



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.2. Issue 3., 2015 (July-Sept.)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

SYMBOLISM AND IMAGERY OF 'RAIN' IN JAYANTA MAHAPATRA'S POETRY

Dr. HOMEN BARUAH¹, SUMITRA JYOTI²

¹Department of English, K.B.R.Degree College, Orang

²Department of English, Gauhati University

ABSTRACT

Jayanta Mahapatra's imagery and symbolism heightened the significance of the meaning of his poems. The ancient symbol of fertility stands as one of the most favourite metaphors for Mahapatra. The metaphor of 'rain' can be considered as the mirror of the poet's psychological condition. His use of the metaphor of 'rain' finds fine expression in his numerous poems. Rain is an all diffusive metaphor in Mahapatra's poetry. Rain not only binds man with the universe as a suggestive symbol of fertility, but also evokes his past and reminds him of the suffering he had faced in life. In Mahapatra's poetry the symbol of rain got manifold directions. The image of rain is used by the poet to symbolize both creative and destructive.

Key Words: Symbol, Rain, Fertility, Indianness, Psyche.



©KY PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In the broadest sense a symbol is anything which signifies something; in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term "symbol" is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself (M.H. Abrams, P-311).

Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the most extensively known and published Indo-Anglian poets in recent days. The Sahitya Akademi Award winner for Relationship has made an original contribution to Indian-English poetry. Mahapatra's poetry is significant because of his use of symbols, myths and imagery which make it different from the verse of other contemporary poets. 'Rain' is a recurring symbol this Indo-Anglian poet. No other Indian poet has written numerous poems on rain as the Orian poet has done. The favourite metaphor 'Rain' can be considered as the reflector of the poet's psyche. His famous 'rain poems' include, 'A Day of Rain', 'The Rain Falling', 'In a Night of Rain', 'After the Rain', 'Four Rain Poems', 'Rains in Orissa', 'Another Day in Rain', 'This is the Season of the Old Rain' and 'Again the Rain Falls' apart from a cluster of other poems which indirectly deal with the theme of rain. His poems are significant because of the use of symbols, myths and imagery which make them different from the other Indo-Anglian poets. K. Ayyappa Panikar states: In Mahapatra's 'Scheme of Sin and Expiation', it is rain that seems to work out the hope for expiation. The process of purification is also a rain of rites. (K. Ayyappa Panikar, P-132-33)

Symbol of Rain

In Indian ancient literature 'rain' is the symbol for fertility and life. Mahapatra used rain also for separation. The rain intensifies the physical desire in man and woman. The bilingual poet depicts such a picture (image) in a night of rain when love is ceased in a hut.

A time of rain and the old town
 Stinks of mould and wet dogs' skins
 A mist of embarrassed thoughts slowly sweeps
 the dark space at the river's edge
 where our homeless women have put up their huts
 There's a sound of crying in there
 of an evening jasmine being born,
 the sounds of satisfaction after love's been made (*In a Night of Rain*)

The Indo-Anglian poet most drawn his material from the landscape of Orissa, his homeland. In the poem 'The Rain Falling' the poet depicts a lively picture of rainy season of Orissa. In respect of the use of rain as a symbol of sexual passion and desire, Mahapatra seems to have been influenced by ancient Sanskrit poets. To certain extent, he has followed his predecessors from Orissa to use 'rain' as a catalytic agent to intensify sexual passion. Mahapatra writes:

Rain that falls silently in a July sky
 catching in your trembling skin
 pearls of fire,

 who can bear the thought
 of his woman going out with someone else
 rain falling on with frightened eyes
 clay that bites the one
 who gave it life. (*The Rain Falling*)

The key poem of the volume '*A Rain of Rites*' reminds readers about the tradition which binds Mahapatra with his past. In the title poem rain is the symbol of wisdom which works as an eye opener for every reader to apprehend reality. It also symbolizes primitive innocence of human being. Rain is an all diffusive metaphor in Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry. Rain not only binds man with the universe as a suggestive symbol of fertility, but also evokes his past and reminds him of the suffering he had faced in life. The following lines suggest:

The rain I have known and traded all this life
 is thrown like kelp on the beach. (*A Rain of Rites*)

If rain intensifies the desire in man and woman for a sexual union, it also provides him or her hope for a better future. The imagist poet focuses on such a situation when rain warns him against the days wasted and face to face him with the reality. The rainfall bring to him a kind of self-realisation. The poet exclaims as following:

Rain stands on the margins of my time,
 a discovery, like theft,
 making me careful how I lay the hour down,
 looking at the trees growing too large
 for my little yard, filling with lurid light,
 and I hardly see spring coming in. (*Again the Rain Falls*)

The rain creates lasting impact on people's mind. As a result it evokes both memory and desire by covering both past and present. This can be treated as the exposition of paradoxical statement by Mahapatra. In the poem '*A Rain*' he writes:

I see
 it play over people, piled up to their silences
 it creates an impression of vastness
 it quietly opens a door. (*A Rain*)

All night I have waited for the rain to end,
 the forbidden memories ringing, compelling
 footfalls among the ruins, the day's last sun-smoking
 in unending fields soaked in innocence. (*Four Rain Poems*)

According to V.A. Shahane, 'Rain', for Mahapatra, is thus both a ritual and reality-ritual of purifying oneself as well as the reality of seasons, the cyclical change in the Indian year, in Orissa's wet and fertile landscape- the naked earth covered by the waters of the Mahanadi and its tributaries which in fact, surround the town of Cuttack from the three sides making virtually an island (V.A. Shahane, P-147).

In Mahapatra's poetry the symbol of rain got manifold directions. The image of rain is used by the poet to symbolize both creative and destructive. 'A rain that does not wet the earth/ lost of purpose, like a benediction', where day breaks fat and treacherous with rain' shows the destructive forces of rain.

In Mahapatra's poetry 'rain' as a regenerative symbols occurs frequently in numerous poems. The poet exclaims,

It has being raining again
 and the water drips upon the bones,
 flowing into the cold earth where
 the dead lie easy in rows.
 This is the time when the poem
 raises itself once again, unknown wings
 brushing the face of darkness of our loving
 to make us ask: Does one find death
 in an act which comes out of love?

The metaphor of rain possesses another aspect for Mahapatra which is positive and welcome. The Post-colonial poet depicts the image of the rainy season of his native state, Orissa in an artistic manner. In the poem '*Rain in Orissa*' he states:

The sky's face expressionless
 an oriole call echoes away in the sullen greyness,
 the book of earth throbs with the light of things.
 A pond heron floats wearily in a rain pool.
 Its face a mask, it pauses for another look around.
 Grass everywhere is huge and moves forward to kill.

In Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry 'rain' is not only a symbol but also an evocative metaphor of life and prosperity. The poet gives equal importance to 'rain' and 'life'. Hence, the poet can't live without 'rain'. In the poem '*In the Fields of Desolate Rice*' the poet vehemently says:

In the end
 I come back to the day and to the rain

Conclusion

Mahapatra started to write poems rather late in comparison with his contemporaries. His numerous poems have appeared in most of the reputed journals throughout the world. The richness of language, imagery and symbolism made his poems thought provoking. The sweetness of his poems possesses fountain-like flow. These poems also possess some hidden layers of the psyche of the poet. The poet's images are subtle, apt and thought provoking. The ancient symbol of fertility got manifold directions in the hands of the great poet. 'Rain' is recurrent symbol of Jayanta Mahapatra's verse. His personal experience and feelings about 'rain' finds expression in his fairly numerous poems. Mahapatra excels other Indian-English poets in regard to the use of 'rain' imagery and symbolism.

Notes and References

1. Mahapatra, Jayanta., *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*. Calcutta: Dialogue Publications, 1971.
2. _____., *A Rain of Rites*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976.
3. _____., *A Father's House*, Calcutta: United Writers, 1976

4. _____.,Selected Poems. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
 5. Abrams, M.H.:*A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Bangalore: Prasim Books Pvt. Ltd,1999.
 6. Shahane, V.A.,The Naked Earth and Beyond: The Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra', *Perspective on Indian Poetry in English*.ed. M.K. Naik, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984.
 7. Panikar, K.A., The Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra *OJES*, Vol. XIII, No-1,1977.
-