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Propagation of Truth through Beauty of Religion in Aesthetics in study of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

Indian aesthetics is truthfully based on the Satyam, Shivam and sundaram. Every aesthete follows this concept while presenting his idea on aesthetics. Rabindranath Tagore has explored his ideas of Indian aesthetics in all his works but present study delves into his selected plays- *Chitra*, *Malini*, *Ascetic* and *Sacrifice* with close penetration. This discussion shows not only the aesthetic joy based on the religious traditions of Indians but also deals with the religious ideology, spirituality, symbolic significance and mythical approach in religious aesthetics and fulfillment of spiritual quest. His plays explore the basic themes of relationship of God and human soul, of God and nature, of nature and the human soul, of the individual soul and humanity. The informing spirit of all these themes is Tagore's profound humanism which makes his mysticism warmly mundane and meaningful. The myths employed by Rabindranath Tagore are borrowed from nature, ancient civilization, and old literature and Indian Hindu scripture. Tagore seems to be real aesthete while showing the concept the Indian aesthetics in all its form. Thus the proposed study will investigate the basic concepts of religious aesthetics and aims to be convert the religious orthodoxy of myths into the meaningful way to acquire the spirituality along with truth in beauty of religion.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Propagation of Truth through Beauty of Religion

Introduction

Religion is the lifeblood of a culture where people set their mentality on the fact that they have safety from evils. It provides the store of symbols, stories and doctrines that enable us to communicate about our destiny. The idea that all literature is somehow connected with religion assumes that the basis for religion is something which transcends the individual mind and from the aesthetic point of view, of course, this is emphatically so. Tagore's works show that there is a process of gradual evolution of an intellectual- emotional response to religious passion. Religion holds together the diverse elements of the contemporary fragmented being and gives a sense of direction in his life. Throughout his literary career, Tagore tended to salvage Indian aesthetics from the moral of aesthetic vision which encompassed with the ideals of religion. Religion has always elicited great concern. Rabindranath Tagore, being an Indian philosopher has written great works which are deeply rooted in Brahmanism and Hinduism and explore the essence of Indian thought. Before describing the truth in the religion in the plays of Rabindranath Tagore, one should know what the truth is. Truth is the reality which makes the false illusions clear, created in minds and are going through the centuries. The truth can be represented in the best way by presenting the false belief in the very philosophical way not by criticizing it directly. Tagore has done so in his plays. There are many types of false beliefs and notions in every religion which have no meaning in real acquisition. Like In Indian religion, Sacrifices of innocent animals before Goddess Kali is considered very pious and reliable. Secondly, traditional family religion is to be followed forcefully. Tagore has stirred these types of false beliefs by his plays. But as far as the aesthetics in the truth of religion is considered, this creates the new philosophy of aesthetic pleasure where falsehood does not become heavy on the permanent joy but made the joy more reliable. So Tagore has tried to modernize the philosophy of aesthetics by differentiating the truth of religion. Arjuna says to Chitra: "Illusion is the first appearance of truth." (*Chitra*, p44) Tagore has profound and philosophic knowledge of Indian Religion. His literary quest for a soothing and inspiring religious passion for delineating his thought have got the expression in his debuts- *Malini*, *Chitra*, *sacrifice* and *The Ascetic*.

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Tagore's critical venture to evolve literary form rooted in the Indian indigenous soil. Hence, these plays become a potent weapon for expression of truly Indian religious, aesthetic sensibility. Rabindranath takes its meaning rather literally and visions are deeply connected to the personal realization. Tagore has explored the vision in the modernity in Indian in different contexts, but has the same aesthetic joy. He says: "The meaning of the living words that come out of the experience of great hearts can never be exhausted by any one system of logical interpretation." (*Sadhna*, 8)

Religion plays very vital role in every culture. Most of the tendencies of human being get the start by the instinct of the religion. Religion alludes the society where people follow different religions and shape their ideas only with what they are told to follow by their parents whether they consider it right or wrong. The same can be observed in *sacrifice*. People believe in the norm that goddess Kali would be happy if they perform the sacrifice. Even the queen also follows this with the assumption that her family would be blessed by the goddess through sacrifice. In the play, *Malini*, She is about to abolish when she follows another religion where community go against if anybody tries to break their chain of religion.

In the exploration of religion, tradition plays very great and important role to sustain the aesthetic joy. Tagore has explored these in his plays in *Chitra*. Arjuna and Chitra most of the times meet in a temple which create the symbolic significance of religious aesthetics. Chitra says: "I hastened on my quest, and found Arjuna in the forest temple of Shiva." (*Chitra*, 6) Tagore seems to follow the base of aesthetics known as Satyam, Shivam and sunderam.

In Indian religion, it is believed that the Gods have been deviated with their duties by Hinduism. Lord Ganesh is considered the symbol of prosperity. Lord Shiva is the embodiment of the fulfillment of desires. Chitra daily offers to Lord Shiva to make her secret desire true. She says to Arjuna: "I harbor a secret in my heart for the fulfillment of which I offer daily prayers to Lord Shiva." (*Chitra*-8) Indian religion has the great value of Brahmins and Hinduism. In *Malini*, Malini accepts the Buddhism, all the Brahmins of her kingdom go against her and King says: "The Brahmins, frightened at her here say, have combined." (*Malini*, 4) Malini's learning's of religion persuade her mother to follow only the truth, not the falseness of religion. Her mother comes to the spiritual religion and favors her daughter by saying: "If this be a part of their creed, then let come the new religion, and let those Brahmins be taught afresh what truth is." (*Malini*, 6)

Every religion has great importance of myth, So Indian religions are not the exception. Tagore has presented myths in his plays very clearly. Aesthetics are sensed with myths in religion. "Myth describes the various and sometimes they break through the sacred that reality establishes the world and makes it what it is today. Furthermore, it is as a result of the intervention of supernatural beings that man himself as what he is today a mortal, sexual and cultural beings." (*The Myth of External Return* 5-6)

Tagore deliberately chose the mythical approach for obvious advantages to explore him truth of religion. It gives the sense of the continuity of time and human consciousness. "Myth is an active force which is intimately related to almost every aspect of culture." (*Myth Model and Paradigm*, 20) His plays explore the basic themes of relationship (1) of God and the human soul (2) of God and nature (3) of nature and the human soul (4) of the individual soul and humanity. The informing spirit of all these themes is Tagore's profound

humanism which makes his mysticism warmly mundane and meaningful.

Tagore deliberately chose the mythical approach for obvious advantages to explore the truth of religion. The myths employed by Rabindranath Tagore are borrowed from nature, ancient civilization, and old literature and Indian Hindu scripture. In the plays of Tagore has presented the myths or mythical notions. As in the play *Sacrifices*, we see that the people believe that if they sacrifices the animal, then Goddess Kali would be happy and bless them. They decorate the animal which is going to be sacrificed with flowers and take it to the temple then cut it. This is considered the most auspicious deed to please the God and Goddesses. In the other play *Malini* one can see that people follow their traditional religion.

History of Indian gives the evidence from where Religion combines the people in order to establish the peace and purity and creates the uniformity among different religions. But Tagore has different views about religion. No doubt he has absorbed the allusion from ancient history regarded the religion, but only for the aesthetic joy and exploration of truth by the religions. He frankly confesses that:

"I have already made the confession that my religion is the poet's religion. All that I feel about it is from vision not from knowledge. Frankly, I acknowledge that I cannot satisfactorily answer any question about evil or about what happens after death. Nevertheless, I am sure that there have come moments in my own experience when my soul has touched the infinite and has become infinitely conscious of it through the illumination of joy." (*The Religion on Men*, 107)

The ancient Indian thought of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta* have potent effects on Indian Aesthetics. Tagore is highly influenced by these. But he can rightly be called an Idealist, spiritualist, monist as well as a theist. Hirendernath Datta has rightly remarked that: "Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy is the philosophy of concrete monism." (*Rabindranath As a vedantist*, 12)11

In Tagore's work, we find multiple expressions of spiritual freedom. Tagore had firm faith that art helps the soul to enter its own natural home and claims its citizenship in that kingdom of spirituality. The temples, meditations become the embodiment for the religious security. Religious Chitra tells: "I harbor a secret desire in my heart, for the fulfillment of which I offer daily prayers to Lord Shiva." (*Chitra*, 12) She has the vision and vision makes someone aesthetics. Arjuna asks her: "What stern vow keeps you immured in this solitary temple, depriving all mortals of a vision of so much loveliness." (*Chitra*, 13).

Tagore's mind is itself a kingdom where diverse streams cross, flow and merge into the land. It creates the real aesthetics. Not only one religion, but by different religions, Tagore has presented the truth of the world. Tagore's creations are so vast and voluminous that aestheticism appeals in the minds of readers in any easy schematization or categorization. It shows not only the truth of religion, but also colors the beauty of religions. Tagore has deep penetration regarding this beauty of religion. Tagore's vast knowledge about religion has made R.I.Paul to remark that: "It is difficult to decide which aspect of Tagore's works should be stressed, on which quality of man's attention should be concentrated and which achievement of his especially mentioned, there is hardly any form of religion

which he did not drown.”(Tagore’s *Pamphlets*47)

Tagore as being a philosopher did not lag behind in giving the philosophic outlook to the Indian religion. He asserts firmly the fact that religion is related to the freedom of mind and thought. Bharatmuni has also accepted this form of freedom in *Natyashastra* and gave different types of aesthetics. So Tagore has also emphasized on freedom and presented this in his Plays. Tagore’s play *Malini* shows such type of philosophic freedom when she became a follower of Buddhism. She has the freedom of her thought and mind and accepts what she wants. She preaches about the unity in all the religions. In such a condition heart reveals the truth and essence of every religion as she has. And in another play named *Ascetic*, we see that the ascetic goes from one place to another to find the truth, but he recognized the reality of religion only when he makes the unity of mind and heart with freedom. The world around him looked very practical to him and gave the glimpses of truth. Generally, it is thought that renouncement of the world is considered the part religion in India as ascetic did in the play. But the renouncement gives the truth of reality in the veil of religion as Rabindranath Tagore explored it.

An Indian poet, philosopher, writer and spiritual master Shri. Aurobindo says in *Savitri*: “A lonely freedom cannot satisfy a heart that has grown one with our heart, I am the deputy of the aspiring world; my spirit’s liberty I ask for all.” (*Savitri*, 32)

Through the relationship of God with human beings, Tagore represents the idea of the relationship between man and totality very beautifully. He gives a personality to God in order to make the better expression. He says: “Reality is the expression of personality, like a poem, like a work of art.” (*Personality*, 66) God is considered the last hope of man, which sustains life and gives strength. So Tagore does not consider the necessity of regular offering to show the existence of God. He is the object of personal realization which creates the initial tendency towards belief. As in *Malini*, Malini adopts the very simple method of realizing God. He shows the truth within the human form. As he says: “man can take an interest in the absolute only when it is humanized.” (*Idealism of Rabindranath Tagore*, 205) Rabindranath says: “There is a point where the mystery of existence contradictions meets, where movement is not all movement and stillness is not all stillness, where the idea and the form, the within and without, are united where infinite becomes finite without using its infinity.” (*Personality*, 17) Sanyasi says: “I took shelter in the darkness of the infinite.” (*Ascetic*2) The unity cannot be achieved by looking or taking the things as components, but as the ‘whole’. He says: “Truth lies not in ordinary consciousness, not in the consciousness of fragments, but in the consciousness of the whole.” (*The Religion on Men*, 21)

Tagore purposes that God’s existence creates the fact of joy in every aspect of creation. Every human being has the aesthetic sense inherent in him, so has the capacity to feel this joy. He gives the examples of Saints and says: “Dadu, Ravidas, Kabir and Nanak... had glimpses of the word of unity They babble like babes of the joy their vision of Him, of ecstasy into which His music has thrown them.” (*Sadhana*, 228)

Creation is also the acute part of Indian aesthetic Tagore believes in the reality of creation. It has humanistic significance also. So the creation is an embroiderer or an expression of the Absolute. According to Tagore: “God finds himself by creating.” (*Geetanjali*, 104) Creation is requisite

because it is the expression of joy. Tagore says: “our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he has been bonded with us forever.” (*Personality*, 11) Creation may be real or it may be mere appearance. But both convey the aesthetic sense. But it is appearance is also necessary to create. This is also the matter of fact that “when you deprive truth of its appearance, it loses the best part of reality.” (*Chitra*, 50)

Every Religion is deeply connected with spirituality. The Spirituality helps man to forget the bonds with the world, and reveals to him the invisible connection by which we are bound up with the eternal. As in *Chitra* Vasanta says-“I am-vasanta – the king of seasons. Death and decrepitude would wear the world to the bone, but that I follow them and constantly attack them. I am eternal youth.” (*Chitra*, 26-27)

Tagore had firm faith that art helps the soul to enter its own natural home and claims its citizenship in the kingdom of spirituality. In *Malini*, her mother tells to the king: “I tell you king, she is not a common girl. She is a pure flame of fire. Some divine spirit has taken birth in her.” (*Malini*, 4) According to Tagore, Religion explores the duties of mankind and its fulfillment is the real response to the religion. Religion creates the true self of the man. Chitra says to Arjuna: “If you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self.” (*Chitra*, 48)

Tagore’s philosophy with the Indian aesthetics restarted the ancient wisdom to meet the needs of modern times. In the play *Malini*, Malini makes her mother aware towards the material reality and says: “Mother! There are some who are born, even in a king’s house.. Wealth does not cling to those whose destiny it is to find riches in poverty.” (*Malini*, 2) Dr. Radhakrishnan himself describes that: “Rabindranath Tagore gives us a human God, dismisses with the contented concept of worldly illusion, praises action overmuch and promises fullness of life of the human soul.” (*The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, 7) The turning to God means renunciation of worldly comforts and achievements and a commitment to a spiritual discipline of non-attachment.

Tagore seems to create the image of God in nature itself. Nature is portrayed as the God and the real religious guide of man. In all his plays, one can see his ideas regarding the nature interwoven with the reality of the fact. Tagore, like Wordsworth and Keats believes in the glimpse of eternity of nature. Tagore’s mystic vision grants him the knowledge of the oneness of things. In *Chitra*, Tagore shows the existence of Gods in nature like Vasanta as the king of seasons and the other God named Madana, the God of youth.

If temples and the ways of worships is the outer base of Indian religion, then the holy books are the creator or allusions which elude the religion from the very traditional form plays like *Malini*, there are the references of religious books which are to be followed traditionally by the followers of family religions. Holy books belong to the particular religion, according to the tradition. Her mother asks her: “Where did you pick up your new creed, which goes against all our holy books?” (2) All the religious books and the matter contained in them are considered the whole form of reality. The Malini’s mother asks the very true question: “Are all truths confined only in their musty, old books?” (5)

In every religion, woman has been the most important and central matter since traditions long. So Tagore depicts the woman in every picture of life. As far as his aesthetics in the plays are concerned, Tagore has made the original frame of religious beauty as well as the religious truth through the portraits of women like Chitra in the play *Chitra*. Malini in

Malini, prakarti in *Ascetic* and Gunwati in *sacrifices* are the major characters. Arjuna tells to Chitra: “You seem to me like a goddess hidden within a golden image.”(44) According to Tagore, religion is not the acceptance of one God or the particular way of worship, but it is the moral ways by which life of everyone is treated. Social norms are created derived from the worship, but, the politeness and the social justice. Supriya asks “Religion? Sir! Is it your religion that claims the banishment of an innocent girl? (Malini) Thus the present delves into the truth of beauty of religion in aesthetics in close study of selected plays of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore presents not only the beauty of religions but also explores the truth with the clear presentation of spirituality, religious ideology, spiritual freedom of mind and the religious beliefs with the decoration of Indian Aesthetics.

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