



Cultural memory and regional identity in Jayanta Mahapatra's 'Relationship'.

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Abstract

Jayanta Mahapatra occupies a distinctive position in Indian English poetry because of his sustained engagement with memory, history, landscape, mythology, religion, social suffering, and regional consciousness. His long poem *Relationship*, first published in 1980, is particularly significant for its complex representation of Odisha as both geographical homeland and cultural memory-space. This paper examines the relationship between cultural memory and regional identity in *Relationship*, arguing that Mahapatra constructs Odisha not simply as a physical location but as a layered cultural landscape in which personal memories, collective histories, myths, rituals, religious traditions, and experiences of poverty converge. Drawing upon the theories of Maurice Halbwachs, Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, and Pierre Nora, the study examines how individual memory is shaped by collective cultural frameworks and how places become repositories of historical consciousness. Particular attention is given to the Kalinga War, the river Daya, the ruins of Konark, temple culture, mythology, ritual, poverty, marginality, and the poet's relationship with ancestral history. Mahapatra's statement that his "existence lies in the stones" becomes a central expression of his understanding of place and identity. The paper further examines his restrained poetic language, symbolism, imagery, silence, and use of English to articulate an intensely regional experience. It concludes that *Relationship* transforms Odisha into a living cultural archive in which memory becomes a means of constructing regional identity while simultaneously questioning inherited cultural narratives.

Keywords: Jayanta Mahapatra, relationship, cultural memory, regional identity, Odisha, Indian english poetry, history, mythology

Introduction

Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the most distinctive voices in Indian English poetry. His poetry is characterized by an intimate relationship with place, memory, history, religion, nature, human suffering, and existential consciousness. Unlike poets who use landscape merely as a decorative background, Mahapatra makes landscape an essential part of his poetic identity. Odisha, particularly Cuttack and the surrounding cultural environment, occupies a central position in his imagination. Rivers, temples, ruins, roads, villages, rain, sea, religious rituals, historical memories, and ordinary people repeatedly appear in his poetry. These elements are not isolated images; together they form a cultural landscape through which the poet understands himself and his relationship with the past.

Among Mahapatra's major works, *Relationship* occupies a particularly important position. Published in 1980, the poem received the Sahitya Akademi Award for poetry in 1981. The official Sahitya Akademi record lists *Relationship* under poetry for the 1981 award. The poem is generally described as a long poem composed in twelve movements or sections, and critical discussions have emphasized its engagement with Odisha's history, mythology, landscape, traditions, and cultural consciousness.

The title *Relationship* itself is suggestive. It indicates connection rather than isolation. The poem may be read as an exploration of relationships between the poet and his homeland, the individual and society, memory and history, the present and the past, nature and human beings, and personal consciousness and collective cultural experience. The title therefore provides an appropriate framework for studying the poem through the concepts of cultural memory and regional identity.

Mahapatra's relationship with Odisha is not simply geographical. In an interview, he described Odisha as the world that "holds" him and connected his poetic identity with its history, Konark, temples, landscape, and people. This self-description is particularly significant because it indicates that the region is not merely an external subject of his poetry. It is part of his identity. His poetic consciousness develops through his relationship with the cultural environment in which he has lived. The central concern of this paper is therefore the way in which *Relationship* transforms Odisha into a repository of cultural memory. Cultural memory refers to the ways in which communities preserve and transmit their past through myths, rituals, monuments, religious practices, literature, historical narratives, and symbolic spaces. Memory is not simply an individual psychological activity. It is also shaped by cultural and social frameworks.

Maurice Halbwachs's concept of collective memory is particularly relevant here. Halbwachs argues that individual memories are formed within social frameworks. People remember through family, community, religion, locality, language, and cultural traditions. An individual's memory is consequently connected with the memories and experiences of others. Mahapatra's poetry demonstrates this process clearly. His personal memories of Odisha repeatedly open into larger cultural and historical memories. Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory extends this argument by emphasizing the role of cultural forms in preserving collective knowledge. Monuments, rituals, myths, texts, religious traditions, and symbolic places allow societies to maintain connections with their past. In *Relationship*, temples, stones, rivers, historical landscapes, myths, and rituals function precisely in this manner. They preserve

traces of earlier generations and allow the poet to experience the past within the present. Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory" is also useful for understanding Mahapatra's treatment of Odisha. Certain places become repositories of memory because they are associated with important historical and cultural experiences. The temples and ruins of Odisha, the Daya River, and the landscapes associated with Kalinga history can be understood as such sites. They are physical locations, but they also contain layers of collective remembrance.

The relationship between memory and place is particularly visible when Mahapatra writes

"and yet my existence lies in the stones" (Relationship). This brief statement is central to the present study. The "stones" may be understood as the material remains of Odisha's historical and architectural heritage, particularly its temples and monuments. Yet the poet does not simply observe these stones from outside. He locates his own existence within them. The physical landscape becomes part of the self. The past is therefore not something external to the poet; it is embedded in his identity. A critical source reproducing the passage gives the lines in connection with the poet's relationship to the stones and his cultural origins. The poem's historical consciousness is equally important. The memory of the Kalinga War becomes one of the most powerful historical dimensions of Relationship. The Daya River, traditionally associated with the aftermath of the battle, becomes a symbolic site of violence and remembrance. Mahapatra recalls:

"how the waters of the Daya
stank with the bodies of my ancestors" (Relationship).
The significance of this image lies in the transformation of history into personal memory. The poet refers to the victims as "my ancestors," thereby establishing an imaginative relationship between his present identity and the historical violence of Kalinga. The historical past becomes ancestral memory. The Daya is no longer merely a river; it becomes a witness to collective suffering. Scholarly discussions of the poem repeatedly identify this passage as central to Mahapatra's historical consciousness.

The poet further asks

"What can ever wash the air of its gashed voices?" (Relationship).

The rhetorical question suggests that historical violence cannot be completely erased. The "gashed voices" become traces of a traumatic past. Memory survives even when physical evidence disappears. The question also challenges the possibility of complete historical purification. The past remains morally present. The paper therefore argues that Relationship presents regional identity as an evolving relationship with memory. Odisha is not simply a homeland inherited through birth; it is reconstructed through history, cultural symbols, landscape, personal experience, and remembrance. The poet's identity develops through his engagement with the region's cultural memory. The paper focuses on the following major areas: Odisha as cultural memory; history and the Kalinga War; myth, religion, and ritual; poverty and marginality; individual and collective memory; and language and poetic technique. Through these dimensions, the study demonstrates how Mahapatra creates a complex regional identity that includes both cultural pride and critical reflection.

Review of Literature

Jayanta Mahapatra has received extensive attention from scholars of Indian English literature. Critical studies of his poetry have examined his treatment of landscape, history, mythology, religion, existentialism, alienation, social suffering, nature, memory, and Indian cultural consciousness. His work is particularly significant because it demonstrates how English can be used to express highly localized Indian experiences. M. K. Naik places Mahapatra among the important Indian poets writing in English and recognizes the strong presence of the Odisha landscape in his poetry. Critical discussions of Mahapatra frequently identify his poetic style as restrained, reflective, symbolic, and deeply connected with the physical and cultural environment of Odisha.

Relationship has attracted particular critical attention because of its historical and cultural scope. One academic study identifies the poem's engagement with the history of Odisha and particularly the Kalinga War, interpreting history and storytelling as central components of the poem's structure. Another study emphasizes the relationship between personal memory, myth, and the poet's connection with his motherland. Such scholarship is valuable for understanding the relationship between individual consciousness and collective cultural identity. Critics have also emphasized the importance of myth and tradition in Relationship. Mahapatra draws upon the myths and legends associated with Odisha, including those surrounding temples, religious traditions, and historical monuments. These cultural references allow him to connect contemporary experience with the past. Myth becomes a form of cultural memory.

The poem's treatment of the Kalinga War has also been discussed in relation to historical consciousness. The river Daya becomes an important symbol because it connects geographical space with historical trauma. Mahapatra's phrase "the bodies of my ancestors" transforms an ancient historical event into an intimate ancestral memory. Another important area of criticism concerns rootedness and alienation. Mahapatra's poetry often expresses a desire for belonging while simultaneously revealing distance and uncertainty. His relationship with Odisha is therefore not straightforward. He belongs to the region, yet he questions aspects of its social and cultural life.

His treatment of poverty has also been examined by critics. Mahapatra's regional imagination does not romanticize Odisha. The cultural grandeur of temples and monuments exists alongside hunger, deprivation, and social suffering. This creates a more complex understanding of regional identity. Critical attention has also been given to Mahapatra's poetic language. His use of symbolism, imagery, silence, and culturally specific references contributes to his distinctive poetic voice. His English does not erase regional identity; rather, it becomes a medium through which regional identity is articulated.

The existing scholarship therefore provides valuable discussions of Mahapatra's history, mythology, landscape, and cultural consciousness. However, there remains scope for bringing these elements together through the theoretical framework of cultural memory and regional identity. The present study attempts to fill this gap by arguing that these themes are not separate. Landscape becomes memory; memory becomes cultural consciousness; cultural consciousness contributes to regional identity; and regional

identity is continuously revised through the poet's engagement with history, mythology, religion, and social experience.

Research Objectives and Research Gap

The principal objective of this study is to examine how cultural memory contributes to the construction of regional identity in Jayanta Mahapatra's *Relationship*.

The specific objectives are

To examine Odisha as a cultural and geographical repository of memory.

To analyse the relationship between personal and collective memory.

To examine the role of history, especially the Kalinga War, in regional consciousness.

To study mythology, religion, and ritual as forms of cultural memory.

To examine poverty and marginality as components of regional identity.

To analyse Mahapatra's language, imagery, symbolism, and poetic technique.

To demonstrate how personal memory becomes a form of collective cultural remembrance.

The research gap lies primarily in the need to bring these themes together under a unified framework. Although Mahapatra has been widely studied, *Relationship* can be further explored as a poetic representation of cultural memory in the formation of regional identity.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this research is based primarily on cultural-memory studies and theories of place and identity.

1. Collective Memory: Maurice Halbwachs

Maurice Halbwachs argues that individual memory is shaped by social frameworks. People remember as members of families, communities, religious groups, and cultural societies. Memory is therefore never entirely private. This theory is particularly applicable to *Relationship*. Mahapatra remembers Odisha as an individual, but his memories are shaped by the historical and cultural environment surrounding him. His memories of temples, rivers, religious traditions, and historical events are connected with wider collective experiences.

2. Cultural Memory: Jan Assmann

Jan Assmann distinguishes cultural memory from ordinary individual memory by emphasizing the role of durable cultural forms. Myths, rituals, monuments, texts, symbols, and religious practices preserve knowledge across generations. In *Relationship*, the temple, stone, river, myth, and ritual operate as cultural forms. They preserve traces of the past and provide the poet with access to earlier cultural experiences.

3. Memory and Forgetting: Aleida Assmann

Aleida Assmann's work is useful for understanding the selective nature of cultural memory. Communities remember some events while forgetting or suppressing others. Cultural memory therefore involves both preservation and exclusion. Mahapatra's poetry challenges

selective remembrance by bringing suffering, poverty, death, and marginality into the cultural landscape. His memory is not limited to celebrated monuments and glorious history.

4. Pierre Nora and Sites of Memory

Pierre Nora's concept of sites of memory provides another useful framework. A place becomes a repository of memory when it contains symbolic and historical associations. The ruins of Konark, temples, rivers, and landscapes connected with Kalinga history can be interpreted as sites of memory. They contain the traces of earlier generations and make the past visible in the present.

5. Regional Identity

Regional identity develops through the relationship between people and place. Geography, history, religion, language, customs, traditions, and shared memories contribute to a sense of belonging. Mahapatra's regional identity is complex because it combines affection with criticism. Odisha is his homeland, but he does not idealize it. His regional identity is therefore a critical and reflective form of belonging.

Odisha as Cultural Memory

Odisha occupies the centre of Mahapatra's poetic imagination. In *Relationship*, the region becomes more than a geographical territory. It becomes a cultural archive containing memories of ancient history, religious traditions, myths, architecture, landscape, suffering, and human experience. The poet's famous declaration, "my existence lies in the stones"-is perhaps the most concentrated expression of this relationship.

The stones represent historical and cultural remains. They are silent, but they preserve memory. By placing his existence within them, Mahapatra establishes a relationship between identity and material heritage. The next movement of the poem deepens this idea by connecting the stones with movement through time. The stones carry the poet's "footsteps" from one day into another. The image suggests that the landscape preserves the passage of individual life while simultaneously connecting that life to historical time. This is precisely the kind of relationship that cultural-memory theory attempts to explain. The physical environment becomes a medium through which memories are preserved.

Konark is especially significant. Its ruined temple embodies the tension between permanence and decay. The temple survives, but its original historical world has disappeared. The ruins therefore become evidence of both cultural achievement and historical loss. Mahapatra's response to the ruins is deeply personal. He does not see them merely as monuments to be admired. They become part of his own existence. The stones contain the memories of artisans, rulers, religious traditions, historical violence, and cultural transformation. The poet therefore transforms architecture into autobiography. Odisha's rivers also function as repositories of memory. The Daya River becomes especially important because of its association with the Kalinga War. It is simultaneously a natural landscape and a historical witness.

When Mahapatra writes: "the waters of the Daya / stank with the bodies of my ancestors"

he collapses the distance between ancient history and contemporary identity. The victims of the Kalinga War become “my ancestors.” The historical event therefore becomes a personal inheritance. The river becomes a site of collective trauma.

Mahapatra’s treatment of Odisha also includes religious and cultural traditions. Temples and rituals preserve collective memories by connecting present generations with earlier cultural practices. The poet’s engagement with these traditions demonstrates how cultural memory remains active in contemporary life. However, Odisha is not remembered only through cultural glory. The poet also remembers suffering. The region’s cultural monuments exist alongside poverty and deprivation. The result is a complex cultural memory containing both celebration and pain. The landscape therefore becomes a living archive. It remembers what official historical narratives may forget. The poet’s task is to listen to the silent traces embedded in the landscape. The importance of ancestral memory becomes even clearer in the poem’s reference to the “altar of my origins.” The image suggests that cultural origins require recognition. The poet must acknowledge the historical and cultural forces that have shaped his identity. Thus, Odisha functions as both origin and destination. It is where the poet comes from and the cultural space to which his memory continually returns.

History, the Kalinga War and Collective Memory: Historical memory occupies a central position in Relationship. Among the historical events represented in the poem, the Kalinga War is particularly important. The war is remembered not as a distant historical episode but as an event whose consequences continue to influence regional identity. The Daya River becomes a symbol of the violence of history.

Mahapatra asks: “What can ever wash the air of its gashed voices?”

The question suggests that historical trauma cannot simply be erased. The voices of the dead remain embedded in cultural memory. The poet’s use of the word “ancestors” is especially important. The Kalinga dead are transformed into part of the poet’s own genealogical and cultural history.

The poet recalls

“the bodies of my ancestors”

This is not historical narration in the conventional sense. It is emotional historiography. The poet experiences history through memory and imagination. The Kalinga War also introduces the figure of Ashoka and the transformation associated with his remorse. Yet Mahapatra’s perspective is not satisfied with the conventional story of Ashoka’s conversion. The transformation of the conqueror does not bring the dead back to life.

This is why the poem retains an atmosphere of unresolved historical guilt. The war therefore becomes a symbol of the destructive possibilities of power. Its memory also warns against repetition. The poet fears that history may return in new forms. The line referring to “bloody victories” reinforces this concern. Historical memory is therefore not merely about preserving the past; it is also about learning from the past. The Kalinga memory contributes to regional identity because it gives Odisha a historical narrative of resistance, suffering, violence, and transformation. Yet Mahapatra avoids simplistic nationalism. The memory is tragic rather than triumphalist. The poem thus demonstrates

that regional identity can be constructed through traumatic memory as well as cultural pride.

Myth, Religion and Ritual

Myth, religion, and ritual constitute another important dimension of cultural memory in Relationship.

Myths transmit cultural knowledge across generations. They preserve stories about gods, heroes, origins, sacred places, moral values, and historical imagination. In Odisha, mythology is closely connected with temple traditions, Jagannath culture, festivals, rituals, folklore, and artistic traditions. Mahapatra enters this cultural world but does not reproduce it uncritically. He recognizes the power of myth while questioning its relationship with contemporary life. His use of myth creates a dialogue between inherited cultural knowledge and modern consciousness.

The phrase

“the forbidding myth”

is significant because it suggests both attraction and apprehension. Myth is powerful, but it can also become difficult to escape. Religious traditions provide continuity. Rituals repeat inherited practices and therefore allow cultural memory to survive. However, Mahapatra frequently juxtaposes sacred traditions with poverty and suffering. This creates an ethical question: What is the value of cultural grandeur if ordinary human beings remain deprived? The temple consequently becomes an ambiguous symbol. It represents faith, history, art, and cultural continuity, but it can also represent the distance between sacred ideals and human suffering.

In one section, Mahapatra writes

“It is my own life

that has cornered me beneath the stones
of this temple in ruins” (Relationship).

The image is striking because the temple becomes simultaneously a cultural monument and a psychological space. The poet’s personal existence is “beneath” the stones of cultural history. The temple is therefore not simply an object of cultural admiration. It becomes part of the poet’s internal world. Religion also provides a framework for thinking about death and continuity. Rituals surrounding death connect individuals with ancestral traditions. In this way, personal loss becomes part of cultural memory. The poet’s remembrance of his mother is an example. He writes of watching:

“The grave that is my mother’s” (Relationship).

The mother’s grave becomes both personal memory and cultural memory. Death is experienced individually, but rituals and memorial spaces place individual loss within a larger cultural framework. Thus, myth, religion, and ritual function as mechanisms through which individual and collective experiences are connected.

Poverty and Marginality

Mahapatra’s regional identity is distinctive because it includes the suffering of marginalized people. He does not construct Odisha as a romantic landscape of temples, rivers, mythology, and natural beauty alone. Poverty is part of cultural memory because communities also remember periods of hunger, deprivation, disease, death, and social injustice. The poet’s representation of poverty therefore complicates regional pride. A region cannot be understood

only through its cultural monuments. It must also be understood through the lives of people who inhabit it. Mahapatra's poetry frequently places beauty beside suffering. The temple exists beside poverty; historical monuments exist alongside hungry people; sacred rituals occur within a society marked by inequality. This contrast is ethically significant.

The marginalized become part of the poet's cultural landscape. By giving literary visibility to suffering, Mahapatra creates a form of counter-memory. Such memory challenges official narratives that celebrate monuments and rulers while neglecting ordinary people. Poverty also contributes to the poet's sense of alienation. The poet belongs to the region but cannot accept all aspects of its social reality. His criticism therefore becomes a form of moral engagement. The result is a regional identity that is self-critical rather than celebratory. Mahapatra's Odisha is beautiful, ancient, religious, historical, poor, wounded, and alive. These contradictions make his representation more realistic and intellectually compelling.

Individual and Collective Memory

The relationship between individual and collective memory is fundamental to Relationship. Mahapatra begins with personal experience but repeatedly moves toward collective history. His childhood memories, family experiences, encounters with places, and reflections on death become connected with the larger cultural environment. The poet's personal memory of his mother, for instance, becomes associated with the cultural landscape of childhood. The grave is not simply a private location; it exists within a broader cultural geography. Similarly, his memory of stones becomes a reflection on historical identity.

The line: "my existence lies in the stones" demonstrates this transformation particularly well.

The poet's identity is constructed through relationship with material cultural heritage. Memory therefore operates in two directions. The individual remembers the culture, but culture also shapes what the individual remembers. This reciprocal relationship is consistent with Halbwachs's theory of collective memory. The poet's use of the term "ancestors" further demonstrates the movement from personal to collective memory. He does not experience the Kalinga War personally, yet he imaginatively inherits its consequences. This is how cultural memory works: individuals inherit memories of events that occurred before their birth. The past becomes meaningful because it is connected to present identity. At the same time, memory is selective. The poet does not reproduce the whole history of Odisha. He selects particular places, images, events, and experiences that carry emotional significance. The result is a reconstructed Odisha. It is not simply the historical Odisha; it is Mahapatra's remembered Odisha. This distinction is important because it shows that regional identity is not fixed. It is continually recreated through memory.

Language and Poetics

Mahapatra's language is one of the major reasons for the effectiveness of his treatment of cultural memory. His diction is generally restrained and contemplative. Instead of relying on elaborate rhetoric, he frequently uses images, symbols, silence, repetition, and juxtaposition. The image of stone is a good example. "My existence lies in the stones" is

grammatically simple but conceptually profound. The stone becomes a symbol of history, permanence, ancestry, architecture, and identity. Similarly, the Daya River becomes more than a geographical feature. Through the image of "the bodies of my ancestors," it becomes a symbol of historical trauma. Mahapatra's language therefore transforms ordinary geographical objects into cultural symbols. His use of silence is equally important. Silence can indicate loss, death, historical trauma, spiritual uncertainty, or memories that cannot be fully articulated. The poem's fragmented movement between personal experience, history, mythology, and landscape resembles the workings of memory itself. Memory does not proceed chronologically. One image can suddenly evoke another period of life. Mahapatra's poetic structure reflects this associative quality. His use of English is also significant. English allows his regional experience to reach a wider audience, but the cultural content remains deeply rooted in Odisha.

This demonstrates the flexibility of Indian English poetry. The English language becomes a vehicle for regional consciousness rather than an obstacle to it. Mahapatra's poetic language therefore performs an important cultural function: it translates regional memory into literary form.

Regional Identity: Belonging and Alienation

Regional identity in Relationship is not a simple declaration of belonging. It is characterized by tension. Mahapatra belongs to Odisha because its landscape, history, culture, and people have shaped his consciousness. Yet he also feels alienated by poverty, social contradictions, religious uncertainty, and historical suffering. This combination creates a mature form of regional identity. The poet does not say that everything belonging to his region is admirable. Instead, he accepts responsibility for remembering its wounds. His statement about his existence lying in the stones is therefore not merely an expression of cultural pride. It is also an acknowledgement of historical burden. The poet's relationship with Odisha is simultaneously emotional and intellectual. This is why the title Relationship is so appropriate. The relationship is not static. It changes as memory changes. The poet looks at the past from the perspective of the present. He therefore discovers new meanings in old places. Regional identity becomes a continuing dialogue between memory and interpretation.

Discussion and Major Findings

The analysis of Relationship leads to several major findings. First, Odisha functions as a cultural archive. Its temples, stones, rivers, landscapes, myths, and historical sites preserve collective memories. Second, personal memory becomes collective memory. Mahapatra's individual experiences are repeatedly connected with broader cultural histories. Third, history becomes emotionally present. The Kalinga War is not treated as a distant historical event. The poet transforms its victims into "my ancestors," creating an intimate connection between past and present. Fourth, myth and ritual preserve cultural continuity. Religious traditions connect contemporary life with inherited cultural knowledge. Fifth, poverty and marginality form part of regional identity. Mahapatra refuses to remember only the glorious aspects of Odisha. Sixth, regional identity is both belonging and criticism. The poet's attachment to Odisha is strengthened rather than weakened by his willingness to

confront its contradictions. Seventh, language transforms place into memory. Through imagery, symbolism, silence, and restrained diction, Mahapatra turns geographical space into cultural meaning. Finally, *Relationship* demonstrates that memory is an active process. The poet does not merely recover the past; he reconstructs it from the standpoint of the present.

Conclusion

Jayanta Mahapatra's *Relationship* is a powerful poetic exploration of the relationship between individual consciousness, cultural memory, historical experience, and regional identity. The poem demonstrates that a region is not simply a geographical territory. It is a complex accumulation of memories, traditions, myths, landscapes, historical events, social experiences, and emotional attachments.

The central finding of this study is that Odisha functions as a living repository of cultural memory in Mahapatra's poetry. Stones, temples, rivers, ruins, graves, myths, rituals, and historical landscapes preserve traces of the past. The poet enters these spaces through memory and transforms them into poetic symbols. The declaration "my existence lies in the stones" is particularly important because it expresses the relationship between identity and place. The stones are historical objects, but they are also part of the poet's existence. The past therefore becomes part of the self. Similarly, the Daya River transforms historical memory into ancestral memory. When the poet remembers "the bodies of my ancestors," the Kalinga War becomes an intimate part of regional identity. History is no longer external; it becomes emotionally inherited. The study also demonstrates that Mahapatra's cultural memory is not selective in a celebratory sense. He remembers poverty, suffering, death, and marginality along with temples, myths, and cultural achievements. His regional identity is consequently critical and ethically engaged. Myth, religion, and ritual provide continuity between generations, but Mahapatra also questions inherited beliefs. His poetry therefore occupies a space between faith and doubt, tradition and modernity. The research further concludes that individual and collective memory are inseparable. The poet's personal memories are shaped by the cultural environment, while his act of remembering contributes to the preservation and reinterpretation of collective memory. For future research, Mahapatra's poetry may be studied through ecocriticism, postcolonial memory studies, trauma studies, regional studies, and comparative Indian literature. A comparative study of Mahapatra's English poetry with his Odia poetry could be particularly productive in understanding the relationship between language and regional identity. Ultimately, *Relationship* demonstrates that literature can preserve cultural memory while simultaneously questioning it. Mahapatra's Odisha is not a museum of the past. It is a living cultural landscape in which history continues to speak through stones, rivers, temples, myths, memories, and human suffering.

His poetry suggests that to remember a place is to remember the people and histories that have shaped it. To belong to a region is therefore not merely to celebrate its heritage but also to confront its wounds. In this sense, *Relationship* becomes an extended meditation on the meaning of cultural belonging. Mahapatra's achievement lies in transforming the local into the universal. Odisha remains at the centre of

his poetic world, but through Odisha he speaks about memory, mortality, history, identity, suffering, and the human search for belonging. His regional poetry consequently acquires universal significance.

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