

Lokaratna

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An e -journal of Folklore Foundation ,  
Odisha ,Bhubaneswar

Lokaratna is the e-journal of the Folklore  
Foundation, Orissa, and Bhubaneswar. The

purpose of the journal is to explore the rich cultural tradition of Odisha for a wider readership. Any scholar across the globe interested to contribute on any aspect of folklore is welcome. This volume represent the articles on performing arts, gender , culture and education , religious trends and sacred centres of Odisha.

Lokaratna Vol III

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Lokaratna is the official journal of the Folklore Foundation, located in Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

Lokaratna is a peer-reviewed academic journal in Oriya and English.

The objectives of the journal are: To invite writers and scholars to contribute their valuable research papers on any aspect of Odishan Folklore either in English or in Oriya. They should be based on the theory and methodology of folklore research and on empirical studies with substantial field work. To publish seminal articles written by senior scholars on Odia Folklore, making them available from the original sources. To present lives of folklorists, outlining their substantial contribution to Folklore To publish book reviews, field work reports, descriptions of research projects and announcements for seminars and workshops. To present interviews with eminent folklorists in India and abroad. Any new idea that would enrich this folklore research journal is welcome.

Content in Oriya and English Request for online/manuscript submissions should be addressed to Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Editor in Chief, Lokaratna, Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar, and Odisha- 751014 in e-mail:<[mkmfolk@gmail.com](mailto:mkmfolk@gmail.com)> or to <[pasayatc@gmail.com](mailto:pasayatc@gmail.com)> or ([meher.hk@gmail.com](mailto:meher.hk@gmail.com))

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## From the Desk of Editor in Chief

Since last one year I have been extensively travelling across the country and experiencing the diversities of the vast land. We have so many ethnic groups, so many languages and so many religions and customs! We have sufficient ground to establish our self and separate identity in relation to the other , but still we feel one. This has been made possible due to our heritage and tradition that we have inherited from the generations. Being in my own village I am a global person.

Some of us love tradition and some are in transition. Some try to discard the old fashion and try to transform the whole world. Some of us like the tradition and don't accept the transition. But some of us try to synchronise the tradition with the transition and create a blend of the past with the present. But we survive with our respective thoughts, ideas and beliefs.

In 21 st century, a new trend has emerged to voice the marginalized. Melineum Development Goal ( MDG ) 2010 advocates for the marginalised and has suggested a lots of activities to be adopted in development sector. People on the other hand are uniting to fight the injustice, though it is fragmented, scattered, but they fight for their human rights. Globalisation has one language, one ambition and one culture. This is to create a space for those who can. It never stands for the cannot. Therefore the people who are in the side of cannot are raising their voices against this ideology. Consider how the developed countries are grappling with the human crisis as well as environmental crisis. They are also entangled with the masters of technology and try to resolve the issues and problems through technologies. Technologies can create a lot of things, but it cannot create a Jesus Christ or a Buddha. When heart become heartless there

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never laid the humanity. Human values are degenerated. Still we believe that this degeneration will invite regeneration.

Now the gap of local and global is reducing. A Dongria Kondh young man can fight against the multinationals in London and the most sophisticated scientist is also believe the tribal priest for his perseverance. Now indigenous are also cosmopolitan and now environmental scientists are also eager to adopt the sacred nature. Some

where the social knowledge is becoming more stronger than the experts and the nature of achieving the knowledge is becoming more human and experiential than the theoretical.

We as the practitioners of knowledge, who wish to learn from the most nonliterate are ready to understand the alchemy of nature from the age old man and women and want to perpetuate the human knowledge across the globe.

This volume, as usual, coming up with very rich articles related to epics, oral traditions, tribal knowledge, performing arts, traditional drama, oral tradition of death ,ritual-performance and on folk goddesses. This volume contains the articles of some Indian folklorists and Indologists. Very interestingly this volume captures the report of the SHARP International Conference 2010 held in Helsinki University , Finland which can be the best source of understanding the Indian context of Book Culture from the below. Another Report on Common Wealth Game 2010 held in India reported by Rasika Abrol of New Delhi. Tara Duglas, an English tribal art animator from England who propogated tribal art of India in England are two interesting work. This volume also contains the dance tradition of Orissa represented by Odishi dancer Madhulika Mahapatra in Karnataka to search the roots of Odissi dance. Book review section contains the review of one famous book Popular Culture written by H John Weaver published by Peter Lang, along with some other books published in Odisha. I am thankful to all the writers who have gladly contributed to this volume. Special thanks to Dr Harekrishna Meher and Dr Chitrasen Pasayat for their editorial assistance.

I am thankful to the Director, National Folklore Support Center, and Chennai for his support to get this volume published in NFSC web site for the wider readership. I am also thankful to Prof. Mark Turin of Cambridge University who has been kinds enough to link the web journal of Folklore Foundation that is released from NFSC, Chennai with the World Oral Literature Project. I hope that this solidarity would safeguard folklore scholarship across the globe.

Mahendra K  
Mishra

Folklore Foundation,



Bhubaneswar



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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF POET JAYADEVA'S GĪTA-GOVINDA

Dr. Harekrishna Meher

INTRODUCTION :

Lyric poems play a very significant role for development of language and literature. Whatever may be language; the poetic and musical expression of heartiest feelings reveals the inner sense of life and gladdens the lovers of music, art and literature. Sanskrit literature is prosperous with the tradition of lyric poems. In comparison to prose, Gīti or Song has some distinct attractive and appealing feature that directly touches the core of the heart of connoisseurs. The lyrical flow of Sanskrit composition has its origin from the Vedic literature, especially Sāma-Veda. In Classical Sanskrit Literature, starting from 'Meghadūta kāvya' of Kālidāsa, the lyric poems enjoy a prominent position in the pen of some eminent poets. Compositions such as 'Moha-Mudgara' and 'Bhaja-Govindam' of Ādi Śāṅkarāchārya enhance importance and beauty of Sanskrit lyric tradition with their melodious structure.

To the arena of lyric poetry, Poet Jayadeva of twelfth-century A.D. has unique contribution in his nectar-showing pen. Jayadeva is one among the distinguished poets of Odisha, who has been immortal for his extraordinary and unique Sanskrit work. Born in the village Kenduvilva on the bank of River Prāchī, Jayadeva, a great devotee of Lord Jagannātha and the loving husband of Padmāvatī, composed such a

marvellous kāvya that delights the people even in the present age with its literary loveliness and musical splendour.

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Gīta-Govinda of Poet Jayadeva is a great creation depicting the eternal love-story of Rādhā and Krishna. Conglomeration of Sāhitya, Saṅgīta and Kalā (literature, music and art) are simultaneously preserved in this kāvya. As enumerated in the scriptures, Saṅgīta consists of Nritya, Gīta and Vādyā (Dance, Song and Musical Sound).

Odissi Dance and Odissi Saṅgīta have intimate and inevitable relationship with Gīta-Govinda kāvya. Regarding own lyric poem, the poet himself writes:

“Yad gāndharva-kalāsu kauśalamanudhyānam cha yad vaish  
avam,

Yachchhriṅgāra-viveka-tattvamapi yat kāvyeshu līlāyitam  
/

Tat sarvam Jayadeva-pa ita-kaveh Krish aika-tānātmanah,

Sānandāh pariśodhayantu sudhiyah Śrī-Gīta-Govindatah // ” (GG. XII / 12).

[Whatever musical excellence in Gāndharva  
arts,

Whatever devotional concentration of the

Vaishnavites,

Whatever relish of erotic sentiment for the  
connoisseurs,

Whatever playfully delineated in the literary  
compositions,

All those things the wise may delightfully  
purify

learning from the beautiful kāvya Gita-  
Govinda

written by the Pandit-Poet  
Jayadeva,

whose mind is ever-engrossed in Krishna  
alone.]

\*(All English Translations of Sanskrit Verses quoted in this article are by the  
author Dr. Harekrishna Meher)

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Jayadeva's Gīta-Govinda forms a masterpiece of lyrical composition that has been bestowing literary taste and aesthetic pleasure captivating ears and minds of the Sanskrit-lovers all around the world. Thoughts of the Vaishnavites, excellence of the devotees in musical arts and relish of erotic sentiment for the lovers of literature – all these are found intermingled in this kāvya. In the present article, endeavours have been made to throw lights on some literary aspects of this remarkable work in a critical perspective.

DEPICTION OF NATURE :

Nature is inevitably associated with every part of human life. From the Vedic literature till today's literary compositions, human behaviour is attributed to Nature and Nature's behaviour is attributed to the human beings. Every poet, somehow or other, is inclined to delineate Nature, Prakriti, in own style and presentation. In Jayadeva's work, Nature finds a place of special importance and recognition.

In the very beginning of Gīta-Govinda, Nature is seen vividly delineated. Main theme of this kāvya is the erotic stories of Lord Krishna and Rādhā. Jayadeva likes to indicate the matter at the outset within the description of Nature in the first verse :

“Meghair meduramambaram vana-bhuvah śyāmāstamāla-  
drumair

Naktam bhīrurayam tvameva tadimam Rādhe ! griham prāpaya  
/

Ittham Nanda-nideśataśchalitayoh pratyadhva-kuñja-  
drumam

Rādhā-Mādhavayor jayanti Yamunā-kūle rahah kelayah // ” (GG. I / 1).

[The sky is encompassed by  
clouds.

With the hue of Tamāla  
trees,

darksome appear the sites of  
woods.

This dear  
Kāhnā

feels very timid at  
night.

O Rādhā ! You therefore  
please

accompany him to reach home  
aright.'

Thus by the words of King  
Nanda,

stepped ahead both Rādhā and  
Mādhava

towards the tree of bowers on the  
way.

Glory to their plays of love, secret and  
gay,

on the bank of river  
Yamunā.]

Poet Jayadeva announces the word 'Megha' (Cloud) which is a prime feature of Nature and simile of Lord Krishna who is well-known as 'Ghana-Śyāma', darkish as cloud. In the first śloka of the kāvya, it is found that several facets of Nature such as cloud, sky, Tamāla trees, night and Yamunā river have been illustrated. Moreover, all these aspects are blackish by nature and very similar to the dark-bodied Krishna. It may be undoubtedly stated that the poet has consciously used these aspects of Nature to beautifully enhance the literary value as well as the glory of Krishna who is akin to them. Further the depiction of darkness is amalgamated with the projection of pleasurable play of Rādhā and Krishna. Rādhā is internally understood as 'Chit Śakti', the Divine Power of Knowledge and Consciousness in the form of Light that dispels the murky veil of ignorance in the heart of the mundane beings.

Contextual descriptions of cloud, sky, trees such as Tamāla and creepers such as Lavaṅga, gentle zephyr, cuckoos, mango-blossoms, spring season, Moon, darkness, ocean and the like facets of Nature are found in a very impressive manner.

Among various aspects of Nature, Flower is depicted as a prime symbol of beauty and love in literary works of many poets. Jayadeva is not an exception to this matter. In Gīta-Govinda, a beautiful Flowery Figure of Rādhā has been revealed by her lover Krishna in a verse of Canto-X :

“Bandhūka-dyuti-bāndhavo’yamadharah snigdho Madhūkachchhvir

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Ga aś Cha i ! chakāsti nīla-Nalina-śrī-mochanam lochanam /

Nāsābhyeti Tila-prasūna-padavīm Kundābha-danti Priye

!

Prāyas tvan-mukha-sevayā vijayate viśvam sa Pushpāyudhah // ” (GG. X / 6).

In this verse, Rādhā’s limbs have been said to have acquired the loveliness of several flowers. Addressing his beloved with sweet loving words, Krishna states:

[These lips of thine really bear  
similarity

with the beauty of flower  
Bandhūka.

O Self-esteemed  
Lady !

Thy comely cheeks compile the lustres of  
Madhūka.

Manifesting the  
beauty

of blue lotuses, thy eyes are very  
lovely.

The stature of Tila flower, thy nose  
bears.

Thy teeth, O My Dear  
!

spread the radiance of Kunda  
flower.

Serving thy fine face with these five  
flowers,

the Flower-shafted Love-god  
Cupid

conquers the entire universe  
indeed.]

Such expression of floral ornamentation is really remarkable and worth-mentioning. Further, descriptions of Mādhavī creeper, Varu a tree, Nāgakeśara flower, Kimśuka (Palāśa) flower, Bakula flower, Vanamālikā, Atimuktaka creeper, Mango tree, Betasa creeper-bower, lotus, Kuravaka flower and the like are contextually observed in this kāvya and these matters reflect an intimate relationship with Nature. Portrayal of Nature with an ecological perspective can also be marked in discussion of several figures of speech, sentiment and literary metres.

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ALLITERATION AND ALAŅKĀRAS :

A popular verse found in Classical Sanskrit literature about the significance of some

epical qualities runs thus :

“Upamā Kālidāsasya Bhāraverartha-gauravam  
/

Naishadhe pada-lālityam Māghe santi trayo gu āh //”

In Sanskrit Literature, appreciably special significance is observed in the Simile of Kālidāsa, Gravity of Meaning of Bhāravi and Grace of Diction of Śrīharsha, the author of Naishadha Mahākāvya, and the combination of these three epical attributes is seen in Māgha-kāvya which is known as Śīsupālavadhā-kāvya written by Māgha. Such remarks are maintained in case of Mahākāvya or epic poems. But in case of Gīti-kāvya or Lyric poem, Pada-Lālitya or Grace of Diction reigns supreme in the excellent composition of Jayadeva’s Gīta-Govinda. The poet himself speaks of the special qualities of his own writing in the following lines:

Madhura-komala-kānta-  
padāvalīm,

Śri u tadā Jayadeva-Sarasvatīm //” (GG. I /  
3).

Gīta-Govinda kāvya is endowed with sweet, soft and beautiful words. Musical affluence, serenity, rhythmic eloquence, lucidity, emotional touch and sweetness of meaning are the fine features of this lyric poem. Considering all these matters, it may not be inappropriate to proclaim: “Govinde Pada-Lālityam.”

Grace of diction (Pada-Lālitya) is mostly found in Alaṅkāras, the Figures of speech such as Anuprāsa and Yamaka. If a consonant is used repeatedly, it forms Anuprāsa, alliteration (1). If certain letters having consonants and vowels are repeated serially with the same consonants and vowels, Yamaka Alaṅkāra (2) is maintained there. Viśvanātha Kavirāja in Chapter-X of his ‘Sāhitya-Darpa a’ has thrown much light on numerous



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Alańkāras along with the related matters. Further, he has quoted a verse (Unmilan-Madhu-Gandha.. etc.) from Jayadeva's poem as an appropriate example Vrittyanuprāsa, a division of Anuprāsa Alańkāra.

Gīta-Govinda is a treasure-trove of lyrical jewels. In every line of this kāvya, Alliteration with end-rhymes in the songs is exquisite with definite designs. Pada-Lāliya is seen abundantly with melodiously sweet, delicate and beautiful words. Some verses are being presented here as instances. In description of Spring season, very popular lines are:

“Lalita-lavańga-latā-pariśīlana-komala-malaya-samīre /

Madhukara-nikara-karambita-kokila-kūjjita-kuńja-ku īre //

Viharati Harirīha sarasa-vasante /

Nrityati yuvati-janena samam sakhi ! virahi-janasya durante // ” (GG. I / 3/1 ).

[Here appears the pleasurable  
Spring,

wherein the delicate  
zephyr

of Malaya  
mountain

gently blows having loving  
embrace

of the graceful Lavańga  
creeper

and wherein the cottage of bowers  
is

filled with the sweet cooing of  
cuckoos

mingled with the humming of black-  
bees.

O Dear Friend ! Hari enjoys  
wandering

and dances with the young  
maidens

in this season which is unbearably  
afflicting

to the couple separated from each  
other.]

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Contextually in other place, depiction of Spring is found in the following  
verse :

“Unmīlan-madhu-gandha-lubdha-madhupa-vyādhūta-chūtaṅkura-

krī at-kokila-kākalī-kalakalair udgīr a-kar a-jvarāh /

Nīyante pathikaih katham kathamapi dhyānāvadhāna-ksha  
a-

prāpta-prā a-samā-samāgama-rasollāsairamī vāsarāh // ” (GG. I / 9).

[During the days of Spring  
season,

ears of the  
wayfarers

painfully feel very  
feverish

by the noisy sound of cooing of  
cuckoos

sporting in the mango-  
blossoms

that slowly swing by the black  
bees

craving for the emerging sweet  
aroma.

These vernal days are  
anyhow

passed with  
difficulties

by the lonely  
wayfarers

who in cheerful sentiments enjoy  
union

with their life-like  
maidens

attained in some moments of concentration  
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within their mental  
sphere.]

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In the two verses quoted above, the consonants 'm', 'dh', 'k', 'r', 'l', 'n', 'th', 'p', 's', 'm' etc. have been used repeatedly and as such Alliteration is distinctly seen. Yamaka is also observed with the word 'kara' found in the words 'madhukara', 'nikara' and 'karambita'. Also with the word 'samā' found in the words 'Prā a-samā-samāgama', Yamaka Alańkāra is seen clearly.

In the above-mentioned two verses, the delineation of Spring season is supported with cuckoos, black bees, mango-blossoms, Lavańga creepers, gentle zephyr, delicate pleasure-bowers and the like. So with these aspects, a nice portrayal of Nature is conspicuously obtained along with the human feelings and sentiment of 'Śrińgāra'.

Aspects of Nature such as cloud, mountain, Moon and Chakora bird are seen exemplified in a song of Canto-I. Here Upamā, Rūpaka and Anuprāsa Alańkāras are clearly noticed in the context of praise and worship of Lord Vish u. Some lines of the lovely song addressed to Hari appear thus :

“Abhinava-Jaladhara-sundara ! Dhrita-Mandara e /

Śrī-mukha-Chandra-Chakora ! Jaya Jaya Deva Hare ! //” (GG. 1 / 2 / 7).

[O Hari ! Eradicator of all evils !

Handsome like a newly appeared  
Cloud !

O Holder of Mandara mountain  
!

O Chakora Bird for the

Moon

of Goddess Lakshmī's  
face !

Victory to Thy Supreme  
Self.]

Upamā (3) Alańkāra is observed here, because Hari has similarity with comely darkish Cloud (Jaladhara) in appearance. Cloud is 'Upamāna' and Hari is 'Upameya'.

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Further Rūpaka Alańkāra is found here, while Hari is described as a Chakora Bird and Lakshmī's Face as the Moon. In this case of Rūpaka (4), Upamāna is directly placed in Upameya with 'abheda āropa'. Besides, in the wording of this sweet song, repetition of consonants such as 'n', 'd', 'r' and 'ch' etc. manifests the sweet alliterative design that conspicuously confirms Anuprāsa Alańkāra. Along with these figures of speech, Hari's hearty love for Lakshmī is indicated in the song. In the line "Jaya Jaya Deva Hare" the name of Poet Jayadeva is hidden and it is understood with a pun.

In another context, a fine illustration of Nature is observed. Just after the arrival of night, Moon-rise is so beautifully and attractively presented in graceful words of the poet that the verse remains ever-ringing in the ears. The concerned verse appears thus:

"Atrāntare cha kula ā-kula-vartma-pāta-

Sañjāta-pātaka iva sphu a-lāñchhana-śrīh  
/

Vrindāvanāntaramadīpayadamśu-  
jālair

Dik-sundarī-vadana-chandana-bindurinduh // ” (GG. VII / 1).

[By this  
time,

as a big dot of sandal  
paste

on the forehead of the Direction-  
Damsel,

Moon, spreading own rays,  
illuminated

the inner area of  
Vrindāvana.

He had borne the beauty of a distinct  
stain

as if caused by sin due to own  
appearance

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on the path of the adulterous  
maidens.]

A charming depiction of Moon is found here. Further, the figures of speech, namely

Anuprāsa, Yamaka, Utprekshā, Kāvyaśiṅga and Rūpaka are marked beautifully intertwined in the present verse.

In the first and second lines, the consonants 't', 'r', 'p', 's' have been repeatedly used and so form Anuprāsa. Also the letters 'ñja' and 'ñcha' having same 'cha' varga of alphabet come under the purview of Anuprāsa. In the third line also, consonants 'v', 'n', 'd' are found repeated and thus form Alliteration. In the fourth line, very sweet words are used having the consonants 'n', 'd' and 'r'. So a melodious feature of the verse is automatically maintained. In the first line, the word 'kula' has been used twice, one cut off from the word 'kulatā' and another the total word 'kula'. Thus this 'kula' maintained twice serially having the letters that are consonant 'k', vowel 'u', consonant 'l' and vowel 'a' reveals Yamaka Alaṅkāra.

Further the Moon is personified and is depicted as a fellow who has as if acquired sin. So the word 'iva' though normally meant for Upamā (simile), here speaks of Utprekshā (5) where 'asambhava-kalpanā' is maintained. The reason of acquiring sin is that Moon is inimical causing harm or obstacle to the unchaste women, who are inclined to meet their lovers secretly in the deep darkness of night. But Moon with own rays discards the darkness on their path and exposing them, appears as an impediment to their secret visit to the lovers and hence bears a clear stain on his body as a mark of that sin. Here Kāvyaśiṅga Alaṅkāra (6) is observed, since the cause of the intended meaning (sin) has been mentioned.

Besides, Rūpaka Alaṅkāra is clearly found here, because Direction (Dik) is depicted as a beautiful dame and Moon is directly delineated to be a big dot of sandal paste (chandana-bindu) on her forehead. In both the cases of Direction and Moon, metaphor has been given and not simile. As such all these Alaṅkāras inserted collectively form 'Saṅkara' and 'Samsrishi' Alaṅkāra (7), as each of them mingled in the said verse can be traced. Such are some examples. Further several figures of speech can be determined in different contexts. All such applications of epical attributes display the dexterity of the poet in this Gīti-kāvya.

## POETIC STYLE AND LITERARY METRES:

Gīta-Govinda comprises twelve Cantos (Sargas), twenty-four Songs and seventy-two

Ślokas. All the Sargas are designed with various melodious Rāgas or Tunes such as Mālava, Gurjarī, Vasanta, Rāmakerī, Deśa, Gu akarī, Gau a-Mālava, Kar ā aka, Barādī, Deśa-Barādī, Bhairavī, Vibhāsa etc. along with different (Tāla) musical modes such as Rūpaka, Yati, Ekatālī, Pratima ha, Ā va etc. having Ash apadīs. By the poet, the twelve cantos have been named as 'Sāmoda-Dāmodara' (Canto-I), 'Akleśa-Keśava' (Canto-II), 'Mugdha-Madhusūdana' (Canto-III), 'Snigdha-Mādhava' (Canto-IV), 'Sākāñksha-Pu darīkāksha' (Canto-V), 'Sotka ha-Vaiku ha' (Canto-VI), 'Nāgara-Nārāya a' (Canto-VII), 'Vilakshya-Lakshmīpati' (Canto-VIII), 'Mugdha-Mukunda' (Canto-IX), 'Chatura-Chaturbhujā' (Canto-X), 'Sānanda-Govinda' (Canto-XI) and 'Suprīta-Pītāmbara' (Canto-XII). Some slight variations of names are seen in different editions of this book. From the name or heading of each canto, one can find the concerned topic along with alliteration bearing sweet, graceful and captivating letters.

'Vaidarbhī Rīti is observed in this sweet lyrical composition of Jayadeva. Having long Samāsas 'Gaudī' Rīti is also found intermingled. Profusion of 'Prasāda' and 'Mādhurya' Gu as delights the heart of the readers and listeners (8). Here the style of presentation bears an amicable amalgamation of dramatic dignity and epical approach. The poet has used various Rāgas in 'mātrā-metre'. In the midst, some traditional metres 'var a-chhandas' are found inserted. Therefore this Gītikāvya Gīta-Govinda is a wonderful and beautiful blend of both kinds of metres 'var a-chhanda' and 'mātrā- chhanda', also of dramatic and lyrical presentations. The Var a-chhandas used in this kāvya are Śardūla-Vikrī itam, Vasanta-Tilakā, Druta-Vilambita, Vamsastha, Śikhari ī, Prithvī, Sragdharā, Upendravajrā, Mālinī, Hari ī, Pushpitāgrā and Anush up (9). The poet has used mātrā-chhanda mainly 'Āryā' and several lyrical chhandas in his innovation and musical muse. Poring upon the arrangement of Sargas, use of traditional Chhandas, Rasas and depiction of picturesque view of Nature etc., Gīta-Govinda, though a unique Gītikāvya in its genre, can be included in the category of Mahākāvya also.

Western scholars have given different opinions about the design of Gīta-Govinda kāvya. In this regard, A.B. Keith in his book 'A History of Sanskrit Literature' refers to



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some scholars. William Jones calls Gīta-Govinda as a little pastoral drama, Lassen styles it as a lyric drama, Schroeder regards it as a refined Yātrā. Pischel and Levi place it in the category between song and drama. Further Pischel styles it as a melodrama (10).

In Indian tradition, it is marked that Jayadeva has combined both traditional chhandas and lyrical tunes along with a dramatic structure. So amalgamation of these three qualities establishes this kāvya as a wonderful literary creation. As the lyrical melodious tune dominates in this kāvya, modern scholars like Abhiraja Rajendra Mishra (11) endeavour to describe it as the most ancient rāga-kāvya from which the tradition of rāga-kāvya has emerged. Hence deliberating on various views, it may be opined that Gīta-Govinda is a unique Gīti-kāvya or Rāga-kāvya with its own peerless design.

Sweetness and gravity of meaning are indeed appreciable in a verse, where Rādhā is depicted as an embodiment of Rasas present in the earthly region. Here the divine damsels namely, Madālasā, Indumatī, Manoramā, Rambhā, Kalāvatī and Chitralkhā are mentioned and understood with a double meaning. Ślesha Alaṅkāra (Pun) is found there where certain word expresses more than one meaning (12). The word 'Prithvī' means 'Earth' and it is also mentioned through Mudrālaṅkāra that indicates 'Prithvī' chhanda in the concerned verse which runs as follows :

“Driśau tava Madālase vadanam  
Indumatyāspadam,

Gatir jana-Manoramā vidhuta-Rambham ūru-dvayam  
/

Ratis tava Kalāvatī ruchira-Chitralkhe bhruvā-

Vaho vibudha-yauvatam vahasi tanvi ! Prithvī-gatā // ” (GG. X / 7).

[Languid are thy eyes with intoxication  
(Madālasā).

Effulgent is thy face with charming moonbeam  
(Indumatī).

Thy gait gladdens mind of all the beings  
(Manoramā).

Thy thighs form the tremulous plantain tree  
(Rambhā).

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Embellished with art is thy erotic play  
(Kalāvatī).

Thy brows have lovely lines of painting  
(Chitralkhā).

O Slim-limbed beloved lady  
!

Ah, present on  
earth,

You bear the juvenile exuberance of  
nymphs

who adorn the dominion of  
gods.]

Contextually this verse is told by Krishna to Rādhā. Here enchanting is the

presentation of pun so sweetly and wittfully inserted in the concerned verse composed in 'Prithvī' chhanda. This metre consists of four steps having seventeen letters in each with serial arrangements of five ga as namely, 'ja', 'sa', 'ja', 'sa', 'ya' along with one letter of short vowel and one letter of long vowel. It has two pauses, one in eighth letter and another in last letter of the step (13).

Similarly in another place, an example of Var a-chhanda 'Upendravajrā' appears very charming and appealing in the context of Rādhā's pangs of separation. A maiden-friend of Rādhā contextually tells Krishna in the concerned verse as follows :

"Smarāturām Daivata-vaidyā-hridyā !

Tvadaṅga-saṅgāmṛita-mātra-sādhyām  
/

Vimukta-bādhām kurushe na  
Rādhām

Upendra ! vajrādapi dāru o'si // " ( GG. IV / 4).

[Ye noble self like the divine doctor  
!

All the illness of Cupid-stricken  
Rādhā

can be cured very  
well

only by the  
ambrosia

of your loving  
embrace.

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If you do not make  
her

free from this grief so  
far,

O Dear Upendra  
!

Really very  
cruel

more than the thunderbolt you  
are.]

This verse is composed in 'Upendravajrā' metre which consists of four steps having eleven letters in each with serial arrangements of three ga as namely, 'ja', 'ta', 'ja' along with two letters of long vowel. It has one pause in the last letter of the step (14). Here the poet mentions the name 'Upendravajrā' that with a pun implies the traditional Sanskrit metre, along with the desired theme. Vyatireka Alankāra (15) is found here, because Krishna (Upameya) is regarded as a cruel person more than the thunderbolt (Upamāna).

Again a chhanda named 'Pushpitāgrā' is observed in Mudrālañkāra in a verse where Rādhā's maiden-friend speaks to Krishna :

“ Ksha amapi virahah purā na sehe

Nayana-nimīlana-khinnayā yayā te /

Śvasiti kathamasau rasāla-  
śākhām

Chira-virahe a vilokya Pushpitāgrām // ” (GG. IV / 6).

[O Krishna !

In the days by-  
gone,

she was unable to endure your  
separation,

by the grief caused by closing of  
eyes,

and now how can she tolerate having  
sighs

the long  
estrangement,

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III

looking at the branch of mango  
tree

having blossoms at the top  
? ]

The said verse is written in 'Pushpitāgrā' chhanda which consists of four steps. In first and third steps, it has twelve letters each having serial arrangement of four ga as namely, 'na', 'na', 'ra' and 'ya'. In second and fourth steps, it bears thirteen letters each with serial arrangement of four ga as namely, 'na', 'ja', 'ja', 'ra' and one letter having long vowel (16). The poet has directly used the word 'Pushpitāgrā' (having blossoms at the top) as an adjective of mango-branch, and with a pun, it indicates the concerned Sanskrit metre.

In another place, name of Sanskrit metre 'Śārdūla-Vikrī itam' is seen used with a pun. Contextually Rādhā's lady-companion intimates Krishna about the bewildered condition of Rādhā. The verse runs thus:

“Āvāso vipināyate priyasakhī-mālāpi  
jālāyate,

Tāpo’pi śvasitena dāva-dahana-jvālā-  
kalāpāyate /

Sāpi tvad-virahe a hanta hari ī-rūpāyate hā katham,

Kandarpo’pi Yamāyate viracayañchhārdūla-vikrī itam // ” (GG. IV / 2).

[O Krishna ! Owing to pangs of  
separation,

for Rādhā, her home seems to be a  
forest.

The group of her dear maiden-  
friends

appears as a trapping  
net.

With heavy sighs, the heat of  
separation

turns to be a vast forest-  
conflagration.

It is a matter of severe  
woe

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III

that because of thy  
separation,

Oh, how she appears as a

doe,

and Love-god Cupid for  
her,

has become Yama, the Lord of  
Death,

displaying the activities of a fierce  
tiger.]

The word 'Śārdūla-Vikrī ita' literally means 'Playful gait of tiger', also is a name of Sanskrit metre which comprises four steps bearing nineteen letters in each with serial arrangements of six ga as namely, 'ma', 'sa', 'ja', 'sa', 'ta', 'ta' along with one letter of long vowel. It has two pauses, first in twelfth letter and second in the last letter of each step (17). Composing the verse in this metre, the poet has befittingly utilized both the meanings with a literary pun. Though several verses of this kāvya have been composed in this metre, the poet has distinctly illustrated this name in this context once only.

In another context, bearing the pangs of separation, Rādhā tells before her maiden-friend to make necessary steps for union with her lover Krishna. The verse describes the anxiousness of Rādhā for whom the mango-blossoms and other aspects of Nature are not pleasurable. The concerned verse appears thus:

“Durāloka-stoka-stavaka-navakāśoka-  
latikā-

Vikāśah kāsāropavana-pavano'pi vyathayati  
/

Api bhrāmyad-bhriṅgī-ra ita-rama tīyā na mukula-

Prasūtiśchūtānām Sakhi ! Śikhari tīyam sukhayati // ” (GG. II / 4).

[O My Friend ! Here

florescence of new Asoka  
creeper

bearing few bunches of  
flowers

is not at all pleasurable to my  
eyes

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and causes distress  
immense.

Breeze of pleasure-grove beside  
pond

gives me pains  
further.

This budding of mango-blossoms with sharp  
tips,

though charming with the humming of black-  
bees

roving over them, does not give me a gleeful  
sense.]

In this verse, the word 'Śikhari ī' literally means 'Something (feminine) with sharp tip'. Here it is an adjective of 'Mukula-Prasūtiḥ', budding of blossoms. Besides, 'Sikharini' is a name of Sanskrit metre that comprises four steps, having seventeen letters in each, with serial arrangements of five ga as namely, 'ya', 'ma', 'na', 'sa' and 'bha', along with one short-vowelled letter and one letter of long vowel. It has two pauses, first in sixth letter and second in the last letter of each step (18). The poet has composed the concerned verse in Śikhari ī metre with a pun appropriate to the context.



Thus arrangement of Sanskrit words in this verse reveals figures of speech such as Anuprāsa, Yamaka and Ślesha with poetic wit and literary dexterity.

## BLEND OF EROS AND DEVOTION :

'Rasa' is regarded as the form of Brahman. The Upanishadic statement "Raso vai sah" succinctly manifests the Supreme Self as Blissful Relish. In rhetorical works, Rasa has been explained as 'Brahmāsvāda-Sahodara' by Viśvanātha Kavirāja (19). Life and literature, both are inevitably interrelated with each other. The prime sentiment of life of mundane beings is Eros. Beauty, attraction, union and creation are the series of the artistic world. Rati, erotic pleasure, is the main instinct of all the creatures of the world. Therefore 'Śriṅgāra' is widely known as 'Ādi Rasa', the first sentiment enumerated in literature.

In most of the bodies of Indian temples, erotic designs are generally noticed, even if devotees having a heart filled with devotion to gods and goddesses enter into the sites. Such designs or depictions though externally carry some unpalatable taste in contrast with inner devotional relish, yet they symbolize duality and creation of the world with a

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touch of aesthetic sense in the form of Eros. Mahābhārata and other various epical compositions contextually exhibit numerous verses of erotic pleasures. Such delineations may be construed as poetic lapses in one sense, but intrinsically they portray the inevitable experiences of human life filled with feelings and emotions.

Rasa (Sentiment) is the prime phenomenon in drama and kāvya. Bharata-Muni in his Nā ya-Śāstra has defined the relish of Rasa in the Sūtra: 'Vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhichāri- samyogād Rasa-nishpattih' (20). Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhichārī Bhāvas unitedly manifest the relish of a Rasa. All these can be observed in various contexts of description of Eros and other sentiments. The noted rhetorician Viśvanātha Kavirāja has rightly discussed all these matters in his work. Every Rasa has a 'Sthāyi-

Bhāva', a permanent feeling or emotion. Vibhāva is of two kinds, Ālambana and Uddīpana. Both Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas combinedly reveal the previously generated Sthāyi-Bhāva. In every Rasa, Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas remain separately and these two are external cause of relish of Rasa, while Sthāyi-Bhāva is the main internal cause. Manifestation of Sthāyi-Bhāva is regarded as Rasa. Anubhāva is the factor that makes a person externally experience the internally aroused Sthāyi-Bhāva. Vyabhichāri-Bhāva, also known as 'Sañchāri-Bhāva', helps to nourish the Sthāyi-Bhāva already boosted up and makes it suitable for relish. Sañchāri- Bhāvas are of thirty-three kinds, namely Nirveda, Āvega, Dainya, Śrama, Mada, Jadatā, Ugratā, Moha, Vivodha, Svapna, Apasmāra, Garva, Mara a, Alasatā, Amarsha, Nidrā, Avahitthā, Autsukya, Unmāda, Śańkā, Smriti, Mati, Vyādhi, Santrāsa, Lajjā, Harsha, Asūyā, Vishāda, Dhriti, Chapalatā, Glāni, Chintā and Vitarka. (21)

For example, Rati (Love) is 'Sthāyi-Bhāva' of Eros. If a feeling of love (rati) arises in the minds of a man and a woman by seeing each other, both the persons are Ālambana Vibhāva, as they are resort or shelter (Ālambana) of love. Both are the causes of emergence of love. The factors that boost up or expand Rati are 'Uddīpana Vibhāva' such as moonlight, pleasure-garden, lonely place, sandal, fragrance of flowers, cooing of cuckoo, humming of black-bees, attractive scenery and so on. Both Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas combinedly reveal the previously aroused Rati. Sthāyi-Bhāva such as Rati, already aroused in the hearts of the lover and the beloved through Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas, comes out or becomes manifested by Anubhāva which is the effect of Sthāyi-Bhāva. Through acting in speech or limbs, Anubhāva makes a person externally experience the internal manifestation of Sthāyi-Bhāva. Every Rasa has separate Anubhāvas. For instance, Anubhāvas of Rati, in case of union, comprise physical expressions such as sweet smile, amorous glances, kisses, moving of brows, maddening gestures etc. along with oral expressions such as speaking sweet words and the like.

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Lajjā, Harsha and Asūyā etc. are Sañchāri-Bhāvas in this regard. Passing through all these Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhichārī Bhāvas, Sthāyi-Bhāva Rati turns into 'Śrińgāra' Rasa.

‘Śrīngāra’, Eros is the prevailing sentiment of Gīta-Govinda kāvya. Both ‘Vipralambha’ (Love-in-Separation) and ‘Sambhoga’ (Love-in-Union) Śrīngāra have been elaborated in the entire lyrical composition. Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhichārī Bhāvas are observed in different contexts of erotic descriptions. According to Viśvanātha Kavirāja, without feeling of separation, happiness or excellence of pleasurable union cannot be experienced. He opines : “Na vinā vipralambhena sambhogah push im aśnute” (22). During love, if there is no separation, love-in-union does not acquire proper nourishment. Hence for excellence and strong effect in Sambhoga, Vipralambha has been elucidated as an essential phenomenon in human life.

In the context of sending message by the banished Yaksha separated from his beloved wife, Poet Kālidāsa in his famous gītikāvya Meghadūta says :

“Snehānāhuh kimapi virahe dhvamsinaste tvabhogād  
/

Ish e vastunyupachita-rasāh prema-rāśībhavanti // ”  
(23).

[Some opine that  
anyhow

during the gap of  
separation,

affections slowly  
deteriorate.

But the real thing is  
that

due to lack of  
enjoyment,

relish of affections becomes  
enhanced,

and the affections turn into accumulated

love

immensely enjoyable at the time of union.]

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In the pen of Jayadeva, Rādhā is contextually described as a 'Virahi ī Nāyikā' and finally she enjoys union with her eternal lover Krishna. Here Krishna is presented as 'Dhīrodātta Nāyaka'. He enjoys pleasure with several Gopī damsels. Rādhā is 'Parakīyā Nāyikā'. She has been contextually described as Virahotka hitā, Kha itā, Kalahāntarītā, Abhisārikā, Vāsaka-Sajjā and Svādhīna-Bharttrikā Nāyikā. In the sensuous scenario of love, Rādhā is a lovely murmuring effulgent fountain and Krishna is the vast ocean of love. Both the lives attain supreme bliss in union only. Vīśvanātha Kavirāja in Chapter-III of his 'Sāhitya-Darpa a' has elaborately discussed about several divisions and qualities of Nāyaka and Nāyikā (24).

ādhā in an inner sense is deemed as Individual Self (Jīvātmā) and Krishna as the Supreme Self (Paramātmā). The external design of eroticism gives an internal meaning of philosophical phenomenon. Rādhā is considered as 'Prakriti' (Primordial Matter), while Krishna is regarded as 'Purusha' (Supreme Being). Union of Jīvātmā with Paramātmā, or of Prakriti with Purusha is understood here.

Poet Jayadeva clearly indicates the main theme of amorous pleasures of Śrī (Rādhā) and Vāsudeva (Krishna) in the verse :

“Śrī-Vāsudeva-rati-keli-kathā-  
sametam

Etam karoti Jayadeva-kavīh prabandham // ” (GG. I / 2  
).

[Poet Jayadeva is  
composing

this literary work with the  
stories

of erotic  
dalliances

done by Rādhā and  
Krishna.]

In Sanskrit literature, 'prabandha' is a general term for kāvya or gīta or literary composition. Gīta-Govinda is not simply the descriptive work of erotic pleasure of

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Rādhā-Krishna. Here in inner perspective, humanistic, philosophical and spiritual or theistic trends of life are also observed.

Traditionally several verses of Gīta-Govinda are melodiously sung in the temple of Lord Jagannātha. In almost all the cantos of Gīta-Govinda, for Lord Krishna, the poet has befittingly used the word "Mādhava" which means Lakshmī's husband. ('Mā' means 'Goddess Lakshmī' and 'Dhava' means 'Husband'). Further, the poet has portrayed Krishna as the source of all the ten incarnations of God in some other context :

"Vedānuddharate jaganti vahate  
bhūgolamudvibhrate,

Daityam dārayate Balim chhalayate kshatra-kshayam kurvate  
/

Paulastyam jayate halam kalayate kāru  
yamātanvate,

Mlechchhān mūrchchhayate dasākṛiti-kṛite Krish āya tubhyam namah // ” (GG. I / 5).

[My salutations to Thyself, Krishna, the Supreme  
Lord,

having ten types of bodily form as  
incarnations;

The Lord, who protected Vedas, the Divine  
Wisdom,

in the incarnation of  
Fish;

Who bore all the worlds in the incarnation of  
Turtle;

Who lifted up the circle of earth in the incarnation of  
Boar;

Who tore up the demon Hira  
yakaśipu

in the incarnation of Man-  
Lion;

Who deceived King Bali in the incarnation of  
Dwarf;

Who destroyed the  
Kshatriyas

in the incarnation of  
Paraśurāma;

Who conquered Rāva a in the incarnation of  
Rāma;

Who held plough in the incarnation of

Balarāma;

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Who spread compassion in the incarnation of  
Buddha;

and Who makes the Mlechchhas faint in the incarnation of  
Kalki.]

In this context, it may be remembered that Sage Vyāsa, the author of Bhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa, describes Krishna as the Almighty Supreme Being (Kṛishṇa Bhagavān Svayam). Poet Jayadeva most probably follows the sense of Bhāgavata in eulogizing the greatness of the Supreme God.

In another place of Gīta-Govinda, Krishna playing in spring and embraced by beautiful Gopī damsels has been delineated as the Embodiment of 'Śrīngāra' Rasa. The verse is :

“Svachchhandam vraja-sundarībhirabhitah pratyāṅgamālīṅgītaḥ,

Śrīngārah Sakhi ! mūrttimāniva madhau mugdho Hariḥ kṛī ati // ” (GG. I / 11).

[In every limbs, in front, freely  
embraced

by the beautiful maidens of  
Gopapura,

O Dear Friend  
!

during the sweet season of  
spring

plays sportively, the enchanted  
Hari,

Himself as if embodiment of  
Eros.]

So Bhakti (Devotion) and Rati (Erotic Pleasure), both are beautifully blended in the inner sense of spiritual and philosophical speculations in this gīti-kāvya. Regarding own composition, the poet himself has rightly said :

“Yadi Hari-smara e sarasam mano,

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Yadi vilāsa-kalāsu kutūhalaṃ  
/

Madhura-komala-kānta-  
padāvalīm,

Śri u tadā Jayadeva-Sarasvatīm //” (GG. I /  
3).

[If your mind is fraught with  
sentiment

in remembering Lord  
Hari,

if you have any



curiosity

in the arts of joyful  
dalliance,

then listen to Jayadeva's writing  
literary,

that contains the words sweet, delicate and  
lovely.]

Thus a marvellous and sweet admixture of both Devotion-to-God and Relish of  
Erotic pleasure is maintained in the melodious work of Jayadeva.

#### CONCLUSION :

Open description of erotic activities is generally not appreciated by the readers. In  
epical tradition as it is observed, great poet like Vyāsa in Mahābhārata (25) has  
distinctly inserted the erotic depiction into the pathetic context in such a manner that  
one can really experience the significance of both the sentiments simultaneously  
without any hesitation. Poets like Kālidāsa, Śrīharsha, Bilha a, Bhartrihari and Amaru  
have unhesitatingly described some open portrayals of erotic sentiments contextually.  
But the case of gīti- kāvya Gita-Govinda is quite different. It is purely an erotic love-  
poetry. Poet Jayadeva has clearly mentioned the purpose of his book, that is the "Rati-  
keli-kathā" of Rādhā and Krishna. So there is nothing to criticize against the  
elaboration of nude erotic pleasure poetized by the devotee Jayadeva.

Human life attains success with four achievements (purushārtha) that are Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha. Love emerges from pleasure and a pure Sāttvika thinking emanates from love. Pure thinking paves the way for attainment of God. Complete submission of Self in the Supreme Being is the salvation. Rādhā has accomplished Kāma, the mundane enjoyment. Both Rādhā and Krishna have unveiled the passionate feelings of their hearts in the context of love elaborated in Gīta-Govinda. Relish of Rasa is regarded as equal to Brahmānanda. In this connection, the poetic delicacy of Jayadeva is remarkable indeed. His lovely words expressing sentiments of love are sweeter than all other sweet things such as madhuka-liquor, sugar, grape, nectar, milk, ripe mango and the lovely lips of beloved maiden also. Really significant is the following verse in praise of his composition:

“Sādhvī Mādhvīka ! chintā na bhavati bhavatah Śarkare ! karkarāsi,

Drākshe ! drakshyanti ke tvām Amrita ! mritamasi Kshīra ! nīram rasaste  
/

Mākanda ! kranda Kāntādhara ! dhara i-talam gachchha yachchhanti yāvad,

Bhāvam śrīṅgāra-sārasvatamiha Jayadevasya vishvag vachāmsi //” (GG. XII / 13).

[O Liquor of Madhuka  
!

No noble thought arises for  
you.

O Sugar ! You’re very unsavoury  
really.

O Grape ! Who will behold you  
?

O Nectar ! You’re gone  
dead.

O Milk ! Your essence is mere  
water.

You weep, O Ripe  
Mango !

O Lips of Beloved Lady  
!

Down to the nether region you  
go,

as long as the sweet words of  
Jayadeva

in this world on all sides  
offer

emotional feelings of erotic  
expression.]

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III

From the above discussions, it may be ascertained that Gīta-Govinda of Poet Jayadeva forms a glorious, magnificent and unparalleled literary asset of overflowing love in the sphere of Sanskrit literature. For its own epic, lyrical and aesthetic attributes as well as universal appeal, with heartiest endearments it will remain ever-remembered as a sweetest, excellent and eternal composition for all the lovers of literature all over the world. Popularity of this kāvya has been enhanced through several translations of writers from different countries even in the present day of modernity.

\* FOOT-

NOTES :

(1) 'Anuprāsah śabda-sāmyam vaishamyē'pi svarasya  
yat'

(Sāhitya-Darpa a,  
10/3).

(2) 'Satyarthe prithagarthāyāh svāra-vyāñjana-  
samhateh /

Krame a tenaivārittir Yamakam vinigadyate // (SD,  
10/8).

(3) 'Sāmyam vāchyam avairdarmyam vākyaikya Upamā dvayoh' (SD,  
10/14).

(4) 'Rūpakam rūpitāropo vishaye nirapahnave' (SD,  
10/28).

(5) 'Bhavet sambhāvanotprekshā prakritasya parātmanā' (SD,  
10/40).

(6) 'Hetor vākya-padārthatve Kāvyaṅgam nigadyate' (SD,  
10/63).

(7) 'Yadyeta evāṅkarāh paraspara-  
vimiśritāh /

Tadā prithagalaṅkārau Samsrīṣṭi ih Saṅkarastathā // (SD. 10/97-  
98).

(8) For Gu a and Rīti, See 'Sāhitya-Darpa a' (Chapter VIII &  
IX).

(9) For details of Chhandas, See  
'Chhandomañjarī'.

(10) A History of Sanskrit Literature (Keith), page-  
191.

(11) 'Concept of Giti and Mātrigītikāñjali-Kāvya'

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(<http://hkmeher.blogspot.com/2008/05/concept-of-gti-and-mtrigtikjali-kvya.html>)

(12) 'Ślish aih padair anekārthābhidhāne Ślesha ishyate' (SD, 10/11).

(13) 'Jasau jasa-yalā vasu-graha-yatīścha Prithvī guruh'  
(ChhandoMañjarī).

(14) 'Upendravajrā jatajāstato gau.'  
(VrittaRatnakara);

'Upendravajrā prathame laghau sā.'  
(ChhandoM).

(15) 'Ādhikyam upameyasyopamānān nyūnatāthavā, Vyatirekah.' (SD, 10/52).

(16) 'Ayuji nayuga-rephato ya-  
kāro,

Yuji cha najau jaragāścha Pushpitāgrā'.  
(ChhandoM).

(17) 'Sūryāśvair masajas-tatāh saguravah sārdūla-vikrī itam.'  
(ChhandoM).

(18) 'Rasai rudraīśchinnā yamanasabhalā gah Śikhari ī.'  
(ChhandoM).

(19) SāhityaDarpa a (Chapter,  
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(24) Sāhitya-Darpa a: Nāyaka (Chap. 3/30 -38) and Nāyikā (3/56 -  
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(25) 'Ayam sa rasanotkarshī pīna-stana-  
vimardanah /

Nabhyuru-jaghana-sparśī nīvī-visramsanaḥ karah  
//'

(Mahābhārata, Strī-Parva,  
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## Ramleela of Mithila: A Forgotten Tradition of Folk Theatre

Dr. Kailash Kumar  
Mishra<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The two great epics: Ramayana<sup>2</sup> and Mahabharata<sup>3</sup> from time immemorial  
have

been influencing the every sphere of life and culture of India. Both the epics  
are

considered to be the Pancham(fifth) Veda along with Dhanurveda and  
Ayurveda.

These two epics are also considered to be the first written or well  
documented

itihasas or histories with full of genealogical records and incidents and accidents

in life of different characters. Most of the episodes of these two epics are directly

connected with the historical characters. In various phases of devotional development in Hinduism the poets and writers made their attempts to write the essence of Ramayana of Valmiki<sup>4</sup> in the language of common men and women of

the specific geographical pockets. Such experiments of the regional scholars and

saints made the texts of the Ramayana very popular in India and Indian Sub-continent. Tulsidas for example wrote Ramcharitmanasa<sup>5</sup> in Awadhi or old Hindi. Kamban<sup>6</sup> wrote Kambaramayana<sup>7</sup> in Tamil, In Kerala Patala wrote

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Ramayana is an ancient Sanskrit epic considered one of the major texts of the Hindu religion. It is believed to have been written between 500 and 100 BCE, and is attributed to a revered Hindu sage, Valmiki. The Ramayana is the story of Prince Rama, whose wife, Seeta, is kidnapped by a ten-headed evil king,

Ravana. <sup>3</sup> The **Mahabharata** is an epic poem of the Indian sub-continent, which is one of the most important texts of the Hindus. It dates back as far as the 8th century BCE, with later portions being added up to the 4th century BCE. The name itself means roughly, Tale of the Bharata Dynasty, and it is a mythological history of ancient India. It is more than 1.8 million words long, spread over 74,000 distinct verses, making it one of the longest poems in the world. The **Mahabharata** covers a great deal of material, ranging from simple histories to entire philosophies on living. The **Mahabharata** begins with a claim of completeness, stating:

"What is found here may be found elsewhere. What is not found here will not be found elsewhere." <sup>4</sup> Maharshi

Valmiki was a Hindu sage-scholar who lived around the beginning of the first millennium B.C. He is referred to as the 'adikavi', the original creator of the Hindu. He is the original writer of the Ramayana. <sup>5</sup>

Ramcharitmanasa was completed in 1584 AD. <sup>6</sup> Kamban was born in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Therazhundur, a village in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. Kamban's knowledge and involvement in poetic endeavors was such that that he is rightly called as 'kavi chakravarthy'.

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Ramayanam and Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century wrote Adhyatma

Ramayanam Kilipattu in Malayalam; In Andhra Pradesh, the Telugu Ramayana is

known as Sri Ranganatha Ramayana and was adapted by Buddha Reddy; Eknath wrote the Marathi Bhavartha Ramayana in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; Krittivas Ojha composed the Bengali Ramayana in 15<sup>th</sup> century; Madhava Kandali wrote Kotha Ramayana in Assamese in 15<sup>th</sup> century; in Orissa, Oriya Balaramadasa Ramayana was adapted by Balarama Das in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in Punjabi language, Guru Gobind Singh wrote the Ramavatara in 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mithila has

always been known for its scholarship and unparalleled dominance in

Dhramshashtra and tantra was also not lagging behind in this area. Four Maithil

scholars composed Maithili Ramayana in different phases of history: Kavivar Chanda Jha<sup>8</sup> (1831-1907) composed Mithilabhasa Ramayan , Lal Das composed

Rameshwarcharit Ramayana, Acharya Ramlochan Sharan (1890-1971) composed

Maithili Ramcharit Manas, and last but not the least Viswanatha Jha "Bishpayi"

wrote Ram Suyash Sagar in early 1980s. The influence of various forms of Ramayana and their episodes mainly the episodes of Seeta encourages the women

and the common folk who were not much educated either in Sanskrit in the beginning or Modern subjects including English in the later phase of modern history of Mithila to create songs, small poetic dramas and complete folk theatrical performance on Ramayana. Women confined themselves in songs and

ritual incantations but the common folk of Mithila went ahead and started performing the complete episodes of Ramayana in the form of Ramleela. The Ramleela tradition of Mithila has several unique identities. Unfortunately,

because of the Ramayana serial this tradition is almost vanished from this land.

The artists have either joined other petty jobs or many of them have been living

the retired life. Some of the well-known Ramleela artists are died also. In this

<sup>7</sup> In Kambaramayana there are totally 10418 verses in six kandas (chapters) ie Balakanda, Ayodhyakanda, Aranyakanda, Kishkindhakanda, Sundarakanda and Yuddhakanda. As in Valmiki Ramayana there is no Uttarkanda in Kamba Ramayana. Each chapter contains many subchapters. <sup>8</sup> Chanda Jha was from the Pindaruch village of present Darbhanga District. Although a court-poet of Maharaja Lakshmeshwar Singh of Darbhanga, he showed exceptional creativeness and initiative in the literary field and was somewhat influenced by the western trends in literature. He acted as the main resource person and guide for Grierson in his exploration of the dimensions of Maithili culture including Maithili language. He did the poetic translation of Vidyapati's Purush Pariksha in Maithili which is treated as a milestone in Maithili literature. Chand Jha's other works include Giti- Sudha, Mahesbani sangrah, Chandra Padavali, Lakshmeshwar-Vilas, and Ahilya-Charita.

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article I have made an attempt to talk very briefly about the history, uniqueness,

style, relationship between the audience and performers, the role of Vyasa and the

management of show and last but not the least the measures by which this very

rare intangible heritage of Mithila can be once again revived in a changing scenario and fresh atmosphere while retaining its flavor of originality.

### The Land: Mithila

Far away from Indian big cities and the modern world lies a beautiful region once known as Mithila. It was one of the first kingdoms to be

established

in eastern India. The region is a vast plain stretching north towards Nepal, south

towards the Ganges and west towards Bengal. The present districts of Champaran,

Saharsa, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Supaul, Samastipur etc.,

and parts of Munger, Begusarai, Bhagalpur and Purnea of Bihar cover Mithila. It

is completely flat and free from rock or stone. Its soil is the alluvial silt deposited

by the river Ganges, rich, smooth clay dotted with thousands of pools replenished

by the monsoon, the only reservoirs until the next monsoon. If the monsoon is late

or scanty, the harvest is in jeopardy. But if the rain god is kind, the whole plain

bursts into green from October to February, dotted with man-made ponds where

beasts and peasants bath beneath ancient vatvrikshas. In this mythical region,

Rama, the handsome prince of Ayodhya and incarnation of the Vishnu, married

princess Seeta, born of a furrow her father King Janaka had tilled. Mithila is that

sacred land where the founders of Buddhism and Jainism; the scholars of all six

orthodox branches of Sanskrit learning such as Yajnavalkya, Bridha Vachaspati,

Ayachi Mishra, Shankar Mishra, Gautama, Kapil, Sachal Mishra, Kumaril Bhatt and Mandan Mishra were born. Vidyapati, a Vaisnav poet of 14<sup>th</sup> century was

born in Mithila who immortalized a new form of love songs explaining the

relationship between Radha and Krishna in the region through his padavalis and

therefore the people rightly remember him as the reincarnation of Jaideva

(abhinavajaideva). Karnpure, a classical Sanskrit poet of Bengal, in his famous

devotional epic, the Parijataharanamahakavya gives an interesting account

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confirming the scholarship of the people of Mithila. Krishna tells his beloved Satyabhama, while flying over this land on way to Dwarka from Amravati, “O lotus-eyed one behold! Yonder this is Mithila, the birthplace of Seeta. Here in every house Saraswati dances with pride on the tip of the tongue of the learned

(Mishra, Kailash Kumar 2000)”. Mithila is a wonderful land where art and scholarship, laukika and Vedic traditions flourished together in complete harmony

between the two. There was no binary opposition.

#### Ramleela of Mithila

Mithila Ramleela like other parts of India and Indian Sub-continent is organized in a makeshift open-air theater at night by the trained artists, all males.

No female is playing the role of any character in traditional Mithila Ramleela.

Ramleela, meaning “folk theatrical performances of Rama’s life”, is a performance of the great Indian epic Ramayana in the form of a series of scenes

that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. As a composite cultural and



life

way ritual, Ramleela, dedicated to the life and deeds of Lord Rama, has served the

purpose of devotional worship, sacrificial offering, eulogy, meditative experience

and immersive communion. Ramleela of Mithila is based on multiple stories and

folklore. Here focus is always given on the exploitation and pains of Seeta, who is

according to the Ramyana was the daughter of Janaka, the King of Mithila. You

can easily observe the common saying among the elderly women about Seeta:

Ram biyahne kun phal bhela/seta janm akarath gela (What benefit did Seeta get

being the consort of Rama! Her birth as woman became a curse!). There are number of rituals and other songs that depict the helplessness of Seeta, her sacrifice for Rama and Rama's cruel and careless attitude for Seeta. In one song it

is depicted that in the jungle at the hut of sage Valmiki, Seeta gives birth to two

sons of Rama: Lov and Kusha. She requests a barber to intimate this news in

Ayodhya, mainly to Kaushilya, Kaikeyee and Sumitra, but she warns him to take

all care to ensure that Rama in no way should be informed about this. She

develops friendship with the wild animals, birds and other creatures of jungle and

shares her pains and hardships with them. Even Toady when some lady is

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frustrated with the attitude of her husband or any male in the family she becomes furious and out of great emotional loss she cries: phatoo he dharti – My dear Mother Earth, this is enough! Now may I request you to crack in equal halves where I can jump in and end my life!!! Such examples are numerous but I will not go deeper details of Maithili songs and rituals as I am concentrating myself on Ramleela alone.

All characters of Ramleela in Mithila are played by the male actors alone.

They perform the role of female characters such as Seeta, Kausalya, Sumitra, Kaikeyee, Sunayna, Mandodari, Arundhati and others and try their level best to create the real effects. However, they fail to create the real effects in depicting the female characters in most of the situations. The Ramleela Mandli consists of all actors, assistants, cooks and helpers. Majority of the roles are played by the Brahmins and some characters are performed by the other castes also. The episode, dialogues, narratives, musical recitation, scenes and stage management everything is done under the strict guidance of the Vysa. Vyasa, as is clear from its nomenclature is the most knowledgeable person. He knows how to play harmonium and sing melodious songs. He props the artists and supports them when they are delivering the dialogues on the stage. The Vyasa works hard and reads all the major texts about the Ramyana. He holds his grip on the folklore

and

folk rituals to depict the local effects in the performance. He always behaves as an

internal innovator and keeps on innovating the dialog delivery, couplets and other

verses. He converts the entire episodes in his own language and develops unique

style of saying the message. He uses the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Avadhi

along with Hindi in his poetic creation and according to the place and language of

the people he keeps on changing the situation. In a war scene between Lakshmana

and Ravana I have observed unique dialogue deliveries between the two

characters in a typical modern Hindi language all in poetic diction. Some

examples are given

below:

Ravana says to Lakshmana: Bak bak bak bak mat karo bakri ki tarah/ Ara lekar

chhed doonga lakdi ki tatrah.

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Outraged with this Lakshmana responded: Itne din tak tum soye the gadde aur

galeechon pe/ Aaj mai tujhe sulaa doongaa mitti aur dhelon pe.

In one episode, Bharat comes to meet Ram and Lakshman in the

jungle

and requests them to come back to Ayodhya. Lakshman expresses his anger to

Kaikeyee and says: Kaanta tha so nikal gaya ghrito ka diya jala lena/ Kah dena mata kaikei se bharat se raaj chala lena<sup>9</sup>.

When the demon king Ravana kidnaps Seeta and he is forcefully taking

her to Lanka with him, the helpless Seeta sings a very pathetic song and remembers Rama, her consort. She feels that she has been facing such difficult

situation because she has not served her parents and in-laws as a devout daughter

and daughter-in-law:

Ha raghunandan/ dusta nikandan/ mohe khabaria to lahak ho Rama/ Mata-pita ke

sebo ne keliyai/ sasu-saur ke sevo ne kelyai/tai bhelyai ban ke koyaliyaa ho

Rama/<sup>1</sup>

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In one more songs while going to Lanka with Ravana Seeta explains the story she

was trapped:

Siya sudhi sunahu ho raghurai/ bipra rupa dhari ravan bani aayel/ bhiksha lae

gohrai/ Siya sudhi sunahu ho raghurai/ Bhiksha lene niklali Janki/ rath par liyo chdhai/ Siya sudhi sunhu ho Ragurai...<sup>11</sup>

After hearing this helpless song of Seeta Jatayu comes at her rescue and

the Vyasa sings from the distance: Itna bachan sunat giddha khagpati/ rath ko liyo

<sup>9</sup> The only obstacle was in your life is out of Ayodhya now/ Go and lit the lamp of purified butter/ Go and tell Mother Keikeyee to rule Ayodhya with Bharat as its King!

<sup>10</sup> Dear beloved Rama, the bright star of the Raghu dynasty/ You are the one who kills the enemies and wicked/ O dear Rama, please save me/ I failed to serve my parents and also in-laws/ Probably this has caused me this problem and today I am <sup>11</sup> O crying dear bright in the star wild of jungle Raghu as dynasty, a helpless please cuckoo. listen to the problem of Seeta/ The demon King Ravan came to me in a disguised form of a beggar/ He was begging from the entrance/ I became kind to him and came out with alms/ As soon as Janaki came out, he forcefully put her in his chariot/ O dear bright star of Raghu dynasty, please listen to the problem of Seeta!

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rokai/ charan chonch se maha yudhha kinho/pankh gayo jhahrai/ Siya sudhi sunahu ho Raghurai<sup>12</sup>

All such depiction in the local language creates a massive audience support for the theatrical performance. The audience gets totally involved into the

play and enjoys every moment of it in complete devotion and involvement. Such

is the power of this kind of innovation.

Usually the entire episodes of Ramyana are performed in 20-40 days depending upon the paying capacity and interest of the villagers of a particular

village. There is an interesting way of getting each day's food and other expenditures from the villagers. At the peak of the drama the main character

appears before the audience keeping a garland of flower in his hand. Now he request the audience assembled to see the performance to hold the garland for the next day. The person who holds the garland takes the responsibility of paying the entire costs of the team including food, stage, honorarium of the artists etc. for the next 24 hours. Once it is done the artist announces the name of that person loudly with great joy and passion. Everybody present for the performance gives him the standing ovation. The same practice is repeated every day.

In order to please the youth the Ramleela artists perform some dramas and

plays after the gap of 7-8 days and generate support from the spectators of all sections of the society. This initiative helps them to earn extra income and exhibit the hidden creative genius.

The involvement of the spectators in all process of creativity is observed

in every sphere of the performance of Ramleela. I remember one incidence. In my village, some 30 years ago a Ramleela Troupe came to stage the Ramleela for 40 days. A day before the staging of Lanka dahan<sup>13</sup> episode the Vysa requested the spectators to bring fruits, flowers, sweets, etc. for decorating Ashok Vatika and

<sup>12</sup>The king of birds: vulture - Jatayu heard the helpless crying of Seeta/ He immediately stopped the chariot of Ravana/ He fought with Ravana with his beak and wings and ultimately burnt his wings / O dear bright star of Raghu dynasty, please listen to the problem of Seeta! <sup>13</sup>Burning of Lanka by Hanumana- the monkey god.

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surroundings and for the consumption of Hanumana. The spectators followed the

instructions with devotion and brought fresh fruits, sweets, etc., as prasada and

handed over to the artists.

The Ramleela artists use to travel to Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh,

Chhatisgarh, parts of Bengal and Orissa and also in Nepal for theatrical performance of Ramleela. In the Bhojpuri speaking regions the Maithils were known as performers of Ramleela. All of a sudden, immediately after the release

and telecasting of Ramayana serial this tradition failed to sustain. This way a powerful genre of Maithili folklore died forever. And surprisingly no cultural institution and individual came forward to protect this art form with the help of the common people and Government's intervention.

Reasons for the disappearing of the Ramleela Tradition in Mithila

As has already been stated above, the telecasting of the Ramayana serial

and availability of the CD and VCD etc., in the open markets are the main reasons

of the dying of this art form. The second most important reason is the lack of sponsorship from the maharaja of Mithila. The kings of Mithila always neglected this art and the artists. The girls were never encouraged to play the role of female characters in the Ramleela performances. The actors of Ramleela always treated very low and they were never respected in the society. They hardly managed to perform the play with proper dresses and costly attributes including the decoration of stage, lighting arrangements, ornaments etc. This art form was not linked with the great cultural tradition of Mithila. No serious research work was done to preserve and protect this art form. Mithila always lacked the scholar and supporter like Sivaram Karant to highlight the glory and power of Mithila Ramleela. Lack of financial support, and over indulgence of the Bramhins and Karna Kyastha did not allow the performers to use much innovations in terms of stage management, costumes, and even the delivery of dialogues. The lower castes of Mithila did not attach itself in true spirit and commitment with this tradition. The so called modern and educated class kept itself away and always treated this art form as

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below their dignity to join. No attempt was made to include Mithila Ramleela as

curricular or even the extracurricular activity in school or college syllabus. The artists were neglected and many of them compelled to join factory and other petty

jobs to sustain their families. Some of them died also.

### Measures to Revive the Tradition

There is an urgent need to revive the tradition of Mithila Ramleela Mandali in

changing perspective. This according to me is possible if the following measures

are considered seriously by the Government and also by the people of Mithila:

- Mithila Ramleela should be revived in the new form. The girls should be allowed

and encouraged to learn it as performing art and represent Mithila through this

creativity. A social movement may be created to see that the concept of Ramleela

is spread like the concept of Mithila painting which got recognition world over in

a few years.

- The government with the help of art institutions, anthropologists, performers, etc.

should make serious attempt to identify the master artists, Vyasa etc. of Ramleela

to appoint them as the teacher performers and young children and students from

all over Mithila should be encouraged to join the course of learning the art of

Ramleela from  
them.

- All the universities of Mithila and some other Universities of Bihar and also other parts of India may be instructed to start Mithila Ramleela as curricular and evaluative subject under the performative arts.
- Art Institutions and clubs such as Sangeet Natak Academy, Ministry of Culture, Spic Macy ICCR, CCRT, schools etc. should arrange the performance of Mithila Ramleela in various places and platforms.
- The well-known and creative performs of Ramleela tradition should be honored with Padmshree, Padmavibhushan, and other awards. Such awards will encourage the other people to join this art form with interest and commitment.
- All communities and castes of Mithila should be encouraged and sensitized to feel proud about this tradition and get them involved in multiple ways.

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Narratives of Regional  
Identity:

# Revisiting Modern Oriya Theatre from 1880-1980

Sharmila Chhotaray<sup>1</sup>

In this paper I intend to outline a brief history of Oriya theatre that in the larger context of the socio-cultural changes in Orissa. I shall suggest that this theatre was deeply influenced by social, political, economic and cultural forces such as the colonial system and search for Oriya identity that was operating in what was regarded then as the Oriya speaking regions. For my purpose I have divided Oriya theatre into three periods. They are: 1877-1939, 1939-1960, and 1960-1980. I shall offer a rationale for making these divisions. The issues that I wish to develop here are Oriya Nationalism/regional identity, second, the Jagannath Cult and its religious and social dimensions, third the emergence of new theatre in Orissa as a result of the Western experimentations in the drama. Finally, I shall assess the position of contemporary Oriya theatre vis a vis other art forms like Jatra.

## THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

<sup>1</sup> Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology, American Institute of Indian Studies, 22, Sector-32, Institutional Area, Gurgaon. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Seminar on Post Independence Indian Theatre, Calicut, Nov 9-10, 2004.

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Orissa on the Eastern part of India experienced multiple cultural encounters for about five

hundred years. It needs to be mentioned here that Orissa was subjected to many foreign

invasions such as the Mughals, Afghans, and Marathas before the arrival of British in 1803. From 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was the Islamic empire in which the theatrical activities were marginalized eventually from public life and royal courts and temples of

Hindu kings. The Afghans occupied the northern portion of present Orissa and ruled for

more than one hundred seventy years i.e., from 1468 to 1578 and this empire succeeded

by Moguls who remained from 1578 to 1751. During this period the social and economic

changes occurred substantially.

The British ruled for a few years in early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Bengali administrative class followed them and settled in the coastal plains of northern Orissa. 1866 marks the

outbreak of the Great famine and the consolidation of the British rule. By the end of this

century the imperial tradition through Bengalis had already entered into the roots of the

Oriya culture “which attempted to subvert the traditions of Orissa with techniques of spreading cultural imperialism that seemed to have been adopted from the Europeans” (

Panigrahi;1996: 20). During British Raj, the Madras presidency ruled over Southern Orissa and Western Orissa in turn was controlled by the Central Presidency. It needs to

be mentioned that southern Orissa had come under the sway of Telugu a dominant language in the region. Similarly, Western Orissa was closed to Singhbhum and Bihar

and was subjected to a dominant Hindi language and literature. Thus, the regional culture

in different parts of the state witnessed various cultural responses to the colonial rule.

As Minoti Chatterjee (2004) argues in a separate context, cultural imperialism was a process of permeation and pervasion of one culture by the thought, habit and purpose of

another. It involved convincing the people of the superiority of the culture of the rulers

and inferiority of their own. In Orissa too, we find similar movement of cultural resistance not to the British imperialism but to the cultural domination of the ruling ideologies of Bengalis through its theatrical productions. It results in its Oriya identity formation through its engagement in revival of historical stories and narratives.

## DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ORIYA THEATRE FROM 1877-1960

The first period 1877-1939 witnessed a wave of religious or mythological dramas. Oriya

nationalism arose as a result of the impact of British colonialism and the Bengali Zamindari system. The cultural map was deeply imbued with the religious cults, but gradually it got replaced with an awareness of the glorious past and the changing social

scenarios in the province. Most of the plays were translation of Bengali plays during this

phase of Oriya drama. Translating the Bengali dramas into Oriya, theatre moved away and 'becomes a significant projection of a regional cultural identity.' While early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century had witnessed a number of Bengali plays, Orissa experienced its own first Oriya drama only in 1880. It is a matter of controversy<sup>2</sup> whether Jagmohan Lala's Babaji,

(The Hermit) and Raghunnath Parichha's Gopinath Ballav were the first Oriya plays that

followed the Western style. The same argument also has been developed in the case of

Gopinath Ballav. However, Ramshankar Ray's Kanchi Kaveri, is generally recognized as

the first modern Oriya theatre, staged in Cuttack in the year 1880. During the same period

there was a parallel development of the Sanskrit pattern of Dramaturgy in Southern Orissa. The king of princely states like Chikiti, Parala and Tarala (now Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh). Govinda Soordeo of Paralakhemundi performed not only Sanskrit dramas but also sometimes presented Fakir Mohan's play like Patent Medicine and Lachhma, staged in Cuttack and Chikti. The first two decades of this century witnessed

great advancements in theatrical productions. The role of magnetic theater in Cuttack modernizing the theatrical productions<sup>3</sup> was significant. Aswini kumar Ghosh<sup>4</sup>, one of the

<sup>2</sup> Babaji contained colonial prose dialogues and presented social satire that narrated the life of a corrupted Babaji of the colonial days. It criticized the English-speaking Babus (respected gentlemen) who spread alcoholism in society. Ramesh Panigrahi says that the stage was an avenue for social correction of the 'follies' that percolated... to Babaji of Orissa as a parameter of modernity and as an attempt at the redefinition of the dramatic form. However, it is still a controversy among the theatre historians whether this play should be called a pure theater or not, as it contained songs and rhetorical language and was described mostly as a refined version of Jatra. <sup>3</sup> The second decade of this century also had two other permanent stages, namely, Basanti(1910) and Usha(1913). Prior to that i.e., from late 19<sup>th</sup> to first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were absolutely no permanent theatre houses existed, though feudal Rajas and Zamindars established theatres for performances on the festive occasions.

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pioneers of Oriya drama in the second decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century wrote his first play Bhisma

(1915) in blank  
verse.

It is not true that no theatrical tradition existed in the state prior to colonial rules. In fact it

was the age of indigenous performances of Leela, Suanga, and Jatra that were confined to

rural Orissa. The proscenium stage surpassed the indigenous theatre like Jatra and could

reach both rural and urban masses. Jatra was confined to the rural areas as an occasional

performative tradition. Both modern and traditional theaters coexisted while fulfilling the

entertainment needs of a diverse audience. Similarly, the Jatra also saw a tremendous

growth in Orissa parallel to the court theater in Southern Orissa and commercial

theaters

in Cuttack and  
Balasore.

The next period 1939-1960 is a period that reflects the changes taking place in  
Orissa

thanks to the national freedom struggle; the plays during this period depict issues  
dealing

with themes like social reforms and female education. During this period, rejecting the

indigenous tradition, playwrights and the proprietors of the theatre brought in the  
'Actor-

Managerial' tradition. After 1939, Oriya drama moved toward a highly commercial  
market. Kalicharan Pattanayak switched over from Rasa and Lila, the traditional  
lyrical

dramas to social plays like Girls' School performed on Proscenium stage in his  
Orissa

Theatres in 1939. Orissa Theatres developed a well-decorated performance space  
with

the incorporation of modern dramatic techniques. Kalicharan was one of the first  
playwrights to make use of language appropriate to characters. He was a rare  
instance of

a playwright who also was simultaneously an organizer, musician, director, actor and  
playwright. According to Hemant Das, one of the most notable transformations from

<sup>4</sup>Ghosh was associated with the first Oriya mobile theater of Balanga namely Radha Krishna  
Theatre (near Puri) till 1933. The theatrical creations were appreciated as it had a wide range of themes  
to deal. The first mobile theater Radhakrishna theatres started touring over the length and breadth of  
the state with translations of Bengali plays.



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Jatra to the theater form that took place in Orissa is seen in the story of Annapurna Rangamanch. Due to reasons of convenience, it was decided to split the group into two

parts in Puri and Cuttack named as Annapurna 'A' and Annapurna 'B' group respectively. Until 1960s, it continued with great success and toured extensively throughout the year. In sixties, a paradox was seen in Oriya Theater by the playwright

Gopal Chhotray who provided the new orientation to the poetic plays of the popular Jatra playwrights<sup>5</sup>. However, these revived myth-based and tradition-bound plays till the end

of sixties could only attract its maximum popularity at the mass level.

The third phase is the post 1960S of Oriya theatre: The new drama movement. The gradual decline of Annapurna theatre paved way to the new drama<sup>6</sup> era of Manoranjan

Das followed by Bijay Mishra, Biswajit Das, Byomakesh Tripathy, Jadunath Das Mohapatra, Basant Mohapatra, Ratnakar Chaini and Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi. Theatre

during this period modern experiment such as these inspired by Brecht, Freud and Sartre.

However, the experimental and epic theaters were not found in favor (Tripathy, 1995:52).

Kings, members of royalty and zamindars, largely patronized Oriya theatre financially.

However, in most instances playwright-directors-producers themselves made the actual

effort. The financial support during the commercial ventures were offered by the business

class i.e., Marwaris and Mahantas of Mathas. After sixties till present time it is through

personal donations and occasional Government support Oriya theatre is patronized. Now

one needs to go beyond the empirical facts and should examine as to how theatres work

<sup>5</sup> Similar developments can be seen in Jatra, the open-air theatre. It was also at its peak during this time with the making of Gitinatyas by Baishnab Pani and Balakrishna Mohanty that were very popular in the rural Orissa. Jatra also took elements from the modern theatre and was called 'theatrical Jatra'. However, The Gitinatyas and Gitavinayas of Pani, Mohanty and other jatrakaras were almost disappeared in last part of the 1950s. Chhotaray revived them with 'lyrical poetry and lucid prose dialogues imbued with deep pathos and genial humour' and introduced them in radio and television.

<sup>6</sup> Till 1950s Oriya drama was a matter of construction of a non-controversial plot, peopled by flat characters and full of insipid sequences.

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in history vis-à-vis in society and culture. Thus, it may be useful at this stage to review

briefly the major narratives that depicted in the Oriya theatre.

## NARRATIVES OF ORIYA NATIONALISM /REGIONAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF KANCHIKAVERI, CUTTACK BIJAY AND KALAPAHADA

The century- long administration by both British and Bengali officers had indirectly given way to the formation of Oriya nationalism and the growth of the Oriya cultural identity and consciousness. Around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Oriya language was facing its identity crisis in the colonial context. Almost all the plays were either in English, in Bengali, in Parsi or in Marathi. Sachidananda Mohanty (1991:121) notes that language politics in Eastern India in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a significant driving force for the emergence of regional consciousness in Orissa and the use of language for acquisition of secular power gained a particular urgency during the colonial period in many parts of British India, though there were bound to be specific regional manifestations. For instance it was said by Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya a Bengali inspectors of schools that 'Oriya is not a separate language'. Significantly, these factors led to the save Oriya movement<sup>7</sup> in North-Eastern Orissa that thanks to the British and Bengali colonial impact. The mid 19<sup>th</sup> century was the period of Oriya Renaissance when through the emergence and development of Oriya literature Orissa got its new separate identity. Oriya theatre basically developed in the northern part of Orissa rather than the Western and Southern. These developments had their counterparts in the field of theater and other performing arts.

During this period, the playwrights were creating the paradox of hybrid Sanskritic revivalism and Westernization in the play. Further it is important to mention that there was a parallel growth of a theater of reaction in both the state namely Bengal and Orissa, that differed in the sense of its power structure. While colonial Bengal in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century began to have its political theatre through IPTA against the British rule, colonial Orissa began with a creation of Puranic tales which was probably a strategy to assert the native tradition against the onslaught of the indirect colonial cultural invasion. Unlike Bengali and Tamil theater Oriya counterpart did not become a rallying point for people's resistance soon as it was felt in Bengal against British rule. It rather focused on the

<sup>7</sup> A number of champions of Oriya language such as Radhanatha Ray, Fakir Mohan

Senapati and Madhusudan Das led this movement. They pioneered the modern literature through poems and stories confronting the political and cultural instabilities.

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regional Oriya identity while responding to the new English education introduced by missionaries.

Thus, it is worth examining here whether the first Oriya play Kanchi Kaveri<sup>8</sup> was a reaction to its regional consciousness concerning the construction of the Oriya linguistic identity. The play is considered as the first Oriya nationalist drama inspired by the growth of Bengali literature and culture, Ramshankar Ray developed his passion for Oriya literature through plays. In Kanchi Kaveri the love and devotion for Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the state has been presented. As Bishnu Mohapatra<sup>9</sup> rightly says :

Kanchi Kaveri, in its new incarnation, is about victory and order, a victory of Purussottam (Jagannath is also known as Purussottam) Dev symbolically representing the Oriya people and a cohesive polity: the body of king , like a leviathan, containing within it teeming millions. There is also a victory of an Oriya cultural tradition.

Although the story has been narrated differently throughout 19th and the 20th century,

invariably it has revisited the understanding of the historical regional consciousness of

the king and his patriotism and its devotion to Lord Jagannatha. Many strands feed into

the cultural identity of Orissa. The cult of Jagannath is an important strand, but it has to

be admitted that the Oriya theatre covers a larger gamut of Oriya experience. Many of

Ashwini Kumar Ghosh plays adopted the stories related to Jagannatha's Mahima taken

from Dardhayta Bhakti a book of poetic stories that deals with the life of the devotees of

Lord Jagannath. For example, in the popular play Salabega, the son of a Muslim

administrator named Lalbeg kidnapped a Brahmin widow from Danda Mukundapur, a

village near Puri, and Salabega was born from her. Later he became a great devotee of the

8 A narrative poem originally has been written on the 15<sup>th</sup> century Suryavamsi King

Purussottam Dev by a poet Purussottam Das in sixteenth century in several literary forms from long poems to plays. The play is based on a fascinating Oriya historical legend where the Gajapati king of Orissa engages in a battle with the king of Kanchi and won over the hand of princess Padmavati. The “annual” task that the king of Puri ritually performed during the car festival was a subject of ‘insult’ that the king of Kanchi alleged to have made. The battle was waged in order to revenge this injury. 9

Mohapatra explores the ability of the text to generate meanings about the world,

simultaneously, at ethical, political cultural and economic levels. For detail see his article” The Kanchi Kaveri Legend and the Construction of Oriya Identity” in Studies in History, 12, 2, pp.204-221, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

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Lord. Similarly, we see in Bhakta Dasia Bauri and Shriya Chandaluni life sketch of untouchable devotees. It has to be stated that this Jagannath cult of Orissa is not sectarian

with upper caste hegemony. It is syncretic in approach and has a Daravidian substratum.

Ram Shankar Ray’s play written in blank verse was a combination of Sanskrit dramaturgy that adopted Western representation being performed before the educated

elite

.

During the era of historical/national wave, Bhikari Charan Pattnayak, a follower of Brahmo cult wrote plays concerned with ideals of a national culture against the

demerits

of Western culture. In his *Cuttack Bijay*, he described the constant barbaric invasions by

Marathas, Moghuls and British of the historical place, the then capital of Orissa that is

Cuttack. Similarly, the prominent dramatist Aswini Kumar Ghosh of this period made a

tremendous contribution to the development of modern Oriya stage. Ghosh's popular play *Kalapahada* deals with the history of Orissa. *Kalapahada*, a converted Muslim devastated all the Hindu religious institutions in Orissa.

## 'MODERNISM' IN ORIYA THEATRE: THE IMPACT OF WESTERN EXPERIMENTATION

In the post-independence period Oriya theatre saw a shift in themes and ideas of presentation. Here comes the *Naba Natya Andolan*: the new drama revolution in Orissa

when Manoranjan Das disassociated from the commercial theatre ventures in 1960s.

Tripathy describes that Manoranjan in protesting against the prevalent practices (of conventional theatrical practices) and norms shouldered the responsibility of compelling people to visit the theater before they retired for the day. Manoranjan's *Bana Hansee*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The play presented the time-flux hypothesis, the stream –of – consciousness technique in delineating past memories by the use of psychological, not chronological time, the concept of eternity and the characters taking part

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(Wild Duck) pioneered the new drama movement that heralded a new era and opened up

a whole new vista of new ideas. Das followed European dramatists like Ibsen, O'Neil,

and Eliot's symbolic expressionism but Freud's psychoanalysis was the crucial aspect of his play. If Manoranjan showed psychological time<sup>14</sup> by mingling the past, the present

and the future, Bijoy Mishra in his Shaba Bhaka Mane (The pall-bearers) spoke of the

real, actual time and in his play the time of action corresponded to performance. Mishra's

play has been called the first absurd Oriya play. Similarly, Biswajit Das depicts contemporary society and the living reality in his plays like Mrugaya, (the royal Hunt). In

this play he has showed how darkness is the essence of the life and the gap between what

we want and what we get increases. He has also contributed lighting techniques to the

Oriya stage, which was underdeveloped for long. To break this absurdist tradition or combining other traditions into this new dramatic revolution, Ramesh Panigrahi and Ratnakar Chaini contributed new kinds of plays. Chaini made an appropriate use of myth

to contemporize the theatre experience. Both of them have been highly influenced by Shakespeare, Shepherd etc and tried to reflect it in their play a psychoanalytical exploration of marital crisis. The next generation of this new drama could only be amateurish. Many of them changed their career from theatre to television and cinema. The Oriya drama in 1980s that with these dramatists<sup>12</sup> came with a bleak future and only

survived in major places of the state having a limited number of middle class audiences.

## CONCLUSION

in a present to which they do not belong (because they are dead) as if in a ritual of 'taking of roles' stand testimony to Manoranjan Das's indebtedness, where life is the wild duck trying to fly away into oblivion from the cycles of human existence.

<sup>12</sup> Das's play could only reach out to the urban educated elite of Cuttack and other coastal plains. This probably led him to make an unconscious effort to get back to this initial Oriya dramatic contribution in the 50s and 60s. His plays after 1976 imbued with the revival of contemporize traditional theater through the folk plays.

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However, all is not bleak with regard to the contemporary theater in Orissa. Alongside

this there is also a challenge posed by cable television, and commercial Hindi cinema. Despite this however many forms of theatre<sup>13</sup> are still active and are carrying out

experimentation in new approaches and techniques. An important aspect of the theatre in

modern Orissa is that it has not been able to influence or attract the masses. The English

educated professionals tried to showcase their plays for the higher order of society and

marginalized the lower sections. For instance, the common 'Oriya mind' was not



prepared to accept the 'absurd' plays for long. The modern drama could not keep pace

with what the playwrights presented, rather it has given way to the highly commercialized theatre called Jatra<sup>14</sup> in the province. The survival of drama today only

depends on the yearly drama competitions and festivals held by the amateur theatre groups since 1980s.

When we review the emergence of the history and development of the Oriya theater tradition, we find that it is a complex and many-sided story. It has been intimately connected with developments in Orissa's social and political history. For instance, it has

been suggested that due to late arrival of the British in Orissa, theatrical developments in

particular, were relatively slow to come by. We may see here a contrast with the situation

in neighboring Bengal. However; the story also reveals serious limitations and at times

outright failures. Such instances however need to be located against the backdrop of a

changing social milieu in Orissa. Here we need to examine several factors such as a question of cultural continuity and discontinuity, institutional patronage and the changing

nature of viewership, financial support and the problematic role of the elite with regard to

dissemination of art forms. In this sense Oriya Theater shares many parallels and

<sup>13</sup> The street theater represented by the Natya Chetana of Subodh Patnayak is a case in point.

Annually, practitioners, artistes, researchers and theater enthusiasts gather at Natyagram in Khurda for practice

and peoples theatre festivals.

<sup>14</sup> B.B.Kar in Tradition of Theatre-Yatra (p.263) in Traditions of Folk Theatres, Eds (2000) describes that post- independence Orissa saw a popularity of modern theatre to oppose Yatra for its refined and sophisticated representations of themes, soon Yatra adopted the modern technical know-how, for example in Yatra the theatre stage began to be used to make performance more appealing and attractive.

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differences with the theatre situations similar to the overall decline of this art form at the

national  
level.

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Indigeneity and  
Wisdom:

Folktales of Raj Bora Sambar of West  
Odisha

Introductio  
n

There was a goatherd tribal old man called Raja. He would graze his goats during the day and bring them home in the evening. Then he would absorb himself in playing his mandal<sup>1</sup>. His mandal got old and the old man was not happy with the tune that came from it. But he could not afford a new one.

One day, while grazing his goats on the riverside, he could see a Honda<sup>2</sup> grazing by the river side. He chased it and could catch hold of it. When he opened it he saw a heap of jewellery inside. He made a bundle with his towel and carried the jewellery with him and went back home along with his goats. On the way, he saw a scavenger coming towards the river. The scavenger asked him, "What are you carrying in the bundle, Raja uncle?" "The goatherd replied, "I got some jewellery in a Honda by the river side." The scavenger asked, "What will you do with the jewellery? Give them to me; I shall give you a new mandal." Raja thought the jewellery would not give him

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happiness, but if he got a mandal, he would be happy playing it every evening. So Raja gave his bundle of jewellery to the scavenger in exchange of the mandal. He went home, took the mandal from the scavenger and played his mandal and remained happy. What could be the objective of folklore than the essence and moral of the tales!

This tale which I heard as a child symbolizes that happiness is more than a heap of treasure. We can buy a heap of gold but not happiness. This is an ancient tale but sounds quite relevant even today. Like this one, folktales teach us many valuable truth about life. Tales are embedded with multilayered meanings of great morals. Even though they are prevalent among the obscure and illiterate people, even though they are dismissed as old, out dated and irrelevant by the hegemonic cultures, they can offer lessons of wisdom to the so called educated, modern and urban people. Khubchandani rightly points out: "In hegemonic cultures, local knowledge of the subaltern is 'denigrated' as myth, primitiveness, superstition, or at best is exotic and cosmetic. On the other hand, local knowledge of the privileged is passed on as universal truth" (39).

The aim of this paper is to discuss a few folktales from Raj Bora Sambar region and demonstrate that even though they come from an obscure and mostly illiterate and semi-illiterate background, they can serve as words of wisdom to the modern human society.

### Story telling

Story telling tradition is as old as human civilization. It perhaps began with

people sharing their experience with one another after a day's work. People would sit

together and share their every day experiences. They also told stories about gods and

goddesses, legendary persons and other supernatural power which stimulated them

to be more imaginary and thus reality and imagination shaped the essence of folktales

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People told stories and listened to them from one another. Tales were transmitted from one generation to the other. Thus, they became a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, culture and traditions. Tales are performed in different contexts, socio-religious ceremonies to transmit knowledge (values, philosophy and beliefs) and so on. Tales are also told for recreational purposes. Family and society ( akam and puram ), as mentioned by AK Ramanujam, have been the two domains of telling stories. It is a well-known fact that The Panchatantra was written to educate the princes of royal lineage. It is said that when a psychologically disturbed person went to a mendicant in ancient times, the latter would prescribe medicine and a folktale.

India has a rich tradition of storytelling known as the Katha tradition. India is also known as the home of many great tales such as Katha Sarita Sagara, Betala pancha Vimsati, Dasa Kumara Charita, Suka Saptati, Panchatantra and so on. We can find folk elements in the contemporary arts, crafts and forms of literature and culture. Being a multi-lingual nation, it has tales in many languages both in oral and written forms. Even today, there are many tales which are still in oral form. They are predominantly available in rural areas. Hence the rural and the oral go together. But it is also true that one can't ignore the existence of urban folktales. Interestingly,

many management guru are now using and reinterpreting folktales and narratives as one of the best instrument in understanding and resolving the complex management situation. Nevertheless, the rural common folks seem to be responsible for preserving this tradition.

Odisha being a state of great linguistic diversity has a sizeable tribal and rural population. It has a repository of tales in numerous languages. This richness drew scholars like Verrier Elwin and Lokaratna Kunja Bihari Das to document tales from the nook and corner of Odisha. Elwin's monumental collection Tribal Myths from Orissa is such a pioneering work. Lokaratna Kunja Bihari Dash not only collected folktales but also other folk forms from different parts of Odisha. These forms include myths, riddles, songs, games, folk drama and proverbs. His collection

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Folklore of Orissa published by Odisha Sahitya Akademi is a treasure for scholars interested in folklore in general and folktales in particular. Department of Odia, Sambalpur University has brought out two collections of folktales titled Paschim Odisara Loka Katha (Folktales from West Orissa) by collecting stories from the undivided districts of Sambalpur, Balangir, and Sundargarh of Odisha. Among his several collections and scholarly works Mahendra Kumar Mishra's Oral Epics of

Kalahandi and Chitrseen Pasayat's various collections and scholarly works are worth

mentioning. All these efforts are praise worthy. However, there has been hardly any

efforts to document and study tales from the Raj Bora Sambar region in particular

though it has a rich treasure of folk forms. It is our endeavour, therefore, to

document selected tales from this region and explore the educational values present

in them. It is pertinent here to give a profile of the Raj Bora Sambar region.

### Raj Bora Sambar: A Profile

The Raj Bora Sambar (also known as Bura Sambar or Buda Sambar) region

covers some areas of Bargarh, Nuapara and borders of Balangir districts of West

Odisha. Padampur is been the centre of this region and the Bariha (from Binjhal Tribe) kings of Padampur have been the rulers. There is a legend behind its name-

Bora Sambar. Once, the Raja of Padampur went for hunting. He killed a constrictor

(known as Bora saamp in the local language). The snake was in the process of killing a deer (known as Sambar in Odia). So the combination of these two words

'Bora' and 'Sambar' makes the word Borasambar. Because it was ruled by the Rajas,

the suffix Raj is added to it and together it is called Raj Bora Sambar.

Raj Bora Sambar is a hilly region with its lush trees such as Mohul, Neem,

Sahaj, Saal and numerous hillocks all around. It has small rivers and patches of



fields. The fields produce a good rice grain which is known for its taste, cereals, groundnuts and other vegetables.

People of many castes (mostly the backward classes) and communities live in

this region. They include Binjhals, Sahara, Mirdha, Kolha, Kandha, KishanMali, Kusta, Bhulia, Agharia, Kulta, Kusta, Gond, Kumbhar, Dhoba, Gonda, Chamar, Ghasi, Kulta and Brahmins. Most of communities mentioned above can be termed as

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indigenous people. They have been living in this region for generations. They are from common peasants, labourers, servants and known as common folk. They have

a rich tradition of folklore including songs, myths, legends, riddles, proverbs and tales. A large section of the people depends on agriculture. After a day's labour they

spend their evenings in different forms of entertainment. These include tales, songs,

dance, theatre, games, music, and riddles. They also celebrate different festivals which give them opportunities to practice and perform these forms. Rituals are also

another occasions for such performances. All these factors make this region culturally very rich and vibrant. The local arts and crafts including handlooms, basket weaving and music are very famous. The people of this region have significant contribution for famous Sambalpuri music and Sambalpuri handloom.

## The Tradition of Story telling:

Story telling is a vibrant and living tradition in this region. Children are told stories by parents and grand- parents, by peers and relatives. Children learn traditional values, traits, skills through folktales.

We listened to stories told by parents, grand parents and relatives. Even guests who visited our village also told stories. In the process of telling stories a story teller would sing, dance and perform different acts to make their stories interesting and captivating. Story telling sessions used to be very long, sometimes

the entire night.

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One may caution that these stories are though specific to Raj Bora Sambar

region, they might be found in other places as well. This is just because stories travel

through different means. However, majority of the tales included in this collection are specific to the Raj Bora Sambar region. An in depth analysis of socio-cultural and economic practices will reveal this. Dorje Penjore in his article titled, "Folktales

<sup>15</sup> I realized that this tradition was disappearing slowly with the spread of modernity. We don't find this kind of performance taking place any more. I thought these tales should be documented in some form. So I decided to recollect them and document them. In case of doubt I had to consult a number of people who share the same experience. I have also referred to a number of secondary sources just to brush up my mind. Thus, I could put together some folk tales so that they could be preserved and could be selectively used for pedagogic purposes later. In addition to these, I have a collection of songs, proverbs and riddles.

in Values Transmission” explains four functions of folktales. The four main functions are:

1. Children Education
2. Entertainment
3. Repository of History, Language and Values
4. Spiritual Function

The folktales in question also perform similar functions. Tales told to children for education and entertainments are usually performed by women at home whereas

tales told in public are performed by men. About folklore Blackburn and Ramanujan

point out in their introduction to Another Harmony (1986) that, it functions as part of

a culture; they also act as carrier of culture. As they points out: “Folklore is not only

a culture system with a special content, but a culture carrier which diffuses differently than other cultural systems” (19). Based on the tales of Raj Borasambar

this can be equally realized.

There are a few tales that perform spiritual function. For instance the tale of

“Karamsani” discussed here as the story of fate and efforts are told on the occasion

of Karamsani festival to sensitize people about role of destiny or fate.

It is pertinent here to discuss some of the features of these folktales. Most of

the folktales are about common folk. We do find a king or queen here and there but

common folk like farmers, servants, labourers form major part in these tales. The common jobs performed by them are food gathering, collecting firewood and farming and earn their livelihood with manual labour. Many oral tales portray master and slave relations and the servant outwits the master. We also find that a

person, even if he is a servant, can rise to the level of a king through his efforts. Many

characters are disguised as tiger, jackal, frog, mouse, crocodile and hippo. More importantly, each of these tales has a lesson.

Another feature of these tales is that, these are familiar to the audience. Because they are familiar, the audiences also take part in the process of story telling.

When the audiences are familiar with the tales there is a greater demand on the

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### Lokaratna Vol III

performance of the story teller. The audiences respond by appreciating, endorsing or

commenting as the story teller tells the story.

The stories are inter-connected. The story teller connects stories and after

stories and goes on. It depends on the story teller's skills to connect and continue the

session.  
n.

The performance of folktales brings together other genres as well. There is

convergence of folk forms such as songs, dance and riddles and proverbs. For instance, telling about a old man he would cite a proverb “Budha ke hela saathe, budhar katha nai kate” meaning “The old man has turned sixty, his words are not honoured.” Such folk forms are integrated into tales which themselves are educative

in nature. Sometimes, a dialogue from a story is also used as proverb. For instance,

people refer to the story “Story of the Blind Man” and derive the following quote and

use as proverb: Ghoda chinhili

niswase

Hira chinhili  
usase

Raja chinhili  
biswase.

Translatio  
n

I could recognize the proper horse by his  
respiration

I could recognize the proper diamond by  
weighing

And the proper king by  
faith.

Here it is interesting to see how another genre gets into the other. In the first

instance, a proverb gets into a tale and in the second example; a dialogue of a tale

becomes a  
proverb.

There are also beautiful songs found in many of the stories. For instance  
consider the following song from “The Seven Sisters.” The bride is asked to get  
up

and join her bridegroom at the altar. But she is not able to do so as she has  
been

bitten by the snake placed on her head by her elder sister. The dialogue is in the  
form

of  
song:

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Uthana, nanire basana  
nanire

bhai mor asila  
bare

Uthi naipare, basi naipare  
bohu

Bodo nani dele kunjabana khusa  
je

Munda dana dana  
kare

Translation  
:

Get up my dear sit down my  
dear

The groom's procession has  
arrived.

I can't get up dear sister-in-law nor can I sit  
down

The elder sister has made my  
hair

And I get a terrible  
headache.

A few words may be told about the poetics of these tales. They are a  
feast to

the eyes of the audiences. The language, style and skills of presentation and  
performance are worth witnessing in action. They are captivating and  
mesmerizing.

The use of symbols, references and suggestions of meaning will be a good area  
of

research for a researcher to  
appreciate.

Wisdom in the Folktales

Now let us discuss a few folktales and see what they can offer to our  
society

as form of education. "The Story of the Magic Sticks" is about a boy who lives  
with

his mother. He is asked by his mother to go to the forest and get firewood. When  
he

tries to cut down a tree, the tree goddess asks him not to cut down the tree and  
bestows him with gifts thrice. But he is not able to materialize the gifts for twice  
due

to the cunning of his uncle. However, he is successful at the end. The magic

stick

gifted to him by the goddess punishes the villains. He has been cheated by his uncle

for his un-critical nature. It teaches us not to be carried away by advice of some

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body and apply one's intelligence. Intelligence after all is doing the right thing in the

right place in a right way in the right manner. We must verify facts as the age has

become very complicated. It also teaches us that if we are honest and have faith in

God, the worldly forces cannot create hurdles for us. This humorous tale teaches

valuable lessons to all of us.

There are stories about practical knowledge and for teaching values.

“The

story of Fate and Efforts” also known as story of Karamsani in this region is one of

them. A person is given rewards thrice but he is not able to enjoy that as the right

time has not reached. It is about fate. If we don't have something in our fate, we

may not get it in spite of our efforts and perseverance. This means that we should not

try to control and achieve everything we desire. We need to understand that we can't

achieve anything and everything in this world. What ever we get we get them out of



the mercy of the Supreme. We should have this faith. If we are too much ambitious

and have overconfidence we will be disappointed if we faith to achieve. This belief is

very important at this age of neck throat completion and rat race.

We should do our duty and leave it to God's will. "The Story of the Blind Man" deals with recognizing ability of the differently-able person. Though he is visually challenged, he is able to perform tasks that are near impossible for an ordinary person. In this age we are sensitive to such talents and abilities. This particular story reinforces the same lesson.

Folktales are considered to be outdated and irrelevant to the modern society,

but we see their relevance in many stories. For instance, the stories- "Balmati and

Her Seven Brothers" deal with the barbaric nature of human beings. Balmati is the

youngest sister of her seven brothers. Her seven brothers do not hesitate to kill her

by coming into the influence of their wives. Their wives are just jealous of Balmati

and due to that they prompted their husbands to kill her. Similar in human and barbaric incidents do take place even in our so called modern society.

The tale "Mother Can't Be Replaced" deals with the ungrateful nature and insensitive behavior of the present generation towards elders. Here, the son does not

hesitate to bury his mother alive when she becomes old and unwanted. One need not

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point out the cruel ways old parents are ill-treated. These two are pertinent issues

confronting the society even today. There are disputes and killing among brothers

and sisters for property. We hardly find love and cooperation among them. Such cases are more obvious in political families where money and power are the driving

forces. The tale “The Seven Sisters” is about jealousy among siblings. Here, there is

a plot hatched by the elder sister to kill the girl on the day of her marriage as the girl’s marriage has been fixed even though the elder one is yet to be married. The

elder sister places a black snake in her hair while making her hair. As a result she

gets terrible headache and is not able to get up and go to the marriage alter. This is

discovered later by her groom later. This vice is one of the five vices that has grip

over modern man and women too. The story teaches us to get rid of our jealousy and

be happy with others success.

These stories are treasure trove of values and education. They not only bear

the testimony of a rich local tradition but can serve to teach the present generations.

They can be related to the situations that prevail in well-to-do families, industries

and corporate offices.

They can also be related to modern narratives including novel and films and selectively be utilized for pedagogic purpose as well. These tales have a lot of things

to offer to children. They teach them universal values such as compassion, generosity and honesty while disapproving attributes such as cruelty, greed and dishonesty. Contemporary formal education can offer cognitive, linguistic and vocational skills, but fail to impart social values and behaviour. Folktales can fill up

the gap by transmitting human values and moral education. Folktales make children

imagine and create their mental pictures and mental exercise leaves deepest impression. Since they are embedded with multilayered meanings, children get a lot

of scope to interpret them in different ways. Parents and teachers are apprehensive

about exposing certain kinds of tales for they are about immorality, violence and sensual/obscene. A careful selection is necessary. We can always make a selection.

Conclusion

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These were just a few examples of folktales that can offer educational values and

wisdom to our modern society. As pointed out earlier these tales come from the

illiterate and obscure communities, but they have great values to teach our modern,

urban and elite society. In the time of moral degradation, it is time that we looked for

the tales that are part of our heritage to draw morals from them. Our school

curriculum should also include such values in them so that our children learnt to be

good human beings instead of running after money, power and positions and

achieving things through wrong means.

If efforts are made to select appropriate stories and appropriate connections are made

they will be more effective. It is hope that scholars will venture into exploring such

possibilities. Management gurus have been using tales from The Ramayana and

Mahabharata to bring home certain concepts and skills (e.g. Soft skills). So, why not

we also explore possibilities of using folktales? I would like to conclude by narrating

another story. The day my grand father went to school for the first time, the school

inspector happened to visit the school. He came to my grandfather's class and asked,

"Children, how does pond water get muddy?" My grand father answered, "Sir, it gets

muddy when people catch fish" There was a guffaw of laughter in the class as the

bookish answer was "Rain water makes pond water muddy." This example shows

that our education system does not recognize local and experiential knowledge as

knowledge but respects farfetched things as knowledge. The plight of folktale is

the

same. We tend to ignore it as a form of knowledge. Now the global agencies have

felt for a need for indigenous wisdom to be part of our formal education. For instance, "Spelling out the challenges of indigenous education, a UNESCO study

envisages that traditional knowledge of indigenous people, alive in oral tradition through customs and festivals, folklore and artifacts, should form part of integral education"(Khubchandani 39). It is time we recognized their values. These values

will be helpful to the present society which is suffering from the cancer of violence,

hatred, fear and threats, natural calamities, environmental pollutions and degradation

of moral values. One only hopes that the indigenous wisdom might help.

Note

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1 a kind of

drum

2 a magical big iron bowl with

treasure in it

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Tribal Literature in India (2005), English through Folktales (2010), several sets of

instructional materials on Study Skills in English and more than twenty research papers.)

Story : I

## Balmati and Her Seven Brothers

The old man Sadhab had seven sons and a daughter. The girl's name was Balmati. All his seven sons were married and lived with their parents together. Balmati was also married. She had come to her parents' home to spend a few days with them. Her sisters-in-law did not like her. They always made complaints against her. Her brothers except the seventh one were also annoyed with her.

One day, the brothers and their wives went to the field to work. It was her turn to cook food for them. While cutting leafy vegetable, she cut her finger. It was bleeding. She thought, "If I wipe it on my sister-in-laws' saris, they will shout at me. If I wipe on my sari, it will become dirty. So let me wipe it with the vegetable. So she wiped the blood with the vegetable and her blood got mixed up with the leafy vegetable.

When the brothers came back home, she served them food. They said, "What have you mixed with the vegetable, dear? It tastes so good." The girl answered, "Nothing as such. While cutting vegetable, I cut my finger and it bled. So the blood got mixed up with the vegetable. Due to this, the vegetable might be tasting good." The seven brothers thought if her blood was so tasty, then how tasty her meat must be? We must kill her and eat her meat. The seventh brother loved Balmati. So he kept quiet. But when the elder ones forced him, he did not raise any objection.

One day the brothers told their father that Balmati had come from her in-law's house for a long time and she was required to go back. If needed,

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they could accompany her to her in-law's house. Their parents liked the idea and allowed them to accompany her to her in-law's house. Since they had to walk through forests, they carried bows and arrows with them. They also took their dog along with them. They made their plan to kill her on the way.

As they were walking in the forest, they decided to take rest under a big



tree. They told her about their plan. They asked her to climb the tree and sit on a branch spreading her hair open. Then the eldest brother shot his arrow by singing:

Tie your hair dear  
Balmati

The arrow is going to kill  
you

Balmati wept and  
replied:

Let the arrow kill me, my enemy  
brother

I am not going to tie my  
hair.

Then the elder brother shot his arrow but it did not pierce her and moved somewhere else. Like that several of them tried but no arrow could pierce her. She also did not tie her hair calling them her enemies. Finally, the youngest one's turn came. He was unwilling to shoot. He was very sad. But the elder brothers forced him to do so. So he sang:

Tie your hair dear  
Balmati

The arrow is going to kill  
you.

She replied  
:

Let the arrow kill me, my enemy  
brother.

I am not going to tie my  
hair

Finally, it was the turn of the youngest brother. He loved his sister very

much. He did not want to kill her at all. He tried to avoid his aim from her but finally it went and pierced Balmati and she collapsed on the ground.

As she fell down the brothers cut her into pieces and prepared her meat. As the six brothers were busy cooking her meat, the younger one went for an

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errand with the dog. There he killed the dog and cooked its meat and hid it with him.

It was meal time. All of them sat down to eat the meat of Balmati, but the youngest one took out the goat's meat and started eating. He hid Balmati's meat in a bowl. After they finished eating, he went towards the pond and buried the meat on the bank of the pond. There Balmati and the dog were born as two lotuses.

At the sunset they came back home and told the parents that they had left Balmati in her in-law's place. The parents were happy.

At Balmati's in-law's house, people were worried as she had not come back for several days. Then they decided to go to her parents house to take her along with them. As they were approaching Balmati's village, they came across the pond. There she saw two lotus flowers. She asked her husband to pluck them. As the old man entered the water to pluck the big lotus, the big lotus asked the small one:

Who comes to pluck the  
lotus?

Dear, who comes to pluck the  
lotus?

The small flower  
replied:

Your father-in-law comes to pluck the  
lotus

Dear, your father in law comes to pluck the lotus.

The flower moved ahead and the old man could not pluck it and came back. Thus, the old couple continued their journey and reached Balmati's house.

Balmati's parents greeted them and offered them their hospitality. Balmati's in-laws told them the purpose of their visit. They said that they had come to take Balmati back. Balmati's parents were shocked and said that her brothers had already reached Balmati. Then they called the brothers and found out everything. Then the old couple told about the two flowers. So they realized that Balmati might have born as flower.

Then they went to pluck the flowers. As the elder brothers went to pluck the flowers the big flower asked:

Who plucks the lotus

Dear, who plucks the lotus?

The small flower replied:

The elder brother plucks the lotus dear

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The elder brother plucks the lotus.

The flower moved ahead and the elder brother could not pluck the flower. Then they went and called Balmati's husband. He came and went to pluck the flower. The big flower asked:

Who plucks the lotus

Dear, who plucks the  
lotus?

The small flower  
replied:

Your husband plucks the lotus  
dear

Your husband plucks the  
lotus

The flower allowed herself to be plucked. As soon as he touched her, she immediately turned into Balmati and came out of water . Both of them went home and got their brothers punished by the king and they lived happily.

Story -  
2

### The Story of the Magic Stick

Once there was a boy and his mother who lived in a village. The boy was called Bera meaning fool. His mother prepared muri, puffed rice and sold in the village and both of them earned their living with whatever she got from it.

One day the mother said, "Bera, you go and get some firewood so that I can prepare puffed rice." Bera said yes and went to the jungle with his axe. In the jungle, as he hit a tree with his axe the tree God said, " Bera, don't cut me. I will give you a cooking bowl. You just need to place it on the hearth and think of some food you want to eat and that will be ready in the bowl. You need not collect firewood or food any more." Bera was very happy.

He took the bowl and started for home. On the way, he decided to visit his uncle's house. He went there and told his uncle about the magic bowl. His uncle was a greedy man. He said, "All right, nephew. Your bad days have gone. Now you can have a good life." He asked Bera to

keep the bowl in the house, go to the pond and have bathe before having his meal. Bera went to have his bathe. When Bera was away, his uncle exchanged the

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bowl with their old one and kept it as if it was Bera's bowl. Bera came back after his bath and had his food , bade farewell and went home taking the bowl.

He went home. His mother asked, "Where is your fire wood?" He replied, "Mother, we don't need any firewood now. You need not even cook. The God of the tree has given me this bowl. You just have to place it on the hearth and think of some food and it will be ready in the bowl." His mother was very happy and put it on the hearth and said, "Puffed rice." But there was nothing in the bowl. It was still empty.

Bera thought, "The God of the tree has cheated me. I will go and cut it down tomorrow." The next day, he went and gave the tree a blow. The God of the tree said, " Bera, don't cut me. I will give you an earthen pot. You place it on the hearth and think of some food and it will be ready in it." Bera again went to his uncle's house. He showed the earthen pot to his uncle. His uncle was happy. He told Bera to keep the pot in the house, go and come back after bath. Bera went to the pond. During that time, he exchanged the pot and hid the pot inside. When Bera came back home, his mother got angry and said, " You haven't got the fire wood today. There is nothing in the house. How can I cook without fire wood?" Bera said, "Mother, the God of the tree has given me this earthen pot. If you place it on the hearth and think of any food, it will be ready." The mother placed it on the hearth and said, "puffed rice." The bowl was still empty. Mother got angry and said, "Why don't you get fire wood instead of all these things? We will not have anything to eat tomorrow." Bera said, "Mother, I am certainly going to get fire wood from the tree tomorrow."

The next day, he went to the jungle and gave the first blow on the tree. The tree said, "Bera, please stop. Don't cut me. Today I am going to give you two things. Take these three sweet cakes and a stick. However much you eat from the cakes, three will remain with you. If anybody plays any mischief, the stick

will punish him.” Bera was very happy. He went to his uncle’s house and told his uncle about it. His uncle again sent Bera to have his bath and then when Bera was away they tried to eat the sweet cakes. That time, the stick started hitting them on their face. Then it threw away their things and broke many of their cooking utensils.

When Bera came back home, he saw that the things were lying scattered. Their faces looked disfigured. All of them looked upset. Bera could understand everything and came back home. When his mother saw him without fire wood, she became very angry. She said, “You are not going to change. I don’t know what

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should I do with you?” Bera replied, “ See, mother, I have got three sweet cakes for us to eat. However much we eat, three will remain extra. If any one plays mischief with us, he will be beaten up by the stick. Our sorrow is over.” His mother had the sweet cakes with Bera but three sweet cakes still remained. They lived happily ever after.

Tale -  
3

### The Seven Sisters

Sadhaba, the businessman had seven daughters. They reached marriageable age. Among

them, the youngest one looked most beautiful. The chief’s son from another village came

to know about her beauty and wanted to marry her. But she had an unmarried elder

sister. So how could she marry before her elder sister’s marriage? But the boy’s parents

insisted to make her their bride. So the girl's parents agreed to get her married.  
The

boy's parents came to see the girl and their marriage was  
fixed.

On the marriage day, the bridegroom came in a procession. The  
bridegroom's

people were received and treated with care and respect. Then the marriage ritual  
started.

The bridegroom sat on the bedi, (alter) and waited for the bridegroom to come.  
The

bride's father hinted to the bride's companions to get her to the bedi. They went  
and

asked her to  
come:

Get up dear and come  
out

Your groom awaits for you at the  
alter

She  
replied:

I am not able to get up my dear  
friends

I am not able to sit  
down

My elder sister has made my  
hair

And I get a terrible  
headache

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The time was running out. The groom's people asked the girl's aunt to get

her to the alter. The aunt went and said:

Get up dear and come out

Your groom awaits for you at the alter

The girl replied:

I am not able to get up my dear aunt

I am not able to sit down

My elder sister has made my hair

And I get a terrible headache

It was getting late. The groom's people were restless. They requested the

girl's family members to accompany to the alter but the girl said the same

thing and did not come. Finally the boy said, " Let me go and try." Usually



it is not allowed for the couple to meet before marriage, but since it was a

case of emergency, people allowed the boy to go and get the girl.  
He

went near the girl and  
said:

Get up my dear come to the  
alter

Time is running  
out

We have to travel a long  
distance

We have no time to  
lose.

The girl  
replied:

I know my  
dear

But I am not able to sit or  
stand

My elder sister has made my  
hair

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And I get a terrible  
headache

The boy wanted to see her head and the decoration made by her girl's elder sister. He could see a black snake in the hair. It had bitten her head and that was why the girl's head was reeling in pain.

The boy took out his knife and immediately killed the snake. A medicine man was called and he cured the girl. Then the marriage ritual was conducted. Both of them came back home and led a happy life.

#### Tale - 4

##### Mother Can't Be Replaced

Once upon a time an old woman and her son lived together. The son's name was Dhaneshwar. When Dhaneshwar came of marriageable age, his mother arranged a girl for him and got them married. After getting married, Dhaneshwar was influenced by his wife so much that he started abusing his mother. His wife also started illtreating his mother. Dhaneshwar knew everything but kept quiet. He did not say anything. He was squeezed in between. On the one hand there was

his own mother who carried her for ten months and gave him birth. On the other

hand, his newly married beautiful wife.

One day his wife said, “ We have to get rid of this old woman somehow. I

have thought of a plan. You tell her that there is a treasure box in the field and

you are going to dig the treasure. She will also come to see it. You dig the pit.

While she looks into it, sitting on the edge of the pit, push her inside and cover

her there.”

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Dhaneshwar replied, “ It is a good idea. I shall do as you say.” The next

day he told his mother that he was going to dig the treasure box in the field and

went to the field with his spade and started digging a pit. His mother was greedy

and curious. She followed him. Dhaneshwar started digging the pit. His mother

came there and sat on the edge of the pit and started looking into it. That time, he

pushed her inside the pit and covered her with soil and came back home. He was

very happy to inform this to his wife. His wife also became happy. They had their

food and went to sleep. In the middle of the night, they could hear the knock on

their door. When they got up and opened the door, they thought that must be

ghost of the old woman. The old woman replied, " No, I am not a ghost at all.

How can there be any ghost when I am alive. Dhaneshwar asked, "I had buried

you there. How did you come back and what are you carrying in your hands? "

The old woman replied, " You did not cover the soil properly. So I could get up.

These are goods left by the thieves. When I was lying down in the pit, four thieves

came under the tree and started sharing their stolen goods. When they saw me

getting up, they left the place in fear thinking that I was a ghost. You can take

this wealth now. Take this wealth and ask people in the village if they are ready to

be your mother by replacing me and by accepting the wealth. Dhaneshwar took

the wealth and called at every door, " Take this wealth and be my mother. "

People saw him and closed their doors." Then Dhaneshwar came back home and

said, "Mother, you be at home. Nobody can replace you. We have made a

mistake. You must forgive us." Since then three of them lived happily.

## Five

### Effort and Fate

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Lokaratna Vol  
III

People in early days believed in fate. According to them if you do not

have good fate for something, you cannot achieve that in spite of your

efforts. The following story is about fate and efforts.

Once the God of fate and the God of efforts were debating under a banyan

tree that was situated at the end of the village. The god of Fate said,

“People become rich or poor according to my wish. Without my

blessings, they are nothing. The God of Efforts said, “If people don’t make

efforts they cannot become what they want. It is my blessings that make

people achieve what they want to achieve in life.” But the God of Fate did

not agree with it. Both of them argued over it for a long time. At that time,

an old man was passing by that way carrying a bundle of fire wood.

The

two Gods asked him, "Dear old fellow, we are discussing a serious

subject. Please come and resolve it." The old man replied, " I have no

time to resolve your problem. I have to go home soon and give the

firewood to my wife so that she would start cooking. The God Effort said,

"All right, you take this bundle of coins and buy things of your choice and

live a happy life. Now onwards, you need not have to collect fire wood.

You can throw away the firewood and go home." Then he told the God of

Fate, " You will see the old man will become rich and his life will change

all together. The God of Fate said, " Let us see, what happens."

The old man threw away the bundle of firewood and reached

home. He found that his wife had gone somewhere locking the house. So

he put the bundle of coins somewhere near the door and went to call his

wife. At that time the neighbour's wife came and stole away the bundle of

coins. The old man's wife was furious to see him without any fire wood.

The old man said, "You forget about the fire wood. I have got a bundle of

coins. We need to collect firewood anymore." His wife said, "All

right

give me the bundle of coins you have got. When the old man looked for

the bundle of coins above the door, he did not find it there. The old

woman got more furious and shouted at him. The next day the old man

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### Lokaratna Vol III

was coming that way carrying a bundle of firewood. The two 'Gods saw

him and asked, " I had given you so much money, but you still go to the

jungle to get fire wood. Your fate has n't changed. "The old man said,

"No sir, the bundle of coins you had given is stolen. " The God of Efforts

said, "Okay. You take these gold coins and they will change your fate."

The old man was happy to see such a big gold coin. He collected the coin

and went to the pond to bathe. He kept the gold coin on the rock and got

inside the water to bathe. In the mean time, the coin was swallowed up by

a fish. The old man came out of the water and saw that there was no coin.

He was sad and came back home. His wife who was waiting for him was

again disappointed and abused him for coming empty

handed.

The next day, the old man again went to the jungle to get firewood.

On the way, he met the two gods. The god of fate said, " See the old man

is like that due to lack of my blessings." The God of effort said, " All

right. You bless the old man and let me see how he does." Then the God

of Fate said, " Yes, your fate will change with in the seven days. You take

the seven coins and buy things for you and your family and lead a happy

and prosperous life. "The old man asked, " What can I buy with these

seven coins sir? " The god of Fate replied, " You don't worry as long as

my blessings are with you, you will never be in wants." The old man

thanked the god of Effort and left for home. On the way he thought what

to buy. Then he saw the fisherman with a big fish. The old man bought

the fish and came home. He called his wife and said, " See I have got a big

fish. You cut it and cook." When his wife cut the fish, she could find a

gold coin in the stomach of the fish. When the old man saw it he realized

that it was the lost coin which was swallowed by the fish. He became very

happy and danced in happiness as if he was possessed. He said, "



Yes, I

have got the coin. I will get back the money  
too.”

The neighbour’s wife heard this and got frightened. She  
thought, “

The old man is possessed. So he will make out that she has  
stolen his