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INTROSPECTIVE NARRATION OF THE *SELF*: A STUDY ON THE SELECT POEMS OF  
TAGORE

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ABSTRACT

The paper contributes a study on the selected poems of Rabindranath Tagore on the 'Introspective narration of the *SELF*'. Apart from tracing the theme in the poems the paper unites the ideas of the beginning of life, amalgamation of various creations with the oneness, and surrendering the self. With his variety of synthesizing the philosophies of eastern mysticism and western materialism, Tagore visualized the realization of *self*. The doctrine of '*Advitha*' from the '*Upanishads*' has dominated the poems with the view of separating the 'body' from the 'soul'. The poetic vision baffled over the thoughts of the life. It is strongly believed that the Epistemological views of the poet leaves long lasting impressions on various approaches to realize the *Self*.

Key Words: The doctrine of *ADVITHA*, Eastern Mysticism and Western Materialism, Oneness of God

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Pious seer Rabindranath Tagore finds introspection into himself through his poems. Being a philosopher and theist all his poems carry a mark of religion and God. Tagore's predominant acquaintance with the western scholars like Bertrand Russel, Bergson, Gilbert Murray, Einstein and Yeats influenced Tagore to synthesize the ideas of both eastern and western philosophies. He firmly spread the concept of '*Vasudaika kutumbam*', oneness of the universe. His poems preserved luster and received by post-Victorian thrust for truth and simplicity. Yeats's admiration for 'Gitanjali' proves his acceptable versions on worship. He identifies Nature as the ultimate Creator and most of his poems are monologues which exemplify and unify *Truth, Love and Life*.

His meditative tone of the poems mesmerises and takes the reader into a trance. Tracing the truth of the beginning, existence, and the end of all lives, Tagore narrated the philosophy of oneness of God in his poems. He believes God is perceived through Love and Truth, and he unites the three concepts together as one. He projects Nature's beauty which fills the life with awesome experiences and passes great energy into life. He worries how people forget this and crave for unsubtle prosperity in searching of happiness. He constructs a path through his poems to lead the happiest life. A lot of religious impact is seen in his poems and

concludes all the poems defining 'Truth', 'God', and 'Love' which are ultimate in everyone's life. This paper is a study of his select poems tracing the concept of his introspective narration of 'Self', defining, experimenting and experiencing the oneness of God, Nature, Love and Truth.

Through the poem 'The Beginning' he traces the starting and end of life. The poet reconnects and recollects the beginning of life on the earth. He poses a question 'where do we belong?' which gives an evolutionary impression through the memorial recollection of mother. He calls the child 'Heaven's first darling', 'twain-born'. This refers the continuous cycle of birth and death, reincarnation, the fundamental belief of all religions. While analyzing the philosophies of Tagore, Basanth points out Tagore's opinion on existence. "The ordinary man in his embodied existence in the 'self'; he can realize his true nature by becoming a soul"<sup>1</sup>. (Kumar Lal: 82).

Through the memory of 'mother', poet starts narrating the beginning of life on the earth. The introspection starts for the question 'from where have I come from?' answering the baby, she says he is from her 'house hold deity' and 'lived in the life of my mother'. This shows the spiritual sovereignty of the poet that he presents the unification of human soul with universal soul describing 'Monism'. Poet praises the purity of all existing souls and picturing oneness with love of the mother and the child. "You belong to all have become mine". The poet uses the term 'twain-born' which means in metaphysical context visualizing the world's nearer presence with an awoken soul which he means the real birth. Basanth says, "Tagore's philosophy the apparent in consistency of reality, conceived as both personal and impersonal, somehow evaporates"<sup>2</sup>. (Kumar Lal: 48)

In the poem 'Senses' Tagore presents an interesting meaning for sensuousness. Attaining liberation is possible only through sacrificing the bonds of all relations and practicing strict celibacy. In contrast Tagore finds the spirit of God the 'Oneness' in all the creation and relation. In this poem 'the earthen vessel' symbolizes the earth and 'wine' symbolizes prosperity and happiness. Tagore praises the beauty of creation of the earth, its colours and its fragrances poet uses his senses to perceive oneness of God. Basanth writes Tagore's opinion on relation, "Man has to realize his kinship with everything, and he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love"<sup>3</sup> (Kumar Lal: 72)

Poet says 'My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame.....'. Even though we see various things on the earth, they are different in appearance and one in spirit. Tagore describes religion, "A religious life means a life of self-denial for self-realization"<sup>4</sup> (Kumar Lal: 74). When we practice this, all our 'illusions burn' and leads to 'Illumination of joy' and our personal desires transform to 'ripen fruits of love'. Tagore unbinds the secrets of life saying how ignorant if we don't realise the connectivity of God with life. He feels God in the form of Love, Truth and Nature, which he presents as the central themes in all his works. Not only these mystical experiences of the poet develop an introspection of self-hood but this leads to a deep personal communion. Tagore criticized professing a particular religion which leads to hatred of other people. Tagore says "freedom of mind is needed for the reception of truth"<sup>5</sup>. (Sen: 132).

In the poem 'prisoner' Tagore separates the 'soul' from 'body'. It reflects a kind of mysticism. Poet addresses the soul as 'prisoner' and the 'God' as master. The introspection went deep in this poem how humans relish the worldly things and becomes materialistic which causes pain and sorrow and kills the freedom for the soul and enthralled towards the cycle of rebirth. As Swathi Samantaray exactly traces Tagore's philosophy and says:

"Tagore communicated his religious and philosophical views were that of 'bridal mysticism' devotional mode in which the seeker of the Devine becomes a friend of God..... The soul of the devotee is the 'bride' and the God is the 'Bridegroom' and their union is recognized as the spiritual marriage"<sup>6</sup> (Samantaray: 47).

The soul addresses the body 'king' 'my lord' as it influences the soul in many ways. Because it is imprisoned in the body, it has to obey the wishes and deeds as well. The body should never gets attracted towards everlasting longing for 'money' and 'power' which gives an ultimate freedom to the 'self'.

In contrast the soul which is imprisoned in the body hovers all over the world in search of wealth which causes to its own misery. Soul bounds in an unbreakable grip that is 'rebirth'. All the religions believe

that our 'Karma' that we do at present, decides our fortune in next birth. To break this recycling, we surrender all our deeds to Almighty. Poet feels sad how humans suffer miserably without realizing this. As Samantaray points out, "Tagore's poetry can be called an incarnation which invokes the soul of silence, incarnate in human language - the silence of the absolute meaning beyond the relative contingency of verbal events"<sup>7</sup> (Samantaray: 132).

The poem 'Journey' describes in depth the appearance of 'God' in 'Nature'. We find his reaction to the beauty of Nature is an unconscious expression of his soul. Poet starts the poem with a kind of awareness of self-visualizing the creation of God. He wishes to relish the 'silence of sea', listen to the 'ripples of bird songs', see the 'flowers with various colours bloomed on the road sides', the 'golden colour of clouds' and so on. He played together with his companions in the Nature in the morning (childhood) but later he finds all of them passed in a different path by noon (middle age), leaving him alone. He stayed back under the shadow, enjoys the noon air stretching his limbs on the grass, for which he is criticized. He is humiliated and pointed out for not living in a regular path. "Mockery and reproach pricked me to rise" Poet firmly believes in his deed and says criticism always make us strong.

He sustains his loneliness and sleeps deep (meditation). It dwells his spirit in overwhelming joy and diverts his path to stay in the world of flawless beauty. When he opens his eyes he finds he reached his destiny, the most pleasant spirit, God. He says the path is hard to travel, but reaching the destiny is the ultimate liberation.

Tagore presents the pleasant esteemed self which craves for eternal peace in the midst of Nature. Tagore presents the difference between ideal facts and actual facts of life, the conflict between Conscience and physical pleasure. He dissolves the absolute difference between Nature and soul. Radha Krishnan traces Tagore "He is a Vedantin, a thinker who draws his inspiration from the Upanishads."<sup>8</sup> (Radha Krishnan:138). The dark shades of the forest and holy banks of the rivers are the driving force which makes us listen to the imminent vibrations made by the soul. Turning inwards is not possible in this noisy machinery life. This sort of life kills the upbringing of spirituality, whereas the Nature purifies and heals the self. Tagore depicts how one has to surrender the 'self' to Nature in this poem.

Tagore says Nature as 'the most sacred place for pilgrimage'<sup>9</sup> (Gupta: 58). His saintly approach to life and God is clear in this poem. This is the rigid Hindu philosophy which *Bhakti* moment professed at that time. But it is very easy to lead a happy life leaving all results to the holy feet of God and must not give up our trust upon Him in any worst condition.

Thus all his poems are not just hymns but meditations. Tagore's philosophy professes 'Vedanta' and 'Vaishnavism'. He traces an answer for many questions that rise in his mind for the meaning of 'Life', 'Love', 'Religion' and 'God'. He identifies the Nature with God, and God with Nature. His unique thoughts appear as an unconscious devotion towards the Almighty. Tagore preached Indian philosophies in a western accepted way. His introspection is clear and gives a strong belief in oneness of God.

#### Notes

\*Select poems for the study are 'The Beginning', 'Senses', 'Prisoner', and 'The Journey' from <http://www.poemhunter.com/rabindranath-tagore/poems>, 1/1/2004, by C E Teymur, Paris, France.

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