

Rabindranath Tagore: A Study of Humanism and Universal Fraternity in Gitanjali

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Abstract

The present study aims to evaluate humanism and universal fraternity mentioned in Gitanjali to understand their relevance in modern times. The study has undertaken secondary data collection and thematic analysis. It has been found that the universal fraternity of Tagore is a divine interconnection between man and nature. The philosophy can be used successfully along with an educational curriculum to enhance a sense of empathy and universal fraternity. The paper situates Tagore's work within the broader context of Indian spiritual traditions and universal humanist thought, underlining its enduring relevance in promoting harmony and global solidarity. Ultimately, this study argues that Gitanjali serves not only as a spiritual offering but also as a humanist manifesto, advocating for a world rooted in empathy, equality, and fraternity.

Keywords: Modern, study, spiritual, argues, equality, etc.

Introduction

The situation has raised a strong need for literature intervention in restoring peace and order. Certainly, Rabindranath Tagore's interpretation of peace and brotherhood dilutes international borders and upholds peace and global relationships. The Nobel Prize organisation mentions Tagore's works as profoundly sensitive, fresh, and beautiful. Gitanjali fetched Tagore the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, making it worthy of discussion in the face of the global world crisis. The present study aims to evaluate universal fraternity and humanism in Gitanjali, commenting on their relevance in modern times.

Tagore's humanism promotes interpersonal relationships, and in the words of Tagore, humanism is "the religion of man" (Collins, 2008). The humanism in Tagore's view is an individual's capability to achieve the utmost self-expression. Such humanism is eternal and is divine, linking humanism directly with God. A deep observation suggests Tagore's thoughts are directed towards social reforms; however, such reforms emphasise refinement of thoughts and action. Certain works of Tagore find convergence of Indian and Western philosophies, transcending national boundaries.

The book is marked by poems having a deep spiritual context along with philosophical rigour. The original poems were published in a set of 157 in the Bengali language. It is possible to interpret Gitanjali from a multifaceted perspective, defining a complex relationship between man, nature, and God. W.B. Yeats, in the introduction to Gitanjali, mentions the work of Tagore as equivalent to Chaucer's forerunners with incredible spontaneity and passion. The popularity of Gitanjali is in contrast to the First World War, which took place in a similar timeframe and caused loss of universal peace and prosperity.

To critically analyse works on Tagore's humanism and Gitanjali, and to incorporate Tagore's philosophy of Universal fraternity with the real-time global crisis.

- To analyse the concept of humanism in Tagore's Gitanjali, focusing on its spiritual, social, and ethical dimensions.

- To explore how Tagore expresses the ideal of universal fraternity in selected poems of Gitanjali.

Poems of Rabindranath Tagore are highly inspired by diverse religious views on divine unification. The divine consciousness in the works of Tagore promotes subjective transcendence leading to the unification of the self and nature. Several instances of Tagore's poem and songs have a reflection of Baul, which depicts spiritual confluence with simplicity and an ascetic mindset. The deep influence of Baul culture on Rabindranath Tagore can be ascertained from the fact that he used to consider himself a Baul (Nangia & Printers, 2000). Often, Tagore is considered the literary flag bearer of Indian and Eastern spirituality.

The fact can be confirmed by close observation of the poetic rigour that has the essence of both Indian philosophies and other mystic concepts from Sufism. Mysticism supports union with God through meditation and supplication. There is grandeur and surrender to a greater power in their works, painting towards spiritual unification. The style and simplicity of Tagore's works uphold spiritual values in the unification of man with nature. Nature is the embodiment of spiritual presence in the works of Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore's works promote peaceful coexistence and dignified treatment of all castes, races and communities (Williams, 2007). Diversity and cultural loss due to a lack of cross-cultural understanding and hatred are significant and ongoing issues across the globe. In the present time, religious ideas are being highly twisted for personal gain by religious leaders. This has led to the creation of organisations which are rigid and orthodox. In contrast to the present landscape of religious activism.

The explicit study of available literature put forward significant gaps in the literature that the present study has an urge to fill. Most of the research is highly concentrated on the contemporary period of Tagore, and its relevance in the current global scenario is missing. The concept of spirituality has been mentioned in most of the literature in relation to nature; however, there is a strong need to discuss its impact on inter-human interaction and communication is lacking. To what extent Tagore's philosophy of brotherhood and universalism impacts cross-cultural understanding and peaceful coexistence in societal crises needs further evaluation. There is a strong need to interpret works like Gitanjali with the contemporary socio-political scenario to understand the practical implementation of Tagore's philosophy of humanism.

The present research has collected **Secondary qualitative data** followed by **Thematic analysis of it**. Emphasising the use of qualitative data to produce a new pool of knowledge in a contemporary exploration has been endorsed by an **Exploratory research design**. Secondary qualitative data has been found to add value to previously existing thoughts and ideas that were not valued due to a lack of priority and other cultural reasons (Corti & Bishop, 2005). It is noteworthy that the present research seeks to interlink earlier findings on Tagore's work with contemporary socio-political issues. As the avenue is less explored, using secondary qualitative data to generate deep knowledge for the present application is justified. As the present study is philosophical, the use of a quantitative mode of analysis is not justified.

Tagore's concept of humanism was diverse and had a strong influence of non-duality in it. It has been found that Gitanjali is marked by lines stating ethical conduct with the poor and dignified treatment of the poor (Paul, 2006). The idea of moral treatment of the downtrodden shows empathy and benevolence. Most of the verses have God at the centre of offering, with humanity having a natural propensity to be attracted towards such central divinity. The definition of Humanism in the book surpasses social differences and prejudices. In "Gitanjali", the humanism is marked by spiritual oneness, universal love, empathy and shows a universal search for divine connection.

There is a significant link between the dilution of national boundaries and universal brotherhood in the poems of Rabindranath Tagore. In the thirty-fifth poem of “Gitanjali”, Tagore mentions:

“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”;

The poem is the flag bearer of universal brotherhood and signifies that rigid nationalism is a barrier to universal inclusive growth. The factor of ‘fear’ is highly relevant in the present setup, as tensions across the globe have created an environment of fear and anxiety. Thus, fearing loss of social or cultural value is a barrier to inclusive growth.

Universal brotherhood, according to Gitanjali, is a reflection of divine oneness. According to Gilevych (2009), Tagore mentions in verse forty-three,

“And today, when by chance I light upon them and see thy

signature, I find they have lain scattered in the dust, mixed with

The memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten.”

The poem signifies that the human race appears scattered and diverse due to a lack of realisation. Divine intervention clears the veil of ignorance and leads to the realisation of universal brotherhood. The poem is highly significant as it highlights the inherent interconnectedness among people of diverse cultures and demographics.

There is a strong influence of cultural hybridity in Gitanjali as it intermixes a colonial cultural setting with traditional Indian norms (Salma, 2008). The cultural intermixing is not a mere stylistic choice, but it is an active persuasion by Tagore for self-identification. The subject matter of Gitanjali is vast and incorporates the present-day crisis as it is directed towards the exploration of the human spirit and promotion of harmony (Gilevych, 2009). Traditionally, the underlying principles of conflict have evolved due to a lack of understanding and materialistic greed.

Gitanjali have presented humanity and brotherhood as factors interconnected by divine love. Universal brotherhood in the text is a tool for self-realisation and expansion of the idea of self. Individual spiritual inclinations have a significant role to play in minimising intergroup violence. The study confirms similar findings from thematic analysis, stating that universal brotherhood is highly divine and there is a non-dual relation between the world and the self. Spiritual humanism in Gitanjali upholds moral and ethical conduct and empathy for the sufferers. The philosophy promotes universal harmony, which is currently lacking in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the application of the philosophy of humanism and universal brotherhood can be used in the contemporary world to manage conflict. The use of secondary qualitative data has helped in gathering deep knowledge for the real-world application of the poetic philosophy of Tagore mentioned in Gitanjali. Most of the issues in the contemporary world are a result of poor diversity and inclusion, which can be solved by Tagore’s philosophy of universal oneness.

The present study has been conducted using secondary data, and it needs quantitative backing. The use of primary research in conflict-prone areas to gather precise data on human loss is lacking. Perspective talking is a strong tool to enhance cultural inclusiveness and for generating empathy by means of delivering culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002). It is recommended to include verses from Gitanjali in the literature at the primary level to promote a sense of universal brotherhood and harmony.

Thus, Tagore's humanism in Gitanjali not only enriches literary discourse but also serves as a guiding light for building a more inclusive and humane world. Tagore's message resonates with renewed urgency. By internalising his ideals, humanity can move closer to a future where harmony, empathy, and mutual respect prevail.

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