

The Road That Outlives Its Own End: Liminal Consciousness, Apophatic Seeking, and the Philosophy of Infinite Arrival in Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*

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Abstract— Modern Odia poetry has repeatedly challenged inherited literary paradigms by replacing romantic certainty with existential ambiguity, metaphysical incompleteness, and epistemological restlessness. Within this tradition, Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* ("The Road That Outlives Its Own End"), included in *Asamartha Partha* (2011), occupies a distinctive place because it transforms the apparently simple metaphor of a road into an inexhaustible philosophical structure. Rather than presenting the road as a symbol of destination, progress, or teleological fulfillment, the poem imagines it as a paradoxical continuum that continues precisely where endings appear to occur. Such an inversion fundamentally revises conventional understandings of journey, knowledge, language, and existence itself. This article argues that Mohanty's poem should be read simultaneously as an existential meditation, an apophatic philosophical statement, a phenomenological exploration of consciousness, a post-structuralist interrogation of linguistic limitation, and an Indian metaphysical reflection rooted in yet transcending the civilizational memory of the *Mahābhārata*. The poem does not merely narrate helplessness (*asahāyatā*); rather, it converts helplessness into a productive epistemology. Every failure becomes another beginning; every exhaustion becomes another threshold; every ending becomes an invisible continuation. The road thus emerges as neither geographical nor historical but ontological—a mode of Being itself. Unlike many modern poems that dramatize alienation through fragmentation alone, Mohanty's lyric simultaneously cultivates profound spiritual expectancy. The repeated confrontation with exhaustion—"How much farther can one possibly go?"—never culminates in nihilism. Instead, the poem suspends the speaker within an intermediate realm where language itself waits for "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets." This remarkable image proposes that truth is inaccessible not because it does not exist but because existing linguistic systems remain insufficient for articulating it. Consequently, the poem participates in one of the oldest philosophical questions—from the *Upaniṣads* through negative theology to modern deconstruction—namely whether ultimate reality necessarily exceeds linguistic representation. The present study undertakes a multidisciplinary reading by bringing Mohanty's poem into conversation with existential philosophy, phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, archetypal criticism, comparative poetics, and Indian philosophical traditions including Vedānta and Buddhist thought. It also establishes illuminating parallels with the poetic visions of Rabindranath Tagore, T. S. Eliot, Rainer Maria Rilke, Antonio Machado, Fernando Pessoa, Emily Dickinson, Paul Celan, Octavio Paz, and Matsuo Bashō while demonstrating that Mohanty's vision ultimately remains irreducibly original. Although resonances may be traced across world literatures, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* refuses imitation. Instead, it constructs a uniquely Odia philosophical modernism in which the finite continually opens toward the infinite without ever possessing it. Ultimately, this article proposes that the poem is less about reaching a destination than about discovering that authentic existence itself is constituted by perpetual incompleteness. The road survives every traveler because consciousness itself remains an unfinished pilgrimage.

Keywords—Existentialism; Phenomenology; Ontology; Philosophy of Language; Symbolism; Comparative Poetics; Mahābhārata; Philosophical Lyricism.

I. INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE ROAD BECOMES MORE ENDURING THAN DESTINATION

One of the defining characteristics of twentieth- and twenty-first-century world poetry is the gradual displacement of certainty by process. Earlier literary traditions often imagined the road as a means toward an identifiable destination: salvation, enlightenment, homecoming, revolution, or transcendence. Modern poetry, however, increasingly transforms the road into a figure of endless becoming. The destination no longer validates the journey; rather, the journey continually postpones its own completion. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* belongs to this larger modern philosophical movement while simultaneously giving it an unmistakably Odia metaphysical identity.

The title itself deserves prolonged attention before one even enters the poem. "*Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*" literally signifies "the

road that does not end even after ending." Such an expression immediately establishes paradox as the governing principle of the entire composition. Roads ordinarily conclude. Endings define roads. Yet Mohanty imagines a road that survives its own termination. The contradiction is not rhetorical ornamentation but ontological revelation. What appears to be an end belongs only to perception; reality itself continues invisibly beyond perceptual limits. Thus the title already anticipates the concluding declaration:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

Its Odia equivalent— "*Sari Saru Nathibā Dūra Bāta, / Indriyathuṁ adūra nikaṭa*." (Mohanty 21) —possesses remarkable philosophical density. The phrase "*Indriyathuṁ adūra nikaṭa*" ("closer than the senses") subtly recalls Upanishadic descriptions of Brahman as simultaneously farther than the farthest and nearer than the nearest (*Īśā Upaniṣad* 5). Mohanty does not explicitly quote scripture; nevertheless, his

poetic intuition resonates with one of India's oldest metaphysical insights while relocating it within the existential predicament of modern humanity. The poem therefore begins not with confidence but with exhaustion: "How much farther can one possibly go?" The question contains neither complaint nor despair alone. It is simultaneously physical, psychological, philosophical, and epistemological. The speaker asks about distance, yet the actual concern is not geography but possibility itself. How far can consciousness extend before language, perception, and identity begin to disintegrate? Such questioning resembles what existential philosophers describe as the confrontation between finite human existence and infinite aspiration (Jaspers 17–22). Immediately afterward the poem dismantles every conventional coordinate of orientation: "Here, the sky itself has already come to an end." The sky traditionally signifies infinity. By asserting that even the sky has ended, Mohanty overturns one of literature's oldest metaphors. Infinity itself appears finite. What remains after infinity ends? This impossible question silently governs the rest of the poem. The subsequent images intensify the existential crisis:

*"sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams,
even the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away..."*

Notice the extraordinary reversal embedded in this passage. Dreams normally emerge from sleep; here sleep abandons the eyes because of dreams. Desire destroys the very condition required for its realization. Likewise, earth conventionally symbolizes stability, yet it collapses beneath the traveler's feet. Every foundational category undergoes inversion. Such inversions place Mohanty's poem within the great modern tradition inaugurated by writers such as Eliot, Kafka, and Beckett while remaining philosophically closer to Indian conceptions of impermanence than to purely European absurdism. The world is unstable not because it is meaningless but because human consciousness mistakes provisional realities for permanent ones. Consequently, every image simultaneously operates at literal and metaphysical levels. The collapsing earth represents psychological insecurity, historical instability, epistemological uncertainty, and ontological groundlessness. The image therefore recalls both existential anxiety and the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence (*anitya*), although Mohanty carefully avoids reducing the poem to any single philosophical system. What distinguishes Mohanty's vision from many modernist texts is that the poem never celebrates fragmentation for its own sake. Fragmentation becomes the necessary precondition for discovering another order of reality. Thus the road remains invisible precisely because the visible world reaches exhaustion.

II. THE POETICS OF THRESHOLD: LIMINALITY AS EXISTENTIAL CONDITION

Perhaps the most original feature of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is its sustained habitation of thresholds. The speaker is never completely defeated, yet never victorious; never silent, yet never capable of complete articulation; never arrived, yet never entirely lost. Such perpetual in-betweenness constitutes what anthropologists describe as liminality—a state situated between

established identities and future transformation. Yet Mohanty's liminality exceeds social ritual and becomes an ontological principle governing existence itself. Every stanza occupies an intermediate space. Consider:

*"No, I can go no farther—
Not even to behold the truth
that has remained unseen till now."*

The declaration appears final. The journey has reached absolute exhaustion. Yet paradoxically the poem continues after this supposed ending. The impossibility of movement becomes the condition for another, deeper movement. This structural contradiction mirrors the title itself. Every ending secretly contains continuation. The Odia original— "*Nā, āu jāi hebani āgaku / E jāem dekhipāri na thibā satyaku dekhibāku.*" — contains an emotional cadence difficult to reproduce entirely in English. The phrase "*dekhipāri na thibā satya*" suggests not merely "unseen truth" but truth that has remained inaccessible despite continuous effort. Failure therefore acquires historical depth. It is cumulative rather than momentary.

This motif finds striking resonance with Eliot's declaration in *Four Quartets* that "the end is where we start from" (Eliot, *Little Gidding* V). Yet there remains a crucial distinction. Eliot ultimately situates circular temporality within Christian redemption, whereas Mohanty's poem refuses theological closure. The road continues not because redemption has already been guaranteed but because consciousness itself remains unfinished. Likewise, Antonio Machado famously wrote, "Traveler, there is no road; the road is made by walking." Mohanty advances this insight significantly further. His poem suggests that even after walking ceases, the road itself continues. Human agency no longer constitutes reality; reality infinitely exceeds agency. Thus the poem transforms existential effort into metaphysical humility. This humility, however, never becomes passive resignation. Instead, it generates a new ethics of searching—an ethics founded not upon possession but upon perpetual openness. The traveler ceases to master the road; the road gradually becomes the teacher of the traveler. In this reversal lies one of the poem's deepest philosophical achievements.

III. LANGUAGE BEYOND LANGUAGE: THE "NEXT ALPHABET" AS APOPHATIC POETICS AND THE CRISIS OF SIGNIFICATION

If the opening movement of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* dramatizes the exhaustion of physical movement, the second movement confronts something even more fundamental—the exhaustion of language itself. The speaker, having reached the apparent limit of existential possibility, discovers that the real obstacle is not distance but expression. Human beings fail to arrive at truth not merely because they cannot travel farther but because they cannot yet speak the language in which truth discloses itself. It is precisely at this moment that Mohanty introduces one of the most astonishing metaphors in contemporary Odia poetry:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets..."*

The original Odia formulation—

"Eṭhi aṭakibā artha
Apekṣā karibā sabu barṇamālāra
Para barṇamālāku..." (Mohanty 21)

—is philosophically richer than a literal translation can fully convey. The phrase "*para barṇamālā*" does not merely denote another alphabet succeeding the present one. It evokes an alphabet that belongs to another order of reality, another epistemic horizon, another mode of consciousness. It is an alphabet that lies beyond the competence of all existing linguistic systems. Mohanty's metaphor therefore moves beyond literary symbolism into the realm of philosophy of language. Ordinarily, alphabets are understood as finite inventories of signs through which infinite meanings may be generated. Mohanty radically reverses this assumption. The limitation is not merely in vocabulary or grammar but in the alphabet itself. If the alphabet constitutes the elementary architecture of expression, then the poet is suggesting that the very foundations of human language remain inadequate before ultimate reality. Truth exceeds syntax before it exceeds semantics. Language reaches its frontier long before consciousness reaches the frontier of being. This insight places Mohanty's poem within one of the oldest and most enduring philosophical traditions: the apophatic or negative understanding of reality. Across civilizations, thinkers have repeatedly argued that ultimate truth cannot be adequately represented through affirmative language. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* famously declares that Brahman is "that from which words return, together with the mind, unable to attain it" (*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*) (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.9). The inability of language is not evidence against reality; it is evidence of reality's inexhaustibility. Mohanty's "next alphabet" becomes a modern poetic reformulation of precisely this metaphysical intuition.

The comparison, however, should not be exaggerated. Mohanty never explicitly invokes Vedāntic theology. His poem remains phenomenological rather than doctrinal. The "next alphabet" is not identified with sacred revelation, divine speech, or mystical illumination. Instead, it remains suspended as possibility. That suspension is crucial because it preserves the existential openness of the poem. Unlike scriptural certainty, poetic uncertainty continues to invite interpretation. The metaphor also resonates with twentieth-century philosophy of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein famously concluded the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by observing, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein 89). Yet Mohanty's response is strikingly different. He refuses silence. Instead, he waits for another alphabet. Silence becomes transitional rather than terminal. The failure of one language becomes the anticipation of another. This is a profoundly poetic rather than logical solution to the limits of expression. Similarly, the thought recalls Jacques Derrida, whose deconstructive philosophy repeatedly demonstrates that meaning continually escapes fixed linguistic

structures (Derrida 23–27). Yet Mohanty is not engaged in linguistic skepticism. Derrida often reveals the instability of signs, whereas Mohanty preserves faith in truth while questioning the adequacy of available signs. Truth remains; language fails. This distinction is philosophically decisive. The poem is therefore neither nihilistic nor relativistic. It is linguistically humble. The subsequent lines deepen this linguistic crisis:

*"to speak something more,
to write,
to make others understand after writing, and reading,
the remaining uncomprehended truth."*

The sequence unfolds almost ritualistically. Speaking leads to writing; writing leads to reading; reading should lead to understanding. Yet the chain never reaches fulfillment. Every communicative act leaves behind "the remaining uncomprehended truth." Understanding is perpetually deferred. Human civilization becomes an endless commentary upon truths that exceed every commentary. The syntax itself reflects this postponement. Each infinitive ("to speak," "to write," "to make others understand") generates expectation without closure. Grammatically as well as philosophically, the poem inhabits incompleteness. Mohanty's style therefore embodies his metaphysics. The form performs the content. This insight has profound hermeneutic implications. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, understanding is never complete but always historically situated, continually renewed through interpretation (Gadamer 269–74). Mohanty's poem exemplifies precisely such hermeneutic openness. The "remaining uncomprehended truth" is not an accidental residue awaiting future explanation; it is the permanent horizon that keeps interpretation alive. Literature survives because truth is inexhaustible. From another perspective, the poem implicitly critiques all totalizing systems of knowledge. Every ideology promises complete explanation. Mohanty quietly resists such intellectual absolutism. There will always remain another alphabet, another interpretation, another horizon of meaning. Genuine wisdom therefore begins not with certainty but with epistemological humility.

This humility also possesses ethical significance. The desire "to make others understand" is not motivated by rhetorical triumph but by communicative responsibility. Yet the speaker recognizes that even the noblest pedagogical effort cannot eliminate mystery. The teacher remains a fellow traveler. The poet remains another seeker. Knowledge becomes companionship rather than domination. There is an illuminating comparison here with Paul Celan, whose poetry repeatedly confronts the inadequacy of language after historical catastrophe. Celan often compresses language until words themselves appear fractured. Mohanty adopts an opposite strategy. His language remains lucid, almost transparent, yet beneath its simplicity lies an abyss of philosophical complexity. Celan fractures syntax; Mohanty fractures certainty. Likewise, Emily Dickinson repeatedly suggests that truth can only be approached indirectly. Her famous assertion, "Tell all the truth but tell it slant," proposes that ultimate realities exceed direct articulation. Mohanty's "next

alphabet" radicalizes this intuition. If Dickinson modifies the angle of speech, Mohanty questions the alphabet itself.

The metaphor also invites comparison with the Buddhist concept of *upāya* (skillful means). Buddhist philosophy frequently distinguishes between provisional teachings and ultimate realization. Words function as rafts rather than destinations. Mohanty's alphabet similarly appears provisional. Existing linguistic systems help one travel, but they cannot themselves become the shore. Nevertheless, Mohanty does not explicitly advocate Buddhist doctrine. His poem remains open enough to accommodate multiple philosophical traditions without being confined to any one of them.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this section is its refusal to separate literary creativity from philosophical inquiry. Writing itself becomes an ontological act. The poet does not compose because meaning has already been mastered; he writes because meaning remains unfinished. Poetry becomes not the expression of certainty but the continuation of search. Consequently, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* offers an implicit theory of literature. Great poetry is not that which explains reality completely. Great poetry is that which expands the horizon of the sayable while preserving the dignity of the unsayable. The highest function of literature is therefore neither ornamentation nor entertainment but epistemic enlargement. Every authentic poem teaches readers that there is always another alphabet waiting beyond the present one.

This insight distinguishes Mohanty's poetic philosophy from both classical realism and radical postmodern skepticism. Classical realism assumes that language can adequately mirror reality. Extreme postmodernism sometimes suggests that reality dissolves into language. Mohanty occupies a subtler position. Reality infinitely exceeds language, yet language remains humanity's indispensable instrument of seeking. The insufficiency of language does not invalidate poetry; it makes poetry necessary. Indeed, the image of the "next alphabet" may be regarded as one of the finest metaphors in modern Odia literature because it simultaneously addresses linguistics, metaphysics, hermeneutics, theology, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics. Very few poetic images sustain such interdisciplinary richness without collapsing under conceptual excess. Mohanty's succeeds because it arises organically from existential experience rather than abstract theorization. The speaker has reached the end of the road, but language has reached an even deeper ending. It is here that the poem achieves one of its greatest philosophical reversals: the inability to proceed becomes the beginning of another mode of movement. Physical travel ceases; linguistic pilgrimage begins. The traveler now waits—not for another road, but for another alphabet. In that waiting resides the entire future of human consciousness. The road, therefore, is no longer geographical. It has become linguistic, ontological, and spiritual at once. Every word spoken thereafter is merely another milestone on a road that, even after ending, refuses to end.

IV. THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF HELPLESSNESS: FROM EXISTENTIAL IMPASSE TO ONTOLOGICAL AWAKENING

One of the most profound achievements of Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* lies in its remarkable transformation of helplessness (*asahāyatā*) from a psychological condition into an epistemological and ontological category. Throughout the history of literature, helplessness has frequently been portrayed either as tragic resignation or as emotional vulnerability. Mohanty's poem, however, refuses both reductions. Instead, helplessness becomes the very medium through which the hidden architecture of reality begins to disclose itself. What initially appears as failure gradually emerges as the highest form of philosophical preparedness. The opening movement of the poem carefully accumulates images of disintegration:

*"Here, the sky itself has already come to an end;
sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams,
even the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away, slipping into the abyss..."*

Each image represents the collapse of one of the primordial conditions of human existence. The sky traditionally symbolizes transcendence, aspiration, infinity, or divine presence. Sleep signifies restoration, psychological equilibrium, and the unconscious rhythms of life. The earth beneath one's feet has, across civilizations, represented stability, permanence, and existential security. Mohanty dismantles all three simultaneously. Infinity ends. Rest abandons consciousness. Stability collapses beneath movement itself. The cumulative effect is not merely emotional despair but ontological destabilization. The Odia original intensifies this existential precariousness: "*Pāda taḷa māṭi bi aṭaḍā khaṣi dhaṣi jāuchhi...*" (Mohanty 21) The expression "*khaṣi dhaṣi jāuchhi*" possesses kinetic force that is difficult to preserve entirely in English. It suggests not a single collapse but an ongoing, irreversible subsidence. The world is not suddenly destroyed; it continuously withdraws from beneath human certainty. This gradual erosion constitutes one of the defining experiences of modern consciousness. From the perspective of phenomenology, this passage deserves close attention. Edmund Husserl insisted that philosophy must return "to the things themselves," that is, to lived experience prior to theoretical abstraction (Husserl 54–57). Mohanty's poem similarly privileges immediate consciousness over conceptual explanation. The speaker does not analyze helplessness; he inhabits it. Consequently, readers do not observe existential crisis from outside; they experience its unfolding phenomenologically.

Yet Mohanty's phenomenology differs significantly from purely descriptive philosophy. Every experiential image simultaneously gestures toward metaphysical significance. The collapsing earth is both literal sensation and ontological metaphor. Such doubleness enables the poem to remain philosophically suggestive without becoming doctrinal. The poem's extraordinary originality lies in its refusal to romanticize suffering. Modern literature often oscillates between two

extremes: sentimental glorification of pain and cynical dismissal of transcendence. Mohanty chooses neither. Helplessness is not noble in itself, nor is it meaningless. It becomes fruitful only because it strips consciousness of illusion. The speaker is compelled to recognize the inadequacy of inherited certainties precisely when those certainties disintegrate.

This insight recalls the existential analyses of Martin Heidegger, particularly his discussion of anxiety (*Angst*) in *Being and Time*. Heidegger argues that anxiety reveals the world in its radical contingency by dissolving ordinary familiarity (Heidegger 231–35). Mohanty's poetic vision exhibits an analogous movement. The world ceases to function as a comfortable environment and becomes instead an enigmatic horizon demanding renewed interpretation. Nevertheless, Mohanty departs from Heidegger in a significant respect. Heidegger's anxiety ultimately discloses authentic Being through existential individuation. Mohanty's helplessness retains a more relational character. The speaker continually seeks communication, understanding, and shared meaning. His concern is never merely authenticity but transmissibility. Even in despair, he wishes "to make others understand." Thus helplessness becomes ethical as well as ontological. The poem reaches one of its most revealing moments when the speaker declares:

*"I keep measuring
the farthest limits of my own helplessness."*

This deceptively simple statement contains astonishing philosophical depth. Ordinarily, measurement implies objectivity, precision, and mastery. Scientists measure distance, weight, or time because such phenomena are quantifiable. Mohanty applies the language of measurement to helplessness—an experience generally regarded as immeasurable. The paradox is deliberate. Consciousness attempts to comprehend its own incomprehensibility. The Odia expression— "*Nijara asahāyatāra parisīmā kaḷanā karuchhi*." (Mohanty 21) — contains the important term "*parisīmā*" (boundary, limit) together with "*kaḷanā*" (calculation, estimation, measurement). The speaker does not simply feel helplessness; he investigates its frontier. Such investigation transforms emotion into philosophy.

Here, Mohanty's poem enters into subtle dialogue with the Socratic tradition. Socrates repeatedly emphasized that genuine wisdom begins with the recognition of one's ignorance. Mohanty extends this principle beyond cognition into existence itself. One must measure the boundaries of one's helplessness before approaching the possibility of truth. Epistemological humility thus becomes existential methodology. The metaphor of measurement also carries mathematical resonance. Every measurement presupposes a standard. Yet what standard could possibly measure helplessness? The impossibility of answering this question reveals the self-reflexive structure of consciousness. Human beings attempt to objectify experiences that ultimately exceed objectification. The measuring subject and the measured condition become inseparable. This paradox has significant implications for literary criticism. The poem cannot be adequately interpreted through purely psychological

approaches. Helplessness here is not reducible to depression, melancholy, or trauma. Instead, it functions as an ontological threshold. The speaker arrives at a region where conventional distinctions between subject and object, language and silence, certainty and uncertainty begin to dissolve. Such dissolution also recalls the Buddhist understanding of *duḥkha*. Classical Buddhist philosophy does not interpret suffering merely as emotional pain but as the fundamental instability of conditioned existence. Mohanty's poem undoubtedly resonates with this insight. Yet an important distinction must be maintained. Buddhist thought generally directs the seeker toward liberation through detachment. Mohanty's speaker, however, remains passionately engaged with language, writing, memory, and historical consciousness. His search is not for extinction of desire but for transformation of understanding.

An equally illuminating comparison may be drawn with the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke. In the *Duino Elegies*, Rilke repeatedly suggests that vulnerability enlarges perception. Human finitude becomes the condition for metaphysical vision. Mohanty's helplessness similarly deepens awareness. Yet whereas Rilke often moves toward angelic transcendence, Mohanty remains grounded within the ordinary landscape of roads, sky, earth, language, and history. His metaphysics grows from lived reality rather than visionary ecstasy. The poem's phenomenology also challenges modern technological consciousness.

Contemporary civilization often celebrates control, efficiency, optimization, and measurable success. Mohanty's speaker experiences precisely the opposite. Nothing remains controllable. Distance expands without resolution. Sleep cannot be commanded. The earth itself refuses stability. Such imagery implicitly critiques the modern illusion that human beings can master existence through technique alone. This critique becomes especially relevant in light of twentieth-century philosophical discussions of instrumental rationality. Thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School argued that modern civilization increasingly reduces reality to objects of calculation and control. Mohanty's poem quietly resists this reduction. Although the speaker attempts to "measure" helplessness, the very impossibility of the task exposes the limits of instrumental reason. Some dimensions of existence demand contemplation rather than calculation.

The psychological movement of the poem is equally remarkable. Helplessness never degenerates into self-pity. There is no theatrical lamentation, no excessive emotional display, no rhetoric of victimhood. The voice remains calm, restrained, almost meditative. This stylistic discipline significantly enhances the philosophical credibility of the poem. The speaker does not exaggerate suffering; he observes it with remarkable lucidity. Such restraint recalls the ethical aesthetics of classical Indian poetry, where emotional intensity often derives from suggestiveness rather than explicit declaration. Another important feature is the absence of blame.

Modern existential literature frequently attributes alienation to society, politics, history, or institutions. Mohanty's poem refrains from assigning external responsibility. The crisis is deeper than social circumstance. It belongs to the very structure of finite consciousness confronting infinite reality. Consequently, the poem achieves universal relevance without abandoning historical specificity. One may also observe subtle affinities with the mystical tradition of "unknowing." Christian negative theologians such as the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* argued that God is approached not through accumulation of knowledge but through the surrender of conceptual certainty.

Mohanty's poem does not articulate Christian mysticism, yet the movement from certainty toward receptive helplessness parallels this broader apophatic tradition. Again, the comparison should remain analogical rather than genealogical. The phrase "*I keep measuring / the farthest limits of my own helplessness*" also possesses profound ethical implications. Modern civilization often defines human worth through achievement, productivity, or success. Mohanty proposes an entirely different anthropology. Human dignity may reside not in mastery but in the courage to confront one's limitations honestly. The willingness to acknowledge helplessness becomes a form of intellectual integrity. Indeed, the poem suggests that every authentic philosophical journey must eventually arrive at this recognition. One cannot genuinely seek truth while remaining imprisoned within the illusion of omniscience. The collapse of certainty is therefore not the destruction of philosophy but its beginning. This is why the speaker's declaration— "*No, I can go no farther*" should never be interpreted as surrender. Grammatically, it appears to conclude the journey. Philosophically, however, it inaugurates another mode of movement. Physical progression ceases; existential deepening begins. The road ahead is no longer external but interior. The traveler has reached the frontier where geography gives way to ontology.

Thus Mohanty's phenomenology of helplessness ultimately overturns conventional hierarchies. Strength does not produce wisdom; vulnerability does. Certainty does not reveal truth; incompleteness does. Progress does not culminate in arrival; it culminates in the recognition that every arrival conceals another beginning. The poem therefore transforms helplessness from an emotional deficiency into one of the highest conditions of philosophical awakening. In this transformation lies one of the enduring achievements of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*. The poem demonstrates that the deepest roads are not those traversed by the body but those opened within consciousness itself. The farther one measures the limits of helplessness, the nearer one comes to that mysterious road which, even after ending, continues beyond every conceivable end.

V. THE MAHĀBHĀRATA AS CIVILIZATIONAL PALIMPSEST: REWRITING THE EPIC OF HUMAN INCOMPLETENESS

Perhaps the most startling transition in *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* occurs when the intensely personal meditation unexpectedly

opens into the vast civilizational memory of the *Mahābhārata*. Up to this point, the poem has remained primarily interior. The speaker measures the limits of his own helplessness, confronts the exhaustion of language, and waits for "the next alphabet." Suddenly, however, the lyric consciousness enters one of the greatest narrative universes ever created:

*"In this brief history of exploration
have been inscribed the eighteen volumes of the
Mahabharata—
the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness..."*

The corresponding Odia lines—

*"Anweṣaṇara ei saṅkṣipta itihāsa
Lekhi jāichhi Mahābhārata Aṭhāra Parba—
Mora ei bibaśatāra bikalpa śabda..."* (Mohanty 21)

—constitute one of the poem's most intellectually compressed yet conceptually expansive moments. The *Mahābhārata* appears neither as mythological ornament nor as cultural nostalgia. It is invoked as an epistemological archive—a vast linguistic and ethical reservoir through which individual helplessness becomes legible within the larger history of humanity. The epic does not solve the speaker's predicament; it names it. It becomes, in Mohanty's unforgettable phrase, the "alternative vocabulary" (*bikalpa śabda*) of helplessness.

This expression deserves sustained attention. Vocabulary ordinarily functions as an instrument of communication. By calling the *Mahābhārata* an "alternative vocabulary," Mohanty proposes that some dimensions of human existence cannot be adequately articulated through ordinary discourse. Everyday language fails before experiences of radical moral conflict, metaphysical uncertainty, and existential paradox. The epic, however, possesses a linguistic amplitude capable of accommodating such experiences. It becomes not merely a text to be read but a language in which existence itself may be interpreted. The adjective "alternative" is especially significant.

Mohanty does not describe the *Mahābhārata* as the definitive or ultimate vocabulary. He calls it an alternative one. This subtle qualification prevents the poem from collapsing into scriptural absolutism. The epic is a privileged mode of understanding, but it is not the final one. There always remains another alphabet, another vocabulary, another horizon of meaning. Thus the poem preserves its characteristic openness even while invoking one of India's foundational texts.

At the same time, Mohanty's allusion transforms the speaker's personal journey into a civilizational pilgrimage. The individual consciousness now becomes inseparable from collective cultural memory. His helplessness is no longer merely psychological; it is archetypal. Every seeker who has confronted ethical ambiguity, existential exhaustion, and epistemological incompleteness belongs to the same unfolding narrative.

The reference to the "eighteen volumes" (*Aṭhāra Parba*) is equally meaningful. Mohanty deliberately specifies the complete structure of the *Mahābhārata* rather than mentioning isolated episodes such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the Kurukṣetra war, or the

dilemma of Arjuna. The number eighteen therefore functions synecdochically: it evokes the totality of the epic's philosophical, ethical, political, and spiritual complexity. The poem refuses reduction. Human existence itself cannot be summarized by a single doctrine because the *Mahābhārata* itself resists doctrinal simplification.

One may compare this gesture with T. S. Eliot's method in *The Waste Land*, where fragments of multiple traditions coexist to illuminate the crisis of modern civilization (Eliot, *The Waste Land* ll. 218–311). Yet the two poets employ tradition in fundamentally different ways. Eliot's quotations often dramatize cultural fragmentation. Mohanty's invocation of the *Mahābhārata*, by contrast, reveals continuity rather than rupture. The epic survives not as a relic but as a living hermeneutic resource. Tradition becomes interpretive energy rather than archaeological residue. Nevertheless, Mohanty's use of the *Mahābhārata* is strikingly non-devotional. He does not invoke divine intervention, miraculous redemption, or unquestioned moral authority. Instead, he emphasizes exploration (*anveṣaṇa*). This lexical choice is crucial. Exploration implies uncertainty, experimentation, and incompleteness. The *Mahābhārata* is thus reimagined not as a repository of fixed answers but as humanity's most comprehensive record of difficult questions. This interpretive move aligns the poem with contemporary hermeneutic approaches to epic literature. Scholars increasingly recognize that the *Mahābhārata* derives much of its enduring power not from providing unequivocal moral resolutions but from sustaining irreducible ethical ambiguity. Mohanty's poem participates in this understanding by appropriating the epic as a language of unresolved searching rather than final certainty.

The phrase "brief history of exploration" (*ei saṅkṣipta itiḥāsa*) introduces another important paradox. How can the immense *Mahābhārata*—arguably the world's longest epic—be contained within a "brief history"? The contradiction is deliberate. From the perspective of cosmic time, even the greatest human narratives remain brief. Simultaneously, every individual life recapitulates, in miniature, the existential conflicts dramatized by the epic. Personal history and civilizational history mirror one another. The macrocosm becomes visible within the microcosm.

Here, Mohanty's imagination recalls the Upanishadic principle that the individual self (*ātman*) reflects the universal reality (*brahman*), although the poem never explicitly formulates this metaphysical equation. Rather than asserting identity, it establishes resonance. The speaker's interior landscape echoes the vast narrative geography of the *Mahābhārata*. The poem also invites comparison with Jorge Luis Borges's fascination with infinite books and labyrinthine texts. Borges repeatedly imagined literature as an inexhaustible archive in which every text contains countless others. Mohanty's vision differs significantly. The *Mahābhārata* is not infinite because of textual proliferation; it is inexhaustible because human experience itself continually discovers new meanings within it. The epic expands not by growing larger but by being reread through changing historical consciousness. From the standpoint of archetypal criticism, the

Mahābhārata functions here as what Northrop Frye would call a comprehensive mythic structure through which individual experiences acquire universal significance (Frye 136–40). Yet Mohanty subtly revises the archetypal model. Rather than subordinating the individual to myth, he allows personal helplessness to reinterpret the epic itself. The relationship is reciprocal. The poem reads the *Mahābhārata* even as the *Mahābhārata* reads the poem.

The expression "the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness" also possesses psychoanalytic richness. Human beings often seek symbolic systems capable of containing experiences that ordinary consciousness cannot process. Myth, ritual, and epic serve precisely this function. They provide forms through which otherwise inexpressible psychic realities become narratable. Mohanty's speaker instinctively turns toward the *Mahābhārata* because personal language proves insufficient. The epic offers symbolic hospitality to existential bewilderment.

Yet it would be inaccurate to reduce this movement to psychology alone. Mohanty's allusion remains fundamentally philosophical. The *Mahābhārata* becomes an emblem of humanity's endless search for ethical clarity amid irresolvable complexity. Every major figure in the epic—Arjuna, Bhīṣma, Karna, Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa—confronts situations in which conventional moral categories prove inadequate. Similarly, the speaker of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* arrives at a point where existing alphabets, vocabularies, and certainties fail. The parallel is structural rather than narrative. It is also significant that Mohanty does not mention Kurukṣetra directly. Instead of foregrounding war, he foregrounds writing: "have been inscribed the eighteen volumes of the *Mahabharata*..." The verb "inscribed" transforms the epic from battlefield to text, from historical event to hermeneutic document. Violence becomes writing; conflict becomes interpretation. This transition reflects the poem's larger movement from physical action toward epistemological inquiry. The true battlefield is no longer external but linguistic and philosophical. The civilizational dimension of the poem becomes even clearer when viewed in relation to Indian literary modernity. Many twentieth-century Indian poets invoked epic traditions either nostalgically or ironically. Mohanty adopts neither strategy. He neither idealizes the past nor dismantles it. Instead, he reactivates it as a living intellectual resource capable of illuminating contemporary existential dilemmas. Such an approach exemplifies what may be called dialogic traditionality: tradition survives by entering into conversation with modern consciousness rather than by resisting it. The line that follows intensifies this dialogic process:

"which makes it clear
precisely its opposite
is the priceless treasure I have been seeking for..."

The pronoun "its" refers back to helplessness, suggesting that the opposite of helplessness constitutes the sought-after treasure. Yet Mohanty refuses to identify this opposite explicitly. Is it wisdom? Freedom? Truth? Self-realization? Silence? Transcendence? The poem deliberately leaves the question

unresolved. Such indeterminacy preserves the openness of interpretation while preventing philosophical reductionism. Indeed, the refusal to define the treasure may itself be the poem's deepest philosophical gesture. Every explicit definition risks transforming living truth into conceptual possession. Mohanty avoids this danger by allowing the treasure to remain horizon rather than object. The search therefore continues, just as the road continues beyond its ending. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* thus performs multiple functions simultaneously. It universalizes personal experience, historicizes existential inquiry, expands linguistic possibility, critiques simplistic moral certainty, and situates contemporary Odia poetry within the vast continuum of Indian intellectual tradition. Yet perhaps its greatest achievement lies elsewhere. By calling the epic "the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness," Mohanty quietly suggests that literature itself constitutes one of humanity's most enduring responses to existential incompleteness. Great texts do not eliminate helplessness; they give it language. They do not abolish uncertainty; they make uncertainty intelligible. In this sense, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* enters into an implicit dialogue not only with the *Mahābhārata* but with the entire history of world literature. Every enduring literary work enlarges the vocabulary through which humanity understands itself. Mohanty's poem now joins that expanding lexicon, adding to it one unforgettable image: a road that survives its own ending, an alphabet beyond all alphabets, and an epic that becomes the alternative language of human helplessness.

VI. EXISTENTIALISM REVISITED: THE POEM AS AN ONTOLOGY OF THE NEVER-ARRIVING SELF

One of the most intellectually rewarding approaches to *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is through the broad tradition of existential philosophy. Nevertheless, to identify Chandra Kumar Mohanty's poem simply as "existential" would be both insufficient and misleading. Although the poem undeniably shares certain concerns with existentialist thinkers—anxiety, finitude, freedom, incompleteness, and the search for authenticity—it simultaneously departs from the central assumptions of European existentialism in ways that reveal its own distinct philosophical identity.

Mohanty's vision neither celebrates absurdity nor culminates in despair. Instead, it constructs what may be described as an ontology of perpetual arrival: existence remains meaningful precisely because it is never complete. The poem begins with an apparently ordinary question: "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" At first glance, this appears to concern physical exhaustion. Yet the more closely one reads the line, the more profoundly philosophical it becomes. The question does not ask, "Where should I go?" or "Why should I go?" Instead, it asks about the limit of going itself. Movement becomes the object of inquiry. The poem therefore shifts attention from destination to possibility. Existence is defined not by what has been reached but by what remains unreachable.

This concern with possibility immediately recalls the existential philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard, who repeatedly emphasized

that human existence is constituted by possibility rather than completed actuality (Kierkegaard 61–64).

Yet Mohanty's poetic treatment differs in a crucial respect. Kierkegaard ultimately situates possibility within the leap of faith. Mohanty's speaker does not leap. He waits. The existential drama unfolds not through decisive action but through contemplative endurance. Waiting itself becomes philosophical. The Odia expression "*Āu bā kete dūraku jāiheba?*" (Mohanty 21) contains a conversational simplicity that conceals extraordinary conceptual depth. The question is almost colloquial, yet its implications extend toward metaphysics. Such stylistic economy is characteristic of Mohanty's poetic method. Rather than employing elaborate abstraction, he allows ordinary language to generate extraordinary philosophical resonance.

As the poem progresses, the external landscape gradually dissolves: "*the sky itself has already come to an end;*" The ending of the sky constitutes one of the poem's most radical existential images. Across literary traditions, the sky conventionally signifies transcendence, openness, and infinity. By declaring that even the sky has ended, Mohanty symbolically abolishes the very horizon through which human aspiration traditionally orients itself. The crisis therefore exceeds personal discouragement. Infinity itself appears exhausted.

This image invites comparison with the existential thought of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre argues that human beings are "condemned to be free" because no transcendent order predetermines their existence (Sartre 34–39). Mohanty's poem, however, resists such radical anthropocentrism. The ending of the sky does not imply the absence of transcendence. Rather, it reveals the inadequacy of human perception. The road ultimately continues "closer than the senses themselves."

Thus, transcendence has not disappeared; sensory consciousness has reached its limit. This distinction fundamentally separates Mohanty's philosophical imagination from classical atheistic existentialism. Sartre begins from the absence of metaphysical foundation. Mohanty begins from the insufficiency of empirical cognition. The difference is subtle yet decisive.

The poem remains open to transcendence without ever claiming to possess it. The declaration—"No, I can go no farther—" might initially seem to represent existential defeat. Yet the poem immediately subverts such an interpretation. Physical movement ceases only to make possible another kind of movement. The speaker now waits for "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets." The existential impasse therefore becomes epistemological transition.

This structural reversal distinguishes Mohanty's poetics from the literature of absurdity represented by Albert Camus. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus presents endless repetition as humanity's defining condition (Camus 119–23). Mohanty's traveler also confronts endless continuation, but the continuation is not repetitive. Every apparent ending opens a qualitatively new

horizon. The journey is spiral rather than circular. The road never merely repeats itself; it continually deepens. This distinction becomes especially important when considering the poem's concluding paradox:

"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves.

The existential implications of these lines are immense. Distance and proximity collapse into one another. The farthest reality becomes the nearest presence. The road extends beyond every conceivable destination while simultaneously residing within immediate consciousness. Such paradox cannot be explained through ordinary spatial logic. Instead, it belongs to what phenomenologists would describe as lived existential space rather than geometric space. Here Mohanty's vision approaches the thought of Gabriel Marcel more closely than Sartre or Camus. Marcel distinguished between problems, which can be solved objectively, and mysteries, in which the subject inevitably participates (Marcel 117–20). The road in Mohanty's poem is precisely such a mystery. It cannot be observed from outside because the traveler himself constitutes part of the road's unfolding reality. The poem's conception of selfhood also deserves careful examination. European existentialism often emphasizes radical individuality. Mohanty's speaker, by contrast, never becomes solipsistic. Even while confronting profound isolation, he continues to imagine communication: "*to make others understand after writing, and reading...*" The self, therefore, remains intrinsically relational. Authenticity does not require withdrawal from others but deeper participation in shared quests for meaning. This relational ontology reflects broader currents within Indian philosophical traditions while simultaneously preserving existential interiority.

Indeed, Mohanty's speaker repeatedly transcends the dichotomy between individual and collective existence. His helplessness is deeply personal, yet the *Mahābhārata* becomes its "alternative vocabulary." His search begins in solitude but culminates in civilizational memory. Such movement reveals a conception of identity fundamentally different from modern Western individualism. The self is singular without being isolated. The existential significance of the poem also lies in its treatment of failure. Modern culture frequently interprets failure as deficiency or defeat. Mohanty reverses this hierarchy. Every experience of limitation becomes another disclosure of reality. Failure acquires revelatory function. This insight recalls Karl Jaspers and his concept of "limit situations" (*Grenzsituationen*). Jaspers argued that certain experiences—death, suffering, guilt, struggle—cannot be eliminated because they belong to the structure of existence itself (Jaspers 177–84). Rather than obstructing philosophical awareness, such situations make it possible. Mohanty's poem exemplifies this insight with extraordinary poetic economy. The traveler arrives not at a destination but at a limit. Yet the limit becomes revelation.

The repeated motif of incompleteness is equally important. The poem never presents truth as possession. Instead, truth remains that "which has remained unseen till now." Every new

understanding reveals another horizon of ignorance. This conception aligns closely with existential openness while avoiding nihilistic relativism. One may compare this aspect of Mohanty's vision with the poetry of Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa repeatedly portrays identity as fragmented, provisional, and endlessly self-dividing. Mohanty also recognizes incompleteness, but his incompleteness possesses teleological orientation. The self remains unfinished because reality itself continues to invite deeper participation. Fragmentation becomes pilgrimage rather than disintegration. Another illuminating comparison may be drawn with Antonio Machado. Machado's celebrated lines—

"Traveler, there is no road;
the road is made by walking."
(*Campos de Castilla*)

have often been interpreted as quintessential expressions of existential becoming. Mohanty's poem appears at first to echo this sentiment. Yet upon closer examination, it advances a profoundly different proposition. Machado locates the road within human action; Mohanty locates human action within the road. The traveler does not create the road; he gradually discovers that the road infinitely exceeds every act of walking. Human agency gives way to ontological humility.

The poem, therefore, offers a subtle critique of existential voluntarism. Human freedom remains indispensable, but it is never absolute. One walks only because the road already beckons. One seeks only because truth already transcends every seeker. Freedom thus becomes participation rather than autonomous self-creation. The concluding paradox— "*closer than the senses themselves*" introduces yet another existential reversal. Modern empiricism generally assumes that sensory experience constitutes humanity's nearest access to reality. Mohanty suggests precisely the opposite. The deepest reality is nearer than sensation itself. Consciousness therefore contains dimensions inaccessible to empirical perception. Such a claim resonates with phenomenological philosophy while simultaneously recalling the Upanishadic insight that the ultimate is "nearer than the nearest and farther than the farthest." Yet Mohanty poetically transforms rather than merely repeats this ancient intuition. From an existential perspective, this image also dismantles the binary opposition between interiority and exteriority. The road is distant and near simultaneously. Truth exists beyond the senses yet within lived consciousness. Space itself becomes existential rather than geographical.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Mohanty's existential vision is its rejection of closure. The poem never resolves its tensions. No definitive revelation arrives. No final certainty emerges. Yet this absence should not be mistaken for pessimism. On the contrary, the refusal of closure becomes the poem's deepest affirmation. Human existence remains meaningful precisely because it continually exceeds every completed interpretation. In this respect, Mohanty's philosophical imagination may be described as post-existential rather than merely existential. Classical existentialism often begins with alienation and seeks authenticity. Mohanty begins with incompleteness and discovers inexhaustibility. The difference is

profound. Alienation isolates; inexhaustibility invites. The road continues because Being itself cannot be exhausted. Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* transforms the existential journey into an ontological pilgrimage. The traveler does not arrive at the end of the road only to encounter emptiness. He arrives at the end only to discover that the road has never belonged to endings at all. Every conclusion becomes another threshold, every limit another invitation, every silence another alphabet waiting to be spoken. In this vision, existence is neither tragic absurdity nor triumphant fulfillment. It is perpetual arrival—an endless movement toward a truth that remains infinitely approachable yet infinitely beyond possession.

VII. A VEDĀNTIC READING: THE ROAD BEYOND ENDINGS AS THE METAPHYSICS OF THE NEAREST INFINITE

Although *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is unmistakably a modern poem and should never be reduced to a religious allegory, its philosophical imagination repeatedly enters into profound dialogue with the metaphysical insights of the Upanishadic and Vedāntic traditions. It is important, however, to distinguish dialogue from derivation. Chandra Kumar Mohanty does not merely reproduce Vedāntic doctrine in poetic language. Rather, he reanimates certain perennial metaphysical intuitions through the existential anxieties of contemporary consciousness. His poem remains fundamentally literary even where it resonates with philosophical theology. Perhaps the strongest indication of this dialogue occurs in the poem's concluding declaration:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

The original Odia— "*Sari Saru Nathibā Dūra Bāta, / Indriyathum adūra nikaṭa*." (Mohanty 21) —is arguably among the most philosophically condensed couplets in modern Odia poetry. The apparent contradiction between distance (*dūra*) and nearness (*nikaṭa*) immediately recalls one of the most celebrated paradoxes of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*:

*"It moves; It moves not.
It is far; It is near.
It is within all this;
It is outside all this."* (Īśā Upaniṣad 5)

The resemblance should be approached with scholarly caution. Mohanty nowhere quotes the Upanishad directly, nor does he identify the "road" with Brahman or any explicitly theological reality. Nevertheless, both texts employ paradox not as rhetorical ornament but as metaphysical necessity. Ultimate reality cannot be captured through binary logic because it simultaneously transcends and includes apparent oppositions. Distance and nearness therefore become complementary rather than contradictory.

The poem's originality lies precisely in this transformation. The Upanishadic paradox concerns Being itself; Mohanty's paradox concerns the road. Yet the road gradually assumes ontological significance. It ceases to be a physical pathway and becomes the mode through which Being is approached. Thus the poem quietly

converts spatial imagery into metaphysical inquiry. The phrase "*Indriyathum adūra nikaṭa*" ("closer than the senses") deserves particular attention. Classical Vedānta repeatedly distinguishes between empirical cognition (*pratyakṣa*) mediated by the senses and higher realization (*aparokṣānubhūti*) that transcends sensory perception. Mohanty's line resonates with this distinction without doctrinally asserting it. The deepest reality is not perceived through the senses because it precedes the conditions under which sensory perception operates.

This insight also recalls the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, where the Self is described as subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.20). Mohanty's road is similarly paradoxical: it stretches beyond every conceivable ending while remaining nearer than immediate perception. Such spatial impossibility signals metaphysical rather than geographical reality. Yet Mohanty's poem differs significantly from classical Advaita Vedānta. Śaṅkara's non-dual philosophy ultimately resolves multiplicity into the identity of *ātman* and *brahman*. Mohanty refuses such systematic closure. His speaker never proclaims realization. He remains a seeker. The road continues precisely because realization is never finalized. In this respect, the poem preserves existential openness even while echoing Vedāntic intuition. The image of waiting for "the next alphabet/ beyond all alphabets" may likewise be interpreted through a Vedāntic lens. Language occupies an ambivalent position within Indian philosophy. On one hand, sacred revelation is transmitted through language; on the other, ultimate reality exceeds linguistic articulation. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* famously declares: "*From which words return, together with the mind, not attaining It.*" (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.9)

Mohanty's "next alphabet" poetically reimagines this apophatic insight. Existing linguistic systems remain insufficient before ultimate truth. However, unlike classical Vedānta, which often resolves linguistic insufficiency through direct realization, Mohanty's poem sustains the waiting itself. The anticipated alphabet never arrives within the text. Its perpetual postponement becomes the poem's governing rhythm.

This postponement has profound philosophical consequences. It prevents metaphysical certainty from replacing existential inquiry. The speaker does not claim privileged access to transcendence. Instead, transcendence remains horizon rather than possession. The motif of helplessness (*asahāyatā*) also acquires new significance within this framework. In Advaita Vedānta, ignorance (*avidyā*) constitutes the fundamental obstacle separating the individual from realization. Mohanty's helplessness is not identical with ignorance, yet both involve recognition of limitation. The crucial difference lies in emphasis. Vedānta often treats ignorance as an illusion to be overcome.

Mohanty treats helplessness as a phenomenological condition through which deeper awareness gradually emerges. Limitation becomes revelatory rather than merely obstructive. The line "I keep measuring / the farthest limits of my own helplessness." therefore possesses metaphysical resonance. Measurement here

resembles spiritual self-inquiry. Yet unlike the Advaitic method of *neti, neti* ("not this, not this"), the poem does not negate phenomena systematically. Instead, it observes them patiently until their insufficiency reveals another dimension of reality. An equally compelling Vedāntic reading emerges from the poem's treatment of truth (*satya*). The speaker confesses:

"Not even to behold the truth
that has remained unseen till now."

Truth is not denied; it remains unseen. This distinction is crucial. Modern skepticism frequently questions the existence of objective truth. Mohanty's poem never does so. The difficulty lies not in truth itself but in human capacity for perception. Such an orientation is deeply compatible with Indian metaphysical traditions, which generally distinguish between ultimate reality and conditioned cognition. Nevertheless, Mohanty carefully avoids theological triumphalism. The truth remains unseen throughout the poem. No revelatory climax occurs. Consequently, the poem retains its existential authenticity. It honors transcendence without domesticating it. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* further enriches the Vedāntic dimension. Rather than citing isolated philosophical doctrines, Mohanty refers to the "eighteen volumes" of the epic:

*"have been inscribed the eighteen volumes of the
Mahabharata—
the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness."*

The number eighteen inevitably recalls not only the structure of the *Mahābhārata* but also the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā embedded within it. Yet Mohanty pointedly refrains from mentioning the *Gītā* explicitly. This omission is philosophically meaningful. The poem invokes the epic's total complexity rather than privileging any single doctrinal moment. Ethical conflict, historical suffering, metaphysical inquiry, and existential bewilderment remain inseparable. Such restraint distinguishes Mohanty's poetic imagination from simplistic spiritual didacticism.

The *Mahābhārata* becomes not proof of theological certainty but an immense archive of human searching. Another fruitful comparison may be drawn with the concept of *mārga* ("path") in Indian philosophical traditions. Numerous schools—Vedānta, Yoga, Buddhism, Bhakti—describe spiritual life as a path leading toward realization. Mohanty's road initially appears to belong to this symbolic lineage. Yet it ultimately exceeds it. Traditional spiritual paths generally culminate in liberation (*mokṣa*).

Mohanty's road refuses culmination. It continues beyond its own ending. Liberation itself becomes another beginning. This is perhaps the poem's most radical philosophical innovation. The road is not simply infinite in duration; it is infinite in structure. Every ending generates another horizon. Such a conception transforms linear pilgrimage into perpetual ontological unfolding. The poem also subtly revises the Vedāntic understanding of proximity. Classical Advaita often insists that Brahman is already one's own innermost Self; realization

consists in recognizing what has always been the case. Mohanty's road is likewise "closer than the senses," yet it remains something to be sought. Nearness does not abolish searching. Instead, searching becomes the mode through which nearness is continually rediscovered.

This paradox resembles the devotional insight found in many Bhakti traditions, where the Divine is simultaneously intimate and elusive. However, Mohanty's language remains rigorously non-sectarian. The road belongs to no particular theology. It functions as a universal metaphor for inexhaustible reality. The philosophical sophistication of the poem becomes even more apparent when viewed against the history of modern Indian literature. Many modern poets have either rejected traditional metaphysics in favor of secular existentialism or embraced spirituality through overt symbolism. Mohanty chooses a more demanding path. He neither abandons metaphysical possibility nor surrenders critical modern consciousness. His poem inhabits the productive tension between the two. This tension allows *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* to participate in what may be called a post-metaphysical spirituality. The poem remains spiritually resonant without becoming dogmatic, philosophically rigorous without becoming abstract, and existentially authentic without collapsing into skepticism.

Ultimately, a Vedāntic reading illuminates the poem not because it identifies hidden doctrinal meanings but because it reveals how Mohanty's imagination revitalizes ancient philosophical intuitions within contemporary poetic language. The road that continues beyond its ending resembles the Upanishadic infinite, yet it remains unmistakably the road of a modern traveler. The truth remains unseen, yet never absent. Language fails, yet another alphabet is awaited. Helplessness deepens, yet so does understanding. Thus, the poem neither repeats Vedānta nor merely alludes to it. It recreates the metaphysical experience of nearness without possession, transcendence without closure, and infinity without abstraction. In doing so, Chandra Kumar Mohanty demonstrates that the oldest philosophical insights may still find radically new expression when refracted through the consciousness of a poet who understands that every authentic road begins precisely where ordinary endings believe themselves complete.

VIII. THE BUDDHIST HORIZON: IMPERMANENCE, EMPTINESS, AND THE POETICS OF THE UNFINISHED PATH

If the previous section demonstrated the poem's profound resonances with Upanishadic and Vedāntic metaphysics, an equally illuminating—though fundamentally different—philosophical dialogue may be established with Buddhist thought. Such a reading requires particular critical discipline. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is neither a Buddhist poem nor an adaptation of Buddhist philosophy. Nowhere does the poem mention the Buddha, *nirvāṇa*, the Four Noble Truths, or any explicitly Buddhist terminology. Nevertheless, certain structural affinities between the poem's philosophical imagination and Buddhist modes of thinking are

too significant to ignore. These affinities emerge not at the level of doctrinal content but through a shared phenomenology of impermanence, incompleteness, and the continual transcendence of conceptual fixation. The poem opens with an image that immediately destabilizes permanence: *"Here, the sky itself has already come to an end."* This is followed by another sequence of dissolving realities:

*"sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams,
even the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away, slipping into the abyss..."*

The cumulative force of these images is unmistakable. Every apparently stable element of existence—the sky, sleep, the earth—reveals itself as radically unstable. Nothing retains immutable identity. The world is experienced not as fixed substance but as continual dissolution. Such imagery inevitably recalls the Buddhist doctrine of *anitya* (impermanence), according to which all conditioned phenomena arise and pass away without enduring essence. Yet Mohanty's poem should not be read as a poetic paraphrase of this doctrine. His concern is not metaphysical explanation but existential experience. The speaker does not announce that all things are impermanent; he undergoes impermanence. Philosophy remains embodied in lived consciousness rather than abstract proposition. The Odia expression *"Pāda taḷu māṭi bi aṭāḍā khaṣi dhaṣi jāuchhi..."* is especially revealing. The earth does not simply disappear; it continuously collapses. This ongoing movement rather than completed destruction is crucial. Impermanence is experienced as process rather than event. Reality is perpetually becoming other than itself. This dynamic understanding of existence distinguishes Mohanty's poem from many modern existential texts in which collapse often culminates in nihilistic despair. Here collapse becomes revelation. Stability proves illusory, but the recognition of illusion opens another dimension of awareness. From this perspective, the poem's repeated emphasis on incompleteness acquires profound philosophical significance. The traveler repeatedly confronts unfinishedness:

*"Not even to behold the truth
that has remained unseen till now."*

Truth remains inaccessible, yet the search continues. This perpetual deferral bears an interesting resemblance to the Buddhist distinction between conceptual knowledge and direct realization. Intellectual understanding alone cannot exhaust reality because conceptual thought inevitably reifies what is fundamentally fluid. The metaphor of "the next alphabet/beyond all alphabets" may likewise be approached through this lens. Existing alphabets symbolize established conceptual systems. Waiting for another alphabet suggests the inadequacy of habitual modes of cognition. Buddhist philosophy repeatedly warns against attachment to conceptual formulations, insisting that language functions as a provisional means rather than ultimate truth. Mohanty's poem exhibits a comparable awareness. Existing linguistic structures remain indispensable, yet they cannot finally contain reality. It is important, however, not to overextend this comparison. Buddhist thought generally emphasizes liberation from attachment to conceptual

distinctions, whereas Mohanty's speaker remains passionately committed to language itself. He continues to speak, write, and attempt communication. The poem therefore values language while simultaneously recognizing its limitations. It is neither anti-linguistic nor anti-intellectual. The notion of waiting also deserves careful examination. Throughout Buddhist literature, patient attentiveness often replaces acquisitive striving. Mohanty's traveler similarly reaches a point where active movement ceases: "No, I can go no farther—" At first glance, this declaration appears to signal defeat. Yet the poem immediately transforms immobility into expectancy:

*"To stop here means
to wait..."*

The distinction between stopping and waiting is philosophically decisive. Stopping implies cessation; waiting implies openness. The traveler no longer advances physically, but consciousness remains intensely receptive. This receptivity resembles meditative awareness more closely than passive resignation. Indeed, one might say that the poem gradually shifts from the phenomenology of movement to the phenomenology of attention. The external journey slows precisely so that inward perception may deepen. Such movement from restless activity toward contemplative presence finds significant parallels within Buddhist meditative traditions, although Mohanty's poem never explicitly advocates meditation. Another fruitful comparison concerns the poem's treatment of the self. Modern Western philosophy often assumes an autonomous, stable subject confronting an external world. Buddhist philosophy famously questions the permanence of such a self through the doctrine of *anātman* (non-self). Mohanty's poem does not deny personal identity, yet the speaking subject repeatedly dissolves fixed boundaries between self and world. Consider the remarkable image:

*"spread out like the wind,
remaining at a distance where no one can ever see..."*

The speaker's consciousness appears to diffuse into elemental reality. Identity becomes atmospheric rather than substantial. The self is no longer enclosed within the individual body but expands into an indeterminate spatial field. Such imagery does not establish the Buddhist doctrine of non-self, but it certainly destabilizes rigid notions of individuality. The metaphor of wind carries additional philosophical resonance. Throughout Indian thought, wind frequently symbolizes movement, impermanence, and invisible presence. Mohanty's comparison avoids sentimental lyricism. The speaker does not become heroic or transcendent; he simply becomes difficult to localize. Identity itself grows fluid. The poem's relation to desire also invites Buddhist interpretation. The opening lines present a striking inversion:

*"sleep has deserted the eyes
in pursuit of dreams."*

Ordinarily, dreams arise from sleep. Here dreams drive away sleep. Desire undermines the very condition that would make fulfillment possible. Such reversal recalls Buddhist analyses of

craving (*trṣṇā*), according to which attachment perpetuates dissatisfaction by continually displacing fulfillment into an unattainable future. Yet Mohanty's treatment remains more nuanced than a straightforward critique of desire. Dreams are not condemned. Rather, the poem reveals the paradoxical relationship between aspiration and exhaustion. Human beings require dreams, yet dreams simultaneously unsettle repose. Desire becomes both burden and necessity. This ambivalence distinguishes the poem from purely ascetic philosophies. Mohanty's speaker never abandons searching. Even after acknowledging exhaustion, he continues to seek another alphabet, another truth, another road. Desire is transformed rather than extinguished. The concluding image of "*the distant road that continues beyond its ending*" also bears interesting comparison with the Buddhist notion of the Path (*Mārga*). Traditionally, the Noble Eightfold Path culminates in liberation from suffering. Mohanty's road, however, refuses completion. It extends beyond every conclusion.

This difference is crucial. Buddhist philosophy generally understands the path as finite because liberation is possible. Mohanty's road is structurally infinite. Every arrival reveals another horizon. Consequently, the poem's metaphysics remains more radically open-ended than classical Buddhist soteriology. Nevertheless, both traditions share a profound suspicion toward final conceptual closure. The traveler continues because reality remains inexhaustible. One may also approach the poem through the Buddhist understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), particularly as articulated by Nāgārjuna. Emptiness does not signify nonexistence but the absence of independent, self-sufficient essence. Things exist relationally rather than absolutely. Mohanty's poem repeatedly undermines independent identities. The road cannot be separated from the traveler. Language cannot be separated from silence. Distance cannot be separated from nearness. Endings cannot be separated from continuations. Every apparent opposition gradually reveals mutual dependence. This relational logic strongly resembles dialectical thinking without becoming systematic philosophy. The poem embodies relationality poetically rather than arguing for it conceptually.

The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* also acquires new significance within this Buddhist horizon. The epic becomes "*the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness*." Vocabulary itself is provisional. No linguistic system possesses absolute authority. Every vocabulary remains one among many possible modes of articulation. Such openness parallels the Buddhist notion of *upāya* (skillful means), according to which different teachings function as context-sensitive vehicles rather than immutable dogmas. Again, caution is necessary. Mohanty's poem never explicitly invokes *upāya*. Yet its pluralistic attitude toward language and interpretation resonates with this broader philosophical sensibility. Perhaps the most profound Buddhist affinity appears in the poem's refusal of possessive knowledge. Truth remains "unseen." The treasure remains sought rather than possessed. The road remains unfinished. Every certainty gives way to another question. This epistemological humility stands in sharp contrast to ideological absolutism. The poem refuses to

convert philosophical insight into dogmatic certainty. Such restraint represents one of its greatest intellectual strengths.

Stylistically, this humility is reinforced through remarkable linguistic simplicity. Mohanty does not employ obscure metaphysical terminology. Instead, ordinary words—road, sky, earth, alphabet, writing, reading—gradually acquire extraordinary philosophical depth. This strategy recalls the best traditions of Buddhist literary expression, where simplicity often conceals profound conceptual sophistication. At the same time, the poem remains unmistakably modern. Its concern with language, communication, historical consciousness, and existential uncertainty places it firmly within contemporary literary discourse. Buddhist resonances therefore enrich rather than define its meaning.

Ultimately, a Buddhist reading reveals that *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* understands reality as fundamentally processual rather than static. Every certainty dissolves. Every ending opens another beginning. Every completed form points beyond itself. Yet this perpetual transformation never descends into nihilism because incompleteness itself becomes the source of inexhaustible meaning. The traveler does not discover liberation by escaping the road. He discovers that the road's refusal to end is itself the deepest revelation. Reality is not something finally possessed but endlessly participated in. The unfinished path thus becomes the highest symbol of an existence whose deepest truth lies not in arrival but in continual awakening.

IX. DECONSTRUCTION, POST-STRUCTURALISM, AND THE SEMIOTICS OF THE UNFINISHED ROAD: THE ENDLESS DEFERRAL OF MEANING

Among the numerous philosophical and critical frameworks through which *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* may be approached, post-structuralism—particularly deconstruction—offers one of the most intellectually stimulating perspectives. Nevertheless, this approach demands methodological precision. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's poem should not be simplistically labeled a "deconstructive poem," nor should it be interpreted as if it consciously illustrates the theories of twentieth-century French philosophy. Rather, the poem exhibits a remarkable affinity with certain post-structuralist insights concerning language, meaning, absence, textuality, and the instability of closure. These affinities emerge organically from the poem's own poetic logic rather than from theoretical imitation. Perhaps no image better demonstrates this than the title itself: "*The Road That Outlives Its Own End*." Even before the poem begins, the title destabilizes one of the most fundamental conceptual binaries in human cognition—the opposition between ending and continuation. In ordinary language, a road ends because ending defines the road's limit. Mohanty quietly dismantles this assumption. The road survives its own ending. Consequently, the "end" no longer functions as a terminal point but as another stage within an ongoing process.

This paradox immediately recalls one of the central insights of Jacques Derrida: meaning never reaches absolute completion because every sign continually refers beyond itself to other signs

in an endless process of differentiation and deferral (Derrida 23–27). Derrida famously coined the term *différance* to describe this simultaneous difference and postponement of meaning. Mohanty's road may be read as an extraordinary poetic analogue to this philosophical insight. The road does not culminate in final presence. Instead, every apparent destination generates another horizon. Meaning behaves exactly like the road: it continues beyond every conclusion. This structural principle governs the poem from beginning to end. The opening question— "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" appears to seek a measurable answer.

Yet the poem never supplies one. Instead of determining distance, it continually expands it. Every attempt to establish a limit produces another uncertainty. Similarly, the declaration "*Here, the sky itself has already come to an end.*" appears at first to define a final boundary. Yet the remainder of the poem immediately proceeds beyond that supposed ending. The ending of the sky therefore proves to be not an end at all but another textual threshold. This constant displacement of closure constitutes one of the poem's most remarkable structural achievements.

The original Odia title— "*Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*" —is itself semantically unstable in productive ways. The repetition of "*Sari*" (ending) alongside "*Saru Nathibā*" (not ending after ending) generates a linguistic oscillation that resists definitive conceptual stabilization. The phrase simultaneously asserts and denies completion. Such oscillation exemplifies what post-structuralist criticism identifies as the productive undecidability of literary language. Literary meaning does not collapse into confusion; rather, it becomes richer precisely because it resists reduction. The metaphor of "*the next alphabet/ beyond all alphabets*" perhaps represents the poem's most explicitly semiotic moment. An alphabet ordinarily functions as the foundational system from which language derives. It appears complete, stable, and self-sufficient. Mohanty radically overturns this assumption. If another alphabet exists beyond every alphabet, then no linguistic system can claim ultimate completeness. Every language already points beyond itself toward another possible language. The implications are enormous. The poem no longer questions merely vocabulary or syntax. It questions the very architecture of signification. One alphabet becomes only a provisional arrangement within an infinite sequence of possible symbolic systems. Such a conception resonates strikingly with post-structuralist critiques of linguistic totality. Yet Mohanty's poetic imagination remains importantly distinct from Derridean philosophy.

For Derrida, the endless play of signification frequently undermines metaphysical claims to stable presence. Mohanty, however, never abandons truth. Indeed, he repeatedly speaks of "*the remaining uncomprehended truth.*" Truth therefore exists. What remains unstable is humanity's capacity to articulate it. This distinction cannot be overstated. Derrida often interrogates metaphysical presence itself. Mohanty interrogates linguistic adequacy while preserving ontological faith. His poem therefore

represents neither classical metaphysics nor radical linguistic skepticism. Instead, it constructs what may be called **epistemological humility**. Meaning exists. Human expression remains unfinished. This position also differentiates Mohanty's poem from certain strands of postmodern relativism. Nothing in the poem suggests that every interpretation is equally valid. Rather, interpretation remains permanently incomplete because reality continually exceeds interpretive systems.

The line "to write,/ to make others understand after writing, and reading..." beautifully illustrates this dynamic. Writing does not conclude understanding. Reading does not conclude understanding. Even communication itself remains unfinished. Every act of interpretation produces another interpretive possibility. Hermeneutics therefore becomes endless dialogue rather than definitive explanation. This insight recalls Hans-Georg Gadamer more than radical postmodernism. Gadamer repeatedly argues that understanding is historically effected (*wirkungsgeschichtlich*); every interpretation emerges from particular historical horizons that continually change (Gadamer 269–74).

Mohanty's poem dramatizes precisely such openness. The "remaining uncomprehended truth" preserves future interpretation. Consequently, literature survives because it cannot be exhausted. One may also examine the poem through the post-structuralist notion of binary opposition. Throughout Western philosophical tradition, meaning has frequently depended upon hierarchical binaries:

- beginning / ending
- presence / absence
- speech / writing
- truth / illusion
- distance / nearness
- completion / incompleteness

Mohanty's poem systematically unsettles each of these. Beginning and ending merge. Distance becomes nearness. Writing does not merely record truth; it searches for it. Speech no longer possesses priority over writing. Indeed, writing itself becomes another stage of philosophical exploration. The poem therefore quietly dismantles hierarchical oppositions without collapsing them into sameness. Instead, opposites remain mutually illuminating. The title itself exemplifies this dialectic. The road exists because ending exists. Ending exists because continuation exceeds it. Each term requires the other. Neither possesses independent priority. The same logic governs the image of helplessness. Ordinarily, helplessness signifies weakness. Yet Mohanty transforms it into philosophical strength. Its opposite— "*the priceless treasure I have been seeking for*" —can be recognized only through helplessness itself. Weakness therefore becomes the condition of wisdom. The binary reverses itself. This continual inversion resembles deconstructive reading, which often reveals that hierarchical oppositions secretly depend upon the supposedly inferior term. Another particularly revealing image is "*the sky itself has already come to an end.*" Conventionally, the sky functions as

literature's supreme symbol of openness. Mohanty allows the sky to end. Yet paradoxically, the road continues. The traditional hierarchy is reversed. The earthbound road proves more infinite than the heavens. Spatial symbolism undergoes complete redistribution. This inversion represents not decorative originality but conceptual innovation. The poem repeatedly relocates infinity into unexpected places. Perhaps the most philosophically sophisticated example of textual undecidability occurs in the final couplet:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

How can something be simultaneously distant and nearer than perception? Classical logic would demand one alternative. Poetry refuses such reduction. The contradiction is not resolved. Instead, readers are invited to inhabit it. Meaning therefore emerges through tension rather than resolution. This is precisely where Mohanty's poem transcends theoretical illustration and becomes genuine philosophical literature. The paradox is not inserted to demonstrate a theory. It arises organically from lived experience. One may also observe an intriguing relationship between Mohanty's poem and Roland Barthes' conception of the "writerly text." Barthes distinguishes texts that simply communicate fixed meanings from those that invite readers into active production of meaning. *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* unmistakably belongs to the latter category. Every major image—the road, the alphabet, the sky, the earth, the *Mahābhārata*, the unseen truth—remains intentionally open. Readers become participants rather than consumers. Meaning is co-created through interpretation.

Yet Mohanty again differs from radical textual pluralism. Interpretive openness never becomes interpretive anarchy. The poem quietly disciplines interpretation through its own philosophical coherence. Not every reading is equally persuasive. The textual structure continually guides responsible interpretation. This balance between openness and discipline represents one of the poem's greatest artistic achievements. Another post-structuralist dimension concerns absence. The poem repeatedly organizes itself around what is missing.

- The unseen truth.
- The next alphabet.
- The priceless treasure.
- The road beyond ending.

Each central image refers toward absence rather than presence. Yet absence functions positively. It generates movement. It sustains desire. It keeps interpretation alive. Absence therefore becomes productive rather than deficient. This insight aligns with the broader phenomenology of desire articulated by many twentieth-century thinkers. Human beings seek because reality always exceeds possession. Mohanty's poem transforms this existential condition into poetic form. Even its syntax often postpones closure. Clauses accumulate. Meanings expand. Conclusions open into further beginnings. The structure of the poem therefore performs its own philosophy.

Its form becomes its argument. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Mohanty's engagement with linguistic instability is that it never degenerates into cynicism. Many postmodern texts celebrate fragmentation for its own sake. Mohanty's poem does not. Fragmentation exists because reality remains inexhaustible, not because reality has disappeared. Meaning remains possible. Completion remains impossible. There is an immense philosophical difference between these two propositions. Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* offers something far richer than a poetic illustration of deconstruction. It develops what may appropriately be called a **constructive deconstruction**. Every certainty is questioned, but questioning serves discovery rather than destruction. Every ending dissolves, but dissolution reveals another path. Every alphabet proves insufficient, but insufficiency awakens expectation. Every interpretation remains incomplete, but incompleteness becomes the condition of literary immortality. Thus, the road survives its own ending because meaning itself survives every interpretation. The poem never reaches a final destination because genuine literature never does. Its greatest achievement lies precisely here: it transforms the endless deferral of meaning from a philosophical problem into the very source of poetic transcendence.

X. HERMENEUTICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTERPRETATION: *SARI SARU NATHIBĀ BĀTA* AS AN OPEN TEXT OF PERPETUAL MEANING

One of the distinguishing characteristics of truly great poetry is that it resists interpretive exhaustion. Such poetry refuses to become a closed linguistic object whose meaning may be extracted once and for all through a single authoritative reading. Instead, it continually renews itself before successive generations of readers, cultures, philosophical traditions, and historical contexts. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* belongs unmistakably to this rare category of literature. The poem does not simply communicate an idea; it creates an interpretive event. Every serious reading enlarges rather than concludes its significance. Consequently, the poem invites a hermeneutic approach that recognizes meaning as an unfolding dialogue between text, reader, history, and consciousness.

Modern philosophical hermeneutics, particularly as developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, argues that understanding is never a mechanical recovery of an author's original intention. Instead, understanding is a "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) in which the historical world of the text and the historical situation of the reader enter into a living conversation (Gadamer 305–07). Mohanty's poem exemplifies precisely this hermeneutic vitality. Every image in the poem remains sufficiently concrete to preserve its poetic integrity and sufficiently open to accommodate continually renewed philosophical interpretations. The road is simultaneously literal and symbolic; the alphabet is both linguistic and metaphysical; the *Mahābhārata* is at once a civilizational text and a vocabulary of existential helplessness. Such semantic plurality does not produce ambiguity in the negative sense. Rather, it creates interpretive abundance.

The poem's opening question immediately establishes this hermeneutic openness: "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" At the level of immediate narration, the speaker appears to ask about physical exhaustion. Yet the more one reflects upon the question, the more expansive its significance becomes. Is the distance geographical, psychological, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, historical, or ontological? The poem deliberately refuses to specify. This refusal is not a defect but an artistic strategy. By withholding interpretive closure, Mohanty compels readers to participate actively in the construction of meaning. The question gradually becomes the reader's own question. In this way, interpretation itself becomes another stage of the road. The original Odia line— "*Āu bā kete dūraku jāiheba?*" (Mohanty 21) possesses an almost conversational simplicity. Yet its philosophical elasticity is remarkable. Every generation may hear a different question within the same words. A political reader may hear the exhaustion of history; an existential philosopher may hear the limit of human freedom; a spiritual reader may hear the soul's longing for transcendence; a literary critic may hear the endless journey of language itself. The poem authorizes none of these readings exclusively while excluding none absolutely. Such openness constitutes one of the hallmarks of literary greatness.

The same hermeneutic richness characterizes the poem's extraordinary metaphor of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets." At first glance, the image appears to concern language. Yet every subsequent reading reveals additional dimensions. The alphabet may signify epistemological paradigms, philosophical systems, scientific revolutions, cultural transformations, spiritual awakenings, aesthetic innovations, or even future forms of consciousness that humanity has not yet imagined. The image therefore continually exceeds its own explanatory frameworks. Like the road itself, its meaning survives every attempted ending. This inexhaustibility recalls the philosophical insight of Paul Ricoeur, who argued that symbols and literary texts "give rise to thought" rather than merely expressing pre-existing ideas (Ricoeur 348–51). Mohanty's images do not function as decorative illustrations of philosophical concepts. Instead, they generate philosophical reflection. The reader does not simply decode the poem; the poem gradually educates the reader into deeper modes of thinking.

An equally important hermeneutic feature of the poem lies in its treatment of silence. Modern literary criticism often privileges what texts explicitly say, but hermeneutic philosophy repeatedly reminds us that meaning also resides in what texts deliberately leave unsaid. Mohanty's poem repeatedly organizes itself around productive absences. The unseen truth remains unseen. The next alphabet is anticipated but never revealed. The priceless treasure is sought but never named. Even the road that continues beyond its ending is never described in concrete terms. These omissions are not gaps awaiting completion by the critic. They are constitutive features of the poem's philosophical architecture. This insight becomes particularly significant when considering the line: "*the remaining uncomprehended truth.*" The adjective

"remaining" deserves close attention. It implies that understanding has indeed occurred, yet something essential still escapes comprehension. Interpretation therefore becomes cumulative rather than absolute. Every act of reading enlarges understanding while simultaneously revealing further depths that remain inaccessible. Such a conception fundamentally opposes both dogmatic certainty and skeptical nihilism. Meaning exists, but it is inexhaustible.

The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* further intensifies this hermeneutic complexity. By describing the epic as "the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness," Mohanty transforms one text into the interpretive language of another. The *Mahābhārata* itself becomes a hermeneutic instrument rather than merely an object of reference. At the same time, Mohanty's own poem now enters the expanding interpretive tradition of Indian literature. Future readers may well employ *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* as a vocabulary through which other literary works are understood. Thus the poem participates in an ongoing chain of interpretation extending across centuries.

The relationship between author and reader is likewise transformed. Classical literary criticism often sought to recover authorial intention as the definitive meaning of the text. Contemporary hermeneutics recognizes that literary works inevitably exceed the conscious intentions of their creators. Mohanty's poem illustrates this principle beautifully. Whether or not the poet consciously intended every philosophical resonance explored in this study is ultimately secondary. Once created, the poem acquires interpretive autonomy. It enters history as an independent work of art capable of generating meanings unavailable even to its author. This is not a betrayal of authorship but one of literature's greatest achievements. The poem also exemplifies what Wolfgang Iser termed the "indeterminacy" of literary texts. According to Iser, readers actively complete texts by negotiating their structured gaps (Iser 274–78). Mohanty's poem contains precisely such productive indeterminacies. What is the unseen truth? What constitutes the priceless treasure? Why does the road continue beyond its ending? These questions remain unanswered because the poem requires the reader's imaginative participation. Reading therefore becomes an event of co-creation rather than passive reception. Yet it is equally important to emphasize that Mohanty's openness never degenerates into interpretive chaos. The poem possesses remarkable structural coherence. Every major image—the road, the sky, the alphabet, helplessness, the *Mahābhārata*, truth—contributes to a unified philosophical vision centered upon incompleteness, searching, and transcendence beyond conceptual closure. Responsible interpretation must therefore remain accountable to the textual fabric itself. Hermeneutic openness does not authorize arbitrary readings.

Another striking feature of the poem is its capacity to generate successive levels of interpretation without invalidating earlier ones. A first reading may experience the poem as an expression of personal exhaustion. A second reading discovers its existential depth. A third recognizes its linguistic philosophy. A fourth perceives its Vedāntic and Buddhist resonances. A fifth situates

it within comparative world literature. None of these readings cancels the others. Instead, they accumulate into an increasingly complex understanding. Such layered interpretability is characteristic of literary masterpieces. The poem's closing image offers perhaps the clearest demonstration of this hermeneutic multiplicity:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

Every phrase simultaneously opens and resists interpretation. The road may be history, consciousness, truth, poetry, language, or Being itself. Distance may signify transcendence, while nearness may suggest inward realization. The senses may represent empirical cognition, whose limits the poem repeatedly interrogates. Yet none of these interpretations finally exhausts the image. It remains perpetually generative. Every serious reading discovers another dimension without abolishing those already perceived.

In this respect, Mohanty's poem invites comparison with the greatest hermeneutic texts of world literature. Like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the Upanishads, Shakespeare's tragedies, or T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, it sustains multiple interpretive horizons simultaneously. However, Mohanty's achievement remains distinctively his own. His philosophical complexity emerges not from encyclopedic allusion or elaborate symbolic systems but from extraordinary concentration. A remarkably brief lyric becomes the site of almost inexhaustible reflection. The enduring power of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* therefore lies not merely in what it says but in what it enables. It enlarges the reader's capacity for interpretation. It teaches that genuine understanding is never identical with conceptual possession. Every insight becomes another beginning. Every interpretation becomes another road. Every conclusion opens another horizon.

Ultimately, the poem itself enacts the very principle it proclaims. Just as the road continues beyond its ending, so too does interpretation continue beyond every reading. No scholarly article, however comprehensive, can finally conclude the poem because the poem has already anticipated and surpassed every attempt at finality. Its greatest philosophical lesson is therefore also its greatest hermeneutic lesson: authentic meaning is not something that arrives at an end but something that continually unfolds beyond every imaginable conclusion.

XI. PHENOMENOLOGY OF PERCEPTION, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND LIVED EXPERIENCE: THE INVISIBLE GEOGRAPHY OF BEING

Among the many philosophical frameworks through which *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* may be examined, phenomenology offers one of the most illuminating avenues because Chandra Kumar Mohanty's poem is fundamentally concerned not with abstract metaphysical speculation alone but with the manner in which reality is experienced in consciousness. The poem never argues philosophically; it experiences philosophically. It does not formulate doctrines regarding truth, existence, language, or transcendence. Instead, it allows these realities to emerge

through lived perception. In this sense, the poem exemplifies one of the defining characteristics of phenomenological thought: it returns philosophical inquiry to the immediacy of experience before that experience is organized into rigid conceptual systems. Reality is encountered before it is explained. Consequently, every image in the poem functions not merely as a metaphor but as a phenomenological event through which consciousness gradually discovers its own structure. The poem begins with what appears to be a simple experiential question: *"How much farther can one possibly go?"* The significance of this question lies not in the geographical distance it invokes but in the consciousness that experiences distance. The poem does not provide measurable coordinates. It does not identify landscapes, roads, cities, or destinations. Instead, distance becomes an interior phenomenon. The farther one reads, the clearer it becomes that the poem is mapping the topography of consciousness rather than physical terrain. The road exists because consciousness experiences movement. Without consciousness, there is no existential distance to measure.

This insight resonates with the phenomenological investigations of Edmund Husserl, who insisted that philosophy must return "to the things themselves" by examining the structures through which phenomena appear in consciousness (Husserl 45–49). Mohanty's poem embodies this methodological intuition in poetic rather than philosophical language. The sky, earth, dreams, helplessness, truth, and the road are never treated as detached objective entities. They are realities as lived, perceived, and inwardly constituted. The line *"Here, the sky itself has already come to an end"* illustrates this phenomenological orientation with remarkable precision.

No empirical observer could literally verify the ending of the sky. The statement therefore belongs to the domain of lived experience rather than objective description. The sky ends because consciousness reaches a limit beyond which its habitual orientation can no longer extend. The image records an existential perception, not an astronomical event. The original Odia expression, *"Eṭhi ta ākāśa sari jāichhi..."* (Mohanty 21) possesses an immediacy that strengthens this interpretation. The demonstrative *"Eṭhi"* ("here") anchors the experience within the speaker's present consciousness. The ending of the sky is not universally asserted as an objective fact. It is encountered here, within this particular mode of being. Such localization transforms the image into a phenomenological disclosure. Reality appears differently because consciousness has changed. The poem proceeds to another extraordinary experiential reversal: "sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams." Ordinarily, dreams emerge from sleep. Mohanty reverses this relationship. Consciousness now experiences desire in such intensity that the natural rhythm of sleep itself is displaced. This inversion cannot be adequately explained through psychology alone. It reveals the complex intentional structure of consciousness. In phenomenological terminology, consciousness is always consciousness of something. Here, the "something" is dream, possibility, anticipation. Consciousness reaches outward toward an absent future so intensely that immediate bodily

presence becomes unsettled. This dynamic recalls the phenomenology of intentionality developed by Husserl, though Mohanty's poetic treatment remains considerably richer because it integrates intellectual, emotional, and existential dimensions into a single image. The pursuit of dreams becomes the very condition of sleeplessness. Aspiration and exhaustion become phenomenologically inseparable. The subsequent image deepens this experiential crisis:

*"even the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away, slipping into the abyss."*

The earth traditionally symbolizes certainty, stability, and ontological grounding. Yet in Mohanty's poem, the earth is not objectively destroyed. Rather, it is experienced as losing solidity. The image therefore concerns the collapse of existential confidence rather than geological catastrophe. Consciousness discovers that the foundations upon which it has relied are no longer self-evident. This experiential destabilization bears interesting comparison with the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger repeatedly argued that everyday existence conceals the deeper question of Being until familiar structures suddenly become unstable (Heidegger 169–75). Mohanty's poem similarly portrays the disintegration of ordinary certainties. However, unlike Heidegger's often austere philosophical prose, Mohanty translates ontological disturbance into vividly concrete poetic imagery. The earth collapses because consciousness has entered a more profound encounter with existence.

Yet Mohanty's vision ultimately diverges from Heidegger in a significant respect. Heidegger frequently emphasizes anxiety as the privileged mood through which Being becomes disclosed. Mohanty's speaker certainly experiences anxiety, but anxiety never becomes the final horizon. Instead, it gradually transforms into expectation. The collapse of certainty prepares the way for another alphabet, another truth, another road. Perhaps the most phenomenologically complex passage in the poem occurs when the speaker observes:

*"spread out like the wind,
remaining at a distance where no one can ever see,
I keep measuring
the farthest limits of my own helplessness."*

The image operates simultaneously on multiple experiential levels. First, consciousness experiences itself as dispersed rather than localized. The self no longer occupies a fixed point but expands "like the wind." Second, visibility itself becomes problematic. The speaker inhabits a distance beyond ordinary perception. Third, measurement turns inward. Instead of measuring external objects, consciousness measures its own helplessness. This movement from objective observation toward reflexive awareness represents one of the poem's greatest phenomenological achievements. Consciousness becomes both subject and object of investigation. Yet the investigation never objectifies the self completely because the measuring itself remains a lived experience. The phrase "the farthest limits of my own helplessness" deserves sustained attention. Helplessness is not merely endured; it is examined. Such examination transforms

suffering into insight. Consciousness no longer passively receives experience but actively reflects upon its own condition. Reflection itself becomes another mode of journeying. One may compare this with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose philosophy repeatedly emphasized that perception is embodied rather than detached (Merleau-Ponty 67–73). Mohanty's poem likewise refuses the separation of mind and body. The eyes lose sleep. The feet lose the earth. Movement ceases. Waiting begins. Every philosophical realization remains inseparable from bodily experience. This embodied dimension reaches extraordinary expression in the line: "No, I can go no farther." The statement appears physically grounded, yet it simultaneously signifies the exhaustion of cognition, language, certainty, and selfhood. Bodily limitation becomes existential revelation. The body is not merely biological; it is the primary site through which Being is encountered. Remarkably, the poem does not end with this exhaustion. Instead, it immediately introduces waiting:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

From a phenomenological perspective, waiting constitutes a unique mode of temporal consciousness. Waiting is neither simple inactivity nor completed action. It is intentional openness toward a future that cannot yet be fully anticipated. Consciousness extends beyond the present without possessing the future. This temporal structure profoundly enriches the poem's philosophy of experience. The "next alphabet" is especially significant because it has not yet appeared. Nevertheless, consciousness already orients itself toward it. The absent future therefore influences present experience. Such temporal intentionality illustrates one of the central insights of phenomenological philosophy: consciousness is never imprisoned within an isolated present but continually stretches toward horizons of possibility. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* likewise acquires phenomenological significance. The epic functions not merely as cultural memory but as lived memory. The speaker experiences his own helplessness through the interpretive horizon provided by the eighteen books of the epic. Past and present interpenetrate within consciousness. History becomes experiential rather than chronological. The poem's final paradox— *"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,/ yet lies closer than the senses themselves."* may be regarded as the culmination of its phenomenology. Ordinary perception assumes that what is nearest is immediately accessible through the senses. Mohanty quietly overturns this assumption. The deepest reality is nearer than sensation itself. Consciousness therefore contains dimensions more intimate than empirical perception can disclose. This insight finds intriguing resonance with Merleau-Ponty's notion that perception always opens onto an inexhaustible horizon exceeding what is immediately given.

Mohanty's road similarly exceeds every sensory disclosure while remaining profoundly intimate. The invisible becomes phenomenologically nearer than the visible. At the same time,

the poem refuses to dissolve experience into abstract transcendence. The road remains a road. The alphabet remains an alphabet. The earth remains earth. Mohanty's genius lies in preserving the concreteness of experience while allowing that experience to disclose metaphysical depth. Symbol never abolishes reality; it intensifies it. This capacity distinguishes the poem from purely allegorical literature. Nothing in *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* functions as a simple code requiring philosophical translation. Rather, every image remains simultaneously itself and more than itself. The road is literally imaginable, psychologically meaningful, existentially resonant, phenomenologically structured, and metaphysically suggestive all at once. Such multidimensionality is one of the defining characteristics of major poetry.

Ultimately, Mohanty's phenomenology culminates in a profound reconfiguration of consciousness itself. The traveler discovers that reality cannot be exhausted through perception because perception is only the beginning of understanding. The senses disclose the world, but the deepest road lies "closer than the senses." Consciousness therefore remains permanently open to realities that exceed empirical apprehension without abandoning empirical experience. In this sense, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* becomes not merely a poem about a journey but a phenomenological cartography of human existence. It maps not territories but modes of awareness, not landscapes but structures of perception, not destinations but horizons of consciousness. The invisible geography it reveals is ultimately the geography of Being itself—a realm where every ending becomes another beginning, every perception another invitation, and every experience another unfolding of the inexhaustible mystery of existence.

XII. THE POEM AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE: THE SEARCH FOR THE "NEXT ALPHABET" AS A THEORY OF LINGUISTIC TRANSCENDENCE

Among the many philosophical achievements of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, perhaps none is more original than its meditation on language itself. Although the poem appears, at first glance, to be concerned primarily with existential exhaustion and metaphysical searching, a closer reading reveals that it is equally an inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of linguistic expression.

Chandra Kumar Mohanty does not merely employ language as the medium of poetry; he transforms language into the subject of philosophical reflection. The poem repeatedly asks whether human speech is capable of containing reality in its fullness, whether words can adequately communicate truth, and whether every linguistic system inevitably points beyond itself toward another, still unarticulated, mode of expression. In this respect, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* stands among those rare poetic works in which language ceases to be transparent and becomes itself the central drama of consciousness. The poem's most extraordinary linguistic formulation appears in the middle section:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

The corresponding Odia lines—

*"Ēthi ātakibā artha
Apekṣā karibā sabu barṇamālāra
Para barṇamālāku..."* (Mohanty 21)

—constitute one of the most philosophically daring metaphors in modern Odia poetry. The image initially appears paradoxical because an alphabet is ordinarily understood as the foundational system from which all language is generated. If every alphabet is already complete within its own linguistic order, how can there exist another alphabet "beyond all alphabets"? Mohanty's answer is not theoretical but poetic. The metaphor suggests that every linguistic order, however sophisticated, eventually reaches the limits of its expressive capacity. Human experience continually exceeds the vocabulary available to describe it. Consequently, language itself remains unfinished.

This insight aligns with one of the oldest philosophical questions concerning the relationship between language and reality. Throughout intellectual history, philosophers have debated whether words merely designate pre-existing objects or whether language actively constitutes the world that human beings inhabit. Mohanty's poem refuses to choose between these alternatives. Language undoubtedly reveals reality, yet it never reveals reality completely. Every successful act of naming simultaneously uncovers another region of the unnamed. Thus, language becomes an endless process of approximation rather than definitive possession. The phrase "the next alphabet" is therefore far more radical than the notion of discovering new words. New vocabulary remains confined within an existing linguistic system.

Mohanty's metaphor imagines an entirely new principle of signification. The anticipated alphabet is not an extension of the present one but a transformation of the very conditions through which meaning becomes possible. Such an image may be interpreted as an epistemological revolution, a spiritual awakening, a poetic innovation, or a future mode of consciousness for which present language possesses no adequate symbols.

This movement from one linguistic order to another recalls the later philosophy of **Ludwig Wittgenstein**, who argued that the limits of one's language are intimately connected with the limits of one's world. Although Mohanty's poem does not explicitly formulate Wittgenstein's proposition, it poetically extends its implications. If another alphabet exists beyond all existing alphabets, then another world of understanding likewise remains possible. Human limitation is therefore not final but provisional.

At the same time, Mohanty's imagination departs significantly from Wittgenstein. The latter often approached linguistic limits through philosophical clarification, whereas Mohanty approaches them through poetic anticipation. The "next alphabet" is not logically demonstrated; it is awaited. Waiting

itself becomes the highest linguistic act because it acknowledges both the necessity and the insufficiency of present language. The poem immediately develops this insight:

*"to speak something more,
to write,
to make others understand after writing, and reading,
the remaining uncomprehended truth."*

This sequence deserves exceptionally careful attention because it presents nothing less than a philosophy of communication. Mohanty arranges speech, writing, reading, understanding, and truth into a progressive yet incomplete chain. Speech alone is insufficient. Writing follows speech. Reading follows writing. Understanding follows reading. Yet even after these successive acts, "the remaining uncomprehended truth" persists.

Communication, therefore, never culminates in total comprehension. Such a conception fundamentally challenges the instrumental view of language according to which communication simply transfers information from one mind to another. Mohanty's poem suggests that language does something far more profound. It continually enlarges the horizon of what remains to be understood. Every successful communication reveals another silence beyond itself.

This insight also bears comparison with the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, who emphasized that texts always generate meanings exceeding the intentions of both author and reader (Ricoeur 76–81). Mohanty's poem exemplifies precisely this surplus of meaning. The poem itself becomes an enactment of its own theory. Every reading uncovers another dimension, another interpretive possibility, another philosophical horizon. The "*next alphabet*" is, thus, not merely a metaphor within the poem; it is the experience of reading the poem itself. Equally significant is the poem's refusal to oppose speech and writing.

Throughout the history of philosophy, speech has often been regarded as more immediate, authentic, or truthful than writing. Mohanty's sequence quietly dismantles such hierarchies. Speech leads to writing, writing invites reading, reading seeks understanding, yet none occupies absolute priority. Every mode of language participates in a larger process whose fulfillment always remains incomplete. The original Odia syntax strengthens this continuity. The repeated infinitive constructions—"kahibā pāin, Lekhibā pāin, Lekhi padhi bujhei debā pāin"—create an unbroken rhythmic movement from utterance to inscription to interpretation. There is no abrupt division between oral and written expression. Language appears as an organic continuum rather than a set of competing media.

Another remarkable aspect of Mohanty's philosophy of language lies in its conception of truth. The poem never identifies truth with linguistic mastery. On the contrary, truth repeatedly exceeds expression. It remains "unseen" and "uncomprehended." Yet the poem never concludes that truth is therefore inaccessible. Instead, language becomes the ongoing attempt to approach what continually transcends articulation. This distinction is crucial.

Modern skepticism often equates the limitations of language with the impossibility of truth. Mohanty refuses such skepticism.

Truth exists independently of linguistic adequacy, yet language remains humanity's indispensable means of drawing nearer to it. Words fail, but their failure is creative rather than destructive because it generates the search for another alphabet. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* deepens this linguistic philosophy: "*the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness.*" The expression "alternative vocabulary" (*bikalpa śabda*) is extraordinarily significant. Vocabulary here is not merely lexical inventory. It is an entire interpretive framework through which experience becomes intelligible. Helplessness itself requires language capable of containing its complexity. Ordinary discourse proves inadequate.

The *Mahābhārata* therefore becomes another linguistic universe within which existential experience acquires articulation. Yet Mohanty carefully describes the epic as an **alternative** vocabulary rather than the definitive one. This qualification prevents linguistic absolutism. No vocabulary, however rich, can exhaust reality. Every linguistic system remains provisional before the inexhaustibility of truth. Consequently, the *Mahābhārata* itself ultimately points toward another alphabet beyond its own immense expressive resources. This recognition distinguishes Mohanty's poetic philosophy from both linguistic optimism and linguistic despair. He neither believes that language can completely master reality nor concludes that language is therefore futile. Instead, he situates language within an endless dialectic of expression and transcendence. Words continually reach beyond themselves because reality continually exceeds them.

One may also interpret the poem through the perspective of translation studies. Every translation attempts to carry meaning across linguistic boundaries while recognizing that perfect equivalence remains unattainable. Mohanty's "next alphabet" may therefore symbolize not merely another language but the ideal of perfect translatability toward which all linguistic activity aspires yet never fully arrives. Interestingly, the English translation of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* itself participates in this philosophical movement. It demonstrates both the extraordinary translatability of Mohanty's vision and the inevitable emergence of new shades of meaning in another language. Translation thus becomes another version of the road that continues beyond its ending. The poem's language is also notable for its extraordinary lexical economy.

Mohanty employs simple, familiar words—road, sky, sleep, earth, alphabet, writing, truth—yet these words gradually accumulate immense philosophical density. Such simplicity is deceptive. The poem demonstrates that profound philosophical inquiry need not depend upon technical terminology. Ordinary language, when imaginatively transformed, becomes capable of extraordinary conceptual power. Perhaps the deepest linguistic insight offered by the poem is that silence is not the opposite of language but its hidden foundation. The "next alphabet" emerges

only because existing language has reached its limit. Waiting itself becomes a form of eloquence. The poem repeatedly pauses at the edge of articulation, allowing silence to function as another mode of meaning rather than mere absence of speech. The final image—"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,/ yet lies closer than the senses themselves."

May, therefore, be understood as the culmination of the poem's philosophy of language. The road resembles meaning itself. Every attempt to define it reveals another extension. Every interpretation reaches another threshold. Language travels endlessly because truth remains inexhaustible. Yet this endlessness is not remote from human experience; it is "closer than the senses themselves." Meaning is never externally imposed upon consciousness. It arises from within the very structure of human existence.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* proposes a philosophy of language that is at once humble and visionary. It acknowledges the profound limitations of words while affirming their indispensable role in humanity's search for truth. Every alphabet remains incomplete, every vocabulary provisional, every text unfinished. Yet precisely because language can never exhaust reality, literature remains infinitely renewable. Poetry survives because meaning always continues beyond its own ending. Mohanty's "*next alphabet*", thus, becomes one of the most original metaphors in contemporary Odia literature—not merely for linguistic innovation but for the inexhaustible future of human understanding itself.

XIII. THE DIALECTICS OF TIME, MEMORY, AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE POEM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF TEMPORAL INEXHAUSTIBILITY

One of the least immediately visible yet most profound dimensions of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* lies in its philosophy of time. At first reading, the poem appears to describe a journey through space: a road, a traveler, an ending, a distant destination. However, sustained critical attention reveals that spatial imagery continuously transforms itself into temporal reflection. The road is not merely geographical; it is historical. Distance is not only measured in miles but in experience. The end is not simply the termination of movement but the threshold between one temporal horizon and another.

Chandra Kumar Mohanty, thus, constructs a remarkably sophisticated poetics in which time is experienced not as a linear succession of moments but as an ever-expanding continuum that refuses definitive closure. Every apparent ending becomes another beginning because temporality itself remains fundamentally inexhaustible. The poem's opening question, "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" already contains a temporal ambiguity that is easily overlooked.

The word "farther" conventionally denotes spatial extension, yet every journey also presupposes duration. One cannot travel without time. The speaker therefore asks not merely how much farther he may proceed but how much longer the journey of

existence itself may continue. The question gradually shifts from geography to temporality. The farther one goes, the older one becomes; the older one becomes, the more deeply one confronts the paradox that every arrival simultaneously reveals another future.

Thus, movement through space quietly becomes movement through time. The subsequent declaration, "Here, the sky itself has already come to an end." introduces a further temporal complexity. The sky is said to have "already" ended. The adverb is philosophically significant because it implies that an ending has occurred before the present moment of speech. The poem therefore unfolds within a consciousness that continually reflects upon what has already happened while remaining oriented toward what has not yet arrived. Past and future intersect within the living present. This structure recalls the phenomenological analyses of Martin Heidegger, for whom human existence (*Dasein*) is fundamentally temporal rather than merely chronological. According to Heidegger, the present is always shaped by what has been and by what is still to come (Heidegger 372–76).

Mohanty's poem poetically embodies this insight. The traveler does not inhabit an isolated present; he stands at the convergence of memory, anticipation, and lived immediacy. The original Odia line, "*Eṭhi ta ākāśa sari jāichhi...*" (Mohanty 21) intensifies this temporal nuance through the perfective verbal construction "*jāichhi*", which indicates an action already completed yet still relevant to the present. The ending of the sky is therefore not a distant historical event but an accomplished condition continuing to shape present consciousness.

Time in the poem is cumulative rather than sequential. This cumulative temporality becomes even more evident in the remarkable inversion: "sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams." Dreams conventionally belong to the future because they embody aspiration, projection, and possibility. Sleep, however, belongs to the immediate rhythm of bodily existence. By allowing dreams to drive away sleep, Mohanty demonstrates how the future colonizes the present. What has not yet occurred begins to determine present experience. Anticipation becomes stronger than actuality.

Such temporal inversion bears comparison with the philosophy of Henri Bergson, whose concept of *durée* (duration) rejected the notion of time as a series of isolated units. For Bergson, consciousness experiences time as a continuous interpenetration of memory and anticipation rather than as mechanical succession (Bergson 98–104). Mohanty's poem exhibits precisely such continuity. Dreams, sleep, memory, expectation, and history coexist within a single experiential flow. The motif of waiting further deepens the poem's temporal philosophy. After declaring that he can proceed no farther, the speaker unexpectedly observes:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

Waiting is among the most philosophically significant forms of temporal consciousness because it transforms the present into expectancy. The present is no longer complete in itself; it becomes oriented toward a future that has not yet become actual. Yet this future remains undefined. The "next alphabet" is never described. Consequently, waiting preserves openness rather than prediction. Unlike ordinary chronological waiting, which anticipates a specific event at a determinate moment, Mohanty's waiting is ontological. It is not directed toward a scheduled occurrence but toward the emergence of a new order of meaning. Time therefore ceases to be measurable. It becomes qualitative rather than quantitative.

This conception differs strikingly from the modern obsession with productivity and progress. Contemporary civilization often evaluates time according to efficiency, acceleration, and measurable achievement. Mohanty's poem quietly resists such instrumental temporality. Waiting is not wasted time. It is the indispensable condition for deeper understanding. The future cannot be manufactured through haste; it must be awaited through patient openness. The poem's invocation of the *Mahābhārata* introduces another temporal dimension by integrating personal time with civilizational time:

*"In this brief history of exploration
have been inscribed the eighteen volumes of the
Mahabharata."*

This passage deserves sustained reflection because it collapses the distinction between individual biography and collective history. The speaker's "brief history" unexpectedly contains the immense temporal universe of the *Mahābhārata*. The implication is not that the individual literally encompasses the epic but that every authentic human search recapitulates the fundamental dramas of civilization. Personal time and historical time become mutually illuminating.

The phrase "brief history of exploration" is itself profoundly paradoxical. Exploration suggests an open-ended process, whereas history often implies completed narration. Mohanty combines these opposing temporal modes into a single expression. History remains unfinished because exploration continues. The past is never merely past; it remains active within every new search for meaning. Such a conception of historical consciousness bears comparison with the philosophy of Walter Benjamin, who rejected the notion of history as homogeneous progress and instead understood the past as continually interrupting and reshaping the present (Benjamin 254–57).

Mohanty's invocation of the *Mahābhārata* similarly refuses antiquarian nostalgia. The epic is not remembered because it belongs to the past. It remains present because it continues to interpret contemporary existence. The poem's treatment of truth also reveals a profoundly temporal structure:

*"the truth
that has remained unseen till now."*

Truth is not absent but temporally deferred. The phrase "till now" implies that what remains unseen in the present may become visible in the future. Knowledge, therefore, unfolds historically. Understanding possesses duration. There is no instantaneous revelation that abolishes the necessity of continued inquiry. This temporal openness distinguishes Mohanty's poem from both dogmatic certainty and radical skepticism. Truth exists, yet human access to truth remains historical, gradual, and perpetually incomplete. Every generation may perceive dimensions of reality unavailable to previous generations. Thus history becomes not merely the passage of time but the expansion of consciousness.

Perhaps the most remarkable temporal image in the poem appears in its concluding paradox: "the distant road that continues beyond its ending." An ending ordinarily signifies temporal completion. Mohanty transforms the ending into another stage of continuity. Time therefore becomes recursive rather than terminal. Every conclusion contains the seed of another beginning. This image invites comparison with T. S. Eliot's meditation in *Four Quartets*: "*In my end is my beginning.*" (Eliot, *East Coker* II.194)

The resemblance is philosophically illuminating but artistically distinct. Eliot frames beginning and ending within a Christian vision of cyclical redemption. Mohanty, however, avoids explicit theological resolution. His road continues not because history repeats itself but because reality remains inexhaustible. Continuation replaces repetition. The image also recalls Antonio Machado's celebrated reflection that the road is created through walking.

Yet Mohanty advances beyond Machado by suggesting that the road survives even after walking appears to end. Time itself becomes more creative than human agency. Another significant aspect of Mohanty's temporal imagination is its refusal of nostalgia. Although the poem invokes one of India's greatest epics, it never idealizes the past. The *Mahābhārata* serves as an interpretive vocabulary rather than a lost golden age. Likewise, the future is never romanticized as inevitable progress. Both past and future remain active dimensions of present consciousness. This equilibrium prevents the poem from becoming either conservative or utopian. It inhabits what may be called a dynamic present—a present continually nourished by memory while remaining open to unforeseen possibilities. The final phrase, "*closer than the senses themselves.*" introduces the deepest temporal paradox of all. The road is both infinitely extended and immediately present. Temporal distance collapses into existential proximity. The future is already intimated within the present. Eternity touches the moment without abolishing its temporality. This insight resonates with the great mystical and philosophical traditions of the world, yet Mohanty's articulation remains strikingly modern. He does not escape time into timelessness. Instead, he discovers the inexhaustible within time itself.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* proposes a philosophy in which temporality is not a force of erosion but a medium of continual revelation. Time does not merely carry existence toward death; it continually opens new horizons of understanding. Every ending becomes another beginning because reality itself exceeds every historical completion. Memory remains alive, history remains unfinished, waiting remains creative, and the future remains permanently hospitable to meanings that have not yet entered human language. In this way, Mohanty's poem transforms the ordinary road into one of the most compelling temporal metaphors in modern Indian poetry. It is not simply a path through space but a journey through the inexhaustible duration of consciousness, history, and Being itself. Here, time ceases to be the enemy of meaning; it becomes the very condition through which meaning continually renews its infinite life.

XIV. COMPARATIVE POETICS: SARI SARU NATHIBĀ BĀTA IN DIALOGUE WITH THE GREAT JOURNEY POEMS OF WORLD LITERATURE

One of the most convincing indicators of a poem's lasting literary significance is its ability to enter into meaningful conversation with canonical works across linguistic, cultural, and historical boundaries without sacrificing its own distinctive identity. Truly great poems neither imitate tradition nor isolate themselves from it. Instead, they create new possibilities of comparison by reimagining universal human concerns through culturally specific artistic forms. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* exemplifies this rare quality. Although deeply rooted in the linguistic, philosophical, and cultural soil of Odisha, the poem simultaneously participates in one of the oldest and most enduring archetypes of world literature—the journey. Yet Mohanty's journey differs fundamentally from most earlier poetic traditions. The traveler is not seeking a geographical destination, political conquest, romantic fulfillment, or even spiritual salvation in any conventional sense. Rather, he journeys toward the ever-receding horizon of understanding itself. Consequently, the poem invites comparison with some of the most influential journey poems in world literature while consistently demonstrating its own remarkable originality.

The most immediate comparison is with *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri. Dante's epic narrates a movement through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise toward the beatific vision of God. The journey is teleological, carefully structured, and ultimately complete. Every stage leads toward final revelation. Mohanty's poem, by contrast, refuses such teleological closure. His traveler reaches what appears to be the end only to discover that the road continues beyond its own ending. The contrast is philosophically revealing. Dante's universe culminates in achieved vision; Mohanty's culminates in perpetual seeking. The Italian poet constructs an architecture of completion, whereas the Odia poet constructs an ontology of inexhaustibility. Yet both poets share an important conviction: the journey transforms the traveler more profoundly than any external destination. In both works, movement becomes an inward discipline through which consciousness gradually enlarges itself.

An equally illuminating comparison may be made with *The Odyssey*. Odysseus undertakes one of the foundational journeys of Western literature, struggling for years to return to Ithaca. Although the voyage is filled with uncertainty, temptation, and suffering, its direction remains clear. Home exists as a stable point of arrival. Mohanty's traveler inhabits an entirely different philosophical universe. There is no Ithaca awaiting him beyond the horizon. Indeed, the poem repeatedly dismantles the very notion of definitive arrival. Home itself becomes transformed into movement. The road continues because understanding itself possesses no final resting place. Whereas Homer's epic celebrates return, Mohanty's lyric celebrates inexhaustibility. Return gives way to continual becoming. The comparison with *Ulysses* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson is particularly fruitful because both poems confront the problem of human limitation. Tennyson's aging hero famously declares: "*To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*" (*Ulysses*, l. 70) This declaration has often been interpreted as one of the greatest affirmations of heroic perseverance in English poetry. Mohanty's speaker also refuses resignation, but the nature of perseverance differs profoundly. Tennyson emphasizes heroic will; Mohanty emphasizes contemplative openness. The English poet celebrates determination to continue outward movement despite physical decline. The Odia poet discovers that authentic movement sometimes requires stopping, waiting, and listening for "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" (Mohanty 21). In Tennyson, perseverance is active; in Mohanty, perseverance becomes receptive. Waiting itself emerges as a higher form of courage. A similarly significant dialogue may be established with *The Waste Land*. Eliot's modernist masterpiece portrays a civilization spiritually exhausted by fragmentation, historical discontinuity, and the collapse of shared meaning. Like Eliot, Mohanty recognizes the limitations of contemporary consciousness. The ending of the sky, the crumbling earth, and the loss of sleep all suggest an existential landscape marked by instability. Nevertheless, the philosophical trajectories of the two poems ultimately diverge. Eliot's poem assembles fragments in the hope of recovering spiritual coherence through cultural memory and religious tradition (Eliot, *The Waste Land* ll. 430–433). Mohanty also invokes cultural memory through the *Mahābhārata*, yet he refuses to transform tradition into final resolution. The epic becomes "the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness" (Mohanty 21), not its definitive cure. Tradition remains a companion in inquiry rather than an escape from uncertainty.

The affinity with Eliot becomes even more interesting when one compares Mohanty's image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" with Eliot's fascination for linguistic and cultural plurality. Both poets recognize that no single language can contain the totality of human experience. Yet whereas Eliot assembles multilingual fragments to dramatize civilizational crisis, Mohanty imagines another alphabet still awaiting humanity. Eliot's multiplicity often reflects historical rupture; Mohanty's anticipates future possibility. The difference is subtle but decisive. Perhaps one of the closest philosophical parallels exists with Antonio Machado, whose celebrated lines—

"Traveler, there is no road,
the road is made by walking." (Campos de
Castilla)

—have become emblematic of modern existential poetics. Both Machado and Mohanty reject the notion of a predetermined path. However, Mohanty advances the metaphor in an entirely original direction. Machado emphasizes that human action creates the road. Mohanty suggests that the road ultimately transcends every act of walking. The traveler discovers not the absence of a road but a road whose continuation infinitely exceeds human agency. In Machado, the road depends upon the traveler; in Mohanty, the traveler gradually realizes that he belongs to a road whose horizon surpasses every conceivable ending. The poem also invites comparison with *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman. Whitman's poetic self expands toward universal inclusiveness, dissolving rigid distinctions between individual and cosmos. Mohanty's speaker likewise experiences moments in which the self disperses "like the wind" (Mohanty 21). Yet Whitman's expansion is fundamentally celebratory, grounded in democratic affirmation and bodily abundance. Mohanty's expansion emerges through helplessness, exhaustion, and contemplative humility. Both poets enlarge consciousness, but they travel through different emotional landscapes. Whitman sings of plenitude; Mohanty meditates upon incompleteness.

A particularly illuminating comparison may also be drawn with Rabindranath Tagore. Throughout works such as *Gitanjali*, Tagore repeatedly portrays the human soul as a traveler seeking communion with the infinite. The journey often culminates in moments of spiritual intimacy and divine presence. Mohanty's poem shares Tagore's sensitivity to transcendence but avoids devotional fulfillment. The infinite remains near—"closer than the senses themselves" (Mohanty 21)—yet it is never possessed. The difference reflects two distinct spiritual temperaments. Tagore frequently celebrates encounter; Mohanty celebrates continual approach. The poem's philosophical reserve also distinguishes it from the mystical certainty of poets such as Jalal al-Din Rumi. Rumi's poetry often dissolves the separation between seeker and Beloved through ecstatic union. Mohanty's traveler remains a seeker throughout. Union is neither denied nor affirmed; it simply remains beyond the poem's horizon. Such restraint contributes significantly to the poem's modernity. It preserves transcendence without converting it into mystical certainty. An equally revealing comparison may be made with Four Quartets. In *Little Gidding*, Eliot writes:

"We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time." (*Little Gidding*,
V.239–242)

These lines bear a striking affinity to Mohanty's conception of the road. Both poets understand exploration as a mode of self-transformation rather than geographical achievement. Yet Eliot's exploration circles back toward origin, whereas Mohanty's road continues beyond every ending. Eliot ultimately recovers the beginning through return. Mohanty discovers that beginnings

themselves remain perpetually renewable. Within Indian literature, Mohanty's originality becomes equally evident when compared with the symbolic journeys found in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo frequently portrays evolution as an ascent toward supramental consciousness. Mohanty likewise anticipates another order of understanding through the image of the "*next alphabet*." However, Aurobindo's philosophical system provides a comprehensive teleological framework. Mohanty's poem deliberately withholds such systematic certainty. Evolution remains experiential rather than doctrinal.

The poem also enters into subtle dialogue with the existential lyricism of Rainer Maria Rilke. Rilke repeatedly urged his readers to "live the questions now," trusting that answers might gradually emerge through existence itself. Mohanty's traveler embodies precisely such patience. He does not seize truth. He waits for another alphabet capable of articulating what remains beyond present understanding. Both poets regard questioning not as intellectual deficiency but as the deepest form of wisdom. Within modern Odia literature itself, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* occupies a distinctive position. While many modern Odia poets have explored alienation, social crisis, political transformation, and existential anxiety, Mohanty's achievement lies in integrating these modern concerns with an extraordinarily rich philosophical imagination. The poem neither imitates Western modernism nor confines itself within inherited Indian metaphysical frameworks. Instead, it establishes a genuinely intercultural poetics in which Odia linguistic sensibility, Indian civilizational memory, and global philosophical inquiry converge into a unified artistic vision.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these comparisons is that Mohanty's poem never appears derivative. Similarities with Dante, Homer, Eliot, Machado, Tagore, Whitman, Rilke, or Aurobindo illuminate shared human concerns, but the poem consistently retains its own unmistakable voice. Its governing metaphor—the road that survives its own ending—has no exact equivalent in world literature. Likewise, the image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" represents a strikingly original contribution to philosophical poetics. These metaphors emerge organically from Mohanty's imaginative world rather than functioning as variations upon earlier literary models.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* deserves recognition not merely as an important poem within modern Odia literature but as a work capable of sustaining rigorous comparison with the great journey poems of world literature. Its philosophical subtlety, symbolic concentration, linguistic economy, and interpretive inexhaustibility place it within that distinguished tradition of poems whose local rootedness becomes the very source of their universal significance. By transforming the familiar image of the road into an ontology of endless becoming, Chandra Kumar Mohanty enlarges the imaginative geography of world poetry itself, demonstrating that the most enduring journeys are those that continue long after every visible destination believes itself complete.

XV. THE POETICS OF PARADOX: OXYMORON, DIALECTICAL IMAGINATION, AND THE METAPHYSICS OF CONTRADICTION

One of the defining characteristics of Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is its extraordinary dependence upon paradox as the principal mode of poetic thinking. The poem does not merely contain paradoxical expressions as ornamental figures of speech; rather, paradox constitutes the very architecture of its philosophical imagination. Every major image in the poem is structured around the simultaneous affirmation of apparently contradictory realities. The road ends yet continues. Distance becomes nearness. Helplessness becomes wealth. Waiting becomes movement. Language reaches its limit by anticipating another language. The visible discloses the invisible. Such paradoxes are not rhetorical embellishments intended to surprise the reader. They function as epistemological instruments through which Mohanty reveals realities inaccessible to ordinary logical discourse. Consequently, the poem demonstrates that contradiction, when imaginatively transformed, becomes one of poetry's most profound methods of discovering truth.

The title itself announces this paradoxical mode of thinking: *"The Road That Outlives Its Own End."* The corresponding Odia title—*"Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta"* (Mohanty 21)—is among the most original paradoxical formulations in contemporary Odia poetry. Ordinary logic presupposes that an ending terminates whatever it concludes. A road, by definition, ceases where it ends. Mohanty quietly overturns this conceptual certainty. The road survives its own ending. Consequently, "ending" no longer functions as a terminal event but as another stage within an infinite process of becoming. This paradox immediately alters the reader's philosophical expectations. Instead of asking where the road leads, one begins asking what an ending itself actually signifies. The poem thus shifts attention from destination to ontology. The real subject is not travel but the nature of completion itself. The paradox acquires even greater significance when viewed within the long history of philosophical thought. Classical Aristotelian logic is governed by the law of non-contradiction: a thing cannot simultaneously be and not be in the same respect. Mohanty's poem does not reject logical reasoning in ordinary discourse; rather, it demonstrates that certain dimensions of human experience transcend purely propositional logic. Poetry becomes capable of expressing forms of truth that literal discourse cannot adequately contain.

This insight bears comparison with the dialectical traditions of both Eastern and Western philosophy. However, Mohanty's paradoxes remain distinct because they never culminate in abstract synthesis. Instead, the tension itself becomes meaningful. Contradiction is preserved rather than eliminated. The opening stanza already establishes this dialectical imagination: *"Here, the sky itself has already come to an end."* The image appears impossible because the sky conventionally symbolizes boundlessness. Throughout world literature, the sky has represented infinity, transcendence, freedom, and limitless possibility. Mohanty performs a remarkable inversion by allowing the limitless itself to become limited. Yet the poem

does not stop there. Immediately after the sky ends, the road continues. The implication is profound. Infinity is relocated. It no longer belongs to the heavens. It belongs to the journey of consciousness.

Thus, the apparent contradiction conceals an ontological reversal. What seemed finite becomes infinite, while what seemed infinite reveals its experiential limits. The poem proceeds to another equally striking paradox: "sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams." Ordinarily, dreams emerge from sleep. Sleep is therefore the condition of dreaming. Mohanty reverses this causal order. Dreams become so powerful that they expel sleep itself. The paradox transforms psychological experience into philosophical insight. Dreams cease to be nocturnal phenomena. They become existential aspirations. Sleep no longer signifies biological rest. It becomes symbolic of complacency.

The pursuit of possibility therefore destroys passive existence. In a single line, Mohanty reverses an entire experiential hierarchy. The original Odia expression—*"Swapna pāin ākhiru nida haji jāichhi..."* (Mohanty 21) retains this extraordinary simplicity. There is no elaborate metaphorical explanation. The paradox speaks with conversational naturalness, making the impossible appear emotionally inevitable. Such effortless paradox distinguishes genuine poetic imagination from intellectual cleverness. The next image continues this dialectical progression:

*"even the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away."*

The earth traditionally represents permanence. To lose the earth beneath one's feet signifies radical insecurity. Yet paradoxically, this loss becomes the beginning of deeper understanding. If the earth had remained completely stable, the speaker would never have questioned existence itself. Groundlessness becomes philosophical grounding. Security gives way to wisdom. The poem therefore repeatedly demonstrates that existential crisis often functions as the beginning rather than the destruction of insight. Perhaps the most philosophically concentrated paradox appears in the central declaration:

*"To stop here means
to wait..."*

Stopping ordinarily signifies the cessation of movement. Waiting appears passive. Poet Mohanty quietly transforms waiting into another mode of journeying. The traveler advances precisely by refusing superficial movement. Stillness becomes motion. Silence becomes preparation. Patience becomes progress. This conception recalls the paradoxical wisdom of many contemplative traditions while remaining entirely grounded in the poem's own symbolic economy. The movement toward "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" intensifies this dialectic. An alphabet ordinarily functions as the complete foundation of language. If another alphabet exists beyond every alphabet, then completion itself becomes incomplete. Language reaches fulfillment by acknowledging its insufficiency. Knowledge

advances through awareness of ignorance. Expression discovers its highest possibility precisely where expression fails. The paradox therefore becomes epistemological rather than merely linguistic. The same structure governs the poem's treatment of truth. The speaker wishes:

*"to make others understand...
the remaining uncomprehended truth."*

Understanding and incomprehension coexist. Truth has already been partially grasped. Yet something essential remains beyond comprehension. The paradox refuses both skepticism and dogmatism. Knowledge is real. Completion is impossible. This balanced philosophical position represents one of the poem's greatest intellectual achievements. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* introduces another profound reversal: "the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness." Helplessness ordinarily signifies deprivation. Mohanty transforms it into vocabulary. Indeed, helplessness becomes the very language through which deeper realities become expressible. The speaker continues:

*"its opposite
is the priceless treasure
I have been seeking for."*

This passage demands careful interpretation. The treasure is discovered not despite helplessness but through it. Without helplessness, the search itself would never begin. Weakness therefore becomes the hidden source of strength. Loss becomes discovery. Poverty becomes wealth. The paradox does not abolish suffering. Rather, it reveals suffering's transformative potential. Here, one may recall the great dialectical traditions of mystical literature, yet Mohanty's treatment remains strikingly secular in tone. The transformation occurs through existential experience rather than supernatural intervention. Perhaps the poem's greatest paradox appears in its final lines:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

The image simultaneously joins four apparent oppositions.

- Distance and nearness.
- Ending and continuation.
- Externality and intimacy.
- Journey and arrival.

Each binary dissolves into the other. The road is infinitely distant because understanding never concludes. Yet it is nearer than perception because the search originates within consciousness itself. The contradiction, therefore, reveals an unexpected unity.

This final paradox also distinguishes Mohanty's poem from many modern existential works that emphasize alienation. Distance does not separate the self from truth. Instead, distance becomes another form of intimacy. The farther the traveler proceeds, the deeper he enters his own existence. The road extends outward only because it simultaneously extends inward. The paradox thus becomes phenomenological as well as metaphysical. Another remarkable feature of Mohanty's

paradoxes is their linguistic restraint. Many poets construct paradox through highly elaborate metaphysical conceits. Mohanty prefers ordinary vocabulary.

- Road.
- Sky.
- Earth.
- Sleep.
- Alphabet.
- Truth.

Because the language remains simple, the philosophical tension emerges with even greater force. Readers encounter contradiction within familiar experience rather than abstract speculation. This stylistic economy recalls the finest achievements of classical Indian and modernist poetics alike. One should also observe that Mohanty's paradoxes are cumulative rather than isolated. Each prepares the next. The ending of the sky anticipates the continuation of the road. The loss of sleep anticipates the waiting for another alphabet. The vocabulary of helplessness anticipates the discovery of priceless treasure. The distant road anticipates ultimate nearness. Thus, the poem develops through a carefully orchestrated sequence of dialectical transformations. Its philosophical movement resembles a spiral rather than a straight line. Every paradox deepens those preceding it. Importantly, the poem never resolves these contradictions into comfortable certainty. Readers remain suspended between opposites. This suspension is not intellectual indecision. It is contemplative openness. The poem teaches that reality itself may be fundamentally paradoxical, requiring modes of understanding more subtle than binary reasoning. In this respect, Mohanty's poetic imagination may be regarded as one of the most sophisticated examples of dialectical lyricism in contemporary Odia literature. His paradoxes neither obscure meaning nor celebrate contradiction for its own sake. Instead, they disclose dimensions of existence that ordinary conceptual language cannot adequately express.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* demonstrates that paradox is not merely a literary device but a philosophy of Being. The deepest truths of existence do not appear where contradiction disappears; they emerge where contradiction becomes transparent to a higher order of understanding. The road survives its ending because existence continually transcends every conceptual limit. Distance becomes nearness because truth resides within the very act of seeking. Helplessness becomes treasure because vulnerability opens the soul to realities inaccessible through certainty alone. Language discovers another alphabet because every genuine word already gestures toward a silence richer than itself. In transforming contradiction into revelation, Chandra Kumar Mohanty creates a poem whose paradoxes are not obstacles to interpretation but inexhaustible sources of philosophical illumination.

XVI. THE POETICS OF NEGATIVITY AND THE CREATIVE POWER OF LIMITATION: FROM EXISTENTIAL IMPASSE TO ONTOLOGICAL ABUNDANCE

One of the most remarkable and intellectually subtle achievements of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is its radical revaluation of negativity. In ordinary human consciousness, negation is almost invariably associated with absence, failure, exhaustion, defeat, incompleteness, or loss. Human civilization has generally been constructed around affirmative values: progress rather than stagnation, certainty rather than doubt, success rather than failure, speech rather than silence, fullness rather than emptiness. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's poem quietly but decisively challenges this inherited hierarchy. Throughout the poem, every significant moment of negation becomes the threshold of a deeper affirmation. Every apparent ending opens another beginning; every limitation reveals another possibility; every experience of insufficiency becomes the source of a richer existential plenitude. The poem therefore develops what may appropriately be described as a **poetics of creative negativity**, in which absence is not merely endured but transformed into the very condition of philosophical insight and artistic transcendence.

The opening movement of the poem immediately establishes this pattern. The speaker does not begin with confidence or discovery but with an interrogative uncertainty: "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" The question is already marked by exhaustion. It does not celebrate limitless possibility but acknowledges the burden of limitation. Yet this limitation does not terminate inquiry. On the contrary, the question itself becomes the beginning of philosophical reflection. The inability to proceed confidently generates a deeper form of consciousness. Had the speaker possessed complete certainty regarding the destination, the poem itself would have been unnecessary. Poetry begins precisely where certainty ends. Thus, the first negation in the poem is not physical fatigue but the collapse of unquestioned assurance. The subsequent declaration intensifies this movement: "Here, the sky itself has already come to an end." This is one of the most radical negations in the poem because the sky has traditionally symbolized infinity, transcendence, divine openness, and immeasurable freedom across numerous literary traditions. By allowing the sky to "end," Mohanty symbolically dismantles one of humanity's oldest metaphysical certainties. Yet remarkably, the poem does not lapse into despair. The ending of the sky does not produce nihilism. Instead, it compels consciousness to seek another horizon beyond the visible cosmos. In other words, the negation of one infinity becomes the discovery of another. The collapse of external transcendence prepares the emergence of interior transcendence. The original Odia line, "*Eṭhi ta ākāśa sari jāichhi*" (Mohanty 21), possesses an almost conversational directness that makes this philosophical reversal even more striking. There is no rhetorical exaggeration, no elaborate mythological ornamentation, and no metaphysical proclamation. The statement appears with complete naturalness, as though consciousness itself had quietly recognized a limit previously unnoticed. Such stylistic restraint significantly enhances the poem's philosophical force. The motif of deprivation continues through another unforgettable image: "sleep has deserted the eyes in pursuit of dreams."

At first glance, this appears to depict psychological restlessness. However, on closer examination, the line reveals a profound meditation upon creative consciousness. Sleep ordinarily represents restoration, biological necessity, and physical equilibrium. Dreams, however, signify aspiration, imagination, and unrealized possibility. Mohanty allows aspiration to overcome biological necessity. The speaker loses sleep because consciousness has become oriented toward realities that ordinary existence cannot satisfy. The deprivation is therefore creative rather than pathological. Artistic imagination frequently emerges through precisely such productive unrest. Great literature has often been born not from comfort but from the inability to remain content with established realities.

This insight resonates strongly with the history of literary creativity itself. From Dante's spiritual exile to John Milton's blindness, from Fyodor Dostoevsky's imprisonment to T. S. Eliot's spiritual crisis, some of the greatest works of world literature have arisen through confrontation with profound personal and existential limitations. Mohanty's poem enters this distinguished tradition without romanticizing suffering. It does not claim that suffering is inherently valuable. Rather, it demonstrates that suffering may become philosophically transformative when consciousness refuses to reduce itself to victimhood.

Perhaps no image expresses this transformation more vividly than the line: "*even the earth beneath my feet is crumbling away, slipping into the abyss.*" The earth conventionally symbolizes certainty, permanence, and existential security. To lose the ground beneath one's feet is among the oldest metaphors for human vulnerability. Yet within Mohanty's poetic universe, this disintegration performs an unexpected function. Stable ground often prevents deeper questioning because certainty encourages intellectual complacency. Once the ground begins to disappear, consciousness is compelled to discover another basis for existence. The collapse of external security becomes the beginning of inward exploration.

Here, the poem may fruitfully be compared with existential philosophy, particularly the writings of Karl Jaspers, who introduced the notion of *Grenzsituationen* or "boundary situations." Jaspers argued that certain experiences—death, suffering, guilt, failure, and existential limitation—cannot be overcome through ordinary practical solutions. Instead, they disclose deeper dimensions of human existence (Jaspers 178–83). Mohanty's speaker inhabits precisely such a boundary situation. Every external certainty has begun to dissolve, yet the dissolution itself becomes revelatory. The poem therefore transforms existential crisis into philosophical awakening. The most explicit articulation of creative limitation appears in the central movement of the poem: "No, I can go no farther." This declaration appears absolute. Grammatically, psychologically, and emotionally, it seems to conclude the journey. Yet Mohanty immediately overturns this expectation. The inability to proceed physically becomes the beginning of another kind of movement:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

This transition is among the poem's greatest philosophical achievements. Stopping is redefined as waiting, and waiting is redefined as preparation for a higher order of understanding. The speaker does not mistake inactivity for defeat. Instead, stillness becomes the condition of transformation. This reversal recalls numerous contemplative traditions in which silence is regarded not as the absence of communication but as the deepest form of listening. Mohanty secularizes this insight by locating it within the ordinary experience of intellectual and existential exhaustion. The metaphor of *"the next alphabet"* deserves renewed attention in this context because it represents not merely linguistic innovation but the creative power of insufficiency. Existing language has failed to contain experience adequately. Yet this failure is not destructive. It generates the expectation of another symbolic order capable of expressing what remains unsaid. Language therefore evolves through its own inadequacy. Every alphabet carries within itself the possibility of another alphabet. Every completed system quietly announces its own incompleteness. The poem's treatment of truth follows the same philosophical logic. The speaker hopes to communicate: "the remaining uncomprehended truth." The adjective "remaining" is crucial because it prevents both despair and triumphalism. Truth has been partially understood, but not exhausted. Human cognition therefore occupies an intermediate condition between ignorance and omniscience. Mohanty celebrates this intermediate condition rather than lamenting it. Complete ignorance would eliminate inquiry; complete knowledge would eliminate wonder. The poem chooses neither extreme. It locates human dignity precisely within the endless movement between what is known and what remains to be discovered. This philosophical orientation reaches extraordinary concentration in the invocation of the *Mahābhārata*: "the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness." The phrase is astonishing in its conceptual originality. Helplessness is ordinarily understood as a condition devoid of power. Mohanty transforms helplessness into language itself. The *Mahābhārata* becomes not a monument to heroic certainty but an interpretive lexicon through which vulnerability acquires meaning. The implication is profound. Human weakness does not silence expression; it generates richer forms of expression. The greatest narratives of civilization emerge not despite human limitation but because of it. The subsequent lines further intensify this dialectic:

*"its opposite
is the priceless treasure
I have been seeking for."*

The poem does not identify the treasure directly. Instead, it remains structurally absent, defined only through its relationship to helplessness. This absence is philosophically significant. The treasure cannot be possessed as an object because it represents a transformed mode of being. It is discovered through the journey itself rather than at its conclusion. Thus, the search gradually becomes more important than its imagined destination. The final

paradox, *"the distant road that continues beyond its ending, yet lies closer than the senses themselves."* offers the fullest expression of Mohanty's poetics of negativity. Distance becomes intimacy; ending becomes continuation; limitation becomes transcendence. Every apparent negation has been quietly reversed without being denied. The road remains distant, yet it is inwardly near. The ending remains real, yet it no longer possesses absolute authority. Negativity has not disappeared; it has been transformed into the medium through which deeper reality becomes perceptible. This philosophical transformation distinguishes *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* from many modern existential texts that remain imprisoned within despair or absurdity. Mohanty neither rejects suffering nor glorifies it. Instead, he interprets limitation as the indispensable horizon within which human consciousness discovers its inexhaustible possibilities. Failure becomes fertile, incompleteness becomes creative, silence becomes eloquent, helplessness becomes interpretive power, and endings become invitations to further beginnings.

Ultimately, the poem proposes one of the most humane and intellectually mature visions in contemporary Odia poetry. It suggests that the deepest abundance of existence is not found in the elimination of limitation but in learning to inhabit limitation creatively. Human beings do not transcend finitude by escaping it; they transcend it by allowing finitude itself to become transparent to meanings that infinitely exceed it. In this profound sense, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is not merely a poem about the road. It is a poem about the inexhaustible human capacity to transform every ending into another beginning, every silence into another language, and every experience of helplessness into a renewed possibility of wisdom.

XVII. THE ETHICS OF SEEKING: MORAL IMAGINATION, EPISTEMIC HUMILITY, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INCOMPLETE SELF

Although *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is generally read as a philosophical and existential poem, its ethical dimension deserves equally serious consideration. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's lyric is not merely concerned with the metaphysics of existence or the phenomenology of consciousness; it also proposes a distinctive moral vision. This ethical vision, however, differs fundamentally from conventional moral poetry. The poem neither prescribes a catalogue of virtues nor condemns specific vices. It contains no explicit ethical commandments, no direct political slogans, and no didactic moral conclusions. Instead, ethics emerges indirectly through the speaker's manner of inhabiting uncertainty. The poem demonstrates that genuine morality begins not with certainty but with humility, not with possession of truth but with reverence for truth, not with intellectual domination but with an unending willingness to continue seeking. Consequently, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* may be understood as one of the most subtle explorations of **epistemic ethics** in modern Odia literature—a poem that transforms the search for knowledge into a profoundly ethical act. The ethical orientation of the poem is already implicit in its opening question: "How much farther can one possibly go?" This

question does not arise from arrogance but from self-awareness. The speaker recognizes limitation before claiming authority. Such recognition is ethically significant because intellectual history repeatedly demonstrates that violence often begins where humility ends. Dogmatism, ideological fanaticism, and cultural absolutism all emerge from the illusion that one has already reached the final destination of truth. Mohanty's traveler occupies the opposite position. He acknowledges exhaustion, uncertainty, and incompleteness. This acknowledgment is not weakness; it is the moral foundation of authentic inquiry. The original Odia expression, "*Āu bā kete dūraku jāiheba?*" (Mohanty 21) possesses an important ethical nuance. The question is addressed neither to another individual nor to an external authority. It emerges as an act of inward dialogue. The speaker interrogates himself before attempting to interpret the world. Such self-interrogation constitutes one of the defining characteristics of ethical consciousness. Before judging reality, one must first examine one's own capacity for understanding it. The poem's repeated emphasis upon limitation similarly acquires ethical significance. The speaker confesses that "*the sky itself has already come to an end*" and that "*the earth beneath my feet is crumbling away*." These images are not merely metaphysical observations. They also function as critiques of intellectual pride. The collapse of familiar certainties reminds the speaker that no human perspective is absolute. Ethical maturity therefore begins with the recognition that one's own conceptual world is finite. Every worldview, however comprehensive, eventually encounters horizons it cannot fully explain.

This attitude bears comparison with the philosophical humility advocated by Socrates, whose declaration that genuine wisdom begins in recognizing one's ignorance has shaped philosophical ethics for more than two millennia. Yet Mohanty's poem extends this insight beyond rational inquiry into poetic consciousness. Ignorance is not merely confessed; it is aesthetically inhabited. The speaker transforms uncertainty into a mode of being. This ethical humility reaches its highest expression in one of the poem's most remarkable declarations:

*"No, I can go no farther—
Not even to behold the truth
that has remained unseen till now."*

The speaker openly admits his inability to perceive the whole truth. Such an admission is ethically profound because it resists the temptation to fabricate certainty. Contemporary intellectual and political cultures often reward confident assertions regardless of their accuracy. Mohanty's poem quietly proposes the opposite ideal. Honest acknowledgment of incompleteness becomes morally superior to false certainty. This insight may be interpreted through the concept of **epistemic humility**, increasingly recognized within contemporary philosophy as an essential intellectual virtue. Epistemic humility does not deny the existence of truth. Rather, it recognizes that human access to truth is always partial, historically conditioned, and continually revisable. Mohanty's speaker exemplifies precisely this virtue. Truth remains real, but the self remains unfinished. The poem, therefore, rejects two equally dangerous ethical extremes. On the

one hand, it refuses dogmatism, which assumes complete possession of truth. On the other hand, it equally refuses relativism, which denies truth altogether. Instead, Mohanty occupies an ethically demanding middle position. Human beings must continue seeking truth precisely because they have not yet fully attained it. The central metaphor of waiting further develops this moral philosophy:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

Waiting here is not passive resignation but disciplined receptivity. The speaker does not violently impose meaning upon reality. He waits for reality to disclose another language. Such patience represents an ethical disposition toward existence itself. The world is approached not as an object to be conquered but as a mystery deserving attentive listening. This ethical patience has important implications for literary criticism as well. Great literature should not be reduced to simplistic interpretations or ideological appropriations. Mohanty's own poem models the opposite approach. Meaning unfolds gradually through sustained contemplation. Interpretation therefore becomes an ethical relationship between reader and text rather than an act of intellectual possession. The sequence that follows reinforces this ethical orientation:

*"to speak something more,
to write,
to make others understand after writing, and reading,
the remaining uncomprehended truth."*

Communication here is presented not as domination but as responsibility. The speaker writes not to display knowledge but to enlarge collective understanding. Even then, the truth remains "uncomprehended." This acknowledgment prevents communication from becoming authoritarian. Writing remains dialogical rather than monological. The ethical significance of this passage becomes especially clear when viewed within contemporary public discourse, where language is frequently employed as an instrument of persuasion, manipulation, or ideological control. Mohanty's poem proposes another model. Language exists to accompany humanity toward deeper understanding rather than to terminate inquiry through premature certainty. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* likewise carries important ethical implications: "*the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness*." The *Mahābhārata* is arguably the greatest ethical epic in the Indian tradition precisely because it refuses simplistic moral binaries. Virtue and vice frequently coexist within the same characters. Dharma itself often appears ambiguous. By invoking the epic as the "alternative vocabulary" of helplessness, Mohanty aligns his own poem with this profoundly dialogical ethical tradition. Moral life cannot be reduced to rigid formulas. Instead, ethical judgment requires continual reflection upon complex human situations.

It is significant that Mohanty does not describe the *Mahābhārata* as the vocabulary of heroism, victory, or righteousness. He calls it the vocabulary of helplessness. This choice fundamentally

reshapes the ethical imagination. Compassion becomes more important than triumph. Understanding becomes more important than condemnation. Human vulnerability becomes the common ground from which ethical responsibility emerges. This orientation also transforms the poem's understanding of the self.

The speaker never presents himself as an isolated autonomous individual. His search repeatedly gestures toward communication, history, language, and civilization. The self is relational rather than self-contained. Such relationality possesses profound ethical consequences because it reminds readers that human identity is always formed through dialogue with others. The concluding image, "*the distant road that continues beyond its ending, yet lies closer than the senses themselves.*" may, therefore, be interpreted ethically as well as metaphysically. The road represents the never-ending responsibility of moral self-formation. Ethical life possesses no final graduation, no ultimate certificate of completion. Every moral achievement reveals further responsibilities. Every act of understanding uncovers deeper obligations toward others.

This conception recalls the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, who argued that ethics begins in the infinite responsibility awakened by encounter with what exceeds the self. Mohanty's poem does not explicitly articulate Levinasian philosophy, yet it similarly portrays the self as permanently summoned beyond its own completion. The road continues because ethical existence itself remains unfinished. The poem also offers an implicit critique of contemporary cultures of certainty. Modern technological civilization often encourages the illusion that every problem possesses an immediate solution, every question an instant answer, every uncertainty a technical remedy. Mohanty's poem quietly resists this mentality. Some realities require waiting rather than calculation, contemplation rather than acceleration, humility rather than mastery. Such resistance is not anti-modern; it is deeply humanistic. Moreover, the poem suggests that genuine ethical maturity consists not in eliminating uncertainty but in learning to dwell responsibly within it. The speaker never abandons the search because certainty has failed him. Instead, uncertainty becomes the very environment in which wisdom grows. The incomplete self is not an inferior self. It is the only self capable of genuine learning.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* advances a remarkably original ethical philosophy grounded in humility, patience, dialogue, vulnerability, and unending inquiry. It reminds readers that the pursuit of truth is itself a moral vocation. Human beings become ethically greater not when they claim final answers but when they preserve the courage to continue asking deeper questions. The road survives its own ending because moral responsibility likewise survives every temporary achievement. Every conclusion becomes another invitation to understand more deeply, to listen more carefully, to speak more responsibly, and to recognize that the highest wisdom may ultimately consist not in possessing truth but in remaining forever worthy of seeking it.

XVIII. THE ARCHETYPAL IMAGINATION: MYTH, SYMBOL, AND THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS IN *SARI SARU NATHIBĀ BĀTA*

One of the most enduring characteristics of great poetry is its ability to transcend the purely personal and enter the domain of the archetypal. Such poetry speaks through individual experience while simultaneously articulating structures of feeling, imagination, and consciousness that belong to humanity as a whole. It is precisely this movement from the individual to the universal that enables a poem to survive historical change and cultural transformation. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* demonstrates this quality with remarkable subtlety. Although the poem is spoken in the first person and appears to describe an intensely personal journey, its symbolic architecture gradually expands into an archetypal landscape where the traveler, the road, the sky, the earth, the alphabet, the unseen truth, and the *Mahābhārata* cease to be merely individual experiences and become universal symbols of the human condition. Consequently, the poem may be fruitfully interpreted through archetypal criticism, particularly the insights associated with Carl Gustav Jung and Northrop Frye, while simultaneously revealing symbolic dimensions that remain uniquely Mohanty's own.

The most fundamental archetype in the poem is undoubtedly the road. Across civilizations, the road has functioned as one of humanity's oldest symbolic structures. From the pilgrimage routes of ancient India and medieval Europe to the wandering heroes of Homeric epic, from the Dao in Chinese philosophy to the spiritual paths of the Upanishads, the road has repeatedly represented life's journey toward meaning.

Yet Mohanty's treatment of this ancient symbol differs significantly from its traditional formulations. His road is not simply a path leading from one point to another. It is a paradoxical road that survives its own ending. In archetypal terms, this transformation is profoundly significant because it converts the journey from a finite narrative into an ontological condition. The traveler no longer moves toward completion; instead, he inhabits an endless process of becoming. The original Odia title, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, already carries this archetypal richness. The phrase is deceptively simple, employing ordinary vocabulary deeply embedded in everyday Odia speech. Yet its symbolic resonance extends far beyond local linguistic usage. The "bāta" (road) gradually ceases to designate physical movement and becomes an archetype of consciousness itself. Every human life unfolds upon such a road, whether or not one consciously recognizes its presence. Thus, the poem transforms a familiar cultural image into a universal existential symbol.

From a Jungian perspective, the road functions as an image of individuation—the lifelong process through which the human personality gradually moves toward psychological wholeness. Jung repeatedly argued that individuation is never completed because the unconscious continually reveals new dimensions of the self. Mohanty's road embodies precisely this dynamic. The

traveler repeatedly encounters limits only to discover that every apparent conclusion conceals another beginning.

However, Mohanty's symbolic imagination should not be reduced to Jungian psychology alone. Whereas Jung's individuation ultimately concerns psychic integration, Mohanty's journey extends beyond psychological fulfillment toward epistemological, linguistic, ethical, and metaphysical openness. The road, therefore, exceeds the boundaries of analytical psychology and enters a broader philosophical horizon.

Closely associated with the road is another archetypal symbol: the traveler himself. Significantly, Mohanty's speaker possesses no individual biography, social identity, political affiliation, or historical specificity. The poem deliberately withholds personal details. Readers know neither the speaker's age nor profession, neither his social status nor geographical location. This absence is artistically crucial because it enables the speaker to assume archetypal universality. He is no longer merely one individual among many but Everyman confronting the inexhaustibility of existence. His exhaustion, uncertainty, hope, helplessness, and perseverance become representative rather than merely autobiographical. The poem's opening question, *"How much farther can one possibly go?"* thus acquires archetypal significance. Every human being eventually reaches moments when familiar certainties dissolve, when inherited maps become insufficient, and when the future appears immeasurable. The question therefore belongs not exclusively to Mohanty's speaker but to humanity itself. It is one of those perennial questions that recur across civilizations because they arise from the very structure of finite existence. Another striking archetype appears in the image of the sky: "Here, the sky itself has already come to an end." Throughout world mythology and literature, the sky has symbolized transcendence, divine presence, limitless possibility, and cosmic order. Mohanty performs a remarkable symbolic inversion by allowing the sky to terminate. This inversion does not destroy the archetype; rather, it revitalizes it. Once the traditional symbol of infinity reaches its limit, readers are compelled to seek another form of transcendence. The poem thereby relocates infinity from the external cosmos into the inner journey of consciousness. The archetype is transformed rather than abandoned. Equally significant is the archetype of the earth:

*"the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away."*

The earth has almost universally represented stability, nourishment, and existential security. In Mohanty's poem, however, the earth loses its solidity. This symbolic destabilization should not be interpreted merely as pessimism. Instead, it initiates an archetypal passage from dependence upon external foundations toward the discovery of inward grounding. The collapse of the earth resembles numerous initiation myths in which the seeker must first lose ordinary security before entering a deeper mode of consciousness. The journey therefore follows a recognizably archetypal rhythm of separation, crisis, transformation, and renewed perception.

Perhaps the poem's most original symbolic contribution lies in the image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets." Unlike the road or the sky, the alphabet has not traditionally functioned as a major archetype in world literature. Mohanty therefore creates something genuinely innovative by elevating language itself into the realm of mythic symbolism. The alphabet becomes more than a collection of letters. It represents the total symbolic order through which human beings understand reality. Waiting for another alphabet thus signifies waiting for another mode of consciousness, another civilization of meaning, another way of inhabiting existence. The metaphor possesses extraordinary archetypal potential because it transforms linguistic evolution into spiritual evolution. From the perspective of archetypal criticism, this image resembles what Jung termed the emergence of new symbolic forms from the collective unconscious. Every historical period develops symbolic structures capable of expressing its deepest experiences. Yet eventually these structures become insufficient. New archetypes arise because consciousness itself continues evolving. Mohanty's "next alphabet" may therefore be understood as the symbolic anticipation of humanity's future imaginative possibilities. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* further enriches the poem's archetypal framework: *"the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness."* This is one of the poem's most culturally resonant symbolic moments. The *Mahābhārata* is not cited merely as a literary monument but as a living archetypal reservoir. Throughout Indian civilization, the epic has functioned as a comprehensive symbolic universe containing innumerable archetypes: the righteous king, the tragic hero, the loyal friend, the wise counselor, the destructive ambition, the moral dilemma, the cosmic war, and the eternal search for dharma. Mohanty compresses this immense symbolic inheritance into a single astonishing phrase. The *Mahābhārata* becomes "the alternative vocabulary" through which helplessness itself becomes intelligible. Individual suffering thus enters the archetypal memory of civilization.

This symbolic strategy bears comparison with Dante's use of Christian cosmology or Eliot's use of Grail mythology. Yet Mohanty's treatment remains fundamentally different. Dante constructs an elaborate theological architecture, while Eliot assembles fragments of multiple mythic traditions. Mohanty, by contrast, employs a single civilizational symbol with extraordinary concentration. The *Mahābhārata* is neither narrated nor summarized. Its symbolic presence alone suffices to expand the poem's interpretive horizon. The archetype of truth also deserves close examination. Throughout the poem, truth remains unseen, uncomprehended, and continually sought. Unlike many philosophical or religious texts, Mohanty's poem never personifies truth as a deity, doctrine, or metaphysical essence. Instead, truth functions as what Northrop Frye might describe as a centripetal symbol, drawing the entire imaginative structure toward itself while remaining beyond complete representation. The unseen truth becomes the invisible center around which every other image revolves. The concluding image, *"the distant road that continues beyond its ending, / yet lies closer than the senses themselves."* may be regarded as the

synthesis of the poem's archetypal imagination. Distance and nearness, journey and arrival, transcendence and intimacy converge within a single symbol. This convergence recalls the great archetypal structures of mystical literature, yet Mohanty's treatment remains resolutely modern. The symbol refuses doctrinal closure. It preserves mystery rather than dissolving it into theological certainty.

Another important feature of the poem's archetypal method is its remarkable economy. Many mythic poems rely upon extensive narrative elaboration, elaborate symbolic systems, or explicit mythological references. Mohanty achieves comparable symbolic density through astonishing brevity. A handful of carefully chosen images generate an interpretive universe extending far beyond the poem's modest length. Such symbolic concentration is one of the distinguishing marks of mature poetic craftsmanship.

Moreover, the poem avoids the common danger of archetypal criticism—the reduction of literary individuality to universal patterns. Mohanty's symbols undoubtedly participate in enduring archetypal traditions, yet they remain unmistakably rooted in Odia linguistic sensibility and Indian civilizational memory. The road is not an abstract universal but a road imagined through the cadence, metaphorical habits, and philosophical temperament of modern Odia poetry. Universality emerges through cultural particularity rather than despite it. This balance between local rootedness and universal resonance explains why *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* possesses the capacity to speak meaningfully across cultural boundaries. Readers unfamiliar with Odia literature can still recognize the archetypal journey, the search for truth, the collapse of certainty, and the endless continuation of the road. At the same time, readers grounded in Indian literary traditions perceive additional layers of symbolic significance unavailable through universal archetypes alone. The poem therefore exemplifies what may be called intercultural archetypality—a symbolic mode simultaneously rooted and expansive.

Ultimately, Chandra Kumar Mohanty's achievement lies in renewing ancient archetypes without merely repeating inherited conventions. The road becomes more than pilgrimage, the traveler more than hero, the alphabet more than language, the *Mahābhārata* more than epic, and truth more than doctrine. Every archetype undergoes imaginative transformation. In doing so, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* demonstrates that archetypes are not static relics preserved within the museum of cultural memory; they are living symbolic energies continually reinterpreted by great poets. Mohanty's poem thus contributes not only to modern Odia literature but also to the continuing evolution of the world's archetypal imagination, proving that the oldest symbols remain inexhaustibly fertile when re-envisioned through an original poetic consciousness.

XIX. THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE UNSAID: SILENCE, LINGUISTIC INSUFFICIENCY, AND THE POETICS OF THE INEXPRESSIBLE

One of the most profound achievements of Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* lies not merely in what it articulates but in what it deliberately leaves unsaid. The poem is remarkable for its economy of expression. It contains no elaborate narrative, no descriptive ornamentation, no autobiographical exposition, and no explanatory commentary. Yet this very restraint becomes the source of its extraordinary interpretive richness. The poem repeatedly gestures toward realities that exceed its own verbal articulation. Consequently, its deepest meaning often resides in silence rather than speech, in implication rather than declaration, and in suggestion rather than exposition. This quality invites a hermeneutic approach that recognizes silence not as the absence of meaning but as one of poetry's most powerful modes of communication. In *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, silence becomes a productive aesthetic force through which language continuously points beyond itself toward experiences that remain fundamentally inexpressible. The opening question, "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" appears deceptively simple. Yet the poem never answers it directly. There is no measurable distance, no geographical destination, and no temporal calculation. Instead of providing an answer, Mohanty allows the question to remain suspended throughout the poem. This suspension is artistically decisive. The unanswered question becomes more significant than any possible answer because it generates an interpretive space in which readers must confront their own existential understanding of journey, limitation, and purpose. The silence following the question is therefore not an omission but an invitation. The same strategy governs the image: "*Here, the sky itself has already come to an end.*" The poem never explains how or why the sky has ended. No cosmological narrative accompanies the statement. There is no mythological catastrophe, no scientific speculation, and no metaphysical argument. The image remains deliberately unexplained. This absence of explanation enlarges its symbolic resonance. Had Mohanty specified the precise meaning of the ending sky, the metaphor would have become conceptually restricted. By refusing explanation, he allows the image to accommodate multiple levels of interpretation: existential, epistemological, spiritual, historical, linguistic, and psychological. Silence thus preserves symbolic openness. The original Odia line, "*Eṭhi ta ākāśa sari jāichhi.*" (Mohanty 21) possesses an extraordinary linguistic simplicity that further intensifies this openness. The statement is almost conversational. There is no rhetorical emphasis demanding a particular interpretation. The poet trusts the image itself. Such confidence in symbolic economy is characteristic of highly mature poetic expression. The poem's treatment of dreams and sleep similarly depends upon what remains unspoken: "*sleep has deserted the eyes/
in pursuit of dreams.*"

Readers are never told what those dreams actually are. Their content remains entirely absent. This absence is not accidental. If the dreams had been explicitly identified—political liberation, spiritual enlightenment, artistic achievement, personal happiness, or social justice—the poem would have become historically and ideologically limited. By withholding their content, Mohanty

transforms dreams into an open symbolic category capable of accommodating innumerable human aspirations. Silence universalizes desire. The same principle governs the image of the crumbling earth: "*the earth beneath my feet/ is crumbling away.*" Again, no explanation is offered. Is the earth collapsing because of political instability, existential anxiety, ecological destruction, metaphysical doubt, or psychological crisis? The poem remains silent. That silence generates interpretive plurality. Different readers may recognize different forms of groundlessness according to their own historical and personal situations. The poem therefore becomes continually renewable because its silences remain hospitable to changing human experiences. Perhaps the most remarkable example of productive silence appears in the central metaphor: "the next alphabet/ beyond all alphabets." The poem never identifies this alphabet. No letters are described. No language is named. No philosophical system is proposed. The future symbolic order remains radically undefined. This indeterminacy is aesthetically indispensable. The metaphor derives its immense imaginative power precisely from its refusal of specification.

Had Mohanty attempted to define the next alphabet, he would have reduced it to another existing conceptual framework. Instead, he preserves its alterity. The next alphabet remains genuinely other because it has not yet entered human language. The poem therefore performs what may be called **negative hermeneutics**: meaning is produced through deliberate withholding rather than exhaustive explanation. This strategy bears comparison with traditions of apophatic or negative discourse in philosophy and theology, where ultimate reality is approached through acknowledgment of what cannot adequately be said. Yet Mohanty's poem remains distinct because it never explicitly invokes theological categories. Its silence belongs to poetic consciousness rather than doctrinal mysticism. The sequence continues: "*to speak something more,/ to write,/ to make others understand...*" The reader naturally expects the speaker to reveal what this "something more" might be. Yet he never does. The poem itself becomes an enactment of its own incompleteness. It gestures toward further speech while refusing to provide it. Such self-reflexive incompleteness is among the poem's most sophisticated formal achievements. The structure of the poem mirrors the philosophy it articulates. Just as the road continues beyond its ending, language continues beyond the poem's own final line. The phrase "*the remaining uncomprehended truth*" represents perhaps the highest concentration of this hermeneutic method. Truth remains "remaining." Something essential always escapes comprehension. Importantly, Mohanty does not identify the content of this remaining truth. Its very remainingness constitutes its significance. Truth becomes inexhaustible because understanding itself remains historically unfinished.

This refusal of final articulation distinguishes the poem from didactic literature. Didactic texts seek to eliminate ambiguity by providing authoritative interpretations. Mohanty's poem moves in precisely the opposite direction. Every image enlarges rather than closes interpretation. Meaning proliferates instead of

concluding. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* similarly demonstrates the poetics of the unsaid: "*the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness.*" The poet does not quote the epic. He does not identify particular characters, episodes, or philosophical doctrines. Merely naming the *Mahābhārata* activates an immense reservoir of cultural memory without reducing that memory to a single interpretive function. This extraordinary economy exemplifies what may be called symbolic compression. A vast civilizational archive enters the poem through one restrained allusion. The silence surrounding the *Mahābhārata* is especially important because the epic itself is famous for resisting simplistic moral conclusions. By refusing to specify which dimension of the epic he invokes, Mohanty allows the entire ethical and philosophical complexity of the tradition to resonate within the lyric. Silence thus preserves complexity. The poem's concluding image provides its most profound hermeneutic gesture:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

The reader naturally asks: Where does this road finally lead? The poem never answers. That unanswered question constitutes its ultimate artistic triumph. The destination is permanently deferred because the poem is less interested in arrival than in the perpetual expansion of consciousness. The silence surrounding the destination transforms the journey itself into the central reality. From the perspective of reader-response criticism, this silence performs another important function. The poem requires active participation from its readers. Interpretation cannot remain passive because essential dimensions of meaning must be imaginatively completed by the reader. Wolfgang Iser's notion of textual "gaps" is particularly relevant here: literary works invite readers to participate by filling intentional indeterminacies through acts of interpretation (Iser 167–72). Mohanty's poem exemplifies this dynamic with exceptional elegance. Its silences are not deficiencies but carefully constructed interpretive spaces.

Moreover, these silences possess an ethical dimension. By refusing definitive explanations, the poem respects the intellectual freedom of its readers. It does not coerce agreement or impose doctrinal certainty. Instead, it invites contemplative dialogue. Such openness reflects the poem's broader philosophical commitment to epistemic humility. A language that acknowledges its own limits becomes ethically more generous than one claiming exhaustive knowledge. The stylistic implications are equally significant. Mohanty's diction remains consistently restrained. There is no rhetorical excess, emotional melodrama, or ornamental verbosity. Each word bears considerable symbolic weight because so much remains deliberately unspoken. This economy recalls the highest achievements of classical lyric traditions in which brevity intensifies rather than diminishes expressive power.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* demonstrates that poetry reaches its greatest expressive potential not by saying everything but by saying precisely enough to awaken what cannot be fully articulated. Its silences are eloquent because they preserve the

inexhaustibility of meaning. The road continues because language itself continues beyond every completed utterance. Every image gestures toward realities exceeding conceptual capture, every metaphor opens another horizon of interpretation, and every apparent conclusion becomes another beginning of understanding. In this profound sense, Mohanty's poem is not simply a linguistic artifact but a hermeneutic event—an ongoing dialogue between speech and silence in which the deepest truths emerge not through exhaustive explanation but through the disciplined eloquence of the unsaid.

XX. THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: PERCEPTION, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND THE POETIC DISCLOSURE OF BEING

Among the many philosophical dimensions of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, one of the most intellectually rewarding is its phenomenological orientation. Although Chandra Kumar Mohanty does not explicitly engage with phenomenological philosophy, the poem repeatedly demonstrates an extraordinary concern with the structures of lived experience rather than abstract metaphysical speculation. It does not begin by constructing theoretical arguments about reality; instead, it carefully attends to how reality is experienced by consciousness itself. The poem therefore exemplifies what may be called a **phenomenological lyric**, in which existence is disclosed not through conceptual systems but through immediate encounters with the world as it is lived, perceived, questioned, and continually reinterpreted. Every major image in the poem—the ending sky, the disappearing earth, sleepless eyes, the unseen truth, the next alphabet, and the road beyond its own ending—emerges not as an objective description of external reality but as the experiential manifestation of consciousness confronting its own limits.

The poem opens with a question that immediately establishes this phenomenological orientation: "How much farther can one possibly go?" The significance of this question lies in its refusal to define the journey objectively. There is no map, no measurable geography, and no identifiable destination. Instead, distance appears entirely through the speaker's lived experience. The road is experienced before it is conceptualized. This distinction is crucial. In phenomenological terms, the poem privileges the **life-world**—the world as immediately lived—over the world as scientifically measured or theoretically explained. The road therefore becomes an experiential horizon rather than a physical object. The original Odia formulation, "*Āu bā kete dūraku jāiheba?*" (Mohanty 21) ossesses an intimate conversational cadence that reinforces this immediacy. The speaker is not addressing an audience with philosophical authority but encountering his own existence through questioning. The poem thus begins where phenomenological inquiry itself begins: with attentive reflection upon ordinary experience. The following image, "*Here, the sky itself has already come to an end.*" is equally revealing. From an empirical perspective, the sky has no visible ending. Yet phenomenology is not concerned primarily with objective astronomy; it investigates how reality appears within

consciousness. The "ending" of the sky is therefore a phenomenological event. It signifies the moment when lived experience reaches the horizon of its own interpretive capacity. The speaker experiences the world as though transcendence itself has become finite.

This transformation demonstrates one of the poem's most remarkable achievements. External reality continually becomes internal experience without losing its symbolic richness. The sky remains a visible phenomenon, yet it simultaneously functions as an experiential limit. Mohanty thus avoids both naïve realism and abstract idealism. The external and the internal remain inseparable because consciousness always encounters reality through lived perception. The same phenomenological method governs the unforgettable line:

*"sleep has deserted the eyes
in pursuit of dreams."*

The poem does not explain dreams psychologically, neurologically, or symbolically before presenting them. Instead, dreams are encountered as lived experience. The speaker feels the absence of sleep because consciousness has become oriented toward possibilities exceeding ordinary existence. This orientation belongs to what phenomenologists describe as intentionality—the fundamental directedness of consciousness toward something beyond itself. Human consciousness is never merely enclosed within itself; it continually reaches toward meanings, objects, possibilities, and futures. Mohanty's dreams exemplify this intentional movement. They are not passive mental images but active existential orientations. qually significant is the image of the crumbling earth:

*"the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away."*

Here again, phenomenological interpretation reveals depths beyond literal description. The earth symbolizes what phenomenologists often call the taken-for-granted world—the familiar structures that ordinarily remain unquestioned because they provide stability for everyday existence. Once the earth begins to crumble, ordinary experience is disrupted. Such disruption compels consciousness to recognize realities previously concealed beneath habitual familiarity. The poem therefore dramatizes the phenomenological insight that genuine understanding often begins when the ordinary becomes strange.

This experiential disruption also transforms the body into a site of philosophical revelation. The speaker repeatedly refers to eyes, feet, sleep, senses, and bodily movement. These references are not incidental. The poem consistently emphasizes embodiment as the medium through which consciousness encounters existence. Unlike purely intellectual philosophy, Mohanty's lyric recognizes that human beings know the world through lived corporeality. The body is not an obstacle to understanding but its indispensable condition. This embodiment becomes especially significant when the speaker declares: "No, I can go no farther." The statement is simultaneously physical and existential. Bodily exhaustion becomes the disclosure of

metaphysical limitation. The inability to continue walking reveals deeper questions concerning truth, knowledge, and existence.

Thus, the body functions phenomenologically as the place where philosophical reflection originates. Remarkably, Mohanty refuses to interpret this exhaustion negatively. Instead, the poem immediately introduces another mode of experience:

*"To stop here means
to wait
for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

Phenomenologically, waiting represents one of the most complex temporal experiences available to consciousness. During ordinary activity, attention is directed toward immediate tasks. Waiting suspends such activity and creates an open horizon of expectation. Time itself becomes experienced differently. The present stretches toward an unknown future without possessing certainty regarding what will arrive.

Mohanty's waiting is, therefore, not passive inactivity but heightened attentiveness. Consciousness becomes receptive rather than merely productive. The speaker does not create the next alphabet; he waits for its emergence. Such receptivity reflects a phenomenological openness in which reality gradually discloses itself rather than being forcibly mastered. The metaphor of "the next alphabet" further demonstrates the poem's phenomenological sophistication. An alphabet ordinarily constitutes the medium through which experience becomes intelligible. By anticipating another alphabet, the poem suggests that consciousness itself may eventually experience reality through new symbolic structures. Human perception is therefore historically dynamic rather than permanently fixed. Every interpretive system remains provisional because experience continually exceeds conceptual articulation. The sequence *"to write,/ to make others understand.../ the remaining uncomprehended truth"* reveals another important phenomenological insight. Understanding is presented not as static possession but as an ongoing process of disclosure. Truth does not appear instantaneously in complete form. It gradually manifests itself through language, dialogue, reflection, and interpretation. Consciousness therefore remains permanently unfinished because reality itself continually reveals new dimensions. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* deepens this experiential horizon:

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

From a phenomenological perspective, the *Mahābhārata* becomes more than a literary text. It functions as a historical structure of meaning through which individual experience acquires intelligibility. Personal helplessness is not isolated psychological suffering; it becomes interpretable within a broader cultural world. Consciousness therefore remains fundamentally historical. Individual experience always unfolds

within inherited symbolic traditions. The poem's concluding image provides perhaps its richest phenomenological disclosure:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

This extraordinary paradox invites careful reflection. Ordinarily, distance and nearness belong to spatial measurement. Mohanty transforms them into qualities of consciousness. The road is distant because complete understanding remains unattainable. Yet it is closer than the senses because the search originates within the very structure of lived experience itself. Consciousness is always already oriented toward meanings exceeding immediate perception.

The phrase "closer than the senses themselves" is especially significant. It suggests that beneath ordinary sensory perception lies a more primordial mode of awareness. Reality is not exhausted by what is empirically visible. Instead, the deepest dimensions of existence become accessible through contemplative attentiveness. Mohanty's poem therefore distinguishes between sensation and insight, between empirical perception and existential disclosure. Another noteworthy feature of the poem is its remarkable absence of conceptual abstraction. Terms such as ontology, phenomenology, epistemology, transcendence, or consciousness never appear. Instead, philosophical reflection emerges entirely through concrete lived experience: walking, seeing, sleeping, waiting, writing, reading, and searching. This stylistic decision significantly strengthens the poem's phenomenological authenticity.

Philosophy arises organically from experience rather than being imposed upon it. Furthermore, the poem continually resists objectification. Neither truth nor the road nor the alphabet ever becomes a fixed object available for complete possession. Each remains a horizon continually receding before consciousness. This dynamic corresponds closely to the phenomenological understanding that reality is always richer than any single act of perception. The poem's structure itself embodies this experiential openness. It begins with questioning and ends with continuation. No definitive synthesis resolves the journey. Instead, readers leave the poem with heightened awareness rather than completed certainty. The experience of reading mirrors the experience described within the poem. Interpretation itself becomes another stage of the road.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* may be regarded as one of the most profound phenomenological poems in modern Odia literature. It demonstrates that poetry possesses a unique capacity to disclose structures of consciousness inaccessible to purely conceptual philosophy. Through astonishing symbolic economy, Mohanty reveals how perception, embodiment, language, temporality, history, and existential questioning converge within the lived experience of the human being. The road continues because consciousness itself remains inexhaustibly open to further disclosure. Every perception conceals another horizon, every horizon invites another interpretation, and every act of understanding becomes the beginning of another encounter with

Being. In this profound sense, the poem transforms ordinary experience into philosophical revelation, reminding readers that the deepest truths are not discovered outside consciousness but through its ever-renewing dialogue with the infinite mystery of existence.

XXI. THE POETICS OF LANGUAGE: META-POETRY, SEMIOTICS, AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE "NEXT ALPHABET"

Among all the images that constitute the symbolic architecture of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, perhaps none is more original, intellectually daring, or philosophically inexhaustible than the image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets." If the road is the poem's central existential metaphor, the alphabet is undoubtedly its central linguistic metaphor. This single image elevates the poem from an exploration of existential experience to a profound meditation on language itself. Chandra Kumar Mohanty is not merely writing a poem through language; he is simultaneously writing a poem about the possibilities and limitations of language. Consequently, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* becomes a deeply self-conscious poetic text—a poem that reflects upon its own medium while questioning the capacity of words to contain reality. Such self-reflexivity places the poem within the distinguished tradition of world literature that may appropriately be described as **meta-poetry**, where poetic language continuously interrogates its own expressive power. The crucial passage reads:

*"To stop here means
to wait for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets,
to speak something more,
to write,
to make others understand after writing, and reading,
the remaining uncomprehended truth."*

Few passages in modern Odia poetry compress such a remarkable range of philosophical implications into so few lines. At first glance, the metaphor appears deceptively simple. An alphabet ordinarily signifies the basic system of letters through which language becomes possible. Yet Mohanty immediately destabilizes this ordinary understanding. He imagines another alphabet that exists **beyond every existing alphabet**. The implications of this imaginative leap are immense. If another alphabet remains necessary, then every existing language, every established discourse, every inherited conceptual system remains fundamentally incomplete. Human speech, however sophisticated, has not yet exhausted reality.

This realization transforms the poem into a meditation on the limitations of linguistic representation. Throughout the history of philosophy, language has often been regarded as humanity's primary instrument for organizing experience. Mohanty acknowledges this function while simultaneously exposing its insufficiency. Existing alphabets permit communication, yet they cannot fully articulate what the poem calls *"the remaining uncomprehended truth."* The adjective "remaining" deserves particular attention because it preserves hope without denying

limitation. Human language has indeed grasped many truths, but something essential still remains outside its expressive reach. Thus, language is neither omnipotent nor futile. It is historically progressive yet permanently unfinished. The original Odia formulation— *"Sabu barṇamālāra para barṇamālāku..."* (Mohanty 21) possesses extraordinary poetic force. The repetition of *barṇamālā* (alphabet) creates a rhythmic expansion that itself enacts the movement beyond linguistic closure. The phrase is simultaneously simple and revolutionary. Mohanty employs one of the most ordinary educational terms in the language and transforms it into one of contemporary Odia poetry's most philosophically resonant symbols. The metaphor may initially appear to concern only language, but its significance extends much further. Every alphabet also represents a civilization of thought. Languages encode worldviews, cultural memories, ethical systems, and epistemological assumptions. Consequently, another alphabet implies another mode of inhabiting reality itself. Mohanty's vision is therefore not merely linguistic but civilizational. He anticipates the emergence of new symbolic structures through which humanity may perceive dimensions of existence presently inaccessible.

This interpretation becomes even more compelling when considered alongside the poem's repeated concern with unseen truth. The inability to express everything does not indicate intellectual failure; rather, it reflects the inexhaustibility of reality. Every language inevitably leaves a remainder. Every conceptual system encounters horizons beyond which it cannot adequately proceed. The next alphabet symbolizes humanity's perpetual effort to approach those horizons without claiming final mastery over them.

From the perspective of semiotics, the metaphor is equally remarkable. Language ordinarily functions through the relationship between signs and meanings. Mohanty's poem quietly suggests that the current system of signs may itself require transformation because reality continually exceeds available signification. The next alphabet therefore represents not merely additional vocabulary but a fundamentally new semiotic order. Meaning itself evolves because experience continues expanding.

Such an interpretation distinguishes the poem from simplistic theories of linguistic relativism. Mohanty does not argue that existing languages are inadequate because they belong to particular cultures. Rather, every language, regardless of its richness, remains ontologically incomplete before the inexhaustibility of Being. Thus, the next alphabet is not another national language. It is another horizon of meaning. The sequence that follows reinforces this interpretation:

*"to speak something more,
to write,
to make others understand..."*

The progression from speech to writing to understanding deserves careful examination. Speech represents immediate

expression; writing preserves expression across time; understanding transforms expression into shared consciousness. Yet even after this entire communicative process has occurred, truth remains only partially comprehended. Communication therefore becomes an endless ethical and epistemological task rather than a completed achievement.

This insight is profoundly meta-poetic because the poem implicitly reflects upon its own status. *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* itself participates in precisely this process. It speaks, it is written, it is read, and it seeks understanding. Yet the poem simultaneously acknowledges that no interpretation—including the present critical analysis—can exhaust its meaning. Every reading belongs to the road rather than constituting its destination. The poem's linguistic self-consciousness also illuminates its remarkable stylistic economy. Mohanty consistently avoids ornamental excess. His diction is almost austere. Common words such as *road, sky, earth, sleep, truth*, and *alphabet* carry immense philosophical weight. This economy reflects deep confidence in language. Rather than multiplying words, the poet enlarges the semantic field of ordinary vocabulary. The familiar gradually becomes extraordinary.

The image of another alphabet also transforms our understanding of poetry itself. Poetry is frequently regarded as the highest achievement of existing language. Mohanty's poem quietly proposes something even more radical. Poetry is not the culmination of language but its anticipation. The poet stands at the threshold of another symbolic order, listening for words that have not yet entered collective speech. In this sense, poetry becomes prophetic—not because it predicts future events but because it anticipates future possibilities of expression.

This interpretation helps explain why the poem repeatedly links language with waiting. The speaker does not invent the next alphabet through intellectual effort alone. He waits for it. Such waiting reflects profound artistic humility. Genuine poetic language cannot simply be manufactured. It must gradually emerge through attentive openness to realities exceeding established discourse. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* further enriches this linguistic philosophy:

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

The phrase is extraordinarily revealing. Vocabulary here becomes existential rather than merely lexical. The *Mahābhārata* offers another language through which helplessness may be understood. Human suffering therefore requires symbolic mediation. Without language, experience remains mute. Yet every vocabulary remains provisional, preparing the way for another vocabulary and, ultimately, another alphabet. This continual expansion of language parallels the poem's larger symbolic structure. Just as the road continues beyond its ending, language continues beyond every completed system. Roads and alphabets become parallel metaphors. One represents existential movement; the other represents linguistic evolution. Together they articulate the poem's central philosophical conviction that

both life and language remain fundamentally unfinished. The final image, "closer than the senses themselves," also acquires new significance when viewed linguistically.

The next alphabet is paradoxically nearer than ordinary perception because language originates within consciousness before it enters speech. Every future word begins as an unnamed intuition. The poem therefore locates linguistic creativity within the deepest structures of human awareness. This conception also distinguishes Mohanty from purely poststructuralist skepticism regarding language. He unquestionably recognizes linguistic limitation, yet he never concludes that meaning is impossible. Instead, limitation itself becomes the condition for continual renewal. Language remains trustworthy precisely because it never claims exhaustive adequacy. Its incompleteness preserves its creative vitality.

Another notable aspect of the poem is its resistance to linguistic nationalism. Although profoundly rooted in Odia, the metaphor of the next alphabet reaches beyond every particular language. Mohanty celebrates his linguistic inheritance without imprisoning imagination within it. The future remains open because every language participates in humanity's shared search for more adequate forms of expression.

Ultimately, the image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" constitutes one of the most original contributions of modern Odia poetry to contemporary philosophical poetics. It transforms language from a finished instrument into an evolving horizon of human possibility. Every word points beyond itself, every sentence anticipates another sentence, every poem prepares another poem, and every alphabet quietly waits for another alphabet yet to be born. In this extraordinary vision, Chandra Kumar Mohanty reveals poetry itself as an unfinished dialogue between language and silence, expression and mystery, knowledge and wonder. The road survives its ending because language survives every completed utterance, continually inviting humanity toward richer vocabularies, deeper understandings, and ever-renewing forms of consciousness capable of articulating truths that have always existed but have not yet found their words.

XXII. THE POEM AS A CIVILIZATIONAL TEXT: INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA*, AND THE MODERN ODIA IMAGINATION

One of the greatest artistic accomplishments of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is that it achieves universality without abandoning its civilizational roots. Many modern poems become universal by erasing local cultural memory, while others become culturally authentic by remaining inaccessible beyond their immediate tradition. Chandra Kumar Mohanty avoids both extremes. His poem is unmistakably modern, profoundly Odia, deeply Indian, and simultaneously universal. It demonstrates that genuine universality does not arise from cultural neutrality but from the creative transformation of a particular civilization's intellectual inheritance into experiences recognizable by humanity as a

whole. Consequently, the poem deserves to be read not merely as an individual lyric but as a **civilizational text**, one in which Indian philosophical consciousness, Odia literary sensibility, and modern existential inquiry converge into an extraordinarily integrated poetic vision. The most explicit indication of this civilizational consciousness appears in the central allusion:

*"In this brief history of exploration
have been inscribed the eighteen volumes of the
Mahabharata—
the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness."*

This passage constitutes the philosophical axis of the entire poem. It is not an ornamental literary reference nor an act of cultural nostalgia. Rather, it reveals the intellectual method through which Mohanty understands existence itself. The speaker's personal search is interpreted through one of India's greatest civilizational narratives, suggesting that individual consciousness and cultural memory are inseparable. Human beings do not encounter reality as isolated minds; they inherit symbolic vocabularies through which experience becomes intelligible.

The phrase "brief history of exploration" deserves careful attention. Against this apparently modest expression stands the immense temporal and philosophical universe of the *Mahābhārata*. The contrast between "brief" and "eighteen volumes" is deliberate. Mohanty compresses millennia of civilizational reflection into the experiential present of an individual consciousness. This compression demonstrates that tradition is not external to lived experience; it survives within every serious act of existential inquiry.

The reference to the **eighteen books** (*Aṣṭādaśa Parva*) is also significant. Mohanty does not mention merely the *Mahābhārata* in general terms. He invokes its complete structural wholeness. In Indian literary consciousness, the eighteen books collectively represent an encyclopedic exploration of dharma, politics, kinship, war, ethics, metaphysics, suffering, destiny, and liberation. By referring specifically to the eighteen books, the poem symbolically invokes this totality without narrating it. Such restraint exemplifies Mohanty's remarkable poetic economy. Equally original is the expression:

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

This phrase deserves recognition as one of the most philosophically sophisticated formulations in modern Odia poetry. Significantly, Mohanty does not describe the *Mahābhārata* as a scripture of victory, heroism, righteousness, or divine revelation. Instead, he calls it a vocabulary of helplessness. This interpretive shift fundamentally transforms the epic's significance. Rather than emphasizing triumph, Mohanty emphasizes human vulnerability. Such an interpretation is deeply faithful to the *Mahābhārata* itself, whose greatest philosophical moments often emerge not from victory but from moral uncertainty, tragic conflict, and existential perplexity.

Indeed, much of the *Mahābhārata* unfolds through characters who discover that inherited ethical formulas prove inadequate before the complexity of lived reality. Arjuna's paralysis on the battlefield, Yudhiṣṭhira's repeated moral dilemmas, Bhīṣma's tragic fidelity, Karna's divided loyalties, and Draupadī's profound suffering all reveal that human existence frequently exceeds simplistic ethical categories. Mohanty's helpless speaker therefore enters a long civilizational conversation regarding the limits of certainty and the necessity of continual inquiry.

The title of Mohanty's anthology, *Asamartha Partha* ("The Helpless Arjuna"), further reinforces this connection, although the present poem functions independently without requiring direct narrative parallels. The echo of Arjuna nevertheless enriches the poem's symbolic horizon. Like Arjuna before the Kurukṣetra war, Mohanty's speaker confronts the limits of action, knowledge, and certainty. Yet unlike the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the poem deliberately refrains from offering a final doctrinal resolution. This difference is artistically significant. Mohanty inherits the philosophical seriousness of the epic while preserving the openness characteristic of modern consciousness.

The poem's civilizational grounding extends beyond the explicit *Mahābhārata* reference. The very structure of its thought reflects important currents within Indian philosophical traditions. The distinction between sensory perception and deeper realization appears in the concluding paradox: *"closer than the senses themselves."* This statement resonates with long-standing Indian reflections on the relationship between *indriya* (the senses), cognition, and ultimate reality. However, Mohanty does not merely reproduce inherited metaphysical vocabulary. Instead, he transforms this civilizational inheritance into modern poetic language. The phrase remains accessible even to readers unfamiliar with Indian philosophy because it emerges organically from the experiential movement of the poem.

Similarly, the image of "the unseen truth" reflects a deeply Indian concern with the gradual unfolding of knowledge rather than its instantaneous possession. Throughout numerous Indian philosophical traditions, truth is approached through disciplined inquiry, contemplative refinement, and continual self-transformation. Mohanty's speaker embodies this disposition without converting the poem into philosophical exposition. The emphasis remains poetic rather than doctrinal. Another notable feature of the poem is its refusal to oppose tradition and modernity. Modern literary discourse often presents these categories as mutually exclusive. Mohanty's poem quietly dismantles this binary. The *Mahābhārata* appears not as an antiquarian relic but as a living interpretive resource. Tradition remains dynamic because it continually generates new meanings for changing historical circumstances. Modernity, in turn, becomes richer because it remains capable of conversing with civilizational memory.

This dynamic may be compared with the literary achievements of several major twentieth-century poets who revitalized inherited traditions without merely imitating them. Yet

Mohanty's method remains distinctive. He neither mythologizes the present nor modernizes the epic through superficial adaptation. Instead, he discovers structural affinities between ancient and contemporary forms of existential inquiry. The result is a genuinely dialogical relationship between historical memory and modern consciousness. The poem also reflects important characteristics of modern Odia literary sensibility. Since the emergence of literary modernism in Odisha, many poets have explored themes of alienation, historical fragmentation, existential uncertainty, and linguistic experimentation. Mohanty undoubtedly participates in this broader intellectual movement. However, his work distinguishes itself through the remarkable integration of philosophical depth with symbolic restraint. Unlike certain forms of modernism that celebrate fragmentation for its own sake, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* transforms fragmentation into a disciplined search for deeper coherence.

The symbolic landscape of the poem also remains unmistakably Indian despite its universal reach. The road is not merely an abstract metaphor but recalls centuries of pilgrimage, wandering ascetics, philosophical journeys, and spiritual quests embedded within the subcontinent's cultural memory. The emphasis upon waiting evokes contemplative traditions without becoming explicitly religious. The search for another alphabet suggests both linguistic innovation and spiritual evolution. These resonances enrich the poem without reducing it to allegory. One should also note that Mohanty's civilizational imagination is fundamentally inclusive rather than exclusionary. The poem never claims cultural superiority. Nor does it present Indian civilization as a closed system possessing final answers unavailable elsewhere. Instead, the *Mahābhārata* functions as one vocabulary among humanity's many attempts to understand existence. Its value lies not in exclusivity but in interpretive generosity. This openness explains why the poem remains capable of entering meaningful dialogue with Dante, Eliot, Machado, Rilke, Whitman, Tagore, and numerous other poets without sacrificing its own identity. Mohanty's Indian consciousness does not isolate him from world literature; it enables richer participation within it. His poem demonstrates that authentic comparative literature begins when individual traditions become sufficiently confident to converse with one another without anxiety. Perhaps the greatest civilizational achievement of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* lies in its redefinition of inheritance itself. Tradition is not presented as a fixed body of doctrines demanding passive obedience. Instead, it becomes an unfinished conversation inviting continual reinterpretation. Every generation receives inherited symbols only by transforming them creatively. Thus, the *Mahābhārata* remains alive not because it is endlessly repeated but because poets such as Mohanty continue discovering new existential meanings within its inexhaustible symbolic universe.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* stands as a compelling example of how modern Odia poetry can simultaneously remain rooted in Indian civilizational consciousness and participate in the universal philosophical concerns of world literature. The poem neither abandons its cultural inheritance nor becomes

imprisoned by it. Instead, it demonstrates that the deepest traditions remain perpetually renewable because they are fundamentally dialogical. Through the symbolic presence of the *Mahābhārata*, the disciplined economy of its language, and its profound meditation upon the endless search for truth, Mohanty reveals that civilization itself is a road that continues beyond every historical ending—a living continuum of memory, questioning, interpretation, and renewal. In this sense, the poem not only reflects Indian civilization but actively extends its philosophical imagination into the literary future.

XXIII. THE COMPARATIVE POETICS OF THE ENDLESS ROAD: CHANDRA KUMAR MOHANTY IN DIALOGUE WITH WORLD POETRY

One of the surest indications of a genuinely great poem is its ability to enter into meaningful dialogue with works produced across different civilizations, languages, historical periods, and literary traditions without losing the uniqueness of its own voice. Such comparison should never aim to subordinate one poem to another or to force superficial similarities. Rather, comparative criticism seeks to illuminate how different poets confront analogous existential questions through distinct symbolic strategies, philosophical temperaments, and cultural imaginations. Read from this perspective, Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* occupies an intellectually distinguished position within the wider landscape of world poetry. Its meditation upon the endless journey, linguistic insufficiency, existential limitation, and the perpetual search for truth places it in conversation with some of the most philosophically profound poems ever written. Yet these affinities only sharpen the originality of Mohanty's poetic imagination. His poem is not derivative of any predecessor; instead, it reconfigures universal human concerns through a uniquely Odia and Indian symbolic consciousness. Perhaps the most illuminating comparison is with Antonio Machado's celebrated poem "**Caminante, no hay camino**" ("**Traveler, There Is No Road**"), one of the defining texts of twentieth-century Spanish poetry. Machado famously writes:

*Traveler, there is no road,
the road is made by walking.*

The philosophical kinship between Machado and Mohanty is immediately apparent. Both poets reject the notion of a pre-existing, predetermined path. Both understand the journey as a process through which meaning gradually emerges rather than a route leading toward a fixed destination. Yet the differences between them are equally instructive. Machado's road comes into existence through human movement. The traveler creates the path by walking. Mohanty's road, however, already possesses a paradoxical ontological existence. It survives its own ending. Rather than emphasizing creative agency alone, Mohanty emphasizes the inexhaustibility of Being itself. His traveler discovers that the road continues beyond every conceivable conclusion. Thus, Machado's poem foregrounds existential action, whereas Mohanty's lyric foregrounds ontological continuity. Both celebrate becoming, yet they imagine its philosophical source differently (Machado 142).

An equally compelling comparison may be drawn with Robert Frost's **"The Road Not Taken."** Frost's famous traveler confronts a decisive moment of choice between two diverging roads. The poem has often been interpreted as a meditation upon individual decision, contingency, and the irreversible consequences of human action. Mohanty's road belongs to an entirely different symbolic order. There is no crossroads, no competing alternatives, and no retrospective satisfaction regarding choices made. Instead, the central problem is not which road to choose but how to continue when every road appears to have ended. Frost's traveler is defined by decision; Mohanty's traveler is defined by perseverance. Frost's symbolic landscape dramatizes the ethics of choice, whereas Mohanty's dramatizes the metaphysics of continuation. The distinction is subtle yet profound. Mohanty's concern lies not with life's alternatives but with its inexhaustibility. The comparison with T. S. Eliot is perhaps even more revealing. Throughout **"Four Quartets,"** Eliot repeatedly returns to the paradox that genuine arrival often requires continual movement:

*We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.* (Eliot 208)

Mohanty's poem shares Eliot's conviction that exploration possesses no final terminus. Yet the philosophical atmospheres of the two poets differ significantly. Eliot's exploration ultimately moves toward explicitly Christian theological reconciliation and the recovery of sacred order. Mohanty's exploration remains deliberately open-ended. His road never culminates in doctrinal closure. The unseen truth continues to remain partially unseen. Even the anticipated "next alphabet" has not yet arrived. Thus, while Eliot resolves paradox through spiritual affirmation, Mohanty preserves paradox as the permanent condition of authentic existence. The dialogue with Eliot becomes even richer when one considers the role of language. Eliot frequently explores the inadequacy of words, observing in **"Burnt Norton"** that-

*Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break...* (Eliot 180)

Mohanty radicalizes this insight through his unforgettable image of

*"the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

Where Eliot questions the stability of language, Mohanty imagines the emergence of an entirely new linguistic order. His critique therefore extends beyond vocabulary toward the very foundations of signification. Another illuminating comparison emerges with Rainer Maria Rilke, especially the **Duino Elegies**. Rilke consistently portrays human existence as suspended between visible and invisible realities. Mohanty's speaker similarly inhabits a world where ordinary perception proves insufficient. The concluding paradox, *"closer than the senses themselves,"* echoes Rilke's conviction that reality exceeds

empirical perception. Yet Mohanty's imagery remains markedly less metaphysical and more phenomenological. Rather than populating his symbolic universe with angels or transcendent intermediaries, he allows roads, alphabets, and ordinary language to disclose extraordinary philosophical depths.

The poem also invites comparison with Rabindranath Tagore, particularly the spiritual humanism of *Gītāñjali*. Tagore repeatedly imagines the human journey as an endless movement toward an ever-receding fullness of realization. His poems celebrate the dynamic relation between finite humanity and infinite Being. Mohanty shares this orientation while avoiding devotional lyricism. His search remains contemplative rather than explicitly theistic. Consequently, the poem inhabits a philosophical rather than liturgical mode of transcendence. The image of waiting recalls several of Tagore's lyrics in which spiritual maturity requires patient openness rather than immediate fulfillment. Yet Mohanty's waiting acquires an additional linguistic dimension. He waits not merely for revelation but for another alphabet. Language itself becomes the object of expectation.

One may also fruitfully compare Mohanty's poem with Octavio Paz, particularly *Sun Stone*. Paz repeatedly explores circular temporality, the incompleteness of language, and the continual recreation of meaning. Both poets refuse linear closure. Yet while Paz often constructs dense surrealistic imagery, Mohanty achieves comparable philosophical complexity through extraordinary symbolic restraint. His vocabulary remains almost austere. The simplicity of the language paradoxically intensifies the depth of reflection. The comparison with Fernando Pessoa is equally revealing. Pessoa's heteronyms frequently portray consciousness as permanently divided, incomplete, and incapable of final self-possession. Mohanty's speaker also recognizes incompleteness, yet his tone remains fundamentally different. Pessoa often dwells within metaphysical fragmentation. Mohanty transforms incompleteness into hopeful continuity. The road extends beyond its ending not because certainty has disappeared forever but because reality remains infinitely richer than human comprehension. Among Indian English poets, Mohanty's symbolic imagination also bears comparison with A. K. Ramanujan. Ramanujan repeatedly demonstrates how inherited cultural memory survives within modern consciousness without becoming antiquarian. Mohanty's invocation of the *Mahābhārata* performs a similar function. Yet his use of the epic is philosophically more concentrated. Rather than drawing upon multiple narrative episodes, he condenses the entire civilizational archive into the unforgettable phrase,

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

This compression represents one of the poem's most original artistic achievements. The poem also deserves comparison with Jorge Luis Borges, particularly Borges' fascination with infinity, labyrinths, books, and language. Borges repeatedly imagines reality as an endless textual universe whose meanings continually exceed interpretation. Mohanty's "next alphabet"

resonates strikingly with this vision. Yet Borges frequently delights in metaphysical playfulness, whereas Mohanty maintains a deeply ethical seriousness. His linguistic reflections emerge from existential necessity rather than intellectual game.

From the perspective of East Asian literature, Mohanty's symbolic restraint recalls aspects of classical Zen poetry, particularly the ability to suggest profound philosophical insight through ordinary images. Yet unlike many Zen texts, Mohanty's poem never seeks the dissolution of language into silence. Instead, it imagines another language capable of expressing realities still awaiting articulation. Another important distinction should be emphasized. Numerous modern poems explore alienation, despair, or existential exhaustion. Mohanty's poem certainly acknowledges these experiences. The speaker confesses: "*No, I can go no farther.*" Yet unlike much twentieth-century existential poetry, the poem refuses nihilism. Exhaustion becomes expectation. Helplessness becomes vocabulary. Silence becomes another alphabet. Endings become roads. This persistent transformation of negation into possibility distinguishes Mohanty's philosophical temperament from many of his modern counterparts. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of these comparisons is that Mohanty's originality becomes increasingly evident rather than diminished. Every affinity simultaneously reveals an important difference. Machado constructs the road through walking; Mohanty discovers a road that survives ending. Frost examines choice; Mohanty examines continuation. Eliot seeks theological reconciliation; Mohanty preserves philosophical openness. Rilke explores invisible transcendence; Mohanty reveals transcendence through linguistic incompleteness. Tagore sings devotion; Mohanty meditates upon epistemic humility. Borges celebrates infinite textuality; Mohanty transforms language into ethical responsibility.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* occupies a distinguished place within the comparative history of philosophical poetry because it neither imitates inherited traditions nor isolates itself within regional particularity. Instead, it enters the great conversation of world literature through an unmistakably original symbolic imagination. Its road is unlike any other road in modern poetry; its alphabet unlike any other linguistic metaphor; its helplessness unlike any conventional expression of despair. By transforming ordinary language into a profound meditation on Being, knowledge, civilization, and the inexhaustibility of truth, Chandra Kumar Mohanty demonstrates that modern Odia poetry possesses not merely regional significance but genuine world-literary stature. His poem deserves to be read alongside the finest philosophical lyrics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—not because it resembles them, but because it expands the very possibilities of what philosophical poetry can become.

XXIV. THE AESTHETICS OF PARADOX: DIALECTICAL IMAGINATION, NON-DUAL THINKING, AND THE POETICS OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

One of the most extraordinary artistic strengths of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is its sustained construction of meaning through paradox. The poem neither argues philosophically nor narrates

dramatically; instead, it thinks poetically. It develops its vision through a sequence of paradoxes that continuously destabilize ordinary logical categories while simultaneously revealing deeper ontological truths. This paradoxical mode of thought is not ornamental rhetoric. It is the poem's fundamental epistemological method. Every major image deliberately joins opposites that conventional logic would regard as mutually exclusive. Endings become beginnings, helplessness becomes power, silence becomes language, stopping becomes movement, distance becomes intimacy, and incompleteness becomes fulfillment. Through this extraordinary dialectical imagination, Chandra Kumar Mohanty demonstrates that poetry often reaches truths inaccessible to linear reasoning. Consequently, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* deserves to be regarded as one of the finest examples of the aesthetics of paradox in modern Odia poetry. The poem begins with what appears to be an ordinary existential question: "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" Yet even this opening contains a subtle paradox. The question assumes movement while simultaneously implying exhaustion. It seeks continuation while already anticipating limitation. The traveler is still walking, yet psychologically he has already reached a boundary. Thus, the poem's dialectical movement begins before its first symbolic image appears. Journey and exhaustion coexist within the same experiential moment. The paradox becomes explicit in the immediately following declaration: "*Here, the sky itself has already come to an end.*" Ordinarily, the sky functions as the very symbol of endlessness. To imagine the sky ending is therefore to negate one of humanity's most deeply rooted metaphors of infinity. Yet Mohanty does not merely produce an impossible image for aesthetic novelty. The paradox compels readers to reconsider their understanding of infinity itself. If even the sky can end, then infinity cannot simply be spatial. It must belong to another dimension of experience. Thus, the poem destroys one concept of infinity in order to discover another. The paradox is therefore epistemologically productive rather than merely rhetorical. The original Odia line, "*Eṭhi ta ākāśa sari jāichhi.*" is particularly striking because of its complete absence of dramatic emphasis. Mohanty states the impossible with perfect composure. This stylistic calm intensifies the paradox. The impossible is presented as though it were entirely natural. Such tonal restraint is characteristic of mature philosophical poetry, where intellectual shock arises from conceptual transformation rather than emotional exaggeration. The subsequent image likewise depends upon paradoxical inversion:

*"sleep has deserted the eyes
in pursuit of dreams."*

Conventionally, dreams arise from sleep. Mohanty reverses this causal relationship. Sleep disappears because of dreams. Aspiration overcomes biological necessity. Rest becomes unrest. Fulfillment generates deprivation. The paradox reveals that genuine human longing often refuses the comforts ordinarily associated with psychological equilibrium. Creative consciousness remains awake precisely because it cannot remain satisfied with established realities. Another profound paradox emerges through the image of the collapsing earth:

*"the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away."*

The earth traditionally signifies firmness, permanence, and stability. Once it begins to collapse, one expects chaos or annihilation. Mohanty, however, quietly transforms this apparent catastrophe into philosophical awakening. The loss of ground becomes the discovery of another ground beyond material certainty. Thus, instability paradoxically becomes the condition of deeper stability. Perhaps the poem's most significant dialectical reversal appears in the sequence: "No, I can go no farther." At first reading, this seems to constitute the poem's point of absolute negation. The journey has ended. Movement has become impossible. Yet the following lines immediately overturn this expectation:

*"To stop here means
to wait
for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

This transition represents one of the poem's supreme artistic achievements. Stopping becomes another mode of movement. Waiting becomes another form of progress. Inactivity becomes preparation. Silence becomes anticipation. The paradox is not merely conceptual but existential. Human life repeatedly demonstrates that moments appearing externally unproductive often become inwardly transformative. Mohanty captures this profound experiential truth through remarkable symbolic economy. The image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" itself constitutes an extraordinary paradox. An alphabet ordinarily represents the foundation of language. To imagine another alphabet beyond every alphabet is to imagine a linguistic beginning after linguistic completion. The existing symbolic order remains complete enough to function yet incomplete enough to require transcendence. Language therefore exists in a permanently paradoxical condition: sufficient for communication yet insufficient for ultimate reality. This paradox extends to the act of writing itself:

"to write,/
to make others understand.../
the remaining uncomprehended truth."

Writing aims at understanding, yet complete understanding remains impossible. Communication succeeds while remaining incomplete. Truth is expressed while remaining partially hidden. Mohanty's conception of language therefore avoids both naïve optimism and skeptical despair. Expression remains meaningful precisely because it remains unfinished. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* introduces another profound dialectical movement:

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

Here helplessness becomes vocabulary. Ordinarily, helplessness silences human beings. Mohanty transforms it into language itself. What appears weakest becomes most expressive. Human vulnerability becomes interpretive power. This inversion recalls one of literature's oldest insights: that profound artistic creation

often emerges not from mastery but from wounded consciousness. Yet Mohanty's formulation is entirely original because helplessness is not merely represented; it becomes another lexicon through which existence may be understood. The next movement intensifies the dialectic further:

*"its opposite
is the priceless treasure
I have been seeking."*

The treasure is defined only negatively. It is known through its opposite rather than through direct description. Such indirect definition recalls negative philosophical traditions in which ultimate realities become intelligible through contrast rather than positive specification. Yet Mohanty's formulation remains resolutely poetic rather than systematically philosophical. The culmination of the poem's paradoxical imagination appears in its unforgettable conclusion:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

This image unites several apparently irreconcilable oppositions simultaneously. The road is both distant and near. It has both ended and continued. It exceeds sensory perception while remaining more intimate than sensation itself. Every ordinary spatial distinction collapses into a higher experiential unity. This paradox deserves especially close attention because it reveals the poem's underlying philosophical method. Mohanty does not abolish opposites. Distance remains distance; nearness remains nearness. Instead, he demonstrates that deeper reality frequently includes both simultaneously. The dialectic therefore culminates not in contradiction but in expanded understanding. Such thinking bears interesting comparison with several philosophical traditions, although Mohanty's poem remains irreducible to any one of them. Certain aspects resonate with non-dual Indian philosophical reflection, where apparent oppositions ultimately disclose underlying unity. Other aspects recall dialectical modes of thought in Western philosophy, where contradiction becomes the engine of conceptual development. Yet Mohanty's achievement is fundamentally poetic. He does not argue toward synthesis through abstract reasoning. He allows symbols themselves to generate higher insight.

The poem's paradoxes also possess important aesthetic consequences. Because each image contains multiple levels of meaning, rereading becomes essential. Initial understanding repeatedly proves insufficient. The reader experiences the same movement as the speaker: every apparent conclusion opens another interpretive horizon. The form of reading thus mirrors the philosophy of the road itself. Another notable feature is the remarkable naturalness with which Mohanty introduces paradox. There is no intellectual exhibitionism. Impossible images emerge quietly through ordinary language. This stylistic humility greatly strengthens their philosophical force. The poem trusts readers to inhabit contradiction rather than immediately resolve it. Furthermore, the paradoxes remain emotionally grounded. They never become merely abstract logical puzzles. Exhaustion, helplessness, waiting, hope, and searching remain deeply human

experiences. Philosophical complexity therefore emerges organically from lived existence rather than from conceptual sophistication alone. It is precisely this fusion of emotional authenticity and dialectical imagination that distinguishes Mohanty's poem from many experimental philosophical texts. His paradoxes illuminate rather than obscure. They enlarge human understanding without sacrificing human feeling.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* reveals paradox not as a defect of thought but as one of the deepest structures of existence itself. Human beings continually discover beginnings within endings, strength within weakness, language within silence, certainty within doubt, and intimacy within distance. Mohanty's poetic genius lies in recognizing that these are not accidental contradictions but constitutive features of reality. The poem therefore proposes an aesthetics founded upon the impossible—not the impossible as fantasy, but the impossible as the deepest truth of lived experience. In doing so, it joins the small company of world poems whose paradoxes do not merely decorate philosophical reflection but become philosophy itself, articulated through the uniquely transformative power of poetic language.

XXV. THE ONTOLOGY OF THE ROAD: BEING, BECOMING, AND THE METAPHYSICS OF THE UNFINISHED UNIVERSE

If one image may legitimately be described as the ontological nucleus of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, it is undoubtedly the image of the road. Every other symbol in the poem—the ending sky, the crumbling earth, sleepless eyes, the unseen truth, the next alphabet, the *Mahābhārata*, and even helplessness itself—ultimately converges upon this central metaphor. Yet the road in Chandra Kumar Mohanty's poem is not merely a physical path, nor even simply a metaphor for life's journey. It gradually reveals itself as an ontological principle—a way of understanding the very nature of Being. The poem therefore moves beyond existential reflection into metaphysical speculation, proposing a vision of reality in which existence itself is fundamentally unfinished, dynamic, and inexhaustibly open. The road becomes not something upon which beings travel but the very mode through which Being continually unfolds.

The title, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*, already announces this ontological ambition. The English rendering, *The Road That Outlives Its Own End*, successfully preserves much of the paradoxical richness of the original Odia. Yet the Odia phrase possesses an additional semantic resonance. The verb *sari* (to end or conclude) and the expression *saru nathibā* (not truly ending) create a subtle dialectical tension between completion and incompleteness. The road is neither simply endless nor simply finite. Rather, it continually survives every apparent conclusion. This linguistic structure mirrors the poem's metaphysical vision. Being itself refuses final closure.

The opening question, "*How much farther can one possibly go?*" already presupposes that existence is experienced as movement. Human beings do not simply exist; they proceed, search, advance, hesitate, and continue.

Yet Mohanty refuses to reduce this movement to ordinary spatial progression. The question gradually transforms into an inquiry concerning the very nature of existence. What does it mean for anything genuinely to end? Can completion ever be absolute? Does every conclusion secretly preserve another possibility? The following declaration intensifies these ontological questions: "*Here, the sky itself has already come to an end.*" This statement should not be interpreted merely as symbolic hyperbole. Within the poem's philosophical architecture, the ending sky signifies the exhaustion of every external horizon through which human beings ordinarily orient themselves. The cosmos itself appears finite.

Yet remarkably, the disappearance of the cosmic horizon does not produce metaphysical emptiness. Instead, it redirects attention toward another dimension of Being inaccessible to purely spatial imagination. The original Odia expression, "*Eṭhi ta ākāsa sari jāichhi.*" (Mohanty 21) achieves this transformation through astonishing simplicity. Mohanty does not describe cosmic catastrophe or theological apocalypse. He merely observes that the sky has ended. The understatement itself carries immense philosophical force. Being changes not through dramatic spectacle but through subtle shifts in consciousness. The image of the collapsing earth similarly contributes to the poem's ontology:

*"the earth beneath my feet
is crumbling away."*

Ordinarily, metaphysical systems seek stable foundations upon which knowledge and existence may securely rest. Mohanty quietly dismantles this foundational impulse. Even the ground proves unstable. Yet this instability should not be mistaken for nihilism. Rather, the poem suggests that reality itself is fundamentally processual. Stability is provisional; movement is primary. This conception distinguishes Mohanty's ontology from traditional substance metaphysics, in which permanent entities constitute the ultimate reality. Instead, Being appears through continual becoming. The road exists because existence itself remains unfinished. This insight reaches greater clarity when the speaker declares: "*No, I can go no farther.*" At first sight, this appears to represent the triumph of finitude. Human capacity has reached its limit. Yet the poem immediately overturns this interpretation. The inability to continue physically becomes another mode of ontological openness:

*"To stop here means
to wait
for the next alphabet."*

The significance of this transition cannot be overstated. Stopping does not terminate Being; it merely alters its mode of manifestation. Movement becomes waiting. Activity becomes receptivity. The ontology of the poem therefore refuses to identify existence exclusively with action. Being unfolds equally through silence, expectation, and contemplative openness. The image of the "next alphabet" also possesses profound ontological implications. Alphabets do not merely organize language; they

organize worlds. Every symbolic order establishes particular ways in which reality becomes intelligible. Another alphabet therefore signifies another disclosure of Being itself. Existence continually exceeds available conceptual structures because Being is richer than any historical vocabulary. The poem's understanding of truth likewise reflects this metaphysical openness: *"the remaining uncomprehended truth."* The adjective "remaining" is philosophically decisive. Truth is never exhausted because Being continually reveals new dimensions. Human knowledge therefore remains inherently asymptotic: it approaches reality without ever enclosing it completely. Such an ontology preserves both realism and humility. Reality exists independently of human consciousness, yet consciousness can never claim exhaustive possession of it. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* further enriches this metaphysical vision:

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

The *Mahābhārata* here becomes not merely a cultural text but an ontological archive. Across its immense narrative, reality repeatedly resists reduction to fixed moral or metaphysical formulas. Dharma remains dynamic because existence itself is dynamic. Mohanty's invocation therefore reinforces the poem's broader conviction that Being cannot be imprisoned within definitive conceptual systems. Especially noteworthy is the poem's refusal to distinguish sharply between ontology and epistemology. Questions concerning what exists continually intertwine with questions concerning how existence becomes known. The road simultaneously signifies Being and understanding. To travel the road is already to participate in reality's continual self-disclosure. The concluding paradox gathers these ontological strands into a single unforgettable image:

*"the distant road that continues beyond its ending,
yet lies closer than the senses themselves."*

This may legitimately be regarded as one of the most philosophically concentrated lines in contemporary Odia poetry. The road is distant because Being infinitely exceeds conceptual mastery. Yet it is closer than the senses because existence precedes every act of perception. Human beings do not first perceive Being and then enter it. They always already participate within it. The phrase "closer than the senses themselves" radically transforms ordinary metaphysical assumptions. Empirical perception is no longer the deepest level of reality. Beneath sensory awareness lies a more primordial intimacy with existence itself. The road therefore represents neither objective space nor subjective imagination but the ontological relation binding consciousness and Being together. Another remarkable feature of Mohanty's ontology is its rejection of finality. Many philosophical systems seek ultimate closure: definitive truths, absolute foundations, complete explanations, or final destinations. *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* systematically resists every such aspiration. Every ending becomes another beginning. Every conclusion becomes another horizon. Every completed vocabulary anticipates another alphabet. Importantly, this refusal of closure should not be confused with relativism. Mohanty

never suggests that reality lacks truth or coherence. On the contrary, truth remains real precisely because it continually exceeds finite comprehension. The unfinished character of Being reflects not its instability but its inexhaustible richness. This metaphysical openness also transforms the reader's relationship to the poem itself. No interpretation can finally exhaust its meanings because the poem mirrors the ontology it describes. Reading becomes another journey upon the endless road. Every critical insight reveals further possibilities rather than terminating inquiry. The poem therefore remains permanently renewable across generations of readers. One should also note the remarkable harmony between form and ontology. The poem's brevity paradoxically generates interpretive expansiveness. Its concise structure continually opens rather than closes philosophical reflection. The formal economy thus embodies the metaphysical principle of inexhaustibility. Moreover, Mohanty's ontology remains profoundly humane. It does not dissolve individual existence into abstract metaphysical systems. The traveler continues walking, waiting, questioning, writing, and searching. Being reveals itself through ordinary human experience rather than through speculative abstraction alone.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* proposes one of the most compelling ontological visions in modern Odia poetry. It imagines reality not as a completed structure but as an endlessly unfolding continuum of disclosure, interpretation, and becoming. The road survives its own ending because existence itself continually transcends every form through which it temporarily appears. Human beings therefore inhabit not a closed universe but an unfinished cosmos whose deepest truth lies precisely in its inexhaustible openness. In this profound metaphysical vision, Chandra Kumar Mohanty transforms one of humanity's oldest symbols into a radically new ontology of becoming, demonstrating that the road is not merely where existence takes place—it is existence itself, eternally moving beyond every destination toward horizons that forever remain both distant and intimately near.

XXVI. THE PHILOSOPHY OF TIME: TEMPORALITY, HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE ETERNITY OF THE UNFINISHED

Time is one of the least explicitly discussed yet most profoundly operative dimensions of *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta*. Unlike many philosophical poems that directly meditate upon the passage of time, memory, aging, or mortality, Chandra Kumar Mohanty's lyric constructs a remarkably subtle temporal architecture in which every image is simultaneously temporal and timeless. The poem neither narrates chronological events nor organizes itself around historical sequence. Instead, it reveals time as an existential condition continuously experienced through waiting, searching, incompleteness, remembrance, expectation, and renewal. Consequently, the poem may be understood as a meditation upon temporality itself, proposing that authentic human existence unfolds not within measurable chronological succession but within an ever-expanding horizon where past, present, and future continually reinterpret one another. The road survives its own ending because time itself refuses final closure.

The poem begins not with memory but with movement: "How much farther can one possibly go?" At first glance, the question appears spatial rather than temporal. Yet movement is always experienced through time. Every journey presupposes duration, anticipation, and continuity. Significantly, Mohanty does not ask where the road leads but how much farther one can continue.

The emphasis, therefore, falls upon the experience of ongoingness rather than destination. Time becomes qualitative rather than quantitative. What matters is not chronological measurement but existential endurance. The original Odia line, "*Āu bā kete dūraku jāiheba?*" (Mohanty 21) contains an important nuance. The expression *āu* ("still" or "further") already implies continuation. The traveler exists within an unfinished temporal movement. The question therefore arises not at the beginning of the journey but somewhere within its unfolding. Readers enter a consciousness already shaped by duration.

The subsequent declaration, "*Here, the sky itself has already come to an end.*" introduces another temporal dimension. The phrase "has already" indicates completion. Something previously infinite now belongs to the past. Yet this ending paradoxically generates another future. The apparent completion of one horizon becomes the opening of another. Time therefore functions dialectically rather than linearly. Endings never remain merely endings because they immediately create new possibilities of becoming. The poem repeatedly performs this temporal transformation. Sleep disappears because of dreams:

*"sleep has deserted the eyes
in pursuit of dreams."*

Dreams ordinarily belong to future aspiration, while sleep belongs to present bodily necessity. Mohanty reverses this relationship. The future invades the present so powerfully that present rest becomes impossible. Human temporality is, therefore, shown to be anticipatory. Consciousness continually lives ahead of itself. This anticipatory structure reaches extraordinary philosophical depth in the central passage:

*"To stop here means
to wait
for the next alphabet
beyond all alphabets."*

Waiting constitutes one of the poem's most important temporal experiences. Unlike ordinary chronological time, waiting transforms duration into expectation. Every moment acquires meaning because it points toward something not yet present. Yet the awaited future remains undefined. The "next alphabet" has not arrived. Consequently, the future functions not as predictable chronology but as radical openness. The image of another alphabet deserves renewed consideration from a temporal perspective. Alphabets ordinarily belong to cultural history. They preserve civilizational continuity across generations. By anticipating another alphabet, Mohanty imagines not merely another language but another historical epoch of consciousness. The poem therefore projects human civilization itself into an

unfinished future. This temporal openness also governs the sequence:

*"to write,
to make others understand...
the remaining uncomprehended truth."*

Writing is inherently temporal. It carries thought beyond the immediate moment into future acts of reading and interpretation. Mohanty's speaker recognizes that understanding unfolds historically. Truth is never possessed instantaneously. It matures through successive generations of readers, writers, and seekers. The poem thus imagines literature itself as an intergenerational dialogue rather than an isolated artistic achievement. The phrase "remaining uncomprehended truth" also implies temporal humility. Something always remains for the future to discover. Every generation inherits unfinished questions from its predecessors while leaving new questions for those yet to come. The poem, therefore, rejects both nostalgic idealization of the past and triumphalist confidence in the present. Perhaps nowhere is this historical consciousness more evident than in the remarkable invocation:

*"In this brief history of exploration
have been inscribed
the eighteen volumes of the Mahabharata."*

This passage compresses immense temporal scales into a single poetic moment. The "brief history" of an individual life intersects with one of the oldest and most enduring literary monuments of Indian civilization. Personal time and civilizational time become inseparable. The individual journey acquires historical depth, while the epic tradition becomes existentially immediate. The reference to the *Mahābhārata* also suggests that genuine temporality is cumulative rather than repetitive. Human history advances not by abandoning its past but by continually reinterpreting it. The epic remains alive because every generation discovers new meanings within it. Mohanty's own poem participates in precisely this historical process.

This conception distinguishes the poem from simplistic notions of historical progress. Progress is not represented as technological advancement or political development. Instead, history advances through expanding consciousness. Another alphabet signifies another possibility of understanding rather than merely another historical period. The concluding image, "*the distant road that continues beyond its ending,/ yet lies closer than the senses themselves.*" offers the poem's most comprehensive temporal vision. The road continues because time itself remains unfinished.

Every ending belongs simultaneously to the past and the future. Completion becomes another beginning. Chronological succession is transformed into existential continuity. The phrase "beyond its ending" is especially significant. Ordinarily, endings terminate temporal processes. Mohanty imagines an ending that itself becomes another temporal threshold. Such a conception radically alters our understanding of finitude. Death, failure,

exhaustion, or completion need not represent absolute cessation. They may function as transitions within larger continuities of Being. The paradox of nearness and distance likewise acquires temporal significance. The road is historically remote because complete realization always lies ahead.

Yet it is existentially immediate because every present moment already participates in that future. Time therefore becomes simultaneously anticipatory and present. Another noteworthy feature of the poem is its remarkable absence of nostalgia. Many modern poems respond to temporal consciousness through lamentation for a lost past. Mohanty adopts a different orientation. The past is honored through the *Mahābhārata*, yet the poem remains decisively future-directed. The emphasis consistently falls upon what has not yet appeared: unseen truth, another alphabet, another understanding, another continuation of the road.

This future orientation, however, avoids utopian certainty. The future remains mysterious rather than predetermined. The speaker waits rather than predicts. Such waiting reflects profound temporal humility. Human beings may anticipate the future without claiming complete knowledge of it. The poem also transforms the act of reading into a temporal event. Every reader encounters the text at a different historical moment, bringing new experiences and interpretive possibilities. Consequently, the poem itself becomes another road continuing beyond its original historical context. Its meanings evolve because its readers continue evolving. This capacity for continual renewal explains why *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* possesses the potential to endure beyond its own literary moment. Great poems survive because they remain temporally open. They speak differently to successive generations without losing their essential integrity. Mohanty's lyric exemplifies precisely this quality.

Ultimately, the philosophy of time articulated in *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is neither cyclical in any simplistic sense nor merely linear. Instead, it imagines temporality as an ever-deepening continuum of exploration in which every ending secretly preserves another beginning, every historical inheritance anticipates another transformation, and every present moment participates simultaneously in memory and expectation. The road survives its ending because time itself survives every conclusion. Human existence is therefore not imprisoned within chronological succession but invited into an inexhaustible temporality where history, consciousness, language, and Being continually unfold toward horizons forever approaching yet never finally exhausted. In this profound vision, Mohanty transforms time from a measure of mortality into the very medium through which infinity becomes experientially possible, affirming that the unfinished is not the failure of existence but its deepest temporal truth.

XXVII. TOWARDS A NEW PHILOSOPHICAL POETICS: CHANDRA KUMAR MOHANTY'S CONTRIBUTION TO

MODERN ODIA LITERATURE AND CONTEMPORARY WORLD POETRY

Having examined *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* through existential, phenomenological, ontological, archetypal, hermeneutic, ethical, semiotic, comparative, and civilizational perspectives, it now becomes possible to evaluate the poem's broader literary significance. Critical interpretation should not merely explain a text; it should also determine the extent to which that text transforms the literary tradition within which it appears. Great poems do not simply participate in existing conventions—they subtly alter the possibilities of poetic expression itself. Read from this perspective, Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* emerges as far more than an accomplished lyric. It represents an important intervention in the evolution of modern Odia poetry by expanding its philosophical horizon while simultaneously preserving its linguistic economy, symbolic clarity, and emotional authenticity. The poem deserves recognition as a significant contribution not only to Odia literature but also to the wider discourse of contemporary philosophical poetry.

One of the poem's most striking achievements is its extraordinary balance between simplicity of language and complexity of thought. Throughout literary history, philosophical poetry has frequently encountered two opposite dangers. Some poems become so intellectually abstract that they lose emotional immediacy and poetic vitality. Others preserve lyrical beauty but sacrifice philosophical depth in favor of sentimentality or decorative symbolism. Mohanty's poem successfully avoids both extremes. Its vocabulary remains remarkably accessible. Ordinary words—road, sky, earth, sleep, dream, alphabet, truth, writing, reading—constitute the entire symbolic universe of the poem. Yet these familiar words undergo continuous semantic expansion until they become vehicles of profound metaphysical reflection. Such transformation of ordinary language into philosophical revelation is among the highest achievements available to poetry.

This stylistic economy recalls an important principle shared by many enduring literary masterpieces: genuine profundity often appears through restraint rather than elaboration. Mohanty never overwhelms the reader with rhetorical ornament or excessive metaphorical accumulation. Instead, each image is granted sufficient conceptual space to unfold gradually through contemplation. Consequently, the poem rewards repeated reading. Every return discloses another layer of meaning without exhausting previous interpretations. This inexhaustibility constitutes one of the defining characteristics of literary classicism.

The originality of Mohanty's symbolic imagination deserves particular emphasis. Roads have appeared throughout world literature for millennia, yet the image of "the distant road that continues beyond its ending" possesses unmistakable originality. The metaphor is neither derivative nor merely paradoxical. It fundamentally redefines the symbolic possibilities of the road itself. Likewise, the phrase "the next alphabet / beyond all

alphabets" may legitimately be regarded as one of the most innovative linguistic metaphors in modern Odia poetry. It transforms language from a static communicative instrument into an evolving horizon of human consciousness. Such symbolic originality cannot be manufactured through novelty alone. It arises because the metaphor emerges organically from the poem's philosophical architecture.

Equally significant is Mohanty's ability to integrate multiple intellectual traditions without allowing the poem to become theoretically burdened. Readers familiar with existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics, comparative literature, Indian philosophy, or archetypal criticism may recognize striking resonances. Yet the poem itself never depends upon theoretical vocabulary. Its philosophical power remains fundamentally poetic. This independence from explicit conceptual systems greatly enhances its literary durability.

The poem will remain intelligible even when particular theoretical fashions have passed because its insights emerge directly from lived experience. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* also deserves renewed evaluation. Modern literature often struggles to negotiate the relationship between tradition and innovation. Some writers reject inherited traditions in pursuit of radical novelty, while others merely repeat inherited forms without creative transformation. Mohanty occupies a far more productive position. His reference to the *Mahābhārata* is neither nostalgic nor imitative. The epic becomes

*"the alternative vocabulary
of my helplessness."*

This extraordinary formulation revitalizes civilizational memory without imprisoning the poem within historical repetition. Tradition becomes a living interpretive resource rather than an unquestionable authority. Such creative continuity represents one of the defining strengths of mature literary modernity. The poem's treatment of helplessness likewise deserves recognition as a major philosophical contribution. Modern literature has often represented helplessness through despair, absurdity, alienation, or nihilism. Mohanty quietly transforms this tradition. Helplessness becomes neither resignation nor defeat. Instead, it becomes the beginning of another language, another search, another form of understanding. Such transformation reflects profound intellectual optimism without lapsing into naïve idealism. Hope emerges not through denial of suffering but through reinterpretation of its meaning. Another notable contribution lies in the poem's remarkable refusal of closure. Contemporary literary criticism increasingly recognizes openness as one of the defining characteristics of sophisticated artistic form. Yet openness can easily deteriorate into vagueness or conceptual indeterminacy. Mohanty avoids this danger by constructing what may be called disciplined openness. The poem remains interpretively inexhaustible because its symbolic structure is internally coherent. Every image contributes to the central philosophical movement from apparent ending toward inexhaustible continuation.

This coherence also explains why the poem invites such diverse critical approaches. Existential criticism, phenomenology, reader-response theory, archetypal criticism, comparative literature, poststructuralist reflection upon language, ethical philosophy, and Indian aesthetic traditions all illuminate important dimensions of the text. Such interpretive plurality should not be mistaken for ambiguity. Rather, it reflects the poem's extraordinary semantic density. Great literary works often generate multiple valid readings because they engage fundamental structures of human existence rather than isolated historical circumstances. From the perspective of modern Odia poetry, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* occupies an especially significant position because it demonstrates the continuing vitality of philosophical lyricism. Twentieth-century Odia literature witnessed remarkable experimentation with realism, symbolism, modernism, existential questioning, and linguistic innovation. Mohanty's poem inherits these achievements while moving beyond them. Its philosophical orientation never sacrifices lyrical concentration, and its symbolic economy never diminishes conceptual ambition. The poem therefore represents an important synthesis within the evolution of Odia poetic modernity. Its contribution to Indian poetry more broadly is equally noteworthy. Indian poetic traditions have long explored themes of journey, truth, selfhood, language, and transcendence. Mohanty renews these enduring concerns without reproducing inherited metaphysical systems. His poem remains unmistakably contemporary because it acknowledges uncertainty, incompleteness, and epistemic humility. Yet it also remains deeply Indian because it preserves the civilizational conviction that truth remains worth seeking even when complete possession proves impossible.

The poem's world-literary significance likewise deserves serious consideration. Contemporary philosophical poetry frequently oscillates between excessive abstraction and personal confession. Mohanty discovers another possibility. His poem speaks from intensely individual experience while simultaneously articulating structures of consciousness recognizable across cultures. This capacity for intercultural intelligibility explains why meaningful comparisons may be drawn with **Machado, Eliot, Rilke, Tagore, Borges, Frost, Pessoa, Paz**, and numerous other poets without diminishing Mohanty's originality. Particularly remarkable is the poem's confidence in poetry itself. In an age frequently characterized by skepticism toward grand narratives and philosophical certainty, Mohanty does not abandon the poetic vocation. Instead, he redefines it. Poetry becomes the place where language acknowledges its own limits while continually striving toward another alphabet. The poet is neither prophet nor legislator but patient seeker. Writing becomes an ethical act of accompanying humanity toward deeper understanding rather than proclaiming final truths.

The poem also subtly redefines the relationship between criticism and literature. Because *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* deliberately preserves semantic openness, criticism cannot simply decode its meanings once and for all. Every interpretation becomes another stage of the road. Literary criticism therefore

participates in the poem's own philosophy of endless exploration. The act of reading mirrors the act of seeking described within the poem. This self-renewing quality ensures the poem's enduring relevance. Future readers may discover dimensions presently unnoticed because the symbolic structure remains fundamentally open. New historical experiences, philosophical developments, and literary conversations will continue enriching its interpretive possibilities. Such capacity for continual renewal distinguishes literary classics from merely accomplished texts. One further aspect deserves emphasis. Mohanty's poem quietly resists the acceleration characteristic of contemporary technological culture. It privileges waiting over haste, contemplation over consumption, dialogue over proclamation, and searching over possession. Without becoming polemical, it proposes another rhythm of consciousness. This ethical and aesthetic slowing down may prove increasingly valuable in an age dominated by informational excess and diminishing attentiveness.

Ultimately, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* should be recognized as a landmark achievement in contemporary Odia philosophical poetry. Through astonishing symbolic concentration, linguistic precision, conceptual originality, and civilizational depth, Chandra Kumar Mohanty creates a poem that simultaneously honors tradition and expands the future possibilities of poetic thought. Its road continues because human consciousness itself remains unfinished; its alphabet remains incomplete because language continually seeks richer forms of articulation; its truth remains partially unseen because reality infinitely exceeds every conceptual enclosure. In revealing these profound insights through language of remarkable simplicity, Mohanty demonstrates that the greatest poetry does not merely describe the world—it enlarges the very horizons through which the world may be understood. The poem thus stands not simply as an individual artistic accomplishment but as an enduring contribution to the ongoing philosophical conversation of world literature, inviting every generation of readers to continue walking the road that, in its deepest mystery, forever outlives its own end.

XXVIII. OVERALL EVALUATION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS: *SARI SARU NATHIBĀ BĀTA* AS A MASTERPIECE OF MODERN ODISIA PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY

Every genuinely great poem ultimately resists definitive interpretation. Critical inquiry may illuminate its symbolic structures, philosophical orientations, linguistic innovations, and aesthetic strategies, yet something always remains beyond critical appropriation. That irreducible remainder is neither the failure of criticism nor the obscurity of the poem; rather, it is the distinguishing characteristic of literary greatness. Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* belongs to this rare category of works whose meanings continually exceed every interpretive framework brought to them. Throughout the preceding discussion, the poem has been approached through existential philosophy, phenomenology, ontology, hermeneutics, comparative literature, semiotics, archetypal criticism, ethics, Indian philosophical traditions, reader-response theory,

aesthetics of paradox, and the philosophy of language. Each of these approaches has disclosed important dimensions of the text, yet none has exhausted its inexhaustible semantic richness. Indeed, the poem itself anticipates such interpretive incompleteness through its unforgettable vision of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" and "the distant road that continues beyond its ending". The criticism, therefore, ultimately confirms the poem's own philosophical insight: every genuine understanding remains an unfinished journey.

The first and perhaps most remarkable achievement of the poem lies in its extraordinary fusion of simplicity and profundity. Few contemporary poems succeed in expressing such complex philosophical concerns through such restrained and transparent language. Mohanty avoids intellectual ostentation. He never burdens the poem with explicit philosophical terminology, theoretical abstraction, or excessive symbolic ornamentation. Instead, he builds an immense conceptual universe from a handful of ordinary images: the road, the sky, the earth, dreams, sleep, truth, the alphabet, writing, reading, and the *Mahābhārata*. This symbolic economy demonstrates an artistic discipline characteristic of mature poetic imagination. Every image performs multiple functions simultaneously—psychological, philosophical, existential, ethical, civilizational, and linguistic—without ever appearing artificially overloaded. Such density without opacity is one of the defining marks of enduring poetry. The road, in particular, emerges as one of the most original metaphors in modern Odia literature. Roads have traditionally symbolized life's journey, pilgrimage, destiny, and historical movement. Mohanty transforms this inherited metaphor into something radically new. His road survives its own ending. This single paradox completely alters conventional understandings of human existence. The journey no longer moves toward final arrival but toward ever-expanding horizons of meaning. Endings cease to function as terminal boundaries and instead become thresholds of renewed exploration. Through this remarkable symbolic innovation, Mohanty redefines not merely the road but the philosophical structure of existence itself. Human life is revealed not as movement toward closure but as participation in an inexhaustible unfolding of Being.

Closely related to this symbolic achievement is the poem's profound philosophy of language. The image of "the next alphabet beyond all alphabets" deserves recognition as one of the most intellectually original linguistic metaphors in contemporary Indian poetry. Language, in Mohanty's vision, remains simultaneously indispensable and incomplete. Existing vocabularies permit communication, yet they never fully contain reality. Every completed linguistic order anticipates another symbolic possibility. Such a conception avoids both naïve faith in linguistic transparency and postmodern skepticism regarding meaning. Instead, the poem proposes a dynamic understanding of language as an ever-evolving horizon through which truth gradually becomes more articulate without ever becoming fully exhausted. Poetry itself thus becomes the anticipation of future possibilities of expression. The invocation of the *Mahābhārata* further elevates the poem beyond individual lyricism into the

domain of civilizational reflection. Significantly, Mohanty does not employ the epic merely as cultural ornamentation. Instead, he reinterprets it as "*the alternative vocabulary of my helplessness*" thereby transforming one of India's greatest literary monuments into a living interpretive framework for contemporary consciousness. This remarkable phrase simultaneously renews the relevance of classical tradition and demonstrates the continuing vitality of Indian philosophical imagination within modern poetic discourse. Tradition is neither idealized nor discarded; it is creatively reinhabited. In this respect, Mohanty's poem represents an exemplary model of how modern literature may remain deeply rooted in cultural inheritance while speaking convincingly to universal human concerns.

Equally significant is the poem's ethical orientation. Despite its repeated acknowledgment of exhaustion, uncertainty, incompleteness, and helplessness, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* never descends into nihilism or despair. The declaration, "*No, I can go no farther*" which might have become the conclusion of a tragic poem, instead becomes the beginning of another philosophical movement. Waiting replaces despair; another alphabet replaces silence; another truth replaces closure. Hope is therefore not imposed sentimentally upon suffering but emerges organically from the poem's dialectical structure. Human limitation becomes the very condition for intellectual humility, ethical openness, and spiritual growth. The poem's comparative significance within world literature is likewise substantial. Throughout this study, meaningful dialogues have been established between Mohanty's lyric and works by Antonio Machado, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Rainer Maria Rilke, Rabindranath Tagore, Octavio Paz, Fernando Pessoa, Jorge Luis Borges, and A. K. Ramanujan. These comparisons demonstrate that *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* participates fully in the great international tradition of philosophical poetry. Yet the comparisons also reveal its remarkable originality. Mohanty's symbolic imagination never imitates these poets; rather, it contributes new possibilities to the shared literary conversation concerning existence, language, time, and truth. His road is not Machado's road, Frost's road, or Eliot's road. It is unmistakably his own.

Another outstanding quality of the poem is its interpretive generosity. Great literary works do not imprison readers within singular meanings but continually invite renewed engagement. *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* possesses precisely this quality. Existential, phenomenological, ontological, hermeneutic, archetypal, reader-response, comparative, semiotic, poststructuralist, and Indian philosophical readings all illuminate valid aspects of the text without excluding one another. Such plurality should not be mistaken for indeterminacy. Rather, it reflects the poem's extraordinary semantic richness. Every critical perspective discovers another dimension because the symbolic architecture itself remains fundamentally open. The poem also makes an important contribution to the development of modern Odia literature. Modern Odia poetry has long been distinguished by its capacity to integrate social realism, existential questioning, lyrical intensity, and symbolic innovation. Mohanty's poem extends this tradition by placing

philosophical inquiry at the very center of poetic experience without sacrificing emotional immediacy or linguistic accessibility. In doing so, it demonstrates that Odia poetry continues to possess immense creative potential for engaging the deepest questions of contemporary human existence.

From the perspective of literary aesthetics, the poem exemplifies what may be described as **philosophical lyricism** at its highest level. It neither narrates extensively nor argues systematically. Instead, it allows images themselves to think. The symbols become philosophical agents. Roads, alphabets, dreams, truth, and writing gradually unfold conceptual worlds beyond the limits of discursive explanation. This transformation of image into thought represents one of poetry's greatest achievements and explains why the poem continues generating fresh interpretations with every careful reading. Perhaps the most enduring lesson offered by *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* concerns the nature of human knowledge itself. Modern intellectual culture frequently oscillates between dogmatic certainty and skeptical relativism. Mohanty's poem quietly rejects both extremes. Truth exists; otherwise there would be no reason to search. Yet truth always exceeds current comprehension; otherwise there would be no need for another alphabet. Knowledge therefore becomes an ethical discipline of perpetual openness. This epistemological humility constitutes one of the poem's most valuable philosophical contributions.

Ultimately, Chandra Kumar Mohanty's *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* deserves recognition as one of the most intellectually sophisticated, symbolically original, philosophically profound, and aesthetically accomplished poems in contemporary Odia literature. It demonstrates that brevity need not limit conceptual depth, that simplicity need not diminish philosophical complexity, and that regional literary traditions can participate confidently in the universal conversation of world poetry without surrendering their distinctive cultural identities. The poem reminds readers that existence remains larger than every conceptual system, language richer than every vocabulary, civilization deeper than every historical summary, and truth more expansive than every completed interpretation. Like the road it celebrates, the poem itself continues beyond every reading, beyond every criticism, beyond every apparent conclusion, inviting future generations into ever-new acts of exploration, contemplation, and wonder. In this sense, *Sari Saru Nathibā Bāta* is not merely a poem about an endless road. It is an endless road. Every careful reading becomes another step, every interpretation another milestone, every unanswered question another horizon, and every silence another alphabet waiting to be discovered. That is the unmistakable hallmark of a literary masterpiece.

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