसको कुनै पक्का रूप पनि देखिँदैन ।

लगभग २०/३० वर्ष अघिको कुरा हो । हामीले पानी र पोखरी आदि विषयमा केही काम गर्दै थियौं । हामीमा यो विषय बुझ्ने जिज्ञासा थियो । यसैले यताउता भौँतारिँदै थियौं । मेरो कारणले गर्दा केही अरु साथी पनि यस काममा लागे । उनीहरूले सामग्री जुटाएर मलाई सहयोग गरे । राकेश दीवान पोखरीसम्बन्धी अध्ययन गर्न मध्य प्रदेश र महाराष्ट्रको सिमानामा पर्ने बैतुल क्षेत्रमा गएका थिए । उनले त्यहाँ एउटा राजाको कथा सुने । पोखरी त यस कथामा थियो नै । तर यसमा सर्वप्रथम जीवनसम्बन्धी अर्थको खोज नै थियो ।

प्रायः राजा वा शासकको स्वभाव अरुभन्दा फरक हुन्छ । एउटा सांसारिक राजालाई के भएर हो कुन्नि, आफ्नो जीवनको अर्थ बुझ्ने इच्छा भयो । कुनै सल्लाहकारले उनलाई भन्यो कि ब्रह्म बुझेमा सबै अर्थ बुझिन्छ । यो कुरा सुनेर राजाले उनलाई भने, “ त्यसो भए तिमीले नै ब्रह्मबारे भनिदिए हुन्न र !” राजाको जिज्ञासा थाहा पाएर उनले भनेका थिए, “ महाराज, यो त ठूलो काम हो । मजस्तो अदना मानिसले ब्रह्म के हो ? बुझ्ने कुरै भएन । तर यति त पक्का कुरा हो - ब्रह्म बुझेमा सबै अर्थ बुझिन्छ ।” ब्रह्म भन्ने कुन चराको नाम हो ? यसबारे कसले भन्ला ? यो प्रश्न राजाले आफ्ना सबै भाइभारदारका अघि तेर्स्याएका थिए । उनले यस प्रश्नको उत्तर खोज्न चाहेका थिए । उनीहरूले सल्लाह दिएअनुसार राज्यका सारा ज्ञानी, साधुसन्त आदिलाई निम्त्याएर विज्ञान भवनमा एउटा वृहद् सम्मेलन गर्नुपर्ने भयो । यसो गरियो भने कसैले न कसैले त अवश्य ज्ञान देला, ब्रह्म के हो ? भन्ला नै । यति कुरा सर्वसम्मतिले निर्णय गरियो ।

ब्रह्म बुभ्न्, जीवनको अर्थ बुभ्न् र राजाको जीवन अर्थमय बनाउनका निम्ति एउटा विराट सभाको आयोजनाको तयारी हुन थाल्यो । राज्य मात्र होइन, राज्य बाहिरका ऋषिमुनि एवं ज्ञानीहरूलाई निम्तो पठाइयो । शासकहरूको पनि केही त सनक जाग्छ नै । ब्रह्म ज्ञानबारे भन्ने होइन, ब्रह्म ज्ञान सुन्ने तरिका के हो ? राजाले यो कुरा निश्चित गरे । गोलमेच वा राउण्डटेबुल कन्फ्रेन्स चाहिँदैन । राजाले आफ्नो कुरा यसरी भनेका थिए, “ सम्मेलन स्थलमा म आफ्नो भव्य घोडाका साथ उभिनेछु । एउटा खुट्टा रिकाबीमा राखेर म घोडा चढ्नेछु । अर्को खुट्टाचाहिँ अर्कोतिरको रिकाबीमा पर्नासाथ ज्ञानीले ब्रह्मबारे भन्नुपर्छ । भन्न सकेन भने मैले आफ्नो एडीले घोडालाई सङ्केत गर्नेछु । र, मेरो सङ्केत पाएर घोडा भुर्रर आकाशमा उड्नेछ । यति क्षण र यति सेकेण्डमा ब्रह्म ज्ञान दिनेलाई मनग्यै पुरस्कार दिएर पुरस्कृत गरिनेछ । “यति छिटै भन्न नसक्नेलाई केही दण्ड गरिने कुरा पनि थियो । तर यहाँ त्यसलाई बेलिविस्तार लगाउनु आवश्यक छैन । ‘रकाव में पाँव, ब्रह्म दिखँव’ अर्थात् रिकाबीमा खुट्टा - ब्रह्म देखाऊ । यो नै राजाको नारा थियो ।

यस कथालाई संङ्क्षिप्तमा यसरी भन्न सकिन्छ । राजाको खुट्टा रिकाबीमा पर्नासाथ घोडा भुर्रर उड्छ । राजाको अर्थमय जीवन बनाउने चक्करमा कैयौँले कोर्दा खानुपन्यो । तर एउटा ज्ञानी आयो । राजाले खुट्टा उठाउनेबित्तिकै उसले चिच्याएर भन्यो, “ अनिकाल परेको छ, तपाईंलाई त ब्रह्मकै चिन्ता छ । “यो चिच्याइ सुनेर राजाले घोडा दौडाएनन् । उनी घोडाबाट ओर्ले । उनले ब्रह्म देखे कि देखेनन् ? यसै भन्न सकिन्न । सायद उनले ब्रह्म देखे होलान् । त्यसपछि राजा-प्रजा, साधु-सन्त, ज्ञानी र शारीरिक दण्ड भोगेका आदि सबै मिलेर थुप्रै पोखरीहरू बनाए । पोखरी बनिसकेपछि फेरि त्यहाँ कहिल्यै पनि अनिकाल परेन ।

समाजमा यस्ता कथाहरू बग्नेल्ती पाइन्छन् । यी कथाले जीवनको अर्थ बुभ्न्ने विभिन्न बाटोहरू खोल्छन् । यसबाट यो पनि प्रश्न उद्छ- एकलै जीवनको

अर्थ जान्ने हो वा अरुलाई पनि यसमा लगाउने हो । एकलै कुनै गुफामा बसेर अर्थमय जीवनको लड्डु खाने हो अर्थात् एक वचन वा बहुवचनमा सबैलाई भोज दिएर । एकलै उन्नति गर्ने हो वा अधिकांशका साथ धेरथोर भए पनि उन्नति गर्ने हो । यो मीठो रहस्य केही समयका लागि हो वा लामो समयका लागि । यस कथामा एउटा तह समय र कालको पनि छ ।

प्रायः हरेक समाजमा अर्थको खोज गरिन्छ । मानिसले यो काम केही हजार वर्ष पुराना शास्त्रअनुसार गर्छन् । शास्त्रीले भनेको तरिकाले गर्छन् वा एउटा मिस्त्रीको तरिकाले । यो पनि सोच्नुपर्ने कुरा हो । सोच्ने अर्को तरिका पनि छ । सोच्ने शब्द सजिलो लाग्छ भने यसलाई कठिन बनाए पनि हुन्छ । चिन्तन गर्ने पनि एउटा तरिका छ । चिन्तनको असर जीवनमा पर्छ ।

यो जीवन भन्ने कुरा स्वयंमा के हो ? हामी बाँचिरहेका छौं । कहिले हामीलाई यो कुरा थाहा हुन्छ ? जन्मिनु अघिदेखि नै हामीले सास फेर्न थाल्यौं । हाम्रो प्राण र हृदय आदि कहिले बन्छ ? हामीलाई थाहा हुँदैन । जीवविज्ञान र शरीरविज्ञान बुझ्नु पनि जरूरी छैन । जन्मेको केही समय पछिसम्म 'अबोध' रहनुपर्छ । तर अबोधको 'अ' हट्छ । बाल्यकालमा बोध हात पर्दैन । लाग्छ, तीन अक्षरको यो अबोध शब्दको 'अ' हट्नासाथ पूरै तीनवटा अक्षर हामीसँग विदा हुन्छन् ।

हामी न त अबोध हुन्छौं न हामीलाई बोध हुन्छ, हामी को हौं ? कहाँबाट आएका हौं ? र, कहाँ जाने हो ? हामी अलमलमा छौं । गन्तव्य थाहा छैन । त्यहाँसम्मको यात्रा गर्दा मजा पनि लिन्नौं, आनन्द पनि लिँदैनौं । आफैँसँग शिकायत गर्छौं । शत्रुका कुरा छोडौं, आफ्नै मित्र र आफ्नै समाजसँग शिकायत गर्छौं । जसलाई खराब जमाना भन्छौं त्यससँग शिकायत कति हो कति छन् । लाग्छ, हाम्रो सम्पूर्ण जीवन यात्रा शिकायतरूपी इन्धनले चलिरहेको छ । हाम्रो जीवनको यस गाडीले कालो मुसलो फालेको फाले छ । यसले गर्दा रात दिन चौबीसै घण्टा नबिसाई फाल्छ । यसले गर्दा अरुको फोक्सो त बिग्रिन्छ, खराब हुन्छ । स्वयं आफ्नै फोक्सो पनि

बचाउन सकदैनौं । पहिले भनेभैँ हामी कोलका गोरू हौं । एउटा पुरानो कथा छ । तैपनि सज्जन भुटो बोलिरहन्छ । बाल्यकाल खेलमा हराएर बित्यो । जवानी सुतेर खेर गयो । अहिले बुढ्यौली देखेर रून मन लाग्छ । कवि शैलेन्द्रको यो कुरा बम्बईको फिल्मबाट लिइएको हो । दर्शनको यो एउटा लामो परम्पराको निचोड हो, निष्कर्ष हो ।

हजारौं वर्ष पहिलेको कुरा हो । तिनताका एकजना ऋषि थिए । उनको नाम च्यवन थियो । उनले एउटा खास किसिमको चटनी बनाएका थिए । त्यो युग ब्राण्डनेमको युग थिएन । तैपनि त्यस चटनी अर्थात् प्राश (आयुर्वेदिक औषधी) को नाम ऋषिको ब्राण्डनेम च्यवन र प्राश मिलेर च्यवनप्राश भयो । हिजोआज त्यो चटनी जसले बनाए पनि यसको नाम च्यवनप्राश नै राख्ने गरिन्छ । तर यहाँ त्यो चटनीको चर्चा स्वास्थ्यको प्रसङ्गमा गरिएको छैन । आयुर्वेदअनुसार यस चटनीमा ४५ किसिमका जडीबुटी, फलफूल, पात, सखर, अमला आदि मिश्रण गरेर बनाइन्छ ।

यो औषधी मामुली रूघाखोकीमा काम लाग्छ । यसले शरीरको थोरबहुत प्रतिरोधक क्षमता पनि बढाउँछ । ४५ वटा जडीबुटीले यो चटनी तयार हुन्छ । अब यहाँनेर एकछिन सोचौं । एउटा पूर्ण अर्थमय जीवन बनाउन कति थरीका चीजहरू चाहिएलान् । अहिले हामी शरीर शास्त्रतर्फ नजाऔं । त्यो मेरो काम पनि होइन । यसबारे मेरो योग्यता शून्य बराबर छ । तर एउटा जीवन सार्थक कसरी हुन्छ ? यसमा कति कुरा थपिन्छ ? घट्छ, गुणा हुन्छ र भाग हुन्छ । अलिकति सोचौं । अनुकूल परिस्थिति, असल विचार, सङ्गति, उचित परिवेश र अवसर मात्रले जीवनको रूप बन्दैन । प्रतिकूल परिस्थिति, विसङ्गति, जय-पराजय, मनको शान्ति र होहल्ला, कोलाहल अर्थात् नयाँ भाषामा भन्ने हो भने जिन्दावाद-मुर्दावाद आदिबाट पनि जीवनको रूप बन्ने गर्छ ।

केही हजार वर्ष पहिलेको पुरानो इतिहास खोजेर पढौं । महाभारतमा एउटा पक्षले जित्छ र अर्कोले हाँछ । तर त्यस विजयको परिणाम के हुन्छ ?

युधिष्ठिरले त्यस विजयबाट के पाउँछन् ? उनले यस बारेमा भनेका छन्, “ यो जय त त्यो पराजयभन्दा पनि खराब चीज हो ।”अहिले यहाँ जय-पराजयको कुरा नगरौं । मृत्युले पनि जीवन बनाउने गर्छ । आफ्नो पनि बन्छ र आउने पुस्ताको जीवन पनि बन्छ । यस्ता अनेकानेक उदाहरणहरू भेटिन्छन् । यहाँ ती सबैलाई यहाँ दोहो-याउनु जस्सी छैन । तर आजभन्दा ६७ वर्ष पहिले अर्थात् सन् १९४८ मा यही महिनाको ३० गतेका दिन आफ्नो मृत्युबाट एउटा जीवन निकै अर्थमय भएको थियो । यो कुरा हामीलाई थाहै छ । (यहाँ यो प्रसङ्ग महात्मा गान्धीका बारेमा लेखिएको हो।)

४५ वटा चीज मिलाएर बनाइएको एउटा साधारण चटनी । प्राश र हाम्रो जीवन । हामीले त्यस तराजुमा आफ्नो जीवन तौलियो भने एउटा अडकल काट्न सकिन्छ । हामीले आफ्नो जीवन पौष्टिक, स्वादिष्ट वा भनी सार्थक र अर्थमय बनाउनुपरेको छ । यसका निम्ति लाखौं-करोडौं चीजलाई छान्नु, भुट्नु, काट्नु, उमाल्नु र पिस्नुपर्छ । केही छैन भने पञ्चमहाभूत त चाहिन्छ नै । तर यो प्रकृति पनि बडो गजबको चीज छ । त्यसले जीवनलाई बढी सरल बनाएको छ । जीवनसम्म जानुअघि प्रकृतिले बनाएको अर्को एउटा चीज हेरौं । बरको रूख छ । त्यसको बीउ तोरीको बीउभन्दा पनि सानो हुन्छ । यति सानो बीउबाट यत्रो विशाल बरको रूख तयार हुन्छ । त्यो पनि अरु रूखजस्तो एउटा फेद भएको होइन । यहाँ त अनगिन्ती फेदहरू छन् । ५-१० पुस्ताले त्यस बरको छायाँमा बस्न पाउँछ । यसैले भन्नैपर्छ, त्यसको उमेर पनि सार्थक र अर्थमय हुन्छ ।

बरको हाँगामा गुँड बनाएर अनगिन्ती जातिका चराचुरुङ्गी बस्छन् । र, लाखौं चराहरूले त्यस रूखबाट प्राप्त भएका चारा खान्छन् । उनीहरूलाई कपास चाहिँदैन । बाँकी बच्यो – गाँस र वास । त्यस रूखले आफैं यी दुवै दिएकै छ । हाम्रा नेताले जनतालाई गाँस, बास र कपास उपलब्ध गराउने बाचा गर्छन् । यसको नाममा उनीहरूले केके गर्दैनन् ? सबथोक गर्छन् । तैपनि केही फार्न भने सक्दैनन् ।

अर्थमय जीवन कसरी होला ? अब यसकै बारेमा कुरा गरौं । यस्तो जीवनको निम्ति कति कुरा चाहिएला । च्यवनप्राशमा त ४५ वटा चीजहरू हुन्छन् । त्यसको गुणा र भाग गरेर यहाँ त लाखौं-करोडौं चीजहरू चाहिएलान् । कहाँ पाइएला ? कसरी पाइएला ? सबैको कति मूल्य पर्ला ? के सबैले एउटा चीजको एउटै मूल्यमा समान रूपले चीज पाउलान् ? ठीक छ, यी सबै पाइए रे । तैपनि सार्थक जीवन यात्राको प्रमाणिकता के होला ? मामुली रेलयात्रा र हवाईजहाजको यात्रा गर्दा आईडी प्रुफ, आधार कार्ड र नागरिकता चाहिन्छ । यीमध्ये एउटा भएन भने यात्रा गर्न पाइँदैन । कुरा यस्तो छ । के एउटा लामो सार्थक जीवन यात्रा आईडी प्रुफबिना गर्न सकिएला ?

स्थिति यस्तो छ । यसैले लामो सूची तयार गर्नुअघि केके चाहिन्छ ? बजारमा उत्पादित वस्तुतिर लागौं । च्यवनप्राशभन्दा यो अलग कुरा हो । फ्रान्समा Scent (अत्तर अर्थात् सुगन्ध) को ठूलो कारोबार हुन्छ । त्यहाँ श्नेल नाम गरेको एउटा कम्पनी छ । हुन त यसले अनेक वस्तुहरू उत्पादन गर्छ । सायद एकाध करोडका हाते घडीहरू पनि । यसले श्नेल-५ भन्ने सेन्ट पनि उत्पादन गर्छ । यही सेन्ट उत्पादन गरेर यो कम्पनीले नाम कमाएको छ, प्रसिद्ध भएको छ । एउटा अत्यन्त सुन्दर सानो शिशीको मूल्य आठ हजार पर्छ ।

संसारमा शौकिन मानिसहरूको कमी छैन । यस्ता मानिसबीच यस सेन्टले निकै नाम कमाएको छ । सबैले यसलाई मन पराउँछन् । यसमा पनि च्यवनप्राश जस्तै निश्चित चीजहरू मिसाइएको हुन्छ । जस्तै गुलाबका कैयौं टन कोपिला आदि चाहिन्छ । फ्रान्सका खेतबारीबाहेक संसारका विभिन्न वन-कृषि, घना जङ्गल आदि ठाउँबाट यी सब सामग्री ल्याइन्छ । यदि कुनै वर्षमा यस सूचीबाट एउटै चीजको मात्रा पुगेन र त्यसको गुणवत्ता भएन भने श्नेल-५ को उत्पादन स्थगित गरिन्छ । यस कम्पनीले पनि महँगो सुगन्धको सार्थकता देख्दैन । तर जीवनको सुगन्ध ? प्रकृतिले जीवनरूपी सार्थक

सुगन्धका साथ श्नेल-५ जस्तो काम गर्ने हो भने सायद जीवन नै चल्ने थिएन । सबैको जीवन स्थिर र ठप्प हुने थियो ।

जीवन सार्थक पार्न केके चाहिन्छ ? यसको साटो केके चाहिँदैन ? भन्ने सूची पनि काम लाग्छ । आँखा छैन, कान छैन र मुख पनि छैन अर्थात् कानी, बहिरी र लाटी । अमेरिकाकी हेलेन केलर लाटी थिइन् । उनले आफ्नो जीवनको अर्थ मात्र पूर्ण गरिनन्, आउने लाखौँ मानिसलाई पनि बाटो देखाइन् । संसारभरि उनको जीवनी पढिन्छ । उनका सुक्तिले कठिन र निराश परेका कैयन् मानिसलाई सम्बल र सहारा दिँदैछ । यस्तै एउटा उदाहरण पनि छ । यो उदाहरण लुई ब्रेलसँग सम्बन्धित छ । उनले आफ्नो बाल्यकालमा यो संसार, यसका सबै रङ र पूर्ण इन्द्रधनुष स्पष्ट देखेकी थिइन् । तर पछि गएर उनका आँखा फुटे र उनी कानी भइन् । उनका लागि चारैतिर चुकजस्तो अँध्यारो भयो । उज्यालो देखेपछि अँध्यारो भन्नु ज्यादा कालो हुन्छ । यो थाहा भएकै कुरा हो ।

लुई ब्रेलले अँध्यारोलाई उज्यालो पारिन् । उनले लिपि र स्क्रिप्ट आविष्कार गरिन् । नेत्रहीन मानिसले यो लिपिमा लेखिएको भाषा पढ्न सक्छन् । उनले निकै ठूलो र महत्वपूर्ण काम गरेकी थिइन् । तर बाँचुञ्जेल उनले कुनै प्रशंसा र प्रेम पाएकी थिइनन् । तर उनको मृत्युपछि मात्र फ्रान्सले उनको सार्थक जीवनको महत्व बुझ्यो । त्यसपछि सारा संसारमा उनको नाम फैलियो, प्रसिद्ध भएको थियो । हिजोआज लुई ब्रेलले बनाएको लिपि पढिन्छ । नेपाली र हिन्दी भाषामा पनि यसको पढाइ हुन्छ ।

यस धर्तीमा हेलेन केलर र लुई ब्रेलजस्ता कति हो कति विभूतिहरू जन्मिएका छन् । यिनीहरूको जीवनी पढेर हामीले सिक्नुपर्छ, शिक्षा लिनुपर्छ । आफ्नो जीवनमा चाहे जति पनि दुःखकष्ट आइपरोस्, समस्या होस्, पैसा, प्रेम, मानसम्मान, अवसर, उन्नतिको कमी होस् वा यी सबै नभए पनि जीवन स्वदैन, अविरल इन्द्रावतीभैँ बगिरहन्छ । जीवन स्वन्तु पनि हुँदैन अर्थात् सङ्कट । यस्तो कुनै जीवन छैन जसमा हिजो वा आज आपत-विपत

नपरेको होस् वा भोली नआउला, यो हुनै सक्दैन । आपतकाल घोषणा गर्ने हैसियत भएकी इन्दिरा गान्धीको जीवन पनि आपतबिनाको थिएन ।

मेरा पिताजी कवि हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको एउटा निकै सानो कविता छ । उहाँले त्यस कवितामा निरापद कोही छैन भन्नुभएको छ । न तिमी, न उनी र न म नै । कसैको जिन्दगी दूधले धोएको हुँदैन । यदि आफ्नो जीवनमा कुनै दाग देखियो भने म आफैँ आफ्नो धोबी बन्नुपर्ला, आफ्नो जीवन आफैँ धुनुपर्ला । हामीले अरुमा लागेको दाग बारम्बार देखिरहन्छौँ । यो नयाँ कविता छोडेर अब एउटा पुरानो कविता यानि भजनतिर लागौँ ।

कविरको एउटा सुन्दर भजन छ- 'वा घर सबसे न्यारा ।' कुमार गन्धर्वजीले आफ्नो मीठो स्वरले यसलाई भन् सुन्दर बनाउनुभएको छ । यस भजनमा यो घरभन्दा त्यो घरको परिचय दिइएको छ । यहाँ यस जीवनमा धेरैजसो कुराहरु भरिभराउ छन् । तर त्यो न्यारे (असाधारण) घरमा त केही पनि छैन । कविरले आफ्नो विशिष्ट शैलीमा अगाडि यसरी भन्दछन्, " त्यो असाधारण घरमा वेद पनि छैन । यस घरको जीवनमा त वेद, गीता, गुरुग्रन्थ, कुरान र बाइबल आदि सबथोक छन् । र, यतिखेर यिनैका कारण संसारमा थरीथरीका भैँभगडा, मारपिट र लफडा मच्चिएको छ जो नहुनुपर्ने हो तर ती भइरहेका छन् । बन्द हुने छाँटे देखिँदैन । त्यो असाधारण घरमा मूल, फूल, बेल र बीउ केही पनि छैन । न धर्ती छ न आकाश । न बाहिर-भित्रजस्तो कुनै कुरा नै छ । ज्ञान र ध्यान दुवै त्यहाँ पाइँदैनन् । त्यहाँ पाप पनि छैन । कविरले अगाडि निकै महत्वपूर्ण कुरा गर्दै भन्छन्- त्यहाँ पुण्यको फैलावट पनि छैन । साँच्चिकै हाम्रो जीवनमा पुण्यको ठूलो फैलावट हुने गर्छ । हेर्दा यो बडो सार्थकजस्तो देखिन्छ तर प्रायः यसको फैलावट यति विस्तृत हुन्छ, आफूले गरेको पुण्यका अघि हामीले बाँकी सबैलाई पापी नै देख्छौँ अर्थात् आफ्नो जीवनको सार्थकता र शेष सारा जीवनको निरर्थकता । यही वृत्तिका कारण देशका प्रधानमन्त्रीसमेत उम्कन पाउँदैनन् ।

त्यो असाधारण घरमा यस्ता कुरा पाइँदैन । हामी त्यहाँ कहिले जाने हो ? जाने हो कि होइन ? यो पनि थाहा छैन । तर हामी सबै यस घरमा त बसिरहेकै छौं । अलिकति पनि कोसिस गर्ने हो भने कविरको यस असाधारण घरको छानाबाट दुई-चारवटा सुकेका घाँसका टुक्रा त हामीले आफ्नो यस जीवनमा ल्याउन सक्छौं नै । कविरले यही भजनको एउटा पङ्क्तिमा यसरी भनेका छन्- त्यो असाधारण घरमा बिनाज्योति नै उज्यालो छ ।

मैले सुरम्भै यस्ता सभाहरूमा एउटा दियो प्रज्वलित गर्ने कुरा भनेको थिएँ । म फेरि भन्छु- जहाँ बाल्न सकिन्छ, त्यहाँ मानिसले बालून् । तर हिजोआज बलेन भने कविरको त्यो असाधारण घरलाई सम्भन्नुहोस् । मलाई पूर्ण विश्वास छ, अर्थमय जीवनमा जीवनको अर्थ बुझ्ने यो सानो प्रयास हो । र, यस प्रयासमा तपाईं सबैको उपस्थिति छ । यस उपस्थितिका कारण तपाईंहरूले पनि बिनाज्योति नै उज्यालो देख्नुहुनेछ ।

(प्रस्तुत लेख ४ जनवरी, २०१६ का दिन सेडेडद्वारा भारतको नयाँ दिल्लीमा आयोजित व्याख्यान मालाका निम्ति लेखकद्वारा प्रस्तुत कार्यपत्र हो । भारतको प्रसिद्ध पत्रिका 'नयाँ ज्ञानोदय' ले आफ्नो मार्च २०१६ अंकमा हिन्दी भाषामा यो लेख प्रकाशित गरेको थियो ।)

# वैदिक आर्यहरूको कृषिभूमि, उर्वराशक्ति, बालीनाली क्रम र वर्तमान नेपालको कृषिको स्थिति

❖ नीलप्रसाद पन्त

## परिचय

भूमि वास्तवमा सम्पूर्ण मानव जीवात्मा र वनस्पतिको अस्तित्वको आधार हो । यो तथ्यलाई मानिसले प्राचीनकालदेखि नै स्वीकार गरेको पाइन्छ । त्यसकारण आर्य जातिले आर्षग्रन्थ वेदमा आफूलाई जन्म दिने आमाको जति महत्व भूमिको भएको कुरालाई स्वीकार गरी 'पृथ्वीमाता' वा 'धर्तीमाता' जस्ता उच्च आदरार्थी शब्दले वन्दना गर्दै आएको पाइन्छ । मानवले यस्तो महत्वपूर्ण भूमिलाई विभिन्न साधनबाट खनजोत गर्ने, उर्वर बनाउने र बालीनालीहरू उब्जाएर जीवन यापन गर्दै आएको छ । यो कार्य निरन्तरता र परिवर्तनको मोड पार गर्दै आइरहेको छ र यसले मानव सभ्यता रहेसम्म निरन्तरता पाउने निश्चित प्रायः छ ।

## भूमि वन्दना

वैदिक मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषि-मुनिहरूले भूमिको पवित्रता र महत्व बारेमा धेरै चिन्तन मनन गरेको पाइन्छ । वाजसनेयि माध्यन्दिन शुक्ल मजुर्वेदको एउटा ऋचामा "भूमि माता तिमीले सबै व्यवस्था मिलाउने काम गर्दछ्यौ । सबलाई आश्रय प्रदान गर्दछ्यौ । तिमीबाट खेतीको काम, जगतको हितको काम, ऐश्वर्य वृद्धिको काम र पालन पोषणका जुन काम भएका छन् त्यसको लागि तिमीलाई स्वीकार गर्दछौ र आदरसाथ नमस्कार गर्दछौ भनिएको छ" (एजु, ९/२२) । अथर्व वेदका मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषि अथर्वाले भूमि सूक्तका सम्पूर्ण ऋचाहरूमा भूमिमाताको स्तुतिका मन्त्रहरू आह्वान गरेका छन् । ती मन्त्रहरूमा भूमि माताका विभिन्न सृजना र विशेषताहरूलाई केलाएर बडो सुन्दर शैलीमा वन्दना गरिएको छ । एउटा मन्त्रमा "हे भूमिमाता ! तिमी

आफ्नो मध्य भाग र केन्द्र भागमा तथा तिम्रा शरीरबाट उत्पन्न हुने सबै पोषक पदार्थमा हामीलाई प्रतिष्ठित गराऊ र पवित्रता प्रदान गर । यी धर्ती सबैका माता हुन् र उनले हामीलाई परिपूर्ण र सन्तुष्ट गराउन” भनिएको छ (अथर्व, १२/१/१२) । अर्को मन्त्रमा यहाँको धर्ती र उत्पादनको विशेषता बताइएको छ कि “जुन विशाल भूमिमा सागर, महासागर, नदी, फिल, तलाउ, पोखरी, इनार आदि जलासयहरू छन् । जहाँ सबै किसिमका अन्न, फलफूल र सागपात अत्यधिक मात्रामा उत्पन्न हुन्छन् त्यहाँ सबै प्राणीहरू सुखी र खुसी हुन्छन् । जहाँ किसान, शिल्पकार आदि उद्यमी सङ्गठित रूपमा रहन्छन्, त्यो भूमि हाम्रा लागि श्रेष्ठ, भोग्य पदार्थ र ऐश्वर्य प्रदान गर्ने होस्” (अथर्व, १२/१/३) । यसै प्रसङ्गमा कृषि उत्पादनको लागि ज्ञान हुनुपर्ने ऋतुचक्रबारे मन्त्र आह्वान गरिएको छ “हे विशाल मातृभूमि तिमीभित्र ग्रीष्म, वर्षा, शरद, हेमन्त, शिशिर र वसन्त ऋतुहरू रहेका छन् र यी ऋतुहरूका दिन रातहरू हाम्रा लागि कल्याणकारी होऊन्” (अथर्व, १२/१/३६) । अर्को एक मन्त्रमा वर्षाका देवता, उत्पादन गर्ने मानिस र उत्पादनका वस्तुहरूको स्तुतिमा “जुन भूमिमा धान, गहुँ, जौ आदि अन्न प्रचुर मात्रामा उत्पादन हुन्छन् र जहाँ विद्वान ब्राह्मण, सूरबीर क्षेत्रिय, कुशल (व्यापारी) वैश्य, कुशल (सेवक) शूद्र र अन्य गरी पाँचै वर्णका (पञ्च कृष्टय) मानिसहरू आनन्दपूर्वक निवास गर्दछन् र भूमिमा निश्चित समयमा जल वर्षा भएर अन्न उत्पादन हुन्छ, पर्जन्य देवताले जसको पालन पोषण गर्दछन्, त्यस्ता मातृभूमिलाई हामी नमस्कार गर्दछौं” भनिएको छ (अथर्व, १२/१/४२) । उक्त प्रसङ्गमा “अन्न, जल, दूध, घिउ, लता, वनस्पति, सुगन्ध औषधी प्रदान गरेकी पृथ्वी मातालाई हवि प्रदान गर्दै शिर भुकाएर स्तुति र नमस्कार गर्दछौं । मातृभूमि हामीलाई प्रतिष्ठा सम्पन्न गराउ” भन्ने स्तुति पाइन्छ (अथर्व, १२/१/९, २३, २७, ६२, ६३) ।

माथि उल्लेख भएका ऋचाहरूको सार यो हो कि वैदिक युगका मानिसहरूको लागि भूमिमाताभन्दा प्रिय, स्तुतिमय र आनन्दमय वस्तु अरु

कुनै थिएन । यसकारण उनीहरू भूमिमातालाई विभिन्न नाममा स्तुति, उपासना र वन्दना गर्ने गर्दथे ।

कृषि कार्य भूमिको सतहमा गरिने भएकाले भूमिविना कृषिको परिकल्पना नै गर्न सकिँदैन । पृथ्वी बाहेक अन्य ग्रहमा अहिलेसम्म कृषि कार्य भएको जानकारी छैन । यस अर्थमा वास्तवमा पृथ्वी धर्ती माता हुन् जसले असङ्ख्य जीवात्म र वनस्पतिको अस्तित्व सम्भव बनाएकी छन् । यसकारण पृथ्वीको माथिल्लो सतह माटोको ज्यादै ठूलो महत्त्व छ र यो कृषिको मात्र आधार नभई मानवको अक्षय निधि हो । यसबाट नै मानिसले पोषण र जीवन प्राप्त गरिरहेको छ । प्रकृतिद्वारा मानिस, जीवात्मा र वनस्पतिलाई प्राप्त यो माटोलाई सवाधानीपूर्वक प्रयोग र उत्पादन कार्यमा लगाएमा वरदान हुन्छ र अप्राकृतिक प्रयोग गरेमा दुर्भाग्य पनि निम्तिन सक्दछ ।

सामान्यतया: पृथ्वीको सतहमा मौसमी परिवर्तनको कारण चट्टानहरू टुक्रिएर बन्ने पृथ्वीको माथिल्लो खुकुलो र नरम सतहलाई माटो भन्ने गरिन्छ । विश्वका सबै सभ्यताहरू पृथ्वीको सतहको ६ देखि ९ इन्च बाक्लो पत्र माटोमा नै विकसित भएका छन् । यो माटोको संरचनागत सन्तुलन बिग्रन गएमा पृथ्वी मरुभूमि बन्न सक्दछ । यही सन्तुलन बिगारेको कारण एसिया, युरोपका कैयौं सभ्यताहरूको अन्त्य भएको छ । पहिले राम्रो माटो र कृषि उत्पादन भएका मुलुकहरूले माटोलाई राम्रोसँग प्रयोगमा नल्याउँदा आज खाद्यान्न आयत गर्ने मुलुकमा रूपान्तरण भएका छन् । आधुनिक विज्ञानले २१ औं शताब्दीमा माटोविना कुनै भाँडो वा जलाशयमा पोषणयुक्त घोलहरू राखेर वनस्पति हुर्काउने हाइड्रोपोनिक्स (Hydroponics) प्रविधिको विकास गरेको छ र जमिन कम हुने जापान जस्ता मुलुकमा यो लोकप्रिय पनि भएको सुनिन्छ तापनि यो प्रविधि पनि अन्ततः भूमिको माथि वा यसको आधारमा मात्र गर्न सकिन्छ । हावामा वा अन्तरिक्षमा त गर्न सकिँदैन ।

**मलखाद र यसको प्रयोग**

बृहत् अर्थमा मलखाद भन्नाले माटोको उर्वरा शक्ति वृद्धि गर्न र बालीनाली तथा बोटविरुवाको उत्पादकत्व बढाउन माटोमा मिसाइने वस्तु भन्ने बुझिन्छ । मलखाद मुख्यगरी प्राकृतिक, जैविक, वानस्पतिक र रासायनिक गरी चार किसिमका हुने गर्दछन् । प्राकृतिक मलखादमा माटोमा रहेका विभिन्न उत्पादक खनिज, लवण, क्षार आदि तत्व पर्दछन् र यसमा चुन, खरानी जस्ता वस्तुहरू रहेका छन् । माटोमा रहेका उत्पादकत्व बढाउने जीवाणुहरू, मानव लगायत विभिन्न प्राणीका मल मूत्र र तिनीहरूका जीवावशेषबाट बन्ने जैविक मल हो । वानस्पतिक मल ढैंचा आदि हरिया वनस्पति र भारपात कुहाएर बनाउने गरिन्छ । आधुनिक विज्ञानले आविष्कार गरेका एमोनियम सल्फेट, पोट्यास, युरिया, नाइट्रोजन, फोस्फोरस जस्ता रासायनिक मिश्रणबाट तयार गरिएको मललाई रासायनिक मल भन्ने गरिन्छ ।

प्राचीन वैदिक कालमा माथि उल्लिखित मलहरूमध्ये मूलतः गाई गोरुको गोबर र गहुँत, अन्य जनावरको मल मूत्र, पन्छीहरूको विष्टा, वनस्पति सडाएर बनाएको मल र पशुहरूको सिनोबाट बनाइएको मल प्रयोग गरिन्थ्यो । मानव मलमूत्रलाई अहिले मलको रूपमा प्रयोगमा ल्याउने गरिएको छ तापनि प्राचीन वैदिक युगमा यसको प्रयोग वर्जित थियो । मानव मलमूत्रमा उम्रेका साग र कन्दमूल समेत खानको लागि अपवित्र ठानिन्थ्यो ।

सामान्यतया: ट्रपिकल क्षेत्रमा पर्ने भारतीय भूखण्डको माटो प्राकृतिक उर्वराशक्ति कम भएको रूखो किसिमको रहँदै आएको छ । यस्तो माटोलाई उर्वर बनाउन गाईको गोबर, गहुँत, अन्य जनावरका मलमूत्र मात्र पर्याप्त नभएकाले वनस्पतिहरू सडाएर बनाइने हरियो मलको प्रयोग गरिँदै आएको पाइन्छ (रन्धव, १९५८:३०) । वर्तमान अवस्थामा पनि भारत र नेपालका ग्रामीण किसानहरू आफ्नो मलखातमा सोत्तर, पाती, असुरो लगायत वनस्पति कुहाएर मल बनाउने गर्दछन् ।

वैदिक युगमा लगाइने बालीनालीबाट राम्रो उत्पादन लिन उर्वराशक्तियुक्त राम्रो माटो, सूर्यको तापक्रम, वायु, वर्षा र बालीको सुरक्षामा ध्यान दिने गर्दथे । यसको लागि उपयुक्त परिस्थिति तयार होस् भनेर देवताहरूको स्तुति गरिन्थ्यो । ऋग्वैदिक कालदेखि नै भारत वर्ष र नेपालमा खेतीका लागि मलखादलाई निकै महत्त्व दिएको देखिन्छ । मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषि दीर्घतमा औचथ्यले गाईका गोबरबाट अन्य वस्तुहरू अलग गरेर शुद्ध पार्न सूर्यका किरणरूपी ऋभुहरू प्रख्यात छन् भन्ने वचन बोलेका छन् (ऋ, १/१६१/१०) । यस्तो गोबरलाई जमिनमा छरेर उर्वर बनाइन्थ्यो । अर्का मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषि ब्रह्माले गाईलाई गोठमा आएर निर्भयपूर्वक बस्न र बाच्छा बाच्छीले युक्त भई गोब्याउँदै निरोगी भएर मधुर रसयुक्त दूध दिन आह्वान गरेका छन् (अथर्व, ३/१४/३) । ऋषिहरूले गाईको गोबर र गहुँतमा जमिनको उर्वरा शक्ति बढाउने, बालीनाली वृद्धि गराउने र माटोको आर्द्रता कायम राख्ने गुण भएको कुरा सिद्ध गरेका थिए ।

प्राचीन कालीन भारत वर्षमा जमिनको उत्पादकत्व बढाउन गाई गोस्को गोबर तथा गहुँत र भैसी, ब्राखा, भेडा लगायतका चौपायाको मल प्रयोग गरिन्थ्यो । धार्मिक ग्रन्थहरूमा बाख्रा, भेडा, सुंगुरको मल, माछाको सिनो, जौ, तेलहनको पिना, दलहनहरूका अवयव मिलाएर मलखाद बनाउने उल्लेख पाइन्छ । कतिपय ग्रन्थमा फलफूलका बोट विरुवाहरूको जरा नजिक खाडल खनेर घरपालुवा जनावरको मल, जनावरका हड्डीहरू राखेर पुर्ने गरिन्थ्यो । यसबाट वनस्पति बालीनालीको वृद्धि तीव्रगतिले हुने गर्दथ्यो भन्ने उल्लेख पाइन्छ । इ.सं. को बिसौं शताब्दीको मध्यसम्म पनि भारत र नेपालमा रासायनिक मलखाद प्रचुर मात्रामा उपलब्ध थिएन र त्यसबेला ग्रामीण किसानहरूले गाउँ बाहिर एउटा खाडल बनाएर आफ्ना पशुहरूको मलमूत्र जम्मा गर्ने गर्दथे र खेती लगाउने समयमा उक्त मल प्रयोग गरिन्थ्यो । यस्तो चलन प्राचीन कालदेखि आजसम्म निरन्तर रूपमा चल्दै आएको पाइन्छ । यो कुनै विदेशी र स्वदेशी मौद्रिक लगानीविना आवश्यक मलखाद आपूर्ति गर्ने सुलभ र प्रभावकारी तरिका मानिन्छ । २१ औं शताब्दीमा

विश्वका अति विकसित र विकसित मुलकहरू रासायनिक मल, किटनाशक औषधी र आधुनिक प्रविधिअनुसार गरिएको कृषि उत्पादनले मानव स्वास्थ्यमा उत्पन्न गरेको गम्भीर समस्याबाट सचेत भएको पाइन्छ । अब ती राष्ट्रहरू जैविक (Organic) खेती प्रणाली र अन्तरबाली खेती प्रणाली (बालीनाली र बोटविरुवा बीचमा खेती गर्ने) तर्फ फर्केका छन् र यसको बढी प्रयोग जर्मनीमा भएको पाइएको छ । कृषिमा अत्यन्त विकसित संयुक्तराज्य अमेरिकामा समेत आधुनिक कृषि प्रविधि प्रतिस्थापनको लागि कदमहरू चालिएका छन् । कृषि वैज्ञानिक क्रिस मेननले आधुनिक रासायनिक मल र किटनाशकलाई बहिष्कार गरी गाईको मलको आधारमा हिउँदे बाली ( रबीबाली) लगाउने र वसन्त ऋतुमा हरियो मल वा प्राङ्गरिक मल सहित खनजोत गरेर खेती लगाउने अभियान सुरु गरेका छन् (म्याक डेर्मोट; १९९१:१५) ।

वैदिक वाङ्मयका विभिन्न ग्रन्थमा मलखाद तयार गर्ने सम्बन्धमा वर्णनहरू पाइन्छन् । बराहमिहिरले १ अढक (६४ पल) तिल, २ अढक बाख्रा वा भेडाको बडकौला, १ प्रस्थ (१६ पल) जौको पिठो र १ तुला गाईको सिनोलाई १ द्रोण (२५६ पल) पानीमा मिलाएर ७ रात सडाएपछि राम्रो मलखाद तयार हुने र उक्त मल बोट विरुवाको जरामा राखेपछि राम्रो फूल र फल लाग्ने बताएका छन् (राघवन, १९६४:४४) । अग्नि पुराणमा पनि करिब-करिब यस्तै मिश्रणबाट मल बनाउने कुरा उल्लेख गरिएको छ । जौको पिठो, तिल र बाख्राको लिदी र गाईको सिनो मिलाएर सात दिन सडाएपछि राम्रो मल तयार हुने र यसको प्रयोगबाट बालीनाली राम्रो हुने उल्लेख छ (अग्नि पुराण, १०३८) ।

मलखादको बारेमा कृषिपराशर ग्रन्थमा महत्वपूर्ण कुराहरू वर्णन गरिएको पाइन्छ । यसमा माघ महिनामा शुभदिन र नक्षत्रमा गाईको मल जम्मा गरिएको मलखातोमा पूजा गरेर श्रद्धा साथ मललाई कोदालोले तलमाथि फर्काउने र त्यस मललाई धुलो बनाएर सूर्यको तापमा सुकाएर फागुन

महिनामा त्यहाँबाट लगेर प्रत्येक गरामा बनाइएका खाडलमा राख्ने तरिका बताइएको छ । त्यसरी गरामा जम्मा गरिएको मल बीउ रोप्ने समयमा बराबर पुग्ने गरी गरामा छर्नु पर्दछ र यदि मल नराखी धान रोपियो भने बाला लाग्दैन भन्ने उल्लेख छ (कृषि पराशरः १०९-११) । कृषि पराशरमा वैशाखदेखि माघसम्म १० महिनासम्म उलटपलट गरी राखिएको गोबरलाई गोमूत्रले सडाउने कार्यबाट अमोनिया जस्ता बीउ विरुवालाई क्षति पुऱ्याउने तत्व कम भई राम्रो मल तयार हुने विधि बताइएको छ । यसरी तयार गरिएको मलबाट उब्जाउ कालो माटो बन्ने र त्यसमा बाली उत्पादन वृद्धि हुने उपाय प्रष्ट पारिएको छ । मलबारेको यो ज्ञान लामो अनुभवबाट प्राप्त गरिएको थियो ।

### ३. बालीनालीको लागि आवश्यक उपयुक्त अवस्था

कृषि कार्य गर्नका लागि किसानहरूमा धेरै श्रम शक्ति र व्यवहारिक ज्ञानको आवश्यकता पर्दछ । बालीनालीको राम्रो उत्पादनको लागि उपयुक्त हावापानी र तापक्रम आदि कुराहरू हुनुपर्दछ । त्यसैगरी बीउ छर्ने र उमार्ने, रोप्ने, सिंचाई र गोडमेल गर्ने, रोग र किटपतङ्गबाट बचाउनु पर्दछ । यजुर्वेदमा कृषिलाई प्रभाव पार्ने जलवायु बारेमा जानकारी राख्न जोड दिइएको छ र त्यो उपयुक्त होस् भनेर स्तुति गरिएको छ (यजु, १८/३१)। मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषिहरूले बालीनालीबाट राम्रो उत्पादन पाउनको लागि उब्जाउ माटो, सूर्यको उचित तापक्रम, वर्षा, वायु, मल र उपचार तथा सुरक्षा सहितका ७ वटा पक्षको उचित व्यवस्था गर्न सूचित गरेका छन् (यजु, १८/३०-३५) । राम्रो उत्पादनको लागि यी बाहेक असल जातको बीउ आवश्यक हुन्छ र भारत वर्ष र नेपालमा बीउ प्रशोधन गर्ने र रोप्ने राम्रो तरिका विकास गरिएको थियो ।

### ४. बीउ प्रशोधन

राम्रो बाली उत्पादन गर्न सबैभन्दा पहिले असल र स्वस्थ बीउ आवश्यक हुने गर्दछ । वैदिक कालीन भारतवर्षमा बीउ रोप्ने उन्नत प्रविधिको विकास

भएको थियो । बालीनाली लगायत तीन किसिमका बीउ प्रयोग गर्ने गरिन्थ्यो । बाली लगाउँदा बीउ रोप्ने, विरूवा रोप्ने र गानो वा कन्ध रोप्ने गरिन्थ्यो । विद्वान सुरपलाले वृक्ष यजुर्वेद ग्रन्थमा बालीनालीका बीउ बारेमा विस्तृत व्याख्या गरेका छन् । बालीनाली लगाउने पहिलो तरिकामा बीउ नै रोप्ने गरिन्थ्यो । निश्चित ऋतुहरूमा लगाइने बालीहरू राम्रोसँग पाकेपछि त्यसबाट असल बीउ छनोट गरी पुनः रोप्ने कार्यमा प्रयोग गरिन्थ्यो । यस्तो बीउलाई माटोमा रोप्नु पूर्व विभिन्न विधि विधानहरू पूरा गर्ने गरिएको थियो । पहिलो तरिकाअनुसार बीउलाई रोप्नुपूर्व दूधमा भिजाएर ५ दिन सुकाएर घिउ र विड्ङ्ग नाम गरेको वनस्पतिबाट बनाइएको धूपमा धुवाँएर रोप्ने गर्दथे । दोस्रो तरिकामा बीउलाई दूधमा भिजाएर तिल र वृहतीको खरानी सहित घिउमा मलेर गाईको गोबरमा लटपटाई घिउको धूपमा धुवाँएर रोपेमा सम्पूर्ण उम्रिन्छ भन्ने मान्यता थियो । गाईको दूधमा भिजाएर गाईको गोबरमा लटपटाएर सुकाएर पुनः मह र विड्ङ्ग वनस्पतिको धुलोमा मलेर रोपेमा सबै उम्रिन्छ भनिन्थ्यो । ज्ञान भएको बुद्धिमान मानिसले बीउलाई दूधमा भिजाएर छार्याँमा सुकाउने र वृहती जातको तिलको खरानीमा मलेर तोरीको तेलमा लटपटाएमा रोप्न उत्तम हुने बताइएको छ । बीउलाई विड्ङ्ग वनस्पतिको धुलोमा मलेर वा गाईको गोबरमा लटपटाएर रोपेमा छिटो उम्रिन्छ र राम्रोसँग फस्टाउँछ भनिन्थ्यो । वैदिक कालमा बीउलाई पानीले धोएर शुद्ध वस्त्रमा राखेर देवपूजन र नमस्कार गरी ब्राह्मणलाई पैसा वा जमिन दान पश्चात घरमूलीले पहिले र त्यसपछि अन्यले बीउ रोप्ने गरिन्थ्यो (राघवन, १९६४:१०१) । यस सन्दर्भमा अथर्व वेदको एउटा ऋचामा ऋषि उपरिबभ्रमले देवताद्वारा मानिसलाई सरस्वती नदीका किनारामा मधुर रसयुक्त जौ प्रदान गरेको र भूमिमा धान्य उब्जाउनको लागि असल दानी मरुतगण किसान बनेको र इन्द्र देवता हलोको अधिपति बनेको बताइएको छ (अथर्व; ६/३०/१) ।

अहिले विश्वमा उत्पादन हुने प्रायः खाद्यान्न बालीहरूको उत्पत्ति एसियाको भारतीय उपमहाद्विपमा भएको र यहाँ कृषिकार्य कम्तीमा पनि ८० हजार वर्ष

पहिलेदेखि हुँदै आएको मानिएको छ । यसकारण धानको उत्पत्ति र खेती गर्ने चलन पूर्वी भारतबाट सुरु भएको भन्ने कथन छ । तर आर.एन मल्लिकले नेपालको कपिलवस्तु जिल्लाको जङ्गलमा *Oryza perennis* नामको धानको प्यारेन्टल प्लान्ट (Parental plant) प्रशस्तै पाइएको र यो नै धानको पूर्व रूप हो भनेका छन् (मल्लिक, १९८४:५८) । जौ र गहुँ पनि उत्तरी भारतमा उत्पत्ति भई नेपालमा समेत खेती गरिएका खाद्यान्न हुन् भन्ने मान्यता एकथरी विद्वानहरूको रहेको छ ।

#### ५. बालीनालीको क्रम चक्र

वैदिक कालका किसानहरूमा आलोपालो गरेर बाली लगाउने र माटोको उर्वराशक्ति बढाउने कुराको राम्रो ज्ञान थियो । व्यवहारिक कृषिमा एउटा जमिनमा प्रत्येक वर्ष एउटै बाली रोप्नु राम्रो नहुने कृषि विज्ञानको मान्यता रहेको पाइन्छ र कम्तीमा पनि २ वा ३ वर्षको अन्तरमा ४ देखि ६ वटा बाली पछि पुनः पहिलेको बाली लगाउनु उत्तम मानिन्छ । यसको कारण प्रकृतिले नै कतिपय यस्ता बाली दिएको छ जसले माटोलाई चाहिने नाइट्रोजन, पोटास जस्ता तत्वहरू उत्पादन गर्दछन् । कोसेबालीहरू यस्तो वर्गमा पर्दछन् । कतिपय बालीनालीका जराहरू गहिराईसम्म पुग्ने र कतिपयका जराहरू गुजमुज्ज परेर सतहमा नै रहने हुन्छन् । जराहरू टाढासम्म पुग्ने बाली लगाएपछि कोसे बाली लगाएर पुनः जमिनको उत्पादकत्व कायम गर्न सकिन्छ । यो कुरा वैदिक किसानहरूले बुझेका थिए र मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषि सुकीर्ति काक्षीवतले इन्द्रलाई पुकारा गर्दै जौको खेती गर्ने किसानले बारम्बार बाली काटे भैं तिमीले दृष्टको दमन गरेर श्रेष्ठजनको पोषण गर्ने कार्य गर भनेका छन् (ऋ. १०/१३१/२) । यो ऋचाको भाष्य गर्दै कतिपय विद्वानले किसानहरूले बारम्बार जौको बाली काटे भैं भन्ने मन्त्रको तात्पर्य त्यसबेलाको उन्नत कृषि प्रणालीमा बाली चक्र क्रमअनुसार एक बालीपछि अर्को गर्दै निश्चित बाली लगाउने भन्ने अर्थबोध गराएको उल्लेख गरेका छन् (ऐर, १९४०:१७) । त्यसैगरी त्यसबेला लगाउने बाली बारेमा अर्को एक मन्त्रमा उल्लेख पाइन्छ । त्यसबेला बृहश्च (धान), यावश्च (जौ),

माषश्च (मास), तिलाश्च (तिल), मुदगाश्च (मुगी), खल्वाश्च (चना), पियङ्गवश्च (कागुनु), मेणावश्च (रायो), श्यामाकाश्च (सामा), निवाराश्च (निवार), गोधूमाश्च (गहुँ), मसुराश्च (मसुरो) आदिको वृद्धि होस् भन्ने कामना गरिएको पाइन्छ (यजु, १८/२०) । आश्चर्यजक कुरा के छ भने आजकल बहुसङ्ख्यक मानिसको प्रमुख खाद्यान्न मकै (मर्कटान्न) र कोदो (कोद्रव) को वर्णन वैदिक वाङ्मयमा पाइँदैन । सायद यी अन्नको खेती त्यसबेला गरिँदैनथ्यो होला वा यी अन्न अहव्य भएकाले उल्लेख नगरिएको हुन सक्दछ । माथि उल्लेख गरिएका अन्न र दलहनहरूको खेती ऋतु चक्र अनुरूप गरिन्थ्यो । तैत्तिरिय संहितामा वर्षमा दुई बाली उत्पादनको चक्र उल्लेख पाइन्छ र ग्रीष्म ऋतुमा जौ र वर्षा ऋतुमा हरिया बालीहरू, शरद ऋतुमा धान, हेमन्त ऋतुमा दलहन र शिशिर ऋतुमा तिल उत्पादन हुने कुरा बताइएको छ (तैत्तिरिय, ५/१/७/३, ७/२/१०/२०) । तर यो वर्णनमा ग्रीष्म ऋतुमा जौ उत्पादन हुने कुरा त्यति मिले जस्तो देखिँदैन । कैशितकी ब्राह्मण उपनिषदमा जौ र गहुँ हिउँदे बाली भएको र चैत्र महिनामा पाक्ने कुरा लेखिएको छ (कै.ब्रा.१९/३) ।

मानवले पशुका बथान लिएर घुमन्ते जीवन यापन गर्ने अवस्थालाई पार गर्दै उत्तर आदिम युगमा आउँदा खेतीपाती गर्ने सीपको विकास गरेको थियो । त्यस क्रममा एकपटक खेती गरिएको जमिन छाड्दै नयाँ-नयाँ जमिनमा खेती गर्न थाल्यो । यसरी जमिनलाई केही वर्ष बाँझै छाडेर पुनः खेती गर्ने प्रथाको (Fallow rotation farming) सुरुआत हुन गयो । यसले गर्दा उत्पादन राम्रो भयो । दोस्रो चरणमा कोसेवाली, दलहन र अन्य अन्न अन्तर्बालीको मिश्रित खेती गर्न थालियो । यसरी परम्परागत रूपमा खेतीपाती गर्ने कार्यबाट प्राप्त गरेका व्यवहारिक अनुभवबाट सिक्दै अन्न उत्पादन कार्यमा राम्रो व्यवहारिक ज्ञान प्राप्त गर्ने सफलता मिलेको थियो । यसकारणले वैदिक वाङ्मयमा अन्न उत्पादन र यसको परिमाणलाई निकै महत्वका साथ वर्णन गरिएको छ । वेदको अन्न सूक्तमा मन्त्रद्रष्टा ऋषि अगस्त्य मैत्रावरुणिले मानव जीवनको आधार अन्नको महत्वलाई स्पष्ट पार्दै अन्नदेव नामले स्तुति गरेका छन् ।

त्यहाँ अन्नलाई कल्याणकारी, सुखप्रद, विद्वेषरहित, मित्र जस्तै हितैषी, सम्मानपूर्वक उपभोग गरिने र रिस डाह मुक्त भएको स्तुति गर्दै अन्न मङ्गलकारी, संरक्षणयुक्त, पोषकतत्वयुक्त भएर आउन आह्वान गरेका छन् ( ऋ १/१८७/३) । त्यसैगरी सुखको रूपमा परिचित अन्नदेव जौ गहुँ आदि खाद्यान्नका साथमा गाईको दूध घिउ आदि पौष्टिक पदार्थ खाएर स्वास्थ्य बलियो होस् भन्ने कामना गरेका छन् (ऋ १/१८७/९) । अन्न मानिसको लागि मात्र नभएर पशु पन्छीको आहाराको आधार पनि थियो ।

### ७. निरन्तरता र परिवर्तनको संघारमा वर्तमान नेपालको कृषि

नेपालको कृषि प्रणाली अझै पनि परम्परागत ढाँचाको नै छ । वैदिक कालीन कृषिमा उल्लेख भएका धेरै पक्षहरू नै प्रचलनमा रहेका छन् । वेद हिन्दूहरूको सामाजिक, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक जीवनको मार्ग निर्देशक ग्रन्थ भएकाले यसको प्रभाव निरन्तर रूपमा परिरहेको छ । नेपालका कतिपय जनजातिहरूले आफूलाई आर्य मान्दैनन् तापनि उनीहरूले वैदिक कृषि प्रणालीका औजार र उपकरणहरूलाई आजसम्म पनि प्रयोगमा ल्याइरहेका छन् ।

वर्तमान नेपालको कृषि वैदिक कृषि प्रणालीबाट त्यति भिन्न छैन । त्यस समयमा जनसङ्ख्या ज्यादै कम थियो । त्यसको अनुपातमा खेती योग्य जमिन पर्याप्त थियो । यसले गर्दा जमिनमा चाप परेको थिएन र उपलब्ध जमिनमध्य कमै जमिनमा खेती गरिएको थियो । तर वर्तमान कालमा जनसङ्ख्यामा अत्यधिक वृद्धिले गर्दा खेतीयोग्य जमिन कमी भइरहेको छ । यसले गर्दा खेतीयोग्य जमिन खण्डीकरण र सङ्कुचन भई स-साना जोतमा परिणत भएको कुरा तल प्रस्तुत तालिकाबाट स्पष्ट हुन्छ ।

### तालिका नं. १ भूमिको जोतको विवरण

जोतको आकार (हेक्टरमा)	जोतहरू		
	सङ्ख्या	क्षेत्रफल (हेक्टरमा)	
		सिंचित	असिंचित

साना जोत वा जमिनविनाका जोत	१,१५,५३८	९९०.४	२,१२८.९	३,११९.३
जमिनयुक्त जोत	३७,१५,५५५	१,५८३,२१७.९	९३९,३०२.१	२५,२२,५१९.९
०.१ हेक्टरभन्दा कम	३,५५,५४९	१०,०३३.३	१०,०४३.२	२०,०७६.५
०.१ हे. देखि ०.२ हेक्टरसम्म	४,६१,९५७	३५,३३६.५	३२,८२५.३	६८,१६१.८
०.२ हे. देखि ०.५ हे.सम्म	११,६९,५०३	२,१२,४८२.३	१,८४,२३८.६	३,९६,७२०.९
०.५ हे.देखि १ हे.सम्म	९,८४,०२२	३,९४,३८८.५	३,००,६७१.६	६,९५,०६०.१
१-२ हे.सम्म	५,४८,९७४	४,८१,१११.७	२,६८,६९८.३	७,४९,८१०.०
२-३ हे.सम्म	१,२९,३६४	२,२५,७७७.७	८२,७९०.८	३,०८,५६८.५
३-४ हे.सम्म	३९,५०७	१,००,८०४.६	३३,५४८.५	१,३४,३५३.१
४-५ हे.सम्म	१४,८८१	५१,०७०.८	१४,२९३.९	६५,३६४.७
५-१० हे.सम्म	१०,७४४	५८,७०६.१	१०,४७१.०	६९,१७७.१
१० हे.भन्दा माथि	१,०५४	१३,५०६.३	१,७२०.९	१५,२२७.२
<b>कूल</b>	<b>३८,३१,०९३</b>	<b>१५,८४,२०८.३</b>	<b>९,४१,४३०.९</b>	<b>२५,२५,६३९.२</b>

स्रोत : सि.बी.एस., नेशनल सेन्ट्रल सेन्सस अफ स्ट्रिकल्चर २०११/१२ (तालिका १) ई. २०१३ ।

माथिको तालिकाबाट यो कुरा स्पष्ट हुन्छ कि साना जोत जसको क्षेत्रफल ४ आना (०.०१२७२ हेक्टर) र आठ धुर (०.०१३५५ हेक्टर) सम्मको सङ्ख्या पनि निकै भइसकेको छ । यस्तो सानो जोतका जमिन कृषिका दृष्टिले उपयुक्त देखिँदैन । त्यसैगरी कृषि योग्य जमिन ०.१ देखि १० हेक्टरभन्दा ठूला कित्ताहरूमा विभाजित भएको देखिन्छ । यसरी जमिन खण्डीकरण हुनु कृषिको दृष्टिले राम्रो मानिँदैन । जमिनलाई स-साना जोतमा खण्डीकरण हुनबाट बचाएर चकलाबन्दी खेती (Enclosure farming) प्रणाली अपनाएमा मात्र कृषि उत्पादनमा वृद्धि हुने कुरा स्पष्ट छ । राजनीतिक अर्थशास्त्र (Political economy) को दृष्टिले यो भूमि वितरणको तथ्याङ्कलाई अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय प्रचलनअनुसार विश्लेषण गर्दा ०.१ देखि ०.५ हेक्टरसम्मको जोताहालाई गरीब किसान, ०.५ देखि २ हेक्टरसम्मको जोताहालाई निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय किसान, २ देखि ५ हेक्टरसम्मको जोताहालाई मध्यम वर्गीय किसान, ५ देखि १०

हेक्टरका जोताहालाई धनी किसान र १० हेक्टर माथिको भूस्वामीलाई जमिन्दार, भूमिपति वा सामन्त मान्ने गरिन्छ । निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय किसानको जोताहामा जम्मा १४,४४,८७० हेक्टर जमिन रहेको पाइन्छ तापनि यसै वर्गका किसानहरूको सङ्ख्या ठूलो भएकाले यो वर्गका किसानको जोतको आकार सानो नै रहेको छ । नेपाल कृषिमूलक अर्थतन्त्र भएको मुलक हो र यहाँको आयको मुख्य स्रोत जमिन हो । जमिनको यस्तो असमान वितरणले गर्दा आयमा पनि व्यापक भिन्नता रहेको कुरा निर्विवाद छ । यसकारण जमिनको समानुपातिक वितरण र "जमिन कसको जोत्नेको" नारालाई आम रूपमा आत्मसात गरिनुपर्दछ ।

यस सन्दर्भमा वर्तमान नेपालको कृषि भूमि उपयोग र कृषिको संरचनात्मक स्वरूप बारेमा पनि सङ्क्षिप्त चर्चा गर्नु सान्दर्भिक नै होला । नेपालमा कृषि भूमिको उपयोग र कृषि उत्पादन प्रणाली परम्परागत शैली र आधुनिकता बीचको सङ्क्रमण अवस्थाबाट गुज्रिरहेको छ । यो कुरा तल तालिकामा प्रस्तुत तथ्याङ्कबाट पनि स्पष्ट हुन्छ ।

### तालिका नं. २

#### नेपालको कृषिभूमि उपयोग र कृषिको संरचनात्मक स्वरूप ई. २०११/१२

कूल कृषि भूमि (हेक्टरमा)	२३,६३,०००.७३	१००%
कूल खेतीयोग्य भूमि (हेक्टरमा)	२१,६२,७५१.१	१००%
सिंचित भूमि	१३,१३,४०६.३	५२.१%
Iron plough ले जोत्ने गरिएको जमिन (हेक्टरमा)	१०,७३,४४१	-
Tractor ले जोत्ने गरिएको जमिन (हेक्टरमा)	८,४४,७००	-
Power tiller ले जोत्ने गरिएको जमिन (हेक्टरमा)	७५,६७१	-
आधुनिक रासायनिक मल प्रयोगको जमिन (हेक्टरमा)	१९,८७,५४४	-
रासायनिक मल प्रयोगको कूल परिमाण (किन्टलमा)	४०,४१,१४४	-

स्रोत : (क) सेन्ट्रल ब्यूरो अफ स्ट्याटिस्टिक्स, स्ट्याटिस्टिकल पकेट बुक अफ नेपाल ई.२०१४ ।

(ख) सेन्ट्रल ब्यूरो अफ स्ट्याटिस्टिक्स, नेशनल सेम्पल सर्भे अफ आग्रिकल्चर (नेपाल)

नेशनल रिपोर्ट २०११/१२/ई.२०१२ ।

माथिको तालिकाबाट के कुरा स्पष्ट हुन्छ भने अर्भै पनि ४७९ प्रतिशत जमिनमा सिंचाइको व्यवस्था हुन सकेको छैन र आकाशे भरमा खेती भइरहेको छ । यस अर्थमा नेपालको कृषि वैदिक कालीन ऋतुचक्रअनुसार नै चलिरहेको देख्न सकिन्छ । खनजोतको दृष्टिले हेर्दा हरप्पा सभ्यतामा आविष्कार भई वैदिक युगमा व्यापक प्रचलनमा आएको काठ र फलामको फालीयुक्त गोरुले तान्ने हलोबाट (Iron plough) नै १०,७३,४४१ हेक्टर जमिन जोल्ने गरिएको देखिन्छ । हिमाली र पहाडी भेगका साथै तराईमा पनि हलो व्यापक प्रयोगमा रहेको छ । Tractor र Power tiller ले अर्भै व्यापकता पाउन सकेको छैन ।

मलखादको प्रयोगमा निरन्तरमा र परिवर्तन दुवै देख्न सकिन्छ । बहुसङ्ख्यक किसान गाईवस्तुको गोबर मल प्रयोग गरेर खेती गर्दछन् । माथिको तालिकामा ई.२०११/१२ मा विभिन्न बालीनालीमा प्रयोग गरिएको आधारमा १९,८७,५४४ हेक्टर जमिनमा ४०,४१,१४४ क्विन्टल रासायनिक मल प्रयोग भएको देखिन्छ । यो खपतलाई न्यून नै मान्नु पर्दछ । रासायनिक मलको प्रयोग व्यापक मात्रामा प्रयोग हुन सकेको छैन र यसो हुनुमा किसानहरूमा रासायनिक मलले माटो बिग्रन्छ भन्ने चिन्ता, स्वदेशमा मल उद्योग नहुनु, मल समयमा उपलब्ध नहुनु, मूल्य उच्च हुनु र क्रय शक्ति नहुनु किसानहरूमा माटोको गुण प्राङ्गारिक र रासायनिक मलहरूको वैज्ञानिक अनुपात जस्ता ज्ञानको अभाव आदि कारणहरू देखिन्छन् ।

उब्जाको दृष्टिले हेर्दा नेपालमा अधिकांश वैदिककालीन परम्परागत बालीनाली नै प्रचलनमा रहेको पाइन्छ । वैदिक ग्रन्थमा उल्लेखित धान, गहुँ, जौ, कागुनो, निवारो, मास, मुगी, मसुर, चना, तिल, रायो आदि अहिले पनि प्रमुख अन्न, तरकारी र तेलहन बाली रहको छन् । वेदमा उल्लेख नभएको मकै खेती (मर्कटान्न) भारत वर्षमा ई सत्रौँ शताब्दीमा र नेपालमा अठारौँ शताब्दीको अन्तिम दशकमा सुरु गरिएको थियो (रेग्मी, १९७१ : १७-१८) । वेदमा सायद कुअन्न ठानेर कोदोको उल्लेख नभएको होला तर हाल यो

व्यापक रूपमा खेती गरिन्छ । आलु खेती पछि मात्र सुरु भएको पाइन्छ । कर्कपेट्रिकका अनुसार नेपालमा आलुखेती ईअठारौं शताब्दीको अन्तिम दशकदेखि १९ औं शताब्दीको मध्य सम्ममा प्रचलनमा आएको उल्लेख छ ( रेग्मी, पृ.१९) । काउली, बन्दा, लसुन, प्याज, भण्टा जस्ता तरकारीको खेती पछि मात्र सुरु भएको देखिन्छ । एउटा अर्को उल्लेखनीय कुरा के छ भने वेदमा उल्लिखित र वर्तमान समयमा पनि प्रचलनमा रहेको धान, गहुँ, जौ, मास, मसुरो लगायतका अन्न र दलहनहरूका परम्परागत बीउहरू लोपउन्मुख हुँदैछन् । यी बालीहरूलाई वैज्ञानिक प्रविधिद्वारा Improved र Hybrid गरी नयाँ-नयाँ जातहरू प्रचलनमा ल्याएको छ । यी नयाँ जातको खेती गर्न आधुनिक प्रविधि, रासायनिक मल र विषादीको आवश्यकता हुन्छ । यसबाट जमिनको उर्वरा शक्ति बिग्रेको र मानव स्वास्थ्यमा समेत असर परेको अनुभूति गर्न थालिएको छ । धान बाली हाल वर्षमा २ पटकसम्म लगाउन थालिएको छ । विभिन्न तरकारहरू ग्रिन हाउस प्रविधिद्वारा सबै ऋतु र महिनामा उत्पादन हुन थालेको छ । तथापि जनसङ्ख्याको तीव्र वृद्धि र उचित उत्पादन पद्धतिको अभावको कारण नेपाल भण्डै २५ वर्षको अवधिमा नै धान, चामल लगायत अन्न निर्यातक (Exporter) मुलुकबाट अन्न आयातक (Importer) मुलुकमा परिवर्तन भएको छ । नेपालले मासिक डेढ अर्ब रूपैयाँको चामल आयात गर्न बाध्य भएको छ । यसले गर्दा राष्ट्रिय ढुकुटीको ठूलो हिस्सा चामल आदि खाद्यान्न र पेट्रोलियन पदार्थ खरिद गर्न तिर्नुपर्ने भएको छ । यो मुलुकको कृषि अर्थतन्त्रको लागि ठूलो चुनौती बन्न गएको छ ।

### निष्कर्ष

वैदिक कालमा भारतवर्ष र नेपालका आर्यहरूको जीवन यापनको प्रमुख आधार खेतीपाती नै थियो । वैदिक आर्यहरूले यस्तो महत्वपूर्ण भूमिकाको अनेक मन्त्रहरूमा वन्दना गर्दथे । उनीहरू माटोको उचित उपयोग प्रति अति नै सचेत थिए । जनावरका गोबर र विष्टाबाट बनेका मल जमिनलाई उर्वर बनाउन प्रयोग गर्दथे । बालीनाली फस्टाउन र राम्रो उत्पादन प्राप्त गर्न

माटोलाई उब्जाउ बनाउने, सूर्यको तापक्रम वर्षा, वायु, मलखाद र बालीका रोग र जन्तु जनावरबाट सुरक्षा जस्ता कुरामा विचार पुऱ्याउने गर्दथे । ऋतुअनुसार बीउ छर्ने, उमाने, रोप्ने, गोडमेल गर्ने, बाली भित्याउने कुरामा राम्रो ध्यान दिन्थे । बीउलाई राम्रोसँग प्रशोधन गरेर रोप्ने गर्दथे । राम्रो उत्पादन लिनको लागि बाली क्रम चक्रको ख्याल राख्दथे । एक बाली लगाएपछि जमिनलाई मलिलो बनाउने कोशेबाली लगाए पछि पुनः अर्को बाली लगाउने गरिन्थ्यो । त्यसैगरी जमिनलाई एक दुई वर्ष बाँभो छोडेर पुनः खेती गर्ने (Fallow rotation farming) गर्दथे । यसरी त्यसबेला प्रकृतिलाई कुनै पनि क्षति नपुऱ्याई खेतीपाती गर्ने गरिन्थ्यो । वर्तमान नेपालको कृषि प्रणाली वैदिक कालको निरन्तरता र परिवर्तनको सङ्क्रमणबाट गुञ्जिरहेको छ । हालको कृषिमा गोरु र हलोको प्रयोग, गोबर मलको निरन्तर र अत्यधिक प्रयोग, आकाशे वर्षाका आधारमा ऋण्डे आधा खेती योग्य जमिनमा खेती निरन्तरता रूपमा देखा पर्दछन् । त्यसैगरी वैदिककालीन प्रमुख अन्नबाली अहिले पनि उत्पादनका प्रमुख बाली रहेका छन् । परिवर्तनको दृष्टिले हेर्दा खेती योग्य जमिनको खण्डीकरण र सङ्कुचन, पावर टिलर र ट्रयाक्टरहरूद्वारा खनजोत, विभिन्न नहर र मेसिनबाट सिंचाई, वेमौसमी खेती र किटनाशक विषादी र रासायनिक मलबाट उत्पादनमा वृद्धि तर मानव स्वास्थ्यमा क्षति जस्ता कुराहरू देखिन्छन् तापनि यसबाट जमिनको उत्पादकत्वमा क्रमिक ह्रास हुँदै गइरहेकोले मानिसको भविष्यमाथि ठूलो चुनौती बनिरहेको छ यसकारण वैदिक मानिसले सोचे जस्तो भूमिलाई कुनै क्षति नपुऱ्याई प्राकृतिक तरिकाले खेती गरी अन्न र तरकारी आदि उत्पादन गरेर जीवनयापन गर्नु बुद्धिमानी देखिन्छ नत्र यो भूमि मरुभूमिकरण भई मानवको लागि अभिशाप पनि बन्न सक्दछ ।

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