

Modernist Movement in Odia Literature: The Revolutionary Renaissance (1866-1920)

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Abstract

Tracing back to the plight of Odisha we can state that it was started by the alien rule at the middle of the Medieval rule. Lots of atrocities were inflicted upon the Odia identity in the form of disintegration, attack on Odia language by giving her a lower status and imposing foreign nomenclature, and finally lackadaisical attitude of the alien Government towards the precarious condition of the native Odia people. This article tries to draw the attention of readers to how it was in the aftermath of the Great Famine of 1866 that the seeds of nationalism were sown by the educated and learned sons of Odisha which helped in ushering a new era in Odia speaking land. This work also delves into the fact that the result of the modernist movement for literary revivalism was significant as it brought out a notable change in the field of education, health and political atmosphere of Odisha. This article also aims at providing information regarding the hardship of the people of Odisha due to colonial rule and the British government's apathy. The colonial government did very little to preserve Odia identity and language. The objective of this study is to throw some light on the magnificent works of some renowned patriotic and scholarly writers of the state of Odisha. The archival studies were followed to complete the article.

Key Words: *Kabi Samrat, Bidagdha Kabi, Reetiyuga, Madalapanji, Cutchery*

Introduction

The Odia society went through a prolonged phase of decadence and decline, especially between 1368 to 1865, which, in turn, affected Odisha polity, society and economy. Its once glorious art and culture also came under a dark shadow during this period. This period which traversed between the medieval and modern period of Indian history witnessed many historical changes in the form of different ruling dynasties viz., the *Afghans*, the *Mughals*, the *Naib-Nazims*, the Marathas and finally the British who established themselves on the Odisha soil more through fowl means. The Turko-Afghans from Bengal made Utkal or Medieval Odisha lose her identity in 1568. The East India Company occupied Odisha in the year 1803. The establishment of British rule was followed by a long stretch of anarchy and oppression. The age-old tradition and language of Odisha came under attack from western culture. It was after the Paika Rebellion that came up in response to the British Government's most favourite modus oprenda better known as the policy of. Divide and Rule under the advice of the

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administrative officers from Bengal. These officers, who represented a privileged community because of their proximity to colonial rulers, went about spreading their own language and culture in the province of Odisha. Because of these changes in the past glory of Odia language and literature was drowned amidst the ocean of modern and western culture. However, in a dramatic turn of events, it was saved by some of the worthy sons of Odisha soil who not only rescued the Odia language but also opened the era of renaissance in Odia literature and took it to another level.

As a consequence of foreign domination Odia tracts like Sambalpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Sonpur, Redhakhol and many other adjoining areas were united with the erstwhile Central Province. The Madras presidency covered Odia tracts up to the lake of Chilika on its north including Ganjam and the adjoining areas. The coastal strip which included Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and adjoining hilly tracts got included in the sprawling Bengal Presidency. As a result of which all these segregated places failed to maintain the dignity of their mother tongue, the highly rich Odia language. It led ultimately to a sad situation where this ancient and prosperous language gradually lost her previous glory and charm. The dignity of Odia language was at a serious stake as Bengali, Hindi and Telugu languages tried to influence and establish supremacy over this rich language. Although Odisha passed through a period of political confusion, in the field of culture it was flourishing due to the literary contributions of many poets, dramatists, writers, novelists, etc. During this period notable poets like Upendra Bhanja, renowned as *Kabi Samrat*, Baladeva Rath known as *Kavi Surya*, *Abhimanyu Samantasimhara* famous as *Bidagdha Kavi*, *Dinakrishna Das* and many more started the trend of writing devotional songs in a period famous as *Reetiyuga*.

Dominance of Bengali language

After the British occupation of Odisha in 1803 both Odia and Persian language were used in the Cutcherry. The Christian missionaries under the guidance of William Kerry, Marshman, and Wadd also tried to maintain cordial relations with the general public by gaining knowledge in Odia language. The Commissioner of Cuttack sent a letter to the Deputy Collector of Cuttack on 22 January 1838 urging him to prepare a list of those officers who had to pass the examination of Odia language before 1 August. The Odia language was prevalent among high Zamindaries and the areas covering 45 miles from the Subarnarekha to the southern parts of Ganjam, Cuttack Tributary Mahal, and Zamindaries of Madras. So, it is a very useless comment to abolish this language used by such a vast number of people and to use Bengalee letters instead of Odia and to deprive the Odia people of all the Government jobs. The fate of the Odia language got a strong face list from Goldburry, the Commissioner who rejected the proposal outright being supported by Forbis, the Collector of Puri. However, the statement that Odia a sub language of Bengali, and the writing of Bengali letters with Odia pronunciation created a lot of resentment among the native people. Reverend J Longge read several valuable books and scriptures like the *Madala Panji*, *Gajapati Vamsabali*, *Kanchi Kaberi Pothi* and *Jagamohan*, etc. but unfortunately, he remarked that the Odia language had achieved very little progress and it should be merged with Bengali language. Earlier in 1857 Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Burmese were found suitable for the entrance examination for admission into Calcutta University but Odia and Assamese were neglected and not allowed as a medium of instruction

in educational institutions. He also stated that books and journals should all be printed in the Bengali language. By this the people of both Bengal and Odisha would get the opportunity to learn the Odia language. In an essay written on 17 September 1869, he again stated that Odias should take due interest in learning Bengali because there were so many high-standard books available in Bengali language. According to him Bengal happened to be a vast territory with a beautiful, properly uttered, and audible language than the mother tongue of the Odia people which was strongly condemned by the *Utkalollasini Sabha*. However, some domiciled intellectual Bengalees opined that proper unity could be brought in the country only by the most respected Sanskrit language which is the *Devabhasa* (language of God). Fortunately, Odisha had some benevolent British officials who supported the continuity of the Odia language like Inspector N S Harrison who strongly rebutted Uma Charan Haldar by saying that Odia is a separate language and textbooks should be written in this language. The *Utkal Dipika* informed the *Indian Mirror* that Odias were uninterested in learning Bengali due to educational obstacles and preferred improving their language through education in Odia. The year 1866 witnessed the occurrence of the 'Great Famine' and the publication of *Utkal Dipika*, the first newspaper in Odisha to raise her voice only for the sake of stability of the Odia language under the editorship of *Karmaveer* Gouri Shankar Roy. ¹The launch of *Utkal Dipika* excited those dedicated to preserve the Odia language. The Government issued the order in 1869 that education through Odia medium should be started in Odisha and appointed a special committee to decide the list of Odia textbooks. Gobinda Chandra Mahapatra was appointed as Deputy Inspector of Schools, Colonel Stanlee, Capt. Loo and Mahesh Chandra Bandyopadhyay were selected to supervise public education in Cuttack. The king of Dhenkanal donated Rs 1000/- to this committee. The general body of this committee was consisted of celebrated educationalists such as W. C. Lacey, Jaganmohan Roy, Bichitrananda Dash, Dwarka Nath Chakraborty, Kalipada Bandopadhyaya, Nabin Chandra Sarangi, Banamali Singh and Gouri Shankar Roy. The education committee in October 1869 decided to grant a prize of 300/- to write the history of Odisha for schools in the Odia language. In the 1870s, the Odia language faced challenges, and tensions between Bengalis and the Odias escalated beyond tolerance. The Bengalee officials with the tacit support of the British government planned to completely do away with the Odia language and they argued that Bengali should be the official language due to the modernity, education, and dominance of Bengalis in higher administrative positions.

Recommending Bengali as a vehicle for social mobility

Simultaneously a defamation campaign started that deliberately tried to denigrate the Odia language and culture. Those led this nefarious campaign also made uncharitable remarks about the intellectual and creative potential of Odia people. They felt that Odisha lacked quality in language, music, dance, attire, and ornaments, as people preferred cheap, stale goods over more expensive and quality items. In contrast to Bengalis and Muslims, who quickly befriended newcomers, the Odia people were less open to making such connections. They urged the natives to improve their lifestyle by adopting better clothing and furnishings, highlighting the indifference of Bengalis in Odisha. Exploiting the prevailing chaos, Bengalis gained significant control over Odisha's administration, appointing their relatives to high positions. However, the government's mandate to make Odia the official language and require officers to learn it irritated many Bengalis. Sterling noted that Bengalis in the north and Telugus in the south

dominated higher administrative positions, undermining the Odias with satirical comments. Supported by the *Hindu Patriot*, they claimed Bengalis were well-educated and skilled, which justified their appointments in government services across Bengal, Odisha, and Assam. They argued that all government activities in Odisha should be conducted in Bengali. The situation was further aggravated by Rajendra Lal Mitra who stated that unless the Odia language was wiped out, the region could never progress. He said that out of the population of Odisha which happened to be twenty lakhs, only twelve lakhs' people knew how to read or write. So, such a small mass would not be able to maintain Odia as a separate language. But in comparison to Odisha, Bengal happened to be a vast territory and had a rich cultural heritage. Therefore, they thought Bengali language could help Odia people in achieving mobility in life like English helped the upper-class Indians to achieve some mobility during colonial times. Thus, he condemned the efforts of those Odias who tried to establish a separate identity for their language. John Beams, Collector of Balasore, stated that apart from the coastal area of Odisha, the vast hilly tracts from Nagpur to Telangana, Odia happened to be the speaking language of all the hill tribes and the limited number of English and Bengali people would not be able to abolish this prosperous mother tongue of Odisha. He pointed out that the result of teaching Bengalee in Odia schools would be devastating as the Odia students would then hate their mother tongue. The Bengalees tried to show their culture, tradition, and civilization as much developed as the natives who maintained a gloomy life of superstition, ignorance, and a squeezed lifestyle. However, the Bengalees were wrong in their thoughts since ancient Odisha had a strong relationship with foreign countries like Java, Sumatra, and Borneo which was not seen anywhere in India. T.E. Ravenshaw, the commissioner of Cuttack, and Mr. Martin, the inspector at Medinipur, also were in the same page with John Beams. Besides them, educated personalities like Gouri Shankar Roy, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Acharya Pyari Mohan, and many others raised their voice against the sinister attitude of Bengalees. Baikuntha Nath De, the editor of the *Utkal Darpan*, on the inspiration of *Kabibar* Radhanath Roy, John Beams, *Bhaktakabi* Madhusudan Rao, and Pandit Mrityunjay Rath published valuable writings in the *Utkal Darpan* to show the virtue and heroic deeds of the Odia race. The book of Kantichandra Bhattacharya also attracted the attention of Raja Sudhala Dev of Bamanda who had taken the leadership to raise the prestige of Odia Language. Rangalal Bandopadhyaya, the Magistrate in Odisha, well versed in the ancient literature of Odisha never took Odia as a backward language. The smaller number of books published by Oriya authors proved Oriya was not an improved language, he opined. Rajendra Lai Mitra was supported by Kalipada Bandopadhyaya, the editor of *Utkal Hitaisini*. He praised the controversial book of Kantichandra Bhattacharya entitled— '*Oriya Ekti Swatantra Bhasa Naye*' published in the year 1869.

Utkala Dipika: A rallying point for support of Odia Language

Rajendra Lai Mitra was severely criticised for his above-mentioned opinions by some English officials and the Odia elite class. Some domiciled Bengals also came forward in support of the Odia language. First of all, the *Utkal Dipika*, under the editorship of Gouri Shankar Roy raised its voice against the opinion of Rajendra Lai Mitra. It stated that Mitra had presented a wrong statistical account about the population of Odisha since he had only counted the people in the plain areas called *Mughalbandi* area whereas Odia language was used among the people starting from Medinipur on the north to Ganjam on the south, and also in Sambalpur on the

west and the adjoining areas. Further, the people living in the *Garjat* areas (had not been counted by Mitra. *Utkal Dipika* highlighted the popular Odia resentment x that the British government generally paid more attention to Bengal than Odisha. The slogan Odisha is for Odias was able to replace the Bengalee language by keeping the honor of the Odia language. Thus, the reaction against the abolition of the Odia language was very sharp. Gradually, Odia people got appointments in higher posts. Nanda Kishore Bal was appointed as Joint Inspector of Higher Education. Radhanatha Roy, the young poet, became the Deputy Inspector of Schools at Balasore. As the Education Department was handled by such celebrities and awakened scholars, the nature and character of Odia language, and literature underwent a sea change. Radhanath became the rising star of this new horizon of 'Renaissance' enjoined by Fakir Mohan, Madhusudan Rao, Chintamani Mohanty, Ram Shankar Roy, Gangadhar Meher, Nanda Kishore Bal and many more. The last part of the 19th century witnessed another conspiratorial scheme of victimization of the Odia language in Sambalpur came under the government of the Central Provinces. John Woodburn, the then Commissioner of the Central Provinces ordered on 15th Jan 1895 replacement of Odia by Hindi which was to be used in the courts of Sambalpur, Bolangir and Kalahandi. The historical date of 1st January 1895 was fixed to carry out the order of using Hindi as the official language in Sambalpur instead of Odia which was the saddest news published in the C.P. Gazette dated 19th January 1895.

IMPOSITION OF HINDI IN SAMBALPUR

Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna, the first and foremost editor of the *Sambalpur Hitaisini* raised his voice against this unjust proposal. *The Hitaisini*, *the Dipika*, and the *Sambad Vahika* became the weapons for Nilamani Vidyaratna, Gouri Shankar Roy, Madhusudan Das, and Fakir Mohan Senapati, the four educated and erudite prodigal sons of Odisha, who combinedly started a fierce attack against the imposition of Hindi on the people of Sambalpur. In an article in *the Hitaisini* under the title 'Abolition of the Mother Tongue', Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna and the regional Gazette published that some of the high officials were planning for the implementation of Hindi and complete abolition of the Odia from linguistic landscape pf Sambalpur. The people of Sambalpur should strongly oppose this news. Otherwise, the risk of being labeled as cowardly, and those in power may view them as weak and ineffective. Vidyaratna made significant efforts to uplift the Odias in Sambalpur, fostering pride in their language through the publication of new Odia writings. Simultaneously leaders like Chandrasekhar Behera, Sripati Mishra, and Baikunthanath Pujari joined the campaign to advocate for Odia over Hindi.

On September 2, 1901, Madhusudan Das, President of the *Utkal Sabha*, sent a telegram to the Viceroy, protesting the proposed removal of Odia as the official language. At a meeting in Cuttack, he put light on the fact that Sambalpur was predominantly Odia-speaking, with six lakhs of its eight-lakh population using the language. At the 22nd meeting of the *Utkal Sahitya Samalochani Samiti* on 21 January 1902 in Talcher, the speakers noted Odia's close connection to Sanskrit and criticized the government's negligence towards the language. Eventually, the government responded to the public pressure and replaced Hindi with Odia in Sambalpur, effective from 1st January 1903. The language agitation in the Bengal and Central Provinces also impacted Odia-speaking areas in the Madras Presidency, where Odia faced resistance from Telugu speakers. In 1873, people demanded separate recognition for Odia, as Telugu was made

compulsory for higher official positions. The disorder in Odia literature drove Pandit Gopinath Nanda Sarma to compose an Odia dictionary and to start language research. Rangabhatta Gunmayasastri, founder of *Hitabadini* and *Ganjam News*, was a strong advocate for united Odisha and opposed the proposal to write postal addresses in Telugu instead of Odia. In 1902, Raja Harihara Mardaraj appointed Pt. Nilamani Vidyaratna as the editor of *Praja Bandhu*, published under the patronization of the King. In 1903, he established *the Ganjam Odia Sabha* at Rambha, gaining support from notable figures like Pt. Gopabandhu Dash, Nanda Kishore Bal, and Krishna Prasad Choudhury. At the same time, language agitation was ongoing in other Odia-speaking areas, including Singhbhum in Chhotanagpur. Bhupati Nath Basu, editor of *Naba Sambad*, aimed to rally public sentiment against the injustices in Odisha and promote the Odia language. He highlighted that the residents of Singhbhum in Chhotanagpur were deprived of the chance to learn their mother tongue. Pandit Gopabandhu Dash to activate Odia visited numerous places like Phuljhar, Khariar, Bindra, and Bastar, etc. Along with Ananta Mishra, he encouraged the people of Sareikala, Kharasuan, and Dhalbhum to read Odia Bhagavata. Besides it, he also went to Chikiti, Manjusha, Tarala etc., to provide a safeguard to the Odia language and culture. The powerful writers like Radhanath Roy, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Madhusudan Rao, Gangadhar Dash, Pandit Nilakantha Das, and many others engaged their pens in praising the greatness of Utkal and India. The lackadaisical attitude of the government towards modern education deprived the people of Odisha of getting higher education. The Christian missionaries in 1809 for the first time started the translation of the Bible into Odia. *Bharata Barasara Itihas* by Fakir Mohan in 1869, *Rambilash* by Kapileswar in 1875, *Utkal Rachana* of Radhanath in 1876, and *Prabandhamala* of Madhusudan in 1880(51) were introduced and highly appreciated only after 1866.

The phase of renaissance in Odia language and literature

Modernist attitude of Odia literature was first shown in *Rambilash* published in 1875 *Sambad Vahika* published several writings in 1877 Shibanarayan Nayak wrote *Susikshara Phala Utkal Sahitya* on 30th May 1875 published *Ambhamanankara Matrubhasa* on 13th May 1880 it published *Bigyana O sethire Upakanta*.¹⁰ Besides it, *Swadharma*, *Artha*, *Hindu Dharma O Seva*, *Arya ki Pouttalika*, *Odissara Prathama Christa Dharma Prachara*, *Odissara Prachina Kirti*, *Engraja Rajaniti*, and many more essays were published. Another journal named *Oriya O Nabasambad* published numerous essays such as *Utkal Kabita O Kabi*, *Purna Dharma* 28th April 1887, by Madhusudan Rao, *Oriya Sahityara Itihasa* , 18th June 1887, *Samaja Sanskara* 25th August 1887, *Oriya Bhasa* 08th August 1888, *Utkal Sahitya* 16th January 1889, *Onyanka Kartabya* 20th March 1889, *Atma Nirbharata* 29th July 1891, *Sakar Puja ki Nindaniya* 5th August 1891, *Odiya Bhasa* 12th June 1895, *Odiyanka Abhagya* 23rd October 1895, *Odissara Baniya* 16th January 1895 and many more. The *Bhasouddipani Sabha* aimed at the revival of old kavyas and the comparison of kavyas of different poets.

RADHANATH RAY: The Bard of Balasore

The period 1871-95 was named after Radhanath Ray, better called as *Kabibar*, the most celebrated poet. He was the best composer of Oriya poetry during this period. His creations touched the deepest corner of the hearts of the readers. It was his passion to experiment new thoughts and ideas and to add the modernistic value to them. The village Kedarapur in the

district of Balasore became the most fortunate one possessing one of the worthiest sons of Utkal, when *Kabibar* Radhanath Roy was born in the year 1848. Although he rendered service as Inspector of Schools under the British government for some time, he never abandoned his originality as a nationalist writer of Oriya poetry. Basically, a worshipper of nature he never gave up his motto to describe his devotion for the motherland and mother tongue. The *Utkal Sammilani* in the year 1908 adopted his famous lyric, *Sarbeshan No Janani Bharat Dharani Kalpalateyam* as the opening song in the session because it depicted a beautiful link of Odisha as the daughter of mother India. His poems reflected the concept of unity in diversity, that is India today. The sanctified coastal area at Chandrabhaga, the serenity at Khandagiri, the majestic fort of Barabati built by the blood and toil of valiant soldiers of Utkal and the splendid beauty of the lake of Chilika were all reflected in the writings of *Kabibar* Radhanath Roy with a patriotic fervor. His other famous writings included *Kedar Gouri*, *Chandrabhaga*, *Nandikeswari*, *Parbati*, *Chilika*, *Mahayatra* and many more.

MADHUSUDAN RAO

Another poet who himself became his own identity was Madhusudan Rao. He was influenced by the philosophy of *Brahmo* ideas and adopted it. Therefore, *Brahmo* philosophy had an indelible impact on all his writings. Basically, he was the worshipper of truth and love. The past glory of the land Odisha was the theme of his poetry. He was against the system of *Sati*, untouchability, child marriage and atrocities inflicted upon the Hindu widows in the name of custom. His famous creations included *Kabitabali*, *Utkal Kushumanjali*, *Ekamra Kanana*, *Utkal Janani Pratt*, *Akasha Prati*, *Staba*, *Padma*, *Sarat Prabhat* and *Udayostava*. The creations of Madhusudan were regarded as a bridge between the east and the west. He upheld a modernistic value system which ignored idolatry and other superstitious customs. At the same time, he admired the idealistic thoughts of the east. In the *Utkal Gatha*, one of his notable poems, he described Odisha as the most precious land. He observed that one of the most valiant races i.e., the Odia race which was once the most renowned one, became effortless and lusterless, and had come to this poor state of existence. The long years of foreign rule and prevailing anarchy led them to lead a charmless and dull life. Madhusudan Rao wanted to awaken this race and to encourage them to remember their own past and to reinvigorate themselves. He became a path-finder like *Swami Vivekananda* and expressed that both love for God and pursuance of nationalistic vision were ail the same and with this one can achieve the desired objective. His *Shankha Dhwani* was a combination of two sonnets. He felt pity over the sad plight of mother Odisha. The superstitious customs as well as foreign rule had a strong grip over her. Therefore, she lost her originality. So, Madhusudan became grief stricken by observing the uninspiring life style of the people. *Bhakta Kabi* as the name given to him by the people was fully justified as he had surrendered his life to the Almighty. The *Primer* that he prepared for the beginners in Odia language during that period of nationalism shows the value and importance that he attached to the mother tongue.

NANDA KISHORE BAL

Pallikabi or the village bard, Nanda Kishore Bal wrote about the ideas of unity and integrity of Odisha and that of India. The only short story composed by Nanda Kishore was about Laxmi who raised her voice against the prevailing dowry system. His famous novel *Kanakalata*

reflected the superstitions of the society like widowhood, casteism, the forcible marriage of girl child with older persons etc. Nationalism could be traced in his lyrics like *Naba Satabdira Nimantrana* and *Sri Khetra*. In *Charuchitra* he stated the plight of the people of Sambalpur and Ganjam after separation from Odisha. He motivated the Odias to sing *Naba - Asha - Gita* or the new song of hope at a time when they were victimized to many kinds' suppressions. Gangadhar Meher, famous as the poet of nature, was one among the poets who contributed to the enrichment of human society and Odia literature. His famous writings include *Indumati*, *Pranayaballan*, *Tapaswini*, *Kichaka Badha*, *Basanta Barnana*, and many more.¹⁶ The poem *Utkal Laxmi* presented the immortal glory of Utkal. In *Kichaka Badha* he narrated the beautiful nature and grace of the Odias in Sambalpur. The characters such as Sita, Sakuntala, Kousalya, Draupadi, Indumati etc., sang about the greatness of Indian womanhood. Child marriage, illiteracy, early widowhood as well as the system of sati and kanyasuna made their condition very precarious. Therefore, Gangadhar through his characters narrated the greatness and affectionate nature of Indian, women and requested the society to save them from all these difficulties.

FAKIR MOHAN SENAPATI: The story teller par excellence

Fakir Mohan Senapati another stalwart was a towering personality in the then Odisha's political condition and Odia literature His immense courage, sincere efforts, strong determination, and sense of duty were superb. It was in the aftermath of the 'Great Famine of 1866'¹⁸ that Fakir Mohan raised his strong voice against the vested interest class or the Bengali Babus who tried to dominate the Odias and their language and literature by passing absurd comments. Finally, he concluded that without any development Odia would remain obscure. Eminent Odia literature of yester years such as Jagannath Das, Upendra Bhanja, Abhimanyu Samantasimhar, Dinakrishna, etc were given due respect by Fakir Mohan. In his poetry *Mu Hata Bahuda* he expressed the excellence of both Odia and Sanskrit languages. Apart from that in *Utkal Bhumi*, *Janmabhumi*, *Utkal Yubak*, etc., he encouraged the youth to develop the Odia language and established an organization named *Utkal Bhasa Unnati Bidhyayini Sabha* at Balasore in 1867. His *Rebati* was not only the first short story in the history of Odia literature was published in *Utkal Sahitya* in 1898. His famous novel *Chhamana Athaguntha* was based on the economic life of the people. It showed the severity of the then zamindari system and the struggle for existence made by the poor people. *Mamu* was another novel by Fakir Mohan that described the bad impact of English education. Fakir Mohan Senapati was able to depict the pictures of the social life of Odisha on a rural backdrop. His language was also very realistic and heart-touching. Thus, we may say that Fakir Mohan Senapati was able to depict the pictures of the social life of Odisha on a rural backdrop. His novels were very much involved with the life of the common people. His language was also very realistic and heart touching. His creations assumed great importance in the sky of Oriya literature. He was also the most adorable poet who provided the modernistic value to Oriya literature. He truly explained how the Britishers wanted to create a class of slaves by educating the Indians through English language.

MADHUSUDAN DAS

A towering personality, who never felt afraid of any highly ranked British official and could mold everybody with his brilliant appeals was Madhusudan Das. As the time demanded,

Madhusudan preferred the literary path that would motivate the people towards their mother tongue. *Janana*, *Utkal Santan*, *Jananira Ukti*, *Santanara Ukti*, *Sammilani*, and *Jati Itihasa* were the six poems of Madhusudan. He knew it well that the resurrection of Odisha could be attempted by amalgamation of all those places using Odia as their mother tongue under a single government. The people of Odisha should try to rejuvenate their previous glory. Both *Santanara Ukti* and *Utkal Santan* expressed their sentiments and deep passion for the motherland. *Janana*, another poem of Madhusudan, was a eulogy that inspired, the generation to lead a dedicated life for the sake of the welfare of the common people.¹⁵⁷ Madhusudan, who fought for the cause of a unified Odisha, and wanted a dignified status for her however could not live long to see his dream fulfilled. He died on 4 February 1934 and Odisha attained provincehood on 1 April 1936.

GOPABANDHU DASH

Born on 9 October 1877 in a small village Suando near Puri, Gopabandhu starting from his early student career showed tremendous talent as a budding poet. Gopabandhu realized the deep touch of Odia culture within his own heart. Therefore, in all his literary creations starting from *Abakasha Chinta*, *Karakabita*, *Bandira Atmakatha*, *Brahmatattwa*, and *Nachiketa to Satyabadi* and *The Samaj*, he undertook the onerous task of searching out the genuine and originality of the Odia race. With his four friends, Nilakantha, Harihara, Krupasindu, and Godavarish, he established a *Vana Vidyalaya* at *Satyabadi* near Puri in the lap of nature. Within a very short span, this school became a production centre of enlightenment and awakening and declared a 'National School'. The poem *Bandira Atmakatha* by Gapanabdhhu carried messages of national consciousness about religion, philosophy, culture, national movement, and the picture of an ideal nation. The distress and wretched condition of the common people, the treachery of village *Zamindars*, social injustice, and maladministration of the British government were fully depicted in his poems. He started a monthly Journal called *The Satyabadi* from the *Satyabadi* press near Puri. Gopabandhu started a weekly newspaper on Saturdays from this press famous as *The Samaj*, from 4 October 1919. This newspaper aimed to awaken the people crushed by the natural calamities and the ignorance of the government about the welfare of the people. Emphasis was put on issues like education, religion, health and sanitation, gram panchayats, small scale industries, agriculture and so many plights of the general people of Odisha.

Conclusion

To sum up with the fact that the 19th century Odia struggled against many obstacles one of which was the language controversy. A three-pronged attack was lunched against the Odia language that took a serious turn in the long run. Uma Charan Halder, Sib Das Bhattacharya, Kantichandra Bhattacharya and Rajendra Lal Mitra attacked Odia language with satirical comments and ignored its position and status in Odisha. In the Western areas the government of the Central Province wanted to replace Hindi in the courts and offices of Sambalpur. Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna and the Maharaja of Bamanda, Raja Basudeva Sudhala Deva took active part in the agitation against the imposition of Hindi as an official language. Similarly, Pandit Gunnaiya Sastri, being a Telugu person raised his voice against the imposition of Telugu language in Odia schools of Ganjam. The language controversy produced many intellectual

personalities in Odisha who with their immortal writings left a remarkable impact upon the society. Madhusudan Das, Madhusudan Rao, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna, Gouri Shankar Roy, Radhanath Roy, Gangadhar Meher and many more writers tried to show the beacon light to the people of Odisha. These pioneers of Odia literature depicted the down-trodden cultural and social life of Odisha in their literary creations. They acted as the social reformers in the surcharged atmosphere of Odisha. Their chief aim was to lit the gloomy life of the people of Odisha who were spiritless and led a slavish life full of bad thoughts and had lost all their hopes, aspirations and interests for the betterment of the country. Their patriotic feelings and messages opened a new era of literary renaissance in Odisha. We can proudly state that this period saw the start of a united and intellectual movement of the Odia people against the maladministration of the government.

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