

A great freedom fighter Nilakantha Das (1884-1967) became closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and many other great leaders in shaping the political life of India. Though he had to spend much of his time in active politics, he succeeded in establishing a standard of good writing that has deeply influenced later generations of writers. In his rediscovery of the past, of the rural community of the village, in turning to the ancient Oriya folk lore, in his effort to put the spoken language on an equal footing with the classical tongue, Nilakantha inducted the young into world free from dominion of absolutism.

Dr. Narendranath Misra, the writer of this monograph, worked with Nilakantha Das in Nababharat Press. Formerly Professor of Oriya at Visva-Bharati, he has authored number of books including one on Nilakantha Das.

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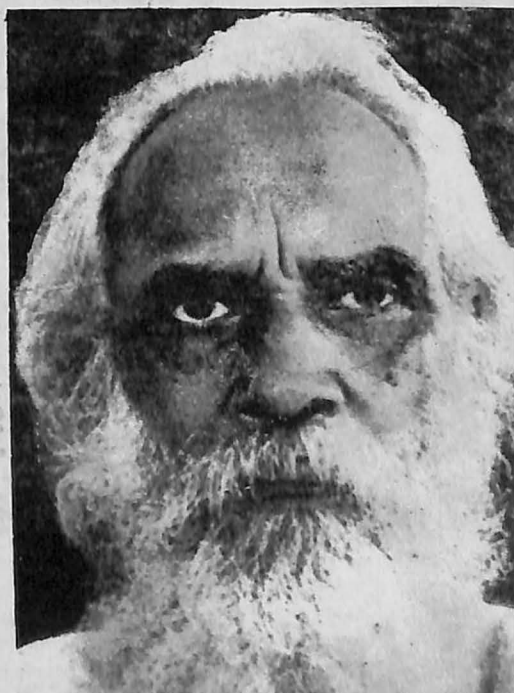
Nilakantha Das

Narendranath Misra

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Nilakantha Das

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

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

Nilakantha Das

Narendranath Misra



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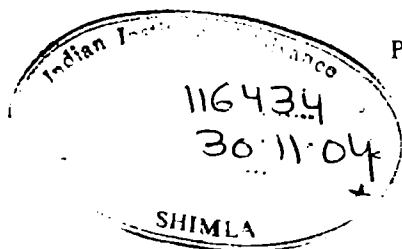
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Preface

This is a short account of the life and works of Pandit Nilakantha Das (1884-1967). He played a vital role in the cultural life of Orissa. He was a great freedom fighter and being closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and others played a great role in shaping the political life in free India. His birth centenary was celebrated in 1984 throughout the country. People remembered him with love and respect. His fellow freedom fighters and many eminent persons paid him glowing tributes. At that time I had a rare privilege of writing a book on Nilakantha's life and literary achievement entitled 'Pandit Nilakantha : Jeebani O Kruti' in Oriya on behalf of Pandit Nilakantha Smriti Samiti, Bhubaneswar. The same book had been translated into English by late Lila Roy and published in 1985 by the above Smriti Samiti.

So when the Sahitya Akademi requested me to write a monograph on Nilakantha in the Makers of Indian Literature series I readily accepted the offer. While working on this little book I had thought again and again how best I could be selective to present a man through his works, so vast and voluminous in a few pages of a monograph. Moreover all his writings are only available in Oriya. I have kept in mind the future generation and specially those who have no direct access to his writing in Oriya. Therefore, I decided to use more space in presenting him through translation. Naturally I have taken great care in selecting some of his poems, short and lyrical and some selective stanzas from the long poetical works (Kabya). I have also taken some of the thought-provoking passages from his prose works.

The book I wrote during the centenary adequately deals with political life and thought of Pandit Nilakantha and this

book is also available in English. In the short life-sketch given in the present book more importance has been given to his creative and cultural life which is relevant to understand his literary works.

Nilakantha's own writings are available in four volumes published by Students' Store, Cuttack. I have also gone through a large number of secondary works, criticisms and theses done on him. But I am to admit that I have understood the man in a more subtle way as I was fortunate enough to see and feel his greatness from a close quarter. In my youth he was my favourite writer. In fact during the fifties I wrote in the famous serials of the journal 'Dagara' on Nilakantha as my most beloved writer. I also lived and worked with him for several months in Nababharat Press when he was fully devoting to literary work. Like me, I am sure, for many he is not a past personality. He is a living presence. He is still alive in many ways. His august personality, his saintly figure, his grey hair and flowing white beard, his face beaming with a radiant glow of happiness and hope, his voice ringing with faith and vibrant with the idealism of human brotherhood—all have been a part of our own being.

How could I bring those things alive to my reader, specially of younger generation those of whom have neither seen him nor read him? I have pondered deeply to invent and follow a suitable methodology to pack into a few pages so vast and voluminous materials. I have lost much time being lost in elation and dejection. I am grateful to the officials of the Sahitya Akademi for their repeated rejoinders.

At last I want to remind the readers once again that this is not a primer or a critique of Nilakantha's world of creation. This is only a quick survey of his eventful long life, his poetry, prose, philosophy and his dream for a bright new world free from war and want.

I am really grateful to the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, for asking me to write this monograph and for giving me an

opportunity to pay my humble tribute to a great son of Mother India. I do hope to see another edition and make amends to make this book more useful.

Narendranath Misra

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Life

Let us go to the place where there was 'Satyabadi Jatiya Bana Vidyalaya'. There is an enclosed ground enshrining the tombs of Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Godabarish Misra, Pandit Nilakantha Das and others. We can see the following words in the epitaph of Pandit Nilakantha Das :

In memory of a dear companion of Gopabandhu, he, Nilakantha by designation, whose wisdom, erudition and poethood are sung at large and whose extra-ordinary service to the country has contributed to the well-being of the people rests here for good on his departure to the other world.

We can get the outline of a complete life from this epitaph. Pandit Nilakantha Das, an erudite scholar, poet and leader, who was the close associate and follower of the Utkalmani taught the pupils in the school at Satyabadi. Lord Sakhigopal's temple is in this village. So it is also known as Sakhigopal. The place is surrounded by settlements of Brahmins known as 'Sasana'. One of them is Shri Ramachandra in the district of Puri.

Ever since the construction of the present magnificent temple of Lord Jagannatha in the 12th century A.D. by the Ganga king Chodaganga Deva (1078-1147), Puri became the centre of Hindu Religion. In 1568 the temple was desecrated and plundered by Kalapahad, an Afgan general. During the rule of the Akbar the Great, Ramachandra Deva, the king of Khurdha Garh became a powerful monarch. In 1593 he was proclaimed as the Gajapati ruler under the Mughal emperor.

He got full right to revive the worship of Lord Jagannatha. He established many Brahmin settlements. Sixteen of them are famous, as their representatives are from the 'Mukti mandapa pandita sabha' of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri. Shri Ramachandrapur, the village where Nilakantha was born, is one of them. It is on the bank of a small river named Ratnachira.

Nilakantha was born on the 5th August 1884 (Shrabana 14, 1291). His father Ananda Das was forty-five and mother Hiradebi was thirty-six. Being the only son after seven daughters his parents had delighted to name him Nilakantha in the name of the family deity. The family was devoid of the fortune of the past, but fortunate enough to be proud of its heritage of learning. His grandfather Banamali Das was a well-to-do man, collecting rent for the East India Company. He was benevolent and pious. He was borrowing to pay the 'pescus' and collecting his dues from the cultivators after the harvest. In the year 1848 he met untimely death at the age of twenty eight and there was none in the family to manage the estate. All the rent-free landed property was lost. His grandmother had a hand-to-mouth existence. Spinning the 'charakha' was her only vocation to supplement family income. Her only son Ananda Das could get little learning. However, he worked hard to regain the family fortune. It was considered demeaning for a Brahmin to work in a crops field. But with revolutionary spirit, Ananda Das himself cultivated his land, married in a wealthy family of lower Brahmin class and with the dowry money he paid his father's debt. He tried to set examples of character, hard work and self-study before his only son.

Let us first glance at the major events of Nilakantha's life. He was the eighth child and the only son of his parents. His childhood was steeped in sweetness and tenderness. His mother was loving, and the sisters were his playmates. The village Shriramachandrapur, on the bank of the river Ratnachira with dense coconut groves was an ideal environment for the growth of a creative mind. His attachment with Shriramachandrapur

was life long. He built a dignified house on the site of his father's small earth dwelling.

Nilakantha started his study at the village 'pathasala'. From the beginning he had a keen power of observation, good memory and intelligence. Within that limited opportunity he developed himself in an attractive manner. After the primary standard he studied in the village Middle School. The old Headmaster was very affectionate and once professed a great hope about him. Remembering the event Nilakantha writes,

I was the youngest among my class mates. So sometimes the seniors alienated me and did not help me in the study. Once I was crying when allegation came before him against me. Suddenly he scolded the seniors and told, 'Now you are making him alone. But see what he will be at the long-run!' How and why he told like this, I did not know.

Nilakantha spent his childhood with all the primitive pride and prejudice in that village. Really his early education started with the village culture and environment. The English school established at the village Shriramachandrapur by his uncle Harihar was the early temple of his learning. Completing the middle English education he went to Puri in the year 1899 without the knowledge of his father. In that year Puri was linked by railways with Calcutta, the capital of the British Indian Empire. At this time he came under the influence of the then revolutionaries like Muktar Ramachandra Das and Gopabandhu Das, who became his mentor. Being crowded by pilgrims the little coastal town Puri became health-hazard to its inhabitants. For health ground Nilakantha had to leave Puri Zilla School to study at Cuttack. During his student days at Cuttack he became one in heart and mind with the Bengal revolutionaries and was often out to preach 'swadesi' as a young ascetic in the villages. He was well acquainted with the social reform works of Gopabandhu Das, who founded his famous open-air national school in 1909 at the village

named Satyabadi. Nilakantha did not wish to join any government services and just after appearing in the B.A. Examination he worked for Gopabandhu's school. In 1912 he became the Headmaster and 'kula guru' of the Satyabadi Jatiya Bidyalaya after passing the M.A. Examination in Philosophy of Calcutta University. This school was an independent institution.

To finance it and his many other activities Gopabandhu had to take a job under the patriotic Maharaja Shri Ramachandra Bhanja of Mayurbhanja. Now the school was fully in charge of Nilakantha. Seen with the leadership of Gopabandhu and the organising ability of Nilakantha, Satyabadi became a centre of culture. Many highly educated young people joined the institution. A monthly magazine in Oriya named as 'Satyabadi' was published and a separate printing press was established for the purpose. There Nilakantha proved himself as a prolific writer, a profound critic. His contribution to the study of Oriya literature made him famous. Postgraduate studies in Modern Indian Languages were being introduced at that time in the University of Calcutta. Nilakantha joined the M.I.L. Department of the Calcutta University in September 1920 to organize the Oriya studies. But his stay was short, for as soon as Mahatma Gandhi gave the call he left the service and joined the Non-cooperation Movement against the British rule. He went to jail. Being released from jail, in 1923 he joined the Swarjya faction of the Congress and was elected as a member of the Central Legislative Assembly. He was elected to the Central Assembly four times and served as the secretary of his party in the assembly. But when there was a call he was leaving the legislature to join the struggle. He went to jail several times taking part in Civil disobedience and salt Satyagraha movements. As the President of the Orissa Provincial Congress Committee he supported Subhas Chandra Bose and resigned the presidentship. That was 1939, when the world war started. In the year 1942 he left the Congress party. In 1945 he retired from the Central Assembly. Since 1934 he was editing Nababharata

a monthly journal devoted to literature and culture. He established a printing press and gave all his time for writing.

The prison was for Nilakantha a place of repose. Being in the company of eminent leaders and scholars like Rajendraprasad, Kripalani, Narendra Dev and others he devoted his time to study and contemplation. After leaving the school at Satyabadi he had little time for poetry and creative writings. He wrote lyrical poems, translated Tennyson. 'Geetaprabesh', an extensive introduction to Shrimad Bhagabata Geeta was his major press work. He was dreaming of a new India not only free from foreign rule, but to usher in a new era of peace in the whole world.

Nilakantha became the President of Orissa Pradesh Congress twice. In 1936 Orissa became a separate province under his leadership. Congress movement was firmly footed in Orissa. Though Nilakantha was an instrument for formation of elected Congress government in the newly formed province for the first time, he remained out of power. He was a radical thinker and nonconformist. Intellectually he aligned himself with a radical thinker and revolutionary M. N. Roy. That is why during the war period he was moving away from official Congress ideology. He devoted all his time for writing and editing the journal Nababharat. The people of all over the state adored him as 'Utkalguru'.

Independence came. Nilakantha saw that the free India of their dream has not been achieved. There were few patriots among the power-hungry politicians. The ideal of freedom has been deluded. Nilakantha could not tolerate this passively. So in 1950 he formed his own political party 'Swadhin Jana Sangha' and boldly stood against the drift. However in 1955 on the request of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru he came back to Congress. He was elected from his own home constituency Satyabadi to the State Assembly and became the speaker.

Though Nilakantha was back in politics, he was very much a man of letter and culture. In 1958 he became the first

President of the newly formed Orissa Sahitya Akademi. Government of India honoured him with Padma Bhusan. His door was always open for scholars and litterateurs. On their request he dictated his memories which is his last contribution to Oriya literature. This autobiography was much appreciated for its literary merit and presentation of a picture of an age which saw much change, turmoil and frustration. In 1964 the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi awarded this book as the best work of Oriya Literature.

His health was steadily falling. In the 1961 interim election to the Orissa Assembly though people wanted him he could not stand. Nilakantha, who was a gourmet, lover of good food, used to take fish of best variety almost as his principal diet, had to live on strict regime. He suffered from diabetes. A man who was always moving had to remain confined to his bed. In November 6, 1967, on the full moon day of the month Kartik 1374 he passed away at the residence of his son-in-law in Cuttack. With full state honour his mortal remains were carried in a grand procession to Satyabadi in the district of Puri and was consecrated to fire at the same Bana Bidyalaya and enshrined in a tomb where his Guru Gopabandhu's ashes were buried about forty years ago.

Thus came the end of a man who was a part of generation and history. It is difficult to enumerate his achievements in all the spheres of life. He leaves behind a lasting contribution to the Oriya language and literature. His famous kavya, numerous essays, his monumental commentary on the Geeta and a host of other works will remain as a land-mark in our literature, culture and heritage.

Poetry

Nilakantha as a poet was an idealist and intellectual. He was a leader in the field of creativity and culture. He was urbane and at the same time a man of the folk. He was more at home at his own village. He started the life of a teacher in the open air school at Satyabadi. He lived among the school children. A humanist, philosopher, patriot, his mind was soaring high, but at the same time touching the earth to train the young minds in their natural surrounding. The school was set up in the ideal of 'Tapoban' by his mentor and 'Guru' Gopabandhu Das. He was a saintly personality. The young poet teacher was out to make his message as simple as possible for the children. But there was limitation. He never diluted his thought, nor allowed the imagination for a play. He was a seeker of truth. Whatever may be the environment, whatever may be the crisis in real life, he wanted to be above and abide by his inner spirit of freedom in action and thought. Nilakantha's greatness as a poet can only be felt in his sincerity and creativity expressed through an art which is not surcharged with any flamboyant emotion. His mind was always restless to create and invent a world of beauty and truth. When he was alone in the quiet environment of his rural home or the confinement of prison life he could search his own creative soul. In the mad world of politics and passion in the relentless world of action the poet in him was all along dreaming for a creative life of contentment and fulfilment. The poet himself has confessed, 'when I stay alone I feel to create something new in the domain of poetry. My poetry is born out of a feeling, inspiration and daydream.'

Only at the age of twenty-five Nilakantha as a highly

educated scholar from the University, got an opportunity to gain rare experience of living in hardship and drudgery in a poverty stricken peasant society. His dedication for a cause, his spirit of sacrifice induced him to be a poet. The first book of his poems was a breviary for the use in the school in which he was the 'Kulapati'. The high ideals of Upanisadic philosophy inspired the poet. The poems would have been pedantic and prosaic had the poet not discovered the child in him. The extent to which he was able to identify with the children is astonishing. He looked at the world in the eyes of a child. Their latent sense of creativity, natural curiosity was the guiding force behind the poems. The poet was looking at the beauty of the manifestation and the teacher was caring to rouse the child's mind to be self-functioning to pursue his own search for knowledge.

It seems strange that an eminent poet composed his first poem on request from his own students, not from inner urge for self expression. The poet remembers,

It was the year 1912. The worship of Goddess Saraswati was being held in spring. A poem was needed for recitation. I wrote 'Bhaktira udbodhan'—invocation to devotion. After some time this poem was published in the famous journal 'Utkal Sahitya.'

With this success the poet wrote more devotional poems. Those poems were published as 'Bhakti-gatha' ballads of devotion. These are not story poems. Bhakta-kabi Madhusudan Rao was an eminent poet of the time. He wrote 'Basanta-gatha' poems in praise of spring. The word *gatha* has been used for poetry in a general way.

There are four parts with prologue and epilogue. The poet admits he has in mind about four types of devotees as propounded in 'Bhagabata-Gita'. So each of the parts are named as 'Artavani', 'Prasna-vani', 'Bhakta-vani' and 'Atma-vani'. Each part contains about twenty stanzas. The rhyme is traditional and

can be set to tune. Although the style is garbed in a classical form; the expression is homely which can touch every heart. From the outset it appears that the poet is in quest for a personal God whom he can look and locate in his soul. But in fact the whole of Nature is God incarnate. This God is not to be found in any temple or house of worship. The God is near and afar. He is everywhere in light and in the vast maze of oblivion. Only one who has set alight the lamp in his heart can find the way. A true devotee is the path finder. He needs only faith in himself. May be his life is like a dew drop on a blade of grass. But when he feels the presence of God in his own heart in the form of love the life in this world becomes enjoyable and death becomes deathless. He will have no doubt about his capacity to understand the law of creation. He will feel that he is the Brahma, the creator, the embodiment of the time, the space and the law that rules the universe.

After almost five years the poet ventured to write his best epic poem on the temple of Konarak. The poet along with some of his like minded friends started studying deeply the best of the poetical creations of world both of the ancient and modern times. He had no time to try his hand in writing lyrics and various type of short poems. Moreover writing poetry was not the aim of his life—a life dedicated for creation of a new social order in freedom.

In the hard working life of a teacher and social worker there was little time for the poet to give words to his dreams. In October of 1911 he became the Kulapati of Satyabadi Bihar and on 17 September 1918 he handed over to his intimate friend Godabarish Misra. Being relieved of the onerous work of the head of the school he left for his sweet home where was his old father, loving wife and children. Of course he was teaching in the same school and going there once a day. It was only at a few miles away. The poet was much relieved from the labour and the responsibility. He now finds time to think, revive the happy moments he had with young pupil.

The poetical fervour so subdued under the impact of restless action came into the forefront. In his college days the poet translated a portion of lord Alfred Tennyson's 'The Princess' which was in their courses of study. The poem introduces some serious idea in a way which is at once attractive and pleasing. As a reformer and an idealist the young poet was charmed at the English poet's humanistic outlook on woman. The charm of scenic description, the art of dramatic narration find its proper place in the translation in Oriya. The poem in Oriya consists of six cantos written in blank verse interspersed by singsong lyrics of classical Oriya tradition. Although the characters are puppets of theory, the Oriya poet makes them alive through several interludes of rare and entrancing beauty.

In 1917 summer, the poet took his students on an educational tour to the princely states of western Orissa. Again at the autumn of the same year he along with his pupils went to Konarak to see the temple on sea shore. The poet remembers, in an evening in a forest resort one ballad singer came to him and set tune to ballad that tells the story of love of a prince of yore with a forest girl Maya, and the building of the temple at Konarak. This inspired the poet to write an epic poem in two parts as 'Konarake'. The first part named as 'Rama chandire rati o sakal'—the night and dawn at Rama chandi and the second part is named as Mayadevi. The poet confesses 'this is my new and original venture in writing a long poem'. It is new but considered as one of the best poetical works of our time.

The poem begins with a note of despair. 'How frightful is the night? The storm sweeps cloud roars in the dark sky.' Their hope to see the magnificent temple of Konarak standing on the vast sandy shore under the bright moonlit sky of autumn is shattered. They are taking shelter inside the sanctorum of the temple of Rama chandi. While the young students tired of a long walk are sleeping the poet in half sleep and half awake was dreaming of a new dawn.

The poem consists of one thousand lines divided into forty stanzas. Each stanza conceived as a complete poem, describes a new scene or gives the pen picture of a new episode. The personality of the poet, his world outlook and thoughts give unity to the poem. The style is all his own. The words are simple and suggestive. The images are innovative, appealing and strange. The stanzas are composed in a form of address to sleeping children, the roaring storm, the gods and goddesses or any object of Nature. The messages brought by the storm a in a stormy night in desolate shore is the message of a new humanism. On the background the poet's facile pen depicts the rise and fall of empires, the forts, the temples, the military prowess of the monarchs, the naval wars at the mouth of river Chandrabhaga and lake Chilka through endless stream of events and episodes. The last four stanzas give the picture of the dawn, the rise of the sun on the lapping of the waves of the vast watery mass of the sea. Sitting on the mouth of the river Chandrabhaga the poet observes how the river flows with a happy note on her bosom to meet the dearest of her heart the sea and the sea in return not giving loving embrace, but hurting her with roaring waves. The tender sweet heart of the young will not be broken seeing the hard reality in the world of Nature and man.

The second part is a narrative poem named Mayadevi. It consists of five cantos with prologue and epilogue. The hero is the Prince Narasingh Deva of the Gajapati dynasty that ruled for four hundred years in an empire in the eastern India. The prince was leading a campaign against his own revolting tenants in the hilly tracts of western Orissa. At the end of the campaign Narasingh met Mayadevi the Princess of Sisupalgarh. The love story has been woven in such a way that the whole of the mother land from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari came into the background.

In the first canto the poet introduced the renowned scholar poet Pandit Visvanath Kaviraj as the emissary of the Kalinga

court to the court of Jambudesh. The beauty of the Himalayan kingdom which was known from the book revealed in all its splendour before his eyes. In the mouth of Visvanath the poet has depicted the glory of the kingdom of Orissa giving the details of her people, their culture, their great temples and the vast panoramic shore. Both the kingdom of Jambudesh and Utkal were facing the threat from the Islamic states and both of them were defending the religion of the land of indigenous people. Through marriage Visvanath wanted to cement the friendship of the two distant kingdoms against a common enemy.

In the second canto reception to Visvanath, the emissary of the Kalinga court at the court of the Jambudesh has been given. The grandeur and pomp, the festivity have been described. More prominence has been given to the inside story of the Jambu king's family, the king's solace to the queen, the talk among the princess and the queen about the kingdom of Utkal and their capital city. While depicting the mental agony of the queen for sending her beloved daughter to a distant land the poet has paid rich tribute to the glory of motherhood.

The love that sprout from a mother's heart

Endlessly spread to fill the Earth;

The love that overflows a mother's breast

Lit the sky with the Sun and stars.

In a word, that love which sustains the life is the repository of all music and poetry. But when this sacred love is spoiled by lust becomes dangerous like poisoned milk. The Princess who was blooming like a lotus became an object of prey for the lustful enemy. In the depth of her sorrowful heart there was a hope and one night she dreamt how from the abysmal darkness she soared high towards the Sun up in the sphere. In this dream episode the poet got a scope to paint the aerial view of the Himalayas, the vast land mass and the sea in one sweep. The poem was written during the first world war years.

The aeroplane was used for the first time in war. Thus in this episode of dream we find the imaginative mind of the poet. At last the emissary of Utkal has returned with a great retinue visiting on the way all those places famous in 'Puran' as sacred place for pilgrimage. But the poet's eye was on the geography and history. The last part of the canto depicts in detail the journey by the boats on the Mahanadi. The beauty of the western mountainous part of Orissa under the rain clouds, the storms, dawns and sunset, the awe and wonder of the members of the Jambudesh courtiers have been vividly described in such a way that speak of the poet's treatment of Nature, his aesthetic vision, a poetic sense of feeling to be at one with Nature as our dearest companion. The Gajapati King's welcome of the party at the fort Bidanasi again takes us to the courtly pageantry.

In the third canto the festivity for the first part of the ritual of the marriage preparation of the prince Narasingh with the princess of Jambudesh has been depicted. Amidst all the rejoicing there was one thing wanting. The prince for whom all this festival was being celebrated was not there to conjure with it. He was away in the far away forest land to fight with the rebel tenants. The king and the queen were facing burning mental agony as they could not take the consent of the prince about the marriage. Moreover they got some hints that the prince has already betrothed to Mayadevi the princess of Sisupalgarh. The king was also apprehensive about the long drawn war with an enemy so hideous and dreadful. The queen's soft heart of a mother was apprehensive about the safety of the prince in so hostile a forest. The fury of the war raged. The victory eluded for a long time. At last the leader of the revolt Tanka was apprehended and was brought before the Prince Narasingh. The poet has given expression to the heroic heart of the fighter of freedom. Tanka speaks for the whole of the oppressed humanity. The love for his motherland has made him bold to sacrifice every thing. The prince at last

bowed down before the heroic son of the soil. His own conscience showed the path of friendship. The forest people became one with the people of the plain. In a vacant mood when the prince was moving about in the forest alone he met with the princes of Sisupalgarh for a short while. They unknowingly gave their heart to each other. The prince revealed this before that intimate circle.

If the third canto is an ode to heroism the fourth canto is an ode to love. In the camp the prince was meeting with many learned men and many of them were also poets and enchanting singer. Three ballad singers have sung about the different aspects of love. The ballad of the poet of 'Katarah Garh' for example contains the following story :

There was no happiness in a princess's mind. The queen went with a proposal of marriage with a rich man. Her brother went with the portrait of a hero. The king, her father went with the proposal of marriage with a renowned king. But the princess gave no heed. She was thinking of her lover who is neither rich, nor a hero nor a king, but a man of 'her' choice. In the night of deep anguish she left the palace. In the morning her mortal remains were floating in the bathing pond of the queen.

Narasingh was out for hunting. He heard the song of maidens in the midst of the forest. Leaving the horse behind she walked and met the party. The princess of Sisupalgarh was there. They looked at each other. It was going to be evening. The princess returned to the palace with her maids. But the prince did not find his horse and lost the way. He went to the nearby palace and was treated as a guest. There was the old king and the princess. The fort was often ravished by the horde of insurgent rebels. The princess became the host. But the prince had to go to meet the enemy.

In the fifth canto Maya and Narasingh had developed intimate friendship. Narashingh told Maya about his marriage proposal with the princess of Jambudesh. This proposal was

accepted by the king Ananga Deva, the father of Narasingh. The king died. Now the prince was in a dilemma. Is he to keep his father's word or his own word? But Mayadevi prayed the prince to marry the princess of Jambudesh. She will serve as the maid of the queen. But the Jambudesh Jema came to greet Mayadevi. She wanted to be the maid of Maya. Maya told her about a dream she saw : "She is floating on the water of the sea and Narasingh is holding her hand. There was a voice from the void. Narasingh will not have her hand nor she will serve at his feet." Maya had one request, that if she dies not seeing Narasingh her body should be floated in the river in a casket. The sweet memories of Narasingh's meeting was haunting Maya. She had no feeling of sorrow when she was narrating her last wishes sitting on the same bed where once Narasingh was with her. Thus spoke Maya:

Narasingh is my heart's wealth
You are my heart's dear
Keep my memory ever alive in you
for Narasingh to offer.

In a moment of bliss and joy when Maya and the Jambudesh princess were in embrace, Maya collapsed. With great pomp Maya's body was taken to the palace of Ganga Emperor. Narasingh was fighting a naval war against the pirates on the mouth of the river Chandrabhaga. Message of the death of Maya was sent to him. Maya's body was floated in the river as per her last wish. In the sixth and the last canto the naval war and the wish of Narasingh again to meet his beloved queen along with Maya have been narrated. At the moment of the victory he got the message of the passing away of Maya. On returning to the palace the king and the queen spent their days as mendicant. Knowing from the merchants about a casket at Mitraban on the shore with the body of a maiden inside, looking as living and the casket is so heavy that none could move it from its place, the King Narasingh and his queen

went there to see the casket themselves. Thus speaks the legend: the king alone when approached the casket a bright figure rose out of the casket to embrace the king. Suddenly there was darkness everywhere. None could see what happened there. But again when it was dawn the king and the queen appeared as most happy couple. Then the king called Sibeī Santrai the master builder to build a befitting memorial for Mayadevi—the temple of Sun God on the mouth of river Chandrabhaga. The epilogue gives the mythical story. Narasingh and Maya were the incarnation of the Sun God and his spouse, Chhaya. Sibeī was the incarnation of Visvakarma, the heavenly builder. The Jambu Jema was the incarnation of the daughter of Visvakarma. Visvanath, the scholar poet was the son of Brihaspati, the Deva-Guru. The epic ends with an invocation to the poet, the ballad singer who originally narrated the story to our poet Nilakantha in a solitary rest house in the forest land.

Oh! Poet you live for a few days more
 Carrying this history with you.
 You sing your song alone on the shore
 The river will hear with dancing ripples.
 The mountains will hear raising their head
 from deep dark caves,
 The creeper on the wall of the fallen fort
 will hear bedecked with winter dew.

An year after another historical narrative poem 'Kharvel' was published in 1920. Mahamegha Bahan Chet raj Air Kharavel was a powerful monarch in Kalinga in first century B. C. His inscription on the cave of Khandagiri hills near Bhubaneswar narrates the achievements of his rule. The poem gives the story of his conquest of North West, war with the Greek king Demetrius with the help of the Bajira king who was an old man. He had his adopted daughter Dhusi. She went in disguise as the general of the Bajira army and joined the Kaling army

to fight with the Greeks. This joint army was victorious. In the war Kharavela was gravely wounded. Dhushi attended him. After regaining health Kharavela returned to the Bajir King's palace and there came Dhushi in her real self. In the camp and war she was his companion and the friendship was intimate. Now she became his life's partner. This is a ballad epic consisting of only five canto. The form and style speak of the poet's controlled and measured treatment of theme, relentless effort at blending the narration with befitting description of natural scene and events. Heroism and love have been glorified. The story is well told. The characters are few and deftly treated. The poet's attempt to write a popular epic has been successful.

In 1923 when the poet was in jail in Hazaribag, he wrote his last longer poem 'Das Nayak'. This is an adoption of Tennyson's Enock Arden. The poet has depicted the life of fisherman as he saw during his student days at Puri. He has deftly used the language of the common folk. Though there is romantic tinge in ideals exposed, the life of the characters are treated in realistic manner.

In his long active life Nilakantha rarely wrote any poem. But when he retired from the active life in very old age he again turned to poetry. As he started writing for the children, so also he ended writing for them. Some of them appeared in text books for children. The captions of some of the poems will give some idea about the theme. They are 'Mo tiki ghar' (my little house), 'Mo raja' (my king), Ama Neta (our Neta a cow). The fly and the spider and so on. In his history of Oriya literature eminent writer Surendra Mohanty has aptly remarked, 'Before Nilakantha wrote for the children, there was reader for children, but there was no real literature for them.'

In an age when the narrative verse was fast becoming a lost art Nilakantha composed his long epic poems. He created immortal heroes out of history and legend. He had love for tradition. At times he has followed the path of his immediate predecessor Radhanath and some time the medieval master

Upendra Bhanja. But he was not a traditionalist. Rather he was a great innovator. His ideas are novel and universal. His rational scientific outlook, philosophical and humanist vision, romantic sensibility and realistic approach, sincerity in treatment of truth and beauty, infusion of noble sentiment, rich and varied imagery, the expression impregnated with intimate touch of the folk life and manner all combined made him simply a great poet for all countries and all time.

Prose

During the last half of the 19th century Oriya literature took new form on the model of western literature. In poetry there was very rich tradition of epic, lyric and song. There were a large number of great poets with abundant production in the ornate school of poetry. Their religious fervour and adoration of love had much appeal for the masses. Although prose in Oriya attained its pristine glory in the 18th century at the hand of able writers of story, it had very limited use. With the spread of English education use of prose was very wide. New mode of expression, style and diction was being innovated by the writers of essay, novels and story. Through the spread of journals and newspapers a new type of popular literature was fast growing. Thus in the wings of change of time new literature came. But the change in the taste of the people was slow. The traditionalist and the classic school of writer resented the change both on moral and aesthetic ground. The supporters of the new movement in literature were sceptic about its success as the new literature was not gaining much popularity among the general masses.

In the early years of the twentieth century our taste in literature was in cross road. Our mood was ambivalent between Renaissance and Revivalism. Changes in the West before and after the first Great World War created a disillusion in our mind about the Western civilization. The spiritual and moral roots of ancient India was gaining ground in the wake of our struggle for freedom. The Satyabadi School in Oriya literature was a great experiment. Their aim was to serve the country through the spread of ideal and worthy literature among the masses. With his visionary outlook and searching mind Nilakantha

studied the past and the contemporary writers to show new path to the younger generation of writers.

Nilakantha in soul and spirit was a true poet. His ineffable poetic temperament is more expressed in prose than poetry as he was a trend setter in prose. He started early. He was a student in Puri English school. On the death of Samanta Chandra Sekhar he wrote his first article. It was read in a public meeting on the day of the 'shraddh' ceremony of the renowned traditional astronomer. This article was published in the famous journal Utkal Sahitya as a befitting obituary. This essay was appreciated for the neatness of language, lucid style and clarity of thought. The first sentence may be rendered like this : "It is true that India, which is in great plight, immersed in superstition, trodden under alien onslaught, addicted to idleness, emergence of a man with the power of a genius seems as fiction; but in the backward province of Orissa the birth of Chandra Sekhar a great soul is like the appearance of a bright star in the deep darkness of the deluse." The author shows deep concern for the dismal state of the country under the alien rule. Chandra Sekhar had no Western education, no access to modern scientific instruments. He studied the interstellar world with the simple instruments which he himself innovated and was able to write 'Siddhanta Darpana' considered as a outstanding scientific work in these days. The young mind of Nilakantha thus related the advent of a great man to the glorious tradition of our rich past.

During the Satyabadi School days the pedagogic interest in improving the mother tongue as the medium of teaching various subjects, including science led him to study linguistics, grammar and all the aspects of literature. The library at the school, the intellectual circle and the need of regular contribution to the periodicals gave him impetus to write essays and criticism. The age of the great trio of Oriya prose and poetry came to an end with the advent of the Satyabadi school of writers. Nilakantha was on the vanguard. The new literature

had its strength and weakness. Nilakantha analysed creative mind of the age. Nilakantha's contribution to Oriya criticism as such is not voluminous. Yet his place as a critic is still unsurpassed. The criticism of literature produced before was of mediocre value and importance. It lacked originality. Only rarely critics adapt themselves to the special circumstances of the country. They had little direct bearing on the great works produced at the time. More over to set the basis of the critical literature there was no institutional demand and backing. The journal Satyabadi founded by Gopabandhu in 1911 and his guiding inspiration for enriching our literature on the models of what have been created anywhere and any time in the field of art and culture attracted Nilakantha to the field of Oriya criticism.

Though written in different times all the essays published earlier in journals or in books as introduction were collected in a book entitled as 'Oriya Bhasa & Sahitya' in 1954. The first ten essays are on Oriya script, language and prosody. The last eight essays are on great masters of the past and present day Oriya poets and writers. The first two essays deal with the study of Oriya phonetics and linguistic. In fact Nilakantha has introduced these subjects to Oriya readers for the first time. He analysed all the aspects of study of linguistics for the development of Oriya language. There are four essays on prosody. The history and development of Oriya rhyme from early times to modern age has been traced. The influence of Sanskrit and other modern languages on Oriya verse rhyme has been studied from all aspects to show the originality of Oriya poets in creation of powerful rhyme, which can be set to tune and recited as well to bring out the emotions expressed.

Sarala Das is the 'Adikavi' in Oriya literature. There were many mythological stories about his advent as a poet. Nilakantha has established Sarala Das as a poet who was a prophet and a revolutionary harbinger of a new age in Oriya culture and language. In the words of Nilakantha "the revolution of Sarala Das".

Viswabasu as the servant of Lord Jagannatha, is a myth and legend. But the revolution of Siddha Siddheswar' (Sarala Das) is a fact. For the preservation of the society, literature and culture, this is the first and foremost revolution by an Oriya poet. He gave birth to a new language, culture and literature. The Oriya oral literature and the language, which originated from the 'Odia Prakrit' got a firm footing in the great epic of Sarala Das's 'Mahabharat'. In comparison to Vyasa's Mahabharata some consider this as a work of lesser merit. But there lies the originality and merit of the 'Sarala Mahabharata'. People have treated the great epic as their own and in course of time interpolations have obliterated the poet's vision and world-view. Nilakantha through his deep learning and analytical mind showed the path to appreciate the real merit of Sarala Das for building a progressive human society.

To evolve his own style, Nilakantha paid more stress on the study of classic. One of the classics which he loved most was the 18th century poet Upendra Bhanja's "Labanyabati". He edited the great epic of Upendra Bhanja consisting of 42 cantos with a long introduction. We may render freely Nilakantha's own words on Labanyabati, its theme and language. "It is not only Labanyabati but also all the characters of the 'Kavya', the hero, side characters, all the male and female, important and unimportant characters represent the eastern ideology. The idealism and Indian philosophy of social life have been depicted through his writings.

Upendra Bhanja has given expression to our own language, our hope, our true nature, our action, our love, our gestures, our dialogue, all our intimate social life. That is why it has occupied whole of our heart. In a poem there are two aspects—thought and language. It has been said aptly : some poets are painters of words and their poems are paintings in words. Upendra Bhanja gave more attention to the language and words. The tradition was there in Sanskrit, Upendra Bhanja had great mastery in this art of poetry. There was none parallel to him.

He had no chance to go out of his palace to mix with the ordinary masses. The poet has taken all cares to paint his poems as if embodiment of a maiden adorned with ornaments. He has constructed poems, not composed. His poem does not flow like a stream, it moves like a stately elephant adorned from top to toe. Another characteristic feature of Upendra Bhanja is wherever he narrated some lively episodes he used most matured language. He has added lustre to his picture with the power of pure and simple Oriya words. The expressions are lively and expressive. For example, when the lover asks his lady love, the lady love says, 'Tell me what shall I say'. In the poems of Upendra Bhanja the poetic thought is garbed with great decorative garment of language fitted with all priceless jewellery. From beginning to end everywhere the language is decorative. The poet might be describing a patch of land, the dawn, the face of a lady, everywhere the painting is superb with words. Very few poets have so much talent about words of the dictionary (that is Sanskritised words) along with the pure Oriya words. He has used a large number of Sanskrit words. Sanskrit words have only served as faithful servant to enhance the strength of Oriya words. If one wants nothing else but to learn the Oriya language well, the poetry of Upendra Bhanja will be of great help to him.

While studying modern poets Nilakantha analysed critically how far the tradition has been developed in a natural way assimilating and incorporating which is the best in the domain of art and literature of the modern age. In Radhanath he found a genius among modern school of poets who successfully experimented with new model and form in poetry. He had a cosmopolitan outlook on love and aesthetic treatment of theme, character and language. He was also a lover of nature, native tradition, past history and a dreamer of a great future of mankind. In his criticism Nilakantha has created a new tradition and dimension for understanding modern school of poets.

In the style of Radhanath there are much imitations from other languages, but he has assimilated them to give a new shape to his style and diction. For example his language is much influenced by Bengali. He knew Bengali well. He started his literary career by writing poems in Bengali. Large amount of borrowing by him has weakened the tradition and style of writing in Oriya. Of course in his own way Radhanath made an honest effort to make Oriya language a powerful medium for expressing subtle feelings and powerful emotions. Like a less powerful man, who seeks shelter under a more powerful person, he tried to make his language more powerful with the help of more refined Sanskrit language. But this was not the tradition of Oriya language in the past. Due to ignorance of modern writers about the trends of traditional Oriya writings they are not able to develop our own language and traditions and become imitators of other languages.

Madhusudan Rao was, as a man, more or less a model for Nilakantha. Madhusudan's personality as a teacher and preacher of a new religion, idealist, moralist and a social reformer and his active role in ushering a new age in the field of education and culture deeply moved Nilakantha. How this great personality has been revealed through the prose and poems of Madhusudan, Nilakantha has analysed it in a vigour and style unknown to Oriya literature. But he was a critic of his language and style. So he remarks, "People criticise Madhusudan's prose style as more Sanskritised. So it is far away from the natural language of the people. He has not observed the naturalness of language as used in the society. He has felt the lack of proper words to express his thoughts. He has followed the traditional syntactical pattern. His expressions lack precision of words. At the same time he has no fluency, free movement in style and symmetry in construction of linguistic structure."

It is only in Fakiramohan Nilakantha found the natural and real growth of Oriya language. Fakiramohan was a great son of the soil and through his long life of action and service

to the people gained rare insight to look at the root of the malady of his time. Nilakantha's essay on Fakiramohan was written not only to adore the great novelist and poet still living, but to define the ideals of Satyabadi school in literature. To serve the truth and to be one with the people at large was their motto. Through out his life Fakiramohan served the country as a humanist and progressive administrator. In his essay 'Fakiramohan and Oriya Novel' Nilakantha has seen him as his sage of the new age who has seen the life and time through intimate experience of a long active life. He has given the real picture of his people in their natural language. The humour added a tone and texture to his novel. He painted village life. There is naturalness and naivety but no slur of rustic ugliness. There is a glow in them that transcends rustic crudity into a sublime form of art. Thus Nilakantha concluded, "With a rare insight and genius Fakiramohan has shown how literature is always related to life. The aim of literature is to attract the people through their suffering, uttering and the life they are living."

To make the Oriya language powerful enough to serve a modern egalitarian society, Nilakantha argued in the essay 'Oriya Language and Grammar', if the Oriya is a separate language its grammar should be designed to accordify the special structure of the language. In this way he thought of a descriptive grammar in place of prescriptive grammar prevailed at that time. Nilakantha observed that the grammar which students read, contains no analysis of Oriya words. The language which students speak and hear outside the school has no place in grammar which they read in schools.

The aim of education thus is not fulfilled. The aim of education is to make a student more able to adjust outside the classroom. Where the life was stereotype and circumscribed in a small village, people were thinking that to learn a little classic Sanskrit or Latin is a true education. But to develop our own lives through education is the need of modern age.

We could not afford to limit our education by studying artificial language. The portal of the school should be opened to the language of the people, the grammar should also deal with and describe the natural and living language. Thus a new grammar has to be evolved.

Nilakantha's greatest contribution for the study of Oriya Language and Literature is a book entitled 'Oriya Sahityara Kramaparinama'. This is a book of about 500 pages. He has defined the facial structure of Oriya Culture and Literature. He has broadly defined literature as an expression of social progress. He has not seen literature as expressed in books but the origin of literature from the evolution of civilisation and culture. Three streams of culture Sabara, Kalinga and Arya amalgamated in a mighty stream to form the Orissan culture and literature. Through long ages of history he has observed how different cultures and civilisations have faced each other and tried to conquer one another but at the end they loose something and gain something and adopt to survive. That is the way how human civilisation made progress. He has studied the social, cultural and religious trends of the people. He has studied the epics and puranas, the ancient art architecture and developed his own theory and outlook regarding the world-view of Orissan culture and literature.

This great work was presented in September 1947 in a form of a lecture when after long struggle India became free from British subjugation. In a way Pandit Nilakantha has defined the ultimate aim of independence to build a new culture and literature free from dogmatic outlook and renegade thinking. He ends his book with a faith and conviction about the survival of Oriya literature. In the words of Nilakantha, "The eternal stream of Oriya literature has not died, can never die. Through ages it has faced the proud and powerful, imitated alien culture, but at the same time not lost its own purity of soul. It has the strength to enrich the world culture in a new way. We are not slave in body. Now a time has come when we should

free our thought and culture, arise awake in knowledge and action; in idealism and character, enlighten the world." This much was Nilakantha's contribution for the study of Oriya literature.

Contribution of Nilakantha in the field of religious and philosophical writing is remarkable. He wrote *Arya Jeeban* (The life of the Aryans) when he was a teacher in Satyabadi. The book mainly deals with the life, culture and religion of Vedic Aryans. He has observed in detail how the life of Aryans is alive and influencing the human civilisation of the entire world. The book was published in 1921. It was immensely popular and was translated into Hindi by Jainendra Prakash, an eminent litterateur in Hindi.

His another work on religion and philosophy is 'Geeta Prabesha', an introduction to Bhagabat Geeta, which he wrote during his jail life. This book was published in 1936. Nilakantha's mind was deeply absorbed to reveal how all the streams of Indian Philosophy have been synthesised in Bhagabat Geeta. The book deals with the comparative study of all the religions of the world. He has also studied the social structure, the impact of religion and philosophy in the struggle for freedom and survival of humankind. This massive work of 1000 pages was studied avidly by the younger generation when India was passing through a tumultuous period of its own struggle for freedom.

The 'Purusottam Tattwa' as propounded by Nilakantha may be put in his own words,

Now science has developed to a stage, which has created a hope that human society has moved from good to greater good and discord to peace. But this is not happening. Turmoil, danger and destruction are spreading their wings. Today in the world people are struggling for their own profession. The poorest of the poors is striving for a morsel of food, but the rich are after augmenting their wealth and guard themselves. Nobody

is seeking the true-self or the soul. It is only the idealists who strive to gain knowledge about the soul. The idealists may be great men but they are not the real living men of the society. It was natural for an ordinary man to seek in his own body the worldly pleasure. This is a binding force. This can not serve anything. First of all one should understand the value and aim of life. This can only be done through the development of the soul. Atma (the soul), Bhuta (the world) are not two different things; rather they are the two sides of one thing. Man is not insignificant. An ordinary man is not different from a great man. If we take them as different then there will be no solution to the social function. Humanism does not reside in the littleness of man. The little man is no man; he is doomed to die.The measure of all the actions of the world is in this soul. So it has been said, through knowledge of soul we can measure all the truths of all knowledge.

India gained independence. The country was facing great problem in formulating the language policy. Nilakantha was invited to speak in the 'Samabartan Utsab' of Sanskrit learning in Puri in 1947. He spoke about the linguistic problem of modern India and ancient India's contribution to the solution of the problem through the invention of a unique language, Sanskrit. There are different 'Prakrit' languages in India. Sanskrit not only assimilated these languages but also assimilated languages of outside India. Panditji pleaded, "We should not give up anything which we received through contact with the West, rather we must develop our own linguistic tradition inherited through Sanskrit language to make it useful for modern world." While boldly speaking in favour of Sanskrit he said, "People say Sanskrit is a dead language. But it is not a dead language like Greek or any other ancient languages which has literature but no utility for the modern age. Sanskrit grammar is still influencing the study of modern languages

of the world. No past language can be compared with Sanskrit. Sanskrit words, idioms and the process of forming new words and its phonetics, alphabets, everything is still living. It is only not that in a way Sanskrit, the national language but also a spoken language of India. There is a strong oral tradition of learning Sanskrit by common people. There are many people even those are illiterate but recite 'Vedic mantras' correctly. From the Vedic time, this tradition is prevailing without interruption. We say Sanskrit is 'Deva Bhasa'. There is a saying, "Our forefathers need only words but Gods need words pregnant with thought." It is not only tradition but when a tradition is enriched with new ideas and thought it helps civilisation to grow.

Conservatism turns learning to ignorance. The Sanskrit speaking Aryans always were eager to enrich their language and culture by learning from others. Through preservation and assimilation they are making their culture eternal and universal.

Pandit Nilakantha was as much concerned with the ordinary masses as he was concerned with elite. He wrote several persuasive essays in very simple touching language to bring social reform. His two such essays need to be discussed here. One is 'We are and we would be' (Achhu O Habu), another is 'Moustache' (Ninsha). First few lines of the essay will give an idea : "If we carefully study the human society, it will be observed that two powerful forces are in action. The specific gravity of human society remains stationary with the collision of these two opposite forces. The preservation, reformation and renewal of society is possible due to the collision of these two forces. One is conservativeness and another is the spirit for change. Some say we shall follow what we are following from generation to generation. But we should become what we should be."

In a very popular way the whole theory of evolution of Darwin and also all the history of social change of the world has been pointed out by Pandit Nilakantha. He has also pointed

out the reason of social evils of our society.

Panditji has not seen the division in the society among rich and poor. But there are two types of men; some are courageous and laborious, some are idles and cowards. Fear and idleness are the main obstructions for independent thinking and action. At the end of this long essay he appealed to the Hindus in the following words, "So my dear Hindu brothers, it is time to awake from the social stupors. You make yourself awake before time makes you awake hitting hard. Don't receive anything from the past as faultless. This is the age of independent thinking. Nobody is dependant on anybody in this age of rule of law. Now all are the masters in the world of thought and all are restrained in freedom. If you become careful, you can swim on the new wave of time. You can achieve your right which is inherent in every man. You can build your own free social life and free economy. Your glorious past will be revived and will create a new hope of bright future. The world will embrace you with friendship and honour you amply."

While writing on social reform Nilakantha once observed, "it is easier to break a house than to build one". Nilakantha has not seen only the dark side of our traditional society in which he was born. He was born in a village where Brahmin absolutism reigned supreme. Superstition, caste and prejudices were the root of all evils. Out of this dark side he discovered the greatness and sweetness latent in a traditional rural society. The folk customs, their oral literature gave him insight to understand the heart of the people. This helped him to become a true servant of the people. His object was to clear away the dead wood of ignorance. While preparing the people for the advent of new, he also prepared their mind to revive what is good in the old traditions. To him society is like a house. Before demolishing any part of it, the materials for future construction from all sources be made available. So he discarded traditional absolutism of the past and inspired all to move in the path of universal humanism.

As a man of the masses Nilakantha had to face the people as political worker. He was a great orator. His oral presentations, whether at an academic lecture or at a public rally were spellbinding, intensely energetic, seriously engaged with his subject, witty, erudite, he had a magnetic presence.

He edited several journals both periodicals and dailies. As in his social life so also in political life he was fighting against falsehood and deceit. Even as a teacher in Satyabadi he was writing in the famous daily paper named as 'Seva'. When Gopabandhu died in 1928 he edited for sometimes the famous daily 'Samaj'. When he was at the top of Congress Party of Orissa he was editing the monthly 'Naba Bharat' as a literary journal and 'Lokamata' weekly which was supporting Netaji's Forward Bloc. When Panditji alienated himself from the Congress Party in support of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, he published daily paper 'Naba Bharat'. But Nilakantha had a too independent mind. He could not stick to a particular institution or group. He established and sustained a modern press. So at last he had to give up his mind on journalism and devoted his full time for publication of the literary journal 'Naba Bharat'. It was published for more than ten years from 1935 to 1946 and again from 1950 to 1955. This journal was his life's dream. He wanted to build a new India with the idealism of Indian heritage and humanism of the modern West. The page of the journal was open for writers young and old and belonging to different political groups. One of the speciality of the journal was, it was not allowing publication of any article which was not written in good taste and pure linguistic style. Panditji himself was labouring tirelessly to improve the quality of writings of the new authors and correcting the outmoded views of old writers. He himself wrote a long article entitled 'Manab Pragatira Dhara' to impress others on his own view of progress based on duty and self-improvement not on right, competition and self-annihilation.

A few words need to be written about Nilakantha's concern

for the children. From very early age he wrote songs, stories and textbook for children. He wanted that every child should know about the culture and heritage of the past. While he was in jail he conceived of presenting all the great epics of India to children. His 'Pilanka Mahabharat', 'Pilanka Ramayan', and 'Pilanka Bhagabat' are unique contribution to children literature in Oriya. He even thought of adopting classical Oriya writings for the children. In 1955 he edited one textbook 'Sahitya Chandrika' for children.

Nilakantha as a prose writer has no parallel in Oriya. He has written for every segment of the society. He understood very well the mood and mind of his readers. Nilakantha's last book 'Atmajibani' came out in 1963. He never attempted to write novel, which "is the one bright book of life" as D. H. Lawrence has said. His autobiography is the 'bright book', of not only his life, but that of the whole society of friends and family, of fellow and folk, at home or jail, in life— private or public. His style, diction and language reached perfection, deliberately or not, in a process of recreation of a life which like all things human, fall short of what it might have been. An autobiography is to certain extent a book of confession, an attempt to reveal the truth. Here, as Andre Maurois says: "Poetry steals many a march on truth, the result is a species of novel which is truer to life than most works of fiction." Those who have gone through his criticism, philosophical discourse, social satire and the like will find a change from sublime to subtle, a subjective, personal, informal, conversational language jewelled with his wit, his wisdom and his characteristic erudition and humility.

Last Word : Myriad Mind

To understand the mind of a genius we are to follow him from the childhood, through all his creative life up to the end. Nilakantha's long life of eighty-three years is spread between two centuries diverse in many ways. If the nineteenth century was of idealism and theory the twentieth century was a century of action. During this long period our country and society also passed through many radical changes from slavery to freedom, from dark orthodoxy to the light of reason and enlightenment of the mind.

Nilakantha was born in an orthodox Brahmin family which lived in the environment of peace and plenty in a sleepy little village almost cut off from the world outside. There was no modern communication, no railways. The pilgrims and priests were driven by faith touching the dust of a land believed to be the abode of God. They were reading and reciting 'Puran', chanting mantra, and doing every thing for the imaginary life in the other world. They were bearing all the misfortunes in the name of fate. They had no faith in their own effort. But the time was changing. As a child Nilakantha saw the dawn of a new age. From the village 'Pathasala' he went to a modern school. The innocent and the inquisitive mind of the child got a scope for free play. He was the only male child in a family of seven sisters. His grand mother and parents were loving the only son from the core of their heart. His father was to mend his own ways to build the character of the son. There was a sense of pride in the family of the past glory of learning. His father was forty-five when Nilakantha was born. Though his father was not educated in modern light, yet he was trying hard to be out of the binding of orthodoxy

and superstition. Due to the pride of their superior caste the Brahmins were not even touching paper, due to cultivate land was derogatory to them. Nilakantha's uncle Pandit Harihar Das of whom he heard from his father was not only a great scholar in Sanskrit but also a champion of modern English education. With the help of English officials he established English schools in rural areas. His father cultivated his own land. To some extent he broke caste barrier in his own marriage. All this had salutary effect on the mind of the child. As a child he could argue with his God-fearing mother. Once in childhood Nilakantha took a banana from a bunch which was kept for offering to the Goddess. His mother was very much afraid of the wrath of the Goddess. Nilakantha asked, are all Goddesses not like loving mothers? More over they do not take any food. If a child like me take a ripe banana from the bunch kept for the Goddess why should she be angry with me? Rather, like a loving mother she will be very happy and do us good.

Nilakantha was a man more urban and rational. At a ripe old age he wrote his autobiography. In it he devotes much space to his childhood and paints the picture of old village society bringing out the beliefs and orthodox mode of life of the village priests, village physicians, the poverty and misery of the villagers, their innate virtue and simplicity. Up to the end of his life he was in spirit and mind a man of the village. In his early youth when he was merely a school teacher he built a small two storied house in his village at the wish of his father. Throughout his long life though he had to spend much of his time in big cities, he never built a house in a town. This village home and the life of a teacher were most dear to his heart. He once wrote to a friend from his own village when he was a teacher there thus : "the more I gather experience as a teacher the more I like to be with children, I wish to die on the chair of a teacher. Always with bright sunny faces around me I now live in a fairy world. Here I see man in his purest essence, untouched by the sad complexities

of advanced life especially of civilised race.”

We may take another instance from his life. He even judges his guru, political preceptor Gopabandhu in the light of his individual judgement, own philosophy of looking at the life and the world. He narrates this in his autobiography. Once Gopabandhu and Nilakantha together heard an outstanding oriental scholar who reading out and explained the entire Mahabharata to them for fifteen days. Then Gopabandhu asked Nilakantha to comment on the great epic. “Mahabharata would not have been incomplete without the character of Krishna” was his answer. Gopabandhu gazed at him for a while and said, “Never think this. It is a sin.” Nilakantha writes,

I have never seen the greatness of Gopabandhu in his religious attitudes. But he was a great worker dedicated to the service of man. I have seen and felt his magnanimity as man.

Nilakantha also looked at the greatest man of the time—Mahatma Gandhi in the same light of his own outlook. He narrates the event that took place during Gandhiji’s famous ‘padayatra’ from Puri to Cuttack. On his way the Mahatma saw a group of nomads taking their lunch on the roasted meat of wild cat. He invited them to share his food of boiled vegetables and fruits and explained to them that it was cruel to kill animals. He advised them to eat vegetables, milk and ghee. Probably, being unaware that they could not afford such things, Gandhiji visited Satyabadi Ashram school in 1923 when Nilakantha was there. Nilakantha writes in the autobiography, “Gandhiji spoke about spinning. In Satyabadi school spinning was introduced as a compulsory subject for teaching the students. We had much discussion on it. At last Gandhiji gave his opinion that the economic problem of Orissa and the whole of India would be solved by spinning and promoting Khadi. But I could not accept this opinion at all. Gandhiji could not satisfy me in his argument. At least I told him, then,

By faith and faith alone we embrace
Believing when we cannot prove.

These lines I quoted from Tennyson's "In Memorium". Gandhiji told, 'Exactly that is the attitude.' Nilakantha says, at that time he was not in a position to give up the path of reason and to be swept by faith. Only in 1921 he gave up the teaching job of the University of Calcutta to take part wholeheartedly in the noncooperation movement at the call of Mahatma. But soon he proved himself as a parliamentarian and in 1924 became the secretary of the Swarajya Party in Central Assembly. There also he on several occasions had to join issue with the powerful chairman of the party great Pandit Motilal Nehru. During the second world war he joined the fiery spirit of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. On an ideological difference he resigned from the Provincial Congress Presidentship in 1939 and became a right hand man of Subhas Bose in founding Forward Bloc. He gave responsive cooperation to the English so that our own youth could be trained militarily taking part in the great war to fight with foreign ruler when needed. Even after Independence he did not join any power-block and formed a separate party namely 'Swadhina Janasangha' late in life at the request of the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru he rejoined Congress and as the president of the Orissa Assembly he played a vital role in the democratic governance of our country.

As a patriot and political worker he has served his own age. But as a leader in the field of education and culture his work and ideas will live long to guide generations to come. Nilakantha along with Gopabandhu and Godabarish created a new school in Oriya literature known as 'Satyabadi Age'. This was followed by 'Sabuja Age.' Shri Annada Sankar Ray as a son of Orissa and founder of Sabuja Age paid his homage in the following words. 'Pandit Nilakantha Das came into prominence as one of the founder of the Satyabadi School, a unique institution situated in a sylvan surroundings, reminiscent

of the Tapovanas of Ancient India where the Risis lived with their families and taught their pupils. The idea caught our imagination when we were children.I was taken to Satyabadi by my uncle. Harish Chandra Ray, who had himself taught there for a short time. ...Thirty years after that (1954) I met Pandit Nilakantha at Santiniketan where he addressed a meeting. His subject was the Jagannath cult. By that time he was a grand old man and I too about fifty.For a long time Dr. Kunjabihari Das was the head of the department of Oriya at Santiniketan. It was he who brought Pandit Nilakantha Das to Santiniketan and introduced me to him. There after it fell to my lot to introduce the distinguished guest to the audience.

“Pandit Nilakantha was a pandit indeed, a man of great learning. The discourse he gave was most learned discourse. I am not the right man to assess his many splendoured personality. To me he appears to be first and foremost a SAVANT as the French say. In the second place, he is a master of Oriya prose. His autobiography reveals his mastery in style and diction. Though he was an eminent Sanskrit scholar he loved the genius of Oriya language and would not treat it as an ancillary of Sanskrit. In the third place, he was a considerable poet who had a gift for narration. The poetic element in his nature was suppressed by his educational and political preoccupations. Last but not least, he was an educationist whose name will survive as one of the founding fathers of the unique Satyabadi School.A university lectureship was a poor substitute and in any case it was temporary. He sought consolation in Gandhian politics which he soon substituted for parliamentary politics. In the end he became a *Vachaspati*, that is President of the Legislative Assembly.

“But I would rather think of him as a Vanaspati, a lord of the forest. ...He died at the height of his fame as the tallest tree of the Grove of Academe, as the Greeks would say. His name will survive as the Plato of Utkal.”

“It is easier to break a house than build one.” Nilakantha

summed up his approach to the problem of his day keeping the above motto in mind. He in every way tried to reconstruct the mind of people with a foresight which he gained through struggle and sacrifice. The prison was his real place for 'tapasya'. There the teacher of a single school became a prophet philosopher of mankind. He wrote a monumental 'Gitabhasya' and propounded the 'Purusottama Dharma' as the true meaning of Jagannath cult. Nilakantha had no faith in the conventional form of religion. He was an intellectual humanist. Yet to him Jagannath originally the God of the Sabar tribe had a special significance.

Nilakantha was a student of philosophy in the University of Calcutta. He got M.A. Degree in 1911. After a decade he was chosen as the first man to teach and build the post graduate department of Oriya in the University of Calcutta. This was possible for his dedicated work for study of the Oriya folk, classical and modern literature. His was a many sided genius. He was experimenting with new method of teaching science and all other subjects in the medium of mother tongue. That is why he had to research hard to find the real strength of the Oriya language. He wrote a descriptive grammar and studied linguistics and classical and modern literature. At the same time his work for social reform and service of the needy during natural calamities was going on unhindered. This experience in social service and teaching not only directly led him to his public career as a politician and a constructive worker but also made him a thinker and a creative writer. As in life so also in art he was an innovator and creator. He started writing first books for his own pupils in the school. He wrote for the rural folk for social reform. As an editor of newspapers and journals he wrote for the general masses. As an orator and writer the art of communication in language was his life long 'sadhana', his life's mission. This he confessed before the All Orissa Writers Conference, 'I staved life's sojourn to serve The Muse with dedication. In youth this was my inspiration

to build my life. But a time came when I felt for the health of a sick nation and society ... all are to join the ghostly dance of the swift footed Goddess of wealth and power. This ghostly dance is politics and in our country this has become illusory like the arena of magic performed by a 'Hathayogi'. There is neither the lustre of the Art of The Muse nor the sure footed march of a western army. There is only uncertainty and self abnegation. While forgetting the 'self' of mine in this tumult and fury I heard the sacred voice of the savants of the muse. I awoke from slumber. This voice soothes my heart like the sound of a flute coming from a calm, sombre distant forest in repose under the setting sun. I forget all my shortcomings, shun all inhibitions and join the band to serve the Muse."

A man dies. His actions cease. But the ideals live for ever. Nilakantha lived and worked to fulfil a dream which he dreamt for the whole mankind. His deeds will live. The words he uttered at the end of the life of his master Gopabandhu seem more true for him.

Let your memory bequeath faith
Fill the world with the fire of youth
Oh Nilakantha*
Dying you live to defy death.

•

* In original : 'Oh Gopabandhu'.

Translations : Poetry and Prose

THE BLESSED LAND

This is Utkal the land where
The sands of the sea shore invokes the lofty mountains,
The rivers flow into the sea,
The ploughmen sit and sing on fields, dales and orchards
The waves of Chilika a vast a watery mass dance
Oh them dance the long shadow of the mountains
On her shore like waves rise
The ranges of Mahendra mountains
The coastal plains of Coromandal is charming with
coconut groves.

Oh mother Ramachandi!
Was this land there when Konarak born
The enemies looking with awe and fear?
Beholding the charm and splendour of this land
You descended from heaven.
The Lord of Nilachala left his heavenly abode.
Is this the land where
The saints and prophets were love bound?
All the revolutions and discord proved false
The ploughmen turned soldiers
When there was need for supreme sacrifice
Their bugles roaring high above the Himalayas?
Oh mother Ramachandi, you have beholden
You have borne the burnt of time
Why are you silent?

THE PRINCE AND TANKA THE REBEL

Oh Tanka, today I knew that you are a great hero,
You did not hide as a coward.
Then tell me why you move in darkness as a thief
And steal the wealth of my subjects?
Is this the duty of a warrior class?
You do not obey the law of the land.
You plunder the innocent and hide in forest:
A true hero does not hanker after others' wealth,
rather die.

Oh Prince, you denounce us as thief!
Tanka who was silent with all humility slowly raised
his head,
Looked face to face with the prince nonchalantly
His eyes wide open, with voice undaunted spoke;
"Still I am not beheaded. I do not fear.
Our honour desecrated, wealth turned into dust.
This beautiful green land of ours is bleeding.
That prison is my sweet home where all my dear ones
have gone.

Who is thief, tell me, oh prince.
Who is hankering upon others' wealth?
You the great inheritor of the dynasty of Chodaganga
Tell me on whose wealth you are sustained in this land?
How do you venture to speak this lie
That the Dhankasa nabar, the Ekamra forest is your kingdom?
Our forefathers entered this virgin land of forests,
And created with hard labour this wealth, the cities.
Did any of your forefathers ever lend them helping hand?
On whose wealth you have built the nine storeyed palace
on the bank of Mahanadi?

Are you not snatching the wealth created by others' labour
for your luxury?

From thirteen rivers apart you came to address the son
of the land as thief.

When you do not find enough for your luxury

You are out for war to inflict destruction on innocent.

You think the subject know nothing

You only know where lies their happiness

You consult the shrewd flatterers and deceivers
to judge the mind of your subject.

In this world is this the godly justice?

He who has might is not a thief.

Is this the duty of the Kshatriya, a hero's errand?

I am defeated, what shall I tell your more."

Mother, Oh mother, I have no words to speak

I could not save your honour.

When I am bidding farewell to you

Your tears I see flowing in hundreds of your rivers.

I have not gone to any foreign land.

How could I know the pains of parting?

When I go hunting a little far, I could not forget you.

Now I am going for ever to a land

from where none returns.

In which heaven shall I be in peace?

Oh prince, is there no inferno in this forest?

Do please throw me there."

(Konarke p.366)

LAST WORDS

As the stars burn and vanish in the sky,
The dark clouds float away,
As the cuckoo's song flood the forest
 along the murmur of the wind,
The same way the memories of the distant past
Created ripples of joy and sorrow in the heart.
The same way the sweet music of the flute
 and the song of the poet created ripple
And faded in the blue dome of the night sky.
The poet laid down his flute on the ground
And with a smile on his face looked.
I stared in the dim light of the lamp to his face
 wonder struck
Paused a little, and then the poet opened his lip.
"Who is hearing our song?
We would be happy if one only hears us.
Who cares for the presentation?
Oh my son, I will sing of the past that gone by.
Will you believe that?"
"The proud peasants, the proud king
 with them the vast land bubbled.
The bards singing love's happy note
The country and town were full of golden crown.
This Utkala was the abode of gods.
The kings were godly.
This land was the play ground of the goddess of wealth
And the goddess of Muse's cherished home.
What will you find here my son?
Everywhere there is dirt and darkness
The country and towns are pale and lifeless."
I only dream, dream of the past gone by

The memories make me forget the present.
I sing, only sing alone inside my cottage."
"Oh poet live, live with the great history with you
Sing, oh sing, in this lonely wilderness.
The rivers and mountains will hear your song
And the creepers will hear
on the broken walls of the crumbling forts."

(Konarke : p.407)

LIFE OF A PRISONER

It is winter night. The prism like white moon is fading.
The music of the prisoners handcuff is resounding.

Soon it will be dawn, doors will be open.

The east will paint her face with vermillion and kumkum.
Many a saintly hero will wake up

Like the saints waking up in the caves of the Himalayas.

The sages of the Himalayas go to the spring for 'tarpan'.

But the heroic saints will go to open tapes shivering
in cold.

They will recite the incantation of their 'sadhana'

And will satisfy the spirit and soul of their forefathers.

The prisoners will be looking toward the high prison wall
Where the sun will be rising slowly as if out of fear.

They will look at the same hackneyed scene

That patch of grass and earth, that prison gate

The line of prisoners like the line of lamb

With blanket, short shirt, half pant, leg below knee bare

To whom they will protest, they have no courage,

Why they are here?

Some one out of hunger stole a cucumber

Some one has told a lie out of fear to the policeman.

Some one has come to the prison by the might of the
Daroga's pen.

The Daroga who could not find out the real culprit
sent this innocent to the prison.

Some one who could not satisfy the greed of Daroga
came indicted as murderer.

The Daroga is now a Raibahadur and the 'dagi' is in jail
only for eleven years.

Some one was a rich villager, all say so.

The land-lord, a bigman, who loots his rich villagers
 with the help of the police and send them to prison.
 So they say, 'the Mohapatra loots and others look dazed.
 Being in prison they have given up the hope of their
 land and family,

When they will return nothing will be there.

All are shivering in cold with one iron pan in their hand.

This is the pot to drink, to eat, to wash.

They are to keep it in hand always clean.

The government doctor knows how many diseases this cure.

This iron goes to stomach and makes the blood red.

This cures the enlarged spleen and this is their only medicine.

Food is not so important. Who cares it!

Everything is measured in the smallest weight of
 'tola' (ten gram).

The rice, vegetables, pulses, lemon and tamarind

Except salt nothing is spent beyond the given amount.

All are 'hakima', all are Officers, only the prisoners are thief.

But no body knows where the grocery goods vanish.

The fruits and vegetables in the prison garden washed away
 in flood.

Only the 'Saru' remains for the prisoners because
 it is so hard.

Also remains carrot after it gave seeds to mix with
 rotten potatoes.

Fortunately they get little 'sag' and 'chatni'.

If they suffer from stomach trouble and could eat
 they are punished by canning.

If they want a little more, they are made to stand handcuffed.

No body cares for slapping, kicking, beating on knee.

They are prisoners living in water

The crocodiles are taking their care.

To whom they will protest, who will hear?

If the ward-keepers are dissatisfied when all in empire
 will be ruined

Not only the crocodiles, there are also whale and
shark moving around.
But in a country far away to swallow everything
there are 'Raghava' made of conch shell.
"Petty people quarrel among themselves and suffer."
That is why always their eyes shed tears.

SHRIPANCHAMI

Today is a morning in spring.

India is festive joyfully.

Flowers blooming in garden, birds chirping in the nest.

With the conch's sound bright sun rises,

The trees and creepers having shed the dew looking lovely.

The winter has gone, gone with it the dullness from everywhere

The innate world of animate and inanimate vibrates
with song.

The god's mercy pervades this lovely world.

With love and compassion the Nature shines.

In flowers and leaves on groves and trees, the goddess of beauty blooms.

The reflection of this beauty is in every face

The world is filled with joy.

With this joy the god's mercy open the door of knowledge
for the young and old.

Therefore all take it granted that this day the mother
of all Vedas-Bharati was born.

The Indians have become so righteous
meditating the Bharati in their worldly life.

The Indian poets opened the door of Nature worshipping goddess Bharati.

Poets like Kalidas, Bhababhuti, Valmiki and Vyasa
freely played in the heart of Nature.

Their names are known in the whole world

And the whole world hears them in wonder.

What a sorrow! That Bharati is now not in India.

Superstition is worshipped as Bharati.

The school children only worship images painting on coconut with offerings.

They break a coconut for fulfilment of their heart's desire.

How strange it is! What a ghastly idea!
What a unwholesome result,
What a suffering for the whole nation for this
superstitious faith.
India today is lying in dust, her people are looked down.
They have lost love for knowledge.
They are worshipping images of clay,
They fast, take sweets as 'prasad'
And thus they worship knowledge.
They always forget the difference between natural and
supernatural.
And thus becoming uncivilised devoid of learning.
If the Bharati resides in an image, then the 'prasad' would
give the taste of learning.
The inanimate would have become saturated with emotion
and the stone could speak.
A day was there when people were worshipping the Nature
as supreme.
Everywhere there was life flowing, the stone was singing,
Lofty ideas are taking shape.
But alas! Today life in India is dry
the tongue of knowledge is silent.
The sons of India are mute witness of her past.
Once we had everything they shout, but today
there is nothing.
The whole country is enchained with the snare of superstition.
There is no light of science, no power of noble deeds.
The sacred worship of Bharati was famous in the days
of Veda and Purana.
Alas! Being bound by superstition bears profane fruit.
Be that superstition. There is great truth in its root.
Let the closed door of truth be opened and
the darkness vanish.

MESSAGE OF INTROSPECTION

Where are you, where are you, in which void?
In the midst of this great hospice see how the void blooms.
I have searched Him in the forest
On the sea below and on the sky above
In life, in death, among the stars
In the great play of Nature
On the boundless time's eternal play.

Silently the stars scan the sky,
Silently life blooms in the vast space,
Silently playing in the waves the times' stream flows,
The universe silently paints the unblemished art.
Where are you in which mysterious world?
The spring sun enchants the sky,
Sun sets, again rises with what love!
What a great song pervades the world.

(Bhakta Vani : Kahin achha keun soonya dese)

TO WHOM I AM WAITING FOR

Oh Lord, can I not tell you my heart's desire?
I am waiting and waiting for days and night in vain
Where can I meet you?
In how many ways and in which law you have
chained me?
I want to speak out
But where is the word in my mouth?
You are everywhere in the wide space and endless time
Are you not in my heart, oh Lord?
In my labour, in my rest whose gesture shines?
For whom is this life, work and meditation?
Days are passing, where am I floating?
Whom am I waiting, with what hope?

(Bhakta Vani : Kahaku basichi chahin)

WHEN THOSE GOLDEN DAYS WILL RETURN

When those golden days will return to India
The days of Buddha and Paresanatha?
Nonviolence was shining like sword
Conquering the desires, men were becoming hero.
The wealth of friendship filled every heart.
Sugata, the noble was moving in houses and in tents
Solacing and counselling grieved and wounded.
As cloud freely moves on the sky
And also sometimes descend on mountains
So also the Buddha's disciples
Sacrificing all the worldly pleasure, ruling over the kings.

But today they invade the weak
Drink their blood alive by trick,
They want to grab then the world treacherously.
This is the way of the western civilisation.
How will they understand the law of Sugata?
In life they know only their own pleasure.
They speak like the proverbial heron.
How will they give others' their right?
They want to grab the whole of the world.
They want to drive the people from their own motherland
And to settle their countrymen there.
With luxury goods they fill the world
And kill people by denying their livelihood.
They do not know to fight face to face
They fight like coward by crooked trick.

(Kharavela)

ON LITERATURE

In a way, Literature is an expression of the growth of society. The measure of this growth is culture and the state of the culture can be judged from literatures. So from customs to poetry, from science to painting, from architecture to folk habits all are elements of literature.

The evolution of literature is to be known from thought and philosophy, importunity and creativity, feeling and experience. In Oriya the words 'chahani', 'chalani' and 'chamaka' speak of everything about culture. 'Chahani' includes all principles and theories, 'chalani' includes all social commerce and creation, and 'chamaka' means the unbounded explosion of emotions of a wonder-struck mind. Everywhere fusion of this emotion in philosophy, art and poetry attract man towards joy.

Although the development of culture is evident in art and inventions of science, things created to fulfil the needs of man, the language is the main vehicle of culture. In all our creation there is the element of literature. But only in language where episode, narration, thought is expressed, we are to trace the evolution of literature.

When it is expressed in writing, we easily understand what is literature. So written literature is taken as literature. But though not expressed in writing in oral form there may be stories, songs and sayings which people learn by tradition. These are sometimes more lovely and more lively. There was a time when only this type of literature was available. There was no knowledge about writing. When there was no printing press this type of folk and oral literature was widely prevalent. In our 'Puran' and epics we find the collection of this folk literature created in pre-literate society.

INVASION AND INFLUENCE IN LITERATURE

The literature of languages of the Santhal, Gond, Vil and the like has been fully or partly lost. This has happened due to the invasion of other languages or literatures. Always this is happening in different societies. This invasion on language is more or less like the invasion for wealth or land and also goes along with it. As a result of self-defence many new and powerful languages have been born. New literatures have flourished. Where language fails to retain the literature, it loses identity. The literature is also lost or merged with that of the victorious.

In this age language and literature are the foundation of social reconstruction and growth. Society was born when man invented the language to express thought and feeling. Then literature was born. Today crossing many a hurdle again the roots of the society is being traced in language and literature. We shall have to follow the natural process of growth. As we prune a tree to make it more useful, so also we shall have to restructure the society and literature for its healthy growth. A society evolved on the foundations of language and literature of a land should be saved from the invasion of other languages and literature to follow the natural course of growth.

A society can be based on blood relations, on religion, on exploitation of other people, on the obedience to a king or leader, or on dogmatic altruism or on the language and literature. Of all these where the society grows on the basis of literature that is the best development of human society. In the evolution of Oriya literature we shall have to understand its identity and individuality in the domain of Indian and world literature, and trace its history to know how it has faced many invasions, how it defended and restructured itself.

ORIYA LITERATURE

The eternal powerful flow of Oriya literature has not dried up. Through the ages past it has faced the proud victors, it has imitated others out of inferiority complex. But we shall have to look upon its true identity. This can rightfully add elan vital to the cultural heritage of the world. Today we are not physically dependent. It is time to make ourselves free in thought and mind. Arise ! Awake! In knowledge and action, in outlook and character, enlighten the world.

(Oriya sahityar kramaparinam)

ON POETRY AND POET

Poets are generally emotional. In the domain of art to make poetry more alive many poets look towards sexual symbol. They strive hard to win the heart of their reader by utilising deftly sensual theme. But this is not at all difficult. Rather it is easy to be swayed by this carnal instinct in the name of love. Nowadays many artists and poets in their poetry, drama and stories make this their only theme. There are people who judge the merit of poetry on the ability of the poets in treating love theme. In fact, in the poems of little merit one finds no other things to enjoy. But the real poet never satisfies himself with this easily available soft currency of love.

(Atmajibani, p.143)

ON SERVICE

To sacrifice one's own pleasure, own consummation and own content for the sake of others is service. This service is the best 'Karma Yoga' for man. In every living being we see God. In every step we pray for his blessing. We are unshaken in

our faith for the liberation of mankind. With the blessing of the Father of the universe let our service be fruitful and reach the goal.

(Seva, May 18, 1921)

DESIRE AND DUTY

Let us have a look at a forest. The tress, creepers, flowers make the forest beautiful. This beauty is the symbol of the universal good. Let us look at the universal selfgrowth. One big tree produces how much seeds! If a plant would sprout from each seed and survive within a decade there will be no space in the entire world for only one species of tree. Then where can we find the beauty of the world in diversity? Where can the universal good be found? This nature of development is found also in society. There is no end to the desires. But if we give way for survival of all the desires, then there will be no good, no beauty— so no truth. We shall have to direct our desires and actions in such an ideal measured way, which will be good for the entire humankind. It is the desire that drives us on the path of attaining good. Desire never dies. Only the cease of action will be the death of desire. No action means no life. If one gives up action the sojourn of the body will stop. From this body springs religion that leads us to salvation. Without action there will be no body. How will we be free? How will the spirit grow? Only being absorbed in action we shall have to find which is impure action 'akarma'. We shall be content with whatever we get fulfilled in the wide endless world of desires. If God will fulfil all our desires there will be no truth, no goodness, no beauty in the society. We should know that the seed of eternal growth of the self lies in desire. There is also truth in this. Our body is the seat of all our achievements, actions and desires. The seed of universal good is anchored in the body. All the seeds are

striving to become a tree. But the beauty of the revealed reality is not destroyed by them. Such is the duty (dharma) of the individual in the society. One should strive. But at the same time one should be content at whatever one gets. One should thus do his duty.

(Gita prabesh p.153)

SOUL'S RELATION WITH THE UNIVERSE

The child when born expresses itself through some independent actions. He never tolerates hindrance and protests through the expanding action of crying. That is not all. The Nature sets this mode of self expression through her action and keep the mother's breast ready for the child. His desires are fulfilled. When the sun shines the child opens his eyes. His eyes feel the light. His action of seeing begins. He kicks his legs. It hurts. He controls the kicking. In this way the self's action is being related to and revolted against the work of Nature. Thus the value of the objective world is understood. How much one should be involved to express oneself is understood. More we come in contact with the world more we get the right knowledge to express nicely. Thus we understand the laws of expressions. From amoeba to man, from a particle to the sun, from all our attachment and contentment in life, this eternal law of expression is revealed. This action and interaction in individual 'byakti' and the whole world 'visva' goes on and on. The relation of the individual with the world is varied. They are separated and at the same time related. The existence of the individual has no meaning without it being a part of the whole universe. From one side we see the individual and on the other side we see the world. Each of them have independent existence and at the same time dependent each other. So thus 'bhog' and 'tyag, enjoyment and denial are the counterpart of the same coin.

(Gita prabesh p.328)

ON THE RELIGION OF DEVOTION

Devotion is a dangerous thing in human society. The devotee is intolerant. He is an outright liar. He invents unbelievable fictitious actions of his person of veneration and says these are truth. He tinges his idealism with the covetous untruth and preach that in society. This is a weakness of man and the greatest disease in society.

(Atmajibani p.149)

ON LIBERTY

In the modern world, liberty is not the goal. The goal is people's liberty. Every individual will be independent, he will feel that he is enjoying liberty. From the old conception of liberty, the liberty of the new age should evolve. What will be its philosophy? What will be the action plan? This should be clearly stated by the leaders. Giving leadership in petty matters the leaders are dragging the country towards destruction.

(Nababharat)

ON RELIGION OF THE POSITIVE TRUTH

In India ones at a time the Positive truth was revealed. This we find in the Upanisads—'Oh! The self is a thing one should first hear about it, then think about it, and think over it diligently to understand it.' In this self there is no difference between man and woman, between owner and worker, rich and poor. All the constraint of the world is not found in self. When man raises himself to the religion of the self, all really become equal.

(Bidhatanka srusty—Nababharat, 1st issue-1935)

WORLD SOCIAL ORDER

Before time comes with all its grinding force to awake you, you awake yourself. Today mundane altruism or right of inheritance by birth is not all powerful. Nobody's blunder will be admitted as the saying of Veda. In this age of independent thinking and in the domain of ethics none is slave to other. All are bound by 'principle'. In the domain of thought all are the emperors and all are disciplined by freedom. So in this age of hope, arise and awake! The whole world of social republic is waiting for you. Be enlightened with individual freedom and discipline yourself with the social freedom and join that republic of the world of social order.

(Achhun o hebun G.B. p.458)

ON CHARAKHA

Spinning was accepted as a subject for teaching at the Satyabadi school. After much discussion Gandhiji was of opinion that the problem of poverty in Orissa and the economic crisis in the country can be solved by spinning. I could not at all agree to this view as Gandhiji could not satisfy me with his arguments. At last I told :

By faith and faith alone we embrace
Believing when we cannot prove.

I quoted these lines from "In Memorium" of Lord Tennyson. Gandhiji replied, "exactly this is the attitude." But I was not in a position to discard the path of reason for the sake of a belief.

(Atmajibani—N. G. Part-1, p.91)

FROM SPEECHES AND REMARKS IN CENTRAL
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

(Speech in support of the schemes for putting all Oriya speaking tracts under one local administration.)

The present Orissa inherits the culture of three ancient provinces; one is Kalinga, another is Utkal, and the third is Udra. Ancient Kalinga was the first colony of the Aryans on the fringe of the Dravida country. The clear history extends so far back as the 7th century B. C. It comprises the coastal strip from Calcutta or Tamluk to the southern extremity of Ganjam. This was the Kalinga, which was conquered by Asoka, the king of Magadha, whose conquests made a saint of him. Kalinga had a robust culture and the present colossal art of Orissa which is a distinct type of Aryan art is the remnant of the development of ancient Kalinga art, which in original may be found even now in the cave temples of Orissa. The seafaring habits and navigation of Kalinga are well known.

Then Kalinga was a strong Buddhist centre of culture. The Buddhist religion made a stronghold there. When it was again Hinduised the stream of culture came from Udra country which extended over the southeast portions of the present Central province; and I may say here that the present temple of Jagannatha, which stands out as a religious monument through out India, is a gift of the Udras, and the present Orissan culture may well be proud of that temple, where no caste or untouchability is in practice. This you will find nowhere in India. The culture is purely Orissan. Orissa has kept it up. But that Orissa is not recognised to be a distinct individual factor in the Indian federation of races.

Orissa was in history, always a separate province. It was a flourishing state. Even during wars with neighbouring states, it could build up a robust art and literature and it could spend enormously on religious art and other institution of religious and social importance. The extent of Orissa, which is now

claimed to be from Midnapur to the southern point of Ganjam and from the shores of the seas to somewhere beyond Singhbhum and in the Eastern Central province, is not a recent discovery. In olden times it was much larger in extent and a powerful kingdom. Even during the palmy days of Bahamony, Vijayanagaram and Bengal, our kings kept up their independence and carried their mighty peasant militia into the very heart of those countries and our separate existence as an independent race and kingdom was kept up till the later half of the 16th century, when no other province in India except Khandesh—which perhaps succumbed about the same time, kept its independence against the imperial Moghul arms. Then when Akbar took it he understood the position. He was a statesman, and not a mere conqueror. He could understand the necessity of the separate existence of the Oriya people and he made it a separate province. Throughout the Moghul rule it remained separate.

Then conquest after conquest came, and we were treated like a football. Perhaps during the British regime matters have been carried to the extreme length. ...The famous historian W. W. Hunter has admitted how the British Government was responsible for the famine and the poverty of our ancient land.

It is quite natural that we should like to be a separate province as we have been throughout the course of our history, but for about two hundred years, when on account of the fault of this imperial Government we have been vivisected and thrown in portions here and there. And it is natural that even at a great risk to our economic life we should much like to be a separate province.

THE IDEAL AND OUTLOOK IN EDUCATION

(An extract from the paper read at the Benaras Session of the All Asian Education Conference on 29.12.1930)

The ideal of education is always the fulfilment of human destiny. The destiny has, for a long time, been fashioned

according to the wishes of the state. A system of national education controlled by the state is a present necessity for the very cultural existence of the East. This arrangement has come to stay. But the basic outlook of Eastern life should not, therefore, be overlooked.

I have no antipathy for the English language as such for it introduces a man into one of the biggest literature of the world. So also do languages like French and German in their own way. Men with educational and cultural ambition ought to study one or more of them. But the intention of making English the medium of education in this country was obviously different. To the convenience of a handful of Englishmen in this county as the ruling caste the entire system had to be adapted. Indian youth were consequently made to learn a language and nothing else all their lives. Thus the growth of humanity in culture was stunted. A boy's self-confidence, the very basis of his self-realisation, was undermined and inferiority complex became the inevitable result. The educated and the common folk lost touch with each other. The ruling class came to be a class different from the ruled. The educationist looking to cultural destiny of the race cannot afford to overlook things like this. For if India is at all destined to live, not merely as a mass of humanity, but as a cultural entity, the educationist must find out how to guide it and give it a creative character.

The destiny of the East is to fulfil her destiny by adding the real human aspect to the culture of the world.

MY UNCLE

My uncle, Pandit Harihar Das was born some time in October 1842 and died on the 9th February 1874, about ten and half years before I was born. I have not seen him but heard of him from my father. My father was forgetting everything when he was telling about the brave deeds and outstanding merit of his younger brother. I have heard this again and again as

enchanting fairy tales and still imagine I have not known a visionary so active, so liberal, so talented and so daring like him. He had no alphabetic knowledge even up to the age of fourteen. Once he went to Puri and heard the oration of a Pandit in Sanskrit. He was so inspired to learn the language of gods that he started learning first from the village pandit and then went to Dhenkanal (a princely state) to learn Sanskrit from a famous Pandit Jayee Misra. Lastly he went to Nadia-Nabadweep and established himself at Puri. Sanskrit was to him like his first language. He became a great creator. It pained him much to see the society chained in abject dogmatism. He devoted fully to cure the society of this evil. In our village in those days people were not even touching paper out of fear to lose caste. By learning English they feared that they would become Christian. The first step my uncle took was to discard the traditional dress. He dressed himself like a European and moved from village to village riding on horse. He persuaded the people to get the benefit of modern school education. Out of his small earning as a Sanskrit teacher he started a school in his own village and with the help of the English officials he established many others. With his sacred memory the school he founded in our village afterwards became the famous Satyabadi Open Air School.

My uncle was not a rich man. He had his mother and wife. Still he freely allowed the young poor students to stay with him at his Puri house. Late Dibyasinha Misra who was the first graduate in the Puri district was one of them. There were many to oppose him. But due to his power of reasoning, amiable personality, motive of selfless service no opposition could stand on his path. Many were attracted to him and he was respected and loved by the people. He had great influence on the poet Madhusudan Rao, who was a boy of Puri.

At that time Mr. Beams was the collector of Puri. When Harihar and the collector came to know each other they became also teacher of each other. Mr. Beams learnt Sanskrit and Oriya,

and Harihar learnt English and Greek. Beams wrote his famous grammar of seven Aryan languages and Harihar translated the Greek dramas. I have heard about the friendship between these two great men. They were writing to each other in Sanskrit.

After Mr. Beams Mr. Gadis became the collector. He also became a student of him to learn Sanskrit and Oriya. He was so much charmed with his personality and learning that he made all arrangements to send him to England.

At that time with his own effort and money he came forward to open a School for Sanskrit learning. The school was opened two years before the great famine of Orissa in 1866, on the Kumar Purnima day (full moon day of the Indian Calendar, Kartik.) Of course the school itself was a small one when it was started. But there was a great dream of Harihar behind it. I have seen the appeal he made and the plan he prepared for this institution. His dream has not been fulfilled. That dream will be a source of great inspiration for the development of this institution. He wanted to make it a residential school where all the branches of languages, literature, philosophy and science be studied and research be done.

As a first step he wanted to raise a fund of rupees one lakh at that time. He made appeal with recommendation of English officials of the Education Department. He himself went to Uttar Pradesh and the king of Balarampur who was a patron of Sanskrit learning donated rupees five thousand and five hundred. He also became a patron of this institution and provided funds for free fooding of the students to have 'prasad' from the temple of Jagannath. Many other zamindars and princely states also came to support him.

The great famine known as 'Na-ank' came. One third of the population perished. But Harihar was undeterred. He arranged food and clothing and expenses for all. The school never suffered.

There is a story. Very often Harihar was going on tour. Once his old mother was ailing. He was the only son. Members

of his family asked him not to go. If something happens to the old lady, who will lit the pyre? But with his usual gait he told them. 'I am her only son and I am so attached to her that I cannot tolerate the scene.'

While returning from the Northern India he stayed for few days in Calcutta. At that time Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj was living there. He was preaching against idol worship. Harihar joined a session and spoke in favour of traditional worship. Dayanand was very much impressed and invited him to his 'gurukul'. He also assured him to raise fund.

In 1872 on way to Rajputana Harihar became ill in Calcutta. His brain deranged. He became dumb. After all the possible treatments he was brought to Puri. He was interned in a room. One day he was there alone. An oil fed lamp was burning. He himself dressed in the suit which was made for his visit to England. He was loitering unmindfully. The dress was caught fire. Suddenly he spoke in loud voice again. With a half burnt body he was lying down on green banana leaves. He uttered his last word, his epitaph. The nice Sanskrit verse can be freely rendered thus—I could not meditate on God to get salvation from the worldly life. I could not gain piety to be blessed in heaven. I could not enjoy the bliss of conjugal life. I was only born to be an axe to slash the green youth of my mother.

(Sanskrit o sanskruti)

It was 'kumarpurnima' (full-moon day of Kartik). On that evening the death anniversary of Pandit Harihar Das was held at our village. I can never forget in my life the address Gopabandhu gave that day. It was on that very day the work for Satyabadi School started. The village library of Shriramchandrapur was named as Harihar Library.

Gopabandhu was the pillar. All the ideas and dreams for Satyabadi School were of his. He was our inspiration. But

he himself was inspired by the memory of late Pandit Harihar Das, the founder of the Puri Sanskrit College Neither I nor Gopabandhu have seen him. He died in 1874. It was an untimely premature death. But as if his soul descended on Gopabandhu. He was often speaking about Harihar raptly. He wrote a poem on him in the journal 'Mukur'. This was before the establishment of Satyabadi School. I still remember the lines :

Mook hoi kari aji jaen Hari
 Jeba rahithanta banchi!
 Odianka hate dei thanta sate
 Unnati bhandar kanchi.

(Even being dumb if Hari would have lived till today, he could have given the key of the storehouse of progress to the people of Orissa.)

(Atmajibani p.60)

MY FIRST MEETING WITH GOPABANDHU

Gopabandhu was then a student either in B.A. class or in B.L. class. Haribhaina was reading F.A. and was staying with him in the same college hostel. They were intimate friends. I was often hearing from him about Gopabandhu. In one summer vacation he was in the village. He took me along with Ananta Misra, who was also a student in Puri Zilla school to see Gopabandhu in his village Suando. It is about five miles from our village on the bank of Bhargabi river.

We heard that he was not staying in home during the vacation. He was married and had become the father of a son and a daughter. He lived like an astute devout Hindu family man. We started early in the morning and reached there much ahead of noon. He was staying on the outskirts of the village at the temple of the goddess Jageswaree and observing *saptanga*. Saptanga or *saptanga* is a ritual to recite the whole twelve parts of Bhagabata Puran written by the sixteenth century poet

Jagannath Das in Oriya. I saw a calm and majestic figure seated on the ground on a mat holding a bunch of palm-leaf manuscript on both the hands in a posture of strait spine and face downward and the recitation was going on in a musical flowing voice. There were three or four listeners and the priest of the temple with strip of sandal pest on his forehead. We took our bath in the river and took prasad. At the afternoon the recitation was over and we took sunned rice offered to the goddess on banana leaf. I was then an orthodox Brahmin boy and could hardly take prasad cooked by a lower caste 'sebaka'.

OUR VOW ON THE BANK OF RIVER BHARGABI

The temple is on the river bank and below is the stream of water, beyond that there is the dry bed of the river. The sandy bed of the river serves as the burning place (smanan) of the nearby village Balapur during the summer months. It was moonlit night. The sky was clear. At the other end of the black jet of water the sand was shining like silver dust. At that time cholera was epidemic in the area. The village Balapur was worst effected. A few could afford to burn the corps. Dead bodies were scattered on the sand. This happens during famine or epidemic. That night we, four of us, sat under the shady moonlight of the banyan tree on the river bank. On the other side of the river jackals were howling. Biers, coffins and unburnt corpses were clearly visible to us. We were not minding that. We were talking endlessly. Very few can talk like Gopabandhu. More over we were child before him. We were charmed to hear him. His every word was touching our heart. The setting moon had gone behind the horizon. The night dawned. We forgot ourselves. At last we decided that after completing our education we should not go for government services. We shall do something for the country. We shall see it to be in a better state than what we saw at the time of our birth.

Major events in the life of Nilakantha

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1884 | Born on 5th August, Vill : Sriramchandrapur, P.S. Satyavadi, Dt. Puri. |
| 1889 | Passed Middle Vernacular Examination. Admitted to Puri Zilla School. |
| 1905 | Passed Matriculation Examination Married Radhamani Debi. |
| 1909 | Passed B.A. Examination. Started Satyabadi Bana-Vidyalyaya with his mentor Gopabandhu Das. |
| 1911 | Passed M.A. Degree Examination of Calcutta University in Philosophy. Became a regular teacher in Satyabadi School and was also the Headmaster. His critical and poetical works appeared in journal. |
| 1918 | Left Satyabadi School and worked as a whole time social servant. Did relief work in Davar famine. |
| 1920 | Joined Calcutta University as lecturer in Oriya in newly started Dept. of Modern Indian Languages. |
| 1921 | Gave up University service and joined the noncooperation movement at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. |
| 1924-1945 | Went to jail several times. Member of the Central Legislative Assembly for three terms. |
| 1934 | Edited Monthly Literary Journal 'Naba-Bharat' |
| 1938 | President of the Utkal P.C.C. (Provincial Congress Committee). |
| 1942 | Left Congress Party. |
| 1952 | Formed 'Swadhin Jana Sangh' party. Elected to Orissa Assembly. |
| 1954 | Joined National Congress Party. |
| 1957 | Speaker of Orissa Assembly. |
| 1958 | President of Orissa Sahitya Akademi. Recipient of Padma Bhusan. |
| 1964 | Received Sahitya Akademi Award for autobiography. |
| 1967 | Died on the 5th November. |

A list of works of Nilakantha

- 1918 Upasana (Devotional songs)
- 1919 Pranayinee (epic poem). Konarke (epic)
- 1920 Kharavela (epic poem)
- 1921 Arya jiban (a treatise on the life of the Aryan)
- 1923 Dasnayak (long poem). Pilanka Ramayana (Ramayana for the children)
- 1924 Pilanka Mahabharata (Children's Mahabharat)
- 1925 Pilank Bhagabata (Children's Bhagabata)
- 1931 Odia Vyakaran (Part I & Part II)
- 1936 Bhagabata Gita (with new analysis on Gita)
- 1948 Odia Sahityara Kramaparinam (Part I)
- 1951 Sanskrut o Sanskruti (Sanskrit and Culture)
- 1953 Odia Sahityara Kramaparinam (Part II)
- 1954 Odia Bhasa O' Sahitya (collection of essays)
- 1955 Sahitya Chandrika (Collection for young readers)
- 1963 Atmajibani (An autobiography)
Collected Works—Part I & II
Periodicals & news papers edited by Nilakanth
- 1918 Satyabadi (Work with Gopabandhu)
- 1921 Seba (9 Fortnightly paper on views)
- 1934 Nababharat (Monthly Literary Journal)
- 1936 Lokamata (Daily news paper)
Compilation of speeches
- 1959 Speeches and remarks of Pandit Nilakantha Das
(Vol. I) Edited by P. C. Dey

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