

Visualizing Tagore

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A Teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge but merely repeats his lesson to his students, can only load their minds, he can not quicken them.”

❖ **Rabindranath Tagore**

Rabindranath Tagore was a seer, sage, poet, writer, patriot and freedom fighter. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature for his book Gitanjali. Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, dramas and thousands of songs.

Tagore is a poet of humanity and has a universal message of peace, love and joy. Love is one of the main themes of Rabindranath's poetry. he is as much a poet of love and passion, as he is a poet of love of God and religion. He visualizes a country where the people's minds are free from fear and narrowmindedness such as casteism, racialism, conservatism, etc. In the poem 'My Heaven' the poet gives the picture of an ideal country:

“where the mind is without fear and head is held high

where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls,

Where words come out from the depth of truth,

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection,

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way.

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit'

Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening

Thought and action;

Into that heaven of freedom, My father, let my country awake.¹

He taught to find the beauty of human relationship in the daily life of common people. God is not a distant reality, but an essential aspect of homes and temples. The Indians feel his nearness in all the human relationships of love and affection and in all the festivities in which they so frequently participate. God is present in flowers, fruits and all the objects of nature. Indian art and literature, being inseparably related to the infinite reality, endeavour to reveal the depth of the mystery pervading the universe and make it human and living. No wonder Tagore asserts:

“My religious life and my poetical life have followed the same mysterious line of growth. Some how they are wedded to each other”²

The true, primary function of art is to create and recreate man’s true world,

“The living world of truth and beauty”³

Tagore finds science unsatisfactory because, unlike art, it doubts the artists’s sanity and rejects outright the,

“paradox of the infinite assuming finitude”⁴

This kind of knowledge, pursued by science, is simply an accumulation of concrete facts and does not enlighten and stimulate man:

“it is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music.”⁵

Tagore Alludes:

**“The infinite and the finite are one as song
and singing are one. The singing is incomplete;
by a continual process of death it gives up the
song which is complete. The absolute infinite is like
a music which is devoid of all finite,
time and therefore meaningless.”**

The absolute eternal is timelessness and that has no meaning at all- it is merely a word the reality of the eternal is there, where it consists all times in itself”⁶

Tagore refers to the ancient Indian prayer,

“Lead us from the unreal to reality”

‘Gatanjali’ is Tagore’s unique blend of romantic longing, devotion to God and a simple love of created things. In Gatanjali the tradition of Indian bhakti Poetry of Mira, Kabir and others, takes a new birth. Yet, Tagore expresses himself in such a way that the poems have a universal appeal. It deals with the intimate, mystic relationship of man and God and expresses the feeling of gratitude for the God for his immortal gifts to mortals.

The theme of Gatanjali goes with the Vaishnav tradition of Bhakti but Tagore gave it a new and original treatment.

Sri Aurobindo Says:

“One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Rabindranath’s genius is the happiness and originality with which he has absorbed the whole spirit of Vaishnave poetry and turned it into something essentially the same and yet new and modern.”

The theme of mysticism, humanism, love of nature, spiritual liberation, charity, separation from the Almighty, the ultimate aim of union, the theme of perfection, detachment and the dominating theme of death appeals fantastically.

Death is represented as a servant, traveller, boatsman and a bridegroom. The soul of poet is sometimes a woman lover, Gopi of Krishna, bride and sometimes a musical harp”.

❖ as a master musician who fills the soul of man with the music of spiritual, sometimes he is beloved, many a times a king, he is a father, caring mother. The theme of humanism is in richness. The love for society, mankind, nature and the world is treated in various poems. A critic Charles A Moore says:

Tagore is universally considered a humanist par excellence. He says that humanity is the Dharma of human beings.

Tagore is not an escapist when he talks of renunciation of worldly life. He is mystic and visionary. He accepts the challenges of life. Life is a great gift of God and it should not go waste. Man can not attain salvation or Mukti by renunciation of worldly life. As he says in Gitanjali”

**“Deliverance is not for me in renunciation
I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.
Thou ever pourest for me the fresh
draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance/
Fill this earthen vessel to the brim.
My world will tight its hundred
different lamps with thy flame and
place them before the altar of thy temple.”⁷**

Internationally, Gatanjali is Tagore’s best known collection of poetry.

His appeal was not restricted to any domain or region, he truly belonged to the world. When it comes to inspiring the masses, his name is bracketed with the greatest. In ‘Gora’ he projects his vision of the individual’s role in the prevailing times. He is able to give a wide message through this work when he declares through a dialogue:

“Today I am really an Indian,

In me there is no longer any opposition between Hindu, Mussulman and Christian. Today every caste is any caste, the food of all is my food.”

References-

1. English Poetry, (Sri K.G. Srivanstva, Kanpur.)
2. ‘From My life’, A Tagore Reader – P. 86
3. “What is Art”? Personality P.31
4. ‘The World of Personality’ Personality – P.55
5. Ibid – P.56
6. Ibid – P.57
7. Gitanjali – 73 (deliverance is not fore me”)