

Realism in the Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

Tagore's poetry, the poetry of 20th century is realistic and his conscious of the grim realities of life has shattered all illusions and romantic dreams. The tragedy of everyday life has induced in the poet a mood of disillusionment. That is why it portrays the realities of life and there is nothing sentimental about it. The whole poetry of Tagore is poetry of despair. Tagore's poetry is the poetry of common themes related to common happenings and nature. His poetry is full of common aspects of life. His themes are never selected in advance. He stoops down to the ordinary and real problems of ordinary man. As a matter of fact, his poetry sees or views life and real problems of ordinary man and has no wish to escape from it into a world of dreams.

INTRODUCTION:

Tagore's poetry is full of reality. During the hours and days of intense experience of life's significances and essences, he wrote poetry or poetic drama. Imagination gave him eyes, ears, wings and thrilling and melodious voice. The songs of Gitanjali are songs mainly of the closest personal connection between the poet and the eternal, as lover and beloved, wife and husband, servant and master, friend and friend, as if the poet were trying to approach reality in a personal relationship with the help of symbolic representation. So Gitanjali songs are mainly poems of Bhakti in the great Indian tradition. Tagore was god-intoxicated, intoxicated with the love of the divine, turning his love into the purest poetry. The opening song of Gitanjali is:

*"Thou hast made me endless,
Such is the pleasure.
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and
again,
And fillest it ever with fresh life."*

This denotes that the human body is the temple of soul; the human soul is the temple of God.

The human soul is naught unless it is inhabited or filled by the spirit. Birth and death are filling and emptying of the soul by the spirit and the individual is insignificant without spirit. That is why Tagore's realism is complex and many sided. Talking about the world he confessed in the poem "Old and New":

I awake

This world is not a dream

In words of blood I saw my being.

I knew myself through hurt and pain.

One cannot deny the fact that his poems are of outstanding excellence and of permanent and universal significance. The poet has seen life in its naked realism. His poetry tries to diagnose the ailments of modern life and embodies its spirit.

Tagore's realism can be characterised by the use of colloquial diction, words,

speeches, rhythms etc. He has spiritualised nature like Wordsworth and intellectualized like Shelley. Tagore does not love nature alone but also lower creatures living in the lap of nature. His poetry deepens sense of pity for the poor and the suffering.

The spread of democracy has made the poet more and more conscious of the dignity of man. He focuses his attention on the problems of common and ordinary men and holds society responsible for their sufferings.

When Tagore was born, Bengal was stirred with new life by three great movements: religious (which was headed by great – hearted man of gigantic intelligence- Raja Ram Mohan Roy), literary (heralded by the novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee) and national for which he worked wholeheartedly in the enlistment of democracy and social advancement.

Reference:

1. The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore (vol. I), (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2004), p-263.

CONCLUSION:

Tagore's realism is truly based on social problems and their causes, political aspects, problem of woman, inequality, sexual love, child marriage, the rich and the poor, communalism and caste, war and sufferings of common folk and education etc. Tagore's realism will be focussed concerning his social, political and religious views. One need not dive deep to discover the problems of India; it is so plainly evident on the surface. Our country is divided by numberless differences— physical, social, linguistic, religious and this obvious fact must be taken into accounts in any course which is destined to lead us into our own place among the nations who are building up the history of man. Tagore's drama is also realistic drama; but the realism in his plays is a realism of the mind, not so much of external physical action as of emotional or spiritual action. In fact, he achieves his most intense realism when his symbolism is most complex.