



Mystical Elements in the Select Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore And W.B. Yeats: A Brief Study

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Abstract

W.B. Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore are often recognized as the twentieth century's greatest poets. Both institutions have a long history of scholarly collaboration. As a result of their lengthy friendship, numerous similarities have been made between Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats. Their thirty-seven-year relationship had an effect on both of these fine gentlemen. Tagore embodied the East's wisdom and integrity for Yeats, hence confirming his confidence in Asian philosophy. Yeats was regarded by Tagore as a symbol of the West's artistic energy. The relationship between Tagore and Yeats is typical of Indo-Irish relations, and the Irish poet's opening words in *Gitanjali* are frequently referenced in scholarly treatises on the subject. Both poets' legendary work is preoccupied with the eternal conflict between life and death. There is a reason for this. While Yeats' preoccupation with Tagore was fleeting, it reflects not only cross-cultural encounters inside the British colonial domain, but also Western conceptions of the Orient. This article discusses how to contextualize the works of both poets within the context of contemporary mysticism.

Key words: *mysticism, God and religion, mystic elements, Rabindranath Tagore, W.B. Yeats, Gitanjali, The Second Coming, Sailing to Byzantium, etc.*

Introduction

It is a religion that places emphasis on having a direct and intimate contact with God, as well as being conscious of God's presence in the most fundamental sense of the word. Religion at its most passionate, sensitive,

and living is what this is. For Balckburn (2005), “mysticism is characterized as a fleeting belief in the presence of realities beyond perpetual or intellectual apprehension that are fundamental to being and directly accessible through subjective experience.” Mysticism is defined as a belief in the existence of realities beyond these. Mystic refers to something that is described by someone with a higher level of consciousness than the average person. Poetry has long been a favorite of sages and mystics because it is a vehicle through which feelings can be expressed and ideas can be communicated.

Among the greatest poets of the twentieth century, Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore are frequently mentioned as examples. Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats had a long and close friendship. There hasn't been much discussion about B. Yeats among literary critics and biographers in the past two centuries. Their thirty-seven-year relationship had an impact on both of these fine gentlemen. As a result of Tagore, Yeats was able to justify his belief in Asian philosophy. Tagore viewed Yeats as a symbol of the artistic energy of the West, a view shared by Tagore.

Tagore and Yeats are both contemporary poets who are widely regarded as among the greatest of the twentieth century. Both have received the Nobel Prize in Literature in English. Both are recognized as national poets in their respective countries. Both fought against the English and took part in the national liberation struggle. The mystic union is only possible through God's grace for both of them. They both believed that human marriage is an appropriate system for spiritual life. Both are poets, patriots, painters, philosophers, and lovers of beauty. Both pondered the issue of life and death. Both had a dreadful school experience and despised formal education. Tagore renounced the Knighthood in protest of the Jalianwalabagh massacre, whereas Yeats declined it.

Both had a long life and a long poetic career that spanned more than fifty years. If Yeats was eager to learn the ancient wisdom of the east, Tagore served as the East's cultural prophet for the West. Yeats admired Tagore's *Gitanjali*, and he was instrumental in introducing him to the West by writing the *Introduction to his Gitanjali*. Tagore and Yeats had a twenty-seven-year friendship that had a significant impact on both of them. It is worthwhile to compare the philosophies underlying their poetry and uncover previously unknown aspects. This work is an attempt to delve into the essence of Indian philosophy, which had a significant influence on Tagore's humanistic vision and futuristic vision of Yeats. The goal of the research is to uncover the mystical dimensions in their poetry, as well as the similarities and differences in their thoughts. Tagore, meantime, was enamoured with India and spiritualism and longed to meet like-minded men in the West. When it came to politics, Yeats had a particular fondness for Irish mythology. It's no surprise that Tagore was brought up and looked the part of an aristocracy, while Bengali tradition was a rich source of inspiration for his writing and music. They were both captivated by the relationship between poetry and song. Both poets produced work that had a mystical feel to it. They were divided between wanting to be a part of society and wanting the privacy that comes with being a poet. Both were literary renaissance figures who had a tremendous impact on the coming up generation of writers.

Preface on Gitanjali by Yeats

“Indian culture and Mr. Tagore are both satisfied with seeking the spirit and surrendering to its spontaneity. Every time he talks, it's as if he's comparing his path to that of those who have loved more and have more influence in the world than he has. Men passing by on their way home grin at me, which makes me feel embarrassed. Then I sit like a beggar maid, with my skirt pulled up over my ears, and do nothing when they ask me what I want. The playmate of the idle days has the pleasure of drawing my heart on to him now, and I do not know why this sudden call to something pointless in effect,' he would explain at a later period. As close to him as children are, the birds and the leaves seem as close to him as before our sentiments appeared between them and us. This purity and simplicity can be found nowhere else in literature."1961 (Yeats)

In the words of Chatterjee,

“Nature has been a source of inspiration to many in their mystic quest. The Rig Vedic seers had a sort of quasi vision of the Supreme Truth- amid natural phenomena and to nature was a living inspiration, with which they always remained in direct communion.” (Chatterjee, 193)

A well-known mystic, Rabindranath Tagore regarded nature as an inspiration and metaphor for eternal truths. It grows in importance over time. Tagore of *Gitanjali* is profoundly influenced by nature's majesty, but this cannot conceal the truth of his inner existence. The poet's inner darkness is often dispelled by the mystic light that illuminates Nature's realm.

Rabindranath Tagore has been dubbed the "Shakespeare of India" by admirers of his work. "*The Gardener*" and "*Gitanjali*," two of Tagore's most prominent works, reveal his spiritual outlook. On the other hand, poems like *Sailing to Byzantium* and *The Second Coming* of Yeats occupied much prominence with respect to spiritual point of view. This article investigates the connections between Tagore and Yeats in their writings, with a focus on Mysticism. There is no better poet than Rabindranath Tagore to bridge Eastern and Western spirituality in the first part of the twentieth century. People from many walks of life can benefit from reading his verse, which is genuinely spiritual while also being extremely sensitive.

Historically, the Tagore–Yeats connection is representative of Indo–Irish relations, and the Irish poet's opening lines in *Gitanjali* are frequently quoted in academic studies. Both poets' illustrious works deal with the age-old question of life after death. There's a good reason behind this. Yeats' short-lived fixation with Tagore is not only a reflection on British colonial experiences, but also an illustration of Western conceptions of the East. Tagore's capacity to transcend national and social borders as well as its mystic and religious aspect captivated Yeats and other western readers.

“As the Eastern Sage, Tagore outwitted the Orientalists who, like the Colonizers, saw actual places in the world as fleeting venues in which to live out one's dreams.” (Sen, 2010)

To Yeats, India, as portrayed in Tagore's poetry, was everything he had imagined it to be: enthralled by the supernatural and dedicated to a literary tradition in which poetry and religion were interchangeable terms. On the other hand, Yeats was not blameless. Tagore was subversive in the way he rewrote his own poetry. Instead of a logical sense with worldly love, Tagore's poems portray a metaphysical sense with divine love, which is why Tagore appears to be one step ahead of Yeats in his poetry.

Swami Adiswarananda states:

“Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical and spiritual thoughts transcend all limits of language, culture, and nationality. In his writings, the poet and mystic take us on a spiritual quest and gives us a glimpse of the infinite amid the finite, unity at the heart of all diversity, and the Divine in all beings and things of the universe.”(Tagore, 2004)

However, the term "mysticism" has undergone a number of definitional shifts. “An article in the research says that the term "mystical" is occasionally used to refer to a wide range of manifestation and ideologies such as occultism and spiritualism, as well as eastern and new age philosophies, as well as the sublime meetings of saint and mystic geniuses.” (Daniels, 2003).

It is possible to deduce the difference between religious and mystical experiences from this examination. Carl McColman (2010) discusses Mysticism in his work titled "*A Contemplative Faith*."

1. “The pure experience of mysticism itself (whether this means a joyful encounter with God's presence at the Eucharist, or a mind-blowing absorption into Divine Unity during deep contemplation or any of countless other ways of experiencing the Mystery).”
2. “The struggle to wrap words around such pure experience, always doomed to at least partial failure, since by its very nature mystical experience is ineffable.”
3. “The quest to invest such mystical language with meaning and relevance interpreting the reports of mystical experience in terms of their religious, social, political, psychological and moral value, both to the individual and to the community in which the experience occurs.”
4. “And finally, the effort to pass on the treasures of mystical wisdom, not only in written works such as the writings of the great mystics but also in more informal ways such as individual spiritual direction and the formation process for monastics and oblates.”

Rabindranath Tagore believes that God can be found all around us in the natural world. He expresses his gratitude to God by taking in the splendour of creation, which he sees as a reflection of God's presence. Tagore

isn't a conceited individual. He remembers God's blessings even when life is harsh and people are complaining. In his poetry, he makes direct allusions to God, saying that He bestows blessings on man without asking for them. The greatest gifts that man may ever receive are the things he enjoys in this universe, such as the sky, stars, wind, and flowers.

“This is my prayer to thee, my lord — Strike, strike at the root penury in my heart.

Give me the strength to lightly bear my joys and sorrows. Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend on my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.”

Rabindranath Tagore

Christian mystics such as Ignatius of Loyola or Francis of Assisi or Teresa of Avila are often credited with writing the above prayer. The devotional poetry collection "*Gitanjali*," composed of Tagore's devotional poems, expresses spiritual adoration and contemplation of God's numerous benefits. They reminded some listeners of the Old Testament Psalms. Because of their spiritual honesty and aesthetic beauty, these themes appeal to individuals of all faiths. When Tagore writes about spiritual experiences, he does so in a way that is not only appealing and engaging but also one in which his readers will feel a strong sense of identification.

In *The Little Flute*, he writes,

“Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales,
and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new...”

Gitanjali's potency was derived from Tagore's own encounter with God. Tagore's biographer, Edward J. Thompson, stated:

"What matters in (Tagore) is... his personal experience of God. " Anyone who has read *Gitanjali* will have no doubts as to its profundity or honesty. God has an uncanny way of getting right up close and personal with him. More frequently than not, he leans toward pantheism than any other Western theist. The Indian's relationship with God becomes more intimate and individual as a result of God becoming more individualized for him... Unless he found it in personal experience, I'll suppose that neither flesh nor blood revealed to him but rather our Heavenly Father in His Son, Jesus Christ.” (Thompson, 2003)

His poetry reveals a profound spiritual awareness and mysticism time and time again. A good example of this may be found in his 1928 book *Fireflies*, which states the following:

“I touch God in my song
 as the hill touches the far-away sea with its waterfall....
 Love remains a secret even when spoken,
 for only a lover truly knows that he is loved....
 In love, I pay my endless debt to thee for what thou art.” (Tagore, 1999)

W.B. Yeats

The occult system and mysticism were introduced into poetry for the first time by none other than W.B. Yeats. His poetry, which resurrects the gods and fairies of Celtic mythology, is laced with mysticism. It was a mystic event for Yeats, and the poem he wrote was infused with that experience, giving it a spiritual dimension. Yeats's interest in the esoteric helped open up his mind and imagination to a deeper level.

According to Yeats, the mystical gospel is as follows:

1. That the boundaries of our mind are constantly altering, and that multiple minds can merge and produce or expose a common mind and energy.
2. That our memories are part of a single huge memory, Nature's memory.
3. That symbols can summon this vast intellect and memory. (Jantzen, 1995)

There are many ways to express the mystical in poetry, but one that stands out is Yeats' use of imagery to bring these mythological places to life through his poems. This poet's poetry is steeped in ideas of otherworldliness and spirituality; he was fascinated by these subjects and it shows in his work. It all started with him being drawn to the esoteric world of Theosophy and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an ancient mystic fraternity, when he was a young man. Philosopher Carl Jung utilised conical gyres to represent the soul, as well as his conceptual picture of time as a series of concentric circles. It is common to find references to mysticism and magic throughout Yeats' poetry, particularly in "*The Second Coming*" but also in other works like "*Sailing to Byzantium*" and "*The Magi*" (1916). To reject Christian ideals and instead embrace a more supernatural view of spirituality gives Yeats' poetry a distinctive taste that influences his treatment of history, politics, and love in his poetry.

Throughout his life, Yeats had a keen interest in occult, mysticism, and astrology. Throughout his life, he devoured books on the subject and, in 1911, he joined the Paranormal Research Organization The Ghost Club. According to his words from 1892, if he hadn't made magic his primary focus, he wouldn't have had time to write the black book or create *Countess Kathleen*. Everything I do, think, and write revolves around my mystical life. Yeats narrates his quest for the enigmatic realm of spirits in Byzantium.

“Before me floats an image, man or shade,
 Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
 For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
 May unwind the winding path” (Yeats, 1962)

There is mystery in the world of spirits; the speaker is unsure whether he is looking at a figure, a man, or a shadows. In the end, he comes to the conclusion that the apparition is made up of a composite image. When you unravel this image, you'll discover even deeper passages into Hades' ghostly realm, the invisible bedrock of the visible world.

A fascinating personal encounter informs Yeats' beliefs about life and history. Using the paranormal phenomenon known as automatic writing, he and his wife attempted to communicate with the spirit world using just their hands and pens. Yeats meticulously analyzed and categorized approximately four thousand pages produced during more than 400 sessions of automatic writing. Gyres are interpenetrating cones that depict mixes of opposing opposites from both a personal and historical perspective, according to him. Gyres were, according to him, set in motion by the divine impregnation of a mortal woman, first with Zeus' rape of Leda and then with Mary's conception as an unblemished virgin. Yeats discovered that symbolic events happened in the middle of the 1000-year halves of each 2000-year era. According to him, a civilization can acquire exceptional brilliance during periods of equilibrium, and Yeats used the grandeur of Athens in 500 B.C., Byzantium in 500 A.D., and Italy in the 1500s to illustrate his point about the possibility of this. Byzantium conjures up visions of rapture and revelation on a phantasmagorical scale.

“Dying into a dance, An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve. Astraddle on the dolphins mire and blood, Spirit
after spirit! The smithies break the flood, The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.”

Yeats experienced visionary trance, which allowed him to enter this hypothetical realm, but such experiences are not limited to mystics and master poets. Yeats didn't give a step-by-step guide on how to achieve these ecstatic states of consciousness. Although he was an outspoken critic, his art and life showed others the way to more creative and enlightened approaches to life and the spirit. The fact that he was prepared to take risks and even look dumb in search of a more lively and transcendent experience of life makes him an admirable example to anyone who has strong spiritual yearnings but does not feel accepted or comfortable in conventional religious traditions.

Conclusion

Both literature and philosophy are based on the process of thought, and the synthesis of the two has a long history. Both a philosopher and a poet are concerned with ultimate reality as it relates to the human life vision. Their disclosure strategies are obviously distinct. A philosopher is someone who is capable of reasoning, analyzing, and speculating in accordance with a set of rules. In comparison, a poet employs his imagination to surround the reality of human life. Additionally, inspiration and faith are essential for a poet to create any work of art. A philosopher employs intellectual activities in order to comprehend truth as ultimate reality. He is a staunch supporter of science. To convey ultimate reality, the poet employs his own literary style. Additionally, a poet possesses his or her own vision, which enables him or her to see and analyze any object. Aristotle properly identified poetry as a form of philosophy.

When it comes to readings, Rabindranath Tagore and even W. B. Yeats can take you beyond time, religion, and language. There is a lot of confusion in our lives now. We use language in explicit ways, citizens are terrified and adhere to stifling belief systems, and individuals have more communication technology than ever before, but they feel more alone. In these times of historical and psychological turmoil, Tagore and Yeats' works clarify our sometimes-confusing inner experiences. To them, the soul and imagination are key in an ancient worldview, creating a vital middle ground between consumer materialism and rigid fundamentalism. We must examine the enigmatic spiritual roots of our existence and build an environment that is open to beauty and a profound sense of the sacred, a vision that is still relevant in today's world.

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