

Interface between Nature and Human Values in English Literature

Pattam Chakma

Research Scholar, Dr. N.G.P. Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Kalapatti, Coimbatore-641048

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore is a great poet of nature. Since his boyhood, he had been in touch with nature that helped him in emerging as a poet. As a young boy he had always wondered about the earth and the sky, the sun and the moon, the birds and the flowers, the trees and the clouds, the rivers and the streams and the day and the night with great enthusiasm. He is like Wordsworth who had lived and died with that of nature. Thus, Tagore words which is quoted by Dr. Satish Kumar in his book, *Narayan's Rabindranath Tagore Gitanjali*, details about his affinity with Nature even from his infancy: "I had a deep sense, almost from infancy, of the beauty of nature, and intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and felt in tune with musical touch of the seasons in the air. At the same time I had a peculiar susceptibility to human kindness"(43).

According to Tagore, man, nature and god are one and the same. His poems are not just an expression of beauty and charm, but also spirituality and meditation towards God, man and Nature. His poems are songs sung to man, prayers to God, and gratitude to Nature. The poem *Where the Mind is without Fear* is a prayer to God for true freedom of his country. He prays to the Almighty for the unity of his country and the entire world. He prays for a nation where people could get free education and could live with truth without discrimination. He also compares 'reason' or 'rational thinking' to a 'clear stream' and 'superstitious belief' to a 'dreary desert'. He prays to God to awake his country not from the dreams of dream but from the darkness of ignorance.

The poet shows how to lead a good life. When people learn to live in unity they can never go wrong. When people live with good moral values, a country is free from all evils. The poet's message is that one has to clear all the dreary thoughts and should have rational thinking like clear streams with clear thoughts and ideas which ought to be productive for the country. To reach perfection one must be hard working and overcome the narrowness of the mind. When a man lives with good human values, he feels the happiness within him as well as in the surrounding. Human qualities such as mercy, forgiveness, kindness, sympathy, empathy and moral inclination for truth and justice are what associated with human values that aspire for a purposeful life.

Tagore encourages everybody to live a life with morality and spirituality with Nature. He believes that a man who departs himself from Nature is a poor creature. One who dwells in Nature can elevate himself to reach the divine presence of God. Nature can heal the sorrow- stricken hearts emotionally and physically. When a man is broken down spiritually and emotionally, he can seek hope and solace in the presence of Nature. Tagore's words goes thus in *Narayan's Rabindranath Tagore Gitanjali*: "O Sun, rise upon the bleeding hearts blossoming in the flowers of the morning ..." (*Fruit Gathering* 36). A lonely man can find companion in the beauty of Nature. A rose is a symbol of love. Wind is the symbol of strength, hope, unity, freedom, eternity and balance. "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (110) is a promising line by P.B. Shelley in his poem *Ode to West Wind*, in which he projects the greatest quality of Nature which keeps up its promise, unlike many men. One can interpret in another way as Nature teaches a person to have faith in one's future. If tribulations come one should not lose hope in life, but must have trust in life that it will sure bring happiness too in future. Shelley too is a poet of Nature who admires and praises the high qualities of Nature. Fire is the symbol of energy, power and passion. Water symbolizes purity and acts as cleansing, renewal and purifying element. Tiger symbolises strength. All these are the essence of nature that teaches many things in life, for one has to open one's heart to learn from it. In *Gitanjali*, Tagore writes: "Has not the word come to you that the flower is reigning in splendour among thorns...?"(LV, *Gitanjali* 52). Here the poet is talking about hope like Shelley that when one loses hope and despair, one can take the example of the rose which blooms amidst many thorns which reigns with vigour, attracting everyone's attention with its beauty. Similarly, a person also can become like the rose amidst troubles and difficulties by working hard without losing hope. Where there is hope, there is life. Nature gives joy and ecstasy. It has the power to console the suffering of humanity

Nature being mute teaches us everything. Like Wordsworth, Tagore also believes that the mind of man and spirit of Nature are interlinked with peace and harmony. When man opens his heart fully to Nature, Mother Nature communicates her essence in the presence of the state of mind, thus creating harmony and peace between the mind and the man. Nature is the moral teacher who guides man towards perfection. The more one departs from Nature, the more degraded one becomes. Every stage of a man's life changes like the seasons. Life is like Spring which is like the initial stage of a man's life, filled with joy. Summer is like the youth, full of fun, with activities and challenges, rainy season is like that of blooming and painful, and Winter is like the final stage of a man's life which is plain and dry. Life is like a book. Every chapter may not have happiness but it is full of challenges. How one tackles them is what one becomes. With laziness and ignorance one becomes a burden to himself and the society as well. Tagore writes: "Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection..." (XXXV, *Gitanjali* 36).

Man is the most superior living being. A man with no human values is no less than any other living creatures. Tagore's poems are full of nature that acts as a background in which human beings govern to play various roles. In *Gitanjali*, nature not only acts as a background but also harmonises human thoughts and feelings: "That vague sweetness made my heart ache with longing and it seemed to me that it was the eager breath of the summer seeking for its completion..."(XX, *Gitanjali* 28). According to Tagore, Nature is the melody of God. One can learn more from Nature than from philosophy, like the productive

and destructive quality to which everyone is bound. Sometimes, there are things for which solutions cannot be found from others, but can be obtained from Nature. Nature intends to trust oneself. Modern generation though advanced in technology could find solace only from Nature.

In *Gitanjali*, Tagore tells us that one cannot find God in chanting and singing, and telling of beads in the lonely dark corner of a temple. Instead, he finds God in humble cottages. His spiritual significance comes from the commonplace activities of life. He is against the division of caste and creed, which only brings destruction to society and mankind. He rejects the idea of orthodox conception of attaining *mukti* or *moksha* but believes that one can attain it through love for mankind. Hence he writes: "Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all forever..." (XI, *Gitanjali* 22). According to Tagore, love for mankind is the greatest worship and service to God. To him, God dwells in every man and objects in the world. If one wants to reach God, one ought to serve the poor and the needy which is one of the greatest services of mankind. Hence he offers his song of prayer to God thus:

This is my prayer to thee, my lord- strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.
Give me the strength to surrender to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
Give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love. (XXXVI, *Gitanjali* 36)

Tagore had immense love for the poor, lowly and the downtrodden. He says that man is the image of God: "My heart can never find its way to where thou keepst company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost..." (X, *Gitanjali* 22). He believes that Nature is the abode of God. Every aspect of nature is the symbol of Eternity: "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..." (III, *Gitanjali* 18). Tagore prays for better humanity since he is a man of humanity *par excellence*, who sings the joy and of the whole humanity, in almost all his poems. As we have seen, Tagore is a mystic hero who could get lost completely in Nature and have direct connection with Divinity. To him, the entire universe is permeated by one life, and one soul. God and nature is a persistent theme in his poetry.

CONCLUSION

Literature is an art. Every writer writes in order to express his thoughts and to convey something to the readers. However, a reader needs to dig out the hidden meaning from it. Tagore is a great admirer of Nature whose poems are filled with expressions of Love and Nature. He is one of those few writers who had done justice in describing Nature. From his works, one can learn how to live peacefully with Nature and among one another. To him, life is a gift and living a life is like an offering to the Divine. One must cherish a life and fulfil one's duty by living righteously.

Reference Work

- [1] Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*, Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press, New Delhi: 2010. Print.
- [2] Forum for English Studies, Shillong. *The Looking Glass*, Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi: 2010. Print.
- [3] Jainco. *Selected Poems*, Jainco Publishers., Delhi: Print.
- [4] Kumar, Satish. *Narain's Rabindranath Tagore GITANJALI*, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal Educational Publishers, Agra: Print.
- [5] Tagore, Rabindranath. *GITANJALI*, Macmillan Publishers India Ltd., New Delhi: 2010. Print.