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**Dr. Md. Sajjad**  
M.S.K.B + 2 School, Muz,  
Chandwara, Nazirpur, Bihar,  
India

## **Pain and anguish in the works of Jayanta Mahapatra**

**Dr. Md. Sajjad**

### **Abstract**

The major themes of Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry are Indianness, pain, hunger, social problems, family relations, love, time sex, nature and search for self. He has confirmed that his existence to the Oriya land, history, myth society. Time, family relations and society plays a key role in his life as well as in his poetry. He has developed his profound theory of poetic creation through his poetry. And nature in Mahapatra has less space for its independent existence. The images from nature are so inevitably embedded in the symbols of his poetry. This paper is an attempt to expose Indian social realities and picturing contemporary scene through suggestive imagery. In this paper Mahapatra focuses on the pain anguish, hunger, loneliness and isolation of Indian poor people.

**Keywords:** Hunger, loneliness, isolation social reality, pain, misery and poverty

### **Introduction**

Jayanta Mahapatra is an eminent Indo-Anglian poet, firmly and deeply rooted in Indian soil. Mahapatra's sensibility is essentially Indian. These is an unmistakable authenticity of tone and treatment in his work. His Indianness is seen in his poems about Orissa poverty, hunger, pain and starvation have been chronic in India, they are the most important facet of the life of the Indian masses. They also constitute a major theme in Mahapatra's poetry. The theme is studied from various angles and its varied nuances and poignant realities and brought out with great intensity and credibility in *Hunger*. The *Whome house in a Calcutta street* and *Man of His Night*. These poems are the studies of the male sexuality and the exploitation of women consciousness of poverty and the suffering of the Indian masses and of women as victims of male lust in a male dominated society imparts to Mahapatra's poetry a tragic pessimistic tone. Another major theme of Mahapatra's poetry is human relationship and these relations focuses on sexual love as in 'Lost the logic' and 'The Where house in a Calcutta street' Mahapatra's poetry springs from deep personal experiences.

### **Body of the paper**

Mahapatra through light upon the poetry and hunger in his major poems. In 'Hunger' the old fisherman forces his daughter turn to prostitutions due to extreme poverty and hunger. In the poem 'grandfather' during the Orissa famine of 1866. In 'Dhauri', it was the hunger for power that motivated Ashoka to launch the wars of Kalinga in which through and of warriors were slaughtered and their dead bodies were thrown at the batter field of Dhauri. The pain and anguish in Mahapatra's poetry comes out of his keen observation of hunger which is prevalent everywhere in India. This may be hunger for food, for sex or for power.

### **Summary of the paper**

Mahapatra in his most remarkable poems, 'Hunger' is marked and characterized by extreme trenchancy and brevity of expression. In this poem, the protagonist, who is tortured by the desires of the flesh, the fisherman to sell his daughter an account of poverty. Mahapatra uses images unify the emotional states of the protagonist. "The flesh was heavy on my back" conveys the torment of the sexual starved narrator or protagonist. "The white bones thrash his eyes" conveys the spiritual anguish of the fisherman father during customers for his daughter, hunger for food merges with the hunger for sex as the narrator protagonist accepts the fisherman's offer of his daughter.

'Dhauri' is a sensitive account of the historical catastrophe of the war of kalinga that led the thousand of lives to quench the individual's hunger for power, Mahapatra does not hail the

**Correspondence**  
**Dr. Md. Sajjad**  
M.S.K.B + 2 School, Muz,  
Chandwara, Nazirpur, Bihar,  
India

power and the military exploits of Ashoka, his sympathy reaches out to the vanquished and the dead who find no mention in Ashoka's rock edicts. The poem is elegiac in tone. In the poem 'Grandfather' the poet relates the harrowing experience of his grandfather, Chintamani, Mahapatra, who was compelled to embrace Christianity in order to survive the pangs of hunger and starvation during the famine. This decision between death and conversion ultimately, faith succumbs to the demands of the body but it leads to a loss of identity among his progeny. The hunger and starvation led to convert to Christianity. It was triumph of the body over the spirit. For Mahapatra, individual identity is the chief negotiating factor in the exploration of an emotional response to reality.

The poem, 'A country' is one of Mahapatra's political poems in which he suggests that suffering is universal. This poem is replete with socio-economic and socio-political under tones. Extreme poverty and hunger which engenders violence is the thematic thrust of the poem. There is however, no explicit critique of the political scenario where vast disparities exist between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, where all protests against the existing social order are brutally crushed. The old men's narration in 'sleepy voices' of the age-old poverty and cruelty moves the poet. The poet dreams of an equitable world order as he listens to the "far away wailing of hyenas aware of the dying countryside around them "for the people are tortured by hunger. It has been a hand age old phenomenon, the tale has been told again and again.

In the poem 'A missing person' Mahapatra's portrait of a village woman is painted with remarkable precision and compassion. A sharp image of loneliness and the haunting feeling of class within the self-brings a quick sympathetic response from the reader. The refined images extended their nuances beyond mere verbal description. The precise image by "drunken yellow flames" very effective, and elegant.

In some of his poems, Mahapatra has extended his sympathies to contemporary life with its political connotations. The poem 'An old country' and the tattooed taste reveal Mahapatra's keen consciousness of contemporary socio-political reality in the poem. 'The Holy sands' Mahapatra deals with the degeneration of modern man lacking love, sympathy and healthy values of life. It also shows how man has turned dry and monotonous life a skull. On economic and political planet, it suggests that the hunger, draught and poverty. The term 'holy before sands' stands has a mild irony on the holiness of the religion places. The second stanza portrays some white-clad widowed women awaiting to enter the 'great temple' here; 'The Great Temple' is the temple of Lord Jagannath. The eyes of three widowed women are 'spare like those caught in a net' they hang by shining strands of faith. The delineation of the funeral pyre and the process of cremation is heart-rendering. The pyre where the mother of the narrator being consumed is in consonance with her last wishes.

### Conclusion

Thus, we can say that the poem of Mahapatra shows his dexterous mastery of words and phrases. This verse is free and moves slowly and smoothly. His poems are a mixture of metaphysical images and he transforms elemental visual images of Indian nature and traditional rural life, into memorable metaphors. Mahapatra is supposed to be the interpreter of a complex and our culture through its

landscape and people. The Indian of his poetry is governed by an acute awareness of the cultural and socio-political ethos of his native place. Mahapatra is a poet of remarkable power and vision and he has made his mark on the scene of Indian English poetry. The poetry of Mahapatra is very much down to earth, the themes being contemporary life situation. Mahapatra's poetry appears to be complex thanks to its language and allusiveness.

Mahapatra's poetry is essentially a poetry of exploration but what he explores is often a not very important in the context of some object or a natural phenomenon or a historical place. His poetry sustains its strength from the union of the concrete and the abstract of the expected and the unexpected in the metaphysical manner. He is aware of the changing contours of his poetry. He has attempted to construct a body of poetry which has the kind of relationship with his environment and the problems of finding significance in this time of darkness and lost ones that is similar to the major poets. There is however an awareness of other people, the landscape, the changing skills, desirable women and sexual gratification. In the major poems of Mahapatra, he discusses the social problem hunger, sex, lone, marriage, that has been the fate of men down the ages. The alternative is prostitution, military conquest, conversation and bloody revolution. But the hunger persists. This is the root cause of the poet's pain and anguish.

**Mahapatra is good at cultivating human relationship:** To read poetry of Mahapatra is to acquire a kind of empathy with the contemporary life. Mahapatra has decolonized his poetry and had made it a vehicle for the articulation of Indian scene in the post-colonial era. The credit rebounds. Mahapatra forges a fresh Indian English idiom that gives a local habitation a name to post-colonial poetry making it an amazing read. Mahapatra is making a concerted effort to decolonize Indian English poetry. His knowledge of native language i.e. Oriya and inwardness with indigenous tradition and culture are a great help to him in decolonizing his poetry. Like other post-colonial writers seek to limn the indigenous culture and thereby assert their nationality that is lovable and enduring indeed.

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