
A Comparative Study of Love and Life in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra and Ratan Bhattacharjee

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Abstract :

Great literature conveys “timeless truths” but in quest of an alternative paradigms, postcolonial literature often dismisses the traditional images, metaphors and symbols throwing the gauntlet to the imperial efforts bent on imposing their own precept and concepts on the third world literature. The subtext of the Western writings accepts modification in the East –West cultural counter. This paper aims at exploring the points where the vision of two poets on love and life converge and diverge. Both of them wrote profusely on love and life. One is the most veteran poet of Indian English poetry and the other is an emerging voice of love in Indian love literature. It is interesting that their realistic approaches are not as simple as they appear at a cursory glance by a reader. Their use of symbols and images are much planned and purposive, giving love poetry its unique features in Indian English Literature)

Keywords: Love, Indian English Literature, Jayanta Mahapatra, Ratan Bhattacharjee, postcolonial leit motif, symbology, east –west encounter.

“The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles is like a breath of cool, fresh air on a hot, humid day,” wrote the famous Australian poet and painter Rob Harle in his analysis of the poems of

Ratan Bhattacharjee. “In this fast paced, often crass commercial world, where money buys most things, except love,” wrote Harle, “love is in short supply.” Bhattacharjee with this wonderful collection of poems does just this nurturing of love emotions in this book that is followed by another marvellous anthology of poems *Oleander Blooms*. The struggle of postcolonial discourse extends over the domains of varied entities. But in an anthology of love poems if such questioning and revaluation occur, then the poetic discourse is bound to be a challenging one. “Postcolonial literature and criticism arose both during and after the struggles of many nations of Africa, Asia Latin America ...”(Habib 738). It operates at two levels first as a historical marker of the period following decolonisation and second as an embodiment of intellectual approaches which have been influenced by post structuralism and post deconstruction. Great literature conveys “timeless truths” but in quest of an alternative paradigm, postcolonial literature often dismisses the traditional images, metaphors and symbols throwing the gauntlet to the imperial efforts bent on imposing their own precept and concepts on the third world literature. The subtext of the Western writings accepts modification in the East –West cultural counter (Das 90). This is how the cultural position is stated and which is the main task of intellectual and literary critic.

In Mahapatra’s poetry, personal feelings are intensified as the poet questions the existence of the self; the other often takes the form of local society, and especially Hindu culture, ritual and spirituality, symbols and the past from which he has been alienated.

The socio-cultural identity of woman can never be possible in such an orthodox society. Writers, like Pratibha Roy, Sitakant Mohapatra, Mayadhar Mansinha, Fakir Mohan Senapathi, Jayanta Mahapatra, from such a place is trying their level best to create a position of significance for woman. Their works are trying to break the shackles of

conceptualisations of a woman, which are nothing more than an object of sexual gratification. Woman has never been more than a sexual object in the eyes of a chauvinistic man (Roy Himadri).

Mahapatra's poems appear a continuous relation of aspects of the isolation, loneliness, solitude, alienation of the self from external realities in a world without apparent purpose. This is the existential dilemma of most modern literature. While Mahapatra's world is filled with personal pain, guilt, remorse, hunger, desire, and moments of renewal, his environment is filled with symbols of belief by the ordinary lives of the people of Cuttack, the temples, the Hindu festivals, the ancient monuments. Poverty, deprivation, and prostitution recur in his verses. Ratan Bhattacharjee's *The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubble* is indeed a bouquet of love poems, as he has beautifully portrayed the dualities existing in the experience of this emotion which we can very well see in the antithetical divide 'Melodies and Maladies', where innocence of love coheres with experiences of love.

The poems in the book *The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles* also shed light on many ugly episodes of life even on the most horrible incident that Delhi witnessed, the rape of the helpless student in the bus at midnight on the open road. Bhattacharjee very accurately points out in his poem "They tore the Petals on the Road" and that the rapists killed womanhood, the mother, daughter, the sister in you/All in one night" just in one night".

This one night was indeed very horrible and the brutality makes us silent in shame and which would lead us to another poem of equal dexterity named "My Days are Silent". This poem paints a picture of oppression and voices out the silence of the oppressed but also hints that this may be the silence before the storm, the silence before a revolution. One can easily discern this in his lines:

My days are silent and my nights are loud
Oppression and tears cover my sky

Like the dark and monstrous cloud.
The sweat drop by drop writes the daily gospel
On the canvas of our dull and sombre life
One meal a day we are allowed.

As in the Mahapatra poems, there is an ironic subtext and the reality emerges as a character in the poems reflecting a postcolonial anguish. The poet lays bare the agony of the sufferers:

Threats of cane and low wage
Lost is all our labour
We are like barren trees
History is forgotten in whisper.
Our forefathers never saw a metropolis
But when they protested against land acquisition
They saw metro police.
We could write a scarlet letter with our sweat
Which could turn black into red
We never became a river to reach the sea
But we always remained a rushing rivulet.

Sexual contacts forcibly with the susceptible women are the very common phenomenon that male usually practice to exhibit their physical power upon the women. Sometimes the male is already acquainted, or who knows her pretty well socially - friends, acquaintances, a date, or even the one in an existing romantic relationship, where it is alleged that consent for sexual activity was not given, or was given under duress. The patriarchal male always takes the benefit of the situation and condition and exhibits his physical power and desire for the sexual pleasure and fantasies. She gets ruptured psychologically and loses the struggle of existence. Even the people in such a society where such a victimised woman abodes, doesn't hesitate to ostracise and corner her from the frame work of that society. No one tries to understand her unuttered

pathos and agony. The traumatic condition that she has been compelled to fails to acquire even sympathetic attitude from the patriarchal society. Rather she is been looked down upon with abominate hatred:

The odour of a raped woman through the wetness, sacked and consigned to the poison in her blood, And the irrelevanceOf people walking past in silence...[June Rain]

In such a condition the victimised woman doesn't have any options of survival. She feels pity on her conditional existence. The poet very realistically captures the pains that '*raped woman*' undergoes.

In the second volume of Ratan Bhattacharjee's "Oleander Blooms" there are a number of poems dealing with the loneliness of the woman and her lover, both maddened by the craze for being one. The solitude of the woman in the field was romanticised by the poet. According to him the woman in the house is also romantic, but with *tragic solemnity*. Unfortunately she receives neither of them instead she is imposed with dictums that the orthodox patriarchy wants her to follow without any rebel. Probably writers like Mahapatra are trying to break these notions of the society with their creations. Marriage, homemaking, child rearing, and maintaining the traditional etiquette of the family are some of the dictums that define her as a woman in the prevailing culture of the patriarchal society.

A male-dominated society fails to look deep into the pathos that the women undergo for maintaining her responsibilities that is being imposed upon them in the name of traditions and cultures. This conventional authoritative phenomenon is very common not only in Orissa but also in most parts of the north of India. Women exist here with sacrificing their dreams and desires. Decentralising their roles from one to the other might prove their adaptive characteristics but within this lies the

invisible voice of pathos. Even as an unmarried girl, a woman never escapes the cruel authoritative vision of the males in cities and towns of Orissa. Why just Orissa, this trend has to be confronted by women anywhere in the world. They are always been tortured whenever they are out of the secured parental homes. A feeling of security converts into insecurity in open air because of the voyeuristic visions of the males. Mahapatra captures this very vividly:

...there goes Lakshmi down the road,swinging
her tight little hips in unison...[Awe]

The portrayal of such voyeurism has nothing more than sexual connotation, where a male considers woman objects or '*thing*' of sexual pleasure. Being a poet of emotions, sentiments and feelings, Mahapatra heightens the intense self-portrayal while depicting the psychological constructions of women. From self-realisation to self-pity, the distance that women travel in the psychological space has been expressed imaginatively. The male-gaze that an unmarried woman confronts develops from rapid subjective feelings to deep anxieties and insecurities. Woman feels alienated in the world surrounded by males, who dictates rules of existence for the woman:

The voluptuous figures of women in stoneonly
wish to save our feelings of love and
freedom...[The Quest]

Deriving sexual pleasure from gazing at the body of a young woman is a phenomenon that keeps on occurring frequently. The poet tries to capture this form of harassment that women confront every day. Nurturing the sense of pleasure, a chauvinist man derives a sexual gratification by harassing a woman in this form. Whether she is a daughter of a neighbour or she is a wife of someone, the male in the patriarchal setup reveals his concealed beast by portraying this form of perverse

sexual pleasure. The power of men over women is exhibited in this form of derogatory encounters.

The patriarchal man gets the freedom to harass women. The relevance of such visual harassment where the males exhibit power is being vividly presented in Mahapatra's works. Males are reluctant to the fact that this exhibition of power compels the women to be engulfed in the sense of loss of social space. The women start feeling not only physically insecure, but also this sense of vulnerability makes her emotionally weak. The parameter of patriarchy thus gives the male to conquer the woman with force both physically and emotionally. And this gives the males to involve in violent physical encounters with the vulnerable ones.

The treatment of such deprived women in the poems of Bhattacharjee is quite different. He shows how a lover can feel the Oleander in such a woman who is traumatised by her husband. Read one poem that is written by Bhattacharjee about the selfishness of a self-centred dominating husband. 'Alas! She was in the Hug of a Selfish Giant':

She was happy to see herself in the hug
The dominating selfish giant took her in his
clutch
She was grateful to her papa for this match
She knew that it was a priceless catch
The princess never knew her own talent
She forgot her abilities and had no time to lament
She obeyed all the rituals of marriage
She had no other job but to rear his kids
After evening she makes her husband happy
At daytime her beloved kids she feeds
She has to forget her innate talents
Her husband like a selfish giant is on TV and
chat
She kept herself busy with teaching the kids

She used pass her lonely moments with a lapdog
and a cat.

What more can she do, she is a typical housewife
Her father wished her to be Ma Laxmi in spite of
all strife

In the name of duty and affection and foreign
tour

Her husband made her a Nora of Doll's House
She was in the clutch of that huge selfish giant
She whispers in fear all day like a poor mouse.

A long portion of this poem is given to show in details how in India a working woman is exploited by her husband using her beauty, name , and fame and still not happy until she becomes a cook and a sexy object on the bed. One such poem of Bhattacharjee reveals the drudgery of a woman after she leaves her father's home:

In the Palace of Love
She was her father's princess
With grand graphics the father
dreamt , his princess will become a queen
By her exquisite beauty, her dynamism
and superb talent , every heart she will win.
She was to sing in the voice of gold
Years rolled and rolled
Nuptial knot in India is a bondage
This drudgery continues over the age
A woman is a woman and never a Queeni
in her husband's house
She is a homemaker having no home of her own
The husband burns like a sun and in his
effulgence
The poor wife like the pale moon all shone.

In the *Maladies of love* we have seen how Bhattacharjee has portrayed the alienation and anguish in poem after poem, realistic panorama for all the readers where the poet confesses “my wings are broken and I am no longer able to dream.” He inked in these poems the agonies of life, tragic severance, loneliness and above all love feelings, the most vital passion of human heart. Prof. Ecaterina Patrascu beautifully focuses this aspect in her ‘Afterword’ in the book:

complexity of the new book derives from the balance between Ratan Bhattacharjee’s ‘*Melodies*’ and his ‘*Maladies*’ – the second half of his volume. A universe of tears and dark shouts, images of dryness and creative sterility, pessimism about the human fate, appeasing loneliness, and an aggressive or indifferent nature create the image of a conspiring universe, of a place of meaningless changing. The solitude of the contemporary man, the dullness and boredom of a non-conceptual contingency, the routine of everyday life, the repetitive existence that cannot coagulate meaningfully and that implacably leads to an insignificant death, are among the maladies of the contemporary world. To all these, the poet adds the corrupted beauty when motivation lacks, the anxiety of existence in an entropic universe, the life of the distressed or of the barely living, the emptiness of heart and the voiceless of the unfamiliar in one’s own land, the burdened fate of the common man’s suffering and oppression, the useless cry searching for meaning, understanding and salvation.

All these are wonderful observation and we may read out a few lines from one or two such poem from the ‘*Maladies*’ section:

I gather the rose leaves in the ruffle of wheat

When I heard your helpless cries.
You left me wary ever after and
The sea enters through my buried eyes (The
Cocktail Party was Over 67)

The poet of love feels how the European mental restraint operates over complexion of a woman since the days of Dark Lady Sonnets of Shakespeare. In the poem 'Love is as Flattery of Beauty', the poet writes

We are born black, we are poor and alone
No message ever blinks on our phone
Love is for us a forbidden zone
In our life the crescent moon never shone.

Like Mahapatra, Bhattacharjee too wrote a lot on daughter. But there is a great difference. In his poems Bhattacharjee focuses on the love element while Mahapatra goes on with his realistic perspectives. The love of a father for the daughter often tends to build up feelings of securities from the male-dominated world. A daughter starts relying on the male species in general and conceptualises about all of them as her own father's world of love has made her perceived: "...*My daughter, she's just turned fifteen...Feel her...*" [Hunger].

A father might never visualise her daughter as an object of sexual gratification, but for the patriarchal world she is nothing beyond a sexual object: "*My neighbour's little daughter says she can't understand why the wind keeps crying in the telephone wires; and there, how it makes stars tremble too!*" [Possessions]

Even the little girl becomes the victim of patriarchy. Gradually she also develops a sense of self-love to avoid the gaze of the males in the society. The feeling of insecurity also envelopes her as she grows physiologically.

She is made to feel vulnerable by the cruel patriarchal chauvinism. It might not always have the sexual connotations

but definitely it has a sense of emotional trauma. In a country like India, girl child is forced negligence and subtle ignorance. This form of feelings that the little girl confronts develops in her an attitude to be engrossed with her own self. Thus the primary stage of self-love evolves with such reciprocation from the society she grows. Why the little girl only, even the old lady has to confront such ignorance and negligence. The role of the woman as a mother is just in one corner of the house. She is compelled to bear her liberty in that marginalised space. The sense of self-love that when she was young gradually converts into self-pity as she grows old. Her role is left only for '*pujapatha*' or spiritual inklings. She feels that she has been expelled from the household duties. No one pays her attention except in the cases of illness (Roy).

Here Bhattacharjee is totally different. If we look at the poems he writes for daughter, (although personal, yet they got universal tone), then a father daughter relation comes out vividly. It is seen as the most beautiful relation on this planet. Elisabetta Marino very truly observes: "Ratan Bhattacharjee's words are a soothing balm, restoring peace to the troubled heart." From his unpublished poems 'Our Daughter, Our Princess' we may quote a few lines on daughter :

A daughter has in her hand a touchstone
Like a tree she has a wonderful dream
Like a bird in flight in the sunbeamed sky
Joy bubbles full to the brim.
Today no sadness dear daughter
Only dream of happiness for a tomorrow
A lampless night is full of darkness
You are the Light removing dark sorrow.

This is found in many poems of Oleander Blooms. The poem 'Little Child' in The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles' is outstanding where the poet says : "You are the heaven sent

Nature's gentlest boon/When you are happy I see a full silvery moon'.(Why Your Dad Waits for You , My Daughter')

In *Oleander Blooms* also there is a poem 'The Little Girl' where the poet writes " Everyday she becomes a more perfect woman/ With all her trauma , hopes and fears / She can , she can." There is another poem from his recently published Kindle edition *Our Daughter, Our Princess'* where we find such sweet lines about a daughter:

A daughter is always a lovely wonder
Like a shadow given by a lovely tree
When a daughter smiles,
Stars in the sky all shine so free.
When my poetry began in solitude
We recalled her childhood days
The first dawn of creative light
The ever sonorous bright sun rays.

But the poet's heart bleeds when India's daughter is raped on the Delhi Highway. As in the first book, in *Oleander Blooms* also, he makes the readers aware of the ghastly reality: India, your daughter is dying/ Bloodstained is your Highway/at Midnight/ So much darkness, O God/The rapist was not seen in the Neon Light'. It does not mean Bhattacharjee is pessimistic and after seeing this ghastly event in the media, he simply keeps silent. He voices the trauma: "How much a mother can cry /How much a father can try for taking the monster to scaffold/ Indian Republic is sixty five years old"(India's Daughter). On the International Women's Day he pays tribute to a courageous daughters of India:

Only a woman can wander still in the full moon night/
The universe becomes wonderfully flooded with light/
A Real woman never breaks down in reaching to the top / Life is not for her a doll's house, nor a Teddy bear shop (On International Women's Day').

The tone dominantly sombre in the poems of Mahapatra who tries to portray women as victims of suffering as a daughter, mother or wife. He tries to portray a mother who needs attention of care and concern. So the mother in his poetic imagination:

...My mother looked at him and took her pills
and pretended illness; it was only the
justification of her own life.” [Possessions]

Despite the orthodoxy of the patriarchal society, the mother in Mahapatra’s creation has a romantic resonance. But reality is something else. Basically, to get attention from others in the family, especially of the father, she has an attitude of self-pity. This sensibility of self-involvement draws her attention gradually towards spiritualistic approach of life. Her *‘puja-patha’* keeps her busy most of the time. As she hands over the power of domesticity or the power of the four-walled kitchen to her daughter-in-law, she feels her role in the family has deprecated. But here also Bhattacharjee depicts ‘Mother’ as a shiyuli flower, white, fragrant and sweet like the divine blessings. Bhattacharjee uses the shiyuli or Jasmine flowers for the motherly love as that flower has a divine property. The poet rightly makes some general observations on women.

As a beloved or as a wife
a Woman needs two things in her life
A fabulous smile and a guy that creates it
All other words ,caring or sharing just a hype
Smile is a difficult thing
It comes only when birds sing
To know a woman full
An experience that is always beautiful.

While Jayanta Mahapatra avoids the conventional romantic mode, Bhattacharjee espouses it and yet never forgets reality.

His use of symbols has a wonderful uniqueness. Like Jayanta Mahapatra, Bhattacharjee never uses harsh and rude perceptions in depicting love. But when he uses the Oleander symbol in place of rose his postcolonial approach is clear. Jayanta Mahapatra has portrayed women of his place with this patriarchal discrepancy. So he uses the cultural sensibility in his works to transcend. But Bhattacharjee is very much romantic and maintains it nearly all his poems even when he tells the harsh truth. The poems of *The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles* are the outcome of the poet's interactions with men and women in reality and dreams. He talks with his characters in his poems and there are still some with whom he had an imaginary conversation. Even the most fabulous characters are all real to him. The poet himself says "My passions and feelings are all genuine. They are quintessentially tangible.

Read out the few lines from this poem 'Your Hello Blinks on My Cell Phone'

Your 'Hello' blinks on my cell phone
When I feel your presence when I am alone
I become a river with a boat sailing for the ocean
Cadences of bonding suddenly seek expression
Your words haunt me like Sundari trees
Waiting for rains in Sunderban
I record my pangs of sorrow and pain
Borrowing them from a rainbow drenched in rain.

In 'You are the Definition of Beauty' Bhattacharjee's elegant lyricism involves the reader (who is lulled and appeased by the author's evocative and rhythmic lines), and stir his/her sweetest feelings

What is beauty? Where lies beauty
It's not in diamond, not in emerald, but in Ruby
You yourself are the definition itself
Your beauty is Truth, believe me, I never lie,
I don't believe, I never will believe,

Beauty is born only in the viewer's eye.

The importance of universal communication is highlighted in many other poems through recurrent water images: oceans ('My Heart Becomes a Continent'), rivers, the pulsating veins of the planet ('Poems Connect') and Nature ('Nature has a wide within'). They all remind us that nature abhors divisions and partitions and her example should be followed.

"Like the frustrated people, I never take refuge in Philosophy" writes Bhattacharjee. The poems range through virtues and the vices with the magnificent boldness of Rumi poems. He is one of the very few poets who, echoing the Creator, can declare that the world is good and Love is best. The objective distancing of a poet from his themes is a part of his impersonality as a poet. He wanted to utter in the varied rhythms which have the movement of living things. Dora Sales of the University Jaume I Castellon, Spain wrote in the introduction to *The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles*,

Dr.RatanBhattachrjee is a valuable poetic voice to be heard. He has written a compelling collection of love poems that cover many hues of love: softness, longing, desire....all written with a simple and delicate poetic touch.

Ratan Bhattacharjee is a poet who knows how to express emotions through verses and rhymes. His each poem can be cited for this.

Where is the rainbow seen?
In the sky or in a man's mind?
The seven colors run a riot
When your lover is kind (What is there in a
Rainbow?).

This may be the Wordsworthian poetic exercise, the spontaneous overflow of feelings. Ratan Bhattacharjee's poems

enrich the feelings with intellectual profundity. In poem after poem he has woven the magic spell of creating ambience for his readers who are eager to have a tangible graphics of love.

Few lines from the poem evoke all the passions for example in the poem 'You are just a touch away'

How many poems I really can write for you
Let me count the number
Like the flowers red, purple and amber.

These few lines recalls E. B. Browning's 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways...."

Bhattacharjee has created interior monologues in his poems. He passionately believes in the presence of mysteries of life which cannot be known through intellect only, because emotional overflow can enrich our comprehension and consciousness. Aju Mukhopadhyay, eminent senior poet of Indian English Literature says about Bhattacharjee and his book, *Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles* that in this book of love poem , he has poured himself out ...mainly as a romantic poet of the present age." We may modify Aju Mukhopadhyay's comments by adding that Bhattacharjee has a neo –romantic craving in the first section of his poems which may be called 'the pink rose section' contrasted with the 'pale rose section' in the latter half. He calls the latter half 'Maladies of Love' where he goes beyond the so called romantic sentimentalism. His strong denunciation of the conventional way of looking at life and love is reflected so loudly in the second section. Eminent Academician and Writer Prof. Elisabetta Marino of the University of Rome beautifully analyzed Bhattacharjee's poetry in her Foreword to the book by saying,

"A wide array of emotions, from passion, hope, enthusiasm, wonder, and anticipation, to anger, disappointment, frustration, sadness, and regret are aroused by his compelling lines, where continents meet, men and women discover

subtler channels of communication, and nature ceases to be a mystery, while turning into a friend, ready to share joys and sorrows with its creatures.”

In an interview given to a Kolkata based Editor-poet Santanu Halder, Bhattacharjee said,

My grandfather was poetic, my father is a crazy soul for poetic expressions. I was very much moved by Mayakovosky and Sukanta. I had a photograph of my young age in which I posed as Sukanta. So much I liked his simplicity of language and the revolutionary urge.

Yes, his simple words have created a great stir in the mind of the young people reminding us of Lorca’s poems whose use of simple natural images, birds, flowers, trees, sky, rivers registered a protest against the inhuman brutality of Franco’s dictatorial regime. There is an apparent simplicity in the images and symbols used in the poems. His expressions are frank but far from being casual and vulgar, they reach into the deep of human mind. They stir the deepest emotions. Bhattacharjee’s love with sea, ship, clouds, rain, trees, stars has been portrayed so fantastically in his poems that it will make the readers fall in love with them and of course with the poet. A few lines from one poem of his are leave an indelible impression on our young mind,

You made the promise and me to keep
I was the sea and you had been the ship
My ship had a strange name
Love Me For Ever.

Only a poet can express the feeling of love and the pain of missing him/her in verses in this fabulous way.

When the boughs are loaded with mango shoots
I miss you since the dawn
When frosty winter lashes at the door
I miss your warmth in the lonely room.

How beautifully the pain of missing the dear one is expressed. Everyone can relate oneself with this as we all miss someone. In the today's world everything happens through internet and Facebook has become the basic need of today's youth. Bhattacharjee has also used this theme in his poem 'When you rejected my request for friendship on Facebook.' So real and so kind of him to treat the Facebook addiction of the young generation in a corrective way.

Bhattacharjee defines love in poem after poem. His poems are a perfect head and heart matter they show the variety of shades of his poetic genius.

In the book he inked two different shades of life, one is love and another is loneliness, despair, tears. First half enjoyed love and second half celebrated loneliness. In 'My Days Are Silent' the poets expresses the pain of being alone

My days are silent and my nights are loud
Oppression and tears cover my sky
Like the dark and monstrous cloud.

In another poem 'I felt like a wounded peacock' the poet says

Only me it was to feel the scar of its wounds on
its long tail
Monsoon of hope faded and in the jasmine garden
I shivered like a dry creeper with an empty heart.

One more poem which shows despair and loneliness and made my eyes wet is 'At the End of the Long Road'

I groaned under the sorrowful chains
None was there at the end of the road

To carry the sorrowful load
When I suffered from writhing pains.

On this Prof.EcaterinaPatrascu, University of SpiruHaret beautifully focuses in her 'Afterword' in *The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles*:

The solitude of the contemporary man, the dullness and boredom of a non-conceptual contingency, the routine of everyday life, the repetitive existence that cannot coagulate meaningfully and that implacably leads to an insignificant death, are among the maladies of the contemporary world. To all these, the poet adds the corrupted beauty when motivation lacks, the anxiety of existence in an entropic universe, the life of the distressed or of the barely living, the emptiness of heart and the voiceless of the unfamiliar in one's own land, the burdened fate of the common man's suffering and oppression, the useless cry searching for meaning, understanding and salvation.

Thus while Mahapatra drags us to the reality around us, Bhattacharjee transcends the reality to reach a vaster space of imagination. In love poetry his use of alternative symbols and Oleander replacing the rose is very significant in the context of postcolonial thinking. Rose has thorns but no poison. Oleander in spite of its coloured sweetness, it is poisonous in spirit. We may conclude the article with the remarks of Professor Antony Johae in this context. He wrote in the Afterword to *Oleander Blooms*:

On the one hand, the beauty of the flower (amply illustrated throughout the collection) signifying the physical beauty of the woman and ideal aspect of love, while on the other containing the

potential for destruction because of its poisonous properties when ingested by humans.

This duality of the love symbols and the quest for postcolonial counterpart of rose had not been present in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra.

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