Abolkara: The Odyssey of a Disobedient Hero

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Long age, there was a Bramhin Wiseman. Once he set out on a pilgrimage and wanted somebody to accompany him, to carry his luggage and to serve him in all other ways. He then asked a young boy for the same. The boy was whimsical in nature and agreed on a condition that if he will see any unusual, unnatural thing the Wiseman has to explain about it to him immediately. Otherwise he will never accompany him. The Bramhin was agreed. On the way to different pilgrimages, the boy asked the Bramhin the things which are unusual or uncommon to him and expected immediate explanations to those. If the master asked him to wait till the lunch is over, the boy immediately would said to him that as the condition is not followed by the master he will be leaving him. In this threatening, the master forced to explain what the boy wanted to know.

This behavior of the boy was so disgusting that the master named the boy as ‘Abolakara’ means – he who doesn’t obey.

This is the formulaic background, to which all the listeners of Abalokara tales in Orissa know. It is an indigenous development of oral narrative pattern in Orissa. When ever the key situation would come to the tale and Abalokara would see some thing unusual, the listener would very well know what would be the next step or the young hero-how he would react and what he would say.
Sometimes the story teller starts the tale with the formulaic background or would start directly saying ‘during the journey …. Abalokara once saw ….’ knowing very well that the young listener would not and never ask the story teller that ‘which journey’ depending on the pre knowledge of the listeners.

In the tale a couplet is very common and popular. When the head strong little hero would pressurize the Wiseman for an explanation, disgusted master would say,

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\begin{align*}
& \text{Stretch the mate} \\
& \text{Hold the Umbrella} \\
& \text{O Abalokara! Listen} \\
& \text{I shall tell you the tale ….}
\end{align*}
\]

This couplet is also acts as formulaic lines. Abalokara tales are incomplete with out this couplet the disobedient character of the little master he is also reflected.

In Orissa Abalokara is extremely popular. A number of tales are available where Abalokara has portrait on the above cited context. Most striking thing is Abalokara; the character of oral literature has so much potentiality that he has attracted not only the fantasy loving young listeners but some of the serious writers of Orissa of the present times.

It is indeed an extremely significant development that a disobedient hero of oral narratives becomes a protagonist of modern Oriya fiction.
The writers of Oriya literature have not only adopted the character but have transform his personality multi dimensional. In folktales Abalokara is whimsical, headstrong, arrogant and disobedient. He is confined to his own world only. It is his inquisitiveness that he is interested to know the reason of some unnatural thing- this inquisitiveness has brought the main tale. He is only instrumental to go the main tale but in written world Abalokara not only confined to his own traditional identity; his social status, his intelligence, his reputation every thing is change in contemporary fiction.

Monoj Das one of the most popular fictionists of Odia has written eight stories, Kailash Pattanaik has written fifteen stories, Achyutananda Pati and Hrusikesh Panda one each portraying Abalokara as their main protagonist. In these stories of recent times Abalokara the servant represents the common folk. Some times Abalokara comes with a deviation and poses intelligence. All the authors have taken the opportunity to raise questions on various social orders, down fall of morality, political corruption through the protagonist Abalokara.

The odyssey of the disobedient hero had started from orality, century back and has reached presently to literacy. In the journey Abalokara has transformed in many ways. In the oral tales, Abalokara was instrumental to bringing the main tale. He does not have a role to develop the tale. In contemporary fiction he is an integral part of the story. He has a specific role in it. In folktales his inquisitiveness reflects the inquisitiveness of the audience. In contemporary stories of Orissa, he represents common mass, taboo or instrumental to a political satire. In orality, Abalokara does not have a voice but in contemporary Oriya stories he has both a voice and a viewpoint.

God knows, how long this odyssey of Abalokara would go ….