

## The Literary Heritage of Sonepur

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Sonepur lying nestled in a cosy bower surrounded by long lines of sky-blue, forest crowned cliffs forming pre-eminently the base of a triangular plot, washed by the perennial flow of the Mahanadi and river Tel is a veritable poet's paradise. In the words of Sir Richard Temple:

“A real variety to the scene was afforded whenever caught the golden colours of the eastern sky, the rapids made a merry noise as they hurried along. The effect of the rocks was doubled by the reflections of teak trees, laden with their yellow blossoms, hung over the margin of the stream. We were one day on horse-back, another day in boats, it was from the midstream that the best views presented themselves. When the river was winding through mountain gorges, the hill-sides widely parted, would allow the water to broaden itself into a small lake, the voyager issuing from it by the river passage, would turn a corner and find himself in a fresh lake, whence he might enter another and yet another - each lake differing from its neighbour.”

These lovely sights and sounds created the appropriate artistic atmosphere where poets, novelists, dramatists, painters, musicians, etc. of no mean merit flourished. Here at Sonepur.

The growth of literature at Sonepur can be traced to Charyapada, to Matsyendranath and Daripada of the Natha cult. They wrote esoteric poetry in language known as Sandhya bhasa. The local idioms they used are still in currency in this area. Lakshmikara, daughter-in-law of

Jalandharippa, Raja of Lanka (Sonepur), who was one of the exponents of the Natha cult was the propounder of Sahajayana Buddhism whose “Advayasiddhi” is the medieval form of Acharya Rajanish's modern method of Yogic practices from sex to salvation. The mystic poetry of the Natha cult which flourished from 8th to 11th century largely influenced the Panchasakha literature of Jagannath, Balarama, Yasowanta, Achuyta and Ananta. The Natha literature of Sonepur seems to have set the tone and temper of the literature the successive ages pursued.

Sasisena Kavya by Pratap Rai of the 17th Century is a milestone in Oriya literature. At a time when Oriya poetry was characterized by ornamental richness and figurative intricacies, here was a kavya marked by sweet simplicity and fluid beauty. And the author of this singular kavya was a son of this soil. There are enough internal evidences to show that the author belonged to Sonepur garjat. The kavya deals with the love, marriage and elopement of Ahimanikya, minister's son and Sasisena, daughter of the Raja of Amaravati near the present Chandikhol of Cuttack. It was here at Kamantapur (Sonepur) that the real drama of their love-life is enacted against the tantric background of this land of Sat Bahen. It was here that Ahimanikya, trapped by Jnanadei Maluni, one of the seven tantric sisters, was transformed into a sheep by day and a youth by night. The kavya end with the transformation of the sheep into Ahimanikya under royal orders and the reunion of the love-lorn lovers. Jnanadei

expresses her disdainful horror in her response to the king's command to bring the sheep. "What an idea", exclaims the cunning Jnanadei, "a sheep in the house of a gardener, a horse in house of a potter and a monkey in the house of a weaver ;"

The Chauhans who ruled Sonepur for about three hundred years kept up the tradition of the Somagupta kings whose copperplate charters carry lines of highly ornate poetry. In the Maranjmura copper plates of Yayati, Sonepur-on-Mahanadi has been depicted as a metropolitan city washed by the moon-lit, foam-crested, restless waves of the confluence sanctified by its holy water, decorated with rest-houses, resounding with the beaming, blooming lotus-faces of amorous women with anticing side-long glances.

During the reign of Niladhar Sing Deo (1841-91) there lived at Sonepur three great devotional poets namely, Chandramani Das, Bhima Bhoi and Bhubaneswar Panigrahi.

Chandramani Das was a siddha yogi whose samadhi pitha is visited by thousands of devotees all the year round. His best known work is Sudhasara Gita (1940) consisting, like the famous Bhagavat Gita, of 18 Cantos. It is based on the Pinda-Brahmanda tattwa of the Panchasakha school of poetry. But, while this intricate tattwa is made complicated by the Panchasakhas it is conveyed in simple, intelligible language by Chandramani Das. "Narada Gita" written in the form of a dialogue between Uddhava and Narada is Yogasastra turned Kavyasastra. These Yogas are quite different from those delineated in the Gita and yet this unpublished kavya closes with the beatific vision of anantasayi Vishnu which reminds us of the Viswarupa in the Gita.

"Bhavataraka" which is another unpublished but unparalleled work by this saint poet seems to have been influenced by Ram Das Dadhyata Bhakti. It comprises thirty cantos and is an episode on sin and salvation. From men to animals, from animals to reptiles-each one can

be saved by the grace of god. This is what we find from canto to canto. The most remarkable aspect of this voluminous kavya is the transcendental vision of God seen by a hunter through a strange bird in canto XVII. "No hands /No feet.. No beak/No colour, No shape/No nose, no ears... Its body filled the sky, the earth and the underworld. And he looked into his body and saw the bird." This immanent us of the poet's mystic English contemporary Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" -

A sense sublime  
Of something far more  
deeply interfused  
Whose dwelling is the light  
of setting suns  
And the round ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky and in the  
mind of man

We see this cosmic vision again in Srikrishna Sudhamruta where the asta patavamsis seated on the Garuda witness Krishna's Gopa Lila far down in Maya Dwaraka and look back and yet find him behind them.

Chandramani Das wrote "Tandava Nruttya", "Bhsramana Gita" "Halia Gita", "Prabhati", "Balagopala Chautisa", "Gupta Gopibhasa", etc. some of which are yet to see the light of day. He was a Vaishnavite poet who loved bhajans and kirtans. And yet the god he worshipped was Rama and Krishna and Machha and Kachha and Narasimha - all rolled into one. And that one even is disembodied Brahman.

Bhima Bhoi began where Chandramani had left. His god was Mahima, the Sunya Brahma or the Void. Tribals are animists. They woship "rocks and stones and trees". And yet here was an unschooled tribal rebel who declared an unremitting, uncompromising battle against idolatry, against brahminical orthodoxy and royal authority. Setting up his ashram at Khaliapali near Sonepur with the patronage of Raja Niladhar Sing Deo, Bhim Bhoi became the Mahima Swamy of West Orissa whose monotheistic bhajans set to

the tune of the castanet ring in the raptured ears of his million devotees in West Bengal, Andhra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Bhima Bhoi was a prolific poet who, at once, dictated four bhajans to four scribes. Of his writings mention may be made of Srutinisedha Gita, Adi Anta Gita, Astaka Bihari Gita, Brahma Nirupana Gita, Bhajanamala, Chautisa Madhuchakra, Manu Sabha Mandala, Brahma Chalaka, Stutichintamani and "Mahima Vinod", a ponderous poetic itinerary of Mahima Swamy yet to be published. Besides, he has dictated numerous bhajans and chautisas which are still lying scattered here and there. In Brahma Nirupana Gita Bhima Bhoi defines Brahman as Purusa and Prakruti, light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, master and slave, sea and sky, good and evil, death and immortality. But the magnum opus of Bhima Bhoi is his Stuti Chintamani which has no parallel in Oriya poetry. It elevates pure personal suffering to the height of a kavya like Wordsworth's "Prelude". Here in Orissa a wail of agony was, for the first time, considered subject matter for poetical composition in Bhima Bhoi's hands. We, therefore, sometimes strongly feel this unlettered genius of an unimportant Garjat of those days should have been, in all earnest, given the honour of inaugurating the modern age in Oriya poetry.

There was another neglected talent of Sonepur - Bhubaneswar Panigrahi- whose "Prema Tarangini" kavya can rival the best of Upendra Bhanja, "Kavi Samrat" of Oriya poetry. Born to an humble brahmin family of Gaurgaon, Bhubaneswar Panigrahi was a court-poet of Niladhar Sing Deo and a pundit of much learning. "Prematarangini" which means "a river of love" deals with the separation and union of Krishna and the Gopis in a language charged with passion and power. This is highly ornate, pictorial poetry, a long love-song composed to a wide variety of metres, decorated with figures of speech of alankaras like Utpreksha, Punarukti, Yamaka, Rupaka, Simhavalokana, Vyagragati, etc. and Chitravandhas like Samputavandha,

Padmavandha, Rathavandha, Gomutrachhanda, etc. scattered throughout with uncontrolled prodigality. The last four cantos are sometimes detached from the kavya and sung as morning hymns which, in their lucidity of expression, depth of feeling and melodic beauty, have hardly any parallel in Oriya poetry. Besides "Prematarangini" written in 30 cantos, kavyas like "Bhagavata Mahatmya", "Astapadi" and a few lyrics and chautisas based on the Krishna cult by Bhubaneswar Panigrahi are a precious treasure of Oriya poetry. In one of these songs, Krishna, on hearing Radha's grief-stricken separation, bursts into one of the most ornamental utterances.

Nira niraja nayanaru nivara  
Varaja vasa khedajalu uddhara  
Dharadharastana vinayavistara  
Tara kesa mukha poti re.

Raja Niladhar was himself a poet, a painter, a composer, and a musician. The lyrics he wrote were simple, sweet and passionate and were largely influenced by the prevalent taste of Vaishnavite poetry.

Rajarsi Prataprudra Sing Deo (1891-1902), Niladhar's son and successor, was well-versed in Sanskrit literature and culture. He had composed several hymns in Sanskrit included in Stotratarangini (1893) comprising astakas, dasakas, dwadasakas on pattamaheswari, here is nityajnanananda sudhamvonidhirupa, an ocean of eternal wisdom and bliss. Somaesvari is Padmasina, trinayanayuta proditaditya kantih, a three-eyed goddess seated on a lotus and shining like the sun. Goddess Sureswari dazzles with white tulips trembling on the creeper of her fine frame, sphurat malli mala lalitanuvallari parisara, while the Mahanadi rushes on to lie on the large lap of the eastern sea, prachipayodhi vipulankaviharasila. Prataprudra's poet, Pt. Chintamani Nanda's Jagadisa Mahima Stavah is another solid contribution to the world of Sanskrit hymns.

If Prataprudra was a Sanskrit scholar, it is all but natural that the Oriya kavyas namely Chaturdasapadi (1918) attributed to him should

carry on them the distinct stamp of his Sanskrit scholarship. If Upendra Bhanja's Vaidehisha Vilasa and Dinakrushna Das' Rasa Kallola are written with the first letter of each line beginning with 'b' and 'k' respectively, Chandravati parinaya is composed in chakaradyaniyama (each line beginning with the alphabet-'Cha') which is rarer still in Oriya vocabulary. Based on an episode from the Mahabharata this kavya deals with the elopement and marriage of Chandravati, Duyodhana's daughter, with Shamva, Srikrishna's son. Like "Prematarangini", this is a pictorial, musical kavya composed to as many as twentytwo metres like Kalasa, Ramakeri, Rasakoila, Vasanta, Chakrakeli, Mangalagujjari, Shankarabharana, etc. The splendour of description, the opulence of alankaras, and the mellifluity of its music make it one of the milestones in the Riti Yuga Oriya poetry. Prataprudra's unpublished "Chaupadi Ratna" contains powerful lyrics on the Radha-Krishna love theme. The colophon verses of the originals of Chandravati Parinaya and Chaturdasapadi preserved at Gourgan in manuscript form bear the name of Bhubaneswar Panigrahi. Thus these kavyas attributed to Prataprudra were definitely written by Bhubaneswar which BM Sing Deo later published in the name of his father, Prataprudra. Bhubaneswar Panigrahi's son, Dwija Nilambar, too, has left behind him a few significant lyrics composed in medieval Vaisnavite mode. This rich tradition of poetry is fostered and sustained by the natural loveliness of Sonepur, its rivers and streams, its hills and forests, its fields and groves and, above all, by the Mahanadi flowing down loud on the stones and low on the sand, singing with Tennyson's brook, 'Men may come and men may go/ But I go on forever.'

The reign of Birmitrodaya Sing Deo witnessed the flowering of all branches of literature: poetry, novel, drama, biography, travelogue, translations, etc.

Birmitrodaya is said to have written Chandraprabha Kavya (1902), Astapadi (1926), and Anangarangini (1935). While Astapadi

resembles Prataprudra's Chaturdasapadi in content and form, Anangarangini and Chandraprabha Kavya which drew the admiring attention of poet Radhanath Ray show the poet's rare combination of tradition and modernity. Anangarangini deals with the imaginary story of love between Naravahana, Raja of Kausambi and Chandraprabha. Anangarangini deals with the imaginary story of love between Rasananda, Yuvaraj of Kanchanapura and Anangarangini, princes of Kamanagara, while Chandraprabha Kavya delineates the live and marriage, separation and union between Naravahana, Raja of Kausambi and Chandraprabha, daughter of the fairy king, Chitraketu. The visible approach of Anangarangini's youth depicted by the florist Kalavati in Ch.II and the description of the spring-garden in Ch.IV of Anangarangini, the elaborate depiction of the spring-forest, the sunset and sunrise in Chandraprabha Kavya justify them as jewels of Oriya poetry. While there is the unmistakable shadow of the ornamental poetry of the Riti Yuga on Anangarangini, Chandraprabha Kavya is a splendid specimen of simplicity in modern poetry. Its theme is ancient but its treatment brings it close to the poetry of Radhanath and Nandakishore. In St.267-9, Naravahana nostalgically reminisces :

The same scented breeze from the south  
The same warm song of the cuckoo,  
The same flowers, the same bees  
White with pollen grains,  
the same sweet air,  
And yet since her departure  
Something has happened to my heart.

Maharani Lady Parvati Devi and Yuvaraj Somabhusan have respectively left behind them two important kavyas namely, Syamantaka Mani (1928) and Gajendra Mokshana (1907). While Syamantaka Mani deals with the loss and restoration of the jewel Syamantaka, Gajendra Mokshana depicts the story of the salvation of an elephant crocodile from a Gajendra Mokshana



claim a special place in Oriya poetry for its moving simplicity spontaneity and spirituality.

Pt. Aditya Prasad Guru was primarily a Sanskrit scholar who attempted three kavyas in Oriya. Kutiravasini (1931), Kokila Sandesa and "Tarapurgarh" (MS). While Kokila Sandesa is written in the tradition of Duta Kavyas like Kalidasa's Meghaduttam and Dhoyi 'Kaaviraja's Pavanadutam, Kutiravasini, dedicated to Maharani Parvati Devi, is based on Canto VII of Devi Bhagavatam. It tells the story of Sukanya, daughter of Raja Saryati, and her god-conquering chastity.

Mayaraduta by Lakanath Misra resembles Guru's Kokila Sandesa. Both are Khanda Kavyas written on the same theme and in the same 'Kalyana Ahari' metre. But Misra's Haripriya (1922) can be classed with modern poetry. It tells the story of Haripriya's disappearance and discovery against the scenic, sylvan setting of Sonepur. The treatment of nature in this kavya carries it close to the best of Gangadhar Meher's nature poetry.

Harihar Panigrahi is a minor poet whose Agamani, Nirajana, Niti Saurabha, Asrudhara, Archana and Santwana Puspamalya claim him a place among Oriya poets. While the last three are elegiac effusions on the death of Birmirodaya Sing Deo, the first three relate the poet to nature and human nature. Though of shorter stature than his celebrated father Gopinath Panigrahi, Harihara will be remembered for his pan-Orissan sentiments expressed in Nirajana. In the midst of drowsy autumnal fertility and dreamy voluptuousness, in the midst of what Keats would have called, 'mellow fruitfulness', the poet finds Orissa condemned to starvation and slavery. Where is the trade across the seven seas? the poet asks ruefully. At a time when the Oriya language was under attack when poets like Gangadhar, Radhanath, Bichitranand,

Bichhandacharan were sweating and struggling to keep the banner of the Oriya language flying, here was a thin, little voice in a remote corner of Orissa lifting its lyric of patriotic protest.

Sonepur had a rich tradition of songs and music. Niladhar Sing used to compose songs and sing them to the accompaniment of musical instruments which he himself played. Birmirodaya sing Deo wrote half a dozen books containing hundreds of songs which continued the tradition of kavisurya Baladeva Rath and Gopalakrushna in Oriya Poetry. These songs contained in Sangita Ratnahara (1925), Sangita Vallari (1931), Krushna Premodaya Champukavyam O Sangita Sudhasagara (1933), Sangita Mitrodaya (1934) and Sangita Kusumanjali are largely based on the love between Radha and Krishna, and composed to a wide variety of metres like 'puravi', 'todi paraja', 'kedara gauri', 'bhatiari', 'kamodi', 'saari', 'malhara', 'panchama varadi', 'anandabhairavi', 'sankarabharana', etc. They are set even in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, tunes. These songs, characterized by soft sentiments and lyrical intensity, combine in them the lucid simplicity of Elizabethan love-lyrics with the intellectual titillation of metaphysical secular songs. Birmirodaya's unpublished lyrics and chautisas and Malasri alongwith Swarnapura Bedha Parikrama (1899) and Lady Parvati Devi's Humva Gita (1929) come under this category of songs. Birmirodaya compiled and published two collections of Sanskrit hymns, namely, Stotrarangini (1893) and Suvarnamerusatakam (1927) to which Niladhar, Prataprudra and Birmirodaya have made significant contributions.

This tradition of poetry has come down to Kaibalya Charan Nayak whose "Nala Charita" written in Riti Yuga style and "Sakha Prasakha", a romantic effusion are yet to be traced. Marudhara (1961) and Sandhyatara (1969) contain around fifty devotional lyrics which show the poet's disenchantment and disillusionment with the world and his theocentric mindset. One of his longest poems in Sandhyatara is 'Chandli Chule' which takes the reader on a delightful trip round

the religious and historical places of Sonapur. Kaibalya Charan's MS "Mahapathara Yatri" contains a cluster of divine poems expressive of the poet's world-weariness and stoical surrender to divine dispensation. The last poem 'Mahapathara Yatri' which paints the pathetic picture of a dying man casting longing lingering looks behind closes with the emboldening sense of self-realization with which he "puts out to sea" in the hour of sunset and evening star.

Satyanarayan Bohidar was a poet with a difference. Author of 'Kosali Bhasakosh', his works namely Tik Chahnra (1975). Ghavghavo, Ghuvkudu etc. are written in Kosali or Sambalpuri language. The ease and facility with which Bohidar weaves the local idioms into the tapestry of his poetry is indeed amazing.

Of the other poetical works of Sonapur, mention may be made of the monumental "Buddha Purana" in several volumes by Nakula Nayak, "Papakshaya Mahatmya" by Dharmananda Meher, "Rama Lila" by Gandhar Vaisya, "Anutapa Tarangini" by Pt.A.P.Guru, Purana Kathasara by Parvati Devi, Ratnasimhasana Prasasti, by Damodar Sastri, Ratnasimhasanotsava by Gopinath Panigrahi and Kalika Purana by B.M. Sing Deo.

### Historical Literature

Bijoy Chandra Mazumdar who was a poet and a historian wrote "Sonpur in the Sambalpur Tract" (1911) and Orissa in the Making (1925). Sri Ramchandra Mullick wrote "Samkhipta Kosala Itihas" (1931) and "Odisha Itihas" which are pure history. "Sonapur Itihas" by Pt.Aditya Prasad Guru and "Sonapur Chauhana Vansa Itihas" by Biswanath Rath, too, are prosaic attempts at pure history. But the works by Pt.Gopinath Panigrahi Vidyaratna like Upahara Puspanjali (1910). Kumara Janmotsava (1927), Ekadasi Udyapana (1928) constitute the poetical history of the Chauhan rulers of Sonapur. They set out to celebrate an occasion but end up as history. Gopinath Panigrahi's master-piece is a historical Sanskrit epic of the order of Gangadhar

Misra's famous Kosalanandakavyam (1929). "Swarnapurarajavansanucharitam" which the poet rightly calls the "Second Kosalananda". It is a poetic, historical record of the Chauhan Rajas of Sonapur beginning with Madangopal and ending with Birmirodaya.

Damodar Misra Sastri's 'Swarnapura Chauhana Kirttidarpana' is a historical kavya in Oriya serialized in Sambalpur Hiteisini. It traces the history of the Sonapur Chauhans in simple, lyrical poetry. Unfortunately this rare works has not been published in the form of a book.

Pt Aditya Prasad Guru's "Tarapurgarh" in Oriya, Syenagirih and Purascharana vamna Champuh in Sanskrit, too, are historical kavyas which trace the history and legends surrounding Sonapur.

### Travel Literature

At a time when there was hardly any travelogue in Oriya literature, Sonapur created a host of travel literature. Some of them were written in the form of dialogic kavyas which lend credence and objectivity to history. Swarnapura Gunadarsha (1921) by Damodar Sastri is the historical geography of Sonapur in the form of a Champu Kavya gadyam hudyam ashesasavdanihitam padyam . Lokananda and Sadananda, fictitious merchants from Prayag, begin their tour of Sonapur State from the left bank of the Mahanadi, cross over the Panchara Pragana and visit the places of interest on the right bank till they enter the town. Maharudrayaina Kavyam (1920) like Biswanath Rath's Panigrahanapadapapah (1919) and Jagannath Mishra's Utasavatarangini Champuh (1910), is another historical kavya by Damodar Misra who decribes the journey of Maharaja Birmirodaya through the scenic Sonapur. His visit to Sambalpur and Benaras. His trip round the temples of Benaras, the performance of the Maharudra Yajna and his return journey are described with the fidelity and sincerity of a distinguished count - who draws in his first hand experience.

But on top of all is Gopinath Panigrahi's Brata Charita (1915) which is a remarkable travelogue in prose at a time when Oriya literature was quite poor in prose. The occasion in the thread ceremony of Somabhusan Sing Deo, Birmitrodaya's son, but it sends the writer to different places of Orissa and beyond, which come out aggressively alive in Panigrahi's journal. While Part-I takes us round Puri, Sareikela, Boudh, Athgarh, Dhenkanal, Kasipur, Kuchinda, Calcutta etc, we are set on a guided tour round the temple town of Sonapur in Part-II. What Jagannath Misra Tarkatirtha, does in Utsavatarangini Champuh, Gopinath Panigrahi Vidyaratna does in Brata Charita. But, what is remarkable and delightful about Panigrahi is his sinewy prose and graphic visual descriptions which are the hall-marks of travel literature.

It is said that B.M.Sing Deo had written a book Bharata Bhramana, which confined an interesting account of his travels across the country, now unfortunately lost.

### **Biographical Literature**

"Here in this country", wrote B.C.Mazumdar, "we cremate the body, we do not raise a monument". Yet he raised one in Chohan Rulers of Sonpur (1925) brief life-sketches of Niladhar, Prataprudra and Birmitrodaya in pure panegyrics. B.C.Mazumdar was closely associated with the Sonapur Durbar. He had seen the Rajas within close range. Had he wished, he would have built solid biographies on the rulers, but he did not choose to do so. May be because, truth is dangerous and to sing the praise is less problematic and more profitable than to launch a perilous voyage on the discovery of the 'whole man'.

But unlike Chohan Rulers of Sonpur, Life of Rani Amulyamani Devi (1915) contains a full-fledged biography, even though here, too, we do not see anything shocking or revolting in the Rani. The Rani was, of course, on her own the true representative of Indian womanhood - an ardhgini to Rajarsi Prataprudra. The life of a

Rani is bound to be uneventful. But, Dasgupta discovers in Amulyamani more than a Rani. She is an ideal mother, a devoted wife and a fine specimen of Indian womanhood. The book deals with Amulyamani's early years in the Kalahandi palace, her married life, her children and grandchildren, her role as a wife and a mother and her last days.

It is said that Pt.Gopinath Panigrahi had attempted a book of biographies and called it "Satcharitra Samadara" which is lost to posterity.

### **Dramatic Literature**

Sonapur had a rich tradition of dance and music and drama. Imagine a Yuvaraj freely mixing with the public and uninhibitedly acting his part with them on the stage. And this was possible at Sonapur in the second decade of the 20th century. The Yuvaraj was Somabhusan Sing Deo. His Sridama Daridrya Bhanjana (1920) is the only play available on Sridama's grinding poverty, his unflinching devotion to Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna's unshakable friendship with Sridama- all these are depicted in the drama. Bhagia Panda is a newly created character in this mythological play, which lends dramatic relief, through frolicking humour, to this otherwise serious play. The dialogues are written in Hindi, Hindi mixed with Oriya, Oriya mixed with Sambalpur. In the Foreword, B.M.Sing Deo refers to one-actor titled "Mayasavari" by Somabhusan which is not available.

Gopinath Panigrahi is said to have attempted some poetic plays, namely "Subhadra Parinaya", "Sachala Harana" and "Rukmini Harana" which have walked into oblivion.

### **Fictional Literature**

It has already been said that Birmitrodaya had a poetic talent, but his works on prose fiction like Bhagna Kankana (1920) and Nilakuntala (1927) are milestones in Oriya fiction. At a time when Oriya literature had only a handful of novels to show, it was here at Sonapur that these novels were written to enrich the literature of the State.

Bhagna Kankana is a historical novel based on the intrigue between Ajayagarh had Bishnugarh Raj families. The distinction of this novel lies in the Jaina background against which the quiet words of wisdom uttered by a little ignominious girl Johan in the gathering gloom of the evening. "Sorrow breeds sorrow. The compassion of Lord Mahabir removes sorrow and leads the soul through endless joy towards Nirvana. What is sorrow, prince?"

While Bhagna Kankana is a historical novel, Nilakuntala is a sociological fiction, which reflects the dwindling values of the rural society of those days. The centers of activity are Binodpur and Bishnupur and the merit of the novel lies in the seamless integration of the main plot with the under plot. Nilakuntala projects the picture of the contemporary society: the misguided youth, the village touts, the simple, unsuspecting, unsophisticated Savara society, the gossips in the river ghat, the evils of poverty and the benefits of education - all these are realistically portrayed in the novel. The justice dispensed is poetic. The denouncement is harden, it is too sudden to be credible. And yet this novel will live for the life it mirrors.

### Translation

The appetite of Birmirodaya for Sanskrit classics was whetted by the pundits who surrounded him. They were Pt. Krupasindhu Mishra, Jyotisalankara, Pt. Ramachandra Padhi, Siddhanta Tilaka, Pt. Gobinda Rath, Jyotischandra, Pt. Gopinath Panigrahi, Vidyaratna, Pt. Kasinath Mishra, Kavyavinod, Pt. Damodar Misra, Sastri, Pt. Aditya Prasad Guru, Kavyatirtha, Pt. Chintamani Nanda, Vidyabhusana, Pt. Devaraj Misra, Sahityopadhyana, Pt. Brusabha Misra, Vidyalkara etc. Maharaja BM Sing Deo might have also received inspiration from Prataprudra and Amulyamani, his parents who were well-read and well-versed in Sanskrit literature. This made

him translate into Oriya great Sanskrit classics like Ratnavali (1894), Abhijnana Sakuntala Nataka (1898), Vikramorvasi (1910), Rutusamhara (1915), Naisadhiya, Charita (1921), Sisupala Vadha (1928), Dasa Kumara Charita (1928), Kalika Purana (1929), and Uttara Rama Charita Kavya (1930) Sing Deo acknowledges the help of Bhubaneswar Badpanda, Fakir Misra, Madhusudan Rao, Nilakantha Das, etc. without which the major works of Kalidas, Sriharsa, Bhavabhuti, Dandi, Magha, Markandeya would have remained Greek to the ordinary Oriya readers.

Under BM Sing Deo's patronage BC Mazumdar translated Gita Gobindam into Bengali. Lady Parvati Devi, it is said, had translated Bhaktikavyam and Pt. Gopinath Panigrahi, Malatimadhavam and Mruchhakatikam, but these invaluable translation have become extinct with the passage of time.

It may be mentioned here that great works like Gangadhar Misra's Kosalanandakavyam which is one of the three historical Sanskrit Mahakavyas of the country, Gopinath Tunga's Virasarvasvam which is the quintessence of twentyseven shastras of India, Niladri Mahodayah which is the only complete and comprehensive compendium on the 'Puja padhhati' of Lord Jagannath, Pt. Harihara Rath's Birmirodaya Mahabharata in three volumes, etc. would not have seen the light of day without the royal patronage of Sonapur. The Sonapur Chair of English at Revenshaw College and the Post-graduate Department of Calcutta University founded by Sonapur Durbar have immensely contributed to the cause of language and literature down the years.

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