

Annada Shankar Roy - A Profile

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Padma Bhusan Annada Shankar Roy is one of the founder members of the famous "Sabuja Yuga" of Oriya Literature. This great man of letters was born in the district of Dhenkanal, Orissa on 15 March 1904 in an auspicious moment. His ancestors were the inhabitants of the district of Hooghly in Bengal. During the period of Toddarmalla, they came to Orissa and permanently settled in Dhenkanal District. That's the way Annada Shankar was born in Dhenkanal. His father Nimai Charan Roy, spent his childhood in Dhenkanal palace amidst other companions. He was the Manager of the theatre group in the palace. Oriya and Bengali plays were being staged there at different times of the year. Annada Shankar enjoyed each and every play. This was the reason as to why he unknowingly developed a keen interest in literature since childhood.

Annada Shankar had a family library in Dhenkanal. The Headmaster of his high school had entrusted upon him the responsibility of the school library during his student days at school. At that time he was only twelve years old. The Headmaster was an eminent literature himself. In 1919, Annada Shankar shifted to Puri from Dhenkanal and established an intimacy with Kalindi Charan Panigrahi during his study in Puri school. In addition to this, his uncle Harish Chandra Roy who was also a renowned story writer, used to bring magazines like 'Utkal Sahitya', 'Mukura' etc. to his home town Dhenkanal while he was a student in Ravenshaw

College, Cuttack. These magazines, developed in him a great inspiration for creating Literature. In course of time he came in contact with great personalities like Madhusudan Das, Viswanath Kar etc. with the help of his uncle. He was a regular reader of the literary magazine 'Utkal Sahitya' edited by Viswanath Kar. Since then, he had a flair for creative writings.

Annada Shankar dreamed of becoming a great journalist in his youth. Once a circus party came to Dhenkanal and exploited the public there. Hence he lodged a complaint against it through the editor of "Utkal Deepika" under the pen-name of Dayanidhi Das. At that time, he was only 15. One year after this, he had translated a story written by Leo Tolstoy and published it in the Bengali magazine "Prabashi". On the eve of this an English letter of Annada Shankar was published in "Epiphany" a Christian Missionary Weekly from Calcutta. For this writing the Editor of that magazine. The literary, cultural, educational and family life of Annada Shankar was spent in this way before his matriculation from Dhenkanal. Now the Non-Co-Operation movement started during this time through the country and it had a tremendous effect in the mind of Annada Shankar. He had no intention to appear at the Matriculation Examination. But being advised by the teachers of his High School he appeared at the examination and passed successfully. Just at that time, he lost his mother. Annada Shankar's intention of being a journalist fell flat when he had to run from pillar

to post in different offices of Newspapers at Calcutta with the hope of working there. At last he fell ill.

Uncle Harish Chandra Roy showed him a new path of life. After passing Matriculation Annada Shankar was wondering about his future. During this time i.e. in 1921 his uncle Harish Chandra Roy brought him back to Cuttack and got himself admitted in Ravenshaw College. Annada Shankar came in contact with Harihara Mahapatra, Sarat Chandra Mukherjee etc, during his days in Ravenshaw College. Before this he was also acquainted with Baikuntha Nath Pattanaik in Dhenkanal. The literary life of Annada Shankar developed fully when he was reading in Cuttack. He had taken the responsibility of editing a hand written Magazine named "Prabha" while he was a mere boy of ten. Again during his college life he was entrusted with the responsibility of editing another handwritten magazine meant to create a literary class. Really, they were the persons who came in future to be known as literary trend setters of "Sabuja Yuga". All of them were the regular writers of that hand written magazine "Abakasha".

In second Year Annada Shankar left his uncle's residence and started staying in Ravenshaw College hostel. During this time his short story 'Swapna' was published anonymously in a magazine. This short story, described the future of Orissa. During this time his essay 'Khelaghara' was published. It was written in the light of the famous dramatist Ibsen's "Doll's House". Taking this opportunity Annada Shankar became the favorite of Viswanath Kar, the editor of 'Utkal Sahitya'.

From the realistic point of view Annada Shankar stepped into the realm of Oriya Literature since he was eighteen. And he bade farewell to our literature when he turned twenty two. Therefore his creative period in Oriya Literature

is only four years, from 1922 to 1926. Regarding this, the author himself has written :- "I reached the arena of Oriya Literature when I was eighteen and took farewell from this when I turned twenty-two. I used to write in 'Utkal Sahitya', 'Sahakar' and 'Sabita' for four years from 1922 to 1926. I wrote ten to twelve poems, about twenty or twenty two essays, one short story and three units of a novel 'Basanti' during these four years. After taking farewell I had to write a criticism on Kabibar Padma Charan Pattnaik's book 'Padma Pakhuda' while in England. That was an exception." So during this time all that he created in Oriya were twelve poems, glimpses of the past, identification letter, besides nineteen essays, letters, one short story and three chapters of the Novel 'Basanti'.

Annada Shankar went to Patna for reading B.A. after passing I.A. from Cuttack. There, the renowned novelist of Bengali Literature Mr. Sarat Chandra came to be his guide. As a result, Annada Shankar gave more importance to Bengali than to Oriya. During this time some Bengali Essays including 'Oriya' were published in different magazines. He came across with Mr. Kalindi Charan during his visit to Puri in the year of 1924. During this time some Bengali Essays including 'Oriya' were published in different magazines. He came across with Mr. Kalindi Charan during his visit to Puri in the year of 1924. During this meeting it was decided to compose an Oriya novel named 'Basanti' under the framework of Bengali novel 'Baroyaari'. This novel was published serially in the Oriya magazine 'Utkal Sahitya'. From this time onwards the school of Sabuja Sahitya was firmly established. But Annada Shankar took a historic decision in 1926 in the wake of Sabuja School in spite of getting wide recognition within a short span of time. According to his own words :- "There arose an idea in my mind that whatever I want to speak I can express them only in one language and that is

Bengali. This decision was a great decision in my life. Had it been wrong in 1926, I couldn't have achieved any success in Bengali language. I would have been a failure as a writer in Bengali. There was no way left to go back to Oriya Literature again. I had a great confidence in myself in taking to this deadly determination. Besides this, there was another reason, very funny reason. My friend Kalindi's writings appealed me most, I took it for granted that I couldn't accept it either that I would be in the second position for ever. Of course it was my weakness".

In 1927, Annada Shankar Roy set out for England at the age of twenty three securing the first position in the I.C.S. Examination. As a result his emotional and cultural distance from his own native land Dhenkanal and Orissa increased. In the year of 1930, as soon as he returned from England, he lived in Bengal and embraced Bengali language whole heartedly in stead of swinging between two languages. During this period he suddenly became popular for his writing of 'Pathe Prabase' in Bengali Language. From this on his last he went on composing as many as 180 books in Bengali language. For this towards the latter part of his life, Annada Shankar gained many names and fames in Bengali Literature and in West Bengal as well. Until his death he was the President of Bengal Sahitya Akademi. The Govt. of India conferred on him with 'Padma Bhusan' for his contribution to Indian Language, Literature and Culture. He was awarded 'Desi Kottam' degree from Shantiniketan in addition to honorary D. Litt. Degrees from the Universities like Burdwan, Calcutta and Rabindra Bharati. He is the rare personality of Orissa to get innumerable awards like Vidyasagar Award, Rabindra Award, Annand Award; Shiromane Award, Honorary, Begum jebunesa Award of Bangladesh and Kazl Mehboob-ul-la welfare Award etc. But in his eyes, his greatest award for him was his 'Love of Mankind'.

The conjugal life of the creator was very joyful. Poet Annada Shankar had cherished a desire in his youth to marry a married lady named Sarala. But he fell in love with a young lady named Joyce during his stay in England. Again in course of time these two ladies went far away from his life. At last he married Alisa took the new name and was known as an Indian daughter-in-law called Smt. Lila Roy. Lila was the only source of inspiration behind his creations. Out of his two sons the eldest Punyashloka died a few days back and the second son Chitrakam died long ago during his infancy. His daughter named Jaya dedicated herself fully with her service staying all the while with her father. She loves non the less to be known as an Oriya daughter and Oriya daughter-in-law.

For Annada Shankar, Literature and Administration were two different elements. After resigning from Govt. Service due to many official problems, Annada Shankar resorted to Literature as the heart beat of his life. The broadmindedness of Kaviguru Rabindra Nath, Mahatma Gandhi, Leo Tolstoy got reflected in his literature, Annada Shankar had collected the honey to sweeten his literal feelings only from Orissa, he still felt very proud of his Oriya credentials.

Therefore a Bengali though he was no less an Oriya so far as his mind and spirit are concerned. He loved native land Dhenkanal deeply. The man of letters, Administrator and Culturist was born in this district and was the only one among the countless many in every field. He was extra-ordinary and ahead of his time. Although he left us forever on the 28th of Oct. 2002, the present day youths have been inspired always getting light from this unique creator of Literature.

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