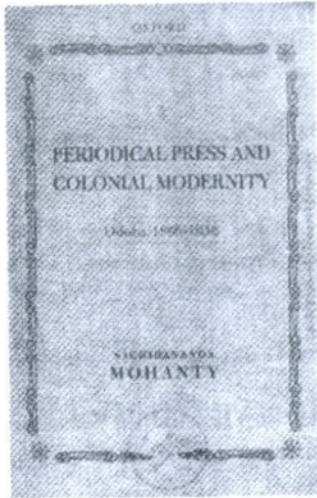


BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

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Periodical Press and Colonial Modernity: Odisha, 1866 to 1936
by Sachidananda Mohanty, Oxford University Press. Pp 160, Rs.595/

Sachidananda Mohanty is a renowned academician and scholar who is recognized in both India and abroad for his formidable contribution towards serious research work.

The book under review titled "Periodical Press and Colonial Modernity" provides a detailed survey of the rise and decline of the periodicals in colonial Odisha since 1866 to 1936 and shows how the advent

of Utkal Dipika and Utkal Sahitya brought about the concept of colonial modernity through writings inspired by western enlightenment. Mohanty also shows how these periodicals sometimes resisted colonial modernity and ushered in alternative/ vernacular modernity. He writes about the contemporary period of e-publishing and internet and says that the concept of periodical literature

must acquire new meaning or else it will be forgotten and relegated to the background. Periodical Press, according to Mohanty, reached its zenith during the 19th Century. Mohanty relates it to the structure of university system and he also traces its link to the advent of capitalism and a new leisured class. Mohanty shows how journals became invaluable archives for academic professionals and administrators in course of time. The term periodical encompasses a wide spectrum and Mohanty states that it is a colonial import. That is why Mohanty has to undertake painstaking research to unearth the history of the periodical press in Odisha during a stipulated period. Mohanty proves that Utkal Dipika's advent can be directly traced to the terrible famine in Odisha in 1866. Mohanty tries to link up periodical press with colonial modernity. By highlighting the lives of the editors of Utkal Dipika and Utkal Sahitya - Gaurishankar Ray and Biswanath Kar Mohanty wants to contextualize vernacular/ alternative modernity. Mohanty claims that his study begins with the birth of the periodical in Odisha in 1866 and closes with the advent of Odisha as a separate province in 1936. Mohanty says that colonial modernity in Odisha came in the form of rich cameos. English education and rhetoric of progress were the central projects of colonial discourse. Mohanty writes as an

insider with a whole gamut of Odisha scholars who had prepared a ground for him to plumb deeper into his research. The book is short, containing just 126 pages but every line adds to an existing body of knowledge and research. There is not a single page in the book where the readers do not find glimpses of Mohanty's erudition.

Mohanty exhibits the scholastic rigour of a deft academician in this book. His wide range of reading in different fields enriches the text and the readers are provided with reason and logic at every page. Mohanty cites the example of writers like Fakir Mohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Chandramohan Maharana and Radhanath Rao who stand for "Bhasha tradition". Mohanty shows how along with the rise of colonial modernity, the periodicals gave rise to vernacular/ alternative modernity.

Women's education became an important concern during that period and the periodicals contributed towards this goal. Mohanty refers to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's essay regarding female education published in "Bangadarshan." The way Mohanty makes a parallel comparison between Bengal and Odisha is really commendable. Mohanty has not only researched through studying books, but he has also taken recourse to archival findings. Mohanty shows how in Odisha by the first

of the 20th century the concept of the new woman was being debated in Utkal Sahitya, Mukura and other journals by Sailabala Das, Sarala Devi and Pratibha Devi. Fakir Mohan Senapati made it explicitly clear in his fiction that reading periodicals was a must for domestic couples.

That is how Mohanty selectively points out the validity of periodicals in 19th century and 20th century Odisha. On the other hand a female poet like Sushila wrote an instructive poem regarding the female education in Odisha and Mohanty relates it to the rise of the vernacular/ Alternative modernity in Odisha. Mohanty gives the citation from a periodical titled "Grahalaṁmi" and comments how female education was resisted by a section of native population. Mohanty comments that Fakir Mohan Senapati questioned the validity of western historiography and upheld the virtue of oral history and that is how he threw a challenge to the dominant modernity project by highlighting the importance of alternative modernity. The first chapter of the book deals with the history of the periodical press in Odisha. The theme of filial ingratitude brought about by baneful western education is also

discussed in the context of writings of Fakir Mohan Senapati. Mohanty charts out the growth and decline of the periodical press in Odisha in the first chapter. Mohanty makes it apparent that the East India Company and the missionaries were responsible for the birth of the periodical press in India and Odisha was no exception. The second chapter deals with the lives and ideology of the two periodicals respectively Utkal Dipika and Utkal Sahitya and their contribution to the society. The third chapter deals with the print journalism and Odiya modernity while the fourth chapter discusses Utkal Sahitya and colonial/Alternative modernity. Issues like patronage are also discussed in the book at great length but basically the book brings to light a forgotten chapter of the intellectual and cultural/literary history of Odisha. The book is written in a lucid style and Oxford University Press deserves praise for bringing out such an interesting volume.

Kudos to Mohanty for writing such a book which does not pretend to be a dry academic work full of critical jargon.

Shubhajit Bhadra



Architecture of Flesh by N. Ravi Shanker, Poetrywala, Mumbai 2015. Pp.80, Rs.225/-

It is a privilege to read, enjoy and review new books of poetry as the world of words unfolds itself in various colours, sound and images...for perception of different emotions in moist alphabet. Some of them are miniscule, micro-sonnets, some are like large tendrils, they engulf you; they void your emptiness and create a plethora of pleasure in its purest form in the higher cortex which only poetry can deliver.

1. Architecture of Flesh-by N. Ravi Shanker [Ra Sh].
2. Bookmarking the Oasis by K. Srilata, &
3. Clawing into Water's Skin by M.K. Ajay.

Amongst the three, N Ravi Shanker is vastly different from M. K. Ajay & K. Srilata in both content

and language. Popularly known as Ra. Sh, he is a poet from Kerala and there is no dearth of Rain and Eternal Sunshine in his poems. He often creates his own body image amidst the glory and ruins of ancient India – its culture and rich heritage. But he has no inhibition about writing body-poetry, poems of love and lust, erotic tales with narcissistic exaggeration. He writes about various social injustices in dark satire, about immoral and incestuous relationships, of bestiality and even necrophilia. But the eros is trapped, in a cocoon – in the inner shell of pyramid largely governed by myth and mysticism and death is the ultimate crusader...

A few of his poems are written in the form of transcript, a few as songs [with musical interlude].