Introduction

Jayanta Mahapatra (1928) is all about being himself. He is an authentic voice and one of the Indian poets who have been honored first at abroad then at home. He holds a beautiful attitude; like a smile of child, a welcome for all and having no shutter for his heart. He has another scale of things; he is the philosopher who prefers to pen poetries. As he writes,

“Everywhere, the people talk of their desire for the peace
more than anything else in the world
Somewhere, the urge to talk about oneself
consumes the entire lifetime.

There is (somewhere) a great poem I have to write”

He is a patient listener and critical observer and bestowed with a willing ear in choosing the subject for his poetry. Earlier he was a man of Physical Science but now his Physical world copulate with Metaphysical imagery in his poetry. Jayanta Mahapatra successfully portrays all the experiences and pathos. All the unvoiced voices find echoes in his poetry. Myth, Mysticism, History and varied imagery attain utmost importance in his realm of poetry. Jayanta Mahapatra manifests a sensibility moulded by reckless innocence. His imagery flies keeping its feet deep rooted in the soil. His poems are his communion and a close observation of the region in and out. His poems oscillate between tensions of language and expression. His quiet unassuming voice talks shamelessly about the ground realities. His eyes shift seamlessly across the contexts. He weaves his experiences on the warp and weft of deep Indian consciousness. His
homeland becomes the hub of his literary works; his experienced eyes don’t let any cultural corner unvisited. Hunger, Pain, Scars, Communalism, Terrorism, Dirty Politics and Screams of women paints his imagery. The best thing about his reading is that one never know what will turn up in next phase.

His consciousness tethered to the belief that every happening has its consequence; in what happened before. His homeland Orissa has been a paradox, contradict of pleasant and painful experiences for him. He holds a heart that can feel the hunger in stomach and the hunger between the two legs. He has the eyes that can see the concern of ageing prostitute and also the concern of a father of teenage girl. His poetry expresses his love and concern for the people of his homeland but he also feels the woe of the victims of Union Carbide in Bhopal and the forced martyrs of Khalistan in Punjab. As he has himself given a clue to his poetry when he said that his poems deal with the life within himself where the mind tries to find a sort of coherence from the mass of things in the world outside it. Jayanta Mahaputra’s poetry is the kind of cross section of the exotic culture and represents socio-culture deterioration of the present generation. He always tries to go deep into the problem. He is concerned about the present state of India. His poetry has a wide range and his thematic circle includes both past and present in its diameter. His poetry is at once encompasses history and also gives a vision to future. This makes him a polar star in the galaxy of Indian English poets. Indian English poets are broadly divided into two categories: one those who identify themselves with the landscape of the place and the contemporary India, and other those who acclimatize the indigenous tradition to English language and Jayanta Mahapatra belongs to both the category. What makes him familiar, absorbed in
Indianness and Orissan identity yet exotic and more versatile? The answer to this question can be found from the study of his poetry keeping their themes and varied imagery in mind and also keeping the historical elements which played role in shaping them. The present study is an effort to map Jayanta Mahapatra first as a human being, as youth who witnessed a great period of transformation from world war to post independence communal violence. As a observer who felt the pain of untimely deaths due to cyclone in Orissa, thousands of deaths in Bhopal due to poisonous gas, assassination of Gandhi and terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir. It will be incomplete and insufficient without taking in to consideration his journey as a poet and as a human being.