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## Shanti Journal: A Multidisciplinary Journal

Shanti Journal is a prestigious bi-annual research journal published by Bishwa Shanti Chiran Milan Campus, located in Bansbari, Kathmandu, Nepal. The journal aims to promote and disseminate high-quality research in various disciplines within the arts and humanities.

Scope and Focus Shanti Journal welcomes articles from diverse fields within the arts and humanities, with a particular emphasis on interdisciplinary research. The journal provides a platform for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to contribute their insights and findings in the following areas:

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2. **Literature and Literary Studies:** Articles on literary theory, comparative literature, genre studies, postcolonial literature, and other literary topics are encouraged.
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## Guidelines For Authors

Basic layout and arrangement is:

Double-spaced on 8x5"x11" with 1" margins on all side.

Front 12-point Times New Roman.

Use the same font throughout your paper except within footnotes or image.

Indent the first line of every paragraph 0.5 in using the tab key or the paragraph formation function of your word-processing program. Leave the remaining lines of the paragraph left-aligned.

Use one space after periods at the end of a sentence.

## Article Pattern

Title

Author Name, Affiliation and Email ID

Abstract (Maximum 200 Words)

Keywords (Maximum Five)

Introduction

Literature Survey

Problem Definition

Methodology/Approach

Result and Discussion

Concluding

Future Scope

References

Each Author (s) short profile

Title: Title must be informative and specific. It should be easily understandable by the reader and should reflect the motive of the research paper.

Author Name, Affiliation and Email ID: Author First name and Last Name personal Email Address.

Abstract: One paragraph containing at most 200 words. It is a summary of the report describing the question investigated, the methods used, the principle results and conclusions.

Keywords: five most important terms that describe your research domain and specific problem area investigated.

Introduction: It is a brief section usually not more than a page. It should be informing the reader of the relevance of your research.

Literature survey: This section includes a short history or relevant background of the research area being addressed.

Methods/Approach: This section should describe how you are supposed to rectify the problem ,what approach of what methodology you are supposed to use in your paper.

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## Editorial

Welcome to Shanti Journal: A Multidisciplinary Journal! Published bi-annually by Research Management Cell of Bishwa Shanti Chiran Milan Campus, Shanti Journal aims to provide a platform for researchers and scholars to publish their work in various disciplines relating to arts and humanities. Our journal covers a wide range of topics, including language, literature, culture, international relations, performance arts, media, and communication.

Shanti Journal seeks to promote original and high-quality research in both empirical and theoretical domains. We welcome submissions that present previously unpublished work, including research results, case studies, and theoretical analyses. It is important to note that all articles submitted to our journal should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

To ensure the quality and integrity of the articles published in Shanti Journal, all submissions undergo a rigorous peer review process. Our team of expert reviewers evaluates each submission

based on its originality, methodology, significance, and adherence to academic standards. The review process helps us maintain the highest standards of scholarly excellence.

Shanti Journal encourages academic writing and publication across a wide range of specializations within the academic and research domains. Our journal covers diverse topics, including but not limited to: Gender studies, Children's rights, Media studies, Social and cultural sustainability, Domestic and global issues, Education, Health risks, Environmental management, Literature

We believe that by encompassing such a broad focus, Shanti Journal can contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding in various fields.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the authors who have contributed their insightful work to Shanti Journal. Your dedication to research and scholarship is invaluable, and we are honored to showcase your contributions.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to our distinguished reviewers. Your expertise and support during the review process have been instrumental in maintaining the quality of the journal. We are grateful for your commitment to academic excellence.

As the Editor-in-chief of Shanti Journal, I am proud to lead a team that is dedicated

to promoting multidisciplinary research and academic writing. Our mission is to foster excellence in scholarly work and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in various disciplines relating to arts and humanities.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in Shanti Journal.



Satya Raj Joshi  
Editor-in –Chief



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## Challenges and Way-out of Transforming Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh: An Empirical Study.

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### Abstract

*The shift from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh signifies a noteworthy development in Bangladesh's technology environment, mirroring goals for a thorough digital overhaul. This essay explores the difficulties that arose throughout this shift and suggests some viable alternatives to clear the path. The digital divide, cybersecurity risks, governance concerns, and infrastructure limitations are among the major obstacles that are identified by means of a thorough examination of regulatory frameworks, technology infrastructure, and socioeconomic aspects. Additionally, it investigates how these difficulties may affect Bangladesh's vision for a Smart Bangladesh's goals of achievement. In order to successfully address these difficulties, the study provides strategic suggestions based on empirical facts and insights from the current literature. These include building inclusive digital governance, bolstering cybersecurity precautions, encouraging innovation ecosystems, and improving digital infrastructure. Bangladesh may speed its road towards a genuinely smart and inclusive society and overcome obstacles to its digital transformation by putting these proposals into practice. Through practical observations and suggestions for overcoming obstacles in the transition from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh, this study adds to the conversation on digital development.*

**Keywords:** Digital Bangladesh, Smart Bangladesh, Challenges, Way out, ICT infrastructure, Governance transformation

## Introduction of the Study

The transition from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh represents a significant shift in Bangladesh's socioeconomic fabric, driven by the incorporation of digital technology into numerous elements of governance, the economy, and society. Since the launch of the Digital Bangladesh Vision in 2008, the government has undertaken ambitious measures to use the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for national development (Hossain & Moon, 2021). These initiatives have resulted in tremendous success in developing digital infrastructure, improving e-governance services, and increasing digital literacy across the country. However, as Bangladesh moves towards becoming a smarter and more technologically sophisticated nation, it faces a slew of difficulties that require careful study and deliberate action (Alam & Islam, 2020).

Despite significant gains, the path to Smart Bangladesh is fraught with problems that inhibit its realization and require immediate attention. One of the most pressing issues is the digital gap, which persists across urban-rural divides, financial inequities, and gender discrepancies. Scholars such as Bhuiyan (2021) argued that unequal distribution of digital infrastructure and access to ICTs exacerbates socioeconomic disparities, limiting digital technologies' transformational potential for marginalized communities. Furthermore, cybersecurity dangers loom big as Bangladesh deals with the growing hazards of cyberattacks, data breaches, and online fraud. Chakma & Nasiruddin (2020) research highlights the increasing sophistication of cyber-attacks, as well as the inadequacy of present cybersecurity solutions to protect key digital assets and personal information.

Furthermore, governance difficulties impede Bangladesh's transition to a Smart Bangladesh. Chowdhury (2019) emphasizes the need of good governance frameworks and institutional capability in ensuring that digital projects are implemented transparently, accountable, and efficiently. However, governance flaws, bureaucratic red tape, and corruption impede the seamless execution of digital initiatives and the achievement of intended results. Furthermore, infrastructure restrictions like as poor internet access, power outages, and a lack of digital literacy impede the broad adoption and efficient use of digital technologies throughout the country (Hossain, 2020).

In light of these issues, identifying feasible solutions and charting a strategic path ahead becomes increasingly important. Bangladesh's road to Smart Bangladesh necessitates a coordinated effort to bridge the digital gap, boost cybersecurity defenses, strengthen governance systems, and overcome infrastructure obstacles. Bangladesh can

overcome the hurdles of becoming a truly smart and digitally inclusive nation by using creative ways, promoting public-private partnerships, and prioritizing equitable growth. This study aims to investigate these issues in depth and make concrete suggestions to move Bangladesh's digital transformation agenda ahead.

### **Rationale of the Study**

The reason for this study is that it is very important to understand and solve the problems that Bangladesh is having as it moves from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh. Bangladesh is trying to use digital technologies to improve its economy and society as a whole, but it is facing many difficult problems that need to be carefully looked at and solved strategically. To get the most out of digital transformation projects, scholars like Islam & Khan, (2019) stress how important it is to deal with problems like the digital gap, cybersecurity risks, and poor governance. The study's goal is to help Bangladesh's digital plan move forward and promote growth and development that benefits everyone by figuring out the causes of these problems and suggesting workable answers. Also, since not much research has been done on this subject, there is an urgent need to fill this gap in the literature and come up with evidence-based ideas that can help shape policy and practice. So, the goal of this study is to give a full picture of the problems that are stopping Bangladesh from becoming Smart Bangladesh and suggest ways to get around them so that the country can become more digitally open and technologically advanced faster.

### **Objective of the Study**

#### ***General Objective***

To Identify and address the difficulties impeding Bangladesh's transition from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh, as well as provide solutions to overcome these impediments.

#### ***Specific Objectives***

Find out how big the digital gap is in Bangladesh by looking at how different groups, like those who live in rural areas or are on the outside, can access digital tools.

Check out Bangladesh's cybersecurity situation by looking at the weak spots and risks that digital infrastructure faces and suggesting ways to make cybersecurity stronger.

Look into the problems with governance that are stopping digital projects from working well, find weak spots in institutions, and suggest changes to improve digital governance.

## Literature Review

A lot of writing has been written about the difficulties and possibilities that come with Bangladesh's digital transformation as it moves from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh. Some researchers, like Kabir & Nasir (2020), talk about how important Bangladesh's Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021 is for the country's digital growth plan. This plan, which was started by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2008, wants to use digital technologies to boost economic growth, make government work better, and make people's lives better (Khan & Akter, 2021). But even though Bangladesh has made a lot of progress, it still has a lot of problems that are stopping it from becoming a smart and digitally open country.

One of the biggest problems is the digital divide, which includes gaps between cities and rural areas, between men and women, and between high incomes and low incomes. The digital gap between different groups of people needs to be closed through focused interventions that teach people how to use technology better, make it easier for more people to access digital infrastructure, and study by Karim & Rahman (2021). Bangladesh also has to deal with a lot of worries about cybersecurity dangers, like cyberattacks, data breaches, and online scams. Studies by Rahman & Islam (2020) shows how important it is to improve cybersecurity means right away to protect important digital assets and keep people safe and private online.

Bangladesh's digital change plan is also slowed down by problems with government. In its 2020 report, the World Bank stresses how important it is to have strong institutional ability and good governance frameworks to make sure that digital projects are carried out in a way that is open, accountable, and successful (Mahmud & Rahman, 2021). However, problems with government, excessive red tape, and corruption make it hard to carry out digital projects smoothly and achieve the goals that were set.

Finally, the literature shows how difficult it will be for Bangladesh to move from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh. These issues, like the digital gap, cyber threats, and bad government, show how important it is to work together to fix underlying problems and plan a way to move forward. This study wants to add to the conversation about Bangladesh's digital change by using findings from previous studies to help find solutions to the problems that are stopping the country from becoming smart and digitally inclusive.

**Research gap:** There is a lot of writing about Bangladesh's journey to become more digital, but there is still a big gap in study that looks at all the problems that are stopping the country from becoming Smart Bangladesh. Studies have looked at certain issues, like the digital gap, cybersecurity risks, and problems with government, but there aren't many that look at all of these problems together and come up with complete answers. This study tries to fill in that gap by looking at all the problems in depth and suggesting smart ways to solve them, which will help the conversation about Bangladesh's digital change move forward.

## **Research Methodology**

We have used secondary research methods to find and study data, literature, and information that was already out there that was important to Bangladesh's journey towards digital change. Literature review, document analysis, and case studies are some of these methods. They all give a lot of information about the problems and possible answers that come with Bangladesh's digital change.

### ***Literature Review***

A literature study is a methodical look at and combination of current academic journals, books, reports, and other relevant sources to find out more about the research topic (Mamun & Uddin, 2019). For this study project, a full literature review will be done to look at everything that is already known about Bangladesh's road towards digital transformation. There will be research on the digital gap, cyber threats, problems with government, and how well digital projects work. Researchers like Rahman & Akhter (2021), and the Rahman & Islam (2021) have done a lot of work on different parts of Bangladesh's digital change. This work has given us useful information that i can use in my research.

### ***Document Analysis***

Document analysis include reviewing official documents, policy papers, government reports, and strategic plans relevant to the study issue (Roy & Hossain, 2021). In this study project, document analysis will be used to examine major documents such as the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021, government regulations, and strategic plans for digital transformation activities in Bangladesh. By reviewing these papers, scholars can obtain a better grasp of policymakers' aims, efforts, and issues, as well as the tactics recommended to meet them.

## Case Studies

Case studies require a thorough examination of specific cases or examples that are relevant to the research topic (Rashid & Rashed, 2020). For this research project, we will be conducting case studies on specific digital initiatives, projects, or interventions implemented in Bangladesh. These studies will help us understand the challenges and opportunities that come with the country's digital transformation. Through an analysis of case studies on both successful and unsuccessful digital projects and initiatives, researchers can gain valuable insights and identify best practices. These insights can help in developing recommendations and strategies to overcome obstacles and accelerate progress towards a Smart Bangladesh.

By utilizing these secondary research methodologies, researchers can gain a thorough understanding of the obstacles and possible remedies linked to Bangladesh's digital transformation journey. Through the synthesis of existing knowledge, analysis of relevant documents, and examination of case studies, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of Bangladesh's digital landscape. This understanding can then be used to propose practical recommendations to tackle major challenges and foster a smarter and more digitally inclusive nation.

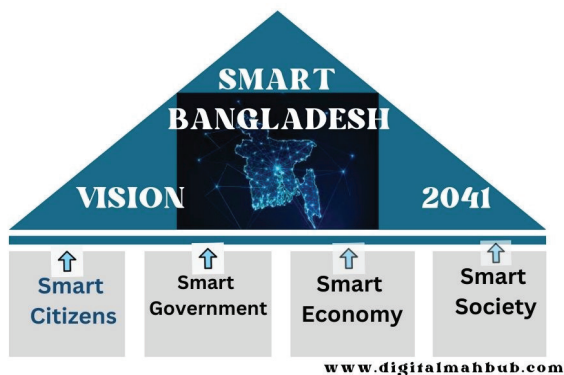
### Country Scenario of Digital Bangladesh toward SMART Bangladesh

Bangladesh has begun a dramatic journey from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh, spurred by bold initiatives aimed at harnessing the potential of digital technology to promote socioeconomic growth. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presented the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021 in 2008, and it is the cornerstone of the country's digital transformation drive. This vision envisions a digitally empowered society in which technology drives inclusive growth, efficient government, and a higher quality of life for citizens (Sarker & Begum, 2020). Over the last decade, Bangladesh has achieved tremendous progress in building digital infrastructure, promoting e-governance services, and increasing digital literacy among its people.

**Figure:** SMART Bangladesh.

(Source: [www.digitalmahbub.com](http://www.digitalmahbub.com))

Notwithstanding these successes, Bangladesh still has a long way to go before it can fully transform into a Smart Bangladesh due to a variety of issues. The





digital divide is a major issue that continues to exist in a number of areas, including as gender differences, wealth inequality, and urban-rural discrepancies (Siddique & Hossain, 2021). Rural regions and marginalized groups continue to lag behind, creating socioeconomic disparities and impeding inclusive development, while metropolitan areas and wealthy communities have comparatively greater access to digital technology.

Furthermore, as Bangladesh struggles with the growing dangers of cyberattacks, data breaches, and online scams, cybersecurity concerns are very real. The spread of digital technologies has increased the attack surface, leaving personal data and vital digital infrastructure open to abuse (Uddin & Akhter, 2021). Bangladesh's digital resilience and national security are seriously challenged by these dangers, which are further exacerbated by lax cybersecurity regulations and low user knowledge.



**Figure:** Pillars of SMART Bangladesh. (Source: [www.digitalmahbub.com](http://www.digitalmahbub.com))

Furthermore, governance flaws impede Bangladesh's digital transformation ambition. Bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and institutional flaws inhibit the successful execution of digital projects and the achievement of intended results (Yasmin & Haque, 2020). Limited coordination among government agencies, regulatory bottlenecks, and a lack of transparency in decision-making processes all erode the efficacy of digital governance initiatives, suffocating innovation and growth.

In light of these problems, Bangladesh must devise a strategic plan to overcome



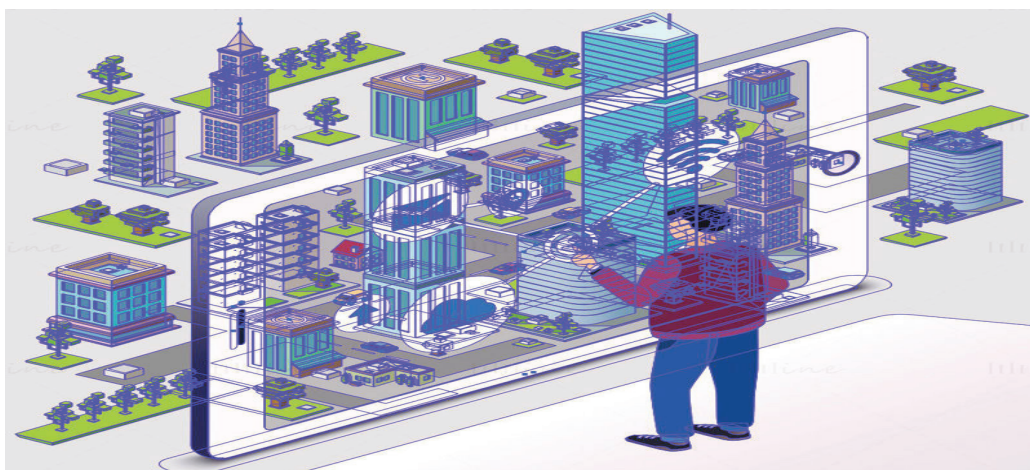
impediments and accelerate progress towards a Smart Bangladesh. This necessitates coordinated efforts to close the digital gap, increase cybersecurity defenses, and improve governance structures. By using innovative solutions, encouraging public-private partnerships, and prioritizing equitable development, Bangladesh can traverse the intricacies of its digital transformation path and emerge as the region's leading digital economy. This study effort intends to give a complete analysis of these problems as well as concrete solutions to help Bangladesh's digital agenda go forward.

## Research Findings and Analysis

The study discovered significant results by meticulously analyzing existing literature, policy papers, and case studies, providing insights into the issues, possibilities, and potential solutions related with Bangladesh's digital ecosystem.

### *Digital Divide:*

**Urban-Rural Disparities:** Access to digital tools is still different in rural and urban areas, even though there have been attempts to close the gap (Zaman & Hossain, 2000). Some problems that rural areas still have, like bad internet connections and not enough digital learning programs, make it harder for them to fully join in the digital economy.



**Figure: Facilities of SMART Bangladesh. (Source: [www.theconfluence.blog](http://www.theconfluence.blog))**

**Gender Disparities:** As of 2020, there are still big differences between men and women in Bangladesh when it comes to internet access and use. There are already differences between men and women when it comes to schooling, jobs, and social and economic possibilities. This makes them even more unequal.

### ***Cybersecurity Threats:***

***Escalating Risks:*** Bangladesh is increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks, data breaches, and online frauds due to the growing digitization of services and the proliferation of digital technologies (Zulfikar & Rahman, 2021). The lack of robust cybersecurity measures and awareness among users further exacerbates these risks, posing significant challenges to Bangladesh's digital resilience and national security.

***Need for Enhanced Measures:*** There is a pressing need for enhanced cybersecurity measures to safeguard critical digital assets and protect citizens' privacy and security (Rahman & Akhter, 2021). Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure, implementing effective regulatory frameworks, and enhancing public awareness are essential to mitigate the risks posed by cyber threats.

### ***Governance Challenges:***

***Bureaucratic Red Tape:*** In Bangladesh, ineffective administrative processes and bureaucratic red tape impede the successful execution of digital projects (Mahmud & Rahman, 2021). Innovation is hampered by bureaucratic roadblocks, institutional inertia, and complicated regulatory procedures that slow down the speed of digital change.

***Corruption:*** In Bangladesh, corruption still poses a serious threat to digital governance, eroding public confidence in government agencies and their transparency (Mamun & Uddin, 2019). For resources to be distributed fairly and effectively and for digital services to be delivered effectively, corruption in digital governance procedures must be addressed.

### ***Success Factors:***

***Public-Private Partnerships:*** In Bangladesh, public-private partnerships and civil society organizations are frequently involved in successful digital projects (Islam & Khan, 2019). In order to spur innovation, build up digital infrastructure, and provide residents with useful digital services, public-private partnerships are essential.

***Innovative Approaches:*** Mamun & Uddin, (2019) asserts that Bangladesh has witnessed the emergence of revolutionary mechanisms for achieving financial inclusion and economic empowerment, including mobile banking, digital payments, and e-commerce. The utilization of technology to tackle socio-economic issues and advance inclusive development is critical for the digital transformation endeavors of Bangladesh.

Finally, the study findings offer a comprehensive view of the problems and

possibilities inherent in Bangladesh's transition from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh. Bangladesh can accelerate its development towards a digitally inclusive and technologically sophisticated society by addressing the digital gap, improving cybersecurity measures, resolving governance difficulties, and capitalizing on success factors such as public-private partnerships and creative initiatives.

### **Challenges to Start SMART Bangladesh**

In order to achieve significant progress, the shift from a Digital Bangladesh to a Smart Bangladesh is accompanied by numerous challenges that need to be addressed. The aforementioned concerns encompass a diverse array of subjects, such as digital infrastructure, governance, cybersecurity, and socio-economic infrastructure. The research endeavor has identified the subsequent noteworthy issues:

***Inadequate Connectivity:*** Even though Bangladesh has made a lot of progress in building up its digital infrastructure, there are still places in the country that have little to no internet access (Rahman & Akhter, 2021). This lack of connection makes it harder to use digital services and stops people from adopting digital technologies, especially in rural and remote places.

***Poor Quality of Service:*** Even in places where people can connect to the internet, the quality of service is often bad, with slow speeds and frequent outages (Chowdhury, 2019). This makes digital efforts less effective and makes it harder for people to get digital services without any problems.



**Figure:** Challenges of SMART Bangladesh. (Source: [www.albd.org/media](http://www.albd.org/media))

**Red Tape and Inefficiencies in Government Agencies:** Inefficiencies and red tape in government agencies make it harder to adopt digital projects and take longer to make decisions (Khan & Akter, 2021). Administrative red tape and regulatory bottlenecks make it take longer to implement projects and stop new ideas from coming up.

**Lack of Coordination:** The different government departments and groups working on digital projects don't always talk to each other or organize their work (Bhuiyan, 2021). Because of this lack of unity, people have to do the same things twice, which costs time and money and makes it harder to follow the rules. In general, this makes digital government less useful.

**Cyber dangers:** Hacking, malware, phishing attacks, and data breaches are just some of the cyber dangers that Bangladesh is facing more and more (Hossain & Moon, 2021). Critical digital infrastructure and private data can be misused because there aren't strong cybersecurity means in place. This puts national security and public trust at great risk.

**Lack of Skills:** Bangladesh doesn't have enough skilled cybersecurity workers to deal with the growing problems (Kabir & Nasir, 2020). Because people don't know much about cybersecurity, it's hard to find, stop, and react to cyber dangers effectively. This leaves digital assets open to attacks.

**Digital Divide:** There are still differences in access to digital tools between people in Bangladesh's cities and rural places, as well as between people from different socioeconomic groups (Hossain, 2020). This digital gap makes current differences in healthcare, education, and job possibilities even worse, which slows down development that benefits everyone.

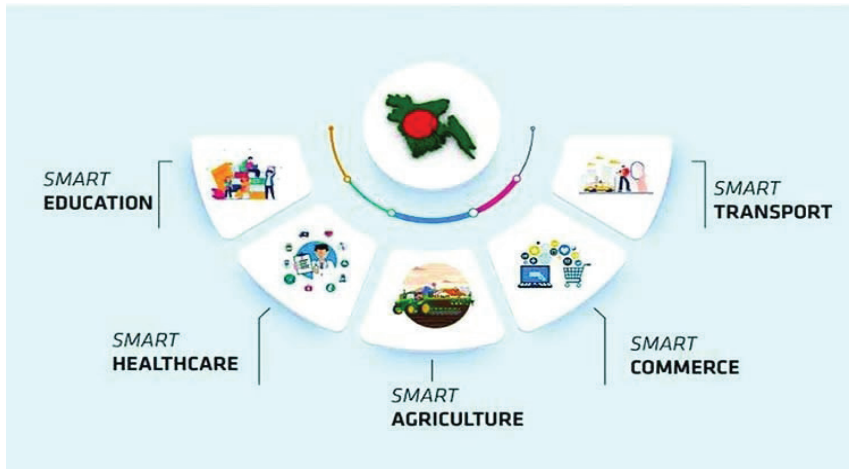
**Digital Literacy:** People who don't know how to use technology well have a hard time adopting and using it (Chakma & Nasiruddin, 2020). People can't fully participate in the digital economy and get to digital services if they don't know about or understand how to use digital tools and services.

## **Way out of Existing Problem**

There are many problems that need to be solved on the way from "Digital Bangladesh" to "Smart Bangladesh," but there are also many ways to get past these problems and make real progress. Bangladesh can get through the problems and find

a way to become a Smart Bangladesh by changing its policies, investing in its digital infrastructure, building up its people's skills, and forming smart relationships. The study project found the following to be the most important strategies:

**Expand Connectivity:** In order to fix the problem of poor connection, people should work to bring the internet to areas that don't have it yet, especially rural and remote areas (Chowdhury, 2019). This can be done by doing things like putting in fiber-optic lines, setting up mobile broadband networks, and opening community internet centers.

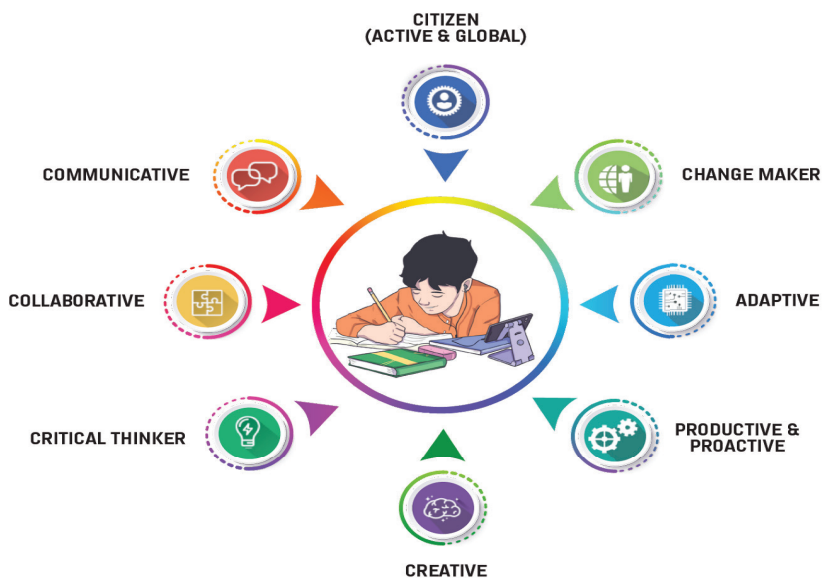


**Figure:** Connectivity of SMART Bangladesh. (Source: [www.pressxpress.org](http://www.pressxpress.org))

**Make Service Better:** To make service better on the internet, money should be spent on updating old equipment and introducing technologies that make connections faster and more stable (Hossain, 2020). This includes setting up 5G networks, making network control tools better, and making last-mile connectivity better.

**Simplify Administrative Processes:** To get rid of government red tape, changes should be made to simplify administrative processes and lower legal hurdles (Karim & Rahman, 2021). This includes making it easier to get licenses, digitizing government services, and starting e-governance projects to make things run more smoothly and openly.

**Encourage Collaboration Between Agencies:** To make it easier for government agencies to work together, tools should be set up to make it easier for them to share information and work together (Karim & Rahman, 2021). Setting up cross-functional task groups, holding regular meetings, and coming up with shared standards and protocols for exchanging data are all parts of this.



**Figure:** Benefits of SMART Bangladesh. (Source: [www.a2i.gov.bd](http://www.a2i.gov.bd))

**Strengthen Cybersecurity:** To reduce cyber threats, money should be spent on improving cybersecurity measures, such as setting up cybersecurity guidelines and deploying advanced security technologies (Khan & Akter, 2021). To protect important digital assets, this includes setting up firewalls, intruder detection systems, and encryption methods.

**Close the Digital gap:** To encourage digital inclusion, we should start projects to close the digital gap and make sure everyone has equal access to digital tools. This includes giving money to people who need it to buy digital products, giving underserved areas free or cheap internet access, and starting programs to teach people how to use technology properly (Bhuiyan, 2021).

**Improve Digital Literacy:** To improve digital literacy, training programs should be made available to give people the skills and information they need to use digital tools correctly (Zaman & Hossain, 2020). This can be done by teaching digital skills in schools, holding training sessions for people, and working with community groups to run social programs.

## Conclusion

There are many problems on the way from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh. These include differences in digital infrastructure, online threats, bad government, and social and economic obstacles. But even with these problems, there



are clear ways to get past them and make real progress. Bangladesh can get through the problems and find a way to become a Smart Bangladesh by changing its policies, investing in its digital infrastructure, building up its people's skills, and forming smart relationships.

Suggestions made in this study project stress how important it is to take a broad approach that takes into account many aspects of the problems. Reforms in policies are needed to set a clear path and structure for going digital, and investments in digital infrastructure are needed to connect more people and make digital services better. Building people's skills is important for giving people more power and making them more resistant to online threats. This is especially true when it comes to safety and digital literacy. Also, encouraging creativity and getting people from different groups to work together can speed up technological progress and promote growth for everyone. Bangladesh can use the changing power of digital technologies to boost economic growth, make government work better, bring more people together, and make people's lives better by following these suggestions. But to be successful, people will have to stay committed, work together, and be able to change with the times in order to deal with new difficulties and the changing digital world.

To sum up, the change from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh is hard but doable. The government, the business sector, civil society, and foreign partners all need to work together. Bangladesh can reach its goal of becoming a Smart Bangladesh and become a star in the digital era by being open to new ideas, encouraging inclusion, and using digital tools for long-term growth.

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## A Catholic Perspective on Interreligious Peacebuilding in the Himalaya

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### Abstract:

*Armed conflict, economic poverty, human trafficking, and gender discrimination are among the problems that most impact vulnerable women in the Himalaya. These challenges, common to the rest of South Asia and other parts of the world, are exacerbated by political, social, and cultural norms in mountainous regions that promote violence and facilitate insurgencies. Furthermore, geographic separation and cultural biases contribute to the political and economic marginalization of mountain peoples, which can lead to the belief that violence is the only reasonable option for gaining a voice. Nevertheless, the Himalaya encompasses a variety of vibrant religious traditions that promote peace and justice, of which Catholicism is a small minority. As such, it is crucial for Catholic peacebuilders to adopt an effective interreligious, intercultural, and cooperative approach for these problems. This project will examine Catholic peacebuilding to identify the reasons, methods, and implications for an interreligious approach in the Himalaya. After summarizing the foundation and principles of Catholic peacebuilding, I will consider the specific challenges in the Himalayan context. Subsequently, I will examine the similarities and differences in Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist understandings of peace. Finally, I will offer an analysis of how Catholic peacebuilding can be most successful in the Himalaya. While the predominant models of Catholic peacebuilding have been successfully implemented in regions that are largely Christian, these approaches can struggle to effectively engage across religious, cultural, and political boundaries. In summary, this essay argues that an interreligious approach is necessary to build peace amid these challenges.*

**Keywords:** Peacebuilding, Interreligious Relations, Catholic Social Teaching, Justice

Himalayan society includes millions of poor especially women and children who are exploited and socially marginalized. They face religious and ethnic discrimination, violent conflicts and human rights violations that result in displacement, ecological destruction, and political and economic oppression supported by powerful elites (Amaladoss, 1997, p. 135). These challenges, common to the rest of South Asia and other parts of the world, are exacerbated locally by political, social, and cultural norms, ubiquitous in mountainous regions, that promote violence and facilitate insurgencies. For example, there are various stages of conflict and instability throughout the region. Violence and armed conflict in Kashmir have persisted since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Nepal suffered from a devastating ten-year civil war at the end of the twentieth century, from which it continues to recover. Tibet remains in a state of political uncertainty with its spiritual leader in exile in India and much of its population scattered as stateless refugees in India, Nepal, and other parts of the world. Geographic separation and cultural biases further contribute to the political and economic marginalization of mountain peoples. For instance, women suffer disproportionately during and after conflicts from the threats of sexual violence, magnified stress of family care, and loss of economic viability.

After centuries of understanding a political concept of peace as simply the absence of war, the Roman Catholic Church redefined its understanding at the Second Vatican Council, admonishing Catholics “to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about” and acknowledging that “the concrete demands of the common good are constantly changing as time goes on. Hence, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly” (Gaudium et spes, 1965, § 78). Therefore, Catholic peacebuilders attempt to engage with all components of society through interfaith dialogue and cooperation to protect human dignity and to address the root causes of conflict in pursuit of justice and a sustainable peace. Amid this context of political instability and suffering, the Himalaya encompasses a variety of vibrant religious traditions that promote peace and justice, of which Catholicism is a small minority. Catholic social teaching contains the elements of a comprehensive approach to pursue peace and justice that transcends religious and cultural boundaries.<sup>1</sup> As such, it is crucial for Catholic peacebuilders to adopt an effective interreligious, intercultural, and cooperative approach in order to find ways to effectively contribute to addressing these problems. This essay offers a Roman Catholic perspective on the necessity and possible methods for interreligious peacebuilding in the Himalaya.

Interreligious relations in the Himalaya vary depending on the locality. For example, descriptions of the Kashmir conflict often emphasize the Hindu-Muslim conflict, yet there are also examples of interreligious cooperation among villagers seeking to overcome hardships (Nazir, 2018). Alternatively, relations among different religious traditions in Nepal tend to be harmonious although there are some instances of anti-Christian persecution, which may be attributed to concerns about conversion or the spreading influence of Hindu nationalism from India.<sup>2</sup> Church teaching and the Christian gospels require Catholics to seek peace. As a minority in the Himalaya, this must be done through interreligious cooperation. Muslim scholar Ali Ahmed, reflecting on peace efforts in Kashmir, notes that Interreligious relations can help to promote peace and harmony necessary for the flourishing of the community, state, and region (74). Therefore, this research is primarily praxis oriented but with an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation. The qualitative research includes theological and religious ethics with specific attention given to marginalization, inculturation, and historical and cultural studies in the Himalaya. Quantitative sources include observations, case studies, and insight from local peacebuilding organizations. Finally, my conclusions are influenced by my experience as a U.S. military officer and former diplomat in South Asia.

## **What is Catholic Peacebuilding**

Catholic peacebuilding attempts to engage with all levels of society through interreligious cooperation to protect human dignity and address the root causes of conflict in pursuit of a sustainable and just peace. The three primary ways that peacebuilders attempt to counter violence, and the effects of violence, are through conflict prevention, mitigation, and transformation. Conflict prevention is an attempt to prevent violence from occurring before it starts by attending to the factors, which are often related to injustice, that lead to war. This is done by addressing the root causes of violence and responding to unjust relationships and structures that prevent communal harmony. Conflict mitigation consists of direct measures to reduce the effects of violence on the victims and communities. This approach often relies on changing the attitudes and perspectives of the belligerents, while addressing the effects and symptoms of conflict to protect and defend human dignity and the common good. Specific examples include facilitating dialogue among opposing factions and seeking protection for noncombatants impacted by the violence. Conflict transformation attempts to restore justice and peace to communities and regions damaged by violence. This process involves reconciliation and the restoration

of sustainable structures to promote a peaceful and vibrant society. In this approach, peacebuilders seek to capitalize on indigenous non-violent approaches and strengthen those aspects of society that will contribute to a lasting peace. Given the consistent threat, existence, and effects of armed conflict in the Himalaya, peacebuilding is an integral component of living the Catholic faith. Catholic peacebuilders in the Himalaya, however, cannot work directly or unilaterally in peace efforts, but must cooperate by joining with other organizations to pursue peace and justice (Amaladoss, 2017, p. 220).

To build on this process, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has developed a three-step approach for interreligious peacebuilding that emphasizes reconciliation through applying binding, bonding, and bridging activities. This process, referred to as the 3Bs, was designed to cultivate alternatives to violence on (intra- and inter-) personal, communal, and municipal levels (Omer, 2017, p. 6-7). Binding activities focus on promoting self-transformation, including trauma healing and dialogue. This allows the person, whether a victim or a perpetrator, entrance into the community to prepare for reconciliation with others in their own group. Bonding activities focus on strengthening intragroup relations and understanding with the hope that improved intragroup relational patterns will benefit intergroup action and dialogue. These relationships can facilitate arriving at a consensus on ways to address conflict by bridging with the “other.” Bridging activities, eventually, cultivate intergroup trust and activities, such as interfaith celebrations, community-based reconciliation projects, joint legal literacy trainings and intergroup dialogue. The desired outcome of this process is a set of mutually agreed upon, pragmatic and implementable resolutions that can generate support by conflicting groups and from stakeholders at all levels (Omer, 7).

Catholic peacebuilding seeks practical methods to reduce violence and unjust systems by engaging with all stakeholders, especially the relevant political apparatus. This process also includes those who are responsible for and involved in the conflict. Although there may be discomfort with including perpetrators and victims in the same process, this is an essential component and must be carefully navigated by peacebuilders. Thus, justice should take shape within existing social relations, giving due consideration to the contextual location (Jenkins, 2013, p. 116). Lisa Sowle Cahill prescribes a “networked reinforcement of conditions of peace” that involves all levels of civil and governmental actors, international organizations, and interreligious partners for this process.<sup>3</sup>

Engagement at the local level helps to bring communities together to allow for further dialogue and participation of those at the national and international levels. This description of peacebuilding illustrates the importance of integrating religion and politics. Finally, this methodology must be based on a sincere long-term commitment.

Within these communities, however, there are actors who are often not trusted, or even feared. An obvious example is the combatant forces who are visibly responsible for the perpetrated violence. A second example seems as if it would prevent the possibility of interreligious peacebuilding efforts; therefore, careful discernment and navigation of the situation is crucial. Catholic peacebuilding relies on the assumption that religious figures will be respected at the local level. Religious peacebuilders are often considered to be “uniquely well-positioned to gain access to local leaders” and build trust in communities. Although this is true in some circumstances, there are often situations in which religious actors, especially Christians, are not welcome or are met with suspicion.

A more significant obstacle is when religious figures are perceived as complicit in violence or oppression. The Catholic Church contributes to peace and social welfare in South Asia, yet its historical ties to colonialism and association with Western imperialism result in some persistent skepticism. In Kashmir, Hindus are deemed complicit with the oppressive Indian government while Muslims are accused of links to terrorist activity that ostensibly emanates from Pakistan. In other parts of the Himalaya, Buddhist monks can be looked at with suspicion for not following nonviolent paths in their political, social, and similar struggles given their participation in religious wars in other parts of Asia and the militarized monasteries in Tibet. These examples complicate the influence of religious figures on a local peace process, yet suspicion or distrust of religious actors is not an insurmountable obstacle for Catholic contributions to peacebuilding. At each level, these actors must discern their appropriate role while assessing the best approach for contributing in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration. For local Catholic actors, it is conducive to work through and with community religious figures and organizations to ensure that their contribution is not perceived as outsider meddling.

While this endeavor becomes more of a challenge at the national and global levels, the Catholic Church has clearly articulated the obligation for its leadership to pursue a just peace. In *Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII directs the Church to give “serious thought” to the problem of peaceful relations between world political communities through



“mutual trust, sincerity in negotiations, and a faithful fulfillment of obligations” (1963, § 118). More recently, Pope Francis has continued to emphasize the need to generate a lasting peace through a recognition of our common humanity to place fraternity at the center of people’s lives.<sup>4</sup> This should serve as the impetus for bishops and the Vatican to diplomatically engage with thoughtful messaging and dialogue. This includes the Asian bishops, who must navigate between the survival and flourishing of the institutional Church and standing up for the values outlined in the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12). Their statements need not attack any government and should also account for the intransigence, history of violence, and acts of terrorism that provoke military action and oppression from the state. Moreover, they should highlight the tension among development, stability, and just peace while at the same time considering solidarity, the common good, and a spirit of cooperation. Catholic social teaching from the past century provides a framework to link political, economic, and social development toward a just peace.

Grassroots efforts for building peace start at the most basic levels in communities to counter systems of injustice that promote conflict. This concept allows for developing cooperation that is based on ethical and political common ground. Using community-defined needs as the foundation and involving as many stakeholders as possible can help to generate a sense of involvement (Headley and Neufeldt, 2010, p. 131). For example, community participation allows for shared perspectives in cooperative political institutions that enhance the value of agreements among divergent interests. Starting at the ground level promotes building momentum to increase pressure on more powerful figures and institutions in local, national, and international communities. Cahill describes how the different sides meet “to build or restore conditions of peace by working for structural justice and reconciliation at the grassroots level” (Cahill, p. 294). A focus on grassroots peacebuilding is the starting point for Caritas in South Asia but can be the limit in the Himalayas because of political limitations that restrict most Catholic institutional efforts beyond the local level. These challenges include political and cultural impediments at the local and state level

Political limitations and sensitivities are a significant hindrance for peacebuilders to strategically engage at the national and international level in the Himalayas. Local bishops, who may be concerned with the survival of their church, must balance between defending their flock and values with sustaining a relationship with the state power, who



perceive their intervention as a further example of colonialist interference. Messaging from the Vatican, which is notably absent in the case of Tibet or Kashmir, could be related to possible backlash on local Catholics or perhaps that most of the victims are not Catholic. A crucial component is that input from the magisterium must account for the power imbalance between governments and militaries with the marginalized. I agree that dialogue for a just sustainable peace must include all possible stakeholders; however, reconciliation must be on the terms of the victims, not the powerful. Unfortunately, Catholic peacebuilding scholarship does not effectively articulate how this might occur in a Himalayan context.

### **Challenges in a Himalayan Context**

To account for the contextual cultural and societal realities requires attention to the possibilities of suspicion of religious actors, political sensitivities at all levels, faulty assumptions of nonviolence, and attempts to navigate between development and stability. For example, peacebuilders in the Himalaya must be fully cognizant of the amalgamation of religion and state politics. Just as Hinduism has become an ideology of—and is sustained by—the Indian state, the influence of Hindu nationalism extends beyond India's borders into other parts of the Himalaya (Fernandes, 2021, p. 93). A second problematic aspect arises when institutional Catholic peacebuilding efforts link development with a just peace. It is essential, however, that they avoid conflating concepts of peace related to order, stability, and profit with those that emphasize justice, equality, and human flourishing. The connections between economic and social development, with both peacebuilding and militarized political narratives, are a considerable complication for strategic engagement.<sup>5</sup>

As the Church attempts to balance relationships with the state and defend the most vulnerable, it must navigate the divergence in methods that ostensibly seek the same goal of peace. Kashmiri political scientist Nitasha Kaul notes that “in armed conflict, the vested interests entrenched in profiting from conflict seek to limit the range of possible political options that might lead to demilitarization, dialogue, conciliation, a just peace, and eventually resolution” (viii). This mentality contradicts peacebuilding objectives despite a mutual goal of development. The Indian government argues that development will help to eliminate terrorism and build stability. Alternatively, Bhan argues that Indian development efforts are “lived contradictions of an occupying power” where humanitarian policies of the state and military that emphasize compassion and goodwill “seamlessly morph into

heartless tactics” of militarism disguised as democracy or development (Kaul, 2020, 14). Such “lived contradictions” also apply to other efforts that pursue development to improve state economies, often at the expense of the marginalized, which can then provoke further violence.

Likewise, a desire to embrace and build on indigenous nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation and reconciliation in local communities can be problematic if those communities exhibit a proclivity for violent behavior.<sup>6</sup> Himalayan examples of communal violence can often counter accepted narratives that shape peacebuilding assumptions. The evidence that conflict is more likely in mountainous regions indicates that a presupposition of nonviolence is problematic. Those who live in high-altitude regions are often inclined toward violence due to their neglect and isolation from dominant culture and governments.<sup>7</sup> At the grassroots level, a disposition toward violence can be an ingrained defense mechanism against external oppression. Thus, it seems counterproductive for peacebuilders to assume that Himalayan communities will naturally adopt nonviolent methods to address conflict.

Although Catholic peacebuilding’s assumption of relying on indigenous nonviolence may not always be effective, an appeal to peaceful and nonviolent narratives and examples across religious traditions is possible. For example, there are multiple historical examples across the subcontinent of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist leaders encouraging unity and nonviolent approaches for religious cooperation and peace. Incidents of violence will continue to occur in the Himalaya, often as a reaction against perceived or real oppression and state violence. As the Catholic Church has articulated, “if peace is to be established, the primary requisite is to eradicate the causes of dissension” (Paul VI, § 83). Violence is more than the use of force, but includes patriarchal and ethnic oppression, gender-based-violence, and other forms that result from power imbalances. Therefore, Catholic peacebuilders should encourage the nonviolent narratives of other traditions while embracing grassroots efforts to counter patriarchal oppression, caste and ethnic discrimination, as well as physical violence directed from and against state militarism.

## **Interreligious Understanding of Peace**

There is a difference between social peace, or communal tranquility, and a religious idea of spiritual peace. Peacebuilding practice tends to emphasize the political aspects of social peace; however, as I will illustrate with the understanding of peace across different religious traditions, these two notions are interconnected. Jesus offered a notion of peace by saying, “do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (Jn. 14:27); this peace is not the absence of conflict or war but is present in those times. True peace must be grounded in the pursuit of justice, dialogue, truth, and reconciliation, although integrating justice with peace is one of the most challenging aspects.

Peace is both an objective and a means pursued through dialogue, starting with the individual, growing at the grassroots level, and then expanding globally in a long-term commitment to counter injustice. Each of the four religious traditions described in this essay (Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist) approaches peace at three levels: peace in relation with and from God; peace in relationship with others, including interreligiously; and a peace that incorporates justice and emphasizes—but is not limited to—nonviolence. Peace and justice are integral and inseparable components of Catholic social thought, Mohandas K. Gandhi’s nonviolence, Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s Islamic peacebuilding, and the appeals of the Dalai Lama.

While lacking the magisterial institutions of the Catholic Church, Islamic teaching has maintained a consistent understanding of peace. The noun form of the word Islam, *salaam*, means safety or submission to God in peace (Omar, 2015, p. 22). This is evident in the Qur’an, as God, the source of all Peace, greets His creation with Peace (Q. 36:58). Islamic teaching has emphasized reconciliation and mercy as crucial aspects of achieving peace. The Prophet Muhammad not only projected a concept of peace that was both internal and communal, but “was also able to develop a complete methodology of peaceful activism” (Khan, 2009, p. 29). This model of building peace was based on patience, reconciliation, and calmness to avoid hostility and violence. Among Muslim theologians, *al-silm* (peace, reconciliation) is a fundamental term. Peace is defined in the sense of a relationship with others; however, God remains “the very source of all peace” (Omar, 2015, p. 22).

These Quranic teachings of peace were exemplified by Ghaffar Khan, a prominent twentieth-century Muslim voice for nonviolence, in the Pashtun tribal areas of Pakistan. He was a close friend and follower of Gandhi, both of whom sought nonviolent means

to achieve a peace that was related to God (Omar, 2015, p. 27). Ghaffar Khan's peace efforts—which relied on the Qur'an, Islamic teaching, and Gandhi—were directed at injustices resulting from British colonialism, as well as moral and social reform in the Pashtun community (Gandhi, 2008, p. 268). Ghaffar Khan's struggle for peace focused on the rights of the poor, weak, and threatened. Exhibiting tolerance in the face of suffering, Islam helped impel him not toward power, but toward social and humanitarian purposes of relieving poverty and fighting oppression and injustice (p. 273). Nevertheless, he recognized the limits of his efforts through his honesty in addressing the Frontier's women by stating “today we [the men] are the followers of custom and we oppress you,” indicating that he was promoting peace but with an incomplete notion of justice (p. 274).

As the Islamic and Catholic understandings of peace begin with God, Hinduism starts with an inner spiritual peace. The phrase *Om shanti* (peace) is understood as tranquility of the mind from listening to silence (Mohanty, 2015, p. 180). Peace reflects a spiritual consciousness, beginning within each person, but it is relational with others in a political peace, as it extends to the home, community, nation, and beyond. The meaning of peace and nonviolence is explicitly discussed in Hindu texts with ties to the gods and societal peace. For example, the *Mahabharata* describes nonviolence in all of its forms as “the marks of one who is naturally endowed with divine virtues.”<sup>8</sup> Likewise, there is a similarity with the Gospels when the *Vedas* proclaim the practice of nonviolence (*ashimsa*) as the way to achieve harmony, or peace between people, and the *Upanishads* state that “when we love others we love ourselves...”<sup>9</sup> These reflect not only Jesus' actions, but his words, “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 19:19).

Gandhi's understanding of peace was influenced by Hinduism and other Eastern religions, but also by his familiarity with Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). It was both political and internal but promoted nonviolent means to overcome injustice. In Gandhi's mind, nonviolence was a useful political tactic for liberating people from foreign rule, but the spirit of nonviolence required an inner realization of spiritual unity in oneself (Merton, 1965, p. 6). Thus, inner unity was a prerequisite for achieving broader peace. Gandhi's Hindu understanding of peace reflected a similar relationship with God as that of Ghaffar Khan, where achieving peace must first happen by “a state of complete resignation to the Divine Will” (p. 6). His peacebuilding method, *satyagraha*, used nonviolence to resolve political, social, religious, and economic conflicts (p. 75).

Unlike Catholicism, Hinduism, or Islam, Buddhist teaching on peace is predominantly concerned with the internal personal nature of peace; in practice, however, there is a communal and political application. Peace is central to Buddhism as a state to pursue or as the primary spiritual goal. Corresponding to the teaching of other major South Asian religions, Buddhist thought is consistent in that one cannot approach or reach a state of peace by violence or other nonpeaceful means, whether of thought or action (Rosch, 2015, p. 149). In early Buddhism, peace was primarily understood as the peace of mind of individuals, with ultimate peace only obtainable after death. Relationality is evident in that anyone on the path of peace must practice peace to be of benefit to themselves and to others. As Buddhist thought developed, more of an emphasis has been placed on a fundamental peace that embraces peaceful and nonpeaceful states of mind and of the world (p. 150). What is missing from the Buddhist understanding of peace is a connection to justice, although this aspect is articulated in peacebuilding practice, especially by the Dalai Lama.

The fourteenth and current Dalai Lama is the foremost spiritual leader of the dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism. As a refugee, he sees his “efforts in promoting peace, nonviolent approaches to resolving conflicts, and understanding across boundaries of race, religion, and nations” as rooted in ancient teachings (Dalai Lama, 2010, p. 38). While relying on traditional Buddhist concepts of peace necessary, he reaches across religious boundaries to correlate peace with selflessness, frequently citing Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Calcutta. For instance, he describes Mother Teresa as a “model of altruism” who exhibits “the centrality of the compassionate ideal in Christianity” (p. 60). Likewise, he notes the striking similarity between Francis’s peace prayer and the writing of the eighth-century Buddhist teacher Shantideva: “May I be a protector for the unprotected; a guide for travelers; a bridge for those who long to cross to the other shore. May I be a lamp for those who wish for light, a shelter for those in need of rest; a servant for those in need of service” (Bodhicaryavatara 3:17-18) (p. 61). With an emphasis on the connections between different religious traditions, the Dalai Lama’s public expressions of peace are a relevant model for cooperative peacebuilding.

Peace, as described in the examples above, is a crucial topic for interreligious cooperation. The frequent political and ethnic violence, poverty, and marginalization, as well as increasing religious nationalism, indicate a need for collaborative efforts to pursue peace and justice. The descriptions of peace in the Catholic, Islamic, Hindu,

and Buddhist traditions indicate three common themes. The first is that peace must be found in relation with and through God or the divine. Secondly, Catholic peacebuilding principles parallel the efforts of Khan, Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama to underscore an interreligious coincidence of seeking peace in relationship with others. Thirdly, there is a decided emphasis on the integration of peace and justice through nonviolence. While these examples feature internationally recognized peacebuilders, the frequency of violence and conflict indicates that the pursuit of justice through nonviolence is not universally accepted. Therefore, the doctrinal and scriptural concepts of peace must be invoked to convince fundamentalists who are less inclined toward interreligious cooperation and communal peace.

### **Catholic Peacebuilding Approach in the Himalaya**

There are numerous approaches for Catholic peacebuilding that have proved to be effective in different parts of the world. Many of these methods, however, have succeeded in places where Christianity is the majority, such as Latin America, Africa, and the Philippines. Likewise, other cultural and social factors require a nuanced approach for the Himalaya. First, Catholic peacebuilders must recognize and appreciate their minority status. This often requires partnerships and collaboration, where others take the lead or serve as the representative face of the effort. There must be thoughtful consideration of the appropriate time and place for contributions to build peace. This can be accomplished through interreligious dialogue that is focused on determining common values and areas of shared concern related to poverty and violence. This method can accomplish the goals of prevention, mitigation, and transformation by starting with the individual and then promoting intragroup or communal harmony to build bridges among different groups to foster societal changes.

The first steps for Catholic peacebuilding in a Himalayan context should start with individuals. These include victims of violence or injustice, as well as perpetrators and other members of society. This process, which CRS refers to as binding activities, focuses on promoting self-transformation, including trauma healing and dialogue, which allows the person entrance into the community to prepare for reconciliation. These efforts can help to prevent further violence by helping to resolve the root causes of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> The healing process helps to mitigate the effects of violence on individuals. Transformation, in

this stage, begins at the grassroots level through individual change. This is demonstrated in the specific efforts that Catholic peacebuilding institutions make to address the unique challenges for women in armed conflict. For example, the most recent conference from the Catholic Peacebuilding Network focused on women's leadership in peacebuilding processes (Montevecchio, 2024).

Religious peacebuilding organizations promote women, peace, and security through a variety of cooperative programs. Catholic teaching, which stresses a special concern for the vulnerable and marginalized, facilitates the participation of all stakeholders in the peace process. There is particular attention to ensuring that women have a decision-making capacity, as well as including combatants from both sides of the conflict (Love, 2010, p. 56). In terms of protection, religious peacebuilding organizations are often effective in recognizing and mitigating the effects and symptoms of armed conflict, such as human trafficking, sexual violence, and economic struggles. Church sponsored organizations, like Caritas and CRS, seek to mitigate the impact of war on women by addressing the root causes of violence and creating just societal relationships (Headley, 2010, p. 131). A significant component of Caritas' conflict transformation process is to strengthen and contribute to a vibrant civil society that promotes peace through reconciliation and restoration of infrastructure.

The next stage of Catholic peacebuilding in the Himalaya should then build on the individual efforts by promoting intra-group or communal peace. These activities, referred to as bonding, focus on strengthening intragroup relations to facilitate the possibility of intergroup action and dialogue. Developing harmonious relationships within groups can help to prevent violence by addressing the root causes of the conflict. Tensions within or between communities are less likely to escalate to violence when individuals or groups can see the humanity in others. Likewise, this process helps to continue the reconciliation process to mitigate the damage caused by war and injustice. While seeking nonviolent options, Catholic peacebuilders must find appropriate paths to strengthen civil society through truth and reconciliation. An example of how this can be implemented is a project conducted by Caritas Nepal following the Maoist insurgency.

Caritas Nepal, which works to empower the marginalized and disadvantaged to reduce poverty, provide humanitarian assistance, and realize social justice and peace, also works in the areas of human rights and gender equality. Peacebuilding programs tend



to focus on the grassroots level in communities affected by violence and disaster. The organization implemented a “National Peace Programme” project after the insurgency to support conflict affected people with community-based projects that promoted peace, harmony, and human rights.<sup>11</sup> The project was successful in helping more than a thousand conflict-affected persons return to their villages, participate in reconciliation programs, and formed over ten mediation centers in targeted areas. Other peacebuilding projects have emphasized youth training and gender equality in communities and in conjunction with development programs.

Given the religious plurality of the Himalaya, effective peacebuilding must seek to build bridges across religious and ethnic boundaries. Engaging in dialogue can help to identify shared values and concerns that affect all members of society. Only through this process can peacebuilders truly find a path to overcoming structural injustice that are often the root causes of violence. This can be done when there is something that will promote unity and bring groups together. The specific place or event will be contextually specific to every situation, although a helpful model can be found with the Catholic shrine to Our Lady of Madhu in northern Sri Lanka, which served as a place of peace both during and after the thirty-year conflict. Although it is not located in a mountainous region, it bears many cultural similarities to much of the Himalaya. Catholics are a minority in Sri Lanka, yet this shrine attracts thousands of Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim devotees each year.<sup>12</sup> During the war, this location in Madhu was a place of refuge for those fleeing the violence, regardless of their religious affiliation. Although Mary is recognized as a Catholic figure, the shrine has proved to be a source of unity and harmony to build bridges among both Tamils and Sinhalese from across the religious spectrum.

Building a sustainable and comprehensive peace must include all stakeholders. This includes bridgebuilding across ethnic and religious lines, as well as ensuring that everyone involved in the conflict is included. This means that victims and perpetrators, the oppressed and the oppressor, must all have a seat at the table. Moreover, engagement must be pursued at all levels of society. Religious peacebuilders must find the appropriate place for their contribution within this context. More importantly, however, they also must overcome any apprehension to include those who might seem to have different objectives or values.



## Conclusion

For Catholic peacebuilders to engage amid the political and cultural realities of the Himalaya in pursuit of a sustainable and just peace, they must offer relevant and appropriate contributions to their non-Christian interlocutors. While Catholics have a clear mandate and proven success in building peace, as a minority, they must partner with others. Nevertheless, by maintaining an emphasis on prevention, mitigation, and transformation, existing programs can be expanded and other models could be considered. Peace should not be considered as only the absence of war, but as a comprehensive effort that includes spiritual and political stability, as well as justice. An enduring and sustainable peacebuilding process must include all stakeholders and an enduring commitment to evolve with the ever-changing reality of society. The Catholic Church has years of experience in building peace throughout the world, there is much to be learned from the numerous Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and even secular peacebuilding organizations in the Himalaya.

Religious actors and beliefs can promote sound and coherent views on peace, especially by promoting reconciliation. This research illustrates that it is in the interest of religious minorities to work toward building interreligious relations and promote peace. Therefore, Catholics must work outside of their own communities by emphasizing shared areas of concern and values that can facilitate such collaboration. In the broader context of peacebuilding, this is essential for a Himalayan context, given the religious plurality. Accordingly, this project focuses only on Catholic peacebuilding and could benefit from additional research that offers non-Christian perspectives. Further research should look specifically at challenging problems, such as the frequent exclusion of women from peace processes despite their unique challenges during war and conflict.

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## **The museum and digital transformation: reforming national museums in Nigeria towards a new normal**

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### **Abstract**

*Nigeria is home to 53 National Museums, 65 National Monuments, and 2 world heritage sites. The development of information, communication, and technology (ICT) in the twenty-first century has led to a digital transformation of museums, with the use of digital tools in areas like virtual tours and visits, exhibitions, performances, concerts, and documentation, among others. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons that will be discussed in this paper, Nigeria is still falling behind in this age of digital transformation. This essay examines the history of museums and the idea of 21st-century digital change. It examines the numerous strategies that museums throughout the world have embraced in an attempt to draw in more visitors and maintain their financial viability over time. A comprehensive understanding of digital transformation requires an analysis of its drivers and constraints using a variety of theoretical frameworks. This study uses a qualitative method for data collection and analysis. The historical research design is applied in this study. Primary and secondary sources of data were gathered for this research study from books, journal articles, newspaper editorials, conference proceedings, magazines, websites, and new media are some of the resources that are used in the data collection process drawn from selected relevant museums, cultural agencies, literatures, curators, and scholars. The research comes to the conclusion that national museums must embrace a national model for digital transformation in order to transform digitally. This would ensure that the museum stays relevant in the twenty-first century while protecting its*

*unique cultural legacy and help save a lot of jobs. Museum stakeholders were given recommendations based on strong evidence, with a special emphasis on Nigeria, about how to continue to be relevant in fostering meaningful debate in the era of digitization.*

**Keywords:** Museum, Digital Transformation, Information, Communication and Technology, National Museum, Digitization

## **Introduction**

History demonstrates that the one constant in all human undertakings is change. From the era of prehistory to the era of the industrial revolution, artificial intelligence and information and communication technology (ICT) have become ubiquitous in the twenty-first century. The digital revolution, sometimes referred to as the fourth industrial revolution, is a new normal. Information and communication technology (ICT) and digital breakthroughs that use tools and technologies to further human endeavor are its defining characteristics. Furthermore, these developments have impacted every industry and had unintended consequences for those who have rejected the advancements brought about by this new century. More specifically, as ICT and digital technologies are being used in fields like print, film, music, museums, and theater, the arts industry is not excluded. Like other industries, the arts sector embraced the new inventions and changes brought about by the COVID-19 epidemic, which was typified by digital transformation. During the epidemic, policies like social separation and isolation allowed digital change to flourish across many industries.

Digital transformation is defined as the transformation of work events, processes, competences, and models by aligning them with the changes and opportunities in digital technologies (Betchoo, 2016). This definition suggests that digital transformation is an era that has come to stay and has affected every facet of human endeavors. Digitalization as it is also called, transforms analogue material into a digital format and double digits (Tilson, et al, 2016). This relates to the changes affecting the Museum industry which from onset has been used to conventional analogue styles but today has started going digital which has attracted more proceeds. Ganguly (2015) and Rogers (2016) reveal that about 84% of organizations are making efforts to develop a vision, plan and application for digital transformation not because they see it as an organizational mission, but because they see Information Technologies as a benefit. In addition, Hrustet et al. (2019) suggest that digital transformation can be realized in three different methods such as: customer-based, organization-development based, and technologically-based.

Customer-based digital transformation can be achieved by the desires and needs of the customers, while organization-development based is developed with the aim of increasing profit, cutting costs and maintaining output and for the last method, technologically based digital transformation entails the changes and opportunities stemming from digital technologies. In relation to this subject matter, museums can integrate these three models of digital transformation in order to respond to the new normal. For digital transformation to take place, information communication technology (ICT) plays a vital role. In the world today, ICT, social media, virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are contributing significantly to the operations of museums.

The word *museum* originated from the Greek word “mouseion” which meant the “seat of the Muses” which was a designated philosophical institution or a place of contemplation. During the Roman age, it was a place solely for philosophical discussion. The historic museum at Alexandria founded by Ptolemy Soter in the 3rd century was primarily used to preserve and interpret material aspects of heritage (Simmons, 2010). In the 15th century, the word *museum* was revived to describe the collection Lorenzo de’ Medici in Florence, but the term conveyed the concept of comprehensiveness rather than denoting a building. By the 17th century, *museums* were described as collections of curiosities in Europe. During the 19th and most of the 20th century denoted a building housing cultural material to which the public had access (Findlen, 1989). The International Council of Museums ICOM, which is the body that regulates the activities of museums globally adopted the definition for “museum” according to the ICOM Statutes, which was adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August, 2007: A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. The International Council of Museums undertook a project to update the existing definition of “museum.” This is the proposed new definition for “museum”:

*“Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artifacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve,*

*research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing”*. (ICOMS, 2007)

## **Evolution of museums in nigeria**

The origin of museums in Nigeria dates back to the pre-European era. During this time, traditional shrines and the palaces of ancient kings housed cultural artifacts of religious, political, and social significance. These establishments not only functioned as monuments in and of themselves, but they were also in charge of housing these materials. At that time, heads of households and priests who served as curators at different shrines were in charge of maintaining and safeguarding these artifacts. The earliest modern museums appeared in the early 1930s. K.C. Murray, J. D. Clarks, B. E. Fagg, Hunt-Coole, and Milburn—colonial masters in Nigeria's education sector—were the main players in this. They received invitations to instruct art in high schools and teacher preparation programs. In their effort to protect antiquities, they put pressure on the colonial authorities to establish museums and enact laws prohibiting the export of cultural relics. As a result, on July 28, 1943, the Nigerian Antiquity Service was officially launched, with K. C. Murray served as its first Director. With the adoption of Decree No. 77, which dissolved the Antiquities Commission and replaced the previously established Department of Antiquities with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), a thorough review of the laws pertaining to Nigeria's cultural resources was carried out in 1979. With further responsibilities given to the Commission and more, the NCMM oversaw the construction of monuments and museums in many regions of the nation, including Esie, Jos, Ile-Ife, Lagos, and more. (Nzewunwa, 1984)

## **Theories of digitalization**

Two theoretical frameworks that focus on digital transformation are the technology enactment framework and digital era governance approach. Fountain's (2004) technology enactment framework elucidates on the impact of technologies on organizations through an institutional perspective. The author differentiates between objective and enacted technologies. Objective technology incorporates innovations such as the Internet, whereas enacted technology entails the use, design and perception of those technologies by individuals within the organization. The perception and usage of technology is constrained by institutional arrangements, but enacted technology also influences the organization.



Another framework that explains digital transformation is the “digital era governance” approach coined by Dunleavy et al. (2006) who argue that under the influence of the new public management paradigm, technological change enables change in public sector organizations in several ways. Dunleavy et al. (2006) posit that that technology only does not change organizations, rather the way organizations work and their use of technologies changes work practice.

## **History Of Digital Transformation In Museums**

Digital transformation in museums is still a work in process. But some scholars suggested that the emergence of digital transformation in museums dates back to the early 2000s when various innovations and creativities were adopted by museums to reflect digitalization. According to Museums Report, 2016, digital transformation in museums dates back to 2005 when two disruptive projects emerged. The first of these disruptive projects which transformed museums digitally was developed by a group of students from Marymount Manhattan College who called themselves ‘Art Mobs’. They produced an alternative audio tour system for museums. This innovative project was described as Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City which was a downloadable podcast which encouraged museum visitors and tourists to preload the podcast into their personal IPODS which they can bring to the museums. This alternative audio tour for the museum of Modern Art was taken advantage of by museums which produced their own tour podcast. (Museums Report, 2016)

The second project which transformed the museum digitally was Walker Art Center’s Art on Call which was a project which delivered an interactive audio tour which was enabled on the visitor’s personal cell phones. This project enabled visitors to use their various personal devices such as MP3 player and phone to enhance their museum experience (Adler, J 2013). These early digital innovations in museums were improved on by Apple through her iPhone and iPod touch in 2007 and other smartphones and tablets began to imitate them in creating visual-audio virtual tour systems which were first developed to aid museum operations and management (Museum Report, 2016).

## **Effects Of Digital Transformation On Museums**

Digital transformation is a new normal that has transformed the nature of every profession. Museums are not left out in this transformation. Marta et al. (2020), and

Benjamin (2008) suggests that this shift and transformation is evident and visible in museums where technological and digital revolutions have gradually affected the aura of originals or prototypes which are threatening their authenticity. The effects of these digital transformations in museums can be seen in how they have begun to adjust their various business practices and models which reflects a comprehensive 21<sup>st</sup> century model (digital age). Some of the effects digital transformations have played in museums include:

Firstly, the era of digital transformation has significantly contributed to the ways arts objects are perceived and seen by the public and audience who now perceive it to be more interactive, dynamic and democratic in nature. As suggested by Newman (2010), the effects of the digital transformation in museums have been more disruptive in nature. The disruption brought by this era on museums has displaced many old styles and as such threatened those who have failed to adopt these trends and innovations in their work culture. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the transformation digitally which has affected the management of arts objects in Museums, theaters, galleries where historical objects are collected and displayed for the benefit of the public.

Secondly, digital transformation has contributed significantly to profit utilization in museums. The era of digital transformation has created more profit opportunities for those who have transformed their services digitally via social media platforms. Many arts galleries, museums and artists now exhibit their objects and art works on their websites and social media where they make huge profits from sales as a result of a good number of customers that patronize them (Lee and Lee, 2018). Many artists and stakeholders now make use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to release information on their exhibitions which they use in inducing transactions with prospective buyers (Fletcher and Lee, 2012).

The use of social media has also opened more avenues for artists to showcase their work. Digital transformation has affected the way professionals and artists in museum produce their works as digital transformation has created new spaces and opportunities for new techniques where digital installation art, virtual reality, 3D animations, robots' artistic genres are now model that have emerged in museums which have threatened the place of human beings who are at risks of losing their jobs (Marta et al., 2021).

Additionally, digital transformation has created new tools to facilitate effective and friendly service delivery communications with audiences through art objects. This

disruption is visible in the feedback mechanism which many who have adopted digital transformation provide for their audience. For instance, artists such as Bernulia, Tanaka Tatsuya, and Beccaclason who are Instagram users have expressed that they can easily sell their artworks on social media platforms than selling them offline. They also stated that they do cultural branding which they use in promoting feedback from their various audiences. They stated that their new media art-based forms have successfully “pushed the boundaries of contemporary arts and museum collections” (Samdanis, 2016).

### **Case studies: tate modern museum, met museum, bristol museum, and british museum**

The four examples below shed more light on various digital transformation strategies museums are now adopting across the globe:

#### **Tate Modern museum, United Kingdom**

Tate Modern, UK is one of the museums across the globe that has gone digital in its activities through various customers based and technological based digital transformation strategies which has changed the system through which the modern museum carried out her activities. According to a study conducted by Emily Fildes and Elene Villaespesa of Tate Museum, the museum adopts a system of using mobile devices in their galleries to facilitate a technology based digital transformation. From the report, the museum recorded about 91% of their visitors to Tate Museum and 86% of them were used to using mobile phones, tablets while visiting the galleries. It was suggested that about 91% of these visitors connected their devices via a free Wi-Fi made available by the authorities of the museum (Tate Modern Release, 2012). The system of allowing people to bring their mobile devices to the museum premises was to allow them to take pictures, share them and their experiences at the museums on their social media pages so as to enable the public to search information about them on their Tate website which is available to the public. A number of these visitors go to the extent of downloading the Tate Modern application or sometimes use the mobile website of the Tate Modern for virtual tours.

The museum built a mobile web tour in their content management system which is a simple interface where audio or audio files can be uploaded or in addition to images. These enable the visitors to browse or check locations where they can get some artwork or objects. The authorities of the modern museum suggested that the main reason why they chose this pattern was to create a more sustainable and consistent approach to the mobile

offer across the Tate's Four galleries. The authorities of the modern museum argue that this system of building mobile tours is relatively cheap and fast (Museum Reports, 2016).

### **The Met Museum, USA**

The Met Museum located in the USA, is another museum that has gone digital in her activities most especially using customer based and technological digital transformation strategies which are similar to the Tate Modern, UK. The museum adopts audio guides which tourists use in touring round the museum. Grace Tung, a digital media associate at Creative Development, argues against the opinion of some who see audio guides as old-fashioned products which visitors can hold onto while embarking on their tour (Museum Reports, 2016). Rather, Tung suggests that audio guides are compulsory as a resource that should be used by every museum which should combine both digital and non-digital tools. This model is what is usually referred to as a "service design," whereby experiences and services are better created in order to meet visitor's needs within a specific context. This system requires a proper understanding of the user experience in a robust way so as to have a hitch free tour experience (Museum Reports, 2016). This perspective is even corroborated in *Improving the Audio Guide: A Look at our Visitors* which explains the discoveries of the museum through a survey conducted on its visitors on the importance audio guides provided to them (Tung, 2015). Moreover, it was discovered that many of the visitors adopt the system and they see it as a reliable model that aids their tour at the museum which they enjoy and appreciate as it makes it a worthwhile experience.

### **Bristol museums, galleries, and archives, united kingdom**

The Bristol Museum, galleries, and archives located in the United Kingdom is another typical example of a museum that adopted the three models of digital transformation which include customer based, technological based, and organizational based. The museum is one of the few museums across the globe that has up to date data information on her websites as suggested in a finding documented in the Museum Reports, 2016.

The museum, galleries, and archives of Bristol actively used a tool for data importation which has successfully developed a good number of different simple applications and workflows known as Sapphire. The Sapphire, which is a tool that has up to date information about the museum, provides information in the collections directly

to the museum visitors (Museum Reports, 2016). In an effort to digitally transform the organization, the numbers of staff at the Bristol Museum, galleries and archives, UK utilize a simple form to create records in the ‘events module’ and they capture upcoming events and exhibitions at the museum sites. These events are displayed live for Axiell’s Emie collection Management system on screens in the galleries which are brought to the notice of the audience.

## **The british museum**

The British museum is one of the global models of museums that have adopted a well comprehensive digital transformation in her day-to-day activities which has improved the operations and profit of the museum. The museum uses a virtual reality system to transport or take people through the Bronze Age. This was done through a 3D technology built by the museum to aid the process. In 2014, the Guardian reported that visitors in the British museum were invited to walk into a 4,000-year-old roundhouse where fire was lit, the floor swept and some enigmatic objects were laid waiting to be discovered. This system of virtual roundhouses introduced by the museum had a fire flickering and crackling levels of light shining through the open door which was created by Solus Heritage. The Chief Executive Officer of the company shared that they had invented billions in the gaming technology which is connected to smartphones to create a virtual reality. This innovation created 3D scans of the objects in the museum through the British museum pioneering micropasts project where thousands of people across the globe use online models to transcribe information and model museum objects (Museum Report, 2016).

## **Case study of the first digital museum in nigeria**

The concept of digital museum is new in Nigeria, and the trend is now making its way to the arts sector through various innovations. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic created a disruption in the museum industry by creating many changes and innovations in the way things are done. The first digital museum to have been launched in the country was built by a digital driven company known as Art Tech District, which sponsored and launched a museum project for the restoration and preservation of Nigerian culture and artifacts established in 2021 at Abuja. The digital museum was established in the form of an ‘Art Village’ which was named “Discovery Museum”, which synchronized arts history with the aid of technology which showcases Nigerian history to the public in a digital format. During the opening ceremony of the digital museum, the General

Manager, Ms. Faridah Dikko said the museum offers Nigerians a platform to learn their culture, explore new ideas and interact on digital creativities and most especially display their talents to the world. According to Dikko “Arts Tech District recognized the role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in today’s world and to create roles in capturing the attention of individuals, especially the young minds and decided to employ it in promoting the museum and culture of Nigeria by creating something different and captivating”. While speaking on the company’s concept on digital museum, Ms Dikko said,

*“What we did with the museum was to make a typical museum going experience and infuse it with elements of technology and digital media... As we all already know, ICT is the future of the world. So, we felt a museum was the right project because as a country, we felt there is a gap so we wanted to strengthen the Museum culture in the country... We also wanted to focus on our history, and really find a way to share our history, or talents and our visitors within the community. We also wanted to do so in a way that was different, engaging and exciting to the young people and the children as well. These are the different things that we considered”* (The Vanguard Newspaper, 2021).

The idea of a digital museum in Nigeria started during the COVID-19 lockdown and has come into reality after its launch in 2021 at Abuja. The Museum contains game arena, virtual reality, art and crafts studios where ‘Adire’ (a local method in making cloth in Nigeria) are made and taught to the public, children’s zones, galleries, archive and a museum for historical objects (The Vanguard Newspaper, 2021). The emergence of the Discovery Museum has showcased that if the stakeholders in the museum industry are determined to adopt digital models in museum practices, this will come into reality.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations that follow would significantly improve Nigeria's national museums' digital transformation. They outline the path forward for Nigeria's national museums' reform and realignment in order to include digital tools into its daily operations:

### **Increasing the national budget for museums**

There is an urgent need to increase the budget that goes to the national museums by the government if we collectively desire to have digital museums in the country. Digital transformation requires huge funds as it is the heart of any technological innovation and creativity in any given setting. Increasing the national budget that goes to the national

museum will go a long way to assist the management of national museums in Nigeria to transform museums digitally by adopting global standards.

### **Designing informative and up-to-date websites**

Additionally, for museums to be transformed digitally, the management of national museums must build a website to create a friendly public interface where useful information on the museum can be made available to the public who are the main audience of any museum. Digital museums across the globe have their own websites where they use to interact with the public. In Turkey for instance, a study was conducted on about 62 museums, 47 of them have their own corporate website which were used for ticketing, presentation of text and photographs of the museum, news bulletin, blogs and forums, options for sending email request, online product sales, interactive map of the museum and how to get to the museum. If public and private stakeholders are determined to transform national museums in Nigeria to digital ones, the museum management of each of the national museums must have its own website.

### **Establishing a robust social media presence**

There is also a critical need for national museums in Nigeria to have a social media presence. This is a prerequisite for any museum that aims to go digital. Going digital affords the museum with an opportunity to interface and interact with the public in a good way. A social media presence gives the museum the opportunity to strengthen the satisfaction of visitors and customers who pay a visit to the museum. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Google Arts project, Pinterest, Fliker, Vimea, are some of the social media platforms the National Museum can project her image with to the public space.

### **Training museum staff on how to integrate digital tools in their daily operations**

The museum must train its staff on how to handle digital tools and techniques which is a key prerequisite to transforming national museums digitally in Nigeria. Most especially, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have posed severe damages to many jobs which have now been taken over by artificial intelligence which has replaced technical skills of humans. What humans can do in the past can now be done better by machines. In order to stay relevant and keep their jobs, management of museums should train their staff on digital tools that can help transform museums digitally. In this day and



age where artificial intelligence and machine learning are pervasive, there is a need for museum leaders to provide organization-wide training to staff. Thus, allowing them to have a competitive advantage in terms of their ability to achieve more positive outcomes at work.

### **Building a digital catalog system for documentation of records**

There is a need for museums to improve on their manual method of documentation of records in museums. The management of national museums in Nigeria should adopt a digital method of documentation and archive which protects the cultural heritage found in the museum. This can be done by adopting a digital catalog system where objects in the museums are documented digitally. The museum has to migrate from documenting on white and black which has a lot of disadvantages to documenting digitally. A digital catalog system should be adopted which should be easily accessible and properly structured. Additionally, the museum website can be used to host details of documentation of objects that can be found in the museum.

### **Providing a people-centric, digital friendly experience**

In the modern world, a museum ought to offer customized digital experiences and services to the public. This can be done by adopting information communication technology tools in the visitors' tours while paying a visit to the museum. Digital tools such as projection screen, touch screen or interactive screen, 3D screen, virtual reality tools can be introduced. Mobile technologies such as audio guides, video guides, tour applications for smartphones, free Wi-Fi, audio guides for visually impaired can be adopted by national museums in Nigeria. If these services are put in place, they will help improve on the numbers of those who visit the museum while improving on user-friendly experience.

### **Introducing e-commerce stores to increase visitor satisfaction**

Museums can increase their revenue generation streams by creating virtual stores to provide online services to visitors. This will help in transforming the operations of museums digitally in Nigeria. The museum website can be used to provide virtual tours to the public at a fixed price using advanced 3D technology where objects can be exhibited virtually. A good number of digital museums offer virtual tours for audiences and generate

a lot of income from the process. Adopting this model will go a long way to address the revenue gaps in national museums in Nigeria which are in need of intervention.

## **Conclusion**

The advent of digitization in museums has caused a disruption that has resulted in a decline in the physical number of visitors. Nonetheless, as the number of individuals using the internet rises every day, more and more people will visit museums virtually. New trends like artificial intelligence and information and communication technology, among other digital tools, have changed the nature of work and resulted in a large loss of jobs. The effects of these digital transformations in museums as discussed in this paper include: The public's and audiences' perceptions of art objects have been greatly influenced by the digital revolution, which has made them appear more dynamic, interactive, and democratic. Museum profit utilization has benefited greatly from the digital shift. The production of art by experts and artists in museums has been impacted by the digital shift. Furthermore, new instruments for friendly and efficient service delivery communications with audiences through art objects have been made possible by digital transformation.

The paper has presented some examples of models of digital transformation in museums that Nigeria can learn from such as: the Tate Museum which created a mobile web tour within their content management system, which has an easy-to-use interface for uploading audio files in addition to photos which allows guests to peruse or verify locations where they can purchase artwork or other items; The British Museum which takes visitors on a virtual reality journey through the Bronze Age; The Bristol museum, galleries, and archives which makes active use of Sapphire, a data importation tool for creating a wide range of straightforward applications and workflows; When visiting the Met institution, visitors can utilize audio tours provided by the institution. Consequently, this paper argues that the idea of a digital museum is relatively new in Nigeria which offers a number of benefits to the sector. The advent of COVID-19 epidemic caused a lot of changes and advancements in the way things are done, which caused a disruption in the museum industry.

A national strategy for digitally modernizing museums must be adopted as a wake-up call to the government, management, employees, and stakeholders in the museum sector in Nigeria. By doing this, many jobs will be saved and the museum's relevance in the twenty-first century will be maintained while its unique cultural history is preserved. It

is recommended that for Nigeria to transform digitally, the following should be prioritized: Increasing the national budget that goes to the national museum, designing informative and up-to-date websites, establishing a robust social media presence, introducing e-commerce stores to increase visitor satisfaction, providing a people-centric, digital friendly experience, building a digital catalog system for documentation of records, training museum staff on how to integrate digital tools in their daily operations.

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## Changing aspects of Indian culture: A Sociological Perspective

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### Abstract

*Indian culture is a rich tapestry of traditions, beliefs, and practices that have evolved over centuries. However, like any other culture, Indian culture is not static. It undergoes constant change due to various factors such as globalization, urbanization, technological advancements, and socio-economic transformations. This study aims to analyze the changing aspects of Indian culture from a sociological perspective, with a focus on the impact of these changes on organizations and social systems. By delving into Indian society, religion, culture, and social change, this article seeks to contribute new insights to the existing knowledge on Indian culture. Indian culture is deeply rooted in its ancient history, diverse religious beliefs, and regional traditions. It encompasses a wide range of practices, including language, art, music, dance, cuisine, clothing, and social norms. The cultural diversity within India is immense, with each region having its own distinct customs and traditions. This diversity is a testament to the rich heritage of the country. The changing aspects of Indian culture have a significant impact on organizations and social systems. This study provides a sociological perspective on the evolving nature of Indian culture, highlighting the influence of globalization, urbanization, and technological advancements. By analyzing these changes, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of Indian society and contribute to the existing knowledge on Indian culture. It is crucial for individuals, organizations, and policymakers to adapt to these changes and embrace cultural diversity to foster a harmonious and inclusive society.*

**Keywords:** prespective ,indian culture ,Changing aspects ,analyze ,existing knowledge

## **Introduction**

Culture is nothing but our way of life. It includes language, food, religion, our social behavior, values, traditions, and beliefs. These are all passed from one generation to another. Here, we cannot forget about the role of social, political, economic, and cultural organizations. Culture refers to the patterns of thought and behaviour of people. It includes values, beliefs, rules of conduct, and patterns of social, political and economic organisation (Dr. Binod Bihari Satpathy). India's culture is one of the oldest and richest cultures in the world. Indian culture has a strong foundation in civilization and religion. India had the oldest and richest culture, but it has been changing ever since because of globalization, foreign culture, and its impact on our society. The people in our society are changing and adopting new ways of life. India is ruled by British emperors, and because of their cultural impact, some dynamics and dimensions have taken place in our society. New behavioral patterns, cultural aspects, rules, and norms are taking place in our society, and they are impacting our people in our day-to-day lives. Globalization, industrialization, privatization, and samskrutization were also part of the 21st century, and by these, Indian society was impacted in a deep sense. Because of globalization, the world has become "the global village."

## **Objectives**

It is true that defining the goals of the task when producing a research paper in an academic setting is challenging. It is predicted based on the constraints of the research papers. In a similar vein, the following goals have been developed for this study:

Examining the elements that influenced the transformation of Indian culture

Comparing shifts in culture from a sociological angle

Bringing to light the elements that shape Indian culture

Recognizing the shifting cultural disparities

## **Methodology**

According to the article's goals and introduction, the research writer conducted a thorough search for pertinent and crucial research papers before starting to create this piece. A thorough and comprehensive assessment of the applied elements was conducted. For this paper, the exploratory research approach was employed by the research writer. It is appropriate to describe and clarify Indian culture and associated concepts, as well as the elements that impact culture and facilitate cultural transformation.



## **The nature of Indian culture and history**

Culture is a way of life. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the language you speak in and the God you worship all are aspects of culture. In very simple terms, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. (Dr. Binod Bihari Satpathy). Indian culture is known for its diversity and prosperity. Language plays a very important role in the creation of any culture. In India, there are fifteen national languages recognized by the Indian Constitution, and these are all spoken in different dialects across the country. India had the richest heritage and culture, which built upon the oldest civilian values and traditions. It's one of the oldest, created 4,500 years ago in the civilization era. The religious texts of different ages that Indologists very often studied not only emanated the idea of a 'Hindu India'; they also proposed contrasting and conflicting visions of time, space and object. As a corollary, the need for supplementing those with field view was also felt by some of our pioneers (Biswajit Ghosh). According to many sources, it is described as "Sa Prathama Sanskrati Vishvavara," the first and supreme culture in the world.

### **Religion, values, and traditions:**

India has seen many religions in the past few years. India is known for its variety of religions, like Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Parashi, and Islamism. Though people practice different cultures and traditions according to their religion, they are all considered unique Hindus. Here, all religions have contributed their own culture, which has become mixed. There are different cultures in the religion, and different religions are also added to the culture. One of the oldest and most diverse civilizations in the world, Indian culture includes a wide variety of languages, customs, beliefs, concepts, taboos, codes, and directions, masterpieces of art, construction, rituals, and ceremonies (Abhirup Bhadra). Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. Hinduism is widely accepted and followed by many Indians. According to the research, 80% of people in India identify as Hindus. Culture is cumulative and dynamic in nature. Culture will change as time passes. Our culture is influenced by our civilization, religion, and languages. Culture is always part of society. Socio-cultural changes are measured in various dimensions such as politics, economics, corporates, and society (Dr. C Thanavathi, S Ramya).

### **Changing aspects of Indian culture**

We all know change is common for all and universal. Change is happening in our lives and in us. So, our Indian culture is influenced by foreign culture and has changed a lot over the centuries. Changes are happening in our culture and traditions. New

inventions, discoveries, and the spread of ideas contribute to cultural changes. Consider the effect of the internet. It's not only changed the culture of individual countries but the entire world (Dr. Vijay Kumar). Sometimes it's good and beneficial, but sometimes it affects our culture and tradition badly and results in negative aspects.

Some traditions have changed that are not good for society, i.e., Sati Pratha, child marriage, the Devadasi system, and untouchability. Policies and laws are also modified pertaining to it. It is a positive change. Due to technology, some changes are happening in our society. Technology and the internet have become a part of our lives. We are using Face book, Twitter, Instagram, Whats App, etc., so these all make people come to know each other's culture, lifestyle, and traditions well. People are thinking independently and have become independent.

Education: Education is one of the major weapons or means of empowerment. Today's girls are also getting new job opportunities and going to different parts of the world to get higher education and jobs.

Marriage and family: These are both important social institutions; they have contributed a lot to our society over the last few decades. Changes have happened in their functions and responsibilities. Joint families disappeared, and single families came into existence. Today's people are seeking their life partner based on their attitude and interests. They are becoming more independent.

Traveling and tourism: People are traveling across the world, learning, and incorporating their lifestyle and culture. Sometimes changes help to remove bad evils and traditions. This is good because we want to remove old traditions that have existed for a long time in our society. They are not useful to people or society. Changes in culture mean not only our culture but also our food, dress, traditions, and customs rules. Our social institutions like family, religion, marriage education, caste, and social structure get affected by cultural change.

Influence of western culture on Indian society: In India, people are fully free to accept and practice other cultures and religions. Because India is a secular country, the Western culture we accept is a gift from Britishers. They came for the purpose of business but built their emperor and ruled over 200 years. So, Indians were slightly and gradually influenced by their culture. The Indian social structure has changed due to globalization, industrialization, and privatization. But one of the most important things here that can be mentioned is westernization. Westernization mostly impacts our urban society, but rural areas are also impacted by westernization. The consequences of westernization

are much greater. Our social institutions like education, family, marriage, cases, and religion get affected by westernization because they have changed in their functions and responsibilities. Social, political, and economic organizations get impacted by westernization.

This article discusses three significant phenomena that have changed our society's culture.

Innovation

Exploration

Diffusion of Cultures

Innovation

### **Innovation**

In societies, cultural norms have changed as a result of new innovations. In every field, new technologies are applied in ways that both form and reflect new cultural ideals. In place of the outdated methods, they assist people in discovering fresh and efficient methods and formulating them in society.

### **Exploration**

Exploration is the finding of new information in a connected field. This could result in the development of new protocols, instruments, and work flows.

### **Cultural diffusion**

The diffusion of cultures allows communities to converge and get to know each other better. This merging of cultures offers advantages as well as disadvantages. It is a culture that interacts with another culture to influence it. Displacement diffusion is linked to cultures that transfer concepts, such as technology and business procedures, to a new cultural setting.

In addition to this, cultural shifts can also result from environmental changes, technological innovation, and interaction with different cultures.

### **Affecting Factors**

Industrialization, urbanization, Modernization, and globalization have contributed to significant changes in the culture of the world, more in non-western third world since the end of the colonial period, and the Second World War, contributing to some progressive, undesired changes. (Gogineni, Rama Rao, Kallivayalil, Roy Abraham et al.).

### **Globalization**

It has brought new ideas, technologies, and cultural practices from all over the world to

India, which has had a huge impact on Indian culture. Increased cultural exchange, the acceptance of foreign lifestyles, and modernizations of conventional norms and values are the results of this.

### **Modernization**

Traditional societies must adapt to modernization components in order to become modern. In this case, the process is turning an agrarian civilization into an industrial or commercial society. Here, cultural norms, religiosity, and other fundamental societal values are all on the decline. The daily routines and cultural practices of people in society have been significantly impacted by industrialization.

### **Industrialization**

Naturally, this resulted in a shift in consumer culture. Industrialization brought with it the emergence of numerous vocations. Many work opportunities were generated. Which helped people improve their business, technical, and social abilities?

### **Urbanization**

It speaks about the process by which rural settlements become urban communities. People's cultural norms inside society are also impacted and transformed during this process. Because of the impact on people's new cultural beliefs and behaviors, this may result in a different kind of community development.

Panikkar lists 29 strategies for bringing about cultural transformation in his work "Indic Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism" (K. Pathil (ed), Religious Pluralism, ISPCK, 1991, pp. 252-299). Here is a brief synopsis of them:

1. Growth
2. Development
3. Evolution
4. Involution
5. Renovation
6. Reconception
7. Reform
8. Innovation
9. Revivalism
10. Revolution
11. Mutation
12. Progress
13. Diffusion
14. Osmosis
15. Borrowing
16. Eclecticism
17. Syncretism
18. Modernization
19. Indigenization
20. Adaptation
21. Accommodation
22. Adoption
23. Translation
24. Conversion
25. Transformation
26. Foundation
27. Acculturation
28. Inculturation
29. Interculturation

### **Results and discussion**

Sociologists have noted that society is dynamic and always changing; it is not a body of water that remains unchanged. After much debate, it has been discovered that slow, incremental changes in society eventually result in social transformations. Being a devoted sociology student or academic is not required to comprehend the shifts in culture.

By taking a deeper look, even the average person can see the changes occurring in our society. Several major religions, including Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, originated in India. Indian culture has been greatly influenced by the rise of these religions and their ideologies, which have shaped its values, customs, and beliefs.

Indian civilization and society have always preserved their distinctiveness; however, foreign culture and habits have a big influence on it. At first, a multitude of cultures and religions called it home. Diversity, cultural richness, and religiosity are seen in all aspects of contemporary society. This can be explained by a number of factors, including industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and the influence of foreign cultures and habits. Foreign culture has affected Indian philosophy, literature, art, and architecture since its inception. Exchanges between cultures can occasionally play a role. India is a melting pot of castes, religions, languages, and cultural traditions. In this case, a variety of political, social, and economic forces have greatly influenced and helped to create a distinctive culture.

Significant cultural shifts have become new aspects of contemporary Indian society. Secularism and modernization rank highest among them. Traditional values have changed in Indian society nowadays in many spheres of human behavior, including food, attire, education; festival celebrations, religiosity, cultural interchange, idea sharing, communication, and so forth. Significant impact on language, dance, music, film, philosophies, religions, cuisines, etiquette, traditions, and civil communication.

## **Conclusion**

Indian culture has the ability to bring people together, even if it has been impacted by modernity, industrialization, globalization, and other factors for a long time. Indian culture is frequently pursued as a synthesis of several cultures. India's civilization has been heavily impacted by foreign cultures and practices throughout its history. Foreign culture initially had an influence on Indian philosophy, literature, art, and architecture; norms, symbols, values, beliefs, language, formal and informal mores, laws, taboos, folkways, and customs are examples of cultural elements. Culture is made up of values and beliefs, languages, symbols, rituals, and norms. All other customs are shaped by the factors.

Every element of our everyday lives has been profoundly impacted by cultural change, which is also bringing about changes in daily life. Many visitors from the oldest civilizations and cultures have been drawn to India by its society and have been going there on a regular basis. Indians are united in this era, even if globalization, modernity, industry, and other factors have long influenced Indian culture.

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## Elusive Quest for Social Justice in Mahananda Dhakal's *Burhan*

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### Abstract

*Everyone in the world deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Every individual's rights and opportunities should be recognized and protected within the society where they belong. This is the state of "social justice". Social justice is inevitable as it promotes fairness and equity across different aspects of society. However, underprivileged people are denied social justice in an unjust society, resulting in missed opportunities across various sectors of life. As a result, a person may experience a cascade of difficulties in other different areas too. Burhan's hero Maila Tharu, and other characters also go through similar phases of unfavorable conditions, struggles and sufferings. This proves to be the destiny of underprivileged people in an unjust society, where the quest for social justice is elusive.*

*This paper explores and analyzes persistent struggles for social justice in Mahananda Dhakal's *Burhan*. It attempts to explore different ways of exploitation and victimization of such innocent and helpless characters. This paper also contends that such characters are denied rights and opportunities within the society, and kicked out from their own land and properties. Through the critical analysis of the character's experiences, the paper examines the elusive nature of social justice in *Burhan*. The paper finally argues that *Burhan* serves as a powerful commentary on the ongoing struggle equity and the critical need for transformative change.*

**Keywords:** Social justice, equity, exploitation, victimization, quest



## Introduction

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are the inalienable rights of all human beings. An individual should have equal rights and opportunities in the society. Every individual's rights and opportunities should be recognized and protected within the society where they belong to. This is what we call "social justice", which is must for every member of a society. In fact, "Social justice is a normative concept centered on the notion of fairness and the principles of equality, equity, rights and participation" (Khechen, 2013, p. iv). However, right from the very beginning of the human civilization, most of the means and resources and opportunities are exploited and controlled by specific groups of the society. Powerful people determine the capacities, actions, beliefs, or conduct of other people in general. It means the other groups of people remain underprivileged, being deprived from access to different sorts of means and resources and opportunities, within the same society. To bring about equity and equality, and social justice in the society, the underprivileged people of the society have to go through several severe phases. They are obliged to struggle and suffer harshly to achieve the same status in the society, despite the fact that they are also the equal members of the same society. And, obviously, in most of the cases their tireless efforts lead them to nowhere else, but in vein. Mahananda Dhakal's *Burhan* depicts similar quest for social justice by the major characters, especially Maila Tharu and his son Shomlal, of the novel.

In fact, *Burhan* is the story of dream, struggle and self-respect. The first section of the novel is *Dream*, which depicts the dream of different characters of the novel. The characters like Maila Tharu, Shomlal and Parvati in the novel belonging to lower class and status have their own dream for better life. They all have their own circumstances. Maila Tharu and Somlal's origin is Dang, whereas Parvati's origin is Syanja. "In the story, mother Parvati and Maila Tharu's pain, sorrow, discomfort, lack, and poverty are the same. Destiny made mother Parvati weak, deprived, poor. The feudal system and society's elites who neglected Maila Tharu created and continued to create penury" (Nepali, 2022, para. 5). However, *Burhan* is dreamland for all of them, where they expect for better life, free from their problems and difficulties. They have dream to have their own land, own house, and hope to be capable of fulfilling at least their basic needs. "To solve their condition of penury for once and for all, they chose to migrate, but nothing dramatic happened in their lives" (Chaudhary, 2023, para. 7). Despite their unwillingness to abandon their beloved land and origin place, they are bound to do so. They have to leave it for their better life, for the bright future of their children and upcoming generations, and at least to get rid of several severe problems they have been suffering from.

The second section of the novel is *Struggle*, which depicts the struggle of the

prominent characters in the novel. Parvati struggles to support her family in terms of quality life. She strives to give better education to her children. On the other hand, Maila Tharu struggles even to join hands and mouth. He hasn't enough land to cultivate. Because of extreme poverty, he is unable to provide proper education to his children. As a result, he has to send his son as a *Kamaiya* (bonded laborer) in the house of a landlord. Their problems remain unsolved. It's not that they don't try. In fact, they fail to fulfill their dream because of the discriminatory socio-cultural, political and economic factors. They become the victim of systemic discrimination and oppression.

The third part of the novel is *Self-respect*, which depicts the characters' final and decisive action for their existence in real sense, i.e. self-respect. It's the state of do or die. After great suffering, long struggle, and living a life full of pain and disgust, the characters have come up to this stage. "Finally, in the *Self-respect* section, characters like Shomlal are engaged in a People's War for their self-respect, but there is also pessimistic feeling since the achievements are not as expected and the condition (fate) has not changed yet" (Aryal, 2023, para. 14). Even the last hope and efforts of the characters, like that of Shomlal, go in vein.

In fact, *Burhan* is a story of dream, struggle and self-respect, but it doesn't seem to be equal and achievable for all. Specially, Maila Tharu and Shomlal, who are the representative characters from Tharu community, have always been cheated by their fate and they have become the victim of systemic violence. Though Maila Tharu and Shomlal strive for social justice from the very beginning, all their efforts go in vein. This proves to be the destiny of underprivileged people in an unjust society, where achieving social justice remains elusive.

In the novel *Burhan*, the protagonist and other subsidiary characters face several severe problems i.e. poverty, discrimination, violence, injustice and many others. They had to suffer from such problems basically because of the then discriminatory social, cultural, political and legal practices in the western Terai of Nepal. The novel *Burhan* portrays its characters' quest for social justice in the then society, which was elusive in nature. The paper tries to answer the research questions: What is the central quest of the main protagonist in Mahananda Dhakal's *Burhan*? What are the hurdles in achieving his quest for social justice? How does the main protagonist's quest for social justice become elusive?

The paper is divided into five parts. Following this introduction, relevant literature is reviewed, which emphasizes some previous studies on the issue. Following that, research method is provided to answer the research questions. Afterwards, the textual

analysis is presented which analyses the text using the social justice theory. The last section concludes the possible conclusions based on the research.

## Literature Review

Different critics and writers have analyzed and reviewed the text from multiple perspectives. Amrik Prasad Chaudhary in his article “‘*Burhan*’: A Mirror of Tharu Reality” presents the novel as a reflection of Tharu’s way of life. He writes, “...the motif of the novel is to show the lifestyle of the Tharus, their role in the society, their sorrow, pain and struggle, their beliefs and their unchanging convictions” (Chaudhary, 2023, para. 2). He further states, “*Burhan*, in my view is a mirror of the Tharu tribe. *Burhan*, the setting of the novel, is the center of hope for shelter, cloth and food” (Chaudhary, 2023, para. 12). Further, he also puts on their faith and tireless efforts to overcome their long lasting problems. “It is a matter of sadness to say that even after continuous efforts and struggle, the expected result is not obtained. A question therefore makes an obvious appearance: What is the achievement for the Tharus after all these years of struggle and demonstration? Practically nothing” (Chaudhary, 2023, para. 10). This is how, the Tharus of *Burhan*, as portrayed in the novel, are conditioned to be within the same struggling and pathetic condition.

Raj Kumar Tharu and Bhagbat Poudel (2023), in their research paper “Does Maila speak? A journey of a common man in Mahananda Dhaka’s *Burhan*” examines the reasoning behind the voice (lessness) of Maila Tharu and his son Somlal Tharu, who are the prominent characters in the novel. Further, they highlight the Tharus’ social reality in the light of how the subaltern is misrepresented and altered during transitions. They write:

The ethnic uprising that took place during the Maoist insurgency period and some of the movements that followed, most notably the Tharu Movement in western Nepal, have not adequately addressed the genuine suffering of subaltern Tharus. Thus, marginalized people, such as the Tharus, remain behind mainstream political, administrative, and social lives in the practical realm... (p. 16).

The extraction clarifies the reason behind the backwardness of the underprivileged communities like Tharus of western Nepal. Though many revolutionary movements took place, they could not address and resolve the problems of the communities. Time changed, context changed, but their socio-economic conditions remained same. Maila Tharu and Shomlal, the representative characters of the novel, have the similar case. Though they actively participated in such movements, like *Kandra Andolan*, *Kamaiya Mukti Andolan*, *Jan-Andolan*, etc., they are not benefitted in anyway.

Another writer Begam Thapa analyses the character of Maila Tharu, protagonist

of the novel. He describes Maila Tharu as “a representative of Tharu communities living in *Burhan*, the place from where this novel is born” (Thapa, 2023, para. 4). Further, he describes Maila Tharu as “innocent, simpleminded, straight-forward, illiterate, economically poor yet culturally rich, honest, patient and laborious” (Thapa, 2023, para. 5). However, he is easily manipulated by the leaders of different political parties. Thapa writes:

Different political leaders from different parties show him greed to give land but it is only consolation. Maila Tharu participates in different Tharu’s movements but his lifestyle remains same, rather becomes more miserable. They start the Tharu movement risking their lives. They are injured during the movement and are threatened by the government to leave their homes. He is used by different political leaders in different course of time in his struggling life. (para. 9)

This shows that Maila Tharu has just been used as a scapegoat. Despite his active participation in different movements, and his tireless efforts to change his and his family’s economic and social condition, he is unable to do so. His illiteracy, simplicity, innocence, and the like are some of the factors which keep him lagging behind the progress. Even after generations and generations, his and his family’s overall conditions remain same.

Gita Aryal (2023), in her article “*Mero Najarmaa Burhan*”, elucidates the novel on the basis of three major sections: dream, struggle and self-respect. She asserts the condition of Tharus as *status quo*. “The novel expresses the fact that even when the Tharu caste is in crisis, their dreams are the same” (Aryal, 2023, para. 25). This is the bitter reality of Tharus is *Burhan*. Dhiren Anupam (2022), in his article “*Burhan: Sapana ra Sangharsh maa Aljhiyeko Jijiwisha*” also describes *Burhan* as “the dream world of the poor” (Anupam, 2022, para. 7). For him, “*Buhran* is the totality of sad stories that remain as they are despite lifelong struggles” (Anupam, 2022, para. 11). Though *Burhan* is a dream land, everyone’s dream is not fulfilled. Because of socio-economic, political and cultural structure, some communities like the Tharus could not make any progress. Thus, they are obliged to live in the same pathetic condition.

Despite extensive research on the topic, it often overlooks the intersectional experiences of marginalized communities like Tharus within the socio-economic, cultural and political structure of the society. While there is ample literature on social justice issues, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies regarding elusive quest for social justice. Thus, the research would be helpful in exploring and analyzing intersecting experiences of the marginalized communities, especially Tharus, in Nepal.

## Methodology

Since this is a qualitative research, its findings and analysis are based on the application of relevant theories on the primary text. The research has used library research technique for the collection of related data and materials. The novel *Burhan* by Mahananda Dhakal has been taken as the primary data in the research and the secondary data have been derived from theoretical books, journals, theses, and other readings. Social Justice Theory has been applied as a theoretical framework to analyze the primary text. John Rawls, and other notable theorists' theories and ideas on Social Justice have been applied as theoretical bases for the research.

## Central Quest and Hurdles in the Quest for Social Justice

The entire heartbreaking journey of Maila Tharu, from Chitrakuti of Dang to Rajapur of Bardiya (Burhan), for economic, social and psychological stability is no less than a nightmare. In the novel, Maila Tharu has to make this journey since all his ancestral land has been seized by a landlord deceptively. Before starting this journey, Maila Tharu had heard about Burhan from his grandfather. He had understood Burhan as a "Paradise". "Burhan was a story. A story of dream" (Dhakal, 2022, p. 42). In fact, Burhan is "the new land, which precisely indicates the region around Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts where the Tharus, migrating from their traditional estates in and around Dang, live" (Chaudhary, 2023, para. 2). Since Maila Tharu makes this journey for equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities, the central quest of the main protagonist in the novel is the pursuit of social justice.

The overall narrative of the novel revolves around the protagonist's journey and struggle for his and his family's better life and the community's improved status in the society. As Maila Tharu belongs to a poverty-stricken family, marginalized and underprivileged community, his journey is not as easy as the journey of a common man. His journey and pursuit of social justice is full of struggle, hurdles, and challenges. Maila Tharu tells the reason behind migrating from Dang to Rajapur of Bardiya (Burhan) to Ningma, the narrator of the novel. Landlessness, extreme poverty, *Kamaiya Pratha* (bonded labor system), extreme exploitation and abuse of landlords, and the like were some of the major factors that forced the underprivileged Tharus of Dang to leave their place of origin and homeland in search of a suitable place so that they could lead their life in a normal way. Even the journey was so difficult. Maila Tharu tells, "It was difficult. It took six days for others, but it took seven days for us" (Dhakal, 2022, p. 49). Further he states the reason behind taking longer time to reach Burhan. "Burhan didn't suit my younger brother. He died in the half way" (Dhakal, 2022, p. 49). This is how Maila Tharu and his family had to suffer even in the journey to Burhan.

John Rawls (1971), in his book *A Theory of Justice*, asserts “justice as fairness” and defines the “primary subject of justice [to be] the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation” (Rawls 1971). His idea of social justice emphasizes fairness in the society in terms of rights and duties. However, the scenario in Dhakal’s *Burhan* is just opposite. Maila Tharu, his family and his community in general are the victim of unfairness.

Maila Tharu had heard a lot about Burhan from his grandfather. “Grandfather used to tell stories about water, land and forest...” (Dhakal, 2022, p. 41). But he never knew why his grandfather didn’t migrate to Burhan himself. In the beginning, Maila’s grandfather had land. He had made cultivable land “by chopping down the forest.” However, he hadn’t the land ownership certificate (*Lalpurja*) of the land. In fact, the entire land was deceptively seized by a landlord. As a result, the family of Maila Tharu became landless in their own place of origin.

In the novel, Maila Tharu and his family became the prey of an unjust social structure. Unable to bear the burden and suffering, Maila’s parents, along with Maila and his younger brother, had to leave Chitrakuti, Dang. They left their beloved place of origin when Maila was about seven or eight, just to be away from all the existing problems and social injustice, and at least to have better life than they had been living in Dang. However, they continue to suffer because of unfair societal structure.

Thus, despite their relentless struggle, the deep-rooted social injustice faced by the marginalized Tharu community remains unresolved in an inequitable society.

### **Maila Tharu and Somlal’s Elusive Quest for Social Justice**

A quest is a difficult journey towards a specific mission or a goal. This involves a quester, a place to go, a reason, challenges along the way, and the character learning about themselves. These elements resemble with the elements present in the Dhakal’s *Burhan*. Maila Tharu and his family are questers; they have a place to go, i.e. Burhan; they also have a reason, in fact many reasons, to go; they face several challenges along the way; and the characters learn about themselves too. The same thing applies to Parvati, another prominent character of the novel, as well.

It was expected that Maila Tharu’s family’s unfavorable condition would change after being migrated to the new land, i.e. Burhan. But everything does not go as expected. Maila participates in many movements actively. But various factors resist him from making progress and achieving his goals. “...the change in the family of Parvati and



Mahila that the level of political consciousness is increasing due to the *Kandra Movement*, *Sukumbasi Movement*, *Kamaiya* and *Kamlahari Mukti Movement* for their rights, but the Tharu community is comparatively backward due to lack of skills and education” (Sapkota, 2023, para. 6). Since the movements ended in an agreement, the expected achievements were not achieved. Though some Tharus were able to get a place to live, they were forced to return to work due to the lack of food and other basic needs. The compelling circumstances of Shomlal to become *kamaiya* (boned laborer) present the same scenario.

Though Maila Tharu and Parvati are from almost the same economic background, their present social and economic conditions are far different from each other's. As the time changes, the social and economic circumstance of Parvati also changes, though she also suffers a lot in her quest for change. At present, she has sufficient land. Her children are educated, and employed now. As a result her overall condition has improved. However, the condition of Maila is still helpless. Maila remains struggling throughout his life, but in vein. Maila Tharu's dream remains unfulfilled. It continues up to the next generation, i.e. even his son Shomlal suffers from similar problems. Their socio-economic circumstances do not change as the time changes.

In a just society, every individual is expected to have social justice. “Fair access to goods and services is a fundamental principle of social justice” (Khechen, 2013, p. 5). Regardless of one's class, gender, sex, origin, or any other factor, every individual has equal right to the means and resources of the society. Contrary to this, Maila and Shomlal's conditions are different. They are the victim of systemic oppression. In fact, the discrimination and mistreatment against them has been perpetuated by the society and the ruling system. In this respect, Tara Lal Shrestha (2012) argues:

The internal colonization mission has dominated and subordinated the women, Dalits, Janajaties, Madhesis and disenfranchised them in such a way that the subalterns are hardly able to overcome the layers of hegemony. The representation of the Nepali indigenous community especially Tharus, who are boycotted from mainstream politics. (p. 17)

This means that the disadvantaged groups like Tharus of Nepal have been the victim of internal colonization, and as a result they are unable to rise above their existing condition. Even the political system doesn't support and address their issue. With the change in time, several political reformations and changes have taken place. But unfortunately, their overall conditions remain the same.

Unable to bring any significant change, despite his tireless effort, Maila gives up his hope for social justice in the later phase of his life. Though he is able to have ownership



in a small piece of land, as an achievement of *Kandra Movement* in which he actively participated, this land is not enough to sustain himself and his family. So, he is bound to send Shomlal as *kamaiya* in a landlord's house where he is ill-treated and exploited. Even he loses his beloved wife there.

Though Shomlal was very simple and innocent in the initial phase, later he becomes revolutionary and aggressive in nature. For the self-respect and recognition in the society, Shomlal gets engaged in a *Jana-Andolan* (People's War). During this phase, he remains away from his wife Ramita, his son and other members of his family. He goes underground for long time. In the war, he got injury in his leg as a bullet was shot in it. He had ultimate hope from this war. But unfortunately, after the Peace Agreement, "Shomlal was disqualified. Both his body and fortune did not favor him. Shomlal's dreams did not get justice" (Dhakal, 2022, p. 301). This way, after Maila Tharu, Shomlal also remained and continued to be the victim of existing discriminatory socio-cultural, economic and political structure of the country. This shattered all his dream, hope and expectations.

Parvati's family becomes an ideal family with the help of Maila Tharu. Parvati's son Sagar becomes the President of *Sukumbasi Samasya Samadhan Aayog* (Squatter Problem Resolution Commission). Parvati's another son is in the good position of Nepal Police. However, the condition of Maila and his family is still worst. "He stood at the forefront of the movement for change. But Maila's family could not have the privilege to experience the change" (Dhakal, 2022, p. 321). They could never fulfill the dream of Burhan as seen by their ancestors. They remained suffering the scarcity of food, shelter and clothes continued for generations.

Betrayed by his fate, Shomlal expresses his frustration for not being able to achieve anything even after his great struggles and sufferings. Shomlal's frustration is clear when he refuses to accept the letter of appointment handed to him by Sagar. Shomlal bursts in a creeping voice, "The letter of appointment does not fulfill the dream of Burhan. This cannot be the outcome of my lifelong struggle for liberation. I do not need this mere paper. Is it enough to justify our identity? Is the ethnic existence limited only on it?" (Dhakal, 2022, p. 324). This pessimistic mood of Shomlal expresses the pain and suffering they have experienced. Most ironically, it is not certain how long this situation will continue.

Thus, the struggles of Maila Tharu and Shomlal in *Burhan* underscore persistent shortcomings of systemic reforms in achieving social justice, leaving marginalized communities trapped in a cycle of unfulfilled dreams and pervasive injustice.

## Conclusion

*Burhan*, by Mahananda Dhakal, depicts the journey of the main characters, and their overall conditions from past to present. This paper views the novel through the lens of social justice. The novel delves on the impact of unfair social structure on the progress and change of the underprivileged community, particularly through the characters of Maila Tharu and Shomlal. Both the characters suffer severely in the quest for social justice. The paper also has tried to answer the research questions on the central quest of the protagonist, hurdles he faces, and the reasons behind his quest for social justice become elusive. While the paper provides an in-depth exploration of these key elements, the paper primarily focuses on Maila Tharu and Shomlal's experience in *Burhan*, which may overlook other relevant perspectives and broader socio-political contexts, thereby affecting the generalizability and comprehensiveness of the analysis. The analysis may not fully capture the complexity of social justice issues portrayed in *Burhan*, as it focuses narrowly on Maila Tharu and Shomlal. As a result, the findings might not be as widely applicable or relevant to other contexts or characters beyond Maila Tharu and Shomlal. Thus, incorporating additional characters and perspectives from *Burhan* and exploring the broader socio-political context could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social justice issues depicted in the novel in future research.

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## Interest and Career Planning in Health Economics among the Public Health Students of Purbanchal University, Nepal.

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### Abstract

*Health Economics applies economic principles to the health sector and is a popular area in Public Health. Interest among students in Health Economics is growing. Currently, there are 10 (Universities and health academics) offering Public Health programs (Master or Bachelor of Both). Among them, Purbanchal University (PU) is the second university in Nepal to offer a Bachelor of Public Health (BPH) program since 2001, followed by Tribhuwan University in 1986. Health economics is one of the subjects taught in public health programs. A cross-sectional descriptive study aimed to explore the interest and career planning of Health Economics among public health students at PU School of Health Sciences (PUSHS), a constituent college of PU. A purposive sampling method was adopted, and the study site was selected for the researcher's feasibility. For the quantitative study, a total of 64 students in the final year of BPH and Master of Public health (MPH) were enrolled in the study. Similarly, for a qualitative study, five students who already passed out MPH and completed their health economics course were enrolled. More than two-thirds of students didn't study economics in their school-level curriculum and had inadequate backgrounds foundations in economics, but most of the students showed their interest and career planning in health economics. The majority of the students highlighted the usefulness of health economics for shaping the healthcare system of the country. The study has mixed levels of the status of interest and career planning in Health Economics among public health students of PU. The study suggests further research to be carried out to explore the role and necessity of Health economics in*

*public health programs in a proper and organized way through universities and academic institutions.*

**Keywords:** Health Economics, Economics, Career Planning

## **Introduction**

Purbanchal University (PU) was the second university of Nepal to offer Bachelor of Public Health (BPH) program since 2001 followed by Tribhuwan University in 1986 (Subedi et al., 2016). Currently, there are 5 universities (Tribhuwan University, Purbanchal University, Pokhara University, Kathmandu University, and Rajarshree Janak University) and 5 autonomous health academies (BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Madhesh Institute of Health Sciences, Madan Bhandari Academy of health sciences, Karnali Academy of Health Sciences and Patan Academy of Health Sciences) conducting Public health academic programs (BPH or MPH or Both) in different parts of Nepal.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Health is multifactorial and it is affected by many determinants. Health and Economics are the two most important and interrelated fields. Health economists are enriched with the skills and knowledge of how healthcare markets are organized and how investing in people's health can benefit society. It emphasizes identifying the best ways to utilize the resources to take care of the sick and helps to promote the overall health of the people. Tentatively defined, health economics is an area of study whose subject matter is the optimum use of resources for the care of the sick and the promotion of health. Its task is to appraise the efficiency of the organization of health services and to suggest ways of improving this organization. Promotion of health patently involves more than services of the health professions such as food, housing, recreation, and clothing, but, although they contribute importantly to health and wellness, they must be excluded from the scope of health economic studies. While the scope of health economics may be delimited in this way, account must be taken of the competing uses of scarce resources, the impact of economic levels and economic growth on the status of health, and the need for health services (Mushkin, 1958).

Students switch careers for various reasons, like seeking more meaningful work, pursuing long-held dreams, or adapting to job loss. This article gives tips on evaluating current career satisfaction, understanding motivations for change, and considering financial implications. It also discusses self-assessment for career suitability, covering values, skills, and interests, with additional sources for guidance (Mullins, 2009). And Now, Health

economics is now one of the field in which public health students can develop their career.

Health economics as a behavioral science and as input into health policy and health services research. Research related to economics and health is interdependent and can result in an impact on population health(Fuchs, 2000).

Health Care resources are limited and Economics is about getting better value from the deployment of scarce resources. Since the mid-1960s economists in many countries have been seeking their attention to health services and have considered the economic aspects of different options in the financing, planning, and management of health care. Given the current interest, the time seems to be right to assess the contribution of the analysis carried out so far and to introduce doctors to some of these ideas (Mooney & Drummond, 1982).

The COVID-19 global pandemic gives great lessons to the global community and all available vaccination options for COVID-19 are very effective. Some may even be more effective than others and may also have different health and economic profiles. The methodology to measure the benefits of vaccination programs especially when they have herd immunity as a goal is currently being debated. Health economists, around the world, greatly contributed to developing the idea about resource generation in COVID-19 Vaccine production(Schulenburg, 2021).

In Health economics, there are many ideas, which provide the proper ideas of decision-making in health care. (Kernick, 2003) And how as primary decision-makers within the system, healthcare professionals with the help of health economics can make decisions in the best interest of their patients while making efficient use of limited resources. It is our responsibility as healthcare professionals to combine medical expense with economic proficiency to help actualize the overall vision of our health systems of delivering equitable, high-quality, safe, efficient, accessible, and cost-effective services(Karki, 2018).

In this context, health economics is the area of public health to be understood and for the time being the nature, contents and the student's interest should be studied to enhance the competencies of curriculum towards health economics.

## **Methods**

Following Institutional Review Committee (IRC) approval, the cross-sectional

study was carried out in the Final semester students of Bachelor of Public Health and Master of Public Health in Purbanchal University School of Health Sciences (PUSHS) which was established in 2012 AD offering courses in Bachelor in Public Health (BPH) and Master of Public Health (MPH) courses Public Health along with Nursing, Pharmacy, and Laboratory Science discipline. It is located at Sundarharaicha Municipality, Morang District and Koshi Province of Nepal.

The purposive sampling method was adopted and the study site was selected for the researcher's feasibility. The quantitative study was conducted among the 64 students and qualitative information was taken from the five students who already completed their Health Economics courses in Both Bachelor of Public Health and Master of Public Health Programs.

For the quantitative study, self-administered questionnaires were constructed. The study tool was prepared based on available and relevant literature. Answerability and Difficulty in understanding the given question were noted and the tool was modified according to the feedback obtained from the pre-testing. any question was noted during. The validity of the questionnaires was checked by peer review and through subject experts. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents before data collection. The collected data was analyzed and descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage were calculated. Qualitative information was gathered and discussed with available literature.

## **Results and Discussions**

During the study, the curriculum of Both Bachelor of Public Health and Master of Public Health was reviewed. Health Economics was found to be included in the curriculum of BPH and MPH of PU. Only final year students of Bachelor of Public Health (BPH) & Master of Public Health (MPH) with Health Service Management specialization were considered for the study because the health economics course was kept in the curriculum of this course respectively in the sixth and third semesters. Table .1 Shows that the BPH Curriculum of PU was launched in 2001 and subsequently revised in 2012 and 2019. Currently, the Health economics subject is kept as a separate subject in BPH and MPH curriculum of PU. In BPH Program, initially, the contents of health economics were included in a combined subject named public health administration and health Economics. In 2012, BPH curriculum was revised and the separate subject named as 'Health Economics and Financing' was kept in the semester for a total of 4 credits. The



latest, revision of BPH curriculum was done in 2019, which renamed the curriculum as 'Public Health Economics and Financing'. In, MPH Program, the curriculum was launched in 2016, which also kept health economics as a separate subject which was named 'Public Health Economics and financing'. Currently, in PU, both BPH and MPH health economics were 80% final and 20% internal assessment with 100 full marks.

**Table 1: Status of Health Economics in curriculum of BPH and MPH at PU**

Level	Curriculum Status	Nomenclature of subject	Subject weightage
BPH	2001 (Initiated)	Public health administration and health Economics	Health Economics includes a combined subject of 40 hours (Theory)
	2012 (First Revision)	Health Economics and Financing	4 credit hours (Theor= 3 credit hours & Practical = 1 credit hours)
	2019 (Second Revision)	Public Health Economics and Financing	3 credit hours
MPH	2016 9 (Initiated)	Public health economics and Financing	3 credit hours
	2014 (First Revision in process)	Public health economics and Financing	3 credit hours

**Table 2: Distribution of Participants in the study**

Level of Study	Number of students
Bachelor of Public Health	52
Master of Public Health	12
Total	64

Table 2, showed that altogether 64 students participated in the study. Among them, 52 students were from BPH Program and 12 students from MPH programs who already completed their health economics subject during the course. students participated in the study. The BPH students who already completed the sixth semester, in which the health economics course was included, and currently studied in the final year (7th and 8th

semesters) were enrolled in the study similarly 12 students of MPH who already completed their health economics subject were also enrolled in the study.

Table 3: Interest and career Planning in Health Economics among Public Health students				
SN	Variables		Number	Percentage
1.	Studied Economics in School level Curriculum	Yes	20	32.25
		No	44	68.75
2.	Perception About Health Economics Subject	Interesting	40	62.50
		Not Interesting	24	37.50
3.	Usefulness of Health Economics	Useful in Health System	59	92.19
		Not Useful in Health System	5	7.81
4.	Develop further Caren in Health Planning	Yes	35	54.69
		No	20	31.25
		Not Known Yet	5	7.81
		No Want to say anything	4	6.25
5.	Opinion about health Economics	Difficult to understand and study	38	59.38
		Easy to understand and study	15	23.44
		Neutral	11	17.19
6.	Confident of Health Economics study	Not confident	19	29.69
		Confident	25	39.06
		Very Confident	20	31.25
7.	Most Interesting Topics in Health Economics	Cost	10	15.63
		Demand and Supply	15	23.44
		Economic Evaluation	8	12.50
		Health Financing	17	26.56
		Budgeting	10	15.63
		All topics	4	6.25
8	Most Bothering Topics in Health Economics	Cost	9	14.06
		Demand and Supply	15	23.44
		Economic Evaluation	10	15.63
		Health Financing	16	25.00
		Budgeting	12	18.75
		All topics	2	3.13

Table 3, shows the status of different variables of interest and career planning

of Health economics in the enrolled students. The questionnaires were based on single-response self-administered questions. More than two-thirds of the students didn't study economics during their school education. Regarding Perception About Health Economics Subject, majority of the participants said that health economics was interesting to study. Most of the respondents (92.19%), responded that health economics was a useful course and was applicable for public health students. The majority of the students wished to develop their career in health economics and nearly one-third of students didn't want to develop their career in health economics and the remaining students didn't decide yet or cannot say anything. Students were interested and desired to develop their career in health economics but in contrast, the majority of the students said that health economics was a difficult subject to understand and study this might be due to the possibility of future opportunities of the courses. Similarly, the confidentiality of students towards studying health economics was also asked, a higher number of students said that they were confident about studying health economics. Students were also asked about interesting topics within health economics, and the responses were found mixed answers.

These data provide the basic information about perceptions, opinions, and preferences regarding the study of health economics among the study group. It showed both positive and negative sentiments, as well as areas of interest and concern within the field. The majority of respondents didn't study economics in their school-level curriculum. A study conducted by Subedi et al, Educational Satisfaction of Public Health Undergraduates: A cross-sectional study in Nepal, although, didn't separately discuss Health Economics but the study focused on the need for intervention in curriculum structure & contains, teaching methodology, teaching-learning materials, admission and examination procedure (Subedi et al., 2016). So, in the case of health economics also, the further studies should be explored to find out the real situation.

Regarding the perception of health economics, a majority of the students the usefulness of health economics and their interest in the subject matter, and the study findings are similar to Wendel et.al which said that the concerns and interest are increasing in health economics(Wendel et al., 2017)2nd Edition provides an evidence-based framework to help practitioners comprehend the changes already underway in our nation's healthcare system. It presents important economic facts and explains the economic concepts needed to understand the implications of these facts. It also summarizes the results of recent empirical studies on access, cost, and quality problems in today's

healthcare system. The material is presented in two sections. Section 1 focuses on the healthcare access, cost and quality issues that create pressures for change in health policy. The first edition was completed just as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). However, a notable minority find it uninteresting, suggesting potential challenges in engaging certain individuals with the topic. Although students were found, the interest of students in studying health economics might be affected by various factors which was not a part of this study, and the majority acknowledge its importance, highlighting its relevance in shaping healthcare policies and practices and thus which was similar types of suggestions for the BPH students which stated that to be carried out to explore the perception of health professional on viewing climate change in terms of health risks and involving health professionals in solving the climate change issues to prevent (Mahato et al., 2014). But the suggestion might be useful for health economics too because there is no sufficient literature about health economics and public health academic programs in the Nepalese context.

Regarding career planning, a majority of the students expressed their desire to develop further careers in health economics. However, some respondents are unsure or unwilling to disclose their intentions regarding these thoughts and opinions. Overall, the data highlighted the complexity and importance of health economics in public health decision-making making highlighted both the opportunities and challenges associated with studying and applying economic principles in the context of healthcare systems, reflecting the diverse perspectives within the surveyed population. There is no similar literature available in Google Scholar, however, a study conducted by the affiliates of Auckland University of Technology showed that the number of students was rising the economics in advanced level studies (Webber & Mearman, 2012).

For qualitative research, five students, who already passed out the health economics course, in MPH programs were asked about their views regarding interest and career planning in Health economics. The verbatims are given below:

*"Health Economics is a practically applicable course, we can apply principles and theories in the planning information about interest and career planning, organizing and implementing the public health services so it is necessary to study".*

*"Health Economics is an important and useful course for a public health professional, its in-depth knowledge and real-world scenario should be known for efficient and effective*

*conduction of programs, and exposure from various experts and economists is required for the expansion of vision towards health economics and financing"*

*"I want to become a health economist, but don't have sufficient information about where the course is studied and how to get admission in Health economics course. Can I get the proper job after completing the course?"*

*"I am confused about how to many health economics in Nepal, and what way I can make my career in it, I read health economics but did not understand in what way it will be applicable in the health system of Nepal".*

A qualitative study showed that the students were interested in health economics but they were confused about the further courses which was not available in Nepal and one of the studies suggested that faculties were adequate in subjects like health economics and other public health issues. (Mahat et al., 2013). So, such issues should be addressed to show the clear way out in the health economics subjects.

One of the literatures said Health Economics is an essential course for public health professionals and studying health economics gives the detailed ideas necessary for efficient program management. Aspirants of health economists need guidance on where to study and how to get into Health Economics programs. Understanding public health funding and its impacts on welfare, global finance, population flows, and trade is essential. (Carande-Kulis et al., 2007)protecting the public's health is one of the most conspicuous. The government provides goods and services such as registration of births and deaths, public health surveillance of disease and injury, outbreak investigations, research and education, health insurance for the poor and elderly, enforcement of laws and regulations, evaluation of health promotion programs, and assurance of a competent healthy workforce. In the past, economics in public health has almost exclusively focused on efficiency of programs through the use of cost-effectiveness or net present value measures clustered under the rubric of "economic evaluation." Efficiency measures are useful at the programmatic level. However, lack of full employment and market failures including public goods and the impact of consumers and producers actions not reflected in the markets (externalities. So, it's very crucial to understand the health economics in public health and the appropriate measures that were taken in our Nepalese context.

## Conclusions

The study has mixed levels of status regarding interest and career planning in Health Economics among public health students of PU. There is no doubt, that health economics is useful for public health students, who are assumed to be future planners and policymakers in the health system. The study found that the majority of students felt difficulty in understanding and had an inadequate foundation of knowledge of economics at the school level, despite that students were interested in developing their careers in health economics. The better understanding of Health economics among public health students fosters their skills and knowledge which help to strengthen the public health system. Health economics is the essential area of public health that is required for the proper opportunities of education and learning through universities and academic institutions. Inadequate opportunities in education, lack of information, and separate courses are areas to be explored. The study also focused the separate courses on Health economics at the university level. The study suggests further research to be carried out to explore the role and necessities of Health economics in public health programs in proper and organized way through the university and academic institutions.

## Limitations of study

This study has several limitations as it is a cross-sectional study based on general perceptions and purposively selected sample size, the findings may not be generalized outside the study population.

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## Behind the curtain: External Examiners' Experiences about Thesis Evaluation

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### Abstract

*Evaluating a thesis is important because it ensures that students' research is valuable and meets high academic standards before they are awarded their degrees. The study aimed at exploring the experiences of university-level English teachers as external examiners for Master of Education (M.Ed.) theses in English Education at the Faculty of Education (FoE), Tribhuvan University(TU). Sample population this qualitative study consisted of 17 University-level English Education teachers who worked as external examiners to evaluate the theses written by M.Ed. students specialized in English Education. The researcher employed judgmental sampling to select the sample. He used semi-structured interview technique to collect the data. The data was analyzed employing thematic approach of qualitative data analysis. Findings revealed several systemic issues in the thesis evaluation process. Participants noted thesis evaluation as ritualistic practices where procedures often became routine. This leads to inconsistencies and compromised evaluation quality. Supervisors' unfamiliarity with thesis writing guidelines prepared by FoE created further challenges. This unfamiliarity also affects feedback quality and evaluation standards. The study also identified variability in thesis quality, difficulties in integrating feedback, and ethical concerns, such as requests for biased evaluations. Time constraints emerged as a critical issue which limits the depth of review and feedback. Additionally, misalignment between examiner expectations and institutional requirements, along with inadequate institutional support, further complicated the evaluation process. These findings underscore the need for a re-examination of evaluation practices, enhanced training for supervisors, and improved institutional support to ensure a fair, consistent, and effective thesis evaluation process.*

**Keywords:** Academic Rigor, External Examiner, Feedback Integration, Impartiality, Supervisory Knowledge

## Introduction

Thesis evaluation is essential in the academic framework. It ensures that thesis meets the required standards of quality and rigor (Tinkler & Jackson, 2001; Lessing, 2009). It is essential for validating research findings, upholding academic standards and assessing the students' original contributions to their field (Mafora & Lessing, 2014). Holbrook et al. (2004) and Kyvik and Thune (2015) also state that thesis evaluation is a crucial step in validating students' scholarly contributions and ensuring their research meets rigorous academic standards before degrees are awarded. External examiners are often appointed to review theses to ensure the work meets quality and standards comparable to other institutions. They also help identify areas for improvement and ensure that assessment practices are fair and consistent.

The Dean's Office at the FoE, TU, appoints external examiners to evaluate theses written by the M.Ed. students of both affiliated and constituent campuses under FOE, TU. And the external examiner appointment process is very systematic in nature. Upon completing their theses, M.Ed. students submit their work to their respective departments, accompanied by their thesis supervisors' recommendations. Then, the campus formally requests the Dean's office, FOE to appoint external examiners through a letter or email. The Dean or Assistant Dean appoints external examiners from different campuses to provide an impartial review. The examiners visit the campuses to conduct a thorough evaluation and hold a viva voce examination.

The respective campus forms three committee members to evaluate the theses submitted by the students. Among the three members, one is the head of the department, one is the thesis supervisor and one is the external examiner appointed by Dean's office. External examiners who were appointed from outside the campus provide an independent and objective perspective that is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the evaluation process. Their presence ensures the evaluation process is free from internal biases and pressures (Joyner, 2003).

External examiners play a pivotal role by offering an impartial perspective on the quality and rigor of the theses (Mafa & Mapolisa, 2012). Their primary responsibilities include assessing the originality, methodological soundness, and overall contribution of the thesis (De Beer & Masona, 2009). Their reflective practice allows them to scrutinize a thesis comprehensively and provide constructive feedback that can guide students in refining their work (Phelps & Shilling, 2018). However, balancing their roles as evaluators and mentors can be challenging, requiring continuous reflective practice to ensure that feedback is both rigorous and supportive (Carter & Whittaker, 2009).

Empirical evidence underscores the value of reflective practice in thesis evaluation.

Structured and collaborative reflection leads to more detailed and constructive feedback (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). Additionally, institutional support is crucial for fostering reflective practice, including training and resources for examiners (Hannan & Silver, 2000). Advancements in technology, such as digital tools and online forums, offer new opportunities for enhancing reflective practice (Sweeny, 2008). Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, impartiality, and fairness, are integral to reflective practice, and institutions should provide clear guidelines and training on ethical reflection to align examiners' practices with professional and institutional standards (Shenton, 2004).

The thesis evaluation process involves three stages: initial reading, report preparation, and the viva voce (Mullins & Kiley, 2002). Each stage presents its own set of challenges and requires distinct skills. The initial reading involves assessing originality, methodological rigor, and contribution, while report preparation requires a balance between critical evaluation and constructive. The viva voce allows students to defend their work and examiners to probe deeper into the research, though it can be challenging when differences in opinion arise or when students struggle to defend their work (Johnston, 1997).

The existing literature has extensively examined the roles and experiences of internal examiners. However, there is a notable lack of comprehensive research on the experiences of external examiners (Petersen, 2007). Delamont et al. (2004) and Trafford (2003) also state that the focus of most studies has been on internal evaluation dynamics, including issues such as examiner biases, candidate pressures, and the standardization of evaluation criteria. In a same way, Schulze (2011) states that there is a growing recognition of the need to explore how external examiners navigate their roles, the specific difficulties they encounter, and their overall impact on the evaluation process. This research has provided valuable insights into the unique experiences of external examiners in the context of FoE, TU. Thus, this research contributes to the broader discourse on academic assessment by shedding light on the often-overlooked experience of external examiners and providing recommendations for enhancing the evaluation process.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design to investigate the experiences of external examiners in the thesis evaluation process. The qualitative approach was selected for its capacity to offer a profound and detailed understanding of the personal experiences of the external examiners. This method is particularly suited to capturing the complex and context-specific nature of these experiences (Giorgi, 2012).

## **Sample and Sampling**

The sample for this study comprised 17 English teachers who were appointed as external examiners by the FoE at TU during the academic year 2080-2081. These examiners were selected from seven different campuses across Nepal, including two from Dadeldhura Multiple Campus, Dadeldhura, two from Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, three from Butwal Multiple Campus, Butwal, three from Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tahachal, Kathmandu, two from the Central Department of Education, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, three from Surkhet Multiple Campus, Surkhet and two from Sanathimi Campus, Sanathimi, Bhaktapur. The researcher utilized non-probability judgmental sampling to ensure the inclusion of participants with relevant and significant experience in the thesis evaluation process. Initially, the researcher requested the Dean's Office, FOE, TU to provide a list of external examiners appointed between Bhadra 2080 and Asadh 2081. From the list of 24 external examiners provided, 17 were selected based judgement of the researcher. After selecting participants, their names were arranged alphabetically and then renamed as P1 to P17 to ensure their anonymity.

## **Data Collection Technique**

The researcher employed semi-structured interview to collect the in-depth exploration of the external examiners' experiences. An interview guide was developed with open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the participants' experiences and views on the thesis evaluation process. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility, enabling participants to provide comprehensive insights while addressing specific aspects of their experiences (Creswell, 2013).

## **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data collected from the interviews. This method involved following stages: familiarization with the data through transcription and thorough reading of the transcripts, generating initial codes by highlighting significant statements and concepts, and organizing these codes into potential themes (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). The identified themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. This process involved checking the coherence of the themes in relation to the data set and defining and naming the final themes. The findings were presented thematically, based on the analysis of the interview data.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Ritualistic Practices in Academic Thesis Evaluation**

The majority of participants stated that the thesis evaluation process often takes on a ritualistic character, characterized by established norms and procedures that shape how

evaluations are conducted. These ritualistic practices, however, reveal systemic challenges that affect the overall quality of the evaluation process. Participants described a process where external examiners visit the campus, conduct a cursory review of the theses, perform the viva voce, provide feedback, sign the approval sheet, receive their remuneration, and then leave the campus. P7 noted, "The whole process feels very mechanical, with little genuine engagement." This procedure rarely includes a follow-up to verify whether the feedback has been incorporated by the students. P12 mentioned, "There is no real accountability to ensure that feedback is actually implemented." Additionally, some supervisors assure students that as long as the external examiner is well-compensated, their signature on the approval sheet is guaranteed. P14 said, "It sometimes feels like the approval is more about the payment than the quality of the work." These statements highlight the need for a more thorough and accountable evaluation process to ensure the integrity and quality of academic assessments.

This ritualistic adherence to procedural norms creates a routine framework that examiners are expected to follow. This rigidity can result in inconsistencies and pressures that compromise the depth and effectiveness of evaluations. Vernon (2006) notes that strict adherence to such rituals can lead to variable quality and fairness in the evaluation process. Systemic challenges embedded in these rituals include balancing thoroughness with efficiency, maintaining consistent standards across diverse theses, and minimizing personal biases. The ritualistic nature of these practices highlights the need for a critical re-examination and potential revision of the evaluation frameworks to better align procedural efficiency with the quality of feedback provided.

### **Supervisory Knowledge among Supervisors**

The study revealed a significant gap in the supervisory knowledge among thesis supervisors at the FoE, especially among the supervisors of affiliated campuses. Despite the existence of specific formats and guidelines prepared by the FOE Dean's Office for thesis evaluation, many supervisors are either unaware of these guidelines or lack a thorough understanding of their application. This gap is evidenced by inconsistent feedback provided to students, varying standards of evaluation, and discrepancies in the expectations for thesis structure and content. P7 stated, "I have experienced contradictory advice from, supervisors which makes it hard to understand what is truly expected from the suggestion." Similarly, P9 also said, "The feedback from the supervisor are often vague and do not align with the guidelines provided by the Dean's Office." The lack of familiarity with the FOE's guidelines among supervisors poses a critical challenge to maintaining academic standards and ensuring fair and objective thesis evaluations. Supervisors play a pivotal role in guiding students through the research process, from proposal development to final defense. When supervisors are not familiar with established

guidelines, it leads to mixed messages about what constitutes a high-quality thesis, causing confusion and inconsistent academic expectations among students. This inconsistency affects the comparability of theses, making fair evaluation difficult. Ineffective feedback from supervisors, misaligned with institutional standards, hinders students' improvement and academic success. Additionally, the approval of substandard work compromises the institution's credibility. Unclear guidance increases student anxiety and stress, causing delays and frustration in their academic progress. Adherence to standardized guidelines ensures quality, consistency, and fair evaluation, supporting students' academic achievements.

### **Varied Thesis Quality**

Participants noted experiencing a wide range of thesis quality, with some theses being exceptional while others barely met minimum standards. P7 said, "I have seen exceptional theses alongside those that barely meet the minimum standards." P11 noted, "Dealing with such a broad range of quality levels is both rewarding and frustrating."

The variability in thesis quality presents challenges for maintaining consistent evaluation standards. Sadler (2009) suggests that differing levels of quality complicate the application of uniform assessment standards, leading to inconsistencies in feedback. Mudavanhu (2017) recommend setting baseline standards and providing additional support for weaker theses to mitigate these issues. Ensuring a minimum quality threshold and offering targeted assistance to students could enhance consistency and fairness in evaluations.

### **Feedback Integration**

Participants faced significant challenges in ensuring that feedback was effectively integrated into revised theses. P3 commented, "Providing detailed and constructive feedback is one thing, but ensuring that the student acts on it is another challenge." P9 also remarked, "I have noticed that feedback is sometimes superficially addressed rather than thoroughly incorporated." These comments underscore the difficulty in not only delivering quality feedback but also in ensuring that students fully understand and implement the suggestions, which is crucial for their academic development and the overall quality of their work.

The integration of feedback is a critical aspect of the evaluation process. Malone (2014) notes that effective feedback should lead to meaningful improvements in the thesis. However, students may struggle to fully incorporate detailed feedback, resulting in inadequate revisions (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Knowles et al. (2011) emphasizes the need for clear, actionable feedback and support mechanisms to help students understand and implement evaluators' comments effectively.



## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations, such as maintaining objectivity and avoiding conflicts of interest, were prominent themes. P2 mentioned, "Upholding ethical standards is critical in the evaluation process." P6 noted, "Once, when I was appointed as an external examiner at an affiliated campus in Rupandehi District, I arrived in the evening. The campus chief had arranged for me to stay at a local hotel. I checked in around 4:25 PM. At 6:00 PM, the supervisors, campus chief, assistant campus chief, and all the students who had submitted their theses for the viva voce gathered at the hotel. They invited me to join a soiree organized by the students. The event continued until 11:00 PM. During the soiree, the campus chief requested that I accept the theses easily."

External examiners have reported encountering requests for payments in exchange for favorable thesis evaluations, often indirectly from campus chiefs or supervisors at affiliated campuses. This practice undermines the fairness and integrity of the evaluation process, creating implicit pressure on examiners and leading to concerns about their professional ethics. The involvement of campus leadership in these corrupt practices further complicates the issue, making it challenging for examiners to report malpractice due to a lack of formal reporting channels and fear of retaliation. The overall impact includes potential damage to institutional reputation, a decline in academic standards, and increased financial burdens on students. Addressing these issues requires enhanced transparency, stricter oversight, and support systems for both examiners and institutional leaders to maintain a fair and credible evaluation process.

Upholding ethical standards is fundamental to the integrity of the evaluation process. Nyika (2014) emphasizes the need for objectivity and fairness to maintain credibility. Russell (2006) also emphasize the importance of strict ethical guidelines to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure impartial evaluations. Adhering to these ethical principles is essential for maintaining trust and fairness in the evaluation process.

## **Time Constraints**

Participants reported that time constraints significantly impacted the quality of thesis evaluations. The Dean's Office generally appoints external examiners only two or three days before the viva voce date. Consequently, examiners are expected to evaluate up to five theses per day, which makes it challenging to conduct thorough reviews and provide constructive feedback.

P13 noted, "The time allocated for reviewing a thesis is often too short to provide a detailed and comprehensive evaluation." In a similar manner P8 articulated, "With the increasing number of theses to evaluate, the pressure to meet deadlines often compromises the quality of feedback."



The findings reveal a critical gap in the thesis evaluation process related to time management and workload. The short notice given for appointment and the high volume of theses to review create a situation where examiners struggle to balance speed with the depth of their evaluations. This pressure may lead to superficial assessments rather than the detailed and constructive feedback necessary for the improvement of theses. The concerns expressed by participants' point to a systemic issue within the evaluation framework. Insufficient time not only affects the quality of feedback but also may undermine the overall rigor of the evaluation process. The findings suggest a need for better planning and allocation of resources to allow examiners adequate time for thorough reviews, thereby enhancing the quality and effectiveness of feedback provided to candidates. The challenges associated with time constraints align with Quan-Baffour & Vambe (2008), who assert that time limitations often lead to superficial reviews, reducing the effectiveness of feedback. University of South Africa (2008) similarly highlights that inadequate time for assessment compromises the thoroughness of evaluations. Addressing these issues may involve extending the evaluation periods or optimizing the review process to ensure examiners can offer more detailed and constructive feedback.

### **Subjective Judgment**

Subjectivity in evaluations emerged as a significant concern among examiners. The participants acknowledged that their personal expertise and backgrounds inevitably influenced their assessments. P5 candidly mentioned, "My background and expertise inevitably influence my evaluation. While I strive for objectivity, personal biases can sometimes affect my judgment." This highlights the inherent challenge in maintaining complete impartiality, as examiners' unique perspectives and areas of expertise can shape their interpretation and evaluation of students' work. Despite efforts to remain objective, the subtle influence of personal biases can lead to variations in how theses are assessed, potentially impacting the fairness and consistency of evaluations. This underscores the importance of having clear, standardized guidelines to help mitigate the effects of subjectivity and ensure a more uniform evaluation process across different examiners.

The issue of subjectivity reflects personal biases and varying expertise can lead to inconsistent assessments Cantwell and Scevak (2004) and Nicol et al. (1999) also emphasize the need for objective criteria to minimize the influence of personal biases. To enhance the reliability and objectivity of evaluations, it is crucial to establish clear, standardized criteria and involve multiple examiners to provide a balanced assessment.

### **Expectations Misalignment**

Misalignment between examiner expectations and institutional requirements emerged as a significant issue, creating challenges in the evaluation process. P16 expressed

this concern by stating, "I sometimes feel that my expectations for a thesis are higher than what the institution seems to expect." Similarly, P10 remarked, "There needs to be a clearer understanding between the institution and examiners about what is expected." These comments highlight a critical gap in communication and alignment, where examiners' personal standards and the institution's official criteria do not always coincide. This misalignment can lead to discrepancies in how theses are evaluated, with some examiners potentially holding students to higher standards than those set by the institution. Such inconsistencies can cause confusion and frustration for students, who may struggle to meet varying expectations. To address this issue, it is essential for institutions to establish clear, consistent guidelines and ensure that examiners are fully aware of and aligned with these standards. This would help create a more uniform evaluation process, reducing the potential for subjective discrepancies and supporting students in meeting clearly defined academic expectations.

The misalignment of expectations between examiners and institutions can lead to confusion and inconsistencies in evaluations. Merriam and Bierema (2014) argue that aligning expectations among stakeholders is crucial for maintaining consistency and fairness in assessments. Sankaran and Hill (2005) also suggest that clear communication and regular updates about evaluation standards can help bridge this gap and ensure that all parties are on the same page.

### **Institutional Support**

The level of institutional support varied among participants, affecting their evaluation experiences. Some examiners reported receiving ample support, while others faced challenges due to inadequate resources. P1 said, "In some cases, I received ample support and resources from the institution, which facilitated a smoother evaluation process."

Institutional support is crucial for effective thesis evaluation. Popescu and Popescu (2017). argue that adequate resources and guidance are essential for thorough assessments. Vernon (2006) highlights the importance of consistent institutional support for facilitating a smooth evaluation process. Improving institutional support, including providing necessary resources and guidance, can enhance the quality and efficiency of evaluations.

### **Reviewer Training and Calibration**

Participants noted that lack of adequate training and calibration among reviewers affects the consistency of evaluations. P2 said, "There is often insufficient training for reviewers on the evaluation criteria, leading to varying interpretations of what constitutes quality." In a similar vein P5 mentioned, "Calibrating evaluators to ensure consistent standards is a challenge."

Training and calibration are critical for ensuring consistency and fairness in evaluations. Kritzinger and Looock (2014) suggests that regular training sessions and calibration exercises can help align reviewers' interpretations of evaluation criteria. Golding (2017) supports this view by emphasizing that well-trained reviewers are more likely to apply standards consistently, which can improve the reliability of the evaluation process.

### **Feedback Delivery Methods**

The methods used to deliver feedback were also a point of concern. Participants reported that some feedback was delivered in ways that were not always constructive. P2 stated, "The feedback provided often lacks clarity, making it difficult for students to understand and act upon." P14 also said, "Effective feedback delivery methods need to be standardized to ensure clarity and usefulness."

Effective feedback delivery is crucial for its impact. Ismail et al. (2014) highlights that feedback should be clear, constructive, and actionable to facilitate meaningful improvements. Golding et al. (2014) emphasize the need for standardized feedback delivery methods to ensure consistency and clarity. Improving how feedback is delivered can enhance its effectiveness and help students better understand and implement evaluators' comments.

### **Administrative Burden**

Participants also noted the administrative burden associated with the evaluation process. P11 said, "The amount of administrative paperwork involved in the evaluation process can be overwhelming and detracts from the time available for actual thesis review." P13 also articulated, "Reducing administrative tasks could help examiners focus more on the quality of their feedback."

Administrative tasks can be a significant drain on the time and energy of examiners. Denicolo (2003) suggests that streamlining administrative processes can help alleviate some of the burdens associated with thesis evaluations. By reducing paperwork and administrative overhead, institutions can enable examiners to focus more on providing high-quality feedback and conducting thorough evaluations.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shed light on the complex and often problematic nature of the thesis evaluation process at FoE, TU. The findings reveal a pressing need to address several systemic issues that affect the quality and fairness of evaluations. The ritualistic practices that dominate the evaluation process suggest a disconnect between established procedures and effective assessment. These rituals, while intended to standardize evaluations, often

result in inconsistent quality and ineffective feedback. There is a clear need to reassess and reform these practices to enhance the depth and accuracy of evaluations. Additionally, the study highlights a significant gap in supervisors' familiarity with evaluation guidelines. This lack of awareness leads to varying standards and unclear feedback, further complicating the evaluation process. Addressing this issue requires improved training and better dissemination of guidelines to ensure consistent and high-quality assessments.

The findings also point to challenges such as time constraints, ethical concerns, and the influence of subjective judgments. To address these, it is essential to provide more institutional support, streamline administrative tasks, and implement robust training programs for evaluators. By making these adjustments, TU, FoE can improve the consistency, fairness, and overall quality of its thesis evaluation process, ultimately fostering a more rigorous academic environment.

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## Evaluating the Effectiveness of WhatsApp Applications in Enhancing Oral Health Awareness Among Students

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### Abstract

*Mobile messaging apps like WhatsApp are popular communication tools, especially among youth. Oral health issues are common among young adults, but traditional education methods often fail to engage them effectively. Research on using WhatsApp for oral health education is limited, particularly in Nepal. This study aims to evaluate WhatsApp's effectiveness in improving oral health awareness and practices among students. Employing a quantitative approach with a pretest-posttest design, the study evaluated the effectiveness of a WhatsApp intervention on oral health knowledge and practices. Conducted at Yeti Health Science Academy, 38 students participated, completing pre- and post-tests. Instruments included socio-demographic data and the Digital Education (DE) questionnaire, alongside the Oral Health Awareness and Practice questionnaire. Reliability tests indicated high consistency in the tools. Ethical approval was obtained, and descriptive and paired statistics were applied in the analysis. The mean age was 20.65, with 80% female and 90% Hindu participants. Brahmin and Chhetri were the most common ethnicities. 76.3% practiced oral hygiene, and 26.3% flossed daily. Most consumed sugar snacks (76.3%), with some experiencing dental visit anxiety (37.8%). Mouthwash was popular (89.2%), but no probiotic therapy was reported. Post-test oral health scores significantly improved (88.6579 vs. 76.9737). WhatsApp intervention shows*

*potential in improving oral health awareness and practices among students. Integrating mobile apps like WhatsApp into oral health education programs can enhance engagement and effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** Health education, Mobile app integration, Oral health awareness, Student engagement, WhatsApp intervention

## **Introduction**

Oral health awareness among students is vital as it directly impacts their overall quality of life, including physical, mental, and social aspects (Lin et al., 2021). Poor oral health can lead to pain, infections, and difficulty in eating or speaking, which in turn affects academic performance and self-esteem (Albino et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2021; Nayak et al., 2018). Educating students about oral health fosters lifelong healthy habits, reducing healthcare costs and improving quality of life (Giansanti & Cosentino, 2021). Various social media platforms have been suggested for disseminating information, with WhatsApp being a reliable source for mass communication (Giansanti & Cosentino, 2021). Regular care and informational support are helpful in improving disease-related health outcomes, making WhatsApp an incredible tool for raising awareness (Krishna et al., 2009). New technologies like WhatsApp can effectively serve as platforms to communicate dental advice, strengthening the connection between health services and technology (Nayak et al., 2018). Social Media applications like WhatsApp have become pervasive tools for communication, particularly among youth. (Jacinto & Arndt, 2018; Ab Mumin et al., 2022). Smartphones have become a necessary part of our everyday life which is used for instant messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp, Messenger, iMessage, Kik, Viber, GroupMe, Telegram, Send, Line, and Snapchat) and very popular among the users. Despite the prevalence of oral health issues among young adults (Chau et al., 2023; Jain et al., 2024; Murray, 2022), traditional health education approaches often fail to engage this demographic effectively (Albino et al., 2012). There is a notable gap in research evaluating the effectiveness of WhatsApp applications in improving oral health awareness among students (Nayak et al., 2018). Previous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of mobile health applications in promoting behavior change among diverse populations (Aljafari et al., 2022; Koshy et al., 2008; Nagaveni et al., 2022; Raiman et al., 2017). However, in Nepal, few studies have focused on oral health education interventions (Subedi et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021). In the digital age, social media is gaining popularity due to its cost-effectiveness, reach among large populations, and capability to maintain health data

records. Despite these advantages, such studies remain limited in Nepal. Building upon this existing research, the current study aims to apply similar strategies to oral health education using WhatsApp. By evaluating the impact of WhatsApp interventions through pre- and post-assessments, researchers seek to provide insights into a systematic and interactive approach for enhancing oral health awareness among students

## **Methodology**

The main purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of utilizing the WhatsApp social media platform application to enhance oral health awareness and practices among newly admitted allied health science students. Employing a quantitatively approach with a pretest-posttest design, the study intervention duration spans 5days. The research is conducted at Yeti Health Science Academy among a sample of 38 students, both pre and post-test. WhatsApp platform is chosen as the medium for enhancing oral health awareness among students due to its accessibility, user-friendly interface, and widespread adoption, providing a resource-rich platform for innovative student-learning experiences (Raiman et al., 2017; Willemse, 2015). Particularly popular among younger demographics, its ability to facilitate real-time communication and share multimedia content makes it an effective tool for delivering health-related information (Nayak et al., 2018; Raiman et al., 2017). Additionally, WhatsApp's group chat functionality allows for collaborative learning and peer support, which can reinforce positive health behaviors. Researchers have selected this platform to provide an awareness intervention approach and deliver awareness packages.

## **Instruments of Study**

The study comprises two sections. The first section examines socio-demographic variables, while the second section includes the Digital Education (DE) questionnaire. The DE questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents high dissatisfaction and 5 represents high satisfaction. Similarly, the Awareness for Oral Health (AOH) questionnaire utilizes a modified 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing high dissatisfaction and 5 representing high satisfaction. Additionally, the second section includes a questionnaire on oral health practices, categorized as yes, no, and sometimes.

## **Reliability and Validity Test:**

The reliability test for the digital education of oral health yielded promising results. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the Digital Education (DE) questionnaire (8 items),

Awareness for Oral Health (AOH) (14 items), and Oral Health Practice (12 items) indicate high internal consistency, affirming the reliability of the measurement instruments. For the DE questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha value was .830, while for the AOH questionnaire, it was .848. Similarly, the Oral Health Practice questionnaire demonstrated excellent reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .956. These findings underscore the robustness and consistency of the questionnaires in evaluating participants' awareness and practices regarding digital oral health education, thereby enhancing the credibility of the study's data collection tools.

### **Data collection methods:**

Included pre-test and post-test oral health knowledge and practice assessments, WhatsApp-based educational intervention, and pre-test and post-test evaluations using the same questionnaire. The study recruited a newly admitted 38 students of who were newly admitted and who didn't have received formal oral health education in secondary school or clinical settings. Participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention group (sending a short WhatsApp educational message). Research utilized WhatsApp, recognized as the simplest, cheapest, and most effective means of communication within the clinical health sector (Mars & Escott, 2016). Similarly, another study revealed WhatsApp's effectiveness as a communication tool among clinicians, highlighting its relevance and applicability in clinical settings (Raiman et al., 2017). The methodology involves gathering data from newly joined allied health sciences students through Google Docs. In the first week of the study, researchers collected pre-test survey questionnaires. In the second week, 5 days an intervention pack was introduced. Consequently, the researchers followed by sending at least 2 to 3 short messages with short videos, text messages, infographics, and information such as the following 5-days calendar for oral health education using digital media through social platforms:

#### **Day 1: Introduction to Oral Health**

Post a video introducing the importance of oral health.

Share infographics highlighting key facts about dental hygiene.

Invite followers to share their oral health routines using a dedicated hashtag.

#### **Day 2: Brushing Techniques**

Post a tutorial video demonstrating proper brushing techniques.

Share tips for selecting the right toothbrush and toothpaste.

Host a live Q&A session with a dental hygienist to answer questions about brushing.

### **Day 3: Flossing and Interdental Cleaning**

Share a video tutorial on the importance of flossing and interdental cleaning.

Post infographics showing the step-by-step process of flossing.

Encourage followers to share their experiences with flossing and interdental brushes.

### **Day 4: Nutrition and Oral Health**

Share tips for maintaining a tooth-friendly diet.

Post infographics highlighting foods that promote oral health.

Host a poll asking followers about their favorite tooth-friendly snacks.

### **Day 5: Oral Health Habits for Kids**

Share a video with tips for teaching children about oral hygiene.

Post infographics on fun ways to encourage kids to brush and floss.

Host a virtual Storytime session featuring children's books about dental health

### **Inclusion criteria**

Specify enrollment in allied health sciences programs, possession of smartphones with WhatsApp installed, and willingness to participate. Exclusion criteria encompass students with advanced oral health knowledge and those not using WhatsApp platforms. Additionally, participants should not have any oral health-related illnesses and must be willing to take part in the study.

**Ethical approval** was obtained from the Yeti Health Sciences Academy IRC, recognized by the Nepal Health Research Council, and informed consent from participants was secured.

### **Data analysis:**

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics and paired t-tests to assess the effectiveness of WhatsApp-based interventions on pre- and post-test knowledge and practices about oral health among students.

## Results

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Variables Among Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group(n=40)		
25 yrs	21	52.5
≥26 yrs	19	47.5
Mean= 20.65; Std. Deviation=4.07337; Minimum=18.00; Maximum=39.00		
Gender(n=40)		
Male	8	20.0
Female	32	80.0
Religion(n=39)		
Hindu	36	90.0
Buddhist	2	5.0
Christian	1	2.5
Ethnicity(n=36)		
Brahman	13	32.5
Chhetri	14	35.0
Newar	2	5.0
Mongolian	7	17.5

Table 1 shows that among the participants, 21 (52.5%) are aged  $\leq 25$  years and 19 (47.5%) are aged  $\geq 26$  years, with a mean age of 20.65 (Std Deviation: 4.07; Min: 18; Max: 39). In terms of gender, there are 8 males (20.0%) and 32 females (80.0%). Regarding religion, 36 (90.0%) are Hindu, 2 (5.0%) are Buddhist, and 1 (2.5%) is Christian. The ethnic breakdown includes 13 (32.5%) Brahman, 14 (35.0%) Chhetri, 2 (5.0%) Newar, and 7 (17.5%) Mongolian participants.

Table 2: Pre-test Practice of Oral Health Among Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Brush twice daily		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	29	76.3
Yes	6	15.8
Used fluoride toothpaste		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	27	71.1
Yes	8	21.1

Floss your teeth daily		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	26	60.5
Yes	8	26.3
Visit dentist twice yearly		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	23	76.3
Yes	10	15.8
Skills in oral health care		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	29	76.3
Yes	6	15.8
Taking care Cav-		
ities		
No	2	5.3
Sometimes	25	65.8
Yes	9	23.7

Table 2 shows participants' oral health practices. Results indicate that 76.3% sometimes brush twice daily, use fluoride toothpaste, and visit the dentist twice yearly. Additionally, 26.3% floss daily, while 23.7% actively care for cavities.

**Table 3: Pre-test Practice of Oral Health Among Participants**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Consume excessive sugar, snacks or beverages		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	29	76.3
Yes	6	15.8
Prevent tooth sensitivity		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	29	76.3
Yes	6	15.8
Probiotic therapy		
No	38	100
Sometimes	0.00	0.00
Yes	0.00	0.00
Use Mouthwash		
No	1	2.7



Sometimes	3	8.1
Yes	33	89.2
Dental visit anxiety		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	17	44.7
Yes	18	37.8
Digital Education		
No	3	7.9
Sometimes	25	65.8
Yes	10	26.3

Table 3 reveals participants' oral health practices. Most respondents (76.3%) sometimes consume excessive sugar, snacks. Similarly, 76.3% sometimes take measures to prevent tooth sensitivity. However, no participants reported using probiotic therapy. The majority (89.2%) use mouthwash, while 37.8% experience dental visit anxiety. About digital education, 26.3% reported using it sometimes to learn.

**Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair	Total_Pre-Test	76.9737	38	10.03100	1.62724
1	Total_Post-Test	88.6579	38	5.93786	.96325

**Table 5: Paired Samples Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair	Total_Pre & Total_Post	38	.115	.493
1				

**Table 6: Paired Samples Test**

Mean		Std. Devi- ation	Std. Error Mean	Paired Differences				df	Sig.  (2-tailed)
				95% Confidence Inter- val of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Total_ Pre - Total_ Post	-11.68421	11.05540	1.79342	-15.31803	-8.05039	-6.515	37	.000

From these statistics, we can observe the mean score on the post-test (88.6579) is higher than the mean score on the pre-test (76.9737). This suggests an improvement or change in the measured variable between the pre-test and post-test. The standard deviation of the scores decreased from pre-test (10.03100) to post-test (5.93786), indicating potentially less variability in scores after the intervention or treatment. The standard error of the mean also decreased from pre-test (1.62724) to post-test (0.96325), suggesting more precision in the mean estimate after the intervention. Based on these findings, it appears that there has been a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. However, to draw more concrete conclusions, further statistical analysis, such as a paired-samples t-test, could be conducted to determine if the observed difference is statistically significant. Additionally, examining the context of the study and any interventions or treatments implemented between the pre-test and post-test would provide valuable insights.

## Discussion

The findings of this study highlight significant improvements in pre-test and post-test scores, reflecting positive outcomes from the intervention. The increase in the mean post-test score (88.657) compared to the pre-test score (76.973) suggests the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing the measured variables. Moreover, a reduction in the standard deviation (pre-test: 10.031; post-test: 5.937) and standard error of the mean (pre-test: 1.627; post-test: 0.963) indicates improved precision following the intervention. These observations align with previous research demonstrating the efficacy of interventions in improving outcomes (Krishna et al., 2009). Subedi et al. (2021) demonstrated the effectiveness of oral health education in enhancing oral hygiene knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Additionally, social media technologies offer versatile methods to promote oral health awareness among students, utilizing various formats such as videos, audio, visuals, and text messages. This study specifically utilized short text messaging due to its simplicity, time-saving nature, and accessibility from any location. Other studies also support the effectiveness of using platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube for similar educational purposes. Mobile phones, particularly SMS services, are emerging as effective tools to reinforce oral health education messages and promote healthier behaviors (Jadhav et al., 2016). For instance, Abdaljawwad (2016) demonstrated that sending text messages directly to patients about oral hygiene significantly improved compliance over a 3-month period. Intervention strategies, such as instant messaging applications (Raiman et al., 2017), play a crucial role in improving communication and enhancing learning

opportunities in healthcare settings. Similarly, another study conducted by Pubalan et al. (2024), regular WhatsApp texting messages and reminders significantly improved oral hygiene. Participants receiving regular reminders via WhatsApp messaging showed a notable improvement in oral hygiene compared to the control group (Pubalan et al., 2024).

The findings suggest that utilizing WhatsApp as an educational tool can significantly enhance oral health awareness among students by leveraging its accessibility and popularity (Giansanti & Cosentino, 2021). In real-world settings, educators can use WhatsApp to disseminate accurate health information, facilitate peer discussions, and encourage positive health behaviors (Ab Mumin et al., 2022; Jadhav et al., 2016; Willemse, 2015). However, attention must be paid to preventing misinformation and ensuring equitable access.

## **Recommendations**

From this study, researchers suggested that enhancing standard care with reminders, oral health awareness, and management through social media, voice, video, and short message services can support improved health outcomes and streamline intervention for both caretakers and healthcare providers.

Social media platforms like WhatsApp are widely accepted and offer valuable opportunities for connection, sharing, learning, and exchanging educational information (Dhungana et al., 2023; Oral et al., 2024; Shrestha et al., 2023). Utilizing WhatsApp to deliver educational content, such as short videos and various materials, is an effective method to reach students, particularly in rural areas (Palladino & Thapa, 2023; Shrestha et al., 2023; Thapa et al., 2023). These approaches are advantageous in regions with limited access to modern technology and infrastructure for oral health care. However, leveraging such technology requires careful consideration of legal aspects and regular updates on dental health practices. This research highlights the need for developing self-awareness, life skills education, and digital literacy to ensure data privacy, security, and effective oral health interventions (Marzo et al., 2024; B. Thapa et al., 2023; P. Thapa et al., 2024).

## **Limitation**

While the study demonstrated the potential of WhatsApp interventions in improving oral health awareness and practice, several limitations should be considered. The study's sample

size was relatively small and limited to a specific demographic, consisting primarily of allied health science students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data introduced the possibility of response bias and may not accurately reflect participants' actual behaviors. Furthermore, the study's duration was relatively short, which may not capture long-term effects of WhatsApp interventions on oral health outcomes. Future research should address these limitations by including larger and more diverse samples, employing objective measures of oral health behaviors, and conducting longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of mobile app-based interventions over time.

## **Conclusion**

The study results highlight the possible of WhatsApp interventions in attractive oral health awareness and practices among students. As evidenced by the socio-demographic data, which discovered a mainly young, female, Hindu population, there occurs a demographic suitable for engagement through digital platforms. In spite of diverse oral health practices among participants, with many rarely observing to suggested activities like brushing and dental visits, the post-intervention improvements direct the efficacy of WhatsApp-based educational initiatives. Integrating mobile apps like WhatsApp into oral health education approach embraces potential for attractive engagement and effectiveness, mainly among youth who are already familiarized to using such platforms for communication. By leveraging the widespread popularity and convenience of mobile messaging apps, oral health education can scope broader audiences and ease behavior change in a more interactive and engaging manner. This research study highlights the importance of pioneering approaches in addressing oral health challenges, particularly in situations where traditional education approaches may fall short. Moving forward, additional study and application of mobile app-based interventions are acceptable to discover their full potential in promoting oral health and cultivating overall well-being among diverse populations.

**Finding:** None

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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## Rights of crime victim under the prevailing laws of nepal

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### Abstract

*The rights of crime victims are an important consideration in the criminal justice system. In Nepal, there are a number of prevailing laws that outline the rights and protections afforded to victims of crime. This study provides an overview of the key rights and entitlements of crime victims under Nepalese law. The prevailing laws of Nepal recognize the need to protect and support victims of crime throughout the criminal justice process. Under the Criminal Procedure Code of Nepal, victims have the right to be informed about the progress of the case, to participate in the proceedings, and to receive compensation for losses incurred as a result of the crime. The Domestic Violence (Offense and Punishment) Act further safeguards the rights of victims of domestic violence, granting them the ability to seek protection orders and access emergency support services. Additionally, the National Criminal Justice Coordination Committee has established a Victim Support Fund to provide financial assistance and rehabilitation services to victims. This fund can cover expenses such as medical bills, legal fees, and livelihood support. Victims also have the right to confidentiality and privacy, and measures are in place to protect them from intimidation or retaliation. While Nepal's laws demonstrate a commitment to upholding victim rights, challenges remain in terms of effective implementation and access to support, especially for marginalized groups. Ongoing efforts are needed to strengthen the capacity of the criminal justice system to consistently fulfill its obligations to crime victims. Overall, the legal framework in Nepal represents an*

*important foundation for ensuring victims are treated with dignity, provided with necessary resources, and empowered to participate in the justice process.*

**Keywords:** Crime victims, victim rights, criminal justice system, NepalIntroduction

“Victims” means persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, including those laws proscribing criminal abuse of power. A person may be considered a victim, under this Declaration, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familial relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

The term “victim” also includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependents of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization. The provisions contained herein shall be applicable to all, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, age, language, religion, nationality, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or practices, property, birth or family status, ethnic or social origin, and disability. (www.ohchr.org)

### **Access to justice and fair treatment**

Victims should be treated with compassion and respect for their dignity. They are entitled to access to the mechanisms of justice and to prompt redress, as provided for by national legislation, for the harm that they have suffered. Judicial and administrative mechanism should be established and strengthened where necessary. The responsiveness of judicial and administrative processes to the needs of victims should be facilitated.

### **Restitution**

The term ‘Restitution’ in the criminal justice system means payment by offender to the victim for the harm caused by offender’s wrongful acts. Courts have the authority to order convicted offenders to pay restitution the victims as part of their sentences. Many states of the courts are required to order restitution to victims in case involving certain types of crimes, typically violent felony offences but sometimes other serious offences as well. Offenders or third parties responsible for their behavior should, where appropriate, make fair restitution to victims, their families or dependents. Such restitution should include the return of property of payment for the harm or loss suffered, reimbursement

of expenses incurred as result of the victimization, the provision of services and the restoration of rights. Courts may order full or partial restitution. When courts order restitution, they look not only at the victim's losses but also the offender's ability to pay. The courts may order to reduce total amount of restitution if offender is unlikely to be able to pay or scheduled per month payment. (Shah, 2018)

Governments should review their practices, regulations and laws to consider restitution as an available sentencing option in criminal cases, in addition to other criminal sanctions. Restitution can cover any act of pocket losses directly relating to the crime, including:

Medical expenses

Therapy cost

Prescription charges

Counselling cost

Wages cost

Expenses that related to participating criminal justice process

Lost or damaged property

Insurance deductibles

## **Compensation**

When compensation is not fully available from the offender or other sources, States should endeavor to provide financial compensation. The establishment, strengthening and expansion of national funds for compensation to victims should be encouraged.

## **Assistance**

Victims should receive the necessary material, medicinal, psychological and social assistance through governmental, voluntary, community based and indigenous means.

## **Victims of abuse of power**

States should consider incorporating into the national law norms proscribing abuses of power and providing remedies to victims of such abuses. In particular, such remedies should include restitution and/or compensation, and necessary material, medical, psychological and social assistance and support. States should consider negotiating multilateral international treaties relating to victims. States should periodically review existing legislation and practices to ensure their responsiveness to changing circumstance

should enact and enforce.

### **Statement by Notable Jurist Regarding Rights of Victims**

In the publication of the law literature in Nepal, probably **Katak Malla** happens to be the pioneer to introduce the subject of victimology. (Malla, 1988, p.58-62) He has dealt with defining the term victimology and has pleaded the compensation to the victims. He has in short explained about the European laws, Indian experiments and Nepalese traditions.

**Justice Gajendra Keshari Bastola** has continued the introductory information to the prior publications. (Malla, 1988, 18-25) He has argued more to prove the penal policy under the Hindu Jurisprudence, where the compensation policy was prescribed for the victims.

**Shankar Kumar Shrestha** has voiced about the problems of victims. (Shrestha, 1994) He has satired on the constitutional and legal system of our country, not being positive toward she crime victims.

**Dr. Ram Krishna Timal** in his article entitled “Sarkaradi Muddha Firta Linda Ko Peedit haru upekchit chainan” (Are not Victim Neglected in Withdrawal of state cases) has argued about the practice of government to withdraw a state cases. (Timal, June23, 1994) He also suggested to reform our legal system to welcome victim’s support program. (Timal, Aug17, 1994)

### **Bhattarai Rabindra, “Aparadh Peedit Samrakshyan Bidhayak Ma Frak Maat ”**

**Bhattarai Rabindra**, who did a lot in the field of justice to the crime victims of Nepal. In this article he suggested to address the provision of social rehabilitation program to be determined by adding a separate section in an act for social restoration with legal commitment of government. (Bhattarai, 2019)

**Kedar Prasad Poudel** has described a background and need of victimology. (Poudel, 1994) He has noted a few significant information about the development of victimology.

**Chuda Bahadur Shrestha** has briefly discussed the victim support program applied in the different countries and he has copied the typology of the victims from Benjamin

**Mendelson’s** work which can give us information about the classification of the victims. (Shrestha, 1996) He has supplied a photograph to support his description about the victim

support management.

**Kashi Raj Dahal** has briefly discussed on the need of protection of victim's right in his article entitled "Protection of Victim's right" simultaneously, he has given a short sketch on the development of 'victimology'. (Dahal, 1998)

### **Rights of Crime Victim**

Through the analysis of National Legal provisions, Researcher has identified various rights of victim. All states and the government have passed laws to establish a set of victims' rights. In general, these laws require that victims have certain information protecting, and a limited role in the criminal justice process. Rights of crime victim depends on the laws of the jurisdiction where the crime is investigated and prosecuted by government authorities.

Some of the fundamental rights of crime victim proposed in different laws are; Right not to be victimized, right to be compensated against victimization, right to stand as a party on the failure of State Agency, right to be entitled for medical treatment, right to be consulted before the decision is made for withdrawal of sub-judicial cases or before granting pardon, Right to access to justice. (Shrestha, 2012, p.12)

In the Nepalese Context, It's a virgin topics, that's why importance of rights of crime victim is increasing day by day. The constitution of Nepal, 2015, Country Penal (code) Act, 2017, Crime Victim Protection Act, 2018 and various int'l laws are maintaining law and order to ensures right to justice of crime victims in Criminal investigation, adjudication of cases, compensation, and social rehabilitation. The rights of crime victim can be summarized as follows:

#### **The core rights of crime victims**

The Core rights of crime victim are as follows:

The right to be treated with fairness, dignity, sensitivity, and respect;

The right to attend and be present at criminal justice proceedings;

The right to be heard in the criminal justice process, including the right to confer with the prosecutor and submit a victim impact statement at sentencing, parole, and other similar proceedings;

The right to be informed of proceedings and events in the criminal justice process, including the release or escape of the offender, legal rights and remedies, and available benefits and services, and access to records, referrals, and other information;

The right to protection from intimidation and harassment;

The right to restitution from the offender;

The right to privacy;

The right to apply for crime victim compensation;

The right to restitution from the offender;

The right to the expeditious return of personal property seized as evidence whenever possible;

The right to a speedy trial and other proceedings free from unreasonable delay;

The right to enforcement of these rights and access to other available remedies.

### **Constitutional Provisions on Victims Right**

We have experienced seven different constitutions within seven decades, the latest constitution; “Constitution of Nepal” was promulgated by the constituent assembly in 2072. The Constitution has provided various rights to the people as their fundamental rights from Article 16 to Article 48. It has provided comprehensive provisions for victim’s rights in different articles under fundamental rights and has given special attention to the victim’s right in article 21 under fundamental rights chapter.

The constitutional provisions regarding compensation for victim in violation of these provision, includes; a victim of crime shall have the right to get information about the investigation and proceedings of a case in which he or she is the victim. A victim of crime shall have the right to justice including social rehabilitation and compensation in accordance with law. (Art.2, Constitution of Nepal, 2015) No person who is arrested or detained shall be subjected to physical or mental torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, that shall be punishable by law, and any person who is the victim of such treatment shall have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law. (Art.22, Constitution of Nepal, 2015)

The Constitution has also guaranteed the right to privacy of any person, his or her residence, property, document, data, correspondence and matters relating to his or

her character shall, except in accordance with law, be inviolable. (Art.28, Constitution of Nepal, 2015) Likewise, it has clearly spelled out that no one shall be subjected to trafficking nor shall one be held in slavery or servitude, no one shall be forced to work against his or her will. (Art.29, Constitution of Nepal, 2015). Similarly, the Constitution is against the violence against women, which states that no woman shall be subjected to physical, mental, sexual, psychological or other form of violence or exploitation on grounds of religion, social, cultural tradition, practice or on any other grounds. Such act shall be punishable by law, and the victim shall have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law. (Art.38, Constitution of Nepal, 2015)

The Constitution has states on the rights of the child, such as; No child shall be employed to work in any factory, mine or engaged in similar other hazardous work, child marriage, transported illegally, abducted/kidnapped or taken in hostage, recruited or used in army, police or any armed group, or be subjected, in the name of cultural or religious traditions, to abuse, exclusion or physical, mental, sexual or other form of exploitation or improper use by any means or in any manner as well as physical, mental or any other form of torture in home, school or other place and situation whatsoever.

Any act contrary to these clauses shall be punishable by law, and a child who is the victim of such act shall have the right to obtain compensation from the perpetrator, in accordance with law. (Art.39, Constitution of Nepal, 2015) The social justice and social has been guaranteed in this constitution. The Constitution has provided right to constitutional remedies in the manner set forth an Article 133 or 144 for the enforcement of the rights conferred in the chapter of fundamental rights. It can shows as follows:

#### **Article 21: Right to victim of crime**

The constitution of Nepal 2072 Art 21 has provisioned ‘Right to victim of crime’. Whereas 21(1) says that ‘A victim of crime shall have the right to get information about the investigation and proceeding of a case in which he or she is the victim.’ likewise 21(2) defined ‘ A victim of crime shall have the right to justice along with social rehabilitation and compensation in accordance with law’

#### **Article 22: Right against the torture**

(2) Any act mentioned in clause (1) shall be punishable by law, and any person who is the victim of such treatment shall have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law. (Art.22, Constitution of Nepal, 2015)



## **Article 24: Right against untouchability and discrimination**

(5) Any act of untouchability and discrimination committed in contravention of this article shall be punishable by law as a severe social offence, and the victim of such act shall have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law.

## **Article 30: Right to clean environment**

(5) The victim shall have the right to obtain compensation, in accordance with law for any injury caused from environment pollution or degradation.

## **Article 38: Rights to women**

(1) No woman shall be subjected to physical, mental, sexual, psychological or other form of violence or exploitation on the ground of religion, social, cultural tradition, and practice or on any other grounds. Such act shall be punishable by law, and the victim shall have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law.

## **Article 39: Right to the child**

(10) Any act contrary to in clause (4), (5), and (7) shall be punishable by law, and a child who is the victim of such act shall have the right to obtain compensation from the perpetrator, in accordance with law.

## **Article 44: Right to consumer**

A person who has suffered injury from any substandard goods or services shall have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law.

### **Specific Laws Related to the Victims' Right**

Specific rights of crime victim are as follows:

#### **The Country Penal (Code) Act, 2017 (2074)**

This act serves to amend and consolidate laws in force relating to criminal offences. It is expedient to provide for a timely code on criminal offences, by amending and consolidating the laws in force relating to criminal offences in order to maintain morality, decency, etiquette, convenience, economic interest of the general public by maintaining law and in the country, maintain harmonious relationship and peace among various religious and cultural communities, and prevent and control criminal offences. The Legislature - Parliament under clause (1) of Article 296 of the Constitution of Nepal has enacted this Act.

The provision regarding to the compensation of victims are as follows:

## **Chapter 2: General Principles of Criminal Justice:**

**Section 32:** Victim of crime to be entitled to obtain information of proceeding of case and compensation:

32(1) of this section defined ‘The victim of crime shall have the right to obtain information about the investigation and proceeding of the case in which he/she is the victim’. Similarly 32(2) says ‘The victim of crime shall have the right to justice with social rehabilitation and compensation.’ (Dhakal, 2018, 329)

## **Chapter 5: Provision Relating to Punishment and Interim Relief**

### **Section 48: Power of court to order interim compensation**

The court may order the accused of such offence to provide medical treatment or pay an interim compensation or relief amount to such person. (Dhakal, 2018, 332-35) the court shall cause such amount to be recovered from any assets of such person within thirty five days of such acquittal according to this section.

## **Part 2, Chapter 4: Offences against Public Justice**

### **Section 99: Prohibition of malicious investigation or prosecution**

(3) Where any person suffers any kind of harm or loss from the offence under sub section (1), he or she shall be entitled to get compensation from such offender. (Dhakal, 2018, 99)

## **Chapter 5: Offences against Public Interest, Health, Safety, Convenience and Morals**

### **Section 127: Order for Compensation to be paid:**

Where any harm or loss is caused to anyone or any property of anyone from any of the offences under section 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, and 124 of this Chapter, compensation shall be ordered to be paid by the offender to the person who so suffers such harm or loss. (Dhakal, 2018, 356)

## **Chapter 10: Offences Relating to Discrimination and Other Degrading Treatment**

### **Section 169: Order for compensation to be paid**

A reasonable compensation for the injury or pain caused to the victim shall be ordered to be paid by a person who has committed the offence under this chapter. (Dhakal, 2018, 369)

## **Chapter 12: Offences Relating to the Human Body**

### **Section 186: Order for compensation to be paid**

Where any harm, injury or loss is caused to the body, life or property of any person from the commission of any offence under this chapter, a reasonable compensation for such harm, injury or loss, shall be ordered to be paid by the offender to the victim and to his or her if the victim is **unavailable**. (Dhakal, 2018, 373)

## **Chapter 14: Offences against Protection of Pregnancy**

### **Section 198: Order for Compensation to be paid**

Where any harm, damage, or loss is caused to any person's body, life, or property from the commission of an offence under this chapter, compensation shall be caused to be paid by the offender to the victim.

## **Chapter 15: Offences Relating to Unlawful Detention / Confinement**

### **Section 204: Order for Compensation to be paid**

A reasonable compensation shall be ordered to be paid by the offender, who commits, or causes to be committed, an offence under this Chapter to the victims. (Dhakal, 2018, 378)

## **Chapter 16: Offences Relating to Enforced Disappearances**

### **Section 208: Entitlement to compensation**

A person who is subjected to enforced disappearance **appears or is made public** subsequently, he or she shall be entitled to get a reasonable compensation from the person who has so subjected him or her to enforced disappearance.' And 208(2) has been said that, if the person subjected to enforced disappearance is already dead, the immediate heir to him or her shall be entitled to get the compensation referred to in sub-section(1). (Dhakal, 2018, 380)

## **Chapter 18: Sexual Offences**

### **Compensation ordered to be paid**

A reasonable compensation shall be ordered to be paid to the victim of any offence under this chapter other than the offences under section 220 and 226. (Dhakal, 2018, 386)

## **Chapter 19: Offence Relating to Medical Treatment**

### **Section 239: Compensation ordered to be paid**

Where the death of, or grievous hurt to, or other harm, injury or damage to, any person is caused from the commission of an offence under this chapter, reasonable compensation

shall be ordered to be paid by the offender to the concerned victim and to his or her heir if the victim is dead. (Dhakal, 2018, 389)

## **Chapter 21: Offence Relating to Cheating, Criminal Breach of the Trust and Extortion**

### **Section 254: Compensation**

Where any injury or damage is caused to any person from the commission of an offence under this chapter, the amount of controversy, if set out, and a reasonable compensation, if the amount in the controversy is not set out, shall be ordered to be paid by the offender to the victim. (Dhakal, 2018, 395)

## **Part 3, Chapter: 1 Offence against Individual Privacy and Prestige**

### **Section: 303 Compensation to be paid**

Where a person derives any benefit or causes any kind of damage, loss, annoyance or injury to another person by committing an offence referred to in this chapter, a compensation for such damage, loss, annoyance or injury shall also be ordered to be paid by the offender to the victim. (Dhakal, 2018, 408)

## **Chapter 2: Offences Relating to Defamations**

### **Section 307 : Punishment for Libel**

Section 307 (3) clarified A person is convicted of libeling deceased under this chapter, such compensation and litigation costs shall be ordered to be paid by the offender to near heir to the deceased whose feeling was hurt. (Dhakal, 2018, 410)

## **Crime Victim Protection Act, 2075 (2018)**

The crime victim protection act, 2018 enacted by the Federal Parliament of our country that ensures the right to justice of crime victims in criminal investigations, adjudication of cases, compensation, and social rehabilitation. This first law in the favor of victim of Nepal came into force upon its publications in the Nepal gazette on Sep. 14, 2018. This act also aims to minimize the adverse impact of crimes on victims. This act stated, “any victim shall have to right to enjoy, decent, fair, and dignified behavior during the criminal justice process. He/she shall not be discriminated on the basis of religion, color, gender, ethnicity, origin, language, marital states, age, physical or mental unsoundness, disability and ideology among others.”

Similarly, the victim of rape, incestuous rape, human trafficking, and molestation shall have right to privacy during criminal investigation, prosecution and court proceeding. Again stated that “No one shall disclose the identity of such victim in any form whatsoever” concerned investigating officer or agency if required to provide medical, psychological, psycho-social, and legal counselling; name, address, contact number of investigating officer with the history and complexion of crime suspects, and progress report of prosecution to the victim if he/she desires so. The act defines the victims as “the concerned victim directly affected by the crime and his/her family even if the investigation officer releases the crime suspect because it is not necessary to continue to keep him/her in the custody, information there of shall also be provided to the victim.” This law added as per the act, the victim shall enjoy the compensation including medical treatment and payment on the basis of harm.

The major provisions prevailing in the latest Crime Victim Protection Act 2018 are as follows:

## **Chapter: 2, Rights and Duties of crime victims in Criminal Justice Process**

### **Section 4: Right to dignity**

The victim shall have the right to get the respectable as well as dignified behavior in the criminal justice process. (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Section: 5 Right Against Discrimination**

The victim he/she shall not be discriminated on the basis of his/ her religion, color, ethnicity, gender, caste, origin, language, marital status, age, physical or mental unsoundness, disability, and ideology. (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Section 6: Right to privacy**

The victim of rape, incestuous rape, human trafficking and molestation shall have right to privacy during criminal investigation, prosecution, and court proceeding. It again states that “No one shall disclose the identity of such victims in any form whatsoever” (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Section 7: Right to information of investigation**

It states that concerned investigating officer or agency is required to provide medical, psychological, psycho-social, and legal counselling; Name, Address of prosecuting agency,

Name, Address and mobile no: of investigation officer , complexion of crime, suspect and progress report of investigation and prosecution to the victim if he/ she desires so. (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Section 8: Right to information**

The right to information to be exercised by the victim. The prosecuting agency shall be provide victims with all information about the prosecution against the crime suspect.

### **Section 9: Right to information about criminal justice process**

The prosecuting agency shall provide the victim with all information about the prosecution against the crime suspect, progress report, a certified copy or charge sheet filled against him/ her and court proceeding. Similarly, the concerned court shall inform the victim whether the crime suspect was sent to jail or not: until final verdict date, venue and time of hearing.

### **Section 10: Right to be safe**

The victim and his/her family shall have right to be safe from the potential attack and threat of crime suspect, perpetrators, defendants and their witness.

### **Section 12: Right to hire personal lawyer**

The victim shall have right to hire separate lawyer during the criminal justice process if he/ she desires so. (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Section 18: Right to get information of compensation**

Victim shall enjoy compensation including medical treatment made to lawyer, on the basis of harm ceased to him/her. The compensation shall be borne by the perpetrators.

### **Section 30: Entitled to get compensation from such offender**

Where any person suffers any kind of harm or loss from the offence the court shall acquitted the reasonable compensation to the victim. (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Section 37: Order for compensation to be paid**

Where any harm or injury or loss is caused to the body of victim, until he died without getting any amount or compensation. His/her family member to be entitled to get the compensation.

### **Chapter 5: compensation levy (amount)**

An offender of any crime shall be deposited the amount in compensation fund as the law of this act. It is based on the time duration of punishment according to his/her crime.

### **Chapter 6: Victim Protection recommend committee**

This act has also made a provision of a six member's victim protection recommendation committee led by the Attorney General to recommend to the government protection of interest and rights of crime victims, and delegates the right to work without malicious investigation. It states that No any authority responsible by law for making investigation or prosecution shall make malicious investigation with intend to have an innocent person bear liability. (Samiti, 2018, p.276)

### **Chapter 7: Miscellaneous**

The amount of reasonable compensation will be provided from the fund as per the offence of a crime but it should be properly claimed in court proceeding. It is provisioned to be informed about the court proceeding to the victims as per the law. Our government has power to make a specific law or rule after recommend by the protection committee if needed. (Samiti, 2018, p.258)

### **Determination and execution of sentences for criminal offence Act 2074**

Determination and execution of sentences for criminal offence Act (Act No. 38 of the year 2074) is illustrated in order to maintain morality, decency, etiquette, convenience, economic interest of the public by maintaining law and order in the country, maintain harmonious relationship in common communities and prevent criminal offences. Therefore, the legislature-parliament under clause (1) of Article 296 of the constitution of Nepal has enacted this Act. (Dhakal, 2018, 559) The included major provisions are as follows:

#### **Chapter 6: Provision of Compensation**

##### **Section 41: Compensation should be paid**

As a result of any damage to the victim's life, property or conscience the court may order to pay the reasonable compensation to the victim. Provision relating to the punishment he/she shall be entitled to get compensation from such offender. (Dhakal, 2018, 559)

The following things should be considered when determining the compensation of section



Physical, Mental, or psychological harm to the victim.  
The harm or loss to be entitled to the heir if victim died.  
Financial condition and sources of expenditure of offender.  
The condition of dependent person.  
Other suitable specifies by the court.

Where the death of, or grievous hurt to, or other harm, injury or damage to, any person is caused from the commission of an offender under this chapter, reasonable compensation shall be ordered to be paid by the offender to the concerned victim and to his or her heir if the victim is dead.

#### **Section 42: Compensation should be provided immediately**

Even if anything is written in section (1), if such a person couldn't pay compensation immediately but mortgage other assets, the court shall order paying in installment within a year. (Dhakal, 2018, 559)

#### **Section 43: Compensation to be paid individually**

If there are two or more than two offenders in a same offence everyone will be liable to pay compensation individually as their quantity of crime.

#### **Section 44: Compensation to be paid with consent**

Even if anything is written anywhere both offender and victim may be agreed, the court may order the paying of compensation of an offence as their commitment. (Dhakal, 2018, 560) Likewise sec 45(1) in the provision of imprisonment, 'any harm, injury or loss is caused in an offence, if offender doesn't pay compensation within a time to the victim, the court shall order to be paid from his/her ancestral property (Dhakal, 2018, 560) and provisioned sec 45(2) has been incorporated, 'a person who commits, or causes to be committed the offence under sub-section (1) shall be liable to a sentence of imprisonment for a term not exceeding four years.'

#### **Section 48: Establishment of Victim Relief Fund**

If the accused is unable to provide compensation or amount pursuant to sub-section(2) in accordance with the order under sub section(1), the court shall order that the compensation or amount be provided to the victim or person dependent on him/her from the victim relief fund established pursuant to the laws in force related to the determination

and execution of sentences for criminal offences; and the amount so provided shall be recovered from such accused person and reimbursement into such fund. (Dhakal, 2018, 561) Laws relating to the protections of rights of crime victims are as follows:

Children's Act, 2018

The Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Elimination) Act, 2014

The Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007

The Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009.

The General Code (Muluki Ain, 1963)

**Findings:** The major findings are as follows:

A person may be considered a victim, under this Declaration, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familial relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Various declarations adopted by the general assembly to the UN Convention on transnational organized crime along with its protocol, there has been a significant advancement in the victim justice system in the international arena. In a domestic sphere, as a right of a crime victim is regarded as a fundamental right since 2015, noteworthy improvement can be realized in the physical, mental and economic status of a victim through the assistance of other Acts consistent with Constitution.

Constitution of Nepal, 2015 mandates right of a crime victim as a fundamental right and under this fundamental right Crime Victim Protection Act, 2018 was promulgated into action to ensure and expose the intention in the mentioned Article in a pertinent, elaborative and applicable way so that it becomes easier to administer justice in a victim-friendly manners. This Act ensures the right to justice of crime victims in a criminal investigation, adjudication of cases, compensation and social rehabilitation in accordance with the Constitution.

Recognizing victims as a crime victim itself, they are taken as a witness in the proceeding of their case as per the legal framework of our country.

Nepalese judiciary has adopted a victim-friendly response and procedure towards the trial of cases by implementing the right to privacy, right to a continuous hearing and right to in-camera hearing in the trial of cases like attempt to rape, accident, human trafficking and more has more profoundly respected the rights of victims and attracted the faith of the people towards judicial and victim justice system.

Several laws and courts decisions have mandated several rights of victims which gives a tons of hope to the victims who have lived traumatic life due to the crime done by others. But more

provisions bring more challenges in effective.

Judiciary has clarified the rights to the victim as an integral part of fundamental rights as they are important in living a dignified life.

Though there has been a lot of advocacies regarding rights of a crime victim and also there has been dramatic progress in legal provisions in protecting and assisting the victims, still, there are some challenges to provide and preserve the rights of crime victims.

There is no clear formulation of a judicial approach to compensate the victims of crime as soon as possible, to determine the amount or form of such compensation realistically and to facilitate the livelihood of the victims through compensation.

### **Conclusion:**

By analyzing various existing prevailing laws of victim justice, the present constitution, for the first time in article 21 illustrates victim's rights as a fundamental right; this is the first constitution all over the world including rights of crime victim as a fundamental right except state constitution of Arizona state of United States America. It states that crime victim should be informed about the investigation and case proceeding as well as social rehabilitation and compensation as provided by law. However, procedural complexities in the execution of decision with regard to getting compensation from the defendant. Which are the important and essential rights for victims of crime. Even though GON has incorporated various rights of crime victim and compensatory justices in its laws, policy even these provisions were scattered in different laws. Our nation promulgated as an act, like the Country Penal Code Act 2017, and Crime Victim Protection Act 2018, that ensures the maintaining of morality, decency, etiquette, convenience, economic interest as well the right to justice of crime victim in criminal investigation, adjudications of cases, compensation and social rehabilitation and more. The crime victim protection Act 2018 section, 41 of compensation levy is a big hurdle for the victim to get compensation; it states that a defendant should deposit a very less amount as their duration of imprisonment.

GON has enacted the Country Penal(code) Act 2017 and crime victim protection Act 2018, in order to reform the entire Criminal Justice System. These laws are illustrated for Compensation for crime victim, the protection of witness, medical treatment, services, financial support, allowances, privacy, victim fund, victim compensation committee and victim protection recommendation committee, etc. These laws of Nepal has incorporated on the basis of various provisions illustrated in International Instruments and guidelines for the protection of victim's rights. Moreover, there is no effective institutional mechanism

for recovering the ordered compensation and not implemented strongly. There is still hindrance for access to court for victim, such as; procedural difficulties, delay, costly, lack of gender friendly environment, lack of information of law and legal procedure, security problem for witness, lack of sensitivity towards victim, political protection to the offenders and imbalance power relationship between victim and offenders. There is procedural complexity in the execution of decision with regard to getting compensation from the defendant. Basically, victims are not able to get the compensation on time. Similarly, the implementation of law and judgments given by courts related to the protection of the privacy for victim is not properly implemented and the protection and security of crime victim is not satisfactory.

Likewise, there is adequate legal mechanism but not effective. The law and procedure to provide compensation should be simplified. The proceeding of criminal justice system should be courteous and empathic towards victim's plight. It would help them to feel comfortable while dealing with justice system. And it is better to determine the special form of rehabilitation program by adding a separate section in act for the provision of social restoration to the crime victim. The government should show the legal commitment of implementation of social rehabilitation program. Even if the accused is not found or convinced in any case of victim, state should be guaranteed of compensation as well as further proceeding. There should be fair deal in all level of courts for the protection of victims and witness. The victim should at all stages of the procedures, be questioned in a manner which gives due considerations to his personal situation, his/her rights and dignity. Whenever possible and appropriate, children and the mentally ill or handicapped should be questioned in the presence of their guardians or other person qualified to assist them. The victim should have the right to ask for a review by a competent authority of a decision not to prosecute.

The responsiveness of judicial and administrative process to the need of victims should be facilitated by taking measures to minimize inconvenience to victims, protect their privacy, ensures safety as well as that of their family and witnesses on their behalf, from intimidation and retaliation. Right to medical treatment, right to be a party to discussion on the case being withdrawn, right to free legal aid, right to access to justice and so on, which are the important and essential rights for victim of crime, that should be guaranteed as the fundamental right. Indeed, our Nation accepted the basic principles of

the justice for crime victim and abuse of power in 1985.

Restitution, compensation, reparation, are aspects of community's restorative responsive to crime and the harm it caused. It should be managed properly. The components/professionals of Victim Justice System should be sensitized on crime victim issue. Rehabilitation centers and Victim Fund must be established as per the crime victim protection act to provide shelter and to be protected them from re-victimization and scheme of providing compensation should be introduced to normalize their livelihood. Victim awareness program should be organized and state should provide vocational training and education to re-establish crime victim in the society. It is necessary to fulfill the six members of victim protection recommendation committee led by the attorney general to recommend the government as per the recent crime victim protection act 2018. Victim/witness assistance program and legal support mechanism should be provided to the crime victim who is poor, weak and illiterate for further proceeding.

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## Internal determinants of profitability in Nepali commercial banks

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### Abstract

*Bank is the financial institutions, which collects the deposit from the general public and institutions and provides loan to mobilize the resources in the economy that support to develop the stable economy in the country. The stable economy of the country depends on the successful operation and better financial performance of the banking industry. The stability and growth of the bank have direct relationship with its profitability. There are several internal and external determinants of measuring profitability of the bank. The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between internal determinants and profitability (i.e. return on assets) and to analyze the impact of internal determinants on profitability position of Nepalese commercial banks. This study considered twenty commercial banks out of twenty-seven commercial banks operating in Nepal till fiscal year 2075/076. The sample size depends on the operation of 10 years in Nepalese banking industry. This study was based on the secondary data of commercial banks and collected data from the period of fiscal year 2071/072 to 2075/076 through their website. The study used the multiple regression analysis through SPSS software to measure the banks' profitability in terms of Return on Asset (ROA) as a dependent variable and to analyze the impact of size of bank, employee efficiency, operating efficiency, management efficiency, interest cost and liquidity risk. The study found that the bank size, interest cost, management efficiency, liquidity risks and operational efficiency have negative relationship with ROA. On the other hand, employee efficiency has a positive and*



*statistically significant relationship with banks' profitability. However, the impact of operational efficiency and interest cost is statistically insignificant and other internal determinants are statistically significant against the banks' profitability. The study suggests that the banking sectors should take into the consideration of the key internal factors in their operation to overcome their liquidity crisis and operational issues and to improve the profitability position of the commercial banks in Nepal. This study also opens the floor of the study in other banking financial institutions to analyze the determinants of profitability. The researchers can also study the external determinants of banks' profitability in the future.*

**Keywords:** deposit, current liabilities, profitability determinants, efficiency, firm size and liquidity.

## **Introduction**

Financial markets and banking system are more efficiently managed in developed countries whereas weak and undersized in developing countries like Nepal. So, they have several opportunities to fill the gap between borrowers and depositors and to earn more profit and secure depositors' funds. Savings and investments are the most important determinants of economic growth and sound financial health of the national economy. Banks are the financial institutions, which mobilize, allocate and invest the huge amount of deposit collected as savings from their clients and satisfy to their shareholders in terms of financial rewards i.e. wealth maximization and dividends. Wealth maximization and dividends are the major interests of the shareholders to measure the financial performance of any companies. Accordingly, banks also measure and evaluate their performance based on allocation of capital, expansion and growth and economic development as well. Therefore, efficiency and profitability of banks are evaluated through the sound financial system in the utilization of the funds collected from depositors to granting loan to borrowers. Due to better quality services for customers and efficient operation and fund mobilization, they improve their profitability and flow of funds. Similarly, leverage and working capital have negative effect on profitability (Asimakopoulous, Samitas & Papadogonas, 2009). On the other hand, age and size of the company have an inverse effect on its profitability (Salman & Yazdanfar, 2012).

Aburime (2007) explained the profitability as reflection of sound operation and performance of the banks. More precisely, it reflects the quality of management, efficiency,

capability of risk management and competitive strategies of the banks and behaviours of shareholders. Profits is an indicator of the financial strength of the bank for external investors. Firm size, growth and fixed asset ratio have statistically significant and positive effect on profitability whereas, liquidity, leverage and operating cost have a negative and statistically significant effect on the profitability position of manufacturing companies (Agegneu & Gujral, 2022). Healthy and sustainable profitability is important to maintain the stability of the banking system and contributes the financial system in the country (Bashar & Islam, 2014). Both internal and external environment of the organization affect the profitability of the banking sectors. But this study tries to analyze only the internal determinants of profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. Internal factors affect the performance of bank that is basically measured by its profitability. Krakah and Ameyaw (2010) analyzed the performance of the bank in terms of financial variables presented in the financial statements. Besides, they also investigated the effect of management decisions on operating results and found a direct effect on the operating results and performance of banks.

### **Statement of Problem**

Financial system plays an important role for the sustainable economic development of a country. It does not only transfer funds from depositors to investors but also ensures the depositors for their savings, investments in productive sectors, mobilization of resources of the country and increasing savings. Chijoriga (1997) found that the performance of commercial banks depends on profitability which is the prerequisite condition for the efficiency of commercial banks. When they have better profitability position, they can minimize their risks and uncertainty. High competition, risky investment, high level of liquidity provision, poor asset quality, low efficiency, high level of non-performing loans, and threats of new technologies, high competition have negative effect on the profitability of banks that show low performance. Firm size, firm growth, and electricity crisis have positive effect on profitability whereas, firm age, financial leverage and productivity have negative effect on profitability (Yazdanfar, 2013; Fareed et al. 2016). Nepalese financial sector is dominated by banks due to establishment of 27 commercial banks even 24 development banks, 22 finance companies, 90 micro credit development banks, 25 insurance companies, Provident Fund, Citizen Investment Trust have been operating in the country till fiscal year 2076/077. They have satisfactory performance in terms of profitability, capital adequacy, growth and expansion and customer service. The stability of

commercial banks depends in the national economy on their profitability position.

All these issues of Nepalese banking sector with respect to measuring performance are key internal determinants of profitability and not studied in the past. Therefore, this study investigates to fill the gap by providing full information about the internal factors that affects profitability of commercial banks operated in the country considering 5 years data. The following are the research questions of the study:

Is there any relationship between internal factors and profitability position of Nepalese commercial banks?

What is the impact of internal determinants on profitability position that affect the performance of Nepalese commercial banks?

### **Objectives of the Study**

Internal, industrial and macro-economic factors affect the profitability of commercial banks. This study considers only internal determinants of profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. These include the bank size, capital adequacy, liquidity risk, operating efficiency, management efficiency, employee efficiency and interest cost. Therefore, this study is expected to provide empirical evidence on the profitability and to analyze the internal factors that influence profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

To assess the current status of internal determinants and profitability position of Nepalese commercial banks.

To examine the relationship between internal determinants and profitability position of Nepalese commercial banks.

To analyze the impact of internal determinants on profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

### **Research hypotheses:**

### **Review of Literature**

The existence, growth and successful operation of a business organization mainly depend upon earning profit. The profitability of the organization will contribute for the economic development of the country by providing additional employment and tax revenue to government. It is true that profitability also increases the value of shareholders. The term 'profitability' refers to the ability of the business organization to maintain

its profit year after year. Smirlock (1985) conducted the empirical study on efficiency to examine the relationship between market concentration and bank profitability and found significant negative relationship with the profitability. Bashir (2003) examined the relationship between high capital-to-asset and loan-to-asset ratios and profitability of the company and found strong relationship of these factors with profitability. The regulatory burden could also negatively affect the performance of the banks (Saunders & Cornett, 2008). Heffernan and Fu (2008) conducted the study of ten bank-specific internal determinants and three macroeconomic determinants and analyzed their effects on performance of South Asian banks taking 76 banks as sample. Among the results obtained are cost to income ratio is negatively signed and significant to profitability. The best dependent variables are Economic Value Added (EVA) and the Net Interest Margin (NIM), as against Return on Assets (ROA) or Return on Equity (ROE). According to the study of Samad (2015), bank specific factors such as loan-deposit ratio, loan-loss provision to total assets, equity capital to total assets, and operating expenses to total assets are significant factors of bank's profitability whereas bank sizes and macroeconomic variable have no impact on profits. Debt ratio has negative effect on financial performance, whereas the firm size has positive effect on ROE (Onaolapo & Kajola, 2010). Firm size, capital structure, and asset structure have positive effect on return on equity whereas, inflation have negative effect whereas no any effect of business growth rate, current solvency, economic growth rate on return on equity (Kanwal & Nadeem, 2013). Capital strength, loan intensity and bank size have a positive and significant impact on ROA whereas inflation has a negative and significant impact on ROA and ROE (Rahman, Hamid & Khan, 2015). The study of Raza, Saeed & Hena (2019) found that the bank loan has positive impact on bank performance whereas the size of asset has negative and significant impact on profitability. Deposit does not have the prominent impact on profitability of banks in Pakistan. The study of Petriiaa, Capraru & Ihnatov (2015) showed that credit and liquidity risk, management efficiency, the diversification of business, the market concentration and the economic growth have impact on profitability of banks (i.e. ROAA and ROAE).

### **Limitation of the Study**

There are several internal and external variables that affect the profitability of the organization. But this study will focus only seven internal factors such as bank size, capital adequacy, liquidity risk, operating efficiency, management efficiency, employee efficiency,

interest cost that affect profitability position of the commercial banks but other external factors such as inflation rate, industry competition, globalization effect, gross domestic product growth, foreign currency exchange rate, spread interest rate etc. are not included in this study. Only financial ratios, descriptive statistics, co-relation co-efficient, test of multicollinearity and regression are used for analysis based on 5-years' data in this study.

## Research Methodology

In order to examine the relationship between internal determinants and the profitability position (i.e. return on assets) and to analyze the causal impact of internal determinants on return on assets, this study was based on causal comparative research design. In this study, profitability of the banks is a dependent variable and size of the bank, capital adequacy, liquidity risk, operating efficiency, management efficiency, employee efficiency, interest cost are independent variables. There were 27 commercial banks at the time of selection of sample of the study. Out of these 27 banks, only 20 banks were selected as sample for this study, which have more than 10 years of operation in Nepal before 2019. So, the selection of the sample banks for the study was based on their operation of ten years in Nepal. Websites and annual reports of the banks are used to collect the data. Test of multicollinearity, Regression, correlation co-efficient, descriptive statistics are used for the interpretation of data of these banks. The collected data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations and multiple linear regression to achieve the broad objectives of the study.

For the test of multicollinearity, variance inflation factor ( $VIF < 10$ ) and tolerance level (over 0.10) are used and under descriptive statistics, mean, median, standard deviation, maximum and minimum are used to analyze the general trends of the data collected from the sample banks for five years from fiscal year 2071/072 to 2075/76. Correlation matrix is used to examine the relationship between the dependent variable and explanatory variables. Besides, multiple linear regression and t-statics are used to analyze the relative effect of internal determinants on profitability of the sample banks. For this study, ordinary least square (OLS) method has been used to examine the relationship between profitability and its determinants with the help of SPSS 22 software package. The regression model is as follows: s

$$ROA_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1(Size) + \beta_2(CaAR) + \beta_3(LRR) + \beta_4(OER) + \beta_5(MER) + \beta_6(EER) + \beta_7(ICR) + \mu_{it}$$

**Where,**

$\beta$  : Coefficient for the respective explanatory variables,

ROA	: Return on assets	= Net profit/ Total assets
Size	: Size of bank	= Natural log of total assets
CaAR	: Capital adequacy ratio	= Equity/ Total assets ratio
LRR	: Liquidity risk ratio	= Current liability/Total assets
OER	: Operating efficiency ratio	= Total cost/Total income ratio
MER	: Management efficiency ratio	= Operating expense/operating income
EER	: Employee efficiency ratio	= Staff expenses/Total assets
ICR	: Interest cost ratio	= Interest expense/Total Deposit

## Results and Discussion

### Test for Multicollinearity

Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimation method is used in this study, which assumes no co-relation with one another explanatory variable. How much correlation causes multicollinearity however, is not clearly defined. Correlation coefficient above 0.9 could cause a serious multicollinearity problem and model does not efficiently estimate with less reliable results (Hair et al., 2006). It means that there is no serious multicollinearity among the explanatory variables if correlation coefficient is below 0.9.

Table 1

#### *Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.701 <sup>a</sup>	.492	.453	.003874
a. Predictors: (Constant), LnTA, MER, LRR, EER, CaAR, OER, ICR				

Table 2

#### Co-efficient and Collinearity Diagnostic Statistics

<b>B</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Collinearity Statistics</b>	
	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>	
1 (Constant)	-.014	.027		
CaAR	.051	.019	.425	2.350
LRR	.011	.010	.600	1.666
OER	.002	.007	.280	3.570
MER	-.033	.008	.253	3.947
EER	.362	.099	.593	1.687
ICR	.058	.055	.120	8.361
LnTA	.001	.001	.821	1.218

a. Dependent Variable: Return on assets

Source: SPSS 22 result

Table 1 Model summary shows co-relation among the independent variables i.e.701. Collinearity statistics column of above table 2 shows tolerance level above 0.10 and VIF value below 10. So, there is no issue of multicollinearity among seven independent variables. P-values of LRR, OER, ICR and LnTA are above 0.10. So, they are insignificant. But only three remaining variables are significant and F-statistics shows significant at 0.05 even four variables are not statistically significant, the regression model is the best fit for the analysis of internal determinants of profitability in Nepalese commercial banks.

### Descriptive Statistics of the Data

The following Table 4 presents the outcomes of the descriptive statistics for main variables involved in the regression model generated to show the overall description about data used in the model. Mean, median, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value of dependent variable, ROA and independent variables such as size of bank, capital adequacy, liquidity risk, operating efficiency, management efficiency, employee efficiency and interest cost are presented in the following table.

Table 3

#### Descriptive Statistics

		<b>ROA</b>	<b>CaAR</b>	<b>LRR</b>	<b>OER</b>	<b>MER</b>	<b>EER</b>	<b>ICR</b>	<b>LnTA</b>
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		.01766	.11320	.87564	.38026	.64212	.01019	.04531	25.24165



Median	.01700	.10850	.88500	.35700	.64650	.00900	.04150	25.26600
Std. Deviation	.005238	.030640	.050097	.106535	.101493	.005120	.020299	.446917
Minimum	.005	.043	.515	.231	.401	.004	.010	24.122
Maximum	.036	.195	.957	.990	.868	.028	.089	26.146

Source: SPSS 22 result

According to table 4, all variables comprised 100 observations and ROA is used as the profitability measure in this study; which indicates that Nepalese commercial banks earned positive net profit after tax (NPAT) during the study period. For the total sample, the mean of ROA 0.01766 i.e. 1.766% with a minimum of 0.5% and a maximum of 3.6% which means the most profitable bank earn NPAT Rs. 3.6 from the investment of every Rs.100 in the assets of the banks among the sample banks. On the other hand, the least profitable bank among sample banks, earn NPAT Rs. 0.5 from the investment of every Rs. 100 in the assets of the banks. The standard deviation statistics for ROA is 0.005238 that indicates variation in profitability between the selected banks was very small. It is found that sample banks need more efforts to utilize their assets to increase ROA.

Similarly, average capital adequacy ratio (CaAR) is 11.32%, with a minimum of 4.3% and a maximum of 19.5%. Nepalese commercial banks have lower capital adequacy position in an average. There is direct relationship between capital adequacy and profitability. Average liquidity risks ratio (LRR) is 87.564%, with a minimum of 51.5% and a maximum of 95.7%. There is inverse relationship between liquidity and profitability. LRR of Nepalese commercial banks have higher liquidity position in an average.

Furthermore, OER is in the range between 23.1% and 99%. The mean OER is 38.03% and standard deviation of 10.654%. The most efficient bank has a quite substantial cost advantage compared to the least efficient bank. MER ranges from 0.401 to 0.868 with average efficiency ratio of 0.64212. The most efficient bank can get more advantage from the management efficiency in comparison to the least efficient bank due to maximum MER (0.868) and average MER is 0.64212. EER is in the range between 0.004 and 0.028 with the average efficiency ratio of 0.01019. Banks have less role of employees' efficiency. EER can be deviated by .005120 from its mean, which is the least value among the independent variables. So, there is less fluctuation in the ratio from the mean.

On the other hand, the size of bank which is measured by natural log of total asset

has the highest standard deviation (0.4469) and the most deviated variable from its mean. Similarly, the standard deviation of ICR is 0.020299, comparatively lower and average ICR is 0.04531. ICR ranges from 0.010 to 0.089. So, the most efficient bank has a quite substantial cost advantage by 0.010 (1%) on deposit in comparison to the least efficient bank in diversifying their source of revenue.

## Correlation analysis

Correlation is an index which measures the relationship or association between two or more variables to each other. Pearson's co-relation coefficient is used in this study to develop the relationship between the variables that ranges from +1 (i.e. perfect positive relationship) to -1 (i.e. perfect negative relationship). Sample size is the key element in co-relation analysis to decide the correlation coefficient is different from zero or statistically significant. The correlation coefficient above 0.20 is significant at 5% level of significance when the sample size is more than 100 (Meyers et al., 2006). The sample size of this study is 100 observations and above justification for significance of the correlation coefficient can be used in this study. The following table 4 (Correlation Matrix) shows the correlation coefficient between the dependent variable and independent variables.

Table 4

Correlation matrix

	ROA	CaAR	LRR	OER	MER	EER	ICR	LnTA
ROA	1							
CaAR	.356**	1						
LRR	-.130	-.624**	1					
OER	.172	-.163	.175	1				
MER	-.417**	.094	-.096	-.276**	1			
EER	.384**	.244*	-.100	.394**	.133	1		
ICR	-.164	.421**	-.334**	-.674**	.741**	.022	1	
LnTA	.278**	.069	-.066	.081	-.036	.351**	.053	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).      *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								

Source: SPSS 22 result

Above table 4 shows, MER of sample banks is the most negatively correlated variable with

ROA (-0.417). It clearly shows that profitability and management efficiency have inverse relationship. Similarly, there is also negative association between ROA and LRR (-0.130), OER (0.172), ICR (-0.164). On the other hand, the EER is positively correlated with the profitability measure (0.384). Similarly, there is positive correlation between ROA and CaAR (0.356) and Bank size (0.278) respectively.

## Results of regression analysis

Table 5 shows the regression outputs calculated using SPSS software and shows the most of the beta coefficient negative. These coefficients explain the influence level of each independent variables on the dependent variable (ROA). P-value (Sig. value) indicates the percentage of each variable for significant.  $R^2$  indicates the explanatory power of the regression model and adjusted  $R^2$  is used to measure the loss of degrees of freedom associated due to addition of extra variables to analyze the explanatory powers of the models. The regression model used in this study to identify the influence level of determinants on the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks is as follows:

$$ROA_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1(Size) + \beta_2(CaAR) + \beta_3(LRR) + \beta_4(OER) + \beta_5(MER) + \beta_6(EER) + \beta_7(ICR) + \mu_{it}$$

$$ROA = -0.014 + 0.051(CaAR) + 0.011(LRR) + 0.002(OER) - 0.033(MER) + 0.362(EER) + 0.058(ICR) + 0.001(Size)$$

Table 5

### Co-efficient Statistics

Model B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig. Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics	
	Std. Error	Beta				VIF	
1 (Constant)	-.014	.027		-.526	.600		
CaAR	.051	.019	.300	2.631	.010	.425	2.350
LRR	.011	.010	.108	1.127	.263	.600	1.666
OER	.002	.007	.031	.218	.828	.280	3.570
MER	-.033	.008	-.638	-4.320	.000	.253	3.947
EER	.362	.099	.353	3.660	.000	.593	1.687
ICR	.058	.055	.226	1.053	.295	.120	8.361
LnTA	.001	.001	.103	1.257	.212	.821	1.218

a. Dependent Variable: Return on assets

Source: SPSS 22 result

Besides, table 5 shows that the coefficients of capital adequacy, liquidity risk, operational efficiency, employee efficiency, interest cost and size of bank against ROA are positive with coefficients of these variables are 0.051, 0.011, 0.002, 0.362, 0.058 and 0.001 respectively. This indicates that there is a positive impact of these aforementioned variables on ROA. Thus, it is found that one unit increase in these three variables will lead to increase in ROA by 0.051, 0.011, 0.002, 0.362, 0.058 and 0.001 respectively. But the coefficient of management efficiency against ROA is negative with the coefficients of these variables are - 0.033 respectively. This indicates that there is an inverse impact of management efficiency on ROA. Thus, it is found that one unit increase in management efficiency will lead to decrease in ROA by 0.033 respectively. Finally, as per the regression results presented in table 5, only three variables, CaAR, MER and EER among seven independent variables used in this study are strongly significant at 1% level of significance.

### Analysis of Model (R<sup>2</sup>)

The following table 6 shows R-squared statistics and the adjusted-R squared statistics of the model, which are 70.4% and 49.6% respectively. The result indicates that 49.2% of total variations in dependent variables is accounted by the changes in independent variables i.e. size of banks, capital adequacy, liquidity risks, operational efficiency, management efficiency, employees' efficiency and interest cost. These variables collectively explain 49.2% of total changes in ROA. The remaining 50.8% of total variations is explained by other factors. They may be some bank specific factors and external factors which are not included in the model. Therefore, these independent variables collectively are good explanatory variables for the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

Table 6

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.701 <sup>a</sup>	.492	.453	.003874
a. Predictors: (Constant), LnTA, MER, LRR, EER, CaAR, OER, ICR				

Source: SPSS 22 result

## Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The following table 7 shows the overall test of significance of the model that tests the acceptance of null hypothesis. Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):  $R^2$  is equal to zero is rejected at 1% level of significance as the p-value is sufficiently low (0.000). F value is 12.709 with p-value 0.000 indicates strong statistical significance, which supports the reliability and validity of the model. So,  $R^2$  is not zero. Thus, among the significant variables, capital adequacy, management efficiency and employees' efficiency have statistically significant impact on profitability of banks at 1% level of significance since their p-values are 0.010, 0.000 and 0.000 respectively. But, operating efficiency, interest cost and size of banks have no statistically significant impact on profitability of banks at 10% level of significance since their p-values are 0.263, 0.828, 0.295 and 0.212 respectively.

Table 7

F-Statistics (ANOVA<sup>a</sup>)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.001	7	.000	12.709	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual		.001 92 .000				
	Total	.003	99			
a. Dependent Variable: Return on assets						
b. Predictors: (Constant), LnTA, MER, LRR, EER, CaAR, OER, ICR						

Source: SPSS 22 result

## Major Findings of the Study

The analysis is based on the theoretical framework and the data collected through the data collection instruments. The data were analyzed in light of internal determinants of profitability as research questions and hypotheses stated. Hence, the analysis mainly focuses on the results of the regression analysis based on secondary data relating to internal determinants of banks' profitability of the selected Nepalese commercial banks of Nepal. Based on the study of selected factors such as size of bank, liquidity risk, employee efficiency, operational efficiency, management efficiency, interest cost. After testing multicollinearity among the internal determinants as independent variables, capital adequacy ratio was eliminated from the model.

Equity to total assets ratio was used as a proxy variable in the model to measure the capital adequacy of Nepalese commercial banks. The coefficient of Capital adequacy is 0.051 and the impact of management efficiency on profitability is positive and statistically strong significant at 1% (with p-value = 0.010) and correlation coefficient between capital adequacy and ROA is 0.356. Moreover, the significant parameter indicates that the capital adequacy affects the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

Size of banks in term of the natural logarithm of total asset (Size) was used as proxy in the regression model. It is found that size of banks has positive effect on banks' profitability and statistically insignificant impact on banks' profitability. The result shows that larger size of bank leads higher profitability of the bank. It could mean that higher size banks enjoy higher profit than lower size banks of Nepal because they are getting the benefit of economies to scale.

Based on the liquidity risk, the regression result of this study implies that the relationship between liquidity risk and ROA is negative and coefficient (0.011) is insignificant at 10% significance level (p-value = 0.263). The variable, Current liability to total assets ratio was used as a proxy to measure the liquidity risks of Nepalese commercial banks in the model. The result indicates that the liquidity risk variable has a significantly positive influence (0.011) on bank profitability. This implies that increase in one unit of liquidity risk leads to increase lower ROA by 0.011 in an average.

Based on operational efficiency ratio, the coefficient of operational efficiency ratio of total cost to total income is 0.002. So, the co-efficient was positive and statistically insignificant at 10% significance level (p-value=0.828) having negligible influence on ROA and correlation coefficient between operational efficiency and ROA is 0.172. Moreover, the insignificant parameter indicates that the structure does not affect the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. This result shows that increasing total cost of Nepalese commercial banks would certainly improve the banks' profitability by negligible rate by 0.002. So, operational efficiency and banks' profitability are negatively correlated (0.172) and insignificant impact on ROA (i.e. banks' profitability). The results imply that an increase/decrease in these total cost increases/decreases the profits Nepalese banks.

Operating expense to operating income ratio was used as a proxy variable in the model to measure the management efficiency of Nepalese commercial banks. The coefficient of management efficiency is -0.033 and the impact of management efficiency

on profitability is positive and statistically strong significant at 1% (with p-value = 0.000) and correlation coefficient between management efficiency and ROA is -0.417. Moreover, the significant parameter indicates that the management efficiency affects the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

Based on employee efficiency ratio, the variable, staff expenses to total assets ratio was used as a proxy in the model to measure the effect of employee efficiency on profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. The coefficient of employee efficiency is 0.362 and the impact of employee efficiency on profitability is positive and statistically strong significant at 1% (with p-value = 0.000) and correlation coefficient between employee efficiency and ROA is 0.384. Moreover, the significant parameter indicates that employee efficiency positively affects the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. Thus, the alternative hypothesis that states there is a significant relationship between employee efficiency and profitability may be accepted. Thus, the study found that the employee efficiency variable to be significant in determining profitability in the long-run. The result also shows that the Nepalese commercial banks may truly be benefited from staff efficiency.

Based on interest cost ratio, the variable, interest expenses to total deposit ratio was used as a proxy in the model to measure the effect of interest cost ratio on profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. The coefficient of interest cost is 0.058 and the impact of interest cost on profitability is positive and statistically insignificant at 10% (with p-value = 0.295) and correlation coefficient between interest cost ratio and ROA is -0.164. Moreover, the insignificant parameter indicates that interest cost negatively affects the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

## **Conclusion**

There are several factors that affect the profitability position of the organization. Some of them are internal determinants and some are external determinants of the organization. This study basically focused on the internal determinants of profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. This study aimed to examine the relationship between internal determinants and profitability position (i.e. return on assets) of Nepalese commercial banks and to analyze the impact of internal determinants on banks' profitability. The internal determinants refer to the factors that originated from bank accounts (income statement and balance sheet). Therefore, they could be termed as micro or bank-specific determinants of



profitability. The profitability of banks may also be affected by the external determinants that are not considered in this study because internal factors explain a large proportion of banks' profitability; nevertheless, external factors have also an impact on their performance. Seven explanatory variables were used as internal determinants of banks' profitability in this study such as size of bank (natural log of total assets), capital adequacy, liquidity risk, operating efficiency, management efficiency, employee efficiency and interest cost. To fulfil the objective of this study, an appropriate econometric methodology, Ordinary Least Square (OLS) model, was used to estimate the coefficient, to measure the influence level and develop the relationship between profitability and its determinants using SPSS 22 software package. Quantitative data were mainly used from secondary sources for the time period of 2014/015 to 2019/020 in order to analyze the internal determinants of profitability in Nepalese Commercial Banks.

The study found that the management efficiency has a negative impact on ROA with coefficient of  $-0.033$  which is statistically strong significant. There is a positive impact of all six independent variables on ROA except management efficiency with statistical significance even capital adequacy ratio, management efficiency ratio and employees' efficiency ratio are only significant at 1% level of significance. This shows that as increasing operating costs of commercial banks would certainly improve the banks' profitability and increasing interest of deposit would also improve the banks' profitability. In the Nepalese banking industry, there is higher liquidity risks ratio shown as per the result of descriptive statistics.

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## ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभाव

लावण्यप्रसाद दुङ्गाना  
विद्यावारिधि शोधरत

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### लेखसार

‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ (२०२३) खण्डकाव्यमा अभिव्यक्त रहस्यसम्बन्धी दर्शनको अध्ययनलाई प्रस्तुत शोधलेखमा विषय बनाइएको छ । ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ ऐतिहासिक विषयवस्तुमा आधारित रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभाव रहेको कृति हो । यस अध्ययनमा ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यमा केकस्तो रहस्यको प्रभाव छ र उक्त प्रभावको ग्रहण कविले किन गरेका हुन् भन्ने जिज्ञासाको समाधान खोजिएको छ । यस अध्ययनका लागि आवश्यक प्राथमिक तथा द्वितीयक स्रोतका सामग्रीहरू पुस्तकालयीय कार्यबाट सङ्कलन गरिएका छन् । प्रस्तुत अध्ययनका लागि रहस्य विषयक षड्दर्शनका मत तथा उक्त दर्शनकाध्येताहरूका रहस्यसम्बन्धी धारणालाई सैद्धान्तिक पर्याधारका रूपमा लिइएको छ र तर्क तथा विश्लेषण विधिको पनि उपयोग गरिएको छ । यस अध्ययनमा ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको विषयवस्तु ऐतिहासिक र मूल कथ्य राष्ट्रप्रेम रहे पनि उक्त राष्ट्रप्रेमलाई सुदृढ, महिमामय एवम् जीवन्त तुल्याउन रहस्य दर्शनको सचेत प्रभाव ग्रहण गरिएको निष्कर्ष निकालिएको छ ।

**शब्दकुञ्जी :** इहलोक, ईश्वर, परलोक, राष्ट्रप्रेम, षड्दर्शन

### विषयपरिचय

प्रस्तुत शोधलेखको मुख्य विषय “राष्ट्रनिर्माता” खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्यप्रभाव’ भन्ने रहेको छ । ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्य कृति हो । ‘खण्डकाव्य’ भनेको ‘महाकाव्यको एक देशको अनुसरण गर्दै लेखिएको कविताकृति’ (विश्वनाथ, २०५०, पृ. ५९५) अर्थात् ‘कविताको मझौला रूपको कृति’ हो । यस ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको रचना राष्ट्रकवि उपाधिले विभूषित माधव घिमिरेले गरेका हुन् । यसको प्रकाशन २०२३ सालमा भएको हो । कवि घिमिरेले यस खण्डकाव्यमा नेपाल एकीकरणको ऐतिहासिक विषयलाई समेटेका छन् । उनले यस खण्डकाव्यमा राष्ट्रको अखण्डता अक्षुण्ण रहनुपर्छ भन्ने भाव प्रस्तुत गर्दै अगाध राष्ट्रप्रेम दर्साएका छन् । यसै गरी ‘रहस्य’ भनेको ‘क्षिप्त यथार्थ’ अथवा ‘लुकेर रहेको वास्तविकता’ हो र ‘प्रभाव’ शब्दले यहाँ ‘छाप’ अर्थ बोकेको छ । ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्यको छाप छ भन्ने यस विश्लेष्य विषयको आशय हो ।

रहस्य पौरस्त्य दर्शनको विषय हो । यस दर्शनले जीवजगत्का अनगिन्ती गुप्त यथार्थका बारेमा चिन्तनमनन

गरेको छ । यस दर्शनको प्रभाव जनबोलीदेखि साहित्यरचनासम्म परेको देखिन्छ । कवि घिमिरे यही पौरस्त्य दर्शनका अध्येता भएकाले उनका रचनामा यसको प्रभाव रहेको भेटिन्छ । उनको 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यमा पनि ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य र इहलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्यको सचेत प्रभाव रहेको र रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभावका माध्यमबाट खण्डकाव्यको मूल कथ्य राष्ट्रप्रेमलाई सबल तुल्याइएकाले यो विषय अध्ययनीय बनेको छ ।

अध्ययनका दृष्टिकोणहरू विभिन्न हुन सक्छन् । कविता विधाका सन्दर्भमा भन्नुपर्दा यसको अध्ययन एवम् समीक्षा अधिकतर काव्यशास्त्रीय दृष्टिबाट भइरहेको देखिन्छ । यस शोध लेखमा भने 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यको रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभावका दृष्टिकोणबाट अध्ययन गरिएको छ । यसअघि घिमिरेको दार्शनिक विशेषताको चर्चापरिचर्चा गरिएको पाइए पनि रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभावका दृष्टिकोणबाट भने 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यको अध्ययन भएको पाइएको छैन । त्यसैले उक्त शोधान्तराल पूरा गर्न यहाँ यो विषय छनोट गरिएको हो र यसले 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यका पाठक तथा अनुसन्धाताहरूलाई उक्त खण्डकाव्यको दार्शनिक दृष्टिकोणबाट अध्ययन गर्न सघाउ पुऱ्याउने भएकाले यो शोधकार्य औचित्यपूर्ण, महत्वपूर्ण र उपयोगी रहेको छ । यस अध्ययनमा घिमिरेको 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभावको प्रयोग किन गरिएको हो भन्ने शोध समस्यालाई मुख्य रूपमा लिइएको छ । यसै गरी यस लेखमा 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यको दार्शनिक दृष्टिकोणबाट अध्ययन गर्नुलाई उद्देश्य बनाइएको छ । यस शोधलेखमा घिमिरेको 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभाव किन ग्रहण गरिएको हो भन्ने शोधसमस्याको प्राज्ञिक समाधान गर्ने उद्देश्य राखिएको छ । यसका साथै उक्त रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभावका माध्यमबाट खण्डकाव्यको मूल कथ्य राष्ट्रप्रेमलाई महिमामय, सुदृढ एवम् जीवन्त तुल्याउन कवि घिमिरे सफल भएको यस अध्ययनको दावी रहेको छ ।

## अध्ययनविधि

प्रस्तुत शोधकार्यका लागि आवश्यक प्राथमिक स्रोतको सामग्री 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्य तथा सैद्धान्तिक पर्याधारका लागि आवश्यक द्वितीयक स्रोतका सामग्रीहरू पुस्तकालयीय कार्यबाट सङ्कलन गरिएका छन् । अध्ययनको दृष्टिकोण रहस्य दर्शन रहेको र यसको स्रोत पूर्वीय दर्शन भएकाले यहाँ षड्दर्शनका ईश्वरसम्बन्धी र इहलोकसम्बन्धी मत तथा यस सम्बन्धमा दर्शनका अध्येताहरूबाट व्यक्त विचारलाई सैद्धान्तिक आधार बनाई शोध समस्यको समाधान खोजिएको छ । यस क्रममा खण्डकाव्यका पद्यहरू सोद्देश्य छनोट गरी तर्क र विश्लेषण विधिबाट 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यमा ईश्वरसम्बन्धी तथा इहलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभाव रहेको निष्कर्ष निकालिएको छ ।

## सैद्धान्तिक पर्याधार

रहस्य अध्यात्मवादी विचार हो । पौरस्त्य दर्शनका क्षेत्रमा रहस्यवादी विचारको मूल स्रोत उपनिषद् मानिन्छ । यसले इन्द्रिय अगम्य रहस्यमय परमात्माको असीम शक्ति र महत्ताको खुलासा गर्न खोजेको छ (अर्याल, २०५६, पृ. ४५) । यस अखिल ब्रह्माण्डमा निहित सम्पूर्ण ज्ञानको उद्घाटन अद्यापि सम्भव भएको छैन । यसैलाई रहस्य मानिएको छ । यस रहस्यलाई विद्वान्हरूले अध्यात्मदर्शनसँग जोडेर अध्ययन गरेको पाइन्छ (शर्मा, २०६०, पृ. ३५३) । जीव र जगत् को सारा शक्ति र अस्तित्व ईश्वरमा अन्तर्निहित रहेको र यिनको ईश्वरसँगको संयोग रहस्यमय रहेको दार्शनिक मत छ । प्रस्तुत शोधकार्यमा यिनै ईश्वर तथा इहलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई अध्ययनको आधार बनाइएकाले यहाँ सोसम्बन्धी विचारहरूलाई सैद्धान्तिक पर्याधारका रूपमा निम्नानुसार प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ

## ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य

पौरस्त्य दर्शनले उच्च महत्त्वका साथ ईश्वरका विषयमा चिन्तन गरेको छ । ईश्वर रहस्यकै विषय हो । पाणिनि व्याकरणले राज्य गर्नु, स्वामी हुनु, शासन गर्नु, आदेश गर्नु आदि अर्थयुक्त 'ईश' धातुमा 'वरच्' प्रत्यय लागेर 'ईश्वर' शब्दको व्युत्पादन भएको देखाएको छ (ईश्वरचन्द्र, सन् २००९, पृ. ३४९) । आस्तिक दार्शनिकहरू जब

गतिशील ब्रह्माण्डको रहस्यको खोजीतर्फ उन्मुख भए, तब उनीहरूले अनुमान र तर्कबलले ब्रह्माण्डको सृष्टि र सञ्चालनका लागि कुनै अनिर्वचनीय शक्ति सक्रिय रहेको ठहर गरे । त्यही शक्तिलाई उनीहरूले ईश्वरको उपाधिले अलङ्कृत गरे । त्यस्तो ईश्वरलाई ईश, परब्रह्म, ब्रह्म, परमात्मा, देवता, भगवान् आदि नामले पुकारेको पाइन्छ । यो ईश्वरतत्त्वका सन्दर्भमा दार्शनिकहरूविच मतैक्य छैन । दर्शनका भाष्यकारहरूले ईश्वर विषयलाई आफ्नो दृष्टिअनुकूल व्याख्या गरेका छन् । योग दर्शनले अविद्यादि पञ्चक्लेश, शुभाशुभ कर्म, कर्मजन्य सुखदुःखरूप फल तथा वासनाको संसर्गबाट रहित पुरुष विशेष ईश्वर हो भनेको छ (सरस्वती, सन् २०१०, पृ. १४७) । न्याय दर्शनले ईश्वरलाई जगन्निन्यन्ता र कर्मफल प्रदाता मानेको छ (सरस्वती, सन् २०१०, पृ. ३) । यस दर्शनका अनुसार ईश्वर असल र खराब कर्मको साक्षी पनि हो । वेदान्त दर्शनले ईश्वरलाई ब्रह्मका रूपमा चिनाउँदै यस जगत्को उत्पत्ति, स्थिति तथा प्रलयको कारक रहेर पनि यो अनिर्वचनीय, निर्गुण, निर्विशेष, अपरिवर्तनीय, सत् र चित् छ भनेको छ (गोयन्दका, सन् २००९, पृ. १) । यी दार्शनिक मतलाई नियाल्दा ईश्वर एक रहस्यमय शक्ति रहेको देखिन्छ ।

## इहलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्य

इहलोक यही धर्ती हो र परलोक यस धर्तीभन्दा परको स्थान हो । यी स्थानका अनेक रहस्यमय वर्णन भेटिन्छन् । विशेषतः आध्यात्मिक दार्शनिकहरू यसतर्फ आकर्षित देखिन्छन् । पौरस्त्य आध्यात्मिक दर्शन मध्येको एक वैशेषिक दर्शनले सृष्टिको कारण परमाणुलाई ठान्छ । यस दर्शनअनुसार निष्क्रिय परमाणुमा ईश्वरले गति पैदा गरिदिन्छन् अनि सृष्टि हुन्छ (गिरी, २०५५, पृ. ५२) । यस मतले इहलोकसम्बन्धी सृष्टि परमाणुबाट भएको मान्यो तर परमाणुको सृष्टिकारणलाई रहस्यमै राखेको देखिन्छ । मीमांसा दर्शन अणुवादमा विश्वास गर्छ । यसले वेदविहित कर्मबाट उत्पन्न अपूर्वले निष्क्रिय परमाणुमा क्रिया उत्पन्न गराउँछ र कर्मकर्ताले कर्मफल भोग्नका लागि योग्य संसारको निर्माण हुन्छ भन्ने मान्छ । त्यस्तो अपूर्व कुनै शक्तिबाट नभई आफैँ सञ्चालित हुन्छ (गिरी, २०५५, पृ. ५३) । मीमांसाको अन्तिम ध्येय स्वर्ग हो । स्वर्गप्राप्तिका निष्कामकर्म र आत्मिक ज्ञान गरी दुई साधन रहेका छन् (सरस्वती, सन् २०१०, पृ. १६६) । स्वर्ग पारलौकिक विषय हो । यसको वास्तविकताबारे यस दर्शनमा खुलाएको पाइँदैन । त्यसैले यो रहस्यकै विषय बनेको छ ।

ईश्वरका सम्बन्धमा अनेक धारणा पाइए पनि समग्रमा सृष्टि, स्थिति र लयका कर्ता र शुभाशुभ कर्मका फलदाता परम तत्त्व विशेष नै आस्तिक जगत्मा ईश्वरका रूपमा स्वीकृत रहेको देखिन्छ । यो ईश्वर तथा सृष्टिजगत् का इहलौकिक र पारलौकिक अनगिन्ती विषयहरू रहस्यमय नै छन् । अतः पौरस्त्य दर्शनका ईश्वर र इहलौकिक रहस्यसँग सम्बन्धित धारणाहरूलाई यस अध्ययनको सैद्धान्तिक आधार बनाइएको छ ।

## रहस्य दर्शनको प्रभावका दृष्टिमा 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्य

'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' आधुनिक नेपालको एकीकरणसम्बन्धी ऐतिहासिक विषयवस्तुमा आधारित खण्डकाव्य हो । यसले नेपाल राष्ट्रका निर्माता पृथ्वीनारायण शाहलाई नायकको भूमिकामा उभ्याएको छ । 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्य पृथ्वीनारायण शाह र उनका भाइ दलमर्दन शाहको संवादमा रचिएको छ । एकीकरण अभियानबाट विश्राम लिई आफूले एक भाग जमिन अलग राज्यका रूपमा अंश पाउनुपर्ने माग दलमर्दनले राखिरहँदा पृथ्वीनारायण राज्य अविभाज्य र अखण्ड रहने दृढ विचार प्रकट गर्दछन् । कविले पृथ्वीनारायण शाहका माध्यमबाट यस खण्डकाव्यमा राष्ट्रप्रेमको भावनालाई प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् । कविले राष्ट्रप्रेमको अभिव्यक्तिलाई सबल तुल्याउन ईश्वर तथा इहलोकसम्बन्धी दर्शनको सहारा लिएका छन् । जसलाई निम्नानुसार प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ :



‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको विषय ऐतिहासिक र सारभाव राष्ट्रप्रेम हो तापनि कवि घिमिरेले खण्डकाव्यका विभिन्न विषयसन्दर्भमा ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् । कवि घिमिरे पृथ्वीनारायणले आफ्नो राष्ट्रको समुन्नतिका लागि उत्साह व्यक्त गरेको सन्दर्भमा ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई यसरी प्रस्तुत गर्छन् :

**उठे उज्याला चुचुरा हिमाली**

**आकाश नीलो अझ भन्नु उचाली**

**धर्ती उचालूँ कुन शक्तिद्वारा**

**वराहजस्तै उधिनेर दाहा ।**

पृ. १२

देश एकीकरण एक महान् कार्य हो । यो चानचुने सोच, शक्ति र प्रयासले सम्पन्न हुने कार्य होइन । यो त प्रलयकालमा वराहले धर्तीको उद्धार गरेजस्तै कठिन कार्य हो । माथिको काव्यांशमा पृथ्वीनारायण आफू वराहजस्तै भई आफ्नो राष्ट्रको उद्धारका लागि तत्पर रहेको भाव कविले प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् ।

वराह विष्णुका दश अवतारमध्ये एक अवतार हो । पौरस्त्य दर्शनले भगवान्का विभिन्न अवतारहरूलाई ईश्वरकै रूपमा व्याख्या गरेको छ । वेदान्त दर्शनको रामानुज भाष्यले राम आदि अवतारलाई ईश्वरका विभिन्न पाँच रूपमध्ये विभ्रव रूप मानेको छ । वराह विष्णुको एक अवतार रहेकाले

वेदान्तको रामानुज भाष्यअनुसार यो ईश्वरको विभ्रव रूप हो (आचार्य, सन् १९६४, पृ. ४१३-४१५)। यहाँ कविले वराह र पृथ्वीनारायणलाई उपमानउपमेय सम्बन्धमा प्रयोग गरेका छन् । पृथ्वीनारायणले यहाँ वराहले प्रलयकालमा दाहाको मदतले धर्तीको उद्धार गरेजस्तै आफू पनि आफ्नो राष्ट्रको उद्धारका लागि वराह भैं भएर उभिन तयार छु भनेको कुरा कविले प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् । कविले यहाँ पृथ्वीनारायणको अभूतपूर्व शक्तिसँग तुलना गर्ने उद्देश्यले ईश्वरको प्रयोग गरेका छन् । प्रलयकालमा नष्ट हुन लागेको धर्तीलाई वराहले थुनुनामा राखी कसरी उद्धार गरे, त्यो रहस्यमय रहेको कुरा प्रस्तुत गरिएको यहाँ ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य प्रकट भएको छ ।

कवि ‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको तृतीय सर्गमा सुन्दर सृष्टिको वर्णन गर्दै ईश्वर चिन्तनलाई अधि साँछ्छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**यै नित्य लीला स्थल पार्वतीको**

**साहित्य सङ्गीत कलावतीको**

**वैशाखमा शङ्करले समाधि**

**खोलेसरी सुन्दर सृष्टि आदि ।**

पृ. ४

कवि घिमिरे माथिको काव्यांशमा नेपालको सुन्दर सृष्टिको वर्णन गर्छन् । नेपालको सृष्टिसौन्दर्य मनमोहक छ । कवि यहाँको सुरम्य सृष्टिलाई पार्वतीको नित्य लीलास्थल ठान्छन् । अझ वैशाखको प्रकृति त कविलाई समाधिमा लीन शङ्करले आँखा खोल्दा उनका प्रभावले सर्वत्र एक साथ नवीन सृष्टिसौन्दर्य कायम भएको अनुभूति भएको छ । वैशाख वसन्त ऋतुको सुरुवातको महिना हो । शिशिरमा रित्तिन लागेको रङ्ग, रूप र प्राणलाई पुनः सञ्चार गर्दै वसन्तले धर्तीलाई हराभरा तुल्याउँछ । नेपालको प्राकृतिक सजावटको

सुरम्य चित्रकारी देखेर कवि लट्ठ छन् । उनलाई शिवले वैशाखमा समाधिबाट आँखा खोल्दा सृष्टि भएको अनुभूति हुन्छ । शङ्कर र पार्वती ईश्वरकै रूपमा पूजित छन् र सारा सृष्टि अझ सुन्दर सृष्टि शङ्करसँग सम्बद्ध देखाउनुले यहाँ कविले ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई प्रस्तुत गरेको पाइन्छ ।

तृतीय अध्यायकै अर्को श्लोकमा कविले समुद्रमन्थनको प्रसङ्गलाई प्रयोग गरेका छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**मथेर त्रै क्षीर समुद्रबाष्प**

**उच्चैः श्रवा नाम निकालि अश्व**

**महेन्द्र चङ्गे त्यस अश्वमाथि**

**कि वज्रले पर्वत काटि काटि । पृ. ६**

कवि घिमिरे नेपालको महिमा र विशेषताको बयान गर्न अरू दैवी घटनाको सहारा लिन्छन् । देवताहरूले सृष्टिको अनेक क्रियाकलाप सम्पन्न गरेको अनौठो र पावन भूमि भनी उनले

नेपाललाई चिनाउन खोजेका छन् । अघिल्लो श्लोकमा जुन क्षीर समुद्रको चर्चा छ, यहाँ त्यसैलाई मथेर उच्चैःश्रवा नाम गरेको घोडा निकालिएको बताइएको छ । क्षीर समुद्रको मन्थनबाट लक्ष्मी, पारिजात फूल, अमृत आदि अनेक चिजबिज निकालिएका थिए भन्ने चर्चा पाइन्छ । माथिको काव्यांशमा क्षीर समुद्र मन्थनबाट निस्केको घोडामा महेन्द्र अर्थात् देवराज इन्द्र चङ्गे र उनी आफ्नो अस्त्र वज्र प्रहार गरी यहाँका पर्वतलाई काट्दै घोडामा हिँड्थे भनी कविले बताएका छन् । देवताहरू पनि ईश्वर मानिएका र इन्द्र आदि देवताहरूले समुद्र मन्थन गरेको चर्चाबाट यहाँ ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य प्रकट भएको छ ।

कवि घिमिरे नेपाललाई सृष्टिको आदिभूमि मान्छन् र मनुले मानवको सृष्टि यहीँ गरेको ठान्छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**धरा जलप्लावनमा हुँदा रे**

**नौका यहीँ नै मनुले उतारे**

**यहीँ भयो मानव सृष्टि पैलो**

**मनुष्यताको शुभदृष्टि पैलो । पृ. ९**

कविका अनुसार पहिलो मानव सृष्टि नेपालमै भएको हो । मानवहरू मनुबाट उत्पन्न भएका हुन् अर्थात् मानवका पुर्खा मनु हुन् र मनु चाहिँ ब्रह्माका सन्तान हुन् । कविले मानवको प्रथम सृष्टि नेपालमै भएको हो भन्दै यहाँका मानवको सृष्टिलाई लगेर ब्रह्मासँग जोड्न खोजेको देखिन्छ । यस प्रसङ्गलाई नियाल्दा नेपाली मानवको आदिमूल त ब्रह्मा पो रहेछन् । अतः यस काव्यांशले पनि मानव सृष्टि, मनु र ब्रह्मासम्मको सम्बन्धलाई समेट्न खोजे काले यहाँ ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य झल्केको पाइन्छ ।

कवि घिमिरे यहाँ जताततै शिवको शक्ति प्रवाहित भएको ठान्छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**हिमालको सुन्दर सिर्जना यो**

**जातीयताको चिर चेतना यो**

## यो शक्ति आफैँ शिवतत्वसङ्ग

फलाममा चुम्बकको तरङ्ग । पृ. १९

कवि यहाँको सुन्दर हिमाली सिर्जनामा होस् वा चिरकालदेखिको जातीय चेतनामा होस्, सर्वत्र शिवतत्व तरङ्ग गित भएको पाउँछन् । उनी फलाम र चुम्बकको उदाहरण पेस गर्दै फलाममा चुम्बकको तरङ्ग तरङ्गित भए भैं शिवतत्वको तरङ्ग पनि यहाँ सर्वत्र प्रवाहित रहेको कविको ठम्याइ छ । कविले

नेपाललाई यिनै शिवको छायाछविले सर्वत्र प्रच्छन्न भूमिका रूपमा चिनाउन खोजेका छन् । उनले यस काव्यांशमा यहाँका कण कणमा शिवको तरङ्ग रहेको अनुभव गरेका छन् । शिव पनि ईश्वरकै रूप

हुन् । यस्ता ईश्वरको प्रभाव सर्वत्र कसरी पर्छ भन्ने वास्तविकता रहस्यमय छ । यही ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य माथिको काव्यांशमा प्रकट भएको छ ।

मानिस ईश्वरका प्रेरणाले सञ्चालित छ भन्ने कविमत छ । पृथ्वीनारायणको राष्ट्रनिर्माणको अभियानमा पनि कवि ईश्वरकै प्रेरणा देख्छन् । पृथ्वीनारायणको संवादमा भनिएको छ :

**यै शक्तिले केवल तानि आयौँ**

**नजानि आए पनि जानि आयौँ**

**बढ्ने सधैं जीवनको कहानी**

**महानदी बन्दछ मूल पानी । पृ. २०**

प्रस्तुत श्लोकभन्दा अधिल्लो श्लोकमा कविले शिवशक्तिको प्रसङ्ग उठाएका थिए । यस श्लोकमा पनि कवि पृथ्वीनारायणले तिनै शिवशक्तिको प्रभावमा नेपाल एकीकरणको अभियानतर्फ आफू तानिएको बताएका छन् । साना साना पानीका मूलहरू महानदी बन्न पुगे भैं नेपालका ससाना राज्यहरू महान्

नेपाल देशमा समाहित हुँदै जाने र नेपाल शिवभूमि भएकाले यस अभियानमा पनि शिवकै प्रेरणा रहने भावआशय कविले प्रकट गरेका छन् । शिव देवाधिदेव, महादेव, महेश्वर आदि नामले पुकारिने

गरेका छन् । यिनैको प्रेरणाले हरकुनै क्रियाकलाप सञ्चालित रहेको विश्वास काव्यमा प्रवाह गरिनुले यहाँ ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य प्रकट भएको स्पष्ट हुन्छ ।

कवि यहाँका कण कणमा ईश्वरको वास देख्छन् । यहाँका जमिनदेखि आकाशसम्म विभिन्न देवदेवी रहेको उनको ठम्याइ छ । कवि भन्छन् :

**भुइँ भुमेको सगरै सिमेको**

**यो पार्वतीको नजरै घुमेको**

**विशालको दर्शन गर्न आयौँ**

**र कीर्तिको आर्जन गर्न आयौँ । पृ. २**

विशालता पृथ्वीनारायणको मूल अभीष्ट हो । पृथ्वीनारायण आफ्नो राष्ट्रलाई विशाल बनेको

देख्न चाहन्छन् । विशाल देश बनाउन सकेको कीर्ति आर्जन गर्ने उनको सपना छ । यस्तो महान् कार्यको सम्पन्नताका लागि उनलाई महाशक्तिको आवश्यकता छ । यसै सन्दर्भमा उनी आफ्नो भूमिमा जताततै ईश्वरनजर घुमेको अनुभव गर्छन् । उनी भुइँमा भुमेको र सगरमा सिमेको वास रहेको र सर्वत्र पार्वती देवीको नजर परेको पवित्र स्थान आफ्नो देशलाई मान्छन् । ईश्वर सदा सत्को पक्षधर हुन्छ । महान् देश रच्ने कार्य आफैँमा सत्कार्य हो । यस्तो सत्कार्यमा ईश्वरले सकारात्मक साथ दिन्छन् । आफ्नो विशाल नेपाल निर्माण गर्ने अभियान ईश्वरको साथकै कारण अवश्य सम्पन्न हुन्छ, भन्ने पृथ्वीनारायणलाई विश्वास छ । पृथ्वीनारायणका माध्यमबाट कविले नेपालका जल, स्थल तथा नभमण्डल सर्वत्र देवदृष्टि रहेको वर्णन गरेबाट यहाँ ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य प्रकट भएको छ ।

‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ राष्ट्रप्रेमको भाव सलबलाएको खण्डकाव्य हो । यस खण्डकाव्यमा कविले पृथ्वीनारायण पात्रमार्फत् राष्ट्रप्रेम प्रस्तुत गर्ने क्रममा नेपाललाई ईश्वरीय प्रभावयुक्त राष्ट्रका रूपमा चित्रण गरेका छन् । उनले यहाँ प्रसङ्गानुकूल ढङ्गले ईश्वरलाई स्रष्टा, द्रष्टा तथा प्रेरक शक्तिका रूपमा उभ्याएकाले यहाँ ईश्वरसम्बन्धी रहस्य दर्शनको सचेत प्रभाव रहेको पुष्टि हुन्छ ।

### इहलोक परलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्यप्रभाव

‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ ऐतिहासिक खण्डकाव्य हो । पृथ्वीनारायण शाह र दलमर्दन शाहको द्वन्द्वात्मक संवादको संरचनामा यो खण्डकाव्य तयार भएको छ । कवि घिमिरेले पृथ्वीनारायणलाई अखण्ड नेपालको दृढ प्रतिज्ञा पात्रका रूपमा उभ्याएका छन् । कविले दलमर्दनलाई भने अंशका नाममा राष्ट्रको विखण्डन चाहने असत् पात्रका रूपमा चित्रण गरेका छन् । कविले अखण्ड नेपालको पक्षपोषणका माध्यमले राष्ट्रप्रेमको भावज्वार उराल्दै गर्दा ठाउँ ठाउँमा इहलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई प्रसङ्गानुकूल ढङ्गले प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् । यस इहलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई यहाँ सृष्टिसौन्दर्यसम्बन्धी र मानवजीवनसम्बन्धी दुई फरक फरक उपशीर्षकमा विभाजन गरी अध्ययन गरिएको छ ।

### सृष्टिसौन्दर्यसम्बन्धी रहस्य

कवि घिमिरे नेपालको सृष्टिसौन्दर्य देखेर मोहित छन् र यो रहस्यमय रहेको उनले अनुभव

गरेका छन् । कविले पृथ्वीनारायणको संवादबाट प्रस्तुत खण्डकाव्यको प्रथम सर्गमा शरद् ऋतुको वर्णन गर्दै नेपालको प्राकृतिक सृष्टि सौन्दर्यको रहस्यात्मकतातर्फ दृष्टि लगाउँछन् । कवि भन्छन् :

दिवा उजेली रजनी जुनेली

सन्ध्या सिँदुरे छविका तरेली

अहो शरद् सुन्दर दिव्य भाँकी

रहस्य खोलेर रहस्य बाँकी पृ. १६

धर्तीको प्रकृति अनौठो छ । यहाँको प्रकृतिले समय समयमा अनेक रङ्ग र रूप फेर्छ । यसलाई मानिसहरूले

ऋतु परिवर्तन भनेर बुझेका छन् । त्यस्ता ऋतुहरू वसन्त, ग्रीष्म, वर्षा, शरद्, हेमन्त, र शिशिर गरी ६ ओटा छन् । हरे क ऋतुका आफ्नै स्वभाव र विशेषता छन् । माथिको काव्यांशमा कवि शरद् ऋतुको सौन्दर्यको महक बिछड्को भएको बताउँछन् । वर्षा समाप्त भएर सुरु हुने शरद् ऋतुका दिनहरू सफा र उज्याला हुन्छन् । यस ऋतुमा जुनेली रात पनि उत्तिकै सफा र उज्याला भएर सुन्दर देखिने कुरा कवि बताउँछन् । अझ सन्ध्याकाल त सिन्दुर छरे भैं रङ्गीन देखिन्छ भन्दै शरद् ऋतुको सौन्दर्य अनेक भाँकीमा मनमोहक ढङ्गले प्रस्तुत हुने कविको ठहर छ । यो सौन्दर्यको रहस्य यति गूढ छ कि यसको रहस्यका पत्र जति पल्टायो, उति रहस्य बाँकी नै रहन्छ भनी कवि रहस्य अगम्य रहेको बताउँछन् । यहाँ कविले ऋतु परिवर्तनका क्रममा देखिने सौन्दर्य रहस्यमय भएको बताएर सृष्टिसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई प्रस्तुत गरेको पाइन्छ ।

कवि यही सर्गमा पवित्र भूमि नेपालमा कैयौँ दैवी रहस्यका घटनाहरू घटित हुने कुरा खोतल्छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

यहाँ चहाछिन् कति देवदूत  
विना शरीरै पनि दिव्य रूप  
यो मृत्तिका हो कि त ज्योति हो वा  
जो हो त्यही हो परिपूर्ण शोभा

पृ. १८

मर्त्यलोक विशेष गरी मानवलागायत अन्य जीवजातिका लागि हो । देवताहरूका लागि होइन । देवताहरूका लागि त स्वर्गलागायत अनेक लोकहरू छन् तथापि प्रस्तुत काव्यांशमा कवि यस नेपाल भूमिमा कैयौँ देवदूतहरू विनाशरीर दिव्य रूप लिएर डुल्ने गरेको बताउँछन् । जुन कुरा अगम्य र रहस्यमय छ । कवि अझ यो धर्ती मृत्तिका हो वा ज्योति हो, त्यो रहस्यमय रहेको बताउँछन् । ज्योतिलाई कविले यहाँ चेतन शक्तिका रूपमा लिएका छन् । कविका अनुसार धर्तीलाई जड भनी त सारा जीव तत्वको सृष्टि, स्थिति र लय यसैबाट सम्भव छ अनि चेतन भनी त्यो पनि कठिन छ अर्थात् धर्तीको वास्तविकता रहस्यले युक्त छ भन्ने कविको आशय छ । धर्तीको सृष्टि रहस्यको चर्चा गर्दै कविले यहाँ सृष्टिसौन्दर्यसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् ।

‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको पञ्चम सर्गमा नेपालको अनौठो सौन्दर्य र विशेषताको वर्णन गर्ने क्रममा रहस्यको सङ्केत गर्दै कवि भन्छन् :

नेपाल यो सुन्दर दिव्य देश  
पुर्खाहरूले चिर भुक्त शेष  
पिए पनि नित्य भरी भरी यो  
रित्तिन्न कल्यै मधुमाधुरी यो

पृ. ७

नेपाल देशको प्राकृतिक सौन्दर्य वर्णनातीत छ । यहाँको प्रकृति अनुपम छ । माथिको काव्यांशमा कविले नेपाललाई सुन्दर दिव्य देश भनी चित्रण गरेका छन् । दिव्य देश भन्नुको आशय स्वर्गीय देश भन्ने हो । स्वर्गको सार सुख हो । कविले यस नेपाल देशलाई सुखैसुखको भण्डार अनुभव गरेका छन् । त्यस्तो सुख यहाँ कसरी सम्भव भयो वा त्यो सब कसले तुल्यायो भन्ने प्रश्नको जवाफ पाउन कठिन छ ।

नेपाललाई पुर्खाहरूले चिरकालदेखि भोग गरेर शेष रहेको देश भनेर पनि उनले चिनाएका छन् । पुर्खाले चिरकालदेखि भोग गरेर शेष रहेको भए पनि यो नरितिई जहिल्यै भरी छ भन्ने कविको बुझाइ छ । जति पिए पनि यस देशको सृष्टिसौन्दर्यको रसमाधुरी कहिल्यै नरितिनु रहस्यमय छ भनी कविले नेपालको सृष्टिसौन्दर्यको महत्त्वलाई रहस्यमय सावित गरेका छन् ।

धर्तीका अनेक विशेषतालाई औल्याएर यसको रहस्यलाई अनुभव गर्दै कवि घिमिरे चकित हुन्छन् । उनी भन्छन् :

**आकाश नीलो धरती हरियो  
प्रकाशले जीवनले भरी यो  
आनन्दको यो मधुघार दीप्ति  
अशेष तिर्खा र अनन्त तृप्ति** पृ. २४

नेपालको महिमा यसको बाहिरी सुन्दर स्वरूपमा मात्र सीमित छैन । कवि यस देशलाई अनेक गुण र विशेषताले पूर्ण देख्छन् । कवि तृतीय अध्यायको अर्को श्लोकमा विष्णुको सन्दर्भलाई प्रयोग गर्छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**शिवालिका पर्वत पङ्क्तिपार  
यहीं थियो क्षीर समुद्र क्यार  
यहीं सुते श्यामल शेषशायी  
हिमाल नाभिस्थलमा खिलाई** पृ. ५

कविलाई आफ्नो देश निकै महान् लाग्छ । कवि घिमिरे नेपाललाई पवित्र देवभूमि मान्छन् । उनी शिवालिका पर्वतपार क्षीर समुद्र रहेको र शेषशायी विष्णु आफ्नो नाभिस्थलमा हिमाल सजाएर सुतिरहेको अनुमान गर्छन् । पौराणिक कथाहरूमा वर्णित त्यो ठाउँ अन्यत्र कतैको नभई नेपालकै हो भन्ने कविको ठहर छ । विष्णु पनि ईश्वरकै रूप हुन् । कवि यहाँ त्यस्ता ईश्वरले वास गरेको ठाउँ भन्दै नेपाललाई ईश्वरभूमि रहेको जनाउँछन् । देशको महिमा गाउने सन्दर्भमा पनि कविले नेपाललाई सृष्टिको रहस्यमय आदिभूमि भनी चित्रण गरेर नेपालको सृष्टिसौन्दर्यसम्बन्धी रहस्यलाई प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् ।

नेपाल प्राकृतिक सुन्दरताको अनुपम नमुना हो । कवि नेपाललाई विभिन्न नदी र किनाराका हरियालीले सुन्दर देख्छन् । श्रावस्ति अर्थात् श्रावस्त राजाले बसाएको सुन्दर सहर जस्ता हजारौँ सहरले नेपाल सुशोभित छ भन्ने बताउँदै ईश्वरले नेपाललाई नियालिरहेको उनले जनाएका छन् । कवि भन्छन्

**नदी नदीका हरिया किनार  
श्रावस्ति जस्ता नगरी हजार  
कुवेरको पुष्पकले चहारी  
अटालिका लच्छिनका छहारी** पृ. १३

कुवेर धनका देवता हुन् । उनीसँग मनवेगी पुष्पक विमान थियो । त्यो विमान रावणले खोसेर लगे

को चर्चा पौराणिक ग्रन्थमा पाइन्छ । कुवेर त्यही पुष्पक विमान चढी यहाँको आकाशमा चहार्थे र त्यही प्रभावले यहाँका अटालिकाहरू लच्छिनका भएका हुन् भन्ने कविले बताएका छन् । कुवेर एक देवता रहेका र देवताहरू ईश्वर मानिएकाले कविले नेपाललाई ईश्वरीय प्रभाव रहेको रहस्यमय देश मानेका छन् । यहाँ कविले नेपाल देशको सृष्टिगत महत्व र विशेषताको बयान गर्ने क्रममा यस देशलाई कुवेरको राज्यभूमिका रूपमा चर्चा गरेकाले यहाँ सृष्टिसम्बन्धी रहस्यको प्रभाव रहेको छ ।

चतुर्थ सर्गमा कवि दलमर्दन शाहको संवादका माध्यमबाट रहस्यको बयान गर्छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**जहाँ पनि कल्कल बग्छ पानी**

**सानन्द उस्तै जनजिन्दगानी**

**यो सिर्जनाको वरदान जस्तो**

**जहाँतहीं उति महान जस्तो पृ. ५**

सृष्टिसौन्दर्य अति अद्भुत छ । जताततै आनन्दै आनन्दले पूर्ण यहाँको सौन्दर्य कसरी सृष्टि भयो ? कसले सिर्जना गर्‍यो ? प्रस्तुत काव्यांशमा कविले यही सृष्टिसौन्दर्यको रहस्यको वर्णन गरेका छन् । जहाँतहीं कलकल पानी बग्दा र मानिसहरूको जिन्दगी जताततै आनन्दले पूर्ण देख्दा कविलाई यो सिर्जना वरदानस्वरूप लागेको छ । कविलाई यो सिर्जना महान् र रहस्यमय पनि लागेको छ । वरदान अर्काले दिने कुरा हो । यो सर्वत्र आनन्दले भरिपूर्ण सृष्टिलाई कसले मानिसका लागि वरस्वरूप प्रदान गर्‍यो ? यो सबै घिमिरेका विचारमा रहस्यमय छ । माथिको काव्यांशमा नेपाल रहस्यमय वरदानस्वरूप भएको चर्चा भएवाट यहाँ सृष्टिसम्बन्धी रहस्य झल्केको पाइन्छ ।

कवि घिमिरे यस धर्तीमा सिर्जनाको रहस्यमय अजस्र मूल रहेको बताउँछन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**यो सिर्जनामूल अजस्र दिन्छु**

**सम्भावना लाख सहस्र दिन्छु**

**सधैं उज्यालो म भविष्य दिन्छु**

**रहस्य खोलेर रहस्य दिन्छु पृ. १५**

यस धर्तीमा देखा पर्ने हरदिन हरयामको सिर्जनामूल अनौठो छ । यसले यहाँ लाखौँ सिर्जनाको सम्भावनालाई निश्चित गरिरहेको हुन्छ । यो सिर्जनामार्फत् यहाँको भविष्य जहिल्यै उज्ज्वल रहने अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ । यस्तो कसरी सम्भव भइरहन्छ, त्यो रहस्यमय छ र त्यस्तो रहस्यलाई जति

खोतले पनि रहस्य नै रहिरहने कविको ठहर छ । अथाह सम्भावनाको देश नेपालको रहस्य अपरम्पार भएको वर्णन माथिको पद्यांशमा भएवाट यहाँ सृष्टिसौन्दर्यसम्बन्धी रहस्य प्रकट भएको पाइन्छ ।

## **मानवजीवनसम्बन्धी रहस्य**

ब्रह्माण्डको संरचना अनौठो छ । धर्तीलोकको संरचना पनि कम उदेक लाग्दो छैन । प्रस्तुत काव्यांशमा कवि यहाँको वातावरणको बनेट रहस्यले भरिएको देख्छन् । यहाँको आकाश कसरी निलो देखिएको हो र धर्ती हरियो कसरी बनेको हो ? अझ यो धर्ती प्रकाश र जीवन तत्त्वले कसरी भरिएको हो भन्ने कुरा कविमनमा खुल्दुली छ । कविले



त्यसको जवाफ पाएका छैनन् । रहस्यै रहस्यका बिच यहाँ आनन्दको मधुधार प्रवाहित भइरहनु र यहाँ तृष्णा र तृप्ति दुवै अशेष र अनन्त रहनु कविका अनुसार रहस्यमय छ । यहाँका मानिसका मनोकाङ्क्षा जति पूरा हुँदै गए पनि उति नै बाँकी रहन्छन् । यहाँका मानिसका तृप्ति पनि बाँकी रहिरहन्छन् । त्यसो भएर नै यहाँको मानिस नयाँ नयाँ कुराको खोजीमा लागिरहेको होला । खोजी हेर्दा यसरी यहाँका हरेक विषय रहस्यले युक्त छन् भन्ने कविको वैचारिकता यहाँ प्रस्तुत भएको छ । यहाँ कवि मानवजीवनसम्बन्धी रहस्यले चकित देखिन्छन् ।

कवि घिमिरे द्वितीय सर्गमा दलमर्दन शाहका संवादका माध्यमले पनि रहस्यकै बयानमा रमाउँछन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**निस्की गुफा बाहिर सिद्ध यौटा**

**रहस्यका शङ्ख फुकी अनौठा**

**घुमेर हिँड्थे घनघोर राति**

**जागेर अज्ञान र नीद माथि पृ. ६**

‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको दोस्रो सर्गमा दलमर्दन शाहले आफ्नो गोरखा राज्यको महिमा गाएका छन् । गोरखा राज्यका विशेषताहरूको चर्चा गर्दै जाँदा त्यहाँको रहस्यमय पक्षका बारेमा पनि दलमर्दनले चर्चा गरेका छन् । यहाँ एउटा सिद्धले रातको समयमा शङ्ख फुक्दै हिँडेको वर्णन गरिएको छ । गोरखा राज्यमा एक सिद्ध गुफामा बस्थे । ती सिद्ध बेलाबखत गुफाबाट बाहिर निस्केर रहस्यका अनौठा शङ्ख फुक्थे । घनघोर रातमा अज्ञान र निदमाथि जागा हुँदै हिँडेको घटनालाई माथिको काव्यांशमा समेटिएको छ । यहाँ त्यसरी अनौठो शङ्ख फुक्दै हिँड्ने सिद्ध को हो भन्ने वास्तविकता क्षिप्त छ । त्यसैले कविले यहाँ यस घटनाका माध्यमबाट मानवजीवनसम्बन्धी रहस्यको वर्णन गर्न खोजेका छन् ।

‘राष्ट्रनिर्माता’ खण्डकाव्यको तृतीय सर्गमा पृथ्वीनारायणका माध्यमबाट कविले रहस्यको वर्णन गरेका छन् । कवि भन्छन् :

**भन्थे कुमारै वयमा मलाई**

**योगी उनै गोरखनाथ आई**

**त्रिसप्त गङ्गा सब मध्य रात**

**बोल्छन् मनुष्यैसरि गुप्त वात पृ. २**

तेस्रो सर्गमा पृथ्वीनारायण शाह पनि गोरखाकै बढाइचढाइ गर्छन् । उनी विगतमा गोरखनाथले बताएको आश्चर्यजनक कहानीलाई यस सन्दर्भमा स्मरण गर्छन् । माथिको काव्यांशमा पृथ्वीनारायणलाई उनको कुमार वयमा गोरखनाथले एउटा रहस्यको कुरा सुनाएको चर्चा छ । त्यो रहस्यको कुरा भनेको नदीहरूले रातको समयमा मनुष्यले भैं गुप्त वात मारेको घटना हो । गोरखनाथले पृथ्वीनारायणसँग त्रिसप्त गङ्गाहरू रातको समयमा मनुष्यले भैं आफ्ना गुप्त वात गर्थे भनी पृथ्वीनारायणको किशोरकालमा भनेका थिए भन्ने किंवदन्ती छ । यसको आशय गोरखा त्यस्तो रहस्यमय भूमि हो, जहाँ नदीहरूसमेत मानिसले भैं वात मार्छन् भन्ने हो । यही कुरालाई पृथ्वीनारायणले स्मरण गरेको कुरा यहाँ स्पष्ट्याइएको छ । सामान्य जनजीवनमा नदीहरू मानिस भैं गफिनु रहस्यमय छ । अझ नदीहरू गफिएको विषय मानिसले थाहा पाउनु अझ रहस्यमय छ । यहाँ एक सिद्धले नदीहरू मानिस भैं गफिएको वर्णन गरेबाट यो घटनाले मानवजीवनसम्बन्धी रहस्यको सङ्केत गरेको पाइन्छ ।

कवि माधव घिमिरे 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यमा नेपालको सृष्टिसौन्दर्य र मानवजीवनसम्बन्धी रहस्यको वर्णनमा केन्द्रित छन् । यसरी यस काव्यमा इहलोकनिहित रहस्यको वास्तविकतालाई उद्घाटन गर्न नभई रहस्यको वर्णनमा कवि रमाएका छन् र मेरो नेपाल यस्ता अनेक रहस्यमय विशेषताले सुशोभित देश हो भन्ने राष्ट्रप्रेमको भाव प्रकट गर्न उनी सफल भएका छन् ।

## निष्कर्ष

'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' नेपाल एकीकरणको विषयलाई समेटिएको ऐतिहासिक खण्डकाव्य हो । राष्ट्रको अखण्डताको पक्षपोषण गर्दै रचिएको यस खण्डकाव्यमा कवि घिमिरेले ऐतिहासिक विषयका माध्यमबाट राष्ट्रप्रेमको भाव प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् । उनले राष्ट्रप्रेमको भाव प्रस्तुत गर्न भने दर्शनको मदत लिएका छन् । पौरस्त्य दर्शनका अध्येता घिमिरेले आफ्ना रचनामा उक्त दर्शनको प्रभावलाई सचेततापूर्वक प्रयोग गरेको देखिन्छ । यस 'राष्ट्रनिर्माता' खण्डकाव्यमा ईश्वर तथा इहलोक र परलोकसम्बन्धी रहस्यको सचेत प्रभाव रहेको छ । उनले यस खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्यको उद्घाटन नभई रहस्यको वर्णन गरेका छन् । उनले यहाँ रहस्य दर्शनको प्रयोग गर्नुको उद्देश्य नेपाल देश रहस्यस्वरूप ईश्वरीय भूमि रहेको र यहाँ अनेक अगम्य गुप्त रहस्य रहेका हुनाले मेरो नेपाल देश महान् छ र यसलाई अनन्तसम्म अखण्ड राख्नुपर्छ भन्नु हो । कविले यसरी रहस्य दर्शनको प्रयोगबाट राष्ट्रप्रेमको भावलाई सुदृढ, महिमामय एवम् जीवन्त तुल्याउन सफल भएकाले यस खण्डकाव्यमा रहस्यको सचेत प्रभाव रहेको पुष्टि हुन्छ ।

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टीकाराम नेपाल

उपप्राध्यापक, यालना विद्यापीठ (क्याम्पस), महोत्तरी

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### लेखसार

प्रस्तुत लेखमा नारायण ढकालको 'इरफान अली' कथालाई सबाल्टर्न अध्ययनका दृष्टिले विश्लेषण गरिएको छ। सबाल्टर्न शब्दले सामान्यतः वर्ग, लिङ्ग, जाति, उमेर, भाषा, कार्यगत दर्जालगायत हरेक हिसाबले विभेद गरिएका, शोषण र उत्पीडनको सिकार भएका व्यक्ति वा समुदायलाई जनाउने गर्दछ। प्रस्तुत कथाको मुख्य पात्र इरफान अली मूलतः जातीय, भाषिक र आर्थिक रूपले सबाल्टर्न बन्न पुगेको तथ्यलाई यस आलेखमा विभिन्न साक्ष्यमार्फत प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ। जातीय, भाषिक, वर्गीय जस्ता आधारबाट सबाल्टर्न बन्नुपरेको स्थितिलाई देखाउँदै राज्यसत्ताको चरम दमन र शोषणविरुद्ध सबाल्टर्नवर्ग एकजुट हुनुपर्छ भन्ने विचार कथामा आएको छ। जातीय, भाषिक तथा आर्थिक दृष्टिबाट 'इरफान अली' कथा कसरी सबाल्टर्नमैत्री बन्न पुगेको छ भन्ने समस्यामा केन्द्रित रहेको प्रस्तुत लेखमा पुस्तकालयीय कार्यका आधारमा सामग्री सङ्कलन गरिएको छ। नारायण ढकालको 'इरफान अली' कथालाई आधार सामग्री र सबाल्टर्न सिद्धान्त तथा पूर्वकार्यसँग सम्बन्धित सामग्रीलाई द्वितीयक स्रोतका सामग्रीका रूपमा ग्रहण गरिएको यस लेखमा गुणात्मक पद्धति अपनाई विषयवस्तु विश्लेषणविधि प्रयोग गरिएको छ। सबाल्टर्न वर्गको पहिचानलाई शिरोपर गर्दै उनीहरूका आवाजलाई सशक्त रूपमा उठाएकाले प्रस्तुत कथा सबाल्टर्नमैत्री रहेको निष्कर्ष यस लेखको रहेको छ।

शब्दकुञ्जी : अधीनस्थ, उत्तरआधुनिकतावादी, नवमार्क्सवाद, प्रभुत्वशाली, सबाल्टर्न, हेजेमोनी ।

### विषय परिचय

नारायण ढकाल (वि.सं. २०१०) नेपाली साहित्यका बहुमुखी प्रतिभा हुन्। यिनले पत्रकार, राजनीतिज्ञ, कवि, उपन्यासकार र निबन्धकारका रूपमा आफ्नो व्यक्तित्व सबल बनाएको पाइन्छ। विस्थापन शीर्षकको कथाबाट आफ्नो कथायात्रा सुरु गरेका ढकालका सहरयन्त्र (२०५०), इरफान अली (२०५१), बहिर्गमन (२०६०), आत्महन्ता (२०६१), इन्द्रजाल (२०७१) जस्ता कथा सङ्ग्रह प्रकाशित छन्। सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, राजनीतिक विकृति र त्यसले निम्त्याएको दुष्परिणामलाई विषय बनाउन चाहने ढकालका कृतिमा सबाल्टर्नको पक्ष उत्तिकै सशक्त रूपले आएको देखिन्छ।

'इरफान अली' नारायण ढकालको सबाल्टर्नमैत्री कथा हो। यस कथाको मुख्य पात्र इरफान आर्थिक, भाषिक, आर्थिक जस्ता पक्षबाट सबाल्टर्न बन्न पुगेको देखिन्छ। मुसलमान समुदायको सिधासाधा व्यक्तिका रूपमा रहेको इरफान अलीमाथि भएको

दमन र क्रूर हत्यालाई यस कथामा मार्मिक रूपले प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । तराईवासी इरफान नेपाली भाषा बोल्न नजान्ने भोजपुरी भाषी हो । भाषा जान्न नसकेकै कारण उसलाई चोरी आरोपमा दोषी करार गरी मृत्युदण्ड दिइएको घटना यस कथामा रहेको छ । प्रस्तुत लेखमा यस कथालाई सबाल्टर्न सिद्धान्तका कोणबाट अध्ययन गरिएको छ । सबाल्टर्न शब्दले सदियौंदेखि इतिहासविहीन भएका वा बनाइएका समाजका किनारमा रहेका आवाजविहीन तथा अधिकारविहीन समुदायलाई जनाउँछ । सबाल्टर्न एउटा बृहत् सिद्धान्त हो । यसभित्र सबै प्रकारका विभेदहरूका कारण किनारीकृत हुन पुगेका शोषितपीडित अटाउन सक्छन् ।

प्रस्तुत कथामा सबाल्टर्न वर्गको जातीय, भाषिक, वर्गीय अवस्थालाई कसरी प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ ? सबाल्टर्न वर्गको आवाजको स्थिति के कस्तो छ ? भन्ने मूल जिज्ञासालाई समाधेय समस्या बनाएर त्यसैको विश्लेषण गर्नु यो आलेखको उद्देश्य रहेको छ । बिन्दु शर्मा (२०७४) ले समसामयिक प्रगतिवादी नेपाली कथा पुस्तकको 'समसामयिक प्रगतिवादी नेपाली कथाको ऐतिहासिक सर्वेक्षण' शीर्षक लेखमा सीमान्तीकृतका आवाजलाई सशक्त ढङ्गले प्रस्तुत गर्ने नारायण ढकालको 'इरफान अली' कथाले नेपालका जेलहरूमा दिइने यातना, त्यहाँका जेलन र चौकीदारहरूको क्रूरता एवम् बन्दीहरूको त्रासपूर्ण स्थितिको यथार्थलाई उद्घाटन गरेको छ भन्ने विचार व्यक्त गरेकी छन् ।

दयाराम श्रेष्ठ (द्वारा प्रगतिवादका स्तरीय कथाकारका रूपमा नारायण ढकाललाई चिनाइएको छ । ढकालका कथाका बारेमा विभिन्न पद्धतिबाट अध्ययन भए तापनि 'इरफान अली' कथामा नै आधारित भई सबाल्टर्नसम्बन्धी अध्ययन विश्लेषण भएको देखिँदैन । प्रस्तुत लेखमा सबाल्टर्न सिद्धान्त र त्यसका आधारमा इरफान अली कथाको अध्ययन विश्लेषण भएकाले सम्बद्ध सिद्धान्त र प्रयोगबारे जिज्ञासा राख्ने जो कोहीका लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण र उपयोगी हुने देखिन्छ । सबाल्टर्नका जातीय, भाषिक र वर्गीय विषयलाई मात्र आधार मानी इरफान अली कथाको अध्ययन विश्लेषण गर्नु प्रस्तुत लेखको सीमा रहेको छ । सबाल्टर्नसम्बन्धी मान्यताहरूका सापेक्षतामा इरफान अली कथाको अध्ययन विश्लेषण गर्नु प्रस्तुत लेखको विषयक्षेत्र रहेको छ ।

## अध्ययनविधि

प्रस्तुत लेख तयार पार्नका लागि सामग्री सङ्कलनको पुस्तकालयीय कार्यलाई अङ्गीकार गरिएको छ । नारायण ढकालको 'इरफान अली' कथालाई प्राथमिक स्रोत र कथाको विश्लेषणका लागि उपयोग गरिएको सबाल्टर्नसम्बन्धी मान्यता चाहिँ द्वितीयक स्रोतको सामग्रीका रूपमा प्रयोग गरिएको छ । यसमा सबाल्टर्नको सिद्धान्तका आधारमा पाठको अध्ययन, विश्लेषण गरिएको छ । यहाँ सामग्रीलाई वर्णनात्मक र व्याख्यात्मक विधिबाट प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ ।

## सैद्धान्तिक पर्याधार

सबाल्टर्न शब्दले तल्लो दर्जा वा तहका मानिसलाई बुझाउँछ । यस शब्दले सदियौंदेखि शासित, आवाजविहीन तथा इतिहासविहीन वर्गलाई जनाउँछ । हैकमवादी, औपनिवेशिक तथा सामन्ती शासकको लामो समयदेखिको थिचोमिचो र भेदभावबाट उत्पीडित शासित व्यक्ति वा निमुखा वर्गलाई नै समग्रमा सबाल्टर्नका रूपमा चिनिन्छ (श्रेष्ठ, २०६८, पृ. १-१४)। सबाल्टर्न जनहरू तथा उत्पीडित वा सीमान्तीकृत वर्गको अध्ययन गर्ने मानिसहरू सबाल्टर्नलाई वर्ग, जनजाति, भौगोलिक रूपमा उपेक्षित मानिस, दलित सबैको पर्यायको रूपमा लिन्छन् (सुवेदी, २०६८, पृ. xvii)। युगौंदेखि इतिहासका पानाबाट बाहिर फर्काइएको सबाल्टर्न वर्गको आफ्नै इतिहास लेखन गर्ने उद्देश्यले सन् १९८२ देखि दक्षिण एसियामा सबाल्टर्न अध्ययन अभियानको रूपमा सञ्चालनमा आएको देखिन्छ । इतिहासविद् रन्जित गुहाको नेतृत्वमा सबाल्टर्न अध्ययन समूह निर्माण भएको हो (श्रेष्ठ, २०६८ पृ. २) । गुहाले सम्पादन गरेका सबाल्टर्न स्टडिज : राईटिङ्ग अन साउथ एसियन हिस्ट्री यान्ड सोसाइटीका छ ओटा ठेली प्रकाशनका माध्यमबाट सबाल्टर्न अध्ययन स्थापित भएको पाइन्छ । रन्जित गुहा र गायत्री चक्रवर्ती स्पिभाकको सम्पादन र एड्वार्ड सडको भूमिकासहित सेलेक्टेड सबाल्टर्न स्टडिज (सन् १९८८) कृति प्रकाशित भई सन् १९९० देखि सड तथा स्पिभाकले यसबारेमा गहन प्राज्ञिक लेखहरू प्रकाशन गर्न थालेपछि नै सबाल्टर्न अध्ययनले अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय मान्यता, चर्चा र विषयगत व्यापकता

पाएको बुझिन्छ (एटम, २०७८, पृ. २४७-४८)। यस अध्ययनलाई उत्तरआधुनिकतावादसँग पनि जोड्ने गरिएको देखिन्छ। पहिचान, सामाजिक आन्दोलनसँगै सबाल्टर्नको निरन्तर विकासमा उत्तरआधुनिकतावादी चिन्तनको महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका रहेको मानिन्छ (भट्टराई, २०७८, पृ. ४९)। यसरी सबाल्टर्न वर्ग समाजको सबैभन्दा तल रहेको पाइन्छ। यो वर्गको उत्पादनका क्षेत्रमा महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका भए पनि उपभोगका अवस्था किनारीकृत छ। अतः इतिहासका सबै कालखण्डमा एउटा केन्द्रले अनेकौं प्रकारले निर्माण गरेको किनाराको वर्ग नै संसारभर सबाल्टर्न वर्गका नामले परिचित छ।

सबाल्टर्न शब्दलाई तल्लो वर्ग, भुइँमान्छे, सीमान्तीकृत जस्ता भावमा प्रयोग गर्ने प्रथम व्यक्ति इटालीका नवमाक्सवादी तथा सांस्कृतिक विश्लेषक आन्तोनिओ ग्राम्स्की हुन्। उनका शब्दमा सबाल्टर्न भन्नाले गैरशासकीय र अहैकमवादी वर्ग वा समुदायलाई जनाउँछ जो सधैं अधीनस्थ हुन्छन् र उनीहरू शासकको प्रयोगको वस्तुसमेत बन्न पुग्छन् (श्रेष्ठ, २०६८, पृ. १६)। ग्राम्स्कीले शासितहरू शासकहरूबाट शासित भइरहन तयार भएको अवस्थालाई हेजेमोनी भनेका छन्। त्यस्तो हेजेमोनीको स्वीकारोक्ति आफैं आउँदैन। त्यसलाई शासकले विभिन्न किसिमका वैचारिकीमार्फत सिर्जना गरेका हुन्छन्। त्यस्ता वर्ग, धर्म, राष्ट्रियतालगायत संस्कृतिका विभिन्न क्षेत्रहरूमा जरा गाडेका वैचारिकीहरूलाई आत्मसात् गरी शासित हुन स्वीकार गर्छन् (उप्रेती, २०६८, पृ. १७१)। सबाल्टर्न अध्ययनले इतिहास, राजनीति जस्ता विभिन्न मोडहरू पार गर्दै साहित्यिक अध्ययनसँग सम्बन्ध गाँस्न आइपुगेको पाइन्छ।

साहित्यमा सबाल्टर्नको अध्ययन शक्तिसँग जोडेर विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन गर्ने गरिन्छ। सबाल्टर्नको स्वतन्त्रता र स्वायत्तताको मुद्दा साहित्यमा पनि लागु हुन्छ। साहित्यका विविध आयाम र छिद्रहरूबाट सबाल्टर्न साहित्यमा बोलिरहेको हुन्छ भन्ने मान्यता यस सिद्धान्तमा पाइन्छ। समग्रमा हेर्दा सबाल्टर्न अध्ययनले आर्थिक, सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक जस्ता आयामका विशेष अवस्थाहरूमा सबाल्टर्न चेतनाको अध्ययन गर्दछ। प्रस्तुत लेखमा नारायण ढकालको 'इरफान अली' कथालाई सबाल्टर्नसम्बन्धी मान्यताहरूका आधारमा विश्लेषण गरिएको छ। जातीय, भाषिक तथा आर्थिक पक्षलाई सबाल्टर्नको अवस्था देखाउने आधार मानी यिनै आधारबाट सबाल्टर्न बन्न पुगेका वर्गको आवाजलाई पनि यहाँ विश्लेषण गरिएको छ।

### इरफान अली कथामा सबाल्टर्नको अवस्था

'इरफान अली' कथामा मुस्लिम समुदायको एक पात्रमाथि राज्यसत्ताका आडमा भएको अन्याय, अत्याचार, दमन र मृत्युदण्डसम्मको घटनालाई विषयवस्तु बनाइएको छ। देहाती भाषा बोल्ने ऊ गरिब, सहाराविहीन देखिन्छ। भाषा, पहिचान आदिको खोजी नै नगरी उसलाई निराधारमै दोषी करार गर्दै तुच्छ व्यवहार गरेको र मृत्युदण्ड दिइएको छ। यस घटनाबाट प्रभुत्वशाली वर्गले अधीनस्थवर्गप्रति गरेको व्यवहारलाई कथाले छर्लङ्ग पारेको छ। अतः इरफान अलीनामक त्यो पात्र सबाल्टर्नको प्रतिनिधि पात्र बनेको देखिन्छ। यस कथामा सबाल्टर्नको जातीय, भाषिक, वर्गीय अवस्था सघन रूपले आएको छ। अतः सबाल्टर्नसम्बन्धी यिनै कुरालाई आधार मानेर प्रस्तुत कथाको छुट्टा छुट्टै शीर्षकमा विश्लेषण गरिएको छ :

### इरफान अली कथाको सबाल्टर्नको जातीय अवस्था

जातीय दृष्टिले 'इरफान अली' कथाको मुख्य पात्र इरफान अली सबाल्टर्न देखिन्छ। ऊ मुस्लिम समुदायको नेपाली हो। वीरगन्ज जेलमा साम्प्रदायिक दङ्गा भएपछि उसलाई काठमाडौंको जेलमा राखिएको छ। चोरीको अभियोगमा थुना परे तापनि उसले चोरी गरेको हो, होइन प्रमाणित भएको छैन। उसको स्वयम् चाहिँ कुनै नराम्रो काम नगरेको दाबी गर्दै आएको छ। देहाती (भोजपुरी) भाषा मात्र बोल्न जान्ने उसको वास्तविकतासँग कसैलाई वास्ता पनि छैन। ऊ स्वयम् पनि आफ्नो समस्यालाई राख्न भाषिक कारणले असमर्थ छ। वीरगन्जमा बसोबास गर्ने तराई मूलको सीमान्तकृत समुदायको जीवन भोगाइ र प्रभुत्वशाली वर्गबाट हुने गरेको शोषणलाई उसैको प्रतिनिधित्वका आधारमा यहाँ देखाइएको छ। एउटा कैदीले अलीलाई सङ्केत गरी भनेको छ, "साले मुसल्टेलाई साढे सातको दशा लागेको थियो कि ?" (पृ. १५३)। यहाँ मुस्लिम समुदायको भएकै कारण

उसलाई तुच्छ व्यवहार र निकृष्ट भाषाले गाली गरिएको छ । काठमाडौंको जेलमा रहेका मूल चौकीदार, दलसिङ सबैले उसलाई मान्छेको आधारभूत स्थानभन्दा तल राखेको पाइन्छ । मुसलमान भएकै कारण उसलाई जेलमा पनि जोसुकैले अपमान मात्र गरेको छैन विभिन्न किसिमका सजाय पनि सहज रूपले दिएको छ ।

इरफान अली आफैँमा निर्दोष रहेको तर बर्बर दमनमा परेको छ । उसले यस कुरालाई उसले भनेको छ, “मालिक दया करी, हमार कुछो भुल नैखे” (पृ. १५५) । इरफान दलसिङ, मूल चौकीदार आदिको अनाहकको क्रूर सजायको कुनै प्रतिकार गर्न सक्दैन । ऊ मात्र ईश्वरको प्रार्थना गर्छ र आफूलाई भाषामा आफूलाई सजाय नदिन र आफ्नो कुनै गल्ती नभएको जानकारी गराउन चाहन्छ । उसले कथामा यो कुरालाई यसरी अभिव्यक्त गरेको छ, “मालिक हाम्रा से जे भइल अन्जानमा भइल । हमार कुछो भुल नैखे, दया करी” (पृ. १५५) । जातीय आधारमा नै इरफानलाई चरम यातना दिइन्छ । उसको जातीय, धार्मिक अस्तित्वलाई त स्वकारिदैन नै उसमाथि अमानवीय व्यवहार गर्नको मूलकारण पनि उसको जातीय र त्यससँग जोडिएको धार्मिक आस्थासमेत रहेको बुझिन्छ । कथामा दलसिंह भनेको छ, “साला मुसल्टे, चौकीमा हिँड् ।....अभै कुरा बुझिन्छ साला । चौकीमा हिँड्” (पृ. १५३) । यहाँ मुसलमान भएकै कारण तीव्र घृणा ओकलेको देखिन्छ । अपमान गर्नुको आधार पनि अलीको जातीय पहिचान रहेको सङ्केत मिलेको छ ।

वास्तवमा इरफान अली सीमान्तीकृतको प्रतिनिधित्व गर्ने तराईवासी नेपाली हो । ऊ तराईकै सन्दर्भमा पनि पिछडिएको वर्गमा पर्ने जाति/समुदायका रूपमा रहेको छ । यस कथामा उसलाई कथित उपल्लो मानिएका जातिले अमानवीय व्यवहार गरेका छन् । इरफानलाई जातीय रूपमा नै अपमान र तिरष्कारपूर्ण व्यवहार गर्दै मूल चौकीदार भन्छ, “भन् ए मुसल्टे, तँ कुन उग्रवादीको दलाल होस् । कुन एबेसीको पैसा खान्छस् भन्” (पृ. १५६) । मुस्लिम समुदायको भएको र नेपाली बोल्न नसकेका आधारमा विविध आरोप लगाएकोबाट मूल चौकीदारले उसलाई जातीय रूपमा अधीनस्थ तुल्याएको देखिन्छ । मूल चौकीदारले वीरगन्ज जेलमा साम्प्रदायिक दङ्गा भएर यहाँ सारिएको भन्दै इरफानलाई बाँध्न दलसिङलाई आदेश दिन्छ । कैदी नै रहेको तर जेलर वा जेल प्रशासनको नजिकमा रहेको मूल चौकीदारले अन्ततः उसलाई कठोर सजाय दिई मृत अवस्थामा पुऱ्याएको छ । कथामा समाख्याताले भनेको छ :

उता आठ नम्बर चौकी भने अभै आफ्ना गलत र अमानवीय करतुतहरूको निमित्त सक्रिय र जागरुक थियो । यो सबै गतिविधिले दर्साउँथ्यो- तत्कालीन नेपालको प्रतिबिम्ब यहाँ प्रदर्शित छ । अर्थात् राजधानीको जेलको त्यो कोठा एउटा दर्पण हो, जहाँ सिङ्गै नेपालको छाया हेर्न सकिन्छ । जहाँ देशको अन्याय र अत्याचार हेर्न सकिन्छ । इरफान अलीमाथि नाहकमा भएको अत्याचार पनि त सिङ्गै मुलुकमा हुने अत्याचारको एउटा बोनसाई रूप न थियो । (पृ. १५८)

समाख्याताको यस टिप्पणीबाट इरफान अली घटनामा दोषी नरहेको देखिन्छ । तत्कालीन सरकारले सोझासाभा निमुखा नेपालीमाथि दमन गर्ने गरेको तथ्य समाख्याताको अभिव्यक्तिबाट प्रस्ट भएको छ । सरकार अन्याय र अत्याचार प्रशस्त गथ्र्यो भन्ने आधार पनि उद्धृतांशले दिएको छ ।

मूल चौकीदारले इरफानलाई आफूहरूले मारिदिएको व्यहोरा जेलरलाई सुनाउँदा जेलरले आन्तरिक प्रशासनका कैदीहरूको उत्साह बढाएर हिँड्छ । यसबाट तत्कालीन सरकार निरङ्कुश र क्रूर रहेको थप पुष्टि हुन्छ । तत्कालीन व्यवस्थाले इरफानको जीवनको पनि कुनै मूल्य देख्दैन । खाना बनाउने चुलो निर्माणका लागि माटो खन्दा उसलाई जेलमा सुरुङ खनी भाग्न खोजेको जस्तो निकृष्ट तहको आरोप लगाइयो र अभ्र बढी सजायको भागीदार बनाइयो । वास्तवमा उसको जीवन दयनीय र अपमानजनक स्थितिबाट गुञ्जिएको कुरालाई कथाले प्रस्ट पारेको छ । इरफान जातीय सबल्टर्न बनी कठोर यातनाबाट पीडामा छटपटाएर अल्लाहको प्रार्थना गर्दै मृत अवस्थामा पुगेको छ । जेलमा थोरै माटो पनि खन्न नदिनु, जेलमा माटो खन्न पाइँदैन भनेर कैदीलाई नबुझाई खनेको देखेमा कठोर सजाय दिनु जस्ता कुराले प्रभुत्वशाली वर्गले सबल्टर्न जातिलाई सधैं आफूअनुकूल बनाइएका मूल्य-मान्यताका आधारमा दास बनाइराख्न चाहन्छ भन्ने कुराको पुष्टि गर्दछ । यस घृणित घटनाले एउटा वर्ग



सधैं जातीय सबाल्टर्नको पीडामा छटपटाइरहेको हुन्छ । यसै कुरालाई प्रस्तुत कथामा मुस्लिम समुदायको सबाल्टर्न पात्रहरूको अवस्थाबाट बुझ्न सकिन्छ ।

उपर्युक्त साक्ष्यहरूमार्फत् सामन्तवादी, निरङ्कुश राज्यव्यवस्थाका कारण एवम् राजनैतिक कुसंस्कारका कारण इरफान अली जस्ता पात्रलाई किनारीकृत बनाइएको बुझिन्छ । उसलाई जातीय र त्यससँग जोडिएको धार्मिक आस्थाका आधारमा समेत अमानवीय व्यवहार गरी मृत अवस्थामा पुर्‍याइएको तथ्य प्रस्टिएको छ । इरफान अलीलाई प्रतिनिधि पात्रका रूपमा हेर्दा जातीय अवस्थाकै कारण किनारीकृत वा सबाल्टर्न बन्नुपरेको स्थिति कथामा आएको छ ।

### इरफान अली कथामा सबाल्टर्नको भाषिक अवस्था

‘इरफान अली’ कथाको पात्र इरफान अली भाषिक रूपले सबाल्टर्न पात्र हो । ऊ भाषाकै कारणले गर्दा भुटा मुद्दाको सिकार भएको छ । आफूलाई फसाउँदा पनि ऊ भाषाकै कारण सत्यतथ्य बताउन सक्दैन । उसले गल्ती नगरेको तर गल्तीको आरोप मात्र लगाएको कुरा उसले मनमा यसरी खेल्छ, “अल्लाह ! मबाट के गल्ती भयो ? कुनै गल्ती गरे जस्तो त लाग्दैन !” (पृ. १५५) । यस भनाइमा अलीको विवशता र निरीहता देखिन्छ । इरफानले अरू कैदी, दलसिङ्ग, मूल चौकीदार कसैसँग पनि संवाद गर्न नसक्नु, एकोहोरो भगवानलाई मात्र समस्या बताइरहनु, आफ्नै भाषामा मात्र बोलिरहनु जस्ता कुराले उसले भाषाकै कारण आफूमाथिको आरोप खण्डन गर्न नसकेको बुझिन्छ । ऊ मानिसले आफ्नो समस्यालाई नबुझेपछि भगवानलाई पुकार्न पुगेको छ । ऊमाथि भएको अत्याचारबारे समाख्यातको कथन छ, “इरफान अलीमाथि नाहकमा भएको अत्याचार पनि त सिङ्गै मुलुकमा हुने अत्याचारको एउटा बोनसाई रूप न थियो” (पृ. १५८) । समाख्याताको यस भनाइबाट अली कुनै घटनाको दोषी थिएन बरु ऊमाथि अन्याय र अत्याचार भएको हो भन्ने देखिन्छ । अन्तर्हृदयदेखिको स्वरलाई हेर्दा पनि अली बेकसुर थुनामा रहेको नै प्रस्ट हुन्छ ।

कथामा इरफानमाथि एकपछि अर्को गर्दै विभिन्न आरोप लगाइएको छ । शक्तिका पछि लागेपछि छुटकारा पाइने आसमा कैदीहरू नवकैदीका लागि शासक जस्तै बन्दछन् । शासनसत्ताको चाकडी गरी कैदीहरू स्वयम् शासक बनेर अलीमाथि अभै यातना बढाउँदै लगिरहेका देखिन्छन् । अलीलाई पानी खन्याउँदै निर्मम ढङ्गले पिटेर यातना दिइएको छ । अनुहारमा कडा चोट दिइएको छ । उसको मुखबाट रगत बग्दा पनि यातना दिनेमाथि कुनै मानवीय भाव विकास हुन सकेको छैन । भाषाकै कारण नाजवाफ बनेको इरफान जस्तोसुकै पीडा र यातना पाए पनि त्यसलाई प्रतिकार गर्न सक्दैन बरु ईश्वरलाई आफ्नो कथाव्यथा सुनाउँछ । उसको भाषा बुझ्नुप्रति शासकहरूको कुनै रुचि देखिँदैन । बरु मुसलमान भएको र उसको आफ्नै भाषा बोलेकै कारण उसलाई अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय तत्त्वको संज्ञा दिइन्छ । यातनाको दुष्प्रक्रमा अलीले कारुणिक स्वरमा भनेको छ, “हाय अल्लाह ! सैतान के हात से हक असहाय के रक्षा करी” (पृ. १५६) । यस साक्ष्यले इरफानले पाएको यातनाको चरमोत्कर्षलाई उजागर गरेको छ । उसको यातना यतिमा मात्र रोकिँदैन अभै बढ्दै जान्छ । उसको चित्कारले सारा जेलमा अमानवीय स्वरलाई परिचित गराउँछ । अन्ततः उसलाई यातना दिएर मारिन्छ । कैदीहरूमा सहानुभूतिभन्दा ऊप्रतिको विद्वेषको मात्रा बढी देखिन्छ । यस्तो अवस्था सिर्जनामा राज्यशक्तिको प्रभुत्वको हात देखिन्छ । मानिसहरूको हत्यालाई शक्तिकै आडमा सहज रूपले दुर्घटना बनाइदिने तथ्यलाई कथामा भनिएको छ, “यो त्यो अस्पताल हो जसले मानिसको हत्यालाई सहज दुर्घटना भनेर प्रमाणपत्र लेख्ने गर्दछ” (पृ. १५८-१५९) । यस्तो शक्तिको डर र त्रासले पनि कैदीहरू शक्तिकै पुजारी बन्ने गरेको देखिन्छ । अभै बफादार कैदीलाई आममाफीको पुरस्कार दिने प्रचलनले पनि उनीहरू शासकप्रति चाकडीबाज बन्न पुगेको देखिन्छ । सत्ता र शक्तिप्रतिको चाकडीकै लागि कैदीहरू यस्तो अमानवीय कार्य गर्न उद्यत देखिन्छन् । शक्तिका पुजारीहरूले भने अलीको जस्तो अवस्था भोग्नु नपर्ने तथ्यलाई उजागर गर्दै कैदीहरू संवादमा क्रममा भन्छन्, “अभागी मुसल्टे काम गर्नुअघि हामीसित सोधेको भए कमसे कम यस्तो दुर्भाग्यमा फस्ने थिएन । .... त्यो अलि कपटी खालकै रहेछ । कमसे कम आएपछि कसैसित मित्र भाव पनि राख्न सकिन्थ्यो” (पृ. १५७) । प्रस्तुत साक्ष्यले पनि भाषिक सबाल्टर्नको स्थितिलाई प्रस्ट देखाएको छ । इरफानले नेपाली भाषा बोल्न नसकेकै कारण ऊ यस परिस्थितिमा पुगेको हो भन्ने कुराको विश्लेषण कथाका अन्य पात्रमा देखिँदैन । बरु समस्याको



भुमरीमा फँस्नुको कारण कपटी भनी अर्थ्याइएको छ । अतः आफूलाई लागेको कुरा भन्न नसक्नु, अरूले नेपाली बोल्दा नेपालीमा नै जवाफ फर्काउन नसक्नु, आफ्नै भाषामा मात्र एकोहोरो बोली रहनु, अरूका अभिव्यक्तिमा उचित प्रतिक्रिया दिन नसक्नु आदिले कथाको मूल पात्र अर्थात इरफान अली भाषिक समस्याले सबाल्टर्न पात्र बन्न पुगेको कुरा प्रस्ट हुन्छ । यसरी इरफान अलीको भाषा बुझ्न खोज्नुको सट्टा उल्टा विविध आरोप लगाउनुबाट समाजमा भाषिक विभेद देखिएको छ भने भाषाप्रतिको प्रभुत्वशाली वर्ग सङ्कुचित रहेका कारण कथाको मुख्य पात्र सबाल्टर्न बन्न पुगेको कुरा देखाइएको छ ।

### इरफान अली कथामा सबाल्टर्नको वर्गीय अवस्था

वर्गीय रूपमा यस कथाका पात्रहरू सबाल्टर्न बनाइएका छन् । इरफानलाई सजाय दिने व्यक्तिहरू मूल चौकीदार, दलसिंह आदि रहेका छन् । यिनीहरू आफैँ पनि सजाय भोगी रहेका कैदीहरू नै हुन् । यद्यपि लामो समयसम्म जेलमा बसेपछि प्रशासनले यिनीहरूलाई नै आफ्नो प्रतिनिधि ठानेको देखिन्छ । जेलरले इरफानलाई केही सजाय भए नभएको बारे मूल चौकीदारलाई सोध्दा मूल चौकीदार भन्छ, “शिक्षादीक्षा मात्र होइन सर, यसले त पुरै पुक्ति पाइसक्यो” (पृ. १५८) । यसबाट सजायका सारा कुरा यिनै कैदीहरूले आफू खुसी दिँदै आएको देखिन्छ । कसैलाई मारुपरे पनि यी कैदीहरू तयार हुन्थे र जेलरलाई पछि जानकारी गराउँथे । जेलरले सबै अधिकार यी पुराना कैदीलाई दिएको बुझिन्छ ।

वीरगन्जमा साम्प्रदायिक दङ्गा मच्चाएको आरोपमा इरफान जेलको कठोर सजायमा परेको छ । ऊबाहेक अन्य कसैलाई केन्द्रीय जेलमा ल्याइएको पनि छैन । उसलाई सबैभन्दा बढी सजाय दिइने कोठामा राखिन्छ । उसलाई भेट्न कोही पनि नआउनु, दङ्गामा उसलाई मात्र फँसाइनु जस्ता कुराले इरफान निम्नवर्गको भएकै कारण सबाल्टर्न बन्न पुगेको बुझिन्छ । त्यस्तै इरफानले चुलो बनाउन माटो लिएको छ । उसलाई जेलपरिसरमा माटो खन्न नपाइने नियम थाहा हुँदैन । जेलका सामान्य नियमहरू बुझ्न र सोध्न पनि नसक्नु, माटाको चुलो सामान्य रूपले तयार गर्नु, अन्य भाषामा पहुँच नहुनु आदिले पनि ऊ सर्वसाधारण नागरिक भएको बुझ्न सकिन्छ । उसले त्यही गल्ती गरेबापत मूल चौकीदार अभै कूर बनेको देखिन्छ । उसलाई सजाय दिँदा, मृत्यु हुँदासमेत उसको पक्षमा कुनै व्यक्ति उपस्थित छैन । उसले दया करी, मालिक जस्ता शब्दावलीको प्रयोग गरेको छ । यी घटनाले पनि प्रस्तुत कथामा अली र कैदीबन्दीसमेत वर्गीय रूपमा सबाल्टर्न देखिन्छन् ।

### इरफान अली कथामा सबाल्टर्न वर्गको आवाज

‘इरफान अली’ कथामा प्रयुक्त मज्चीय र नेपथ्यीय पात्रहरू निरङ्कुश पञ्चायती व्यवस्था, उच्चवर्ग र उच्च जातले निर्माण गरेको प्रभुत्वलाई स्वीकार गर्न विवश भएको देखाइएको छ । नेपाली राजनीतिमा २०४७ सालमा प्रजातन्त्र पुनर्स्थापनापूर्वको अर्थात् पञ्चायती शासनव्यवस्थाको एउटा कुरूप चित्रलाई प्रस्तुत कथाले देखाएको छ । भाषा, धर्म, भूगोल, वर्ग, जस्ता आधारमा इरफानलाई दुर्व्यवहार गरिएको छ । सामान्य जनताका रूपमा रहेको इरफानलाई निर्दोष देखिए पनि कठोर जेल सजाय दिइन्छ । कसैको आदेशको भ्रमा उसले सजायको भागीदार हुनुपरेको छ । ऊ कुनै अदालतीय वा न्यायिक आधारमा जेल परेको छैन बरु धार्मिक, जातीय पूर्वाग्रहको सिकार बन्न पुगेको छ । तराईबाट केन्द्रीय कारागारमा ल्याई सजायको भागीदार बनाइएको ऊ अन्ततः कैदी बन्दीकै कठोर र अमानवीय यानताबाट मृत अवस्थामा पुगेको छ । जेलरले इरफानलाई केही सजाय भए नभएको बारे मूल चौकीदारलाई सोध्दा मूल चौकीदार भन्छ, “शिक्षादीक्षा मात्र होइन सर, यसले त पुरै पुक्ति पाइसक्यो” (पृ. १५८) । यस अभिव्यक्तिबाट जेल प्रशासनले आफ्नो जिम्मेवारी कैदीहरूलाई नै दिएको बुझिन्छ । यसरी पुराना कैदीलाई नै नयाँ कैदीको सजायको जिम्मा दिनु, कैदीहरूको भनाइलाई नै आधिकारिक ठान्नु, कैदीलाई दिइने सजाय मात्रा र प्रकार पनि कैदीबन्दीहरूमार्फत तोकनु आदि तत्कालीन राजनैतिक व्यवस्थाका निन्दनीय पक्षहरू हुन् । यहाँ सबाल्टर्न वर्गप्रति कथाकारको सहानुभूति अभिव्यक्त भएको देखिन्छ । सबाल्टर्नको हकअधिकारको विषयलाई लेखकीय दृष्टिबाट प्रखर रूपले आवाज उठाइएको छ ।

इरफान अली कथामा सबाल्टर्न वर्गको अर्को टिठलाग्दो पक्ष पनि उद्घाटित भएको छ । सबाल्टर्न वर्ग जागेको जस्तो वा विद्रोही देखिएको बेलामा समेत सम्भ्रान्त शक्तिशाली वर्गका अधि अधीनस्थ नै हुन्छ भन्ने ग्राम्चीको भनाइ (श्रेष्ठ,

२०६८, पृ. २१) यहाँ सार्थक भएको देखिन्छ। यहाँका कैदीबन्दीहरू स्वयम् सबाल्टर्न देखिँदादेखिँदै पनि शक्तिशाली वर्गका अधि अधीनस्थ देखिएका छन्। उनीहरू राज्यसत्ताबाट दाससरहका भएका छन्। कैदीबन्दीहरू सामान्तवर्गकै शक्तिबाट सबाल्टर्नवर्गको विरुद्ध परिचालित देखिन्छन्। इरफान अलीलाई मूल चौकीदार, कोठा नायिके आदि अभियुक्तबाटै मृत्युदण्ड दिइएको छ र त्यस्ता अभियुक्त राज्यसत्ताबाट पुरस्कृत हुने कुरा यहाँ उल्लेख छ। यसबाट कथाकारले साङ्केतिक रूपमा सबाल्टर्नको आवाज अरूले नै बोलिदिनुपर्ने कुरा अभिव्यक्त गरेको देखिन्छ। सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, आर्थिक विभिन्न क्षेत्रमा प्रभावकारी भूमिका निर्वाह गर्दै राष्ट्रनिर्माणमा तमाम भूमिका निर्वाह गर्ने सबाल्टर्न वर्गलाई शासककै कृपामा बाँच्न बाध्य पारिन्छ र शासककै चाहना अनुरूप चलायमान बनाइन्छ (श्रेष्ठ, २०६८, पृ. ४०) भन्ने तर्क यहाँ सान्दर्भिक देखिएको छ। यस कुरालाई मूल चौकीदारले अन्य कै दीहरूलाई सम्बोधन गर्दै भनेको निम्नलिखित साक्ष्यले प्रस्ट पारेको छ :

सुन ए कैदीहरू ! जेलभित्र नियम नमान्नेहरू इरफान अली नामको मुसल्टेले भैं आफ्नो जीवनको अन्त्य रोज्नुपर्छ। तसर्थ म तिमीहरूलाई भन्छु - कसैले पनि त्यसको जस्तो काम नगरोस्। सरकारले सबैलाई दुई छाक खान दिएकै छ। बिरामी पर्दा ओखतीमुल्लोको बन्दोबस्त पनि गरेकै छ। (पृ. १५९)

समाख्यातामार्फत कथाले नेपाली इतर भाषी भएकै कारण कुदृष्टि राख्ने राज्यसत्ताको अन्त्य चाहेको देखिन्छ। सीमान्तीकृत समुदायलाई तत्कालीन राज्यसत्ताले अपमानजनक र अमानवीय व्यवहार गरेकाले कथाले त्यस्तो राज्यसत्ताको अन्त्य चाहेको देखिन्छ। शासकहरूको निरङ्कुश चरित्रका कारण तत्कालीन पञ्चायती व्यवस्थाको अन्त्यका लागि जनताले सङ्घर्ष गरेको तथ्य कथामा अभिव्यक्त भएको छ। इरफानमार्फत तत्कालीन राज्यसत्ताको निरङ्कुश चरित्र नै त्यस व्यवस्थाको अन्त्यको कारण रहेको र त्यस दमनकारी राज्यसत्ताको अन्त्यका लागि सबाल्टर्नवर्गको विशेष भूमिका रहेको दर्साइएको छ।

यसरी कथाको सबाल्टर्न पात्र इरफान अलीबाट प्रत्यक्ष रूपले कुनै विद्रोह भएको देखिँदैन। यद्यपि यहाँ उसलाई दिइएको कठोर सजाय र मृत्युदण्डले इरफान नभई तत्कालीन राज्यसत्ताको अन्त्यको सङ्केत गरिएको छ। पञ्चायती शासनको अमानवीय र निन्दनीय कार्य नै त्यस व्यवस्थाको अन्त्यको मूल कारण रहेको तथ्यलाई प्रस्तुत कथाले छर्लङ्ग पारेको छ। निरङ्कुश शासनले अथाह सीमान्तीकृत जनतालाई मृत्युका मुखमा पुर्‍याउने निन्दनीय कार्य गरेकाले त्यस्तो शासन व्यवस्थाको अन्त्य हुनुपर्छ भन्ने सबाल्टर्नको आवाजलाई यहाँ कथाकारका माध्यमबाट प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ।

## निष्कर्ष

‘इरफान अली’ नेपाली साहित्यका बहुमुखी प्रतिभा नारायण ढकालले सीमान्तीकृत समुदायको विषयलाई उठाएको प्रतिनिधि कथा हो। यस कथामा इरफान अली नामक पात्रका माध्यमबाट पञ्चायती शासनमा गरिएको अमानवीय व्यवहारलाई प्रस्ट देखाइएको छ। सिङ्गो राज्य संयन्त्र नै प्रभुत्वशालीहरूप्रति पूर्वाग्रही बन्दा सबाल्टर्न बन्न पुगेका पात्रको जातीय, भाषिक, वर्गीय, धार्मिक जस्ता पक्षलाई कथाले चित्रित गरेको छ। सामाजिक संरचना त सबाल्टर्नमैत्री थिएन नै अझ जेलभित्रसमेत सबाल्टर्न पात्रहरू असुरक्षित बनेको र प्रभुत्वशालीहरूकै हालीमुहाली रहेको तथ्यलाई पनि यस कथाले प्रस्तुत गरेको छ। इरफान निर्दोष देखिन्छ तर साम्प्रदायिक दङ्गाको आरोपमा ऊ जेल चलान भएको छ। ऊ जातीय रूपमा मुसलमान समुदायको मान्छे हो। उसलाई मुसलमान भएकै कारण अपमानजनक सम्बोधन गरिएको छ भने कठोर सजाय र मृत्युदण्ड दिइएको छ। ऊ नेपाली भाषा बोल्न सक्दैन जसका कारण पनि ऊ सजाय र अपमानको भागीदार बन्न पुगेको छ। देहाती भाषामात्र बोल्नु उसको सबाल्टर्न बन्नुपर्ने अर्को बाध्यता हो। अली वर्गीय रूपमा निम्नवर्गको प्रतिनिधि भएका तथ्य प्रशस्त देखिन्छन्। उसलाई वीरगन्जबाट काठमाडौँमा जेलचलान गर्दासम्म पनि उसको पक्षमा कोही देखिँदैन। ऊ माटोको चुलो बनाएर खाना बनाउन चाहन्छ। यस कुराले पनि ऊ आर्थिक रूपले तल्लो वर्गको पात्र रहेको बुझाएको छ। समग्रमा हेर्दा इरफान शोषित, पीडित, निम्न आर्थिक वर्गको प्रतिनिधि पात्र हो। उसका माध्यमबाट कथामा तत्कालीन नेपाली समाजमा सीमान्तीकृत बन्नुपर्ने अवस्थालाई प्रस्ट देखाइएको छ। उता जेलर, जेल प्रशासन आदिका माध्यमबाट प्रभुत्वशाली वर्ग, समुदाय आदिले गरेको राज्यसत्ताको दुरुपयोगलाई

देखाइएको छ । कैदीहरू पनि प्रभुत्वशालीहरूकै पक्षमा उभिएर चाकडी, चाप्लुसी गर्ने गर्थे भन्ने कुरालाई मूल चौकीदार, दलसिङ आदिको चरित्रमार्फत सार्वजनिक गरिएको छ । प्रभुत्वशालीवर्गले सबाल्टर्नवर्गमाथि सधैं आफ्नो हैकम स्थापित गर्न चाहेको हुन्छ भन्ने तथ्य यस किसिमका पात्रबाट सप्रमाण प्रस्तुत भएको देखिन्छ । सबाल्टर्न वर्गको भाषिक, जातीय र वर्गीय पहिचान खोज्दै यस वर्गको आवाज बुलन्द गरेकाले यो सबाल्टर्नमैत्री कथा रहेको पुष्टि हुन्छ ।

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