

# Rabindra Songs: The Humming of a Native Foreigner

*M. Abu Saleh Nizam Uddin*

---

**ABSTRACT:** *The worth-mentioning elements with which the conscience or spirit of the mass people of colonial Bengal during the time of great poet Rabindranath Thakur (1861-1941) was constructed were usually their native language, culture, love, thoughts, freedom movement, nature, farmers and misery in natural calamities. With this reality we can juxtapose Thakur's songs or Rabindra Shangeet since it is expected that a literary figure will uphold the spirit of his nation. Juxtaposed, we see that in his songs he not only refrains from upholding the spirit, but also tries to evade it. Thus epistemology delivered by Thakur's songs is that Thakur, by writing the songs or any Bangaly listener, by worshipping them, is a foreigner despite being a native. This paper has the aim to explore how Thakur's songs, evading mass people's language, way of singing, nature of love, tradition of thoughts, the existence-related question of freedom from British colonizers, nature including its farmers and severe misery of the farmers during natural calamities, proves Thakur or any Bangaly worshipper of the songs to be a native foreigner as he hums them.*

**Keywords:** Thakur's songs, humming, spirit, evade, epistemology, Bangaly worshipper, a native foreigner.

Rabindranath Thakur, the most versatile literary figure of Bangla literature, wrote “2196 songs” (Thakuratha 199). Thematically, these songs chiefly concentrate on love, breaking the bondage of the immovable society, worship, nature and rain. Still today, these songs attract many educated city-dwellers in the West Bengal and Bangladesh. Thus, the songs deserve a critical understanding. If we want to have it, we need to see how much Rabindra songs or *Rabindra Shangeet* uphold issues intimately connected with the conscience or spirit of the nation of colonial Bengal because upholding the national spirit is the prime aim of any literary work..

Critically observed, it becomes clear that in his songs Thakur, unlike a true native, has evaded those issues of national spirit, and resembles a foreigner with a vested interest or little knowledge regarding Bengal . In his songs Thakur uses Bangla which is unnatural (for not being used by the mass people) or Sanskrit (used only in the holy books of Hinduism and occasionally by Hindu priests and *Brahmins*, the Hindu upper class who were a few in number), demands voice condition imitating the voice condition of Western opera songs, expresses Western love that is based on physical attraction, invites indiscriminately Western thoughts and ideas, upholds spiritual meditation, fulfilment and freedom for social welfare in place of the movement for country’s independence, celebrates nature excluding its inalienable farmers, remembers his beloved or meditates on the God during rain and natural calamities instead of helping the poor farmers in misery or danger. Thus for humming of his songs, Thakur or any native worshipper (the native listener who does not think critically) of them may be called a native foreigner.

Thakur in his songs validly used *Cholito* Bangla (the oral and written form of Bangla regularly used by common people) with occasional use of *Shadhu* (the Bangla which has been available in formal writings during his time) for the sake of maintaining proper arrangement of metre and producing sweet sound. But this attempt is not enough for his songs to reach the hearts of the mass people.

This type of Bangla he also uses in his prose when he tries to save Bangla and its prose tradition from Sahibs and Pundits who have

unnaturally been using Sanskrit in excess in their Bangla prose, Sanskrit which mass-people do not understand, with a view to alienating the mass-people from cultural and intellectual activities with the objective of inferiorizing them. This is one form of colonial hegemony. But while attempting to save Bangla prose from Colonial hegemony, what Thakur does may be called native hegemony. Though “He believed that Bangla should not be made to follow Sanskrit grammar . . . he sought sources of his thought and philosophy in the thought and philosophy of Sanskrit language” or “the Bade and the Uponishod” (Mazhar 29). The language he uses is either that of the educated middle class or Sanskrit dominated. But “in the life of an ordinary Hindu *Opovrongsho Prakrito Rup* or dialectic natural aspect of Bangla language is intimately entangled with thousand years’ *Todvob Vabukota* or descended thoughtfulness”, from where Thakur does not feel the urge to collect anything (Mazhar 29). Thakur almost does the same thing which the Pundits and Sahis do—confining Bangla of Bangla prose within Sanskrit.

*Opovrongsho Prakrito Rup* or dialectic natural aspect of a language is actually the form of a language which is produced by common people through their sincere, intimate and constant use of the language for thousands of years. Such form of a language is the core form, full of life and void-of-artificiality. Wordsworth prefers such core form of English which he mentions in his “Preface to the Lyrical Ballads”. *Todvob Vabukota* or descended thoughtfulness means the human tendency of nurturing that thought which, originating from a set of influential religious or philosophical concepts, remains for thousands of years in the minds and thoughts of the common people and in accordance with the contexts and experiences of various stages of time, assumes an intimate and natural feature.

*Opovrongsho Prakrito Rup* with its concomitant *Todvob Vabukota* is the natural feature of any language. But Thakur neglects this basic and essential feature as available in Bangla when he writes prose.

Similar language he uses in his songs.. As an example, the song “*Amar mon mane na-dinorojoni*” (My heart does not obey, day and night) may be taken. Here the poet writes,

আমার মন মানে না-দিনরজনী। (Amar mon mane na-dinorojoni)

আমি কী কথা স্মরিয়া এ তনু ভরিয়া পুলক রাখিতে নারি ॥ (Ami ki kotha shoria e tonu voriya puloko rakhite nari)

ও গো, কী ভাবিয়া মনে এ দুটি নয়নে উথলে নয়নবারি- (Ogho, ki vabiya mone e duti noyone uhtole noyonobari)

ওগো সজনি ॥ (Ogho shojoni)1997 163).

Translation:

My heart does not obey, day and night

What event I have remembered for which I can't control delight in this body

O dear, what I have thought of in my mind that my tears overflow in my two eyes

O dear friend.

The underlined words “রজনী” (rojoni) meaning “night”, তনু (tonu) meaning “body” and উথলে (uhtole) meaning “overflowing” may be familiar to the middle class but not to the working class, the majority. Instead of these three, poet never uses “রাইত” (rait), “গতর” (ghotor) and “উছলাইয়া” (uchlaya) respectively, which are *Opovrongsho Prakrito Rup* or dialectic natural aspect of Bangla which is used by the working class.

Thakur even uses such form of Bangla which is difficult and artificial for the middle class as well. “*Shangono gogone ghoroghonoghota, nishethojamini re*” (Thick cloud in the sky of rainy season, O silent deep night) is an example of such songs. Thakur writes

শাঙন গগনে ঘোর ঘনঘটা, নিশীথযামিনী রে। (Shangono gogone ghoroghonoghota, nishetho jamini re)

কৃষ্ণজপথে, সখি, কৈসে যাওব অবলা কামিনী রে। (Kunjopotho, sokhi, koise jabo obola kamini re)” (1997 240).

Translation: “Thick clouds in the sky of rainy season, O silent deep night/How will I go along the path between trees, dear, O dumb yet sweet/smelling flowers”.

The syntax as well as many words, all of which are not shown here as appearing in the subsequent lines, are used neither in written or spoken form of Bangla by the common people. Most of the common people do not understand these words. For example, the underlined words “কৈসে যাওব” (Koise jaobo) meaning “how will I go” appears much unnatural whereas its Bangla form of common use “kivabe jabo” does not.

In case of the songs the unnatural appearance tends to be more intense than it is in case of the essays because songs transmit more to the mass people than prose. Resultantly, the language of the former has to have more affinity, in terms of linguistic points of view, with that of the common people, especially of the farmers, as used in their daily life.

That *Todvob Vabukota* or descended thoughtfulness is missing in Thakur songs becomes clear when we see Thakur obtaining only the melody from Fakir Lalon Shah’s (1774-1890) songs, not his thought. Lalon has been the great mystic, saint, thinker and song-writer to have emerged from the soil and climate of Bangladesh and become upholder of *Todvob Vabukota*. Also, when we find Thakur as opposing the independence of the country which will be discussed later, we diagnose *Todvob Vabukota* as absent in his songs.

Thus Thakur’s songs do not sing in the language, thought and philosophy of the common or mass people as used in their every day life.

The original singers of these Rabindra songs (like Kaderi Kibria, Shagor Sen, Papia Sarwar, Rezwana Chowdhury Bonya) sing them creating a vacuum of air just in front of the vocal cord. This may be unique in Indo-Pak sub-continent but it is not so in global context. In Europe opera songs are sung with such voice. Some famous opera singers are Alma Gluck, Alessandro Moreschi, Belinda Evans and Luciano Pavarotti. The opera songs came into being hundreds of years before the arrival of Rabindra songs. Thus we may say that, in term of vocal condition while

singing *Rabindra Shangeet*, there is the imitation of the West, no originality or imitation of any of the ways of singing of indigenous *Jari*, *Shari*, *Bhawaya*, *Murshidi* and *Vatily* of Bangladesh or those of Mughol classical tradition of the sub-continent.

Thakur's songs where love is the central issue exhibit the depth of his feeling for his beloved. "*Amar praner pore chole gelo she*" (Who has gone away leaving my soul behind) is such a song where he laments the death of his beloved. After her departure from the world, the poet is quite alone. Flowers bloom but they increase the pain of his heart. Thakur sings,

Who has gone away leaving my soul behind  
Like a gush of the air of Spring.  
She has gone away touching upon, creeping down-  
Has caused flowers to bloom in hundreds  
She has gone away, without saying anything-  
where she has gone away that she has not come back  
While going she gave a glance and sang something-  
So I keep sitting all alone in flower garden (1997 191).

But any serious listener may think of going further and taking stock of the situation in which the song is written. If it is done, it turns clear that Thakur writes the song after the death of his beloved Kadombori Debi, his sister-in-law by being the wife of his elder brother Jyotirindronath Thakur. Kabir Chowdhury affirms, "Mentioning her actual name or under the guise of symbolic ones, Thakur dedicates four books to Kadombori" (28).

Also, the poet perhaps writes the novel *Noshtoneer* (The Spoilt Nest) centering around his affair with her. This possibility is hinted at by Kabir Chowdhury as he utters, "Has Rabindranath himself tried to give some gestures of it in his novel *Noshtoneer*?" (28).

In *Noshtoneer* Charu, the protagonist, is too dejected after her husband Vupoti's cousin young Amal goes abroad. Addressing Amal in

imagination, she tells to herself, ““with the essence of my life I will do the worshipping of you”” (1995, 360). By “[. . .] excavating a tunnel at the bottom of the inmost level”, she has constructed for Amal “a temple of secret mourning decorated with the beads of tears in that lightless silent darkness” (360) and “There remains the right of neither her husband nor anybody of the world. That place is most secret, deepest and dearest” (360 -61).

Thus husband is the third person when his wife’s love is concerned. Towards the end Vupoti realizes and finds that Charu is “. . . the wife who, with her heart, each moment is brooding over another person” (365). Predictably, a family is bound to function no more in this situation. Vupoti leaves Charu. Family, the most essential organ of a society, becomes less important which Thakur does not shed light on. Thus, marital and family ties, as of supreme importance in Indian tradition is inferiorized. And Thakur does this inferiorization in his practical life as Charu may be imagined as Kadombori and Amal Thakur.

In November, 1924, Thakur visits Argentina. There in coastal region called Sun Isidro he meets an Argentine girl Victoria Okampo. A relationship of deep love develops between them while poet gives her the name Bijoya, and the affair continues for two months. That is, “Poet spent two very delightful months in close connection with Bijoya in Sun Isidro near sea”. Poet can not forget her “hospiality and company”(Chowdhury 29). He writes two poems giving expression to his profound feeling for her, one being “*Otithi*” (The Guest). Poet writes;

You have filled up my foreign days, woman,  
With charm and nectar; how easily you have made your own  
The passer-by of far land (qtd. in Chowdhury K 29).

There is yet another girl called Moitroi Debi with whom Thakur has been deeply intimate. It may be understood when Moitroi says,

The day on which I could collect lemon, I would become so  
happy that day but I could not collect always. Taking the juice,  
when I would stand in front of him, he would delightfully sing

one or two Urdu or Persian songs-I can vaguely remember the lyric, it may be mistaken-I am engrossed so deeply in Sharab mixed with Shaaki (qtd. in Hossain 166).

Finally, when Moitroi Debi herself gives an account of her affair with Thakur in her *No Honyote* (In Not being Killed) we come to know that the relationship has been physical as well.

Like Moitroi Debi, Kadombori and Victoria have not disclosed anything. Yet we cannot dismiss the possibility that Thakur's affairs with them have simultaneously been physical too. Thus, Thakur's self-satisfying and revellous attitude in term of love is indeed a wrong approach towards life. This view is also expressed subconsciously by Kabir Chowdhury. Chowdhury unknowingly proves it when he, in an effort to extenuate Thakur through comparison, brings another literary figure whose affair with girls is more than Thakur's as regards number. Chowdhury writes, Goethe "fell in love with many girls" but Thakur's "Range is quite small and limited" (28).

In Indo-Pak subcontinent, a man's love with a woman or vice versa without marital tie is considered shameful and prohibited. It is actually giving freedom to sinful *nafs* or *Ripu* (bad impulse), a moral and religious degeneration. Besides, when a husband or a wife is involved in any illicit love affair, the counterpart spouse who is sincere to the family, is deprived of their right. If the deprived person is the wife, we may say woman's right is snatched away. Thakur, by going against the Bangla tradition of evaluating the family most, has maintained extra-marital relationship and deprived his wife Mrinalini of her right. Her mental agony we can assess and it will not be exaggeration to say that it is pseudo *Shotidaho Protha* (the convention of burning a widowed woman to death, which had been declared null and void by the British in India and native social reformers like Raja Rammohan Rai) that Mrinalini suffers.

Thakur depicts marks of being in the cobweb of colonial dehumanization. It is perhaps due to his knowledge of English language



and education that unlock the door for British intellectual and cultural hegemony to enter into his mind. The colonial aim of dehumanization of the native is clearly shown by the 1835 speech of British educationist Thomas Macaulay, where he mentions what must be the aim of teaching English language and giving their education to the Indian. He mentions in point 34, by giving English, “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (n.p). Perhaps as a landlord, Thakur’s love for sensuous pleasure also contributes here. Thus dehumanized, he disregards all-important morality, marriage and conjugal life that are indispensable to the subcontinental spirit. Ngugi says, “The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation” (Thiong’o 23). Such thing perhaps happens to Thakur.

The colonial dehumanization and westernization in man-woman relationship proliferates as it does in other fields of the subcontinent. India of 1950s and 1960s is shown in the novel *The Guide* by R. K. Narayan where the protagonist Raju forms a love affair with a married girl Rosie, and they live together. Rosie’s unhappy conjugal life with her husband Marco is also a dimension here. Like Thakur’s English education, in this novel there is Albert Mission. These English schools do provide better knowledge but not uplift to native spirit or moral teaching. But as told earlier, the subcontinent has the morality and the validity of man-woman affair only through marital tie. In the novel, there is Raju’s mother whose stories each night at bed time to Raju when he was a child would give him delight, orientation with Indian culture and moral instructions. P. K. Singh views, “The theme of such stories narrated by mothers and grandmothers at bed time is characteristically Indian with their positive moral lessons” (41). Perhaps Raju’s mother is the last generation to uphold the Indian tradition of holding on to morality. Notably, R, K, Narayan is “Himself a believer in conjugal loyalty in his private life” giving hints at his respect for moral issues. With this inner state of an “obligation” of ethos, Narayan treats Raju-Rosie and Rosie-Marco relationships (43). But Thakur differs.

Thus Thakur's love is identical with Western love in so far as being full of the will of self-gratification and void of the concerned questions of morality and religiosity. Defying morality and religiosity, Europe, since its Renaissance, has nurtured Individualism-generated free thinking or freedom of individual choice in everything, even in case of love between a man and a woman without a marital tie. Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri expresses the same opinion regarding Europe. He views,

rejecting "the human essence", "The precedence of nature-matter over humankind translates itself into the precedence of the individual over the social and of individual self-interest over social values necessary for the survival of society" (9).

This condition gives birth to immanentization that dominates the Westerners. Elmessiri narrates a condition of the West to define immanentization. He writes "Men and women have become more self-referential, each one acting according to criteria immanent in his/her Self. That has been accompanied by rising levels of consumerism" (32).

Once the mental set-up of the West relating illicit relationship was rightly rigid. They would not make mistake by not describing it as adultery. They would punish the persons involved though whether the type of the given punishment was justified is a different discussion. As an example Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* may be taken, where its protagonist Hester Prynne, a married woman in an earlier stage of the settlement in America, gets involved with another man in a relationship of love that ultimately leads to physical relationship. Throughout the whole novel the act is indicated as adultery giving gesture to its being illicit. It reflects the then society's frame of mind as regards the action. Accordingly utterances like "Sweet moral blossom" (41), "sin", "soul", "power of self-restraint", (56), "Providence", "the soul's disease" (115) and "the sufferer and his God" (116) are to be abundantly found in the text. Far from permission, there was hatred for such action that reflects in the word adultery exactly representing the nature of the action.

But gradually the scenario changes. John Osborne in his drama *Look Back in Anger* reflects 1950s English society where the illicit affair is not even deemed as extra marital relationship, far from its estimation as adultery. In the drama *Helena*, by sending her friend Alison to her father's home, lives together with the latter's husband Jimmy. But she cannot succeed in becoming accustomed with Jimmy's disposition. She tells Alison, "He wants one world and I want another, and lying in that bed won't ever change it" (90). So she decides to leave. Without any hesitation she expresses her love to her friend's husband Jimmy at the time of departure and says "I shall never love anyone as I have loved you. But I can't go on" (93). If she could adjust, she would stay forever with Jimmy. Thus love is only a matter of utility to her. That she is betraying her friend or not acting in accordance with moral or religious code is not a matter of concern to her.

In 1539 Henry VIII (1509-1547) passed the Statute of Six Articles. It is known to all that there the issue of remaining chaste appears in the second last position. This historical event vindicates that to the West adultery or fornication has become a small crime or sin. And when some radical Romantics were opposing marriage, they were actually giving license to extra-marital affair and adultery.

That relationship between a man and a woman without marital tie is strictly prohibited in Bangla tradition and culture is evident even in lexical aspect of Bangla language. In Bangla such relationship is marked as *Porokia* (Affair with Another) that accurately upholds the detestable nature of the action. But when it is "extra-marital relationship", it is almost similar to having extra player in games and sports. There allowing the extra player(s) to come to the field is very much legitimate. Similarly, the term "extra-marital relationship" gives the apparent impression that maintaining such relationship is not illegitimate. Or, at least the term does not signify anything detestable.

By being dehumanized by the British colonizers, immanentization of the West perhaps occurs in Thakur. Elmissiri opines, "Given the fact that he

has become an immanentized sovereign individual, he cannot sustain the limits imposed on him as a social being and as a member of the family” (32).

We ponder over Thakur’s biography, that is, his love affairs and consequent negligence to his wife because actions of real life evince the real belief and frame of mind of a person. Thus we can explore Western love as nurtured by Thakur, which is at the background of each and every love song he has written.

Thakur has written many songs focusing the need of subverting various social bondages of India. His song “*Ore, ore, ore amar mon metechhe*” (O dear, o dear, my mind has been uplifted) states,

O dear, o dear, my mind has been uplifted,  
Who would stop him today.  
He has extended his hands towards the sky,  
Who would take him down today (‘1997’ 305).

The theme of breaking the social bondage also manifests in his drama *Daakghar* (The Post Office) and *Achalayatan* (The Land of the Static). Rabindranath is more precise in his essay “*Kalantor*” (Another Era) where he discloses his interest in Western Renaissance ideals. It is clearly self-dehumanizing when he expresses his heartfelt gratitude to the British for their arrival into India. To him, the British colonizers, with their progressive thoughts, are superior, who contribute remarkably to backward India. Thakur says,

The inner power of the spirit of Europe hit upon the motionless  
minds of ours, the  
way rain water comes down from distant sky, hit upon land and  
tries to generate  
germination of life inside the lifeless earth (‘2000’ 916).

Thus, Thakur wanted the arrival and dissemination of European Enlightenment of free thinking, individualism, science and technology

into India. But European Enlightenment was a matter of legitimate debate since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment had brought no improvement to the working class people of Europe. Moreover, they had been monolithic by being secular, not thorough permitting no space to theological discourse.

Thakur could have felt and assumed the strength of Indian thoughts consisting of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. We are not urging to disregard the European ones fully. We say that Thakur could have concentrated on the positive aspects of the Western thoughts. Then, we could see Thakur as advocating an exchange of thoughts; exchange which is the oxygen for civilization. Aime Cesaire views, “for civilizations, exchange is oxygen” (2) But precondition to this exchange was an Independent India. England would leave India and in a friendly global environment, exchange of thoughts would take place. Actually, Rabindranath wanted Western thoughts obliterating the Indian ones keeping the country subjugated, perhaps with a view to empowering British intellectual and cultural hegemony.

Thakur is a *Brahmo*, that is, a believer in one and unique God. But he considers himself one of the Hindus. He believes “Hindu Brahmos are Hindus, that is the person who is Hindu is so despite being a *Brahmo*, Hindu even if he is not a Brahmo” (qtd. in Maksud 94). Thus, by being a *Brahmo*, he expresses his spiritual mediation in many of his *Brahmoshongeet* or Brahmo songs. In “*Tomarei koriachi jiboner dhrubotara*” (It is you who are made the guiding star of life), he eagerly wants the God to be by his side. God is like his guiding star. Receiving His Grace, Thakur is free and strong. At individual level this is the *mukti* or liberty of his soul by fulfilling it with the Supreme presence of the God there. Thakur sings,

I have made you the guiding star of my life,  
 In this ocean I will never be lost any more.  
 Wherever I go be revealed,  
 Pour down your light upon eager tears.  
 Always in my mind your face appears secretly,

Even a bit of your disappearance makes me see no shore, no land.

If on any occasion this heart is confused and go astray

Instantly seeing that face it is all ashamed ('1997' 176).

Similarly, elements of mysticism is to be found in his drama *Daakghar* where the protagonist Amal's release from the confinement is Thakur's "mystical notion of death as 'awakening in the world of spiritual freedom'" (Haq 58).

In colonized India Thakur offers obstacle or opposition to more important issue of freedom by stressing frequently the less important issue of mysticism or the fulfilment or liberty of soul that ultimately results in confinement within the society and social welfare considering the state affairs unreachable. And Thakur is happy in this confinement. It is ensured by Thakur himself in his essay "*Attoshokti*" (Self-power). There he says, "I have not looked at the kingship; I have kept my eyes fixed on society. For this reason, freedom of society is truly the freedom of India because the freedom of doing welfare is the true freedom, the freedom to protect religion" ('2000' 106). Thakur urges that there is no problem if the British continue to hold the power of India. Keeping them in power, he wants to have freedom of society to do social welfare which is also a religious duty.

Mohammad A. Quayum opines that Thakur has been in favour of independence but when it turns violent, he does not join. To Quayum, the novels *Ghore Baire* (The Home and the World) and *Char Odhyai* (Four Chapters) are "Tagore's profound testament to non-violence" (6). That is, Thakur is in favour of peaceful movement of freedom.

But Quayum contradicts himself when he narrates Thakur's view by saying that "India's immediate problems were social and cultural and not political" (6). In other words, the prevailing colonial occupation is not an immediate problem to Thakur. Thakur deprecates the truth that independence or freedom from the occupation of another nation is the first essential right of a nation because it is their birth right. If it is achieved, irregularities in social, cultural and other fields can be

concentrated on for their removal. As humanity receives utmost torture by being subjugated, independence is more a human issue than political. But to Thakur it is only “political” and not “immediate” for colonized India which Quayum advocates. In a sense, Thakur places the coach in front of the horse. It seems if an innocent man is held captive by another man and kept confined within a room, and if the person happens to be illiterate at the same time, Thakur would suggest to give him education, not release.

Actually Thakur is in favour of the British, and opposes freedom. In *Char Odhyai*, one of his characters glorifies the British by saying “They could crush our spine with a complete blow. That they could not do. I highly glorify their humanity” (‘2003’ 776). Whatever he tells opposing freedom movement is the furtive assignment from the British, their cultural strategy. It will be vindicated when we see Aravinda Puddar as unveiling the report of Major C. G. Brenan who is in charge of the affair. Regarding *Char Odhyai*, his report says,

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore has also recently been persuaded through the assistant director of public Instruction of Bengal to dramatise one of his books ‘char adhaya’ which delivers a powerfull attack on the cult of terrorism (qtd. in Khan 23).

Thakur’s hymn “Bharat Tirtha” (The Indian Pilgrimage) further clarifies that he never wants freedom and enjoys deeming the colonizers as the Indian. In the hymn Thakur “urges all Indians to unite across race, class and religion, shedding their differences, to fulfil the noble destiny of their homeland standing above the whirlwind of dusty politics” (Quayum 7). In the hymn Thakur writes,

Come, O Aryans, come non-Aryans, Hindus and Mussulmans-  
Come today, O Englishman, come, Oh come, Christians !  
Come, O Brahmin, cleansing your mind  
Join hands with all- (qtd. in Quayum 7).

In this manner, it is obvious that Thakur’s languid songs of worship are tactfully intended to despirit the nation’s movement for independence

which even turns kamikaze on numerous occasions. He does so by offering mysticism or encouragement to liberate or fulfil soul leading to the freedom of society. For this reason perhaps Ahmed Humayun writes, “Future days will not expect thoughts and instructions of politics from him, nor perhaps will his literature be identified as the source of political inspiration” (88). Also, by opposing country’s independence, he opposes *Todvob Vabukota* or descended thoughtfulness of the nation.

From many of Thakur’s songs that celebrate the beauty of nature, the song “*Aj dhaner khete roudro chayai*” (Today in the light and shadow of the paddy field) may be taken as an example. Here poet’s subtle observation does notice the charming paddy field, light and shadow, blue sky, bees, sandy shore, jovial cranes and the like. Poet writes,

Today in the light and shadow of the paddy field  
 There is the game of hide and seek.  
 In the blue sky who has floated  
 The raft of white cloud.  
 Today bees, forgetting the enjoyment of honey,  
 Fly wondering being engrossed in light,  
 Today for what in the sandy shore of the river  
 There is the festival of cranes (‘2014’ 14-15).

But it is to be noticed that from Thakur’s description of nature ordinary people who live intimately with it are excluded giving rise to humanity-reluctance, somnolence and parochialism. In any of his songs or other forms of literary works never has he given significant place to the farmers, the ordinary people who are the majority of Thakur’s Bengal.

This is how when Thakur does not chronicle real picture of Bengal, with the socio-economic condition of its farmers, even readers outside Asia cannot have interest in him as they read his translation. Nirod C. Chowdhury views that Thakur, by not providing “realistic treatment of Anglo-Indian life”, cannot generate significant appeal among British readers (qtd. in Haq 56). Therefore Kaiser Haq’s opinion that it is so owing to “the quality of translation” of Thakur’s literary pieces into English does not have a solid foundation (Haq 56).



Thakur excludes the farmers although the rural setting of Bangladesh, along with them, contributes more to Thakur's literary achievement. Out of ninety four short stories, fifty nine are written here. And great translator and scholar of Thakur William Radice is attracted by the earlier stories, and selects thirty from them as they are "more satisfying than the later ones" (Haq 57).

Jyotirmoi Ghosh, differing with this view, says that Thakur has written songs, poems and dramas which are very popular among the common people. It means Thakur has written for the common people and this makes appeal of Thakur enduring among them. That is, by the Grace of the God, Rabindranath has left dance-song-drama, according to Ghosh, "If it were not so, the inspiration and curiosity of the mass people pivoting around him would not be so long" ( 116). But the point is Ghosh is talking about the forms of literature, not the contents. And the common people Ghosh pays attention to are the middle class. We are talking about the mass people, the farmers who are the majority; the majority who are always absent in those songs, poems, and dramas, and who for this reason, do not even know about those and any other form of Thakur's literature, what to speak of enjoying them.

Actually Thakur's being a *Brahmo* in addition to being a landlord generates in him an ego of being superior in the society which he inherits from his similar forefathers, the *Brahmins*, who, with their self-declaration of being the divinely chosen upper class, would tell the common people, "Please us, give us happiness, you will get salvation" (qtd. in Chowdhury M 230). This is how Thakur evolves in him the tendency to exclude farmers from his literature.

To Thakur, rain has been one of the favourite phenomena of nature. For this reason *Shrabon*, one of the months of rainy season in Bangla calender, is his favourite time. Rain time and again arouses in him feeling of love for his beloved or meditation on God. In one of such songs "*Aj bari jhore jhoro jhoro vora badore*" (Today it rains incessantly in this youthful rainy season) when it rains incessantly, he passionately looks for a girl to whom he can express his love. He sings,

Today it rains incessantly in this youthful rainy season,  
 The eager current from the collapsed sky tends to be  
 accommodated nowhere.  
 O my mind has gone out rushing into rain,  
 this storm has looted it  
 My waves, occupying my bosom, rolls doen to whoe feet ('1997'  
 241).

But the region where Thakur (also a landlord) lives, especially the deltaic region of agriculture based Bangladesh which has been the source of Thakurs' economical power, is prone to various natural calamities. When there are storms or floods, the sufferings of the farmers and other common people knows no bounds. But this rain water never reminds Thakur of the severe misery of the poverty-stricken farmers. Many a time it might have occured that Thakur, on a stormy day, is writing songs sitting at his window and concentrating on his beloved or his humanity-reluctant spirituality while hundreds of the dead bodies of unfortunate farmers and their family members resulting from the violent strike of the storm are being carried away by the flood water of the nearby river.

Thakur is hardly seen as relating the sufferings of the poor with rain in his literature. Many a time he has seen the river bank erosion of the Padma, indescribable loss of the farmers and turning of rich farmers into have-nots. But never has he included the scenario into his songs nor into any other form of his literature. Shorif writes, "Just in front of his eyes each year during rainy season the river bank erosion of wild Padma would swallow lives and possessions of men, even affluent farmers would become beggers, but is the picture available in any of his songs, poems, stories, novels and dramas?" (89).

In his practical life also, there is no record of his humanitarian aids to the farmers even when they are flood-affected. Prabir Guha Thakuratha has viewed that Thakur has tried to raise fund by staging his drama *Boshonto* (The Spring) when there has been a terrible flood in Northern Bengal. But immediately afterwards Thakuratha himself admits that Thakur's "noble aim could not be materialised (198). Even if he succeeded in

raising fund from the staging of the drama, question would remain as to why he needs to collect money from people when he alone can produce the fund. Far from producing it, he perhaps has not released farmers from tax even at a time of emergency called flood. Such impression regarding tax is given by himself when he introduces this frame of mind of his by “cruelly obtaining tax from the tenants not forgiving even a farthing just when he receives the responsibility of lordship” (Shorif 89).

When British colonizers colonize and dehumanize their target nation with multi-dimensional hegemony, that nation, instead of its native issues, feels interested in the British or Western, that is, in foreign ones. In case of *Rabindra Shangeet*, similar is the condition of Rabindranath and West Bengal’s Calcutta-centred worshippers of them. Since the state of being colonized and dehumanized persists in post-colonial period, though in a changed form to some extent, still now there are native worshipping listeners of the songs in Kolkata and the then native worshipping listeners among the urban educated middle class of Bangladesh. Incisively, in a word, both in colonial and post-colonial periods, with the humming of Rabindra Songs, Thakur himself or any native worshipper of the songs turns out to be a native foreigner.

### Work Cited

- Cesaire, Aime. "Discourse on Colonialism." Trans. Joan Pinkham. New York, London: Monthly Review Press, 1972. Print.
- Chowdhury, K(abir). "Goethe O Rabindranath." *Goethe O Rabindranath Abong Onnanya Probondho*. Annesha Prokashon, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2008. Print.
- Chowdhury, M(oin). "Banghal Jatiyotabad Proshonghe." *Colonialism and Post-colonial Reader*. Ed. Fakrul Chowdhury Dhaka: Raman Publishers, 2007. Print.
- Elmessiri, Abdulwahab M. *Feminism Versus Women's Liberation Movements*. USA: United Association for Studies and Research, 2004. Print.
- Ghosh, Jyotirmoy. *Rabindramanan O Pragatisanskriti*. Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1987. Print.
- Haq, Kaiser. "Pioneering a Tagore Revival: William Radice and Others." *Journal of English Studies*. 3.1(2010):53-62. Print. *Crossings:ULAB* Dhaka, Bangladeshpp.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. London: Penguin, 1994, Print.
- Hossain, Kemal Uddin. *Rabindranath O Mughal Samskriti*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1998. Print.
- Humayun, Ahmed. *Biporit Srote Rabindranath* (Rabindranath in Opposite Current), Dhaka, Oitijjo Prokash, 2009. Print.
- Khan, Sadat Ullah. "Poradheen Rabindranath." *Protibuddhijibi*. Dhaka: Punossocho, 2012. Print.
- Macaulay. *Minute by the Hon'ble T. B. Macaulay*. Columbia.Edu, 1835. Web. 15 Jan.2015. <[http://columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallink/s/macaulay/txt\\_minute\\_education\\_1835.html](http://columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallink/s/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html)>.
- Maksud, Syed Abul. *Rabindranather Dharmatatbwa O Darshan*. Dhaka: Prothoma Prokashan, 2013. Print.
- Mazhar, Farhad. "Rakter Daag Muche Rabindrapath." *Rakter Daag Muche Rabindrapath*. Dhaka: Agamee Prakashani, 2010. Print.
- Osborne, John. *Look Back in Anger*, London: Faber and Faber, 1969. Print.

- Quayum, Mohammad A. "Imagining Óne World': Rabindranath Tagore's Critique of Nationalism." Mukto-mona.net, Web. 20 Dec.2014.<[http://muktomona.net/Articles/mohammad\\_quayum/Tagore\\_Nationalism.pdf](http://muktomona.net/Articles/mohammad_quayum/Tagore_Nationalism.pdf)>.
- Shorif, Ahmed. *Rabindra-Vhabna* (Thinking on Rabindra), Dhaka: Bivas, 2014. Print.
- Singh, P. K. *The Novels of R. K. Narayan*, New Delhi, India: Atlantic, 2001. Print.
- Thakur, Rabindranath. *Galpoguscho: A Collection of Stories*. Dhaka: Protik, 1995. Print.
- . *Geetbitan: A Collection of Songs*. Dhaka, Banglaesh: Kakoli Prokashani, nd. Print.
- . *Probandhaoshamagra: A Collection of Essays*. Dhaka: Somoi Prokashon, 2000. Print.
- . *Uponyashshamagra* (A Collection of Novels). Dhaka: Grameen Prokashon, 2003. Print.
- . *Gitanjali*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Aajkal Prokashani, 2014. Print.
- Thakuratha, Prabir Guha. *Rabindranather Gaan: A Collection of Essays on Rabindra Sangeet*,Kolkata, India: Papyrus, 2010. Print.
- Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Harare. Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1987. Print.