



## Narrative sensibilities and poetic vision: A review-based comparative study of Arbind Kumar Choudhary and Jayanta Mahapatra

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### Abstract

This comparative review analyses the narrative sensibilities and poetic vision of two prominent Indian English poets, Arbind Kumar Choudhary and Jayanta Mahapatra. It investigates how each poet constructs profound emotional, cultural, and philosophical meaning through distinctly different narrative techniques. Choudhary's poetry is marked by a style of clarity, direct emotional humanism, and an affirming cultural rootedness. His narratives, often shaped by themes of memory, identity, and human relationships, employ a more accessible and affirming voice. In contrast, Jayanta Mahapatra's work is characterized by an introspective, symbolically dense, and often ambiguous narrative mode. His poetic world utilises fragmentation, atmospheric imagery, and layered symbolism to delve into existential tensions and complex philosophical questions, though similarly engaged with nature and personal history.

The study, synthesising existing scholarship, reveals that while Choudhary's approach relies on cultural affirmation and transparent emotional expression, Mahapatra's employs indirect suggestion and metaphysical exploration. Despite these divergent stylistic tendencies one leaning toward emotional transparency, the other toward philosophical introspection their combined oeuvre demonstrates a rich multiplicity of narrative strategies within Indian English poetry. Ultimately, the analysis affirms that both poets make significant, though different, contributions to the field. Their works represent complementary facets of literary creativity, together showcasing the expansive spectrum of Indian poetic expression, where cultural confidence and existential inquiry coexist and enrich the contemporary canon.

**Keywords:** Indian english poetry, narrative technique, arbind kumar choudhary, jayanta mahapatra, poetic introspection, comparative literary study, narrative sensibility

### Introduction

Indian English poetry has evolved through numerous aesthetic traditions, emotional registers, regional voices, and philosophical shifts. Within this broad literary landscape, two poets Arbind Kumar Choudhary and Jayanta Mahapatra represent distinctive yet intersecting modes of poetic narration. Their works reveal a sincere engagement with emotional life, cultural memory, ethical responsibility, and human relationships, but they articulate these concerns through different narrative techniques and stylistic tendencies. A comparative study of their narratives provides valuable insight into how contemporary Indian English poets negotiate personal experiences and collective identity through language.

Arbind Kumar Choudhary, a poet deeply rooted in Indian culture, writes with a narrative voice that merges emotional humanism with spiritual reflection. His poems often revolve around themes such as love, devotion, nature, and patriotism, capturing the rhythms of rural and traditional Indian life. Choudhary's narrative technique is direct and accessible, using simple yet evocative imagery to convey emotional truths. His poetry embraces clarity and moral earnestness, drawing from local landscapes, historical memory, and everyday relationships. His works portray love as an ethical and transformative force, suggesting that emotional connections are essential for both personal growth and social harmony.

Jayanta Mahapatra, on the other hand, belongs to the establishment of modern Indian English poetry and is celebrated for his subtle, introspective, and often enigmatic narrative voice. His poems carry an undercurrent of existential tension, reflecting on loss, time, memory, and the fragility of human experience. Set primarily in the landscapes of Odisha, Mahapatra's narratives combine sensual imagery, mythic undertones, and psychological depth. His poetry is known for its elliptical structure and symbolic language, offering layers of meaning that require attentive reading. Unlike Choudhary's affirmative emotional tone, Mahapatra often dwells on silence, absence, and the quiet sorrows embedded within everyday life.

A comparative reading of these two poets reveals how differing narrative approaches can illuminate the emotional, cultural, and philosophical dimensions of Indian reality. While Choudhary's narratives emphasize hope, relational ethics, and cultural unity, Mahapatra's narratives bring forth introspection, disquiet, and existential questioning. Together, they represent the dynamic range of Indian poetic narration from active affirmation to meditative exploration. This paper critically examines their narrative styles through a review-based method to highlight both the convergences and divergences that shape their poetic worlds.

### Review of Literature

Comparative studies of Indian English poets often highlight how poets negotiate between personal emotion and

collective identity. Scholars examining pairs like Kamala Das and Nissim Ezekiel, or Jayanta Mahapatra and A.K. Ramanujan, frequently emphasize how regional background and personal psychology impact narrative voice. Researchers who study Mahapatra often argue that his narrative technique reflects an internalized struggle with memory and myth, where landscape becomes a symbolic extension of emotional and historical consciousness. Critics describe his narratives as deeply introspective, often presenting fragmented experiences, unresolved tensions, and intricate emotional landscapes.

In contrast, scholars who engage with poets such as Sarojini Naidu or Arun Kolatkar observe how accessible lyrical expression and cultural imagery shape narrative meaning. This perspective resonates strongly with studies of Choudhary's poetry, which emphasize his commitment to cultural rootedness and emotional clarity. His narratives often portray love, nature, and national pride in a straightforward, affirmative voice, offering poetic meaning through emotional sincerity rather than symbolic obscurity. Existing research suggests that Choudhary's poems function as reflections of Indian cultural ethos, blending spirituality, relational depth, and poetic simplicity.

Critical discussions on the "Arbindonean School of Poetry" identify A. K. Choudhary as a key figure in a distinct Indian school rooted in emotional humanism, innovation, mythology, and a culturally saturated idiom. This school is described as an "emotional output" of Indian life, where poetry becomes a vehicle for deeply felt human experience framed through indigenous symbols and myths. In this view, Choudhary's poetic texture is not merely lyrical but humanistic, foregrounding compassion, ethical concern, and the inner life of ordinary people in culturally specific settings.

A neo-romantic reading of A. K. Choudhary underlines how his poetry is "essentially and undoubtedly romantic," saturated with sensuousness, intense emotion, and a deep affinity with nature and love. The critic notes that Choudhary's love poems foreground selfless, non-egoistic love, treating love as an ethical, humanizing force that "implants love in our heart," which closely aligns with emotional humanism. At the same time, his romanticism is described as "exclusively Indian," as it weaves Indian landscapes, cultural references, and everyday idioms into a relational vision between self, beloved, community, and nature, showing cultural relationality at work.

Scholarly papers on Choudhary's "phrasal flavour" and "phrasal king" status highlight his innovative use of English phrasal verbs and phrases to create a highly idiomatic, culturally grounded poetic language. Critics argue that his dense phrasal style spreads a "phrasal fragrance far and wide," making his poems sound both colloquial and culturally rooted, thus mediating relations between Indian vernacular thought patterns and English expression. This stylistic choice supports cultural relationality: the poems enact relationships between languages, idioms, and cultural worlds, while the emotional charge of these phrasal clusters reinforces a humanistic, experience-near tone.

Studies on humanistic perspectives in Indian English poetry such as work on A. K. Ramanujan and Kamala Das provide a comparative framework for reading emotional humanism and relationality in Choudhary. Humanistic readings of Ramanujan emphasize a "self" that transacts freely with family, society, culture, and religion, suggesting a model of

relational subjectivity that resonates with Choudhary's outward-looking, culturally engaged lyric self. Similarly, analyses of Kamala Das's confessional humanism show how personal emotion is interwoven with social critique and cultural context, a pattern that can inform a reading of Choudhary's emotional and cultural concerns as mutually reinforcing rather than separate domains.

Comparative literary scholarship suggests that contrasting poets from different stylistic orientations, such as Choudhary and Mahapatra, allows for a deeper understanding of how Indian English poetry balances clarity with complexity and emotional immediacy with layered ambiguity. While no direct comparative study between these two poets exists, the broader field of Indian English comparative criticism supports the value of such an analysis, especially in understanding how narratives evolve from regional identities, philosophical inclinations, and personal sensibilities.

### Methodology

This study employs a review-based qualitative comparative methodology, focusing on narrative approaches, thematic patterns, emotional structures, and cultural contexts. The primary material for Choudhary's analysis includes his poetic collections and the interpretive insights available in the referenced thesis. For Mahapatra, secondary research and widely available critical interpretations of his major works contribute to the comparative framework. No primary textual survey is conducted; instead, this research synthesizes existing interpretations and re-examines narrative patterns through close reading and thematic grouping.

The comparative method proceeds through three stages. The first stage involves identifying major narrative attributes for each poet, such as tone, imagery, symbolism, emotional structure, and cultural grounding. The second stage compares these attributes to determine areas of convergence, such as the use of nature imagery or emotional exploration, as well as areas of divergence, such as narrative clarity versus ambiguity. The third stage discusses how the poets' backgrounds, cultural settings, and philosophical orientations shape their poetic narratives. This systematic approach enables a coherent and balanced interpretation of both poets without relying on quantitative data.

### Results and Discussion

The comparative analysis crystallizes two fundamentally distinct, yet equally potent, narrative tendencies within Indian English poetry. Arbind Kumar Choudhary's narrative voice emerges as one of sincere, culturally grounded emotional transparency. His poetic world is constructed from familiar, resonant imagery rivers, seasonal cycles, rural landscapes, and enduring familial bonds. These elements coalesce into accessible narrative arcs that directly echo the textures of everyday Indian experience. Choudhary's narratives consistently emphasize restorative, affirmative themes: the healing power of love, the innate spirituality found in human relationships, and a palpable moral beauty inherent in the natural world. This philosophical stance is mirrored in his technique; the emotional immediacy of his themes is amplified by an unembellished diction and a direct, often linear, narrative structure. The result is a poetry of connection and cultural affirmation, where meaning is not obscured but illuminated,

inviting the reader into a shared space of recognized emotion and ethical clarity.

In stark contrast, Jayanta Mahapatra's narrative style embodies a poetics of introspection, atmospheric subtlety, and deliberate symbolic ambiguity. His poems resist straightforward arcs, instead unfolding through fragmented images, sudden shifts in temporal perspective, and profound existential questioning. In Mahapatra's oeuvre, landscape particularly that of Odisha transcends mere setting to become a charged, metaphysical extension of personal and historical memory, often tinged with a sense of loss. His narratives consciously forgo consolation, aiming instead to illuminate the intricate shadows, complexities, and inherent uncertainties of human consciousness. This requires an active, deep engagement from the reader, who must navigate the silences, absences, and unspoken emotional tensions underlying the text. It is this very complexity a modernist sensibility concerned with psychological depth and a contemplative, often troubled, engagement with time, history, and identity that distinguishes Mahapatra's narrative mode as one of philosophical excavation rather than declarative statement.

Despite these pronounced divergences, a closer examination reveals significant narrative affinities that root both poets in a shared, though diversely interpreted, sensibility. Nature operates as a central, indispensable device for both, yet its narrative function diverges: for Choudhary, nature is a relational companion and a source of clear ethical guidance, while for Mahapatra, it is a resonant repository of memory and a site of existential tension. Similarly, both poets place love and profound emotional experience at the core of human identity. However, Choudhary's treatment is one of celebration and affirmation, whereas Mahapatra's is probing, melancholic, and questioning. Furthermore, their narratives are deeply enmeshed within specific Indian cultural landscapes Choudhary's Bihar and Mahapatra's Odisha. The distinction lies in their approach to this rootedness: Choudhary embraces cultural visibility and continuity, while Mahapatra delves into the cultural undercurrents, the historical hauntings, and the private mythologies that shape a sense of place.

Ultimately, the discussion affirms that together, Choudhary and Mahapatra do not represent a hierarchy of value but rather expand the formal and thematic possibilities of Indian English poetic expression. They effectively delineate two ends of a rich creative spectrum: one end emphasizing emotional clarity, cultural affirmation, and accessible humanism; the other emphasizing contemplative introspection, psychological depth, and modernist complexity. Their combined work demonstrates that the narrative construction of meaning in contemporary Indian poetry can be equally powerful whether it seeks to resonate through shared recognition or to provoke through nuanced exploration, proving that the tradition is capacious enough to hold both transparent solace and profound, unanswered questioning.

### Conclusion

This comparative study affirms that the narrative contributions of Arbind Kumar Choudhary and Jayanta Mahapatra significantly enrich the corpus of Indian English poetry through a dynamic of stylistic contrast and thematic complementarity. Choudhary's accessible, emotionally transparent, and culturally rooted narratives construct a poetic universe founded on relational ethics, spiritual beauty, and a palpable sense of belonging. His work operates as an affirming mirror, reflecting shared cultural

ethos and emotional harmony. In direct contrast, Mahapatra's introspective, symbolically dense, and existentially oriented narratives function as a probing lens, challenging readers to confront the intricate fragmentation of memory, the tensions of identity, and the inherent ambiguities of consciousness. Their pronounced differences do not suggest a hierarchy of value but rather illuminate the remarkable breadth and pluralism inherent in the Indian poetic tradition a space where divergent voices, sensibilities, and narrative modes not only coexist but meaningfully interact to form a richer whole.

Ultimately, the analysis underscores the profound importance of narrative technique as the very architecture of poetic meaning. Choudhary's direct, affirming style builds bridges of immediate connection and cultural affirmation, while Mahapatra's oblique, contemplative mode invites readers into a more arduous, yet rewarding, engagement with life's metaphysical uncertainties. Together, their oeuvres demonstrate the expansive spectrum of narrative possibilities available to the contemporary Indian poet, offering masterful insights into how emotional experience and cultural identity can be articulated through diametrically opposed yet equally legitimate poetic forms. This exploration, therefore, serves not as a final word but as an invitation for further scholarly inquiry. Future research into the narrative strategies of other Indian English poets promises to deepen our understanding of how regional sensibilities, philosophical outlooks, and literary traditions continually interact and reshape the evolving, vibrant landscape of Indian literature in English.

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