

One of the finest products of the Satyavadi Banavidyalaya, Godabarish Mohapatra (1898-1965) had a fierce intellectual honesty. The life he lived and the life he believed were indetical. What he professed he wrote about, and what he put down in writing always reflected the values he upheld in personal life. A fine soul, a fine writer, he was fundamentally moved by a desire how best to do good to the society and to people at large, and how to identify a writer as a sentient being. This he did in ample measure for which Oriya literature should be immensely grateful to him.

Dr Brundaban Chandra Acharya (b.1937) is a well-known Oriya scholar and critic. Formerly Professor of Oriya at the Visva-Bharati, he is now Bhima Bhoi Professor of Oriya at Sambalpur University.

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GODABARISH MOHAPATRA

The sculpture reproduced on the end paper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum.

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Godabarish Mohapatra

Brundaban Chandra Acharya



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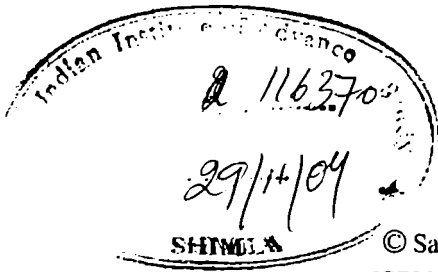
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Life and Career

Godabarish Mohapatra has occupied a unique place in Oriya literature. A writer of humour and satire, he was deeply concerned with the problems of his contemporary life. The present study of his writings includes his poetry, short stories, novels, humorous and satirical writings, belles-lettres, one-act plays, children's literature as well as his journalistic pieces. To make a systematic estimate of his literary genius, some particular phases of his career are being touched upon in the following pages.

FIRST PHASE (1914 - 1921)

Born on 1 October 1898 at Kumarang near Banapur in Orissa, Godabarish had read extensively ancient Oriya literature such as *Gopibhasa*, *Gunasagara*, *Keshaba Koili*, *Natuchori*, *Angadapadi*, *Kapata Pasha*, etc. in his early years, before attending school. His quick and spontaneous versification charmed his teachers in the upper primary school where he was reading. A boy of eight or ten, he went to the paddy-fields with his brother at night, spent hours in gossip in the granary floor and easily composed short rhymed-verses on paddy-field granary and fire. The words of elderly people became poetry in his rendering. He once constructed a drain in the school orchard but later found the drain gone for which he composed a stanza with eyes suffused with tears : 'Ah my drain / They tortured you till death'. The emotion of the child for minor objects of little recognition and value made him compose innumerable poems like this in his school days.

His first poem 'Banapur' (1914) was awarded a prize in the Annual Day of M. E. School Students' Union. Braja Sundar Das, the famous Editor of *Mukura*, was the Chairman at that function and published the poem in his journal.

Composing poems was his hobby. He wrote poems such as 'Usha', 'Nirjhara', 'Pradosha', 'Shishira', 'Nitimalya', 'Puspanjali' in 1914 that are compiled in his book *Je Phula*

Phutihila in 1966. But even earlier they were first compiled as *Prabhata Kusuma* in 1920, and printed in Mukura Press by Braja Sundar Das.

Prabhata Kusuma was dedicated to his young teacher Pandit Godabarish Mishra. There he wrote, 'I offer this flower blossoming at the dawn of life, with devotion and love, in the hands of my esteemed young master Sri Godabarish Mishra, M. A. B. T., the bard and the worthy son of my motherland.' On *Prabhata Kusuma*, the then Headmaster of Cuttack Training School, Chandramohan Moharana, wrote on 16 November 1918 : 'I was too pleased to read the poetry anthology *Prabhata Kusuma* by Sri Godabarish Mohapatra. The language is charming and the thoughts generally impressive. This young poet would be adorned with a high position among the poets if he retains his sincerity and devotion'.

Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra, the Headmaster of Satyabadi Banavidyalaya, in which Godabarish was a student, remarked on this book on 7 August 1919 : 'Sri Godabarish Mohapatra is a student of Satyabadi School. I have discovered his poetic sensibility on several occasions. He is my student and is almost in the first stage of his life. It is seen in the field of literature that many young talents have failed to be successful satisfactorily in the later days of their lives. Hence it seems unsafe and unwise to remark about his future at present. Of course, it requires no mention that his poetic genius is gradually developing through his writings.....The present booklet *Prabhata Kusuma* is surely up to mark. If something is there to learn from small poems, then *Prabhata Kusuma* is quite valuable. The language is as simple as his thoughts.'

Ratnakar Pati, Lecturer in Philosophy at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, wrote his views on this book on 25 February 1919 : 'I hope that the book *Prabhata Kusuma* would find a deserving place in Oriya literature because there are some nice and profound thoughts in the book....The poet is also the author of another book named *Banapur* and its readers might have known about his literary talent'.

As *Prabhata Kusumā* and *Banapur* were written before Godabarish had joined Satyabadi Banavidyalaya, they were free from the literary ideals and styles of Satyabadi period. In these two poetic utterances, the influence of Radhanath Ray, the famous Oriya Poet, could be seen. 'Banapur' shows the influence of Radhanath's 'Chilika'. The description of nature and its manifestations in mountains, caves, birds, dawn and dusk, the lake covered with dancing lotus and clouds perching on hills, remind Radhanath as far as language, rhyme and presentation are concerned. The influence of Radhanath's 'Tulsi stāvaka' is evident in 'Prabhata Kusumā', in connection with memorable moral teachings.

The poems of *Banapur* were appreciated by many, including Pandit Godabarish who encouraged Mohapatra to join Satyabadi as a student (1915 to 1921). Joining Banavidyalaya, he wrote the poem 'Kabira gāna'. It received approbation and was published in the school's monthly magazine *Satyabadi* in 1916. The dashing of waves against the shore, the melodious tune of the cuckoo and the blossoming of lilies are some of the mysteries of nature that he wrote about in that poem.

In 1916, another poem 'Kic jānithilā' was composed with the symbolic presentation of a flower that had a venomous snake underneath ready to bite the man wanting to pluck the blossom.

Mohapatra was influenced by Satyabadi trend and the literary output of that period like *Dharmapada*, *Konāraka*, *Padmabati*, *Dharanidhar*, *Kālijāi*, *Mun Chāsāpua*, etc. Most of the poems collected in the book *Je Phula Phutihila* belonged to the period (1914 to 1921). His excellent poems charmed others to gain the title 'adolescent poet' for himself.

Satyabadi Banavidyalaya was established by Pandit Gopabandhu to train students mentally to free India from the shackles of foreign rule. The teachers were quite affectionate to the pupils and imbibed in them the spirit of nationalism, patriotism, liberty and sacrifice. Mohapatra was deeply influenced by his saintly teachers. Pandit Godabarish gave him the biographies of

Italian freedom fighters like Mazzini and Garibaldi which influenced Mohapatra to write the biography of Mazzini published in 1930. He also wrote the outlines of *Rajput Kahani* following the *History of Rajasthan* by Todd. In most of his poems during 1918 to 1920, the ambition for freedom and liberty through selfless dedication of the youth dominated. He wrote a poem entitled 'Pathika mun swarājya duāre', meaning 'I am a pedestrian on the threshold of self-rule'.

In 1920, in the aftermath of the World War, he wrote a poem named 'Ātmabali' on an incident of self sacrifice which was published by the famous freedom fighter Govinda Chandra Mishra. The author referred to an incident of Russian-Japanese war where a Japanese old woman committed suicide to send her patriotic son to the war.

After the publication of *Satyabadi* from Asha Press of Berhampur, another magazine *Vani* saw the light of day in 1919, and continued till 1921. While Godabarish was a student of classes X and XI, his poems and stories got published in the same magazine.

'Parimala', published in *Vani* in 1919, was the first short story of Mohapatra that portrayed in a passionate and gripping manner the tragic life of a virile youth. An essay named 'Bharatara birabālā Sanjukta' meaning Sanjukta, the heroic lady of India, was also published in that magazine. Stories like 'Milani' and 'Bhāi' were also published in the magazine in 1920. So too poems like 'Bidāya bele', 'Barsha sheshe', 'Abakāsha shesha dibase' etc.

The natural surrounding of Banavidyalaya enchanted the tender heart of the young poet. He composed poems and songs for the functions of the school. Poems like 'Ganeshagitikā', 'Sankirtana' as well as 'Chhande chhande', 'Kunje kunje', 'Abartara devi', 'Bani vandana' etc. were written in Sanskrit metre and style on the occasions like the worship of deities like Ganesh, Saraswati, Siva and Krushna.

He plunged into the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921, when Banavidyalaya got affected by the prevailing situations.

SECOND PHASE (1922 - 1938)

This was a time of tension and conflict for the growth of Mohapatra's genius, but unlike an ordinary man he faced it with confidence and courage.

He was connected with *Samaj* and *Lokanukha* (1922), both printed under the editorship of Godabarish Mishra. Many of his stories and poems were published in *Mukura*. Stories like 'Mclādiha', 'Prāyaschita', 'Bidhabāra niswāsa', 'Panditanka siddhilābha', 'Dhukhini duāre bhikāri', 'Mun chora nuhen', 'Bhagnahrudaya', 'Duiti tankā', 'Srāddha byabasthā', 'Patitāra pua' etc., portray Orissan rural life. Easy, simple and conversational in language they bear the sympathy and sense of humanity of the author.

His stories like 'Mātira māyā', 'Tirtha yātra', 'Garibara bhagabāna', 'Garibara sansāra', 'Asundara prema', 'Premara pratihimsā', etc., indicate the influence of Tolstoy on the writer as far as the plots are concerned. Even his original stories are influenced by the narrative technique and style of Tolstoy.

He became the editor of *Puribasi* in 1923 but it stopped due to economic crisis. Returning to Banapur, he started composing patriotic verses. He went from village to village to spread nationalism and the message of national movement. In 1924, Pandit Godabarish met him and asked him to get his stories published in books so that he could get some money. He gave him a Bengali book too for translation into Oriya. The first one to be printed was *Kathā Kāhāni* in that year, and the translation of the second one, i.e., the *Bhaktiyoga* of Aswini Kumar Dutta was published in 1930-31.

Following the ideal of Pandit Godabarish, Mohapatra did not seek any government service and preferred to lead an independent life. He concentrated on writing novels besides stories and poems. As a result, in 1925, his novel *Rajadrohi* saw the light of the day. Subsequently, Pandit Godabarish himself wrote novels like *Abhāgini*, *Ghatāntara*, *1817* etc.

Due to the paucity of Oriya novels, Balakrishna Kar launched

a scheme named 'Ananda Lahari Upanyasa Mala', to publish new novels. The novels of Mohapatra like *Premapathe* (1932), *Bandira Māyā* (1936), *Birā Yubaka* (1936) and *Bidroha* (1938) were written under the inspiration of Balakrishana Kar. Most of his revolutionary poems were also published in the magazine *Sahakara* of which he was a regular writer. Some poetry anthologies namely *Ruparekha* (1935), *Chithi* and *Utsajaya* were also published during this period. He wrote *Raktapata* (1936-37) in imitation of Mary Coreli's *Vendetta*.

He was an efficient social worker. He worked under the leadership of Pandit Gopabandhu at the time of terrible flood in 1926-27 in the districts of Cuttack and Puri. It gave him a chance to make friendship with another outstanding worker, Jadumani Mangaraj. The patriotism and personality of Gopabandhu, made him write stories like 'Ebe madya banchichhi' (1935), 'Bikhyata katakaru Akhyatapalli', and many others. The death of Gopabandhu in 1928 deeply touched his heart, which found expression in many of his writings.

Pandit Godabarish established a High School at Banapur in 1930. Mohapatra was the first Secretary of the Managing Committee as well as a teacher at the beginning of the school and taught a number of subjects for want of teachers. At that time, *Banaphula*, a literary magazine, was published under his editorship from Banapur.

He was engaged in the spread of Oriya language, literature and culture in Midnapur area in 1931. His 'Utha Kanakala' received great acclaim from many people including Bhagabata Chandra Das, an Oriya in Midnapur, who wrote the book *Bartaman Samajer Itibrutta* in Bengali. Next year the poem was published in *Sahakara* with the title 'Smasāna puḷārira āhwana'.

For his interest in journalism, he joined the daily *Asha* as Sub-Editor in 1928, edited by Sasibhusan Ratha. When *Asha* was discontinued in 1930, he joined the Editorial Board of *Samaj*. Then he was associated with Balakrishna Kar in the field of journalism. He became the Managing Editor of *Utkala Hiteishini*,

published from Berhampur and patronised by the king of Parala.

Most of his creative writings were published in *Mukura* of Brajasundar Das, *Sahakara* of Balakrishna Kar and *Nababharata* of Pandit Nilakantha during the period under discussion. Pandit Nilakantha used to pay Mohapatra an amount of ten rupees for each story at that time. Acharya Harihar wrote once to Godabarish about an incident that happened in their village Ramachandrapur. The episode was turned into a story named 'Bratabhikhyā'. This story was published in *Nababharata* and later included in the story-book *Ebe Madhya Banchichhi*.

The poems, stories and novels of this period express the sentiments of revolution and radicalism of his creative life. The social background of sorrow and poverty has been presented in a lively way. The author's sense of humanity and sympathy became the source of appreciation and interest for the readers.

THIRD PHASE (1938 - 47)

A new chapter began in the life of Godabarish with the publication of the humorous and satirical weekly magazine *Niankhunta*, the only of its type in Orissa, from 12 March 1938. Mohapatra became the editor, writer and publisher of this famous magazine and continued as such throughout his life. The news-items were flashed in the form of poems, stories, belles-lettres and humorous discourses which made him extremely popular. He published it from Sarada Press and was so deeply attached to it that even he tried to sell it moving from door to door. At the time of financial instability which was obvious and inevitable, he was helped by some of his friends. Many also avoided him.

Since 1936 he had selected Berhampur to be his field of activities being related to *Utkal Hiteishini*. Before *Niankhunta* was published he had formed a Vagabond Association. In 1937 he suggested to his friends about the publication of *Niankhunta*, which was materialised by the zeal of his comrades. The association dissolved but the magazine continued to be published, and slowly became an institution in Orissa.

During the second world war the publication of *Niankhunta* was disturbed for two years because of its transfer from Berhampur to Cuttack and shortage of paper. The following were some of its aims and objectives :

1. To check the whimsical and arbitrary rules of the party in power, by highlighting public opinion necessary for democracy.
2. To imbibe the spirit of restraint and discipline in the minds of the people.
3. To fight against injustice and corruption in the spheres of social, political and administrative affairs.
4. To arouse consciousness of the common mass for just and impartial administration and to ascertain social and political justice to the people.
5. To stimulate the sense of dignity and self-confidence in the people.
6. To encourage the Oriyas to establish their identity in the national level.

Mohapatra himself wrote the following regarding the success of the magazine: '*...Niankhunta* is not blown out in spite of so many storms and tempests in the past twenty-five years. Rather it has been enlightening more and more. As an effect of this light and by this sacrificial fire many power-blinded birds, corrupt insects, and selfish sinners have been burnt and destroyed. *Niankhunta* is the torch to guide the mass in this darkness. It is neither backed by the electricity of money making motivated advertisement of the Government or the Party in power nor by the fuel of anti-social elements having vested interests. The great souls, whose encouragement gave birth to *Niankhunta*, are almost gone. The history of this magazine is a history of terrible struggle since its beginning. The principle of *Niankhunta* is the principle of this nation, its civilisation and culture. It fares forward on its own track and will continue to do so. Its sermon is:

Nindantu Niti nipuna jadi ba stubantu,
 Laxmi samabishatu gachhatu ba jathestam,
 Adaibame maranamastu yagantare ba
 Nyayat patha prabichalanti padam nadhirah.

That means, this magazine is impervious to the appreciation or depreciation of wise people, the entrance or exit of Laxmi, and the death coming today or tomorrow. But it is a must to follow the just and right path.' (*Niankhunta* 23rd year, 5th No. , March 1963, p2)

On its 26th anniversary he again wrote : 'The future critics will evaluate the role of this magazine as the mirror of national life and character. ...This nation of Oriyas is yet unable to have its own identity in the national level. To enable it in that respect *Niankhunta* marches ahead with the flame of light. It has never lost its route to attain the target though surrounded by storms, tempests, thunders and lightnings...*Niankhunta* prays to God :

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah sarve santu niramayah,
 sarve bhadrani pasyantu, ma kaschit dukkha bhavet.
 Om shantih, shantih, shantih.'

(*Niankhunta*, 24th year, 1st No., November 1936, p 2).

From the literary point of view, the role of *Niankhunta* was immense. The poems, stories, belles-lettres, and one-act plays of Mohapatra were published in this magazine. Humour and satire are intermingled in his style of writing to have a special position in Oriya literature. But there is no fundamental change in his attitude as a thoughtful and ardent personality of literature. The tradition of Oriya literature continued to be forceful in him. The complicated thoughts and arrogance of the modern human life are clearly, elaborately and fearlessly articulated in his writings.

FOURTH PHASE (1947 - 65)

The artistic success of Mohapatra's writings was tremendous. He expressed the past glory, the present anxieties and the possibility of a bright future for this nation in his grand manner. Some of his writings were compiled in stories and poetry anthologies after

Independence. Those are, *Galpa Nuhen* (1951), *He Mora Kalama* (1951), *Hāndishālara Biplaba* (1952), *Kantā O Phula* (1958), *Nila Māstarāni* (1958), *Pāhācha Talara Ghāsa* (1958), *Utha Kankala* (1961), *Bankā O Sidhā* (1964), *Sruti Samchayana* (1965). But even then, almost four times of the collected articles have not been compiled in books. He started editing a magazine for children named *Tuan Tuin* (1957). Some of his charming poems and stories published in this magazine have been compiled in *Mo Khelasathi* (1958), *Kunira Hati* (1959), *Ki Katha* (1961) and *Desha Bideshara Upakatha* (1962).

In this phase, he was rewarded as well as condemned. He was severely assaulted on the highway, his granary was burnt to ashes in his village, and many defamation cases were filed against him. But the agonies increased the sharpness and might of his pen. His two poetry anthologies, i.e., *Kantā O Phula* and *Utha Kankala* got Orissa Sahitya Akademi Award in 1959 and 1962 respectively. Though he had to face many experiences of pain and pleasure, mirth and misery, it was his remarkable strength of character that he made move beyond these 'earthly tensions to have the poetic world of peace, tranquility and confidence.

He died on 25 November 1965. After one year of his death, his poetry anthology *Bankā O Sidhā*, got central Sahitya Akademi Award. A sentence from the book comes to mind in this context :

Mithyara abarana satya age
pare nahin rakhi kebe bhulai anc.
nianku ke rakhipare ghodaikari
phuti uthe satyata dine na dine.

This means that truth cannot be concealed by the cover of falsehood for ever as fire cannot be kept hidden. It must come out one day.

Poetry

He composed poems, read them before friends and then submitted them for publication. The mother of poetic art provides inspiration for the creation of aesthetic beauty and pleasure. Lack of it makes poetry unpoetic, he believed, and pointed out how an experienced poetic self expresses its feelings, visions and thoughts always through befitting language.

Word and meaning, feeling and language are intricately related in the poems of Godabarish. It is impossible to change a word without damaging the expression and subject-matter of his poems. For him, there was no difference between the content and the form. One is the inner object and the other is its manifestation.

The individuality of the poet is prominent in his poems. The expression of despondency or gaiety is never direct, rather suggestive and symbolic. The context and presentation are blended in his poems, which create immense interest for the readers.

Mohapatra never hankered after fame and prestige. This was the impact of Satyabadi Banavidyalaya on his sensibility. His aim was to entertain and edify, and he almost always had a social purpose, and he made his language a fit instrument for the purpose.

Godabarish often used the language of day to day life in his poetry. His mind was quite receptive and heart sensitive to his surrounding and to various events in the society. The actualities of life were formulated by the poet in a simple, lucid and charming style.

Especially confrontation with the gross, mundane and earthly was a part of his strength. The strange experiences, conflicts, shocks and feelings, etc., enriched his poems, and almost always acted like touchstones that changed and transformed his poetry into something rich and strong. That is why Pandit Nilakantha Das, his teacher, wrote that his poetry was as 'sprightly' and 'alive' as he himself was.

Godabarish's long creative period, beginning from the second

decade till the end of the sixth decade, for about 50 years, was also a time of great strain for India. Indian life — socially, politically and otherwise — went through momentous changes, more particularly, that was also the period when tastes continuously changed, and new and newer ideologies tended to dominate the literary scene. Godabarish began his career as a student of Satyabadi Banavidyalaya with such singular personalities as Pandit Gopabandhu, Pandit Nilakantha and Pandit Godabarish, and their ideas and ideals found their way in his consciousness throughout his life and became the guiding principles that shaped his spirit. When the socio-political ideals and purposes of Satyabadi literature was substituted by the passion and imagination of the Romantics and the strident social commitments of the Progressives in the twenties, thirties and forties, he kept off all of them. He kept his literary ideals and inspiration sharp and pointed, always in the service of goodness and beauty to be understood and acquired in the midst of deceit, wilfulness and hypocrisy.

The emergence of Godabarish Mohapatra as a poet was occasioned by the harmony of two trends, i.e., Radhanath and Madhusudan on the one hand, and Gopabandhu and Godabarish Mishra on the other. In the poems of Mohapatra, the influences of these four poets are traceable in the thematic, stylistic and linguistic aspects. But his poetic determination amid firmness of purpose belonged to his own personality.

From his adolescence, the poet was a visionary. He found fountain of tears in the torrents of rainfall. Sometimes the rain drops appeared like the drops of honey and the sign of sweet love of a beautiful bride. The ever green flora on the river banks symbolised the winsome smile of someone unknown. The music of the distant horizon, the song of the colourful valley, and the melodies of the seasons enraptured him and moved his heart to realise the truth of cosmic life. With that spiritual fervour in him, he became conscious of Indian freedom and gave a call to the people to fight for it. The cosmic sound 'OM' was the invoking hymn for the saints to start something new and divine, which

touched the innermost chord of the poet. This call of spiritual upliftment and wilfulness was turned into a political call for patriotism, liberty and self-rule by self-sacrifice and service to the motherland. He wrote 'Utha Kankala' (Rise, O Skeleton) to encourage the slumbering Indians imbibing self-consciousness and social responsibility in them. He never thought of the individual happiness and comfort. He took the role of a revolutionary leader to lead the mankind towards salvation and freedom. Pandit Gopabandhu Das, the great savant, shaped his mind and spirit. Godabarish remained devoted to him throughout his life.

In the poem 'Utha Kankala' the poet has compared modern Orissa with a graveyard and the people with skeletons. But the graveyard is not to be despised. Rather it is suggestive of a new beginning. The poet takes the role of a conjurer, a Tantrik, with supernatural magic powers. In the poetry of Mohapatra, the feelings of patriotism, nationalism and liberty become the focus of attention that enlightened and purified the minds of the people.

The youthful spirit remained with the poet till his death. It was tempestuous and uncontrollable. Besides, Godabarish was a poet of suffering humanity. He thought it wise to bathe in the tears of sorrow-stricken human beings without trying to escape. He felt that God lived not in the church or temple or mosque, but in the hearts of men and in their smiles and sighs. He invited people to worship mankind as service to man is service to God. In his poem 'He mora kalama' (Oh, my pen) he points out that the pen has unthinkable potentiality to bring a sea-change in the lives of people. He was intolerant of nepotism, partiality, love of power, selfishness and indifference at the higher echelons of society. In his poems the cruel politics and the wrong principles of administration were often condemned. He had the ability to mix politics with literature by an actual assessment of political revolution and social movements. Such poems were 'Chati', 'Shāgunā', 'Pechā', 'Bokā', 'Daleighāi', 'Tankā' etc. The sleeper (Chati) is the symbol of undeveloped adivasis who are often exploited by others. Vulture (Shāgunā) is the symbolic representation of the corrupt political

leaders; and road (Rāstā) is not merely a curved roadway with ups and downs, it witnesses rise and fall in the lives of the nation being trod both by the victors and the starving people. Similarly 'Khajurigachha', i.e., date palm, symbolises the crudity of administration, and 'Darapodā bidi' (Half burnt bidi) is compared to the defected ex-ministers lying unnoticed and useless at the roadside. The poem 'Abasara' i.e. retirement, says that after the power is gone, ex-ministers are hated and condemned by the people because of their past arrogance and whimsical rule.

The blending of satire and humour is found in the poems like, 'Garibara durgāstaba', 'Banyānchalara nimantrana', 'Dalei ghai', etc., where the poet portrays a pathetic picture of the poetic object to make the readers serious and thoughtful.

Godabarish is one of the outstanding humanists in Oriya literature of the twentieth century. The Oriya prostitutes of Calcutta donated for the flood relief in Orissa in 1955, though they were hated and abused as wanton libertines. They had hearts for Orissa, their motherland. The poet compared their tear drops with the ocean of humanitarian love and affection.

His tender feelings were not only limited to human beings but also extended to birds and beasts. He was shocked at the sight of goats and cocks left in Kalijayee temple as sacrifice. The poet composed poems showing the appeal of such animals in a very satirical way arousing pathos and sympathy. The beasts are more human than human beings. He composed verses on goats, peacocks and pregnant deer professing human sympathy for them.

The poet was fond of recapitulating past incidents. Progress seems possible with the aid of the memories of a rich past, he thought. Such an incident occurred in 1955, at the time of a Sarvodaya fair at Puri. Cart-loads of surplus rice, dal and food items were buried in the ground on the one hand, on the other an unknown man died at the side of the road of whom no one bothered. He wrote a poem named 'Ajanā nāgarika' (Unknown citizen) that depicts innocent neglected villagers.

As far as forms of poems are concerned, Godabarish wrote in

many a form such as narrative, elegy, sonnet, ballad, and satires etc. and in each form he excelled and touched the hearts of the readers. But primarily he was a lyricist, and there was a fine blending of musical elements in his poetry. The auditory sense of his readers is fully satisfied by his versification that has fine sound effects and metrically graceful movements. The musicality of the poems can be easily found out when words like 'Bhanja', 'Kanja', 'Samgita', 'Punjita', 'Sumila', 'Asru', 'Kunja', 'Kunjargati', etc., are used in his poems in a successive as well as meaningful manner. Very often, the poet took recourse to conversational and spoken style as in 'Bājekathā' (Meaningless words) and 'Bāta kete' (How far?). Accuracy of words in the proper context is one of his special characteristics.

He never tried to avoid miscellaneous objects around him. Reading his writings the reader feels in his mind the pathetic scene of a crowd standing in front of a shop to purchase rice, or the complacent speech of a person sitting comfortably on a seat in the bus to a person standing very painfully in that vehicle. The realistic portrait of daily experiences of common men were poetically presented to the readers. Truth and reality are intricately associated in his poetic imagination.

In fact Godabarish never told anything other than the truth. His poetic heart was much attracted towards that. He tried to expose guilt and falsehood so that people may learn the greatness of truth and honesty. In his poems, the national, social and moral realities of the then Orissa were painted in a charming and realistic way. The inequalities of life and the racial discrimination or the caste feelings were to be challenged and uprooted, he professed. The poems like 'Jagādāsakahe' and 'Parbata' are two such examples.

Transformation of this earth into heaven was what he wanted. But he was never away from the contemporary anxieties, problems, dissatisfaction and wants. Rather the sense of dissatisfaction would encourage the people for progress and development, he thought. Necessity is the mother of invention, and as such the nature of his

poetry was fundamentally satirical as far as the expression of modern mind was concerned. The poet regarded the modern civilisation to be a civilisation of posters. People are deceived by the colourful posters without being aware of the contamination of morality, dignity, self-respect and self-confidence in the posters. It is time they should not be deceived by the appearances. Remembering the rich past, they should always try to go beyond, into a bliss of mind and spirit.

He wrote a number of poems like 'Purunāchhatā', 'Chhindā daudi' on rebirth, transmigration and indestructibility of soul, being influenced by the philosophy of ancient India. He has termed the present way of family planning and abortion to the degradation of Indian culture. To check population, he preferred celibacy to the operation or other medical measures. The poems like 'Shakuntalā', 'Paribāraniantritā janani', 'Garbhapāta', 'Kidebi nāam', and 'Ajnāta pitā' bear the message of the poet against the Government measures to plan the families.

His pen was always conscious and active to guide the Oriyas, to right course of thought and action without being lost in the zigzag and winding ways of selfishness and hypocrisy. To be modern is not to be Westernised. Rather modernity comes when the past is studied and applied to achieve one's end in future. Godabarish had this sense of modernity.

The poet sang the glory of struggle, dissatisfaction, conflict and tension as they enriched and activated one's own life. Facing the hard realities of one's existence would make a person self-confident and courageous. But heroic struggle for existence has a particular limitation for an individual, because he has to get rid of that struggle and recline in the lap of eternal peace, permanent truth and long cherished salvation. This life as well as the life after was the focus of attention for Godabarish, a man of oriental mysticism.

The poet was bitingly satirical in his writings, but it would be a mistake to remark that he lacked love and affection for mankind. His heart was really an ocean of human kindness, love and

sympathy for common people. His aim was not to hurt somebody's sentiment for nothing, rather he attempted to arouse human virtues in the hearts of his so-called victims.

He was a poet of passion who could probe into the inner-most nature of human beings by his wisdom and poetic insight. His poetic vision was divided into two parts, one gave rise to the feelings of mind, brain, conscience and the other was an Absolute Vision which was not influenced by impressions or subjectivism. His poetic temperament—dynamic and sensitive—was in quest of knowledge. In his poems we find various allusions from mythology and history, sympathy for the down-trodden and suffering mankind, inspiration for revolutionary steps, and above all expression of a strong sensibility through humour and satire. He loved individualism, liberty and freedom but he had to suffer the agonies of loneliness also. On the one hand he is a staunch devotee of common people thinking of them as real incarnation of God and on the other a worried and restless rebel against the degradation in the field of social life, administration and culture. His poems make one agitated and revolutionary, but also tend him to search for the peaceful bliss in human life.

We present in the appendix a few of his poems in English translation.

Short Stories

As a literary form Short Story in Oriya literature emerged in 1898 when the social life of Orissa was in a plight. That sense of injury gave birth to the stories of Fakir Mohan who wrote them out in the later phase of his life, in the first decade of the century. His lead was taken up by many other story-tellers till we come to Godabarish, whose stories provided a powerful expression of the prevailing social ills. Like Tolstoy he strove for truth, love and spiritual elevation so as to make a man a human being. His characters like Maguni, Benudhara, Pattanaik, Sahadev, Hari Suar, Dandia Bou, Haricharan etc. were great creations. To see Godabarish is to observe the rural Orissa representing the common people. His stories recorded the history of sighs and tears of daily labourers, wage-earners, peasants and poor people. He was an artist of human emotions who could transform the finite into infinite by the magical strokes of his pen.

Godabarish had the capacity to inform the readers about the main points of his stories from the beginning. For example the starting of the story 'Muhurtakara Dekhā' (Meeting for a moment) is like this :

Meeting for once; that too for a moment! That day was a time of scorching rays as if fire rained from the sky. The pleasant earth was screaming with her dry and sterile bosom lying bare. In that tranquil and lonely moment, I met her for a moment only.

The story 'Pattanike paisātic' (A farthing, Mr. Pattnaik) begins: No sooner had the bus stopped at Asika bus stand, than a voice was heard, 'A farthing Mr. Pattnaik, please'. There was an endless hurly and burly to the uttermost bitterness of the mind. A sudden change took place when the bus stopped on the dusty highway. In the place of that dry rough noise, a shrill and soft voice of pathos was heard—'A farthing, Mr. Pattnaik ! Please'.

In some stories the writer has made the characters to narrate the whole story. Some sentences from his story 'Premara Phasala' (The harvest of love) may be quoted:

Afterwards I thought so for many days. Would the hills speak? Would the trees sing? Would the old rocks dance? Pondering over such thoughts, I sat on the boundary ridge of the green paddyfields of hilly Narasinghpur. I observed many things sitting there, but never heard anything from anybody. In one evening, when the sun was hiding itself behind that distant Manibhadra hill, like a mass of gold, the sound of footstep could be heard. Surprised, I looked up. Someone asked, 'Do we stay some steps behind?' He who asked was a young man. The other person was a young lady. The lady answered 'Yes'.

The frequent use of dialogues is another characteristic feature of his stories. An instance from 'Ebe madhya banchichhi' can be cited:

The touch of hot waves or the pathetic cool of the day could not make Benudhar move. Benudhar was standing beneath the tree since morning without asking anything from anybody, just like the dumb tree.

A question was asked :

'Hallo! boy ! your village?'

Benudhar raised his head and looked up. He looked as if like a statue — quiet and dumb.

Again he was asked :

'Where is your village, poor chap? Have you got rice?'

Benudhar looked on.

The man asking questions came nearer. A touch of cool, soft hand, was felt on his back. That touch seemed to penetrate into his heart through the outer coverings like shirt, skin, flesh, bone and marrow. The body had a peculiar sensation. The eyelids quivered, tears gathered. From the eyes two drops fell on the ground. He tried to say something.

That man again asked :

‘Have you got rice, my boy ?’

‘No’ he said.

‘Would you like to have some ?’

‘No, I have not come to eat rice’.

‘Then why...?’

Benudhar could not tolerate any more. He cried aloud.

Replied, ‘I heard under this tree and under those feet —

“Never beg. Let us be human, and let us live like men.”

Benudhar prostrated himself before his feet.

The dialogues are short, precise and meaningful. His stories are full of incidents and problems. Plots are more emphatically treated than other literary devices.

He painted the colourful moments of events and psychological or behavioural problems. He never gave allowance to sub-plots and enforced associations between events or persons to make the stories interesting. On the other hand he focused on the main plots, main characters and the main narrative techniques.

Once Stevenson said about the style in short stories: ‘There are, so far I know, three ways only of writing a short story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it or lastly, you may take a certain atmosphere and get actions and persons to realise it.’

Godabarish followed all the three techniques in writing stories. The first technique was adopted in stories like ‘Mundā sāhādā’, ‘Jāl tankā’, ‘Premara phasala’. The second was used in ‘Ebe madhya banchichhi’, ‘Maguni of Magunira sagada’. The last one can be found in the stories like, ‘Mobile court’, ‘Pattanaike paisatie’, ‘Sidhā salakhe Bhuhaneswar’, ‘Orissāra atma’.

He never took recourse to irrelevant and meaningless words to make the narrative long and monotonous. Every word was essential, irreplaceable and unavoidable. Nothing was extraneous or superfluous. The consequences of his stories are always suggestive. The ends of the episodes provide greater delight to

the readers. Again the stories were the examples of excellent psychological insight for which they touched the hearts of the readers. The characterisation was also superb and natural. The spontaneous delineation of characters made them lively, down-to-earth and impressive.

He created his own world in the short stories with his own laws and codes of conduct for the characters. The way of life of the readers was automatically presented in the flow of the writer's narrative style. He himself wrote in the preface of 'Sruti samchayana' : 'Whether there is the delight of literature or not, the rules of grammar are followed or not, characters are emphasised with adequate proportion or not, philosophy of life is expressed correctly and in proper place or not, I have not written stories having been concerned with all these things.'

He described multiple plots, many characters and several actions in the scope of a short story without making it clumsy. The dictum that one event or one moment of one's life, should be the focus of attention in short story was not always followed by him. The stories like 'Ebe madhya banchichhi', 'Māgunira sagada', 'Unmochana', 'Hari Suārara Gandhi topi', include suspense of events. His stories are compressed but universal, small in volume but great in value.

Godabarish started writing stories at the time of the first World War, and continued till Independence and beyond. His stories can be mainly grouped as follows :

1. Psychological : The psychic manifestations of men and women in the midst of various situations, events and contexts.
2. Social : The reflections of Oriya society with its way of life, conventions and rituals. The writer also often treats at the reformation that may be brought about in the society.
3. Domestic : The disintegration of family life and the reality of a process of decay.
4. Political : The political consciousness dependent on contemporary political situations.
5. Historical : The concern with the rich past.

6. Cultural : The cultural heritage is charmingly presented in stories such as, 'Brata bhikhyā', 'Ebe madhya banchichhi', 'Mundā sahada', etc.
7. Humorous : Most of the stories aim at creating humour and laughter with a satirical motivation. Stories like 'Pātranka smaranashakti', 'Khadada haking', 'Stop booking', 'Manisha chheli', 'Tera', 'Byakarana prathama', etc, are some such examples.

This grouping is not absolute because in his stories three-four elements often blend to provide the desired effect. Below is a brief discussion of some of his more important stories.

The story 'Ebe madhya banchichhi' gives a vivid picture of a famine in the village Sirci. People gathered in the relief centre. The living human beings oscillated between the extreme poles of life and death. They experienced death in course of living their lives. All groaned and screamed, and all rich ones had become beggars. Benudhar, the protagonist, was poor, helpless and miserabile. He tried many times to go to the Relief Centre but hesitated to go in such a gathering. When all the family members of Benudhar had nothing but to starve, he finally went to the centre for help. But he was torn between two forces — the starvation of his family and his education, self respect on the other. He had learnt in the Banavidyalaya to live like human beings, but now he had come to beg. He went to a secluded place and sat beneath a tree, where Gopabandhu was astonished to find such an Oriya who hesitated to beg in spite of intolerable starvation and acute poverty. He uttered spontaneously that 'this nation is yet alive'. One's self respect cannot be sold for a handful of rice, Benudhar thought.

In the story 'Manisha-ku patharakalā kie' (Who has petrified the man into a stone?) the main character is Bhima Das, the stone cutter, who prefers to be a cutter of stones without being responsive to the help and invitation of the king of a luxurious life. He has sacrificed his life and blood to build cities and palaces but has never been able to enjoy a life of merriment and leisure. He himself

has become a stone due to his long association with stones and rocks.

The story 'E janmara tirthakhetra' describes the behaviour of Airtha, who joined a team praying to God but realised that real pilgrimage was cultivation of the fertile green lands. In the story 'Bikhayata katakaru akhyatapalli' the intention of the writer is to invite the educated people from towns to villages. The story 'Brata bhikhya' is an example of our culture of humanitarian understanding and sacrifice. In spite of several storms and hazards, this nation has not lost the priceless attributes of human beings such as love, sympathy and kindness.

The story 'Munda sahada' narrates the story of Ganga, a forlorn and dejected lover, who tried to marry Champa but failed as she committed suicide under a Sahada tree. Hence he always went to that tree and regarded it to be his Champa. The description of the emotional restlessness is quite powerful and heart touching. A love story named 'Premara simhasana' deals with the separation of two lovers, Gati and Pata, both belonging to untouchables. Gati went to Rangoon to earn money for their marriage but when he returned he found Pata married to someone else. As a result, he became mad and his dead body was found in his house with golden ornaments on his chest. He was uneducated and untouchable, but his heart was human, enlightened and passionate. He was a true human being with a sensitive soul.

The story 'Swapna' (Dream) describes the marriage of a wealthy aristocrat to a beggar maid. She was dreaming of gold and thought that whatever he touched turned into gold. Her golden dream was materialised after her marriage with that moneyed man.

In the story 'Jatira daka' the writer has glorified humanity. The narrow outlook of casteism cannot profane it. 'Muhuratakara dekha' is a story in the true sense of the term which is an apotheosis of human virtues. The writer is much more concerned with the anxieties of common man and has really read the hearts of the blind, lame, diseased, delinquents and beggars. A moment's deep insight into somebody's heart remains in mind for ever. A beggar

wants money, but he values affectionate dealings more.

The writer has deified a man who spent all his energy for the pleasure and peace of others. The poor are the true incarnation of God. Pratap is a poor fellow in the story 'Debatara bidhana'. The village leader decided to build a temple on his piece of land. Pratap's five sons and two daughters worked hard to build the temple and at last breathed their last. The temple was constructed and Pratap made a statue of God. He became blind and his tears rolled down to listen to sound of the drum, music of flutes and wind instruments. One night, Pratap entered into that temple and brought the God to his cottage to imprison Him there.

The plight of Oriyas working in Rangoon, Calcutta, etc., caused continuous pain on the sensitive heart of the writer. People go to such places leaving their native villages for earning money, but returning, they find their worlds upside down. Near and dear ones are never found in the same condition to welcome them. A son finds his ailing and dying mother in the story 'Duity dina', a husband finds his wife waiting after selling all her ornaments in 'Mun Rangunru pherili'. The story 'Duiti ratri shesha prahara' also describes the pitiable condition of Oriya workers returning from Rangoon.

One of the best stories of Godabarish Mohapatra is 'Magunira shagada'. Maguni was a cart-driver of Khalikot. He earned his livelihood by taking passengers from the station to the town in his cart. But the motor-vehicle of Mr. Singh shattered his peace and happiness as his cart became useless. He starved and ultimately faced his end. People remembered him and talked of him after his death with love and sympathy. The industrial civilisation is responsible for the destruction of the values of the agrarian society. Machines pose a great challenge to the financial stability of the poor working class people. Maguni represents the common labourers and the proletariats on whose tomb the capitalist system builds its castles.

The story-anthology 'Nila mastarani' is of a different nature. The stories here were written between 1955 and 1958. The rural

life is dominated by the superfluous city-culture resulting in the loss of a valuable past and a confused realisation of the broken present. 'Nial mastarani' depicts such social values in a comprehensive way, the meeting points of both city and rustic rural life. There is conflict as well as reconciliation in this union and a final moral attitude towards life.

The picture of Harisharan in the story 'Unmochana' is suggestive of the miseries of millions of people — starving, suffering, crying. A minister went to an area to inaugurate his statue built by Harisharan, but returned without inaugurating it as the statue did not have the upper part of the body. Only the legs and the waist were built which seemed an insult to the minister. As the poor people cannot take their hands to their mouths, the political leaders do not have the right to have their head, chest and hands. They are thoughtless, cruel and useless. This explanation of Harisharan which pleased the gathering mass was a challenge to the politicians and leaders in power.

The story 'Jal tanka' (Counterfeit notes) explains the deceitful behaviour of a leader in Khadi dress, who gave counterfeit notes of six rupees to the mother of Baraju while purchasing fish from her. While she went to bring medicine from the doctor for Baraju, the doctor refused to take those notes, and Baraju died. The barbarous and inhuman behaviour of the powerful leaders are satirised in this story. The reader is overwhelmed by the maximum effect of minimum materials like the few words of Baraju's mother.

Nila Mastarani in the story 'Nila mastarani' is a representative of the fallen women. Nila, the daughter of a Brahmin, was married to Madan, a washerman. Their love was not so much physical as ideal. The inter-caste marriage is not the crux of the matter. It is the human affection and the ties of heavenly love between man and woman that counts.

The society is not destroyed by the marriage of the silly Harihar, a barber to Saudamini, the daughter of a Brahmin in the story 'Dhurta pandita'. In the story 'Gotie chāmacha' (A spoon), the writer has narrated that a cup of tea requires ten spoonfuls of

sugar, whereas it was quite sweet with half a spoon of sugar some years ago. The spoon has been debased and worn out which was brought by the tea-seller to give medicine to his wife, now dead.

'Swayam sebika' (Lady volunteer) is a story describing the disintegration of home life in a satirical manner. The leaders of pre-Independent period have obtained positions of power and wealth, whereas the staunch innocent followers for whose sacrifice the Independence became really possible, are now decaying under the pangs of poverty and starvation.

Mohapatra availed the chances of mixing with varieties of people, enjoying several scenes, and hearing many things from many people which helped him a lot in writing lively, natural and impressive short stories.

The various changes and developments of the country did not affect Orissa as much as it should. In the book 'Sruti sanchayana' the writer tries to hint at the lifelessness and dullness of the Oriyas which make them ignorant and undeveloped. The real life of Orissa lies in the rural areas. The struggle of men to live like men is the main point in Mohapatra's stories. They take into account the dualistic experiences of the people who are mere actors and actresses on the stage of this world. Their anxieties, restlessness, hypocrisy, corruption, and unjust activities are being treated in such a manner that they evoke laughter as well as satirical remarks. So the stories guide the readers to pursue the right track.

Hari Suara, a true Congress man, who took active role in the freedom struggle and invited the humiliating life of a prisoner many times, is now a non-entity. He shouts against dictatorship and aristocracy only to make himself a butt of ridicule because the kings, dictators and aristocrats have become the powerful members of political parties. He removes the Gandhi cap from his head when he finds that the despotic, selfish and arrogant persons are using it to further their own gains.

'Mun dine mantri thili' is a story which shows the restlessness and sleeplessness of a minister as he looks at the eloquent garlands offered to him in public meetings and tries to realise the

responsibilities of a minister in a democratic system of administration.

The story captioned 'Hastāntara' (Changing hands) deals with the feudalistic system that seems to be present as yet though the British rulers have left the throne of India. Only the administration was handed over by the foreign people to their Indian counterpart without any change in outlook and system.

The story 'Ghana darajira jami' (The land of the tailor Ghana) indicates the foolish and nonsensical administration of the Government. Ghana declares himself landless to avoid land revenue, by selling his land and purchasing a sewing machine instead.

'Sidhā salakhe Bhubaneswar' is a story which describes the pathetic life of Ganapati Bishoyi, a reputed farmer. He does not get the help of his two sons, established as government officers in Agriculture Department, and dies in his native village. This story indirectly satirises the behaviour of the educated sons towards their aged father.

The story 'Jabanikā patana' relates the tragic end of an old woman who dies of starvation when Orissa was declared a separate state. The writer ironically terms Orissa as a 'surplus state'.

'Chora kie' is an interesting story in which a tribal named Sukura living in the forest is being debarred from collecting materials for his food, cloth and shelter from the forest and consequently is sent to jail as he challenges the forest officers. He says to another prisoner in the jail that various items are taken from the forest for the marriage of the conservator's daughter which puts him in a conflict—whether he is a thief or the forest officer. The forest department in particular and the administration in general are criticised in this story.

The story 'Secretariat chori' (Theft in the Secretariat) talks of the mal-administration in the state which encourages theft and misappropriation of funds. 'Mobile court' is also an example of the blind and arbitrary rule of the Government.

The subconscious minds of male and female characters are

overtly displayed in his stories like 'Ranka tu jāgnāre', 'Chandramani bābukka sansāra', 'Gotie gala', 'Magara smruti', 'Jadā kurupāra prema', 'Duithara basna bandi', 'Akhira pākhe', etc. Different problems of life and their impact on human behaviour are very accurately presented by the writer in his stories by going deep into the psyche of his characters.

Mohapatra tried countinuously to free man from his surrounding and to lead a life of happiness and bliss. Man can live like a human being if he develops a sense of responsibility and duty for his family in the beginning, and ultimately thinks of the nation. Thus he can have the pleasure and satisfaction to have a fruitful, peaceful and resourceful life from the daily incidents. Mohapatra has sweetened the stark truth with sugar coating to make it palatable and enjoyable.

His characters stand for the common mankind. There are many from Nila Mastarani to Bana Parida who often suffer the pangs of painful existence.

The impressions of the writer about the villages and cities, the educated and uneducated, rich and poor, bureaucrats and proletariats are so convincing because of his accurate observation and flawless understanding.

Mohapatra's social consciousness is immensely captivating and overpowering in his stories. He makes us conscious of our own identities and positions in the society and hopes that there may be reforms in the socio-cultural and political outlook of the people.

Novels

Fakirmohan Senapati had deeply studied the minds and emotions of his characters along with many loopholes and taboos in the social structure. But Godabarish Mohapatra laid more emphasis on the socio-cultural pressures which determine the characteristic features of individual situations, and make a man happy or unhappy. He attempted to pinpoint the dark sides of the the society for necessary reformation by making people simultaneously conscious and proud of their rich past. His sympathy was for those individuals who more often than not became innocent victims of the surrounding factors.

His *Rājadrohi* (1925) and *Bandiramāyā* (1935) are historical novels as far as the themes are concerned. His social novels are *Premapathe* (1932) and *Vidroha* (1938). The novel *Vira Yubaka* (1936) blends social issues in a crime tale. He also wrote a novel entitled *Raktapāta* in imitation of *Vendetta* of Marie Corellie, English novelist.

The novel *Rājadrohi* gives the picture of Orissa in her dwindling stage in a dark age. In the regime of Jadu in Bhoi dynasty, the foreign merchants were creating disturbances in the coastal area and plundering the people. They purchased boys as slaves. Such an incident was the kidnapping of the son of Durjayaman, the banished king of Kuhudigarh, by the foreign merchants. While they took that boy in a ship, the waves of Chilika became uproarious and violent as a challenge to their sins. Consequently, they left the boy as a distorted figure on the shore. That boy overcame various hurdles in the dark night, and came over to the hermitage of Bhagat Das. He brought along with him a small girl whom he found leaning on her mother's dead body in the burial ground. Bhagat Das was quite surprised as well as happy to find these two. He formed a dance party with them along with a tiger, Bhiṇṇa. Balaram became twenty-five, and Malli sixteen but blind. The blind Malli danced behind Balaram who could

amuse the audience by the exhibition of his distorted face and laughter-provoking gestures. Later on, the people of the kingdom came to take Balaram in order to coronate him as the King of Kuhudigarh.

The history of Orissa says that at that time the palaces of Orissa were full of rebellious and revolutionary spirit owing to the oppressive behaviour of some Muslims. The peace of the state was shattered by rampant robbery and atrocities on the innocent people. The priests in the temple of Lord Jagannath kept the god hidden, being afraid of the Muslims. In 1622, Narashing Deb occupied the throne of Khurda and was successfully counteracting the invasions of Mughal Subedars. Mohapatra wrote his novel *Rājadrohi* taking this topic as his basis. The king of Kuhudigarh was a faithful and courageous subordinate of Narasingh Deb. The other subordinate kings treacherously proved Durjayman to be a traitor before Narasingh Deb and unfortunately Narasingh Deb wrongly banished him from his kingdom. Durjayaman bore this insult silently and indignantly too, and took shelter in the forest of Ghumusara. At that time his only son was kidnapped by the British pirates. In this novel, imagination took precedence over the historical facts. Anyway, this novel reveals the author's sincere love and pride for the past heritage of Orissa.

In the novel *Bandiramaya* the novelist portrayed the picture of Marhatta times. Fakirmohan described this period in his novel *Lachama* in a very charming and detailed manner. *Bandiramaya* does not have much of historical authenticity. It is only the background of the novel in which the love of motherland is being presented in the youthful and romantic lives of men and women in an interesting way. Siyan Satrusal remained victor on several occasions against the Marhatta rulers. He was old but active in the cornfield. His son Abhimanyu was a heroic man, and his daughter Phula, was as soft and as beautiful as a delicate flower.

The courageous youth Abhimanyu left the cornfield and rushed to the battlefield against Marhatta invasion. The old and cold heart of Satrusal became violently agitated. The tender-hearted Phula

bade farewell to her brother in the traditional fashion with hatred and vengeance in her mind towards the Marhattas. A large prison cell was built in Binipadia to imprison the Marhatta prisoners under the supervision of Satrusal. Phula objected to this arrangement because the enemies should not be hosted like this yet. Siyan Satrusal employed his daughter to supply milk to the prisoners in the prison. Phula did this job but did not want to see the faces of the prisoners out of hatred.

The news of Abhimanyu's death in the battlefield reached Siyan Satrusal to make him terribly shocked and sad. He fell ill. Phula got the news from some new prisoners who gave her a pendant of a dying soldier, who was none but her brother. From that day onwards Phula's heart changed and she showed sympathy to the prisoners. The greater her ailing father developed hatred against the Marhattas, the more she advanced on the way of love and affection towards them.

A prisoner named Devanath had already occupied the heart of Phula. Both of them engaged themselves in sweet and soothing conversation. Around that time the prisoners were to be released as a result of treaty between the Gajapati of Orissa and the Marhatta Subedar. Devanath went to take leave from Phula. The emotional talk between Phula and Devanath in a dark night in Satrusal's residence shocked the father of Phula. Satrusal pounced like a lion on them and ordered Phula to leave his house. Both the young lovers left the house immediately.

But where would they go? If Satrusal could not accept Devanath as the son-in-law then would the parents of Devanath allow Phula to be their daughter-in-law? They determined to dedicate their love, attachment and endless emotional tie at the altar of nationalism to keep the honour of their motherlands. They jumped into the deep and deadly waves of Mahanadi to prove that personal relationship loses its identity in front of the nation. The historic novels of Godabarish show his love for the past history though he did not hesitate to portray both the bright and dark sides as well.

In *Premapathe* and *Yidroha* the writer dealt with social plots.

The social history of Orissa in the past forty years is being presented in these novels. The spread of western education made the educated youth mistakenly radical. They ignore the tradition and conventions of the society. A heart touching picture of that tendency is being narrated in the novel *Premapathe*. Marriage is a holy and divine ritual which was unfortunately polluted by the whimsical choice of brides and bridegrooms by their counterparts without any advice from the parents.

School boy Haricharan once met an innocent rural girl Kanaka. The writer made the point clear that this story was mostly real. Kanaka started dreaming golden dreams about her life with Haricharan. Haricharan received college education and led a city-life. Gradually he forgot Kanaka, the sweet and simple girl of a rustic village. His mind was eager to have relations with Chanchala, an educated lady of his class. As a result his proposed marriage with Kanaka was to be cancelled. His parents were offended for this undesirable act of their son. Haricharan got married to Chanchala. But Kanaka who was waiting for Haricharan felt socially humiliated. She raised her voice for woman's liberty. Men are free and sometimes arbitrarily whimsical. But, on the other hand, women suffer from a life-long imprisonment because of unnecessary laws and restrictions on them. The complaints of Kanaka against the behaviour of educated youths in the first three decades of the twentieth century became more acute in the later years. Now women don't suffer silently. They are prepared to confront the aggressive husbands with courage, confidence and rationality.

Kanaka and Haricharan have been substituted by Gauri and Radhanath respectively in the novel *Vidroha*. In *Premapathe* they were lover and beloved but in *Vidroha*, daughter and father. The thought, mind and heart of Gauri resemble that of Kanaka. The incomplete works of Kanaka are consummated in *Vidroh*. The inhumanity and cruelty of Haricharan are to be retributed in Radhanath. Radhanath could not be sympathetic and considerate to women like Haricharan. Gauri had to fight for her rights against

society and ultimately succeeded in attaining her liberty.

In the fourth decade of the present century Sri Sarada, a well-known lawyer, formulated laws in relation to child marriage and widow marriage, which were accepted by the British Rule. *Vidroha* is written on the background of Sri Sarada's laws. Radhanath offered her young daughter Gauri to an old widower. But Gauri's husband died after a couple of years, and she became a widow to suffer the humiliation and torture to an extreme measure. The mother of Gauri got a terrible shock at the miseries of her daughter and breathed her last. But strangely enough, the old widower Radhanath married Rama, a young lady. In the family of Radhanath, two young lives, Gauri and Rama, started revolting against such inhuman behaviour and customs prevalent in the society. Gauri accompanied Braja, her neighbour, in his campaign against the social evils like untouchability, and Rama threw away her bangles and wiped out her vermilion from her forehead in front of the old Radhanath to present herself as a widow. Radhanath was vanquished, and Rama, Gauri and Braja won to establish themselves and showed ways of resistance towards a society full of social evils and stigmas which are based on foolishness and stupidity.

In the art of presentation Godabarish followed the epistolary technique in *Pramapathe*. Haricharan wrote to his friend Ramesh and Kanaka to her dear sister, and the plot was expanded through letters.

Mohapatra's characterisation reveals the fact that the writer was much motivated towards youthful activities and tried to establish the prominence of youth in the various affairs in this world. The courage, dynamism, heroism, sacrifice, and broadmindedness of young people are glorified in his novels. But he never allowed the youngsters to be indisciplined and morally crooked in the name of freedom and liberty. All of them tried to make their society solid and united. In amorous activities too, his characters did not lose restraint and decency. The writer describes such incidents with suggestive seriousness. The writer has

described the widowhood of young Gauri in a very touching way like this :

Standing near the jasmine plant and caressing her body, she thinks it has withered. All my ornaments withered away like this jasmine. Flowers wither away when it is time for that but my ornaments? Oh! How do people stretch hands — they take away the ornaments one after another. Are their minds constituted of stones? Is there none in their house to wear ornaments? Is there none in their family to smile or to let others smile? Now I am withered like this jasmine flower. But I am not able to die smiling like this. Oh! the flower smiles with joy. As if it says — ‘I am going; smile and amuse.’ Like this will this Gauri smile again? Will she again come smiling? Is there any chance of her smiling in this world? For whom she would smile? or where she would go smiling? She has all nights, where is day in her life?

In all his writings the writer has tried to make man conscious of human values. The undesirable and harmful elements in human nature are being pointed out so as to rectify them. The personal life of individuals are being prepared for enriching the social and the national life.

His novels are never over descriptive. His pen is quite restrained and disciplined to put the right word in the right place and right context. A common style in his novels is his suggestive nature. Mohapatra had an extraordinary kind of taste. In the modern Oriya literature, Godabarish appears to be a man of rare aesthetic sensibility.

Satires

The artistic sensibility of Godabarish Mohapatra was enriched by the elements of humour and satire. He has provided an ample chance for the readers to laugh and be amused. This peculiar humorous attitude of mind is found in all his writings. His attitude towards life and the world is clear from his following remark: 'Many strange events in relation to social and political problems on the way of life have come into my vision. Some of them are humorous, some are tragic, and some other gloomy due to degradation in the social and national character. I look into the creation of delight or humour regarding society and politics in a different way because of my experiences' (Preface to *Kanta o Phula*). His attitude is comprehensive, sympathetic and self-conscious.

His poetic self was tortured to notice the discrepancy between manners and morals, tradition and newness, global development and provincial degradation as well as the social injustice existing in the society. His humour is a voice of rebellion. Dr. M. Mansingh aptly said : 'Mohapatra has fulfilled a contemporary need — the need of exposing the corrupt, the hypocrite and the enemies of the law in a scathingly sarcastic manner that none else could even partly do as successfully as he has done' (*Indian Literature*, Ed. by Nagendra, p 517).

In the writings of Godabarish, we find two types of humour, i.e. pure humour and satire. In the expression of pure humour the literary self is kind, generous and merciful. He has not despised and neglected the common man. As the life of a common man is incomplete, it is sure to be imperfect and erroneous. Living a life implies the allowance of a number of follies and vices. Those follies and frivolities are to be tolerantly dealt with, not to be vindictively scorned.

The mannerism of the characters, the laughable but permissible follies in one's behaviour, and oddity in one's gesticulations create

pure laughter. The daily life of Janardan, the protagonist of 'Khadada hawking' is really laughter-provoking. Janardan roams from village to village, door to door, in order to sing the fame and glory of Khadada, the coarse cotton. His eloquence multiplies when people gather around him to hear his speech. He feels proud and elevated to the extent that he stands on his cotton package, about a foot taller than his own body and addresses the gathering as 'Dear brothers'.

Janardan does not sell a particular piece of cloth with border because he has kept it for someone he loves. He wants to satisfy his wife who has been neglected too much for a long period being busy in national service. He would present it to her in the special occasion of Kumara purnima.

Kumara purnima would be observe the following day. The people in the village Noda did not purchase anything but only bargained. He left with a quick pace for the railway station. Ridges, paddyfields and the weight of the package did not trouble him. He thought of his wife. He could hear her voice and see her smiling face. He imagined his wife wearing the new sari and entering a room. Suddenly he became conscious and found himself standing under a tree. Then he started running to catch the train. But the train had left the station. He missed it. He took a seat in the platform and his imagination carried him to his small cottage where he found a sweet sixteen year girl wearing the new sari with vermilion on the forehead, and smile on the lips. This romantic and fanciful mind arouse laughter and humour at the time of reading it.

'Byakarana prathama' is a humorous story in which the main character Banambara has exhibited a very peculiar and ridiculous behaviour in his father-in-law's house for which he is insulted on several occasions.

Jatadhar Babu is the hero of the story 'Manisharu chheli'. A poet he later joined Independence movement and went to jail. When released, he devoted himself in the service of the nation. But he had no residence. Ultimately, he found a quarters in the town where a goat also stayed. The rent was reduced from five

rupees to three rupees and fifty paise per month. Jatadhar Babu happily stayed there in spite of the frequent bleating of the goat. He started to compose a love poem with fine thoughts, sweet feelings and poetic sentiments. When he heard the goat bleating 'mein, mein, mein' he was disgusted for the disturbance. After a while, he again sat to write but this time the goat started bleating to his utmost irritation. He ceased writing being helpless. At night, he dreamed of that monotonous sound. He could not sleep peacefully. He decided to leave the house and packed his belongings. In the morning the owner came and asked him whether he was irritated by Budhi, the goat. Jatadhar Babu said that he was not at all disturbed by the goat. While eating the tiffin, Jatadhar Babu said that he was a philosopher-poet who could easily compose poems in spite of so many disturbances. The bleating of the goat was insignificant. He then started writing poems while the goat started bleating. Gradually it was found that unless the goat bleated, he could not write poems. As the goat died, Jatadhar Babu failed to write poems. The owner told Jatadhar Babu to bleat 'mein, mein, mein' so as to make his son calm and happy, who was weeping for the death of the goat. Jatadhar Babu did the same in a beautiful manner. Then the owner asked him to stay there without paying rent and getting three rupees from him to bleat when the child would cry. From that day onwards Jatadhar Babu had been writing poems and bleating like the goat but nothing had been published. This is an interesting and amusing story which is quite humorous and satirical too.

The absurd behaviour and psychology of Ramahari Babu's wife in the story 'Mobile court' is quite interesting. She was happy to listen to the call of neighbours who addressed her husband as 'Babu' though he was a clerk. That 'Babu' term was also applied to the owner of their house who was a high government official. So, she innocently thought that her husband was also, like the owner of the house, a man of equal prestige and status.

Bhagi Patra of the story 'Pātranka smaranashakti' is a humorous character. He has lived for forty years in spite of the diseases like

waist-pain, colic-pain, dyspepsia, indigestion, constipation, rheumatism etc. constantly attacking him. He narrates the history of each of the diseases in a fascinating manner to arouse pity and pathos. He uproots radish to get rid of waist-pain and at the same time takes medicine for indigestion. So he has to undergo severe harassment. Mr. Patra forgets the instruction of his wife who is away in a fair. The medicines are kept near at hand but he doesn't know which one is meant for what. His poor memory makes him confused. Perhaps the name of the medicine starts with the alphabet 'Ka'. He is helped very humorously by another character to remember the name like 'Kadali', 'Kantha', 'Kaupina', 'Kamandalu', 'Kankada' etc. Then there is a knock on the door. The village physician Kapila comes in. Mr. Patra remembers that his wife has told him to send for Kapila physician, the name starting with 'Ka', not the name of the medicine.

In the story 'Bhagidāsānka sadhi', Bhagidas wears a wrapper made up of the borders of some saris once worn by his dead wife. He takes care of that cloth out of love and sincere feeling. People ask him about the reason for using this peculiar cloth. He says that it not only suits the body but also the mind. He describes the history of the colourful borders one after another before a character who quite interestingly thinks of his own choice of saris for his wife. He is not prepared to listen to the pathetic tales of the narrator. Mohapatra intends to arouse love and sympathy for the people at whom we laugh.

In the story 'Duhswapna' published in *Niankhunta* (No. 9 July 1963) Godabarish Mohapatra delineates the character of Srimati Anunka Devi, who is the wife of a high official. She represents the aspiration of women to the extent that she appeals to God to make men feel the labour pain. Such a craze for liberty and equal right with male counterparts is ridiculous and laughable.

Now the manliness of men is reduced to nothing. They are the objects of ridicule before women because of their weaknesses. Godabarish has written in his belles-lettres 'Nari Jagarana' that all the vehicles, coaches, rickshaws are full of women. Women

swarm in markets and hotels and offices. Two old women laugh at him because he is found in the midst of ladies. They think that men should take care of children in the houses. The writer made Sadasiva Babu cover his head with a veil. Sadasiva Babu is also too much afraid of his wife. This humorous writing satirically points out the depravity and dependency of the male sex in social life. Mohapatra was not against women's liberty, he was against the excess arrogance and dominance of women in the name of freedom.

The narrative skill of Mohapatra can be compared to that of Jonathan Swift. But his satire is invariably mixed with humour and good entertainment. Two examples may be cited :

- a. All knew in the village that Kelei Nana was very greedy. He knew how to earn but was very particular about spending. He never acknowledged himself to be covetous. Once he went to the market with his 12 year old grandson to purchase brinjals. The man who was selling brinjals asked Kelei to pay the arrear. Kelei told him not to be hasty. He would repay all the amount next week. The grandson requested Kelei to pay the amount because the man was in a quite pitiable and pathetic state. Kelei told his grandson that the man was impatient to take money from him because he had taken some brinjals at the marriage of his grandmother and not yet paid the cost. Then the grandson said that really that man was unnecessarily hurried and impatient.
- b. Once a woman went to a neighbour's house for gossiping. The neighbour told her that she and her husband had planted a lemon tree that day as a memory of their compromise after a stiff fight between them. The other lady said if one lemon tree after a single conflict would have been planted by them, then their courtyard might have been full of lemon trees.

Godabarish Mohapatra is not always serious in describing humorous incidents. Often he is light and carnal in expressing it. For example, in his poem 'Danta O prema' (Teeth and love), Chintamani Babu could not smile at his beloved because he had

lost all his teeth. He only looked at her. He became worried and then purchased the teeth-ridges from a shop and got them fixed. He was happy to smile and laugh with Behela. Once Chintamani Babu and Behela were travelling in a rickshaw in the evening. The rickshaw jerked in an uneven road and the false teeth fell down. Behela felt ashamed to look at the ridiculous condition of Chintamani Babu.

In the poem 'Handisalara viplaba', the poet presents the change of a conservative lady's attitude towards family life. She goes to cinema with the friend of her husband instructing her husband to take care of their child in the house. She doesn't use veil nor she is hesitant to go alone keeping her husband in the house. In his poems like 'Formula', 'Bekar samasya', 'Bidaya bela', 'Chithira utara', etc., he has created pure, meaningful and hearty laughter.

The fundamental concept of humour includes an attitude of detachment. To focus on the foolishness, selfishness, and plight of men in a sensible manner is the real strength of humour. To enjoy this sort of humour, the reader is also required to have the specific taste. A man without the sense of humour can never enjoy such writings. Sense of proportion is also necessary to make the humour more touching and appealing.

Humour comes from pathetic and tragic sentiments too. They are not mutually exclusive, rather complementary. In 'Khadada haking', 'Patranka smarana shakti', 'Mani shaura chheli', 'Mun dine mantri thili', 'Bhagi dasanka shadhi', etc., we find humour coming from pathos and tragic feelings. In the works of Charles Dickens, humour and pathos intermingle and enrich the sentiments of humour. Swinburne rightly observes about Dickens that he is a 'master in the coterminous provinces of laughter and tears'. The same remark is applicable to Godabarish Mohapatra. A strange but sweet relationship between laughter and tear in the writings of Godabarish makes him a unique writer. In many cases, the starting is humorous but the end is tragic.

Yet Mohapatra's creative power is more prominent in the satirical and witty presentation than in his humour. Humour

includes fun, jest, buffoonery, ridicule, wit, irony, satire etc. Satire is explicit but irony is implicit. Satire turns to sarcasm when expressed in a witty manner. Mohapatra based his wit, satire and irony on those persons who were morally degraded and intellectually mean. The difference between manners and morals made him to be satirical in his presentation.

Godabarish was a unique satirist in Oriya literature but he was not the creator, inventor or father of satire. Radhanath, Fakimohan, Laxmikanta and Gopal Praharaj were successful satirists prior to him.

In his satire Godabarish was beyond any personal animosity and individual prejudices. Social and national spirit became more important in his writings. He had never become mean and vulgar.

The ridiculed persons as well as the related factors may not be there after about a hundred years but the readers would sincerely and gladly enjoy the satirical writings of Godabarish because of the lofty style and excellent thought. The poetic heart was quite vast and generous and its powerful inspiration could be discovered in his literary creations. One may not agree with his views but would certainly agree that he was a genius in satire and a sincere supporter of truth and justice. The timeless splendours of the satires composed by Godabarish Mohapatra would be receiving acclaims of the readers and critics for ages to come.

Truth was the pivot of all his attractions. He was never hesitant to speak the truth. The spark of fire can never remain hidden for ever. Truth must come out today or tomorrow; that was what he believed. He was a moralist who pointed out the immorality, stupidity, follies, unnecessary luxuries, falsehood and vices in the manners of persons who occupied positions of power.

We may remember what Pope said when asked about his attack

Ask you what provocation I have had ?

The strong antipathy of Good to Bad.

The remark is rightly applicable to Godabarish as a satirist.

Some aspects of his method in writing satires can be summarised as follows :

- a. Like Swift, Godabarish has used animal metaphors to make his satire and humour artistically decent in the writings like 'Pechā bādudi upākhyāna', 'Gadhiā chhelichhuā kathā' (Tale of wolf and kid), 'Mushāru bāgha (From rat to a tiger), etc.
- b. He has satirised the contemporary events through illustrations of folk songs and folk tales.
- c. He mocked at the contemporary politics and social life by means of proverbs used in the society.
- d. Legends and myths have been the means of his satire also. While describing the critical moments and complicated situations in prevalent politics, he very often referred to mythological figures and episodes to make it appealing and interesting so as to be grasped by common people.
- e. Scolding somebody through deceitful praise is an important aspect of his satire. Equivocal utterances make the satire funny and amusing. Godabarish was somewhat influenced by Jadumani Mohapatra, a 19th century Oriya poet, in this respect.
- f. Through pun and repartee, Godabarish tried to eulogise also. Like Jonathan Swift, of whom a critic said 'Eulogy was to be his talent, but it would be best expressed ironically, through mock insults' (Irven Ehrenpreis).
- g. The vocabulary of Godabarish was extra-ordinarily rich. Word-play or suitable arrangement of linguistic terms have made his satire artistic. Ambiguous words are also used to satire the persons of human nature.
- h. He created humour and satire through connotation and word-play. Familiar words are used with new meanings. For instance 'chila' (kite), 'pechā' (owl), 'ajagara' (python), 'sāguna' (vultures), 'balada'' (bullock), etc., have been denoted with new implications. Strange meanings of the words like 'bara' (husband), 'kara' (tax), 'jhada' (storm), 'ota' (camel), 'patha' (roadway), 'oshada' (medicine), 'mada' (wine), 'dara' (rate), etc., are given to satirised people.
- i. The common writing style in *Niankhunta* can be regarded as the style of exemplification. All the incidents of society and

Satires

politics are being narrated satirically by exemplification from the folk tales, tales from foreign land, Arabian stories, *Panchatantra*, mythology, *Aesop's Fables* etc. He himself also invented some stories to set as examples to make the political or social events more charming and enjoyable. His 'Sata kahibā nā michha kahibā' (Speak the truth or tell the lies) is an example where a person refuses to write that two plus two is equal to four. He may speak that as others believed it to be but cannot write like that to be free from politics. The examples like 'Māgā māhākud', 'Upākhyāna', 'Banara gāi kinā', 'Panā Narasingh' are given to popularise some of the contemporary incidents.

- j. His satires touch all sorts of people in different walks of life, starting from the members of the Gram Panchayat, bus driver, constable, clerk, magistrate, lawyer, doctor, judge, professor, editor, news reporter, secretary to deputy minister, minister and governor etc. All have been the targets of his bitter criticism.
- k. Parody is one of his supreme weapons to laugh at the existing social and political happenings. He composed the largest number of parody in Oriya literature. In parody of Madhusudan's 'Nirvāsitarā Vilāpa', he has said that it is better to live in the prison where pure mustard oil is available. Foolish people live in the society to use impure and adulterated oil. Radhanath's *Meghaduta*, Gopal Krishna's *Radha and Krishna*, Bhaktacharan's *Manabodh Chautisa*, Bhanja's *Bibhusana Puspejākānti Jāna* and some folk songs have been parodied by Godabarish. The appearance of Hare Krishna Mahtab and Radhanath Rath, in the election is being parodied by him as:

Aprakurta Premamurti Jaya Radha Hari

Abyakta lilaku byakata kala abatari

This is a parody of Abhimanyu's first stanza of his great *kavya Bidagdha Chintamani*. He also parodied *Kedargauri* of Radhanath while describing the Kedars and Gauris. the romantic young boys and girls roaming in the the capital. The social and political inertia, injustice and corruption are being portrayed by Godabarish in his parodies. That's why his parodies are serious in tone and piercing

Godabarish Mohapatra

in their appeal. ·

He composed a number of belles-lettres to use them as the instruments of satire. Belles-lettres are primarily light and elegant, imaginative and humorous essays. The writer establishes emotional attachment with the readers through this sort of writing. The readers come in contact with a specific world of sentiments in the belles-lettres of Godabarish Mohapatra, such as 'Tuma pocket rahasya' (The mystery of your pocket), 'Mora swargajatra', (My journey to Heaven), 'Maribaku belanahin' (No time to die), 'Purusa kahaku kahanti' (Who is termed as a man), 'Tume kebc apakhya kara' (Do you ever wait?), 'Rajanitika roga' (Political disease) etc.

To sum up, it may be said that Godabarish's life and writing were one piece. What he professed he wrote about, and what he put down in writing was basically the values he believed in personal life. A fine soul, a fine writer, he was fundamentally moved by a desire how best to do good to the society and to people at large, and how to identify a writer as a sentient being. This he did in ample measure for which Oriya literature should be immensely grateful to him.

Excerpts from Godabarish's Writings

Equation (1) is a nonlinear differential equation, and its solution is not known in closed form. However, we can obtain an approximate solution by using the method of perturbation expansion. We assume that the solution $x(t)$ can be written as a power series in ϵ :

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O MY PEN!

O my pen, an eternal revolutionary you are
Eternally silent, too.
Friend of all life, in all ages
though you cost a paise few.
Though frail-bodied, you've shaken many stony hearts
as also many granite-hard floors.
But why are you a prisoner in Orissa today?
Arouse this nearly dead nation, if only for once.

You are my friend, too, a very faithful friend
and through your sharp point
countless dearest thoughts have I expressed
enshrined in my troubled heart.

Chengiz Khans and Hitlers come and go
many Isms rage:
civilisation bloom and fade in this world
only in two days.
But above all these, you reign supreme
you are immortal in every age.
Why are you so dull and inactive in Orissa today
Why have you lost your edge ?

You have captured in immortal words and verses
the words of Buddha, Shankar and Christ,
and also on other occasions when gods trotted
this earth in the guise of men.
Never have you been a handmaid of pretence,
never have you yielded to force physical.
In one line you have discarded with vigour
all exploitation, suppression and corruption.

**You have cut off all bondages, given eyes
to the blind and written immortal words.
Your revolution is full of truth and peace
and your lamp shines through countless ages.**

THE HALF-BURNT BIDI

O half-burnt bidi, today you lie
under a roadside heap of garbage
But yeaterday someone's lips you kissed
and you'd burnt your body as an offering.

In some lonely fields where Kendu plants grow
in languorous luxury, in far-off Bolangir
a damsel had plucked you with her tender fingers,
Could you tell us, O half-burnt neglected bidi :
if the seller had shed tears, for the rates were low.

O my poor, half-burnt bidi, dust-ridden you are now.
The tobacco-leaves fondly grown in someone's fields,
and rotting in the tax imposed by the Excise Department
finally took shelter in your lap, thinking they were landless.
Who's that poor urchin who tied you together in one string?

You're the leaf of a sad damsel, and a farmer's wealth,
But in the cottage industry manned by day-labourers
Were you re-born, and because of you, minister's jobs
rise and fall through the votes of people, though now
burning for a while, you lie in the midst of filth.

You are not the only half-burnt one, there are many,
many like you, many leaders and ministers, who have burnt
their selves in the flame of power, and now prostrate lie,
like you, on the great road that this world is, and give out
long sighs, and have taken to smoking you as a final refuge.

TO PAPER

Who is that prehistoric maiden, O Paper! who
with the collyrium of her dark eyes
painted your body, calling back at mind
the lovely face of her lover,
with a long line of tears
overflowing her cheeks?

One day in a school, O dear Paper
a boy scared of dry arithmetic
while struggling for results,
out of sheer hopelessness, rested
his head on your bosom.
Do you remember today the restless dreams
that he used to have at times?

Once an unmindful girl
afar in the upper storey of her school
pressed the pen between her lips,
Her eyes were wide open,
and unable to decide what to write
she was muttering something to herself.
But the sight of her smiling friend on the mirror
shocked her, and she held you close,
very close to her breast.

A man who can't smile even once in his life,
a man who doesn't get a square meal a day
holds you tight in his lap night and day.
Even he has no time to think of his darling.
A time was there when the tribe of clerks
etched with the touch of their hands
many black and red lines on your face.
The poor man's land is sold on your bosom.

WOMAN

When you raise your face and look at me
the whole sky dawns within my mind,
no horizons remain,
and I find no image for it.

When you hang your face down
a huge unknown ship sails into the sea of my heart
floating on water, and yet largely under it,
and I find no image for it.

When you laugh like the cascading hill stream,
when you sit quite without a word,
When you are the goddess of primeval Vak
I only know you are life itself.

Pervading all space within, without,
do you assume so many forms
only for my sake?

THE DECENTRALISATION OF SARASWATI

You had emerged, O Saraswati, in this great land,
with book in hand, and attired in white,
Lotuses adorned you, you were seated on a swan
What a harmony rose from the depths of your lyre
The wise and the learned, all worshipped you
and you gave them blessings, sometimes with four hands,
Sometimes in courts, sometimes in huts,
Life blossomed wherever your music rose.
But now decentralised you stand, O the Eternal one
into Song-Dance-Arts Academies.
Now will you keep your lyre in one room, and go to the other ?
This room literature, and that dance;
Decentralisation is now an Administrative rule
So now leave the centre, and move to the circumference
Prose now gives the same delight as poetry,
I therefore fail to get a glimpse of you.

YOU AND ME

Lots of differences, Brother, are there between you and us.
For one thing, there's none like us in your midst.
You still live in that old-fashioned house of yours
while we live in the capital city of Cuttack.

The sole of your feet has never touched a slipper.
But we always wear Flex shoes only.
You always complain you get nothing,
While at our door we are flooded
by regular streams of ghee and oil.

You say you never get any paddy to buy.
But we get it on door-delivery, throughout night and day.
You stay idle there, and get drought and flood,
But see, our cars have no rest, we move heaven and earth for
you.
You all have gone dumb, so to make you hear our words
we have acquired loud-speakers, only for your sake.

CONTROL

A day has twenty-four hours, but my sorrows are countless.
Therefore, O God, advise me please
which sorrow should get how many hours of my tears.

My child is ill; and my wife with an anguished heart
tells me — the barley bought from the market has only
powdered maize; and then I hear the news
that two lakhs of people have been killed by goondas
in West Punjab. But what's the remedy?

While brooding on these, I am informed
by the call-boy that the shop-keeper gave
only a seer and half of rice for a rupee; with this
how shall I manage to feed my family for a day?

At this time, come ten people in a body asking for
contributions to improve my village; my hand
moves visibly from my waist to my pocket and from there
to my bag; the volunteers can imagine the state
of my finances, and in silence they leave.

And from my back a voice is heard to inform me
in the so-called milk sold by the milkman today
three-fourths are water; then comes another voice
from the front door. I guess it belongs to Sadhu Jena
who shouts — I can't supply grass any more
if I am not paid four annas per bundle.

As I debate in my mind for which should I worry
which is greater in this world, I can't know
volunteers or contributors, water or milk
my cook informs we've no kerosene today; it sells

for two rupees a bottle, and in the backyard
a younger daughter-in-law is tortured by her mother-in-law

In this age of controls, therefore, O Lord
put some control on the sorrows and misfortunes
that I have to face, and also specify for which sorrow
I should hold a meeting, and for which I should pray alone;
for which I should speak in the Assembly like a hero.
In this age of post-war reconstruction, tell me O Lord,
which sorrow deserves a minute, and which an hour or two.

THE OWL

When the dark menacing night descends
on the path of life,
Oh please tell me, O owl, the nocturnal voyager
for whom do you send this call
under the feet of the dense dark
Or in the ancient hollow of the trunk?
I really get startled on my way.

For whom do you sing? O Owl! hooting what new songs,
when the solitude of the lonesome roads and the fields
of the quiet earth look on eternally
on the innumerable stars from the blue sky
and when in the violence of the storm the mind shrinks?

When you fly past flinging out your claws,
the sharp beak and the wide eyes, the mind
is deeply shocked. O the day-blind, round-eyed one!
Why you hide as a coward in the day
and what your hunt in the dark
are all unknown to us all.

Wealth is kept in dark, you roam about in dark
Now I understand why Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth,
chose you as her pet. For with you as her minion
the people in dark seek her blessings in despair
and have darkened the market
with high rates for all commodities.

Man now worships the owl, and the world is full of owls.
Everywhere is observed the ceremony of darkness;
the 'dark visits' are on; and everywhere
your beak and look conjure up the spectral dance
that feeds on travelling allowances from the treasury.
Darkness everywhere encircles the Orissan land
The call from Rairangpur enquires : Where's Nawarangpur?

The south calls today to the iron contour of the North
The wail of Chilka echoes
against the far-off hills of Hirakud.
It is only you, O Owl
Who wanders from this border to the other.

Many a dark visit has already maddened the nation.
Your image has been spread all over the country.
When would the day break ?

And when would the darkness fade far away?
I take you for a minister, and you're now
the ruler of the country.
Are you bent upon leading it through the way of Death?
The storm gathers from all sides.
The thunder shakes the being of all.
You are sitting hidden in the hollow of a tree.
What songs do you sing
O the day-blind, round-eyed one?