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RESEMBLANCE OF EMANCIPATION BETWEEN TWO LEGENDS: A CLOSE STUDY ON YEATS'S POEMS AND RABINDRA SANGEET

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ABSTRACT

It is universal truth that literature should not be defined or divided according to any specific region or language. So literature is a world centered concept where all races, languages, religions got mingled. During the beginning period of 20th Century, Eastern and Western literature posses some kind of similar literary conception specially on spiritualism and mysticism. W.B. Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore were the chief intellectual and literary representative of Ireland and India respectively during that time. Basically they were the identity of their own nation before the World. In this paper my intention is to find out the philosophic resemblance of that two Nobel Laureate in few of their writings specially on their conception of spiritual emancipation.

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One of the most important incident in the field of World literature was occurred on 7th July, 1912 when William Butler Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore met for the first time. This friendship opened a new kind of philosophy and idea. Basically in that time Yeats was highly influenced by the Indian philosophy that was depicted by him in his Preface of Tagore's "Gitanjali" (Songs Offerings, 1913). Yeats was attracted towards the Indian mystic Purahit Swami. Therefore he and Tagore shared their own theory on poetry, humanity, peace, freedom. Tagore was a poet, as well as a singer, song composer. So his songs also bear some semblance with Yeats.

To evaluate Yeats's conception of purification, emancipation and mysticism two of his famous poems 'Sailing to Byzantium' (1927) and 'Byzantium' (1930) should be mentioned. In the very beginning of the poem 'Sailing To Byzantium' Yeats described a very sorrowful state of his country in the eyes of an old man. It was surrounded with

sensuality that was unsuitable for an old man. So he wanted to remove himself from that kind of wretched situation. So the old man wanted to forget his decayed body and educate his soul with immortality. Unable to find any suitable position in his country he sailed to Byzantium that is the centre point of the poem. To describe the primary condition of Byzantium he stated very significant lines :

"O Sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall."

In those lines Yeats described fire as 'holy' thing and the sages as the divine representative. The sages stood in the fire like the stones in mosaic marbles. He asserted the permanence of the sages in fire . The old man requested those agent of God to purify his souls. So here fire stands for purification. So he appealed to them :

"Consume my heart away, sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal."

It is very significant because the old man wants to burn all his animal desires that are the black mundane wishes of our soul. It will be then easy to go to the eternity. Here the burning is not agony but the blessings of God. Through this fiery purification we may take the divine shape. Here Yeats used fire not as destroyer but preserver that remind us God Shiva in Hindu mythology. No doubt here fire stands for purgatory.

In this regard the second important poem is "Byzantium" where the poet described the 'fiery purification' in detail. In the opening line the poet said -- "The unpurged images of the day recede" that imply that those 'unpurged' should be purged that is the point of view. After describing the skeltonic unpurged shape the poet directly went to the purification episode. He wonderfully described the divine fire that is blazing autonomously without any support of faggot or steel. He said --

"Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame
Where blood begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave."

We are wondered that no storm can disturb this divine flames that is begotten of blood. Then all 'blood begotten' spirits are thrown in the fire. Thus all the complexities, desire, furies of life are purged by that 'holy suffering' of being burnt. It is the 'celestial agony' that can remove all the real agonies of life. So the poet emphatically expressed the holy blessings of that fire :

"Dying into a dance
An agony of trance
An agony of flame that can not singe a sleeve"

Here by the words 'can not singe a sleeve' Yeats again asserted that this burning is not agonious but pious. So here Yeats discovered fire in a totally new form. It is very clear that in those two poems fire stands for emancipation, hope, purity, divinity and all those are auspicious for mankind.

Again in the care of the poem "News for the Delplic Oracle" (1936-39), Yeats discussed the painful purgatorial process of the deads who are carried by the Dolphins. They are compelled to

relive their lives mentally for purification. Thus they suffered too much eternally. Even their Thus cries are treated as some sweet or melodious tone. However they are thrown brutally by the savage dolphins in some chifft – sheltered bay. Then at least their souls would be purged. Here Yeats again discussed the eternal process of purification that looks as punishment in general eyes but actually reward of holy piousness. We may quote from the poem.

"Straddling each a dolphin's back
And steadied by a fin
Those innocents relive their death
Their wounds open again."

It is notable that the Pythia was known as the 'Oracle of Delphin,' a name given to the priestess of the temple of God Apollo. So this oracle is the message of God. When the friends of Plotinus went to Delphic in order to know anything about their friend, they came to know that Plotinus was sent to the Island of Blessed for some purification. In that poem Yeats imagined the process of that purification where he involved the God indirectly in that process. So we may think that painful but holy purgatorial process was being done by the instruction of Almighty.

Now I shall turn to the World Poet (Viswa Kabi) Rabindranath Tagore. In beginning of discussion on him I want to mention a famous song of Tagore.

Let the holy flame of fire be touched the heart,
Make the life pious by the burning blessing.
Uplift my body up and make the lamp of your temple,
May the light flame be blazed in song throughout night and day."

In that song Tagore considered the flame of fire a holy and pious thing that can purify the heart. Here the fire is not horrible rather it's burning may lead our soul to the Heavenly place. Tagore wished that such fire should blaze in our heart for all time that purge our soul and body. So he offered his body to make the lamp of the temple that means he wanted to burn his body. So here no doubt fire stands for purity. In the concluding line of the song Tagore said --

"All my anxieties will be uplifted high"

It is very clear that all the sufferings of human life may be cured by that 'burning'.

In another Rabindra Sangeet, the composer asserted that we can have emancipation from all uncertainties or agonies of our life by the 'divine punishment'. It is not torturous but celestial. So here he made his point on 'fiery harp' (Agnivina) that shakes the whole Universe by its pious light and by its fiery touch human life can get new path. So our mind can be purged and rejuvenated by that 'fiery song'. So Tagore said –

"How are you playing the fiery harp!

The sky is shaken by the light-song of star

.....Your fiery attack in the night

Blaze new star on my agony."

In another lyric Tagore used fire as an agent of emancipation. He wished to uplift his soul in the sky of ceaseless freedom. The World Father arranged a sacrificial alter (Yogya Vedi) from where the holy flame is coming out. He is very hopeful that we can get our freedom beyond the mundane burden of our life by dedicating ourselves into the holy fire of sacrificial alter (Yogya Vedi). Thus we shall be purged. We may quote from the song :

"My release lies in the light in the sky

My release is in the dust and grass

... sacrificial alter of the Father is the agony burning suffering

Thus Invoke my life to the open sky."

Like Yeats Tagore deserved the divine punishment from the God. In order to get emancipation we should welcome that 'punishment' with smile face. Actually the punishment is not 'burning' but a prize that we shall be getting in after life. We should reject all our black desires by that purification. He compared human mind with the smell stick and candle. The smell stick does not provide any smell or the lamp any light unless and until it is burnt or lighted by the fire. So we can not show our morality or inner strength unless we are burnt.

Allegorically, this is not burning at all, but lightening the lamp of our life. In that particular song Tagore delivered a philosophical message :

"You have done well being cruel

Thus blaze the fire in my heart

... when my mind is in an unconscious state

Your punishment is then a prize

In the darkness I can't see you

But turn my all 'blacks' into fire"

Tagore treated fire in a different point of view. According to his philosophy we may go through our celestial way of love by burning our soul. He wanted that the mind of every beloved should be purged in order to get true touch of love in fresh heart. So he begged to his lady love to blaze the light lamp of our life before ending of night that means the earthly life. It is a fine philosophical lyric –

"Blaze the life lamp before the night ends

By your fire

My silent mind is waiting with its own darkness

To be burnt."

Tagore was well aware that every human life is unfulfilled. It's impossible to satisfy all the desires with in a single life. But we should have always a positive view upto the ending of our life. We should first throw all the garbages of failure of our life. So the mind should be purified that can turn all miseries into pleasure, all bad to good, failure to success which is the ultimate goal of life. Again he used the fire as 'magic purifier' by which touch all piousness shall be coming –

"Blaze the fire burning all the garbages of failure

I want light in that solitary darkness of night

... Adding the blowing wind in my mind

You have mingled back-white by the flame."

Apart from discussing the point of purification it is found that both Yeats and Tagore were devotional towards the Almighty. In sailing to Byzantium the poet urged his countrymen to give all of their desire to the holy feet (fire) of God who can mercy us all. Then as a reward, he can send us to the divine world with a new shape. In the worlds of Yeats in the poem –

"Once out of nature I shall never take

My bodily form from any natural thing

But such a form as Grecian Goldsmith make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling."

Here the 'hammered gold' is the ultimate purification and the consequence of the fiery blessing. In the poem the old man gave all his

mundane animal like desires to the holy fire. Here Yeats bear a resemblance with Hindu funeral system. The dead body of a Hindu man is burnt in the funeral pyre in the belief that all the bodily sin of that man will be purged by that burning. Thus the man will reincarnate in a new pure shape in the coming life.

The same conception is found in the case of 'Byzantium' when after the ending of purification process the bodies take a new shape with the blessing of God.

"There image that yet
Fresh images beget
That dolphin torn that going tormented
sea."

In that two poem Yeats is a believer of the purity of God and after life. Here he is a mystic sage who advised the countrymen to give everything to God in order to get 'pleasurable punishment.' We have to give up all our 'black traits' that will be converted into good one. Actually Yeats's mysticism is not only confined within academic purpose, but any man can get the new glimpse of light reading Yeats. He defined his mysticism and devotion in his letter to John O'Leary –

"The mystical life is at the centre of all that
I do and all that I think and all that I write."

It basically enhanced his imaginative flight. He described the agonious condition of old age in 'The Tower', but in the ending portion of the poem due to the poetic imagination strong spiritual and mystic power he said –

"Now shall I make my soul
Compelling it to study
In a learned school."

It is the fundamental policy of philosophy and ontology that we can't get the divine freedom in that living world. But every human being is afraid to leave that sensuous world due to fear of Death. It is the highest fear of any human being. So to enter in the world of new hope (Byzantium) in the voice of Yeats we should first overcome the fear of death. So as a mystic singer Tagore invoked the God of Light (Yotirmoy) to be cruel enough to smash the hard shield of Death by His divine auspicious hand. He again urged to the "Horrible God" (Rudra or God Nataraja) to burn the mundane heart so that we can

conquer death. Here Tagore applied 'cruel kindness' and invoked the God.

"You be victorious light man
You arrive conquering death, you be
victorious
... Cut the decayed dress by your hard hand
Come purity, come brave you be victorious
You morning Sun in horrible face
Blaze the fire in the heart, conquer the
death."

It is notable that Tagore's concept of emancipation is closely related with God. He treated the wrathful appearance of God as preserver who can destroy all evilness of the world. He advised his fellowmen to worship that idol and to be loyal, submissive, devotee to God, not to be afraid of Him. We can not achieve our ultimate goal (The Shiddhi) with corrupt heart. So in his songs five stands for the holy touch of God. He wanted to surrender all of his belongings to the Almighty and said in his song –

"I know I have to give everything
All of my fame, all of my voice
... Filling your pleasure with my tone of
agony
Let me to be yours
All I have will be yours in holy time
I have to give every thing."

The song has a close resemblance with 'Sailing to Byzantium.'

Like Yeats Rabindranath thought that our character possess many traits of vanity and arrogance that are the detested features of mankind. We should pray to our Idol to mercy us for that. Then we shall be freed from all that mundane sin and our body will be as celestial as God. So devotion brings love, emancipation. So he said –

"Let my head be bent to the dust of your
feet
Drawn my vanity in my tears."

Here Tagore emphatically said that vanity and arrogance is responsible for our down fall. Basically, we do not do anything ourselves but as per the intention of God. Then we should be devotee to his feet.

I find the same anxiety of Yeats in the voice of Tagore that our life is filled with sensuousness that are the 'Seven deadly sin' according to

Testament. So we have to purify ourselves from those sensuousness. He has to educate our soul like the old man of 'Sailing to Byzantium'. So Tagore prayed to the God to take away all our such sins –

"How long shall I be carrying the burden of
sex

... Rejuvenate the desires by killing them
Then it will be victorious being defeated by you."
In another song Tagore used the 'Dipavali' (Festival of light) that is being celebrated in Bengal on 'Kali Puja' in that belief that the fiery light of that night will conquer all the evil powers. He wanted purification by treating his body as the clay-lamp on which the fire blazes. It is the divine interpretation because 'Dipavali' is the symbol of purification. He devoted himself to the wish of God by being burnt as the clay lamp –

"Your message is beautiful
It may provide freedom in my body and
heart
Dipavali is the festive of world
I am the clay lamp, blaze the flame
The light-glimpse is your wish."

Here Tagore's theory of evil and redemption should be discussed. Actually evil is any sort of mischievous act including lust, miseries that are the 'mire' in Yeatsian thought. Tagore had a philosophical outlook on that good and evil co-exists in our Universe. So we have to overcome this evil. So the purgatory is very urgent to convert all the mischievousness to good for the mankind. He considered it as the play (leela) of God to mix suffering misfortune with goodness and pleasure.

"Misery knocks at the door and her
Message is that thy lord is wakeful and
He calls thee to the love-tryst through
The darkness of night."

So the pain does not give any agony but purge the soul. Here Tagore added universality and mysticism with this poetic theory that pain brings the message of coming pleasure that is the shape of 'Goldsmiths of Byzantium'.

In conclusion it is to be noted that at the ending portion of Yeats's literary career he was disillusioned with Tagore. He found the lack of vitality in him. Actually the socio-political condition, the difference of colonial stand point between

Ireland and India, difference of attitude on 'Nationalism' with Tagore is responsible for that consequence. Though he lacked the friendly, sympathetic outlook on Tagore later, but he never condemned Tagore, even praised him before few years of his death. So ignoring all those controversies we make safely state that there was a close affinity on the philosophical, spiritual concept of that two legends and the world literature is highly enriched by that friendship.

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