

Book Review

Anagata: An eye opener

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Title: Anagata

Author: Narayan Sahoo

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“Can I not appear before you as I have not taken birth? I have come.....to ask a few questions to you all.....”

Yes, that is the statement which the un-born girl asks in the play Anagata (One who has not come), letting the reader’s hairs stand in excitement. The play written by Narayan Sahoo deals with the extremely important and relevant subject of girl child abortion. It strongly advocates the fact that the gender of a child should not be discriminated and girls are in no way less than boys.

It has been a popular perception in India that boys are assets and girls are liabilities for parents as they have to be married off. The same feeling has given rise to the dowry system which inspite of stringent laws prevail till date strongly in many parts of our country. It is also a popular perception or, a mis conception that a boy is more capable than a girl, he will look after the parents in old age and most importantly keep the lineage & family cycle running. The ancient mythology, literature and popular culture have boosted this conception and held the woman giving birth to a boy in high esteem. The girls have always been viewed as house keepers and therefore were deprived from formal education.

Times have changed, so have the perceptions. But the fact is that the girl child abortion rate is alarmingly high in India prompting the government to make laws in this regard and come up with projects providing financial support for the girl child like “Beti bachao, beti padhao”. The phrase Beti bachao or save the girl child has specifically emerged from the incessant killing of the girl child even when she is in the mother’s womb through illegal sex determination tests.

The play *Anagata* has been staged multiple times under the direction of Satya Jena and also telecast on Doordarshan. The present book contains the printed script of the play which addresses this issue of national shame of our country. Set in a family where a girl is aborted even before she is born, the narrative is taken forward by the imaginary apparition of the unborn girl who appears as a character and strongly asks the family members and basically to the entire society, what was her fault and why she was mercilessly murdered and denied an opportunity to see the daylight and live. The play makes us stand before the mirror, puts a finger in our eyes and

gives a jolt to our conscience and makes us realize that we cannot enjoy a sexual intercourse without wanting to shoulder the responsibility of its consequences and that basically differentiates a man from an animal.

Laid down in ten scenes, starting with a conventional *prastabana* or introduction, *Anagata* is a social drama high in emotional, feminist and humanist values. The author, an academician-critique, should be applauded for addressing a serious issue peeving our nation and in true sense he has used the medium of drama as a weapon of social reform & awareness.

The *kichi suchana* section provides readers with useful information regarding the legal provisions of abortion. Overall, the book in terms of content and design provides thoughtful and intellectual reading to the readers.

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