

TESTIMONY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE IN THE SELECT POEMS FROM *GITANJALI*

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ABSTRACT

Gitanjali is a great translated work by Rabindranath Tagore. It was written in Bengali and translated into English by Tagore himself. It stands unique like *The Bible* and *The Thirukkural* for its universal quality. It can be called as prose poetry for it has the strength of a prose and the melody of poetry. Testimonio is a Latin American narrative genre. *Gitanjali* can be considered to be a testimonial literature where it refers to the poet's personal experience in the society with the mankind and in the spirituality with the eternal force. It tells the personal relationship of the poet with the divinity. The songs in *Gitanjali* are about the close connection between the poet and the eternal, as a lover and beloved, wife and husband, servant and master and friend and friend. The lines in these poems are written in the first person in order to insist the connectedness of the poet with the concept of the poem. The speaker of *Gitanjali* is Tagore himself as a creature, lover, beloved, poet, etc. In *Gitanjali*, he speaks about God, eternal life, death, spirituality and also about the society. The impact of his experience in the society and in the spirituality is reflected in the select poems from *Gitanjali*. There is a deep subjective note in many lines which don't appeal to the mind, but to the heart of the reader. *Gitanjali* is not merely an intellectual work, but also a work which can be felt and experienced by the readers for it reflects the poet as well as the readers' emotion. This paper deals with the testimonial aspects of Tagore on society, humanity, spirituality and eternity.

KEYWORDS: Testimonio, Spirituality & Eternity

INTRODUCTION

Gitanjali is a 'Song Offering'. It has 103 songs. It was written by Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali poet, writer, painter, patriotist and a freedom fighter. He was awarded with Nobel Prize in 1913. He introduced a new practical education system in Shantiniketan, which was established by Tagore himself. In *Gitanjali*, he speaks about God, Eternal life, death, spirituality. *Gitanjali's* source language is Bengali and the target language is English. It has the personal references and direct experiences of Rabindranath Tagore and so it can be called as a piece in Testimonial Literature.

Translation is a literary communicating process which helps us to remove the artificial boundaries between of literature of different regions or country. The translator's cultural, social, philosophic and aesthetic background determined the choice of the text and the translation. Translation is a complex exercise because of the cultural context, the linguistic difference and grammatical structure. Translation is an art as well as science. *Gitanjali* is a translated work by its own writer. When a work is translated by the same author it would be very close to the original. *Gitanjali* is one such a work which doesn't lose its originality.

Gitanjali is praiseworthy for its universal quality. Though the physical foundation of the work is the tropical growth of India, hearts all over the world has responded to it as though a single heart beats in the breast of mankind despite of the differences. *Gitanjali* offers a comprehensive view on the life because the poet's inspiration is drawn from his love of humanity. The poet's love of humanity is closely linked with his love for God. Loving God is equal to love or service to humanity. *Gitanjali* is a love poem where God comes down to meet man and man meets God and reaches out to meet God because of the mutual love that exists between the two.

Gitanjali is a hymn to life and it is a dialogue between the individual soul (Jivatma) and the infinite (Paramatma). In this poem we see the wisdom of the Upanishads (commentaries written on Vedas), Sufism, Christianity, Buddhism the lyrical charm of the Bauls folk literature and images from the Bakti culture all find a place in *Gitanjali*. The poem depicts a moment of glorious waiting. It is full of conversation between god and man.

POETIC CONTENT

Testimony is a kind of attestation to the truth of a matter. Testimonial Narrative is a literary genre which includes with the personal experience of the writer in his literary Testimonial literature is bringing out the personal experience in writings. The establishment of testimonial literature is during 20th Century. The emotions, feelings of the writer are expressed in a testimonial literary work. Rabindranath Tagore is not only a poet but also a philosopher and a Nobel laureate. The poems in the *Gitanjali* are the outcome of Tagore's observation and experience of God man, society and nature. The poem reflects the search of Tagore for God, happiness, peace and love and so it becomes a testimonial literary work.

Rabindranath Tagore has contributed to our National Anthem. He started to write at the age of seven. He was looked after by a servant and so he was very much connected with the ordinary people. He was fascinated by nature all the time. His father sent him to London to study. There he was inspired by Romantic poets and Victorians. In India he mixed with the folk people and 'Bulus'. His songs were the reflection of his life. He was also influenced by Christianity, Buddhism and Sufism.

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again," (*Gitanjali I*)

In this line he speaks about his belief on the over soul and His grace. *Gitanjali* has a spiritual note it means songs offering to God. The poems are addressing God. It addresses God as a creator and Tagore projects himself as an empty vessel and like a flute. Many bamboos are there in the Earth but only some are selected. His life is melting. It is like a glad bird he adores God. He is a singer in front of Him, but Tagore reveals that He is the song.

For Literature he got the Nobel Prize in 1912 and he was the only Indian to receive it in those days. Early days he was influenced by his father and brother. He was at the age of nine and his sister-in-law Kathambari Devi at the age of thirteen. She was the first critic of Tagore. She was also a good influence to him. Mirnalini is a good companion to Tagore as a wife. He lost his two children and wife. Kathambari attended suicide. Vishva Bharathi is the outcome of Shantiniketan. He believed in the oneness of the world and followed nationalism. His vision was universal. British Government wanted to honor him with the 'SIR' title, but he courageously refused it. After coming from London, he fell, sink and visited the Shelleyda near to the Padma bank of this river he wrote *Gitanjali*. He had a second visit to London and

William Rawthan introduced Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats. His verses are comprehensive that focuses on every aspects of life

“I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower,
knowing that thou hast thy set in the inmost shrine of my heart”. (*Gitanjali IV*)

Our nation can't even think to forget a great man like Tagore who was a Poet, Patriot, Educationalist, Creator and humanist. He was a multidimensional personality. He was compelled to go to the school by his parents. and due to his disinterest, a new teacher was appointed to teach him at home itself, which prevented him from mingling with the other children.

“The child who is decked with prince's robes and who has jeweled chains
round his neck loses all pleasures in his play: His dress harpers him at every
step” (*Gitanjali VIII*)

He was married to Mirila devi and begot five children. Among them three were girls and two were boys. Girls are: Pela, Rani, sameendra and the boys are: Ratheenra, Sameenra, He faced a great loss in 1905. That is he lost his father and six months later he lost his daughter Rani and two years later he lost his son Sameendra. But Tagore continued his services and in 1912 he wrote his famous work *Gitanjali* and it won the Nobel Prize. He tells to God through the Song he reaches Him. He forgets himself and sings. He enjoyed the silence because he understood that silence is God's song and His music is light. His life was for God and He fulfills all the things. Tagore wants to join in the divine presence of God, but he also understands that it is very difficult because He is holy and pure like stream. When we cross the obstacles that time also enjoy life, be happy. Go to God not only in bad time, but also in all the good time.

CONCLUSIONS

Tagore is the one who named Gandhiji as 'Mahathma'. A mystic poet has a direct contact with God and doesn't need any institution or religion. *Gitanjali* shows the mystic poet in Tagore who preaches a joyful philosophy full of love faith in that entire life offer.

Tagore loved the nature and it can be said that he belongs to the poetry religion. He surrendered his whole life to understand the over soul. He thought that his life was journey. He wanted to create a great change in the people's mind regarding God and religious aspects. He believed in the Baul people and the saints. They have never searched God in the Temple or Church, but through the people. Tagore was attracted and influenced by them and these things are reflected in the *Gitanjali* which makes it a Testimonial Literature. He calls God a Supreme Spirit and *Gitanjali* is completely offered to that Spirit.

The world is related to the over soul. He considered the world as a spiritual journey. He condemned the superstitious beliefs in the society. He insisted on Service to Mankind and having a Childlike heart. He worked for the Peace of the world. He was a Freedom seeking man. He seeks the God in the nature. He taught the simple ways to reach God and understand nature. Thus Tagore's select poems from *Gitanjali* become an evidence to prove it to be a testimonial literature. His Childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age are reflected in these poems. Hence it can be called as a testimonial literature.

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