

Classical Language : Odia

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Government of India has established four criteria for grant of classical status to the modern Indian language. The classical status to any language brings fame to the language and provides greater opportunities for research and development.

In this context, one can judiciously think about giving this classical status to Odia language. The ancientness of the Odia language is being proved from its soil which speaks about two types of language from very beginning. The development of Odia can be seen through its spoken and written forms. The spoken languages are expressed in two ways. One preserved through folk forms and the other preserved through cave paintings. The songs sung at the time of birth, death and other functions are preserved, stories are painted through cave paintings both represent the creativity of the underlying literature. The Gudahandi painting of Kalahandi district and the cave art of Khandagiri and Udayagiri are the great achievements of this primitive architecture. Towards the 13th century A.D. the deities made at Konark not only limit the language to the time and space but also spread to the distant countries like Bali, Java, Sumatra, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaya and Philippine. **Borobudur temple** of central Java and the **Angkor Wat** temple of Cambodia are the fine examples of Odisha-influenced Indian architecture.

Odisha has largest number of pre-historic sites. Lots of Paleolithic stone implements have been found in various sites of Odisha. Similar sites of copper Bronze Age and Iron Age are available in plenty. The latest archaeological excavation has taken place in 2013 at **Harirajpur**. The findings of excavation includes **human skeleton**, broken potteries, carbon, earthen pots, agricultural stone implements, animal bones, flooring of houses, remains of hearth, which **claim to be 4000 years old**. The Tel river civilization throws light on a great civilization existing in Kalahandi, Balangir, Koraput regions in the past that is recently getting explored. The discovered archaeological wealth of Tel Valley speaks of a well civilized, urbanized, cultured people inhabiting on this land around 2000 years ago. The **Radhanagar Fort** of Jajpur was the centre of circle on the periphery of which lay places like Kayama, Deuli, Tarapur, Vajragiri, Langudi etc. These sites yield inscriptions mentioning the names of Tapussa and Bhallika. All over the world Tapussa and Bhallika are regarded as the first **disciple of Buddha**. On the basis of the new findings, Dr. Monica Smith of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, claimed that the fortified city is Sisupalagarh of Odisha, flourished from around 5th century B.C and probably remained well after the 4th century A.D. Researchers say the items found during the excavation point to a highly

developed urban settlement. Very early in Kalingan history, the Kalingas acquired a reputation for being a fiercely independent people. Ashoka's military campaign against Kalinga was one of the bloodiest in Indian history on account of the fearless and heroic resistance offered by the Kalingas to the mighty armies of the expanding Mauryan Empire.

Odisha in ancient days had illuminated Indian sky of knowledge so brilliantly with its own unique luster that the Rig Veda in its tenth Mandala had to advise its followers to be cautious of Odisha where indigenous people find their object of worship in wooden logs. Odisha is the land of Jagannâth culture which is the principle of Sarva Dharma Samanvaya. Jagannâth is a wooden deity (Saura). He is the Dakshinakâli for the Saktas and Vairaba for the Saivites. He is Mahâganapati for the Gânapatyas and at the same time He is the Suryanârâyan for the Sauryas. His festivals are of a Purânic origin and the rituals are an admixture of tribal rituals and Sâkta's *nyasa* and *mudras* and many more. His majority of rituals are based on Uddiyan *tantras* which are the refined versions of Mahayan *tantras* as well as Shabari *tantras*, which have evolved from Tantrik Buddhism and tribal beliefs respectively. Of his *mantras* the incantation Oum is Vedic and Hlim, Slim, Klim are Tantrik. His Kaibalya (Mahaprasad of rice) is of a Jaina origin and Nirmalya is of Saivite origin.

Odisha became a centre of Buddhism. The three Buddhist schools: *Vajrayan*, *Kalachakrayan* and *Sahajayana* reformed in Odisha by Odia people. By 7th century A.D., King Indrabhuti of Sambalpur introduced it as **Vajrayana**, which is supposed to have travelled to other parts of the country and Tibet. Acharya Pitupada (8-9th C AD) achieved a great reputation as a scholar and a saint at Ratnagiri and promulgated **Kalachakrayana**, a new vehicle of Buddhism. Vajrayana was changed to

Sahajayana by Lashminkara, the princess of Sonepur and sister of Indrabhuti. It is believed that the great Buddhist saint Padmasambhava went to Tibet from Odisha to propagate Vajrayana Buddhism and founded a new religion named **Lama**.

In the maritime history of India, Odisha (ancient Kalinga) played a significant role in spreading Indian culture to other parts of the world. The picture of a Giraffe on the Sun Temple of Konark speaks of the trade relation of Kalinga with African countries in the 13th Century. The picture of elephants in Odisha temple being carried by a boat speaks of the vigorous internal maritime activity. The maritime trade has been entrenched in the socio cultural and religious life of Odisha for centuries. The traditions like **Taapoi episode of Khudurukuni Osha, Nisha Mangala Osha, Somanatha Brata Katha, Boita Bandana on the next day morning of the Diwali and morning of Karttika Purnima**, the festivals like **Panchuka** of Kartika Purnima and **Bali Yatra**, imprint clear testimony of our glorious maritime heritage. Baliyatra literally means a 'Voyage to Bali', and celebrates an ancient maritime tradition and the connection with Bali. During the ceremony, men, women and children are dressed up in traditional costumes launch tiny boats made from banana peels, paper or Solapitha with lighted lamps inside, and **Odia women** perform the rite of '**Boita Bandâna**'. The festival is similar to the '**Masakapan Ke Tukad**' festival of **Bali**, to the '**Loi Krathong**' festival of **Thailand (ritualistic floating of model boats)**, to the '**Bon Om Touk**' Water Festival of **Cambodia**, and to the '**That Luang**' Festival of **Laos** all of which involve around the same time of the year.

When we talk of the recorded history we straightway come down to language. Recording of history or for that matter any recording necessarily requires a language. Since all the

languages of the world have not developed at the same time, the historical recording or the recorded history of different regions of the world vary from each other in matters of time. Odisha as well as India did exist in some form or the other much before the invention of script and a written language. Odia is one of the most ancient languages of India. Eminent linguists and scholars like John Beams, G.A. Grierson, L.S.S O Malley, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, John Boulton, Dr. D.P. Pattanayak and others have time and again argued in favour of the antiquity of Odia language.

As to the peculiarities of Odia as a language as distinct from its sister languages like Hindi, Bengali and Assamese. As early the 1870s **Sir John beams** has said that, “At a period when Oriya was already a fixed and settled language, Bengali did not exist, the Bangalis spoke a vast varieties of corrupt forms of Eastern Hindi”. [Beams, Sir John, “Comparative Grammar of four Indo-Aryan Language”, Vol 1, pp-120]. According to G.A. Grierson – “In the case of living rational beings, this noun of multitude is the word Mâne, which is said to mean literally ‘men’. In the other nouns it is usually some word meaning ‘all’. In the varb, as is also the case of Bengali, the singular of the first and second persons are only used by the uneducated, or when respect is not intended. xxx. Each letter in each word is clearly sounded, and it has been well described as ‘comprehensive and poetical, with a pleasant sounding and musical intonation, and by no means difficult to acquire and master’. Oriya is remarkably free from dialectic variations. The well known saying which is true all over the north of India, that **the language change every ten kos does not hold in Orissa**. In what is known as the Mughalbundi, which consists of Cuttack, Puri and the southern half of Balasore, the language

is one and the same.” [Linguistic Survey of India, Vol-V, P-368-369].

The following observations by **L.S.S O’ Malley**, who knew not only all these languages but also Sanskrit, both classical and Vedic, may be of interest to the readers. According to O Malley- *‘The great majority of the people speak Oriya or as it is sometimes called Odri or Utkali, the language of Odra or Utkala, both of which are ancient name for the country now called Orissa, Oriya, with Bengali, Bihari and Assamese forms one of the four speeches which together make up the eastern group of Indo- Aryan Language. Its Grammatical Construction closely resembles that of Bengali, but it has one great advantage over Bengali in the fact that, as a rule, it is pronounced as it is spelt. x x x. The Oriya Verbal system is at once simple and complete. It has a long array of tenses, but the whole is so logically arranged, and built on so regular a model, that its principles are easily impressed upon the memory. It is particularly noticeable for the very complete set of verbal nouns, present, past and future. When an Oriya wishes to express the idea embodied in what in Latin would be called the initiative, he simply takes the appropriate verbal noun and declines it in the case which the meaning necessarily requires. As every infinitive must be some oblique case of a verbal noun, it flows that Oriya grammar does not know the so called infinitive mode at all. In this respect Oriya is in an older stage of grammatical development than even classical Sanskrit, and, among Indo-Aryan Languages, can only be compared with the ancient Sanskrit spoken in the Vedic times.x xx.’* [L.S.S O’ Malley, Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers, (Cuttack), Second Edition by E.R.J.R. Cousins,(I.C.S.), 1933.p-47-50].

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee said - “*Of the three speeches Oriya, Bengali and Assamese, Oriya has preserved a great many archaic features, in both grammar and pronunciation and it may be said without travesty of linguistic truth that Oriya is the eldest of the three sisters, when we consider the archaic character of the language*” [Indian Historical Quarterly Vol-XXIII, 1947, P-337].

Odisha is the only state, where three types of Brahmi scripts like - Pre-Brahmi, Brahmi & Post Brahmi have been discovered. We have seen the most ancient Odia script found in more than 5775 cave paintings belonging to period of 1 to 15 millennium B.C. has been found in 55 caves of Odisha including Gudahandi and Yogimatha. The script ‘Ga’, and ‘o’ (tha) was discovered from Yogimatha rock painting of Nuapada district. In this rock Art a person with four animals and some alphabets create a word ‘Gaitha’ (very popular Odia word at present ‘Gotha’ or ‘group’ in English). After this painting we saw at Vikramkhola, which is a cave containing pre-historic, undeciphered pictographic inscriptions. The inscription seems that an iron chisel was not used. Some of the letters are partly cut and partly painted, while some letters are only in paint and it was the method regularly employed during period of Brahmi inscription. The colour of the paint is red ochre. An examination of the letters, which at first sight give the impression of having Brahmi forms, shows that the writing was a mixture of Brahmi form and a developed type of the Mohenjodaro script. The Vikramkhola Inscription supplies a link between the passage of letter from the Mohenjodaro script to Brahmi of its period 1500 B.C. [Jayaswal K.P., *The Vikramkhola Inscription: “The Indian Antiquary”, Vol - LXII, 1933, P – 58 - 60, Orissa District Gazetteers, Sambalpur, Government of*

Orissa -1971,p-551-554]. These alphabets have similarity with Dhauri and Jaugada Inscriptions of Ashok. It was the ancient form of Indian script and it is the first glimpse of possible origin of the Odia language and script. But **Kharavel’s Hatigumpha inscription (1st Century B.C.) is the real evidence of past Odia cultural, political, ritual and social status and it is the 1st poetic style inscription.** Though Ashok has created many rock edicts and inscription before Kharavela, yet his instructions for administration have been written in a rude and chocked language. On the other hand, the Hatigumpha inscriptions show the flexibility of a language in a sweet flow.

Main feature of this inscription was based on principles of Sanskrit poetic structure: such as-

“*Sadvanshah kshyatriya bā pi dhirodattah gunanwitāh
Ekabanshodva bhupāhā kulajā bahabo pi Jā*

*Shrungarabirashantānāmekoangirasa ishyate
Angāni sarbe<pi rasāha sarbe nātakasandhyāhā*

*Itihāsodvabam bruttamānānyad bā sajjanāshrayam
Chatwarastasya bargahā syusteshwekam cha phalam bhavet*

*Aādya namaskriyashribā bastunirddesha eba bā
Kwacinnindā khalādinām satām cha gunakirtinam*

(*Sāhitya Darpan- Biswanāth Kabirāj*)

It means that such creations will be called as poem which Protagonist would be *Dhirodatta* belonging to an untouchable Kshtriya. In Rasa (aesthetics) Srungāra (Love, Attractiveness), Vīra (Heroic mood), Sānta (Peace or tranquility) among them one would be the main *rasa* and others remain with them as usual. All aspects of drama, historic tales and other legendary folklores are present. The description of all the four fold-Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha are still present here, but one should be given priority than other theme. At the beginning it should be written

as respective, blissful and subject aware with welfare of people being hatred towards evil and devotional towards sages/saints.

When Hatigumpha Inscription was created by Kharavela, all these principles were traced by him before, which has been followed by Rudradaman (Girinar inscription-150 A.D.), Samudragupta (Prayaga inscription-365 A.D.), Kumargupta (Mandasore inscription-473A.D.) etc, created their own famous creativities in a decent poetic style on many rocks in Sanskrit language. The trend of writing was not obstructed after Kharavela. From Asanapata inscription in Keonjhar created by Satru Bhanja, (a warrior of Odisha) were engraved in the temple, Laxminarayana of Simhanchalam by Mukunda Deva are such examples. At the beginning, these inscriptions had a dynamic journey from Pali to Sanskrit. They have not lost the sense of Odia. Therefore, Odia language, literature, script and culture are based on the discussions on these inscriptions. The words written in the Hatigumpha Inscriptions are still used in the present day Odia language.

The continuity of development in language, literature and culture can be seen in the following landmarks in the inscripational history of Odia in continuation of the Ashokan and Kharavel inscriptions.

1. Satrubhanja Asanpât inscription 3rd century A.D.
2. Nibinna Plate. 7th century A.D.
3. Bajrahasta Dev's Parlakhemundi inscription 9th century A.D.
4. Soro GanDibeDa inscription 10th century A.D.
5. Urajam Inscription – 1051 A.D. (The first complete Odia inscription written in Odia script.).

Sanskrit had such an impact upon Odia language that the *Asanapata* inscription at Keonjhar composed during the reign of Satru Bhanja was written in a mixed form of Sanskrit in place of Pali and the vernacular language of the period. [*Odisha Historical Research Journal* volume XIII, no.2 1969, page-4, 5]. The Dhenkanal Copper plates of Queen Tribhubana Mahadebi reveals that Bhauma Kings were spending huge amount of money for building Buddhist monasteries and *stupas*. During 8th century AD, *tantra* was introduced in Buddhism. The three sects of this *tantra*: **Bajrayana**, **Kalacakrayana** and **Sahajayana** were evolved one after another and spread across the globe gradually.

Eminent Odia Buddhist Monk during this century was **Acharjya Pitopada**. He had introduced the '**Kalacakra**' in Buddhist *tantra*. Buddhist *tantra* has two major sects: Bajrayana and Sahajayana. According to **Sadhanamala**, there were 4 major hubs for the **Bajrayana** sect of Buddhism, among which the most important region was **Uddiyana** (Odisha). This region is considered the point of origin of Buddhist *tantra*. Moreover, **Indrabhuti**, the King of **Sambalaka** (Sambalpur, Odisha) was the first person in reforming the Mahayana school into **Bajrayana**. He is the author of famous Buddhist scripture *Jnanasiddhi*. Similarly, Anangabajra, the teacher of Indrabhuti, had also written another monumental literature *Prjnopayabini- ishchayasiddhi*. **Lakhminkara**, sister of King Indrabhuti and **Padmasambhaba**, adopted son of the King and the founder of the tibet "**Lama**" school, were also two eminent Odia figures who promoted Buddhist literature and philosophy of Odisha.

The earliet literary evidence is provided by Boudh monks (8-12th Century A.D.) Short poems written by Kanhupâ, Luipâ, Sabairpâ, Gun

Duripâ, Sântipâ, Bhusukupâ, are collection in ‘Âscharjya arjyâchaya’ popularly known as **Boudhagâna O Dohâ**, written in the proto-language of Odia. Although **Boudhagana O Doha** is claimed as the precursor of Odia, Assami, Bengali and Maithili, which is close to Odia the eldest of the eastern languages. The following few lines of Kanhupâ will show that the language of the chrya is closest to colloquial Odia.

Nagar bahire dombi tohari kudia

(City outside low cast woman Your hut)

X X X X X X

Alo dombi Toe sama kariba ma sanga

(Oh Dombi, You with will do companion)

The language of Kanhupâ’s poetry bears close resemblance to modern Odia. For example:

“Ekaso padumo chowshathi pakhudi

(One such lotus with sixty-four petals)

X X X X X X

Tahin chadhi nachao dombi bapudi”

To it climbing dance Dombi the poor self.”

Paduma (Padma, Lotus), *Chowshathi* (64), *Pakhudi* (petals), *Tahin* (There), *Chadhi* (rise), *nachao* (to dance), *Dombi* (a female from untouchable caste), *Bapudi* (a very colloquial Odia language to apply as ‘poor fellow’). These also sung of Bajrajana, Sahajajana, Tantrajana etc., the heart land of which was ancient Odisha. The Buddhist carjya poems were written during the 7th and the 12th century. They were written in the proto-Odia, Bengali and Assamese language, when the languages were being separated. It is only natural that their language will be closest to Odia, the most conservative of the three. Many

of their links are contemporary colloquial Odia and do not need translation.

12th century A.D saw the rise of the “**Nâtha Dharma**”, under the guidance of Matsyandranath and Gorakhnath and it has heavily influenced the religion and literature of the Odias. We see that the “Nâtha community” and “Shaiva community” were imbued with tantric beliefs. In the ancient Odia literature, especially Pre- Sâralâ literature, **Sishurveda**, **Amarakos** and **Gorakha Samhita** has acquired an important place.

During this period **Sishurveda** (13th century A.D.) is another important composition. It can be included among the Saivaite Nath literature to which **Gorakha Samhita** (12th century A.D.) is another important contribution. But what is important during this period is the development of prose. One important composition is **Mâdalâ Pânji** (11th century A.D.), which is the historical record of the Gajapatis and that of the Puri temple. The next important composition of this period is **Rudra Sudhanidhi** (14th century A.D.).

Sisu Veda is a remarkable production in more ways than one. Saivite in content, it is linguistically the last lingering echo of the Buddhist Charya literature of the 7th -12th centuries. In the “**Sishurveda**”, a very ancient tradition of Odia prose literature has been kept alive. It has been accepted to be the link between **charyâ** literature and Sarala literature, fulfilling a major gap, thus completing the chain that started with the chronicle of Kharavela in the 1st century B.C. and evolved slowly but steadily by a simple natural process.

Though dealing with the esoteric knowledge of Tantra, this Sisu Veda is written throughout in some of the lilting metres of the Buddhist lyric, and hence it is pleasant both to read and to hear. An excerpt from of *Sisu Veda* (13th century A.D.) is given below :-

Odia:-

*Jehneka baka na halai nira
Tehneka mana pabana thira
Baga machhe nire sama kari jana
Tebe se pindaku parache prana.*

English:-

*Like a crane that does not disturb the water
Keep thou thy mind and breath calm,
Only when thou makest the crane and the fish
The same undifferentiated
Shall thy body understand life. (stanza-21)*

The verses are the prose commentaries following each verse in this book. This archaic prose speaks of its own antiquity. It undoubtedly belongs to the same category as the temple inscriptions of the 12th-13th centuries. There is no doubt that this is the earliest literary prose in Odia.

The next important writing after Sishu Veda is *Amarkos*. Its authorship is not known. But the subject of the text is extensive. It establishes the limits of the body on one hand and continuing the universe in the body on the other. This “**Pinda Brahmanda Tattva**” influenced Odia literature up to 16th Century. This Nath Cult was extensively practiced all over India. The headquarters of its Satyanath branch was the Saiva Pitha at Bhubaneswar in Odisha.

Pre-literate India had continuous flow of tales which are preserved in *the Vedas, the Upanishads* and *The Puranas*. Some of them have been associated with rituals, feasts and fasts; Pali *Jataka Katha* contains Buddhist lores. Secular tales like Sanskrit *Panchatantras*, *Hitopadesas* and *Bruhat Katha Manjari* have reached through Prakrit, folk tales in to all Indian languages.

Some of the texts read at folktales are **Somanâtha Brata Kathâ** (13th century)

Nâgalchauthi Brata Kathâ (14th century), **kâka charita** and ‘**Dâmodar Oshâ**’ of 15th century.

Odia prose had begun quite early in the history of literature. **Somanâtha Brata Kathâ**, **Nâgalchauthi Brata Kathâ**, **Kâka Charita** are some examples. **Mâdalâ Pânji**, the records of the Gajapati and Puri Temple, began to be written around 11th century. Between 12th and 15th the centuries were written **Chaini chakadâ** and **Purusottam Debâlaya Kâryabidhi**. There is considerable difference of opinions about the date of some of these texts. For example Madala Panji is said to be a document beginning with the 11th - 12th century but claimed to be written in the 16th century. All these await further research.

An excerpt from **Somanâtha Brata Kathâ** (13th century A.D.) is given below;-

Parameswara kahanti, devi sunanti, Suna devi pârvati, Mâlaba boli desa, tahin pâtala boli nagra, tahin birabikrama boli râjâ, se râjâ mahâpratâpi, se katakara aneka mahimâ. Ghare ghare subarna kalasa basânti. Dhabala mayapura, ati sundara. Subarna kalasa upare neta patâkâ udânti. Chaurasi hata basanti.... (*Kunja bihari Tripathy, Prachina Odia Gadya Sankalan, Odisha Sahitya Akademy-1982, P-92,*)

An excerpt from **Nâgalchauthi Brata Kathâ** (14th century A.D.) is given below;-

“Suna he narapatimâne, sri nâgul chouthi kathâ. Eka je sâdhaba ghara. Târa sâta bohu. Sâna bohutiki dekhi na pâranti. E rupe ketek dine Asina galâ. Kârtika galâ. Pimpoi amâsyâ jibâra câridine nâgul chauthi helâ. Sâsu sakâlu snâhâna kalâ.”

The pre-Sarala literary scene was SoRasâ, Chautisâ, Webi, Loli, Gitâ, Samhitâ , Mâdalâ Pânji , Nâtha literature. One of the most important pre-Sarala literary texts was Bichitra

Ramayana by Sidheswar Das. The use of Prakrit words in abundance gives evidence of its pre-Sârâla composition. This was so popular that it was translated in to Telugu by six eminent Telugu poets, one after another. Similarly, Sarala Das was the major creator and consolidator of the Odia language and the Poet Laurate of Odia literature. His Mahabharata is not a translation but a transcreation. Many new stories with local flavour have been added to the Mahabharata. Yudhisthira had married to the daughter of an Odia merchant of Jajpur described in Sarala Mahabharata. His Laxminarayana Bachanika and Laxmi Puran of Balaram Das the manifesto of feminism book in the Indian literature of that time. The popularity of Sarala Das's Mahâbhârata was translated into Bengali. In the *Bana Parva*, Sarala Das introduces the interesting "True Mango Story". This True Mango story has got, mutatis mutandis, into the Bengali Mahâbhârata of Kasiram Das. It indicates the deep influence that Sarala's epic exercised over neighbouring language. In the counterpart of this episode in the original epic eminent Bengali Writer Professor Bijaya Chandra Mazumdar said that - "It is remarkable that this Odia poet acquired celebrity in Bengal and his Mahabharata was introduced in Bengali translation not later than the early part of the 16th century". [Mazumdar, B.C.: *Typical Selections from Oriya Literature, Vol.1, Introduction, P-XXVIII*]. Some stories found in the Indonesian islands are similar to the versions of Sarala Das.

In 1509 Chaitanya came to Odisha to spread Vaishnavism. Before him Jaydev had prepared the ground by embodying the spirit of Vaishnavism through his *Geetago vinda*. Chaitanya's path of devotion was known as Raganuga Bhakti Marga, but **the Panchasakhâs differed from Chaitanyas and believed in Jnâna Mishrâ Bhakti Mârگا, which has**

similarities with the Buddhist philosophy of Charya literature stated above. Five Odia poets emerged in late 15th and 16th century A.D. were Balarama Das, Jagannatha Das, Achyutananda Das, Ananta Das and Jasobanta Das. They wrote over a span of one hundred years and they are collectively known as the **panchasakhâs**, as they adhered to the same school of thought, *Utkaliya Vaishnavism*. The word *pancha* means five and the word *Sakha*, friend. [Mazumdar, B.C.: *Typical Selections from Oriya literature, Vol-1, Introduction, p-XIX-XXII*]. Balarama Das's *Jagamohana Râmâyana* provided one pillar, along with Sarala Das's "*Mahâbhârata*", upon which subsequent Odia literature was built. His *Lakshmi Purâna* is considered to be the **first manifesto of women's liberation or feminism in Indian literature**. Apart from *Jagamohana Râmâyana* and *Lakshmi Purâna* he also composed various works such as the *Vendântasâra Guptagitâ*, *Nâma-mâhatmya*, *Bhâva samudra*, *Kamalalochana Chautisâ*, *Kânta Koili* etc.

The most influential work of the period was Jagannatha Das's The *Bhâgabata*, which had a great influence on Odia people as a day-to-day philosophical guide. There must be few books in the whole of Indian literature that can be compared with this Odia Bhagabata of Jagannath Das. Says the Bengali scholar B.C. Majumdar in his introduction to Typical Selections from Oriya Literature: "There cannot be any hesitancy in making this statement that *Jagannath Das, by presenting his Oriya Bhagabat to the people, induced all classes of men of his country to cultivate the vernacular language. The benefit which Jagannath Das has conferred upon his countrymen is immense, how the moral ideas preached by him in the book have moulded and still moulding the character of many million of men can be easily*

appreciated.... When the people learnt that the Bhagabat, which is the most sacred of sacred books, was within their easy reach, the people took to the study of the vernacular with uncommon zeal and energy. This is why the art of reading and writing is known and practiced by the common people more extensively in Orissa than Bengal. Long ago, Bhudev Mukherjee as Inspector of Schools duly observed this fact of Oriya mass education and reported the matter in his public report.... There is not a single Hindu village in Orissa where at least a portion of Jagannath Das's Bhagabat is not kept and daily recited."

The **Bhagabata Tung** (Tung means Home) is an integral part of rural community life in Odisha. It is or was till recently a multi-purpose village institution- the village school, the village hall, the village court, the village devotee centre, the village mass hotel, and the village library, all combined into one. A Bhagabata Tung was the rallying point for the entire village life. Influenced by the devotion and poetry of young Jagannath Das, the noted Assamese poet **Shankardev** wrote the *Bhâgavat* in Assamese, and played a key role in establishing the spiritual centres across Assam called *Nâmaghara* modelled on Odia **Bhâgabat Tung**. The lord worshipped in **nâmagharas** is Jagannath of Puri. 158 years after the composition of *Bhagavata* in Odia, **Sanatan Chakrobort** was inspired to translate it in to Bengali. Yet the *10 skanda* of the Odia *Bhagavata* couldn't be translated in to Bengali because of the inability of the Bengali language to express the exact devotional meanings of the particular *skanda*, which he has accepted and said that -"

Suna suna srotâgana Kari nibedanal
Prathama haite grantha lekhilu âpana

Dasamera sesa khanda **bhâsha** Na pâyila
anekeka ta pasi grâme grâme bedâila

E hetu utkala bhâshâ karila likhana
Jagannâtha dâsa kruta apurba barnana

Grantha samâpana hetu utkanthâ hayiâ
Bangaja bhâshâyâ utkala misâyâ

Ithe sâdhu Jana mora dosa Na lâyibe
sâdhu bākya ânande sunibe

Besides this great work Jagannath Das also composed *Artha Koili*, *Dârubrahma Geetâ*, *Shunya Bhâgabata*, *Dhruba Stuti*, *Tulâ bhinâ* etc.

After the age of the Panchasakhas, some prominent works were written, which include *Usabhilasa* by Sisu Sankara Dâs, the *Rahasya-manjari* by Deva-Durlabha Dâs and the *Rukmini-bibhâ* by Kârîtika Dâs. A new form of novel in verse evolved at the beginning of the 17th century when Ramachandra Pattanayaka wrote *Hârâvali*. The prominent poets of the period, include Dinakrushna Dâs, Upendra Bhanja and Abhimanyu Sâmantâ Simhâr. Their *kavyas* especially that of Upendra Bhanja is characterised by elaborate ornamentation and eroticism. Kavi Samrat **Upendra Bhanja** created many words that made Odia language and literature more developed. His multi-meaning sentences are extremely difficult to be translated into other languages.

Odia "chhanda" is different from Sanskrit chhanda "**matra brutta**" and Odia "**akshyara brutta**" is locally named as *Dandi brutta*. The two great Odia epics i.e. Sarala *Mahabharat* and Balaram Das's *Dandi Ramayan* were written in this *brutta*. *Dandi brutta* is dissimilar number of letters per line in a *pada*, whereas *matra brutta* is based on guru (High)-laghu (Low) *matra* equality in a *pada*.

The period of 300 years after the *Sangam* era in Tamil literature is known as *Dark Age*. But there is no such 'Dark Age' found in case of Odia language, because the political instability created

by foreign rulers had failed to choke the literary development of Odisha after the demise of Kharavelian Empire. Although Pali language was replaced by Sanskrit through non-Odia rulers during this intervening period, Odisha's literary activities were kept uninterrupted, traces of which can be clearly identified from various rock inscriptions as well as scholarly manuscripts created during the period.

After this discussion, finally we may conclude :

1. Odia has considerable antiquities. It predates the literatures of most modern Indian languages by more than a thousand years. Its oldest work, the Hatigumpha Inscription, dated back to 1st Century B.C., and the Boudhagâna O Dohâ, the first ever possible literary expression of Odia literature, contain the earliest example of Odia language used in Tantric expression of Mahayani Buddhist tradition.
2. Odia constitutes the indigenous literary tradition in India which is not derived from Sanskrit. Indeed, its literature appeared before the influence of Sanskrit and became strong and qualitatively different from Sanskrit or other Indian languages. It has its own rhetoric theory, its own esthetics, and, above all, a large body of unique literature. It shows a sort of Indian sensibility that is quite different from Sanskrit or other Indian languages, and it contains rich and vast intellectual tradition.
3. The quality of classical Odia literature is such that it is fit to stand before the great literatures of Sanskrit and other languages. The subtlety and profundity of works, their varied scope, and universality qualify Odia to stand as one of the great classical traditions. Everyone knows that the Bhagabata and the Mahabharata, both are the world's greatest works on ethics; but this is merely one of an innumerable of major works, and comprised of Odia classical tradition. There

is not a facet of human existence that is explored and illuminated by this great literature.

Finally, Odia culture is one of the primary independent sources of modern Indian culture and tradition. It is equally important that the great sacred works - Odia Bhagavata and Odia Vaishnavism, beginning with the Jagannath anthologies, have undergone the development of modern Hinduism. Their ideas were taken into the Bhagabata Purana, Laxmi Purana and other texts, and spread all over India. Sanskrit as the source of the modern Indo-Aryan languages, classical Odia is the source language of Thai, Tibet, Simhali, Bengali and Assamese. As Sanskrit is the most conservative and least changed of the Indo-Aryan languages, Odia is conservative and advanced updated language as well. Unlike the other modern languages of India, Odia meets all requirements. It is extremely old (according to L.S.S O' Malley, as old as Latin and Vedic Sanskrit); it arose as an entirely independent tradition, with almost no influence from Sanskrit or other languages; and its ancient literature is indescribably vast and rich and Odia as a nation plays a very prominent role in ancient India and its valour has been mentioned as matchless.

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