



## International Journal of Applied Research

ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
 ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
 Impact Factor: 8.4  
 IJAR 2022; 8(12): 72-75  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
 Received: 03-10-2022  
 Accepted: 05-11-2022

**Radha Narayan**  
 Research Scholar, L.N.M.U.,  
 Darbhanga, Bihar, India

# Rabindranath Tagore contribution to Bengali poetry

**Radha Narayan**

### Abstract

No doubt Tagore selected to put in writing with inside the medium of the Bengali language, however he isn't the poet of Bengal alone. He is of India and of the world. His poetry possesses ordinary exceptional and its advantage is identified past the frontiers of history. He is a poet of the complete world, and it's miles due to his worldwide humanism that he has been presented the Nobel Prize. His love for India is obvious now no longer best in *Gitanjali* however in his different poems as well. His humanism is obvious in lots of poem in *Gitanjali*. Two poems 106 and 107 in Bengali *Gitanjali* entitled 'Bharat Tirtha and Pamanite' are the first-rate instance of his Indianism.

**Keywords:** *Gitanjali* however, bharat tirtha, pamanite

### Introduction

"In the forms of poems Tagore conceives India as the meeting ground of different nations of the world. Just as the place of confluence of different rivers is regarded as sacred, so also India is holy land being the meeting place of different people of the earth. The *Aryans* and *Dravidians*, *Pathans* and *Mongols* have all joined together on the sea-shore of humanity-that is India. From time immemorial India has cherished the ideal of unity. This unity of civilization will be realized on the sea-shore of humanity-that is India. In the last stanza the poet invites "the *Aryans* and the *non-Aryans*, the Hindus and the Muslims, the English and the Christians, the Brahmins and the untouchables to come together and join their hands with one another in this holy land of India which is meeting ground of all nations <sup>[1]</sup>."

"In the poem 'Pamanite' Tagore has condemned his countrymen for practising untouchability. He says that those who have insulted these poor people and denied them human rights will face God's anger and share shame and humiliation with them. He gives them a stern warning that if they continue to keep themselves aloof from the so called untouchables, they would have to unite with them in death upon the funeral pyre." The publication of the English version of *Gitanjali* in 1913, took all Europe by storm, and at once made Tagore a great world-poet and won for him the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature. Since then it has been translated into most of the important languages of the world. Tagore no longer remained a poet of Bengal but became a poet of India and the world. His popularity has been continuous and world-wide.

There are various reasons for the universal appeal and continuing popularity of *Gitanjali*. Firstly *Gitanjali* is mainly devotional poetry in the great Indian tradition of *Bhakti*. But the theme finds a new and original treatment. It is the unique Indian flavour. Its familiarity accounts for its popularity in India, while its apparent novelty was its recommendation abroad. Poetry in *Gitanjali* aspires to the condition of prayer. Tagore writes, "The function of poetry and arts is to remind us that the greenroom is the grayest of illusions, and the reality is the drama presented before us, all its paint and tinsel, masks and pageantry, made one is art. The ropes and wheels perish, the stage is changed; but the dream which is drama remains true for their remains the eternal Dreamer <sup>[2]</sup>."

He wrote hundreds of patriotic poems. His Morning Song of India-'*Jan Gana Man*' is the greatest testimony of his Indian-ness. He stood for India's unity in diversity. The following song of *Gitanjali* also reveals his international nationalism and makes him a poet of India as Walt Whitman is the poet of America: "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high.

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Radha Narayan**  
 Research Scholar, L.N.M.U.,  
 Darbhanga, Bihar, India

Where words come out from the depth of truth  
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into  
 the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
 Where the mind is led forward by thee  
 Into ever- widening thought and action.  
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country  
 awake."

In fact the whole of the *Naibedya* (Offerings, 1901) out of which he included some songs even in *Gitanjali* (1912) is steeped with the colour of patriotism, nationalism and Indian-ness. He upholds the ideals of ancient India and advises time and again to shun. The initiation of the West. He asks his countrymen to follow the ideals of unity, self-sacrifice and fearlessness. He asks them to give up ignorance, bigotry and superstition. In poem No. 93 of *Naibedya* as translated by the poet himself he says—

Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful with your white robe of simpleness. Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul. Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty and know that what is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting. There are many poems in *Naibedya* which are prayers-prayers for the awakening of India, for the regeneration of Indian life. Does the poet pray for going back to the ancient past? Certainly not. He is a modern poet too. He once said that he would be proud to be born in India again and again, in spite of all her poverty and distress. But Tagore did not club poetry in the narrow chains of nationalism or Indian or Bengali. He is an international humanist. He believes in the principle of *Basudhaiva Kutumbkam*: to him the whole world is a family of human beings. He is a Hindu, Christian as well as a Muslim. His poetry is free from religious sectarianism. Yet he draws from the religion and rivers, forests and Trees Mountains and clay of India. His images, his aspirations, his ambition, his dharma, his morning, his prayers are definitely like those of an Indian saint, an Indian thinker, an Indian sage and mystic. Dr. Iyengar feels that "the poems are the recordations of the poet's experience of flowers, clouds, all the wealth of spring, all the glory of the earth"<sup>[3]</sup>.

*Gitanjali* has been underrated by critics abroad as an Indian poem. If by the Indian-ness of *Gitanjali* is meant that it is a poem which could have been written only in India, the land of that *Vedas*, the *Purans*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagvada*, a land which has a unique and most glorious tradition of saint poets, *Gitanjali* is definitely the book of Indian poems, but if by the Indian-ness of the poem is meant its limited and local appeal, the statement is invalid, for Tagore's message is beyond India, beyond all the limits of this earth and the oceans and the mountains. Tagore is a world poet and his *Gitanjali*, honoured with the Nobel Prize, a world poem. To quote Dr. Srinivas Iyengar "The current coin of India's devotional poetry is melted and minted anew by Rabindranath, but the pure gold shines as brightly as ever, even though the inscription on the coin is in English. The imagery, the conceits, the basic experience, the longing, the trial, the promise, the realization all have the quaintly unique Indian flavour and taste."

Tagore's *Gitanjali* is a thriceborn poem. It is an offspring of Indian saint (*Vaishnavite*) mystic poets of Hindi, of Bengali, and of the lyrical poetry of England. It is a railway junction where many parallel lines converge. Love of Nature, love of

mankind and love of God it is this *Triveni* that waters *Gitanjali*.

Original Bengali poems are remarkable for their sweet music and unheard melodies. The flavour of the original is maintained in the English version too. The poems have gained immensely from their being written in the form of songs, but they are much more poetry than music. With *Gitanjali* it may be an advantage to forget the music, so that the bare beauty of the poems may shine on us in silence.

Mysticism of *Gitanjali* is of a high order. *Gitanjali* says Edward Thompson, brings us very close to a religious experience which is universal yet intensely individual. "His restlessness, of which his words speak, is in the book, deepening the minor tone. His anxiety to mix with the simple life of men, wherever he can find it at its fullest, is also here"<sup>[4]</sup>.

According to Dr. Gurumurthi, "*Gitanjali* contains some of the finest expressions of his mystic experience and has a place equally in the mystic literature of the world as the finest poetry of our time"<sup>[5]</sup>.

The theme of the poem is union with God. God with the golden touch of his feet has kindled the light of reason and the lamp of love in his mind. The light of God's music illumines the universe. God is Life of life, Truth of truth, Love of love, Power of power and King of king. The songs of *Gitanjali* are songs mainly of the closest personal connection between the poet and the Eternal, the lover and the Beloved, wife and Husband, servant and Master, son and Father and the poet tries to approach the Great Reality through personal relationships. He is of the belief that when the human beings develop unbounded love they will realize the intensity of God. The way to achieve him is through self-surrender. The last song of *Gitanjali* ends with the following note—

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet. Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

To quote Laxness Halldor, "What an enviable god, this god of Tagore: the Great Friend, the Beloved, the Lotus flower, the unknown man playing a lute in the boat yonder on the river." Dr. Iyengar says, "*Gitanjali* is a variety of the recordation of the vicissitudes in the drama of the human soul in its progress from the finite to the infinite. And the progress is necessarily conceived as a battle, as a journey and as a continuing sacrifice culminating in a total offering of all in self- surrender, so that by losing all one may join all"<sup>[6]</sup>.

The years between 1901 and 1910 were the years of troubles and turmoils for the Tagore's. Though born in a renowned family, Rabindra never enjoyed the fruits of prosperity. In 1902 his wife died. Between 1904 and 1906 his daughter, his son and his father died. His peace was disturbed. He was sad. Since the sweetest songs are those that tell of the saddest thoughts."7 Tagore began to compose *Gitanjali* to find peace and rest. It was in search of peace that wrote *Gitanjali* between 1906 and 1910. In 1912 he translated it into English. English *Gitanjali* is not a literal and comprehensive translation of the *Bengali Gitanjali*. It contains many poems of the original *Bengali Gitanjali* but other are from *Naivedya*, *Khaya* and *Gitimalaya*. The English poems are free translations, expressing the main ideas of the Bengali poems and may be treated as fresh compositions.

Rabindranath Tagore's works are more or less in the Bengali language and he is generally accepted as a pre-eminent writer in Bengali and not an Indian writer in English. But he has translated or it would be more appropriate to state that he has translated his Bengali works into English himself and through that cast an influence on the regional literature of India which on other writer in recent past or in the distant past has been able to do. He attained to the stature of an all India writer and made an extraordinary impact on every regional literature. He is the inspirer and the moulder of the literature of a whole and entire nation. It has to be acknowledged without hesitation that his translations of original Bengali works into English are mainly responsible for his widespread influence.

Tagore's translation into English of his own works in Bengali are not exact translations of the originals, they are mostly free renderings. They are a sort of trans-creations or something that lie midway between translation and recreation. Tagore took liberties with the originals and almost rewrote them into English rather than attempted a literal translation. Occasional changes from the original were made by him, sometimes two or three poems were combined into one and at another time a single poem in the original was divided into two. The method of translation followed by Tagore. And it is an entirely novel method, practised by him, and the fact that he is perhaps the only writer in the world who has translated his own work into English entitle his works translated by himself to a place among the Indian writers and writings of English. Besides, there are works, both poetry and prose written by him originally viz., *The Child* and the prose Works *Nationalism*, *Personality*, *Creative Unity* and *The Religion of Man* which qualify him in his own right a writer in English.

Tagore's achievement as a poet rests mainly on his *English Gitanjali*, and other English rendering of the poems that followed it. His reputation, which was at its height in the second decade of the 20th century in the west mainly rests on his mysticism. The mystical appeal of *Gitanjali* and his other poems was emphasized upon again and again. Tagore, the mystic was made much more of than Tagore, the poet. Even W.B. Yeats committed this mistake. An appreciation of *Gitanjali* as poetry was first made by Ezra Pound. Really speaking *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon* and *The Gardener* hold a appeal for us not for their mystic depth, but for their lyrical quality or essence.

Tagore's lyrics are prose-poems. The movement in his prose-poems, is compared by him to the steps of a young woman, controlled by the natural desire for balance. There is easy, everyday manner about his prose-poems and their subject matter is such that it could not be expressed in any other way than in that form. The lack the usual trappings of poetry, but they have their own beauty. He does not know what is a prose-poem and how is it formed, but he knows fully well that it has beauty which cannot be seized by argument. When his translation of *Gitanjali* into English was seen by the English writers it was eloquently praised by them and they accepted it as part of their literature. Tagore felt embarrassed at this high praise of his poem, as he believed in *vers libre* as a means of the international exchange of poetry because 'rhythmic prose is more generously hospitable to ideas of all complexions and characters'. His verse is one which has been liberated (*vers libre*) and not *vers libre* (one which is born free). Free verse requires a heightened moment of poetic expression

emerging out of a music of its own. It is an attempt at aesthetic organisation. It catches not a music based on the rhythm of metrical feet, but cadence which was not bound to the counted syllables or even lines that rose and fell with the emotions and flow of words. Tagore's diction in *Gitanjali* is fluent, measured and well-modulated. He writes a countable prose the rhythm of which is referred to by Ezra Pound as a 'subtle underflow'. C.F. Andrews, it is said, was stirred to the depths of his soul by the haunting melody of song no. 60 of *Gitanjali*. His translation into English may lack the musical beauty and evocative power of the original and his poems may appear to be just shadows of his real self, but the 'subtle underflow' of his poetic prose in English, which Edward Thompson calls a 'impeccable metrical achievement' is what we feel unmistakably as we go through them.

Tagore is one of the great lyric poets of the world. His lyrics are marked by simplicity and directness of expression. His lyric poetry presents a unique combination of the poet's sincerity of feeling and vividness of imagery accompanied with the rhythmic flow of words. The impression gathered on reading his poem of that the poet's mystic yearning is harmoniously blended with deep human passion and significance.

Tagore's poetry is deep-rooted in the rich associations of Indian philosophy and he tries to recapture its theme and spirit. The first song of *Gitanjali* describes the body of man as the temple of the soul and the soul as the abode of God, thereby emphasizing that the human soul is immortal: "this little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales and hast breathed through its melodies eternally new." The poet in his passage, through the image of *Lord Krishna* playing the flute, not only lays stress on the immortality of the human soul, but also suggests that ups and downs in life are like the melodies played by Lord Krishna. The vision and imagery of *Gitanjali* are Indian. Its songs are in the great tradition of the Indian devotional poetry and the spiritual message contained in them is universal. The English language is skillfully adapted to the Indian myth and imagery, which go well with it. An example of this is song 23 of *Gitanjali*, where the image of Radha and Krishna is gainfully employed. "I can see nothing before me. I wonder where thy chariot comes. But what dim shore of the ink black river, by what far edge of the frowning forest, through what mazy depths of gloom are Thou threading. Thy course to come to me, my friend. "The characteristic features of Tagore's poetry are its humanistic essence combined with a spirituality, a love of nature and man and the expression of the beauty and splendour of the earth. The poet does not convey to us a message to escape from life and seek shelter in a hermitage but he emphasizes again and again that man should actively participate in the joys and sorrows of life. "Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me", says he in one of his lyrics.

In his poetry translated from the original into English, he derives inspiration from Indian tradition. But there are poems written directly in English and *The Child* is one of them. The main source of inspiration in the poem is the Bible and it was written by the poet immediately after witnessing a passion play while in Berlin. The poem is beautiful combination of Hindu imagination and Biblical inspiration. The theme is invested with a universal significance and the imagery is terse and precise and the theme is skillfully handled.

## Conclusion

There are, however, some short-comings in his poetry. It is wrong to say that his poetry is uniformly good. There is a certain inequality in his thought and matter. There is in his poetry a certain rhythmic and total monotony and the tonal variety is almost negligible. The reader fails to be inspired by any newness with each succeeding work. The tone is mystical and devotional throughout his work and it is this monotony more than anything else which accounts for the decline of Tagore's reputation in the west. His reputation has been wrongly stressed upon as a mystic poet. Tagore's mystical poetry has produced rather a limiting influence on the themes and styles of Indian poetry. Indian poets wrote mystical poetry after the manner and spirit of Tagore, but this prevented them from writing pure lyrical poetry. The post- independence Indian poet in English has risen above this limiting influence of Tagore on him. Tagore has done great service to Indian writing in English. His greatest contribution has been the introduction of rhythmic prose in which he showed that the English language can be a suitable medium of expression of Indian sentiments, imagery and vision.

## References

1. Chakravorthy BC, Tagore RN. His Mind and His Art, New Delhi, Young India Publications; c1971. p. 65-66.
2. Tagore RN. The Poet's Religion Creative Unity, Macmillan Co. Ltd., London. 1939. p. 14.
3. Srinivas Iyengar RK. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Indian Writing in English, Sterling Publisher Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. 1973. p. 25.
4. Edward Thompson: Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist, Oxford University Press. 1948. p. 219.
5. Dr. Gurumurthi D: 'Rabindranath Tagore' A Sketch, Gurdev Tagore, ed. R. Narsimhan, p. 18.
6. Quoted by Amalendu Bose. Loc. Cit.
7. Dr. Iyengar: Rabindranath Tagore, p. 14.