

**Rabindranath Tagore As An Imagist:With Reference To His Play  
'The Post Office'.**

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**Abstract :**

Rabindranath Tagore, a Benagali poet, was born with gift of art. As a poet, a short story writer, a playwright, an essayist and a painter, he ruled over the kingdom of art and literature. R. Tagore won Nobel Prize in Literature. His poetry and writings has been rich and generous with different literary devices. Especially, his literary work is rich with imagery and symbols and he has interwoven not only contemporary but artistic themes in his literary works. The present paper throws light on R. Tagore's use of images in *The Post Office* that is enough to prove him as an imagist.

**Keywords:** Images, symbols, objects, adjectives, physical and spiritual thinking.

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Rabindranath Tagore, a distinguished playwright in Indian English drama, has dominated not only Indian theatre but European dramatic traditions also. His contribution to Indian theatre is an outstanding. His works consists of *Sacrifice, King and Queen, Malini, Balmiki Pratibha, Autumn Festival, The Castle of Conversation, The kings of the Dark Chamber, The Post Office, The Cycle of Spring, The Free Current Tent, The Red Oleanders*. All these dramas deal with varied social, political, spiritual themes. In this context, Edward Thompson urges,

“All these dramas are vehicles of thought rather than expression of action.”(Thompson 19)

Besides his play, R. Tagore composed poems. His most elaborative poem '*Gitanjali*' has a pivotal place in Hinduism.

Most of Tagore's plays are full of various literary devices. He has skillfully used various objects, words, symbols and images in his plays. Like all his plays, *The Post Office* is full of vivid images represented by different objects and words in the play. Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of

literature... (Abrams 121) An image is a singular picture that has been created in the minds with words whereas imagery is plural which includes various images in any literary work. Imagery can create visual picture of objects, actions and ideas in the mind. It appeals to the senses. R. Tagore's *The Post Office* is rich with varied images. It is such literary devices that have brought recognition to R. Tagore on national as well as international platform. About Tagore's play *The Post Office*, W. Andrew Robinson and Krishna Dutta remarks that the play "continues to occupy a special place in (Tagore's) reputation, both within Bengal and in the wider world." (Dutta and Robinson 21-50) At first W. B. Yeats wrote English-language version of the play; he also wrote preface to it. (Yeats 311)

Rabindranath Tagore has depicted the physical or worldly objects as well as the inner conflict in the minds of the characters. He endeavors to present "the inner reality of things." (Desani 17) The use of vivid images and symbols in *The Post Office* inclines keynotes to theme of the play. In this regard, K. R. S. Iyenger opines, "Not the logic of careful plotting, but the music of ideas and symbols is the soul of this drama." (Iyenger 143) Rabindranath Tagore has inculcated images in the play to make it musical and to bring out the inner reality.

The hero of *The Post Office* is a child, Amal who plays a pivotal role in the whole drama. The play deals with an ill and sick child who longs for freedom. The boy who is in limitation of Madhav, his guardian, and doctor, is attracted by the outer world and longs to enjoy the worldly ecstasy. The play talks about the freedom of the child and from all kinds of restrictions. Hence it is to be noted that in most of the literary work of Tagore, the theme of freedom is depicted. His world famous poem '*Gitanjali*' also deals with theme of freedom.

The boy is not allowed to go out of the door as the advice of the doctor because of illness of the boy. However, the boy is willing to go out of the door or look out of the window to enjoy the outer world which is full of meadows. The child is willing to play with children freely and enjoy the ecstasy in life. But the doctor says, "I have already mentioned, on no account must he be let out of doors." (Mukhrjee 2)

Madhav , who is a guardian of Amal, loves Amal deeply. Madhav feels it more comfortable to learn from books at home rather than to be outside. He is worried of Amal's disease. Earning is the most important for Madhav but he is anxious of Amal too. He says, "Formerly earning was a sort of passion with me. I simply could not help working for money. Now I make money and as I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy for me."(Tagore 8). Amal's longing to go out cannot be fulfilled.

Amal: See that far away hill from our window- I often long to go beyond those hills and right away.

Madhav: Oh, you silly! As if there is noything more to be done but just get up on the top of that hill and away.(Mukherjee 8)

There is a difference between material and spiritual thinking. The material thinker looks at the world materialistically but a spiritual view has no limitations. It is beyond any binding. Amal's view is spiritual.

The images of door and windows are, for Amal, gates to freedom. However, Amal's desire is haunted by the materialistic world. Gaffer describes the beauty of outer nature to Amal who desires to enjoy but in vain. Gaffer tells, ".....no devil of doctor can stop them for a moment. The birds looked upon me as nothing but a man, merely a trifling creature without wings and they would have nothing to do with me....."(Tagore 11).The dairyman explains the beauty of his village and the boy is willing to visit the Panchmura hub and the beauty of the river, Shamli. The dairyman, later, realizes the sensation of the boy and he learns to be happy by selling curds.

Moreover, a little flower gatherer Sudha , the name signifies nectar, asks, Sudha: Let me close the window a bit for you.

Amal: No, don't only this one is open! All the others are shut.(Mukherjee 28-29)

The image of open window signifies state of liberation. In the play, Amal is treated by two doctors. The first one, an ordinary physician, is unable to treat the diagnosis of Amal well. As Amal's response to doctor is as follows.

“I feel awfully well today, Doctor. All pains seem to have left me.”(Mukherjee18).

The boy is full of sensation and the doctor's physical treatment is not fruitful to the boy. The doctor, the royal physician, realizes that the disease of the boy is not physical but psychological. He allows the windows opened. The result is fruitful. Amal reacts, “I feel very well, Doctor, very well. All pain is gone.”(Mukherjee 65) The word ‘all’ does not suggest the pain of disease. In fact, it indicates more than it that is a binding of all the uneasiness in life. The boy reacts that he is feeling ‘fresh’. However, the word ‘fresh’ stands for the boy's willingness to be escaped from all the bindings of Madhav and the doctor. The word ‘open’ is an image of the freedom of joyful life.

The difference between the reactions of the boy to an ordinary physician and the royal physician is meaningful. The images that are suggestive of freedom are noteworthy. Moreover, the watchman is serving the British and is a satisfied servant in British regime. The conversation between Amal and the watchman is an indication of freedom.

Amal: Won't you sound the gong, Watchman?

Watchman: The time has not come yet.

Amal: How curious! Some say the time has not yet come, and some say the time has gone by! But surely your time will come the moment you strike the gong!

Watchman: That's not possible; I strike up the gong only when it is time.

Amal: Yes, I love to hear your gong..... Tell me, why does your gong sound?

Watchman: My gong sounds to tell the people. Time waits for none but goes on forever.(Tagore 22)

This conversation indicates that it is a time to rebel against the British rule. The image of gong clarifies the time of revolt. The image of time signifies the time of liberation. Time is mighty and unconquerable. Nobody can go beyond the time. It is a law of nature that happiness comes after pains and sufferings. It is Almighty who makes human beings free from clutch of time.

The Headman is, although a head, under the control of British regime. He has no power to bring any change by himself. Hence the generations like the Headman are contented in their

living life. But the young generation does not prefer to live a binding life. It seeks for the freedom of the country from the British rule.

The Post Office is a mean of communication through letters. Before invention of electronic devices, post office and letters have been the only way of distant communication. Rabindranath Tagore's *The Post Office* signifies complete freedom from all kinds of bindings in the worldly life and transcending to spiritual one. The post master is supposed to be an image of God who brings messages to the earthly creatures. Therefore, Amal requests the king to make him king's postmaster. He requests: "Make me your postman that I may go about, lantern in hand, delivering your letters from door to door."(Mukherjee 46)

The postman represents the angel of Almighty and the lantern stands for the message full of divine light. Thus the angel of Almighty conveys the divine and spiritual message to the human beings who are drowned in the trend of physical illusionment in the world.

Moreover Amal says, "I can see all stars now twinkling from the other side of the dark."(Mukhejee 55)

The line 'the other side of the dark' makes it clear that this world is gloomy, full of material things. The real world is another which is full of ecstasy of heaven, a spiritual one and there is only divine light where there is no room for material illusions. The light of the stars is universal and not restricted to only a part. The words silence, sleep and death are suggestive of the way to freedom from all bindings of life. The starry light provides divine view to look at the world beyond earthly and physical life.

Rabindranath Tagore's use of imagery is praiseworthy. All of the characters in *The Post Office* are living in the shadow of the British regime. Tagore, through his imagery, has focused on the impact of colonialism in India. *The Post Office* signifies the psychological state of Indians in the British regime. Unique characters in the play and use of various adjectives and signifying words indicate the past, present and future state of life in India under the British regime.

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