

**Indian Poetry in English**  
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**Lecture - 09**  
**Jayanta Mahapatra**


Good morning, friends. You are listening to NPTEL online lectures on Indian Poetry in English and the lectures are being delivered by Binod Mishra. My dear friends, in the previous lectures, you have already learnt how Indian poetry in English began and then the previous lecture we had started early modern poetry in English, where we had discussed the poems of Nissim Ezekiel, who is considered to be a master poet.

And today we are going to talk about Jayanta Mahapatra--- another important figure without whom Indian English poetry seems to be incomplete. But before we look into the works of Jayanta Mahapatra and we realize the poetic sparks that Mahapatra had created, it would be quite pertinent to know some something about the poet, his background the surroundings that he was in and also socio-political climate.

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### Socio-Political Conditions

- ❖ Post-Independence India
- ❖ Emergency in 1975 ,Terrorism in 1980s & Bhopal Gas Tragedy 1984
- ❖ Rising Intolerance
- ❖ 2015: Mahapatra protested against growing 'moral asymmetry' in the country by returning the Padma Shri .



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Because it is always the sociopolitical climate that prompts a poet and of course, propels him not only to show his sparks, but also allows him the weapon to face several challenges and to answer several challenges.

The political condition that India had attained during the time of Mahapatra was an India which had already got its freedom and as I have been saying that with freedom came not only many responsibilities, but also several challenges which had to be faced. So, it was a post- independent India, specially of 1960s and 70s and after that when we had our own government own system the challenges that arose in the form of several political impediments which humanity had to test the bitterness of it.

It was, one such was emergency in 1975. And then again terrorism as many of you might be aware of and then there were several other tragic incidents like Bhopal gas tragedy and others which actually catapulted the minds of many poets and provided them a lot of substance for their poetry. It was a sort of atmosphere where it appeared that political indifference was too much and that also led to a sort of intolerance and the poets also cannot remain unaffected by this.


You already might have heard that, there were many poets and creative writers who actually returned their awards and here I am reminded of Mahapatra also protesting against such sort of political uncertainties and he had returned Padma Shri in 2015.

So, these were some of the brief pieces of information, but then who this Mahapatra was, and how he started. So, let us have a look at Mahapatra's early career.

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Introduction to the poet

- ❖ Born in 1928, Cuttack, Orissa
- ❖ Family: Christian Convert
- ❖ Christian upbringing in a Hindu dominated society.
- ❖ Oriya
- ❖ Physics Teacher of Ravenshaw University,
- ❖ turned to poetry late in life.
- ❖ Culturally and geographically restricted to Orissa.
- ❖ Deep understanding of the Indian environment.
- ❖ A bi-lingual poet and essayist
- ❖ Literary Magazine: *Chandrabhaga*



Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981  
Padma Shri in 2009  
Returned in 2015

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Jayanta Mahapatra, who actually became very famous though too late because he started writing poetry in his 40s, I mean it is said that when he was 38, he began writing poetry he was not like other poets whom we have discussed, to whom these parts came are too early.

So, Mahapatra was born in 1928, in pre-independent India., He could see both the faces of India---- the pre- independent India and the independent India. Born in Cuttack of Orissa. Mahapatra's poetry is supposed to be steeped in Oriyan culture in Oriyan traditions, but then that actually becomes a matter of debate as to whether Mahapatra should be confined or should be called only a traditional or a native or a regional poet.

Right from the beginning of his life, Mahapatra had seen several faces because his forefathers even though they were Hindus, they had converted themselves to Christianity. So, it was only from the beginning that Mahapatra had to discover his own identity and he was living in an age of conflict---- conflict not only inside, but conflict outside as well.

One thing which is very important to know about Mahapatra is that Mahapatra basically was a physics teacher. He did his M.Sc. in physics and he served as a physics teacher in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. His education took him to several places, but then once he started writing poetry and Mahapatra was a bilingual poet he wrote in two languages both in English as well as in Oria.

But then majority of his poems are restricted to Orissa, the Orissan landscape and the various problems that Orissa had seen--- like say the famine, the poverty and if one has to look at the entire corpus of Jayanta Mahapatra one could find that there were several issues that Mahapatra has delineated in his poetry.

Now, one thing which is once again very significant to note that Mahapatra is still there and he is in his 90s.He is in his 90s. So, he can be considered to be a living legend. Since he had throughout been in Orissa as a poet working in Ravenshaw college from where he retired he was very active and he continued writing even though age was on his side, fine, but yet with ripening years Jayanta Mahapatra also grew.

He was also editing a journal named *Chandrabhaga*. He got several awards-- he actually got Sahitya Akademi award in 1981, and then later on in 2009, he got Padma Shri which

he returned in 2015. Now, Mahapatra even though he started his career late, I mean career as a poet he started late, but then he has got a good number of volumes poetic volumes to his credit.

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So, here you can find the list of his poetic works he started with *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* and it is said that his early poetry was full of intellectualism. At several places he has himself said that he was actually trying to talk to his own self----- from the self to the other that is actually a journey that one can witness in the poetic works of Mahapatra.

So, *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* is more willed by intellect than emotion. We can find Mahapatra's poetry even though as many critics and writers have said that it is steeped in past, but Mahapatra is the poet of silence and since science was his background. So, we can find there a conflict between silence and science, science and fiction, silence and noises, and throughout you can find a beautiful delineation of all these.

Next to come was *Svayamvara and Other Poems*, where there is a recurring vocabulary and it is said that words become concept in the world of a Jayanta Mahapatra. And then came *Rain of Rites*. This *Rain of Rites* one must not confuse that the *Rain of Rites* talks about rains, rather it actually talks about the legends, the history, the myths and many more.

A rain is actually a symbol, you know. Poets have got symbols as a weapon and through symbols of rain, he talks about fertility, he talks about-- say progress, he talks about destruction, he talks about the difficult, different, distinct times, he talks about the flowering, he talks about, I mean there are end number of things that he discusses because with symbols, symbols actually provide him a sort of weapon to answer several challenges.

Then comes in 1979, *A Father's Hours*, then comes *Waiting* which actually talks about the conflict between the waiting of a child and the waiting of an adult and how because Mahapatra himself had said that poetry has to reveal, but when poetry has to reveal, I mean, it should not reveal in a way that it just becomes like prose.

Because, through Mahapatra's opinion, poetry should have a different language and you will find when we discuss some of his poems you will find how he violates, how he actually distinguishes a poetic language or literary language from the language of the common people.

Then comes *Relationship*, which once again talks about myths, legends and history. There one can find a sort of inner conflict. At times it is seen that the journey from the outside to the inside and from the inside to the outside is also witnessed. So, the space of feeling, the inner space of feeling is what we can find. And then comes *Life Signs*-- it was actually *Relationship* for which he got Sahitya Akademi award in 1981.

And then came *Life Signs*, where actually he talks about poetry, sometimes he talks about how what he really wants to say because at times he says what it is and what it is not.

So, this journey can be considered to be a sort of poetic process. And then comes, *Burden of Waves* and *Fruits* then *Whiteness of Bones*. *The Whiteness of Bones*, again is very symbolical and it appears that the poet has grown from the innocence to experience where whiteness again once again is very symbolical because whiteness can refer to so many things because here he talks about *Whiteness of Bones*, I mean, he talks about the utility and futility of life.

And behind this utility and futility of life also through symbols he talks of several things that we can find an echo and an inspiration of many modern day poets like Ezra Pound

and T S Eliot, fine; we will come across some of the lines in order to show you how Mahapatra has grown from a poet of passion to a poet of performance to a poet of realization, to a poet of extreme consciousness that is what Mahapatra's forte should be remembered for.

Even though there are very few poems you cannot find Mahapatra's confinement to a particular reason, to a particular land, but then he talks of memories, he talks of guilt, he talks of suffering, he talks of poverty, he talks of the plight and the miserable condition of women, he also talks about animals, birds and so many things.

And Orissan landscape has got a permanent place in the poetic world of Jayanta Mahapatra, it is said that Mahapatra was actually trying to build a sort of bridge from the local to the universal, from the local to the global. Then comes *Bare Face* which came out in 2000 and then *Land* which got published in 2013.

Now, as I have been telling that when a poet has got such a vast range because Mahapatra cannot be confined even though past is a recurring theme in majority of his poems and at times we find because he says that poetry is a moment of isolation, poetry is a moment of silence, it is a moment of loneliness, it is a moment of emptiness and at several places he has said, once he has already written the words because after you have written the words or composed the words then only poetry has got no meaning.

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The slide features a title 'Themes of Mahapatra's Poems' in a blue font. Below the title is a list of six themes, each preceded by a checkmark. The slide has a dark blue header and footer. The footer contains a logo on the left, the text 'swajati' in the center, and the number '5' on the right.

### Themes of Mahapatra's Poems

- ✓ Prevalence of 'silence', Loneliness, and emptiness
- ✓ Introspective preoccupation
- ✓ Historical, cultural and social themes
- ✓ Ironic reflections on love, sex, and politics
- ✓ Juxtaposition of images and symbols – (Bery)
- ✓ Death, disease, decay, lepers, beggars, poverty.

So, the major aim of poetry is actually to represent the voice of the unsaid, my dear friend! There is a sort of introspection--- introspective preoccupation in majority of his poems where his poems range from historical to cultural and also to social themes; if time permits I will take one or two poems where I can show you how Mahapatra tries to distinguish the literary language from the common man's language.

Mahapatra's world, to quote one of the poets, who says that 'I had no speech, but metaphors' and in Mahapatra's world also you can find there is abundance of metaphors imageries rivers, sky, sea, crows, animals, birds; I mean quite a good number of imageries is there.

And then even many people have come to the extent of experiencing that Mahapatra's poetic world is very difficult and to that Mahapatra himself says that it is not easy it is not quite easy to write a poem because you know poems actually take time and as we all know that poetry is a sort of recollected emotions in tranquility and that Mahapatra also follows.

But then, Mahapatra is not unaffected by several challenges which Orissa had been a witness to for example, poverty- stricken and in majority of his poems you can also find a background of Jagannath, I mean Puri where he mentions the landscape of Puri, I mean Lord Jagannath and then there he also talks about several other details like beggars, lepers and all. So, in Mahapatra's world both princes and paupers get space and that is very significant of Mahapatra, my dear friends.

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- Certain vagueness in his poems provides them with their Indian sensibility.
- Striking images
- Colloquial
- Ellipsis
- Wisdom from cultural legacy
- Poetic Geography: Puri

"Physics taught me to write with a consciousness, not to use the 'unnecessary word' in a poem."  
- Mahapatra

"Poems need to be revelatory, they should show something that *has not been shown before*. If it offers something new, either through images or through statements made, then the poem has possibly done what it was meant to do. If you look at all the best poets we have had, they've always been spiritual people. They have always looked upwards. A good poem should lift you from the plane we live in, this mundane plane that we exist in now, into something a little higher. It's a sort of prayer, worship, *sadhana*. If it does not take us higher, of what use is that poem?"

Now, at times his poems appear to be very vague, but then this vagueness is a quality there is a vagueness in poems, but then this vagueness provides his poetic world with a sort of Indian sensibility because he himself says about poetry as I had been sharing with you, my dear friends,----- poems need to be revelatory they should show something that has not been shown before. I mean it is very easy to show what is there, but what Mahapatra says is that a poet should show what has not been shown before.

If it offers something new-- either through images or through statements made, then the poem has possibly done what it was meant to. So, the aim of poetry is to show what has not been seen. Poets as we all say that the poets have got the third eye, my dear friend. If you look at all the best poets we have had they have always been spiritual people, they have always looked upwards-- a good poem should lift you from the plane. So, when he says from the plane we live in, I mean he talks about the ordinary, the commonplace experiences to be given a sort of super experience, my dear friend.

This expression has to get a sort of significance. This mundane plane that we exist in now has got something a little higher, it is a sort of prayer, poetry is a way of life, it is a sort of *sadhana* it is a sort of penance. If it does not take us higher, of what use is that poem.

So, for those people who think that Mahapatra's world is very intricate, very difficult and his poems are also very difficult, many people are not able to understand. For them this



is the answer when he says if it does not take us higher if a poem does not make you think what good use is a poem.

Because Mahapatra was a man of science--- a man of physics that is why the images which you will find my dear friend, the images are quite striking. It may remind us of a sort of the wit fine of a sort of wit and conceit that many of us English lovers have found in the poetry of John Donne.

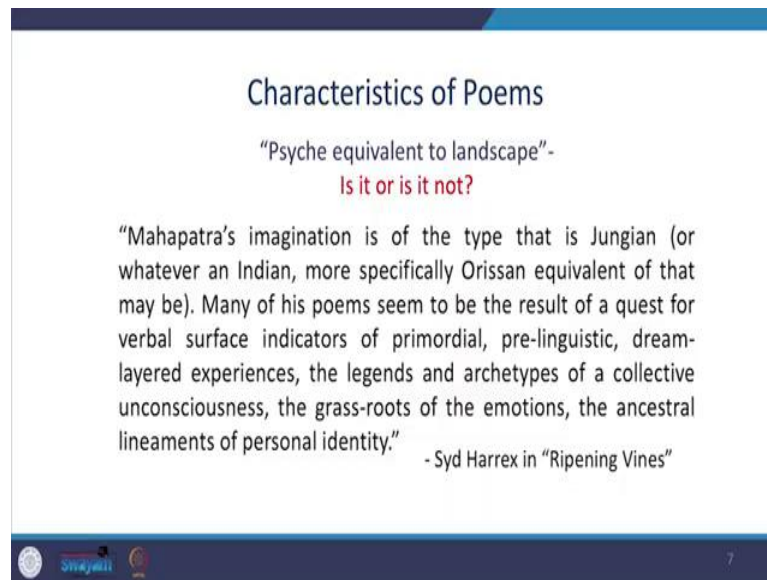
Of course, we do not get so many surprises, but then we can get many striking images and these striking images actually hinge upon a wisdom from cultural legacy, of course. The poetic geography or the landscape is Puri and that is why I would really I cannot stop myself from taking up a poem named "Dawn at Puri" and once we see that poem and you will also find how Mahapatra is different and why Mahapatra is distinct as an Indian English poet, my dear friend.

He himself had said, physics taught me to write with a consciousness, with a consciousness Mahapatra cannot be considered simply to be a poet who actually sings of romantic sparks and all. Mahapatra's poetic world is full of pains, trials, tribulations and we are reminded of P B Shelley who says our sweetest songs are those that consist of our saddest thought and Mahapatra's world is also suffused with pain, my dear friend. Because without pain there cannot be poetry that is what Mahapatra himself believes.

He says that physics helped him gain a sort of consciousness not to use the unnecessary word that is why when we read Mahapatra's poems we will find that there is a sort of precision, there is a sort of conciseness words used are not difficult my dear friend; images may be difficult, but then for that you will have to have some patience, my dear friend.

Of course, what Mahapatra believes is that one has to have a sort of imagination and it is only through imagination that we can meander through the sparks and furies; sparks and furies that can lead to ashes. In Mahapatra's world we find the use of ashes too much, the ash which is burnt out of which is the remnant of fire because Mahapatra believes that ultimately all our lives are towards the end it is, but nothing. So, one can find there are layers of interpretations-- one when one roams or when one really steals through the world of Mahapatra.

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The slide has a white background with a blue header and footer. The title 'Characteristics of Poems' is centered in a dark blue font. Below it, a quote is presented in black text, with the phrase 'Is it or is it not?' highlighted in red. The quote is attributed to Syd Harrex in 'Ripening Vines'. The footer contains a small logo on the left and the number '7' on the right.

Characteristics of Poems

“Psyche equivalent to landscape”-  
**Is it or is it not?**

“Mahapatra’s imagination is of the type that is Jungian (or whatever an Indian, more specifically Orissan equivalent of that may be). Many of his poems seem to be the result of a quest for verbal surface indicators of primordial, pre-linguistic, dream-layered experiences, the legends and archetypes of a collective unconsciousness, the grass-roots of the emotions, the ancestral lineaments of personal identity.” - Syd Harrex in “Ripening Vines”

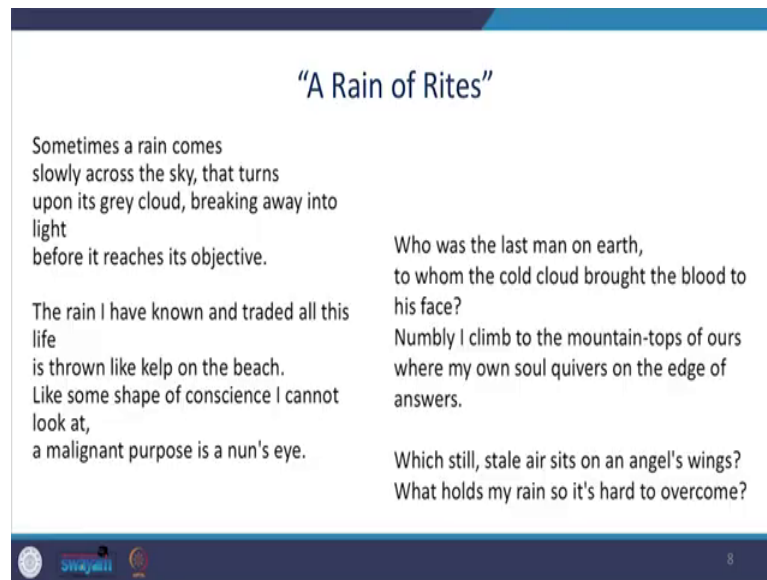
Mahapatra’s imagination, if we take a quote by Syd Harrex, who in “Ripening Vines”, says-- Mahapatra’s imagination is of the type that is Jungian or whatever an Indian, more specifically Orissan equivalent of that may be. Many of his poems seem to be the result of a quest.” This quest may be a sort of identity quest because he was a Christian convert. So, he was also trying to find out he was also trying to have his own identity and those identities he is also trying to find through his poems he is also trying to answer.

“Indicators of primordial, linguistic, dream layered experiences, the legends and archetypes of a collective unconsciousness collective unconsciousness.” So, once you start through the world of Mahapatra you will find that even though past is there, but past has been used as a sort of reminder to the new generation, to the upcoming generation of how we have left our traditions behind.

My dear friends, we all know that any poet who compromises with tradition or who forsakes his tradition cannot be a good poet if we are reminded of what T S Eliot says. So, Mahapatra follows that and through the past he also tries to provide mankind a sort of legislation the grassroots of emotions, the ancestral lineaments of personal identity and this personal identity Mahapatra was actually trying to find.

Now, let us take some poems in order to justify what we have been saying about Mahapatra and in order also to testify what a great poet Mahapatra was.

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Now, here you can find the title of the poem is “A Rain of Rites” and it is from that collection *Rain of Rites* where if you have a look at the lines you will find that right from the beginning the poet actually takes a symbol as a weapon and then he makes a sort of soul searching.

Let us read the poem in order to get the substance or the nuances of how the poet begins the journey of self-discovery:

Sometimes a rain comes/ slowly across the sky, that turns/ upon its grey cloud, / breaking away into light before it reaches its objective.

So, here rain is very symbolical, rain symbolizes here fertility, creation.

“The rain I have known and traded all this life/ is thrown like kelp on the beach,”

This kelp is a sort of sea-wood and he says throughout the sort of rain I have experienced they are just like seaweeds ‘like some shape of conscience I cannot look at a malignant purpose in a nun’s eye.’

Here he talks about the meaninglessness, the fruitlessness of this life, the insignificance of this human life:

who was the last man on earth,  
to whom the cold cloud brought the blood to his face?

Numbly I climb to the mountain-tops of ours  
where my own soul quivers on the edge of answers.

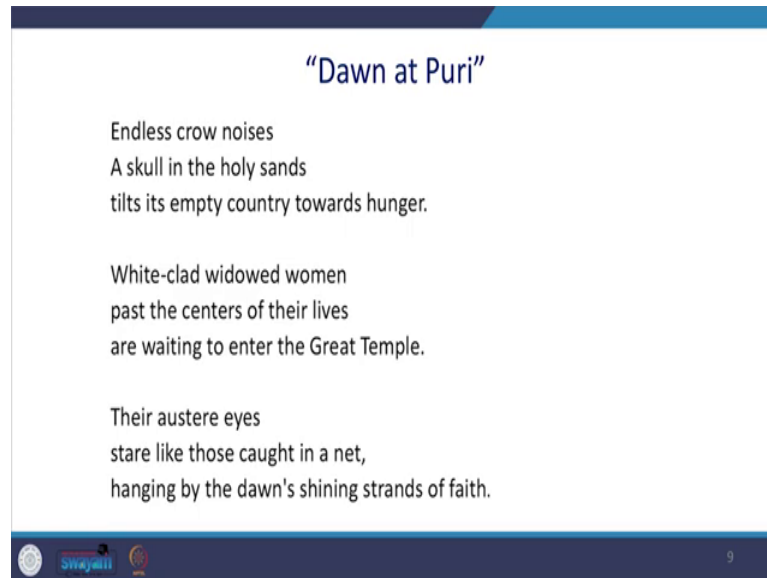
So, I am trying to seek several answers where my soul is searching this search may be anything. this may be a search for identity, this may be a search for a sort of a spiritual journey, this may be a search for his roots ‘which still, stale air sits on an angels wings?’

Stale air once again reminding us of our past stale air sits on an angel’s wings/ what holds my rain so, it is hard to overcome. So, to me why what is it that stoppeth me what is it that restricts my rain the rain of my life, the meaning of my life. So, this is the poet’s question and this is not only the poet’s question, even though we can say that the poet is actually trying to personalize it, but the poet tries to universalize it and all of us are in a rain of rites all of us are in a rain of such identity we are actually trying to discover such a sort of rain in our lives.

Now, my dear friends! One of the most famous and one of the most popular poems which have been prescribed in many universities colleges, schools and all that can actually give an inkling into the poetic corpus of Jayanta Mahapatra. The title of the poem is “Dawn at Puri.” And while analyzing I will try my level best to show how the poet actually tries to violate the common rules, the common people actually have in their psyche or in their knowledge.

But then he takes a very common experience of a dawn at Puri. This is not the Dawn that we had been talking about in Savitri this is the different Dawn, a common dawn where the poet simply looks at and in his imaginative eye then suddenly he is transported to a different world. Let me read the poem so that you can find out the beautiful meaning which is hidden or which has been transported in it.

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Now, see the poem begins:

Endless crow noises  
A skull in the holy sands  
tilts it empty country towards hunger.

The poet actually talks about hunger, but then there is a sea, then there is a Dawn at the sea beach at Puri and the poet simply says what he finds? He finds endless crow noises. So, what is there? The crow noises and those crow noises endless, my dear friend.

See, how the poem begins. The poem begins with an adjective and then comes the double nouns, the multiple nouns, compound nouns---- endless crow noises see a skull in the holy sands; a skull this skull is actually reminiscent of people who are already dead, our forefathers tilts it empty country towards hunger.

So, it is because of the hunger that we have lost many of our forefathers, many of our citizens, many of our near and dear ones and then what is there-- the crow simply the crow is cowing and the cowing of the crow has also got some symbolical meaning. So, the poet here makes use of symbol and the poet also makes you know, if we also analyze it stylistically we will find the poet actually tries to violate the common rules and the verb, the verb is in the third line, my dear friend.

White clad widowed women

past the centers of their lives

are waiting to enter the Great Temple.

And the poet also makes us aware of how the miserable condition of the white-clad women. Those women who have already been widows, they are clothed in white and their only center is towards the temple, my dear friend.

So, the temple also here stands as a sheltering ground for all those helpless people who have nobody to take care of, but here the poet says white-clad widowed women past the centers of their lives again. He makes use of the verb pass and he says past he makes use of past participle. So, there the poet actually makes use of foregrounding as a linguistic device here and the poet actually tries to say the language of common man and the language of literary and the language of literature is quite different.

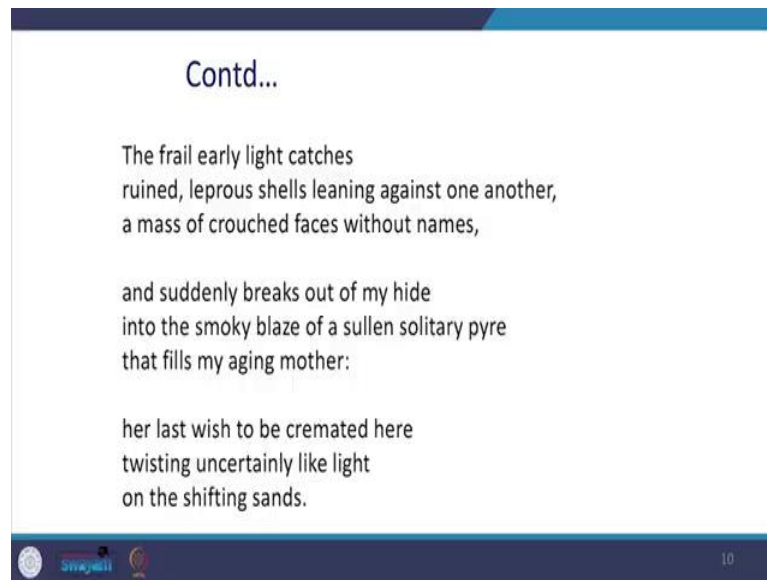
And then he says,

their austere eyes their austere eyes

stare like those caught in a net

Whose austere eyes? The austere eyes of these widowed women though they appear to be caught, they appear to be trapped 'hanging by the dawn shining strands of faith' and again the dawn here there is a personification, my dear friend; hanging by the dawn shining can the dawn shine. So, here is a reflection the morning sun comes and then the lives of all these widowed women they appear as if they have been caught and they appear hanging by the dawn shining strands of faith.

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The frail early light catches

The frail early-- so double adjectives have been used; ruined, leprous shells leaning against one another/, a mass of crouched faces without names,/  
and suddenly breaks out of my hide

into the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre.  
What happens?  
So, when I see this sullen solitary pyre near the seaside, then suddenly, I am transported to and I am reminded of my own mother's wish and then in the next stanza of the poet will say:

her last wish to be cremated here

twisting uncertainly like light  
on the shifting sands.

So, what the poet does? The poet actually looking at the dawn here, the poet has many things in his mind, the poet not only violates the standard English language, but since he is a poet he has got this license.

And then, what the poet does? The poet not only makes use of double nouns, he not only makes use of adjectives, but then he also makes us aware of what is our tradition what our forefathers, what our mothers used to think of and that is what the poet is actually reminded of? He is reminded of when he looks at this dawn, he is reminded of how his mother's last wish was to be cremated; because all our forefathers wanted to get a sort of salvation through this Swargadwar as they say.

So, there is actually a sort of intensity of conflict and this conflict is also the conflict of the poet's own self and from the poet's own self to the self of his own mother and the poet has also made use of *hide* which is used as a noun, but the poet has actually made its use as a verb. So, that is what makes this poem very beautiful, my dear friend.


If we make a proper thematic analysis of the poem, we can also get a lot of meanings as we have already discussed that even though the poet is discussing or delineating a landscape, but then he through this locale he actually tries to universalize it according to the Indian tradition where the Oriya sensibility is actually the representative of Indian sensibility all our forefathers wishing to be cremated at Puri, near the Swargadwar.



It is actually a conflict between faith and experience and when the poet says that endless crow noises fine; so on the one hand, he talks about this landscape; on the one hand, he talks about this picture, but on the other hand, when he comes to the end he says that the last wish of his own mother was to be cremated here.

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**Analysis of the Poem: "Dawn at Puri"**

- ❖ Description of the landscape of sea beach where funeral pyre keeps burning in Puri.
- ❖ Dwells on local details
- ❖ Meditative and hypnotic imagery
- ❖ Oriya sensibility
- ❖ Faith and experience
- ❖ Images palpitate with life
- ❖ Cremation at Puri *Swargadwar*



 Swayam  11

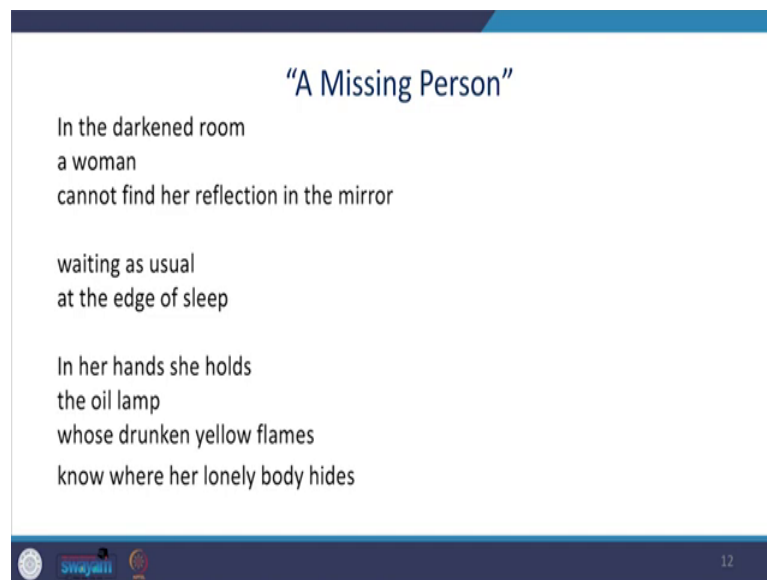


So, there is a sort of conflict between faith and experience and these images which the poet actually has provided here, palpitate with life, my dear friends.

Now, as I have been saying that even though Mahapatra's world is steeped in past Mahapatra is also affected by the condition of the women and in poem after poem, he says. There is actually a very famous poem which you can read at your own disposal "Whorehouse in Calcutta", where he talks about the prostitutes' pitiable condition and there he also takes a bite at the contemporary civilization; no, that how on one hand, you think of these people polluting, but why cannot you think of that these are the people who are also civilizing the world in a different way, my dear friend.

And then, he also talks about in "A Missing Person", he talks about a woman who is also trying to search her own identity because of the confinements that she has and she can only look at her own features and try to find out her own soul- searching where She, can simply find the yellow flames, the yellow flames of the lamp, which she is having where her lonely body hides.

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If you permit, may I read the lines in order to make it clear rather.

In the darkened room/ a woman/ cannot find her reflection in the mirror. /

In the darkened room, so dark symbolizes this ignorance, dark symbolizes the sort of tradition which actually has bolted the conscience of all these women. Their only

conscience is alive, but the patriarchal system-- what the patriarchal system has provided, her waiting as usual at the edge of sleep in her hands she holds the oil lamp whose drunken yellow flames know where her lonely body hides.

So, where is she; what is her identity? So, in poem after poem, he also talks about the miserable plight of women you can have a look at this poem where the status of the women has been shown in a very intentionally and in a very biting way, where the poet says.

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**Plight of Women**

“Where are things called homes  
sticky with toil; need after need  
tempts the fates to touch them,  
trap the homely, embarrassed hurt.

Year after year  
like onions and herbs hung out to dry  
their hearts heavy  
the quiet too long.  
What do they live for(.....)  
They seed, though.” (“A Rain of Rites”)

Where are the things called homes/ sticky with toil; need after need/ tempts the fates to touch them,/ trap the homely, embarrassed hurt.

Look at the lines- look at the words are the words difficult no, but these words are actually soaked in pain, hurt, embarrassed, sticky, fine; need after need, year after year; look at this stanza how symbolical it is, but how beautifully and candidly, it actually delineates the condition of women.

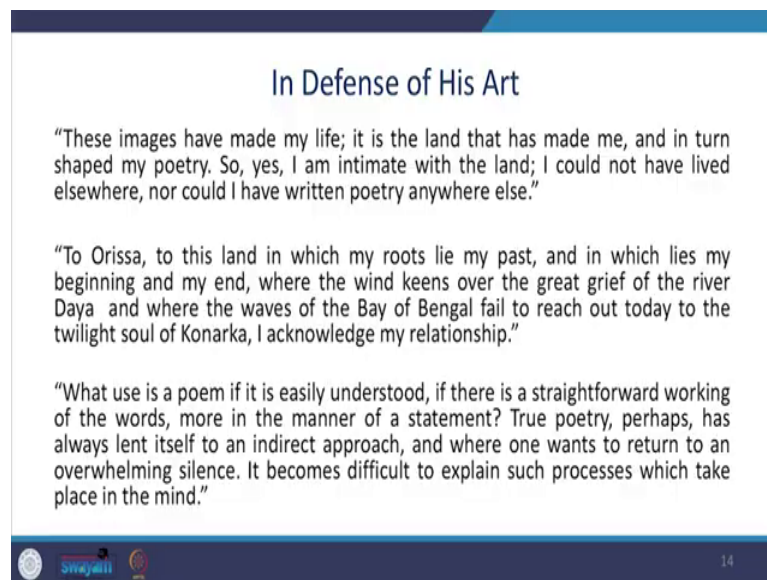
Year after year;/  
I mean repetitive,  
like onions and herbs hung out too dry  
their hearts heavy  
the quite too long.

Silence they have been silenced; they do not have a voice of their own fine. Their hearts heavy, the quite too long. What do they live for; what is the meaning and significance of life for them when their lips are tight and when they are only waiting on the edges of the sleep, what do they live for; and then in a very typical one line, the poet says ‘they seed though.’

I mean, see, how the poet actually takes a dig that these women who are considered to be the mother of civilization after civilization, they have actually been silenced, but they have simply been allowed to have their sustenance; only because why? They seed though those who are the creators they actually have been put to silence they do not have their identity of their own, my dear friends.

Now, you also come across several, you know several attacks on the poetic world of Mahapatra where many people say that Mahapatra’s poetic world is too intricate, too difficult and he is confined only to Orissa only to Oriyan landscape. In defense of his own art what Mahapatra says is an eye opener.

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The slide is titled "In Defense of His Art" and contains three quotes from Mahapatra. The first quote is: "These images have made my life; it is the land that has made me, and in turn shaped my poetry. So, yes, I am intimate with the land; I could not have lived elsewhere, nor could I have written poetry anywhere else." The second quote is: "To Orissa, to this land in which my roots lie my past, and in which lies my beginning and my end, where the wind keens over the great grief of the river Daya and where the waves of the Bay of Bengal fail to reach out today to the twilight soul of Konarka, I acknowledge my relationship." The third quote is: "What use is a poem if it is easily understood, if there is a straightforward working of the words, more in the manner of a statement? True poetry, perhaps, has always lent itself to an indirect approach, and where one wants to return to an overwhelming silence. It becomes difficult to explain such processes which take place in the mind." The slide also features a logo for "Swayam" and the number "14" in the bottom right corner.

What he said is, “These images have made my life; it is the land that has made me, and in turn shaped my poetry. So, yes, I am intimate with the land; I could not have lived elsewhere, I could not have lived elsewhere, nor could I have written poetry anywhere else.”

So, Mahapatra is not ashamed when somebody calls his poetry to be steeped only in a particular landscape and only in a particular reason he is rather proud and he says that, I could not have written had I lived elsewhere. And then to this land “to this land Orissa”, he says. ‘to this land in which my roots lie my past, and which lies my beginning and my end where the wind keens over the great grief of the river Daya and where the waves of the Bay of Bengal fail to reach out today to the twilight and soul of Konarka, I acknowledge my relationship”, Fine? .

So, he makes a very candid confession and as I have been saying that he is not only a poet of guilt, a poet of confession, but he is also a poet who actually is proud of his own landscape, his own land. And about his poetry, because many people you might have yourself experienced that Mahapatra’s vocabulary is very simple even though the imagery is difficult, but then what he says is -what use is a poem if it is easily understood.

Those people who consider his poem difficult, to them it is a very pertinent answer. What use is a poem if it is easily understood, if there is a straightforward working of the words more in the manner of a statement? True poetry, perhaps has always lent itself to an indirect approach. You remember, what he said, what has not been shown has to be shown and that should actually be the aim of poetry.

And he rightly says good poetry has always lent itself to an indirect approach and where one wants to return to an overwhelming silence. It becomes difficult to explain such processes which take place in the mind.

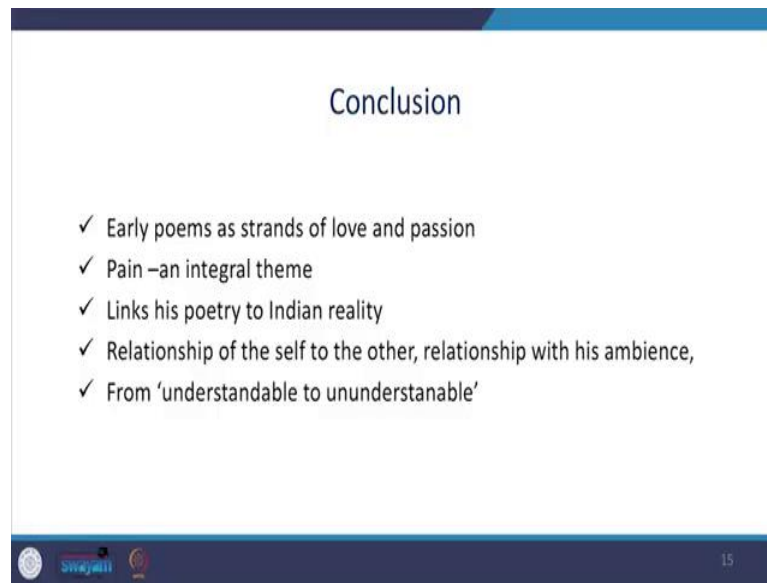
So, Mahapatra is very clear in terms of his art, in terms of his association in a particular landscape with a particular reason. So, having looked at two or three small poems now you can create your own impression of Mahapatra and here a sort of conclusion that we can draw, but you are free to make your own conclusions. But my only request is while reading Mahapatra please have some patience so, that you can get the proper meaning because poetry, according to Mahapatra, is not a straightforward poetry has to be indirect.

So, Mahapatra’s earlier poems where he has talked about the atrocities on women, the rapes of women, of little girl being sold, a day and night and whatsoever and then

because of poverty and he himself is a case in point how his own religion was converted from Hindu to a Christianity.

So, his early poems are actually strains of love and passion, but then as a poet Mahapatra has grown after 70's where we find pain to be a sort of recurrent theme of his poems. Poem poems after poems you can find are replete with pain and pain is a sort of integral theme in his.

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Actually, it is his pain that links his poetry to Indian reality because Indian reality is not about the skyscrapers and whatsoever we are witnessing today. So, Mahapatra has very beautifully presented Indian reality without any hiding or without any pretext.

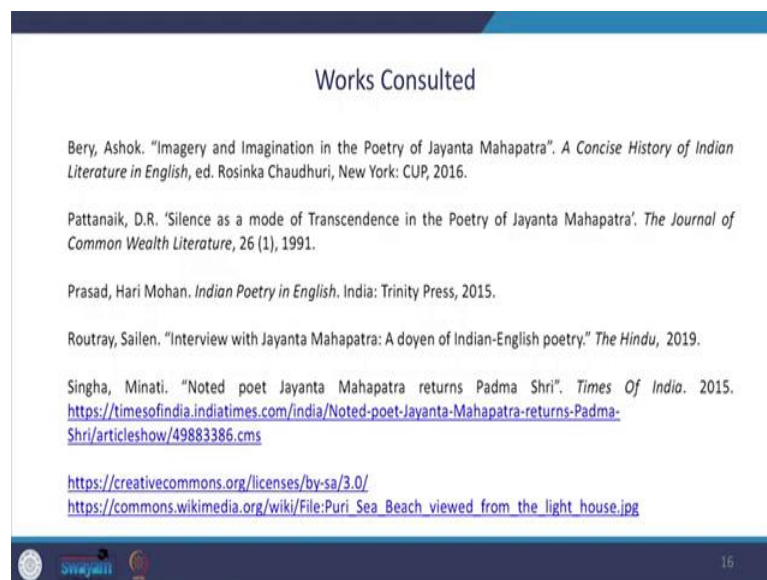
So, that makes him and rightly has Vilas Sarang said that 'of all the Indian English poets it is Mahapatra, who is a true Indian poet because he believes that we should not seek inspiration from others rather we should seek inspiration from our own culture from our own myth from our own legion from our own history because our history is replete with examples be it of the Holy Scriptures and whatsoever.'

So, you one can find in the world of Mahapatra a great range right from a child's pain to to a woman's plight, to the beggars and the lepers, who for whom the temple is a sheltering ground and for the widows too as you have yourself experienced.

So, the relationship of the self to the other is also a very dominant theme in Mahapatra and relationship with his ambience. No poet can be a great poet if he has not been able to be affected with the ambience that he is living in. Mahapatra has rightly said, that poetry is actually a journey from the understandable to the un-understandable, meaning thereby what it is and what it is not.

So, my dear friends, having discussed Mahapatra's poetic world, we can come to the conclusion that, Mahapatra is, in true sense, a great Indian English poet without whom the world of Indian English poetry could not have been possible and that is why Mahapatra has been prescribed in all the major institutions not only of India, but at certain places abroad as well.

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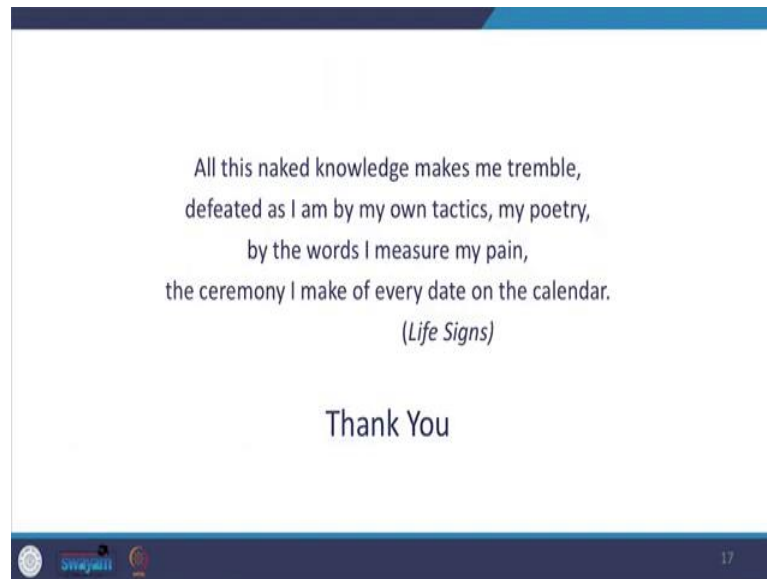
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So, before we come to end this talk, let me quote once again some lines from Mahapatra's volume *Life Signs*, where he says and where he talks about poetry and where he talks about the helplessness of poetry and the helplessness of human beings by saying, ----"All this naked knowledge makes me tremble,/ defeated as I am by my own tactics. So, my poetry/ by the words I measure my pain/ the ceremony I make of every date on the calendar."

And with this we come to the end of today's talk here. We find not only the impressions of Buddha, not only the impressions of Gandhi, not only the impressions of Christ, because entire life is actually replete with pain and a true *Sadhak* can get something new only out of the pain only out of the penance only out of the suffering, after suffering only there is a new tomorrow.

And for you also there will be a new tomorrow, when I come up with a new lecture and the new lecture will be on once again another significant voice and that is Keki N. Daruwalla. Till then, thank you very much. I wish you all a good day ahead.

Thank you.