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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF ODISHA AS THE MILIEU OF GURUPRASAD MOHANTY'S KAALAPURUSHA

**\*Santosh Kumar Nayak**

Assistant Professor and Head, P.G. Department of Odia Language and Literature, Government College,  
Dayananda Vihar, Koraput, Odisha 764021, India

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#### ABSTRACT

Here, attempts have been taken to focus on the post-independence political state of Odisha as the milieu-cum-stimulus of the legendary poem *Kaalapurusha* written by Guruprasad Mohanty. Though he had written this poem under the influence of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot, the best ever poem of twentieth century still it is true that every writer is present in his every work. With these words of Hugo, we can draw a conclusion that Guruprasad during the translation of *The Waste Land* has unconsciously or consciously put himself into the beaker with the anabolic reaction for forming the poem and stirred thoroughly to mix well during its genesis. This implies that the poem *Kaalapurusha* has been manufactured with the blood and flesh of the poet; his time and environment. Again, the most momentous environmental factor of the poem is the socio-political factor for which we see certain active genetic behaviors are there in it. The typical behaviors of the characters may be traced in this light. Being political by nature and since we are born to be political beings the attitude and influence both will be there in a literary creation.

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#### INTRODUCTION

**"Art is either plagiarism or revolution."**

*-Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin*

The poem, about which this discussion is going on, is really an excellent piece of art in Odia literature. This is because it is both a product of plagiarism and creativity. Hence, it is a plagiarized creativity. Means it is not plagiarized. But can we deny the contribution of Eliot as the source of this poem? No, not at all. We can't. We should not say like this. Though it took its birth from imitation or from the process of translation, still it has some new things, some pure things in it. These things make the poem powerful and worth appreciation. Hence, for the entire post-independence Odia poetry it became a mile-stone, an ideal and in fact the back-bone of the themes of a number of poems. A single man when give rise to numberless persons, we say that man revolutionary leader. If a single poetry gives birth or stimulates numberless poems then it is called a revolutionary poetry. *Kaalapurusha* is that kind of revolutionary poetry. It changed the so called thought and theme of the Odia poems. Until the twenty-first century, even till today his poetry, especially *Kaalapurusha* has been treated ideal in many respect such as theme, style, language, concept, paradox, ambiguity etcetera by many authors.

Many of the reasons could be cited here in this favor. But the most important reason among them is the socio-political background or the political milieu of the period which worked as a suitable bed for germination with several favorable conditions like water, air, heat and sunlight. Therefore, the political context of the period should be studied in order to understand the poem well by root.

#### THE POLITICAL MATRIX VERSUS KAALAPURUSHA WITH REFERENCE TO SELF

The characters, setting and the theme of the poem *Kaalapurusha* is really significant. It is not only important in relation to literature, technique, and style, modernity, not even in relation to the art of translation or trans-creation or anything else but surely it is an important most creation of the history with reference to its politics. Its language, theme, and above all its objectives are really very powerful and second to none only for its satiric and ambiguous attitude and behavior. It is a clear cut reflection of the contemporary politics of Odisha. Mohanty has written a couple poems in this phase having very important and intimate relations with the contemporary or the then political atmosphere. Those poems are: *Alakaa Saanyaal* and *Kaalapurusha*. First of all, we should be very much clear about the connection or relation between 'literature' and 'politics' and along with that, the concept and the domain and range of 'literature' and 'politics' should also be transparent. Here,

\*Corresponding author: Santosh Kumar Nayak  
P.G. Department of Odia Language and Literature Government College, Dayananda Vihar,  
Koraput, Odisha 764021, India.

literature does not mean the basic thing what means in a broader sense and sensibility rather it means a creative imagination, a book or a piece of literature of poetry, drama, prose, essay, short story etcetera. Again, we should be conscious about the phenomenon of 'self-preservation' of a writer, to which we call 'style' sometime. We can rightly remember the words of Samuel Butler: "Self-preservation is the first law of nature". Creative imaginations should be put under a separate room while talking about the forms of literature. Therefore we should treat works of the creative imagination or creative literature different from other forms of literary production. This enables us to watch and acknowledge the writer who wants to make a statement. Non-creative literature operates according to a conscious mandate but the creative literature does not. Fabrication or manipulation could not be done by a journalist or any other person. Fabrication by a journalist is regarded as betrayal, a kind of crime but fabrication is what a fiction writer does. In fact, the bottom line is that the word '*politics*' conjures up partisanship, divisiveness and a low threshold of scoring dirty points against an opponent.

"But politics in its very first definition relates to the art of government. We might refer to that as "Big P", because I want to make the case that Big P, the larger politics of the nation, inescapably shapes us in a trickle-down effect from the cradle to the grave. Politics determines the price of bread or the availability of guns or whether one lives in splendour or the squalor of a refugee camp. Closer to home, it might be a Caribbean mother having to choose between bread today and school fees tomorrow. Big P shapes the world into which we are born, our daily environment, and leads to what we might call "small p" politics; that is, all those decisions of personal governance that we are forced to make, both externally and unconsciously, every moment of our lives."<sup>[1]</sup>

This is the period where we all have been enmeshed in politics because we are living in a political world. In fact we are living in a politically socialized society. Hence, we are political beings. In this way, a writer is also a part of the political world. Hence, we cannot escape ourselves from the political impacts and decisions. In this way, we can make a sentence with its conclusion that literature is a product or a byproduct of political interventions or political affairs. Hence, we must have a literal responsibility being a political animal. Hence, a writer is politically infected and affected both consciously and unconsciously. In his or her (author) perspectives whatever may be the conclusions but it is the eventual thing underneath these matter that s/he has been communicated much earlier in subconscious and unconscious level of mind. We should never forget the background of the poem *Kaalapurusha* while searching for its real substratum or substrata. It is very clear that it is a trans-creation of the legendary long poem *The Waste Land*, the best poem of twentieth century. But the quest and the question is that- is this a poem resulted only due to imitation of Mohanty to *The Waste Land*? Is this a poem underneath which there is only the inspiration of *The Waste Land* or of Eliot alone? The answer is very obvious and that is 'no'. This is called the Cuttack edition of *The Waste Land*. True. Truer will be the answer if it will be told as the personal edition of *The Waste Land* with reference and respect to the life, literature, society, family and environment of Odisha. Now question is

that what kind of environment? It is nothing but the socio-cultural and the socio-political environment of Guruprasad.

"The raw material of writers is the entire world that we live in; a world that continuously shapes us as we in turn shape it, through our poetry or fiction. The writer is someone who has no choice but to be engaged with society, which means political engagement. Nothing escapes the snare of the political, big P or small p – it is about the price of bread, the paycheck you bring home, how you interact with neighbours or whom you choose to romance. You can rebel against the latter or hew your own path, but your choice will be shaped by political concerns, and those have always included religion, race or ethnicity, sex and gender. Today, perhaps, more than ever."<sup>[2]</sup>

It is very important to notice in a literary process of creation that how it comes out and take the crystalline shape in the cellular matrix of the writing. It ultimately leads a revolution. Hence literature is bearing that political burden. In fact, the folk literatures have also been played that much important role with reference to politics since ages. Literature is such a museum which preserves the blood and lymph of the contemporary and previous society, politics, religious values and traditions and ethics and attitude with imaginations. "The good thing is that in doing so, the creative writer has enormous resources that the fact-based writer has not. Literature is an art. It is about transformation. It is about taking one thing and making something else of it, changed but recognizable. So, politics might be the subject matter, but only as raw material. Literature does not need to employ polemics or confrontation. Nor is it about telling readers what they already know, but enabling them to contemplate what they didn't know they knew. It is not a question of avoiding issues but of being crafty in portraying them. Literature is above all, storytelling. And, as Chinua Achebe has said, storytelling is a threat. Storytellers, poets, writers, have always found ways of confronting tyranny, especially in spaces where such actions are dangerous and deadly. Throughout the ages, writers have developed and employed myriad literary devices and explored the fullest limits of language through satire, magical realism, fantasy, fable and so on. Writers over the ages have found ways of talking about issues – like politics – without seeming to talk about them. The function is not to present the world as it is, but to present it in a new light through the narrative power of art."

<sup>[3]</sup> Literature is political, no doubt, but it should not be explicitly political. The object of literature is not to represent but to re-present the society and to provide necessary antibiotics with reference to the diseases and disorders. Literature is not only the mirror of a society but also contemporaneously it is the ventilator, purifier and antibiotics of a society. Hence, literature could be accepted as the creative light coming through the socio-political prism. We can perceive right here what Oliver Senior says in the keynote speech at the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference: Trinidad, presented by the Bocas Literature Festival in partnership with the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council below.

Now we can rightly quote the lines told by John D. Lindberg what he says in his essay 'Literature and Politics'. He says: "The relation between literature and politics is a multilane freeway with traffic flowing freely in the both directions: Any

work of literature is in part a product of sociological and political factors, to the extent that the writer's personality has been shaped by the sociological and political environment of this time. Conversely, important works of literature or whole literary movements have had profound effects on society by setting up or destroying taboos, conventions, and social prejudices, thus contributing to changes in values which in turn have brought about social and political change."<sup>[4]</sup>

### POST-INDEPENDENCE ODIA POETRY VERSUS ODISHA POLITICS

We see a clear demarcation between the pre and post independence Odia poetry just as we see the same kind of demarcation in between the post and pre independence Odisha politics. The political environment and interests were like this we encounter in the poetry of Guruprasad and also in other contemporary Odia poets. One can see many poems written in this phase of 1947-60 or 1947-70. The long poem *Kaalapurusha* was written in the year 1960. Before 1955 he had written some of his poems like *Akroora Ubaacha*, *Alakaa Saanyaal*, *Champaa Phula*, *Sharata Ruture Janah* etcetera in this taste. The taste and themes of these poems are quite different, new and age-worthy. We can clearly taste and feel the political impacts on the same. Post-Independence context of Orissa is not at all simple or straight forward. It is just like a prism or a kaleidoscope. Political colour changed the entire theme and object of the state and even of the nation. People became power-drunk. N.R. Mohanty critically remarks on this context with a reverse chronological look, i.e., from 90s to the edge of post independence. He says- "1990s reflected a paradigm shift in Indian politics. The first 20 years after independence saw the dominance of Congress in India's political landscape. Rajni Kothari, the celebrated social scientist, described the Indian political system of this period as the one-party dominant state. The year 1967 is supposed to be a watershed in Indian politics, for breaking the monopoly of the congress. Non-Congress governments came to power in several states that year. The culmination of this phase was in 1977 when Congress lost power even at the Centre. But this triumph of non-Congressism was halted in 1980 and a variety of circumstances returned the Congress to a dominant position in different parts of the country. The 1980s were almost a throwback to the political scene of 1947-67 period. However, since the 90s, the Congress has lost its pre-eminent position. The Mandal, Mandir and a plethora of regional sentiments have altered the electoral scene so drastically that the Congress cannot hope to return to its halcyon days in the near future."<sup>[5]</sup> It is an acute overview of the post-colonial or the post-independence Odisha and its political atmosphere. It could be termed as the period of societal cerebral transitional period. If the political leaders were there in the matrix of identity crisis then it could be easily understood from this, what was the level of identity crisis of the common people of that time. This is the major reason for which we notice there several kinds of identity crisis issues and typical behaviors of the characters of that time.

"It is a widely accepted fact that India as a nation is passing through a most critical phase in its post-independence history. Caught as it is in the vortex of sweeping changes in the global neoliberal economic and political arena, India is increasingly subverting itself as a vulnerable target of the imperialist-driven globalisation projects. This has at one level resulted in the growing subservience of the nation's freedom to

formulate its foreign policy even to the dictates of the US hegemonistic rule and at another in the reformulation of the national economic agenda in tune with the prescriptions of the Washington Consensus."<sup>[6]</sup>

### THE POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND ITS REFLECTION

Politics is a powerful device of any kind of society. It is very significant to any literature of that society also. Hence, the direct psychological and mental picture is reflected in the concerned literature of that period and that society. The behavior and mentality or attitude of the characters of a text also depends upon the political scenario of the concerned society and time. If the politics is disturbed or if it is of low value or ethics then also it will be reflected in the concerned society and literature. It could be told that literature is a direct product of society and politics is also a product of society. Hence, literature could be taken as the byproduct of politics of the concerned society. Politically Odisha was also disturbed due to the instability of the congress party. If politics of a state is disturbed and its stability is destroyed then obviously the public psychology and public mentality will be disturbed. The situations were so bad that Orissa was under the rule of president. Therefore historians say, "The history of Orissa 1952 to 1972 can be conveniently described as the search for stable administration and may be divided into two phases: The first phase extending from 1952 to 1961 was one of political instability when the Congress party found it difficult to maintain cohesion and failed to provide dynamic leadership, and the second phase till 1967 was the period of stable congress dominance though at a times the party was beset with leadership problem."<sup>[7]</sup> Emergency was there from May, 1959 to June, 1961 in Orissa. Is it a good symbol for the state or the state politics? Can anybody say that it is a good sign about the environment of the state politics and the societal picture of the state? Rather, here, we can indirectly churn out the food for literature. Literature always looks at the society. Active literature is vigilant and serious about the different issues of the contemporary society. And politics is the steering of the society. Hence, literature cannot think except this. This is the reason for which the leader characters of *Kaalapurusha* are like this. They are disturbed, unstable, ill-minded and are not proper leaders literally. Where a king has many pores in his character, then it is obvious that the society or the state has many leakages in its plate of character and purity. That is the major issue with this long poem *Kaalapurusha*. People had no belief on the leaders. They were confused. The mental state of the state was really disturbed and hung out. They were not safe at all. As a result: "The result of the first general election in Orissa held in 1952 were ominous for the political future of the state and no single party could secure a clear majority in the Legislative Assembly. Ganatantra Parishad formed by the rightist element in 1949 emerged as the second largest party in the state legislature to play the role of opposition. In the coastal districts the Congress Party had its stronghold, whereas in Garjat tracts the Ganatantra Parishad appeared to be most popular. These two parties therefore represented two natural divisions of Orissa and were led by Nabakrushna Chaudhury and R.N. Singhdeo, respectively. Several

factors joined together in creating a difficult situation for him. Though a man of high integrity and character, the fact that Chaudhury was installed in power by Mahatab in 1950 proved to be his greatest disadvantage.”<sup>[8]</sup> Dirty politics entered in this period to the clean environment of Orissa. Power hunger was seen at that time. Some leaders like Mahatab played the role of opposition very well. A devastating and dangerous flood and further natural calamities played an adverse role at this period in Orissa. Basically, the people of the coastal belts like Cuttack were the major victims of the same. Apart from this there was another unexpected problem in Orissa with reference to its regions and languages. There was a serious public agitation against the integration of two Oriya feudatory states, *Sadheikalaa* and *Kharasuaan* with Bihar. This is called the SRC movement and it caused a serious law and order situation in the socio-political environment of Orissa. “Chaudhury was neither a good administrator nor power hungry. His ineffectiveness caused great set back to the prospects of the first five year plan in Orissa.”<sup>[9]</sup> A false administrative inaction was preached. Mahatab took the opportunity of this situation. He made propaganda against Chaudhury and impressed the congress President U.N. Dhebar. Hence, under immense pressure, Chaudhury gave resign on 18, October, 1956. In the eve of second election Mahatab came to Orissa and joined as a C.M. of the state as a substitute. In this way, the political environment of Orissa was contaminated with frailty, cunningness, corruption, jealousy, power-drunk and power centric attitude, inactiveness, and many other things away from the sanctity, purity and beauty of politics.

“This analytical framework explains the political reality in large parts of India. But Orissa does not fit into this construct neatly. [...] Contrary to the national trends, the Congress could not secure an absolute majority in Orissa in two successive elections after independence: 1952 and 1957. It had to resort to many unsavoury practices to muster a majority. After the 1957 election, the Congress returned to power with the support of the Jharakhand Party and a bunch of independents. But the latter sought to extract so high a pound of flesh that the ruling party headed by Harekrushna Mahtab desperately sought a coalition with the main opposition party in the assembly, Ganatantra Parishad. It was an extraordinary event in the history of Orissa, nay Indian politics, when the ruling party and the leading opposition joined together to form a government.”<sup>[10]</sup>

So far about the stability of the government, it could firmly be told that it was all about a part of the game plan of Odishan post-independence politics. This has an adverse and negative impact on the socio-behavioral aspects of the time. Literature has reflected these things very beautifully with utmost care and attention. In fact, there will be a clear cut reflection of the socio-political scenario of the society of the concerned time period at the sub-conscious level of literature even after its unwillingness. This is why we can rightly say that literature is the real reflection of the society as well as of the political, economic, cultural, and other aspects and perspectives associated with it. In toto, it is the reflection of both the social as well as individual life. N.R. Mohanty rightly remarks critically-

“It was only in 1961 mid-term election that the Congress secured an absolute majority for the first time, under the leadership of Biju Patnaik. But the next election in 1967 saw the Congress's decimation, with a breakaway group of Congress led by Dr Mahatab (Jana Congress) forming a coalition with the same Ganatantra Parishad in a new incarnation, the Swatantra Party. By the time the mid-term election took place in 1971, Biju Patnaik had formed a breakaway Congress group called Utkal Congress and Dr Mahatab had returned to the fold of Congress, dissociating with the Jana Congress. This time it was the turn of the Utkal Congress to join a coalition with the Swatantra Party to form the government under the leadership of R N Singh Deo. But much before the end of the tenure of this government, Biju Patnaik decided to return to the Congress fold paving the way for the formation of a Congress government. But when his hope for assuming the leadership position was foiled by a scheming Nandini Satpathy, Biju Patnaik revived the Utkal Congress and the Congress government fell. In the subsequent assembly election, in 1974, the Congress managed to become the single largest party, but three short of majority. It formed the government with the help of Communists.”<sup>[11]</sup>

In fact, after the independence, Odisha faced several changes in the fields of society, politics, industry, economic status, and many more things like location of capital etcetera. “The government, at the same time, did not like to neglect the development the small-scale and cottage industries in the province.”<sup>[12]</sup> No doubt, it was a very good step taken by the then government. But at the same time, it is equally true that, here the negligence started towards the cultivation or agriculture. Again, some opportunists came here and exploited the women in the name of job or bread and butter. We can see many Alaka Saanyaala and a number of Pratima Nayaks, Minati Nayak and characters like Meera in the poems of Sachhi Routray and Guruprasad Mohanty. “If one takes a broad overview of Orissa politics in the last sixty years, it is difficult to find any ideological fault lines. Dr Mahtab, who remained active in state politics till late 1970s, had given a go by to any ideological commitments when looking for allies to bolster his minority government. That explains why he had no qualms in going for a coalition with the Ganatantra Parishad which was supposed to be the party promoted by the protagonists of feudatories and princely states. The Congress was, ideologically, committed to the people's movement waged against the oppressive rulers. And that was the burden of the Congress's campaign against Ganatantra Parishad in the preceding elections. Sharing of power between the two ideologically polarized parties exposed the politics of opportunism, though both the parties tried to celebrate it as a case of political maturity. Biju Patnaik, a leading acolyte of Mahtab then, had played a crucial role in making the coalition possible. But when Mahtab grew close to R N Singh Deo, the pre-eminent leader of Ganatantra Parishad, it raised Biju's hackles and he engineered a rebellion against the 'unholy' alliance and the government fell.”<sup>[13]</sup>

The behavior of states and the political leaders of the states, according to theories of power politics, is centered on survival. Hence, they can go to any extent for the sake of their survival in the platform of politics. Politics improves and ensures many things in a common man of a state. For example, it makes an

individual a citizen, improves their duty, prestige and security as well. But in the midst of all these things we got a competition in Odishan politics. "When Biju Patnaik fell out with the national leadership of Congress and founded a regional outfit called Utkal Congress, he made a clarion call to fight the injustice meted out to Orissa by successive Congress governments at the Centre but all this posturing came to nought barely three years later when he re-entered the Congress fold in the hope of political rehabilitation."<sup>[14]</sup> Communal elements were germinating at that period with utmost silence. Everybody wanted here an independent identity. In fact, it was not simply an independent identity but a powerful identity. It was not only the psychology or the state of mind of the political persons but also of the common mass and it was the *vox populi*. The impact of this mentality reflected directly in the social life of Post-Independence Odisha. "Whatever the results, it will only help to reinforce and vindicate the premise that the politics in Orissa in the post-Mandal and post-Mandir phase has not seen a marked departure from the past. The state politics has mostly been driven by a handful of personalities, bereft of any ideology or principle, across the ruling-opposition divide But then individual factor has remained important in the political domain of all states at all times, but the distinguishing factor in Orissa is the near absence of the identity politics which political actors in other states have to accept as fait accompli. That explains the continuity — rather than the epistemological break in 1990s — in Orissa politics since independence."<sup>[15]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the early ages we ensure politics as the feeder of literature. Now, politics is plays a pivotal role in the making of society and societal behavioral laws even. Politics, now-a-days, is shaping the mind of the people. People are now power craze and money craze. They have forgotten the ethics which is the soul heart of their culture and tradition. Politics is now not at all a pious place for good and simple people. It is now, the eventual resort of the scoundrels. Literally, politics before independence and the politics after independence have a difference of hell and heaven. We are now down-trodden by birth by the virtue of our works, thoughts and poor interests. This has given birth to the people or characters like Ramu, Alaka, Minati Nayak, Meera, Smaarta Das engineer and other characters of *Kaalalapursha*, the legendary and documentary long poem of Guruprasad. It is a poem inspired by T.S. Eliot, the greatest and the most influential poet of the twentieth century. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The power addiction is the greatest problem of the entire century after the departure of the British rulers. This may be depicted as the colonial impact or the cases of post-colonialism. But the power addiction of some people made them forgot their culture, tradition and even their own identity and existence. All these cases may be well studied by the psycho-analysis methods and the mentality of the society as well as of the individual could be well understood.

## NOTES

- [1] See <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/apr/29/olive-senior-literature-political>
- [2] Ibid.
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Lindberg, John D., 'Literature and Politics', *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* - Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), pp. 163. DOI: 10.2307/1346587 See <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1346587>
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- [8] Ibid-pp. 423-24.
- [9] Ibid-pp.424.
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- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Patra, Kishori Mohan, Devi, Bandita, An Advanced History of Orissa. New Delhi: KalyaniPublishers, 1983, pp.-313.
- [13] Mohanty, N.R., Op. Cit.
- [14] Ibid.
- [15] Ibid.

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