

Kuntala Kumari Sabat : A True Patriotic Litterateur and Reflection of Her Literary Works on Gandhian Movement

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Kuntala Kumari Sabat was born on 8th February, 1909, at Jagadapur in Bastar region. Her parents were Daniel and Monica. Shortly after her birth, her parents went to Burma with family. So Kuntala Kumari passed her early childhood at Burma with her parents and imbibed the spirit of fearlessness. Then she returned to Khurda with her mother Monica after her father got remarried at Burma. So Kuntala Kumari stayed at Khurda with her mother for a short period. She completed her early school education at Ravenshaw Girl's School and higher study at Medical School, Cuttack. Kuntala Kumari composed beautiful poems during her school days. She came out successfully from the medical school and became popular as a lady doctor with her sincerity and simplicity.¹ Although a lady physician by profession, she knew the

colonial treatment of the anatomy of an enslaved nation better than her own degree.

Kailash Rao was her literary teacher who guided her literary activities. Kuntala Kumari enrolled herself as a member of 'Nava Vidhan', the 'Brahmo Society'. She got wide applause when poems, 'Anjali' came out. She won approbation from almost all the literary figures of Orissa. A leading cultural association of women conferred on her the title 'Utkal Bharati'. Gopal Chandra Praharaj and Pallikabi Nanda Kishore Bal loved her and adopted her as their daughter. Kuntala Kumari joined a maternity welfare centre, which was newly opened at Cuttack in 1925. Later she left for Delhi on 1st July 1928. The same year she got married to Krishna Prasad. New phase of life began, yet she did not leave her writings. She had written in English,



Bengali and Hindi and contributed to a number of non-Oriya journals and edited a number of Hindi journals at Delhi. During her stay at Delhi, she presided over the 'All India Arya Mahila Sammilani' at Bareilly. During this time also she was invited by the Allahabad University and Benaras Hindu University to deliver lectures. She was the president of the students federation at Aligarh. She was made the chair-person of a reputed social organisation founded by Harbilash Sarada for the introduction of widow marriage and abolition of child marriage. While at Delhi she took steps to encourage, publish and project Oriya literature. At Delhi, Kuntala Kumari was also associated with eminent writers like Maitheli Saran Gupta, Yeasshpal Jee Jain, S.H. Batsayan and a host of Hindi writers. 'Hindi Pracharini Sabha' conferred on her the title of 'Bharat Kavinetri.'

She upheld the essence of struggle brighter and sharper than any volue in public life. Every page of her life was a profound ambiguity of social standing. Her love for Orissa and her glorious past finds mentioned in her poems. A disciple of Gandhi she claimed independence as the birth right of Indian people. She took up the task of awakening the women. She encouraged them to join the National Movement under Gandhian leadership. She writes -

*'Senapati Aaji Deichhanti Daka
Utha bharatara Biraputrajaka,
Apurba Asahayoga Ranagune
Arte Antakasi para Janejane,
Bharatara Jete Viragunamani
Chaliasu Senapati Dakasuni.'*³

During the non-cooperation movement she gave a clarion call to the people of Orissa to fight for freedom. She was the voice of modern Orissa. In a real sense she was a visionary and a rebel. She expressed her concern for the suffering mankind and wanted to free mankind from exploitation.

No doubt, Kuntala Kumari had a lot of patriotic fervour in her. She had derived a special pride in herself by portraying Gandhi, Nehru and the spinning wheel in her lucid poems. This instilled a lot of confidence to visualise a free India through the veil of the

darkened British rule. She was imbibed with the true spirit of a colonial poet's vision to awaken public consciousness like Bankim's immortal Bengali song. The Oriya youths plunged headlong into the non-cooperation movement being addicted to her war songs. It ignited the sparks in them spontaneously, so to say rapidly. Although Kuntala Kumari had a brief span of life time of thirty eight years, her creations outlived her to pioneer the cause of rooting out British misrule in India. She composed beautiful numerous patriotic poems and songs. Her first collection of poems came out in 1922. Then it was followed by 'Uchhwas' - 1924, 'Archana' - 1927, 'Sphulinga' - 1929, 'Ahwan' - 1930, 'Prem Chintamani' - 1930, 'Oriyanka Kandana' - 1937, 'Garjat Krishaka' - 1939.⁴ Her live for man, nature and nation is reflected in her poems. She had a deep hatred for superstitions and conventions, raised her voice against high and mighty. She always tried to protest against injustice and inequalities. She renounced the heartless religious dogmas and practices. She comprehends the image of glorious past of Orissa. At times it carries the romantic strain of love for liberty, equality and fraternity.

She composed the inaugural song of 'Utkal Sammilani', chaired by Acharya P.C. Roy in 1924. the poems in the anthology 'Archana' echoes the voice of poor and lowly, the depressed and the marginalized. Her poetic longing for brave new world is expressed in most of her poems. Some of her poems published in 'Sphulinga', inspired the youth of Orissa and infused dynamism in them. The volume 'Ahwan' captures the spirit of Gandhi's clarion call to people to join the struggle for freedom. In her poems 'Sphulinga' she wants to inspire his fellowmen to get lessons from the past history and to get out of the present set up and dullness. Her poems in Ahwan created tremendous sensation. Her fame as a patriot and poet spread over the country. She had a transterrestrial longing for an ideal world, a golden era ruled by love, justice and beauty. The yearning for liberty is always marked in her poems like 'Garjat Krishaka'. She expressed the poetic anguish over a cause of the elitish exploitation on the toiling mass. The entire gamut of Kuntala Kumari's poetic works oscillate between her love for her land and people and the love for God. The poetic identification with the sufferings of common

men presents two fold note at one moment she protests and revolts and at the next, she discovers the mystical design in everything and everywhere. In nature, and all its creation see could she the face of God. Her poetry, in some degree, reveals all the romantic traits : "Love of nature, love of beauty, imagination, love of past and a wearied sadness." No doubt she has enriched the Oriya literature by her pen. Her commitment to explore the possibilities of a free world with faith in love, beauty, truth, goodness and wisdom. Her noble sentiments and her feelings for the sublime have given her poems a universal appeal. Her writings were regularly published in the 'Samaj' and 'Sahakar' under the title 'Delhi letters'. She expresses the socio-political life of pre-independent India and makes a zealous attempts to reform the tradition ridden society. In the novel, 'Na-tundi', She expresses real thing of the land. 'Raghu Arakhit' is one of her most outstanding works. It narrates the social character regarding marriage, where a compensation was given to the bride's family.⁵

Kuntala Kuamri's voice was more reflected in her poetry anthologies AHWAN (the call) and Gadajata

Krishaka (Feudatory Farmer). The following stanza provides enough stimulus to adorn the spirit of mankind.

*Oh ! my compatriot !!
The man is not born
to die of reminiscence
or to sink in somewhere
It is never a human fate
That gets terminated through a
happiness living
After being condemned to
the fretful glooms of failure
in a deprived morbid prison of
ever - disciplined humiliating;
Thus great Earth is
never a decaying caravan
or a lady nurturing death.*

Her poetry was a great leap towards strengthening the debilitation of Oriya race against the mighty Britishers. It is definitely a great voice to heal up the wounded psyche of several Oriyas condemned to a bonded earth under 'British Raj'.⁶ She was a rebel no doubt and simultaneously a visionary. She stirred the conscience of the people through her writings. Her poems kindled a new spirit in the hearts of the people and inspired them to fight relentlessly against the Britishers.

One of the session of Utkal Sammilani was held at Balasore on 2nd August 1931 with Kuntala Kumari in chair. Jahnabi Devi was the chairperson of the reception.⁷ Nearly twelve hundred people

all over Orissa attended. This meeting was also attended by more than a thousand women. In her speech as the chairman of the Reception Committee Jahnabi Devi refuted the universally accepted view of women's inability to stand on their own.⁸ In this session a central executive committee, named "All Orissa Women's Association" was set up. Here sincere efforts were made to work out a programme for the improvement of condition of women of Orissa.

In an essay entitled "Kabi O Lekhakara Udeshya", she raised the status of a poet by declaring that she is not limited to any time and clime. A true creative artist moves high above such human limitations : "The poet or the writer is nature's representative. He is not confined to any particular nation or time. He belongs to all the nations, to all time and all humanity."⁹ Her death on 23rd August 1938 was a great loss for the people of Orissa. Her brief life was a saga of relentless struggle against evil and darkness. She was a talented woman poet from Orissa, second to none in her bold utterances for the cause of Indian freedom. Although she spent major part of her short life outside the state, she had enough inclination to intercede

the causes of its Gods and Goddesses, aquatic landscapes, rural surroundings, and the people irrespective of rich and poor alike. Therefore, time and tide has not thrown her into the limbo of oblivion. Her ideas and concern for common man got reflected in her works. Her life and creatives made her a legendary personality in her life time itself. She championed the cause of a world-free from evil and injustice. Her passion for justice, equality, liberty and fraternity was astounding. Throughout her life she fought against injustice and exploitation.

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On The Path of Swaraj

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Countrymen, Companion, Kins
and others are Are you frightened at my getting
behind the bar ?

It was apprehended before hand
then, why do you feel so sad ?

Timidity is the coward's character
A hero kills or dies himself either.
In hero's horoscope no retreat is there
For sake of life he dies never.

I know this war of peace is on
There's no need of bomb, bullet or gun.
Neither muscle nor money is needed
No carriage, horse or elephant required.
This spiritual battle is there
to curb the beastly power.

He who, leaving aside wealth, home or relation
Has adressed himself with arm of non cooperation

and by non violence is urge
shall reserve a place in the stage.

Jail is its initial effect
Death may come as ultimate.
Knowing well I have entered to the war
I never mind for honour or dishonour.

Let my body mingle to country's soil
Let march along it one and all.
Let my flesh and bones pile
all holes and ditches of Swaraj fill.

At all on emulation of my life
to the Freedom path any man persuaded if,
His Providence's blissful desire
Let be fulfilled – it is my ultimate desire.

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