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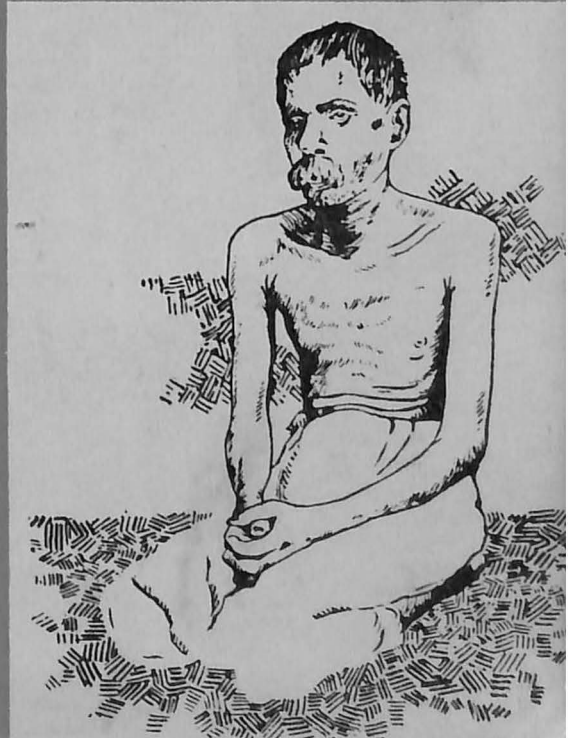
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Radhanath Ray

Gopinath Mohanty



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Radhanath Ray (1848-1908) came of a Bengali family that had settled in Orissa for generations.

His kavyas set up a new tradition in Oriya poetry and influenced subsequent poets almost up to the middle of the 20th century. He enriched Oriya poetry by introducing into it new forms, new topics, a new approach and greater freedom. Among the many new things which he brought into Oriya poetry, there were blank-verse modelled on Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Bengali poetry, pictorial, musical but direct and unambiguous language following Scott and Wordsworth, satire in the manner of Dryden and Pope, denunciation of despots, tyrants and oppressors, concern with social problems, a spirit of protest against conventional morality, a disbelief in the power of gods and goddesses, and patriotic sentiments, which last brought him trouble from his employers. He was viewed as a national poet of the first order in Orissa.

Dr. Gopinath Mohanty, the author of this monograph, needs no introduction to any student of Indian literature. But here one would find one of the greatest novelists of Orissa paying highest tribute to one of the greatest poets of his language in a very lucid and convincing manner.

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RADHANATH RAY



MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

RADHANATH RAY

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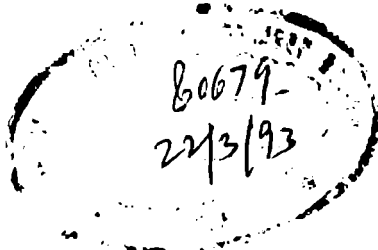


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Acknowledgement

I am indebted to the Sahitya Akademi for sponsoring the writing of this monograph by me and for its publication. While I have depended on my own study of the writings of Radhanath, I have also utilised all available material contained in the writings of others about him as appeared to me to be consistent and useful. I express my gratitude to the writers whose writings have been listed in the bibliography given in Appendix 3. I particularly mention two outstanding contributions, first those by Dr. N. Samantaray who has brought to light little known facts about the career, writings and times of Radhanath, and secondly 'Kabi Lipi' by Dr. D.P. Pattanayak in which some letters written by Radhanath to Gangadhar Meher were compiled together, edited and published. The letters throw light on some of his attitudes, opinions and on some incidents relevant to the poet's moods. I have also profited by the voluminous biography written by Sri D.C. Ray, son-in-law of the Poet's eldest son Sri Sashi Bhusan Ray. It contains, though in a pell-mell fashion, a wealth of material but I could not always agree with the opinions expressed there.

G.M.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

ORIIYA is one of the fourteen major languages of India and is spoken by over twenty million people in the eastern region of India, known in history as Odra, Kalinga, Utkal, Tosala and Orissa, famous for its temples, its fine sculptures and ancient culture. Thus, it has the temples of Jagannath at Puri, Lingaraja at Bhubaneswar and Konarak on the sea-beach among the thousands of temples adorning the entire area. The Oriya language is one of the most ancient among the Indian languages. The earliest extant poems in the language are those which were composed by some of the famous saints of the Vajrayana School of Buddhism in the 7th to 9th century A.D.

The British occupied Orissa in 1803 and already by then, Oriya poetry was rich, highly developed and profuse in quantity, stored in innumerable palm leaf mss. some of which could be found almost in every home. It possessed a wide variety. It had grown out of the Indian and the local culture. It bore the influence of Sanskrit, and of folk traditions and it conformed to values that were typically Indian, expressing traditional Hindu beliefs and outlook on life. Radhanath Ray, born in 1848 was the most outstanding Oriya poet in the 19th century after the British conquest of Orissa.

He came of a middle class family in the Balasore District from a tiny village in the sea-coast. He read in a high school, passed the F.A. Examination of the Calcutta University as a non-Collegiate student and then worked under the British Government, first as a school teacher for eight years, and then as a high ranking officer in the Education Department of the Province of Bengal. For twenty three years, he was in charge of directing the modern system of primary education in the districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore in Orissa and in some

Garjat states which were then included in the Orissa Division of Bengal. That system of education had been newly introduced by the British Government. He was a famous educationist. In recognition of his meritorious work, the British Government conferred the title of 'Rai Bahadur' on him in 1903 (15 September). He died on the 18th April, 1908.

It was while working as an Inspecting Officer of Schools that he took to writing seriously in Oriya, first turning his attention to text-books and then to Kavyas. He composed nearly 14,000 lines of Oriya poetry including 9 Kavyas which constituted his important contribution to Oriya literature. They were written and published during the period from 1886 to 1897. They set up a new tradition and influenced subsequent poets almost up to the middle of the 20th century. He enriched Oriya poetry by introducing into it new forms, new topics, a new approach and greater freedom. Among the many new things which he brought into Oriya poetry, there were a system of end-rhyming adopted from Bengali, blank-verse modelled on Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Bengali poetry, a pictorial, musical but direct and unambiguous language, following Scott and Wordsworth, romantic legends concerning people and places, description of nature, lyrical poetry in the manner of British romanticist poets, satire in the manner of Dryden and Pope, denunciation of despots, tyrants and oppressors, concern with social problems, a spirit of protest against conventional morality, a disbelief in the power of gods and goddesses, and patriotic sentiments, which last brought him trouble from his employers. The new sentiments that his poetry expressed at once drew applause and certain aspects of his poetry stirred up a bitter controversy. He was viewed as a national poet of the first order in Orissa and was accorded honour and recognition that has rarely been given to any other writer.

His fame came in the wake of two circumstances peculiar to his age. First, the country as a whole had been in utmost misery, backwardness and degradation as a result of the British occupation. Dispossession of zemindaries and lands belonging to the people of Orissa and their exploitation by outsiders had become the rule, and most of the key positions under the Government were held by outsiders. The normal responsibilities of administration had been neglected, obviously with deliberate intent, so

that the heroic and patriotic instincts of the people of Orissa might never revive. The British Government had ample proof of the spirit of the people in the armed resistance of 1817-19, and also while it had to crush resistance in almost every Garjat, and at other sporadic intervals. To the misery thus caused had been added an unmitigated cycle of repeated droughts, cyclones, floods, and famines and severe epidemics. Nearly a million people died of starvation in 1866 in the districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore in, what is known as, the 'Great Famine'.

The country was in such a state of neglect that even roads were scarce and large areas were overgrown with jungle and infested with wild animals. The Calcutta-Madras rail link then non-existent in Orissa was thrown open only in 1900. Education had been utterly neglected. The Balasore High School, which was the third English School to be opened in Orissa and the one in which Radhanath read was opened only in 1853. It was only after 1854, on account of the recommendation made by Sir Charles Wood, member, Board of Control that primary education made some headway in Orissa. Though Christian missionaries printed the New Testament in Oriya from Serampore in 1804 and set up a printing Press at Cuttack in 1857, the first public press, the Utkal Printing Company was set up in 1866.

Another circumstance peculiar to the time of his advent was a strong move made by some self-seeking job-hunters from outside Orissa to make the British Government to abolish the Oriya language in their schools and offices in the Orissa Division and to replace it by Bengali. The move first originated in a letter dated the 14th January, 1841 addressed by the Board of Revenue, Bengal to the Commissioner of the Orissa Division. Prior to that, in a circular dated 30th May, 1837 the Government of Bengal had directed that the use of Persian in its offices should be discontinued and should be replaced by 'the local language', while English would continue as before, and that any one who was not familiar with the local language would be debarred from holding an appointment under the British Government. Naturally, people from outside Orissa who till then had occupied almost all posts under the British in Orissa were apprehensive lest they would lose their jobs and their power and influence, and so, in order to keep their sway over Orissa intact, they engineered the move in 1841. Orissa had been cut up after the British

occupation and portions of it had been tagged on to Bengal, to Central Provinces and to Madras. As was mentioned by Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra before the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 4th April, 1870, Oriya had been the language of the people and the language in the courts in the whole of Midnapore and Bankura up to 1850, when it was deliberately suppressed and replaced by Bengali, so that, in 20 years, the change was finally complete. Similar hopes continued to be cherished in respect of the Districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore for which attempts continued. This led to much bitterness. A strong reaction in defence of the Oriya language was set up leading in course of time to the Utkal Sammilani movement under Madhusudan Das for amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts, and for the formation of a separate province. Those who wanted to suppress Oriya had been particularly harping on the fact that there were no good text-books in Oriya; in fact, preparation of text-books in Oriya had been neglected and discouraged by interested parties. The agitation to abolish Oriya was officially closed when a circular dated the 8th November 1869 was issued by the Government of Bengal. The circular said that in all schools of the Orissa Division, Oriya should be the medium of instruction. Desperate attempts were there after made by the agitators through the press and on the platform, they continued for a year or two more and finally, ceased. The struggle had lasted for over 28 years.

Gouri Sankar Ray came of a Bengali family that had settled in Orissa for generations. He was one of the important leaders of the counter agitation in defence of Oriya, for that purpose he edited the 'Utkal Dipika'. Fakirmohan Senapati who edited the 'Baleswar Sambad Bahika' was another such leader. As is evident from Fakirmohan's autobiography, Radhanath's sympathies were with the Oriya cause, but he did not come out in the open. He came of a Bengali family that had long settled in Orissa. Oriya and Bengali meant the same to him, and his early writings were poems in Bengali. It was after the language controversy had ended that his writings in Oriya were seen in print. The novelty and richness of his Oriya poems, the fame that his talents evoked, and the influence that he commanded as a poet, scholar, high ranking officer gave him a unique fame in the context of the twenty-eight years fight to save the Oriya langu-

age. It was as if the high worth of his poems vindicated the honour of Orissa and raised its prestige. He became a national hero.

He continues even now to be the most frequently discussed Oriya poet. His poems are still taught in schools and colleges and are regarded as classics. Many poets imitated him in the succeeding years, many more were influenced by him in some form or other, and the bold experiments that he attempted in the language, form and content of poetry encouraged his successors to try newer experiments. He was the initiator of modernism in Oriya poetry and he can justly be regarded as one of the makers of Oriya literature.

This is a brief monograph intended to convey a broad idea of the life and poetry of Radhanath Ray in a nut-shell. The limitations of space naturally restrict a fuller dilation on different aspects connected with the subject.

CHAPTER TWO

Life and Career

A. Early Life:

RADHANATH RAY was born on Thursday the 28th September, 1848 in village Kedarpur near Soro in the sea coast of Balasore in Orissa. His father was Sundar Narayan Ray and his mother Tarini Devi.

He came of a Bengali family of the caste 'Kayastha' that had settled in Orissa for generations. The family, originally bearing the surname 'De' had shifted from Radhanagar in Midnapore to Dasmangal in Balasore and then had settled in Kedarpur where Radhanath's grand-father Narayan Prasad De had married the daughter and heir of a Zemindar with a surname 'Ray'.

The family owned a few acres of land at Kedarpur, but it had to maintain a social status, there were many mouths to feed, and it was not rich. It derived some income and had a status because some of its members had been serving under the British. Radhanath's father was a clerk in the office of the Collector, Balasore. The pay of clerks in those days varied from Rs. 3/- to Rs. 10/- a month, but rice sold at 60 seers a rupee and so a clerk could maintain his family. Radhanath's uncle Balaram Prasad was employed for some time as an executive ('Daroga') under the British Salt Manufacturing Company at Balasore. His uncle Jagannath Prasad also worked there for some time. But the Salt Company was abolished in 1863 and so the two were thrown out of employment. Radhanath's youngest uncle 'Jahnabi babu' worked as a petition writer in the Collector's office and assisted the joint family in bread earning.

Sundar Narayan Ray was a hard-working and frugal man, Radhanath was his eldest son and it was his ambition that his son should get an English Education and so be enabled to

secure an employment under the British Government.

In 1853, a second son Jadunath was born to Sundar Narayan Ray by his first wife Tarini Devi, and then in 1854 she suddenly died. This was a bitter shock to Radhanath. He grew into a morose, quiet child and the mood hardly left him all his life. One characteristic of his poetry in his obsession with death, it dates from this early experience. He wrote a poem in Bengali about this incident some years later.

Sundar Narayan Ray married Rupa Devi in the same year. He then put Radhanath under the care of a professional primary tutor named Narayan Nayak. True to the custom then prevailing, the teacher flogged Radhanath off and on, made him to cram his lessons, and kept him fully occupied in that tasteless pursuit giving him no time to play. Nor was Sundar Narayan Ray softer in his dealings with his son, he did not even allow him to go out to play or to mix with other children. He wanted his eldest son to grow into a serious, purposeful man and for that purpose, to be well up in his studies. Radhanath had thus a miserable, loveless childhood. He was growing into a weak, undernourished and frequently ailing child, melancholy and unusually serious. He had an accident in 1854, the only time when he used to be allowed to go out of doors was when he would be taken to the village tank for a bath, but once, his feet slipped and he was at the point of drowning. He was rescued by a co-villager, Haladhar Sadangi. His father no more permitted him to be taken outside.

A 'Vernacular School' was set up at Soro with the efforts of Radhanath's father and Radhanath was admitted into that school in 1857. The Headmaster of the School was Basudev Nanda and Radhanath then read Sanskrit for the first time.

In February 1858 Radhanath admitted into the second year class of the Government High School, Balasore. He then shifted from his village Kedarapur and put up with his father in a rented house at Balasore. He read in that School for six years up to January, 1864. Later, on 24th October, 1868, that is just before he appeared at the F.A. Examination, he obtained a 'Government School Certificate' from the Headmaster of that High School. The certificate has been published in his biography written by Sri D.C. Ray. It mentions that he was in the highest class of the school when he left school in January of 1864. Thereafter, he joined the staff of the school in 1864 and was in the

employment of the Government uninterruptedly till the date of his retirement. He must have passed the Entrance Examination as a non-collegiate student in 1865 or in 1866.

Sons of some rich zemindars and high ranking officers were among his intimate friends in School; one such was Baikuntha Nath De, later Raja B.N. De, a rich zemindar of Balasore who remained his friend and patron throughout his life. When Radhanath wrote text-books, with one or two exceptions they were all published by Baikuntha Nath De from his Press. His early literary creations were also published from that Press.

While in school, he was cited as the best boy of the second year class in the Annual Report. He was mentioned as one of the three best boys of his class in the Annual Report for 1862-63 that is when he was in the class next below the highest. Fakirmohan Senapati's impression of his academic activities is that he passed the Entrance Examination in the first division and obtained a scholarship but Fakirmohan's statement that he passed the Entrance Examination in 1864 and then joined the Presidency College for some time in 1864 cannot be correct.

B. His life as a School Teacher:

RADHANATH RAY joined the staff of the Balasore High School as a teacher on 1st May 1864 on a salary of Rs. 30/- a month. He was little more than a boy and was a sickly child of skin and bone. He lived with his father in a rented house at Balasore as before, the place was east of the Gadgadiah Tank. It is probable that he appeared at the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University for which he had been preparing at home while teaching in school; no records are however available. About his first year as a teacher in that School, Gangadhar Acharya, the Headmaster wrote that he had been a little prone to carelessness before, but that he had improved.

He worked in the Balasore High School till December, 1868. In the meanwhile 'The Great Famine' overtook Orissa in 1866 and there was a stark famine in the Chilika lake islands in 1868. F.A. classes opened for the first time in Orissa in January, 1868, but Radhanath appeared at the F.A. Examination of the Calcutta University as a non-collegiate student in December, 1868 and passed the examination.

While at Balasore, he was writing Bengali poems. His

Bengali *Kabitabali*, Part I, was published in 1868. As has been recorded by Fakirmohan Senapati in his autobiography, Radhanath used to mix with him and with other friends secretly in the evenings in spite of the expressed wishes of his father; Fakirmohan was then the local leader of the Oriya group in the language controversy and so Radhanath's father had no wish that his son should be seen with Fakirmohan. In 1868 Fakirmohan set up a committee of six including himself for the promotion of Oriya literature and Radhanath was one of the members.

He was next transferred to the Puri High School. He joined there on 23rd December, 1868. He was at Puri till January of 1872. He found scope at Puri to improve his knowledge of Sanskrit. The Puri Sanskrit School was set up in 1810, Radhanath and his student and friend Madhusudan Rao both read Sanskrit under Pandit Harihar Das, Headmaster of that School who was an eminent scholar.

The happy event of his marriage with Parasamani Devi daughter of Chandramohan Aditya of Remuna near Balasore took place in 1870 while he was a teacher at Puri.

He was transferred to Bankura in January 1872 as Second Teacher in the Government High School there. The second volume of his Bengali poems, *Kabitabali* Part II was published in 1872. He was at Bankura till the end of June 1872 when he was promoted as a Deputy Inspector of Schools and his career as teacher ended.

C. His life as an Officer in the Education Department:

RADHANATH RAY was promoted as Deputy Inspector of Schools, Balasore District in July 1872, and he worked in that post till November, 1877.

It was during this period that his earliest Oriya writing, a translation of 'Meghaduta' first appeared in print. It is said that a portion of it had been published earlier in Fakirmohan's magazine 'Bodhadayani' some time between 1868 and 1871, but the report is not confirmed and that publication is not traceable. The translation of Meghaduta appeared in full in the magazine 'Utkal Darpana' in 1873 when that magazine was first published by Sri Baikuntha Nath De, from his 'De's Press' at Balasore. It was followed by a prose translation of a foreign story which Radhanath named 'Italiya Juba' and by a long and

serious essay, entitled 'Bibeki'. The translation of 'Meghaduta' at once made him famous and the prose style of 'Bibeki' became a model for editors and essayists to follow.

Writing text-books in Oriya seemed to hold out good prospects for earning money. Inspecting Officers under the Education Department had been doing so elsewhere in Bengal. Starting with 1876, Radhanath began to write a number of text-books. A list of such text books has been given in Appendix 2. They raised the standard of text-books in Oriya. Particularly, his 'Model questions on Oriya literature' published in 1879 when he was already Joint Inspector of Schools for the Orissa Division, and which was prescribed as a text book, inculcated on teachers and senior students the new critical approach to literature that he and his friend Madhusudan Rao advocated. Madhusudan Rao was a lyrical poet and a famous educationist. One of the text-books, which the two wrote together, namely *Kabitabali* Part I, was published in 1876, it contained two poems by Radhanath, namely, 'Pabana' which was in 85 lines and 'Words of Shivaji to his soldiers' which was in 46 lines. Those were his first original poems in Oriya.

His father died in July, 1873. His eldest son Sashi Bhusan was born in 1876. He was promoted as Officiating Joint Inspector of Schools, Orissa Division on 26th November, 1871. He then went to Cuttack, stayed there continuously till 1900 and made Cuttack his permanent home. The best days of his literary creations and literary contacts were at Cuttack. His greatest literary creations were produced during his stay in a rented house at Sheikhbazar belonging to a Zemindar of Balasore. He put up in that rented house for 13 years from 1880 to 1893 when he had a fine double storeyed house built in Kaligali street and shifted there.

On his transfer to Cuttack, he presided over the first half-yearly meeting of the 'Utkal Sabha' in December of 1877 and over its first annual meeting held in June 1878. The 'Utkal Sabha' had been organised by Gouri Sankar Ray by coalescing the activities of two other organisations at Cuttack and it was one of the first public associations set up in Cuttack which concerned itself with the interests of the Oriya people.

His second son, Rajani Bhusan was born in 1878. A third volume of his Bengali Poems *Lekhabali* was published during

that year.

The year 1879 brought him the friendship and patronage of his official superior, Bhudeb Mukherji, then an Inspector of Schools in Bengal. He was a famous Bengali writer. He had come to Orissa on tour. Radhanath accompanied him and the two discussed literature on the way. Bhudeb Mukherji was 21 years elder than Radhanath. He loved Radhanath like his son, eulogised him in a Bengali magazine that he had been publishing every year, and he used to recommend him for promotion to the next higher post. Radhanath went to Chinsura in 1888 to visit Bhudeb Mukherji and was his guest for three weeks. He accompanied Bhudeb Mukherjee on a sight seeing tour for three months in 1882, the two then went to Birbhum, Patna and Gaya. There were on the best of relations. Bhudeb Mukherji died in 1898.

Radhanath's sister Swarnamayi married the Zamindar of Kaupur in 1880. In the same year, the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj offered to appoint him as his Dewan, Radhanath declined the offer in 1881.

His job made him to tour frequently in the interior of the Orissa Division. He used to be out on tour at a stretch for months. He thus visited several Garjat states every year and was often out in the hills and jungles, attending to his official duties, effecting contacts, studying the country, enjoying its natural beauty, and taking notes which he later utilised when he wrote his poems. His biography by Sri D.C. Ray mentions many such tours undertaken in different years.

He was fond of travelling. In 1883 he went to Calcutta to see the International Exhibition, he was next away for 3 months visiting northern India, Central India and Darjeeling and he described his experiences in his poem, 'Chilika'. Even after he had retired from Government service, he often trekked out to see his favourite hills and jungles and to enjoy the beauties of open nature of which he was so fond of. An infection which he had caught while returning from one of his travels led to his last illness and his death.

The year 1886 was particularly memorable for him, for, during that year, he made the acquaintance of the best of his patrons, Maharaja Sir Basudev Sudhala Deva, ruling chief of the Feudatory State of Bamra, and, as he frankly admitted later in a

letter published in the Maharaja's paper 'Sambalpur Hitaisini' on 21 July, 1897, a new career as a creative writer in Oriya opened for him after he had received a very encouraging letter from Sudhala Deva and had met him in person at Deogarh. He had been on tour to Talcher, Bamra being outside his jurisdiction, he took casual leave for 10 days and went from Talcher to Deogarh where he met Sudhala Deva. Sudhala Deva did him honour conferring the title of 'Kabibara' on him and presenting him with a purse of Rs. 500/-. During this year, two of his Kavyas, first *Kedar Gouri* and then *Chandrabhaga* were published from the printing press of Baikuntha Nath De of Balasore. Other Kavyas followed till 1897. Of these, he dedicated three to the Raja of Bamra, namely *Chandrabhaga* in 1886, *Nandikeswari* in 1887 and *Jajatikesari* in 1895. He eulogised the Raja of Bamra in the body of some of his poems. Sudhala Deva published his Kavyas *Nandikeswari*, *Usha* and *Parvati* and later his kavya *Jajatikesari* in his magazine 'Utkala Hitaisini. He was always Radhanath's friend and guide. When the prestige of Radhanath as a poet as compared with that of Upendra Bhanja was involved in a literary controversy, Sudhala Deva and his friends and employees supported the cause of Radhanath, and his patrons financed the magazine 'Bijuli' which was run for a year in his support. The Raja's second son financed the publication of his Bengali 'Lekhabali Part II' in 1902.

He had a second royal patron in the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. It appears that when a particular instalment of his poem 'Parvati' that was being serialised in the Bamra Raja's magazine was printed in September, 1890, Sudhala Deva felt deeply shocked and outraged, for that instalment had contained a story of incest and murder, and the foul-deed had been attributed to a King of the Ganga dynasty from whom the Raja of Bamra claimed descent. Further serialisation was stopped under orders of the Raja for a period of 5 weeks though it was later resumed in December, 1890. After this happened, Radhanath turned to the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj and presented him with a copy of 'Parvati'. The Maharaja expressed his admiration for that poem and Radhanath then had his 'Chilika' and his 'Mahajatra' published in the Mayurbhanj Maharaja's magazine 'Utkal Prabha'. The Maharaja gave him a reward of Rs. 100/- for each of those fine Kavyas. But he had given the same amount of reward to

another poet, Gobinda Chandra Mohapatra, who was also his Assistant Dewan, for the latter's poem 'Himachala'. This shocked Radhanath and was partly responsible for killing his incentive to write any more serious Kavyas. As he wrote to Gangadhar Meher on 10.7.1894 about the affair,

“‘Hira’ (i.e. diamond) and ‘Jira’ (i.e. cumin-seed) have been given the same price.”

He had somehow hoped, as he wrote to Meher on 18.3.1895, that the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj would play the role of the bounteous king Vikramaditya towards Oriya poets but his hopes did not materialise. He grew embittered against all ruling chiefs of Orissa. He wrote to Meher on 18.3.1895, “The Raja of Bamra deserves praise but whatever he has done is but too little.” In the same letter he declared that he had given up writing because of sickness in his family, pressure of work and lack of appreciation of his writings by the country. He was more explicit in his letter to Meher dated 27.3.1895, where he said that in India, which was under a foreign rule, poetry did not bring any financial reward for the writer as it did in Europe, instead it subjected him to enmity and to jealousy. He added:

“It is idle to waste time in a pursuit
that has no reward, material nor spiritual.”

Radhanath had dedicated his ‘Usha’ to the Raja of Talcher in 1888 and his ‘Chilika’ to the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj in 1892. He eulogised the Maharaja and his wife, Queen Soudamini in euphemistic terms at the end of his poem, ‘Chilika’, the eulogy forming a part of the poem. He devoted 89 lines of eulogy to the Maharaja in the 5th canto of his Kavya ‘Mahajatra’. But that was before he had felt disillusioned with the Maharaja. After that, he criticised the Rajas trenchantly in his satire ‘Darabara’. In spite of his eulogies to some of them, it appears that he had hated them as a class, and the pictures that he had drawn of them and of their women-folk in his poems were not edifying. The Rajas and Zemindars, however, continued to patronise him and his eldest son Sashibhusan Ray. On 16.5.1892, the Raja of Athamalik addressed a letter to him saying that he would give him a reward of Rs. 300/- for his ‘Mahajatra’ and in the same year, the Raja of Darpan gave him a reward of Rs. 200/- for that book. His complete works were published in 1902 at the expense of the Raja of Khariar and after his death, his biography

(Royal, pp 1207) written by Sri Durga Charan Ray was published in 1941 at the expense of the Raja of Athgarh.

His writings brought him wide renown. Besides their intrinsic worth, several other factors helped their quick popularity. One was the context of the language controversy that had recently ended, and which had generated, as a reaction, a strong Oriya nationalism. Another was his friendship with Rajas, Zemindars and other elite who mattered in those days. A third was the influence that he enjoyed as head of the Education Department in the Orissa Division with thousands of teachers, scholars, and other officers under him as his subordinates and official authority. Writers, editors and scholars crowded round him and he was looked upon as the leader of literary activities in Orissa.

His plan to write text-books begun in 1876 continued till 1886, they were written by him singly or in collaboration with others. The period from 1886-97 was that of the publication of his Kavyas. His last text-book 'Vyakarana Prabesha' was published in 1899. Some text-books written by other people known to him mentioned that he had revised them.

BITTER DAYS, TROUBLE OVER TEXT-BOOKS:

Almost all the text-books written by him were published by the De's Press, Balasore belonging to Baikuntha Nath De. He had a big say in the approval of books as prescribed text-books as he was then Joint Inspector of Schools, Orissa. Where-ever the Headmaster of a Primary School had the option to choose one out of more than one prescribed text books, it was natural that a text-book which the Joint Inspector favoured or had himself written was more likely to be preferred. In course of time a scandal arose about his connection with text-books, and charges were made openly in the press that he backed the De's Press and favoured his friends. He desisted from writing text-books. A complaint was filed against him by Sri Gobinda Chandra Ratha, a famous text-book writer of the time, before his authorities alleging nepotism and favouritism on his part, it was enquired into in 1890 by Brahma Mohan Mallik, Inspector of Schools, and was dismissed as baseless.

He was promoted as acting Inspector of Schools, Orissa Division on 21.6.1892 when that post was created for the first time.

TROUBLE REGARDING HIS POEMS:

'Bijuli-Indradhanu controversy'

His connection with text-books had made enemies for him. A section of the educated people of Orissa resented the themes of his Kavyas though they admired his style and his poetic worth. They thought that he had offended good taste, morality and accepted values of conduct and had calumnised the national tradition of Orissa. In 1893 his supporters tried to establish through the press that he was superior to Upendra Bhanja as a poet and at once there arose a bitter literary controversy descending to the level of lampoons and degrading personal attacks. Those who backed Upendra Bhanja started a magazine named 'Indra-Dhanu' and those who held up Radhanath started a magazine named 'Bijuli'. The latter stopped publication early in 1894, while 'Indra-Dhanu' continued for more than a year thereafter. Radhanath was subjected to ridicule, infamy and mortification as a result of this untoward happening.

CHARGE OF SEDITION:

His worries had not ended. On 22.6.1897, the title of 'Rai Bahadur' had been conferred on him and he had received many felicitations. But two years later, in July, 1899 he received a communication from the authorities calling for his explanation because one of his subordinates had secretly reported to them against him, asserting that his poem 'Words of Sivaji to his Soldiers' and 57 lines at the end of the 5th canto of his poem 'Mahajatra' preached sedition against the British Government. This subordinate had acted in revenge for he expected a promotion at the hands of Radhanath but had been passed over and some one else had been promoted instead. Radhanath was in serious anxiety, all the while trying to prove his innocence to the charge of sedition. Sri D.C. Ray records in his biography that in exasperation, he tore up five more cantos of 'Mahajatra' that he had composed and which were ready for the press, and that he had also prepared an outline for writing 18 more cantos of 'Mahajatra' which he then shredded and consigned to the flame. The charges for alleged sedition were dropped at the end of 1899, but early in January 1900 he was called to attend a meeting at Calcutta where he was served with an order transferring him to the Burdwan Division. He was made to join his

new post at Hooghly as Inspector of Schools, Burdwan Division without being allowed time to go back to Cuttack.

APPRECIATION OF HIS OFFICIAL WORK:

His work as Deputy-Inspector of Schools, Balasore, and as Joint Inspector of Schools, and then as acting Inspector of Schools, Orissa Division, was highly praised by his superior Officers and so too his work in the Burdwan Division. Several appreciations have been recorded by Sri D.C. Ray in his biography.

HIS EDUCATION POLICY:

His biography reproduces some of the notes of inspection prepared by him. They show that his inspections were thorough and constructive. He embodied in them elaborate instructions on how to remove the defects that he observed. He mixed freely with teachers. He even took primary classes in order to demonstrate how a teacher should do his job. He personally trained the teachers and so built up the machinery that would implement his instructions.

He formulated a new approach to education. Children were to be taught not merely to remember new information but what is more important, how to exercise their own powers of observation, reasoning, discrimination and judgment. Interest was to be stimulated in them for understanding their environment. They were to be taught how to spot out points of similarity and dissimilarity in different objects and concepts, to group things into classes, and to study the relations of different components to each other in a structure and also to study a structure as a whole. His approach to teaching was clearly demonstrated in his book 'Model Questions on Literature'. Among other things, the book laid emphasis on a proper understanding of grammar, its correct application, on a detailed analysis of structure of words and sentences, on acquiring a sound knowledge of metre, prosody, metaphors and also on the appreciation of the spirit of a poem. A student was required to be made familiar with new methods of composing verse such as end-rhyming, 'Upadha' rhyming, and new metres. Interest was sought to be roused in the student for knowing about the life of a poet and relating it to his poetry, for effecting comparisons between different poets, different poems by the same poet, and different

portions of the same poem. Emphasis was laid on undertaking a discriminating study of a poet's technique, his imagination, feelings and emotions and of the manner in which he had created beauty. These methods of study were new. Radhanath not only wrote new poetry, but in generations of the students, he fostered a new and critical approach to the understanding of literature.

HOOGHLY:

His fame as a writer and as a famous educationist continued to spread while he worked at Hooghly. He made many friends. Among them were Sri Jaladhar Sen, editor of the Bengali magazine 'Bharat-Varsha', Sri Sisirkumar Ghosh, founder of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri, and others. It is significant that even while he was in Bengal, he tried to make other people interested in the Oriya language and literature and he discussed Oriya literature with others frequently. At least, two young people, one Sri Akhil Palit, a Police Inspector, and a young lady writer, Nagendrabala Saraswati became sufficiently interested in Oriya so as to learn how to read it and they could appreciate Oriya Poetry.

NAGENDRABALA:

He had contumacious relations with young Nagendrabala and she was an accomplished girl nearly thirty years his junior in age. Their relations began in July or August of 1901, and lasted for two years so long as he was at Hooghly. Both of them kept it a secret and to all appearances she was his 'disciple'. She regarded his wife as her mother and even paid her a visit at Cuttack. She was a married woman and as she suffered from some incurable disease, she had been moving from place to place for a change. She was a fine lyrical poet in Bengali and had published a number of books of poems. Radhanath wrote prefaces to some of her books and praised her warmly. After she died in April or May of 1906, Radhanath was terribly upset, he was filled with a consciousness of sin, felt guilty, repented his action, and nearly went off his head.

He retired from Government service on 15.9.1903.

D. His last Years:

RADHANATH came back to Cuttack after his retirement and lived there. He left frustrated because he had been made to retire in the usual course on completion of 55 years of age like anybody else and not been granted extension of service, and had not been promoted to the Class I of the Bengal Educational Service.

He had made no important contribution to Oriya literature after 1897, he wrote several poems of minor importance, his powers had failed. His losses were more than counter-balanced by the high esteem that he enjoyed in Orissa as a writer. On 24.12.1903 he presided over the first annual conference of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj and on the following day, he participated in the Utkal Sammilani Conference where he moved a resolution for promotion of the Oriya language on which he read a paper.

He went to Manjusa in January of 1904 and was there from the 12th to the 23rd of January waiting for arrangements to be made by the Raja so that he could be taken to the Mahendragiri mountain. No arrangement could be made and he came back to Cuttack.

Bhudeb Mukherji had died in 1898 and in February 1904 he had another irreparable loss when Raja Sudhala Deva died. He had suffered from ailments all his life and his health was breaking down. He went to Calcutta on 6.7.1905 in order to attend a meeting of a 'Committee on Primary Education' of which the Government had appointed him as a member. In the first half of 1906 he was on the verge of a breakdown, he requested Fakirmohan Senapati to get his horoscope read by a competent astrologer. Fakirmohan had that done, he wrote a touching reply to Radhanath assuring him that his worst times were over.

Suddenly, in 1907, he felt excruciating pangs of remorse when he was reminded of his contumacious relations with Nagendrabala. He hated himself, hated and denounced her, though he did not divulge her name, raved, wept, grew restless, had no sleep and no appetite, felt pain all over the body, and passed days in agony. He then decided to make a public exposure of his guilt without disclosing the identity of the lady. He did so by several means. He published and circulated a written confession entitled 'An appeal' in Oriya. He addressed a

confessional letter to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. He published two confessional poems one of which was addressed to his wife. He began to write out a detailed confession, portions of which were later published in his biography written by Sri D.C. Ray.

His 'Appeal' caused a stir. Letters poured in praising him for his moral courage in boldly making a public confession of his sin. In the estimation of some people, his action indicated that in an age when several people in high circles lived secretly sinful lives, he had lived an incorruptible life, had sinned but once, and then had purged himself by his confession. Prayers were offered for him by Rev. A.H. Young and Rev. Raj Mohan Bose in his house on that occasion. Finally, he regained his mental balance.

A few months later, on 19.1.1908, Radhanath went out with his son Sashi Bhusan to visit old places and friends. He went to Pallahara and to Bamra and was well-received by the Rajas. On his way back, he was coming in a bullock cart in order to catch train at Meramundali so as to come to Cuttack, when he had blood dysentery while he was at Govindpur. He reached Cuttack in that plight on 7.4.1904. He had fever two or three days later and lay bed-ridden and he died at 1 A.M. on 18th April, 1904.

His body was cremated at Sati Choura, Cuttack where a 'Samadhi' memorial constructed by a gift from Madhusudan Das, the then political leader of Orissa still stands. His death was universally mourned and his birth and death anniversaries are observed throughout Orissa every year.

He was survived by his wife and three sons.

E. Radhanath Ray in retrospect:

THE FACTS of his life show at a glance that it was the life of a remarkable man, determined to make his way forward against heavy odds by will-power, intelligence, foresight, planning and hard work. It was a long way from the insignificant hamlet Kedarpur on the sea coast, and from a common lower middle class family that he had travelled in those dark and difficult days. Of success he had ample.

His formal education had been interrupted while he was sixteen, but he was known to be one of the most well-read men of his time, a rare scholar in English, Sanskrit, Oriya, Bengali

and Hindi. He was a 'teacher of teachers' and he brought up generations of students and scholars by the knowledge imparted by the books that he wrote, and by the policy of education that he formulated and implemented in Orissa.

He achieved great success as a writer and occupied an immortal place in Oriya literature.

He was always a success as a government servant, starting life as a third teacher in a High School, he rose to the highest status in Orissa under the Education Department. As a man of the world too, he was a success, he acquired rank, prestige, wealth and power and moved in the highest circles and thousands of people cringed before him to obtain his favours. Even his recommendations were fruitful, they advanced their fortunes in British India and in the Garjat States.

With all this, he was proverbially meek, polite and unassuming. He was simple in his standard of living, was averse to luxury, wore modest clothes, ate a very sparse diet, worked very hard, never sparing himself, and moved on foot in the streets of Cuttack with common crowds. He was austere in his habits and pleasant in his manners.

The curse of his life was his chronic ill-health. He suffered all his life from colitis, colic, asthma and other troubles. He took to opium to allay his suffering. He often sat on the floor on a mat instead of sitting in a chair. The posture in which he sat was the Yogic posture of 'Virasana', knees pressed to the ground and the bottom resting on upraised toes because there was a belief that, that Yogic posture would give him some relief from his pains. He was man of skin and bone with piercing eyes blazing from hollows. It is strange how in spite of such ill-health he could work so hard.

Among the good habits that he rigidly practised were promptness, punctuality and diligence and his characteristic was sincerity. His letters to his friends, particularly to poet Gangadhar Meher show him as an unsuspecting, easily believing, open and warmhearted friend, eager to assist others. It was far from his nature to sing his own praises, to project himself by any means other than sterling worth, and even when maligned, to write anything in self-defence. He was shy in several respects, he was not even a platform speaker and he was particularly reticent about himself. He was very generous in his appreciation of the

merits of others. His collections of Bengali poems contained poems eulogising some eminent Oriya poets and some eminent men of Orissa. His Kavya 'Chilika' contains a warm tribute to the genius of poet Kavi Surjya. He warmly praised the poems of Gangadhar Meher. His 'Mahajatra' contains moving lines of sympathy for Samanta Chandra Sekhara (Born 1835) a great astronomer and an eminent Sanskrit scholar of Orissa who was then in distress.

He had innumerable friends and admirers. They came of different races, languages, religions and castes. Among them were Brahmin Pandits, Christian Padres, Muslims, Europeans, Oriyas, Bengalis, Rajas, high ranking officers and common people. He was above parochialism and above all distinctions of language, caste and creed. What he cared for was worth and what guided him was reason and not blind sentiment. In himself, he combined both the Oriya and the Bengali, he was a Bengali by birth, he loved Oriya literature and devoted himself to it. He had a broad human sympathy and an all-India outlook not restricted by local patriotism. His open-mindedness was partly due to the influence of the Brahmo Samaj which had been set up at Cuttack in 1869. Two of his intimate friends Madhusudan Rao and Pyarimohan Acharya were Brahmos. Viswanath Kar, Editor of the Utkal Sahitya and an ardent admirer of Radhanath was another Brahmo. The Brahmo Samaj had a strong influence on the rising generation of those days.

The times when he lived saw the emergence of Oriya nationalism and the Utkal Sammilani movement headed by Madhusudan Das. It was a period of national awakening when mediaeval stupor gave place to a modern awareness of needs, problems and objectives. In the context of that consciousness, Radhanath's writings, enriching Oriya literature and enshrining the names and descriptions of places in Orissa in poetry were a matter of pride for Orissa. It was very significant that the opening song of the first Utkal Sammilani Conference held at Cuttack in December 1903 was a Sanskrit poem composed by Radhanath beginning "Sarvesham no janani Bharata".

CHAPTER THREE

The Writings of Radhanath Ray

THE writings of Radhanath can be broadly grouped as follows:

1. Poems in Bengali,
2. Text Books in Oriya,
3. Translations in Oriya in verse,
4. Prose writings in Oriya,
5. Minor poems in Oriya, and
6. Kavyas in Oriya.

Lists of his writings have been given in the Appendix.

HIS BENGALI POEMS:

His poems in Bengali were his earliest compositions. They were also continued at times in his later years while he used to write mainly in Oriya. Three such anthologies are known to have been published, namely, *Kabitabali Part I* (1868), *Kabitabali Part II* (1878) and *Lekhabali* (1902). He translated some Sanskrit poems of Kalidasa into Bengali and those were published together as '*Kalidas Suktayah*' (1902), Bengalis domiciled in Orissa for generations often speak a dialect of Oriya called '*Kera*' which is a mixture of Oriya and Bengali, but, as his letters printed in Sri D.C. Ray's biography indicate, Radhanath used to write to his son in Bengali. His Bengali poems have a natural ease, spontaneity and freshness which one somehow misses in his more sophisticated, laboured and refined Oriya poems. He was influenced by Bengali poets, particularly by Michael Madhusudan Dutt whose '*Meghnad Badh*' was published in 1861. He later wrote to poet Gangadhar Meher that his Bengali poems had been highly acclaimed by Bengali authors, writers, critics and editors, but it does not seem that those had a place in Bengali literature at any time. Nabin Chandra Sen, the famous poet of '*Palasir Juddha*' was a contemporary of Radhanath.

TEXT-BOOKS:

The text-books which he wrote in Oriya about which mention has been made before were a valuable asset to the cause of primary education in Orissa, it is a pity that he did not write more of them.

TRANSLATIONS:

He began his career as an Oriya poet with his translation of Kalidasa's 'Meghaduta', it was published in 1873. It is in simple Oriya and reads like an original composition. It was a characteristic with him to which he owed much of his success that when he translated passages, borrowed plots, descriptions and ideas he could put them in his own words in Oriya in a manner so that they looked like his own original compositions. Often, his readers were enamoured of passages in his poetry which were only Oriya renderings of what other poets had written in Sanskrit or in English. Another translation which appeared like an original composition was his poem 'Tulasi Stabaka' published in 1894 by the time when he had written most of his Kavyas. It was an Oriya rendering of some lines from the 'Kiskindhya Kanda' of the celebrated 'Ramacharit Manas' of Tulasi Das, except what the name indicated, and it meant on the face of it, 'A bunch of leaves of the holy Tulsi Plant', Radhanath gave no indication of the source of the poem and many people mistook it for an original composition.

PROSE WRITINGS:

After his 'Meghaduta' was published, two prose-pieces were published by Radhanath in the same year, 1873, and in the same magazine, 'Utkal Darpana'. The first was 'Italiya Juba', a prose translation of a foreign story; the name of the original was not revealed. The story is only of academic interest because it had appeared within 20 years of the beginning of modern Oriya prose style. The modern Oriya prose style had first appeared in the text books written by Gobinda Chandra Ratha, author of the first Oriya primer, 'Barna-bodhaka' (1854), Bichhanda Charana Pattanayaka, Kapileswara Vidyabhusana and others. The Oriya prose style in text books like 'Padartha Vidya Sara' (1832) and etc. compiled before by Christian missionaries was incorrect ungrammatical, grotesque and comic. The style of Radhanath's

story was an uneven admixture of Sanskrit and colloquial words. But his second prose piece, a long essay, 'Bibeki' was different. Its prose style is a land-mark in the history of Oriya prose, being clear, concise, direct, and purposeful, though at times it is heavy with condensed Sanskrit words of compact meaning. It offers advice to people on how to face various adverse situations with wisdom, courage and fortitude.

Further samples of his prose are provided by the following:

- (a) 48 letters written by him to Gangadhar Meher during the period from 1892 to 1905. They were compiled and edited by Dr. Debi Prasanna Pattanayak in his book 'Kabi Lipi' published in 1951 by Visvabharati.
- (b) Description by Radhanath of his journey to Talcher, Bamra, Pal Lahara and Keonjhar published in the magazine 'Naba Sambada' in 1887, an article on 'Bamara' published in that magazine in 1896, and a brief address read before the first annual conference of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj in December, 1903.
- (c) Letters purporting to have been written by him to others and given in D.C. Ray's 'biography'. No originals nor facsimiles are available.
- (d) A portion of his unpublished autobiography given at pages 466-473 of D.C. Ray's 'biography', and an 'appeal' said to have been sent by him to the press, published at pages 473-478 of the same book. Neither the originals nor facsimiles are available. The texts have not been authenticated.
- (e) Some prose pieces said to have been written by Radhanath and published in his 'Granthavali' after his death by his son. Their genuineness has yet to be established by independent corroboration. These include a complete write-up in prose of the rest of the story in each of his poems 'Parbati' and 'Urbasi' from the stage where the poems had been left incomplete. They also include scrappy notes said to have been found in a 'note book' maintained by him.

It would be safe to base one's idea of Radhanath's prose on the prose pieces in the first three items mentioned above.

His prose style matured with the years. It had all the characteristics of good prose, namely, brevity, accuracy, compactness and force. Unlike his poetic style which was often verbose, his prose style was condensed and pithy, conveying much more than what would appear on the surface. It had a pictorial quality. When used for the purpose of pressing a point, it was very persuasive. Unfortunately, he did not write much prose, and so, when he is mentioned as a writer, it is only as a poet.

MINOR POEMS:

Including his two translations, 'Meghaduta' (1873) and 'Tulasi Stabaka' (1894), Radhanath wrote 23 minor poems. His first original poems were two poems published in an anthology 'Kabitabali' Part I in 1876, in which, the other poems were by Madhusudan Rao. The book was prescribed as a text book. His two poems were 'Pabana', consisting of 35 lines written in a simple, elegant and musical style and 'Words of Sivaji to his Soldiers' consisting of 45 lines and being the first poem written in Oriya conveying an appeal of Indian nationalism and also the first dealing with a historical figure of all-India stature. Both these early poems exhibited characteristics that were to figure in his poetry in general. Thus, both showed the influence of English and Sanskrit poets, and both had the 'Upadha Milan' pattern of end-rhyming as was found in Bengali.

There was an interval of ten years before any other poem written by him was published. Then in 1886 another anthology containing two poems by Radhanath and some other poems by Madhusudan Rao was published and was prescribed as a text-book. His two poems were 'Beni Samhara' and 'Bharat Iswari'. The latter was a panegyric to Queen Victoria, yet a tone of nationalism was clearly discernible in it as it contained a prayer to God to make the Indians united and strong.

'Beni Samhara' was a long poem in 528 lines of 14 letters in each line and was nearly one and a half times as long as his two early Kavyas 'Kedar Gouri' and 'Chandrabhaga' taken together, but all it did was to rewrite an episode described in the Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa. Its importance lay in the fact that for the first time in history an attempt was made to modify and modernise Old Oriya the language and the rhyme of that great ancient masterpiece and Radhanath's manner of re-

writing it was copied and followed thirty-two years later by pundits engaged by Arunodaya Press of Cuttack who prepared a 'revised' version of the palm leaf MS of Sarala Dasa's 'Mahabharata', printed in 1919. Radhanath abandoned the 'Dandi Brutta' rhyme of the original text in which the lines were of unequal length and rhythm had been maintained internally, corresponding to the ebb and flow of natural emotions according to the meaning, the music in Sarala Dasa's 'Dandi brutta' had imitated the sound of breakers beating on the sea-shore. The 'Dandi Brutta' had been a unique contribution to Oriya poetry by Sarala Dasa who flourished in the 10th Century (and not in the 15th as is erroneously believed) and it had also been followed by subsequent poets. Radhanath also gave up the rich, suggestive, apt and accurate colloquial Oriya style that Sarala Dasa had used and replaced it by Sanskrit words. It was characteristic of the poetry of Radhanath in general that while he initiated change and innovations, he did away with much that was rich and lively in the local tradition, and as the popularity of his poems grew, much of the richness and grandeur of traditional Oriya poetry went out of vogue and was discarded.

Radhanath continued to make similar attempts to retell stories from the Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa in his later years in a similar manner. 'Bana Harana' (1904), 'Duryadhanara Rakta Nadi Santarana' and 'Smasana Drusya' are examples. They were products of the years of his failing powers, the result was a loose narration with weak poetic quality. Most of the minor poems are of the same, poor quality and they were composed after his last Kavya 'Darabar' had been published in 1897.

He had produced his best blank verse in his Kavya 'Mahajatra' before 1897. He turned to blank verse again in his 'Dasaratha Biyoga' which he composed perhaps at the end of 1900. All that is known is that he dedicated it in February, 1901. But its language was weak, diffuse, and ineffective and its content was sentimental and poor in quality. 'Savitri Charita' published in 1904 was no better as blank verse, its only redeeming feature was an attempt, made in a few of the lines of that long poem of 766 lines, to write poetry modelled on the style of the Oriya 'Bhagavata' of Jagannatha Dasa.

Another instance of the decay of his talent is in an incomplete poem 'Mahendragiri' written in 1904 in which an attempt

was made to describe natural scenes as he had done earlier in his famous Kavyas 'Chilika' and 'Mahajatra', he simply could not regain his former stature and the poem was poor in quality.

He continued to write his minor poems almost till his last days. But they rarely bespeak of his characteristic talent. All that they evince is that he had a genuine love for writing poetry. Even when he was in great mental agony because of a sudden guilt-consciousness, he poured out his self-condemnation and bitter anguish in two poems.

Among his minor poems are two unfinished ones, 'Urbasi' and 'Fularani', which, if completed, might have classed among his masterpieces. It is probable that they were composed during the years of the efflorescence of his talent as a romantic poet, that is between 1886 and 1894. In 'Urbasi', his poetic style is found at its best. He avoided the use of heavy, Sanskritic expressions which he had frequently used in most of his Kavyas and, instead, used simple, soft, natural and suggestive words with which the most remarkable patches and in fact the rarest lines of good poetry occurring in his Kavyas had been written. For instance, while describing the early touch of the spring he wrote: "The lotus, afraid of the mist, is unwilling to raise its face from the water". 'Urbasi' was discontinued after 190 lines. 'Fularani' was probably composed after 'Mahajatra', it represents a further maturity of his blank-verse, but it suffers from under-expression. It stopped after 100 lines.

KAVYAS: Their Contents:

The crowning event of Radhanath's literary career and the one for which he is remembered is his role as a writer of imaginative Kavya poems in Oriya. These began with the publication in 1886 of his 'Kedar Gouri', a poem in 106 lines of 20 letters each, and ended with the publication of his 'Darabara' in 1897. He wrote 9 Kavyas. Of these, Parbati (1890) and Mahajatra (1893) were left incomplete. In three of them, there is no continuous story. 'Chilika' (1891) contains a description of natural scenes in and around a lake in Orissa bearing that name. 'Mahajatra' (1893) contains word pictures of natural scenes, some character portraits, and dissertations on the causes of the moral degradation of India leading to its loss of freedom. 'Darabara' is a satire containing several satirical portraits, denunciation and

some personal sentiments. No such themes had ever been taken up before by Kavyas in Orissa.

Each of the six other Kavyas, 'Kedar Gouri' (1886), Chandrabhaga (1886), Nandikeswari (1887), Usha (1888), Parvat (1890) and Jajatikesari (1894) narrates a complete story, portrays some characters, describes some natural scenes, describes the appearance of objects and persons, tries to create beauty, deals with imagination, feelings and emotions, and preaches values regarding human conduct and behaviour. All these six Kavya poems are imaginative romances dealing with legends about men and women and with love, and adventure. Except 'Jajatikesari', his other romantic Kavyas end in death and their stories try to follow the pattern of classical tragedies. Far away places, ruins and the past figure in all of them.

BORROWED PLOTS:

In almost all his Kavyas, the plots were borrowed from other sources and were suitably modified so as to appear as genuine local legends of Orissa. 'Kedar Gouri' gives the story of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses', 'Chandrabhaga' of 'Daphne and Adonis' from the same text with borrowings from Pope's 'Windsor Forest', 'Nandikeswari' presents Ovid's 'Scilla and Ninus' with some modifications, Usha presents Ovid's story of 'Atalanta's race' with some additions and modifications, 'Parvati' deals with a legend taken from the Oriya 'Madala Panji' that is the 'Chronicles of Kings' with borrowings from Aeschylus' play 'Agamemnon', and 'Jajatikesari' borrows its plot from the poem 'Bidya Sundar' by the Bengali poet Bharat Chandra and also from the Sanskrit 'Choura Panchasika'.

THEMES:

The general trend of the theme in each one of these six romances is the behaviour of human beings afflicted with physical passion for the opposite sex which is what Radhanath means by his use of the word 'love' ('Prema' or 'Priti') and that impulse defies parental authority social inhibitions and all considerations of propriety and safety. In 'Kedar Gouri', a boy and a girl run away from home and commit suicide. In 'Chandrabhaga', a sex-mad youth represented as the Sun God of Konarak chases a girl who then drowns herself in the sea. In 'Nandi-

keswari', a princess maddened by 'love' for an invader steals out of her father's fort at night to meet him, professes her love for him, offers him her father's mascot jewel, and when he spurns at her love, commits suicide. In 'Usha', youngmen eager to marry a girl, run races with her, lose the contest and are killed, one such youth succeeds in winning the race by a stratagem, but when he marries her, the two suddenly die. In 'Parvati', a father commits incest on his daughter and then gets her and her illegitimate child murdered. In 'Jajatikesari', a boy and a girl fall in love, she hides her lover who is disguised as a girl in her room, and they live happily until detected, he was about to be put to death, but a goddess intervenes and then her father gives her in marriage to him.

DESCRIPTIONS OF PLACES, OBJECTS AND SCENES

KEDAR GOURI:

'Kedar Gouri' is the briefest of these nine Kavya poems, having 106 lines, each of 20 letters. Almost its entire length has been taken up by the narration of the story. Description of natural scenery and familiar scenes to the minutest detail by means of a keen observation constitutes the highest excellence of Radhanath's poetry, it only made its appearance in this poem and was more in evidence in his next Kavya, 'Chandrabhaga'.

CHANDRABHAGA:

'Chandrabhaga' has 270 lines with 16 letters in each. A tense description of the chase of the girl 'Chandrabhaga' by the Sun-god who has been painted here as the villain of the piece makes interesting reading. The images here have also been taken from Ovid's narration and from Pope's 'Windsor Forest' but they have been successfully rendered into Oriya so as to appear as original. These two earlier poems were, however, preliminary experiments, a much fuller Kavya poem was the third one, 'Nandikeswari'.

NANDIKESWARI:

'Nandikeswari' has 1074 lines, each with 12 letters, and is divided into two cantos. Nearly four-fifths of the poem is common verse, without any extraordinary quality, relieved at times

by pictorial description, even then, its charm lies in the fact that it contains a detailed description of different scenes, persons and places in Orissa, named and described in Oriya poetry for the first time. In addition, nearly 165 lines have a high literary excellence. These include, in Canto I, the description of a dawn, the description of a scene when a river-goddess, Ganga appears before the hero, Chora-Ganga, a scene of river Mahanadi in flood, another of a water-fall named 'Pradhanpat' situated in Bamara, and in Canto II, descriptions of a sun-set, of a scene at midnight, a festival in a temple and a moon-lit night. There is an unforgettable picture of princess Nandika, maddened by lust, moving out at dead of night with intent to betray her honour, her father and her country. The theme of the poem has been set in the background of a war of invasion and it contains a description of a military camp, soldiers and fights.

USHA:

'Usha' is almost of the same length as 'Nandikeswari'. The core of the story is 'Atlanta's race' but Radhanath had added two more legends from his imagination, one about the birth of the hero and the heroine, Jayanta and Usha, and the other about the origin of the peacock emblem of the Raja of Mayurbhanj. The heroine, Princess Usha, has been shown as leading the life of a hunter, moving with a bevy of other beautiful girls, hunting in the jungle and also in a river, Balangi, and thus, an occasion has been created to portray feminine beauty, scenes of shikar, and charming natural scenes. Suitors for her hand have been described as having come from different parts of the country, and so, different places in Orissa from where they are supposed to have come have been named and described. The poem has been enriched by portraits of birds, animals, mountains, jungles and other natural scenes. There is a moving description of the cremation of the dead bodies of the hero and the heroine at the end of the poem, demonstrating an ability to paint a tense atmosphere which Radhanath could at times achieve.

PARVATI:

'Parvati', though left unfinished, shows Radhanath's art in its maturity. Like some other Kavyas of Radhanath, the lack of taste displayed in selecting its theme detracted from its quality,

it is an unwholesome story of brutality, vice, incest and murder, but while an insignificant portion of the whole is taken up by the story which remains scattered in two isolated patches, the bulk of the interest of the poem derives from its charming descriptions. The poem consists of two cantos and has 902 lines, each with an average of 7 words or 20 letters. It describes several natural scenes, and familiar scenes at different hours of the day, and gives portraits of different places in Orissa. It contains a description of the colourful 'Dol Jatra' festival at Puri. There is a unique picture of hills all along the sea-coast, from Balasore to Puri, on which bon-fires have been lighted in order to convey news of a military victory. There are also pictures of tribal dances. Some of the charming descriptions have a nostalgic touch. There are also scenes of sieges and battles. A novelty about the content of this poem lay in its subtle portrayal of a despot and his activities, and in its denunciation of tyrants and oppressors. This was a new feature which had rarely been seen before in Oriya literature. King Gangeswara has been portrayed as a cruel, selfish, avaricious, lustful and blood-thirsty villain. The poet takes pains to describe how he laps the fat of the land, enjoying the very best produce of each place in his kingdom. Birds shut up in a menagerie in his palace and silently suffering their bondage bring to mind the lot of his slaves and of the people over whom he rules. There is a long and humorous description, in the Chaucerian manner, of people drawn from various walks of life, they chant 'Glory to King Gangeswara', that was only meant to signify that the common people had become callous and indifferent to their exploitation and slavery, and had no political awareness. Radhanath denounced despots and oppressors through the words of Kanchuki, an old guard of the palace. The writing of 'Parvati' was interrupted because the poet's eldest son Sashu Bhusan Ray fell seriously ill and so he had to pass anxious days, but it was not resumed even after his son recovered, obviously due to some other considerations. In a letter addressed by Radhanath to Biswanath Rath, primary school teacher at Poktunga, and published at pages 216-217 of D.C. Ray's biography, it is mentioned that 'Parvati', which had remained incomplete, was not even half of what it had been planned to be. There can be no conjecture as to how the rest of it might have been. A write-up in prose

concluding the story published after the poet's death in his 'Granthavali' (i.e. 'complete works') lacks authenticity, it cannot be accepted as something which Radhanath wrote or intended to write.

CHILIKA:

'Chilika', as has been mentioned earlier, is a unique Kavya poem dealing with description of natural scenes, but having no regular plot nor character. It is a string of pictures interspersed with observations by the poet. As in some other poems of Radhanath, the poem contains descriptions of different places in Orissa, of the Chilika lake, hills, jungles, rivers, temples, and etc., of varieties of birds, plants, flowers, fish and sharks. Significant details have been given. Changes occurring in the same scenes according to changes in the light at different hours of the day have been sought to be depicted. There are familiar scenes of fishermen coming back in the evening in their boats and singing popular songs on their way, of herds of cattle returning from hills at dusk, their bells ringing, of water-fowl floating on waves, spreading over the water and also hovering above in the sky like clouds, of hills and forests reflected in the lake in the moon-lit night, of the lake tossed in a roaring storm and etc. The description has been mixed with pictures of the Himalayas, of the Rajasthan desert, the Vindhya, the Godavari River, and etc. so as to present contrasts. There are two snatches of legends, one is a description of a boat-journey by King Purusottam a Gajapati returning after conquering Kanchi, bringing with him Princess Padmavati, the Kanchi King's daughter whom he was to marry in future. The other is about Goddess Gurubeyi directing an attack in a storm in the Chilika lake against an invader named Raktabahu and his forces who were in their boats.

MAHAJATRA:

'Mahajatra' which followed next, remained incomplete. It appears to have been planned on a grand scale but only a fragment of the entire poem that was planned is available in point. Even then, it is in 7 cantos which are much longer than any other single Kavya of Radhanath. It has 2391 lines, each with 5 words on an average, and with 14 letters in each line. The idea

was to portray the downfall of India starting from the quarrel between Prithviraj and Jaychandra, and also to trace its causes. It would be idle to conjecture if Radhanath would have stretched his story up to the British conquest of India. But the narrative was cut short after the first battle between Prithviraj and his enemies had been described in Canto VII. The poem is particularly significant because it was the first Oriya Kavya in which blank verse was used. A speciality of the poem particularly found in its 4th canto is its description of vices like the Seven Deadly Sins as in Spenser and which signified the advent of the Kaliyuga or 'Age of Perverted Values'. Socio-political problems particularly those connected with the moral values which had an all-India significance were dealt with in this poem for the first time in Oriya literature. The poem has a historical perspective, a deep patriotic fervour and it expresses strong nationalist sentiments. The second and third Cantos contain some charming descriptions of natural scenes in hilly areas.

JAJATIKESARI

'Jajatikesari' was the last of Radhanath's romantic Kavyas. It has 1116 lines, each of 20 letters or seven words on an average. After 'Mahajatra' which was his most serious composition, 'Jajatikesari' was a light, breezy, and even flippant creation in which the main interest centered round the narration of a romantic, dreamy and fantastic story. The poem showed Radhanath as a spent force. It contained some patches of good natural scenes but it lacked the quality of the description found in his earlier Kavyas.

DARABARA

'Darabara', the last of his Kavyas, contains no particular plot nor character, it consists in the main of a series of satirical portraits. There are 745 lines, the first four pay homage to the historic Barabati fort, then follow 51 lines depicting the scene of an official Durbar, the idea was probably taken from the one held at Cuttack in 1896 when Mr. Cook, Commissioner of Cuttack conferred the title of 'Rai Bahadur' on Radhanath's sister's husband, the Zemindar of Kaupur, and the title of 'Maha-Mahopadhyaya' on Samanta Chandrasekhara. A gallery of satirical portraits has been presented in lines 52 to 204

where there is a comic and ironical description of the elite of the land quarrelling among themselves for seats in the higher ranks in that ceremonial gathering, and while putting up their respective claims for recognition, bragging of the posts that they held under the Government, of their noble descent, of their wealth and etc. and in sundry ways, parading their vanity. Some of them have been described as flaunting their gorgeous attires and the ornaments that they wore, others have been shown as strutting pompously and some people have been shown as parading their sedulous imitation of English airs, intonation, and even gestures. The poet deplors that the lure of empty titles makes such people to run after British officers like their pet dogs and to squander money in their efforts to please high ranking officers. The humorous vein of the narrative then turns didactic for a time after 204 lines, and the poet preaches some moral values, but soon, the poet erupts into vitriolic denunciation of the Rajas of Garjat States condemning their pomp, pride, selfishness and vices and castigating them for exploiting the common people and oppressing them. Finally, in lines 643 to 725, he praises Samanta Chandrasekhara, a famous astronomer of Orissa who belonged to a royal dynasty.

The people who have been caricatured in the poem have been labelled by the poet as belonging to 'the new-fangled contemporary society of Orissa'. Obviously, he had some of his contemporaries in his mind when he composed the satire. He nursed a grouse against some English educated people of the day who had criticised him in the Press. As his letters to Meher reveal, his open denunciation of Feudatory Chiefs in this poem was preceded by a feeling that they had no zeal for promoting literature and not one of them had done enough to help him materially.

NEW IDEAS:

Radhanath Ray expressed some ideas in Oriya poetry that went against conventional beliefs and attitudes, and, irrespective of their worth, at least stimulated free and rational thinking.

LOVE:

When he described young people falling in love, he portrayed love as animal passion that did not wait for the sanction of

parents and elders. Often, his young people in love were rebels against parental authority. This was described in his very first Kavya 'Kedar Gouri'. In 'Nandikeswari', his heroine Nandika, declared,

"When a scripture says: 'A father has absolute right over his daughter',

I reject that scripture with a bow."

Oriya poets before him would have shuddered to think of such sentiments which offended accepted codes of conduct and traditional ideas of morality. When those poets had described a boy and a girl in love, the two were either a married couple or were meant to be married together by their parents, and it was sinful for any one to love a person of the opposite sex without the sanction of his or her parents. Radhanath presented the western attitude in such matters and spoke of free choice of partners by boys and girls. Not did 'love' in his poems seldom rise above the level of sex.

HIS ATTITUDE TO HINDU DEITIES:

Another departure noticed in his poems from the characteristics of traditional Oriya poetry was his sacrilegious attitude to Hindu deities who till then had been held by poets in deep reverence. He mocked at them and at their powers, portraying them as endowed with all human weaknesses and as having no power to protect their devotees from misfortune. He perhaps thought that such deities were fictitious and imaginative creations made by people in the past. He portrayed some deities in his 'Chandrabhaga', they were no better than human beings and had the same weaknesses of vanity, spite, anger, jealousy, greed, and as in the Sun-God, also unbridled lust, and callousness to suffering. In the same poem, he narrated how a human being, an old sage named Sumanyu was more powerful than the Sun-God, his curse brought down the Sun-God's temple. He described in 'Nandikeswari' how the inhabitants of a beleaguered fort had depended on their Guardian Angel, a Goddess whom they worshipped, for their protection, but after describing a grand ceremony held in the temple of the Goddess in Her honour. Radhanath went on to say, how immediately after, it, severe calamity overtook the few people of the fort their princess disgraced herself and committed suicide and her father,

the King, abdicated in favour of the invader. In 'Parvati', he narrated the story of a horrible crime committed to a girl, but he took care to make her ghost tell her mother, Queen Parvati that the soul deed took place at a sacred place in full view of saints and deities and they did nothing to help her. She even exclaimed,

"My mother, God does not care what happens to human beings: He is there only for gods."

HIS ATTITUDES TO MEDIAEVAL RULERS:

Before Radhanath, Oriya poetry had rarely spoken ill of Kings and Queens. Ancient dynasties of Orissa had been held by the people in high esteem and the people of Orissa took pride in some of the Kings of such dynasties. But Radhanath was guided by his own judgment of people and by his own likes and dislikes. Though his personal relations with rulers of Garjat States left no room for suspicion in their minds and he was on the best of terms with several of them he seemed to have hated Rajas as a class, so that, when he told stories about Kings and Princesses in his poems, he painted most of them as abominable creatures. This is evident from four of his Kavyas, 'Nandikeswari', 'Usha', 'Parvati' and 'Jajatikesari'. It is not that he was narrating history, he exercised his choice and borrowed from foreign models and passed off such characters as belonging to royal dynasties of Orissa and also added from his own imagination. Nandika in 'Nandikeswari' is a sex-mad princess who shamefully betrays her honour, her father, her King and her country to an invader and then commits suicide. Usha is another princess who minds only her Shikar and her outing, she is eager to beat any one who runs a race with her and she does not care that those who lose the race have also to lose their heads at the scaffold. Her father is equally callous to their sufferings. Radhanath meant to convey that mediaeval princes and princesses led despotic, tyrannical, selfish lives and cared nothing how other people suffered. In 'Parvati' he depicted the character of mediaeval kings at their worst. In 'Jajatikesari' he drew unedifying pictures both of princesses and princes. The King's daughter, Lalita has been painted as another sex-crazy girl, her thoughts are occupied only with her animal cravings. Her lover Jajati, disguises himself as a woman and she hides him in her bed-

chamber. Though 'Jajatikesari' is a legendary hero of Orissa and his name is recalled with pride and veneration, Radhanath put him in an imaginative and fantastic story and painted him as a dissolute youngman goaded by sex. The pictures that he thus painted had no relation to history. People found fault with his taste and some critics thought that he had unjustly slandered the princes and hurt popular sentiments. He condemned the princes openly and in very strong language in his Kavya 'Darabara'. He said:

"Music, hunting, keeping birds for sport,
Drinking and gambling, that is all you do.

. . .

The ethics of your government are only to
loot your subjects,
Rogues, dacoits, back-biters and liars are
your ministers."

HIS SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

He often wrote in his poems against the evils that he observed in society. He was eager to preach moral values and to denounce follies, weaknesses and vices. He dealt with various social problems in his poem 'Mahajatra' where he analysed the course of the degradation of different classes of society in India leading to the downfall of the country as a whole. His satire 'Darabara' exposed and ridiculed the follies, vanity and vices of different classes of people. Tyranny, oppression, despotism and cruelty were particularly denounced by him at different places in his poems. He wrote about love, romance, beauty, dreamy scenes and natural scenery, but he also turned to human problems with intellectual probing.

NATIONALISM:

At places, he preached nationalism, though he did not often jeopardise his safety by doing so openly. The very fact that he enshrined different places in the country in his poems and portrayed familiar scenes in glowing colours focussed attention on the land and fostered patriotism; in addition he was often reminding people that they once had a glorious tradition from

which they had fallen. He denounced alien conquerors of India in a hooded manner in his poem 'Mahajatra'. 57 lines occurring at the end of Canto V of that poem were later challenged as being seditious. In those lines the words and expressions that he had used had a double meaning. The word 'Yavana' meant a 'Muslim' as well as 'foreigner'. 'Sindhu' which the Yavanas had to cross in order to invade India meant 'the river Indus' in its application to Muslims and the 'ocean' in its application to the British. Radhanath described how the Yavanas were flesh-eaters like beasts, were 'ferocious and cruel like wild animals', were 'revengeful, fond of vulgar pleasures', engaged 'in diplomatic struggles', were 'experts in the art of deceitful politics' and how they would enter India under the pretext of propagating their religion and would then loot India. There was a glowing fire in his nationalism but being a practical, worldly wise and cautious man, he kept it camouflaged.

HIS CAMOUFLAGE:

The art of camouflage practised by him in his poetic personality has an interesting and baffling duality; a particular word or line in his poem would mean different things to different readers and serve different tastes. He had a strong attachment for realism, he painted landscapes as he saw them and he tried to portray human beings by viewing them not as embodiments of virtue but with their weaknesses and vices. Yet his poems are full of moral teachings and wise sayings. He was primarily concerned with the joys of living, and he dwelt with gusto on physical beauty and animal pleasures, but often, he affected a stance of ascetic withdrawal and renunciation, speaking of the transitoriness and unreality of earthly existence and the joys of a fancied life hereafter. He was a materialist and a rationalist in the basic outlook of his poems, and yet he delivered sermons containing religious fervour and moral teachings. He ridiculed and caluminised the Rajas and yet sang the praises of some of them in high flown panegyrics. He believed in right conduct as dictated by reason, and in preparation and effort as the means to change one's fortune, and yet he struck up the attitude of a pessimist and a fatalist. He fostered nationalism and denounced the foreign Government, yet he wrote panegyrics to Queen Victoria. He adopted a camouflage in order that he should

not expose himself to risk and that his place in society, his job and his relations with his admirers, friends and patrons would remain safe and assured.

HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE:

He displayed a broad vision and was far too advanced for his times. He tried to interpret the human predicament and the human existence in the context of Time, and so, was always conscious of change and death and had a natural humility. Animal passion as portrayed by him was a symbol for earthly joys for which man has the greatest hankering, but he showed that earthly existence was only a Tantalus' Cup where whatever blossomed forth and tended towards fruition was only meant to die and history was made only to be forgotten. Life, vivid with sense experiences, was shown to be flashing in a moment as symbolised by bright landscapes, only against the background of death and eternity, death was shown as ever present, symbolised in the resolute sound of bells which loom large in his poems, and the creeping shadows of hills that he often described as blotting out land and sky only signified death that was ever coming nearer and nearer. He viewed man as fighting a lonely battle against heavy odds, a frail creature destined to be wiped out, and till then, placed in an absurd situation, without any choice on his part, but he believed that till the very last, the game must be played. His Kavyas in this sense can be viewed as novels much beyond the range of those produced years later even by Fakirmohan Senapati.

POETICS:

The poems of Radhanath Ray displayed various qualities of 'Kavya' as mentioned in Sanskrit poetics and it became an intelligent occupation for scholars to spot those out. Most of his themes also evinced different qualities of Aristotelian tragedy. At the same time, they afforded the pleasures of reading novels.

INFLUENCE OF OTHER WRITER ON RADHANATH:

Among English poets, he was particularly influenced by Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Scott, Byron, Gray, Dryden, Pope, Tennyson and by English translations of Ovid's 'Metamorphosis',

Goethe's 'Faust', works of Dante and Petrarch, and of Homer, Aristotle, Aeschyles and Sophocles. From the romantic poets, he imbibed his idea of writing long poems based on imagination, secular legends, his preoccupation with ruins and the past, his emphasis on the description of natural scenes, description of familiar places, his sensuous portrayal of beauty, the prominence which he gave to unfettered love, and his sentimental brooding. He borrowed plots, characters, descriptions, technique and ideas from these foreign sources and recreated in his own words in his poems. He used the soliloquy in his poems as an artifice which he picked up from Shakespeare and in imitation of the ghost in 'Hamlet', he introduced a ghost in his 'Parvati'. He personified the 'deadly sins' in his 'Mahajatra' in imitation of Spenser. In short, he tried his best to bring into Oriya poetry whatever impressed him in his study of English books, and often his poems are interspersed with lines which are Oriya renderings in verse of English originals. By this means, he brought a wealth of new matter into Oriya poetry for the first time and people of his day who could trace the sources, admired his scholarship, while those who could not were mystified by the weight of his scholarship and by his 'inventiveness'.

Similar was the case with borrowings from Sanskrit poets, though that was not a new thing to do, several other poets before him having done so on different occasions. So too, he borrowed at times from some classic Oriya poets before him, particularly from poets like Upendra Bhanja, Abhimanyu, Dinakrushna, and Kavisurjya Baladeva Ratha of the 'Riti School' of whom he was particularly fond. Another source of his borrowings, like English which also gave his poetry the airs of novelty was Bengali, he was influenced particularly by Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

HIS SCHOLARLINESS:

He had a deep respect for scholarship and he had the belief that literature would be of little worth unless it contained and displayed scholarship. His views were no doubt conditioned by his life as a teacher for 8 years and his life-long contact with the function of education. His writings were thus grounded in scholarliness. It meant specifically that they deliberately evinced proof of his wide reading, his sophisticated knowledge of langu-

age and the technicalities of grammar, composition, rules of poetics and of an outlook that was cultured and refined and was distinguished from that of the average run of people by study, assimilation and deep contemplation.

Literature to him was a very serious and extraordinary matter. As he once wrote to Meher, "It was after long years that I could acquire knowledge about literature of a high order of excellence, but no sooner had I done so, than had I to dissociate myself from writing." To the study of books was to be added patient and keen observation. He wrote in 1903 while writing about Gangadhar Meher's poetry, "Not only study of books but a study of nature which is like a book is indispensably necessary in order to make a poet." With such serious purpose and scholarliness his writings had a peculiar glamour though they were often characterised by artificiality, verbosity, and a tendency to deliver sermons every now and then in which he doled out platitudes.

HIS STYLE:

The impress of learning which Radhanath brought to bear upon literature was reflected in his poetical style. Unlike Fakirmohan Senapati, he was a town-bred man with lesser contact with the nuances of the living speech of the masses, and he did not use that speech at home where he spoke a mixture of Oriya and Bengali. The best of Oriya poetic style had developed in the course of ages out of the living colloquial speech in preference to Sanskrit, a deliberate vein adopted by masters of Oriya poetry like Sarala Dasa, Balarama Das, Biswanatha Khuntia, Gopala Krushna and several others who were at the same time, great scholars in Sanskrit. But Radhanath was not at home in that style, and so, he developed his style out of his study of Sanskrit, his study of some 'Riti' poets who had written in a Sanskrit style, also on the model of Bengali books that he had read, and out of the style of Oriya text books, which, in the initial stages, had been prepared by translating from Bengali by inept translators who could not bring out the differences between the two languages. He also derived his Oriya vocabulary from the Oriya language spoken in urban, 'refined circles' that is by those who used a businesslike dialect in which typical, forceful colloquial Oriya expressions had been replaced, sometimes by expressions

common to Bengali and Hindi, or by renderings of English expressions and usage which did not preserve the characteristic syntax and idiom of Oriya. He relied more on Sanskrit expressions, more often using words of Sanskrit origin which were commonly used in Bengali while there were other synonymous words of Sanskrit origin which were more commonly used in Oriya. But the words that he chose were generally of simple Sanskrit, with unambiguous meaning, were pictorial, musical and evocative. The 'Riti' poetry of Orissa was only one of the many forms of Oriya poetry then existing. But it was much in vogue in his time among the cultural elite because of its music, its colour and its challenge to the intellect to unravel different meanings out of a single word. Radhanath, however, did not write in riddles, and his poetry could be easily understood by any one who had an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit. That was another reason why it gained ready acceptance and wide popularity in preference to the 'Riti' style. He tried various modes ranging from a simple style to a heavy, ornate style made of compound words, and also varying mixtures between the two. Thus, 'Nandikeswari' was more Sanskritic than 'Kedar Gouri', while 'Usha' was heavily Sanskritic. A balance was struck in 'Parvati' which showed his style at its best. Again in 'Chilika' it grew more Sanskrit and was heaviest in 'Mahajatra'. It was only in 'Darabara', his satire, that he tried to write poetry almost in spoken Oriya. In some of his minor poems, he tried to write partly in the manner of Sarala Dasa but he was not successful.

BLANK VERSE:

Madhu Sudan Rao had already tried blank verse in the eleventh stanza of his poem 'Chandra O Tara' in 1873 and Rudra Narayan Patnaik had used it in his poem Ananga Vijaya Kavya in 1879 before Radhanath used it in his 'Mahajatra' in 1894, but Radhanath established blank verse in Oriya poetry. It was modelled on Milton's 'Paradise Lost' but had been borrowed from the Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt who had already used it with success. Radhanath used some of the 'Chhandas' prevalent in Oriya poetry, but unlike other important poets whose poems had been set to music, he evolved a pattern of poetry that could be appreciated only by silent reading or by recitation without producing musical effect. The tra-

ditional Oriya 'Chhandas' fell into disuse as his poetry gained popularity.

END RHYMING:

A very important change which he introduced in Oriya poetry following what was in vogue in Bengali and which remained over till the rise of free verse late in the 20th Century was the method of 'Upadha milan' and rhyming and the 'Matra Brutti Chhanda'. In Oriya poems, it had been sufficient before for the purpose of rhyming if the last letters, at the end of two consecutive sentences rhymed, now in addition it was required that the vowels and nasals immediately preceding the last letter should also rhyme and each line should have an equal number of accents and that at corresponding places. This curtailed freedom but made the lines more musical.

ORIIYA POETRY BEFORE RADHANATH: 7TH TO 17TH CENTURIES

The Oriya poetry that Radhanath composed was thus entirely new in many respects from what had existed before. Oriya poetry had begun with the compositions of saint-poets of the Vajrajana school in the 7th to 9th centuries. They were metaphysical poems concerned with their religious cult. In the 10th century, Gorakhanatha composed his Dohas, they were religious poems teaching the truths of his particular cult. Later in the 10th century, Sarala Dasa composed his unique Mahabharata, an original composition built up from his imagination, portraying contemporary life, society, and moral values through legends, and barely leaning on the skeleton of the Sanskrit Mahabharata. He also introduced his unique 'Dandi Brutta' metre, which had absolute freedom, internal rhythms and was composed in the pattern of the music of the surf beating on the shore. One more of his Kavyas, 'Chandipurana' is available, though not his 'Ramayana', a 'Bilanka Ramayana' in verse written by Siddheswara Dasa spuriously accredited to Sarala Dasa in the 20th century by its first publisher in print, the Amusdaya Press¹ being an inferior product of a much later age, probably of the 18th century.²

'Matsyendra Gita' and 'Sishubeda' written in the 14th century were esoteric literature, and Bachha Dasa's 'Kalasa Choutisa' set

the pattern of poems called 'Chautisas' with lines starting in order with each of the 34 letters of the Oriya alphabets. Three new forms were added in the 15th century. One was the 'Koili' or a poem addressed to a cuckoo employed as a messenger. The most famous of these was the 'Kesaba Koili' of Markanda Dasa which conveys Jasoda's grief over her separation from Krishna. Another form of poetry was the 'Janana' or 'Bhajana' and a third was 'Malasri' reciting the various names of a particular sacred deity. 'Rama Bibha' by Arjuna Dasa describing Rama's marriage and an Oriya translation in verse of Jayadeva's 'Geeta Govinda' by Dharanidhara were other important compositions made in the 15th Century.

Balarama Dasa continued the tradition of Sarala Dasa in his Ramayana, he flourished in the 15th to 16th century. The religious poetry of the Vaishnava saint poets Balarama Dasa, Jagannatha Dasa, Achyutananda Dasa, Jasobanta Dasa and Sishu Ananta Dasa was a valuable treasure added to Oriya literature in the 16th century. That period also saw the birth of the 'Choupadī' pattern of poetry. Poets professioning and studying the Bhakti cult wrote their poems in the 17th century. New patterns of writing poetry such as the 'Poi', the 'Padi', the 'Champu', the 'Boli', the 'Pata' and the 'Mangala' were evolved. Folk styles coming down from previous centuries were developed. A mass of religious literature based on the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the cults of Lord Jagannath and other sacred deities was written in the 16th and the 17th centuries, highlighting the teachings of the Sastra and the practice of virtues and holding up ideals of conduct and character. Many translations and adaptations of the Puranas were made in the 18th century and through legends connected with deities, life and contemporary society were vividly portrayed; one such instance was Pitambarā Dasa's Nrusingha Purana.

THE 18TH CENTURY:

The famous school of 'Riti Kavya' came into prominence in the 18th century, its chief exponent was Upendra Bhanja. It was a variety of highly ornamented, richly musical poetry written in a riddle-like language capable of various meanings. Besides religious poems, a few lay poems were also written in the Riti style. In both these cases, while different 'Rasas' were portrayed,

the emphasis was on sex, but unlike the treatment of sex in Radhanath, they portrayed married love or love that ended in marriage as sanctioned by society, or love of Lord Krishna with Gopikas that had a symbolical, spiritual, and non-physical significance. Upendra Bhanja's 'Labanyavati' and 'Koti Brahmānda Sundari' are instances of lay love themes in the 'Riti style'. Dinakrushna, Abhimanyu, and Jadumani were other great poets of the Riti School.

THE 19TH CENTURY:

An important contribution to Oriya poetry in the 18th century had been the development of typically Oriya musical tunes known as 'Chhāndas', which were even found in earlier centuries. There are such 'Chhāndas' in Dharanidhara's translation of the 'Gecta Govinda' composed in the 15th century. In the 16th century, Ray Ramananda Pattanayaka, a devotee of Sri Chaitanya organised troupes of boys to sing songs of the divine 'Leela', this also stimulated the composition of 'Chhanda' poems. In the 18th century, Biswanatha Khuntia wrote the entire Ramayana in 'Chhāndas'. Kavisurjya Baladeva Ratha (1789-1845) was a great 'Chhānda' poet, he composed his famous 'Champu' poems. Gopala Krushna Pattanayaka (1785-1862) who died when Radhanath was in school was a famous Vaishnava poet who wrote hundreds of charming Chhānda poems about Lord Krishna and his Leela. Another famous Chhānda poet of those days was Banamali.

Poems in a simple, exquisite and charming colloquial Oriya style dealing with various sentiments and mainly devotional and philosophical in character were being written even about the time when Radhanath was born. An important Vaishnava poet who wrote such poems was Bhakta Charana Dasa author of 'Mathura Mangala' who died in 1855, other were Rama Dasa and Arakhita Dasa. A similar poet, a saint though not a Vaishnava was the famous Bhima Bhoi who flourished in Radhanath's time, he belonged to the 'Mahima Dharma' cult. A poem narrating incidents from the history of Orissa and named 'Kaliyuga Purana' had been written in the 18th century by Kabira Saranga, it was followed by a historical poem 'Samara Taranga' by Brajanatha-Badajena.

CONTEMPORARY POETS:

This very brief review of the trends of Oriya poetry before Radhanath would indicate how his poetry was in many respects entirely different from what had existed before his time, it was new poetry, it replaced the older traditional poetry as that was pushed back when people turned to Radhanath. No one before him had written poetry with such a new out-look that was born of an English education and of new ideas current in the times newly introduced by the British rule. Fakirmohan Senapati first translated portions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and published his first original poem 'Utkala Bhramana' in 1892 long after Radhanath leapt to fame as a poet. Gangadhar Meher was another poet of that period, but his earliest poems 'Utkala Lakhmi' and 'Indumati' were published in 1894. Meher sent his MS of 'Indumati' to Radhanath for his comments and his MS of 'Kichaka Badha' was revised by Radhanath in 1903.

FOLLOWERS OF RADHANATHI:

Radhanath's influence became at once apparent. 'Sulochana' (1889) and 'Lakhmi' (1892) by Dr. Rama Krushna Sahu, 'Chitrotapala' (1892) by Sudhala Deva, 'Ansupa' by Damodara Mishra, poems by Sachidananda, Tribhubana Deva and Badakumara Balabhadra Deva, poems by several other poets of Orissa reflected his influence. This continued for years afterwards, with now and then a poet with his own individual genius and originality who could attract attention.

Many lyrics were written by other poets of Radhanath's age combining a new outlook derived from their study of English and their study of traditional models. Some, like a collection 'Nabodyama' (1888) by Chandramohan Maharana displayed a high quality, but the productions were meagre.

A strikingly new approach was made by Nandakishore Bala (1875-1928), famous for his folk-style and nostalgic touches.

THE BREAK WITH THE TRADITION OF RADHANATHI:

But Nandakishore Bala came into the field much later, and so too did Padma Charana Pattanayaka with his fine lyrics and talents and inimitable style and rhythm. The long Kavyas of Chintamani Mohanty written in 1901-1920 echoed Radhanath. Hundreds of poets wrote in the then 'modern' vein after Radha-

nath, bringing in some innovations in style, form and content, but following in the main, the pattern set by him. The change became pronounced in the poems of the nationalist poets of the 'Satyabadi School', Pandit Gopa Bandhu Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Godavaris Mishra. Then, since the nineteen thirties, there was more varied development of lyrical poems, new and striking varieties were evolved, and in the nineteen forties, a new type of poetry, intellectual, symbolic, more intimate and sincere began to emerge, making the break with the tradition of the age of Radhanath clear and undisputed.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Critical Estimate of Radhanath's Poetry

AN idea of the contributions of Radhanath to Oriya literature has been conveyed in the preceding chapter. They had novelty, bulk and high worth. They had the power to change tradition and to set up a new tradition. His poems dominated the field of Oriya literature for half a century or more. What is now intended is to attempt a brief qualitative assessment of his poetry within the limitations that are only too well known, namely, that critical standards can rarely be uniform, and so, whatever be the logic that is advanced, the views that are expressed on the subject are always personal opinions.

SOME EXTRA-POETIC CONSIDERATIONS:

The distance that separates a poet from his critics minimises extra-poetic considerations some of which might have weighed with the poet himself and some other considerations with his critics. Dr. N. Samantaraya in his learned and valuable thesis on Radhanath and in other books that I have mentioned in the bibliography at the end of this monograph has very diligently culled much topical information relating to his times. I have no wish to look at Radhanath's poetry through the cob-webs of past events, partly known, partly distorted, and largely unknown. For instance, it is immaterial to me if, unlike what Dr. Samantaraya has tried to make out, one reason for the popularity of Radhanath's poems was that an army of teachers, students, text-book writers and publishers were always trying to seek his patronage or that he wrote the satire 'Darabara' because Garjat chiefs did not give him financial aid up to the measure of his expectations. Dr. Samantaraya might be correct and he might not be, and I personally think that Radhanath was a shrewd, world-wise man, with sufficient prudence to know how to get

on, and that, though he was highly educated and refined, he was after all a man, and not a saint.

MORBIDITY:

I can even discover a trait of morbidity in his build-up due to ill-health, and a repressed childhood, he was living up to an image of himself that he wanted to convey to others, though what he truly was and thought was different, this duality gave a peculiar colour to his writings, he solemnly sermonised on morals, virtues and ideals, but in his imagination, gloated on sex and on self-indulgence in his poems, a fact which may account for the bad taste that he displayed in the choice of themes. For instance, while he is describing the girl Chandrabhaga running away from the clutches of her pursuer, the lecherous Sun-God, shortly before she would end her agony by committing suicide, he describes the physical charms of her bare body. He had described incest in 'Parvati', lesbianism in 'Jajatikesari', and rabid sex in Nandikeswari. But all that is hardly material for an appreciation of his poetry, a critic has no role as a scandal-monger or as a psycho-analyst.

SOME VIEWS OF CRITICS OF THE DAY:

For the same considerations, I do not feel that while evaluating his poetry, I must share the anger and revulsion of some important and knowledgeable critics of his time like Gouri Shankar Ray, Ram Narayan Lala, another critic who wrote about 'Kedar Gouri' and 'Chandrabhaga' in the 'Naba Sambada' of 17.11.1887, of yet another critic who wrote regarding 'Nandikeswari' in the 'Sanskara' on 15. 1888, another who wrote regarding 'Parvati' in October 1891, nor of his friend Madhusudan Rao who was outraged by his defaming Jajatikesari because Radhanath had defamed royal dynasties revered in history, disparaged the character of women, and had narrated lewd stories and painted sexy pictures. Gouri Shankara Ray wrote in his 'Utkala Dipika' on 3.10.1891, "Radhanath Ray possesses such a prurient imagination that the stories that are born out of it are odious to the ear, too filthy to read, loathsome, degrading and vulgar." All that can be said is that he was not particularly fond of edifying themes and to him the medieval rulers appeared to be debasing.

HIS INDIFFERENCE TO LOCAL PATRIOTISM AND LOCAL PROBLEMS:

In spite of the euphoria with which he was regarded as a 'national poet', it can also be said that he was not particularly interested in praising Orissa nor glorifying its people and traditions. He was indifferent to local patriotism, his vision was broader, and he had his own judgment of people and places. He described the landscape of Orissa and various scenes of nature there but rarely glorified the people of Orissa, and except his heroes and heroines, other people described by him were generally portrayed as painted pictures as a part of external nature. Nor did he write about their heroism, their greatness, nor about their problems, their miseries, nor about the floods, famines and disasters that he had witnessed. What he wrote about and what he did not relates only to the content of his poetry, the question of its quality still remains to be gone into. Contemporary critics let flung at him, he did not cross swords with them in public, but in his letters to Meher, he expressed his utter disgust and contempt for them, he described them in his anger, as ignorant fools who had no capacity to understand and appreciate literature. While he had ample honour and approbation accorded to him he was subjected to no less adverse criticism and even vituperation. All that is past, his poems remain, to be studied and assessed.

LACK OF ORIGINALITY:

It would appear at the outset, that on the whole, while he showed assiduity and scholarship, he lacked originality and the stamp of genius, and that not only in comparison with poets in other languages but also in comparison with several past masters in the art in the Oriya language like Sarala Dasa, Jagannatha Dasa, Upendra Bhanja and several others. He synthesised his borrowings and acquisitions in graceful, refined words, and displayed an unusual imagination and talent while making those synthetic products to appear as his original creations. It goes to his credit that he knew what he had done. In a review of Meher's poem 'Kichaka Badha' which he sent to Meher with his letter dated 13.8.1903, he wrote:

"Genius has the right, sanctioned by precedent, to rebuild the old into a new product, and, secondly, to make borrowed

material to appear as original”.

On 21.8.1903 he again wrote to Meher, communicating a modification of his former comment, it said:

“Genius has the right, sanctioned by precedent, to rebuild the old so as to make it to appear as a new product, and, secondly, to make borrowed material to appear as original.”

His assertion gains no support from English poetics nor from Sanskrit poetics. He merely stated what he had practised. According to the great Sanskrit poetician Mammata, the very basis of great poetry is a poet's ‘genius’, an inborn quality acquired from a previous birth and one by which the poet is enabled to derive an original insight. He has rarely displayed that quality as a poet.

DEFECTIVE STRUCTURE OF HIS POEMS: DEFECT IN HIS ART OF NARRATION:

The structure of his big poems was always diffuse, rambling, and loose, lacking in organisation and coherence. Portions can be cut out without producing any appreciable effect on the whole. There are frequent digressions. The parts are unbalanced, often have no relation to immediacy nor any other connection with each other, and the whole looks like a string of disjointed narrative scenes strung together. His narration and description suffer from a lack of discrimination in weeding out inessentials and details, from a bolstering long-windedness, verbosity, frequent outpourings of platitudes, sentimentality, and lack of suspense. The total effect is one of boredom, and dullness, one reason for which is that his narration and descriptions are interspersed with long patches of prosaic verse.

He gives long catalogues of names of places having nothing in common between them and sometimes adds a line or two about each such place; no doubt, people of those villages point with pride at the names of their villages where they occur in Radhanath's poems, but loading a poem with such material detracts from its poetic quality. There are repetitions, verbosity and conceits which spoil narration and description. A mechanical adoption of rules of poetics and of artifices used by other poets without achieving any artistic effect is at times another feature of his poems. Instances are his soliloquies, which are weak, sentimental, long, descriptive and rambling, and with similar defect,

his attempts to use the dramatic form of dialogues.

ROMANTIC LEGENDS, HIS SPECIAL FORTE:

It is while creating legends from his imagination, either by taking over a single foreign legend and modifying it, or by combining portions from more than one such legend and adding from his imagination that he achieved success as a story-teller. He used to change the names of the characters and the places mentioned in the original legends into Oriya names. The localities in such legends were changed into known places in Orissa, particularly to sites of historic importance. Existing local legends of Orissa, or historical traditions, wherever they stood in the way, were suppressed or changed.

THE LEGEND OF KEDAR GOURI:

In 'Kedar Gouri', which gives the story of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', Kedar is Pyramus and Gouri is Thisbe and the place has been changed to Bhubaneswar. There is the famous Kedar-Gouri temple at Bhubaneswar which pilgrims visit and where the deity 'Kedar' represents 'Himavanta', father of Goddess Durga when She was once born as Gouri. But in Radhanath's poem a new and lay meaning has been given to the two deities. Kedar and Gouri have been described as a boy and a girl who fled from their parents as their parents opposed their marriage, they committed suicide, then a temple was built to their memory where idols representing them were installed for worship. This is a common instance of the manner in which Radhanath wove his legends. The legend gained popularity as it related to a known place, and local temple-guides found it to be profitable as a means by which to impress wide-eyed visitors. In order that a legend might stick, Radhanath took steps to find explanations from his imagination for every possible question about its plausibility that a reader might ask.

THE LEGEND OF CHANDRABHAGA:

So too in 'Chandrabhaga', he transplanted the legend of 'Appollo and Daphne' to a place on the sea-shore near the Konarak temple where there is a sacred pool bearing that name. Daphne was renamed Chandrabhaga, and her aggressor Appollo was described as the Sun-God of Konarak. The famous temple

at Konarak had tumbled down, an explanation was furnished by Radhanath by saying that Chandrabhaga's father, who was a saint with miraculous powers had cursed the Sun-God and so, his house, that is the temple, collapsed.

THE LEGEND OF NANDIKE SWARI:

His ability to conjure up a convincing legend from his imagination was displayed better in 'Nandikeswari'. All that he took from an existing historical tradition was that Chora Ganga Deva occupied the throne of Orissa and founded the Ganga dynasty while before him the Kesari dynasty had ruled Orissa and Subarna Kesari was its last king. Radhanath found a reason from his imagination why Chora Ganga had invaded Orissa, he said that Subarna Kesari worshipped Durga while Chora Ganga worshipped Ganga; in Hindu mythology Durga and Ganga are co-wives of Lord Shiva, Ganga had obtained a boon from Shiva and made her devotee invincible, and she wanted him to conquer Orissa and to do away with the worship of Durga in Orissa, and so he came to Orissa with his army. Radhanath created a fictitious character, Nandika, who, he said, was Subarna Kesari's only issue, she fell in love with the invader, stole out of her father's fort at night and offered to place in the hands of the invader the mascot jewel that had guarded her father's life and his fort so long, he spurned at the offer, she committed suicide, her father turned a mendicant, her body was cremated in an island in the Kathjodi River near Cuttack, a temple was built on the site and a deity named 'Nandikeswari' was installed there. There is actually an island in that river known as 'Nandikeshwari Patha'. The fictitious legend created by Radhanath was thus meant to carry conviction, and the story of 'Scilla and Ninus' was passed off as a legend of Orissa.

THE LEGEND OF USHA:

In 'Atalanta's Race' transferred as 'Usha', Radhanath has exercised his imagination even much more by creating two legends to fit in with the main story. Jayanta and Usha, the hero and the heroine, had to die as soon as their hands were joined in marriage, and, before that, several princes who had run the fatal race for winning the hand of Usha had forfeited their heads. In order to explain why it so happened, Radhanath concocted a

legend about their previous births, he said that they were Gandharvas who used to dance in the celestial court in Swarga and were cursed by Goddess Kali because they had once laughed at her hideous appearance and were ordered to be born as mortals; when they prayed for mercy, Kali relented and ordered that they would return back to the celestial court after dying in the manner narrated in that poem. He also explained that the King of the Gandharvas, Chitraratha was then born as Jayanta, and his wife Tilottama as Usha, and other Gandharva dancers were born as royal princes who later came to sue for Usha's hand. Jayanta was described as an ancestor of the King of Mayurbhanj and another legend was made up in order to explain why kings of that line put a peacock's plume in their crown, an imaginary explanation being given that Jayanta had won the favour of God Kartikeya by saying his celestial peacock from attack of a hunter while it grazed in a forest of Mayurbhanj, the peacock dropped a plume when it flew off, Jayanta picked it up and presented it to his father, the king, and so the Kings of that line adopted the 'Mayura' or peacock as their emblem. The same legend also explained why Jayanta won the race for Usha while other had failed, God Kartikeya had given him three golden lotuses and he befriended him.

THE LEGEND OF PARVATI:

In 'Parvati', he took over a legend from the local Chronicle of Kings, the 'Madala Panji', but rendered it bizarre and fantastic by attempting to build up characters in which he was never a success. What is recorded in the Madala Panji is that Madua (drunkard) Bhanu Deva once raped his daughter while he was fully drunk, then repented, called a council of learned men and sought its advice as to how to expiate his sin, and acting on the advice of those persons, he made his daughter to move round a pitch of ground carrying a leaking water pot, and then he had a big tank dug in the space enclosed by the line of water that dripped from the pot and wetted the ground. But Radhanath represented Gangeswara prototype of Madua Bhanu Deva as a cold-blooded devil who did not act on the spur of the moment under the influence of liquor, but who acted with deliberation, persisted in his sinful overtures and amours and shut up his daughter in a solitary well. Radhanath also added a story of pregnancy, child-

birth, cold-blooded murder and also added another story from his imagination describing how Gangeswara attacked the King of Ratnapura because he coveted that King's daughter.

THE LEGEND OF JAJATIKESARI:

He attempted a legend about 'Jajatikesari' in his poem bearing that name. He made that powerful Shaiva King a devotee of Durga and offered an imaginative explanation that Jajati bore the title 'Kesari' or 'lion' because a lion is the favourite carrier of Goddess Durga. He concocted a legend in which he narrated a story of a clandestine love affair between Jajati and Princess Lalita, daughter of a local king. The legend lacked conviction, and was weak and fantastic. One of the reasons why it failed was that the weak, licentious character of the model from which Radhanath's hero had been borrowed was wholly inapplicable to Jajatikesari who is remembered as one of the most powerful, virtuous and revered legendary King of Orissa.

DEFECTS IN HIS PORTRAYAL OF CHARACTER:

Radhanath could not achieve success in the portrayal of human character, he was more concerned with the presentation of a dream-like story of wish-fulfilment, romance, and sex, his characters were only shadows in spite of the pains that he took to describe their physical appearance. He generally made them to indulge in long, rambling, sentimental out-pourings.

MOODS, FEELINGS AND SENTIMENT:

He showed some originality in describing in poetry a variety of common moods, feelings, sentiments and thoughts, though not in depth nor always in workmanship. At times, he could achieve effect, though the impression was watered down by repetitions, long windedness, hackneyed expressions, and packing of trivial details, and on the whole, due to lack of organisation.

HIS TREATMENT OF LOVE:

There was nothing remarkable in his poetry about portrayal of love. He had described only animal craving, and at times, its agony and bitterness, but the portrayal lacked poignancy and depth because of sentimentality and excessive use of words.

HIS TREATMENT OF BEAUTY:

He is often discussed as a poet who created beauty and also as a poet of nature. What is common to both these roles is that he painted beautiful natural scenes. In addition, he was fond of portraying the appearance of beautiful women. In that respect, he followed classical models from Sanskrit and Oriya, also adding from descriptions that he had picked up from English, and he tried to follow the precepts of classical aesthetics. In his age when emphasis was laid on precedents, and particularly, with the tradition of 'Riti' poets in the background, on the mechanical observance of classical rules, much significance was attached to such efforts, but time had bedimmed the importance of that tradition. It is now open to question whether a description of the externals of a human body in chosen colours with the aid of far-fetched metaphors, and allusions to myths and legends constitutes any particular degree of excellence, specially when such portraits had already been drawn earlier and in a much better manner by masters like Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Upendra Bhanja from whom they were imitated.

THE POETIC DICTION:

The language used by Radhanath for such descriptions became hackneyed poetic diction which occurred again and again. A girl's skin was 'golden', or was like 'polished metal', her dishevelled hair was 'like the lotus flower', her lips, 'like rubies', eyes 'like diamonds', glances 'like those of a doe or of a fish', she was 'like a moon-beam', and so on. Such clichés also mar his description of natural scenes. Thus at sun-set, in a river or in a tank, there always rise 'vermillion waves'. Whenever there is a loud sound, 'it drowns the roar of the sea'. The breeze always 'blows slowly'. Whenever butterflies fly, they flit 'in rain-bow colours', whenever birds move-about, 'they move in dancing poses'. Anything that looks yellow 'has the colour of gold', 'Damsels robed in different colours guard different sectors of the sky', 'Flowers and leaves trembling in the wind 'Fly like banners'.

A common method that he employs in order to depict beauty is to repeat the plain meanings in the words she looks charming' in Euphemistic style and with the aid of metaphors over and over again. For instance, here is a passage from 'Usha':

“So lovely was she with none to compare
 that no smile could be found to describe her beauty
 Where is her equal in beauty in all the world?
 There is only another woman like her and that in heaven
 She is Indra’s wife, a liquid star-decked beauty
 A paragon of beauty among belles in heaven
 The only woman can compare with her”.

Again in Canto 2,

“Anyone who saw her lost his heart to her
 Loveliest of women, foremost of beauties
 She was the prison where all eyes of the world were locked
 Once any one saw her, her beauty’s flame
 Burned in his sky of remembrance like the Morning Star.”

The purpose of using similies and allusions is to illustrate deeper meanings in a clearer and better manner, but he makes use of similies and allusions as ornaments, they are often far-fetched, having no relation to familiar human experience, they spoil the effect and muddle the sense instead of bringing it out more clearly. A defect often noticed in his style is that the words used by him convey a picture only in a broad and general way, and not in a specific manner so as to make out or pin-point delicate shades of meaning.

HIS STYLE:

Often, his style suffers from showiness, pedantry, verbosity and artificiality. As has been mentioned earlier, he tried various modes, ranging from heavy, ornate, Sanskritic compounds to the use of simpler words as in Parvati, but a temptation to show off was generally the reason why he could not often achieve a better effect.

But at times, particularly while describing natural scenery and familiar scenes, his style could rise free of such defects, he then used a few simple and suggestive words and achieved a remarkable effect. A sample of such style is in his first Kavya ‘Kedar Gouri’ for which it was instantly admired. Critics writing in 1866 in ‘Sikshya Bandhu’ and in ‘Sanskrit’ admired it for the evocative charm and sweetness of its style. The pity is that it could

not often be maintained. At times, the simple words that he thus sparingly used had a deeper significance than what their plain meaning conveyed, and that too in the best tradition of the art of 'Dhwani' or suggestiveness which is mentioned in Sanskrit poetics.

Thus, in 'Chandrabhaga', while describing a sun-set, Radhanath says:

"Green Kainsari vine creeping on sand dunes
The only shade on burning sands
Slowly stretched its limbs as day ended."

HIS ART OF DESCRIPTION

NANDIKESWARI:

With the fewest and simplest words possible, Radhanath could, by a nostalgic touch, evoke the description of a familiar sun-set scene on the deserted sea-beach of Orissa. A powerful effect has similarly been achieved in 'Nandikeswari' by a single line where Radhanath suggestively points at a lamp burning in the tower in the fort in the bed-room of the princess at midnight when all the world is asleep. The light signifies the agonised, restless mind of Nandika, mad with her love for the enemy of her country, whom she would go out to meet in a shortwhile. While describing that tragic journey which ultimately led to her disgrace and suicide, Radhanath wrote:

"And now she trod on thorny ground
She whom her own shadow used to give a scare
Walked without fear in that lonely place
On the river bank were sacred relics
Of the glory of her ancestors that she trod underfoot
As she advanced in inky darkness
Like the flaming, all-consuming Sea-fire
Sweeping across the surface of the Ocean"

Rarely have the quality of these eight lines been excelled in Oriya literature. With a few masterly strokes and in the fewest and simplest words, he had succeeded in interpreting the irony of the situation, and the import and consequence of what Nandika was doing, and at the same time, had symbolised in lite-

rature the spirit of a selfish, materialistic age that was foreign to the high moral values and traditions of the past.

MAHAJATRA:

He tried to develop the idea more fully in his 'Mahajatra'. A similar effect has been achieved in that poem in the description of the shadow of hills creeping over the landscape at dusk like a pall of smoke, it reminds one of death.

USHA:

In 'Usha' there are beautiful scenes where a shikar-expedition by Usha has been described.

PARVATI:

The number of such prized hits increases in his 'Parvati'. Describing the spring season he writes,

"Golden buds of Champak flowers
Glow like candles on trees in Cupid's honour".

Describing married Brahmin ladies coming towards Puri along 'Paths darkened by the shade of date palm groves' he compares them with 'molten lava from volcanoes flowing to the sea'.

'CHILIKA':

His poem 'Chilika' is particularly admired for its charming description of natural scenes. It begins:

"Blue sheet of water garlanded with ducks
Swimming pool of Utkala's Lakshmi
Chilika, you are the choicest diadem of Utkala
The store-house of beauty of that fair land"

The description is complete with the minutest details bringing out the significant aspects of the object described. Wherever a rich effect has been achieved, the style is simple and epigrammatic, but here too, his usual failings in the use of words, in

the structure of the poem and in narration and description pre-dominate, so that gleanings have to be made in order to sort out the highlights of the poem. Close observation of details and the overwhelming charm of some bright patches make up for the loss of interest that is caused otherwise. On the whole, 'Chilika' is a remarkable achievement.

In this poem, Radhanath often describes the water-birds that constitute always the special charm of the Chilika lake particularly in winter, and attract visitors from all over India. A few examples are as follows:

“Birds in their wave-swings break into song
Masses of birds fly in the sky
Like a cloud darkening your blue waters below.”

At times he depicts familiar scenes in this poem in a charming manner. Here is a scene of sun-set on the Chilika:

“A throne is now set on Bhaleri hill
For the sun to take his seat
Portions of the hill are now in shade
The green hill has turned blue
Goats and sheep go back in herds
Cattle-bells rumble from Jungle paths
A line of smoke curls upward from the foot of the hill
It rises from the cattle herds and spreads over the forest:
'Era' ducks leave the lake, cackle and fly
Seeking their nests in the jungle
Their flapping wrings are tinted in gold by the sun”.
etc.

He shows proof of a sensitive eye for form and colour.

HIS IDEA OF POETRY

He was strongly individualistic, and when he felt the urge to express himself in verse, he did so copiously, without discrimination and reserve, and wrote in verse whatever came uppermost in his mind. He seems to have been concerned with two things: First, without being too fastidious about the quality of

the content, its artistic order and organisation, he must write and unburden himself. Secondly, he must observe the rules, as he understood them to be, of writing poetry, that is, it should have regularity of stress, accent and rhythm if it was to be blank verse, or it should be in rhyming lines if it was not, and in either case, should be couched in sophisticated, refined language, should be scholarly, should use metaphors and similies and observe the rules of poetics, and since he believed that the duty of poetry was to provide enjoyment and at the same time to teach morals, should do both. This accouts for the combination in his poetry of elaborate descriptions of different parts of the female form, sex, adventure, fairy tale and at the same time, of frequent moral sermons.

HIS USE OF POETRY AS A VEHICLE OF EXPRESSION OF COMMON THOUGHTS

This also explains why he did not shrink from writing in verse much that could as well be written in bald prose by using the very same words though by placing the words in a different order. He used poetry as a natural medium of expression of his thoughts as any one else would use prose. Here is an instance from 'Nandikeswari':

“Shops have been set up on the river bank
 A variety of commodities are being sold
 There are crowds everywhere
 In the river bed, on the bank, and on the river front
 Opposite to the confluence with Kathjodi river
 Of river Bhargavi, mother of Kusabhadra and Daya
 There is Chora Ganga's camp
 The camp was empty in the morning
 It now swarms with men” etc.

Here is a sample taken at random from Canto IV of 'Mahajatra' where the vices have been portrayed as human beings:

“Pride stalks behind, his head touching the sky
 Behind him are his devotees, grim and solemn
 Their gaze is turned upwards

The earth trembles under their tread
 They feel too big to waste their priceless words
 But they are only some frogs in the well of conceit
 Some of them are vain as they are rich
 Some are proud of the number of they keep servants
 Some are proud of their ancestry
 Others are vain as they are of high rank
 Yet others are proud of their fine appearance
 Others of their birth and others of their scholarship”
 etc.

When he wanted in ‘Darabara’, to give some people a bit of his mind, his rage found expression in verse:

“You hired cooks from Messrs Wilsons
 To prepare rich dinners for your guests time and again
 You loaded your guests with presents with baskets over-
flowing
 You hired dancers for them many a time:
 You wring the necks of the unfortunate poor people, the
destitutes”.

EPIGRAM:

Having been set to verse, several of his lines have an epigrammatic force and are quoted as ‘mottos’ even though the sense contained in them is nothing out of the ordinary. One instance from ‘Nandikeswari’ is:

“A person untutored in the art of knowing what another
feels

Can he ever deserve the role of a master?”

Another instance that is often quoted and was inscribed on his Samadhi memorial means:

“No one has stayed for ever on the world’s stage,
 Nor shall any stay:

Their respective roles played out, all shall be whisked off by
Kaia”

(meaning ‘Time’ and also ‘Death’.)

He produced much and it was of a wide variety. Whatever he wrote was readable literature, bearing the stamp of scholarship and sincerity, and some of it was undoubtedly of a high quality. As a poet, he towers over his times and his writings are remembered with deep respect and gratitude as a land mark in the field of Oriya literature.

Appendix

1

List of writings of Radhanath Ray in Oriya (arranged in order according to year of publication)

- 1873—(i) 'Meghaduta', a translation in verse in 1434 lines. (ii) 'Italiya Juba', translation of an English story in prose. (iii) 'Bibeki' a long essay. All were published in the magazine *Utkala Darpana*.
- 1876—(i) 'Pabana' a poem in 85 lines and (ii) 'Words of Shivaji to his soldiers' a poem in 46 lines of 8 letters each. Both published in *Kabitabali Part I*, De's Press, Balasore.
- 1886—(i) 'Beni Samhara', a poem in 528 lines of 14 letters each, (ii) 'Bharat Iswari', De's Press, Balasore, (iii) 'Kedar Gouri' a Kavya of 106 lines of 20 letters each, De's Press, Balasore, price 1 pice. (iv) 'Chandrabhaga', a Kavya in 270 lines of 16 letters each, De's Press, price 2 pice.
- 1887—'Nandikeswari', a Kavya in 1074 lines of 12 letters each. Published in November at the expense of Raja of Bamra from the Victoria Press, Cuttack.
- 1888—'Usha', a Kavya in 832 lines of 17 letters each. Published at the expense of the Raja of Bamra from the Victoria Press, Cuttack.
- 1890—'Parbati', a Kavya of 902 lines of 20 letters each. Serialised in the Raja of Bamra's magazine *Utkal Hitaisini* from 13.8.1890 to 24.9.1890 in weekly instalments, again after five weeks, the last instalment having appeared on 10.12.1890. Published in book form by the Raja of Bamra in 1891.
- 1891—'Chilika' a Kavya in 772 lines of 12 letters each, published in September by the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj in his magazine *Utkala Prabha*.
- 1892—An eulogy to the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj which later formed part of Canto V of Maharaja, published in the magazine *Odisa O Nababharat* from Balasore.
- 1893—'Mahajatra', an incomplete Kavya in 2391 lines of 14 letters each published in the magazine *Utkal Prabha* from Baripada starting in June. Later published in 1896 in book form at the expense of the Rani of Kanika.
- 1894—'Jajatikesari', a Kavya in 1116 lines of 20 letters each, published in part in the *Utkala Prabha* starting from June. Printed in full in the magazine *Sambalpur Hitaisini* of the Raja of Bamra from

- 26.9.1894 to 10.7.1895. (ii) 'Tulasi Stabaka', a translation in 200 lines of 12 letters each.
- 1895—'Urbasi', an incomplete poem in 190 lines of 20 letters each, published in a magazine.
- 1897—'Darabara', a Kavya satire in 745 lines of 12 letters each, published in the magazine *Utkala Sahitya*.
- 1898—'Tinibandhu', a poem in 74 lines published in the *Utkala Sahitya*.
- 1901—'Dasaratha Biyoga', a poem in 429 lines, published in book form.
- 1904—(i) 'Bana Harana', a poem in 726 lines, (ii) 'Durjodhanara Rakta Nadi Santarana', a poem in 218 lines, (iii) 'Smasana Drushya', a poem in 190 lines and (iv) 'Mahendragiri', an incomplete poem in 318 lines. The first three were published in the magazine *Utkala Sahitya*. They have 14 letters in each line. The fourth has 12 letters in each line.
- 1906—'Sabitri Charita', a poem in 766 lines of 14 letters each, published in the *Utkala Sahitya*.
- 1907—(i) 'Sati Prati Satidrohi Patira Ukti', a poem in 164 lines of 14 letters each. (ii) 'Nibedana', a poem in 72 lines of 12 letters each.
- Undated Poems:* (i) & (ii) 2 poems on Queen Victoria in 28 lines composed as Jubilee songs, (iii) A poem on Prataprudra Deva in 40 lines of 12 letters each, (iv) A poem containing Vyasa's advice to Yudhis-thira, in 14 lines of 14 letters each, (v) Some words of advice in verse 24 lines of 9 letters each, (vi) 'Fularani', an incomplete poem in 100 lines of 14 letters each, (vii) 'Hansaduta', a translation in verse, in 64 lines of 13 letters each.

IA

Radhanath Ray's Writings in Bengali

- 1868—Kabitabali, Part I.
 1878—Kabitabali, Part II.
 1902—(1) Kalidasa Suktayah.
 (2) Lekhabati.

2

Text books written in Oriya by Radhanath Ray

- 1876 : 1. 'Kabitabali Part I'. It contained 2 poems by Radhanath and the rest by Madhusudan Rao, De's Press, Balasore.
 2. 'Geometry Mensuration and Surveying' in Oriya, by Radhanath Ray and Siba Narayan Naik, advertised on 11th September, De's Press, Balasore.

- 1877 : 1. 'Geometry' in Oriya by Radhanath Ray and Siba Narain Naik.
 2. 'Practical Geography Part I' in Oriya by Radhanath Ray and Siba Narain Naik.
 3. 'Model Questions in Mental Arithmetic' in Oriya (advertised 1st April).
 All from De's Press, Balasore.
- 1878 : 1. 'Physical Geography, Part I' in Oriya by Radhanath Ray and Shiva Narain Naik.
 2. 'Bhugola Sara Sangraha' by Radhanath Ray. This was printed under the name of his Head Clerk, Bhubaneswar Dutt. De's Press, Balasore.
- 1881 : 'Vyakarana', Published by the Calcutta School Book Society. Radhanath later wrote to Meher that it has been written by his Head Clerk, Bhubaneswar Dutt and not by him.
- 1886 : 'Kabitabali, Part II'. It contained two of his poems and the rest by Madhusudan Rao. De's Press, Balasore.
- 1899 : 'Vyakarana Prabesha' (advertised on 3rd May).

3

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