

## 'Hunger'

- Jayanta Mahapatra

### Introduction

Hunger poem by Jayanta Mahapatra is about the idea of hunger that at the beginning of the poem is that of sex and sexual desire but in the end, transforms into the hunger of stomach that leads the people to do anything.

The poem consist of 4 stanzas having 5 lines each. There is no set rhyme scheme. The poet uses a number of literary devices to describe the events that led from one hunger (Sexual) to the other (physical).

### ① Stanza ↓

The poet begin with the words It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back. In the first reading, we may think that the poet has a heavy load or luggage on his back. However, the phrase hard to believe refers to something that is deep and profound.

The poet here says that he couldn't believe that he had strong sexual desires at that

time and was starving for sex which he couldn't believe. In the next line, we come to know that he is on a boat with a fisherman who says to him "Will you have her?"

Her here refers to the daughter of the fisherman whom he offers to the poet to have sex with her. It is quite strange and impossible as no father even offers his daughter to strangers for quenching their sexual thirst.

While asking, the fisherman seems to be "carelessly trailing his nets". But he was in no way careless. His nerves were stretched and white bone thrashing his eyes meaning that he was quite curious for the poet to say yes as he and his daughter have nothing to eat and are striving for food.

Thus he offers his daughter to the poet so that the latter may quench his sexual hunger while the former two may quench their physical hunger. Note that his daughter's consent is not taken. It is not clear whether she wants to have sex or not.

③ Stanza 2 :-

(3)

The poet then followed him across the sprawling (spread) sands. His mind was thumping in the flesh's sling meaning that the poet's mind was throbbing and his skin was trying to support it like a sling or the bandage used for supporting a broken arm.

The poet thought that his sin will be forgiven by burning the house that he lived in. The line shows the poet was feeling quite guilty because of what he was going to do out of sexual desire.

Then the silence of poet was grabbing him and it seemed that the silence has gripped his sleeves. It was perhaps his nerves that were stretching. The fisherman looked at his old nets which had caught nothing but the foam from the sea.

This last phrase can be attributed to the poet as well if we go deeper into its meaning. The poet imagines as if he had fished nothing but sin by his sexual desire.