

## Tagore's Poetic Art: An Appropriate Medium of His Mystical Experiences

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### Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore, is an eminent scholar who won Nobel Prize for English literature in 1913. His poetic art clearly reveals about his mystical experiences and thoughts. The creative vision of Tagore made him see the immortal in the temporal and temporal in the immortal. The poet accepts with equal warmth all the great and the humble. Tagore's insight gives him a sense of existence outside time and space. The new horizons of knowledge and understanding are unveiled which fills him with joy and delight. Love is the strength and force that uplifts the mortal individual towards immortality. Tagore's trust is firm in the perfect union of man and the Infinite.

**Keywords:** Omnipotent, Humanism, Mysticism, Self Identity, Creation

Rabindranath Tagore, first Indian Nobel Laureate, is a prolific writer and a versatile genius. His poems give us the essence of the Divinity. *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, *Fruit Gathering*, *Crossing*, *The Fugitive I*, *Stray Birds*, *Fireflies* recreate a romantic vision of the divine truth. They intricately weave the sacred with the secular. Tagore communicates highly abstract truths to the readers. He makes spiritual sensuous. His poetry is universally significant because he deals with such images in his poetry which people in all ages have witnessed and known. It deals with the complex problem of modern life with simplicity and directness. The human soul longing for the Omnipotent is spoken of as a crane soaring upwards and God is said to be a mother with life and death as its breast. Tagore's literary works have immense variety and abundance. European poetry is mainly about man and nature whereas Indian poetry is primarily about devotion to God. The principle driving force of Tagore's poetry was his humanism. He paid his great homage to man and not to nature or even to God. In this respect, Tagore's poetry is close to the western mind and surprisingly divergent from the main flow of Indian poetry.

Whatever in this world touched Tagore's heart; he gave artistic and skillful expression to it, not by analytical reasoning or from any particular ideology but from his innermost feelings. This he did in an unending variety and innovative poetical style.-1

Tagore's mystic vision made the super sensuous experiences accessible to him. This creative vision of Tagore made him see the immortal in the temporal and temporal in the immortal. Our approach should be broad and holistic in reference to the world. Our heart should be full of enthusiasm and zeal for the novel. We should observe the things rising above our self-centeredness forgetting selfish purpose of ours. We should desire not only for the betterment of the country, instead for the entire humanity. These thoughts of Tagore are similar to the concept of globalization. Infact they serve as the basis of his literary creations. The educational system and arrangements of Vishvabharti Vishvavidyalaya reflect the same opinion.

Tagore in his article 'American Experience' says that: "I have had reason to believe that there is strong current of spiritual idealism flowing beneath the surface soil of the American mind."-2

Man is the best expression of what he is in truth. He may reject Dharma and may choose to be an animal or a machine and thereby may not injure himself, may even gain strength and wealth from an external and material point of view; yet this will be worse than death for him as a man. The specific meaning of Dharma is that principle which holds us firm together and leads us to our best welfare. The general meaning of this word is the essential quality of a thing.

Tagore's mystical values are wholly different from that of Eliot, Yeats or Whitman who depend either on the conceptual thoughts or on the theological dogmas. Tagore was against strict dogmas and rituals. Tagore's concept of religion is the outcome of some deep realization of unity that he felt with the life and nature around him. He explicates it through his poetry. Tagore discovers Almighty within the life of man. The first and the most significant stage in the mystical experiences, the Kindling or Awakening of the self, happen when the poet feels the mystical presence around him that makes him uncomfortable. The overpowering, overwhelming and new experience confirms the fact that the orthodox ways of worshiping God in the lonely dark corner of a temple will lead him nowhere. The new knowledge of unity in all things fills him with delight and happiness including the opposites like life and death, spring and autumn, day and night, finite and infinite. Tagore celebrates the knowledge gained through the transfigured senses of odour, touch, sight, taste and sound in his poetry and arrives at the mystical consciousness. He glorifies the senses unlike the oriental mystics and asserts that he will never shut the doors of his senses as they are medium of the consciousness of Divine Reality.

The experiences through the sense gradually intensify the inner awakening of the poet. His expanded life excludes nothing including the life of all kinds outside self, of all emotional states, all conditions and situations. Once the poet achieves this experience even, the world outside reveals new concealed meanings. The flowers and leaves, the sunrise and sunset, clouds and the stars, each and everything suggest new messages. To meet life within himself, he enters into another stage of his mystic way which is termed as illumination which bursts forth with the knowledge of divine reality. This insight gives him a sense of existence outside time and space which adds inclusiveness to his sight and emotional realizations. A large number of songs have the ecstasy of illumination:

I feel that all the stars shine in me.  
The world breaks into my life like a flood.  
The flowers blossom in my body.  
All the youthfulness of land and water smokes like  
an incense in my heart; and the breath of all things  
plays on my thoughts as on a flute.-3

The knowledge of the inwardness of things which is referred to as transcendental knowledge makes life and death the play of the same endless music. It opens the gates of love and hope which give plenty of knowledge. And, along with each other, they hold the promise of the infinite possibilities of the union with the Lord. It is the ultimate destination of the mystics of all schools of thought. When Tagore arrives at this stage, his poetry reflects the harmony and music that throbs at the heart of nature. It becomes a quite proclamation of the fellowship between man and nature and man and God. Tagore is aware of the fact that the time has come to offer his silent salutation to the Holy Spirit. As a result, the mystery of death loses all its meaning.

Rabindranath Tagore's mysticism is simple and beautiful. He witnesses the wonder and beauty and goodness through and beyond all that he really beholds and touches. It fills him with the spirit of worship, self-consecration and aspiration. Tagore is an idealist but he doesn't sigh after the unattainable because they are not born out of his imagination. They are born of the sense of real beauty and goodness which his mind perceives in all things. Although sometimes self consecration may find a peaceful way; Tagore does not shrink from it when it leads through pain and trouble. In the poem on Lord's Trumpet, he portrays how he was feeling weary after the day's dusty hard work and was on his way to the temple wanting rest, when he found the trumpet lying in the dust. He had thought his wanderings were over but Lord's trumpet must not be so disgraced and thus he prays for help to put on his armour and takes up and sounds the trumpet, for sometimes pain must be tolerated in darkness with courage and trust.

For only then can the poet know the delight and thrill of having been given this greatest dignity by the Divine Being, the honour of being entrusted with a burden too large

for others. Tagore does not reflect that self- consecration should lead one to asceticism. It means readiness to leave everything that Lord call for, but it does not necessitate the denial of His gifts. These can be returned to the Divine Being in fruits of love. Tagore has a passionate love for nature. All beauty in nature is the living sensation of God's love to his mystic mind which glows and responds filling him with an ecstatic delight. The smallest things are never insignificant or uninteresting to a mystic. Even a leaf is full of beauty, awe and mystery. And a mere flash in the mind, the quickest thought is worth a moment's arrest, that its spark of light may enrich its tiny ray to the illumination of the soul. In *Stray Birds*, Tagore catches these flashes in the mind and some of them sink deep and open up new ways of thought, whereas other seem to be joyous, simple little rays that may cause a momentary smile of happiness. These thoughts that come to the poet about all sorts of the things in the world, he calls asking them to leave their mark in his words.

Spiritual things are of greater importance to the poet than materialistic things. To learn the true ratio of the value of things will generally cost much pain, but the lesson is worth the cost and we shall never be overwhelmed if we never forget the pitifulness of the Divine Teacher. All human beings have a number of harmful and weak longings but the Supreme Being saves us from them by hard refusals. He makes us more worthy of simple and valuable gifts day by day.

But the poet has his thoughts which oppress him as others have. Sometimes he is troubled with the seeming unworthiness and uselessness of man's life but that is natural looking at it from the human point of view. But when Tagore beholds it from Lord's angle, he is aware of the fact that all must be well:

I weep at my unworthiness when I see my life in the hands of the unmeaning hours, but when I see it in your hands I know it is too precious to be squandered among shadows.-4

The Omnipotent can take our life which we offer to him as a voiceless instrument and fill its emptiness with His songs. He can impart us the power for all things, but sometimes, the burden of the divine power makes us fear because of the challenge it brings with it, as when a flower was seen as a token of His love, and in its place His powerful sword, with its responsibility, was found. But the fear vanishes very soon, in the delight of the trust.

Though sometimes he feels fear, he has no actual fear of death. Death is merely the crown of this life. It is a step to fuller life, where the sun will break out from the clouds in the summer of the unknown flowers and he felt no stranger as he crossed the threshold into this world and found himself in the arms of his mother, and that's why as he crosses the threshold of death, he feels that the unknown will appear as ever known to him.

Therefore, one observes that one thing and one thought grips his consciousness of the Almighty through all things, all joys and sorrows, and all his varying moods. The poet

beholds all things; he does all things within that consciousness. The poet doesn't long to be guided by others, lest he misses the opportunity of the Almighty waiting to guide him:

My portion of the best in this world will come from your hands: such was your promise. Therefore, your light glistens in my tears. I fear to be led by others lest I miss you waiting in some road corner to be my guide.-5

Tagore's desire for the Omnipotent is stronger than his desire for anything else. This consciousness of the Almighty makes him bend in worship. The holiest way of worshipping the Divine is to go amongst all that is poor, sordid, bad, and amidst such surroundings to keep pious, loving and compassionate. Jesus Christ hallowed this path and made it beautiful by following it Himself. The Friend of sinners never shrank from the most unclean and presented to all human beings how it was possible to keep unspotted from the world, not by separation from it, but by carrying to it such a benevolent impact of loving sympathy as would awaken around itself all that was charming, pious, good and remove forever all that was shameful. It is a course of worship one can only faintly follow, but never can reach the holiest depths of it which Christ reached alone. One can worship humbly standing before the Almighty face to face sometimes with folded hands. But at the end of all worship, prayer, aspiring, there must always remain for a human being the great need of Lord's mercy and grace. And, then, the Divine, who is always benevolent and kind, never fails in His love. One may waste away his time, his gifts to all those who clamour for them, until, perhaps one merely has one little flower of love to give in exchange for all that the Almighty showers on him but even then He will receive it. One even may have nothing left at all.

The human being is the Almighty's highest creation and manifestation. Tagore, thus, deems man to be the representative of the creator. And the attainment of the Divine Being is the aim of this distinct mission. Tagore has the feeling of the music of the Divine Being in his heart and thus, his entire being desires to go beyond the limits of his own self and be one with the Almighty. Here, the poet does a comparison between the liberated soul and the finite self with two birds. The liberated soul is like a bird moving in the sky singing the songs of the forest. The finite self is as a bird in the cage which cannot move and fly in the vast blue sky or sing the songs of the wood. It says only the words that it has learnt from others. But it has a sincere longing for union with the liberated being. As the two birds can never fly together, in the same way, the soul in bondage longs to be united with the free soul, but it is impossible for it to be so. As the bars of the cage limit the bird, the greed for material things make the life of a human being confined to the material world. The people, who are attached to these things, can never transcend the limit of matter, as they are controlled and led by the ignorant ego. On the other hand, the liberated soul passes its life in the service of mankind and never wishes an escape from this world but tries to improve it. Such a soul does not rely on any outside reason as his actions are expressions of his inner inspiration. His actions are devoid of self interest like those of the Supreme Being and his works are inspired by his inner delight

and happiness. The poet therefore gives immense importance to human action for the realization of the Divine Being.

A human being is apparently composed of the body and the soul. But the body which we witness is only an illusory appearance like any material object. When one realizes this fact, the reality that remains is the soul which is nothing other than the Almighty. The saying that- thou- art means that there is an unqualified identity between the soul that underlies the finite man and the Omnipotent. It is surely true if one takes the word thou in the sense of the empirical man confined and conditioned by its body, and the word that as the reality beyond the world, there cannot be an identity between thou and that. One has to understand the word thou to describe pure consciousness underlying and that also to imply pure consciousness which forms the essence of the Almighty. A complete identity exists between these two as is taught by Vedanta. The identity that is taught between a human being and the Divine Being is a real identity between terms which appear as different. Being identical with the Almighty, the soul is in reality what the Almighty also actually is. The soul appears as the limited finite self because of its association with the body. It is a product of ignorance. The association with the body guides to egoism and this factor hampers our spiritual harmony with the Supreme Being and offers a danger to our development as real personalities. The longings and desires of the body confine the scope of our self realization.

Tagore likens life and death to wakefulness and sleep. As sleep cannot separate the identity of the sleeping person, death cannot extinguish the force of life. As the states of a human being of wakefulness and sleep are not of any importance to the maintenance of self-identity, death and life are only phases of the manifestation of the same immortal life force. Life also ripens into death as the bud blossoms into the flower and the flower matures into a fruit. Tagore, therefore, believes that death is the power of mobility. The things around us move on, grow and decay because of death. Everything would have remained in the same static and unchangeable form and the universe would have been hardened and obstructed if there had been no death. Death has therefore, lightened the tremendous pressure of this bare identity. It has granted to the universe a wide scope to move on. Tagore witnesses the onward march of the force of life through the gateway of death.

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