

# Serving Of Suffering Humanity: A Way To Achieve God in Tagore's Gitanjali

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**ABSTRACT:** - Rabindranath Tagore is one of the greatest gems in the history of Indian English literature. He wrote in Bengali language also. His fame rests on his spiritual autobiographical work Gitanjali. At first, he wrote Gitanjali in Bengali and later it was translated into English. For this work, he got Nobel Prize in 1913. It consists 103 songs and in all these songs, he gives the message of spirituality. The present paper focuses on this question that how one can achieve the God and it is narrated through the songs of Gitanjali.

**KEY WORDS:** - spirituality, humanity, serving, sufferings.

Tagore was born in a rich family. He was very brilliant sincere child from the beginning. Apart from Gitanjali, he wrote very famous works as Chitra, Sonar Tari and The Boat of Gold. His works have had boundless popularity and boundless influence on other writers.

Gitanjali is the most famous work of Tagore and it is considered as the Bible in Bengali culture. Throughout this work, Tagore shows his love for man, love for nature and love for God. He is not an escapist. He believes in segregation, renunciation, and redemption but all these are mixed with his love for humanity. He is not a strong believer of renunciation of world. He believes that if someone wants to find God, he can find Him among the human beings. He is present everywhere and in everyone. He says that to love everyone in this world is to love God and to serve suffering humanity is to serve Almighty. God is not to be found in the temple but with the lowest and humblest. As Tagore says in poem no 10

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

If a person wants to find God, he can find him among the poor and downtrodden because they are very laborious and hard working people. They are true to their lives and duties. They do not believe in artificiality and any kind of show off. They believe in simple living and high thinking. They do those works which are necessary for all human beings. They play a very important role in the work of God as His work is to serve humanity so they are dear to God. Those who ignore the poor and humble, can never find God. The true worship of God means mingling with humanity on terms of equality and participation in their humble activities. The rich and proud can never find God for they keep aloof from the poor and downtrodden. Wealth and consequent pride are obstacles in the way of the communion with God. Service of their fellow man and love of them is the highest form of worship. Tagore criticizes the idolatry and superstitions. As Tagore says in poem no 11

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely and dark corner

Of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and

See thy god is not before thee!

God is not to be found in this way. He lives with the humble and downtrodden. He lives with that person who tills the field by bearing every pain and suffering. The path maker who works hard at breaking stones. He lives in the company of those who toil in sun and shower and whose “garments are covered with dust”. He

gives to those who remain far away from the path of lie. The rich and stylist people remain far from God because of their way of living.

Tagore glorifies the life of humble labour and rejects the ascetic way of life. As he says:

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be

Found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon

Him the bonds of creations; he is bound with us all for ever.

God himself is bound by this world so how can the mortals throw off their bondage. Tagore criticizes the life of renunciation and praises the life of action. He says that one should not live passive and purposeless life. If someone live passive and meaningless life on the name of religion, many orthodox ideas create in his mind regarding his religion and he has a kind of hatred towards others religion. While for Tagore, humanity is the greatest religion. If someone does not have humanity and does not perform his duties truthfully, he can not find the God's grace due to his ignorance. God does not love those who do not work hard and are not truthful their duties. God, Himself is not free, as He has voluntarily bound Himself to the work of creation and to the objects, he has created. How can then man ever hope to be free from bondage?

Tagore's humanism is also reflected in his poem no 35 where he prays to God for the spiritual emancipation of his country. He cries for Heaven of freedom. He wishes for a country where there should be no division on the name of caste creed and nationality. As Tagore 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...

The theme of humanism itself covers the uselessness of religious rituals, which are performed on the name of religion. He presents it through a beautiful image. Once poet's house was dark and lonely and he was in search of light to lighten it. At dusk he meets a girl carrying a lighten lamp on the desolate riverbank and he begs her to give him the lamp as he was in need of it. But she refuses him by saying that she will float it in the river according to custom and tradition and the poet remained in darkness. Through this example Tagore wants to show that true worship of God is not in the performance of rituals and ceremonies but in raising a help to the suffering and needy.

The dominating spirit of Gitanjali is the realization of God and man realizes Him after the spiritual awakening. When he awakes spiritually, he feels connected himself with every human being whether it is inferior and superior. The sense of superiority and inferiority disappears from his heart. He feels the presence of God in everything. Tagore begins Gitanjali with a belief that man is a 'frail vessel' whose own existence is short-lived and God fills it with fresh life. His immortal touch gives man joy. He is omnipresent, immanent, love, truth and life of life. He is the source of power and knowledge that's why it is man's duty to know Him and to unite with Him. Purification and spiritual discipline is essential for the mystic union with God.

Pride, vanity, ego and self-centeredness these are the obstacles in the way of spiritual awakening. These obstacles keep a man separate from God. As Tagore says

I came out alone on my way to tryst. But who is

This that follows me in the silent dark?

I move aside to avoid his presence but I escape him not.

He makes the dust rise from the earth with his

Swagger; he adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.

He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no

Shame; but I am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.

These obstacles are like the prison, which check the freedom of the human soul. One can overcome all these obstacles by his continuous efforts. Human beings need to keep the fire of divine love in their heart constantly. This fire of divine love is the fire of loving and serving of suffering humanity. For God's foot stool among the poorest, lowest and lost.

Worldly wealth and possessions are the dangers and difficulties in the path of spiritualism. Man has become so blind after name fame and money that he forgets God and became self centered. He uses all his wealth and power for his own enjoyment instead of using this in the service of God. The result is that they became the chains to keep his soul in bondage. Spiritual freedom can be achieved only when this wealth is used in the service of poor people and not for one's enjoyment. In the words of Gandhi, "the rich should hold their in trust for the poor."

One of the poem in Tagore's Gitanjali stresses on the virtue and power of charity, and self-sacrifice. In poem no 50 Tagore gives a message that one gets in proportion to what one sacrifice. The poet pictures himself as a beggar going from door to door for alms. Suddenly he beholds a king in a glorious chariot. He expected to get the big amount in alms from the king but king himself comes to the poet and says, 'What have you to give to me?' The poet considered it to be a big joke. The avarice of poet allows him the little grain of corn as a reward on returning to his home, he finds a little grain of gold in his store. He weeps bitterly and regrets that he did not give his all to God.

The parable is a poetic version of the mythical story of Lord Krishna and his boyhood friend Sudama. Sudama in extreme poverty remembers his friend and visits him in his palace. He offers Krishna some rice which he carries with him. With each morsal Krishna takes, Sudama becomes wealthier. On reaching home he found his home flooded with wealth and splendor. It shows that man must sacrifice and renounce his all in the service of God. Absolute surrender to the will of God is the only way to find Him. One, who gives all, gets all. Like the poet, one realizes this truth when it is too late.

After studying, it can be said that serving of suffering humanity is one of the greatest way to achieve God. This is also the main theme of Gitanjali. Through this theme Tagore made Gitanjali world famous because serving of suffering humanity is the essence of every religion.

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