

Contribution of rabindranath tagore essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Own mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps most highly regarded; he is indeed credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature. Such stories mostly borrow from deceptively simple subject matter: commoners. Tagore's non-fiction grappled with history, linguistics, and spirituality. He wrote autobiographies. His travelogues, essays, and lectures were compiled into several volumes, including *Europe Jatrir Patro* (Letters from Europe) and *Manusher Dhormo* (The Religion of Man). His brief chat with Einstein, "Note on the Nature of Reality", is included as an appendix to the latter. On the occasion of Tagore's 150th birthday an anthology (titled *Kalanukromik Rabindra Rachanabali*) of the total body of his works is currently being published in Bengali in chronological order. This includes all versions of each work and fills about eighty volumes. [88] In 2011, Harvard University Press collaborated with Visva-Bharati University to publish *The Essential Tagore*, the largest anthology of Tagore's works available in English; it was edited by Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravarthy and marks the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth. [89]

Music

Tagore was a prolific composer with 2, 230 songs to his credit. His songs are known as *rabindrasangit* ("Tagore Song"), which merges fluidly into his literature, most of which—poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike—were lyricised. Influenced by the *thumri* style of Hindustani music, they ran the entire gamut of human emotion, ranging from his early dirge-like Brahmo

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devotional hymns to quasi-erotic compositions. [90] They emulated the tonal color of classical ragas to varying extents. Some songs mimicked a given raga's melody and rhythm faithfully; others newly blended elements of different ragas. [91] Yet about nine-tenths of his work was not bhanga gaan, the body of tunes revamped with "fresh value" from select Western, Hindustani, Bengali folk and other regional flavours "external" to Tagore's own ancestral culture. [17] Scholars have attempted to gauge the emotive force and range of Hindustani ragas: "[...] the pathos of the purabi raga reminded Tagore of the evening tears of a lonely widow, while kanara was the confused realization of a nocturnal wanderer who had lost his way. In bhupali he seemed to hear a voice in the wind saying 'stop and come hither'. Paraj conveyed to him the deep slumber that overtook one at night's end. [17] "

—Reba Som, Rabindranath Tagore: The Singer and His Song. [92]

Tagore influenced sitar maestro Vilayat Khan and sarodiyas Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amjad Ali Khan. [91] His songs are widely popular and undergird the Bengali ethos to an extent perhaps rivalling Shakespeare's impact on the English-speaking world. It is said that his songs are the outcome of five centuries of Bengali literary churning and communal yearning. Dhan Gopal Mukerji has said that these songs transcend the mundane to the aesthetic and express all ranges and categories of human emotion. The poet gave voice to all —big or small, rich or poor. The poor Ganges boatman and the rich landlord air their emotions in them. They birthed a distinctive school of music whose practitioners can be fiercely

traditional: novel interpretations have drawn severe censure in both West Bengal and Bangladesh.

For Bengalis, the songs' appeal, stemming from the combination of emotive strength and beauty described as surpassing even Tagore's poetry, was such that the Modern Review observed that "[t]here is in Bengal no cultured home where Rabindranath's songs are not sung or at least attempted to be sung ... Even illiterate villagers sing his songs". A. H. Fox Strangways of The Observer introduced non-Bengalis to rabindrasangit in The Music of Hindostan, calling it a "vehicle of a personality ... [that] go behind this or that system of music to that beauty of sound which all systems put out their hands to seize." [94]

In 1971, Amar Shonar Bangla became the national anthem of Bangladesh. It was written—ironically—to protest the 1905 Partition of Bengal along communal lines: lopping Muslim-majority East Bengal from Hindu-dominated West Bengal was to avert a regional bloodbath. Tagore saw the partition as a ploy to upend the independence movement, and he aimed to rekindle Bengali unity and tar communalism. Jana Gana Mana was written in shadhubhasha, a Sanskritised register of Bengali, and is the first of five stanzas of a Brahmo hymn that Tagore composed. It was first sung in 1911 at a Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress [95] and was adopted in 1950 by the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of India as its national anthem.

Paintings

At sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France [96] —were held throughout Europe. He was likely red-green color blind, resulting in works that exhibited strange colour schemes and off-beat aesthetics. Tagore was influenced by scrimshaw from northern New Ireland, Haida carvings from British Columbia, and woodcuts by Max Pechstein. [87] His artist's eye for his handwriting were revealed in the simple artistic and rhythmic leitmotifs embellishing the scribbles, cross-outs, and word layouts of his manuscripts. Some of Tagore's lyrics corresponded in a synesthetic sense with particular paintings. [17]

“ [...]Surrounded by several painters Rabindranath had always wanted to paint. Writing and music, playwriting and acting came to him naturally and almost without training, as it did to several others in his family, and in even greater measure. But painting eluded him. Yet he tried repeatedly to master the art and there are several references to this in his early letters and reminiscence. In 1900 for instance, when he was nearing forty and already a celebrated writer, he wrote to Jagadishchandra Bose, “ You will be surprised to hear that I am sitting with a sketchbook drawing. Needless to say, the pictures are not intended for any salon in Paris, they cause me not the least suspicion that the national gallery of any country will suddenly decide to raise taxes to acquire them. But, just as a mother lavishes most affection on her ugliest son, so I feel secretly drawn to the very skill that comes to me least easily. He also realized that he was using the eraser more than the pencil, and dissatisfied with the results he finally withdrew, deciding it was not for him to become a painter. [97] ”

—R. SivaKumar, *The Last Harvest : Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore*. [98]

Rabindra Chitravali, edited by noted art historian R. Siva Kumar, for the first time makes the paintings of Tagore accessible to art historians and scholars of Rabindranath with critical annotations and comments It also brings together a selection of Rabindranath's own statements and documents relating to the presentation and reception of his paintings during his lifetime. [99]

The Last Harvest : Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore was an exhibition of Rabindranath Tagore's paintings to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, India and organised with NGMA Delhi as the nodal agency. It consisted of 208 paintings drawn from the collections of Visva Bharati and the NGMA and presented Tagore's art in a very comprehensive way. The exhibition was curated by Art Historian R. Siva Kumar. Within the 150th birth anniversary year it was conceived as three separate but similar exhibitions, and travelled simultaneously in three circuits. The first selection was shown at Museum of Asian Art, Berlin, [100] Asia Society, New York, [101] National Museum of Korea, [102] Seoul, Victoria and Albert Museum, [103]

London, The Art Institute of Chicago, [104] Chicago, Petit Palais, [105] Paris, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, National Visual Arts Gallery (Malaysia), [106] Kuala Lumpur, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, [107] Ontario, National Gallery of Modern Art, [108] New Delhi

Theatre

At sixteen, Tagore led his brother Jyotirindranath's adaptation of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. [109] At twenty he wrote his first drama-opera: *Valmiki Pratibha* (The Genius of Valmiki). In it the pandit Valmiki overcomes his sins, is blessed by Saraswati, and compiles the *Rāmāyana*. [110]

Through it Tagore explores a wide range of dramatic styles and emotions, including usage of revamped kirtans and adaptation of traditional English and Irish folk melodies as drinking songs. [111]

Another play, *Dak Ghar* (The Post Office), describes the child Amal defying his stuffy and puerile confines by ultimately "fall[ing] asleep", hinting his physical death. A story with borderless appeal—gleaning rave reviews in Europe—*Dak Ghar* dealt with death as, in Tagore's words, "spiritual freedom" from "the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds". [112]

[113] In the Nazi-besieged Warsaw Ghetto, Polish doctor-educator Janusz Korczak had orphans in his care stage *The Post Office* in July 1942. [114] In *The King of Children*, biographer Betty Jean Lifton suspected that Korczak, agonising over whether one should determine when and how to die, was easing the children into accepting death. [115][116][117] In mid-October, the Nazis sent them to Treblinka. [118] "[...] but the meaning is less intellectual, more emotional and simple. The deliverance sought and won by the dying child is the same deliverance which rose before his imagination, [...] when once in the early dawn he heard, amid the noise of a crowd returning from some festival, this line out of an old village song, "Ferryman, take me to the other shore of the river." It may come at any moment of life, though the child discovers it in death, for it always comes at the moment

when the “ I”, seeking no longer for gains that cannot be “ assimilated with its spirit”, is able to say, “ All my work is thine” [...]. [120] ”

—W. B. Yeats, Preface, *The Post Office*, 1914.

His other works fuse lyrical flow and emotional rhythm into a tight focus on a core idea, a break from prior Bengali drama. Tagore sought “ the play of feeling and not of action”. In 1890 he released what is regarded as his finest drama: *Visarjan* (*Sacrifice*). [110] It is an adaptation of *Rajarshi*, an earlier novella of his. “ A forthright denunciation of a meaningless [and] cruel superstitious rite[s]”, [121] the Bengali originals feature intricate subplots and prolonged monologues that give play to historical events in seventeenth-century Udaipur. The devout Maharaja of Tripura is pitted against the wicked head priest Raghupati. His latter dramas were more philosophical and allegorical in nature; these included *Dak Ghar*. Another is Tagore’s *Chandalika* (*Untouchable Girl*), which was modelled on an ancient Buddhist legend describing how Ananda, the Gautama Buddha’s disciple, asks a tribal girl for water. [122]

In *Raktakarabi* (“ Red” or “ Blood Oleanders”), a kleptocrat rules over the residents of *Yaksha puri*. He and his retainers exploit his subjects—who are benumbed by alcohol and numbered like inventory—by forcing them to mine gold for him. The naive maiden-heroine *Nandini* rallies her subject-compatriots to defeat the greed of the realm’s sardar class—with the morally roused king’s belated help. Skirting the “ good-vs-evil” trope, the work pits a vital and joyous *lèse majesté* against the monotonous fealty of the king’s varletry, giving rise to an allegorical struggle akin to that found in *Animal*

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Farm or Gulliver's Travels. [123] The original, though prized in Bengal, long failed to spawn a "free and comprehensible" translation, and its archaic and sonorous didacticism failed to attract interest from abroad. [3]

Chitrangada, Chandalika, and Shyama are other key plays that have dance-drama adaptations, which together are known as Rabindra Nritya Natya.

Novels

Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them Chaturanga, Shesher Kobita, Char Odhay, and Noukadubi. Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)—through the lens of the idealistic zamindar protagonist Nikhil—excoriates rising Indian nationalism, terrorism, and religious zeal in the Swadeshi movement; a frank expression of Tagore's conflicted sentiments, it emerged out of a 1914 bout of depression. The novel ends in Hindu-Muslim violence and Nikhil's—likely mortal—wounding. [124]

Gora raises controversial questions regarding the Indian identity. As with Ghare Baire, matters of self-identity (jāti), personal freedom, and religion are developed in the context of a family story and love triangle. [125] In it an Irish boy orphaned in the Sepoy Mutiny is raised by Hindus as the titular gora—"whitey". Ignorant of his foreign origins, he chastises Hindu religious backsliders out of love for the indigenous Indians and solidarity India with them against his hegemon-compatriots. He falls for a Brahmo girl, compelling his worried foster father to reveal his lost past and cease his nativist zeal. As a "true dialectic" advancing "arguments for and against strict traditionalism", it tackles the colonial conundrum by "portray[ing] the

value of all positions within a particular frame [...] not only syncretism, not only liberal orthodoxy, but the extremest reactionary traditionalism he defends by an appeal to what humans share." Among these Tagore highlights " identity [...] conceived of as dharma." [126]

In *Jogajog* (*Relationships*), the heroine Kumudini—bound by the ideals of Śiva-Sati, exemplified by Dākshāyani—is torn between her pity for the sinking fortunes of her progressive and compassionate elder brother and his foil: her roue of a husband. Tagore flaunts his feminist leanings; pathos depicts the plight and ultimate demise of women trapped by pregnancy, duty, and family honour; he simultaneously trucks with Bengal's putrescent landed gentry. [127] The story revolves around the underlying rivalry between two families—the Chatterjees, aristocrats now on the decline (Biprodas) and the Ghosals (Madhusudan), representing new money and new arrogance. Kumudini, Biprodas' sister, is caught between the two as she is married off to Madhusudan. She had risen in an observant and sheltered traditional home, as had all her female relations.

Others were uplifting: *Shesher Kobita*—translated twice as *Last Poem* and *Farewell Song*—is his most lyrical novel, with poems and rhythmic passages written by a poet protagonist. It contains elements of satire and postmodernism and has stock characters who gleefully attack the reputation of an old, outmoded, oppressively renowned poet who, incidentally, goes by a familiar name: " Rabindranath Tagore". Though his novels remain among the least-appreciated of his works, they have been given renewed attention via film adaptations by Ray and others: *Chokher Bali* and *Ghare Baire* are

exemplary. In the first, Tagore inscribes Bengali society via its heroine: a rebellious widow who would live for herself alone. He pillories the custom of perpetual mourning on the part of widows, who were not allowed to remarry, who were consigned to seclusion and loneliness. Tagore wrote of it: " I have always regretted the ending" Stories

Tagore's three-volume Galpaguchchha comprises eighty-four stories that reflect upon the author's surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles. [29] Tagore associated his earliest stories, such as those of the " Sadhana" period, with an exuberance of vitality and spontaneity; these traits were cultivated by zamindar Tagore's life in Patisar, Shajadpur, Shelaidaha, and other villages. [29] Seeing the common and the poor, he examined their lives with a depth and feeling singular in Indian literature up to that point. [128] In " The Fruitseller from Kabul", Tagore speaks in first person as a town dweller and novelist imputing exotic perquisites to an Afghan seller. He channels the lucubrate lust of those mired in the blasé, nidorous, and sudorific morass of subcontinental city life: for distant vistas. " There were autumn mornings, the time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it [...] I would fall to weaving a network of dreams: the mountains, the glens, the forest [...]." [129]

The Golpaguchchho (Bunch of Stories) was written in Tagore's Sabuj Patra period, which lasted from 1914 to 1917 and was named for another of his

magazines. [29] These yarns are celebrated fare in Bengali fiction and are commonly used as plot fodder by Bengali film and theatre. The Ray film *Charulata* echoed the controversial Tagore novella *Nastanirh* (The Broken Nest). In *Atithi*, which was made into another film, the little Brahmin boy Tarapada shares a boat ride with a village zamindar. The boy relates his flight from home and his subsequent wanderings. Taking pity, the elder adopts him; he fixes the boy to marry his own daughter. The night before his wedding, Tarapada runs off—again. *Strir Patra* (The Wife's Letter) is an early treatise in female emancipation. [130] Mrinal is wife to a Bengali middle class man: prissy, preening, and patriarchal. Travelling alone she writes a letter, which comprehends the story. She details the pettiness of a life spent entreating his viraginous virility; she ultimately gives up married life, proclaiming, *Amio bachbo. Ei bachlum: " And I shall live. Here, I live."*

Haimanti assails Hindu arranged marriage and spotlights their often dismal domesticity, the hypocrisies plaguing the Indian middle classes, and how Haimanti, a young woman, due to her insufferable sensitivity and free spirit, foredid herself. In the last passage Tagore blasts the reification of Sita's self-immolation attempt; she had meant to appease her consort Rama's doubts of her chastity. *Musalmani Didi* eyes recrudescant Hindu-Muslim tensions and, in many ways, embodies the essence of Tagore's humanism. The somewhat auto-referential *Darpaharan* describes a fey young man who harbours literary ambitions. Though he loves his wife, he wishes to stifle her literary career, deeming it unfeminine. In youth Tagore likely agreed with him. *Darpaharan* depicts the final humbling of the man as he ultimately acknowledges his wife's talents. As do many other Tagore stories, *Jibito o*

Mrito equips Bengalis with a ubiquitous epigram: Kadombini moriya proman korilo she more nai—" Kadombini died, thereby proving that she hadn't."