

The Theme Of 'Deliverance' in the play 'The Post Office' **by Rabindranath Tagore**

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Abstract-

Rabindranath Tagore (May 7, 1861-August 7, 1941) was a man of versatile genius. He was the first and foremost Indian poet, playwright, novelist, painter, philosopher and social reformer who gained for modern India a permanent place on the world literary map. He mainly wrote in Bengali. He translated his own creations into English. He was first non-European who won Nobel Prize for literature, in November 1913. In fact 'The Post Office' and 'Gitanjali' both marked a great transition in his life when his national longings merged in the universal. He was born in a home teeming with creative activity. He was highly influenced with the Upanishads and Buddhism. So he depicted longing for deliverance or freedom of Amal in the play 'The Post Office'.

Keywords-

Versatile, Genius, social, Reformer, Permanent; Map, Translated, Creations, Honorary, Belonging, Merged, Deliverance, Painter, Philosopher.

Introduction-

Rabindranath Tagore's play 'The Post Office' is full of mysticism, superstition, longing for freedom, philosophy, heart touching and beauty. 'The Post Office' is a genuine symbolic play. It is unique because the naturalistic level is sustained throughout from beginning to the end.

Dr. Sukumar sen says-

"The Post Office (Dakghar) is the best known of the symbolic plays by Rabindranath Tagore. Judged as a play 'Dakghar' is not so much dramatic as narrative as there is not much of a story tell. The poet called it a "Prose Lyric" in dramatic form. But the play is vital and moving and through difficult, its performance at

Santiniketan (and else where) was signally successful.

So the play 'The post office' symbolizes the spiritual quest of the individual soul, Amal as the central figure of 'The post Office'.

After going through the play 'The post office' we can see that Amal is the central figure of the play. Whole the story revolves around him. Amal is the foster child of Madhav. In the very beginning, Amal is sick, when the play opens. So the physician has warned Madhav to keep him in doors. He sits near the window. He watches the panorama of different shorts of people to pass – by the way as- watchman, Dairyman, the village Headman, Sudha, Gaffer, the troop of boys and the Faqir. He is interested in them. He also makes them interested in himself by his own unsophisticated talks. Amal has all Tagorian qualities. He has intense imagination. He has great longing for freedom., to wander about and to go beyond the hills. But at the same time, he is lover of peacefulness. He is willing to submit to the dedicates of his elders. He has a mind of his own. He wins over people through gentleness and affection. He has capacity to bring out the best in the people whom he meets. He has great power of imagination which helps him to get any amount of vicarious experience. He is a great lover of life. He is a nice little boy. He has all impulses and attitudes which are essential for a healthy life. He is doubtlessly an imaginative, adventurous, innocent and spontaneous in his every walks of life. He identifies himself imaginatively. He would like to be a squirrel, a workman, a curd seller, the king's postman and even a bird also. He wants to go beyond the hills. He would love to fly away with the time to that land of which no one knows anything.

Amal's longings and desires-

Amal's desires, longings, intuitions, and fancies arise naturally and spontaneously. When he saw at a squirrel sitting with his tail up and with his little hands.

Amal says--

"Wish I were a squired- It would be lovely."

He would love to be a number of things prompted by the situations. He would come to be placed in the post office is just there outside his window and

he is inquisitive.

Amal- Post office? Whose?

Watchman- Whose, why, the king's surely!

Amal- Do letters come from the king to the office here!

Watchman- Of course. One fine day there may be a letter for you in there.

Amal- A letter for me? But I am only a little boy.

Watchman- The king sends tiny notes to little boys.

Amal- Oh, how splendid! When shall I have my letter? Amal longs to receive a letter from the king. He would not be able to read it, as he is unlettered and so not in a position to read it. He would keep these letters carefully and would read them when he is grown up and is in a position to read them. In case the postman is not able to find him out requests the headman to tell the postman that Amal sits by the window. His desire to receive a letter from the king becomes almost an obsession with him. He is reconciled to his illness and confinement on account of post office. Gaffer soon tells him that the letter is on the way and Amal almost sees him coming with a lantern in his left hand. But it is the headman who arrives at the scene and mockingly says to Amal that the blank slip of paper he carries in his hand is a letter from the king. The headman is contemptuous and is led on to state that the king would soon call on Amal shortly and that he would like to have puffed rice from Amal. Gaffer interprets the letters to convey another gentle and encouraging message and tells that the king's physician would come himself to meet Amal. Soon there is a knocking and the king's state physician arrives. Amal is just himself even in the presence of the state physician.

Amal as a round as well as individual character-

Rabindranath Tagore depicted Amal as an individual as well as a round character. He is romanticized and idealized. He speaks forgivingly about the headman in spite of his being cross with him. Amal is in love with life. He establishes contact with the external world also. In his imagination Amal recreates the parrot's Isle and the journey of the king's postman to his village.

The role of Madhav-

Madhav is the man of the world. He has brought Amal into his house. Because Amal is an orphan who has lost his mother in infancy. The world is too much with Madhav. He does not see much in Nature. He is passing much time in getting and spending. He does not listen the voices of far away. In the beginning of the play Madhav is shown fully concerned with the life of Amal. Madhav asks Amal to beg from the king a gift for him as he knows well the circumstances they are in. He is disappointed when Amal tells him that he wishes only one of the king's postmen.

Certainly, Madhav establishes a relationship of affection with Amal. Madhav realizes that involvement is better than 'freedom' and more meaningful. On the one hand Amal is embodiment of man's longing for free and natural development. He represents the pure heart and angelic innocence. On the other hand Madhav represents the fussy and possessive father. The play started with Madhav engaged in conversation with the village physician about concern for the ailing Amal. His importance is next to the Amal in the play. He is made Amal's foster- father.

Role of Sudha -

Sudha is the daughter of the flower – seller .In the play she appears two times. She appears very first in the Act-1 when Amal sits by his window and secondly at the end of the play. Sudha tells Amal that she gathers flowers in her basket. Her feet are so glad. Amal also longs to go out to pick some flowers for her from the topmost branches. She would meet him in her way back home with the flowers. She presents him a bunch of flowers without any payment.

Role of Gaffer-

Gaffer appears as Faqir in the play. He first appears in the Act-1 in the play. Madhav tells Gaffer that he has brought a child into the house. His wife was almost dying to adopt a child. There was a time when earning money was a short of passion with him. But now he makes money for Amal. Now earning has become a joy for him. He is a mysterious character. Madhav is not faithful for him . He notices that all the windows of Amal's room are shut.

Role of village Headman-

The headman is a man of anger. He always thinks in term of power. He has neither affection nor sympathy. He does not establish a bond of love with Amal. He speaks Amal in a very rough manner. He also calls Madhav as "A devilish swell". He comes in anger and goes away in anger. His aggressive destructiveness stands in contrast with Madhav's helpless and blind affection.

Role of the watchman--

The watchman is the old gypsy man who comes sounding his gongs. We can see him very first in Act 1. Amal also asks him to sound the gong. But he is waiting for appropriate time. The watchman also tells Amal that the great house on the other side with flag flying-up is the new post office of the king which is receiving letters from the king, one fee day there may be a letter for 'You' in there. So Amal would like to be a postman.

Role of the village doctor-

The village doctor appears in the play in the very beginning. The village physician represents book- learning. He has a blind faith in scriptures. He treats Amal strictly in accordance with whatever is in them. He advises that Amal can be save only to keep him indoors away from the Autumn, Sun and rain. He comes a second time in Act-two. He asks from Amal how does he feel. Amal replies that he feels

"awfully well". The over specialization of the physician has resulted in a loss of his capacity for human sympathy.

Role of the dairyman-

The dairyman passes by Amal's window in the Act-one of the play 'The post office'. He shouts, "curds, curds, good nice curds. "After listening his voice Amal wants to buy curds. But due to lack of money he can not buy the curds. The dairyman belongs to a village which lies on the river shamli. Amal faintly remembers that he has seen the dairyman's village. He requests dairyman to take him to his village. Amal likes to learn to cry curds .He also wants to walk the long, long road. Amal never wants to be learned .He will like the dairyman.

Amal loves the voice of the dairyman. He likes to cry like him. The dairyman offers Amal some curds without any money. He has taught him how to be happy by selling curds. The encounter of Amal with the dairyman exemplifies that love is essentially creative. It is only love which can transform people into better human beings. The dairyman fascinates not only Amal but them all. Amal's desires, fancies, longings and intuitions arises naturally and spontaneously. Moreover he would like to marry with the niece of the dairyman.

Role of the King's Herald-

The king's Herald announces that the king will come that night on the second watch. He also announces that the king will send his greatest physician to attend on his young friend. The scene between the king's herald and the state physician show that this may be taken as symbolic at all.

Role of the king's physician-

The state physician is represented as different from the village physician. He has much understanding. He also has full sympathy for the patient like Amal. When Amal is in the presence of the King's physician.

State Physician – How do you feel my child?

Amal- I feel very well, Doctor, very well. All pain is gone. How fresh and open! I can see all the stars now twinkling from the other side of the dark.

Physician- Will you feel enough to leave your bed when the king comes in the middle watches of the night?

Amal- Of course. I am dying to be about forever so long. I'll ask the king to find me the polar star- I must have seen often, but I don't know exactly which it is...

Role of the troop of friends(boys) -

Amal sees a troop of boys by the window of his room. He came to know that they will play being ploughman; a stick in the hand of one of the boys will be their ploughshare. They will play the whole day. One of the boys asks Amal to come and play with them. But he is unable to do so. Amal asks the boys to play on the road near his window. He wants to watch them. Amal asks them about the

king's postman as Badal and Sarat. We know that at the end of the Act-one, there is naturalistic situation to a fairly symbolic level. Now Amal and the boys speak of the king's postman --

Amal- Who are they? Tell me their names.

A Boy- One's Badal.

Another Boy- Another's Sarat. .

Another Boy- There's Many of them.

So in a nutshell the symbolic meaning is that the seasons are the postman of the king. The king might be God Himself. The post office might be the whole Universe. And the Nature with her seasons like Badal and Sarat might be the agents through whom God sends His messages.

Thus the central theme of the play 'The Post Office' is doubtlessly 'deliverance' or 'freedom'. Of a child namely Amal. Rabindranath Tagore weaves his words into a most delicate patterns of poetic prose. He spiritualizes all dramatic actions including all his desires. He uses much wit but little humor, much mockery but little irony, much keenness of intellect but little precision and straight forwardness. A realistic plot turns into a cloak for symbolism. It is full of poetic heights. Rabindranath Tagore is a Romantic genius who rebels against the materialistic tradition. He is master of technique of language. He is also master of building imaginary upon imaginary. His characters are extraordinary men and women. So the play 'The Post Office' is an allegory. It is the best symbolic play. It is not the drama of action or circumstances. The theme is simple. There are only two acts without any scene.

Edward Thompson says-

"In 'The Post Office' only the poet's skill has avoided catastrophe; If the language had been a shade less perfect in simplicity and naturalness the play would have sagged downward into a hopeless mush and waiter of sentimentalism. The play has a tighter structural unity and its meaning comes to us like a deep dream of peace. As in the physical world action and reaction are equal and opposite. So in the spiritual world too aspiration and response have alike casual relation."

In this way the play 'The Post Office' is full of the theme of 'deliverance'. It moves on the level of Amal's mental access and his own consciousness. So the play is of one texture of simplicity. It is almost perfect art within its own limits.

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