

Cultural Intersections And Literary Writings In Medieval Odisha

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ABSTRACT

Down from the ages, literature and life have always been homogeneous and reciprocal. Literary writings so vividly reflect the patterns of life in its manifold ways. The primary objective of this paper aims at unfolding the diverse range of creative works by the native Odia writers under Islamic government. In the process, a detailed critical survey has been made to delineate the hodgepodge and variations took place in the literary consciousness of the creative writers from devotional writings to secular literary productions. The paper also extracts the socio-cultural importance of Pala in the lives of the Odias. Indeed, literary writings in Odisha in the medieval period was greatly influenced by various Persian and Arabic elements and in the process strengthened itself immensely.

Keywords: Vaishnavism, Pancha Sankha, Sufism, Nirakar Brahma Bhajans, Jananas

Throughout the course of Islamic government, the interest of intellectuals in Sanskrit writings did not decrease. Odia writings were being provided with Vaishnavite ideology before Islamic rule kept on adding new features. It was observed, Odia writings was not completely unaffected from Sanskrit writings. Odia activity sometimes emulated real Sanskrit activity from its parts contained on thought or in stand and is the action of producing a sound with unusual existing difference. Few Sanskrit writings were converted into Odia and the rest usually paved ways for a more sharpen outflow of literary thoughts in Odia writers. That kind of inclination worked out because few intellectuals, especially experts in Sanskrit were hired to translate things into Odia language. Sanskrit writings might have been the language of intellectual exercise in a larger scale, however, regional scholars supported for the extension of Odia writings.

Apart from those portion, there was exponential growth of Sanskrit writings. Those intellectuals were supported by the rulers and administrators of the state. Krishna Das Badajena Mahapatra, was a prolific writer during the reign of Gajapati Mukunda Deva (1559-1561). However, only few intellectuals had really mentioned about Mahapatra. In Ain-i-Akbari written by Abul Fazal, there was the reference of Krishna Das Badajena Mahapatra of Odisha. One more recognised artist was Kabichandra Biswanath Samantaray. From his artistic knowledge he impressed Raja Mansingh during the time of his stay in Odisha. He worshipped Shiva and earned the fame of Kabi Chandra due to his artistic blessings. He also got respect from Akbar and manifested as a significant artist of the time.

Then, on later period Narasimha Bajpai, the writer of nine books who was an Odia was invited to the court of Akbar. In the course of time Sanskrit writings enriched itself in manifold fields like drama, poetry, devotional works of Hindu mythology and tantric rituals. Those writings were largely devoted as tribute to lords Rama, Krishna, Jagannath and Shiva and therefore were greatly devotional. Few important Sanskrit intellectuals of the time were Haladhar Mishra, Krishna Das Badajena Mahapatra, Gangadhar Mishra, Kabiraj Gopinath Rath, Anadi Mishra, Krishna Shrichandan, Kabi Nityanand, Raghunath Das and Braja Sundar patnaik.

In compare to writings in other languages, Odia writings had tremendous artistic weightage and earned huge success, even next to Sanskrit writings. Sanskrit was a dialect, pretty difficult for ordinary people to interpret and comprehend which could be grasped only by the high class pupil. In the Pancha Sakha time or the before Islamic age, fervent efforts began in Sanskrit writings for the effortless gain of ordinary people from easy dialect. A saying goes like this that written works, showcases foundation of religious and moral beliefs. Suitably to understand works on Vaishnavism, required plenty of information to grab the vision of ordinary person. That was attainable only when Vaishnavism was taught in a dialect perceptible to the common person. So, the teachings of Vaishnavism started to be written in easy verse and smooth fashion, to overwhelm the society. If, this written works were alluring to mankind, then the literary works were regarded

as channel for getting the objective. By inspiring from the people's reaction, the author of this institution imagined to make hard work for the improvement of this literary works. The Pancha Sakha period was known as period of investigation in that era.

Throughout this time, authors of Vaishnavism enhanced Odia literature and also large amount of non-Vaishnavite writings also flourished. Even literary works, not having the manual of Vaishnavism had significant motive to preach and spread Vaishnavism. However, with the passage of time, the outlook of literature expanded taking into account writings other than Vaishnavism. It appears that usual recognition and accepted reaction for the Odia literature encouraged large number of authors to write in Odia, though Sanskrit was still the mainstream language of discourse. In fact there happened an inevitable tussle between Sanskrit and writings in other languages as the former was the language patronized by the superior class of the society; the Brahmins. Then, it was important throughout the course of this time that so many authors who enhanced the Odia literary works would not come into the Brahminism or to those authors typically worshipped for the Sanskrit education and literary texts. However, few priestly class in some instances are seen to have written in Odia as well.

During the time of Prataprudra Deva, large number of the works having spiritual and literary merit were brought to common people. Still those religious melody having clarity in furnishing did not enjoy any extraordinary position during the Islamic time. Dinakrushna Das and Bhupati Pandit gave considerable offerings in this area.

Additionally, before Islamic age, we find the existence of large number of writings on Nirgun Brahma. Debate on Nirgun Brahma in the works of the rhymers was totally substantial and in depth. Still those writings in the Islamic age did not assure any necessary quality. Large number of rhymers(4) in the previous time pursued to work on shapeless and déclassé God and such debates continued in Islamic age which eventually developed for the growth of Mahima religion during the early stage of 19th century Odisha.

We get significant difference in the style of work and characters in the Pancha Sakha time. The Radha Krishna affection, was one of the primary subjects for many authors. Many of the rhymers used to chant the melody of Krishna and his messengers and anything not associated with Krishna were served like unwarranted. However, in this time analysis from the Ramayana and its memoir was also equally given enough importance in the handling of temperament in Odia literary texts.

It was acknowledged that the greatness of Jagannath was expressed as well. He was personally referred in large number of writings, in the Pancha sakha period. Despite of the illustration of hilariousness in rest part of the literary texts in the time of Islamic age, writings on Jagannath were usually provided maximum importance. There are two major causes for it. Primarily, the Chaitannya Panthivaishnava, supplicated dedication and devotion for idol Jagannath, to write rhymes. Furthermore, large number of rhymers were supported by the king of Khurda, the administrator of house of Jagannath, and specially Divya Singha Deva, who raised to devote his rhyme to almighty Jagannath. That must have formed the Jagannath temple well liked in the assessment of the mankind of that period. Instances are there that lord Jagannath, was so deeply loved that even a Muslim heir offered bhajan to him as tribute. His name was Salbeg, who was an heir of Islamic administrator Lal beg and his birth mother was Brahmin. It was saying that salbeg was ill and soon after his birth, his mother introduced him to lord Jagannath. His works on Janana and Chaupadi were all devoted to lord Jagannath. Again as proclaimed from few of the later period of Mughal occupation in Odisha, Cuttack became the centre of administration and the sacred place of lord Jagannath was usually castigated by the Mughals. Again it was noticed that Islam assaulted lord Jagannath and many rhymers and authors had to find protection in different places of the state. Which was however not applicable to Puri since Puri was thought to be the font of literature which was undoubtedly home to many rhymers and authors. Because there was no imperial forum in Puri the imperial support to the rhymers could be obtainable in Cuttack prior to the Islamic occupation and in Khurda later period of Islamic occupation in Odisha. It was further acknowledged as such that intellectuals and authors frequently gathered cooperatively in Puri provisionally at times. Such meetings got significant holiness during the time Chaitanya lived in Puri for giving teaching on vaishnavism at the early part of Islamic age. Sarala Das, a notable author in the earlier part of Islamic time did not do anything in Puri although his work has considerable significance known as Sarala Mahabharat. Incidents occurred in the later part of Islamic occupation in Odisha when rulers of Odisha were removed with governmental scenario. Khurda ruler who was the administrative head of Jagannath was assessed as one distinguished ruler from so many other rulers who came in the Royal power of the Muslim rule. Those rulers came close to Islamic rule, collected information on Islamic forum and wanted to create their court with high splendid and maximum majestic with emulation of Islamic forum. Those usually motivated the Sanskrit intellectuals. Because Odia literary texts on vaishnavism were well liked so, the rulers got disposed to support in addition to Odia rhymers and authors.

During the time of Divya Sinha Deva, large number of rhymers got near to him to earn his support. Although the ruler enforced nearly all and compelled few of them to write rhymes in his name, like, Lokanath wrote few rhymes, and at the bottom of the rhyme is the name Divya Sinha Deva. From this strange view point of the Raja, many rhymers thought it better to quit his forum to compose their writings under other rulers those provided considerable identification and respect for their writings. It was noticed that due to the Islamic invasion, the rhymers would have gone to various rulers of Odisha for the proper patronization of their

writings. Although the subsequent Hindu maratha polity allured with exceptional management to the sacred place of Jagannath. One of the remarkable rulers who was a great enthusiast of literature and who supported writers immensely was Ghumsur Raja Sabhas, who uplifted the work one in Odia and other in Sanskrit.

The Islamic forum could not woo a piece of artistic skill to Odisha only excluding the reign of Akbar. Although Islamic leader could not hinder to the artistic venture of the authors, those were pleased to the sum total of assets and could perceive small the literary text on Sanskrit and on Odia. Although those governmental curiosities straight influenced, it was not worried much about the literary texts, so it were nevertheless coming towards affluence. That were exciting to notice although Puri was conquered and the dominion of Khurda was captured occasionally, authors from the vicinity and from khurda continued to write rhymes and thereby enriched the literary arena. Although some differences are noticeable the way Mughals influenced state community and literature. There was additionally commercial decline and devotional decay that caused annoyance in living. Those declaration relatively more elucidated of the atmosphere that will succeed. Then further it can be acknowledged that few commercial decline happened in the Islamic forum because the excess of income possessed in Odisha, was then provided to Islamic court in Delhi. Although there was not significant devotional decay or annoyance. Apart from the literature of the authors of the Islamic age there was not much evidence of any devotional decay and annoyance. Life was more or less valuable during the pre- Islamic age and on the subsequent age of Maratha.

Dhananjay Bhanja and Upendra Bhanja mainly started the Kavya period. That caused exceptional difference towards the process of literary texts hitherto typically came after on that subsequent time. That conduct to artistic area were carry on to the lady from a princely household which were familiarized to the debate of aged Sanskrit writings and its configuration, elaborated fashion and coherent speech. Writing from those people considered as noble and elaborate in fashion.

Clarity in fashion and to rhymers' articulation or the use of name, although was not unusual in the middle aged planet, it could not shape as very fetching towards the area of literary texts. There was no other poets like Upendra Bhanja to show anything recent, stately and visionary not at all typically usual fashion induced until now. Rather few from Vaishnavism where literary activity was mostly meant towards connection to ordinary people and to devotional information which did not have easy way of composition. Dinakrishna, another poet of Vaishnavism manifested his Rasakallola in elaborate verse. Fashion, hilariousness, elaborateness, charmer and skills, were readily visible in the composition of Upendra Bhanja, the highest literature creator of Odisha. All along he was supposed to produce his writings with unusual merit. The Baisdehisha Bailasa, is the illustration of Chitra Kavya, dispense. The central context of the poem is the Ramayana. The skillful use of various identical terms and the distinguished portrayal of the characters so profoundly reflect Bhanja's matchless literary potential. His skill however, in the present time been looked down upon as 'idiotic dogmatism' by pseudo intellectuals. With its touching melody, his Baidehisha Bilasa, Koti Brahmanandra Sundari, Subhadra parinaya, and Lavanyabati are few outstanding works those are endured greatly and Bhanja enjoys such height that if someone from the field of literature does not quote his lines, he is often taken as man undeserving to some fine artistic understanding.

Furthermore, besides Upendra Bhanja primarily the illustrious lyricists as Sarala Das, Jagannath Das and Balaram Das Particularly highlighted devotional songs in the folklore, devotional engagement was contemplated as the primary objective of living. The abovementioned men are some lyricists those could work on objective substance. Rather for Upendra Bhanja. However, it was not only devotional writings that occupied the central position, literary writers had fascination for other forms of pleasure as well. Upendra Bhanja's Koti-Brahmanda Sundari and Lavanya Bati, address the warmth and pleasure of sensual fondness.

Again a recognized characteristics of his work was to give special importance to community living and portrayed it realistically in his devotional poetry. Those explanation were suffused, broad and substantial, affecting finite mankind from the community. He represented the living of the monarch, Her majesty, ruler, sugerain, secretary, clergyman additionally seeds man fighter and escort.

His explanation to creation was attractive like man of community living. Whose description to the hillock, woodland, stream, aqua, climate and rest organic landscape were exceptional and extremely majestic. Along with the representation of intimacy, he highlighted self-immolation, suffering, sympathy and good will and rest excellence standard. Perfect nature, perfect landscape were the gist to the rhymers and in his demonstration, there were no time to miserliness and care for little object. Few attackers, however vaguely criticize majority of his works for the idea of copulation. Although such remarks needs to be underestimated, for Bhanja's writings transcend such mundane and gross petty human affairs in order to encapsulate much a wider sphere. Bhanja's verse and devotional poetry have the moral worth and inspired many lyricists for a ravishing way of writing. In his writings, marital living has been shown in a significant light. Upendra Bhanja's literary receptacle contains seventy or eighty writings in total, and the demands for many are so high that those are still printed in a large scale. Quite conspicuously, Upendra Bhanja was a man of phenomenal literary excellence. His balanced disposition and charming usage of literary devices like simile and hyperbole leave the scholars dumbfounded.

In spite of the attack of many critics, where he coddled to the manipulation of terms and "hidden ordinary area to the exterior of wordplay and letter of the alphabet" that would be acknowledged where the lyricists worked in the period who were the result of the time and cultural space. We could not offer that same amount of reverence in the present day to such stalwarts, because in those days, their very readers and

audience were well conscious of the religious and moral dimensions of those works that somehow present day readers fail to comprehend. Such literary texts certainly motivate the mass largely, however at the same time as is the case with all great literary pieces, requires some amount of sincere engagement and assimilation with the authorial consciousness. Such writings enjoy perennial glory and appreciation. The works of earlier Pancha Sakha age were mostly religious in tone.

Elaborated literary texts flourished mainly through Dhanjay Bhanja, Upendra Bhanja and also through few vaishnava lady lyricists like Brundabati Dasi, who created its emergence and bestowed for the important course to Odia literary texts. Among other spheres of lyric, Nirgunabad was of much significance. To that group comes lyricists like Arakhita Das, who was devoted to lord Jagannath as, Nirakar. Moreover, Odia literary texts during the Islamic age were prosperous for its clarity, diversity, fashion and innovation.

Further, it is evidenced that there were not only Hindu Odias who strengthened Odia literary texts, rather there were many Islamic Odias, who also greatly contributed to the Odia tongue. Salbeg, for instance an Islamic author whose oeuvre consists of Jananas (worship) and bhajans are profusely steeped in religious devotion. Further, there were few Islamic enthusiasts who would provide a sound literary ambience for Hindu Odia writings. For instance, an author known as shaikh saheb, staying in Tapang in Puri Zone, arranged the writing Icchabati Haran work by Padmanava shrichandan of Banki.

It feels wrong to assume, that Odia literary texts evolved aloof with no collision with Muslim tradition as one of the greatest characteristics noticed in the area of Odia literary texts was the ample utilization of many Persian terms frequently Odinised in the Odia verse and devotional poetry. Those Persian terms enhanced greatly both the Odia dialect and the literary texts.

Despite of the Islamic regime, the Odia literary texts continued to elevate its fame and would even exceed some literary standards to different areas of Eastern India with its amusement and rich potential.

Middle aged literary texts did not do anything remarkable to government and was not usually dispense to the governmental phenomenon, because the income of many lyricists and writers was mostly determined by the monarch and the sovereign ruler. Not one the middle aged literary texts would ponder over single basic communal change that could bring provocation for the existing governmental formation in the community. That were mainly determinist in its feature. However, it would teach in a romantic way for upliftment of the virtues of the mankind and also at the same time perceived social deterioration in a very witty way. Liberality and order of destiny was be welcomed. So, literary texts displayed further earthly fables and the worldly pleasure or explanation to the creation that would be mainly the topic interest to a poetic person to believe that the medieval literature did not dwell in political pattern. Hence the Mughal Dubedas did not prosecute the authors.

Impact of Islam:

There was huge affluence of Odia literature and language with inputs from Persian and Arabic literature. The Odia language was enriched by involving words from Persia and Saudi Arabia. There were also instances of Muslims translating or taking themes from Odia or Sanskrit literature. Salbeg, son of Lalbag wrote Odia bhajans.

Persian was the court language after the Mughal occupied Odisha. All pattas, sahadts and firman were written in Persian language. The people of Odisha became acquainted with Persian language. Even the people of rural areas became acquainted with the language. The influx of Sufi saints enriched the environment. They were known as fakirs also. Even the bright star of Odia literature Fakir Mohan Senapati had the word fakir in his name.

The medieval period witnessed influx of Persian and Arabic words into Odia language. These words are extant now in modern period not only among the elites but subalterns also use the Persian words with ease. Some of the commonly used words are, pista kismis, badam, rumal, kagaz, chauki, bajubandh, atar, seo, halwa, jalebi, chapati, achar, sisa and others.

Apart from common parlance, the Persian words and style of literature found its way to Odia literature. In the works of Upendra Bhanja, Baladev Rath, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Abhimanyu samant Singhara and others we find Persian Urdu & Arabic words. Bamiballav Goswami wrote Tamsa, a type of drama with Islamic theme. Jatra was another contribution of Islamic rule in Odisha. There was translation of Odia works into Persian and vice versa. The Qawali & Ghazals were a direct result of Islamic impact.

Before giving a final concluding touch to the discussion, it appears indispensable to briefly organize the aforementioned survey along with the central role that Pala had in the socio-cultural life of the Odias:

Sanskrit Literature during Kapilendradeva:

The Sanskrit literature made its progress during the reign of Kapilendradeva. He was an accomplished scholar in Sanskrit. His play Parasurama Vijaya describes how Parasurama killed Kartaviryarjuna. During his reign, Nrushimha Vajapayee composed Kasimimamsa and wrote a commentary named Samkshepa Saririka Vartika on Sankaracharya's work Samkshepa Saririka. Narayana Mishra's commentaries on Pwvamimamsa and Uttaramimamsa of Sankaracharya and his younger brother Jalesvara's notable work Jalesvara Paddhati belonged to this period. However, scholars are not unanimous on the fact that the works of these two celebrated writers belonged to the period of Kapilendradeva.

Sanskrit Literature during Purusottamadeva:

Purusottamadeva's monumental work Abhyinava Gitagovinda that contained 800 slokas was a Kavya of no mean order. However, some scholars give credit to poet Divakara for the composition of Abhinava Gitagovinda. Purusottama also composed Namamalika Gopalarchanavidhi and Bhuvanesvari stotram. He also composed dramas entitled Abhinava Veni Samharam, Ananda Vilasa, Janaki Pramoda and Kuvalayasvacharitam. He is also credited with the composition of other works such as the Mukti Chintamani, Dasgriva Vadha, Durgotsava, Dipika Chhanda and Vishnubhakti Kalpadruma. He also wrote two Sanskrit lexicons the Haravaii the Trikaṇḍasesam. During his reign period, Ananta Guru composed the Sahitya Kalpavali, a work on poetics.

Sanskrit Literature during Prataprudradeva:

Prataparudradeva, the last Gajapati king of Odisha was a great poet and writer. His Sarasvativilasam, Kautuka Chintamani, Nirnya Samgraha and Praudha Pratapa Martanda were flamboyant literary creations of that period. An important scholar Sarvabhauma wrote a commentary on Laxmidhara's Advaita-makaranda. Lolla Laxmidhar Pandit was another important luminary of the court of Prataparudra who composed several works such as Vachaspativilasa, Yogadipika, Manva Dharmasastra Dipika, Karnavatamsa and Saundaryalahari Vyakhya. Divakara, a grammarian and poet who wrote Lakshnadarsa, Ohurtacarita, Parijataharana Nataka and Rasamanjari. Jivadava's Bhakti Bhagavata was a milestone in Sanskrit literature during that period. Ramananda Raya wrote Jagannatha Vallabha.

Odia literature during the age of Panchasakhas:

The age that immediately followed Sarala Das, is famous as the Panchasakha Yuga (Age of the Panchasakhas). The age has been so called after the name of five celebrities like Balarama Das, Jagannatha Das, Ananta Das, Achyutananda Das and Yasobanta Das who flourished during the reign period of Prataparudradeva.

Balarama Das's literary works:

Among the creations of Balarama Das, the Dandi Ramayana or Jagamohana Ramayana, Bata Abakasa, Bhava Samudta, Laxmi Purana, Baula Adhyaya, Amarakosa Gita, Brahmanda Bhugola, Bedha Parikrama, Panasa Chon, Gupta Tika etc. were very important.

Jagannatha Das's literary creations:

Jagannatha Das's immortal creations included Odia Bhagavata, Tulabhina, Brahma Gite, Gupta Bhagavata, Rasakrida, Mruguni Stuti, Gaja Stuti, Bhavisya Malika, Gundicha Vije, Dutibodha, Rukmini Malika, Pramoda Chintamani etc. Achyutananda composed Harivamsa, Sunya Samhita, Gopala Ugala, Anakara Samhita, Bipra Chalaka, Chaurasi Yantra, Bhavanabara, Tattvabodhini, Gurubhakti Gite, Amara-Jumara Samhita, Nitya Rahasa, Varuna Charita etc.

Sisu Ananta Das's literary works:

The last among the Pancha Sakhas was Ananta Das famous for his works like Hetu Udaya Bhagavata, Garuda Kesaba Chautisa, Ude Bhaskara, Bhavisya Purana, Vaisnava Purana etc. Among other poets of the Pancha Sakha age, Chaitanya Das's Vishnugarbha Purana and Nirguna Mahatmya; Kanhai Khuntia's Mahabhava Prakasa and Chaitanya Vilasa; Partha Srichandana's Kalavati; Banamali Das's Chata Icchavati; Purusottama Das's Ganga Mahatmya and Kanchi- Kaveri etc. were some of the immortal creations of Odia literature.

The Socio-Cultural Value of Pala:

Pala has been originated from the mixed worship of the Hindu Deity - "Satyanarayan" and the Muslim Deity - "Peera". As mentioned by the noted historian Krupasindhu Mishra in his book The History of Utkal, the Satyanarayan Puja started in Utkal in the year 1716 during the reign of the Muslim ruler Sujaudhin. In the book Gradual Progress of Oriya literature by Pt. Nilakantha Das, Pala originated during the ruler of Hussain Saha of Bengal. Its language was neither Bengali nor Oriya but a unique blending of the both.

This Satyanarayan Puja or Satyapeera Puja is performed only by the Brahmins. This puja is accompanied with song, music and dance. The patriarch of the family along with other members and the neighbors get entertained and spiritually uplifted through this Pala. In certain spheres religious books and mythologies are referred and explained in sweet melodious tone. The chief of the singers is called "Gayaka" and his assistants are called "Palias" or "Co-singers". It consists of five or six persons. The drummer plays on the 'mridanga', other play on the cymbals, dance and help of chief singer 'Gayak' to sing and explain the meaning to the audience. The depth of knowledge, sharpness of intelligence, oratory and keen memory power are put to a severe test when two well - matched groups challenge each other in a Pala competition. Nothing but unreserved admiration is due to the singers for their inexhaustible energy continue the competition every night stretching over a month. The drummer displays the skill of his fingers and relates humorous stories to please the audience. The dialogue between the singer and one of the attendants breaks the monotony of long speeches and jugglery of words in the song.

Pala can be started at any time, while it is sung by the singer in a sitting posture surrounding his helpers, it is called "Pothi Pala" and while staged on a decorated altar through a standing posture with song, music, and dance is called "Thia Pala". Similarly, more than one singer singing Pala on a particular stage in different time and turn is called "Badi Pala". The singers of Pala are devoted artists. Through its observation they glorify the nation and at the same time entertain people of all variety beyond caste and creed. They enrich the society and its culture by bringing the legendary facts of the great epics before the public, retaining the qualities of national unity - the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, the Gita, the Bhagabat, and many mythologies. The common appeal of Pala literature with its social and cultural value is really praiseworthy.

Conclusion:

Thus, there happened a peculiar and simultaneous growth of literary writings in three different languages namely; Sanskrit, Odia and Persian, each influencing other cohesively. Such a harmonious blend prophetically exemplifies the mutually shared socio-cultural space of individuals from two different religious identities. Interestingly, while the orthodox Sanskrit became inaccessible to the common citizen, Persian language with its great flexibility could entice individuals even from the remote regions and persons having no formal sophistication. In relation to it, the horizon of literary writings too passed through radical transformation from the early religious writings of Sarla Das and the Pancha Sakha writers to the later experimental ink of Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja.

The rapprochement between Islam & Hinduism was conspicuous in the literary life of Odisha.

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