

THE THEME OF *BHAKTI* REFLECTED IN TAGORE'S GITANJALI

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ABSTRACT:

**“Moksha Sadhana samagriyam
Bhakti reva gariyasi”**

It is said that of all the spiritual sadhnas the easiest and the best is Bhakti- The best path of devotion. It can be attained either through singing or through the repetition of the divine name. We love music because it is the Language of heart and not the language of tongue. We can captivate any one by music- not only human beings but animals, too. We find that almost all the poets involved in Bhakti movement are a great force, a great integrating force amongst us spreading the gospel of harmony, universal brotherhood and love. Their poetry sprang from the bottom of their hearts. It was the outpouring of their inner feelings. Their songs continue to have a great impact and shower spiritual benefit on us. Among these we have poets like Ramkrishna, Vivekananda and Tagore etc. Therefore it would be quite essential to study Tagore's Gitanjali-a collection of Bhakti songs originally in Bengali and after wards translated in English in 1912 to understand its theme i.e. Bhakti.

KEYWORDS: Religious, moral, spiritual, prayer, sadhana, God, reflection, Bhakti.

Rabindranath Tagore, the most outstanding name in modern Bengali literature, was the greatest creative genius of the Indian mind. He played a vital role in the history of Indian renaissance in 19th and 20th century. The award of the Nobel Prize for literature give him recognition on a global scale to which their cannot be many parallels in literary history. His fecundity and vitality were amazing. His active literary career extended over a period of 65 years. He wrote probably the largest number of lyrics ever attempted by any poet. Being a great bilingual writer, we legitimately can say that, his works form part of Indian writing in English.

'The Gitanjali' means 'song offering' and in the words of Dr. Radha Krishanan "the poems of Gitanjali are offerings of the finite to the infinite". It is the poetry of highest order, poetry which very nearly approaches the condition of prophecy. Whereas T.S. Eliot opines that it is a great poetry which "expresses in perfect language permanent human impulses," and thus brings strange consolation to the human heart. In such works poetry becomes a revelation, an incantation, that flashes open the inner quality. It is poetry in which men converse with eternity. It's hundred and odd lyrics explore (i) the relationship of God and human soul; (ii) of God and Nature; (iii) of Nature and the human soul; and (iv) of the individual soul and humanity. Such a number of themes and ideas are woven together to make up its complex texture.

The central theme of the **Gitanjali**, however, is devotional; it expresses the yearning of the devotee for re-union with the divine. It is in the tradition of the devotional poetry of India, but it finds a new and original treatment. Apart from the sense of devotion, there is an element of human approach in **Gitanjali**. Tagore expresses that service to man is service to God. He is of the opinion that relationship of soul with God is not possible without relationship of soul with man. He says that God lies among human begins. He is in you, me and every living being. Consequently, to love everyone in this world is to love the Almighty, God. God is not to be found in the temple but with

the tiller, the stone-breaker and honest laborers working in the spirit of the Gita ideal “Yoga is skill in works God is with them too. To him the idea of ‘escape’ from the world’s demands is puerile and vain.

He says in **song no. 11** of the **Gitanjali** “*leave this chanting*” He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones. He is with them in rain and in shower and his garment is covered with dust. Throughout this song Tagore condemns ‘*isolation*’ in an ivory tower of the ascetic way of life, and makes a forceful plea for participation in the daily activity of humble humanity. In this poem, the poet is a humanist and a rare spiritual realist. The humanistic approach, here, is at its height.

The waywardness, and wretchedness of human being is indeed endless. Slavery and misery form numberless patterns. To end them once and for all faith from below and grace from above are needed. In **song no-35** of **Gitanjali**. ‘*Where the mind is without fear*’ which reveals his concern for the motherland, for his fellow countrymen, and for the society in general. In this song he prayed to his father, to raise the people of his country to a perfect man, so that out of all turmoil, depravities and narrowness his country might be ready for a struggle towards perfection; ready to stand on its own feet as a country, marching towards the heaven of freedom. The urge and appeal in it to God, the earnest aspiration of the poet was to see India free with its people perfectly humane so it could stand among the nations holding its head high. To the poet freedom lay not in physical acquirement of the country but in becoming free in spirit and status. This lyric, too, is a fine instance of Tagore’s spiritual humanism.

The humanistic element is also seen in **song no-36** of **Gitanjali** ‘*This is my prayer to thee, my lord*’ here Tagore prays to God, his maker, to remove his spiritual poverty. He also prays for strength to bear easily the joys and sorrows with love and sympathy. He wants to serve fellow human beings.

Each poem of Tagore translated into English is packed with a beautiful thought. The assurance of God to human life, the shelter from the restless Journeys is described in **song no -63** of **Gitanjali** ‘*Thou hast made known to friends*’ expresses his faith in the reincarnation of the soul after the death of the body, as well as his faith in the oneness of all, in the total identity of man, God and Nature. The lyric provides a direct and clear statement of the poet’s spiritualism.

The theme of humanism in itself covers the hollowness of Indian traditions and rituals. In **song no-64** of the **Gitanjali** ‘*on the slope of the desolate river*’ Tagore exposes the uselessness of religious rituals which are so characteristics of orthodox Hinduism. True worship of God, according to the poet, lies not in the performance of rites and ceremonies, but in extending a helping hand to the suffering and the needy. The repetition of the word ‘useless’ here, drives the point home as by a hammer stroke.

Another poem i.e. **song no.50** of **Gitanjali** ‘*I had gone a-begging from door to door ----*’ stresses the virtue of power and charity and self-sacrifice. According to the poet man must sacrifice and renounce his all only then he can realize God. Total surrender to Will of God-complete self-sacrifice, perfect charity, and absolute renunciation of all our possession-is the only way that leads to God. He further asserts the fact that one who gives all, gets all.

The anthology concludes with an appropriate poem ending with ‘**Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life....**’ (**Gitanjali-103**) Tagore’s yearning for the eternity was not the spiritual goal, but his apprehension of death, a physical conclusion of life, usually.

To Conclude the Gitanjali songs are mainly poems of *Bhakti* in the great Indian tradition. The Bengali bard, Tagore, is a lyricist with a rare humanistic approach. He glorifies the potentials of man, and depicts the exploitation of the poor. He stands for equality, fraternity, and liberty. He advocates the need of helping mankind to enable them to achieve spiritual liberation. It is because he is acknowledged as a spiritual humanist. Due to uniformity of thoughts and ideas, with his sublimity and the theme of spiritual humanism, **The Gitanjali** has acquired a unique feature among all his works. To sum up, the imagery, the conceits, the basic experience, the longing, the trial, the promise, the realization-all have the quaintly unique Indian flavor and taste. It was any how poetry unmistakable, which aspires to a condition of prayer and whisper chiming into Bhakti songs.

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