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Identity Crisis In Poems Of Jayanta Mahapatra And K.N.Daruwalla

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Abstract

Two renowned Indian poets, Jayanta Mahapatra and Keki N. Daruwalla, explore the subject of identity crisis in depth in their poetry. This article examines the various facets of identity crises as they are expressed in their poetic works. One of India's most prominent modern poets, Jayanta Mahapatra, examines the complexity of identity crisis in the setting of cultural, regional, and personal upheaval. His poetry captures the conflict between his Odia roots and the English language he writes in. He discusses the gap between his native tongue and the language he has adopted, frequently employing vivid imagery to express the feelings of alienation and longing that come along with the search for one's identity. Another well-known Indian poet, Keki N. Daruwalla, approaches the issue of identity crisis from a distinctive angle and frequently goes into political and historical backgrounds. His poetry are renowned for their examination of the effects of colonialism and the turbulent post-independence landscapes of India. The ambiguities of national identity are addressed in Daruwalla's writing, particularly in the wake of political turmoil and societal change. His poems expose the dark depths of a country in transition and throw light on romanticized ideas of national identity. To depict the subtleties of identity crises, both poets use complex symbolism, evocative metaphors, and lyrical language. They weave together embroidery of identity-related issues by drawing on their own experiences, historical moments, and cultural environments. Readers experience a visceral reaction to their poems as they attempt to make sense of the complex webs of identity, belonging, and relocation. The tremendous influence of identity crisis on the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra and Keki N. Daruwalla is shown in this article. Their poetry illuminates the struggles, conflicts, and reflections that characterize the human search for self-understanding in a world that is undergoing rapid change by acting as a mirror to the complicated and constantly changing nature of identity.

Keywords:- Identity, Modern, Regional, Native, Belonging, Conflict.

Before Independence English was considered as the language of colonizers. It was considered as treasure of the British Raj. It can be one of the reasons that before Independence Poetry written in English were derivative in nature. Poets like Henry Derozio, M.M.Dutt, Toru Dutt along with other poets followed British Romantic Poets. They considered them as their role models. The name of Toru Dutt glitters like star in Indian English Writings. Critics and scholars are of the opinion that these poets tried to copy British Poets and thus, they lacked originality. Edmund Gosse has criticized Sarojini Naidu and remarked that she lacked native passion (Iyengar 209). Poets like Sri Aurobindo and Tagore were philosophical. It was after the Independence of India in 1947 that English was no more considered as language of Britishers. It was just a language which was sought as a medium of communication. The ethos of Indian English writing changed a lot. As a result Indian English Poetry came up with new native ideas. Native situations and experiences were embedded in Indian English Poetry. Scholars and critics have highlighted that Indian English Poetry became a part of Indian Literature after Independence. K.R.S Iyengar has remarked that Indianess added to Indian English Poetry transformed the flavor of Poetry (Iyengar 8). In the present research work we are going to unfold the quest of identity in Jayanta Mahapatra and K.N.Daruwalla. It is interesting to note that the contemporaries of Mahapatra and Daruwalla were busy in projecting modernism through their writings. On the other hand Mahapatra and Daruwalla were asserting identity through their poems. Jayanta Mahapatra was born in 1928 in Orissa. It is noteworthy to find that he was born in a converted Christian family. In his poems there are striking features of realism. We can also say that he writes about exactness of the situation in his poems. His understanding of human relationship is also unique. It is one of the reasons that Mahapatra is considered as a poet of fine sensibilities.

Keki N. Daruwalla was born in 1937 in Lahore. He is a fine poet as well as a successful short story writer. He belongs to a Parsi family and his father was a teacher. He was posted in a government college of Lahore. It is interesting to note that his family kept on moving at several places and as a result Daruwalla studied at different schools and learned various languages. It has already been stated that Daruwalla was a good poet but we will be surprised to know that he was also an Indian Police Service Officer. It can be one of the reasons that there are so many violent scenes depicted in his writings. He was a kind of person who believed that identity of a society can be known through the criminals living in that society. K.N.Daruwalla and Jayanta Mahapatra are the poets who were concerned more about their identity. It can be one of the reasons that in their poems we can find a quest for identity. Mahapatra has remarked about poetry that it is like a stranger and the poet tries to find out that stranger (Mahapatra 42). We are aware about the impersonality theory of T.S.Eliot. He has disclosed it in his seminal essay entitled *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (Wikipedia Eliot). Mahapatra deviates slightly from the impersonality theory and talks about the quest of identity in his poems. His search for identity is spiritual in nature. It is further related to Renaissance individualism. In modern times it has been re interpreted by different scholars and critics. It is noteworthy to find that in modern times this quest has become a subject of paradoxical heterogeneities. Thus, we may say that Mahapatra has philosophical connotations. On the other hand in the poetry of K.N.Daruwalla we can hardly find such connotations. Daruwalla is a poet of blunt realities. We have already seen that apart from being a poet he was also an I.P.S Officer. He was aware of the real face of the society. He knew that life is an admixture of different circumstances. In this society we can find the good angel and the bad angel living together. Coming back to paradoxical heterogeneities in modern poetry we find that it is an outcome of poet's involvement as well as detachment. In the present research work the social aspects and identity crisis in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra and K. N. Daruwalla have been studied in detail. I have tried to figure out certain new aspects related to identity crisis in both of these poets. Critics and scholars are of the opinion that Daruwalla is a man of principles. His poems are not less than confessions which are honest in nature. He has written several poems on human relationships. It seems that his understanding of human relationships is deep. It is one of the reasons that his writing style is bold and unique. He has been admired by readers of all

generations (Even 189). In his writings he has projected colonial India as it was. During the time of independence, the condition of India was not good. He has written about the social condition of the country prevalent during that time. He has also tried to show us the root cause of evil widespread in the society. The conservative mind set up of the Indian society is due to patriarchy and its notions. Daruwalla has projected this root cause of evil in his writings. This kind of acknowledgement and honest confession has admired other young writers of the country. He remarks that In India women are considered as weaker section of the society. It is the typical mindset of a patriarchal society. Critics and scholars are of the opinion that Daruwalla is a kind of poet who is outspoken in nature. He is fearless and he has also talked about identity crisis in his poems. A question arises in our mind that if he is fearless and outspoken then how can he talk about identity crisis? The answer of this question lies in the fact that he got threatening calls in his life. His life was in danger because he spoke about realities of the society. He has written about identity crisis in his poems because he felt that he was treated like an outsider similar to Nissim Ezekiel. There are certain parallels between Ezekiel and Daruwalla. Both of these writers felt that they were treated like an outsider in the country. It is one of the reasons that both of these poets talk about Indianness in their poetry. We know that Daruwalla was also a police officer yet he felt like an outsider. It is because people saw him differently in the society. He was a Parsi by religion and it can be one of the reasons that people perceived him differently. It is also noteworthy to find that he belonged to a high-class society but he was ignored in his childhood. He also talks about the poor condition of women in the society. He is bold enough to write about their identity crisis. In his poems he has written about love and lust. He successfully differentiates between love and lust in almost all of his writings. In his childhood he was considered by his parents as a burden. We have already seen that he was a neglected child and he boldly writes about his life. In his life he kept on searching about true companionship and love. He has made his readers aware about the condition of minorities in India. He was a diversified poet who has written on various subjects. In *Fire Hymn* the poet Daruwalla has remarked about religious beliefs of Parsi community. In this poem he has mentioned about the tower of silence. In Parsi religion a dead body is neither cremated nor buried but it is kept at the tower of silence. Daruwalla has confessed that as the tower of silence was very far so he cremated his first born baby in fire. It is one of the reasons that he feels guilty. It was the tough time in his life because he was emotionally broken. He wants to be forgiven and for this purpose he asks the fire to forgive him. In this poem the poet has used fire symbolically. It is a symbol which stands for passion and the poet considers passion as sinful. Critics and scholars are of the opinion that the poet wants to save fire. It is considered sacred in Hindu as well as Parsi religion. The poet has talked about debauchery of fire in this poem. The dead bodies burnt in fire are half burnt and the poet considers it an act of debauchery. In next chapter of the present research work we will analyze more poems of Daruwalla in detail.

In Jayanta Mahapatra we can find that there is a continuous search for identity. It seems that he is concerned more about his self-identity. He himself has remarked about his poetry that it is a kind of ritual where he tries to find about himself (Simms 295). The first volume of Mahapatra *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* came in 1971. It is interesting to note that his second volume came in same year which was entitled *Svayamvara and Other Poems*. In this volume we can find romantic insights of the poet. It becomes evident that Mahapatra started his career as a poet by writing love and romantic poems. He gave special attention to language and form of the poetry. The title of the first volume itself suggests that the poet wants to be alienated from the society. The poet's romantic visions are also highlighted in this volume. His conception of love is not different from a traditional lover. Even in seclusion he continues to be lost in the sweet memories of his beloved. Mahapatra argues that such memories are sweet but painful. Thus, it can also be said that his love is as deep as the height of the sky which is unlimited. The Poet's love finds solace and security in the sanctuary. Bruce King has remarked that the beloved provides some depth to inner space of the poet (King 196). Mahapatra has written so many love poems and in almost all the poems the beloved seems to be unattainable. As a result, the poet

feels secluded and alienated from the society. He tries to find a glimpse of his beloved through his poetry but this attempt cannot provide him peace but he is relieved from the thought that his love is meaningless. Thus, we can also say that the poet is trying to find his beloved in the form of his own individuality which has been lost somewhere. Mahapatra has also remarked about his love poems that his poems are selfish in nature and thus, it is a subject of pity. The poet also acknowledges that by writing such poems he is like those love poets who are restless. We can also feel after reading his love poems that the poet's emotions have been overpowered by his words. It is interesting to note that the words of the poet are selective but appealing. It appeals to our senses and we are compelled to think about the poet. There is a dichotomy between reason and passion. It seems that the rational mind of the poet is overpowered by his emotions which he tries to control. It becomes evident now that the individuality projected by Jayanta Mahapatra and K.N.Daruwalla differs in intensity, degree and attitude. In the poem entitled 'The Anniversary' the poet, Mahapatra writes that love is nothing but a subject of self-pity. It symbolizes the futility of love. The poet further says that his anguish of the love is "painful nothingness" (Mahapatra 10). Thus, we can say that in the love poems of Jayanta Mahapatra there is a lack of maturity and emotions. It seems that he has copied the love sick ideas of contemporary poets. The real seriousness can be found in his later poems like "Hunger". In this poem Jayanta Mahapatra has unfolded the crude reality of child sex trade. The poet has boldly confronted the elements of sexuality in a unique way. It is noteworthy to find that this poem is an internationally acclaimed poem. It is a part of collection of poems entitled *A Rain of Rites*. The poet has remarked about this poem that the subject of the poem is taken from real life experiences. However, it is not disclosed that from where the poet has taken this subject or theme. Critics and scholars are of the opinion that this poem is an expression of disturbed childhood of the poet Jayanta Mahapatra. It may be possible that the poet as the narrator of the poem might be one of the visitors to the fisherman's daughter. This poem is very emotional because we come to know that for fulfilling basic requirements of life human being can go up to any extent. Someone may argue that sexuality has been treated brutally in this poem. The father in form of fisherman is selling his own daughter to overcome hunger.

It is noteworthy to find that Jayanta Mahapatra felt detached from the society in which he lived. He lived in Hindu locality but in 1866 his grandfather got converted to Christianity because of the great famine. In the poems of Mahapatra we can find tradition and myths of Hinduism. It clearly reflects that although he is a Christian but he feels dualism in his identity. It can be one of the reasons that he feels secluded and alienated. This kind of alienation is the root cause of identity crisis. In his poems there is a continuous search for identity. Chintamani Mahapatra, the grandfather of Jayanta Mahapatra adopted Christianity to save his family from the great famine and hunger. After the conversion society looked him differently. It is the matter of great concern for the poet because he felt disturbed with this kind of dual identity. It is one of the reasons that he talks about self-identity and identity of others in his writings. It is remarkable to find that identity of others stands for identity of the society. Mahapatra understands that society plays a crucial role in development of an individual. In other words we can also say that individuality is constructed through family and the society. To live in a civilization we need to understand the norms of the society. Critics and scholars are of the opinion that there is a recurrent theme of Indianness in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra. We cannot deny that he is pre occupied with Indian philosophy. He was a man of fine sensibilities. He writes about human bonding and relationship in detail. His conception of Indian Literature is unique and convincing. His insights and visions are an outcome of several influences. He has also been inspired by Indian Classical Literature. It can be one of the reasons that in his poetry there are numerous symbols and images. Such symbols and images highlight Indian culture and tradition. We can also not deny that in his poetry there is an anxiety and childhood fear. It clearly hints that he has no good memories of childhood. There are psychological and philosophical references in his poetry. These references are full of allusions and ironies. In such allusions and ironies the poet has tried to show us that life is a continuous journey full of struggles

and compromises. His struggle is not only to find his identity but he wants to convince the society that neglected childhood is a subject of deep analysis. His inner consciousness is driven by childhood memories and experiences of life. It can be one of the reasons that in his poetry there is a fine balance between innocence and experience. It seems that the poet admires William Blake who believed that life is full of contraries. We cannot prosper ahead without contraries. Such contraries are also reflected through Blake's songs of innocence and experience. In case of Jayanta Mahapatra we find that his conception of innocence and experience is similar to the conception of William Blake. We have already discussed those earlier poems of Jayanta Mahapatra looks romantic. He is a kind of poet who takes inspiration from Romantic Poetry. Thus, it becomes evident that there are certain parallels between Jayanta Mahapatra and William Blake. Mahapatra's concept of innocence and experience is reflected through tradition, myth and folktales whereas William Blake derives inspiration from nature. In case of K.N.Daruwalla we find that he is also a poet of fine sensibilities. His understanding of human nature is based on real life experiences. We have already seen that along with a fine poet he was also a police officer. He is a kind of poet who dives deep into the problem. It is remarkable to find that he believes in proper diagnosis of the problem. Thus, it becomes evident that there is certain dichotomy between the writings of Jayanta Mahapatra and K.N. Daruwalla. Romantic connotations are differently understood and interpreted by Daruwalla. He is a kind of poet who understands that human nature is complex. Scholars and critics have agreed that there is a sense of realism in both the poets. Mahapatra and Daruwalla are great poets who project exactness of situation through their poetry. We cannot deny that their poems are fictitious but the subject matter which they highlight is mostly taken from real life experiences.

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