



RABINDRANATH TAGORES REFLECTION OF HIS RELIGIOUS VISION THROUGH RICH MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES PROJECTED IN HIS POETIC REALM

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Abstract

This research article lays focus on the element of mysticism and its importance in the literary arena of modern times projecting Rabindranath Tagore as significantly mystical with the stress on his religious vision as one reflected nourished and cherished through a variety of mystical experiences reflected in both his poetical creations and literary essays with God as the creator of all mystic vision and experiences.

Keywords: *Mysticism, Poetic Creation, Literary Essays, Significance, Reflection, Religion, Mystical Experience.*

The mystic is one whose life's aim is to get transformed into the likeness of him in whose image he was created and finds himself on a plane of consciousness where the soul is led forward, from an actual to an ideal state, with a yearning for a reality and nothing else. It is true that music or painting or poetic creation may induce some normal mystic experience. One such poet made mystical in vision by poetic creation is Rabindranath Tagore to whom religions is the breath of life. His is no defined religion of any particular church or creed but it is on that illuminates all his thoughts and spiritualizes all his mystical experiences. In his search for the religion after his heart, Tagore was guided more by his temperament and mental makeup than his knowledge of wordly life. To achieve his goal, he trusted only his feelings and emotions more than intellect: as he rightly put it in his **Religion of Man**,

“The solitary enjoyment of the Infinite in meditation
No longer satisfied me, and the text which I
Used for my silent work ship lost their inspiration
Without my knowing it. I am sure I
Vaguely felt that my need was self –realization” (P94)

His own religion evolved in his mind through a variety of mystical experiences richly reflected in his writings richly both in poetry and essays including speeches. These experiences trace continuously various phases of the growth for a form of union with the infinite being which pervades creation. According to him, the quest is for the contact of the Infinite in the finite which is man's mind. A study of his poetry is the key to the understanding of the spiritual make up of his mind. In his words, the search is for the discovery of poet's religion, neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian. The quest for his religious and mystic vision started with nature which was his first love. His sensitive mind used to react vigorously towards nature even during his early boyhood days. Slowly through a series of experience, the true nature of unseen presence felt behind different aspects of nature became clear to him. Like the Vedic ancestors, as he says, he came to realize behind the different facts of nature a single pervasive principle is at work. Thus in different aspect of nature, he read the revelation of a single inner being. In his words,

The wonder of gathering clouds hanging heavy with the
unshed rain, the sudden sweep of storm arousing
vehement gestures along the line of coconuts trees,
the fierce loneliness of the blazing summer noon,
the silent sunrise behind the dewy veil of autumn
morning kept my mind with the intimacy of a
pervasive companionship (Kingsland 45)

In this view, the creator is working imminently in the creation. He felt that a single principle was working throughout nature, giving it unity and harmony in spite of apparently conflicting pulls of different forces. He believed that the super abundance of beauty in nature is inspired by a desire for delight and to transmit such delight to human hearts. To his eyes, the beauty manifest in nature is like the love letter to God. The beauty of flowers, the star-spangled sky at night, the display of colors in the evening sky, are meant to delight the heart of man and are almost like so many messages of invitation to relationship of love from God. It appears that the belief in the working of supreme principle was also fortified in his mind by an experience



obtained through a mystic vision. He has described it in detail in more than one occasion. One noon while vacantly seeing through an open window, waiting for a bath, the vision came to him He said;

“Suddenly, I became conscious of a stirring of a soul within me . My world of experience in a moment seemed to become lighted and facts that were detached and him found a greater unity of meaning “ (Mysticism 56)

According to Tagore , it is the inner force that directs and shapes the poet’s life and imparts to it unity and direction. The idea of ‘Jivan Devata’ where God becomes humanized appears to have taken full form quite early in his life . This theme finds its fullest expression in **Gitanjali** , the **Gitimalya** and the **Gitali**. These poems reflect the thoughts and moods that swayed his mind under the influence of the grand theme of ‘ Jivan Devata’. The need to offer service initiated the process in his mind which ultimately discovered the religion after his heart, which truly humanized God. Man’s three dominant faculties have exercised considerable influence in shaping his religion. They are the faculties of the intellect, the emotion and the will which correspond to the Indian concept of **Jnana**, **Bhakti**, and **karma**.

Tagore under the influence of mystic vision is said to have made his quest to discover God in mad . It became his conviction that one could realize God in the complete form through man. He can be comprehended directly through intellect being endowed with personality he can reciprocate love and lastly, being capable of receiving service , God can be served through him also . Thus through him, God is accessible simultaneously by the path of Knowledge (Jnana) Love (Bhakti) and Karma (Service) . Tagore’s quest thus ended in a kind of humanism where man becomes the center of interest because he manifests God to man in the most effective form.

Tagore is a mystic but his mysticism is simple and beautiful , not obscure . He sees the wonder , beauty and goodness through and beyond that he actually sees and touches and fills him with the spirit of worship, self – consecration and aspiration. Mystics are often said to have had strange visions which are often the subject of discussion by writers on mysticism . Tagore had mystical visions which he described once without any misgiving as to their influence on his spiritual development in the following lines:

“ when I was eighteen , a sudden spring breeze of religious experience for the first time came to my life and passed away leaving in my life and passed away leaving in my memory a direct message of spiritual reality , one day while I stood watching at an early dawn the sun sending out its rays from behind the trees, I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist had in a moment lifted from my sight and the moving light on the face of the world revealed an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of common place was removed from all things and all men, and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind ; and this is the definition of beauty . They which was memorable in this experience was its human message, the sudden expansion of my consciousness in the super –personal world of man” (OH 84)

What occurred to Tagore in a vision may not interest everyone but that which as a result settled down as a sediment in his poetry cannot be passed over but invites us to share in the rare mental enrichment contractions between claims and values recognized generally as mutually opposing were reconciled by him and a fine harmony is achieved:



Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well (Gittanjali 67)
The same stream of life that runs
Through my venis night and day runs
Through the world and dances in rhythmic measures

In this playhouse of Infinite forms I
have had my play and here have I
caught sight of him that is formless (P96)

Mystical vision are nothing new in a country where the Nayanmars and Alwars of the south as well as the Vaishnavaites singers of the North had flooded the entire country with their personal experience of godhead only in their out pouring of theirs in lines of intoxicating poetry. Tagore himself had visions of higher being which he recorded in some of his books . one day in the afternoon, pacing the verandah of his house , at the age of seventeen, he was gazing at the sky when a strange feeling enfolded him in an ineffable experience which he describes here as:

“While the self was rampant during the glare of day everything I perceived was mingled with and hidden by it. I could see the world in its own true aspect All of a sudden, a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes and I found the world bathed in waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side (Reminiscences 110)

A similar experience befell him later also and he became convinced of the entire life around and himself being dissolubly connected with each other.

They knew the way and went to seek you
along the narrow lane but I wandered
abroad into the night for I was ignorant
I turned away in doubt , but you held me
fast , and their scolding became louder everyday

(Fruit –gathering XVI)

The song deserves deep reflection for its meaning .Tagore confesses this through metaphysical training in Vedanta but that his mystical experience. Assured him of the coming upon the doorstep unaware. The spiritual emancipation was signaled by an experience within the poet’s own opinion, which brought a new orientation to his whole existence. He described it in his Reminiscences. The new experience is definitely of the type known as ‘mystical’. He narrates a previous experience which seems to have led him to that in which he discovered an uplifting of the cover of triviality from the everyday world. After some time, there came a more positive vision, in which he found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side.

“ The radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated in my heart and flooded it with this unusual sight “ (My Reminiscences 115)

From this, the poet says , he gained an insight which has lasted all his life. The effect was a new value attached to man and the world;

And it came to me that no person or thing
In the world seemed to me trivial or
Unpleasing .Everything seemed to me
Extra ordinarily wonderful (P 115)

Tagore’s faith and courage are indomitable because he is one of those who have had visions that nothing coming afterwards can efface . He had felt that he has seen God’s face . That is enough “ I felt I saw your face” (Crossing 76)



He says nothing more about the vision, perhaps he cannot explain more. He probably did not actually see anything but while the vision lasted his whole being was tense with the consciousness of God. Those to whom the vision has not yet come, would not understand, to those to whom it has, in whatever form, the one sentence, 'I felt I saw your face' brings a perfect reflection of it. To Tagore, this brought faith and courage.

To a mystic, the smallest things are never uninteresting or insignificant. A leaf is full of beauty, full of wonder, full of mystery. And of the quickest thought, a mere flash in the mind is worth a moment's arrest, that its spark of light may add its tiny beam to the illumination of the soul. Then all of a sudden nature opened its closed doors to him again through this 'momentous revolution' of a vision. Thus he says that the first book of my life came to an end with these chapters of union, separation and reunion' (Reminiscences 228)

There can be no doubt that Tagore attributes great importance to these experiences which cause 'a momentous revolution' within him. He did not claim any rights to preach for the experience was one of individual character. He call it the outburst of an experience, which is "Unusual, an unexpected inner message, a sudden spiritual outburst within me which is like the underground current of a perennial stream unexpectedly welling up on the surface (p 91)

To sum up, Tagore's conception can be said to be that of an immanent revelation. His mysticism is based on the conception of a deathless soul and the endless possibilities before it, so that man, when spiritually conscious, feels greater than he knows.

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