

ECHOING TAGORE'S LOVE FOR THE MONSOONS

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Abstract

In India, Bengal's most celebrated literary figure, Rabindranath Tagore, was specifically sensitive regarding the various seasons occurring in India. The monsoon and its relation with Tagore's songs is the main focus of this paper. The monsoon, when Mother Nature spreads her beauty by unravelling her bounty treasures, is richly expressed by Tagore. In the composition for the *khanika* (poem) 'Asho nai tumi phalgune' [*you did not come in the spring season*] Tagore says: "when I awaited eagerly for your visit in the spring, you didn't come. Please, don't make me wait any longer and do come during the full monsoon". In another of his songs he visualises on a cloudy sunless day, a person's longing to share his or her deepest treasure of feeling for that particular important person 'Emon ghonoghor boroshaye' [in this heavy downpour] (Tagore 2002: 333, song 248). Through these poetic compositions and many more, one may understand the depth in Tagore's understanding of the human's emotional details regarding this specific season. The monsoon may also be disastrous. According to Tagore's a composition 'Bame rakho bhoyonkori' [*keep aside the destructions*] (Tagore 2002: 394, song 58) he describes as well as wishes that the monsoon keeps away the damage or distress from people's lives. His tunes blend with his words and emotions, not to mention the ragas that are believed to be related with rain that is popular to the Indian subcontinent such as Rag Megh or Rag Mian ki Malhar. These have been affluently used by Tagore to create emotional feelings through his words. He expresses being a philosopher with whom people can find a connection, irrespective of their regional background.

Keywords: Season, Poetry, Emotion, Composition, Raga

INTRODUCTION

The monsoon's natural features have an impact leading to a kind of lyrical mysticism or an ambiguity ascribed to Tagore as a poet, lyricist, and composer. Here, I will analyze first the distinctiveness of Tagore's songs in relation with the monsoon through filtering various aspects of nature association with a poet's affinity in imagery of the monsoon. Secondly, distinct shapes sung in the Rabindra Sangeet¹, being identical to specific songs of Bengal "Baul"² are discussed, as they may be directly comprehensible through various human responses inseparable from those natural features. Considering these features, the question of which human expression fits them, especially during the monsoon season in its actual coherence, is given due consideration in the examination. In doing so, this review essay may yield some ideas about the contribution of the monsoon as a natural season in the human expression of emotion.

Those people who are either familiar with the historical context or who researched this area indirectly often view Tagore as the lighthouse of literature, songs and art. Natural features had

¹ Songs written and composed by Tagore.

² Type of songs from the Bengal region, comprising Bangladesh and the Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura, and Assam.

probably highly inspired the poet, especially the monsoon season. This is the season when a bountiful nature unfolds her beauty, which is uniquely, captured by Tagore. A sense of limitless elation is felt through his words of poetry about the rainy season, which continues as one can easily relate to Tagore's songs.

The vast landscapes of his family estate and the swirling rivers seemed to foster a sense of liberated creativity in close proximity with natural features of the different seasons. Ragas, for instance, Desh, Megh Malhar and Miyan Ki Malhar, find their way in his songs, gently fitting the wordings. Tagore primarily worked with two subjects: the human being, and second, the natural environment he experienced, in all its myriad forms and colors, and how the relationship between both affects the behavior and the expressions of human beings. According to my point of view, it appears that the harmony of relations one experiences and that with nature are not just for the sake of the named only but one that can transcend a particular pattern of writing poems and later composing them into songs keeping in mind the prime influencer. In this case, Tagore and the monsoons.

Tagore himself wrote that when his poems were first published in his book *Gitabitan*³, the people who wished to compile and preserve his work could not find any particular subject in order to determine a specific series or category. Therefore, future publications of his poems were done keeping in mind this requirement.⁴ There exist several categories of emotions in his songs like devotional (puja porjay), romantic (prem porjay) and seasonal (prokriti porjay). His songs on the monsoon comes under the seasonal category (prokriti porjay).

SOME EXAMPLES

The examples given below mention only the most important data. They do not represent the entire work nor the specific context of performance.

Parjaay/Category: Prakriti/Nature

Upa-parjaay/Sub-category: Borsha /Monsoon

Taal: Kaharwa

Rag: Mishra Bageshree Malhar

Mood: Philosophical

“Saghano gahono ratri”

In the middle of a dark night, it pours.

Bereft of warmth, the night is blind.

Blank, I gaze at this void...

Parjaay/Category: Prakriti/Nature

Upa-parjaay/Sub-category: Borsha /Monsoon

Taal: Dadra

Rag: Mishra Bageshree Malhar

Mood: Happy/Carefree

“Paagla hawar badol dine”

On this wild, windy and cloudy day, my crazy mind awakes.

For no reason at all, it wants to go

Beyond the world of senses, where there are no roads!

³ Book of Tagore's poems published as *Gitabitan* গীতবিতান, রবীন্দ্রনাথের সমুদয় গানের সংকলন from 1932.

⁴ In 2002, Shyamapada Sarkar re-published *Gitabitan* (consisting of poems written by Rabindranath Tagore) where a short note written by Tagore is mentioned on page 3.

Parjaay/Category: Prakriti/Nature

Upa-parjaay/Sub-category: Borsha /Monsoon

Taal: Ektaal

Rag: Mishra Sahana

Mood: Sad

“Megher pare megh jomeche”

Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens.

Ah, love, why do thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?

Parjaay/Category: Prem/Love

Upa-parjaay/Sub-category: Prem-Boichitra/Separation

Taal: Kaharwa

Rag: Bhairavi

Mood: Melancholic

“Maran re, tuhu mamu shyamsamaan.”

O death...you are a replica of my Krishna!

Hearing to the Rabindra sangeet, which I am mentioning here for the sole purpose of analysis, it seems to me as if it is in his songs that the evolution of Tagore from what he called a state of being into one with nature is best captured.

The poetic dimension of Tagore in his musical compositions was greatly, inspired by the Baul devotional songs of Bengal. Tagore might have realised the importance of relations where society is concerned as reading to his song’s lyrics and listening to the tunes, which he has wound around the semblance of the words, are just a suggestive.

Another couple of examples are as mentioned here:

Parjaay/Category: Pujo/Spiritual

Upa-parjaay/Sub-category: Bondhu/Friend

Taal: Dadra

Mood: Spiritual

“Dekhechi roop shagore moner manush kacha shona”-Traditional Baul song

“Bhenge mor ghorer chabi niye jabi ke amare. O bondhu aamare” [→ Rabindra Sangeet]

Na peye tomar dekha, eka eka din je aamar kaate na re.”

Breaking my locked door who will set me free

O my friend... Without you, my lonely life ceases to flow! ...

Parjaay/Category: Swadesh/My Country

Upa-parjaay/Sub-category: Bondhu/Friend

Taal: Dadra

Mood: Spiritual/Philosophical

“Hari naam diye jogot matale amar ekla nitai”- Traditional Baul song

“Jodi tor daak shune keu na aashe tobe ekla cholo re.” [→ Rabindra Sangeet]

If no one responds to your call, move alone, move alone...

CONCLUSION

The song ‘Shoghono gahono ratri’ [*Dark night*] describes the philosophical mood of a plaintive mind finding a connection to the pouring of the rain with the emotion of the bereft. On the contrary, ‘Paagla hawar badol dine’ [*Crazy windy days*] describes the confluence of happiness of a human mind with the monsoon, whereas Megher pare megh jomeche’ [*Cloud after cloud has gathered*] and ‘Maran re, tuhu mamu shyamsamaan’ [*O death...you are a replica of my Krishna!*] describes the melancholy of the mind finding its equal in continuous downpour during the monsoon.

In “Bhenge mor ghorer chabi”, Tagore’s inclination towards the “Baul” is again evident in his using the same tunes imbibed in his songs describing the “Mānēr Mānus”⁵ or the “concept of One Soul”.

Reading the words of Tagore’s songs mentioned in this article, it looks like the monsoon is not merely an experience; rather it is a symbol of life and nature intermingling together. The verse and melody of the lyrics and tunes of Tagore’s “Gitabitan” bring it through.

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SPECIFIC AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

Song title: Megher pare megh jomeche

Artist: Lopamudra Mitra / Album: Surer Doshor

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4T7eSAaw6CM>

Song title: Pagla hawa badol dine

Artist: Lopamudra Mitra / Album: Lopamudra / Ghare Phire / Tagore

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn4H6YzEBUo>

Song title: Saghano gahono ratri

Artist: Hemanta Mukherjee / Album: Ki Gabo Ami Ki Shonabo / Hemanta Mukherjee

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K67yPdv8o0>

Song title: Maran Re Tuhu Mam Shyamsaman

Artist: Swagatalakshmi Dasgupta / Album: Maran Re Tuhu Mam Shyamsaman

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXroPH3JFHW>

Song title: Dekhechi Rup Sagore

Artist: Narayan Dutta / Album: Aasman kala Jamin Kala

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r36e37llnEo>

Song title: Bhenge more

Artist: Babul Supriyo / Album Folk & Baul

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkuWIHLcgC>

Song title: Hori Nam Diye

Artist: Tulika Gangadhar / Live performance

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrZSYJR6U68>

Song title: Jodi Tor Dak Shune

Artist: Iman Chakraborty / Album: Tomar Aakash Tomar Batas

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cVMYmBBR9M>

⁵ In Mānēr Mānus (Tuczynska, 2014).