

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AS A LYRIC POET

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Abstract:

The present paper focuses on lyrical poems of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's literary work is characterized by immense variety and abundance. In the course of his long period of active production, covering over sixty years, he published over 300 volumes of poetry, drama, short stories, novel discourses on history, religion, politics, philosophy, etc. However, Tagore was mainly a poet. He has left behind him more than 20 million lines of poetry, a number larger than that of any other poet of the world. This poetic vein penetrates even his prose works. His dramas are symbolic poetic plays, his novels and short stories are poetic, and even his other works are remarkable for their passages of impassioned poetic prose.

KEYWORDS:

characterized, literary, philosophy, symbolic poetic.

INTRODUCTION:

Barring the epic, Tagore tried his hand at every other kind of poetry. But his genius is best seen in his lyrics. Excepting the Child which was first written in English, his other works of poetry were first written in Bengali and were later transcreated into English either by himself or by others under his direct supervision. It was for The Gitanjali, Englished in 1912, that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and it is on his collection of a hundred odd lyrics that his reputation as a world-poet chiefly rests. His English poetical works- The gardener, The Lover's Gift, The Fugitive and Other Poems, The Crescent Moon, The Poems, 1942, etc., are all collection of lyrics.

The appeal of his lyrics has been universal because they deal with impulses that are universal to mankind. As Edward Thompson points out he is a universal poet because he has, "Exquisitely phrased moods of misgiving and wistful trust that have been inarticulate but felt and greatness begins to appear, when we remember that even remotely like him.

However, Tagore did not become a universal lyric poet all at once. His lyric genius underwent a long and gradual process of evolution. His early lyrics are chiefly romantic-escapist in tone. In his early lyrics he is a romantic who deals with Nature in its various aspects, with Beauty, a source of eternal fascination for the romantic imagination. His romantic imagination explores the mysteries of life and death of the universe.

DEVOTIONALLYRICS

Tagore is one of the greatest devotional poems of the world: it was Gitanjali, mainly a collection of devotional lyrics, which created a sensation in Europe, and at once made him into a world poet. Its Indianness, its open-air atmosphere, its simplicity and freshness of a folk song are the important factors which account for its personal appeal. It is mystical poetry in which the poet is concerned with the relationship of man, God and Nature. It owes its inspiration mainly to the Upanishadic doctrine according to which the entire creation has sprung out of joy.

God can be realized not through renunciation, but through oneness with humble humanity and

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participation in its day to day activity. In one of the better known lyrics of The Gitanjali he advises the devotee of God:

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense: What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet Him and stand by Him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

Tagore thus calls upon us to give up our singing and chanting, our meditations, flowers and incense. He says that the path of God realization lies through the performance of the ordinary duties of life. We must come down from our high secluded palace and meet God in the company of the tiller and the pathmaker. And yet it is not that realism which regards material enjoyment as the be-all and end-all of life. The following poem throws further light on this realism:

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.

I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and

Place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.

In this poem the poet says that he is not going to shut the doors of his senses. Does it imply that he wants to indulge in sensuous enjoyment to the full? Certainly not. He will feel and enjoy the delightful presence of god in the material objects of life which can be seen and heard and touched.

PATRIOTIC LYRICS

Tagore has also left behind him a number of patriotic lyrics in which patriotism finds its truest and noblest expression. Poem 72 of the Gitanjali is one of his better known lyrics, and it brings out his humanism, his spiritual realism, as well as his cosmopolitanism. The emphasis throughout is on the spiritual reality of life. The poet does not pray for the 'heaven' of material prosperity in India. On the other hand, he prays for fearlessness, truthfulness and unity; he prays for the dominance of reason over superstition. And last of all he prays for ever widening thought and action. These are the things of the spirit and these constitute his heaven of freedom. He says "God is both immanent and transcendent. He works within the heart of man causing pain or pleasure. It is He who awakens the human soul to the beauty and enchantment of His creation which is His Maya."

LOVE LYRICS

Tagore's reputation as a mystic, has obscured his greatness as a love-poet. In truth, his love-lyrics rank with the greatest love lyrics of the world. His love poetry shows the influence of Vaishnava love poetry, which centres round the loves of Radha and Krishna. But Tagore's treatment of it is entirely his own. In this connection Srinivasa Iyengar says that "The Gardener is the richest of the collections that have appeared in English. It is in the main a feast of love poetry – with a human rather than a divine slant, though with a poet like Tagore the border –line between the two is apt to be tantalizingly indistinct. These are paradisaic in their purity and intensity and even sensuality. Tagore strikes his lyre, vivid imagery breaks out into sudden life, like sparks from the anvil-

I ran as a musk-deer runs in the dhadow of the forest, mad with his own perfume...
The gleaming look from the dark came upon me like a breeze
That sends a shiver through the rippling water and sweeps away
To the shadowy shore...

You blind me with the flashes of laughter to hide your tear..

All the make believe and love –play that lovers feed on, all the agony and hopelessness, all the ecstasy and fulfillment of lovers lives, all is woven here into a garland of memorable song. The lover who is restless because her beloved calls her with his flute, though he is far away, is left to cherish the mere breath that comes to her whispering an impossible hope.

In the circus of phenomenal life there is no room really for pride or self-abasement, for the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam and the stars of midnight. Even the inarticulate beast has an individuality as rich as man's and akin to his, a kinship dating back, perhaps, to paradisaic life in Eden—

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Yet suddenly in some worldness music the dim memory wakes up
And the beast gazes into man's life with a tender trust, and
The man looks down into eyes with amused affection.
It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know
Each other through the disguise.

The Gardener thus almost brings us back to something of the primordial felicity of the Garden of Eden, and once this vision has come back to us and we are able to see things with a new rapture of recognition, we are not likely to reject the gift again.

CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S BEAUTY-URVASHI

In this connection, mention may also be made of Tagore as a poet of Beauty. Urvashi is one of his greatest lyrics, a lyric which has exercised eternal fascination on the mind and heart of the readers of Tagore. According to Hindu mythology, Urvashi is the heavenly dancer of Lord Indra's court, the type of Eternal Beauty, who in the beginning rose from the sea when it was churned by the gods. Tagore views Urvashi as the perfect woman-not child, nor mother, nor wife- but the beautiful woman who is goddess and seductress at once. She carries nectar in one hand, and a POISON of poison in the other; she slumbered till day came, and then appeared in her awful little bloom; she is of all men adored, the ageless wonder.

In the assembly of Gods, when thou dancest in ecstasy of joy,
O swaying wave, Urvashi,
The companies of billows in mid-ocean swell and dance, beat on beat;
In the crest of the corn the skirts of the earth tremble;
From thy necklace stars fall off in the sky;
Suddenly in the breast of man the heart forgets itself.

NATURE-LYRICS

Tagore's nature lyrics also rank with the greatest nature-poetry of the world. He is a great river-poet and a great poet of the Bangali seasons. The forms, the colours, the sounds, the scents of nature fascinate him, and he communicates his own joy in the manifold beauties of nature to his readers. Flowers bloom at every step in his poetry, and rivers flow with their sweet music. He observes accurately and describes minutely and precisely. Vivid and colourful word-pictures of nature's beauty are scattered all up and down his lyrics. His love of nature is all comprehensive and realistic. He is a poet both of the pleasanter and softer in nature, as well as of Nature in its more harsh, unpleasant and ugly moods.

Nature for Tagore is a vast store house of images, of similes and metaphors. His nature imagery is abundant and profuse. However, his uniqueness as a nature poet lies in his sense of absolute identity with the life of nature. He regards Nature as the primal store house of life, out of which humanity has evolved through the ages. Man's human birth has cut him off from this vast source of life, and hence his constant wistful yearning to merge once again with this universal life. Because of this essential oneness of man and nature. Tagore believes in the moral influence of nature.

MUSIC AND MELODY-VERSIFICATION

Another important characteristic of the lyric is music and melody, and Tagore's lyrics are second to none in this respect also. Tagore was a ceaseless experimenter with verse forms, and as a result achieved perfection in the evoking of the music and melody that lies underflow of rhythm in close harmony with the requirement of thought and emotion. The lyrics have an incantatory or mantric quality which is unique. They sing, as it were by a natural magic of their own.

Hence all these qualities make Tagore one of the greatest lyric poets of the world.

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