

EXPLORATION OF PLATONIC LOVE IN TAGORE'S, 'THE GARDENER'

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Abstract

The present paper is concerned with the development and depiction of Platonic love in Rabindranath Tagore's 'The Gardener'. The Platonic love is explored in these songs has touch of universality within them. Initially the love takes place between two characters lover and beloved. But these two characters are presented as universal seekers of love in this rut world. Tagore has skillfully woven this development from the conversation between Queen and Servant to death exploration in last parts. But from start to end he has maintained the platonic philosophy of love which assembles at salvation of mind through spiritual love making. Chastity, beauty, devotion and faith on each other become the vital elements of such love explored by Tagore. Somewhere the love factor is fore grounded above the philosophical inclination. After certain changes love returns in various forms. Finally this all concludes into the death. Poet invites death as the sign of last destination for true lovers. Biological truth intermixed with philosophical reveries are the important factors of such platonic love in this work, which directs these love poems at an idealized romantic goal

The concept of Platonic love is as old as Greek Philosophy. It is an intermixture of spiritual insight and physical attraction between lover and beloved. Platonic love according to glossary is, 'simply love that stops short of sexual gratification is a drastic reduction.' (Handbook of Literary Terms, pg.227) It is certain highest kind of human emotion where one can attain pleasure within the thoughtful mind. Such exploration of platonic love is rendered in Rabindranath Tagore's former love songs in The Gardener. Tagore in this work has achieved highest peak of platonic love. He does not explore the concept which is formerly defined as it is, but he has molded the same concept with his own philosophical insight in it. For Tagore rather than success in love-making, the act itself is important, pure and perfect implication of human mind.

The Gardener starts with the dialogue between servant and queen, where servant demands from queen to take care of her flower garden. The poet himself is installed as the gardener of queen's flower garden. Thus the garden signifies presently seen to embrace the

whole world. In this way in first part love imparts in form of honest servant and beautiful queen. It also subjugates the masculine passion towards feminine beauty. But note the following song where Tagore expresses the goal of true love which wins over the limited life-span,

"Some have smiles, sweet and simple, and some a sly twinkle in their eyes.

"Some have tears that well up in the daylight, and others tears that are hidden in the gloom.

They all have need for me, and I have no time to brood over the afterlife. (Gardner, Song no.2)

It is an honest expression of the artist who does not care for his age and health but is always ready to present his art for others. Such eternity is blessed for love in this work.

After declaring the aim here is symbolical conversation between free bird and cage bird, which Tagore has noted as..,

Their love is intense with longing, but they never can fly wing to wing.

Through the bars of the cage they look, and vain is their wish to know each other. (Gardner, Song no.6)

This is justification of two minds engulfed in the love making. One is real-factual another is imaginative-the dream. Such a notification of life rather than only Romantic presentation of love become the integral part of these poems. Thus Iyenger refers it as, ‘the outstanding quality that showed in every line of his poetry is life....’ (Iyenger pg.29) This life rendering becomes the vital part of platonic love, which is not only physical but sensual and spiritual. Poet alternatively refers the routine practices like milking the cow, fetching the water, farming and other activities. Such practices maintain the realistic depiction in these poems.

The conscience of lover and beloved are more important for true love making. When these both know about the hidden reality of love in them they are excited, such expression is enveloped in following lines,

I run as a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest mad with his own perfume.....

I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek (Gardner, Song no.15)

These lines explore the mysticism in love-making. In another song.no.27 not only excitement but sorrow, frustration in love are also praised by poet as below,

"Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop, while it laughs it dies. But sorrow is strong and abiding.

Let sorrowful love wake in your eyes."..... (Gardner, Song no.27)

This demand of sorrowful love is an exploration of true and spiritual love desire of lover. It is but an honest reflection of rich love mind set. This sorrowful mood is promoted by sacred, devotional appeal of lover to his beloved in song no.30,

*You are the evening cloud floating in the sky of my dreams.
 I paint you and fashion you ever with my love longings.
 You are my own, my own, Dweller in my endless dreams!*

(Gardner, Song no.30)

Poet demands for unification, in words of John Donne’s poem for the Canonization of two minds and bodies. This is the only destined ecstasy for true lovers.

In *Gardener* there are also lots of references for the development of love within the mind of poet. He confesses his early love as below,

*There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its perfume
 was stored in its core.*

Now it is squandered far and wide. (Gardner, Song no.37)

Such a sudden revelation of truth carries poetic mind towards the highest philosophical rendering in following song,

*No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say.
 I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me.
 It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a
 companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic.* (Gardner, Song no.43)

Poet hates asceticism which imparts the parting of his beloved. Here sensual pleasure is superseded over philosophical mood. There is conflict in poetic mind about asceticism of one hand and love making at another hand. He denies former thought, his love failed to achieve its aim. It teaches honest devotion despite of any expectation in love-making. One should never run away from life, whatever reality he may face. This is noted in Tagore's *The Religion of Man* where, 'human life as the ceaseless adventure to the endless further. (Tagore, pg.48)

Some time love is beyond all senses. It is part of feeling rather than only response to sense organs. In song no.58 poet describes an incident where a blind girl came to offer him a garland enveloped in the lotus leaf. Poet becomes sad to know that girl herself does not know the beauty of flowers. Here love is ignorance about oneself. Such incidents are also imparted in love making. After this incident poet praises woman as the marvelous creature made by the God,

*O woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of
 men; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts.*

(Gardner, Song no.59)

This is perfect masculine appeal to feminine imagery. Poet denotes woman as not only part of creativity but she is the source of love-making. This is a substitute force of feminine sensibility explores manhood of poet.

In the last part of *The Gardener* the love making is formalized as part of salvation, something beyond only individual expectation. He tries to build a temple in Song no.72. This is symbolical approach of divine love -the faith which poet is going to construct after long travel. His temple has not doors and windows, but it has only massive stones. These things signify the strength of temple than its ventilation. It is an epitome of firm and perfect faith of love despite of any formal entries like doors and windows, In next followed song no.73 poet suddenly turns at his love about Mother Earth,

*I will pour my songs into your mute heart, and my love into your
 love.*

I will worship you with labour.

I have seen your tender face and I love your mournful dust, Mother Earth.

(Gardner, Song no.73)

Poet wants to universalize his love rather than focusing towards only love couple. The 'mournful dust' is the real love of poet about his mother earth though she is unhappy and unattractive. But poet has molded the mood of same devotion which he has earlier expressed about beloved. Thus platonic love is spread from single entity like beloved to large conceptual

entity in form of Mother Earth. The comparison between beloved lady and Mother justifies sensuality of platonic view towards the love-making.

The above universality of love is further extended into the love between man and beast. See the following line,

*I often wonder where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition
between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language.*
(Gardner, Song no.79)

Poet mentions the invisible boundary between man and beast about the language. But he does want to suggest that true love is beyond any language. This is perfect inclination towards highest credit to emotional value of love than that of expressive form of love between the lover and beloved. Poet has only illustrated two worlds of animal and of human to justify an important element of love. He unified the love of all creatures of God. This is the over exposition of all natural love with human love. Paula Hayes mentions it as, 'In Tagore, love of nature equates at one level to love of God; for, in recognizing the worth of the natural world, one is giving assent to the fact that there is a God who created it.' (Hayes, Paula)

Sexual gratification is not promoted in platonic love which seeks towards the spiritual salvation of two minds which are united in love-making. So death also enrolls as event of such unification. In following song poet mentions his wedding with death.

*Will there be no proud ceremony for our wedding?
Will you not tie up with a wreath your tawny coiled locks?
Is there none to carry your banner before you, and will not the
night be on fire with your red torch-lights, O Death, my Death?*
(Gardner, Song no.81)

Here though death is addressed, the hidden meaning exemplifies that the love should be so honest which can face the destiny of death too. Such holiness is rarely mentioned by poet. It is possible among the pairs which have truly loved on each other. Death is the most difficult ordeal for lovers then, which only can judge the true love-making.

In last song poet appeals to accept his love as not only part of joy but the real love is the eternal source of pleasure for human soul as below,

*In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring
morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.*
(Gardner, Song no.85)

Conclusion:

The Gardener is the celebration of love lyrics by Tagore. The Platonic love rendered in The Gardener is an important part of thinking and emotional set-up of this poetic work. Tagore has not unlimited the love as only emotion and momentary expression of sudden meeting. But for him love is certain blissful act-the sacred living which attains the spiritual reality of person. He has explored not only to feel about love, but he has expressed to think about love. Love presented as thought is the vital part of Platonism behind love making.

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