

**REIMAGINING THE DIVINE: RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S POETIC VISION IN MODERN
CONTEXT**

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ABSTRACT:

Rabindranath Tagore, a luminary of Bengali literature and a Nobel laureate, is renowned for his profound exploration of spirituality and the human connection with the divine. He draws inspiration from ancient texts and infuses his poetry with a cosmic vision and depth that echoes in his revered works. With the objectives of showcasing and exploring the enduring relevance of Tagore's poetic vision in contemporary society, focusing on the portrayal and reimagining of the divine as depicted in his selected poems from the "Gitanjali"; the present paper attempts to examine poems' lasting appeal and endless significance of the humanity. Through the investigation of nuanced representation of the divine, the paper illuminates the relevance of his poetic vision in addressing contemporary spiritual and existential inquiries. By elucidating Tagore's insights and perspectives, an attempt has been made to resonate with the complexities of the modern world, offering the enduring relevance and universal applicability of his vision of the divine in the contemporary time.

Key Words: Inspiration, Divine, Spirituality, Reimagining, Meditation, Culture.

INTRODUCTION:

Rabindranath Tagore, the renowned Indian poet, is a towering figure in Bengali literature and has worldwide significance. He can captivate readers with his timeless poetry and deep intellectual ideas. Tagore was born in Calcutta in 1861 and has left a varied legacy that goes beyond his literary achievements. Being a Nobel Laureate, he was also recognised as a philosopher, educator and social reformer. His influence on Indian English writing demonstrates his exceptional poetic ability and intellectual depth. He has depicted the divine in a resonant manner, making an enduring impression on the world of poetry. He has a large corpus of work including poems, novels, short-stories and essays demonstrating strong commitment to spirituality and compassion. 'Gitanjali' the prayers offered in the tradition of India; centred around the theme of life and meaning for being human. In modern times, where spirituality often polishes up against secularism, Tagore's poetry holds out an exquisite refashioning of the divine; a divine which is close at hand, everywhere accessible and deeply entwined into human experience. Tagore's vision has been so strong that critics have praised Tagore's literary contribution; acknowledging the profound impact of his poetic vision on global literature and thought. The depth and complexity of his poetic expression, reflecting complex interplay of human emotions and existential contemplation has been appreciated widely. Sisir Kumar Das has truly noted that "Tagore's poetry defies easy categorization, encompassing a wide spectrum of emotions and philosophical inquiries" (Das45). Most importantly, Tagore's skills at infusing Indian spirituality into English poetry emphasising his literary brilliance has been greatly admired by Amitava Roy; 'Tagore's poetry reflects a profound engagement with the divine, presenting a vision that transcends conventional religious dogmas and embraces a universal understanding of spirituality' (Roy56). Roy's claim highlights the expansive and inclusive nature of Tagore's exploration of the divine. He declares that Tagore emphasises a departure from rigid beliefs and a call for a more expansive and inclusive understanding of spirituality. The poems of "Gitanjali", exemplify his ability to articulate the deep aspects of the divine in a profoundly creative and suggestive manner of spirituality. Tagore's masterful use of natural imagery to evoke a sense of divine existence and relation also has been greatly cherished by the critics. Tagore's imagining of the divine is deeply

rooted in his admiration for nature and the interrelation of all the existence. Anandita Bhattacharya observes the harmony between humanity and spirituality correctly in her comments: “Tagore’s depiction of the divine often draws upon the beauty of the natural world, symbolizing a harmonious relationship between the human spirit and the cosmic order” (Bhattacharya92). The enduring harmony of the cosmos established by Tagore in his poetry gracefully combines the human experience with a feeling of transcendence.

INFLUENCES ON TAGORE:

Rabindra’s upbringing in a culturally dynamic and intellectually engaging environment gave him a broad view of literature, music, art, along spirituality. His early education blended ancient Indian knowledge with Western ideals, which was also reflected in Bengal’s socio-cultural milieu during the 19th-century Bengal Renaissance. This time had a significant impact on Tagore, for the interconnection of cultural traditions and spiritual concepts.

Many of Tagore’s personal experiences and philosophical beliefs profoundly shaped his poetic vision of the divine. His thoughton nature and deep spiritual inclination were influenced and inspired by the mystical traditions of India, particularly the teachings of the Vedas, Upanishads and insightful verses of philosophical poets like Chandidas, Guru Nanak, Kabir, and Meera of the Bhakti movement. These influences, coupled with his exposure to Western philosophical thoughts during his travels to Europe, contributed to the formation of a uniquely extensive and inclusive worldview. Moreover, his losses, including the deaths of his father and wife, had a profound impact on his literary interpretation of the divine. His strong empathy for nature also inspired his art. Additionally, his involvement with the Mahabharata and Ramayana narratives; gave him enough material to examine ethical dilemmas, heroic acts, and human weaknesses in his poetry. These influences pervaded his poetry and explored fundamental subjects such as mortality, resilience, and the interrelation of life.

TAGORE’S VISION OF THE DIVINE AND MODERN RELEVANCE:

In Gitanjali, Tagore’s visualization of God is not confined to any particular religious paradigm but a universal spirit beyond the shackles of narrow religious dogma, as reflected in lines of Poem no. 11:

“Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?

Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee! (Tagore 26)”

Tagore condemns the ritualistic ways of worship rather invitieeveryone to have their personal experiences of the divine. He is asking: of what use is worship within the temple walls? He clarifythat true spirituality and divine are not hidden in some closed doors or in some dark rooms but instead are in the world and in various human activities. This aspect of spiritualitylooks attractive to thepresent society when traditional religion is being questioned and ignored. These lines tell us about a different kind of spirituality which is more practical and involved. He goes beyond the ordinary route of religious practices or meditation, but rather “releases the god” to us, if we release ourselves from the darkness and live every moment of our lives through the practices that nowadays we hear from the people around us, the thing we love and care; and dofor self and others, the people with whom we communicatesand relates and the universe that we are part of and shaped by knowledge and development. Here, the poet talking about how people can live spiritual life by doing generous and meaningful work, being loving to each other, and most importantly staying connected in every shades of life rather than being alone in tedious practices of work.

As we read the poems, come to realise that these are expressions of an awakened human spirit, a constant and intense search for the truth, and a deep knowledge of life’s essential principles. Tagore is considered largely a philosophical poet whose true and fundamental realm of investigation is the human spirit. Such as in the lines:

“Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved;
but hope for patience to win my own freedom. (Tagore 36)”

His viewpoint on dealing with life's obstacles and difficulties. He broadly focuses on courage, flexibility, and the search for inner strength. If we compare these lines to the current chaotic reality. People expect quick enjoyment and solutions, which are in great demand. However, these phrases call for a shift in viewpoint. Poet advises individuals to focus on developing inner power and adaptability rather than seeking exterior safeguard or instant solutions. Everyone is surrounded by anxieties, problems and pains; the poem teaches us to face it on our inner strength and shows that ultimate freedom is inside our heart and mind. It advocates for the development of resilience activities such as meditation, self-examination and seeking inner calm through patience and determination rather than depending on external solutions or immediate relief. Similarly, in terms of both personal and professional growth, these lines encourage individuals to be both strong and patient in the face of adversity, emphasizing the process of learning about oneself and self-improvement as a means of gaining personal independence and happiness. The phrase "patience to win freedom" highlights determination as a guiding light in the darkness, symbolising escape from pain. Here, contrasting the traditional beliefs, his approach to the divine centres on inner development rather than supernatural intervention.

In today's world where different religions and secular views coexist, Tagore's flight on the divine shows us how to embrace a more open and personal approach to spirituality. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, in his book "Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation," explains that Tagore's spiritual ideas stem from a deep belief in human values aiming to connect the divine with the human. She claims that Tagore's work paves the way for spiritual growth that anyone can follow regardless of their faith. This makes Tagore's ideas useful in our diverse modern society (Bhattacharya 67). Mohit K. Ray stresses that Tagore's spirituality doesn't passively or away from the world but connects with his surroundings. It is clearly represented in his poetry, which discusses discovering the holy found in typical things:

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.

I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight (Tagore 88)"

This line from poem no. 73 reflects Tagore's view that don't find spiritual freedom by giving up worldly things, but pursue by embracing life. This idea fits with modern spiritual methods that focus on being aware and present rather than stepping back from life (Ray 121).

"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 16)"

The 1st poem of Gitanjali begins with an understanding of the transformative power of God, as the poet prays to God for infinity and eternity. Immortal; as the soul is compared to an 'endless' cup being filled by God, symbolizing Hindu beliefs in the travelling of the soul. Tagore uses the music of the flute as a metaphor for life's boundless rebirth, in order to emphasize God's creative power and love what he calls the divine. The poem is about no matter what happens in life such as difficulties at work or troubles in life these lines provide a way of seeing things. It illustrates that humans can be transformed with fresh energy and power, just as the "frail vessel" is continually "ever fill'd with new life." It stresses humankind's possibilities to bear and recover from all kinds of difficulties as it exhibits endurance and adaptation to a wide array of global problems.

"Where the mind is led forward by thee; into ever-widening thought and action;

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (Tagore 50)"

In the poem no. 35 poet wishes for progressive thought and action, guided by the God. He emphasizes the value of freedom, truth, logic, and development as divine attributes with the authority to steer society. The poem is a perennial cry to enlightenment and togetherness, overcoming the limiting barriers of fear and separation. Its primary goal is to portray a desire for social liberty and progress. The interpretation obtains an insightful appeal for inclusive education, engaging critical thinking, creative and social responsibility resulting in societal growth. The poem reflects the goal for a society in which individuals are able to question the old conventions and be the instruments of

transformation, which ultimately leads to a more enlightened and freed contemporary community. Among other things, it shows the enthusiasm for a contemporary society that embraces diversity, equality, and progress, allowing individuals to pursue their ambitions and contribute to the betterment of their communities. It suggests that the divine is in the hearts of the people; an inner light that leads to truth, knowledge, and freedom. Although, poem no. 4 of '*Gitanjali*' touches on the same essence of the divine:

“Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure,
knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs. (Tagore 19)”

The poem depicts a profound relationship with the divine, implying that God is the substance and nourishment of human existence. The poet strives to keep purity, not just physically, but also psychologically and ethically. This represents the concept that one's body is a temple for the divine. It also transmits a feeling of holiness and respect for the body, which is viewed as a tool of divine will. In today's society, integrated wellness approaches like yoga, meditation, and pure eating are popular, emphasising the need of keeping the body pure and in tune with the environment. It also aligns with contemporary beliefs regarding the mind-body connection and the importance of physical happiness in psychological and emotional health.

Many of the poems from '*Gitanjali*' emphasise God's role as the maker or creator. The God-intoxicated poet offers his spontaneous melodies and surrenders. As poet states in the poem no. 7:

“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. (Tagore 22)”

In these remarks, Tagore modestly accepts God as the “master poet”. The poet shows no pride in front of God, indicating that individual identity and human vanity are inconsequential in the divine framework. The petitioner wishes to “perfect/turn/our life as simple and straight as the reed's flute, which is a vacant tube,” implying a desire to act as a conduit for divine presence, similar to how music fills the void of a flute.

However, the present depiction of God in this image emphasises the concept that we should abandon self-interest and instead base our existence on peace, humility, and acceptance of divine instruction. Modern people frequently associate the notion of a fulfilling life with the achievement of goals such as wealth, prestige, and material possessions. The book asserts that joy and ultimate happiness stem from genuine love for a higher power, which allows us to open our hearts to the spiritual side while we are under the spiritual energy. It connects to current spiritual practices that promote letting go, awareness, and the core self. The latter is in keeping with the rising demands of life since it allows one to focus on what actually matters: basic humanity and inner progress. The poet expresses the same idea of self-surrender more clearly in his later singing of the poem no. 36:

“This is my prayer to thee, my lord-strike,
strike at the root of penury in my heart.
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows. (Tagore 51)”

Here, the poet prays to God for inner peace rather than material prosperity or pain treatment. These illustrate the common need for inner fortitude to face and overcome personal challenges, whether financial, emotional, or spiritual. His picture of God is one who facilitates self-transformation by guiding people through the complexity of life with grace and wisdom, an idea that appeals to modern searchers of spirituality in a secular society.

Tagore's “*Gitanjali*” clearly conveys the essential relationship between humanity and the divine, going beyond the visible world to explore regions of calm and pleasure. His poetry portrays the human spirit's journey from limitation to infiniteness, portraying God as a constant companion who penetrates all parts of existence. His work is laced with themes of sacrifice and self-surrender, offering his readers a fresh perspective on humanity's place in the universe. The rich portrayals of

India's natural beauty endow his poetry with significant spiritual and philosophical significance, as contrast to the more limited reach of other poets such as Sarojini Naidu.

Tagore's evocative poetry takes readers on a journey of spiritual discovery. This journey begins in the outside world. It transports the reader to the most intimate moments of mental wellness. He helps individuals grasp the stimulus and increases the reader's perception of spirituality. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan observes that "Tagore employs the visible world to shadow the unnoticed, and he illuminates the temporal realm with the brightness of the eternal." (Radhakrishnan 65).

TAGORE'S INFLUENCE ON MODERN SPIRITUAL THOUGHT:

His poetry expresses the heart of an enlightened human being, encapsulating a quest for truth and a thorough comprehension of life's essential principles. In today's fast-paced and sometimes chaotic world, his message of achieving inner liberation rather than relying on external solutions is especially effective. He has affected current spiritual philosophy, notably in how people see their relationship with the divine in everyday happenings and choose a path of self-discovery and development. When individuals commonly seek pleasure through riches or external objects, Tagore's message encourages them to go within themselves and acknowledge their innate connection to the cosmos. His books provide tranquilly, inspiration, and counsel to the complexities of modern life, enabling a better understanding of oneself and one's place in the world.

CONCLUSION:

A reimagining of the divine is essential in our times. Tagore's lyrical vision goes beyond religious orthodoxy, giving a global spirituality that values human experience and involvement with the world. As society continues to battle with problems about faith and spirituality, Tagore's work serves as an a beacon, directing people towards a more inclusive and introspective conception of the divine. He symbolizes the emancipated human spirit, seeking truth and enlightenment among life's complexities. His has been a beacon for pessimists who value inner independence and steely determination above external solutions. He has encouraged readers to develop a personal contact with the divine. He encourages self-discovery and meditation by seeing the divine in all things, and he gives guidance for dealing with modern-day difficulties with knowledge and dignity.

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