



Bhojpuri Plays of Rahul Sankrityayan: Vedic Influences on His Literature

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Abstract:

Rahul Sankrityayan holds a unique position in modern Indian literature as a thinker who combined ancient Indian knowledge systems with progressive social thought. While he is often discussed in the context of travel writing, history and Marxist ideology, his Bhojpuri plays deserve special attention for the way they carry Vedic ethical and philosophical influences into a regional, people-centred literary form. Rahul Sankrityayan's engagement with Bhojpuri was a deliberate cultural choice. He believed that literature should speak in the language of the masses. His Bhojpuri plays are rooted in folk life, rural settings and everyday conflicts, yet they are enriched by classical Indian thought, particularly Vedic ideas. Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan is a luminous star in the firmament of Hindi, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri, Tibetan, Russian and Buddhist literature. He spent more than 40 years of life as a vagabond traveller thirsty for knowledge. He was like an untiring bee flying from one beautiful flower of nature to another tasting and sipping the essence of flower to its last core and then turning them into the honey of great and profound

knowledge in the form of immortal books. In the long run, he became a Buddhist monk sacrificing his whole life for the sake of the society. His writings comprise a treasure house of information about cultural, anthropological, sociological, geographical, linguistic and economic conditions of human beings. Apart from being an international writer, educationist, social reformer and polyglot, his love for Bhojpuri language and his contribution as a great Bhojpuri playwright is beyond measure. He penned eight classic Bhojpuri plays concerning contemporary issues with masterfully crafted language full of images, symbols and other dramatic and poetic devices which need to be explored and elucidated in modern context. All his eight Bhojpuri plays were composed in the prisons of Hajaribag and Hajipur during the Quit India Movement. His Bhojpuri plays are as follows: Jonk, Nayeeki Duniya, Mehrarun ke Durdasa, Dunmun Neta, Japania Rachhas, Germanwa ke Har Nihchay, Desh Rachchhak, Ee Hamar Ladai.

Rahul Sanskrityaan has composed several great works of Hindi and Buddhist literature. But very few people know that he has to his credit a number of Bhojpuri plays which need to be explored and examined in modern context both on the basis of its theme and technique. For Rahul Sankrityayan, Bhojpuri drama functioned as a medium of social awakening, a continuation of India's oral and dialogic traditions, a platform to reinterpret ancient values in modern contexts.

Keywords: *Bhojpuri literature, Bhojpuri Plays, Women Empowerment, Social injustice, Economic sparsity, New generation, Saran ke*

Sankrityayan's literature does not mean blind adherence to abstract ideas, facts and figures, rather they are highly concrete, integrated and literary. His Bhojpuri literature refers to ethical questioning, human-centric philosophy, and above all, emphasis on action (karma) rather than dogma. These ideas, central to the Vedas and Upanishads, subtly shape the themes, characters and conflicts in his Bhojpuri plays.

Dharohar, Chapra, Ekma, Parsagadh, Sant Prasadi Das, Sant Lachhuman Das.

Apart from being a great polyglot and author of more than hundred books, Rahul Sankrityayan was very much attached to his native soil of Bhojpuri region specially Chapra and Parsa Gadh where in the *Math* of Sant Prasadi Das and Sant Lakshman (Lachhuman Das), he spent most of his time. This monastery was just like the nest of the Skylark of William Wordsworth's famous poem "To the Skylark". Unlike the bird of P.B.Shelley, the Skylark of Wordsworth soars higher and higher in the sky, but never forgets his nest and returns to its own will to look after its broodings:

"Type of the wise who soar but never roam

True to the kindred points of heaven and home".(Wordsworth, Golden Treasury,)

This is exactly what we find in the life of Rahul Sankrityayan whose love for the soil has taken its strong roots in the shape of some Bhojpuri plays, speeches and songs suffused with beautiful words and dictions, images and symbols. Almost all his plays are realistic in tone and temper. They mirror a realistic picture of contemporary society, its various social maladies and evils prevalent in every corner of India particularly of Bhojpuri region. Like the plays of George Bernard Shaw, the Bhojpuri dramas of Rahul Sanskrit have some meanings and messages to the society. In all the plays there is always a mouthpiece character like G.B.Shaw who seems to project the rebellious and volcanic thoughts of Rahul Sankrityayan against the societal misrule, mismanagement, social inequality, injustice, feminine sensibility, so on and so forth.

In the Vedic tradition, dharma is linked to maintaining social order and justice. Rahul's Bhojpuri plays reinterpret dharma as moral duty toward society, especially toward the oppressed and marginalized.

Characters often face ethical dilemmas where truth conflicts with convenience, justice conflicts with power and collective good outweighs personal gain. The Vedic emphasis on karma—right action—is clearly visible. Rahul’s protagonists do not wait for divine intervention. They act, resist injustice and shape their destiny through effort, echoing the Vedic belief. According to Rig Veda:

“मा वो रसानिति न धेनवो गाः

मा वो अश्व अरण्येषु सेदुः।”

(Rg Veda 8.101.15)

Translation

“Let not the weak be crushed by the strong.

Let not the helpless be driven into suffering.”

This hymn clearly opposes exploitation by the powerful, a core concern in the play, *Jonk(Leech)* where authority and social privilege conflict with justice. Rahul Sankrityayan’s Bhojpuri short play “Jonk”(Leech/Blood Sucker) is a satiric indictment on Jamindari Pratha (Landlordism). The play opens with a typical folk song containing the message of the play and the author:

फिकिरिया मरलस जान।

सांझ बिहान के खरची नइखे, मेहरी मारे तान।

हे फिकिरिया मरलस जान।

अन्न बिना मोरा लईका रोवे, का करिहें भगवान।

हे फिकिरिया मरलस जान।

कारजा काढ़ी काढी खेती कईनी, खेतवे सूखल धान।

हे फिकिरिया मरलस जान।

बैल बेची जिमिदारवा के देनी, सहआ कहे बेईमान।

हे फिकिरिया मरलस जान।

(तीन नाटक, 51)

“O my God! What a miserable life I have to lead! I am almost killed by grief and sorrow. I have no money to meet both ends. My wife, too, is not supporting and always flings irony on my misery. What will even God do when my children weep for hunger? I did my farming by taking loans, but unfortunately, all my paddy crops dried in the field. I even had to sell my bullocks to return the loan of the landlord, but in spite of all these things, the money lenders call me dishonest. O my God! What shall I do? I am being burnt alive with too much mental torment.”)

(@ The translation is mine).

This song contains epigrammatically the central theme of the drama in a nutshell. It's the typical dramatic technique of Rahul Sankrityayan to open the drama with a song. The place of Shakespeare, especially his comedies are also characterized by various songs on various occasions. But there is a difference between Rahul Sankrityayan and William Shakespeare. In Shakespeare, when the character is full of spontaneous emotions, he generally expresses his innermost feelings through songs; but in the Bhojpuri plays of Rahul Sankrityayan, the song generally occurs in the beginning of the play and it acts like the mouthpiece of the author. In Shakespeare plays, we never find any mouthpiece. About Shakespeare it is often said that Shakespeare is behind his work in the same way as God is behind the creation – that is everywhere present but nowhere visible. But in the works of Rahul Sankrityayan, we find the elements of George Bernard Shaw who firmly believes in “Art for the sake of life”.

The play is set in a rural society where poor farmers and labourers are badly exploited. Rich landlords, moneylenders and corrupt officials behave like leeches. They take heavy interest on loans, seize land and force the poor to work hard without fair wages. The common people remain trapped in poverty and fear. The poor characters in the play slowly begin to understand that their suffering is not caused by fate or God but by unjust social systems and selfish humans. Rahul Sankrityayan clearly shows that blind faith, ignorance and silence help these “leeches” grow stronger.

As the play progresses, voices of protest arise. The oppressed people realise that unity and awareness are the only ways to remove exploitation. The play encourages resistance, self-respect and social responsibility. It suggests that real change will come not through prayers but through collective action and moral courage.

In simple terms, Jonk is a powerful social play that exposes exploitation and teaches that society must get rid of those who live on others' pain, just as a body must remove a leech to survive.

Sankrityayan's use of Bhojpuri folk idiom is not only a stylistic choice but also a political one—it roots the drama in the lived experience of ordinary villagers and makes the critique of exploitation accessible to the very audience it seeks to empower. This anticipates the strategies of later postcolonial dramatists like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Girish Karnad, who similarly turned to indigenous forms to resist cultural domination and highlight social oppression.

Ngugi, for example, in plays like *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* deliberately employed Gikuyu language and traditional performance styles to expose the exploitation of peasants and workers under neo-colonial capitalism. His insistence on writing in local idioms was a way of reclaiming cultural identity and making theatre a weapon of resistance. Sankrityayan's Bhojpuri songs function in a similar way: they are not ornamental but vehicles of collective consciousness, giving voice to the farmer's suffering and hope.

Girish Karnad, too, in plays *such as Hayavadana and Nagamandala*, drew upon folk tales, oral traditions, and indigenous performance modes like Yakshagana to dramatize issues of identity, power, and social hierarchy. His blending of folk idiom with modern themes mirrors Sankrityayan's technique of opening a play with a song that is both rooted in tradition and charged with social critique.

In this sense, Sankrityayan can be seen as a precursor to postcolonial dramaturgy: he recognized that authentic social protest must speak in the language of the people, not in borrowed elite idioms. His songs are both aesthetic and political, much like Ngugi's village theatre or Karnad's folk-inspired stagecraft. Together, they show how literature and drama can become instruments of cultural reclamation and social transformation, turning local forms into universal expressions of justice and dignity.

The term "Jonk" connotes the rich and the privileged, the so-called landlords, the negative aspects of religious practices and all those who are against the poor and the deserted. In this respect, the play has the dalit sentiments which form parts of modern Dalit literary discourse. The last lines of this play is very remarkable which shows an ideal world of the author free from blood suckers :

“जौना में जोंक ना रहे खून चुसवा ना रहे; जिमदार, मिल मालिक, सेठ सहकार ना रहे। जौना में सब केहू के देहि से काम करे के परे; सब केहू के खाए कपड़ा रहे के पूरा इतिजाम होखे। समूचा देस आ दुनिया के खनदान बन जाए। हद करिया गोर बड़की बड़की तनखाह वाली सपना हो जाय।”

(Let us have an ideal world where there are no jonks or blood suckers; where there are no landlords, mill owners, the money lenders and where everyone has to work with the help of their bodies and there is complete arrangement for food, clothes and shelter; where high salaried employees and the so called white-black community are just like the dream")

(Teen Natak, P.74)

The same symbol of 'Jonk' has been reiterated with some imagistic variations in his famous prose treatise "Tumhari Kshay (तुम्हारी क्षय) which Rahul Sankirtayan composed at the jail of Chapra. He writes:

“जोंकें जो परवरिश के लिए धरती पर मेहनत का सहारा नहीं लेती । वे दूसरों के अर्जित खून पर गुजर करती हैं। मानुषिक जोंकें पाशविक जोंकों से ज्यादा भयंकर होती हैं....

सभी जोंकें बड़े जोश के साथ संसार में प्रलय लाने की तैयारियां कर रही हैं। जिस वक्त मनुष्य जाति ने अपने भीतर पहली जोंक पैदा की थी, उस वक्त उसे क्या मालूम था कि जोंकें बढ़कर आज उसे यह दिन दिखाएंगी । इसके विनाश के बिना संसार का कल्याण नहीं। जोंकों तुम्हारी क्षय हो। (तुम्हारी क्षय, 60)

“Leeches—those that do not toil upon the earth for their sustenance—survive by feeding on the hard-earned blood of others.

Human leeches are far more dreadful than their animal counterparts...

All leeches, with great fervor, are preparing to unleash an apocalypse upon the world.

When humankind first gave birth to the leech within itself, how could it have known that these parasites would one day bring it to such ruin?

Without their destruction, the world cannot be redeemed.

Leeches! May your decay be swift.

(Tumhari Kshay , p. 60)

The book “ Tumhari Kshay” by Rahul Sankrityayan is a classic work which depicts the various types of social, political,cultural and religious infirmities. Rahul Sankrityayan believes that the blood suckers in different incarnations are responsible for these manmade ills and maladies. The poor characters of this play stand by the Truth which is the core concept of Ved, Puran and Upanishads. Rig Veda says :

“सत्येन उत्तभिता भूमिः।”

(Rg Veda 10.85.1)

“The earth is upheld by truth.”

So we see that Truth (satya) is presented as the foundation of social order. Rahul's characters often reject convenience and risk suffering to uphold truth which directly echoes this Vedic principle. This eternal truth which Rahul Sankrityayan has raised in the play "Jonk" has also a very close conformity with *Atharva Veda* and *Yajurveda*. According to *Atharva Veda*:

“समानी व आकृतिः समाना हृदयानि वः

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति।”

(Atharva Veda 3.30.1)

Translation

“Let your intentions be united.

Let your hearts be united.

Let your minds be one, so that you may live together in harmony.”

This verse supports collective good over personal gain, a dominant ethical position in *Jonk*, where social welfare outweighs individual benefit. *Yajurveda* holds the same view :

“तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्।”

(Śukla Yajur Veda / Īsā Upaniṣad 1)

Translation

“Enjoy through renunciation.

Do not covet what belongs to others.”

This verse condemns greed and unjust accumulation of power. In *Jonk*, injustice grows from possession and domination which Rahul critiques through social action.

The next play “*Navaki Duniya*” (The New World) shows an idealistic dream of Rahul Sankrityayan. It is a Bhojpuri play written by Rahul Sankrityayan in 1942. It was written during the time of World War II when Rahul Sankrityayan was in Hazaribagh jail. The play has four acts and promotes the idea of a new world where there is no gap between the big and the small, the privileged and the deserted. In this play, a utopian society is imagined where everyone is equal and there is not any distinction between rich and poor and everyone worships laborers. The village

is fully developed with all the required facilities. This drama is based on the Panchayati Raj system where there is little scope of tyranny, injustice and unwanted interference of the capitalists. This play also shows an acidic satire on the policy, convention and politics of the contemporary Gandhian followers of Congress. Like all other plays, this play also opens with a song containing the future visions of the dramatist. The dramatist says:

नइकी दुनिये के बसौले, ई कुलि दुखवा जाई ना,
जहवाँ न केहये छोट बड लोगवा, सब्बे भाई-भाई ना ।
केन्हके त गाँजल बाड़े अनधन सोनवा, केहू भुखिया तड़फे ना,
केहुत नहाला नित अतर-गुललबा, कहू पनिआ तरसे ना ।
कबहु ना देखल जे घमावा बतासावा, नाहीं जड़वा जनले ना।
कोटवा बईठिके धोखवाके बलवा, से जगवा लुटले ना।।
आवा हो आवा मोरे भइया बहिनिया, सब हिलमिलि लागी ना,
चमवा के छाड़ी जब कमवा पियार होई, तबे भुखिया भागी ना।”

(Unless a new world is established, all these griefs and sorrows will never vanish. In that new world, nobody is high and low, rich and poor, all are brothers. Here the sacs of wealth and prosperity are stacked in rich men's houses but in the new world, The poor will never suffer from starvation. There are some people who take their bath in the scented fresh water, while on the other hand some people are craving for a draught of water. Those who neither felt the scorching heat of summer nor the shivering cold, they are the same people, sitting on the roof of the 5%prostitutes. They plundered the whole world by dint of deception. O my brothers and sisters, please do come and unite together with perfect harmony. Starvation will never die unless you despise the skin, that is, caste and color and love your work in the true sense of the term.)

(*Teen Natak*, Navaki Duniya,27)

In *Navaki Duniya*, labourers are revered and work becomes a form of social worship. This idea reflects the Vedic belief that work (karma) is sacred and foundational to human dignity. *Yajur Veda* declares:

“कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः।”

(*Īśā Upaniṣad 2*)

Translation:

“One should wish to live a hundred years performing action.”

This verse rejects escapism and promotes active participation in social life, a principle embodied by the self-sustaining and fully developed village of Navaki Duniya. The play’s foundation in the Panchayati Raj system reflects the Vedic distrust of tyranny and concentration of power. Governance in Navaki Duniya is decentralized, ethical and community-oriented.

Atharva Veda states:

“सभा च मा समितिश्चावते प्रजापतिः।”

(*Atharva Veda 7.12.1*)

Translation:

“May the assembly and the council protect us.”

This verse highlights the importance of collective decision-making, aligning with Rahul’s rejection of capitalist interference and authoritarian control. The play “Navaki Duniya” seems to be the replica of the social and economic thoughts of Rahul Sankrityayan who was a writer par excellence, a writer who is not afraid of anything; a writer who is beyond any caste, class and creed. About this utopian drama, Dr. Uday Narayan Tiwari, the great writer of Hindi and Bhojपुरी rightly observes:

“ नईकी दुनिया में साम्यवाद का पूर्ण रूप से प्रचार हो जाता है। ना तो जात-पांत का कुछ विचार रह जाता है और ना उच्च नीच का ख्याल ही। सब लोग सहभोजी हो जाते हैं और सभी जातियों में पारस्परिक शादी विवाह होने लगता है। रूस की तरह सम्मिलित खेती होती है और सब लोग सुख समृद्धि से रहने लगते हैं। पुराने गांव का नाम बदलकर लेनिन पुर रख दिया जाता है। सब लोग एक दूसरे को साथी कहकर पुकारते हैं। प्रत्येक गांव में बिजली का प्रकाश हो जाता है और सभी लोग आनंदपूर्वक जीवन व्यतीत करने लगते हैं।

(उदय नारायण तिवारी, भोजपुरी भाषा और साहित्य, पृष्ठ संख्या 290)

“In the new world, communism is fully propagated. There remains no concern for caste or hierarchy, nor any notion of high or low status. Everyone becomes a co-diner, and inter-caste marriages begin to flourish. Like in Russia, collective farming is practiced, and people begin to live in prosperity and happiness. The old village is renamed Leninpur. Everyone addresses one

another as "comrade." Every village is illuminated with electric light, and all live their lives joyfully."

(Uday Narayan Tiwari, Bhojpuri Language and Literature, p. 290)

The opening of the 3rd act of the play "Nayeeki Duniya" shows social equality and a utopian society full of personal integration and relationship. Rahul Sankrityayan observes:

सरग समान देस हमनी बनौली हाँ,
जहवा न केहु बा भिखारी, मोरि इयवा ।
सऊँसे मुलुकवा के एक घर कई देलीं,
सब हवैँ अपने सवांग, मोरि इयवा ॥
सरजू नरैनी से नहरा बनौली हाँ,
गावें गावें पनिआ पटावैँ, मोरि इयवा ।
खेते खेते हरवा चलत बा मोटरवा के,
कबहूँ न पड़ेला अकाल, मोरि इयवा ।

घरे घरे लइकी, लइकवा पढ़त बाड़े,
केहु नाहीं मुरुख अजान, मोरि इयवा ।
गावें गावें नाटक-सिनेमवा चलत बाड़े,
देखताड़े लइका सयान, मोरि इयवा ।
छोट बड जाति न धनिक ओ गरिब बाटैँ,
नाहिं केहु रजवा हमार, मोरि इयवा ।
नाहीं जमिदरवा ना केहु बनीजारवा बा
नाहीं बेटा सुदिया सवाई, मोरी इयवा ॥

(We have made our country like heaven where nobody is a beggar, O my grandmother! We have also made the whole nation as one family where all are our own sons and daughters. We have

made several canals from the rivers Saryug and Narayani for the smooth irrigation of the soil. Now the day of drought is gone because the motorized plough is being initiated in every field, O my grandmother! Now in the New World, nobody will remain illiterate, ignorant and fool as all boys and girls of every house are taking education. Cinemas and dramas are being displayed in all the villages and both the children and the adults watch them, O my grandmother! Now in this New World, there is no caste difference between the low and the high, the rich and the poor. Now nobody is our King, O my grandmother! Further, there are neither the landlords nor the money lenders nor even the children born under the web of debt and interest, O my grandmother!”)

(*Teen Natak*, Nayeeki Duniya,39)

Rahul Sankrityayan in these lines paints a picture of a dream society where all forms of inequality and suffering have disappeared. He imagines a land that looks like heaven, free from poverty and begging, where the whole nation lives together as one family. The vision is full of hope and progress—fields are irrigated by canals, modern machines are used in farming, and drought no longer troubles the people. Education reaches every home, so ignorance and foolishness vanish, and both boys and girls grow up with knowledge. Art and entertainment also become part of village life, with plays and cinema bringing joy and awareness to everyone. Most importantly, the barriers of caste, wealth, and social rank are broken down. There are no kings, landlords, or moneylenders to exploit the poor, and no one is born into debt. These lines show Sankrityayan’s deep faith in equality, collective harmony, and human dignity. His words are simple yet powerful, expressing the dream of a new world where justice, education, and fraternity guide life. It is not just poetry but also a social message, urging people to imagine and work towards a society free from oppression and division.

Rahul Sankrityayan’s vision in *Nayeeki Duniya* is not just a dream of social equality in India, but part of a larger literary tradition where writers imagine a world free from exploitation, ignorance, and division. His utopian picture of a society without beggars, kings, landlords, or caste barriers resonates with several English literary authors who also sought to portray ideal communities and human dignity. For instance, Thomas More in his *Utopia* (1516) described an island society where private property was abolished, education was universal, and justice was based on equality rather than privilege. Much like Sankrityayan’s dream of canals, modern farming, and shared prosperity, More’s citizens worked collectively for the common good and lived without the crushing weight of poverty or greed.

Similarly, William Morris in *News from Nowhere* (1890) imagined a future England transformed into a pastoral paradise where industrial exploitation had disappeared, and people lived in harmony with nature. His emphasis on beauty, art, and communal life parallels Sankrityayan’s vision of villages filled with drama and cinema, where culture becomes a shared joy rather than a luxury.

Even poets like Percy Bysshe Shelley carried this utopian impulse. In works such as *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley envisioned the liberation of humanity from tyranny and ignorance, celebrating a future of love, equality, and enlightenment. Sankrityayan's insistence that no child should remain illiterate echoes Shelley's belief that education and imagination are the keys to human freedom.

Later, George Bernard Shaw in plays like *Major Barbara* and his socialist writings also argued for a society where wealth and privilege should not determine human worth. His critique of capitalism and advocacy for social reform align with Sankrityayan's rejection of moneylenders and landlords.

Thus, Sankrityayan's Bhojpuri verses stand in dialogue with a long lineage of English literary voices who dreamed of a just and humane world. What makes his vision unique is its rootedness in Indian soil—he speaks of canals from the Sarayu and Narayani, of villages theatres, of caste equality—yet the spirit is universal. Like More, Morris, Shelley, and Shaw, he uses literature not only to imagine but to inspire, urging readers to believe that a new world of fraternity, education, and dignity is possible.

Among the prominent intellectual discourses of the world, the discourse of Women identity or feminism is gaining ground for the last few years. According to Wikipedia :

“Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, perspatriarchalonal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminism holds the position that modern societies are —they prioritize the male point of view—and that women are treated unjustly in these societies.[6] Efforts to change this include fighting against gender stereotypes and improving educational, professional, and interpersonal opportunities and outcomes for women” (www.wikipedia.com)

In *Manusmriti*, Rishi Manu says:

“Where women are honoured, there the gods rejoice and dwell.”

(*Manusmriti* 3.56)

This verse states that a society which shows respect and reverence to women becomes a space of harmony, prosperity and moral balance. The presence of the “gods” symbolically indicates ethical order, well-being and collective happiness. From the perspective of women's discourse, this verse

elevates respect for women to a cultural and moral necessity rather than treating it as a matter of personal choice. Womanhood is presented as central to the ethical and spiritual health of society. The verse suggests that social progress, moral stability and cultural continuity are impossible without dignity accorded to women.

This situation is vividly presented in Rahul Sankrityayan's Bhojpuri play *Mehrarun ke Durdasa*. The play powerfully brings out the suffering and constant oppression faced by women who live under the control of a male-dominated social order at every stage of life. Sankrityayan does not limit himself to showing their pain alone; he also tries to explore the roots of these injustices and hints at ways through which change can occur. The play opens with a traditional folk song sung collectively by the characters, which sets the emotional tone and introduces the central theme of women's suffering and resistance. The playwright observes:

“एके माई बपवा से एक ही उदपरवा में,
दूनों के जनमवाँ भइल, रे पुरुखवा।
पुत के जनमवा में नाच आ सोहर होला,
बेटि के जनम परे सोग, रे पुरुखवा ॥१॥

धनवा घरतिया प बेटवा के हक होला
बिटिया के किछुवो ना हक रे पुरुखवा।
मरदा के खइला-कमइला के रहता बा,
तिरिया के लागेला केवाड़, रे पुरुखवा ॥२॥

खेवे के रणपवा जिनिगिया भर परी ओके
लइके जे मरदा मुअल, रे पुरुखवा।
तिरिया के मुवले त बतिये कवन पूछऽ,
जिअते सवतिया ले आवे, रे पुरुखवा ॥३॥

आँखिये के देखते पतुरिया ले रखले बा,
मार-गारी देला दिन रात, रे पुरुखवा ।

ओहि रे खसुरवा मरदवा के किछु नाहीं
तिरिया के भकसी झोकावे, रे पुरुखवा ।।४।।”

(Both male and female are born from the same womb by the same mother and father ; but after the birth of a male child, dances are performed and a ‘Sohar’ song is sung. On the other hand, when the female child is born, there is sadness, O the dominating patriarchy!

The son has the hereditary right on the wealth and land of the parents, but the girls are devoid of this right. The male has various ways for eating and earning, but for the females, the gate is always closed, O the dominating patriarchy!

The girl child will have to sail the tumultuous boat of life after the death of her bride groom in childhood; but just the opposite, after the death of the wife, her husband takes the hand of another woman (the rival woman) instantly, O the dominating patriarchy!

If a female commits any sin, she is beaten black and blue and cursed and abused all day and night and kept in custody like an eyeball and in punishment, she is burnt to death; but the same sin committed by the male is always forgiven, O the dominating patriarchy!”)*

(Mehrarun ke Durdasa, Teen Natak, P 2)

A critical analysis of the above song clearly shows that inheritance rights, economic freedom, and social mobility are the exclusive domain of men, while women are denied access to these fundamental aspects of human dignity. The imagery is vivid and painful: the girl child must navigate the stormy waters of widowhood alone, while a man, upon losing his wife, quickly finds another partner.

Perhaps the most harrowing section is the depiction of moral double standards. A woman who commits a sin is beaten, cursed, and punished with brutal finality, even to the point of being burned alive. In contrast, the same transgression by a man is forgiven, forgotten, or simply ignored. Sankrityayan does not shy away from these brutal truths; instead, he forces the audience to confront them head-on.

Act Two of this drama also opens with a song showing the miserable condition of the rural illiterate women who were forced to cover their face with the edges of the saari. The playwright says:

हम चेरी करी दिन भर टहलवा।

हमरे से जेकर जनमिया करमिया,

सेई हो भइल हमरा के फुटलवा।

गुँगवा के चुमी चूमी बोलिया सिखौलीं,

से रखले हमरा के बलेलबा ॥

बारे से परदा घुंघटवा कढौलै,

धरवे भईल हमनी के जेहलवा ।

दुधवा के पी पहलवनवा बनल जे,

सेही कहे हमरा के अबलवा ॥

जीभियो चलावे आ हथवो चलावे,

से देखी के हँसी लागे महलावा।

राजो धरमवो में मरदे के चलती,

हामर नहीं केहु माने कहलवा ॥

ढोल ओ पसु समतुलवा जे भईनीं,

इहे बा खसूर हमनी के दबल बा ॥

ढहलै पुरनका नौका उठत बा,

ई आहल हमनी के समलवा ॥

(I am bound to do all the menial work like an attendant to the same male who is born from my womb, but he is often seen discarding me at all occasions.

Through kissings and fondlings, I taught my dumb male child the language and speech, but now as a grown-up man, he kept me illiterate.

I have been imprisoned in my own house because I have to live under the veil and purdah. The man who became a wrestler by sucking my milk, now tells me I'm weak and vulnerable.

The male persecutes me both through tongue and hands, that is, by abusing and beating. The whole haveli laughs at me. Nobody in the family follows me. Even in the domain of religions, it is he who dominates.

We are often beaten like a drum and treated like dumb driven cattle. In this way we are parallel to an animal and a drum. Now we see somewhat a good sign that the New World has taken place of the old one.”)

(*Teen Natak*, 8)

In Act Two, the song gives voice to the silent suffering of rural, illiterate women whose lives are shaped by patriarchy, poverty and social customs. Through the words of the woman speaker, Rahul Sankrityayan presents the everyday reality of village women who give birth to sons, nurture them and sacrifice their entire lives for them, yet are later pushed aside and treated as inferior. The emotional pain is deep because the woman realizes that the very son who grew strong on her milk now denies her respect and calls her weak. Feminism here is not shown as a theory but as lived pain and lived injustice.

The image of the veil and purdah symbolizes how women are imprisoned within their own homes. Though the house belongs to them emotionally, it becomes a cage where their movement, voice and identity are restricted. The woman works continuously like a servant, yet she has no authority or recognition. Her illiteracy is not natural but imposed, as the male child whom she once taught to speak grows up to deny her education and awareness. This reflects how patriarchy deliberately keeps women ignorant so that they remain obedient and dependent.

The song also exposes physical and verbal violence as a normal part of women's lives. The woman is abused with words and beaten with hands, while society watches and laughs. Even religion, which should protect justice and compassion, appears to support male dominance. From a feminist perspective, this shows how cultural, religious and family structures combine to silence women and justify their suffering. The comparison of women to animals and drums clearly reveals their dehumanisation, reducing them to objects meant to endure pain without protest.

Yet, the final lines carry a quiet hope. The reference to the old world collapsing and a new one emerging suggests the beginning of awareness and change. Feminism in this song is not loud or aggressive; it is a cry for dignity, equality and human recognition. Rahul Sankrityayan uses the voice of an ordinary village woman to question male power and to hint that social transformation is possible when women begin to see their own worth.

Thus, the Bhojpuri plays of Rahul Sankrityayan show a clear mix of old Vedic ideas and modern thinking. He used simple Bhojpuri language so that common people could easily understand his thoughts. In his plays, ideas like dharma (duty), karma (action), and good values come from Vedic tradition. But he did not follow these ideas blindly. He changed and used them in a new way to talk about real social problems like inequality and superstition.

His main aim was to spread knowledge and bring awareness among people. By using local language and simple style, he connected ancient wisdom with present-day life. In short, his Bhojpuri plays are important because they combine tradition with new ideas and help people think in a better and more practical way.

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