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EDITORIAL NOTE

It is with great pleasure, I, on behalf of National College offer Samriddhi Journal of Development Studies Vol VIII, No. 1, Issue 10, 2022 to the readers.

To meet the objective of disseminating the knowledge and results of research work done by its students, faculties and friends, a collection of six very relevant articles are put together. I believe it will definitely interest students and researchers curious in the matter presented.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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The themes on which articles can be written include: development studies, sustainable development, environment, social sciences issues, socioeconomic studies, anthropological studies, microfinance, microenterprises, tourism studies, cooperative management, development finance, forestry, climate change studies, geography, and linguistics.

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Genesis of Samriddhi Journal of Development Studies (SJDS)

Since the establishment of National College in 1996, it has created a history of conceptualizing and implementing tailor-made academic programs in the fields of development education with high importance to research. National College has pioneered three contextual programs namely Bachelor in Development Studies (BDevS) since 1999, Bachelor in Development Finance (BDevF) since 2006, and Bachelor of Social Sciences (BoSS) since 2013 and very soon is about to start a new program Bachelor of Psychology (BPsych). Affiliated to Kathmandu University, these forward looking programs are designed to addressing contemporary issues of national and global contexts.

Since 2012, the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Centre for Development Studies and Regional Cooperation has granted scholarships for the South Asian students to study at the college. This has added to student diversity in addition to the college already hosting students from all over Nepal. National College also has functioning relationship through a joint research program with Waseda University, Tokyo and University of Sacred Heart, Tokyo since 2002.

The final year students conduct their independent research works under the course entitled DEVS405 Project Work for six credit hours. In general, their works focus on specific topics in a dozen of development sectors, and geographically spread in over 20 districts each year. During the period of 1999-2022, nearly 1200 project works have been successfully completed and documented.

Realizing the strengths of research works and the values of their findings, the college decided to publish a journal to disseminate findings of research work done by faculties and selected students' project works. The first issue was published in 2006 by accommodating nine articles contributed by faculties and experts, and seven abstracts derived from the selected project works along with a list of 65 project works completed between 1999 and 2002.

After a gap of nearly five years, the journal was republished in July 2011 with a new design. The second issue (Volume II, Number 1, February-July 2011) contained 11 articles and a list of 69 project works completed in the academic year 2010. The third issue (Volume II, Number 2, February-July 2012) included seven articles by experts and 12 abstracts of students' project works. Similarly, the fourth issue (Volume III, Number 1, Issue 4, August 2012 – January 2013) accommodated seven articles and nine abstracts among others. In 2014, the Journal has been published as a special issue containing 14 papers and other materials presented at the International Seminar on Sustainable Livelihood organized by the National College on March 1st, 2013 in Lalitpur. In 2015 two issues of the journal were published (Volume 4, No. 1, Issue: 5 Year: 2015 and Volume 4, No. 2, Issue: 6).

The seventh issue was published in 2017 with five articles. The eighth issue got published with six articles in 2020 just before the International Conference for Innovative Education was held at National College and soon after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. The ninth issue was published with four articles in 2021. This tenth issue is published with six articles and an ISSN online as well.

The journal has also become an archive of selected research works conducted by students and faculties. It is believed that the articles have not only encouraged the contributing students but also benefited the students and academicians in general. Finally, the college management believes that the journal would eventually contribute towards development.

Table of Contents

S.No.	Title	Page No.
1	Understanding the Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors in School Drop Out of Girls: A study in two districts of Madhesh Province, Nepal Ashika Sharma	1
2	What are the factors that influence saving behavior of university students? Kavindra Bikram Thapa Navin Jha	9
3	‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यशिल्पको प्रयोग डा. गोपालप्रसाद रैरे	14
4	Community Health System Model to support Health Volunteers to outreach underserved population: A case study of HIV/AIDS program from Tanzania Ram Kumar Shrestha	21
5	Effectiveness of Rural Cooperatives as Means to Enhance Conservation through Economic Development Ujjwal Upadhyay	26
6	Impacts of forest fire on people living in suburban Kathmandu in the buffer zone of Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park Dipshana Dangol Indresh Sharma	34

Understanding the Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors in School Drop Out of Girls: A study in two districts of Madhesh Province, Nepal

Ashika Sharma¹

Abstract

This paper sheds light in understanding the socio-cultural determinants for school dropout among adolescent girls in Dhanusha and Rautahat districts of Nepal. This study employed a mixed method approach to explore the reasons for dropout. The finding derived a conclusion that discriminatory gender norms, and traditional beliefs and practices lead girls to drop out. The research suggests traditional beliefs regarding women as wives with majority of the domestic responsibilities and early marriage limit their educational opportunities. Additionally, restricted mobility and lack of autonomy, and menstrual stigma also leads to school dropout. This study therefore aims to illuminate the importance of understanding these underlying factors in order to work towards creating a supportive environment that promotes girls' autonomy, and agency within their household, and communities.

Keywords : Girls' Education Challenges, Dropout, Social norms

1.1 Introduction

The World Bank defines education as a powerful driver of development for reducing poverty, gender inequality, and instability (World Bank, 2018). For this purpose, providing equitable quality education has been identified as a priority in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNESCO, 2015). However, a positive impact of education is less likely to be achieved unless key issue such as school dropout is addressed first, and this can only be achieved if every child completes their education without dropping out along the way (UNICEF, 2018).

The term dropout has a universal denotation and can simply be understood as an abandonment of school before completing the course (Onyeefulu et.al, 2019). Empirical evidence suggests that there are multiple factors associated with dropping out, and these factors emerge not only from individual choice but also from situation within the household (Sabates, et al., 2010). Researchers also suggest that school dropout is more common among girls (Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian, 2008; Khatri, 2022). Studies have shown that adolescent girls living in extreme poverty are three times more likely to drop out without receiving secondary education. Although there is no single cause of dropout, gender norms and poverty are argued to be the factors for this (OECD, 2022; Khatri, 2022).

The issue of school dropout is a serious concern in most societies around the globe, and Nepal is no exception. The Constitution of Nepal guarantees free and compulsory education up to basic level and free education up to secondary level. According to the Nepal Law Commission, (2019), the country has made great strides in improving education access and achieving a net enrolment rate. In addition, a variety of policies, including provision of free textbooks and school meal program has also been put in place to encourage school enrolment. Despite these effort, substantial number of the most vulnerable children especially girls are still out of school (MoE & UNICEF, 2016). This gap exists because policies have mostly focused on addressing the problem of school enrolment, but rarely the issue of school dropout. This paper, thus, is positioned as an inquiry and is rather suggestive research in understanding the factors causing school dropout among girls in Madhesh province of Nepal.

This study is aimed to assess the socio-cultural factors influencing girls to drop out of schools in Dhanusha, and Rautahat districts of the Madhesh province. This study particularly attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are socio-cultural factors that lead girls to drop out of school?
- How do these factors exert their influence among girls to drop out?

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1.2 Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design. Cross-sectional study is carried out at one time point, or, over a short period to estimate the prevalence of the outcome of interest, for a given population (Levin, 2006; McMillan, 2008). The reason for choosing Madhesh province as the areas of the study because it is considered one of the least performing provinces in terms of education development. According to the National Census 2021, the literacy rate of Madhesh Province lies at the percentage of 49.72% meaning that not even half of the population in Madhesh are literate. Further, data depicted that in the year 2021, about 3.6% students dropped out of school nationally, out of which 2.91% were in Madhesh Province (NHR, 2023). Primary data was collected using a mixed-method approach which helped collecting different but complementary information in understanding the reason for school dropout among girls (Creswell, 2017). According to Creswell (2014), a mixed method study is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection that enables in understanding the research topic in greater depth (Creswell, 2014). With regards to the sampling design, a non-probability purposive sampling was used for both quantitative and qualitative part of the study. A sample of six schools from two districts was chosen for the study based on purposive sampling technique as it allowed researcher to choose a population of interest based on accessibility and feasibility (Bryman, 2012). For the selection of respondents, a sample of 120 girls from grade 7 and 8 were selected based on their willingness to participate in the survey. These grade in particular were chosen because data showed that in general school dropout among girls is more prominent before they complete their secondary education (SSDP Nepal, 2019). Questionnaire survey was the instrument designed to collect quantitative data. With regards to the qualitative part of the study, a total of four Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with school going girls and six semi-structured interviews with parents, school teachers, and education officer at the provincial level. For the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics using SPSS 25 was used, while for the qualitative part of the study, QDA Miner Lite was used to analyze, and interpret the data to generate the findings and results,

1.3 Review of Literature

1.3.1 History of Education in Nepal

To understand the context of school dropout among girls, it is equally important to understand the history of girls' education in Nepal. The history of Education in Nepal is recent and it dates back to 1952 when it was considered a fundamental tool for development (National Education Planning Commission, 1956). However, it was only in 1990 that the constitution recognized girls' right to education to promote female participation in national

development (MOE, 2004). Within the new political climate of 1990, education was accorded as a high priority, and it was in the same year that Nepal became a part of Education for All (EFA) campaign. Thereafter, in the year 2007, the Interim Constitution took the initiative to make education free up to the secondary level (GoN, Interim Constitution, 2007). This initiative increased the Net Enrollment Rate from 93.7% 2009 to 96.6% in 2015 for grade 1-5, and the overall enrollment increased for grade (1-8) from 83.2 % to 88.7% during the same time (SSDP & ADB, 2015). Despite the progress in school attainment, dropout and school retention especially among girls still is a major challenge (Bhattarai, 2017).

The term dropout has a universal denotation and can simply be understood as an abandonment of school before completing the course (Onyeefulu et.al, 2019). Although there is no single cause of dropout, gender norms and poverty are argued to be the factors for this (OECD, 2021; Gurung, 2016). The Global Gender Gap Report of 2015 ranked Nepal as the second-most improved country in the world on Educational Attainment and third-most improved globally on the overall Index and on Health and Survival. Despite these improvements, there is still inequality in achievements across communities, geographical areas, ethnic groups, class and administrative boundaries. Socio-cultural norms and practices relating to gender still play a key role in determining access to education for many girls in Nepal. Although Nepal has made tremendous progress toward the goal of providing education for all, in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, and the Education for all initiative, girls' dropout continues to be a challenge.

1.3.2 Policy environment in Nepal

The current achievement in the educational development for women and girls in Nepal is largely attributable to the Education for All (EFA) campaign of 1990. This international commitment came as a support for the development of basic and primary education in Nepal. Since then, many policies have been enacted in favour of promoting girls' education. In the year 2000, the EFA campaign adopted the Dakar Framework for Action (DFA) focused to deliver quality education by developing technical capacity and resources. The EFA Policy (2002-2015) further aimed at gender mainstreaming and training to teachers on gender sensitivity (Neupane, 2019). In the year 2003/2004, Ministry of Education (MoE) focused on teachers and scholarships to women from various marginalized groups. In 2007, the Interim Constitution was enacted which took the initiative to make education free up to secondary level (GoN, Interim Constitution, 2007). Thereafter, the new constitution enacted in 2015 affirmed the right of all citizens to compulsory and free basic education up to the secondary level (GoN, 2015). The free basic and primary education connoted free

tuition fee and free textbooks (UNESCO, 2008). This initiative increased the net enrollment rate (NER) for primary grades (1-5) from 93.7 % in SY2009 to 96.6 % in SY2015, and the NER for overall basic education (grades 1-8) increased from

83.2 % to 88.7 % in the same period. Despite these enacted education policies, girls dropout still remain a challenge in the country (Neupane, 2017).

1.3.3 Why invest in girls' education?

Investing in girls' education yields two benefits; one is the social benefit, and the other is the economic benefit. Social returns are essential for increasing girls' bargaining power at home and within society. Additionally, it is the key to overturning oppressive customs and traditions which have neglected the needs of girls and women. Furthermore, educated mothers are more likely to send both their daughters and sons to school and to keep them in school longer. In a study of maternal educational characteristics and their impact on girls' education in Nepal, it was found that one additional year of a mother's education increased her daughter's probability of completing the eighth grade by 3–5 percentage points and schooling level by 0.2 years (Dahal, Topping & Levy, 2021). Therefore, it can be argued that educating girls has a ripple effect that not only enhances the wellbeing of individuals, but also contributes to the well-being of the broader society. Another important consideration is the economic benefit. According to the World Bank study, each year that a girl attends secondary school corresponds to an 18% increase in her earnings in the future. A study conducted in Nepal found that the returns to education are higher at the upper-secondary level and that the returns to education for women are greater than those for men (Dunusinghe, 2021). Thus, increasing girls' education opportunities contributes to reducing inequality, increasing decision-making potential, and strengthening economies (Kushiyait, 2010; Kola 2014; UNICEF, 2020).

1.3.4 Theoretical lens of the study

The theoretical rationale of this paper draws on Butler's theory of performativity. Before delving into describing theory of performativity, it is crucial to understand the meaning of the term gender and performativity. Psychologist Robert Stoller who was the first to distinguish between the terms gender and sex, defined gender as feminine and masculine behavior an individual displays, and sex as the biological characteristics of a person (Mikkola 2017). The distinction between gender and sex is used to make a separation between the sexed body on one hand and the gendered behavior of people on the other hand. According to Butler (1990), gender identity is not biologically determined; it is rather reinforced and is produced by gender norms in society by multiple intersecting factors such as locations, race, class,

nationality, culture, religion, education among other things. Butler's theory of performativity argues that gender is something we enact and do rather than something we are, and own. She suggests that an individual is not born with sex but rather sex is made by the everyday choices that they make in life. This notion as defined by Butler is socially constructed where many females perform gender related actions that build into the determination of the gender roles/sex. A key element of gender performativity is the iteration of the act, "Performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate act, but, rather, as the reiterative practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler, 1990 p.2). Butler (1990), considers that, the concept of being a female is a challenge, owing not only to society's view of women as a social category, but, a culturally conditioned or constructed subjective identity. She reasons that women's' actions are limited because she is a female and the reason for such controlled action is because gender is politically and socially controlled. This controlled gender performance means that people become tied into a 'normalized' gender role which is culturally and socially defined as being a 'normal 'female/male'. She asserts that the idea of 'true gender' cannot be defined, since the qualities of gender are part of a broader narrative that helps reinforce stereotypes and expectations of what it means to be male or female.

In the context of girls' school dropout, the fact that more girls still drop out due to various reasons like early marriage, household chores, lack of mobility among other things proves that women' role is linked to domestic spheres and as care takers. The society discursively construct the ideal womanhood with care and domestic sphere. According to Butler (1990), "Gender identity is defined as the outcome of the habitual performative acts that an individual partakes and which are controlled and given shape by the culturally and socially enforced gender norms." The outcome of gender identity was the illusory effect which demonstrated that a women's gender was based on the roles that they were expected to carry which were viewed as natural because they are associated with the biological sex of the individual. School dropout among girls due to such norms often appears natural, reinforcing stereotypical views that may persist in the future.

1.4 Overview of the Findings

This section explains the overall research finding in line with the research questions. In the beginning of the section, demographic information of the respondents is explained. The demographic information highlights respondent's language, ethnicity, and age. This is followed by analysis of different factors socio-cultural factors leading to school dropout.

1.4.1 Respondent's profile

Among the 120 respondents, the majority (51%) spoke Maithili as their primary language, followed by 26% of the respondents who spoke Bajika. There were 21% respondents who used Nepali as their primary language, and the remaining 2% used Bhojpuri. Data revealed that Maithili language was widely spoken in Dhanusha district, Bajika and Bhojpuri was only used in Rautahat district, and Nepali was used in both the districts. In regards to ethnicity, the caste and ethnicity were categorized into seven sub-groups on the basis of CBS directives (CBS, 2021). Based on the distribution of household by ethnicity, majority of the respondents were predominantly Terai Madhesi Dalit (30.83%), followed by Hill Brahmin/Chettri (23.33%). Terai Madhesi Janajati covered 19.16% of the sample and Madhesi Brahmin/Chettri covered 15% of the sample. Tharus (3.67%) and Hill Janajati (4.5%) were the lowest in the sample. The fact that there were less representation of Hill dalit, Janajati, and Tharu was because national data showed that Madhesh province had more Madhesi representation than representation of people from the hills. In regards to age, data depicted that majority (75%) of the respondents belonged to the age group 10-14 years, while the remaining respondents were from the age group 15-19 years. The average age of the girls who participated in the survey was 14 years.

1.4.2 Factors influencing for school dropout

It is widely accepted that education greatly benefits individuals and it is one of the most effective development investments nations can make (USAID, 2008). Education result in greater socio-economic gains, and especially educating girls produces greater benefit (ibid). Nonetheless, there still are girls who do not get opportunities to continue their education due to various reasons. Among the many barriers to education opportunities for girls, this study only covers the socio-cultural aspect. The researchers of this study understand socio-cultural factors as social and cultural practices that shape and influence individuals' beliefs, ideas, attitudes and behaviour within a specific context. In this study socio-cultural factor is understood as social norms, values and institution that shape an individual as identified by Durkheim (Durkheim, 1912). Socio-cultural factors such as gender stereotyping, and deep-rooted social norm prevalent in the society hinder girls' opportunity to continue education leading to dropout. The widespread operation of patriarchal social systems which includes early marriage, menstruation, domestic duties, intergeneration education affect the participation of girls in education and generally lower regard for the value of female life. The traditional beliefs of parents have made young girls to believe that girl-child education is not important because educated women do not make good wives. This section explores early marriage, home responsibility and menstruation as barriers to girls' education in detail.

1.4.3 Domestic Liabilities

Home responsibility was seen as a major barrier for girls to continue their education. Data depicted that for 22.5% of the girls, home responsibilities curtailed for attending schools. All the respondents were unanimous in their response that household chores acted as the biggest barriers for girls. Girls in the district were expected to bear a significant portion of the household responsibilities due to parental expectations and socialization norms. Girls stated during the FGDs that their parents naturally expected them to perform household chores rather than their brothers. In addition to this, in KII conducted with parents, it was mentioned that women were needed in the household so that they can cook for the family, and take care of the household.

A comparison of boys' and girls' daily routine painted a clearer picture. When girls were asked about their daily routine while they went to school, almost all the girls stated that upon their return from school, they would have to be involved in chores like fetching water, cooking and washing the dishes. One of the girls during FGD explains "By the time we finish our chores, we feel tired, especially during the summer season, when the heat is unbearable, we have no time to do homework" (FGD grade 7 girls Dhanusha). When the parents of the girls were asked about their son and what their son did after returning back from school, one of the parents interviewed shared "boys usually come home late as they spend time with their friends, we do not really ask them what they do after school" (KII with male parent, Rautahat). The consequence of this amply summed up by quantitative data where it depicted that the average study hours for girls was only 1.9 hours which they spent mostly doing homework. On the other hand, the girls' average time devoted to household chores was 3.4 hours. In some circumstances, when girls do get a chance to attain education, they didn't get a proper environment to study at home, as well as in school which was a result of the prevailing cultural norm. The household barriers mentioned particularly resonate with the argument of Butler who stresses on performative action caused by social norms creating gender roles. In this case boys and girls trained into doing different activities and fitting into their perceived gender roles i.e., for girl working in the kitchen, and for boys making friends normalize male hegemony over women (Butler, 2001).

1.4.4 Early Marriage

Early marriage is another factor that acts as an impediment in girls' education. The finding generated from this study suggested that 16.67% of the girls did not attend school due to early marriage. Parents in communities had a perception that girls if not married at a tender age would never be married her entire life. In KII conducted with parents, it was mentioned 'if unmarried girls stay at home

for too long, she would be looked upon as a burden to the family’ (KII with female parent, Dhanusha). A good number of respondents also expressed that girl’s education is considered as burden. Therefore, majority of the parents married off their daughters as early as possible.

A key informant mentioned “In our conservative rural society, women are treated as burden in terms of economic returns and output” (Education officer, Janakapur municipality). In addition to this, some girl’s parents said they would want to delay marriage, but the fear of social stigma and dishonor prevented them from acting on their wishes, and made them susceptible to pressure from potential grooms’ families, neighbors, relatives and the community. In the end, both mothers and fathers seemed to be acting more in response to prevailing social norms than to their own wishes. “Parent mostly do not allow girls to go to school after certain point because they fear that when girls acquire education, they would no longer respect them or their husbands’ (Education officer, Rautahat).

Social norms influenced individual decision-making, overriding other considerations and tilting the balance in favor of child marriage. Fear of shame, dishonor, or loss of respect within their communities played a significant role in shaping behaviors and the decisions.

1.4.5 Mobility of girls

Social norms and culture played a part in influencing girls’ mobility because some of the cultural beliefs do not support the idea of women going out of their homes to fend for their families or for trainings/education. This was viewed as men’s role and women who do not adhere to this are ostracized in the community. In this study, quantitative data depicted that 68.33% of the girls did not attend school due to lack of mobility. The attitude that girls’ mobility should be limited stood strong in the community both the districts and was identified as a direct barrier.

Table 1: Mobility of girls and freedom

S. N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Girls should have mobility as boys	38	31.67%
2	Girls should not have mobility as boys	82	68.33%
	Total	120	100%

It is often seen that in villages mostly schools are till primary level, for a higher education, parents have to send their children either to the city or somewhere which is distant from home. During qualitative consultation, girls unanimously stated that their parents did not allow them to go outside the village to pursue their higher-level education. Hence despite passing grade five, girls devoid of the opportunity to study further. When these girls’ parents were enquired about the incident parents

reported that they were scared about what the ‘community would think’ if girls’ started roaming about freely like boys. “How will we be answerable to the community if something happens to our girls? We cannot let them roam freely anywhere like boys do. Boys are generally stronger in that sense”(KII, male parent in Dhanusha).

Such stigma attached to girls could be very damaging and parents reported that there were chances, their daughters might not find appropriate husband in the future. This was the reason; they barred their daughters from travelling outside their village for studies or work. Community leaders who were interviewed also opined that girl are more susceptible to violence than boys because of which they have restrictions to do the things they want to do.

Most of the girls interviewed were already a drop out. When asked if they wanted to re-join school none of them wished to do so instead, they wanted to get some kind of training to start their own business. The girls believed that they had equal caliber to engage in income earning activities as boys. But despite their will, the ultimate decision making was in the hands of the household head. “We also want to study and work but it is hard in our community to follow that. Everyone here gets married so we have to follow the same” (FGD grade 8 girls in Rautahat).

Moreover, girls also mentioned that social norms and culture played a part in influencing their mobility because some of the cultural beliefs do not support the idea of girls going out of their homes to fend for their families or even education. This is viewed as a boy’s role and girls who do not adhere to this are ostracized in the community. When asked the reason for restriction, girls opined that it was due to the social norms and fear that they could elope with some other men they were restricted. “The amount of household chores we have to perform at home gives us less time to think of anything else even if it means going out for future education, we do not have time to even think about going out of the house.” (FGD grade 8 girls Dhanusha).

Girls were also asked about their decision-making ability at home. Data suggested that 83.33% of the girls could not make their own decision. When the reasons for this were explored through a qualitative lens, most of the girls agreed that they could not make any decision without the consent of their parents or the household head. One of the girls shared “My sister had to sacrifice her wish to open a tailoring shop because her in-laws did not allow it.” (FGD, grade 8 girls Rautahat) It can hence be inferred from this finding that it is not that girls cannot make choices but their choices are dependent on the willingness of their parents or the household head that makes decisions for them.

Table 2: Girl's ability to make decision

S. N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Can make own decisions	20	16.67%
2	Cannot make own decisions	100	83.33%
	Total	120	100%

This opens up doors to a lot of debate regarding the status of girls inside the household. Even when girls are capable to make their own life choices, their autonomy is hindered due to patriarchal mindset. Some of the patterns observed suggested impediments to women's involvement, linked to norms and obligations at home. The lack of work opportunity especially for girls is seen as a structural as well as a gender problem discouraging parents to invest on their daughter's education. This also stood as one of the major community level barriers for most of the girls. "Most of the parents in our area come from poor background, they do not see education as a priority for them. For them it is better for the whole family if the girls worked at home and learned household work rather than attend further school as they think do not see the return" (KII Head teacher, Dhanusha).

1.4.6 Menstruation Stigma

In many cultures, menstruation is considered a young girl's first foray into womanhood. However, girls in schools are made victims of their menstruation, and this is reflected in the hindrance that often impact education. The quantitative findings showed that 12.5% of the girls do not go to schools while menstruating. It was found from the qualitative finding that most of the girls simply did not have access to sanitary products, they faced discrimination and stigma during their periods, and many did not have educational resources to inform them about safe and sanitary hygiene practices. Period stigma often comes from superstitious beliefs that paint women who menstruate as impure. This phenomenon dates back for centuries, and is prevalent among numerous cultures, religions, and backgrounds even today. While exploring the issue further through qualitative research, it was found that parents did not want girls to go to school while they were on their cycle. "Girls often skip school during menstruation because parents do not wish to send them to school, and mostly they themselves do not come to school. Due to this reason girls miss up to five school days a month" (Head teacher, Rautahat). In FGDs conducted with the girls, all the girls unanimously agreed that stigma attached to menstruation coupled with lack of proper access to resources, often force them to stay home from school during their periods. Head Teacher of one of the schools in Dhanusha said, "At the maximum, some have estimated that girls might be missing as much as 10 to 20 percent of school days due to menstruation (Head teacher, Dhanusha). KIIs conducted with the parents gave a mixed response regarding menstruation. While some

parents shared it was alright for girls to go to school during menstruation, others had a contrasting opinion regarding the same. Parents shared that girl during menstruation should stay at home and not play with boys in the school as it may harm them

Table 3: Availability of sanitary pads at schools

S.N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Girls who had sanitary pad disposal facility at school	5	4.16%
2	Girls who did not have sanitary pad disposal facility at school	115	95.83%
	Total	120	100%

Lack of sanitary pad disposal facility also played a major role in affecting girls' education. When the girls were asked whether their schools had sanitary pad disposal facilities, 95.83% of them said that schools did not have such facility. Key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted with the teachers and head teachers pointed out that girls avoid coming to school in their menstruation because they feel shy. However, FGDs conducted with the parents and girls gave a completely contrasting view. The findings from FGDs with parents and girls suggested that lack of proper toilet in schools make it difficult for girls to come to school during periods. They said that schools neither have proper locks in the toilet nor there is water when needed. When asked if they would attend school if there were proper toilets, girls said that they would definitely attend school. This was validated by the response of the girls whereby more than 60% of the girls said that it is due to unhygienic toilets that they do not attend schools during menstruation. Hence, it can be inferred that girls miss school not because of menstruation, but rather due to lack of proper toilet facilities inside school premises. Evidence appears to support the fact that menstruation act as a barrier and girls missing school during their periods is because of stigma attached to it.

1.5 Conclusion

The findings highlighted those socio-cultural prejudices concerning girls' educational attainment were highly prevalent in the study area. Factors such as domestic liabilities, early marriages, restriction in mobility, stigma against menstrual cycle and lack of autonomy were identified as reasons for school dropout among girls in Madhesh province. This study also highlighted that girls' home environment is not conducive for studying, which eventually stop them from going to school altogether. This was clearly seen in the finding of the study where in comparison to an average study time of 1.9 hours (when they were in school), girls spent on an average 3.4 hours doing household chores per day. Although girls in the sample shared that they have aspirations for the future, they were well aware that these aspirations would not be achieved due to the deep-rooted norms and lack of

autonomy to take a step forward. The lack of enabling environment along with conservative social-cultural values deprived them of their educational rights.

The association of boys having the education rights and girls being rejected to such rights due to social norms depict the normalized dichotomies of gender system. This example fits into what Butler says about gender identity, that it gets its presumed 'naturalness' through continued reaffirmation of gender enactments following cultural norms pertaining to definitions of masculinity-the idealized enactments of being manly, and conceptions of femininity-the idealized enactments of being womanly (Butler, 1990). Based on the above discussion, it can be said that such norms and values maintain the existing social order of the society. While these findings are unsettling, it is worth noting that these findings are not unique, as a recent global assessment of progress on SDG 4.7 notes that countries are still falling short in solving the issue of school dropout (UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, corrective measures such as awareness on importance of education among families and communities, creating safe and supportive learning environments that foster girls' confidence and well-being, comprehensive training for teachers on gender-responsive pedagogy, classroom management, and on understanding the needs of girls, and implementing robust data collection systems to track girls' enrollment, attendance, and dropout rates would be imperative to address this issue.

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What are the factors that influence saving behavior of university students?

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Abstract

This study surveys university students in Kathmandu valley to examine the impact of peer influence, parental influence and financial literacy on their saving behavior. The study was conducted among undergraduate and post graduate students in Kathmandu valley. Data obtained were analyzed using regression analysis and descriptive analysis such as percentage and frequency. It was discovered that saving behavior of students is significantly influenced by their peers, parents and financial literacy. The analysis further showed that income, age, gender and education level (undergrad and post grad) had no impact on their saving behavior. Hence, financial literacy, peer influence and parental influence were found to be most influential predictors of saving behaviors of university students in Kathmandu.

Keywords : university students, peer influence, parental influence, financial literacy

1.1 Introduction

Saving can be defined as the excess of income over all the expenditures, as per Denton et al. (2011). The subject of savings as an engine of economic growth and development has received an immense attention from different authors, researcher and schools of thought. Like most economists, Smith (1776) for instance, regarded capital accumulation through savings as a necessary condition for economic development. Saving has been and continues to be of paramount importance for both nation and individual for propelling to the path of the sustained development and independence. As per Tang & Chuna (2009), higher levels of saving indicate an economy that is in good condition. Much as the macro level benefits and individual benefits accruing from savings are varied so are factors that have an impact upon the saving behavior. According to Youniss & Haynie (1992), adolescents engage in many economic activities to be independent but due to having a relatively high levels of leisure time disposable at hands of youths and exposure to an abundance of information and influence because of advent technology, the youths have numerous choices to spend their money on which hampers their saving behaviors and leads to financial difficulties. Financial difficulties reduce the productivity in work place, affect the health physically and psychologically. Dowling et al. (2019) state that the absence of financial worries, which could be helped through saving, is associated with subjective well-being.

As per Jamal & Ramlan (2015), financial literacy, parental & peer influence have an effect upon the saving behavior.

Multiple researches also show that peer and parental influence have a high level of impact upon the saving behaviors of youth. According to Youniss & Haynie (1992), both peers and parents act as strong agents that determine the behavior of adolescence in future including saving behavior. Bucciol & Veronesi (2014) suggested that parental teaching is more effective than formal education at school to enhance the ability to meet financial issues in future.

Similarly, according to Zaihan (2016), exchanging ideas about financial management matters among peers and their spending inclination during their social time influences their saving behavior. Likewise, Shin (2010) indicated that the financial literacy positively affected saving practices, while Garg and Singh (2018) indicated that financial literacy is a cause for concern since it is still low among most young people worldwide. In the same context, OECD (2011) notified that awareness of importance of financial education is gaining momentum across the world and that younger generations are more likely to bear more financial risks in adulthood than their parents in terms of saving, planning for retirement and covering their healthcare. As mentioned by Younis & Haynie (1992), the fact that peers and parents act as strong agents that determine the behavior of adolescents in future means that youths imitate their parents and often

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look to peers for discussion of finance related situations. Right decision leads in personal development and growth, which leads to promote positive saving behaviors and to predict financial problems. The research also stated that saving behavior is one of the important characteristics that determines the social well-being and is a solution to the financial circumstances in the future.

2. Methodology

Parental influence, peer influence and saving behavior were measured as per Otto (2009). The scale proposed by Lusardi and Mitchell (2011) was taken to be acceptable, given that it consists of only three items by Rieger (2020). Rieger (2020) also suggested that the scales proposed by Lusardi and Mitchell (2011) might be the most representative for the various financial literacy scales, which has also been used by Mahdzan & Tabiani (2013) to measure basic financial literacy.

3. Theoretical Framework

Katona (1974) defined saving as the part of income which is reserved for future use and may serve to create enduring wealth. Browning & Lursadi (1996) implied that saving took place when money was in excess of income over consumption over a period of time. Saving behavior implied the perception of future needs, a saving decision and a saving action. In other words, saving behavior is the combination of perception of future needs, a saving decision and a saving action. Nepal Rastra Bank defines financial literacy as 'a combination of awareness, knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior necessary to make sound financial decisions and ultimately achieve individual financial wellbeing' in order to design a financial literacy framework. One of the models of financial literacy is conceptualized into three dimensions, namely, financial knowledge, financial attitude, and financial behavior (Atkinson and Messy, 2011). Younis & Haynie (1992) mentioned that the influence of peers and parents is a strong socializing agent throughout the young adult phase.

4. Literature Review

Dangol & Maharjan (2018) tested the parental and peer influence on saving behavior of youth. The study used judgmental and convenience sampling techniques to collect the data of 390 respondents from Kathmandu valley. Linear regression analysis was used by taking peer influence and parental influence as independent variables and saving behavior as a dependent variable. Moderating variables such as income, gender and marital status were taken. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between peer influence and saving behavior. Similarly, there is a significant relationship between parental financial teaching and saving behavior.

Oseifuah et al. (2018) studied the financial literacy among

undergraduate students from Ghana. The study used stratified random sampling for data collection from 342 undergraduate students. Logistic regression and Chi-square statistical procedures were used to analyze the data. The study found that students' experience in handling money (through managing incomes from working) positively influenced their financial literacy as such experience in handling monies would require them to be knowledgeable about financial management matters such as budgeting, investments, interest rates, among others. Saving out-of-pocket incomes of the students was found to be a very significant consideration in the management of their personal finances; whereas, being financially literate appeared not to have a significant influence on savings' propensity of the students. It was also found that as student's monthly pocket money increased, their propensity to save also increased in accordance with the theory of savings behavior, which posits that saving is a positive function of disposable income.

Jamal & Ramlan (2015) studied the effects of social influence and financial literacy on savings behavior. Total 1124 samples were tested using multiple regression analysis. The study showed that there is impact of parental and peer influence and financial literacy on savings behavior. Kadir & Jamaluddin (2020) studied the saving behavior in emerging countries and the role of financial knowledge, parent socialization and peer influence. The study was carried out in 126 students in emerging countries to examine the factors that affected their saving behavior. T-test and ANOVA analysis were done in order to analyze the differences in saving behavior based on demographic characteristics. The study revealed that parent socialization, financial knowledge and peer influence have a significant effect on students' saving behavior.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Descriptive analysis

Male and female respondents were nearly the same i.e. 53% and 47% respectively. 60% of the respondents fall under the 20-25 years of age category. It showed that most of the respondents have income range of Rs. 10,000 - Rs. 20,000 (32.6%) while the least of them have income range of above Rs. 30,000 (12.6%). Similarly, most of the respondents were pursuing bachelor's degrees (68.7%).

5.2 Correlation analysis

Table 1 shows the correlation analysis of the variables under study, which is conducted for the whole sample. As shown in the table saving behavior is positively correlated with other variables. This showed that there is positive and significant correlation between saving behavior and financial literacy, parental influence and peer influence. Similarly, there is a positive and significant correlation among the peer influence and parental influence samples.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

		Peers Influence	Parental Influence	Financial Literacy	Saving Behavior
Peers Influence	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Parental Influence	Pearson Correlation	.392**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
Financial Literacy	Pearson Correlation	.192**	-.073	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.268		
Saving Behavior	Pearson Correlation	.437**	.476**	.140*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.034	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5.3 Regression analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical measure that has been chosen to determine the relationship between one dependent variable, saving behavior and other independent variables which are financial literacy, parental influence and peer influence. Regression is calculated for the responses provided in Likert scale and point system questions. The ANOVA analysis showed that the predictors are able to account for significant amount of variance in saving behavior since the p value is less than 0.05. The result of regression analysis is given in the Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Model	Beta	Sig.	
1	(Constant)	3.917	.000
	Peers Influence Total	.247	.000
	Parental Influence Total	.398	.000
	Financial Literacy Total	.280	.042

Independent Variables: Financial Literacy, Parental Influence & Peers Influence

Dependent Variable= Saving Behavior

The p value is less than 5% for all independent variables in Table 2 which means that all the variables are statistically significant. The study examined the impact of financial literacy, peer’s influence and parental influence on the saving behavior of university students of Kathmandu valley. The study found that the financial literacy, peer’s influence and parental influence has significant and positive impact on saving behavior of university students in Kathmandu valley. Among them, parental influence was found to have the most impact on the saving behavior. Similarly, the moderating variables like age, gender, level of study and income range were found to have no significant impact on the saving behavior.

5.4 Hypothesis testing

The result of hypothesis testing is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of result

No.	Hypothesis	Accepted/Rejected
H1	Financial literacy has positive impact upon saving behavior of the university students.	Accepted
H2	Parental influence has positive impact upon saving behavior of the university students.	Accepted
H3	Peer influence has positive impact upon saving behavior of the university students.	Accepted

6. Conclusion

The study analyzed the university student’s financial literacy, peer influence and parental influence and their impact upon saving behavior. 230 students were selected and a questionnaire was distributed among them. The collected data were described by frequency and percentage. Three hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis. The study found that financial literacy, peer influence and parental influence had significant and positive impact on the saving behavior of university students of Kathmandu valley. The study corroborates with Dangol & Maharjan (2018), Kadir & Jamaluddin (2020), Jamal & Ramlan (2015) and Mahdzan & Tabiani (2013) who also found a significant impact of peer influence, parental influence and financial literacy on saving behavior. Demographic variables such as age, gender, current education level (Bachelor/Masters) and income range had no effect on the saving behavior of the students. This study contradicted a few findings of Dangol & Maharjan (2018), who found significant impact of gender on saving behavior. On the other hand, the study was in line with Dangol & Maharjan (2018) who found no significant impact of income and gender on saving behavior. However, it contradicted all findings of Delafrooz & Paim (2011) who found significant impacts of age, education and income on saving behavior.

7. Recommendation

In order to understand the determinants of saving behavior it is necessary to understand the components that are used to measure it. For instance, having a basic understanding of interest rate, inflation and stock market resulted in increment in saving behavior. Similarly, involving in financial matters with peers and encouragement of parents to save also led to increment in saving behavior. Based on this study it can be concluded that parents have to guide their children to save and make sound financial decisions. Likewise, peers also have a large influence in saving behaviors of students. Additionally, financial literacy is also required to make good financial decisions. Majority of students show good saving behavior because

they believe saving is a good thing, they reduce expenses in order to save and they set aside money on a regular basis. Hence, these components relating to peer influence, parent influence and financial literacy have to be well understood by parents, teachers and students themselves in order to promote and influence savings by students. This leads to an increase in contribution to both the country and the individual as individual saving leads to an increase in overall investment as well as the country's growth. Actual savings may take different forms like cash, bank account, stock market, golds and other precious metals etc. Due to not applying the skills and knowledge related to financial management in their daily lives, undergraduate students have no saving behavior as per Sam (2012). Hence, policy makers and guardians should have some kind of reward system for showing regular saving behavior which requires students to apply their skills and knowledge.

Oseifuah et al. (2018) confirmed that student's monthly pocket money increases their propensity to save and it is not financial literacy that increases their propensity to save. Hence, in order to actually save, it is necessary to have a paying job, substantial pocket money or reduce expenses. If students have no source of income, then having financial literacy and good influence alone is not enough. Students actually have to have employment. Research should be conducted to understand the employment scenario of students and how employment can be generated. Likewise, most of these researches relating to financial literacy are focused on students, perhaps because of easy data collection procedures, resulting in other group of population not being studied. Hence more researches should be conducted in this area focusing on employment, the relationship with parental income and the saving methods preferred by students and those studies should be more inclusive, that is, focused on other strata of population.

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“त्यो एउटा कुरा” नाट्यकृतिमा विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यशिल्पको प्रयोग

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सार

प्रस्तुत लेख नाटककार ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमको ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा प्रयुक्त नाट्यशिल्पको वैशिष्ट्य निरूपणमा केन्द्रित छ। कुनै पनि नाट्यकृतिमा प्रयुक्त शिल्पको अध्ययन विभिन्न दृष्टिकोणले गर्न सकिन्छ तापनि प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिमा जीवनजगत् सुन्दर, सुखद, सङ्गतिमूलक र काम्य छ भन्ने आशावादी एवं आदर्शवादी नाट्यमान्यता र शिल्पपद्धतिका विपरीत जीवनजगत् विद्रूप, त्रासद, निःसार अस्तित्वहीन छ भन्ने विसङ्गतिवादी जीवनदृष्टिलाई अभिव्यक्ति दिन कथ्य, कथानक, पात्र, परिवेश, संवाद आदि नाट्यतत्त्वको चयनमा पनि विसङ्गतिवादी शिल्पपद्धति अवलम्बन गरिएको छ। तसर्थ यस अध्ययनमा विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यमान्यता र शिल्पपद्धतिका आधारमा प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिको शिल्प वैशिष्ट्यको अध्ययन गरिएको छ। प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिलाई शुद्ध पाठ्यविधा मानेर साहित्यका सामान्य तत्त्वका आधारमा अध्ययनविश्लेषण भएको भए तापनि श्रव्यदृश्यकाव्यका रूपमा विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यमान्यता र शिल्पपद्धतिका आधारमा विशिष्टकृत अध्ययन भएको पाइँदैन। त्यसैले यो अध्ययन महत्त्वपूर्ण रहेको छ। प्रस्तुत अध्ययन गुणात्मक पद्धतिमा आधारित छ। सामग्रीको विश्लेषण व्याख्यात्मक तथा विवेचनात्मक विधिमा गरिएको छ। जीवन सुखद, सङ्गतिपूर्ण, सारपूर्ण, सुन्दर र कमनीय छ भन्ने देखाउन नाट्यतत्त्वको चयन गरी नाटक रचना गर्ने परम्परागत नाट्यमान्यता र नाट्यशिल्पका असहमतिमा जीवनको विद्रूपता, अर्थहीनता र निःसारता चित्रित हुने गरी नाट्यतत्त्वको सुविचारित छनोट र चयनपद्धति नै प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिको रचनाप्रक्रियाको व्याकरणसूत्र बनेको छ भन्ने यस अध्ययनको निष्कर्ष रहेको छ।

तिषयपरिचय

आधा दर्जनबढी नाट्यकृतिका स्रष्टा ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतम विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यमान्यता र शिल्पपद्धतिका सफल प्रयोक्ता हुन्। प्रस्तुत लेख उनकै ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा प्रयुक्त विसङ्गतिवादी शिल्पवैशिष्ट्यको निरूपणमा केन्द्रित छ। समकालीन युगसन्दर्भमा परम्परागत

शब्दकुञ्जी : अभिनेयता, नाट्यशिल्प, प्रयोगधर्मिता, रङ्गमञ्चशिल्प, विङ्गतिवादी ।

नाट्यमान्यता र शिल्पपद्धतिहरूको औचित्यमाथि प्रश्न उठाउँदै अभिनव मान्यता र शिल्पसौन्दर्यका उत्तमोत्तम सम्भावनाहरूको सन्धान ‘प्रयोग’ हो भन्ने प्रयोगको नैरन्तर्य प्रयोगशीलता हो र प्रयोग हुनुको भाव र धर्म प्रयोगधर्मिता हो। पाश्चात्य साहित्य जगत्मा यथार्थवादोत्तर युगमा भएका आन्दोलनहरूमध्येको विसङ्गतिवादी मान्यता पनि एउटा प्रयोगधर्मी मान्यता हो। यसले जीवनजगत् सुसङ्गत, सुन्दर र सारपूर्ण छ भन्ने आशावादी-आदर्शवादी मान्यताका विपरीत जीवनजगत् विसङ्गत, त्रासद, दुर्बोध्य र अस्तित्वहीन छ भन्ने कलासाहित्य त्यही विसङ्गत जीवनको अभिव्यक्ति हो भन्ने मान्यतालाई मुखरित गर्छ। त्यही मान्यताका आधारमा विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यरचनाप्रक्रियामा पनि विसङ्गत शिल्प अँगालिन्छ। ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतम पनि प्रयोगधर्मी नाटककार हुन्। प्रस्तुत लेख गौतमले ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा पनि प्रयोगधर्मी विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यशिल्पपद्धतिको प्रयोग गरेका छन्; त्यो प्रयोगका मौलिक विशेषता के हुन् र प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिमा केकस्तो प्रयोगधर्मी शिल्प प्रतिफलित भएको छ भन्ने प्राज्ञिक जिज्ञासाको निरूपणसँग सम्बन्धित छ। अध्ययन परम्परामा केही विद्वान्हरूले उक्त

नाट्यकृतिलाई साहित्यिक विधासरह सामान्य अध्ययन गरेको पाइन्छ तर विसङ्गतिवादी मान्यता र शिल्पपद्धतिलाई नै मुख्य आधार बनाई नाटक मूलतः श्रव्यदृश्य काव्य हो र यसको अध्ययन रङ्गमञ्चीय प्रस्तुतिप्रदर्शनको पक्षसँग जोडेर प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिको शिल्पपद्धतिको वैशिष्ट्यको विशिष्ट अध्ययन गरेको पाइँदैन। यस सन्दर्भमा यो अध्ययन औचित्यपूर्ण ठहर्छ।

अध्ययनविधि

ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमको ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा प्रयुक्त विसङ्गतिवादी प्रयोगधर्मी शिल्पपद्धतिको विशेषताको सन्धानमा केन्द्रित प्रस्तुत अध्ययनको आधारभूत सामग्री प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृति हो। विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यमान्यतासँग सम्बद्ध सैद्धान्तिक ग्रन्थहरू द्वितीयक सामग्री हुन्। यी सामग्रीको सङ्कलन पुस्तकालयीय कार्यबाट गरिएको छ। यो अध्ययन गुणात्मक पद्धतिमा आधारित छ। सङ्कलित सामग्रीको अध्ययन व्याख्यात्मक, विश्लेषणात्मक एवं समीक्षात्मक विधिबाट

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गरिएको छ । प्रस्तुत अध्ययनको सैद्धान्तिक आधार विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यमान्यता र शिल्पपद्धति हो र यसको सैद्धान्तिक आधारको उपस्थापन सामग्रीको विश्लेषणसँगै गरिएको छ ।

‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिको कथ्यमा विसङ्गति

नाट्यस्रष्टाले आफ्नो रचनामा केही भन्न वा देखाउन चाहन्छ । केही भन्नु वा देखाउनु नै छैन भने किन उसले नाटक रचना गर्छ र ! वास्तवमा उसले नाटकबाट जे भन्छ त्यो नै कथ्य हो (राय, सन् २००१, पृ. २५५) । यो नाटकको सर्वाधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण र पहिलो निर्णायक तत्त्व हो किनभने यही तत्त्वले नै नाटकका अन्य तत्त्वहरूको चयनको दिशा र चयनशिल्प निर्देशित गर्छ । वस्तुतः पाश्चात्य जगत्मा बीसौं शताब्दीको एउटा प्रभावशाली आन्दोलनका रूपमा देखा परेको विसङ्गतिवादले यो समस्त जीवनजगत् निःसारै-निःसार, असङ्गत्-असङ्गत् वा विसङ्गत्-विसङ्गत् कामकुराले भरिभराउ छ भन्ने देख्छ (जोशी, २०६६, पृ. १०४) । विलिमय आइ ओलिभरका बनाइअनुसार विसङ्गतिवादीहरू हामी जन्मन नचाही जन्मन्छौं र मर्न नखोजी मर्दछौं, जन्म र मृत्युको बीचमा छौं; त्यसैले हाम्रो अस्तित्व विसङ्गत् छ भन्ने ठान्छन् (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ. १८४) । विसङ्गतिवादीहरूका मान्यतामा हामीले इन्द्रिय, सङ्कल्प र विवेकका कारण आफूलाई प्रबल ठान्छौं तर इन्द्रियहरूले नै विवेकलाई छल्छन् र विवेकले इन्द्रियहरूकै भर्त्सना गर्दछ; कुनै पनि वस्तुलाई हामीले उसको सम्पूर्णतामा बोध गर्न चाहन्छौं; प्रयास पनि गर्छौं तर हाम्रा समस्त प्रयास व्यर्थ हुन्छन्; हामीले स्थायित्व प्राप्त गर्न केही सृजना गर्दछौं; तर ती हाम्रै सृजनाहरूले नै साथ दिँदैनन्; सृजनाको क्षणसँगै कृतिहरू हाम्रो नियन्त्रणभन्दा बाहिर जान्छन् (त्रिपाठी, २०४९, पृ. १०६) । यस्तै उनीहरूका मान्यतामा मृत्युको सन्त्रासले मनुष्यलाई सधैं खेदिरहन्छ र यो सन्त्रास प्रत्येक मान्छेमा सदैव विद्यमान छ (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ. १८३) । यही मान्यतामा उनीहरूले सबै कार्य र अनुभवहरूमा मानिसलाई मृत्युबोध भइरहन्छ; त्यसैले जीवनजगत् विसङ्गत् छ भन्ने विचारलाई प्रखरताका साथ मुखरित गर्छन् (रस्तोगी, १९९०, पृ. १२१) । सारतः यिनै विचार विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारका रचनामा मूल कथ्य बनेर मुखरित भएको हुन्छ ।

विसङ्गतिवादी जीवनमूल्य र मान्यता नै ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमको ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यरचनाको पनि कथ्यविषय बनेको देखिन्छ । नाटककारको कथ्यलाई अभिव्यक्ति दिने प्रमुख माध्यम पात्र हुन्; पात्रका आङ्गिक, वाचिक, सात्त्विक र आहार्य अनुक्रियाको समष्टिमुच्चयबाट कथ्य सम्प्रेषित हुन्छ । ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा पनि पात्रका उपर्युक्त चतुर्विध अनुक्रियाका माध्यमबाट कथ्य सम्प्रेषण गरिएको छ । प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिको मुख्य पात्र रवि हो । उसका अठार वर्षहरू जुत्ता र मोजाको खोजी गर्दागर्दै बितेका छन्; बाँकी अठार वर्ष पनि यस्तै केही खोजैमा बितेका छन् (गौतम, २०५६, पृ. ७८) । जुत्ता खोज्दा एउटा भेटिन्छ; अर्को भेटिँदैन । मोजा खोज्दा पनि एउटा भेटिन्छ; अर्को भेटिँदैन । रविलाई भविष्यमा दुवै जुत्ता र मोजा पाइएलान् भन्ने विश्वास पनि छैन (पृ. ७९) । वस्तुतः जुत्ता र मोजा भनेका लगाउने लुगा, घर, नोकरी आदि अनिवार्य आवश्यकताका वस्तु हुन् । यी वस्तुहरू समग्रतामा कहिल्यै उपलब्ध छैनन् । खोज्नु, खोजिरहनु र नपाइनुको चक्रमा रविको जिन्दगी बितेको छ । उसले अनुभूत गरेको

जीवन भनेको त्यही व्यर्थ परिश्रम र नैराश्य हो (पृ. ११२) । उसकी पत्नीलाई पनि जीवनमा हामीले जानेनाँ, जान्नेदेखि पन्छिरह्यौं, भय मानिरह्यौं, आत्तिरह्यौं, धेरै कुरा पाइएला भन्दाभन्दै केही पाइएन भन्ने मात्रै अनुभूति भएको छ । यसरी दुवैजनामा पश्चाताप र अतृप्ति मात्र छ । तिनै अनुभूतिले गर्दा उनीहरूलाई निदाउन पनि दिँदैन; बिउँफिन पनि दिँदैन; राम्ररी सास फेर्न र घर चलाउन पनि दिँदैन । उनीहरूको अभ्यन्तर घोर निराशा, विफलता, नैराश्य, अज्ञात भयजस्ता दुःखद अनुभूतिहरूले आच्छादित छ । उनीहरूका अनुक्रियाहरू पनि त्यही विसङ्गत् अनुभूतिहरूका अनायास प्रतिक्रियाका रूपमा निःसृत भएका छन् । ती सबै अर्थहीन अनुक्रियाको समष्टिबाट जीवन अर्थहीन र असङ्गत् छ भन्ने चिन्तनलाई अभिव्यक्ति दिइएको छ । केशवप्रसाद उपाध्याय पनि प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिमा निःसारता, निरर्थकता र शून्यताको बोध गराउने विसङ्गत् जीवनदृष्टि प्रस्तुत गरेको बताउँछन् (उपाध्याय, २०५९, पृ. १३६) । वस्तुतः विसङ्गतिवादी रचनापद्धतिमा कथ्यको अभिव्यक्ति कथानक, संवाद, परिवेश, रङ्गमञ्च आदिको नाट्यतत्त्वको व्यष्टि-समष्टिबाट दिइन्छ । तसर्थ आगामी उपशीर्षकहरूमा कथानकका सन्दर्भबाट पनि विमर्श गरिएको छ ।

कथानक संरचनामा विसङ्गत् शिल्पपद्धतिको प्रयोग

विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारहरू कथानकमा विसङ्गत् शिल्पको उपयोग गर्छन् । सुसङ्गत् जीवनको चित्रण गर्ने नाटकमा सामान्यतया रैखिक ढाँचाको कथानक रचना गर्ने पद्धति अवलम्बन गरिन्छ (राय, सन् २००१, पृ. ४५) । यस्ता नाटकमा कथानक जीवनको गत्यात्मक स्थितिको बोधक हुन्छ; कथानकमा विन्यस्त घटनाप्रसङ्गहरूका बीचमा तार्किक तारतम्य हुन्छ । त्यो कथानक सङ्गतिमूलक जीवनको प्रतिनिध्यात्मक हुन्छ । तर विसङ्गतिवादी स्रष्टाहरू भने कलालाई प्रस्तुतिमूलक हुनुमा विश्वास राख्छन्; त्यसैले उनीहरू प्रतिनिध्यात्मक शिल्प परम्परालाई अँगाल्दैनन् (जोशी, २०६६, पृ. १०६) । यस किसिमका नाटकको कथानकमा घटनाहरूलाई घटाइँदैन; मात्र स्थितिहरूको खोजी हुन्छ (श्रीवास्तव, १९९४, पृ. १२) । “विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यमा कुनै स्थूल कथावस्तु हुँदैन, विभिन्न घटना, क्रिया र अनुभूतिलाई विसङ्गतिको सूत्रमा अन्वित गरिन्छ, यसमा कथांश हुन्छ र कथांशका बीच कुनै तार्किक तारतम्य पनि हुँदैन” (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ. १८९) । वस्तुतः विसङ्गतिवादीहरूका अनुसार कला जीवनको अनुकरण होइन; बरु जीवन के हो भन्ने सम्बन्धमा चिन्तन हो र यो मूर्तिविधान नभई अमूर्त विधान हो (त्रिपाठी, २०४९, पृ. १०८) । तसर्थ सङ्गतिमूलक, सार्थक र सबै तारतम्य मिलेको जीवनको स्वरूपको चित्रण गर्ने परम्परित नाट्यकृतिको कथानक ढाँचाका विपरीत विसङ्गतिवादी नाटकमा कथानक ढाँचा अमूर्त प्रकृतिको रचना गरिन्छ ।

जीवन विसङ्गत् छ भन्ने चिन्तनलाई अभिव्यक्ति दिनुलाई मुख्य उद्देश्य राख्ने विसङ्गतिवादी नाटकमा जस्तै ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाटकमा पनि अमूर्त प्रकृतिको कथानक ढाँचा तयार गरिएको छ । यसमा संवेगात्मक जीवनका अस्थिर, अतार्किक क्रिया प्रतिक्रियाहरूका रूपमा कार्यव्यापार सृष्टि गरिएको छ । विशङ्खल र विसङ्गत् आङ्गिक अनुक्रियासंश्लिष्ट वाचिक अनुक्रियाको समष्टि नै कथानक बनेको छ । यहाँ घटित घटनाहरूलाई विन्यास गर्दै गएर कथासूत्र फेला पार्न

सकिंदैन । यहाँ लामो कालावधिमा घटित कार्यव्यापारलाई व्यवस्थित अनुक्रममा बाँधेर पात्रलाई कुनै ठोस फलप्राप्तिको अवस्थामा पुऱ्याएर टुङ्ग्याउने काम पनि गरिएको छैन (उपाध्याय, २०६७, पृ.१४६) । ससाना अनुक्रियाहरूलाई अतार्किक रूपमा प्रस्तुत गाँस्रै गएर अमूर्त ढाँचाको कथानक निर्माण गरिएको छ । पात्रहरूले उटपट्याइ कामकुरा, हासपरिहास, दिल्लीगी आदि गरेर व्यर्थमा समय बिताएका छन् । दृष्टान्तका लागि जुत्ता नभेटिएपछि 'जुत्ता' शब्दमा भएको 'ज' वर्णका अनेक अर्थ खोज्न थालेर समय बिताएको संवाद प्रसङ्गलाई लिन सकिन्छ :

सानु : फेरि जुत्ता, मोजाजस्तै त्यो 'ज' को पनि आने पाइएन भने ...मेरा मनाई 'ज' त कुनै शब्द होइन, वाक्य होइन श्लोक होइन, एउटा अक्षर हो, त्यो पनि तिमीले मोजा नपाएको भ्रुकोमा भ्रुकोको, त्यसको त के माने अथवा जे माने पनि त होला ।

रवि : मुखबाट अचानक निस्क्यो, होइन अब खोजेको कुरो पाइन्न अनि त्यतिन्जेललाई केही गर्नेपऱ्यो ।

सानु : त्यतिन्जेल भनेको के, नपान्जेल ? त्यो पाइएन भने नि, कतिन्जेललाई ?

रवि : हो ...त्यो त, तैपनि ...।

रवि : होइ, 'ज' को माने छ एउटा वा धेरै वा कुनै वा दुवै- हामीले खोज्नुपर्छ । ठीक छ, मै थाल्छु- 'ज' माने जोकर ।

सानु : जोकर के हँसाउने ?

रवि : हो ।

सानु : तर यसमा हँसाउने के छ, मलाई त खोइ ?

रवि : तिमी शीर्षकलाई ध्यानले हेर त- ठाउँठाउँमा भेटिन्छ, अब कोही त्यसै गम्भीर हुन्छ भने मेरो के लाग्छ ।

सानु : त्यसो भए त 'ज' माने जोत्नु, जोत्तिनु पनि त हुन सक्छ । (पृ.८६) ।

उपर्युक्त संवादको शृङ्खला निकै लामो छ । संवादमूलक क्रियाप्रतिक्रिया अधि बढ्दै गर्दा रविले अचानक रङ नभिलेको विजोडा मोजा भेट्याउँछ । त्यसपछि फेरि रवि र सानु त्यही मोजाको रङ, जुत्ता र मोजा लगाउने तरिका बारेमा अर्थहीन कुरा गर्न थाल्छन् । त्यो अर्थहीन कुरा गर्दागर्दै फेरि "मानिसका लागि मानिसले के सोच्नुपर्छ" (प.८८) भन्दै गुरुगम्भीर कुरा गर्न थाल्छन् । यो प्रसङ्गलाई टुङ्गोमा नपुऱ्याई तत्कालै हासपरिहास र व्यङ्ग्यविनोदमा लाग्छन् । त्यति बेले रवि पुरानो कोट लगाएर बाहिर जाँदा मानिसले उपहास गर्छन् भन्दै बाहिर जानुको प्रयोजनका बारेमा कुरा गर्न थाल्छ । उनीहरूको भावजगत्मा भावसंवेगको कुनै शृङ्खला छैन । अनुभूतिका बीचमा कुनै तारतम्य छैन । मानिसका कामकुरामा त्यति बेला मात्र सामञ्जस्य र सङ्गति स्थापित हुन्छ जब उसका मनमा भावसंवेगका बीचमा सङ्गति र समाञ्जस्य स्थापित भएको हुन्छ । भावसंवेगमा नै सङ्गति छैन भने कामकुरामा कसरी सङ्गति र तारतम्य

स्थापित होस् । रवि र सानुका मानसजगत् पनि विशृङ्खल, विङ्गत र अस्थिर छ । त्यसैले विशृङ्खल भावसंवेगहरूका सहज प्रतिक्रियाका रूपमा उनीहरूका संवादात्मक अनुक्रियाहरू प्रतिफलित भएका छन् । तिनै अर्थहीन, अतार्किक र विशृङ्खल कामकुराको सोही ढङ्गमा विन्यास छ । त्यसैले प्रस्तुत नाटकमा लामो कालावधिमा घटेका सार्थक कार्यव्यापारको तार्किक क्रमविन्यास छैन । विसङ्गतिवादी नाटकमा न चरित्रको जीवनवृत्त हुन्छ न कथात्मकता नै हुन्छ (भट्टराई, २०४९, पृ. ३२-५५) । 'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यकृतिको कथानकमा लामो कालावधिमा घटित कार्यव्यापारलाई व्यवस्थित अनुक्रममा गाँस्रै गएर पात्रलाई कुनै सार्थक परिणतिमा पुऱ्याएर टुङ्ग्याउने काम पनि गरिएको छैन (उपाध्याय, २०६७, पृ.१४६) । त्यसैले कथानकमा इतिवृत्तात्मकता छैन; पात्रका सार्थक उद्यमहरूको सुविचारित छनोट र विन्यास छैन । ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमको उद्देश्य सुसङ्गत जीवनको गत्यात्मक अवस्था देखाउनु नै होइन; उसको उद्देश्य त अस्तव्यस्त हुन पुगेको जीवनको स्वरूप देखाउनु रहेको देखिन्छ । त्यसै त उनले प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिमा पात्रहरूलाई परिणामविहीन कार्यव्यापारमा सम्बद्ध भएको देखाएर कथानक संरचनाका तहबाट पनि जीवनको अर्थहीनतालाई ध्वनित गर्ने शिल्प अँगालेको देखिन्छ ।

पात्रचयनमा विसङ्गत शिल्पपद्धतिको प्रयोग

विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यपद्धतिमा पात्रचयनमा पनि परम्परित मान्यता र पद्धतिप्रति तीव्र असहमति राखिन्छ । यसमा जीवनका महत्तम मानिएका मानवीय मूल्यहरूप्रति आस्था नरहेकाले आदर्शका लागि आत्मोत्सर्ग गर्ने नायकको चयन गरिंदैन (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ.१८९) । विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यरचनामा जीवनको दुर्भाग्य, अर्थहीनता, उसको दुर्बोधगम्य अस्तित्वको अपरिचय र महत्त्वहीनतालाई अभिव्यक्ति दिन व्यर्थ कुरामा मात्र अलमलिएका, अनन्त भ्रमेलाहरूमा फँसेका, निराश, दिग्भ्रमित, विक्षिप्त, मनस्तापी, असहाय पात्र चयन गरिन्छ (श्रीवास्तव, सन् १९९४, पृ.२३६) र पात्रहरूले स्वाभाविक लाग्ने कामकुरा गर्लान् भन्नु पर्दैन (भट्टराई, २०५६, पृ.३२-५५) । निरर्थक कामकुरामा नै जिन्दगी बिताएको देखाइन्छ ।

'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यकृतिमा स्वप्निल, अतार्किक, उटपट्याइ, हास्यास्पद र विशृङ्खल कामकुरामा समग्र जीवन बिताउने विदूषक जस्ता पात्र चयन गरिएको छ । रविमा राम्रो नोकरी गर्ने, धन कमाउने, समृद्ध र सुखी जीवन बिताउने सुन्दर सपनाहरू छन् तर त्यसका निमित्त न उसले कुनै योजना बनाएको छ न कुनै सार्थक उद्यम गरेको छ । उसले आफ्नै ओछ्यानमा हिँडेर बाहिर हिँडेको अनुभव गर्छ (गौतम, २०५६, पृ.७३) । ऊ जीवनभर असफलता र अभावैअभावले ग्रस्त भएको छ; निराश हुँदै गएर उसले अर्कैका निमित्त बाँचिदिनु परेको, उत्सर्ग गर्नु परेको र पर्खिनु परेको अनुभव गरेको छ (पृ.१०६) । ऊ "जीवनबाट वाक्क भई आफूलाई बलिका लागि पर्सिएको वोको ठानेको छ भन्ने बुझिन आउँछ" (उपाध्याय, २०६७, पृ. १४२) । उसले पछुताउ, एउटा पाउन नसक्नुको, एउटा थाहा पाउन नसक्नुको दुःख, त्रास र अत्यासको अनुभूति गरेको छ (गौतम, २०५६, पृ.१०३) । उसले प्रत्येक क्षणमा जीवन क्षीण हुँदै गएको, रिक्ति, खिस्कदै र शून्य हुँदै गएको अनुभव गरेको छ (पृ.११३) । कुनै न कुनै कुराको पाउनुको चाहनाले

निरन्तर खोजीमा लागि रहनु, नपाउनु वा खण्डित रूपमा पाउनुकै चक्रमा उसको जीवन अल्किहेको छ ।

नाटककी नारी पात्र रविकी पत्नी सानुले पनि निराशा, हताशा, विवशता तथा लाचारी प्रकट गर्दै भन्छे, “सबै रमाइलो, सबै मुक्ति सोचेपछि यहीं आएर हामी छेकिन्छौं - यसले हामीलाई विवश बनाएको छ, यी भित्ताहरूमा थुनिन, यहाँ हामी असहाय हुन्छौं” (पृ. १०५) । उसले सपना देख्छे । सपनाको विम्बबाट ऊ यति डराउँछे कि निद्रावस्थाबाटै व्युत्पन्न र पनि भयले व्याकुल बन्छे (पृ. ११६) । घरघनी घरभाडा माग्न आउँदा सानुले सारा तेज गुमाउँदै गएको, भित्रबाट डराइरहेको, लगातार टुटिरहेको, भत्करहेको, निरन्तर निरीह, असहाय र क्षीण हुँदै गएको अनुभव गरेकी छ (पृ. ९९) । प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिमा रङ्गमञ्चीय दृश्य पात्र यी रवि, सानु र घरभेटी मात्र हुन् । रवि र सानुले अनुभूत गरेको जीवन निराश, हतप्रद, भयातुर र अर्थहीन हुन पुगेको देखिन्छ । घरभेटीका क्रियाकलाप भने पीडक बनेका छन् । वास्तवमा हरेक मनुष्यका आङ्गिक, वाचिक, सात्त्विक तथा आहार्य अनुक्रियाहरू भावसंवेगात्मक जीवनका प्रखर प्रतिक्रिया हुन् । संवेगात्मक जीवन नै विसङ्गत छ, भने उसका चतुर्विध अनुक्रियाहरूका बीचमा कसरी सामञ्जस्य देखियोस् । प्रस्तुत नाटकमा पनि विषादानुभूति, व्यर्थताबोध, नैराश्य, हैरानी, छटपटी, अपेक्षा र अप्राप्ति आदिले ग्रस्त भएका पात्र उद्भावना गरेर प्रयोगधर्मी विसङ्गत नाट्यपद्धतिको अनुसरण गरिएको छ ।

परिवेश रचनामा विसङ्गत शिल्पपद्धतिको प्रयोग

विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारहरूले परिवेशका माध्यमबाट पनि विसङ्गतिवादी चिन्तनलाई नै ध्वनित गर्न चाहन्छन् । त्यसले नाटकमा विसङ्गत परिवेशको चित्रण गर्छन् । विसङ्गतिवादी नाटकमा बाहिरी दुनियाँका स्थानमा आन्तरिक दृश्यहरूको चित्रण हुन्छ; स्वैरकल्पना र तथ्यहरूका बीचमा स्पष्ट विभाजनको अभाव हुन्छ; समय फैलन र सङ्कुचित हुन सक्छ, अनि वातावरण पूर्णतः तरल हुन्छ, जसले मानसिक स्थितिहरूलाई प्रोजेक्ट गर्छ (रस्तोगी, सन् १९९०, पृ. १२१) । जीवनजगत विसङ्गत छ, भन्ने विसङ्गतिवादीका नाटकमा वास्तवजगतका भयावह, भीषण र विद्रोहात्मक स्थितिहरू सृजना गरी सन्त्रासलाई सर्वोपरि स्थान दिइन्छ (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ. १६३) । त्यसकारण नाटकमा सृजित परिवेश पनि स्वभाविक रूपमा विसङ्गतिपूर्ण हुने देखिन्छ ।

परिवेश रचनाका स्तरमा पनि ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाट्यकृतिमा विसङ्गतिवादी पद्धतिको अनुसरण भएको छ । यस कृतिमा काठमाडौं सहरलाई सामान्य परिवेशका रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ, भने यही सहरको कुनै एउटा गल्लीभित्रको एउटा घरको एउटा साँघुरो कोठालाई रङ्गमञ्चीय विशिष्ट परिवेशका रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । पहिलो अङ्कमा कार्यव्यापारहरू जाडोको समयमा घटित भएका छन् । निकै ठूलो पानी पर्नाले सहनै नसकिने जाडो छ (गौतम, २०५६, पृ. ७१) । पात्रको आर्थिक अवस्था अत्यन्तै दुर्बल छ । उनीहरूले जाडो छल्ने लुगा जुटाउन सकेका छैनन् । शीत काल अत्यन्तै पीडक बनेको छ । दोस्रो अङ्कमा कार्यव्यापारहरू गर्मीको समयमा घटित भएको देखाइएको छ । कोठा साँघुरो छ; हावा खेल्दैन; घामको प्रकाश छिदैन; त्यसैले अँध्यारो छ; उकुसमुकुस छ; कोठामा रङ्गयान र ढलको दुर्गन्ध आइरहेको छ । पात्रहरूले गर्मी र दुर्गन्धमा निसास्सिनु परेको छ । दुर्गन्ध मेटाउन

धूप बाल्नुपर्ने अवस्था आएको छ (पृ. १०९) । पात्रहरू यो ठाउँ छाडेर सुविधायुक्त ठाउँमा जान पनि सक्दैनन् । उनीहरूका लागि यो घर जेल जस्तो भएको छ । घर मात्र होइन; बसिरहेको सहर नै पनि जहरजस्तो भएको छ (पृ. ८६) । वस्तुतः व्यक्ति वरिपरिको परिवेशबाट घनीभूत रूपमा प्रभावित हुन्छ । रवि र सानु जुन परिवेशमा बसोबास गरेका छन् त्यो संसारबाट घनीभूत रूपमा प्रभावित छन् । स्पष्टतः उनीहरूको मानससंसार असहायता, निरीहता, विरोधाभास, पश्चाताप, दुःख, भय र चिन्ताले आच्छादित भएको छ (पृ. ७५) । उनीहरूको मानसजगत यस्तो हुनुको मुख्य कारण दारिद्र्य, विपन्नता, दुर्गन्ध, असुविधा आदिले ग्रस्त वास्तव परिवेश हो । वास्तव परिवेश दूषित, दुर्गन्धयुक्त, निसास्सिँदो, कष्टकर, दारिद्र्य, अवसर र सम्भावनाको न्यूनता हुनाले पात्रको मानसिक जगत दुश्चिन्ता, पश्चाताप, निरीहता, असहायता, आशा र निराशा आदि अनिष्ट भावहरूले विसङ्गत बन्न पुगेको छ । यसप्रकार परिवेश विधानका तहमा पनि विसङ्गत परिवेश निर्माण गरी जीवनजगत विसङ्गत छ, भन्ने अर्थ ध्वनित गरिएको छ ।

संवाद रचनामा विसङ्गत शिल्पपद्धतिको प्रयोग

विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारले विचारलाई अभिव्यक्ति दिन परम्परागत भाषालाई असक्षम ठान्दै नयाँ नाट्यभाषाको सन्धान गरेको देखिन्छ । वस्तुतः विसङ्गतिवादी रङ्गमञ्चले कहिल्यै नदेखिएको र नसुनिएको साङ्केतिक नाट्यभाषाको आविष्कार गरेको पाइन्छ (ओभा, सन् २००८, पृ. १६) । विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारहरू रूढ भाषाको शक्ति क्षीण र अर्थहीन हुँदै गइरहेको ठान्दै अभिव्यक्तिका नयाँ युक्तिको आविष्कार गर्ने प्रयत्न गर्छन् (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ. १६८) । यही प्रयत्नको परिणामस्वरूप उनीहरू जीवजन्तु, वृक्ष, लता, कीटपतङ्ग, चेतन पदार्थका सङ्केत आदिका प्रतीकात्मक उपस्थितिबाट भाव सम्प्रेषण गर्न चाहन्छन् । नाटकमा संवादहरू विशुद्धलिखित हुन्छन् (भट्टराई, २०४९, पृ. ३२-५५) । उनीहरू वेतुकी वार्तालापबाट ध्वन्यात्मक अर्थ सोच्न आह्वान गर्दछन् (ओभा, सन् २००८, पृ. १६) । उनीहरू परम्परित नाटकमा जस्तो तार्किक संवादशृङ्खलाबाट आख्यानमात्मक सूत्र निर्माण गर्दैनन् ।

‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाटकमा संवादसृजनाको मूलाधार विशुद्धखलभाव संवेगात्मक जीवन बनेको छ । संवेगात्मक जीवनका अस्थिर भावसंवेगहरूका ताजा प्रतिफलनका रूपमा संवादहरू सृजना गरिएको छ । यहाँ कुनै एउटा अनुभूतिसँग सम्बद्ध संवादले शृङ्खलाको रूप लिएर टुङ्गेमा पुग्न नपाउँदै अकस्मात् अवान्तर भावविचारसँग सम्बद्ध संवाद प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । संवादको अनुक्रमगैँ भावधारा पनि विसङ्गत हुँदै गएर अन्तिम परिणतिमा पुगेको स्थिति छैन । नाट्यसंवादको अध्ययनअवलोकन गरिसक्दा हाम्रा मानसपटलमा भावविचारको वा तज्जन्य मूर्त कार्यव्यापारको क्रमबद्ध शृङ्खला बन्दैन अर्थात् कथात्मक सरणी बन्दैन । वस्तुतः प्रयोगवादी नाटककार बर्तोल्त ब्रेख्त दर्शक तादात्म्य भावनामा बहकिनुका सट्टा रङ्गमञ्चीय कार्यव्यापारका विषयमा पुनर्विचार गर्न गम्भीर बनोस्, त्यसमाथि सोचविचार गरोस् र परिस्थितिलाई बदल्ने चेष्टा गरोस् भन्ने उद्देश्यका साथ भावधारालाई खण्डित गर्ने गरी संवाद रचना गर्न चाहन्छन् (कुमार, सन् २००१, पृ. २७३) । ‘त्यो एउटा कुरा’ नाटकको संवादको विशुद्धखलतालाई हेर्दा

वर्तोल्त ब्रेख्तको महाकाव्यात्मक नाट्यपद्धतिको स्मरण हुन्छ ।

विसङ्गतिवादी साहित्यकारहरू विसङ्गत दृष्टिलाई दार्शनिक स्तरमा मात्र अँगालेर तृप्त हुँदैनन्; उनीहरू अभिव्यञ्जनावादी नाटकको जस्तै प्रतीकात्मक प्रविधिको अत्यन्त उपयोग गर्छन् (जोशी, २०६६, पृ.१०६) । ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमले पनि 'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यकृतिमा अभिव्यक्तिका लागि अनेक प्रकारका प्रतीकहरू उद्भावना गरेका छन् । यस्तै प्रतीकहरूमध्ये 'घर' लाई बाध्यता, विवशता, असहायपन, लाचारीजस्ता भाव र स्थितिको प्रतीक बनाइएको छ । पात्रलाई 'घर' नेल र भ्यालखाना जस्तै बनेको देखिन्छ । त्यसैले रविले आफ्नो घरलाई कैद, पट्यार र अत्यासका रूपमा र सानुले नेलका रूपमा अनुभव गरेको छ (गौतम, २०५६, पृ.१०३) । 'मोजा' पनि आकाङ्क्षा, अप्राप्ति र अतृप्तिको प्रतीक बनेको छ । यसलाई आधारभूत आवश्यकताको खोजीतर्फ 'मोजा' खोज्नुको प्रस्तुति परिर्लक्षित गरिएको छ (थापा, २०५६, पृ.३६) । रविले जीवनका अठार वर्ष जुतामोजा खोज्न बिताएको छ । उसले जुतामोजा खोज्नु र नपाउनुलाई हाम्रो वर्तमानको वास्तविकता र भविष्य हो भन्ने विचार व्यक्त गरेको छ (गौतम, २०५६, पृ. ७९) । तसर्थ 'मोजा' भौतिक सुखको अपेक्षा र अप्राप्तिको प्रतीकका रूपमा आएको छ । स्वितर जीर्ण भेटिएको छ भने कोट नोकरले समेत तिरफ्कार गरेको भेटिएको छ । रवि तिनै कोट र स्वितर लगाउन विवश बनेको छ (पृ. ८४) । तसर्थ कोट, स्वितर र जुता अतृप्त, असफल, अपूर्ण इच्छा, अतृप्ति, विपन्नता र विवशताका प्रतीक बनेर आएका छन् । रविले बत्तीको स्विच खोजेको छ । स्विचको खोजी भनेको जीवनको उज्यालो वा सुखको खोजी हो (थापा, २०५६, पृ. ३६) । तसर्थ 'स्विच' उज्यालोको प्रतीक बनेको छ । यस्तै प्रस्तुत नाट्यकृतिमा अरु थुप्रै प्रतीकहरूको प्रयोगबाट कथ्यलाई बह्वर्थी र व्यञ्जनात्मक बनाइएको छ । छेकछन्दै नभएका कुराहरूको शृङ्खला छ । जीवन यस्तै विशृङ्खल र अर्थहीन छ भन्ने तात्पर्यमा यी संवादहरू परस्पर सम्बद्ध देखिन्छन् । यसप्रकार असम्बद्ध, अतार्किक र प्रतीकात्मक संवाद रचनाबाट नाटककार गौतमले नाटकको संवादका तहमा विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यशिल्पको प्रयोग गरेका छन् ।

रङ्गशिल्पमा विसङ्गत शिल्पपद्धतिको प्रयोग

नाटक रङ्गमञ्चीय प्रस्तुतिका लागि रचना गरिने भएकोले नाटकलाई कसरी रङ्गमञ्चीय प्रस्तुतिको कलात्मक विषय बनाउन सकिन्छ भनी नाट्यस्रष्टाले रचनात्मक स्तरमा तरहतरहका युक्ति र उपकरण प्रयोग गर्छ । त्यही युक्तिलाई रङ्गशिल्प भनिन्छ । नाटककारले आलेखबद्ध जीवनानुभूतिलाई प्रस्तुतिका अवसरमा रङ्गकर्मीले राम्ररी पक्रन र मूर्त रूप दिन सकून् भनी आवश्यक निर्देशन पनि गर्छ (राय, सन् २००१, पृ. २३९) । नाट्यस्रष्टाले रचनामा पात्रहरूको जन्मभूमि वा कर्मभूमिका रूपमा घरकोठा, आँगन, बारी, खेत, खला आदि विभिन्न स्थान तथा दैनिक आवश्यकताले जुटाइएका भौतिक सामग्रीहरूको वर्णन गर्छ । सोही बमोजिम नाट्यप्रस्तुतिका अवसरमा दर्शकलाई नाट्यपात्रहरूको जीवनलाई बोधगम्य गराउन रङ्गमञ्चीय भौतिक संसारको रचना गरिन्छ । त्यही संसारमा रङ्गकर्मीका अभिनय, गीतसङ्गीत, नृत्य, चित्र आदि अन्यान्य कलारूपहरू र प्रकाश, ध्वनि तथा अन्यान्य भौतिक वस्तुकरणहरू पनि सुविचारित रूपमा संयोजन गरिन्छ । त्यसपछि त्यो संसार काल्पनिक सत्यका रूपमा पात्रको कर्मस्थलका रूपमा

भलमलाउँछ र त्यसले दर्शकको मनःक्षुलाई डोच्याएर त्यही संसारमा लैजान्छ जहाँ पात्रहरूले जीवन व्यतीत गरेका हुन्छन् । त्यसैले प्रस्तुतिका स्तरमा रङ्गशिल्प भनेको नाटकीय पात्रले भोगचलन गरेको भौतिक संसार सृष्टि गर्ने उपर्युक्त प्रकारका मानवीय क्रियाकलाप र भौतिक सामग्रीको कलात्मक संयोजन, व्यवस्थापन र प्रस्तुतिसमेत हो भन्ने देखिन्छ ।

विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारको रङ्गशिल्प परम्परित नाट्यशिल्पभन्दा भिन्न देखिन्छ । उनीहरू नाटकमा पात्रहरूको कर्मभूमि र पर्यावरणलाई पनि पूर्णतः विसङ्गतिले आक्रान्त भएको देखाउँछन् । उनीहरू पात्रहरूका कार्य, स्थल र समयका बीचमा सामञ्चस्य स्थापित भएको देखाउँदैनन् । विसङ्गतिवादी नाटकमा बाहिरी दुनियाँका स्थानमा आन्तरिक दृश्यहरूको चित्रण हुन्छ, स्वैरकल्पना र तथ्यहरूका बीचमा स्पष्ट विभाजनको अभाव हुन्छ; समय फैलन र सङ्कुचित हुन सक्छ अनि वातावरण पूर्णतः तरल हुन्छ जसले मानसिक स्थितिहरूलाई प्रोजेक्ट गर्छ (रस्तोगी, सन् १९९०, पृ.१२९) । विशेषतः यस पद्धतिमा बाह्यजगतका भयावह, भीषण र विद्रुपात्मक स्थितिहरू सृजना गरी सन्त्रासलाई सर्वोपरि स्थान दिइन्छ (उपाध्याय, २०५२, पृ.१८३) किनभने उनीहरूको उद्देश्य मानव सभ्यताको विरूपता, विसङ्गता, विडम्बना र पाखण्डलाई सशक्त अभिव्यक्ति दिनु हुन्छ । प्रस्तुतिका अवसरमा नाटकमा सृजित परिवेशको प्रतिनिध्यात्मक वा प्रतीकात्मक परिवेशका रूपमा रङ्गमञ्चीय संसारको रचना गरिन्छ र आफ्नो उद्देश्य पूरा गरिन्छ ।

प्रयोगधर्मी नाटककार गौतमले 'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यकृतिमा पात्रको डेरा गरेर बसका दुईवटा कोठालाई रङ्गमञ्चका रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् । पहिलो अङ्कको रङ्गमञ्चमा उनले पुस्तक, मेच, टेबिल, लुगा, स्टोभ, चियाका सामान, कीलोमा भुन्ड्याइएको अवस्थामा लुगा, क्यालेन्डर, तस्बिरजस्ता दैनिक आवश्यकताले जुटेका अनेक वस्तुहरू संयोजन गरेका छन् (गौतम, २०५६, पृ.७१) । दोस्रो अङ्कमा पनि गौतमले पात्र सुत्ने गरेको कोठालाई रङ्गमञ्च बनाएका छन् । यी दुवै कोठा अत्यन्तै साँघुरा छन् छन् । बेलुका सुत्ने बेलामा ठाउँ नपुगेर केटाकेटीका बीचमा सधैँजसो किचलो हुने गर्छ (पृ.९९) । यो कोठामा वरिपरिको रङ्गयान र ढलको दुर्गन्ध आउँछ (पृ.१००) । न जाडोमा घाम आउँछ र न गर्मीमा हावा चल्छ (पृ.१०३) । पात्रहरूले आर्थिक अभावका कारण एक वर्षदेखिको भाडा पनि बुझाउन सकेका छैनन् र कोठा छाडेर जान पनि सकेका छैनन् । त्यसैले उनीहरूका लागि घर जेलनेल भएको छ । यसप्रकार रङ्गमञ्चीय परिवेश अतिशय विसङ्गत छ र त्यसले पात्रको भाव संवेगात्मक जीवनलाई पनि विसङ्गत तुल्याउनमा उद्दीपक बनेको छ ।

रवि अँध्यारोमा नै कोठामा केही खोजिरहेको आभास हुन्छ । अँध्यारोमा केही खोजेर पाइने होइन तर रवि अँध्यारोमै केही खोज्छ । उज्यालो मै पनि आफैले फुकालेर राखेका मोजा नभेट्टाएर व्यर्थता र निःसारताको बोधले ग्रस्त रविले अँध्यारोमा के भेट्टाउँथ्यो । अह्न कोठाहरू दिनमै पनि सूर्यको प्रकाश नछिर्ने भएको हुनाले अँध्यारो छ; बत्ती बालेर मात्र देख्न योग्य बन्छ । त्यसैले रविले स्विच खोजेको छ । यो 'अँध्यारो' स्थिति विपन्नता र दुःखको बनेको छ भने 'स्विच'

उज्यालो, सुख र समृद्धिको प्रतीक बनेको छ । 'स्विच'को खोजी 'उज्यालो' को खोजी हो र त्यो 'उज्यालो' जीवनको नैराश्य अंधाराबाट विरक्तिपर खोजिने लक्ष्य हो (थापा, २०५६, पृ.५६) । रविका दम्पतिका लागि सुख, उज्यालो वा समृद्धि स्वप्नवत् बनेको छ । रवि र सानुका चाहना, उनीहरूको वर्तमान र भविष्यसमेत भस्मीभूत बनेका छन् । यो कुराको सङ्केत स्विच बाल्न खोज्दा निभेको घटना प्रसङ्गबाट गरिएको छ । उनीहरू सुतेको बेला भयानक आवाज आउँछ । सानु डराएर उठ्छे; बत्ती बाल्छे र रविलाई उठाउन घचघच्याउँछे; रवि निद्राको भोक्कामा उठेर स्विच थिच्छ र बत्ती निभिदिन्छ (पृ.११५) । अन्धकार र भयङ्कर आवाज भन पीडक बनेका छन् । यसप्रकारको रङ्गमञ्चीय संसारलाई भयोत्पादक, दुःख, दारिद्र्य र नैराश्यको पर्याय बनाएर प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ ।

प्रयोगधर्मी नाटककार ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमले रचनात्मक स्तरमा अभिनयका रूपरचनामा पनि विसङ्गत शिल्पको अनुसरण गरेको पाइन्छ । वस्तुतः विसङ्गतिवादी नाटककारहरू पात्रका अनुक्रियाहरूलाई जीवन विसङ्गत छ भन्ने अर्थमा मात्रसम्बद्ध देखिने गरी गाँस्दै जान्छन् । अनुक्रिया नै विसङ्गतिका शिल्पसूत्रमा उनीएका हुन्छन् भने त्यसमा आधारित अभिनय पनि स्वतः विसङ्गितलाई ध्वनित गर्ने हुन जान्छ । यस पद्धतिमा सूक्ष्म घटना, स्थिति र विचारहरूलाई प्रतीकात्मक अभिव्यक्ति दिइन्छ र प्रतीकात्मक प्रस्तुति नै 'एक्सन' हो । एक्सनलाई नै प्रतीकायन गरी भावविचार अभिव्यक्त गरिएको अनुभव हुन्छ (रस्तोगी, सन् १९९०, पृ.१२३) । बाह्य दृष्टिमा असम्बद्ध र बेतुकी प्रतीत हुने अनुक्रियाबाट नै अर्थ सोचन आह्वान गरिन्छ (ओभा, सन् २००८, पृ. ६) । यसप्रकार जीवन विसङ्गत छ भन्ने देखाउन पात्रलाई असम्बद्ध र विशृङ्खल संवादमूलक क्रियाकलापहरूमा संलग्न गराइन्छ । असम्बद्ध, विशृङ्खल र बेतुकी क्रियाकलापहरूलाई वाचिक रुपायित हुँदा त्यो अभिनयले पनि विसङ्गत जीवनको अनुभूति गराउँछ ।

'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यकृतिमा रचनात्मक स्तरमा आङ्गिक अभिनयका जे जस्ता रूप छन् ती कुनै सार्थक, सङ्गतिमूलक ढङ्गमा पनि आएका छैनन् र ती कुनै निश्चित लक्ष्य प्राप्तितर्फ पनि उन्मुख छैनन् । पात्रहरूले मूर्त कार्यभन्दा बढी व्यर्थ, उटपट्याड् र निरर्थक कुरा गरेका छन्; कुरैकुरामा अल्मलिएका छन्; उनीहरूले गरेका अनुक्रियाहरू एकोन्मुख उद्देश्य प्राप्तिका निमित्त लक्ष्यित छैनन् अर्थात् ती ती अन्वितिपूर्ण ढङ्गमा आएका छैनन् । यसप्रकारका आङ्गिक अभिनयका विशृङ्खल रूपहरूबाट विसङ्गत स्थिति र जीवनको अभिव्यक्ति भएको छ । आहार्य रूपरचना पनि कथ्यअनुरूप देखिन्छ । विसङ्गत जीवनदृष्टिलाई नै अभिव्यक्ति दिन नाटककारले नाटकको मुख्य पात्र रविलाई फाटेका, रङ नमिलेका र पुराना मोजा, खच्याङ्खुचुड परेका, स्त्री नगरेका, छोटा बाहुला नभएका, प्वाल परेका, मैला दिएका

छन् । पात्रको परिधान दरिद्रता, बाध्यता र विरूपताको पर्याय बनेको छ । लुगा लगाउँदै गर्दा रविले खिन्नता र विवशता बोध गरेको छ (गौतम, २०५६, पृ. ८९) । यसप्रकार नाटककार गौतमले आहार्य रूपरचनामा पनि विसङ्गत शिल्पपद्धतिको उपयोग गरेका छन् ।

ध्रुवचन्द्र गौतमले साहित्यिक अभिनयका रूपहरूबाट

पनि विसङ्गतिवादी चिन्तनलाई नै मुखरित गर्ने प्रयत्न गरेका छन् । नाटकको घटना प्रसङ्गअनुसार रविको घरभेटी भरभाडा मान्न आउँछ; पहिले धम्क्याउँछ । पछि तिमीहरू आफ्नै जस्ता लाग्छौ अर्को महिना केही जोरजाम गर्नु म त पर्खिहाल्छु नि भनी उपकार गरे जस्तो गरेर बाहिरिन्छ । त्यस बेला रवि र सानु "एक छिनसम्म विमूढ भएभैं एकअर्कालाई हेरिहन्छन्" (गौतम, २०५६, पृ. ११०) । अतिशय चिसो, गर्मी र दुर्गन्ध, छटपटी, घरभेटीको धम्की र हेपाइबाट निरीहता, विवशता र अकिञ्चनता स्वरभङ्गबाट पीडा आदिको अभिव्यक्ति दिएका छन् । यी अनुक्रियाहरूबाट पात्रको विसङ्गत संवेगात्मक जीवनको प्रकाशन भएको छ । रविका ससाना 'निःस्तब्धता', 'वैवर्ण्य', 'स्वरभङ्ग', 'निःश्वास', 'दीनता' आदिका माध्यमबाट प्रस्तुत नाटकमा आवेग, दीन-हीनता, निरीहता, विमूढता, सन्त्रास, आलस्य, त्रास, विषाद, ग्लानि, उत्सुकता, चिन्ता, चाञ्चल्य, अस्थिरता व्यर्थता आदि भावसंवेगहरूको प्रकाशन भएको छ । चित्तलाई क्षण-क्षणमा विमूढ बनाउनु त रविको स्वभावजस्तो प्रतीत हुन्छ । आफ्नै विस्तरामा बसेर पनि बाहिर हिँडेको ठानेर उसले क्षणिक विक्षिप्तिको प्रदर्शन पनि गरेको छ । दीर्घ निःश्वास, अनर्थ कुरा र अनर्थ कामकुरा, वर्णविकार आदिबाट विद्रुपात्मक मनोदशा प्रकट गरेको छ । सुखद, सुन्दर, कोमल-कमनीय भावसंवेदनाको अविश्रल प्रवाहभन्दा शृङ्खलाहीन, सङ्गतिहीन, अर्थहीन अनुक्रियाहरूबाट दुःखद भावसंवेदनाको अभिव्यक्ति भएबाट प्रस्तुत नाटकको अभिनेय रूपरचनाको शिल्प पनि विसङ्गत भावविचारलाई नै मुखरित गर्ने प्रकृतिको छ भन्ने कुरा पुष्टि हुन्छ ।

रविकी पत्नी सानुका मानसजगत्मा रविमा जस्तो व्यर्थता, नैराश्य, विषादानुभूति, भय, त्रास, दुश्चिन्ता आदि भाव ज्यादै कम देखिन्छन् तापनि ऊ रविका असङ्गत, असान्दर्भिक व्यवहार र कुराहरूका कारणले आजित हुने, सशङ्कित हुने, आत्तिने, अप्रसन्न हुने, विरत हुने, गम्भीर हुने गर्छे । ऊ आफैँ पनि हराए भैं हुने, अचम्म मान्ने, पट्यार मान्ने, उत्सुकता देखाउने, उत्साहित हुने, हाँस्ने, प्रसन्न हुने, लाज मान्ने, कहिले रून्चे देखिनेजस्ता अस्थिर अनुक्रिया प्रदर्शन गर्छे । सानुका संवाद शृङ्खलाबाट पनि कुनै पनि भाव निरन्तर प्रवाहमान भई क्रमशः सघन हुँदै गएर अन्ततः पुष्ट अवस्थामा पुगेको छैन । यहाँ सञ्चरणशील भावहरू उदाउने र क्षणभरमा अस्ताउने प्रक्रिया चलिरहेको छ । संवेगात्मक जीवनका बाह्य परिणामका रूपमा आएका यी अनुक्रियाहरू अतार्किक शृङ्खला आएका छन् । यी जीवनमा कुनै पनि कामकुराको मूल्य छैन भन्ने अर्थमामात्र सम्बद्ध देखिन्छन् । नाटककारले परिकल्पना र प्रयोग गरेका अभिनयका यी चतुर्विध अनुक्रियाहरूबाट जीवन विसङ्गत छ भन्ने अर्थ व्यञ्जित भएको छ । तसर्थ अभिनयको स्वरूप पनि विसङ्गत नै रहेको छ ।

निष्कर्ष

नाट्यकृति विसङ्गतिवादी नाट्यशिल्पपद्धतिको अनुसरणमा रचना भएको 'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यरचनामा जीवनजगत् सुन्दर, काम्य र सुसङ्गत छ भन्ने परम्परागत मान्यताका विपरीत जीवनजगत् विसङ्गतिले भरिभराउ छ भन्ने मान्यता मुखरित भएको छ । सुसङ्गत, सार्थक र सुन्दर जीवनको चित्रण गर्ने इतिवृत्तात्मक ढाँचाको मूर्त कथानक रचना गर्ने

पद्धतिका विपरीत सञ्चरणशील भावसंवेगका तात्कालिक प्रतिक्रियाका आङ्गिक आदि चतुर्विध अनुक्रियाहरूलाई जन्माई जीवन व्यर्थ र असङ्गत छ भन्ने अर्थमा मात्र सम्बद्ध गरेर अमूर्त कथानक रचना गरिएको छ भने कुनै पनि परिणाममुखी कामकुराहरूमा संलग्न उद्यमशील पात्रका सट्टा अर्थहीन कामकुरामा अलमलिएका, भय, अतृप्ति, सअन्तोष र निःसारताबोधले ग्रस्त पात्रको चयन गरी तिनका विसङ्गत संवेगात्मका जीवनका भावसंवेगहरूका ताजा प्रतिक्रियाका रूपमा संवादहरू सृजना गरिएको छ । संवादका वीचमा आदिदेखि अन्त्यसम्म भावविशेषको अक्षुण्ण प्रवाह छैन । भावसंवेगहरू छरपस्ट छन् । बाह्यान्तरिक जीवन अस्तव्यस्त र असङ्गत छ भन्ने तात्पर्यमा मात्र ती परस्पर सम्बद्ध देखिन्छन् । दुर्गन्धैदुर्गन्धले व्याप्त, अँध्यारो, हावा नखेलेर निसास्सिनुपर्ने खालको स्थलगत परिवेश रङ्गमञ्चीय दृश्य परिवेश रचना गरिएको छ । यसले विसङ्गतिलाई ध्वनित गरेको छ । चतुर्विध अभिनयका आधाररूप संवादमूलक कार्यव्यापारहरू सञ्चरणशील र असङ्गत भएका हुँदा चतुर्विध अभिनयका रूपहरू पनि विसङ्गतिका पर्याय बनेका छन् । अपेक्षा, निरर्थक प्रयास, असफलता, अभाव, असन्तुष्टि, व्यर्थताबोध, नैराश्य, पश्चाताप, भय, ग्लानि, अनिश्चयजस्ता भावसंवेगका स्वतःस्फूर्त प्रतिक्रियाका रूपमा जन्माइएका वाचिक अनुक्रिया, दारिद्र्यलाई सङ्केत गर्ने वेशभूषा र विद्रुपात्मक रङ्गमञ्चीय दृश्यपरिवेशको अध्ययन-अवलोकनबाट जीवन निःसार छ भन्ने अनुभूति हुन्छ । तसर्थ नाट्यरचनाका संरचक तत्त्वहरूको विन्यास, सो विन्यासबाट प्रतिफलित बाह्यान्तरिक संरचना तथा रङ्गमञ्चीय प्रस्तुतिपद्धति विसङ्गतिवादी देखिन्छ । नाटकको अध्ययनअवलोकनबाट जीवनजगत्मा सङ्गति र सामञ्जस्य छैन भन्ने भावबोध हुने देखिन्छ । यी सबै तथ्यको साक्ष्यबाट 'त्यो एउटा कुरा' नाट्यकृति नेपाली नाट्यसाहित्य जगत्को प्रयोगधर्मी विसङ्गतिवादी शिल्पपद्धतिको सफल प्रयोग भएको कृति हो भन्ने निष्कर्षमा पुग्न सकिन्छ ।

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Community Health System Model to support Health Volunteers to outreach underserved population: A case study of HIV/AIDS program from Tanzania

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Abstract

Major challenges for the HIV program in the Muheza district of Tanzania, East Africa were to increase HIV testing for men and retain HIV patients on treatment. The USAID funded Applied Science to Strengthen, and Improve Systems (ASSIST) project implemented the Community Health System Strengthening (CHSS) model to improve linkages between health facilities and communities to increase HIV testing and retention in care. The project formed a community team from representatives of the formal and informal pre-existing structures and their networks who worked with the local Home-Based Care (HBC) volunteers. The community improvement team members relayed information from the facility to the community households through their community group members and vice-versa. The application of CHSS model was able to increase the testing of males from 42 to 159 in one month. Over the course of seven months, the CHSS system was able to trace 39 of 44 patients who were lost to follow-up; of these, 23 went back to treatment, five had moved to a different health facility, 11 had died, and five were still unaccounted for. This case study describes the process undertaken, and perspectives of the community members and health facility personnel, who were involved in the project.

Keywords : HIV, community health, home-based care

1.1 Background

According to studies, HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death in Tanzania, with approximately 1.5 million people living with HIV and 80,000 dying from it each year (1,2). Efforts to provide quality care to people living with HIV in Tanzania have increased since the government of Tanzania started implementing HIV/AIDS care and treatment plan in 2003. [5]. Tanzania's National AIDS Control Program (NACP), through multi sectoral HIV/AIDS, provides HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support services (5). HIV testing services (HTS) are an essential component of HIV/AIDS control programs and an entry point of the HIV care and treatment cascade [4]. Even though the government of Tanzania had made HIV testing free and available in all health facilities and conducted nationwide HIV testing campaigns, only 30% of women and 25% of men tested and received the results (1,4,6,29,30). Despite government efforts to provide free antiretroviral treatment (ART) and the scale-up HIV Testing and Service (HTS), care and treatment in healthcare facilities and communities across the country,

55% of men living with HIV (MLWH) self-reported that they were unaware of their HIV status during the Tanzania Impact Survey conducted in 2016-2017.

People living with HIV who miss scheduled clinic appointment for uptake of ART are called Lost to follow-up (LTFU) patients. This situation of People living with HIV (PLHIV) results because of their death, default, and self-transfer to another clinic (7-9). Tanzania National AIDS Control Program (NACP) reported the rate of LTFU among ages 15-24 years was 23.5% (5).

Continued retention of PLHIV to treatment is crucial to mitigate the risk of developing resistance in patients who do not adhere to the ART clinic schedule (21-24). Tracing is effective at reducing the number of LTFU. Engagement studies have shown that as many as 86% of patients who had defaulted from care reengage in care following tracing (8,18,19), and active tracing significantly reduced attrition (11, 20). Systematic reviews have shown that CHWs have played an important role in increasing coverage of essential interventions for child health and

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maternal health (15-20).

CHW programs have provided services to over 200 million people over two decades in Brazil, Bangladesh, and Nepal (22). Implementing a successful community-based intervention program for maternal and child health, which results in a reduction in child and maternal mortality (24-26), improves access to community health care and child growth and development (21; 25-27).

Studies have also found that CHW and CHVs were effective in improving HIV -related knowledge (6), reducing risky sexual behaviors, increasing antiretroviral treatment (ART) uptake (7), and improving access to quality of care (22).

The Home-Based Care (HBC) program was established in Tanzania in 2008 to improve the screening of people for HIV and retain PLHIV on ART at the community level. Tanzania's Health Sector HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan II, 2008-2012, focuses on providing quality HBC services in all districts. Tanzania's government developed National HBC Guidelines, which included the HBC guidelines for providing quality care to PLHIV, a training curriculum for HIV service providers, supportive supervision, and monitoring tools. A well-functioning HBC program offers a continuum of care that extends from a health facility to home stings. There were two HBC volunteers in each village to carry out the HBC program at the community level. The primary function of HBC volunteers was to increase HIV patients' identification, adherence to treatment, and follow-up. However, over the years of experience working with HBC, volunteers have faced challenges in significant geographical coverage, lack of transportation facilities, and lack of regular feedback and support from health facilities supervisors. As a result, HBC volunteers feel "lost in the health system." In this case study, we focused on applying the support CHSS model to support HBC volunteers and increase the coverage of HIV testing, especially for men, and decrease the number of lost to follow-up PLHIV

1.2 Methods

The project conducted an intervention study in five villages in the Muheza district of Tanzania by applying the CHSS model. In addition, the project used a mixed study method to collect the data.

Community Health Strengthening System Model (CHSS model)

Most communities in rural settings possess informal support and social welfare systems where community members make decisions and work together to improve the health of community members and the general welfare of the community. The CHSS model combines formal and informal pre-existing structures and their networks to create an integrated health service delivery system. For

example, the system may consist of formal community groups such as local government, schools, religious groups, farmer's groups, savings and credit groups, etc. In this model, representatives from each community group come together to form an improvement team, find out the gaps in health services and develop and test strategies to overcome the identified gaps. Over time, all components of the community health system will function well with the leadership of community health workers, then the health services become more accessible to the community members, and information exchange between health facilities and households occurs more efficiently.

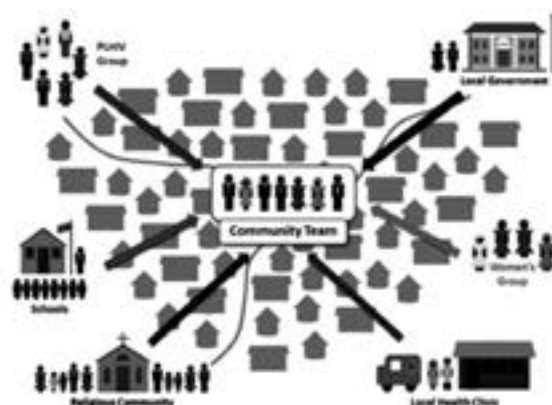


Figure 1: Ram Shrestha's Community Health System Strengthening (CHSS) Model

CHSS Model implementation in Muheza

The project and HBC identified and made a list of the existing local groups that were active in five pilot villages. Then, they identified a village committee in each community with the most representation from all community groups; and engaged that committee as a community improvement team. The project added members to ensure full representation from community groups in this community health improvement team when needed. Each team also included a local HBC volunteer.

The project conducted training for the community improvement team which was composed of one representative from each community group. The participants discussed HIV-related issues, including the importance of HIV testing and treatment adherence, and explored ways to increase support for HIV care in the community.

The project also trained district and health facility coaches to support the community improvement teams. The community improvement teams first focused on increasing HIV testing in their communities to familiarize themselves with the process and obtain some early success before addressing retention.



Picture 1: Community Group Members Conducting Their Regular, Group Meeting Where They Also Discuss Health Issues.

During the first improvement team meeting in January 2014, the HBC volunteer and community improvement team members discussed the low number of HIV testing. The facility data brought to the meetings by the HBC volunteers showed that 106 people went for testing in January (42 men and 64 women, shown in Figure). The reason for this low number of HIV testing was that the HBC providers assigned in each village could not reach all households to sensitize people to go to the health centers for an HIV test.

While implementing the CHSS model, the community improvement team members approached other members of their groups. First, they asked their group members to discuss the importance of HIV testing and staying on ART treatment with their family members. Subsequently, each group member then talked to their families, urging them to go for HIV testing, highlighting the importance of knowing their health status and the family's health.

1.3 Results and Discussion

The qualitative and quantitative data reports indicated a positive result of applying the CHSS model to improve HIV care. Applying the CHSS model increased the reach of the HBC providers and was a practical approach for reaching more households within a short period. In addition, the open discussion of HIV issues in multiple community venues seems to have reduced the fear of discussion with the household and may have helped with disclosure.

There were two main results seen from the work of five community improvement teams:

A. Increase in number of people testing for HIV:

There was a significant increase in the number of people tested in all five villages. The most striking result was the number of men seeking testing in all five villages, which was a big problem before the application of CHSS model. Figure 2 shows an initial spike in number of community

members that tested for HIV, which reflects community members who were not previously tested and includes the results of specific outreach activity in Kwemsala village in February that resulted in a large turnout.

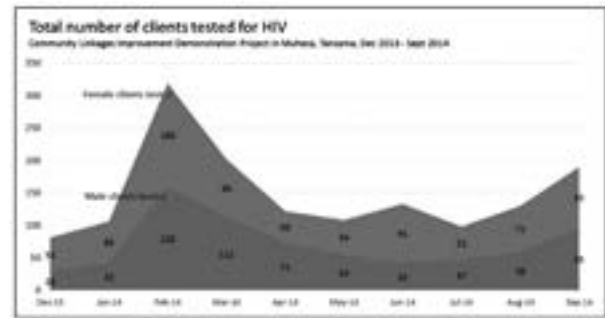


Figure 2: HIV Testing in Five Communities in Muheza District, Tanzania

a. Identified barriers to referral and improved referral system

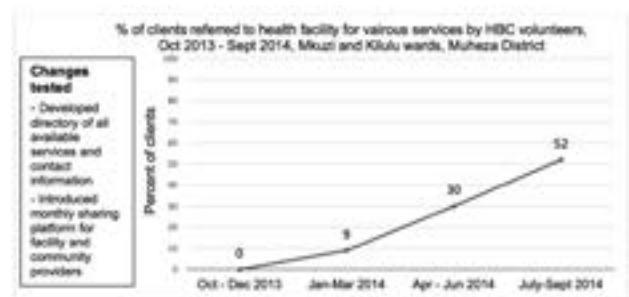


Figure 3: Improved Referrals through Engagement of Community Groups

The situational analysis found that the failure to track clients referred to the health facilities by HBC was because the health facilities did not respect the referral from the HBC volunteers. To address this problem, the community improvement teams created a referral network of the facility and community-based actors, whereby the HBC volunteer and the community improvement teams began using existing referral slips to track patients.

b. Meeting the increased demand for outreach in HIV testing and counseling by the community groups

Some villages far from health facilities requested outreach services to make HIV testing available in their communities. The community improvement team and facility staff established an outreach clinic day to cover the communities within their locations. The facility developed a plan for staff and logistics to manage the process. Community groups mobilized community members and communicated the dates of outreach visits. The facility staff made testing services available and accessible for people who had been mobilized. Community group members encouraged the uptake of services through intra-household discussions.

B. Reduced lost to follow-up of PLHIV by engaging community system

- Use of treatment supporters by HBC volunteers to trace clients:

The community system and improvement approach helped HBCs become more functional and connected throughout the community. The HBC volunteer and PLHIV groups obtained contact information and addresses of clients and treatment supporters from the health facility. They helped HBC volunteers trace those lost to follow-up (LTFU) and update clients' contact information. PLHIV also helped HBC trace their peers who were lost. The HBC volunteer and PLHIV groups used this information to track treatment supporters and patients who had fallen out of care. In March 2014, community improvement teams started tracing those clients who were lost to follow-up and brought patients back to ART.

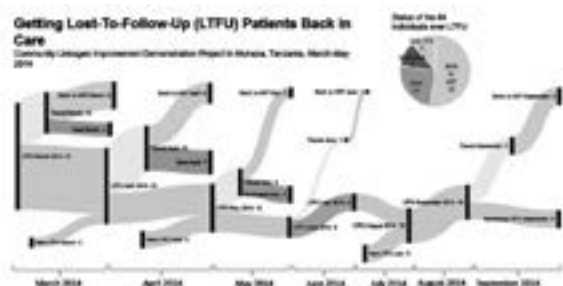


Figure 4: Reduction of Lost to follow up in Five Communities, Muheza District, Tanzania

As shown in Figure 4, over seven months, out of 44 individuals ever lost to follow-up, they brought back 23 clients and found that five had relocated and 11 had died. As of September 2014, only five of the 44 patients were still lost to follow-up. The project established an active system established for tracing and bringing back clients to care as soon as possible.

1.4 Conclusion

Tanzanian government established HBC volunteers in each village to cover 20 to 25 households, making it difficult to reach all the households with the community health service package. Community groups and networks have shown that HBC requires support from community-based groups and networks. The case study of the application of the CHSS model in the five communities in Muheza District demonstrates the utilization of community groups in the increasing update of HIV testing and reduction in lost to follow-up, and improved retention in HIV care. The results showed that it was a promising approach to strengthen linkages in lost to follow-up and improved retention in HIV care as well as between health facilities and the communities they serve.

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Effectiveness of Rural Cooperatives as Means to Enhance Conservation through Economic Development

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Abstract

Most of the protected areas, mainly in developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs), are surrounded by people with poor livelihood and economic conditions that often tend to encroach the forest resources. Previous studies have found that community having poor access or absence of alternative means often becomes susceptible to a vulnerability that may further deteriorate their livelihood conditions making conservation activity more difficult. Since conservation is always challenging without the cooperation of the surrounding communities, it is thus important to make them more responsive about conservation which is possible if they are socioeconomically self-reliant. As the success of conservation is associated with the surrounding communities' livelihood conditions, this study tries to understand the role of a grassroots organization like cooperatives on enhancing the prospective factors and overcoming constraints associated with the conservation.

The study conducted 23 in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations. These respondents were selected through snowball sampling method. Focus group discussions were done between the shareholders/members of Shree Dhampus Agriculture Development Cooperative Limited and the manager of the same cooperative.

One of the main factors that influenced people's attitudes toward practicing environmentally friendly activities was the financial factor. Due to the financial literacy gained from the local cooperative, people have realized the importance of money which led them to financially evaluate whether to use cooking gas or forest resources. However, limited cooperative educations still obstructs people from realizing the importance of benefits they can derive from cooperatives as well as from the conservation of the environment. Nonetheless, the study concludes that despite various constraints, a good example and potential of clustering was seen at the study site. Clustering not only has helped the big companies in the study site but also was able to build the network among the same types of firms. This clustering of firms and the 'we' feeling induced through cooperative can be positively used to promote conservation and protection of wildlife and biodiversity.

Keywords : poverty, environment conservation, natural resources, livelihood, micro financing, financial cooperatives

1.1 Background

Protected areas are keystones of biodiversity and species conservation (Buddhathoki, 2003; Jones et al., 2006). Protected areas such as national parks, wildlife reserves, hunting reserves and conservation areas are considered to provide the foundations to biodiversity conservation. National Parks represent the outcomes of the prime ideology where people are functionally and theoretically excluded from conservation policies. This pro-conservation strategy, which does not consider local

human populations, originated in western conservation ideology and has been replicated by the Government of Nepal since 1972. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests National Park designation is not an effective method of promoting biodiversity conservation (Pimbert & Pretty 1997). The protected area management regime in Nepal has experienced various paradigm shifts in the biodiversity conservation realm. During the 1970's, the thrust was mainly focused on creating national parks and wildlife reserves using a command- and- control approach. In the late 1980s, the focus shifted to the

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creation of conservation areas and ecotourism as a means of conservation. Since the late 1990s the focus has been on linking conservation and development, with the aim of resolving park-people conflict and integrating economic, social and environmental aspects (Heinen & Yonzon, 1994). During this period, the buffer zone approach was introduced and implemented to ensure benefits to the local community through conservation. Since then, driven by the objectives of development-based conservation approach and vice versa, many initiatives are being taken in the protected areas and around to take both activities together (Ramakrishnan, 2008; Upadhyay, 2015). Integrated Conservation and Development Program (ICDP) has been one of the most effective conservation initiatives. It intertwines development with conservation to make communities more self-reliant where nearby protected areas become free from possible encroachments and exploitations (Brown & Wychoft-Baird, 1992; Baral et al., 2007).

As ICDP is always based on development, mainly socioeconomic betterment of the local people, ensuring local community access to financial capital can be an effective instrument. To support such initiatives, the role of cooperatives has significant importance. Cooperatives mainly comprising of various community-based user groups in rural areas, have been found as one of the effective tools to analyze the root causes of the problem (Manandhar & Shin, 2013). Yunus (2007) and UNESCAP (2013) also mentioned the role of cooperatives in identifying nearby resources and empowering people, mainly women, to become the part of micro and macroeconomic development. Thus, there is a growing belief that cooperatives can be one of the effective means of making conservation activities more effective and efficient where communities largely benefit from these initiatives, in terms of better livelihoods and living standards to complement conservation initiatives.

As most of the protected areas, mainly in developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs), are surrounded by people with poor livelihood and economic conditions, they often tend to encroach on and exploit the forest resources due to the absence of alternative means to fulfill their needs (Gurung, 2003; FAO, 2015). A community having poor access to human, social, natural, physical and financial capitals often become susceptible to a vulnerability that may further deteriorate their livelihood conditions making conservation activity more challenging (Mangel et al., 1996; Chettri et al., 2008). Also, in the recent time, the number and areas of protected areas in such zones have been increasing because of the dire need to conserve species, from many environments aggravating factors such as climate change and growing carbon emissions among others (ICIMOD, 2014). Buffer Zone concept (through Buffer Zone Act 1996) brought such an integrated approach that has

helped both conservation and development to occur in and around protected areas. Annapurna Conservation Area Project is one of the biggest conservation endeavours in Nepal that is driven by the similar objectives. It not only harbours some of the most endangered wildlife species but also is the home of one million people that pose conservation challenge. Since conservation is always challenging without the cooperation of the surrounding communities, it is thus important to make them more responsive about conservation which is possible only if they are socioeconomically self-reliant. As the success of conservation is directly associated with surrounding communities' livelihood conditions, there is no way conservation will take place without improving their access to various livelihood-based assets (Parker, 2004). As per the need, many conservation programs and projects are conducting various livelihood-based development activities mainly focusing on education, income, health, and alternative energy but there must be something that will create the impact faster encompassing a larger group of people covering bigger geospatial vicinity. Out of such few development approaches, community-based cooperatives in rural conservation areas have been known for their result-oriented effective outputs that have helped to uplift their living condition and sustain livelihoods (Regmi, 2014; Bahta et al., 2017). Cooperatives, in particular, have been able to identify problems at a local level, mainly poverty, and also been able to look at the alternatives and ways out to overcome such problems by mobilizing resources and enhancing their value chain where an individual and a community can benefit from the investment they make on it (IFAD, 2004; IFC, 2013; Mia, 2016). Thus, the study tries to understand the role of cooperatives to enhance the prospective factors and overcoming constraints associated with conservation. The study has the following objectives:

- To get a better understanding of the overall rationale behind cooperatives and the process with which cooperatives were initiated and its different phases.
- To capture learning on what went well and what bottlenecks or hurdles were experienced that impacted cooperatives and in turn impacted conservation.
- To disseminate and incorporate lessons learned in future projects for more effective community participation in conservation.

1.2 Methodology

To investigate and analyse the main objectives of the research, the study adopted qualitative analysis. The data were collected through both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations. 23 in-depth interviews were conducted where one of the respondents was manager of the local

cooperative while other 22 were share members of the cooperative. As there was only one cooperative in southern ACAP, the manager of Shree Dhampus Agriculture Development Cooperative Limited (SDADCL) was selected through purposively. All the other respondents were share members of this cooperative and the residents of Machhapuchre Rural Municipality, Ward number 7 which falls under southern ACAP. These respondents, in turn, were selected through snowball sampling method.

The secondary data collection was done through related books, journal articles, and reports. Various literature and publications by ACAP and other institutions were reviewed. This was mainly done to understand the rationale of cooperatives in a conservation area.

1.3 Results and Discussion

Machhapuchre Rural Municipality lies in the Kaski District in the Gandaki Province of northern-central Nepal. With 11 wards, its total population is 21,868. The settlement around this rural area is very sparse in with only 40 people per square kilometre (Rural Access Programme, 2017). The village is covered mostly with forest. Majority of the respondents depend hugely on subsistence-based farming which can be divided into staple crops, poultry and livestock rearing-- especially buffalos. Small businesses like grocery shops, pharmacies and fashion wear shops were also seen. The livelihood has been slowly diversifying due to the presence of the local cooperative. Due to the easy access to finance, people in this ward have started to invest in small businesses. Access to finance gives the rural population not only the opportunity to diversify income but also enhances their risk-taking capabilities (Beck & Demircuc-Kunt, 2006; Yunus, 2007). However, the sources of information about the cooperatives are disseminated through friends and relatives. In the Ward number 7 of Machhapuchre Rural Municipality, the use of the informal channel to understand the role of cooperative had a strong importance. All the 22 respondents became the share member of the local cooperative as their friends and relatives told them about the importance of saving money and the accessibility to loan.

The main objective of becoming a member of the cooperative for the respondents was to uplift their socio-economic condition through easy access to loan and saving opportunities. According to the respondents, the presence of local cooperative has empowered them. Empowerment can be divided into financial, economic and social. Past studies have also shown the positive relationships between the upliftment of socio-economic conditions and empowerment (Batliwala, 2007 and Pambe et al., 2014). In this rural municipality, financial empowerment is gained through capital mobilization, and access to loans, despite lack of property rights for the women. According to the census 2011 of Nepal, only 19.71

percent of women have asset ownership. Moreover, there is limited information on the property and asset control by women. In such circumstances receiving a loan without collateral has helped women in Machhapuchre Rural Municipality-7 gain financial independence. In addition to this, dependency on the male member of the family to start up any kind of small businesses has been reduced. Group saving and procurement of loan through the group guarantee approach has helped them gain financial and economic independence. Economic empowerment is hence derived from the enterprise development induced social status and dignity. Economic security has induced social security. As caste and ethnicity is still a deep-rooted system and structure creating division in Nepalese society, the local cooperatives through the equity-based group formation have helped to overcome the traditionally rooted social and ethnic discrimination. Representing all caste, gender, and ethnicities, equity-based group formation has facilitated better social harmony. As observed during the interviews and FGDs, the ethnic composition of respondents were mix, however, there was no visible discrimination felt. During the field study, groups were not formed on the basis of gender, caste and ethnicity. This enhanced better social equity assuring the so-called untouchables resulting in 'we'-feeling which is there in a harmonized society.

Importance of Cooperatives

The FGD revealed that access to finance has become easier. It saves time as they do not have to go to the urban cities or town to get financial assistance. This has saved their time for business and family, particularly to the women. Easy loan disbursement has helped both women and men diversify their income generation sources. Along with the diversification, it has built their habit of saving and investment. Flexible agreement between institutions and borrowers has helped them to enhance their potentials. Rural people in Nepal often tend to oversee their potential and assets, grassroot organizations like cooperatives help people take the risk without binding them into strict policies (Bharadwaj, 2012). Compared to the other financial and banking institutions, moral suasion is enforced to the defaulters instead of legally binding policies despite handsome payback. Group formation through such grass root organizations not just helps them in accessing the loan, but in sharing their daily problem which strengthens we-feeling. Rewarding the people for timely payment of loan boosts the moral component in the society.

Although the locals have started to diversify their income generation sources, there is the absence of export-oriented goods and products. Tourism and enterprise development have not been explored to its maximum potential. Local consumable goods-based enterprise development is limiting the growth of business and

trade due to small market derived slim and scattered settlement and population. Exportable goods both beyond village and country can greatly help to enhance trade to significantly uplift condition. Poor access to market because of dilapidated road condition induces high transportation cost. This causes higher prices for inputs. Due to poor infrastructure, both inputs and produced goods are expensive in the rural areas (Fukubayashi & Kimura, 2014; IGC, 2017). Consumer prices are higher in the site as compared to the accessible cities and towns around, which makes the business difficult.

Despite such problems, a good example and potential of clustering was seen in the study site. Clustering not only helps the big companies but the network of the same type of firms also helps the smaller companies benefit from the pool of skills, expertise and resources (The Economist, 2009; Hanna, 2017). Complimenting factor to the small business related to the cooperatives are big investors. Due to the tourists attracted by the big hotels and resorts, small business and enterprise have to be able to grow. Majority of the consumers of such small business are tourists coming for recreation and trekking.

Role in Conservation

The motivation factor for following the pro-environmental behavior can range from one's attitude to norms. One of the main factors that influence the people's attitude towards practicing environmental-friendly activities can be financial. Financial factor is conceived usually from the self-interest of the individual. In recent times, many campaigns have focused on this factor to make their movement a more successful.

The government, ACAP and local grassroot organization like cooperatives role in promoting the financial factor can be one of the ways to bridge the gap in people's environmental knowledge, awareness and then practicing it. Due to the people-centered approach, ACAP has been able to bring many conservation initiatives to make environmental protection and its services to the local people more effective (NTNC, 2018).

Forest crown cover has gone up by 8.73 percent in the period 2006-2016, mainly in the southern ACAP (Singh 2016). Intensive consultation and discussion with local people also inferred the correlation between increased conservation of both flora and fauna with enhanced people's livelihood and socio-economy due to improved access of financial capital. There were direct positive correlations spotted, where people quoted the cases of their shifting of dependency for survival and livelihood from forest resources to their own enterprises for their survival and livelihood. Increased sighting of wild fauna mainly ungulates along with macaques and wild fowl gave the impression of improved bio-diversity and sustained eco-

system assuring systematic and healthy food chain to encourage conservators which can be correlated with the increased socio-economic condition of the area. Also, people's visit to the forest has significantly reduced due to their enhanced economic capability as they can afford to alternative sources of energy like LPG, biogas and solar. Moreover, local don't want to visit forest as they find this risky amid faunal growth in numbers. Their economic empowerment greatly helps to keep them away from forest reducing possible human wildlife conflict as well.

Constraints

The drain of economically active population is the major limiting factor behind the growth of agriculture-based economy comprising of many high-value cash crops like coffee, large cardamom, fish farming opportunities that can easily be done both locally and regionally. Lack of formal education on cooperative and absence of skills and technical training restrict the rural population to establish stable enterprises (Okpara, 2007; Bharadwaj, 2012; Karki & Xheneti, 2017). Limited knowledge on cooperative education makes people unable to realize the benefits they can derive from cooperative. In addition to this, enterprise development training and modern farming techniques both at crops and livestock levels is another constraint. Basically, there are three categories of people found on the site: "A" economically capable, "B" economically subsistence, and "C" Ultra poor.

"A" class are not attracted to feeble investing financing opportunities; whereas, "C" cannot even afford to become a member even by investing nominal share price. As only subsistence class i.e., "B" category is attracted and can afford to work with the cooperatives. Majority of the ultra-poor community are excluded from this service as they are unable to become a share member of the cooperative which is a primary condition to become eligible to get a loan. Until and unless they are brought into this financial mechanism and services, conservation and development cannot go further and far.

Due to limited capital budget of mere NPR 7.5 million, it is not possible to provide a loan to all needy people in the region. There are no other sources of capital, viz. revolving fund, which could be disbursed under subsidized interest on the amount if disbursed to ultra-poor people. Without serious precautions capital of subsistence category, people are likely to become even more vulnerable.

a. Status of Fund Availability and Mobilization

The fund available in the cooperative is just less than NPR 7.5 million which is above critical budget cooperative requires to sustain financially. The continuous auditing, both internal and external, has made all financial transaction transparent and cooperative itself sounds accountable and responsive in many senses.

b. Cooperative-Community Financial Linkage

Access to finance is still a major constraint in rural Nepal. Among many reasons, the profitability of the financial institution in the operating area influences the availability of financial institutions. Due to these reasons, the presence of commercial banks and other financial institutions are limited in the rural areas of Nepal (IFAD, 2004; Nagarjan & Meyer, 2006). The grassroot organizations like cooperatives play an important role in filling this gap (IFC, 2013; Bahta et al., 2017); however, SDADCL's smaller geographical coverage and less share members limit their assets to provide larger loans and expand the opportunities to the local community.

The absence of cooperative education has limited the coverage and knowledge of rural people to maximize the opportunity that cooperative can provide. Although with the small number of household coverage, the local cooperative in Machhapuchre Municipality has helped the majority of the respondents i.e., 20 out of 22 had taken a loan. As two of them did not require loan, they did not use this facility however actively took part in other community programmes conducted by the local cooperative. Out of 20 respondents who took loan, nine of them diversified their economy through the establishment and upscaling of shops, restaurant and a bakery shop whereas, 11 other used their loan for their children's education and household purposes. Presence of cooperative has given them the opportunity to access the financial services. Formation of the group among the members has even provided the access to loan without the collateral. Not only has it provided the loan but it has also developed the habit of saving among the locals. The saving culture is the first step towards the financial awareness among the rural people as it helps them to cope with the unexpected risks of the future (Ritchie, 2007; Kwai & Urassa, 2015).

c. Reporting and External Auditing

All the cooperatives stated that they report their financial standings to their respective District Division Cooperative (DDC) and Community Forest Coordination Committee (CFCC) every month, according to the Reporting Guidelines set forth by the Division Office.

d. Cooperative Governance

The cooperative has been able to increase the number of share members over the years, and thus participation of community members in livelihood and conservation schemes. However, the proportion of such members is still low in comparison to the total population, primarily due to the limited coverage of cooperative education. Also, cooperatives are limited within its fixed geographic catchment in terms of making local community their share members. The ratio of membership declines as the physical distance from the cooperatives increases (Grandolini, 2015; Pant, 2016). Community members, in general, do have a basic understanding of investment

and credit mechanism, however, the majority of those in category 'C' have not been able to reach cooperatives or avail such schemes due to the lack of minimal amount required to become a member (Clessens, 2006; Khatun et al., 2013; Grandolini, 2015; Ferdousi, 2015).

Although limited geographical coverage was found, the accountability and transparency within the cooperative were intact. Annual General Assembly has been carried out regularly where every share member participates and expresses his/her concerns. The Assembly provides all the stakeholders with an access of over duly shared audited report thus ensuring financial transparency.

e. Cooperative Education to General Public

Unlike claimed by cooperatives about frequent and intensive cooperative education conducted in their catchment area, 95% of the total 22 respondents expressed unawareness about such education. Plus, according to the FGD conducted, cooperative education is limited within the periphery of cooperative offices, and leaving distant forest users and eligible community members deprived of such information.

There has been a positive correlation between cooperative education and successful enterprise development (Salwa et al., 2013; Gardeva & Rhyne, 2011; Manaf, 2017). The absence of an effective channel to aware the rural people in the utilization of loan limits their potentials (WHO, 2010; Pant, 2016). A few proportions of borrowers who have attended these educational sessions and have been motivated to acquire membership and loans have done really well in terms of their returns on investment. Whereas, majority of the borrowers reported that they came to know about the cooperative through their friend circle and personal communication with cooperative staff members, and thus are unaware on the objective of the credit thus availed.

f. Membership

All the cooperatives have prioritized community members belonging to category 'C' in share membership as well as in loan investment, with a higher focus towards women and marginalized groups. Though the policy and membership process is the same in all the cooperatives, the trend of membership increment rates is different in each cooperative due to various reasons that are described in the succeeding chapters.

g. Cooperative – Public Relation

It has been found that community members have a very good perception of the current working committee in the cooperative in all the study sites. All the respondents of the study expressed a strong communal support for their respective cooperative.

h. Disguised Unemployment

Most of the households, in all the study sites, are inclined towards traditional enterprise comprising livestock farming, poultry, and vegetable farming with more focus on subsistence than on commercialization. All the household members are dependent on this particular enterprise, which, however, is subjected to seasonal fluctuations and uncertainties.

It was observed that the nature of enterprise among category 'C' borrowers has not been sufficient for an average family size of four, often demanding young members of the family to seek foreign employment. Most of the respondents, including the borrowers with an excellent history of loan repayment under IGA scheme, had at least one of their family members in the Middle East.

1.4 Recommendation:

- Establishment of more cooperatives in the region with the main focus to involve more and more people through cooperative education can significantly improve both economic and social status of the community including marginalized, disadvantaged and ultra-poor among others.
- Availing of a revolving fund to effectively disburse to the ultra-poor community who are unable to purchase share capital and even save in conduction of enterprise development activity can greatly contribute to improving their financial condition and will make them more independent from environment resources perspective. This system can provide a limited amount of loan to the ultra-poor community to delicately fabricate their socio-economy whereas established subsistence group having sound track record can be availed with a handsome amount of loan to encourage them to start-up a decent enterprise guaranteeing more employment opportunities.
- In order to bring category C people into development mainstream, they must be provided without collateral facilitated by revolving fund. Such fund can be both charitable or welfare.
- Emphasis on cooperative education focusing backward community must be provided both in terms of socio-economic and geographic accessibility.
- To ensure community-managed conservation initiatives, more innovative community capital formation schemes must be launched ensuring physical and financial capital generation ensuring basic physical facilities and income opportunities.
- Insurance Policy must be prioritized and practiced particularly to overcome the possible losses like livestock depredation and crop damage by wild

animals. Proper compensation policy through insurance or other means can greatly overcome such financial and conflict-induced conservation risks.

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Impacts of forest fire on people living in suburban Kathmandu in the buffer zone of Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park

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Abstract

The research study mainly intends to gauge the impact of forest fire in the buffer zone community of Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, mainly in the area of Chapali Bhadrakali (ward number 2) adjacent to the sprawling Kathmandu metropolitan city. The study reflects the frequent occurrence of forest fire events happening in the area and its effects, both physical and psychological, on the local communities in the buffer zone. The locals have their work cut out due to the repetition of the incident every year leaving them no alternative than to ready themselves to face the challenges. Thus, the research paper includes both the threats caused by forest fires to people's livelihoods as well as the local's perception regarding the fire incidents. Ergo, this study analyzes the impact status of the buffer zone community of Chapali Bhadrakali with regard to seasonal forest fire events.

Keywords : forest fires, buffer zone, community, conservation

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Each year forest fire poses the biggest threat to several thousand hectares of forest land in Nepal (Kathmandu Post, 2019) which directly and indirectly impacts people's livelihoods, causing loss to human settlements, health and natural vegetation. People mainly face forest fires during the dry season, in March and April, with the highest concentration of most severe fire cases (Matin et al., 2017).

Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park (SNNP), covering an area of 159 sq km and at an elevation range of 1000 to 2,732 m is Nepal's ninth national park located on the northern fringe of the capital city Kathmandu, which is also the most populous city of the country (Ministry of Forests and Environment, 2017). In addition to it being an important watershed reserve that supplied drinking water to the capital in not so distant past, more recently, in 2005, SNNP was also declared as an important bird and biodiversity area by the government- particularly in avian fauna which numbers around 320 species (SNNP 2017).



Source- The Darwin Initiative³

The park represents the richness of the mid-hill ecosystem but sadly undergoes serious forest fire problem every year. The seasonal forest fire, mostly in the dry season, leads to insufficient food in the natural habitats of the national park. Due to the park's undulating landscape and forests, a forest fire is a challenge for park administration. Therefore, to enhance the protection and conservation

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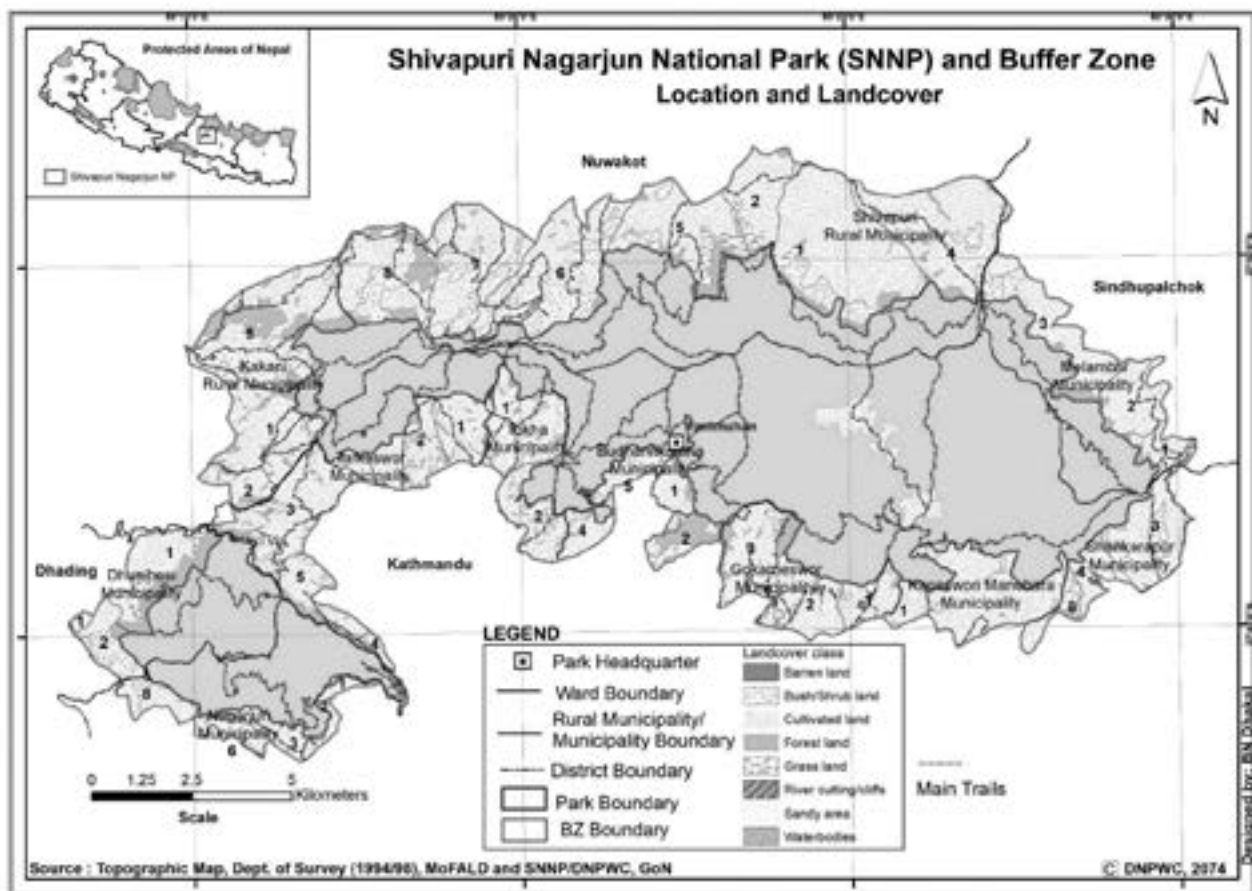
of the national park area, SNNP declared a buffer zone in 2016- fourteen years after the park's establishment in 2002. The main aim of the buffer zone was to achieve the active participation of the people in the conservation of SNNP (MoFE, 2017).

Recent history: Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park has faced numerous fire issues over the years. According to the annual SNNP report of 2012/13, forest fires were spotted in 24 different locations which also include the area around Panimuhan, Budhanilkantha, and, inside and around the area of Chapali (SNNP, 2013). Moreover, 21 forest fires were spotted again in different locations between 2013 and 2014 (Shrestha, 2015). On the 2015/16 annual report of SNNP, a fire was spotted in Nagarjun, Sundarijal, and Bishnumati during the months of March-April, and again in the same year fire incident was found in Nagarjun, Sundarijal, Tarakeshwar, Suerechaur, Tokha, Bishnumati and Chisapani in the months of April-May. Almost 2600 hectares of forest land caught on fire in different locations this year (SNNP, 2016). Furthermore, in the year 2019, a forest fire was caught inside the national park which destroyed almost 8 ha of the forest land (Lama, Mandal, & Kandel, 2019), and in 2021 SNNP caught a huge forest fire impacting the national park. As stated by the 2016/17 annual report of SNNP,

the national park is facing many challenges along with the increasing forest fire and encroachment in the buffer zone area (SNNP, 2017). Likewise, in 2022, the buffer zone community of the SNNP suffered from forest fires, after the occurrence of the forest fire in the Panchakanya community forest (Radio Nepal, 2022), following the forest fire in the Thanidanda area, south side of Jugal Danda Nani Gumba (myRepublica, 2022). Moreover, the fires in the forest have not only destroyed the lands but also caused damage to the human settlement; wild animals like monkeys ran away from the forest, whenever there are forest fire due to their survival instinct, damaging the agricultural crops mainly maize and human properties (Shrestha, B. et al 2022).

1.2 SNNP and Buffer Zone

Shivapuri is one of the four hills, along with Nagarjun, Phulchowki, and Chandragiri, which surround the Kathmandu metropolitan area. Its namesake, the Kathmandu valley, in turn, contains in itself three districts viz. Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. The district of Kathmandu has the city of Kathmandu and ten other municipalities (Kathmandu Metropolitan City, 2021). Out of the ten, Budhanilkantha municipality stands out with its unique landscape, and has areas which lie in the buffer zone of the SNNP.



Source: DNPWC web portal

The SNNP buffer zone, covering an area of 118.61 sq. km extends from Kathmandu to the districts of Nuwakot, and Dhading up to Sindhupalchowk district of Bagmati province of Nepal. It has a total number of 12,352 households with a total population of 56,474 (MoFE, 2017). According to the District Forest Office, the SNNP is surrounded by 25 buffer zone communities, with its size varying from 0.77 to 63.9 ha (Bowers et al., 2017).

The Budhanilkantha municipality lies in the Kathmandu district, with a longitude of 85.3653°E and latitude of 27.7654°N. It covers an area of 35 sq km and has a population of 153,303 residing in 32,039 households in its 13 wards (CWIS TA Hub & ENPHO, 2019). Out of which ward no. 2, Chapali Bhadrakali-the research's field site-has a total population of 6,129 with 1,453 households (DFRS, 2018). It is surrounded by the SNNP in the East and South belts, mostly having plain and sloppy land in the South-North part, covering an area of 6.270km² (DFRS, 2018). Out of all the wards in the municipality, Chapali Bhadrakali/ ward no. 2 is known for being more vulnerable to the hazards like forest fires and it falls in the park buffer zone (Ward Office, 2017).

Geographically, the municipality is more likely to face disasters like floods, landslides, forest fires, and earthquakes. Meanwhile, its ward, Chapali Bhadrakali, remains threatened by the effects caused by these disasters. Therefore, in order to reduce this risk, the area has Panchakanya Buffer Zone Community Forest Users (PBZU) that looks after the situation.

Forest trees are an integral part of rural livelihoods in Nepal. The forests in Nepal are mainly conserved and managed by community forest, which accounts for 20% of the country's total forest area and benefits almost 1.6 million households (Magarath et al., 2013). Hence in 1993, the government of Nepal initiated the buffer zone approach by adopting a participatory approach in buffer zone resources management where the Users' Group and the committee were formed to carry out the activities of the local community development smoothly and effectively (Bhusal, 2014).

1.3 Buffer zone and forest fire

Forest fire is the biggest threat in Nepal that can severely cause damage to its ecosystems resulting in biological and economic losses, human and wildlife casualties, and health hazards (Singh et al., 2020). More than 41% and about 40% of the forest fire incidents recorded in Nepal are within 1km of a settlement and road respectively; however, the fire events were lesser in the area having more distance between the forest area and settlements (Matin et al., 2017). The forest fire that occurred at the Panchakanya community forest in the year 2022 was brought under the control with the help of the officials like Armed Police Force, Nepal Army, National Park, and

Nepal Police (Radio Nepal, 2022).

Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park is one of the national parks of Nepal that is close to the human settlement and heavily surrounded by a suburban population. Within the past years, forest fire incidents in the country have been noticeably increasing, with more casualties. It has mainly impacted the buffer zone community that depends on the forest for their livelihood, adversely affecting them by limiting the resource availability of the forest and destroying public assets and infrastructure.

Although the fire management policy of the SNNP (2017-2021) has clearly mentioned its objectives to prevent forest fire in order to avoid the adverse effects of fire on wildlife and its habitat, there are no strategies planned to minimize the threats in the buffer zone area other than mentioning the buffer zone communities in the fire-prone season (Ministry of Forests and Environment, 2017). The issue lies when the government, which acts considerably during each fire-prone season, soon forgets about the necessity of forest fire prevention and firefighting after the seasonal forest fire.

The poor management and not having a systematic plan for prevention and control of forest fires, with limited resources to monitor and manage the forest fire, is only making the national park area and its buffer zone communities more vulnerable to these incidents. The forest fire risk is more severe, especially in the Buffer Zone area, having more chances of causing long-term health problems, with adverse ecological, economic, and social impacts on the community (Satendra& Kaushik, 2014). A number of villages are burnt every year with the loss of lives, cattle, and other property due to the forest fire. Yet, the organization fighting forest fires has rarely been spotted (MoFSC, 2009). As soon as the monsoon arrives, the forest fire get naturally under control, and shortly after being handled, the raging forest fires are forgotten (The Kathmandu Post, 2021).

Nepal has been experiencing unusual forest fire over the years. Out of 75 districts of Nepal, 18 were found at high risk of forest fires (Matin et al., 2017). Over 400,000ha of land is burnt annually in Nepal due to forest fires (Bajracharya, 2002, as cited in Matin et al., 2017). The monitoring and management of fire in Nepal have always been weak as the forest department has minimal resources for addressing forest fire management (Matin et al., 2017). And the ones who are affected the most are the people close to the area when these incidents occur. The forest fire erupted on 11th April 2021, near the Budhanilkantha Municipality in the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, impacting both the forest resources and the man-kind (THT, 2021). SNNP is closest to the country's capital Kathmandu, a highly populated city, while its buffer zone area is only less than 10 miles away from the North of the capital city (Bowers et al., 2017), which has

increased the risk of forest fire enormously.

The threats arise with the city facing urban sprawl, and its effects are clearly visible near the national park area, mainly on the northern side. The wildland-urban interface has a greater chance of being impacted by forest fire (Shephard, 2018). The frequent event of forest fire is not new to the buffer zone community, which faces loss from the incidents each year, suffering damage to health, ecological, economic, and social aspects.

The conducted study mainly helps to identify the forest fire risk and its impact in the buffer zone community of Chapali Bhadrakali-2, Budhanilkantha Municipality- one of the vulnerable wards to forest fire, following its history of disasters. The objective of this study was to determine the impact of forest fire in the Panchakanya BZ community of Shivapuri- Nagarjun National Park by assessing the consequences of forest fire on the livelihood of the buffer zone community and gauge perspectives of residents with regards forest fire. The study area of the research covered Chapali Bhadrakali- 2 of Budhanilkantha Municipality and people of the PBZU area are included in this study. Due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the methodology was adapted to fit in with the WHO guidelines. The study took the predictive assumption that the PBZU community of Chapali Bhadrakali, Budhanilkantha Municipality is affected by the seasonal occurrence of forest fires in the SNNP.

2. Methodology

The data collected from Budhanilkantha Municipality ward no 2 (Chapali Bhadrakali) was accumulated from both primary and secondary data sources. A data need assessment was carried out resulting in quantitative data collection of economic, and livelihood loss caused by the forest fire and qualitative data collection to gauge perspective of the residents through interview method, along with on site observation. The research design used is convergent parallel mixed method.

A combination of household survey (n=32)-- with use of a schedule with both open and close-ended questions- and key informant interviews (KIIs) along with site observation were used as primary data sources. Due to which an element of triangulation is used in analyzing the results. Literature, ward records, journals, and official websites were used as secondary data sources.

A 5-point rating scale was used to determine the perspectives of locals regarding forest fire. Also, an interview schedule was constructed and two respondents viz. the ward chairman of the Chapali Bhadrakali-2 and chairperson of PBZU were identified as the key informants. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed and organized according to themes and analyzed before inserting as an important part of results. Finally, observation was carried out by taking notes and

field photographs. Free, prior and informed consent was taken from all the participants with verbal consent before recording audio and clicking photographs. Meanwhile, throughout the research, anonymity and confidentiality is maintained wherever it was sought.

3. Results



Fig. 1: Demarcation of study site

Source- Google Map



Fig. 2: Detailed view showing land uses of the study area covered

Source- Google Map

3.1 Livelihood of Buffer zone Community

As shown in Fig 3, out of the total households surveyed, the majority i.e. 63.33% are involved in Agriculture and Livestock as their income source. Few respondents were involved in business/ finance/others and some were unemployed.

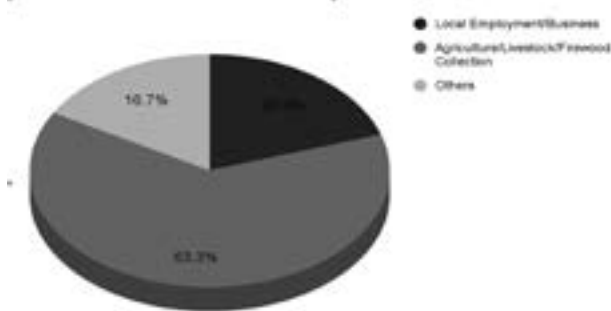


Fig. 3: Major livelihoods at the community

3.2 KII schedule with Ward Chairman

"The 2021 Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park forest fire affected the community more indirectly than directly. With the water resources drying out, the people had to bear the impact for almost two months." ---Mr. Rajendra Khadka, Ward Chairperson

Chairman Mr. Khadka has served the Chapali Bhadrakali for over four years. He explains that besides the direct effect of forest fire drying up water resources, the community people have also suffered from an indirect loss due to the forest fire happening over the years. The forest is home to wild animals, and when the disasters like fires occur in forest, they tend to move outside the area, searching for a place to escape. And when the same event happens in the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park's forest, the wild animals, mainly monkeys, come out of the forest looking for shelter and food but end up destroying property, field, and agricultural land of the people.

Mr. Khadka added that the ward has offered to help the people who suffered from the loss or property damages from such circumstances. The ward has also taken precautions, to avoid casualties, like providing training to local people, creating fire lines to avoid spreading in every direction, and more. He also believes that adding water sources in the forest area would make it easier and quicker to control fire. He also opined that placing the firefighting equipment near the forest area would help to manage the situation more swiftly. He also added that though at the present, not many people are overly dependent on forest resources, but, a similar incident of 2015 of supplies disruption with India could increase dependency of the local residents on forest resources.

Mr. Khadka states that the supplied disruption with India created havoc among the people due to gas shortage. With that, the local community started targeting the forest resources to cook their meal and run their daily livelihoods. As the situation was tough, the administration could not stop the people and had to accommodate by providing the solution of one tree per house.

In order to not repeat the same chaos in future, the ward is planning for alternatives. He further concluded by saying that 'dependency on the forest resources is not the solution; we have to search for alternatives'.

3.3 KII Schedule with Chairman, PBZU

"I believe the huge forest fire we faced this year (2021) will undoubtedly repeat in the future. The main risk is to human settlement. Ironically, it is also one of the reasons behind the rising number of forest fire incidents over the years." --Mr. Bikas Shrestha, Chairperson of PBZU

Chairman Mr. Bikas Shrestha has been looking after the Panchakanya Buffer Zone Community Forest Users for over two years. He believes that forest fire occurrences are quite common in the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, mainly on the upper side of Bishnumati and Wasik village. He wryly added that that area faces forest fire events every year, but the incident of 11 April 2021 drew public's attention as it was more devastating and one of the worst forest fire experiences in 2021 so near the country's capital.



Fig. 4: Upper Hill Area of Chapali Bhadrakali

Mr. Shrestha adds to his statement, mentioning that the PBZU has been handling forest fires for years; however, the year 2021 was exceptional. That year the national park had to undergo 2 to 3 hectares of land damage impacting the local community severely.

In the Buffer zone, people are restricted to use resources from the national park. Nevertheless, they are still allowed to enter the area once a year for collecting leaf litter, fodder, foliage and some non timber forest products. These activities help keep the forest area clean while also reducing forest fire risk by clearing out the dried wood and leaves.

The Chairperson also mentions as they are taking control of the forest fire event, numbers of fatalities are decreasing. Regardless, the local people still have difficulties in their livelihood.

Shivapuri is rich in natural resources, mainly water, and the people who are dependent on water from the park for drinking purposes, extend from ward no 2 to ward no 8. The occurrence of forest fires each year destroys the trees and shrubs in the area, resulting in the dried-out primary water sources locally called pani-muhan. On top of that, he estimated that the increasing urban sprawl contributes to approximately 75% of the forest fire in the area. This results in absence of open area more and more as people move towards the SNNP periphery wanting to connect to nature.

Mr. Shrestha mentioned that though they ‘cannot stop people who want to visit the park as the forest belongs to everyone’; however, what they can do is ‘search for the solution’. According to him the SNNP forest fire of 2021 was controlled with the help of committee people with additional support. The negative impact the fire left behind was the ‘air pollution that everyone in the area had to bear’.

However, it was more extreme for the community who resided closer to the forest fire spots and suffered more due to it-- a tough situation given that it was during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also shared that for a long time, an issue has been ongoing between the Buffer zone community and local government regarding handling the responsibilities of the forest. Yet, ‘forest fire management laws are yet to be made’.

3.4 Loss Caused By Forest Fire in the Community

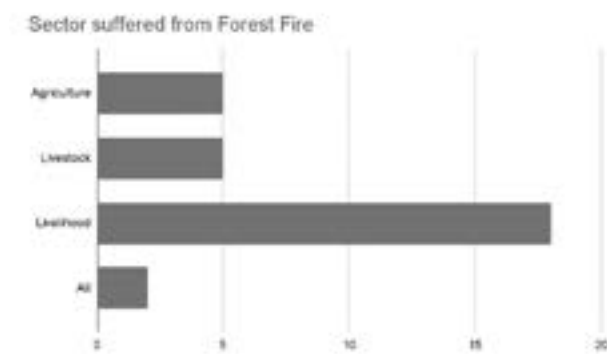


Fig. 5: Sectors suffered from Forest Fire

As shown in Fig. 5, out of the total respondents, equal proportion i.e. 16.67% believes that agriculture and livestock sectors suffered the most due to forest fire. But the biggest response i.e. 60% believes that it was livelihood that got affected the most. Most of the respondents consider the reason behind this sector's suffering is the pollutants caused by the forest fire. Two respondents gave no replies.

3.5 Perception towards impact on livelihood and property

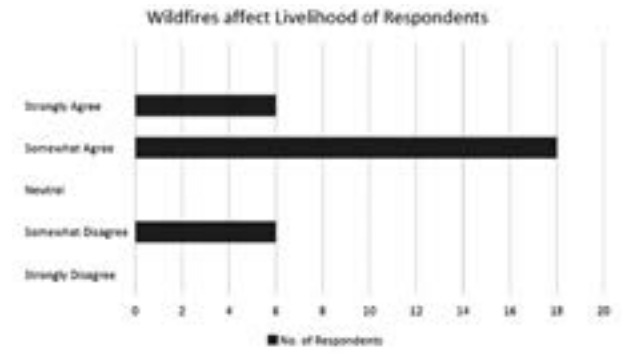


Fig. 6: Community’s perception towards impact on livelihood

The data were also analyzed for gauging residents’ perception regarding forest fire, to know the long-term psychological effect on the people after facing the menace every year. On that account, a big majority of the respondents agreed that forest fire affect their livelihood. Two were no replies.

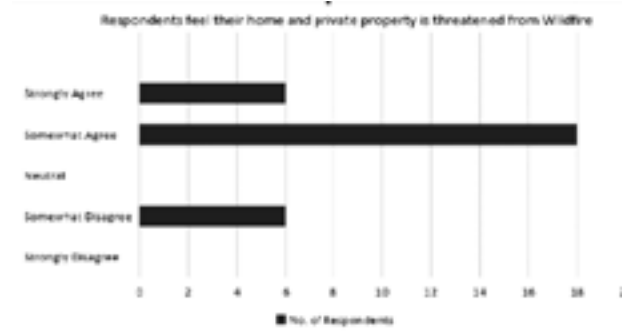


Fig 7: Perception regarding threat to private property

Likewise, a big majority of the respondents also felt threatened by chances of their homes and property being gutted by the seasonal occurrence of forest fire in the area. Moreover, most of the informants –two were no replies–also agreed that forest services should put efforts to safeguard private properties within fire-prone areas.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The buffer zone committee of the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park had to go through several challenges in controlling, minimizing, and managing the forest fire in the forest. In doing so, the local people have always played a crucial role in handling the fires, with equal participation in the management plan.

The people residing in the national park buffer zone are well familiar with the causes and consequences of the forest fire that repeat every year. Regardless of being familiar with the situation, they become hopeless when fire outbreaks every fire-prone season. Mainly the people who live in the upper hill area encounter more challenges

than the individuals living in the lower hill.

The fires that repeat in every dry season due to natural cause is hard to get away from or even take control of. However, the forest fire could get worse and more challenging due to anthropogenic cause. In the case of Chapali Bhadrakali, urbanization has played a big role in the increasing number of forest fires annually. Being a famous nearby national park to the Kathmandu metropolis, the SNNP gets a large visitor footfall resulting in human activities which, in turn, could also be responsible for most of the fire occurrences. The testimony lies in the fact that the fire in the national park mainly occurs in the location where there are many visitors. Also, locally speaking, within last few years, people have migrated to the buffer zone area of the national park mainly for its refreshing habitat and rental land for agricultural purposes.

Besides, an increase in the number of forest fire would only bring disasters to human settlement and the environment resulting in the loss of human lives and ecosystem. The people residing near the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park are mostly dependent on its water sources for drinking purposes. With the increasing incidents of forest fire, the water sources of the national park are drying out, destroying the important ecosystem services that benefited the community. A case in point is the fire that occurred in SNNP in 2021 which dried out the water sources for around two months. Furthermore, the impurities generated from that forest fire got mixed in the water degrading the agricultural production and harmed health of livestock.

The communities residing on the upper hill of the Chapali Bhadrakali are primarily dependent on agriculture and livestock for their living. Those communities are restricted to collect resources from the national park. However, there are no limitations on the resources near the forest area. As it happens, the locals collect the necessary things from nearby the forest area rather than the national park itself for sustaining their livelihoods. However, only a few individuals depend on forest resources like fuel woods for their livelihood nowadays. Also, most of them are not aware of the training programs conducted by the local government. Yet, without proper firefighting training and tools, those communities still have to douse down the fire themselves. One of the respondents commented that 'if we don't settle the fire in time, it will just grow bigger and put our settlement area at risk'. The people of PBZU might not have faced serious fatalities for now, but they are terrified by the frequent fire they face every year.

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NATIONAL COLLEGE AT A GLANCE

National College, since its beginnings in 1996, has maintained the same education philosophy that the timeless attributes of leadership, skills, intuition, ambition and humility will always be the pillars of developing better human resources.

Our approach in pursuing this philosophy is evident in the approach we have adopted in offering path breaking interdisciplinary courses that bring on faculties from diverse walks of life. This in tandem with field studies and opportunities of participating in training, workshops and seminars of national and international level has the potential of transforming you in realizing your ambitions.

We believe interdependence, agility and flexibility would

be the new norms. We saw that firsthand during the pandemic. Our flawless effort in conducting online classes and evaluation and smooth research activities are standing testimony of collaboration even in crisis.

Every crisis is an opportunity to learn, unlearn and relearn. This is the aptitude we have been trying to inculcate in our students. We feel pleased that we have been hosting South Asian Students and are contributing at not just the country level but regionally.

We are honored in having likeminded institutions as collaborators and partners and are thrilled by the good news we get every year of our graduates doing well at home and abroad.

PROGRAMS AFFILIATED TO KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY AND OFFERED BY NATIONAL COLLEGE TIME PERIOD: 4 YEARS (8 SEMESTERS)

BDevS (Since 1999) main courses: Economics, Sociology, Environment and Development Research

BDFin (Since 2006) main courses: Finance, Management, Economics, and Development

BoSS (Since 2013) main courses: Sociology, Ethnicity, Gender, Governance, Policy and Research

BPsych (From 2023) main Courses: Clinical psychology, Counseling psychology, Industrial setting & Research Methodology.

All these programs are conceived by Development Experts, Social Scientists and Academicians with inputs from the local communities to international professionals, and designed to be unique in Nepal and South Asia.

The courses are also designed to be dynamic so that the faculties could maneuver the topics by reflecting on the contemporary issues at the national and global levels within the outlines of the syllabus.

Specific features of the above programs are:

- National College is UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Center for Development Studies and Regional Cooperation since 2012.
- International student Exchange program with Waseda University and others under Nepal Japan Project.
- Presents of south Asian students adding to student diversity under the South Asia Foundation Scholarship
- Erasmus +students Exchange with Palacky University, Czech Republic.
- Internal evaluation by faculties on assignments, internal assessments, attendance and class & field participation carrying 50% marks
- End-semester examinations conducted by KU carrying 50% marks
- For the subjects with practical classes, 100% marks by internal evaluation only
- Field works and practical applications of knowledge and skill
- Exposure to various institutions, communities and geographical settings
- Faculty-students interactions for exchanging ideas, sharing experiences and in-depth learning
- Peer interactions for group work
- Independent Project Work under experts' guidance

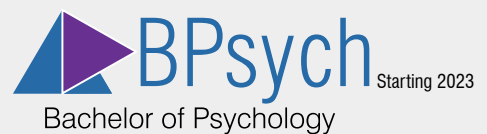


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