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RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S GITANJALI 45: A CRITICAL STUDY OF IMMANENCE, TRANSCENDENCE, AND OMNIPRESENCE

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Keywords	***Abstract***
Immanence, Transcendence, Mysticism, Bhakti Tradition, Eco-theology.	In this paper we will analyse a famous poem- "Have you not heard his silent steps? / He comes, comes, ever comes" (Gitanjali-45) by the first Non-European Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore. The poem is a potent structural and thematic microcosm of Tagore's spiritual philosophy, which rests on the confluence of classical Indian Bhakti (devotional) traditions, Upanishadic monism and Western Romanticism. This study looks at the role of temporal, seasonal, and psychological imagery in Tagore's negotiation of the delicate dialectic between divine transcendence (the absolute, unapproachable reality) and divine immanence (the deity in the material world). The study shows how Tagore deconstruct linear time into a continuous spiritual present by analysing the rhythmic repetition of the phrase "He comes, comes, ever comes". The paper also looks at the making of nature and the human interior. It shows that natural phenomena like the perfumed

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	pathways of April and the thundering chariots of July are not mere simply decorative backdrops but active externalizations of the soul's shifting devotional landscapes. Finally, the poem's unique approach to suffering is assessed, in which grief is re-imagined as a familiar touch of the divine. This study argues for a redefinition of the spiritual journey in Gitanjali 45, not as an ascetic detachment from the world, but as an ecstatic, everyday anticipation of a God who is continually arriving, through close textual analysis and historical-contextual mapping.

Introduction

"For his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West." This was the citation when Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. The centrepiece of this worldwide literary transvaluation was Gitanjali (Song Offerings), a book that connected the ancient spiritual tradition of the Indian subcontinent with the individualistic, lyrical sensibilities of modern global literature. In this collection, Gitanjali 45 starts with the suggestive, rhetorical question,

> "Have you not heard his silent steps?
>
> "He comes, comes, ever comes"

is a classic statement of Tagore's theological and aesthetic perspective.

The poem is a representation of a fundamental paradox of the spiritual experience: the vision of an absolute, boundless Divine that still speaks itself via the quietest, most subtle parts of ordinary reality. For the study of English literature and postcolonial theological frameworks, Tagore's work constitutes a dramatic break from both traditional Western canonical hymnology and hard and fast Eastern orthodoxies. Tagore presents the idea of Jivan-Devata, the Lord of Life, rather than of God as a distant king to be appeased by fear or matter as Maya (an illusion to be transcended by austere renunciation). It is closely related to human history, natural processes and individual subjectivity.

This study will provide a comprehensive critical examination of Gitanjali 45. It will trace its historical and intellectual lineages, examine its formal and rhetorical mechanisms, and explore its distinctive handling of time, nature, and human suffering. This research paper will explain how Tagore develops an ecumenical mysticism that considers human emotional fragility as the ultimate depository of divine revelation.

I. Upanishadic Monism and Bhakti Synthesis: The Legacy of Inwardness

The spiritual architecture of Gitanjali 45 has very deep roots. It can be understood only in the light of the twin intellectual traditions that shaped Tagore's upbringing and creative philosophy. The young poet grew up in the intellectual cradle of the Brahmo Samaj, a reformist organization led by his

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father, Debendranath Tagore, and steeped in the Sanskrit Upanishads. The Upanishadic vision, the basic unity of all existence, was expressed in terms of the concepts of Brahman (the ultimate reality) and Atman (the individual soul). This idea is summed up in the words of mahavakya "Tat Tvam Asi" ("That Thou Art"). In Gitanjali 45 this monistic structure is turned into poetry. The imperishable unconditioned Brahman is personified as a traveller whose footsteps are audible over the cosmic distances.

But if the intellectual skeleton of the poem is Upanishadic, its emotional blood is from the Indian Bhakti and Sufi groups, especially from the Bauls of Bengal. The Bauls, a group of non-conformist mystic minstrels, sang of the 'Moner Manush' ("the Man of the Heart"), a divine entity not to be found in temples or books, but within the human inner sanctum. Tagore combines the philosophical majesty of the Upanishads and the fervent devotion of the Bhakti poets (such as Kabir, Mirabai, and Chaitanya) to remove the dreadful, unapproachable otherness of the God.

The hypothetical question "Have you not heard his silent steps?" in Gitanjali 45 suggests that divine revelation is not an extraordinary, catastrophic occurrence intended just for saints and ascetics. Instead, it is a persistent, subtle fact available to individuals who cultivate a responsive inner consciousness. The "silence" of the footfall means that the Divine does not reveal itself in dogmatic thunder or institutional directives, but in a peaceful, steady presence that demands an inward silence on the part of the listener to be perceived.

II. The Mechanics of Repetition and Temporal Collapse: Perpetualism of the Rhythmic

Structurally, the poem is remarkable for its persistent repetition (most notably in the refrain: "He comes, comes, ever comes") which has a hypnotic effect. In classical Western literary criticism, such recurrence might be explained in terms of structural rhythm or lyrical emphasis. Yet, this linguistic construct has an essential philosophical role in the context of Tagore's spiritual aesthetics: it reduces the linear, historical time (Chronos) down to the sacred, perennial present (Kairos).

Linear time is by its very nature broken up. The past is gone, the future is not yet to be born, and the present is fleeting. This framework often produces anxiety, alienation and a sense of detachment from the holy. Tagore directly challenges this linear fragmentation through the rhythmic structure of his lines:

> "Every moment and every age, every day and every night
>
> he comes, comes, ever comes."

Tagore connects scales of time in an open-ended way: the microscopic "moment", the epochal "age", the diurnal "day" and the nocturnal "night", and makes the arrival of the divine a continuous, unbroken process. The recurrent phrase "comes, comes, ever comes" functions as a musical sthai (the steady, underlying refrain in Indian classical music). It provides a feeling of security in the changing

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conditions of human life. Such structural permanence means that the spiritual journey is not an architectural climb to a distant goal. It is more an instant awakening to an arrival in process. There is no need for the seeker to overcome the distances of space or the epochs of time to meet the Divine. It is only necessary to realize that the Divine is already moving towards him, filling every crack of time with its presence.

III. The Topography of the Soul: Eco-Theology and Seasonal Metaphor

Tagore's poetry is rooted deep in the sensory truths of the natural world and not in abstract, disembodied spirituality. The changing seasons of rural Bengal constitute a fundamental lexicon for the exploration of inner spiritual experiences in Gitanjali 45. The Nature is not presented as a passive decorative background for human feeling; it is an active channel through which the Divine reveals himself and speaks to humanity.

The poem vividly actualises the dynamic relation to its opposing seasonal markers:

“In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.
In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes.”

Tagore here juxtaposes the spring month of April (Baishakh) with the monsoon month of July (Shravan). April is a quintessential panorama of sweetness, light and aesthetic enjoyment. “Fragrant days” and “forest paths” imply a calm, predictable element of the Divine that comes to us through the sweet chords of nature. This kind of imagery is very much in the Western Romantic tradition and reflects Wordsworth’s belief in a loving spirit closely interfused with nature.

But Tagore is not the follower of sentimental, one-dimensional pantheism, but instantly introduces the stormy intensity of July. The 'rainy gloom' and the 'thundering chariot of clouds' suggest a whole different aesthetic register: the sublime, the awesome, the overpowering. The images are drawn from a long tradition of Indian classical literature, echoing Kalidasa's Meghadutam (The Cloud Messenger), where the monsoon is intimately connected to the anguish of separation and desire.

Tagore expresses a holistic spiritual vision by calling for the Divine to come on the “thundering chariot” just as it does along the “fragrant forest path.” The Divine is present not only in moments of clear, tranquil awareness, but also in the chaotic, dark and violent storms of existence. Nature's changes are not different from the natural rhythm of human life. Both bright roads and stormy nights are good ways to find God.

IV. The Transfiguration of Grief: Grief as a Divine Contact

Throughout the history, the subject of human suffering has been a serious issue for many philosophers and theologians, frequently leading to estrangement, uncertainty, or dark pessimism. In the last verse of Gitanjali 45, the problem is faced, and a fundamental, psychological and theological reordering of human sorrow is offered:

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"In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart,

and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine."

Instead of interpreting pain as a mark of divine absence, an unknowable catastrophe, or a retribution for previous transgressions, Tagore reimagines grief as a direct conduit for close, divine communication. The phrase "sorrow after sorrow" reflects the unrelenting and recurring nature of human grief. And yet it is within this fragility that the poet perceives a genuine bodily intimacy to the Divine: the "steps that press upon my heart".

This haptic image transforms the nature of the crisis. The weight of pain becomes the deliberate, urgent footstep of the cosmic voyager. This weight does not break the human heart, but consecrates it, since it is a divine footprint.

From this point of view the startling paradox of the last sentence results: "it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine". Here sadness and joy are no longer polar opposites but rather part of a single, continuous spiritual journey. The "golden touch" is an alchemical metaphor for turning the basic metal of human misery into the shining gold of spiritual delight.

Mysticism for Tagore is not cheap escapism promising freedom from sorrow. Instead, it delivers a profound transfiguration of that pain. The seeker can bear the dark nights of the soul because he knows that these great moments of vulnerability are often the very portals through which the Divine enters human consciousness.

Conclusion:

Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali 45 is a masterpiece of twentieth century devotional literature, a profound meditation on the connection between the human and the divine. Tagore's spiritual vision is culturally specific yet generally accessible; it combines the monistic theory of the Upanishads, the fervent devotion of the Bhakti movement, and a reverence for nature.

The poem, with its rhythmic pattern, modifies our sense of time and makes the spiritual quest an immediate, everyday knowledge of a God who is always approaching. His buoyant seasonal pictures combine the material world with the spiritual life, to reveal that the softest ways of nature and her fierce tempests are both expressions of one divine being. Most importantly, the poem offers a powerful message of hope and perseverance by envisioning human pain as direct, intimate contact with the Divine. Gitanjali 45 changes our view in the ultimate sense. It tells us that the sacred is not to be reached by fleeing from our earthly existence, but by listening carefully to the silent, continual steps reverberating through the chords of our heart.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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