

“Rebati”; the artistic expression of awareness and sensitivity

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ABSTRACT

Rebati is the sad story of an unfortunate girl. Her guilt was that, she was born into a conservative family where girls were not allowed for education .moreover there was a strong belief that misfortune was invited by doing so. By chance during Rebati's education cholera spread through out the village and she was blamed for this .Although it is the first story written in Odia language but it has all the features of a first class story. This single story is the mile stone in the world of Odia fiction which is the dumb witness of nineteenth century. This is the story which bears the social and cultural history of Odisha, This article contains the analysis of the artistic expression of the writer Fakir Mohan Senapati about the nineteenth century society .

KEYWORDS : (Introduction: literature and society, Gist of the story, characteristics of the society, impact on society.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the true reflection of social life. The right author examines the intricacies of society and shapes his experiences in literature. He sees the out-word and intimate form as the society and articulates that Idea in his literature. Although he creates his works within a certain period of time he and his literature becomes timeless by perpetuating human emotions. In Odia literature Byasakabi Fakirmohan Senapati was in fact a timeless artist. He has closely monitored the vitality of social, cultural and political life of nineteenth century Odisha, and As the symbol of his deep experience he donated four novels, many short stories, poems and many prose pieces to Odia literature. 'Rebati' is his first as well as Odia literatures first ever story. It is the living depiction of social life in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its subject matter carries the essence of the last decade of 19th century.

Rebati is the sad story of an unfortunate girl. Her guilt was that, she was born into a conservative family where girls were not allowed for education .moreover there was a strong belief that misfortune was invited by doing so. By chance during Rebati's study cholera spread through out the village

and she was blamed for this as if she brought this cholera to the village. Fakirmohan Senapati did not say it directly that Rebati was at fault or Rebati was not responsible for this misfortune anywhere in the story but the tragic outcome of the story compelled the reader to become sympathetic towards Rebati. Fakirmohan hopes that this sympathy will be able to eradicate this superstition from the society and create absence of belonging one day. He just wanted to show the situation of that time where an epidemic caused by the negligence of the society was believed as the misfortune caused by the woman education which was very disgusting.

In October 1998, Fakir Mohan published the story 'Rebati' in 'Utkal Sahitya' paper under the Pseudonym Dhurjati. However it is the first successful story of odia literature which inspired many writers to write short stories in our native language.

Rebati exploded on the new society that was formed in Oldisha after 1871. It contains the struggles of social life in the late nineteenth century. For the first time in the History of Oldia literature we can see the formation of an triangular tradition of love affection and compassion in this story. The unique characteristics of 'Rebati' are:-

- Opposition to women education by the older generation and welcome by the new generation.
- The ruthlessness of the land lords.
- A soft stream of internal love, affection and compassion.
- The helplessness of the poor and the greed of the money lenders and
- Extreme Racism.

The story has an old generation opposition to women education. Grandmother of Rebati 'Jejimaa' was the symbol of the old generation. She did not like her grand daughter Rebati's education and complained that due to the bad effects of Rebati's education (at that time women education was considered as an unfortunate factor) their life was disrupted. Rebati's father and mother have died, her tuition teacher Basudev also died as the result of

Rebati's study. The landlord taken their cows, workers left their field . Jelimaa complained all the bad things that happened to them are due to Rebati's study. By giving education to Rebati, writer welcomed women education in the society but it was shattered by the ill effects of antiquity.

In the nineteenth century society a new zamindar (landlord) group was emerged in place of the traditional land lords who were the Flatterers of the British government. Before Rebati Fakirmohan Senapati had written "Chha mana Atha gunt" (six acres and eight) novel where he described the exploitation of Zamindar Ramachandra Mangaraj. He has taken the land of innocent Sharia & Bhagia. Here in this story he is able to describe the whole nineteenth century even in the small area of short story. Here the landlord took the cows of Shyama Bandhu (Rebati's Father) falsely by showing he had money leftover him. which shows the ruthlessness of the land lords of that time.

We can also see a beautiful and soft flow of love in the story. Between Basudev (Tutor) and Rebati. Their love is restrained such love has never existed in Odia literature before. This love does not have any desire for physical relation but there is the greatness of sacrifice. This is the finest love story of Odia literature where glory of sacrifice is described.

This short story also describes the affection of Shyambandhu and Jejimas towards Rebati. At first Jejima condemned her grand daughter's education and said that all their misfortunate were due to her education. The famous dialogue of Jejima that, she always utters to rebuke Rebati was -

"Lo Reba" (Oh Rebati)

"Lo Nian" (Oh fire)

"Lo chuli" (oh chulla(stove))

But by heart she loves Rebati, we can see Jejimas love when she sold a broken utensil at Hari Sahoo's shop and came home with food and medicines for Rebati. In the midst of all the ignorance and superstition of the old grand maa, she stands as a virtuous woman. There may be hatred, contempt and disgust in the language in which Rebati was scolded by her but we can see an unconditional love of the old heart for her grand daughter. The story expresses the combination of love and compassion which gives an eternal value to the story.

This story is about the helplessness of the poor. The picture of exploitation of land lords and money lenders can be clearly seen in this story. The deception of the greedy society of that time is exposed in the story.

One of the main points of the story is Racism. Jejimaa (grand mother) first asked about the caste of Basudev after Rebati's marriage proposal with him. It is simply come to our notice when the

old jejima said that, 'don't judge the wealth. Ask the caste' this reflects the conservative attitude of the people towards the caste system" Rebati the female protagonist of the story ,seems to invite misfortune for her self and her community .Over time Rebati has become an icon and her story an allegory for female education an emancipation .However the story itself does not advocate for or against these ideas .It is a story about helplessness before fate"¹

Although Fakirmohan pays more attention to the subject-matter than the style of the story while compassing . It's useful and timely language continues to fascinate the reader of all time. It may be the first story written in Odia language but it has all the features of a first class story.

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