

Book Review

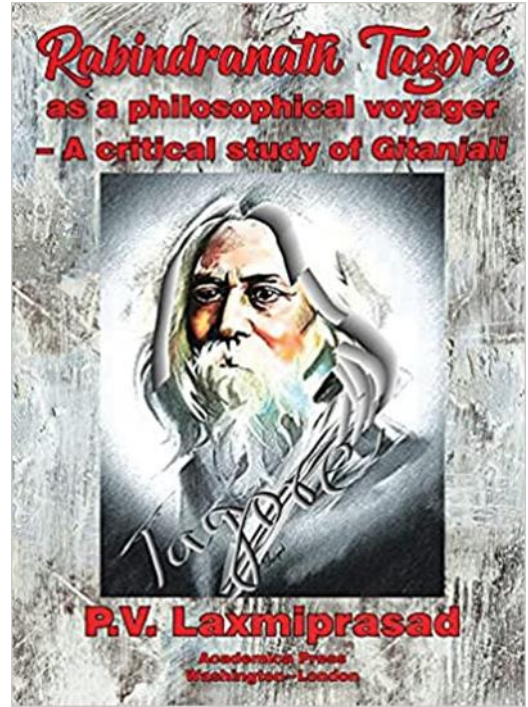
P.V. Laxmiprasad's *Rabindranath Tagore as a Philosophical Voyager – A Critical study of Gitanjali*, Academica Press, 2021, ISBN-978-1680539370, Price- Rs. 13,738.00/-, pages 260.

Reviewed by D. Vijaya Lakshmi
Associate Professor
Vishnu Institute of Technology, Bhimavaram
Email: vijayalakshmi.d@vishnu.edu.in

*Sraddhävānlabhate jñānam tatparah saāyatendriyah |
jñānam labdhvā parām sāntim achireñādhighacchati
||39||*

Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita Fourth Chapter, Jnana Yoga, a person one who believes in his faith can achieve knowledge which leads him to spiritual peace to write this kind of book. Dr. Laxmiprasad's title of the book, *Rabindranath Tagore as a Philosophical Voyager – A Critical study of Gitanjali* is very apt. Devotion to God is the main theme of Gitanjali which means prayer to God and emphasizes God's omnipresence. Tagore expresses his philosophy and heavenly experiences out of his life rather than rituals and laws. Step by step description of Dr. Laxmiprasad's is amazing and interesting to understand his philosophical concept.

Dr. Laxmiprasad's Brief bio note of Rabindranath Tagore started with introducing Rabindranath Tagore's parents and siblings and how he was moulded by his brothers as one of his brothers was his first teacher. Tagore joined a public school with a vision to be a barrister. In the process, being an independent student optionally, he happened to read Shakespeare's plays, the *Religio Medici* and so on. This triggers him to start writing poetry. The Themes of God, Nature, Love, Humanity and Death are the vital philosophical concepts throughout the book Gitanjali. Dr. Laxmiprasad evaluates and explores critically and philosophically the life of a human being.



Dr. Laxmiprasad draws the concept of philosophy from the life of Tagore was fantastic. He explains bead by bead connected to a thread as he portrays what inspired Tagore to write poetry and how he was the witness for earthquake in Bihar and poverty in Bengal. Illiteracy, poverty and colonial rulers inspired Tagore to compose poetry. Indian English Poetry boomed at this point of time in the history of India. Dr. Laxmiprasad slowly grabs the attention of the readers and provokes them to understand Tagore's philosophic mind.

Being an erudite scholar, Dr. Laxmiprasad described Tagore's early life, how he dedicated his life to the nation and inspired people with his writings in various genres, and his excitement of winning the world's greatest prize, Nobel Prize for literature. Thematic concepts, God, Nature, Love, Humanity and Death, of religious philosophy of the Gitantanjali are explained one by one.

Being a multifaceted genius, Tagore focuses on ordinary life of human beings but makes it extraordinary by driving the theme to devotion to God and landing smoothly on two worlds - religious and political and justified to the utmost extent. When Tagore was a young boy, the Brahmo Samaj movement spread the seeds of Hinduism known as bhakti in his mind and blood. In the first part of the book Dr. Laxmiprasad takes into consideration 2, 11, 12, 35, 93, 94 and 96. A few of those poems were prescribed for students of various levels to motivate them to understand what were the circumstances at the time of the independence as well as Tagore's philosophy/spiritual mind. Tagore's themes of his philosophic poems are from Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Vaishnavism, Brahmosamaj and so on. 'Service to humanity is Service to God' is the known saying and evergreen to all ages is represented in his poems.

Description of songs in Gitanjali in the words of Dr. Laxmiprasad is like a Shodoshopachara Nitya Pooja offered to God. Having the impressions in the songs are from the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Buddhism, Jainism and others which drive him to spirituality, mysticism, philosophy and so on. Tagore has expressed the reversible reaction between God and man and also man and Nature. His devotion to God leads to Love that is especially Love of Nature and Love of Humanity. He praises God for presenting a human being to enjoy the senses.

Tagore's Philosophy has no language though he writes in the English language. The literary devices and imagery add grace to his poems and are widely opened for the scholars to do research on various aspects of his philosophy and mysticism. Indianness and Hinduism are the major aspects in the Gitanjali. Jivatma (Individual Soul-Human Being) and Paramatma

(Supreme Soul-God are the key elements in the philosophy of Tagore. These two are ardently entwined and inseparable.

Tagore's simplicity is not only observed in his way of living and but also in his thought of writing. Anybody can understand the theme of his poems very easily but a Jnani only can understand the in-depth layers of his philosophy. So, though this, one can understand the content based on their competence and capability. Body, Vessel, Soul, flute are the ordinary words but these become extraordinary in the hands of Tagore. Lord Krishna who gives life to all living beings on the earth is the destroyer as well as creator. 17, 18 and 19 poems are the best examples of the relations between Nature and Man who comes from the music of God. From poem 19 to 20, music becomes truth and mystic. Establishment of dharma in humanity is the next issue to think about at this juncture. Here it is the right time to recall this universally known sloka from the Bhagavad Gita

*pariträëya sädhünäm vinäshäya cha dushkrutäm /
dharmasamsthäpanärthäya sambhavämi yuge yuge ||8||*

In the poems 19, 23 to 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35 and 39, the poet cannot be God but with his efforts, he can offer songs to the lotus feet of God with full of philosophy that Tagore has poured through his songs. At this point of time, the inward and outward journey of all the individuals have been touched with spirituality. Craving for enlightenment in the journey of finding self- realization is the focal point. The Man has gone through light and darkness which means wisdom and ignorance. In the poems 42, 43, 46 and 47, Egoism, egotism, wealth, property, selfishness, desires which are called briefly materialistic pleasures can grip human beings but knowingly one has to surrender one's self to God is the essence of Tagore's Gitanjali.

Dr. Laxmiprasad, in the conclusion of this book, has very keenly covered all the themes mentioned such as devotion, love, humanity, nature and death. Excellent justification, critical comments and analysis are given timely. The way he presented the philosophical concept in a nutshell through the said themes affirmatively strengthened the book and motivates me to read till the end without break. Taking a break is quite common as thinking and rethinking and introspection and retrospections are essential milestones in the journey of reading this book outwardly and inwardly.