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## Social Realism In The Story 'Lanthan'

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### Abstract: Social Realism and Empiricism

When reality merged with an empirical perspective, it took the form of social realism. Within literary description, empiricism firmly established its position. It was a new version of realism.

The core principles of empiricism are accuracy, adequacy, and truth. In order to lead society onto the right path, it is essential for literature to possess, portray and foster all these qualities.

### Key words:

Mental arithmetic / Mind-map.

A traditional arithmetic / Mind-map.

A traditional decorative pillar or stack (often used in rituals or rural architecture).

Greenery / Verdancy.

Butea monosperma.

Pandemic / Epidemic.

### Introduction to the Author:

In the genre of modern Odia short stories, Dillip Behera is a very familiar and influential figure. Through his writings both in prose and verse, he has infused diversity to his literary corpus. He has received various prestigious

awards for his literary contributions. Overcoming a life of struggles, he has built a monument of life and creative excellence.

Dillip Behera was born on April 13, 1988, in Matampura, Mayurbhanj district. His story collections include **Panthashala, Level Crossing, Abstract, Lanthan, Shabasanthara**, and other stories. For the book *Lanthan*, he was honoured with the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2022. Additionally, he has received the Katha Nabapatibha Puraskar (2011), Mayurbhanj Yuva Puraskar, Kishori Charan Dash Galpa Puraskar (2021), and Justice Harihar Mahapatra Natya Sahitya Puraskar.

His stories reflect the mental conflicts of the modern individual, their way of life, hope, despair, darkness, and light. They serve as a clear reflection of post-modern consciousness, highlighting inherent social conflicts, social realism, and human evolution.

### (A) Social Reality

In the present time, social life is greatly influenced. Every aspect of human life—problems, mental stress in the social, political, economic, and administrative spheres—faces constant conflicts and ironies. Emotions like envy, jealousy, and competition are pushing humans toward pains, problems, conflicts, and struggles. Amidst these struggles, firm efforts to

keep life moving provide inspiration to remain duty-bound.

Political issues, economic crises, unemployment, and advertisements are deeply affecting public life. Like legendary authors Fakir Mohan Senapati and Gopinath Mohanty, Dillip Behera portrays the social conditions of his time in his writings. His stories based on social thoughts include **Chhai**, **Ganita**, **Lanthan**, **Shrabani Mishrara Samsara Chinta**, and **Sangurodhare Shrabani**.

### (i) Picture of Rural Society

Author Dillip Behera was born in a remote village and is deeply connected to his roots. His stories portray various social perspectives and rural problems. He vividly describes the envy and internal conflicts between brothers involving land and property.

In the story "**Chhai**", the protagonist Pradip stays in the city but remains emotionally attached to his village. The story explores the weakening bond between brothers and the helplessness Pradip feels regarding his identity and ancestral home.

### (ii) The Problem of Unemployment

Unemployment has taken a fierce form in today's society. The main causes are population growth and lack of employment opportunities. Educated, semi-educated, and uneducated people all face this reality of unemployment and livelihood issues.

In the story "**Ganita**", the protagonist Maikela Mahanti is an educated, ambitious, and gentle young man who has the temperament of helping people around him. He is in love with a girl named Sipra, but due to his lack of employment, he cannot express his romantic feelings for her. The situation of unemployment stands out as a political issue.

### (iii) Superstition and Blind Faith

Superstition is a social evil that keeps people in the darkness of ignorance. Despite scientific progress, many still cling to blind faith.

In "**Lanthan**", Premalata develops aloofness and feels isolated after her husband's death. Besides, the villagers cruelly label her as the cause of her husband's death.

In "**Sangurodhare Shrabani**", the story shows how people viewed the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of superstition. It mirrors Fakir Mohan Senapati's **Rebati**, where education is blamed for bringing "bad luck" or disease to the village.

### (iv) Political Landscape

Politics is not just is not confined just to the national-level leaders; it also exists within families, homes, and villages.

In the story "**Hati**", the author portrays rural politics. Every year, wild elephants destroy crops of the farmers, and here also politics is found to have its play: Some villagers would like the elephants to come to their crop fields so they can claim compensation from the government! This reveals how narrow self-interest often outweighs a collective danger.

### (v) The Caste System

The caste system is a social curse that demeans humanity. It creates distance, hatred, and inequality.

In **Chhai**, Pradip is shown having affinity with Marxist ideology and believes in a classless society. At the same time, he encounters the harsh reality of social divisions.

In **Shrabani Mishrara Samsara Chinta**, the theme of deep-rooted caste system in the society is predominant. When Atanu and Shrabani express their desire to marry each other, Shrabani's mother objects to the marriage upon learning that Atanu is from a different (Harijan) caste, her hesitation coming from her apprehension of social boycott.

Similar themes appear in **Ganita** and **Shuapanthi**, where love fails to culminate in marriage due to the rigid barriers of entrenched caste system.

### Conclusion

Dillip Behera's work serves as a mirror to the 21st century social system, capturing the transition from ancient traditions to modern struggles while highlighting that the society is still bound often by anachronistic notions and prejudices.

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