

Naturalism as Aesthetic in Santali Poetry

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ABSTRACT

Naturalism, as a literary movement, aims to depict human life objectively and realistically, in a manner that shows social, psychological and biological realities. Initially, Santali poetry focused on nature and the spirit world, as well as folk life and community, and since independence, there has been a major change in themes, including naturalistic tendencies. This paper traces Santali poetry's evolution from aesthetic of naturalism in the 1950s to 1980s. The study examines how the poets Gorachand Tudu, Krishna Chandra Tudu, Aditya Mitra 'Santhali' and Basudeb Besra represented death consciousness, psychological conflict, sensuality, instinctive human behaviour and other socially suppressed aspects in their selected poems. The study is qualitative and adopts a textual analysis approach. The paper purports that the naturalistic poetic style emerged as an alternative style of poetry that turned away from idealized image of nature to its complexities of human life. The study also shows that Santali notion of Churitan has its own indigenous dimension to explain naturalistic expression in Santali literature.

Keywords: Santali literature; Poetry; Literary movement; Naturalism.

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth-century European movement of naturalism expanded the realist movement and attempted to depict reality as

it were in nature in a none motional and scientific manner by focusing on the factors of heredity, environment, instinct and social conditions that determine human behavior. The naturalism differs from romantic or idealistic works in its attention to the mundane aspects of existence, such as poverty, suffering, death, sexuality, violence, and psychological strife. Literary critics like the French philosopher Émile Zola saw a role for literature as an experimental art that might provide a way to study human behavior in the context of its social and environmental surroundings. While Santali literature evolved on its own cultural and linguistic context, some thematic features similar to literary naturalism started appearing in Santali post-independent period. Until the 1950s, Santali poetry was mostly a reflection of nature, religious belief, folklore and cultural identity of the Santali community. As the modern literary works of the Santalis started to grow, poets began to concentrate on the hidden realities of human life and the themes that they had not been discussing in the public literary arena before. In Santali literary thinking this is tightly coupled with the notion of Churitan – the intuitive or latent human being. It includes feelings, passions, fears and psychological moments which lie below the social norms. It is, therefore, important to note that naturalism in Santali poetry is not just an intellectual or literary borrowing from the western literary movement, but an indigenous aesthetic practice just as much as Santali cultural consciousness.

This study focuses on Santali poets of between the 1950s and the 1980s and how the concept of naturalism came into being and established as a unique poetic style in Santali poetry

NEED OF THE STUDY

The Santali literary criticism has developed in a very significant way, but systematic studies on naturalism as an aesthetic movement are not much. The study of folklore and oral tradition, linguistic development, and romantic aspects of Santali literature receive relatively little scholarly attention, and naturalistic poetry has yet to be given serious consideration.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the historical emergence and development of naturalism in Santali poetry.
2. To analyze **Churitan** as a Santali aesthetic concept and its relationship with naturalistic expression in Santali poetry.
3. To identify and interpret the major themes and aesthetic characteristics of naturalism in selected Santali poems.
4. To evaluate the contribution of major Santali poets to the development and evolution of naturalistic aesthetics in Santali poetry.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This research uses qualitative, descriptive and historical method. The textual analysis of selected collections of Santali poetry, corresponding to the different stages of development of naturalism, is the main approach of the research. The primary sources are Chandmala by Gorachand Tudu (1957), Onarhe Serenj Binda by Krishna Chandra Tudu (1968), a collection of selected poems by Aditya Mitra 'Santhali' and the poetry of Basudeb Besra. Secondary sources include books, scholarly articles, dissertations, conference papers, and critical articles on Santali literature, literary movements, and naturalistic theory. The study uses historical analysis to chart the

chronological evolution of naturalism, and it uses interpretative textual analysis to find commonalities in theme, symbol, imagery, and aesthetic devices. The poems chosen are analysed in detail, focusing on the themes of death consciousness, psychological suffering, instinctive behaviour, sensuality, violence and the hidden emotions of the human being. The results are understood in the context of literary naturalism and the cultural context of Santali literary tradition.

DISCUSSION

Naturalism in Santali Poetry

Emergence of Naturalistic Aesthetics in Santali Poetry

Before Independence there was a written tradition for Santali poetry. The early Santali poets mainly sang about nature, farming life, festivals, mythology, spirituality and the collective values of society. Moral and cultural limits embraced human emotion, and issues around death instinct, sexuality or psychological conflict were hardly explored. Modern Santali poetry gained momentum and fasted after independence through the literary journals and published poetry collections. Written Santali literature received a great boost during the 1940s with the publication of Hor Sambad by the Government of Bihar, but in the explicit naturalistic themes it is only from the 1950s that it can be seen.

Gorachand Tudu and the Beginning of Santali Naturalism

Chandmala, by Gorachand Tudu (1957) is an early recognisable beginning of naturalism in Santali poetry. The poem 'Ei' is an introduction to emotional intimacy and sensual expression between lovers, which is a new theme in poetry. The naturalistic features are comparatively subdued but their presence already marked the beginning of a new style of poetry, as the subject of the work became private human feeling paired with the literary voice.

The poem states:

*Ei' re isarat milwa menak,
Coko cerecre rumuj henak,*

*Rijau rajire muluc menak,
Akut atenjon cak henak?
EI' re epem oka oko menak,
Sorom sebela mon khon neak;
Emok atanre banuk bhagaok,
Pirit punjire banuk khagaok.¹*

The "EI" in this poem is repeated as a declaration of intimacy between two lovers, representing emotional attraction and desire. The poem celebrates love, physical love, and young lovers' feeling. The image depicts a private, intimate setting away from the view of others, where emotions of love and attraction may be openly expressed without social norms. The mention of sorom (shyness) also highlights the mental conflict between one's desire and one's modesty. In contrast to the romantic love as something idealized and purely spiritual, Gorachand Tudu depicts romantic love as a natural instinct of all human beings, which stems from emotion and physical attraction. The poem embodies the natural emotions of desire, excitement and emotional intimacy that develop between lovers. In foregrounding these personal experiences, Ei diverges from the usual topics of Santali poetry, and opens up new themes that previously had not been part of public literary expression. The poem is also important because it does not romanticize instinctive human emotions and feelings related to the senses, but does a very good job of portraying them naturally. The lovers' wish to be alone is a testament to the conflict between private feelings and public values. In this subtle but realistic depiction of human emotions not openly expressed, Gorachand Tudu paved the way for the evolution of naturalism in modern Santali poetry.

Psychological Naturalism in Krishna Chandra Tudu

Krishna Chandra Tudu significantly expanded naturalistic expression in his poetry collection *Onarhe Serenj Binda* (1968). His poems portray intense emotional conflict, despair, and suicidal imagination. In one notable poem, a young woman

declares that she would rather die by hanging or drowning than experience emotional betrayal. The imagery of self-destruction reflects psychological realism rather than romantic exaggeration, thereby illustrating one of the essential characteristics of literary naturalism-
*Am ho etak tola dada, inj ho etak tola,
Sari gese dada ape tola re, nawa gatem naman.
Chehel chepel lota dak re dada, injdunj unum gujuk,
Atu baher dhubighans re dada, injdunj pasi gujuk.
Alom unum gujuk dular alom pasi gujuk,
Tandi tikor kathanj anjom, am donj dela am.²*

Death Consciousness in Aditya Mitra 'Santhali'

Another major aspect of naturalism that Aditya Mitra 'Santhali' added through his portraits was the portrayal of death and human mortality in the late 1970s. Unlike the traditional Santali poetry which explained death in a spiritual or religious context, Mitra's poetry communicates death as a reality of human life. His poetry has a focus on the inevitability of death, and has a call for the reader to be aware of death as one of life's universal conditions and not a supernatural event. It is a realistic treatment which enriched the philosophical aspect of naturalistic aesthetics in Santali poetry.

The poem states:

*Horko mena, tinre gada rohor catich ena,
Tobe bole jiyon gada anjet utar ena.
Arko botor arko bhayon segech sepech kan,
Jemon gujuk reak sar tinak haso kan!
Maila malot lugri jemon horko pheraowa,
Hormo nowa napai temon jiwi horoga.
Taram langa mansi lagit gujuk-guruk ma,
Rear umul kana; manwa mabon hudis ma.³*

This poem is an expression of Mitra's thoughts on the inevitability of death and the fleeting nature of human existence. The poet reminds the reader of the fact that all human beings have to die and that there was no escape from death. All people, regardless of social status, wealth or personal

achievement, must eventually die. The image is characterized by its emphasis on the ephemeral nature of the human body and the ongoing cycle of life and death in nature. The poem does not deify death nor evoke in the reader the impression of a mysterious event, but rather of a fact that applies to all of human life. Such attention to the universal and inevitable nature of death is typical of the central feature of literary naturalism, namely, "death consciousness. Through the portrayal of a foregone conclusion of human life, Mitra deviates from the idealized or spiritual understanding of death and onto a realistic one of human mortality. The poem is notable for its naturalistic aesthetics, as it includes a discussion of death as a part of humanity. Aditya Mitra 'Santhali' brings an element of mortality as a natural law to the philosophical and realistic aspects of contemporary Santali poetry through simple but powerful imagery.

Basudeb Besra and the Maturity of Naturalism

Basudeb Besra's poetry is a late naturalistic stage of Santali literature. Besra differs from the previous poets in focusing more on the human element of death, emotional anguish, than on the naturalistic aspects, as he introduces more elements of violence, death, psychological stress, revenge and destructive human instincts. His poems delve into the darker aspects of human psychology and portray people overcome by strong emotional forces. Instead of teaching these feelings as moral issues, Besra shows them as a fact of life; this is a central tenet of literary naturalism.

The following stanza from Besra's poetry illustrates this tendency:

*Anjom pe champa herel joto,
Mid ke mid inj helech peya;
Orak duar sim sukri ko,
Ched ge banj sarej apeya.⁴*

The speaker here shows a strong desire to kill and to be avenged in this stanza. He speaks to people around him and says no one will escape his wrath. He says he will

slaughter them, one by one, likening them to animals. The violence imagery is a phenomenon of the speaker's disturbed psychological state and also his destructive impulses that are generated in extreme emotional conflict. The poem does not glorify violence but reveals the latent violent tendencies of human beings and the delicate mental state of human beings. This idea of a realistic revenge, death, and instinctive actions serve as the aesthetic principles of naturalism, and literature as a tool for depicting the "dark, repressed and forbidden things of life. Therefore, Basudeb Besra's poetry can be counted as an important milestone in the development of Santali naturalism. He depicted violence, psychological strife, and death consciousness in a realistic and emotional manner, expanding the scope of Santali poetry and reinforcing naturalism as an important aesthetic tradition in contemporary Santali literature. The collective works of Gorachand Tudu, Krishna Chandra Tudu, Aditya Mitra 'Santhali' and Basudeb Besra show that naturalism was slowly emerging and developing into a separate art movement in Santali poetry in the period of 1950s to 1980s.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of naturalism is a major shift in the evolution of Santali poetry. Santali poets broke away from the themes of nature and spirituality to explore various other aspects of poetic expression, such as psychological conflict, death consciousness, sensuality, instinctive behaviour and socially suppressed experiences. The study finds out that Gorachand Tudu, the first naturalistic expression poet of Santali poetry, was followed by Krishna Chandra Tudu, Aditya Mitra 'Santhali' and Basudeb Besra who enriched the field. Together, they helped to create a naturalistic aesthetic movement in modern Santali literature. Naturalism in Santali poetry was not simply a western literary criticism being adopted by the Santali people, but it was a concept that

emerged from their cultural environment based on Churitan. Santali naturalism thus has to be viewed as an aesthetic approach whose foundations lie in the Santali culture rather than in an attempt to conform to the abstracted, literary view of nature prized by Western naturalists. Santali naturalism must therefore be read as a culturally based aesthetic approach rather than as a mode of representation designed to fit into the schema of the abstracted, literary approach to nature so valued by western naturalist scholars.

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