

Book Review

A journey through the history and development of Odia Theatre

Saumendra Kumar Swain

Arabinda Lenka

Name: Odia Natakara Samikshyatmaka Itihas (1877-2018)

Author: Neeladri Bhushana Harichandan & Alok Baral

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Odisha is a land of arts and artists with the Odia language gaining a classical status and the land possessing a rich repertoire of traditional and classical art forms. Theatre, undoubtedly, is one of the most widely practiced and important art forms in Odisha. As explained by Neeladri Bhushan Harichandan in the forward of the book under discussion, its aim is to present a thoroughly academic picture of the growth, evolution and development of drama and theatre of Odisha.

The book has been laid down into seven chapters to take the readers through a chronological journey in time. The first chapter traces the origin and development of Odia drama. The second chapter enquires into the aesthetics of drama in terms of content and language. The third chapter tries to analyze the socio economic problems that have been addressed in the various plays written by Odia playwrights. The fourth chapter explores the diverse range of subjects which the plays deal with. The fifth chapter comments on the transition of Odia 'drama' to 'theatre' in the sense that it moved from the playwright's arena to the director's arena as dominance of experiments or *prayoga* increased. The discussions in these chapters are extremely rich in terms of data, information, observation and analysis. All major writers and important plays have been thoroughly discoursed.

The seventh and the concluding chapter presents a vivid description of the various plays written over the time period of the book, from 1877 to 2018, and the issues dealt in it. The evolution in

subject and the writing style, *shaili*, has been explicitly discoursed upon. It covers a wide range of concepts including myth, history, character analysis, anti hero, feminism, tribal issues. Contemporary issues like natural disaster, farmer suicide, death from poisonous alcohol, displacement, left wing extremism, old age home, generation gap, live in relationship, animal characterization, eco theatre, LGBT, dalit issues etc. have also been discussed with due mention and importance.

Both authors are stalwart critique-academicians and belong to two different generations which has enabled the book to cover more than hundreds of plays written over 140 years. It is indeed a commendable job to collate a serious discussion on Odia theatre within the folds of one book so vividly and rigorously over such a long period. It will serve both as a reader's as well as researcher's delight.

Author profile:

Saumendra Kr Swain is a Lecturer of Odia in Bhairab Degree Mahavidyalaya, Borigumma, Koraput, India and may be reached at papukpt@gmail.com

Arabinda Lenka is a student of M.A. in Journalism & Mass Communication at the Central University of Odisha, Koraput, India and may be reached at arabindalenka30@gmail.com