

# Scribal copies of pre-modern texts and the digital environment: A case study of the Odia Sarala Mahabharata

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**Abstract-** No other text fascinates the Odia mind as the eponymous Sarala Mahabharata. As of now we have at least four complete editions of the text beginning from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the third quarter of the twentieth century. In spite of this, the question of 'authentic text' is yet to be settled; consequently there continues to be a call by textual scholars to restore the 'authentic text'. This is natural, given that there are around 280 palm leaf manuscript scribal copies of the text in the Odisha State Museum alone and no two copies are exactly the same. Hundreds and thousands of copies exist in private possession and are yet to be taken up for study. Understandably, no textual scholar would be able to investigate all the extant copies to arrive at the so-called 'authentic text'. This paper argues that in view of the special nature of the Sarala corpus, finding an authentic way of 'doing the Mahabharata' would be more fruitful than looking for the authentic text. In view of the unlimited possibilities offered by the digital environment and scope for computation, this paper reviews the approaches of scholars to the text and offers a new method of 'doing the Mahabharata'. It will study the textual transmission of Sarala Mahabharata in Odisha, and argue for the need for digital archiving and curatorial to enable fine-grained corpus analysis for enhanced textual criticism.

**Index Terms-** Manuscript culture, textual criticism, corpus analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Mahabharata of Sarala Das in Oriya language which was created in about 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was a long lived poetic endowment gift in a phase of all India vernacularization. This spacious work is interpreted as the earliest initial scribble of Oriya epic and consequently serves as a model archetype for the blooming of additional epic literature in Orissa in the medieval phase. The author of the text casted himself as Sarala Das for his fidelity to the goddess Sarala (a village female deity who synthesize sakti and vaishnava analysis in herself) and thus he had this name after the collection of the Mahabharat in Odia. (1) This Mahabharat of Sarala Das is not the accurate veracious furnishing of the Sanskrit Mahabharat of Vyasa. It is only an encyclopedic epitome of the Socio-Political-Cultural build up Of India along with Orissa in the medieval phase in the clutch of the aspects of the Sanskrit epic. The author calls it as Mahabharat yet he makes

use of sections of other Puranas and upu-Puranas. He homogenizes them with territorial customary chronicle familiar to him. All most all significant angle of research of the topical Mahabharat in Oriya is the identity and nature of the content. As it focus one's attention on the early and medieval phase its dominance has been observed by the historians and language experts who occasionally have been convinced to use it for further historical research.(2)

Hence in this working paper our emphasis is the textual problem, critical editions, apply digital humanities method, POS tagging and chunking of a classical text.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

'The textual problem' and 'critical editions':-

- The main aim of centre for Odishan studies. The Sarala Mahabharata is a relevant specimen of the 'textual problem' in the manufacture of academic version.

Actually Sarala Mahabharat was brought to the centre of attention in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by Pitambara Das, the writer of Odia Nrusingha pura and before that in Orissa's Pandit and colon people gave priority to Jaganatha Das's Bhagavata, Dandi Ramayana of Balarama Das, Haribansha of Achyutananda Das and some of the books of 'Bhakti' by the enthusiasts of Chaitanya.

- It is well known as of now that the great researcher Professor ArtaBallav Mohanty's study of the Odia Mahabharata brought out by Directorate of culture in the year 1964 is less than complete and perhaps unreliable. According to the own statement of Professor Mohanty, his study was established on 11 manuscripts accessible at that time. In spite of the inadequate number of manuscripts mentioned to, a analysis of subsisting literature on this proposal displays that the Arta Ballav Mohanty's edition is at best an extensive encyclopedic edition of Sarala Mahabharatas.
- Secondly According to eminent scholar S.J. Gopinath Mohanty, that the author of the Mahabharata was not Sarala but Sarola and that the text was written in tenth century. But in Artaballava's edition says it was based on two oldest extant manuscripts, collected from a private source and other is yet to be known.
- There are also a handful of private venture to translate, edit and publish some chapters of Mahabharata. All of

them expect an analytical study therapy of odia Mahabharata.

- At present 240 Mahabharata manuscripts have been collected from beyond Orissa and considered the momentousness of Mahabharata as a cross disciplinary description of Odisha's by gone Socio-cultural history.

Thus an up to date newfangled critical edition of Mahabharata in Odia and in English is essential.

There exists no account of how the existence or non-appearance of par textual components besides from the colophons may be taken into account learning of Sarala manuscripts. Far apart from printed books, embellished and enhanced illuminated manuscripts, palm leaf manuscripts exists an exceptional set of issues as the differentiation of text and paratext.

In the transmission activity of the manuscripts, certain unavoidable components are consolidated as a part of the main text. Whatever such components are to be read as mere additions or alteration or misrepresentation. It is essential to faithful and detaild study of Mahabharata and rationalizes the variation between additions and alterations and various authentic trademarks for the development of a critical edition.

Bibliographic note:

The main framework of the narrative of the Sarala Mahabharata but has made several fluctuations and has attached to it substantially the stories of his own formation and various other matters known to him.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century we find the name in the text of 'William Hunter's Orissa' in the year 1872 expressed that sarala Das kavi stayed 300 years ago, transcribed Mahabharata into oriya (3) in the year 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D. there was an expanding study on odia Mahabharat in the well known established odia magazines like "Utkala Sahitya" 'Mukura' and Jhankar, pandit Mrutyuniaya Rath emerged a comprehensive wall-to wall review on sarala Mahabharat in 1911 in murura, and then in 1915, Gopinatha Nandasharma in Utkala sahitya (4)

In 1898: Manmohan chakravarty dates the constitution to "not later than 16<sup>th</sup> century like the original Sanskrit it forms a of diagnostic experiment and takes of about two thousand folios. It did not affect to any literary conclude and the verse generally unequally. That verse is popularly known as "Dundi bruta". But it has the benefits of having antiquated the Sanskrit Mahabharat among universal. (5)

In the year 1903: Madhusudan Das classify Sarala Mahabharata as Purana and concluded his analysis in just one paragraph (6)

In the year 1904 Researcher Shyamasundar Rajguru clarity and describes' Sarala as "Adikabi "of odia litetrature (see: Biographical note on Sarala appears in Utkala sahitya, year 7, No-4, April, 1904)

In 1911 , Pt. Mruturjaya Rath wrote "sarala charita " (A biography of sarala ) (8) According to Rath sarala was born between 1435 AD to 1479 AD during the reign of Kapilendra Deva , around 1415 and Mahabharata was composed in 1465 AD

In 1926: A marshalling discourse of sarala Mahabharata writing by Gopinatha Nanda Sharma, titled as Sri Bharat Darpan : maheralize in the from of a book contained nine chapters . (9)

In 1948: Another eminent analyst Padit Nilkantha Das in 1948-1953 Sarala and setup its historical awareness of the early and medieval phase of India.

In 1950s and 60s there was a intense debate between two literary magazines 'Jhankara' and 'Dagara' based on the bnature and content of Mahabharata . The noted contributor of this debate were 'GopinathaMohanty', Banshidhara Mohanty, Achyutananda Das , and Krushna Chandra Panigrahi , The study was further concentrate with John Boltion's curiosity in it and by the critical analysis by si. Suchidanada Mishra and others It was G.N. Dash (Gaganendranath Dash ) and man y others it was G.N. Dash who chtlenge the view that sarala Das deliberately worn histry in the anthology of his mahabharat. And he recommended that in order to his mahabharat one mast know the periodical time which he was following and that one mast not forget hios sakata hindu mins (10) Krushna Chandra Panigrahi. Researcher. Well known historian of odisha was very courageous on the historical consciouness of the poet (11) He endow numerous historical and geographical references in sarala Mahabharata which part was not mentioned in the original Sanskrit Mahabharata text panigrahi appreciating the views of his ancestors like Mrutunjaya Rath , Gopinatha Nanda Sharama and Nilakantha Das made a meticulous painstaking study of the Mahabharata and proposed that the poet had responsively and knowingly established various historical character and episodes of early and medieval India . (12) He has carefully studied the references and contents to sustain that actually poet was a historian .

The clarification of Panigrahi on the history of Orissa and India in Sarala Mahabharata has been challenged by professor G.N. Dash in an appreciative intelligent thoughtful focus on odia . Just have a look, one action – packed debate of G.N. Dash can be stated below :-

Where did Sarala Das noticed the political defense history of India of his period and were his origin ? How could he direct draw his attention towards history and how could he be able to protect the past in such a systematic correct manner. In the different episodes of his Mahabharata. But in the point of geographical information given by Sarala Das sometimes not accurate and also imperfect and it cannot be acquired by the contemporary researchers.

### III. AIM AND OBJECTIVE

To seriously survey and critically evaluate the editorial exercises accepted for the preparation of Sarala Mahabharata and to rethink scholastic hypothesis about the text and the context. Moving into the archives and museum, one should discover an unbelievable captivating and outstanding assortment of documents to be worked on.

All of this makes it possible to invest in the collection and digitization of manuscripts so as to enable shape required for linguistic anatomization of the Sarala Mahabharata manuscripts. It will be early to create postages for a ancient text. All this will assist the inscription the historical challenge of earmark the past in a contemporary version.

#### IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Which procedure was chose to take up for the selection of the primary text for the production of a modern version.
- What was the nature of investigation and comparison?
- Which as pacts of manuscripts were taken into consideration?
- In which method we develop pos tag set for ancient text

#### Part –B

We can consider Sarala Mahabharata as a research base for further advance study. Creating a database for developing cataloguing indexing, digitalization and detailed linguistic analysis, and study of POS tagging and chunking method proves that a classical text and modern technological method came to under one roof. Here we saw five examples, that based on how we cataloguing manuscript classical text.

#### SAHADA BRUKHYARA MAHATMYA

[[Goloka\JJ brukya\N\_NN]]\_NP[[ karatara\N\_NN rathe\N\_NST]]\_NP [[chaka\N\_NN]]\_NP [[MahakaLapa\JJ brukhya\N\_NN]]\_NP [[Se\PR\_PRP]] \_NP [[harai\V\_VM\_VF]]\_VGF [[mahApAtaka\N\_NN]]\_NP |e|

**In this example in the case ‘Goloka brukya ’ the word ‘Goloka’ which qualifies the noun word ‘ Brukhya ’. According to chunk role adjectives appearing before a noun will be grouped together with the noun chunk. In this issue whether to chunk the word is chunked as [[Goloka\JJ Brukhya\N\_NN]]\_NP which is a noun chunk. Similarly the word ‘karatAra and Rathe’ is tagged as noun. The issue is whether to chunk the word is chunked as [[karatAra \N\_NN]] \_NP and Rathe [[\N\_NN]]\_NP. The word ‘Caka’ which is tagged as common noun is chunked as [[Caka \N\_NN]]\_NP. In the case ‘MahAkaLapa Brukhya’ the word ‘MahAkaLapa’ which qualifies the noun word ‘Brukhya’. Here the word ‘MahAkaLapa’ tagged as adjective and the word ‘Brukhya’ tagged as common noun. In this issue whether to chunk the word is chunked as the [[MahAkaLapa\JJ Brukhya \N\_NN]]\_NP which is a noun chunk. Because adjectives appearing before a noun will be grouped together with the noun chunk. The word ‘Harai’ which is tagged as finite verb is chunked as [[Harai \V\_\_VM\_\_VF]]\_VGF (finite verb chunk) .**

**The word ‘mahApAtaka’ which is tagged as common noun is chunked as [[mahApAtaka \N\_NN]]\_NP.**

In this research work students learn the skill of working with primary sources, the language of ancient time etc. It creates a wicker opportunity to know our language, literature, culture, society day-today life of common man, detailed History geographical and political back ground of our country.

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