

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

*From Colonial Modernity to the
Postcolonial Postmodern*

Edited By

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CHAPTER 4

Locating the Local in Indian Poetry in English: A Study of Jayanta Mahapatra

✓ Dr. Nitai Saha,

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Munshi Premchand Mahavidyalaya, Darjeeling.*

Jayanta Mahapatra, like many other Indian poets writing in English, is bilingual. Initially a practising poet in vernacular Oriya, Mahapatra later flourished as an Indian poet in English. It is beyond doubt that his Oriya poetry also ranks very high. The works of several noted Oriya poets have been translated into English by him. His poetry is widely read and discussed both at home and abroad. C.L.L. Jayaprada in *Indian Literature Today* mentions: "His (Mahapatra's) is the case of a writer who is first recognised abroad before getting deserved attention at home. Even now, one could say that critical output on Mahapatra is not appropriate to his own work" (86). Like Shiv K. Kumar and Keki N. Daruwalla, he is good at creating contrived images and known vocabulary that immediately set him a class apart from most of his contemporaries.

The path of an Indian poet writing in English does not run as smoothly as that of a native poet. The genuineness of his sensibility and his language are equally doubtful. This is the reason why an Indian poet writing in English often resorts to devices both in his matter and manner, which may be called 'gimmicks' as so many Indian poets attempt to sell Indian English poetry abroad. One often finds distortion of syntax and use of unusual