

An introspection of self and reality from Jayanta Mahapatra's Socio-Cultural Perspectives.

Mrinal Kanti Das

NET, Ph.D. Scholar,

Ranchi University (Reg. No-134378/18), PTT in English, Belda College.

Vidyasagar University, West Bengal, INDIA

Email - mkd.beldacollege@gmail.com

Abstract: *Jayanta Mahapatra's conception of socio-cultural perspectives that he realizes in his locale brings him face to face with history and myth when his "self" is exposed in the act of attention. The relations between self and reality - the reality that eludes but includes self and culture form the bedrock of Mahapatra's poetry. To him, it is the investigation of myths and it is coupled with the world of art and sculpture. He continues his search for a divine spirit and for grace in relationship between man and man, and god and god, men and sculptured art. Mahapatra seems to have the conviction that tradition is continuity and one has to understand the present in terms of the past and the past in terms of the present. There is a deep sign of introspection in his poetry. The present study titled "An introspection of self and reality from Jayanta Mahapatra's socio-cultural perspectives" thrives on these converging factors to establish that a creator as self has a couple of selves with reality to form a socio-cultural diversity in the society. This study is bound to explore the poetic tertiary of Jayanta Mahapatra with special stress for his introspection of self and reality in his poetry. He prefers to code and decode his awareness and consideration using suggestive symbols and myths. Another chief concern of this study includes his promise towards society, his socio-cultural concern for the mass which live unnoticed and unheard.*

Key Words: *socio-cultural, perspectives, self and reality, introspection, concern.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Poetry is an assembly place of self and reality. Poetry can at times be helpful in providing answers or reply to questions which the self asks. It can be enormously dear too, and the thoughts, when they come into a poem do not want to be alone in them. The present study is an effort to scrutinize how poetry assesses Mahapatra as an induction point to focus his self through which he is able to see a large world around of which he is only a section. The Indian poets who express themselves in English have their cultural roots in their community. Many of these Indian poets have been educated in a foreign country but since they belong to the middle - class, they find themselves separated within their own instant sphere and even from the westernized culture Jayanta Mahapatra not only looks at the outer world, but also within nature itself the authentically gained experiences of life in order to find out a sense for himself. His poems deal with the query of self, search for roots and reality, Hindu culture, its rituals, spirituality, symbols and the lost heritage of the past. He does not like to ignore the world he lives in.

Mahapatra who is born into a particular socio cultural environment inherits fluently and unconsciously through the accrued knowledge of earlier generations in the type of traditions, folklore and myths. Myths are the strong symbols of mans goals and ambition which provide him with beliefs and help him set his pursuits in a difficult world that endlessly warns man's reality. They play a vital role as the old socio-cultural and heritage of Odisha. Jayanta Mahapatra's attention of the experience of the past arouses in him the question who he was. The attachment with the self and the society runs through Mahapatra's *Relationship*. It creates a sense of association between self and the other. The individual emotion of the poetic self is primarily united very deeply with the ecological setting, ritual and totality of life. Mahapatra has realised the heart-beat of the deceased artist in the stone- carving art and statue of the temples in Odisha. He has also made a relations with stone-carving and inscriptions. It is an introspect of self and reality from the poet's socio- cultural perspectives. Mahapatra's poetry, according to Bhat "makes the reader look inwards, question himself about life, its significance uncertainty and so on leading him to process of personal discovery". (Bhat 13) The internal self and reality of Jayanta Mahapatra have been found with his childhood and his poems are their product. His poems reveal the poet's strong affection along with his childhood experiences a lot with the Oriya fairy testimonies, myths, legends and the high-quality Indian epics. The poet remembers the spark of feelings of the whispers of solitude that encircle him. His heart turns into serious on the sight of his mother now, transformed in appearance. The poet feels the suffering of his father's loss of life. This depiction of human condition forms an essential part of his poetry thus taking into account almost all the existing grievances of humans in general- and of Indians in particular- such as scarcity, dishonesty, offense, lack of communal harmony, social unrest, grass-roots level realities of common man along with his figurative competence. Social aspects of Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry are self and reality which related with poverty. Odisha is a state which is known inside and outside of India for

its object poverty .Mahapatra writes poetry dealing with poverty just like an economist .He shows how scarcity seriously affects other aspects of life, sometimes compelling woman to either go to brothel or to hold knife to be naxalite. In his poems, “Hunger” (Mahapatra; *RR* 21) and “Whorehouse in Calcutta Street” (Mahapatra; *RR* 36), Mahapatra describes the life and manner of a prostitute. Here the prostitute accepts this occupation only being bound by poverty. It is known from her behavior and behaviour with a customer when she offers him her body. The prostitute makes the customer hurried up in a hard voice, which indicates that she does not have any emotion for her costumer rather she acts like machine; just to make some money she gratifies the sexual craving of the male folk. A client might feel somewhat embarrassed of having come into a whore house .After all the very courtyard of his house seems to be a partner in the conspiracy which is a matter of routine in a place like this. According to A.K Paniker, “The Whore House in Calcutta Street” shows both the strength and the weakness of Mahapatra as a poet. The first and last stanzas of this poem, says this critic, have the same quality of tightness, sharpness and precision. The present study brings out some important elements to establish that a creator as self has a couple of selves. It analyses and throws light on the character and social reality of human life. The self-sure tone and imagination and insight of the poet make approach for an extra deeply felt dwelling place. The poetic inspiration of Mahapatra jumps from his individual world and the poet is unrepentant, as he feels that his poems are for himself extra rather than for the reader. He preferred to make feel of the life which was once dishonesty in fragments earlier than him. He was advised to seek solutions for himself, trying out his feelings by way of putting them in resistance to the material of the poem he knew he ought to write. His poems don't excuse themselves as vocal pictures translating into a couple of layers of meaning. Mahapatra grants a continually varying skyline in his poems. He creates a lyrical cosmos which is fully Indian. Mahapatra's poetry brings out many traits of post colonialism as a lingering colonial past, search for origin and identity. Henry Louis Gates is quite appropriate here to quote:

Ours is a late twentieth century world profoundly fissured by nationality, ethnicity, race, class, and gender. And the only way to transcend those divisions to forge, for once a civic culture that respects both differences and commodities – is through education that seeks to comprehend the diversity of culture.(Gates 42-43)

The poem “Evening Landscape by the River” (Mahapatra; *LS* 47) shows the lost world through a lively representation of actual scene. The poet feels sad as he surveys the sight. The feeling of sadness is almost overwhelming and it makes him feel as if his eyes were closing. The atmosphere is so dark that one forgets everything, even the faces of the dear ones who have departed from the world. The unfortunate fishermen live in busted shacks located close to the river. There is a temple in the distance and it is completely still in consideration. The river is full of water, and in the darkness of the evening, the light of the moon falling upon it unevenly, as if it has no purpose to carry on there. The very minute details of his setting prove that Mahapatra is the son of the Odisha coast. Mahapatra moves very often from local to universal. His poetry pervades the macroscopic India in the microcosm of Odisha. The evils he has experienced and noticed in his own place, he could combine them with the problems that are collective and universal. He is of the belief that a poet's distinctiveness cannot be only his confidential and personal upbringing, his response to landscape, his awareness of the ritual and culture with which he identifies himself makes up his uniqueness. Mahapatra confirms his inseparable recognition with his native land in one of his poems, “Somewhere, My Man” (Mahapatra; *SMM*):

A man does not mean anything
But the place.
Sitting on the riverbank throwing pebbles
into the muddy current,
a man becomes the place. (1-5)

There is a synthesis between the man and the place. In order to supply the sustenance to traditional Indian culture in his poetry, Mahapatra takes recourse to the locale—the social, topographical and artistic background of his birth place. So, Srinivas Iyenger rightly observes: “No true poet can escape tradition, for all our yesterdays are involved in the poet's deeper consciousness; and no true poet can escape the pressure of the present, for he is in it and of it, and the best he can do is to relate the immediate present to the living past ...” (Iyenger 41-42). The well-known town Puri is regarded to be a holy place by the Hindus. It is the blessed place of Lord Jagannatha, the presiding divinity of Odisha. The Hindu disciples find deliverance and extraterrestrial peace at Puri. The poem, “Dawn at Puri”(Mahapatra;*RR*) emerges as a practical article of the Hindu psyche and their age-old viewpoint and society. Mahapatra marks this constant belief of the Hindus in this poem:

her last wish to be cremated here
twisting uncertainly like light
on the shifting sands. (16-18)

Mahapatra's poetry is noticeable for intensity of approach and true lyrical imagination which has a scale of dappled themes. Odisha setting representing India's cultural and religious past magnificence bequeathing into present and emptiness in modern continuation, love, sex and all outlook and associations which make human life and excellent poetic craftsmanship. His outstanding poetic skills, his authority to use local language, his faultless account of nature landscaped attired in foreign language spurs him to decolonize his poetry. Like other post colonial poets of other countries like Australia, Africa, Caribbean, he effectively establishes his own individuality, and nation's identity which was devastated due to colonization. Boehmer is right when he comments on his progressive link:

Indian, African and Caribbean nationalist writers focused on reconstructing from the position of their historical, social or metaphysical difference a cultural identity which has been damaged by the colonial experience. The need was for roots, origins, founding myths and ancestors, national for mothers and fathers in short, for restorative history.(Boehmer 56)

Cultural diversity and variety in India may apparently contribute to a poet's identity; but in reality, these forces remain devoted to defining, and authenticating a typical identity. Jayanta Mahapatra is a Christian, living in a Hindu society—a society which pays utmost homage to Lord Jagannatha, the presiding god of Odisha. Jayanta Mahapatra's grandfather accepted Christianity out of convincing forces of scarcity and dearth. There is always a sense of anxiety and estrangement in his poetry. He perpetuates his hunt for identity and he is keen on the statement of his self-emanating from an absolute part of his holy land and its rich socio-religious society. Mahapatra's hunt for roots of origin of man, and the origin of the cosmos leads him to search relationships with different aspects of life. Finally, he discovers the unending joy. This everlasting joy exists in love of self along with the humanity in which he belongs to. At last the poet reaches to a point from where he can have everlasting peace. The silence is a key to such recognitions. Hence, this study of the poet and his locale confirms the fact that in Mahapatra's poetry there lies an indivisible relationship between the poet and his place along with the people. It cannot be denied that Mahapatra's formation of such poetry is only the result of his oneness with the soil. His poetry functions as an inspired medium and depicts the poet's search for his soul. It is a kind of pilgrimage that brings him towards the spirit of his homeland and explains to him the vastness of his being and the sense and significance of his life and living. Mahapatra is a realist. He can view life and its various emotions and mysteries against the setting of the landscape of Odisha. The load of the poet's awareness makes him handle the poem in such a way that the calm tranquility of the countryside strips the society off the mask of culture. For the poet, the landscape of his native place often mirrors the past brilliance and the dead ancestors. Many of the poems of Mahapatra are a search for the self. The exploration for the self gives a sign of continuity to his poetry. Memory helps the poet delve deep into the depths of the past that enables his search into the self. With the aid of memory he tries to discover his own roots, and find consolation from the burdens of the present. The past redeems him from the horror of being nameless; from the fear of aging and death; from the fear of the changing scenario in the present.

2. SUMMARY:

The poetic world of Mahapatra reiterates the idea that one should journey into one's own self in order to cope up with the outer world without exploiting others and their property. So, this is an attempt to project an introspection of self and reality from Jayanta Mahapatra's socio-cultural perspectives with richest use of symbols, myths, images and similes by showing him as an eminent Indian English poet. He shows a fluent expression of the eternal silence of the unknown and his sensibility is fundamentally Indian. The secret of his success lies in not disowning his Indian inheritance and not falling victim to what has been called 'a feeling of alienation'.

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