

PROJECT WORK, SEMESTER VI, ENGLISH HONOURS, 2022-23

TITLE : STRING OF THOUGHTS IN TAGORE'S *GITANJALI* (Synopsis)

Gitanjali, originally written in Bengali, comprises 157 poems; later, most of the poems and songs found their way into the English translations, numbering 103.

The Bengali work was first published on 14th August, 1910, whereas the English translations were published in 1912 by the India Society of London. It contained translations of 53 poems from the original Gitanjali and 50 from *Achalayatan*, *Gitamalya*, *Naivedya* and *Kheya*.


This work, bringing the prestigious Nobel prize to Gurudev, has been a constant source of inspiration and research, even to this day. "Gitanjali is a railway junction," says Buddhadeb Bose, "where many parallel lines converge." No simple formula can sum up the depth of this philosophical text, but one can categorically discern four types of world in the text : God and Nature, Nature and the soul, the soul and the humanity, God and human soul. These four themes are not kept strictly separate, they frequently run into each other, fuse and mingle.

In most of the poems in this collection half a prayer from below and half a whisper from above blend aesthetically, the prayer often evoking the response, or the whisper responding to the prayer, and always prayer and whisper chime into one song. Gitanjali is full of such poetry, as in the opening song: "Thou hast made endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail Vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life." The human body is the temple of the soul the human soul is the temple of God. The human soul is meaningless unless it is inhabited or "filled" by the Supreme. Thus, birth and death partake of God's endless life, His immortality. In another song, Tagore sings, "This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new." The Bengali words are: "Kato je giri kato je nadi teere/ Berale bahi choto e banshitire/ Kato nag an bajale phire phire/ Kemone taha kobo..."

The Phenomenal world in which the individual plays his obscure part is really the Lila or the drama of the Supreme, and to know this is to participate in the total joy of the cosmic play and give utterance to the joy in ineffable song. The joy of the world helps the individual realize the existence of God, taking him to a transcendental plane where he feels united with Him. Man is just an observer, deriving joy out of watching the endless paths before him, which appear in different hues and odours with the changing seasons of Nature. To quote the poet, "Amar ei path chawatei Ananda/ Khele jai roudra chayay, barsha ashe, basanta..."

Nature with all her beauty and bounty, appears in diverse forms and colours, lending grace and elegance to her elements. At the same time however, in her we also find a tumultuousness, and a devourer, an image of wilderness and destruction. She reminds us, times and again, of her role as a creator, preserver and destroyer. The threefold actions are controlled by none other than the Supreme Being Himself. This is where Nature merges with her Creator, blending forms, synthesizing the various aspects. The physical descriptions of Nature in all the poems ultimately merge with the realization of the eternal spirit of the Divine being.

The philosophy of Tagore is essentially rooted in the ancient Vedic and Upanishadic traditions of India and accentuated by mysticism, putting nature at a revered position. According to the Upanishadas, Brahman is at the centre of everything, and the Supreme Being or the Absolute, who creates the universe, nurtures it, destroys it when time comes, and again gives birth to the universe. Thus the cycle of creation, the cycle of life, goes on; and during the ceaseless movement of the cycle, a close bond between the Creator and His creation the universe is established. At times, the Absolute as the Creator and the world that is His creation, might appear to be binary opposite entities, but they actually are not. They are not contradictory but complementary entities leading to the totality of the universe. This philosophy of life offers this 'principle of synthesis': 'the state of realising our


PRINCIPAL
Dhruva Chand Halder College
P. O.- D. Barasat, P.S.- Jaynagar
South 24 Parganas, Pin- 743372

relationship with all, of entering into everything through union with God, was considered in India to be the ultimate end and fulfilment of humanity'. Tagore believes that in seeking to be united with the infinite lies the fulfilment of the finite, human, individual being.

He negates the contrariness of nature between man (the world in general) and the Absolute because man, the being with intellectual, aesthetic and emotional faculties, forms the most essential part of the Creation of the Absolute; thus the soul of man or jivatman becomes the microcosm of the paramatman, and therefore the complementary element to prove the organic totality of the universe. And because man is the microcosmic identity of this all-pervading paramatman, who is also the fountainhead of pure bliss and epitomises unmixed joy or anandam, he reaches the state of ecstasy and tastes the same anandam once he unites with the Absolute. Thus the ultimate manifestation of humanity is attained. It is a quest of man to attain the Absolute that enables him to taste the divine joy – not only upon reaching the goal, but also in the path of the journey, while he embraces all world into his heart. This quest is an inward journey as well, for this is a quest after man's own soul as well.



PRINCIPAL
Dhruva Chand Halder College
P.O.- D. Barasat, P.S.- Jaynagar
South 24 Parganas, Pin- 743372