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## SPIRITUALISM IN THE POETRY OF RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

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### Abstract:

Rabindra Nath Tagore, the embodiment of wisdom and perfection occupies the most coveted and aspired throne in the realm of Indian English literature. This most versatile grate of his time, Rabindra Nath Tagore left no genre of literature un-attempted. Poems, Novels, Plays, short stories, various kinds of prose and miscellaneous writing followed ceaselessly from his fertile heart and mind. Although he left no genera of literature untouched, he is mostly acclaimed for his achievement as a poet, specially for his Magnum Opus '*Gitanjali*' for which he won the Nobel Prize in the year 1913. His poetic talent and exposure reached new heights as he was acclaimed all over the World with the publication of *Gitanjali* in 1912 . This paper is an attempt to explore the underlying spiritualism in the poetry of Rabindra Nath Tagore, specially in *Gitanjali* and the way Tagore achieves spiritual enlightenment in his poetry by dwelling in the World of the Divine.

### Keywords:

Spiritualism, Eco-Feminism, Ecology, Deep Ecology, divine, Union

### Introduction:

*Gitanjali* is a collection of lyrics on God, man and nature undefined by his romantic longing for communication with the Divine. The word *Gitanjali* means an offering of songs. The central theme of the poem is the realization of the Divine through self purgation and service to humanity. He says, 'am

here to sing thee songs". It epitomizes very motto of human life. He has seen life as essentially devotional, meant for glorifying the Almighty Who has made this huge arrange for all our needs. The whole book of *Gitanjali* is endowed with rich his poetry of great signification. It lives the reader in fit of contemplation. Lines like the following from *Gitanjali* seems to create a palpable influence on the reader's heart.

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail  
 Vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.  
 This little flute of a reed thou hast carried ever hills and  
 Dales and has breathed through it  
 Melodies eternally new (Song-1)

*Gitanjali* opens four distinctive world before the humanity i c (i) God and human soul  
 (ii) God and nature (iii) Nature and soul (iv) The soul and humanity (Satish Kumar 88)

### **Interpretation:**

The rising star in the domain of Indian English poetry of the Colonoial and the post colonial area, Rabindra Nath Tagore has created his own idiom of poetry rendering the Vedic and Upanisadic sagas in the English Language and there by establishing the superiority of the Indian English poetry to the entire Western World. He achieves spiritual gratification dwelling on the World of divine and attempts to explore spirituality through his poetry. This rising star in the domain of Indian English Poetry, was born in the affluent family of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore from whom he inherited spiritual qualities. His father was acknowledge for his passion for saintly attributes. So Rabindra Nath naturally inherited great sense of dignity and penchant for ambition.

Rabindra Nath was blessed with the privilege of scerene atmosphere when his father had a house erected at some distance form Bolpur. It was subsequently transformed into Shanti Niketan (Abode of Peace). From there he went to Amritsar, where he saw the renowned Sikh Temple. He learned Sanskrit and English from his peerless father. Kalidas's play *Meghdoot* left an indelible impression on him. Soon his ecstasy in poetry came to the fore. He has been a poet and prophet of all the times and through his poetic monuments he has united Nature, God and the Soul. He has been a bard of realities, mysticism, mellifluous melodies and soulful lyricism and his works have glorified the virtues of the Almighty. His poetry depicts the Soul's eternal truth and reality and what is most desired in human life as whole. The feminine virtues of nature in its myriad ways have been explored as eco-feminism and eco-mystism and secret laws of life and nature have been very mellifluously depicted. Rabindra Nath Tagore drank deep from the rich heritage particularly from the teachings of the Christian Missionaries and Brahma Somaj.

Before analyzing spiritualism in Tagore's poetry, specially in *Gitanjali*, my paper deals with the theories of Ecology, Eco-mysticism, Eco-criticism, Deep Ecology, Spiritual Ecology with a brief presentation of concepts.

### **Ecology:**

Ecology is the scientific study of the relationship and interdependence between each and every life form of the environment. The word Ecology has been derived from the Greek words Oikos and logos meaning "Household" and "Knowledge" respectively. The term Ecology was first coined by the German biologist Ernest Haeckel in 1866, when he defined it as the science of the relationship of the organisms to the environment. It has developed as a reaction against the practice of isolating creatures and studying them in laboratories. The word Ecology is very often used in connection with the Green Movement.

### **Eco-Feminism:**

Eco-Feminism is one of the significant ecological and feminists movements emerged in 1970 s. An increasing consciousness of the relationship between women and nature primarily resulted the advent of this movement. It draws parallel between women and nature. Arising out of the struggle of women to sustain themselves, their families and their communities, this movement advocates for environmental protection as well as protection of women, preservation of indigenous culture, traditional values, and such issues that can bring a social change.

### **Eco-Mysticism:**

Eco-Mysticism may be defined as ecological mysticism or living ecologically like a mytic's way of lifet. Mysticism is the art and science of living perfectly. Is the self knowledge that subsumes the knowledge of the world. Is the quest for and the union with the absolute (Paranjape 1989: 1) Further " it is the concern with the nature of the ultimate reality. It includes both means and ends, both the goal and the way" (ibidem). The major terms in the aforesaid definition like "absolute", "ultimate reality" are the parts of ecology. So ecological mysticism implies the art/science of living perfectly ecologically and earning the self knowledge required for the sais purpose.

### **Eco-Criticism:**

Eco-Criticism as a portmanteau term is a blend of ecological and criticism and it is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty and Fromn-xviii) it is based on the connection between human culture and the entire ecosphere.

## Deep-Ecology:

Deep-Ecology calls for a profound transformation in the traditional ecological paradigm entailing new metaphysical, epistemological, religious, psychological, sociopolitical and ethical principles. Deep-Ecologists believe that as part of the intricate web of entire ecosystem, the devolvement of humanity is possible only through a peaceful co-existence with each and every organism (Naess 187).

The theoretical concepts discuss above have been applied in the poetry of Rabindra Nath Tagore whose works enshrine the basic Indian values and the sympathy to nature. The basic Indian ethos teaches us to be compassionate to nature and to be in harmony with nature. In Indian culture there has been a tradition of living with nature in a relationship of mutual dependence.

In Tagore's poetry, specially in *Gitranjali*, love of nature equates at one level to love of God, for in recognizing worth of the natural World, one is giving assent to the fact that there is a God who has created it.

Tagore's Journey towards seeking the ultimate union with God begins with his complete surrender at the feet of God. He offers himself physically and emotionally when he says

Pluck this flower and take it. Delay not! I fear lest it droop and drop into the dust.

It may not find a place in thy garland, but honour it with a

Touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it.

Though its colour be not deep and its smell be faint, use this

flower in thy service and pluck it while there is time (Song-6)

Tagore's mysticism stretches further when he perceives Divinity as a lover, 'who walked with secret stapes, silent as night, eluding all watchers' (song 22). Sometimes Tagore's eco-mystical mind perceives divinity as a king "who came down from the throne and stood at the poet's cottage door". (Song 49).

The eco-mystical symbols and motifs use in *Gitanjali* emphasizes Tagore's adroitness in embodying such assorted aspects of nature which portray Tagore's believe of nature as path to the Almighty. Tagore believes the World as a manifestation of the Divine thus he derives pleasure out of it and many of the verses of *Gitanjali* celebrate the joy of Creation. He aesthetically merges the nature imagery with the lives and actions of the persona. This is appreciated through the lines like the following:

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest

Path he comes, comes ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July night on the thundering

Chariot of clouds he comes, comes ever comes (Song 45)

The verses of *Gitanjali* are the songs that Tagore wants to sing but, “remains unsung to this day”. Like a true lover he wants to be that united with the Absolute Truth which has not achieved yet. “I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.” (Song 13) .

As a eco-mystical poet, there seems the inspiration of Hindu Scriptures and Vedas, more specially the Rig Veda’s in Tagore’s Poetry. Tagore’s mission of glorifying the external beauties and bounties of nature is quite different from that of Western Romantic Poets such as Wordsworth. In Tagore what is expressed in the songs of *Gitanjali* is a thoughtful relationship of the poet to the mythical or cosmological origins of the world. It is doubtful that the same function can be found in the more secularized naturalism of the western Romantic poets. The natural symbols, images, motifs used throughout *Gitanjali* aesthetically portray the Vedantic conception of the oneness of man with nature.

Another important moral preaching conveyed by Tagore through his devotion towards God is the lesson of universal brotherhood:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of words,  
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a  
temple with door all shut ?  
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee.

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and

Where the path maker is breaking stones (Song-11)

### Conclusion:

Thus through the Songs in *Gitanjali* Tagore devotes himself exposing the greatest glory of the Almighty. As such *Gitanjali* exposes the Deep Ecology principle of Eco-Criticism. The poet is intoxicated with the love of God at immortal touch of whose hands his “ little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance in ineffable”. (Song-1) “Though : age pass, still thou (God) pourest, and still there is room to fill”.( Song-1), speaks of the mystery of God’s Creation. The Almighty being, “ Life of my life, I shall try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs” (3) is the essence of the poets prime conscience. Realizing Almighty’s presence everywhere the poet sings, “ thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful, there is in the nest it is thy love

that encloses the soul with colours and sound and odours” (Songs 45). The poet is overwhelmed by the Maya (Illusion) of the Almighty and surrenders himself to Him. Tagore’s self surrender is extreme devotion to the Lord when he sings, “ Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation thee”. (Song-103) The superb Eco-Mystical strain in *Gitanjali* is spiritual and spiritually ecological. Words fail to describe such divine experience.

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