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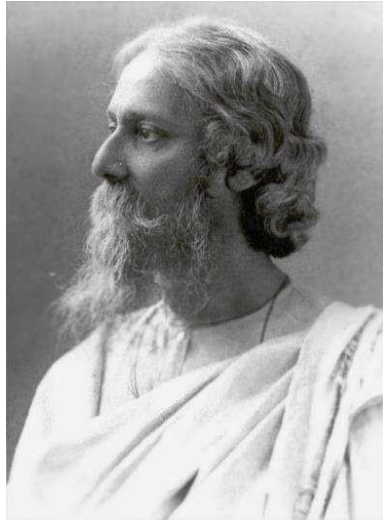
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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Rabindranath Tagore: A Quest for Beauty

Dr. Neeru Bala, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.



Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Abstract

If it could be said that literature has reached its excellence in the creative hands of Rabindranath Tagore, then it would not be wrong to say that he was the one writer who first gained a place for modern India, on the world literary scene. An ardent apostle of endless excellence, Tagore is very aware of emphasizing the inner potentialities of man, and the reaching beyond of consciousness through partnership with Beauty, which might direct one toward the thrilling avenues of creative appreciation. Throughout his life, Tagore had worshipped the ideal of beauty and perceived it in his heart as a devoted disciple. Tagore does not adore external beauty as most poets do; and he envisages only the emotional beauty which he has personified in his writings as the ideal human characteristic. That is why this crucial element of all of Tagore's writing (after a deep analytical study) makes a reader firmly convinced of the deep spiritual impulse that inspired Tagore in the writing of his songs, which enhances his sense of beauty.

Introduction

To bathe in the beauty of creation is to be blessed with the blessings of the All Beautiful. Rabindranath Tagore, an incomparable worshipper of beauty throughout his life, sought beauty not extrinsically but intrinsically, introspectively and the sense of beauty appears in his creations as a living, dynamic force. As the fountain of beauty springs from the heart, his quest for beauty is primarily in the heart's core. He looks at the reasons for the blossoming force of beauty within as quite inexplicable. However, Tagore presents an explanation in his own inimitable fashion about the inner urge for beauty that is involved in the history of human creative process.

Tagore's Quest to Unfold Beauty

Like any faithful creative artist of beauty, Tagore believes in unfolding the inherent mystery of beauty. He believes in the truth of Bacon's statement that the best part of beauty is that which no picture can express. Therefore, the quest becomes a haunting one, a thrilling and unending voyage toward the sea of beauty. The quest for the beauty of death in creative force

appears in a new pattern of poetic consciousness. In fact, in the preface to this book of poems, the poet plunges into self-revelation in a very eloquent mode:

“Looking within my heart, an idea awoke within me that everything good and evil of my every moment, my all experiences of joy and sorrow of day to day life are taking an endless image of creation ceaselessly. The real nature of that creativity is the eternal ups and downs of this expression and non-expression. Thinking over this it seemed to me, What, then, is the meaning of death? Somehow the reply was that life retains everything while death leads. I am dying at every moment and through this death I am marching ahead towards the avenue of life. It is as if the work of sowing is going on within me the past, present and future is being sewn.”

The quest for the beauty of love that adorns every object of Nature goes on quite convincingly in Tagore's poems. Tagore has an inward eye of beauty that has its parallel only in that of Victor Hugo who is re-enlivened in Tagore's translation. The words of dedication the poet uses for his book of poems *Chhabi O Gaan* are worthy embodiments of the quest for beauty. In fact, the spring of beauty re-appears in a new garb in these poems and the poet plunges into the beautiful and mysterious world of Nature quite cordially and deeply to reveal the beauty of the Great Creator of the world. In this quest for beauty, Tagore makes new experiments with language and diction.

Energetic Enquiry into the Spirit Of Beauty

Joyous and youthful as the Poet maybe, the form of poetry seems to be drenched in beauty with a many-sided splendor in his creation. The creative spontaneity at this stage of his life gets a new spurt of energetic enquiry into the spirit of beauty. Tagore's genius is reflected in the exploration of the element of love in his poem Bhanu Singla Thakurer Padavali that has undergone long years of poetic endeavour. In fact, there is a soft corner for this creative manifestation of love in his heart and the romantic imagination is spread over the canvas of a mellow atmosphere of love.

Beauty Associated - Poignance of Pain

Rabindranath Tagore has a new vision of life for the manifestation of the poignance of pain in the human heart. The poet's quest for beauty as reflected in *Kadi O Komal* discovers beauty in a newer pattern, the youthful vigour in Tagore finds a new language of exposition. In his own comment titled "Kabir Mantabya" at the beginning of the book of poems as a preface, Tagore explains his own position quite frankly:

Youth is that time of the change of season in the life when the unexposed enthusiasm for blooming and perfection suddenly becomes visible in manifold colours and appearances. Kadi O Komal is my composition of that youth anew. Whatever found expression within me was new and sincere to me also. (RR-61)

Search for Word for Self-Revelation

The search for the word of the heart that the Poet undertakes, leads him towards a greater and thrilling quest for beauty. Tagore makes himself continually poised for the most unassuming but the most appropriate word for self-revelation and self-discovery. Rich and varied as his experience was in the wonderland of creative sensibilities, he could easily switch over from one pattern of imagery to the other. These variations are found in plenty in his *Manasi* where every poem is a romantic journey in the path of the quest for beauty.

Nature Personified as Beauty

Nature personified as beauty in the Poet's quest finds a new expression in the exposition of love that transcends romanticism to touch mysticism. The Poet also runs wild towards Nature, despite the fact that he is running towards her in futility. Tagore also makes a deep study of the smile in her face that spreads the mysterious aura of her intentions of love-offerings and interprets her beauty in the star studded sky. The delight of the mystery of Nature that the Poet enjoys in abundance finds its superb manifestation in the poems of *Sonar Tari*. On a different context, of course, the same sense of beauty is revealed in the poem *Paras-Pathar* (*The*

Touchstone). Here the Poet enters rather more deeply into the concept of beauty and the vehicle for the manifestation of beauty, is a simple, self-disinterested *Khaypa* (*The Homeless*) who is in continual search for the real touchstone. The beautiful portrait of Nature is drawn with a sense of serenity in the backdrop of a great philosophy of life based upon the renunciation of the ephemeral objects of nature.

Beauty in the Pangs for Separation

The quest for beauty in the pangs of separation as expressed in *Viraha* is a natural comeback on the part of the Poet into the world of pure romanticism. The bereaved heart of the poet seeks beauty in void and this sense of beauty is created not in isolation without Nature, but essentially featuring Nature as an embodiment of nostalgia reminiscent of the eternal. The woes of the lover and the beloved, even in isolation, are alive in all natural perspectives and even the vacant room throbs again with the beautiful movements and conversations that haunt the poet's mind time and again.

Beauty and the Play of Child

Tagore enters into a new dimension in the quest for beauty. Here the Poet himself is a child playing on in innocence with the beautiful objects of Nature. But along with the eternal play of the child on the seashore of eternity, beauty appears in a deeper concept also. Hide and seek is the emblem of this quest eternal. The Poet unfolds the mystery of beauty in the autobiographical vein of a child spreading the oysters of beauty before the seashore of humanity. The poet has a keen eye and a kind heart too. He cannot be rude to the child despite his naughtiness, nor can become indifferent to his views and opinions. He allows himself to suffer from conflicts consequential to affection and awareness, duty and forbearance as the internal components of beauty. The sense of a somber attitude is engulfed in a deep veil of joyous activities that never allow a child to remain aloof from the kingdom of beauty. Indeed, it is the quest of all quests for beauty:

The appreciation of Beauty in Tagore is just like that of a devotee. This beauty eternal is different from that described by Browning who says that he cannot feed on beauty for the sake of beauty alone. (RR-191).

Beauty Personified as Woman

The quest for beauty is further accentuated in *Gitanjali* where beauty is personified as a woman and given a mystic interpretation. In Tagore desire means beauty. A woman, indeed, is a serene picture of beauty sans desire. Serene beauty is abstract. A woman whose beauty is admired does not earn this admiration for her bodily charms. She does it because she is abstractly an icon of beauty. In the poem *Urvashi* Tagore views *Urvashi* as the sheer woman not child, nor mother, nor wife but the beautiful woman who is goddess and seductress at once: “*Woman you are, to ravish the soul of Paradise. Like the dawn you are without veil, Urvashi and without shame*”.

Explorer of Truth Goes After Woman's Beauty

As such a woman's beauty is absolute, only an explorer of Truth runs after such beauty. The nearer the explorer goes to Truth, the more the bliss eternal flows on to him. This beauty is much beyond the reach of desire. This cannot be enjoyed in the physical sense; it can be enjoyed only in spirit untainted by selfish desire. Such a beauty can only be worshipped. Tagore treats Almighty as a beautiful woman who treads on everything. The whole of God's creation is beautiful, hence True.

Derelict Clouds of Beauty, Etc.

In his quest for beauty, the Poet sometimes enjoys his vacant mood like the ‘derelict clouds’ of the sky, but even then beauty emerges with extraordinary brilliance of colours. Ever alert about the laughter of creation, the Poet goes out in his quest for beauty in the freedom of the wind and the sky, the birds and the streams, even dumb hours of darkness as he introspects, finds language in the stillness of eternity. The quest becomes more entertaining as he plunges

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into the deep sea of beauty: *"I placed your flower, O world! I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked. When the day waned and it darkened, I found that the flower had faded, but the pain remained"*.

Beauty of Pain and Suffering

Tagore sees the beauty of pain that remains after suffering has passed. He is ready to embrace sorrow that is to be christened in the halo of brilliance. The freedom from all encumbrances and constraints that he pines for, becomes a reality:

"You blind me with the flashes of laughter to hide your tears ..."

Seeking Beauty in the Love of the All Beautiful

A new concept of beauty emerges from the Poet's vast experience of Nature. The sweet incompleteness of Nature is the infinite charm of human life, continually seeking beauty in fulfillment. The inner wailing of the Poet's heart seeks beauty in the love of the All Beautiful. The world appears to him as the embodiment of the All Beautiful. He welcomes the world with his love that came like a song and was in happy union with eternity. The association of love in the form of a song with divinity, is an altogether new perspective of Tagore's quest for beauty. It brings forth in him a sense of humble dedication. It also marks a note of happy optimism that makes the Poet rather frank and buoyant.

Conclusion

If we analyse the creative works of Rabindranath Tagore, then it should not be denied that Tagore represents a happy blending of love, beauty and truth. The creative ideal, as the Poet elucidates, takes its form in the innermost essence of creativity and therein lies the brilliance of his quest for beauty. Tagore, therefore, seeks beauty anywhere and everywhere, but the process of seeking every time appears new with changing processes of imagination. The experimenting with prose-poems point towards the changeability of ideas and expression in search of beauty.

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The Poet's finer sensibilities, exploring new frontiers of beauty, find a new avenue of manifestation. Tagore's true concept of beauty is adorned with love. Here is truth dancing arm in arm with Beauty. Tagore has given a description of the serene touch of the beautiful. He feels the touch of Truth in the core of his heart. In the process of discovering beauty the Poet plays with imageries as freely and abundantly as possible. He allows them to be adorned with the ornaments of his language, the twists and turns appearing as sparkles that dazzle with much lustre.

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