

"Spiritual Elements In Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali"

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Abstract:

Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali explores extensively the concept of spiritual awareness and the relationship between humans, nature and the divine. Focusing on themes like as mystical experience, nature, death, immortality, self-realization, devotion, submission, and the interconnectedness of human and divine life, this study delves into the key spiritual concepts found in Gitanjali. Tagore portrays spirituality as more than just a religious practice; it is an inside path leading to liberation, unity with all people, truth, and the divine. Nature, human connections, service, sorrow, and ordinary life all play a role in the poems' depiction of a spiritual journey away from egocentric self-awareness. The Upanishadic and devotional schools of Indian philosophy, which had an impact on Tagore's understanding of spirituality, are also examined in the research. This study aims to interpret and analyse some poems of Gitanjali to demonstrate how Tagore translates his spiritual ideas such as desire, surrender, transcendence and self-discovery in poetry. The relevance of Gitanjali, the research finds, will not ever fade owing to its focus on unity of human beings, nature and God and its refusal to bow down before organized religion. Thus, we must conclude that Tagore's spirituality is perhaps best seen as a universal philosophy of love, liberty, compassion and discovery of our common essence.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Spirituality, Mysticism, Divine Love, Self-Realization, Nature, Devotion, Upanishadic Philosophy, Spiritual Consciousness.

Introduction

Among the most illustrious literary figures in the world, Rabindranath Tagore stands tall and proud. Originally composed in Bengali, Tagore's works have been translated into English. When it came to poetry, Tagore was unrivalled. Though it reached a spiritual peak in its last stages, his early poetry was emotional and imitative. The teachings of nature

and the mystique of God may be better understood, according to Tagore, via poetry. Elevating man's spirit from materialism and erecting a perfect communication between man and his surroundings and the ultimate truth are the basic goals of poetry. —A poet's ultimate aim should be to bring about a creative union between the self and the cosmos (Tagore, *Creative Unity*. p. 17). My name is Rabindranath Tagore, and I am a poet first and foremost. Poetry abounds in all of his literary works.

My religion is basically the religion of poets, he said. Like the ideas for my songs, its touch reaches me via invisible, untraceable pathways. Just as my poetry life has evolved in an enigmatic fashion, so too has my religious life (Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 5). —From Wyatt and Surrey to Spenser, Dryden, Shelley, and Swinburne, right up to the early Ezra Pound, his verse technique will carry us from one end of the literary spectrum to the other. His ballads surpass Scott's, and his child poems, more abundant than Blake's, blend innocence with almost sophisticated humour (Bose, *Tagore: Portrait of a Poet*, p. 20). Indian culture is lauded in Tagore's poetry, which has garnered international acclaim. In the field of Indo-English literature, his translations into English are highly esteemed. His poetry is exceptional and one-of-a-kind because of his inventiveness, varied subject matter, romanticism, mysticism, lyrical, understanding of love, humanity, and amazing technical methods and versification. Variegated strands of many subjects, each with its own unique thought and expression, bind Tagore's poetry together. Without a doubt, his poetry, diction, style, imagery, versification, love of nature, humanism, lyricism, and universal appeal moved the hearts of all poets. An air of mystery and romance permeates Rabindranath Tagore's poetry. The Upanishads, Vaishnava poetry, Sufism, Buddhism, and Kalidas are common roots from which Tagore's mysticism and romanticism emerge, and they are mutually supportive (Chelliah, 2017, p. 56). For a religiously-minded individual, Tagore's mysticism provides a pragmatic path to understanding the cosmos. Note S. B. Mukherji's thoughts on his mysticism:

The mysticism is so clear that it's almost sensual; it's a vision rendered tangible. Imagination that can externalise an intuitive vision with symbols and pictures startlingly fresh animates the poems, which weave into their texture the mystique of nature and the mystery of the primal harmony of the soul with her. The delight and wonder of it all. (Mukherji, p. 38)

Among Tagore's poems, the mysticism stands out. —One undivided changeless life in all lives, one Inseparable in the Separate, (Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 58) he comes to understand. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan (p.20):

Poet Rabindranath sheds light on the unseen by making use of the visible world. He brings the everlasting light to bear on the world of the now. As his soul passes

throughout it, the corporeal world becomes see-through.¶ (Radhakrishnan, p. 137)

Gitanjalil by Tagore is a masterpiece of literature that embodies spirituality. The words of Gitanjalil depict his longing for the Almighty. —Gitanjalil is where he said it:

Oh, my lord, I have no idea how you sing! I am always utterly awestruck when I listen. Thy music is a beacon that guides all people to safety. The ethereal essence of your song floats across the heavens. Your sacred music surges forward, unimpeded by any hard rockl. (Tagore, Gitanjali p. 20)

About the Poet and the Text

Kolkata, West Bengal was the site of Rabindranath Tagore's birth on May 7, 1861. The West Bengali religious reformer Debendranath Tagore was his father. Poet Rabindranath Tagore began writing poetry at a young age. His work as a dramatist, essayist, short story writer, and poet in Bengali has been widely read and appreciated. He pioneered the use of colloquial language within the conventional framework of Bengali literature, ushering in new kinds of poetry and prose. His contributions to the exchange of western and Indian cultures were also substantial. Actually, in 1913, for his renowned literary work —Gitanjali,¶ he became the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. A university in rural West Bengal, —Shantiniketan¶ (meaning —Abode of Peace¶ in Bengali), was also founded by him. In addition to poetry and short tales, he penned novels such as —Goral (1910) and —Ghare-Baire¶ (1916). Even if he passed away on August 7, 1941, his literary works will go on forever. Tagore himself chose and translated 103 religious English pieces from his own library of Bengali poetry for inclusion in Gitanjali. Every one of the poems in the book has a mystical quality to it. Emphasising and conveying the devotee's connection with the highest, or —God,¶ is the text's fundamental topic. The text is linguistically rich and provides a solid foundation for the stylistic study; it is also engaging and inspiring to read because of the inventive and creative use of poetic language, such as the use of ancient forms of English in the poems. Poet Rabindranath

Tagore became an icon in the literary world after receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 for this work, which is revered for its magnificent substance and beautiful language.

Nature Imagery And Symbolism In The Gitanjali

There is a definition of "Gitanjali" that fits the text. "Geetanjali" is a derivation of the term "offering," which is the original meaning of the word. Because it means "Song Offerings," "Gitanjali" is the end outcome. Feeling and cherishing Gitanjali is important. After hearing from William Rothenstein how well-received the Bengali Gitanjali (song offerings) were in the West, Tagore decided to translate them into English. This poem beautifully captures the essence of humility. An imploration for the poet to find an easy approach to let his heart open to the Divine Beloved. Integrating art, poetry, and philosophy, Gitanjali is a classic that will never go out of style. The delicate and eloquent expression of Indian culture, heritage, and that is what draws in readers and earns their

appreciation. Though anonymous, the poems collected in "Gitanjali" captivate readers with their intense sensitivity and force of passion. We are not mere mortals going via a religious rite of passage. All of us are spiritual beings going thru a human journey. (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, p. 138)

Many of his writings include picturesque landscapes of India, especially Bengal, shown in natural imagery. Every detail of ordinary life took on an everlasting meaning in Tagore's poetry, and nothing was too little or unimportant for him. —In an uncountable number of his poems we notice Tagore's great dexterity of employing a wonderful abundance of nature imagery with rich variety and freshness (Mohit, p. 84). In these works, nature plays the role of a nurturing mother figure whose healing touch and benign presence benefit not only the poet or character but also the audience. There are moments when it seems like Mother Nature is furious, merciless, and brutal.

The rain has been restraining my parched heart for what seems like an eternity, my God. The horizon is blatantly exposed, with not the barest trace of a cloud or even a sense of a faraway chilly rain. If you so choose, unleash a violent storm that is brimming with death, and jolt the whole sky with bolts of lightning (Tagore, Gitanjali Poem, p. 40).

Images of nature, particularly plants and water, appear often in his poems. In addition, his poetry collection has several natural aspects that serve as mystical metaphors. For example, there are recurring symbols of rivers, oceans, waves, earth, moon, sun, stars, sky, flowers, birds, bees, sand, and dust. In addition, he often uses the time of day and the season as themes in his poetry. The major topics are quite varied, yet they all come together in a harmonious whole thanks to the symbols. Ecological issues are clearly being expressed here, which suggests that Tagore is a follower of ecocritical studies. —In that boundless expanse, while thy serene countenance listened, my melodies would surge like waves, liberated from the shackles of language (Tagore, Gitanjali Poem, p. 42). —The majority of the pictures in Tagore's poems exude the scent of the Indian heritage of vivid imagery, especially of nature. The poet's imagery and symbolism are straightforward and easy to understand, similar to the work of Wordsworth and other romantic poets, rather than intricate, formal, and fantastical as is typical of contemporary and philosophical writers in English literature (Chelliah, p. 251). The taste of the great Indian epics and scriptures permeates most of Tagore's imagery. The rich Indian tradition was like a river that Tagore drank from.

Spiritual Elegance In Gitanjali

Spirituality encompasses a wide range of beliefs in a power greater than one's own physical self. Being interested with things of a spiritual rather than a material nature is what it means to have this trait. Belief in a higher power may play a central role in some religious systems. A more all-encompassing view of humanity's place in the universe may also be required. One must be diligent if they want to attain spiritual enlightenment. Spirituality may be better understood if we picture a house-garden with a flowering plant. A neglected

plant will not produce blossoms, regardless of how much care it receives from the soil, sunshine, or stem. Those details need our undivided attention. Spirituality also grows inside us as we carefully tend to our physical, mental, emotional, and energetic selves. When we lack maturity in our reasoning, we start to question everything. A new perspective opens up to our minds as our reasoning develops. Finding one's life's purpose is a common theme in spiritual practices. It is something that every single person goes throughout. One definition of spirituality is a profound and holy awareness of one's own vitality and interdependence with all things.

A profound feeling of empathy and comprehension develops between the poet and God as a result of Tagore's beautiful language and tone when he prays to God (Ray, p. 114; Tagore, Edition of Gitanjali p. 20). The poet is moved to complete submission to God in pursuit of happiness and contentment by his profound respect for the ultimate power. In all of life's highs and lows, the poet feels God's presence, and that fills him with delight. — As if God were constantly stroking him, Tagore portrays God in all aspects of his life with tremendous spiritual fervour (Mukherji, p. 52; Tagore, Edition of Gitanjali p. 86). Tagore portrays God in a variety of roles in his works, including parent, reconciler, and close friend. At times, Tagore acts as if he has encountered the divine. In seeking God, the poet hopes to find answers to questions about life and death, as well as fulfilment, harmony, and serenity. —The poet finds solace in the knowledge that he is never really alone in the universe because of the divine presence that permeates both nature and his own life. Thus, the poet yields to the Omnipotent and finds solace in his prayers and submission (Tagore, Edition of Gitanjali p. 20; Sarkar, p. 67).

All throughout Gitanjali, you can feel Tagore's innovative, spiritual soul at work. This collection, which does not adhere to any particular format, still conveys his cohesive tendency toward God. —True knowledge, according to Tagore, is seeing the oneness of God in all things (Tagore, Gitanjali p. 72; Tagore, p. 58). The eternal poems of Gitanjali represent this concept. In —Gitanjali, Tagore has a pantheistic view of spirituality, which holds that —everything is God or that —God is present in everything. This view holds that the divine or God is inherent in all finite things. —Tagore posits, in all of the poems in —Gitanjali, that God is the ultimate reality, out of which the material universe and humans are reflections (Tagore, Gitanjali p. 91; Ray, p. 118). In his prayers to the Almighty in the Gitanjali poems, Tagore expresses his utmost love to the Supreme Being, acknowledging His omnipotence and asking for His blessings on humanity. There is no mistaking the humanistic spirituality shown in Gitanjali. Gitanjali poems by Tagore make it seem as if God is with him always, both when he is awake and when he is asleep, in his conversations with God. When Tagore feels compassion and love for other people, he knows that God is present in their lives as well.

As a stranger, the poet experiences a sense of God's presence in nature, the interplay of light and shadow, the rainy season, the sky's illumination and thunderbolt, day and nite,

moonlight nite, on the road or in the temple, and engages in compassionate and loving conversation with God. The poet begs God to stop being so elusive, like a shadow that flits by just as quickly. God has no physical form. However, Tagore claims to sense His presence in all things. To some extent, this is Tagore's pantheistic method of handling the spirituality in his poetry. On occasion, Tagore conveys his contentment with God's disposition toward him; God's playful hide-and-seek with the poet. On occasion, the poet is content with his life-and-death quandary and has no complaints. Tagore finds joy in this world because, to him, it is an expression of the Almighty. Living in harmony with God is as simple as immersing oneself in the natural world, in his view. —It is this delight in making that Gitanjali is all about. Tagore imagines himself as a cherished waiting for his lover to visit him and leave a sign of his love as he seeks and desires union with God (Tagore, Gitanjali p. 20).

Spiritual Communion With Nature

The spiritual meaning behind nature's sensual presentations was more important to Tagore than the phenomena themselves. Actually, his poetry shows a progression from sensual joy in nature to a mystic and spiritual understanding of nature's essence. He sees no distinction between God, humanity, and the natural world. Lyrics by Tagore are not autonomous poetry about nature whose primary focus is the extolling of its virtues. The poet's poems, which are melodic and lovely, are —the fruit of his meditations on God, Man and Nature (Mukherji, p. 52). One characteristic of Tagore's poetry that sets him apart from all other poets is the emphasis he places in lyric after lyric on man's total affinity with nature. He states in Chapter II-2 of *The Fugitive*:

The experience with the Eternal Stranger fills my heart with loving familiarity, and I have marvelled how simply it sits before me, this enormous universe. (Tagore, *The Fugitive* p. 20)

The overwhelming impressions that the grace and might of the Supreme Fountainhead permeate Tagore's songs about nature only in a deep spiritual connection with nature can one experience being. William Wordsworth, who shared Tagore's belief in the divine presence in natural phenomena, introduced the western notion of pantheism into poetry. Because Mac Farland, —He was a worshipper of nature, he was a pantheist and not a Christian, for Christian worship God thru Christ (Mac Farland, p. 270). This was his way of looking at Wordsworth's pantheistic idealism. The pantheistic ideology that Tagore developed was unique to him. —Mr. Tagore, like Indian civilisation, has been satisfied to explore the soul and submit himself to its spontaneity, as W. B. Yeats so eloquently expresses it (Tagore, Gitanjali p. 20).

The parallels between Wordsworth's and Tagore's spiritual experiences are intriguing. A mystical atmosphere is analysed by Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey. At times, when our bodies are sleeping, our souls awaken. We see the spirit —whose dwelling is the

light of setting suns (Tengshe, p. 37) in such a lovely attitude. Like many others, Tagore observed a sunset and felt a connection to the soul of nature. In the midst of losing his identity and succumbing to the allure of the setting sun, he clung to the driving force of the universe—the concept of pleasure. The harmony between the spirit of nature and the intellect of man is something that Tagore believes in, much as Wordsworth did. Mother Nature shares her views with man, and when man allows her to be influenced by nature, they find harmony. It is this balance that calms the human spirit. Man may learn moral lessons from nature, which both advises and compels him to act in a decent and virtue-filled way. In his writings, Tagore titled:

In this day and age, we do not want public places of worship or rituals. An Ashram is what we really want. A location where the harmony of the human spirit and the splendour of nature may be found is our desire (The Religion of Man, p. 98). (Tagore, p. 98) sense His presence in all things. To some extent, this is Tagore's pantheistic method of handling the spirituality in his poetry. On occasion, Tagore conveys his contentment with God's disposition toward him; God's playful hide-and-seek with the poet. On occasion, the poet is content with his life-and-death quandary and has no complaints. Tagore finds joy in this world because, to him, it is an expression of the Almighty. Living in harmony with God is as simple as immersing oneself in the natural world, in his view. —It is this delight in making that Gitanjali is all about. Tagore imagines himself as a cherished waiting for his lover to visit him and leave a sign of his love as he seeks and desires union with God (Tagore, Gitanjali p. 20).

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The Religious Philosophy Of Tagore: The Religion Of Thepoet

Plenty of people have spoken about Tagore's religious beliefs and practices, and most of them agree on one thing: —his religious philosophy isn't specific to any one faith (Mukherji, p. 54). This is a big, if not essential, part of the poet's poetry. This being so demonstrably true piques our interest, and we want to go more into Tagore's philosophical writings where he discusses his religious beliefs. —His views on religion as both a philosophical discipline and an existential practice are laid out in great detail in *The Religion of Man* (Isa Upanishad, p. 10). There we find out that his family was a monotheistic adherent of the Upanishads, an old philosophical text, when he was born. In addition to this, Tagore did not let his family's experiences shape his concept of God; instead, he pursued his own path, refusing to accept religious beliefs at face value just because his peers did. Here is where Tagore's journey took a different turn than his ancestors'; here is where his concept of spiritual autonomy and freedom within the framework of religion as a philosophy originated. Although he may not have realised it at the time, he had unknowingly continued a tradition begun by his Vedic forefathers. Instead of a believer's faith, Tagore's is the poet's faith, based on the idea of freedom. Tagore compared dogmatic religion with the following when attempting to define a poet's religion:

There are no more uncertainties or unanswered issues in dogmatic religion. Lights and shadows play hide-and-seek in the earth's atmosphere, while the wind, like a shepherd

child, plays upon its reeds amid flocks of clouds, and the poet's faith is fluid as well. Without any boundaries to confine it, it unveils boundless fields of light even as it never promises to carry anybody anywhere! (Tagore, Creative Unity p. 7).

Because he thinks that a person's worldview should be formed by beliefs freely-reached rather than inherited, Tagore consistently stands against the dogmas of religion. Because he thinks there can be no space for unfettered mental activity in a world where every issue has a single, definitive solution, he fights against institutions and limits that elevate the person and limit their mental reach. There is no such thing as an unchangeable truth, according to Tagore; all truths are subject to change depending on the circumstances. God, in his view, is the one constant truth and the one unanswerable question. This realisation is the result of his long-term and everyday meditation on God, which he does in the natural environment and under the tropical sky of his childhood, and which is an expression of his love and devotion. Because this procedure is sacred to Tagore, he writes about it as follows:

Worshipping God every day isn't about gaining him more slowly; rather, it's about giving up control, letting go of whatever is holding us apart from him, and growing in our awareness of him via service, dedication, kindness, and love! (Tagore, Sadhana (The Realization of Life) p. 82).

The Philosophy Of God According To Tagore

Literally, the Gitanjali revolves around God. God is the one constant and the undisputed master of the work's themes, regardless of one's perspective. Every living thing has its origin in God, the immovable mover and the thematic root. From this central theme, several themes emerge, all of which are directly related to God. During a time that was both quiet and spiritual, but also vibrant and full of colour, Tagore wrote Gitanjali in an effort to discover and know God personally. —I have longed to find thee with my songs for all of my life! God, who is the greatest mystery to the poet, is fully depicted in the work: —I put my tales of you into lasting songs! (Tagore, p. 64). It was they who guided him from door to door, and he felt about himself, searched, and touched his world with them. —From the depths of my soul, the secret spills out! (Ibid, p. 65). A poet's pursuit of God is the pinnacle of achievement; however, knowing God is a lifelong struggle: —My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said 'Here art thou!' (Mills, p. 20). Everything in the Gitanjali represents God, according to W. B. Yeats:

A man sitting on a riverboat, playing a lute like one of those figures full of enigmatic meaning in a Chinese painting, represents God Himself, as do flowers and rivers, the blowing of conch shells, the heavy rain of Indian July, and the parched heat! (W. B. Yeats, p. 11).

Tagore's understanding of God is rooted in the Vedic philosophy, namely the ancient wisdom found in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Perceiving the Supreme One as

all-pervasive, brilliant, innocent, and absolute, Tagore, like the Upanishads, stresses its transcendence and immanence. Both the Upanishads and Tagore's depiction of God—It moves and it moves not—suggest that God exists. Both far and close. It permeates everything and everything is not it. (The Bhagavad Gita, p. 9) The Upanishads depict this Supreme Personality—the creator, the God of all beings, the God of gods, and the universe—as an immutable, unchanging, all-knowing force that is both eternal and omniscient. Many titles are used to describe God in the Bhagavad Gita, including: The Greatest, The Primal Being, The Eternal God, The Supreme Personality, The Supreme Abode, and The Supreme Purifier. Just like in the other examples, God makes himself known to Tagore via a variety of names; this is indicative of the profound impact that these holy texts had on him. Because —I am seated in the heart of all living entities,|| God is clearly present in every verse of the Bhagavad Gita. According to the (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, Verse 20), Krishna states, I am the beginning, middle, and end of all beings.‘ This description is also found in the Gitanjali. God is hidden in the depths of humanity and at the center of everything:

You are nurturing seeds into sprouts, buds into blooms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness, all while hidden in the center of things. I slept in my idle bed, dreaming that work had stopped, since I was exhausted. When I awoke this morning, I saw my garden brimming with beautiful blooms|| (Tagore, Gitanjali (Song Offerings) p. 55).

The Gitanjali God is not only all-knowing and all-powerful, but he is also everywhere at once. He rules the cosmos and is the most beloved friend of humans: — ...and call thee friend who art my lord|| (Tagore, Gitanjali (Song Offerings) p. 15). He is present in all places.

Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali explores in great detail the quest for enlightenment and the nature of spirituality that the human being pursues. As evidenced in the study, the notion of Spirituality in Gitanjali is not constrained to religious or ceremonial exercises but is rather demonstrated as an inward journey to discovery, devotion, love, and enlightenment. Tagore's God is everywhere: in nature, in the individual, in beauty and pain, in labour and everyday life. Thus his mysticism creates a connection between the man and the divine. Gita is the vehicle that Gitanjali primarily used to point to the central idea of spiritual practice – that of divine love. Tagore's relationship with God can be characterized as one of humility, submission, closeness, devotion, and desire. From a poetic point of view, the poet discovers, over and over again, that he or she is finite, and can't escape from the ego other than through being totally open to the divine. But instead of weakness, this spiritual surrender can be a way towards more self-awareness and freedom. These poems also demonstrate his/her search for the divine vis-à-vis her journey of estrangement and yearning towardsspiritual enlightenment and oneness. A further significant aspect of Tagore's spirituality is nature. The elements of nature, like rivers, flowers, seasons,

sunshine and sky, could provide the sense of the divine. Through Gitanjali, nature is not merely scenery, but becomes an instrument for rich spiritual discussions. Thru his depiction of nature, Tagore expresses his conviction in the interdependence of all living things and furthers the notion that one might encounter the divine both inside and outside of this world. Also, Gitanjali reflects the significance of death, spiritual freedom, immortality and self-awareness. Death is recognized as not an end but merely a point on the journey to enlightenment. For Tagore as a man who believes in the eternity of life and also the eternity of his spiritual self he has accepted his death in the sense of his bodily presence. Moreover, the surrender of —ego, —fear, —attachment and —limited individuality is a necessary element of spiritual freedom. Both the impact of Indian intellectual traditions, especially Upanishadic and devotional philosophy, and Tagore's unique humanistic understanding of spirituality are reflected in these notions.

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