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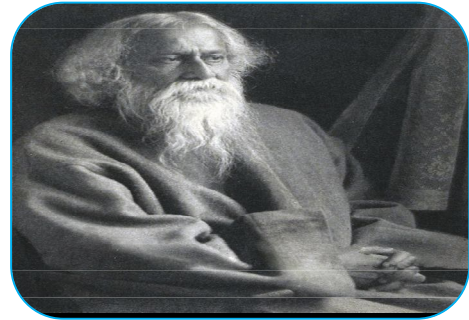
RABINDRANATH TAGORE AS A DRAMATIST

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ABSTRACT:

A pioneer in the field of education, Rabindranath Tagore proved by example to the world that formal education is not all that important and that whole-some education consists in training of all the sense along with the mind instead of cramming the brain with memorized knowledge. He is one of the greatest poets of modern India, and received the Nobel prize for literature in 1913. He holds credit for having written the national anthem for two countries, India and Bangladesh.



KEYWORDS: *field of education, Nobel prize for literature, formal education.*

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore is considered as “sui generic” in Bengali theatre and dramatic Bengali literature. It is not possible to assign him a particular place chronologically. Nor is it easy to label his plays with useful tags, or define their relationship with the theatre. His plays and his ideas of theatre developed along lines differing from the general direction of development of Bengali drama and theatre. They had little influence on other playwrights and his attitude to the theatre in Kolkata was cool, distant or at best, ambivalent. The allowed many of his plays to be staged in the professional theatres but generally disapproved of their ways. Lastly, his own ideas changed over the years.

Rabindranath wrote forty seven dramas, including half a dozen works which may or may not be called dramas. Judging by the number, he is entitled to rank as a major dramatist;- Shakespeare wrote thirty seven dramas, shaw fifty five and kalidas only three : These forty seven dramas include all types- profound tragedies, warm hearted comedies, tragicomedies, satires, symbolical dramas, dramas dealing with contemporary social and political problems, dramatic dialogues in verse, lyrical dramas, musical dramas and dance dramas. If we judge a writer by the criterion of abundance, variety and complete competence, by which T.S Eliot judged Tennyson to be a great poet, then Rabindranath is undoubtedly a great dramatist, and had he written nothing else, he would still be one of the most predominant figures in the literary history of Bengal, and an immensely gifted writer worthy of a niche among the literary immortals of the world. More than a dozen of his dramas have the essence of dramatic art and are, therefore, dramas in their own right. These dramas have been elaborately discussed in appropriate places, and from these discussions it will be evident that conflict, character – delineation, unity of action and semblance of life are, in general, prominently there. The dialogue is graceful and speakable, and is quite appropriate to the character and the impression they produce on the mind is unified and strong

and durable. If the final test of a work of dramatic art is based on the artistic effect of the whole, then they will have a place among the major dramatic works of the world.

DISCUSSION :-

We may have a cursory look at what may constitute their claim to recognition as major dramatic works. In 'Prakritir Pratisodh' (Nature's Revengne), Rabindranath's first regular drama, the hero the sanyasi is a full length portrait, delineated through exciting conflicts, both outward and inwards which mingle with one another to produce the catastrophe. And the theme is profound – realizing the infinite in the finite. Malini is a closely constructed play of which the theme is evolved through a number of well defined conflicts of which the prime one is the clash between the religion of love personified in 'Malini' and the Vedic religion of the Brahmins. The three principal characters of the play are convincingly delineated; The plot of 'Raja Q Rani' is sprawling and the portrait of the hero is not convincing. But the poet's English translation of it as 'The King and the Queen' is a concentrated piece in which both the major and the minor characters are well portrait. Lila is a lovely creation of the poet. And in Shankar, he has shown his skill in making a relatively unimportant figure quite a personality in a small way. 'Sacrifice' is one of the very well built plays or Rabindranth almost conventional and classic in its economy and observance of time and place. Its dialogue is original, and the characters, even the minor ones, are all convincing.

Rabindranath's symbolical dramas, both allegories and those that belong to the genre of symbolical drama proper, deserve special mention. 'Achalayatan' (The castle of conservatism) is a rollicking satire based on a clear collision between the attitudes of two brothers, Mahapanchaka and Panchaka, both of whom have been well delineated. 'Phalguni' (The cycle of spring), though very weak in plot-construction and character-delineation and though there is no conflict, is a lyric feast and very enjoyable on the stage and inspires man to a new awakening that life is a reality and the terrors of death are illusions. 'Rakta Karabi' (Red Oleanders) has a plot in which the conflict is well marked and the main characters and sharply limned and individualized, and its theme- the harmful and dehumanizing, effects of industrialism and the remedy – is of perpetual interest. "Taser Des" (The Kingdom of Cards) stuffed with low humour, extravagant wit, ludicrous action and a genuine message that demands out serious attention, is a class by it self. Its concise, forceful and witty dialogue, melodious songs and lively dances have combined to make its representation on the state very popular.

'Saradotsav' (Autumn Festival) is a concentrated piece of dramatic art with no over elaboration of any episode and characterization, and there is perfect integration of the idea, the dramatic situations and the characters who are all typical except Upananda. The things and beings in the play are all symbols to convey the message that perfection cannot be attained without passing, through the fire of pain. 'Raja' is full of irrelevancies and crammed with songs, but its English translation as 'The King of the Dark Chamber' by the poet himself is free from these defects. Queen Sudarshana, the heroine of the play, is a unique creation in that though she is a symbol of the eternal quest of the human soul for God, She is palpably the daughter of Eve. It is a spiritual drama of a Kind which has no precedent in literature, particularly in dramatic form.

'Dak Ghar' (The post office), entirely in prose without a single song, is a play which can be called a prose lyric. It is a play of gripping human interest and at the same time conveys a spiritual message. It is impeccable in construction, an almost perfect piece of art' very perfectly constructed'. In 'Miktadhara', one of the most moving and well-knit dramas of Rabindranath, the dramatic story arise's out of a conflict between the ruler and the ruled which symbolically is a conflict between man and machine, an essentially spiritual problem. The play contains many passages of impassioned prose and a number of musical and limpid songs which are intimately linked with the message of the play. All the characters are flat but they are admirably portayed, particulary Abhijit and Dhanajay Vairagi.

Rabindranath's musical dramas and dance dramas the difference between which is almost negligible too cannot be ignored as works of dramatic art. They belong neither to what is called opera nor to ballet, because in many of them music and dance are used as a part of the vital action and character delineation, two essential elements in drama. Marjorie Boulton aptly, says that

Rabindranath's very beautiful and simple Natir Puja is a play in which -----the function of dance as a form of religious ritual and sacrifice is shown. Most of these dramas are refreshingly original also because in them nature is not only the background but a participant; To see them acted is a thrilling experience, a veritable feast for the eye, ear and mind at the same time,

During the last decade of the nineteenth century. Rabindranath wrote six tiny dramas- 'Gandharir abedan' (1897), 'santi' (1899), 'Narakbas' (1899), and 'Viday Abhishap' (1900), all of which except 'Viday Abhishap' were published in 'Kahini' in 1900. Later the poet translated them into English as 'Mother's Prayer' 'Ama and Vinayaka', 'Somaka and Ritvik', 'Trial by Luck', 'Karna and Kunti', and 'Kacha and Devayani' respectively 'Trial by luck was published in the July issue of the Modern review in 1920 and the remaining five were included in "the Fugitive" published in 1921. These plays, all based on the Mahabharata are so short that they cannot be called dramas though they are not devoid of dramatic qualities they may be called dramatic scenes.

Prasanta Mahalanabis says about these dramas: "They are studies of men and women placed in very difficult emotional situations. It is not drama, because there is very little movement. One might almost say that it is an instantaneous cross section of a powerful dramatic movement – something like a snapshot of a real drama. Nothing happens – we just see them. This trenchant observation has to be taken with a pinch of salt. As will be shown while discussing these plays, in each one of them there are clashes of attitudes, conflicts of aims and ideals, moments of tense and exciting drama, and things happen, though not in every case.

Gandharir Abedan contains 553 verse lines while 'The Mother's Prayer' contains only 181 lines of prose. In the translation the dialogue between Gandhari and Yudhishthir has been completely left out. And the dialogue between Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana as well as that between Dhritarashtra and Gandhari has been largely condensed. The title of the English version, The mother's prayer is not a very suitable title. For here the mother does not appeal to the son at all to abandon his wicked ways. A befitting title would be 'The wife's prayer'. For it is Gandhari's appeal to Dhritarashtra that is the core of the playlet. She comes to her husband and says, "At your feet I crave for a boon."

In 'The Mother's prayer Rabindranath has not only transformed the Mahabharata story into something much more beautiful but also added an extra dimension to it and invested it with a new significance. And the argumentative skill of the characters and the appropriateness of the words and metaphors used by each amply testify to the extra ordinary genius of the poet. He has also seized on the essential characteristics of the three dramatis personae with superb skill. Though the characters do not evolve through experience or action and though they lack mobility that is the hall-mark of life, yet one particular aspect of each character is clearly revealed through its utterances. There are conflicts in each character and there are conflicts between one character and another. It is through these conflicts that the particular aspects of the character are portrayed. Each character has a point of view which is maintained with fearless conviction and utmost candour but the conflict is always there. In 'Dhritarashtra' the conflict is between his love for his wicked son and his regard, for what is just. In 'Gandhari the conflict is between her affection for her son and her devotion to her husband and her unflinching faith in the eternal religion of man. Duryodhana who is proud of the victory and disdains regret for the means and offers specious arguments to justify his conduct seems to be free from any conflict but really he is no less torn and tormented by conflict than Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. As he himself says, he is no longer happy but exultant'. He is so terribly bitten by his guilty conscience that he has not the courage to face his righteous mother. To hear that she is coming, he leaves the room. For, as Dhritarashtra says, he cannot bear the fire of his mother's presence. Edward Thompson's statement that "Gandharir Prayer" wears with a certain coldly intellectual quality, with the absence of any sort of real clash in the meeting of father and son, with its iteration of lessons of morality and with long passages which are expository only" does not stand scrutiny.

Charu Chandra Bandyopadhyay has read 'Gandhari's Abedan as an allegory. It was written when India was awakening to political consciousness and was impatient of the British rule. Here Dhritarashtra is the British Parliament which blindly supports the injustice inflicted on its dominions. Duryodhana is Indian Bureaucracy which never thinks of justice but of victory only. Gandhari is the

sense of British justice which does not hesitate to punish its nearest relative if he commits any wrong. Duryodhana's wife bhanumati is British prestige which is utterly indifferent to what is right and wrong, its only concern being to obstinately impose its authority over others. The pandavas are Indians, victims of the then wicked Indians, victims of the then wicked Indian bureaucracy nobodies in their own land and Draupadi is the glory, peace and solace in the righteous journey following the penniless pandavas like a shadow in their exile. In 1947, fifty years after the book was written, when India won independence after much bloodshed, Gadhari's Prophecy in her last speech in the English version came true-'the supreme deliverance from the fire of death.'

'Karna and Kunti' like 'the mother's prayer', is based on Mahabharata story, and most of the comments made on 'The mother's prayer' are applicable to it and vice versa. Rabindranath's Karna-Kunti story is very much more than its source. It is a concentrated piece, full of vitality and vigour, written in a language whose directness has a magic effect. The dialogue can immediately be taken in, at least on its upper level of meaning, and can be spoken excellently well without long meditation. And every speech clear, concise and unambiguous, is characteristic of the speaker. There are sentences which are moving to read, such as Kunti's 'Let your forgiveness burn her heart like fire, and consume, its sin and Karna's on the night of, my birth you left me naked and unnamed to disgrace: leave me once again without pity to the calm expectation of defeat and death!'

The story of Rabindranath's 'Kacha and Devayani' is substantially almost the same as it is in the 'Mahabharata.' The only change the poet has made in this. In 'Mahabharata' Kacha refuses to marry Devayani and the latter curses him that he will not be able to use, the art of 'Mritasanjivani' he had learnt from her father and Kacha in return curses her that no sage's son will ever accept her hand in marriage. But in Rabindranath's 'Vidaya Abhishap' (The curse at farewell) when Devayani curses him, he blesses her: "Goddess, you will be happy. All your mortification will drown in the tumult of ecstatic delight." The poet has made this change to glorify Kacha, a magnanimous man whose fixity of purpose nothing can deflect, whose placidity of mind nothing can perturb; who can sacrifice what is agreeable for the sake of an ideal. The English Version, however, ends with Devayani's curse. Kacha neither curses nor blesses her.

The playlet is a clash between a woman's passion and a frigid scholar's sense of duty, not 'between a woman's passion and a man's selfish coldness', as Edward Thompson says. For, in love every woman behaves as Devayani does but every man does not behave as Kacha does. To say that the play is a conflict between masculine and feminine attitudes to love is to misread the masculine attitude. And to accuse Kacha of 'Selfish Coldness' is to degrade his character. He is neither selfish nor cold. He is actuated by a keen sense of duty and is oblivious of everything that stands in its way.

Through 'Ama and Vinayaka' Rabindranath's conception of religion has found eloquent expression. In 'The Religion of Man' he says. "My religion is a poet's religion and neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian. Its touch comes to me through the same unseen and trackless channel as does the inspiration of my songs." He had no allegiance to any creed, dogma, institution or any organized body of worshippers. He was convinced that in the surface of our being we have the ever changing phases of the individual self, put in the depth there dwells the Eternal spirit of human unity beyond our knowledge. His religion is the Religion of Man in which the individual became defined in the humanity. Religion consists in the endeavour of man to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of man the Eternal, and to have faith in him. Consciousness of the spiritual kinship of man which is universal is the essence of religion. But man has broken this universal religion into fragments-Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. 'Then there are the household rites, social customs, castes, races and so on. All of which stands against the practice of the Religion of Man. Fragmentation of the Universal religion is fragmentation of Truth and all broken truths are evil. In 'Ama and Vinayaka' the poet has shown the supremacy of the universal religion over manmade religions man made laws, social customs and rites. Love which is an eternal custom and rite. Love which is an eternal element of the human heart, cannot be regulated by accepted standards of social morality. Ama loves a Mussalman and accepts him as her husband and remains devoted to him up to the end and she is sati, a chaste wife. Symbolically ama stands for the Religion of Man which is the consciousness of the

spiritual kinship of man and acts is defiance of the man-made laws or institutions. Rama represents religious bigotry and Vinayaka is the voice of justice. The soldiers stand for blind brute force that helps bigotry in its attempt to crush real religion.

'Somaka and Ritvik' is the English version of Bengali 'Narak Bas'. (A sojourn in Hell): Here, as in 'Ama and Vinayaka, the poet has shown the supremacy of the Religion of man over man made religion Somaka, the king of Videha, got a son in old age as a result of offering sacrifices at many a shrine over a number of years. He became exceedingly fond of the son and often neglected his royal duties. One day, while in his audience hall, he heard the wail of the child coming from his mother's room. Instantly he rushed to the room, brushing inside Ritvik, the high priest of the royal house, who had come there to give him daily, benediction. Ritvik got terrible angry and asked him as to what made him neglect his duty and even slight a Brahmin's blessing. The king said that as he had only one son he was too much infatuated by him and begged the priest's forgiveness. The priest said that he might have a hundred sons if he followed his advice. The king, as a Kshatriya, Swore by all that is sacred that he would do whatever he would ask him to do. The priest asked him to light a sacrificial fire and sacrifice his son to it. The king was horrified but as a Kshatriya he kept his promise and allowed the priest to throw the son into the fire. For this virtuous deed, according to the popular conception of religion, he is entitled to heaven.

'Lakshmi's Pariksha' (1897) has a light, subtle irony and gentle humour that arouse laughter. It is written in tripping rhymes, quite in keeping with the light mood. This is the only play of Rabindranath in which there are no male characters just as there are no female characters in 'Autumn Festival': it has stage properties, and it has been performed several times with great success.

Rabindranath himself rendered 'Lakshmi's Pariksha' into English as "The Trial" which was published in "The Modern Review" in July, 1920 (Vol.XXVIII, No.1). the English translation is much shorter, less than half of the Bengali original, and as so often with Rabindranath's English Version, it is a definite improvement. Twenty three years had passed since he had written the play. His critical maturity during this period helped him discern and prune what was not essential.

"The Trial" deals with the popular belief that Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and prosperity, is indiscriminate in distributing prosperity and adversity, and illustrates that this belief is utterly erroneous. In this dramatic scene two characters have been admirably contrasted – the kind hearted queen kalyani and her crooked maid servant khiri. In the trial khiri proves to be unworthy of getting Lakshmi's favour. Lakshmi bestows her gift only on those who deserve, and withholds them from those who deserve, and withholds them from those who are crooked. She smiled on kalyani who always helped the needy and withdrew her favours from khiri who never helped anybody. She is most judicious in distributing prosperity and adversity.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE : AWARDS ACHIEVEMENT AND HONORS

- Rabindranath Tagore won nobel prize in literature in 1913 and Rabindranath was the first Indian to win nobel prize.
- British crowned Rabindranath Tagore with knight title in 1915, but after the incident at Jallianwala Bagh, Rabindranath Tagore refused to keep knight Title further at 1919 to protest the terror.
- In 1930 the paintings of Rabindranath Tagore was exhibited in paris and London.
- Later in 1930, Rabindranath Tagore wrote oxford during his stay at Briningham.
- Rabindranath Tagore was the cofounder of Dartington Hall school in Japan.
- Indian postage Department showed their tribute to Rabindranth Thakur on 7th may 1961 when a stamp released in the name of Rabindranath Tagore.
- Indian Government, west Bangal Government and many private firms showed respect to Rabindranath Tagore by opening Institutions. Health contrers and many seva contres world wide in the name of rabindranath Tagore.

CONCLUSION -

There are some men rare in the world whose contributions cannot rightly be estimated in their own lifetime, Rabindranath Tagore was such a man. The debt which modern India owes to him is great. We cannot pretend to measure it. He made notable contributions to philosophical religious and educational thoughts to the moral regeneration of the people and economic reconstruction of the villages to politics and also to social reforms.

In this study, an attempt has been made to provide a survey and a critical appraisal of Rabindranath's dramas. He has a spiritual message – message of Love and message of sacrifice for mankind. Today, as perhaps never before, humanity is searching for peace and security in this world which have been profoundly shaken by the turbulent results of inharmonious attitude and behavior. The practical 'how to live' finds full expression in Rabindranath's dramas with his philosophy "Live and let other Live". Tagore shines bright as a playwright:

"Let all be happy,
Let all be healthy,
Let all be gentle,
Let none have sorrow."

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