

COLONIAL PERIODICALS AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW PROVINCE: THE CASE OF *UTKAL DIPIKA* AND *UTKAL SAHITYA*

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Abstract

This essay will explore the intersections between the twin periodicals, *Utkal Dipika* edited by Gourishankar Ray [1866-1917] and *Utkal Sahitya* edited by Biswanath Kar [1897-1934] in terms of authorial 'intentions' and textual practice. Located in the larger colonial context in British India, it will argue that in course of time, these pivotal intersections resulted in the birth of a new linguistic province called Odisha in 1936, one of the first of its kind in India. It will argue that the emerging print culture, created by the native gentry, under the British Raj, led to newer forms of linguistic and cultural imaginaries in eastern India whose contours are beginning to be unravelled in recent times.

Keywords: Victorian/periodical press, British rule, Bible translations, colonial modernity, native gentry, print capitalism, editorial guilds, print history, textual practice, missionary press, language politics, linguistic province, sub-nationalism

Our attitude to the past has never been as crucially important as it is today. Although the language turn and discourse analysis in a post-modern age question the earlier axioms of historicity, the disciplines of history, aided by theory, has become integral to all academic quest. Thus, social, cultural, economic and literary history and historiography have come centre stage. Popular and revisionist history from the multiple disciplinary and generic standpoints

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engages the attention of avant-garde scholars today. Consequently, the Periodical Press of the 19th century in Britain,¹ Europe, America, and India must engage our attention.

Indeed, a look at some of the best articles published in the research journals in India will bear out the truth of my claims of the seminal contribution of the Periodical Press to our thinking of India's colonial past. For instance, in his article: "'The Beshya' and the 'Babu: Prostitute and Her Clientele in 19th century Bengal'"² Sumanta Banerjee, one of the leading critics of 19th century popular culture in India, argues that 'unlike the wife who sells her body into slavery once for all', and is made to turn it into a breeding machine for producing sons - (as explicit as saying 'Putrathe Kriyate Bharjya')- the prostitute hires her body without the obligation to reproduce. What she purchases in the course of her labour is intangible for herself but is a purchasable fantasy for male client'.³

Based on articles published in Periodical Press, as well as contemporary treatise on the subject, Banerjee examines the class structure of the 'Beshya' and allied notions: of 'free women', concubines, rural women, the organized sector, the grades of status and demands of the 'Babu', the Neophyte, religion and caste, the red-light areas, the new clientele, the new generation of prostitutes, popular perception, and finally, the response of the 'Beshya'. He singles out letters of prostitutes in contemporary newspapers that illuminate our understanding of the 'prostitute question.

Given this approach to the study, the present essay will explore the intersection between the twin periodicals, *Utkal Dipika* edited by Gourishankar Ray [1866-1917] and *Utkal Sahitya* edited by Biswanath Kar [1897-1934]. It will argue that in course of time, this historical process led inexorably to the birth of a new linguistic province called Odisha in 1936, one of the first of its kind in India.

My primary aim is to see the extent to which 'models' of the Victorian Periodical Press shaped their counterparts in colonial Odisha during the mid-19th Century till the early 20th Century, and thereby help explain the use of the term, 'colonial periodicals.' Interestingly, the newly emerging bourgeoisie challenged Western modernity and came up with varied forms of alternative/vernacular responses in the colonial periodicals. As is well known, European print culture came along with the colonial modernity project through the British rule in the settlement colonies, first to Bengal and then to the neighbouring region of Odisha.

For my purpose, I shall focus on *Utkal Dipika* and *Utkal Sahitya* as case studies. The two appeared periodically; the first was more in the

nature of a broadsheet that imparted topical information of general interest, while the second was closer in form and spirit to a literary journal.

A brief recapture of the broad contours of the early print culture in the region, especially under the inspiration of the English missionaries, would provide a useful context for the discussion.⁴

The Cuttack Mission Press was set up in 1837. *Gyanarupa*, edited by C. Lacey appeared in 1849. *Prabodha Chandrika*, published in 1856, gave a great deal of coverage to Odia language, literature and culture aside from dealing with Missionary activities. *Prabodh Chandrika* may be considered the first news and literary magazine of Odisha.

In 1861, the Christian Vernacular Literature Society published a monthly named *Arunadaya* in 1861. The East India Company and the Missionaries directly and indirectly pioneered the creation of the periodical press in India. Since most of these dealt primarily with missionary matters, there was a felt need to bring out an independent news magazine in Odia.

From roughly the middle of the 19th century till the third decades of the 20th century, there was an efflorescence of colonial periodicals in the region of Odisha. I would suggest that aside from other factors, it is primarily and pre-eminently the search for linguistic and cultural identity that drove the mission of these colonial periodicals and ensured a modicum of popularity. Mention may be made here of the more successful ones: *Utkal Dipika*, (1866); *Utkal Darpan*, (1873); *Utkal Madhupa*, (1878); *Pradipa*, (1885); *Sikhyabandhu*, (1885); *Naba Sambad*, (1887); *Odia ONaba Sambad* (1888); *Utkal Sahitya*, 1997; *Sambalpur Hiteisini* (1889); *Utkal Prabha*, (1891); *Sahakar* (1919); *Naba Bharata*, (1934); *Adhunika*, (1935) and so on.⁵ Notice the disproportionately large number of journals that carried the name 'Utkal', that traditionally stood for the region called Odisha and recalled its haloed glory. Here past with a sense of nostalgia is being evoked to make a clarion call for the creation of a new province with a distinct culture of its own. (See Kar, 1989 and 2013; Also see Mishra, 1979; 1983; Pattanayak, 1972; Pradhan, 1973 and Samantaray, 1964)

In contrast to the earlier publications, the two periodicals under discussion modelled themselves after the Mid-Victorian style trading companies with shares owned by a rich crop of royalty and wealthy entrepreneurs.

As a periodical appearing every week in the printed form with news item of interest to a wide cross section of readers in the region, *Utkal Dipika* posed a challenge of a formidable kind to its editor

and managers. The problem of acquiring the right kind of paper, designing, typesetting and producing the print run was one part of the challenge; the other was clearly the collection of news and advertisements for revenue; the third related to the question of the writing of editorials and columns.

It must be noted that the newspaper industry was still in its infancy in colonial India, and in Odisha, the necessary manpower and infrastructure hardly existed. Most of the advertisements for a long time came from small time business houses and pharmaceutical companies from Bengal that were into the sale of hair oil, cosmetics, watches and clocks. They had their head offices in Calcutta. Much later after 1900, we begin to see advertisements for products and services that had their origin in Odisha.

In striving for larger goals, did the two editors join hands with journals beyond the 'borders' such as in Bengal and elsewhere? How did they contribute to the making of the Odia sub-nationalism? This would be an important goal of the essay. As the editors advocated the linguistic and cultural interests of the subject population of the Odia speaking region, especially in the context of the internal linguistic colonialism they were subjected to, the periodicals paved way for the formation of a new linguistic province, one based on the primacy of the Odia language.

II

Gourishankar was born on 13 July 1838 in Dikhitpada in the Cuttack district, around the time Bankim Chandra Chatterjee took birth in the Kantalpada village in Bengal. Receiving early education in the village school, Gourishankar went to read Odia, Urdu and Persian in the high school at Cuttack in 1849 at the age of eleven. In 1858, Universities were set up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Gourishankar excelled in studies and winning a scholarship in 1856, travelled to Hooghly in June 1857 for higher education. The task was far from easy. Aside from the distance, there was also societal bias then against English education which was alleged to have corrupting influence on the young learners.

Gourishankar fared well in the first year at the Hooghly College but had to abandon his studies soon after, due to the bidding of his father in November 1858. On his way back, he worked as a temporary teacher at the Balasore Zilla School for rupees twenty per month, and subsequently returned to Cuttack in 1859.⁶ Joining as a Clerk at the Commissioner's Office, Cuttack, for Rupees Fifty in the latter half of

1859,⁷ he was soon appointed as a Money Order Agent by the then Commissioner G.F. Cockburn. He obtained a position as a translator. Fearless and independent-minded by temperament, Gourishankar was dutiful to a fault and stood up to his superior, Mr. Armstrong, the Joint Magistrate. Gourishankar distinguished himself by devotion to service. Displaying exemplary honesty, he retired from government service in 1882 after a productive career.

Gourishankar was deeply concerned about the need to preserve the Odia language against the onslaught of Bengali. In 1868, Rajendralal Mitra, an administrator addressed the Cuttack Debating Society and declared that those who believed in the welfare of the Odias ought to introduce Bengali as the lingua franca in the Odia speaking areas, a viewpoint that was strongly supported by Umacharan Haldar and Rajakrishna Bandopadhyaya in *Cuttack Star*. After all, opined Mitra: 'Should there be a language for a population of 20, 00000 only?'⁸ Further, Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya, a schoolteacher of Balasore, argued that 'Odia is not a separate language' but merely a dialect of Bengali. Gourishankar defended Odia in *Utkal Dipika* in a spirited manner.

The best way to preserve the Odia language, Gourishankar reasoned, would be through the medium of printing. A group of like-minded activists including Babu Bichitrananda Das; Jagmohan Ray, Maharaja Bhagirath Mahendra Bahadur of Dhenkanal and Gouri Shankar Ray came together and established the Cuttack Printing Company with a capital investment of Rs.7500/-. Set up in the drawing room of Jagmohan Ray, the improvised litho press was operated by Bhagirathi Sathia.⁹

Realizing the absence of good textbooks in Odia, Gourishankar wrote a geography book and got it printed in his press along with many ancient texts transcribed from their palm leaf origins. The main objective of the printing press was to bring out a weekly for the dissemination of news. Accordingly, a month after the establishment of the press, in August 1865, the first issue of *Utkal Dipika* was published. The appearance of the journal could not be timelier. For in 1866, Odisha was devastated by a horrific famine called 'Naanka Durbhika'. The Famine Enquiry Commission Report of the Government of India captured the essential pathos of the situation: It goes to the credit of the British that they took up this matter for discussion in the British Parliament. Horrified by the nature of this tragedy, Sir Stafford Northcote spoke trenchantly on the floor of the House of Commons. Indirectly his arguments paved the way for the formation of a new linguistic province:

I feel for the unnaturalness of territorial dismemberment and suggest bringing the Oriya country under one separate administration. The whole province is geographically isolated to an excess degree... The people are also separate and distinct of a character and a language peculiar to themselves.¹⁰

Sir Stafford's considered opinion regarding the need for a more lasting solution to the tragedies of Odisha seems to have been echoed by Gourishankar himself in the *Minutes of Evidence* he gave to the Famine Commission dated 11 January 1867.

As the editor of *Utkal Dipika*, Gourishankar extensively covered the news of the famine and brought to public attention and to the notice of government officials, public grievances regarding income tax, salt tax, and sales tax aside from the issues of mis-governance by the police, civic and educational officials. Such action required a great deal of courage, for the Press was bound to attract punitive action by vindictive officials for the forthrightness of views expressed. Gourishankar's uniqueness lay in the fact that he presented all issues in an objective and dispassionate manner before its readership. He was present at the Royal Asiatic Society along with other Oriya pundits and patriots at Calcutta in 1870 and vehemently opposed the imposition of Bengali as a court language in Orissa.¹¹

The campaigns he actively led in the pages of *Dipika* covered many issues such as the government's decision to withdraw Persian from the Court, the need for the preservation of Odia language and literature in Odisha well as the preparation of standard textbooks. He wrote an effective rejoinder to Rajendralal Mitra's speech in *Dipika* and declared unequivocally that 'the ignorant ought not to pass a comment on a matter which he had no knowledge.'

Similarly, he firmly opposed the use of the Bengali script for writing Odia and correctly argued that eastern languages like Bengali, Odia and Assamese were not derivative or dialects of each other but were independent languages that had evolved in due course and had a common origin in Sanskrit. After an active life, he passed away on 7 March 1917.¹²

In terms of its contents, *Utkal Dipika* typically contained the following:

- (a) News of various laws
- (b) Details of education, culture and national life
- (c) Discussion of Odia language and literature
- (d) Account of the news and problems of Odisha, and finally
- (e) List of holidays and almanac of Odisha.

It contained several sections and columns. The names of the

columnists were not displayed as a general policy; the only name that was given regularly was that of the editor Gourishankar Ray who was also listed as the Manager.

Dipika was born out of the need to share news and views regarding the famine and to act as a mouthpiece of the Odias to articulate their grievances. The responses to the famine that *Utkal Dipika* regularly featured in its pages were marked by rigor and rare objectivity and brought about the changes it desired.

The challenges of running news weekly like *Utkal Dipika* must have been formidable. In the absence of documented study, such challenges like compilation and presentation of news, writing of regular columns, printing and circulation, advertisement revenue, patronage and institutional support can only be speculated. Further documented studies in this area will illuminate our understanding of the functioning of the journals.

Dipika brought in perspectives from far and near, ran excerpts from other magazines and journals published in India and abroad. In specific terms, it underlined the importance of debating clubs and public speeches in creating a new public culture in Odisha. It used a mix of wit, humour and solemnity to highlight the important literary-cultural and political issues. And finally, in a masterly manner, it dealt with the issue of language politics. The attempts to impose the Bengali language and script were brilliantly portrayed in *Utkal Dipika*. It created the necessary public awareness about the linguistic, literary and cultural pride among the Odias and made strategic alliances with individuals and forces for the preservation of Odia language and culture.

The editorials in *Utkal Dipika* were written mostly by the editor Gourishankar. It must have been a herculean task, given the fact that the editor himself was a man of town who also doubled up as a social reformer and activist. Besides, a number of verbal and administrative skirmishes were noticed in the pages of *Dipika* regarding the attitude towards the colonial masters. In a number of instances, the *Dipika* was also dragged to court in the alleged defamation cases regarding the 'objectionable' use of language and opposition to colonial laws. Given such constraints, it is nothing less than a miracle that a journal of this kind ran from 1866 to 1937, beyond the passing of its founder, whereas many periodicals with impressive pedigree perished on the way. The dedication, idealism and ability of the editor must be the major reason for the success of such a venture. Added to that, was the clear case of patronage of a wider readership that regularly lent its ears in a sustained manner week after week. The credibility of

the periodical and the sincerity with which the editorial task was discharged for a worthy cause were never in doubt. The cause was eminently cultural. It would be a matter of debate whether the British administrators in Odisha and Calcutta were taken in by the profession of loyalty and supplication. What was important is that both sides: the British and the Indians gained from this arrangement.

For the most part the editor attempted to strike a balance between outright defiance of the colonial administration and total subservience. They championed many causes popular in nature and in the process earned credibility for the periodicals while refraining from direct challenge to the colonial regime.

III

Like Gourishankar Ray, Biswanath Kar's life is intimately linked with the fate of his journal. The latter was born to a Brahmin family on 24 December 1864 in Mulabasanta village of the undivided Cuttack district of Odisha.¹³ He received his early education in the hands of his village teachers.

At the age of 16, Kar mastered Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, French, Greek and Latin. Losing interest in formal education, the young learner left the Mission High School in the first half of 1885. While looking for a suitable opening for a job, he took up the editing of two journals name *Samaja* and *Samskaraka* and soon his association with the Brahmo Samaj brought him to the public domain.

There was a felt need among the Odia literati to publish a good literary journal. Indeed, several journals like *Pradipa*, *Madhupa* and *Asha* had become extinct by then. Thanks to a collective effort by Madhusudan Rao, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Sadhu Charan Ray, Chandra Mohan Maharana and Krishna Prasad Choudhury, a new journal called *Utkal Sahitya* was born. Initially well run, the journal soon encountered obstacles both literary and material.

Biswanath thought that the long-term answer to the financial problem of the journal lay in setting up a printing press which would give the necessary revenue as well as facilitate the printing of the journal. He obtained patronage from kings and Zamindars [landlords] and put in his own meagre resources into the venture. On 10 January 1900 the Utkal Sahitya Press was established in Balu Bazar, Cuttack.

Now that the Press was set up, Biswanath's main goal lay in creating a band of loyal and dedicated writers for the journal in order to promote quality literature. Thanks to his support and inspiration, an

entirely new generation of writers such as Gopal Chandra Praharaj, Nanda Kishore Bal, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Sashi Bhushan Rai, Ramshankar Ray, Bhikari Charan Patnaik, Kuntala Kumari Sabat and others made a name for themselves by writing in the journal.

Biswanath believed in establishing family ties across linguistic barriers and therefore gave his daughter Narmada in marriage on 15 October 1919 to Jitendra Kumar Biswas who was a Muncif in Bengal. The younger daughters, Pratibha and Suprabha, after suitable training, joined the Ravenshaw Girls' school as teachers. Both received education in the famous Bethune College of Calcutta and became supporters of female education in Odisha. They chose to remain single and worked diligently till the end. Pratibha, like Narmada, wrote and translated admirably in the field of interfaith dialogue and female empowerment. Suprabha retired as the Inspector of schools after successful teaching at the Ravenshaw Girls' School,

While the girls blossomed, Biswanath was finding it difficult to get a steady stream of quality writers for his journal. A crisis was manifest in the case of *Utkal Sahitya* by 1920. The Radhanath Rai, the iconic Odia writer, passed away in 1908. Madhusudan died on 28 December 1912 and Fakir Mohan on 14 June 1918; three of the best-known contributors to the journal were tragically lost within a short span of time. It must be noted that Biswanath was extremely discerning as an editor and made stringent editorial judgment.

He had a financial arrangement with the owner of Cuttack Trading Company, according to which the books of the CTC were to be printed in the Utkal Sahitya Press. A portion of the building upstairs, served as the accommodation of the Kars.

Biswanath took personal care in the printing undertaken in his press. He engaged experienced proof-readers like Krushna Chandra Kar and every proof copy passed through his hands. If by chance, errors crept in, he preferred to consign everything into flames and prepare fresh machine proofs.

Biswanath was independent both in thought and action. He was not convinced about the civil disobedience movement and therefore opposed it at a great cost to his reputation. At the same time, when the British government honoured him with the title of Rai Bahadur, he turned it down.

Endowed with a strong moral vision of life, he was against superstition and blind beliefs and used *Utkal Sahitya* as an instrument for carrying out the necessary reforms in society. The satirical writings of Nanda Kishore Bal and Gopal Chandra Praharaj that he

published in *Utkal Sahitya* came handy for this purpose.

What were the defining features of *Utkal Sahitya* that Biswanth Kar founded and nurtured for long? The journal brought in a variety of genres: essays, criticism, stories, novels, travelogue, life stories, biographies and autobiographies in an extraordinary manner. Two columns were extensively used: 'Bibidha Prasanga', miscellaneous topics, and 'Sankhipta Samalochana', brief criticism. The journal witnessed the evolution of the Odia prose.

Utkal Sahitya contained essays of different kind such as the descriptive, narrative, and reflective ones, as well as essays that were critical and informative. The prominent writers were the following: Fakir Mohan, Radhanath, Madhusudan, Ramshankar and Gangadhar, Krishnaprasad, Chandramohan, Nandakishore, Gopal Chandra, Jagabandhu Singh, Sashi Bhushan, Mohini Mohan and Jalandhar Dev.

On 19 October 1934, Biswanath passed away after an eventful life in the service of Odia language and literature. By the time he died, there was a decline in the circulation of the journal. According to Bhagirathi Nepal, *Utkal Sahitya* got delinked from the nationalistic forum and therefore lost leadership. But it had already made its mark and served a historical purpose.

IV

In terms of contents and style, the two journals were manifestly different; one was primarily news weekly, the other a literary periodical. Both complemented each other, their lifespan coincided during the period between 1897 and 1927. The two journals were born essentially as cultural and political responses to the challenges Odisha faced in the mid-19th Century for its survival: There seems to have been a sense of inevitability in the emergence of the two forums, given the political contexts of the times. However, by the first decades of the 20th century, certainly by the 1920s, the basic objectives of the two journals, namely the need to safeguard the language and literature of the region were achieved. To be sure, further battles lay ahead. But in the social, political and cultural arena, Odisha had gone beyond the crisis point; its survival was no longer in doubt.

We have seen that Gourishankar and Biswanath were essentially the products of their times. They were both traditionalists and modernists who were open to the ideas of change. Indeed, they saw change as inevitable. Through their writings and actions, they used

the breath of the new culture, and winds of change blowing from within and outside the province, to act as the life force that would sustain an ancient civilization. Many of the changes that the West propelled, such as the new system of education, style of governance, use of technology and warfare, maritime trade, land, revenue, agricultural and irrigation system, costume, food and entertainment industry, [the shampoo bath and the polo game to mention at least two], the progressive agenda in the different domains of life— all came as a Juggernaut, demolishing and destroying the hurdles on its way.

There is little doubt, however, that both Gourishankar and Biswanath were outstanding editors who were dedicated; idealistic-minded, intellectually gifted with a creative approach to life. Both were endowed with an ethical drive of an exceptional kind that sought the welfare of the entire mankind and the insentient world. Changes had to be made in Odisha. No doubt the British were colonialists and imperialists. But they could be reasoned with. It was futile to think of militancy, and warfare with them. Better still was to enlist the support of members of the higher echelons of the British Administration in Odisha and Bengal, and to carry out with their support, the necessary changes in the province.

The editors, basically realists, thought out the strategy in terms of their understanding of the situation at hand. In this, up to a point, they were not mistaken; many reforms were carried out in the province especially after the famine. The roads, coastal canal system, and the land revenue system, the new college named after Ravenshaw, all were taken up on a priority basis thanks to a vigorous campaigning by *Dipika*. While the British divided Bengal in 1905 for political reasons, they gave a separate province to Odisha on 1 April 1936.

On balance it must be said, however, that the journals made insufficient effort in exposing the exploitation in the hinterland especially in the feudatory kingdoms. While they received patronage from the feudal elements and the kings, they did not speak out vigorously against the feudal kingdoms and forces. Clearly the ideological fault lines would remain buried in the province and would surface in the decades following the thirties of the last century.

Similarly, the contributions of *Utkal Sahitya* to the making of modern Odisha, in the colonial context, are abundantly manifest in the pages of the journal. The new cultural codes, menace of plagiarism, imperialism and war, modernity and new historiography, [the latter exemplified by the diaries of the Portuguese trader

Streyanshan Master], the rise of the New Woman, travel and contact zones—all find prominent place in the journal. Likewise, it played an outstanding role in debating issues like modernity and the reform agenda, the role of leadership, the question of self-reliance and cultural transactions between English and Odia. It employed a variety of literary styles and encouraged a wide range of genres, prose, poetry, fiction, short story, essays, criticism, travelogues, skits, humour, and occasionally, plays. The best of the writers, poets and essayists of modern Odisha like Fakir Mohan Senapati, Madhusudan Rao, Kuntala Kumari Sabat and others wrote in this forum. They gave respectability to the journal, and in turn, found an excellent platform for self-expression and creativity.

V

Periodical Literature in colonial Odisha was created by the Christian missionaries in the production and dissemination of the print culture in the region; it broke from the primarily evangelical agenda of the missionaries and created a vernacular modernity through the promotion of many literary genres in Odia. While it brought in the English Language and Literature to the forefront, it also ushered in modes of cultural transactions such as translations and adaptations for a larger readership.

While cultural influences from Bengal and elsewhere were commended by the editors, in terms of the idiom, style and contents, the journals made innovations and contributed to the emergence of modern Odia language and literature. The appeal to the larger Odia readership testifies to the fact that the journals had indigenous roots. It promoted Odia self-esteem but eschewed cultural chauvinism.

Gourishankar knew that the best way of preserving the press freedom was to have independent finances and therefore he established the Cuttack Printing Company which supported substantially the running of *Utkal Dipika*. A group of like-minded activists including Babu Bichitrananda Das; Jagmohan Ray, Maharaja Bhagirath Mahendra Bahadur of Dhenkanal and Gourishankar Ray came together and established the Cuttack Printing Company with a capital investment of Rs.7500/-. It was set up in the drawing room of Jagmohan Ray. Given the circumstances of the times, and the lack of awareness of such ventures, it was an extraordinary move, farsighted that revealed that sound finances were responsible for the running of a good periodical press. Subscriptions and advertisements also added to the revenues. By all account, the journal was commercially

successful.

Similarly, *Utkal Sahitya* was supported financially by the *Utkal Sahitya Press* that undertook printing work on a regular basis. Patronage was received from Kings and Zamindars. Biswanath Kar also put in his own meagre resources into the venture. On 10 January 1900 the *Utkal Sahitya Press* was established in Balu Bazar. Subscribers and advertisements too supplemented the revenue. Both the journals enjoyed mass appeal

Both Gourishankar and Biswanath came from the upper caste reformist Brahmo background, and both tried to combine tradition with modernity. They welcomed many of the changes brought about by colonial modernity, but also decried aspects they perceived as 'baneful' or 'harmful' and considered unsuitable to Odisha. In this, their approach was common to others such as Fakir Mohan Senapati. Products of their times, they were not rigid or dogmatic and welcomed a broad spectrum of views and reviews in their journals. Gourishankar was more caustic against those he felt were domineering and arrogant. On the other hand, Biswanath was unrelenting about the need for ethical and moral conduct. Like Matthew Arnold, he felt that literature ought to serve a moral purpose and must be serious in approach.

Politically, Gourishankar espoused a middle of the road position. A reformist in approach and temperament, he believed in bringing about the necessary administrative and cultural changes in Odisha through campaigns and appeals to the higher authorities rather than by fomenting revolts and rebellion. However, this did not mean that he was a supplicant. Firm and self-respecting throughout his life, he did not hesitate to highlight atrocities committed by Englishmen or native administrators. The same can be said of Biswanath Kar who spearheaded the need to preserve the Odia language and culture and bring about the necessary reforms through campaigns in the press.¹⁴

The two journals zealously guarded their press freedom and did not compromise with forces that attempted to subjugate them. They fought a number of court cases and came out of them successful. Gourishankar faced greater challenges since his was a news magazine that took up pressings issues that were administrative and political in nature. Besides, he also championed literary issues that brought his journal in close conflicts with some of the influential Bengali administrators. His best ally in this regard, was a fair judiciary. Similarly, Biswanath was staunch in his opinion and steadfastly defended his contributors in *Utkal Sahitya*. It must be said that both the editors were balanced in their judgment, and

never allowed the pages of their journals to be used for malicious or scurrilous purposes. Ultimately, the credibility of the journals also came to their rescue from being proscribed by authorities.

The editors of the two journals while serving the interest of Odisha were not parochial or insular in their approach. Gourishankar had Bengali ancestry, while Biswanath gave his daughter and family members in marriage in Bengal. It must be noted that the Brahmo Samaj movement [basically a social reform movement of Hinduism] crossed the regional boundaries; it embraced Bengal and Odisha. *Dipika* brought regular excerpts from periodicals from Bengal, Bombay and elsewhere, just as *Utkal Sahitya* brought in translations and adaptations from other languages and literature. Odia literary and regional culture was being created in healthy collaboration with other Indian Strands.

Both the editors firmly believed in interfaith dialogue. They were spiritual minded, who saw the need to go beyond narrow religiosity. Naturally, as in any age, it would be hard for the writers and editors of the two journals to go completely beyond the stereotypes and dogma of their period; it must be admitted that at times the treatment of Christianity and Islam have been less than fair.

It is not clear how the two editors and their journals would have fared had they lived longer. Gourishankar died at the peak of his career and fame in 1917. The movement he had created and consolidated ran full steam and brought about the necessary changes in his lifetime. Unrivalled both as a reformer and editor, he remained a powerful spokesman of the Odia cause. Others like Madhusudan Das had come to the scene when the movement for the unification of the Odia speaking areas was gaining ground. But Gourishankar stood tall and was widely admired. On the other hand, while Biswanath Kar continued to excel, by 1920, both the cultural and ideological climate in Odisha had begun to change. Nevertheless, both left a rich legacy that would be continued in a varied manner in the journals of post-independence Odisha.

Conclusion

The year 1866 is important as a point of departure: It witnessed the Great Odisha Famine and led to the birth of *Utkal Dipika*, the first major news periodical of Odisha, a weekly founded and edited by Gourishankar Ray. Similarly, on 1 April 1936, a large part of Odia speaking areas was brought together by the British who had arrived earlier in the province in 1803. In between, in 1897, the eminent

Odia reformist-litterateur Biswanath Kar founded *Utkal Sahitya*. Both *Utkal Dipika* and *Utkal Sahitya* ran beyond the life-span of the two founder-editors who left an outstanding legacy after them. By championing the cause of the Odia language and culture, the two journals contributed to the formation of the Odia speaking province on 1 April 1936, the first of its kind in India.

[All translations from Odia, used in the text, unless otherwise indicated, are by me.]

Notes

1. See www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document; also www.victorianweb.org
2. See *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, No.45 (Nov.6, 1993), pp.2461-2472.
3. Ibid. p. 2461.
4. For most part of the information, I have relied on my publication, *Periodical Press and Colonial Modernity: Odisha, 1866-1936*, New Delhi: OUP, 2016.
5. For a good review of the history of colonial periodical literature in Odisha, see Bauribandhu Kar, *Odia Sahityara Samalochanataka Itihasa* (in Odia) [The History of Odia Literary Criticism], Cuttack: Kitab Mahal, 1989; rpt. Cuttack: Friends' Publishers, 2013. Also see, Gopal Chadra Mishra, *Odishara Bikashare Patra Patrikara Prabhava* [in Odia]/[The Impact of Odia Periodicals on the Growth of Odisha], Cuttack: Grantha Mandir, 1979;rpt.1983; Sudhakar Pattanayak, *Sambadapatraru Odishara Katha*, (in Odia) Cuttack; Grantha Mandir,, 1972;rpt.2011; Atul Chandra Pradhan, *Press and Journalism In the Nineteenth Century Orissa*, *Bharati -Utkal University Journal Humanities*, 7(13, 1973) :31-40; Natabara Samantaray,, *Odia Sahityara Itihasa:1803-1920* (in Odia)[History of Odia Literature], Bhubaneswar: Grantha Mandir, 1964.
6. 'Karmavir Gourishankar Ray' by Radhanath Rath, in Srichandan Singh, p.3.
7. See Gourang Charan Ray, in Singh Op. Cit.p.26. Sudhakar Pattanayak, *Samabadapatraru Odishara Katha*, Cuttack; Grantha Mandir, 1972;rpt, 2011)
8. *Utkal Dipika*, 13.3.1869.
9. Ibid.p.6.
10. Ibid.p.17.
11. Radhanath Rath, p.9.
12. *Karmajogi*, p.68; *Karmaveer Gourishankar*, p.13.
13. For much of the information regarding the life of Biswanath Kar, I am indebted to *Bagmi Biswanath* by Krishnachandra Kar (in Odia), Cuttack: Rashtra Bhasha Samabaya Prakashan, 1983. Also see, *Bagmi Biswanath Kar* by Bhagirathi Nepal, Cuttack: K.K.Mishra & Co, 1984.
14. By the 20s of the last century, many leading activists in the field of Odisha politics and social life, spearheaded the movement for a separate Odia speaking province. See, for instance, Pandit Gobabandhu Das's writings in *The Star of Utkal*, dated 13.12.1924: As Das wrote: 'Dear Editor, you have asked me for a message in Oriya amalgamation. No message however ably delivered would adequately express the feeling of Oriyas who are now struggling as a race for their very existence under the present state of their dismemberment. The

tongue of the Oriya has been cut. In Medinipur they were five lacs some three or four census back and their number is now insignificant, almost a negligible quantity... I believe, in spite of the many destructive forces of administration, the Oriya must survive as a race. The national consciousness of the Oriya has been roused. He must help himself and sincerely trust God will help him'. [*The Star of Utkal-1924*] Quoted in *Kuntala Kumari Jibana Charita* (in Odia) by Chakradhar Mohapatra, Cuttack: Grantha Mandir, 1972, pp.117-119.