

Apprehension of Prerogative Replica in the Exertions of Rabindranath Tagore

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into how Rabindranath Tagore examined the theme of freedom in his works, influenced by his experiences under foreign rule, including issues like racism, language barriers, living conditions, and the freedom to voice opinions. Tagore criticizes narrow nationalism, which he views as fueled by selfish ambition and greed. His plays—*Dakghar* (The Post Office), *Achalayatan* (The Immovable), *Muktadhara* (The Waterfall), and *Raktakarabi* (Red Oleanders)—each reveal different dimensions of his expansive concept of freedom

Keywords: *Racism, Nationalistic Boundaries, Myopic ambition and greed, etc*

Introduction:

Rabindranath Tagore was a prominent figure in Indian culture, known as a poet, philosopher, musician, writer, and educator. His literary career spanned 65 years, during which he produced a vast array of poems, plays, short stories, novels, and critical essays. In 1913, he became the first Asian Nobel Laureate when he won the Nobel Prize for his collection of poems, *Gitanjali*. Affectionately referred to as Gurudev, his musical works are collectively known as Rabindra Sangeet. Notably, two of his songs—*Jana Gana Mana* and *Amar Sonar Bangla*—are now the national anthems of India and Bangladesh, respectively.

Tagore's work frequently celebrates the theme of liberation. The concept of freedom recurs throughout his diverse literary creations, sometimes overtly and at other times subtly. His philosophy, influenced by ancient Indian Upanishadic texts, led him to conclude that true freedom is not found in individualism but in the unity of minds and hearts. Nevertheless, he also emphasized the importance of individual exploration as a crucial path to discovering freedom.

Tagore humorously reflects on his childhood, where he was often under the rule of negligent yet oppressive servants. To evade their responsibilities, they would place young Tagore in a designated spot in the servants' quarters, drawing a chalk circle around him and solemnly warning him of the dangers of crossing it. Aware of Sita's fate in the Ramayana for stepping outside a similar boundary set by her husband, Tagore complied with their confinement but felt a rebellious urge to erase the chalk line and seek freedom beyond it. This formative experience stayed with him throughout his life; he consistently felt stifled by any restrictive boundaries and fiercely challenged them.

1. In *Dakghar* (The Post Office), the young protagonist Amal forms connections with various strangers, showcasing the spontaneity and innocence characteristic of childhood. The play adeptly reflects Tagore's thoughts on freedom. Confined to his bed due to illness, Amal observes the world outside and befriends passersby, including a curd seller, a watchman, a flower girl, and an old man.

Though physically restricted, Amal is not imprisoned in a spiritual or creative sense. His vivid imagination and natural charm enable him to connect deeply with seemingly unrelated individuals. As Tagore highlights in his foreword to S. Radhakrishnan's *The Philosophy of Upanishads*, true freedom goes beyond physical limitations and is found in the connections we establish with others. ***"When our self is illuminated with the light of love, then the negative aspect of its finality, and then our relationship with others is no longer that of competition and conflict, but of sympathy and co-operation."*** Young Amal represents the pure-hearted essence of childhood, untouched by the artificial divisions of social or economic class. This allows him to interact effortlessly with others, free from any sense of separation.

In Tagore's view, freedom also encompasses the ability to make mistakes and learn from them. He believes that true growth comes from the freedom to explore, err, and reflect on those experiences. According to him, this journey of learning is essential to personal development and the realization of one's potential ***"Those in authority are never tired of holding forth on the possibility of the abuse of freedom as a reason for withholding it, but without that possibility freedom would not really be free. And the only way of learning to use a thing properly is through its misuse."***

2. In *Achalayatan* (The Immovable), this theme serves as a classic illustration of the joy that comes from learning through one's own mistakes. The play emphasizes the importance of personal growth and the transformative power of experience, highlighting how mistakes can lead to valuable lessons and deeper understanding. Through the characters' journeys, Tagore showcases the significance of embracing imperfection as a pathway to true wisdom. The play, named after a school that prioritizes rigid, ritualistic education, emphasizes punishment and lacks vitality. Young Panchak stands out as a misfit in this setting, unafraid to confront the unknown consequences of his actions.

At the heart of Tagore's understanding of freedom is the idea of assimilation rather than individualism. For him, liberty transcends the conventional notion of pursuing one's own path. True freedom, he argues, arises from the union of souls, highlighting the importance of connection and collective experience over solitary ambition ***"The most individualistic of human beings who owe no responsibility are the savages who fail to attain their fullness of manifestation.....Only those may attain freedom.....who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation"***. The evolution of freedom is essentially the evolution of human relationships. As individuals learn to connect more deeply and authentically with one another, they create an environment where freedom can flourish. This growth in relationships fosters understanding, empathy, and collaboration, which are vital for achieving a truly free and harmonious society.

3. In his play *Muktadhara* (The Waterfall), Tagore powerfully underscores the theme of freedom. The narrative revolves around an oppressed community and their eventual liberation. In response to the citizens of neighboring Shiv-tarai failing to pay their taxes, Ranajit, the king of Uttarkut, builds a dam as a form of punishment. In contrast, Abhijit, the crown prince, challenges this harsh action and seeks to help the people of Shiv-tarai by creating a passage that links them to the wider world. His vision reflects Tagore's own ideals, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing the well-being of all individuals, transcending nationalistic boundaries.

For Tagore, freedom serves as a crucial touchstone in his political philosophy. He openly criticizes the growing materialism and mechanization of human life, which can stifle the mind and trap individuals in narrow perspectives, whether those are societal or self-imposed. He observes that such constraints hinder true liberation and the ability to connect with others, ***"The freedom of unrestrained egoism in the individual is licence and not true freedom....For his truth is in that which is universal in him"*** The notion of freedom that often characterizes modern civilization can be superficial and materialistic. It tends to focus on external achievements and possessions rather than fostering genuine inner growth and meaningful connections. This approach may overlook the deeper essence of freedom, which involves self-awareness, personal fulfillment, and the ability to engage authentically with others. True freedom should encompass not only material aspects but also spiritual and emotional dimensions that contribute to holistic well-being.

4. In *Raktakarabi* (Red Oleanders), a quintessential example of a confined mind is embodied in the character of

the king. Written shortly after *Muktadhara*, this play is rich with symbolism and metaphor. It uncovers the hidden life of a king ensnared by his relentless pursuit of wealth, sacrificing his humanity in the process. In stark contrast stands Nandini, a spirited and fearless young girl, who possesses only her vibrant life-force and her love for Ranjan. Her character represents freedom and authenticity, highlighting the stark differences between material obsession and the true essence of life.

The play unfolds dramatically, culminating in the king unknowingly killing Ranjan, who never appears on stage. Overcome with remorse, the king eventually breaks free from his self-imposed isolation and joins Nandini, who rises to become the leader of the people.

Tagore's vision for a free India—one unshackled from materialism, nationalism, and religious or racial orthodoxy—aims for a shared destiny with humanity, moving towards a more global society. This aspiration is beautifully encapsulated in a poem from *Gitanjali*, presented as a heartfelt supplication that reflects his deep yearning for unity and understanding among all people. Through this work, Tagore articulates his hope for a world where individual identities harmonize within a broader human community.

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 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.

To uphold the self-respect we owe to ourselves and our creator, education must aspire to the highest purpose of humanity: the complete growth and freedom of the soul. In such an environment, the mind can freely create its own dreams, allowing the changing seasons to bring their colors, movements, and beauty into the heart of human existence. Tagore seeks to elevate the ideal of freedom beyond earthly concerns, infusing it with a cosmopolitan spirit that envisions a vibrant and hopeful future.

*Freedom from fear is the freedom
I claim for you my motherland!
Freedom from the burden of the ages, bending your head,
Breaking your back, blinding yours eyes to the beckoning
Call of the future;
Freedom from the shackles of slumber wherewith
You fasten yourself in night's stillness,
Mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous paths;
Freedom from the anarchy of destiny
Whole sails are weakly yielded to the blind uncertain winds,
And the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as death.
Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world,
Where movements are started through brainless wires,
Repeated through mindless habits,
Where figures wait with patience and obedience for the master of show,
To be stirred into a mimicry of life.*

His childhood experiences instilled in him a lasting belief in the importance of freedom in education. He deeply understood the necessity of forming a close connection with one's cultural and natural surroundings. Through engaging in the diverse activities of his family, he came to reject all forms of narrowness, especially those that create divisions between people. He viewed education as a means to appreciate the rich elements of different cultures while preserving one's own cultural identity and uniqueness.

“From the solemn gloom of the temple children run out to sit in the dust, God watches them and forget the priest”.

Tagore's belief in freedom and joy as essential principles of life naturally influenced his approach to discipline and education. He viewed the denial of freedom as a denial of life and growth, obstructing a child's natural desire for self-expression, which is crucial for both physical and mental development. For Tagore, freedom of thought and expression is vital not only for intellectual growth and character formation but also for fostering genuine, happy relationships between students and teachers—relationships that cannot flourish in an environment of artificial constraints and forced reserve.

The extent of freedom that Tagore permitted, both inside and outside the classroom, is often remarkable. He is known to have tolerated—even encouraged—impertinent remarks from his students, which would typically frustrate an average teacher. He even allowed his students to openly critique the foundational ideals of the institution, celebrating their courage in doing so. In one of the sessions at Shantiniketan, he openly acknowledged this approach.

“This Shantiniketan will fail if it fetters your minds or makes you fear.... Today is the day of my victory, because my students have said today freely and bravely that I am hopelessly in the wrong. I do not admit that I am wrong, but I want you to have the courage to say so, if that is your conviction. May Shantiniketan always give you that freedom and courage”.

“Freedom of mind is needed for the reception of truth”, He stated that it was education—not mere admiration for the charka (spinning wheel)—that Gandhi advocated as a means to liberate India from the tyranny of its past and the overwhelming misery of irrational, unyielding orthodoxy. For him, national boundaries represented another arbitrary "circle" that constrained his desire to connect with all of humanity. He rejected these barriers of exclusion, along with the labels and divisions that hindered the creation of a broader human community.

Conclusion:

Tagore's fervent advocacy for the principle of freedom should not be misconstrued as a promotion of unchecked license or a disregard for the importance of discipline. On the contrary, his writings are rich with expressions that emphasize the value of various ideals linked to a disciplined and well-integrated personality. He believed that true freedom coexists with responsibility and the cultivation of character.

According to him *“the human soul is on its journey from the law of love from discipline to liberation, from the moral plane to the spiritual. Buddha preached the discipline of self-restraint and moral life; it is a complete acceptance of law. But this bondage of law cannot be an end by itself; by mastering it thoroughly we acquire the means of getting beyond it. The individual's heart must be filled with courage and which could make him understand actual freedom and allows him to enjoy it up to the lee, but not disturbing the balance”*.

All these various aspects of the theme of freedom often run concurrently and sometimes converge in Tagore's analysis and works. Today, the issues Tagore addressed in his plays are evident in different forms. Children, especially in urban environments, are increasingly influenced by video games, television, and the internet, resulting in less direct human interaction. For many societies, education has become little more than rote memorization within boxed classrooms, where the focus is on achieving high grades and securing lucrative jobs. Meanwhile, capitalist economies worldwide are often manipulated by profit-driven corporations that prioritize their interests over the development of those who need support the most. In this context, Tagore's message of freedom in all its dimensions remains profoundly relevant.

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