

**PSEUDO-ZEAL OF WORSHIPERS IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S  
'LEAVE THIS CHANTING AND SINGING'**

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**Abstract**

Rabindranath Tagore, a recipient of Nobel Prize, an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, a Bengali Polymath and a sobriquet Gurudev reshaped Bengali literature and music as well as Indian art with contextual modernism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He was the outstanding creative artist of the modern Indian subcontinent. He was recognized as a humanist, Universalist, ardent anti-nationalist and the propagandist philosophizing about religious tenets and ritualism.

In his poem, *Leave this chanting and singing* Rabindranath Tagore feels the presence of the divine in every object of his creation and is inextricably tangled in it. He does not believe in the supernatural elements like heaven and hell. He finds God on the earth in the form of nature and in the ideals of human principles. He displays his ecstatic pleasure that he has already experience in his spiritual transformation with God. Tagore establishes an intimate relationship with God. But his God is not a sectarian one belonging to any particular religion or culture. Through his auto-translations, Tagore achieves a kind of creative synthesis in Gitanjali. In this present paper, the researcher attempts to probe into the poet's divine perception which can be only experienced as a whole, not by dissection. He exposes severely pseudo-zeal of the worshippers in a real sense. He directly attacks on false worshippers who show their artificial and pretentious spirituality.

**Keywords:** Pseudo-zeal of the worshippers, ritualism, spiritual hypocrisy, salvation, spiritual realism, etc.

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*Leave this chanting and singing and  
telling of beads!  
Whom do you worship in this lonely  
dark corner of a temple with doors  
all shut?  
Open your eyes and see your God  
is not before you!  
He is there where the tiller is tilling  
the hard ground and where the  
path maker is breaking stones.  
He is with them in sun and in shower,  
and his garment is covered with dust.  
Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!*

**Introduction**

Rabindranath Tagore's poetry is viewed as spiritual, mercurial and magical. His well known work Gitanjali (song offerings) a song of soul and the harmony of life, is profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse. It has a string of songs and experienced ecstasy- a state of divine union of soul with the supreme. It gives solace to the whole humanity. It echoes in its cadence the essence of every religion. In the tumultuous socio-political era of the pre-war world, when the West had become a Godless state (with Nietzsche's proclamation of "Death of God"), Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore offered solace through his spiritually charged artistic achievement of immense appeal and supreme significance, Gitanjali, a collection of 103 English poems (1912). It is an excellent expression of Indian Bhakti cult with ultimate submission before the will of God. It is Tagore's finest achievement in English verse. Its central theme is devotion and its motto is,

*"I am here to sing thee songs." (Poem no. XV).*

There is human longing in Tagore to be united with God, to seek fulfilment in the unification of the human soul with the cosmic soul, the union of self with the supreme when he says:

*"And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love."  
(Gitanjali XXXVI)*

K. R. S. Iyengar writes:

*"The Gitanjali songs are mainly poems of bhakti in the great Indian tradition. We have Vaishnava poets and Saiva poets who seek God as a child seeks its mother, as a lover seeks his (or her) beloved" (Indian Writing in English, 110).*

Tagore's conception of Gitanjali took place through his unquestioning devotion to God to whom he offers his gratefulness in the opening poem where he affirms his firm faith in the immortality of soul and ever refreshing life:

*"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou  
emptiest again and again and fillest it ever with fresh life." (Gitanjali 1)*

*Leave This Chanting and Singing* is the 11<sup>th</sup> poem in this collection. Tagore mentions the actual reason of writing this poem.

*"I worked hard to break out of the religious and communal thinking that was beginning in 1941, when the Hindu Muslim riots erupted in the subcontinent, making the partitioning of the country*

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*hard to avoid. I was extremely shocked by the violence that was provoked by the championing of a singular identity of people as members of one religion or another and he felt convinced that this disaffection was being foisted on common people by determined extremists.”*

(<https://newrepublic.com/article/89649/rabindranath-tagore>)

**Pseudo-Zeal of the Worshippers:**

*The term Pseudo stands for pretentious, false, unreal, sham, spurious and deceptive and the word zeal refers to great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective. Thus the combination of pseudo-zeal means pretentious enthusiasm or fanaticism for spirituality.*

*Jesus mentions the quality of true worshipper in the Bible, Matthew 22:37,*

*“You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with your entire mind.”*

*True worshippers not only pray to God but also they follow the footsteps of God. They believe in practical life. They intermingle with poor and needy and help them by all means.*

**Selfish and barren ritualism:**

*In this poem, Rabindranath Tagore, a great philosopher, deploras all selfish and barren ritualism which believes in mere performance of rituals without any thought of general being. He bids the holy priests (Pujaris) to abandon the outdated method of chanting the mantras, singing and murmuring loud prayers by holding tight the chain of beads one by one. He stresses on the holy man to contemplate on the fact of finding God inside a lonely dark room with all the doors shut. He must try to open his eyes inside the dark room to see whether God is really there in front of him. Will he even come near to the presence of God and expect a positive interaction with the Great Unknown? God is not in the dark chamber where the so-called devotee is meditating and chanting hymns turning his back upon the world of toiling humanity.*

**Actual Dwelling of God:**

*Tagore urges the false worshippers to stop the worship of God in a secluded corner of the temple, with their eyes half shut. He boldly condemns them,*

*“Open your eyes and see God is not there before you.”*

*Tagore boldly tells about the existence and presence of God. He utters,*

*“God is everywhere but his face can be mysteriously seen by the eyes of one’s heart in perhaps some of the most unusual places of the world.”*

*God is not to be found in this so-called or hypocritical manner. He proclaims in a definite way, God lives with the humble and the down trodden like the tillers of the land and path makers who work hard at breaking stones. He lives with those who toil in sun and shower and whose clothes are soiled with dust. Tagore imagines that in the process, even God’s garment is covered with dust. Therefore he advises the holy man to imitate God by removing the holy mantle and set foot upon the dusty soil. The poet reveals the secret of obtaining God. He says,*

*“If the priest wants God, he must come out of his temple, give up his holy robes and work with the humble tillers of the soil in rain and sun.”*

*Tagore thus glorifies the life of humble labourers and rejects the ascetic way of life.*

*According to Tagore,*

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*“God stands with the tiller who is tilling the hard ground and the path maker who is breaking stones in the open air. He is with both of them in the heat of the sun and the shower of the summer rain, yet strengthening them unknowingly.”*

**Spiritual Goal of human being:**

The poet, in an authorial voice, depicts the spiritual goal of human being. He rightly asserts, God has bound himself in the process of creation and accepted its joys and sorrows. To be Godly is not to be restricted to self meditation and ritualistic flowers and incense, but let his clothes be tattered and stained for God’s sake.

*“The ultimate spiritual goal of the ascetic is to seek deliverance. This is the liberation of the soul from the cycle of birth and death. But God himself is bound to all of us in chains of love. He himself is not free and He has joyfully bound Himself to the work of creation and to the objects He has created. Then how can man ever hope to be free from bondage?”*

The poet urges the ascetics to leave the ritualistic flowers and incense which does not serve any purpose. Pseudo worshippers go to the temple, offers flowers and incense and costly gifts to God but they are very reluctant to help the beggars or needy people who stand outside of the temple. They fail in understanding the religion of humanity. He claims,

*“To be Godly is not to be restricted to self meditation and ritualistic flowers and incense, but let his clothes be tattered and stained for God’s sake.”*

The influence of the Hindu Advaita (non-dualism) can be traced in his song “*Leave This Chanting*” where he feels complete identification with God; where God is not a distant, separate entity but bound with his own self in creation:

*“Deliverance! Where is deliverance to be found! Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bounds of creation; he is bound with us all forever.  
(XI)*

He should learn it the hard way to seek and find the face of God amidst the face of the world. God does not listen to his prayers, for he is with the poor and the down trodden. According to the poet, one can find God not in the temple but with the workers who are working whole day in the dirt and under the hot sun. He asks the readers,

*“What harm is there if you work under the sun and if your cloths become dirt. Even when your clothes are turn out or stained, there is no harm because one is going to see the creator.”*

Thus Tagore wants to convey that human beings must participate in the activities of life for the better realization of God.

**Tagore’s concept of True Religion:**

Finally Tagore shares his valuable opinions about true religion. He says,

*“True religion consists in love of man and in lending a helping hand to the less fortunate men and women who struggle hard to make a bare living.”*

Tagore believes that service of man is service of God. That man is to be pitied who is seeking to find his personal salvation by running away from the world. P.S.Ramesh Chandran, Editor of Sahyadri Books, Trivandrum remarks, Tagore’s poem *Leave This Chanting and Singing* has a

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universal appeal. He expects from human being that they should love God and respect Him in every walk of life.

“God was the most beautiful creation of mankind, created in man's exact likeness, one playful, lovely and comely. So why not love him ardently and affectionately and respect him beyond everything as the creator who decided to stay?” (<http://nut.bz/1zdohpx2>)

The poem *Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!* leaves a great impact upon the readers. It creates awareness about true religion, humanity, service to man, practical life, assisting the needy and poor's, seeing the face of God in labourers, to get clear vision from God and to feel the real experience of toiling hard with such people and to get acquainted with their problems..

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