

**ANALYSIS OF TAGORE’S PLAYS REF. TO ELEMENTS OF DRAMA: A  
GENERIC STUDY**

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**Abstract**

Theatre is a unique tool to explore and express human feeling. Theatre is an essential form of behavior in all cultures, it is fundamental human activity. Theatre as an art form has been a heritage quotient for Kolkata. The city of joy, which is enriched with the flow of creativity and performing arts, certainly stands apart from the rest of the world when it comes to theatre. In Kolkata, you will find “love for theatre” in one in three people. Group theatres, commercial theatre, youth theatre culture are just some of the facts of Kolkata theatre scenario.

Tagore modernized art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dramas, dance-dramas and essays spoke to topics political and personal. Gitanjali, Gora and Ghore Baire are his best-known works and are performed till today. This paper aims to analyze Tagore’s work as a dramatist. His plays classified by consensus into eight generic are subjected to scrutiny by way of generic introductions, plot synopses and analyses in depth to reveal the empiric and incessantly maturing artist in Tagore.

**Keywords:** culture, human activity, theatre, political, Gitanjali, Gora, Ghore Baire, generic, empiric.

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“The universe has its only language of gesture,  
It talks in the voice of pictures and dance.”

- **Rabindranath Tagore**

Theatre is a unique tool to explore and express human feeling. Theatre is an essential form of behavior in all cultures, it is fundamental human activity. Theatre as an art form has been a heritage quotient for Kolkata. The city of joy, which is enriched with the flow of creativity and performing arts, certainly stands apart from the rest of the world when it comes to theatre. In Kolkata, you will find “love for theatre” in one in three people. Group theatres, commercial theatre, youth theatre culture are just some of the facts of Kolkata theatre scenario. Bengali theatre has its origin in British rule. It began as private entertainment in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the pre-independence period, Bengali theatres played a pivotal role in manifesting dislike of the British rule. After the independence of India in 1947, leftist movements in west Bengal used theatre as a tool for social awareness. This added some unique characteristics to the art form that still have strong effects.

Tagore modernized art by spurring rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dramas, dance-dramas and essays spoke to topics political and personal. Gitanjali, Gora and Ghore Baire are his best-known works and are performed till today. Rabindranath Tagore also known as Rabindranath Thakur in Bengali; sobriquet Gurudev was a Bengali polymath, who reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art while contextual and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Author of ‘Gitanjali’ and “profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse” he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913.

Tagore the dramatist meets the long-standing need for a comprehensive study of entire dramatic corpus of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1942), modern India’s most distinguished, prolific and sensitive dramatist, for achievement, framed for beyond the confines of his country. The nature and structures of action in Tagore’s plays, failure to comprehend which has seriously hampered the appreciation of his excellence as a playwright.

His plays classified by consensus into eight generic are subjected to scrutiny by way of generic introductions, plot synopses and analyses in depth to reveal the empiric and incessantly maturing artist in Tagore.

**Musical Drama**

- 1) Valmiki Pratibha, 1881
- 2) Kal Mrigaya, 1882
- 3) Mayar Khela, 1882

**Verse Drama**

- 1) Rudrachandra, 1881
- 2) Prakritir Pratisodh, 1884
- 3) Raja O Rani, 1889
- 4) Visarjan, 1890

### Poetic Drama

- 1) Chitrangada ,1892
- 2) Viday – Abhishap, 1894
- 3) Malini ,1896
- 4) Gandharir Abhedan, 1897
- 5) Narak-Bas, 1897
- 6) Karna-Kunti Samvad, 1899
- 7) Lakshmir Pariksha

In which Chitrangada and Karna-Kunti Samvad is very much famous even Today

### Prose Drama

- 1) Grihaprobesh ,1925
- 2) Sodhbodh,1926
- 3) Natir Puja , 1926
- 4) Tapti, 1926
- 5) Kaler Yatra ,1932
- 6) Chandalika ,1933
- 7) Tasher Desh, 1933
- 8) Bansari,1933

In which Chandalika and Tasher desh is very much famous and performed in theatres by many new theatre artists.

### Comedy Drama

- 1) Hasyakautuk ,1907
- 2) Byangakautuk , 1907
- 3) Goday Galad
- 4) Sesh Raksha,1928
- 5) Baikunther Katha, 1897
- 6) Basheekaran ,1901
- 7) Chitrakumar Sabha,1926
- 8) Muktir upay,1938

### Symbolic Drama

- 1) Saradotsam,1908
- 2) Rinsodh,1921
- 3) Mukut,1908
- 4) Prayaschita,1909
- 5) Paritran,1929
- 6) Raja, 1910
- 7) Anup Ratan,1920
- 8) Achalayatan,1912
- 9) Guru,1918
- 10) Dakghor,1912
- 11) phalagunee,1916

- 12) Mukutadhara, 1922
- 13) Raktakarabi, 1924

#### **Nature drama**

- 1) Basanta , 1923
- 2) Sesh Barshan, 1925
- 3) Srabangatha, 1934
- 4) Natyaraja; Riturangashala, 1927
- 5) Nabin, 1930

#### **Dance Drama**

- 1) Sapmochan , 1931
- 2) Nrityanatya Chitrangada , 1936
- 3) Chandalika, 1938
- 4) Nrityanatya Mayar Khela, 1938-39
- 5) Shyama, 1939

Chandalika, Nritynatya Chitrangada, and Shyama are also performed even today.

#### **1. Musical Drama**

With the experimentation of the early 1880s in coalescing vocal music and drama, made possible by his ambidexterity in both arts. In the 3 plays comprising the genre Valmiki pratibha , kal mrigaya and MayarKhela , music and drama achieve a fused form , the “ dramatic musical speech “ being conceived for stage presentation as the dialog is sung and not spoken. The tonal improvisations depicting shifting dramatic moods build with tunes sad, stories and comic, the musical texture of these plays were singing “another way of speaking”. Mayar Khela is one of his best play.

#### **2. Verse Drama**

The 1880s saw the playwright, still in his twenties experimenting in yet another mode of dramatic expression. The changeover from the musical to the verse medium , the singing voice to the “ talking voice “, was attended with the widening of the playwright’s dramatic range that opened up more complicated vistas of human relationships. The use of verse, with its “intricate organization of rhythm and vocal sound, producing intense expressiveness and heightening the dramatic quality “, marks a distinct stage in the development of Tagore dramatic art. Dramatic poetry in the verse plays exhibits its verbal resourcefulness matching the variability of expression that drama demands.

Tagore’s 4 verses plays Rudrachandra, Prakritir Pratisodh, Raja O Rani, and Visarjan are interesting facet of the beginnings of modern drama in India. The last two plays Raja O Rani and Visarjan were to enter permanently into the repertoire of Bengalidrama.

### **3. Poetic Drama**

The sensitivity conducted experiments of the seeking artist with dramatic poetry in the verse plays in the 1880s and the poetic plays of the succeeding decade preserve a record of the changing rhythm of the national life, stirred by a shift from the imported to the inherited values.

The outcome of the changed creative urge was a series of plays of varying sizes in a new vein commencing with Chitrangada and closing with Karna-Kunti Samvad, which may appropriately be termed poetic. Chitrangada marks the beginning of dramatic inspiration.

In Chitrangada, the matrix love between Chitrangada and Arjuna recreating a conscious mythopoeic imagination of dramatized the complex of physical repulsion – attraction leading to ultimate derived material with inherent moral implications.

Karna-Kunti Samvad with which ends this phase of experimentation is a tensed dramatic dialogue against the backdrop of pandavas and the kauravas. The dramatic focus is on the glory of heroic ethic as karma, the pre-nuptial son of Kunti, side with the pandavas even when approached by queen mother herself, who reveals to him the secret of his birth, ironically only after he and Arjuna, offspring of the same womb, have become implacable enemies.

### **4. Prose Drama**

Changefulness characterizes Tagore's creativity. It has been justly remarked that "the end he reached always become the point of new beginning. That is perhaps the most striking feature in the development of his arts spread over six decades. A cluster of plays different from those of the symbolic genre and imagination grows, which for want of a better nomenclature has been classed "Prose Drama".

The plays, making a distinctive phase in Tagore's development as a dramatist between 1925 and 1933, when his creativity activity is in full spate, appear in the following order Grihaprabesh, Sodhbodh, Natir puja, Tapti, Pritran, Rather rasi, and Kabir deeksha, Chandalika, Tasher desh and Bansari. The attribute "prose" may as well be applied to be the symbolic plays or the comedies, as the medium in both cases also happens to be prose.

Three plays of this genre, Grihaprobesh, Sodhbodh and Tasher desh are dramatization of Tagore's own short stories. The seed of Natir puja may be traced to his short narrative poem, Pujarini, Tapati and Paritran are new version of earlier plays. Chandalika is inspired by a Buddhist legend. Bansari has an original plot.

Grihaprobesh, Sodhbodh and Bansari are plays in a contemporary milieu, Natir puja and Chandalika are legend – based. Tapati and Pritran are quasi-historical. Rather Rasi and Kabir deeksha are apocalyptic. Tasher desh is a dramatic fantasy.

Chandalika and Tasher desh are his famous plays which are performed even today. Chandalika is performed in many language by theatre artists.

### **5. Comedy Drama**

Tagore has wrote many comedy dramas like Hasyakautuk, Byangakautuk, Goday Galad, Sesh raksha, Baikunther, Basheekaran, Chitrakumar Sabha, Mukti upay. In this type of drama he has wrote comedy dialogs and script to entertain the audiences. In which Hasyakautuk is one of the most played act in the theatre.

## 6. Symbolic Drama

The changed tenor in Tagore's life at the turn of the century with the founding of his school at Shantiniketan and the storm and stress he passed through during this period had a direct bearing on the set of plays with which his dramaturgy enters another significance phase. Tagore infuses into these dramatic work the very spirit of his nation at this historic moment.

The pervasive symbols in the construction of these plays, written between 1908 and 1924 and often viewed as typical of Tagore's dramatic genius, accounts for the generic designation "symbolic".

Tagore the symbolic dramatist is reflected in facile remarks relating to his symbolic dramatist is reflected in facile remarks relating to his symbolic plays such as , "permeated with Mysticism" similar to " particularly Maurice Maeterlinck's", or "drama in which no action takes place: a drama in which vague , shadowy figures meander through the pages", or deficient in " plot with exposition , development and denouement", or the symbolism being "altogether unintelligible", or "the emptiness of such symbols". The consideration of his symbolic plays in the western context, much like his work of the musical, verse and poetic genres.

The symbolic device in the native dramatic tradition and the Bengali theater of the time being concerned merely with the sentimental domestic dramas and historical and mythological melodramas , the creations of Tagore's symbolic plays assumes particular significance.

The creation of the symbolic plays saw the corresponding growth of a special stage-art that attempt to take the drama nearer to the people and relate it to the familiar but profoundly spiritual rhythm of life.

## 7. Nature Drama

Exemplifying the growth of a specific dramatic genre in a special environment are a number of plays stamped with an individual dramatic idiom written between 1923 and 1934. Elements of the traditional "Nature festivals" have here been transformed into an aesthetic ritual, embodying a new concept in drama.

Nature drama is more benefitting a designation, considering their cosmic scope. Nature drama in them is viewed through the prismatic appearance of the seasons and it undergoes changes as the playful dynamism of the seasons in their eternal cycle induces corresponding changes in all that come within their grand sweep.

The imaginative, mythical and ritualistic content of these plays is realized best in the light of the unique physical environment of Shantiniketan, the immediate incentive that went into the creation of Tagore's nature play.

Three of the 5 nature plays, Basanta, Sesh Barshan and Sarbangatha are conceived in the play within-the-play format with remote indigenous courtly settings.

## 8. Dance-Drama

In the context of Tagore's ceaseless experimentation with choreographic technique as a theatrical vehicle toward the closing phase of his creative career is seen the growth of a dramatic genre appropriately termed as dance drama. Appearing in snatches as spontaneous stylized movements like "body swayed to music ", did not assumed a technically developed form.

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Dance which “imitates character, emotion and action by rhythmical movement”, in the plays of the present genre governed theatrical enactment assuming the form of an uninterrupted choreographed sequence.

The creation of dance drama with their harmonized elements reflects the playwright's thoughts in equal measure on all 4 constituents going into them –the dramatic, the theatrical, the musical and the choreographic.

In the three dance dramas, distinctive of the genre and marking the final theatrical triumph of a longer career \_ Chandalika (1938), re-dramatization of the song studded earlier prose play written in (1933), and shyama (1939), the last masterpiece, based on a song–dance-drama with the culminating sequence of songs and dances of the earlier play is last off and song \_dialog of the drama proper introduced for the art of continuous choreography to carry on the action uninterrupted.

In Mayar Khela , an adaption for dance-acting of a musical play of his early youth choreographic structure , however falls short of desired standards as its very dramatic conception does not promise the finished expertise of a *chore drama*.

The theatre concept of the dance drama is a remarkable reflowing in the modern context of the very especial dramaturgic aesthetic that flourished in ancient India

Rabindranath Tagore has given a noteworthy contribution in the field of theatre and presented remarkable plays and his creativity in front of the people. Now all the theatre artists and performers are giving tribute to him by performing his plays and present it in front of the people.

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