

# Exploring the Depths of Existence: Jayanta Mahapatra's *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*

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## Abstract:

The poem *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* by Jayanta Mahapatra has been influential and thought-provoking, reflecting on the state of society today. *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* is a collection of forty-nine poems written by Jayanta Mahapatra which is published in the year 1971. The poem delivers a profound insight on the human condition and effectively conveys the spirit of contemporary difficulties. Language and images used by Mahapatra to describe a world in upheaval where hopelessness and misery outweigh brightness. The poem acts as a call to action, imploring readers to address the crucial problems afflicting society and push for reform. It examines issues including socioeconomic injustice, environmental deterioration, and the breakdown of interpersonal relationships. Mahapatra's potent verses have a feeling of urgency that compels readers to think critically about the current situation of the world and their own part in determining its course. Mahapatra inspires us to work towards a more compassionate, just, and sustainable society with his song *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* which sheds light on today's most important concerns. The poem is a reminder that it will take all of us working together to overcome our problems and build a better future for future generations.

**Keywords:** Transience, Mortality and Time, Human Yearning, exploration, culture, light and darkness.

## 1. Introduction:

Jayanta Mahapatra, one of India's most celebrated poets, has captivated readers with his thought-provoking and evocative poetry. Among his remarkable works, *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* stands out as a poignant exploration of the human condition and the relentless passage of time. Through this poem, Mahapatra takes us on a profound journey into the depths of existence, inviting us to reflect on mortality, longing, and the intricate interplay between life and death.

## 2. Analysis of themes:

"Close the Sky, Ten by Ten" explores themes of solitude and grief at its centre. In order to generate a sense of despair and underline the extreme loneliness people suffer in a turbulent environment, Mahapatra uses powerful metaphors and evocative images. The poem's title, which

alludes to the act of cutting off the enormous sky, represents the termination of opportunities, aspirations, and desires.

Inamdar notes that Mahapatra's debut book of poems, *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* has the claustrophobic phrase "We impose on ourselves self-willed imprisonment, We miss oneness with others". (Inamdar 85) Mahapatra is troubled by this sense of confinement, which is clear from the repeated use of the word "cage" in several of his later works. The illustration of caged or entangled birds and animals demonstrates how self-incarceration stops one from reaching one's full potential (Mitra12).

### i) **The Atmosphere of Transience:**

In *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* Jayanta Mahapatra masterfully captures the fleeting aspect of existence and the passage of time while also evoking a melancholy mood of transience. The poet creates a picture of impermanence using rich images and moving metaphors, enabling readers to feel the transitory moments that constitute our life. Mahapatra's use of metaphors to illustrate the transitory nature of existence is one of the poem's most striking features. He writes, for example,

"the moon's skull / unrolling its lustre / in the sand's thirst."

This metaphor not only conveys the idea of the moonlight refracting off the parched sand, but also alludes to how fleeting such beauty and lighting are. Like life itself, the moon's light is transient and continually changing. Mahapatra also used the metaphor of

How do we release ourselves?

In the stretched, dropped scales of loneliness? (*Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*20)

To express the idea of emptiness and impermanence. It supports the idea that everything eventually vanishes and is replaced by a vacuum. The words and images of the poem also convey a sense of regret and desire, which adds to the transient atmosphere. According to Mahapatra, "I lie down with all this around me, / wanting, wanting." These lyrics express a strong desire for something elusive, an ache that never quite goes away. The word "wanting" is used several times, which highlights both the fleeting nature of human yearning and the underlying unhappiness that it brings.

Mahapatra skillfully employs analogies, words, and images throughout *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* to create a mood of transience. It draws readers into a study of life's transience, highlighting time's passing and the fleeting beauty of existence. The poem asks us to consider the transitory moments that form our lives and the underlying impermanence that we all experience through the use of these evocative themes.

### ii) **Mortality and Time:**

Jayanta Mahapatra dives deeply into the theme of mortality in *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* providing a deeper analysis of the inevitable nature of death and its hold on our lives. The poet wants to make people think about how life and death interact while highlighting their inherent connection via his moving lines. Mahapatra's remarks ring with an awareness of mortality and a sense of acceptance. In his poem, he declares: "Death rises with me, as certain as water, / the bird that floats on a broken sky." In the same way that water is a necessary component of life, this metaphorical imagery clearly depicts the omnipresence of death, which follows the poet wherever he goes. The illustration of the bird hovering on a shattered sky serves to further emphasise the close relationship between life and death by showing how they dwell in the same space.

The poet wants readers to consider their own mortality by emphasising this relationship between life and death. Mahapatra aims to raise awareness of the temporary nature of human life by recognising the certainty of death. He serves as a gentle reminder that passing away is an inevitable part of life and that it follows us around all the time. Mahapatra also expresses the idea that time is a constant companion and constantly serves as a reminder of our death. The passing of time serves as a subtle but constant reminder of how short our lives are. The poet challenges readers to acknowledge the fleeting essence of time and to embrace a greater awareness of their own mortality through the poem.

In overall, *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* by Jayanta Mahapatra explores the concept of mortality with two distinct goals in mind. First, he wants to draw attention to how closely life and death are related, emphasising how mortality permeates every aspect of our journey. Second, he encourages us to live completely and notice the fleeting beauty all around us in order to elicit a greater comprehension and acceptance of our finite life. Mahapatra asks people to consider their own death and accept the impermanence of life with grace and wisdom via his examination of mortality.

### iii) **The Human Yearning:**

In *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* Jayanta Mahapatra explores the profound desire that dwells inside the human soul as he digs into the depths of human desires. The poet captures the essence of human desire in the lines "I lie down with all this around me, / wanting, wanting," conveying a sense of want, yearning, and the search of fulfilment. The expression "I lie down with all this around me" denotes a reflective mood in which the speaker is overwhelmed with the complexity and subtleties of the outside world. This demonstrates the poet's understanding of the plethora of experiences, feelings, and wants that are all around us as we navigate life. The term "wanting" is used several times in the poem, which highlights how intense humanity's desire is. It indicates an intense yearning that goes beyond worldly goods and is unquenchable. By using this phrase, the poet is implying that the human spirit is motivated by a persistent search for something that lies beyond of the here-and-now, a desire for a feeling of fulfilment, significance, and connection.

“the silent windows of my body open” (*Close the Sky*)

Mahapatra challenges us to delve into the core of our own yearnings and think about what actually gives our life value and purpose through his words. The poem encourages readers to

examine the deep motivations that underlie their behaviour, relationships, and ambitions as a starting point for reflection. In addition, the poet's focus on human longing highlights the fact that we all have a natural need for fulfilment and connection. It recognises that it is inherently human nature to look for significance and meaning in life beyond merely existing. The passages challenge readers to ponder the depths of their aspirations and the many directions their own particular search for fulfilment could go.

Mahapatra essentially explores the core human predicament in *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* by delving into the depths of great desire. The poet invites readers to embark on an introspective trip, reflecting on their own aspirations, wants, and the innate search for meaning that each person possesses, via the vivid portrayal of longing.

#### iv) **The Interplay of Light and Darkness:**

Jayanta Mahapatra uses vibrant images to create a stunning contrast between light and darkness in *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* which represents the complexity of human emotions and experiences. The words "I reach into dark patches / where light had fallen / and I fall into light / where darkness lay" (lit., "I enter into light / where darkness lay") are a lovely example of this dynamic.

“the walls join themselves to two chairs a tumbler beside the bed dry and hard from the dark commencing the slow leak of day” (*Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* 23)

The duality of existence is reflected in the opposition between day and night. In contrast to the darkness that frequently signifies misery, hardship, and uncertainty, light may signify happiness, positivism, and enlightenment. Mahapatra recognises that these two seemingly opposed aspects of the human experience exist alongside one another by placing them in juxtaposition.

The poet implies that even in the deepest recesses of our psyches, we may find opportunities for development, insight, and change. Furthermore, this contrast between light and shadow explores the subconscious. It recognises the complex character of our feelings and experiences, drawing awareness upon the numerous aspects of our inner lives (Vijaya 8). The ability to persevere and discover a source of light inside ourselves, despite external obstacles, is highlighted by the realisation that moments of lighting may arise from the darkest recesses.

The contrasts and complexity of human life are reflected in Mahapatra's *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* through the effective use of images and the investigation of the interplay between light and darkness. It prompts contemplation of happiness and sadness, the possibility of self-improvement and enlightenment in the face of adversity, and the interconnectedness of all things.

### **3. The Poet's Exploration:**

As a poet, Mahapatra uses *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* as a vehicle to explore profound existential questions and grapple with the mysteries of life. He invites readers to accompany him on

this introspective journey, traversing the landscapes of longing, mortality, and the fleeting nature of our existence. Through his introspection, Mahapatra encourages us to engage with our own introspective contemplation and search for meaning.

#### 4. Conclusion:

Jayanta Mahapatra's *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* is a poetic masterpiece that delves into the depths of human existence. Through rich metaphors, powerful imagery, and profound introspection, Mahapatra leads us on a thought-provoking exploration of mortality, longing, and the ephemeral nature of life. As we immerse ourselves in the poem, we are compelled to confront our own existential questions, contemplating the fleeting moments that shape our lives. *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* stands as a testament to Mahapatra's poetic prowess and his ability to illuminate the universal human experience through his words.

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