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A STUDY OF SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S MYSTIC VERSES- WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS TRANSLATED VERSION

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ABSTRACT

The study explores Rabindranath Tagore's work for circumstantial analysis. Rabindranath Tagore is well known around the globe as a Bengali Hindu Poet. His world famous book "Geetanjali" is a collection of 103 spiritual songs, titles as "Song Offerings" was published in 1912, by London Society. The study encompasses the Tagore's mastery of deep spirituality which inspired the exhausted and shattered European. The Europeans were materialism repellent and had been in search of some escape from naive worldly distresses. "Geetanjali".

This study is a descriptive qualitative analysis of some of his selected poems. The universal approach of “Natural Ethics” is selected for the deep analysis of his different poems. Spirituality, moral ethics and codes to worship God in true spirit are the main themes of Tagore’s poetry.

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7th of May, 1861 in Kolkata. His pen name was “Gurudeve” and he is well known for his extraordinary talents as an artist, poet, writer, painter and lecturer. His father Debendranath Tagore was a leading light in the Brahma Samaj- a restructuring Hindu society which pursued to promote a monotheistic understanding of the Upanishads and move away from the firmness of Hindu conventions and Orthodoxy which they felt was not letting India to flourish.

This study is a translated version of Rabindranath Tagore’s poetry. It is the translated version of Tagore’s selected spiritual songs that he wrote during his voyage to England. He was accompanied by his son. They unfortunately lost the translated version when his son forgot the briefcase they put the translation book in. but luckily found it back after some days. It was due to his friend-Rothenstein, continuous insisting him which convinced Tagore to allow W.B Yeats to write the preface of the book. And finally after winning great fame and honor this collection was published in 1912 by India Society in London.

Rabindranath Tagore is well-known to the world as a towering personality in the epoch of deep-rooted literature of Bengal. He is well known for his poetry and in addition to his poetic domain he mastered the genres of novel, short stories and essays as well. “The Nobel Prize winner, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) – ‘the Indian Goethe’ as Albert Schweitzer called him- was not only the foremost poet and playwright of modern India, but one of its most profound and influential thinker.” (Gupta, 2016).

The melodies of Geetanjali are so amusing and profound in custom and stock, elegance and image that it is not adequate to bring together in its best all the various fancies and aspects. The present study will focus on the contextual analysis of Rabindranath Tagore’s selected poems to highlight his universal themes of love, humanity, morality and affections. Geetanjali includes the most enchanting verdict of a greatest Yogi (Mystical person)- Rabindranath Tagore- who continued to strive for keeping the lamp of knowledge burning in the hostile winds of ignorance. As a famous proverb says “A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn with its own flame”.

This collection of poems was well acknowledged by Europeans at that time as the Western poetry at that time was lacking moral elevation and spirituality. Rabindranath Tagore’s simplicity, his appeal to natural ethics and highest philosophy of truth revealed the real values of humanity to Westerns. Padhika Mukherjee says “Rabindranath Tagore, the minstrel of Mother India, occupies a frontal position in the Galaxy of the prophets of Humanism.” (Mukherjee, 2011)

The main theme of the research study is the spirituality and manifestation of God which prevails in all phenomenon of holy mysticism and nature. Mountains, trees flowers, changing modes of weather, stars, universe, and rotation of day and night, the sun, the moon etc. are all great manifestations and exhibitions of God. W. B Yeats rightly states about Tagore's poetry as "The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes."

"Geetanjali" is actually a poetic expression of Tagore's divine and spiritual thoughts. Reading it, one feels like a Sufi at the height of his ecstasy uttering words that can be felt from the heart. This heart. It is a sound coming from the heart. In fact, this book is a song of the combination of spirituality and humanity. Under the essence of spirituality, in these poems of Tagore, moral elevation, supplication, the quest to find God and the feeling of communion with him are found. In most of the poems of "Geetanjali" Tagore as a true lover cherishes the pleasure and happiness of his true beloved and professes his love not only for his creator but for his happiness and pleasure for all his creatures. Geetanjali also expressed feelings of love and compassion. Such poems can be said to be the best example of moral elevation.

Tagore was the ambassador of humanity and spirituality. He longed to see the quality of humanity in human beings and for him humanity was something higher than religion. He was the true bearer of humanity and wanted all the people of the world to live with mutual agreement and love. He wanted to unite all human beings in a relationship of mutual love and harmony.

According to Tagore, the essence of God is not limited to a place of worship, nor can God be found by sitting in a corner of a place of worship only through worship and austerity, but for this one has to feel the pain of humanity. This idea Tagore described in one of his poems as follows:

Geetanjali is the true poetic genius of Tagore's expression of divine and elevated spiritual thoughts. While reading it the reader can sense the Sufi (mystic) feeling at the highest ecstatic level. These songs combine spirituality, mysticism and humanity.

SIGNIFICANCE AND RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

The current study focuses on Tagore's universal approach of humanity and mysticism. Tagore aims to appeal the elevated spirituality and moral ethics. His poetry is unprejudiced although he belonged to a Hindu family still his poetry never favored the Hindu orthodoxy. His appeal is universal which defies the odd materialism and on the contrary highlights humanity. This study provides new subject matter for the future researchers by introducing them with the new dimensions in Tagore's verses. Tagore's mystic songs are very diverse and rich because it's not only about the search for the love of Creator but about the love of creatures as well. It's the moral elevation of feeling which explains the love and compassion in true spirit.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To study the spiritual aspects of Tagore's poetry as a universal appeal to humanity
- To relate mysticism with search for reality and love of god
- To study divine and elevated spiritual thoughts of Tagore
- To highlight the potential in Tagore's poetry which helps to escape from materialism

REASERCH QUESTIONS

1. How Rabindranath Tagore's poetry appeals to divinity and spirituality?
2. What is the degree of potential in Tagore's poetry that could affect the reader's mind?
3. Why Tagore relate mysticism with god to search for reality and truth?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study involves the descriptive analysis and qualitative interpretation of the translated version of Rabindranath Tagore's mystic songs. The universal approach of morality "Natural ethics" is selected for the textual analysis as this philosophy appeals to the innate quality of virtue against evil.

Primary Sources

The translated version of Rabindranath Tagore's mystic poems/songs is selected as primary source for the analysis. Some of his selected mystic verses from his worldwide famous mysticism book-Geetanjali- are meticulously studied for analysis.

Secondary Sources

Internet sources, articles, research papers, scholarly commentaries of different scholars and essays regarding Tagore's poetic talents and works are used as secondary sources for conducting this research work.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Being a romantic poet, Rabindranath Tagore as an admirer of nature was interested in natural scenes from the very beginning and the direct connection with the natural environment, earth and sky, seasons and plant life and simplicity of life gave him a lot of inspiration. So in your poetry, there are mentions of swaying fields, chirping birds, the smell of soil, clouds, flowers and ever-changing seasons, mountains, rivers and seas. Such kind of glimpses could be seen in his translated book "Spiritual Offerings" while reading poems #2, #5, #21, #23, #41, #42, #48 and many more reader could see much symbolic representation of the mentioned integers.

As discussed earlier in the study that Tagore's picks the divine themes of spirituality and mysticism. His subject matters are related to supreme thoughts. He believes in humanity irrespective of any religion or ideological grounds. For him humanity comes first. Shamim (2013) says about Tagore's poems that his poems are highly influenced by Hafiz and whenever Tagore got a chance to visit Hafiz's grave in Iran, he admitted and expressed his gratitude for him that they belong to same school of thought.

Tagore in poem #11 says as:

"Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!"

One of the reason behind Tagore's mysticism could be the influence of "Vishnu". From fifteenth to seventeenth century the Bangla Literature was under the inspiration of art like Radhakrishan. This school of thought is called "Vishnuism". According to this approach spirituality is deeply rooted in true love for divinity of the Supreme Lord. And it's true and purest shape according to this school of thought is "Ecstasy". When the creatures forget about his/her surrounding and therefore lost in the love of his Lord. And according to mysticism it is the only way of salvation. For instance the very opening lines of poem # 59 have beautifully explained this idea as:

"I know, this is nothing but thy love, this golden light that"

It is worth mentioning that Tagore belonged to the "Vidyanti" school of mysticism. And this school believed in the oneness of the supreme power. It is also a similar belief of Muslims as well. The research here compares the Islamic mysticism to that of Vidyanti. Both the ideologies believe that the supreme power belongs to The Almighty. The very first commitment that a muslim makes is to say and believe in the oneness of the Almighty. The same approach is seen in Vidyanti when the agree and confess that all powers belong to The Supreme Lord that is The Creator of all worlds.

According to "Vidyanti" school of mysticism nothing in this world is permanent. Everything in this world has no reality. Man is ignorant towards the truthfulness of the universe. Only the closeness to the divinity can let man to know about the truth of universe. And it unveils the mysteries of mind towards truth. Tagore states in his poem that the glittering and shinning of worldly things makes man blind towards the true purpose of universe it is a all deceiving that tricks the foolish men of this world.

But all these images are also a source of searching God as well. One can search and ultimately finds The Almighty and then it seems that God is directly communicating with His beloved creature.

Optimism is a crux of Tagore's poetry and his mystic songs are full of such examples. For instance Tagore says that His blessings are so limit less that he showers his blessings and men fulfills his desires yet his blessings has no limit. Whatever the circumstances men face, men pleads for His mercy and He is

benevolent and caring that He never returns his creature without fulfilling their desires. Unlike any ordinary human being Tagore is not scared of approaching death. He rather welcomes death because he thinks death is a mean to meet God. His approach is an example of his love for God as well. He wants to leave this world for the other world where he would get chance to see God. This is an ecstatic stage of his mysticism. Tagore portrays God as a benevolent mother who always keeps her dear child close to her chest. She never let her child go away from her bosom. In one of his poems Tagore has related leaving this world and entering the other side by embracing death, as the interval a mother shifts her child from one breast to the other. As a mother's love is unconditional same is the love of The Almighty for all his creatures.

The study focuses on Tagore's approaches towards different changes that occur in human life. Tagore is so optimistic that even his philosophy of death is interesting. He believes death is not the end of this mortal life only but it is the shifting of soul to the other side of life. In life after death one could enjoy same pleasures and happiness that he/she enjoys in this world.

This school of mysticism believes that none exceeds the power of The Almighty. He is the truth. He is the first and will remain when nothing is left behind. No one surpasses the powers of The Almighty. He resides in each and every residue of the universe. And thus it is the universal theme of Tagore's mystic songs as well.

Professor Salim Youssef Cheshti says that mysticism is the utmost desire of mystics which overpowers their intellect and emotions to such an extent that they consider the Supreme Lord as their sole aim of life. Their thoughts are enchained by it they think and talk only about Supreme Lord. They search it in stars, in rivers, in fragrance of flowers, in tides of rivers, in songs of nightingale, in the diversity of deserts rather every scene of nature portrays the shape God to them.

Racism and ideological discriminations has been always a common practice in India. It's a pivotal part of Indian culture for centuries till date. It's a prevailing custom now as well. Tagore although was a Hindu himself, he never favored these discriminations. And that is the reason he appeals the universal code of humanity.

One of Tagore's themes in Geetanjali explains the pathetic condition of a state or country if that country believes in religious or racial discriminations. He explains a state must not follow the discriminatory laws when it comes to its public interests. Each individual in a state must enjoy the same relief and he/she must not be treated differently on religious grounds. According to Tagore this school of thought is destructive for the national interest. His subject matter in Geetanjali are based on same themes a well. Tagore states in Geetanjali that one should forget about reciting beads, casting spells, praising others falsely as these are the tactics of a mock god. If you want to see God in real life you will find Him in fields while a farmer ploughs on barren lands with his bullocks. Because the creations are the purest forms of God's reflection.

Rabindranath Tagore ideology is basically based on impartial and unbiased approach of nation building. According to his ideology every individual should be set free, irrespective of their religious beliefs, to enjoy all the facilities provided within a state. We have the same ideology of different Muslim leaders as well. For these leaders subcontinent is like a great democratic state where every individual has same important status.

Tagore has created very beautiful pictures from nature scenes and his imagination, from which Tagore's beauty of nature comes out without veil and immediately captivates the reader. The natural charm of the poems of "Geetanjali". The atmosphere gives a sense of the true beauty of the universe and the reader becomes convinced of the handiwork of the powerless creator. The poetry of "Geetanjali" fully reflects the philosophical thoughts of Tagore. Here he reveals the deep secrets of life and the universe like a philosopher. His quality is that instead of precise philosophies of life, he has explained the secrets of selfless passions and simple life in a very clear way. He finds out from his philosophical way of thinking something that is not seen by an ordinary person.

For example, Tagore has beautifully presented this philosophy in a poem that one cannot fully enjoy the true beauty of life with rich clothes, pomp and burdens of heavy jewelry, i.e. material comforts. The original and true color of life can be seen in simple and ordinary life. He has described this in his verses with references from natural beauties lying in open fields, in simplicity of countryside life and purity of natural things. No artificial ornament can compete with natural and pure beauty. The purity of nature dominates any ornamented beauty.

Tagore had discovered the secret of worldly life and perhaps that is why the sense of impermanence of life is prominent among them. According to them, it is foolishness to be attached to this temporary world and because of this man suffers from mental discomfort. Although man is made of dust. It knows very well that life and all its relations are going to perish. In view of this fact, Tagore in a poem of "Geetanjali" described worldly love and desires as meaningless junk. He is also aware that worldly comforts are temporary but he is compelled by his nature.

Tagore's philosophy of death is also very interesting. He considers death as the other side of life and is always ready to embrace it with joy like life. After going through various experiences, he was very curious to go through the stage of death. This may be due to his deep spirituality in which he considered death as a means of meeting God. In one poem, Tagore calls God a benevolent "Mother" who always holds her child close to her bosom and describes death as the interval when a mother withdraws her child from one breast to the other. For example in poem # 83;

"MOTHER, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow"

“Geetanjali” is actually a collection of songs and the literal meaning of “Geetanjali” is melody, song and song. In this sense, a prominent feature of “Geetanjali” is lyricism and melody.

Since the song has no specific form, it can be written in any form. However, there must be melody in it, and for this the poet has the most effective method, that is verbal repetition. Tagore also used the same strategy in “Geetanjali”. For instance, various translators have also used such strategy of alliteration by repeating same rhythmical sounds to produce melodious effect in translated verses.

Actually, Tagore was also a musician, so he knew very well how to create the atmosphere of songs and what words to use where and how. In this regard, he has chosen the words very thoughtfully. Apart from this, Tagore’s songs also have sincerity of passion. His graceful and lyrical compositions of his poems cum songs in “Geetanjali” are the best examples of this.

Due to the above-mentioned features, “Geetanjali” enjoys the honor of eternal popularity and despite the fact that almost after a century, it has not lost its charm and till date it’s prosaic and verse translations is produced in various languages and it will continue to appear frequently in future as well.

CONCLUSION

It is thus concluded from recent study that Tagore is a true follower of love and humanity. His philosophy is truly based on spirituality and mysticism. As a true follower of spirituality his divine love helps him find his beloved (God) in every aspect of nature. Nature is his medium which provides the stimulus for his thoughts. And it seems that he is directly communicating with God. His poetic genius is the best example of his divine communication.

The songs in Geetanjali is a pure a complete representation of Tagore’s mysticism. These songs of passionate spirituality of Tagore portray ethical and moral elevation, the desire to find God and his desperation to communicate with God. The elements of spirituality has added a strange and mysterious atmosphere in these verses which takes the readers to some other dimension. The readers find a world beyond vision. It is a world where nature is in full bloom and practices all its divine powers. A world where the lover and the beloved, the creator and the creation are all communicating directly with each other. Due to the above-mentioned features, “Geetanjali” enjoys the honor of eternal popularity and despite the fact that almost a century has passed since Tagore wrote these verses; its prose and verse translations in various languages continue to appear frequently. And it is as much fresh and the beautiful as it were a century ago.

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