



## MORALITY IN ODIA CHILDREN'S POEMS

**Khagendra Sethi**

Lecturer, Dept. of English, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack. Odisha, India,

[sethi.khagendra@gmail.com](mailto:sethi.khagendra@gmail.com)



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The objective of this article is to examine and analyse some Odia poems and show how these poems cast lasting impact on the morality of the Odia children. It will also show that apart from other social factors responsible for the growth of the young minds, Odia children's poems play a vital role in shaping up their minds with dominant morals, values and ideals. These poems are generally prescribed for students in primary and upper primary levels. Sometimes these poems are folk songs and those are sung to the children by their mothers and grandmothers for a variety of purposes like to make them sleep, calm them down from crying or divert their attention from one thing to the other. The children learn these poems at an early age and develop a positive attitude based on the theme of the poems when they grow up. They try to translate those ideas and ideals in their real life in course of time. In other words, the poems contribute to the individual growth of the mind till the later stage of life.

### I

Odisha has the historic glory of art, architecture, culture, sculpture and literature. When Odia language was undergoing a phase of transition, its literature existed in the form of folk songs and folklores. Odia children's poems, at that time, were very much in the form of rhymes. Due to the influence of renaissance in India in 19<sup>th</sup> century, children's literature was recognized as a branch of literature in India. Like any other Indian regional languages, Odia language and literature also welcomed the trends of renaissance. It is at this stage, Odia children's poems gained ground because of the large scale contribution of Madhusudan Rao. Later, children's poets like Pallikabi Nandakishor Bala and Gopala Chandra Praharaj, Gobinda Ratha, Chandra Mohan Maharana and Sitanath Roy created a special identity of Odia children's literature. Odia books for children per se were non-existent in school curriculum. In 1895, Vaktakabi Madhusudan Rao wrote *Barnabodha* which was incorporated in school syllabus for primary children. He also wrote *Shishubodha*, *Balabodha*, *Sahitya Prasanga*, *Sahitya Kusuma* to enrich children's literature. 'Pravata', 'Sandhya', 'Sundara Sansara', 'Grisma' and 'Barsha' are the most memorable poems Madhusudan Rao wrote for

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children. Fakirmohan Senapati has not written anything specific for children but some poems like 'Benga Bhai', 'Koili Nani', 'Bani Chadhei', 'Sankhi Biradi', 'Daani Alua', 'Sahada Gachha' and 'Balua Kukura' placed in *Abasara Basare*, a collection of poems, can be included as poems for children.

Gopal Chandra Praharaj, another Odia poet, has major contribution for Odia children's poems. He is immortal for his famous poem for children 'Dhore Baya Dho'. Pallikabi Nandakishore Bala has earned the name as a distinguished poet for Odia children's poems. His collection of poems *Nanabaya Gita* is a milestone in Odia children's poems. The poems are simple, easy and extremely lyrical. It touches the curiosity of the little children. His poems are very much adored by the children because he was a school teacher and was deeply associated with the little children in schools.

The first quarter of twentieth century witnessed the profuse output of Odia children's literature, particularly Odia poems. Mrutyunjaya Ratha's collection of poems *Rasabali* is very much familiar. At this time Nilakantha Das published two epic poems *Pilanka Mahabharat* and *Pilanka Ramayan* which enriched Odia children's poems. The other great poems for children written at this time were *Bala Mahabharat* by Madhusudan Das, *Sunara Desa* by Padmacharan Pattanaik and *Puspanjali* by Janakinatha. Balakrushna Kara's *Janha Mamu*, *Sachitra Shishu Ramayana* and *Phula Changudi* were the famous Odia poetry books written for children. Balakrushna Pattanaik's *Charu Labanga Lata* and *Phula Baulabeni*, Kalicharan Pattanaik's *Kala Handia Megha*, Harekrushna Das's *Shishu Ranjana Gitika*, Brahmananda Sadangi's *Shishu Sangita*, Balaram Das's *Sishubodha Ramayana*, Manicharan Mohapatra's *Nutana Sishu Khela Gita*, Srinivas Singh's *Shishumela Gita* were the best books in this period.

Children's literature, in the middle of the century, took a new dimension. The spirit of nationalism influenced the Odia poets to a great extent. They started writing on this aspect in order to inject the spirit of patriotism in the minds of the children. Prior to the independence, this movement helped the children to be influenced by the freedom struggle and after independence they were motivated to retain the value and dignity of independence. The Odia children poets understood the spirit of the period and wanted to strengthen the foundation of the spirit of the children by incorporating these poems in and outside the school curriculum. The children are 'agami jugara drasta, agami jugara srasta' (the seers and the architects of the future nation) and by their effort a golden age can be initiated in the history of our country –

was an idealistic notion of the great poets and statesmen of that time. A stanza can be quoted for instance to show the tremendous influence of the poem on the young minds.

Udaya pathara yatri amere                      naba bharatara chhatra  
Sukabata amen naghosibu aau                andha badhira shastra

Ame agami jugara drasta

Ame agami desara srasta. (Radhamohan Gadanayak, Sahitya

Sourava, II, 1947)

(We are the travelers of the path of enlightenment and the students of new India. Like parrots, we shall not chant the old scriptures blindly. We are the seers and the creators of the coming era.)

Towards the second half of the twentieth century, the international community debated on the urge of the human rights. It awakened the consciousness of the individual and of the nation. This found reflection in literature. The constitution is committed to safeguard the fundamental rights of an individual. In return, the state expects duty and accountability from him. It is inevitable to make the children, the citizens of tomorrow, conscious. They should be aware of the planning, economy, agriculture, industry and other multiple activities of the country. The onus lies on the present syllabus of the modern schools to let the children maintain national integration, secularity and other constitutional values of the country. The study of Odia children's poems, at the present time is not just confined to entertainment rather it has become multi-functional in building both the individual and the nation.

It goes without saying that the whole world smiles with the smile of the children. The parents as well as the teachers adopt various means to make the children cheerful. For such a great cause children's literature has got a very important role to play. For the pleasure of the children, the grandmothers sing songs. The mothers sing while they feed their babies. The lullabies make them asleep. The mothers also sing songs to stop them crying or divert their attention. The songs serve as an entertainment and help them to divert their attention from one state to the other. Besides this obvious and common purpose, the songs have both direct and indirect implications that help in nourishing the psychological growth of the children.

The objective is to show that the poems, sung for the purpose, cast tremendous influence on the mind of the children. These poems are conceived with the various ideas and ideals that shape the mental development of the young children. The poems are very constructive in nature and the children listen to them and enjoy with great fun and pleasure. This paper

would like to establish how the young children imbibe the basic human values from the Odia children's poems that continue to have a long bearing upon their mind from childhood to adulthood.

Starting from the birth, a child is accustomed to listen to various rhymes and Odia poems in the lap of the mother and the grandmother. They sing the most beautiful and mellifluous songs on different situations to entertain the child. The very songs enchant the child and the child responds in accordance with the desire of the mother. Besides the part of entertainment, the songs play a major role in shaping the psyche of the children. The songs cast a long lasting impact on their minds and they mentally prepare to lead their life on the morale of the songs. To substantiate this point some Odia children's poems should be referred to.

## II

The poems widen the horizon of imagination of the children. They learn the art of imagination and speculation. The window of wisdom starts opening. They are able to identify the values of life. They realize the importance of devotion and divine belief. Honesty and veracity touch their hearts. Justice, pity, purity, politeness and commitment are some of the human qualities that the child likes to imbibe in life. Moreover, the children also learn how to take care of the trees, show pity to the animals, do duty to the parents and neighbors. A stanza can be quoted which imprints in their minds at the early age and try to realize its message in real life when they grow up:

Bidya atai mahadhana

Balake kara uparjana (Madhusudan Rao)

(Learning is a great wealth, and children are required to pursue it.)

Learning is treated as wealth. Children are advised to acquire this wealth. When a child listens to the songs, he thinks too much on it. He mentally prepares to achieve it in life. Though he is a child yet he understands the significance of learning. He feels committed and concentrates on studies on his own. The poem serves as a form of inspiration. He is also inspired by a poem which sings:

Raja sina puja paye apana desare

Kabi puja paithae desa bidesare (Kabi Jadumani Mohapatra)

(A king is respected in his kingdom but a poet is respected in and outside the country.)

This stanza comes from Kabi Jadumani Mohapatra. Jadumani views that a poet is superior to a king. Learning is much above the empire and the emperor, power and position. The glory of the king is confined to the boundary of the state but learning spreads beyond boundaries. The children very slowly understand and realize the gravity of study at an early age. He orients his mind towards learning from this song. Moreover, his orientation does not stop till he completes his education. It is because the theme of the poem has a lasting impact on his mind since his childhood.

A child forms separate constructs in his mind with reference to different poems he listens to. He develops different ideas and ideals upon these poems and tries to implement them in his life. He inculcates one of the highest values in life when he listens to the song:

Sata kahibaku kian daribi      sata kahi pachhe male maribi  
Mote etiki sikhao sain he      mora dhana jana loda nahin he. (Ramakrushna Nanda)  
(Why should I be afraid of telling the truth? Let me die for the cause of truth. O God!  
Teach me this much, I do not want wealth, name and fame.)

Here is a poem, for instance, when the child listens to it he gets the highest motivation in life. Lie is regarded as a sin. Gandhiji considers it to be a crime. Truth is the highest virtue in life. That is why the child resolves to lead the path of truth. He is prepared to maintain truth even at the cost of life. He earnestly prays for God to teach him the ways of truth. He values truth more than his wealth and fellow beings. This very concept of truth continues to influence on him in his entire gamut of life. Like morning showing the day, the idealism that ingrains in his mind during childhood, is consolidated at the later stage of his life.

A variety of songs influence him. They are of different taste and flavor. A poem touches him which values the dignity of manual labor. The so-called sophisticated and educated people of the present day society detest manual labor. Here is a poem that sings the glory and greatness of a daily wage laborer.

Sramika bhaire      lagi pada  
Keun kama aba      tote bada  
Kala karakhana      sadaka kenala  
Bila kama aba      bandha bada (Ananta Pattnaik)

(Brother Workers! Work hard. Nothing is harder for you: be it working in factory and farm or building roads and embankments!)

The lines whole heartedly appreciate various categories of laborers covering from the industrial workers to the daily wage laborers working in a canal. The impression goes to the children that no work stands impossible before them. Moreover, they work with dignity. The poem also advises to work like a hero. Only action can overcome need and redeem suffering. The whole country will prosper with wealth and the people will have hearty smiles. The poem ingrains work ethics in the mind of the children. He visualizes a country free from fast, hunger and suffering and full of progress and prosperity. He dreams of a country where people can enjoy maximum comfort and happiness. A poem rightly sings:

Kama karijao bira pari abhaba kasana jau sari  
Dhana dualate puri uthu desa  
mukhe mukhe hasa jau vari (Ananta Pattnaik)

(Work like heroes and thereby bring an end to the need and suffering. Let the country be full of wealth and prosperity, its people forever cheerful.)

Some poems are also there which reveal biography of the great men. The children accrue utmost inspiration from those poems. A poem is written on Madhusudan Das, the great barrister and social reformer of India. Once upon a time he was going to school and on the way got slipped in a muddy road. He reached school late in the same muddy dress. The teacher was amazed. He also took the people aback when he repaired that swampy road by the help of his friends during puja vacation. This small boy is an epitome of patience and fortitude. He did not break down. Nor did he admit defeat either. His action shows his commitment for society that he would undertake in the rest of his life. The lines are:

Hela dasahara chhuti bela sathi pila daki kala mela  
Bali godi mati pakai savien gan danda kale samatula (Jagannath Mohanty)

(During Dussera holidays he assembled his friends and got the village road repaired by filling it with sand, soil and mortars.)

The poem sets Madhusudan Das as a model. It touches the hearts and minds of the young children. They swear to themselves to be a child like Madhusudan Das. They also undertake similar tasks in their very childhood. Their inspiration reaches climax when they come to know that the child is none but the great Madhubabu. A small boy who has grown into a renowned advocate, a great statesman and a conspicuous social activist, devoted his whole life for the sake of the motherland. The poem states:

Bada hela dine sehi pila            Madhu baristara bolaila  
Desa pain kete kama kari sie      kala kala jasha rakhi gala (Jagannath Mohanty)  
(That boy grew up and became known as Madhu barrister. He became immortal by his great deeds for the country.)

The children also develop a sense of respect and devotion towards their parents. Whatever ideas they form about their parents continue to be with them life-long. He regards them as living gods. These gods are greater than the gods in heaven. He learns that only their blessings can shield them from crises. So they grow with this input in mind. The poem rightly reads:

Pita mata tharu            bada debata ke  
   Saraga            raije nahin  
Tankari ashisa            saha eka sina  
   Bipadun        tariba pain        (Madhusudan Rao)

(No Gods in heaven are greater than parents. Their blessing is the only way out to overcome the crises.)

Even folk songs also develop in them a sense of work culture, fellow feelings and patriotism. The stanza cited below endows children with many human qualities. The children learn that God has given them two hands to work. Through these hands they can earn their livelihood. They will neither beg nor depend on anybody. They will use their hands in constructive purposes. They will make use of their hands in welcoming friends and beheading foes in case they grab the motherland. He can fight and bring victory and honor for the country. He will defeat enemies and put up flag in the coast as well as at the top of the mountain as a mark of bravery and heroism. The stanza justifies:

Eije mora duiti hata        jogai deba dana  
Kariba nanhi bandhu jane    aghata keven na na  
   Shatru jadi chhuinba mati  
   Munda tara deba je kati

Sagara kule pahada chule    udai deba bana  
Ei je mora duiti hata        jogai deba dana

(Here are my two hands meant for providing bread and butter and not for hitting friends. If the enemy intrudes into our land they will behead him and put up the flag of victory over sea as well as at the top of the mountain.)

Another folk song also teaches a child how to become an ideal individual and a role model and make the people proud around. He will do something unique for the motherland for which the boys will applaud and the girls will garland him as a mark of love and respect. The friends will sing and dance in honor of him for his bravery and heroism. So, when the child marches from childhood to adulthood he feels committed for the dignity of the motherland. Consciousness grows in him when he grows up. He doesn't do anything that will cause disgrace to him, his community and his country.

Balake mora chamaka      dekhi maribe kara tali  
Balika gale galai debe      garabe phula mali  
Nachibe mita gaibe gita      mishai chhati chhati  
Jaya Odisha Bharata jaya      janma bhumi mati

(For my heroic deeds, the boys will clap, the girls will garland me with pride and the friends will sing and dance together. May the soil of my motherland Odisha and India triumph!)

In a nutshell, this article affirms that apart from many other factors responsible for the growth of the human mind, Odia children's poems also help in shaping up the psychological development of the school going children. Apart from entertainment, these poems are educative in nature. The children imbibe the basic morals, values and ideals from these poems and inculcate them till the rest of their life.

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