

Status of women in the writings of Fakir Mohan Senapati.

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ABSTRACT: Fakir Mohan Senapati's women are truly renaissance women. Fakir Mohan Senapati as a male writer understands the cause of women much better than most writers. The Indian woman is the sufferer of a terrible contradictory transitional period, turn between two different value systems. In spite of the status of equality bestowed upon her by law, it is difficult for her to change in the core and for the society to free her of the age-old sanskar. Present paper is a critical analysis of female subjugation in the name of customs. The writer has depicted the social taboo against women education in the rural society of Odisha. Rebati is the central character of the story who is attracted in education and suffers in the whole story. There is no one to morally support her. She was the product of a society based on communal rural tradition where values regarding women's role were historically embedded in socio cultural structures of the society.

KEYWORDS –state of transition-tradition and modernity-. Dogmas-. Odia literature-feminist thrust -family, history and social modernism--educated, sophisticated- and - rebellious -, woman - shedding off the traditional values -inherited consciousness

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Fakir Mohan Senapati is considered as the father of Modern age of Odia literature . He saw the present age in the viewpoint of Odisha's religious experience and his sympathies lay largely with the past. Odia literature is considered to have inspiration from the great epic poem, the Mahabharat (1470 AD) by Sarala Das whose women characters were impressive. Fakir Mohan Senapati was the pioneer of the modern Odia fiction. During the past hundred years after Fakir Mohan so many talented fiction writers emerged in Odisha like Gopinath Mohanty, Surendra Mohanty, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, Kanhu Charan Mohanty and Pratibha Ray.

Fakir Mohan's senses of comedy and sarcasm have remained unsurpassed in Odia literature and it is his characteristic style which made him popular with a wide range of readers. He had faith on that Asceticism, Love and Devotion were four pillars that formed the base of "Dharma". His faith was derived from Islam, Asceticism from Buddhism, Love from Christianity and Devotion from Vaisnavism.

Fakir Mohan's first novel, "Chha Mana Atha Guntha" written during 1897-1899 and published in book form in 1902, is considered as a revolutionary creation in Odia language for two important reasons. Firstly, with the appearance of this novel, the language of novel changed from that of the pundits to that of the common man. His skillful management of the spoken language of the Odia rustics redeemed Odia prose style from the burden of Sanskrit and Bengali influences and provided a distinct literary identity to the native Odia language and vocabulary. Secondly, this novel, as well as the two novels Mamu published in 1913 and Prayaschita published in 1915, were a pioneering attempt at producing fiction of social realism in Odia language. Set in the colonial Orissan society during the early decades of the nineteenth century, Chha Mana Atha Guntha is the story of an evil landlord, Ramachandra Mangaraj, who exploits poor peasants and appropriates their property. Exploitation of the poor villagers by the land lord and the rise of a new class of exploiters among petty officials and clerks under the British government were the two dominant features of the Odia society through nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. The fictions such as Lachhama, Chhamana Athaguntha, Mamu and Prayaschita are taken together, from a vast and packed in design in enlightening a pattern of change in the socio-economic, culture and political life and thus setting off the shifting social history of Odisha over a time of two hundred years.

During the phase of Fakirmohan Senapati, personality of women is somewhat revolutionized. Even she can thrash her husband to bring him to the correct path.. But then she also serves him after he is thrashed (Patent Medicine). In his writings two types of women like conventional and up to date are found. The grandmother of Rebati, the wife of land lord is conventional, because they trust in ritual, conventions and fallacy. But there is also Rebati who wants that she would be educated. The social fictions of Fakir Mohan Senapati deal with women characters in all their shades with a lot of sensible sympathy and insight and at the same time he is not

reluctant to portraying the other side of women temperament. In Chhamana Athaguntha, Saria is a childless woman and she pours all her affection on her black milky cow, Neta and when Neta is snatched away by power by Rama Chandra Mangaraj, she is not able to bear the sorrow of parting as if the mother is estranged from her child – and she dies. Further, we also observe the character of a concubine, Champa, in the novel who is a diabolical partner in crime of Rama Chandra Mangaraj.

Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843 - 1918) is respected as a pioneer in the field of Odia novel. His “Rebati” printed in 1898 is the first modern Odia short story. Much before social pragmatism became the leading mode in other literatures of the country; he had revealed the way of life in the villages. His Chha Mana Atha Guntha is much-admired as a modern classic.

Fakir Mohan Senapati’s women are really revitalization of women. Fakir Mohan Senapati understands the sufferings of women much better than the majority writers. The Indian woman is the sufferer of a terrible contradictory intermediary period, turn between two dissimilar value systems. Despite the status of parity granted to her by law, it is not easy for her to change in the heart and for the culture to free her of the age-old custom. Rebati is a teenager of beginning part of nineteenth century who has the pursuit for knowledge; she is a true renaissance character. Confidence in her is created by her father, mother and teacher Vasu with whom she has a spiritual bond of the heart. But, her grandmother opposed her education. Rebati was not a girl to surrender to her grandmother’s proposal. She started a radical attitude: “You silly old fool [to her grandmother]...Father, I really wish for study.” We see that eagerness of the girl to be educated even at the cost of distressing an elderly member in the family. Similarly, Savitribai Phule led the women’s education in India, Fakir Mohan’s first short story ‘Rebati’ influenced many women writers in Odisha to write and fight for the cause of women’s predicament and education helped them to a great extent for their empowerment

Fakir Mohan Senapati is a famous social thinker. In the story he describes the sufferings and social suspicions related to epidemics like Cholera Cholera is treated as a nuisance from the Goddess on those brave against religious dictates and socially established norms. When the parents and the teacher of Rebati died in cholera grandma charged Rebati’s education to be the cause of this evil in the house. In the end both the women die of starvation and paucity. Another personality is the wife of Babu Chandramani Pattnaik in the story ‘Patent Medicine’. She is at once daring and kind hearted. She knows the responsibility of a wife. She is clever, tolerant, considerate but, unlike the common Odia women, she rises to the juncture and succeeds in bringing a transformation in her spoiled husband by way of punishment.

Status of women in Indian literature are subject to contradiction – there is a conventional image and there is a protesting voice also. Post Independence literature depicts the woman’s expedition for her identity giving rise to many troubles. The new woman is rising and there are a number of new problems to be taken up by the generation. However, two general views of woman have been dominating Odia writing from ages the Sita and the Draupadi are the types where it is seen the silent suffering with utmost faithfulness in the Sita type and woman as an individual challenging social justice in the Draupadi types. The latter has got better admiration. But we have to keep in mind that family has a essential role in the scheme of life. The new woman in Odia literature does not split the family but imagines to make the family. Be it big or small, be it in the place where woman is always there for story-telling and dramatic expansion. If woman is missing, there is no poems, no song, no tears, no amusement, no comedy and thus no existence in this world. unluckily, still they are walking on a tight cord to establish there human rights and social impartiality.

Odia woman, at the turn of century are in a state of conversion between the crossing point of custom and modernity. Though women writers are broadminded and reverential towards the rich traditional values, they are now certain as well of their own new personality and responsive to the dogmas in the customary values. At the change of the millennium Odia literature, as far as the feminist force is concerned, is not liberated from relations, history and social modernization. The woman in modern Odia literature are more learned, refined and even at times rebellious but, still, woman seems to be cautious of cracking off the conventional values form part of her innate awareness.

Fakir Mohan Senapati as a social reformist, knowing the modern social attitude very well, he did not dare to award Rebati with an distinctiveness of her own. After this enormous changes came in Odia learning system but still there are limitations in traditional sections. But for some groups like tribal people not anything has altered. They still exist in a world where there is no education and modern facilities. Like the grandmother of Rebati still in tribal region there are so many grandmothers who do not allow their granddaughters to go to school. Women education is still very limited and is not respected by the traditionalist section. Again, pre-marital love was almost prohibited. It is amazing for Fakir Mohan to have empathized with such problems in those times of narrow living principles and superstitious approach in rural community.

Women in the majority part Odisha are till now dogma-ridden due to lack of education. We have, thus, the progressive valiant new woman and, at the same time, the helpless, uneducated, male subjugated woman existing side by side in both life and literature. The sense of artistic continuity has been now a communal mooring and the writers take as their preferred themes – women’s schooling, widow remarriage elimination of

untouchability and women's emancipation. Their writings can become a shared inheritance only when there is a process of social acknowledgment. It can be said in end that the character in story Rebati is representation of women education and suppression. In some sense characters like the grandmother and Mangaraj are necessary characters from which the size and essence of a character like Rebati could be observable. As a dependable human being, knowing all the social huddles of society Senapati offered 'Rebati' in such a way that which will offer a new mode to all the girls like Rebati. Time has been altered still there is woman who is still suffering for education and liberated life. After 19th century educational standing has been changed and there is so many scopes on educational sector but still there are tribal girls who are desiring to get education. Through this story Senapati has attempted to give power to Odia culture and womanhood. It was his prominence and his thoughtfulness through which he has described a character that is very quiet, brave and her isolation appearing in misery and scarcity. But still she is bold and acts as sufferer for the modern world. It is concerning the realism of society and the culture where a woman is in misery till the ending of her life.

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