

**الذات المهمشة: الجسد، الصمت، وسياسات الهوية في
قصائد مختارة لجايانتا مهاباترا**

**The Marginalized Self: Body, Silence, and
the Politics of Identity in Jayanta
Mahapatra's Selected Poems**

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الكلمات المفتاحية: جايانتا مهاباترا، الأسطورة، الذاكرة، الهوية، شعر ما بعد الاستعمار، الذات
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الملخص

امرأة تحقق في المرأة فلا تجد وجهاً. أب يعرض ابنته على غريب. جذاميون يبتعدون جانباً بينما يمر كاهن. هذه ليست مشاهد معزولة للمعاناة في شعر جايانثا مهاباترا؛ بل هي مداخل لسؤال أكبر: كيف تجد الذات المهمشة صوتها حين تُختزل إلى صمت، إلى جسد، إلى لا وجه؟

تتناول هذه المقالة ثلاث قصائد للشاعر الهندي الإنجليزي، وهي "شخص مفقود" (A Missing Person) (1971)، و"الجوع" (Hunger) (1976)، "طعم الغد" (Taste for Tomorrow) (1976)، لتبحث في كيفية إعادة تخيل الذات في شعره. لا تظهر الذات هنا كشيء ثابت أو مستعاد، بل كشيء يتشكل باستمرار من خلال تفاعل الأسطورة والذاكرة والهوية. بالاعتماد على النقد الأركيبايطي لنورثروب فراي، وفلسفة الذاكرة عند بول ريكور، نظرية الهوية الثقافية عند ستيوارت هول، يكشف التحليل عن مسار واضح عبر القصائد الثلاث: من الغياب (المرأة الممحاة من انعكاس صورتها)، إلى التجسد (الفتاة المختزلة إلى سلعة)، إلى التمرکز الاجتماعي (الجذاميون الموجودون خارج دائرة المقدس).

ما يبرز ليس ذاتاً موحدة أو منتصرة، بل ذاتاً مجزأة، مثقلة بالوجع، وحاضرة باستمرار. تخلص المقالة إلى أن شعر مهاباترا لا يقدم شفاءً أو حلاً، بل يقدم شهادة. وفي تلك الشهادة، تُعاد تخيل الذات لا كاملة، بل قادرة على الصمود.



Abstract

In Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry, images of suffering are not just isolated moments of pain. Instead, they represent entry points into a larger question of how a marginalized individual can find their voice after being stripped of their identity (like being turned into mere flesh) and after having had their identity erased to the point of having no face.

This study reassesses "A Missing Person" (1971), "Hunger" (1976), and "Taste for Tomorrow" (1976), three poems by Indian English poet, to support that the poet Mahapatra reconceptualizes the self as continually evolving from myth, memory, and identity rather than as a fixed or once again restored entity. Through the use of Northrop Fry's archetypal literary criticism; Paul Ricoeur's memory theory; and Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory, the study identifies a distinct pattern across the three poems, moving in order through the process of absence (the woman's image erased), embodiment (the girl being commodified), and social inscription (the people with leprosy being placed outside of religious).

What emerges, rather than a unified or triumphant self, is a fragmented self, one that is burdened and yet persistently present at all times during the poem. At the conclusion of Mahapatra's work, it states his poetry does not provide healing or offer resolution; it offers the witness. Thus in the witness of the self redefined as endurance rather than wholeness, one can see the post colonial condition (remembering) within its own fragmentation (thus being redefined).

1.1. Introduction

In his body of work, Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry does not provide solace or a route of escape. It stays awake to complex realities, which include: poverty, memory, loss and the fragility of human identity. The poems are typically subdued in tone but they reveal significant tension, in that the past is never truly gone and the present is never completely secure. What distinguishes Mahapatra's poems is not solely the subject matter that is being presented; but also the way in which he interlocks diverse strata of experience (mythical, historical and personal) within a singular poetic moment.

Current Indian English poetry has been referred to as being a place where various histories, cultures and power structures intersect, especially upon the foundations of the colonial experience, and its aftermath. In this vein, Mahapatra stands out as a poet. Critics such as Das (2009) and Dubey (2022) indicate that he has a close tie to the local/regional landscape of Odisha, while at the same time addressing broader issues such as memory, suffering and cultural identity. In his poetry, Mahapatra demonstrates a continuous negotiation between local and global/regional, personal and historical, lived and remembered elements.

Many of the previous studies of Mahapatra's poetry have taken an isolated view of the major themes of his work (myth, memory, identity). Although those studies provide valuable readings, they treat those elements as independent, disparate entities, which is problematic, since those entities cannot be understood separately, and thus those previous studies fail to show how Mahapatra's poetry relates to local Indian life after independence. The three aforementioned elements of Mahapatra's poetry



are not only interdependent but also continually work together to create a collective voice in the expression of experience.

The examination of this interaction relies upon certain theoretical perspectives from Frye, Ricoeur and Hall. Frye's theory regarding myth demonstrates that archetypal structures and their respective literary meanings (such as ritual, sacrifice, and cycles) are still present when they are used in modern contexts (Frye, 1957). Ricoeur's theory concerning memory helps to interpret how memory continues to exist as fragments, traces and reconstructed narratives that are open to interpretation (Ricoeur, 2004). Hall also uses position theory to illustrate that identity is created by the self as influenced by a continually evolving cultural, historical, and social experience and that these identities are not stable entities (Hall, 1990).

This research employs an integrated analytical technique rather than using these concepts one at a time. This type of analysis examines how mythology serves as a means of creating symbols; how memory provides historical information to fill in the gaps between those symbols; and how identities emerge from the interactions of both myth and memory. The interaction between the two can be seen most clearly in Mahapatra's portrayal of the "body" as a source of not only the physical aspects of the body but also as a location for the intersection of symbolic meanings, historical traumas and social processes.

Through a close reading of selected poems, including "A Missing Person"(1971), "Hunger"(1976), "Taste for Tomorrow"(1976), The movement from absence to presence and finally to the social space, through which the self is developed at every phase and in each of these

different settings illustrates how the self is slowly being redefined through these three distinctly different contexts. The author of this article asserts that, throughout his body of work, Mahapatra creates the poetic self as a series of different pieces, rather than a completely whole, resolved being. This poetic self is the combination of all the things that created it; its inheritance; the things that it remembers; and the things that it has experienced. So in essence, one does not simply discover their identity but has developed their identity through the conflict between myth, memory, and experience.

1.2. “A Missing Person”(1971).

Some people don't just miss from the world, they miss from their own selves. A Missing Person (1971) would be considered one of these poems being memorable for the reader because of what it does not say. The poem is not about one woman alone, it describes someone that could be anyone. The woman described is a woman living in rural areas and she cannot see her own Image in the mirror. Although she has a lamp in her hand, and it lights up everything around her, the light does not touch her. She is "missing" from her true self and does not even know she is missing. (This has been defined by Dubey) She has no power, she has no voice, and she has no choice; the Patriarchy has taught her to disappear from society, and she has learned that lesson well. The poem related her on the "edge of sleep", between waking and dreaming, between living and losing. (Dubey 2020)

“the mirror fails to reflect the image” (Mahapatra, 1971, line 3).



The poem's core conflict is illustrated through the following lines. The mirror, which usually represents the truth about who you are, does not provide this expected identity confirmation. The mirror reflects nothing but absence, rather than a stable self. According to Northrop Frye's theory, the poem belongs to what he refers to as "the myth of winter," a time when myth faces its own emptiness. The mirror that has no reflection symbolizes the fragmented self and, therefore, the loss of coherent identity that myths provided in the past. The woman's existence before the existence of systematic reflection places her in an ironic mode according to Frye where renewal has no chance but cold acknowledgment of nothingness (Frye, 1957, p. 186). The lamp (which can shine light) but does not reflect the woman implies symbolic displacement of Revelation.

"the room is dark" (Mahapatra, 1971, line 1).

The empty room, darkened by space, reinforces the concept of emptiness; the woman who carries the light into the room cannot see herself. The room awaits but nothing comes back. The poem shows the disintegration of identity: from Paul Ricoeur's view, "ipse" identity is made through relation to the other – the most straightforward way to do this is to see one's reflection in a mirror and understand yourself as an aside from oneself, as someone to be recognized. However, the poem demonstrates that this reflection is not available. The mirror reflects nothing. There are no elements to come from outside, or no "others," to encounter. The woman is the absence of the now; she is present and not present at once. The absence of "idem" identity, or definite steady-self, occurs if one's stable self does not have anything stable to be reflected through or to be proved to exist by. What remains is just a fragile "ipse"

identity, which has some existence irrespective of the state of sameness (Ricoeur, 1992; 2004).

In addition, the concept of 'darkness' is both tangible and intangible; it represents the separation of the 'feminine' self from being recognized and given meaning by the world around her. The feminine represents all women who have historically been outside of the center and who have needed to be seen, heard, and recognized as whole people. She embodies the collective memory of all those women who have never had their own individual story told and who have lived their lives in silence without their names ever being written down (Ricoeur, 2004; Swain, 2017). As Lakshmi Raghunandan states, "the feminine is unable to see her own reflection in the mirror because she is constantly in a 'state of being half-asleep' due to having fallen into a tamasic sleep that completely removes all human consciousness" (Raghunandan, 1988, p. 179).

"the mirror fails to reflect the image" (Mahapatra, 1971, line 3).

The failure described here is not just a physical one; it is also an existential failure; the woman does not have the ability to narrate her own story, as she has no way of knowing what her identity is. Her identity has been suspended and not narrated. Stuart Hall would argue that this poem articulates identity as a process of representation, rather than as a fixed or static entity. He claims that "Identity is not a static essence but rather a position created by many different discourses". The identity of the woman in the poem is created and produced within those discourses that position her primarily as a result of patriarchy, tradition, and a society that does not allow space for her voice to be heard. However, the poem does not merely accept this positioning; it also gives voice to the absence of that position.



The darkroom, the broken mirror, and the weak light are all visual representations of an entire system designed to keep women from being seen. This very exposure opens up the potential for the woman to be re-imagined; not as her voice has been restored, but rather for her silence to be acknowledged as a truthful testimony (Hall 1990).

By examining the poetry of "A Missing Person" through the lens of Northrop Frye, we can identify this poem as an example of the failure to manifest 'the feminine archetype' as it is represented in the traditional literary mythos. The traditional representation of women in mythology is through some element of fertility, wisdom, or Grace. However, in Mahapatra's poem, there is no reference or representation of the feminine archetype. The lamp that the woman in the poem has, does not illuminate the woman when the woman is waiting for the master who is never going to arrive, and the woman sees her reflection in the mirror that does not show anything. This was Frye's term for "ironic displacement" as it relates to the archaic format of the female archetype: the old myths no longer exist, and no new mythology has taken their place (1957).

Ultimately, "A Missing Person" is about losing the sense of self. The female character continues to be a missing person, even though her absence becomes an implication of her presence. Such as, the woman does not speak, hence she no longer has a voice. This means "to reimagine oneself", rather than regain the self that had been lost prior to the loss itself.

1.3. "Hunger"(1976)

If "A Missing Person" is about absence and silence, then "Hunger" is about transitioning from the dark space of the room to the light of the fisherman's

shed. This time around the body is no longer absent but here is painfully present as a body that has been dehumanized and reduced to meat, i.e., traded for food. The transition of absence to embodiment is the second phase of the marginalized self: the body as an object of exploitation.

This poem is about what hunger does to humans, it reflects not just the hunger in our stomachs, but rather that of total hunger, a hunger that robs you of everything: dignity, morality and blurs the boundary between the animal and human. According to this research paper, the purpose of this poem is as a meditation on the body as an exploited site, where a woman's body is a commodity for food and where the female identity is reduced to flesh and where the self is re-described by recognizing itself to be nothing.

"I found it a little strange that the body was heavy on my back. Then there was a fisherman who said: Will you take her, unfeelingly, following his nets and his nerves as if his words made his intention to take care of himself more legitimate." (Mahapatra 1976, lines 1-3).

The poet describes the corporeal as "heavily"; altruistic; lacking enjoyment. The word "heavy" implies the embodiment of the act; the burden of committing this act and the burden of one's desire are both embodied in this word. The voice does not identify the girl, provide her with an identity, an image or provide an identity for her (an American who identifies by ethnicity). She exists as "the fisherman's daughter." Thus she exists only as it pertains to her father as well as to the man who sleeps with her. This is how one can recognize sexual exploitation: There is no violence associated with it; there is such extreme devaluation/obliteration of someone's existence that they are left being fundamentally incapable of



realizing who or what they are as a result (Alorcious & Balachandran; 2023).

In Northrop Frye's opinion, the character of hunger in this context is an archetype that has been displaced. Usually in mythology, sacrifice is a ritual that is offered to the gods as a representation of something sacred. In Mahapatra (1979) however, this pattern of sacrifice is turned upside down, and the daughter is sacrificed to the economic conditions we are living by today instead of to a god. According to Frye (1957), he refers to this as displacement, when the mythical patterns are distorted and then redefined in contemporary settings; many times it has resulted in brutal realities. The theme of "heavy flesh" represents the weight of the inverted act of sacrifice in which something sacred has been devalued (the fisherman's hut represents the altarpiece of the sacrifice).

"The sky fell on me"

(Mahapatra, 1976, line 18).

According to Frye, the falling sky represents the archetype of the apocalyptic - A representation of the end of a world or a world order (Daniel 6:26). In "Anatomy of Criticism" (1957), the falling sky signifies the breaking down of the cosmic structure of the universe. In other words, it is a signifier of the breakdown of moral assurance. The "poem" can be said to be in "ironic mode" or no hope exists after the fall.

According to Paul Ricoeur, the girl's erased identity is an example of collective suffering; therefore, her body is not merely a corporeal existence but rather a remnant of the historical record of famine, poverty, and patriarchy that haunts our collective unconscious. Although the reader does

not know her name, her absence becomes a presence in this way. This is what Ricoeur (2004) describes as “ethical memory” — not about remembering the specific facts of a traumatic event, but about remembering those who stood witness to it as it was silenced. The poem uses a completely flat tone because the poet cannot find the words to adequately convey the burden of trauma associated with the events depicted.

By utilizing Ricoeur's idea of "narrative identity", we can gain insight into the speaker's downfall. The old self, or his moral identity, has been destroyed due to his experience with extreme hunger and desire. This has led to a construction of the self based on the act of observing his own failure -- a new self that is very different from the previous self. When he says, "The sky fell on me", he uses a metaphor to express the state at which the previous self no longer exists, and a new self with a different narrative begins to form (Ricoeur, 1992).

According to Stuart Hall, the girl has been created through poverty, gender, and through a culture that views her body like a resource. She does not create this position for herself; rather it has been imposed upon her. However, Hall explains that she is represented not only as a victim, but as a presence in a silent way. Hall explains (1990) that “each regime of representation is a regime of power,” and the poet reproduces the representation of a ‘marginalised Indian’ within both Western and domestic discourses to showcase the disparity between the oppressor's and the oppressed through the connection of their being within the “tired cry” of the fisherman and the speaker's complicity (meaning that the oppressor is not always separate from the victim). They are often one in the same

person - caught up in a system of power that doesn't allow for any innocence.

The collapse of the moral framework is symbolized by the sky falling. This is reflected through the representing "fathers tired cry" as an assertion of symbolic inheritance - the legacy of collective guilt that has been transmitted through generations, which highlights their inability to change their circumstances (i.e. poverty). This is consistent with Hall's (1990) assertion that collective identities are not simply a singular and homogenous identity. They are built from the 'cracks' and 'gaps' that separate dominant and marginalized voices as a result of colonization.

In an interview, Mahapatra confessed:

It was inspired by a real event, and in fact could have taken place there, on the deserted black sands of Gopalpur, if I had been alone long enough to have the time to do so. I can picture myself walking the beach along with my isolation and my own inner sexual being grappling with the reality of being alone in a darkly-lit, palm frond-covered hut, while attempting to discover my own inner self and experience my own degradation as I try to comprehend my absolute hopelessness in the face of my country's persistent hunger-induced deprivation of dignity and light (Mahapatra, Key Notes, 1982).

This study looks at what the poet has done as an act of confession (not out of guilt; but out of acknowledgment), and how the poet exists within a larger framework than himself/herself, i.e., the larger world around them. The poet is not a savior...rather he/she is a witness...and by witnessing...the poet becomes part of the narrative. This is described in the study as

"reimagining yourself"; not having an idealized, pure, innocent image of yourself, but having a critical view of yourself acknowledging your involvement in creating/maintaining this environment of suffering/hunger.

As a final conclusion, "Hunger" (1976) demonstrates that hunger cannot just be understood in physical terms; it has also social, moral, and existential dimensions as well. Hunger impacts and shapes all of our relationships with other people, distorts our values, and forces us into a self that we cannot fully accept. The "reimagining of the self," then, does not happen for the girl by separating herself from her physical body; instead, she must confront her physical body, which serves as a kind of mirror to help illuminate the fragility of her postcolonial Indian identity. The girl cannot be rescued; she can only be remembered. The memory of her physical body becomes a place of witness for what has occurred and the act of remembering keeps the act of reimagining her self not as a single fixed entity, but as an ongoing process of witness, which continues to carry the emotional weight of the past.

1.4. "Taste for Tomorrow" (1976)

With "Hunger"(1976) revealing how the body is being used by another in the confines of a small space (hut), "Taste for Tomorrow" shows how suffering takes on a larger scale as it becomes apparent in public in the city of Puri, and then when viewed collectively and integrated within the context of religion.

Mahapatra's 1976 "Taste for Tomorrow" represents one of his most profound explorations of the city of Puri, which is included among what many critics refer to as Mahapatra's "Puri Poems," or works examining this



significant religious location and its association with the Jagannatha Temple. The poem both reveals the contradictions presented by what the time and place are called "Sacred" in terms of the dichotomy between religious and secular life, while also representing the temple itself as a living mythos converted into a poetic setting; it evokes within the reader both a sense of reverence for the religious practices that take place in and around the temple and confound the reader with questions of existence based on the experiences of the extreme poverty and suffering which are commonplace in all parts of India (as cited in Dubey, 2022).

The poem opens abruptly:

“At Puri, the crows. / The one wide street lolls / out like a giant tongue. /
Five faceless lepers move aside as a priest passes by”
(Mahapatra, 1976, lines 1-5).

Crows represent decay in many human cultures. Crows in Indian culture are closely associated with death, and they are also connected to Pinda-dana ceremonies performed along the banks of rivers to honor and remember ancestors. Crowding together in this way sends a message about the death and decay that still exists. Instead of signaling spiritual elevation, they represent a reminder of our mortality. The "street lolls out like a giant tongue" reads as lifeless and also as having little energy left. The idea of the city being portrayed as a sickly body contrasts significantly with the idea of it being sacred. The five "faceless lepers" represent the poor as being counted but not recognized. Their "facelessness" symbolizes the way in which the poor are viewed in India; although they are seen, they are not recognized as human beings. The crows being perceived as a "priest moves

by" gives priority to institutionalized religious bodies over the existence of human suffering associated with poverty (Dubey, 2022; Paranjape, 2010).

According to Frye's interpretation, this represents a moment of irony; i.e., an ironic moment in which ideal mythic structures have been revealed to lack any real adequacy when confronted with factual circumstances. The temple would belong to the mythos of summer (Order, regeneration/renewal and spiritual meaning), whereas the lepers would belong to the mythos of winter (disintegration, fragmentation, and suffering). Therefore, the temple and the lepers can be said to exist within the same spatial relation, and this is what Frye refers to as the "ironic mode," because in this situation the mythic promise is seen to be partially fulfilled (Frye, 1957, p. 223).

According to Paul Ricoeur, lepers serve as "traces," left behind through their suffering and demanding ethical recognition. Though they remain faceless, they are in truth even more significant than if they had a face. The lepers represent visible markers of what society tends to ignore. The indifference of the priest represents a form of "selective forgetting," in which established institutions sustain their authority through a willful disregard of that suffering. The poem, conversely, presents an alternative to this act of forgetting, by providing the lepers with a place of honour through their representation as the very first image in the work. What has been called by Frye a disintegration of myth is, in Ricoeur's view, still preserved as a trace that must be subject to interpretation (Ricoeur, 2004).

According to Stuart Hall's view, lepers exist in a societal framework that makes them unnoticeable; conversely, priests embody institutional authority. Identity in this context is not defined on its own, but rather



defined through power-based frameworks. Hall referred to the scene is an example of 'positioning', whereby a person's sense of belonging is built within a paradigm of power and meaning (Hall, 1990).

The poem then moves beyond to the temple: "Thick crowds of people at the temple's entrance after the end of the street: an enormous holy flower / covered in sweat from the winds of larger reasons".

A flower, commonly seen in Indian culture as a symbol of purity, rebirth and spirituality has now become both ambiguous and disturbing (Rao, 2013). The introduction of the word "sweat" indicates the use of the body for physical effort, discomfort, and exertion. The sacred is returning to the world of the material, the imperfect, and therefore the human. The phrase "higher purposes" is undefined and creates ambiguity. As noted by Hall, this exemplifies a "crisis in being," where traditional symbols no longer have fixed or stable meaning. As such, the flower has become a battleground of competing meanings; it has become established and disestablished; it has become sacred and profane; it has created stability and instability (Hall, 1990).

According to Frye's theory, the flower holds a remnant of the mythos of rebirth but is contextualized through irony, thereby negating its ideality. The flower as an image of divinity is not survivable beyond suffering; rather, it is a part of suffering (Frye, 1957).

Ricoeur views the crowd as practicing "organized forgetting" when it actively forgets the lepers, who are left behind in their movement to the temple. By placing lepers and the temple in one image, the poem rejects

any form of “organized forgetting” associated with the physical act of moving to the temple (Ricoeur, 2004)

'Taste for Tomorrow' (1976) distinguishes itself from other poems by its lack of a resolution. The poem ends with no closure, leaving its audience caught between the pain associated with living on the street and the hope offered by living near a temple. There is no reconciliation between that which is sacred and that which is profane; rather, their cohabitation exists in an unresolved state of unrest. The poet does not intervene, evaluate, or solve; he simply observes and documents the situation and chooses not to look the other way.

The use of Frye's analysis suggests that traditional modal myths cannot carry meaning in an unstable world. The poem is also an ethical act in Ricoeur's analysis, as it holds a place for the memory of those who have not been memorialized. Finally, Hall understands the poem to be a manifestation of identity, revealing how uncertainty surrounds one's identity, and how one's identity is formed by factors that one cannot readily control (Frye, 1957; Ricoeur, 2004; Hall, 1990).

Rather than serving as a figure of authority, the poetic self arises from being a witness. To witness is to participate in redefining one's identity—not by escaping from suffering, but rather by confronting it. Although the self is not necessarily healed, it is rendered visible; it is fragile; it has a location; and it continues to be in the process of becoming.

1.5. Discussion: Intersections of Myth, Memory, and Identity Across the Poems



Having examined the three poems individually, this section now draws them together to identify patterns, contrasts, and the overarching logic that connects them.

The three poems 'A Missing Person', 'Hunger' and 'Taste for Tomorrow' all provide evidence of the continual development of a coherently but evolving artistic understanding by Jayanta Mahapatra. In examining the relationship between myth, memory and identity as separate levels of analysis, the study finds that these three areas work together to express a multi-faceted and often incoherent depiction of self within each of the three poems, creating unique and variable substance within the context of each poem as well as throughout the body of Mahapatra's poetry.

From "A Missing Person," which shows that identity can be understood as absence (cannot be fully seen or grasped); "Hunger," which shows that identity is now an embodied experience (burdened/disrupted from the body) with inscribed desire, exploitation, and survival; and "Taste for Tomorrow," where we see the identity of the self as expanded beyond one's own body and placed in the collective space and of those around us (religion, social hierarchy, public rituals). Mahapatra's poetry characterizes the way in which identity is always changing according to different places/scenarios.

Frye's structural archetypes of myth can be identified within the three poems; however, they exist in a state of constant instability. The myths themselves do not provide harmony or transcending elements in these three poems; rather, they are dislocated from their mythical origins and are found scattered throughout today's world. For instance, the sacrificing myth in "Hunger" is reflected here in a somewhat mask-like image that throws up

a mirror image of itself, while the sacred symbol (documented as the temple) in "Taste for Tomorrow" is juxtaposed beside a visible image of suffering. In "A Missing Person", the disappearance of stable symbolic forms highlights the deterioration of tradition stability between myth and symbol. The irony of myth is reflected in Frye's ironic mode - the challenge that reality brings to myth constructs and results in the idealistic coherence of myth being lost.

Paul Ricoeur's notion of memory being reconstructed is the foundational consideration to understanding memory at its level of actuality, that is the way through the three poems presented. Memory appears through fragmented, traceable and untraceable forms, not as a distinct or complete narrative. The missing woman, exploited bodies and faceless lepers, for instance, exist as lost remnants of histories that can never be fully understood. These figures uphold a responsibility to be remembered, to be constructed and interpreted as Ricoeur has described as the ethical obligation to be remembered. Memory as such, does not merely connect back to history but provides a means to be exposed to what has been lost (silenced).

Stuart Hall's concept of positioning serves as a framework for examining identity. Each of the poems reveals that the self is influenced by external factors such as: patriarchy in "A Missing Person," economic necessity in "Hunger," and religion in "Taste for Tomorrow." Additionally, the analysis demonstrates that identity is not simply formed; it develops out of tension and contradiction. Consequently, the self is never fully formed or complete; it continues to be negotiated.



Most importantly, all three dimensions are interdependent: myth gives rise to the symbolic element of experience; memory gives historical significance to the symbolic element of experience; identity results from the interaction of myth and memory. In essence, this process results in a fragmented, exposed, and often unresolved self. Additionally, the fragmentation that occurs as a result of the above is not seen as a symptom of dislocation; rather it is indicative of the nature of experience in a postcolonized environment - where history, culture and power have a complex and often contradictory relationship with each other.

As indicated by their combined effect upon the reader, Mahapatra's poetry does not attempt to eliminate the tension of the poem as a whole; instead, he continues to maintain that tension throughout the poem. The poet's newly imagined self is not fully emergent (that is, whole) or unified, but rather, as each of the three poems attests, shaped by has both memories and inheritance from the past and also by the imposition of others upon it. The act of poetry, therefore, is not one of healing; rather, it is witness to the competing and multiple ways of being "self." Together, these poems strongly support the thesis of the study as a whole: the poet does not imagine himself through resolve; he creates (or sustains) himself through a continued involvement with loss, memory, and the paradoxes which characterize post-colonial life.

1.6.Conclusion

According to Mahapatra, "I had my sky fall" (1976, line 18); this line is from the conclusion of one of the poems that is included in our research on the relationship between myth, memory and identity in Mahapatra's poetry. Surprisingly, we couldn't find any definite conclusions to our initial question, but instead (through the image of the sky dropping) a significant amount of evidence supporting our hypothesis that these three elements interact continuously in the witness's experience.

The three poems "A Missing Person" (1971), "Hunger" (1976), and "A Taste for Tomorrow" (1976) show a repeated pattern where the identity of an individual does not exist as fixed or whole, but rather is formed or shaped by the forces of absence, embodiment, and social location. In "A Missing Person", the self is characterized as being predominately invisible and erased; while in "Hunger", this mark of invisibility and erasure is manifested on the body - where desire, poverty, and moral conflict intersect; and in "A Taste for Tomorrow" the identity of an individual has been extended outside of the personal or particular and therefore is shaped and influenced by religious structures and experiences of the collective - how the identity has been formed or is continually evolving through an iteration process resulting from the ever-changing (historical, cultural) dynamics present within constituting conditions throughout Mahapatra's poetic works.

The theoretical aspect of this work illustrates that Northrop Frye's concept of myth does not function as a consistent or perfect framework; rather, it is transferred to the world we currently live in and is challenged by the ongoing tensions surrounding its symbolic coherence. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur's viewing of memory as both a process that is active and



ethical is exemplified through the poetic presentation of fragments, silences, and traces from the past, which necessitate interpretation. The recollections do not provide for a sense of continuity; instead they reveal historical injuries that have ongoing effects. Additionally, Stuart Hall's conceptualization of identity as positional helps to help articulate how the self is constructed within structures of power, culture, and history, yet allows for the potential of negotiation and reinterpretation.

These findings together show that Mahapatra's poetry gives us a complicated and fine model of self in a postcolonial area. The connection of the myth, memory and identity does not bring any resolution or harmony instead it brings about an unstable (in all senses). An unstable; constantly moving (constantly shifting); filled with tension (very tense) individual. But that instability does not represent a failure, it represents everything someone has gone through during their lived post-colonial experience where the past can never be completely recaptured and the present is always coloured by unresolvable histories.

Ultimately, this study argues that Mahapatra represents the self as continuously evolving rather than reconciling the tensions found in his work. Rather than attempting to create a unified historical narrative, his poetry is a document of historical adversities and their impact on both individual and society. It evolves in its portrayal of suffering, allowing for a continual analysis and evolution of identity through interaction with our myths, memories, and cultural experiences. In this context, this study provides valuable insights to the discipline of postcolonial literary criticism as to how we think about the formation of identity as a living, ever-evolving process.



Mahapatra's poèmes ne donnent donc pas de réconfort. On trouve seulement la rigueur du témoin. Par conséquent, on ne peut plus envisager le soi comme étant guéri (soi), mais comme étant là (ici) ; non pas comme un tout (entier), mais comme persévérant (continu).



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