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The Elements of Mysticism in the Songs of Gitangali

Abdul Halim Shaikh*

ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore was hailed in the West as "The Wise Man from the East" with the publication of English *Gitangali* in 1912. *Gitangali* songs are steeped with the ethos of mysticism and spirituality. These are the songs of mysticism. Here, Tagore expressed his longing to merge with the Infinite. Tagore is, to a great extent, inspired by vaishnava tradition and the Baul Psyche in his treatment of the subject of love between the worshipper and worshipped. Nevertheless, Tagore has his striking originality with which he has elevated the theme to the celestial level unlike the vaishnava poets. Tagore depicted the reciprocal love between the devotee and the God through the exquisite depiction of natural scenes, the poets manifested the divinity in nature. He feels thankful to the munificent God for its infinite bounciness to the humanity. Tagore makes prayer offerings to this God through which he wants to imbibe himself with Him.

Keywords:- mysticism, spirituality, Infinite, worshipper, God prayer.

INTRODUCTION

The poetry of *Gitanjali* is the poetry of mysticism. It is the poetry which is inspired by and seeks to express, the soul's direct vision of reality. Mysticism is the fundamental theme in the book of *Gitanjali* into which multitudinous ideas and themes converged. It is through mysticism Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore successfully fulfilled the secret purpose of art. A mystic poet is a revealer of reality and he should also be a lover and seer. Before delving deep into the book of *Gitanjali* for the detail analysis of elements of mysticism is, let us see what mysticism is. Wikipedia defines mysticism as the "Union with the Absolute, the infinite, or God." It can also be described as the exalted stage where human soul is in direct communion with God. A mystic believes that the ordinary world of sense perception is not real and that, behind this visible world there is more real world that can be apprehended spiritually and not through the medium of the senses. The mystic seeks to establish an immediate and intuitive relationship with the inner, ultimate reality. In a certain sense mysticism is at odds with realism and commonsense. Mysticism is not a rationally explainable concept. All mysticism seeks to withdraw themselves from the world of appearance and ally themselves with the inner world. This mysticism believes in renunciation, detachment for worldly affairs and in asceticism.

But Tagore's mysticism does not completely comply to the traditional Indian mysticism. He did not seek deliverance in renunciation. The poet is the staunch lover of the earth and society and at the same time, he seeks union with God. He is not an ascetic or yogi. He wanted to be united with God with loving human heart. He seeks to meet his God through the service of man. Man is an integral part of his ideal mysticism. He believed that the true deliverance of humanity lies not in the temple or mosque but in the field where the tillers till the land in Sun and shower and in the path where the laborer's construct road breaking stones. Tagore's mysticism is humanistic. He does not completely distrust reason and the value of perception. He does not advocate a dissociation

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from everyday life but enjoys the joy of living. He does not reject sense experience but makes it a medium of spiritual experience. His mysticism is thus counterbalanced and kept in check by intense humanism. Tagore is saint poet who has not refused to live but has spoken out of life itself. Coming out of the midst of life the poetry of Tagore accepts life in its wholeness as a revelation of the divine mind. This is not the 'Via Negativa' of the Neo-Platonist's but a positive mysticism, which passes forward to a 'more abundant life'. The idea of God which informs it is far from that concept of a static and transcendent Absolute which is regarded as the center of Hindu mysticism. The deity to whom this songs of *Gitanjali* are offered is at once the striving spirit of creation, and that creation is the eternal source and end: both infinite and intimate, "Dark with excess of light" and yet the friend and lover of each soul.

"Thou art the sky, thou art the nest as well"

(POEM NO- 67)

Since He is one of the aspects of the energetic spirit of life, active in his own Creation, inhabiting the flux, this God may best be found and worshipped, not in the temple "with doors all shut," but within the rich and various world of things:- Tagore most exquisitely set this idea to music in *Gitanjali* Poem no- 11:

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance ? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master has himself joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all forever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow."

Tagore's God does not inspire him to indulge in renunciation of earthly joys and bonds. He is the Creator of earth with all living hues and odors. Man should not seek deliverance in asceticism neglecting all the charms and joys of beautiful earth. This idea is beautifully express in poem no- 73:

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever purest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the alter of thy temple."

God, then, is conceived by this mystic as pre-eminently the Creator of life and of beauty. He is the Divine minstrel, and all the creation is His song. Like Richard Rolle, the English hermit, who called the last state of the transfigured soul the "State of heavenly song." The poet is driven again and again to musical imagery in the attempt to express his vision of the universe in song no-3:

"I know not how thou singest, my master ! I ever listen in silent Amazement. The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on....."

The poet expresses his deepest zeal to unite with supreme in many of the songs of *Gitanjali* in unequivocal terms. The poet knows that meeting with the Infinite soul for the finite is always nearly impossible task. So, to accomplish this ultimate longing, he should go through numberless severe ordeals. The poet determines to keep his human body pure as it is the abode of God. In song no-4 he announces his pledge-

"Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind."

The poet's song deserted all ornaments not to allow any unnecessary jingling to subdue the sweet whisperings of God. The poet has discarded all artificiality, gaudiness to become simple and down-to-earth. He believes that vanity of human heart is the impediment to the unity between God and man. In song no-5, he aptly sings- "My song has put off her adornmentsMy poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight."

Human life is built on the castle of vanity, pride and vain-glory. Very often it becomes difficult to triumph over the inordinate pride. But God dwells among the lowliest and the poor. The poet faces the bitter struggle within his self to vanquish the pride to meet his beloved God who lives among the downtrodden. In a biblical tone, the poet makes the eternal revelation in song no- 10

"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost."

Human life is nothing but a bundle of wishes and desires. We only thrill in the fulfillment of mundane dreams. This material prosperity corrupts our soul and drags out us far away from God. The earthly desires are the snares on which we get imprisoned. If we want to get united with the Infinite, we should suffer tribulations. In song no- 14 Tagore explains it most fascinatingly-

"My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by heard refusals: and this strong mercy has been wrought in to my life through and through.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gravest to me unmasked- this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind- saving me from perils of overmuch desire."

Through, travails and hardships the poet is gradually preparing himself for his ultimate communion with the God. The poet harbors a firm conviction in his heart of all hearts that one day he would be meeting his beloved God conquering all impediments. The possibility of union with God seemed no longer a far off idea to the poet. He believes that the auspicious time of his tryst with God is nearing him.

It seems to us that the poet is clearly viewing the light of dawn which brings the tidings of meeting. In song no- 19 and 20, the poet expresses his firm hope

"The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky." (19)

"Only now and again a sadness fell upon me, and I started up from my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind."

"I knew not then that it was so near....." (20)

In the very next song we hear the poet say that he should wait no longer. Time has come and the poet should set sail without delay to meet his dear God. The poet hears the tune of flute calling him clearly for the voyage:

"I must lunch out my boat. The languid hours pass by on the shore- Alas for me!

The spring has done its flowering and taken leave. And now with the burden of faded futile flowers I wait and linger.....

What emptiness do you gaze upon! Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air with the no of the far away song floating from the other shores?"

At the anticipation of most coveted meeting with his beloved friend which is God, the poet's heart convulses with hopes and fears. The poet imagines the God as solitary way farer in the deserted street. He is not fully certain that God would enter into his hut without fail. An uncanny fear lurks in his heart. These hopes and fears of the poet are expressed unparalleled beauty in song no- 22:

"In the deep shadow of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou walkest, silent as night, eluding all watchers....."

Oh my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house- do not pass by like a dream."

The poet imagines himself to be a female beloved waiting anxiously in the lonely hut throughout the stormy dark night for the return of her husband. The night passes but she finds no traces of her wayfaring friend opening doors again and again. She can no longer keep up her faith that her lover would come. She apprehends her lover probably is traversing the dark gloomy forest of some unknown land and crossing the black river as he is eager for the communion with his bride. She feels sad in her futile waiting with undying longing.

"Art thou abroad on this stormy night on the journey of love my friend? The sky groans like one in despair.".....

By what dim share of the ink-black river

Art thou threading thy course to come to me, my friend."

When the impossible meeting was to take place the beloved most unfortunately as fallen in profound sleep. After an endless waiting, the God has finally come but she woke not from her fatal sleep to meet Him. The sadness deepens at her heart for the irreparable loss she has suffered. The sadness sounds charmingly sweet in song no- 26:

"He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me! He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands and my dreams become resonant with its melodies.

Alas, why are my nights all thus lost? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep?"

Tagore is the saint who is not afraid to live, a saint, who dears to mingle with common things of the world, fearing no defilement from their touch, and a poet, the very closeness of whose contact with earth lifts him ever nearer to heaven. Within this man's grace are the eternal verities the everlasting yea, and the grasp is never relaxed. He makes the most of what we strive for seems so small, and yet he makes life itself so large.

CONCLUSION

The message revealed in the 'unearthly' songs of Gitangali shook the hearts of the western intellectuals and writers the western world was caught by storm with it. From W.B. Yeats, who added the glorious 'Introduction' to the book, Ezra pound, the fames American poets, Ernest Rhys, noted

English writer, to C.F. Andrews, all were profoundly 'addicted' to the God- intoxication of Rabindranath Tagore. To the lacerated hearts of the western people, these divine song gave strength solace and conviction they herd the foot steps of gentle Jesus Christ in the mystical song of Tagore. many believed it to be the prior prediction of Jesus Christ's Second Coming. Tagore was accolade every where as great 'Mystic Poet'.

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Analyzing the Circumstances that Influenced Tagore's Translation of Gitanjali

Abdul Halim Shaikh*

ABSTRACT

This article will try to analyze the circumstantial and psychological factors that propelled Robindranath Tagore to undertake the job of translation office of his own Bengali poems into English - which is certainly a remarkable phenomenon in the history of world literature. Tagore was pre-eminently a Bengali poets. All his masterpieces are written in this language. But his sudden sojourn in to the English literature through translation is a worthy subject of speculation. Tagore represent unique bilingualism the question that legitimately arises here is what motivated Tagore for the translation while Tagore was evidently unwilling to introduce his poetic muse to the world. The answer lies in the contemporary time and in the many epistles of Tagore. Consecutive cruelest shocks of bereavement, persistent hectic literary pursuit, involvement in the political activities and execution of zamindari duties, Tagore was physically and mental battered and brushed by 1912 he felt acutely lonely. He made plain to visit London for treatment. Besides, treatment he wished to meet the best minds of Europe. Before embarking the ship, he prepared some translation as a provision of path which proved unusually good for the world.

Keywords: circumstantial, psychological, translation, muse, bereavement

INTRODUCTION

Gitanjali is a book of translation done by the poet Rabindranath Tagore himself from his original Bengali poems, a slim volume of 103 poems in prose translation. But this slender book caused such a massive tumult in the Western world that R.N. Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913, hundred and five years ago from now. Tagore was the first Indian and non-European to be the Nobel Laureate. Basically Tagore was a Bengali poet. His relationship with English is very complex one. He never felt fully confident in the language. Never did he compose anything first hand in English except a poem (*Child*). But the very poet began translating some of his selected poems into English under stranger circumstances. It would reveal how a Bengali poet who was reserved and unwilling to introduce his poetic muse into the world came to the realm of translation. Translation of poetry is quite misleading. A good deal of charm and delicacies of poem are lost when it is translated. It often fails to revive the glory of the original poem. We can here quote Serge Gavronsky who gave a fine definition of translation. He said, "The original has been captured, raped and incest performed. Here once again, the son is the father of man. The original is mutilated beyond recognition-the slave-master dialectic reversed (1977).

What Tagore did in *Gitanjali* was not a translation actually, but a transcription. In this regard we can remark that even Tagore himself cannot do the justice to his original poems. W.B. Yeats indirectly hinted the shortcomings of Tagore's translation when he uttered, "These lyrics-which are in the original, my Indians, tell me full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies, of

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colour, of metrical inventions." Tagore was a Bengali poet, not an English poet, and he did not at his command the technical resource of meter, rhyme etc.-that he had in Bengali. So, he wisely chose to translate his poems and songs into poetic prose. The genius of Tagore made impossible possible in the successful translation of *Gitanjali* poems. It is undeniable that his translations have some gross limitations. Sometimes it failed to maintain proper English grammar and syntax. Moreover, it is not translated into metrical rhymes. The metrical innovations which are numerous in original Bengali *Gitanjali* are all lost in English prose translation of *Song Offerings*. Instead of all shortcomings of translation *Gitanjali* stirred the hearts of the Western people so enchantingly that they simply felt mesmerized and awe-struck. Even the title of the book was not in English, but in Bengali. No book of poems have ever been able to create such a euphoric response as a series of one hundred and three translated poems did a century ago. Again, never has any work of translation received such paradoxical feedbacks ranging from exuberant ecstasy to painful indifference like this one. The history of Indian English literature is profoundly indebted to *Gitanjali*. A century past, still Tagore is the lone figure in the list of Nobel Laureate from India in literature.

The version *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* was not an entire translation of Bengali *Gitanjali* that was published in 1910. It contained 157 songs and lyrics. English *Gitanjali* comprises 103 poems in total-53 from *Gitanjali*, 16 from *Gitimalya*, 15 from *Naibedya*, 11 from *Kheya*, 3 from *Sisu* and 1 external from each of *Chaitali*, *Smaran*, *Kalpna*, *Utsargo* and *Achalayatan*. To Tagore, the best of his spiritual poems and songs coalesced into it. Here the poet paid his offerings to the God through songs. 'Gitanjali' means the 'offering of songs', 'prayer offerings of songs'. *Gitanjali* portrays the poet's deep-rooted longing for ultimate communion with God, the union of finite with the Infinite.

R.N. Tagore himself was not fully satisfied and confident with his own translations. When he handed the manuscript over to William Rothenstein, he was dubious about its merit. Regarding the translation of *Gitanjali* Tagore opined that "translations are not always literal-the originals being sometimes abridged and sometime paraphrased."

On 13th March, 1913, he penned a letter to Ajit Kumar Chakraborty, his associate, in which he frankly made a confession saying "what I try to capture in my English translation is the heart and core of my original Bengali. This is bound to make for a fairly wide deviation. If I were not there to help you, you may probably find it impossible to identify the original in the translation." On 12th May, 1913, he further said, "the forms and features of the original become difficult in my translations-the way I do them these days. My translations are more a reflection than an exact replica of the original image."

Attainment of Maturity: *Gitanjali* is a work of mellowed maturity. In 1912, India Society of London published *Gitanjali*. By the time, Tagore was 51 years old, he has already reached at the certain zenith of his genius. Though in his writing career, Tagore never descended, only scaled upward with astonishing fruition. None except Tagore in the world literature could the steady excellence of writing throughout the whole career.

Tagore began his poetic journey only at the age of twelve. *The Evening Song* (1882) is his first book of recognition. After some volumes of poetry *Manosi* (1890) was published. It is the book in which Tagore touched the top notch of Bengali poetry. Then came his *The Golden Boat* (1894). This book was full of poetic mystery and mastery of art. The poem *The Golden Boat* was its masterpiece. It was deceptively simple, yet metaphorically esoteric. At the time of *Naibedya*, *Kheya* and *Gitanjali*, the poet Tagore gradually stepped into the second phase of his poetic career. After a series of family tragedy Tagore is already miserably lonely. Death has caused havoc in the life of Tagore. He lost his mother, his favorite sister-in-law, wife, one son, two daughters and his father within 1905.

Recurrent Deaths of dear Ones in Tagore's Life: The Tagore whom we meet in *Gitanjali* is one who suffered terribly at the hands of fate. He already lost many of his beloved members

of his family. *Gitanjali's* Tagore is chastened in heart and calm in mind. He had developed an intimate relationship with God. He surrendered himself to Him with no expectations of return of anything. It was a selfless sacrifice. The repeated family tragedy made Tagore more stoic. For the irreparable loss he suffered, he never blamed God. On the contrary, he felt more attracted towards Him after each death of his near and dear ones. Even the cruelest bereavement could not cripple him down.

Tagore had very little memory of his mother as he got little opportunity to be loved by her. He was mainly brought up under the care of cooks and servants. He seldom met his mother. It gave him an opportunity of studying nature and man minutely. He grew loner and introvert. He found ample solace in his fruitful imagination. The first blow of death came to his life when he was only fourteen. His mother, Sarada Devi died in 1875. Later in his life he had to encounter the deaths of many loved ones-his sister-in-law Kadambari Devi, his wife Mrinalini Devi, his daughters-Madhurilata and Renuka, and his younger son Shamindranath. Tagore wrote

**"Jibon O Moroner Shimana Charaye Bondhu he amar Royecho daraye"
"Beyond the bounds of life and death, There you stand, Oh! my friend"**

The accidental death of Kadambari Devi (19th April, 1884), the better half of Jyotirindranath Tagore, made Tagore completely distraught. In her, the poet had found the best friend, the source of literary inspiration and solace from all pain. She was not only his sister-in-law, she meant a world to him. But this wonderful lady who accomplished in art, horse-riding suddenly committed suicide in 1884 leaving an irreparable vacuum in Tagore's heart. It was the cruelest blow to him. It took long time for Tagore to recover the shock. The poet had to bear the bereavement for the whole of his life. He has immortalized her character in his famed short story *Nastanirh*. Kadambari Devi was the presiding goddess of his heart. In one of his famous poems, Tagore reproached her for having left him behind-

**"She's gone, What more is there to say?
They are gone, What song is left to sing?"**

On 19th April, 1884, within six months of Tagore's marriage, Kadambari Devi, committed suicide suddenly. She was only 25 then. No one knows why. This tragedy left a very deep impression on the mind of Tagore. It was the first great sorrow of his life, his first experience of the terrible reality of death. None could fill the void she left. More than sixteen years, she had been his comrade, his confidante, his refuge, she was more than mother to him.

Within a few months of his finding a new home in Santiniketan, his wife Mrinalini Devi fell seriously ill and was taken to Calcutta where she died on 23rd November, 1902. Recalling the tragedy, her eldest son, Rathindranath wrote in *On the Edges of Time*:

"Mother had realized that the end was near even before the doctors had given up hope. The last time when I went to her bedside she could not speak, but on seeing me, tears silently rolled down her cheeks. That night we children were all sent to bed in another part of the house. But my sister Bela and I could not go to sleep. A vague fear kept us awake. Early in the morning we went up to the terrace overlooking the room where mother slept. An ominous silence hung over the house, the shadow of death, seemed to have crossed its threshold with stealthy steps during the night. That evening my father gave me father's slippers to keep. Vicissitudes of life, pain and afflictions never upset the equanimity of father's mind. His inward peace was not disturbed by any calamity however painful. Some inner resources gave him the power to face and to rise above misfortunes of the most painful nature. After mother's death father devoted himself with renewed zeal to the affairs of the school at Santiniketan."

Mrinalini Devi devoted her brief life in the service of her husband. She was a very simple lady. She had nothing to ask for. She fulfilled all the requirements of the post silently. But at her sudden death, Tagore got no opportunity to repay the love to her. And then all he could do was to offer to God, what was meant for her. Tagore wrote in one poem of *Fruit Gathering*, a collection of poems:

Her night has found its morning
And Thou has taken her in Thy arms
And to Thee I bring my gratitude
And my gifts that were for her.

Urge for Translation

One question legitimately arises regarding the translation of *Gitanjali*. What motivated R.N. Tagore to translate his poems into English? Why did he venture to translate his own Bengali poems into a foreign language in which he had no full confidence? Till the publication of English *Gitanjali* by India Society in London in 1912, Tagore was an obscure figure even in his own country. Only in Bengal he managed to become a household name. *Gitanjali* established him as an iconic poet in the world arena. He was applauded in the East and the West unstintingly. This deluge of appreciation was not at all what Tagore sought in transcription of his poems. Even Tagore himself was doubtful about the quality of his English translation. No Indian author before him tried to translate themselves in English. Tagore was the first to initiate the task to present the East to the West that were virtually different from each other. *Gitanjali* bridged the East and the West together and the twin began to meet amicably. In this context Rudyard Kipling should be quoted. He once proudly asserted the superiority of the Western civilization. At the same time he strongly looked down upon the East. In his poem *The Ballad of East and West* (1889) Kipling imperiously howled:

"Oh, East is East, and West is West,
And never shall twain shall meet."

With *Gitanjali* which is strewn in Indian ethos and values, Tagore easily crashed the myth of Kipling that West would never understand the exotic East full with mythological and superstitious faiths. Tagore showed the essential human nature is universally the same.

Tagore came to the realm of translation quite abruptly. It is not that the poet wished to launch an 'English career'. Buddhadeb Bose, the eminent Bengali writer and critic opined that Tagore was not "a translator by temperament: for his translation was not a part of the poetic vocation". He was too great a poet for the humble and laborious task of translation. In this field of translation Tagore represented a unique bilingualism. He pioneered the art. None before him ventured to render his/her original works into another medium to reach the foreign readers. Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Vladimir Nobokov (1899-1977) etc. followed the footsteps of Tagore with admirable success.

The exigency of contemporary time and facts should be dissected to understand the background which urges Tagore to initiate the translation.

Till the publication of *Gitanjali* Tagore was totally unknown, unheard in the West and little known in his own country except Bengal where he was dearly loved. There were unnumbered indigenous admirers of Tagore both in Bengal and in London. They were determined to present the genius of Tagore to the West through the help of translation. At the beginning of 20th century, a group of Tagore's friends and admirers namely Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), Jadunath Sarkar (1870-1958), Sister Nibedita (1867-1911), Ajit Kumar Chakraborty (1886-1918), Lokendranath Palit (), Pannalal Basu, Debendranath Mitra, Anand K. Coomarswamy took initiative to translate his works for his reception outside Bengal and India as a whole. They chose Tagore's short stories and

essays first for the translation. Surprisingly many of them skipped Tagore's poetry. It seemed to them untranslatable being full of idioms and nuances of meanings. Even J.C. Bose wrote to Tagore of his idioms. *The Modern Review*, a literary journal from Calcutta well received in both England and America played a pivotal role in promoting the translations of Tagore's works in the West. Between December 1909 to June 1912, the journal published translations of Tagore's 15 short stories, 9 poem sand 3 essays. Tagore found some hidden want in the translations of his poetry done by the translators. He was dissatisfied with them. He felt that the translators did injustice to his writings. In 1911, it was Anand K. Coomerswamy who ignited Tagore's translations. Bengali was unknown to him. So he requested Tagore to render his poetry in English paraphrase so that he could write them in English rhyme. This prose translations paved the way for Tagore to venture *Gitanjali*. In the meantime (1911) Ramananda Chatterjee, the poet's friend and the editor of the *The Modern Review*, requested Tagore for his contribution of English translation of poetry to be published in the magazine. Tagore agreed and his poetry was published in 1911 edition of the magazine. It was not *The India Society* of London but *The Modern Review*, that published Tagore's own translation. We can justify the view of Sisirkumar Ghosh, the author of *Rabindrath Tagore* (1990) published by Sahitya Akademi, that Tagore's decision to translate his own poems was, in fact, "the culmination of efforts started at least a decade earlier."

Roby Dutta's metrical translation of Tagore's poems in the shape of a book rather quickened the birth of Tagore's own prose translation of his poems. Roby Dutta published the book in London and sent a copy to the poet for his view. Evidently Tagore was unhappy with it and determined to initiate translating his poetry in verse-libra which was near to his heart.

Furthermore, due to linguistic bar, many European acquaintances who were eager to learn Tagore as poet could not read him. From 1890 to 1912, Tagore had to translate sporadically some of his poems into English to fulfill their demand. So it was a psychological exigency to the poet that prepared him for the translation.

Finally, we can say that Tagore made up his minds to pay his due visit to England in 1912 to meet the best minds of Europe of the time. Before that, he had to endure the recurrent shocks of bereavements. In 1912 Tagore was physically very ill. So he fixed his mind to pay a visit to London for medical treatment. Literally he became desperately lonely in his life's journey. He lost all props of life by 1907. He was eager to explore the unknown destiny of his life through his visit to the world. It would not be unjust to say that he inwardly wished to test his luck in the alien land with his translations.

After judging the whole background we can reach to the conclusion that R.N. Tagore drew his inspiration for translations of his poems not from external sources. But inspiration was completely internal and it came from the depth of his heart. Otherwise no outside influence can create an immortal art like *Gitanjali*. The poet could hardly devote himself to the laborious artificial job of translation unless he felt the urge at the bottom of his heart. Moreover, it was the recapturing of delight of creation to the poet which motivated him more. He enjoyed the inner ecstasy in recreating his old poems in new medium.

MEDICAL TOUR TO LONDON CANCELLED AND TRANSLATION BEGAN

Unending hectic writing activity, active participation in the political movement, cumbersome responsibilities of being jaminder, the huge pressure of setting up new residential school in Santiniketan and the continuous death of family members for the last ten years gave no respite to the poet. Consequently, the 50th birthday found Rabindranath sick in body and wearing in spirit. So he wistfully looked towards the West. He never nourished anti-West feelings in his heart even in his most patriotic and introspective phase and had drawn inspiration and sustenance as freely from the values of the

Western civilization as from the past of his country. In the beginning of 1912, he made preparations for his third voyage to Europe. This time he looked upon it as a pilgrimage rather than a holiday. Undoubtedly, Tagore had medical exigency to visit London for recovering his health. At the same time the prospect which impelled Tagore towards West is his intention of meeting at first hand live minds.

Tagore had long been neglected by the intelligentsia of Bengal. Quite astonishingly they came forward to honour the greatest poet ever born in India by celebrating his jubilee on 28th January in 1912 in the Town Hall of Calcutta. *The Modern Review* described the reception as "an unparalleled reception – the first time that such an honour has been done to a literary man in India."

Tagore was supposed to sail on 19th March of 1912 but on the dawn of very day he became suddenly very ill and fell unconscious. So doctors forbade an immediate sea voyage. With this extemporaneous cancellation of voyage, Tagore felt disappointed and sought consolation by retiring to Shelidah (which now in Bangladesh), his favorite haunt, on the banks of the Padma for convalescing and restoring strength. It was this time in Shelidah that he began to translate for the first time some of his *Gitanjali* songs into English. On 6th May, 1913 in a letter to Indira Devi, his dear niece, he gave a minute detail of the initiation of his English translation:

"You have alluded to the English translation of Gitanjali. I cannot imagine how people came to like it so much. That I cannot write English is such a patent fact that I never had the vanity to fill the ashamed of it. If anybody wrote an English note asking me to tea, I did not feel equal to answering it. Perhaps you think that by now I have got over that delusion. By no means. That I have written in English seems to be the delusion. On the day I was to board the ship, I fainted due to my frantic efforts at leave-taking and the journey itself was postponed. Then I went to Shelidah to take rest. But unless the brain is fully active, one does not feel strong enough to relax completely; so the only way to keep myself calm was to take up some light work".

"It was then the month of Chaitra (March-April), the air was thick with the fragrance of mango-blossoms and all hours of the day were delirious with the song of the birds. When a child is full of vigour, he does not think of his mother. It is only when he is tired that he wants to nestle in her lap. That was exactly my position. With all my heart and with all my holiday I seemed to have settled comfortably in the arms of Chaitra, without missing a particle of its light, its air, its scent and its song. In such a state one cannot remain idle. It is an old habit of mine, as you know, that when the air strikes my bones, they tend to respond in music. Yet I had not the energy to sit down and write anything new. So I took up the poems of Gitanjali and set myself to translate one by one. You may wonder why such a crazy ambition should possess one in such a weak state of health. But, believe me, I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado. I simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days gone by."

Here one thing should be also be noted that, apart from translating poems, Tagore engaged himself in the composition of new songs which were later published as *Gitimalya (Garland of Songs, 1914)*. As many as 16 poems from this anthology were translated for English *Gitanjali*. The very first song of *Gitanjali*- 'Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure', is from this collection. Here in this book Tagore urged his beloved God saying-

'Now that all tumult is banned, Let us whisper to each other,
Thou and I Let the heart murmur its secret in song.'

Tour to London resumed and more translation followed

Within a short period of convalescence, Tagore regained his vigour to risk a voyage. Without further delay, Tagore sailed for London from Bombay (Now Mumbai) on 27th May, 1912 accompanied

by his son Rathindranath and daughter-in-law Pratima. The poet embarked the ship with notebook in which he was storing his translation for more harvest. Regarding it he wrote a letter to Indira Devi: "The pages of a small exercise book came to be filled gradually, and with it in my pocket I boarded the ship. The idea of keeping it in my pocket was that when my mind became restless on the high seas, I would recline on a deck-chair and set myself to translate one or two poems from time to time. And that is what actually happened from one exercise book I passed on to another."

During the voyage Tagore actively concentrated on the writing of essays, letters, songs, Translations as the sea was calm and the journey was comfortable one. The first notebook which Tagore gifted to William Rothenstein, a famous British painter, (1872-1945) is kept in preservation in Harvard University. It contained 86 translations out of which 83 are included in the *Gitanjali*. But the second notebook which contained at least 20 poems was lost. Nobody could trace it.

Conclusion: William Rothenstein midwifed the form Tagore as a great poets in the western world through the publication of *Gitanjali*. Tagore first gave the excise book containing 86 translation office poems for opinion. Rothenstein was deeply charmed by the translation. He got it typed and send the copies to W.B.Yeats, and two auther poets. All were highly exuberant and appreciative. Finally the book was published by India Society of London on 1st November, 1912. Tagore resched the culmination of fame with the award of Nobel Prize for Literature in 1313 mostly for *Gitanjali*. The External influences undoubtedly helped Tagore to move forward for the translation. but the actual inspiration came from the depth of his heart because no external influence can create an immortal piece of literature.

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