

# AN ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

A Textbook prescribed by S.R.T.M University,  
Nanded as per CBCS Pattern

BOARD OF EDITORS





**MACMILLAN**

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# An Anthology of American Literature

A Textbook Prepared as per CBCS Pattern  
for College Students of UG Second Year Optional English

**Prescribed by**

Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded

**Content developed by**

Mr Vivek B Zamble: Unit 1 (I)

Dr Machindra H Khandagale: Unit 2 (II)

Dr Nitin N Doke: Unit 2 (III)

Dr Prashant M Mannikar: Unit 3 (IV) & Unit 5 (VII)

Dr Dnyaneshwar S Choudhari: Unit 3 (V)

Dr Shivkumar B Rautrao: Unit 4 (VI)

**Editor**

Dr Prashant M Mannikar





## (II) Song of the Open Road

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**Walt Whitman**

### **ABOUT THE POEM**

The poem "Song of the Open Road" was first published in the 1856 edition of the poetry collection, *Leaves of Grass* written by Walt Whitman. It is a narrative poem about life lessons, observations and joy. The speaker takes up the role of a vagabond. He chooses to travel and explore 'the open road'. He goes wherever the road leads him. The road symbolises various things such as freedom, multiplicity and ideals. He speaks about the feeling of freedom on his journey. The journey gives him enormous pleasure. The poem is considered of great significance even today. It motivates and encourages the practise of enjoying and building a connect with nature. It deals with all aspects of human life and offers a solution to varied problems.

### **ABOUT THE POET**

Walt Whitman (May 31, 1819 - March 26, 1892) was born in Long Island (Paumanok), New York. He was the second child to Louise and Walter Whitman. His father was a farmer, house builder and free-thinker with radical, democratic beliefs. His mother belonged to a Quaker family who believed in an 'inner light', complete freedom of conscience and equality between man and woman. The influence of all these things is evident in the writings of Walt Whitman. He was self-taught and worked as a journalist. As a journalist, he wrote many stories speaking out for women's and immigrant's rights. Ralph Waldo Emerson reacted enthusiastically reading Whitman's work. Due to his new form and theme, Whitman was recognised and celebrated as the supreme American poet. He is often labelled as a revolutionary poet. He breaks with the conventions of English verse in form and content. He was the father of free verse and popularised it in America (the USA). His poetry is revolutionary with rhyme and strict meter. It deals with common people and transcendentalism.



## DISCUSSION

### Summary

The speaker of the poem "Song of the Open Road" starts his journey on a light-hearted note. He begins a journey the destination of which is 'the Open Road'. One might wonder reading, that the destination of one's trip is 'the open road'. However, it is very symbolic. The open road leads the speaker to many other known and unknown, white and black, and men and women in the country. The speaker expresses his content as he has enough to live and wants nothing more. He wants neither stars nor an ideal thing.

'The earth, that is sufficient,

I do not want the constellations any nearer,'

He does not want to engage in day to day needs and things of interest as common men and women do. He clears his intention that he carries his 'old delicious burdens'. He wants to carry men and women because they fill him up. He can't get rid of them. It shows his deep love of humanity and attachment to nature.

The speaker continues with the same attitude and tone in the next section. He loves unseen things. The road is not only what it physically appears to be but it is also suggestive. The suggestive significance of the open road is that it is trodden by many people to reach their destination. It also symbolises an endless exploration of the speaker as he writes:

'Here the profound lesson of reception...'

His love for the country and countrymen is serious, pure and sincere. His love is same even for cities, curbstones, porches and so on. They indicate human torch and existence. The speaker is not afraid to leave the road. If he needs to leave, he will but he wishes to travel on it forever.

The speaker expresses a deep sense of gratitude to air as it helps him to speak. The objects 'by the road sides' inspire him and give shape to his ideas. These 'latent with unseen existences' are the matters of deep interest to the speaker. Further, he counts each and every thing he comes across such as 'distant ships', 'rows of houses', 'pierced facades', roofs, porches, entrances, copings and ascending steps and so on.



The speaker assumes that not only he himself is eager to continue the journey but the road itself also. His love for the road is greater than his love for the poem –

‘you shall be more to than my poem.’

It is very interesting that the poet makes the road a living being. Then the speaker assumes that he is free from all limits and imaginary lines. He is a guy who can't be tabooed by borders or limits. He is as free as a bird. All men and women rejoice him. If they reject him, he doesn't bother. He blesses all who bless him:

‘Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me.’

Then the speaker broods over the best man. The open air, nature and the earth make a man a perfect person. While exploring the open road, people get space for great ideas and deeds. Here, they meet their true wisdom. They find the purpose of life with the true wisdom. The true wisdom leads one to re-examine philosophies and religions.

After redefining the inner core, the speaker gets puzzled over many questions. These questions are the outcome of his overwhelming state of mind. The questions are based on his desires, thoughts, relations with men and women, flora and fauna and strangers.

By the time, the speaker comes back on the open road. He seems to be very happy as he is longing for human contacts. He meets people and wishes that all people should join him. He wants to enjoy the hospitality. He invites all to accompany him with full freedom from day to day worries and routine. He carries on in search of divine things which are more beautiful than the worldly things.

The open road does not indicate riches or complacency. It indicates movements, growth, and progress in life. The speaker stands for a while with the companions and says goodbye to them to meet new companions. The people come and pass away. They have their own interest of journey. Here, the speaker tells the reader that any traveller can meet the person whom he wants. One can possess the thing without working or paying. One can enjoy with best places and people. The universe is road itself.



The speaker continues with the same thesis. But here, he transcends from the physical world to the metaphysical. He argues that the soul itself is a traveller. It travels farther than the body. It travels through the universe but the destination is not fix. The speaker addresses the companions directly. He advises them not to hide in the dark. There is a secret nature of everyone. All are going furtively and posing false appearances to which they themselves can't acknowledge. The speaker wants to know us that success gives way to a new challenge. One who travels with him should prepare for that challenge. He also assures them that the road is safe. It is his experience as he has tired the road.

Finally, the speaker assures all the companions that all things should work as per their requirement. He wants the company of all. He says that his love is more precious than money. He wants to love all and loved by all. He wishes to tread the road in the company of each other and make the journey meaningful, joyous and fruitful.

## Critical Appreciation

The poem "Song of the Open Road" starts with the speaker striding (travelling) joyously down the roadways of the country.

'A foot and light-hearted I take to the Open Road'  
Healthy, free, the world before me,'

Whitman initially creates this visual image of the speaker as a vagabond who is carefree, happy and enthusiastic. He moves to the open road 'light- hearted'. The word 'healthy' indicates the physical, intellectual and spiritual health of an individual, and of the country. Probably, Whitman would like to express that the tension due to the civil war will not weaken the national health and unity.

The poet produces two angles of the vagabond, that is, the speaker- the vagabond and his involvement in nature, people, country sides, systems and spirituality. His nature is thoroughly pure and uncorrupted. He addresses the road as a living being and tries to form dialogue with it- 'You road'.

At the outset, the poet clarifies that the journey is symbolic. It is indicated through many clauses:



'Done with indoor complaints, Libraries, querulous,  
criticism'

Strong and content I travel the Open Road.'

The poet expresses his disregard to the routine life and embraces the new and carefree life. The 'Open Road' symbolises this new fresh and joyous life style. It is free of all social, cultural and traditional bondages.

'Gently, but with undeniable will,

Divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.'

Travelling in this manner provides the speaker with intellectual and spiritual independence and self-reliance. It helps him to realise selfhood-

'Now I see the secret of the making of the best  
persons,

It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep  
with earth.'

The thesis of the best person is logically developed. A man grows into the best person living in the company of nature, earth and on the open road. Such man's deeds can seize the hearts of the whole race. Only on the open road our wisdom is tested. It can't be tested in the classrooms. Here, he stresses the idea that everyone should identify his 'self' i.e. the original or real self and its relation with the universe.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> section of the poem, the poet uses a new word 'Allons' to express his deep faith and love in the people:

'Allons! Whoever you are come travel with me!'

It is a personal appeal to the reader and travellers. By the way he forms the dramatic structure of the last seven sections of the poem. It intensifies the frenzy and fervour of the speaker. The poet emphasises on the moving, living, subtle and joyous world.

'Allons! We must not stop here,

However convenient this dwelling....'

Thus the poet rejects the static and materialistic attitude. This appeal shows the declaration of joy, movement and active life.

The poet enjoys the living world which is growing, running and bringing change over the world. The static life represents idleness and inactivity resulting into endless sufferings. The movements



or journey symbolises the spiritual life which grows on the open road, in the company of nature and men. Probably, the open road is the holy spiritual road of the universe. The poet appeals to the fellowmen to participate in the journey with all hardships, difficulties and diversity of private and public life.

'My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion

He going with me much go well arm'd,'

Following such path, he forms close relationship with his countrymen. He wants to explore the world with the people around him. The journey is very symbolic. It shows the progress of the poem and of the theme. It is a symbol of exploring the physical, intellectual and spiritual world. His personal experience is of the universal significance:

'The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,

I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,

Now it flows unto us, we are rightly changed.'

In this way, it is a moving experience from private to public world and from physical to spiritual world. The poet explores his ideas of a moving and living world. He accepts all known and unknown during the journey. The poet probably wanted to reflect on the tension due to civil war in USA. Probably, he wants to keep going in instead of fighting. It grows organically like leaves. Whitman believed, like the English Romantic poets that poetry should not be composed but be spoken. The poet uses a descriptive language. It includes colloquialisms, slang and regional dialects. It is sometimes with eccentricities. He uses many symbols, images and figures.

In the present poem, he has used many poetic devices such as Enjambment, Symbolism, Rhetorical Question, Alliteration, Imagery, Personification, Anaphora and Assonance and so on. Unlike English poets, he uses trochaic meter rather than iambic meter. In both meters, a foot consists of two syllables but in trochaic the first syllable is stressed whereas in iambic second syllable is stressed. As usual, he has depicted day to day life in first person.



## **EXERCISES**

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### **I. Short answer type questions.**

1. Write a brief note on Whitman's diction.
2. Describe the landscape in the poem.
3. What is exclusively American about Whitman's present poem?
4. Write a short note on the significance of the title of the poem.
5. Explain briefly the symbolic significance of 'the open road.'
6. Differentiate between trochaic and iambic meters with examples.

### **II. Answer the questions given below in about 300 words each.**

1. What is the theme of the poem "Song of the Open Road"?
2. How does the poem "Song of the Open Road" express the democratic ideas?
3. Elaborate on the use of symbols, images and figures in the poem "Song of the Open Road."
4. What is transcendentalism? Find out some references of it from the poem and explain them.

### **III. Classroom activities.**

1. The students should be taught how to read, analyse and comprehend a poem. Give them a copy of the poem "Road not taken" by Robert Frost along with "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman. On the basis of graphic organisation, ask the students to compare and contrast the two poems.
2. Students should work on Whitman's ideas of America and democracy, discuss them among one another and list the qualities of American democracy.
3. Suggest the students to collect material on meter, rhythm, rhyme images, symbols and poetic devices. Then, arrange a discussion on the difference between trochaic and iambic meters with suitable examples.



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**Rabindranath Tagore's Philosophy of love Depicted  
In The Play Chandalika****Dr. Machindra H. Khandagale**

Asst. Prof. &amp; Research Supervisor, P G &amp; Research Dept. of English, Dayanand College of Arts, Latur.

**ABSTRACT:**

Rabindranath Tagore has composed over sixty plays including full length plays, one act plays, farce, interlude and musical plays; tragedies, comedies dark plays, problem plays and tragic-comedies. In all his literary creations we can see the influence of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. For Instance, the play *Chitra* is based on Hindu epic poem the Mahabharata whereas *Chandalika* is based on a Buddhist legend probably Tagore would have come across while studying Ranjendra Lal Mitra's *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature*. The story strengthens Buddha's message of equality as Ananda, the disciple of the Buddha, approaches towards a well and asks for drinking water to Prakriti an untouchable (Chandal), young girl. Initially she hesitates to offer it but after listening his message of equality, she offers it to him. The simplest move by Ananda becomes a cause to Prakriti to fall in love with him. Her passion for Ananda blinds her completely as usually takes place in common instances and she compels her mother to cast a magic spell on Ananda so that he could love and accept her as his better half. Her mother drags him to her hut but could not succeed in corrupting Ananda who prays to the Buddha to save himself from this shame and remorse. As a result of it, Buddha breaks the magic spell and frees Ananda from the clutches of Prakriti and keeps him as pure as he was before. The play can be analyzed through different angles such as spiritual conflict, a psychological drama, casteism, sexuality and love as a force to establish peaceful, ideal, prosperous and respectful life. The present article deals with the social and psychological conflicts that leads the young booming girl to break down the so called social constructs which helps us to define Tagore's philosophy of love.

**Keywords:**

Hinduism, Buddhism, Prakriti, Ananda, Buddha, Mahabharata, philosophy, casteism, sexuality, love etc.

Tagore's lectures in the book *Sadhana* deal with the ideas of the individual's relation to the universe, consciousness, evil, self, action, beauty, love and the amalgamation with the Supreme. Tagore repeatedly emphasizes on the progress of the soul towards the union with the God i. e. the idea of oneness of *Being*. The Infinite, as Tagore believes can be attained through self-redemption, selfless action and love. This message has been aptly presented in the play *Chandalika* when Prakriti's mother repents over her act of using magic spell on Ananda to which she was thinking to be wrong. She repents watching worn, pale and faded Ananda at her threshold and probably gets redemption from her sin because she accepts her guilt and expresses her remorse over her sin:

MOTHER. Victory to thee, O Lord. My sins and my life lie together at thy feet,  
and my days end here, in the haven of thy forgiveness. [She dies.]

(Tagore, Three Plays 166)

Tagore was deeply influenced by the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha. *Sadhana* includes the following eight topics – 'The Relation of the Individual to the Universe', 'Soul Consciousness', 'The Problem of Evil', 'The Problem of Self', 'Realization in Love', 'Realization in Action', 'The Realization of Beauty' and 'The Realization of the Infinite.' The poet offers here the ways and means of attaining the ultimate



purpose in human life. S. Radhakrishnan in his book, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, states that Rabindranath's philosophy of life, love and religion is the revelation of ancient Indian ideology depicted in the Upanishads. In *Chandalika* Tagore blends these things beautifully.

In the second speech entitled 'Soul Consciousness', Tagore rests stress on man's search for a system in accelerating his everyday dealings of the world:

"This search for system is really a search for unity, for synthesis; it is our attempt to harmonize the heterogeneous complexity of outward materials by an inner adjustment. In the search we gradually become aware that to find out the One is to possess the All; that there, indeed is our last and highest privilege." (Tagore, *Sadhana* 41-42).

The Upanishad explains that while achieving consciousness of one's soul, one achieves God-consciousness. The true greatness lies in the realization that we are physical self as well as spiritual self; the part of the largest consciousness. Man travels from ignorance to light when his soul attains freedom from mundane activities of the physical world. Initially Prakriti understands it when she understands the true identity of love. Though her mother again and again reminds her identity as untouchable, she expresses her freedom in the following manner:

PRAKRITI [sings]. Blessed am I, says the flower, who belong to the earth.

For I serve you, my God, in this my lowly home.

Make me forget that I am born of dust,

For my spirit is free from it.

When you bend your eyes upon me my petals tremble in joy;

Give me a touch of your feet and make me heavenly,

For the earth must offer its worship through me.

(Tagore, *Three Plays* 150-151)

Her enthusiasm knows no bounds so she dances, sings and forgets the physical dirty cage placed around her by the society, culture and religion. The unhealthy ethical, social, cultural and religious codes have proved boon to the rise of Buddhism in India. In the modern times, after the reformatory movement in India, these customs were severely criticized and Tagore's three generations (Tagore's grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore, his father Debendranath Tagore, and he himself) were directly connected to it. As a result of it, Tagore strictly criticizes untouchability and puts his idea regarding caste system in the play *Chandalika* as follows:

PRAKRITI. Then a Buddhist monk came ... and said, 'Give me water'.

... I said, 'I am a chandalini, and the well-water is unclean'. He said, 'As I am a human being, so also are you, and all water is clean and holy that cools our heat and satisfies our thirst'.

.....

He said that Janaki bathed in such water as this, at the beginning of her forest exile, and that Guhak, the chandal, drew it for her. My heart has been dancing ever since, and night and day I hear those solemn tones— 'Give me water, give me water'.

(Tagore, *Three Plays* 148-149)

In fact, Tagore's philosophy of love centers upon the concept of the infinite love that reveals through finite forms. The essay 'Realization of Love' deals with this ideology which travels through the set moral and ethical bondages and reaches to freedom in love. Tagore reminds us with Buddha's idea of *Brahma-vihara*, i.e.



the joy of living in Brahma. It means that one who overcomes the seven deadly sins and develops love for all living and non-living beings, accomplishes perfection of consciousness. As influenced by Buddha's teachings, Tagore states:

"Who could have breathed or moved if the sky were not filled with joy, with love? It is through the heightening of our consciousness into love, and extending it all over the world, that we can attain *Brahma-vihara*, communion with this infinite joy"

(Tagore, *Sadhana* 137-38).

Prakriti, in the passage of time, forgets the ways to infinite joy and becomes blind for Ananda though she is warned by her mother that 'Prakriti, these men's words are meant only to be heard, not to be practiced.' But Prakriti does not listen it and becomes crazy for Ananda. Moreover she insists her mother to chant her magic spell on Ananda and bring him to her to accept her and glorify her existence. As she urges:

PRAKRITI. I want him, Mother I want him beyond all measures. I want to take this life of mine and lay it like a basket of flowers at his feet.

(Tagore, *Three Plays* 151)

On one hand one may sympathize with the Prakriti's desire for Ananda but on the other hand it is really unjust to be so selfish. Tagore does not agree with such storm of physical self. It doesn't mean that Tagore completely denies it but demands very mutual way to achieve it to be turned it into a boat to carry on our journey from this finite world to the Infinite. At the same time Tagore criticizes all the artificial, man-made taboos to the natural expressions of love. He believes that in the name of civilization, morality and ethics, man has lost his true self that results in spiritual suicide. Perhaps Tagore would have pained by the inhumane treatment given to the untouchables and Negros in the world. As he precisely states:

Civilization must be judged and prized, not by the amount of power it has developed, but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity.  
(Tagore, *Sadhana* 143)

Tagore uses the character of Prakriti and Ananda to differentiate between Maya and true love. When love becomes Maya (illusion) and discriminates among races and peoples; treats people as slaves we have to replace by freedom and justice. Tagore discusses the quality of love at length and states that the world is born out of love, sustained in love, it moves towards love, and finally enters into love. It is love that enables man to transcend all limitations as at the same time it is his love of life that urges him to continue his relation with this great world. Only love can harmonize the opposing principles of creation that of unity and diversity, loss and gain, personal and impersonal, bondage and liberation. Tagore puts it in the following way:

"It is the high function of love to welcome all limitations and to transcend them. For nothing is more independent than love, and where else, again, shall we find so much of dependence?" (Tagore, *Sadhana* 147-48).

In this respect one can quote Tagore's attitude expressed through Prakriti's mouth. Initially she demands Ananda as her met by hook or crook but when she sees him in mirror, she is horrified at faded, pale and worn physique. She direly urges her mother to stop the magic spell:



PRAKRITI (looks in the mirror and flings it away). O mother, mother, stop! Undo the spell now—  
at once—undo it! What have you done? What have you done? O wicked, wicked deed!—  
better have died. What a sight to see! Where is the light and radiance, the shining purity, the  
heavenly glow? How worn, how faded, has he come to my door! Bearing his self's defeat as  
a heavy burden,

(Tagore, Three Plays 165)

Love is not a product of compulsion but of joy. And this joy which is manifest in creation, “is the realization of truth of oneness, the oneness of our soul with the world and of the world-soul with the supreme lover” (149). Hence, Tagore associates love to joy that in turn it associates to God. The soul of man pursues freedom from ignorance to realize the world-soul. In the present play Chandalika, Monk Ananda seems to be a mouth piece of Tagore when he goes through water and fire but does not shatter his faith in Buddha indicating the love of Infinite. The last words of Ananda in fact present Tagore's gist of his philosophy of love:

ANANDA [chanting].

Buddho Susuddho karuna mahannvo Yoccanta suddhabbara-gnana locano Lokassa  
papupakilesa ghatako Vandami Buddham ahamadarena tam.

To the most pure Buddha, mighty ocean of mercy,  
Seer of knowledge absolute, pure, supreme,  
Of the world's sin and suffering the Destroyer—  
Solemnly to the Buddha I bow in homage.

Tagore, Three Plays 166)

Radhakrishnan points out that Tagore gives due importance to both body and soul. He neither supports the Western idea of the importance of the body /materialism nor the Eastern faith in the soul. Tagore, in fact tries to have a good balance between the two which is more fruitful for humanity. But when the soul fails to recognize her lover then she is the handmaid that is swayed by dejection and sorrow. It is in the very heart of his activities that man seeks to unite with the lord, not from being relieved of all his works or responsibilities of life.

Thus, Tagore's philosophy of love is a comprehensive which includes the idea of a happy and fruitful blending between the individual and the world, the finite and the infinite. Tagore gives a fluent countenance to his desire for social betterment. The soul filled with the infinite love devotes itself in the service of man and reaches to its ultimate goal. Though a collection of discourses, *Sadhana* offers a fine way to Tagore's philosophy of life, love and a manifestation of the Infinite, in terms of joy and love. *Sadhana*, means a rigorous practice. Tagore has lived the life what he has pictured in his works. For him even nation was not that much significant as the humanity. He has rendered his yeoman services for the betterment of the world.

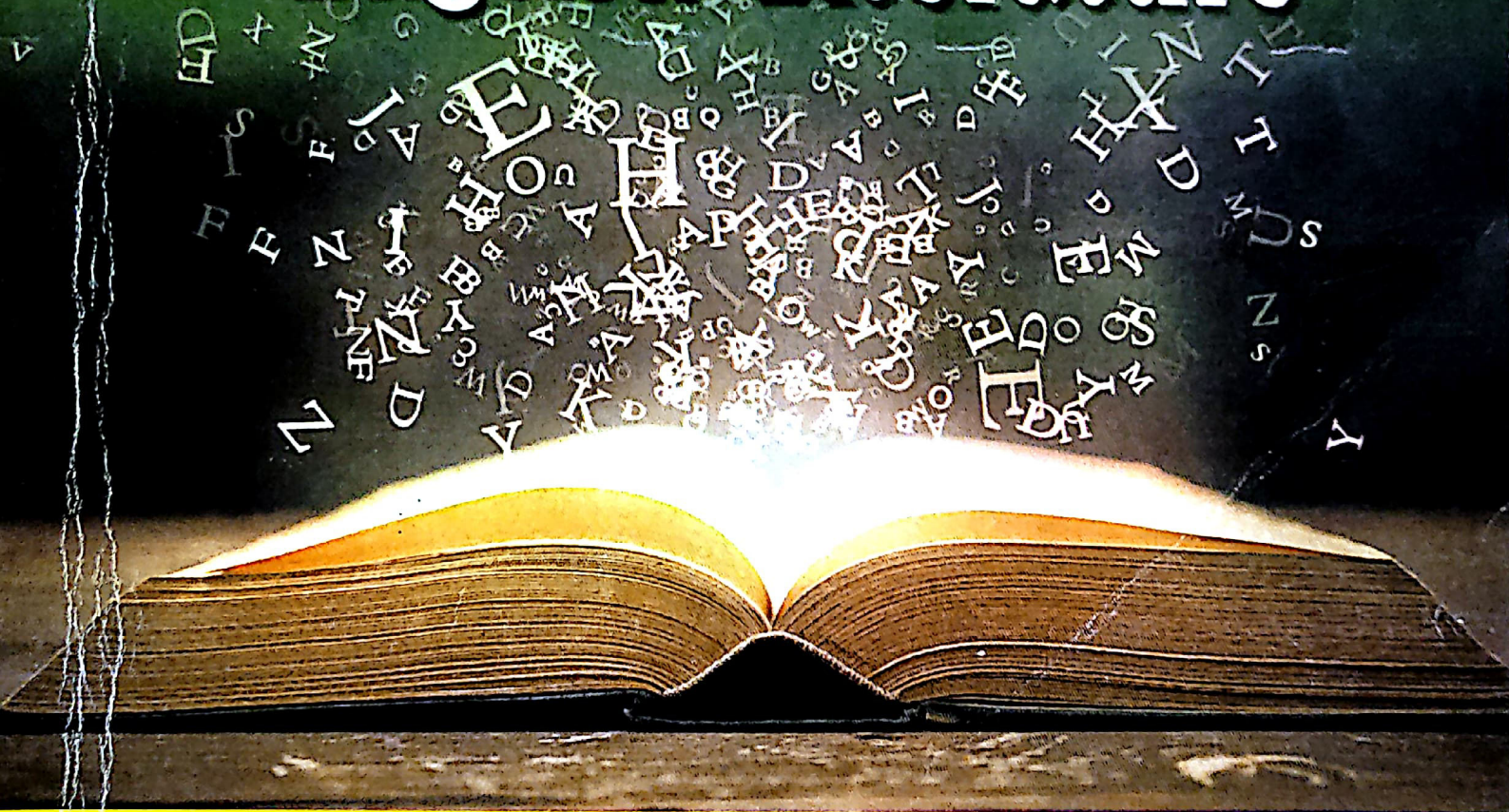
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# A STUDY OF RIVER THEME IN SELECTED POEMS OF A. K. RAMANUJAN

Dr M. H. Khandagale

Assistant professor,

PG & Research Dept. of English,

Dayanand College of Arts, Latur

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A.K. Ramanujan is an expatriate Indian English poet. As an expatriate he oscillates between two worlds - the country of his birth and the country of his domicile. His knowledge of folklore has given him themes, ideas, images and symbols. He has tried to use all his experiences of Brahmin family background of South India. Naturally, he strikes the readers as one, who is nostalgic, sentimental and somewhat narrow in his vision of the Indian society drawing frequently as he does from his memories of early home life and of his relationships with his kith and kin. One of the charges against him seems to be that, he is an exile, who is too alienated from his country to show any involvement in its culture, for he is able to de-romanticize. Ramanujan was awarded the Padma Shri in 1976, a Mac Arthur Prize Fellowship in 1983, and was recently elected a Fellow of American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

A.K. Ramanujan has talked much about the theme of 'River'. His much anthologized poem 'A River' from his volume of verse "Selected Poems" published in 1976 which influenced R. Parthasarathy to write his poem 'Vaikai', is a realistic debunking of the romanticization of traditional Tamil culture and it presents no challenging cruxes or baffling ambiguities, verbal or theological and instead it seems to invite the reader to itself by its very directness of appeal and simplicity of thought. Showing no blind reverence for old myths and tradition, Ramanujan makes a daring effort to penetrate beyond the Vail of illusion and unfold the grim truth behind the devastation caused by the river. The poem is, about truth, the reality of the river and kinds of relations between the present and the past and it presents an ironic contrast to the glorious way in

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which the poets have sung the praises of the city, the temple, and the river.

Ramanujan in the poem 'River' does not give a traditional song of praise for the full river; instead, he narrates what he sees as the villagers' 'real experience'. No doubt, the river is beautiful when quiet in the summer, but when it floods, it causes suffering that is not at all poetic. The visitor to the village reports what really happens, in the language of a common villager. The first stanza gives us a picture of a river almost dried up in summer:

“...every summer  
a river dries to a trickle  
in the sand,  
baring the sand-ribs,  
straw and women's hair  
clogging the Watergates  
at the rusty bars...”

Madurai is the city of temples and poets. The poets living in this city write poems about cities and temples. Their poems also contain accounts of how every summer a river flowing through Madurai is reduced to a narrow stream and how soon afterwards, it is flooded with the water of the rains. When river is reduced to a narrow stream, its water cannot pass through the Watergates because of the piles of straw and women's hair which obstruct its flow.

“under the bridges with patches  
of repair all over them...”

The bridges over this river are marked with many patches of repair. Those stones of the bridges, which become wet, began to glisten or shine, while the dry stones retain their original dull colour. The impression of the stones in the river has been successfully conveyed to us by the following comparisons:

“the wet stones glistening like sleepy



crocodiles, the dry ones  
shaven water-buffaloes lounging in the sun.”  
words like ‘sleepy’ and ‘lounging in the sun’ add an atmosphere  
of the drowsy peace of summer to the picture. The next line  
bears the key note of the poem:

“The poets sang only of the floods.”

As it indicates that, the poets could do nothing practical or  
effective to prevent people’s misery resulting from the floods in the  
river. The poets could only write poems on the subject of floods, but  
could not render any aid to the afflicted people. A visitor once  
happened to spend one day in Madurai when a flood in the river  
was imminent.

“He was there for a day  
when they had the floods.  
People everywhere talked  
of the inches rising,  
of the precise number of cobbled steps  
run over by the water, rising  
on the bathing places,  
and the way it carried off three village houses,”

The visitor heard people everywhere talking about the level  
of the water rising quickly. The people talked about the water rising  
over the steps leading to the river and the water rising over the  
bathing places. He also heard people talking about the floodwaters  
sweeping away three village homes. Not only that, what is still more  
shocking is the loss of cattle and human lives:

“one pregnant woman  
and couple of cows  
named Gopi and Brinda, as usual.”

The phrase ‘as usual’ is tinged with irony. The callous attitude  
of the people to look at flood casually has been criticized. Surely,  
we cannot enjoy flood when it kills human lives. The image of  
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'pregnant woman' is significant for it involves two generations, the present and the future. The suggestion implicit in the image is that flood not only harms the present generation but also the future. Thus the destruction caused by flood has deep and far-reaching consequences.

In the next passage the poet comes heavily on the new poets for blindly following the old poets in glorifying the river and flood. The seeming beauty of the rising water may have an attraction for new poets but:

"..... no one spoke  
in verse  
of the pregnant woman  
drowned, with perhaps twins in her,  
kicking at blank walls  
even before birth,"

The pregnant woman perhaps carried two babies in her womb; and she had even perhaps felt the two babies kicking against the walls of the womb before they could come into this world. The last passage sums up the earlier passage and the poet ironically calls through the mouth of the visitor:

"He said:  
the river has water enough  
to be poetic  
about only once a year  
and then ...."

The visitor said that there was enough water in the river to inspire the poets to compose poems, though only once in a year. Then Ramanujan lays bare the realities about flood and the wholesale destruction that is caused by it. In order to reiterate the loss, the poet repeats a few lines of the second passage. The details about twins, which the woman would have born, bring the experience down to its simple and painful humanity. Thus the visitor tells us:



"...and one pregnant woman  
expecting identical twins  
with no moles on their bodies,  
with different-coloured diapers  
to tell them apart."

The pregnant woman is expecting to give birth to twins with no moles on their bodies and therefore, with nothing to enable anybody to differentiate between them after their birth.

Like tricky Chinese boxes, A.K. Ramanujan's poems are difficult to open but of exquisite workmanship; they are objects to hold between fingers as much as they are printed lines to read with the eyes. You sense this from even the way they appear on the page, the left-hand margin carefully jagged, and the overall design often original to the poem. In this he resembles that other inventor of stanzas, George Herbert.

Talking about the treatment of Ramanujan to the 'theme of river' in his poetry; unlike traditional poets, he views the river objectively. The river may look beautiful, when it is quiet, but the destruction caused by flood is not at all poetic. The image 'identical twins' makes the loss more poignant. They are identical in their innocence. They lose their life for no fault of theirs and it is in this sense that the flood really creates havoc.

The poem is in free verse. The poet narrates the poem through the mouth of the visitor to make it objective. Ordinary things have been described in simple language and the complaint of the poet against the old as well as new poets has been stated unequivocally in a straightforward line. "The poets sang only of the floods". The images in the poem, particularly 'pregnant woman' and 'identical twins', are full of significant suggestions for the future. Ramanujan seems to tell the foreigners, particularly the Americans, about the implications of disastrous floods caused by the rivers in spate we find a word 'diapers' which means napkins in America and that word has been used keeping an American audience in



mind. Moreover, there is no point in telling Indians about flood who are well aware of it and perhaps in a way used to it.

A River tells us of the annual flood in the river which flows through the city of Madurai. What Ramanujan here really wants to tell us is that, although this annual flood in the river inspires poetry, it does not evoke any real sympathy from the authorities or even from the writers of poems themselves. Nothing is done to protect human beings, animals, and houses against the damage which is done by the flood-waters.

A River is a touching and poignant poem. But it is noteworthy that Ramanujan simply writes as an observer, maintaining an attitude of complete detachment and not making any deliberate effort to touch or move his readers. Pathos is the key-note of this poem, but Ramanujan does not employ any particular device to arouse the pity of his readers. He merely communicates certain facts to the readers, letting the facts themselves produce the desired effect on them. Far from using any particular device to arouse the feeling of pity in the hearts of the readers, he employs the weapon of irony against the poets who write poetry all rights but who take no practical steps in the matter. Even so far as the poets are concerned, only the older ones dealt with the floods in their poems while the new poets have no room in their poetry to describe, or refer to, the havoc which the annual flood works. The new poets merely quote the old poets but do not mention the tragedies which occur during a flood. There is more irony in the closing passage in which Ramanujan says that the river has water enough to urge a poet to write a poem about it, only casually mentioning the damage which the flood-waters cause in the very first half an hour.

Noteworthy is the casual manner in which Ramanujan refers to the misfortunes which are caused by the annual flood in the river. A couple of cows and three village homes are swept away by the flood-waters, and one life is lost. The person who is drowned in the flood-waters is a woman. As the woman was pregnant, it means that actually two lives have been lost. But the woman may have



been having twins in her womb; and that means that three live have been lost. There is a touch of humour here also. Ramanujan says that the woman, perhaps carrying twins in her womb, might even have felt the babies kicking against the walls of her womb; and there is another touch of humour when we are told that the pregnant woman expected identical twins with no moles on their bodies to enable anyone to differentiate between them after their birth. The mother herself would have found it difficult to distinguish one child from the other, and would have made them wear diapers of different colours to be able to distinguish the one from the other. There is also a touch of humour in the naming of the two cows. It was not necessary for the author to give us the name of the cows, but he has done so just to amuse us. The cows have the names of Gopi and Brinda. Thus we may label A River as a tragic-comic poem.

The greatness of the Ramanujan's 'theme of river' lies in the fact that the traditional praise for river has been contrasted with what is actually experienced by the people during the floods. Ramanujan looks at river objectively through the eyes of visitor. The language of the poem well suits the theme. This is straightforward poem and has the definite touch of memorableness about it.

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**Address**

• Vikram Nagar, Boudhi Chouk, Latur.  
• Tq. Latur, Dis. Latur 413512 (MS.)  
• (+91) 9922455749, (+91) 8999250451

**Email**

• aiirjpramod@gmail.com  
• aayushijournal@gmail.com

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## Stylistic Study of Malavikagnimitra: An Attempt of Establishing Similes

**Dr. M. H. Khandagale**

Asst Professor

Pg & Research Department Of English  
Dayanand College Of Arts, Latur.

*A creative figure is always conscious to make his work interesting and perpetual with the apt use of language. One gives one's message precisely and effectively employing proper linguistic devices such as Allegory, Alliteration, Anastrophe, Anecdote, Antithesis, Assonance, Cacophony, Epithet, Euphemism, Euphony, Hyperbole, Inversion, Irony, Metaphor, Metonymy, Onomatopoeia, Oxymoron, Paradox, Rhyme Scheme, Rhythm, Simile, etc. Since antiquity, a few literary devices are regularly used and being commented on for their richness and effective handling. They provide language with lucidity, euphony and simplicity and make the piece to be interesting for ages. The present article 'Similes in Malavikagnimitra' endeavors to find out skillful handling of the figure of speech 'Simile' by Maharshi Kalidasa.*

**Key Words:** Metaphor, simile, linguistic devices, Malavikagnimitra, euphony, simplicity, etc.

Literary devices are stylistic tools that explain speech beyond its ordinary range. Such language is called figurative language that makes it different from ordinary communications maintaining beauty but affecting the clarity through ambiguity. Simile is one of the principal figures of speech in which words do not give their literal meaning. The origin of the word 'simile' is the Latin language where it means 'resemblances.' Simply speaking it is a comparison between two dissimilar objects with some similarities. Metaphor is covert comparison whereas simile is overt. Gibbs rightly observes, "Simile is fundamentally a figure of speech requiring overt reference to source and target entities, and an explicit construction connecting them."

Both metaphor and simile typically comprise an exaggeration in comparison. One more specialty of it is the imagery and metaphorical concept. The Western linguists have classified figures of speech into two categories- 'meaning form' and the 'trope.' The first changes the ordinary pattern of words, like antithesis, hyperbole, etc. The second gives change to the general meaning of the words like simile, metaphor, paradox, irony, etc. Both simile and metaphor enhance the effect and beauty of language. Simile is used in all literary genres and in day to day conversations which overtly and specifically explains the object conveying the

message beautifully. Even common folks also use it collecting material for comparison from their daily businesses and geographical areas and make their communication beautiful and effective. But more investigation by linguists is made in the field of metaphor than Simile. In this respect Bredin rightly observes, "Like metaphor, it is a semantic figure, a mental process playing a central role in the way we think and talk about the world, which often associates different spheres." The comparison can be negative or positive as it denotes the mode of comparison. Maharshi Kalidasa operates it effectively in his play while juxtaposing two dance mentors, Ganadasa and Hardatta who quarrel over their superiority as a dance mentor. Ganadasa looks down upon Haradatta in the following manner- "This man is not as good as the dust on my feet." The comparison of Hardatta with 'dust' presents before us his low standard as a dance tutor. There are many instances of affirmative similes in the present text for example Hardatta while complaining about Ganadasa says to the king, "in truth, there is the same difference between your reverence and myself that there is between the ocean and a puddle" According to Shankar Pandit that this said ironically of Ganadasa.

Similes function differently such as they communicate precisely and effectively, and extend the available resources as Kalidasa beautifully



employs Myth to describe Malavika's greatness as a student. As per the notion when the drops of water fallen into sea- shells under the influence of Arcturus, they are turned into pearl. By the way, he makes her body as sea-shells and whatever it produces in the form of dance is the pearl i. e. highly valuable and exceptional.

"I am certainly destined to become famous, for the skill of the teacher, when communicated to a worthy object, attains greater excellence, as the water of a cloud, when dropped in to a sea-shell, acquires the nature of a pearl."

Similes also function as the perceptive tools of thought which heighten the effect of the language. As a reader, one can see many instances of this function in the play Malavikagnimitra. The example of it can best be seen in the following dialogue of the king-

"I see her, who indeed, decked with the auspicious ornaments, accompanied by Kauciki in the dress of an ascetic, shines like the three Vedas incarnate accompanied by the knowledge of the Supreme Soul."

Kauciki is a Pitamardika (match-maker) means one who helps the Nayika (heroine) in attempt to gain her lover. The term 'auspicious ornaments' refers to a type of golden ornament that a Hindu woman wears it at the time of her marriage and takes it off after his death which is of highest importance and is compared to Vedas, the most sacred scriptures of Hinduism. Kalidasa gives such deep meaning using the smallest object in comparison.

The intensity of the function of similes changes on the basis of the type of text, for instance the scientific texts employs mostly comparisons and analogical reasoning. It also changes on the basis of the mood of the character and situation. If the situation is somber, the playwright has to use the same objects. AS the present play is a comedy, it seldom employs such similes. For instance, Queen Iravati uses such simile when she comes across her husband

engaged in another woman falsifying his two wives. So, she compares herself to a deer and the king to the hunter who is eager to kill and eat it.

"Oh the faithlessness of men! I indeed relying upon your deceitful speech- unsuspecting like the deer that is attracted by the whistle of the hunter-did not anticipate this."

Here it becomes necessary to state the difference among simile metaphor and analogy. Simile includes two objects and analogy four. Similes also differ from metaphors on the basis of cause, target idea and literal judgments. They are figurative and compare ideas which are seemingly incomparable and thus indicate the unexpected connection between source and target.

Simile:

**Vakulavalika:** Your foot shews like a red lotus.

Metaphor:

**King:** (to himself): My eye has perceived in its full splendor, its appropriate object, since it has seen the smiling face of the almond-eyed one.....

Parivrajika: Oh moon- faced one!

Analogy:

**Parivrajika:** Ah! I consider also that you have a right to the title of queen. While the fire attains extreme brilliancy from the assistance of the sun, on the other hand the moon also acquires greatness when favoured by the night.

Similes are classified into the most stereotyped or the conventionalized and fixed similes and the most creative similes. These are the two excesses of comparison. Between the two, normal (ordinary) and novel (fresh, but not unexpected) similes can be settled. The comparison of 'woman' to 'deer' and 'king' (man) to 'hunter' in the above dialogue is the example of stereotyped simile whereas the 'skill' of teacher compared to 'rain' and the 'skill' of a pupil to 'pearl' is the example of creative simile in the following dialogue by Ganadasa while explaining the beauty of Malavika's dance :



“I am certainly destined to become famous, for the skill of the teacher, when communicated to a worthy object, attains greater excellence, as the water of a cloud, when dropped in to a sea-shell, acquires the nature of a pearl”

Ortony classifies similes into two types on the basis of semantics- literal and non-literal similes. Non-literal similes handle topic and vehicle non- symmetrically and can drop the similarity markers, but in literal similes, the terms can be reversed and the similarity markers can't be dropped. We can find Kalidasa using such similes also.

**Literal Similes:**

**Vidushaka:** “Inform the king that I am favored by having that duty entrusted to me. But that unfortunate girl being guarded by the queen more carefully than before, like the jewel guarded by a snake.”

**Non-literal similes:**

**Haradatta:** King!.....He said, “ in truth, there is the same difference between your reverence and myself that there is between the ocean and a puddle.”

Fromilhague (1995) has classified similes between objective and subjective, and explicit and implicit similes. Objective similes initiate from real physical experiences and subjective similes from individual connecting devices. The explicit simile states a sense or point of similarity directly using the structure 'as...as.' The implicit simile states a sense indirectly using words 'like, just like,' etc. The explicit and implicit similes which are the basis of this article can best be noticed in the play Malavikagnimitra by Kalidasa.

**The Subjective Simile:**

**King.-**Though I endeavour to be calm, the sound of the music of the drum makes me hasten, like the noise of my own desire<sup>4</sup> descending the path of fulfilment.

**The Objective Simile:**

**King:** She is like the moon-light obscured by clouds. As for your majesty, you amuse me by asking that your wishes may be accomplished, having become quite distressed like a bird hovering round the shop of a butcher, desirous of meat, but afraid to venture.

**The Implicit Simile:**

**King: (to himself).** My eye has perceived in its full splendor, its appropriate object, since it has seen the smiling face of the almond-eyed one, with the brightness of its teeth half displayed, like an opening lotus with the filaments of the flower partially visible.

**The Explicit Simile:**

**Irawati (spitefully):** Ah! My husband has a heart as soft as fresh butter.

The vehicles used in the variety of similes are as follows:

Sr. No.	Target	Sources/ Vehicles
01.	Ganadasa's mentoring	Water of a cloud
02.	Malavika's skills in dance	A sea-shell, pearl
03.	Haradatta as a dance teacher	Dust of my feet (Ganadasa's)
04.	Difference between your reverence and myself (Haradatta)	Between the ocean and the puddle
05.	Dharini's qualities as a queen	Fire attains brilliancy from the assistance from sun or the moon from night
06.	Dharini's auspicious ornaments	The three Vedas



07	Sound of the music of the drum	The noise of my own desire (king's)
08.	A stupid person becomes clever by association with wise	Turbid water is made clear by contact with the mud-dispersing fruit
09.	The brightness of its teeth half displayed (Malavika's)	an opening of lotus with the filaments of the flower partially visible
10.	Her(Malavika's) disappearance behind the curtain	The obscuration of the prosperity of my two eyes, the end of the great feast of my heart, the closing of the door of joy
11.	Thy princely qualities (king's)	The Sun's rays, The Sun climbed to the zenith, the geese in lotuses with ornamental water, pigeons under sloping roofs of the palace, peacock desirous of drinking the particles of water, flies to the revolving wheel-water
12.	The inside of stomach burns (Vidushaka's)	A cauldron in the market place
13.	Malavika's restless face	The moon light obscured by clouds
14.	King's ecstasy for meeting Malavika	A bird hovering round the shop of butcher desirous of meat but afraid of venture
15.	Malavika's fading face	Worn and thrown jasmine garland
16.	Queen's guarding of Malavika	The jewel guarded by snake
17.	Malavika's fingers	Shoots in spring
18.	Movements of fingers	Beckons to enter the pleasure garden
19.	Southern wind fragrant with mango-blossoms	The palm of hand frequently stroking me (king)
20..	My distracted heart (king's)	A heart of traveller longing for water

21.	Her pale cheeks (Malavika's)	The stalk of a reed
22.	Her a few ornaments (Malavika's)	The jasmine creeper having its leaves developed by spring and with only a few flowers
23.	Malavika's life	Vakulavalika's body
24.	Malavika's foot	A red lotus
25.	Her soft foot (Malavika's)	Young lotus, the filament of lotus
26.	Softness of king's heart	Fresh butter
27.	Faithlessness of men (king's)	The hunter
28	Simple woman	deer
29.	Man's deceitful speech	The whistle of hunter
30.	Malavika's hips	bimba
31.	Bimba-like hips	The Vindhya Mountain
32.	Golden girdle	A row of thunder clouds
33.	Queen Dharini's return	Mars retrogressing to his mansion in the zodiac
34.	Malavika and Vakulavalika's imprisonment	Two snake-maidens (the maidens of Naga race)
35.	The king	Mango tree
36.	Gautama's sleep	Ox in the market
37.	Crooked stick	snake
38	defeat of king of Vidharbha by Agnimitra's forces	A lotus struck with rain drops
39.	Queen Dharini	The Earth
40.	Trembling heart	Water in the leaf of a lotus
41.	Malavika in silk dress and scanty ornaments	A night in the month Chaitra (when the moon about to rise, with the lunar mansions free from mist)
42.	Quiver-sharp	A plum peacock-tails



	wearing of brigands	
43.	Treatment to Malavika during the year	A garment of woven silk used as bathing-cloth

In short, Maharshi Kalidasa uses varieties of similes such as objective and subjective similes; conventionalized/ fixed and creative similes; literal and non-literal similes, and explicit and implicit similes. As already stated, the basic concern of the article is to study similes in the light of explicit and implicit types, the playwright uses them carefully and smartly in the play *Malavikagnimitra*. There are nine examples of explicit simile and thirty one of the implicit simile. It means that the playwright wants to convey his ideas implicitly and indirectly. The use of similes in play heightens the linguistic and stylistic effect making the play extremely appealing and impressive especially while describing the beauty of Malavika, the heroine of the play. Varied objects such as geographical, flora and fauna, birds, seasons, planets, plants, trees, etc. are employed successfully. Even Northrop Frye’s contention regarding the archetypal comparisons is also seen in the present study. For instance, the king’s qualities are compared to the ‘Sun’ or ‘the rays of Sun.’ Equally, Malavika’s beauty and skills are compared to flowers, plants, and mountain and so on. Kalidasa gives very deep imaginative and romantic touch to his comedy ‘Malavikagnimitra.’

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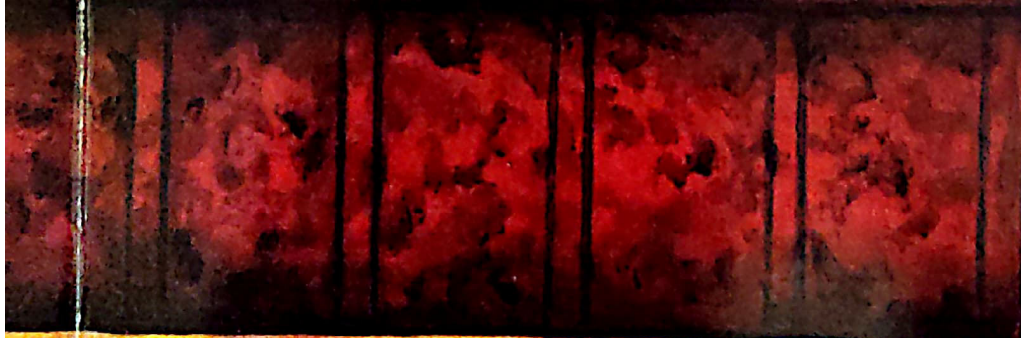
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# CHRONICLE OF HUMANITIES AND CULTURAL STUDIES

A Peer Reviewed Bimonthly International Journal

Special Issue On  
**WORLD LITERATURE:  
THEORY AND PRACTICE**



*Issue Editor*  
**Prashant Mannikar**



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## Reflection of Pluralistic Spirituality and Internationalism in Rabindranath Tagore's writings

Dr. M. H. Khandagale  
Research Supervisor  
P G & Research Department of English  
Dayanand College of Arts, Latur.

**Abstract:**

*Pluralism has many forms in modern globalized world such as social, doctrinal, ethical, spiritual, cultural, and political and so on. Spiritual or Religious pluralism is significant in present-day society. Its roots lie in political liberalism. The present essay throws light on Tagore's pluralistic spiritual nationality who, in his enormous and manifold writings deals with a vision of international union of humanity. The essay also explores Tagore's ideas of the East-West divergences. He opposes Western imperialist ideology but advocates the liberal humanist values. At the same time, he criticizes the social and political crises of the contemporary East. His writings also show his disbelief in any political solution to universal problems. So, he upholds a spiritual ideology in the Western and Eastern cultures to solve those problems. He connects the Western liberal humanism to the Eastern harmonizing spiritualism. Thus, Tagore's pluralistic spiritual nationality bridges the gap between the Western modern humanism and the Eastern religious spiritualism.*

**Keywords:** *Religious, humanism, nationalism, culture, Eastern, Western, spiritualism.*

Rabindranath Tagore was optimist regarding the future of humanity. He makes a general statement that our history does not for much space to machines or machine guns, but assists the races to realize their empathy of minds, their common responsibility for universal humanism. The idea of universal humanism is the outcome of Tagore's vision of life and world. Tagore's overwhelming spiritual nature and his idealist attitude against nationalism. This attitude has made him an object of criticism both at home and overseas. During 1916 to 1917 and during 1924 to 1927, he was on tour of Japan and the USA where he spoke on the topic of 'Nationalism'.



In Japan, he compared the traditional Japan to the Westernized Japan which received an indifferent response. On his Chinese tour in 1924, he had received mixed public response to his traditional Eastern ideology. In America he was primarily well received, but the American journalist and New Humanist Paul Elmer More had badly criticized him in the *Nation* on 30 November 1916. Equally, his lectures on the evils of political nationalism were detested by the non-Bengali Indians living in the USA. The response reached to the worst condition when there was an unsuccessful attempt to murder him in the hotel room on the West Coast. Thus, Tagore's spiritual universalism remains a matter of both admiration and censure in India and abroad.

Tagore uses the term 'spiritual' to indicate man's existence in this world. It does not consist in any supernatural implication. In fact, it is an attitude to look at life and reality which shapes man's ethical awareness and his internal consciousness over physical world. For Tagore transcendence helps man for surpassing the excessive materialistic and self-centered nature and to realize one's spiritual connection with the living being. Tagore's *Sādhanā* (1913) and *The Religion of Man* (1931) observe to this liberal idea of spirituality.

It's no doubt that Tagore's spiritualism is shaped by the *Upanishadic* principles but he modifies them according to time and need. He doesn't become just an orthodox thinker and advocates only the ideals of the metaphysical world. Tagore in *The Religion of Man* posturizes the concept of 'transcendental Man' who is in the reach of common human being. Tagore's views of the East-West relationship, internationalism and universalism are deeply rooted in his spiritual bent of mind shaped by both western liberal humanism and the Indian spiritualism. But all his ideas and concepts are multi-dimensional and debated all over the world in different ages. Tagore himself states in 'Notes and Comments' (1924) 'True universalism is one that does not demolish the walls of one's own house' but offers 'hospitality to one's guests and neighbours.' Thus Tagore respects cultural religious and spiritual natural multiplicity. So he rejects the Western idea of nation that is based on industrialization exploitation and inequality.

Tagore gives the concepts of 'nation' and 'society' in one of his lectures delivered in abroad. For him 'nation' means the political and economic union of people. It originates for a mechanical interests. But 'Society' is a unique expression of man's spirit. It a natural expression of human relationships. Tagore's ideas like *svadeś*, '*svadeśsamāj*' and '*ātmaśakti*' explore man's spiritual power. In this way, Tagore tries to unify socio-cultural identities of people in the East and the West. For Tagore, this is the beginning of a spiritual unity of human beings in the world.



It does not mean that Tagore was unaware of Eurocentric distribution of economic and cultural capital of British Raj. But he accepted it as a blessing for the development of the East. He never thought that any culture was harmful. So, the cultural synchronization for Tagore is a process towards perfection which would take the world towards zenith of spiritual prosperity.

In his famous poem 'Where the mind is without fear'

"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  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way  
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

Tagore deals with the idea of *ātmaśakti* or the spiritual power of man. The phrase in last line 'my country' represents Tagore's deep sentiments for the Swadeshi Movement during 1905–07. Tagore had actively involved in it. But the third line displays Tagore's pluralistic, multicultural nationalism. 'Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls'. This line explores his pluralistic nationalism. Regarding it Tagore writes that people must work hard with one's great sense of humanity to meet the true goal of cosmopolitanism otherwise it will not show any progress. In this way he makes difference between nationalism and internationalism and strictly advocates pluralistic cultural nationalism. He skilfully contrasts people's own personality to the great spirit of man. By the way, he supports the spiritual oneness of universal humanity.

In this way, Tagore while defining his idea of pluralistic internationalism skilfully avoids extreme national, racial and ethnic loyalties, and prefers those values that help to establish, strengthen and widen his idea of pluralistic cultural nationalism. He is against the obligation of local beliefs and customs on another. He supports liberal universalism which promotes a universal brotherhood. He rejects both the shapeless universalism and extreme nationalism and finds out golden middle to maintain peace and prosperity in the world. In this way, he encourages a pluralistic spiritual nationalism recognizing the social, religious and cultural identities and values the moral and spiritual unity of all humanity. Though there is profound use of the



terms such as 'East' and 'West' in his writings, we can't ignore presence of cultural syncretism in his thoughts. It means, unlike Edward Said, his use of these terms is less antagonistic and controversial. In *Orientalism* Said stresses the difference between the East and the West projecting imbalanced power relationship. One can easily see Said asserting Eurocentric relationship of power and of domination. Tagore doesn't give any place to such ideology in his writings. He sings not for any nation, culture and religion but for merits in all nations, cultures and religions in the world. That's why the reason he sings pluralistic spirituality and nationality.

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