
Harmonizing Horizons: Vijay Kant Dubey's Melodic Reflections on Jayanta Mahapatra's Poetic Symphony

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ABSTRACT

Publication Info

Article history :

Received : 29.10.2023

Accepted : 30.11.2023

DOI : 10.30949/dajdtla.v19i2.3

Key words:

Imagism, myth, Odia identity
picturesque, vernacular

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Bijay Kant Dubey is the Head of the Department of English in Chandrakona Vidyasagar Mahavidyalaya, Mindrope. He is a gifted writer who has penned down a plethora of writings including poems, book reviews, articles etc. This paper aims to examine Bijay Kant Dubey's commentary on the great poet Jayanta Mahapatra through his six poems on the renowned poet. It will attempt to highlight not only the perspective of Dubey but will also put forth his writing style. It will help in adding depth to the understanding of Mahapatra's poetry so far. Being an enthusiast of Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry, the style of his writing has little similarity with that of Mahapatra's, such as simplicity with effective technique of intertextuality, use of slight touch of Indian rural spoken dialect in English language specially when he talks about the women of village and subaltern group of women. Dubey's poems are deliberate attempt of Mahapatra's appreciation in a poetic form. This paper aims at exploring Mahapatra's poetic sensibility and simplicity through the select poems of Bijay Kant Dubey which is written on and about Mahapatra.

Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry surely drew and continues to inspire a large number of creative authors and scholars to explore and discover something new. In his work "Jayanta Mahapatra: approach to poetry. In his paper titled, "A Critical Study of the Imaginative World in Jayanta Mahapatra's Poetry," Soma Bandyopadhyay depicts Mahapatra's nature of adapting a native custom to the English language, whereas Md. Sajjad presents the poet's internalized experiences inspired ardent readers to solve the riddles surrounding his creative creations. Not only about poems, there are some researchers and writers who have written about his prose works also such as the present primary poet of this paper Bijay Kant Dubey presents the prosaic abilities of Mahapatra's writing through his select prose works in his paper named, "Door of Paper As A Masterpiece Prose-work of Jayanta Mahapatra." Similarly, Srikanth Ganduri analysed the imaginary world in Jayanta Mahapatra's poems through his paper, "A Brief Study of the Imaginative World in Jayanta Mahapatra's Poetry." As poetry is an art form of writing so Mahapatra is an artist, this might be the clear reason that Dr. A. G. Pakhmode title his research paper as "Jayanta Mahapatra's Poetic Art: A Brief Study." *Rock Pebbles: A Peer-Reviewed International Literary Journal* devoted an entire special issue to Jayanta Mahapatra in the January-June 2011 edition, with Udayanath Majhi serving as the editor of this issue. Dr. K. R. Vijaya's study, "Poetry As A Social Commentary: A Study of Select Poems of Jayanta Mahapatra," demonstrates cultural criticism and effect on poetry. Keeping in mind Mahapatra's Indianness and vernacular way of telling tales with mythological references, Hemanta Rajbanshi, in collaboration with Dr. Bairagi Patra, wrote a paper titled, "Treatment of Indianness and Indian Lexical Items in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra." As with this entire topic, many editors and authors have committed and are currently working on writing about Jayanta Mahapatra as a poet. One such writer is Bijay Kumar Das, who has authored four

versions of a book titled, *The Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra*, which was released in 2009 and *Jayanta Mahapatra: the Poet of the Common Man* in 1 January 2016 by Dr. Pawan Kumar Jha. Apart from these works “Echoes of a wounded presence”: Images of women in Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry,” published by Madhusudan Prasad, deals with the presence of women in his poetry. Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih has written a personal account of meeting with Jayanta Mahapatra in online an article which is published on *Scroll* in 10 July 2022. After reviewing the literature we found that numerous research papers, books, blogs, articles are being written on Mahapatra's poems and by many researchers, critics and reviewers but this paper examines the poems composed about the Odia poet Jayanta Mahapatra by Bijay Kant Dubey.

Jayanta Mahapatra (22 October 1928 – 27 August 2023) born in Cuttack, Odisha, to a lower middle-class family. Stewart School in Cuttack was where he received his early schooling. From 1949 to 1986, he taught at several government institutions in Odisha after earning a first-class Master's degree in Physics. Mahapatra wrote 18 volumes of poetry throughout his lifetime. He began writing poetry at the age of 38 and published his first poems in his early forties. His epic poem “Relationship” earned him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981, making him the first Indian English poet to get the accolade. Many prestigious poetry journals around the world have published Mahapatra's poems, including *Boundary*, *Chicago Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *New England Review*, *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry International*, *Poetry (Chicago)*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Georgia Review*, and others (Mohanty). He received national and international acclaim and was regarded as one of the foremost Indian English poets. Jayanta Mahapatra has received several notable accolades for his literary works. He has received the Jacob Glatstein Memorial Award in 1975, the Allen Tate Prize in 2009, the SAARC Literary Award in 2009, and the Padma Shree Award in 2009. On May 2, the same year, he received an honorary doctorate from Ravenshaw University. In 1981, Jayanta Mahapatra became the first Indian English poet to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award (Jayanta Mahapatra). His Odia poetry are exceptional. The line forms are virtually premodern, austere, and brief. Nonetheless, the sensibility is high-modernist—socially involved, politically conscious, and steadfastly standing with common people, oppressed, and marginalised long before it became trendy in Odia poetry to do so. Here is an English poet writing in Odia, English in tone, pitch, and emotive register, but Odia in rhythm and flow of the lines (Routray).

Since 1986, Bijay Kant Dubey has been writing poetry. Initially, he focused mostly on poems that celebrated the relationship between the soul and the Supreme Soul, which he perceived as The Light Divine, The Divine Path, Songs of Soul, and Songs of Siva. However, he did not publish these poems, and over time, many of the manuscripts he wrote were destroyed (Bijay Kant Dubey). In the poem “Jayanta Mahapatra As An Odia Poet”, Bijay Kant Dubey pens down on how Orissa breathes and thrives in Mahapatra's heart and soul because he is born and brought up in the Orissan soil so he was an Odia at the core. Mahapatra used to patiently and keenly witness both the past and present time. He clicks pictures of the standing remains of the Indian rock temples. His inquisitiveness arises at the sight of those temples as if he basks in the “Architectural splendor and glory” (Dubey, line 8) of the monuments. In this way, his presence builds a bridge between the past and present period. He is a poet of not only Orissan landscape and beauty but he is observant of the Odia folk including the masons, pilgrims, devotees and even beggars. Standing amidst grand and timeless architecture his eyes keenly notices the nuances of the people who visit the temples—“In a prayerful tune of own”(Dubey, line-29) He meticulously marks the sculptures carved on the temple walls and arcs exhibiting the relationships of love and lust because of the fact that Mahapatra was a physicist he views Orissa through a prism of equilibrium—“Seeking salvation and pardon/The devotees queued/Many of them widows, poor daughters and sons/Held by faith and doubt.”(Dubey, lines 30-33)

Dubey used imagism in another poem on Mahapatra. In “Jayant Mahapatra As A Poet Of Silence”, he described several images and has drawn comparisons to show the turbulence and the calmness inside Mahapatra. Beginning from the first stanza, he compares the Odia poet to the ‘morning sea’ which is quiet and serene. He pens down many images like the blooming lotus at dawn, awakening of the world from a deep slumber like the allusion of the Seven Sleeper’s Den. He also draws nature imagery of the chirping birds, hot winds and dry leaves. The third stanza of the poem speaks about the silence in noon time surrounded by a strange gloominess set in due to the weather. Puzzled due to the uneasiness and weariness brought by the Sun and hot winds he remains silent. It paints a contradictory picture of inside and out. The last stanza is full of contrasting images to the first stanza of the poem. This stanza describes Sun soaked landscape full of sweat, scorching heat, hot winds and dry leaves. Poetry is the contrasting of the known and the unknown, the anticipated and the unexpected, and it frequently results from what Eliot refers to as a single sensibility. Mahapatra, without a doubt, is elevated to a lofty romantic status, imbuing common objects with what Wordsworth refers to as a peculiar colouring of fancy.

In the poem “Jayanta Mahapatra And His Relationship”, Dubey explains his close relationship with his native land Orissa. This relationship is not a superficial one but actually it is deeply rooted in his spirit. It is beyond the mere physical attributes. He is intricately connected with the language, culture, myths and mysteries. In other words, the poem speaks about the relationship of oneness he shares with Orissa culminating all the pluralities as one which he had never forgotten. He mentioned numerous places like the coastal areas, rivers, hills, sea beaches, bird sanctuaries, tourist spots, lakes, orchards, forest reserves, temples etc to explain his immense attachment with the entire Orissa. Mahapatra has a soulful bond which is unforgettable. His mind and body both belongs to this place. In the last line Dubey writes- “Moving around/ Cuttack, Bhubhneshwar and Puri.” (Dubey, lines 23-24) which clearly says that however he wanders and moves around many places of coastal Odisha but he will primarily remain an Odia first and an India at the second place. It shows his attachment and love for his land.

In his another poem titled, “What is in Jayanta Mahapatra's Relationship” which is the continuation of his earlier mentioned poem, Dubey talks about Mahapatra's childhood and experiences in Odisha which seems a kind of short prelude of Mahapatra's life composed in a Babu English that everyone can read fluently and understand about Mahapatra's love for his native place. Dubey continues to write about his poetic style which is full of pictorial quality, lucid, easy language with deep meaning and the way he plays with puns, the way he is describing his poetic quality and easiness which seems he is influenced with the book named *Jayanta Mahapatra: The Poet of the Common Man* by Dr. Pawan Kumar Jha. Dubey says that the kind of picturised image Mahapatra uses in his poem to make it lively is immensely expressive and beyond appreciation as he says, “There is nothing as that to explain and paraphrase,” (Dubey, line 11), not only the positive but the surrealistic side of human world is also shown in Mahapatra's poetry as Dubey uses the phrase “Negative and Washed photographs” (Dubey, line 19) in his poem to describe the kind of writing which Mahapatra is famous for. The third stanza Dubey devoted to the praise of natural images and religious references which Mahapatra's poems contain and that create a sort of floating images in the mind and eyes of the readers, not only this but Mahapatra's poems are epitome of the historical references of Odisha art, cultures and struggle, with the word struggle Dubey perhaps taking the reference of one of the heart-wrenching poem of all times named, “Grandfather” where Mahapatra taken us back to the deadliest famine of 1866 in Odisha and portrayed the scariest situation of his grandfather through his yellow pages diary. In his last stanza poet establishes the comparison between Rupert Brook's poem “The Soldier” and “Relationship” by Jayanta Mahapatra. The poem “The Soldier” examines the relationship between British soldiers who is

patriotic to his own country. The poem makes the implication that people are shaped by their upbringing and culture and that their nation is something they should sacrifice their lives for, as demonstrated by the soldier's impassioned description of his attachment to England. Mahapatra's masterpiece, "Relationship," which earned him the esteemed Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981, is rooted in the ancient history of Orissa, the region he hails from. "Relationship" is a sort of an epic poem contains twelve parts just like Edmund Spencer's *Shepherd's Calendar* contains twelve eclogues. It illustrates Mahapatra's link to history, rich cultural legacy, and how those things have evolved into the present over time. Long sentences, heightened language, and evocative, picturesque symbols and imagery all contribute to the sublime style's expression of the elevated subject matter.

In the poem "Indian English Poetrywallah" where he uses a metaphor to compare vendors with poet and call them Poetrywallah, the first stanza is mostly resembles with the Haiku form of poetry. Just like any other vendor poetrywallah also sell, buy, eat and drink poetry, they take money to publish poetry and give money to buy poetry. Continuing the praises of the style of Mahapatra's poems,

In his next poem, "Jayanta Mahapatra And His Poetic Base" Dubey focuses on the religious sites which he mentioned and composed about in his poems such Jagannath temple of Puri, the Lingaraj-temple, Udaygiri and Dhaulagiri, Khandagiri, and Konark Sun-temple. Further in the very first stanza Dubey depicts how skillfully Mahapatra made pictures and coloured his poems with historical, sociological, mythical, and regional features. In next two stanzas Dubey focuses on the natural images and the vivid picture of summer which usually there in Maharashtra's poems, such as Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Balasore, beaches and how Mahapatra portrayed the characters of women seems like a women living under the lakshmanrekha with no liberty, perhaps Dubey talking about Mahapatra's own mother's description in his poem "Dawn at Puri" even in the summer mothers and daughters of village are sitting inside the houses waiting for rain to vanish their burning houses whereas men resting under the orchard of mango trees. These kinds of pictures without any hard language shows how women are subjugated and deprived from the very easily available properties of nature, and this also shows that on the one side poets are writing and composing about big things where Mahapatra take account of village women and taboo themes such as prostitution and sex. The description of the second stanza in Dubey's poem shows the influence of the poem, "Indian Summer" by Mahapatra. The poem has been widely anthologized in major poetry collections and is required reading in most Indian schools, colleges, and universities. The poem was originally included in his collection, *A Rain of Rites*. In the next stanza Dubey doesn't lose his grip of describing the way Mahapatra used to give vivid images of funerals and crying of people for their loved ones, in attempt to make it more sensuous Dubey uses such kind of words which can make readers hear the mourning noises as he says, "Funeral choric voices" (Dubey, line 61). In fifth and sixth stanza Dubey appreciates that Mahapatra never forget about his Indian past and historical facts which need to be mentioned when it comes to India warriors, as Mahapatra composed poem on Kalinga War and Ashoka effectively in his poem called, "Dauli." The poem is constructed around the renowned Kalinga conflict. The region of Kalinga was associated with modern-day Orissa and was additionally known as Utkala in certain chronicles. Chandragupta Maurya attempted to capture Kalinga as well, but was defeated. The monarchy of Kalinga threatened the Maurya Empire's marine trade and dominance in the East. Ashoka, the Maurya King, invaded Kalinga with the intent of subduing and annexing it to the Maurya realm. Jayanta Mahapatra describes the repercussions of the Kalinga conflict. The poet reconstructs the sight immediately following the fight, with the fields littered with slain dead and blood seeping from them, in the opening verse. The blood-splattered fields of Dhauli bore quiet witness to the unparalleled bloodletting. In last four stanzas Dubey carry on the same thoughts about Mahapatra's poems that without even being subjected to any name such as

socialist, Marxists, and propagandist Mahapatra written about each and every part of society and phases of human life without being judged and judgmental about anything. When we consider the socio-political situation in post-independence India, we discover the portrayal of basically Indian issues in Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry. These are hunger, communalism, casteism, superstition, and political leaders' ignorance of the country's suffering. Mahapatra and others witnessed the countrymen's pre-independence ambitions and hardships, sacrifices and agonies, and were left disillusioned with shattered hopes. He writes about his experiences in poems such as "Heroism," "The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Republic: 1975," "30th January 1982: A Story," and "A Missing Person." (Rajbanshi and Patra 29-30). Dubey goes on to mention that Mahapatra never failed to write about the deprived group of our society such as Devdasi, and nautch girl and also written about the highest ideological state apparatus group of people such as priest, and upper class. in order to give emphasis in his tone he uses anaphora with the words like "the" and "still" that after being aware about these drawbacks in our society we as a reader of Mahapatra still witnessing these false practices of dowry, male domination, domestic benevolence and what not. the ability of composing poem on such a prolific persona with Babu English could be seen with the uses of figure of speeches every now and then in his poems, as he also uses refrain after asking rhetoric questions that how a society who is aware about the falsehood and problems in the society can be so quite about this, he says, "How can it be, / How can it be," (Dubey, line 143).

All the poems mentioned and discussed in the present paper throws light on Bijay Kant Dubey's brilliancy of writing poems on Mahapatra specifically. His poems are simple in structure and form yet profoundly deep and picturesque. The style of his poems is extremely simple, filled with intertextuality of Mahapatra's poems, and being a fan Bijay Kant Dubey follows simplistic attitude to play with the words in his compositions. The kind of rural vernacular and dialect, he uses in his poems is magically impressive and nostalgic as most rural Indian residents used to mispronounce words which contain "sha" and "za" in the same manner Dubey uses word "Asoka" instead of "Ashoka" in his poem "Jayanta Mahapatra and His Poetic Base." In the poem, "Jayanta Mahapatra As A Poet Of Silence" he used vernacular when he wrote awaking instead of the standard English word awakening- "The world awaking from slumber/Arising and awaking from," (Dubey, lines 8-9), apart from these features, traces of Babu English can be seen in some of his poems such as "Photographing, lightning and shading" (Dubey, line 17) in the poem "What Is In Jayanta Mahapatra's Relationship." In the poem, "Jayanta Mahapatra As An Odia Poet" he writes, "The people coming and going" (Dubey, line-17) and "He taking/Visionary glides." (Dubey, lines 19-20). He mostly uses enjambments in his poems. Poetry is about perspectives, ideas, feelings, and judgements. Examine them. Poetry is assertions, so make some. Poetry is thought as it is thought by you, by us, and by them. Poetry just expresses our opinions and feelings in moody words and concepts. It is about language and style—how you express yourself. Poetry exists in style. You impart writing etiquette. You immediately end the lines and introduce them. Pause and speak. It is pictures and images. Make you the picture. Take images, make drawings, portraits, and silhouettes; poetry is visuals. I'll give you the selfies. From the digicam, selfies. For your benefit, for your enjoyment, and for your own pleasure. It is nothing more than the skill of loving, observing nature—flowers blooming, birds hopping and dancing, and birds dancing. Dew-smeared little seuli blossoms laying fallen in the winter morning, the scented seulis, kursis, kaaminis, champas, and cchatims are there to fascinate you with their pleasant smell. Poetry represented by asters, poppies, calendulas, chrysanthemums, dahlias, pansies, and salvias. According to Bijay Kant Dubey These poems added to the understanding of Mahapatra's poetic sensibility and eco-centric quality of his poems.

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