

Kokuā and the Cartography of Invisible Fear: A Postmodern, Comparative And Multi-Critical Reading of Sourindra Barick's *Kokuā*

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Abstract: Sourindra Barick occupies a distinctive position in post-modern Odia literature as a poet whose imagination transforms myth into an instrument of contemporary cultural criticism. His poem "*Kokuā*," included in the celebrated collection *Anubhārata* (1990), exemplifies this artistic vision by creating one of the most haunting symbolic landscapes in modern Odia poetry. Although the poem appears to narrate the nocturnal arrival of a mysterious demonic presence in the legendary city of *Dwārakā*, its true significance lies far beyond mythology. *Kokuā* gradually emerges as an invisible metaphysical force that infiltrates not merely geographical space but the psychological, ethical, historical, and existential dimensions of human civilization. The mythical city becomes a metaphor for every civilization, while *Kokuā* evolves into a universal emblem of fear, alienation, moral disintegration, spiritual exhaustion, and the subtle corruption of consciousness. The poem thus abandons conventional narrative realism and constructs an open symbolic universe in which readers continually negotiate multiple layers of meaning. This article critically examines *Kokuā* through the theoretical perspectives of postmodernism, existential philosophy, symbolic criticism, and archetypal literary analysis. It argues that Barick radically redefines the traditional image of the demon by presenting evil not as an external monster but as an invisible psychological and civilizational condition. Through remarkable symbolic economy, mythic reconstruction, paradoxical imagery, rhythmic repetition, and suggestive ambiguity, the poem dismantles the binary oppositions between myth and reality, history and present, self and other, visible and invisible. Rather than offering moral resolutions, the poem compels readers to confront the unseen forces that silently inhabit modern existence. Consequently, *Kokuā* stands as one of the finest achievements of postmodern Odia poetry, revealing how mythology can become an enduring language for interpreting the crises of contemporary humanity.

Keywords: *Anubhārata*; *Kokuā*; Postmodernism; Symbolism; Myth; Existentialism; Consciousness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the remarkable contributions to post-modern Odia poetry, Sourindra Barick's *Anubharat* (1990) occupies a unique literary position because of its remarkable ability to transform inherited myths into living metaphors of modern consciousness. He was born in Baripada, Mayurbhanj, a tribal-rich district of Odisha on 03rd October of 1938: his father Daitari Barik and mother Shankari Barik. His father, Daitari, was a very famous teacher of the district at that time and was the head master of Baripada School. Sourindra's childhood was spent in Rairangpur, a small town of Mayurbhanj district. He, after being passed the metric examinations from Baripada High School, studied I.Sc. in M.P.C. College, Baripada, one of the most premier colleges of Odisha at that time and then came to Ravenshaw college to study B.A. in English. There only he completed his Masters degree in English as well in the year 1961. From the very year he joined M.P.C. College as a lecturer in English. He served at various government colleges in Baripada, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Bhadrak, Cuttack, and Angul. He took retirement from OES service as the director of the Text Book Bureau, Govt. of Odisha, Bhubaneswar. Unlike poets who merely revisit mythological narratives for aesthetic nostalgia, Barick reconstructs mythology as an epistemological instrument through which contemporary human existence may be

interrogated. His poems are never content with retelling ancient stories; rather, they excavate forgotten symbols and reinvest them with philosophical urgency. Within this poetic architecture, *Kokuā* emerges as perhaps the most psychologically disturbing and artistically accomplished poem of the collection. It presents an apparently mythical figure whose gradual movement into the sacred city of *Dwārakā* simultaneously becomes the movement of invisible terror into the interior geography of civilization itself. The poem therefore ceases to be a narrative of supernatural invasion and becomes an exploration of the invisible mechanisms through which fear colonizes individual consciousness and collective memory.

One of the most remarkable achievements of *Kokuā* lies in its extraordinary symbolic restraint. The poet never explicitly defines *Kokuā*. The creature remains deliberately suspended between folklore, nightmare, mythology, psychology, and philosophy. Such semantic openness is fundamentally postmodern because it refuses interpretative closure. Every reader is invited to reconstruct *Kokuā* according to the anxieties of his or her own historical moment. In an age dominated by technological alienation, ideological violence, environmental catastrophe, political manipulation, and psychological fragmentation, *Kokuā* acquires endlessly

renewable meanings. The poem therefore possesses extraordinary timelessness. Instead of belonging to a particular historical event, it becomes permanently relevant because the invisible forces threatening humanity continuously change their forms while preserving their essential character.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Post-modern Odia poetry has increasingly been recognised for its rejection of grand narratives and its preference for symbolic plurality, fragmented consciousness, and philosophical indeterminacy. Critics have frequently observed that the later decades of twentieth-century Odia literature witnessed an important shift from social realism toward psychological symbolism and mythic reconstruction. Within this literary transformation, Sourindra Barick has emerged as a significant poetic voice whose works resist ideological simplification while simultaneously engaging with the moral crises of contemporary civilization.

*"Kokuā comes to the citadel of Dwāarakā,
stepping softly upon the threshold of twilight.*

No sooner does darkness descend
than doors in every dwelling fall shut.
The naughty child slips silently into sleep;
dogs yelp along the lonesome lanes;
the *Erakara* groves whisper their wild, wounded
wind.

Kokuā has come to Dwāarakā."

However, despite Barick's acknowledged literary stature, *Kokuā* has not yet received the sustained scholarly attention that its artistic complexity deserves. Existing criticism generally discusses Barick's poetry within broader surveys of post-modern Odia literature, leaving the symbolic architecture and philosophical depth of *Kokuā* largely unexplored. Consequently, the poem presents a significant opportunity for original research. The present study seeks to fill this critical gap by offering a comprehensive interpretation of *Kokuā* as a postmodern allegory of invisible fear and fractured consciousness.

3. OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of this study is to examine the symbolic, philosophical, and postmodern dimensions of Sourindra Barick's *Kokuā*. It further seeks to investigate how myth is transformed into a metaphor for contemporary psychological and civilizational crises. Another objective is to analyse the poem's imagery, symbolism, narrative ambiguity, and linguistic strategies in order to demonstrate its significance within modern Odia literature.

4. MYTH RE-IMAGINED AS CONTEMPORARY REALITY

Perhaps the greatest artistic innovation of Barick lies in his refusal to preserve mythology as sacred history. *Dwāarakā* no

longer belongs exclusively to Krishna's age. It gradually becomes every civilization, every nation, every family, and every human mind. Myth undergoes complete democratization. The ancient city becomes an archetype of civilization itself. Equally transformative is the reconstruction of *Kokuā*. Traditional mythology often portrays demons through spectacular violence. Barick dismantles this convention entirely. His *Kokuā* neither drinks blood nor destroys bodies. Instead, he enters consciousness. He invades memory. He occupies relationships. He infects perception itself. Consequently, evil becomes psychological rather than physical, existential rather than biological, invisible rather than spectacular.

"Kokuā comes... Kokuā calls...

*Kokuā darts through every dim corner of
Dwāarakā—*

Kokuā in the shadows, Kokuā in the sighs;

Kokuā in the wife's wary gaze,

in the mother's muted embrace;

Kokuā in the mirror's murky memory.

He inhabits every heart,

he courses through every crimson stream."

Such reconstruction reflects one of the central concerns of postmodern literature: the most dangerous forces in modern civilization are precisely those that remain unseen. Ideology, misinformation, paranoia, consumerism, prejudice, loneliness, and spiritual emptiness rarely possess visible forms, yet they profoundly shape human existence. *Kokuā* becomes the poetic embodiment of these invisible realities.

5. THE ARCHITECTURE OF FEAR

Fear functions as the structural principle governing the entire poem. Remarkably, fear emerges before *Kokuā* himself appears. Twilight descends. Doors close. Children fall asleep. Dogs bark. Trees whisper. Every detail contributes to an atmosphere of anticipatory dread. The psychological landscape therefore prepares the arrival of the symbolic intruder. This delayed revelation demonstrates Barick's extraordinary artistic discipline. Terror is not created by the monster itself but by expectation. The imagination manufactures horror long before reality arrives. The poem therefore exposes one of the deepest paradoxes of human psychology: fear often exists independently of its object. Even when *Kokuā* finally appears, his description remains simultaneously concrete and symbolic. His black body, serpent-like hair, burning eyes, thorn-like tongue, and spear-like nails evoke ancient archetypes of darkness while avoiding grotesque excess. These images do not describe zoological anatomy but emotional experience. *Kokuā* looks exactly as fear feels.

6. INVISIBLE VIOLENCE AND THE COLLAPSE OF INTERIORITY

The philosophical climax of the poem arrives unexpectedly in the concluding declaration:

"Kokuā does not suck blood,

*nor drain the marrow's essence;
he devours no bone—
he shatters the silent spirit."*

These lines completely redefine violence. Throughout literary history, violence has generally been represented through wounded bodies. Barick rejects this tradition. The deepest violence is invisible. It destroys courage, faith, imagination, compassion, memory, hope, and moral conviction. The body survives while the spirit gradually collapses. This insight possesses extraordinary contemporary relevance. Modern civilization increasingly experiences psychological exhaustion, loneliness, anxiety, depression, ideological polarization, digital alienation, and spiritual emptiness. None produces visible wounds comparable to physical warfare, yet each profoundly damages human existence. Barick anticipates this modern condition with remarkable poetic foresight.

7. SYMBOLISM OF UNIVERSAL INFILTRATION

One of the poem's most powerful artistic strategies is repetition. The below passages can be well investigated and the intension and spirit of the poet and the poetry can be assessed easily. Like Guruprasad Mohanty, Sourindra has used this technique in his poetry to make it more appealing and aloud. Here, we see the lines below:

"Kokuā has come to Dwāarakā.

His body—black as boundless night;
his hair—serpents sliding in sinister spirals;
his eyes—embers of an ancient witch-fire;
his tongue—thorned like the hawthorn's spite;
his nails and teeth—spears of primordial dread."

Again, in a small poem like "*Kokuā*", poet Sri Barick has used this technique which is of course quite significant in this case.

"Kokuā comes... Kokuā calls...

*Kokuā darts through every dim corner of
Dwāarakā—*

Kokuā in the shadows, Kokuā in the sighs;

Kokuā in the wife's wary gaze,

in the mother's muted embrace;

Kokuā in the mirror's murky memory."

The repeated invocation functions almost like ritual incantation. Each recurrence expands *Kokuā's* sphere of influence. Initially external, he gradually enters shadows, households, mirrors, relationships, hearts, and finally the bloodstream itself. This movement symbolically maps the progressive colonization of consciousness. Evil does not conquer civilization through military invasion but through psychological infiltration. Every repetition therefore marks another stage in humanity's surrender to invisible corruption. Especially striking is the line describing *Kokuā* within "the wife's wary gaze" and "the mother's muted embrace." These intimate domestic images suggest that fear ultimately destroys

trust itself. The family, traditionally regarded as the safest human institution, becomes internally infected.

8. LANGUAGE, IMAGERY, AND POETIC TECHNIQUE

Barick's poetic language combines remarkable simplicity with profound symbolic resonance. The diction remains accessible, yet every image generates multiple interpretative possibilities. Darkness functions simultaneously as physical atmosphere, psychological uncertainty, historical crisis, and metaphysical ignorance. The poem's rhythm depends largely upon repetition rather than rhyme. This repetitive movement creates the sensation of relentless pursuit. *Kokuā* cannot be escaped because language itself repeatedly returns him to consciousness. Equally impressive is Barick's economy of expression. Few words are wasted. Every image contributes simultaneously to narrative progression, symbolic construction, emotional atmosphere, and philosophical suggestion. Such compression recalls the finest achievements of twentieth-century symbolic poetry.

9. EXISTENTIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS

At its deepest level, *Kokuā* investigates the fragility of human existence. Human beings construct civilizations believing themselves protected by walls, institutions, religions, governments, and historical memory. Yet Barick quietly dismantles these illusions. No wall prevents invisible invasion. No city remains permanently sacred. No civilization escapes internal decay. "Whence he comes, and how—/no mortal knows, none has witnessed./Yet *Kokuā* glides, ghost-like, past the sentinel;/the unseen one leaps lightly upon every shoulder./ *Kokuā* does not suck blood,/ nor drain the marrow's essence;/ he devours no bone—/ he shatters the silent spirit."

The poem consequently resonates with existential philosophy. Human beings confront realities that cannot be fully understood or controlled. The unknown continually exceeds rational explanation. *Kokuā* remains mysterious because existence itself remains mysterious. Note the concluding and dismantling lines below which not only shatters the mind of a versatile reader but also put a new foundation of philosophy in the mind of the time and interpreters of times to come.

"Kokuā has come—

and keeps on coming—

to Dwāarakā and to all who dwell within."

Moreover, the poem refuses moral certainty. It never explains why *Kokuā* arrives or whether he can be defeated. Such openness transforms readers into active participants who must themselves confront the invisible *Kokuā* inhabiting their own historical moment.

10. POSTMODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

Kokuā exemplifies postmodern poetic consciousness through its rejection of fixed meanings and singular interpretations.

Myth and reality coexist without hierarchical distinction. The symbolic remains permanently unstable. Historical time dissolves into contemporary experience. Ancient *Dwāarakā* becomes indistinguishable from the modern metropolis. The poem further rejects the binary opposition between external and internal reality. *Kokuā* exists simultaneously outside and inside human beings. The distinction between monster and victim gradually disappears because *Kokuā* ultimately inhabits every heart.

"*Kokuā* comes... *Kokuā* calls...
Kokuā darts through every dim corner of
Dwāarakā—
Kokuā in the shadows, *Kokuā* in the sighs;
Kokuā in the wife's wary gaze,
in the mother's muted embrace;
Kokuā in the mirror's murky memory.
He inhabits every heart,
he courses through every crimson stream.
x x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x x
Kokuā has come—
and keeps on coming—
to *Dwāarakā* and to all who dwell within."

This radical ambiguity constitutes the poem's greatest artistic achievement. Instead of providing answers, Barick produces interpretative freedom. Readers continually reconstruct meaning according to changing historical circumstances.

11. KOKUĀ IN THE WORLD LITERARY IMAGINATION: A COMPARATIVE AND MULTI-CRITICAL READING OF SOURINDRA BARICK'S KOKUĀ

One of the greatest achievements of Sourindra Barick's *Kokuā* is that it transcends the geographical boundaries of Odia literature and enters the universal domain of world poetry. Although rooted in the mythical landscape of *Dwāarakā*, the poem speaks a language understood by every civilization that has experienced fear, moral decay, spiritual emptiness, and psychological fragmentation. Like the masterpieces of Dante, Shakespeare, Blake, Eliot, Kafka, Camus, Borges, Neruda, and Heaney, *Kokuā* constructs an archetypal figure whose meaning continually expands beyond its immediate cultural origin. It is not merely an Odia poem; it is a philosophical meditation on the invisible enemies of humanity. Its symbolic richness permits interpretations from numerous critical perspectives, making it one of the finest examples of postmodern mythopoesis in Indian literature.

11.1. A Comparative Reading with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

The closest spiritual companion to *Kokuā* in twentieth-century world literature is T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Eliot presents a civilization devastated by spiritual sterility, cultural fragmentation, and metaphysical exhaustion after the First World War. Barick similarly portrays a civilization invaded by an unseen presence that silently destroys its inner vitality.

Yet there is a profound difference between the two poets. Eliot's wasteland is visibly fragmented, filled with broken voices, fractured myths, and exhausted rituals. Barick's *Dwāarakā* appears outwardly intact; the catastrophe is invisible. The city has not collapsed architecturally—it has collapsed psychologically. Eliot's modern man wanders through ruins; Barick's modern man lives within an apparently functioning civilization while his consciousness is gradually consumed by an unnamed darkness. If Eliot writes the archaeology of external cultural collapse, Barick writes the anatomy of invisible civilizational infection. Moreover, Eliot fragments language itself to represent modern chaos, whereas Barick achieves equal philosophical complexity through extraordinary simplicity. His repetitions—"Kokuā comes... *Kokuā* calls..."—create an incantatory rhythm that resembles the inexorable spread of fear itself. Thus, where Eliot fractures discourse, Barick hypnotizes it.

11.2. A Comparative Reading with Franz Kafka

Kafka's universe is haunted by invisible systems of power whose origins remain unknowable. In *The Trial*, Joseph K. is condemned without understanding the nature of his crime. In *The Castle*, authority exists everywhere but remains inaccessible. Likewise, *Kokuā* arrives without explanation. No one knows where he comes from or how he enters *Dwāarakā*. His anonymity constitutes his greatest power. However, Kafka externalizes bureaucratic absurdity, whereas Barick internalizes existential terror. Kafka's characters struggle against invisible institutions; Barick's humanity struggles against invisible psychological occupation. *Kokuā* resembles Kafka's oppressive universe, yet he possesses greater symbolic flexibility. He may represent ideology, hatred, technology, memory, guilt, fear, or history itself. In this sense Barick moves beyond Kafka by refusing to reduce symbolic ambiguity to a single philosophical system.

11.3. A Comparative Reading with Albert Camus

Camus's *The Plague* depicts an epidemic whose biological reality simultaneously symbolizes fascism, absurdity, mortality, and existential isolation. Barick adopts a similar symbolic strategy. *Kokuā* is not a biological creature but an epidemic of consciousness. Like Camus' plague, *Kokuā* spreads silently, invisibly, and democratically. No class, family, or institution remains immune. Yet Camus ultimately discovers dignity through human solidarity and ethical resistance. Barick remains more radically postmodern. He offers no heroic doctor, no resistance movement, no philosophical certainty. The poem ends with perpetual arrival:

"*Kokuā* has come—and keeps on coming."

History therefore possesses no final victory. Human beings must permanently confront invisible crises.

11.4. A Comparative Reading with William Blake

William Blake transformed visible reality into symbolic vision. Every tiger, lamb, child, and city became metaphysical architecture. Similarly, Barick transforms *Dwāarakā* into an archetype rather than a historical location. *Kokuā* functions

much like Blake's Tiger—both are creatures whose true identity exceeds physical description. However, Blake seeks cosmic reconciliation between innocence and experience, whereas Barick refuses synthesis. *Kokuā* never reveals divine purpose. His mystery remains permanently unresolved, embodying the postmodern rejection of transcendental certainty.

11.5. A Comparative Reading with Gabriel García Márquez

Like magical realism, *Kokuā* dissolves the distinction between myth and ordinary reality. *Kokuā* enters the city as naturally as nightfall. No character questions the coexistence of mythology and everyday existence. Nevertheless, Barick differs fundamentally from Márquez. Magical realism normalizes the miraculous within social reality. Barick instead psychologicalizes mythology. *Kokuā* is simultaneously real, symbolic, philosophical, and psychological. The poem therefore belongs less to magical realism than to mythic existentialism.

11.6. Psychoanalytic Perspective

From a Freudian perspective, *Kokuā* may be interpreted as the return of the repressed. Civilization constructs moral order by suppressing instinct, violence, guilt, and unconscious fear. Yet these repressed energies inevitably return. *Kokuā* emerges from precisely this unconscious darkness. His arrival at twilight symbolizes the liminal boundary between consciousness and the unconscious. His infiltration into wives, mothers, mirrors, hearts, and bloodstreams indicates that repression never remains external. The unconscious gradually occupies every dimension of psychic life. The poem therefore dramatizes Freud's unsettling proposition that the greatest enemy of civilization originates within civilization itself. From a Jungian perspective, *Kokuā* becomes the collective Shadow—the dark psychological inheritance shared by humanity. Every civilization attempts to project evil outward onto demons, enemies, or strangers. Barick reverses this projection. *Kokuā* already exists within every individual. He inhabits every heart because humanity itself contains the shadow it fears.

11.7. Existential Perspective

Existential philosophy begins where certainty ends. *Kokuā*'s origin remains unknowable, his purpose unexplained, and his destiny unresolved. Such ambiguity reflects the existential condition described by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. The poem reveals that anxiety is not produced merely by external danger but by uncertainty itself. Humanity cannot control invisible forces because existence itself exceeds rational comprehension. *Kokuā* therefore represents existential dread—the awareness that human beings inhabit a world whose deepest realities remain inaccessible.

11.8. Marxist Perspective

A Marxist critic might interpret *Kokuā* as ideological domination. He enters unnoticed because ideology always

disguises itself as ordinary reality. He occupies families, institutions, and individual consciousness. He destroys not bodies but critical awareness. Under this interpretation, *Kokuā* symbolizes capitalism's invisible colonization of desire, consumerism's transformation of identity, and political manipulation's control of collective imagination. His greatest weapon is not violence but normalization. Thus, Barick anticipates contemporary discussions of ideological hegemony remarkably well.

11.9. Feminist Perspective

The poem's references to "the wife's wary gaze" and "the mother's muted embrace" deserve careful feminist attention. *Kokuā* invades domestic space rather than merely public institutions. The family, traditionally imagined as a sanctuary, becomes psychologically contaminated. The wife's gaze is transformed by suspicion, while maternal affection becomes muted by fear. Patriarchal violence, emotional insecurity, domestic oppression, and inherited trauma may all be understood as manifestations of *Kokuā*. The demon thus symbolizes those invisible structures that silently erode intimate human relationships.

11.10. Eco-critical Perspective

Nature in *Kokuā* does not merely provide scenery. Twilight, barking dogs, whispering groves, darkness, wind, and silence collectively participate in the poem's emotional architecture. Unlike Romantic poetry, nature does not console humanity. Instead, it mirrors psychological disturbance. The whispering *Erakara* groves become ecological witnesses to civilizational decay. The environment absorbs human anxiety, suggesting that ecological and psychological crises are inseparable.

11.11. Postcolonial Perspective

Although no colonial power explicitly appears, *Kokuā* may be interpreted as every invisible system of domination that invades indigenous consciousness. Colonialism rarely conquers merely territory; it colonizes memory, language, imagination, and identity. *Dwārakā* thus becomes every colonized civilization, while *Kokuā* symbolizes ideological occupation. His invasion resembles cultural imperialism, where external control gradually becomes internalized until the oppressed unconsciously reproduce their own subjugation.

11.12. Deconstructive Perspective

From Derrida's perspective, *Kokuā* systematically dismantles binary oppositions.

- Visible / Invisible
- Human / Demon
- Myth / History
- External / Internal
- Reality / Symbol
- Sacred / Profane
- Civilization / Barbarism

None of these oppositions remains stable. *Kokuā* is simultaneously external and internal, mythical and contemporary, imaginary and real. Meaning therefore becomes endlessly deferred. The poem resists definitive interpretation, exemplifying deconstruction's central insight that texts generate proliferating meanings rather than fixed conclusions.

11.13. Archetypal Perspective

Northrop Frye and Carl Jung would identify *Kokuā* as an archetypal Shadow figure. Unlike traditional demons who threaten physical survival, *Kokuā* threatens spiritual identity itself. His repeated arrival transforms him into a cyclical archetype rather than a historical event. Every civilization experiences its own *Kokuā* because every civilization inevitably confronts corruption, fear, moral decline, and existential uncertainty. Consequently, *Kokuā* joins the great archetypal figures of world literature alongside Dante's Lucifer, Shakespeare's Iago, Melville's White Whale, Conrad's Kurtz, Eliot's Fisher King, and Kafka's invisible Authority. Yet Barick's creation remains distinctive because *Kokuā* possesses no fixed identity. His shapelessness constitutes his universality.

12. PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The deepest philosophical insight of *Kokuā* is its redefinition of evil. Classical literature often locates evil in monstrous bodies or supernatural beings. Barick relocates evil into consciousness itself. The terrifying revelation—"He shatters the silent spirit."—transforms ontology into psychology. Evil is no longer an external event but an internal condition. The destruction of hope, trust, imagination, ethical courage, and spiritual equilibrium becomes the greatest catastrophe. In this respect, Barick's poem resonates not only with Indian philosophical concerns about *avidyā* (ignorance) and *māyā* (illusion), but also with the existential anxiety of Kierkegaard, Heidegger's notion of *Angst*, Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism, Eliot's spiritual desolation, Camus's absurdity, Kafka's invisible oppression, and Jung's collective shadow. Yet *Kokuā* synthesizes these currents into a uniquely Odia poetic idiom rooted in the mythic landscape of *Dwārakā*.

13. CONCLUSION

Sourindra Barick's *Kokuā* stands among the most intellectually compelling and artistically sophisticated poems in post-modern Odia literature. Through the remarkable fusion of mythology, symbolism, psychological insight, and philosophical reflection, the poet transforms an obscure mythical figure into one of the most powerful metaphors for the invisible crises of modern civilization. The poem demonstrates that the gravest dangers confronting humanity are rarely physical; they arise instead as subtle invasions of consciousness, ethical imagination, interpersonal trust, and spiritual integrity. In this sense, *Kokuā* is not merely a mythical being but a universal condition—a name for every unseen force that corrodes the human spirit while leaving the body apparently untouched. The enduring greatness of *Kokuā*

lies in its inexhaustible interpretative richness. It belongs simultaneously to mythology, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and literary modernity, while transcending the limits of each. Every generation may discover a different *Kokuā*: authoritarianism, consumerism, technological alienation, ecological collapse, communal hatred, misinformation, or existential despair. This semantic openness is the hallmark of great postmodern literature. Barick's achievement is therefore not simply the creation of a memorable poem but the creation of a living symbol that continues to illuminate the anxieties of every age. Through its profound artistic restraint, symbolic density, and philosophical universality, *Kokuā* secures an enduring place among the finest poetic achievements of contemporary Odia literature and invites sustained scholarly engagement within the broader discourse of world postmodern poetry.

Viewed through comparative literature and multiple critical paradigms, *Kokuā* emerges as far more than a regional literary achievement. It is a world poem that transforms a culturally specific myth into a universal meditation on fear, invisible violence, and the fragility of civilization. Like *The Waste Land*, it interrogates civilizational decay; like Kafka, it reveals the terror of unseen power; like Camus, it portrays the spread of existential contagion; like Blake, it mythologizes psychological reality; and like the great postmodern writers, it refuses interpretative closure. Its enduring originality lies in Barick's creation of a symbol that is at once local and universal, mythical and modern, philosophical and political. *Kokuā* is not simply a demon who enters *Dwārakā*; he is the invisible presence that enters every age under a different name. Whether understood as fear, ideology, alienation, totalitarianism, ecological crisis, digital surveillance, consumerism, or spiritual emptiness, *Kokuā* remains perpetually contemporary. For this reason, the poem deserves recognition not only as a landmark of postmodern Odia poetry but also as a significant contribution to the global canon of symbolic and philosophical literature.

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