



Sahitya Akademi

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Meet the Author

Damayanti Beshra





Dr. Damayanti Beshra is one of the most prominent Santali writers who is also a poet of considerable repute. Her writings not only inspire but also touch the hearts of both the young and the old. Eminent Santali poet Sri Arjun Charan Hembram remarks on her that— 'Damyanti, a mainstream writer in the area of Santali Literature and a woman poet of magnificent substance; who combines richness of culture, joy of living, sorrow and suffering of common people with element of divinity in her intellectual images popularly known as poetry.'

Damayanti was born on 18th February 1962 at Bobejoda in Mayurbhanj District. This village is 90 kms away from the District Head quarter Baripada. She is the eldest daughter of Late Rajmal Majhi and late Pungi Majhi.

The condition of education was very bad those days, especially in the villages. There were no schools in Boberjoda. But some kindhearted rational and educated natives gave education in a small shed. Damayanti also joined the other children. At first she began to write the letters on the ground with chalk. Her paternal uncle was very happy when he came to know that she was interested in studies. Her uncle was at that time settled in a village named Deuli and he didn't have any children. So he took Damayanti and got her admitted in a government school.

Damayanti's nick name was Dhigij during her childhood. According to Santal tradition the name was given after her grandmother. But, instead of her parent's name her uncle and aunt's name was written in the school. Her uncle was late Budhan Majhi and aunt was late Mani Majhi. These two played a vital role in providing proper schooling to Damayanti.

At Deuli School, she read up to Class - III, as there was no further schooling available. Then she moved to Chandida School which was located 2 kms away from the village. At Chandida School she completed 4th and 5th standard. Then she was admitted in T & R W Girls High School, Rairangpur. This was the beginning of hostel life for



Dr. Damayanti Beshra with family



Receiving Pt. Raghunath Murmu Fellowship from Prithibi Majhi, Speaker of Assam Assembly at Bhubaneswar in 2004.

Damayanti. From class 6th to 11th she stayed at Rairangpur Kanyashram. During this time she began to write poems. In the year 1977 she passed matriculation from that high school.

After passing matriculation from Rairangpur Girl's High School, Damayanti's family members were concerned regarding her further studies because there was no women's college in Rairangpur. So, her uncle Faguram Majhi got her admitted in Ramadevi Women's College, Bhubaneswar. At Bhubaneswar, she stayed at Post Metric Hostel. During those days hostel fee was Rs.60/- but due to financial problems, she was not able to pay the hostel dues in time. She only got Rs.40/- or Rs.50/- from her family. Financially Damayanti faced a lot of problems. She had only two pair of clothes to wear. But despite all the difficulties Damayanti was doing very well and always secured highest marks among her hostel mates. This impressed the hostel matron Braja didi (Brajewari Mishra). She was pleased by her performance and devotion to studies. Braja Didi loved Damayanti like her own sister. She let her stay in the hostel despite over dues due to the financial tribulations. She managed to pay the hostel dues by the post-matric scholarship which she was getting at the year end. In 1979 she passed I.A. and in 1981 she passed B.A. with Odia Honours.,

In the year 1983 she passed M.A. from Utkal University, Bhubaneswar with Linguistics as her special paper. During her M.A. Programme due to financial problems she wasn't able to afford University Hostel, so she stayed at Post-Matric Hostel. During her college days she began to write poems both in Odia and Santali language. In 1985 she got her first job as Junior Employment Officer at Sambalpur. During the course of this job she qualified Staff Selection Commission and preferred clerk-cum-typist to avail grounding atmosphere for her desired service. While working at A.G. Odisha, Bhubaneswar, she qualified OPSC (Orissa Public Service Commission). So, she left her second job and joined Maharaja Purna Chandra College, Baripada, Mayurbhanj as a Lecturer in the year 1987. This was the job she was made for and it provided her the break—to serve literature. Along with poems she now began to write essays too.

In the 1988 Dr. Damayanti Beshra was married to Mr. Gangadhar Hansda. Mr. Hansda is a Bank Officer and also a writer and lover of literature. So, their marriage wasn't only the marriage of hearts but also of two literature lovers. After marrying Mr. Gangadhar Hansda, Damayanti's fortune changed. In 1990, her first poem "Onoliya" (writer) was published in *Fagun*

Koel magazine, an essay on Pandit Raghunath Murmu was also published. Damayanti didn't stop there and continued to write poems and essays in both Odia and Santali language. Following the encouragement from her husband Damayanti completed her M. Phil in Odia in the year 1993.

Damayanti's husband is also a writer. Basically he wrote plays. After marriage the writer duo wrote a play named *Vig Sar*. Mr. Gangadhar came to know about the poems Damayanti was writing. He encouraged her to publish it. So, in 1994 Damayanti's first anthology *Jivi Jharna* was published. *Jivi Jharna* is the first ever anthology written and published by a female Santali writer. For this anthology she got "Poet of the Year" award from All India Santali Writers Association.

Well known Santali poet Sri Jadumani Besra comments on her poems, "She likes to depict vivid life style and works of mankind as well as beauty of nature through poetry, which is praise worthy." This was only possible because of her husband's continuous support. There's an old saying that "behind every successful man there's a woman", but in Damayanti's case it's the reverse. Hence, she bestows all the successes to her husband.

After *Jivi Jharna* she wrote another anthology of prose named *Sagen Saonhed* and *0 ot og ol aar Jurijita* a poetry book in 1995. In the same year she was transferred from Baripada to Govt.College Phulbani. This was the turning point for her and changed her course of life a lot. In 1996, she wrote a book Pandit Raghunath Murmu in Odia. When she was working at Phulban: she wrote many striking and moral poems and essays. She also undertook some translation works.

She was transferred back again to Baripada in the year 2001. Immediately, she registered for Ph.D at North Odisha University,

Mayurbhanj. Her Ph.D. topic was "Mayurbhanjara Santala Eko Samajika Sanskrutika Adhyayana". In 2005 she got her Ph.D. degree. From the year 2004 onwards she has written many poems, essays criticisms, grammar, history of Santali literature, Santali History etc. Her work in these different Genres has got her the love and admiration of readers.

Damayanti is not only an exciting writer but also a prodigious speaker. Different educational institutes and literary organizations invite her as Guest of Honour, Chief Guest and Chief Speaker. As a lecturer, she has presented many papers on national, international meets and at UGC sponsored seminars. Due to these outstanding qualities, she got the privilege of becoming the first convener in Santali language when it was recognized by the Sahitya Akademi. She was honoured by Sahitya Akademi award for her extraordinary anthology *Say Sched* in the year 2009. From the year 2011 onwards she has been publishing the first Santali women's magazine named *Karam Dar*.

Among the Odia and the Adivasis she is well known as an Adivasi researcher and people respect her for her calm, confident and humble attitude.



Receiving Literary Award from Governor of Odisha at Bhubaneswar, 2012



In a Literary programme with Sitakant Mahapatra, Satkodi Hota at Betnoti College, Odisha, 2012

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Research Experience:

1. Conducted a research work on Santal Tribes of Mayurbhanj for which doctorate degree was awarded.
2. Guiding four Scholars at present for Doctoral Degree on Santal Tribe, Munda Tribe and Kuduttri Community.
3. Published more than 35 papers in Odia and Santali Journals and Souvenirs.

Books: (in Odia)

1. *Raghunath Murmu*, Biography, 1996
2. *Chal Champaru Bhanj Disom, Santala Janajatiro Sanskrutiko Porompota*, 2006
3. *Damodara Dhare Dhare Santalo Sanskrutiro Suchipatra*, 2009
4. *Samaja O Sanskruti Prustopatare Mayurbhanjara Santala*, 2010
5. *Jhumororo Kichhi Gumamro O Onya Prabandha*, 2012

Books: (in Santali)

1. *Jiwi Jharna*, Poetry, 1994
2. *Sagen Saonhed*, Essay, 1995
3. *O Ot Og OI aar Juri Jita*, Poetry, 1995
4. *Kuindi Mim*, Sisu Kabita, 2004
5. *Guru Gomkeyag Njenel ar Njanalag*, Criticism, 2006
6. *Saysahed*, Poetry, 2006
7. *Santali Saonhed Reyag Nagam*, (A brief History of Santali Literature), 2007
8. *Ronor Tuplag* (Santali Grammar for +3 Course), 2008
9. *Parsi Saonta Saonhed* (Essay), 2009
10. *Gidrabhulaw Kahni* (Story), 2010
11. *Ror Sanes* (Linguistic), 2012

Translation:

1. *Omarchayamag Rubayat*, (from Rubayat of Omarchayam), 2006
2. *A.ra. Reyag Serma* (Awarded Odiya Poetry Book Sabdara Akasa) Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2012

Conference:

International:

1. International Santal Conference on 21st and 22nd December 2008 at Jemshedpur
2. International Conference on 11th, 12th and 13th March 2011 Organised by Aikyabharti Research Institute, Pune.

National:

1. All India Tribal Writers Conference-IGNCA, New Delhi in collaboration with SC/ST Reserch and Training Institute, Bhubaneswar on 17th to 20th June 2008.
2. All India Women Writers Conference on 3rd Nov to 5th Nov 2009 at Punjabi University, Patiala.
3. All India Santali Writers Conference on 19th and 20th November 2011 at Assam.
4. All India Women Writers Conference on 26th & 27th March 2011, Organised by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi at Gangtok.

Seminar:

1. National Seminar on Santali Language Education, organized by CIIL, Mysore on 25.08.2008 at HT, Kharagpur
2. National Seminar on Adibasi Bhasa O Sanskruti 19th & 20th February 2009 at P.G. Department of Odia (DSA), Utkal University, Vanivihar.



Receiving Sahitya Akademi Award from Sunil Gangopadhyay, President, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2011

3. National Seminar on Indigenous Cultures and Dances of Jharkhand, on 26th and 27th of August 2011 at Central University of Jharkhand, Brambe, Ranchi.
4. National Seminar on the Role of Santali Language on the Development of Santal Society, organized by All India Santal Intellectual Literary Forum on 9th & 10th December 2011.
5. National Seminar on the Changing Scenario of the place of women in society in Eastern Regional Language, organized by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi on 23rd and 24th February 2012.
5. Professor Khageswar Mahapatra Foundation Samman Patra-2009
6. Sahitya Akademi Award-2010 for Poetry Book *Say Sanhed*
7. Bhanjaputra Award-2010 from Pujyapuja Anusthan, Baripada.
8. Maa Tangorasuni Samman -2010 from Udala, Mayurbhanj.
9. Maheswar Nayak Samman -2010 from Mayurbhanj Sahitya Sansad, Baripada
10. Sambardhana from Mayurbhanj Sahitya Parishad for enrichment of folk literature of Mayurbhanj - 2010.

Workshop

1. Translation workshop at Puri on 20-22 October, 2011
Organised by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.
2. Project: 'History of Santali Literature' as per the Writers in Residency Scheme of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.
3. Editing: Yearly journal *Karamdar*- an exclusive Santali Women Writers Magazine and acting as coeditor in College Magazine *Bhanja Bharati*

Recognition:

1. Poet of the Year award-1994 from All India Santal Writers Association.
2. Zila Stariya Bisista Sahityiki Sambardhana from Sebak Samiti, Baripada, 1996.
3. Sadhu Ramchand Murmu Award 2004 from All India Santal Writers.
4. Pandit Raghunath Murmu Fellowship-2004 from All India Santal Writers Association.

11. Kabi Bhuasan Dr. Ramakrishna Saha Memorial Award -2011 from Kabi Bhusan.
12. Dr. Ramakrishna Saha Memorial Trust, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha.
13. Janajati Pratibha Samman-2012 by ATLC, Bhubaneswar.
14. Sambardhana on the occasion of Biswa Mahila Divas from Jila Prasason Mayurbhanj for contribution to Tribal literature and Art-2012.

Academic Activities:

1. First convener of Santali language Board in Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi during 2004 to 2007.
2. Member, Santali Language Syllabus Committee for UPSC, New Delhi.
3. Advisor, All India Santal Semled, Jhargram and Advisor of Santal Writers Association, Odisha.
4. Member, Syllabus Committee member of North Orissa University, Baripada.
5. Member, the Board of Conducting Examiners in the subject Santali, Sambalpur University.