



## Poetess Kuntala Kumari Sabat

*Dr. Nirmala Kumari Mohapatra*

"Listen oh brother human !  
Man is not born to weep and die  
To get drowned and to be perished

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Listen oh brother human !  
You are the children shinning in nectar  
You have no death"

*Kuntala Kumari Sabat*

Kuntala Kumari Sabat (LMP) was a medicine practitioner by profession. She has earned reputation as a doctor and poetess. By interest and aptitude She was a novelist, social reformer and a good orator. She was having multi-faceted talent. Her writing shows the socio-political concern of the then Odisha, ie, 1922-1930. She had deep knowledge in four languages ie, Odia, Hindi, English and Bengali.

On 8th February, 1901, Kuntala Kumari was born at Jagadapur in Bastar locality. Her mother Mrs. Monica and father Dr. Daniel shifted their establishment to Burma as father Dr. Daniel got posted in that new place of Burma. So from the childhood Kuntala Kumari was accustomed with Hindi as the regional language. Her home language was Odia. She learnt English from her father. She also learnt Bengali from a neighbouring lady. In about 1916, Mrs. Monica came to Khurdha with her children. It was the original place of her in-laws. So Kuntala Kumari studied in Khurdha and then in Ravenshaw Girls' High

School, Cuttack. She was a voracious reader. Very soon she picked up Odia and wrote a poem; She recited that self-composed one in lyrical voice and got a lot of praise. She joined in Cuttack Medical School in 1918. She was the top-ranking candidate in the medical entrance examination.

Kuntala Kumari came out successfully in LMP Examination in 1921. She was topper in Bihar-Orissa Medical Council Examination and got gold medal. During four years of her studies she bagged 16 medals in toto. Those were of silver and gold. She started her life as a doctor in Cuttack city in the area of Ganga Mandir. She had to work hard to maintain her family including grandmother, mother and siblings. She was good in doctoring, especially in surgery and diseases of women. Most of her patients were from higher strata of society. Her keen sincerity in service was awarded as patients took her as Goddess. In 1925 the Red Cross Society opened a Maternity Welfare Centre in Cuttack City where Kuntala Kumari was appointed as a lady Health Visitor. Her commendable service and sincerity drew the attention of the then Governor's wife; Madam Wheeler.

In 1928 Kuntala Kumari got married and started a Medical Hall of her own in Delhi. It was named as "Bharati Medical Hall". She was a busy one from morn to night. She was blessed with two daughters. They were named as 'Utkala Kumari and Kalinga Kumari. Before her death

she was also blessed with a male child. It was the irony of the fate that she died of child birth, who saved thousands of patients in pregnancy and child birth.

As a literary personnel Kuntala Kumari was highly esteemed. She was a regular writer in some journals at that time. The Utkal Sahitya was then a well known literary magazine. The Mukura and Sahakara were also good journals then. Her publications drew the attention of literary people of that time. Her anthology of poems "Taraprati" (Ode to Star) was published in 1922. Her first novel "Bharati" was also published in the year 1923. In this year also one collection of poems naming Anjali (offerings by two palms) was published. The next year she published one more anthology of poems naming -Uchhwas. It means spiritual thoughts coming from within. One of the poems from this anthology was Sephaliprati (Ode to the night Jasmine). It denotes her optimism and eternal love towards the Lord. Her songs with patriotism with a beautiful name 'Archana' (Worship) was published in the year 1927. It is divided into four sections; such as- Bilwadala, Durbadala, Chamadal and Satadala. The first three sections were dedicated to noted poets of the then Odisha. They were Radhanath Ray, Nandakishore Bala and Madhusudan Rao respectively. Another collection of her patriotic songs naming Spulinga (Sparkling) was published in the year, 1927. Other collections of poems were Ahwana (The Call) and Premachintamani. The later was full of emotions.

Kuntala Kumari was free to express her multifold thoughts vide novels. During her short life she wrote novels like - Kalibohu (Bride having dark colour skin), Parasamoni (the gem with magnetic power), Naa Tundi (Very talkative), Raghu Arakshita (The orphan boy - Raghu). Her major work in novel was 'Raghu Arakshita'. It

was the story flow of an orphan boy who was settled up in the society through several hurdles. In her writings she tried her level best to establish the value of humanism and freedom of women from social oppression. Her novels show high ability of patriarchy and low status of women in families. So arose struggle for existence and importance. That was the clear scenario vividly depicted in her novels. Several reformations like anti-caste mode, widow marriage, patriotism and nationalistic ideals were illustrated in her essays. She boldly points out the misbeliefs and superstitions on the basis of religion. She also created awareness among the mass to wipe out the social stigma.

Madam Kuntala Kumari wrote a series of essays entitled - "Letter from Delhi". Those were inspiring at that time as it was the period of struggle for freedom. She also wrote against casteism. She had delivered lectures to the people living outside Orissa, especially in Calcutta. Her writings show sympathetic tone for the poor, oppressed and destitute. She wrote inspiring songs at the time of 'Salt Satyagraha' (1930). Most of her essays give the note of reformation, health consciousness especially to the women and girls.

The title - 'Utkal Bharati' was conferred on her in the year 1925. She was highly esteemed in giving conventional addresses in several educational - cultural institutions.

It was a big blow to her life that she passed away so soon at the age of 38 only. It was a big loss to her family, state and nation at large. She was such an important person that her personality and dedications had an impact upon the society as well as the general public. I pay my sincere tribute on her birthday i.e. on 8th February.

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