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Padmasri Dr. Satya Narayan Rajguru: An archaeologist scholar without schooling

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Abstract

Padmasri Dr. Satya Narayan Rajguru was a celebrated archaeologist and historian of Orissa who was made pioneering researches on archaeology, epigraphy, history and literature, and has laid the foundation of scientific historical research on solid grounds in Orissa which was emulated to a great extent by a host of history scholars of India in general and Orissa in particular. His long involvement, dedication and original contributions to the Orissan historiography are immense and profound. A multifaceted personality, Rajguru made in-depth study of ancient scripts on stone, palm leaves besides creating literature with a humanistic fervor.

Keywords: Zamindary, palinki, bahaka, timmarasu

Introduction

Early Life

S.N. Rajguru was born on 19th August 1903 ^[2] (*Bhadrapada Krushna Ekadasi*) in a Rajguru family of Paralakhemundi Zamindary. His father was Harikrushna Rajguru and mother was Sunamani Devi. His parents were the devotees of Lord Satyanarayana for which they given their child's name as Satyanarayan. His grandfather, Madhusudan Rajguru, was a great Sanskrit Scholar. He was fortunate enough to be the child of the Oriya movement. He was born in 1903- the year of the formation of the Utkal Sammilani. His birth during such an opportune moment of history can be taken as an event ordained by God ^[3].

His mother was passed away when he was only 7 days of age. Her grandmother Mika and aunty Bimala (widow sister of his father) and taken all the care of his childhood ^[4].

Early Education

S.N. Rajguru's education was started early in the age of five. He was admitted in the Municipal Primary School (modern Shyam Sundar Rajguru Primary School) of Paralakhemundi. Sri Narasingha Mishra was his private tutor ^[5]. After completion of primary education, he was admitted in the Maharaja's Boys High School at Paralakhemundi. He was revolutionary by nature from his childhood. In a school where he was a student he challenged the use of a particular uniform and a turban on the head as prescribed by the Head Master for which he was expelled from the school ^[6]. Because of this nature he was denied admission into any school of Paralakhemundi and decided to take admission in a Sanskrit School. He was passed Shastri examination in Sanskrit as a private student.⁷

Besides obtaining a degree through private study Satyanarayan acquired knowledge in Bengali, Sanskrit and Telugu.

Career and Achievements

In the year 1918 at the age of fifteen, Satyanarayan married to Taramani Devi in a Brahmin village near Changudi Sasana ^[8]. Bhikari Mishra was his father-in-law, the second graduate of Paralakhemundi and the Head Master of Manjusha High School. Balabhadra Mishra was the younger brother of Bhikari Mishra and the second M.B.B.S. doctor of Orissa. Satyanarayan's only brother-in-law justice Abhimanyu Mishra was also a famous personality in Orissa. Abhimanyu Mishra also the former Vice Chancellor of Berhampur University ^[9].

After marriage, Satyanarayan has decided to publish small poems in magazines. As an adolescent, poetess Sarojini Naidu's "the Palanquin Bearers" inspired Satyanarayan Rajguru to the extent that he translated it into Oriya as "Palinki Bahaka" ^[10]. This poem was his first creation when he was in the high school. As per the advice of his friend, Satyanarayan sent

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this poem to a monthly magazine. 'Pradeep' published from Berhampur under the editorship of Shasi Rath^[11]. After the poem was published in the magazine 'Pradeep', he wrote some more small poems and published them through Shasi Bhusan Rath's Asha Press.

There was a library in the Rasika Raj Matha near Rajguru street, which was established by the veteran writer and dramatist Apanna Paricha of Paralakhemundi. Apanna Paricha was the uncle of Simadri Paricha. Simadri was the headmaster of a high school and he had translated a historical Bengali play 'Hameer' (the book was preserved in the library of Apanna Paricha Rasika Raj Matha). The play 'Hameer' was originally written by Dot Sahed in Bengali. Simadri got the play 'Hameer' staged with Satyanarayan as a Hero. It was Satyanarayan's first stage performance. Since then he started story writings for dramas.

Inspired by the great writers like Fakir Mohan, Bankim Chandra he started collection of plays, dramas, books, magazines and preserved them in a small library in his house.

In the year 1919 Satyanarayan's grandfather was passed away:

Satyanarayan's uncle Shyamsundar Rajguru, the first Oriya graduate of Ganjam had formed a voluntary agency under the patronage of Paralakhemundi Maharaja Sri Krushna Chandra Gajapati. Satyanarayan joined the organization as a dedicated volunteer. Between 1930-36 he had taken up compilation of demographic documents relating to Oriya population, mapping and documentation of papers with regard to unification of Paralakhemundi and Jeypore zamindars.

As a warrior of movement for Orissa Pradesh unification he had earned the reverence of the masses. By 1923 Rajguru took his initiation in epigraphy and deciphering ancient scripts from the renowned historian Gidugu Ram Murty of Andhra Pradesh. He sat on the path of a true archaeologist and unraveled historical truth by his study of copper plate grants and paleography. He wrote a series of his discoveries in articles in the reputed journals of national and international level.

His literary talent was exhibited at a very early age. He composed a number of historical dramas like 'Kharavela', 'Ranachanda', 'Karnata-Kumari' and 'Kalinga-Vijaya'. For this purpose he collected a lot of source materials from Palace library, Paralakhemundi; College Library and the Connera library. In his first historical play 'Kharavela' he describes the agony of the Oriyas under a fragmented Orissa state and creates a strong sense of patriotism in Orissa. His other historical play 'Karnata-Kumari', which aroused Oriya Nationalism in the then Paralakhemundi Zamindari to such an extent that, it led to Oriya-Telugu conflict and preparation of a Telugu film known as "Timmarasu" to Challenge it^[12].

At the earlier stage of his life, Dr. Rajguru was elected as a member of the Paralakhemundi Municipality. Thus gave him an opportunity to render social service. He worked as the civic body councilor for 16 years. He was also elected to the Ganjam District education board, Berhampur. Besides, Rajguru had a great sympathy for the underprivileged women folk of our country those days. He has opposed child marriages and supported widow marriage. Despite resistance from conservative class of his times he went ahead with his reformatory movement. During the World War II, he had worked hard for the people of

Paralakhemundi as a leader in the Home Guard Organisation^[13].

The Oriya movement in South Orissa received a great impetus after the visit of Philip-Duff Enquiry Committee in 1924. From that day onwards till the formation of the separate Orissa province, in 1936, Sri Rajguru worked hard to hand with Maharaja K.C. Gajapati for the unification of the Oriya speaking areas. Maharaja K.C. Gajapati entrusted him to prepare the maps, memorandums, reports and historical data to submit the same to the different committees and commissions that were set up to enquire into the problems of the Oriyas. It is heartening to note that, he prepared a memorandum in a befitting manner and put forth his strong arguments before Dr. Pannikar- the Chairman of the States Reorganization commission. It is only because of Dr. Rajguru's memorandum the Southern Boundary of new Orissa province remained intact^[14].

As an eye-witness of many events of Oriya movement and with easy access to the different courts of the Rajas and Government offices, he had ample opportunity of knowing the accurate details of the Oriya Movement. He contributed a large number of research-based articles to the different newspapers and journals and created a strong public opinion in favour of the unification of all the Oriya speaking areas. No other historian gives so detailed account of Oriya movement as Sri Rajguru.¹⁵ It seems, the movement for the amalgamation of all the Oriya speaking areas was the mission of his life.

In the year 1931, Rajguru has written a number of columns, poems, articles in various daily newspapers, magazines and journals. Most of them were patriotic in nature and mostly relating to formation of separate Orissa province. Following is the list of his publications during the year 1931 and 1932^[16].

1. "Mandraj Odiya Anchalare Census Bivrat" (Oriya), in *Dainik Asha*, January, 1931.
2. "Naraj Darshan", *Utkal Sahitya* (Oriya), in *Dainik Asha*, January, 1931.
3. "Odiya Desamisrana Sambhandhe Pade" (Oriya), in *Dainik Asha*, January, 1931.
4. "Bambali Karnankara Intiperu Rahasya" (Oriya), in *Dainik Asha*, January, 1931.
5. "Mandraj Odiya Anchalara Jati Bichara" (Oriya), in *Dainik Asha*, January, 1931.
6. "Desamisranare Manjusara Bhaga Nahi ki ?" (Oriya), *Navin Patrika*, Berhampur, 1931.
7. "Utkaliya Lipi Tatwa" (Oriya), *Sahakar*, 1931.
8. "Odisara Unnati" (Oriya), 12.02.1931.
9. "Jagannath Dash" (Drama), 23.02.1931.
10. "Janani Utkala" (Oriya), 01.03.1931.
11. "Desamirana Sambandhe Pade", *Dainik Asha*, 19.03.1931.
12. "Prakrutika Oriya Bhasara Nirdesh", 22.03.1931.
13. "Desamisranar Itihas", *Dainik Asha*, 27.03.1931.
14. "Dakhina Odisara Manachitra", *Dainik Asha*, 03.04.1931.
15. "Rakta Golap", (Short Story), *Sahakar*, 07.04.1931.
16. "History of Eastern Gangas of Kalinga", *The Prachee* (English Journal of Prachee Samiti, Cutack), 10.04.1931.
17. "Odisadesa Misranare Dakhina Odisara Bhaga", Presented at the Utkal Sammilani, 27.04.1931
18. "Choudwarara Pratnatatwa" *Utkal Sahitya*, 1931.
19. "The Hieroglyphic Inscription of Orissa", 25.03.1931.

20. "The Heiroglyphic letters of Naraj", *Prachee*, 29.05.1931.
21. "The Chronological Account of the Bhanjas of Ghumsur" *Prachee*, Vol. II, Pts. III and IV, 1932, PP.2-17..
22. "Odisara Dakhina Seema" *Sahakar*, Vol. II, 1931, PP. 499-508.
23. "Japanra Kramannoti", 30.06.1931.
24. "The Odras and their predominancy", *Prachee*, pp.27-31.
25. "The Census Error", 19.07.1931.
26. "Utkal Jati Vigyan", 20.07.1931.
27. "Odisara Adima Jativigyan", 01.07.1931.
28. "Utkalara Prachina Paraja Jati", *Utkal Sahitya*, 24.07.1931.
29. "Odisara Kartabya Karma", *Dainik Asha*, 28.07.1931.
30. "Raddddhanathanka Kavyare Narira Sthana", 01.08.1931.
31. "Odisara Dakhina Seema", *Sahakar*, 13.09.1931.
32. "The Orissa Question", *the Hindu*, Madras, 24.06.1931 and 15.07.1933.

In the year 1932, S. N. Rajguru has written a historical work titled, "Kakhina Odisara Tailap Vamsa" and published it in the *Andhra Historical Research Journal*.

Discovery, interpretation and collection of copper plate grants, inscriptions was the mission of his life. He travelled different parts of Orissa to study the Copper Plate Grants and unraveled the historical truth after proper examination. He contributed a number of research papers on his discoveries to the well-known research Journals of India and abroad.¹⁷ He explored a number of inscriptions found on the temple walls of Sreekruman, Draksharam, Simahcalam and Mukhalingam which are now in Andhra Pradesh. The publication of such study not only rectified the historical blunders committed by the archaeologists and historians, but also revealed the new facts and truth. Though he was less qualified (not even completed matriculation examination) and much younger in age than Prof. G. Subarao of Rajmahendri College, he boldly and fearlessly challenged his opinion who attempted to prove that the original birth place of the Brahmins was in Bengal but not in Kalinga. The discovery of Chidivalasa Copper Plate falsified the statement of G. Subarao. Dr. Rajguru proved that, the Brahmins of Chidivalasa village belonged to Kalinga Brahmin Caste, Because of this discovery, the Andhra Brahmin Mahasabha honoured him with the award of Bharati Bhusan^[18].

One of the crowing achievements of S.N.Rajguru was the reading of the inscriptions on the rock walls and temples of Mahendragiri Mountain. Mahendragiri was once upon a time the capital of the Matharas, Sailodbhavas and the early Gangas. And this got a reference in the Allahabad pillar Inscriptions by Harisena when Samudragupta led a military expedition to the Deccan kingdoms. In this stupendous works Mr. Nilamani Vidyaratna and Bidya Bhusan extended a helping hand and immensely assisted in the deciphering the history of that period. They also established the fact that on the peak of the Mahendragiri Mountain, a fort was built by the king to protect themselves from the onslaughts of the enemies.

S. N. Rajguru also discovered that Mukhalingam was the ancient capital of Kalinga with a great Saiva pitha. He also challenged the mis-statement of facts of Subba Rao, a noted

epigraphist of south. He defied the possible Ganga era in south Orissa as fixed by Suba Rao and R.C. Majumdar. From the inscriptions, he fixed up the possible date of reign of the Bhaumkaras in 736 A.D. which too was corroborated by the famous historian, K.C. Panigrahi.

Another significant achievement of Sri Rajguru was the discovery of copper plate Grant from khorasanda village near Paralakhemundi. This discovery brought to light the historicity of Mathara dynasty which he published in Bihar and Orissa Research Journal^[20].

His first historical work 'The Gangas of Kalinga', Vol.I and Vol. II came to limelight on 1932. But his monumental work History of the Gangas (2-Vols.) is a pioneering one and more scientific and well organized than the Ganga Kings of Kalinga. He divided his first volume into six chapters, Chapter-I deals with the legends and mythological accounts about the Ganga Kings. Second chapter narrates the Accounts of the Greek writers. Chapter-III highlights the political condition of Kalinga. Epigraphical records of the Gangas of Kalinganagar are discussed in Chapter-IV. Chapter-V was devoted to Gangas of Swetaka, Chapter-VI of the book contains the cream of the work. It narrates the historical account of the Ganges from 7th to 10th century A.D. The book also contains a nice Bibliography.

The second volume of the work was published in 1972. It was arranged in 3 chapters which deals with the imperial branch of the Ganga Dynasty, Gangas of Khimundi and the History of Paralakhemundi. The book is scholarly and well documented. For the first time, the Gangas of Khimundi came to the limelight by Dr. Rajguru.

An ancient engraving which attempted to prove the birth place of the Brahmanas not in Kalinga but in Bengal was falsified by Dr. Rajguru after the grace of proper philological interpretation of copper plate grants. He proved that the Brahmins of Chidivalasa of Andhra Pradesh belonged to Kalinga Brahmin caste. This discovery fetched him Bharati Bhusan honour from the Andhra Mahasabha.²¹

S.N. Rajguru had created remarkable poetic treatise like *Manorama*, *Janani Utkala*, *Lokanritya*, *Gotipua Nacha* etc. Among his other literary achievements Kharavela, Kalingavijaya, Karnata Kumari and Gajapati stood prominently for their historical value^[22]. His well-known mythological plays include 'Seeta' and 'Geeta Govinda' and 'Radhavisekha', 'Chitra' is also considered as a social play of Rajguru^[23].

Dr. Rajguru has also focused on the different boundaries of the different ancient territorial units of Orissa like Kalinga, Tri-Kalinga, Sakal Kalinga, Kangoda, Svetaka, Kodaloka, Khijli Mandala, Hirakhanda, Kalinga Dandapat, Uttara Khanda etc. He had got a little knowledge in art, architecture, sculpture and numismatics which are a part of archaeology. But he was proficient in epigraphy and undoubtedly an intellect in his own method.

The study of paleography helped him to decipher the origin of the Oriya script in different ages and its distinctiveness from the neighboring languages. He proved himself to be a great author in Oriya because of his past experiences and unlimited knowledge. His writings in Oriya embraced the different aspects of Oriyas as a race, caste, their culture, literature, boundary, archaeology, inscriptions and dramas etc.

In 1947 Sri Rajguru was appointed as the Research Officer under the Maharaja of Kalandi at Bhawanipatna. There, he was entrusted to edit the Kalinga Historical Research

Journal. During his sojourn at Bhawanipatna he composed the 'Naga Itihasa' in Oriya ^[24].

The Government of Orissa established the State Museum in the year 1950 at Bhubaneswar for doing historical research on Orissa. S.N. Rajguru was appointed as an Epigraphist Curator in the Museum by the Government of Orissa. The five volumes on *Inscriptions of Orissa*, authored by S.N. Rajguru were the outcome of his work as a curator at the Orissa Museum. S.N. Rajguru explored a number of inscriptions found on the temple walls of Sreekruman, Draksharam, Simahcalam and Mukhalingam which were now in Andhra Pradesh through his monumental work *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. III and Vol.V. The publication of such study not only rectified the historical blunders committed by the archaeologists and historians, but also revealed the new facts and truth. His study of Indology helped him to compile a volume of the temples and religions in India.

Dr. Rajguru made original study on medieval inscriptions of Orissa and several motive inscriptions found at Simanchalam and Puri. He finally decided the date of beginning of the Bhuma era and the Ganga era. Another significant work "Invocatory Verses from Inscriptions" (2 Vols.) fetched for him the highest award Padmashree which was presented by the then president of India Sri V.V. Giri in 1974 ^[25]. His history of the Gangas in two volumes traced the origin of the Gangas and their growth as a dynasty besides establishing a palace of the Gajapati kings of Paralakhemundi. The history had drawn accolades from Chakravarti Raj Gopalachari, the then Governor of Madras Presidency.

His Oriya book "Odisara Itihasa" is an encyclopedia of the history and culture of Orissa. It contains the research articles like the Rock Shelter of the Pre-historic man in Orissa, pre-historic culture of Orissa, the first rice growers of India, Jainism in Orissa before Mahavira so and so on.

After retirement from the Orissa State Museum-as curator of Epigraphy, Rajguru was awarded a fellowship by Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University at Puri to decipher the motive inscriptions found in the Jagannath Temple of Puri and the adjoining monuments. Due to the de plastering of the Jagannath Temple, a number of votive and other inscriptions came to limelight. Their contents provide new information with regard to the construction of the temple, the land grants for its maintenance and the rituals. His most famous work "Inscriptions of the Temples of Puri and origin of Lord Sri Purushottama Jagannath" (2 vols) was the outcome of his work as the research Fellow of Jagannath Sanskrit University. It throws a flood of new light on the history and culture of Orissa.

In the year 1994, Dr. Rajguru has published his autobiography "Mo Jeevana Sangram" (in Oriya). It gave Dr. Rajguru "Sarala Samman" and the Kendriya Sahitya Academy award for its vivid recounting of a historian, epigraphist and an archaeologist at work. His style of writing is very simple. His literary presentations were free from linguistic jargon. He is very laborious and hardworking. He was a voracious reader. No other scholar remained so busy in writing research books or papers for such a long time as Sri Rajguru. People called him as a Book-work ^[26]. S.N. Rajguru's *History of Orissa*, part one, is considered to be an authentic work on the subject.

In the words of P.K. Mishra "as an objective scholar, he added new credibility to Orissan historiography. Though he

disputed the academic viewpoints of many scholarly giants like Dines Chandra Sircar, Finally by his impeccable logic and truthful research work, he succeeded in winning the debate on controversial issues. Among the three historians who were awarded 'Padmashree' for their scholarly contributions, Rajguru appears to be a more prolific writer on Inscriptions (Other two historians are Paramananda Acharya and Krishna Chandra Panigrahi). Without his epigraphic studies, the Telugu sources of Orissan history would have remained in drak. His epigraphic studies threw new light on the history of the Eastern Gangas and the imperial Gangas, besides many minor dynasties like the Nalas, Matharas, Vighrahas etc. who would, otherwise, have remained unknown. No scholar has enriched the historiography of medieval Orissa more than Rajguru. His proficiency in six languages such as Oriya, Sanskrit, Telugu, Bengali, Hindi and English was an advantage and his scholarly humility and dedication to research have no comparison.

For his outstanding contributions to the realm of literature and history, Berhampur University conferred on him the prestigious D.Litt. Degree in 1975 ^[27]. He also received the following honours and awards in his lifetime.

1. Received 'Utkal Sahitya Samaj' Prize 1930.
2. Felicitated by the Andhra Pradesh History Congress in 1950.
3. Received the most prestigious "Padmashree" award in 1974.
4. Received the Doctorate Degree from Berhampur University in 1975.
5. Felicitated by the Orissa History Congress in 1980.
6. Felicitated by Pragati Utkala Sangha of Rourkela in 1986.
7. Awarded 'Sarala Samman' in 1996.
8. Awarded 'Kendra Sahitya' Academy Prize in 1996.
9. Awarded 'Utkala Ratna' by Utkala Sahitya Samaj in 1996.

Following is the list of contribution of Dr. Rajguru

Though Dr. Rajguru was recognized as an archaeologist and historian his literary caliber cannot be denied. Almost all his works were research oriented. His contributions in Oriya language are Odisara Itihasa, Odisara Sanksrutiak Itihasa (Vol I and II), Naga Itihasa, Radhabhiseka (Natika), Manorama Kavya, Janani Utkala (Khanda Kavya), Ashoka (drama), Kharavela (drama), Gajapati (drama), Chitra (drama), Prastava Chintamani (edited), Oriya Upavasa, Odiya Lipira Krama Vikasa, Gopabandhu Gadya Sahitya (edited), Kalingara Atmakatha, Odisara Sankhipta Itihasa, Mo Jeevan Sangram (autobiography), Bharatiya Lipitwa, Sri Jayadeva (drama), Sri Jayadeva O Geeta Gobinda, Sri Purushottama O Sri Mandira, Januarira Sodasha Ratri (drama), Gangabansara Itihasa, Odisara Abhilekha, Puri Mandira Silalekha, Sri Purushottam Jagannathankara Mulatatwa etc. are writings mostly based on original research. At the same time he was contributed other languages, such Bengali, Sanskrit and English. His famous writing in Sanskrit in Prachina Utkala Rajaprasasti Mala. His contribution to the history of Orissa in English are *History of the Gangas* (two volumes), *Inscriptions of Orissa* (five volumes), *Invocatory verses from the Inscriptions* (two volumes) *Inscriptions of the temples of Puri and Origin of Lord Sri Purusottam Jagannath* (two volumes), *The Archeological Account of the Bhanjas of Ghumsur, The*

Heirographic Inscriptions of Orissa etc.

Dr. Rajguru lost his wife in 1996. Thereafter he spent an ailing and crippled life. He died in the year 1997. Padmasree Dr. S.N.Rajguru was a great scholar, historian, archaeologist and epigraphist. His contribution for making Orissa as a separate province is remarkable and unforgettable. S.N. Rajguru is a worthy son of the soil.

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