



A Critical Study On Gitanjali With Special Reference To Rabindranath Tagore

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ABSTRACT:

Rabindranath Tagore's major opus, Gitanjali, is a gift from the finite to the infinite. It houses the lifeblood of our illustrious spiritual heritage. Tagore's spiritual autobiography, Gitanjali, demonstrates how to reach God through the path of love and devotion. Tagore attempts to lead men into the realm of God through Gitanjali's rhythm and devotional lyrics. When it comes to religious tunes, Tagore is unrivalled. "Tagore's winning the Nobel prize for poetry put India on the cultural map of the world. After Vivekanand's appearance at the Chicago World Religions Congress, this was another assertion by India of her spiritual vitality in the days of abject political subjugation". This article highlights about the Gitanjali with special reference to Rabindranath Tagore.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Nobel prize

INTRODUCTION:

The English translation of Gitanjali swept across the western world. W. B. Yeats was significantly impacted by Gitanjali's lyrics, as he admitted in his introduction to the book:

"I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days together, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and restaurants, and I have often had to close it, lest some stranger would see how much it moved me".

Gitanjali was first published in English in 1912-13, and it was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Indira Devi Tagore relates the account of how the Gitanjali poems were translated in a letter to his niece Indira Devi Tagore. The following is an English translation of Tagore's letter:

"It was then the month of 'Chaitra' (March-April). The air was thick with the fragrance of mango-blossoms and all hours of the day were delirious with the songs of birds. When a child is full of vigour, he does not think of his mother. It is only when he is tired that he

wants to nestle in her lap. That was exactly my position. With all my heart and with all my holidays I seemed to have settled comfortably in the arms of 'Chaitra', without missing a particle of its light, its air, its scene and its song. In such a state one cannot remain idle. It is an odd habit of mine, as you know, that when the air strikes my bones, they tend to respond in music. Yet I had the energy to sit down and write something new. So I took up the poems of Gitanjali and set myself to translate them one by one. You may wonder why such a crazy ambition should possess one in such a weak state of health; but believe me, did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado. simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days. The pages of a small exercise book came to be filled gradually, and with it in my pocket I boarded the ship. The idea of keeping it in my pocket was that when my mind became restless on the high seas, I could recline on a deck chair and set myself to translate one or two poems from time to time. And that is what actually happened. From one exercise book I passed on to another. Rothenstein already had an inkling of my reputation as a poet from another Indian friend. Therefore, when in the course of conversation he expressed a desire to see some of my poems, I handed over the manuscript to him. I could hardly believe the opinion he expressed after going through it. He then made over the manuscript to Yeats. You know the story of what followed. From this explanation of mine you will see that was not responsible for the offence, which was done mainly due to the force of circumstances." [1-3]

The letter cited here is the first source of information about Gitanjali's origins. As he indicated in the letter, Tagore began translating Gitanjali's songs for no apparent purpose, yet it was an exceptional event in the history of literature, earning him the Nobel Prize. Tulsidas Tagore's exercise was purportedly for self-satisfaction, but millions of readers throughout the world have been attracted by its devotional connotations.

CRITICAL STUDY ON GITANJALI WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON RABINDRANATH TAGORE:

Tagore had been nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature for Gitanjali by T. Sturge Moore, an English author and Royal Society member. The Committee chose Tagore as the recipient of this prestigious prize. Heidenstam, a committee member, had paid a glowing tribute, with specific admiration for Gitanjali:

"I was deeply moved when I read these poems and I do not remember having read any lyric writing to equal them during the past twenty years or more. They gave me the hours of intense enjoyment; it was like drinking the water of a fresh, clear spring. The intense and loving piety that permeates his every thought and feeling, the purity of heart, the noble and natural sublimity of his style, all combine to create a whole that has a deep and rare spiritual beauty. There is nothing in his work that is controversial and

offensive, nothing vain, worldly and petty, and if ever a poet may be said to possess the qualities that make him entitled to the Nobel Prize, it is he. Now that we have found an ideal poet of really a great stature, we should not pass him over". [4]

Gitanjali is a collection of Tagore's poetry drawn from eleven of his works. All of Gitanjali's songs are religious poems taken from works like Naivedya (1901), Kheya (1906), and Gitimalya (1914). The poems were written in Bengali and subsequently translated into English by Tagore for his book Gitanjali. In English Gitanjali, there are 103 poems, most of which are taken from Bengali versions of Gitanjali, Gitimalaya, Naivedya, and Kheya. Lyrics can be found in Caitali (1896), Kalpana (1900), Smaran (1903), Sisu (1903), Acalayatan (1912), and Utsarg (1914).

The Upanishadic ideals are mirrored in the self-contained Gitanjali poems. They're more akin to Bhakti poetry from mediaeval India. The love symbolism is credited to Bengali Vaishnav poets. Mr. K. R. S. Iyengar explains it like this:

"The Gitanjali songs are mainly the poems of 'Bhakti' in the great Indian tradition. We have Vaishnav poets and Saiva poets who seek God as a child seeks its mother, as a lover seeks his or her beloved. Numerous are these gifted singers — God intoxicated, intoxicated with the love of the Divine, turning his love into the purest poetry. The current coin of India's devotional poetry is melted and minted anew by Rabindranath, but the pure gold shines as brightly as ever, though the inscription on the coin is in English" [5]

Gitanjali is the individual soul's desire to be reunited with the Cosmic Soul in its purest form. The aroma of profound spiritual realisation can be discovered here, as the mind blooms.

Gitanjali's lyrics have a logical consistency to them. Each poem looks to be a descendant of the one before it, and each one heightens the intensity of the previous one. There are 103 verses in Gitanjali that can be classified into eight categories, each offering a different bouquet of wonderful thoughts: The love between 'God' and 'Man' is revealed in the first set of poetry (1-7) We were made in God's image and likeness. A person's soul is immortal. The body may come and go, but the soul endures. Only by sincere adoration of God can an individual find fulfilment. Only when God instructs the poet to sing does he do so. The universe is filled with God's singing. His music can be heard all around the universe. God's presence can be found in all places. Because he beams the light of truth and wisdom into man's mind, Tagore refers to God as the "Life of His Life." He want to be one with God. Poet sees his life and soul as a flower that he offers to God, begging him to accept his humble offering. In our daily lives, the poet invites us to renounce pride and vanity in favour of simplicity and honesty. God isn't interested in pomp and circumstance. We can't achieve perfect oneness with God, the Supreme Lover, because of our clothes, jewellery, and other pride and vanity symbols. To reach this oneness, the devotee must give up pride and vanity.

The first group's major concept is the individual soul's eventual submission to the Cosmic Soul.

The poems in the second group (8-13) look at how love for humanity can elevate the human soul to a higher spiritual degree. Tagore advises a mother of an adorned child against keeping her child dressed up because it inhibits them from mixing with normal people. It is a source of strength to be able to communicate with one's peers. The poet encourages us to give ourselves totally to God's will. God is with the most humble and lowly of people. Those who look down on the poor and oppressed will not find God. True worship necessitates participation in the lowliest of the poor's pursuits. The wealthy and haughty have no access to God. Tagore instructs the priest to abandon ceremonies and work with the humble land tillers in this chapter. Tagore believes that renunciation is a delusion. Life and the ascetic's humble responsibility to others must be embraced by the austere. The poet states firmly that participation in everyday activities is required for God to be realised. Tagore is a believer in God's immanence in the universe, and that he can be found wherever. Every natural object is a representation of His presence, and He lives within us. The poet insists that self-purification is a requirement for God realisation. If a person wishes to receive God's blessings and realisation, he or she must cleanse their souls of all wickedness. We learn that all of the songs in this collection lead us to believe that vanity is a hindrance. Every person, even the poorest, must be recognised as a mirror of God. We must fulfil our commitments to the poor and needy with humility. God only asks that our thoughts, deeds, and actions be pure. God is all-pervasive, and serving others allows us to encounter Him.

In the third group of poems, the poet expresses his yearning to be associated with God (14-36). The need for reconnection with God's moulders as a result of separation. Mental fortitude leads to the fulfilment of desire, despite the fact that the route to realisation is filled with obstacles. God saves man from the tangle of the world by prohibiting him from pursuing worldly goals and aiding him in his search for self-purification. According to the poet, true love consists of complete obedience to God rather than the fulfilment of rituals. According to Tagore, the deep desire to meet the lover is what allows the union to happen; similarly, the human soul can only connect with God if it yearns intensely for divine union. Tagore highlighted the importance of patience in obtaining God's favour in a powerful way. God's mercy will reward the devotee's patience and endurance, just as the night's wait is blessed with the sight of day. The separation will end and reunification with God will be realised if there is a genuine desire. Tagore believes that God exists in our hearts. We keep looking for God in the outside world, like a deer who has musk within but goes outside to locate it, which is futile because God lives in our own hearts. Tagore thinks that God is a true and fearless lover of his followers, and that He is always willing to help them in their moment of need. Tagore is optimistic, believing that death is just a step in life and that the spirit is eternal. Death is a way for God to recreate life. We must have entire faith in God and surrender to His

will]. Only love for the Divine can lead us out of the abyss of earthly desires. The smothering of earthly goals is required for God-realization. On the path to God-realization, material attachment is a huge stumbling obstacle. Spiritual salvation is only possible via the sacrifice of material attachments. Tagore scorns the ego, seeing it as a barrier to emancipation and realisation. The poet, like a true Vedantist, thinks that petty greed and identification with the body are the root causes of enslavement, and that the soul can be released by removing vanity and pride. Emancipation is achieved when one's worldly assets are used for the benefit of others rather than for one's own pleasure. True love is self-effacing love.

Tagore prays earnestly to God to remove his ego, lower self, conceit, and vanity so that he can experience God's love. Tagore genuinely prays to God to help him overcome his spiritual poverty and give him the strength to surrender to Him. The lyrics of this band have a spiritual tone to them.

The fourth group's poetry has a strong theistic undertone (37-57). The poet finds incomparable bliss when he achieves oneness with God. The poet's ultimate purpose in life is to find God. 'Let my heart repeat this without end that I want thee, and only thee,' he exclaims emphatically. God is gracious and compassionate in every way. The poet prays for divine grace and kindness because he believes in God's mercy. The poet longs for a reunion with the Divine. He periodically feels abandoned, but he gradually accepts his circumstances and recognises God's all-powerful nature. 'He comes, comes, comes, ever comes,' says the poet, who suddenly sees God everywhere. He appears, disappears, and reappears at all times and in all ages, day and night.' We can only experience God if we completely surrender to His will. Only through self-sacrifice and the abandonment of attachments can one come to know God. Whoever gives everything gets everything back. God isn't impressed by showmanship; all He wants is true love and humility from us. As the poet puts it:

“Greet him with empty hands, lead him,
In the room all bare,
Bring out thy tattered place of mat
And spread it in the courtyard”. [6]

God is the creator as well as the destroyer. He offers us spiritual strength to overcome evil and build detachment in order to break free from enslavement. According to the poet, God and Man have a reciprocal yearning for each other. God requires man's love just as much as man requires God's. According to Tagore:

“Thou who art the King of kings has
Decked thyself in beauty to captivate
My heart. And for this thy love loses
Itself in the love of the lover, and there
Art thou seen in the perfect union of

The two" [7]

Tagore utilises Vaishnav love poetry imagery to depict his desire to join with God in this group.

The poets in the fifth group (58-70) talk about God's nature. In everything, the poet perceives his immanence. God, who is unchanging and inseparable from nature, dwells in everyone's hearts. The poet responds, "Yes, I know this is nothing but thy love." In the phenomenal universe, God is everywhere. The impact of Upanishadic ideals can be seen in his poems. According to the Taitreya Upanishad, everything came from Brahman. In Brahman, everything exists. As Upanishadic seer Tagore argues, God is omnipresent. Every form of life and natural item is an expression of the Divine. According to Tagore, man and nature are divine tools through which God manifests Himself. Tagore promotes total commitment to God. Like a devoted girlfriend who wishes to elevate and reveal her radiant beauty just for her lover, the poet has reserved his soul sacrifices to God:

"There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition". [8]

Tagore treats God both as finite and as infinite and says:

"Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well". [9]

God is a merciful God. He is always there in our joys and sorrows. As a pantheist, the poet thinks that all natural objects are animated by a living spirit.

The poet claims that the pluralistic phenomenal world is Maya, or illusion, and that it obscures the glory of God from man's perspective in the sixth group of these poems (71-78). God is, in reality, immanent in his creation, which arises from a single source, namely God:

"Hidden in the heart of things thou are nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flower into fruitfulness". [10]

Tagore articulates the notion that the observable world is illusion, yet he spiritualizes it and recognises the Divine's pervasive presence in it:

"All my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love". [11]

With exquisite imagery, the poet emphasises the significance of service. Man must fulfil his earthly tasks by serving his fellowmen and, in the end, gain emancipation as the river goes through farms and villages before merging with the ocean. A river merging with the sea is depicted in the Gita. (4) Serving humanity, according to Tagore, is the true form of worship for God.

The seventh group contains the idea that God's creation is perfect (79-103). The agony of being estranged from God should lead us to seek him out all the time. Tagore begs for God to wipe away his earthly existence and re-unite him with God through the beautiful symbol of cloud, which fades in darkness and dissolves in light. Because God is always looking out for our best interests, we must have entire faith in him. There's no reason to be pessimistic. It's never too late to return to him. God is similar to our loving mother, who loves grief offerings over material gifts, just as a mother treasures her child's suffering above all else.

'Death,' according to Tagore, is a celestial messenger who returns the human soul to God. Death is the end of a person's life. The Divine mother's two breasts, according to the poet, are 'Life and Death.' The child sobs when the mother takes it from the right breast, but is instantly consoled once it is placed on the left. Similarly, after enjoying the joys of this world, the human soul will find complete peace and tranquillity in the other place where it will go after death.

Vaishnavism is unquestionably widespread in Bengali culture. Tagore presents the different colours of Vaishnav philosophy in Gitanjali. Gitanjali expresses the aspiration of the individual soul to unite with the global soul. The entire Vaishnavism is based on a single-minded devotion to the Lord. His love poetry is centred on complete self-sacrifice. The words of Gitanjali are full of imagery of the soul being worshipped and God being a lover. With the intensity of a true lover, Tagore adores the Divine Beloved. He proclaims:

"I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands". [12]

There have been many pioneers in this world, but there are few true ambassadors of humanity with a divine mission to fulfil on this planet. Tagore is a great torchbearer who demonstrated to the world the wonderful path of humility and spirituality. Gitanjali is an everlasting literary masterpiece that elucidates Upanishadic thought's age-old wisdom. As Humayun Kabir says, Tagore's view of love has spiritual underpinnings:

"Tagore's love for man unconsciously and inevitably merged into the love of God. For him God was essentially love. The love of the mother for her child or the love of the lover for the beloved are only instances of the supreme love, that is God". [13]

Gitanjali's major topic is the realisation of God via self-purification, love, prayer, devotion, dedication, and surrender to God through service to humanity. Tagore was influenced by the Upanishads and the Gita, and Gitanjali imbibes the mysticism and spirituality of ancient India in this regard. The first line of Gitanjali comes from the Gita:

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and
Fillest it ever with fresh life". [14]

Here we find the reflection of Gita's philosophy wherein Lord Krishna says:

"AS a man, casting off worn-out garments, taketh
New ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off
worn out bodies, entereth into others that
Are new". [15]

'Isavasyam Idam Sarvam,' Tagore believes, the entire universe is nothing more than a manifestation of the almighty. The only source of all things is God. Tagore's thought is based on Upanishadic philosophy. According to the Taitreya Upanishad, everything came from Brahman. In 'Brahman,' everything exists. Everything goes straight to the 'Brahman.' The 'Parmataman,' the 'Brahman,' the greatest Reality, gives birth to this many world. The waves are born in the ocean, are supported by it, exist and play in it, and eventually evaporate back into it. In the words of Adi Sankaracharya:

ब्रह्मणः सर्वभूतानि जायन्ते परमात्मनः
तस्मादेतानि ब्रह्ममैव भवन्तीत्यवधारयेत्।

(All things in this universe are born of 'Brahman'; therefore one should understand that they are Brahman alone). [16]

In Gitanjali, Tagore reflects Upanishadic beliefs. In whatever he sees, he sees unity. The presence of God may be seen in every phenomenon of the universe, according to poets. Tagore brilliantly conveys his mystic experience when he says:

"O beloved of my heart! This golden light that dancés upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead, the morning light that has flooded my eyes - this is thy message to my heart. Thy face is bent from above; thy eyes look down my eyes, and my heart has touched thy feet". [17]

Gitanjali is a poetry that is both mystical and metaphysical. Tagore believes that God is present in all things. He declares:

"The light of thy music illumines the world. The life-breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on'. [18]

The human spirit yearns to be reunited with God, yet material attachment is the greatest hindrance to that goal being realised.

"Obstinate are the trammels, but my heart aches
When I try to beat them.
Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed.

I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room". [19]

Tagore advocates non-attachment as a philosophy, yet he is a practical person who despises asceticism, in which ascetics are only concerned with their own well-being and ignore social issues. He exhorts us vehemently and firmly:

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see the God is not before thee!

"He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking the stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil". [20]

Tagore is the poet of humanity, and Pearl Buck's description of him as a world poet is accurate. In his poems, we find a blend of nationalism and universalism, but he is a truly national poet. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan explains it like this:

"Tagore sees what India wants and tells us what exactly it is. He sees the inward agonizing of the Indian soul, understands the passions and doubt surging in her mind, wishes to deliver her from the travails through which she is passing, and give her the peace of soul". [21]

Tagore, like Mahatma Gandhi, has a dream for India. He fantasises about a liberated India where the people are unafraid. He says in Gitanjali:

"Where the mind is without fear and the
Head is holding high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into
Fragments by narrow domestic walls;
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 every-widening
thought and action,
Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country
awake". [22]

Tagore is appropriately known as the "child of the Upanishads." Others may have faith in

God, but Tagore is certain that He exists. His God isn't on another plane of existence that humans can't see. He believes that God is very real to him and that he belongs to us. Gitanjali bears the imprint of the Vaishnav ism. R. N. Sarkar claims that

"This Vaishnav cult is more suffused in the soft soil of Bengal. Rabindranath shares it fully in his Gitanjali. The worldly love of husband and wife, of man and woman in general, and in other forms of love we have made lord our own. We have taken him in the same relationship, as he has expected no relationship, as outside His existence. By that established relationship we have transcended all the barriers of earthly love. Rabindranath is born and brought up in this culture, and has sought to make the most of it in Gitanjali for a total submission, not standing out the barriers of worldly existence, but just well within it reaching down the throne of the Lord to the dust of daily life. The man loves his lord in his woman and the woman loves Him in his man, with the same urge he and she love him in everything, in every manifestation of nature. The whole Vaishnav cult is built upon this love". [23]

Tagore's faith in God is unshakeable. He treats God as though he were a close family member. He prefers to avoid dealing with anyone in the middle. On all of his limbs, God's living touch is felt. R. N. Sarkar adds one more remark:

"Rabindranath derives inspiration from the age-old Indian concept of the omnipresent. He believes in 'All-comprehensive' existence of God behind everything". [24]

Similarly, Tagore says that God is both finite and infinite. He is behind everything:

"Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well". [25]

In this situation, God is both the sky and the nest. The infinite is represented by the sky, while the finite is represented by the nest. As a result, Gitanjali vividly reveals God's all-encompassing nature. Tagore is a theist who believes that God is present with us and delights in our love. According to him, love, and only love, compel God to join our lives. Again, to paraphrase R. N. Sarkar:

"Rabindranath is aware of the Lord whose presence he would feel everywhere, not as an imposed Krishna wherever a Vaishnavite's eyes may fall, but as the Lord present in his own creation. His wait must therefore be too long. He cannot accept the Koranic view: that Allah is never present amongst us, nor the Biblical gospel that none can reach my Father but through me. He rather feels that Allah is always here and the Father is directly present at our door-step. Tagore's song offerings are always at his altar. The only media acknowledged by Tagore between him and his father, obviously Rasul's unincarnated Allah and Christ's heavenly Father, is his direct manifestation in this

creation". [26]

Gitanjali's core topic is the affirmation of life. It can be expressed in a variety of ways. Many poems have examined devotion, longing for reunion, melancholy of separation, joy of success, and other themes.

CONCLUSION:

Gitanjali is a genuine gold mine of stunning and thought-provoking images. His outlook is essentially utilitarian in nature. Illustrative, ornamental, evocative, and expressive are some of its key functions. Many images include symbolic elements. The flute, boat, vessel, and other symbols are all significant; most of the pictures are taken from nature. Birds, flowers, the sky, stars, the sun, light, darkness, cloud, and rain, among other things, are symbols of spirituality and mysticism. The following lyric is an excellent example of picturesque images that depict a soul's reunion with God:

"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" [27]

Gitanjali uses a lot of water imagery to show how omnipresent the infinite is. The majority of his photographs have a sensual quality to them. S. B. Mukherjee properly noted about Tagore's images in Gitanjali:

"Here are the images of flashing lights and color carried aloft into the immensity of space". They are images that suddenly. [28]

The original verse could have been given the native music of his soul, as it has been given to his originals in Bengali. Rabindranath meant it really a message of the East and represented himself as the most successful modern messenger". [29]

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