



RELIGIOUS STRAIN IN TAGORE'S WORKS: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the real theme of Tagore's works as the spiritual enhancement of a person irrespective of his religion and age. Tagore borrows themes from Indian mythology, Buddhism or any other classical sources only to spread the feeling of humanity among the people of all religions. Moreover, his works preach that ones salvation is the ultimate goal that is to be achieved by every human being of any religion. Through his characters he tried to show symbolically that the true wisdom lies in one's own spirituality. He used poet's religion which for him is the other name of humanity. In fact, he helped his readers to discover their innate creative spirits and become better religious and better people. In 'The Post office' through Amal's character he defined religion as a spiritual reality that will be reached only after death by everyone who has faith in Almighty. He also vividly explains how Amal's senses are renewed in a new form that appreciates all things that surround him. His poems voiced against religious and social orthodoxy and took on a lyrical voice of establishing communal harmony among the people. Tagore had reflected on the inner essence of Reality in many of his poems. His beliefs and human values are well expressed in the lyrics of Gitanjali. Finally the ultimate theme of his works represents that true religion is characterized by a healthy relationship with the Divine rather than by external factors. Tagore believes that finite self (soul) lies in the root of infinite (God). And it is the finite that grows and develops into the infinite.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the first Asian to be awarded Nobel Prize, is the most eminent Bengali renaissance poet, philosopher, essayist, novelist, critic, composer and educator who tried to bring in harmony of universal humanity among the people irrespective of their nature, caste, creed, culture and race. His works reveal his efforts in finding out the meaning of the life and the universe. All his works explore the concept of one's freedom of mind and spiritual sovereignty which he considered as the need of the hour. Tagore in his works spoke about the common man's mind in his or her own language, rhythm and very ordinary sentiments of every day life. Even today the readers interpret their sentimental issues of suffering, joy, love and anger in any situation by reciting verses from Tagore's poems, singing his songs, quoting dialogues from his plays, and citing opinions from his essays. This brought him the fame of world's poet and the guru of all poets. Tagore had been one among

the people and maintained relations through his works/characters with each other and shared his thoughts, feelings and opinions about the humanity and its ethics. The best example for this is though Tagore came from a Hindu family, it did not prevent the largely Muslim citizens of Bangladesh from choosing one of Tagore's songs ("Amar Sonar Bangla" which can be translated as "My Golden Bengal") as its national anthem. This reveals the nonsectarian nature of Tagore. In fact the only religion for Tagore is Humanity and this humanity as he believes, lies in one's own spiritual freedom.

The overwhelming impression created by Tagore in the hearts of people made him the true inspiring person for a free mind. Most of the freedom strugglers used different kinds of weapons in the national struggle. For example: Gandhiji's non-violence. Similarly Tagore used his pen as the most effective weapon to bring out humanity among the people and thereby contribute to the ultimate spiritual sovereignty. The national anthem 'jana gana mana adhinayaka' which means 'the leader of people's mind' rightly fits in to say that Tagore took part in national struggle. Tagore's works include 28 volumes of poetry, stories, novels, operas, essays and diaries and 2,500 songs. Tagore was a world famous poet. Most of his works were appreciated and got translated by other international poets. For instance W. B. Yeats, in an introduction of Gitanjali said, "Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilization itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to the spontaneity" and also added, "At times I wonder if he has it from the literature of Bengal or religion". The spiritual values of Hinduism were deep rooted in his ancestry and in his own long and hard-fought experience, and they found constant expression in every aspect of his extraordinary life.' One of his plays 'The Post Office', describes the child Amal defying his stuffy and puerile confines by ultimately "fall[ing] asleep", hinting his physical death. A story with borderless appeal—gleaning rave reviews in Europe—Dak Ghar dealt with death as, in Tagore's words, "spiritual freedom" from "the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds". "[...] but the meaning is less intellectual, more emotional and simple. The deliverance sought and won by the dying child is the same deliverance which rose before his imagination, [...] when once in the early dawn he heard, amid the noise of a crowd returning from some festival, this line out of an old village song, "Ferryman, take me to the other shore of the river." It may come at any moment of life, though the child discovers it in death, for it always comes at the moment when the "I", seeking no longer for gains that cannot be "assimilated with its spirit", is able to say, "All my work is thine" [...]." (As quoted- W.B.Yeats, Preface, The Post Office, 1914).

'The Post Office' is about a young, innocent, pure and simple boy-Amal. Amal is not allowed to go outside because of his illness. But the boy wanted to go outside and he wanted to become a bird and cherish the nature outside. He was too curious to be free and fly away with the time to the land where no one knows anything. Tagore symbolically shows that Amal wanted to escape from the ephemeral and materialistic world to a world of sensations. Amal's confinement to the small room symbolizes the human soul imprisoned in the mortal body. Amal befriends all those who passes by and shares the feeling of love towards each other

through the open window. He also made others to feel happy with what they are doing and get satisfied with what they have. For instance, the curd seller who at first was rather irritant comes closer to the boy later. When Amal learn about Panchmura hub and Shamli river from the curd seller he gets delighted to see them. He also acknowledged that the cry of curd seller makes him very happy. These innocent and love-filled words taught the curd seller to be happy selling curds. The Headman calls Amal a wretched monkey but towards the end he likes Amal and pity him on his untimely death. In spite of hurry Sudha returns with flowers to Amal as promised. Gaffer who scares the children too stands beside the death-bed of Amal at the end. The children are happy with the toys that were given by Amal. The most significant fact about Amal's role is that he redeems whoever comes in contact with him. All these instances focus on the feeling of love for others and this feeling is the true religion of humanity.

Here the post office becomes the symbol of universe, King stands for God, post men are nature's six seasons, and letter is the message of eternity, the message calling us to reach God. The blank slip of paper symbolizes the message of God where one is free to interpret according to one's own lights. When Amal comes to know about the post office he feels very happy thinking that he would receive a letter from the king. The waiting for the letter made him impatient. He thought he would beg King to make him his mail carrier so that he can travel around the world delivering messages. When the royal physician enters his room all the doors and windows are opened. The opening of gate by the king's physician is the opening of the human mind to the nature of the experience. Amal say's he is happy now. Fakir helps him to see the vision of parrot isle . He feels fresh and open. Amal feels so because he finds comfort in his soul as death brings him spiritual freedom.

In the conversation between Amal and Madhav:

Amal say's: See that far away hill from the window, I often long to go beyond those hills and right away.

Madhav say's: Oh! you silly! As if there is nothing more to be done but just get up to the top of the hill and away

From the conversation we know that Madhav is keen to live in this world and earn more money. Amal didn't want to stay here but to go beyond this world. This is the difference between a materialist and a spiritualist. Amal desperately wanted to become free and this would be possible only through the post office which itself forms a bridge between known and unknown. This post office would communicate the soul with God through his message which is nothing but an invitation to leave the world of pain and enter into the world of eternal bliss.

Most of Tagore's works including the Post Office and Gitanjali declares that death is not the end but a new beginning. Death is not something to be hated or feared. It is a welcome release from the earthly bonds. In stanza LXXXVI of Gitanjali, Death is conceived as God's servant who brought

*Thy call to my home,
The night is dark and my heart is fearful
Yet I will take up the lamp; open my gates
And bow to him my welcome.*

In Gitanjali the reader shall feel the presence of God as well as His coming to the world; that is Almighty's journey towards us- the human. A spiritualist holds the finger of God and enters a different world of freedom.

Finally the creativity of Tagore and his freedom in putting all his relentless efforts towards perfection, to bring harmony among the people and the harmony of people with the nature has a strong effect on readers around the world. His works will certainly direct the people towards humanity which in turn drives them towards spirituality, the ultimate destination.

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