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Silences in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra

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Abstract:

Silences are all-pervasive in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra and they originate from myriad sources. The chief sources of silences are loneliness, darkness, ash, stone, past, ancient history and myths. They have enormous creative potential which constitutes Jayanta's poetic vision. Silences are more evocative than speech and are the most effective means of communication. They radically slash the role of words in loneliness and darkness. Silences act like an antenna for the poet to reveal his subconscious mind fearlessly which he had previously withheld in social discourse. They have given him an ample opportunity to authentically redefine his relationships with the members of his family, friends and others. Silences help Jayanta Mahapatra to correlate the present with the ancient past by means of memories or reveries. Silences of the ancient myths help the poet to dramatize the modern tragic times in a frank and unbiased manner.

Keywords: Silence, Loneliness, Darkness, Ash, Stone and Myth.

Silences authentically define the poetic vision of Jayanta Mahapatra. Prof. M. K. Naik rightly observes, "His most characteristic note is one of quiet" (2018, p. 217). Silences are all-pervasive in his poetic oeuvre. Jayanta Mahapatra assigns significant place to silence in his poetry. Prof. G. N. Devy aptly remarks, "His is poetry of non-comment, poetry that centres round silence" (Sharma, UMJM, p. 135). Silence is a very effective dramatic device which has dispensed away with the use of long description or analysis. It raises the intellectual level of the poem and demands the total participation of the reader in understanding its implications.

Function of Silences

Silences help the poet in analysing the world of reality vis-à-vis ancient myths in historical perspective. They assume myriads of dimensions which make Jayanta's poetry very deep and suggestive. Silences can be long, short or still. They can be comfortable or

frightening at times. Silences realistically dramatize the subconscious mind of the poet, his relationship with his near and dear ones and the tragic world. They also help the poet in highlighting the limitations of the modern times of Orissa\ India and the glories of the ancient past. The present article presents an in-depth evaluation of silences in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra.

Silence\Speech

Silence is not merely an absence or does not mean anything but constitutes a vital strategy of communication as important as speech. It has an explicit mobility “that flies like a tree sparrow” (‘Death in Orissa’, Panda, p.191). It is the context that communicates the power and meaning of the message of silence. Silences are more eloquent than speech in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra. Speech, which consists of words, have no relevance in loneliness. The poem ‘The Quality of Ruins’ affirms the superfluity of words in loneliness: “Words have value only if one is not alone” (Jayanta, Lie of Dawn, p. 36). Loneliness is, therefore, a must for intensifying the effect of silence in a caged existence. Silence of loneliness is a boon for creativity in which an artist gets the desired tranquillity of mind and undisturbed focus to realise his poetic aspirations. Jayanta has frankly admitted that he is always a loser in speech than in silence: “A game of speech in which I invariably lose” (‘It’s My Room Once Again’, Lie of Dawn, p.43). In the poem ‘A Country’, the poet’s contact with the outside world is never snapped in silence of darkness of his room: “Sometimes at night when all voices die \ my mind sees earth, my country” (Jayanta, Lie of Dawn,p.51).

Silence and Memory

Memory plays a crucial role in the life of silences. It can be active or passive. Silence activates memories which can make the mind transcend the barrier of time and space. Memory transports the poet into strange untrodden lands: “Memory carries me into strange lands” (‘Rice’, Lie of Dawn, p.101).It leads to the unification of time and the division between the present and the past is instantly annihilated. Memory helps Jayanta Mahapatra to correlate the tragic present with the glorious Indian ancient past.This enhances the epic range and scope of his point-of-view. Memory keeps the poet in constant touch with those who are alive or dead. This is how he overcomes the feeling of silences of loneliness. Finally, memories are inactive in rains: “Memories are silent”(‘Four Poems’, Lie of Dawn, p.184), but active in silence of darkness.

Types of Silences

There are divergent types of silences in Jayanta Mahapatra's poems. The often repeated silences are:

i. Silence of People

Silence of the people shows their utter lack of sympathy or humanistic concerns in social behaviour. They do not sympathise with those who suffer and die before their eyes. The poem 'June Rain' ruthlessly exposes such selfish people who "walked past in silence" (Panda, p. 217) a raped woman without extending her any help.

ii. Silence of World

Silence of the World is the characteristic feature of the modern age. Jayanta has himself experienced the bitter apathy of the world which is least bothered about his acute pain and unabated grief. The poem 'The Looking Glass' highlights the intense hostility of world faced by him: "In front of me is a world \ that doesn't seem to care" (Lie of Dawn, p.109). The poet visualises this "silent world floats beside me" (Lie of Dawn, p. 104) in the poem 'The Hour Before Dawn'.

iii. Silence of Stones

Silence of Stones permeates the entire poetic universe of Jayanta Mahapatra. It runs parallel to the progression of his life. The poem 'Relationship' shows how his life has a direct bearing on stones: "and yet my existence lies in the stones \ which carry my footsteps from oneday into another" (Lie of Dawn, p. 59).

Stones are not permanent but subject to wear and tear with the passage of time. The poem 'Relationship' testifies to the destructive impact of time on stones: "How the age-old proud stones \ lost their strength and fell" (Lie of Dawn, p.62). The woman in the poem 'The Woman Who Wanted to be Loved' is converted into stone as the time passed: "Season pass, and she becomes stone" (Lie of Dawn, p. 114).

Stones are indispensable for sustaining life and must be religiously preserved: "We will always let the stones live" (Lie of Dawn, p. 136). Silence of stones can be converted into deities through prayers and meditation. Only stones can shield us from the problems plaguing the modern society. The poem 'Sermon of The Garbage Heap' affirms the power of stones to protect us from the tragedies of the modern times: "Just the stones waiting to rescue

us \ from the cries of the present” (Panda, p. 198). The poem ‘Stones’ shows that stones must be allowed to exist because they are our shadows which don’t leave us in the lurch: “We will let them live \ because they are those shadows of ours \ which will not leave us”(Lie of Dawn, p.136).

iv. Personification of Stones

Stone is also personified which looks like “the phallus of enormous stone” (‘Relationship’, Lie of Dawn, p. 59) and is worshipped like an object of worship. The poem ‘Rice’ shows “inane faces of stone lions \ stare on from torn temple entrances” (Lie of Dawn, p. 101).

v. Spiritualisation of Stones

Stone is spiritualised also. Stone is also the symbol of different types of powers which gods embody. The silence of saints “lies inside their own truths”(‘Silence’, Panda, p. 218) and the silence of moss “broods silently in the cracks of the stone”(‘Silence’, Panda, p. 218). “Dumb silence of a God’s curved eye,(is) directed like a pilgrimage”, observes Jayanta in the poem ‘Moving’ (Panda, p. 212). Stones have become the object of worship like Gods: “God’s little idol \ at the foot of the dying banyan” (‘Village Evening’, Lie of Dawn, p. 22).

vi. Stone is also a symbol of history, culture and myth in Mahapatra’s poetry

The stones of Konarka stand for the root of life and the knot of death. They are the chief source of poetic inspiration for the poet. In Konarka, the temple is made up of stone of fire, sleeping through centuries but alive still, full of energy and warmth. These stones create the past as well as universe itself. They uphold and contain the myth which gives meaning to the past.

vii. Silence of Nature

Dawn is the time of the poet’s “speechless voice” (‘The Hour of Dawn’, Lie of Dawn, p. 104). Silence prevails everywhere during a rainy night. The poem ‘Silence’ shows that continuous rain during the night brings life to a standstill. The speaker does not feel the urge to say anything and the “Five-year-old Pratick is silent inside his screams”(Panda, p. 218). Winter mornings are still and filled with a “sullen mist” (‘A Still Winter Morning’, Panda, p.193) and “The only door to an exhausted village hut \ opens noiselessly like a tongue hung out” (Panda, p. 193) and “Somewhere a garden spider \ is busy, silently spinning

its web” (Panda, 218). Silence in a valley on an autumn day is felt as “deep stillness” (‘Moving’, Panda, p. 212). The poet often hears the cracking silence from the autumn of my fear” (‘A Morning Walk in Bhopal’, Panda, p. 203). Silence of the sea is very deceptive and often leads to drowning and death. The poem ‘Death’s Wild Land: Eleven Poems’ shows how a boat has sunk by the deceptive calm of the sea:

“Just the lethal calm of the sea

Into which a boat has sunk” (Lie of Dawn, p. 120).

Silence of valley is also due to the “strong and silent deodars in the valley” (‘Relationship’, Lie of Dawn, p. 59) and the “wounded trees silent \ in slow, settling heat” (‘The Lie of Dawn’, Lie of Dawn, p. 196).

viii. Silence of Darkness

Darkness intensifies the feeling of silence. Jayanta has never felt bored in the silence of darkness. Rather, he can freely “mingle with darkness as well as light” (‘Illness’, Lie of Dawn, p.187). The dark window in his lonely room has never blocked or blurred his vista of the external world.

Causes of Jayanta’s Silence

There are multiple causes of Jayanta Mahapatra’s prolonged silence. It may be due to his lack of religious faith of any kind. He is not sure whether God is a part of his life or not. Silence can also be on account of his unrealised cherished dreams. Even knowledge does not help him in overcoming his silence. Finally, the poet’s “silence is because of poetry” (‘The trail of Poetry’, Lie of Dawn, p. 81). The poet’s search centres around what to believe in his futile existence. He has always felt alienated from his father which must have contributed to his loneliness as admitted in the poem ‘The Hour Before Dawn’:

“My father, sad-faced father! How very far away you are

From this empty room filled with myself” (Lie of Dawn, p.104).

Poet’s necessity of Loneliness

The fear of losing his face forced the poet to lead a life of silence of loneliness. He has no hesitation in admitting it in the poem ‘Freedom’: “In order for me not to lose face \ it is necessary for me to be alone” (Lie of Dawn, p. 129). He wears the mask of loneliness to

hide his true identity and failures in his poetic career. Jayanta prefers the company of shadows to avoid interacting with human beings to overcome his overwhelming feeling of loneliness. The poet finds logic in silence: “The logic I seek sees sound within silence” (‘Illness’, Lie of Dawn, p.187).

Silence of Ashes-source of Poetry

Poetry emanates from silence of ashes: “All the poetry there is in the world \ appears to rise out of the ashes”, claims Jayanta Mahapatra in the poem ‘All The Poetry There is’(Panda, p. 208). Moreover, those who live in the ashes of silence know how to “age more gracefully, keeping the strength \ they had gathered in the embers of their misery” (Panda, p. 208).

Silence of ashes have an immense poetic potential. Poetry starts and ends in loneliness and silence. The world of poetic apprehension is conceived inside the silence, as the poet looks inward in such a situation, but he promptly moves outward to find words from the silence in series of images and similes to transmit the meaning. Silence implies poetry. The poem ‘A Trail Of Poetry’ affirms the truth of this observation: “but silence is because of Poetry” (Lie of Dawn, p. 81).

Ashes are also the source of fear for the children. Ashes of the dead take the children by surprise: “And the ashes of our dead \ take the children by surprise”(Lie of Dawn, p. 126). The poem ‘Freedom’ reveals the poet’s fear of applying ashes on his forehead: “I keep the ashes away, \ try not to wear them on my forehead”(Lie of Dawn, p. 130). The poet refers to “Ashes of sobs”(Lie of Dawn, p.131) in the poem ‘Scream’ to dramatize his feeling of pain and grief.

Silence-Communicative Value

Silence has an enormous communicative value in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra. It can help him in revealing what lies hidden or unexplained in his mind in social discourse. Silence reveals the secret knowledge and deepens his understanding of others and himself. The private world of the poet is suggestively presented in his poetics of silence. Moreover, conscious silence leads to inner silence. Spiritually, silence is understood as the language of the soul. Finally, meditation reveals the inner silence. “Silent funerals” symbolise the mood of grief in the poem ‘Of Things to Talk over’ (Lie of Dawn, p.193). Moreover,

Time's silence rests on the river. It is vividly revealed in the poem 'Shapes by the Day': "Time rests its terrific quiet on the river" (Lie of Dawn, p. 28).

Silences-enhance thinking

Silences give the poet an opportunity to think seriously and critically in an objective manner. The atmosphere of loneliness and darkness provides the desired channel for free and undisturbed atmosphere for unbiased thinking. Silences also reveal the true nature of the private and public selves of the poet without any fear or malice. Jayanta Mahapatra has frankly admitted his failure in the silence of loneliness in the poem 'A Tale, To Begin With' that he "never did anything worthwhile" (Panda, p. 225) and this forced him to distance himself from others: "To tell the truth, no one had seen him. \ Neither his friends nor relatives, or his enemies"(Panda, p.225). The poem 'Shadow' shows that the poet has never felt lonely in the company of his shadow which exists prior to his birth:

"Maybe this shadow of mine
was born before I was.

Now I am never alone
because it's always there" (Lie of Dawn, p. 93).

Self-Analysis

Jayanta Mahapatra has frankly redefined the relationship between silences and his life in the poem 'The Plot': "My life is something else; it's made up of \ silences that say more than was safe for me" (Lie of Dawn, p.162). Silence of nightreminds him of escaping from his country. The poem 'It Is Night When' reveals his plan: "Night, when I feel I have to escape \ from my own country", (Panda, p. 202).

Silence is a must for an unbiased self-analysis and evaluation of others. It is the best strategy of exploring one's true intrinsic self. The poet unhesitatingly had revealed to D. S. Panda: "For in this way I feel I can be more honest with myself" (2018). Silence is the inward analysis of the subconscious mind of the poet which is not revealed in the day-to-day discourse. It is indeed the true appraisal of the nature of the man and his creative output. The poet has frankly confessed in the poem 'The Looking Glass' that he has not yet understood himself: "I'm not sure I know myself yet" (Lie of Dawn, p. 109). Silences give him an opportunity to know his authentic self.

Silence also makes the poet re-evaluate the persons who remained an enigma for him in the past. He has tested the veracity of this statement in the poem 'Father': "Out of silence we look back now at what we do not know" (Lie of Dawn, p.24).

Silences Redefine Relationships

Silences of loneliness make the poet remember those who made him believe in himself. They help him travel backward in time to ponder over things he could not accomplish in the past. Jayanta informs us in the poem 'Godfather' the role of silence in introspection: "Out of silence we look back now at what we do not know" (Lie of Dawn., p. 24).

Silences keep the past relationships evergreen in the poet's memory and would never make him feel depressed and alienated. He was always in search of his genuine sympathisers who had always encouraged him to move forward and never to abandon his intended goal in life. The poem 'Doors' is the appreciation of such well-wishers:

"I look for those who could be mine.

I look for those who once
protected me by believing in me
when I could not believe in myself" (Lie of Dawn, p.82).

Jayanta is often reminded of his dead grandfather in silences. The poet has visualised him lying buried among the dead in the poem 'Relationship': "My dead grandfather floated in that sea of buried things" (Lie of Dawn, p.72). He is also reminded of his grandmother in the poem 'A Grey Haze over the Ricefields' who used to shower love on him as a child: "Those little kisses on my cheeks \ my long-dead grandmother gave me" (Lie of Dawn, p. 195). Jayanta redefines his relationship with his father in silences. He has frankly admitted in the poem 'Shadows' that his interactions with him in real life was fruitful. But he was afraid of losing his identity under his overpowering influence:

"and silence stood between us, father and son.
How could I come out of the shadow" (Lie of Dawn, p.83).

Jayanta's father is radically different from him because he believed in himself. He was made up of sterner stuff which had always prevented him to "drown himself in water.

Or in awe” (‘Father’, Lie of Dawn, p. 106). The poet informs us in the poem ‘Possession’ that his father suffered from a prolonged illness and died of pus-filled bed-sores” (LD, p. 117): “My father took four years to die \ lying on the edge of his pus-filled sores” (Lie of Dawn, p. 117).

Jayanta has never given up the hope of meeting his father after death in mood of silence. This mood of optimism is vividly presented in the poem ‘Ten Years, Past, 9 \ 11’:

“Years after my father’s death

I see him waiting by the side of the road

like a leaking old boat ready to take me”(Panda, p. 200).

Jayanta was terribly afraid of his “mother’s wrathful eyes”(Panda, p.226). He still vividly remembers his mother’s hostile attitude: “The soft dampness of my tears when \ my mother didn’t notice me \ from beyond the closed door of her youth”(Lie of Dawn, p. 195).

Silence and Modern Tragic World

Silence embodies contemporary human situation. It helps the poet in dramatizing the degeneration that has taken place in every walk of modern times. Jayanta Mahapatra reveals the real reality vis-à-vis the silence of loneliness. Silence is an effective strategy of expressing the sad truths of modern times. For Jayanta, modern life has become corrupt, lifeless and dehumanised. It is an adverse time to live: “Time, our strongest possession, bleeds” (‘Possessions’, Lie of Dawn, p.118). Orissa \ India has become a land of agony, violence and poverty with little hope. Jayanta calls India a “country of wounded shadows” (Panda, p. 198).

Silence and Pain \ Grief

Silence is the most powerful means of expressing pain and grief. Silence is internally located and the poet faithfully dramatizes the trauma of his heart. Jayanta Mahapatra considers pain and grief synonymous with his life. He has frankly admitted in the poem ‘Of A Questionable Conviction’ that “pain belonged to him alone”(Panda, p. 205). The poet’s grief is highly personalised, as is confessed in the poem ‘The Land That is Not’:

“I don’t want to sit bent over a page

to reflect in it my griefs,
more for myself than for others”(Lie of Dawn, p. 132).

The birth of a poem lies in bitterness, as is conveyed in the poem ‘The Lines of My Poem’:

“Is it a mistake to think that bitterness is just what

A line of this poem needs

To keep it alive” (Lie of Dawn, p. 149).

Jayanta’s pain originates from the rain as is revealed in the poem ‘The Fifteenth of August’: “My Pain comes from the rain \ riven from the clouds of my own realisation”(Lie of Dawn, p.124).

Pain and sufferings are unavoidable in life. God is a mute spectator and cannot help us in distress. The poem ‘Sermon of the Garbage Heap’ shows that a sick person should not expect any favour from God who wants him to suffer: “This evening God shall by somebody’s bed \ and assure him once again that he should suffer” (Panda, p.198).

Lack of Humanism

Man has become extremely selfish and self-centric in the modern times. The poet doubts whether any person will mourn him after his death or not: “I can’t remember hearing anyone \ saying he will mourn for me when I am gone”(Lie of Dawn, p.25}. The spirit of humanism is awfully missing in the silence of the moderns.

Poverty and Hunger

India is “tortured by hunger” Lie of Dawn, p. 52) claims Jayanta in the poem ‘A Country’. Orissa is inflicted with “the curse of beggardom” (‘Heroism’, Lie of Dawn, p.143). It has become a land of poverty and children have become saleable for the survivals of their famished families. This pathetic condition of poor children is vividly dramatized in the poem ‘The Stories in Poetry’:

“And children

Who are sold and bought every day

In the street of Bombay and Calcutta”(Lie of Dawn, p.147).

The poem 'Possessed' testifies to the perennial life of hunger of the children: "And tomorrow, sixty thousand children \ will go hungry again" (Lie of Dawn, p.117). The poem 'Taste for Tomorrow' shows the marginalisation of the poor in the society: "Five faceless lepers move aside \ as a priest passes by" (Lie of Dawn, p. 35).

The poor are ill-treated by the rich. The poem 'The Birth Of Grief' shows that "the strong always abuse the weak" (Panda, p. 195).

Crimes

Silence of loneliness helps the poet to present the true picture of crimes in Orissa \ India. The crime-graph shows steep rise in crimes in the modern times. Cases of rapes and murders are daily reported in newspapers. It is a matter of shame of the once prosperous land that such heinous crimes are being committed without any fear. "Two tribal youths were shot dead today" reveals the poet in the poem 'Deaths In Orissa-1' (Panda, p. 191). The poem 'Night' shows the tragic ending of the life of the daughter of a village who was left alone after the murder: "a daughter of the village \ lies mutilated and dead \ looking unbearably lonely out there" (Panda, p.199). Killing in the name of religion is quite rampant: "The familiar news \ of another killing \ in the name of religion" ('The Lie of Dawn', Lie of Dawn, p. 196). The poem 'June Rain' is a dig at the heartless people who passed by the raped woman in silence without extending her any help:

"The odour of a raped woman through the wetness,

Sacked and consigned to the poison in her blood,

And the irreverence

Of people walking past in her silence" (Panda, p. 217).

The poet refers to the "peon's raped daughter" in the poem 'A Tale, To Begin With' (Panda, 226). The poem 'Death's Wild Land' shows the plight of a stay woman in a male society in India: "he rapes her \ and he kills her" (Lie of Dawn, p. 123). In the poem 'Here and Elsewhere', "a young mother has strangled \ her only child in the night" (Lie of Dawn, p. 190). The holy land of shrines and temples has become the land of barbaric crimes and the poet does not want to live and compose poem about it, as revealed in the poem 'The Land That is Not':

"Today the land of shrines and temples

offers its troubled tombs of blood,
when I don't want to write my poem,
while a mob watches, cheering in delight
at the sight of Fara's rape
and mutilation limb by limb"(Lie of Dawn, p. 132).

The poem 'Waiting for the Summer of 1994' shows that it is a matter of shame for a nation where killing goes on unchecked and cannot be eliminated:

"Even this narrow street of blaring radios
cannot hide the shame of my native land
where a man easily kills his neighbour" (Lie of Dawn, p.135).

The poem 'Here and Elsewhere' shows that "a girl is set on fire \ for the dowry she did not bring" (Lie of Dawn, p. 190). The poet feels "stubborn silence after senseless crimes" ('Illness', Lie of Dawn, p. 187).

Barren Land

The land has lost all its fertility in the modern Orissa. The poem 'Deaths In Orissa-1' shows "The fallow fields have lost their long yearning" (Panda, p. 191). In the poem 'The Absence of Knowledge', the silence of the starved earth is very disturbing: "From the starved earth a silence \ rises so incredible, it hurts the ears" (Lie of Dawn, p. 56). The poem 'Rice' shows that the rice crop has all withered due to drought: "The rice has lost its wings \ it does not tremble in the wind", Lie of Dawn, p. 101). It has become silent due to drought.

Social Unrest

The poet is extremely upset by the social unrest and mayhem in the modern times. He is shocked to witness horrible acts of terrorism and insurgency disturbing the peace and harmony of the society. In the poem 'The Sound of Freedom', the poet deals with his reminiscence of the lost time and the life of alienation in the modern times. The poem 'Sometimes' deals with the chaos prevailing in the society and the forces that are bent upon its disintegration:

"Sometimes one isn't sure

it was't even one's life one is fighting for.

Yet people everywhere

Are divided against each other" (Panda, p. 223).

Alienation

Alienation becomes unbearable in an atmosphere of silence. Jayanta Mahapatra finds self-facing universal alienation in the modern world. The poet feels totally alienated in life. He interacts with the external world through "The empty window in his lonely wall \ belongs to him" ('Of A Questionable Conviction', Panda, p.205).

Women feel totally alienated at home in the male-dominated society of Orissa \ (India). They are deliberately ignored and humiliated and denied. A wife feels alienated in the post-marriage period. She loses all her identity and is treated like any other lifeless object in the family. She is also wilfully denied any physical or emotional happiness from her self-centred husband.

Human Relationships

Mohan Ramanan rightly remarks, "Mahapatra explores with utmost tenderness the intricacies of human relationships in his poetry" (2017, p. 27}. Human-relationships are diluted beyond limits in the modern society. They have become purely sensual rather than emotional or intellectual in the modern times. They are short-lived and can be terminated on flimsy ground. The marital relationships are often strained and can lead to extra-marital relationships in Jayanta's poems. In the poem 'Hands', he dramatizes the pangs of separation in love: "Between them \ a silence occupies the whole place" (Lines 1-2). The speaker's life is all destabilised after being deserted by his beloved. His separation from his beloved has created a total vacuum in his life. It is period of silence in which there is no physical contact between the speaker and his beloved.

The theme of the poem 'Waiting' is the pangs of separation in love. The poet is reminded of an eighteen-year young girl whom he met last month after his marriage. The girl was extremely frank and allowed him to have physical relationship with her. It looked like a realised romantic bonding, but this hastily formed relationship ended abruptly which totally destabilised his life. His estrangement from the girl was a period of profound silence in life.

Modern V \ S Ancient Orissa

Modern Orissa \ India marks the period of decadence in every sphere of life. Poverty, hunger and starvation have infected every nook and corner of this once prosperous state and it can be extended to the whole of India. Jayanta dispassionately visualises the rich past of India vis-a-vis the poverty-stricken modern India. The poet peers into the “papers of the past \ appears to hold on to the meaning of the present” (‘The Absence of Knowledge’, Lie of Dawn, 55). The poem ‘The Sound of Freedom’ deals with the poet’s reminiscences of the time lost and the life of alienation in the modern times.

Impact of Past on Present: Silence of Past

Jayanta Mahapatra makes use of the silence of the past for the authentic estimation of the tragic present. For Jayanta, the impact of the past on the present is unavoidable. There is no escape from the tragic consequences of the past which are linked with the poet’s reminiscences. He finds himself caged, sterile and shocked in his bid to tide over his dilemma. In the poem ‘At the Burning Ground’ the poet shows that all the dead or to be dead share the same fate. Life is reduced to ashes after death and becomes a part of the earth. Jayanta loves revisiting the past because of its glory. He has no doubts about the reality and timelessness of the past which has a special fascination for its lovers. Past is a fact and not a fiction in his poetry.

Silence of History

Silence of History is very revealing and has a universal message. It points to the futility of war which ultimately silences the victor as well as the vanquished in the long run. The poem ‘Dhauri’ shows the disastrous consequences of wars of Kalinga in which “the fallow fields of Dhauri \ hid the red-smearred voiceless bodies” (Lie of Dawn, p.18). The deaths and destruction cause by wars shattered the life of Asoka and he embraced Buddhism: “The place of his pain peers lamentably \ from among the pains of the dead” (Lie of Dawn, p. 18). The poem ‘The Abandoned British Cemetery Balasore’ presents the tragic ending of the thirtynine British colonisers who died of cholera in the vanquished country “Awkward in the silence, a scrawny lizard | watches the drama with it, hooded gaze| And a scorpion its sting drooping, \ two eerie arms spread upon the marble, over an alien name” (Lie of Dawn, p.26). The poet exposes the British mentality and its unappeasable hunger for land.

Silence of Myths

Myths are all-pervasive in the Indian society which shows its cultural strength. Mohan Ramanan has rightly observed: “In his poetry we find a complete absorption of the culture and tradition of Orissa” (2017). Jayanta’s poetry emanates from the silence of myths of Orissa \ India. He makes frequent use of Indian myths which enhance the epic range of his poems. The rich past of Orissa has lost all its ancient glory in the modern times. There is an all-round degeneration in every sphere of Orissa \ India. Hunger, poverty, crime, immorality have reached their zenith in it. The rich old myths of India help in highlighting the present-day misery and torture: “tortured by hunger and the rock of decay in the air \ after the age-old myths have been told all over again” (‘A Country’, Lie of Dawn, p. 52). The poet presents the realistic account of the modern horrible conditions in the poem ‘Possessions’:

“The worn-out face of India
holds the weak eyes of dumb, solitary poets
who die alone,
silenced by the shapelessness of life alive” (Lie of Dawn, p.118).

The poem ‘Relationship’ is a twelve parts dream of past Orissa, its myths, symbols, history and his relationship to the past, traditions and the land.

In the poem ‘Performance’, Jayanta is “amazed by the silence of Kurushetra”. The poet refers to Arjuna, a famous mythical character in the Mahabharata, who asked What had Arjuna or any one done? Jayanta also uses the Sati myth in the poem ‘Tradition’ which shows that the widows would unhesitatingly burn themselves at the pyres of their husbands after their deaths. They think that they cannot live apart from them and courageously opt for premature death to show their unfathomable love their husbands. Jayanta uses the river myth in the poem ‘The Years Dawn’. The River stands for a Goddess in Indian mythology and is a symbol of life perpetually in a state of flux. But the river has lost all its divine purity in the modern sick times. Jayanta uses the myth of Krishna in the poem ‘A Summer Poem’. It is introduced in the beginning of the poem:

“Over the souging of the sombre wind
priests chant louder than ever:
the mouth of India opens” (Lie of Dawn, p. 39).

The Myth of Krishna shows that the opening of mouth of Krishna which reveals myriad forms of God. It also symbolises the unity of the cosmos. The myth points to the *Mahabharata* where Krishna opens his mouth to show Yashoda, his mother, the final destiny of this universe. The myth used in the poem 'Dawn at Puri' is that the religious-minded women who are cremated at the temple of Puri would enter gate of heaven. They wait patiently in the closing phase of life to avail of this opportunity: "White-clad widowed \ past the centres of their lives \ are waiting to enter the Gate Temple" (Lie of Dawn, p.21 }.

Conclusion

Silences are indispensable for the understanding of the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra. They exist in myriad forms and help us in comprehending the themes of alienation, marital relations, human-relationships, crimes, poverty and the have-have not relationships. Silences and creativity are correlated with each other in Jayanta Mahapatra's creative process. They deal with the private and the public lives of the poet in a free and fearless manner. Silences also correlate the world of myths with the tragic world of reality in the poet's mood of reminiscences.

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