

## Exposing Tyranny of Subjugated Female Identity in Selected Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra

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Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the most celebrated Indian poets of the post-independence era. He is credited with having exposed the tyrannical treatment to which women in Orissa are subjected. His poetry narrates mottled experiences of women, within the framework of their debilitating situatedness. He records tremors lingering in the lives of women, which he imputes to the socio-cultural ambience in which they live. He particularly notices the heartrending treatment of women in a household of Orissa, where he had spent a major part of his life. He is also renowned as a poet who profoundly and adroitly delineates the themes of loss, absence, silence, hollowness, grief, death, time and sexuality. His presentation of these themes and that of woman suffering is marked by his ascribing of gender-based discrimination and its implications to enfeebled and appropriated government machinery.

He critiques the oppressive forces which dehumanize women and relegate them to the status of objects. Accordingly, Mahapatra's characterization of women highlights his compassion for them. He brings forth the minimal spatial freedom that women have been begrudged by men. He thus articulates his disgruntlement with women having been deprived of agency to express themselves. However, while advocating fair treatment to women, he exquisitely avoids pitying or sympathizing with women. "Jayanta Mahapatra's poetic world is doubtless scattered singularly with various images of wives, beloveds, whores, seductresses, village women, city women and adolescent girls, having deeply significant metaphoric evocations and spotlighting his tragic vision of life to which he is essentially committed. Demonstrating his vital poetic strategy and dimensional zing his deep humanism as well as his overriding thematic obsessions, Mahapatra's images of women indubitably form a tonal chord central to the mood of his poems." (Prasad, 2000)

This paper tries to ponder over Man-woman relationship, which is a tangled piece of yarn, which is coiled in such a way that it reflects its own complexities. This relationship is put under dissection as to expose tyranny subjected to women through work of Mahapatra. In this relationship the identity of a woman depends entirely upon man; a woman with multiple male partners is a whore, a woman with one male partner is married and the one who has lost her partner is a widow. All three of them has to follow certain societal norms to be a part of society, however, floozy is an ostracized element of society.

Adding to the fact that agency of woman has always been in respect with men around her. Simone de Beauvoir a radical French philosopher, a writer, a political activist and later a

second wave Feminist, has done a groundbreaking work in questioning the "other" status of women occurring due to their anatomical structure, their historical place (social and economic condition), their existential crisis, which arises out of the constructed femininity and psychoanalytically constructed situation of being curbed due to religion and popular culture. She realizes that there is some asymmetry between 'masculine and 'feminine'. a man "thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of a woman as a hindrance, a prison...woman has ovaries, uterus, these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature" (Beauvoir,2011). Beauvoir further quotes Aristotle "female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities" (Beauvoir,2011). She concludes the line of thought as "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman, not in herself but as related to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being". (Beauvoir,2011).

Mahapatra's images of woman, aided by elegant patterning and continuity evoke at once the locale and universal, the contemporary and perennial and help us comprehend his poetry in general. Since the beginning of his career, he is obsessed by whore image. He deeply dwells on the humane understanding of a whore. He understands them as the breadwinners of the family who moves out of the embraces of their children in dark. The client prostitute relationship is portrayed in a realistic light in his "The Whorehouse In Calcutta street." The patriarchy who abhors prostitution in broad day sunlight yearns for it in the hidden corners of night. Whom they avoid publicly craves for communication with them in bed in order to know what a woman is. Prostitute being more professional, declines all quests for communication.

"Hurry, will you? let me go"

And her lonely breath thrashed against your kind.

These blunt lines indicate that she is not there for sexual pleasure alike the male. These sexual indulgencies are not fun for her. This sex for her is typically brazen and devoid of sentiments. It is male who has come for his quest and lust for another woman.it is men who have been disloyal in these brothels since centuries. This realistic image topped with remarkable artistic finesse is in sharp contrast with the feudal image of the courtesan. His poem "morning signs" portrays his agony and empathy for the women being used as sex workers.

Voices of girls tasseled with wind and rain

Reach my ears and arouse a dormant hurt;

The smell of damp sheets and semen here

Haggling for nearness beginning again

In a familiar room

Mahapatra is saddened with the sexual understanding of women's identity. They are interpreted only as objects i.e. sex objects. He finds loose administrative system as a culprit behind the exploitation of women .they are an indication of misery in a society he depicts this in his "The twenty-fifth Anniversary of A Republic"

The prostitutes are younger this year:

At the police station they're careless to give reasons

For being what they are

And older women careful enough not to show their years. (Bhadauria, 2015)

This implies to the reality that nothing has changed in years. Even the condition is more pitiable, that even the younger girls are also exploited. Inadequate law and order have snatched them of their dreams in their blooming stage. Their condition has disrobed them all of the identities they could be. Those poor girls switched to it as the only job left to them. They are stripped of their humaneness and are seen as animals. As animals are used for their carcass, Similarly females no matter younger or older have always been used for their flesh only.

Unfolding the understanding of Mahapatra on the acidulous plight of another member of civilization as a sex object who is only exploited in one way or another to serve the ways of another member that are males. Women have always been a victim of a corrupt and deteriorated social order. This has poignantly comes out in his " Hunger" discerning prostitute sex. In this father, who is a victim of poverty unscrupulously resorts his fifteen-year-old daughter into prostitution.

I heard him say: my daughter, she's just turned fifteen

Feel her. I'll be back soon, your bus leaves at nine."

This poem heightens the exploitation of a girl child by her own father.

Prostitution is seen as an outcome of penury, even if women try to transcend this by toiling themselves into labour they meet discrimination wages. They also become the victims of voyeurism. Mahapatra always sympathizes and glorifies the poor and destitute women in his writings. In " Again , one day , walking by the river" discerns the plight of poor Indian women working at a road construction site in sultry weather.

"A tar drum smolders in front of the judge's house

As four women workers rub the hot tar

Onto the pitted face of the road

It is two in the afternoon, and

The heat of yesterday still clings to the old walls

Like harsh salt on the skin. ( Bhadauria,2015)

As he sees the women toiling in the sun's scorching heat, laboring to earn, he gets broken with the obnoxious behaviour they suffer due to voyeuristic males around them. As flesh hungry jackals they hound poor women in poem " Slum"

Penury stricken women bear huge exploitation. Women have always been conditioned in a way that they are made aware of their sexuality long before they become aware of themselves. They are taught to hide, hide their bodies in order to be protected from hawks outside. They are taken either as a possession to be protected or as an object used for gratification. In the poem "The Stranger, My Daughter" Father aims to protect his daughter by confining her to the walls of his home. He is deeply concerned to protect a 'juices' of her body from being stolen by the males outside.

Males in their puberty witness certain changes in their bodies, which they discuss and mocks openly. on the contrary, women are commanded to hide their changes and are not allowed to disclose them as crucial as menstruation. They get bashed by their sexual stir and ignores their actual attributes which makes them a female. A female being abashed of being a female is the real tyranny, where she hates herself for being what she is created by God. Mahapatra has put this shame in words in his "in sunburst".

Possible , rigid , two shy twelve year olds

Glance surreptitiously , then turn their heads away

These girls are turning their heads away on encountering mating between a bull and cow on the road.

Their own hushed bodies amaze them. Lost in respectability's ruse,

They stare at the road , learning to close their eyes ,

To hold their keen pride.( Bhadauria,2015)

Women are conditioned in a way to fear and control their sexuality in one way or other, their entire life, which results in the creation of a void in their life.

Mahapatra brings in focus the silence, absence, loneliness in life of an Indian woman. In the poem "Dusk"

An Indian woman, piled up to her silences,

Waiting for what the world will only let her do.

In marriage, daughters are usually 'given away' as an object to be possessed by another male. Her identity, desire and way of life will be understood by her new owner who is her husband. this new owner in place of love, understanding and compassion lend her only loneliness and silence in her life. Either she is perceived as an object of sexual gratification or a servant toiled day and night in household chores. She resorts herself in her lonely attic, waiting for her companion, who would never be hers, away from her family she craves for him, in the end, either she maintains peace with this ever-growing void or suffers from hysteria. This solitude is perfectly pictured in " On Most Nights"

On most nights there's a woman

Who just lies in her bed, open

Like any old thing in the house she lives in.

Like time, that pours over her.

The walls keep their close watch over her loneliness. ( Bhadauria,2015)

This imagery dimensionalises the humanized understanding of Mahapatra of females. His eloquent imagery in the poem proves his empathy towards sidelined and ignored identities of women.

Women sans men are not women; they are a liability on their family. A widow is always seen as an abomination, an omen or with pity. They are ostracized from family gatherings and religious activities as if they are a culprit. This affects their mental psyche and they suffer from loneliness and fear of existence coils them. In order to sustain they embrace the darkness. In "village evening" he has put this darkness into words.

In the dark air of her hut

Ahalya , the widow, caresses the rupee.."

Their entire life women are afraid to die as a widow. They fear the misfortune that would befall upon them. When a husband dies, as the master of her controlled sexuality is gone, so she is not allowed to exercise it further consequently, either she becomes Sati or takes refuge in religious faith. In " Dawn At Puri" the widows are metaphorically addressed as being caught in the net.

White- clad widowed women

Past the centres of their lives

Are waiting to enter the great temple.

Their austere eyes

Stare like those caught up in a net

Hanging by the dawn's shining strand of faith.( Bhadauria,2015)

Mahapatra's poetic matrix travels all the realms of a woman's life quite empathetically. As a girl, she needs protection, as a wife she gets loneliness. As a mother, she relies on son as a widow she caresses whatever little she has and saves herself by resorting into religion.

Prostitution, Voyeurism and being a reliability is the spectrum of life of women in India. Also, Mahapatra talks about how rape is hideous of all. It always shocks him and increases his plight for women. He presents how 'the rape of a young girl' took him aback:

Last year on the bend of the Debi River

The rape of a young girl

Shocked us like ripe mangoes

Dropping from bare trees in winter. (A Whiteness of Bone, pp. 60)

L. Bhatt adroitly remarks: "The fear, anguish, the helplessness, the shame, the agony and the pain of the rape victim are powerfully communicated in the analogy; the trembling in eyes of cows, we see being led meekly to the towns slaughter house." ( Bhatt, 2000)

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