

Indian Poetry in English
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Lecture - 30
Bibhu Padhi

Good morning friends and welcome back once again to NPTEL online certification course on Indian Poetry in English. In the previous lectures, we had been discussing some of the poets who first were professors and then they were poets.


Now, in this series we had discussed the impressionistic form of Indian English poetry. And, today once again we are going to discuss one more important figure namely Bibhu Padhi, who also was a professor of English and then poetry was a passion for him.




Before we go into the poetic world of Bibhu Padhi, it would actually be very significant if we come to know about who Bibhu Padhi is and what actually are the traits of his poetry. My dear friends it has been seen that those poets who were actually born in an independent India had many other things to talk about or to delineate than those who were born in pre-independent India. And, in this category Bibhu Padhi is also one such name. He was born in independent India especially in the year 1951 in Orissa in a small town named Cuttack.

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Introduction

- ❖ Born on 16th January, 1951 in Orissa
- ❖ Ravenshaw Autonomous College, Cuttack
- ❖ Influenced by Pablo Neruda, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Octavio Paz, Cesare Pavese, Salvatore Quasimodo, Emily Dickinson, James Merrill, Whitman, William Statford etc.
- ❖ Poet, critic and translator
- ❖ Unlike Mahapatra, he is an insider. (A Brahmin) (King, p. 345)



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Now, it has been seen that a majority of poets who belong to Orissa, try to follow the footsteps of the great Jayant Mahapatra and in Bibhu's world also you will find the same sort of inkling, but then there is a difference. We shall try to find out those differences. Bibhu was actually born on 16th January, 1951 and then he had his education in Cuttack only.

It is said that majority of Bibhu's life was spent in Cuttack and then he took up a teaching position in various parts only of Orissa. So, the poet is some way or the other soaked, drenched in Orissan landscape, Orissan reality and when we talk about Orissan reality, naturally the image that comes to our mind is poverty, drought, rains which have been a consistent theme in majority of the poems of Bibhu Padhi.

Right from the beginning, but he was influenced by some major poets namely Pablo Neruda, then Giuseppe and then Ungaretti, Octavio Paz, Cesare Pavese, Salvatore Quasimodo, Emily Dickinson, James Merrill, Whitman and William Statford. So, what he has admitted in many of the interviews are that he was actually influenced by many a British as well as many American poets.

But, he apart from being a poet is also a critic, a translator and poet of course he is. About Padhi it is said and Bruce King in his famous book mentions that 'unlike Mahapatra, Padhi is an insider.' The focus is that Padhi is a Brahmin and one can find the way Padhi's poems move, rotate and the way Padhi tries to create a sort of kaleidoscopic effect.

But, majority of his poems move around Orissa, Orissan landscape, like Mahapatra he is also time and again found moving in the corridors of the past and there is a sort of patterning in the poetry of Padhi and pattern that we come across Padhi's world is of everyday realities. So, once we have a discussion or once we explore the world of Padhi, we will actually come to know about the various patterns that Padhi follows.

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Padhi has to his collection quite a good number of poetry collections fine, to his credit. Quite a good number of poetry collections are beginning with *Going to Temple* which came out in the year 1988.

Then came *A Wound Elsewhere*, *Lines From A Legend*, *Painting the House*, *Games the Heart Must Play*, *Living With Lorenzo*, *Choosing A Place*, *Migratory Days*, *Brief Seasons*, *magical Magic Ritual*, *than Midnight Diary* and one that came out only this year is *A Friendship With Time*.

Now, it is very difficult to unravel the mysteries surrounded in all the poetry collections, but we shall take up some of the poems from some of his major collections and then try to find out what sort of a poet Bibhu Padhi is.

In fact, if I have to make an analysis of Padhi as a poet, I will consider Padhi primarily a love poet and then anything else. But, then Padhi's poetic pen has actually spilled lines which can be considered to be very immortal in terms of composing serious things in a very subtle and very simple manner.

Now, what are actually the characteristics of Padhi's poems? As I have been saying that majority of poets from Orissa, they always try to imitate or follow the footsteps of Jayanth Mahapatra; because Jayanth Mahapatra is a big name especially for the people of Orissa and to greater extent to Indian readers at large.

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Characteristics of Poems

- Orissa in the background
- Spontaneity, use of subtle language
- Amalgamates reality, memory and dream
- Artificiality and verbosity seem to obfuscate his pure intention.
- Environmental degradation

It is raining in Cuttack once again
The rain that arrives so gently
that it can scarcely be heard
through my son's dream songs,
the harsh songs of motor cars
crowding the road. Once
on such afternoon in July,
your limp voice drifted into my room
through the rain...
and I can almost remember
your sweet voice...
in the July of one distant, echoing year.
("Listening through the Rain")

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So, in a Padhi's word also we find Orissa in the background, but then one thing that makes Padhi distinct is the spontaneous quality of his poetry. His lines are very spontaneous, one may not need to make any effort in order to understand the meaning of it; the flow of the lines are very natural just like a stream, just like a river.

The language used in Padhi is very subtle and Padhi tries to mix or amalgamate reality, but a major portion of the reality is related to the memory. So, Padhi unfolds a sort of memory. When we read the poems Padhi, we will find that there is always an invisible you and this you, who the, you is--- it is very difficult to interpret and explore.

But, then there is always an invisible you to whom Padhi has addressed in majority of his poems. This you can be anyone; this you can be a poetic persona as well. Since, Padhi's world is very spontaneous, we do not find much of artificiality because artificiality and verbosity they appear quite inimical if understood from the angle of Padhi, they in a way obfuscate the pure intention of Padhi the poet.

We can also find environmental degradation in majority of his poems, but then for that we have to wait for some time before we start unravelling the gems that Padhi actually mentions in his poetic world. Let us take some of the lines of one poem which is "Listening through the Rain", as I have been saying that rain has been used consecutively in many of the poems.

Sometimes waiting for rains, sometimes the beauty and the benignity of rains, sometimes rain has been used very metaphorically as in this poem we can find; “It is raining in Cuttack once again,/ the rain that arrives so gently,/ that it can scarcely be heard/ through my son’s dream songs.” The poet here actually tries to show two phases.

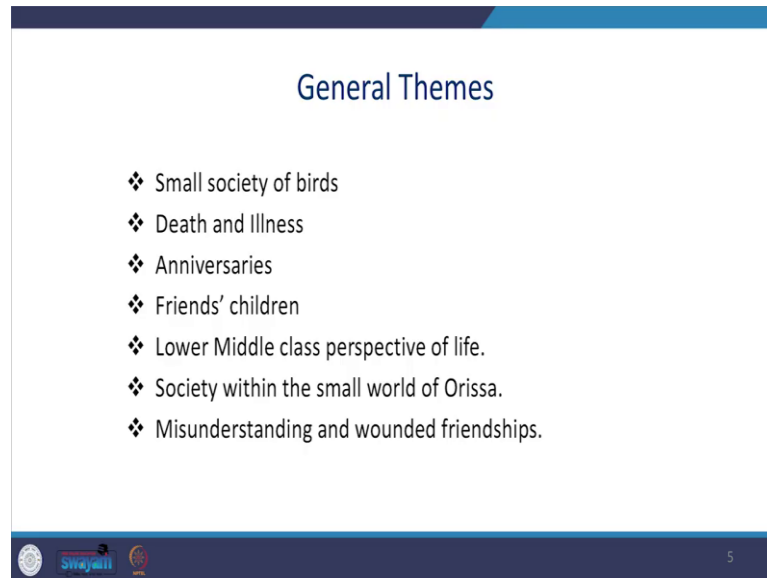
The poet tries to show two phases of the city that is Cuttack and he actually reminisces the rain and then as the poem proceeds further as himself says, that it can scarcely be heard through my son’s dream songs, “the harsh songs of motor cars/ crowding the road. Once/ on such afternoon in July,/ your limp voice drifted into my room/ through the rain/ and I can almost remember your sweet voice/ in the July of one distant echoing year.”

So, there is a memory being unfolded here, but then the poet actually keeps rain in the background and then he talks about the city life and then he also talks about the noises. And, then he also seems to miss the sound of the rain, but at the same time he not only misses the sound of the rain, he actually also misses one of his loved ones, one of his true ones to whom he says that everything had changed.

But, still “in the July of one distant echoing year in my memory/ I keep on I keep on hearing/ the sweet sound your limp voice drifted into my room.” I mean if we analyze other poems also, we can find that there are some other themes also scattered in the poetic realm of Padhi. Say for example, one can also come across the small society of birds, but then Padhi in a way is a realist.

It appears if one has a look at the lines of Padhi’s poems, one can find that they appear as things come quite naturally to people. I am reminded of how poetry should come as the leaves come quite naturally to tree and so is the case with Padhi also.

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Padhi talks of death, illness, he also talks about anniversaries, then he also talks about many a relations loved, lost. At times Padhi is also confounded at the relationships which actually come to haunt his mind.

He also gives us a picture of the middle class, lower middle class people and then he is confined. So, one thing that one can find in the world of Padhi is that Padhi does not want to move outside Orissa. So, the landscape is Orissa and majority of his poems have in their background Orissan landscape and then, but then through that also Padhi actually does not want his imagination to stop.

But, then he wants the imagination once again to explore newer lands, newer realities, but then reality cannot be ignored, reality cannot be missed. If we come to talk about the poetic process of Padhi because, Padhi's world has got a sort of variety. So, what he said in one of his interviews to Mahuya Bhaumik, actually is an eye opener. What he says, "I wait for a poem to come. Perhaps wait for a title as well."

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On Poetic Process

“I wait for a poem to come. Perhaps wait for a title. At some other time the first or the last line. The first line stays with me for a week or so and then it asks me to put itself down on the page. Earlier I used to write my poems in long hand, but now I write it on the computer. Right now I have a title for a poem as well as its first two lines. I think, when I sit down to write, the rest of the poem will follow.”

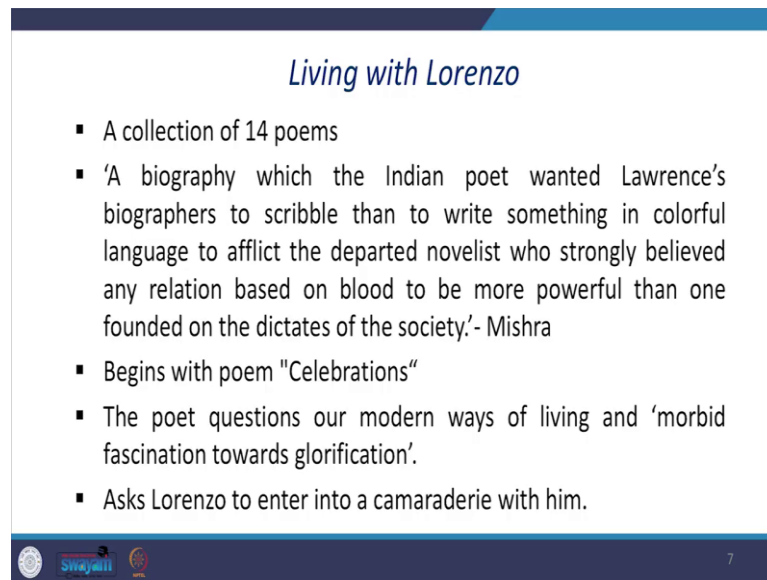
(In an interview to Mahuya Bhaumik)

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“I wait for a poem to come. Perhaps wait for a title. At some other time the first or the last line. The first line stays with me for a week or so, and then it asks me to put itself down on the page. Earlier I used to write my poems in long hand, but now I write it on the computer. Right now I have a title for a poem as well as its first two lines. I think when I sit down to write, the rest of the poem will follow”. Meaning thereby- he wants a thought to sink, a thought to simmer; so, that it actually takes a poetic form.

And, then as he says that he is also a witness to the change, earlier he wrote in his own hand, but now he has been typing on the computer. Now, one of his very significant chap books entitled *Living with Lorenzo*, it actually tells us about the poet’s imagination of how if he could have lived with Lorenzo. Now, who is this Lorenzo? This Lorenzo is D. H. Lawrence, Padhi actually had worked for quite a long time on D. H. Lawrence.

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Living with Lorenzo

- A collection of 14 poems
- 'A biography which the Indian poet wanted Lawrence's biographers to scribble than to write something in colorful language to afflict the departed novelist who strongly believed any relation based on blood to be more powerful than one founded on the dictates of the society.'- Mishra
- Begins with poem "Celebrations"
- The poet questions our modern ways of living and 'morbid fascination towards glorification'.
- Asks Lorenzo to enter into a camaraderie with him.

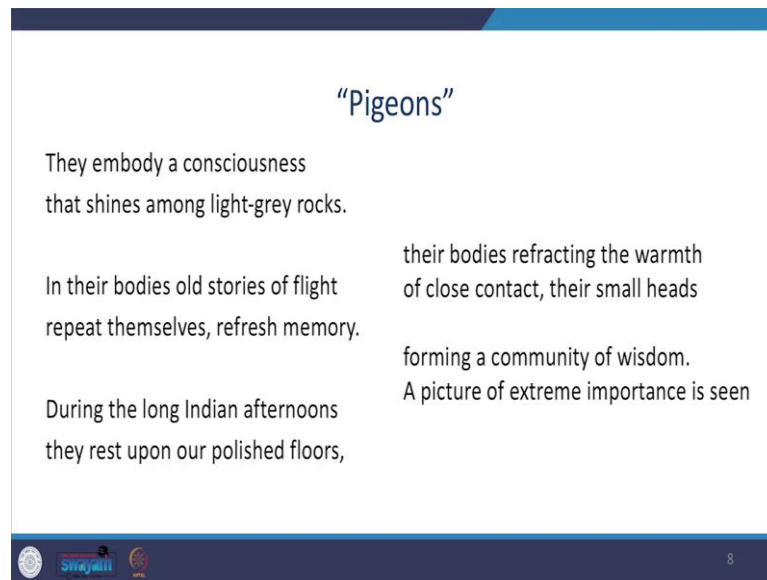
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And, then he composed a chap book and titled it *Living with Lorenzo* which has got 14 poems. "It is a sort of biography which the Indian poet wanted Lawrence's biographers to scribble, in a way he warns that the biographers of Lorenzo should write something in colourful language to afflict the departed novelist, who strongly believed any relation based on blood."

Now, I have been saying that Padhi is a realist and that is why like D H Lawrence, he also believes in the relationship of blood, to be more powerful than one founded on the dictates of the society. Now, he begins this chap book with celebrations and he questions, through this he questions our modern ways of living and morbid fascination towards glorification. He also asks Lorenzo to enter into a camaraderie with him into a sort of friendship with him.

The chap book is a thin, but it is suffused with meaning and one can enjoy a lot while a reading *Living with Lorenzo*. We can also take some poems from his very first collection that is *Going to Temple* and there we find how the poet always tries to create a sort of conflict between consciousness and unconsciousness. And for that he takes some of the birds as a medium and here it is the poem entitled "Pigeons."

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“Pigeons”

They embody a consciousness
that shines among light-grey rocks.

In their bodies old stories of flight
repeat themselves, refresh memory.

During the long Indian afternoons
they rest upon our polished floors,

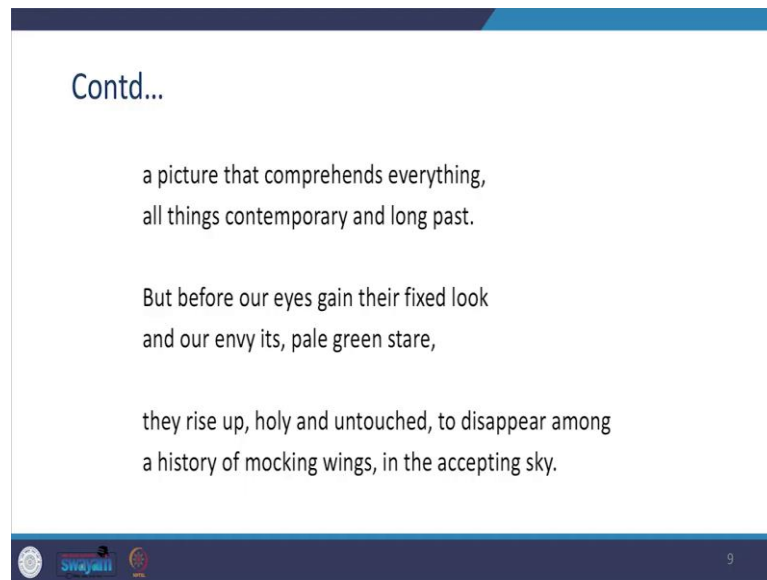
their bodies refracting the warmth
of close contact, their small heads
forming a community of wisdom.
A picture of extreme importance is seen

Swajali 8

And, he says the poem begins with, “They embody a consciousness/ that shines among light-grey rocks,/ in their bodies old stories of flight/ repeat themselves, old stories of flight repeat themselves, refresh memory./ During the long Indian afternoons/ they rest upon our polished floors,/ their bodies refracting the warmth of close contact, their small heads/ forming a community of wisdom,/ a picture of extreme importance is seen.”

So, through this “Pigeon”, the poet actually also in a way tries to compare human life and says that how these pigeons, through their bodies actually tell us old stories of flight of struggle, fine, of climbing, repeating themselves, refreshing a memory.

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“A picture that comprehends everything,/ all things contemporary and long past;”
Though he talks about pigeons, but then he talks about humans’ strive, humans
excellence and then how our memory can lead us to. “But, before our eyes gain their
fixed look and our envy its pale green stare, ‘they rise up holy and untouched, to
disappear among/ a history of mocking wings, in the accepting sky.

So,same is the case when human beings-- they actually are struggling between
consciousness and unconsciousness. We think of an ambition, we try to climb and then
we also see its picture in the pigeons. But, then the moment we try to rise up holy and
untouched to disappear among a history of mocking wings in the accepting sky. We can
take some more poems.

There is another poem from the same collection and that the poem is titled “Telephone
Poem,”. To the youngsters of today this poem may appear to be very satirical and at
times it may also appear to be worthless, but how through this the poet actually talks
about love.

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“Telephone Poem”

A voice hangs anonymously between your unspoken words and my eagerness.	are quickly interspersed with moments of large silence.
My world breathes the distance of your face, endures the weight of	A lump in the throat betrays the silent magic
an absence of promises. Spurts of tentative assurance	of waiting without words. Hastily, I put into your ears two flat words, "Good night."
	The voice clears.


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“A voice hangs anonymously/ between your unspoken words.” Today we have the facility of saying everything, today also we have the facility of looking at people even while talking. But, then think of a time when telephone was the only medium of communication especially between two people far off, fine. “My world breathes/ the distance of your face,/ endures the weight of an absence of promises./ Spurts of tentative assurance/ are quickly interspersed with/ moments of large silence.” Now, during communication over telephones and in olden days, how even sometimes or the other the connections were not smooth. And, then if it is a talk between two lovers think of how one can try to interpret the silence, moments of large silence.

“A lump in the throat/ betrays the silent magic,/” Something that one wants to say and suddenly there is a lump, there is a block of waiting without words of waiting without words. “Hastily, I put into your ears/ two flat words, good night/ and the voice clears.” So, now, one can find that Padhi is a magical poet who through his simple lines can actually tell us a lot and that is why I say majority of his poems are soaked in love.

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Going to the Temple Part 1

How shall we begin? We shall carry long-thought-out ways to find a thing, name a quiet loss. We shall collect the milk white flowers from our doorsteps; in due time we shall make them shine with our morning sicknesses, prominent headaches.		At the feet of the dark goddess, we shall make them hold the pains we've known and endured. We shall turn our cloud looks into intelligible forms, clean total gestures of fear and of love. It may not be hard then to drive all our little efforts to a reassuring smile, a cool collected look.
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We can also take the title poem from this collection entitled *Going to the Temple*, it has got two parts. And, through this the poet not only raises some contemporary questions, but then he not only questions and then also provides some amount of answers, we can read some of the lines. “How shall we begin? /We shall carry/ long thought out ways/ to find a thing,/ name a quiet loss./ We shall collect/ the milk white flowers/ from our doorsteps/ in due time./ We shall make them shine/ with our morning sicknesses,/ prominent headaches/ at the feet of the dark goddess.” So, when we go to the temple, fine and suddenly we go with all sorts of problems, all sorts of anxieties, all sorts of sicknesses, all sort of illness, we shall make them hold the pains as if God has got the alternative, God has got the medicine, God has got the solution to all problems.

“We shall make them hold the pains,/ we have known and endured,/ we shall turn our cloud looks/ into intelligible forms,/ clean total gestures/ of fear and of love./ It may not be hard then/ to drive all our little efforts/ to a reassuring smile,/ a cool collected look.”

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Contd... Part 2

"Bury all the dead.
Your land will turn beautiful once more.
If you happen to meet a voice
that you do not recognize,
then you must realize
That it is mine.
When you arrive here,
we shall invent a together-hour
to settle our differences
and estimate a new deal.

I shall answer all your
hesitations and fears
with a slight glance,
a mere smile.
A neat, stone-cut look
will complete my ritual of touch."

Swajati G 12

“Bury all the dead, / your land will turn beautiful once more. / If you happen to meet a voice/ that you do not recognize/ then you must realize/ that it is mine.” It is one voice that we can hear that we often visualize that the voice tells us that when your land will turn beautiful once more.

If you happen to meet a voice that you do not recognize, then you must realize that is mine. “When you arrive here, / we shall invent a together- hour/ to settle our differences/ and estimate a new deal. / I shall answer all your/ hesitations and fears/ with a slight glance, / a mere smile. A neat, stone cut look/ will complete my ritual of touch.”

So, this is how the poet actually talks about the beliefs of Indian masses that how we go with all sorts of problems, all sorts of anxieties, all sorts of offers and think that God has got all the solutions. And, then even when we do not hear a voice, we start visualizing that when that you do not recognize a voice then you must realize that the voice is mine.

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Contd... Part 3 & 4

At the crowded entrance
we shall reenact childhoods
that we forget and receive back
repeatedly, remember lost deities.
We've been silent for too long.
Let us seek out our wishes
and arrange them
in their proper
order.
The stones shall hear us
and begin to speak.

Let us wash our hands clean
of the cruel daylight,
wipe the acquired and inherited
meanings off our tired faces.
Inside that darkness
they wouldn't matter anymore.

Part 4

I don't know how I can make it.
Perhaps I'll run down
the large steps to her smile
and make it my own.

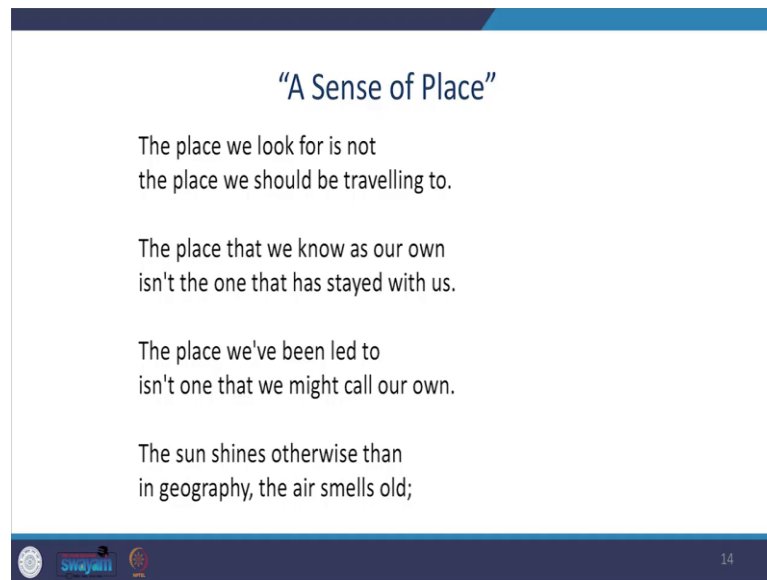
swajani 13

And, in the 3rd and the 4th parts, the poet says—“At the crowded entrance/ we shall reenact childhoods/ again memory “that we forget and receive back/ repeatedly, remember lost deities./ We have been silent for too long,/ let us seek out our wishes/ and arrange them/ in their proper order.” So, when we are children we do not remember, but then let us go back once again, ‘The stone shall hear us/ and begin to speak.’

“Let us wash our hands clean/ of the cruel daylight”... The poet also gives us a message that simply going to the temple is not enough, unless and until we are ourselves clean. Let us wash our hands clean of the cruel daylight, wipe the acquired and inherited meanings off our tired faces inside that darkness, they would not matter anymore. So, when you have some mischievous design, can these stone walls or these gods or deities not understand?

They understand everything and finally, in the part 4, the poet says--- “I do not know how I can make it./ Perhaps I will run down/ the large steps to her smile/ and make it my own and make it my own.” The poet in Bibhu Padhi at times also talks about place and this place is a sort of quest which all of us are carrying within. A quest to the eternal, a quest to the sublime.

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“A Sense of Place”

The place we look for is not
the place we should be travelling to.

The place that we know as our own
isn't the one that has stayed with us.

The place we've been led to
isn't one that we might call our own.

The sun shines otherwise than
in geography, the air smells old;

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So, this poem is titled “A Sense of Place” and the poet says that life is a continuous journey and every now and then even though you are living in a present age, most of the time you are exploring something, you are perhaps retreating to a past.

“The place we look for is not/ the place we should be travelling to”. I mean the poet actually talks about the nothingness of this world. And, are the sort of phantoms that we are struggling towards we are moving towards ‘The place that we know as our own/ isn’t the one that has stayed with us’. Nothing is permanent on this earth, everything is so unreal fine, everything is so transitory.

“The place we have been led to/ is not one that we might call our own.” So, we human beings actually start boasting of our place of our power, of our position. But, the poet actually becomes very philosophical and not only philosophical rather he actually speaks in a very real tone and says the place we have been led to is not one that we might call our own. “The sun shines otherwise than/ in geography, the air smells old, the air smells old.”

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Contd...

the light moves slow, is slight, falling
at the place where the heart is believed to be.

We wait, but nothing shows that might've recalled.
in a clear way a breath lost among night and time

not long ago.
A place

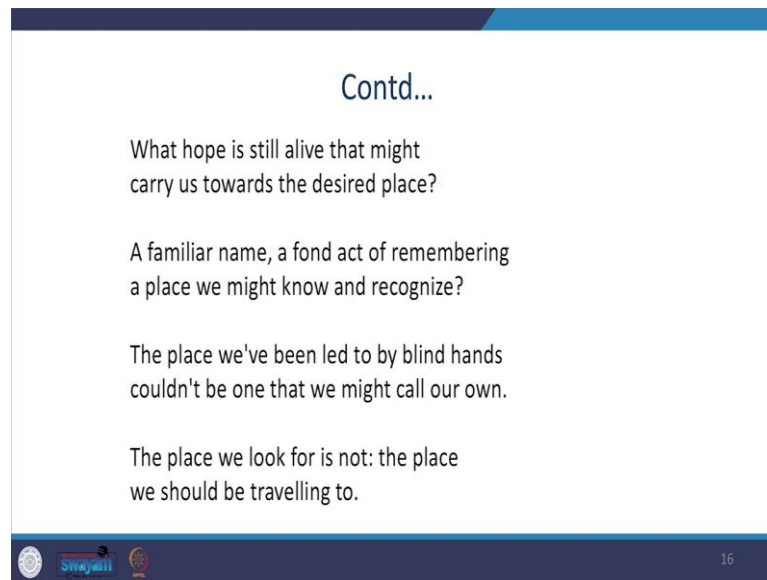
of our own, a dream of living
fulfilled by all our dreams of acting.

Swajati 15

“The light moves slow, is slight, falling/ at the place where the heart is believed to be.” So, the real place is the place where your heart belongs to: “We wait, but nothing shows that might have recalled, / in a clear way a breath lost among night and time/ not long ago. / A place/ of our own, a dream of living/ fulfilled by all our dreams of acting.” We can find in Bibhu’s world dreams, past fine, imaginations.

But, then the poet actually tries and wants all of us to be realistic in our approach and understand that our stay on this earth is not permanent. The earth is not a place where we have come to live forever and that is why if you start believing, that the place which you are living in is yours, is actually untrue. This is not your place; of our own dream of living fulfilled by all our dreams of acting.

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Contd...

What hope is still alive that might
carry us towards the desired place?

A familiar name, a fond act of remembering
a place we might know and recognize?

The place we've been led to by blind hands
couldn't be one that we might call our own.

The place we look for is not: the place
we should be travelling to.

So, what actually then is the place? The place is the heart, a heart that is pure, a heart that is full of cleanliness, a heart that is free from all sorts of turbulence, a heart that is free from all sorts of jealousies. “What hope is still alive that might/ carry us towards the desired place? / A familiar name, a fond act of remembering/ a place we might know and recognize?” The place we have been led to by blind hands could not be one that we might call our own.

“The place we look for is not: the place/ we should be travelling to.” So, what is the real place? We do not know our real place, we do not know our real aim, we are all masked people and that is why our vision know, our vision is blurred. We actually start thinking something which is not permanent as permanent. But, we are perhaps travelling to a different land, to a different place, and the place we consider to be our own is not our own place.

Now, we can also take another collection named *Games The Heart Must Play*. Now, Padhi, as I have been saying that primarily Padhi is a poet of love, love in different dimensions, love in various manifestations. In this title, I mean *Games The Heart Must Play*, the poet actually talks about three sorts of; because it is a trilogy of love poems, where there are three sections.

One section is “Dream Children”, then “Today” and then “Daughter”. Now, why this collection is very important is-- it actually moves between present and past and the poet

has in a very beautiful manner composed and also at times the poet satirizes, takes the digs at the present condition of the world. He actually tries to laugh at the consumerist culture that has actually blinded us. We are living, fine, we are living like people who do not have the sense of their place as we have discussed earlier.

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Games The Heart Must Play(2002)

- ❑ Trilogy of love poems
- ❑ "Dream Children," "Today" & "Daughter"
- ❑ A picture of present and past
- ❑ Consumerist culture
- ❑ Longing for love and life

But then, the erratic rains
Had started falling, and we were
Required back elsewhere.
We walked back, your umbrella
Offering me my much needed-shelter. (70)

What right have we over
The sprawling desert of humanity?
What right have we to add
To our own deserts
Of the heart and the mind,
when we already know
that we couldn't possibly help
a single seed grow
into its own tree?
(*Games The Heart Must Play*,15)

So, there is a sort of longing for love and life in this collection, where the poet not only talks about what sort of life we are living in, what sort of life we are actually thinking to strive after.

But, at the same time the poet also talks about the discrimination in a spread out in the society between the boy and the girl, between the birth of a boy and the birth of a girl. And, then the sort of maltreatment which is being given to the daughters or to the girls in general, the poet also talks about all those children who actually do not have somebody to take their care or somebody to care for them.

So, one can also find that humanity--- what sort of humanity is it when we are having a sort of deserted outlook. And, the poet says what right have we over the sprawling desert of humanity? What right we have to add to our own deserts, by deserts actually he means the sort of dryness where there is no emotion, where there is no stability, where sentiments are perhaps for a different world. To our own deserts of the heart and the mind, when we already know that we could not possibly help a single seed grow into its own tree.

It actually gives us a picture of the modern world, where we are living in a waste land and we are thinking of showing seeds so, that the tree will grow up. But, then the poet says it is not the real condition, the real condition is that we are living in an age where our hearts are all parched, where our hearts are all dry. We are devoid of all sorts of emotion and that is why what we are waiting for? We are actually waiting for rains.

The rains of fertility--- rain has been permanent, you know, theme in the poems of a Bibhu Padhi and where he says—“But then the erratic rains/ had started falling and we were/ required back elsewhere,/ we walked back your umbrella/ offering me my much needed shelter.” So, in this poem, I mean, this has been taken from one of the sections and in this poem. The poet actually thinks of an imaginative daughter.

So, that he could be, I mean the person of the poet could be led by when he could have caught the fingers, when he could have got a shelter. The poet also talks about how the old people, how the senior citizens are often left and then their sons are not in a position to take their care and that is why he says-- let me think of those dream children.

Let me think of those daughters whose umbrella can save me not only from this scorching rays of the sun, but also from the rains. So, there is actually a yearning for a shelter and this shelter can be provided or offered by find none other than a daughter. So, if one can go through the entire collection, one can find how the poet’s heart weeps at the mentality of those parents who actually make a sort of discrimination between a boy and a girl.

And, they give, they do not provide a sort of equal opportunity and treatment to boy as well as to girl. Then comes *Migratory Days*, let us also because you know it will be very difficult for me to talk about all the poems, but I can simply try to familiarize you with some of the collections. This *Migratory Days* is again very symbolic, where the poet talks about three journeys and these are travel journeys.

So, a travel diary of three places namely of Hyderabad, Trivandrum and Calcutta. Now, here the poet actually comes out of the background of Cuttack and here he talks about three places, namely three cities Hyderabad, Trivandrum and Calcutta and these journeys were undertaken because of some need or the other. So, here travel has been used as a metaphor.

But, then through this travel the poet actually talks about some larger meanings, some larger realities, the conflict between the mind and the matter and then how he says that when a person is displaced he may himself feel to be lonely. But then he says when you are displaced, this displacement actually brings you closer to another human being. All of us are actually moving towards a sort of uncertainty.

And, that is why we should never think that there is a certainty in life, we can take some of the lines where the poet actually becomes very philosophical rather he tries to show us all, he tries to make us all aware of a sort of reality when he says that leaving is dying.

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Migratory Days (2011)

- A travel diary of three places: Hyderabad, Trivandrum and Calcutta
- Travel used as a metaphor
- Conflict between mind and matter
- Displacement brings humans closer
- All of us are moving towards an uncertainty

Leaving is dying, if
Dying is what we are told it is.
And hence, I couldn't just leave.
"I am leaving. Let us be happy
though, for we all are leaving
anyway, for a better place,
But shall be here again
and sooner than you think." (38)


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“Leaving is dying, if dying is what we are told it is,”. If you simply, we have been told that dying is what we are told, leaving is dying, when somebody leaves it is just like death, fine. So, he tries to find some extra meaning even in ordinary things and hence I could not just leave, “I am leaving. Let us be happy/ though, for we all are leaving/ anyway for a better place.” So, there is a sort of admission, there is a sort of confession that this stay on this earth is not permanent, this is temporal. Our stay is temporal on this earth, but shall be here again and sooner than you think.”

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“What the Doctor Said”

"It is usual at this age, this time . of the year. He must not miss A single dose, it is the accuracy.	as if trying to fathom the effect of what happened in each of us, what we thought of it. And then all three of us.
Which matters much. Otherwise, there is every chance that it will return at this time every year."	"He has improved, remarkably, faster than I had thought or imagined and it is a good sign for the future.
The doctor called each of us in, separately-. my cousin, his wife, me, as if there was a story in each of us,	But you must bear in mind that <u>there's someone with you who is</u> <u>as important as you are, someone</u>

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In the same collection *Migratory Days*, there is a poem which also even though the poem is crafted in a way when the poet has to go to visit his ailing cousin. But, then through that he also tries to make a sort of poetic reality which may, in course of time, appear to be, because as a poet, the poet also is at times frightened of the impending reality that is before us.

And so, when he got the news that his cousin was ill and he went there all of a sudden, I mean to Trivandrum, this is from the Trivandrum section where he says, “It is usual at his at this age, this time/ of the year. He must not miss/ a single dose.... the doctor says “which matters much otherwise /there is every chance that it will/ return at this time every year./ The doctor called each of us in/ separately my cousin, his wife,/ me, as if there was a story in each of us,/ as if trying to fathom the effect of what/ happened in each of us, what we thought/ of it and then all three of us/. And the doctor says, “He has improved remarkably, faster than I had thought or imagined./And, it is a good sign for the future,/ but you must bear in mind/ that there is someone with you who is/ as important as you are, someone/” fine. So, as I have been saying that a Padhi is a poet where there is always an invisible you, who is this invisible you? The invisible you is your own self.

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Contd...

who even now, is hardly capable taking good care of himself someone who, needs love and care.	I arrived at Prasanthi Nagar. Words may not be true, are in fact not, and they could
I struggled to pray for him but the words had left me a long rime ago, long before	Will be mistaken for other words, other thoughts or plans for the year.

Swajati 20

And, the poet here says that “there is some someone with you who is as important as you are, someone/ who even now is hardly capable taking good care of himself,/ someone he need who needs love and care.” I mean the situation is such that this person has to take care of himself, but the doctor says in a way. “I arrived at Prasanthi Nagar words may not be true/ are in fact, not and they could/ will be mistaken for/ other words, other thoughts/ or plans for the year.”

So, there are times when we must try to understand what message is hidden in the words because, words which are already communicated or said they may not be true, but then they are for other words as well and then one needs to understand this. Before, we wind up this talk, let me also touch upon very briefly about one very important collection which is entitled *Brief Seasons*, which is out and out a collection which is full of love.

And, here one can find not only a sort of conversational language being used, but again all these poems are addressed to a lover or to a beloved or somebody who is very close to somebody who is very intimate. And, then the poet also talks about how when a person is in love and how he becomes impatient and he conveys it in the form of a poem.

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Brief Seasons (2013)

All the watches of the world
were faster at least by
half-a-day that day.
I don't know from which of us
the long wish came---
the wish to know
one feels to find
all the watches stopping,
forgetting their very own
time and place. (Song No. 12)

Love is where blood is---
blood issuing out of blood,
dissolving into blood.
Love is where our gods are,
supporting one another,
enjoying each other's company.
Love is where blood is,
has to be. (Song No. 26)

swajati 21

When he says, “all the watches of the world/ were faster at least by/ half a day that day./ I do not know from which of us/ the long wish came,/ the wish to know/ one feels to find/ all the watches stopping,/ forgetting their very own/ time and place.” So, love is such a feeling where people want that time should stand/ stop, still and the poet in a very subtle manner the poet says.

If all the watches of the world were faster at least by half a day that day if it could have been possible, but is that possible? *Brief Seasons* find that life is full of and then once again we are reminded of what D. H. Lawrence believed in the relationship of blood. And, in the next song number 26th, the poet says- “Love is where blood is/ and in this poem you can find the use of blood several times.

“Love is where blood is /blood issuing out of blood,/ dissolving into blood. Love is where our gods are/ supporting one another,/ enjoying each other’s company.” Love is where blood is to be. Love is actually such a feeling, but what is happening in the present day world is—love, that true, the love that we are hankering after? Perhaps not, but the poet also tries to say here that we should always think of relations.

And, these relations may be the relations not only of two people who are entwined in love, but also those people who are intimately related to you traditionally, who are related to you in a sort of bond, your own relatives. So, the loss of relationship is also a

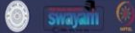
common theme in the poetic world of Bibhu Padhi. Again, in two poems I am tempted to take here.

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Contd...

Today, looking at
your absent photograph,
I begin to wonder
if the woman I am looking at
is still you.
Please do not come between
your pictures and me.
Why does one have to change?
Why do we have to grow?
(Song No. 49)

The heart remembers.
Remembers yesterday, what
happened, what didn't,
what could've happened.
it struggles to figure out
what might happen
if today were somewhere absorbed
by a much stronger yesterday.
The heart remembers
other places, still other places
that are so different from
those other places,
the countless rooms in which
it has spent its brooding time
until this room, this day.
(Song No. 60)

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“Today looking at/ your absent photograph,/ I begin to wonder/ if the woman I am looking at/ is still you./ Please do not come between /your pictures and me./ Why does one have to change?/ Why do we have to grow?/” Love is innocent, love actually does not want any other force, love does not want us to be mature, love always wants us to be innocent in each other’s company.

And, the poet says even in absence I feel your presence and that is why he says your absent photograph and I do not want, I begin to wonder if the woman I am looking at is still you. Do not come between your pictures and me let me visualize, let me preserve this love which perhaps I have lost. And, then the last song of this collection, the song number 60, where he says, ‘The heart remembers’ because Padhi is a poet of past, Padhi is a poet of memory, ‘remembers yesterday what/ happened, what did not,/ what could have happened./ It struggles to figure out/ what might happen,/ if today were somewhere absorbed/ by a much stronger yesterday,/ the heart remembers/ other places still other places/ that are so, different from/ those other places,/ the countless rooms in which/ it has spent its brooding time/ until this room, this day.’”

The poet says past may appear at times to be painful, but past has got such a sort of solace that all our frustrations, all our grudges, all our wounds can get a sort of relief, only in the past associations, only in the past times.

And, that is why he says what happened, what did not, what could have happened. So, one should not always think, one should not be deterministic rather in Padhi's world, we find a sort of indetermination. Again, there comes another collection that is *Midnight Dairy*. But, then I think we will not be able to, but then we can take only one poem.

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Midnight Dairy(2015)

If indeed all time were one time
and ours, you might venture forth,
claim things to your conscience's way.
But no, that is not true at all;
there still remain a whole lot of things,
to be taken care of in the midst of
other absences, and you need to know
how frail can be our human efforts
to sort out all that we have had already
or going to have in their natural order .

(from "There is always room for Excuses")

But I know I can't decide on anything,
having been here for so many years,
always worried over letting my house

On rent, finding a willing companion
for sharing the night air trembling with
lost friends and enemies, children and wives

Fathers and mothers, the earth's
mean, immeasurable history
of heartless consumers and landlords.

Again the night is thick with memories.
and I need someone to be with me
to share my own worthless vanities.

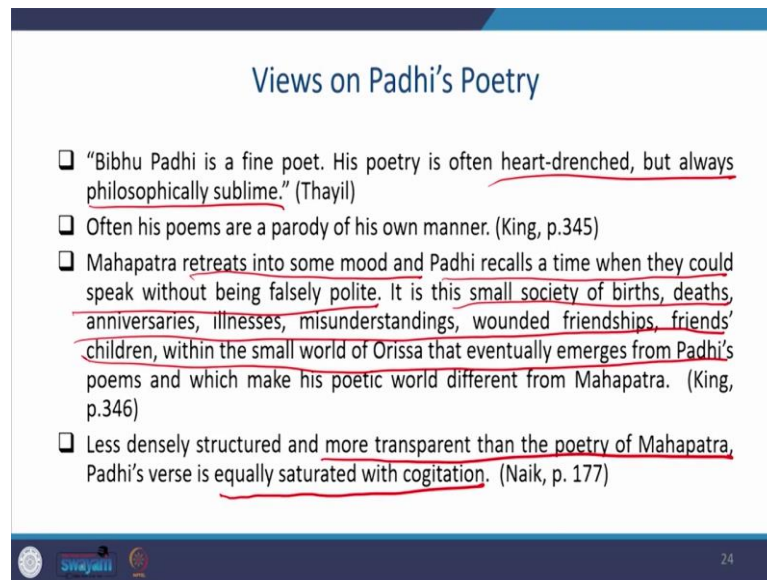
("Perhaps This is What I Need")

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“If indeed all time were one time/ and hours, you might venture forth/” and it reminds me and it can also remind you of Andrew Marvel where he says- Had I, but the time and the world this coyness my dear lady were no crime. And he says, “But no that is not true at all,/ there still remains a whole lot of things/ to be taken care of/ in the midst of other absences you need to know.”

We believe in the present, but perhaps we ignore the absences and the absences keep of reoccurring, the absences keep on haunting us and those absences are not absences, they are actually presences. So, having discussed the world of Padhi, we can also take up some comment and conclude.

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The slide is titled "Views on Padhi's Poetry" and contains four bullet points, each with a small square icon. The text in the bullet points is underlined in red. The slide also features a blue header and footer with logos and the number 24.

- ❑ "Bibhu Padhi is a fine poet. His poetry is often heart-drenched, but always philosophically sublime." (Thayil)
- ❑ Often his poems are a parody of his own manner. (King, p.345)
- ❑ Mahapatra retreats into some mood and Padhi recalls a time when they could speak without being falsely polite. It is this small society of births, deaths, anniversaries, illnesses, misunderstandings, wounded friendships, friends' children, within the small world of Orissa that eventually emerges from Padhi's poems and which make his poetic world different from Mahapatra. (King, p.346)
- ❑ Less densely structured and more transparent than the poetry of Mahapatra, Padhi's verse is equally saturated with cogitation. (Naik, p. 177)

“Padhi is a fine poet. His poetry is often heart drenched, but always philosophically sublime”; says Jeet Thayli another contemporary poet. If we have to compare the poems of Padhi with that of Mahapatra because, in both of them are this regional landscapes, they actually get prominent places. So, here what Bruce King says is very important. “Mahapatra retreats into some mood and Padhi recalls a time when they could speak without being falsely polite. It is this a small society of births, deaths, anniversaries, illness, misunderstandings, wounded friendships, friends’ children, within the small world of Orissa that emerges from Padhi’s poems and which make his poetic world different from that of Mahapatra.” And, what M K Naik says is also very significant. He says—“Less densely structured and more transparent,”... because one does not have to. There is no other meaning because, the flow is so continuous, so spontaneous, “more transparent than the poetry of Mahapatra.” It will actually be a very difficult for many of us to unravel the world of Jayanth Mahapatra.

But, the world of Bibhu Padhi is so transparent and the lines flow so smoothly, that ‘it appears to be equally saturated with a sort of cogitation,’ with a sort of quest my dear friend. A quest for the self, a quest for the mind, a quest not for the matter, but a quest into the past unfolding memories. So, before I come to wind up this talk, let me take some of the lines from one of his poems, “Waiting for Rain,” where he says.

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"I'm yet to learn how to arrange my words
in an order acceptable to men or God.
On the far horizon in the north, behind
a solitary tree, a cloud remains
entangled among ancient branches,
hardly caring to know that
there is a land here, waiting for rain." ("Waiting for Rain")

Thank You

Swajati 25

"I am yet to learn how to arrange my words/ in an order acceptable to men or God./ On the far horizon in the north, behind/ a solitary tree, a cloud remains/ entangled among ancient branches/ hardly caring to know that/ there is a land here, waiting for rain." There is a land here waiting for rain and one can make, one can extract greater meanings. There is a heart waiting for fertility, there is a heart waiting for union, there is a heart waiting for the union of two souls, the soul lost in the past and the body still suffering. So, this continues the struggle one can find in the poetic realm of Bibhu Padhi.

Thank you very much. With this we come to the end of today's talk.