

TREATMENT OF LOVE IN THE PLAYS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE : A STUDY

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Rabindranath Tagore is not only one of the most outstanding and shining names in modern Bengali literature but he was also one of the most prominent writers who first gained for modern India a place on the scene of world literature. Tagore had become active participants in that intellectual and artistic reawakening which, in its early phases, is particularly associated with the Bengal region and which was not too manifest itself all over Indian sub-continent in course of the 19th century and spelling into the 20th century. He was “not a man only but an age had made its way at last into history - he had summed up in himself a whole age, in which India had moved into the modern world.”¹ He was a great poet and a great man and he had left behind him a great institution, the Vishvabharati at Shantiniketan. Tagore is an ever fixed star in the Indian literary sky. The age in which he was born an age of cultural transition. Rabindranath Tagore (7th May 1861 - 7th August 1941) sobriquet Gurudev was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his religious literature and music. He was a darling of versatility. To some extent he was an integral whole. His fecundity and vitality were amazing. He gave a thought to the writing of dramas along with his poetical and prose writing. He wrote quite a number of dramas.

The chief characteristic of Tagore’s dramas is that they manifest a lyric charm of a very high order. Thompson rightly observes: “His dramatic work is the vehicle of ideas rather than the expression of action. A rhymed verse of extreme flexibility with poetic overtones is permitted greater range in dramas as he explained once poetry is like the sea, whose specialty is in its currents; but prose is landscape and it is able to express various moods - forests, mountain, deserts, flat ground, uneven land...”(*Ibid*).

His dramas are more suitable for the open air than for close theatre. He invoked the spirit of Yatra (folk opera) which had been hounded out of Calcutta by the professional stage. In his plays, he often introduces street pageants-humming with life and characters cross the stage speaking, singing, commenting a kaleidoscope of dancing thoughts. His plays are merely the plays of ideas, the reality of which remains hidden behind a persistent and determined illusion. His dramas are capable of poetic heights. The truth which he seeks to describe is not an objective or material thing but an abstract truth, a spiritual idea. The drama is just a device and excuse for him for self expression.

His greatest discovery is love and conception of love is beyond measure. Tagore's ideas of love break a new ground, as he transfers love into a private world of imagination. He was not a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. According to Tagore: "Love is life in its fullness like the cup with its wine".²

Almost all the plays of Tagore deal with social relationship between men and women. Love not only imparts the bloom of beauty to the body but joy to the mind and perfection to life. Love is that profound expression of reality which satisfies our hearts without allurements but its own ultimate value. In Tagore's plays we observe three types of love: Physical, Spiritual and Mystical. In the beginning characters are attracted towards physical charm and beauty but in last they attain spiritual bliss and mystical aspect in the union of lover and beloved.

The lyrical drama of Tagore *Chitrangada* is almost perfect in unity and conception, magical in expression, a nearly flawless whole, knit together by the glowing heat of inspiration. Inevitably, *Chitrangada* is a love story but a moral is woven into the texture of the play. Chitra lives by its sensuous poetry, not its dry morality. Traditional cultures have their own tension but this tear filled spring will outlast the philosophy of self-control. Indeed the theme is the enchantment of spring and the power of its spell on the senses. Chitra, entitled after her name goes to win the love of Arjuna in the forest temple of Shiva but is disappointed. Arjuna says:

I have taken a woe of celibacy; I am not fit to be thy husband!³

Chitra understands that her physical beauty cannot win his love and decides to win it by making it spiritual. In the play *Chitra*, we have not the same effluence of mystical thought and emotion as in other plays. But we have in it a realization of the diviner element of love and life, a heavenly message to the human soul as to what is the meaning of love in the truest sense of the term. In the play *The King And The Queen*, king Vikram is totally attracted towards the physical charm of his queen Sumitra, the infatuated king neglects his royal duties towards the state. The theme of love in it is shown in a wider sense. He asks her to leave the house and its service alone, because his heart cannot spare her:

Alas, my darling, where have vanished those days of unalloyed joy when we first met in love, when our world awoke not only the flush of the early dawn of our union broke through our hearts in overflowing silence.⁴

Thus the husband, being an infatuated lover loses the wife's respect and the confidence with which he vindicates his manhood. He is so passionately in love with her that

he spends his time hovering round her. Taking advantage of his infatuation for the queen, her relatives from Kashmir manage to grab all important position in the state and fatten on their spoils. Complaints reached to the king but he has no ear and has no time to waste over vulgar concerns when life is short and love so sweet. Thus Tagore expresses the sensation both gay and melancholic under the dominating emotions of love and its allied sentiments. The transient psychological states under the stress of love, restlessness and curiosity are described with a highly developed sense of physical perception and intuitive awareness. *Red Oleander's* Nandini in a fervently rhetorical speech, proclaim her pious and joyful attachment with Ranjan, who for her is a personification of beauty and youth:

I love Ranjan as the rudder in the water might love the sail in the sky, answer its rhythm of wind in the rhythm of waves.⁵

Her love gives joy to that lonely soul and Ranjan feels:

A thrill of delight to his very marrow.⁶

Nandini becomes the bearer of the message of love, freedom and light for the world. She symbolizes the dance rhythm of all, which makes her so simple, so perfect. She surrenders herself to her object of love and rests there freely:

My love, my brave one, here do I place this blue throats, feather in your crest, your victory has begun from today and I am its bearer.⁷

Red Oleanders depicts how greed of Gold transforms man into a lifeless machine. All personal relationship of love and affection are lost in this world of modern industrialism. Nandini is the human symbol of love and liberty. Nandini has a lover Ranjan, whom she adores and loves and waits for his comings to liberate the people. Ranjan calls her his 'Red Oleander' because the colour of his love is red like the oleanders which she wears on her neck, on the breast and on her arms. Later she says to Vishu about king:

He is hungry for love and wants desperately to live, for when she had told him that she could give up her life for the love of Ranjan, he got frightfully angry and drove her away.⁸

Tagore's love is a noble passion, stirring dynamic and creative. It is an ennobling and elevating drive capable of reconciling the discords of life. Tagore exemplifies the physical aspect of love that makes life eternal on the earth. Love is an imperceptible agency offering the fullest security to man suffering with a real hunger of the soul basic to all human consciousness. Obviously, love is purifying water which can wash away the dirt of soul if any it simply implies that love gives perfection to the emotional life by transforming it in the spiritual. The plays of Tagore, to a large extent, deal with the presentation of inner truth, the inner life of man.

Tagore's quest for spiritual love is an admirable study of his inner life-study of God primarily and of the muse secondarily. His spiritual progress is a remarkable as his poetic progress. Kadambari Devi, his sister-in-law, held a unique position in Tagore's emotional life. She was an underline flame of sacrifice, love and inspiration in his heart, a flame whose touch fired his poetic genius throughout his boyhood and youth and to whom he dedicated the

Vaishnav lyrics. He found great relief and consolation in the Vaishnav poems. An eminent scholar of Tagore's literature Dr. Sukumar Sen has recorded: "The Vaishnav lyrics now acquired a new spiritual significance for him. Radhna of Vaishnav poetry is Man and Krishna the unobtainable fulfillment of Man's desire. Between the two there is an impassable gulf of separation but there is also a sure promise that the two will meet ultimately when the cycle of creation is complete."⁹

The essence of real love is on the spiritual plane and not on the physical plane. *The King of the Dark Chamber* is Tagore's audacious attempt to invade the invisible. The message of the play is the quest of spiritual bliss. "Its attempt is somberly impressive", says Edward Thompson "a magnificent attempt to dramatize the secret dealings of Go with the human hearts." The King (who symbolizes God) remains invisible throughout the play even to the queen, though his presence is felt by her:

Oh I can feel even in this dark, how lovely an wonderful you are.¹⁰

The dramatist seems to convey the idea that this world is full of religious bigotry and blind fanaticism but even then there is hope for us, if we follow the path of love. It is characteristic of Tagore's dramas that it is often a young girl and a young boy who shows us the true path in the midst of darkness - the path of love. The dominant idea of *Malini* is that purity is the essence of religion. *Malini* conveys the message of spiritual love to Supriya. In *Malini* the forces of Brahminism of Hindu orthodoxy are ranged against the challenge of compassion of love. She is the first major Buddhistic heroine. The main and the central voice of *Malini* are to bring new religion or creed in society. Malini feels restlessness and uneasiness in the midst of royal fascinated pleasures. She expresses her feelings and desires:

The moment has come for me, and my life like the dew drop upon a lotus leaf, is trembling upon the heart of this great time.¹¹

Supriya, a maiden, who has a spiritual awakening of love in her heart, tells the real meaning and true definition of religion- 'Truth and love are the body and the soul of the religion!' Supriya is a true devotee and lover of faith. She is recognized as a true worshipper who by life long devotion has gained the highest fulfillment of her desire. Kamenkar, who loves Supriya, is firm in his resolution. She says to him:

I had to keep my faith even at the cost of love. Yet he has ever kept me close to his heart, as the moon does its dark spots. But, however strong a ship may be if it harbors a small hole in its bottom. It must sink.... Kamenkar, was in the law of nature.¹²

To evaluate his conception of love, whether physical or spiritual, it can be safely said that his dramas are the presentation of inner life which imparts a romantic beauty to his men and women living in the lap of nature. Tagore's idea of love is not exclusively a biological or psychological entity; it is rather a complex reflection and comprises various emotional reactions of joy and sorrow, pleasure and fear hope and despair. It is associated with chastity, both physical and mental. It is changeless and spiritual necessity.

Tagore's phenomenal dramatic career, encompassing over sixty plays occupies the prime position in Bengal and Modern Indian Drama as a playwright. He is the path finder of modern Indian drama. The beauty of his plays made him world famous. He has been the representative man of his time in touch with the fullness of his intellectual heritage.

References

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- ³Tagore, Rabindranath. *Chitrangada*. London, Macmillan And Company Ltd, 1938, 7.
- ⁴Tagore, Rabindranath. *The King And The Queen*. London: Macmillan And Company Ltd, 1889 , 1.
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- ⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁷*Ibid.* 96.
- ⁸*Ibid.* 34.
- ⁹Bhattacharya, Vivek Ranjan. *Tagore's Vision of a Global Family*. New Delhi: Enkay Publisher Pvt. Ltd, 33.
- ¹⁰Tagore, Rabindranath. *The King Of The Dark Chamber*. London: Macmillan And Company Ltd, 51.
- ¹¹Tagore, Rabindranath. *Malini* . London: Macmillan And Company Ltd, 2.
- ¹²*Ibid.* 6.