

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Rising Kshatriya Consciousness in “Dangdhari Mao” (Minatory Mother) of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma

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Abstract:

The Rajbanshi poetic literature has been a significant medium of cultural expression and a powerful means for awakening the community's historic-political awareness. The community's glorified cultural legacy, their degeneration, their subdued pain and agonies of inner desperations, their past and nostalgic landscapes find wonderful poetic expression in Rajbanshi language. The Rajbanshi poetic voices have been very powerful to stir the lost Kshatriyasm and to invoke the goddess of strength for dynamism, rebirth and their regeneration. In early twentieth century Thakur Panchanan Barma published a collection of poems entitled “Dangdhari Mao” (Minatory Mother), thought to be one of the first published anthologies of ‘Modern Rajbanshi poetry’. This paper is to analyze the poems as Rising Kshatriya consciousness of the Rajbanshis.

Keywords: Rajbanshis, Kshatriya, Dangdhari Mao, Minatory mother

1. Introduction

Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma, the pioneer of Renaissance of the north-east India, the embodiment of Kshatriya-spirit, a great social reformer, was pained and worried to see the Kshatriyas in indolence and inactivity. He wanted to ignite Kshatriya-fire and awaken the sleeping race from long lethargy and inaction. He is perennially rooted in every heart of Rajbanshi community for his great sacrifice and selfless service. He was really sensitive and sympathetic to the welfare of the community. His dream was to emancipate the Rajbanshis from such inertness, stupor and spiritual paralysis. He wanted to establish their justified right with his tireless struggle. He gave the community a new life.

To awaken Kshatriyasm Thakur Panchanan wanted to empower women and to inspire male ones. He dreamt of empowered and self-dependent women-folk and, and so he established women wing to save them from any atrocity. He was always in favour for women education. He had his great confidence in his Kshatriya-brothers. So he had his clarion call – “Kshatriyasm is my God. In fact, Kshatriyasm is my mother.” So, he believed that “Son of Kshatriya with his own vigour is savior of all.” He advised that “the mantra of Kshatriya is to retrieve his soul with his own spirited vitality.” This message really worked as stimulant in the Kshatriyas. To stir the Kshatriyas submerged in indolence and sluggish inactivity Thakur made them understand that “perseverance, vigour, skill, heroism, charity and piety are the outcome of Kshatriyasm.” Even he introduced the worshiping of strength-inspiring Goddess Chandika to awaken sleeping Kshatriyasm. He stimulated the Kshatriyas calling, “Kshatriya Brothers, awake, do not sleep more, hear the cries of women... you are men, Kshatriyas among men; but you are effortless. Kshatriya Brothers: be spirited, awake, be united, proceed with action, Heroic youths, awake... Kshatriyas are born only to retrieve mother and sisters and make them happy.”

Panchanan Barma embodied his youthful vigour in the poetic form of “Dangdhari Mao” only to inspire men and stir the Kshatriya sentiment so that they were to be revitalized. The fiery women reproached male ones to stimulate Kshatriya masculinity by saying their pathetic helplessness. They are being abducted from the laps of their husband, or father's house wherever they live when male-ones remain inactive whereas women as part of strength-inspiring Goddess face everything for self-resistance. To awaken the senseless and submerged Kshatriyas he was so restless and impatient that to retrieve the helpless women he embodied “Dangdhari Mao” in his poem as a part of super power. Women as power arose hearing the helpless women- scream before men-folk. So Panchanan Barma composed:

2. MAO DANGDHARI (Minatory Mother)

My minatory mother was startled to hear helpless scream.
 No direction, no door but only clamor in the ways of life she finds
 Lap of husband, father's home or brother's, wherever she nestles.
 She is being abducted by lecherous rogues
 By breaking the fence, beating the groom, kicking the sisters-in-law.
 The woman holding peg is forcefully snatched covering the face with cloth.
 Heart rending scream pierces the veil.
 Her wails rend air to sky.
 The men-folk see with a vacant star in inaction.
 My minatory mother yells her anger and rushes with cudgel.

(Tr. Sanjit Sarkar)

Sleeping Kshatriya-vigour is here reproached as shameless, powerless and effortless as Kshatriyas are still bewildered, aimless and in inaction. So to liberate women-folk and to save their chastity Dangdhari Mao(Angry mother)rambled and rushed with cudgel to annihilate the rascals.

Actually there were wide-spread rape and molestation on women, specially in the district of Rongpur, now in Bangladesh. Cries of raped and abducted women rent the sky, horrified the air creating ghastly anarchy. It seemed there was no rule of law or ruler, humanity died, social-life plunged in torture. Women were victimized by double patriarchal structures. They were victims at the hands of their own generated patriarchy called discreet patriarchy and another was overlapping patriarchy of the dominating class. In both cases, women were victims. Here women celebrated their own strength in their identity, struggle and resilience. Thakur Panchanan well understood that women must be empowered physically, mentally and intellectually for their self-defence. Above lines reflect women-regeneration. The women were inspired and empowered with such a spirit that when inactive male Kshatriyas took no action to save the honour of women, the women themselves went ahead in self-defence. He not only highlighted the atrocities on women by own community at large, but also articulated the need for retaliation and resistance. So it was a social movement that was for social justice.

Thakur Panchanan ensured the life and security of the raped women. He empowered and strengthened them with education and taught them stick and dagger play. Even he never discriminated between man and women and Hindu and Muslims as he thought that the only religion of the Kshatriys is to retrieve the helpless. He composed –

“Hindu Musalman Bechr anire, Manush Jan Naito Bhin.
 Ulsi Dhaya Arter Uddhar, Ei Khastriter Chin.”

He wanted to say here that human beings are all equal and there is no difference between Hindus and Muslims. The Dangdharo Mao expressed her regret to see the inertia and inaction of men-folk. Thakur composed the following lines to revive lost Kshatriyasm touching the very sentiment hidden in inaction.

3. BETACHAOAR PRATI (To Manhood)

Boo! Tut! Dead men-folk, odium upon you.
 Your mother-folk being kidnapped, yet you remain inactive.
 Oh, only enjoy to be called noted man, how is your manhood?
 Only bravery on poor woman, returning from field.
 No shame, no heart, no force in your body.
 For this veiled bridegroom cries fie upon you.
 If you cannot shelter and save women-folk in your grips
 Is this for the mothers bore the burden of sins?

(Tr. Sanjit Sarkar)

Yet sleeping masculinity did not respond to the call of Dangdhari Mother(minatory mother). Who was to save the helpless as men did not wake? Being disappointed and disheartened Dangdhari Mother herself was calling, stirring and instigating the sleeping Kshatriyasm to awaken Kshatriya sentiment so that they could be inspired to save the race and revive their glorious heritage.

Come on, Kshatriyas, you are reiterated
 Have you no ears, no heart to hear crying?
 It may be amidst mountain-rivers or beyond.
 Yet you must hear it as near, if you are
 To be a Kshatriya.

(Tr. Sanjit Sarkar)

Religion or mission of Kshatriyas is to retrieve one from hazard. So if one is to be a Kshatriya, helpless wails of women must reach his ears only to resolve him to rescue them.

Agonized crying spontaneously pierces Kshatriya-ears.
Heart stirred with sudden storm, body infused strength.

(Tr. Sanjit Sarkar)

The name of Kshatriya is not an empty word; it is full of force. In the name Kshatriya there is the energy of this universe. In the very name there is all the energy that is needed for overpowering the evils, destroying the irreligion, establishing the religion and for the welfare of the world. But there is destitute in the name of the Kshatriya. So the poet composed:

The name of Kshatriya is the sea of energy, God yearns for the name.
To see the condition of that name the heart is pierced.

(Tr. Sanjit Sarkar)

The Dangdhari Mao ends with an incident. Here Kuranu is a Kshatriya hero who rescues a woman self Kshatriya heroism. He worshipped Ma Bhabani after such a rescue with self-Kshatriya power. Kuranu was lauded, his parents, above all Kshatriyas. Kuranu infused energy in this universe. The universe smiles with joy.

Thus there was the eruption of Kshatriyas vigour opening the flood-gates of dynamism, liberation and action. The Kshatriyas got determined to retrieve the destitute and to overpower the evils. He felt sobered and satisfaction only after destroying the evils. So Thakur composed glorifying the Kshatriyas:

The hero fixes his eyes ahead when he defeats the mountain.
He gets satisfied only after slaying the rascals and retrieving the helpless.

(Tr. Sanjit Sarkar)

Really speaking the Kshatriyism was revived as it reflected in the 10th Annual Conference when Thakur Panchanan paid his great tribute to Kshatriya-spirit with great satisfaction. He said, "Kshatriya Brothers, heroes, nephews, sons, what are you? ...it would not be enough to call you as heart of hearts...In your life a new light. Nobody requests you to participate you in war; again many ones prohibit you. You obey none, you think life meaningless without displaying Kshatriyism in warfare".

- Note: Rajbanshis are the very community of people mostly living in North Bengal, West Assam, and in the Rongpur district of Bangladesh. With the Kshatriya movement under the legendary leadership of Panchanan Barma they have established their dominant presence.

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