



# The Right to Entitlement to Food and Food Insecurity in the age of Politics.

Dr Upasana Roy Barman

Assistant Professor, Department- Political Science

Serampore Girls' College, West Bengal, India

**Abstract:-** The basic entitlement to life composed of the aspect of Food and Food Security means an individual ability to have social, economic, and physical access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. This article is an endeavor to understand the availability of food in light of the power politics of the state. Amartya Sen stated in his work that the law stands between food availability and access to food. If that is true then it is important to understand the availability of Food and the politics of Food insecurity- or in a simple sense –the politics of the entitlement to Food.

**The first section- What is Food in the sense of hunger and the concept of Food insecurity? -. The second section - Entitlement to Food and Food Insecurity-** is the main section of the article, which will primarily focus on the politics of the entitlement to Food. This study will be conducted in respect to certain cases of Famine from the pages of World History. **The last sub-theme- Food is the right to Life which breathes in the entitlement of the Right to Food**

**Key word:-** Food insecurity, Politics, Entitlement, Starvation, Distribution of Food, and Natural Rights

**Introduction-** Annapurna Devi- the Goddess of Food and nourishment holds a special place in every Kitchen of every Hindu family. Anna means – food and Purna means filled. The iconography of the deity shows a young woman, adorned with ornaments and holds a bedecked pot with tasty porridge in her lower left hand, which implies that she is the Goddess of nourishment and never let her devotees without food. What is more implicit about Goddess Annapurna is the fact that her act of giving food and nourishment is taken as a responsibility of every Hindu household not only within the 4 walls of their house but also for all who reach their nest. In the film Ashani Sanket- Distant Thunder of Satyajit Ray, he depicts the lamentation of the children of Devi Annapurna in the

politics of the Bengal Famine of 1943. But the most denoting rendition of the Great Famine was seen from the perspective of eyes of a young Brahmin doctor-teacher, Gangacharan, and his wife, Angana. In every scene of Angana's kitchen, she is seen keeping aside a handful of rice – amid the crisis for any stopover to their nest- because she believes feeding- is what justifies the deity she worships in her self-acclaimed space. It was what her culture taught her to do, not only for herself but for all others outside there. Churchill's denial policy not only led to the rotting of starved bodies in fields and rivers- because people didn't have the bare necessities to perform the last rites. But it was also an abdication of the very culture of their deity in every Hindu house- an act of cultural refutation by the colonial state. Churchill and his British state not only appropriated the power to decide whether the colonized soul would be fed or not. But he also became the master of deciding which norms and codes of a Culture will be ordained by the disrobed identities.

### 1- **What is Food Insecurity- Concept and various aspects**

**What is Security?** In most layman's understanding- the concept of Security means protection or freedom from any danger or threats. This state of being Secure can be in respect to any circumstances, any activities, and any organization or even from fear, anxiety, danger or doubt. But what contains Security is to ensure the claim of Survival. Now we come to the concept of Food Security- or what is Food Security? In 1980s the Food and Agricultural Organization the idea of Food Security was based on demand and supply equation in relation to Food Security. The definition was “Ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need” **1**. But in 1986 the World Bank Report on Poverty and Hunger focused on a larger dimension of Food Security. “The report introduced the distinction between chronic food insecurity, associated with problems of continuing or structural poverty and low incomes, and transitory food insecurity, which involves periods of intensified pressure caused by natural disasters, economic collapse, or conflict. This was complemented by Sen’s theory of famine (1981) which highlighted the effect of personal entitlements on food access i.e. production, labour, trade and transfer based resources. The widely accepted World Food Summit (1996) definition reinforces the multidimensional nature of food security and includes food access, availability, food use and stability”**2**. So what follows is the fact that in the 1974 World Food Summit, it was defined as “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” **3**. But it was redefined and expanded in 2001 and it stated “Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” **4**. So what is Food Security- “Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” **5**.

There are basically four elements that build the ground for Food Security- Availability, Access, Use and Utilization and Stability. **Availability**- refers to the Supply Side of Food Security. “On a national level food availability is a combination of domestic food production, commercial food imports and exports, food aid, and domestic food stocks. On the household level, food could be from own production or bought from the local markets” **6. Access**- “An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets, and prices in achieving food security objectives” **7. Use and Utilization**- “Use describes the socio-economic aspects of household food and nutrition security, determined by knowledge and habits. Assuming that nutritious food is available and accessible, the household has to decide what food to purchase and how to prepare it as well as how to consume and allocate it within the household. Another aspect is the biological utilization. This relates to the ability of the human body to take food and convert it. Besides that utilization requires a healthy physical environment... understanding and awareness of proper health care, food preparation, and storage processes.” **8. Stability**- “Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are still considered to be food insecure if you have inadequate access to food periodically, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status.” **9.**

There are generally two types of Food Insecurity- 1- Chronic Food Insecurity and 2- Transitory Food Insecurity. Chronic Food insecurity means “Lack of minimum requirement of food to the people for a sustained period due to extended periods of poverty, lack of assets and inadequate access to productive or financial resources” **10.** Transitory Food Insecurity means “Sudden lack of food or reduction in the ability to produce or access minimum requirement of food due to short-term shocks and fluctuations in food availability and food access, including year-to-year variations in domestic food production, food prices, and household incomes” **11.** There is another types of Food insecurity – Seasonal Food insecurity which falls “between chronic and transitory food insecurity. It is similar to chronic food insecurity as it is usually predictable and follows a sequence of known events.

2- **Entitlement to Food** - In this section, the precise understanding of what is Food insecurity will travel through the most wretched times of History- to understand the Politics of Entitlement to Food- and how that acted as a podium for the lamentation of the masses.

a- The Bengal Famine of 1940- “The study, published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters was conducted by researchers from IIT-Gandhinagar, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), and the Indian Meteorological Department. They studied simulated soil conditions from 1870 to 2016 and concluded that while all the other famines during this period were caused by drought, the one in 1943 wasn’t” **12.** British policy was explicitly designed to ‘reduce the consumption of the poor’, as Keynes put it, to make resources available for

British and American troops, through a ‘forced transfer of purchasing power’ from ordinary people to the military. The austerity was imposed most harshly on the people of Bengal, who fell into extreme famine, while food supplies were appropriated and diverted for military use.”**13.** As Sen has stated in his thesis- “There was an abnormally higher withholding of rice stock by farmers and traders from the winter harvest of 1942-3; the normal release following the harvest did not take place... the prohibition of export of cereals in general and of rice in particular from each province, which had come into operation during 1942 with the consent of the government of India, prevented the price spiral in Bengal being broken by imports from the other provinces. The weakness of their position is also reflected in the fact that, while the famine killed millions, with agricultural laborers forming by far the largest group of those killed, Bengal was producing the largest rice crop in history in 1943.” **14.** It was never a shortage of food grain, but it was the loss of the rural people to command over food- the denial of their entitlement set- Individual access to Food.

b- **UKRAINE FAMINE OF 1932-** In 1932 and 1933, millions of Ukrainians were killed in the Holodomor, a man-made famine engineered by the Soviet government of Joseph Stalin. It was Stalin's belligerence against the Ukrainian peasantry and intellectual class- to stop their hullabaloo for Independence. He purposefully included the Collectivization of Agriculture in his Five Year Plan to give the Soviet state direct control over Ukraine's rich agricultural resources and allowed the state to control the supply of grain for export. The majority of rural Ukrainians, who were independent small-scale or subsistence farmers, resisted collectivization. They were forced to surrender their land, livestock and farming tools, and work on government collective farms (kolhosps) as laborers. “In August of 1932, the decree of Five Stalks of Grain stated that anyone, even a child, caught taking any produce from a collective field, could be shot or imprisoned for stealing ‘ socialist property.’. At the beginning of 1933, about 54,645 people were tried and sentenced; of those, 2,000 were executed. To escape death by starvation, people in the villages ate anything that was edible: grass, acorns, and even cats and dogs. As famine escalated, growing numbers of farmers left their villages in search of food outside of Ukraine. Directives sent by Stalin and Molotov (Stalin's closest collaborator) in January of 1933 prevented them from leaving, effectively sealing the borders of Ukraine. While Ukrainians were dying, the Soviet state extracted 4.27 million tons of grain from Ukraine in 1932, enough to feed at least 12 million people for an entire year” **15.**

c- **Rwanda Conflict 1992-** The huge food crisis that Rwanda faced in the 1990s was something that was espoused by the majority in Power against the survival of the Minority. The government deliberately diverted fund for military expenditure with the invasion of forces from Uganda in October 1990. “The mass intentional starvation that transpired from 1998-2002 struck the Tutsi majority Kivus region in the northeast of the country the hardest. The insecurity of this region made it extremely dangerous for aid groups to provide any humanitarian support or report on what was happening, but strong evidence suggests that the government was either deliberately using starvation as a weapon against Tutsis, which would result in a first-degree famine crime, or at the very least, pursuing policies that were the principle cause of the starving of thousands, a second-degree famine crime” **16.**



d- Southern Sudan 2017- Even though we cannot side out natural calamities as one of the reasons for Food insecurity in Sudan. But another pertinent cause for the down sliding graph of access to Food- is the conflict that has torn the Land. ” The famine of 2017 was widely regarded as “government made”: during the armed conflict between government forces loyal to President Salwa Kiir and the major military confrontation between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) factions erupted in mid-December 2013 and the conflict is still ongoing and having major impacts on the food security status of South Sudanese households (FAO/WFP, 2014). According to FAO/WFP, inter-communal and inter-ethnic conflicts during 2013 and high food prices have caused enormous impacts on the food security of households. Sudan People’s Liberation Army led by Riek Machar, government forces denied the people humanitarian relief and killed many of them” **17**. In South Sudan it is not possible to assess the right to food as a human right. “There is no legal instrument to oblige the state to recognize, respect, protect and promote the right to food as a human right” **18**. This has resulted in a situation whereby people lack in their endowment set itself, or its transformation into an entitlement set to ensure Food security. The condition of food security is not just a question of raising food production for availability and adequacy, but ensuring that the rural and urban poor do have the means to have access to food. South Sudan has failed to ensure that development of those endowments set.

3- **Right to Life breathe in Right to Food-** Natural Rights are those right which are given to us by the Nature and cannot be taken away by any custom, government or any organization- they are universal and inalienable in nature. Article 3 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states that – Everyone has the right to life and to live in freedom and safety.- which is the most fundamental to exercise all other rights that are available to any human being. It is here that Right to Food- as taken as an analogue to the attainment of the Right to Life. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 in its Article 11 stated- “ the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food... and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. Also recognized was: the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger” **19**. As far as India is concerned- The right to Food doesn’t come under any specific name of Fundamental Right- but is taken as an element of Right to Life- Article 21 of the fundamental right. There are two cases that need to refer in reference to India- 1- Chamoli Singh & Ors. vs. State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr- 1996- the Supreme Court stated that Right to Life doesn’t means satisfaction of animal needs. It stated “The right to live guaranteed in any civilized society implies the right to food, water, a decent environment, education, medical care, and shelter” **20**. 2- Kapila Hingorani vs. State of Bihar- 2003- The Supreme Court referred to Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and stated “Human beings have a right to food and that hunger is a violation of human rights. The Court held that lack of access to food violates the human right to food, and issued various directives to ensure that no starvation deaths occur.” **21**. Law of the Land is to facilitate the bridge between Food available and Food Access- if endowment set contains all the resources both tangible and intangible that are legally owned by a person- then the state act as a determinant in order guarantee the attainment of the Endowment set. Now comes the entitlement set- which is all the possible combination of goods and services that

( by production, exchange, or transfer) one can attain using the endowment set- but Legally- which means that the State has the responsibility to provide the freedom to attain or convert resources of an endowment set into goods and services of Entitlement set- which is measured by E mapping. Marx was never against the Industrialization process, but what he stated was the fact that inequality comes from the distribution itself. The distribution of Food- in terms of attaining access to Food is the imprinting factor.

Activities that can present the platform for Food Security are building self-reliance at the grassroots level, decentralization of the decision-making, government policies for crop variation, increasing agricultural land and stopping desertification, providing for Food distribution from the local level, new technology transfer, more direct consumption or direct entitlement set, reduce food waste, more productive water management and embark upon the environmental challenges to food security. But what is more crucial is to understand the fact that Right to Food is a Human Right and states should embark upon it as part of its obligation to Humanitarian Assistance. Sovereignty cannot be taken as a ground to shrug off the responsibility of feeding others outside the border- it is also an act of protection of Human Rights. If Guantanamo Bay detention camp is a Human Rights offense- so is diversification of Food relief from Yemen- “This conduct amounts to the stealing of food from the mouths of hungry people,” says WFP Executive Director David Beasley “ 22. The problem lies with the fact that giving aid is not the bridge between food availability and access. The end of this analysis comes with a part of Bernard Shaw's work on Man and Superman-

“Malone: My father died of starvation in Ireland in the black. Maybe you've heard of it.  
Violet:TheFamine?

Malone: No, the starvation. When a country is full of food, and exporting it, there can be no famine.”- **Bernard Shaw- Man and Superman.**

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