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TRANS-HISTORICITY OF TRAUMA IN THE POETRY OF JAYANTA MAHAPATRA: IN FOCUS "GRANDFATHER" AND "DHAULI"

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Abstract: Human suffering has remained a permanent resident on the poetic premise of Jayanta Mahapatra. By the poet's own words, "His eyes saw the pain in the mirror / that occupied him." The epicentres of this pain or suffering have remained as much within the subjective sphere of Mahapatra's life as in the vaster outside one of objectivity. Trauma happens to be an intense shock-wave of pain. Insofar as of Mahapatra's thematic landscape is concerned, this traumatic version of pain is expressive of a definite transhistorical dimension. This research paper seeks to examine this trans-historical dimension of trauma in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra. Tracing historical origins and sources of trauma besides its footmarks and nature in the plenitude of this poet's verses will be the thrust issues with this analysis. Moreover, the discernible transhistorical feature of trauma will be attributed to its permanent settlement in the museum of memory and at the "door of paper." It would be striking to show how Mahapatra has been a master in the art of rehabilitating trauma at the "door of paper" and thereby has been instrumental to lending it with its transhistorical and transgenerational status. Two most time transcending poems, "Grandfather" and "Dhauli" of this poet will form the main focal point of the undertaken analysis on the transhistorical dimension of trauma.

Keywords: History, trauma, memory, collective consciousness, and trans-historicity

Introduction:

The bilingual Indian poet, Jayanta Mahapatra, is renowned world over. The irony about Mahapatra is that the landscape of his poetry is predominately a provincial one. Odisha, the Indian province of his nativity and ancestral root has been the runway of the flights of his poetic imagination. About his rootedness to the soil of this province, Mahapatra himself has affirmed in the collection of his essays and memoire, Door of Paper (2007),

> To Orissa, to this land in which my roots lie and lies my past and in which lies my beginning and my end, where the wind keens over the grief of the River Daya and where the waves of the Bay of Bengal fail to reach out today to the twilight soul of Konark, I acknowledge my debt and my relationship (81-82).

A few pages earlier in the same collection, he has reiterated, "I would never be wrong if I said that my own poetry has been about Orissa, this land where I was born and have spent all my life" (34). In spite of his being's stubborn rootedness to the narrow confines of a small province, surprisingly, his poetic vision and sensibility have embraced the entirety of the broader inhabitation of humankind. In the context, the argument made by the critic, B.C. Nayak, sounds immensely pertinent and persuasive that Mahapatra's happens to be a "poetics of paradox" ranging widely from "individual" to "the universal" (2018, 1-13). About Odisha, the province of the poet's psychic and imaginative mooring, true, it is territorially small but incredibly rich in terms of historical legacies, sculptural splendour, and sociocultural rites, rituals and traditions. The natural as well as historical specificities such as "the River Daya," "the Bay of Bengal," and "Konark" about which Mahapatra has mentioned in the above quotation, bear enormous sociohistorical significance not only to the local native community in isolation but

also to the entire Indian subcontinent and its populace at large. Natural landscapes of this state along with its numerous other sociohistorical sites have held the mind and imagination of Mahapatra in captivity and have inflicted deep injuries upon his psychic being. History as much the subjective one as the broader provincial one has goaded the poet to the "door of paper" and the game of words as the only "way out" of his constantly haunting sense of the past. About history and memory, Mahapatra has written in his poem titled "Rice,"

> Memory carries me into strange lands,
> my arm around the iron shoulders
> of desolate paddy fields.
> History, dead river,
> torments me (2009, 101).

Insofar as Mahapatra's vast poetic province is concerned it is considerably crowded by history both subjective and the racial one. A close scrutiny of this poet's plenitude of poetic lines reveals history to be, among several other things, an experience of trauma. In its nature and range, this traumatic experience tends to be both transgenerational and transhistorical. Besides, the subjects who have undergone this intense experience comprise not a few individuals only. Community, the aggregational entity of individuals, has also suffered massively from this dreadful experience. The prime concern with this writeup is shedding some lights on this transgenerational as well as transhistorical dimensions of trauma as discernible in the poetic lines of Mahapatra.

It is pertinent to begin with the historical epicentres of this traumatic experience. The land of Odisha has witnessed many such historical phenomena. Of many historical phenomena with enormous sociopolitical significances, two deserve special mention here for the simple reason they have cast serious "shadows" on Mahapatra, the poet, and have paved path for the composition of his two timeless poems, "Grandfather" and "Dhauli." One is the Great Famine of 1866 which had very badly shaken the backbone of Odisha. This Famine is more famous by the name, the Na' Anka Durvikhya and its memory still creates tremors in the mind and imagination today even though in the meantime a period more than a century and half is already past. The other historical event of equally nightmarish experiences occurred even in much more remote a time. It was a war and it occurred in 261 BCE. It has been recorded in the pages of the Indian history as the Kalinga War. The poem "Dhauli" is this bloody event's direct artistic outcome. As a matter of fact, these two happenings in combination with many others of identical nature and effect have lent the poet with a vision as well as sensibility of profound and permanent sadness. Further, they have left him with a tone of intense and eternal melancholy the ripples of which are unmissably felt in each one of his poetic pronouncements. Mahapatra has made no secret of this fact. In the poem titled "Of a Questionable Conviction," for instance, he has written with reference to his own poetic position of course in third person, "His eyes saw the pain in the mirror / that occupied him" (2009, 97).

Pain has remained a permanent and pervading feature of the fate of the people of the poet's native land. As the voice of his land and community, the poet could not help making much of this disquieting stuff. Referring to himself in oblique manner, Mahapatra has written in the opening lines of the same poem, "This is a man who talks of pain / as though it belonged to him alone" (97). As already hinted above, the epicentres rendering Mahapatra's sensibility mournful are many. As stated above, the Great Famine of 1866 and the Kalinga War of 261 BCE have been the most dreadful ones. The common and unforgettable fallout of these two events has been trauma. The trauma these events resulted in impelled many of its sufferers

resort to actions with enormous sociocultural and religious implications. In the case of the Famine, the unending starvation it unleashed posed serious threats to nothing less than the very existence of the hungry generation of the time. It shook the cultural foundation of several individuals. Out of desperation many didn't hesitate even to change their faith with a view to save their lives. The poet's grandfather was one who resorted to this drastic step. About the other event, the Kalinga War, one internet source states,

> Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty conquered Kalinga in the bloody Kalinga War in 261 BCE, which was the eighth year of his reign. According to his own edicts, in that war about 100,000 people were killed, 150,000 were captured and more affected. The resulting bloodshed and suffering of the war is said to have deeply affected Ashoka. He turned into a pacifist and converted to Buddhism. (Gupta, 2011)

It is no wonder, the War has made millions of families of Odisha undergo severe traumatic experience particularly the ones (families) the near and dear ones of which have been killed in this bloodiest ever historical event. More importantly, it brought about radical change in the emperor Ashoka, the prime cause of this devastative event. The scale and magnitude of suffering both the events inflicted were so massive and nightmarish that even the very thought of them and their narrative accounts have brought about similar nightmarish effects in the subsequent generations in general and in the generations of the victimised families in particular. Trauma as the common deplorable outcome of the events has likewise transcended the boundaries of time. Hinting at the persisting painful presence of such agonies in the airs of Odisha, Jayanta Mahapatra, one unfortunate heir of the victim family, has stated in his Door of Paper, "A kind of struggle floats in the air and laps the hearts of men: the struggle just to live, against drought and flood, storm and fever. Nothing more" (2007, 7). Mahapatra, the poet and his poems hold testimony to this fact. Two poems, "Grandfather" and "Dhauli," to be specific, are the living testimony of trans-historic trauma wrought by the events under reference. They have explicit and unambiguous bearings of intergenerational trauma. Despite its origin in some specific historical moment, trauma has been transmitted from one generation to another through memory most in the manner of a contagious disease. The poems under reference do offer evocative accounts of trauma, in symbolic manner though. They are suggestive of its diverse effects on the socio-political, religious as well as psychological fields.

"Grandfather" and the Great Famine:

The poem "Grandfather" is based on the black days of the Great Famine of 1866 in the state of Odisha. It captures each inch of disbalance in mental and physical faculties. It highlights the loss of common sense, the lack of decision-making ability. It also deals with people's endurance of the experiences of horror arising out of the famine. The speaker of the poem is the grandson of one of the worst sufferers of this terrible event. The worst sufferer, grandfather, is the central character of the poem. His grandson, the speaker, wants to know from him what and how he underwent at that most dreadful moment of his life. He enquires,

> 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?... (2009, 23).

The intensity of misery and the cruel face of impending death can be well inferred by readers of the poem.

The most disturbing as well as disastrous effect of the Famine was suffered in the field of religion. Religion of an ethnic group or community without any doubt, happens to be its identity. This distinguishing marker of identity gets transmitted from generation to generation. It remains most precious to the soul of the community members. Religious faith tends to be an integral part of an individual's consciousness. Each member of the community inherits it from his/her ancestors. He or she lives with it and dies with it too. Like time, religious faith is both transhistorical and transgenerational in nature and existence. Because of its trans-historical as well as transgenerational dimension, any tampering of it naturally results in serious impacts on the members and the community as a whole. Changing one's faith doesn't affect the individual concerned alone. It continues to haunt the minds and imaginations of the posterity as well. Its tremors are felt in unending manner by every succeeding generation. The Famine of 1866 had terribly shaken this very religious baseline of many Odia people. It had made the issue of one's survival very difficult. In the face of imminent death out of starvation, Mahapatra's grandfather changed his faith and embraced Christianity. This historical decision has remained a potent cause of torment for the poet and his successors. It has made the grandfather questionable in the eyes of his successors too. It has left him in a position which is all but venerable and glorious.

In the poem, "Grandfather," the term 'religion' has worked as a means of one's survival. It has influenced the characters to adapt their life to the need of the hour. The problem of undernourishment, malnutrition, inadequate diets has exacerbated social tensions. It has impelled a complex historical thing, the conversion of religion to take place as a viable strategy of survival. During this devastative Famine, people continued to struggle between life and death. The British missionaries and religious groups provided them with food and medical facilities obviously not unconditionally nor without any cost. Religious conversion was the price the famine-hit had to pay to save their lives from sure death. The poem "Grandfather" has come up as a critique of this grim scenario. It has endeavoured to make readers understand the gravity of the situation. Describing the predicament, the grandfather of the speaker might have undergone in those most difficult hours of the Famine, Mahapatra has written,

> The imperishable that swung your broken body,
> turned it inside out? What did faith matter?
> What Hindu world so ancient and true for you to hold?
> Uneasily you dreamed toward the center of your web (23).

Like million others, Mahapatra's grandfather has faced enormous insurmountable challenges during this terrible famine. This disastrous phenomenon has exerted unbearable adverse effects on the native Odias specifically in respect of getting access to food and other basic necessities of life. The unbearable pains arising out of hunger and starvation have impelled Jayanta Mahapatra's grandfather to change his faith. His conversion from Hinduism to Christianity had given him an opportunity to have access to resources supporting life. About the consequences of contrary nature of this drastic step taken in desperation, Mahapatra has written, "The separate life let you survive, while perhaps / the one you left wept in the blur of your heart." Long after that calamity took place, in the present now it has continued to stir the mind and the thinking faculty of the succeeding generations. The poet and his son representing respectively the third and the fourth generations, have got themselves engaged in a talk in the present about that disastrous happening of past days. Referring to this scenario of temporal juxtaposition, Mahapatra has continued further, "Now in a night of sleep and taunting rain / my son and I

speak of that famine nameless as stone" (24). The grandfather's decision to change faith has left behind in the descendants a deep psychic scar. It has continued to haunt their mind and fill their hearts with irredeemable anger, agony and despair.

There's no doubt, the Famine under reference here has made the grandfather incur great loss. It is a loss of multifarious type. First and foremost, it is the loss of the age-old ancestral faith i.e. Hinduism. It has caused him suffer the loss of heath and the equilibrium of mind. The loss has not remained confined to the grandfather himself in isolation. It has taken the succeeding generations into its sway. The feeling of loss in the next two generations is obvert in the following stanza:

> A conscience of years is between us. He is young.
> The whirls of glory are breaking down for him before me.
> Does he think of the past as a loss we have lived, our own?
> Out of silence we look back now at what we do not know.

The temporal gap between the grandfather at one end and the poet and his son on the other is of "a hundred-odd years." After an elapse of so many years, the shadow of the event still haunts the mind of the descendants. The next two stanzas tell how the shadow has taken the descendants into its sway. They read:

> There is a dawn waiting beside us, whose signs
> are a hundred-odd years away from you, Grandfather.
> You are an invisible piece on a board
> whose move has made our children grow, to know us,
>
> carrying us deep where our voices lapse into silence.

Although quite imaginable, it is yet not easy to know what the grandfather exactly underwent during that hard time. The poet concludes the poem with the following lines which express only his wistfulness and a note of deep sighs:

> We wish we knew you more.
> We wish we knew what it was to be, against dying,
> to know the dignity
>
> that had to be earned dangerously,
> your last chance that was blindly terrifying, so unfair.
> We wish we had not to wake up with our smiles
> in the middle of some social order.

Mahapatra has tried to understand the grave situation of the past in which his grandfather took such a drastic step of embracing Christianity. The poet cannot go back to that grave situation in real time. It is next to impossible. Time allows us only to move forward but not in the reverse direction. But one can traverse the realm of the past by riding on the hypothetical wings of one's imagination only the way the poet has done here in this poem of painful and perturbing reminiscence.

Because the poet has received a deep psychic scar, the world has appeared to him extremely gloomy and sorrow-ridden. As a matter of fact, this very sight of pervading pain has been to a considerable extent an act of externalization of internal feeling. Pain indeed has stuck to his sight so hard and so permanently that the objects of the external world such as wind,

water, rock and stones appear to bear stamps of pain on them. In the context, the observation made on Mahapatra's poetic craft by the noted scholar, B.C. Nayak, sounds immensely pertinent. Talking about the recurring presence of "shadow" in Mahapatra's poetry, Nayak has observed,

> The shadow has weighed so heavily on the mind of the poet and has caused so deep and incurable a scar in the inner landscape of his mind as well as psyche that even the moment he casts a look at the outside landscape … the shadow instantly transmigrates itself invariably into the landscape" (2017, 46).

The following lines from the poem titled "The Stones," for instance, do corroborate this poetic fact. Talking about "stones" the poet has written,

> Like shells lying around from the last battle
> they make us feel that
> something like hate or power is real;
> we can hear the breathing of our dead
> move among the silent shapes (2009, 136).

The feeling of trauma thus has remained a powerful and persistent feature with Mahapatra's poetry. It has emerged to be a salient and disquieting motif of his poetry. Again, the scholar, B.C. Nayak, is right in his observation that the shades of this powerful feeling do have their origin in history - history both personal and national. He has convincingly argued that this feeling has taken the form of a "shadow" and has invaded the province of Mahapatra's poetry. He has demonstrated how the imperial and pervading presence of this shadow has turned Mahapatra's poetic lines into "shadow lines." In the concluding segment of his highly analytical article titled "Shadow Lines of Mahapatra's Poetry" Nayak has affirmed,

> The discernible shadow in his lines is conspicuously the verbal manifestation of deep psychological scars received by the poet in his emotionally trouble-torn childhood. Mahapatra's poetry which has evidentially remained the enclave of an imperious shadow, does have definite ontogenetic lineage in history" (2017, 57).

He has further reiterated that "Poetry… for Mahapatra has been an idiomatic surfacing of a subterranean spectral being with its undoubted mooring in personal psychic experiences." As to the origin of this shadow and in that, of the feeling, an earlier in the same article, Nayak has boldly stated, "'history', whether personal one or national, has always remained with Mahapatra a metaphor for deep anguish and infliction, for oppressive forces and torments" (48-49).

The Famine severely hit all the states of a being, physical as well as mental. Intermittent starvation due to acute scarcity of food miserably weakened one's physical being. Increasing starvation deaths, desperate struggle for survival, cruel and scornful face of death, no relief from suffering at sight, nerve-shattering pressures of stress, the air of despair and hopelessness led to the critical state of unmanageable anxiety and depression in individual's psychic being. This kind of traumatic situation brought both the mental as well as physical being under serious stress. It held one's cognitive faculties in jeopardy. This state of jeopardy badly affected one's ability to take right decisions. It moreover, percolated to the baseline of individual's memory and inerasably stuck to it. This situation of trauma can be well inferred from the following lines which depict the desperate actions undertaken by the narrator's grandfather.

> How old were you? Hunted, you turned coward and ran,
> the real animal in you plunging through your bone.
> You left your family behind, the buried things,

the precious clod that praised the quality of a god.

The imperishable that swung your broken body,
turned it inside out? What did faith matter?
What Hindu world so ancient and true for you to hold?
Uneasily you dreamed toward the centre of your web. ("Grandfather")

It is here worth the mention that the poem "Grandfather" has been composed in reaction to the haunting memory of the dreadful situation that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of this historical phenomenon i.e. the Famine of 1866 of Odisha.

Jayanta Mahapatra has come across a diary maintained by his grandfather. The faded pages of this diary bearing some notes on the Famine have remained for the poet a living record of that nightmarish event. The yellow diary of Mahapatra's grandfather has thus been an emblem. It emblematizes the disastrous Famine of 1866 and its devastative effects. It stimulates in the speaker also the feeling of nostalgia. It works moreover, as a connect. It connects and coheres too different generations across the annals of time and history. It transports the poet at once to the grave situation that prevailed during the terrible Famine under discussion. It helps recreate the nerve-shattering experience the poet's grandfather underwent in the past. The yellow papers of the diary liken the faded proof of the quest for food, for shelter and means of survival on the part of the famine-struck Odias of the day. Mahapatra, the poet writes:

The yellowed diary's notes whisper in vernacular.
They sound the forgotten posture,
the cramped cry that forces me to hear that voice.
Now I stumble in your black-paged wake. (2009, 23)

It also induces an imaginary nostalgic feeling in the speaker who was not there when the actual event occurred in the past. He acquires the knowledge of the experience and memory of his grandfather from the yellow diary and endeavours to depict the soul-shattering experience of his grandfather. True, the real experience must have been harder than the one depicted here in the poem. However, the speaker could well imagine the pain his grandfather and many others had undergone in real life situation at that point of time. The feeling of trauma thus has wiped out the boundaries of time. The moment of trauma has acquired a trans-historic dimension and has taken multiple generations in its sway. The speaker of the poem has been one of the latest living bearers of the traumatic past. The yellow diary plays the role of a mirror reflecting the harsh reality. This record telling about the tragic past of the people of Odisha has obviously haunted the mind of the poet. He has attempted to escape from the pain of haunting memory by putting it settle in the silver lines of his poem. Here the effort made by Mahapatra is identical with what John Keats has done in his poem "Ode to a Nightingale." Keats has expressed his wish to escape from the painful realities of life through the wings of poesy. The nightingale's song has offered the poet the sought after escape.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow (Keats, Lines 21-30).

Referring to the trying times of his grandfather in the days of the Famine, Mahapatra has spelt out:

For you it was the hardest question of all.
Dead, empty trees stood by the dragging river,
past your weakened body, flailing against your sleep.
You thought of the way the jackals moved, to move. ("Grandfather,"23)

The tension of terror and helplessness is reminiscent of the crisis S. T Coleridge's narrative hero, the Ancient Mariner, faced in the aftermath of his committing the sin. In the poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Coleridge has depicted the compelling situation comprising the sin and its fallout, the trap of water, in most evocative terms:

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail! ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," 90)

The Mariner is caught haplessly in a stalemate situation of life. He is struggling for life in the face of imminent death. He experiences the horror arising out of the scarcity of food and drinking water in the middle of the sea. Out of desperation, he bites his own arm for blood to quench his dreadful thirst. The situation the Great Famine of Odisha had led to was in no way less grave. The unbearable hunger and pain compelled the grandfather to get converted to Christianity. The poem "Grandfather" is a vociferous verbal testimony telling in loud and clear terms the painful story of survival against dreaded and devouring face of starvation and hunger. It delineates the trans-historic impacts of the moments of trauma on the deeper canvas of human psyche and consciousness cutting across ages and generations.

The grave historical situation that prevailed in Odisha at that point of time brings to mind a parallel one, 'The Black death,' the devastating pandemic, that wrecked the city of Oran in Albert Camus's novel, Plague (1947). In the novel, the city becomes quarantined because of the bubonic plague. Camus in the book defines Plague when it was realised in the novel for the first time. Hey says, "The word "plague" had just been uttered for the first time. At this stage of the narrative, with Dr. Bernard Rieux standing at his window, the narrator may, perhaps, be allowed to justify the doctor's uncertainty and surprise, since, with very slight differences, his reaction was the same as that of the great majority of our townsfolk. Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise" (The Plague Part I, 18)

The reactions of the population to the crisis, the severity of the situation, the suffering and the choices of individuals are the universal characteristics of being in pain and or being in any condition that is horrible and has horrible consequences. The book shows human sufferings in the exposure to a disastrous disease. Camus also deals with the societal and political issues of his time through the disaster. It deals not only with the illness but also with the mental and emotional states of the characters. The city was deadly struck by the plague and its fear. The struggle for survival can be seen where the exploration of the reaction of human being during

times of crises and to the disease is one of the aims of the book. The psychological distress, anxiety and trauma explained:
"… But actually it would have been truer to say that by this time, mid-August, the plague had swallowed up everything and everyone. No longer were there individual destinies; only a collective destiny, made of plague and the emotions shared by all. Strongest of these emotions was the sense of exile and of deprivation, with all the crosscurrents of revolt and fear set up by these." He also adds how the weather goes against the mankind and the streets becomes lonely with the loss of life "It was this time that a high wind rose and blew for several days through the plague-stricken city. Wind is particularly dreaded by the inhabitants of Oran, since the plateau on which the town is built presents no natural obstacle, and it can sweep our starts with unimpeded violence. During the months when not a drop of rain had refreshed the town, a grey crust had formed on everything, and this flaked off under the wind, disintegrating into dust-clouds. What with the dust and scraps of paper whirled against peoples' legs, the streets grew emptier." (The Plague Part III, 82)

"Dhauli" and the Kalinga War:

As already hinted above, another potent cause of trauma is deadly wars. Such wars are not rare and scarce insofar as the history of Odisha is concerned. To repeat it here once again, the Kalinga War of 261 BCE has been one of the bloodiest battles ever fought in the history of humankind. The cost of this war was the precious lives of millions of the brave Kalinga warriors of the time. It's no wonder, the hypersensitive poet in Mahapatra has landed in the blood-soaked battle field of that nightmarish event of 261 BCE, again if not in real life situation but definitely in the virtual realm of imagination. In symbolic terms though, his poem "Dhauli," depicts certain scenarios linked to that massively destructive war. The scenarios in themselves are evocatively suggestive of definite moments as well as experiences of trauma. Referring to the bleak situation that arose in the aftermath of the Kalinga war, the poet has written,

> Afterwards,
> when the wars of Kalinga were over,
> the fallow fields of Dhauli
> hid the red-smeared voiceless bodies (Mahapatra, 2009, 18).

The ghastly sight of the blood-bathed battle-field reportedly brought about radical change in the cruel emperor, Asoka. Henceforth he set upon the peaceful path of benevolence and promotion of religious values. The poem ends with a reference to the feeling of Asoka's pain and the more disheartening stimuli of his pain:

> the measure of Asoka's suffering
> does not appear enough.
> The place of his pain peers lamentably
> from among the pains of the dead (18).

The blood-cuddling tale of the devastative war has ruffled the poet's mind and heart so much that even centuries after he has discerned some sad tidings floating in the air of the battle site. Mahapatra has written in the penultimate stanza,

> Years later, the evening wind,
> trembling the glazed waters of the River Daya,
> keens in the rock edicts the vain word,

shuttered silence, an air: (18).

The enduring transgenerational efficacy of suffering is very much evidential in the poem, "Dhauli." Incidents are momentary but their effects are often time-transcending. In the Context, it is worth reinstating the basic fact here once again that Mahapatra's "eyes saw the pain in the mirror/ that occupied him." The pain has "occupied" him once and for all. To put it differently, the lenses of his eyes have been indelibly tinged with "pain." That is why the world has appeared to him pervasively painful. History both personal and universal has remained nightmarish with the poet. Its memory and knowledge have allowed him no peace or respite. On the contrary, it has made him feel deeply pained and dejected. As the stanza from the poem "Rice" already cited above in the introductory segment, tells "memory carries" Mahapatra "into strange lands," and history as a "dead river" ceaselessly "torments" him. History obviously has struck him very hard. It has sustained a deep and incurable psychic scar. He has never ever succeeded in overcoming this deep psychic scar. It has always chased him in the form of an inseparable shadow. This terrible state of his being and living is crystal clear in the following lines from the poem "A Country."

Wherever I try to live,
in pious penitence at Puri
or in the fiery violence of a revolutionary
my reason becomes a prejudiced sorrow
like socialism. (2009, 51).

In their own way, Jayanta Mahapatra's "Grandfather" and "Dhauli" have emerged to be so to say, the miniature versions of The Plague and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." These two poems like many others of their kindred, have lent certain fleeting moments of history with immortality. They have rendered history transcend its temporal boundaries and wear the posturing of trans-historicity forever. If art sanctions transhistoricity to history, the credit goes to the artist. Artist is instrumental to this process of transformation. In his essay titled "The Poet", R.W. Emerson is right to remark, "Art is the path of the creator to his work" (1950, 338). The poems of Jayanta Mahapatra are representative of his paths to, or ways with, history. In the same essay, Emerson has rightly called poets as the "liberating gods" (334). Moreover, he has renamed them as "the Knower, the Doer and the Sayer" (321). Mahapatra has displayed his uncommon ability invariably in respects of all the three: knower, doer and sayer.

Conclusion:

Jayanta Mahapatra has remained basically a versifier of history. The ugly and blood-stained face of history has always distracted his attention and remained the cause of his trauma and trepidation. Avowedly, "history, the dead river" has tormented him. Memory and words have been the museum of history. Some critical junctures of personal as well as sociopolitical history with terrible fallouts of massive loss and suffering have held the poet's mind and being in captivity. As "a way out," the poet has endeavoured to bail himself out of this stifling situation by resorting to the ameliorating anaesthesia of words. By his own admission, "I have salvaged the hours of loss for my own self-expression in poetry" (2007,224). For him, the act of composing a poem has always been "a safety measure, a strategic reserve." According to him, whenever "time" has "plotted a crisis" in his life and he has "needed a way out," he has come to this "safety measure," and "strategic reserve" (224). This kind of inhouse felicitation of history in the enduring chamber of memory and the preservatives of words and idioms has rendered history turn transgenerational and trans-historic. Mahapatra is of the opinion that "a poem becomes a testament on the page" (2007, 84). By this logic, history being allotted a

permanent berth in the poem, "becomes a testament on the page" to withstand the trials and tribulations of time for good.

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