CHAPTER-III

3.1 Introduction

Poems of Jayanta Mahapatra open a door for the outsider to peep in to very depth of the land called Orissa. His poems move ahead holding the hands of history, myth and folklores of the land. Historical sagas and day to day anecdotes of his time are woven together in his poems. An outsider who is unaware of his land, its topography, its folktales and myths finds it hard to get in to the meaning of his poems. Many times he borrows his symbols and images from the realm of history for example silent stones call him through ruins to relate their secrets, Konarka, Jagannath Temple, Bhubaneswar and Dhauli come in crowding in his many poems along with surreal images of his town. He becomes a historian who puts the heritage of his land in to his verbal museum for forever. Unlike the regular historian, he is not plain and obsessed with data, long descriptive and logic but he becomes a humanitarian who seeks a new meaning out of dead stones, ruins of temples. He is not a mere reader of those stone writings and storyteller of ancient fables and tales but he tries to correlate his present with past. He creates a true solution of his personal and private heritage and puts bits of time in to his verbal kaleidoscope and let the reader alone to form many layers and patterns out of it. He narrates his present putting it side by side with myths of the land; he holds a mythopoeic vision when it comes to description of his land and its realities. He explores and turns over every stone of the time in a hope to find a new meaning and a new symbol and a new myth to connote his meaning. He
declares himself an Oriya poet who happens to write in English; his observation about himself proves itself very easily when it comes to his use of myths and element of history in his poem, he chooses maximum indigenous myths and fables. He believes in honoring the tradition, preserving the spiritual and natural ecology, his poems and socio-cultural milieu in them makes him a historian walking ahead holding verbal canvas and displaying his eco-humanism. Mahapatra takes reader in to the selected realms of history, to few precise points where he can stand with his poems looking at present time and its humanity. His poems hold an urge; a desire of persona to preserve our rich heritage, at the same time he wants to show his readers a new facet of reality visible from the points where he stands. He uses several types of myths when it comes to use of surreal strong images. Rivers, Temples, Stones, Fields and Forests all come in there one by one in his poems to sing for his land and his people. He tries to prove, how history has a very strong effect on our present. Myths and fables provide explanations for our condition, for our loses, and for our actions only to sooth us at the time of grief. He celebrates Orissa in his poem manifesting its Social, Cultural and Historical sight; he takes every familiar and unfamiliar reader on a sight scene of his land. As he, himself accepts this trait of his poem while discussing importance of past and history in writings while talking to Bijay Kumar Das, “Great poetry has always chosen and preserved experience, and this is not something easy to achieve. As a poet one tries to do this, to give life to what has touched him most in myth or legend or even, fact, and bringing these into timeless proportions. But as I said, this is difficult. Perhaps in this way poetry helps to protect our civilization; this urge to preserve the past and also to look into the future becomes a true requisite for good poetry everywhere. Poetry’s concern is with the art of life, to provide us with the means to live fully and truthfully. So, as a poet, how could I not be conscious of my past and of the history which has shaped me, both personal and racial?”

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This chapter tries to explore the element of history in the poems of persona and side by side its impact and importance for the persona.

### 3.2 Jayanta Mahapatra: Romancing with History

Before taking step ahead researcher here finds a dire need to present a brief account of the history of Orissa. It will be futile to lead this exploration ahead without reference to the roots, legends, myths and fables we are talking about. In the following passages researcher has tried to draw a precise caricature relating a brief account of the important occurrence of the land, which appear again and again in the poems of persona. Orissa or Odisha is situated on the coast line along the Bay of Bengal. In ancient time this land was known as Utkal, Kalinga, Udra, Koshala and Kodanga. History of Orissa shows its perseverance and deep knowledge. Orissa is blessed with a long coast line measuring around 482 km with many beautiful beaches as well as inland water in the form of ancient rivers like Daya, Mahanadi, mighty waterfalls, and forest-clad blue hills of Eastern Ghats with rich wild life. Orissa is quite rich in its heritage that houses many remarkable monuments of ancient times. Orissa is the land of legends and pilgrimage, a favorite tourist spot. It has many tales to tell about its kings, temples and cities. Orissa stands as a symbol of Ancient Indian Architectural beauty, its temples, stone work, rock cut caves, and forts hold many secrets and stone tablets to tell the history this all shows love of Oriyan kings for art and architect. The Architecture of edifices, like the Konrak Temple, Jagannath Temple, Barbat Palace, Rajrani temple, Khandagiri caves, and the Lalit Giri & Uday Giri are really remarkable. Its territory formed a part of the ancient Kalinga of Mahabharat fame. In the ancient time Orissa was rose to prominence as a Kingdom under Kharavela, a great conqueror and patron of Jainism, in the second half of the first century B.C. Other great rulers belonged to the Keshari dynasty and the Eastern Ganga dynasty who were also great builders. At one time the vast kingdom spanned from Ganga to Godavari. The flourishing maritime trade with South-East Asian countries i.e. Java, Borneo had brought in a golden era of affluence and
opulence. The Kalinga School of architecture flourished from the 7th to 13th century A.D. The most important monuments of this period can be seen in and around Bhubaneswar and Puri. The Mukteswar Temple is the finest piece of architecture of Kalinga. The Lingaraj Temple of Bhubaneswar, the Jagannath Temple of Puri above all the world renowned world heritage Sun Temple at Konark is the epitome of temple architecture and sculpture. But the modern Orissa came into existence in April 1, 1936. The Britishers declared it as a separate province. In fact, Orissa has become a multi dimensional, multi colored, many splendored, vibrant & boisterous modern state all set on its journey in the present millennium to make its presence and voice felt in the nooks and crannies of the world through the Universal Cult of brotherhood, its unique cultural heritage, luxuriant forests and wild life, sprawling Chilika Lake, bountiful coastline, wide range of tribes and colorful canvass of art & culture. Orissa has been resurgent again rejuvenating and resuscitating its ancient glory, glamour & greatness. Its lush green countryside and fertile plains, tiny hamlets fringed with palm, coconut trees and mango groves offer the charm of rural beauty while the urban pockets, the four cities in particular, with the splendor of modern technology provide the amenities necessary for a comfortable stay. This wonderful land of fascinating beauty boasts of colorful festivals round the year. Orissa is also the land of unique handicrafts and other excellent artifacts.

3.3 Orissa: The Dispossessed Land

History along with tradition, culture and myths form a very integral part all arts whether verbal or visual. Jayanta Mahapatra’s time and place consciousness and his honesty of expression guided by his surreal images all provide a unique quality to his poems and add a strong historical element in his works. He never tries to detach himself from his land, its traditions and myths. He uses history to move ahead in his stream of consciousness. He is haunted by history and tradition and in turn he haunts them. As he himself remarks, “I seem to be pulled by the tradition. Tradition might represent many things such as
history, myths, the suffering of others. I intend to imagine; but which evidently is real to me. Tradition could not simply be the movement which has been happening all along; it could be related to grief of others, the struggle to find out life in another way. And poetry, for me does try to redefine tradition. I realize this would seem a little unclear, but in a way tradition pursues me as I pursue it myself.\textsuperscript{3} Belonging to Orissa the land of legends and festivals; persona see these things as his natural response to his land. These things come to him naturally and become a part of his life work having Orissa at its centre. Festivals, Ritual are the way of life in Orissa as poetry is the way of life for the persona. Orissa has a number of festivals throughout the year, and one who lives in midst of this all can’t ignore them so easily. They come as his natural response towards the stimuli received from the land. It will not be an exaggeration to say that persona’s poem are his responses towards the soil of his native world, and this is what makes him to write such kind of poems which sing for Orissan history. His poems are his quest for the self within realms holding history. He wanders among the ruins of the past, feeling every stone; reading the script of time carved on it through his keen eyes and can feel the suffering of his ancestors in his sensible heart. He is not a mere historian reading out chapters of it, through stones and statues or through few rusted pieces in museum rather he is a humanist, who redefines the whole history from a new perspective. As he writes about his poems, “These poems are just attempts of mine to hold a handful of earth of my face and let is speak….Perhaps this signifies a return of my roots so that they can reveal who I am.”\textsuperscript{4} He tries to gain self-confidence and end his alienation through his past. He explores his relationship with land, its ruins, myths, its stones, rivers and sea. His exploration into history provides him profound meaning, a crystal clear truth and essence of his land. His quest for identity becomes his search in to history. As he opens his one of the greatest and longest poem with a homage to Orissa,

\textbf{Once again one must sit back and bury the face
in this earth of forbidding myth,}
the phallus of the enormous stone,
when the lengthened shadow of restless vulture
and when the time of the butterfly
moves inside the fierce body of the forest bear;
and feel the tensed muscles of rock
yield to the virtuous water of the hidden spring of Mahanadi.

Persona describes Orissan cosmology in detail in this long poem. He describes Orissa as the land of myths. He feels myth to be the core of all the activities back in his land. He finds air, water, rock, trees, temples and rivers all wrapped in myth. Myth is the only comfort, source of solace a silent withdrawal in to some relaxing corners and above the all composure which allows him to ponder. It alleviates fear and pain, and arouses compassion in him for others; he tries to walk in that sleep and actions to soothe himself and his readers. As he writes,

I thought: those who survive the myth
Have slipped past their lives and can not define their reasons.

He moves ahead with this sleep habit. He finds a loneliness and consciousness in this sleep which is needed to explore the self consciousness. He seeks the sleep habit of golden deer and wants to attain the joy of living in the vast forests of heart. He finds it necessary in this strange land full of betrayals. He wants to seek a shelter amongst dreams as he writes,

So I shall seek the sleep-habit
of the golden deer, tempter of the tastes,
in order that I might see outlined
against the vast forest of the heart
the miracles of living, so that other may pity me,
so that my dream would not end:
the fabulous marriage procession of power, like Siva’s.

(Ibid)

3.4 Konarka

Persona searches his reasons and look for his identity through history and myth, tradition and culture in the sprawling environment of Orissa. And in this quest he finds himself amidst of stones and ruins of Konarka and its broken parts and granite which stares him constantly. As he writes in section one of the Relationship

only that stones were my very own,

waiting as mother or goddess or witch,

as my birth feeds on them

as though the empty dugs of sorcerous thought.

(Ibid)

He finds past staring him through stone faces of ruins stretched wide in his native land. He can watch the pain and agony of those twelve hundred artisans who worked here day and night to save their lives from the wrath of their own emperor King Languda Narasimha Dev. He believes in magical power of stones, to transcend the realm of dead people and relate them to present realities. Jayanta Mahapatra recalls the fable related to Konarka; about a twelve year boy, who jumped into the sea to perish to save the name of his father, as he writes,

This sleep was needed

to go on pretending that blood throbs

in the pallor of dreams, to find

the enchanted regions of boyhood and dignity

where the burnt granite of the fallen Konarka

binds the sun to a rhythm of desire,

and the supple figures multiply

their mute echoes of another fire on stone.

(Ibid)
Legend is like this: the crowning slab of the sun temple Konarka could only be fitted into place by a twelve year old boy, the son of the chief architect after all the attempts to do so by others including twelve hundred artisans the chief architect the boy did it very easily. And later, the boy jumped to his death from the top of the finished temple to save his father’s name and honour. Persona finds many unheard cries echoing in the ruins of Konarka. He finds walls are burnt by blaze, not of the sun but of the infinite pain of those twelve hundred artisans and that boy who died by jumping from its top.

    and your bronze youth
    overwhelms
    with an unheard cry of the infinite
    that once blazed the red sandstone walls
    of Konarka
    Bhubaneswar and Puri
    with the terrifying passions
    of solitary beings.

    (“Orissa”, WT)

Persona when sees the ruins of Konarka what he finds, not the temple but the very sun is ruined over there. He finds the labour, sweat and blood of those unknown artisans who spent a great amount of time of their lives in creating the monument for fulfilling the pride of some one. He finds a strange kind of silence in those ruined walls and broken tops of Konarka as he writes,

    The cry of wounded sun silenced among
    the ruins of Konarka.

    (RS)

In his poem entitled, Konarka he again recalls those twelve hundred artisans and that twelve year boy of chief architect, who died to save his father’s name. He finds it black in his sleep and as cold beacon of his silent land and messenger of death. He recalls that boy called Dharma
Here the little boy in a dream
waved to the man once
and death hung its peace;
an indifferent time of stone
marks the burnt-out funeral pyre
and the sunrise

(“Konarka”, WT)

Persona furthers his Konarka tell describing the location of the temple. He describes the granite walls of the temple and air which coming through sea brings moisture and smell of the sea where a dying child lies in front of his father. This dying child is the son of chief architect of the Konarka.

Far into these granite peaks of dream
where the air is moist and soft in the smell of the sea,
where the dying child lays his father on the sands.

(RS)

As now he wanders in ruins of Konarka he founds the dark chariot of the sun stagnant as its wheel claws are strangled desperately in our lives. He observes it like a visionary and writes,

marooned on the stone, on the dark chariot of the sun
whose fevered granite wheels claw desperately
at the strangled earth in our lives?

(Ibid)

Persona reminds the endless work of artisans and even animals like elephants which were engaged in carrying granites from the forest in his poem. He refers to all this when he writes,

the night of wild elephants pounding down
in the undying sun,
and the horned and the hooved,
the gandharvas and the demons.

Mahapatra also refers to stone carving made on the walls of the Konarka. On the walls of the Konarka temple the engraved motifs of the Kamsutra evoke the moods and phases of human life. These statues and carvings depict birth, sexuality and fertility,

This is the real body: raging pachyderm
with the crazy testicles, red and wild,
the lusting god of the blackest Shiva night.

He also refers to image of Yoni and Linga in the poem as the origin of the life. He refers to it as “the phallus of enormous stone”. Then like a real historian he describes about the various carings and images carved on the walls of the temple. He refers to monumental chariot and the wheel having twenty-four spokes with carved elephants; here each spoke stands for an hour of the day. There are many erotic figures in the panel at the base. Many images of the gods and goddesses with serpent like entwined bodies and the elaborated lattice work. As he writes,

For lofty as they are on their twenty-four blue spells,
my walk along the trembling of the stone
seems loftier still; to the flashing tendril
from the fugitive root, the throat of stone

And last there where the day sweeps its aggressive yellow curves
like a serpent-woman’s tail.
Konarka is persona’s metaphor for Orissa, for regular historians and for those who study sculptures, it is superb 13th century stone temple dedicated to sun, and have beautiful carving and erotic images on its wall. But for persona it stands for a time, a piece of his very own heritage, he can feel sighs of those artisans who worked here day and night. It reminds him of those ruthless emperors who took many innocent lives. It is also a symbol of heritage that is being lost in race of modernity, a great mass of the nation is unaware of our own heritage. Those red stones seem blood-red and believe those peaceful edicts written on stones bear incomplete truth.

\begin{verbatim}
artisans of stone,
messengers of spirit,
twelve hundred artless brown flowers in passion
to the night in humble brotherhood,
aerial roots of a centuries-old banyan tree;
not taking our lives seriously
for our lives are only of the seeds of dreams,
forgetting the cruelties
of ruthless emperors who carved peaceful edicts
on blood-red rock.
\end{verbatim}

(Ibid)

3.5 War of Kalinga

When Ashoka, the son of the Mauryan emperor Bindusara and the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, ascended the throne of Magadha in 273 B.C. treading in the footsteps of his forefathers he set out to expand his empire. In the 12th year of his reign, he sent a message to Kalinga asking its submission, but the Kalingaraj refused to submit to the Mauryan Empire. As a result Ashoka lead a huge army against Kalinga. This took place in 261 B.C. the freedom loving people of Kalinga offered a stiff resistance to the Mauryan army. The whole of Kalinga turned into a battle arena. History offers us but few examples of such
fiercely fought wars as this. The Kalingaraj himself commanded his army in the battlefield. However, the limited forces of Kalinga were no match for the overwhelming Magadha army. Contrary to Ashoka's expectations, the people of Kalinga fought with such great valor that on number of occasions they came very close to a victory. The soldiers of Kalinga perished in the battlefield fighting till their last breath for their independence. The victory ultimately rested with Ashoka. The war took a tremendous toll of life and property. The 13th rock edict of Ashoka throws light on this war. At least 0.1 million Kalingans were killed while another 0.15 million were taken prisoners. And almost equal numbers of Magadha soldiers were also killed. There was not a single man left in Kalinga to live a life of slavery. This is the singular instance of a war in history which brought about a complete change of heart in a stern ruler like Ashoka. The scene of the war presented a horrible sight, the whole terrain was covered with the corpses of soldiers, wounded soldiers groaned in severe pain, vultures hovered over their dead bodies, orphaned children mourning the loss of their nears and dears, widows looked blank and despaired. This sight overwhelmed Ashoka. He realized that his victory at such a cost is not worthwhile. The whole war resulted in Ashoka's deviation towards Buddhism and after two and a half years he became an ardent follower of Buddhism under Acharya Upagupta. War of Kalinga is a milestone in the history of Orissa; this war stands for indomitable sprit of the land which remained dispossessed till the very end of the war. It was back in 261 B.C. the emperor Ashoka, son of Bindusar was on his voyage of expanding his kingdom. He sent a warning to Kalinga to surrender but people of Kalinga fought for their freedom till the last breath of their lives. Kalinga had a very small army in comparison to Ashoka’s ocean of soldiers but people of Kalinga were brave they fought bravely and nearly achieved victory a number of occasions but not finally. In the end Ashoka won but it was useless, there wasn’t a single man in the Kalinga, who survived and can be made slave. Ashoka got crestfallen when he saw the river turned red in the blood of dead soldiers. Whole Dhaulagiri was covered with dead bodies up to the river Daya. There was no one to perform the
final rites of these dead bodies so vulture and other animals devoured them. Ashoka realized his mistake and suffered a change of heart and turned to Bodhism. He sent followers of Bodhism far and wide to spread the religion and carved his famous edicts on the rock face for posterity. But it all came after death of millions of innocent Oriya soldiers, who died for securing self respect and freedom for the land. Orissa breathes in every particle of the persona and within the beats of his sensible heart so he feels the pain and moans of his ancestors died untimely in the war. As he writes,

It is hard to tell now
what opened the anxious skies,
how the age-old proud stones
lost their strength and fell,
and how the water of Daya
stank with the bodies of my ancestors;

(Ibid)

These lines hold historical account of the Kalinga war and invader stands for Ashoka who got the bloody victory at the very high cost at last. In his poem entitled, ‘Violence’ he mocks Ashoka’s change to peace and preaching peace. He killed the whole land for his hunger of power only to realize in the end that it was a mistake. He snatched everything and then carved agenda of love on the stones. As he writes,

On the trunk of an old banyan
a mutilating knife celebrates
an agenda of love.

Elsewhere, a two thousand-year-old edict
of peace stares, heavy with useless remorse.

(“Violence”, RD)
Banyan tree is the symbol of Bodhism, which was accepted and spread by Ashoka after the war of Kalinga. He again refers to these edicts in the poem entitled, ‘Song of the Ashokan Edicts, 261 BC’ he finds blood of his ancestors over these edicts and find it all useless and unreal, as he writes,

**These things can happen all the time.**

*Memory has drained us,*  
*and an ancient stone wall*  
*inscribed with rules*  
*is not what it appears.*  

(“Song of the Ashokan Edicts”, *RD*)

The wounds given by Ashoka never gets heal, it is down there very deep under the layers of blood red soil of Orissa and its pus and pain flow through the hearts of every sensible man of the land. Persona is not an exception; in spite of his soft poetic heart he never forgives Ashoka. He puts a question mark against historical anecdotes and questions the edicts carved for peace after taking millions of lives of innocent people. In one of his most recent poems, entitled ‘Asoka’ he writes,

**Slashed with blood-red light, Asoka**  
**turns away from himself, proclaiming**  
**“All men are my children.”**  
**The silk throats of the water of Daya,**

(“Asoka”, *LD*)

He recalls how his ancestors sacrificed everything, even the very life for securing their self respect and spirit of freedom. Persona remembers Karuvaki the princess.

**The sky had not blinded Asoka still,**  
**and the stars trembling with blood.**  
**Karuvaki, Kalinga’s vanquished princess,**  
**was worth more than a hundred thousand dead.**

(Ibid)
Hunger of the land and suffering of the people of his native land remind him ancient times when his ancestors are mutilated by a great emperor who carved edicts of morals on the face of stone which are standing dumb faced like silent gods and seeing pain of people.

**Hunger and stars go past to test our sleep;**

**behind the wall of ancient rock, where a long-dead emperor’s edicts still proclaim the morals of war,**

**silent gods cast handfuls of light**

**to net the shadows of our nonchalant lives.**

(“Under the Drift of Mild Moons”, *LD*)

River Daya stands somewhere in the corner of the history of Orissa. It holds a sad music of humanity. Daya is silent witness of the millions of inhuman killings of soldiers of Kalinga. As per ancient writings the war was so cruel and lethal that water of river had turned blood red due to blood and dead bodies of the soldiers who dies on its banks. Walking on the banks of Daya persona still finds shadows of that blood red water and smell of dead bodies. As he writes,

**Is it the ghost of river in my blood?**

**or the eerie wind laps the waters,**

**secretly searching for the smell of blood**

(“Song of the Past”, *WT*)

Dhaulagiri or Dhauli comes again and again in the poems of the persona side by side mesmerizing the war of Kalinga. This was the place where the bloody war was fought at the banks of river Daya. This is the place which took the fallen sons of the land in his lap for forever. This was the place which knows the numbers of died soldiers and of vultures which consumed their dead muscles. Here flows the river Daya whose water had turned red due to blood of his own sons, fallen or thrown in its water taking their last breath. As persona records it;
when the wars of Kalinga were over,
the fellow fields of Dhauli
hid the red-smeared voiceless bodies.

As the earth
burrowed into their dead hunger
with its tortured worms,
guided the foxes to their limp genitals.

(“Dhaulagiri”, WT)

He recalls those fallen and nameless ancestors who fought and died untimely. Many of them didn’t even receive final rituals and left for the birds at the Dhauli. But he also feels his words being as useless as being the cold chants. Youth of the land is unaware of their sacrifice and praise the Asoka for his peace. Asoka who took millions of life only to realize it was his mistake, stands as hero of peace in our history and it pinches persona.

Under the burnt whispers of the wind at Konarka,
like the lost faces of a lost language at Dhauli
passing the deaths of nameless thousands by,
and with my words as useless as the cold chants

(“Story at Start of 1978”, WT)

3.6 Jagannath Puri and Chariot Festival

Orissa is the land of temples and festivals and it is natural for the land rooted sensibility of the Persona to give his beautiful response towards it also. One such festival is the famous chariot festival of Jagannath Puri, in which idols of lord Jagannath, Balbhadra and Shubhadra are taken to streets in famous Rath Tana. Puri holds an important place in the history, culture and tradition of Orissa. Many Indians, living in northern parts of our countries and living abroad may be unaware of the state called Orissa but they must be aware of Puri or the Jagannathpuri. Such is the importance of this pace in Hindu culture. The temple of Jagannath Puri as the name suggest is devoted to lord Jagannath one of the incarnations of lord Vishnu. The construction of this temple was intitated by King
Chodaganga Deva in 1235 A.D. However it was finished by other kin of the same Ganga dynasty called King Anangabhima Deva. Kings of the Ganga dynasty managed the temple till the Afghani invasion in 1558. The temple was ravaged by ruthless Afghani commander called Kalapahad. After Afghan’s decline another Hindu king Ramchandran Deb reconstructed it and managed it even during rise of Mughals in India. However it was took over by Marathas in 1751. They proved their mastery in managing the temple and popularize it throughout the land due to its famous Chariot festival. But one more change took place during the British rule in India in 1805. Britishers handed over the temple to the Puri’s King-Gajapati Maharaja and announced him Superintendent of the temple and it is unchanged even today. Every year in mid-summer, Lord Jagannath along with his elder brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra, go to vacation seating in grand chariots of Rathas from his temple of Puri to his gareden palace in country side. Many historians believe that it is Buddhist tradition. As per Fa Hien, the Chinese historian, who visited India in 5th century AD, had mentioned about car festival of Buddha being pulled by public on the roads. This celebration begins with *Ratha Yatra* in the morning, millions of pilgrim take part in the traditional custom of *Ratha Tana* or chariot pulling. Idols of all the three deities Jagannatha, Balbhadra and Subhadra are placed in their chariots called *Nandighos* having 18 wheels and 23 cubit height, *Taladhvja* having 16 wheels and 22 cubit height and *Devadalana* having 14 wheels and 21 cubit height. Each year these wooden chariots are built according to very rigid and long rituals. The idols of these three deities are also made of wood and they are religiously replaced after every 12 years. Here god is worshipped as Daru or wooden idols. These idols are bizarre and incomplete because as per a legend this is due to mistake of Shubhadra. She was asked by *Gopis* to keep watch on the arrival of Krishna and Balbhadra while they talk of their love for him. Shubhadra became so much absorbed in the stories of *Gopis* and did not notice the arrival of Krishna and Balbhadra. As they heard stories of *Gopis*, their arms and legs retracted and they had big grins on their faces about ecstasy. The idol of Jagannath has massive square head, merging with the
chest within single piece of wooden stump without any trace of neck. The arms are inserted in a line with upper lip, eyes are very large and round and body is limited to waist. The idol of lord is about 6 feet tall and color is predominately black and the eyes are round and large. Eyes are made using many concentric circles having red in outer border, white in the middle and black in the center. The idol of Balbhadra is also about 6 feet tall and painted white on face with oval shaped eyes. And his tup-like arms are at the level of eyes. And the idol of goddess Shubhadra is yellow and 5 feet tall. Her eyes are also oval. These statues are made out of the wood of Neem tree. In his number of poems persona refers to chariot festival, the temple and wooden idols of deities as well as the streets of Puri. He refers to huge eyes of lord Jagannath’s idol, as he writes,

For it seemed to be a time
when waters flow past without their purposes,
when replicas of temples lie scattered everywhere
and thousands of fake huge eyes open wide in wood
inside them.

(RS)

He is remained an outsider, a neutral observer of the history of the land and its rituals. History is out of his physical sight and rituals are forbidden for him being a non Hindu but these things make him even more perfect in his vision of history and customs of his land. He wonders melting mass of humanity at chariot festival do everything for the mere statues of lord but why do we fail to show our humanity when it is most needed? At times his consciousness takes him very deep in the history and he seems to argue with dead and finds past uncoiling itself and alters in to wooden being; the idols of lords made up of neem wood. As he mentions it beautifully,

My life lies in this shallow slough in the hills,
refusing one the courage of taking to flight,
testing the mind for communication with the dead;
a past that uncoils itself and alters
into the statues of an aboriginal wooden being
who plays on one’s fear of being afraid.

(“Song of the Past”, WT)

He found concentric eyes made out of neem wood, huge and fake as God is silent even after seeing the pain and injustice all around him. He again refers to lord Jagannath and incomplete idol which does not have legs. His tone becomes harsh as he uses an image of legless cripple which stands like the legless idol of lord Jagannath, as he writes,

In these indistinguishable mornings
like pale-yellow hospital linen,
   a legless cripple
clutters up the wide temple street,
   the quiet early light crouched in his palms.

(“Faith”, WT)

He refers to famous chariot festival in many of his poems. He describes how streets get full of humanity which buzzes like swarm of mosquitoes around the temple and he also describes the proud temple priests standing near the shrine above the chariot. Whole humanity melts in around the chariots of the lord Jagannath, Balbhadra and Shubhdra. He finds heritage of the land in these festivals, sentences of old leading the present generations close to their roots.

What sentence of old
moves him toward the furious wrinkled walls?
The Puri priest standing in indulgent sunshine
plays a small ridicule across the melting festival,
safe in place above a pile of hard-eyed ancestors.

(Ibid)

In his another poem entitled, ‘Learning to Flow Free in the Chariot Festivals at Puri’, he describes about the mass that is eager to pull the chariot of lord and attain some sort of salvation. He creates an image of the chariot which
jostles like a toy in millions of hands. Many people even lost their lives during this festival many times stampede and rumours take lives of many. Palms get bruised and veins turn red due to continue pressure due to weight of chariots. As he describes,

In the charred coconuts of the festival
is a secret shared by the carapaced of the sun.
The giant chariot jostles like a toy
in a million hands: numbed fingers litter the way
before the black abyss of its unheard cry,
and in the frail red veins of retinas.

(“Learning to Flow free in Chariot Festival at Puri”, WT)

Puri is one of the Chardhams for Hindus, it welcomes millions of Hindus around the country each year at its gate. One thing that connects all the temples of the nation is their familiar streets, loaded with shops selling things used for various rituals and rites in temples, lots of people, smell of rotting fruits, flies swarming and dozens of beggars including blind, cripple and lepers. These flocks are forbidden in temples, they wait on the steps of the temples for the alms to be thrown at them and survive eating Prasad and occasionally few pieces of breads or fruits given by visitors. Persona never forgets to put History, Myths and Reality side by side with one another. And then he leaves it all on the reader to decide.

At Puri, the crows.
The one wide street
looks out like a giant tongue.
five faceless lepers move aside
as a priest passes by.

(“Taste for Tomorrow”, WT)

In his one of the volumes of the poems entitled, ‘Temple’ he has written a lot about Indian tradition of Shakti Worship-Worshipping Goddesses as symbol of power. He has also given a reference of Durga Pooja in some of his poems. It is
one of the many festivals of Orissa. In this festival goddess Durga is worshipped for nine days. Artisans make beautiful statues of Durga with the clay obtained from the delta of Mahanadi. He projects many images of the statues of Goddess Durga and images of domestic violence, gender discrimination, Sati Pratha and brides being burnt for dowry to display a contrast between ritual and reality.

The ten-armed clay Durga
tframed in a mythic past,
carried slowly by twenty-four tired men.

(“Moving”, RR)

3.7 Bhubaneshwar and Lingaraj Temple

References to Bhubaneshwar are also very recurrent in the poetics of Jayanta Mahapatra. Bhubaneshwar was the ancient capital of Kalinga and famous as the city of temples named after Tribhuvaneswar—the lord of three worlds. It holds more than 500 temples around which religious life of the city life revolves. And most important of these temples is the Lingaraja Temple. Lingaraj means the king of lingam the symbol of Shiva. Shiva is worshipped here as Tribhuvarshwar. And his consort Parvati is called Bhubaneshwari here. There is a legend that Shiva revealed to Parvati that Bhubaneshwar Tirtha was a resort favored by him over Benaras. Then Parvati under the guise of a shepherd visited the city herself. Two demons called Kritti and Vasa desired to marry her. She requested them to carry her upon their shoulders, and crushed them under her weight. Shiva then created the Bindusar’s lake to quench her thirst and took abode here as Krittivasas or Lingaraja. Together with Puri and Konark, Bhubaneshwar forms the ‘golden triangle’, one of the most visited destinations in East India. Lingaraj temple is 55 meters in height, biggest in 150 smaller shrines in its spacious courtyard. It is surrounded by massive walls lavishly decorated with beautiful sculpture. Structurally, the Parasurameshwar temple at Bhubaneshwar is the oldest and believed to be built in 8th century and Lingaraj temple was built in 10th century. It is built on red sandstone giving its dark shade. The idol is said to be Sawyambhu— an idol that has emerged on its own, is made of one massive
granite stone that is worshipped both as Shiva and Vishnu. This idol is also called Harihara meaning both Vishnu and Shiva both. Beside Lingaraj temple Bhubaneshwar has famous and vast lake Bindu Sagar at its center. In his poem entitled ‘Bhubaneswar’ he portrays a verbal image of city of temples. He refers to red sand stone of Lingaraj temple. He refers to its forbidden walls stading erect in sunlight keeping loads of heritage within them at the banks of famous Bindu Sagar. Mass aroungd temple gathered for ceremony after worn out voyages in brozen sunset as he writes,

Stone is the theme

and the endless, forbidden temple wall
goes from lighted shadow into shadowy light,
by the west bank of the stale and futile Bindu Sagar,
tired of ceremony, pale and evil-smelling and still
trying the worn-out voyages of the brozen sunset.

(“Bhubaneshwar”, WT)

He goes deep in to history and finds the Bindu Sagar futile as its water is turned stale and smelling. And may be persona here tries to refer to the futile rituals of the land which has become stagnant holding many superstitions. He finds it strange that people have so much faith in the stone; his tone becomes very rationalist when he questions our customs. People offer milk to stone which is installed in every Shiva temple as Linga. He finds stones are becoming overpowering then men. In the land which had seven hundred million hungry bellies such customs are futile. He takes a deep in to history and comes out holding rational view of the things leading towards humanity. The whole world thus becomes weary as he writes,

Perhaps it is a weary world
that pulls me also to the shore:
we build the stone that has overcome men
until the fate that shrouds us as fog
breaks free of its own river, its quiet hope.
He refers to Linga, in many of his poems. Images of temples, shrines, seated lions at the gates of temples, beggars seating in line outside temples etc. are the recurrent images related to Bhubaneshwar the city of temples in many of his poems.

A wandering boy hurls a rock through
the ruined entrance. Shadows in retreat fly;
of serpent- girls, elephant gods, fiery birds.
Mosquitoes slap the Siva linga in ignorant stillness,
a long shiver running down the shrine.

(“Abandoned Temple”, BF)

Konarka, Bhubaneswar and Puri have remained the silent witness of the Orissan History and atrocities of the time. These places hold ruins of the land, holding some red chapters of Oriyan history. These ruins stand alone like persona wandering about their futile existence for the mass and eager to pass on their preserved anecdotes to the present time and secure the future of time.

Your silence, my land,
grows
with an old petrified loneliness,
and your bronze youth
overwhelms
with an unheard cry of the infinite
that once blazed
the red sandstones walls
of Konarks
Bhubaneshwar and Puri
with the terrifying passions
of solitary beings.

(“Orissa”, WT)
3.8 Maritime History of Orissa

Orissa is blessed with splendid seacoast comprising of undivided districts of Ganjam, Puri, Cuttack and Balasore. Much historical evidence proves glory of the sea coast and marine heritage of ancient Orissa. These evidences can be found in many literary records like Puranas, Epics, Vedas and writings on palm leaves and stones. Ancient literature proves that Orissa invited sea trade from South Asia, China even far from ancient Rome. One such place in Chandipur a place in Balasore district. It was ruled by the Kalinga king Mukunda Dev then by Mughals until 1750-51 and lastly by British. It was an important stronghold as a port of trade for the Dutch, French and for Britishers. Chandipur of Balasore became a prominent place for the sea trade as other major ports of South Orissa became defunct due to several a natural as well as man made problems like heavy siltation and bifurcation of channels due to irregular flood activities. In this situation, the seafaring activities were concentrated in the north Orissan coast, especially in Balasore district. In present time Chandipur hold a place of one of the most beautiful beaches in India, a paradise for beach combers as it is the only sea beach in the present time which recedes 5km everyday at low tide. And its bed is not muddy and sandy but hard and rocky. One can easily find starfishes and sea shells and drift wood. Like Balasore many historian and ancient text consider Chilika as a major harbor. The famous Chinese traveler Fa-Hien also refers to a port from where ships bound for South East Asia. This port was said to be located at Chhatragarh on the banks of the Chilika lake. Excavations of the 7th century revealed ship anchors, and the 10th century documents refers to the Chilika lake as being a vital port and shelter for ships going to Asia. The Chilika lake is situated along Orissa coast at southwest corner of Mahanadi delta and is largest coastal lagoon in Asia with a length of 64 km and tapers towards south. The western and Southern margins of the lake are fringed by the Eastern ghat hill ranges. The lake is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a belt of about 4 km wide sandy beach ridges and barrier spits lying to the eastern side of the lake. Chilika lake was
considered to be a natural harbor and thousands of ships were floating on it. The Bramhanda Purana mentioned the maritime activities of Chilika lake where thousands of ships were floating for trade to Java, Malaya, Singhala and China and other island countries. In present time it is recognized as one of the most important wetlands in the world because it is home to a phenomenal variety of birds. It becomes home of many migrated birds which come far from Iran, Central Asia and Siberia. In his one of the poems entitled, ‘The Captive Air of Chandipur-on-Sea’ he intermixes ancient legend of the land with present reality. He recalls the ancient fisherman who went on trading roaming in the sea to far away land up to Java and Sumatra. As per their tradition their women get crowded at the beach on the day of Kartika Purnima to bid them good bye and wishes for the trade. Persona creates a contrast between the past traditions and present realities of the fisher men of the land.

Day after day the drunk sea at Chandipur
spits out gueze wings of shell along the beach
and rumples the thin air behind the sands.
Who can tell of the songs of this sea that go on
to battle and double the space around the lives?
Or of smell paralyzed through the centuries,
of deltas hard and white that stretched once
to lure the feet of women bidding their men goodbye?

(“The Captive Air of Chandipur on Sea”, LS)

Standing on the beach and feeling the captive air of the Chandipur, persona thinks about the past heritage and present realities. Now the tide is just a mere shadow of the old proud watercourse and is just a ridicule of the dead. As he writes,

And what is it now that scatters the tide
in the shadow of this proud watercourse?
The ridicule of the dead?
Susurrant sails still whisper
legends on the horizon: who are you,
occupant of the silent sigh of the conch?

(Ibid)

Poem is all about the contrast that lies between past and present, the glory of maritime history and a tourist spot during British day and today just few people around here. Now what he finds is only cries of fishermen ‘come drifting through the spray, music of what the world has lost’. In his award winning long poem Relationship he recalls this maritime history and ancestor exploring his relationship with the native land.

the sailing ships of those maritime ancestors
who have vanished in the black bay without a trace,
that only live in the sound of the waves
flinging themselves onto the dark fringes
of this land from Chilika to Chandipur.

(RS)

Many brave Oriya fishermen sailed the uncharted sea for the trade and vanished in their attempt to earn bread for the family and wealth for the land. But that maritime history is a mere historical record now. Now only few tourists are visible here and at Chilika lake to watch the migrant birds coming from the far land of Siberia. As he writes,

Siberian geese are already skimming the lake
between the reeds, not taking more than what they need.

(“Winter in the City”, RD)

He strives all the time to present his land in his poems. He puts the landscape, culture and folks of the land in his poems every now and then. He recalls the history and heritage of the land to find a relationship to end his old alienation that is growing like tides and recurrent cyclones in the land. He starts searching reality of this land wrapped in old myths. His search leads him to
historical volumes of the land. The Physics adapt rationality of the persona walks side by side his metaphysical observation of the land and its history to produce his response towards the myth, culture and history of the land. He finds himself in close sky surrounded by faces of history, he talks to each face one by one and relate the sermon in his poems. He recalls emperors who ruled over this land and the invaders who invaded it time to time to force in new chapters in its history.

Orion crawls like a spider in the sky
while the swords of forgotten kings
rust slowly in the museums of our guilt,
while the carved rock loses its light,
and the man with many memories
doesn’t know what to do with them

(RS)

Yes, he feels suffocated at time by the load of history; personal and of the land. Through swollen glasses of the noon he peeps inside the ruined corridors of history and wanders what to do with this history, heritage and endless rituals of the land. But then he writes,

for a new body to reveal
the green-leaved carpet of pleasure,
somewhere. elsewhere,

wearing the dreams away of the forgotten Ganga Kings,
digging at the ruins of their own private sorrow.

(RS)

3.9 Na Anka Famine 1866

The famine of 1866 called Na Anka struck Orissa severely and killed one third of its population. Persona has remained quite sensitive towards the suffering of the humanity in general and to the adversities of the land. Floods, famines, cyclones all found their references in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra. Hunger,
poverty, people having hollowed out eyes, people suffering from leprosy all affected him and compelled his sensible heart to mention their suffering in his poem. The famine of 1986 is both personal and general memory for the persona. As mentioned in his biography, once his father handed him an old diary having yellow pages. It was his grandfather’s diary. This diary gave him many answers but also aroused many other questions. His grandpa’s diary is his tale of woe and describes how he starved to the point of death and then changed his faith to save himself. He puts his grandfather’s suffering in his poems,

**The yellow diary’s notes whisper in vernacular.**

They sound the forgotten posture,
the cramped cry that force me to hear that voice.
Now I stumble in your black-paged wake.

(“Grandfather”, *LS*)

He then recalls how people were so helpless, hunger made them eat tamarind leaves and some unknown tubers which led to epidemics. Many people lost their lives, even domestic animals died due to the lack of fodder and grass, everywhere there was suffering, and endless hunger only jackals and other men eaters were happy. He explain the suffering of the land like this,

**Did you hear the young tamarind leaves rustle**
in the cold mean nights of your belly? Did you see
your own death? Watch it tear at your cries,
break them into fits of hard unnatural laughter?

(Ibid)

In one of his poems, ‘Light Thinking: Clutching at Straws’ he recalls the history of 1986 and how his grandfather and many took shelter into a white missionary and changed their religion to save their life.

**You are not my problem. Not even that history of mine I have lived with day after day. A history of my grandfather, starving to death as a sallow youth, as he walked into white missionary camp during the terrible famine in 1866.**
3.10 Mythopoeic Vision

Ruins everywhere
holding dim interiors of myth.
And priests
always trying to prove they’ve been.

(“The Morning-II”, WT)

Indian history is a wholesome mixture of myths, epics, legends and anecdotes of gods. Persona refers to such myths of India and Orissa in his many poems. He uses most of the myths to describe the predicament of Indian women. Yes, women and their pain has remained one of the most recurrent themes in the poems of the persona. He puts before us the bare realities, when he expresses that here in India women can be either a Goddess or a Prostitute but not a human. In his very first collection Close the Sky Ten by Ten he has used the myth of Lakhsman Rekha or the circle drawn around Sita for her protection,

Drawing a circle he places the women inside.
The forest drags down the clamour of the birds.
She looks down too, circumscribed by a pact,
smelling of winds and root and forest heat

(“The Circle”, CS)

As per the Ramayana, Lakshman drew a circle around Sita for her protection when he went looking for his elder brother lord Rama and Sita committed a mistake of crossing the Lakshaman Rekha or the line of order so she had to suffer. By using this myth Persona wants to prove how male always try to dominate the women assigning her boundaries or drawing such circles around her taking excuses like her security. This circle is not physical but it is one of the mental barriers of our society. Similarly he uses myth of Siva and Parvati, to describe the predicament of Goddesss in our traditions. He describes how she has
to perform a very hard penance to achieve Siva as her husband and how she has to enter the fire of *Havan Kunda* at her father’s place to secure her husband’s pride. The same kind of hypocrisy is seen in the *Agnipariksha*- test of chastity given by women entering alive in the fire. He describes the solitude of Sita, deserted by Lord Rama and vacuum inside the heart of Parvati lying in Siva’s cave. As he writes,

> O solemn Ayodhya skies!
> O savage den of Siva!
> let me not awaken
> the meaningless tears of rage and hate
> when you fumble at the catch of my consciousness
> before you cut the heart out of my body
> and nights scour my womb
> with ashes of solitude.

(*TP*)

He also uses myth of Ahlaya- the wife of the great sage Gautam. Her beauty made God Indra the King of *Swarga* spell bound and that God took the guise of her husband and entered in to the hut of sage. Ahalya was unaware of this and he touched her at the very moment Gautam arrives and found her wife beside Indra. Indra runs away from there and Gautam gives a curse to his wife and she turns stone as per the curse, ‘*some holy curse changed a woman to stone*’. She waits for centuries for the arrival of lord Rama to come and touch that stone with her feet for her salvation from the curse. Similar is the legend of Savitri- a woman who reaches Yama- the hindu god of death, Mahapatra describes it as,

> …a dark-eyed woman climbs the endless stairs
> of her abandoned house, the great earth
cowering before her, turning back
the triumph of death with the power
of her faithful silence, outside the bonds of time.

(*RS*)
Such myths are deployed in the history, to make women docile and faithful to their husband however there is no such myth for husbands to remain faithful and committed to wives. Such myths show male hypocrisy that is so evident in our society since the prehistoric times. As he writes,

**What was myth, a journey in which one feared**
**one could loose himself at any moment? Or was it**
**merely a time which lay in the dust and stone**
**of the languid water, which move sadly**

(Ibid)

He uses the myth of Radha and Krishana the lover God and Goddess who used to meet at the banks of river Yamuna. They had played many Raslialas- Dance of Love there. They are the eternal lovers but could not marry; still they are worshipped together in Hindu Mythology as Radha-Kishana. Persona uses image of Radha and Krishana for describing the nature of Orissa,

**Radha, still standing**
**on the night of warm mists,**
**abandoned, and yet boundless**
**with pain and desire;**
**Krishna, far away,**
**like the silence on the river,**
**secretly always victor.**

(“Orissa”, WT)

Persona uses many local myths along with the myths derived from religious epics of the country. He uses myths as metaphor to explore history. He uses typical Oriya myth of limbless lord Jagannath. Myths are inseparable part of Indian history and persona in spite of his scientific background remains quite open when it comes to use of myths in his poems. Beside above such mentioned mythological anecdotes he describes many mythical places and names in his
poems every now and then. ‘Hills of Nilgiri’- where stands the temple of lord Jagannath, ‘the tree of Klapdrum’, ‘The statue of seated Buddha’. Beside this in many of his poems he is found displaying ‘Karma’ principle as well as philosophy of vaisnav saints of Orissa. His uses mysticism and Orissan culture side by side in his poems. Orissan tradition of Village deity- the gargoyle and Topoi tradition of Orissan Tribes are also visible in his poems.

as I begin to tire out of indifference,
not daring to kneel before gargoyle or goddess

(“Performance”, FH)

In his longest poem having more then 900 lines he has talked about the myth of the Putana the ogress sent by Kansha to kill the lord Krishana. Here persona presents the plight of the women through various myths in the poem. This poem begins with a news item from, The Times of India dated March 24, 1980, news about the suicide of two octogenarian weaver couple, Ramanujan (85) and Chelammal (80) out of poverty and loneliness. This poem has an epilogue too about a twelve year girl being raped and murdered. In this poem Chelammal becomes mouth piece of persona which talks about the state of women in our society. This poem is divided in to three sections standing for the three stages of the life of Chelammal. He presents the myth of Putana as a revolutionary step taken by woman. Instead of being Sita, Parvati or Draupadi she chooses to be the ogress and gets killed by lord himself to reach salvation. She too suffered but not life time like Sita and Parvati. As persona writes,

And now the ogress,
transformed into lovely woman,
her poisoned nipples
the moksha-centre of her martyrdom,
awakens the women of the mind.

(“Talking of Death”, BW)
Thus he presents a contemporary resonance to various Hindu myths of our land. He treats old myths with tests of modernity and rationality to derive new meanings out of them. He uses these myths a handy tool to demonstrate contradictions and austerities hovering over the plight of Indian woman. Here he may be found as a true science adapt person trying to find some rational out of hypothetic presence of the myths around us. As he says talking about Temple, “I thought I’d do this poem as sort of symbolic journey and lead it to spiritual realization of human suffering. It’s a dream narrative representing the plight of the long-suffering Indian woman….I suppose past and present, man and nature, contribute to the myth which is necessary for survival….And yes, I did use the Hindu myths of the destructive image of the Ogress, Putana, to drive in the point that life has to be lived amidst all deceits, cruelties, disguises and contradictions and that illusion, whether mystical or earthly might help to save man from ultimate despair.”

3.11 Recent Currents of History

Jayanta Mahapatra belongs to one of the most changeful period of our land. He has remained a sensible witness of World-War; his one of the uncles went missing at Burma border. He has seen the freedom struggle of India. He was also the part of youth who has witnessed the eve of independence. He has seen the woes of partitions and havoc of communalism. He has seen the rise of terrorism in Kashmir and Punjab, he is also the witness of Bhopal Gas tragedy the biggest industrial disaster in the history of the mankind. All this makes him a living history and his memories get reflected in his poems. One of the most influential figures in his life is Mahatma Gandhi. He is follower of his principles, and holds same kind of sensible heart which can easily see the pain behind every face. He has written around fifteen poems addressing directly to Gandhi. From Salt Satyagrah to his assassination all gets recorded in his verbal canvas. Talking about the influence of Gandhi upon him he has said to Rabindra Swain in an
interview, “That was in 1947. I was a young student at Patna University, and our excitement was at its peak—to have been part of the Indian people who had just become independent. The tricolor was nothing less than god. And Gandhiji, he was a superior being, above all of us lesser mortals…perhaps Gandhiji taught me that evening to be unafraid…and that body was just a covering for the mind and that this mind could go on to dream and do those things seemed impossible to achieve.” In his one of the long poem entitled, ‘Requiem’ he pays his tribute to Gandhi. In the first section he presents an image of the tomb of the Gandhi. Assassination of Gandhi has ended an era of Indian History, but we are still living in the legacy of that men who had the courage to come cladded in cotton dhoti and sit beside well dressed Britishers. But what we are doing today, we are killing his ideals, every new minister come and pays him tribute giving fixed smiles to cameras. As he writes,

A small procession winding its way
to the Tomb by the Yamuna,
a nation’s blindness

groping for the proverbial flames of colours,

Bare January tress.

And the mist, raw and trembling,

falling on its knees.

(“Requiem”, BF)

He starts the fourth section of the same poem with a short article published in Web Miller’s United Press dated May 5, 1930 about Salt Satyagraha. Gandhi travelled with the group of 114 people from the Sabarmati Ashram of Ahmedabad to Dandi a village near the coastal city Navsari to break the Salt law imposed by Britishers. As per this law the complete right to make and sell salt remains with Britishers only, Gandhi broke this law and announced that, “He has applied salt in the foundation of British Rule in India”, this satyagraha holds a unique place in Indian and British history. British rule in India thrashed all the Savyamsevakas
again and again but they marched on without any reply holding their truth and non-violence as it has been described in the above mentioned article, “They marched steadily, with heads up, without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically beat down column. There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward till struck down.”

Persona uses image of Gandhi as alone true leader and displays the contrast between the Gandhian Era of leadership and present dirty politics. In many of his poems he mocks at present corrupted government using image of Gandhi.

Even the headless torso of Gandhi
in the city square can speak.

Like truth, unsaid most of the time,
yet almost said.

Sometimes one isn’t sure
it wasn’t even one’s life one is fighting for.

(“Sometimes”, BF)

In the ninth section of his longer poem, ‘Requiem’ he compares Gandhi with a poem of two lines. Here he recalls those two words said by Gandhi before his death when he was shot dead by Nathruam Godse,

And the poem of a mere two words
is drawn to its own beauty,
born in the cool January air,
ending in the fullness of fire;

He’Ram

(Ibid)

Persona feels connected and related to Gandhi, he uses Gandhi as an image old man, a leader wandering somewhere in the corridors of parliament all alone. Persona mingles political anecdotes and pretentions of present time leaders who portray themselves as the follower of Gandhi. And what they do for his
ideals except releasing stamps in his memories on the eve of twenty-fifth anniversary of our republic. Even, we the common men of this nation have forgotten his ideal and legacy. As persona describes an incident in his poem entitled, ‘Red Roses for Gandhi, “Eight students chose the most painful form of death in trying to immolate themselves by fire in various towns of India on 2nd October 1990-Mahatma Gandhi’s birth anniversary.”’ He frames his poem side by side this incident and show how indifferent we are today towards him and towards the nation. At times persona wanders about that Ram Rajya or the promised land of Gandhi. As he writes in his poem entitled, ‘The Fifteenth of August’

The photograph of Gandhi in the new airport lounge
is more than forty years old.
Every time I look into the old man’s eyes,
he calmly hands my promise back to me.
Land our land,
there is so much land between us now.

(“The Fifteenth of August”, WB)

Persona buries his face in to history searching roots but he is also aware of the world and mishappens of land that was going on when he was making his poems. One such disaster is the Bhopal gas tragedy, December 3, 1984- the biggest industrial nightmare for the world when callousness of Union Carbide, a pesticide making industry took the lives of 10,000 people and affected 30,000 to 50,000 permanently. Many lost their eyes, few lost their kidneys, few ballooned in to inhuman shapes and many fallen victims of life long infections. It was all due to leakage of poisonous gas Methyl-iso-cyanide or MIC. Company was running its plant in an area having population of 1, 20,000 around it, and without any kind of safety system and back up plans. The gas took the lives when people were lying in the arms of winter sleep. In the dark of the night people ran helplessly not knowing where to go. Doctors were helpless too, they could not do anything. And
morning light arrived with thousands of dead bodies of human, birds and animals on the streets of Bhopal. Even the leaves of trees had turned black, 30 year shave passed and still thousands of survivors are waiting for justice. Pain of such survivors and those who have taken away by untimely death gets depicted as history in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra. As he writes in his poem entitled, ‘Death of a Nameless Girl in Bhopal, December 1984’

*Sanity never saves anyone, the pattern
of colour breaking the city’s green expanses
to a brief states of time, as you went on
expressing the thought that direct death
from attack by the poison gas was terrible
but understandable. As the years go by
we shall only get more and more sorry
for ourselves, we shall study with this history.*

(“Death of Nameless Girl in Bhopal”, WB)

Most of the victims of Bhopal gas tragedy lost their lives. Their eyes have collapsed inside, veins have busted out and in many cases eyes got cataract forever. Persona records their pain when he writes,

*The earth beneath is cold. A lost ray
starts slipping towards the east,
wavering sunrise. A world becomes a plot.
The page of life sprouts scary, unseeing eyes.*

(“Bhopal Dawn”, WB)

In one of his volumes of the poetry entitled, *Dispossessed Nest* he has written about mishappen that took place in our nation in 1984- terrorism and communal violence in Punjab as well as Bhopal gas tragedy. In one of the poems of this volume he remembers a 5 year girl called Leela whose photograph appeared in The Times of India on 31st December 1984.

*The eyes are deep and hard in Leela’s sockets.*
And the face looks peaceful in death
That’s what they say, the onlookers,
what would Leela have said
had she grown up to her father’s age?

(DS)

In the same collection of the poems persona has talked about the history of terrorism in Punjab and the religious fanaticism after the assassination, of Indira Gandhi. He records the evil of communalism and anti Shikh riots in the first section of the Dispossessed Nest called Bewildered Wheatfields.

Somewhere

amidst the bewildered Wheatfields
the cool night wind snips off the skin
from the fruit of reason

(Ibid)

Persona also remembers the hijack episode; terrorist hijacked flight number 405 and took it to Lahore. The humane behavior of terrorist generates confidence at first but in the end the evil of terror gets hold of the passengers. He mentions the chaos and nude dance of violence on the streets of Punjab in his poems. The land becomes accustomed with ‘curfews’, ‘Ambulance’, ‘blowing sirens’, ‘bullet shots’ and ‘death’. The land gets besieged by fake promises of the politicians who come flying in jets. He portrays the land of terror;

In the city of the round-the-clock
curfew, and the white trucks
painted AMBULANCE fighting
my thought in the sun

(Ibid)

Beside this his poems records many of the remarkable incidents of his time. He refers to increasing crimes- rape of girls whether the name is Fara, Mariyam, or Mana, continual starvation and hunger in the land even after fifty
years of independence the honour killings of lovers in the land. As he writes in his most recent anthology called, **Land**

_Some time back I had stumbled_  
on the decomposing bodies of a young couple  
on the hill slope behind the temple. The girl  
couldn’t have been more than sixteen years old.  

("More in the Dreams than in the Flesh", *LD*)

His poems present ancient as well as recent records of history in them. He depicts current socio-economic condition of the land in his poems. He is one of the most poetically and politically aware poets. Orissa has remained a center point of change in many historical accounts of our land. North East states of our land is facing Naxalism from years, in one of his poems he talks about Naxalism,

_Why am I hurt still_  
_by the look in the hand_  
_of that graceful Naxal girl_  
_who appeared out of nowhere that winter,_  
_holding knife as old as history?_  

("A Country", *SP*)

He refers to communal violence that engulfed our humanity again and again. He has written many poems regarding rise of religious fanaticism in our country. He refers to anti-shikh riots of 1984 and Hindu-Muslim riots of 1992 after Babari Mosque incident in Mumbai and other parts of the country. In one of his poems entitled, ‘Because’ he recalls the riots of Gujarat.

_Because these times are turning out another_  
_orphan girl, another maimed man,_  
_another ruined country,_  
_and history is without its time._  
_The face goes on wearing its two eyes._  
_Leaves murmur like dying Muslims._  

("Because", *RD*)
3.12 Conclusion

Thus poems of Jayanta Mahapatra show his concern for the heritage as well a present record of history before the reader to allow him/her to derive their own view points. His poems show his concern for the lost values of the land, lost ideal of Gandhi, lost ancestors, decaying humanity. He presents history but he never allow himself to get involve in it, he observes it taking all the precautions and conscious sanitization to not to get infected by it. As he writes,

Yet there is little of it
in the dove's lifeless body
I found early this morning;
history has no arms,
it leaves us to build our snares.

(“Summer Nights 2009”, LD)

Thus in the poems of Mahapatra one can find him dealing with time and history as if handling a flexible entity, a liquid filled in a conatiner allowing it to flow backward and forward. He constantly relates past and present to shape up new images, new meanings to questions, to situations which arise before his eyes, ralted to society, to heritage, to myths and to ritauls of his spiritual land. War of Kalinga, his for gotten ancestors, rulers of the land, forgotten tibes and people all find him accesible. Past keeps in pouring in his poems bringing in new connections to present and future. For persona past equals to values, it is the way which leads to his roots being left behind under the heap of dust and his poems are his effort to clean up the dust and bring past glory to present time.
REFERENCES


3. Ibid


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid