

Indian Poetry in English
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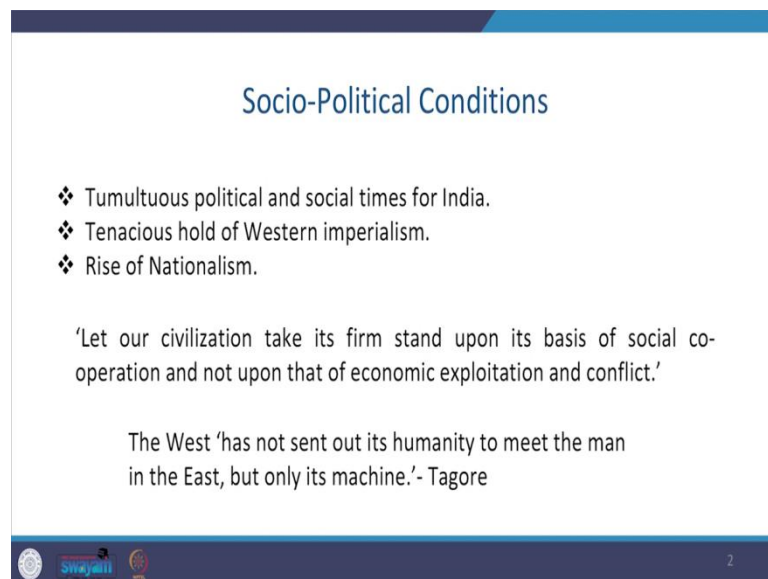
Lecture - 04
Rabindranath Tagore

Good morning and welcome back to NPTEL online lectures, on Indian Poetry in English being delivered by Binod Mishra. My dear friends, in the previous lecture that was lecture number 3 we discussed Toru Dutt. And now, we are in the midst of the 4th lecture which is on Rabindranath Tagore, a name which Indians are very much proud of and especially a particular region of our country, specially Bengal which consider Rabindranath Tagore as their poet.

And in this lecture we will see, how Rabindranath Tagore who started as a Bengali poet became--- from a national poet, to an international poet, and how he is still remembered and his contribution in the world of Indian poetry in English are not to be forgotten despite, having traveled years and years of our academic journey.

Now, who was this Rabindranath Tagore? And what were the social conditions which actually enabled Tagore to carve his poetic numbers in such a way, that he became a multi dimensional genius?

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Socio-Political Conditions

- ❖ Tumultuous political and social times for India.
- ❖ Tenacious hold of Western imperialism.
- ❖ Rise of Nationalism.

‘Let our civilization take its firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict.’

The West ‘has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but only its machine.’- Tagore

 2

The socio political conditions during that time was quite tumultuous my dear friend. And India was passing through a very difficult phase. As we have seen, there was actually a sort of national consciousness all around the country and then the tenacious hold of western imperialism was not liked by many of the nationalists.

Here, we must understand that even though Tagore was not a political figure and he did not have much access to politics. Yet, through his poetic numbers he was actually creating his songs, his lyrics and, through many of other genres because Tagore combined in himself so many talents.

He was not only a poet, but he was a dramatist, he was not only a dramatist, but a painter, a musician fine? He actually was a person who had in him, all sorts of talents which could actually work well for the development of this nation. Tagore at one place has said: 'Let our civilization take its firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict.'

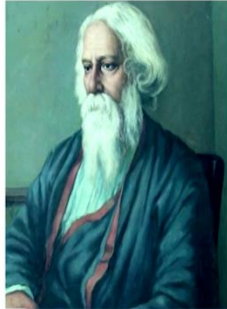
Now, during that time when India was passing through a very critical stage, and there was a fight for freedom, Tagore had a different sort of notion. Tagore was not a hardcore nationalist, and he was not even opposed to the English education, even though he was not that good at English. Which you may remember as I have said in my first lecture, how Tagore had himself mentioned in one of his letters to one of his nieces, when he said that—" I even did not know how to respond when somebody asked me for a cup of tea".

But, Tagore actually has realized that the West 'has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but also, but only its machine.' Now, Tagore was such a person who had a different sort of notion that humanity was one of the best weapons, and that is what we can find in the works of Tagore, because through different genres that he has worked how he has created a world. So, let us first try to understand, who was Tagore and how in a family of 14 brothers you know, he was actually, Tagore got his birth on 6th May 1861 in Kolkata and there was 14 siblings out of which 7 were the sons and he was the last of all.




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Introduction

- Born on 6 May, 1861 in Calcutta.
- Began writing at 17, Visited England at 17.
- Influenced by English Romantics and great Victorians.
- Nobel Prize in 1913- First non-European
- 'The Great Sentinel'- Gandhi
- Bengal Renaissance.
- 1901 Ashram at *Shantiniketan*
- 1921 Established *Visva-Bharati* University
- Died on 7th August, 1941.



Poet, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, composer, painter, thinker, educationist, nationalist and internationalist




3

Tagore was right from the beginning influenced by Chandidas, Vidyapati and many more because he had been listening to, and he also remembered and admired the songs which was in a different sort of tradition that was a Vaishnava of our tradition.

But, then he was also not untouched by the English Romantics and great Victorians. We will find later, how he was also influenced by the major romantic poets, and also by major Victorian poets, and how he could also find in his own world the element of Browningsque and then also of Whitman.

So, he combined in himself a sort of exposure to Western education,, even though he was not that good at English. Now, many of us may wonder that Tagore, who began writing at a very small age of 17, and you know as it would have it, being a Bengali he started writing in Bengali. So, primarily Tagore was a Bengali poet, but then how he became an English poet was also by accident that we shall discuss.

Tagore's writings and his views, because Tagore was a thinker even besides being a poet, a painter even besides being a playwright, a nationalist even besides being a person who was actually thinking of the his own pattern of education, but he was also a sort of internationalist.

It is only because of those feelings, that Tagore had composed our National Anthem Jana Gana Mana that you many of us are reminiscent of. And this was for the first time recited in one of the meetings of Indian National Congress, and later on it became our National Anthem.

It was in 1901, that he started a sort of Ashram at Shantiniketan which has become world famous and, this Shantiniketan which later on developed into a University had a mix of all sorts of scholars, not only from India, but also from abroad such was a great vision of Tagore fine?.

And Tagore died on 7th August 1941, a man who had so many qualities, he had also a long life to lead. So, how Tagore came to be recognized as an Indian English poet, and how he became an English poet that we must know, my dear friend.


During the time when nationalism was on the rise, Tagore had been translating many of his own works, though he was writing in Bengali, many of his Bengali works got recognized and he had become very popular in Bengal as popular as Chandidas and Vidyapati.

And Bengali's are still proud of, and they must be proud of not only them but we Indians must be proud of Tagore being a poet who brought to India the first Nobel Prize in literature.

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Contd.

- Nationalism was rising
- National Anthem
- Translated many works
- Interested in astronomy, biology and medicine:
Vishva-Parichay.
- Wrote Haiku poems
- Vedic and Rig-Vedic affiliations provided with Imageries
 - 'Cosmic element poetically domestic'
- Away from theocentric vision to scientific vision

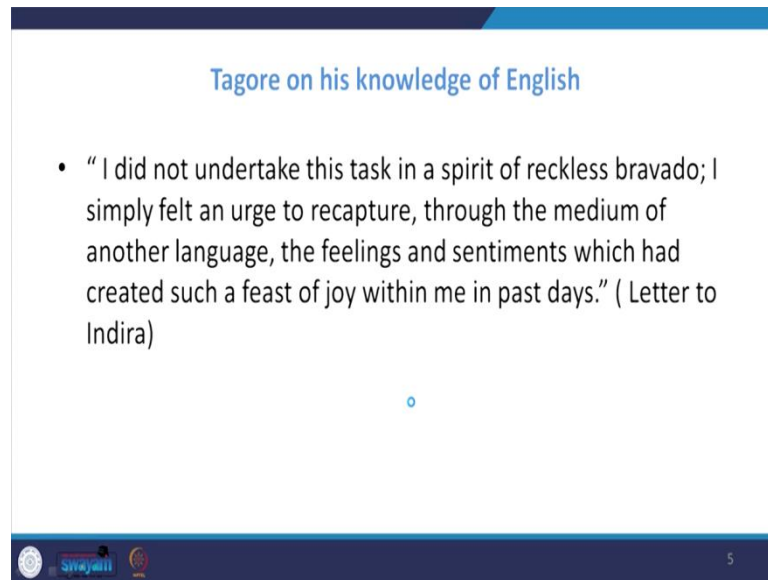


4

There was actually a beautiful blend of Vedic and Rig Vedic affiliations, which provided Tagore with all sorts of imageries and in the world of Tagore we will find, if you go through because most of us are familiar with Tagore's *Gitanjali* which was translated as song offerings, fine?

We will see how it became an English poetry and how it opened the minds of the people away from India. Away from the theo-centric vision, Tagore had a scientific vision my dear friends. But how did this happen? How Tagore composed *Gitanjali*?

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The slide features a blue header with the title "Tagore on his knowledge of English" in white text. Below the title, a bullet point contains a quote from Tagore: "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 past days." (Letter to Indira). The slide has a dark blue footer with logos on the left and the number "5" on the right.

Tagore's knowledge of English as I have been telling that it was not in English, that one can say it was actually a flawless or immaculate English, but he himself has realized that his English was not good, but when he translated *Gitanjali*, he in one of his letters again wrote to Indira his niece.

"I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado;

I mean while he was translating his own works into English. So, he says that :

"I was not undertaking this task in a spirit of reckless bravado, rather I simply felt an urge to recapture; let me underline the word **recapture** through the medium of another language, the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in past days."

My dear friends, Tagore has visited England even in his youth also. But then in 1912 because earlier also Tagore got a lot of time as a manager of his own states, he used to take England journeys, where he got a lot of time to think, to revise his own poems and this finally, had become a habit.

So, when in 1912 Tagore, was going to England through this inland water on the ship, he thought, because in order to get himself relieved of the boredom and the envy that those days the journeys included, he started translating some of his poems. And not only did he translate; so while he was translating he did not have in his mind that they should become a classic, he translated.

And in England he actually lost his own translations in the railway tube, which was later I mean his translated works were later actually recovered by none other than his son Rathindranath, who actually shared it with Professor William Rothenstein. And you know, this is how it was in 1912, and it was in 1913 that the message of Tagore becoming the recipient of Nobel Prize in literature came, and after this news came Tagore's reputation became bigger.

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Tagore's Major Works in English

- ❑ *The Gardener* presents both male and female point of view in love.
- ❑ *The Crescent Moon* delineates with both the outsider and insider's view of childhood.
- ❑ *The Child* was inspired by a passion play in Germany.
- ❑ A conventional allegory in which 'the Man of Faith' is killed during the night by his despairing and impatient followers.

Gitanjali (1912)
The Gardener (1913)
The Crescent Moon (1913)
Fruit Gatherings (1916)
Stray Birds (1916)
The Fugitive (1921)
Lovers Gift and Crossing (1918)
Fireflies (1928)
The Child (1931)
Poems (1942)

By that time Tagore has himself established himself in Bengali, but now he was also known as a great English poet, but before that let us try to understand what was it in his works that made him so great a poet. Apart from *Gitanjali*, there are other works also of Tagore which we must be familiar with, the very *Gitanjali* came out in 1912 followed by *The Gardener* which was published in 1913.

My dear friends, all of us must remember that Tagore wrote only one poem in English and that was towards the end and that was *The Child* in 1931, rest of the poems are merely his translations and you know these are either translated by him or by some other

people. But, his translations have established his reputation because his translations are not only translations, but rather transcreations. So, one of the books entitled *The Gardener* which was published in 1913, it is actually it is a sort of love fest as Srinivasa Iyenger calls it is a sort of love fest and here we find whereas, in *Gitanjali* we find that it is a sort of song suffering where he says

“I sing to thee,

I came to sing of thee,

Here there is a quest there is not only a philosophical, but a spiritual quest in *Gitanjali* as we will see.

Here he himself at times surrenders, here he himself at times feels the joy of being in the company of God and the lines of *Gitanjali* are so beautifully carved, my dear friend that at times he says---“ Oh you do I did not know he came sat by my side, I could not know how what a sort of sleep it was”. So, Tagore believes and he blends the finite with the infinite.

But, in the other book that is *Gardener*, where he talks about love and this love is between humans, it is not between man and God, but between humans. And then there is another book which was published in 1913, the same year *The Crescent Moon* which talks about childhood.

And while he talks about childhood, he not only talks about one side of childhood, but he provides both the sides of childhood. The child being looked as an adult, the outer and the inner sides, insider’s view of childhood. And there are many beautiful passages where you will find that how the child believes in a world of day dreaming while throwing his glances out of the window, while thinking of the butterflies, while thinking of the flute while.

I mean there are many sorts of wonderings that the child has and then, when if even if we read today we can find how the nascent childhood has gone, how the nascent childhood has died. And then the child, as I said, one of the only work that was written in English by Tagore was inspired by a passion play and that also in Germany.

Once upon a time when Tagore visited Germany, he was asked to write a play, asked to write a play which could have the basis of the Man of Faith. Surprisingly enough this Man of Faith, who actually twills for millions and millions of his people and those people who were following, but at the end of it so happens, that the same Man of Faith is killed by his impatient followers.

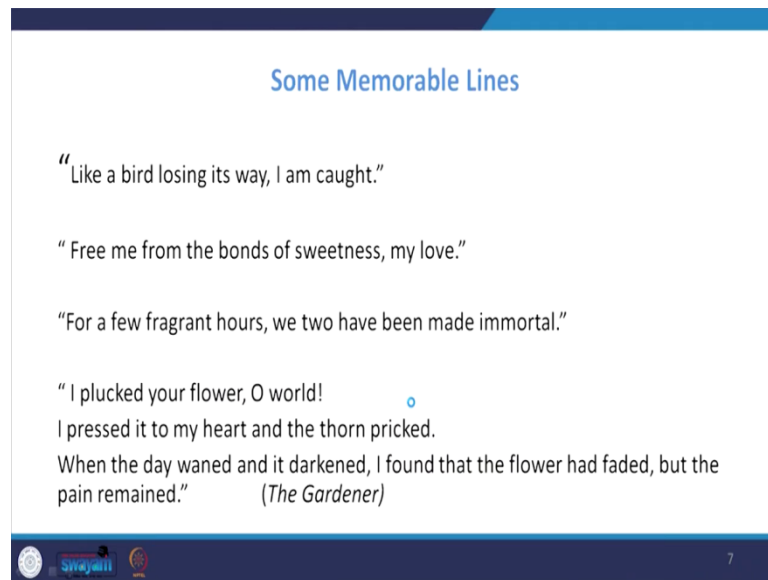
Many people believe that this Man of Faith, the killing of this Man of Faith suddenly turned out in the killing of Gandhi, as you know after the Independence fine? So, but then there cannot because these are all sorts of imaginations--- or all sorts of things that people can think about, but then it is actually this child is actually an allegory, which as I said the Man of Faith, who is killed during the night only by his despairing and impatient followers my dear friend.

So, even if *Gitanjali* which has more than 100 odd poems and most of his poems are actually written in a song sequence. But, apart from *Gitanjali*, let us first try to and it is we do not have much time to talk about the entire corpus of Tagore's world, but we shall simply be touching upon because my aim through this course is to familiarize more and more Indian poetry in English not only of our precursors, but also of our present times.

Now, *The Gardener* which is considered to be a love poem, a love fest there are certain lines because Tagore believed and since Tagore was a man who had in him a sort of literary bilingualism. And in this poem, *The Gardener* he talks of love in various manifestations and he says, that love has got different sorts of voices.

And here he talks about love not only the love of one person, but the love both of male and female where he says that love can at times create anger, at times identity, at times it can create a sense of possession, at times it can provide a sense of debilitating influence upon man.

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Some Memorable Lines

“Like a bird losing its way, I am caught.”

“Free me from the bonds of sweetness, my love.”

“For a few fragrant hours, we two have been made immortal.”

“I plucked 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.” (The Gardener)

swjain 7

And here are some lines you can find

“Like a bird losing its way, I am caught.”

Many of Indian critics can find in all these the different sorts of rasas ,fine, the rasaa-- or the inner delight which I have been calling. They actually at times can be the rasas of Shringar, the rasas of Virah, I mean separation,

“Free me from the bonds of sweetness, my love.”

And when he talks about love uniting people, he says:

“For a few fragrant hours, we two have been made immortal.”

We two have been made immortal, and again when he talks about the female love he also talks about how the shy female lover, the demure female lover at times in a very instantaneous way she says ‘go’ and later on starts feeling like weeping—“ oh why does not he come back.”.

And one very important and significant line from The Gardener, which can make us all swim into an ocean of delight is

“I plucked your flower, O world.

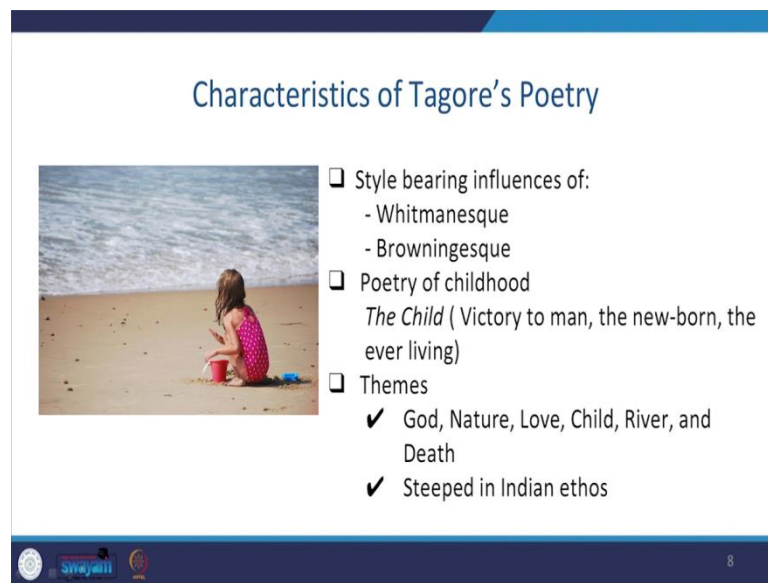
I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.

When the day waned and it darkened,

I found that the flower had faded, but the pain remained.”

I mean both the sides of love-- you know the meeting, the union and also the sort of separation.

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The slide is titled "Characteristics of Tagore's Poetry" in a blue font. On the left side, there is a photograph of a young child in a pink dress sitting on a sandy beach, looking out at the ocean waves. To the right of the photo is a list of characteristics:

- Style bearing influences of:
 - Whitmanesque
 - Browningsque
- Poetry of childhood
 - The Child* (Victory to man, the new-born, the ever living)
- Themes
 - ✓ God, Nature, Love, Child, River, and Death
 - ✓ Steeped in Indian ethos

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for "swayam" and a small number "8" in the bottom right corner.

Now, what actually are the characteristics of Tagore's poetry? Is Tagore only a love poet? Yes, in Tagore we can find there are various manifestations of love; love not only to human being, but love to the almighty who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. And Tagore has sung end number of number of songs not only in praise of the Almighty, but also trying to create a sort of human bond with the divine, where he actually makes us remind of the themes of God, Nature, Love, Child, River, and Death.

What makes Tagore an Indian poet is the strain and the Indian ethos, the Indian sensibility my dear friend. Now, as I said earlier that, Tagore was not hostile to English education or the western influence, Tagore was actually trying to create a sort of synthesis between the East and the West.

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Synthesizing East and the West

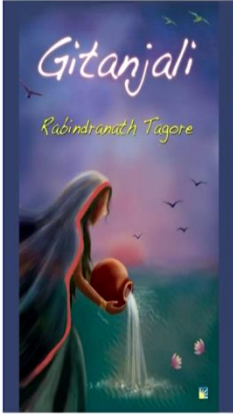
“ We must recognize that it is providential that the west has come to India and yet someone must show the east to the west, and convince the west that the east has her contribution to make to the history of civilization. India is no beggar to the west, and convince the West .and yet even the west may think she is, I am not for thrusting off western civilization and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association.”

9

And that is why even though not so good at English what he said “We must recognize that it is providential that the west has come to India, and yet someone must show the east to the west. The west should actually know what are the qualities of the east and convince the west that the east has her contribution to make to the history of civilization. India is no beggar to the west, and convince the West. And yet even the west may think she is, I am not for thrusting off western civilization and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association.”

So, all Tagore wanted, that it is only by integrating with the West that we can have a sort of development. So, he was a very forward looking person as regards his poetry, as regards his vision, as regards his thought processes and as regards his own philosophy. Now, since *Gitanjali* made Tagore one of the world famous poets and brought a laurel to India in the form of Nobel Prize in literature.

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Gitanjali (1912)

- A gain in loss
- Theme of 'devotion'
- Lyrical & Expressive
- Tone is philosophical, devotional and mystical
- Transcreation than translation
- Unconscious act
- 'There are moments when the translations surpass the original' -Buddhadeva Bose

swajani 10

It is actually a gain in loss. Why loss? As I told you, the manuscript of it was forgotten or lost in the railway tube and later on it was recovered. So, had it not been lost perhaps it could not have caught the eyes of the English poets, and the English painters like William Rothenstein and W. B Yeats who happened to be so moved, that whenever he got time, he used to read that in hotels and restaurants he has himself mentioned fine?

And then whenever somebody came he used to close it lest others may know and see that W. B Yeats had been moved rather. And he had written a preface to it, the theme of this *Gitanjali* is complete devotion, in Indian context we can find it; it is actually imbued with the Bhakti rasa, the Bhakti rasa, devotion. The tone may appear to be very philosophical, devotional and mystical, yet it is not devoid of the delight, fine?

And as I have said, it was not only a translation even though Tagore might have tried to translate it, but later on it became a sort of transcreation and Buddhadeva Bose, one of the famous Bengali poets has said, "there are moments when the translations surpass the original and that have become in the case of Tagore".

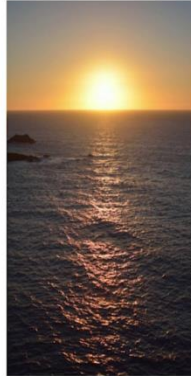
So, after Tagore got Nobel Prize in 1913, the entire world came to know that Indian literature is so vast, Indian literature had such a great depth as many of the forefathers had been trying to promote it. Many of the songs in this collection are in the form of semi sonnets and even they are philosophical, I mean at times the poet may appear to be talking of a sort of pessimism yet there is a sort of optimism.

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Characteristic features of *Gitanjali*

- Semi-sonnets
- Philosophical
- Relationship between God and Devotee (Man)
- Is there a ray of hope?
- Shift from pessimism to determined optimism

“I have carried the manuscripts of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me.” (W.B. Yeats)



11

So, there is actually a shift from pessimism to determined optimism. And here the one that I was referring to about W. B Yeats who says;

“I have carried the manuscripts of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or in the top of omnibuses and restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me.”

So, W. B Yeats at during his own time was quite famous and even Ezra Pound had also a lot of appreciation for these verses and William Rothenstein or the professor painter actually later came to know that, once he had come across this man, but at that time I could not understand that is he was such a great person.

Now, in order to understand the beauty, the rhythm, the philosophy and the sort of surrender, and the sort of devotion that Tagore offers in his Songs offerings we can find because Tagore, did not believe that there was only one way to love God.

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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 himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

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.

And in poem number 11, what he says is actually a sort of eye opener when he says

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.!

So, when you are chanting and you are thinking that God is before thee no, and you see what he provides the solution and he says;

“ He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones.”

Let us see this sort of sympathy and this sort of optimism that Tagore had for the common ranks of people, the farmers.

He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil.”

Tagore does not say that one should actually worship only one God or one should have his or her opinions, or his or her devotions to one religion, rather he says the true religion is the religion of the common people.

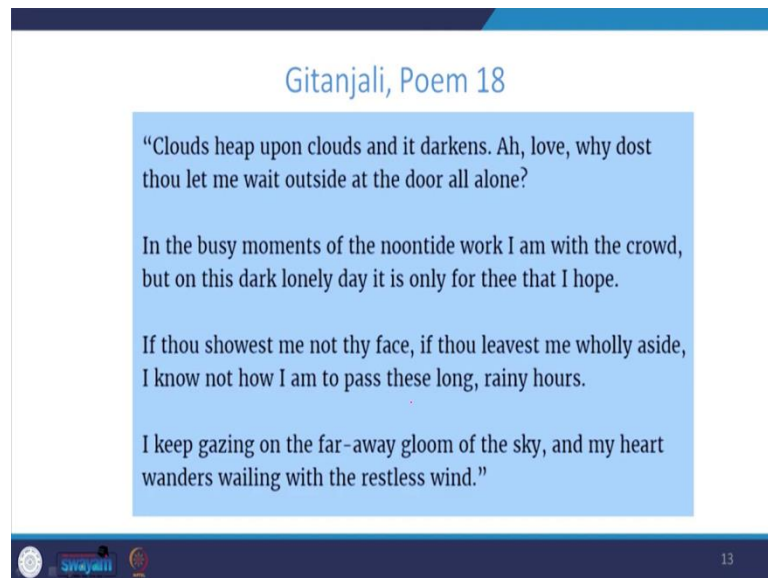
“Deliverance? Where is the deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us for all ever.”

Come out of that meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense, what harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?”

His sympathies are for the poor people no? Even though Tagore himself was from a very rich and cultured family, but his heart, bled to those walking in the ground, those walking in the fields and this is how he says that--- God does not belong only to somebody who has confined God and simply chanting, but God is with them who are actually hard working, God is with them who are there walking in isolation, but then trying for the greater welfare.

My dear friends, there are around 100 poems in *Gitanjali* and all of them we cannot say that one is meager or some other is greater, but all the poems in it actually remind us of the sort of significance that Tagore had been having.

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Now, here I am actually passionate enough to recite another poem, that is poem number 18 from *Gitanjali*, where you see how he depicts.

“Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside the door all alone?

No he tells God, why do you let me wait outside at the door all alone?

In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd.”

So, we are reminded of one very beautiful poem, I am the ‘I am the mob the mass the crowd’ fine. So, God is with those people;

If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside,

I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy hours.

I am in the hours of sorrow and you alone can take me up,

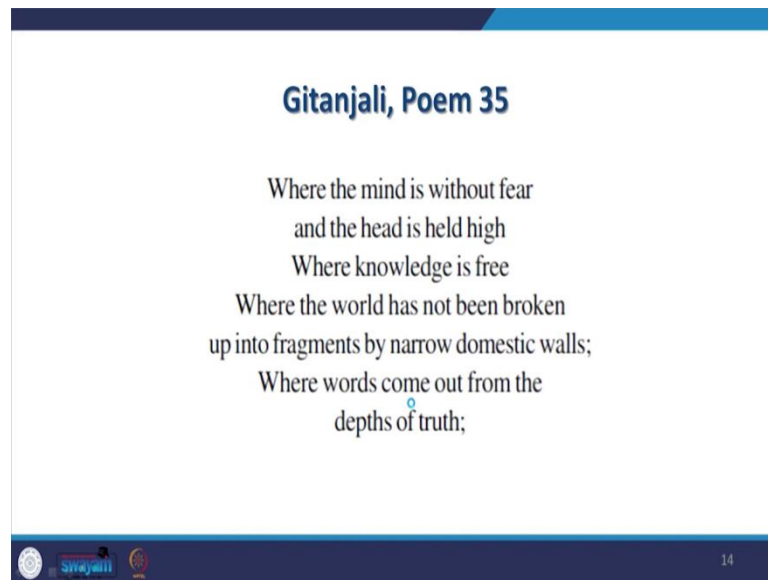
you alone can convert all my sorrows into joys.

I keep gazing on the far-away gloom of the sky,

and my heart wanders wailing with the restless winds.”

And then there is another poem which need not be forgotten because, it was such a poem which while it was a part of song suffering, but it actually prompted people to come out of the, come out of a sort of mental slavery.

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And then this poem is has been prescribed in most of the colleges and universities where he says;

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,

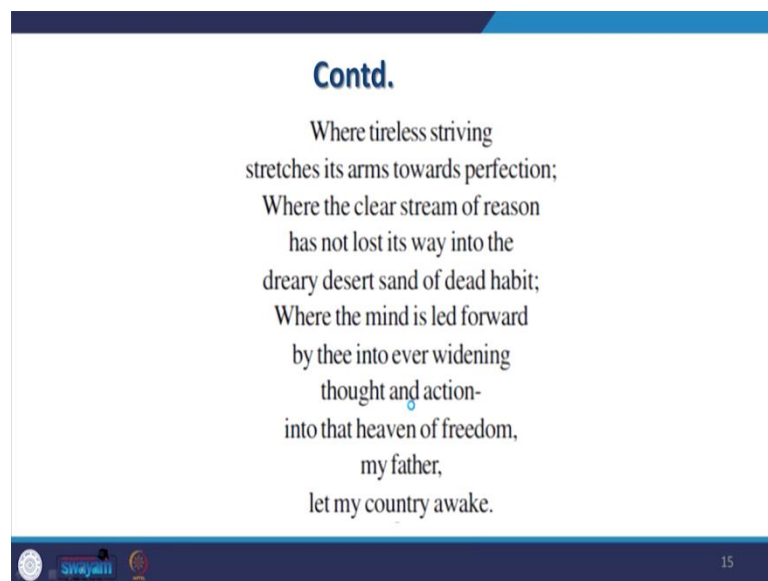
where knowledge is free,

where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

where words come out from the depth of truths.

Can there be any poet writing like this, where he talks about no boundaries where, he talks about man's ultimate freedom from any sort of slavery even though he was not political, but then what he was here trying to direct was, a sort of invocation to people to get out of the sort of you know the sort of dependence that we were in.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:17)



Where tireless striving

stretches its arms towards perfection;

where the clear stream of reason

has not lost its way into the

dreary desert sand of dead habit.

And then finally, he says:

into that heaven of freedom,

my father

let my country awake.


So, in a way as a poet, he was trying to invoke the masses, he was trying to invoke the citizens of this people that at all costs we have to get our own freedom, the freedom that we are not enslaved.

There are certain characteristic features which, since you might have read this poem not only during your school and college days, but you can find at times there are several repetition and several literary devices have been used the repetition of the word where is actually reminiscent of the use of anaphora and then there is a sort of integral philosophy.

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Characteristic features of the Poem

- Utopia of freedom
- Freedom from Mental slavery
- Seven subordinate clause with one main clause
- Restoring what Britishers had robbed from our country
- Patriotic yet universal
- Use of anaphora – ‘where’
- Integral Philosophy



swajani 16

The poem talks not only talks about freedom, but it talks about freedom of all sorts and it also talks about how Britishers who had actually been ruling over us and exploiting all our resources, how they need to be realized that the country belongs to those people who actually are the soils of the soul and not the alien ones.

So, there is a sort of patriotic voice, but then this voice cannot be confined only to Indian settings, it can actually spread to all of the nations which once upon a time had been being ruled by the alien powers.

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On the Seashore (From The Crescent Moon)

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.
The infinite sky is motionless overhead
And the restless water is boisterous.
On the seashore of endless worlds
The children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand,
And they play with empty shells.
With withered leaves they weave
Their boats and smilingly float them
On the vast deep.
Children have their play on the
Seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim,
They know not how to cast nets.
Pearl-fishers dive for pearls,
Merchants sail in their ships,
While children gather pebbles
And scatter them again.
They seek not for hidden treasures,
They know not how to cast nets.

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Now, apart from Gitanjali as I said, The Gardener again is one of the most famous poems and we have discussed that. But, here something because after all; all poets within themselves have a child alive in them and here is a poem from *The Crescent Moon*.

As I said earlier,” The Crescent Moon talks about both the internal and the external views of a child, how the child when he is a child or she is the child how his passions are at times circumscribed, but then how the child wants to have a sort of freedom and here he has titled this poem as” On the Seashore” and the poem goes like this.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet;

He talks about children.

The infinite sky is motionless overhead

and the restless water is boisterous;

See the images.

‘On the seashore of endless worlds

the children meet with shouts and dances’

You know the natural, the spontaneous joys.

They build their houses with sand,

Imagination, every child is an imaginative creature and

They play with empty shells.

With withered leaves they weave

their boats and smilingly float them;

childhood reminiscences

on the vast deep.

Children have their play on the

seashore of worlds.

Are you not reminded of Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations*, you might be reminded of how Wordsworth has done in that? And here Tagore says;

“They may know not how to swim,

they know not how to cast nets;

I mean the worldly knowledge they are devoid of.

‘Pearl fishers dive for pearls,

merchants sail in their ships,

while children gather pebbles and scatter them again.

They seek not for the hidden treasures,

they know not how to cast nets.”

So, they are the innocent children, but will the innocent children or should the innocent children's innocence be snatched from them, and that is what is happening, and that is why this poem has got a sort of universal appeal.

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Contd.

The sea surges up with laughter,
And pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.
Death-dealing waves sing
Meaningless ballads to the children,
Even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle.
The sea plays with children,
And pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.
Tempest roams in the pathless sky,
Ships are wrecked in the trackless water,
Death is abroad and children play.
On the seashore of endless worlds is the
Great meeting of children.



18

The sea surges up with laughter,
and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach,
death-dealing waves sing
meaningless ballads to the children,
even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle.”

See the use of simile even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle.

“The sea plays with children,
and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.

On the seashore of the endless worlds children meet; “
so again, repeats.

“Tempest roams in the pathless sky,
ships are wrecked in the trackless water,
death is abroad and children play.


On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of the children.”



So, the entire poem actually is a sort of reminiscence of all our childhoods, how in childhood we actually want to have a sight of all that goes around us, how innocently we respond to and how nature is at its work. How people are at its work, but then death is abroad and children play on the seashore of endless worlds, is the great meeting of children.

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Characteristic features of the Poem

- Evokes the innocence of the child in harmony with nature
- Contrast between the world of the adults and the children
- Imageries of Companionship
- Cosmological Existence
- Societal and human context
- Innocence vs. Danger
- Tagore witnessed the death of many. Perhaps he wants to preserve innocence



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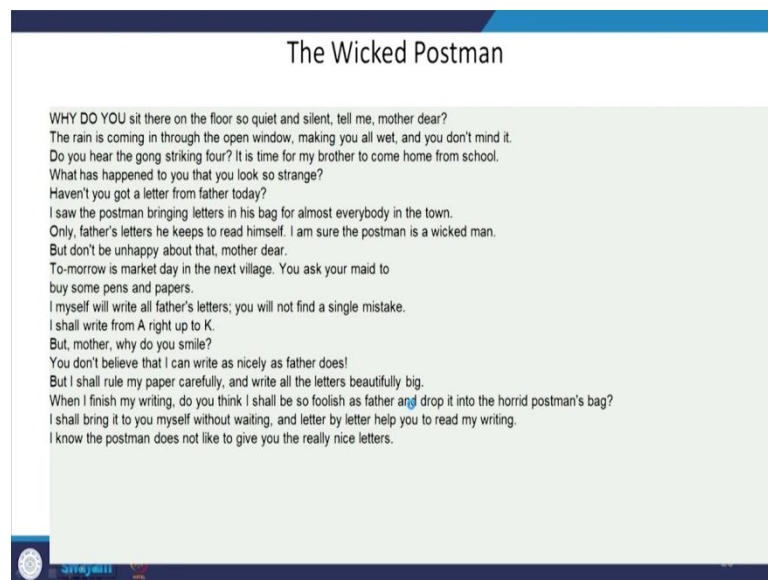
So, it not only evokes the innocence of the child in harmony with nature, fine? As we see in the great romantic poet Wordsworth's poem 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality', fine. So, we also where he says, 'our birth is, but asleep and forgetting.'

And here in this poem we find, how the adult world and the children's world has been compared. There is the children, they actually require a sort of companionship and their companions when the entire world is agog with their own merchandise, it is only nature which can be their companion, fine.?

But, then Tagore, why did Tagore write this poem what could have been the inspiration? My dear friends! Tagore had witnessed a series of deaths in his family, right from his sister-in-law, to his own wife to some of his own relatives as well, and that is how his childhood joys were destroyed. But a child during his childhood should revel and rejoice in the childhood joys and the children's joys are being destroyed by the adult world by the adult world of experiences.

So, Tagore actually wanted to preserve the innocence of the children because the smile of the children is very puerile, is very divine and he does not want to be devoid of that. Now, again we find that in many of his poems again in another poem from the poem entitled 'The Wicked Postman.'

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Here, you can again find how the child is yearning to know what the mother is doing or why the mother is so sad, where the mother, where the child is quite unaware of and since the mother has lost her husband, mother has lost her husband. The child in a sort of eagerness wants to bring a sort of consolation to the mother and the poem goes like this. where; one line of the poem can actually remind us of the innocence when the child says.

“Haven't you got a letter from father today?

I saw the postman bringing letters in his bag for almost everybody in the town.

Only, father's letters he keeps to read himself. I am sure the postman is a wicked man.

But don't be unhappy about that, mother dear.

Tomorrow is market day in the next village. You ask your maid to

buy some pens and papers. And

I myself will write all father's letter; you will not find a single mistake.

I shall write from A right up to K; fine.

The poem was actually earlier in Bengali, but it was translated into English and towards the end, the child says;

But, mother ,why do you smile?

You don't believe that I can write as nicely as father does,

but I shall rule my paper carefully, and write all the letters beautifully big.

When I finish my writing, do you think I shall be so foolish as father and drop it into the horrid postman's bag?

Again the child's world and the adults world and how the child's innocent. Innocently the child says;

“ I shall bring it to you myself without waiting, and letter by letter help you to read my writing.

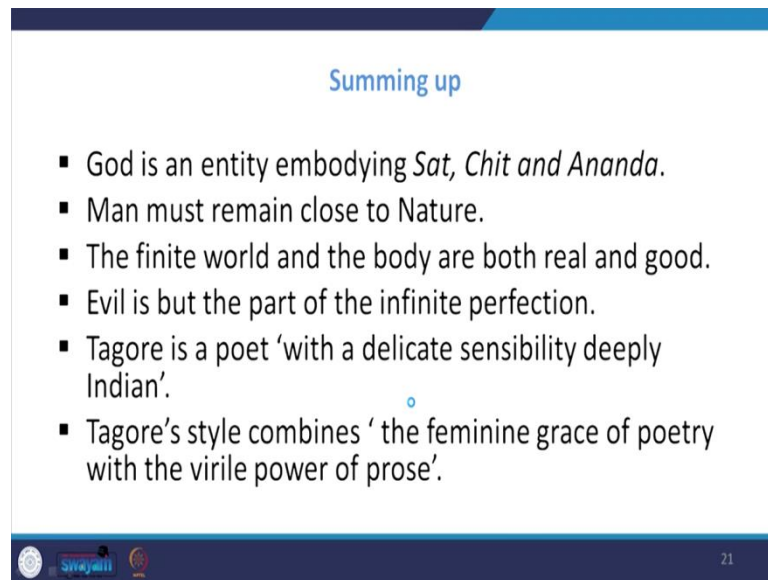
I know the postman does not give you the really nice letters.”

Now, such a sort of innocence do we really find such a sort of innocence, anywhere other than a poet who is not philosophically clad, but also thoughtfully well-dressed where language does not become a barrier, my dear friend.

And that is why, when we try to assess Tagore, even though towards the end Tagore had many critics even those admirers like W. B Yeats, Ezra Pound, C. S Lewis and others who had actually been great admirers, they actually turned turtle and they became very hostile because some of the use of the language and the repetitive languages that were found in the later works of Tagore did not please them.

But, then that actually does not beleaguer the stature of a figure like Rabindranath Tagore, who actually not only through his offerings, but through all of his poems tried to say or convey that God is an entity, which actually combines the three beautiful words sat and chit; truth, heart and delight, entertainment know anand fine?

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Summing up

- God is an entity embodying *Sat, Chit and Ananda*.
- Man must remain close to Nature.
- The finite world and the body are both real and good.
- Evil is but the part of the infinite perfection.
- Tagore is a poet 'with a delicate sensibility deeply Indian'.
- Tagore's style combines 'the feminine grace of poetry with the virile power of prose'.

21

Man has to remain true to nature that is what is the essence of all Tagore's poems. The finite world and the body are both real and good, it is not that we should simply think of the soul. We should also think of the body, we should also think of the present, but then evil is, but the part of the infinite perfection.

Tagore who actually, if we have a look at his overall corpus, we can find as rightly has been mentioned by a famous Indian critic who says that Tagore is a poet 'with a delicate sensibility deeply Indian'. There is Indian ethos, Indian strain, Indian sensibility, Indian colors, Indian words. Repetitive words like flute, like dance, like a spirit, like soul, like seashore, I mean these are the words through which Tagore's world is actually be-spattered with.

Tagore's style to conclude, combines 'the feminine grace of poetry with the virile power of prose'. This is actually what was said in the Nobel Prize presentation ceremony, the feminine grace of poetry because many people said that Tagore writes prose poems. And in the Nobel Prize presentation ceremony one of the judges said, 'the feminine grace of poetry with the virile power of prose'.

My dear friends, Tagore's world is not a world of pessimism, Tagore's world is a world of optimism and one can find layers of meaning in Tagore's poetry and before we end, let us remind ourselves of one of the beautiful lines of Tagore from poem number 45 where he says.

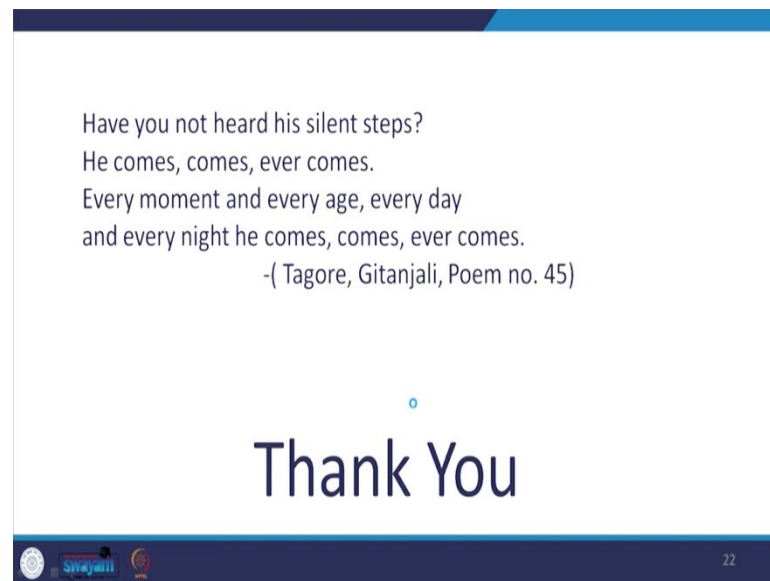
Have you not heard his silent steps?

He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day

and every night he comes, comes ever comes.

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So, life of course, may have certain ups and downs, but if a man keeps his heart intact, if a man keeps his passions intact, devotes himself to the services of God, God will come surely. His graces will come, his benignities will come and my dear friends, I will also come with the next lecture; lecture number 5 next day. With all this, let me wish you all a good day and I thank you for your patient hearing.

Thank you. Have a nice day.