



Intercultural Love and History: A Literary Study of Bhima Bhuyan

Dr. Sashikanta Barik

Asst. Prof. & Head of Department, P.G. Dept. of English, Shailabala Women's Auto. College, Cuttack, Odisha, India.

Abstract – Experience is the mother of all writings of literature – be it novel, play, poetry, or autobiography. It is intensely related to the history of a time. Therefore, history and literature were symbiotic. History, in fact, prepares the soil for the nursery of literature. Culture, too, is another segment of the social history that moulds the human imagination and the sensibility. This is inextricably linked with the writer's history of the time. The paper has done a study of the Bhuyan Adivasi, or tribe of Keonjhar district of Odisha, who were culturally opposites, attached to the kings and princes of Keonjhar by a kind of filial bonding. Culturally, Bhuyan Sardars or leaders carry the prince on their shoulders for the coronation. Consequently, as a reward for their utmost devotion, the king ties the Ranjeet saree on Bhuyan Sardar's head. It is customary that the young prince will be coronated sitting upon the lap of a low-caste Bhuyan Adivasi. This cultural kinship has crossed the boundary of high and low and united them with an inseparable bonding of love and care. This basic history of the Bhuyans and the Kings of Keonjhar, imbibed as an experience by the novelist Gopal Ballav Das during his stay at Keonjhar as a government officer, has been transmuted to a unique fictional legend. Bhima Bhuyan – the first Adivasi novel in the history of Odia literature, retelling the celestial love and romance between a Bhuyan Adivasi and a charming princess of a royal family. Published in the year 1908, much earlier than Gopinath Mohanty, the unparalleled master-composer of tribal fiction, Gopal Ballav Das has been a trend-setter in inventing the poetic narration in prose. The love in each other's hearts, with the fear of social and cultural taboos – an Adivasi and a princess – has been transformed into real platonic love, without having any communication between them. The tribal hero, Bhima, wishes to sublimate his desire by sacrificing his life, and Jema, the princess, has been exemplary in remaining forever unmarried and wished to live at Brindavan with the feminine perfection of adopting one lover and only one husband. The historical facts so nicely compromised with the fabulous imagination, added with romance and ripeness of love, have turned into a timeless art, forever madly inviting the fiction-lovers and enthusiastic researchers to dive deep and to explore the unexplored till date.

Keywords: Symbiosis, Bhuyan Adivasi, Adivasi novel (tribal fiction), Platonic love, Timeless art.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gopal Ballav Das as a Novelist

As a contemporary of Fakir Mohan Senapati, the famous novelist of colonial Odisha, Gopal Ballav Das was born in 1860 in the village of Satyabhamapur, Salipur of Cuttack District. He was the younger brother of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, the architect of Modern Odisha as Utkal Pradesh. His father's name was Raghunath Das, and his mother was Parbati Dei. Completing his M.A. Degree from Calcutta University, he joined as the Deputy Magistrate of Odisha. During his service tenure, he was the most honest and efficient officer and was honoured with many awards. Working as a Deputy Magistrate in different places of Odisha, at last he was promoted to Personal Assistant of Odisha Commissioner, and in the entire Gadajhat district



worked as Assistant Superintendent. He married the daughter of the then Commissioner of Odisha, Ray Bahadur Nandakrishna. His wife's name was Basanta Kumari Dei. She was also the editor of Sikshya Darpan, alias Paricharika. Both of them had no son and were graced with only two daughters, named Uma Dei, the eldest, and Rama Dei, the youngest, who is the renowned freedom fighter and patriot. Despite being a full-time dedicated government servant during that period, he had a love for literature. He edited and introduced a poetry anthology. He contributed articles regularly to a famous journal known as Indra Dhanu. His talent and genius were known to many literate members of the general public of the time. He wrote poems such as "Usha", "Taraka Samhara", and "Konarke". He did the Odia translation of many prevalent laws of those periods. In disapproval of Radhanath's poetry, he violently criticised. He edited and printed his famous anthologies, such as Bhakti Ratnabali and Preeti Sudhakar. Though he was a poet, he wrote the famous biography of his father-in-law, Nandakishore Das. His lifetime achievement was his first and last novel, Bhima Bhuyan. This was the first novel in Odia literature, composed and published in 1908, relating to the Bhuyan Adivasi (tribal) of Keonjhar District. Of the entire population of Odisha, tribes were only one-third of the population at that time period. The whole of Odisha civilisation and culture was a conglomeration of the Arya and Adivasi-Anarya. Chronologically, Padmabali of Umesh Chandra Ray was the first novel in Utkal, Bibasini of Rama Sankar Ray the second, and Bhima Bhuyan the third of Utkal, though Fakir Mohan Senapati's Lachhama had been composed by 1905 and officially not published till 1914. In writing Bhima Bhuyan, he had created a genre in Odia fiction, combining complete ornamental poetry in prose, a fictional writing in poetry in the early 20th century. His love for nationalism was perceived from many speeches at Utkal Samilani, and finally, he came to the end of his life in 1914.

2. ABOUT THE ANCESTRAL HISTORY OF THE BHUYAN TRIBE OF ODISHA

The non-Aryan Adivasi tribes of Odisha are a part of the state's ancestral heritage. Odisha's fundamental religious tradition and culture were a mix of Aryans and non-Aryans. As it is known, the Jagannath cult, the navel-centre of Odisha's culture, had its origin from the Sabar tribe. This mixed cultural fermentation of Aryans and tribes (non-Aryans) had been continuing as the Jagannatha culture.

As per the official record, Odisha has around 64 different tribal communities. Of them, 13 were vulnerably going towards extinction. As the tribes like Kandha, Kolha, Bhuyan, and Santal were dominating in the Northern region, so also Gadaba, Paraja, Koya, and Ganda tribes were equally dominating in the Southern region of Odisha. Among all Adivasis, Bhuyans carried a mind of dignified inheritance. Why Bhuyans, because the whole novel had developed an unusually celestial romance between a Bhuyan Adivasi young boy and a princess of Keonjhar. The novelist Gopal Ballav Das got an opportunity to work as Superintendent when the King of Keonjhar was enthroned during the minor years. There, he came in close contact with the Bhuyan tribe, their culture, and their lifestyle, which inspired him to compose a fictional tribal romance, glorifying a Bhuyan tribal boy in love with a princess.

As the tribal history says, the Bhuyan had a lot of dignity among all the tribes. They were found in the Bhuyan pitha of Keonjhar. Bhuyans had loyalty, extreme devotion, and attachment towards the royal family. Equally, the Keonjhar king also selected them as Raja-Sardar (=king's leader). This royal tradition has been continuing for a long time; that is, when the young king was about to be coronated, Bhuyan leaders carried the king on their shoulders to the throne for the coronation. After the king was coronated, the young king would tie the Ranjeet saree on the head of the Bhuyan leader. The novelist, with an eye-witness of this intense involvement between a non-tribe and a tribe, passionately intensified his desire to give shape to a fictional romance. Apart from this, the scenic natural beauty of this place was to him more marvellous than



the natural sights of the Vindhya mountains. The loyalty of the Bhuyans is so remarkable that they treat the king as their idol or the representative of God. Equally, during the coronation, the king too proved his love for the Bhuyan community by sitting upon the lap of a Bhuyan tribal man as a customary process. The novelist Gopal Ballav Das, appointed as a receiver when the king was at a minor stage, came intensely in touch with Bhuyan's lifestyle, akin to orthodox cultural glamour. The festival gathering of the unmarried adult young men and women of the Bhuyans, preparing themselves for the Changu dance and bough – breaking dance, was really exciting and enticing. During this period, boys and girls got an opportunity to choose their future partner. This carnival pleasure of the Bhuyans had its predominance during the Maghapoda festival (=Wood-fire in Agni Utsav in the month of Magha). This realistic experience was the source of this tribal novel. The novel has retold vividly the cultural ideologies of Bhuyan young men and women, old, and the extreme aged, exhibiting a rare kind of living-style in nature's abode beneath this historical detail. An undercurrent of criticism is pointed against the civilised society where there was no consistency in love, no chastity of women, no robust philosophic vision, no monogamy as a sacred concept of marriage in modern times. Though it was a tribal fiction in the canons of literature, it crossed the limitation of time with the message of human values for all time, where eternity in the relationship between a man and woman was reflected, as a foil to the corrupt men and women of contemporary society, sheltered upon sensual pleasure. The small fiction has become rare in stature for its spark of ethics in different contexts, such as politics, social history, economics, social justice, fatalism, spiritualism, community laws, and a person's dos and don'ts in practical life. The prosaic history of the Bhuyans in collusion with the lively touch of romantic love has been metamorphosed into an immortal piece of literature, carrying the message of celestial love for mankind for all time.

3. ROMANCE IN CULTURAL OPPOSITES IN BHIMA BHUYAN

The novel begins with an allusive poetic quote from Canto 39 – Stanza 34 of Bidagdha Chintamani of Abhimanyu Samanta Simhara, where Visakha is giving consolation to love-sick Radha, pining for Lord Krishna – “Dispassionate love in non-attachment is more powerful than passionate physical union.” The Skeletal Romance framework is based on this fundamental love ethic, borrowed from Samantha Simhara. The fictional narration starts at the advent of the spring season, which seems to be stepping onto the earth weakly due to the fear of dying winter in the month of Magha on the occasion of Agni Utsav as per the Hindu calendar on the full moon day. In the Bhuyan tribal culture, this is known as Maghapoda Parba, where the unmarried boys and girls, men and women, old men and women observe an exciting revelry since the day of this festival. Like Basudhaiba Kutumbakam (=the whole mankind is one family under the Earth) of the Sanatan religious belief, the Bhuyans have gathered in the lap of nature like the mosaic of scattered honeycombs, where the group of honey-bees circle the queen bee and create a mesmerising humming sound. Festival pleasure has united the boys and girls of the Bhuyan community on a platform, preoccupied with dancing, singing, and drum-beating. Irrespective of high and low caste, all were passionately indulged in the theme of Horacian *carpe diem* (seize the day), defying the bites of acute winter. In the version of Gopal Ballav Das:

“Jati ajati, saana bada samaste ananda lahareere dolaayamana... bhinnaruchihlokah’ anusare bhinna bhinna padartharu utpanna helehen ananda eka. Gai kala heu, dhala heu, desi heu ki bidesi heu, dudha eka ... puni ‘agni jesane sabu khai, bichare dosagunna nahi’ sehipari narakinnara, pashu, pakhi saburithare anandara sanchara ... ehara saana-bada, ucha nicha bichara nahin. ehada iswariya, swarg – naraka, surasura, narakinnara jaahankara krida pitula se Sachidananda namare abhihita.” (p.1-2)



3.1 Translated as:

Irrespective of high and low caste, young and old, all are in the cradle of pleasure... As to the people of varying tastes, pleasure, though born from different things, is of one. Whether the cow be black or white, native or foreign, milk is one... Just as fire consumes all, it has no flaws when its lapses are considered. Similarly, pleasure prevails in all, be they men, demi-gods, animals, or birds... There is no discrimination between the young and the old, high and low. It is of divine origin. Heaven or hell, gods or demons, men or demi-gods, pleasure is the dearest icon of all. Therefore, God is referred to as Sat-Chit-Ananda or Sachidananda.

Those unmarried boys and girls of the Bhuyan tribe, preoccupied with the ripple of pleasure, move towards the stepping stone of romance. Their physical contact becomes their clue for freedom of choice in selecting a life partner. Where elders have no interference, rather they were the partaker in their children's pleasure. This is fundamentally a voluntary romance. Boys and girls marry of their own choice but never show any disrespect towards the elders, in discharging their basic duties towards parents. This sweet bonding between the parents and the children among the Bhuyans is their cultural edifice.

3.2 Triangular Love:

Bhuyans have their leaders, selected by the respective kings in their domain. Tila Sardar is the leader of one tribal clan. He is affluent and gracious with a single daughter, Chinamali. In the opposite clan, there is another leader named Sadhu Sardar. He is as rich as Tila Sardar, but he is blessed with two sons – Banasura and Bhima. Both were young and handsome and carry enviable virtues. In their tribal version, Chinamali is called dhangdi (unmarried girl), and Banasura and Bhima were called dhangada (unmarried boy). Both brothers were in love with Chinamali. Equally, Chinamali has kept the reserve of her heart for both. It is too unpredictable whom Chinamali will prefer. She does not discriminate in showing love towards both. Two brothers were supposed to be her two eyes. Their romance originates from the group-dance in the Maghapoda festival, and they exercise their own freedom to become bride and groom.

4. FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN MARRIAGE AS BHUYAN ADIVASI CULTURE

In this freedom of choosing life-partner in matrimony, their parents have no interference and shift the responsibilities to their children. This continued tradition in this way has become ancestral. This Maghapoda Parva infact creates the warmth of love. In the version of Gopal Ballav Das, who has experienced and experimented with the quintessence of Bhuyan's lifestyle, it is worth quoting:

“Emane prakrutira santaana. Prakruti kodare laalita palita. Bigyana padhi gyani hoi nahanti; tathapi emane bhala kari bujhichhanti je manusya keteka kalajae badhiba, teniki chhidiba. Antare anantare anta heba. Balakale jaaha thiba jubakale tahaa na thiba. Jubakala katha budha kalaku na thiba. juba jaahaa karipare budhaa tahaa na pare. Jubakale jaahaa sundara dise, tahaa budhathare maagjaanila pari dekhadie. Jubakale jaahaa sukhakara, budhakale taku anaibaku mana hue nahin. Sutaran prema kautukare jubaka jubatinkara pratidwandi heba pain budhaa budhiinkara pathara danta ba kalapa loda nahin..... sabu kalare sabhinki sabu sukhakara nuhen. Kintu kichhi nijaku sukhakara nohilebi sethure anyaku sukhi dekhigare sukha achhi. Budhaa dine jaahaa nije khaiba, naiba, pindhibare sukha nahin, tahaa anyaku khoiba, peiba, pindhei-debare sukha achhi ehaa prakrutira niyam boli janajae. Kintu badapania dekhaiba pain jubaankara pratidwandita heba ki bata ogali gadi madibasiba niyam boli janajae nahin. Ehi niyam anukaranare rajaa-praja ubhayanka pain baanaprastha byabastha hela pari bodhahue.” (p. 5)

4.1 Translated as:



They are the children of nature and nurtured in nature's lap. They are not wise by reading science, but by sustained experiences. They have well-understood that a man will grow up for a certain period, then he will stoop to decline. Finally, he will end up in the endless Almighty. What keeps him in spirit in childhood does not prevail in old age. Things pertaining to youth do not hold good in old age. Furthermore, an old person cannot do what a young person can. What is good-looking in youth, the same casts a poor show in old age. Whatsoever is pleasant in the youth stage, is abhorrent in old age. For instance, in the love-fun of young, young boys and girls, the stony teeth and the hollow cheeks of the old and aged never feel to be their contestant... At all times, not everything is good for all. But something might be unpleasant for oneself; there is pleasure in making others happy. Whatever does not seem to be the happiest things, like eating, drinking, and dressing up, during old age, there is more pleasure in making others eat, drink, and wear... But to show off the pride of seniority, it does not seem to be the law of the Bhuyan Community that an elderly person will be the contestant for the young or act as a deterrent for obtaining the chair. In strict obedience to this rule, there is the law of Banaprastha (leaving the worldly life and entering the forest for achieving salvation), both for the king and the subjects, towards the last part of their life.

5. NATURE AS THEIR ELEMENTAL SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

Bhuyans were basically hedonistic. Therefore, pleasure is utilised to the fullest extent in youth, where the old never interfere, but rather be a part of their pleasure in reminiscence of their youth's indulgence when they were unmarried. This is the gist of their physical gratification in the act of romance. They were illiterate and have never read science, but by observing the law of nature, they have summed up the essence of life in a nutshell: "Bhuyans never leave their house to live in isolation or live in the jungle. Like tigers and their cubs, they learn from their own mistakes. They were their own teachers. They don't have teachers outside to make them literate or educated. They have neither a nursery nor schools. They were their own teachers. They have no knowledge of Darwin's mixed breed that causes a bad inheritance. Even if they have freedom of choosing their life partner willingly, they don't keep their parents at a distance to exercise their opinion." Accordingly, both Sadhu Sardar and Tila Sardar were willing to accept their son's and daughter's choice.

5.1 Twist of Narration

Two brothers had their obsession to marry Chinamali. But Chinamali chose Banasura, the elder brother, and kept a reserve of her heart for Bhima, the younger. It is intensely agonising that Bhima could not escape from this heartbreaking remorse. He too thought of marrying Chinamali, but he could not bring himself to deceive his elder brother by marrying Chinamali; rather, Chinamali made up her mind to marry Banasura. Instead of avenging his own brother, he wished to die, which he made a blatant confession to his friend Rama. This unfulfilled desire to marry Chinamali as a lingering preoccupation haunted Bhima's mind, time and again.

To twist the linear plot, Gopal Ballav Das has diverted the matter, adding pathos to a linear narrative plot. Chhamu Pattnayak has come to Sadhu Sardar's clan on horseback with an important message from King Hari Chandan Mardaraj, the rival of King Jagdev. After the formal greetings were done by all men and women of Sadhu Sardar's Bhuyan clan, Chhamu Pattnayak confessed that the king wished to include Bhima in his soldier troop to fight against the king Jagdev and his soldiers. Sadhu Sardar, with a fond affection towards his son, grumbled, but he finally yielded to Chhamu Pattnayak's clarification about King Hari Chandan Mardaraj's choice between Banasura and Bhima. Bhima instantly agreed to give service to the king as a concealed reaction to Chinamali's choice in choosing his elder brother as her groom, and convinced his father to leave the clan forever. As per the culture of the Bhuyan tribe, Chhamu Pattnayak



has been given hospitality by the Bhuyan Adivasi women. By the by, the recent war held between two kings – King Jagdev and King Hari Chandan Mardaraj – the leadership of Bhima had been effective in killing many opponents in the war. Bebartha Trilochan Mohapatra, the head of Jagdev troop, has been captured with other defeated enemies who will be beheaded after the king's order. But Bhima was praised for his valour and honoured by King Mardaraj by tying a Ranjeet (Victorious) saree on his head.

The narrative now moves towards a plot of pathos tonight, where Bhima is ordered to cut the head of his father and his elder brother, Banasura, who were captured, along with the defeated soldiers. This dilemma of the narration has taken the plot to a miraculous height by dramatizing the intense agony of three: the father and his two sons. Whose head is to be cut and who to be released is a complex affair on the part of Bhima. Going through the faces of the captured enemies, he suddenly recognised his father and his elder brother, Banasura. Here, the character of Bhima excels all virtues in showing his kindness towards his father and brother, tactfully replacing the heads of two killed enemies. Remorsefully, as a pleasure on the other hand, Bhima dined tonight with his father and brother secretly as a get-together of a lost family after a few days.

6. KING'S SICKNESS BEGETTING ROMANCE

Defying the king's command to cut the head of arrested enemies, such as his father and his brother, Bhima, out of an obligation to the filial bonding between father and son, and brother and brother, has given shelter to Sadhu Sardar, his father, and Banasura, his elder brother. In the meantime, King Hari Chandan Mardaraj became sick and bedridden with a prolonged illness, which was of futile effect despite the treatment of many physicians, necromancers, astrologers, even gods and goddesses. Bhima too had been depressed to know his beloved king being sick for a long time. He wanted to meet him by any means, but nobody dared to tell the king about Bhima's curiosity to see the king. At last, by the grace of someone, permission was granted to Bhima to meet the king, whereupon he wept like a child out of his devotion and love for the king. He assured the king that an old man, who is quite familiar with him, is guaranteed to cure the sick King. The king listened to his prayer and consented to him. Surprisingly, the king had been relieved of his pain and felt relaxed enough to have a sound sleep after long days of sleeplessness. In this tense situation, nobody was allowed any kind of entry to the king's bedroom except Bhima and his daughter Jema. The princess was pleased to see her father sleeping peacefully without the traces of pain. She had forgotten everything except her father. Like overflowing water, she was in the height of her full-fledged youth, who, being confined to the four walls of the house, never got an opportunity to see a full-grown youth, brimming with masculinity. Her eyes fell upon Bhima, the life saviour of her father during critical condition. She was well aware of his helpful attitude. She was speechless, but her eyes instinctively fell upon her father as well as Bhima. The more she felt about the deep sleep of the king, the more she fixed her eyes upon Bhima without any communication. Her glance was enough to prove her intense passion towards Bhima.

A silent romance overpowered her mind. Gradually, she began to forget her father's presence. From the virtues of the tribal boy Bhima, Jema's attention had been more diverted towards Bhima's complexity, well-built physique, and sturdy shoulders. She could not help gazing upon his attractive physique. This rare kind of immortal love, born in a sick environment, had wonderfully breached the cultural taboos – one was an ordinary tribal, an Adivasi boy, while the other belonged to a royal dynasty. It was evidently a strange union between a man and a woman of culturally opposite backgrounds. It crossed the physical boundary to become pure metaphysical and transcendental without any talk or physical touch between the duo. Her father's physical condition had been replaced with Bhima's visage in her psyche, which was difficult to



obliterate. She could not keep her passion subdued to gaze upon Bhima, time and again. As she was unable to express in words, Bhima too kept a reserve of his heart for Jema without a voice. This muteness of love had the tremendous intensity of love without the working out in physical action. Equally, his gaze upon Jema was an activation of his earlier weakness towards Chinamali, whom his elder brother married. Gradually, Chinamali's visage disappeared, and Jema's image stuck to his psyche. She had been eclipsed when Jema, like a moon, had reached the peak of the sky to reflect intensely upon Bhima's mind. He hated Chinamali and focused on Jema, forgetting the limitations of his caste and a low-profile stature. He was blissful to feel the physical presence of Jema. His heart wished for the mind's contentment. To him, pleasure had been soul-based, instead of the body's impulse. Though it started from the body, love had been converted to platonic and heavenly. When the king recovered from the illness, pleasure was returning to him. Bhima was away from it. His mind's eye was always searching Jema's physical glamour, though he could feel that he belonged to a low-profile community, and Jema was at the nadir among the surrounding tribal community. She had been informed that her father had come back to life because of that old man whom Bhima brought to the palace. It was unforgettable that love and romance had preoccupied their mind during the night's silence. As the river wished to be united with the sea and Madhabi flower needed the thorny creeper as a prop, Jema wished to meet Bhima passionately like Ganga–Jamuna and Hara–Gouri. But nobody could enter their mind's window to read each other's hearts. They did not have a single talk. There was the flow of love, but it did not cross the bank. It was not eating away at the banks like a streaming river flowing incessantly. With the gaining height of their love, the king's health, virility, and glamour too increased reciprocally. When the old assured no further treatment, the king wished to reward the old. Even if their eyes did not meet, their hearts' eyes made them united in distance. Bhima gradually felt whether Jema would be happy or not to see him; he was rather happy to be with her. He carefully nurtured a love for Jema in his heart and mind. He did not feel that he was a bee, and Jema was a flower. There had been a meeting between the flower and the bee, but the bee did not suck the honey from the flower. The flower was surrounded with thorn all around, but it was difficult to tell whether the flower was soft or thorny. This tremendous romance-narrative in paradoxes had made the lovers immortal irrespective of their caste, creed, community, and cultural ideologies.

7. REFLECTION OF TRUE LOVE IN THE IRONY OF FATE

After recovering from the illness, the king was now like a moon or a bright sun, free from eclipse. Many people now came to see the king, and people equally appreciated Bhima for his miracle. The old man had cured the king, and he must be rewarded. He is no doubt a Dhanwantari, the God of Medicine. But who knows, the wheel of fate will turn upside down, and the king will order capital punishment for that old man.

Everybody knows the old physician, who saved the life of the king, will be rewarded today, but everybody's expectations went wrong. At last Bhima reached there, accompanied by an old and a young man. They lay prostrate before the king. The assistant of the king, Khuntia, disclosed the mystery that this old man and the young belonged to those five heads to be beheaded as ordered by the king. But surprisingly, this old man and the young stayed alive inside Bhima's room. Bhima equally confessed that it was a fact, honourable king. Those two – the old man and the young, were his own father and his brother. How could he kill them? But Bhima had to give his own head if the king's order was not carried out as an obligation. He agreed to sacrifice his own head instead of his brother's and father's. The decision of the king was final. Most judiciously, the king gave the verdict that the old man was not punishable because he saved the king's life. Either of the two sons had to be killed by the choice of the old man. Whosoever the old man wished to



be beheaded, he had to be executed. Sadhu Sardar weepingly interfered and said to kill him instead of his sons. But the king said that the old man had to offer at least one of his sons for the death sentence. The old man looked at the eyes of the two sons and could not decide who to sacrifice. After all, a father has a filial affinity towards his own sons. How can he see his own son being beheaded before him? He wept like a child, embracing both his sons. The king was too speechless and bewildered to see this pathetic sight. Now, Bhima opened his mouth and said he must be punished for the defiance of the king's order. He took his head to the sacrifice post. But the killer was, too, speechless. Sadhu Sardar took his own head to sacrifice post and fell upon Bhima. Banasura too wished his head to be cut instead of his own brother. To stop this tragic sight, someone came from inside and informed the king that Jema wished to talk with him. After a few minutes, King came and informed that all had to be freed from this death penalty, as Jema wished no one of them had to be killed. All were extremely happy to listen to the king's decision. In this, the old man and two of his sons could not understand anything. Sadhu Sadar wept more and more, clasping both his sons with the noble decision of the king and his daughter. Two sons equally wept like children holding their old father. When the king consoled time and again about the relaxation of death-punishment, their weeping stopped. King also told them to go to Bhima's room, and all had been dispersed from the sight. This also equally proved the reward of Bhima's good work and selfless love for Jema. Jema had proved the fathom of her love towards Bhima by stopping the king's heinous decision for the head-cut of those innocent tribal men who had kept the dignity of that royal family aloft. Bhima and Jema were really the immortal lovers amidst a lot of painful hindrances.

8. UNLOCKING THE SUPPRESSED ROMANCE IN LOVER'S HEART

Many days have passed since Bhima, his father, and brother were acquitted of their capital punishment. There was no stir in the air for battle. Neither of the kings showed any interest in further fights among them. All were fearlessly indulged in royal pastimes. People sang old songs and made merry, accompanied by a variety of musical instruments. Irrespective of the old and the young, all were indulged in this song of romance. Males preferred to remain lifelong bachelors since they were attached to the Queen's Zenana. The queen and her followers were also confined to the four walls of the house without seeing the sight of any male member. However, they had never deprived themselves of reading and studying various things, contributing to their knowledge. The Princess and her bosom friends were supposed to be the icons for the courtiers and the subjects of the King Mardaraj dynasty. Also, the ladies attending to the princess served her like their loving deities and were busy dressing her with flowers and ornaments. Dressmakers beautified the unmarried queen so magnificently that she showed no sign of ego in herself. Jema also had no pleasure in those songs and entertainment. Neither was her pleasure fixed upon the ivory-bed, nor on the fragrance of a sandalwood stick in front of her. She was stoic and poised that day. Her eyes were fixed upon the brilliant moon suspended in the distant sky. In the absence of her mind, King Hari Chandan Mardaraj, her father, entered. All of a sudden, all the songs coming from the musical instruments stopped. Jema also stood up as sombre and serious. All showed their adoration with bow-down of their head. When the king took his seat on the throne, the princess and her followers remained silent as a sense of adoration. King confessed sorry for his business, but Singarima, on behalf of the princess, revealed that she was not well for a few days. King also felt the contrary signs of his daughter. Singarima added that she did not have an interest in any kind of games or entertainment, nor in clothing, nor in eating, nor even in studying anything. She absent-mindedly thought of something which was beyond the comprehension of ordinary palace-servitors. Meanwhile, one of her fellows sang out a stanza from Abhimanyu Samanta Simhara's Bidagdha Chintamani, which meant a resignation to this life with the chanting of the name of Lord Chintamani as a



celestial fusion of love. The king intervened in explaining that all might have seen the intense filial bonding among Bhima's brother and his father the day the three were taken to sacrifice-wood.

A father normally expects all good for his children, and not an unfortunate situation for his children. Singarima, one of her close fellows, wished to disclose the reason of Jema's absent-mindedness, if the king permitted. The king also said that Dhanwantari, the god of medicine, must know the truth if the disease is to be cured. When all remained silent, one of her fellows, named Indumati, by the cues of Jema revealed the fact. She said that, in front of the king, Jema wished to say something to Bhima regarding the Ranjeet Saree, who had to be summoned here. As the Bhuyans normally entered the palace as a cultural practice, Bhima was immediately called for. King further asked Indumati more about Bhima, and she spoke on behalf of the king's daughter. Jema wished Bhima's departure from this palace forever. With this, the king said it was a silly thing. He would now drive out Bhima and his father and elder brother from this Palatial-fort if his daughter wished or bid farewell to them with riches, elephants, and horses. If the daughter wished, he would strip them of their wearing clothes and drive out. Why is she making herself sick with this silly thing? Indumati further added that there were many things to be revealed. The King said to divulge everything without fear. She continued saying that Jema wished to live at Brindavan, the seat of Lord Krishna, forever. Sringarima, an elderly woman, was surprised to know Jema's indifference to this worldly life at such a young age. This kind of thing was never expected from Jema at the age of full-brimming youth. The king was also surprised to know this. He said that at this age, his daughter had to make merry, play, and laugh with her fellows. With a resignation to this royal pleasure and equally embracing a life of spiritual love at Brindavan was really unacceptable on the king's part. With this, the king and others remained silent. It was well-understood that Jema wished not to reveal the fact in front of all except a by-pass confession. Instantly, an old lady presented Bhima in front of the king. As the old lady disappeared, the king asked Bhima, who stood before him fearlessly, tying the Ranjeet Saree on his head, "If the fight is not done between King Jagdev and King Hari Chandan Mardaraj, what shall you do?" Bhima wished for more fights, and the king further asked, "If the fight is not done, will you go back to your place?" But he wished to die by fighting. King was terribly surprised by Bhima's resignation to this worldly life, like his daughter. He wished neither to leave his beloved king's troop nor wished to stay among his troop. He felt he was miserably wretched to be a partaker of this worthy place beside the king. He revealed the fact that, though it was irrelevant, he wished to stay among the cranes when he belonged to the crow family, to hold the moon as he was a dwarf, and to lie afloat as a floating boat on a vast sea. Either he must be driven out or be killed by the order of his beloved king. This was supposed to be the quintessence of romance in divinity between Bhima and Jema – a young tribal boy and a princess from quite opposite communities.

9. MIRACLE OF LOVE BREAKING RIGID BOUNDARIES

The miracle of this pious love has truly bridged the distance between low and high castes, colours, and communities. This is metaphysical bonding without the presence of a physical body and verbal communication between the duo. With these words, Bhima bowed down. King further asked Indumati to express the last wish of Jema. Indumati said Jema wanted Bhima to take off that Ranjeet saree. Instantly, Bhima disrobed the Ranjeet saree and lay down before the king. Now, Jema, too, removed the head ornament from her head and handed it over to Indumati. The king and others were stunned at this sight. No one's eyes were closed, nor was anybody's mouth open. There was no stir anywhere. Indumati, now picking up the Ranjeet saree from the ground, said solemnly to Bhima, "Now you hold the head-ornament of Jema." The king had nothing to say except being a silent observer of the situation. Bhima now touched



the head-ornament on his head and gazed at Jema like a wooden statue, without any voice. Indumati continued further addressing Bhima as 'Ranjeet Singh' that Jema would remain hidden since now and said, "The day you, conquering your senses, being reformed, as stainless and pure as a loving human being of celestial stature, you will present yourself before Jema holding this head-ornament. Again, you will get back this Ranjeet saree as 'Jitendriya' (conqueror of senses) from Jema. Now you do as you wish." All had been stunned to hear this. After a few hours, Bhima left the palace with a bow down of his head to the king. Again, Jema entered her chamber with her fellow mates. One by one, everybody dispersed. It was heard many days after Jema and Bhima had their meeting during the last stage of each one's life. By that time, both had been metamorphosed to two perfect loving souls in one-cloistered cell. Adopting this constriction as an unmarried life forever, the narrator's grand old-mother, Krushna Dei, while singing Gita Gobind, leaped as a sati (lady of chastity) to his grand-father, Choudhary Sudarshan Das's funeral pyre.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The message at the back of this narration is that, where the country is proud of giving birth to this type of sacrosanct lady as a spinster, this country too can bring out a reformation among the ladies of contemporary society with these inspirational ideologies of Jema. Love in celestial elevation transcended the body and the narrow creed of caste, colour, and community. Disinterested attachment between Bhima and Jema had been a universal type as a constant reminder to lovers in their usual art of love and consummation. Keonjhar Jema, as a ritual of loving one man as a lover, did not wish to marry but remained a spinster lifelong with a prayer for union with Bhima in the next life. This was possible as the greatest cultural identity among Indian women. A lesson to be noted down from this romance is the undercurrent of a criticism of the capricious attitude of changing husbands and wives in present-day man and woman, and lover and beloved. The brilliant narration had eclipsed the present-day romance among the lovers with a passionate zeal for the gratification of their senses, not realizing the intensity of love in the soul, where the role of the body was required to be completely absent.

11. HYPOTHETICAL REDUCTION

It is axiomatic that love originates in the physical level, becomes psychic, and goes beyond the psyche. In Bhima Bhuyan, there is love inside the love. It appears and disappears in itself. Passion for Jema reminds Bhima about Chinamali, his early love in tender age. It is forever green in Bhima's mind. It comes to the surface as he remembers but quickly fades in the intensity of a broader love, that is Jema, a princess. Love dies in the intensity of love. Passion for love becomes dispassionate. Love that is inflamed is annihilated in itself when it moves from physical to metaphysical. Love towards Jema is physical and beyond physical. It dies and gets itself reborn in transcendence. Love begins in the eyes, enters the heart, and permanently exists in the mind. Here, the lovers are absent in a physical state and alive forever in isolation, in no way union, but their minds' union never lies asunder. Bhima and Jema are not united physically, but forever green in separation and forever exist in their mind's world. This silent, voiceless love without the touch of physique is the greatest paradox of love, where there is more love in no expression. They are pledged to conquer the flames of senses before their final reunion. Jema wishes to go to Brindavan – the seat of divine flames to burn all sensual desires, and Jema accordingly instructs Bhima to change the dross of his heart and senses to gain the perfection of a real union – two souls without a body. Jema and Bhima, body and the beyond body, are only the voice of souls.



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