

## Music, Magic and Miracle of Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*

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Rabindranath Tagore speaks of himself:

I have had my invitation to this  
world's festival... [Gitanjali, XVI]

Going through "Gitanjali" is a musical journey for the readers. It has an unmistakable, inimitable lyrical flavour. The world of "Gitanjali" is full of hope, light, peace, bliss, happiness, assertion, assurance, confidence and conviction. It sings of the joys of life. It declares the triumph of life. It is death-defying. Tagore wonders in "Gitanjali LVII":

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

Tagore floods the world with the celestial tune of these song offerings in "Gitanjali". The songs of this Nobel winning poetry collection dispel all darkness from our life. These are our life's breath, the sole delight of our existence and passion of our much agonized soul. These deeply devotional and spiritual offerings enlighten people in all ages. "Gitanjali" makes us wiser and nobler. The poet and the devotee join hands in Tagore. The poet pours out his heart to express a spirit of adoration or worship to God for His beauty, charity, might and grace. The soul-stirring songs eclipse all earthly pain, concerns. "Gitanjali" takes us to the world of aesthetic beauty. W.B. Yeats pays his tribute to the poet in the introduction to "Gitanjali":

...one understands at every moment that he is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which has never seemed strange, unnatural or in need of defence.

The poet's overwhelming desire to offer himself at the feet of his master is wrung at every moment:

My poet's vanity dies in  
shame before thy sight. O master  
poet, I have sat down at thy feet.  
Only let me make my life simple  
and straight, like a flute of reed  
for thee to fill with music. [Gitanjali, VII]

God is immutable, eternal. He manifests Himself in His creation. Tagore pays his tribute to God who has always filled his vessel of poetry with heavenly music. He showers His blessing unconditionally on the poet. So in "Gitanjali", Tagore articulates his ardent thankfulness to God:

Thou hast made me endless, such is  
thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou  
emptiest again and again and fillest  
it ever with fresh life.

Tagore considers himself as the flute of God. This divinely inspired flute creates eternal songs over the hills, dales and rivers in praise of God. The poet's heart roams in the realm of boundless joys at the loving touch of his master's hand. Tagore does not know how to grasp the profuse gifts of God in his small hands:

Thy infinite gifts come to  
me only on these very small hands  
of mine. Ages pass, and still thou  
pourest, and still there is room to fill.

Poem II makes the poet and God inseparable. Music binds them together. The devotee unlocks his heart at the altar of God:

Drunk with the joy of singing  
I forget myself and call thee  
Friend who art my lord.

The harmonious melody of his song melts "All that is harsh and dissonant". The poet sings:

my adoration  
Spreads wings like a glad bird on  
its flight across the sea.

Poem III expresses the poet's amazement at the master singer, i.e. God. He becomes the speechless at the indescribable beauty of God's tune. He sings in praise of God:

The light of thy music  
illuminates 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.

Poem IV sings the purity of the poet's soul. He tries desperately to keep evils, untruth away from him. God reigns in pure heart. The poet wants to prepare his heart as the seat of God. He wants to experience in all his actions. He wants God to erect His shrine in the altar of his soul. He wants to merge with master. He wants to surrender himself to God. Life is full of toils and turmoil. Tagore searches desperately and finds some moments of divine bliss in Poem V:

Now it is time to sit quiet,  
Face to face with thee, and to sing  
Dedication of life in this silent and  
Overflowing leisure.

Poem VI is metaphysical in its essence. Tagore considers himself just like a flower whose significance of life lies in its being offered at the feet of the God. All its fragrance, colour must be dedicated to Him. The poet is afraid that he will be withered like the unplucked flower. Life is meaningless if it is not for the sake of God. The poet appeals to God:

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

Tagore is afraid of age and death. It will end everything. So he does "fear lest the day end/before I am awake, and the time / of offering go by." He has not much to offer to God. His scope is limited like the flower whose "colour be not / deep and its smell be

faint". In spite of all his limitations, he pines for his master. He wants to dedicate himself completely. He implores thus:

use this flower in thy service and  
pluck it while there is time.

The plea for God's grace reminds us of Donne's poem "Batter My Heart":

Take me to you, imprison me, for I  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free...

"Gitanjali" XVIII is a symbolical poem. The poet gets impatient because of his detachment from God. He waits outside for God. Clouds accumulate in the sky. The poet becomes gloomy. He longs for God with his keenest desire. The restless soul pines for him:

I keep gazing on the far  
away gloom of the sky, and my  
heart wonders wailing with the  
restless wind.

Poem IV is about the significance and purpose of the poet's life on earth. He is just an ordinary being. He can praise God with the store of his songs. His songs inundate the whole surroundings with a spiritual serenity. He is prepared to sing for his master even at the dark hour of his life. Each and every moment of his life is dedicated to God. His humble submission to God touches the chord of our heart:

I am here to sing thee songs. In  
this hall of thine I have a corner  
seat.

Poem XXXV is an immortal creation. It gives us the lesson of nationalism. The poet dreams of a country where he wants to be. In this imaginary country people are fearless. Their head is always held high. People are the worshippers of truth, reason and purity. The poet cherishes the hope in the deepest core of his heart that one day the Indians will be the denizens of this dreamland. In this world knowledge is free from superstition and narrowness. The Indians are imprisoned by the fetters of religion, caste and dogmatism. It is not enough that the British has left us. There is no scope for complacency. We have to scrutinize ourselves. We have not achieved freedom from our narrow inborn prejudices. Tagore wants to annihilate these walls of selfishness which keep the Indians apart from each other. We have to overcome our drawbacks. We have to uplift us spiritually. The poet powerfully portrays the paradisaical place:

Where the world has not  
been broken up into fragments by  
narrow domestic walls.

In this visionary, heavenly place people strive for perfection. Reason is like a clear stream. It never loses itself in the sandy desert of blind faiths, conversions. Here God leads men into "ever-widening thought and action." Tagore dreams to transform India into this visionary country. This poem makes us dream with Tagore. At the present moment India is in a crisis. At this crucial stage, we need to recapitulate his message to his countrymen.

God remains Tagore's sole and safe haven. In the midst of cares and concerns, worries and afflictions he turns again and again to God. God wants complete surrender from men. Tagore's ultimate realization was so true:

I bitterly wept and wished  
that I had had the heart to give  
thee my all.

God consoles him, soothes his soul and elevates his spirit. Tagore prays to the Almighty:

When desire blinds the  
Mind with delusion and dust, O  
Thou holy one, thou wakeful, come  
With thy light and thy thunder. [Gitanjali, LVIII]

### **Works Cited:**

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Gitanjali, Embassy Books  
Guide to Compulsory English, Calcutta University, Roy and Mukherjee