



## Ravindranath Tagore - A Study

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**Abstract:** Tagore began his poetic career at the age of eight and continued it until the last day of his eventful life. He dedicated his last poem addressed to death. It is indeed a mystery. In his teen ages, Tagore used to surprise scholars by his masterly imitation of Vaishnava Lyrics in his *Bhanusimha*, *Thakurer Padavali*. During the last decade of his life Tagore visited the then Russia and a social awareness crept into his mind.

**Key words:** imitation, poetic career, Tagore

**Narration :** It may not be hyperbolic to say that there may not be such a great man as Tagore. Just two points are worth enough to mention here. He was the author of our National Anthem . At least 40 crore Indians stand up to respect the National Anthem, when it is sung or played on music. He was the author of the National Anthem of Bangladesh also. There also a good number of people respect their National Anthem by standing in attention. What else would the dead soul requires to be joyous, if at all we have belief on soul.

Above all he was the first Asian to receive the Noble Prize for English literature in 1913. The writing of *Gitanjali*, written in a foreign language was preferred to the writings of even the English people, writing in their native language. In addition to all these. Tagore was a singer, a painter, a dancer, an educationist and above all a great freedom fighter

In literature also he wrote in almost all forms of literature, the poetry, the drama, the short stories etc. It is worthy to note that he did not mention the name of any God in his *Gitanjali*, thus giving universal appeal to it. As a philosopher, Tagore was more a *Visishtadvaitin*, than an *Advaitin*.

As an educationist, reformer politician, and follower of Brahmo Samaj, he assimilated the best in the oriental tradition. fought against the bigotry and inertia of conventional Hinduism. He relinquished his knight hood.

As a painter, Tagore struck the golden mean between traditionalism and impressionism. "Genuinely original, genuinely native". Again, as a musician he established a pleasing synthesis between classical and light music, *Rabindra Sangeet* will enjoy eternal youth.

As a dramatist, he started with verse-plays and ended with dance drama. He was also an actor.

Tagore began his poetic career at the age of eight and continued it until the last day of his eventful life. He dedicated his last poem addressed to death. It is indeed a mystery. In his teen ages, Tagore used to surprise scholars by his masterly imitation of Vaishnava Lyrics in his *Bhanusimha*, *Thakurer Padavali*. He was called Shelley of Bengal for his romantic lyrics, *Sandhya Sangeet* and *Prabhat Sangeet*. He had a distinctive stamp of his own poetic idiom. His poetry touched a great height in the *Chaitali* and *Manasi* group of poems. The writing of these two poems lead to the writing of *Gitanjali*. After the receipt of the Noble



Prize, Tagore's fame reached a new height and there was lot of publicity and fan fare. With this his thoughts and feelings reached great heights. We find these in Balika poems which won for him a comparison with Robert Browning.

During the last decade of his life Tagore visited the then Russia and a social awareness crept into his mind. We find a sort of realism in his later poems like Lepika and Nabajatak. We also find in his later poems a deep understanding of social and economic issues of the people. We miss in these poems the lyrical rapture, the element of imagination and mysticism as we see them in his earlier works. The pictures of toiling masses and the unfortunate sections of our society replaced the lotuses, clouds and flutes of his earlier works. Tagore remarks that only as a singer he comes before the inspiring presence of the God. The amazing variety and melody of his songs have placed Tagore among the great composers of the world.

Tagore was not that much known to the non-Bengali readers prior to his award of Nobel Prize in 1913. Later he rose to spectacular fame. Gitanjali created a storm in the West. But to an Indian reader it may be just restatement of the Upanishadic wisdom. In Bengali version Gitanjali contains 195 songs, whereas in English it comprises 103 songs. They are of fully diverse strains. The decade that preceded the emergence of Gitanjali saw Tagore's heart filled with sorrow after sorrow. "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" truly applies to Tagore. Mrinalini Devi, Tagore's wife died in 1902. He had a son and a daughter who also died afterwards. In Gitanjali, the poems expose an attitude of selfless surrender to God. These songs have universal appeal. Gitanjali is a

mixture of mysticism, romanticism and humanism. The deep subjective note characterises romantic poetry. As in the case of Wordsworth we find nature worship in his poems. As we find in Shelley's poems, in Tagore's works also we find the reformist fervour. Just as we find in John Keats, in Tagore also we find the sensuous verbal felicity.

Though Tagore followed romanticism in his poetry, like Shelley he is not a scorner of the earth. According to Tagore, spirituality does not mean an escape from the problems of life. It is not a complete negation of life. He declares that he finds the real bliss of freedom in "a thousand bonds of delight". In Gitanjali, Tagore draws all the phrases by using the symbols like flute and the player, the river and the sea, the wave and the shore. Rain clouds, Autumn skies, harvest fields, gardens in spring dawn and the sunset provide a colourful backdrop.

According to Tagore, death is not a cessation or negation, but a strange fulfilment. "I will never let him go with empty hands". "And because I love this life, I know I shall love Death as well", he declares. In this attitude, Tagore resembles Walt Whitman, the American Poet, who considered death as a great outlet, and it is life going back to its original state.

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