

লক্ষ্মীনন্দন বৰাৰ ‘গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি’ৰ নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ কথকতা

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সংক্ষিপ্ত সাৰ :

অসমৰ জন-জীৱনৰ লগত নদীৰ প্ৰাচীন,গভীৰ সম্পৰ্কই অসমীয়া সাহিত্যক বিশেষভাৱে প্ৰভাৱান্বিত কৰি আহিছে। ‘মিৰিজীয়াৰী’ উপন্যাসৰপৰা বৰ্তমানলৈকে বিভিন্ন অসমীয়া উপন্যাসত নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱন ৰূপায়িত হৈছে। প্ৰসিদ্ধ উপন্যাসিক লক্ষ্মীনন্দন বৰাৰ এনেএখন উল্লেখযোগ্য উপন্যাস হৈছে ‘গঙা চিলনীৰ পাখি’। নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনক গভীৰভাৱে অধ্যয়ন কৰি উপন্যাসিকগৰাকীয়ে গ্ৰাম্য কৃষিজীৱী জনসাধাৰণৰ আশা-আকাংক্ষা,সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতি,আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠান আদি উপন্যাসখনত সজীৱ ৰূপত অঙ্কণ কৰিছে। নদীৰ বিচিত্ৰ ৰূপৰ স্পৰ্শতে গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনে লাভ কৰে জীৱনৰ বিচিত্ৰ ৰূপৰ অভিজ্ঞতা; যি অভিজ্ঞতাৰে তেওঁলোকে উপলব্ধি কৰে জীয়াই থকাৰ বাস্তৱ সত্য। সেয়েহে নদী অবিহনে গ্ৰাম্য জীৱন হৈ পৰে স্থবিৰ, প্ৰাণহীন আৰু অসম্পূৰ্ণ। এই গৱেষণা পত্ৰৰ জৰিয়তে লক্ষ্মীনন্দন বৰাৰ ‘গঙা চিলনীৰ পাখি’ৰ নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ সামগ্ৰিক মূল্যায়ন কৰিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

প্ৰধান শব্দ (Key word): নদী, সোণাই, গ্ৰাম্য জীৱন,বানপানী, নাৰী, ৰাজনীতি, আবেগ-অনুভূতি, সাহিত্য, উপন্যাস আদি।

১.০০ প্ৰস্তাৱনা :

আৱহমান কালৰেপৰা নদীৰ লগত ৰক্ষিত হৈছে সাহিত্য-সভ্যতা-সংস্কৃতিৰ গভীৰ সম্পৰ্ক। নদীৰ পাৰত গঢ় লৈ উঠা গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ মূল চালিকা শক্তিয়েই হৈছে নদী। নদীকেন্দ্ৰিক গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ আধাৰত ৰচিত হৈছে বিভিন্ন সাহিত্য। বিশ্বত বিভিন্ন সাহিত্যৰ দৰে ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্যতো বৈদিক যুগৰে পৰা নদীয়ে গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ স্থান লাভ কৰি আহিছে। অসমীয়া সাহিত্যতো আঁকোৱালি লৈছে নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনক। নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ সুখ-দুখ, আবেগ-অনুভূতি, আশা-আকাংক্ষা, জীৱন সংগ্ৰাম,

সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতি, ভাষিক বিশেষত্ব আদি বিভিন্ন অসমীয়া সাহিত্যই অতীতৰে পৰা বহন কৰি আহিছে। বিভিন্ন লোকসাহিত্য, গল্প-উপন্যাস, কবিতাতো নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱন চিত্ৰিত হৈছে। অসমীয়া উপন্যাস সাহিত্যত ৰজনীকান্ত বৰদলৈৰ ‘মিৰি জীয়াৰী’ৰপৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি নৱকান্ত বৰুৱাৰ ‘কপিলীপৰীয়া সাধু’, নিৰুপমা বৰগোহাঞিৰ ‘সেই নদী নিৰবধি’, লীলা গগৈৰ ‘নৈ বৈ যায়’, চৈয়দ আব্দুল মালিকৰ ‘সূৰ্যমুখীৰ স্বপ্ন’ আদি উপন্যাসত বিভিন্ন নদীক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি ৰূপায়িত হৈছে নদী-মানুহৰ নিবিড় সম্পৰ্ক, নদীপৰীয়া জনসাধাৰণৰ বিচিত্ৰ বৰ্ণময় কাহিনী। লক্ষ্মীনন্দন বৰাৰ ‘গঙা চিলনীৰ পাখি’ও নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ আধাৰত ৰচিত উপন্যাস।

২.০০ অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি আৰু সমল :

আলোচ্য গৱেষণা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুত কৰোঁতে প্ৰধানতঃ বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতিৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে। লগতে সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ৰ বিভিন্ন গ্ৰন্থ, প্ৰৱন্ধ আদিক গৌণ উৎস হিচাপে লৈ গৱেষণা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুত কৰা হৈছে। বিষয়বস্তু উপস্থাপনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দশমিক পদ্ধতিৰ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হৈছে।

৩.০০ ‘গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি’ উপন্যাসৰ বিষয়বস্তু :

আলোচ্য ‘গঙা চিলনীৰ পাখি’ লক্ষ্মীনন্দন বৰাৰ এখন উল্লেখযোগ্য উপন্যাস। নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনক গভীৰভাৱে অধ্যয়ন কৰি নিজস্ব শৈলীৰে মনোমোহকৈ উপন্যাসত বৰ্ণনা কৰাসকলৰ ভিতৰত লক্ষ্মীনন্দন বৰা অন্যতম। উপন্যাসখনৰ বিষয়বস্তু সোণাই নদীৰ পাৰৰ গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ লগত জড়িত। গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ সুদক্ষ কলাকাৰ বৰাৰ হাতৰ স্পৰ্শত নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্যজীৱন উপন্যাসখনত অতি সজীৱ হৈ পৰিছে। নৈপৰীয়া বাসিন্দাৰ স্বাভাৱিক গ্ৰাম্যজীৱন, সময়ৰ পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ বাবে আঁকোৱালি লোৱা নতুন জীৱন সংগ্ৰাম, সামাজিক নতুন মূল্যবোধ, জীৱনৰ জটিলতা, মানৱীয় আশা-আকাংক্ষাই হৈছে উপন্যাসখনৰ মূল উপজীব্য।

উপন্যাসখনত অংকিত হৈছে এটি ব্যৰ্থ প্ৰেমৰ কৰুণ কাহিনী। সোণাই নদীৰ পাৰতে অংকুৰিত হৈছিল বাসন্তী আৰু ধনঞ্জয়ৰ প্ৰেম। লক্ষীমপুৰৰ ধনঞ্জয়ৰ পূৰ্বৰ জীৱন আছিল অত্যন্ত বেদনাদায়ক। পিতৃ-মাতৃহীন ধনঞ্জয় আৰু ভনীয়েক বৰদেউতাকৰ আশ্ৰয়তে ডাঙৰ-দীঘল হৈছিল। সময়ৰ পাকচক্ৰত ধনঞ্জয়ে পৰিয়ালৰ সকলোৰে পৰা আঁতৰত সোণাইৰ পাৰত আশ্ৰয় গ্ৰহণ কৰেহি। বাসন্তীৰ ককায়েক ভোগমনৰ লগত থকা সু-সম্পৰ্কৰ বাবে বাসন্তীৰ ঘৰলৈ অহা-যোৱা কৰোঁতে ধনঞ্জয় আৰু বাসন্তীৰ মাজত প্ৰণয় উন্মেষ হয়। কিন্তু নিৰ্বাচনী ভোটৰ ৰাজনীতিৰ বাবে ধনঞ্জয় আৰু ভোগমনৰ মাজত অহি-নকুল সম্বন্ধ হোৱাত বাসন্তী আৰু ধনঞ্জয়ৰ প্ৰেমে পৰিপূৰ্ণতা লাভ নকৰিলে। ভোগমনে ধনী মথুৰা মণ্ডলৰ লগত বাসন্তীৰ বিয়া ঠিক কৰিলে। তথাপি প্ৰেমৰ তাড়নাত প্ৰেমাস্পদ ধনঞ্জয়ৰ লগত বিয়াৰ পূৰ্বতে পলাই যোৱাৰ যো-জা কৰিও নৈতিক চেতনা জাগ্ৰত হোৱাত সেয়া বাদ দি বাসন্তী মথুৰাৰ লগত

বিয়াত বহিল। দুদিনমান বাসন্তীয়ে সুখৰ বৈবাহিক জীৱন কটাইছিল যদিও দাম্পত্য জীৱনলৈ ধুমুহা নামি আহিল তেতিয়া যেতিয়াই মথুৰাই গম পালে বাসন্তীৰ পূৰ্বৰ প্ৰণয়ৰ কথা। বৈবাহিক জীৱনৰ ছন্দপতন ঘটিল। মথুৰাই বাসন্তীক সহজভাৱে ল'ব নোৱাৰা হ'ল। বাসন্তীয়ে পূৰ্বৰ কথা অকপটে কৈ মথুৰাৰ সন্দেহ দূৰ কৰাৰ চেষ্টা কৰিলেও মথুৰাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তন নহ'ল। অশান্ত, অস্থিৰ, ভাৰাত্ৰান্ত মন লৈ অৱশেষত মথুৰাৰ মটৰ দুৰ্ঘটনাত মৃত্যু হ'ল। স্বামীৰ মৃত্যুৰ পিছত বাসন্তীৰ মাকৰো মৃত্যু হ'ল। গৰ্ভৱতী বাসন্তীয়ে তথাপি ধৈৰ্য ধৰিলে। কিন্তু শেষত ভূমিষ্ঠ সন্তানৰ মৃত্যুত বাসন্তী বাউলী হোৱাৰ দৰে হ'ল। সৰ্বস্ব হেৰুৱাই বাসন্তী দিশহাৰা হ'ল। শত্ৰুৰূপ উপদেশত তাই কীৰ্তন-দশম পুথিত শান্তিৰ সন্ধান কৰিলে। কিন্তু এটা সময়ত স্বাভাৱিক নাৰীৰ দৰে বিধৱা বাসন্তী এটি পূৰ্ণ জীৱনৰ প্ৰতি উদ্বাউল হৈ পৰিল। এহাল প্ৰেমিক-প্ৰেমিকাক পলুৱাই পঠিয়াই বাসন্তীয়ে নিজৰ জীৱনৰ পূৰ্বৰ ভুল সংশোধন কৰি আনন্দ লাভ কৰিলে। ডেকা-গাভৰুহালৰ প্ৰেমৰ বতাহে বাসন্তীকো স্পৰ্শ কৰিলে। লাহে লাহে সকলো দুখ পাহৰি পূৰ্বৰ প্ৰেমিক ধনঞ্জয়ৰ লগত এক হোৱাৰ বাবে বাসন্তী ব্যাকুল হৈ পৰিল। কিন্তু সামাজিক কামত মন-প্ৰাণ সঁপি দিয়া ধনঞ্জয়ে সামাজিক মৰ্যাদা লাঘৱ হোৱাৰ আশংকাত বাসন্তীৰ ব্যাকুলতাক সঁহাৰি নিদি নিজৰ ঘৰ-মাটি বিক্ৰী কৰি সোণাই নদীৰ পাৰ চিৰদিনৰ বাবে এৰি নিৰুদ্দিষ্ট হৈ পৰিল। জীৱনৰ শেষ আশা ভঙ্গ হোৱাৰ বেদনাত বাসন্তী যেন নিৰ্বাক-নিষ্পন্দন এক প্ৰস্তৰ মূৰ্তিত পৰিণত হয়। বেদনা বিধুৰ বাসন্তী পুনৰ ধৰ্মীয় পুথিৰ মাজত নিমগ্ন হৈ পৰে।

৪.০০ 'গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি'ৰ নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ কথকতা :

নদীক লৈ ৰচিত উপন্যাসত নদী কাষৰীয়া জন-জীৱনৰ আশা-আকাংক্ষা, কামনা-বাসনা, সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতি, আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠান, লোকবিশ্বাস, ভাষা আদিৰ দিশ প্ৰতিফলিত হয়। 'গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি' উপন্যাসখনো ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহয়।

হৃদয়স্পৰ্শী এটি প্ৰেম কাহিনীৰ লগতে সোণাই নৈৰপাৰৰ গ্ৰাম্য জীৱন উপন্যাসখনৰ অন্যতম বিশেষত্ব। সোণাই নদীৰ পাৰৰ গ্ৰাম্য জনসাধাৰণৰ নদীখনৰ লগত নিবিড় সম্পৰ্ক। "সিহঁতৰ মানত সোণাইখন, ইয়াৰ কাষৰীয়া গছ-গছনি, চৰাই-চিৰিকটি আৰু বিশাল শ্যামল মোহনীয় প্ৰকৃতি — সকলো মনৰ আপোন। ইহঁত প্ৰকৃতিৰ লগত অভিন্ন। সেয়েহে কুলি-কেতেকীয়ে মনৰ কথা কয়। সোণাইৰ টলমল পানীতে চিকিমিকি সোঁতত জীৱনৰ ছন্দ বিচাৰি পায়। সোণাইখন সিহঁতে এৰিব নোখোজে। সোণাইতে সিহঁতে জীৱনৰ দীক্ষা পায়। সোণাইয়ে সিহঁতক কথা কয়। নাচে, হাঁহে আৰু বিনায়।" (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ. ৮) বাসন্তীহঁতে দেখে সোণাইৰ বুকুতে কত পীৰিতিয়ে ঠন ধৰিলে, কত পীৰিতি সোণাইৰ জিলিমিলি টোৱে লীন কৰিলে।

নদীকাষৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জনসাধাৰণৰ জীৱন সংগ্ৰামেৰে পূৰ্ণ। কৃষকৰ ভৱিষ্যৎ নিৰ্ধাৰিত হয় নদীক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি। সোণাই নদীৰ পলসে গাঁৱৰ মাটি শস্য শ্যামলা কৰাৰ বাবে কোনো বছৰ ধান-চাউল, শাক-

পাচলিৰে নদন-বদন। কিন্তু সোণাই যেতিয়া ৰুণ্ট হয় সোণাইপৰীয়াই জীয়াতু ভোগে। বানপানী হ'লে সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ ভঁৰালৰ চালেদি পানী বয়, ধান-মৰাপাট পানীৰ তলত জাহ যায়, মাৰি-মৰক, আকাল হৈ সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ দুখে কুলাই-পাচিয়ে নধৰা হয়। সোণাই নদীয়ে নিৰ্ধাৰণ কৰে সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ জীৱনৰ গতি। সোণাইৰ বুকুৱেদি অহা-যোৱা নকৰিলে নচলে। বাৰিষা পাঁচ-ছহাত দ' পানী থকা ঠাইত খেতি কৰোতে বিপদৰ সম্ভাৱনা। "বুৰ দি তলত মৰাপাট কটাৰ সময়ত 'মছন্দৰী', পিঠি ক'লা প্ৰকাণ্ড আঁৰি মাছ বা বৰালি মাছে খুন্দিয়াই কলিজা লৰাই দিব পাৰে।" (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৪০) প্ৰতি পদে পদে বিপদ হ'লেও সোণাইখন এৰি সোণাইপৰীয়া ক'লৈকো যাবই নোৱাৰে। সোণাই নদীৰ প্ৰতি গভীৰ আকৰ্ষণৰ বাবে সোণাইপৰীয়াই পাহৰি যায় নদীখনে দিয়া দুখ-কষ্ট। তেওঁলোক পুনৰ সোণাইৰ প্ৰেমত পৰে। নদীখনে সোণাইপৰীয়াক শিকাই জীয়াই থকাৰ সংগ্ৰাম। সেয়েহে হাজাৰ বিপদতো সোণাইপৰীয়াই জীৱনক সহজে গ্ৰহণ কৰি আগবাঢ়ি যায়।

কৃষিয়েই হৈছে গ্ৰাম্য জনসাধাৰণৰ জীৱিকাৰ প্ৰধান সন্মল। সোণাইপৰীয়া কৃষিজীৱী গ্ৰামীণ সমাজখনে ধান-মৰাপাট-সৰিয়হৰ লগতে কৰি-বেঙেনা আদিৰ খেতি কৰে। ধান বিক্ৰী কৰে। কিন্তু লাহে লাহে পথাৰৰ লখিমীৰে মুখ নভৰা হ'ল। অৱশ্যে মৰাপাটৰ ফচল আগবঢ়াই আছিল। অঞ্চলটোত "মৰাপাটৰ খেতি কৰা কেইঘৰহে টনকিয়াল অৱস্থাৰ, যাৰ মৰাপাটৰ খেতিৰ উপযুক্ত মাটি নাই, সেইবোৰ মানুহৰ অৱস্থা খুব বেয়া। এসময়ত কিন্তু সোণাইপৰীয়া মানুহে মৰাপাটৰ মোল বুজা নাছিল। গৰুৰ পঘাৰ কাৰণেহে এলোচা-দুলোচা মাটিত মৰাপাট কৰিছিল। প্ৰথম মহাসমৰৰ দিনৰ পৰাহে এই খেতিলৈ মানুহৰ মন হ'ল" (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৪৫)। আনহাতে সোণাইপৰীয়া গাঁৱৰ জনসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি হোৱাৰ বাবে পৰিয়ালৰ ভাই-ককাইৰ মাজত মাটি নোজোৰাৰ সমস্যাই গা কৰি উঠিল।

সময়ৰ সোঁতত কৃষিজীৱী জনসাধাৰণৰ জীৱনলৈ অহা পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ প্ৰভাৱ উপন্যাসখনৰ ছত্ৰে ছত্ৰে বিৰাজমান। জীৱনৰ সুখ-দুখ, হৰ্ষ-বিষাদ, প্ৰেম-বিবহ, পোৱা-নোপোৱাৰ আনন্দ-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ পৰা সোণাইপৰীয়াই শিকিছে জীৱনৰ প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থ। পৰম্পৰাগত জীৱন আৰু আধুনিক জীৱনৰ দ্বন্দ্বত হাবু ডুবু খোৱা গ্ৰাম্যজীৱনে হেৰুৱাইছে জীৱনৰ স্বাচ্ছন্দ্য গতি। সোণাইপাৰৰ ভোগৰাম আৰু ভোগৰামৰ দেউতাকৰ সময়ৰ মাজতেই পাৰ্থক্য। ভোগৰামৰ দেউতাকৰ দিনত মাটি বহুমূলীয়া বস্তু নাছিল। সোণাইৰ পাৰত বয়বস্ত্ৰৰ প্ৰাচুৰ্যৰ লগতে কৃষকৰ জীৱন আছিল স্থাৱৰ অথচ স্বচ্ছল। অভাৱ নথকাৰ বাবেই দূৰদৃষ্টিহীন দেউতাকে পুতেকলৈ ভালেমান মাটি-বাৰী ৰাখি থৈ যোৱাটো প্ৰয়োজনীয় বুলি ভবা নাছিল। কিন্তু ভোগৰামৰ দেউতাকে মৃত্যুৰ পূৰ্বেহে উপলব্ধি কৰিছিল যে "তেওঁ এৰি থৈ যোৱা মাটি কেইহালিচাকে ভৰসা কৰি পুতেকে ভৱিষ্যৎ জীৱন গঢ়ি তুলিব নোৱাৰে। তেওঁ জীয়াই থকাৰ অৱস্থাতেই ভোগৰামে খেতিৰ কাম কৰিবলৈ বাধ্য হৈছিল আৰু বেপাৰত ধৰিছিল" (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৪৪)। খেতিৰ মাটি মাথোন তিনি হালিচা। তাৰে পৰিয়ালটি পোহা সম্ভৱ নহয় বাবে ভোগৰামে "মাঘৰ পৰা ব'হাগলৈকে গাঁৱে গাঁৱে গৈ ধান, মাহ, সৰিয়হ আদি কিনি আৰু সপ্তাহত এগাড়ী-দুগাড়ী মাল চৰা দামত বেচে।

ব'হাগৰ পৰা শাওণলৈকে সি ফুলগুৰি, জাঁজৰি আৰু দলংঘাটৰ বজাৰত কটা কাপোৰ বেচে। পাছৰ চাৰিমাহ মৰাপাটৰ কাৰবাৰ কৰে”(গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৪৪)। এনেদৰে মৰাপাটৰ কাৰবাৰ কৰিয়েই ভোগৰাম কলিতা এদিন ভোগৰাম মহাজন হৈছিল।

নৈপৰীয়া অঞ্চললৈ পৰিৱৰ্তন আহে। সোণাই নৈৰ কাষৰীয়া গাঁওবোৰৰ বাট-পথৰ উন্নতি হোৱাত যোগাযোগ সুচল হ'ল। ফলত গাঁওবাসীৰ মঙ্গল হ'ল ঠিকেই, কিন্তু চহৰৰ বেপাৰীয়ে সহজতে গাঁৱৰ হাটলৈ আহি বেপাৰ কৰিব পৰা হোৱাত সামান্য কানি-কাপোৰৰ বেহা কৰা ভোগৰামৰ মন্দা অৱস্থা হ'ল। কাৰণ গাঁৱৰ মানুহবোৰে স্বৰাজৰ আগৰ দিনৰ দৰে হাতে-কটা সূতাৰ কাপোৰ নিষিদ্ধা হ'ল। তেওঁলোকৰ চিলেটীয়া বেপাৰীয়ে অনা কলৰ কাপোৰলৈ হাবিয়াস হ'ল। তেনেদৰে মৰাপাটৰ ব্যৱসায়কো টাউনীয়া ব্যৱসায়ীয়ে গ্ৰাস কৰিলে। কেএগ মহাজনৰ বজাৰৰ সুবিধা পোৱাত সোণাইপৰীয়া কেএগ মহাজনৰ লগত মৰাপাটৰ 'বজাৰ ভাও' কৰি বেছি টকাৰ মালিক হোৱাৰ সপোন দেখিলে। অসমৰ প্ৰায়বোৰ গাঁৱতে স্বাধীনতাৰ পিছত লাহে লাহে কেএগ মহাজনৰ ব্যৱসায় গা কৰি উঠাত গাঁৱৰ স্থানীয় ব্যৱসায়ৰ আমূল পৰিৱৰ্তনে দেখা দিছিল। বৰ্তমানেও ব্যৱসায়ৰ ক্ষেত্ৰখনত তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰভাৱ পৰিলক্ষিত। সোণাইৰ মাছ ধৰা ঠাইবোৰ চৰকাৰে ডাকত দিবলৈ লোৱাত মাছ ধৰি দু-পইচা উপাৰ্জন কৰা সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ ভাতমুঠি যোগাৰ কৰাটোৰো মুদা মৰিছিল। গ্ৰাম্য অৰ্থনীতিৰ তেনে পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ সজীৱ চিত্ৰ উপন্যাসিকে 'গঙা চিলনীৰ পাখি'ত অতি দক্ষতাৰে অঙ্কন কৰিছে।

প্ৰকৃতিৰ বুকুত লালিত-পালিত গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ সহজ-সৰল জীৱনক যেতিয়া ৰাজনীতিৰ কুটিল বতাহে স্পৰ্শ কৰে, তেতিয়া তেওঁলোকে দিক্-বিদিক্ হেৰুৱায়। সোণাইপৰীয়াৰো তেনে অৱস্থা। সোণাইপৰীয়াই ৰাজনীতিৰ জটিল পাঠ নাজানে। ৰাজনীতিৰ পাকচক্ৰত পৰি জটিলতাৰ অৰ্থ বুজি নোপোৱা সহজ-সৰল সোণাইপৰীয়াই জীৱন যুদ্ধত হাবু ডুবু খাইছে। তথাপি নতুন বৈচিত্ৰ্যক আদৰি বহুতে সোণালী সপোন দেখে। সুচতুৰ প্ৰাৰ্থীয়ে নিৰ্বাচনৰ সময়ত সোণাইপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জনসাধাৰণৰ সৰলতা, অভাৱগ্ৰস্ততাক লক্ষ্য কৰি প্ৰচাৰ অভিযান চলায়। ভোটবেংকৰ আশাত তেওঁলোকে অভাবী ভোগৰামক ঢাল হিচাপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিবলৈ লয়। নিৰ্বাচনী প্ৰচাৰৰ সুবিধাৰ বাবে নতুন চাইকেলৰ যোগান ধৰি বিয়াল্লিশৰ আন্দোলনৰ কৰ্মী ভোগৰামেও অভাৱৰ তাড়নাত নীতি-নৈতিকতা বিসৰ্জন দি ভোটৰ যুঁজত সক্ৰিয়ভাৱে অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ ল'লে। ৰাজনীতিৰ কুটিলতাই গ্ৰাস কৰাত ভোগৰামে ভাল-বেয়া বিচাৰ কৰাৰ শক্তি ক্ৰমে হেৰুৱাই পেলালে। গাঁৱৰ নিৰ্বাচনী বতাহৰ সুন্দৰ চিত্ৰ উপন্যাসখনত অঙ্কিত হৈছে এনেদৰে —

“সোণাইপৰীয়া গাঁৱে দেওধাই নাচিছে। অকাল বসন্তই আলিত ধূলি-বালি প্ৰাণময় কৰি তুলিছে। কাম-বন নকৰা ধোদৰ পচলা, টেৰীয়াকৈ পোন্ধ মাৰি ঘূৰি ঘূৰি ডেকা কিছুমানে যেন গণতান্ত্ৰিক অধিকাৰ এইবাৰহে ভালকৈ বুজি পাইছে।...গপতে গঙাটোপ মানুহেও ধৰণীৰ ধূলি-মাকতিৰ লেতেৰা পৰশ পোৱা অখ্যাত মানুহক চাটু বাক্যৰে ভোল নিয়াইছে।” (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৬২)

নিৰ্বাচনৰ পাকচক্ৰত সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ মাজত অসূয়া-অপ্ৰীতি, জাতিভেদৰ সৃষ্টি হ'ল। উপন্যাসত এই বিভেদৰ বৰ্ণন দিছে এনেদৰে —

“এই পাঁচবছৰ সোণাইপৰীয়া গাঁও দুখীয়া আছিল যদিও মানুহৰ মাজত একতা আছিল। বামুণে লালুঙক হয় জ্ঞান নকৰিছিল। খলপীয়া পাভচিলাৰ মৈমনচিঙীয়াখিনি সুকীয়া ধৰ্মৰ বুলি এতিয়াহে মানুহৰ মগজুত সোমাল। কলিতা জাতিৰো যে পানী কলিতা, নট কলিতা, কুমাৰ কলিতা, সোণাৰি কলিতা আদি সুকীয়া সুকীয়া স্তৰ আছে, এতিয়াহে বহুতে গম পালে।” (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৬১)

নিৰ্বাচনৰ কৰাল হাতোৰাই সহজতে ঢুকি পায় গ্ৰাম্য যুৱকচামক। নিৰ্বাচনী বতাহৰ বা লগাত সোণাইপৰীয়া একাংশ ল'ৰা গুণ্ডা হ'ল, গুৰু-গোঁসাই নমনা হ'ল, মদ-পানী খাই কেৱল পইচা হজম কৰিবলৈ শিকিলে। নেতাই সোণাইপৰীয়াক টোপ দিলে ভাল ভাল চাকৰিৰ। তথাকথিত উন্নতিৰ মোহত পৰি সোণাইপৰীয়া উটি-ভাহি গ'ল। নৈতিক মূল্যবোধৰ অৱক্ষয়ে মানৱীয় সম্পৰ্কৰ অৱনতি ঘটালে। নিৰ্বাচন পাৰ হৈ যোৱাৰ পাছত “সোণাইপৰীয়া মানুহ পূৰ্বতকৈ জটিল হ'ল। স্বাৰ্থপৰ হ'ল। কাম কৰাতকৈ বক্তৃতা দিয়াৰ দৰে গা উচালি কথা ক'বলৈহে ভাল পোৱা হ'ল। ৰাইজৰ অজ্ঞতাক মূলধন কৰি একশ্ৰেণী ভোগৰামৰ উদ্ভৱ হ'ল।” (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৬৪)

সময় আৰু আকস্মিক সুবিধাই পূৰ্বৰ ভোগৰামক ধনী-মানী কৰাৰ লগতে অহংকাৰী, সুবিধাবাদী আৰু স্বাৰ্থপৰ কৰিলে। উপন্যাসিকে উল্লেখ কৰাৰ দৰে “কৃষি জীৱনৰ ক্ষয়িষ্ণু পৰ্যায়ত, নতুন মূল্যবোধ আৰু পৰিস্থিতিয়ে ভোগৰামৰ দৰে নতুন মানুহৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে।” ভোগৰামৰ নৈতিক স্থলনো ঘটিল। পৰৰ তিৰোতাৰ লগত থকা অবৈধ সম্পৰ্কৰ বাবে ভোগৰাম প্ৰহতও হ'ল। ক'লা বেপাৰ কৰা ভোগৰামৰ দুবছৰ জেল হ'ল। জেলৰ পৰা ওলাই ভোগৰামে সোণাই পাৰৰ মোহ পৰিত্যাগ কৰি চহৰক আপোন কৰি ল'লে। সোণাই নদীৰ পাৰতে ডাঙৰ-দীঘল হোৱা, ব্যৱসায় কৰা ভোগৰামে সোণাইপৰীয়া জীৱনক নেওচা দি চহৰতে ঘৰ সাজি থাকিবলৈ ল'লে। ধানৰ কল এটা কিনাৰ লগতে কাপোৰৰ দোকান খুলি চহৰত ব্যৱসায় গজগজীয়া কৰিলে। সময়ৰ সোঁতত গ্ৰাম্য অঞ্চলৰ এজন ব্যক্তিয়ে যিদৰে এটা সময়ত চহৰৰ জীৱনক আঁকোৱালি লয় 'গঙা চিলনীৰ পাখি' উপন্যাসত সোণাইপৰীয়া ভোগৰামে তাৰেই স্বাক্ষৰ বহন কৰিছে। গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনক পৰিত্যাগ কৰি চহৰমুখী হোৱাৰ প্ৰৱণতা সম্ভৱতঃ সময়ৰে আহান। সোণাইপৰীয়াও তাৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহ'ল। তথাকথিত আধুনিক সভ্যতাৰ মোহত পৰি সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ চহৰমুখী হোৱাৰ প্ৰৱণতা গা কৰি উঠিল।

গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ এখন পৰিচিত চিত্ৰ হৈছে 'ধৰ্ম'। জীৱনৰ ধুমুহাই বিধ্বস্ত কৰা অসমীয়া গ্ৰাম্য সমাজে 'ধৰ্ম'ক শান্তিৰ শেষ আশ্ৰয় হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰে। তেওঁলোকৰ ভগৱানৰ প্ৰতি অগাধ বিশ্বাস। সকলো বিপদ-আপদৰ পৰা তেঁৱেই ৰক্ষা কৰিব পাৰে বুলি ভাবে বাবেই সকলোৱে ভগৱানৰ নাম লয়। অসমীয়া সমাজত শংকৰ-মাধৱৰ ঘোষাই তাপিতজনৰ হৃদয় শাঁত কৰে। ঘোষাৰ মাজেদিয়েই তেওঁলোকে ভগৱানৰ সন্ধান কৰে। জীৱনৰ ৰং-আনন্দ হেৰুৱাই এদিন বাসন্তী সৰ্বস্বান্ত হয়। কান্দি-কাটি অস্থিৰ হৈ

জীৱনৰ প্ৰতি মোহ হেৰুওৱাৰ সময়তে তাই শহুৰেকৰ পৰা লাভ কৰে শান্তিৰ পথ। শহুৰেক ভগীৰথৰ মতে, “মনটো থিৰ কৰিবলৈ হ’লে প্ৰভূত বিশ্বাস লাগে।...নিস্কাম ভকতিৰে আত্মিক ভগৱানৰ লগত লীন কৰিব পাৰিলেহে মানুহে প্ৰকৃত শান্তি লাভ কৰে” (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.১১৩)। সেয়েহে বাসন্তীয়ে বত্সৱলী-ঘোষাৰ আশ্ৰয় লৈ শান্তিৰ সন্ধান কৰিলে। স্বামী, পুত্ৰক হেৰুওৱাৰ দুখ, বৈধৱ্য যন্ত্ৰণা আদি সকলো পাতলাবৰ বাবে বাসন্তীয়ে ভগৱানৰ নাম লবলৈ ল’লে। গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ এনে স্বাভাৱিক চিত্ৰণ উপন্যাসিকৰ অন্য এক দক্ষতা। উপন্যাসৰ সামৰণিতো উপন্যাসিকে এটা সময়ত ধৰ্মীয় পুথি পঢ়িবলৈ বাদ দিয়া বাসন্তীয়ে ঘটনাৰ পাকচক্ৰত পৰি পুনৰ প্ৰশান্তিৰ পথ হিচাপে ধৰ্মপুথিৰ আশ্ৰয় লোৱাটোকে প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে।

গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ স্বাভাৱিক পৰিবেশত এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজৰ প্ৰচলিত ধাৰণা উপন্যাসখনত স্বাভাৱিক ৰূপত অঙ্কিত হৈছে। “পুৰুষৰ জীৱনৰ সম্পদ-বিপদৰ মূলতে হ’ল নাৰীৰ সতীত্ব” — এয়ে হ’ল সোণাইপৰীয়াৰ পুৰুষ পৰম্পৰা ক্ৰমে চলি অহা দৰ্শন। এনে ধাৰণাৰ ফলত সমাজৰ নাৰীৰো মনত এনে ধাৰণাই শিপাই যায় যে পুৰুষৰ সকলো অখন্তৰ হয় কেৱল তিৰোতাৰ পাপতেই। গ্ৰাম্য সমাজে এনে ধাৰণা কেৱল স্বামী-স্ত্ৰীৰ সম্পৰ্কতে নহয়, ককায়েক-ভনীয়েকৰ প্ৰসঙ্গতো জড়িত কৰে। কাৰণ বাসন্তীৰ মাক সুজলাই বাসন্তীৰ ধনঞ্জয়ৰ প্ৰতি থকা আকৰ্ষণৰ বাবে তাইক বুজাইছিল এনেদৰে —

“জানকীৰ ককায়েকক দিন দুপৰতে ঢলপুৰীয়া হাবিত বাঁহ কাটোতে ফেটীগোমে খুটিলে। নিমিষতে তাৰ প্ৰাণ গ’ল। অৱশ্যে তাৰ ঘৈণীয়েক ভাল তিৰোতা। সকলো অনৰ্থৰ মূল হ’ল ভনীয়েক জানকী। তায়েই ঘৰৰ অলক্ষী। তাইৰ কাৰণেই ঘৰখন ধ্বংস পাব লাগে। কাৰণ একমাত্ৰ উপাৰ্জনৰ থল ককায়েকটোও মৰিল। তাই এবাৰ গা খহোৱা কোনে নাজানে?” (গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, পৃ.৪১)

পৰম্পৰাগত এনে চিন্তাধাৰাৰ হেঁচাৰ বাবে স্বাধীনচিন্তীয়াকৈ সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এগৰাকী গ্ৰাম্য যুৱতী সংকুচিত হয়। বাসন্তীয়েই তাৰ উদাহৰণ। কাৰণ মাকৰ কথা শুনাৰ পিচত তাইৰ কাৰণে ককায়েক ভোগৰামৰ অমঙ্গল হ’ব পাৰে বুলি তাই আশংকাত ভুগিছে। সেয়েহে তাই জীৱনৰ প্ৰথম পুৰুষ ‘ধনঞ্জয়’ৰ মৰম-চেনেহ, আকৰ্ষণক নেওচা দি আঁতৰি আহিবলৈ মনে মনে সিদ্ধান্ত লয়। বাসন্তীৰ মনত বদ্ধমূলভাৱে শিপাই যায় যে তিৰোতাৰ মন পিছলিলে ঘৰখনৰ কাৰণে বেয়া, পুৰুষৰ কাৰণে ডাঙৰ বিপদ।

উপন্যাসখনৰ চৰিত্ৰ চিত্ৰণৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো উপন্যাসিকে গ্ৰাম্য সৰলতা, উদাৰতাৰ প্ৰকাশ ঘটাইছে। ভগীৰথ-ভনীতা গ্ৰাম্য সৰলতাৰ প্ৰতীকস্বৰূপ। তেওঁলোকে বিধৱা বোৱাৰীয়েকক কোনোদিনে বেয়া ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা নাছিল, বৰঞ্চ জীৱ দৰে মৰম-চেনেহেৰে আৱৰি ৰাখিছিল। আনকি তেওঁলোকে বিধৱা বাসন্তীক থান কাপোৰ পৰিধান কৰিবলৈ মানা কৰি জীয়েক পাৰুলৰ নিচিনাকৈ কাপোৰ পিন্ধি আনন্দ মনেৰে থাকিবলৈ পৰামৰ্শ দিছিল। তেওঁলোকৰ আদৰ-আদাৰতে বাসন্তীয়ে অলপদিন দুখ-যন্ত্ৰণা পাহৰি

আনন্দ মনেৰে জীয়াই থাকিবলৈ শিকিছিল। ৰূপক বুঢ়ী, মনবৰী আদিৰ দৰে গ্ৰাম্য পৰিবেশত লালিত-পালিত চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ কাৰ্যকলাপ, হৰ্ষ-বিষাদ, আশা-আকাংক্ষা আদি নিৰ্ভেজাল ৰূপত উজ্জীৱিত হৈ পৰাৰ বাবে উপন্যাসখন অধিক বাস্তৱধৰ্মী হৈ পৰিছে। নিভাঁজ অসমীয়া গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ স্বাভাৱিক নিটোল চিত্ৰৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ উপন্যাসখনৰ গদ্যশৈলী সাধাৰণ পাঠকৰূপা সমালোচকলৈকে অতি আদৰৰ। গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ লগত জড়িত প্ৰত্যেক ব্যক্তিয়ে সহজতে উপন্যাসখনৰ মাজত নিজৰ জীৱনক অনুভৱ কৰিব পাৰে।

৫.০০ উপসংহাৰ :

অসমীয়া উপন্যাস সাহিত্যত নদীকেন্দ্ৰিক গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ আধাৰত যিমানবোৰ উপন্যাস ৰচিত হৈছে তাৰ ভিতৰত তুলনামূলকভাৱে ‘গঙাচিলনী পাখি’ৰ নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ বাস্তৱ চিত্ৰধৰ্মী বৰ্ণনাৰ স্বাভাৱিক, মনোমোহা ৰূপে উপন্যাসখনক জনপ্ৰিয় কৰি তোলাত অধিক সহায় কৰিছে। জনপ্ৰিয়তাৰ বাবে উপন্যাসখনক লৈ চলচ্চিত্ৰ নিৰ্মাণো হৈছে। ভৱিষ্যতে আধুনিক জীৱনৰ বিচিত্ৰ ঘটনা প্ৰৱাহেৰে ন-ন উপন্যাস ৰচিত হ’লেও অসমৰ নদীপৰীয়া গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ নিভাঁজ চিত্ৰৰ পৰিচায়ক ৰূপে ‘গঙাচিলনী পাখি’ উপন্যাস সৰ্বজন সমাদৃত হৈ থাকিব।

প্ৰসঙ্গসূত্ৰ :

১) শেৱালি ডেকাৰ প্ৰৱন্ধ ‘নদীকেন্দ্ৰিক উপন্যাস’, গৰীয়সী, মাৰ্চ, ২০১৫, পৃ.২৯

প্ৰসঙ্গ পুথি :

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| (১) বৰা, লক্ষ্মীনন্দন | : গঙা-চিলনীৰ পাখি, লয়াছ বুক ষ্টল, চতুৰ্থ প্ৰকাশ, গুৱাহাটী। |
| (২) চৌধুৰী, ৰীণা | : সাহিত্যত ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ, অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, গুৱাহাটী। |
| (৩) বৰগোহাঞি, হোমেন (সম্পা.) | : অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ বুৰঞ্জী (ষষ্ঠ খণ্ড), আনন্দৰাম বৰুৱা ভাষা-কলা-সংস্কৃতি সংস্থা, গুৱাহাটী |
| (৪) শৰ্মা, সত্যেন্দ্ৰনাথ | : অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ গতিধাৰা, সৌমাৰ প্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী। |

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PSYCHOLOGICAL DEGENERATION IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS

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Abstract

Heart of Darkness (1899) is Conrad's representative work which explores the heart as well as the outward appearance of human civilization. The story describes a journey up the river Congo which is a metaphor for the journey inside man's inner self and human consciousness. This journey is an encounter with a man's capacity for evil and an account of one man's psychological and moral degeneration. The title of the novel itself asserts that 'darkness has a heart' and at the same time it is the 'heart' above all that is composed of darkness. The real darkness lies in the 'heart' and our progress must be through the partially known to the unknown. The story is also about spiritual breakdown and the journey is symbolic into the dark places of the soul. The central idea of the novella is that darkness is the true nature of our world which gets into the veins of the story. This type of darkness will shatter human as it did to Kurtz in the story. The paper aims to analyze how moral degeneration comes to Kurtz and the things that are responsible for it.

Key Words: Moral degeneration, Human consciousness, Primitive world, Darkness, Horror.

In the novella, *The Heart of Darkness*, the journey through the river Congo is described as a journey that leads back to the earliest beginning of live earth. So, travelling here means bringing the primitive world forward. The river Congo as told by Marlow resembles an immense snake uncoiled with its head in the sea and its tail lost in the depth of the land and when the characters are unable to resist the various temptations along this passage, they helplessly sell their souls to corruption. Kurtz; driven by the two temptations: the desire to make a fortune through ivory and the desire to discover latent kinship with the savages, yielded to their combined power by using his authority as deity

to help him attain his goals. But, he should not be viewed as simply a man that did everything under his own wills. On the contrary, he was a representative of the European colonizers and his behavior represented the wills of what he belonged to.

The Europeans under the guise of civilization builds a railway for their own sake. The so-called emissaries of light are shown to be crude and violent. They had no regard for the destruction of Africa's environment, destroying hills in a feeble attempt to establish a railway. Thus in this way the hollowness of civilization is very neatly depicted in this novella. The real motive of the Whites for venturing into the Congo was not to bring a better or more civilized lifestyle to the poor Africans, but to satisfy their own lust for power. Thus Marlow narrates, "The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die". The colonizers are making profit in the name of civilization and no one is having a friendly relationship with each other. Everyone is just running after profit making and the lust for power ultimately leads to see die inner darkness that lies within the heart of people.

Conrad portrays the empty nature of men. Kurtz, an European slave trader who had travelled to Africa in order to go on with his business is a character who lacks a soul and thus he is called a 'hollow man'. Instead of making the natives 'civilized'. Kurtz become savage himself. This 'hollowness' was due to the lack of self-restraint and self-control. He was so much gratified by the various lusts which makes his heart callous. Kurtz himself is an example of 'heart of darkness'. Many Westerners in the post-Darwinian period believed the primitive people to be morally inferior to the civilized ones and perhaps they assume that Kurtz's descent into barbarism was the result of his contact with the people he met in the Upper Congo. According to Marlow, Kurtz is a man who apparently "had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort". But the problematic view of Kurtz as a moral man is presented towards the end of the novella by a journalist when he says "He had faith-don't you see? he had the faith". From this point a reader gets inclined to accept the possible view of Kurtz as a man of moral degeneration, a man who once possessed 'the faith' and then in Africa lost 'the faith'.

"All Europe had contributed to the making of Kurtz". Through the character of Kurtz, Conrad shows how devilish desire a human can possess and how his soul become corrupt. The character of Kurtz shows us how the best can fall and how the most advanced ideas of political reform can be capable of infinite degradation. Not only the body of Kurtz is absorbed in darkness but at the same time his soul also. There is a sense of possession in the character of Kurtz when he says "My ivory, my intended, my station, my river....". He has the urge that everything belong to him. He has the authoritarian

voice as the whole blackness is possessed by him. The wilderness of Congo makes him more powerful but it also takes his humanity as he mingles with the darkness. Kurtz's power over the jungle and its people was inexplicable. Kurtz was able to become so powerful because rather than be the 'white man' who was an enemy he portrayed himself as a friend. This ability to play psychological games on others was a gift for Kurtz and what helped bring him into power. The whole idea of 'civilization' seems to be futile as Kurtz being a white man, himself here absorbs in what the white man called 'savagery'. This story tries to depict that "nothing is more dangerous than man's delusions of autonomy and omnipotence".

While Marlow, the central narrator of the story reaches the mouth of the Congo river and travels thirty miles up the river to the company's chief station, he notices a group of six men. The men were wearing iron collars, connected by a chain and was guided by a white man. It means that everything happens in Africa are regulated by the Europeans. Conrad makes Marlow regards the White as pitiful representatives of "a flabby, pretending, weak eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" and he essentially sides with the blacks against them. Moreover, Marlow's ship is attacked by tribesmen and a member of the crew is killed. The tribesmen are attacking not to kill anyone or to take revenge but there is other reason behind it. Later on, when Marlow encounters a Russian guy, he discloses to Marlow that the earlier attack on the steamer was ordered by Kurtz himself. The tribesmen do not want to let Kurtz go, and he has become almost a 'god-like' figure to the natives. On the other hand, Kurtz forgets the aspects of his home and identity by the enchanting power of the darkness of the forest.

Kurtz is now a 'hollow man' and his moral degeneration is due to his ambition. He had enslaved and even sacrificed people. He had also involved in many unspeakable rites and rituals. Kurtz abused power in order to fulfill his desire of sex, power, authority, and finally he killed innocent people for the lust of ivory. His report with "exterminate all the brutes" as its last slogan was finally taken away for publication by a journalist after his death. The point is that if he did make it true who would be the ones that worked for their endless desire after all the native "brutes" died out. The separation between Kurtz's speech and Kurtz's unvoiced self is described in relation to his 'degeneration'. As Marlow noticed the human heads on the posts near Kurtz's station, he remarks that "they only showed that Mr. Kurtz lack restraint in the gratification of lusts". The skulls symbolize the darkness of human thought. The disconnection in Kurtz between words and reality help us to understand why Kurtz seemed to be so weak and helpless amidst the wilderness though he was mentally ambitious and powerful and thought that he could

acquire everything.

Moreover, Marlow calls the natives as black people but for Kurtz they are 'brutes' even though he lives with them. Ironically, the Brutes are the Whites who are exploiting the Blacks. The natives were cannibals but in contrast had higher moral standards than the Whites who were plundering their country. The Blacks were paid for their services with useless wires with which they were expected to procure food. But, they did not threaten the lives of the pilgrim Whites. On the other hand, they themselves were bordering on starvation. They were dying slowly. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, nothing but black shadows of disease lying confusedly in the greenish gloom.

Marlow was taking Kurtz back to London when he was seriously ill and on the journey Kurtz died by uttering the words: 'The horror! The horror!' Kurtz experience of seeing man's heart of darkness has destroyed him. These words seems as a response to the unknown self. Marlow asserts that 'the horror' refers not only to Kurtz's unspeakable history, but to the world at large. The word 'horror' refers to inhumanity and it was the truth from which Kurtz cannot escape. The particular word 'horror' signifies the darkness present in every man's heart. Marlow says that these words are the moment Kurtz, realizes exactly how depraved human nature is.

Just as Victor Frankenstein in the novel *Frankenstein* (1818) created a monster that was a manifestation of his inner turmoil so too Kurtz's journey into Africa is an unveiling of his inner darkness which we are all afraid to face. Like Victor, Kurtz sought power, adoration and godlike status both among his European counterparts and the native Africans. Kurtz's journey into Africa as well as his inner journey can be compared to Victor's search for his monster across the icy slopes. During this period each individual underwent a transformation and a realization of the horrors they have created. Kurtz's final words "The horror! The horror!" are comparable to Victor fleeing the scene when faced with the manifestation of his own work. It is as though neither of them can face the reality of what they are responsible for. Victor for playing with science and creating a monster which killed his loved ones, and Kurtz for destroying other's lives, for participating in "unspeakable secrets" of his method. At the end of Kurtz's journey lies not ivory, but his true inner self - the heart of darkness.

At the end we can say that Marlow does not view Kurtz's last words only as a cry of selfish despair but, declares that Kurtz had 'summed up'. As a summation 'the horror' signifies that all hearts beat in the darkness. Kurtz's only difference with other human being is that we pretend to become civilized repressing the darkness in our

hearts whereas Kurtz fulfilled his desires. Marlow says that we are no more better than Kurtz and by saying this, Marlow is balancing the crimes of Kurtz with his last words ‘the horror’. The dying words “The horror! The horror!” displays what Kurtz was inside at the end.

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CHINESE HERBAL DRUGS

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‘*HERBAL drug*’ is not new to India or China. People of both these countries have been using for centuries plant singly or in combination, either as such or in the form of their extracts, for combating diseases. But it is in China that most research has been carried out herbal drugs using modern scientific knowledge. In 1981, the Chinese took to computerization of the data on herbal drugs for interdisciplinary systematization.

Chinese herbal drugs or ‘Zhong Cao Yao’ belong to three main categories : Chinese traditimal drugs or ‘Zhong Yao’, National minorities drugs or ‘Min Zu Yao’ and Folk drugs or ‘Cao Yao’. The most effective crude drugs (plants or plant extracts) of all the above three categories, as gathered from that country's very rich ethnopharmacological resources, are subjected to clinical trials in primary health care centres. Those showing excellent results are taken up for multidisciplinary research including botanical, chemical, pharmacological and clinical studies. Once the active principles are isolated, they are subjected to usual evaluations. If needed, these are synthesized or structurally modified to elicit drugs with higher therapeutic indices.

The results the Chinese have achieved through this multipronged approach are simply dramatic. As is evident from the *Trip Report of the Americal Herbal Pharmacology Delegation to People's Republic of China (1975)*, the discovery of the male antifertility agent ‘gossypol’, the novel antimalarial peroxide ‘Qing Hao Su’, the excellent phenolic taeniafuge ‘agrimorphol’, the wonder tonic ‘*Panax ginseng*’ and many others bear ample testimony to the heights of success the Chinese have achieved in this particular field. The fact that about 60% of new drugs developed in China between 1949 and 1981 originated from medicinal plants is a clear reflection of their successful strategy.

Gossypol :

The story began with the discovery of ‘gossypol’, a male antifertility agent of considerable current interest. In the course of a routine demographic survey in China,

attention of the survey team was drawn to the observation that in one particular region the population growth rate remained insignificant during the preceding many years. A team comprising experts of various disciplines was sent on a fact-finding mission. On careful and thorough checking they noticed that all the people inhabiting that region had only one thing in common - they all used crude cotton-seed oil for salad dressing, suggesting that cotton-seed oil could be responsible for the observed infertility in young men. On systematic investigation the experts ultimately discovered that phenolic binaphthyl was the active principle. They named it gossypol (I) after the name of the cotton plant, *Gossypium herbacium*. After subsequent clinical investigations with gossypol the Chinese concluded that it is a highly effective, reversible (*i.e.*, fertility is regained after the use of gossypol is discontinued) male antifertility agent, to be taken orally.

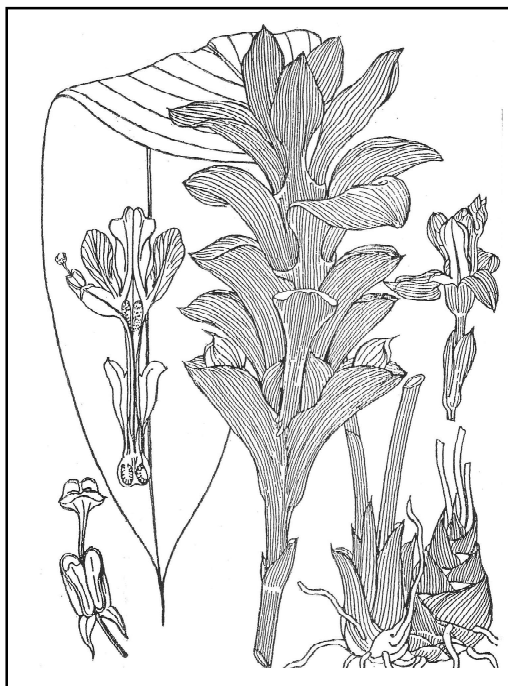


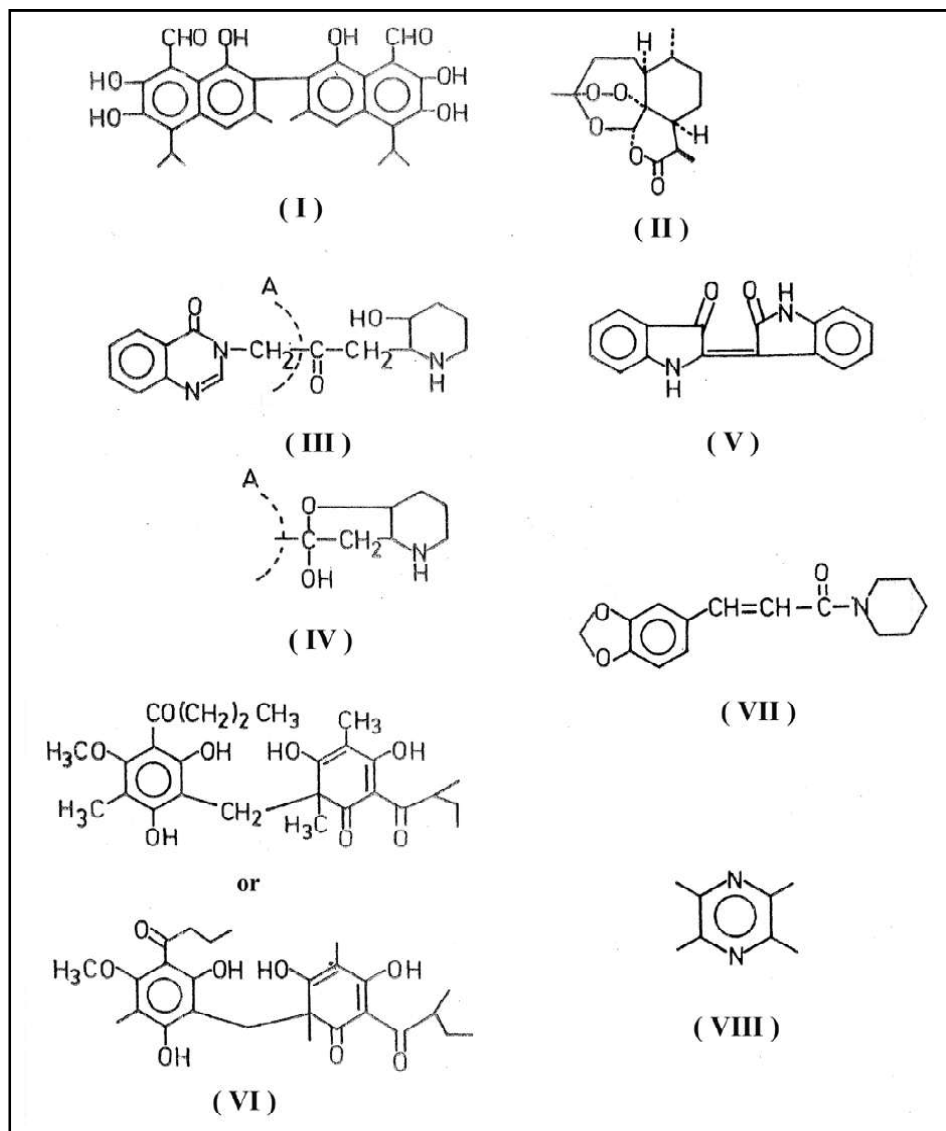
Fig. 1: *Dichroa febrifuga*

The story, however, did not end here. Long term investigation by western scientists revealed that, contrary to the Chinese evaluations, continued use of natural

gossypol, which is racemic [a mixture of equal amounts of the (+) and (-) forms], causes hypokalaemia (potassium depletion from the body) and a slow return to fertility. (+) Gossypol, which had earlier (1968) been reported from the plant *Thespesia populnea*, was later shown (1983) to be inactive. This led to the suggestion (1984) that (-) gossypol was probably responsible for the male antifertility property. Since no natural source of (-) gossypol is yet known, chemists throughout the world have tried to separate the two forms constituting racemic gossypol. By now three groups of chemists led by L Huang of Institute of Materia Medica, Beijing, China (1985), S.A Matlin of City University, London (1985) and P. Balaram of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (1986) have come out with success - all with the help of high-pressure liquid chromatography. Now that pure(-) gossypol is available, its efficacy is being tested on hamsters at National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, U.S.A So far it has proved to be an effective antifertility agent without any side effect. But according to Dr. Matlin, "It is likely to be another 10/15 years before gossypol is put to general use".



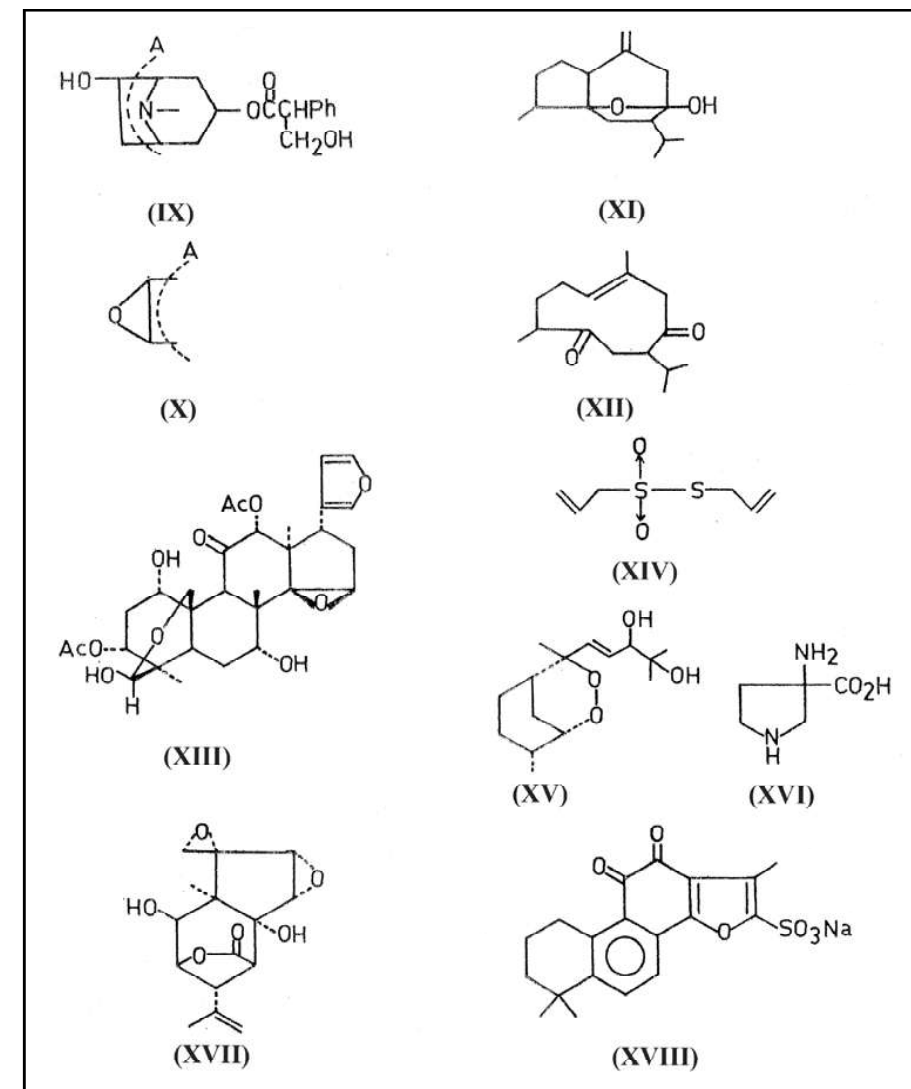
Fig. 2: *Curcuma aromatica*

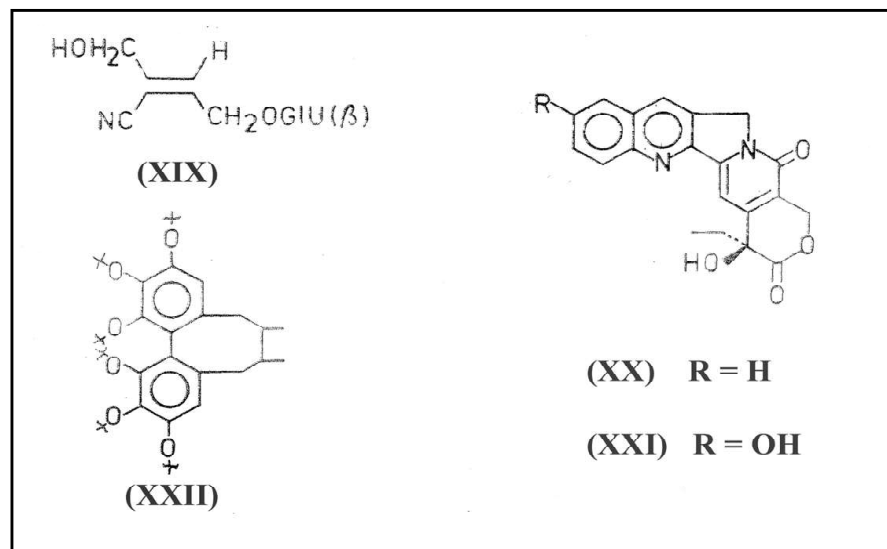


Antimalarials and others :

The second new drug drawing worldwide attention is a completely new type of antimalarial drug. *Artemisia annua*, a Chinese perennial herb, has been used against malaria for centuries in China. Systematic investigation revealed that the antimalarial

activity was located in the neutral fraction of the ether extract of the whole plant. Subsequent chemical investigation led to the isolation of the active component 'Qing Hao Su' or 'Artemisinin' (II). It is a novel sesquiterpene peroxide showing excellent (100%) clinical efficacy. At present it is reported to have been put into commercial production in China.





Dichroa feorifuga is another ancient Chinese plant used for antimalaria purpose. Three 4-quinazolinone alkaloids, α - β - and γ - dichrolnes (III and IV) isolated from this plant have proved to be potent antimalarials, one of them being 150 times more effective than quinine. All the three alkaloids, however, exhibit strong emetic action, which has limited their use. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that their 5-methyl and 5-chloro derivatives as well as acetyldichroine have higher therapeutic value than dichroine itself.

A complex Chinese prescription 'Dang Gul Lu Hui wan' is in use in Chinese traditional medicine for the treatment of chronic myelocytic leukemia. Of the various plants constituting this prescription a mixed plant extract 'Qingdai' could be traced to be the active ingredient. Usual systematic investigation resulted in the isolation of 'Indirubin' (V) as the active principle. It parallels 'Myleran', the drug of choice in chronic myelocytic leukemia, in therapeutic efficacy. It is devoid of any serious side-effect and does not cause inhibition of bone marrow. It is now manufactured in China by a synthetic route.

The remarkable success the Chinese have achieved by exploring the so called 'secret prescriptions' is highlighted by the discovery of the highly effective taeniafuge (*i.e.*, it kills *Taenia saginata* or 'beef tape worm' - a common parasite in the intestine of man) 'Agrimorphol' which is a phlorogucinol derivative. In 1970, a secret prescription

could be managed from a 79-year old Chinese peasant who used the prescribed drug *Agrimonia pilosa* or the 'Winter bud' for antihelminthic purpose. Successful clinical evaluation followed by systematic chemical investigation led to the isolation of the antihelminthic agrimorphol (VI), which is now a commercial product in China.

An Interesting example of the successful exploration of the so-called "effective prescriptions" concerns the discovery of an antiepileptic compound. The follow-up of an effective antiepileptic prescription consisting of white pepper and turnip demonstrated the well known 'Piperine' to be the active component. Encouraged by this finding, the scientists prepared a number of structural analogues, of which 'Antiepilepsirine' (VII) turned out to be the drug of choice. It has now been approved for commercial production in china.

The exploration of the 'treatment principles' of Chinese traditional medicine is best exemplified by the discovery of tetramethylpyrazine. The blood-circulation stimulant drug *Ligusticum wallichili* on chemical analysis revealed about a dozen compounds, a minor component of which, Tetramethylpyrazine' (VIII) emerged to be the active factor. It exhibited excellent platelet aggregation inhibitory properties. Now manufactured by the synthetic route, it is used in China for the treatment of occlusive cerebral diseases, like cerebral embolism.

Among the 'national minorities drugs', the crude drug *Scopoloa tangutica* has been used by doctors of a Tibetan minority group. Recent phytochemical investigation of this drug has shown the presence of 'Anisodamine' (IX) and 'Anisodine' (X) among others. Clinically, anisodamine is used for the treatment of septic shock from bacillary dysentery, meningitis and enteritis. Anisodine is used to cure migraine and a host of other diseases. These are now on large scale production.

Drugs for many uses :

The list of drugs obtained by the modern scientific pursuit of traditional Chinese medicine is too long to be reproduced here. Mention must, however, be made of a few other examples which will project a clear picture of the true state of affairs.

The sesquiterpenes 'Curcumlol' (XI) and 'Curdione' (XII) occurring in the volatile oil fraction of the rhizome of *Curcuma aromatic* ("E Zhu") are used for the treatment of cervix cancer. A protein has been isolated from the root of *Tricho-santhes kirilowili* ("Tian Hua Fen") which induces premature abortion. The chemical structure of this basic, single-chain protein comprising 234 amino acid residues has been elucidated only in 1984-85. 'Andrographolide', the well-known constituent of '*Andrographis*

paniculata” (known as ‘Kalmegh’ in India), has found a new use in the treatment of bacillary dysentery and leptospirosis. All the above three compounds are now in commercial production.

‘Decanoyl acetaldehyde’, a component of the volatile oil fraction of *Houttuynia cordata* (“Yu Xing Cao”), is used as an antimicrobial drug. The cucurbitacin ‘Chuanliansu’ (XIII), isolated from *Melia toosenden* (“Ku Lian Pi”), is a very useful anti-ascaris drug. The immuno-stimulating drug ‘Diallylthio-sulphonate’ (XIV) has been isolated from garlic (*Allium sativum*). All the three are commercially produced nowadays.

The peroxide ‘Yingshaosu’ (XV), obtained from *Artabotrys hexapetalus*, is a new-found antimalarial. The anthelmintic amino acid ‘Cucurbitin’ (XVI) inhibits the growth of young worms of *Schistosoma japonica*. Tutin’ (XVII), the active principle of the parasitic plant *Loranthus parasiticus* growing on *Coriaria sinica*, is highly effective in the treatment of schizophrenia. The above three, though not commercial products, have been mentioned because of their structural novelties.

‘Tanshinone II-A, isolated from the aqueous extract of *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, is used as its sodium sulphonate (XVIII) for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

Among the drugs acting on liver two are commercial products. The active component of *Sedum sarmentosum* is the glucoside ‘sarmentosine’ (XIX) which lowers elevated ‘serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase’ (SGPT) level. The well-known triterpene oleanolic acid, which resulted from the follow-up of *Swertia mileensis*, is used in the treatment of hepatitis. The commercially available preparation of the total flavonoid fraction of *Ilex pubescens* is used in the treatment of angina pectoris.

The quinoline alkaloid ‘Camptothecin’ (XX) first isolated by American scientists from the Chinese tree *Camptotheca acuminata* proved to be toxic in Clinical trials in the USA. Chinese scientists are reported to have developed a method for reducing its toxicity and it is now used in China to increase the survival rate of patients suffering from liver cancer. The Chinese have also isolated 10-hydroxycamptothecin (XXI) from the same plant and are using it in treating primary liver cancer.

Ginseng

Finally, the ‘tonics’ constitute a very important and perhaps the oldest group of Chinese traditional drugs. *Panax ginseng*, the most noted example of this group, is considered to be the Elixir of Life. The discovery of the efficacy of this ‘AII (Pan) Cure (Axos)’ drug dates back to 600 BC, although it was used as early as 3000 BC - 2000 BC. It shows a variety of biological actions. Generally speaking, it has anti-fatigue and

anti-stress actions, normalizing action on blood pressure, CNS stimulating property and protein biosynthesis stimulating action. The second liver tonic is the ethanolic extract of the kernel of *Schizandra chinensis*, which lowers SGPT level and is used for the treatment of certain forms of hepatitis. The active principles have also been characterized. These are group of dibenzo(a,c)cyclo-octene derivatives, all having the basic skeleton (XXII).

The list given so far is by no means complete. Only an attempt has been made to present a brief account of some of the commercially available Chinese drugs that have emerged as a result of modern multi-disciplinary research on Chinese herbal medicine.

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(De)colonisation and the Rise of the English Language in India : A Simultaneous Journey

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Abstract

This paper aims to trace the growth of the English language in India politically, socially and culturally. Such a growth is mapped in the context of the process of colonization and the ensuing decolonisation. The paper endeavours to shed light on how English as an imperialistic tool was deployed by the colonizers and how it eventually became the instrument of protest for the colonized. The emphasis lies on the opposite trajectory of the two processes. The end of the colonial process was parallel to the process of the rise in the status of English in India. As India saw the light of a new decolonized era, it tightly held on to the English language, quite ironically, a remain of colonization.

Key words : decolonisation, growth, English, Parallel process, remain

1. Introduction

The history of the world is a web of interwoven threads where each thread is an imperative event. And just as one thread entwines into another which in turn entwines into a third forming the entire web, every event somehow links up to another event, either as a precursor or a consequence. Another analogy could be that of a collision, where every event in the world is the product of the impact or collision between two preceding events. No event ever stands alone. Everything is a process. And all the history of the world is a perpetual chain of events set in motion.

Colonialism is one such process and this process had some major implications on the history of the entire world. One of the key consequences of colonialism was the spread of the English language among the non-native, non-english speaking nations of the world. Colonialism, with all its political, economical and religious agenda had consequently and inevitably pushed English into the lives of the non-english speaking,

colonized nations. The language has sometimes been imposed deliberately, in spite of all the resistance, upon the people of the colonies; whereas sometimes it had just been assimilated by the people, quite unconsciously, as a corollary of the process of colonization.

With the approach of the mid-20th century, the British empire was losing its hold over the colonized states and the entire concept of colonialism was being uprooted. There were widespread nationalist revolts, rebellions, and the process of decolonization was under way. This, however, did not in any way hamper the growth and development of the English language. Instead, the process of decolonization saw a simultaneous rise in the use of the English language.

From Nationalist periodicals and Journals to writers dealing with the problems of colonialism and capturing the anti-colonial resistance. The English language became that voice of the colonized which would reach the colonizers the fastest. And as the nations started gaining their independence and started settling down to self rule, there emerged the entire canon of post-colonial writing. Cultural assertion and cultural nationalism (Nayar, 2008) were highlighted in such settlements, and so the English language became a major tool for the post-colonial development.

Over the entire period spanning from the birth of colonialism (around 16th century), to the process of decolonization, and finally to neo-colonialism, the number of English speakers in the world have only increased. The number of people speaking the English language were in the range of five to seven million, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and the number shot up to about 250 million during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II (Crystal, David. 1988). As a result of this massive increase in the number of English speakers and its expansion throughout the world, many linguists now refer to English as an “international language” (Kachru, 1983).

Consequently, the English language has come to occupy a major position in the Indian subcontinent India’s vast colonial history has led to the establishment of English as a dominant language in this non-English speaking nation. This paper attempts to trace the rise and development of the English language as being a simultaneous trend to the process of decolonization, taking the Indian subcontinent for a special case study.

2. Language as an Imperialistic Tool

European industrialization was a major trigger in the process of colonization. As the industrial output increased in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. European markets were not enough to handle such massive outputs and generate reasonable profits. As a

result, new markets were sought beyond Europe and an expansion of trade and commerce to new lands was thought of. These new territories provided not only new markets but also resources for sustaining these markets. And so ensued a long history of discovery, invasion and subjugation of new lands and its people Colonialism emerged out of this process of industrial modernity and its capitalist modes of production (Nayar, 2010).

However, colonialism is no longer seen as a mere conquest of lands through physical and military force and the consequent political rule of those lands. Colonialism, as seen today from a post colonial point of view, is the way in which the European power imposed its culture, its language and its knowledge systems on the non-Europeans by projecting their culture and their systems as backward and primitive. Colonialism is, therefore, also cultural colonialism, linguistic colonialism and epistemological colonialism.

As colonial rule could not be sustained by sheer physical force, the language of the rulers came into play. The English language was not just a means of communication between the rulers and the natives, it was the language of power. It was a tool which helped the rulers to rule. Language created a politics of representation which justified the subjugation of the natives as the natives themselves began to believe in their inferiority.

Edward Said believed that the Europeans used their construction of the cast as pagan, savage and primitive, to justify his presence there. According to the white man, the weak and poor, uncivilized and wild native needed to be civilized and refined by him and that was the reason of his colonial mission. This is the White Man's Burden.

In order to rule the natives and to sustain the European's domination it was important that the natives believed the European's construction of himself as wild and primitive. And in order to do so language played a major role as it became the language of representation.

English became the 'language of command' and helped the English colonial ruler to 'order' India in particular ways (Nayar, 2010). Similarly the English language became the language of the government, the language of higher education, the language of politics, after being imposed on all the natives. The loss of vernacular and the native languages of many places can be traced back to the imposition of the European languages on the native people.

3. Homi Bhabha and the Mimic Man

The colonized does not remain ignorant of his situation for long. There soon comes a point when he raises his voice or he effects resistance in some form or the

other. The native escapes through the fractures and the loopholes in the discourse of colonialism. One of the tools of resistance and medium of rebellion is Language - the same language given to him by the colonizer. The language the colonizer uses to enslave the native, to justify his oppressive rule, to use the natives as a pawn in their power play, now becomes the instrument of resistance for the colonized.

Homi Bhabha is one of the key figures in the field of postcolonial analysis. Bhabha talks about how the subject who has been virtually prepared by the colonial authority, learns the mannerisms and the codes of the authority and then uses those mannerisms and codes against the authority itself.

In his essay 'Of Mimicry and Man' he presents to us the idea of the mimic man. 'Mimicry is the disciplined imitation of the white man by the native' (Nayar, 2010). The native has always been taught to be like the colonizer. Whether it is through the imposition of the English language in a western education system or through the imposition of Christian values through the missionaries. The natives have always been asked to "mimic" the white man, leaving behind his own traditions and ancient customs. Bhabha sees this as a site where colonial authority, rather than being reinforced, actually breaks down. What happens is that the native man is never able to fully become a European; all he becomes is an anglicized version of himself. He is a mimic man now who can ingratiate himself into the colonial structure, speak in English, put all the logic and reasoning taught to him by the western education into his arguments and argue in English with the European man (Bhabha, 1991). Thus, the European himself makes the native capable of resistance.

According to Bhabha, this mimic man is in a state of in-betweenness. He is in between an adopted Englishness and an inherent Indianness. This is a hybridized state for the subject. This state creates a 'third space' for the subject and this third space invokes resistance in the subject.

4. Linguistic Consequences of Colonialism : The Indian Subcontinent

India has a vast history of colonialism. The Indian subcontinent was one of the major colonial settlements of the British Empire as it was also one of the largest, both in terms of geography and population, The land was rich in resources and became a major attraction for the British traders and travellers, soon after its discovery by Vasco-Da-Gama in 1498. "The document establishing the British contact with the Indian Subcontinent was the Charter of December 31, 1600, granted by Queen Elizabeth I. It granted a monopoly on trade with India and the East to some merchants of London - the East India Company (EIC) was formed" (Kachru, 1983). And so began the British

reign in India which was to continue for almost the next three hundred years, in which the British transformed from being mere traders to being rulers, administrators and educators.

4.1 Cultural Colonialism in India

For the British to rule India, or for any European power to rule the pagan east for that matter, sheer military strength was not enough. Eduard Said, in his book *Orientalism* talks about the construction of the Orient by the European powers. The Orient is the European construction of the East as pagan, primitive and savage. According to Said, the European constructs the Orient as such so that he is able to justify his presence, his domination and his interference. The European proclaims that it is his duty to 'develop' and govern the weak native. The British justified their colonial mission in a similar manner (Said, 1978).

India had a rich cultural heritage for centuries. The Indian civilization had its own well developed knowledge systems, political systems, medicine, science and educational systems. However, the British refused to acknowledge the developments achieved by the ancient Indian civilization and declared them to be backward and redundant. They took it upon themselves to 'civilise' Indians. And according to Macaulay "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of person Indians in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, in intellect" (qtd. in Bailey, 1991). This, according to them, justified their colonial mission in India.

One of the major tools for such a cultural dimension of colonialism was Language. The British colonizers had brought the English language with them to the subcontinent and so began the slow proliferation of the language. Teaching the English language to the natives was crucial for the achievement of the colonial objectives of the British, of creating a different class of Indians as Macaulay suggests and of properly enslaving them.

The English language has helped in the cultural colonialism in three stages. In the first stage, the ancient Indian languages like Sanskrit and Persian were studied by colonial administrators such as T.B. Macaulay and Warren Hastings, academic scholars like William Jones and James Mill, by translating texts from these languages into English or undertaking studies of Indian law, religion or arts. In the second stage, all these cultural texts and ancient languages were declared to be primitive and backward. They asserted that India would never be able to move forward and develop with such

redundant knowledge systems. In the final stage they substituted English as the medium of instruction, as the language of knowledge itself. They asserted that only European culture and the English language could ensure the modernization of the Indian culture and civilization, and so they imposed the English language on the non-English speaking Indians (Nayar, Pramod. 2008).

4.2 India Becomes Bilingual

English was introduced into the lives of the natives through various means. According to a leading sociolinguist Braj Kachru, there were three phases of the introduction of the English language in India (Kachru, 1983).

The first phase was the Missionary phase. This began around the year 1614 when Christian missionaries came to India and propagated the teachings of the bible which was in the English language. This was one of the first encounters of Indians with the English language.

The second phase, as mentioned by Kachru, was the local demand for the language by spokesperson and intellectuals. These prominent spokespersons were scholars who believed that real scientific development and modernization could only be achieved with the help of this language. They felt that the mere knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian will not help in attaining developmental goals. They held the English language up to the pedestal of the classical languages like Sanskrit and Persian in India.

Two of the major spokesperson of the English language in India were Rajunath Hari Navalkar and Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833).

Raja Rammohan Roy believed that a western education would launch Indians on the path of development. According to him, English would lead Indians to the really useful knowledge that the world has (quoted in Bailey, 1991). In 1823 Roy wrote a letter to the British Governor General of India Lord Amherst. This letter opposed the construction of a college in Calcutta that would teach Sanskrit and Hindu literature. It instead demanded a college which would teach European sciences in the English language to Indians. This letter is often quoted as a landmark evidence of how there was local demand of English and that the language was not forcibly imposed in all cases.

Roy expresses his point of view in this letter by stating that the government should employ:

European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has

raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world (Kachru, 1983).

The third phase was the result of the government policy established by the East India Company. As a result of this, English became the language of administration and it became the language of instruction of the British Empire.

The Charter Act of 1813 officially introduced a formal system of state education in India. The act allotted the Company a sum of Rs. 10,000 to promote education. It also allowed the Christian missionaries to preach their religion and promote the English language among the masses. The East India Company started building a lot of schools and colleges to educate the general public. By 1823, the medium of instruction in private schools had become English.

English Education Act 1835 and Macaulay's Minute

The English Education Act was one of the milestones in the establishment of English as a major language in India. The act was put into effect legally in the year 1835. The Act legalized Lord William Bentinck's decision to reallocate funds being sent to the East India Company for spending on Indian education and literature. Bentinck decided that funds would now be disbursed on a western education curriculum with the English language as the medium of instruction. The ancient Hindu or Muslim teachings in Sanskrit or Persian and the publication of literature in the native languages would no longer be supported financially.

On 7th March 1835 a resolution was passed declaring that, "His Lordship in Council is of opinion that, the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and that all the fund appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."

In 1837, English was made the language of the courts and the administrative language. This move made it one of the major languages in India.

The Governor General Bentinck's decision was based on the recommendations of T.B. Macaulay. Macaulay on 2nd February 1835 wrote a Minute stating how native culture and learning was inferior to western learning and how such superior western learning could only be taught through the English language. He also recommended that the East India Company should stop publishing Sanskrit or Persian or any other vernacular books and should stop supporting vernacular education. Macaulay's recommendations were accepted and officially sanctioned by Lord Bentinck.

Following is a segment from his minute which elucidates his views on the traditional Indian languages:

that English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic; that the natives are desirous to be taught English, and are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit or Arabic; that neither as the languages of law, nor as the languages of religion, have the Sanskrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our engagement; that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.

4.3 Decolonisation in India

Decolonization, when split gives us the literal meaning of the word, where *de-* is to remove something from something and *colonization* is the rule or subjugation of one country over another. Therefore, the term decolonization very generally means to remove or to free a country from its colonial status. The definition seems to be very simple and yet it is quite complex.

When a country is colonized, it is not merely a subordination of the people by physical or military force. It means a forceful rule that tries to efface their culture, their values, their knowledge systems, and their language. It means a forceful rule which is not merely political or economical but also psychological. And so when talking about decolonization one cannot simply restrict oneself to a singular dimension of the entire process. Therefore, decolonization cannot simply imply a freedom of people from a foreign authority. Decolonization would also mean a freedom from a forced way of life, freedom from forced knowledge systems, freedom from an imposed language, freedom from an imposed way of thinking and freedom from an imposed sense of inferiority. Decolonization is a multi faceted phenomenon as it involves setting oneself free from a lot of things.

After almost a century, in 1857, the first massive revolt erupted in the country. And even though the British were able to suppress the revolt by fighting the revolutionaries then, the spirit of the revolt never really died down. India had embarked on this path of revolution and freedom and the voices only grew stronger and louder. By the early twentieth century, a full-fledged anti-colonial struggle had erupted throughout India.

This anti-colonial struggle had many forms of resistance. Some resorted to violent means and some to not so violent. Negotiations and rallies to instill a sense of nationalism were extremely important and a process of nation-building was on its way. According to Nayar, "The anti-colonial movement, in most cases, posited the idea of a

nation with a continuous and common tradition. In India, for example, even the uneven ‘rebellion’ of 1857 invoked the idea of a pre-British ‘Hindustan’.” (Nayar, 2010).

There are a lot of things that added up to the creation of a nationalist sentiment in people, like national symbols, common cultural values, common ancient folklores and songs, traditional literature and common spiritual figures. Language played a very interesting role in such an anti-colonial struggle and helped the revolutionaries in voicing their resistance. However, this language of resistance was not necessarily the native languages of the country. One of the major languages that became the voice of resistance of the Indians was English - the language of its rulers.

The English Language in India

The English language was introduced into India as a corollary to the British rule. It was imposed on the natives, displacing their native and vernacular languages in order to facilitate the ruler’s efficient functioning here. The ruler's tried to discourage all kinds of traditional learning in the traditional languages and so made English a part of the Indian lives. Macaulay’s dream of forming a class of interpreters, English in taste was fulfilled. But what Macaulay never envisioned was that this class of interpreters he created would become the torchbearers of the Indian freedom movement. That this class of Indians who were English in taste, opinions, morals and intellect would lead India on the path of decolonization and that they would use the colonizer’s language against them to voice their resistance.

Earliest Indian Writings in English

The earliest writings in English by Indians emerged in the eighteenth century where basically people talked about their experiences under the colonial rule. It was a subtle way of drawing the attention of the rulers towards them as they wrote in a language which the rulers could understand. Their revolutionary sentiments were not yet direct and loud but they were at least understandable by the British.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote *Rajmohan’s Wife* and published it in 1864. It was the first Indian novel in English. It related the colonial experiences of the narrator, which was essentially an Indian experience, in an English which was unadulterated by Indian words.

This was followed by a stream of Indian writers, writing about their journey through their characters, in a language which was initially imposed on them but now became an instrument of rebelling against this imposition.

The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali essentially but he also wrote and translated his works into English himself. Tagore’s writings truly captured the Indian sentiment and the heart of the Indian soil. His writings captured the attention of many acknowledged British men and he soon became one of the few Indians to be recognized outside India.

Tagore became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in literature in the year 1913 for his work *Gitanjali*, which was essentially in Bengali but was translated in English. Tagore’s nobel citation says that he was chosen for his “profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse” Tagore represented the true Indian genius and invalidated the European notion of India being a place of savage and primitive people who could never produce rich and cultured literature.

The trio of K.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao are credited with being the major class of writers who really used the English language to meet the needs of their narrative. They wrote in the early twentieth century, captured, controlled the English language and used it to depict the stark reality of the nation and the life of every Indian. Their stories captured the real India and it was extremely interesting to see how a foreign language was moulded to tell a tale which was essentially Indian.

Apart from them, major political readers also used the English language to raise their voice against the unfair British domination. Jawaharlal Nehru’s *A Discovery of India* and also a collection of his letters to his daughter Indira were published. His writings depicted his vision for India and outlined his true objectives that he wanted India to accomplish. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was another one such revolutionary who wrote vividly about the Indian Independence struggle. His *The Indian Struggle* was in fact a two part historical account of the Indian Independence Movement. The book was so strong in its resistance against the British rule that it was banned during Bose’s time and only published in 1948.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, was one such prolific writer who truly proved that the pen is mightier than the sword. Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* in 1909 and translated it in English in 1910. It was the earliest accounts of India’s Independence Movement. He wrote his autobiography which was translated in English as *My Experiments with Truth*. Also he was the editor of many nationalist journals and newspapers. Young India was one such English journal.

Relevance of the English Language

This is not to say that the Indian writers or revolutionaries did not write in the

native language or the vernacular Indian languages. Almost all the writers wrote extensively in their respective mother tongue languages or in Hindi and there were only few who wrote exclusively in English. Also writing in the vernacular language or in Hindi ensured that they would be able to reach out to a more rural and isolated sections of the society. However, in spite of all these reasons, writing in English achieved something which writing in the vernacular languages did not.

In using the English language to voice their resistance, these writers could directly communicate with the rulers.

The rulers, when reading journals or newspapers or stories or poetries or novels written in English, could directly get a sense of the storm that was brewing in the nation. They could understand the true feelings of the native soul. Using the English language was the best way to directly reach them, communicate with them, and show our opposition. This was why a lot of Indian texts were translated into English after their publication. A British would be unable to read a text - whether a novel or a newspaper article - in any Indian language. And so, while the text would convey its ideas to the native sparking a fire of patriotism in them, it would have no affect on the Ruler. And for a country which wants to gain its freedom, affecting the ruler and letting him know of his unacceptable intrusion is extremely important.

Post-colonial writers like Salman Rushdie (1991) and Derek Walcott (1986) argue that English gets transformed and nativised. It is no longer the language of the natives and is used against the natives.

4.4 English in Post-Colonial India

It was thought that the end of the British Raj would mean the slow but sure demise of the English language in South Asia. This, of course, has not happened. The penetration of English in these societies is greater than it has ever been (Kachru, 1994).

The Indian constitution designated Hindi as the Official language of the country, under Article 343. The policy makers of young India highly debated in the constituent assembly and came to the conclusion that English was not going to be easily substituted or displaced in India. At the conclusion of this debate they decided to make English as the Associate Official Language. English is the language of the administration, higher education and trade. It is the dominant language in the urban areas and among the upper middle classes and the uppermost classes of society.

According to Kachru, the English spoken in India is nativized because all the different and diverse languages spoken by speakers have some influence on the speaker's way of speaking in English (Kachru, 1986). As a result of such a diverse population, there is a wide range of Englishes being spoken in the country, determined by the speaker's class and occupation in most cases. But the most common variety spoken in all these differences is the **Standard Indian English**.

Post-colonial literature is generally used to refer to literature which is produced by writers who come from States that were previously under a colonial power. This kind of literature reflects, refracts, subverts and interrogates the colonial past of its nation. Temporally, the term also signifies literature coming from a nation after it has gained independence from the colonial rule. India has produced major world class writers, both before and after Independence. The language that was gifted to India by the Europeans has now been moulded by the natives into their own variety officially acknowledged by the world. Indians have been spinning the most magical of stories, in a 'foreign' language, years after its native speakers left. Their writings have been recognized internationally and they have helped in portraying the real face of India, depicting her in all her true colours.

India is the third largest book producing nation, in English, after the US and UK. There is a continuous growth in the creative spirit of the nation and the English language is a vital instrument of channeling this creative spirit.

From Rabindranath Tagore who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 to writers like Salman Rushdie. Arundhati Roy who have been awarded the Booker Prize Awards in recent times, Indian writers have excelled in the literary field. It is Indian writers in English who have truly showcased India to the world not only in terms of understanding the country better, but also by establishing that the language no longer represents the western concepts of literary creativity as its ranges have expanded (Wayal, 2016).

5. Conclusion

Colonialism, therefore, was a major event in the world that had far-reaching consequences. One of the key consequences was the encounter of the Asian and African continents with the English language. The language was used as an instrument of colonial rule. It became more than just a means of communication. It was moulded to justify colonialism. It became a language of the politics of representation.

Though initially imposed on the natives, the language was soon used by them to

imitate the colonizers, with all their sophistication, and later was used to revolt. The language thus became a means of Resistance for the natives. It, ironically, helped the natives acquire their freedom. Bhabha’s idea of the mimic man can be used to explain this comprehensively.

After the gradual decolonization of most of the world, the language has gained global acceptance. It serves as the common medium of communication for all nations. The status of English has only risen and its use extended since the decolonization of the world in general, when many perhaps thought that with the end of colonization the language would lose its power. □□

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**SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS AND ETHNICITY
AS PREDICTORS OF REGIONAL VARIATION IN
INFANT AND CHILD MORTALITY IN JORHAT DISTRICT :
A SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

The study of infant mortality has been attracting nationwide attention because of considerable depletion of population during the stage of infancy, which has a major contribution on reducing life expectancy of population. Research on various aspects of infant mortality has been going on for quite some time throughout the world, and many of the proximate variables that affect it have been identified in this study from the secondary sources. Exploring the association of regional differences in infant mortality with selected socio-economic indicators and ethnicity could offer important clues for designing public health policy measures.

Keywords : Depletion, Infant mortality, life expectancy, proximate variables, regional differences, socioeconomic indicators.

Introduction :

Jorhat is cultural assemblage of various social, religious and ethnic groups. Their living standards, food habits, literacy level, sanitary conditions, nutritional status, utilization of health services and the pattern of child bearing and rearing are rooted in their social values and norms. Although a lot of inputs have been given been in health sector to reduce the high infant mortality, no significant achievements have been made till now. Since the Infant mortality rate is a pooled average value experienced by various cultural groups and communities, it is quite possible that there may be such areas and communities having high infant mortality rate, which may be keeping the overall infant mortality rate of a community at higher level. The infant mortality rate in Jorhat district has declined

from 142 to 57 from 1971 to 2011, while the state level infant mortality rate has declined from 139 to 58 from 1971 to 2011, both have showed declining trend in infant mortality rate. But as per district level the rate of decline has been slow as compared to other districts of Assam.

Infant mortality rate is one of the most important indicators of the general level of health or well being of a given community and of its socioeconomic development. Several analytical frameworks are used for studying the determinants of child survival based on the premise that all social and economic determinants of child mortality operate through a common set of biological mechanisms, or proximate determinants, to exert an impact on mortality. Perinatal, neonatal, infant mortality and child mortality are associated with a number of demographic and socio-economic indicators such as ethnic groups, family income, unemployment, mother's or father's social and education of the mother, women's age of marriage etc. Moreover, it is known that infant mortality tends to be higher in regions with greater social and health-related inequalities and tends to rise in regions that have suffered from substantial socioeconomic, cultural and political disruption.

Objectives of the Study :

1. To study the spatial and temporal trend of infant and child mortality in the study area.
2. To find out the socio-economic and ethnic factors which determine infant and child mortality in the study area.
3. To find out how the socio-economic and ethnic differentials cause spatial and regional variation of infant and child mortality.

Methods and Tools of Data Analysis :

Sampling Method : Multi stage sampling techniques is applied for the study.

1st stage : Jorhat has been chosen on the basis of purposive sampling for the study because of the familiarity with the language, socio-economic and socio-cultural condition of the people.

2nd stage : Majuli and Titabor Circles are chosen out of the six circles of Jorhat district on the basis of highest and lowest infant as well as child mortality respectively.

3rd stage : For collecting primary data, one urban (the district headquarter) and four villages are selected randomly (two having health facility and the other two without health facility) from Majuli and Titabor Circles (in case where the incidence of infant and child death are not enough, the field survey has been extended to the neighbouring

villages). Kamalabari Satra gaon and Ahatguri villages are selected from Majuli Circle. The former have health facility and the later have without health facility in the village. In the same way, Sonowal Kachari gaon (having health facility) and Nagadholi T.E. (without health facility) are chosen from the Titabor Circle.

4th stage : The households, where the infant and child deaths took place were selected on the basis of the registration of deaths by municipal committees in the urban areas and the Primary Health Centre/ Sub Centres in the rural areas and also on the basis of the statement of the village head.

Data Base and Methodology :

The total sample size is 250, 100 from each Circles. Fifty eligible women are chosen through the process of judgment random sampling technique from the district headquarters. From each circle, 50 women chosen who have lost their children in the last 5 year period and 50 women are chosen who have live children under the age of 4 years on the basis of judgment random sampling, seemed to be truly representative to the background characteristics of the respondents. All respondents are currently married women of the age group of 15-49 years.

Statistical Analysis :

Data included perinatal, neonatal, infant mortality and child death (below 5 years) in the 4 villages of Jorhat district of the Assam in 2011. In this study, the women of reproductive age group are taken as the unit of analysis. The dependent and independent variables are categorical in nature. An attempt has been made to apply best measures to analyse the data. The effects of education, standard of living, mother's age at marriage, maternal care during pregnancy and after delivery, access to health facility, unemployment, income, ethnicity and the proportion of minority population on regional differences in infant mortality and child mortality were explored using linear regression analysis. Chi-square test, Null Hypothesis and Binary Logistic Regression have been used for the analysis.

Measures of Mortality :

Mortality rates were calculated for 4 villages of Jorhat district. Perinatal mortality rate is expressed as the number of stillbirths and deaths under 7 days of age per number of live births. Neonatal mortality rate is expressed as the number of infant deaths in less than 28 days of births. Infant mortality rate is expressed as the number of deaths under

1 year of age per number of live births. Child mortality rate is expressed as number of deaths under 4 years of age per thousand children. To highlight the differences between perinatal and infant mortality, we also calculated mortality in weeks 2-52 (mortality after the seventh day to the end of the first year of life), which was expressed as the number of deaths over 7 days and under 1 year of age per number of live births. This mortality was determined only for statistical comparisons of influence of selected indicators to mortality, and has no official, demographical and statistical support.

Results and Discussion :

All the explored socioeconomic indicators and ethnicity individually contributed significantly to both perinatal and infant mortality, with the exception of income. This model explained 34.9 per cent of the variance for perinatal and 36.4 per cent of the variance for infant mortality. Housing condition, standard of living, educational level, medical care, exposure to mass media, mother's age at marriage, maternal care, registered unemployment rate, income and the minority population were used as socioeconomic indicators influencing the mortality rate. All indicators were calculated for each circle, because data are available and rather reliable at the circle level.

Infant Mortality and Mother's Educational Level :

Educational level of the mother is very important for child survival. As level of education goes higher, the probability of survival also increases. But primary schooling does not show any correlation with child survival. Table-1 illustrate the educational attainment of ever married women and their infant and child mortality rate in the district headquarter, Titabor and Majuli circles. The infant and child mortality rate for illiterate women and for those who have some primary education is substantially higher than those with higher educational attainment. A negative relationship is established between the levels of educational status of women and infant and child mortality rate. It is because illiterate women more likely than literate women tend to marry at younger ages and have high maternal mortality, infant and child mortality due to their ignorance about maternity and child health care. This association is sharp and consistent for each age-groups of currently married women in the rural areas than the urban areas.

Table - 1
Spatial variation of infant mortality rate (Total), Male infant mortality rate and Female infant mortality rate according to mother's educational status

Sector	Educational Status														
	No education			Some primary			Complete primary			Complete secondary			Complete higher secondary		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
DHQ	52	50	54	50	49	51	49	52	46	46	48	44	39	40	38
Titabor	55	53	57	55	54	56	51	50	52	46	45	47	44	46	42
Majuli	58	57	59	57	55	59	57	55	59	55	50	60	49	43	55
Total	55	54	56	54	50	58	52	53	51	49	46	52	44	47	41

Infant Mortality and Women's Age at Marriage :

An analysis of the data as represented in Table-2 revealed that women at their median age at marriage of 15.5 years have highest infant and child mortality of 64 per thousand currently married women. Infant and child mortality rate to per thousand women decrease as their median age at marriage increases and vice versa. The median age at marriage for women computed on the basis of the sample data is 21.5 years. An inverse relationship may be established between the women's age at marriage and the infant mortality rate in the study area.

Table - 2
Infant Mortality Rate according to Female's Age at Marriage

Age at marriage (in years)	Median age at marriage (in years)	No. of women (in %)	Total infant mortality rate	Male infant mortality rate	Female infant mortality rate	Married fertility rate	Child-Women ratio (per thousand)
13 to 18	15.50	50	64	62	66	1.5	400
19 to 24	21.5	43.33	53	50	56	1.90	923
25 to 29	27	6.67	48	51	45	1	500

Infant Mortality and Age Composition of Women :

The structural differences in the childbearing population and the pattern of childbearing are very important as immediate determinants of infant mortality. Such factors may be responsible to a certain extent in creating differentials in infant mortality rates between these two circles. Females in rural and backward areas tend to marry at

an early age exhibit highest infant and child mortality rate between the age intervals of 15 to 19 years.

Table - 3
Infant Mortality among Currently Married Women by Age Composition

Age-groups (in years)	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
No. of women (in %)	6.66	23.83	26.67	23.33	13.34	3.33	3.34
Total infant mortality rate	56	54	53	52	53	50	0
Male infant mortality rate	50	49	49	48	41	52	0
Female infant mortality rate	62	59	57	56	65	48	0

Infant mortality and Housing Condition :

The chance of survival increases with the improvement in housing condition. The infant and child death are highest in the kuchha houses followed by semi-pucca and are lowest in the pucca houses. The binary logistic regression analysis shows that the type of place of residence is strongly linked to 'child is alive'. Type of House is also very significant related to child survival. But semi-pucca house is not significantly associated with child survival.

Infant and Child Mortality and Medical Care :

In terms of the medical care, which includes place of delivery, went for delivery care, went for postpartum care, went for immunization, went for antenatal care, given iron folic tablets during pregnancy, given tetanus injection during pregnancy, received BCO, received DPT, received Measles, and received polio, Titabor Circle is far better than the Majuli. This may be one of the major causes for the existing high gap in infant and child mortality in these two Circles of Jorhat district.

Infant and Child Mortality and Exposure to Mass Media :

Higher exposure to mass media leads to lower infant and child deaths. The role of mass media is highly important in utilization of different medical care facilities. As the exposure to mass media increases, the percentage of survival of the child also increases in both districts. But when the number of exposure to the mass increases, it doesn't necessarily lead to increase to the child survival.

Infant Mortality and Life Style Followed :

The general life style and living standard of the people by its various dimensions

measured at the familial level and by a variety of environmental and social factors influence the infant mortality in a community. Factors exogenous to life-styles the availability and utilization of medical health facilities are also very crucial in this regard.

Infant Mortality and Maternal Care :

The delivery of immunization and maternal care services needs to given top priority in Majuli in order to improve the condition of infant and child. Maternal, infant and child mortality is influenced by a whole range of socio-economic factors, the status of women, which includes low level of education, economic dependency and lack of access to services. Titabor circle which has relatively better socio-economic and education status have lower infant and child mortality than the Majuli. It was clear from the interview of the mothers in the Majuli that the existing health system has major problems of absence of links between communities, sub-centers and referral facilities, shortages of equipment and trained staff at referral facility, and a lack of emergency transport to adequately meet the needs of pregnant women particularly for the complications of pregnancy and obstetrical emergencies.

As per the sample survey, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Titabor and Majuli are 412 and 454 respectively per 100,000 live births is the one of the highest in the state. However, it has been showing a remarkable declining trend since 1991. This has been possible due to progress in institutional deliveries especially initiatives under the Janani Suraksha Hojana (JSY). One of the measures for improving MMR is the safe delivery. Incidentally, safe deliveries remain a challenge in the remote and backward villages of Majuli. The JSY is a safe motherhood intervention under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) which focuses on reducing maternal and neo-natal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among the poor pregnant women. With the introduction of the JSY from the year 2005, there has been almost 20 times increase in institutional delivery in the Jorhat district. However, improving the safe motherhood still remains a major challenge for overall improvement in the maternal and therefore is high maternal mortality. Child health is one of the biggest challenges facing Jorhat in the area of children and women development. Although Titabor have achieved the maximum decline of 80 points and Majuli have a decline of 65 points in maternal mortality ratio between 2005-06 and 2010-11. Jorhat continues to remain in the state of having the highest Maternal Mortality Ration (MMR) of 430 per 100,000 live births in Assam.

Safe deliveries, too remain a challenge, as per the sample survey, 35.4 per cent and 24.8 per cent of deliveries are attended by trained attendants in Titabor and Majuli

respectively, the ration level average is 39.9 per cent and all India average is 52.8 per cent. As for institutional births, Titabor and Majuli have 58.5 per cent and 41.5 per cent respectively while the district level figure is 61.8 per cent. Assam is at 64.4 per cent which is lower than the national average of 72.9 per cent.

Infant Mortality and Women's Status in Relation to Total Pregnancy Cases :

The proportion of births at each order is larger than the proportion of births at the next order. Reproductive wastage or abortions was practised at higher birth order (3rd, 4th, 5th) pregnancy cases. The proportion of termination to total pregnancy cases were 36.36% per cent, 28.57 per cent and 66.66 per cent at 3rd, 4th, 5th birth order respectively. It was estimated that 145.65 pregnancy cases were terminated to per 1000 pregnancy cases.

Table - 4
Percentage distribution of pregnancy cases, births and reproductive wastage by subsequent birth order

Birth order	Pregnancy rate (in %)	Termination/ reproductive wastage in % to total pregnancy cases	Births		Reproductive wastage to over 1000 pregnancy cases
			Survival rate (per 1000)	Infant mortality rate (per 1000)	
1 st	42.03	10.03	943	57	100.3
2 nd	27.53	13.07	956	44	130.7
3 rd	15.94	23.4	958	42	234
4 th	10.14	24.70	939	61	247
5 th	4.35	28.8	928	72	288

Education, Unemployment, Income and Infant Mortality Rate :

Table - 5 presents the results of the linear regression between the rates of perinatal, infant mortality, and mortality in weeks 2-52 in the Jorhat district and the separate socioeconomic indicators. In this model, the variables were entered consecutively to explore the effects separately. Dependent variables are the rates of perinatal, infant mortality and mortality in weeks 2-52 separately. All the variables except income showed a significant effect on perinatal mortality. The situation is similar with regard to infant mortality; all the variables except income had a significant effect on

infant mortality. In terms of mortality, in weeks 2-52 all the variables except income and elementary education had a significant effect.

Table - 5
Linear regression between perinatal and infant mortality rate and socioeconomic indicators in the year 2011 - crude effect of each factor

Socioeconomic indicators (separately)	Perinatal mortality				Infant mortality				Mortality in weeks 2-52			
	Unstanderdised coefficients		Significance	R ²	Unstanderdised coefficients		Significance	R ²	Unstanderdised coefficients		Significance	R ²
	B	Standard error			B	Standard error			β	Standard error		
Education												
Elementary	0.178	0.070	0.013*	0.078	0.165	0.076	0.032*	0.058	0.096	0.059	0.103	0.034
Uncompleted elementary	3.458	1.476	0.022*	0.067	4.791	1.540	0.003**	0.112	4.122	1.159	0.001**	0.141
Unemployment rate	0.243	0.060	0.000***	0.174	0.234	0.066	0.001**	0.141	0.168	0.051	0.001**	0.124
Income	0.000	0.000	0.381	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.292	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.267	0.016
Proportion minority population	of 0.364	0.059	0.000***	0.329	0.393	0.063	0.000***	0.336	0.257	0.051	0.000***	0.245
R ² explained variance, * p ≤ 0.05, ** p ≤ 0.01, *** p ? 0.001 (2-tailed)												

Infant Mortality and Standard of Living :

The infant and child mortality rate is negatively associated with the level of living and reflects a country's level of socio-economic development and quality of life. The Chi Sq. test confirms that there is a high degree of association between the child survival and standard of living. The Chi Sq. value 21.02 and 39.96 for both Titabor and Majuli respectively are highly significant. Therefore, it can conclude that the household standard of living and child mortality are significantly co-related.

Gender Inequality in Infant Mortality :

Based on data collected from the sample survey boys are as likely as girls to die before reaching the age of one, whereas, given biological differences only, boys would be more likely to die. There is, consequently, some evidence that non-biological factors reduce girls' relative likelihood of surviving beyond infancy compared to boys.

In terms of nutritional outcomes, girls are as likely boys to have a height-for-age z-score or a weight-for-age z-score of less than two standard deviations below the reference group. However, in terms of access to health care, girls are less likely than boys to receive vaccines but slightly more likely to have parents seeking treatment or advice in the case where they suffer from diarrhea. Finally, in terms of treatment for diarrhea, that is if the child has been given oral rehydration salts (ORS), girls and boys are as likely to have received it. These simple descriptive statistics seem to show that it is not so much inequality in nutritional inputs that drives gender inequality in child mortality but, rather, inequality in "non-essential" access to health care, like vaccination.

Table - 6
Gender Inequality in Child Mortality, Nutritional Outcomes and Access to Health Care

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Ratio boys girls
Infant survival	0.943	0.941	1.002
Height-for-age<2 s.d.	0.503	0.512	0.982
Weight-for-age<2 s.d.	0.437	0.446	0.980
Vaccination	5.288	5.526	0.957***
Treatment for diarrhea	0.700	0.722	0.970*
ORS	0.270	0.269	1.004

Notes: *Significant at 0.10, **Significant at 0.05, ***Significant at 0.01

Linear regression between perinatal and infant mortality rate and socioeconomic indicators - crude effect of each factor :

Table - 7
Linear regression between perinatal and infant mortality rate and socioeconomic indicators - all variables

Socioeconomic indicators	Perinatal mortality			Infant mortality			Mortality in weeks 2-52		
	Unstanderdised coefficients		Significance	Unstanderdised coefficients		Significance	Unstanderdised coefficients		Significance
	B	Standard error		B	Standard error		B	Standard error	
Education									
Elementary	-0.005	0.109	0.965	-0.117	0.115	0.315	-0.166	0.092	0.077
Uncompleted elementary	-1.021	1.695	0.549	1.499	1.792	0.406	2.663	1.435	0.068
Unemployment rate	0.055	0.110	0.618	-0.079	0.116	0.502	-0.025	0.096	0.789
Income	0.000	0.000	0.316	E	0.000	0.963	E	0.000	0.621
Proportion of Roma population	0.383	0.100	0.000***	0.489	0.106	0.000***	0.293	0.085	0.001**
R ²	0.349			0.364			0.303		

R² explained variance, ** p ≤ 0.01, *** p ≤ 0.001 (2-tailed)

Table-7 shows the linear regression presenting the relationship between socioeconomic indicators in the study area and the rates of perinatal, infant mortality and mortality in weeks 2-52. The model explores the influence of all variables together on all the three mortality rates. The model explains 34.0 per cent of variance in perinatal mortality rate, 36.4 per cent of the variance in infant mortality rate and 30.3 per cent of the variance in mortality in weeks 2-52. Only the proportion of the minority population contributed to the prediction of perinatal, infant mortality and mortality in weeks 2-52 in the study area. The effect of the other variables on perinatal, infant mortality and mortality in weeks 2-52 was not significant.

Infant Mortality and Ethnic Composition :

When the data are disaggregated by ethnic affiliations, no clear result emerges (Table-8). All ethnic groups seem to discriminate against girls in terms of infant survival, with Muslim girls having the worst prospects. Girls of General Community are less

likely than General boys to have a weight-for-age z-score of less than two standard-deviations. But, for all other ethnic groups, there is no significant difference between boys and girls in terms of nutritional outcomes. However, in terms of access to health care S.C., Muslim and S.T. girls receive, on average, fewer vaccines than boys of their respective faith. In terms of treatment/advice for diarrhea and ORS, no significant difference between boys and girls is found for any ethnic groups. To summarize, all ethnic groups do seem to discriminate against girls, with all girls being either as likely to die or more likely to die during infancy than boys. Given biological differences only, girls should be more likely to survive than boys. As no real difference exists in terms of nutritional outcomes, it seems that the main way used by parents to discriminate between their children is to limit girls' access to health care, like vaccination, but not their access to more basic health care, like treatment for diarrhea.

It is also interesting to note that, while looking at both genders at the same time, some religious groups seem to perform much better than others in terms of health inputs and outputs for children less than three years old. General and Ahom children are generally better off than S.C. and S.T. children. More precisely, Hindu children have the lowest probability of surviving until age one. Both S.T. and Muslim children are more likely to be stunted and to be underweight, in addition to being less likely to receive vaccinations than General and Ahom children. However, Muslim and S.T. parents are more likely to seek advice/treatment for diarrhea than General and Ahom parents. Given that diarrhea is generally better treated at home by giving the child on ORS pack than by seeing a health professional who might prescribe antibiotics, not too much importance should be given to the results on treatment for diarrhea. As is the case for religion at the individual level, son preference is lower in General population group in Ahom, Muslim, S.C. and S.T. groups.

Given these descriptive statistics, the impact of ethnicity or gender inequality in child mortality, nutritional outcomes and access to health care is not that clear. However, it seems that if one ethnic group is discriminating more against girls than others it is likely to be Muslims. In order to examine more carefully these tentative impressions, we need to control for other factors that may explain why religious groups seem to behave differently. Multivariate analysis will consequently be used.

Table - 8
Health Inputs and Outputs by Religious Affiliations

		All (reference group : Hindu)	Male	Female	Ratio male/female
Infant survival	Ahom	0.956**	0.956	0.956	1.000
	S.C.	0.939	0.939	0.94	0.999
	Muslim	0.953***	0.949	0.958	0.991
	General	0.954*	0.974	0.932	1.045**
	S.T.	0.362***	0.381	0.342	1.114
Height-for-age<2 s.d.	Ahom	0.512	0.517	0.506	1.022
	S.C.	0.526	0.519	0.533	0.974
	Muslim	0.431**	0.441	0.418	1.055
	S.T.	0.272***	0.316	0.223	1.417**
	General	0.451	0.454	0.448	1.013
Weight-for-age<2 s.d.	Muslim	0.443	0.451	0.435	1.037
	S.T.	0.261***	0.252	0.272	0.926
	S.C.	6.670***	6.54	6.81	0.960
	Ahom	5.490	5.59	5.38	1.039***
	Muslim	4.620***	4.74	4.49	1.056*
Vaccination	S.T.	6.950***	7.27	6057	1.107**
	General	0.683	0.713	0.631	1.130
	Ahom	0.697	0.705	0.688	1.025
	Muslim	0.760***	0.782	0.736	1.063
	S.C.	0.922***	0.97	0.858	1.131
Treatment for Diarrhoea	S.T.	0.347	0.391	0.271	1.444
	Ahom	0.264	0.258	0.271	0.952
	Muslim	0.270	0.286	0.252	1.134
ORS	S.C.	0.434**	0.434	0.435	0.999

Notes: *Significant at 0.10, **Significant at 0.05, ***Significant at 0.01

Factor Structure of Six Important Indicators of Infant Mortality Rate :

The evolved factor structure of six interconnected measures based on the result of the statistical techniques applied to field surveyed data presented in the Table-9. State level and country level data are also presented in the table for drawing a comparative analysis.

Table - 9
Comparison of six interconnected measures of Infant Mortality of the study area based on the result of the statistical techniques applied in field surveyed data with the State (Assam) and Country (India) level data collected from secondary sources (2011)

Country/ State/ District/ Circle	India	Assam	Jorhat	Titabor	Majuli
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) (per 1,000 live births)	47	58	57	55	61
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) (per 1,000 live births)	212	390	430	418	454
Neonatal Mortality Ratio (NNMR) (per 1,000 live births)	32	33	30	29	38
Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) (per 1,000 live births)	64	87	85	84	89
Under 5 Male Mortality Rate (U5MMR) (per 1,000 live births)	69	91	93	90	95
Under 5 Female Mortality Rate (U5FMR)	60	68	70	69	76

Findings :

The results of our study point out the relationship between selected socioeconomic indicators, ethnicity and perinatal and infant mortality rate, neonatal mortality rate and child mortality rate in the study area. Looking at the factors separately, a significant effect of educational level, unemployment rate on perinatal and infant mortality was observed, while income had no significant effect on perinatal and infant mortality and child mortality. The model including all socioeconomic factors and ethnicity together showed that only the proportion of people living in rural settlements have a significant effect on perinatal and infant mortality, child mortality.

Worse birth outcomes as well higher mortality in early childhood used to be attributed to maternal education, poor nutritional status, a lack of prenatal care and poor living conditions. Incidence of health problems among minority and poor children aged 0-5 years living in rural and backward areas without proper health facility was associated with poor housing conditions, unhygienic sanitations, poor standard of living, illiteracy among mothers, early age at marriage, non exposure to mass media and poor status granted to girls. It may be concluded that there are several socio-economic and

demographic indices and the proportion of minority people living in rural areas might contribute to regional differences in infant mortality and child mortality in Jorhat district.

It is possible to identify several hypotheses that may explain the worse health of the minority people living in the rural backward villages without health facility compared to the majority population. (1) Observed differences in health may be due to differences in living conditions, different access to goods and services, and the extent of poverty, meaning the major cause of these differences is not ethnicity but different socioeconomic characteristics. There are studies confirming the contribution of socioeconomic characteristics in the explanation of health differences between minority and non minority. (2) Cultural differences are the cause of differences in health literacy, in health-related behaviour (nutritional habits, use of psychoactive substances, physical activity, disease prevention), which lead to gaps in health. (3) The psycho-social hypothesis points to the health consequences of stress from discrimination, social exclusion, material and financial deprivation and lower socioeconomic position. (4) The conditions in early childhood may be a disadvantage, and this disadvantage tends to cumulate in each subsequent critical life period, which may result in widening differences in health over life, resulting in a shorter life expectancy. Of particular interest is access to health care, which might be an important factor of infant mortality. Available indicators of health care (number of gynaecologist and number of beds in institutional care per region) did not contribute to the explanation of regional disparities in infant mortality (analyses not shown), perhaps because these indicators measure only physical availability of health care facilities. Despite the fact that there is a free access to health care guaranteed by law, and ace to health care in a particular region, there might be several significant barriers from the side of the minority communities to benefit from health care like residential segregation (distance from health care facilities and obstacles to arranging a visit), low health literacy, prejudices and discrimination.

Implications :

The majority of mortality studies focus on infant mortality up to 1 year of life as a whole. As in our research, emphasis is put on studying particular components of infant mortality in order to find associations with the specific factors influencing them. Different factors might be important for different components of infant mortality, e.g. educational and health literacy of the mother for infant mortality, age of the mother or state health care spending as a proxy for access to health care for perinatal and neonatal. Based on our findings, it seems that the patterns of the respective associations between selected

socioeconomic factors and perinatal and infant mortality are very similar.

Our findings indicate the need for more and deeper research into mortality up to 1 years of age, its geographical distribution and socioeconomic factors, which increase its level. Further research might try to reveal the mechanisms which play a role in causing socioeconomic differences in infant mortality. Different access to health care between the minority and non minority population, rural and urban population, different quality of health care provided, health literacy, health-related behaviour and many other factors might contribute to the explanation of the differences in infant mortality, while on the other hand, a better understanding of these processes might help us to obtain tailored interventions. Special attention should be paid to the differences in accessibility of the offered services.

Suggestions :

There are several measures which have the potential to decrease such differences : (1) Supporting the work of community health workers and stimulating the collaboration between community health workers, paediatricians and gynaecologists with the aim of overcoming the institutional barriers in the field of mother and child care for women living in Roma settlements; (2) Establishing an intensive and long-term health promotion programme for adolescent women focused on reproductive health, prenatal care, parenting and family planning; (3) Using financial stimuli (e.g. making the reception of certain social benefits depending on participation in prenatal care) to stimulate participation in prenatal care; (4) Enhancing access to the health care and social services systems with the aim of ensuring adequate immunization, early treatment for ill children and social support for vulnerable children.

Conclusion :

As infant and child mortality rate in Majuli is at high level, necessary policies and programme interventions have to be developed to tackle the factors which are responsible for high infant and child mortality in Assam. Health education programmes should be designed for the families who have experienced infant and child deaths so that the further risk of death may be substantially reduced. The effect of birth order and younger maternal age is mediated through short birth interval. Young mothers at high parity, those bearing children at short birth intervals, and mothers who had suffered child loss before are the vulnerable to excessive infant and child mortality. This may be used for future planning and policy decisions aimed at reducing infant and child mortality. Policies

should be formulated with keeping in mind the factors like, age at marriage, timing of child bearing, delaying the first pregnancy, spacing, education and infrastructural facility.

Living in rural and backward area without proper health facility indicates an accumulation of socioeconomic disadvantage. Health literacy, health-related behavior and many other factors might contribute to the explanation of the differences in infant mortality, and a better understanding of these processes might help us to design tailored interventions. ■■

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