

महिला र बालबालिकामा खोज



महिला र बालबालिकामा

खोज

www.cjnepal.org.np



9 789937 045575 >



महिला र बालबालिकामा खोज

सम्पादक
शिव गाउँले



खोज पत्रकारिता केन्द्र

महिला र बालबालिकामा खोज

सम्पादक : शिव गाउँले

प्रकाशक : खोज पत्रकारिता केन्द्र (खोपके)

जावलाखेल, ललितपुर

पो.ब.नं. २४८४६

सम्पर्क : ०१-५५४३०८५

इमेल : mail@cijnepal.org

वेब : www.cijnepal.org.np

प्रथम संस्करण : साउन २०७५

भाषा : शरच्चन्द्र वस्ती

आवरण : रविन साय्मि

डिजाइन : विपेन्द्र घिमिरे

शुद्धाशुद्धि : धर्मराज दाहाल

ISBN : 978-9937-0-4557-5

यो पुस्तक लेखन र प्रकाशनका लागि UNICEF Nepal ले सहयोग गरेको हो ।
यसमा व्यक्त भएका विचारसँग UNICEF को सहमति छ भन्ने होइन ।

खोजमा लैङ्गिक दृष्टि

२०४७ सालको प्रजातान्त्रिक संविधान निर्माणसँगै उदार र खुला शासन प्रणाली स्थापना भयो । विचार र अभिव्यक्ति स्वतन्त्रता सुनिश्चित गर्ने यही संविधानले ठूलो साइजमा छापिने पत्रिका, घरघरमा सजिलै सुनिने रेडियो र देखिने टेलिभिजन विस्तारको वातावरण निर्माण गर्‍यो, जसलाई हामीले व्यावसायिक पत्रकारिता विकासको काल भनेर सम्झन्छौ ।

नेपाली पत्रकारिता क्षेत्रमा सरकारी माध्यम, राजनीतिक मिसन र धेरथोर कर्पोरेट संस्कार सहितको मिडिया उद्योग अघि बढिरहेका बेला राजनीतिक रूपमा तटस्थ र व्यावसायिक रूपमा सक्षम सञ्चार संस्थाको आवश्यकता महसूस गरेर मुलुकका सम्पादक र अगुवा संवाददाताहरूको प्रयत्नमा खोज पत्रकारिता केन्द्र (खोपके) स्थापना हुन पुग्यो । खोज पत्रकारिता सम्बन्धी तालिम, तालिम लिएका संवाददातालाई निरन्तर शिक्षण र उनीहरूबाट खोज समाचार उत्पादन खोपकेको मुख्य कार्यक्षेत्र हो । स्थापनाकालदेखि हालसम्म यसले भ्रष्टाचार, अनियमितता र बेथितिसँग सम्बन्धित खोज समाचारहरू उत्पादन गरेको छ ।

यो पृष्ठभूमिमा एक वर्ष अघि खोपकेले एउटा अलिक भिन्न खालको परियोजनामा हात हाल्यो । संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघीय बालकोष (युनिसेफ) को सहयोगमा सञ्चालित यो परियोजनाको उद्देश्य महिला तथा बालबालिका विषयमा खोजमूलक समाचार उत्पादन गर्नुथियो । आधा जनसंख्याका विषयवस्तुलाई राम्ररी नसमेटिकन खोज पत्रकारिता गर्नु सम्भव पनि थिएन । तर, राजनीति, सुरक्षा, अर्थतन्त्र जस्ता मामिलालाई मात्रै धेरै प्राथमिकता दिने मूलधारका सञ्चारमाध्यमका संवाददाताहरूलाई समेत समेटेर यो काम अघि बढाउनु चुनौती नै थियो । यसका लागि *खोजमा लैङ्गिक दृष्टि* को अवधारणा सहित खोज पत्रकारिता तालिम सञ्चालन गरियो । त्यो तालिमका सहभागीहरूले गरेको खोजमूलक समाचारहरूको संकलन नै हो, यो पुस्तक ।

यसमा समेटिएका १३ वटा समाचारहरूमध्ये सबैले धेरथोर प्रभाव पारेका छन् । प्रदेश-२ मा दुई लाख बालबालिका विद्यालय बाहिर भन्ने समाचार पछि सो प्रदेशका मुख्यमन्त्रीले खोपके

टीमसँग बालबालिकालाई स्कूल पुन्याउने विषयमा छलफल गरेको र तत्कालै प्रदेश सभामा 'बेटी पढाउ, बेटी बचाउ' अभियान घोषणा गरेको उल्लेख गर्न पाउँदा मलाई खुशी लागेको छ ।

महिला र बालबालिका विषयका समाचार सामग्री समेटिएको यो पुस्तक प्रकाशन गर्न पाउँदा खुशी लागेको छ । खोज सामग्री रिपोर्टिङ गर्ने जुभारू संवाददाताहरूको कामको परिणाम हो, यो पुस्तक । उनीहरू विशेष धन्यवादका पात्र छन् । पुस्तकलाई यस रूपमा ल्याउन सहयोग गर्ने संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघीय बालकोष (युनिसेफ) र विशेष रूपमा यसका तत्कालीन सञ्चार शाखा प्रमुख रूपा जोशीलाई म धन्यवाद दिन्छु ।

खोपके सम्पादक शिव गाउँले, कार्यक्रम व्यवस्थापक सौरभ कोलाक्षपति, सहसम्पादक प्रमोद आचार्य, लेखा अधिकृत पूजा थापा र डेस्कटप सहायक मुना मगरको विशेष लगानी छ यो पुस्तकमा । भाषा सम्पादनमा शरच्चन्द्र वस्ती र शुद्धाशुद्धिमा धर्मराज दाहालको योगदान स्मरण गर्न पाउँदा मलाई खुशी लाग्छ ।

अन्त्यमा यति महत्वपूर्ण काममा मलाई सहयोग गर्ने खोपके कार्यसमितिका सल्लाहकार, पदाधिकारी र सदस्यहरूलाई विशेष धन्यवाद दिन्छु ।

नम्रता शर्मा

अध्यक्ष

खोज पत्रकारिता केन्द्र

महिला र बालबालिका विषयमा खोज

राजनीति, अर्थतन्त्र, सुरक्षा, न्यायालय जस्ता विषयलाई अहिले पनि नेपाली मिडियामा प्रमुख वा पहिलो पेजमा छापिने समाचार भनेर बुझिन्छ । प्रधानमन्त्री, विपक्षी दलको नेता, अर्थमन्त्री वा भन्सार अधिकारी, गृह मन्त्री, प्रधान सेनापति र प्रहरी प्रमुख अनि प्रधानन्यायाधीश वा मुद्दा जित्ने-हार्ने अभियुक्तका समाचारले प्रायः प्राथमिकता पाउनु त्यसैको कारण हो ।

मूलधारका भनिने सञ्चारमाध्यमले महिला वा बालबालिकासँग सम्बन्धित विषयलाई अपवाद बाहेक 'सफ्ट स्टोरी' बनाउने गरेका छन् । न्याय नपाएका, अवसर वा मौका नपाएका, नाम मात्रको वा सांकेतिक सहभागिताको अवसर पाएका विषयमा हार्डन्यूज भन्दा धेरै सफ्ट स्टोरीहरू छापिने गरेका छन् । यी मामिलामा 'बिकाउ' र 'आकर्षक' समाचार तयार नहुनुको मुख्य कारण यस्ता घटना वा प्रवृत्तिको भित्री पाटो नखोतल्नु हो । यस्ता विविध कारणले महिला तथा बालबालिका जोडिएका विषयहरू हत्पति ठूला र मुख्य समाचार बन्दैनन् ।

खोज पत्रकारिता केन्द्रले महिला र बालबालिका विषयमा पनि ठूला र मुख्य समाचार बनाउन सकिन्छ भनेर खोजमूलक समाचार तयार गर्ने चुनौती स्वीकार गर्‍यो । यो चुनौतीपूर्ण जिम्मेवारीमा खोपकेलाई संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघीय बाल कोष (युनिसेफ) ले सहयोग गर्‍यो । त्यसैले यी खोजमूलक समाचारहरू र तिनको संकलन यो पुस्तक यहाँहरूसम्म ल्याउन हामी सफल भएका छौं ।

यसमा महिला तथा बालबालिका मामिलाका नीतिगत विषय, परिवार र समाजमा भएको विभेद, हिंसा र उत्पीडन भोगेका कथाहरू समेटिएका छन् । यसमा थोरै मात्र लुकाइएका कथाहरू छन्, धेरै समाजमा महिला र बालबालिकाले भोगेका तर उनीहरू बाहेक अरूले बेवास्ता गरेका कथाहरू हुन् । समाचारहरूले महिला तथा बालबालिकाका विषयमा सरकार, समाज र परिवार भित्रै पनि प्रश्न गर्नुपर्ने अवस्था देखाउँछ ।

कुपोषण: छोराको उपचार हुन्छ, छोरी मर्छन् । यो बभाङ्गको कथा मात्रै होइन, अन्धविश्वास र अभावको जिन्दगी जिउने पूरै नेपाली समाजको घरघरको कथा हो । यसले समाजमा महिलाले कतिसम्म विभेद, शोषण र हिंसा खपेर बस्नु परेको छ भन्ने देखाउँछ ।

राज्यप्रणाली र नीतिनिर्माता माथि कठोर व्यङ्ग्य-कथा हो १५ सन्तानका आमाहरू जसले आफ्ना आधा सन्तान पनि बचाउन सकेनन् । यो यस्तो कथा हो जहाँ आमाहरू आफ्नो कथा मात्रै भन्दैनन्, समाजमा भोगेको अज्ञानता, विभेद र हिंसा बताउँछन् । एउटी आमा त यतिसम्म भन्छिन्, "मरी होला भनेर सिस्नुघारीमा फालेर आएको भरे त जिउँदै रहिछ । ल्याएर पाल्यौं अहिले त्यो छोरी आठ वर्षकी भई ।"

सिन्धुपाल्चोकका महिला र किशोरीलाई भारतीय बाटो हुँदै कसरी खाडी मुलुक पठाइन्छ भन्ने मानव बेचबिखनको समाचारले आधुनिक भनिएको नेपाली राज्यप्रणालीको कुरूप तस्वीर सार्वजनिक गर्छ । अक्षम र भ्रष्ट नेपाली सरकारी संयन्त्रसँग मिलेर मानव तस्करहरूले कसरी सिन्धुपाल्चोकका युवतीहरू विदेश पठाउने काम गरिरहेका छन् भन्ने रहस्य खोल्छ यो समाचारले ।

अदालत कसरी अनागरिक जन्माउने कारखाना भइरहेको छ भन्ने कथाले राज्य संरचनाले देख्न सकिने गरी महिलालाई विभेद गरिरहेको छ भन्ने प्रष्ट्याउँछ । प्रदेश-२ का दुई लाख बालबालिका विद्यालय बाहिर छन् भन्ने कथाले मधेशमा गरीबीका कारण शिक्षा अहिले पनि धेरै परिवारको पहुँचमा छैन भन्ने खुलासा गर्छ । हाम्रो खोज अनुसन्धान पछि बाँकेका युवाहरू नागरिकता पाउन सफल भए र प्रदेश-२ सरकारले बालबालिका विद्यालय पठाउने कार्यक्रमलाई विशेष प्राथमिकता दिएको यहाँ उल्लेख गर्न पाउँदा खुशी महसूस हुन्छ ।

द्वन्द्वकालमा बलात्कार र हिंसामा परेका कैलालीका महिलाको कथा, राजधानीमै यौन व्यापार गर्न विवश किशोरीहरूको व्यथा, स्कूल जाने उमेरमा जाँडको व्यापार गर्न विवश भोजपुरका बालिकाको विवशता, सुर्खेतमा छोरीको जन्मदरमा कमी हुनुका भित्री पाटाहरू समाजमा महिला र किशोरी माथि भइरहेका ज्यादतीका प्रमाणहरू हुन् ।

विद्यालयमा पुस्तकालय बनाउन भनेर पठाइएको पैसा कसरी दुरुपयोग भइरहेको छ भन्ने खोज समाचारले बालबालिकाको गुणस्तरीय शिक्षा पाउने हक माथि कसरी खेलबाड भइरहेको छ भन्ने देखाउँछ । यो बेथिति मात्रै होइन, भ्रष्टाचारको कथा हो । आफैँ उपेक्षित महिला मन्त्रालय समाचारले महिला र बालबालिका माथिको ज्यादती किन रोकिएन भन्ने प्रश्नको जवाफ दिन्छ । मुलुकभरिका महिला, बालबालिका, ज्येष्ठ नागरिक र अपाङ्गको अवस्था हेर्नुपर्ने यो मन्त्रालयलाई राजनीतिज्ञहरूले यसलाई कसरी स्वार्थको खेल मैदान बनाएका छन् भन्ने यसबाट देखिन्छ ।

सक्रिय र जुभारू संवाददाताहरूको प्रयत्न विना यी समाचारहरू तयार गर्न सम्भव थिएन । यी समाचारहरूलाई यस रूपमा प्रकाशन गर्न भाषा सम्पादन गर्ने शरच्चन्द्र वस्ती, शुद्धाशुद्धि हेर्ने धर्मराज दाहालको ठूलो योगदान छ । यी समाचारलाई आ-आफ्ना सञ्चारमाध्यममा स्थान दिएर प्रकाशित गरिदिनु हुने सबै सम्पादकहरूलाई धन्यवाद ! यति महत्वपूर्ण कामको जिम्मेवारी दिने खोपके कार्यसमिति र जिम्मेवारी सम्पन्न गर्न महत्वपूर्ण सहयोग गर्ने खोपके कार्यालयका कर्मचारी सबैलाई धन्यवाद दिन्छु ।

शिव गाउँले

सम्पादक

विषयसूची

बभाइमा कुपोषण : छोरी भन् जोखिममा	वसन्तप्रताप सिंह	१
‘हामीलाई ईश्वरले मात्रै बचाएको हो’	प्रकाश सिंह	९
चेलीबेटी बेचबिखन कुवेत जान कञ्चनपुरको बाटो	प्रमोद आचार्य	३३
देहव्यापारमा कलिला बालिका : सरकार रमिते	लक्ष्मी बस्नेत	३१
न्यायको अन्त्यहीन पर्खाइ	सुजना श्रेष्ठ	३९
बलात्कारका शिकार : मुद्दा जित्छन् तर न्याय पाउँदैनन्	अमृता अनमोल	४५
अदालत-सिडिओ जुहारी	कृष्ण अधिकारी	५१
एउटा विचरा मन्त्रालय	जनक तिमिल्सिना	
	भिषा काफ्ले	५९
बेसहारा बालजीवन : मलाई नसोध कहाँ दुख्छ घाउ !	उन्नति चौधरी	६५
भस्काउने तथ्यांक	लक्ष्मी भण्डारी	७१
स्कूल नगई-नगई जाँडको व्यापार	विद्या राई	७५
शैक्षिक अँध्यारोमा बालबालिका	कल्पना भट्टराई	८३
सामुदायिक विद्यालय : पुस्तकालयको नाउँमा लूटैलूट	रामजी दाहाल	
	श्रवण देव	
	मनिष दुवाडी	९३
Malnutrition in Bajhang : Daughters at greater risk	Basanta Pratap Singh	105
Motherhood : An impressive feat for Bajura moms?	Prakash Sing	113
Pipeline to peril	Pramod Acharya	127
Why and how underage girls are forced into prostitution	Laxmi Basnet	135
No country for women	Shreejana Shrestha	143
Justice far-off for victims of rape and sexual abuse	Amrita Anmol	145
Stuck in a limbo	Krishna Adhikari	151
Big ministry on a little budget	Janak Timalina	
	Bhisa Kafle	159
Children left in the lurch	Unnati Chaudhari	165
Fewer girls in schools : Alarmingly worrying statistics	Laxmi Bhandari	171
Liquor business devouring children’s future	Bidhya Rai	175
Province 2’s dirty laundry	Kalpana Bhattarai	181
Community Schools : Loot in the name of library	Ramji Dahal	
	Shrawan Dev	
	Manish Duwadi	191

तल्कोट गाउँपालिका, रूवातोला (बभाङ) की १२ वर्षीया मञ्जु धामीको १० फागुन २०७३ मा मृत्यु भयो । त्यसको ११ दिनपछि उनकी १० वर्षीया बहिनी कल्पना धामी पनि बितिन ।

छोरीहरूको मृत्यु हुनुभन्दा एक महीना जति अघि मात्र उनीहरू खानेकुरा नपुगेर रोगाएका हुन् र त्यो बिमारको नाम कुपोषण हो भन्ने थाहा पाएकी आमा पार्वती धामीले भनिन्, "एक वर्षदेखि दुवै जना गल्दै गएका थिए । पछि पेट फुल्ल थाल्यो । जीउ सुकेर लौरो जस्तो भयो । धामी-भाँत्री र औषधिमूलो गर्दागर्दा थाकिसकेका थियौं । जिल्लामा एकसरे गर्दा पनि केही देखिएन । पछि मेलबिसौना स्वास्थ्य चौकीमा जाँच्दा कुपोषण भएको भनेर औषधि पनि दिए, तर निको भएन ।"

स्थानीय विद्यालयमा पढ्ने र कक्षामा सधैं प्रथम हुने मञ्जु कक्षा ४ को परीक्षा सकेर ५ कक्षामा भर्ना हुने तयारीमा थिइन् भने कल्पना २ बाट ३ कक्षामा जाँदै थिइन् । उनीहरूलाई कडा खालको कुपोषण (ख्याउटेपन) भएको कुरा मेलबिसौना स्वास्थ्य चौकीमा रहेको पोषण सम्बन्धी बहिरंग उपचार केन्द्रले पत्ता लगाएको थियो ।

पाँच वर्षभन्दा माथिकालाई कुपोषण हुँदा दिइने औषधि स्वास्थ्य संस्थामा थिएन । त्यसैले उनीहरूलाई पाँच वर्ष मुनिका कुपोषित बालबालिकालाई दिइने उपचारात्मक तयारी खाना (आर यूटीएफ-रेडी फर युज थेरापेटिक फूड) दिएर पठाइएको थियो । पार्वती भन्छिन्, "त्यो बेलासम्म



फोहोरमा खेल्दै गरेका काँडाका बालबालिका ।

दुवै जना खाना खान नसक्ने भइसकेका थिए । दुई-चार पोका मात्र खाए । सबै औषधि खानै नपाई बितिहाले ।”

कडा खालको कुपोषणकै कारण त्यही वर्ष पुसमा बुङ्गल नगरपालिकाको खिरातडीकी चार वर्षीया करिश्मा कुँवर र दुर्गाथली गाउँपालिकाकी तीन वर्षकी अस्मिता जप्रेलको मृत्यु भएको जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयको अभिलेखबाट देखिन्छ ।

मृत्यु हुनुअघि चारै जना बालिका जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयद्वारा संचालित शीघ्र कुपोषणको एकीकृत व्यवस्थापन कार्यक्रम (आईमाम- इन्टिग्रेटेड म्यानेजमेन्ट अफ एक्युट मालन्युट्रिशन) को सम्पर्कमा आइपुगेकाले मात्र उनीहरूको मृत्युको कारण कुपोषण नै हो भन्ने पत्ता लागेको हो । स्वास्थ्य संस्थामा नल्याई मृत्यु भएका अन्य धेरै बालबालिकाको मृत्युको मुख्य कारण कुपोषण नै हुनसक्ने स्वास्थ्यकर्मीहरूको अनुमान छ ।

“चिकित्सकीय भाषामा भन्दा कुपोषणले नै मान्छे मार्ने हैन । तर, धेरैजसो बालबालिका असमयमै बित्तुको पछाडि कुपोषण जोडिएको हामीले पाएका छौं” जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयका प्रमुख डा. अनुप रेग्मीले भने, “कुपोषित भएपछि रोगप्रतिरोधी क्षमता क्षीण हुँदै जान्छ । रोगले छिटो आक्रमण गर्छ र निको हुन गाह्रो हुन्छ । फलतः मृत्यु हुन्छ ।” यस्ता बालबालिकाको संख्या अनुमान गरेको भन्दा निकै बढी हुनसक्ने पनि उनी बताउँछन् । राष्ट्रिय जनसांख्यिक स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण २०१६ को तथ्यांक अनुसार बभाडको बाल मृत्युदरप्रति हजार पाँच वर्ष मुनिका ३९ जना, एक वर्ष मुनिका ३२ जना र जन्मेदेखि २८ दिनका २१ जना छ ।

आईमाम कार्यक्रमले आर्थिक वर्ष २०७३/७४ मा गरेको बभाडका पाँच वर्ष मुनिका २३ हजार ३७७ जना बालबालिकाको पोषण अवस्था जाँचमा ३ हजार ५११ जनामा कडा कुपोषण (ख्याउटेपन) भएको पत्ता लागेको थियो । तीमध्ये १ हजार २४५ मा अति कडा कुपोषण देखिएको कार्यक्रम संयोजक सन्देश राजथलाले बताए ।

बभाडमा १४ वर्ष उमेर पुगेका बालबालिकाको संख्या ६४ हजार १२३ छ । सबैको परीक्षण नभएका कारण कति बालबालिका कडा कुपोषणको जोखिममा छन् भन्ने यकीन गर्न नसकिए पनि ११ हजारभन्दा बढी बालबालिका यसको जोखिममा रहेको स्वास्थ्यकर्मीहरूको अनुमान छ । डा. अनुप रेग्मी भन्छन्, “ख्याउटेपन भएका बालबालिकाले समयमै उपचार र हेरचाह नपाउने हो भने जुनसुकै बेला पनि ज्यान जान सक्ने खतरा हुन्छ ।”

स्वास्थ्यको भाषामा ख्याउटेपन बाहेक कुपोषणका अन्य रूपहरू पनि हुन्छन् । ती हुन्, दीर्घ कुपोषण (पुङ्कोपना), कम तौल हुनु तथा सूक्ष्म पोषक तत्वको कमी । सूक्ष्म पोषक तत्वको कमीले कति बालबालिका प्रभावित छन् भन्ने तथ्यांक जिल्लामा उपलब्ध नभए पनि बभाडका ४७ प्रतिशत बालबालिकामा पुङ्कोपना र २९ प्रतिशत बालबालिकामा तोकिएको मापदण्ड भन्दा कम तौल हुने गरेको पाइएको जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयको अभिलेखमा उल्लेख छ । यस्तै ३९.३ प्रतिशत बालबालिकामा रक्तअल्पता देखिएको राष्ट्रिय जनसांख्यिक स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण २०१६ को प्रतिवेदनमा उल्लेख छ ।

छोरी भन् जोखिममा

“यदि छोरा भैदिएको भए मञ्जु र कल्पनाले जस्तो कुपोषणकै कारण अकालमा ज्यान गुमाउनु पर्दैनथ्यो होला” तल्कोट स्वास्थ्य चौकीका अहेव जनककुमार विष्टले भने “छोरा बिरामी भयो

भने ऋण-धन गरेर पनि उपचार गर्छन् । धनगढी, काठमाडौंसम्म पुन्याउँछन् । छोरी बिरामी हुँदा सदरमुकामसम्म पुन्याउँदैनन् । कुपोषणका कारण १३ महीनादेखि गल्दै-सुकदै गएका मञ्जु र कल्पनालाई समयमै सुविधायुक्त स्वास्थ्य संस्थामा पुन्याउन सकेको भए उनीहरू बाँच्ने कुरामा कुनै सन्देह नभएको विष्टको भनाइ छ ।

विष्टले भने जस्तै २०७३ पुसयता जानकारीमा आएका, कुपोषणका कारण मृत्यु भएका चार वटा घटनामा चारै जना बालिका छन् । यसबाहेक, कुनै उपचार नपाई मृत्यु हुने वा औपचारिक रूपमा बाहिर नआउने घटनामा पनि बालिकाकै संख्या बढी हुने स्वास्थ्यकर्मीको बुझाइ छ ।

तीन वर्षीया अस्मिता जप्रेलको 'केस' ले यसलाई थप पुष्टि गर्छ । उनको घरमा गएका जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयका पोषण अधिकृतले उनलाई कडा खालको कुपोषण भएको पत्ता लगाए । र, कुपोषित बालिकाको उपचार निःशुल्क गरिदिने भन्दै जिल्ला अस्पतालको पोषण पुनर्स्थापना केन्द्रमा भर्ना गर्न उनकी आमा शान्ति जप्रेललाई अनुरोध गरे ।

शान्तिले भने छोरीको उपचारका लागि स्थानीय वैद्य तथा धामी-भाँक्रीकोमा १५-२० हजार खर्च गरिसक्दा पनि निको नभएकाले आफूले छोरी माया मारिसकेको भन्दै स्वास्थ्यकर्मीको अनुरोधलाई वास्ता गरिनन् । श्रीमान चार वर्षदेखि मलेशिया गएको, घरमा ससुरा, आफू, एक छोरी र दुई छोरा मात्र भएकोले कुरुवा बस्दा घरको काम अलपत्र हुने भन्दै उनले छोरीलाई उपचार गर्न अस्पताल पठाउन मानिनन् । पोषण अधिकृत इन्द्र कार्कीले अस्मितालाई उपचारका लागि भर्ना नगरे प्रहरीमा उजुरी गर्ने चेतावनी दिएपछि बल्ल बाध्य भएर शान्तिले छोरीलाई जिल्ला अस्पताल, बभ्राडमा भर्ना गरिन् ।



अस्मिता जप्रेल, सैनपसेला ।



कुपोषणका कारण ज्यान गुमाएकी धमेनाकी मञ्जु धामी ।

दुई दिन अस्पताल बसेपछि तेस्रो दिन दिउँसो खाजा खान भनेर छोरीलाई लिएर बाहिर निस्केकी शान्ति फेरि अस्पताल फर्किइन् । वार्डमा भर्ना भएको बिरामी हराएपछि अस्पतालमा खैलाबैला मच्चियो । उनको खोजी गरिदिन अस्पतालले प्रहरीलाई गुहान्यो । खोज्दै जाँदा शान्ति छोरीलाई लिएर घर पुगिसकेकी रहिछन् ।

शान्ति सजिलै भन्छिन्, “तीन-तीन दिनसम्म अस्पताल बस्दा घरको काम डामाडोल भइसकेको थियो । बूढा ससुराले घर धान्न सक्ने कुरा भएन । मरे मर्ली, बाँचे बाँचली भनेर अस्पतालबाट भगाएर ल्याएँ । घर पुगेको भोलिपल्ट मरिहाली ।” उनले अस्पताल जानु पहिला नै छोरी मर्छ भन्ने आफूलाई पक्कापक्की भएकाले अस्पताल लैजान नमानेको बताइन् ।

स्वास्थ्यकर्मीले चार वर्षीया करिश्मा कुँवरको उपचार गर्न पनि उनको परिवारलाई धेरै सम्झाएका थिए । अस्पताल गएर उपचार गराउन हप्तौं बस्नुपर्दा घरको काम बिग्रन्छ भनेर परिवारले उपचार गर्न मानेन । जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयका पूर्व कर्मचारी डाक्टर सुनिल गजुरेलले भने, “जति सम्झाउँदा पनि परिवारले मानेन । हेर्दाहेर्दै बालिकाको ज्यान गयो ।”

माथि उल्लिखित घटना भएका गाउँहरूबाट सदरमुकाममा रहेको जिल्ला अस्पताल आउन/जान चार घण्टादेखि एक दिनसम्म लाग्छ । तर, जिल्ला अस्पतालबाट करीब ५०० मिटरको दूरीमा रहेको रिठापाटा गाउँकी तुलसी नेपालीका तीन छोरीहरू पनि कडा खालको कुपोषणबाट ग्रस्त छन् । उनीहरूमध्ये पनि दुई वर्षकी सरस्वतीको समयमै उपचार भएन भने ज्यानै जाने खतरा छ । तर स्वास्थ्यकर्मीहरूले घरमै गएर पटक-पटक अनुरोध गर्दा पनि तुलसीले छोरीको उपचार गर्न मानेकी छैनन् । उनी भन्छिन्, “मेरो जेठो छोरो पनि सानोमा यस्तै थियो । अहिले भारत गएर पैसा कमाउने भइसक्यो ।” स्वास्थ्यकर्मीलाई लक्षित गर्दै उनले भनिन्, “यिनीहरू हाम्रो नाम बेचेर पैसा खान दिनदिनै अस्पताल भर्ना गर्नुपर्छ भनेर हैरान पाछन् । गाली गरेर पठाएँ र पनि आउन छाडेका छैनन् ।”

जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयकी पोषण अधिकृत सविता शाही ठकुरीले तुलसीलाई घरमै गएर धेरै पटक उपचार गराउन सम्झाएको तर उनले उल्टै गाली गरेर पठाउने गरेको सुनाइन् । सविता भन्छिन्, “मरे मैरे छोरी मर्छन्, तिमीहरूलाई के खसखस भनेर उल्टै हप्काउँछिन् । बच्चीको अवस्था हेरेर दया लाग्छ । डाक्टरहरूले सम्झाउँदा पनि मान्दै मानेकी छैनन् ।”

“छोरा र छोरीमा यो हदसम्मको विभेद होला भनेर कल्पनासम्म गरेको थिइँ” डा. सुनिल गजुरेल भन्छन्, “निःशुल्क उपचार हुन्छ, कुरुवालाई पनि खान-बस्नको व्यवस्था हामी नै गर्छौं भन्दा पनि छोरीको उपचार गर्न मान्दैनन् । मरे अर्की जन्माउँला भन्छन् ।” गाउँघरमा अहिले पनि अस्पतालमा उपचार गराउनुको साटो कुपोषित बालिकाहरूलाई स्थानीय वैद्य र धामी-भाँक्रीलाई देखाउने, बान्द्रे लागेको भन्दै जीउमा बाँदरको दिसा दलिदिने प्रचलन रहेको गजुरेलले बताए ।

जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयका अनुसार खाद्यान्न अभाव, अशिक्षा, अन्धविश्वास र असुरक्षित खानपान नै यहाँ व्याप्त कुपोषणका कारण हुन् भन्ने सर्वेक्षणले देखाएको छ । कुपोषितहरूमध्ये पनि आधाभन्दा बढी बालिका रहेको, छोराछोरीमा गरिने विभेदका कारण उपचार नपाउँदा धेरैजसो छोरीको ज्यान जोखिममा रहेको डा. गजुरेलको भनाइ छ । उनले भने, “जिल्लामा उपचार नहुने खालका बिरामीलाई ‘हामी नै खर्च दिन्छौं, उपचार गर्न जाऊ’ भन्दा पनि मान्दैनन् । घरको काम अलपत्र पर्ने बहाना देखाएर उम्किन्छन् । धेरैजसो कुपोषित छोरीहरूले कलिलै उमेरमा ज्यान गुमाउनु परिरहेको छ ।”



१७ वर्षको उमेरमा तीन बच्चा जन्माइसकेकी बभाङकी बादी महिला ।

घरमा खानपान र हेरचाहमा हुने विभेदका कारण पनि बालिकाहरूमा बढी कुपोषण हुने गरेको छ । दलित महिला संघकी अध्यक्ष आशा विक भन्छिन्, "छोरा भए सुत्केरीलाई मिठोमसिनो खान दिन्छन् र माया गर्छन् । छोरी पाउने आमाको खानपिन र हेरचाहमा खासै वास्ता हुँदैन । जन्मने बित्तिकै आमा नै विभेदमा पर्ने भएकाले बालिकाहरूमा कडा खालको कुपोषण बढी देखिएको हो ।"

बजेटको बाढी, बगेन कुपोषण

कुपोषणको भयावह चित्र भएको बभाङ जिल्लामा यस क्षेत्रमा काम गर्ने कोही नभएको भने होइन । सरकारी र गैरसरकारी क्षेत्रबाट संचालित विभिन्न कार्यक्रमले पोषणको अवस्था सुधार गर्न, जनचेतना अभिवृद्धि गर्न र व्यवहार परिवर्तन गर्न भनेर वार्षिक भण्डै रु.५० करोड खर्च गरेको विभिन्न तथ्यांकले देखाएका छन् ।

आर्थिक वर्ष २०७३/७४ मा मात्र पोषणका लागि काम गर्ने कृषि तथा खाद्य सुरक्षा कार्यक्रम मार्फत रु.८ करोड, गर्भवती महिला र एक हजार दिनभित्रका सुत्केरीहरूको पोषण सुधारका लागि काम गर्ने सुआहारा कार्यक्रम अन्तर्गत रु.१ करोड १२ लाख, एकीकृत बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण कार्यक्रम अन्तर्गत रु.१ करोड १४ लाख, पहल कार्यक्रम मार्फत रु.३० लाख ५० हजार र बालपोषण भत्ताबापत रु.३० करोड खर्च भएको छ ।

यसैगरी जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयले मात्र भिटामिन ए र जुकाको औषधि खुवाउने, एकीकृत बाल स्वास्थ्य कार्यक्रम आदि नाममा रु.७ करोड खर्च गरेको छ । यस बाहेक अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय

गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरू यूएसआईडी, प्राक्टिकल एक्सन, केयर नेपाल, सेभ द चिल्ड्रेन, हेलन केलर इन्टरनेशनल आदि संस्थाहरूले पनि पोषणको अवस्था सुधार गर्न जिल्लामा ठूलो लगानी गरिरहेका छन् । संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघीय विकास कार्यक्रम (यूएनडीपी) अन्तर्गतका युनिसेफ, एफएओ, यूएनएफपीए, विश्व खाद्य कार्यक्रमको बजेटको अंक पनि सानो छैन ।

सरकारीस्तरमा जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालय, महिला विकास कार्यालय, जिल्ला कृषि विकास कार्यालय, जिल्ला पशु सेवा कार्यालय, जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालय र स्थानीय तह लगायतका कार्यालयबाट पोषणको नाममा गरिने खर्चको अंक पनि ठूलै छ । सबै कार्यालयले कुल रकमको ९० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी रकम 'पोषण सम्बन्धी चेतना जागरण' मा खर्च गरेको देखाएका छन् ।

जिल्ला समन्वय समिति अन्तर्गतको बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण कार्यक्रमका संयोजक हेमन्त शाही भन्छन्, "केही पनि हुँदै नभएको भन्ने त होइन । पहिलाभन्दा धेरै सुधार भएको छ । तर लगानी अनुसार प्रतिफल सन्तोष लाग्ने खालको छैन ।" स्थानीयको आवश्यकतामा आधारित भन्दा पनि गैरसरकारी संस्था र केन्द्रीयस्तरका निकायको चाहनामा योजना बन्ने भएकाले कुपोषणको क्षेत्रमा लागू भएका कार्यक्रमहरूले वाञ्छित उपलब्धि हासिल गर्न नसकेको उनको बुझाइ छ ।

मारमा महिला

बभाड जिल्लामा वयस्क महिलामा पनि कुपोषणको अवस्था भयावह छ । नेपाल जनसांख्यिक स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण २०१६ को प्रतिवेदन अनुसार यस जिल्लाका प्रजननशील उमेरका ३९.२ प्रतिशत महिलाको शरीरमा रगतको कमी (रक्तअल्पता) हुने समस्या छ । १५ देखि ४९ वर्षका ६१ हजार २३२ महिलामध्ये २३ हजार ८८० जना यो समस्याबाट पीडित छन् । जिल्ला समन्वय समितिको



करिश्मा कुँवर, खिरातडी ।



कल्पना धामी, धमेना ।

तथ्यांक अनुसार बभ्रुवाङ जिल्लामा हुने विवाहमा करीब ६५ प्रतिशत बालविवाह हुने गर्छ । उमेर नपुगेका र कुपोषित आमाले जन्माउने शिशु पनि कुपोषित नै हुने सम्भावना धेरै हुन्छ ।

कुपोषित आमाका कारण बच्चाहरू मात्र समस्या हुने नभई आमाको ज्यान पनि खतरामा पर्ने गरेको डा. अनुप रेग्मी बताउँछन् । रक्तअल्पता भएका महिलाहरूलाई गर्भावस्था र सुत्केरी अवस्थामा बढी जोखिम हुने गरेको उनको भनाइ छ । “शरीरमा रगतको कमी हुँदा सुत्केरी हुन नसकेर ज्यान जाने खतरा प्रबल रहन्छ” डा. रेग्मी भन्छन्, “सामान्य व्यक्तिको तुलनामा यस्ता महिलाहरूलाई अन्य रोगको संक्रमण पनि बढी नै हुने गर्दछ ।”

कुपोषणका कारण

यस जिल्लामा कुपोषणको मुख्य कारण खाद्यान्नको अभाव हो । जिल्ला कृषि विकास कार्यालयको तथ्यांक अनुसार बभ्रुवाङमा वार्षिक ११ हजार टन खाद्यान्न अपुग हुने गरेको छ । करीब दुई लाख जनसंख्या रहेको जिल्लामा ११ हजार टन खाद्यान्न नपुग हुनु भनेको प्रतिव्यक्ति, प्रति वर्ष ५५ किलो खाद्यान्न अपुग हुनु हो ।

भण्डै ९० प्रतिशत जनसंख्या कृषि पेशामा निर्भर यस जिल्लामा निरन्तर काममा जोतिइरहनुपर्ने बाध्यता कुपोषणको अर्को कारण हो । “यहाँका गर्भवती महिलाहरूले व्याउने गाईभैसीको जति स्याहार गर्छन्, त्यति आफ्नो स्याहार गर्दैनन्” बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण कार्यक्रमका संयोजक हेमन्त शाही भन्छन्, “उसै पनि महिलाहरूको शारीरिक अवस्था कमजोर हुन्छ । त्यसमाथि काममा जोतिने र खानपिनमा ध्यान नदिने भएका कारण आमा र बच्चा दुवै कुपोषित भइरहेका छन् ।” कृषि कर्ममा व्यस्त हुने भएका कारण नवजात शिशुले आवश्यक मात्रामा स्तनपान गर्न नपाउने र हेरचाह नहुने भएकाले पनि पाँच वर्ष मुनिका धेरै बालबालिका कुपोषणको मारमा पर्ने शाहीको भनाइ छ ।

कुपोषणको अर्को कारण अन्धविश्वास हो । सुत्केरी अवस्थामा २१ दिनसम्म छाउगोठमा राख्ने भएका कारण चिसो र धुवाँले नवजात शिशु र आमाको स्वास्थ्य शुरूदेखि नै जोखिममा हुन्छ । त्यसमाथि बच्चा बिरामी हुन्छ, पातलो दिसा गर्छ भनेर हरियो सागपात र गेडागुडी, दही, दूध, माछामासु जस्ता पोषिला खानेकुराबाट वञ्चित गरिने भएका कारण पनि आमा र बच्चा दुवैको स्वास्थ्य शुरूबाटै कमजोर हुने गर्छ । सानै उमेरमा विवाह गर्ने र निरन्तर सन्तान जन्माउने गर्नाले पनि आमा तथा बच्चाको स्वास्थ्यमा हेरचाह नपुगेर उनीहरू कुपोषित हुने गरेका छन् ।

महिलाहरू निरक्षर हुनु पनि कुपोषणको अर्को कारण हो । “जुन घरमा आमा शिक्षित छन् उनीहरूका बालबच्चाको स्वास्थ्य र सरसफाइको अवस्था तुलनात्मक रूपमा राम्रो छ” कृषि तथा खाद्य सुरक्षा कार्यक्रमकी सहजकर्ता विमला विष्ट भन्छिन्, “आमाहरू निरक्षर भएका घरमा अधिकांश बच्चा कुपोषित छन् ।” जिल्ला समन्वय समितिको तथ्यांक अनुसार यहाँका करीब ७३ प्रतिशत पुरुषहरू साक्षर छन् भने महिला साक्षरता ४० प्रतिशत मात्रै छ ।

पोषिला बालीहरू कोदो, कागुनो, फापर, जौ आदिलाई राम्रो नमान्ने र यस्तो खाना खाँदा सामाजिक रूपमा तल परिन्छ भन्ने मान्यताका कारण कुनै बेला प्रशस्त खेती गरिने यस्ता बालीहरू हिजोआज निकै कम लगाइन्छन् । खानामा विविधता नहुने र लगातार भात-रोटी मात्रै खाने भएकाले पनि शरीरमा आवश्यक पोषकतत्वको अभाव भई कुपोषण हुने यस क्षेत्रका जानकारहरू बताउँछन् ।

प्रकाश सिंह

‘हामीलाई ईश्वरले मात्रै बचाएको हो’

बाजुराको दुर्गम गाउँका आमाहरूको कथा,
जसले १५ सन्तान जन्माए तर आधा पनि
बचाउन सकेनन्।

हि माली गाउँपालिका-१ बस्ने ४१ वर्षीया बिस्नकला थापाले गरेको जेठमा १६औं सन्तान जन्माइन् । अरू बच्चा घरमै जन्माएकी थापाले यो बच्चा भने जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालय, बाजुरामा जन्माइन् ।

उनका ९ वटा बच्चाको मृत्यु भइसकेको छ भने ७ बच्चा जीवित छन् । १४ वर्षमा बिहे गरेकी बिस्नकलाको ४१ वर्ष उमेरसम्मको देखिने मुख्य काम भनेको बच्चा जन्माउने मात्रै हो । बाजुरा जिल्लाको पनि दुर्गम गाउँकी बिस्नकलासँग धेरै सन्तान किन जन्मिए भन्ने प्रश्नको जवाफ छैन । श्रीमान जैधन थापा भन्छन्, “रोक्ने साधन केही भएन, उपाय पनि केही जानिएन । त्यसैले धेरै बच्चा जन्मिए ।” जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालय, बाजुराको आकस्मिक प्रसूति केन्द्रका मेडिकल अधिकृत डा. टीकाराम राई भन्छन्, “धेरै बच्चा जन्माउँदा बिस्नकलालाई रक्तअल्पता समेत भइसकेको छ । उनको स्वास्थ्य निकै कमजोर छ ।”

बिस्नकलाको परिवारमा साँच्चिकै विपत्ति छ । श्रीमान जैधन थापालाई बाँचेका बच्चाहरू कसरी पाल्ने र श्रीमतीको ज्यान कसरी जोगाउने भन्ने पिरलो छ । आफ्नो जमीनको उत्पादनले मुश्किलले तीन महीना खान पुग्छ । कोल्टी बजार आएर भारी बोक्ने र लेकमा गई जडीबुटी खोजेर बेच्ने उनले जानेको काम हो । उनका कुनै पनि बच्चा आठ कक्षा माथि पुगेका छैनन् । जैधन भन्छन्, “राम्रोसँग खानै छैन, पढाइ त टाढाको कुरो ।”

स्वामीकार्तिक गाउँपालिका-२ की ४३ वर्षीया आर्मा बुढाले ६ महीनाअघि १६औं सन्तान जन्माइन् । १५ वर्षमा विवाह गरेकी आर्माले ९ वटा बच्चा जीवितै जन्माइन् भने ७ बच्चा मरेका जन्मिए । पछिल्लो सन्तान जन्माउँदा उनको स्वास्थ्य हदैसम्म नाजुक थियो । उनी सहाराविना उभिन नसक्ने अवस्थामा थिइन् । पहिला साप्पाटा स्वास्थ्य चौकी, त्यसपछि बाँधु स्वास्थ्य चौकीमा



छोरो जन्मेपछि बाजागाजासहित घर लैजाँदै बूढीनन्दा गाउँपालिकाका बासिन्दा ।

‘हामीलाई ईश्वरले मात्रै बचाएको हो’



छोरी जन्मेपछि चुपचाप घर फर्कंदै छेडेदह गाउँपालिका-२ की यशोदा थापा।

प्रसूति गराउन नसकेपछि तीन जना स्वास्थ्यकर्मीको सहयोगमा उनलाई प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य केन्द्र, कोल्टी लगेर बल्लतल्ल प्रसूति गराइएको थियो।

आर्माका पति पायन बुढाले भने “पछिल्लो सन्तान मात्रै स्वास्थ्य केन्द्रमा जन्मिएको हो।” अरू बच्चा घरमै जन्मिएका हुन् त ? त्यो पनि होइन। पायन भन्छन्, “पहिलेका त काम गर्न जाँदा, बाटो हिंड्दा जंगलमा पनि जन्मिएका थिए।” आर्मा र पायनको परिवारले भोगेको यो दुःख सुदूरपश्चिम पहाडी जिल्लाको प्रतिनिधि कथा हो। यहाँका धेरै दम्पतीमा परिवार नियोजनका साधन प्रयोग गर्नुपर्छ र उमेर ढल्किसकेपछि बच्चा जन्माउनुहुँदैन भन्ने चेतना नै छैन। बूढीनन्दा नगरपालिकाकी उपमेयर सृष्टि रेग्मी भन्छिन्, “बाजुराका दुर्गम उत्तरी गाउँमा आर्मा जस्ता आमाहरू घरघरमै भेटिन्छन्, जो चालीस वर्ष माथिको उमेरमा पनि जोखिमपूर्ण तवरमा बच्चा जन्माइरहेका छन्।”

हिमाली गाउँपालिका-२ कोटगाउँ बस्ने ४२ वर्षीया कल्सरी बुढा १४ सन्तानकी आमा हुन्। भाग्यले भनौं उनका १२ सन्तान जीवितै छन्। कान्छो अहिले तीन वर्षको छ। १४ वर्षको उमेरमा विवाह गरेकी कल्सरीले १६ वर्षको उमेरदेखि बच्चा जन्माउन थालेकी हुन्। कल्सरी भन्छिन्, “स्वास्थ्य केन्द्र थिएन, गर्भ जाँच हुँदैनथ्यो। जहाँ बेथा लाग्यो त्यही पाउनुपर्थ्यो।” यातायातको असुविधा, सञ्चारको अभाव र ज्ञानको कमीले अहिले पनि यस क्षेत्रका महिलाले गर्भवती अवस्थामा चुनौतीपूर्ण स्वास्थ्य समस्या भेल्लुपर्छ। कल्सरीको गाउँबाट सबैभन्दा नजीकको बिच्छ्याँ स्वास्थ्य चौकी पुग्न करिब एक दिन हिंड्नुपर्छ।

कल्सरीको परिवारमा खान-लाउन साँच्चिकै दुःख छ। तैपनि १०-१२ वर्षका हुँदासम्म दुःखसुख गरेर केटाकेटीलाई नजिकको स्कूल पढ्न पठाइन्। अलिक ठूला भइसकेपछि खान-

लाउन दिन समस्या भयो । अहिले छोराछोरीलाई जडीबुटी खोज्न पठाउने गर्छिन् । नभए फुर्सदमा कोल्टी, मार्तडी बजारमा ज्याला मजदूरी गर्न पठाएर काम चलाइरहेकी छन् । कल्सरी भन्छिन्, "बच्चा धेरै पाएर हो कि के भएर हो, पाँचौँ बच्चा पाएदेखि तल्लो पेट दुख्न थालेको छ । उपचार गर्ने पैसा नभएर सहेर बसेकी छु ।"

बूढीनन्दा नगरपालिका-२ बस्ने ६२ वर्षकी मुगा गिरीले दुई जुम्ल्याहा समेत गरेर १८ वटा बच्चा जन्माइन् । अहिले ८ जना जीवित छन् । यति धेरै सन्तान कसरी हुर्काइन् उनले ? मुगा भन्छिन्, "आजभोलि एउटा, दुइट्टा सन्तान जन्माउँदा दुःख भयो भन्छन् । उहिले त अहिले जस्तो चामल पाइँदैनथ्यो । सिस्नो खुवाएर पनि बच्चा पाल्नुपर्थ्यो ।" बच्चा हुर्काउँदा आफूले कहिल्यै पेटभरि खान नपाएको बताउने मुगा भन्छिन्, "अहिले पनि तल्लो पेट दुख्छ, ढाड निहुरेको निहुरेकै हुन्छ । अहिले सम्बिन्दा हामीलाई त ईश्वरले मात्रै बचाएको हो जस्तो लाग्छ ।"

पाठेघर खस्ने

असुरक्षित तवरमा धेरै सन्तान जन्माएका महिलामा पाठेघर खस्ने समस्या व्यापक छ । स्वामीकार्तिक गाउँपालिका-३ की नमकला बुढाले १३ वटा बच्चा जन्माइन् । पाँचौँ बच्चा जन्मेदेखि उनलाई पाठेघर खस्ने समस्याले पिरोलिरह्यो । आर्थिक अवस्था कमजोर भएकाले अहिलेसम्म पनि उपचार गर्न सकेकी छैनन् । त्यही गाउँपालिकाकी नानकला कठायतलाई पनि, जसका १४ वटा बच्चा छन्, पाठेघरको समस्याले पिरोलिरहेको छ । बच्चा पाउँदा एकपटक त पाठेघर समेत बाहिर आएको उनले बताइन् ।



तारा आउजी छोरी पाएपछि घर जाँदै ।

बडिमालिका-३ बस्ने ७३ वर्षीया लक्ष्मी पण्डितले पाटेघर खस्ने समस्या भेलेको १० वर्ष भयो । तेस्रो बच्चा पाएको वेलादेखि पाटेघर खस्न शुरू भए पनि शुरू शुरूमा लाज मानेर उनले यो समस्या लुकाउँदै गइन् । साह्रै अप्ठ्यारो भएपछि मात्रै उनी जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालय पुगिन् । पाटेघर खस्ने सम्बन्धी स्वास्थ्य शिविर लागेको वेला निःशुल्क अप्रेसन गराइन् । बडिमालिकाकै ३५ वर्षीया जलु साउदको पाटेघरमा समस्या आएको त अफ २१ वर्ष भयो । १४ वर्षको उमेरमा पहिलो बच्चा पाएको वेला उनको पाटेघर खसेको थियो । त्यसपछि पनि उनले तीन वटा बच्चा जन्माइन् । समस्या अहिले पनि उस्तै छ । बडिमालिका, पाटा बस्ने ५० वर्षीया फुगी दानीले पाटेघरमा समस्या भएको १८ वर्षपछि बल्ल उपचार पाइन् । फुगी भन्छिन्, “साह्रै समस्या भएपछि अप्रेसन गरे ।”

जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालय, बाजुराका सिनियर अहेव टेकबहादुर खड्का भन्छन्, “सानो उमेरमा विवाह गर्नु, धेरै बच्चा पाउनु, अदक्ष व्यक्तिले सुत्केरी गराउनु, सुत्केरी भएलगत्तै काममा जानु, गह्रौं भारी बोक्नु पाटेघर खस्ने मुख्य कारण हुन् ।” सिनियर अनमी शर्मिला शाहीका भनाइमा, “बच्चा धेरै जन्माउने र पाटेघर सम्बन्धी समस्या भन्न लाज मान्ने प्रवृत्तिले पनि बाजुराको ग्रामीण भेगका धेरै महिलामा पाटेघरको समस्या भयावह बनेको छ ।”

सामान्यतया २० देखि ३५ वर्षको उमेर बच्चा पाउन उपयुक्त मानिन्छ । तर, बाजुराका दुर्गम गाउँहरूमा २० वर्ष पुग्दासम्म दुईदेखि तीन वटासम्म बच्चा भइसकेका हुन्छन् । यो क्रम ४५ वर्षसम्म चलिरहन्छ । उमेर ढल्केपछि सन्तान पाउँदा आमा र बच्चा दुवैको स्वास्थ्य जोखिममा पर्ने गर्छ ।

जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयका प्रमुख डा. रूपचन्द्र विश्वकर्मा भन्छन्, “धेरै बच्चा जन्माउने, कम उमेरमा जन्माउने र उमेर ढल्केदासम्म बच्चा जन्माउने महिलामा पाटेघर खस्ने समस्या धेरै छ ।” विश्वकर्माका भनाइमा, यसले धेरै आमाहरूको स्वास्थ्य अवस्था जटिल बनाएको छ । कतिको अकालमै ज्यान जाने र बाँच्नेको पनि स्वास्थ्य अवस्था नाजुक हुने गर्छ ।

रक्तअल्पता र कुप्रो पर्ने

धेरै सन्तान जन्माउँदा देखिने अर्को समस्या हो रक्तअल्पता । बूढीनन्दा नगरपालिका-८ की डोमा गुरुङ ३५ वर्षकी भइन् । अहिलेसम्म उनले ११ वटा बच्चा जन्माइसकिन्, जसमध्ये तीन वटा मात्रै जीवित छन् । उनमा रक्तअल्पता देखिएको छ । डा. विश्वकर्मा भन्छन्, “बच्चा पाउने वेलामा हरियो सागपात र आइरन पाइने पोषिलो खानेकुरा खान नपाउँदा रक्तअल्पता हुन्छ ।”

डोमा जस्तै हिमाली गाउँपालिका-१ बस्ने ४१ वर्षीया बिस्नकला थापालाई पनि रक्तअल्पता छ । गएको जेठमा १६औं सन्तान जन्माउँदा मात्रै उनले स्वास्थ्यकर्मीको सहयोग लिएकी थिइन् । रगतको कमीले बच्चा जन्माउन समस्या भएपछि उनलाई दुई पिन्ट रगत दिइएको थियो । रक्तअल्पताका कारण डोमालाई रिगटा लाग्ने र कमजोर महसूस हुने गर्छ । सिनियर अनमी प्रमिला बिष्ट भन्छिन्, “धेरै बच्चा पाउने र बच्चा पाउँदा धेरै रगत बग्ने भएकाले बाजुराका दुर्गम भेगका महिलामा रक्तअल्पता धेरै छ ।”

धेरै बच्चा पाउने आमाहरूमा ढाड दुख्ने र कुप्रो हुने समस्या पनि देखिने गरेको छ । पैतीस चालीस वर्षको उमेरमै बूढी देखिने, निहुरिएर हिडनुपर्ने अवस्थामा हुन्छन् उनीहरू । १८ वटा बच्चा जन्माएकी मुगा गिरीलाई ३५ वर्षको उमेरदेखि ढाड दुख्ने समस्याले पिरोलिरहेको

छ । उनी कुप्रिएर हिङ्ने गर्छिन् । बूढीगंगा नगरपालिका-९ बस्ने कल्या नेपाली अहिले ५५ वर्षकी भइन् । उनी लौरोको सहाराविना हिङ्न सकिदैनन् । ११ सन्तानकी आमा कल्यालाई सातौं सन्तान जन्माउँदादेखि ढाड दुख्ने र कुप्रो पर्ने यस्तो समस्या भएको हो ।

गरीबी नै समस्या

बाजुराको उत्तरी भेगमा भोटे समुदायका जनजातिको बसोबास छ । तिनका महिलाले धेरै बच्चा त्यो पनि असुरक्षित रूपमा; बाटोघाटोमा जन्माउने भएकाले उनीहरूको स्वास्थ्य निकै कमजोर देखिन्छ । कडा परिश्रम गर्नुपर्ने र गर्भवती अवस्थामा समेत आराम गर्न नपाउने भएकाले उनीहरू जोखिममा हुन्छन् । भोटे जनजाति महासंघका अध्यक्ष नृप थापा (भोटे) भन्छन्, "मौसमका कारण चिसो छल्न भेडा-च्याङ्ग्रा लिएर सपरिवार हिउँदका ६ महीना बेंसी भर्ने भएकाले अधिकांश भोटे महिला बाटोमै बच्चा जन्माउन बाध्य हुन्छन् ।"

उनीहरूले गर्भवती र सुत्केरी अवस्थामा स्वास्थ्य चौकी देख्न पनि पाउँदैनन् । आवश्यक खोप पाउने अवस्था नै रहन्न । परिणामस्वरूप धेरै आमा र बच्चाहरू जोखिममा पर्छन् । उनीहरूमध्ये कतिको मृत्यु हुन्छ । त्यो सार्वजनिक जानकारीमा समेत आउँदैन । त्यसमाथि, दुर्गम क्षेत्रमा भएका स्वास्थ्य संस्था पनि सेवा र साधनस्रोतका दृष्टिले कमै मात्र प्रभावकारी छन् । जिल्ला स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयका सिनियर अहेव दीपक शाह भन्छन्, "धेरै पक्षहरू होलान् तर गरीबी नै यो समस्याको मुख्य कारण हो ।"



‘आठ वटा जिउँदा छन्, दश मरे’

मुगा गिरी, ५०

बूढीनन्दा नगरपालिका-२ कोल्ली

तपाईंले कति बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो ?

आठवटा त जिउँदै छन् । १० मरे । जुम्ल्याहा समेत गरेर १८ वटा बच्चा भए । जुम्ल्याहा दुई छोरीमध्ये एक बाँचेकी छ ।

यति धेरै बच्चा जन्माउँदा समस्या भएन ?

समस्या भयो नि ! हामीले घरमा, जंगलमा खेतबारीमा बच्चा पायौं । स्वास्थ्य चौकी थिएनन् । घरेलु सुँडेनीको सहारामा बच्चा पायौं । अहिले पेट दुख्ने, ढाड दुख्ने समस्या छ । बच्चा पाउँदा पाठेघर पनि बाहिर आएको थियो । पछि सुँडेनीले हातले भित्र हालिदिइन् । यसले गर्दा पेट दुख्ने भयो । ढाड दुख्ने त भई नै रह्यो । त्यतिकै हवात बच्चा त कसरी आउँदो होला र ? धेरै होशियार नभएपछि पाठेघर बाहिर आउँछ । रगत धेरै बग्छ र कमजोरी हुन्छ ।

शरीरमा असर परेन ?

शरीरमा असर त पर्छ नै । बच्चा धेरै पाएर हो कि, अचेल सजिलो गरी उठ्न, बस्न हुँदैन । जीउ दुखिरहन्छ । यी खुट्टाका पातिना (हिप) दुखिरहेको छ । कहिलेकाही त रातभरि शरीर दुखेर सुत्न समेत सकिदैन ।

यति ठूलो परिवार कसरी पाल्नुभयो ?

काम गऱ्यौं । बच्चा बोकेर पनि अरुको काम गर्न गयौं । बच्चा बोक्दै पोर्सा (गोठे मल) बोक्यौं । धान कुट्यौं । बच्चालाई ओछ्यानमै छोडेर घाँसपात गर्न गयौं । दाउरा ल्यायौं । हाम्रो पढाइलेखाइ थिएन । भारी बोकेर, काम गरेर बच्चा पाल्यौं । आफ्नो त काम बच्चा पाउने जस्तो मात्रै भयो ।



‘मरी भनेर सिस्नुघारीमा फाल्यौं, जिउँदै रहिछ’

बिस्ना गुरुङ, ५२
बूढीनन्दा नगरपालिका-७

तपाईंले कति बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो ?

१५ वटा पाएँ । ८ वटा छँदै छन्, ७ मरिसके ।

धेरै बच्चा जन्माउँदा समस्या भएन ?

धेरै दुःख भयो । हिउँद औलतिर, बर्खामा हिमालतिर जानुपर्छ । आफ्नो घर-जग्गा छैन । कतिवेला त बाटोमा हिड्दाहिड्दै बच्चा पाएँ । खान समेत राम्रो पाइँदैनथ्यो । धेरै रगत बग्थ्यो । कहिलेकाही त बच्चा पाएकै वेला पनि हिड्नुपर्थ्यो ।

सबै बच्चा बाटैमा पाउनुभयो त ?

कोही घरमा, कोही जंगलमा, कोही बाटोमा । दुई बच्चा अछाम जाँदा

पाएँ । एउटा भोट जाँदा पाएँ । दुई बच्चा अछामको चौखुटेमा र अर्को मार्कुमा पाएँ । ती दुवै बच्चा एक महीना मात्रै बाँचे ।

तपाईंको स्वास्थ्यमा केही समस्या भएन ?

स्वास्थ्य चौकीमा बच्चा पाइएन । त्यो वेला शरीरमा अप्ठ्यारो त पन्यो । चेक-जाँच छैन । बच्चा पाउने वित्तिकै हिङ्यो । चिसोले होला बच्चा जन्मँदै मर्दै गरे । जेठो बच्चा बाँच्यो । ऊ पछाडिका लगातार ६ वटा मरे । पछि श्रीमान् पनि बिते । स्वास्थ्यमा समस्या भएर पनि के गर्नु र ? हामीसँग पैसा हुन्न । धेरै रगत बगेपछि चेक गर्न जान्छौं । १० हजार यो वर्ष सकियो । २० हजार पोहोर सकियो ।

परिवार पाल्न पनि त समस्या भयो होला ?

समस्या पहिला नि भयो, अहिले नि छ । एक दिनमा एक बच्चालाई ५० रुपैयाँ चाहिन्छ । मेरा त धेरै बच्चा छन् । हामीलाई साह्रै समस्या छ । बुढेसकाल लाग्यो । ५० वटा भेडा छन् । तिनै भेडा बिक्री गरेर परिवार पाल्ने विचारमा छु ।

बच्चा पाउँदाको कुनै ठूलो घटना सम्झना छ ?

एक पटक औल झर्दा बाटोमा छोरी पाएँ । पाउने वित्तिकै मरी भन्ने ठानेर श्रीमान् र म भएर छोरीलाई नजिकैको सिस्नुघारीमा लगेर फाल्यौं । तीन घण्टापछि रोएको सुनेर माथि भिउपानीकी मेरी बौरानी (भाइकी श्रीमती) ले घारीबाट टिपेर ल्याइन् । हिउँ परिरहेको थियो । बौरानीले रिसाउँदै ‘जन्मिसकेपछि किन फालेको ? जस्तो भए पनि पाल्नुपर्छ’ भनिन् । अनि हिउँ पुछपाछ गरेर पाल्यौं । अहिले ठूली भएकी छे । कक्षा ८ मा पढ्छे ।



‘चिसोले बिरामी हुन्छन् र मर्छन्, बचाउन सकिंदैन’

डोमा गुरुङ, ३५
पाण्डुसैन-५

तपाईंले कति बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो ?

११ वटा । दुइटा घरमा जन्माएँ, अरु सबै बाटोमा । कोही औल जाँदा, केही भोट जाँदा जन्मिए । केही बच्चाको पालमै मृत्यु भयो । सारै चिसो हुँदा बच्चा बिरामी हुन्छन् र मर्छन् । बचाउन सकिंदैन । बाँचेकालाई पनि जोगाउन सारै समस्या हुन्छ ।

यति धेरै बच्चा जन्माउँदा दुःख भएन ?

भयो नि ! पाल भित्र बस्नु पर्दा चिसो भयो । कति त हिड्दा हिड्दै पनि जन्मिए । धेरै समस्या थियो । खाना राम्रो भएन, आराम पुगेन । रगत बग्यो ।

अहिलेसम्म परिवार नियोजनको साधन प्रयोग गर्नुभएको छैन ?

गरेको छैन । कहिले भोटतिर जान्छौं, कहिले अछाम जान्छौं । भेडा लिएर जाने गरेका छौं । परिवार नियोजन थाहा छैन ।

धेरै बच्चा जन्माउँदा स्वास्थ्यमा के कस्तो समस्या भयो ?

पेट दुख्ने, कपाल दुख्ने, रगत बग्ने, ज्वरो आउने, कमजोर हुने भयो । मेरा बच्चा जन्मँदै मर्दै गए । अहिले तीन वटा मात्र जीवित छन् । एउटा छोरो, दुइटी छोरी । पछिल्लो बच्चा २० दिनको भएको छ । यो घरमै पाएको हो । स्वास्थ्य चौकीबारे सुनेकी छु तर कहिल्यै स्वास्थ्य चौकीमा बच्चा पाएको छैन ।

बाटोमा बच्चा जन्माउँदा के कस्तो दुःख हुन्छ ?

खान, लगाउन पुग्दैन, चिसो हुन्छ । बच्चा पाएकै वेलामा पनि हिड्नुपर्छ । रगत बग्छ । तल्लो पेट दुखिरहेको हुन्छ । पाठेघर खस्ने डर हुन्छ । कहिलेकाहीं रिगटा लागेर ढल्ने अवस्था हुन्छ ।



‘तल्लो पेटै दुख्दो छ, अस्पताल गयो औषधि छैन भन्छन्’

बिस्ना थापा, ६०
पाण्डुसैन-५

तपाईंले कति बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो ?

१५ बच्चा जन्माएँ । १० मरे, ५ छन् । कहिले अछामतिर, कहिले भोटतिर जाँदा जन्माएँ । बाखापाठासँग जानु पर्दा कहिले वनजङ्गलमा पाएँ । सासूससुराले काम नगरे ठीक मान्दैनन् । काम गर्न वन जानुपर्‍यो । त्यही पाएँ । कहिलेकाही त सारै बिरामी समेत भएँ । औषधि गर्न जान अस्पताल पनि हुँदैन, पैसा पनि हुँदैन ।

बच्चा जन्माउँदा तपाईंलाई के-कस्तो समस्या भयो ?

समस्या त हुने नै भयो । वनजंगल जानुपर्‍यो । पेट दुख्दा पनि बस्न पाइँदैन । पाठी (भेडा) गोठालो जानुपर्‍यो । दही, दूध, घिउ, केही खान नपाइने । केही छोराछोरी चिसोले मरे । केही पेटबाट आउँदै मरेर आए । समस्या हुने नै भयो ।

बाँचेका कतिलाई पढाउनुभयो ?

छोरीलाई त पढाउन सकिनँ । एउटा छोरो पुलिसमा गएको छ, उसले १२ कक्षासम्म पढेको छ । एक छोरो आठमा पढ्छ । एउटा सातमा अनि अर्को तीनमा छ ।

धेरै बच्चा जन्माउँदा स्वास्थ्यमा के समस्या पर्‍यो ?

छाती दुख्दो छ । यो पिठ्युँ दुख्दो छ । तल्लो पेटै दुख्दो छ । अस्पताल गयो औषधि छैन भन्छन् । किनेर खानुपर्छ । किनेर खान पैसा हुन्न । रगत धेरै बग्यो । शरीरमा रगत नभएर बच्चा पनि पेटमै मरेर जन्मे होलान् । मान्छे मर्ने रगत बगेरै त हो ।



‘मर्ने मरिगए बाँच्ने बाँचिगए’

कुशा चदारा, ६०
कोल्दी-३ सिराडी

तपाईंका कति बच्चा भए ?

१२ वटा पाएँ । ६ वटा छँदै छन्, ६ मरे ।

बच्चा जन्माउँदा के कस्तो समस्या भयो ?

खान, लाउन र बस्न समस्या भयो । बच्चा पाउँदा छिःछिः भनेर घर आउन दिँदैनथे । हामीलाई गोठमै राखिन्थ्यो । गोठमा चिसोले बिरामी भइन्थ्यो । घरकै ओखतीमूलो, घरकै जडीबुटीले उपचार गर्थे । उ वेला स्वास्थ्य चौकी थिएन । धेरै बच्चा हुँदा धेरै समस्या भयो । कहिले मागेर काम चलाउनुपऱ्यो । कहिले अरुको खेतीपातीमा काम गर्ऱ्यो । अरुकै काम गरेर बच्चा पाल्यौ । मर्ने मरिगए बाँच्ने बाँचिगए । बाँचेका बच्चा पाल्न पनि सारै दुःख भयो ।

छोराछोरीलाई पढाउनुभएको छैन ?

एउटा १२ कक्षा, एउटा ११ कक्षा र एउटा १० कक्षामा पढ्दैछ । तर, पढाउन धेरै दुःख छ । पैसा छैन । उनीहरू आफैँ भारी बोकेर कापीकलम किन्छन् र पढ्छन् ।



‘११ जन्मिएकामा ७ मरे, ४ छन्’

पान्तु चदारा, ६०
कोल्दी-३

कति बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो ?

११ वटा जन्माएँ ।

बच्चा जन्माउँदा कस्तो समस्या भयो ?

धेरै समस्या भयो नि ! खान, लगाउन पाएनौं । सिरनु-सइनु खायौं । रगत कति हो कति गयो । धेरै दुःख पाइयो । पेट दुख्यो, रगत गयो, चक्कर आयो । दुई तीन दिनकी सुत्केरी खान पाइएन । ३० दिनसम्म गोठमै बस्नुपऱ्यो । श्रीमान घरमा थिएनन् । खाना समेत आफैँ पकाएर खानुपऱ्यो ।

किन त्यति धेरै बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो त ?

त्यो वेला सुई थिएन । केही औषधि थिएन । उ वेला अस्पताल पनि थिएन । समय नै लाटो थियो ।

बच्चा धेरै हुँदा परिवार पाल्न के-कस्तो समस्या भयो ?

साग खायौं, सइनु खायौं । केही मरे, केही बाँचे । ११ जन्मिएकामा यताउता हुँदा ७ मरे । अहिले चार जना छन् । अरुको काम गरेर बच्चा पाल्न गाह्रो छ । खान, लाउन पुग्दैन । जग्गा थोरै छ । श्रीमान बितिगए । छोरो बम्बई गएको छ । अलि अलि कमाउँछ ।



‘चार वटा पेटमै मरेका जन्मे’

पम्फा रोकाय, ४२
बूढीनन्दा नगरपालिका-३ नुरी

तपाईंले कति बच्चा जन्माउनुभयो ?

१३ वटा । चार वटा पेटमै मरेका जन्मे । त्यसबाहेक एउटी छोरी चार वर्षकी भएर मरी, एउटा दुई वर्षको छोरो बित्यो । अहिले सात बच्चा छन् । कान्छो तीन वर्षको भयो ।

धेरै बच्चा पाउँदा तपाईंलाई कुनै समस्या भएन ?

धेरै समस्या भयो । खानलाउन पुग्दैन । कमजोर भएर होला, पेटमै मरेका बच्चा पनि जन्मे । बच्चा पाल्नका लागि घर छोडेर पाण्डुसैनको काँधमा होटल थापेर बसेकी छु । होटलको कमाइले अलिअलि कपडा किन्ने र खाने व्यवस्था गरेकी छु । पछिल्लो एउटा बच्चा स्वास्थ्य चौकीमा पाएँ । अरु कोही घरमै, कोही जंगलमा र कोही खेतबारीमा काममा गएको वेला जन्मिए । दुःख त हुने नै भयो ।

बच्चा पाल्न समस्या भएन ?

समस्या भयो । लगाउने कपडा भएन । खेतीपाती कम । खानलाउन समस्या । श्रीमान् मिस्त्री काम गर्नुहुन्छ । त्यहीबाट अलि अलि पैसा कमाइ हुन्छ । दुःख गरेर बच्चा पालिरहेका छौं ।

प्रमोद आचार्य

चेलीबेटी बेचबिखन कुवेत जान कञ्चनपुरको बाटो

सिन्धुपाल्चोकबाट दुबई र कुवेत जान कञ्चनपुरको बाटो
किन प्रयोग हुँदछ ? वैदेशिक रोजगारीको आवरणमा
भइरहेको चेलीबेटी बेचबिखनको कथा ।

भारतको उत्तराखण्ड राज्य अन्तर्गत पर्ने रुद्रपुरमा १ कात्तिक २०७४ मा सिन्धुपाल्चोकका ६ जना किशोरीलाई भारतीय प्रहरीले पक्राउ गर्‍यो र कञ्चनपुरस्थित माइती नेपालको कार्यालयलाई जिम्मा लगायो । पक्राउ पर्ने टोलीमा एउटी यस्ती किशोरी थिइन्, जसको उमेर १४ वर्ष मात्र थियो । तर, नागरिकतामा भने उनी १९ वर्ष पुगेकी थिइन् । सेलाङ घर भएकी ती किशोरीले विदेश जान पाइने लोभमा दलालको सल्लाह मानेर आफ्नो उमेर बढाएकी थिइन् ।

त्यो टोलीमा अर्की किशोरी १८ वर्षकी थिइन्, तर नागरिकतामा उनको उमेर २० वर्ष लेखिएको थियो । हेलम्बूकी ती किशोरीले पनि दलालले भनेअनुसार उमेर बढाएर नागरिकता बनाएकी थिइन् । उनीहरूलाई उमेर बढाएर नागरिकता बनाउन उक्साउने व्यक्ति सिन्धुपाल्चोककै रमेश तामाङ थिए, जो अहिले काठमाडौंमा बस्छन् । दुवै किशोरीका आमालाई तामाङले 'छोरीलाई विदेश लगेर राम्रो काममा लगाइदिने' लोभ देखाएपछि उनीहरूको उमेर बढाएर नागरिकता बनाइएको थियो ।

सिन्धुपाल्चोकका किशोरी कञ्चनपुर हुँदै भारत पुऱ्याइएको यो पहिलो पटक होइन । माइती नेपाल कञ्चनपुर कार्यालयकी कार्यक्रम संयोजक महेश्वरी भट्टले सन् २०१६ देखि २०१७ को सेप्टेम्बरसम्ममा विभिन्न मुलुकमा बेचबिखनका लागि लैजान लागिएको अवस्थामा सिन्धुपाल्चोकका ५० जना किशोरीलाई उद्धार गरिएको जानकारी दिइन् । उनले भनिन्, "हामीले फेला पारेको संख्या मात्रै हो यो, लुकाई-छिपाई लगेका अरू कति होलान् कति ।"

उमेर बढाएर बनाइएका नागरिकता र राहदानीसहित सिन्धुपाल्चोकका चेलीहरूलाई पक्राउ गर्ने रुद्रपुर प्रहरीले जारी गरेको प्रेस विज्ञप्तिमा उल्लेख भएअनुसार, "नेपालबाट किशोरीहरूलाई विभिन्न बाटो भएर खाडी मुलुकमा घरेलु कामदारका लागि पठाउने गरिन्छ । नेपालमा यस कामका लागि भिसा नपाइने भएकाले उनीहरू दिल्ली विमानस्थल हुँदै गन्तव्य तय गर्छन् ।"

भारतीय प्रहरीको विज्ञप्तिमा वैदेशिक रोजगारको नाममा ती किशोरीहरूलाई खाडी मुलुक पुऱ्याउने दलालहरूको नाम नै किटान गरिएको छ । विज्ञप्तिमा उल्लेख छ, "यो टोलीमा



२०७४ कात्तिक १ गते भारत उत्तराखण्डको रुद्रपुरबाट भारतीय प्रहरी र माइती नेपाल, कञ्चनपुरले उद्धार गरेका किशोरी र प्रहरीले जारी गरेको प्रेस विज्ञप्ति । तस्वीर सौजन्य: माइती नेपाल कञ्चनपुर कार्यालय

सिन्धुपाल्चोकका सोमबहादुर गोले, सिन्धुलीकी नानीमाया माझी र पर्साका विष्णु लोप्चन संलग्न छन् । तीनैजना रुद्रपुर प्रहरीको हिरासतमा छन् ।

भारतीय प्रहरीको प्रेस विज्ञप्ति र नेपालका प्रहरी अधिकारीको बुझाइ एउटै छ- 'चेलीबेटी ओसारपसार र बेचबिखनको शैली बदलिएको छ ।' जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालय सिन्धुपाल्चोकका प्रमुख, प्रहरी नायव उपरीक्षक (डीएसपी) विमलराज कँडेल भन्छन्, "जिल्लामा तीन वर्षयता मानव बेचबिखन सम्बन्धी उजुरी आएकै छैनन् ।" उनले थपे "उजुरी नआउनु भनेको अपराध नै भएको छैन भन्ने होइन, अपराध नयाँ शैलीमा भइरहेको छ ।" डीएसपी कँडेलका भनाइमा, "मानव तस्करहरूले हिजोआज कागजात बनाएरै चेलीबेटी बेच्ने गर्छन् । उनीहरूले आवश्यक सबै प्रक्रिया यसरी पूरा गर्छन् कि बेचबिखन हो भन्ने थाहा पाउन मुश्किल पर्छ ।"

उनका अनुसार, बेचबिखनमा पहिले जस्तो लुकीछिपी सीमा कटाउने, कुनै कोटीमा वा घरमा पुन्याएर अरू कसैलाई जिम्मा लगाउने, नगद लिने जस्ता कामहरू सोभै नभएर वैदेशिक रोजगारका नाममा हुने गर्छन् । उमेर नपुगेका किशोरीलाई विदेश लैजान दलालहरूले उनीहरूको नागरिकता बनाउने प्रबन्ध समेत मिलाइदिन्छन् ।

वैदेशिक रोजगारमा अहिले 'सेटिङ' भन्ने शब्द खूबै चर्चामा छ । यो सब गर्न दलालले जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयदेखि स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधिसँग समेत 'सेटिङ' मिलाउँछन् । नागरिकताका लागि वडा कार्यालयबाट उमेर बढाएर सिफारिश बनाइसकेपछि किशोरीहरू नागरिकता लिन जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय पुग्छन् । शुरूमा उल्लेख गरिएकी सेलाङकी कोपिला तामाङ (नाम परिवर्तन) ले १४ वर्षमा ५ वर्ष उमेर बढाएर नागरिकता बनाइन् । त्यसपछि दलालकै योजना अनुसार राहदानी पनि उमेर बढाएरै बनाइन् । भारतीय प्रहरीबाट उनीहरूलाई जिम्मा लिने माइती नेपालको कञ्चनपुर कार्यालयकी कार्यक्रम संयोजक महेश्वरी भट्ट भन्छिन्, "सिन्धुपाल्चोककै रमेश तामाङले विदेश जान सजिलो हुन्छ भन्दै कोपिला र उनकी आमालाई फकाएर जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय, सिन्धुपाल्चोकबाट नागरिकता र राहदानी निकाल्न लगाएका थिए ।"

दलालहरूले किशोरी र तिनका अभिभावकलाई यतिसम्म आश्वस्त पारेका हुन्छन् कि, जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयमा पुगेर उनीहरू नागरिकता बनाउन उमेर पुगेको दाबी गर्छन् । जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयका एकजना कर्मचारीका अनुसार, "शंका लागेर किशोरीसँग सोधपूछ गर्दा अभिभावक नै अधि सरेर 'जन्माउने म, उमेर मलाई थाहा नभए कसलाई थाहा हुन्छ ?' भन्न थालेपछि हामीलाई थप प्रश्न गर्ने ठाउँ रहन्न ।"

उनीहरूले स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधिको सिफारिश समेत लिएर आएका हुन्छन् । अनि सरकारी अधिकारीहरूलाई उमेरबारे शंका लागे पनि नागरिकता दिनैपर्ने बाध्यता आइलाग्छ । जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय सिन्धुपाल्चोकका प्रशासकीय अधिकृत पीताम्बर पाण्डेले भने, "उमेर नपुगेको जस्तो लागेपछि हामी नागरिकता पछि बनाउँदा पनि हुन्छ, विदेश जानकै लागि उमेर ढाँटेर नागरिकता र पासपोर्ट नबनाउनुस् भन्छौं । तर, उनीहरूलाई यसरी तयार गरिएको हुन्छ कि जसरी पनि नागरिकता चाहियो भन्छन् ।"

प्रशासनबाटै नक्कली नागरिकता

सिन्धुपाल्चोक, इचोककी सन्तोषी तामाङ (नाम परिवर्तन) लाई आठ वर्षकी छँदा उनकी काकीले काममा लगाइदिन्छु भनेर भारतको दिल्ली लिएर गइन् । त्यहाँ राम्रो काम नपाएपछि उनले

दलालहरूले 'सेटिङ्ग' मिलाउँदा खूबै होश पुऱ्याएको देखिन्छ । यस्ता नागरिकता र राहदानीमा हुने होलोग्राम र सरकारी छाप सक्कली नै हुँदोरहेछ । सिन्धुपाल्चोकमा नागरिकता जारी गर्ने अधिकारीको टाउँमा हुँदै नभएको मान्छेको नाम राखिएको भेटियो । यसो गर्दा नागरिकता र राहदानी किर्ते गर्ने दलाल र उनीहरूसँग मिलेमतो गर्ने सरकारी अधिकारी को हुन् भन्ने पत्ता लगाउन गाह्रो पर्छ । नागरिकता र राहदानीमा सम्बन्धित व्यक्तिको हस्ताक्षर र औंटाछाप सक्कली हुने भएकाले विमानस्थलहरूमा विश्वास गरिने सम्भावना धेरै हुन्छ । यसरी 'चोरबाटो' बाट बनाइएका नागरिकता तथा राहदानी दलालहरूले आफूसँगै राख्ने गर्दा रहेछन् । जस्तो कि, यूई पठाउनु छ भने विमानस्थलमा पुगेपछि मात्रै सम्बन्धित व्यक्तिलाई राहदानी र नागरिकता दिइन्छ । ताकि, त्यसभन्दा अघि आफ्नो अपराध 'लिक' नहोस् ।

मोबाइलमा भिसा, फोटोमा मोलतोल

विदेशमा राम्रो काम पाइन्छ भनेर किशोरी र तिनका अभिभावकहरूलाई लोभ देखाए पनि दलालको वास्तविक धन्दा चाहिँ अर्कै हुने गर्छ । उनीहरू किशोरीको तस्वीर देखाएर यो केटी उपलब्ध गराइदिन्छु भनेर पनि कारोबार गरिरहेका हुन्छन् । वैदेशिक रोजगारको नाममा लामो समयदेखि चेलीबेटी बेचबिखनमा संलग्न, भारतीय प्रहरीको हिरासतमा रहेका पर्साका विष्णु लोचनले आफूले नेपाली युवतीहरूका तस्वीर पठाएर विदेशी ग्राहकसँग मोलमोलाइ गर्ने गरेको स्वीकार गरेका छन् । उनले भारतीय प्रहरीलाई दिएको बयान हेरेकी महेश्वरी भट्टका अनुसार, लोचनले त्यो बयानमा 'केटीहरूको फोटो दुबईका ग्राहकलाई पठाउँछु, जुन केटी राम्रो मान्छन् उसैलाई पठाउने हो, त्यसबापत राम्रो रकम पाइन्छ' भनेका छन् ।

भारतीय प्रहरीको विज्ञप्तिबाट पनि यसको पुष्टि हुन्छ । त्यस अनुसार, लोचनले बयानमा 'विदेश जान चाहने युवतीहरूका तस्वीर संकलन गरी यूईका शेखहरूलाई पठाउने र उनीहरूले जसलाई मन पराउँछन् उसलाई विदेश पठाउने गरेको' उल्लेख गरेका छन् । लोचनसँगै पत्राउ परेकाहरूले 'केटीहरूको भिसा मोबाइलमा आउँछ, त्यसपछि पठाइएका केटीहरू के गर्छन्, फर्किन्छन् वा फर्किन्नन् हामीलाई थाहा हुन्न' भनेको पनि विज्ञप्तिमा उल्लेख छ ।

कुनै वेला चेलीबेटी बेचबिखनको गन्तव्य भारत हुने गर्थ्यो । अब भारत मात्र गन्तव्य रहेन । अहिले सिन्धुपाल्चोकका चेलीबेटी बेचिने मुख्य गन्तव्य खाडी मुलुक बनेका छन् । जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय सिन्धुपाल्चोकका अनुसार, वैदेशिक रोजगारका नाममा यहाँका चेलीबेटी ओमन, मलेशिया, यूई, कतार, किर्गिस्तान, कुवेत, साउदी अरेबिया, सिरिया, लेबनान लगायतका देशमा गइरहेका छन् । प्रशासकीय अधिकृत पाण्डे भन्छन्, "झवाट्ट हेर्दा दलाल वा म्यानपावर कम्पनीबाट रोजगारीको लागि विदेश गएको जस्तो देखिन्छ । वास्तविकता बेचबिखन नै हो ।"

नेपालमा चेलीबेटी बेचबिखन धेरै हुने जिल्लाका रूपमा चिनिन्छ, सिन्धुपाल्चोक ।





बायाँबाट क्रमशः
सम्भ्रना तामाङ,
सोममाया लमिनी
र कान्छी तामाङ।
तस्वीर सौजन्यः
सामी, सिन्धुपाल्चोक

१२ वर्षदेखि बेपत्ता

सिन्धुपाल्चोकको इन्द्रावती गाउँपालिका (साबिक सिम्पालकाभ्रे गाविस) मा १२ वर्षअघि रामबहादुर बोम्जन तामाङ नामका दलाल पुगे। विदेश जान चाहने महिला खोज्दै हिडेका उनले सोममाया लमिनीलाई 'कुवेत लगेर काम लगाइदिने' लोभ देखाए, अनि सँगै लिएर गए। सोममाया १२ वर्षअघि घरबाट हिडेदेखि अहिलेसम्म सम्पर्कमा छैनन्। आमा बेपत्ता भएपछि उनलाई खोज्दै कुमार लामा कुवेतसम्म पुगे। तर, केही अतोपत्तो लागेन। "आमालाई विदेश लैजाँदा १४ वर्षको थिएँ" २६ वर्षीय लामाले भने, "ठूलो भएपछि खोज्न कुवेतसम्म पुगेँ, तर पत्ता लगाउन सकिनँ।" दलाल रामबहादुरको घर सिन्धुपाल्चोककै हेलम्बू गाउँपालिका (साबिक पालचोक गाविस) हो। अहिले उनी कुवेतमै बस्छन्।

सिन्धुपाल्चोककै चौतारा साँगाचोक गढी नगरपालिका (साविक इर्खु गाविस) की सम्भ्रना तामाङ ७ वर्षदेखि बेपत्ता छन्। वैदेशिक रोजगारका लागि भनेर २०६७ सालमा यूईए गएको उनी त्यसयता सम्पर्कमा छैनन्। ९ वर्षअघि मलेशिया गएको पाँचपोखरी थाङपाल गाउँपालिका (साबिक गुन्सा गाविस) की १२ वर्षीया कान्छी तामाङको पनि अहिलेसम्म अतोपत्तो छैन।

प्रहरीको अभिलेख अनुसार वि.सं. २००० मा यहाँ पहिलोपल्ट चेलीबेटी बेचबिखनको उजुरी दर्ता भएको थियो । जिल्लाको उत्तरी भेगका गाउँहरूबाट तुलनात्मक रूपमा धेरै किशोरी बेचबिखनमा पर्ने गरेको प्रहरी र प्रशासनको बुझाइ छ । कारण, ती गाउँहरूमा गरीबी व्याप्त छ, शिक्षा छैन, चेतनाको कमी छ । प्रहरीको उपस्थिति कम हुने भएकाले दलालले उनीहरूलाई निर्धक्क प्रलोभनमा पार्न सक्छन् । बेचिनेहरूमा प्रायः तामाङ समुदायका किशोरी र युवती छन् ।

प्रहरी तथ्यांक हेर्दा हेलम्बू गाउँपालिका अन्तर्गतका हेलम्बू, इचोक र हाँकाल; जुगल गाउँपालिकाका गोल्चे, गुम्बा र हगाम तथा पाँचपोखरी थाङपाल गाउँपालिका अन्तर्गतका बाँसखर्क, बरुवा, भोताङ, गुन्सा, थाङपालकोट लगायतका गाउँका धेरै चेलीबेटी बेचबिखनमा परेका छन् । “नपढेका र गरीब परिवारलाई फकाउन दलाललाई सजिलो हुन्छ” जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालय सिन्धुपाल्चोकका प्रहरी नायव निरीक्षक ख्याली सिंहले भने, “यस्ता सोभा महिला बेचबिखनमा धेरै पर्ने गरेका छन् ।”

महिलाहरू वैदेशिक रोजगारमा धेरै जाने जिल्लामा भापापछि दोस्रो नम्बरमा पर्छ, सिन्धुपाल्चोक । वैदेशिक रोजगार विभागको तथ्यांक अनुसार २०६७ सालयता सिन्धुपाल्चोकका ७ हजार ७७० महिला वैदेशिक रोजगारका लागि भनेर विभिन्न देशमा गएका छन् । २०७३/७४ मा मात्रै सिन्धुपाल्चोकका दुई हजार २० जना महिला वैदेशिक रोजगारमा गएको तथ्यांक विभागसँग छ । तर, सूचना परामर्श लिएर, सीप सिकेर विदेश जाने महिलाको संख्या निकै कम छ । वैदेशिक रोजगारका लागि सुरक्षित आप्रवासन परियोजना (सामी), सिन्धुपाल्चोकका अनुसार आर्थिक वर्ष २०७२/७३ र २०७३/७४ मा जम्मा १४४ जनाले मात्र विदेश जानुपूर्व सीप सिकेका छन् । सीप र सूचना बेगर दलालहरूको फन्दामा परेर विदेश गएका महिला अनेक समस्यामा पर्छन् ।

सामी संयोजक रीना श्रेष्ठले रोजगारीका लागि भन्दै विदेश पुऱ्याएर बेचिएका महिलामाथि यौनशोषण लगायतका शारीरिक शोषण हुने गरेको, तोकिएको भन्दा वेग्लै र अप्ठेरो काममा लगाउने गरिएको बताइन् । महिलाहरू वैदेशिक रोजगारको नाममा बेचिएका, बेपत्ता भएका, ठगिएका, राहदानी लगायतका महत्वपूर्ण कागजात जफत गरिएका र ज्यान समेत गुमाएका



मानव तस्करीको अभियोगमा पक्राउ परेका सिन्धुपाल्चोकका सोमबहादुर गोले, सिन्धुलीकी नानीमाया माझी र पर्साका विष्णु लोप्चन । अहिले उनीहरू भारतीय प्रहरीको नियन्त्रणमा छन् ।

तस्वीर सौजन्य: माइती नेपाल, कञ्चनपुर कार्यालय

घटना सामी कार्यालयमा दर्ता भएका छन् । श्रेष्ठका अनुसार, २०७१/७२ यता मात्र ८३ वटा यस्ता घटना दर्ता भएका छन्, जसमध्ये पाँचजना महिला अहिलेसम्म बेपत्ता छन् ।

कानूनी प्रश्न : बेचबिखन कि ठगी ?

चेलीबेटी बेचबिखनको हिजोको तौरतरीका आज पूरै बदलिएको छ । अब त्यो सब वैदेशिक रोजगारको आवरणमा हुन थालेको छ । वैदेशिक रोजगारकै नाममा मानव बेचबिखन, ओसार पसार र तस्करी भइरहेको छ । तर, यी विषयलाई कसरी सम्बोधन गर्ने भन्ने व्यवस्था विद्यमान कानूनमा छैन । मानव बेचबिखनको यो नयाँ स्वरूपलाई न 'वैदेशिक रोजगार ऐन २०६४' ले समेटेछ, न 'मानव बेचबिखन तथा ओसारपसार नियन्त्रण ऐन २०६४' ले । वैदेशिक रोजगार ऐनमा मानव बेचबिखनबारे केही उल्लेख छैन । मानव बेचबिखन तथा ओसारपसार नियन्त्रण ऐनमा वैदेशिक रोजगारको नाममा हुने बेचबिखनलाई स्पष्ट पारिएको छैन । त्यहीकारण वैदेशिक रोजगारको नाममा मानव बेचबिखन गर्नेमाथि कुन कानून आकर्षित हुने र कस्तो कारबाही हुने भन्ने अन्योल छ । यसले गर्दा मानव तस्करहरूले वैदेशिक रोजगारको नाममा मानव बेचबिखन गर्ने छूट पाइरहेका छन् ।

'मानव बेचबिखन तथा ओसारपसार नियन्त्रण ऐन २०६४' अनुसार मानव बेचबिखन भन्नाले महिला तथा बालबालिकालाई यौन शोषणका लागि बेच्नु भन्ने बुझिन्छ । ऐनमा रहेको यस परिभाषाले रोजगारीको नाममा अहिले भइरहेको बेचबिखनलाई समेट्दैन । 'वैदेशिक रोजगार ऐन २०६४' ले वैदेशिक रोजगारका नाममा हुने बेचबिखनका घटनालाई ठगीको रूपमा परिभाषित गर्छ । अर्थात्, वैदेशिक रोजगारका लागि भन्दै विदेशमा लगेर बेचबिखन गर्ने कार्य कानूनतः 'व्यक्ति वा म्यानपावर कम्पनीको ठगी' मात्रै हो भन्ने बुझिन्छ । वैदेशिक रोजगारमा गएकाहरू बेचबिखनमा पर्दा समेत दलाललाई वैदेशिक रोजगार ऐनअन्तर्गत कारबाही हुँदा कम सजाय हुने गर्छ । कानूनतः मानव बेचबिखनको कसूरमा २० वर्ष कैद सजाय हुने व्यवस्था भए पनि वैदेशिक रोजगारमा ठगी गरेको कसूरमा भने ३ देखि ७ वर्षसम्म मात्रै कैद हुने व्यवस्था छ ।

वैदेशिक रोजगारका नाममा भइरहेको मानव बेचबिखनलाई ठगी भन्ने कि बेचबिखन भन्नेबारे ऐनमा रहेको विरोधाभास अन्त्य गर्न वैदेशिक रोजगार ऐन संशोधनको प्रक्रिया चलिरहेको वैदेशिक रोजगार विभागका सूचना अधिकारी मोहन अधिकारी बताउँछन् । "संशोधित मस्यौदा कानून मन्त्रालय पठाइएको छ, अब संशोधन होला" उनले भने । महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालयकी उपसचिव रोशनीदेवी कार्कीले पनि ऐनमा रहेको अन्योल हटाउन मानव बेचबिखन तथा ओसारपसार नियन्त्रण ऐन संशोधनको तयारी भइरहेको बताइन् । कार्कीका अनुसार, विकराल बन्दै गइरहेको मानव बेचबिखनको समस्या सम्बोधनका लागि मन्त्रालयले कार्ययोजना बनाएर कार्यान्वयन गर्ने तयारी गरिरहेको छ ।

सुरक्षित वैदेशिक रोजगारीको अभियान चलाउँदै आएको गैरसरकारी संस्था पौरखी नेपालकी अध्यक्ष मन्जु गुरुङ बेचबिखनलाई ठगीमा मात्रै कारबाही हुनु पीडकलाई जोगाउनु हो भन्ने ठान्छिन् । "पासपोर्ट लिएर विदेश गए पनि यो बेचबिखन नै हो" उनले भनिन्, "रोजगारीको अनुमति पत्र नदिने तर पासपोर्ट हातमा थमाएर लुकीचोरी विदेश पठाउने कामलाई ठगी मात्रै भन्नु हुन्न ।"

लक्ष्मी बस्नेत

देहव्यापारमा कलिला बालिका सरकार रमिते

काठमाडौंमा ठूलो संख्यामा कलिला बालिका
गुजाराका निम्ति यौनकर्मी बनेका छन्। सरकार
भने रमिता हेरेर बसेको छ।

अ नगिन्ती सपना बोकेर दिनहुँ देशका कुनाकाप्चाबाट थुप्रै मानिस राजधानी पस्छन् । त्यो पंक्तिमा कलिला बालिका र किशोरीको संख्या पनि त्यत्तिकै हुन्छ । औपचारिक शैक्षिक योग्यता र हातमा सीप नभएका थुप्रैलाई काठमाडौँ शहरले यस्तो जञ्जालमा पारिदिन्छ, उनीहरू देह बेचेर गुजारा चलाउन बाध्य हुन्छन् । अनि, विस्तारै पेशेवर यौनकर्मी बन्छन् ।

खाजाघर, चियापसल, स-साना रेस्टुरेन्टदेखि बास बस्न बनाइएका गेस्ट हाउस तथा शहरी 'रात्रिजीवन' भनिने डान्सबारमा काम गर्ने धेरै बालिका र किशोरी पेशेवर यौनकर्मी बनिरहेका छन् । 'मनोरञ्जन क्षेत्र' भनिने यस्ता ठाउँहरूमा उनीहरूको देह किनबेच हुन्छ । यो व्यापारका क्रममा कतिपय गर्भवती समेत हुन्छन् । अनि उनीहरूलाई अर्को आपत् आइलाग्छ । राजधानीमा कसरी भइरहेछ कलिला बालिका र किशोरीहरूको देह किनबेच ? हामीले केहीको कथा-व्यथा खोतलेका छौं ।

कामना

भर्खर १६ वर्ष पुगेकी कामना कलंकीको सपना गेस्ट हाउसमा काम गर्छिन् । तीन वर्षदेखि त्यहाँ काम गरिरहेकी उनी शुरूमा आफ्नो कामबारे खुलेर बोल्न मानिन् । केहीबेरपछि टाउको निहुन्याउँदै भनिन्, "त्यस्तै नराम्रो काम गर्छु ।"

कामनाले भनेको त्यो 'नराम्रो काम' हो- यौन व्यवसाय । उनका ग्राहक थरीथरीका छन् । कोही एक दुई घण्टा बस्छन्, कोही रातभर पनि । ग्राहक अनुसार कमाइ हुन्छ । रातभर बस्नेले धेरै 'टिप्स' दिन्छन् । उनी भन्छिन्, "बिहे नगरेका भन्दा बिहे गरेका, ३५-४० वर्षका ग्राहक धेरै आउँछन् । नयाँभन्दा पुरानै धेरै छन् मेरा ।"

तीन वर्षअघि ठूलो सपना बोकेर काठमाडौँ आएकी थिइन्, कामना । शुरूमा होटलमा भाँडा माइने र सरसफाइ गर्ने काम गरिन् । तर, कमाइ र व्यवहार दुवै राम्रो नभएपछि साहुबाट 'राम्रो व्यवहार' हुने काम रोजिन् र यौन व्यवसायमा लागिन् ।

दुई वर्षयता उनी साथीहरूसँग मिलेर डेरामा बसेकी छन् । अरू साथीहरू पनि उनको जस्तै काम गर्छन् । कामना भन्छिन्, "अब त धेरैलाई फोन नम्बर थाहा भइसक्यो । होटलको साहुले पनि नम्बर दिइहाल्छन् । बेलाबेला आइरहनेहरूले फोन गरिरहन्छन् ।"





साँभको रत्नपार्क

बीचमे पढाइ छाडेकी कामनालाई अब पढ्न मन छैन । केही सीप भइदिए चाहि यस्तो काम गर्नुपर्ने थिएन जस्तो लाग्छ । गाउँमा बस्ने आमाबुबालाई 'रात्रै काम छ' भनेकी छन् । कहिलेकाहीँ घरमा केही पैसा पनि पढाइदिन्छिन् । उनी भन्छिन्, "अब गाउँ फर्केर जान मन छैन । के मुख लिएर जानु ?"

प्रेरणा

२१ वर्ष पुग्दै गरेकी नुवाकोटकी प्रेरणा अहिले काठमाडौँमा आफ्नै सिलाइ-कटाइ व्यवसाय गर्छिन् । उनले फेशन डिजाइनरको 'एडभान्स कोर्स' पनि गरिसकेकी छन् । आफूजस्तै करीब एक दर्जन चेलीलाई फेशन डिजाइनिङ सिकाएकी उनी चार वर्षअघिको आफ्नै दिनचर्या सम्झँदा भने भावुक हुन्छिन् ।

त्यसबेला भर्खर एसएलसी दिएकी थिइन्, प्रेरणाले । आमा बिरामी भएपछि पैसा कमाउनै पर्ने बाध्यता आइलाग्यो । उनी फुपू नाता पर्नेसँग काठमाडौँ आइन् । तिनै फुपूले बालाजुको एउटा होटलमा काममा लगाइदिइन् । "भाँडा माभ्ने, सरसफाइ गर्ने काम होला भन्तानेकी थिएँ" उनले भनिन्, "साहुले ग्राहक रिभाउनुपर्छ भने । शुरूमा के भनेको हो बुझिँनँ । पछि थाहा भो— ग्राहकले जे भन्यो त्यही गर्नुपर्ने रहेछ ।" उनी भन्छिन्, "त्यसपछि मैले गर्ने-नगर्ने सबै काम गर्नुपऱ्यो ।"

एकदिन साहुले नै जबर्जस्ती गरेपछि उनी त्यहाँबाट भागिन् । काम खोज्दै जाँदा उनी

ठमेलको एउटा मसाज सेन्टरमा पुगिन् । काम गर्ने केटीहरू, मसाज गराउन आउने चाहि केटा मात्र हुन्थे । शुरूमै दिदी (साहुनी) ले काम सिकाइन् । प्रेरणा भन्छिन्, “छुट्टै कोठामा आफू पनि एकलै, ग्राहक पनि एकलै हुने, एकै दिनमा १४-१५ जनासम्मलाई सेवा दिनुपर्थ्यो ।”

त्यहाँ उनी जस्ता चारजना केटी एउटै कोठामा सुत्थे । “स-साना बच्चा भएका आमाहरू पनि काम गर्थे” प्रेरणाले भनिन्, “दिउँसो बच्चा राख्ने कोठा छुट्टै हुँदोरहेछ, बच्चा रोए पनि आमाहरू जान पाउँदैनथे ।”

प्राप्ति

कलंकीको कलश गेस्ट हाउस केही महीना अधिसम्म प्राप्तिको कर्मथलो थियो । के काम गछ्यो भन्दा विना संकोच भनिन्, “ग्राहकसँग बस्छु ।”

उनी पेशेवर यौनकर्मी बनेको तीन वर्ष भयो । पहिले पुरानो बसपार्कतिर बस्थिन् । एक वर्ष जति भयो कलंकीतिर आएको । “रेट फरक हुन्छ, एकजनासँग १५०० लियो भने रुम भाडा आफैँ तिर्छु, आफैँ रुम भाडा तिर्ने ग्राहक आयो भने हजार रूपैयाँ लिन्छु” प्राप्ति भन्छिन्, “दिनको चार-पाँच हजारसम्म कमाउँछु ।”

८ कक्षा पढ्दापढ्दै उनी साथीसँग भागेर काठमाडौँ आएकी थिइन् । शुरूमा यो काममा लाग्दा उनी १५ वर्षकी थिइन् । उनले आमा, दाजुभाउजू र भाइलाई ‘बिहे गरिसके’ भनेकी छन् । यही काम गर्दागर्दै भेटेको एक युवकसँग माया बसेर बिहे पनि भयो । गाडीमा काम गर्ने उनका श्रीमानलाई अब उनी अरूसँग बसेको मन पर्दैन । प्राप्ति भन्छिन्, “दिउँसो अरू काम गरेर बिहान, बेलुका कोठामै बूढाबूढी बस्न पाइने भए अब यो काम छाड्थेँ ।”

वेदना

चार वर्षअघिको कुरा हो । वेदना त्यसबेला १४ वर्षकी थिइन् । थानकोटतिरको एउटा होटलमा काम शुरू गरेको दिन साहूले ग्राहकलाई खाना पुऱ्याइदेऊ भने । उनी खाना लिएर गइन्, कोठा साँघुरो थियो । “ग्राहकले खाना होइन, मेरो हात समाए” वेदना भन्छिन्, “खाना पुऱ्याउनु भनेको ग्राहकसँग बस्नु रहेछ ।” त्यो क्याबिन रेस्टुरेन्ट थियो ।

गाउँकै चिनजानका मान्छेले उनलाई मासिक रु.४-५ हजार तलब हुने सजिलो काम लगाइदिन्छु भनेर काठमाडौँ ल्याएका थिए । वेदना भन्छिन्, “फोन उठाउने काम हुन्छ भन्थे र विश्वास गरे । यस्तोमा परे ।”

पहिलो दिनमै भोग्नु परेको व्यवहारका कारण उनले त्यो होटल छाडेर अर्कोमा काम गर्न थालिन् । “अहिले बिहान चारबजे उठेर राति १०/११ बजेसम्म



रात परेपछिको काठमाडौँ ।

भाँडा माइछु” आफ्नो अनुभव सुनाउँदै वेदना भन्छिन्, “ग्राहकसँग बस्नेलाई शारीरिक दुःख चाहि हुन्न । साहुले पनि राम्रो गर्छ । भनेको बेला छुट्टी दिन्छ, मागेको पैसा पनि दिन्छ । भाँडा माइने, सफा गर्नेलाई चाहि हेप्ने, दुःख दिने, काम धेरै लगाउने गर्छन् ।”

मनु

१७ वर्षीया मनुको घर रामेछाप हो । एक वर्ष अधिसम्म उनी काठमाडौंको एउटा डान्सबारमा काम गर्थिन् । साँझ ६ बजेदेखि रातको १२ बजेसम्म काम गरेर डेरा पुग्दा रातको दुई बज्यो । बिहान ६ बजेको स्कूल भ्याउन पाँच बजे उठ्नुपर्थ्यो । स्कूल पढेर १०-११ बजे कोठामा आउने, खाना पकाएर खाने, केहीबेर सुत्ने, होमवर्क गर्ने र साँझ परेपछि फेरि डान्सबार पुग्ने उनको तालिका थियो । १३ वर्षको उमेरमा शुरू भएको यो काम तीन वर्ष चल्यो ।

हामीले भेट्दा उनी गैरसरकारी संस्था 'विश्वास नेपाल' को दिवा सेल्टरमा थिइन् । यो संस्थाले उनी जस्ता बालिकालाई आश्रय दिएको रहेछ । डान्सबार छाडेपछिको एक वर्षमा मनुको जीवन पूरै फेरिएको छ । अहिले उनी कलेज पढ्ने र बचेको समय विभिन्न संघसंस्था र स्कूलमा डान्स सिकाउने काम गर्छिन् ।

बुबाले छाडेर अर्कैसँग बिहे गरेपछि मनुकी आमा उनीसहित भाइ र बहिनी लिएर चार वर्षअघि काठमाडौं आएकी थिइन् । सडकछेउमा तरकारी बेचेर परिवार पालिरहेकी आमा अकस्मात् बिरामी भइन् । उपचार गर्न आफन्तबाट लिएको ऋण तिर्ने उपाय थिएन ।

काम खोजिरहेकी मनुलाई चिनजानकै दिदीले टेकूमा रहेको डान्सबारमा काम लगाइदिइन् । दिदी पनि डान्सबारमा काम गर्थिन् । केही दिनमै ग्राहकलाई 'रमाइलो' गराउने काममा अभ्यस्त भइन् । “ग्राहक यस्तो ठाउँमा रमाइलो गर्न भनेरै आउँछन्, उनीहरूको चित्त बुझाएरै पठाउनुपर्छ” मनु भन्छिन्, “मैले पनि तीन वर्षसम्म त्यही गरेँ ।”

सफल

दिवा सेल्टरमा मनुसँगै थिइन्, १७ वर्षीया सफल । उदयपुरकी सफलले मनुका कुरामा सही थप्दै भनिन्, “ग्राहकले भने अनुसार गरिदिएपछि हामीलाई पनि टिप्स आउँछ, साहुलाई पनि आम्दानी हुन्छ ।”

बालाजु बाइपास क्षेत्रको डान्सबारमा काम गर्ने सफल ११ कक्षा पढ्दै गर्दा एक वर्षअघि गाउँकै दिदीहरूसँग काठमाडौं आएकी थिइन् । उनले शुरूमा दोहोरी साँझमा काम गरिन् । त्यसपछि डान्सबारमा छिरिन् ।

गाउँमा हुँदा उनी नजिकैको स्कूलमा पढाउँथिन्, महीनामा रु.७-८ हजार कमाइ हुन्थ्यो । धेरै कमाइ गर्न काठमाडौं आउने हुटहुटी चल्यो । “तर, काठमाडौंमा



यस्तो काम पो गर्नुपर्दोरहेछ" सफलले भनिन्, "अब घर फर्केर जाउँ भने भागेर गएकी भन्लान्, यहाँ अरू काम केही पाइन्न, के गर्ने, के ?"

जन्मिएको बच्चा अलपत्र

२०७४ साल जेठ १९ गते माइती नेपालको केन्द्रीय कार्यालयमा एक किशोरी आइपुगिन् । उनको पेट सामान्य भन्दा अलि ठूलो थियो । उनी आठ महीनाकी गर्भवती रहिछन् । उमेर सोध्दा ट्याक्कै जवाफ दिन सकिदैनथिन् । कहिले १८ वर्षकी भएँ भन्थिन्, कहिले २० पुगेँ भन्ने जवाफ दिन्थिन् । कहाँबाट आएको भनेर नबताउने उनी 'प्रहरीले यहाँ जाऊ भनेर पठायो' भन्थिन् ।

माइती नेपालका कर्मचारीहरूले धेरै सोधीखोजी गरेपछि थाहा भो- उनी काठमाडौंको नयाँ बसपार्क (गौगबु) क्षेत्रको होटलमा काम गर्थिन् । अविवाहित उनी त्यही होटलमा काम गर्ने क्रममा गर्भवती भएकी रहिछन् । उनलाई बच्चा जन्माउन माइती नेपालमै पठाइनुको रहस्य पछि उनी आफैँले खोलिन्- "बच्चा जन्माएपछि दुई लाख दिने भन्ने कुरा भएको थियो ।" माइती नेपालकी वरिष्ठ कानून अधिकृत उमा तामाङका भनाइमा, "नयाँ बसपार्क वरपरका होटलमा उनी यौन व्यवसाय गर्थिन् । ग्राहकसँगको शारीरिक सम्पर्कबाट गर्भवती भएर असजिलो अवस्थामा पुगेपछि प्रहरीले माइती नेपालमा ल्याइदिएको थियो ।"

उनले एक महीनापछि बच्चा जन्माइन् । त्यसपछि थाहा भो- उनको घर तनहुँ रहेछ । कामको खोजीमा घरबाट भागेर काठमाडौं आएकी रहिछन् । घरपरिवार भएको थाहा भएपछि माइती नेपालले उनलाई ५ भदौमा घर पठाइदियो ।

योभन्दा दर्दनाक अर्को कथा छ । २०७४ मंसिर पहिलो साताको कुरा हो । काठमाडौंको कलंकीमा रहेको गैरसरकारी संस्था 'चेन्ज नेपाल' की स्टाफ नर्स अनु विष्टले फील्डमा जाँदा एक होटलमा भर्खरकी सुत्केरी बालिका भेटिन्, जोसँग बच्चा थिएन । अनु होटल, रेस्टुरेन्ट, खाजाघरहरूमा काम गर्ने बालिका-किशोरीहरूको स्वास्थ्य अवस्था परीक्षण गर्ने काम गर्छिन् । अनुले भनिन्, "तिनको उमेर १५-१६ भन्दा बढी थिएन । कलंकीको एउटा रेस्टुरेन्टमा काम गर्थिन् । ग्राहकसँग यौन सम्बन्ध राख्दा गर्भवती भएको बताउँथिन् ।" 'तिम्रो बच्चा खोज त ?' भनेर सोध्दा 'एउटा संस्थाले मलाई गर्भवती अवस्थामा हामी हेरचाह गर्छौं भनेर लगेको थियो, तर बच्चा जन्मेपछि उनीहरूले लगे, मलाई त्यहाँबाट निकालिदिए' भनेकी थिइन् । ती बालिकाले त्यो संस्थाको नाम बताउन सकिनन् । अनुले उनलाई सुत्केरी भएको तेस्रो दिनमा, लगाउने कपडा पनि राम्रो नभएको, रगतैरगत पोतिएको अवस्थामा भेटेको बताइन् ।

'चेन्ज नेपाल' मा कार्यरत अधिकारकर्मी वर्षा लुईटेललाई यौन व्यवसायी किशोरीहरूले बच्चा जन्माएर अरूलाई दिने, अनि त्यसबापत आर्थिक लाभ लिने गरेको थाहा छ । उनी भन्छिन्, "कलंकीको आकाशे पुल रहुञ्जेल साँभ परेपछि त्यहाँ ग्राहकसँग बागेँनिङ्ग हुन्थ्यो । कुरा मिलाएर गेस्ट हाउस जान्थे । त्यस क्रममा मैले गर्भवतीहरू पनि भेटेकी छु । अब बच्चा के गर्छौं त भन्दा उनीहरू एकअर्कामा आरोप-प्रत्यारोप गर्थे । एकले अर्कालाई यसले बच्चा जन्माएर बेच्चे भन्थे । एउटीले त अर्कालाई 'यसले पहिला पनि बेचिसकेकी हो' भनेर आरोप पनि लगाएकी थिई ।"

लुईटेलका अनुसार, २०७४ कात्तिकमा ७ महीनाकी गर्भवती एकजना यौनकर्मी किशोरी सेल्टरमा आइपुगिन् । काठमाडौंमै घर भएकी र ९ कक्षामा अध्ययनरत बताउने उनी गर्भवती भएको घरमा थाहा हुने डरले बच्चा जन्माउन सेल्टरमा पुगेकी थिइन् । लुईटेल भन्छिन्, "उमेर

१८-१९ वर्ष बताए पनि हेर्दा १६ वर्षकी जस्तै देखिन्थिन् । ७ महीनाको गर्भपतन गराउन मेडिकलले डेढ लाख रुपैयाँ मागेपछि पैसा तिर्न नसकेर उनी सेल्टरमा आएकी थिइन् ।”

अपराधको कारखाना

राजधानीमा यौन व्यवसायमा लागेका बालिका र किशोरीको संख्या कति होला ? यो क्षेत्रमा कार्यरत संघसंस्थाहरूले १५-१६ हजार बालिका र किशोरी यौनकर्मी रहेको बताए पनि आधिकारिक आँकडा कोहीसँग छैन । बालअधिकारकर्मी प्रमेश प्रधान यौन व्यवसायमा बालिकाहरू आउने क्रम बढेको, तर संख्या किन बढ्दैछ र उनीहरू कहाँबाट कसरी आइरहेका छन् भन्नेबारे अध्ययन हुन नसकेको बताउँछन् ।

ती संघसंस्थाहरूका अनुसार होटल, खाजाघर, गेस्ट हाउस र क्याबिन रेस्टुरेन्टमा बालिका र किशोरीहरूलाई 'ग्राहक रिभाउन' कै लागि राखिन्छ । उनीहरू प्रायः १२-१३ देखि १७ वर्षसम्मका हुन्छन् । तर, उमेर सोध्यो भने मालिक र उनीहरू स्वयंले पनि साँचो बताउँदैनन् । धेरैजसो राम्रो कमाइ हुने आशामा गाउँबाट आएका हुन्छन् । उनीहरूलाई होटल, रेस्टुरेन्ट सञ्चालकहरूले विस्तारै यौन कार्यमा लगाउँछन् । भाँडा माइने लगायतका सरसफाइका काम गर्न चाहिँ पाका महिला या केटाहरूलाई राखिएको हुन्छ । मसाज सेन्टरहरूमा भने प्रायः १५-१६ वर्षका बालिका-किशोरीदेखि २५-३० वर्षका महिला हुने गरेको 'चेन्ज नेपाल' की प्रमिला चापागाईंले बताइन् ।



काठमाडौं भ्याली ।

अब आवरणमा किराना पसल राखेर समेत यस्तो कार्य हुन थालेको छ । माइती नेपालमा कार्यरत अधिवक्ता उमा तामाङले आफूले निरीक्षण गर्दाको एउटा घटना सुनाइन्- “धुम्बाराहीमा चारतले घरको भुइँतलामा किराना पसल थियो । छिमेकीले शंका लागेर प्रहरीलाई खबर गरेपछि माइती नेपालबाट हामी हेर्न गयौं । घरभित्र दुइटा कोठा थिए । त्यहाँ १६-१७ वर्षका दुई किशोरी थिए । उनीहरूलाई एकजना ग्राहकबाट रु.५०० लिने गरी यो काममा लगाइएको भेटियो ।”

गैरसरकारी संस्था ‘वाईएसटी, नेपाल’ की अध्यक्ष भिक्टोरी थापाका भनाइमा, “यौन व्यवसायमा लागेकाहरू प्रायः कलिला बालिका छन् । ब्यूटीपार्लर र पुरूषको कपाल काट्ने शैलुन समेतमा मोलमोलाइ गरेपछि ग्राहक उनीहरूसम्म पुग्ने गर्छन् ।”

राजधानीमा यौनकर्मि बालिका र किशोरीहरूका लागि काम गर्ने दर्जनौं संस्था छन् । तिनले कतिपयलाई आफ्नो सेल्टरमै राखेर विभिन्न सीप सिकाइरहेका छन् । ती संघसंस्थाका कर्मचारीको भनाइमा, धेरैजसोले सीप सिक्नै खोज्दैनन् । सिक्न भनेर आएकाहरू पनि तालीम सकिंदासम्म टिक्दैनन् । ९० प्रतिशत जति बीचमै छाडेर हिड्छन् । कति त पुरानै काममा फर्किन्छन् ।

कुनैबेला बालिका र किशोरीहरूलाई करकापमा पारेर यौनकार्यमा लगाएका उजुरी यस्ता संघसंस्थामा थुप्रै पर्छे । यातना दिइएका र कुटपीट गरिएका गुनासा आउँथे । पछिल्लो समय होटल तथा रेस्टुरेन्ट सञ्चालकहरूले उनीहरूलाई करकापमा पारेर होइन, फकाएर यो पेशामा लगाउने क्रम बढ्दो छ । त्यहीकारण उजुरी र गुनासा धेरै आउँदैनन् । कमाइ हुने लोभमा उनीहरू आफैँ पनि हत्वति त्यो काम छाड्न चाहँदैनन् ।

महानगरीय प्रहरी प्रभाग, गोगुबु बसपार्कका प्रहरी निरीक्षक हरिहर सुनुवार गोगुबु क्षेत्रका होटल र खाजाघरहरूमा धेरै बालिका यौनकार्यमा संलग्न रहेको बताउँछन् । उनी भन्छन्, “बेलाबेलामा हामी रेड पनि गर्छौं । तर, रंगेहात भेट्न गाह्रो छ, त्यत्तिकै कारबाही गर्न मिल्दैन ।”

महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालय, काठमाडौंकी बाल संरक्षण अधिकृत इन्दिरा पौडेल भन्छिन्, “आधिकारिक विवरण नभए पनि अनुगमनमा जाँदा भेटिए अनुसार यौन व्यवसायमा लागेका मध्ये आधाभन्दा बढी किशोरीहरू १८ वर्षभन्दा तलका छन् ।”

यस्ता किशोरी र बालिकाहरूको संरक्षणका लागि सरकारले ‘श्रमजीवी महिलाहरूमाथि कार्यस्थलमा हुने यौन उत्पीडन नियन्त्रण निर्देशिका २०६५’ जारी गरेको छ । निर्देशिकाको दफा १५ अनुसार प्रमुख जिल्ला अधिकारी अध्यक्ष रहने गरी एक समिति गठन हुन्छ । त्यसले उनीहरू शोषणमा परे नपरेको निगरानी गर्छ । तर, प्रमुख जिल्ला अधिकारी यति धेरै समितिका संयोजक रहन्छन् कि उनलाई यस्ता विषयमा ध्यान दिने फुर्सदै हुँदैन ।

कानून अनुसार, १६ वर्षभन्दा कम उमेरका बालिकासँग सहमतिमा शारीरिक सम्पर्क गर्नु पनि जबर्जस्ती करणी गरेको ठहर्छ । तर, राजधानीको यौन बजारमा दिनहुँ व्यापक मात्रामा यस्तो अपराध भइरहेको छ । अफ दुःखद कुरा, यी बालिकाहरूको संरक्षणका लागि सरकारी प्रयत्न शुरू नै भएको छैन भने पनि हुन्छ ।

सृजना श्रेष्ठ

न्यायको अन्त्यहीन पर्खाइ

संक्रमणकाल सकियो तर कथित जनयुद्ध कालमा सेना र
माओवादीबाट बलात्कृत कञ्चनपुरका महिलाको न्यायको
पर्खाइ सकिएको छैन ।

कञ्चनपुरकी मीना चौधरीलाई १५ वर्षअघि तत्कालीन शाही नेपाली सेनाका जवानहरूले सामूहिक बलात्कार गरेका थिए। बलात्कृत भएको डेढ दशक बितिसक्यो, तर उनले न्याय पाएकी छैनन्। भन्छिन्, “सरकारले न बलात्कारीहरूलाई कारबाही गरेको छ, न मलाई राहत र क्षतिपूर्ति दिएको छ।”

सरकार-माओवादी सशस्त्र द्वन्द्वका बेला बलात्कृत भएकी उनको ‘न्यायको पर्खाइ’ लम्बिइरहेको छ। उनलाई लागेको थियो, ‘युद्ध’ रोकिएपछि बलात्कारीहरू समातिएलान्, उनीहरूलाई कारबाही होला। तत्कालीन माओवादी ‘युद्ध’ छोडेर सरकारमा शामिल भएपछि उनको आशा भन्नु बढेको थियो— अब त दोषीहरू अदालत पुग्लान् र पक्कै न्याय पाइएला।

तर सोचे जस्तो भएन। न्यायको खोजी र क्षतिपूर्ति पर्खेरै उनले ११ वर्ष लामो ‘राजनीतिक संक्रमणकाल’ गुजारिन्। न्याय कहिले पाइएला, अझै टुङ्गो छैन। “पहिलेका कुरा सम्बिन्दा निकै दुःख लाग्छ, मेरो कुनै गल्ती थिएन” चौधरीले भनिन्, “न मैले क्षतिपूर्ति पाएँ, न बलात्कारीहरू समातिए।”

२५ जना सैनिक भ्यानमा घरमै आएर जबर्जस्ती गर्दा चौधरीका श्रीमान घरमा थिएनन्। “उनीहरूले मलाई कुटपीट गर्दै पालेपालो बलात्कार गरे” चौधरीले स्मरण गरिन्, “भाग्य बलियो रैछ र बाँच्न सकेँ।”

बलात्कृत भएपछि चौधरीलाई समाजमा हेर्ने दृष्टिकोण राम्रो भएन। गर्भवती भएको थाहा भएपछि त गाउँलेले उनलाई ‘छिः-छिः र दुर-दुर’ गर्न थाले। उनको दुःख र पीडा बुझिदिने कोही भएन। तैपनि उनले एकलै संघर्ष गरिरहिन्। एकलै लडिरहिन्।

“उपचारका लागि धेरै पैसा खर्च भइसक्यो” उनले भनिन्, “सरकारले सहयोग गरिदिए अलि राम्रो उपचार गर्न पाउँथेँ।” अरूले क्षतिपूर्ति पाइरहेका भए पनि आफूले भने केही खबरसम्म नपाएको चौधरीले बताइन्। भनिन्, “क्षतिपूर्ति पाइने हो कि होइन एकपटक भनिदिए पनि हुन्थ्यो।”



२०६३ सालमा सशस्त्र द्वन्द्व सकिएपछि नेपालले लामो बाटो तय गरिसकेको छ । यसबीच राजतन्त्र हटिसकेको छ । दुईपटक संविधान सभाको चुनाव भइकन संघीय शासन प्रणाली र धर्मनिरपेक्ष राज्य सहितको संविधान जारी भएको छ । तत्कालीन नेकपा (माओवादी) का छापामारहरू कति नेपाली सेनामा समायोजन भएका छन्, अधिकांश घर फर्किसकेका छन् । भन् अहिले त 'माओवादी' समेतको बलियो सरकार छ । धेरैलाई लाग्छ, द्वन्द्वका पीडितहरूले न्याय पाउन अब कुनै रोकावट छैन ।

तर, चौधरी जस्ता पश्चिम नेपालका धेरै महिलालाई सशस्त्र युद्ध सकिए पनि त्यसको रापतापले अझै पोल्टा छोडेको छैन । द्वन्द्वका बेला देशका अन्य भूभागहरू भन्दा पश्चिम नेपाल बढी प्रभावित थियो । यहाँ राज्य र विद्रोही दुवै पक्षबाट मानवअधिकार उल्लंघनका घटना अन्यत्र भन्दा धेरै भएका थिए ।

त्यसवेला बलात्कृत भएका महिलाहरूसम्म सरकारको दृष्टि पुग्न सकेको छैन । सरकार त परको कुरा, उनीहरूलाई आफ्नै परिवारका सदस्य र समाजका व्यक्तिहरूले समेत घृणाभावले हेर्ने गरेका छन् । कतिपयलाई त आफ्नै पतिले पनि त्यागिदिएका छन् ।

समाजमा नराम्रो दृष्टिकोणले हेर्छन् कि भन्ने भयका कारण बलात्कृत धेरै महिलाले आफ्नो पीडा बाहिर ल्याएका छैनन् । त्यसैले युद्धको बेला ज्याकै कति महिला बलात्कृत भए भन्ने यकीन तथ्यांक पनि कसैसँग छैन ।

गैरसरकारी संस्था एडभोकेसी फोरम, नेपालले तयार गरेको विवरण अनुसार कञ्चनपुरमा सशस्त्र द्वन्द्वका बेला कम्तीमा २५० बलात्कारका घटना भएका थिए । सत्य निरूपण तथा मेलमिलाप आयोगमा करीब ३०० बलात्कारका घटना दर्ता भएका छन् ।

बाहिर आएका घटना हेर्दा थाहा हुन्छ, बलात्कृत हुने महिलाहरूमा धेरैजसो कमजोर आर्थिक अवस्थाका छन् । अहिलेसम्म पनि उनीहरूको न सामाजिक सुरक्षा छ, न उनीहरूलाई राज्यले न्याय दिलाउन सकेको छ ।

सत्य निरूपण तथा मेलमिलाप आयोगकी सदस्य माधवी भट्टले भनिन्, "शुरूमा दर्ता भएका घटनाको अनुसन्धान गर्नुपर्छ, त्यसपछि बल्ल उनीहरूलाई क्षतिपूर्ति दिन सिफारिश गर्न सकिन्छ ।" यसको लागि कति समय लाग्ला ? भट्टले भनिन्, "अनुसन्धानको काम भर्खरै शुरू भएको छ, केही वर्ष त पक्कै लाग्छ ।"

२०७४ साउनमा संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघको मानवअधिकार समितिले युद्धकालमा बलात्कृत भएकी पूर्णमायाको बारेमा चासो राख्दै यसको अनुसन्धान गर्न नेपाल सरकारलाई आग्रह गरेको थियो । पूर्णमायाका बारेमा संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघले चासो राख्नु नेपालको युद्धकालीन अपराध छानबिनका सम्बन्धमा एउटा महत्वपूर्ण घटना थियो । तर, त्यसपछि पनि सरकारको तर्फबाट कुनै अनुसन्धान अगाडि बढेको छैन । न सरकारले संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघलाई कुनै जवाफ नै पठाएको छ ।

एडभोकेसी फोरम, नेपालका ओमप्रकाश सेनले सशस्त्र द्वन्द्वका बेला बलात्कारमा परेका पीडितहरूलाई न्याय दिलाउन र क्षतिपूर्ति दिन सरकारले सधैं आनाकानी गरिरहेको बताए ।

प्रदेश-७ का अर्थमन्त्री ऋपट बोहोरा यौन हिंसामा परेका महिलाका लागि रोजगारीको व्यवस्था गर्नु प्रदेश सरकारको प्रमुख प्राथमिकता हुने बताउँछन् । भन्छन्, "रोजगारीका अलावा हामी बलात्कृत महिलाका बालबच्चाहरूलाई निःशुल्क शिक्षाको व्यवस्था गर्छौं ।"

मीनाहरूले यस्ता आश्वासन उहिल्यैदेखि सुन्दै आएका हुन् । उनीहरूले खोजेको चाहि आश्वासन होइन, न्याय हो— जसको अतोपत्तो अभै छैन ।



‘बीस मिनेटमा तहसनहस’ : देवकी

“मेरो जीवन तहसनहस हुन २० मिनेट पनि लागेन । १३ वर्षअघिको एक रात एक बजेको समयमा माओवादी छापामारहरूले घरमा आएर मलाई बलात्कार गरे । त्यसपछि श्रीमानले छोडेर गए, कहिल्यै फर्किएनन् । पहिले उनी भारतमा काम गर्थे । जेनतेन परिवार चलेको थियो, म खुशी थिएँ । म बलात्कृत भएपछि श्रीमानले ‘परिवारको इज्जतमा दाग लाग्यो’ भने । आफ्नो परिवारको इज्जत र प्रतिष्ठामा आँच आयो भनेर त्यसपछि उनले मलाई स्वीकार्नै मानेनन् । पीडा त मैले बेहोर्नु परेको थियो, तर श्रीमानले आफू हेपिएको महसूस गरे ।

“मलाई नखाएको विष लागेको जस्तै भयो । पैसाको अभाव र समाजको असहयोगका कारण एकलै बालबच्चा हुर्काउन साह्रै कठिन भयो । छिमेकीले पनि मलाई गलत दृष्टिले हेर्न थाले । थुप्रै पटक आत्महत्या गरूँगर्छूँ लाग्यो, तर छोराहरूको हालत के हुने होला भनेर मर्न सकिनँ । अहिले त छोराहरू पनि हुर्किए । अब पहिलेको कुरा थाहा पाएर उनीहरू पनि लज्जित हुन्छन् कि भन्ने चिन्ता लागिरहन्छ । १३ वर्ष अघिको त्यो रात मैले कुनै अपराध गरेकी थिइनँ, माओवादीले गरेका थिए । तर खै किन, अहिले मलाई नै अपराधी जस्तो व्यवहार गरिदैछ ?”

‘केही पाएकी छैन’ : रमादेवी

“२०५८ साल चैत १२ गतेको एक साँझ, श्रीमान र म मेरो माइतीघर जाँदै थियौं । अकस्मात् दुई प्रहरीले हामीलाई रोके । उनीहरूलाई शंका लागेको रहेछ— हामीले माओवादीलाई सहयोग गरिरहेका छौं । हामीले ‘हामीहरू सर्वसाधारण हौं’ भन्यौं, तर उनीहरूले विश्वासै गरेनन् । मेरो श्रीमानलाई लछारपछार पारे, छातीमा बन्दूक तेर्स्याए, अनि श्रीमानकै अगाडि मलाई बलात्कार गरे ।

“मेरो गर्भ खेर गयो । त्यति मात्र होइन, त्यसपछि मलाई अनेक खालका संक्रमण भए । वर्षौंसम्म पीडा भइरह्यो । छिमेकीले हेप्न थाले । समाजमा कुरा काट्न थाले । धन्न, म भाग्यमानी रहँछु, एकदमै सहयोगी श्रीमान पाएँ । उनले मलाई कहिल्यै नराम्रो व्यवहार गरेका छैनन् ।

“त्यो घटना भएयता आजसम्म सरकारले राहत देला कि भनेर कुरिरहेकी छु, तर केही पाएकी छैन ।”



‘बच्चाको मुख हेरेर मर्न सकिने’ : करुणा

“बलात्कृत हुँदा मेरो बिहे भएको ६ महीना मात्रै भएको थियो । तीन वटा गाडीमा प्रहरी आए । ‘तेरो घरमा माओवादी आउँछन् कि आउँदैनन् ? बन्दूक राखेको छ कि छैन ?’ भनेर पिटे । ‘तेरो बुढाले केही गर्न सक्दैन ?, बच्चा पनि पाएकी छैनस् त’ भनेर थर्काए । त्यसपछि पालैपालो बलात्कार गरे । विच्याउन दिएनन् । ‘कराइस् भने गोली हान्दिन्छु’ भने । कसैलाई घरभित्र आउन दिएनन् ।

“बलात्कृत भएपछि परिवारकै सदस्यले शारीरिक र मानसिक तनाव दिन थाले । ‘जाँ गए नि जा, हाम्लाई क्यै मतलब छैन’ भनेर श्रीमानले घरबाट निकालिदिए । त्यतिबेला म गर्भवती थिएँ । माइत गएर दुई/तीन महीना बसेँ । त्यसपछि मैले अर्को बिहे गरेँ ।

“अहिलेका श्रीमानले पनि मलाई राम्रो व्यवहार गर्दैनन् । तँ बलात्कृत भएको थाहा पाएको भए बिहे नै गर्दिनथे’ भन्छन् । रक्सी पिउँछन् । जब मान्छेहरूले मलाई हेरेर खिसी गर्छन्, एकदम नराम्रो लाग्छ ।

“... हाम फालेर मर्न भनेर नदीमा पनि गएँ, तर मर्न सकिनेँ । बच्चाको अनुहार हेरेर मात्र बाँचिरहेकी छु । सरकारले राहत देला कि भनेर धेरै पटक धेरै ठाउँमा धाएँ । बलात्कारमा परेकाहरूलाई कुनै राहत छैन भनेर फर्काइदिए । अहिले रोएरै जिन्दगी बितिरहेको छ ।”



‘मलाई कहिल्यै स्वीकार गर्दैनन्’ : बुधनी

“२०६१ साल भदौ १ गते घरमा आर्मी आयो । मलाई कुटपीट गर्‍यो । म अचेत भएँ । ब्युँभिँदा त मेरो तिघ्रा रगताम्य भएको थियो । थाहा पाएँ, मलाई बलात्कार गरेछन् । मेरो पूरै शरीर एकदमै दुखेको थियो । मर्नु न बाँच्नुको अवस्थामा थिएँ ।

“उठ्न-बस्न पनि अरूको हात समाउनुपर्थ्यो । डेढ महीनासम्म काठमाडौँमा गएर उपचार गरेपछि मात्र म हिड्न सक्ने भएँ । अहिले पनि म पहिलेको जस्तो तन्द्रुरुस्त छैन । पाठेघर दुखिरहन्छ ।

“छिमेकीहरूले मेरै अगाडि त कुरा काट्दैनन् तर उनीहरूले मलाई समाजमा बस्नलायक नै सम्झ्दैनन् ।

खिसीटिउरी गर्छन् । बलात्कृत हुनु मेरो गल्ती होइन भनेर कसैले बुझ्दैनन् ।

“आर्मीले मेरो श्रीमानलाई कुटीकुटी मारे । तर प्रहरीले पछि मूठभेडको क्रममा मरेको भनेर गलत सूचना फैलायो ।”



‘जस्तोसुकै पीडा सहन सक्छु’ : उमा

“बलात्कृत भएपछि मलाई मेरो श्रीमानले राम्रो नजरले हेर्न छोडे । म बलात्कृत भएकी हुँ, तर उनले अरू मान्छेहरूसँग सम्बन्ध राखेको आरोप लगाउन थाले । थुरुथुरुमा त उनले यस्तो हुनुमा मेरो गल्ती नभएको भन्दै सहयोग गरेका थिए । तर पछि उनको व्यवहार बदलियो । समाजमा म बलात्कृत भएको थाहा भएपछि उनलाई लाज लाग्न थाल्यो । मैले मेरो इज्जत र खुशी दुवै गुमाएँ ।

“मलाई दुई जना प्रहरीले घरमै छिरेर बलात्कार गरेका थिए । ‘कपडा खोल्’ भन्दा नखोलेपछि उनीहरूले जबर्जस्ती गरे । त्यतिबेला म यति डराएकी थिएँ कि, मैले गुहार माग्नु पनि सकिनँ ।

“अहिले म सधैं सकारात्मक सोच राख्न कोशिश गर्छु तर त्यो दिनको घटनाले मलाई भस्काइरहन्छ । मलाई अहिले स्वास्थ्य समस्या छ । म घरी-घरी भस्किन्छु । डराउँछु । एक्लो महसूस गर्छु । मेरा श्रीमानले मलाई कुट्छन् ।

“बलात्कारको त्यो पीडा सहेर पनि बाँचेकोले होला, अहिले त जस्तोसुकै पीडा पनि शरीरले सहन्छ जस्तो लाग्छ । युद्धकालका अरू पीडितले राहत र क्षतिपूर्ति पाएका छन् तर मैले केही पाएकी छैन ।”

(सबै घटना कञ्चनपुरका हुन् । पीडा नथपियोस् भनेर पीडितको नाम बदलिएको छ र गाउँको नाम राखिएको छैन ।)

प्रकाशित मिति : २२ फागुन २०७४, www.cijnepal.org.np

अमृता अनमोल

बलात्कारका शिकार मुद्दा जित्छन् तर न्याय पाउँदैनन्

बलात्कार र यौन हिंसाका पीडित बालिका र
किशोरीले अदालतबाट मुद्दा जिते पनि परिवार र
समाजका कारण न्याय पाउँदैनन्।

रलाका प्रहरी कार्यालय, बुटवलमा २०७४ साउनको एक दिन रूपन्देही, देवीनगरकी १२ वर्षीया बालिकाको उजुरी पऱ्यो । उजुरी आफ्नै बाबुविरुद्ध थियो । बालिकाको उजुरीमा घरायसी भै-भगडा सम्बन्धी विषय उल्लेख भए पनि प्रहरीले जब उनलाई आफूले भोगेका समस्या ढुक्कसँग राख्न सक्ने वातावरण बनाइदियो, एउटा कहालीलाग्दो सत्य बाहिर आयो । ती बालिका आफ्नै बाबुबाट पटक-पटक बलात्कृत हुँदै आएकी रहिछन् । १२ वर्षीया अबोध बालिकाको दर्दनाक कथा-व्यथा सुनेर प्रहरीको समेत मथिगल हल्लियो ।

बाबुले ६ महीनादेखि आफूलाई बलात्कार गर्दै आएको अपराध उनले प्रहरीसामु खोलिन् । यो तथ्य उजागर भएपछि प्रहरीले बालिकाकी आमालाई उजुरी दिन आग्रह गर्‱यो, तर आमाले मानिन् । अन्ततः मावलीतर्फकी हजुरआमाले किटानी जाहेरी दिइन् । मुद्दा प्रक्रिया अधि बढ्यो र बाबु जेल चलान भए ।

त्यसपछि उनलाई अर्को संकट आइलाग्यो । घर-परिवारले उनलाई आफूसँग राख्न मानेन । प्रहरीले निकै सम्झाई-बुझाई गरेपछि मावलीतर्फकी ठूलीआमा उनलाई आश्रय दिन तयार भइन् । "घरपरिवारले बालिकालाई नै दोषी बनाएका छन्" इलाका प्रहरी कार्यालय, बुटवलको महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालयकी प्रमुख ज्योति कुँवर भन्छिन्, "अहिलेसम्म उनी घर जान सकेकी छैनन् ।"

पीडित नै विस्थापित

रूपन्देहीमा बालिकाको यो कथा एकलो होइन । सिद्धार्थनगरकी १२ वर्षीया अर्की बालिकाको कथा-व्यथा पनि उस्तै छ । उनी पनि आफ्नै बाबुबाट बलात्कृत हुनुपरेको थियो । फरक कति मात्र भने, उनलाई न्याय दिलाउन आमा नै अधि सरिन् । प्रहरीमा उजुरी गरेर श्रीमानलाई जेल पुऱ्याइन् ।

आमाको साहसका कारण, बलात्कारपीडित ती बालिकाले कानूनी न्याय त पाइन्, तर त्यसपछि उनीमाथि अर्को अत्याचार शुरू भयो । 'आफ्नै बाबुलाई फँसाएको' भनेर नजिकका आफन्त र नातागोताले उनी विरुद्ध नानाथरी टीकाटिप्पणी गरे । घरमा पस्न दिएनन् ।



घरेलु श्रमिक किशोरीलाई बलात्कार गर्ने आरोपीलाई कारबाहीको माग गर्दै १२ असार २०७४ मा इलाका प्रहरी कार्यालय, बुटवलमा धर्ना दिइरहेका साधना महिला विद्यालयका विद्यार्थी । तस्वीर : अमृता

गाउँबाट विस्थापित हुने अवस्था आएपछि आमाले समेत छोरीका लागि केही गर्न सकिनन् । बरु, पढाइ छुटाएर घरेलु कामदारका रूपमा नेपालगञ्ज पठाइदिइन् । ती बालिका अहिले नेपालगञ्जमा ६ जनाको परिवारमा चुल्होचौको गर्छिन् । “छोरीमाथि ठूलो अन्याय भएको छ” आमा गोमाले भनिन्, “म आफ्नै घरभित्र लड्न सकिनँ, घरभित्रै छोरीलाई जोगाउन नसकिने भएपछि यस्तो निर्णय लिएँ ।”

सिद्धार्थनगरबाट धेरै टाढा छैन, सालभन्डी । सालभन्डीमा २०६९ सालमा १४ वर्षीया एक किशोरी आफ्नै साथीका बाबुबाट बलात्कृत भइन् । घटना प्रहरीसम्म पुग्यो र साथीका बाबु पक्राउ परे । तर, पक्राउ पर्ने व्यक्तिका नातेदार र आफन्तजनले किशोरीलाई गाउँनिकाला नगरे उनको परिवारलाई नै लखेटिदिने धम्की दिए । अन्ततः बाबुआमाले उनलाई गैरसरकारी संस्था, महिला पुनर्स्थापना केन्द्र (ओरेक) को बुटवलस्थित कार्यालयको जिम्मा लगाए । पाँच महीना पुनर्स्थापना गृहमा बसेपछि गाउँ फर्केकी उनलाई छरछिमेकीले स्वीकार गरेनन् । आफन्तले समेत तिरस्कार गर्न थाले । गाउँमा बस्नै नसक्ने अवस्था भएपछि बाबुआमाले उनलाई घरेलु कामदार बनाएर काठमाडौं पठाइदिए । “ममीसित कहिलेकाहीं फोनमा कुरा गर्छु” काठमाडौंमा अरूको घरमा काम गरेर गुजारा चलाइरहेकी उनी भन्छिन्, “गाउँ जान डर लाग्छ ।”

रूपन्देहीकै मोतीपुरकी १३ वर्षीया बालिका २०६८ सालमा छिमेकीबाट बलात्कृत मात्र भइन्, गर्भवती समेत बनिन् । बलात्कारी छिमेकी जेल त परे, तर पीडित बालिकाको गाउँबाटै उटिबास लाग्यो । शुरूका ६ महीना उनी बुटवलमा रहेको पुनर्स्थापना गृहमा बसिन् । काठमाडौंसम्म पुगेर निकै कष्टपूर्वक सात महीनाको गर्भपतन गराइन् । त्यसपछि सबथोक ठीकठाक हुने आशामा पढ्ने धोको बोकेर उनी गाउँ फर्किन् । तर, तिनै छिमेकीका परिवारले ज्यान लिनेसम्मको धम्की दिए । परिणाम, उनको परिवार नै विस्थापित भएर बुटवलस्थित सुकुम्बासी टोलमा बसाइँ सन्थ्यो । विधवा आमाले होटलमा मजदूरी गरेर उनीसहित दुई भाइलाई पढाउँदै थिइन् । त्यहीबीचमा आमा पनि बिरामी परेपछि दुःखका दिन थपिए । दुई वर्षदेखि लुम्बिनीको एउटा होटलमा काम गरेर गुजारा चलाइरहेकी उनी भन्छिन्, “गाउँ फर्केर जाने अवस्था नै छैन ।”

बलात्कारको पीडामाथि समाजबाट तिरस्कार र विस्थापनको ‘सजाय’ थोपरिएका यस्ता बालिका र किशोरीको अवस्था दर्दनाक छ । जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालय, रूपन्देहीको महिला तथा बालबालिका केन्द्रका प्रमुख प्रहरी सहायक निरीक्षक लक्ष्मण विकका अनुसार बलात्कारका घटनामा धेरैजसो आफन्त र छिमेकी नै पीडक हुन्छन् । उनीहरूले अपराधको प्रमाण लुकाउन पीडितलाई फकाउने र धम्क्याउनेदेखि साक्षीलाई बयान फेर्न लगाउनेसम्मका हत्कण्डा प्रयोग गर्छन् । आफन्तबाट बलात्कृत भएकाहरूलाई घरपरिवारले नै स्वीकार गर्दैनन् । किन भने, उनीहरूको पक्षमा उभिने परिवारलाई समाजले नै बहिष्कार गर्छ ।

२ असार २०७३ मा रूपन्देहीको तिलोत्तमामा सामूहिक बलात्कारमा परेकी नेपालगञ्जकी १७ वर्षीया किशोरी परिवारबाटै अस्वीकृत हुनेमध्येकै उदाहरण हुन् । साथीसँग लुम्बिनी घुम्न आएकी उनलाई ६ जना युवकले बलात्कार गरे । सँगै रहेकी साथी भने भागेर जोगिइन् । तिनै साथीको पहलमा इलाका प्रहरी कार्यालय, बुटवलले बलात्कारमा संलग्नहरूलाई पक्राउ गर्‍यो । तर, पीडित किशोरीलाई त्यसपछि परिवारले नै स्वीकार गरेन । आफ्नै घरको ढोका बन्द भइदिएपछि अहिले बुटवलको एक होटलमा काम गरेर गुजारा गरिरहेकी उनी भन्छिन्, “घरका मान्छेहरू तेरै गल्लीले यस्तो भयो, अब तँलाई घरमा ल्याए अरूको चरित्रमाथि पनि दाग लाग्छ भन्छन् । कसरी घर जाऊँ!”

पीडितको पुनर्स्थापना अनिवार्य : सर्वोच्च

सर्वोच्च अदालतले जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालय, अछाममा कार्यरत रहँदा सहकर्मीबाटै बलात्कृत प्रहरी जवान सुन्तली धामीको मुद्दामा पीडितको न्यायको अधिकारलाई दुइटा दृष्टिकोणबाट व्याख्या गरेको थियो : पीडकमाथि दण्ड र पीडितको पुनर्स्थापना। जबरजस्ती करणीलाई मानवताविरोधी जघन्य अपराध भन्दै सर्वोच्चले भनेको थियो- ‘यस्तो अपराधले सिंगो मानव सभ्यतालाई लज्जित बनाउँछ। त्यसैले पीडितका अधिकारहरू संरक्षित हुनुपर्ने मान्यतामा राज्य चुक्नुहुँदैन।’

पीडितको न्यायमा सहज पहुँच, स्वच्छ न्यायको अधिकार, नोक्सान भएको सम्पत्तिको पुनर्प्राप्ति, पीडकबाट क्षतिपूर्ति, राज्यबाट समेत क्षतिपूर्तिको व्यवस्था र पीडितलाई सामाजिक पुनर्स्थापना गर्न सर्वोच्चले सरकारका नाममा परमादेश जारी गरेको थियो। तर, पीडितले पाउने न्याय ‘पीडकमाथिको दण्ड’मा सीमित हुँदा पीडितको सामाजिक पुनर्स्थापना कठिन बनेको छ।

अधिवक्ता ज्योति लम्साल पौडेलले दायर गरेको अर्को रिटमा सर्वोच्च अदालतले पीडितको पुनर्स्थापनाको सवाललाई छुट्याउँदै नहुने ठहर गरेको थियो। न्यायाधीशद्वय बलरामप्रसाद केसी र भरतराज उप्रेतीको संयुक्त इजलासबाट भएको फैसलामा भनिएको छ, “समाजमा अपराध हुन आएमा अनुसन्धान गरी मुद्दा चलाएर अभियुक्तलाई सजाय दिई पीडितलाई न्याय दिलाउनुपर्ने संवैधानिक दायित्व र जवाफदेहीबाट सरकार पन्छिन मिल्दैन।”



अधिकारकर्मी नम्रता पोखरेल भन्छिन्, “महिलाकै दोष देख्ने समाजको सोचले पीडितलाई नै विस्थापित हुन बाध्य पारेको छ ।” हुन पनि, २०६९ वैशाखमा सामूहिक बलात्कारमा परेकी सुनवल, नवलपरासीकी २२ वर्षीया युवतीको परिवार नै अहिले विस्थापित भएको छ । घटना भएको दुई महीनापछि जिल्ला अदालत, नवलपरासीले बलात्कारमा संलग्न चार जनालाई १० वर्ष जेल सजाय हुने र युवतीलाई रु.२ लाख क्षतिपूर्ति दिनुपर्ने फैसला गर्‍यो । अदालतको फैसलापछि पीडकहरू जेल पुगे । तर, ओरेक नेपालको आवास गृहमा बसेकी ती युवती अझै घर फर्कन पाएकी छैनन् । बलात्कारको उजुरी फिर्ता नलिएको भन्दै छिमेकीहरूले ‘मुख बारेपछि’ उनका बाबुआमा जायजेथा बेचेर सुनवलबाट अर्को गाउँमा बसाइँ सरेका छन् ।

बलात्कारपछि विस्थापित भएका बालिका र किशोरीको संख्या कति छ भन्ने आँकडा प्रहरीसँग पनि छैन । महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालय, रूपन्देहीकी प्रमुख शारदा बस्याल घरपरिवार वा आफन्तबाट बलात्कारमा परेका अधिकांश पीडित विस्थापित भएको बताउँछिन् । “केहीलाई माइती नेपाल लगायतका संस्था मार्फत संरक्षण दिएका छौं, केहीलाई सम्झाएर आफन्तकहाँ पठाइदिन्छौं” उनले भनिन्, “सबैलाई सधैंभरि संरक्षण दिन सम्भव पनि हुँदैन ।” रूपन्देही प्रहरीका प्रवक्ता, प्रहरी नायव उपरीक्षक डिल्लीनारायण पाण्डे भन्छन्, “मुद्दा प्रक्रियामै समस्या आए त्यस्ता बालिका र किशोरीलाई जिल्लामा रहेका संरक्षण गृहमा राखिदिन्छौं, त्यसपछिको अवस्था भने हामीलाई थाहा हुँदैन ।”

बलात्कार र यौनहिसाको शिकार बनेका बालिका र किशोरीलाई संरक्षण र सहयोग गर्दै आएको गैरसरकारी संस्था, कदम नेपालकी अध्यक्ष इन्दिरा आचार्यका भनाइमा, “किशोरीहरूमा आउने शारीरिक र मानसिक परिवर्तनलाई समाजले दोष मान्ने प्रवृत्तिले गर्दा यस्तो अवस्था आएको हो ।”

‘पुनर्स्थापना निकै कठिन’

बलात्कारका मुद्दामा अदालतले छिटो फैसला गर्ने न्यायिक निरूपणको ‘द्वुत-मार्ग’ प्रणाली अवलम्बन गरेका छन् । अहिले तीन महीनाभित्र मुद्दाको फैसला हुन्छ । अदालतले अभियुक्तलाई जेल सजाय हुने र पीडितलाई क्षतिपूर्ति दिने फैसला सुनाउँछ । तर, अधिकांश पीडितले क्षतिपूर्ति पाउँदैनन् । धेरैजसो अभियुक्त क्षतिपूर्ति तिर्ने दायित्वबाट उम्कन माथिल्लो अदालतमा पुग्छन् । पुनरावेदनमा नजाने मुद्दामा पनि पीडितहरू प्रायः क्षतिपूर्ति माग्न डराउँछन् । यस्तो किन हुन्छ ? हामीले यो प्रश्न राष्ट्रिय मानवअधिकार आयोगको उपक्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, बुटवलका अधिकृत चन्द्रकान्त चापागाईंलाई सोध्यौं । चापागाईंले भने, “क्षतिपूर्ति लिन जाँदा पहिचान खुल्छ भन्ने डर हुँदोरहेछ ।”

बलात्कार पीडितलाई क्षतिपूर्ति दिलाउने र विस्थापितलाई घर-समाजमा पुनर्स्थापित गर्ने काम कतैबाट भएको देखिँदैन । अधिवक्ता हेमा खनाल भन्छिन्, “यही कारण पनि पीडितहरू सधैंका लागि विस्थापित हुनुपर्ने अवस्था आएको छ ।”

रूपन्देही जिल्ला अदालतबाट सात वर्षमा करणी तथा यौन हिसाका ३१० वटा मुद्दाको फैसला भयो । अवस्था कस्तो छ भने, अहिलेसम्म एकजना पीडितले मात्र क्षतिपूर्ति पाएकी छन् । बोगडीका शिवपूजन यादवले गाउँकै किशोरीलाई बलात्कार गरेको २०६७/६८ को घटना पीडितले क्षतिपूर्ति पाएको एकलो ‘केस’ हो ।

बालिका र किशोरीहरूलाई फकाउन, लोभ्याउन र धम्क्याउन सजिलो हुने, उनीहरूले प्रतिकार गर्न नसक्ने र यौन हिसाको हाउभाउ पनि नबुझ्ने भएकाले बलात्कार र यौनहिसा बढी

हुने गरेको अनुसन्धानमा संलग्न प्रहरी अधिकृतहरू बताउँछन् । “बढीजसो बाहिरी वातावरणमा घुलमिल नभएका र विद्यालय नजाने बालिका बलात्कारीको निशानामा पर्ने गरेको देखिन्छ” गैरसरकारी संस्था, इन्सेककी रूपन्देही जिल्ला प्रतिनिधि रिमा विसी भन्छिन्, “अभिभावकले छोरीको बलात्कारलाई इज्जतसँग जोड्ने र भविष्यमा बिहेबारी गर्न समस्या हुने डरले घटना लुकाउने गर्दा पनि यो समस्या बढेको छ ।”

जिल्ला सरकारी वकिलको कार्यालय, रूपन्देहीको आँकडा अनुसार आर्थिक वर्ष २०७२/७३ मा रूपन्देही जिल्लाभर बलात्कारका २४ र बलात्कार प्रयासका १५ वटा घटनामा मुद्दा चलाउने निर्णय भयो । महान्यायाधिवक्ता कार्यालयका अनुसार, आर्थिक वर्ष २०७२/७३ मा देशभर एक हजार ८९ वटा बलात्कारका र ४५२ वटा बलात्कार प्रयास गरिएका घटना दर्ता भएका छन् । सरकारी अधिकारीहरू यस्ता अधिकांश घटना प्रहरीसम्म नआइपुग्ने हुँदा यो आँकडा निकै ठूलो हुनसक्ने बताउँछन् ।

विज्ञहरूका अनुसार, सामाजिक संरचना र बढ्दो मानसिक विकृति बलात्कारका घटना बढ्दै जानुको प्रमुख कारण हो । मनोविज्ञानका सहायक प्राध्यापक जीवनकुमार पौडेलका अनुसार मानसिक विकृति कतिसम्म बढेको छ भने मान्छेले आफूले गरेका कर्मको असर र नतिजाबारे समेत ध्यान दिन छाडेका छन् ।

बलात्कारमा परेका धेरैजसो बालिका र किशोरी शारीरिक तथा मानसिक रूपमै विकृति हुन्छन् । लुम्बिनी अञ्चल अस्पताल, बुटवलका स्त्री तथा प्रसूति रोग विशेषज्ञ डा. श्रीधर आचार्य प्रजनन अंगको विकास नहुँदै बलात्कारमा पर्ने बालिका र किशोरीको स्वास्थ्यमा दीर्घकालसम्म असर गर्ने बताउँछन् ।

समाजशास्त्रका प्राध्यापक नारायण पन्थ सामाजिक अगुवाहरूले नै पीडकलाई विस्थापित र पीडितलाई स्थापित गर्ने अभियान शुरू गर्नुपर्ने समय आएको बताउँछन् । “पीडितलाई परिवार र समाजमा पुनर्स्थापित गर्न अभियान नै चलाउनुपर्ने देखिन्छ” उनी भन्छन्, “त्यसका निम्ति सामाजिक अगुवाहरूमा दबाब सिर्जना गर्नुपर्छ ।” पन्थका भनाइमा, “पीडकलाई बहिष्कार गर्दै पीडितलाई सम्मान गर्ने र सामाजिक कामको जिम्मेवारी दिएर विपन्नलाई आर्थिक सहयोगका कार्यक्रम चलाउने हो भने बलात्कारबाट विस्थापितहरू समाजमा पुनर्स्थापित हुन सक्छन् ।”

यौनजन्य हिंसा हुन् या बलात्कारका घटना, तिनलाई प्रायः महिलाको चरित्रसँग जोड्ने सोच समाजमा हावी छ । मनोसामाजिक परामर्शदाता कमला गहतराज भन्छिन्, “पीडित र तिनका परिवारलाई यो केही होइन, भविष्य सुरक्षित छ भनेर मनोवैज्ञानिक रूपमै सबल नबनाउँदासम्म समस्या रहिरहन्छ ।” प्राध्यापनमा संलग्न तुलसा शर्माको भनाइ छ, “समाजमा बलात्कारबाट पीडितलाई होइन, पीडकलाई घृणा गर्ने सोचको विकास भइदिने हो भने यस्ता घटना घटेर जान्छन् ।”

राष्ट्रिय न्यायिक प्रतिष्ठानले हिंसाबाट पीडित महिलाको न्यायमा पहुँच र सामाजिक पुनर्स्थापनाबारे २०७० सालमा एक अध्ययन गरेको थियो । अध्ययन टोलीका संयोजक अधिवक्ता राजु चापागाईंका अनुसार, बलात्कारका घटनामा प्रायः परिचितहरू नै मुछिने हुँदा उनीहरूले पछिसम्म पनि पीडितलाई सताइरहन्छन् । “चिनेकै मानिसले सकेसम्म मुद्दा मिलाउन खोज्ने, नमिले डर र धम्की दिने अवस्था पछिसम्म कायमै रहने भएकाले बलात्कारका घटनामा पीडितको सामाजिक पुनर्स्थापना निकै कठिन छ”, उनी भन्छन् ।

कृष्ण अधिकारी

अदालत-सिडिओ जुहारी

आमाका नाममा नागरिकता देऊ : अदालत
बाबु नदेखाई दिन मिल्दैन : सिडिओ

उच्च अदालतले दिएको आदेश प्रजिअले कार्यान्वयन
नगर्दा नेपालगञ्जका १० युवाले नेपाली नागरिकता
पाउन सकेका छैनन्।

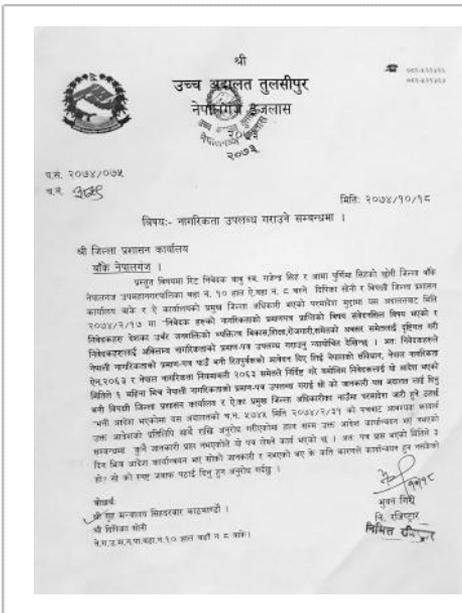
उच्च अदालत तुलसीपुर, दाङको नेपालगञ्ज इजलासका न्यायाधीशद्वय शारङ्गा सुवेदी र वीरबहादुर डाँगीको इजलासले १७ जेठ २०७४ मा नेपालगञ्जका मोहमद शकील हलवाईलाई 'एक महीनाभित्र नागरिकता दिई त्यसको जानकारी अदालतलाई दिनु' भन्ने आदेश दियो ।

उच्च अदालत प्रशासनले ४ असारमा सो फैसलासहितको पत्र जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय, बाँकेमा पठायो । अदालती आदेश पाएपछि शकील पनि उत्साहित हुँदै त्यहाँ पुगे । तर जिल्ला प्रशासनले नागरिकता दिनु त कता हो कता, उल्टै शकीललाई 'तिम्रो बुबा नेपाली नागरिक हो भन्ने प्रमाण खुलेन' भनेर फर्काइदियो ।

यसबारे शकीलका कानून व्यवसायीले पुनः उच्च अदालतको ध्यानाकर्षण गराए । उच्च अदालतले १८ माघमा शकीलसहित पाँच जनालाई किन नागरिकता नदिएको हो भन्ने प्रश्न गर्दै बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनलाई पत्र पठायो । पत्रमा 'तीन दिनभित्र लिखित जानकारी दिन' भनिएको थियो ।

जिल्ला प्रशासनले २१ माघमा उच्च अदालतलाई जवाफ फर्कायो । प्रमुख जिल्ला अधिकारी (प्रजिअ) रमेशकुमार केसीले लेखेको जवाफमा 'नागरिकता ऐन २०६३ को दफा ३ उप दफा २ बमोजिम नागरिकता प्राप्त गर्ने व्यक्तिको बाबु नेपाली वा विदेशी नागरिक भन्ने यकिन हुने प्रमाण नभएकाले नागरिकता नदिएको' उल्लेख छ ।

प्रजिअको पत्रले सबैभन्दा चकित छन् उच्च अदालतका निमित्त रजिष्ट्रार भुवन गिरी । किनकि संविधानतः अदालतको आदेशमा चित नबुझे चित नबुझे पक्षले दोहो-याई पाऊँ भनेर अदालतमै निवेदन दिनुपर्छ । नत्र फैसला कार्यान्वयन गर्नुपर्छ । तर, बाँके प्रशासनले नागरिकता सम्बन्धी मुद्दामा कानून उद्धृत गर्दै किन नागरिकता दिन नमिलेको हो भनेर अदालतलाई जवाफ दिएको थियो ।



अदालत-सिडिओ जुहारी

संविधान र न्यायिक प्रणालीको स्थापित सिद्धान्त अनुसार, अदालतको आदेश कार्यान्वयनमा कुनै समस्या आए माथिल्लो निकायबाट निकास लिएर भए पनि कार्यान्वयन गर्नुपर्छ । त्यसबाट नभएको अवस्थामा अदालतमा रहेको न्यायिक समन्वय समितिसँग छलफल गरेर पनि निकास निकाल्न सकिन्छ । निमित्त रजिष्ट्रार गिरी भन्छन्, "बाँके प्रशासनबाट यस सम्बन्धी कुनै पहल र प्रयास भएन । उल्टै फैसला किन कार्यान्वयन गर्न सकिन्न भन्ने कारण दिएको देखियो । यो आलटाल गर्न आएको हो वा के हो हामी बुझ्दैछौं ।"

शकील जस्तै नेपालगञ्जका १० युवाले अदालतको आदेश पछि पनि नागरिकता पाउन सकेका छैनन् । अदालती आदेश किन नमानेको हो भन्नेमा बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनको जवाफ गोलमटोल छ । प्रजिअ केसीले शुरूमा 'अदालतले नागरिकता दिनु भनेको तर वंशज वा अंगीकृत के दिनु भन्ने स्पष्ट नगरेको' तर्क गरे । त्यसपछि उनले भने "नागरिकता माग गर्ने व्यक्तिको बाबु नेपाली नागरिक हो भन्ने ठोस प्रमाण नहुँदासम्म वंशजको नागरिकता दिन मिल्दैन ।"

शकीलकी आमा नेपाली नागरिक हुन् र उनको जन्म पनि नेपालमै भएको हो । शकील जस्ता युवाको समस्याबारे नेपालको संविधान के भन्छ ? यस सम्बन्धी धारा ११ (५) मा भनिएको छ- 'नेपालको नागरिक आमाबाट नेपालमा जन्म भई नेपालमा नै बसोबास गरेको र बाबुको पहिचान हुन नसकेको व्यक्तिलाई वंशजको आधारमा नेपालको नागरिकता प्रदान गरिनेछ ।' संविधानको यो धाराले नेपालगञ्जका यी युवाहरूलाई नागरिकता दिन कुनै रोकावट गर्दैन ।

तर, बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयले उनीहरूलाई नागरिकता नदिन यही धाराको अन्तिम वाक्यलाई आधार बनाएको छ । संविधानको धारा ११ (५) को अन्त्यमा भनिएको छ- 'तर बाबु विदेशी नागरिक भएको ठहरेमा त्यस्तो व्यक्तिको नागरिकता संघीय कानून बमोजिम अंगीकृत नागरिकतामा परिणत हुनेछ ।'

सि.नं.	रिट निवेदकको नाम, वर, वतन	सम्बन्धीत अदालतबाट आदेश जारी भएको मिति	माग गरेको नागरिकताको किसिम	अनुसूची-१ बमोजिमको विष्कारिस पाराम साप पेश गरेका प्रमाणहरू	माग अनुसार वंशजको नाताले नागरिकता जारी हुन नसक्नुको कारण
१	दिपिका सोनी नेपालगञ्ज-८	२०७४/०२/१७	वंशज	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> बाबु देखाईएका व्यक्तिको मृत्युदर्ता प्रमाण पतिको नाम नखुलेको वामाको जन्मको ना.प.प. नाता प्रमाणित/मतदाता परिचयपत्र शैक्षिक प्रमाण/जन्मदर्ता प्रमाण 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> नेपाल नागरिकता ऐन, २०६३ को दफा ३ को उपदफा २ बमोजिम निवेदिका दिपिका सोनीको आमा पुर्धमा सिंहको विवाह नेपाली नागरिक वा विदेशी नागरिकसँग भएको भन्ने सम्बन्धमा यकीन हुने प्रमाण पेश नभएको । निवेदिकाको आमासले नेपाली नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र सिदा गलत तरिकाले किल्लै प्रमाणपत्र पेश गरी ना.प.प. लिएको भन्ने उजुरीको सम्बन्धमा यस कार्यालयबाट छानबिनको कार्य भैरहेको निवेदिका वंशजले आधारमा नेपाली नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र पाउने व्यक्ति होइन निजलाई गलत तरिकाले नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र दिने तयारी भैरहेकोले रोकी कारबाही गरिमाउ भनी अक्षिण्यर दुस्पर्याग अनुबन्धान आयोगमा परेको उजुरीको सम्बन्धमा गृह मन्त्रालय



रमेशकुमार केसी
प्रजिअ, बाँके, नेपालगञ्ज



भुवन गिरी, नि. रजिष्ट्रार
उच्च अदालत, नेपालगञ्ज

सरकारले तराईका जिल्लामा बसोबास गर्ने नागरिकहरूलाई अध्यादेश मार्फत जन्मको आधारमा पनि नागरिकता दिने कानूनी व्यवस्था गरेर २०६३ सालमा नागरिकता टोली खटाएको थियो । टोलीले बाँकेमा करीब ८ हजार जनालाई जन्मको आधारमा नागरिकता वितरण गरेको थियो । उक्त व्यवस्था अन्तर्गत जन्मका आधारमा नागरिकता प्राप्त गरेको मिति भन्दा पहिले जन्मेका सन्तानले वंशजका आधारमा नागरिकता पाउने प्रावधान थियो । सो अध्यादेश १२ चैत २०७० मा निष्क्रिय भयो । अध्यादेश निष्क्रिय भएको जनाउँदै गृह मन्त्रालयले ७५ वटै जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयलाई सर्कुलर जारी गरेर १२ चैत २०७० पछि उक्त आधारमा वंशजको नागरिकता जारी नगर्ने निर्देशन दियो । शकील लगायतका व्यक्तिहरू यसबाट पनि समस्यामा परेका हुन् ।

संविधानको उपर्युक्त धाराले आमा नेपाली नागरिक भएपछि बाबुको पहिचान हुन नसके पनि सन्तानलाई वंशजको आधारमा नागरिकता दिन सकिने स्पष्ट बताएको छ । बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयले भने संविधान अनुसार ऐन तथा नियमावली आइनसकेको आधारमा शकीलहरूलाई नागरिकता दिन मानेको छैन । यद्यपि, सर्वोच्च अदालतले यसरी नागरिकता रोक्न नमिल्ने आदेश २०७२ सालमै दिइसकेको छ ।

संविधान विरुद्धको काम : सर्वोच्च

सर्वोच्च अदालतले 'पिताको पहिचान नखुलेकै आधारमा नेपाली आमाका सन्तानलाई वंशजको नागरिकताबाट वञ्चित गर्न नमिल्ने' नजीर स्थापित गरेको छ । बाबुको नागरिकताको अवस्था थाहा नभएकै कारणबाट जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय, काठमाडौंले नागरिकता दिन इन्कार गरेका दुई दिदी-भाइलाई सर्वोच्च अदालतले वंशजको नागरिकता प्रदान गर्न २०७२ सालमा सरकारलाई आदेश दिएको थियो ।

तत्कालीन प्रधानन्यायाधीश कल्याण श्रेष्ठ र न्यायाधीश ओमप्रकाश मिश्रको संयुक्त इजलासले गरेको निर्णयको पूर्णपाठमा नागरिकताका लागि सक्षम व्यक्तिलाई विभिन्न अडचन देखाई नागरिकताबाट वञ्चित गर्न नहुने भनिएको छ । 'नेपाली नागरिक आमाबाट नेपालमा जन्म भई नेपालमा नै बसोबास गरिरहेका व्यक्तिहरूले आमाको नामबाट नागरिकता प्राप्त गर्न सक्ने भनी व्यवस्था गरिसकेको अवस्थामा बाबु विदेशी वा स्वदेशी हो भन्ने प्रश्न उठाई संविधान र कानूनबमोजिम नागरिकता प्राप्त गर्ने योग्यता पुगेका व्यक्तिहरूलाई नागरिकता दिन इन्कार गरी नागरिकताविहीन बनाउनु कानून अनुकूलको कार्य मान्न सकिएन' सर्वोच्च अदालतको निर्णयमा भनिएको छ- 'बाबुको नागरिकताको पहिचान नखुलेको भनी निवेदकहरूलाई नागरिकता नदिनु संविधानको विरुद्ध हुन जान्छ ।' सर्वोच्च अदालतले २ चैत २०७२ मा यो मुद्दाको फैसला गरेको थियो ।

२१ वैशाख २०४१ मा काठमाडौँबाट नागरिकता लिएकी अनिता सापकोटाले बारा डुमरबानाका शमीम सिद्धिकीसँग घरजम गरिन् । उनीहरूबाट २०४४ साल असारमा छोरी सजदा र २०५० साल फागुनमा असीमको जन्म भयो । त्यसको तीन वर्षपछि २०५३ साल मंसिरमा शमीम एकाएक बेपत्ता भए । खोजतलास गर्दा समेत भेटिएनन् ।

सजदा र असीमले नागरिकताका लागि २०६८ मंसिरमा काठमाडौँ महानगरपालिकाको वडा कार्यालयबाट सिफारिश लिएका थिए । जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयमा निवेदन दिन खोज्दा प्रमुख जिल्ला अधिकारीको आदेशमा निवेदन दर्ता भएन । आमाको नामबाट नागरिकता दिन नमिल्ने भनी जिल्ला प्रशासनले निवेदन दर्ता गर्न अस्वीकार गरेपछि उनीहरू अदालत गएका थिए ।

रिटमाथिको निर्णयमा सर्वोच्च अदालतले 'आमा नेपालको वंशज नागरिक भन्ने तथ्य प्रमाणित हुँदाहुँदै बाबुको नागरिकताको पहिचान नखुलेको आधार देखाई नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र जारी नगर्ने प्रशासनको आदेशले महिला भएकै आधारमा अनिता सापकोटामाथि विभेद गरेको भन्नेसमेत देखिँदा यस्ता कार्यले संवैधानिक व्यवस्थालाई परास्त गर्न खोजेको देखियो' भनेको छ ।

यो नजीर पछि बाबुको पहिचान नखुलेकै मात्र आधारमा वंशजको नागरिकता दिन नमिल्ने तर्क असान्दर्भिक बनिसकेको स्पष्ट छ । प्रश्न उठ्छ : सर्वोच्चले स्थापित गरेको यो नजीर बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयलाई थाहा नभएकै हो त ?

नागरिकता दिनु : उच्च अदालत

शिवानी सिंह/दीक्षा सिंह

आदेश मिति : २२ मंसिर २०७३

शिवानी (२४) र दीक्षा (२२) सिंह एकै घरका दिदीबहिनी हुन् । उनीहरूको घर नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका वडा नं १० रानी तलाउ नजिकै पर्छ । दुवै नेपालगञ्जमै जन्मिएका हुन् । उनीहरूको विद्यालय तहको अध्ययन पनि नेपालगञ्जमै भएको हो ।

आमा आरती सिंहले अविवाहित अवस्थामै बुबा अनिरुद्ध सिंहको नाउँबाट



१३ मंसीर २०४१ मा नेपाली नागरिकता लिएकी थिइन् । आरती नेपालगञ्जकै एउटा सरकारी स्कूलमा स्थायी शिक्षक छिन् ।

शिवानी र दीक्षाका बुबा अरुण सिंह २०५४ सालमा रोजगारीको सिलसिलामा भारत गए । हालसम्म उनको अवस्था अज्ञात छ । बुबा आमा दुवै नेपाली नागरिक भए पनि बुबा बेपत्ता भएका कारण उनीहरूले नागरिकता पाएका छैनन् ।

मोबाइलको सिमकार्ड लिन, बैंकमा खाता खोल्न, ड्राइभिङ लाइसेन्स लिन, क्याम्पसमा भर्ना हुन, जागिर खान नागरिकता नभई हुन्न । शिवानी भन्छिन्, “नागरिकताको तनावले पढाइ पनि राम्रो भएन । साथीहरू पढाइ पूरा गरेर सरकारी जागिर खान थाले । मैले भने नागरिकताका लागि प्रशासन र अदालत धाउन थालेको तीन वर्ष हुन आँट्यो । अदालतले नागरिकता दिनु भनेर आदेश दिएको पनि सात महीना बित्यो । अहिले पनि नागरिकता छैन ।”



दीपिका सोनी

आदेश मिति : १७ जेठ २०७२

नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका ८ की दीपिका सोनी (२२) को जन्म नेपालगञ्जमै भएको हो । उनले विद्यालय तहको पढाइ पनि नेपालगञ्जबाट पूरा गरेकी हुन् । नेपाल सरकारको छात्रवृत्ति कोटा अन्तर्गत उनले भरतपुर, चितवनस्थित इन्स्टिच्यूट अफ मेडिकल टेक्नोलोजी प्रा.लि. बाट २०७२ सालमा स्टाफ नर्सको पढाइ पूरा गरेकी छन् ।

नागरिकता नहुँदा दीपिकाले नर्सिङ काउन्सिलबाट लाइसेन्स लिनसकेकी छैनन् । लाइसेन्स नभएका कारण रोजगारीका लागि कहीं पनि आवेदन गर्न सक्ने अवस्था छैन ।

आमा पूर्णिमा सिंहसँग जन्मको आधारमा जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालयले जारी गरेको नागरिकता छ । बुबा गजेन्द्र सिंहको १४ मंसीर २०४९ मा मृत्यु भयो । आमा पूर्णिमाले उपमहानगरपालिकाबाट विधवा भत्ता समेत पाइरहेकी छन् ।

आमाले नागरिकता लिनुभन्दा पहिले दीपिकाको जन्म भएको कारण देखाउँदै जिल्ला प्रशासनले दीपिकालाई हालसम्म नागरिकता दिएको छैन । यद्यपि, उच्च अदालत, नेपालगञ्जले नागरिकता पाउने व्यक्ति नागरिकतामा उल्लेख भएको जन्ममितिदेखि नै नेपाली नागरिक भएको मान्नुपर्ने भनेर दीपिकालाई आमाको नामबाट वंशजको आधारमा नागरिकता दिन १७ जेठ २०७४ मा आदेश दिइसकेको छ ।

अर्जुन खटिक

आदेश मिति : २ असार २०७२

नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका वडा नं. २४ कारकादोका अर्जुन खटिक (१९) को जन्म नेपालगञ्जमै भएको हो । उनका बाबु माधवराम खटिकसँग जन्मको आधारमा र आमा मीराकुमारी



खटिकसँग वंशजको आधारमा जारी गरिएको नेपाली नागरिकता छ । बाबु-आमा दुवै नेपालको नागरिक भए पनि खटिकले नागरिकता पाउन सकेका छैनन् ।

बाबुले नागरिकता पाउनु भन्दा पहिले नै अर्जुनको जन्म भएको कारण देखाउँदै जिल्ला प्रशासनले उनलाई नागरिकता दिन इन्कार गर्दै आएको छ । यद्यपि, उच्च अदालतको १७ जेठ, २०७४ को उपर्युक्त आदेशले समेत अर्जुनलाई नागरिकता दिन कुनै बाधा नपर्ने स्पष्ट पारिसकेको छ ।



शकील हलवाई

आदेश मिति : १७ जेठ २०७२

शकील हलवाई (२०) को जन्म नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका वडा नं. ४ मा भएको हो । आमा शबनम हलवाईसँग वंशजको नागरिकता छ । शकीलको विद्यालय तहको पढाइ नेपालगञ्जमै भएको हो । आमा शबनम र बाबु सगीरको सम्बन्ध राम्रो नभएका कारण बाँके जिल्ला अदालतबाट २१ भदौ २०७२ मा सम्बन्धविच्छेद भएको थियो ।

बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनले बाबु सगीर नेपाली नागरिक हुन् भन्ने खुल्ने कागजात ल्याउन नसकेको भन्दै शकीललाई नागरिकता दिइरहेको छैन । अदालतले भने शकीललाई आमाको नामबाट

वंशजकै आधारमा नागरिकता दिन जिल्ला प्रशासनलाई आदेश दिइसकेको छ ।

शकील भन्छन्, "आमाको नाममा मोबाइलको सिमकार्ड लिएर, आमाकै नाममा बैंकमा खाता खोलेर काम चलाइरहेको छु । तर, ड्राइभिङ लाइसेन्स लिन, सरकारी र संघसंस्थाहरूमा जागिर खान त आफ्नै नागरिकता चाहियो ।" उनले भने, "बुबासँग सम्बन्धविच्छेद गरेकी आमाको पालनपोषण गर्ने दायित्व मेरो काँधमा छ । आफैँ भने नागरिकताविहीन छु ।"

आफरीन जर्जा शेष

आदेश गरेको, फौसला तयार भइनसकेको

आफरीन जर्जा शेष (१९) को जन्म नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका वडा नं. ७ मा भएको हो । उनले विद्यालय तहको पढाइ पूरा गरेकी छन् । उनका बुबा रईस अहमद शेषको नागरिकता नलिँदै ३० मंसिर २०६३ मा मृत्यु भएको थियो । आमा रीना जर्जा शेषले विवाह नहुँदै २८ साउन २०५४ मा वंशजका आधारमा नागरिकता लिएकी थिइन् । बाजे शौकत अली र माइला बुबा सईद अहमदले १२ फागुन २०६३ मा जन्मको आधारमा नेपाली नागरिकता लिएका थिए । बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनले आफरीन जर्जा शेषलाई उनका बुबा नेपाली नागरिक हुन् भन्ने खुल्ने प्रमाण ल्याउन नसकेको भनेर नागरिकता दिन इन्कार गरिरहेको छ ।



गणेश सुनार

आदेश मिति : १५ वैशाख २०७२

गणेश सुनार (१९) को जन्म बाँकेको खजुरामा भएको हो । उनले

विद्यालय तहको पढाइ गाउँमै पूरा गरे । आमा सूर्या सुनारले जन्मका आधारमा २०६३ सालमा नेपाली नागरिकता लिइन् । वैदेशिक रोजगारीका लागि भारत छिरेका बुबा लामो समयदेखि बेपत्ता छन् । बुबाको नागरिकता छैन । अहिले बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनले गणेशलाई उनका बुबा नेपाली नागरिक हुन् भन्ने खुल्ने प्रमाण ल्याउन नसकेको भनेर नागरिकता दिन इन्कार गरिरहेको छ । उच्च अदालतको आदेश भने जहाँको तही छ ।



सुषमा गुप्ता

आदेश मिति : २२ कात्तिक २०७४

सुषमा गुप्ता (२९) को जन्म नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका ९९ वसुदेवपुरमा भएको हो । उनले विद्यालय तहको पढाइ नेपालगञ्जबाटै सकिन् । सुषमाकी आमा नन्दकला खड्काले वंशजको आधारमा ६ असोज २०४२ मा नागरिकता लिएकी छन् । बाबु वीरेन्द्रप्रसाद गुप्ताले जन्मको आधारमा २९ माघ २०६३ मा नागरिकता लिएका छन् ।

बाबुले जन्मको आधारमा नागरिकता प्राप्त गरेको मितिभन्दा पहिले जन्मिएका सन्तानलाई नागरिकता दिन कानूनी समस्या भएको भनेर बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनले उनलाई अहिलेसम्म नागरिकता दिएको छैन । आमाको नामबाट नागरिकता दिनु भन्ने उच्च अदालतको आदेश निष्क्रिय बनेको छ ।

बाबुआमा दुवै नेपाली नागरिक भएर पनि आफूले नागरिकता पाउन नसकेकोमा सुषमा आक्रोशित छिन् । यसले आफ्नो आत्मसम्मान र स्वाभिमानमा चोट पुगेको उनको बुझाइ छ । नागरिकता नभएकाले उनी मोबाइल सिम लिन र बैंकमा खाता खोल्न समेत नसक्ने अवस्थामा छिन् ।



ऐश्वर्य र समृद्ध राई

आदेश मिति : ३१ जेठ २०७४

ऐश्वर्य (२९) र समृद्ध (१९) राईको जन्म नेपालगञ्ज उपमहानगरपालिका ९२ बाँकेमा भएको हो । ऐश्वर्य एक वर्ष र समृद्ध आमाको गर्भमा हुँदै बुबा रणबहादुर राईको ३ साउन २०५५ मा मृत्यु भयो ।

आमा निर्मला राईले १० फागुन २०६३ मा जन्मका आधारमा नागरिकता लिइन् । ऐश्वर्य र समृद्धलाई बुवा नेपाली नागरिक हुन् भन्ने प्रमाण खुल्ने कागजात नभएको भनेर बाँके जिल्ला प्रशासनले नागरिकता दिन इन्कार गर्दै आएको छ । उच्च अदालतले उनीहरूलाई पनि आमाको नामबाट वंशजका आधारमा नागरिकता दिन आदेश दिएको छ जुन सक्रिय हुनसकेको छैन ।

प्रकाशित मिति : १ फागुन २०७४, www.cijnepal.org.np

जनक तिमिल्सिना
भिषा काफ्ले

एउटा बिचरा मन्त्रालय

देशको भण्डै ८० प्रतिशत जनसंख्याको सरोकारसँग सीधा जोडिने महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालयलाई राजनीतिक नेतृत्व र कर्मचारीतन्त्रले नै दयाको पात्र बनाएका छन्।

नेपाल सरकारले १८ वर्ष पुगेका र ५९ वर्ष नकटेका सबलाङ्ग पुरुष बाहेकको सम्पूर्ण जनसंख्यालाई महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालयको कार्यक्षेत्रमा राखेको छ । मोटामोटी हिसाब गर्दा यो संख्या नेपालको कुल जनसंख्याको ८० प्रतिशत हुन आउँछ । तीन चौथाइभन्दा बढी जनताको हितसँग जोडिएको यस मन्त्रालयलाई सरकारले चालू आर्थिक वर्ष (२०७४/७५) मा विनियोजन गरेको जम्माजम्मी बजेट हो, रु.२ अर्ब २२ करोड । मन्त्रालयको कार्यक्षेत्रभित्र पर्ने जनसंख्यालाई हिसाब गर्दा यो बजेट प्रतिव्यक्ति १०४ रुपैयाँ पर्न आउँछ । मन्त्रालय अन्तर्गतका १५९१ कर्मचारीको तलब र कार्यालय सञ्चालनको व्यवस्था यसबाटै मिलाउनुपर्छ ।

मन्त्रालयको आर्थिक महाशाखा प्रमुख मिठु थापाका अनुसार वार्षिक बजेटको २९.२१ प्रतिशत तलबमा खर्च हुन्छ । त्यसबाहेक ४४ देखि ५० प्रतिशत बजेट 'महिला विकास कार्यक्रम' मा खर्च हुने गर्छ । यसरी ७५-८० प्रतिशत बजेट कर्मचारीको तलब र महिला विकासमा सकिएपछि बालबालिका, वृद्धवृद्धा र अपाङ्गता भएका व्यक्तिहरूका लागि चाहिँ मन्त्रालयले कहाँबाट खर्च गर्छ ? जवाफ मन्त्रालयका अधिकारीहरूसित पनि छैन ।

मन्त्रालयकी पूर्व सचिव वृन्दा हाडा राजनीतिक र प्रशासनिक नेतृत्वको खोटपूर्ण दृष्टिकोणले यति ठूलो कार्यक्षेत्र भएको मन्त्रालय पूर्णतः उपेक्षित जस्तै हुन पुगेको बताउँछिन् । उनी भन्छिन्, "यहाँ आउने मन्त्री या एकसीटे दलका हुन्छन्, या पहिलो पटक मन्त्री बनेकाहरू । सचिव पनि अरू कतै नअटेका या रिटायर्ड हुने बेलाका आउँछन् । अनि कहाँबाट मन्त्रालय उँभो लाग्छ ?"

हुन पनि पछिल्लो १० वर्षयता यस मन्त्रालयमा १६ जना मन्त्री र १४ जना सचिव फेरिएका रहेछन् । उपसचिव भरत शर्मा भन्छन्, "मन्त्रालय कमजोर हुनुको कारण दह्रो राजनीतिक नेतृत्व नपाउनु पनि हो ।"

एक त एक-दुई सीटे कमजोर पार्टीका नेता मन्त्री बन्ने, त्यसमाथि उनीहरू पनि ८-९ महीनाभन्दा बढी नटिक्ने हुँदा प्रायःले दीर्घकालीन योजना बनाउँदैनन् । त्यसको सीधा असर वार्षिक बजेटमा पर्छ । प्रमुख दलका नेता मन्त्री बनेर यहाँ आउँदै आउँदैनन् । आइहाले पनि पार्टीभित्रको भागबण्डा मिलाउन पठाइएका कमजोर व्यक्ति हुन्छन् । उनीहरूसँग मन्त्रालयलाई अगाडि बढाउने इच्छाशक्ति र दूरगामी महत्वका योजना तर्जुमा गरेर मन्त्रालयमा पर्याप्त बजेट ल्याउने क्षमता दुवै हुँदैन ।

बिचरा मन्त्रालय

महिला बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालयको चालू आर्थिक वर्षको बजेट गत वर्षभन्दा रु.२२



करोड कम हो । बजेट कटौती भएको यो पहिलो पटक भने होइन । यसको बजेट पटकपटक कटौतीमा पर्ने गरेको छ । कर्मचारीहरू भन्छन्- छिटोछिटो मन्त्री र सचिवहरू फेरिनु, उनीहरूले ठोस कार्यक्रम सहित योजना अगाडि नबढाउनु यसको मुख्य कारण हो । मन्त्रालयका एक उपसचिवले भने, "मुख्य सचिव र अर्थ मन्त्रालयसित दह्रोसँग अडान लिने, राम्रा कार्यक्रमको योजना बनाउने मन्त्री र सचिव नहुँदा यस्तै हुन्छ ।"

पूर्व सचिव हाडाका शब्दमा, "महिलासँग सम्बन्धित विषय आउनासाथ मन्त्रालयतिरै पठाइदिने, तर पुग्दो जनशक्ति र बजेट नदिने प्रवृत्ति हावी छ ।"

भूमिसुधार मन्त्रालयबाट आएका दिनेश अधिकारी यस मन्त्रालयमा १८ महीना सचिव भए । आफ्नो कार्यकालमा मन्त्रालयको बजेट र जनशक्ति बढाएर दीर्घकालीन महत्वका कार्यक्रम शुरू गर्ने प्रयास गरेका उनी मन्त्रालयमा आउने राजनीतिक नेतृत्व 'पावरफुल' नहुँदा पुग्दो बजेट र प्रभावकारी कार्यक्रम ल्याउन नसकिएको बताउँछन् । "म आउँदा वार्षिक बजेट रु.९९ करोड थियो, सबैलाई कम्बिन्स गरेर त्यसलाई दोब्बर पुऱ्याएँ, ९०० हाराहारी रहेका कर्मचारीको दरबन्दी बढाएर १३०० पुऱ्याएँ" उनले भने, "तर, मन्त्रीदेखि कसैको पनि प्राथमिकतामा नपर्ने भएकाले प्रभावकारी काम नहुँदो रहेछ ।"

तोकिएको जिम्मेवारी अनुसार यो सामाजिक क्षेत्रमा काम गर्ने प्रमुख मन्त्रालय हो । तर, बजेट विनियोजन हेर्दा त्यस्तो अनुभूति हुँदैन । बजेटमा गरिएको यस्तो उपेक्षा यथार्थमा राज्यको भन् बढ्ता ध्यान पुग्नुपर्ने महिला, वृद्धवृद्धा, अपाङ्गता भएका व्यक्ति र बालबालिकाप्रतिको बेवास्ता हो ।

यसको दोष मुख्यतः मन्त्रालयको नेतृत्व गर्ने मन्त्रीहरूतिरै सोभिने गर्छ । तर, मन्त्रीका पनि आफ्नै गुनासा छन् । १० महीनासम्म महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्री भएका बद्री न्यौपानेसँग इन्धनका लागि समेत मन्त्रालयमा बजेट नहुँदा दुई पटक अर्थ मन्त्रालयबाट रकमान्तर गर्नु परेको तीतो अनुभव छ । "मन्त्रीले नै इन्धनका लागि रकमान्तर गराउनुपर्ने मन्त्रालयको अवस्था कस्तो होला !" न्यौपानेले भने, "मन्त्रालयलाई आफ्नो कार्यक्षेत्रमा काम गर्न सक्ने बनाउने हो भने अहिलेको बजेटमा कम्तीमा दश गुणा वृद्धि गर्नुपर्छ ।"

हेपिएको मन्त्रालय

'ओहो, महिला सचिवज्यू आउनुभएछ !' महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालयमा सरुवा भएर आएका सचिवलाई सिंहदरबारस्थित एउटा क्यान्टिनमा शक्तिशाली मानिएको अर्को मन्त्रालयका एक अधिकृतले एक दिन यस्तो व्यंग्य गरे । त्यसबेलाको अनुभव सुनाउँदै ती सचिवले भने,



“मैले उनलाई आधाभन्दा बढी जनसंख्या ओगटेको महिला मन्त्रालयको सचिव भएकोमा मलाई गर्व छ भन्ने जवाफ फर्काएँ ।” अधिकृत तहका कर्मचारीले आफूभन्दा तीन तहमाथिका सचिवलाई गरेको यस्तो व्यंग्य यस मन्त्रालयलाई हेर्ने राज्य संयन्त्रभित्रकै नजर बुझाउन काफी छ ।

मन्त्रालयभित्र अर्को एक घटना खूबै चर्चित छ । केही वर्षअघि एकसीटे दलका एक नेता मन्त्री भएछन् । मन्त्री नियुक्त भएकै दिन घर पुग्दा उनलाई श्रीमती र छोरीले अंगरक्षककै सामु ‘महिला मन्त्री’ भन्दै व्यंग्य गरेछन् । मन्त्रीको घरभित्रको त्यो प्रसंग यसरी फैलियो कि कर्मचारीहरूबीच अहिले पनि हाँसोको विषय बन्ने गर्छ । मन्त्रालयमा कार्यरत एक सहसचिवले आफूले भोगिरहेको व्यवहार सुनाउँदै भने, “अन्य मन्त्रालयमा काम गर्ने साथीहरूले महिला मन्त्रालयमा पढाएर ‘पेले है’ भन्छन् । ‘सोभो हुनुहुन्छ, त्यही भएर पेलिनुभयो’ भन्दै जिस्क्याउँछन् ।”

बोलीचाली र हेराइमा मात्र होइन, सेवा, सुविधा र स्रोत परिचालनमा समेत हेपिएको छ, यो मन्त्रालय । यहाँका सचिवको कार्यकक्ष अर्थ मन्त्रालयका उपसचिवको कार्यकक्ष जति पनि आकर्षक छैन । त्यहाँ उपसचिवलाई ड्राइभर सहितको गाडी सुविधा छ । तर, यस मन्त्रालयका कतिपय सहसचिवले नै गाडी पाएका छैनन् ।

एउटा उदाहरण हेरौ । २९ भदौ २०७३ मा विष्णु लम्साल अर्थ मन्त्रालयबाट यस मन्त्रालयको सचिवमा सरुवा भए । अर्थमा छँदा सुविधायुक्त नयाँ गाडी चढेका उनले यहाँ पुराना गाडी मात्र देखे । त्यसमा वित्त नबुझेपछि अर्थमा रहँदा आफूले चढ्दै आएको गाडी मगाए । “दुवै मन्त्रालयका सचिव, सहसचिव र उपसचिवहरूको हैसियत एउटै हो”, मन्त्रालयका एक उपसचिव गुनासो गर्छन्, “तर, व्यवहारमा भने आकाश-जमीनको फरक छ ।”

मन्त्रालयमा १० वटा गाडी, २४ वटा मोटरसाइकल र स्कूटर छन् । तीमध्येका चारवटा राम्रा गाडी मन्त्रीसँग हुन्छन् । छैवैको शिक्षा मन्त्रालयमा २० वटा गाडी, ४० वटा मोटरसाइकल र स्कूटर देख्दा यहाँका कर्मचारीलाई आफू हेपिए भै लाग्छ ।

मन्त्रालयका कर्मचारीले इन्धन र बन्दोबस्तीका काममा खर्च गर्न दश पटक सोच्नुपर्छ । बजेट नहुँदा मन्त्रालयले यस वर्ष इन्धनमा रु.२० लाखको खर्च सीमा तोकेको छ । इन्धनमा गत वर्ष रु.२७ लाख बजेट रहेकोमा यस वर्ष त्यसमा पनि रु.७ लाख कटौती गरिएको छ ।

दह्रो जिम्मेवारी, दर्दनाक अवस्था

महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालयबाट मुशिकलले ५० मिटरको दूरीमा छ, शिक्षा मन्त्रालय । छिमेकको त्यो मन्त्रालयमा नेतृत्व गर्न ठूला पार्टीका प्रभावशाली नेताहरूबीच घम्साघम्सी चल्यो । ५० मिटर वरको यस मन्त्रालयमा चाहिँ कसैको आँखा लाग्दैन । केही गरी यहाँ आउनुपरे नेताहरू आफूलाई हेपिएको ठान्छन् । अरूतिर मन्त्री बनाउन योग्य नलागेकालाई प्रधानमन्त्रीले यस मन्त्रालयमा टाँसो लगाइदिन्छन् ।

२०६३ सालयताकै अवस्था हेरौ । पुष्पकमल दाहाल दोस्रो पटक प्रधानमन्त्री बन्दा कोही आकांक्षी नदेखिएपछि यो मन्त्रालय आफैँसित राखे । माधवकुमार नेपालको पालामा उपप्रधान तथा भौतिक योजना मन्त्री विजयकुमार गच्छदारले सम्हालेको यो मन्त्रालयमा सरकार विदा हुने बेला गच्छदारकै पार्टीका सर्वदेव ओभालाई मन्त्री बनाइएको थियो । गिरिजाप्रसाद कोइराला नेतृत्वको अन्तरिम सरकारमा माओवादीबाट मन्त्री बनेका खड्गबहादुर विश्वकर्मा र पम्फा भुसाल अपवाद

हुन् । नभए यसबीचमा यो मन्त्रालय सम्हालेका रामचरण चौधरी, ऋद्धिबाबा प्रधान, जयपुरी घर्ती, बद्री न्यौपाने, दानबहादुर कुर्मी चौधरी, निलम केसी, सीपी मैनाली, कुमार खड्का, आशा कोइराला र विक्रमबहादुर थापा कोही पनि राजनीतिमा प्रभावशाली नाम थिएनन् । अझ रोचक त के छ भने गिरिजाप्रसाद कोइराला, माधवकुमार नेपाल, बाबुराम भट्टराई, पुष्पकमल दाहाल र शेरबहादुर देउवाले आफ्नो एउटै कार्यकालमा दुई दुई जनालाई मन्त्रीको पालो पुऱ्याइदिए, यही मन्त्रालयमा ।

सचिवको यथार्थ पनि यसभन्दा खासै फरक छैन । शक्तिशाली भनिने मन्त्रालयमा जान पहुँच नहुने, जागिरको अन्तिम समयमा विवादमा पर्न नचाहने र अवकाशपछिको लाभका निम्ति गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरूसँग सम्बन्ध स्थापित गर्न चाहने सचिवहरू यहाँ आइपुग्छन् । एकाध व्यक्ति चाहि विदेश घुम्न पाइने आसले पनि आउँछन् ।

२०६३ यताका १४ सचिवमध्ये रूद्रकुमार श्रेष्ठ १२ दिन हाजिर भएपछि सेवानिवृत्त भए । प्रेमकुमार राई आएको ४८ दिनमै र खगराज बराल चार महीनापछि सरुवा भए । सबभन्दा धेरै टिकेका पुण्यप्रसाद न्यौपानेले दुई वर्ष तीन महीनापछि यहीबाट अवकाश पाए । १४ मध्ये ६ जना सचिव यही कार्यरत रहँदा सेवानिवृत्त भए भने सरुवा भएर जाने ८ जना पनि बढीमा १० महीना टिके । १८ महीना काम गरेर रिटायर्ड भएका सचिव दिनेश अधिकारी भन्छन्, "भूमिसुधारबाट उद्योग मन्त्रालयमा जाने अवसर हुँदाहुँदै पनि मैले महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालय रोजेँ । गलत निर्णय गर्नुपर्दैन भनेर यो मन्त्रालय रोजेको थिएँ ।"

मन्त्री र सचिव मात्र होइन, अरू कर्मचारी पनि सकेसम्म यहाँ आउनै नपरे हुन्थ्यो भन्ने चाहँदा रहेछन् । हामीले भेटेका अधिकांश कर्मचारीले 'बाध्यताले गर्दा' सरुवा भएर यहाँ आउनुपरेको हाकाहाकी सुनाए । 'किन त ?' उनीहरूको भनाइ हुन्थ्यो, "यो आकर्षक मन्त्रालय नै होइन ।"

यहाँ आइसकेपछि भने कर्मचारीको धारणा केही फेरिदो रहेछ । महिला सशक्तीकरण महाशाखा प्रमुख राधिका अर्याल त्यसको उदाहरण हुन् । तीन वर्षदेखि यहाँ कार्यरत उनले हामीसँग भनिन्, "शुरूमा बाध्यताले आइयो जस्तो लाग्थ्यो, अहिले चाहि यहाँ आएर राम्रै गरेछु जस्तो लाग्दछ ।" तर, यस्तो सोच्ने एकाध कर्मचारीमा पनि स्रोतसाधनको अभावले 'मोटिभेसन' हुँदैन ।

कसैको पनि रोजाइमा यो मन्त्रालय नपर्ने कारण आखिर के रहेछ ? हामीले यो प्रश्न पूर्वमन्त्री बद्री न्यौपानेलाई सोध्यौं । "यो विकासे मन्त्रालय होइन, यहाँ बसेर आफ्नो निर्वाचन क्षेत्रमा विकासका काम लैजाने अवसर छैन" उनले भने, "राम्रो बजेट छैन । कार्यकर्ता भर्ती गर्ने ठाउँ पनि छैनन् । त्यसैकारण सेवाभाव नहुनेहरू यहाँ आउनै चाहँदैनन् ।"

अलि सम्पन्न र विकसित मुलुकहरूमा 'ह्युमन क्यापिटल बिल्डिङ' लगायत सामाजिक क्षेत्रमा काम गर्ने यस्ता मन्त्रालय निकै महत्वपूर्ण र आकर्षक मानिन्छन् । छिटो-छिटो सरकार फेरिइरहने नेपाल लगायत तेस्रो विश्वका देशमा भने निकै ढिलो प्रतिफल आउने सामाजिक क्षेत्रमा भन्दा तत्कालै नतिजा देखिइहाल्ने सडक, पुल, विद्यालय निर्माणजस्ता काममा सबैको रूचि हुने गर्छ । "यो धेरै बजेट खर्च गर्ने मन्त्रालय होइन, त्यसमाथि मन्त्रीहरूमा केही समय पर्खने धैर्य पनि हुन्न" मन्त्रालयका प्रवक्ता तोयम राया भन्छन्, "तत्कालै नतिजा दिइहाल्ने भौतिक विकासलाई मात्र विकास ठान्ने राजनीतिक नेतृत्वको मनस्थिति यो मन्त्रालय यसरी उपेक्षित हुनुको मुख्य कारण हो ।"

... नजान्नेलाई खुर्पाको बीड

यो केन्द्रदेखि जिल्लासम्म दह्रो संरचना भएको मन्त्रालय हो । त्योभन्दा पनि महत्वपूर्ण चाहि यसको कार्यक्षेत्र हो, जो देशको ८० प्रतिशत जनसंख्यासँग जोडिएको छ । यसैकारण थोरै मात्र काम गर्दा पनि यसले बहुसंख्यक जनतामा राज्यको अनुभूति दिलाउन सक्छ । मन्त्रालयका सचिव डइन्द्रप्रसाद उपाध्याय भन्छन्, "बजेट कति छ भन्दा पनि विनियोजित बजेट अनुसार काम भएको छ कि छैन भन्ने मुख्य कुरा हो । बजेट निकै कम भए पनि मन्त्रालयबाट सञ्चालित कार्यक्रमहरूले राम्रो नतिजा दिइरहेका छन् ।"

मन्त्रालय अन्तर्गत २२ जिल्लामा उपसचिव र बाँकी सबै जिल्लामा अधिकृतको नेतृत्वमा महिला विकास कार्यालय छन् । केन्द्रमा समाज कल्याण परिषद् र महिला विभाग जस्ता संरचना छन् । परिषदले ८० हजारभन्दा बढी राष्ट्रिय तथा अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरूलाई हेर्छ । मन्त्रालय अन्तर्गतकै केन्द्रीय बाल कल्याण समितिका प्रत्येक जिल्ला तहसम्म आफ्नै संरचना छन् ।

सामाजिक काममा विरोध र आलोचना होइन, वाहवाही मात्र मिल्ने हुँदा यहाँ कार्यरत कर्मचारीलाई अन्यत्र जस्तो दबाव हुँदैन । आर्थिक अनियमितताका भ्रमेला पनि धेरै आउँदैनन् । मूलभूत जिम्मेवारी नै सामाजिक सेवा भएकाले सेवाभाव राख्ने कर्मचारीलाई यो मन्त्रालय भन् बढी महत्वपूर्ण छ । एक पूर्वमन्त्रीकै शब्दमा, विदेश भ्रमणको अवसर मिल्ने र देशभित्र पनि नियमित तालिम र सेमिनारहरूमा सहभागी हुन पाइने हुँदा कर्मचारीका लागि यो 'देश पनि हेरिने र मुख पनि फेरिने' थलो जस्तै छ । र पनि, राजनीतिक नेतृत्व र कर्मचारीतन्त्र कसैले पनि यसको महत्त्व र फराकिलो दायरालाई बुझ्न सकेको देखिन्न । परिणाम, महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालय कसैको रुचि नहुने निर्जीव टापूजस्तै बन्न पुगेको छ ।

अवस्था कतिसम्म दर्दनाक छ भनेर देखाउन एउटै उदाहरण पर्याप्त छ । आफ्नै जेठाजूबाट लगातार बलात्कृत हुँदै आएको धनकुटाकी एक महिला घरमा बस्न नसक्ने अवस्था आयो । सहयोग खोज्ने क्रममा उनी जिल्लास्थित महिला मानवअधिकार रक्षा सञ्जालको सम्पर्कमा पुगिन् । उनलाई तत्काल 'रेस्क्यू' गर्नुपर्ने भए पनि राख्ने ठाउँ सञ्जालसँग थिएन । सञ्जालका प्रतिनिधिहरूले मन्त्रालय मातहतको महिला विकास समितिलाई अनुरोध गरे । तर, समितिले पनि आफूसँग बजेट र पूर्वाधार नभएको जवाफ दियो । उनलाई घर फर्काउन सकिने अवस्था नभएकाले अन्ततः सञ्जालकी अध्यक्ष हिमा चेम्जोङले आफ्नै घरमा राखिन् ।

योविघ्न विचल्लीमा परेका महिलालाई पनि 'रेस्क्यू' गर्न र आश्रय दिन नसक्ने महिला विकास समितिको अवस्थाले महिला, बालबालिका तथा समाज कल्याण मन्त्रालय र त्यस मातहतका निकायहरूको हविगत देखाउँछ । केन्द्रीय बाल कल्याण समितिका सदस्यसचिव तारक धिताल भन्छन्, "स्रोत नहुँदा तत्काल उद्धार गर्न र उद्धार गरिएकालाई पुनःस्थापना गर्न समस्या छ ।" सहारा नभएका वृद्धवृद्धा, अपाङ्ग, बालबालिकालाई हेर्ने जिम्मेवारीबारे त सोच्ने फुर्सद नै पाएको छैन, मन्त्रालयले ।

प्रकाशित मिति : ८ फागुन २०७४, www.cijnepal.org.np

उन्नति चौधरी

बेसहारा बालजीवन मलाई नसोध कहाँ दुख्ख घाउ !

पारिवारिक विखण्डन वा समस्याले आवास गृहहरूमा पुगेका बालबालिकाको कथा सुन्नुभएको छ ? उनीहरूको पीडाले भन्छ-
दुःख यस्तोसम्म भोग्नुपर्छ।

हिं सामा परेका महिला तथा बालबालिकाका लागि एक गैरसरकारी संस्थाले कैलालीको अतरियामा सञ्चालन गरेको 'सुरक्षित आवास गृह' मा चार महिलासँगै १० बालबालिका बस्छन् । ७ र ६ वर्षका दाजुबहिनी रमेश र सुष्मा साउद पनि विगत डेढ वर्षदेखि त्यही बसिरहेका १० जनामध्येकै हुन् ।

बाबुआमा दुवै बेपत्ता भएपछि उनीहरू कैलालीको साविक गोदावरी गाविस-८ मा बड्डीबज्यै अर्थात् आमाकी हजुरआमासँग बस्दै आएका थिए । ती बालबालिका राखेबापत नातिनी बुहारीको गाली खानुपरेपछि बड्डीबज्यैले उनीहरूलाई यहाँ ल्याएर राखिदिएकी हुन् । त्यसपछि उनीहरू यो अस्थायी केन्द्रलाई नै आफ्नो सधैको घर ठान्दछन् । दुवै दाजुबहिनी अहिले अतरियाकै एक विद्यालयमा दुई कक्षामा पढ्छन् ।

बड्डीबज्यै धउली साउदका अनुसार रमेश एक वर्ष नपुग्दै र सुष्मा दुई महीनाको गर्भमा छँदा उनीहरूका बाबुले घर छाडेका थिए । कतै खोजतलास गर्दा पनि उनी फेला नपरेपछि आमा लक्ष्मी माइती डोटी गइन् । अनौठो के भयो भने लक्ष्मी माइत गएपछि उनकी आमा पनि एक्कासि घरबाट गायब भइन् ।

सुष्मा डोटीमै जन्मिइन् । त्यसको दुई वर्षपछि लक्ष्मी पनि अचानक बेपत्ता भइन् । त्यसरी क्रमैसँग हराएका रमेश र सुष्माका आमा, बाबु र हजुरआमा हालसम्म फेला पर्न सकेका छैनन् । सहाराविहीन दुवै बालबालिकालाई धउलीले आफ्नो एकल महिला भत्ता र दाउरा बेचेको पैसाले आफूसँगै राखेर हुर्काएकी हुन् ।

सुरक्षित गृहमा राखिएका बच्चाहरूसँग भेटेको भन्दै नातिनीबुहारीले घरबाट निकालिदिएपछि अतरिया बजारमा तरकारी बेचेर गुजारा चलाइरहेकी ७५ वर्षकी धउली यी दुई बच्चाहरूलाई भेट्न आइरहन्छिन् । यहाँका कर्मचारीहरूसँग भन्ने गर्छिन्, "यिनीहरूलाई अब यो घरबाट चाहिँ ननिकालिदिनुहोला ।"

कञ्चनपुरको लक्ष्मीपुर गाउँपालिकाकी ६ वर्षीया अस्मिना चौधरी पनि यही बस्छिन् । उनले यो गृहलाई छात्रावासका रूपमा लिएकी छन् । उनी तीन वर्षकी हुँदा बाबु सुग्रीम चौधरीको जण्डिसका कारण मृत्यु भयो । विधवा आमा सीता डगौरालाई परिवारले हेलो गर्न थाल्यो । कुटपीट सहन नसकेपछि काखकी छोरी दिदीघर छाडेर सीता बेपत्ता भइन् ।

कैलालीको मोहनपुर गेटामा टूलीआमा सरस्वतीसँग बस्दै आएकी अस्मिनालाई उनैले सुरक्षित आवास गृहमा पुऱ्याइदिएकी हुन् । अस्मिनाका बाबुको नाममा एक बिघा जमीन छ । त्यो जमीन हडपन बाजेबज्यैले उनीहरूलाई निकालेको टूलीआमा सरस्वतीले बताइन् । "अस्मिनाको ज्यानमाथि नै खतरा देखेर उसलाई मैले नै सुरक्षित गृहमा पुऱ्याएकी हुँ, मलाई पनि धम्की आइरहन्छ", उनले भनिन् ।

तीन कक्षामा पढिरहेकी अस्मिना छुट्टीको बेला टूलीआमाको घर जान्छिन् । आमा कहाँ छिन् उनलाई थाहा छैन । आमा हराएपछि अर्की बहिनी पनि बेपत्ता छिन् ।

अस्मिनासँग एउटै विद्यालयमा दुई कक्षामा पढ्ने गोपाल सिजापति पनि सुरक्षित आवास गृहमै बस्छन् । भारतको गाजियावादमा काम गर्दै बसेका उनका बाबु छविलालको ४ वैशाख २०७३ मा हत्या भएको थियो । गोपाल त्यसबेला आमाबाबुसँग उतै बस्थे । बाबुको हत्यापछि उनलाई लिएर नेपाल फर्किएकी आमा लीलाको पनि २३ पुस २०६३ मा करेन्ट लागेर मृत्यु भयो । बाबुआमाविहीन बनेका गोपाललाई त्यसपछि फुपाजूले यो गृहमा ल्याएर छाडेका हुन् ।

मनीषा श्रेष्ठ : एउटा प्रतिनिधि कथा

जन्मेको दुई महीनामै आमाले मलाई छाडेर दोस्रो बिहे गर्नुभएको रे ! त्यतिबेला बुबा विदेशमा हुनुहुन्थ्यो रे ! मलाई हजुरआमाले हुर्काउनुभएछ। म तीन वर्षकी हुँदा बुबाले विदेशबाट आएर मलाई पोखराको न्यू लाइफ बालगृहमा राखिदिनुभयो। ६ महीना बसेर फेरि विदेशै जानुभयो। त्यसपछि बुबासँग फोनमा सम्पर्क भइरहन्थ्यो। एक-दुई पटक उहाँले नेपाल आएर मलाई भेट्नु पनि भयो।

आठ वर्षकी छँदा एक दिन मैले उहाँ विदेशमै बित्नुभएको खबर पाएँ। त्यसपछि म सधैंका लागि एकली भएँ। ११ वर्षको उमेरसम्म त्यही बालगृहमा बसेँ। नजिकैको इन्द्र राज्यलक्ष्मी माविबाट ७ कक्षा पास गरेँ। बालगृहमा सँगै बस्ने र मसँग एकदमै मिल्ने साथी यशोदा गिरीलाई एक अमेरिकी दम्पतीले धर्मपुत्री बनाएर अमेरिका लगेपछि म भन् एक्लै।

त्यसबेला बालगृहमा ३५ जना थिए। मभन्दा ठूला दिदीहरू पनि थिए। बालगृह सञ्चालकले रातिराति बाहिरका केटा बोलाएर दिदीहरूको कोठामा पठाउँथे। एकदिन पुलिस आएर त्यहाँ छापा मान्यो। त्यो दिनदेखि बालगृह बन्द भयो। त्यसका सञ्चालक पोखराकै टेकबहादुर थापा त्यसपछि कता गए, मलाई केही थाहा भएन।

शारीरिक रूपमा स्वस्थ बच्चाहरूलाई त्यहाँबाट अन्तै लगे। छडिएका चार जना थियौं। पुस महीनाको जाडो मौसम थियो। पोखराकै रत्न चोकमा रहेको टुरिष्ट बसपार्कको सडक पेटीमा तीन दिनसम्म बस्यौं। सडकमा फालेका खानेकुरा खोजेर खाँथौं। हामी चारमध्ये धरानकी ११ वर्षीया मुस्कान ठकुरी र बाग्लुङकी १० वर्षीया रिनु बरालको त्यही मृत्यु भयो। उनीहरूको लाश उठाउन पनि कोही आएनन्। त्यसपछि म र साथी समीक्षा श्रेष्ठ त्यहाँबाट भाग्यौं।

हाम्रो भेट अमृता गिरी नामकी एकजना दिदीसँग भयो। पोखराकै लामाचौरमा उनको होटल रहेछ। उनले हामीलाई त्यही लगे। पुगेकै दिन मेरी साथी समीक्षालाई एउटा केटा मान्छेले लिएर गयो। त्यसपछि ऊसँग मेरो भेट भएन। म चाहिँ दुई वर्षसम्म त्यही काम गरेर बसेँ। दिनभरि होटलका भाँडा माभेबापत बिहान-बेलुका खान पाउँथेँ।

दुई वर्षपछि एक दिन अमृताले आफ्नो भाइ भन्दै मलाई एउटा केटाको जिम्मा लगाउँदै भनिन्, “तिमीलाई म कहिलेसम्म पाल्न सक्छु र ! अब ऊसँगै जाऊ। उसले तिमीलाई राम्रो काम खोजिदिन्छ।” त्यतिबेला म १३ वर्षकी थिएँ। नयाँ काम पाउने आशाले खुशी भएँ।

म त्यो केटासँगै होटलबाट निस्किएँ। उसले मलाई दिनभरि पोखराको महेन्द्रपुल बजार घुमायो। राति झ्यालै नभएको कोठामा लगेर श्रीमतीको जस्तो व्यवहार गर्न थाल्यो। चिच्याएर रोए पनि सुन्ने कोही थिएन। म सहन बाध्य भएँ।

त्यसपछि महीनौंसम्म ऊसँगै बसें । उसको नाम सुवास थापा मगर रहेछ । घर धादिङ हो भन्थ्यो, बस्न चाहिँ पोखरामै बस्थ्यो । ऊ केही काम गर्दैनथ्यो । दिनभरि बजार डुलेर साँझ कोठामा फर्किन्थ्यो । म चाहिँ ज्यालामजदूरी गर्थेँ । सँगै बस्दा बारम्बार भगडा पनि हुन्थ्यो । उसले एक दिन मलाई होटलवालीले एक लाख रुपैयाँमा बेचेको र म उसको श्रीमती भएकाले जे भन्यो त्यो सबै मान्नुपर्ने बतायो ।

केही महीनापछि उसले हप्तैपिच्छे नयाँ-नयाँ केटीहरू कोठामा ल्याउन थाल्यो ।

तिनीहरूसँग मेरै अगाडि शारीरिक सम्बन्ध राख्थ्यो । ती केटीहरू कहाँबाट आउँथे र फर्किएर कहाँ जान्थे, मलाई केही थाहा हुँदैनथ्यो । उसले मलाई धेरै पिट्थ्यो । म सधैं सहेर बस्थेँ ।

एकदिन मैले सुवासलाई आफू गर्भवती भएको बताएँ । उसले तीन महीनापछि गर्भपतन गराइदियो । त्यसको केही दिनमै ऊ चोरी मुद्दामा पक्राउ पऱ्यो र थुनामा गयो । अदालतले उसलाई थुनामुक्त गर्न रु२ लाख धरौटी मागेको रहेछ । मसँग ज्यालामजदूरीबाट कमाएको रु३० हजार थियो । अरु रु१ लाख ७० हजार ६ महीनामा तिर्ने कागज गरेर खोलाको टेकेदार ज्ञानबहादुर गुरुङसँग ऋण लिएर धरौटी बुझाई उसलाई जेलबाट छुटाएँ ।

ऊ छुटेको ६ महीनापछि म फेरि गर्भवती भएँ । त्यो कुरा सुनाउँदा उसबाट मैले नानाभाँतीका आरोप, गालीबेइज्जती र कुटपिट सहनुपऱ्यो । पेटको गर्भ दुई महीनाको हुँदा फेरि अर्को चोरी मुद्दा लागेर सुवास दोस्रो पटक जेल गयो । त्यतिबेला अदालतले धरौटीमा छुट्न पाउने सुविधा दिएन । दिएको भए पनि मसँग पैसा थिएन ।

म उसलाई भेट्न जेलमा जाँदा रिसाउँदै बारम्बार मानसिक यातना दिइरहन्थ्यो । मेरो पेटको बच्चा अरुकै भएको आरोप लगाउँथ्यो । मसँग पैसा मागेर भगडा गर्थ्यो । पैसा नदिएपछि उसले मेरो वास्ता गर्न छाड्यो ।

म आफैँ ज्यालामजदूरी गरेर पालिन थालें । केही महीनापछि छोरी जन्माएँ । १४ महीनासम्म दुःखकष्टसाथ एकलै डेरामा बसेँ । छोरी दुई वर्ष पुगेपछि जेलबाट छुटेको सुवासले अर्को विवाह गर्ऱ्यो । उसको साथ नपाएपछि मजदूरी गरेरै छोरी हुर्काएँ ।

त्यसबेला पोखरा औद्योगिक क्षेत्रमा पर्ने हिमालयन लाइफ नामको प्लाष्टिक कम्पनीमा काम पाएँ । एक दिन काममा जाँदा बाटोमा एउटा सिमकार्ड भेटें । त्यो कार्ड आफ्नो मोबाइलमा हालेर हेर्दा कार्डमा सेभ गरेको एउटा नम्बर फेला पऱ्यो । त्यो नम्बरमा त्यही कार्डबाट फोन गरी सिमकार्ड आफूले भेटेको जानकारी दिएँ । त्यति गरेकै कारण जीवनमा अर्को पीडाको पहाड ममाथि थोपरिन पुग्यो ।



मैले फोन गरेको नम्बर कञ्चनपुर, गुलरियाको महुवाफाँटा निवासी आशिष चौधरीको रहेछ। ऊ सिमकार्ड लिने बहानामा मलाई भेट्न पोखरा आयो। मसँग प्रेम प्रस्ताव राख्यो। मैले अस्वीकार गर्ने तर उसले ढिपी नछाडेपछि बुटवल गएर मैले ऊसँगै विवाह गरेँ। त्यसपछि पोखरामा सँगै बस्न थालें। शुरूका ५-६ महीना राम्रै रहेको सम्बन्ध त्यसपछि धागो चुँडिए भन्नै भयो।

आशिष मलाई छलेर भाग्यो। २०७३ फागुनमा काखकी छोरी च्यापेर उसलाई खोज्दै पोखराबाट कञ्चनपुर पुगेँ। परिवारमै पुगेर उसलाई भेटें। त्यसबेला मेरो पेटमा उसको चार महीनाको गर्भ थियो। केटा र उसको परिवारले नराम्रो व्यवहार गरेपछि जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालयमा उजुरी गरेँ। प्रहरीले मिलापत्र गराइदियो। म त्यही घरमा बस्न थालें।

एक महीना बस्दा मैले त्यहाँ विभिन्न शारीरिक र मानसिक यातना सहनुपयो। मलाई बोक्सीको आरोप लगाए। धामी लगाएर मन्तरेको चामल कपालमा छरिदियो। मैले पकाएको खाना कसैले नखाने भए। चरित्रमाथि प्रश्न उठाउँदै नराम्रो गाली गर्थे। उनीहरू बसेको ठाउँमा बस्न जाँदा उठेर जान्थे। तैपनि मेरो जाने ठाउँ कहीं थिएन।

एक दिन ज्वरो आएर थला परें। सासू र श्रीमानले उपचारको लागि सेती अञ्चल अस्पताल, धनगढीमा भर्ना गरिदिए। अस्पतालले उनीहरूकै आग्रहमा मेरो गर्भपतन गराइदियो। रगत धेरै बगेपछि मलाई त्यहाँबाट सारेर आशा अस्पताल, धनगढीमा तीन दिन राखियो।

अस्पतालबाट फर्कँदा आशिष घर छोडेर बेपत्ता भइसकेको थियो। उसको विषयमा सोधखोज गर्दा सासूसुराले मलाई घरबाट निकालिदिए। मैले न्याय माग्दै जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालयमा घरेलु हिंसाको उजुरी दिएको छु। न्याय नपाउँदासम्मका लागि तीन वर्षकी छोरी लिएर महिला तथा बालबालिका सुरक्षित गृह अतरियामा बसिरहेकी छु। अहिले १८ वर्षकी भएँ। सीटीईभीटीबाट ब्यूटीपार्लरको तालिम लिएर आत्मनिर्भर बन्ने योजनामा छु तर मेरो नागरिकता छैन। भविष्यमा अझ कति पीडा भोग्नुपर्ने हो, त्यो सम्झँदा निराश छु।

(बालबालिकाको नाम परिवर्तन गरिएको छ।)

गौरीगंगा नगरपालिका-११, कैलालीका वसन्त र रितेश बैजाली दाजुभाइ उसै वियोगको पीडा बेहोर्दैछन्। रितेश तीन महीनाको छँदा बाबुको क्षयरोग लागेर मृत्यु भयो। त्यसपछि आमाले अर्को विवाह गरिन्। अनाथ भएका दुई नातिलाई हजुरआमाले आर्थिक अभावका बीच दुःखकष्टसँग हुर्काउँदै आएका थिइन्। त्यो देखेर राष्ट्रिय मानवअधिकार आयोगमा कार्यरत मानबहादुर नेपालीले उनीहरूलाई यो गृहमा ल्याइदिएका हुन्।

अभिभावक नगुमाएका बालबालिका पनि परिवारका संरक्षकबाटै हिंसाको शिकार भई सुरक्षित आवास गृहमा आइपुग्न बाध्य हुने गरेका छन्। कैलालीकी १३ वर्षीया सानु तिनैमध्ये पर्छिन्। गत वर्ष उनको पेट अस्वाभाविक रूपमा बढेको देखेपछि आमाले नजीकको अस्पताल

लगेर जँचाइन् । डाक्टरले सानुको पेटमा आठ महीनाको बच्चा रहेको जानकारी दिए । त्यो सुनेर बेहोश भएकी आमाले होश खुलेपछि छोरीसँग सोधीखोजी गर्दा आफ्नै ५५ वर्षका बाजेको बलात्कारबाट उनी गर्भवती भएको पत्ता लाग्यो । बाजेको धाकधम्कीका कारण उनले घटनाबारे कसैलाई बताउन नसक्दा आठ महीनासम्म गुपचूप रहेको थाहा भयो ।

प्रहरीको सहयोगमा पीडित बालिकालाई कैलालीस्थित महिला पुनर्स्थापना केन्द्र (ओरेक) ले सञ्चालन गरेको सुरक्षित आवास गृहमा राखियो । त्यहाँ पुगेको १५ दिनमै उनले बच्चा जन्माइन् । आमा र बच्चा दुवै अहिले सोही गृहमा बस्दै आएका छन् । नातिनी बलात्कार गर्ने उनका बाजे चाहि कैलाली कारागारमा कैद सजाय भोगिरहेका छन् ।

बलात्कार गर्ने बाजेलालाई कैद सजाय गरेर मात्र सानुलाई न्याय पाएको अनुभूति हुन नसक्ने ओरेक नेपालकी कैलाली जिल्ला संयोजक विनु राना बताउँछिन् । “जन्मेको साढे चार महीना भइसक्दा पनि बच्चाको जन्मदर्ता भएको छैन । पीडित बालिका र बच्चा दुवैको पुनर्स्थापना गर्न गाह्रो भइरहेको छ”, उनले भनिन् । छोरीलाई केही समयपछि परिवारमा फर्काउन तयार भएका सानुका बाबुले उनीबाट जन्मेको बच्चालाई भने नस्वीकार्ने बताएका छन् ।

महिला तथा बालबालिकाका लागि सञ्चालित दुई सुरक्षित आवास गृह बाहेक कैलाली जिल्लामा अनाथ बालबालिकाका लागि खुलेका ६ वटा बालगृह पनि छन् । तिनमा १९५ बालबालिका आश्रित छन् । अरू २७ अनाथ बालबालिका एउटा छात्रावासमा बस्छन् । बालगृह, सुरक्षित गृह वा छात्रावासमा बस्ने सबै बालबालिका महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालय, कैलालीको सिफारिशमा राखिएका हुन् । तीनै किसिमका गृहहरू गैरसरकारी संस्थाले चलाएका हुन् । तिनीहरूले पूरा गर्नुपर्ने न्यूनतम मापदण्ड सरकारले तोकिदिएको छ । बजेट र जनशक्तिको अभावमा उनीहरूको अनुगमन गर्न भने नसकिएको उक्त कार्यालयकी अधिकृत सन्ध्या सिंहले बताइन् ।

सुरक्षित आवास गृह, अतरियाकी सञ्चालक जानकी मलासीका अनुसार यहाँ राखिएका बालबालिकालाई माध्यमिक तहको शिक्षा पूरा भएपछि परिवार तथा उनीहरूको नजिकका संरक्षककहाँ पुनर्स्थापना गरिन्छ । ६ जना बालबालिकालाई यसरी पुनर्स्थापित गराइसकिएको छ ।

मलासी पीडित महिला र बालबालिकाको मानवअधिकार संरक्षणमा रूचि राख्ने एकल महिला हुन् । पहिले उनी घरेलु हिंसामा परेका महिलाहरूलाई आफ्नै घरमा राखेर अल्पकालीन सुरक्षा दिने गर्थिन् । त्यसो गर्दा पीडितहरूको गोपनीयता भंग हुन थालेपछि उनले यस्तो काम गर्न गैरसरकारी संस्था दर्ता गरेकी हुन् । दुई छोरीकी आमा मलासीलाई २९ वर्षको उमेरमा श्रीमान गुमाएपछि बेहोर्नुपरेको घरेलु हिंसाबाट आफू जस्ता पीडितहरूको लागि सुरक्षित गृह खोल्ने प्रेरणा मिलेको थियो । उनले आफ्नो सबै समय र श्रम सुरक्षित गृहमै लगाएकी छन् । मुठी दानबाट चलेको यस गृहमा उनकी छोरी गीता सहितका पाँच जनाले निःशुल्क सेवा गर्दै आएका छन् ।

जोखिममा परेका महिला तथा बालबालिकाको अल्पकालीन आश्रयका लागि ओरेक नेपालले कैलालीमा २०६३ सालदेखि सुरक्षित आवास गृह सञ्चालन गर्दै आएको छ । सन् २०१७ को जनवरी यता ओरेकमा दर्ता भएका महिला विरूद्धका घरेलु तथा यौन हिंसासम्बन्धी ९७ वटा घटनामध्ये ३४ वटा घटनासँग सम्बन्धित पीडितहरूलाई सुरक्षित गृहमा राखिएको सो संस्थाले जनाएको छ । तीमध्ये २१ घरेलु हिंसा, दुई बहुविवाह, ६ जबर्जस्ती करणी, एक जबर्जस्ती करणी उद्योग र चार यौन हिंसामा परेका पीडित महिला तथा बालबालिका रहेका छन् ।

लक्ष्मी भण्डारी

भस्काउने तथ्यांक

स्कूलमा छात्राको लाइन छोटे हुँदै जानु र
अस्पतालहरूमा छोरा धेरै जन्मन थाल्नुले
जनसांख्यिक असन्तुलनको खतरनाक संकेत गर्छ।

विहान १० बजे उषा बोर्डिङ स्कूलको प्रार्थना सभा हुँदै गर्दा शिक्षिका मधु विसीलाई महसूस भयो- पहिले भन्दा केटीहरूको लाइन घट्दै गएको छ । छेउमै उभिएकी सहकर्मीलाई यो कुरा भन्दा उत्तर आयो, "साँच्चै, हाम्रो पालामा केटीहरूको लाइन लामो भएजस्तो लाग्छ !"

वीरेन्द्रनगर (सुर्खेत) कै अर्को निजी विद्यालय सेन्टमेरिज बोर्डिङ स्कूलका शिक्षक परमानन्द रेग्मीले पनि छात्राहरूको संख्या घटेको टङ्कारो अनुभव गरेका छन् । उनको स्कूलमा यस शैक्षिक सत्रमा नर्सरीमा भर्ना भएका २६० नयाँ विद्यार्थीमा १४७ केटा छन् भने ११३ जना मात्र केटी । उषा बोर्डिङमा पनि नयाँ २३४ विद्यार्थीमध्ये १०१ जना मात्र केटी छन् । छोरालाई निजी र छोरीलाई सरकारी स्कूलमा पढाउने चलन रहेकोमा अहिले सरकारीमा समेत छात्रा संख्या घटेको छ । वीरेन्द्रनगरकै सरकारी स्कूल धुलियाविट माविमा अघिल्लो वर्ष ५४ छात्र र ४१ छात्रा नयाँ भर्ना भएका थिए ।

अस्पतालहरूमा जन्मिएका शिशुको लैङ्गिक अनुपातमा पनि छोरी कम देखिन्छन् । पछिल्लो पाँच वर्षमा मध्यपश्चिमाञ्चल क्षेत्रीय अस्पतालमा ८ हजार ५९४ छोरा र ७ हजार २२२ छोरी जन्मिएको रेकर्ड छ । त्यस्तै, सुर्खेत जिल्ला अस्पतालमा पछिल्लो पाँच वर्षमा भएको ३२ हजार ७६० जन्ममा १७ हजार ५०८ छोरा र १५ हजार २५२ छोरी जन्मिएको जिल्ला जनस्वास्थ्य कार्यालयको तथ्यांकले देखाउँछ । यो भनेको ११५ छोरा जन्मिँदा १०० जना छोरी जन्मेको अनुपात हो ।

स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्रमा कार्यरत सरकारी तथा गैर-सरकारी व्यक्तिहरू भ्रूणको लिङ्ग पहिचान गरेर गरिने गर्भपतनका कारण छोरीको जन्मदरमा कमी आएको हुनसक्ने बताउँछन् । हुनेखाने र शिक्षितहरूले नै भ्रूणको लिङ्ग पहिचान गरेर बच्चा जन्माउन थालेकाले छोरीको जन्मदर घटेको स्वास्थ्यकर्मीहरूको भनाइ छ ।

जन्मँदा नै छोरीहरू कम भएपछि त्यसको असर विद्यार्थी भर्नामा पर्ने नै भयो । जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालय, सुर्खेतको चार वर्षको तथ्यांक केलाउँदा आर्थिक वर्ष २०७०/७१ देखि २०७३/७४ सम्म ५१ हजार ५९३ जना बालबालिका कक्षा १ मा भर्ना भएकोमा २६ हजार १६४ छोरा र २५ हजार ४२९ छोरी रहेको देखिन्छ ।

राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०६८ को तथ्यांकले पनि सुर्खेतमा लैङ्गिक गडबडी देखाउँछ । त्यस अनुसार, जिल्लामा महिलाको संख्या पुरुषको भन्दा ११ हजार ९६२ बढी भए पनि १४ वर्षमुनिका बालबालिकामा छोरीको संख्या छोराको भन्दा ३ हजार ३२१ ले कम देखिन्छ ।

लैंगिक विभेदको मार

पहिलो पटक छोरी जन्माएकी गुर्भाकोट नगरपालिकाकी विष्णुमाया क्षेत्री (नाम परिवर्तन) ले छोराको आसमा लगातार तीन छोरी जन्माइन् । फेरि पनि छोरी नै जन्मिए के गर्ने भन्ने चिन्तामा परेका क्षेत्री दम्पतीले भ्रूणको लिङ्ग पहिचान गरेर छोरी भए गर्भपतन



गराउने निर्णय गरे । त्यसपछि तीन पटक नेपालगञ्जमा लिङ्ग पहिचान र गर्भपतन गराएकी विष्णुमायाको सातौं गर्भमा छोरा रहेको थाहा भयो ।

३९ वर्षको उमेरमा छोरा पाएकी उनी नेपालगञ्जको हेल्थ केयर सेन्टरमा लिङ्ग पहिचान र गर्भपतन गराउने १५ जना जति त आफ्नो चिनजानकै महिलाहरू रहेको बताउँछिन् । तिनैमध्येकी एक सुनिता हमाल (नाम परिवर्तन) ले विवाह भएको सात वर्षमा तीन पटक गर्भमा छोरी भएको पहिचान गरेर गर्भपतन गराइन् । चौथो गर्भमा छोरा रहेको देखिएपछि मात्र उनले बच्चा जन्माइन् । छोरीप्रति कति निर्मोह छ भने, दुई छोरा पाएकी गुर्भाकोटकी विमला बलायर (नाम परिवर्तन) ले तेस्रो सन्तान जन्माउनै चाहिन् । “छोरा भए त गरेर खान सक्छन्” उनी भन्छिन्, “छोरी भए चिन्ता मात्रै ।”

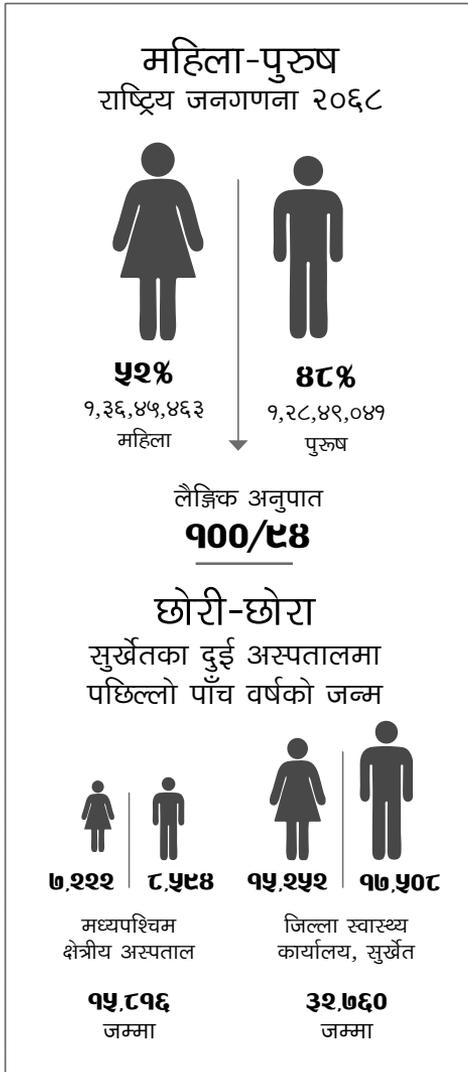
लगातार दुई छोरी जन्माएकी अछामकी जोरमाया शर्मा घरपरिवारमै अपहेलित हुनुपन्थो । दोस्रो पटक सुत्केरी हुँदा उनले राम्रो हेरचाह पनि पाइन् । अपहेलनाकै कारण वीरेन्द्रनगर भरेकी उनले अहिले दुःख गरेर छोरीहरू पूनम र नीलमलाई बीबीएस पढाइरहेकी छन् । वीरेन्द्रनगरकै मीना पौडेल (४०) भने दुई छोरीपछि तेस्रो सन्तान छोरा जन्माउनैपर्ने दबाबमा छिन् । “घरपरिवार र छरछिमेक समेत ‘एउटा छोरा त चाहिन्छ’ भन्छन्” उनी भन्छिन्, “हामीलाई होइन, समाजलाई छोरा चाहिने रहेछ ।”

सुनिता, जोरमाया, मीना नेपाली समाजका प्रतिनिधि पात्र हुन् । यीमध्ये कसैलाई छोरा नभई भएकै छैन, कोही छोरीमै चित्त बुझाउँछु भन्दा पनि छोरा नै चाहिन्छ भन्ने समाज र छरछिमेकको प्रताडनामा छन् ।

कानून अनुसार, विशेष अवस्थामा बाहेक १२ हप्तापछि भ्रूणको लिङ्ग पहिचान गरेर गर्भपतन



उषा बालबाटिका बोर्डिङ स्कूल वीरेन्द्रनगर, सुर्खेत ।



गराउन पाइँदैन । तर, गर्भ रहेपछि लिङ्ग पहिचान गराउने र छोरी भए गर्भपतन गर्ने चलन बढेको छ । मध्यपश्चिमाञ्चल क्षेत्रीय अस्पतालका निमित्त सुपरिन्टेन्डेन्ट डा. डम्बर खड्का कानूनको प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयन नहुँदा भ्रूणको लिङ्ग पहिचान र गर्भपतन दुवै बढेको बताउँछन् । नेपाल बाल मजदूर सरोकार केन्द्र (सिविन), सुर्खेतकी संगीता वलीको भनाइ छ— कसूर थाहा पाएर पनि दोषीलाई न्यायको कठघरामा उभ्याउन नसक्नु मुख्य समस्या हो ।

भ्रूणको लिङ्ग पहिचान गरेर छोरी भए गर्भपतन गर्ने क्रम बढेपछि वीरेन्द्रनगर नगरपालिकाले 'छोरी प्रोत्साहन कार्यक्रम' ल्याएको छ । यस अन्तर्गत छोरी जन्मिए निःशुल्क ब्याक खाता खोलेर नगरपालिकाले रु.१००० जम्मा गरिदिन्छ । मेयर देवकुमार सुवेदी लिङ्ग पहिचान र गर्भपतन रोकेर वीरेन्द्रनगरलाई छोरीमैत्री नगर बनाउन लागिपरेको बताउँछन् । "प्रशासनसँग मिलेर कडा अनुगमन गरी दोषीलाई कानूनको दायरामा ल्याउँछौं" उनी भन्छन्, "छोरी भएकै कारण गर्भपतन गर्ने व्यक्ति, स्वास्थ्य संस्था र स्वास्थ्यकर्मीलाई छूट दिनुहुँदैन ।"

हराएका छोरीहरू

२०६८ को जनगणना अनुसार, नेपालको कुल जनसङ्ख्या २ करोड ६४ लाख ९४

हजार ५०४ मा महिलाको सङ्ख्या ५२ प्रतिशत (१ करोड ३६ लाख ४५ हजार ४६३) छ । यो संख्या पुरुषको भन्दा करीब ८ लाख बढी हो । यस आधारमा महिला-पुरुष लैङ्गिक अनुपात १००/९४ हुन्छ ।

त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय जनसंख्या अध्ययन केन्द्रीय विभागका सह-प्राध्यापक डा. केशव अधिकारी देशभित्र वा बाहिर जहाँ बसेको भए पनि महिला-पुरुषको सङ्ख्या तुलना गरेर हेर्दा नेपालको लैंगिक वनावट अहिले हामीले प्रयोग गरेको तथ्यांकभन्दा ठीक उल्टो देखिने बताउँछन् । "महिलाको संख्या बढी छ भन्ने तथ्यांकका आधारमा आरक्षणको व्यवस्था पनि गरिएको छ, तर छोरीलाई गर्भमै नष्ट गरेर महिलाको संख्या घटाइँदैछ भन्नेमा धेरैको ध्यान गएको छैन" उनी भन्छन्, "सुर्खेतमा देखिएको यो जनसाङ्ख्यिक असन्तुलनलाई राष्ट्रिय परिप्रेक्ष्यमा हेर्नुपर्छ ।"

प्रकाशित मिति : २२ माघ २०७४, www.cijnepal.org.np

विद्या राई

स्कूल नगई-नगई जाँडको व्यापार

चोकबजार र दोभानहरुमा कलिला बालबालिका जाँडरक्सी बेच्न बसेको यत्रतत्र देखिन्छ। संस्कृति र गर्जो टार्ने नाममा खोसिंदैछ बालापन। पूर्वी पहाडी जिल्ला भोजपुरका गाउँ-गाउँको कथा।

- दक्षिणी भोजपुरको हतुवागढी गाउँपालिका-९ की रमिता राई १० वर्षकी भइन् । दुई दाजु र तीन दिदीबहिनीमध्ये कान्छी उनी चार कक्षामा पढ्छिन् । तर, प्रायः विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । रमिता धेरैजसो छिमेकी जिल्ला उदयपुरसँग जोडिएका दूधकोशी र आमचोक गाउँपालिकाको सिमानामा पर्ने एखावा खोलाको दोभानमा भेटिन्छिन् । यहाँ उनका बुवा-आमा जाँड व्यापार गर्छन् । दुई कक्षा पढ्दादेखि बुवा-आमालाई जाँड बनाउन सघाइरहेकी रमिता अहिले उनीहरूले नभ्याउँदा जाँड बनाउने, छान्ने र बेच्ने काम आफैँ गर्छिन् ।
दक्षिणी भेगका दुम्माना, देवानटार, पावला, पाँचा र हसनपुरको केन्द्र हो, एखावा खोला दोभान । दिनहुँ सयौँ बटुवा यो बाटो ओहोरदोहोर गर्छन् । उनीहरू दोभानमा रोकिएर थकाइ मार्ने मेलो बन्छ— रमिताका बुवा-आमाले बनाउने त्यही जाँड । एक बटुको जाँड २० रुपैयाँमा बेचेर रमिताका बुवा-आमा दिनभरमा दुई हजार रुपैयाँसम्मको कारोबार गर्छन् । त्यसबाटै रमिता, उनका दाजु र दिदीहरूको लालनपालन, पढाइखर्च जोहो हुन्छ । रमिता भन्छिन्, “बुवा-आमाको काम देखेर मैले पनि सिकें । अब आफैँ जाँड बनाएर पनि बेच्न सक्छु ।”
- दक्षिणी भोजपुरको आमचोक गाउँपालिकाको केन्द्र हो, बालखा बजार । सदरमुकामबाट १६ कोस टाढा पर्ने बालखामा प्रत्येक शुक्रबार हाट लाग्छ । त्यस दिन यहाँका होटल र घरहरूमा जाँड र रक्सीको व्यापार थेगिनसक्नु हुन्छ । बिहानदेखि राति अबेरसम्म ग्राहकको भीड हुन्छ होटलमा । ११ वर्षीया रञ्जिता राई त्यही भीडभाडमा भेटिन्छिन् । ग्राहकलाई जाँड बनाएर दिने, भाँडाबाट रक्सी सारिदिने र सितन बनाइदिने काम गर्छिन् उनी ।



रञ्जिताको घर खोटाङको जन्तेढुङ्गा गाउँपालिकामा पर्छ । बालखामा उनी सानिमाको घरमा बस्छन् । स्थानीय विद्यालयमा तीन कक्षामा पढिरहेकी रञ्जिताले यता आएपछि पढाइ पनि छाडिन् । उनले घर छाडेर हिडनुको कारण रहेछ— जाँडरक्सीकै व्यापार ।

रञ्जिताको घरमा उनीभन्दा एक वर्ष जेठा दाजु, ८ र ५ वर्षीया बहिनी तथा तीन वर्षको भाइ छन् । जाँडरक्सी बनाएर बेच्नु बाआमाको मुख्य पेशा । दाजुपछि घरकी जेठी सन्तान भएकाले बुवा-आमाले उनलाई पनि जाँडरक्सी बनाउन लगाउँदा रहेछन् । “घरमा जाँडरक्सी मात्र बनाएर बस्नुपर्थ्यो, दिक्क लागेर सानिमाकोमा आएँ, अनि त पढ्न पनि छाडिदिँ” रञ्जिता भन्छिन्, “सानिमालाई जाँडरक्सी बनाउन चाहि सघाउँछु, तर यहाँ घरमा जस्तो किचकिच छैन ।”

- १४ वर्षीया संगीना राईको घर हतुवागढी गाउँपालिका वडा नम्बर २ मा पर्छ । ६ कक्षामा पढिरहेकी संगीनाको मुख्य काम आमालाई जाँडरक्सी बनाउन र बेच्न सघाउनु हो । स्कूल नगएको बेला धेरैजसो समय उनी आमासँगै बसेर जाँडरक्सी बनाउँछिन् ।

संगीनाका बुबा सानैमा बिते । घरमा कमाउने कोही छैन । दुई छोरी हुर्काउन आमाले जाँडरक्सी बेच्न थालेकी हुन् । हिजोआज संगीना र उनकी बहिनी दिनहुँ दाउरा जोहो गर्न वनजंगल जान्छन् । आमालाई सघाउँदा सघाउँदा अब उनीहरू आफैँ जाँडरक्सी बनाएर बेच्न सक्ने भएका छन् । संगीना भन्छिन्, “बुवा हुनुभएको भए, यसरी दुःख गर्नुपर्ने थिएन होला, के गर्नु आमालाई सघाउनै पर्‍यो ।” जाँडरक्सी बेचेर महीनामा दुई हजारदेखि २५ सय रुपैयाँसम्म कमाउँछन् उनीहरू । त्यही कमाइबाट घर खर्च गरेर कापीकलम र स्कूल ड्रेसको पनि जोहो गर्नुपर्छ ।

खस्कँदो शिक्षा, फर्रँदो व्यापार

भोजपुर जिल्ला कुनै बेला देशकै प्रमुख शैक्षिक केन्द्र थियो । वि.सं. १९३२ मा बालागुरु षडानन्दले उत्तरी दिङ्लामा संस्कृत पाठशाला खोलेपछि त्यतिबेला यो जिल्ला शैक्षिक केन्द्रको रूपमा चिनिन्थ्यो । षडानन्द मावि दिङ्लाका प्रधानाध्यापक गोपालप्रसाद तिमिसिनाका अनुसार उक्त पाठशाला जनस्तरबाट खोलिएको देशकै पहिलो र काठमाडौँको दरबार हाईस्कूलपछिको दोस्रो थियो । देशमा राणाशासनको जगजगी रहेको बेला पनि भोजपुरले शिक्षा क्षेत्रमा उदाहरणीय काम गरेको थियो । तर आजको स्थिति बेग्लै छ । तिमिसिना भन्छन्, “अब भोजपुरसँग शिक्षाको त्यो वैभवको इतिहास मात्रै बाँकी छ ।”

जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालय, भोजपुरको अभिलेखले देखाउँछ— शैक्षिक स्तर वर्षेनि खस्कँदो छ । २०६९ सालको एसएलसी परीक्षामा यहाँबाट १३.३० प्रतिशत विद्यार्थी मात्रै उत्तीर्ण भएका थिए । २०७० मा त्यो १२.२९ प्रतिशतमा झर्‍यो । २०७१ मा उत्तीर्ण दर १७.९८ प्रतिशत पुग्यो । २०७२ देखि एसएलसी परीक्षा फेरिएर ‘एसईई’ भयो र नतिजा पनि ‘ग्रेडिड’ पद्धतिमा गयो । त्यस अनुसार भएको २०७३ सालको परीक्षामा सहभागी तीन हजार ५० विद्यार्थीमध्ये एक जनाले पनि ‘ए फ्लस’ ल्याएनन् । ए, बी फ्लस र बी ‘ग्रेड’ ल्याउने क्रमशः ३२, ८३ र १६४ मात्र थिए ।

भोजपुर बहुमुखी क्याम्पसका प्रमुख डा. रोहितकुमार श्रेष्ठ भन्छन्, “धेरै अभिभावक जाँडरक्सी सेवन र बेचबिखनमा यसरी जोडिएका छन् कि उनीहरू छोराछोरीलाई राम्ररी पढाउनुपर्छ भनेर पनि सोच्दैनन् । बालबालिकालाई पढ्ने वातावरण नै हुँदैन ।”

राणाकालमा पूर्व ४ नम्बर (माभकिराँत) का नामले चिनिने भोजपुर राई समुदाय बहुल जिल्ला हो । दुई हजार वर्षदेखि किराँत राईहरूको बसोबास रहेको मानिने भोजपुर जिल्लामा जनसंख्याको ३८.४९ प्रतिशत राई समुदायको बसोबास छ । यो जिल्लाले किराँत राईको सभ्यता र संस्कृतिको उद्गमथलोका रूपमा समेत गर्व गर्छ । तर, संस्कार र परम्पराका नाममा अपनाइएका कतिपय चलनले समुदायभित्र डरलाग्दो विकृति निम्त्याइरहेको छ ।

राई समुदायमा जाँड र रक्सीलाई संस्कृति र रीतिरिवाज धान्ने वस्तुका रूपमा ग्रहण गरिन्छ । चलनचल्तीको भाषामा जाँडलाई 'छ्याड' र रक्सीलाई 'हेडमावा' भनिन्छ । "हाम्रो समुदायमा जन्मेदेखि मृत्युपर्यन्त छ्याड र हेडमावा चाहिन्छ । कुलपितृलाई चढाउन, बिटुलो चोख्याउन, विवाह, भोजभतेर लगायतका सबै सांस्कृतिक कार्यमा यो अनिवार्य चाहिन्छ । किराँत राईको प्रत्येक घरमा छ्याड र हेडमावा बनाउनैपर्छ" किराँत राई यायोक्खा भोजपुरकी अध्यक्ष सिर्जना राई भन्छिन्, "संस्कृतिलाई पुस्ता दरपुस्तामा हस्तान्तरण गर्दै जाने क्रममा बालबालिकलाई पनि सिकाउनु पर्‍यो ।"

संस्कृतिलाई अलग गरेर व्यापारका दृष्टिले हेर्दा पनि यो सजिलो व्यवसाय भएको छ । गाउँमा जाँडरक्सीको व्यापार गर्न पसल दर्ता गर्नुपर्दैन । बजार, दोबाटो जहाँसुकै एक जर्किन रक्सी राखेर बेच्न बसे हुन्छ । जतिबेला पैसाको गर्जो पर्छ, त्यसलाई फुकाउन सजिलो छ यो व्यापार । यसका एकथरी स्थायी व्यापारी हुन्छन्, जो सदरमुकाम र गाउँका बजारमा हुन्छन् । अर्काथरी अस्थायी हुन्छन्, जसले स्थायी व्यापारीको आवश्यकता धानिदिन्छन् । गाउँमा यस्ता अस्थायी व्यापारी घरैपिच्छेजसो हुन्छन् ।

जिल्लाको दक्षिणी भेगका पाङ्चा, बालंखा, दुम्माना, वासिङथर्पु, होम्ताङ, खैराङ, हसनपुर, रानीबास, पूर्वीक्षेत्रको बास्तिम, सानोदुम्मा, ठूलोदुम्मा, जरायोटार, चरम्बी, चम्पे, पश्चिमी क्षेत्रका छिनामखु, खावा, नागी, कोट, गोगने, तिम्मा, अन्नपूर्ण तथा उत्तरतर्फका दोभाने, कुलुडमा जाँडरक्सीको उत्पादन र बजारीकरण बढ्दो छ । महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालय, भोजपुरकी अधिकृत पुष्पलता उप्रेती भन्छिन्, "हामी संख्यामा भन्न सक्दैनौं तर सदरमुकाम, उत्तरी दिङ्ला बजार, दक्षिणी घोडेदार बजार, लेगुवा घाट, सुनबालुवा, कात्तिके पुल, मचुवाटार लगायतका स्थानमा जाँडरक्सीको उत्पादन र बेचबिखनमा बालबालिकाको प्रयोग धेरै छ ।"

यी गाउँमा जाँडरक्सी बनाउने र बिक्रीवितरण गर्ने काममा छोरीहरू नै धेरै संलग्न भेटिन्छन् । महिला अधिकारकर्मी सविना राई भन्छिन्, "घरायसी कामसँगै पैसा कमाउन पनि अभिभावकलाई छोरीहरूले सहयोग गर्नुपर्ने चलन पहिल्यैदेखिको हो ।" उनका भनाइमा, "अब त आफैले बिक्री गरेको जाँडरक्सी खाएर उत्तेजित हुने अनि आफैमाथि हिंसा गर्न आइलाग्ने भएला पनि छोरीहरूले नै बेहोर्नु परिरहेको छ ।"

भर्खरै भएको प्रतिनिधि सभा र प्रदेश सभा चुनावमा भोजपुरका सबैजसो गाउँ घुमेका नेपाली कांग्रेस महासमिति सदस्य हेमन्त मुकारुङको बुभाइ पनि त्यस्तै छ । उनी भन्छन्, "जाँडरक्सीलाई संस्कृतिका रूपमा लिने परम्पराले बालबालिकामा असर पारेको छ । बालबालिकाहरू आय आर्जन र पढाइ खर्च जुटाउने नाममा जाँडरक्सीसँग जोडिए ।" एमाले जिल्ला कमिटी सचिव शरणकुमार राई भन्छन्, "राई समुदायको शतप्रतिशत घरमा जाँडरक्सी पाक्छ । सत्कार-सम्मानमा बालबालिका प्रयोग हुने भए । यसले उनीहरूको अध्ययन र वृत्ति-विकासमा असर पारिरहेको छ ।"

नाममात्रको नियन्त्रण

यो जिल्लामा मात्रै जाँडरक्सी बनाउने र बिक्रीवितरण गर्ने काममा कति बालबालिका संलग्न होलान् ? औपचारिक अध्ययन छैन । तर, जिल्लाका सार्वजनिक पदाधिकारी र निकायले यसको रोकथामका लागि भनेर निर्धारण गर्ने प्राथमिकताले समस्याको आकार अनुमान गर्न सघाउँछ । भोजपुर सरुवा भएर आउने सबैजसो प्रमुख जिल्ला अधिकारी (सिडिओ) र जिल्ला प्रहरी प्रमुख (डीएसपी) ले स्थानीय मदिराको बिक्रीवितरण र त्यसमा प्रयोग भइरहेको बालश्रम नियन्त्रण गर्नु आफ्नो प्राथमिक काम रहेको बताउने गर्छन् । सर्वदलीय बैठकहरूमा पनि यस्तो 'माइन्सूटिङ' हुने गर्छ ।

जिल्लामा यो समस्या कति ठूलो छ ? हामीले स्थानीय चण्डेश्वर मावि, बालखाका प्रधानाध्यापक कपिल गुरागाईलाई सोध्यौं । "अभिभावक नै जाँडरक्सी उत्पादन र बिक्रीवितरणमा संलग्न भएपछि बालबालिका स्वतः त्यसमा संलग्न हुँदारहेछन्, मेरै विद्यालयमा पढ्ने बालबालिकाका ७५ प्रतिशत अभिभावक जाँडरक्सी उत्पादन र बिक्रीवितरणमा संलग्न छन्" गुरागाईले भने, "आर्थिक उपार्जनका लागि अभिभावकले नै बालबालिकालाई यो काममा लगाउँछन् ।"

पूर्वी सानोदुम्मा माविका प्रधानाध्यापक अर्जुन राईको बुभाइ पनि यस्तै छ । राई भन्छन्, "घरायसी प्रयोजनका लागि हुने जाँडरक्सीको उत्पादन र खपतमा त बालबालिका प्रयोग भएकै थिए, अहिले त पसलसम्म पुऱ्याएर बेचन समेत प्रयोग भइरहेका छन् ।"

पश्चिमी टेम्केमैयुङ गाउँपालिका-५, खावास्थित पशुपति माविका प्रअ पूर्ण राईका अनुसार "संस्कृतिका नाममा जाँडरक्सी बनाउने चलन घरैपिच्छे हुन्छ । यसो हुँदा पकाई-तुल्याई गर्ने, खाने, बेच्ने काम बालबालिकाको नियमित काम जत्तिकै हुनेभयो ।"



यस्तो प्रचलनले जिल्लाकै शैक्षिक विकासमा अवरोध पुऱ्याएको ठान्छन्, जिल्ला शिक्षा अधिकारी डम्बर आडदेम्बे । उनी भन्छन्, "संस्कृति-परम्पराका रूपमा घरघरमा जाँडरक्सी उत्पादन, सेवन अनि बित्रीवितरण गर्दा त्यसको पहिलो असर बालबालिकामाथि पर्ने हुँदा उनीहरूको चौतर्फी विकासमा बाधा पुगेको छ ।" आडदेम्बेका भनाइमा, त्यस्ता विद्यार्थी विद्यालयमा धेरैजसो अनुपस्थित हुने र कतिपय त मदिरा सेवन गरेरै विद्यालय आउने गरेको समेत भेटिएको छ । उनी भन्छन्, "यसले सिंगो समुदायको शैक्षिक, आर्थिक र सामाजिक विकासमा असर पारेको छ ।"

रक्सी खाएर विद्यालय आउने विद्यार्थी मात्र हुँदैनन् । केही समय पहिलेको कुरा हो, हतुवागढी गाउँपालिकाको रानीबासस्थित एक निम्न माध्यमिक विद्यालयका प्रधानाध्यापक बाह्रैमास जाँडले मातेर विद्यालय आउने गर्थे । शिक्षक र विद्यार्थीको पटक-पटकको गुनासोपछि जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयले अनुगमन गर्दा पनि उनी मातेर विद्यालय आएको अवस्थामा फेला परे । उनलाई प्रधानाध्यापकबाट शिक्षकमा घटुवा गरियो, विद्यालयमा अर्का प्रधानाध्यापक पठाइयो । रक्सी पिएर स्कूल आउने रानीबासकै अर्को एउटा प्राथमिक विद्यालयका शिक्षकको त जागिर नै गयो । त्यसयता पनि भट्टीमा पसेर मात्रै विद्यालय पुग्ने शिक्षकहरूको संख्यामा खासै कमी आएको छैन ।

कतिपय विद्यालय व्यवस्थापन समिति, शिक्षक-अभिभावक संघका सदस्य, पदाधिकारी र बुद्धिजीवी समेत विद्यालयको बैठकमा मातेर पुग्ने गरेका छन् । जाँडरक्सीले शैक्षिक स्तर खस्क्यो भन्ने कुरा उठ्दा उनीहरू त्यसबारे 'माइन्सूटिङ' गर्न मान्दैनन्, उल्टै 'यो संस्कृति हो, यसका विरुद्ध बोल्नुहुँदैन' भन्छन् । यसबाट आजित बनेका जिल्ला शिक्षा अधिकारी आडदेम्बे भन्छन्,



“शिक्षक, व्यवस्थापन समितिका पदाधिकारी नै जाँडले मातेर विद्यालयमा आउँछन् भन्ने रिपोर्टिङ धेरै आउँछ । यो अवस्था सुधारन के गर्ने भनेर सोच्न सकिएकै छैन ।”

‘समाजकै गति रोकिन्छ’

आम्दानीको अर्को उपाय नभएको भनेर बाबुआमाले स-साना छोराछोरीलाई जाँडरक्सीको उत्पादन र व्यापारमा अभ्यस्त बनाउँदाको परिणाम केसम्म हुन सक्छ ? महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालय, भोजपुरकी अधिकृत पुष्पलता उप्रेती भन्छिन्, “बालबालिकाले सानो उमेरमै गलत बाटो रोक्छन्, भगडालु बन्छन् र बालमस्तिष्कमै नराम्रो असर पर्ने विकृतिहरू आउँछन् ।”

केही समयअघि भोजपुर नगरपालिका-११, आम्तेकमा रक्सीले मातेका श्रीमानले खुकुरी प्रहार गरी श्रीमतीको हत्या गरे । आमाको हत्या गर्न बाबुलाई सघाएको भनेर प्रहरीले बाबुसँगै १२ वर्षीय छोरालाई समेत पक्राउ गर्‍यो । बाबु ज्यान मुद्दामा जेल गए । बालकलाई बालबिजाइँ ठहर गरेर सजायबाट उन्मुक्ति दिइयो । तर, उनी अहिले पनि विद्यालय जानसक्ने अवस्थामा छैनन् । छिमेकीहरूका अनुसार, ‘चोर्ने, ढाँट्ने, साना बालबालिकालाई कुट्ने, भगडा गर्ने गरेर उसको दिन बिच्छ ।’

केही वर्षअघि हतुवागढी गाउँपालिका-४ बाट बलात्कारको अभियोगमा पक्राउ परेका ४८ वर्षीय पुरुषले ‘मादक पदार्थ सेवन गरेर बेहोश अवस्थामा बलात्कार गरेको’ बयान प्रहरीलाई दिएका थिए । हालैको कुरा हो, स्थानीय होम्ताडमा एक किराना पसले महिला छिमेकीबाट बलात्कृत भइन् । उनी जाँडरक्सी बनाउने र बेच्ने काम पनि गर्थिन् । तिनै छिमेकी उनका ग्राहक पनि थिए । पछि उनले घरमा एकलै भएको मौका पारेर ती पसले महिलाकी १० वर्षीया छोरीलाई पनि बलात्कार गरे । समाजमा यस्ता अपराधहरू थुप्रै छन् जसको सोभो सम्बन्ध जाँडरक्सी उत्पादन र बिक्रीवितरणसँग देखिन्छ ।

“यस्तो वातावरणमा बालबालिकाले पढाइमा ध्यान दिनै सक्दैनन्, कम उमेरमै विवाह गर्छन्, शिक्षा र अरू सीप नहुँदा जाँडरक्सीको व्यापार शुरू गर्छन्” महिला विकास अधिकृत उप्रेती भन्छिन्, “उनीहरू आफूले जे भोगे, उनका सन्ततिले पनि त्यही भोग्छन् । पुस्तौपुस्तासम्म यो चक्र घुमिरहन्छ ।”

भोजपुरका गाउँ घुम्ने जो-कोहीलाई लाग्छ— सन्तानको भविष्यलाई लिएर चिन्ता गर्न सक्ने अवस्था भइदिएको भए सम्भवतः यी अभिभावकहरूले आफ्नै छोराछोरीलाई यस्तो काममा लगाउँदैनथे । हुन पनि, गाउँघरमा सन्तानको भविष्य बर्बाद भइरहेको छ भन्ने चेतनाकै अभाव छ । किनभने यो पुस्ता अशिक्षित छ । अर्कोतर्फ, जाँडरक्सीको व्यापार आम्दानी गर्न सजिलो बाटो भएको छ । खेतीपातीले गुजारा चल्दैन, अरू पेशा गर्न सीप र शिक्षा छैन । नयाँ काम गर्न लगानी हुँदैन ।

मानवशास्त्री सुरेश ढकालका विचारमा, राई समुदायको दृष्टिबाट हेर्दा पनि जाँडरक्सी संस्कृति नभई परम्परा हो र परम्परा छाड्न पनि सकिन्छ । तर, जुन परिवार त्यसमा आश्रित छन्, तिनका लागि यो सांस्कृतिक पूँजीजस्तो हुन गयो । हिजो उपभोगका लागि मात्र जाँडरक्सी बनाइन्थ्यो, अब यो बजारसँग पनि जोडियो र ‘कमोडिटी’ हुन पुग्यो ।

“वास्तवमा यो धेरै पैसा कमाउनका लागि अँगालिएको पेशा होइन, गुजारा र भरथेगका लागि गरिएको काम मात्र हो” ढकाल भन्छन्, “यसले बालबालिकाको शिक्षासँगै समग्र भविष्यमै

असर पाछै ।" उनी थप्छन्, "यसले निर्वाध रूपमा लेखपढ गर्न पाउने बालबालिकाको अधिकारमै बाधा पुऱ्याएको छ । त्यस्ता बालबालिका आजको प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक दुनियाँमा निकै पछाडि छुट्छन्, जसले समाजकै गति रोकन सक्छ ।"

समाजसेवी ईश्वरमान राईका भनाइमा, धर्म संस्कृति मान्ने क्रममा केही हदसम्म जाँडरक्सीको प्रयोग स्वाभाविक भए पनि अहिले यसले विकृतिको रूप लिइसकेको छ । यसले सिंगो समुदायको सामाजिक, आर्थिक र शैक्षिक विकासलाई पछाडि धकेलिरहेको छ । "जाँडरक्सी नियन्त्रण नगरी नहुने बेला भइसक्यो" राई भन्छन्, "तर, सानो समूहको आवाजले मात्रै नियन्त्रण गर्न गाह्रो हुँदोरहेछ । यसलाई नियन्त्रण गर्ने हुन्न भन्ने स्वर अबै ठूलो छ ।"

(बालिकाहरूको नाम परिवर्तन गरिएको छ ।)

प्रकाशित मिति : २४ मंसिर २०७४, www.cijnepal.org.np

कल्पना भट्टराई

शैक्षिक अँध्यारोमा बालबालिका

प्रदेश-२ का आठ जिल्लामा स्कूल जाने उमेरका दुई लाख बालबालिका विद्यालय बाहिर छन्। संविधानले 'अनिवार्य' र 'निःशुल्क' भनेको मौलिक हकबाट यो प्रदेशमा यति धेरै बालबालिका कसरी वञ्चित भए ?

सरकारले सातवटै प्रदेशका अस्थायी मुकाम (राजधानी) तोकेलगत्तै प्रदेश-२ का प्रमुख दुई शहरमा ठीक विपरीत दृश्य देखा परे । जनकपुरमा हर्षोल्लासको माहोल देखा पर्‍यो भने वीरगञ्जमा चाहि विरोधको स्वर गुञ्जियो । कारण जनकपुरलाई प्रदेश-२ को अस्थायी राजधानी तोकिएको थियो, आफूलाई राजधानीको दाबेदार वीरगञ्ज सरकारको निर्णयबाट क्रुद्ध थियो ।

यी दुवै शहरसँग आ-आफ्नै 'उज्याला पक्ष' होलान् । तर, एउटा आँकडा भने दुवैलाई लज्जित तुल्याउने खालको छ । प्रदेश सदरमुकाम बन्न प्रयत्नरत धनुषाको जनकपुर होस् वा पर्साको वीरगञ्ज यी दुवै शहरसँग यो प्रदेशका सबभन्दा धेरै बालबालिका विद्यालय जान वञ्चित रहेको 'अँध्यारो पक्ष' जोडिएको छ ।

शिक्षा मन्त्रालयको आँकडाले भन्छ, प्रदेश-२ मा विद्यालय जान वञ्चित बालबालिकाको संख्या केलाउँदा धनुषा र पर्सा क्रमशः पहिलो र दोस्रो नम्बरमा आउँछन् । धनुषामा २७ हजार २९७ र पर्सामा २७ हजार १०५ बालबालिका विद्यालय बाहिर छन् । त्यसपछि क्रमशः बारा, सर्लाही, रौतहट, सिरहा, सप्तरी र महोत्तरी जिल्लाको पालो आउँछ ।

शिक्षा मन्त्रालयले एक वर्षअघि गरेको सर्वेक्षणको नतिजा अनुसार प्रदेश-२ का आठ जिल्लामा १ लाख ९१ हजार २२१ बालबालिका विद्यालयभन्दा बाहिरै छन् । यीमध्ये प्राथमिक तहका २५ हजार ३४४ र आधारभूत तहका १ लाख ६५ हजार ८७७ रहेका छन् । पढ्ने उमेरका विद्यालयबाहिरै रहेका बालिकाको संख्या बालकको तुलनामा धेरै छ । (हे चार्ट)

प्रदेश २ : विद्यालय बाहिर रहेका बालबालिका

प्राथमिक तह

क्र.सं.	जिल्ला	बालिका (छात्रा)	बालक (छात्र)	जम्मा
१	सप्तरी	२१७२	१७५७	३९३९
२	सिरहा	६०६	१०८८	१६९३
३	धनुषा	११६१	८६३	२०२४
४	महोत्तरी	१५९०	१७०३	३२९३
५	सर्लाही	१६७६	६०६	२२८२
६	रौतहट	२६०४	१८०	१७८४
७	बारा	३२५०	१९२६	५१७६
८	पर्सा	४०७४	१०८२	५१५६
जम्मा		१७१३२	९२०५	२५३४४

आधारभूत तह

क्र.सं.	जिल्ला	बालिका (छात्रा)	बालक (छात्र)	जम्मा
१	सप्तरी	७५६०	७५५७	१५११७
२	सिरहा	१०४२५	१०७७७	२१२०२
३	धनुषा	१३२८९	११९८४	२५२७३
४	महोत्तरी	८२५७	६४९५	१४७५२
५	सर्लाही	१३१६२	१०३४८	२३५१०
६	रौतहट	१३५९०	९२१३	२२८०३
७	बारा	१०९२२	१०३४९	२१२७१
८	पर्सा	१३६२७	८३२२	२१९४९
जम्मा		९०८३२	७५०४५	१६५८७७

स्रोत : शिक्षा विभाग (अनिवार्य शिक्षा शाखा)

मुलुकका अरू ६ वटा प्रदेशसँग तुलना गर्दा पनि प्रदेश-२ को यो तथ्यांक सबैभन्दा धेरै हो । शिक्षा मन्त्रालयको अभिलेख अनुसार, प्रदेश-५ मा विद्यालय नजाने बालबालिकाको संख्या ५९ हजार ९०४ छ । प्रदेश-१ मा यो संख्या ४९ हजार ३७ छ । प्रदेश-३ मा यो संख्या ३२ हजार ९८८ छ भने प्रदेश-७ मा २९ हजार १८८ छ । प्रदेश-४ र ६ मा क्रमशः १४ हजार ६१३ र १३ हजार ८४५ विद्यार्थी विद्यालय बाहिर छन् ।

यस अनुसार, विद्यालय नजाने बालबालिकाको कुल संख्या बाँकी ६ प्रदेशहरूमा लगभग दुई लाख (१,९९,५७५) छ भने प्रदेश-२ मा पनि लगभग दुई लाख नै छ । अर्थात् यो मामिलामा बाँकी मुलुकलाई प्रदेश-२ एकलैले दरो नकारात्मक टक्कर दिएको छ ।

यातायात, सञ्चार, शिक्षा लगायत सबैखाले पूर्वाधार र सुविधाका हिसाबले तुलनात्मक रूपमा अगाडि रहेका प्रदेश-२ का जिल्लामा यति धेरै बालबालिका विद्यालय नजानुको कारण के होला ? हामीले त्यसका केही पक्ष खोतलेका छौं ।

ढोका थुन्ने गरीबी

यस टोलका ४० परिवार मुसहरका बालबालिका विद्यालय किन जाँदैनन् ? यहाँ पुग्ने जो कोहीले आफैँ जवाफ पाउँछ । दुई महीनाअघिको कुरा हो, महोत्तरी सदरमुकाम जलेश्वर नगरपालिका-३, खैराटोलमा पुग्दा ९ वर्षीया राधा सदा जूटा भाँडा माभ्रुदै थिइन् भने ११ वर्षीया सज्जिला सदा घरको काम सकेर भाइबहिनी हेरेर बसेकी थिइन् । जेठी छोरी सज्जिलाले आमाबुबा ज्याला-मजदूरीको काम खोज्न गएपछि घरको सबै काम हेर्नुपर्छ । बहिनी राधाले उनलाई सघाउँछिन् ।

खैराटोलकै १० वर्षीया अनु सदा पनि बहिनी र भाइको हेरविचारसँगै खाना पकाउने, भाँडा माभ्रुने र घर सरसफाइ गर्ने काममा व्यस्त भेटिइन् । १५ वर्षीया ललिता सदा खेतमा धान काट्दै थिइन् । खैराटोलका सबैजसो मुसहर बालबालिकाको दिन प्रायः यसैगरी बिच्छ । कलिला



महोत्तरी सदरमुकाम जलेश्वरको खैराटोल, मुसहर बस्तीका बालबालिका जो विद्यालय जाँदैनन् ।

यी बालबालिका सबै किसिमका काम गर्छन् । चौध-पन्ध्र वर्षका बालबालिका समेत आमाबुबासँगै मजदूरीको काममा भेटिन्छन् ।

१४ वर्षीय गोकुल सदा त्यसकै उदाहरण हुन् । पढ्ने रहर भए पनि अहिलेसम्म विद्यालय टेक्न नपाएका गोकुल भन्छन्, "बाबाको कमाइले मात्र घरको खर्च चल्दैन, म पनि काम गर्न जान्छु ।" गोकुलका दिदी, दाजु र भाइ कसैले पढ्न पाएका छैनन् । दिदीको बिहे भइसक्यो, दाजु भारतमा काम गर्छन् र १२ वर्षीय भाइ पनि उनीसँगै काम गर्छन् ।

१२ वर्षीया कलावती सदाको कथा पनि उस्तै छ । आमाबुबा मजदूरी गर्न जान्छन्, उनी घरको काम सम्हालिन्छन् । ११ वर्षीय अनिल सदा ५ कक्षामा पढ्छन्, उनकी दिदी र बहिनीले भने विद्यालय टेक्न पाएका छैनन् । गाउँको अवस्था सुनाउँदै खैराटोलका विशेश्वर सदाले भने, "१२ वर्षकै उमेरदेखि यहाँका बालबालिका अरूको खेतमा काम गर्न जान्छन् ।"

गैरसरकारी संस्था समाज विकास केन्द्रका अनुसार, खैराटोलमा विद्यालय जाने उमेरका ९५ बालबालिका छन् । तीमध्ये ३० जनाको नाम लेखाइए पनि उनीहरू नियमित विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । ६५ जनाले विद्यालय टेकेकै छैनन् । ४० परिवार बसोबास गर्ने यो टोलबाट एकजनाले पनि एसएलसी उत्तीर्ण गरेका छैनन् ।

यी ४० परिवार मुसहरसँग छाप्रो अट्ने बाहेक एक धुर पनि जग्गा छैन । छाप्रो यति सानो हुन्छ कि यसभित्र परिवारका सदस्यलाई सुत्न मुश्किलले पुग्ने ठाउँ हुन्छ ।

सानैमा बिहे हुनु, अभिभावकमा छोराछोरी पढाउनुपर्छ भन्ने चेतनाको कमी र कमाइको लोभले बालबालिकालाई पढाइभन्दा काममा लगाउनु यहाँको आम समस्या भए पनि यसको मुख्य कारण गरीबी हो ।

समाज विकास केन्द्रका 'फील्ड अफिसर' रूपेश पासवानले विद्यालय जान नपाएका किशोरीहरूलाई लक्षित गरी केन्द्रले किशोरी कक्षा संचालन गर्दै आएको र ९ महीनाको कक्षापछि उनीहरूलाई विद्यालय भर्ना गरिने गरेको बताए । अहिलेसम्म कक्षामा २१ जना किशोरी सहभागी भए । तर, उनीहरू कोही पनि विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । यही कारण हुनसक्छ, यहाँका ५० प्रतिशत महिलासँग नागरिकता छैन । धेरै बालबालिकाको जन्मदर्ता पनि छैन ।

संस्कारको पखाल

महोत्तरीको शमासी गाउँपालिका-६, शमासी (इस्लामावाद) टोलको कथा केही फरक छ । यो टोलकी आयसा खातुन (१८) ले कुरान (इस्लाम धर्मको प्रमुख धर्मग्रन्थ) राम्रोसँग पढ्न सक्ने भएपछि घरायसी काममा आमालाई सघाउन मदरसा (धार्मिक पाठशाला) छाड्नु पर्‍यो ।

इस्लामावाद टोलकै नगिमा खातुन (१२) ले पनि घरको काममा सघाउन मदरसाको पढाइ छाडेको तीन वर्ष पुग्यो । १२ वर्षीया सम्मा खातुनले हिन्दी, उर्दू र कुरान सिकेपछि मदरसा छाडिन् । कारण, ६ कट्टा जमीनको उत्पादनले खान लाउन पुगेन, अनि उनका आमाबुबा अन्यत्र काममा जानुपर्ने हुनथाल्यो, घरको जिम्मेवारी सम्माको जिम्मामा आयो । गाउँकै साजिया खातुन (१७) र जाइस्था खातुन (१८) ले त मदरसा पनि टेक्न पाएका छैनन् ।

यो यस्तो टोल हो, जहाँका एक जना पनि बालबालिका विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । अभिभावकले मदरसाको धार्मिक शिक्षालाई मात्र महत्व दिने गर्छन् । तर, करीब ५०० बालबालिका रहेको यो टोलका सबैले मदरसा शिक्षा पनि पूरा गरेका छैनन् । कतिपय बालक मदरसाको पढाइ

सिध्याएर, केही चाहि बीचमै छाडेर रोजगारीका लागि भारततिर लाग्छन् । बालिकाहरू चाहि घरको कामकाजमा व्यस्त हुन्छन् ।

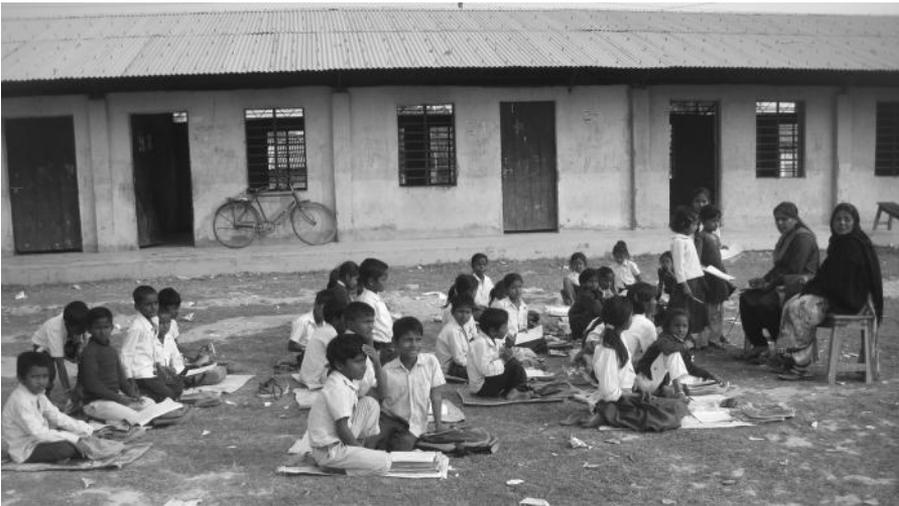
दुई किलोमिटर दूरीमा रहेको छेवैको गाउँमा माध्यमिक विद्यालय छ, तर मदरसाको पढाइ पूरा गर्नेलाई अभिभावकले विद्यालय पठाउँदैनन् । अभिभावक अस्गरी खातुन भन्छिन्, "यिनीहरू पढ्न गए घरको काम कसले गर्छ ?" अर्की अभिभावक रूवेदा खातुनले भनिन्, "छोरीहरूले मदरसा पढेपछि घरको काम सिकाउने र बिहे गरिदिने हो ।"

अभिभावक शेष बकाउल्ला धार्मिक शिक्षा सबैले लिनुपर्ने अनिवार्य प्रचलन भएकाले त्यसभन्दा धेरै पढाउने चलन नभएको बताउँछन् । छोराहरू कमाउन जानुपर्ने भएकाले पढाउन नसकिने, छोरीलाई चाहि टाढाको विद्यालय पठाउँदा सुरक्षा नहुने भएकाले नपढाइएको उनको तर्क छ ।

समाज विकास केन्द्रका फील्ड अफिसर नेहाज अहमदका अनुसार, यहाँको मुसलमान समुदाय आर्थिक रूपमा विपन्न छ । उनी भन्छन्, "त्यसमाथि छोरी घरबाहिर निस्के बिग्रिन्छन् भन्ने सोच हावी छ ।" हैजान अजिजिया सिद्धिकिया मदरसाका शिक्षक मौलाना शेख शलाउदिन राउफले धार्मिक शिक्षा नै पर्याप्त भएको तर्क गरे । उनको भनाइ थियो, "मदरसाको कोर्सभन्दा ज्यादा पढ्न आवश्यक छैन ।"

मदरसामा प्रायः पाँच कक्षासम्मको पढाइ हुन्छ । त्यहाँ सिकाइने कुरा अनौटा छन् । मौलाना राउफले भने, "मदरसामा बालिकाहरूलाई अनुशासनमा बस्न, परिवार र श्रीमान्लाई सधैँ खुशी राख्न, बुर्का (पर्दा) नलगाई बाहिर हिडडुल नगर्न र परपुरुषसँग नबोल्न सिकाइन्छ ।"

गाउँपालिकाका सात वटा वडामध्ये वडा नम्बर २, ३ र ६ मुस्लिम बहुल हुन् । गाउँपालिकाभित्र तीन सामुदायिक विद्यालय, ६ निजी विद्यालय र ६ मदरसा छन् । इस्लामावाद टोल सीमावर्ती भारतको कनवा बजारबाट दुई किमी र सदरमुकाम जलेश्वरबाट २० किमी दूरीमा



विद्यालयमा बस्ने ठाउँ नभएपछि चौरमा बसेर परीक्षा दिँदै विद्यार्थी ।

पछ । यहाँका बासिन्दा मौसमी खेतीपाती र भारतमा ज्यालामजदूरी गरेर जीविकोपार्जन गर्छन् ।

प्रदेश-२ कै सिरहा जिल्लाको सिरहा नगरपालिका-४ स्थित रमौल दक्षिण टोल (कुटीपोखरी) मा मुस्लिम समुदायका २० परिवार बस्छन् । आफ्नो एकै धुर जग्गा नभएका उनीहरू ऐलानी जग्गामा छाप्रो बनाएर बसेका छन् । ५० मिटरको दूरीमा दुई वटा मदरसा र एउटा विद्यालय छन् । तर, मुस्लिम समुदायका ८० बालबालिकामध्ये २० जना मात्र मदरसा जान्छन्, उनीहरू पनि नियमित छैनन् । विद्यालय जाने बालबालिका त एक जना पनि छैनन् । १४ वर्ष पुगेका प्रायः बालबालिका अभिभावकसँगै काम खोज्न निस्कन्छन् । १८ वर्ष पुगेका अब्दुल करिम भन्छन्, "मजदूरी गरेको दिन ६०० रुपैयाँ कमाउँछु । यतिले घरको छाक टार्न ठिक्क हुन्छ, भाइबहिनी कसरी पढाउनु ?"

रमौल उत्तर टोलमा चाहि तीन वर्ष अधिदेखि छात्राको लागि 'गर्ल्स मदरसा' सञ्चालनमा छ । इस्लाम धर्मसम्बन्धी ज्ञान र अंग्रेजी, हिन्दी, अरबी र नेपाली भाषा सिकाइने आवासीय सुविधासहितको यो मदरसामा १३९ किशोरी पढ्छन् । मदरसामा रहेका मध्ये धेरै बाहिरी जिल्लाबाट र केही भारतबाट आएकाहरू समेत छन् ।

यहाँ पढाउने शिक्षिका सबै महिला छन् । छात्रालाई बाहिर निस्कने अनुमति छैन । निस्कने परे बुर्का लगाउनुपर्छ । मदरसाका प्रधानाध्यापक मुस्ताफिर हमानीका अनुसार ती किशोरीहरूलाई उर्दू, अरबी भाषासँगै कुरानका विषय, बुर्का लगाएर हिड्न, नचिनेका मान्छेसँग नबोल्न र श्रीमानलाई खुशी पार्न सिकाइन्छ । हमानीले पनि उही तर्क गरे, "यसमै सबै कुरा छ, किशोरीहरूलाई योभन्दा बढी शिक्षा लिन आवश्यक पनि छैन ।"

मदरसाको पढाइ सकिएपछि अधिकांश अभिभावकले आफ्ना सन्तानलाई विद्यालय पठाउँदैनन् । स्थानीय समाजसेवी मोहम्मद शाहिद भन्छन्, "मदरसाको पढाइपछि विद्यालय पढाउन आवश्यक छ, तर, यहाँका अभिभावक कुरै बुझ्दैनन् ।"

२०० घरधुरी रहेको यस टोलका करीब १०० जना बालबालिका विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । उनीहरूले मदरसामा पनि पाइला नटेकेको समाजसेवी शाहिदले बताए । यो टोलमा दुई वटा मदरसा र एउटा विद्यालय छन् । गरीबी र अभिभावकमा पढाइप्रति रुचि नहुनु यसको मुख्य कारण रहेको शाहिदको निर्व्याल छ । आक्कलभुक्कल मदरसा र विद्यालय जाने बालबालिका पनि बीचैमा पढाइ छाड्छन्, उमेर बढाएर नागरिकता र राहदानी बनाउँछन्, अनि वैदेशिक रोजगारमा जान्छन् ।

बालबालिका विद्यालय नजानुको अर्को कारण घरेलु हिंसा हो । सहनाज खातुन (४५) लाई श्रीमानले छाडे र उनी भारतमै अर्को बिहे गरेर बसे । सहनाजका तीन छोराछोरी छन् । श्रीमानले छाडेपछि घरखर्च चलाउन अरूको घरमा काम गरिरहेकी सहनाजले छोराछोरी पढाउन सकिनन् । यो टोलमा उनीजस्तै श्रीमान र परिवारबाट पीडित २० महिला छन् । श्रीमानले खानलाउन नदिने, घरबाट निकालिदिने र अर्को बिहे गरेर सम्पर्कविहीन भएपछि यसको मार बालबालिकामा परेको छ ।

प्रदेश-२ को अस्थायी राजधानी जनकपुर उपमहानगरपालिका-२० स्थित लोहना गाउँमा रहेको खान काहे बरकात मदरसा नेपालकै ठूलो मदरसा हो । यहाँ एउटै कम्पाउण्डभित्र महिला र पुरुषलाई अलग्गै कक्षामा पढाइन्छ । यहाँ पढ्ने ७० किशोरी आफ्नो कक्षा रहेको भवनबाट अर्को भवनमा जान पाउँदैनन् । किशोर पढाउने पुरुष शिक्षकहरू पनि किशोरी पढ्ने मदरसामा

जान पाउँदैनन् । कडा अनुशासनमा मदरसाको पढाइ सिध्याएपछि अभिभावकहरू आफ्ना छोराछोरीलाई अरू कुनै विद्यालय पठाउन रुचाउँदैनन् ।

पैसा न पढ्ने ठाउँ

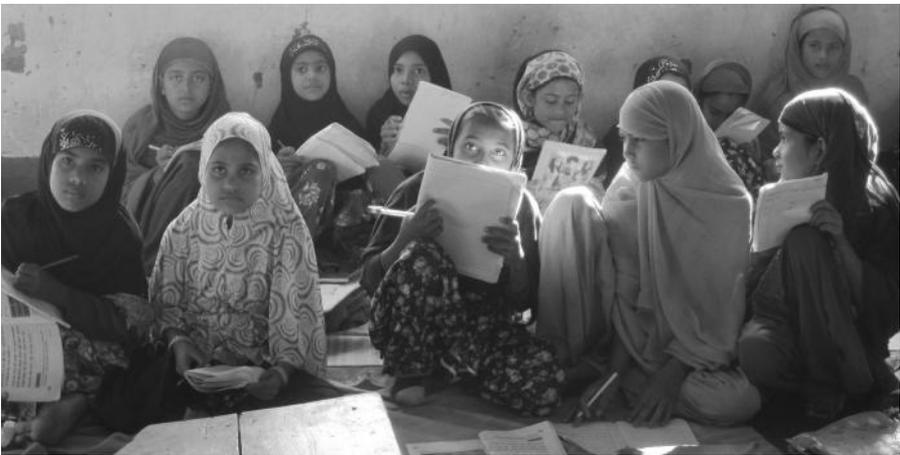
१४ मंसीर २०७४ मा महोत्तरीको मनरासिशवा नगरपालिका-१०, मधवास्थित हनुमान विश्वनाथ जनता सरकारी प्राथमिक विद्यालय पुग्दा त्यहाँ एकजना पनि विद्यार्थी थिएनन् । एकजना शिक्षक र बाल विकास केन्द्रकी शिक्षिका बबिता पाण्डेय मात्रै त्यहाँ थिए । शिक्षिका पाण्डेयले 'अर्को विद्यालयका विद्यार्थीको मृत्यु भएकाले शोकमा यो विद्यालयमा समेत विदा दिइएको' बताइन् ।

खासमा मंसीर महीना धान काट्ने सिजन भएकाले विद्यार्थी नआउँदा विद्यालय बन्द गरिएको रहेछ । सोही विद्यालयमा ५ कक्षामा पढ्ने गुडिया खातुनलाई धानको बोभा लिएर खेतबाट फर्कँदै गरेको अवस्थामा हामीले भेट्यौं । उनले भनिन्, "धान काट्ने सिजन भएकाले स्कूल विदा छ ।"

२०१० सालमा स्थापित यो विद्यालय भवनको छानो र भित्ता दुवै नहुँदा खुला चौरमै पढाइ हुन्छ । चारवटा भवनका आठ कोठामध्ये एउटै पनि सद्दे अवस्थामा छैनन् । शिक्षक रामराव राउत भन्छन्, "कोठाको हालत राम्रो छैन, चौरमै पढाउँछौं ।"

५ कक्षासम्म पढाइ हुने विद्यालयमा एक प्रधानाध्यापक र बाल विकास केन्द्रका समेत गरी तीन जना शिक्षक छन् । बाल विकास केन्द्र र १ कक्षालाई एकै ठाउँमा पढाइन्छ । दुई र तीन कक्षाकालाई एक ठाउँमा अनि चार र पाँच कक्षाका विद्यार्थीलाई एक ठाउँमा पढाइन्छ । विद्यालयमा कालोपाटी नभएकोले गणित विषय पढाउन समस्या भएको शिक्षक राउतले बताए ।

विद्यालयको हविगत देखेर पनि छोराछोरीलाई स्कूल पठाउन मन नलाग्ने अभिभावक लोकेन्द्र सदा बताउँछन् । स्थानीय बासिन्दा दिलकश अन्सारी मुस्लिम, कुर्मी, चमार, लोहार, सदा लगायत समुदायका अति विपन्न र धेरै दलित बालबालिका पढ्ने यो विद्यालयको भौतिक



सिरहा नगरपालिका-४, रमौलस्थित मदरसामा अध्ययनरत छात्रा ।

विकासमा कसैले ध्यान नदिएको गुनासो गर्छन् । शिक्षक राउत भन्छन्, "विद्यालयको स्तरोन्नतिका लागि जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालय नै चासो देखाउँदैन ।" २६१ विद्यार्थी पढ्ने यो विद्यालयका ४० प्रतिशत विद्यार्थी मात्र नियमित छन् ।

नेपालकै पुरानोमध्येको यो विद्यालयमा पढेका थुप्रै विद्यार्थी प्रोफेसर, डाक्टर र इन्जिनियर बनेका छन् । तर, यही विद्यालय रहेको मधवास्थित मुसहर टोलमा आजसम्म एक जनाले मात्र एसएलसी उत्तीर्ण गरेका छन् । ती हुन् योगेन्द्र सदा (३६), जसले २०५५ सालमा नजिकैको भौगुलो भैयादाई गुलावदाई जनता माविबाट एसएलसी उत्तीर्ण गरेका थिए ।

योगेन्द्रले पनि आफ्ना तीन छोरा र छोरीमध्ये एक छोरा र छोरीलाई प्राथमिक शिक्षाभन्दा धेरै पढाउन सकेनन् । भन्छन्, "खर्च नपाएर मैले पढ्न सकिनँ, अहिले छोराछोरी पढाउन पनि पैसा भएन ।" यस मुसहर टोलका ६० बालबालिकामध्ये २० जनाले विद्यालय टेकेकै छैनन् । विद्यालय भर्ना भएकाहरू पनि नियमित छैनन् ।

सिरहाको विष्णुपुरा गाउँपालिका-३, अमागरिया राजपुर मुसहर टोलकी राधिका सदा (८) हप्तामा तीन दिन मात्र विद्यालय जान्छिन् । अरू दिन घरको कामले फुर्सद मिल्दैन । ४ कक्षामा पढ्ने राकेश सदा (१०) पनि धेरैजसो समय बहिनीको हेरचाहमै बित्ने हुँदा नियमित विद्यालय जान पाउँदैनन् ।

टोलकै अनिता सदा (१४) ले २ कक्षासम्म पढेर पढाइ छाडिन् । घरायसी कामको भारले पढाइ छाडेकी उनी अहिले अरूको खेतीपातीको काम समेत गर्छिन् । राजु सदा (१४) ले ३ कक्षा पढेर छाडेको दुई वर्ष पुग्यो भने उनका भाइ त विद्यालय नै जाँदैनन् ।

५ कक्षामा पढ्ने गम्भीर सदा (११) ले भाइबहिनी हेर्ने र बुबाआमालाई सघाउने कामबाट फुर्सद नपाएपछि यसै वर्ष पढाइ छाडे । ९० परिवार मुसहरहरूको बसोबास रहेको यो टोलमा विद्यालय जाने उमेरका ९० जना बालबालिका छन् । तीमध्ये ३० जनाले विद्यालय टेकेकै छैनन् भने जानेहरू पनि नियमित छैनन् । किन विद्यालय नै जाँदैनन् वा नियमित छैनन् भन्ने प्रश्नमा सबैजसोको एउटै जवाफ हुन्छ- 'बाबुआमा मजदूरी गर्न जाने हुनाले घर हेर्नुपर्छ ।'

सदरमुकाम सिरहा नगरपालिका-२, गोरियानीका ज्योति मल्लिक (१७) ले ६ कक्षामा पढ्दापढ्दै पढाइ छाडे । उनी अहिले भारतमा ज्यालादारीको काम गर्छन् । उनका भाइ ६ कक्षामा पढ्छन्, तर बहिनी भर्ना भए पनि विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । ८ कक्षा पढेर छाडेका यहीँका सुरेश मल्लिक पनि भारतमा होटलमा काम गर्छन् ।

डोम समुदायका १५ परिवार बसोबास गर्ने यो टोलका विद्यालय जाने उमेरका २५ बालबालिकामध्ये कोही पनि विद्यालय जाँदैनन् । सिरहाकै बरियारपट्टि गाउँपालिका-३, मल्लिक टोलका ७ परिवार डोम समुदायका तीन जना बालबालिका मात्र विद्यालय जान्छन् । उनीहरू पनि विद्यालयमा नियमित छैनन् ।

डोम समुदायमाथि जातीय विभेद चर्को छ । कथित उपल्लो जातकाले उनीहरूलाई सरसफाइबाहेक अरू कुनै काम दिँदैनन् । स्थानीय सीता मल्लिक भन्छिन्, "उपल्लो जातकाले हामीलाई काममा पनि राख्दैनन् । बाँसबाट सुपो (नाड्लो) र भकारी बनाएर बेचेको पैसाले घरखर्च चलाउँछौं ।"

जनकपुर उपमहानगरपालिका-१२, रामपुरमा रहेको श्री माध्यमिक विद्यालयबाट १०० मिटर टाढा मात्र छ, कुवा गाउँ । सुमित्रा पण्डित यही विद्यालयकी ५ कक्षाकी विद्यार्थी हुन् । तर,

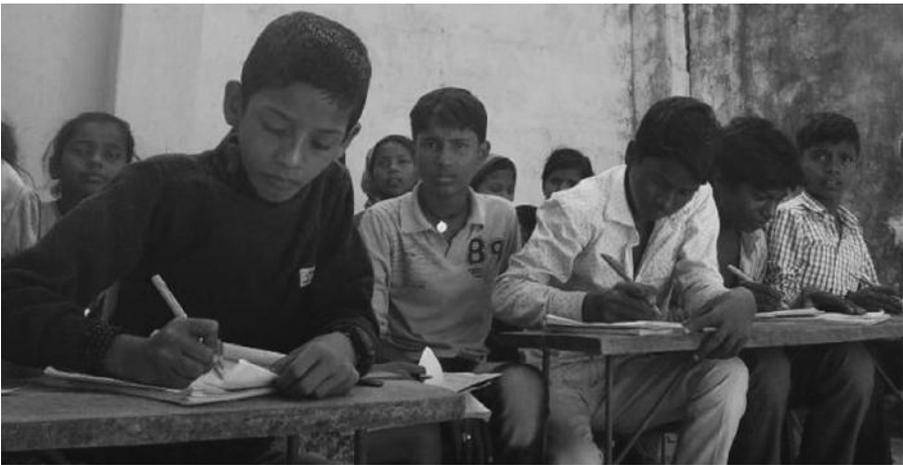
विद्यालय चलिरहेका बेला उनी घरमा भेटिइन् । कारण सोध्दा उनले भनिन्, “राम्रो पढाइ हुँदैन, त्यसैले नगएको ।” स्थानीय वीरेन्द्र नायक भन्छन्, “शिक्षक समयमा आउँदैनन्, आएकाले पनि राम्रोसँग पढाउँदैनन्, त्यसैले कोही विद्यालय जान मान्दैनन् ।”

प्रधानाध्यापक रामअवतार यादवले नियमित पढाइ नहुने कुरा स्वीकार नगरे पनि धेरै विद्यार्थी नियमित नरहेको चाहिँ स्वीकार गरे । प्रावि तहमा आधाजसो विद्यार्थी मात्र उपस्थित हुन्छन् भने सिजनल कामका बेला धेरैजसो विद्यार्थी पढ्न आउँदैनन् । प्रधानाध्यापक यादवका अनुसार ८०० विद्यार्थी पढ्ने यो विद्यालयका २० प्रतिशत विद्यार्थीले बीचमै पढाइ छाड्छन्, जसमा छात्राको संख्या बढी छ । “धेरैजसोको ९/१० कक्षा पुगेपछि बिहे हुन्छ” उनले भने, “छात्राले पढाइ छाड्ने एउटा प्रमुख कारण बालविवाह हो भने छात्रहरू चाहिँ वैदेशिक रोजगारमा जानलाई पढाइ छाड्छन् ।”

महोत्तरी सदरमुकाम जलेश्वरको लक्ष्मीचन्द्र मुरारका उच्च माविमा कक्षा १ देखि ८ सम्म ७०० र मावि तहमा ४३० विद्यार्थी छन् । प्रधानाध्यापक सञ्जीव भाका अनुसार, यस वर्ष अन्य विद्यालयबाट भर्ना हुन आएका करीब १०० विद्यार्थीलाई फिर्ता गरियो । तर, यो विद्यालयमा पनि प्रावि तहका १५ प्रतिशत विद्यार्थी नियमित विद्यालय आउँदैनन् । प्रधानाध्यापक भाका अनुसार, भर्ना भएकामध्ये १० प्रतिशत विद्यार्थीले बीचमै पढाइ छाड्छन् ।

शिक्षा मन्त्रालयका अनुसार, महोत्तरीमा विद्यालयबाहिर रहेका बालबालिका १८ हजार ४५ जना छन् । उनीहरूलाई विद्यालयमा भर्ना गराउन ५० वटा गैरसरकारी संस्थाले काम गरिरहेका छन् । अहिलेसम्म यो अभियानबाट दुई हजार बालबालिका भर्ना गरियो तर उनीहरू पनि विद्यालयमा नियमित छैनन् ।

जिल्ला शिक्षा अधिकारी दूलोबाबु दाहाल भन्छन्, “बालबालिकालाई विद्यालयमा ल्याउने प्रयास गरिरहेका छौं । अर्को शैक्षिक सत्रमा पाँच हजार बालबालिका विद्यालय भर्ना गराउने



महोत्तरीको मनरासिशवा नपा-१० मधवास्थित हनुमानदत्त विश्वनाथ जनता प्राविमा परीक्षा दिँदै बालबालिका । विद्यालयका तीनवटै भवन बस्नलायक छैनन् ।

लक्ष्य छ ।" जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयका शाखा अधिकृत रोजेश्वर भा बालबालिका विद्यालय नजानुमा तत्कालको निर्वाहमुखी आर्थिक बाध्यता मुख्य कारण रहेको बताउँछन् । "पढेर पैसा कमाउन समय लाग्छ, काममा गए तुरुन्तै पैसा पाइन्छ" उनी भन्छन्, "त्यसैले यहाँका विद्यार्थी मात्रै होइन अभिभावक पनि आफ्ना छोराछोरीलाई विद्यालय भन्दा काममा पठाउन चाहन्छन् ।" महोत्तरीमा ३१२ सामुदायिक विद्यालय, ९२ निजी विद्यालय, ५४६ बाल विकास केन्द्र र ९० वटा मदरसा छन् ।

नेपालमा पढ्ने उमेरका १० लाख बालबालिका अभै स्कूल जाने नगरेको शिक्षा मन्त्रालयले तयार पारेको एक प्रतिवेदनले देखाएको छ । २०७३ मा सार्वजनिक गरिएको उक्त प्रतिवेदनका अनुसार विद्यालय नजाने मात्र नभई बीचैमा पढाइ छाड्नेहरूको संख्या पनि निकै धेरै छ । राष्ट्रसंघीय निकाय र नेपाल सरकारले संयुक्त रूपमा तयार पारेको 'सबै बालबालिका' शीर्षकको उक्त प्रतिवेदनका अनुसार नेपालको कुल जनसंख्याको भण्डै चार प्रतिशत बालबालिका स्कूल जाँदैनन् ।

यति ठूलो संख्यामा बालबालिका किन विद्यालय बाहिर छन् ? शिक्षा मन्त्रालयको अनुगमन तथा मूल्यांकन शाखाका सहसचिव आनन्द पौडेल कारण गन्ती गराउँछन्, "पहिलो- अभिभावकमा चेतनाको कमी, दोस्रो- पैसा र तेस्रो- विद्यालयको वातावरण राम्रो हुन नसक्नु । त्यसपछिको कारण हो- सामाजिक परिवेश ।"

हात्ती आयो... फुस्स !

२७ हजार २९७ बालबालिका विद्यालयबाहिरै रहेको धनुषामा उनीहरूलाई विद्यालयमा ल्याउन र टिकाउन युनिसेफ र अन्य गैरसरकारी संस्थाले पछिल्लो तीन वर्षमा रु.१ करोड ८० लाख रुपैयाँ खर्च गरेका छन् । यो अभियानमा जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयले समेत वार्षिक रु.५ लाख खर्च गर्छ ।

उप जिल्ला शिक्षा अधिकारी दानीकान्त भाका अनुसार, मुसहर, डोम र विन समुदायका बालबालिकालाई सानैदेखि काममा लगाइने हुँदा उनीहरूको भर्ना चुनौतीपूर्ण छ । उनका भनाइमा यो समुदायका बालबालिकालाई विद्यालयमा ल्याउन भन्दा टिकाउन र नियमित गराउन समस्या छ ।

भाका भनाइमा, यहाँ प्राविमा औसतमा ७० प्रतिशत बालबालिका उपस्थित हुन्छन् भने निमावि र माविमा क्रमशः ५० र २० प्रतिशत मात्र । पढेर काम नपाइने बुझाइका कारण धेरैजसो अभिभावकले उमेर बढाएर छोराहरूलाई वैदेशिक रोजगारमा पठाउने गर्छन् ।

२२ हजार ८९५ बालबालिका विद्यालयबाहिर रहेको सिरहामा जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयले विद्यालय भर्ना अभियान चलाउन र भर्ना हुनेलाई विद्यालयमा टिकाउन रु.६६ लाख बजेटका विभिन्न कार्यक्रम चलाएको छ । यसको उपलब्धिका रूपमा कार्यालय १० हजार ६०१ बालबालिकालाई विद्यालय भर्ना गरिएको अभिलेख देखाउँछ । तर यसमध्ये ठूलो संख्या विद्यालयमा नियमित छैन ।

विद्यालयबाहिर रहेका बालबालिकाका लागि देशका २८ जिल्लामा यस्तो अभियान चलाइएको छ । प्रदेश-२ का आठ वटै जिल्लामा यो अभियान सञ्चालनमा छ । चालू शैक्षिक सत्रमा यीसहित १५ जिल्लामा अभियान सञ्चालनका लागि रु.७ करोड १८ लाख २७ हजार खर्च गरिदैछ । उपलब्धि भने 'हात्ती आयो, हात्ती आयो... फुस्स !' भनेजस्तो छ ।

(साथमा सिरहाबाट सुरेन्द्र कामती)

प्रकाशित मिति : ३० फागुन २०७४, www.cijnepal.org.np

रामजी दाहाल
श्रवण देव
मनिष दुवाडी

सामुदायिक विद्यालय पुस्तकालयको नाउँमा लूटलूट

सरकारले सामुदायिक विद्यालयहरूमा पुस्तकालय बनाउन भण्डै रु.३ अर्ब बजेट निकासी गरिसकेको छ। तर अनुदान पाएका कैयौं विद्यालयले पुस्तक नै नकिनी रकम अन्यत्रै लगाएका छन्। अधिकांशले चाहिँ पुस्तक बिक्रेतासँगको मिलेमतोमा कामै नलाग्ने केही 'देखाउने' किताब किनेर बाँकी पैसा हिनामिना गरेका छन्।

सप्तरीको विष्णुपुर गाउँपालिकास्थित जनता मावि, खुरहुरियाले गत वर्ष (२०७४) जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयबाट पुस्तकालय संचालनका लागि रु.६ लाख ५० हजार निकासामा पायो । त्यसबाट के कस्ता पुस्तक किनिएछ भनेर हेर्न २१ फागुन २०७४ मा सो विद्यालयको पुस्तकालयमा पुग्दा त्यहाँ प्राविधिक शिक्षा, इलेक्ट्रोनिक डिभाइस एण्ड सर्किट, इलेक्ट्रिक टेक्नोलोजी, माइक्रो प्रोसेसर, डाटाबेस म्यानेजमेन्ट, वेब टेक्नोलोजी, मोडल डिजिटल इलेक्ट्रोनिक, कम्प्युटर नेट वर्क की नामका एक/एक थान तथा कक्षा ९ र १० का केही थान किताब थिए । पुस्तकालयका लागि विद्यालयले पाएको रकमबाट खरीद गरिएका जम्माजम्मी किताब यिनै रहेछन् । एकजना शिक्षकले दिएको जानकारी अनुसार, 'रु.१५ हजार बराबरको किताब खरीद गरेर यो पुस्तकालय चलाइएको छ । अरू पैसा के भयो थाहा छैन ।' यसबारे बुझ्न खोज्दा प्रअ सूर्यनारायण यादवले 'विभिन्न कारणले गर्दा किताब किन्न नभ्याइएको' भन्दै अब छिट्टै किताब किन्ने जवाफ दिए । उनले ती कारण भने खुलाएनन् । विभिन्न जिल्लाका धेरै प्रअमा चैत मसान्तपछि जिशिका रहँदैन, त्यसपछि पैसाको खोजीनिती हुँदैन भन्ने बुझाइ छ । प्रअ यादव पनि तिनैमध्ये पर्दथे ।

सप्तरीकै रूपनी गाउँपालिकास्थित बसबिट्टी माविले पुस्तकालय संचालन गर्न दिइएको रु.३ लाख ७५ हजार भवन निर्माणमा खर्च गरेको छ । "भवन निर्माणको पैसा रहेको बैंक खाता रोक्का भएपछि पुस्तकालयको पैसा त्यसमा खर्च गरिएको" प्रअ श्यामप्रसाद यादवले बताए । "पुस्तकालयको बजेटबाट रु.१ लाख ७५ हजारमा १५ थान कुर्सी, तीन थान टेबल, दुई थान किताब न्याक र चार थान शोकेस खरीद गरिएको" उनको भनाइ छ । अर्थात्, यो विद्यालयले पुस्तकालय शीर्षकमा पैसा लियो तर अहिलेसम्म एउटा पनि किताब किनेको छैन ।

राजविराजस्थित केशो अनिरुद्धवती माविको पुस्तकालयमा केही थान पुस्तक छन् । साभा प्रकाशनका ती किताब पनि च्यातिएका छन् । शिक्षक महासंघका जिल्ला अध्यक्ष समेत रहेका प्रअ फुलेश्वर मण्डलले 'शिक्षक महासंघको अधिवेशन र विभिन्न परीक्षाका कारण पुस्तक खरीद गर्न नसकिएको' स्पष्टीकरण दिए । उनले भने, "अब चाँडै खरीद गर्छौं ।" पुस्तकालय भनिएको कोठा सधैंजसो बन्द रहने हुँदा विद्यालयमा पुस्तकालय छ भन्ने बारे विद्यार्थीहरू अनभिज्ञ छन् । कक्षा ९ की सावित्रीकुमारी यादवले अचम्म मान्दै भनिन्, "खै, हामीलाई त यहाँ पुस्तकालय छ भन्ने नै थाहा छैन ।"

धादिङ जिल्लाको सदरमुकाम नीलकण्ठमा रहेको चण्डेश्वरी उमाविले अघिल्लो शैक्षिक सत्रको बजेटबाट आवश्यक किताब किन्न सूची बनाएको थियो । त्यस अनुसार पुस्तक खरीद पनि गरियो । तर अहिले पुस्तकालयमा त्यो सूचीका दुई-चारवटा बाहेक काम लाग्ने एउटा पनि किताब छैन । जबकि विद्यालयले पाठ्यक्रमसँग सम्बन्धित पुस्तकहरू, शिक्षक निर्देशिका, सन्दर्भ सामग्रीहरू, अभ्यास किताब लगायतको सूची बनाएको थियो । "अनुदान लिनासाथै साभा प्रकाशनबाट दिनमा १० चोटि किताब लिन आउनुस् भनेर फोन आउन थाल्यो" प्रअ हरि इटनीले भने "अध्यक्षसहित गएर किनेको हो, हतारमा किताब छान्न समेत पाइएन ।"

'भ्याट/प्यान बिल मिलाउन सहज हुने ठानेर साभा प्रकाशनबाटै किताब किनेको' प्रअ इटनीको भनाइ छ । आवश्यक किताबको सूची साभामा बुझाएरै खरीद गरेको भए पनि १० प्रतिशत मात्रै काम लाग्ने किताब आएको इटनीले बताए । लाइब्रेरियन घनश्याम लम्साल भन्छन्, "साभाले पठाएको एउटा बोरा त कामै नलाग्ने थियो । सबै पुराना गरिमा पत्रिकाले भरिएको



थियो ।" विद्यालय सूत्रका अनुसार गरिमा पत्रिका मात्रै रहेको उक्त बोरा पछि अप्ट्यारो पर्छ भनेर जलाइएको थियो ।

गत वर्षको बजेटबाट धादिङको गणेशकुण्ड मावि, दाख्राले असारमा किनेका किताब माघ तेस्रो सातासम्म बाल विकास पढाइ भइरहेको कक्षाकोठाको एउटा कुनामा बोरामै थन्किएका थिए । प्रअ रवीन्द्र चौधरीले 'पुस्तकालयको लागि कक्षाकोठा नभएर किताब बोरामा राखिएको' बताए । त्यहाँ पुस्तकालयका लागि किताब किनेको न विद्यार्थीलाई थाहा छ, न शिक्षक, अभिभावकलाई । कक्षा १० का देउवा तामाङ भन्छन्, "अभ्यास किताबहरू पुस्तकालयमा भएको भए अतिरिक्त कक्षा पढ्दा धेरै सजिलो हुन्थ्यो ।"

जिशिका धादिङलाई पनि यसको जानकारी छ । जिशिअ माधवराज शर्माले भने "धेरैजसो विद्यालयले काम नलाग्ने किताब ल्याएको सूचना छ । अनुगमनमा त्यस्तो फेला परे पाठ्यक्रमसँग सम्बन्धित थप पुस्तक किन्न निर्देशन दिइनेछ ।" शर्माको भनाइबाट यो गलत कामका लागि कोही पनि जवाफदेही हुनुपर्ने देखिएन- थप पुस्तक खरीद गरे पुग्यो ।

यसरी धेरै विद्यालयले आफूखुशी बजेट खर्च गरेका छन् । लगभग सबैजसोले पूरै बजेटको किताब किनेकै छैनन् । एउटा उदाहरण कोशी मावि, महेन्द्रनगर, बागभोडा, सुनसरीका प्रअ बालकृष्ण अधिकारी हुन् । उनले २०७४ साउनमा काठमाडौंको मज्जरी प्रकाशनबाट 'पछि किताब किन्ने शर्तमा' रु.१ लाख ५० हजारको बिल लिएर गएका थिए । मज्जरीका सञ्चालक कृष्ण अविरलको भनाइमा, "साउन १५ भित्र बिल फर्स्योर्ट गरिसक्नुपर्ने थियो । बिल लिएर गए पनि

ढुकक हुनुस्, कुनै 'कम्प्लेन' आउँदैन

पुण्यप्रसाद प्रसाईं
अध्यक्ष, डिकुरा पब्लिकेसन



“तपाईंले रु१ लाख दिनुभयो भने हामी रु१ लाख ७० हजारको 'बुक' दिन्छौं। रु१ लाख ७५ हजारमा रु३ लाखको 'बुक' दिन्छौं। त्यो छूट हो तपाईंहरूलाई। एकदम (मिलेर काम गर्न) सकिन्छ। त्यहाँ अरु पनि स्कूल छन् भने मिलेर आउनुस्। एकलै लैजानु हुन्छ भने पनि लैजानुस्।

“बिल चाहिँ कस्तो हुन्छ भने, तपाईंले रु४ लाखको एमआरपी लैजानुभयो भने हामीले तपाईंसँग रु२ लाख ३५ हजार लिन्छौं। बिल चाहिँ तपाईंलाई रु४ लाखको दिन्छौं। भनेपछि रु१ लाख ६५ हजार बढीको आयो के। तपाईंले 'पे' गरे भन्दा बढी। त्यहाँ (स्कूलमा) तपाईंले आफ्नो तरीकाले प्रस्तुत गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ। सजिलो छ, गाह्रो छैन। नियमसंगत र प्रक्रियागत रूपमै हुन्छ।

“कोटेसन पनि बनाइदिन्छु मैले। तीनवटा कम्पनीको (नाम) राखेर बनाइदिन्छु। तपाईंले जिशिकालाई (देखाउन) चाहिन्छ नि कोटेसन, त्यो कोटेसन पनि हामी नै बनाइदिन्छौं। तपाईंलाई त्यहाँ तीन जना स्थानीय व्यापारीले दिनुपर्ने कोटेसन, त्यो हामी यही बनाएर पठाइदिन्छौं। बिलसँगै हामी कोटेसन पनि दिन्छौं। जिल्लामा त्यसको मान्यता हुन्छ। काठमाडौंकै तीनवटा कम्पनी राखेर कोटेसन बनाइदिन्छु। केही पनि (अप्टेरो) हुँदैन।

“अहिले मैले जतिलाई दिएको छु नि सर, हामीबाट धेरैले लगिराख्नु भा'छ, उहाँहरू सबैले कोटेसन त्यसरी नै लैजाने हो। पोहोर पनि त्यसरी लैजानेको पास भइसकेको छ। चितवनमै कसिले लानु भा'थ्यो, पोहोर।

“तपाईंहरूले (पुस्तक) खरीद गर्नको लागि जुन सूचना निकाल्नु भा'छ, त्यो सूचनाको आधारमा हामीले कोटेसन भरेको चिठी दिने हो। (कोटेसन दिने) तीनवटा कम्पनी हाम्रा आफ्नै छन्। ढुकक हुनु न, हामीले गरेको कुनै पनि कामले तपाईंलाई 'कम्प्लेन' आउँदैन।”

(चितवनको एउटा विद्यालयबाट किताब खरीद गर्न भनेर प्रसाईंको ९८४३०००८५२ नम्बरमा फोन गर्दा उनले सुभाएको उपायसहितको कुराकानी www.cijnepal.org.np मा सुन्न सकिनेछ।)

प्रअ अधिकारीले किताब किनेनन् ।" विद्यालयको नयाँ भवन बन्दै गरेको र पुस्तकालयका लागि कोटा नभएकोले त्यतिबेला किताब नकिने पनि बिल ल्याएको प्रअ अधिकारीले स्पष्टीकरण दिए । उनले भने "अब भवन तयार भएको छ, नयाँ शैक्षिक सत्र शुरू भएसँगै आवश्यक सबै किताब किन्छौं ।" मंगलमय मावि पाडाजुँगी, भापाका प्रअ मोहन वगालेले मञ्जरीबाटै रु.७२ हजारको किताब किने । तर रु.२ लाखको बिल बनाइदिन भने । सञ्चालक अविरल आफूले त्यसो गर्न भने नमानेको बताउँछन् ।

सरकारले आ.व. २०७३/७४ देखि शुरू गरेको 'एक विद्यालय एक पुस्तकालय' अभियानमा अहिलेसम्म रु.३ अर्बभन्दा बढी खर्च भइसकेको छ । धेरैजसो विद्यालयले पैसा लिए, तर पुस्तकालय बनाएनन् । कतिले चाहिँ कबाडीमा बेच्नुपर्ने किताब मिलेमतोमा दोब्बर महँगो मोलमा किनेको पनि भेटिएको छ । धेरैजसो प्रकाशन गृहका बिल नक्कली वा वास्तविकतासँग मेल नखाने खालका देखिन्छन् । कतिपय विद्यालयले चाहिँ पुस्तकालयको 'भौतिक संरचना' का लागि भनेर पैसा सिध्याएका छन् ।

एशियाली विकास बैंक, अष्ट्रेलिया, डिफिड, यूरोपियन युनियन, फिनल्याण्ड, जाइका, नर्वे, एसडीसी, यूनेस्को, यूनिसेफ, यूएनडीपी, यूएसएड, विश्व खाद्य कार्यक्रम, विश्व बैंक र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरूको संगठन एआईएन समेत पन्ध्र वटा दातृसंस्थाको साभेदारीमा सञ्चालित विद्यालय क्षेत्र विकास कार्यक्रम (एसएसडीपी) को अनुदान बजेट अन्तर्गत जिशिकाबाट छानिएका विद्यालयले रु.६ लाख ५० हजारका दरले रकम पाउँछन् । कार्यक्रम अनुसार, त्यो पैसाबाट पुस्तकालयका लागि चाहिने सामग्री र पुस्तक खरीद गर्नुपर्छ ।

आर्थिक वर्ष २०७४/७५ मा ७५ जिल्लाका १ हजार ९४५ विद्यालयमा पुस्तकालय बनाउन रु.१ अर्ब ३० करोड ८० लाख ५० हजार छुट्याइएको छ । यो वर्ष सबैभन्दा कम मनाङको एक तथा मुस्ताङ र मुगुका दुई-दुई र सबैभन्दा बढी सिरहाका ६१ विद्यालयले पुस्तकालय अनुदान पाएका छन् । शिक्षा विभागका अनुसार, जिशिकाबाट स्कूलहरूलाई निकासी हुने यो रकम 'पुस्तकालय व्यवस्थापनका लागि पुस्तक, न्याक, कुर्सी-टेबल र किताब खरीदमा खर्च हुनुपर्दछ ।'

अघिल्लो आर्थिक वर्ष २०७३/७४ मा काठमाडौँ, भक्तपुर, मुगु, हुम्ला, सुर्खेत र डोटीबाहेकका ६९ जिल्लाका १७५८ सरकारी विद्यालयलाई जिशिकाबाट रु.१ अर्ब १४ करोड २७ लाख अनुदान निकासी दिइएको थियो । यसैगरी आव २०७०/७१ मा १०५३ वटा विद्यालयमा पुस्तकालयका लागि रु.५० हजारका दरले तथा आव २०७१/७२ मा १००० वटा विद्यालयका लागि रु.१ लाखका दरले अनुदान दिइएको थियो । आव २०७२/७३ मा पुस्तकालय कार्यक्रम राखिएको भए पनि शिक्षा मन्त्रालयबाट बजेट निकासी नभएको शिक्षा विभागको भनाइ छ । यसरी हालसम्म पुस्तकालयका लागि रु.३ अर्ब ५२ करोड ८६ लाख ८० हजार खर्च भएको देखिन्छ ।

‘रु.१० लाखको किन्दा १० लाख फ्री !’

‘एक लाखको किताब किन्दा एक लाखको किताब फ्री ! १० लाखको किन्दा १० लाख फ्री !’

सरकारको 'एक विद्यालय एक पुस्तकालय' अभियानलाई लक्षित गरेर काठमाडौँको बागबजारस्थित डिकुरा पब्लिकेशनले फेसबुकमा यस्तो विज्ञापन गरेको छ । उसले प्रकाशित गरेका किताबको स्तर बुझ्न यो विज्ञापन नै काफी छ ।

ठगीको अर्को तरीका, डिकुरा पब्लिकेसनले 'छूट' दिएका किताबहरू साबिकभन्दा डेढ गुणा मूल्य राखेर पुनर्मुद्रण गरिएको छ । उदाहरणका लागि उसले प्रकाशन गरेको अनूदित पुस्तक 'हितलरको आत्मकथा' को चौथो संस्करण (२०७०) को मूल्य रु.४५० छ भने अहिले त्यसैको मूल्य रु.६७५ राखिएको छ । पब्लिकेसनले ग्राहकलाई ५० प्रतिशतको 'भारी छूट' दिने पुस्तक प्रायः सबै यस्तै छन् । यस्तो अनौठो मूल्यवृद्धिका बारेमा सोध्दा डिकुरा पब्लिकेसनका अध्यक्ष पुण्य प्रसाईंले 'कागजको गुणस्तर राम्रो भएकोले मूल्य बढाइएको' बताए । तर कागजको स्तर पहिलेभन्दा राम्रो देखिंदैन ।

कसरी हुन्छ यो धन्दा ?

जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयबाट पुस्तकालय खोल्ने विद्यालयका लागि रु.६ लाख ५० हजारको बजेट स्वीकृत भएको थाहा पाएपछि प्रकाशन गृहका मालिक वा तिनका कामदार जिल्ला दौडाहामा निस्कन्छन् । त्यसक्रममा बिक्रेताले विद्यालयका प्रधानाध्यापक वा व्यवस्थापन समितिका अध्यक्षलाई 'आकर्षक छूट', 'होम डेलिभरी' दिनेदेखि 'मिलाएर दिने' सम्मको लोभ देखाउँछन् । यसो हुँदा अधिकांश विद्यालयले किताबको सूची तय गर्ने जिम्मा समेत बिक्रेतालाई नै सुम्पिन्छन् । यही मौकामा बिक्रेताले शिक्षक-विद्यार्थीलाई काम लाग्ने भन्दा 'स्टक क्लियरेन्स' गर्नुपर्ने या नबिकेर फ्याँक्न पठाउनुपर्ने किताब बोरामा हालेर विद्यालयमा पठाउँछन् ।

यसरी किताब बेच्नकै लागि डिकुरा पब्लिकेसनले 'सय किन्दा सय सितैं' भन्ने विज्ञापन गरेको हो । एकता बुक्स, रत्न पुस्तक भण्डार लगायतले पनि यसरी किताब बिक्री गर्न ३० देखि ३५ प्रतिशतसम्म छूट दिने गरेका छन् । प्रकाशन व्यवसायको भित्री पाटो थाहा पाउने कथालय पब्लिकेसनका राजीवधर जोशीको भनाइमा, "बिक्री नभएर बजारबाट फिर्ता आएका, प्रतिलिपि अधिकार नलाग्ने र सिकारूले अनुवाद गरेका किताबमा मात्र यति धेरै छूट दिन सकिन्छ ।"

राजीवधरको अनुभवमा पब्लिकेसनहरूले राम्रा किताबमा २० प्रतिशत, मध्यमस्तरका किताबमा ३५ प्रतिशत र खासै उपयोगमा नआउनेमा ५० प्रतिशतसम्म छूट दिन सक्छन् । ३५ प्रतिशत छूट खोज्नेलाई नबिकेर थुप्रिएका किताब दिइने तथा ५० प्रतिशत छूटमा किताब दिन कबाडीबाट उठाउनुपर्ने उनको भनाइ छ । नाम चलेका लेखक र व्यावसायिक अनुवादकले काम गरेका किताबको लागत महँगो हुने भएकाले प्रकाशकले यस्तो 'भारी छूट' दिनै सक्दैनन् ।

विज्ञहरूका भनाइमा, किताब किन्नुअघि विद्यालयले कुन पब्लिकेसनले कति छूट दिएको छ भन्नेमा भन्दा ती किताब विद्यार्थी र शिक्षकका लागि कतिको उपयोगी छन् भनेर हेर्नुपर्छ । तर कमिशनको लोभमा यो महत्वपूर्ण पक्षलाई उनीहरूले बेवास्ता गरेको देखिन्छ । फलतः पुस्तकालयमा राखिएका धेरैजसो किताब त्यहाँका शिक्षक, विद्यार्थीका लागि उपयोगी छैनन् ।



कमजोर अनुवाद भएका र अनधिकृत प्रकाशकबाट बजारमा आएका हिटलर, चे ग्वेभाराको आत्मकथा यस्तै किताबमा पर्छन् । फेरि ती किताब कुन उमेर समूहका लागि उपयोगी हुने हुन् भन्ने पनि छलफलको विषय हुनसक्छ । स्कूले विद्यार्थीका लागि हिटलर र चेका जीवनी उपयोगी हुन् त ? शिक्षाविद् डा. विद्यानाथ कोइराला यस्ता किताबले विद्रोह बाहेक केही नसिकाउने ठान्छन् । डा. कोइराला भन्छन्, "त्यस्ता किताबले कलिला बालबालिकालाई सर्जक हुन होइन, हिंस्रक बन्न सिकाउँछन् ।"

कोइरालाको बुभाइमा, कक्षाकोठाको न्याकमा पुस्तक राखेपछि पुस्तकालय भइहाल्छ भन्ने सोच भएकाहरूले यो काम गरिरहेका छन् । उनी भन्छन्, "विद्यालय तहका शिक्षक, विद्यार्थीका लागि कस्ता किताब उपयोगी हुन्छन् भन्ने नबुझ्ने, बुझे पनि विभिन्न कारणले पुस्तक किन्ने बेलामा आँखा चिम्लिने प्रवृत्तिले यो अवस्था आएको हो ।" पुस्तकालयको बजेटबाट कमिशन असुल्ल कोटेशन मिलाउनेदेखि नक्कली विल बनाउनेसम्मका काम गरेर कही कतैबाट 'कम्प्लेन' नआउने उपाय समेत बिक्रेताले नै सुभाउँछन् ।

‘छूटको पैसामा लूट’

सामुदायिक विद्यालयको स्तर खस्केपछि विद्यार्थीमा पढ्ने बानी बसाउन शुरू गरिएको पुस्तकालय बजेट अधिकांश विद्यालयमा दुरुपयोग भएपछि शिक्षा विभागले २८ माघ २०७३ मा जिशिकाहरूलाई निर्देशन पत्र पठायो । पत्रमा 'पुस्तकालय बजेटबाट पाठ्यपुस्तक, पाठ्यक्रम, शिक्षक निर्देशिका, सन्दर्भ सामग्रीका अतिरिक्त पुस्तक न्याक, कुर्सी टेबलको मात्रै व्यवस्था गर्न सकिने' उल्लेख थियो । तर विद्यालयहरूले विभागको निर्देशनलाई वास्ता गरेका छैनन् । जथाभावी किनेर पुस्तकालयमा राखिएका किताब उपयोगी नहुँदा पुस्तकालयले शिक्षक, विद्यार्थीको ध्यान तान्न सकिरहेको छैन । कमिशनको लोभमा गोदाममा थन्किएका किताब ल्याएर पुस्तकालयमा राखेपछि

त्यो प्रयोगमा नआएको हो । कमिशनकै कारण पुस्तक किन्न जाने अधिकांश शिक्षकलाई विद्यार्थीले खोजेका किताबतिर चासो हुँदैन ।

राजधानीकै विद्यालयहरूले पनि पुस्तक खरीद गर्ने क्रममा लूट नै मच्चाएका छन् । एउटा उदाहरण इमाडोल, ललितपुरको महेन्द्र आदर्श उमाविलाई लिन सकिन्छ । यसका प्रअ एकबहादुर भण्डारीले दुई वर्षअघि काठमाडौंका पुस्तक बिक्रेता तारानिधि रेग्मीसँग रु.२५ हजारको किताब किनेका थिए । पछिल्लो वर्ष जिशिका ललितपुरबाट पुस्तकालय परियोजनामा छानिएको सो विद्यालयका नाममा रु.६ लाख ५० हजार निकास भएपछि प्रअ भण्डारीले बिक्रेता रेग्मीसँग अधिल्लो वर्ष किनेको किताबका आधारमा रु.२ लाखको बिल बनाइदिन आग्रह गरे । रेग्मीले बिल काटेपछि नाफा देखिने र नाफाको २५ प्रतिशत कर तिर्नुपर्ने कानूनी जटिलता देखाएपछि "बरू त्यसबापत लाग्ने रकम



आफूले बेहोर्ने” प्रअले बताएका थिए । रेग्मीको भनाइमा उनी त्यसो गर्न तयार भएनन् । रु.२५ हजारको किताब किनेर रु.२ लाखको बिल मागेको सम्बन्धमा जिज्ञासा राख्दा प्रअ भण्डारीले भने, “खै कतिको किताब किनेको हो, बिल हेर्ने पर्छ ।”

यसले देखाउँछ, पुस्तकालय परियोजनामा कतिसम्म अनियमितता भइरहेको छ । यस क्षेत्रका जानकारहरूका भनाइमा 'धेरै बिक्रेताले किताब बिक्री नगरी बिल काटे बापत मात्रै २० प्रतिशतसम्म रकम लिने गरेका छन् ।' कतिपय प्रअले हाकाहाकी खाली बिल माग्ने गरेको मञ्जरी प्रकाशनका कृष्ण अविरल बताउँछन् ।

पुस्तकालयको महत्व बढाउन शिक्षक, विद्यार्थीको बैठक राखी कस्ता किताब उपयोगी हुन्छन् भनेर सूची तयार गर्नुपर्छ । औलामा गन्न सकिने केही विद्यालयले भने यसरी नै किताबको सूची बनाउने गरेका छन् । बालबोध मावि हटिया, मकवानपुर तीमध्ये एक हो । उसले पुस्तक खरीद गर्दा पाएको छूट बराबरको पैसाले समेत थप किताब किनेको छ । गत वर्ष रु.४ लाखको किताब किनेको विद्यालयले त्यसमा २५ प्रतिशत छूट पाएको थियो । विद्यालयले त्यस वापत आएको रु.९ लाखको थप किताब किन्यो । प्रअ भीमसेन श्रेष्ठ भन्छन्, “शिक्षक, बाल क्लबका सदस्य र विद्यालय व्यवस्थापन समितिसँगको छलफलपछि बिक्रेतालाई किताबको सूची दिइएको भए पनि बिक्रेताले करीब रु.९ लाख बराबरको काम नलाग्ने किताब पढाए । ती किताब फिर्ता गरेर उपयोगी किताब ल्याउन लागिएको छ ।” बालबोध माविले पुस्तकालय व्यवस्थापनका लागि शिक्षक रत्नकुमार भण्डारीलाई जिम्मेवारी दिएको छ । प्रअ श्रेष्ठका अनुसार हरेक दिन शुरूको चार घण्टीपछि भण्डारी पुस्तकालयमै भेटिन्छन् ।

दाताको लगानीमा स्थापित पुस्तकालयमा राखिएका किताब कस्ता छन् र ती पुस्तक शिक्षक-विद्यार्थीलाई कतिको उपयोगी भइरहेका छन् भन्नेबारे अहिलेसम्म कतैबाट खोजीनिती भएको छैन । शिक्षा विभाग र जिशिका समेत यसमा मौन छन् । पुस्तकालय निर्माण र यसको प्रयोगको अवस्था नबुझी शिक्षा मन्त्रालय वर्षेनि ठूलो रकम निकासा गरिरहेको छ ।

शिक्षा विभागका उपनिर्देशक एवं कार्यक्रम तथा बजेट शाखाका प्रमुख घनश्याम अर्याल भन्छन्, “पुस्तकालयमा कस्ता किताब राखिएको छ भन्ने कुराको अनुगमन जिशिका, स्रोतकेन्द्र र स्रोतव्यक्तिले गर्नुपर्दछ ।” शिक्षा मन्त्रालयका प्रवक्ता डा. हरि लम्साल चाहिँ शिक्षा विभागबाट गएको पैसा तोकिए बमोजिम खर्च नगर्नेलाई कार्बाही गर्नुपर्ने बताउँछन् । तर शिक्षाविद् डा. विद्यानाथ कोइराला शिक्षाको सबै अधिकार स्थानीय तहमा गइसकेकोले अब पुस्तकालयको पैसा पनि स्थानीय तहमै पठाउनु उपयुक्त हुने ठान्छन् । शिक्षक, विद्यार्थीसँग छलफल गरी आफ्नो विद्यालयलाई चाहिने किताब किन्ने र त्यसको सदुपयोग भए/नभएको अनुगमन गर्ने जिम्मा पनि स्थानीय निकायलाई दिइनुपर्ने कोइरालाको सुझाव छ ।

एसएसडीपी अन्तर्गत पाँच वर्षभित्र प्रत्येक मावि र निमाविमा एक/एक वटा पुस्तकालय स्थापना गर्ने सरकारी कार्यक्रम छ । कार्यक्रम अनुसार मुलुकभरका करीब १० हजार विद्यालयमा पुस्तकालय स्थापना गर्न रु.६ लाख ५० हजारका दरले रु.६ अर्ब ५० करोड खर्च हुनेछ । जिल्ला शिक्षा कार्यालयका कर्मचारी, विद्यालयका प्रधानाध्यापक, विद्यालय व्यवस्थापन समितिका अध्यक्ष तथा 'भारी छूट' मा पुस्तक बेच्ने प्रकाशन गृहहरूको घातक मिलेमतोका कारण यो रकम सकिइसक्दा पनि विद्यालयहरू पुस्तकालयविहीन नै हुने लक्षण देखिँदैछ ।

A few words from the Chair

The mainstream media in Nepal has come a long way from being a government entity to being a vibrant corporate sector now. In earlier days, the ruling government and the political parties gave directions to the media entities, which obliged as their spokespersons. Although this trend has decreased, the corporate sectors that own media houses now, have challenges to be sustainable but at the same time publish news and stories in an impartial and factual manner. This is a global trend of the 21st Century, and is not confined to Nepal. The Center for Investigative Journalism (CIJ) Nepal has remained a neutral organisation that has used investigative journalistic skills in exposing corruption and other vital issues (economic, financial, traditional, cultural, religious and political) affecting the Nepali society. The mainstream media has been CIJ's partners in publishing some of the most sensitive investigative reports that we have produced.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) has become a mandate for the Nepal Government, now that federalism has been established and provinces with elected leaders are in place. This is also an agenda that is being taken forward by the non-government organisations in Nepal. However, a true inclusion of women and the marginalised communities of Nepal into the mainstream agenda of the government, non-government or private sector is not possible until and unless awareness is created in the Nepali population. It is equally important to make the policy makers accountable to implement laws and policies formulated to make sure justice prevails and all Nepali citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

After the 1990 restoration of Democracy in Nepal, many existing laws were amended and new laws were formulated to establish gender equality and social inclusion

Investigative stories on women and children issue

in the country. Gender equality includes equality of women and transgender community as much as men. However, it is also a fact that although old laws have been amended and new laws have been formulated, their implementations have been far from satisfactory.

Cases of Violence Against Women (VAW), abuse of child rights and marginalisation of the poor, deprived, dalits and others are happening every day. Cases of incest, rape, and abuse of authority are being reported in the papers every day. The media of Nepal have come a long way from having access to free speech in 1990 to now. The media have been highlighting cases of injustice and violence; however, there is a need for journalists and media houses to first understand what are the nuances of GESI and how they affect the lives of people. It is important to understand the issues termed as “women’s issues” is in fact issues of the entire nation. If all people have access to equal rights and opportunities to live in a safe and secure environment, they can contribute to the economic and overall wellbeing of the country.

The project “Khojma Laingik Dristi,” has given CIJ, Nepal an avenue to dig further into our efforts to understand the challenges faced by more than 50% of the population and to expose what are the hurdles that could have been imposed on them by the government and society in general. We have published several investigative reports done through a gender lens. These stories have been compiled in this book both in English and Nepali. I hope it will be a reference in amending laws and formulating new policies to move Nepal towards Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in the true sense.

I would like to acknowledge and thank UNICEF Nepal for providing financial support to CIJ, Nepal for implementing this project “Khojma Laingik Dristi,” to explore the nuances of how lives of Nepali women and children have been impacted by different aspects, including the laws formulated by the government. I would like to give my heartfelt gratitude to the entire UNICEF team, especially Ms Rupa Joshi, for agreeing to partner with us in this important endeavour. I also want to acknowledge and thank Shiva Gaunle, Editor CIJ Nepal, for his leadership in steering the team which includes Saurav Kolakshyapati, Pramod Acharya, and the reporters who have dug out these stories for their relentless work in accomplishing this difficult task. Muna Magar and Pooja Thapa deserve thanks for providing all the logistical and technical support to maintain our website and social networking.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Editors of all mainstream Nepali Media who have been publishing our sensitive and important stories so a large population both within Nepal and outside could read it. Last but not the least CIJ readers deserve our gratitude as our work is for them to read and take actions.

Namrata Sharma
Chairperson
CIJ, Nepal

Basanta Pratap Singh

Malnutrition in Bajhang **Daughters at greater risk**

*In Bajhang district alone, nearly 11,000 children
have been afflicted by severe acute malnutrition.
The plight of girls is more worrisome*

Investigative stories on women and children issue

Twelve-year-old Manju Dhama of Talkot Rural Municipality (the erstwhile Dhama VDC Ward No 1) died on February 21, 2017. Eleven days later, her sister Kalpani Dhama, 10, also breathed her last.

Their mother Parbati Dhama knew too late--a month before the youngest girl died--that the cause of her daughters' ailment was acute malnutrition.

"Both of them had been weakened for the past one year. Then their belly started bulging out. Their bodies got slender like staffs. We had been tired of visiting shamans and giving them medicinal herbs," said the mother. "X-ray examination in the district failed to diagnose their problem. After check-up at the Melbisauna Health Post later, they were given medicine for malnutrition, to no avail."

Manju went to the local school, where she always topped the class. Having finished Grade 4 final exams, she was ready to begin the fifth standard. Her younger sister had passed the second grade. The nutrition out-patient department at the health post had diagnosed severe acute malnutrition in them.

The health facilities did not have the medicine given to malnourished children over five. So the two girls were given the "ready for use therapeutic food" normally provided for malnourished children under five. "By then, both had been unable to eat food. They had eaten only a couple of pouches [of the nutritional supplement] before death," said Parbati.



Children playing in mud.

Malnutrition in Bajhang : Daughters at greater risk

These cases are not new. Four months before the twin deaths, records at the District Health Office show, four-year-old Karishma Kunwar of Khiratdiki in Bungal Municipality had succumbed to severe malnutrition. Three-year-old Asmita Japrel of Durgathali Rural Municipality died from similar deficiencies.

The cause of the fatalities was known since all the four girls had come in contact with the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) programme run by the District Health Office (DHO). Health workers believe that many other children who have no access to health centres die of acute malnourishment.

"In medical terms, malnourishment does not kill. But we have found that malnourishment is linked with deaths of children," said Dr Anup Regmi, chief of the DHO. "Malnourishment diminishes immunity. Diseases attack easily and are hard to cure. This leads to death."

Dr Regmi says the number of malnourished children could be much higher than estimates. According to the National Demographic Health Survey-2016, child mortality per thousand in Bajhang is 39 (under 5 years), 32 (under 1 year) and 21 (under 28 days).

Among the 23,377 children examined by the IMAM programme in the fiscal year 2016/17 in Bajhang, 3,511 were diagnosed with acute malnourishment. As many as 2,266 of them had medium acute malnourishment while 1,245 were found to have severe acute malnourishment, according to programme coordinator Sandesh Rajthala.

The population of under-14 children in Bajhang is 64,123. Since all of them have not been examined, the exact number of malnourished children cannot be ascertained. But health workers estimate that more than 11,000 children are at the risk of acute malnourishment.

Severe acute malnourishment is the most dangerous type. "Without timely care and treatment, severely malnourished children risk losing life any time," said Dr Regmi.

There are other kinds of malnourishment: chronic malnourishment (stunting), acute and chronic malnourishment (underweight) and micronutrient deficiency. Even as the exact data of children suffering micronutrient deficiency is unavailable, 47 per cent children are found to be stunted while 29 per cent are underweight in Bajhang, the DHO records show. According to the NDHS-2016, 39.3 per cent children are anaemic.

Girls at greater risk

"Had they been sons, sisters Manju and Kamala would probably not have died prematurely from malnourishment," Assistant Health Worker at Talkot Health Post Janak Kumar Bista said. "If their son falls sick, [people] treat him even by borrowing money. [They] take them to Dhangadhi, Kathmandu. When their daughter is ill, [they] don't even take her to the [district] headquarters," Bista remarked. Had Manju and Kalpana, who faced malnourishment for 13 months, been taken to a well-facilitated health centre on time, they would have undoubtedly survived, said Bista.

All the four children reported to have died of severe malnutrition in the past year are girls. Besides, health workers believe, those who die due to the lack of treatment or the fatalities that do not come to public notice involve girls mostly.

An incident in the family of Shanti Japrel in Sainapasela Waikot of Durgathali Rural Municipality explains this. The nutrition officer from the DHO, who visited their

Investigative stories on women and children issue

house, found that three-year-old Asmita had severe malnutrition. He asked the family to admit her to the nutrition rehabilitation centre of the district hospital promising free treatment.

Shanti did not follow the health workers' advice saying that she had already spent 15 to 20 thousand rupees on her daughter's "treatment" from local healers and shamans. She said she had no hope for her daughter's cure. Shanta argued that there would be nobody from the family to care for the girl at the nutrition centre since she had to take care of her father-in-law and two sons at home. Her husband had been working in Malaysia for the past four years. Shanta ultimately admitted Asmita to District Hospital Bajhang after nutrition officer Indra Karki threatened to report the case to the police.

After two days at the hospital, Shanta had left along with her daughter on the pretext of having some snacks outside, never to return. When hospital staff found the admitted patient missing, they asked the police to look for her. Later they were found to have reached home.

"Household chores had piled on due to my stay at the hospital for three days," Shanti said without regret. "The old father-in-law is unable to handle things. I fled the hospital leaving it to her fate. She died the other day." Shanta said she had hesitated to take her to hospital as "I was sure that she would die."

Last December, malnutrition claimed the life of four-and-a-half year old Karishma Kunwar of Khiratadi VDC. Health workers had told the family that the girl needed treatment but her guardians said they could not afford to be with the child at the hospital



Ashmita Japrel of Sainpasela died of severe malnutrition.



Untimely death of Manju Dhami of Dhamena due to severe malnutrition.

Malnutrition in Bajhang : Daughters at greater risk

for weeks abandoning work at home. "The family turned down our suggestion. The girl died helplessly," said Sunil Gajurel, a former official at the malnutrition response programme of the DHO.

It takes two hours to half-a-day on foot to reach the district hospital from the places where these incidents happened. Strangely, three daughters of Tulsi Nepali at Rithapakha, which is 500 metres from Simkhet where the district hospital is located, are also suffering from chronic malnutrition. Among the siblings, two-year-old Saraswati has life-threatening malnutrition. Health workers have reached the family several times to request them to treat the baby. A defiant Tulsi says, "My oldest son was like her as a baby. He's now earning in India. The health officials press me every day to admit her to hospital as they get paid in our name. I've scolded them but they haven't stopped coming."

Nutrition officer at the DHO Sabita Shahi Thakuri agreed that Tulsi often shouted at them when they prodded the woman for her daughter's treatment. "Tulsi answers angrily that we needn't worry if her daughters died. The baby has pitiable condition. She doesn't listen even to doctors," said Sabita.

According to DPO Bajhang, the number of children having moderate to severe acute malnutrition in the district is 3,511. The lives of most of them are in peril since their parents are not ready for their treatment.

"I had not imagined this level of discrimination between son and daughter," says Dr Sunil Gajurel. "The treatment is free. They refuse to come for their daughter's treatment even when we promise food and accommodation for the attendant. They reply that they can always give birth to another if one dies."

In rural areas, people even today take malnourished children to local healers and witch doctors rather than hospital and apply monkey faeces on their body believing it to be *bandre* (sickle cell anaemia), said Gajurel.

Surveys show that food shortages, illiteracy, superstition and unsafe food are the main causes of malnutrition. More than half of the malnourished children are girls while lack of treatment caused by discrimination between the sexes threatens lives mostly of girls, according to Dr Gajurel. "We provide treatment cost for patients who cannot be treated in the district. They are not ready to take patients away for treatment. Most produce excuses of pending household chores. Most malnourished girls are dying at early ages," he said.

Girl children are malnourished mainly due to discrimination in food and care at home. Dalit Women Association Chairperson Asha BK says, "When a son is born, the mother is given nutritious food and is loved. When a girl is born, the postpartum woman does not get nutritious food and care. Since their mothers face discrimination after their birth, severe malnutrition is more prevalent in girl children."

Fund flood can't flush malnutrition

This scary picture of malnutrition in Bajhang does not mean that there is no organisation working to end the menace in the district. Statistics show that government and non-government organisations spend nearly Rs500,000,000 in total annually on programmes aimed at improving the nutritional situation, awareness raising and behavioural changes.

Investigative stories on women and children issue



Badi women of Bajhang who had already given birth to three children at the age of 17.

In the fiscal year 2016/17 alone, Rs 80 million was spent under the agriculture and food security programme, Rs 11.2 million by Suahara programme for pregnant women and those rearing a child younger than 1,000 days, Rs 11.4 million for integrated multi-regional nutrition programme, Rs 3,050,000 for the Pahal programme and Rs 300 million for child nutrition allowances.

The DHO spent Rs 70 million on Vitamin A programme, anti-worm drugs and integrated child health programme. Besides, INGOs such as USAID, Practical Action, Care Nepal, Save the Children and Helen Keller International have invested heavily for improving the state of nutrition in the district. Spending by United Nations arms under the UN Development Programme UNICEF, UFO, UNFPA and World Food Programme is also huge.

From the government's side, expenditures under the District Health Office, the Women Development Programme, the District Agriculture Development Office, the District Education Office and the local level for providing nutritional support are hefty too. All the offices have reported that more than 90 per cent of their total fund was spent on 'nutritional awareness raising'.

Hemanta Shahi, coordinator of the Multi-sectoral Nutrition Programme of the District Coordination Committee (DCC), says, "We cannot say there hasn't been any progress. There has been much improvement comparatively. But the outcome has not been satisfactory considering the investment." He believes that programmes on

Malnutrition in Bajhang : Daughters at greater risk

malnutrition control have failed to achieve the desired outcomes since plans are made based on the desires of NGOs and central agencies, rather than local needs.

Women's suffering

Malnutrition is rampant in Bajhang district even in women of reproductive age. According to the NDHS 2016, 39.2 per cent women of reproductive age have anaemia.

According to the report, 23,880 among the 61,232 women in the age group 15-49 years are anaemic. According to the DCC data, child marriages in the district account for 65 per cent of all marriages. Babies born to underage and malnourished women are more likely to face malnutrition.

Shahi said there is no end to the vicious cycle of malnutrition that attacks the baby from the womb when the expecting mother is malnourished. As a remedy, proper foods should be given since conception until the baby is two years old. This is a major challenge in the district.

DHO chief Dr Regmi says malnutrition affects not only the foetus but the mother too. Anaemic women face more risks during pregnancy and childbirth. "Due to anaemia, women have a great risk of losing life during delivery," said Dr Regmi. "Compared to normal people, these women are susceptible to diseases more often."

Causes of malnutrition

The main cause of malnutrition in Bajhang is shortage of foodstuff. According to the District Agriculture Development Office, the annual food grain shortfall in the district



Death of children due to severe malnutrition:
Karishma Kunwar of Khiratadi (Left) and Kalpana Dhama of Dhamena.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

is 11,000 tonnes. The 11million kg food deficit for nearly 200,000 people accounts for a shortage of 55kg per person per annum.

In a district with nearly 90 per cent people engaged in agriculture, relentless work is another cause of malnutrition. Since women are busier with farm jobs than men, they cannot spare enough time for nutritional care and sanitation of themselves and their children.

"Pregnant women here take more care of pregnant cattle than themselves," said Shahi of the Multi-sectoral Nutrition Programme. "Women are physically fragile. Since they also toil hard and pay little attention to what they eat, both mother and child are found to be malnourished." A major factor for malnutrition in children under five is their mothers remaining too busy on the field to breastfeed infants or to care for them.

Superstition has also been blamed for the nutrition deficiency. Since the woman and her new-born are kept out in the cow shed for the first 21 days, infants and their mothers are troubled by cold and smoke. Wrongly believing that greens, pulses, yoghurt, milk, fish and meat cause loose motion in the baby, the mother and the infant are denied nutritious foods since early on, imperilling their health.

Another cause of malnutrition is child marriage. Since girls are married in their teenage and bear children without proper birth spacing, neither the mother nor the baby are properly looked after, leading to malnourishment in children.

Illiteracy in women is also blamed for the poor state of nutrition. "The state of health and sanitation in children is comparatively better in families where the woman is educated," says Bimala Bista, facilitator for the agriculture and food security programme. "Most children from homes where the woman is illiterate are malnourished."

According to the DCC data, about 73 per cent males are literate in the district while the literacy rate for women is only 40 per cent. Since highly nutritious grains like millet, foxtail millet, buckwheat and oats have fallen out of favour due to beliefs that only "low class" people consume them, their cultivation has now been rare. Experts in the region say that a lack of diversity in food consumption due to the regularity of rice-roti intake has led to a deficiency of nutrients in the body.

Published date : 31 December 2017, www.cijnepal.org.np

Prakash Sing

Motherhood

An impressive feat for Bajura moms?

*A story of mothers in Bajura who
gave birth to 15 children but could
not save half of them.*

Investigative stories on women and children issue

Bishna Kala Thapa, 41, of Himali village municipality-1 in Bajura, has apparently a womb of steel. This June, she gave birth to her 16th baby at a health post. However, she gave birth to other 15 children in her house without the assistance of health care providers.

Among 16 children, only seven are alive now. How could anyone speculate that her biggest achievement--after her marriage at a tender age of 14—she has been giving birth to 16 children? Ask her how she managed to endure such pain. She has no answer. Her husband Jaidhan Thapa, however, has a modest answer: **“We had no idea...no contraceptive facilities.”** He sighs!

Dr. Tika Ram Rai, medical officer at the Bajura Emergency Pregnancy Center says, “Bishna Kala has become anemic along with some other complications.” In fact, Bishna Kala’s family is experiencing a disaster. Farmer Jaidhan, whose yield does not even suffice for three months, is panicked and troubled. A question that regularly pops up in his mind is about raising his children and saving his wife.

He works as a laborer at Kolti bazaar while at times he sells medicinal herbs to make a living. His eldest child is an eighth grader. Asked about educating his children, he quips, “Forget about studies, the concern is about survival.”

Arma Buda of Swamikartik rural municipality almost died while giving birth to her 16th baby six months ago at a primary health center in Kolti. Married at the age of 15, Arma’s life is not too different from Bishna Kala’s. Seven out of her 15 babies were stillborn. According to Arma’s husband, Payan Buda, only the 16th baby was born in a



Villagers of Budinanda municipality rejoicing the birth of baby boy.

Motherhood : An impressive feat for Bajura moms?



No reaction on birth of a baby girl of Yasoda Thapa in Chededaha municipality-2.

health post. If so, were all the 15 children born at home? The answer is ‘no’. “Some were born in the fields, some in the jungle, and some...” he recalls.

These heartrending stories of Bishna and Arma are merely symbolic ones that represent the far-western hilly district of Bajura. A majority of couples in the district neither have idea about contraceptives and family planning techniques nor do they have plans or knowledge about the appropriate age for conceiving a baby.

Shristi Regmi, deputy mayor of Budinanda municipality, says, “This practice is not unusual here. This is common in the villages of Bajura.”

A mother of 14, 42-year-old Kalsari Buda of Himali rural municipality candidly expresses her woes, “There were no health posts to undergo pregnancy test. We gave birth anywhere we felt comfortable.” Women of this district are still facing hardship due to a lack of modern means of transportation and communication and knowledge. Kalsari is only a representative character, who has tolerated numerous sufferings while giving birth to a baby in the village. Despite leading a miserable life with insufficient food and clothing, Kalsari sent her children to school but the adverse situation in her family compelled her to send children to collect medicinal herbs or to work as labourers in Kolti and Martadi bazaar. She says, “Don’t know why, I started experiencing pain in my uterus after I gave birth to my fifth child. What else can I do than to endure the pain?”

The story is similar to that of 62-year-old Muga Giri of Budinanda-2. She gave birth to 18 children, including twins. Now a mother of nine living children, Muga says, “People take it a burden to raise one or two children. Imagine how we raised our

Investigative stories on women and children issue

children by feeding sisnu,” Referring to nettle, a plant that gives burning sensation when touched. Hard to believe, but she says she never ate at her fullest while raising children. Now, she complains of back pain sometimes and problem in her uterus. “Perhaps, God saved us,” she grins.

Uterus prolapse problem

Unsafe delivery, lack of rest and giving birth to many children create problems in the uterus for many women in rural areas. Many women are living with prolapsed uterus, which they have been hiding as a social stigma.

Namakala Buda of Swamikartik municipality-3 also gave birth to 13 babies. She got problem in her uterus after the birth to her fifth child. Like other women, she also gave birth to her children at home; some were in the jungle or while working in the fields. She said she has not seen a doctor yet, and the only reason is poverty.

Nankala Kathayat of Swamikartik-5, who gave birth to 14 children, shares the same ordeal of pain in the uterus. She shared a horrific story of how she experienced uterus prolapse while giving birth to a baby.

Laxmi Pandit, 73, of Badimalika-3, has been suffering from uterus prolapsed for 10 years. She felt ashamed to share the problem with her husband and other relatives. The problem first occurred while giving birth to her third child. Only after a decade of having the complication, she got a chance to share it with health workers at the district



After giving birth to a baby girl, Tara Aauji returning home.

Motherhood : An impressive feat for Bajura moms?

health office in Bajura. Luckily, she managed to grab the opportunity of a free health camp to get her problem operated and relieved.

Another 35-year-old Jalu Saud of Badimalika-8 has been suffering from the same problem for the last 21 years. She had been suffering a prolapsed uterus after she gave birth to her first baby at the age of 14. She gave birth to three other children even after knowing about the problem.

Badimalika municipality's 50-year-old Fugi Dani, who underwent successful operation, shares a similar story. Senior health assistant at the district health office in Bajura, Tek Bahadur Khadka says, "Marriage in a tender age, giving birth to too many babies, carrying heavy loads during and after pregnancy are some of the main causes of uterine prolapse."

According to senior health worker Sharmila Shahi, lack of education is one of the reasons behind this problem. She described the situation as "horrible". Usually, 20-35 years is considered ideal to give birth to a child. However, a 20-year-old woman in western remote villages does have two to three children. Giving birth to babies continues until 45 years of age, which is unsafe for both the mother and the child.

Consider what Dr. Rup Chandra Biswokarma, chief of the District Health Office, has to say: "The root cause of the problem is early marriage, and maternity at a tender age or old age."

Weak and crooked

Another common problem among the women is anemia. A 35-year-old woman of Budinanda municipality-8 gave birth to 11 babies and has been living with anemia. Doma Gurung has only three survivals now.

Dr. Biswokarma says, "Insufficient intake of green leaves, vegetables and iron-based food causes anemia." Bisnakala Thapa, who took the help of health worker to give birth to her 16th baby, had to be given two pints of blood due to anemia. Many other mothers are now suffering from back pain as well. These mothers look aged in early forties, and can't even walk straight. Mufa Giri, who gave birth to 18 children, can't walk straight due to severe back pain. Kalchu Nepali, 55, of Budiganga-9, too faced the same problem while giving birth to her 11th child.

Culture and poverty

Janajati women representing the Bhote community in the northern belt of Bajura district basically have this problem and seem to be getting worse because of unhygienic and unsafe pregnancy. Hard work and lack of rest during pregnancy and after delivery are other reasons for getting weak and anemic.

Nrip Thapa (Bhote), chairman of the Federation of Bhote Janajatis, says, "Most of the Bhote women are compelled to give birth to babies on the way while migrating to warmer areas (for six months) to flee cold weather basically due to poverty."

A majority of people in the mid- and far-western hilly districts like Bajura, Bajhang, Mugu, Humla, and Jumla have the practice of seasonal migration to warmer areas

Investigative stories on women and children issue

during winter season, when many women give birth to babies on the way or even in the fields. These women neither see health posts during pregnancy nor do they immunize themselves and their children. That creates problem in both the mother and babies and such stories are hard to come out in the public.

Janajatis representing the Bhote community basically reside in the northern belt of Bajura district. Seasonal migration, geographical remoteness, and lack of awareness have been major reasons for their ignorance about health posts and facilities. Moreover, health posts in these districts are neither equipped nor effective. Dipak Shah, senior health assistant at the district health office says, “Problems could be numerous, but the major problem is poverty.”



"Eight are alive, nine died"

Muga Giri, 50
Budinanda Municipality-2, Kolti

How many babies did you give birth to?

I gave birth to 17 children. Among them, only eight are alive. One of the twin daughters is also alive.

Wasn't it a heroic task to raise so many children?

We faced numerous problems. My babies were not born in health care centers as we did not have health posts around. As a result, I am enduring numerous problems like back-pain and uterus pain. I even suffered prolapsed uterus while giving birth to one of them. A woman, who took care of me, put it inside. Since then, I have been suffering from abdominal and back pain. In fact, how can a baby come out easily? Lack of cautiousness will lead to a prolapsed uterus. We experienced excessive bleeding and weakness.

How did you take care of such a big family?

We worked hard, carried manure for others while carrying our children. Thrashed paddy and went to fetch grass for cows and collected firewood by leaving our children alone at home. Being illiterate, we had no option but to toil to sustain our lives. Seems my work was to give birth to babies.

Wasn't it a pain giving birth to so many babies?

Of course, it was painful and excruciating. Might be because of that, I am unable to stand or sit properly (now). My entire body, including hip, aches. You can't imagine that sometimes I keep awake the whole night due to pain.



"Assuming that she was dead, we threw her in the bush. But she was alive"

Bishna Gurung, 52
Budinanda Municipality-7

How many babies did you give birth to?

Altogether 15. Eight are still alive, seven died.

Wasn't it a pain to give birth to so many babies?

Why not? Temporary migration made it even worse. We are, in fact, squatters, without house and land of our own. Sometimes, I gave birth to a baby while walking. Nutritious food was a mere fantasy. Oh, how can I forget the moment when I endured excessive bleeding? Sometimes, I even had to walk soon after delivering a baby.

Didn't it affect your health?

Why not? I never saw a health post for delivery. Regular check-up was beyond imagination then. Because of the freezing cold, some babies died soon after birth. Except for the first one (son), six others

died soon after birth. Later, my husband died. What could I do except for enduring the trauma? We have neither money nor nutritious food to eat. This year, I bled so heavily that I had to visit a doctor. And you know what; I spent 10,000 rupees for treatment. Last year, I spent 20,000 rupees for the same problem.

You might have undergone numerous problems in raising so many kids.

Absolutely, problems are still there in my life. A child needs 50 rupees per day. Now imagine how much I have to spend for all of my children. Problems are numerous. Besides, we are getting older day by day. I have 50 sheep and I am farming them for a livelihood.

You gave birth to so many babies. Do you have any reminiscences about any major incident?

I gave birth to a daughter while coming down the hill. Assuming that she was dead, I threw her in the bush nearby. Three hours later, my sister-in-law heard her crying and brought her home. It was snowing. My sister-in-law furiously scolded me for throwing away the baby. Now she is an 8th grader.

Does that mean all your children were born on the way (path)?

No, no! Some were born at home, some on the way and some in the jungle. Two of them were born in Achham, one while on the way to Bhot, one in Marku, two were born on the way to Achham.



"They get sick and die of freezing cold. Can't save"

Dolma Gurung, 35
Pandusen

How many children did you give birth to?

I gave birth to 11 children.

Wasn't it painful?

Definitely, since it was freezing cold under the tent. Some babies were born on the way. We had neither sufficient food to eat/ nor warm clothes to put on. Never did I get a chance to rest, due to which I am (still) suffering from excessive bleeding.

Didn't you ever think of using contraceptives?

No. Sometimes we go to Bhot and sometimes to Achham to sell sheep. We had no idea about family planning.

Where did you give birth to 11 babies?

Two at home and others while on the way to work. Some died under the tent due to freezing cold. Protecting a child from extreme cold is, in fact, a tough job.

Didn't giving birth to so many babies affect your health?

Why not? Lots of problems, including stomach- and back-ache, excessive bleeding, fever, weakness etc. I lost my eight children, only three --a son and two daughters--are alive. The youngest one, who is now 20 days old, was born at home. I have only heard about health posts but have not been there.

What problems did you face while giving birth on the way?

Cold is the major problem besides lack of food and warm clothes. We are compelled to walk soon after giving birth, which causes excessive bleeding and uterine prolapse. Weakness is another factor.



"Go to hospital for lower abdomen pains, they say 'no medicine'"

Bishna Thapa, 60
Pandusen-5

How many babies did you give birth to?

I gave birth to 15 babies, among them only five are alive.

How did you give birth to so many babies?

Sometimes I gave birth on the way to Achham and sometimes on the way to Bhot. I even gave birth in the jungle. Parents-in-law do not tolerate us sitting idle. There is neither hospital nor money with us for proper treatment.

What problems did you face while giving birth to 15 babies?

What should I talk about problems? Go to the jungle, feed the cattle, and work continuously without nutritious food like milk, yogurt, butter, etc. Some children died of freezing cold while some were stillborn.

Did you send your children to school?

Only my boys are going to school. The eldest son, who studied till the 12th grade, has joined the police force. Another son is an eighth grader and the two others are in grades 7 and 3, respectively. But for daughters, it is like a dream to study because I could not afford to send them to school.

What health problems did you face while giving birth?

I experienced severe chest pain, backache, abdomen pain, and so many problems like excessive bleeding. Hospital says they have no medicines for free and we could not afford to buy them.



"Some died; while others survived"

Kusha Chadara, 60
Kolti-3, Siradi

How many children did you have?

I gave birth to 12 babies. Only six survived.

What problems did you face during delivery?

I faced numerous problems, including (shortages of) food and clothing. I was forced to spend several weeks in a cow-shed. As a result, I became sick due to freezing cold. There were no health posts during those days. Therefore, we depended on local herbs. I worked as a laborer to raise my children. It was, in fact, challenging to raise those children who survived.

Haven't you sent your children to school?

One studies in grade 12, another in grade 11 and the third one in grade 10. In fact, educating children is another difficulty for poor and unfortunate people like us. Since I cannot afford to buy stationeries for them, they earn themselves by working as potters.



"Out of 11, 7 died, four survived"

Pantu Chadara, 60
कोल्टि-३

How many babies did you give birth to?

I gave birth to 11 children.

What problems did you face while giving birth to so many babies?

Oh, don't talk about problems. Imagine our fate when we had nothing to eat, no clothes to put on and at the same time when I had excessive bleeding. Besides, I had severe headache and weakness. Moreover, I had to stay inside the shed for a month or so. Since my husband was not at home, I had to cook myself.

In that case, why did you give birth to so many children?

We neither had contraceptives nor hospitals during that time. It's all about time and situation.

What major problems did you face raising your children?

We ate whatever we could get, including green leaves. Out of 11 live births, seven died after a few days or a year. Since we have not got enough land to cultivate, we are forced to work as laborers. One of my sons, who has gone to Mumbai, earns a little.



'Four of my babies were stillborn'

Pampha Rokaya, 42
Budinda municipality-3, Nuri

How many babies did you give birth to?

I gave birth to 13 babies' altogether. Four were stillborn. A four-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son died. I have now seven survivors and the youngest son is three years old.

Wasn't it (giving birth to so many babies) traumatic?

Of course, it was. There was no enough food to eat during pregnancy and after delivery. Due to insufficient intake of proper diet, four of my babies were stillborn. My delivery was not in the health post, nor at home. All my babies except the youngest one were born in the forest or in the field.

I am running a hotel now, leaving all my children at home. With this work, I can at least provide food and clothes to my children.

Isn't it a herculean task to raise so many children?

Indeed, problems were numerous from food to clothing. My carpenter husband brings some money with which we have been managing our expenses.

Published date : 31 October 2017, www.cijnepal.org.np

Pramod Acharya

Pipeline to peril

Desperate for work, how underage girls from Sindhupalchok are lured into trafficking in Gulf countries

Why is Kanchanpur being used as a gateway for travels to Dubai and Kuwait? An investigation prompted by this question reveals that women trafficking rings are operating under the guise of foreign employment.

On October 18, 2017, Indian police arrested six teenage girls from Sindhupalchok district in Rudrapur, a city in the Indian state of Uttarakhand and handed them over to Maiti Nepal, an anti-trafficking NGO with an office in Kanchanpur. Among the victims was a 14-year-old girl. But her age in the citizenship certificate was 19. The teenager from the village of Selang had been lured by a trafficker into the scam so that she could travel to a foreign country.

An 18-year-old girl was also among the six girls arrested by the police, but her age in her citizenship certificate was 20. The teenager from the village of Helambu had also fabricated her age upon instructions from the trafficker. The man behind the scam was Ramesh Tamang, who is from Sindhupalchok district but now lives in Kathmandu. Tamang enticed both girls' mothers who granted permission with offers of well-paid jobs in the Gulf countries.

But this was not the first case in which girls from Sindhupalchok were trafficked into India via Kanchanpur. In the last two years, 50 girls from Sindhupalchok district have been intercepted at the border and rescued by Maiti Nepal, said Maheshwari Bhatta, the organization's programme coordinator in Kanchanpur district. "This number includes only those girls who were rescued. There could be many others who might have been moved across the border," she said.

The Indian police released a statement after the arrest of girls who had citizenship and passport with fabricated age as suggested by their traffickers. "In Nepal, teenage girls are recruited to work as housemaids in Gulf countries. Since Nepal doesn't allow them to apply for a visa for such jobs, they use Delhi's international airport to make the trip," the police in Rudrapur of Uttarakhand said in a statement.

The Indian police has even identified traffickers who smuggled the girls into the Gulf countries. The members of the trafficking ring include Som Bahadur Gole (from Sindhupalchok), Nani Maya Majhi (from Sindhuli) and Bishnu Lopchan (from Parsa), according to the Indian police.

Both the Indian police and the Nepal Police agree that the method of women trafficking has morphed over the years. In Sindhupalchok, the district with the largest number of trafficking survivors, there's been no complaint registered against human



Pipeline to peril

trafficking in the last three years. “That doesn’t mean there was no trafficking activity at all. The fact is that they have changed the tactics of trafficking,” said Bimal Raj Kandel, deputy superintendent of police in Sindhupalchok district. “Human traffickers make sure that they have all the required official documents. They meet all the criteria, which makes it harder for us to identify if the activity is really trafficking or not.”

Earlier, traffickers employed various methods including crossing the border by hiding or handing them to someone at a brothel or home and charging money for the travel. But now it’s carried out in the name of foreign employment, according to Kandel. The traffickers would even look after logistics of obtaining citizenship for their targets, who are minor girls.

The word ‘setting,’ widely used in foreign employment sector, is characteristic of how the sector operates. In order to operate their network, traffickers make sure that everyone in the authority—the district level officials and people’s representatives—involved in granting permission for foreign employment is on board. After obtaining the recommendation for citizenship from the ward office, the girls travel to district headquarters to apply for the national ID at the district administration office. Kopila Tamang (name changed), a 14-year-old in the village of Selang in Sindhupalchok, obtained citizenship as a 19-year-old. While obtaining passport, the trafficker instructed her to use the same age as in her citizenship.

She was rescued by the Indian wing of Maiti Nepal. “Ramesh Tamang (of Sindhupalchok) had persuaded Kopila and her mother to travel to the district administration office to apply for citizenship and passport,” said Maheshwari Bhatta of Maiti Nepal. Assured from their traffickers, the girls and their parents themselves claim that they qualify for citizenship. “If we question about their age, their mother would say: ‘I have given birth to her so I know when she was born.’ We would have no means to counter further,” said an officer at the District Administration Office (DAO).

The applicants would furnish recommendation letter issued by their local representatives. So despite having suspicion about their age, government officials have no option but to issue them citizenship. “If we feel that the applicants are not honest about their age, we will urge them to wait for a few years before going abroad. But they seem so determined that no matter what, they will obtain it,” said Pitambar Pandey, an administration officer at DAO Sindhupalchok.

DAO issues fake citizenship

When she was barely eight, Santoshi Tamang (name changed) was lured by her aunt into travelling to New Delhi, India with the promise of a job. Her aunt couldn’t find a decent job for her so Santoshi started working as a domestic help for an Indian family. She was soon subjected to physical exploitation. Traumatized by the experience, she met Yubaraj Lama in New Delhi.

She hoped Lama would finally help her travel to a Gulf country. Indeed, he promised he would help her travel to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). But Santoshi neither had her citizenship nor the passport. In order to apply for her travel documents, Lama and Santoshi made it to Sindhupalchok. Four other young women also joined them at the district headquarters Chautara, where all of them stayed at a hotel.

erates under the guise of foreign employment, has told the Indian police that he would send the girls' photographs before making a deal with his clients.

Now in the custody of the Indian police, Lopchan's testimony offers a window into how trafficking operates from Nepal to the destination countries. In his statement to the Indian police, Lopchan confessed to sending Nepali girls' photographs to his clients so they could choose from a pool of potential victims, according to Maheshwari Bhatta, the head of Maiti Nepal in Kanchanpur, who had seen the statement. "It will ensure me good money," he told Indian police officers.

The Indian police's statement corroborates this claim. Lopchan had told police that he collected photographs of girls interested in travelling abroad for work and sent them to his Arab clients in the UAE. In their statement to the Indian police, traffickers have revealed that the sponsors sent a copy of the visa on their mobile phone. "After sending the girls to the Gulf, we don't keep track of them," the police recorded the traffickers as saying.

For many decades, India served as the only destination for Nepali trafficking victims. But India is no longer the only country Nepali girls are trafficked to. According to the DAO Sindhupalchok, girls from the district have been trafficked to Gulf countries including Oman, Malaysia, UAE, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon. DAO officer Pandey said, "It appears that they apply for jobs abroad, but they end up being trafficked."

Sindhupalchok tops the list of districts with the most women trafficked to foreign destinations from Nepal. According to police, the district first recorded a case of trafficking back in the year 2000 of the Nepali calendar. Most of the district's trafficked girls come from the northern areas, according to local authorities. That's because those villages are mired in poverty and lack awareness on the perils of trafficking. Low police presence in the areas makes it easier for traffickers to operate. Most of the victims belong to the Tamang community.

According to statistics from police, the district's northern villages including Helambu, Ichok, Mahankal, Golche, Gumba, Hagam, Panchpokhari, Banskharka,

Balkharka, Baruwa, Bhotang, Gunsa, Thangpalkot are the hotbed of trafficking.

"Those who are illiterate and from poor family are more likely to be tricked by traffickers," said Khyali Singh, a sub-inspector at the district police office. "Women from that group are likely to be victims of trafficking."

Sindhupalchok is second after Jhapa among districts with most female migrant workers in Nepal. In the last seven years, 7,770 women left the district to work abroad, according to the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE). In the current fiscal year, 2,020





12 years of ordeal

Twelve years ago, a trafficker named Ram Bahadur Bomjan arrived in the village of Indrawati (formerly Simpalkavre VDC) in Sindhupalchok. He said he was looking for women interested in foreign employment. He promised Som Maya Lama a job in Kuwait. Since then, no one knows her whereabouts or whether she is still alive. Her son, Kumar Lama, even travelled to Kuwait looking for her, but he couldn't find his mother, who had left when he was 14.

"I was 14 when my mother left us," Lama, now 26, said. "I went to Kuwait hoping to find her, but I returned home alone." Bomjan, who is from Helambu, now lives in Kuwait.

Samjhana Tamang, a woman from Sangachok in Sindhupalchok, has been missing for the last seven years. In 2010, she had left for UAE, but her family hasn't heard from her since then. Kanchhi Tamang, a 52-year-old woman from Panchpokhari Thangpal village, left for Malaysia nine years ago. She is among the women who have left home for foreign employment, but hasn't returned. There's no end in sight for the families desperate to find their loved ones.

Pipeline to peril

women left home to work in a foreign country, according to the DoFE. But very few checked about the job before leaving or received any training. In the last two years, only 144 women bound for foreign employment received training, according to Safe Migration Project (SaMi). Women who join foreign employment without seeking information or training often face exploitation from traffickers.

The trafficked women often face sexual abuse and end up being exploited by their employers, according to Rina Shrestha, a coordinator of SaMi in Sindhupalchok. Her office has received cases of women sold into prostitution, who have gone missing, with some of them deprived of their passport and other documents. There are also cases of lives lost.

In the last 3 years, SaMi has registered 83 such cases including disappearance of five women.

Legal loopholes

The modus operandi of women trafficking has changed. It now operates under the garb of foreign employment, but trafficking continues unabated. That's because there's no legal framework to address the problem. Neither the Foreign Employment Act-2007 nor the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act-2007 addresses this new form of human trafficking. Foreign Employment Act is silent on human trafficking. Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act doesn't clearly describe the act human trafficking under foreign employment as an offence. That's why there's confusion over which legislation to follow for cases of trafficking under foreign employment. The traffickers are taking advantage of this legal loophole.

The Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act defines human trafficking as an act of forcing women and children into sexual exploitation. But it doesn't include trafficking of women with false promises of foreign employment. The Foreign Employment Act, on the other hand, defines trafficking as an act of cheating. In other words, trafficking is an act of cheating by an individual or a recruiting agency. Under



Som Bahadur Gole from Sindupalchowk, Nanimaya Majhi from Sindhuli and Bishnu Lopchan from Parsa arrested for involvement in human trafficking and now in custody of Indian police.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

the Act, the offender is subjected to a lenient punishment. A human trafficker faces a 20-year jail sentence, but under the Foreign Employment Act, the guilty is sentenced to 3 to 7 years in jail.

Mohan Adhikari, an information officer at the DoFE, said his office is working to amend the Act to clear the confusion. “We have already sent the amendments to the Ministry of Law. It must be pending because we have no parliament now. It will speed up after the elections (for parliament and provincial assemblies),” he said. Roshani Devi Karki, an undersecretary at the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, said preparations were underway to amend both the legislations. Karki said her ministry was preparing a work plan to resolve the increasingly complex problem of trafficking.

Prabha Ghimire, president of KI Nepal, said that the notion that human trafficking was forcing women into prostitution was preventing authorities from taking action against trafficking under foreign employment. The method of trafficking has changed. These issues-- foreign employment, human trafficking, smuggling--must be clearly defined in the law in order to combat trafficking,” she said.

To punish traffickers under the act of cheating is to allow traffickers impunity, said Manju Gurung, president of Pourakhi, an NGO working for safe migration. “They travel with their own passport, but it’s 100% trafficking,” she said. “They are not given work permit, but are moved across the border using fake documents. This cannot be defined just as cheating.”

Published date : 10 November 2017, www.cijnepal.org.np

Laxmi Basnet

Why and how underage girls are forced into prostitution

How a large number of adolescent girls are coerced into sex business to earn their livelihood in Kathmandu . Teenagers, aged between 14 and 18 years, are exploited for sex but the concerned authorities are unresponsive

A larger number of people enter the Capital every day to live their dreams. Among them, adolescent and teenage girls also make their way to the city. Many of these young girls do not have basic education and skills to help them earn a living. They therefore get into unfavorable circumstances in the different workplaces they are taken to. Most of them are forced into sexual activities to please their masters and get enrolled into commercial sex without their choice or knowledge.

“Workplaces” for these teenage girls are tea shops, restaurants, guest houses, night clubs, and dance bars. After being coerced into prostitution some of these young girls and women get pregnant, leading to lifelong trauma.

In this report, we have unearthed the story of young girls who get involved in prostitution in Kathmandu.

Kamana (16)

Kamana (16) has been working in Sapana Guest House of Kalanki for the past three years. She first refused to reveal about her work but later (hanging her head) she said, “I am engaged in bad work.”

For Kamana “bad work” means sex business. She encounters with different clients. Some spend a few hours a day while others prefer to stay the whole night. The income depends on the clients. Those who stay for the whole night give more ‘tips’. Talking about her clients she said, “Most of the clients are married men, aged 35 to 40 years. I have regular clients compared to newer ones.”

Kamana came to Kathmandu three years ago with her dreams. Earlier, she worked in the hotel cleaning dishes and doing house-keeping work. The earning was insufficient and the hotel owner unfriendly. So she decided to take up the job that resulted in ‘friendly behavior’ from the owner.

For the past two years, she has been staying in a rented room with friends. Her friends also work in the same field. Kamana says, “Many of my clients have my phone number. Even the hotel owners provide my number to prospective clients. Frequent visitors continue to call me.”

Kamana has no interest in education after she dropped out of school. But she would like to give up the profession if she had certain skills. In her village, her father and





Evening view of Ratnapark.

mother ask what she does; she tells them that it is “good work.” She even sends money to her family. “I have no interest in going back to the village. How can I return now?” she wonders.

Prerana was introduced into prostitution at the age of (17)

Prerana, who will soon turn 21, is from Nuwakot and has started a tailoring business in Kathmandu. She has completed ‘advanced course’ in fashion designing. She has even trained a dozen girls in fashion designing but she becomes emotional when she recalls her past days (four years back).

She had just taken her SLC exams. As her mother got ill, she had to earn for the latter’s treatment. She came to Kathmandu with her aunt and was taken to work at a hotel in Balaju. She believed that her work was to ‘clean the dishes and do housekeeping’ but the owner said, ‘You need to fulfill the demand of clients.’ “Later, I did everything,” said Prerana.

She fled the hotel after the owner tried to rape her. She reached a massage center in Thamel in search for work. She was taught to massage, but the clients were all male and workers all female. She had to serve at least 14 to 15 clients a day.

She lived with four other girls like her. Mothers of small babies also used to work in the massage center. They had to keep their children in a separate room but were not permitted to look after their babies throughout the day, even when they were hungry.

Prapti (18)

Kalash Guest House in Kalanki used to be the work station for Prapti a few months ago. Asked about her work, she said without hesitation that she 'slept with clients.' She has been in this business for the past three years. She is now staying in Kalanki.

According to Prapti, she earns around Rs. 4,000 to Rs.5, 000 in a day and has set rates differently for various clients. She said, "If a client pays Rs.1,500, I pay the room charge, if the client pays for the room, I charge Rs. 1,000."

She fled to Kathmandu while she was studying in the eighth grade. She was merely 15 years old when she was forced into prostitution. She told her mother and brothers that she got married and had settled in Kathmandu. While working, I fell in love with one of the clients, and married him. Her husband is a driver and does not want her to continue working this way. If she finds some other job in the afternoon, she will leave prostitution.

Bedana (18)

Four years ago, Bedana, 14, was asked to deliver food to a guest in a room at a hotel in Thankot. The room was small and narrow; the guest caught her hand instead of the plate. "Going to deliver food to the guest meant staying with guests," explains Bedana. It was a cabin restaurant.

One of the villagers brought her to Kathmandu telling her that she would find a job easily with a monthly salary of Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,000. He told her that her job would be to receive phone calls "but he brought me to the cabin restaurant to fulfill the customer's desires", she laments.

A frustrated Bedana left the cabin restaurant and started working in another hotel as a dish washer. She cleans the dishes from 4 in the morning to 11 at night and is having a hard time. The hotel owner, as well as the customers, does not behave well with her. But those who accompany customers would get good response from both the owner and the customer, she said.

Manu (17)

Manu, 17, from Ramechhap used to work in a dance bar in Kathmandu three years ago. She had to work from 6 in the evening to 12 midnight. She reached her rented room at 2 am. She hardly got time to sleep because she again had to wake up at 5 in the morning to go to school. After school time (11 o'clock), her regular chores started. She had to cook food, wash dishes, do homework and get to the dance bar again on time.



Evening sight of Kathmandu.

why and how underage girls are forced into prostitution

The investigative team met her at a day shelter of Bishwas Nepal, an NGO working for victims of child prostitution. Her life has changed completely after she left the dance bar. She has joined college and teaches dance lessons at many organizations and schools.

How did she arrive in Kathmandu? The story is very painful. Manu said her father abandoned them and married another woman. After the incident, her mother and brother came to Kathmandu along with her. Her mother, who was the only breadwinner of the family, fell sick all of a sudden. She had no means to pay the loan taken from her relatives for her treatment. She then started searching for a job.

Her cousin sister asked her to join a dance bar, who was also a dancer at the same bar in Teku. She also started to make her clients happy and that continued for three years, she added.

Safal (17)

Safal, like Manu, was also in the day shelter provided by Bishwas Nepal. She is from Udayapur. She told Manu: “If we satisfy clients, we will get more tips and the owner also gets more profit.”

The story of Safal is as painful as Manu’s. She worked in a dance bar at Bypass, Balaju. She came to Kathmandu one year ago with sisters from her village while studying in Grade 11. In the beginning, she worked at a Dohori Sanjh (place for Nepali traditional musical evenings) and later she got into dance bar.

She was a primary teacher at a school in her village. She earned nearly Rs.8,000 a month. But she came to Kathmandu with a dream to earn more money without knowledge that she would have to do such things here. She wants to return to her village but is afraid of possible comments villagers might pass about her.

Baby abandoned by mother

An adolescent girl came to the central office of Maiti Nepal six months ago. She was eight months pregnant but was unable to say her exact age. Sometimes she said she was 18; at other times she claimed that she was 20 years old. She was unable to name the place where she came from. She claimed that the police asked her to go to Maiti Nepal.

After a lot of investigation from Maiti Nepal, it was revealed that she used to work in a hotel at the bus park (Gangabu) area. During inquiry, she revealed that she got pregnant while working in the hotel and was sent to Maiti Nepal to deliver the baby. She further informed the authorities that she would receive Rs. 200,000 after giving birth to the baby.



Investigative stories on women and children issue

Senior legal officer at Maiti Nepal Uma Tamang said, “She was performing commercial sex around the bus park area. Police sent her to Maiti Nepal after she was found pregnant.”

On June 2 2017, she gave birth to a baby after staying in Maiti Nepal for one month. Only then did she reveal that she had come from Tanahu. She had run away from her home in search of better work to Kathmandu. Maiti Nepal sent her home after they found that she had a family.

There is another painful story. In mid-November 2017, Anu Bista, a nurse working for an NGO Change Nepal, found a 15-year girl at a hotel who had recently given birth to a baby. Anu provides regular health check-up to girls working in hotels, restaurants, and tea shops.

Anu said the girl, in her fifteen or sixteen, worked at a restaurant in Kalanki and got pregnant from a client. Asked about her baby, the girl said the organization that helped her during delivery had taken the baby with them and asked her to go away. But she was unable to name the organization. Anu found the girl in a panic situation on the third day of delivery with blood around her.

According to Barsha Luitel of Change Nepal, most of the girls and women involved in sex business abandoned their babies soon after delivery for financial benefits. She said they bargain rates with customers in Kalanki near the overhead bridge or in a guest house.

Luitel also met a lot of pregnant women during her field study. When asked about their babies, they would start accusing each other of selling their babies.

According to Luitel, a 16 year old girl forced into prostitution arrived at her shelter on October 24, 2017. The girl said that she had a home in Kathmandu and was studying in grade 9, she had come to the shelter to deliver her baby and did not want her family to know about it. To hide her pregnancy, she first went to a medical college for abortion but the medical college asked her Rs. 150,000 for the abortion. Luitel said she had reached the shelter to hide her pregnancy from her family. Although the girl claimed that her age was 18-19, she was no more than 16, according to Luitel.

Factory of Crime

What is the number of adolescent girls involved in sex trade in Kathmandu? The organizations working in this sector claim that there are 15,000 to 16,000 teenage girls performing forced sex but the data cannot be verified. Child Rights Activist Pramesh Pradhan said the number of adolescent sex workers is increasing but they have not been able to study and identify why such trend is increasing and where do they come from.

According to rights organizations, hotels, restaurants, guest houses and cabin restaurants keep young girls to entertain customers. Most of them are 12 to 17 years old. But when asked about age, both the owners and the girls do not tell the truth. Most of the girls are from villages; they come here to find better work and gradually, owners of the hotel force them into performing sex with their clients. The owners hire boys and aged women for cleaning and washing work.

Pramila Chapagain of the Thamel branch of Change Nepal said almost all the massage centers hire girls between 15 to 30 years of age.

why and how underage girls are forced into prostitution

Advocate Uma Tamang of Maiti Nepal shared an incident from her field study. She found a small shop under a four-story building in Dhumbarahi, where the owner was engaged in such business. Her neighbors called the police after they suspected her involvement in sex trade. Maiti Nepal also reached there with police and found two rooms inside the house where two girls--aged 16 and 17 --were staying. They were assigned to this business saying that they would be able to charge each customer Rs.500.

There are several organizations in Nepal working for the rights of girls and adolescents. Most of these organizations rescue girls and provide them with different skills. However, most of the girls do not want to get such training. They find it difficult to learn new skills. Almost 90 percent girls left the training and returned to Prostitution. The number of complaints is decreasing these days as the pimps have found new ways of convincing and retaining young girls to perform sex for money.

SP Harihar Sunuwar of the Metropolitan Police Circle Gongabu said more and more girls are lured into the sex business in Kathmandu. Most of the time they raid the hotels but it is hard to trace them. They have no authority to arrest girls without the proof, he said.

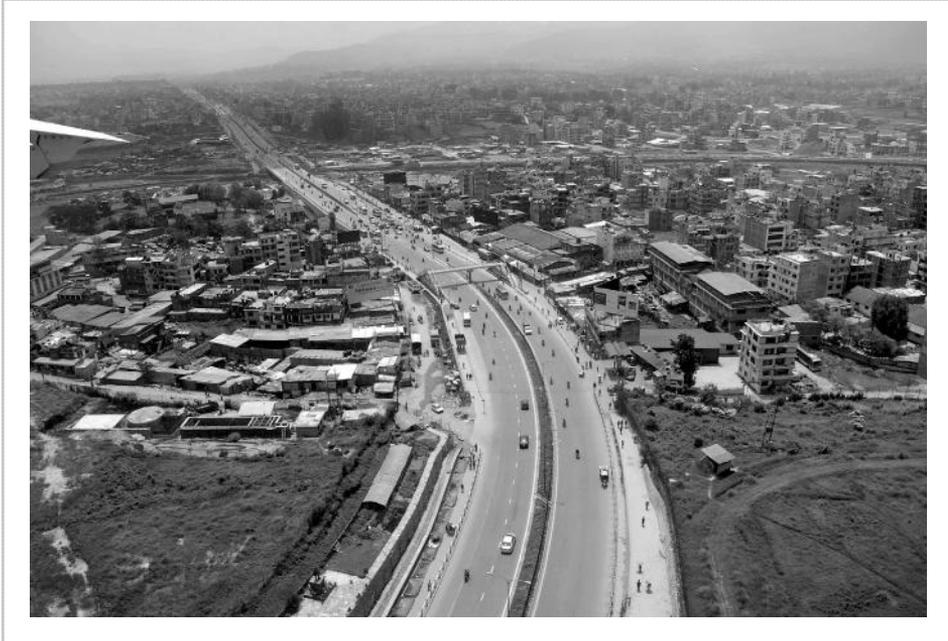
Indira Poudel, Child Protection Officer at the Women and Children Office, said that even though there is no exact data, most of the sex workers are under the age of 18.

The Nepal government has formulated the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act-2065 to control harassment of women at the workplace. According to the law, the Chief District Officer chairs the committee.



Kathmandu valley

Investigative stories on women and children issue



The committee will look after cases of sexual harassment at the workstation. But the CDO doesn't have time to look into such cases as he chairs various such organizations.

Section Officer at the District Administration Office Kathmandu Parash Mani Pokharel said that they have been working to set the procedure against sexual harassment at the workplace.

According to the law, having physical relation with girls below 16 years is regarded as rape. However, everyday hundreds of girls below 16 are involved in sex business in Kathmandu. The saddest part is that the government has not initiated efforts to protect those girls.

Published date : 5 December 2017, www.cijnepal.org.np

Shreejana Shrestha

No country for women

*Nepal's political transition is over, but there is
no closure for victims of wartime rape.*

The Tharu woman's daughter is nearly 15 years old. That is how many years have passed since she was raped by a group of Royal Nepal Army soldiers. That is also the number of years she has waited for justice.

She thought the culprits would be caught when the war ended, and that they would finally be taken to court when the Maoists were elected to power in 2008. She waited throughout the 11 years of political transition for truth, justice and compensation.

"I get very anxious about my past because I am not guilty. I have neither been compensated, nor have those who did it to me been caught," says Chaudhari, her eyes burning with fury.

Her husband was away when 25 soldiers drove up in a van, entered her home and beat her up. "Then they took turns to rape me," she recalls. "I am lucky to be alive."

She battled the ensuing trauma on her own, adjusting to ostracisation by her community which got worse when she got pregnant.

"I have spent a lot of money on my treatment, I could do with a little help, the government should tell me once and for all if I will get compensation or not, since others have," she says. Nepal has come a long way after the war ended in 2006. The monarchy was abolished, there were two elections to Constituent Assemblies that framed a federal secular constitution. Under the peace process the Maoist guerrillas were demobilized, some of them were integrated into the Nepal Army. For many the political transition is over, but not for war survivors like Chaudhari here in the plains of western Nepal which saw massive human rights violations by both sides.

Wartime rape victims are off the government radar, abandoned by their husbands, ostracized by their families and society. The state, which is made up of the warring sides, has excluded rape in the interim relief process and in transitional justice.

There is no accurate data on wartime rape because many victims are still afraid of social stigma. There is a lack of social protection, and many are poor. The statute of limitation, which has now been extended to six months, has been another hindrance.

Advocacy Forum-Nepal alone has documented and worked with at least 250 cases of conflict-era rape. Around 300 cases have been registered at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), where Madhavi Bhatta says: "First the registered rape cases need to be established through investigation and later we will recommend them for reparation."

When asked about how long that will take, she replied, "The process will definitely take years since the investigations have only just started."

Last August, the UN's human rights committee for the first time intervened in the wartime rape case of Purna Maya and urged Nepal to investigate it. Although it was a landmark decision, there has been no response from the government side.

Om Prakash Sen of Advocacy Forum-Nepal says the government has always ignored the demand for justice and reparations from wartime rape victims.

Jhpad Bohora, a Maoist MP from Karnali Province, said that creating jobs for the victims of sexual violence will be a top priority of the provincial government.

"Apart from jobs, we will also provide free education to their children," says Bohora, who has been appointed finance minister for a province which has the highest number of disappeared people and victims of wartime rape.

Published date : 6 March 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np

Amrita Anmol

Justice far-off for victims of rape and sexual abuse

*Even though rape and sexual abuse
victims win cases in court, they are
still outcasted by society depriving
them of Justice.*

In July last year, a troubled 12-year-old girl filed a report at the Area Police Office, Butwal against her father alleging him of instigating 'quarrels' within the family. Soon, her revelation that her father had repeatedly raped her shocked the police.

Divulging details of crime, this girl of Devinagar of Rupandehi said she has been a victim of rape for the last six months. Upon collecting details, when the police asked her mother to file a case against her husband, she denied. Finally, the police initiated investigation and sent him to jail after her maternal grandmother filed a case of evidence.

However, since the family prohibited her from joining them, she, with the support of the police, took refuge in the house of one of her aunts. "The family thinks that she is guilty," says Jyoti Kunwar, chief constable at the women and children cell of Area Police Office, Butwal, adding that the girl has not been home since.

Displacement of the victim

This girl represents scores of girls, who have become victims of rape from their relatives. Another 12-year-old girl, too, faced a similar nightmare when her father raped her. However, her mother supported her to provide justice by sending the father to jail.

The story does not end here. Accusing this girl of indicting her father of rape, family members and relatives barred her from entering their houses. Her helpless mother then sent her to Nepalgunj to work as a maid with the fear of the family being displaced from the village. "My daughter has been victimized," said Goma. "I couldn't do anything for her."

A 14-year-old girl was raped by her friend's father in Saljhandi of Rupanedhi six years ago. Even though the police arrested him, she faced the wrath of her relatives and



Demanding action against rape offenders for abusing domestic house workers, students of Sadhana Women College protesting in front of police office area, Butwal on 26th June 2017.

Justice far-off for victims of rape and sexual abuse

neighbors when they threatened to displace the family if she were not driven out of the house. The pressure was so immense that family members took her to the Women Rehabilitation Center (WOREC) in Butwal. The society and her relatives did not accept her when she returned home after five months. Tired of all this, her parents then sent her to Kathmandu where she started working as a housemaid. "I occasionally talk to my mother over the phone," she says in a wobbling voice. "But I can't go to my village."

A 13-year-old girl of Motipur, Rupandehi, was raped by her neighbor and got pregnant seven years ago. The rapist was put behind bars. However, she was forced to move to Butwal for failing to withstand the society's pressure. After spending the first six months at a rehabilitation center in Butwal, she came to Kathmandu and aborted her seven-month old fetus. No sooner had she returned to her village than her family moved to Butwal since their neighbors issued death threats to them. Her widowed mother works in a hotel to raise her three children. "Going back to village seems to be a distant dream," she sighs.

These are a few heart-rending tales of victims. According to Sub-inspector Laxman BK at the Women and Children's Cell, Rupandehi, there are cases of several families being displaced for failing to endure societal pressure. He says, "The irony is that the society too holds the victims responsible for the act."

A 17-year-old girl of Nepalgunj, who was gang-raped on 16th June 2016, has the same ordeal. Imagine the situation when she was assaulted by six men while on a trip to Lumbini with her friends. The police apprehended the rapists when her friend, who escaped the rape, reported the incident to the Butwal police. Unfortunately, boycotted by the society, she ended up working at a hotel in Butwal.

"Instead of showing pity on me, they accused me of making a mistake," the dejected girl complained. "Did I have any choice while leaving the house when the society threatened me of dire consequences if I stayed with my family?" she queried.

Most of the victims are offended by their family members, their relatives and the neighbors, police say. They go to such extents that they even coerce and intimidate the victims to settle the case or even try to alter the witnesses' accounts. Sub-inspector BK says, "This is why victims face displacement."

Human right defender Namrata Pokhrel says, "The victims are often displaced because of the society's mentality that women are always wrong."

The family of a 22-year-old woman of Sunwal, Nawalparasi, who became a gang rape victim in April 2012, was displaced from their village. The court's verdict came in her favor with a 10-year jail term for the rapists and a compensation pay of Rs. 200,000 for the victim. Despite this, she has not been able to go back home. The consequence: her family had to sell their property and move elsewhere.

The police do not have exact data on rape victims. Sharada Basyal, chief of the Women and Children's Office, Rupandehi says most of the rape victims in the district have been displaced. "While several of them are staying at Maiti Nepal, some are living with their relatives."

Spokesperson of the Rupandehi police, Deputy Superintendent of Police Dilli Narayan Pandey says, "In case of any hassles in the process of the case, we keep them at safe homes in the district. But we remain uninformed about their condition after that."

Compulsory rehabilitation of the victim: Supreme Court

Deciding on the case of police constable Suntali Dhami, who was draped by her colleagues in Achham, the Supreme Court had defined the justice for victims' rights in two approaches: Penalty for the guilty and rehabilitation of the victim. Defining forced sexual relation as a serious crime against humanity, the Supreme Court had said, "Such a crime is an act of embarrassment for the entire human civilization. Therefore, the state should not fail to protect the rights of the victims." The Supreme Court had then issued a special order to the government to work towards providing the victims easy access to court, social rehabilitation, and justice, recovering the loss of property, and compensation from the state's side.

However, the victims' rehabilitation in society has become complicated since justice has been limited to 'penalty for the accused'.

In another writ filed by Advocate Jyoti Lamsal, the Supreme Court has said that the victim's rehabilitation in the society should be incorporated. A joint bench of Justices Balaram Prasad KC and Bharat Raj Upreti said in the verdict: "The government should adhere to its constitutional responsibility and accountability by launching investigation into the case and give justice to the victim and take action against the convict."



Justice far-off for victims of rape and sexual abuse

Indira Acharya, chairperson of Kadam Nepal, an organization sheltering and supporting victims of rape and domestic violence, says, "The society's tendency to observe the physical changes in a girl has been one of the reasons of rape cases."

Complicated Rehabilitation

Even as the courts have adopted a 'fast-track' approach to decide cases of rape, it usually takes three months for verdict. There have been instances of verdict in favor of the victims. However, they have been deprived of compensation since several of the indicted people move higher courts. Meanwhile, several rape victims are skeptical about getting the compensation even if the accused have no rooms for appeal.

Chandrakant Chapagain, officer at the Butwal-based sub-regional branch of the National Human Rights Commission, says, "The victims do not usually claim the compensation fearing that their identities will be revealed."

As a matter of fact, nobody has taken any initiatives to rehabilitate or provide compensation for the victims. Advocate Hema Khanal says, "This is why victims are displaced." The Rupandehi District Court has, in the last seven years, issued verdicts on 310 cases of rape and sexual violence. Ironically, only one girl, raped by Shiva Pujan Yadav of Bogadi, Rupandehi, got the compensation amount.

Police investigating such cases say since children and teenagers are easily lured and tempted, and do not understand sexual gestures, they face high risks of being victimized easily. "Girls, not attending schools and not accustomed to the outside world, are at high risk," opines Rima BC, district representative of INSEC. "Moreover, parents try to conceal cases with the fear of being ostracized from the society. They fear that their daughters will not get married," she adds.

The District Government Attorney's Office, Rupandehi, had decided to file lawsuits in 24 cases of rape, and 15 cases of rape attempt in the fiscal year 2015-2016. Government officials say the data could be higher since several such cases are covered up.

According to the Office of the Attorney General, around 1,089 cases of rape, and 452 cases of rape attempt were registered with the office in the fiscal year 2015-16. Experts say that the social structure and the mental anomalies in persons have been the reasons behind such cases.

Assistant Professor of Psychology Jiwan Kumar Poudel says people have been so irresponsible that they do not even consider future implications of their behavior. A majority of rape victims suffer a deceptive mentality. Dr. Shreedhar Acharya of Lumbini Zonal Hospital, Butwal, said cases of rape will have a long-term impact on the girls, whose reproductive parts are not fully grown.

Professor of Sociology, Narayan Panta, said it is high time that social leaders initiated campaigns to rehabilitate the victim's families, and to displace the indicted ones. He argued that while the ac-



Investigative stories on women and children issue

cused should be ostracized, the victim should be honored by supporting her family in all terms, including financial backing.

There has been a tendency in the society of relating rape cases with the girl's character. Psychotherapist Kamala Gahatraj says, "The problem persists unless the victim and her family are counseled to bring about positive consequences."

Tulsa Sharma, an educator, says, "Such incidences will definitely decrease if people disapprove of the convict, and accept the victims."

The National Judicial Academy four years ago carried out a study on "Victim Women's Access to Judiciary and Social Rehabilitation". According to Advocate Raju Chapagain, who also coordinates the team, since most of the guilty are either relatives or known ones, they continue to torture the victims and their families. "Hence, either they try to dismiss the case, threaten or even coerce the victim's side, making social rehabilitation difficult."

Published date : 9 February 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np

Krishna Adhikari

Stuck in a limbo

The CDO and the court caught in a bitter battle, blocking many youths' path to citizenship

Ten young people of Nepalganj have been left without citizenship after the chief district officer, despite a court directive, refused to implement the order to grant them citizenship. Take a look at how the District Administration Offices are helping produce stateless people.

On May 31, 2017, Sharanga Subedi and Bir Bahadur Dangi, judges on the Nepalganj bench of the Tulsipur High Court, ordered the District Administration Office (DAO) Banke to grant citizenship to Mohamand Sakil Halwai within one month and inform the court about it.

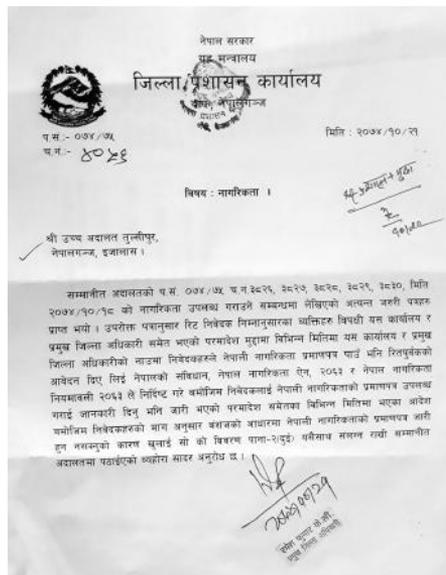
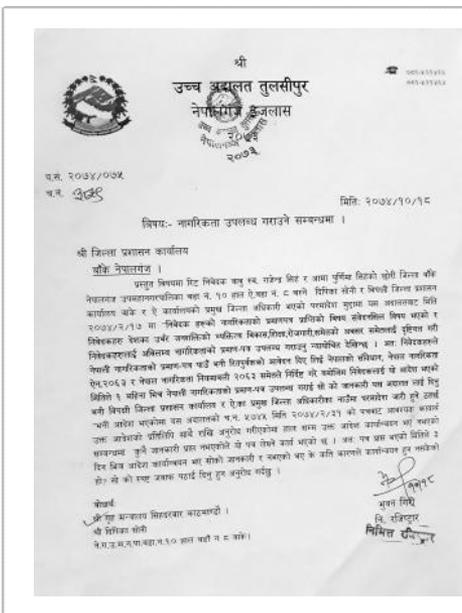
The High Court sent a letter detailing the ruling to the Banke DAO on June 18, 2017. Buoyed by the ruling, Sakil visited the DAO in Nepalganj. But instead of issuing a citizenship, the DAO told him that he lacked evidence of his father's Nepali nationality.

Sakil's lawyers lodged a petition at the High Court after the DAO's refusal. On February 1, the High Court's Nepalganj bench sent another letter to the DAO asking why citizenship certificates were not issued to Sakil and four others. The court had instructed the DAO to clarify within three days.

On February 4, the DAO, Banke replied to the High Court. In his response, Ramesh Kumar KC, the chief district officer (CDO), stated that under the Citizenship Act-2006 (Section 3, sub-section 2), there was no sufficient proof of his father's nationality, which was cited as a reason for the rejection.

Bhuwan Giri, the registrar at the High Court, was stunned by the response from the CDO. Under Nepal's Constitution, if a complainant is dissatisfied with a court ruling, the concerned party can appeal for a revision of the verdict. Otherwise, the ruling must be implemented. Contrary to the provision, the DAO, Banke instructed the court on why it couldn't issue the citizenship.

According to the well-established principle of constitution and justice system, in case of any hurdle in implementing the court order, a way-out should be sought in consultation with higher authorities. If that doesn't work, a meeting of Justice Coordination Committee should be called upon to find a way out. Giri, the acting



Stuck in a limbo

registrar, said, “The DAO, Banke did nothing to resolve this. Instead, it sent a reply detailing why the ruling couldn’t be implemented. We are investigating whether this was to drag their feet on the matter.”

There are 10 other young people like Sakil who have been denied their rights to citizenship. When asked why the Banke district administration refused to implement the court order, it gave an unclear answer. First, KC, the CDO, said the court ruling failed to specify whether to grant citizenship by descent or by naturalization. “Unless the applicant’s father is a Nepali citizen, we cannot grant him or her citizenship by descent,” he said.

Nepal’s Constitution has clear provisions on citizenship for people like Sakil. According to Article 11 (5) of the Constitution: “A person who is born in Nepal from a woman who is a citizen of Nepal and has resided in Nepal and whose father is not traced shall be provided with the citizenship of Nepal by descent.” The young people of Nepalganj would have easily received their citizenship if this provision was followed by the authorities.

But the same Article of the Constitution has the following provision: “Provided that his or her father is held to be a foreign citizen, the citizenship of such person shall be converted into naturalized citizenship as provided for in the Federal law.”

The provision in the Constitution, however, is different from the DAO’s interpretation. If the applicant’s father turned out to be a foreigner, the citizenship will be converted into a naturalized one. That’s why the Constitution has used the term “converted into” in its language.

Young people such as Sakil, Shivani, Dikshya and Soni are eligible for Nepali citizenship, according to the country’s new Constitution. But the district administration,

सि.नं.	रिट निवेदकको नाम, वर, वतन	सम्बन्धीत अदालतबाट आदेश जारी भएको मिति	माग गरेको नागरिकताको किसिम	अनुसूची-१ बमोजिमको विपरीत पदार्थ सापेक्ष गरेका प्रमाणहरू	माग अनुसार बहाजको नाताने नागरिकता जारी हुन नसक्नुको कारण
१	दिपिका सोनी नेपालगन्ज-८	२०७४/०२/१७	बराज	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • बाबु देखाईएका व्यक्तिको मृत्युदर्ता प्रमाण • पतिको नाम नखुलेको बामाको जन्मको ना.प.प. • नाता प्रमाणित/मतदाता परिचयपत्र • वैश्विक प्रमाण/जन्मदर्ता प्रमाण 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • नेपाल नागरिकता ऐन, २०६३ को दफा ३ को उपदफा २ बमोजिम निवेदिका दिपिका सोनीको आमा पुर्धामा सिंहको विवाह नेपाली नागरिक वा विदेशी नागरिकसँग भएको भन्ने सम्बन्धमा यकीन हुने प्रमाण पेश नभएको । • निवेदिकाको आमासे नेपाली नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र सिदा गलत तरिकाले कित्ते प्रमाण बहाज पेश गरी ना.प.प. निराखे भन्ने उजुरीको सम्बन्धमा यस कार्यालयबाट छानविनको कार्य भैरहेको • निवेदिका बराजसे आधारमा नेपाली नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र पाउने व्यक्ति होइन निजलाई गलत तरिकाले नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र दिने तयारी भैरहेकोले रोक लगाइ गिरफ्तार भनी अक्रियार दुस्प्रयोग अनुबन्धान आयोगमा परेको उजुरीको सम्बन्धमा गृह मन्त्रालय

Investigative stories on women and children issue



citing lack of Regulations and Act after the Constitution's promulgation, has ignored the court directive and deprived them of citizenship.

Issue Citizenship: High Court



Shivani Singh/ Dikshya Singh

Directive issued on December 7, 2016

Shivani, 24, and Dikshya, 22, are sisters. They live in their home near Rani Talau at Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City, Ward No 10. Both were born in Nepalganj. They did their school in the city.

On November 28, 1984, Arati Singh, the girls' mother, received the Nepali citizenship under the name of

her father Anirudra Singh. Arati is a teacher at a government school in Nepalganj.

The girls' father, Arun Singh, left for India in 1998 to work. Her family doesn't know his whereabouts yet. Both of their parents are Nepali citizens; they were born in Nepalganj and grew up and went to school in the city. But they were denied citizenship because they couldn't trace their father, said Shivani.

Stuck in a limbo

Lack of citizenship has casued Shivani and Dikshya immense anxiety. Nepal's law requires every person at the age of 16 or above to have a citizenship for any official work. Citizenship is required to open a bank account, buy a SIM for mobile phone, to apply for a driving license, to enroll at college and to apply for job. "It has affected our study. My friends have already started their job after getting their citizenship, but for the last three years, I have been running from pillar to post to get my citizenship," Shivani said. "We haven't received the citizenship despite the court ruling, which was issued seven months ago."



Deepika Soni

Directive issued on May 31, 2015

Deepika Soni, a 22-year-old resident of Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City, was born in the city. She completed her school education here. She did a course on nursing from the Institute of Medical Technology in Bharatpur under a government scholarship programme. But she hasn't acquired the licence from Nursing Council because she doesn't have the citizenship. Without licence, she hasn't been able to apply for jobs.

Her mother, Purnima Singh, has got citizenship by descent. Her father, Gajendra Singh, died on November 29, 1992. Her mother even receives an allowance given by the state to widows. The DAO denied citizenship to Deepika on the ground that she was born before her mother's marriage. On May 31, 2017, a joint bench of Sharanga Subedi and Bir Bahadur Dangi, issued a directive stating that a citizen's birth date should be regarded as the time he or she became the country's citizen and not the day he or she was granted the citizenship. Hence, Deepika was eligible for a citizenship under her mother's name.

Arjun Khatik

Directive issued on June 17, 2015



Nineteen-year-old Arjun Khatik was born in Ward number 24 of Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City. His father, Madhav Ram Khatik, holds the Nepali citizenship by birth and his mother Mira Kumari Khatik has acquired citizenship by descent. Despite his parents holding Nepali citizenship, Arjun has been deprived of it.

In 2007, under a special provision, the government issued citizenship by birth to people who could prove that they were born in Nepal, were living in the country and were 16 years old or older. The DAO, Banke had refused to grant him citizenship stating that he was born on May 29, 1998, before his father was granted the citizenship by birth. But Arjun is not the only one facing this problem. Hundreds of young people have become its victims. CDO KC said the cases in which the applicant's birth date preceded the date when his or her father was granted citizenship had complicated the issue because there was no provision for such cases.



Sakil Halwai

Directive issued on May 31, 2015

Sakil Halwai, 20, was born in Ward number 4 of Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City. His mother Sabnam Halwai has acquired the citizenship by descent. He completed his school education in Nepalganj. On September 7, 2015, the Banke district court allowed his parents to separate following their differences.

Now the DAO, Banke has required a document showing evidence of his father's nationality. The court has already issued a directive to the DAO to grant him citizenship by descent. But Sakil has been denied citizenship because the court's directive is yet to be implemented. "I am making do with the help of my mother's bank account and mobile phone number. But I need my own citizenship to get a job and to apply for the driving licence," he said. "I support my mother as the family's breadwinner, but I am myself without citizenship."

Aafrin Jarra Shesh

Verdict yet to come out

Nineteen-year-old Aafrin Jarra Shesh was born in Ward number 7 of Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City. He has got school education. His father Rais Ahamad Shesh died on December 15, 2006 before getting the citizenship. His mother Rina Jarra Shesh had acquired the citizenship by descent on August 12, 1997 before her marriage. His grandfather Showkat Ali and uncle Saeed Ahmad had got their citizenship by birth on February 24, 2007. Now the DAO, Banke has asked him for a document showing the proof of his father's nationality.

Ganesh Sunar

Directive issued on April 28, 2015

Ganesh Sunar, 19, was born in Khajura of Banke district. He completed his school education at his home village. His mother, Surya Sunar, acquired the citizenship by birth in 2007.

His father, who had left for India to work, has been missing. They don't have the man's citizenship. The DAO, Banke has insisted that he produce a document showing his father's nationality.



Sushma Gupta

Directive issued on November 8, 2017

Twenty-one-year-old Sushma Gupta was born in Basudevpur, ward number 19 of Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City. She went to a school in Nepalganj. Her mother, Nanda Kala

Stuck in a limbo

Khadka, acquired citizenship by descent on September 22, 1985. Her father, Birendra Prasad Gupta, received the citizenship by birth on February 12, 2007. She has also been denied citizenship because, according to the Banke administration, her birth date preceded the date her father got his citizenship document.

Sushma is angry because despite her parents holding the Nepali citizenship, she has been denied the national ID. She feels that it has hurt her self-confidence and self-respect. In a democracy, the right of a citizen is considered topmost. But Sushma couldn't even open a bank account or buy a SIM card because she doesn't have the citizenship.



Aishwarya and Sambriddha Rai

Directive issued on June 14, 2017

Aishwarya, 21, and Sambriddha Rai, 19, were born in Ward number 12 of Nepalganj Sub-metropolitan City. When their father, Rana Bahadur Rai, died on July 19, 1998, Aishwarya was one-year-old and her brother Sambriddha was in the womb. Their mother, Nirmala Rai, acquired citizenship by birth on February 22,

2007. Both have been denied citizenship by the administration, which has required them to produce a document showing their father's nationality. The High Court has directed the DAO to grant them citizenship under their mother's name, but the administration has repeatedly asked for a document to show whether their father was a Nepali or a foreigner.

In 2007, the government deployed teams to distribute citizenship by birth to people living in Tarai districts. The team issued citizenship to around 8,000 people in Banke district. The government had amended the Citizenship Act (2006) through an ordinance. According to the amended laws, the teams granted citizenship by descent to people who were born after their parents got citizenship by birth.

But on March 26, 2014, the ordinance became ineffective. On the day, the Ministry of Home Affairs sent a circular to its offices in all the 75 districts directing them not to follow the changes. That's why people like Aishwarya and Sambriddha found themselves in trouble.

Against the Constitution: Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has set a precedence according to which lack of identification of father should not prevent anyone from acquiring citizenship by descent under the mother's name. Two years ago, the Supreme Court issued a directive to the government to grant citizenship by descent to two siblings who had been denied citizenship by Kathmandu's DAO because their father couldn't be identified. In their ruling, Supreme Court Chief Justice Kalyan Shrestha and Justice Om Prakash Mishra have stated that a person eligible for citizenship shouldn't be denied the rights by creating obstacles.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

“Despite the provision of granting citizenship under mother’s name for people who were given birth by a Nepali citizen, were born in Nepal and grew up in the country, to question whether their father is a Nepali or a foreigner to deny them citizenship is against the law,” the Supreme Court ruling reads. “It’s against the Constitution to not grant citizenship just because an applicant’s father hasn’t been identified.” The Supreme Court had issued the ruling on March 15, 2016.

Anita Sapkota acquired her citizenship in Kathmandu on May 3, 1984. She later got married to Shamim Siddique of Dumarbana village in Bara district. In 1987, she gave birth to a daughter, whom they named Sajda. Six years later, their son Asim was born. Three years later in December 1997, Shamim, who was travelling to his ancestral home, disappeared. He was never found.

In December 2007, Anita and her children applied for the recommendation for citizenship at a ward office of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. When they tried to apply for citizenship at the Kathmandu District Administration Office, the CDO declined to register it. The DAO had refused to register the application citing flaws in the process. After the DAO refused to issue the citizenship under mother’s name, they challenged it at the court.

Responding to the writ petition, the Supreme Court said: “Despite the proof that the mother held citizenship by descent, the administration refused to grant citizenship citing that the father couldn’t be traced. The move seems to have been biased towards applicant Anita Sapkota because she is a woman. This has defied the constitutional provision.”

Published date : 13 February 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np

**Janak Timalina
Bhisa Kafle**

Big ministry on a little budget

*Politicians and bureaucrats have left the
Ministry of Women, Children and Social
Welfare, tasked with addressing grievances of
over 80 percent of population including women
and children, in a sorry state.*

Everyone except able bodied men 18 years or older and those below 59 years falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. These categories consist of almost 80 percent of the country's population. But the government allocated a 2 billion 220 million rupee budget in the current fiscal year to the ministry with such a vast dominion. That means each person under its jurisdiction has a share of 104 rupees. That budget also covers expenses for the ministry's 1,591 staffers and operation of offices.

According to Mithu Thapa, head of the ministry's finance section, the ministry spends 29.21 percent of the budget on salary. Moreover, between 44 and 50 percent of the budget is spent on women development programme, according to Bharat Sharma, undersecretary at the ministry's planning monitoring section. With almost 75 percent of the budget already spent, how does the ministry manage funds for children, elderly and disabled people? Officials at the ministry don't have an answer to this question.

Brinda Hada, a former secretary at the ministry, said the ministry was being ignored despite its vast jurisdiction because of the flawed vision of bureaucrats and politicians. "The ministers who get appointed at the ministry are either first-timers or from a political party with just one seat in parliament. Soon-to-retire secretaries, who couldn't be accommodated elsewhere, get transferred to the ministry," she said. "In such a situation, how can the ministry progress?"

Indeed, in the last 10 years, the ministry had 16 ministers and 13 secretaries. "The ministry has been weakened because it never got a strong political leader," said Sharma, the undersecretary.

The ministers usually come from a party with one or two seats in parliament. They hold office only for about 8-9 months. With their short tenure in mind, they refrain from making any long-term plans. It affects the ministry's annual budget. Major party leaders are never interested in the ministry. In rare instances when they are, they get appointed in order to settle division of spoils within the party. Such a minister neither comes with a vision to lead the ministry nor with the capacity to present plans which could bring the ministry required funds.

Dismal state of the ministry

The ministry's budget for the current fiscal year is 220 million rupees less than the previous year. But this is not the first time budget has been reduced. Officials attributed the cut to frequent changes of ministers and secretaries and lack of planning. "We never got a minister



Big ministry on a little budget

and secretary who could strongly express his or her views with the chief secretary and the finance ministry and present appropriate plans,” said an undersecretary.

“Other ministries refer women’s issues to the ministry, but don’t want to allocate budget and human resource to carry out the tasks,” said former secretary Hada.

Dinesh Adhikari, who served as secretary at the ministry for 18 months, claimed that he launched a campaign to increase budget and increase human resource in the ministry in order to initiate a long-term plan. But he admitted the ministry couldn’t get impactful programmes because politicians overseeing the ministry weren’t powerful enough. “When I came here, the annual budget stood at 990 million rupees. I persuaded everyone involved in it to increase it. The number of staff increased from 900 to 1,300,” he said. “But we couldn’t deliver because no one prioritized it, not even the minister.”

The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is the main ministry for social sector. But going by allocation of budget, it doesn’t feel that way. The fact that less than enough budget is allocated to the ministry demonstrates the state’s apathy towards women, children, elderly and disabled people.

The ministers who were at the helm of the ministry over the years are responsible for the sorry state. But they also hold grudges. Badri Neupane, who had been the minister for 10 months, recalled that he had to request the finance ministry to release funds for fuel when his office ran out of money. “Imagine a ministry where the minister has to request for funds to buy fuel,” he said. “If we want the ministry to fully deliver to its brief, its budget must be increased by 10 times,” he said.



Ministry on the margins

“Look, a women’s secretary is here,” an officer of a powerful ministry, is said to have commented a few years ago when secretary of the ministry arrived at a canteen in Singhadarbar, Kathmandu. “I told him I felt proud to serve as secretary of the ministry which covered more than half of the population,” the secretary recalled replying to the officer. That an officer can make a mockery of a secretary, who is senior to him, shows how civil servants view the ministry.

Another widely known incident was that of a newly appointed minister. A lawmaker from a party that won one seat in parliament got home after being appointed as the minister for women, children and social welfare. His wife and daughter derided him for being a ‘women’s minister.’ This episode spread like a wildfire at the ministry, where staffs still talk about it. A joint secretary at the ministry said,

Investigative stories on women and children issue

“If someone is transferred to the ministry, colleagues from other ministries will pity the person for that. They say he or she was transferred because of the person’s naivety. They think a civil servant agrees to the transfer only under pressure. I think they are driven by personal gains.”

The ministry is also pushed to the margin in terms of service, benefits and mobilization of resources. The office of the secretary there is less attractive than that of the undersecretary at the finance ministry. An undersecretary at the finance ministry is provided with a chauffeured car. But such perks are not offered to some joint secretaries of the ministry.

On September 14, 2016, Bishnu Lamsal was transferred from the finance ministry to the ministry of women, children and social welfare. At his previous office, he was provided with a new chauffeured car, but at his new office he found cars were in bad shape. Dissatisfied, he arranged for the car he used at the finance ministry for his new posting. “Secretaries, joint-secretaries and undersecretaries are entitled to same status in both ministries, but in practical terms, there’s a huge difference,” complained an undersecretary.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has 10 cars, 24 motorcycles and scooters. The minister uses four cars. The ministry of education in the next block has 20 cars, 40 motorcycles and scooters.

Civil servants at the ministry have to think twice before spending on fuel and other essentials. Due to lack of funds, the ministry has put up a ceiling of 2 million rupees for fuel this year. Last year, the ministry was allocated 2.7 million rupees for fuel, but 700,000 rupees was deducted this year.

An island where nobody wants to go

The ministry of education is about 50 metres from the ministry of women, children and social welfare, but influential politicians compete with one another to secure a ministerial berth at the former. No one eyes the ministry of women, children and social welfare, though. Politicians feel they have been sidelined if they get appointed as the minister. Most ministers who have served at the ministry since 2007 had come from a single-seat party. They include Badri Neupane of Chure Bhawar Party and Kumar Khadka of the Akhanda Nepal Party.

Lack of interest from politicians to serve as minister was apparent when Pushpa Kamal Dahal retained the portfolio in his second tenure. During Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal’s tenure, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Physical Planning Bijay Gachchhadar retained the ministry. But near the end of his term, Gachchhadar handed it to his party colleague Sarbadev Ojha. Two Maoist ministers—Khadga Bahadur Bishwakarma and Pampha Bhusal—were the only influential politicians to have served at the ministry. Aside from that, none of the ministers, including Ram Charan Chaudhary, Riddhi Baba Pradhan, Jayapuri Gharti, Badri Neupane, Dan Bahadur Kurmi Chaudhary, Nilam KC, CP Mainali, Kumar Khadka, Asha Koirala and Bikram Bahadur Thapa were influential. Five past prime ministers—Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Baburam Bhattarai, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Sher Bahadur Deuba—changed ministers at the ministry during their term.

Big ministry on a little budget

The fact that 14 secretaries served at the ministry in the last 10 years shows lack of interest among civil servants. Those transferred to the ministry include officials about to retire who don't want any controversy, who want to cultivate NGOs in order to benefit after retirement and those who are not influential for a posting at powerful ministries. A few want to be posted at the ministry because it offers travels to foreign countries.

Among the 14 secretaries since 2007, Rudra Kumar Shrestha retired 12 days after he joined the ministry; Prem Kumar Rai was transferred to another ministry, having worked only for 48 days; Khagaraj Baral moved to another ministry after 4 months. Punya Prasad Neupane was the longest-serving secretary, who retired after two years and three months at the ministry. Among the 14 secretaries, six retired while serving at the ministry. The eight who were transferred completed only about 10 months at the ministry. Dinesh Adhikari, former secretary who retired from the ministry after 18 months, said, "I chose the ministry despite opportunity to move to ministry of industry. I did so because I feared I would have to make wrong decisions in other places," he said.

Not only ministers and secretaries, but civil servants in general also don't want a shot at the ministry. Many civil servants we interviewed admitted they were forced to move to the ministry. "This is not an attractive ministry," they told us.

But some civil servants have changed their mind after their stints at the ministry. Radhika Aryal, head of the ministry's women empowerment section, is one of them. "In the beginning, I thought it was forced upon me, but now I feel it was a good move," said Aryal, who has worked at the ministry for three years. But even officials such as Aryal attributed their lack of motivation to resource crunch.

Why has the ministry proved unattractive to both politicians and bureaucrats? We asked this question to former minister Badri Neupane. "This is not a pro-development ministry. It cannot be used for allocating funds to one's constituency," he said. "Politicians also cannot employ their cadres. That's why it's unattractive to those who are not interested in social service."

In the developed world, similar ministries are responsible for social sector services such as building human capital, which gives it a competitive edge. But in the politically unstable third world countries, politicians are interested in ministries that deliver quick outcomes. So instead of investing in social service, they opt for ministries such as physical planning. "This is not where you get to spend a lot of money. What's more, ministers don't want to wait very long for results," said Toyam Raya, a ministry spokesman. "Many prefer ministries such as physical planning, which quickly deliver. That tendency has contributed to the ministry being ignored."

The ministry of women, children and social welfare has a solid structure from the top to the district level. More important is its jurisdiction, which covers 80 percent of the country's population. That's why even a little work from the ministry can make a huge impact by letting people feel the state's presence. "It doesn't matter how much funds we have. What matters is whether we have completed projects according to budget allocation. Though we have smaller funds, we have been able to deliver results," said Naindra Prasad Upadhyay, secretary at the ministry.

Under the ministry, there are 22 undersecretaries in 22 districts, with the rest of the districts having women development office led by an officer. In Kathmandu, the Social

Investigative stories on women and children issue

Welfare Council (SWC) and the Department of Women are under its dominion. The SWC oversees roughly 80,000 NGOs and INGOs. The Central Child Welfare Committee under the ministry is spread over all the districts.

Civil servants here don't feel the pressure since their job entails social service, a work much appreciated by everyone. They don't have to face financial trouble. Since the main job is social service, those inclined to this field regard it as an important work. "The job allows civil servants to travel abroad and participate in training and workshops across the country. So this has value in different ways," a former minister said. "But neither politicians nor bureaucrats seem to have understood its significance and scope. As a result the ministry is like an island where nobody wants to go."

Such lack of interest can have huge implications for its beneficiaries. A woman who was raped by her brother-in-law could no longer stay at home in Dhankuta. Desperate for help, she contacted district Women Rights Defense Network. Though she urgently needed rescue, the network didn't have a shelter. The network's representatives made a request to the women development committee. But the committee declined to help saying that it didn't have funds and infrastructure. Eventually, Hima Chemjong, the chairperson of the network, agreed to host the victim at her home.

This case illustrates the sorry state of ministry of women, children and social welfare and its district level offices including the women development committee. "Lack of resources has hampered urgent rescue efforts and rehabilitation of victims," said Tarak Dhital, member secretary of the Central Child Welfare Committee under the ministry. It seems the ministry has no time to reckon on the need to support the elderly, disabled people and children under its jurisdiction.

Published date : 20 February 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np

Unnati Chaudhari

Children left in the lurch

*Ever heard of miserable woes of
children who have been separated
from their families?*

Ever heard of miserable woes of children who have been separated from their families?

An NGO-run Surakshit Griha (Safe Home) at Attariya in Kailali has been sheltering around 14 conflict-affected people, including 10 children. Among them are Ramesh, 7, and his sister Sushma Saud, 6, who have been staying there for the last one-and-a-half years away from the warmth and care of their great-grandmother.

Their great-grandmother (mother's grandmother) has been raising them with the support of her old-age allowance and by selling firewood in Godawari-8, Kailali, after the disappearance of their parents. However, unable to withstand frequent complaints, grudges, and pressure from her daughter-in-law, the great-grandmother shifted these two kids to the Safe Home. For these second graders-, Safe Home is their permanent home now.

Dhaulti Saud, their great-grandmother, said Ramesh was not even a year old, and Sushma still in her mother's womb, when their father went missing. Their mother, Laxmi, who moved to her parent's house in Doti after her husband's disappearance, too went missing two years after Sushma's birth.

Daulti's granddaughter-in-law, who was direly against meeting with these two kids, forced this 75-year-old lady to leave the house alleging her of repeatedly doing so. This old lady, who makes her living by selling green vegetables at the Attariya market, frequents her grandchildren to the Safe Home and requests the staffers not to chase her kids away from there.

Meanwhile, for six-year-old Asmina Chaudhary of Laxmipur, Kanchanpur, the Safe Home is like a hostel. She has been staying here for the last three years after her father's death due to jaundice. Unable to tolerate frequent tortures from her husband's family, her widow mother Sita Dagaura suddenly disappeared by leaving her daughter Asmina with her elder sister Saraswati, who later took Asmina to the Safe Home. "I had to take her (Asmina) to there for her safety owing to death threats from her grandparents to seize the one-bigha land, which was registered in the name of Asmina's father." Saraswati says, "They have even threatened me with dire consequences."

Though third-grader Asmina visits her aunt during holidays, she is unaware of her mother's whereabouts. Surprisingly, her younger sister, too, is missing.

Gopal Sijapati, another second grader, has also been staying at the Home for the last two years, since he became an orphan. His father Chabilal -- working in India -- was murdered in Ghaziabad, India, on April 16, 2016. However, he got another shock when his mother died of electrocution on January 7, 2017. Soon after his mother's death, his uncle brought him to the Safe Home.

Basanta and Ritesh Bajjali of Gauriganga municipality-11, too, are no exception. While their father died of tuberculosis when Ritesh was three-months-old, their mother eloped with another man putting all burden on the shoulders of their grandmother, who despite being poor raised them with care. However, Man Bahadur Nepali, an employee at the National Human Rights Commission, took the boys to the Home thinking that they would lead a better life there.

Manisha Shrestha, 18: A representative story

My mother eloped when I was just two months old and my father was abroad, people say. My grandmother raised me. My father came home and took me to the New Life Children's Home in Pokhara when I was three years old. After six months, he went back. He regularly contacted me from abroad and even came to meet me once or twice. Unfortunately, one day the news of his death came to me. There was no one to take care of me. I stayed at the Home until I was 11 years old. After I completed Grade 7 from Indra Rajya Laxmi High School, I became all alone. Then an American couple adopted my friend Yashoda Giri and took her to the United States. Out of the 35 children in the Home, some were elder sisters. One day, the police raided the Home and arrested the owner since he was making money by sending boys to the elder sisters' rooms for physical relationship. Since that day, the centre closed down. I don't know the whereabouts of Tek Bahadur Thapa, the owner.

All the physically-fit were moved away from the Home except four of us, who were driven out to the streets. We spent three nights on the pavement near the tourist bus park in Ratna Chowk, Pokhara, surviving on leftovers. Two among us, 11-year-old MuskanThakuri of Dharan and 10-year-old Ritu Baral of Baglung, died. Nobody came to claim the bodies. My friend Samikshya Shrestha and I ran away from there.

Fortunately, we encountered a hotel owner, Amrita Giri, who took us to her hotel at Lama Chaur, Pokhara. Soon, Samikshya went with a boy. I have never seen her since that day. Amrita washed dishes and did other chores at the hotel for two years.

One day, Amrita asked me to accompany a boy, who she said was her cousin. "I can't tolerate you anymore. You go with him. He will take care of you and find a better job for you," she told me. I was 13 years old then. I happily accompanied the boy with the hope of getting a better job.

We roamed around Mahendrapul bazaar that day. With the fall of night, he took me to his windowless room and started abusing me. I screamed but in vain. I had no option but to endure it and stay with this boy, Subash Thapa Magar of Dhading.



In fact, he had no work other than strolling around the whole day and returning in the evening. I started working on daily wages. We frequently quarreled. One day I was taken aback when he told me that the hotel owner had sold me to him for Rs. 100,000. "Be ready to be my wife," he told me. Later, he started coming home with other girls and even had physical relationship with them in my presence. He often thrashed me.

To my surprise, I was pregnant, which I conveyed to him. He coerced me into aborting it. A few days later, police arrested him for theft. The court asked for a bail amount of Rs. 200,000. That was a big amount. I had only Rs. 30,000 with me. However, I released him from the jail by depositing the bail amount which I borrowed from Gyan Bahadur Gurung, a contractor, as a loan with the assurance of refunding it within six months. Soon, I became pregnant again. He then started screaming at me, thrashed me, and accused me of having an extra-marital affair. Meanwhile, after a few days, he was jailed for theft, this time without bail.

When I visited him in the jail, he unnecessarily tortured me, charging me with having an extramarital affair. He said that the baby in my womb was not his. He only talked about money.

Children left in the lurch

Fed up with his attitude, I wanted to become independent since I was already working on daily wage. I gave birth to my daughter and stayed in the rented room for 14 months struggling for survival with my daughter. As soon as he was released from jail, he married a girl. My daughter then was two years old. I had to struggle even harder to raise my daughter. Fortunately, I got a job at a plastic company, Himalayan Life. One morning, I found a SIM card, which I put on my mobile phone to find a phone number. I dialed the number to inform the owner about the SIM card. However, my gesture of being good brought further misfortune.

The card belonged to Aashish Chaudhary of Guleriya, Kanchanpur. He came to Pokhara to meet me on the pretext of getting his card back. He proposed me for marriage, which I initially rejected. However, later I bowed down to his insistence and went to Butwal with him and got married. Life after marriage was cordial for around six months as we came back to Pokhara. This cordiality, however, did not last long.

Aashish ran away leaving me. I went to Kanchanpur with my daughter looking for him. He was at home. I was pregnant again and coming to know it, he and his family members started torturing me. I filed a case at the district police office, which later resolved the issue. I then stayed with the family.

However, my stay there was no better than hell. I was tortured both mentally and physically. They alleged me of being a witch and even called a witch doctor, who then hit me with rice grains on my head. The family ignored me in all terms and often called me a “characterless” girl. But, I was compelled to endure all these excesses.

Suddenly, I had high fever. My husband and mother-in-law took me to the Seti Hospital and admitted me there. The hospital aborted my baby at their request. Following heavy bleeding, I was shifted to Asha Dhangadi Hospital where I was kept for three days.

When I returned home from the hospital, Aashish was missing. My parent-in-laws then chased me away. I have filed a case of domestic violence at the District Police Office. I am currently staying at the Women and Children Safe Home in Attariya, awaiting justice. I am planning to get beauty parlor training from CTEVT and to be self-reliant. However, I don't have a citizenship certificate. I don't know what I have in store. Sometimes, I get disappointed.

(Names of the children have been changed)

Investigative stories on women and children issue

Children, victimized by their family members despite having parents, too stay in the Home. One among them is Sanu, 13, who was earlier admitted to a hospital after complaints of 'swollen belly'. Surprisingly, when the doctor said she was pregnant, her mother fainted. Later, it was revealed that her 55-year-old grandfather had raped Sanu. The police and the Women Rehabilitation Center (WOREC) took her to the Safe Home in Kailali where she delivered a baby. While Sanu and her baby are in the Home, the grandfather is behind bars at the Kailai jail.

Binu Rana of WOREC says, "We are facing problems in rehabilitating them (mother and child) and in acquiring the birth certificate of the baby, who is now five months old." Sanu's father is willing to take her home but is not ready to accept the baby.

Besides having two Safe Homes for women and children, Kailali boasts of six other orphanages, which shelter around 195 children. Besides, 27 other orphans stay in a hostel. The children staying in different NGO-run orphanages, shelters, and hostels are referred by the Children and Women Office, Kailali.

The shelters and hostels are run and managed as per the government's criteria and directives. However, Sandhya Singh, an official at the Children and Women Office, Kailali, says they have not been able to effectively monitor these shelters and orphanages due to a lack of funds and manpower.

Janaki Malasi of Safe House, Attariya, said that they would rehabilitate the children with their guardians once they complete their high school education. So far, six children of this Home have already been rehabilitated after necessary formalities at the Women and Children Office.

Malasi, a single woman, earlier gave shelter temporarily to the victims of domestic violence in her own house. However, upon realizing later that this compromised on her privacy, she registered an organization at the District Administration Office, Kailali, on June 13, 2015 by forming an 11-member executive committee. A mother of two daughters, Malasi, who was widowed at the age of 29, too, was a victim of domestic violence. This inspired her to establish a Safe Home where she could take care of the victims of domestic violence. Five people, including Malasi along with her daughter Geeta, have been serving voluntarily at the Home--run by collecting food grains.

Meanwhile, WOREC Nepal has been running a Home to provide temporary shelter for the victims of domestic violence in Kailali for the past two years. Among the 97 domestic and sex-related violence registered at WOREC in 2017, it has sent 34 victims to the shelters. During this period, 61 cases of domestic violence, one case of human trafficking, one case of polygamy, nine rape cases, three cases of attempted rape, eight cases of sexual assault, seven cases of social violence, eight cases of violence related to 'witchcraft', and nine cases of abduction have been registered at the WOREC, Kailali. Of them, 21 victims of domestic violence, two victims of polygamy, six rape victims, one victim of rape attempt, and four cases of sexual assault are currently in the safe home.

Published date : 8 January 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np

Laxmi Bhandari

Fewer girls in schools Alarminglly worrying statistics

There is a huge gender gap when it comes to attendance at schools. Moreover, the selective abortion of female fetuses has contributed to a widening imbalance in the sex ratio.

The realization that there were fewer girls in the morning assembly, in comparison to the boys, dismayed Madhu BC, a teacher at Usha Boarding School in Birendranagar. In fact, the girls' lines were comparatively shorter than the boys'.

Upon sharing this piece of evidence hastily with one of her colleagues, she got this response: "Indeed, girls' lines used to be quite long during our time."

Out of the total 234 new students enrolled in Nursery in the new academic session at her school, the number of girls stood at 101.

Paramananda Regmi, a teacher at St. Mary's Boarding School in Birendranagar, too, is familiar with the declining number of girl students at his school. For instance, out of the 260 new students enrolled in grade Nursery in this academic session, only 113 are girls, while 147 are boys. Reports have suggested that when it comes to choosing between a daughter and a son for enrollment to a private school, parents generally pick the son. Parents send their daughters to government schools.

The same is true for other schools. For instance, out of the 91 students enrolled in the Dhuliyabit High School in Birendranagar last academic year, only 41 were girls.

Interestingly, hospital records of new-born babies explain that baby boys surpassed the number of girls. Records at the mid-western regional hospital for the last five years show 8,594 newborns were boys and 7,222 girls. According to the Surkhet District Hospital data, out of the 32,760 newborns in the last five years, 17,508 were boys and 15,252 girls. This illustrates that the proportion of boys is higher than that of girls.

Health experts say that the tendency of abortion, mostly by affluent and educated families with access to prenatal ultrasound testing of the fetuses, has been one of the reasons for the decline in the number of girls. According to statistics at the District Education Office, Surkhet, out of the 51,593 students enrolled in the schools in Grade 1 in the last five years (fiscal years 2070/71 to 2073/74), only 25,429 were girls while 26,164 were boys.

Moreover, according to the National Census 2011, even as the population of women in Surkhet district surpassed men by 11,962, the number of girls under 14 was less by 3,321 than boys.

The outcome of gender discrimination

Bishnu Maya Chhetri (name changed) of Gurvakot municipality gave birth to three daughters in a row while she hoped for a baby boy all along. After her third girl (baby), the Chhetri couple made up their mind to go for fetuses test and act accordingly. After undergoing three abortions following ultra-sound tests in Nepalgunj, they finally decided to give birth to the fourth one because it was a male.

Bishnu Maya, who gave birth to a baby boy at the age of 39, said more than 15 women, who visited the Health Care Center in Nepalgunj for the test, and abortion, were her acquaintances. One among them was Sunita Hamal (name



Fewer girls in schools : Alarminglly worrying statistics

changed), who underwent three abortions in the last seven years of her marriage in the hope of a baby boy. She gave birth to a baby only after confirming that the fourth one was a boy. Meanwhile, Bimala Pariyar (name changed) of Gurvakot, who has two sons, says, "Boys are breadwinners, while girls create worry."

Meanwhile, just because Jormaya Sharma of Achham gave birth to two daughters in a row, she earned scorn from her family members. They took no care of her during her next pregnancy. Unable to tolerate the suffering anymore, she moved to Birendranagar with her two daughters, who are currently pursuing their BBS degree.

Likewise, a mother of two daughters, Mina Poudel, 40, (name changed) of Birendranagar, has been facing constant pressure from her family and neighbors to give birth to a third baby. She says, "My family and society are putting pressure on me to deliver a third baby. They need a son." Mina quips, "Even as I am contented with my daughters, I am under pressure to give birth to a son for the society."

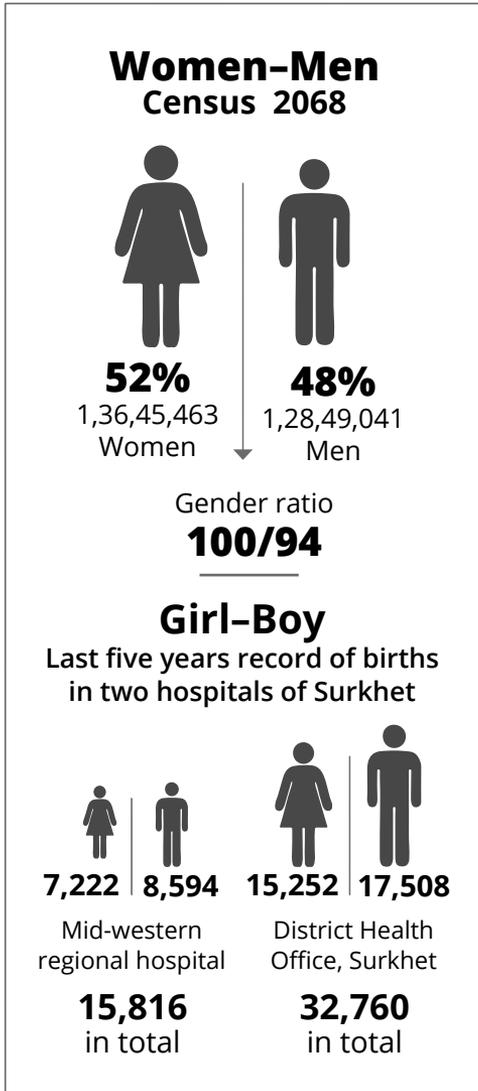
Sunita, Jormaya and Mina are mere representative characters of the Nepali society. What an irony for women who are content having daughters to be forced to have a son!

Despite the country's law barring test and abortion of fetuses after 12 weeks of pregnancy, women are compelled to abort due to the stereotypical patriarchal mentality, as well as religious, cultural and social beliefs.

Dr. Dambar Khadka, acting superintendent of the Mid-western Regional Hospital, says testing to identify the sex of the fetus and its abortion have considerably increased in the lack of effective implementation of the law. Concurring to Dr. Khadka, representative of Child Workers' Center in Nepal (CWIN), Sangeeta Wali, attributes this tendency to the lack of proper enforcement of the legal provisions.



Usha Balbatika Boarding School, Birendranagar, Surkhet.



Meanwhile, to discourage this practice, the Birendranagar Municipality has launched an "Encourage Daughters Program" in which the municipality opens a bank account and deposits Rs. 1,000 to the family's account soon after a daughter is born. Mayor of Birendranagar Municipality, Dev Kumar Subedi says he is trying to make Birendranagar a 'daughter-friendly' local unit. "Strict action will be taken against anyone pressurizing a woman for an abortion," he said.

Missing daughters

According to Census 2011, women accounted for 52 percent of the total population. The population of women was approximately 800,000 more than men's, at a ratio of 100:94 while the total population was 26,494,504.

Associate Prof. at the Tribhuvan University Population Study Center, Dr. Keshav Adhikari says the statistical structure of demography is quite typical in Nepal. "There is a provision of reservation for women [in jobs] on the basis of their population. However, the bitter truth is that the concerned authority has not been able to concentrate on abortion cases. This imbalance has to be scrutinized."

*Published date : 5 February 2018,
www.cijnepal.org.np*

Bidhya Rai

Liquor business devouring children's future

The story of local liquor shops in markets of Chowkbazar and Dovanof Bhojpur district has been excruciating with lassies brewing and selling their products. This has been going on for years. These are some commonplaces where 'alcohol lovers' openly drink and stagger.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

- Fourth-grader, Ramita Rai, 10, of Hatuwagadi-9, southern Bhojpur is the youngest of her parents' five children. Acquaintances often bump into her at the Ekhabakhola confluence near Aamchowk village where she assists her parents in brewing and selling alcohol. In fact, she single-handedly does all the chores when her parents are away.

Ekawakholadobhan (confluence) is a popular centre for locals of Dummana, Dewantar, Pawala and Hasanpur. Locals from these villages frequently visit Ramita's stall to 'take rest and relax'. The income of roughly Rs 2,000 a day from this lucrative business is basically meant to raise and educate Ramita's four siblings. "I learned to brew liquor by observing my parents. Now, I can handle the business alone," a candid Ramita says.
- Balankha bazaar, a business centre of Aamchowk village municipality, is a two-day walk from the district headquarters, Bhojpur. On Friday -- market-day -- almost all shops and houses of this market trade liquor from early morning to late evening. Ramita Rai, 11, remains busy in the market selling liquor and preparing snacks for customers. A resident of Jantedhunga in Khotang, this third-grader has left school just to sell liquor. As the second of seven children of her parents, she has been assisting her aunt to make and sell liquor as per her parent's instruction. "I have been assisting my aunt to make and sell liquor. At least, I have been relieved of my parent's grumbles."
- 14-year-old Sangina Rai of Hatuwagadi-2, too, assists her mother in the liquor business. Sixth-grade Sangina prefers helping her mother to going to school. Sangina's mother started this business to raise her two daughters after her husband's



Liquor business devouring children's future

death. Besides selling liquor, the job of Sangina and her sister is to collect firewood from the nearby jungle. Both sisters have become "experienced liquor producers and sellers" now. "Had our father been alive, we would not have been working like this. However, we must lend our helping hands to her (mother)," says Sangina, who earns between Rs 200 and 2,500 per month by selling liquor. "With this money, we need to fulfil all our necessities, including stationeries and school dress," she quips.

Wildness from childhood

Bhojpur district's fame as an educational hub in Nepal's history has become an aide-mémoire. There was a time when Bhojpur hosted a large number of students from across the country following the establishment of a Sanskrit School in northern Dingla of the district by Balaguru Shadananda in 1872 (1932 BS). According to Gopal Prasad Timsina, headmaster of Shadananda High School, this school was the first to be established by the people and the second school after Kathmandu's Durbar High School. Bhojpur had, in fact, created history by establishing the school at a time when the Ranas barred common children from study. "Bhojpur, now, has just a reminiscence of history," Timsina quips.

According to the District Education Office Bhojpur, the educational status of the district has deteriorated. A meagre 13.30 percent students appearing the SLC examinations got through in 2012 (2069 BS) while the percentage dropped to 12.29 in 2013 (2070 BS). However, in 2017, the percentage rose to 17.98. In 2016 (2073 BS), none of the 3,050 students appearing in the SEE got the A+ grade in the district. While 32 students got A+, 83 and 164 students scored B+ and 'B' respectively.

Campus Chief of Bhojpur Multiple Campus, Dr. Rohit Kumar Shrestha says, "Since a majority of parents have been involved in the liquor business, they even have no time to think about educating their children -- forget about providing an environment conducive to study." Bhojpur, which was identified as Purva 4 (Majhkirant) during the Rana regime, is a district with a majority of its inhabitants as Rais (38.49 percent). The district, which boasts of being the origin of Kirant Rai's civilization and culture, however, is gradually losing its old-age eminence. For instance, the practice of carrying out activities in the name of tradition and culture has led to anomalies within the community. Consumption of liquor, locally dubbed as "Chhyang" and "Hengmawa", has been regarded as a traditional and cultural practice in this community.

"Chhyang and Hengmawa are indispensable in our community from birth to death. In fact, they are compulsory during all rituals. Therefore, each Rai family brews liquor in their home," said Srijana Rai, chairperson of the Kirant Rai Yayokhya, Bhojpur. "Having a basic knowledge about the significance of Chhyang and Hengmawa is important."

In fact, liquor business has been lucrative in the district. Moreover, running a liquor business in the village does not necessarily require registration. A majority of people running this business are temporary businessmen since this is not only an easy business to do, liquor can be sold anywhere, even at the crossroads.

Liquor business has seen a boom in areas like Pancha, Balankha, Dummana, Wasingthurpu, Homthang, Khairang, Hasanpur, Ranibaas, Bastim, Sanudumma, Jarayotaar, Charambi, Champe, Chhinamakhu, Khawa, Nagi, Kot, Gogane, Timma and Dhobhane, among other places of the district.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

Pushpa Lata Upreti, an official at the Women and Children Office in Bhojpur, says, “A substantial number of children are engaged in the liquor business in places like northern Dinglabazaar, southern Ghodetaar bazaar, Leguwaghat, Sunbaluwa, Kattikepul, and Machuwaghat of the district.”

As a matter of fact, daughters are engaged in the liquor business in the villages here. Sabina Rai, a woman rights activist, says, “Engaging daughters in household chores and businesses has been a traditional practice here. Such an environment will increase the chances of negative consequences, including physical exploitation from drunken clientele.”

Hemanta Mukarung, a Nepali Congress Mahasamiti member, who has travelled widely in the district, concurs with Sabina’s views, saying, “Regarding liquor as a traditional and cultural ritual has adversely affected the children. Making liquor has been linked with school fees and studies.” CPN-UML District Committee Secretary Saran Bahadur Rai says, “A majority of the houses belonging to the Rai community in the district brew alcohol. Children are involved in hospitality by affecting their studies, over-all growth, and development.”

Control for name-sake

There has not been any formal study to verify the exact number of children involved in the liquor business in the district. However, public officials and authorities, including the Chief District Officer and the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), have consistently expressed commitment to controlling children’s involvement in the liquor business. Even all-party meetings have this issue on their ‘agenda’ and ‘minutes’.

When asked about the magnitude of the problem, Kapil Guragain, headmaster of the local Chandeswor High School, Balankha, said, “Seventy-five percent students of my school are engaged in the liquor business in one way or the other following the footsteps of their guardians. Parents engage their wards in this business for monetary gains.”

The headmaster of eastern Sanodumma High School, Arjun Rai too concurs with Guragain, saying, “Earlier, children used to be engaged in producing liquor at homes only. However, sadly, they are now involved in doing business at shops.”

Purna Rai, the headmaster of the Pashupati High School, western Temkemaityung village municipality-5, says, “There has been a practice of brewing liquor in every household in the name of preserving culture and tradition in the district. However, children are involved in doing all the chores related to brewing liquor regularly.”

District Education Officer Dambar Aangdembe says, “Such a trend has adversely affected the education sector as well as the children in the district.” Aangdembe says children involved in liquor business are often absent from school. “Some children even come to school under the influence of alcohol,” he laments, adding, “This has adversely affected the education sector as well as socio-economic development.”

The negative effect of liquor business is enormous, especially in the education sector. For instance, headmaster of a primary school in Ranibaas, Hatuwagadi was drunk at all times. Upon finding him drunk during school hours by a monitoring team from the District Education Office, he was not only replaced by another headmaster, he was demoted. Similarly, a teacher of a primary school in Ranibaas was expelled

Liquor business devouring children's future

for coming to school under the influence of alcohol. However, the trend of entering a local liquor shop before coming to school has not ended. There are instances of members of school management committee, teachers, intellectuals and parents of attending meetings under the influence of alcohol. Interestingly, they dismiss claims that liquor has been affecting the education sector. They insist that consuming alcohol has been an old-age tradition and should not be discarded. Tired of this trend, District Education Officer Angdambe says, "I have been reported that teachers, members of the management committee and other office-bearers come to school intoxicated. I have not been able to get a way out to this."

'Will hamper society's pace'

Has anyone thought about the consequences of engaging a teenage daughter in liquor business? Pushpa Lata Upreti of the Women and Children Office, Bhojpur says, "Such a trend will not only make her crabby but also ruin her life."

Recently, a husband murdered his wife with a sharp knife in Amtek of Bhojpur-11. Police arrested their 11-year-old son allegedly for supporting his father. The father has been sent to jail in a murder case. Even as the son was released for being a juvenile, he has not gone to school. Neighbours say his day passes bullying, cheating, quarrelling, thrashing younger children in the village."

A person, arrested by police some years back, in his statement said he raped a woman "under high influence of alcohol" in Hatuwagadi-4. Recently, a neighbour raped a woman, who used to brew and sell liquor in Homthang. The neighbour, who raped



Investigative stories on women and children issue

her, was her regular customer. Later, taking advantage of her being alone at home, this same man raped the woman's 10-year-old daughter. These are some instances and their consequences related to liquor business.

"Children cannot concentrate on their studies under such circumstances. They marry at a young age and since they cannot study, they start liquor business for a living," Upreti says. "Parents make their children follow their footsteps. This has become a usual practice in the district for generations."

A question to ponder: Would parents engage their children in liquor business had they been worried about their future? Probably not. This shows that parents are not only uneducated but also ignorant that engaging their children in liquor business has been ruining their future. Reasons: uneducated parents, lucrative liquor business, lack of education and employment opportunities and lack of investment to start a new business, among others.

Anthropologist Suresh Dhakal says, since liquor has been a tradition, not a culture in the Rai community, the concept can be abandoned. Consumption of liquor has become a cultural asset to those whose family relies on this business. "Earlier, liquor was mainly brewed for family consumption, but now the situation has changed. It has become a commodity now."

Dhakal says, "In fact, this business is not aimed at earning lots of money. This is basically meant for livelihood. However sadly, this has not only ruined the future of young children by robbing them of their right to education but also hampered society's pace."

Anthropologist Ishwarman Rai says, "Use of liquor can be acceptable to some extent in the name of religion and culture. However, this has crossed the limits inviting anomalies in the society. It is high time that production of liquor was controlled; high time we raised our voices and made ourselves heard to ensure the right environment. However, our voices cannot be heard in the din of voices favouring consumption of alcohol."

(Names of girls have been changed)

Published date : 10 December 2017, www.cijnepal.org.np

Kalpana Bhattarai

Province 2's dirty laundry

Thousands of children face dark future without education

In the eight districts of Province 2, 200,000 children who ought to be in school are outside of it. Why are so many students denied education even as the constitution says 'compulsory' and 'free' education is their fundamental right?

Investigative stories on women and children issue

When the government announced the temporary capitals of the seven provinces in January, two contrasting events unfolded in the two major cities of Province 2. While there was celebration in Janakpur, voices of protest reverberated through Birgunj. The city, which considered itself worthier for the title than Janakpur, was angry.

Both the cities have reasons to feel that they deserve the title more than the other. But one figure puts both the cities to shame. Both Janakpur of Dhanusha and Birgunj of Parsa—the two cities in contention to host the capital—have a dark record when it comes to sending children to school. These two cities are where the most children are out of school in the country.

Figures from the Ministry of Education show that Dhanusha and Parsa are the top two districts where children have been denied their right to go to school. In Dhanusha, 27,297 children do not go to school while in Parsa the figure stands at 27,105. The other districts that complete the ranking are Bara, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Siraha, Saptari and Mahottari.

According to a survey conducted by the ministry a year ago, 191,221 students in Province 2 did not attend school. Of them, 25,344 are of primary school going age and 135,877 fit to be in secondary school. Similarly, more girls are skipping school than boys. (See chart)

Province 2: Children out of school

Primary level				
Serial number	District	Girl students	Boy students	Total
1	Saptari	2172	1757	3939
2	Siraha	606	1088	1693
3	Dhanusha	1161	863	2024
4	Mahottari	1590	1703	3293
5	Sarlahi	1676	606	2282
6	Rautahat	2604	180	1784
7	Bara	3250	1926	5173
8	Parsa	4074	1082	5156
Total		17132	9205	25344
Basic level				
1	Saptari	7560	7557	15117
2	Siraha	10425	10777	21202
3	Dhanusha	13289	11984	25273
4	Mahottari	8257	6495	14752
5	Sarlahi	13162	9213	22803
6	Rautahat	13590	9213	22803
7	Bara	10922	10349	21271
8	Parsa	13627	8322	21949
Total		90832	75045	165877

Source: Department of Education (Compulsory Education Section)

Province 2's dirty laundry

Figures from Province 2 stand out even when they are compared with those of other provinces. According to figures from the Education Ministry, 59,904 children in Province 5 are not attending school. In Province 1, the figure stands at 49,037 and in Province 3, there are 32,988 children who do not go to school. In Province 7, the figure stands at 29,188. In provinces 4 and 6, a total of 14,616 and 13,845 students are out of school, respectively.

Although Province 2 is relatively ahead of other provinces in terms of transportation, access to communication, education, and the availability of infrastructure, there may be questions why are so many children in the state not attending school. We have tried to dig out the reasons.

Poverty closes doors

Why do the children in the Khairatol neighbourhood not attend school? Anyone who comes to this place can get an answer. A month ago, when we visited Jaleswor Municipality-3, Khairatole, a neighborhood in the Mahottari district headquarters, we met nine-year-old Radha Sada who was doing the dishes while 11-year-old Sanjila Sada was babysitting her siblings, having finished the household chores. Sanjila is the eldest child in the family and as her parents leave home early to look for the day's work, she has to take charge at home. Her younger sister Radha was there to help.

Ten-year-old Anu Sada, who lives in the same neighborhood, was also busy looking after her siblings, cooking, washing the dishes and cleaning the house. Fifteen-year-old Lalita Sada was working in her paddy field.

Most Musahar children in Khairatole spend their day doing what these children were doing. Young children do all kinds of work while those in their early teens, along with their parents, work waged jobs.



Children of Musahar community who don't go to school, Khairatole, Jaleswor, Mahottari.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

Fourteen-year-old Gokul Sada is an example. Although he wants to go to school, he hasn't had the opportunity to step into a school. "Our father's earning is not enough to run the house, so I also go to work," he says. None of Gokul's brothers and sisters has received formal education. His elder sister has already tied the knot, an elder brother works in India and a 12-year-old brother works alongside him.

Twelve-year-old Kalawati Sada has a similar story. Her parents work, she manages the house. Eleven-year-old Anil Sada studies in Grade 5; his sisters have never been to school. Describing the situation in his village, Khairatole's Biseshwor Sada said, "Children as young as 12 start working on other people's fields [to work]."

According to Samaj Bikas Kendra, an NGO working in the area, there are 95 children in Khairatole. Thirty of the 90 have enrolled in a school, 65 have never been to a classroom. Not a single person from among the 40 families that live in the area has ever passed Grade 10.

These 40 families live on land that is barely enough to accommodate a hut. The hut is so small that there is not enough space for everyone to sleep comfortably.

Although marriage at an early age, lack of awareness among parents that children are to be sent to school, and the parents' 'more-hands-less-burden' thinking are common problems here. At the root of all problems is poverty.

Samaj Bikas Kendra's 'field officer' Rupesh Pashwan said that his organisation was running a nine-month course for girls who are out of school. The goal is to send them to school after the course. Twenty-one girls attended the course, but none of them goes to school. This maybe the reason 50 per cent of women in the village do not have citizenship. Most children do not have birth certificates.

The wall of traditions

However, the story of children in Mahottari's Samashi Rural Municipality-6 (Islamabad) is a bit different. Eighteen-year-old Ayesha Khatun had to drop out of her madrassa (Islamic school) after learning enough to read the Koran (the holy text of Muslims) to help her mother at home.

It's been three years since 12-year-old Nagma Khatun also quit school to help her mother. Another 12-year-old Samma Khatun left her madrassa after learning Hindi and Urdu and the Koran. The reason: the produce from their six kattha (0.5 acre) land was not enough to make the family's ends meet. Her father had to go around looking for work and she had to take responsibility of household chores. Seventeen-year-old Sajiya Khatun and 18-year-old Jaistha Khatun, both of whom live in the same village, have never been inside a madrassa.

This is a neighborhood where none of the children goes to school. The parents only emphasize the religious education provided by the madrassas. However, of the 500 children who live in the neighborhood, not all have completed their madrassa education. The handful of children who finish their madrassa education head to India in search of work, others do not wait to do so; they leave without completing their education. Most children are busy doing their household chores.

Around two kilometers from the village lies a secondary school. But even for those who have completed their madrassa education, the school is out of bounds.

Province 2's dirty laundry

Asgari Khatun, a mother, said, "If we send them (our girls) to school, who will do the household work?"

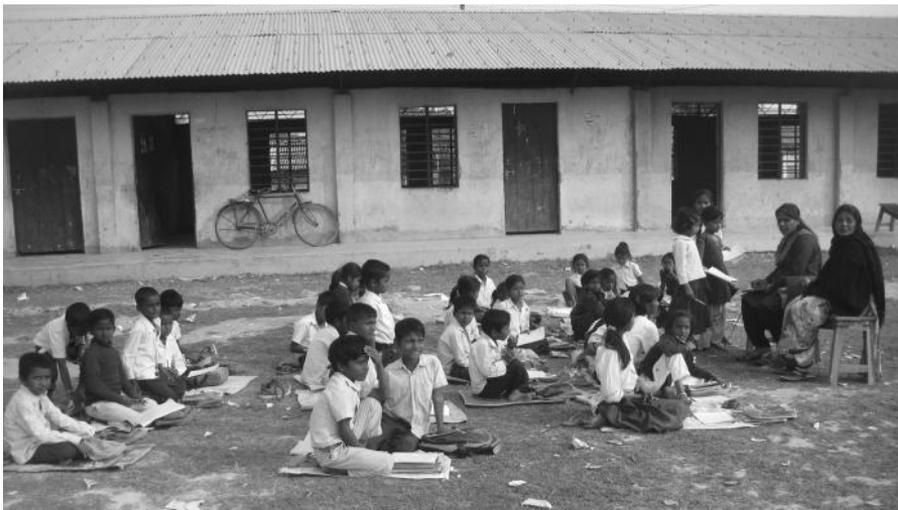
Another mother Rubeda Khatun said, "After the daughters finish their madrassa education, we need to teach them household work, and marry them off."

Shekh Bakaula, a father, said religious education has become compulsory in the community and for that reason they have the tradition of sending children to school. The sons need to go out and find work. The daughters need to walk long distances to go to school and this is not safe. These are the reasons the villagers do not send their children to school, he said.

According to Nehaz Ahmed, a field officer at Samaj Bikas Kendra, members of the Muslim community in the area are poor. He said, "They believe that if they let their daughters out of their house, they will be up to no good." Maulana Sheikh Salauddin Rauf, a teacher at the Haijan Azazia Siddiqiya Madrassa, said religious education was enough for children. He said, "There is no need to study more than what is taught in the madrassa."

Madrassas normally offer education up to the fifth grade. What is taught there is quite interesting. Maulana Rauf said, "We teach girls how to be disciplined and how to keep the family and the husband happy. We also teach them not to go out without a burka (veil) and to not talk to strangers (men)."

Of the seven wards in the rural municipality, wards 2, 3 and 6 have majority Muslim populations. The village has three community schools, six private schools and six madrassas. The Islamabad neighborhood is located around 2 km from East Champarman District's Kanwa bazaar in the Indian state of Bihar. Similarly, 20 km is the distance between the neighborhood and the district headquarters of Jaleshwar. Most



Students giving exams sitting on ground due to shortage of classroom.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

residents of the village are poor. They rely on agriculture and waged labour in India to eke out a living.

The Ramaul Dakshin (South) neighborhood (Kutipokhari) in Siraha district's Siraha Municipality-4 is home to 20 families. The families do not have any land of their own. They have built their huts on barren land. Around 50 meters from the settlement lie two madrassas and a school. But only 20 of the 80 Muslim children in the neighborhood go to the madrassa—their attendance record is poor. There is not even a single child who goes to school. Children in their early teens go out with their parents to look for work. Eighteen-year-old Abdul Karim said, "I earn Rs 600 after a day's work. This is just enough to feed the family. How do I send my siblings to school?"

In Ramaul Uttar (North), a girls' madrassa has been in operation for the last three years. The boarding school teaches 139 girl students Islamic tradition and English, Hindi and Arabic languages. Some of the students come from outside the district; some are even from India.

All teachers in the madrassa are women. The girls are not allowed to venture out of the school. In exceptional cases, they can go out under one condition: they need to put on their burka (veil). According to the madrassa's principal Mustafir Hamani, the girls are taught to communicate in Urdu and Arabic. They are also taught the Koran and ways to keep their husband happy. They are also taught not to talk to men they don't know. Hamnai also says, "This is all that they (the girls) need to learn. Going beyond that is unnecessary."

Most parents do not send their children to school after they complete the madrassa classes. Local social worker Mohamed Sahid said, "It is necessary to send the children to school after they are done with the madrassa. But the parents here don't understand this."

One hundred children from 200 families living in Ramaul Uttar are not admitted to school. They have not even joined madrassas, says social worker Sahid. The neighborhood also has two madrassas and a school. Poverty, along with a disinterest among parents, was the driving factor, Sahid said.

Those who attend the school or the madrassa have a poor attendance record and they drop out at an early age. There are some who forge papers to lie about their age and obtain passports to travel abroad for work.

The other reason children do not go to school is domestic violence. Forty-five-year-old Shahnaz Khatin of Ramaul Uttar was abandoned by her husband, who married another woman in India. She has three children. Shahnaz has no option but to work to make her ends meet; she can't send her children to school. There are 20 others in the neighborhood who are victims of their husband's mistreatment. While some of them have been abandoned by their husbands, others were kicked out of their homes. Around 40 children in the neighborhood come from broken families.

Lohana village in Janakpur, the temporary headquarters of Province 2, is home to Khan Kahe Barqat, Nepal's biggest madrassa. Here children of both sexes are taught in separate classrooms. The 70 girls in the school are not allowed to leave the building where their classroom is located. Male teachers who teach boys are not allowed to enter the girls' section. Most parents who send their children to this madrassa, known for its

Province 2's dirty laundry

stringent discipline, do not want to send students to schools after they are done with the classes there.

No money, no classroom

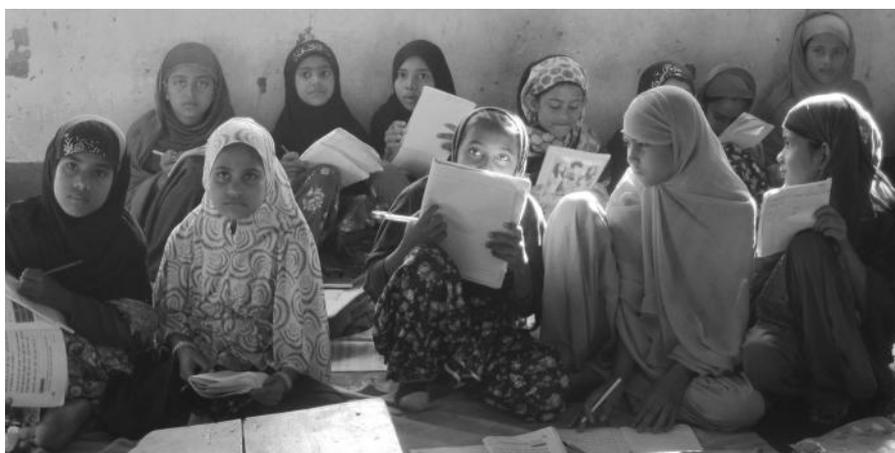
When this reporter visited Hanuman Bishwanath Janata Government Secondary School at Manarasishawa Municipality-10 on November 30, 2017, not a single student was around. A school teacher and Babita Pandeya, a teacher from the Child Development Centre, were there. The school was closed to mourn the death of a student at another school, according to Pandeya.

In fact, it was the month of Mangsir (mid-November-mid-December), the rice harvesting season, which forces students out of school and to the farm fields. One of the students, Gudiya Khatun, a fifth grader, was carrying a bundle of paddy. "Our school was closed because it's a harvesting season," she says.

The school was established in 1963, but the building's roof and walls have been damaged. As a result, students are taught out in the open. None of the eight rooms in the four buildings is in good condition. "The rooms are in serious disrepair. So we teach them in the open field," says Ram Rao Raut, a teacher.

The primary school has a principal and three teachers including one provided by the Child Development Centre. Students of the centre and grade are taught in one classroom. Grade two and three students are also crammed into one classroom. Students of grades 4 and 5 share one classroom. Lack of blackboard meant lessons on mathematics were ineffective, according to Raut.

Lokendra Sada, a parent, says he was reluctant to send his children to school because of the poor state of infrastructure. The students come from marginalized communities including Dalit, Muslim, Kurmi, Chamar, Lohar and Sada, but the school suffers from utter neglect, says Dilkas Ansari, a local. "The district education office



Girls studying at Madarsha of Ramaula, Siraha Municipality-4.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

seems uninterested in upgrading the school's infrastructure," says Raut. Only 40 per cent of the school's 261 students attend classes on a regular basis.

Many students of the school, one of Nepal's oldest, however, have become professors, doctors and engineers. But only one student from Musahar Tole, where the school is located, has passed SLC. Yogendra Sada, 36, the lone person to have completed school education from the local Musahar community, registered at Bhaugulo Bhaiyadai Gulab dai Janata Secondary School in 1999 for SLC.

Yogendra has three sons and a daughter. But he could support education of a daughter and a son only up to the primary level. "I couldn't study beyond SLC because I didn't have money. Now my children are in the same predicament," he says. Among the 60 children from the Musahar community, 20 have never been to a school. Those who have been enrolled in school don't attend it regularly.

Radhika Sada, an 8-year-old girl at Bishnupura Rural Municipality-3, Rajpur, Musahar Tole, attends classes three days a week. She is engaged in household chores the rest of the week. Rakesh Sada, a 10-year-old fourth grader, misses his class because he has to look after his younger sister.

Fourteen-year-old Anita Sada, who lives in the same neighborhood, dropped out of school after Grade 2. Having dropped out due to household work she is tasked with, she now works on other people's fields. Raju Sada, 13, dropped out of school after Grade 3 two years ago; his younger brother doesn't go to school.

Eleven-year-old Gambhir Sada, a fifth grader, dropped out of school after he could not handle the twin tasks of looking after his sibling and helping his parents with household duties. The neighborhood has about 90 households and an equal number of children of school-going age. Among them, 30 children have never stepped into a school. Those who have been enrolled in the school don't attend classes on regularly. When asked about lack of enrollment and irregular attendance, almost everyone replied that they have to look after their house because their parents are usually away from home to earn daily wages.

Jyoti Mallik, a 17-year-old from Siraha Municipality-2, Goriyani, dropped out of school while studying at Grade 6. Now, he is a daily wage worker in India. His younger brother studies in Grade 6, but his younger sister, despite being enrolled in school, doesn't attend classes. Suresh Mallik, who dropped out after studying up to the eighth grade, works at a hotel in India.

Twenty-five families of the Dom community live in the neighborhood, which has 25 children of school-going age. But none of them goes to school. Only three children from seven families of Mallik Tole in Bariyapatti Rural Municipality-3 of Siraha district go to school. But they don't attend classes regularly.

The Dom community suffers from discrimination. The so-called upper caste people don't allow them to work except cleaning. "The upper caste people don't employ us. We eke out a living by making *Nanglo* (bamboo tray used to winnow food grains) and *Bhakari* (woven bamboo container)," says Sita Mallik.

Kuwa village is 100 metres away from Shree Secondary School at the Janakpur Sub-metropolitan City, Ward no 12. Sumitra Pandit is a fifth grader at the school. But she was at home instead of school. "Classes are not run well. That's why I didn't go to

Province 2's dirty laundry

school,” she says. Birendra Nayak, a local, says, “Teachers don’t arrive on time. Even if they are punctual, they don’t prepare well for their lessons. That’s why students don’t want to come.”

Though Ram Awatar Yadav, the school principal, declined that classes were irregular, he admitted that many students missed their classes. Only half of the primary level students attend classes and most don’t come during seasonal work. The dropout rate at the school, which has 800 students, is 20 per cent, according to him. Girl students are more likely to drop out than boys. “Most are married off when they enter the 9th or 10th grade,” he says. “Most girl students drop out due to child marriage and most boy students drop out to travel abroad for employment.”

Around 700 students are enrolled to grades 1 to 8 in Murarika Higher Secondary School in Jaleshwar, the headquarters of Mahottari. Around 400 study at secondary level. This year, 100 students seeking admission were turned away, according to its principal, Sanjib Jha. Here too, 15 per cent primary students don’t attend classes on a regular basis. The dropout rate is 10 percent, according to Jha.

Around 18,045 children of school-going age haven’t been enrolled in Mahottari district, according to the Education Ministry. Around 50 NGOs are working to have them enrolled at schools, according to the ministry. The campaign has helped 2,000 children enroll at schools, but they also don’t attend classes regularly.

“We are trying to enroll those who are out of school,” says Thulo Babu Dahal, the district education officer. “Our goal is to enroll 5,000 children in the next academic year.” Rojeshwar Jha, a section officer at the district education office, says livelihood was the main cause for the high dropout rate. “It takes time to study and then earn a living. But if you join the labor market, you start earning [soon],” he says. “That’s why parents want to send their children to the labour market rather than to school.” The district is



Children of Hanumandatta Bishwanath public school, Manarasisawa-10, Mahottari giving exams. School buildings are not suitable for classes.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

home to 312 community schools, 92 private schools, 546 child development centres and 90 madrassas.

One million children of school-going age are out of school in Nepal, according to a recent report of the Education Ministry. The number of students who drop out of schools is also very high, according to the report, released in 2016. Around 4 percent Nepali children are out of school, according to the report 'All Children in School', jointly prepared by UNICEF and the Nepal government. The figure of out-of-school children is around 1 million.

Why are so many children out of school? "First, parents lack awareness about education. Second, they need money. Third, the schools don't present good environment for learning. Social context also plays some role," says Ananda Paudel, an undersecretary at the ministry's monitoring and evaluation section.

A 70 million-rupee project

Some 27,297 children are out of school in Dhanusha, where UNICEF and NGOs have spent 18 million rupees in the last three years to enroll and retain them at schools. The district education office spends an additional 500,000 rupees on the campaign.

Children of marginalized communities such as Dom and Musahar start as daily wage workers in their early teens, which makes enrolling them at school difficult, according to Danikanta Jha, deputy district education officer. Retaining them at school and ensuring regular attendance is challenging, he says.

Around 70 per cent students attend classes at the primary level, but attendance in lower secondary and secondary level is 50 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, according to Jha. Parents here feel that their children won't get a job despite their education. So they inflate their age to apply for passport in order to travel abroad to work as migrant workers.

In Siraha, 22,895 children are out of school. The district education office has allocated 6.6 million rupees to a campaign for students' enrollment and retention. Around 10,601 children have been enrolled as part of the campaign, according to a record at the district education office. But many of those don't regularly go to school.

Similar campaigns have been launched in 28 districts targeting out-of-school children. The Department of Education is the apex body to drive the campaign, with district education offices handing out funds to Community Learning Centres for its implementation. But some DEOs have handed out funds to NGOs against the procedure.

The campaign is going on in all the eight districts of Province 2. In the current academic year, a total of 71.82 million rupees has been earmarked to run the campaign in 15 districts.

(Reporting contributed by Surendra Kamati in Siraha)

Published date : 14 March 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np

**Ramji Dahal
Shrawan Dev
Manish Duwadi**

Community Schools Loot in the name of library

The government appealed to several donors three years ago to help community schools in setting up libraries. Rs 3 billion has been released for the purpose in total since. Unfortunately, hundreds of schools have siphoned off funds meant for library while most others have bought useless books in collusion with book publishers to show purchases and to misappropriate funds.

Investigative stories on women and children issue

On March 5, the library at Janata Secondary School, Khurhuriya in Bishnupur Rural Municipality, Saptari, had one copy each of the books titled Technical Education, Computer Device and Circuit, Electric Technology, Micro Processor, Database Management, Web Technology, Model Digital Electronic and Computer Network Key besides some textbooks for grades 9 and 10. This is the list of books said to have been bought with the Rs 650,000 released by the District Education Office (DEO) for managing a library. According to a teacher at the school, books worth Rs 15,000 were bought for the library while the remaining grant remained unaccounted for. Asked about it, headmaster Surya Narayan Yadav said they had not been able to buy books for various reasons and the task would be done shortly. But he failed to explain the reasons. Many head teachers in Tarai districts believe that the grant amount would not be enquired about since the DEO ceases to exist in the federal set-up after the end of the Nepali month of Chaitra.

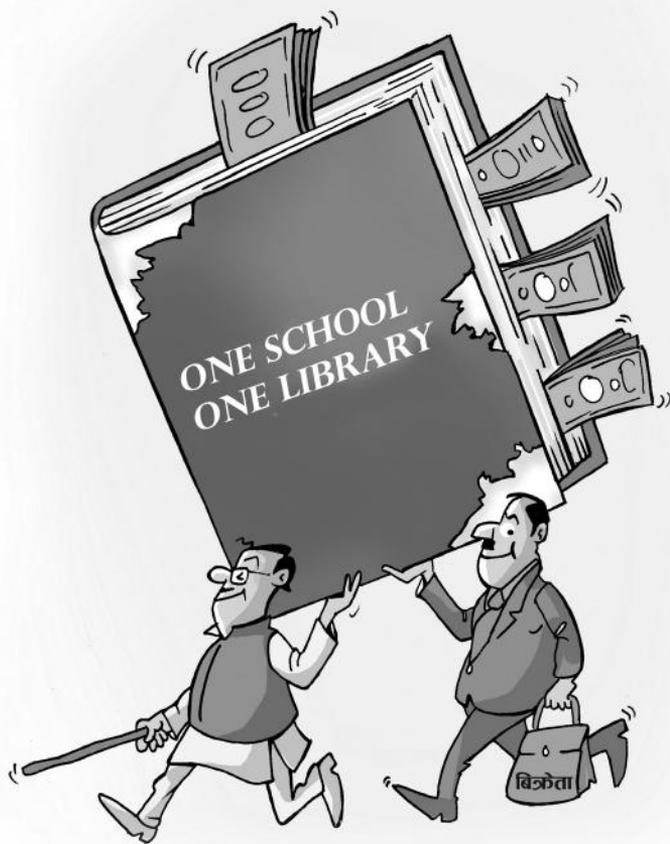
Basbitti Secondary School at Rupani Rural Municipality in Saptari has spent Rs 375,000 meant for library on building construction. "After the bank account having construction funds was frozen, the library funds were spent on that," said headmaster Shyam Prasad Yadav. "From the library budget, 15 chairs, 3 tables, 2 book racks and 4 showcases were bought for Rs175,000," he added. This shows that the school received money under the library heading but has not purchased a single book so far.

The library at Kesho Aniruddhawati Secondary School in Rajbiraj has a small number of books. The Sajha Prakashan books have been torn. Headmaster Phuleshwar Mandal, who also chairs the District Federation of Teachers, admitted that the books had not been purchased due to the teachers' district assembly and examinations. "We'll procure the books soon," he said. Many students do not know that the school has a library as the "library" room is mostly closed. "We don't know here's a library around," said Sabitri Kumari Yadav, a ninth grader.

Chandeshwari Higher Secondary School in Nilkantha, Dhading, had prepared a list of books to be purchased with the budget for the earlier fiscal year. Books were procured but only a few of them are useful. The list was of books related to curricula, teachers' manuals, reference materials and practice books, among others. "As soon as the grant was received, Sajha Prakashan made about 10 calls a day to collect books," said headmaster Hari Itani. "Procurement was made with the help of the chairman. There was no time even to choose books."

Itani said they chose Sajha in the belief that it would be easier to get VAT (Value Added Tax) bill and to tally PAN (Permanent Account Number there. Itani agreed that only 10 per cent books were useful even if the list of required books was provided to it earlier. "A sack sent by Sajha was full of Garima magazines," said librarian Ghanashyam Lamsal. According to school sources, the sack was burnt fearing trouble in future.

The books purchased by Ganeshkunda Secondary School, Dhading in the last month of the last fiscal year remained in a sack at a corner of the child development classroom for seven months. Headmaster Rabindra Chaudhari said the books had remained unused in the lack of space for library. Neither students nor teachers nor guardians know about the book purchase. "If the library had practice books, attending extra classes would be easier," said Deuwa Tamang, a tenth grader.



Dhading DEO has information about this. "I've been informed that most of the schools have bought useless books. If our monitoring confirms this, such schools will be directed to buy additional books related to the curriculum," said District Education Officer Madhav Raj Sharma. His statement shows nobody is held accountable for this wrong deed—it suffices to buy additional books.

Most schools that have spent budget haphazardly have not spent all the allotted funds on books. For instance, Balkrishna Adhikari, headmaster at the Koshi Secondary School, Mahendranagar, Bagjheda in Sunsari, paid Rs 150,000 to Manjari Prakashan in advance in a book deal in the first month of the current fiscal year. According to Manjari manager Krishna Abiral, the bill had to be cleared by August 30, 2017. "Headmaster Adhikari got away with the bill but did not buy books," said Abiral. Adhikari admitted to have taken the bill without buying books as the new building was under construction and there was no room for the library. "The building is ready now. We'll buy all the books when the new session starts," said Adhikari. Headmaster Mohan Bagale of Mangalmay Secondary School Padajungi, Jhapa, bought books worth Rs 72,000 from Manjari publications alone. But he wanted the bill to be for Rs 200,000, which Abiral claimed to have refused.

More than Rs 3 billion has been spent so far on the One School One Library campaign initiated by the government in the fiscal year 2016/17. Most schools have

'Rest assured. There'll be no complaints'

Punya Prasad Prasain
Chairman, Dikura Publication



If you pay us Rs 100,000, we'll give you 'books' worth Rs 170,000. We give 'books' worth Rs 300,000 for payment of Rs 175,000. The discount is yours. We can cooperate. If there are other schools, come together. You can take even if you want to do separately.

On the type of bill, if you buy worth Rs 400,000 of MRP, we charge you Rs 235,000. You'll get the bill for Rs 4 lakh. That means extra purchase of Rs 165,000. More than you paid for. There [at school] you can deal in your way. It's easy, not difficult. It will be legal and procedural.



I'll also give you 'quotation'. There will be [the names of] three companies. You need a quotation [to show] the DEO, we'll make the quotation too. The quotations you'll require from three local traders, we'll send them to you. We give you the quotations along with the bill. They will be valid in the district. I'll make quotations in the name of three companies based in Kathmandu. Nothing will happen.

All those [schools] I give [books] now, Sir, [they take that way]... many are taking [books] from us. All of them take quotations that way. Those who took last year, their deals have been approved. So many in Chitwan took last year!

We give you the letter of quotation submission on the basis of the purchase notice you have issued. We've our own three companies [to issue quotation]. Please rest assured, you won't face any complaints about our work!

(The phone conversation with Prasain, who suggests these ways, made on his number 9843000852 on the pretext of buying books for a school in Chitwan can be heard at www.cijnepal.org.np.)

Community Schools : Loot in the name of library

taken the money but have not built the library. Some even paid for useless books twice their marked price. A majority of the bills issued by publishing houses appear to be fake or do not resemble real ones. Some schools have used up the library budget on the "physical structure" required for it.

Under the School Sector Development Programme (SSDP) implemented in partnership with 15 donor organizations including Asian Development Bank, Australia, DFID, European Union, Finland, Jica, Norway, SDC, Unesco, Unicef, UNDP, USAID, World Food Programme and the Association of International NGOs, each school selected by the District Education Office (DEO) gets grant money of Rs 650,000 to buy necessary books and educational materials.

In the fiscal year 2017/18, Rs 1,308.05 million has been allocated to set up libraries at 1,945 schools across the country. The smallest number of grant recipients is one school in Manang, two each in Mustang and Mugu districts while the largest number is 61 in Siraha (See map). According to the Department of Education, the grant amount released by the District Education Offices to the schools has to be spent on books, racks, table-chairs and book purchases.

In the previous fiscal, 1,758 government schools in 69 districts except Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Mugu, Humla, Surkhet and Doti had got Rs 1,142.7 million in total from the District Education Offices. In the fiscal year 2013/14, schools numbering 1,053 in total got Rs 66.18 million at the rate of Rs 50,000 per school while in the following fiscal year, 1,000 schools got a total of Rs 1 billion at the rate of Rs 100,000 per school. The budget for FY 2015/16, according to the department, included the library programme but funds were not allocated. So far, Rs 3,528.68 million seems to have been spent under the library heading.

'Rs 1 million free on purchases worth Rs 1 million'

'Books worth Rs 100,000 free on purchases worth Rs 100,000. Rs 1 million free on purchases worth Rs 1 million'

This is a Facebook advertisement of the Bagbazaar-based Dikura Publication in Kathmandu targeting the One School One Library campaign of the government. This speaks volumes of the quality of books the house publishes.

In another example of loot, Dikura Publications has reprinted the books it announces to provide price discounts on marking nearly double the usual rate. For instance, a translation of Hitler's Autobiography published by Dikura is now priced Rs 675 while its fourth edition cost Rs 450. Items that the publication offers 'heavy discounts' of 50 per cent on are mostly such books. Asked about such unreasonable rates, publication Chairman Punya Prasai cited 'good quality paper' used in the new copies. But the paper used in the old and new books is not visibly different.

How does this happen?

Once they know that the District Education Office has approved the Rs 650,000 for a school's library programme, publishing house owners or their representatives go on a tour of the district. In the process, the seller lures the school headmaster or the management committee chairperson with "attractive discounts", "home delivery" and a

Investigative stories on women and children issue

"good deal". Under their spell, most schools even entrust the seller with preparing the list of books. The publisher seizes the opportunity to push books whose stocks need to be cleared, rather than those benefitting students, or send books that were about to be dumped for lack of sale.

The "buy 100 get 100 free" advertisement of Dikura Publication is driven by this motive of selling books. Other publishers including Ekta Books and Ratna Pustak Bhandar also offer 30 to 35 per cent discounts to sell books this way. This saying of Rajivdhar Joshi of Kathalaya Publication gives a peek into the inner side of the publishing enterprise: "Books returned from the market, those free of copyright and those translated by novices only can be sold at such discounted rates."

Rajivdhar cited his experience to say that publications can afford to give 20 per cent price discounts on good books, up to 35 per cent on medium-quality books and 50 per cent on those rarely used. Those seeking discounts of 35 per cent get books that hardly sell; books for 50 per cent discount have to be found among those ready to be scrapped. Books by renowned writers and professional translators cannot be sold at such heavily discounted prices as their production cost is high.

According to experts, a school has to consider the usefulness of a book for students and teachers rather than price discounts offered by publications. However, this important aspect has been overlooked in the greed for commission. As a result, most books available in libraries are of little use for teachers and students there.

Poorly translated and unauthorized autobiographies of Hitler and Che Guevara are among such books. Besides, it is debatable which age group of readers the books are suitable for. Educationist Dr Bidyanath Koirala believes that such books teach nothing more than revolt. "Books like them make children violent, not creative," says Dr Koirala.

According to Koirala, people who think library is all about books and racks are engaged in such malpractices. "The failure to grasp what kinds of book are useful for teachers and students and the tendency to neglect it even by those who have realization of this while buying books have led to this situation," he says. Traders themselves come up with ideas to manipulate quotations for extracting commissions, and "undetectable" counterfeit bills. (See box for saying of Dikura Publication Chairman Prasain)

'Loot in discount money'

When the budget meant for setting up libraries to foster reading habit in schools facing deteriorating quality of education was misappropriated, the Department of Education issued directives to the District Education Offices on February 10, 2017. The letter said only textbooks, curriculum, teach-



Community Schools : Loot in the name of library

ers' guide and reference materials were permitted to be purchased under the library budget. But schools have flouted the instruction.

Books in the school library have to be related to curricula, and teachers' guide, reference materials and practice books, among others. These become useful study materials. But the books currently available in school libraries have failed to draw the attention of teachers and students as they are not useful. Teachers who are motivated to buy books for commission pay no attention to books wanted by students.

Even schools in Kathmandu Valley have grossly misappropriated the library funds in the name of buying books. Headmaster Ekbahadur Bhandari of Mahendra Adarsha Higher Secondary School, Imadol, Lalitpur bought books worth Rs 25,000 from Taranidhi Regmi, a bookseller in Kathmandu. Next year, when the school received Rs 650,000 from the DEO Lalitpur after being selected for the library project, headmaster Bhandari asked Regmi to give him a bill for Rs 200,000 on the basis of the purchases from last year. When Regmi said that such a bill would show extra earning by his firm and he would have to pay 25 per cent in taxes, Bhandari was ready even to pay the extra amount necessary to meet the fake transaction cost. Regmi said he did not heed the headmaster's request. When asked about the incident, headmaster Bhandari said he had to look at the bill as he did not remember the exact amount of purchase.

This shows the level of irregularities in the library project. According to people informed on the matter, many booksellers issue fake bills by charging up to 20 per cent of the stated amount. Krishna Abiral of Manjari Prakashan says many headmasters openly ask for blank bills.

In order to add value to the library, book lists should have been prepared after discussion among teachers and students. Very few schools have the practice of holding a teacher-student meeting to list books for procurement. One of them is Balbodh Secondary School, Hatiya, Makwanpur. The school

bought more books with the discount amount on book purchase. When the school bought books worth Rs 400,000 last year, it had got Rs 100,000 back in 25 per cent discount. The school bought more books with the amount. "Even as a list prepared after discussion among teachers, child club members and the school management committee was given to the seller, it sent irrelevant books worth Rs 100,000. We're in the process of exchanging the books for useful ones," said headmaster Bhimsen Shrestha. The school has assigned teacher Ratna Kumar Bhandari to manage the library. Bhandari takes up the library duty after teaching the first four periods.

There has been no study to see the quality and usefulness of books in libraries established with donors' money. The Education Department and the DEOs have maintained silence on it. The



Investigative stories on women and children issue

Education Ministry has been disbursing huge amounts of money every year without finding out about the established libraries and their use.

Education Department Deputy Director and chief of the programme and budget division Ghanashyam Aryal said, "The DEO, resource centre and the resource person have to monitor the kind of books kept at the libraries." Education Ministry spokesperson Dr Hari Lamsal said action has to be taken against officials not spending the grant money as specified. Educationist Dr Bidyanath Koirala, however, argues that the library grant should be sent to the local government since the powers governing school education have been transferred to the local level. Koirala suggests that the local federal units need to monitor use of the library grant.

Under the SSDP, the government plans to establish a library in every secondary and lower secondary school within five years. Rs 6.5 billion will be required to set up libraries in nearly 10,000 schools across the country at the rate of Rs 650,000 per school. Due to the tacit cooperation between District Education officials, school headmaster, school management committee chairperson and the book sellers offering "huge discounts", schools seem to be without proper libraries even when the central budget is spent.

(With cooperation from the Centre for Investigative Journalism)

Published date : 20 March 2018, www.cijnepal.org.np