

SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY, A PATH TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS: A STUDY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S *GITANJALI*

Y.Aparna
Research Scholar
Department of English
Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra, India

Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the most sensitive writers and docile of all poets whose words reflect a soothing sensitivity to the reader. He is versatile in themes and deep in thought. Gitanjali is the most beautiful of Tagore's literary contributions which is published in 1912. Gitanjali is written by Tagore in the height of his spiritual consciousness that takes its birth from the description of God to the joy of communion with Him. Tagore's thoughts were knit into poems that were effortlessly shaped into a beautiful filigreed that gifted us Gitanjali. The flowers of spiritual joy, love, realization of the Divine and the bliss of communion with the Divine together make the garland of Gitanjali that was awarded with a Nobel Prize showing us the path and beauty of spirituality refulgent in simple ways.

Keywords:- *Gitanjali, spiritual joy, realization, Nobel Prize...*

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A STUDY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S *GITANJALI*

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“He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands,
And my dreams became resonant with its melodies.” (2002: 18)

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the most sensitive writers and docile of all poets whose words reflect a soothing sensitivity to the reader. He is versatile in themes and deep in thought.

Gitanjali is the most beautiful of Tagore's literary contributions which is published in 1912. *Gitanjali* is written by Tagore in the height of his spiritual consciousness that takes its birth from the description of God to the joy of communion with Him. Tagore's thoughts were knit into poems that were effortlessly shaped into a beautiful filigreed that gifted us *Gitanjali*. The flowers of spiritual joy, love, realization of the Divine and the bliss of communion with the Divine together make the garland of *Gitanjali* that was awarded with a Nobel Prize showing us the path and beauty of spirituality refulgent in simple ways.

The poems begin their journey from describing the magnificence of God's love. This journey of poems is the journey of Tagore's levels of spiritual consciousness. It has a humble path unveiled for the readers to reach the God. First set of poems till seven show the love of God. He beautifully describes us and gives a sensitive guidance that the Divine is in those hearts that are humble, which we can perceive as those who are materially poor and spiritually rich. Tagore here describes that spirituality does not need to be in the mansions of the rich who praise God with gold but that spirituality is a sensitive path that needs only immense love for God and an undying appetite for communion with God. The poems reflect his blooming mysticism beginning with humble description of god and His love for man. Tagore does not write like other mystic poets and Seer poets with the help of revelations but the poems are deeply touching and influencing.

Taking this quite to the depth, D.M.Thomas, a prominent critic and writer expresses in the book *Ravindranath's Poetry*, "Like unto the youth in love, the one thing which matters to the poet is the union with his divine loved. Everything else is mere accessory. All the dogmas of priesthood, and theology and religion, seem rigid, hard, lifeless, without meaning, before this solicitation of the Lord." (2010: 50)

Tagore is gifted with the humbleness to keep the words charmingly simple yet carry an underlying profound spiritual weight. In this context D.M.Thomas further brings out his feeling, "There is tenderness, a sweet wistfulness about it all. The love analogy shows that the poet is occupied with the thought of his God above everything else. Rarely has spiritual yearning been put in a more simple, intimate, yet a more moving form." (50)

If we peep into Tagore's feelings expressed in the beginning phase of *Gitanjali*, we can see the sense of humbleness.

"Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure.

Knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs" (2002: 3)

These lines are the most compacted form reflecting a high level of spiritual consciousness. Tagore perceives that we are the form and part of God himself, and that our body is like a temple of God which can keep its Lord only when it keeps up its sanctity. Feeling that we are the part of God and that we should keep pure thoughts and heart free from malice is the primary realization of spiritual growth which the garland of *Gitanjali* needles it in its first flower. This thought is sensitive and equally tough to practice.

Tagore takes us to the next part of spiritual journey in which we realize our home is not in the physical world but in the communion with God. We are intensely in love with God and it becomes inseparable but it is a strange difficulty for the soul to reach Him piercing the obstacles that our body, mind and the world give. This phase Tagore says is as suffocating as the bitter – sweet pain a lover hangs to, until he meets his beloved.

"There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; But, cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me." (2002: 10)

This shows the beautiful whirlpool of spiritual thirst we undergo which is the voice of Tagore's own phase. In this context K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar describes the words of beauty and complexity of sensitivity in *Gitanjali* about which he says,

“All poetry is a desperate attempt to express man's relation to his fellow – men, Nature, to God. Man and the circumambient universe: is he one with it, or is he estranged from it? When he feels estranged from it, he feels miserable, he articulates anguished cries; but when he feels one with it, he is transfigured by, ecstasy, joy, he hymns a song of thanksgiving. In either case the impulsion behind the writing is religious. *Gitanjali* is verily the recordation of the vicissitudes in the drama of the human soul in its progress from the finite to the infinite. And this progress is necessarily conceived as a battle, as a journey, and as a continuing sacrifice, culminating in a total offering of all one is so that by losing all one may gain all.” (1965:14)

“Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?

I keep gazing on the far - away gloom of the sky, and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.” (2002: 13)

This reflects Tagore's longing to meet the God which seems to be a maze to start through this physical world where there are only but obstacles to move ahead. D.M.Thomas gives voice to his beautiful feeling of quest to meet the God, “At the highest moment of his God- consciousness, he may forget his ownself. That is the moment of his union with the supreme one, his moment of tryst. But otherwise his spirit is always there as a distinct entity constantly striving for union with the divine spirit. For God – realization and he feels a peculiar joy in this striving. The quest after the divine spirit is more important to him than its ultimate realization.” (2010: 77)

As he prays for God's presence which can wash away all the dark spots of his soul, he feels the nearness to God, his joy leaps and bounces beyond the physical grips, about which he describes,

“I know not why today my life is all astir, and a feeling of

Tremulous joy is passing through my heart.

It is as if the time were come to wind up my work,

And I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence.” (2002: 33)

These lines are beauty personified; the breeze of spiritual bliss touches the longing soul of Tagore that takes him to the higher levels of spiritual bliss. This phase is a journey to God that reflects the fact that all we need is faith in God and love for the Divine which are the richest of spiritual tools and a promising path to the higher levels of spiritual regions. Tagore's spiritual journey is the journey that gives a universal feeling in which a reader can travel gently, smoothly and wisely experiencing a subtle growth with the passing of each poem, taking us equally higher.

The last poems show the joy of communion which is not merely one sided but mutual in which God is also happy showing the perfect amalgamation of soul and God. It gives us a feeling of things falling in perfect natural place just like river water merging back into the sea, rain water reaching back to the clouds, baby running to the lap of its mother and a lover falling in the arms of the beloved who has been in long waiting for the moment, and Tagore says it seems like all the weight is unburdened from the heart and it dwells in joy. Tagore then takes us to the last phase of life and the highest phase in the spiritual plane in which he invites death as a vehicle to meet his beloved God. According to Tagore death is a gate way for higher levels of consciousness and relief from the chains rooted down to the earth. Tagore's heart is like a pearl within an oyster, so delicate and malice free from all the dust and sin of material world. Dr. M.H. Syed in his book *Rabindranath Tagore* talks about Tagore's spiritual path as simple yet sublime in which his love for God and definition of death are reflected,

“The self centered becomes God – centred. The all – dwelling love invades, submerges, and overwhelms the individual consciousness. The whole individual – body, mind and soul – is given up to God. This state of supreme bliss is not “death but completeness.” It is the perfection of consciousness, where there is no dust or darkness to obscure the vision.” (2010: 198).

His love for God and his thirst to meet Him and dwell in that eternal communion of bliss can be seen in these lines,

“Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face.
With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.
...when my work shall be done in this world, O King of Kings, alone and speechless
Shall I stand before thee face to face. (2002: 6)

Tagore's realization of death is reflected in the words,

“O Thou the last fulfillment of life, Death my Death, come and whisper to me,

Day after day have I kept watch for thee; for thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life.” (72)

There is no better an expression like these lines calling “my death” which Tagore feels it as an intimate person in whose arms we can promisingly go to, feeling it as a safer place than we are living in. These last poems of *Gitanjali* are the ripen stage of Tagore’s detachment from the world aspiring to reach the real home.

“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 to thee.”(81)

With these lines filled with bouncing joys of heart that cannot wait for a minute more on this material earth, Tagore takes leave of us, spiritually ascending to the higher worlds, who not only travels high but holds our hand showing all the journey of life, from its budding beauty to the falling flower, which altogether make the beautiful *Gitanjali*.

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