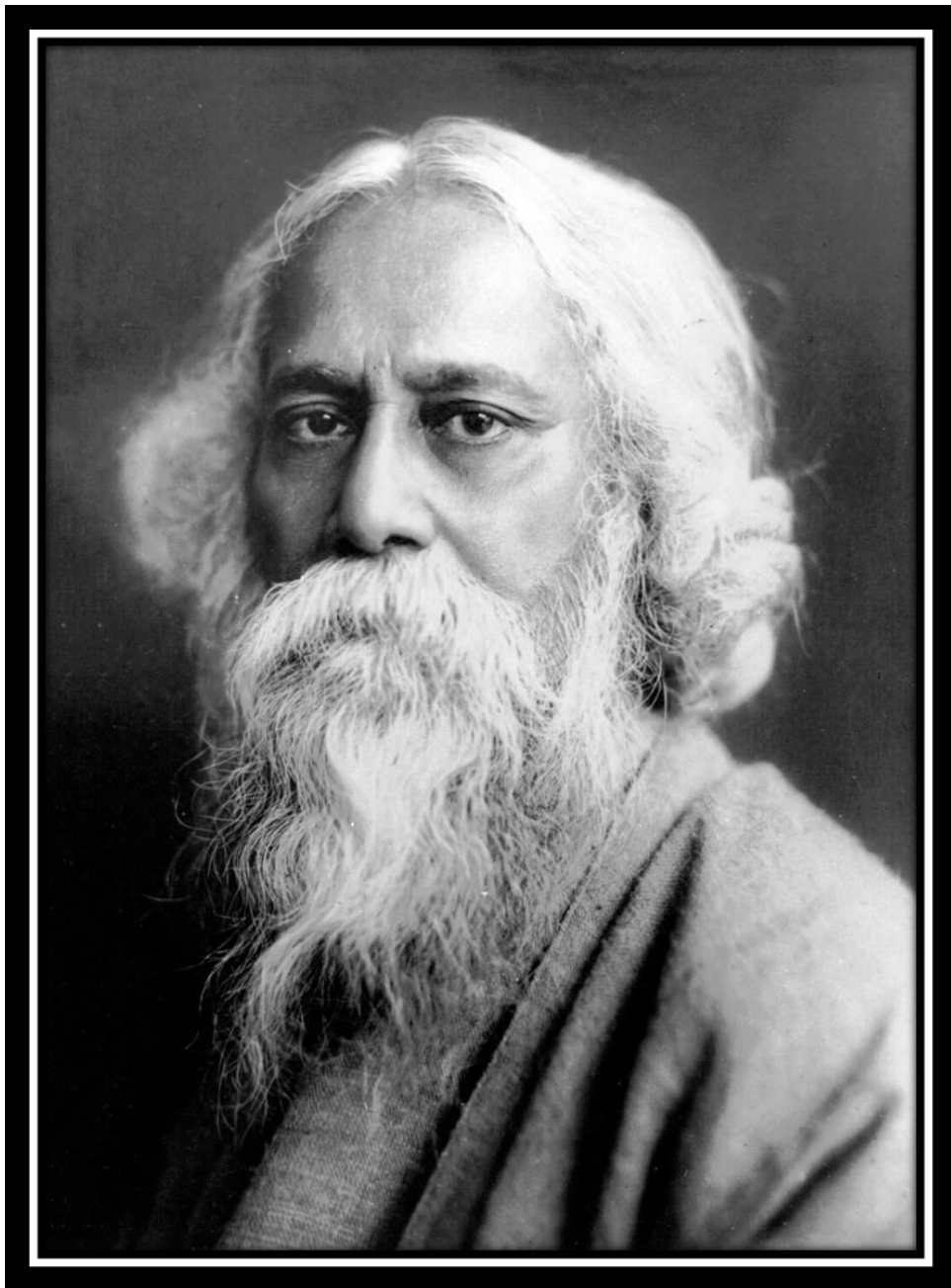


CHAPTER: 1

CREATIVE – ARTISTIC WORLD OF
RABINDRANATH TAGORE:



CHAPTER: 1**CREATIVE – ARTISTIC WORLD OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE:**

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was born into a wealthy, influential, and culturally active Brahmin family. The name Tagore is an English corruption of the title Thakur (that is, Brahmin), and the name Rabindranath means “Lord of the Sun”¹. Rabindranath Tagore is undoubtedly the doyen of Bengali and Indian literature. From an early age, Tagore’s literary talents were encouraged, he was thoroughly schooled in Bengali language and literature as a foundation for integrating culturally diverse influences, and, throughout his long career, Tagore composed most of his work in Bengali.
- His contribution to all art forms like music, painting, sculpture and literature-poetry, fiction and drama is remarkably par excellence. He is the first Asian to receive the much coveted highest literary honour – the Nobel Prize for literature for his monumental poetic creation ‘Gitanjali’ –The Songs Offering in 1913. He popularized the ideal of learning in the lap of nature by founding Shantiniketan the abode of peace as an ideal educational institution which later developed into the Visvabharati University.
- Tagore is generally viewed as a symbol of the integration of East and West. In the East, he is known as a great poet and thinker; in the West, he is best known as the author of Gitanjali, which is characteristic of his work and considered to be his masterpiece. Recognized as a prolific and accomplished writer in all genres, Tagore is internationally acclaimed as one of the world’s greatest lyric poets.

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC JOURNEY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

- Rabindra Nath Tagore is known in the West chiefly as a writer of lyric poetry, but he is very much more than a poet. How many-sided are his activities will be realized when one remembers that besides being a poet, he is also a dramatist of real distinction, a novelist, a literary critic, a renowned educationist, a religious teacher, a social reformer, and a writer of political and historical tracts, ethical treatises, children's books and poems and miscellaneous - essays. But one thing is common to every field of his literary effort, which is that it is always unmistakably affected by his own personal aesthetic outlook and philosophical ideas. The form may differ endlessly, but the essence remains always the same, namely, the expression of his own self. Primarily he is a critic of life-not merely life as we see it, clothed in its physical trappings and social and moral conventions, but life that is much larger and deeper than the human mind can comprehend.

➤ MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND OCCUPATIONS:

- Literature
 - ⇒ Novels
 - ⇒ Poems
 - ⇒ Short Stories
 - ⇒ Essays / Criticism
- Play Writing / Dramatics
- Theatrician / Dramatic Production
- Dancing
- Music
- Drawing and Painting
- Sculpting
- Lectures
- Excursions
- Social Service
- Patriotic

➤ **PRINCIPAL WORKS:**

- Glimpses of Bengal Life 1913
- The Hungry Stones and Other Stories 1916
- Mashi and Other Stories 1918
- Totakahini (The Parrot's Training) 1918
- The Trial of the Horse 1919
- Broken Ties and Other Stories 1925
- The Runaway and Other Stories 1958
- Galpa Guccha (Story Collection) 1959
- Collected Stories from Rabindranath Tagore 1970
- Collected Stories 1974
- Chokher Bali (Eyesore or Binodini) (Novel) 1901
- Gora (novel) 1907–10
- Gitanjali (Song Offerings) (Poetry) 1910
- Raja (Play) 1910
- Dak-Ghar (The Post Office) (Play) 1912
- The Crescent Moon (Poetry) 1913
- The Gardener (Poetry) 1913
- Fruit-Gathering (Poetry) 1916
- Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World) (Novel) 1916
- Lover's Gift and Crossing (Poetry) 1918
- The Fugitive and Other Poems (Poetry) 1919
- Raktakarabi (Red Oleanders) (Play) 1920

➤ **TAGORE AS DRAMATIST:**

- Rabindranath Tagore was a 'Prolific Dramatist' would be an understatement. In his sixty-year career as a playwright, he wrote more than fifty works in the dramatic mode. He tried his hand at so many different styles that a classification of his dramatic output is essential.
- Tagore constantly revised, reworked, or abridged his existing work and made dramatizations of his own fiction. Apart from the two pieces that became dance

dramas, three plays (including Sacrifice) had their origins in novels and five others in various short stories; Worship of the Dancing Girl had its genesis in a poem. Tagore's last dance drama began in the form of a poem written in 1899, metamorphosed into a dance drama in 1936. Similarly, the play Paritrn started off as a novel published in 1883, was dramatized with a different title in 1909, and ultimately rewritten under another title. In the cases of five other plays, including The King of the Dark Chamber, Tagore constructed concise acting editions with altogether different titles.

⇒ **MUSICAL DRAMA:**

- Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki), 1881
- Kal Mrigaya (The Fateful Hunt), 1882
- Mayar Khela (The Play of Illusion), 1888

⇒ **VERSE DRAMA:**

- Rudrachanda, 1881
- Prakritir Pratisodh (Nature's Revenge), 1894
- Raja O Rani (The King And The Queen), 1889
- Visarjan (Sacrifice), 1890

⇒ **POETIC DRAMA:**

- Chitrangada, 1892
- Viday-Abhishap (The Curse At Farewell), 1894
- Malini, 1896
- Gandharir Abedan (Gandhari's Prayer), 1897
- Sati (The Faithful Wife), 1897
- Narak-Bas (A Soujourn In Hell), 1897
- Karna-Kunti Samvad (Karna And Kunti Dialogue), 1899
- Lakshmir Pariksha (Lakshmi's Testing), 1897

⇒ PROSE DRAMA :

- Grihaprabesh (House-Warming) 1925
- Sodhbodh (Acquittance), 1926
- Natir Puia (The Dancing Girl's Worship), 1926
- Tapai, 1929
- Kaler Yatra (The March Of Time), 1932
- Chandalika (The Untouchable Maid), 1933
- Tasher Desh (The Land Of Cards), 1933
- Bansari, 1933

⇒ COMEDIES:

- Hasyakautuk (Laughter And Fun), 1907
- Byangakautuk (Mockery And Fun), 1907
- Goday Galad (Wrong From The Start), 1892
- Sesh Raksha (Saved In The End), 1928
- Baikunther Khata (The Manuscript Of Baikuntha), 1897 267
- Basheekaran (Captivation), 1901
- Chirakumar Sabha (Association Of Professed Celibates), 1926 278
- Muktir Upay (The Way To Deliverance), 1938

⇒ SYMBOLIC DRAMA:

- Saradotsab (Autumn Festival), 1908
- Rinsodh (Repayment of Debt), 1921
- Mukut (The Crown), 1908
- Prayaschitta (Expiation), 1909
- Paritran (Deliverance), 1929
- Raja (The King), 1910
- Arup Ratan (The Jewel Without Form), 1920
- Achalayatan (The Static Institution), 1912
- Guru (The Great Teacher), 1918
- Dakchar (The Post Office), 1912

- Phalgune (The Cycle Of Spring), 1916
- Muktaadhara (The Free Current), 1922
- Raktakarabi (Red Oleanders), 1924

⇒ **NATURE DRAMA:**

- Basanta (The Spring), 1923
- Sesh Barshan (The Last Rains), 1925
- Srabangatha (The Song Of The Rains), 1934
- Nataraja: Riturangashala (King Of Dancers: The Theatre Of The Seasons), 1927
- Nabin (Rejuvenescence), 1930

⇒ **DANCE DRAMA:**

- Sapmochan (Release From Curse), 1931
- Nrityanatya Chitrangada, 1936
- Chandali (The Untouchable Maid), 1938
- Nrityanatya Mayar Khela, 1938
- Syama, 1939

⇒ **DRAMATIC LITERARY INFLUENCES²:**

→ **KALIDASA:**

- Above all writers, Tagore perhaps revered the classical Sanskrit master Kalidasa the most; his early drama contains much proof of the impact of Kalidasa's heroic themes, nature imagery, and lyric language.

→ **KABIR:**

- The mysticism of the fifteenth century poet Kabir attracted Tagore, too, as did the devotional fervor of Vaishnava religious poetry, presenting human love as simultaneously sacred and profane.

→ **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:**

- Among Western dramatists, he respected William Shakespeare. It is significant that he liked Antony and Cleopatra, Othello.

⇒ **MAJOR DRAMA ANALYSIS:**

→ **THE POST OFFICE:**

- The adjectives commonly applied to Tagore's prose drama are "symbolic" and "allegorical," but the playwright frequently disclaimed these notions. The Post Office, perhaps Tagore's most famous play, presents a fine example of how commentators trip over themselves attempting to lace his plays with significant meaning. A generally accepted theory suggests that this short play symbolizes and fulfils in its action the human desire for union with God. Such an interpretation, if correct, would cruelly contradict the actual situation depicted³.
- A terminally ill boy, the center of attention, dies in the course of this play. Amal (the name signifies "pure") is too young even to understand the concept of God, much less wish to be united with Him. On the contrary, he is full of genuine joie de vivre, constantly imagining what he would do once able to walk again. The ordinary person would feel only sadness, not joy, for Amal's passing. The meaning of the play is "less intellectual, more emotional and simple, it simultaneously rejoices that he has been liberated — according to Hindu beliefs — from the shackles of the material world.

→ **RED OLEANDERS:**

- Tagore's preoccupation with life, death, and God in the first decade of the twentieth century gave way to a more overt analysis of political and social subjects during the 1920's. Red Oleanders epitomizes the best work of this phase. Set in an imaginary town called Yakshapuri, the play presents a society in which the hoarding of gold demands strict discipline and a stratified class structure based on the suppression of human rights. He had condemned the passion of greed among colonial powers, "stalking abroad in the name of European civilization," and humiliating subject races;

and the impersonal attitude in modern humanity that transforms the spirit of science into the tyranny of the machine, preferring mechanization over humanitarianism.

- The playwright had become increasingly troubled by the evils of twentieth century civilization and seemed to offer an alternative solution in the person of Nandini, the heroine of this play. Nandini symbolizes spontaneity, love, altruism, and the spirit of humanity in communion with nature. The rebellion she instigates against the dehumanizing and exploitative order succeeds; the invisible King of Yakshapuri comes out and joins forces with her to destroy his own Frankenstein after he sees the havoc it has wrought. *Red Oleanders* has been variously interpreted as a call to Indians to take up arms against the British government and as a socialistic revolt against the agencies of capitalism. Such flag-waving restrictions of its theme only constrict its essential beauty, which exists in its universal qualities, applicable to all societies⁴.
- My object is to discuss Rabindranath Tagore's 'Dramatic Work' in close relation to this particular aspect of his creative consciousness, which is all the while seeking to express in his works his literary ideas, aesthetic beliefs, and the spiritual meaning of his philosophy of life.

➤ **TAGORE AS POET:**

- Rabindranath Tagore was essentially a poetic genius that found its fullest expression in poetry. He wrote many volumes of poetry having nearly a thousand poems on diverse topics related to human life and nature. He also wrote nearly two thousand Songs. The major ones are noted below⁵:
 - *Gitanjali*, With An Introduction By W.B. Yeats (1912)
 - *The Gardener* (1913)
 - *The Crescent Moon* (1913)
 - *Stray Birds* (1916)
 - *Fruit Gathering* (1916)

- Lover's Gift And Crossing (1918)
- The Fugitive And Other Poems (1921)
- Fireflies (1928)
- Sheaves: Poems And Songs (1931)
- The Golden Boat (1933)
- A Flight Of Cranes (1953)
- The Herald Of Spring (1960)
- Wings Of Death (The Last Poems Of Tagore) Published Posthumously In 1960.

⇒ **MAJOR POETRY ANALYSIS:**

- The main theme of Rabindranath Tagore's poetry is the essential unity (or continuity) of all creation, which is also the main theme of the ancient Hindu Upanishads. According to Hindu thought, the only absolute, unchanging, eternal thing is the Supreme Being or world soul who forms the essence of everything. For example, his imagery — dwelling on sunrises and sunsets, flowers and their scents, songs and musical instruments, the beautiful deodar tree, the majestic Himalayas — is a constant reminder that creation is charged with divinity. All people have divine souls, so they should tolerate, respect, and love one another.
- It was there that Rabindranath Tagore's first poems appeared. Though they were highly praised, it soon became clear that this young man did not intend to hold to tradition. He rejected the formal tone of older Bengali poetry, he invented new poetic forms and tried out new meters, and most shocking of all, he wrote in the vernacular. Tagore was just as free-spirited when he set his poems to music, adapting classical forms at will.

→ **GITANJALI SONG OFFERINGS:**

- Published in 1910, Gitanjali Song Offerings is Tagore's most popular work. The English edition, published in 1912, includes translations not only from the original Gitnjali but also from other collections, particularly Naivedya (offerings). As light work to keep his mind occupied, Tagore did the translations himself and the result was English publication followed by the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature.

- Gitanjali Song Offerings explores the personal relationship between the poet and divinity. This divinity he calls Jivandevata, which he often translates as “LORD OF MY LIFE” or “LIFE OF MY LIFE” but also refers to as “MY GOD,” “KING,” “FATHER,” “MOTHER,” “LOVER,” “FRIEND,” and “INNERMOST ONE.” The divinity within inspires Tagore’s songs and motivates him to lead a pure life, but he confesses that involvement in commonplace events sometimes creates a smoke screen that obscures the divinity within and without. The commonplace, however, also has its divinity. God is to be found not only in the temple but also with the workers in the fields.
- The most interesting poems in Gitanjali Song Offerings are a group dealing with death. Tagore welcomes the visit of God’s “servant” and “messenger,” and seeking her in the oneness of the universe has brought Tagore closer to God. Thus reconciled, Tagore welcomes his own death as “the fulfillment of life.” His dying will be like a bride meeting her bridegroom on the wedding night or like a feeding babe switching from the right breast to the left breast of its mother. Meanwhile, his soul is like “a flock of homesick cranes,” on the wing day and night to reach “Their Mountain Nests”⁶.

→ **A FLIGHT OF SWANS:**

- Perhaps Tagore’s best work, A Flight of Swans, thematically, continues to develop the personal relationship between the poet and divinity, there is a new emphasis on the impersonal workings of divinity throughout creation. The dual emphasis can be seen in the opening poem of the English edition, the title poem, wherein the flight of swans breaking the silence of the evening symbolizes not only the aspiration of the human soul but also the yearning of inanimate nature for “the Beyond.” Even the mountains and deodar trees long to spread their wings like the “homeless bird” inside the breast of Tagore and “countless others.” The images of movement and yearning here also serve to introduce the theme of change so prominent in A Flight of Swans.
- For Tagore, the abstract notion of change is embodied in the dance of Siva, the destroyer called Rudra. The dance of Siva purges the cosmological systems. It prevents the flow of “gross Matter” from backing up and putrefying, “renews and purifies” creation in “the bath of death,” and speeds souls onward toward nirvana. Becoming Siva’s partner, Tagore aligns himself with the young rather than the old, with the unknown rather than the known, with wandering rather than home, with movement rather than stagnancy.

- With its focus on movement and change, on the cyclic nature of things. If Siva comes, can Vishnu be far behind? Indeed, Tagore hoped that Vishnu, the preserver and renewer, would come soon. Tagore wrote *A Flight of Swans* at the outset of World War I, and the poems reflect his awareness of the war's catastrophic violence. Once the war started, he hoped that it would at least bring about some good results — that it would clean out the evils of the old world system and bring about a new order of peace and brotherhood⁷.

➤ **TAGORE'S FICTIONAL OUTPUT (NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES):**

- Tagore wrote 119 short-stories, however, he started his fiction career as a novelist in 1901 with *Chokherbali*. He also produced many outstanding novels of rare insight. Some of his major short-stories and novels are given below⁸:
 - *Post Master* (1891)
 - *Kabuliwala* (1892)
 - *Nistanid* (*The Broken Nest*, 1901)
 - *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1918)
 - *Mashi and Other Stories* (1918)
 - *The Home and the World* (1919)
 - *The Wreck* (1919)
 - *Gora* (1923)
 - *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1925)
 - *The Parrot's Training and Other Stories* (1925)
 - *Two Sisters* (1944)
 - *Binodini* (1959)
 - *Four Chapters* (1960)
 - *The Runaway and Other Stories* (1960)
 - *Chaturanga* (1963)
- Since the short story was a relatively new form, Tagore could not so easily be criticized for his short fiction. However, some readers were surprised by his interest in the powerless and by his use of a simple, colloquial style. Tagore's importance as a Bengali writer cannot

be overstated. He is credited with single-handedly transforming the Bengali language. Moreover, his experiments with form and content made it possible for his successors to move into the literary mainstream. For these reasons, Tagore is called the father of modern Bengali literature and a major influence on Indian writers.

➤ **TAGORE AS THEATRICAL – DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS:**

- Tagore, being a man of versatile genius, also produced remarkable and outstanding plays. Tagore considered pre-eminently as a poet in spite of his considerable ‘Dramatic’ output. They all are of different variety, of varying themes and with different techniques. His notable ‘Dramatic Productions’ are:

- Karna And Kunti
- Gandhari's Prayer
- Malini
- The King Of The Dark Chamber
- Sanyasi Or The Ascetic
- The King And The Queen
- Sacrifice Or Visarjan
- Chitra
- The Post-Office
- The Cycle Of Spring Or Phalguni
- Mukia-Dhara
- Red-Oleanders Or Rakta Karabi
- Natir Puja
- Chandaliika

➤ **TAGORE'S ESSAYS / LECTURES / CRITICISM:**

- Tagore's philosophy was also evident in the subject matter, which were written in English and therefore could be published without having to be translated. One of his most popular volumes, Sadhana: The Realisation of Life (1913), deals with the problem of evil and the relationship between human beings and the divine. In Nationalism (1917), which was

drawn from lectures presented in Japan and America, Tagore courageously criticized the nationalistic attitudes of modern nations and specifically of those two. Both that volume and *The Religion of Man* (1931) continued to be reprinted and reread long after Tagore's death.

➤ **TAGORE'S PATRIOTISM:**

- Rabindranath Tagore's meeting with M.K. Gandhi in March 1915 marked the real beginning of his active political and patriotic activities. Both these legendary figures influenced each other greatly. Tagore gave the title 'Mahatma – A Great Soul' to Gandhiji during this visit. He took active part in the Swadeshi movement which later developed into a national movement for the country's freedom. He delivered numerous public lectures on political and educational affairs and tried to create mass awareness. He composed the national anthems of India and Bangladesh⁹.
- Internationally known as a humanist Rabindranath Tagore's vision of the underlying wholeness of life was based on intuitive synthesis of classic Eastern religious texts and the works of early Indian poets and philosophers with Western thought and modern European literature. Although Rabindranath Tagore's writing is deeply rooted in "Indian Social Concern, Political Context and Spiritual Journey". Tagore's gift for expressing the 'Unity of Life' and the grandeur of man gives it 'Universal Appeal'.

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