

## **Tagore's Concept of Divinity in His Poetry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tagore assumes God as the great creator and artist. Gitanjali describes human love: love for man, women, children, for his country, nature and entire life. Tagore believed in the divinity of humanity. To achieve this ideal Tagore seems to suffuse the human soul with the rhythm and melody of his poetry. He explains the concept of the Lord of life in all his poems. He presents the theme of life of the Lord in various forms. He makes one realize the perfect relationship between the supreme soul and all visible, invisible forms in creation. He describes God in various forms. According to Tagore, God is both natural and supernatural. He describes HIM as a master poet. He expresses his feelings in Gitanjali and Prasna by addressing God. He firmly believes that one who fails to find God in himself will never be able to see HIM in others.

### **KEYWORDS**

Tagore's Poetry; Gitanjali; Divinity; Human Soul.

Divinity, known in the Indian contest as 'Bhakti' was at the core of almost all works of Indian Literature earlier. Tagore's concept of divinity revolves around his belief that the realization of perfect love between the Supreme Soul and the soul of all created beings is indeed the essence of all religions. His concept of divinity is synonymous with this love that holds duality on one side and non-duality on the other, union as well as separation and bondage along with freedom.

*When one knows thee, then alien  
there is none, then no door is shut.  
Oh, grant me my prayer that I may  
never lose the bliss of the touch of  
the one in the play of many" [from  
Gitanjali (Old and New), P.93]*

Actually, there is no other language or literature in India which has not been influenced and enriched by this culture. The Buddhist Sahajiya culture and the Hindu Vaishnava culture were the mainstays of earlier Bengali Literature as it was in the case of many other Indian languages. Bengali literature reached the pinnacle of its glory through the lifelong service of Rabindranath Tagore which the bard saw essentially as a Spiritual Endeavour. It is said in the Upanishads: "Wealth is dear to us, not because we desire the wealth itself, but because we desire ourselves." This means that we feel ourselves in our wealth, - and therefore we love it. The things that arouse our emotions arouse feelings for the self. It is like a touch on the harp string... if it is too feeble, we are merely aware of the touch, but if it is strong, our touch comes back to

us in the form of melody and our consciousness is intensified.

Tagore got inspiration from the very soul of Bengal, its rivers, woods, flowers, six seasons, the Sky, the epics, myths and mythology of the place, spiritual heritage and above all his noteworthy background. He had a deeply religious father, Maharishi Devendranath Tagore who had adopted the monistic creed preached by Ram Mohan Roy – ‘Belief in a single undivided Godhead, Brahma.’ The integrity and vitality of Devendra Nath’s character and his profound religious faith left an indelible mark on the mind of young Rabindranath.

His reputation as a writer was established in the United States and England after the publication of *Gitanjali: Song of Offerings* about the divine and human love a man, where he is religious, is a person, but not where he is a mere theologian. His feeling for the divine is creative.

Tagore’s concept of divinity stems from his immense passion for life. He believed that this life of sensuousness goes hand in hand with stark austerity. This life has a unity through all outward conflicts and opposites and ultimately he saw this life as perpetual suffering to an immeasurable degree, an overcoming of constant struggle and conflict to be able to discover life as God’s greatest gift ie love. He had all those traits in him, that is why we could say, “The greenness of grass is the divine poetry; man’s form is God’s lyric”. He saw God as the great Creator – Artist and never forgot to do justice to Him. His poetry describes human love: love for man, women, children, his country, nature, and life itself in all its infinite, variably hues, but behind all this love is the love of the Lord and for the Lord

Tagore believed in the divinity of humanity. For him, God lives in man, particularly in the poor, the down trodden and the unprivileged and saw it as his

life’s mission to lift them to a level of dignified existence. To achieve this ideal, Tagore sought to delight the human soul with the rhythm and melody of his poetry. He saw the world as the ‘garden of God’. He himself explains the concept of the Lord of life in all his poems. In his mother tongue, Tagore is able to present the theme of the Lord of life in its various forms and manifestations in lyrics, music and magic of which the English reader has no knowledge.

Tagore also incessantly struggled to vindicate that truth is God and God is truth. He tried to realize this ideal through the worship of beauty. Though deeply religious, he scoffed ritualism. While loving and respecting the varied ways of thought and actions, trying to reach the self-same goal of truth, he always firmly trusted in his ‘God of Life’ who he stated: *‘King of Poets who, taking all the ingredients that are good and bad in me, all probabilities that exist in me, is ever busy composing my life.’*

He felt that from time before time, through strange forgotten conditions, he has been developed by him in arriving at the present state of awareness. The memory of those series of existences running through the universal strain, sustained by him lies within man in unconsciousness. That is why Tagore could feel an old bond of unity with creepers and trees, birds and beasts in this world. That is why this vastly mysterious and immense Universe did not appear “terrifying or unfriendly” to him either.

Tagore’s concept of divinity was to realize the relationship of perfect love between the Supreme soul and the soul of all created beings. His divinity is synonymous with this love that holds duality on one side and non-duality on the other, union as well as separation and bondage along with freedom. In this love, strength and beauty, form and emotion, the limited and the unlimited all became one. This love, by acknowledging this

world truly transcends the world and by acknowledging what is beyond the universe accepts this universe in its true form.

Rabindranath describes God as Sivam, Santam, Advaitham – perfection, peace and non-duality. God is both personal and super personal. He is immanent and transcendent.

*'To me religion is too concrete a thing, though I have or right to speak about it. But if ever somehow come to realize God, or if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through men, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil.'*

Tagore perceives beauty of a divine nature. The perception of beauty is accomplished with mystical ease. Nature is replete 'with the aesthetic charm.' The melodious will break forth in flowers in all his forest groves. The paradise of a mystic must be most comprehensive which should include both the negative and the positive characters. He even equalizes good with bad. Since God is everywhere, he for this reason perhaps includes all in his all-pervasive scheme of divinity: *"Including all life on earth, touching including God, including Savior and Satan".*

Tagore believes that the purification of body, mind and heart is essential for the realization of the Divinity. It has been observed that the imminence God in which he believed has been derived from the Upanishads. Further, God as an individual in Tagore has been exalted. HE is a transcendental being also. Thus, we come to the position where he believes both in the immanence and transcendence of the supreme deity. It has been very aptly observed that the God of Gitanjali is: *'He is the type of God who holds a sword in one hand and garland in another'.*

The God of Gitanjali is a compassionate being. He recognizes the significance of his devotee. The concept of God in Gitanjali consists of several facets of divinity. HE is the giver of the 'infinite gifts', is responsible for the rebirths, the maker of beauty in nature which is truly perceived by the poets, is inaccessible to us, 'lord' of the humans, HE is inaccessible to us, is the giver of the 'truth' and 'reason'. HE can be realized through our actions, who raises in the heart of the devotee, recognizes the simple living, loves to create and feels enjoyment in doing so, and HE is mystically ultimate, can be caught with a keen intuition, is beautiful, invisible, and has been associated with love even in death. HE is tongue-less but can be felt by us, has the nature to include people etc.

According to Tagore, God is the 'master poet'. HE rises in our soul. The 'master poet' is not available to us without enlightenment; what more one needs is the manifested gifts of God in the form of sky, light, body, life and mind. One who aspires with 'overmuch desire' is a loser. True worship is the surrender to or dedication of what one can term as Truth.

The poet, hurt and mortified, expressed his feelings in the poem, "Prasna" (A Question), addressed to God:

*"You have sent your messengers from time to time who have preached forgiveness and love of all mankind. They are noble souls and worthy of our reverence, and yet today their message seems a mockery and I want to ask you, Are you yourself, O Lord, able to forgive and to love the secretaries of yours who have portioned your air and darkened your light?"*

Tagore's view on God and self is well considered. He believes that within the physical existence of man there is

other separation and meeting between human and the higher entity. The mind recognizes the reunion of the two in ourselves. There is continual separation and continual reunion between the individual mind and the universal mind. This higher life of man must be a kind of compromise between the separation and the harmony between the individual and God. He seems to have followed the Hegelian idea. "The ever-new emergence of being in and through non-being".

Thus, Tagore feels the coming of God in his mood of sorrow and joy. The sorrow presses hard in his heart, and the joy fills his heart with the sweetest sunshine. God rests His feet among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost. If one

wants to realize God, one must be ready to worship the lowliest and the humblest. One cannot establish contact with the Divinity without giving up pride and vanity. Tagore asks us to come down on the dusty soil and find the presence of the Divinity among the tiller who tills the land and the path maker who breaks the stones. The charges of escapism and the other-worldliness against the poet are absolutely wrong and baseless.

In conclusion, it may be stated that Tagore's conviction is that God has to be realized not only in the heart of the devotee but also in the outside world, for the Divine presence can be felt everywhere.

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