

Tagore's Worship of God and Nature through Poetry and Music in *Gitanjali***Dr. V. Madhavi***Patrician College of Arts and Science,
Adayar, Chennai (T.N.), India***Dr. L. V. Padmarani Rao***Yeshwant Mahavidyalaya,
Nanded, (M.S.), India***Abstract**

Rabindranath Tagore is a poet, philosopher, music composer, essayist, critic and educator and a great humanitarian who dreamt of a universal harmony and peace. He is the most eminent bilingual Indian poet who has won the Nobel Prize in 1913 for his famous work *Gitanjali*. This poetic work has earned him international recognition. The original Bengali collection of 157 poems was published on August 14, 1910. The English *Gitanjali* or *Song Offerings* is a collection of 103 English poems of Tagore's own English translations of his Bengali poems first published in November 1912 by the India Society of London. This paper is an attempt to depict the inner harmony that the poet has experienced as a worshipper of God and Nature through his poetry and music.

Introduction

Tagore is a spiritualist poet who worships God and Nature through poetry and music which is reflected in *Gitanjali*. All the poems in a collection of *Gitanjali* are devotional in nature. *Gitanjali* is a song offering to the Divine in which Tagore worships God and Nature with poetry and music.

Divinity in *Gitanjali*

The lyrics of *Gitanjali* represent a divine relationship with the Almighty that the poet has developed. In many poems of *Gitanjali* Tagore expresses his union with the Lord in a beautiful and divine world. His heart is filled with the Lord's kindness and gracefulness. He believes that a devotee who is united to God in constant thought, God takes up all the burdens and sorrows. Such faith confers the comfort that a child derives from the presence of its mother.

In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee.

Let me not force my flagging spirit into a poor preparation for thy worship.

It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening. (Poem 25)

God has a natural compassion towards all his creation. Being privileged as human beings, we should perform our duties in the right spirit so that God pleases and gives us His divine presence. The emphasis is on self exertion and self improvement while one surrenders to the Almighty's supremacy and compassion. Tagore believes that his Lord is the reality who alone can give him lasting joy, strength, and life. He promises his Lord that he will choose the right path to get closer to Him. The poet tries to keep his promise by leading a pure and truthful life.

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in

*flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat
in the inmost shrine of my heart.*

*And it shall be my endeavour to reveal
thee in my actions, knowing it is thy
power gives me strength to act. (Poem
4)*

Tagore's voyage in search of God seems to be started in his early life itself. As a true seeker of His divine presence, Tagore takes the path of spiritual journey with lot of faith. He cries out to the Lord like a child even if he feels a departure from Him. Tagore cries out to the Lord "Where are you Lord" and God's assurance that "I am". Tagore also understands that the path which takes him closer to his Lord is very long. But his faith and devotion essentially make him achieve communion which is beyond the physical universe.

*The time that my journey takes is long
and the way of it long.*

*I came out on the chariot of the first
gleam of light, and pursued my voyage
through the wildernesses of worlds
leaving my track on many a star and
planet.*

*It is the most distant course that comes
nearest to thyself, and that training is
the most intricate which leads to the
utter simplicity of a tune.*

*My eyes strayed far and wide before I
shut them and said 'Here art thou!'*

*The question and the cry 'Oh, where?'
melt into tears of a thousand streams
and deluge the world with the flood of
the assurance 'I am!'* (Poem 12)

God's assurance gives Tagore confidence and strength of mind to pursue the goal sincerely of spiritual destiny. Devotion is a mutual bond between the Lord and His devotees. Tagore feels that the Lord enters into a personal relationship with him. He

believes that God is the father, mother, lover, and the protector of all creation. Tagore develops divine relationship with God and feels His presence around him where both play hide and seek.

*I have not seen his face, nor have I
listened to his voice; only I have heard
his gentle footsteps from the road before
my house. (Poem 13)*

*There are times when I languidly linger
and times when I awaken and hurry in
search of my goal; but cruelly thou
hidest thyself from before me. (Poem 14)*
*Have you not heard his silent steps? He
comes, comes, ever comes.*

*Every moment and every age, every day
and every night he comes, comes, ever
comes. (Poem 45)*

Tagore's relationship with God gets intensified. Initially he only hears the footsteps of the Lord but now he visualises God's smiling, touching, and talking. He observes his divinity very closely and eagerly.

*The night is nearly spent waiting for him
in vain. I fear lest in the morning he
suddenly come to my door when I have
fallen asleep wearied out. Oh friends,
leave the way open to him--forbid him
not. (Poem 47)*

*At last, when I woke from my slumber
and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing
by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile.
How I had feared that the path was long
and wearisome, and the struggle to
reach thee was hard! (Poem 48)*

*If it is not my portion to meet thee in this
life then let me ever feel that I have
missed thy sight--(Poem 79)*

Tagore believes that god being all omnipresent was present everywhere. He has learnt to see God everywhere and in

everything. He understands that the entire universe is a manifestation of God and calls upon God every time believing that he dwells everywhere in the universe. He celebrates God's presence in the realm of everyday experiences. His self remains unaltered and can perceive His presence in the state of waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. There are many occurrences in which the poet feels a growing closeness with Supreme Lord.

He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!

He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies. (Poem 26)

I sit on the grass and gaze upon the sky and dream of the sudden splendour of thy coming---all the lights ablaze, golden pennons flying over thy car, and they at the roadside standing agape, when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me from the dust, and set at thy side this ragged beggar girl a-tremble with shame and pride, like a creeper in a summer breeze. (Poem 41)

One must pray that they should have devotion towards God always. That kind of involvement is needed in serving the Lord. Tagore prays that he should have the good fortune of serving Him always and that He should help him get rid of all other material desires. That kind of attitude doesn't come naturally to all and is difficult to cultivate too. His spiritual aspiration leads him to a detach himself from all worldly things.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked---this sky and the light,

this body and the life and the mind--- saving me from perils of overmuch desire. (Poem 14)

The poet chooses the spiritual path to seek solace at God's feet. He recognises that the God is behind every activity of each individual – sensation, perception, devotion, thought, and so on.

As a realised soul, Tagore expresses his awe and amazement at the Lord's infinite greatness. His sincere prayer to Him is to grant him the ability to grasp and understand Him better.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.

Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.

Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life--- and that is the fetter of thy love. (Poem 34)

Tagore's eternal search for the Lord is an essential component of his spiritual journey. His joy lies in being with Him and to be departed from Him is sorrow. Proximity to Him is joy and distance from Him is sorrow. Tagore tries to find solace in writing poetry. He is not affected by pains and suffering.

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all nights from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves in rainy darkness of July.

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joy in human homes; and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart. (Poem 84)

Heaven is the joy of being beside Him. He feels worried when he is separated from God. For that reason the poet continues to seek the Lord as a child seeks its mother. The poet cries out "I want thee." He wants to reach a state where there is no separation from the God.

That I want thee, only thee---let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry---`I want thee, only thee'.

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is---`I want thee, only thee'. (Poem 38)

Tagore believes that God answers specific prayers of His devotees, and out of His compassion He grants His divine presence to the devotees. His devotees feel at ease in His company, and He and His devotees are inseparable, because He establishes close congeniality with them. His greatness is without limits and without measure. The poet experiences a special grace which put him into contact with the Lord. He feels he gets the clear vision of God and the power to pray to Him face to face. He establishes perfect peace as he seeks His blessings.

But day passes by after day and thou art not seen.

If I call not thee in my prayers, if I keep not thee in my heart, thy love for me still waits for my love. (Poem 32)

Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face. With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.

Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face. (Poem 76)

Tagore surrenders to the Lord with sincerity and devotion. He makes his heart pure and his mind free from attachment to the things of the world. This is the most direct expression of the divine power which helps the devotees reach their spiritual destiny. He makes his submit with sincerity and devotion. His faith in God consoles him and returns his mind to ecstasy.

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish---no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe. (Poem 87)

Tagore calls upon his fellow beings to join him in his worship knowing the fact that the Lord is accessible to all His devotees. Tagore feels His Company all the time and some people are jealous of the proximity of the Lord to the poet. He tells the instances where people blame him for not being religious. The spiritual consciousness gives him the deep inner

realisation, contact with the divine, liberation from external fetters.

I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands. That is why it is so late and why I have been guilty of such omissions.

They come with their laws and their codes to bind me fast; but I evade them ever, for I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

People blame me and call me heedless; I doubt not they are right in their blame.

The market day is over and work is all done for the busy. Those who came to call me in vain have gone back in anger.

I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands. (Poem 17)

Tagore believes that the divine grace is always there to help him overcome his sorrows and sufferings. He offers his sorrows to the Divine and seeks peace and harmony in exchange. The Lord would always be by the devotee's side and would lend unimaginable succour and strength to make the sorrow bearable. All his present and future attainments are made secure by His grace.

Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow.

But this my sorrow is absolutely mine own, and when I bring it to thee as my offering thou rewardest me with thy grace. (Poem 83)

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joy in human homes; and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart. (Poem 84)

The act of worship itself is both action and result. This truth is an inner realisation which is cultivated by devotion to the lord

with ultimate faith. Tagore performs his actions in this spirit and experiences many cherished moments. He is thankful that his prayer has been accepted. Tagore is overwhelmed by Lord's compassion and experiences joy of fulfilment after the pain.

In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy messenger has come within my heart and called me in secret.

I know not only why today my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous joy is passing through my heart.

It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence. (Poem 46)

It is worthwhile to point out Tagore's association with Nature in his poetry. He makes contact with the whole of Nature, then communes with it, feels himself close to it. He praises Nature's infinity, immensity, and its vital force. As a true seeker, Tagore finds much to learn about divinity from Nature. He has developed a sense of affinity with Nature and this leads him embrace its beauty and eternity in this universe. However, he feels sorry that he does not pay much attention to Nature's beauty in the past.

The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs; and the flowers were all merry by the roadside; and the wealth of gold was scattered through the rift of the clouds while we busily went on our way and paid no heed. (Poem 48)

Tagore wrote a range of poems that celebrate Nature. As a true seeker, Tagore finds much to learn about divinity from the Nature. He is immensely sensitive to perceive the presence of a spirit in the creation of God in Nature. He visualises

God's presence in Nature and sleeps in the divine lap of it. He enjoys its beauty in the light of eternity as he experiences this universe as manifestation of divine power.

Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, 'He comes, comes, ever comes.'

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine. (45)

The true purpose of prayer is the ability to recognise the presence of divinity in all creation and in the day-to-day activities. Tagore experiences a holistic awareness of Nature and perceives the divinity in creation. It seems that such a perception paves the way for

God-realisation for the poet. This awareness makes a world of difference when the infinite variety in creation is filled with divine pleasure. These rich experiences make his poetry unique.

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad. (Poem 57)

Tagore's devotion creates innumerable living experiences to feel His presence in this world of arts. These rich experiences shape his art of writing poems. Tagore praises the Lord for his grace on him in this manner.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple. (Poem 73)

Nature in Gitanjali

Tagore finds creation of music and poetry would help him attain union with the Infinite. His poetry on Nature is marked by magical and musical experiences of the spiritual bliss. They are absolutely inherent in his nature and life. He feels His presence very close and gets divine pleasure from His companionship. He praises God for his creation and feels the presence of Him within the Nature. The Lord becomes a living companion, visible constantly all through his life. His devotion and adoration grows abundant and universal in its scope.

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart---this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.

*The morning light has flooded my eyes--
-this is thy message to my heart. Thy
face is bent from above, thy eyes look
down on my eyes, and my heart has
touched thy feet. (Poem 59)*

To integrate the spirit of joy and to reiterate the human participation in the creative joy of the spirituality within nature, Tagore recalls the purpose of this beautiful creation. He expresses his happiness when Nature worships God with its beauty. Tagore believes that all this beautiful creation is given to us to offer Him with utmost devotion.

*The river has its everyday work to do
and hastens through fields and hamlets;
yet its incessant stream winds towards
the washing of thy feet.*

*The flower sweetens the air with its
perfume; yet its last service is to offer
itself to thee. (Poem 75)*

*Pluck this little flower and take it, delay
not! I fear lest it droop and drop into the
dust.*

*I may not find a place in thy garland,
but honour it with a touch of pain from
thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day
end before I am aware, and the time of
offering go by.*

*Though its colour be not deep and its
smell be faint, use this flower in thy
service and pluck it while there is time.
(Poem 6)*

Instead of performing rites and rituals to please God, Tagore is simply offering his prayer with sincere faith in God. He asserts that God could be well realised in the creation and development of Nature.

*Hidden in the heart of things thou art
nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into
blossoms, and ripening flowers into
fruitfulness.*

*I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed
and imagined all work had ceased. In
the morning I woke up and found my
garden full with wonders of flowers.
(Poem 81)*

The poet is deeply attached to Nature and glorifies its beauty in his poems. He wants to be a part of Nature and takes pleasure in sharing its creative joy. He feels eternal peace in the wilderness of Nature and contentment of life. His poetry on Nature is marked by magical and musical experiences of the spiritual bliss.

*Let all the strains of joy mingle in my
last song---the joy that makes the earth
flow over in the riotous excess of the
grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers,
life and death, dancing over the wide
world, the joy that sweeps in with the
tempest, shaking and waking all life with
laughter, the joy that sits still with its
tears on the open red lotus of pain, and
the joy that throws everything it has
upon the dust, and knows not a word.
(Poem 58)*

Tagore believes that it is God Himself who has become this universe with all its beings, animate and inanimate. Each verse of *Gitanjali* captures the essence and beauty of Nature and even showcases the divine aspects in all its totality. Some poems of *Gitanjali* celebrate Tagore's devotion to music. He experiences divine music in Nature. He listens to divine music of Nature in the murmurs of the lakes and in the tunes of cool breeze.

*The morning will surely come, the
darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour
down in golden streams breaking
through the sky.*

*Then thy words will take wing in songs
from every one of my birds' nests, and*

*thy melodies will break forth in flowers
in all my forest groves. (Poem 19)*

Tagore's poetry and music seem to have sprung from his devotion to God. He strongly believes that poetry and music would lead him to God. He brings out the concept of reaching God through music. Tagore believes that his Lord has commanded him to sing and he is so much moved by the Lord's blessings and kindness.

*When thou commandest me to sing it
seems that my heart would break with
pride; and I look to thy face, and tears
come to my eyes.*

*All that is harsh and dissonant in my life
melts into one sweet harmony---and my
adoration spreads wings like a glad bird
on its flight across the sea.*

*I know thou takest pleasure in my
singing. I know that only as a singer I
come before thy presence.*

Tagore tries to remind us of the impact of Nature in our daily existence. He shows us how to experience the blessings of life with the help of nature and music. His love for God, Nature, and music has become acts of worship.

*I know not how thou singest, my master!
I ever listen in silent amazement.*

*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.*

*My heart longs to join in thy song, but
vainly struggles for a voice. (Poem 3)*

Tagore makes it clear that the only hope of finding God is with the help of his songs. He sings of God and Nature with utmost devotion. He asserts that he can reach God's divine feet only through his singing.

*I know thou takest pleasure in my
singing. I know that only as a singer I
come before thy presence.*

*I touch by the edge of the far-spreading
wing of my song thy feet which I could
never aspire to reach.*

*Drunk with the joy of singing I forget
myself and call thee friend who art my
lord. (Poem 2)*

Music in Gitanjali

Tagore listens to celestial voices and music around him and experiences His presence. Considering himself fortunate for being guided by his Master Musician, he tries to sing in praise of God. Tagore waits eagerly for divine appointment and gets promising messages from Him.

*From dawn till dusk I sit here before my
door, and I know that of a sudden the
happy moment will arrive when I shall
see.*

*In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all
alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling
with the perfume of promise. (44)*

Tagore feels very much delighted to sing praises unto the Lord Almighty and he feels relieved when he sings out his heart to the Lord with a sense of total surrender. He sings with tears in his eyes and reverence in his heart. He strongly believes that with music he can reach His divine abode, and that makes him feel the joy of singing. It is impossible to describe the glory and sweetness of that music. His mystic mind enables him to experience the visions and ecstasies of the personal forms of God.

*You came down from your throne and
stood at my cottage door.*

*I was singing all alone in a corner, and
the melody caught your ear. You came
down and stood at my cottage door.*

Masters are many in your hall, and songs are sung there at all hours. But the simple carol of this novice struck at your love. One plaintive little strain mingled with the great music of the world, and with a flower for a prize you came down and stopped at my cottage door. (Poem 49)

For the poet the world is a creation of God, and it is a great melody created by the Master Musician. The poet wishes to be part of this song. The poet sees his poetry as an attempt to rhyme the music of God. He feels himself as an instrument, like a flute, and it is the divine giver of inspiration who fills it with music.

No more noisy, loud words from me--- such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song. (89)

I put my tales of you into lasting songs. (102)

The poet is very much aware of the sacred knowledge of God and the ways to reach Him. This truth has to be grasped intuitively. He consoles himself that because of God's grace he can achieve salvation. He feels as a bride entering into the celestial chariot and ascending to the Lord's abode.

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night. (91)

Tagore waits for his Lord's call. He knows that God only will come to his rescue. The Lord is the only One who can liberate him. He has a hope that his Lord appears before him to grace him during his last moments.

Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey. (93)

Divinity, Nature and Music in Gitanjali

Tagore's spirituality and poetic aspiration both combine and create a range of beautiful poems that could take us to a joyous or mythical world. His poetry embodies his joy, his delight which he experiences in such communion with the God at the end of his journey.

Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door, and with them have I felt about me, searching and touching my world.

It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart.

They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and, at last, to what palace gate have the brought me in the evening at the end of my journey? (Poem101)

The entire creation is His manifestation and God-realisation is the process by which one tries to understand the extent of His total involvement with each and every aspect of it. Most of his spiritual visions of the Lord are of great beauty. He tells his mates about his journey and explains his perceptions about his God.

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed---let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come---let this be my parting word. (Poem 96)

The whole spiritual effort is to understand that actions are binding and that an individual has the freedom in choosing to act in a particular manner. Tagore chooses the path of spirituality which promises him to achieve divine presence of his Lord.

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.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee. (Poem 103)

Conclusion

Trust and faith in the Nature implies the acceptance of God as the sole creator, who also takes care of the entire universe at all times. Tagore believes that God, Nature and music are crucial in realising the Supreme Being. In the process of celebrating divine music in the Nature his experiences turned into incredible poetry. It seems that Gitanjali is an inward journey for self-realisation and enlightenment to understand his relationship with the Lord. As a divine book of spiritual knowledge, Gitanjali shows how to strive to attain truth, righteousness, renunciation and eternal peace and finally salvation.

References:

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