



A Critique of the Folk Praxis of Literary Circles

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Abstract

As spaces where literary activity is shaped collectively through dialogue, critique, and collaboration, literary circles such as *sahitya sansads* and assemblies represent a folk praxis. Odia author Faturananda (1915-1995) represents the communal praxis of these groups through the figure of the “literary human” by using “everyday life” as an active space for social and cultural critique. One gets to observe the dynamics of folk praxis through Faturananda’s satirical lens when the “literary human” finds no fulfillment in solitary pursuits and seeks to integrate into a collective literary folk. Using humour as a sharp tool to examine individual and institutional behaviour, Faturananda focuses on mundane literary life—poets’ quarrels, economic woes and rivalries—to reveal how collective efforts to produce “good literature” often devolve into self-serving behaviour and performative rituals such that meetings and festivals replace real intellectual engagement, and writing becomes formulaic, trend-driven, and politically superficial. Finally, Faturananda suggests that while literary circles promise collaboration, genuine literary creation is an individual and often a lonely pursuit. As he himself was an author, and thus, a participant in literary circles, Faturananda’s critique may very well be read as a reflexive commentary on his own experience.

Keywords: Faturanada, Folk Praxis, Literary Human, Sahitya Sansad

Introduction

The “literary human” may be defined by his entanglement with literature as both a personal vocation and a societal role. This figure has been scrutinised for his creativity and contributions as well as for the contradictions, vanities, and aspirations that shape his existence.

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Michel Foucault, for example, offers a critical lens to view the “literary human” not as an isolated genius but as a construct shaped by broader institutional and social discourses. While discussing his concept of the “author-function” in “What is an Author?” Foucault argues how authorship ties the writer to networks of power, where their public identity is both a product of societal expectations and a reflection of their inner creativity. Similarly, Roland Barthes, in “The Death of the Author,” dismantles the centrality of the author in literary interpretation, and redirects focus to the text itself. This challenges the inflated sense of self-importance associated with the “literary human” while critiquing their pursuit of personal legacy over the communal and interpretive life of literature. Pierre Bourdieu’s exploration of the “field of cultural production” (37) further complicates the image of the “literary human”. In Bourdieu’s view, the literary field operates as a competitive space where writers and intellectuals vie for recognition, legitimacy, and symbolic power. Within this field, the “literary human” is simultaneously an artist and an economic agent, negotiating between creative ideals and the demands of market forces. This tension exposes the pragmatic undercurrents of literary production, where artistic endeavours are often shaped by the pursuit of financial stability and social prestige. Edward Said’s depiction of the intellectual in *Representations of the Intellectual* builds on this critique, framing the “literary human” as a public figure caught between their ideals and the compromises imposed by institutional affiliations and societal constraints. Said presents the “literary human” in a dual role, as a creator and a critic of power, and points to the contradictions inherent in their position as both insider and outsider within systems of authority.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism adds another dimension to the understanding of the “literary human”. Bakhtin (45) emphasises the inherently interactive and polyphonic nature of literature, challenging the romanticised notion of the solitary writer. The “literary human”, from this perspective, is not an isolated genius but a participant in an ongoing cultural and social dialogue. This view resonates with Thorstein Veblen’s critique of “conspicuous consumption,” where cultural production, including literature, becomes entangled with displays of social status and power (68). In Veblen’s framework, the “literary human” is often complicit in the

commodification of art, producing works that serve as markers of prestige as much as they do as vessels of meaning. Georg Lukács, in his studies of the novel, highlights the “literary human” as a mediator between individual creativity and collective social experience. Yet, Lukács, in *History and Class Consciousness*, also critiques the practice in capitalist societies, where cultural products are commodified leading to the alienation of creators (of art) (149-222). Pascale Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters* takes this critique to a global scale, examining how writers navigate the tension between local traditions and the aspirations for inclusion in a global literary canon. Casanova’s insights reveal the inequalities and hierarchies within the literary field, exposing how the aspirations of the “literary human” are shaped by global structures of power and prestige.

At the heart of these critiques lies the inherent contradiction in the life of the “literary human”: their simultaneous dedication to creativity and their entanglement with societal, economic, and institutional forces. These forces not only constrain but also shape the vanities and aspirations of the “literary human”, who often finds themselves striving for authenticity while navigating the demands of recognition, financial stability, and public relevance.

This paper will study an author’s critique of the folk praxis of literary circles through the figure of the “literary human” and the ludicrous ways in which they engage with literature in communal settings. These literary beings are not only creators and consumers of texts but also active participants in the social and cultural dynamics of their milieu. In Faturananda, the “literary human” is an agentic site for exploring the interplay of ambition, creativity, and the social practices that sustain a literary community. This paper is a close reading of Faturananda’s satirical essays such as “Mangalabariya Sahitya Sansad” (Tuesday Literary Association), “Kalam Chhadei (Literary Rivalry),” “Kabi bheda” (Types of Poets), “Khuntinantyalochaka” (The Quibbler Critic), “Odia Sahityare Ambulance Juga” (The Age of Ambulance in Odia Literature), “Medical College re Meher Jayanti” (Meher Jayanti in Medical College), and “Adhunika Kabyajugara Pratistha” (Establishment of the Age of Modern Poetry), which examine the paradoxes and pretensions of the figure of the “literary human” and provide a unique

lens to explore the absurdities and dynamics of literary and intellectual collectives. For the purpose of this paper, all passages taken from the works of Faturananda have been translated into English by the author.

Faturananda and the Cultural Context of Cuttack

Faturananda, or Ramchandra Mishra—his lesser-known given name—stands as a unique figure in the landscape of Odia literary satire. His works blend humour, sharp observation, and an intimate understanding of the social and cultural milieu of his time to create a vivid tableau of human behaviour, particularly within the literary circles of Odisha. Faturananda's writings exemplify the imaginative use of humour as a tool to explore social behaviour, with a focus on the category of the "literary human" in the cultural context of Cuttack, where he resided for the greater part of his life. Through his satirical lens, Faturananda, much like Molière, Cervantes, Alexander Pope, and Mark Twain, illuminates the contradictions and pretensions of intellectual and literary figures.

Cuttack, often regarded as the epicentre of Odia modernity, and with its illustrious literary heritage epitomised by the establishment of the *Utkal Sahitya Samaj* in 1902, fostered an environment teeming with literary activity. This milieu of ambition, competition, and small-town politics shaped the character and behaviour of the literary human. As Pierre Bourdieu has argued in *Distinction*, social space is constructed through struggles for cultural capital, and in the literary world, these struggles are often deeply intertwined with notions of status, prestige, and the power to define what constitutes "literature." In Cuttack, the literary human becomes enmeshed in such struggles, revealing the often absurd and contradictory forces at play within this creative domain.

Faturananda himself embodies this literary persona, deriving his pen name from his natural disposition for *faturkhorī*, or indulgence in wit and banter. This term encapsulates his method, which involves a playful yet incisive critique of the literary and social practices of his time. His approach reflects a deep engagement with the everyday, both as a site of observation and as a subject of critique. Erving

Goffman's notion of the "presentation of self" in everyday life also resonates here, as Faturananda paints the "literary human" as individuals constantly managing their social persona through their involvement in literary production and public performances. For example, Faturananda explains how an author, weary of the solitary grind of reading and writing, slowly comes to the realisation that perhaps he ought to join the living, breathing community.

Why should one trek to ten different places to preach about literature or seek the opinions of his readers? Instead, wouldn't it be more efficient if ten like-minded souls gather in one spot to talk about literature? After all, ten people, with twenty hands, should be more than enough to knead the literary dough. The result? Well, it could be brilliant or utterly dreadful – it's a gamble, really. This gathering spot? It's called the *sansad*, or, more specifically, the *sahitya sansad*, the literary assembly. And when literature calls, much like nature's unavoidable summons, the literary human hurries to the *sansad*, eager to relieve himself of both his intellectual and physical burdens. ("Mangalabariya Sahitya Sansad" 1-2)

Faturananda's "literary humans" are much like Molière's characters – exaggerated types whose social pretensions, flaws, and hypocrisies are exposed for the audience's amusement. In *The Learned Women* (orig. *Les Femmes Savantes*), for example, Molière ridicules the pretentiousness of those who feign literary knowledge for social status. Similarly, Faturananda's portrayal of the literary human mocks the superficiality of individuals who, in their attempts to elevate themselves as intellectuals or artists, often expose their lack of genuine insight. Like Molière, Faturananda employs humour to reveal how individuals manipulate social roles—whether literary, intellectual, or otherwise—to mask deeper insecurities or ambitions.

Everyday Life and Humour as Method

Faturananda employs “everyday life” not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active site of social interaction and cultural production. His humour, far from being frivolous, serves as a methodological tool to dissect and critique the behaviour of individuals and institutions. Drawing on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre in *The Critique of Everyday Life*, one can see how Faturananda’s focus on the mundane elements of literary life, such as the squabbles of poets, their economic struggles, and their petty rivalries, allows him to offer a critique of the social and political tensions that shape literary communities. For example, in “Odia Sahityare Ambulance Juga” in *Sāhitya Chāṣa*, one sees Ajay in emotional turmoil after having faced public humiliation for his defence of Upendra Bhanja’s literature. He had been attacked by a Natabara who described Bhanja’s language as *bajara boli* (street language) and positioned the poet’s work within the “municipality garbage dumping yard” (*Sāhitya Chāṣa* 3) leading to a near-catatonic withdrawal of Ajay. Natabara offers an aggressive revisionist critique by supplanting literary authority with contemporary critical frameworks. The interaction between Ajay and Natabara is a theatrical representation of literary debates, ideological clashes, and the performance of intellectual discourse on an everyday basis. At the same time, it highlights the polemical extremes to which literary debates may descend such that intellectual disagreements are transformed into performative acts of dominance. Ramesh, who is Ajay’s friend, plans an intellectual ambush on Natabara by organising another literary assembly. Manipulating Natabara’s intellectual vanity, Ramesh tells him that he is the only person who can speak about the postmodern era and Natabara is elated. This shows how literary human interactions are sometimes ego-driven.

Faturananda narrates the evolution of a literary association as a social institution, from its optimistic beginnings to its eventual decline, amid the “literary human’s” entanglements with personal grievances, competitive self-fashioning, and the perpetual struggle for ideological ascendancy, offering an incisive critique of the folk praxis of the literary human.

Within the literary world of Cuttack, Faturananda's "literary human" resonates in Lodge's satirical representation of intellectuals who are more concerned with social climbing and prestige than with genuine scholarship. Much like Faturananda, Lodge uses humour to expose the social dynamics, rivalries, and pretensions that govern intellectual and cultural communities. Lodge's characters are often embroiled in the absurdities of academic life, where personal ambition and professional competition intersect. Both Lodge and Faturananda, through humour, critique the often-ridiculous nature of professional and literary identity, highlighting how personal ambition can distort intellectual integrity.

Literary Production as a Social Imperative

In a meeting of the Mangalabariya Sahitya Sansad, there's an urgent demand: "Somehow, we have to bring out a magazine" ("Mangalabariya Sahitya Sansad" 6). The *sansad* members are driven by social expectation and peer pressure, and seem troubled by the frequency with which literary magazines are produced like babies emerging from a gynaecology ward. The *sansad* needs to assert its presence within the literary field and, therefore, must publish a magazine. It doesn't matter if they have nothing unique to say. They are wracked by their failure to publish and are troubled by the threat to their visibility and legitimacy as a group of connoisseurs of literature. Faturananda tells us that their anxiety and frustration is akin to "someone twisting the tail of a cobra" (6). They are deeply conscious of the competitive hierarchy and the need to make their presence felt in literary circles. They ask, "Are all these magazine publishers ten-month-old babies while we remain a six-month-old infant?" (6). In this context, literary production functions as an economy of prestige where outputs such as books, magazines, journals serve as currency that determine the *sansad*'s status and publishing becomes a means of self-legitimation.

As the group debates what kind of magazine to publish, one notices a tension between the idealised objective of literature and the practical realities of literary engagement. First, they decide to launch a poetry magazine but drop the idea as poetry is an idle preoccupation of most "writers." It is feared that the magazine may become a

dumping ground for contributors. Besides, the rejected poets, with their fragile egos, might form a union or even resort to violence. Second, they discuss if they could start a story magazine. But doubts arise about whether short fiction alone would garner substantial readership. Also, there's a scarcity of good writers. Next, a mixed-genre magazine is proposed. Someone also suggests a "quarrel section" arguing that conflict draws attention everywhere, all the time. However, the *sansad* secretary rejects the idea saying that a *sansad* like theirs should serve society's interests and not disrupt them. Nonetheless, the proposition makes it clear that literary culture is as much about social drama as it is about intellectual exchange. The discussions reflect how the folk praxis is dictated more by established conventions and audience expectations rather than creative aspirations or innovative forms. There is considerable anxiety about what people might consume and how the *sansad* would be perceived as a literary collective. This serves as an illustration of how the process of producing literature may be dictated more by societal pressures, competition, and the need for social validation and less by a genuine artistic impulse.

We see a similar critique of the commercialisation of literature and the rise of mediocre writers in Alexander Pope's mock-epic *The Dunciad*. Pope creates a satirical universe where the "dunces"—mediocre poets and critics—are celebrated to highlight the degradation of literary standards in a world where culture is commodified. Pope's critique, centred on the vanity of writers more concerned with public status than with genuine literary creation. Similarly, Faturananda explores the literary human as a unique social category, for whom literature is both a cultural necessity and a commodity. This duality emerges clearly in "Mangalabariya Sahitya Sansad," which finally publishes a magazine aimed at guiding the public but also exposes the economic challenges of literary production. Here, the literary human is not merely a creator of culture but also an economic agent, negotiating between artistic aspirations and the realities of the marketplace. Faturananda's sharp wit and typologies of poets (*Mangalabariya* 20-23), such as the *bhua kabi* (loud, lusty poet), *barachaulia kabi* (learned but indecipherable poet), and *chhagalia kabi*, whose compositions read like neither prose nor poetry, or like both, reveal how the pursuit of literary

success often becomes a performance of social distinction, much like the “conspicuous consumption” Veblen describes in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. For Veblen, cultural consumption, like other forms of consumption, is not just about use but about displaying one’s social standing. Similarly, Faturananda’s “literary human” navigates the complex intersection of artistic creation, social status, and economic necessity, where the performance of literary success becomes as much about gaining social distinction as it is about genuine creative output.

Critics do not escape Faturananda’s satire either. In one episode, a critic lavishes praise on a puerile piece titled “Cow,” hailing it as a profound commentary on modern civilisation and drawing ludicrous parallels to T S Eliot and Ezra Pound (“Mangalabariya” 40–42). These humorous portrayals highlight the absurdities of literary personas while critiquing the pretensions of the literary world. Mark Twain’s *Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses* engages in a similar critique, humorously disassembling the work of a celebrated writer by lampooning the inconsistencies and improbable plot devices in Cooper’s narratives. Twain’s satire functions as a masterclass in literary critique, using sharp humour to reveal how Cooper’s works, such as *The Last of the Mohicans*, fall short of literary standards due to their melodrama, mischaracterisation, and clumsy writing. Both Faturananda and Twain critique the way celebrated literary figures are often held in high regard despite their technical shortcomings.

The “literary human” in Faturananda does not wish to remain a solitary figure and aspires to a public persona. This shift reflects how the identity of the writer becomes inextricably linked to the broader social and political structures. In literary festivities such as *kabita patha sabha* (poetry reading sessions), the act of writing transforms from a private endeavour into a communal, performative act. These events not only create a space for literary expression but also impose a form of social responsibility on poets, compelling them to entertain, engage, and align with the expectations of their audiences. Faturananda highlights how this public engagement is deeply political, with poets composing slogans for political parties and eulogies for state leaders, thereby blending artistic expression with social utility. As Foucault suggests, the writer’s public identity is

shaped less by individual intention than by the power dynamics of the society in which they function. Poets become a conduit for political and social discourse, with their role as an “author” increasingly being defined by the political and social contexts that assign meaning and authority to their work. In this sense, the evolution of the “literary human” reflects the way the “author-function” is embedded in the larger network of power, where literary creation serves both artistic and societal purposes.

Faturananda goes beyond mere literary endeavour to present a multifaceted critique of the social behaviour of the “literary humans”. Pointing to himself as one of them, he characterises them with exaggerated traits such as *amruta behia* (shamelessness), *maskara* (clownishness), and *khilikhilia* (irreverence). These attributes, though comical, highlight the resilience and adaptability necessary to navigate the competitive and often precarious world of literary ambition. For Faturananda, literature is not merely a reflection of society but an active participant in its construction and critique. By portraying the literary human as both a creator and a product of social forces, he highlights the reciprocal relationship between literature and social behaviour, emphasising literature’s role in shaping and questioning the social fabric.

Ritual, Performance, and Absurdity in a Literary Memorial Meeting

In an essay titled “Medical College re Meher Jayanti” (Meher Jayanti in a Medical College), Faturananda shows how the “literary human’s” engagement with literature is mediated through collective rituals that prioritise performance over substance. The event is the literary commemoration of the famous Odia poet, Gangadhar Meher, in a medical college. The absurdity begins with the choice of the place for the event. The doctors and the medical students have the venue decorated with skeletal remains, anatomy posters, and surgical equipment. The speakers engage in a bizarre postmortem of the poet’s physical health, discussing his ailments and speculating on the medical history of the poet who is long dead. A doctor stands up and begins his speech thus:

Chairman and friends! Today, we are celebrating the birth anniversary of a man known in every lane of Odisha. There may be places in Odisha where not a single doctor is available, but there is no place where the late poet Gangadhar Meher is unknown. The day of the poet's birth falls exactly one month and twenty-four days after the death of the founder of modern anatomy, Henry Gray. Sambalpur, a district with a high incidence of heat strokes and the birthplace of the great anatomy teacher, the late Sanatan Pujari, was honoured to welcome the poet into its fold. Since childhood, Meher's health was frail due to a lack of nutritious food. A deficiency of vitamin D was evident, and there was also a possibility of calcium deficiency. As a child, he once fell while playing, and a minor injury severely affected his hand. If this wasn't due to calcium deficiency, then what was? However, his health improved in adulthood as he followed an organic diet. His engagement in weaving led to a slight curvature of the spine. On one occasion, he injured his finger with a spindle, which became septic and developed into an infection. (*Sahitya Chasa* 12–13)

This explains how literature is often subjected to inappropriate and self-indulgent modes of analysis. The memorial meeting ultimately descends into chaos when a speaker mentions how the poet got burnt when his house had caught fire and a student asks whether or not tannic acid ointment or gel was applied. To this, the speaker replied:

No, although tannic acid had been formulated by that time, its use on burns was not known to anyone. Instead, his burns healed completely with the application of edible coconut oil. His father, Chaitana Dev, and mother, Sebati Devi, were deeply distressed by this incident.

In 1907, in the 7th volume of *Utkal Sahitya*, he published a prose work titled *Eha Ki Pruthibira Sabda* (Is This Earth's Sound). He wrote this under the

influence of a delusion, as he kept hearing a buzzing sound—*bhon-bhon*. Sometimes, even the wise experience delusion. His perception of this sound was a sign of nervous debility.

Whatever the case may be, his body endured until April 4, 1924. On that day, the people of Odisha came to know that their venerable poet was no more. (13)

The speakers' preoccupation with everything else but what Meher wrote is a commentary on the common pitfall of literary discourse, where critics impose an interpretation onto authors, forcing the works to conform to contemporary concerns and disciplinary and theoretical frameworks. The medical students engage with Meher's literature, reducing poetry to a series of pharmacological and anatomical metaphors. They compare poetic effects to medical conditions and treatments. For example, *Tapaswini* is likened to bromide-induced paralysis, *Pranaya Ballari* is compared to opium, and *Bharati Bhabana* to quinine's bitterness against colonial rulers (*Sahitya Chasa*, 13-15).

Thus, literary discussions lead to new interpretative angles, however absurd, asserting one's intellectual dominance within the group. In this context, the act of discussing literature becomes more important than literature itself. The meeting ended with the remark of the chairman who wished to end with a respectable note about the poet: "The perspective from which you have evaluated literature has never been seen before. If literature were ever injured, I have no doubt that you would cleanse it with antiseptic lotion and bandage it with gauze" (*Sahitya Chasa*, 13). Faturananda draws a parallel between the fixation on illness and treatment and the way literary discussions in public forums revolve around tangential displays of knowledge. He makes clear the absurd dynamics of literary culture when literature is mediated through communal rituals rather than solitary, personal and informed engagement with texts. The memorial meeting, meant to honour a poet, then becomes a stage for intellectual acrobatics and literature is dissected like a clinical specimen.

Literary Manifestos and the Ritual of Exorcism

The “literary human” is not immune to internal divisions, as Faturananda humorously depicts the conflicts between the “ancients” and the “moderns.” While these debates ostensibly centre on literary aesthetics, they often mask deeper struggles for cultural authority and status within evolving literary traditions. Faturananda critiques these rivalries with humour, revealing their pettiness and the underlying social ambitions of those involved. In the essay “Adhunika Kabyajugara Pratistha” (Establishment of The Era of Modern Poetry), Faturananda shows how writers, as a group, construct movements, enforce trends, and fight for legitimacy in ways that have little to do with literature itself:

There was a great deal of enthusiasm among the budding writers that day. They had all made up their minds to establish the era of modern poetry as soon as possible; no more waiting would be tolerated. The foundation had to be laid that very day.

A large-nosed man spoke up: “What a disgrace! An entire era is about to end, yet Bhanja, Kabisurjya, and Radhanath still sit on the poet’s throne! They died long ago, but their ghosts refuse to leave. No wonder outsiders claim that Odisha has stopped producing poets! No, no, we will forcefully remove them from the collective memory of Odia people. Only then can we comfortably establish a new era.”

A poet with a Hawaiian-style shirt added, “We should hurl clumps of earth at the homes of those who still discuss old poetry. Wherever we find their portraits, we’ll tear them down. Even Mahadev fears clods of earth. Who are they to withstand them? Once people forget the old poets, we can firmly establish our foundation.”

A bald poet with bulging eyes objected: “That’s not right. Beware! Don’t speak of throwing clods. They might land on innocent heads. We need another way. Once our new poetry rises, the dark age of the past will disappear on its own. For now, let’s start writing.”

A poet in loose pyjamas stood up. “But isn’t this like tying a bell around a cat’s neck? Even if people have forgotten the old poets, we still have Mansingh, Gadnayak, Nityananda, and Routray standing like four pillars. How do you expect to leap over them? They’re not old enough to simply wait for their turn to end!”

A curly-haired poet responded casually: “Why stress over that? Four cents’ worth of potassium cyanide will take care of all four. Just invite them over and slip it into their tea. You all don’t know how Praharaj signed off from this world.”

A thick-lipped poet shouted, “Ram, Ram, Ram! Don’t talk about such sins! Why go to such extremes? If we simply make a scene in public, those four will retreat on their own. Remember how rishis and munis would hide in caves to escape worldly troubles? All we need is a loud quarrel.”

Many nodded in agreement. “Yes, yes, that’s the way.” The proposal was clearly popular. The discussion then turned to how the foundation would be established.

A restless poet declared, “We must create a new model of poetry today, immediately! To produce large quantities of modern poetry, we need a model that is easy for everyone to follow. If it’s not accessible, we won’t be able to write in bulk. In this era, numbers matter most. Our poetry must rise democratically. Now, let’s decide what our model should be.”

The model-making began. One poet suggested, “Forget those old metres and patterns; they only slow us down. Our poetry should flow like straw in the wind, with no obstacles, no need for thought or emotion. Like an infant’s babbling, just write whatever comes to mind. Editing or revising is pointless. And there should be no difference between verse and prose; everything should be unified. Even the *Malika* says: *Sarbe hoibe ekakara, na thiba vedara vichara* (All will become one; there would be no differentiation as prescribed in the Vedas).” (*Sahitya Chasa*, 17–19).

The exaggerated calls to exorcise the ghosts of older poets, throw clods of earth at those who still discuss them, and chant slogans against established writers reflect how literary movements often depend on iconoclasm, which is the rejection and destruction of previous literary traditions to assert their own authority. However, this rejection is merely performative, not substantive. The so-called revolution is less about creating new poetry than about attacking the old guard, a common pattern in the history of literary movements, where innovation may be driven by a need for differentiation rather than artistic necessity. Faturananda, thus, critiques literary movements that are often more about establishing dominance in a literary marketplace than about actual artistic renewal. The need to ‘kill’ past poets is a social strategy, not an aesthetic necessity.

In their bid to start a new trend, the group thinks of composing a “model” poem with consensus. Their focus is on *sounding* radical, borrowing from the past, and lacing it with ideological jargon.

The best choice is Rabindranath Tagore’s collected works. Every poet should own a copy. And if you add Omar Khayyam’s works, even better. You’ll get the right language from those. Also, we need to insert some communist terms. These words are very modern. In today’s era of outrage, such words captivate people’s minds.”

Where will we find those words? I haven’t seen such books recently.

No, no—there are no books for this. We’ll have to collect these words from various communist meetings and rallies.

Instead of gathering them one by one, let’s compile a list now and distribute it to everyone. That way, we can save effort.

Yes, yes! Let’s do that. Dictate the key words from Tagore and Khayyam, and also the ones I’ve noted down.

A few poets started dictating, and a list was compiled: sorrow, tears, horizon, limitless, inferior, serpentine,

separation, favourite, storm, dormant, *phagun*, *bakrayita*, don, death, marginalised, hunger, ghost, skeleton, typhoon, gambler, nasty, Siberia, tantric gestures, bloodshed, blood dawn, etc.

Then came the question of similes. The group agreed to immediately discard conservative comparisons in favour of fresh, unexpected ones. A new list was made:

Night like the highest ridge of a thatch, Day like slaked lime, Moon like tin, Sun like the lid of a cooking pot, Earth like a bundle of straw, Forest like tangled hair, River like a sacred thread, Mountain like a pile of feces, Heat like a blast furnace, Cold like ethyl chloride. (*Sahitya Chaṣa*, 20–21)

In the end, with everyone's approval, a model poem was composed.

Conclusion

A literary institution is born as a social institution when a group of literary enthusiasts gather at a common site, assuming the social responsibility of creating “good literature.” In the early days, the members tend to be charitable in thought and word but gradually become self-serving and contentious. The *sansad*, gradually, engenders a distinct category of human, the “literary human”, who becomes the primary agent in the rise and fall of the literary association. Central to Faturananda's critique is the tension between real literary production and the uncritical and populist communal rituals surrounding it. His essays bring to the fore the absurdities of literary pretensions, the self-serving behaviours that often underpin intellectual pursuits, and the vanities and aspirations that define literary and intellectual communities. We see how the identity and social behaviour of the “literary human” is shaped not only by their engagement with reading and writing but also by their entanglement with cultural ideals and expectations and the socio-economic realities of literary institutions. Most importantly, Faturananda suggests that the folk praxis of literary circles often serves as a substitute for genuine intellectual engagement. As a result, writing becomes formulaic, writers borrow phrases and trendy political rhetoric. Some

writers are obsessed with dismantling the past, exposing an insecurity about the present, in which new voices struggle to emerge outside the restrictive boundaries of collective literary identity. The “literary human” in Faturananda is overwhelmed by the easy seductions of trends, groupthink, and performative dominance, suggesting thereby that while communal spaces may fuel discussion and innovation, true literary creation remains an individual struggle.

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