



AMAL, A CHILD ANGEL ENDOWED WITH THE CHARACTERISTIC TAGOREAN QUALITIES

NAYAKWADI DIVYA
Ph D Scholar
Osmania University,
Hyderabad-500007 (TEL) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The play Post office is written by Rabindranath Tagore in 1912 . It was first written in Bengali 1911 in Bengali language namely 'Dak Ghar ' . Tagore completed the play in four days. The play concerns Amal, a child who suffers from a fatal illness. The boy is restrained to home. He is adopted by his uncle Madhav.

The post office is the most popular of all the plays of Tagore. The post office is a linkage connecting Amal with the open streets, the provinces that are beyond Amal's stare, the hill, the river, and the mountain the constricted lane where crickets chirp, where only the stripes wag their tails and nudge at the dirt with their bills. The play holds rudiments of a anxious human drama, a stirring fairy tale and a intensely evocative spiritual symbol.

INTRODUCTION

Amal is an orphan child of about ten, from a rural village in India. He has been adopted by a childless but affectionate couple living in the city. Now, nevertheless, Amal is seriously sick, even though he doesn't know the extent of his illness. The very conventional local Healer has insisted that he stay inside the home, much to the disappointment of his loving "uncle," Madhav Dutta. So, restricted to his room, he sits near the open window where he connects with a variety of passersby. Many of them are people of self-styled significance or they accomplish some intention of category in society. One by one, Amal communicates with these persons and, his naive inquiry and lack of resolutions touches them all in such a way that they are distorted by this child. All are astounded by his plain but determined expedition for knowledge, his constant love for life and his necessity to ascertain the world around him... and the world beyond. Crosswise in the street, Amal sees a shiny new building with a dazzling yellow flag wavering from the roof: it is the King's Post Office. Though he can't even read, he is captivated by the idea of letters, which are people's feelings and approaches, flying about all the way through time and space; he loves getting a letter from the King and



to fly away into the world far away. He would also likes to take a trip to the distant hills on the far horizon. As Amal's physical power reduces, his spiritual power inflates.

The character list in the play is diminutive. Tagore uses an ordinary language technique. Aside from Amal, the characters, are each represented and distinct by their purpose.

Amal has an strong inquisitiveness regarding the external world and yearns for the kind of knowledge that can't be educated commencing a book. Sudha, who gathers flowers, is naïve and pleased to exert effort for her parents. Amal's guardian, Madhav Dutta, is a man who assumes in getting educated from books and feels contented at home relatively than in outdoor. The physician is the man who diagnoses Amal's sickness and will not accede him to depart the house since he is ill. The Curd seller precisely sells curds, is a vendor and is not educated, but is skilled in existence. The Watchman is a devoted attendant to the King; he is sophisticated of the administration and the King's organizations. The Headman is placed in power by the King but is not popular with locals. There are a cluster of Boys who persuade Amal to confront the doctor and depart the house.

Main Paper

The outset of the play is very affirming. Madhav is very much apprehensive regarding Amal an ailing child who is "so calm with all his pain and illness." His concern for the child, his affection and his pursuit in making money are just balanced with the erudite apathy and impudence of the doctor who says: "In medicine as in good advice, the least palatable is the truest." Madhav tells Gaffer how earning has become very important for him after the coming of the boy. He says: "Formerly earning was a sort of passion with me: I simply could not help working for money. Now I make money and as I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy for me." The momentary relevance of the acquisitive world and the ardent yearning of the child excited to escape into a world of perception are juxtaposed most brilliantly.

The boy tells his uncle about his encounter with an erratic man who has a bamboo wand on his shoulder with a small bag at the top and a brass pot in his left hand and wearing an old pair of shoes. He wishes to set out to search for work. Gradually consciousness comes to him. He is relatively peculiar in his behaviour because he aspires to ramble on so numerous streams. When everyone is fast asleep with their doors closed in the high temperature of the day, he marches relentlessly far, very far, in search of work. He, moreover, loves to converse with strangers.

With the advent of the Dairyman the play shifts to a diverse level. The boy is overjoyed with amusement to witness the Panchmura hub and the Shamli river close to the Dairyman's village. He, after that, goes on giving all the particulars regarding the village. There is a



moment of consciousness and another moment of unawareness; He expresses his wonder at the melody of the Dairyman. "I can't tell you how queer I feel when I hear you cry out from the end of that road, through the line of those trees." The boy positively teaches the Dairyman how pleasant it is selling the curds.

The daily activity of Amal is to stand in the courtyard and talk to the passers-by. He is very particular about knowing about the places they visit. A new post office is constructed in close proximity. This prompts the ingenious Amal to visualize regarding getting a letter from the King. He even imagines himself being king's postman. When the village headman comes to know about it he mocks Amal, and pretends the unacquainted child has obtained a letter from the king assuring the possibility that his majestic doctor of medicine will come to attend him and contemplate the disease. Eventually the physician in actuality does come, with a harbinger to proclaim the impending arrival of the king; Amal, nevertheless, falls slumbering (or dies) as Sudha comes to bring him some flowers.

The first scene precedes us to the Doctor and Amal. The doctor represents the British Empire. All the characters all through the book admire him; some characters persuade Amal to listen to his decisions. These are the Indians satisfied with the British regulation. Others wish for Amal to revolt; they are the Indians who desire to be relieved of the British rule. Amal can be seen as a evolution Indian. He is respectful to the doctor's instructions to reside indoors. However he desires to depart, he knows that he is too childish at the instant, but he knows his prospect lies in departure. He can be appraised as the youth of India. His approach is characterized by this quotation, "See that far-away hill from our window--I often long to go beyond those hills and right away." He stands in favor of the children who are not prepared to ascend against the British but believe that someday they will have to.

The subsequent scene is a discussion between Amal and Madhav. Madhav epitomizes the older generation of Indians. He is comfortable to reside at home and pay attention to the instructions given by the doctor. He laments for not being a more scholarly, and wishes Amal to continue staying at home and learn something. He embodies a generation that is situated in their way and reluctant to prevent the British rule. Madhav is satisfied with his life, and currently directs his concentration in the direction of the boy's life. "Formerly, earning was a passion for me... now I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy." This explains Madhav's keenness to let the younger generation deal with the British rule.

Later in the play Amal first meets the Dairyman, then the Watchman, later the Headman. All the three characters signifies diverse functioning levels of the Indian populace. The Dairyman is the manual worker, he is distressed with his occupation but would not have the guts to go in opposition to the British rule, he instigates Amal to acquire book learning and not endeavor out of the house. The Watchman symbolizes an Indian who follows the British rule but does not identify why, and further significantly doesn't be bothered why. He is at

ease with his work and does not inquire about any of his orders. In one important conversation Amal discusses about the time when Indians should start liberating themselves from the British. The Headman is the last working class individual presented by Tagore. He is the Indian under the control of British. He gains from British management and would be reluctant to be concerned in transformation. The three "men" signify Tagore's views on the modern Indian generation.

The ultimate set of characters is Sudha and a group of Boys. Both are cryptogram of India's youth. Sudha symbolizes the young and naïve group. She thinks that Amal should pay attention to the doctor, or else he would be considered disobedient. Nevertheless in the ending she is still eager to pay attention to Amal's thoughts regarding the prospect. The group of boys is the outlook of India, they are prepared to confront the doctor and persuade Amal to unite with them. While Amal does not bond with them we get the feeling that this group will sooner or later ascend and direct India.

Amal's adopt father Madhav Datta takes every preventative measure to protect Amal the sick boy who has got in with himself to Madhav a lot. Now, Madhav's lone trepidation is to save Amal. The doctor has recommend that on any account Amal should never be permitted to go away from home or move out doors. Akin to Tagore, Amal has a profound desire to go out, stretch out in the lap of Mother Earth, to scamper and take part in play, and thus experience freedom. Madhav's wife was fervent to adopt a child. The advent of Amal altered Madhav's life entirely. Sitting by the side of the window Amal talks to the curd-seller(the dairy man), the watchman, the village headman, the little flower girl Sudha and Gaffer or Thakurda, a wandering mendicant or faqir. Everybody extend their compassion apart from the village headman whose amusement lies in making life wretched to others. A group of boys stopovers for him, but Amal is irresistible to tread out of his room to play with them. His corporal condition soon turn into bad to worse. Amal envisages that the king's postman will appear to deliver him the king's letter.

When the doctor visits him he understands that life is receding out of Amal. Madhav and Gaffer are full of distress when they become conscious that Amal is going to exceed away very quickly. Amal is ignorant of his quandary and most of the time engrossed in existing and death approaches to him as a natural outcome.

According to S.K.Desai, love is the principal theme of "post office". The utmost significant theme that interconnects the principal theme of love is that of death. In this metaphorical play, the hero Amal, a little boy, who is sick and is restricted within the four ramparts of a room, desires for freedom. The post Office is itself a character in the play since it serves like a bond connecting Amal with the far-off regions, the beyond of the river; the mountain and the narrow lane. The "letter" which Amal anticipates to receive and the post office are two significant symbols to the play.



The opening words of Madhav, roughly, strike the keynote of the play. When we circumspectly observe Madhav's words, "what a state I am in. Before he (Amal) came, nothing mattered, I felt so free. But now that he has come, goodness knows from where, my heart is filled with his dear self, and home will be no home to me when he leaves". Perhaps he has a intuition that in spite of his preeminent labors to save Amal, the kindhearted boy may "leave" him eventually. He (Madhav) turns out to be accountable, considerate and dutiful in earning and saving money for the safeguarding of the boy. Madhav is a prosperous householder with no children of his own. Amal is ailing from some kind of infirmity from which there seems to be no possibility of recovery. The Doctor has suggested Madhav to keep Amal indoors far from wind and sun.

Amal is described as a "child angel endowed with the characteristic Tagorean qualities". He triumphs over people through utter gentleness and affection. He has a strong love of things and beings. He is essentially an enthusiast of life, he is just a boy and is the comperidium of all traits which Tagore well thought-out to be hale and hearty. He is creative, exploratory, naive, impulsive, kind, compassionate, attentive, inquisitive and filled with affection for. He discovers himself with the whole lot around him. He is passionate enough to be a squirrel just as Keats would steal a look at a nugget with a pigeon.

Whatever Amal is unable to obtain in real life, he tries to construct and acquire it, by the power of his visualization. Amal needs love and he acquires it in an abundant measure from Madhav and Sudha. Madhav is ready to squander all his earnings on his foster son to keep him alive. Sudha would convene him on her way back home with the flowers and present to him a bunch of flowers devoid of any expense. She keeps up her promise, but then Amal is bodily no more in this world. In order to save Amal's life Madhav makes him stay out of the Autumn wind and the sun. Amal is in love with existence and the existing universe and that's why every second of his life is crucial to him. When he is not able to establish contact with his wits, he has substitute to his productive thoughts. He can envisage the parrot's isle and the expedition of the king's postman to the village. He has immense feeling of affection for life and the humankind and he says that he would appeal the King, "I shall ask him to make me (Amal) one of his postmen that I may wander far and wide, delivering his message from door to door".

It is most paradoxical that death hangs around over Amal even from the very beginning of the play. He is predestined not to be alive for long. Madhav is very much taken of concern for the life and wellbeing of Amal that he (Madhav) carries out the directions and commands of the physicians very conscientiously. Amal is not at all conscious of the coming events which transmit a depressing gloom over his life. All through the play we find Amal yearning for freedom. Sitting by at the window Amal, inquires the curd seller, communicates with the watchman, asks a huge number of questions to the village headman devoid of the knowledge

of his surly nature, and is very polite towards Sudha, the flower girl. As for himself, he desires going to the distant land which he witnesses through his window. He wishes to keep himself active visiting places and conversing to everybody. He still imagines that when everybody is slumbering, he would set out devoid of any one's awareness and ask for some sort of effort to do. However by sitting next to the window "he is hope's most pitiful prisoner". "Tell him (Amal) Sudha has not forgotten him" – these words of Sudha, daughter of the flower vendor is the significant thing to comprehend Amal, the vital character of this two Act play.

W.B. Yeats lays eminence on liberation as the central idea of the play. Amal feels liberated through death. The compact of the drama highlights the importance of the possessions of the earth, though the play ends in death. His uncle enforces limitations on his activities as the physician advised Madhav to subsist Amal within the room and not to let him be away from the prevailing terrible climate. Whereas Amal not only desires to be in the open avenue but also set off into regions away from his instantaneous gaze. He regards the hill as the elevated arm of the dumb ground gesturing man to go into far off distant regions. According to Tagore, death is an expedition to the other coast; it is like being charitable in up oneself at finally into God's hands; it is a love-tryst in the dimness of the nighttime; it is seeing God's countenance and offering him one quiet salutation.

Amal's aspiration to obtain a letter as of the king heaves into a mania in Act II. He has been prepared to accept to his infirmity and detention by the Post office. Gaffer utters that the letter is on the way and Amal roughly sees him approaching with a "lantern in his hand". The Headman fetches a slip of paper and scornfully lets Amal know that the letter has come from the King. He appends that the King would call Amal soon and that he would be fond of having puffed rice from Amal. Gaffer converses softly and eloquently and says that the King's state Physicians would himself arrive to see Amal. This is followed by the knock and the state Physician appears. Amal's fascination with the Post office is moreover the result of a tangible circumstances. The Post office is immediately there next to his window and he is curious.

Amal : Post Office? Whose?

Watchman : Whose, why, the King's surely!

Amal: Do letters come from the King to the office here.

Watchman : Of course. One fine day there may be a letter for you in there.

Amal : A letter for me? But I am only a little boy!

Watchman : The king sends tiny notes to little boys.

Amal gets disappointed at the headman's answers to his queries. Consequently he inform him (the headman) not to take the difficulty of transporting him the King's letter. In spite of this the headman acts and talks impudently to Amal. Sudha, daughter of the flower-seller

considers Amal some late star of the morning. Amal is a little envious of Sudha because she walks about cheerfully from place to place gathering flowers. Amal is joyful in the company of boys like Badal, Sarat and others. Apart from the headman, everyone else ascertains a rapport of affection with Amal. Love is basically inventive and it has the control to change people into enhanced human beings. Amal is in adoration with life and the livelihood of the universe and for this reason every minute of his life is momentous to him. His contact with external world is first with prudence and when the sanity drains the capability, then with his thoughts. Thus the identical themes of this play are love and death.

At the heart of the play is a young boy Amal, through whose imaginative mind, life is celebrated, in spite of the child's illness, the play's universal appeal has made it a world classic, because of his Integrated austerity with complexity . The English translation of this play was done by the celebrated poet, WB Yeats. Gandhiji was spellbound by the play in Calcutta in 1917. Anita Desai called it, 'as modest as a dewdrop, as profound as the ocean.'

Tagore, a unique figure in the history of Indian drama in English, equipped himself with the classics of Indian drama and was, at the same time, alive to the European dramatic tradition. He has evolved a dramatic form which influenced the Bengali theatre at the beginning of this century. His career as a dramatist may be divided into three periods, namely—pre-Gitanjali period, Gitanjali period and post-Gitanjali period. During the pre-Gitanjali period he wrote *Sacrifice, King and Queen, Malini, and Balmiki-Pratibha*. During the *Gitanjali* period appeared *Autumn Festival, The Castle of Conservatism, The King of the Dark Chamber and The Post Office*. During the post-Gitanjali period he wrote *The Cycle of Spring, The Free Current Tent and The Red Oleanders*. The range and variety of his drama is astonishing. He borrowed many of his themes from Indian mythology, Buddhist legends and other classical sources without any artistic inhibition or compunction. Edward Thompson remarks, "All these dramas are vehicles of thought rather than expression of action." Tagore achieved a complete dramatic integration in his *The Post Office*.

Tagore has the exceptional gift which a very few poets and writers of fairy tales have, of unconsciously utilizing symbols while consciously writing an appealing story. But he seems to be conscious of his gift, and for this cause he does not resemble the writers of fairy tales, and is, certainly, half-way amidst Coleridge and T. S. Eliot. The play illustrates the tale of the child as perceived by the Indian poets and philosophers. Amal in his intense yearning to run away, from the momentary and materialistic world, into the world of ambiance, and in his desire to search for individuality and unification with God to some extent similar to Dhruva and Prahlada.

Tagore wrote *The Post Office* in 1912. Prior to this play Tagore lost his son, daughter, wife and father to disease, all within a span of few years. The chronology of loss preceding to Tagore's writing of *The Post Office* was beyond belief: his wife died in 1902; his oldest son

died in 1903, Satischandra Ray, his subordinate at Santiniketan died in 1904; his father died in 1905; his younger son, Samindra, died in 1907. In 1911 he wrote *The Post Office* in Bengali. Later he gave a depiction of how he came to accomplish it. One night, while lying underneath the stars on the top of his house in Santiniketan and staring at a starlit sky, he had a strange experience. “My mind took wing. Fly! Fly! –I felt an anguish... There was a call to go somewhere and a premonition of death, together with an intense emotion. This feeling of restlessness I expressed in writing *Dak Ghar (The Post Office.)* He explains:

“When I wrote Dak Ghar, my soul was besotted by an ocean of feeling. It was a very strong wave. Come, venture outside, before you leave you will have to traverse this world. You have to feel the sorrow and joy and thrill and excitement of the human heart. At the time I was deeply involved in establishing the university [Shantiniketan] but suddenly I don't know how it happened that early one morning between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. my heart stood on the rooftop and sprouted wings. I felt a great premonition of a momentous event, perhaps Death. I felt as if I had to jump onto the platform of a train station, as if I were leaving immediately. I was saved. When the call was so strong, how could I resist. The call to go somewhere and the mystery of death is what I expressed in Dak Ghar.” [Translated by Julie Mehta].

Tagore was motivated to write this outstanding play concerning the “loss” of a child, Amal, which is in reality the boy's emancipation, and the commencement of a great expedition headed for the exterior. All the way through the child's demise, Tagore expresses his certainty that the complete implication of existence can only be grasped in bereavement. Hitherto he does this by means of such a radiance, graceful and lyrical touch that *The Post Office* has originate its way into the hearts of audiences universally and in several diverse languages.

The following verse, with its six contradictory propositions, from The *Upaniṣads*, which Tagore used a great deal in his lectures, sums up a so much of what makes *The Post Office* so complex, and spiritual.

*He moves, and he moves not. He is far, and likewise near.
He is within all, and he is outside all.
The Īśā Upaniṣad.*

The first person to generate an English-language edition of the play was W.B. Yeats ; he also wrote a preface to it. It was translated into Spanish; which was done by Juan Ramon Jimenez. The French version of translation was done by Andre Gide and read on the radio the night before Paris fell to the Nazis. A Polish version was enacted under the supervision of Janusz Korczak in the Warsaw ghetto.

Somehow the play take us to the days of World War 2, when the Nazi atrocities were at their height in Europe. Janus Korczak, the eminent polish writer an educator who was posthumously awarded the German Peace prize , headed an orphanage at the the Warsaw ghetto. In spite of offers from his friends, he did not agree to leave the ghetto leaving the children behind.

Refuting the orders of Nazi that the Jews should not perform plays by the Aryan authors, he produced the Pot Office with the children at the ghetto on 15th of July 1942.

When he was asked why he has chosen the play Korczak said that "eventually one has to learn to accept serenely the angel of death"[Dutta an Robinson]. Earlier , in June 1940 the night before Paris fell to the Nazi Germany , Andre Gide's translation o the play was read over Radio France.

Tagore's insights into death seem to be deepest with this play.

"I have had so many experiences of loved ones who have died that I think I have come to know something about death, something perhaps of its deeper meaning. Every moment that I have spent at the death bed of some dear friend, I have know this, yet it is very difficult to describe how for me that great ocean of truth to which all life returns, can never suffer diminution by death... I see how the individual life comes back into the bosom of this ocean at the moment of death, I have felt too how great and fathomless this ocean is, yet how full it is of personality. For personality is ever flowing into it... It becomes instilled with personality. Yet this ocean seems as nothing, as neither light nor darkness, but as one great extension of the universe, an eternity of peace and life..."

Science recognizes atoms, all of which can be weighed and measured, but never recognizes personality, the one thing that lies at the basis of reality. All creation is that, for apart from personality, there is no meaning in creation. Water is water to me, because I am I. And so I have felt that in this great infinite, in this ocean of personality, from which my own little personal self has sprung, lies the completion of the cycle, like those jets of water from a fountain which rise and fall and come back home again."

CONCLUSION

The Play is about emancipation, spiritual freedom, expansion, new life, liberation. Amal is in love with life and the living universe and hence every moment of his life is significant to him. His contact with outside world is first with sense and when the senses exhaust their capacity,

it is with his imagination. Thus the twin themes of this play are love and death. The fact that *The Post Office* was chosen on both these occasions proves beyond doubt the power of the play: It teaches the mankind how to deal with the ruthless onslaught of death, especially when it is perceived that death is meaningless and bizarre. It may be recalled in this context that Korczak and his children were put to death by the Nazi rulers immediately after the performance of the Post Office.

Thus Tagore demonstrates that death, nevertheless, is not such a dreadful thing, that it is not an issue of losing something, but it is an issue of pleasure, victory and tranquility. The final scene in the play, consequently, may possibly be taken as an objective correlative of the ambiguity, candidness, serenity and pleasure with the purpose of which Tagore wants death to be allied with. Amal signifies the man whose soul had received the call of the open road. Finally the bunged gate is unlocked by the king's own physician and to facilitate which is death to the world of accumulated wealth and proficient variety, fetches freedom. Liberation is to be hunted out not in the new world, nevertheless in this world, not subsequent to death, but in this awful life itself. Hence the play depicts Tagore as a spiritual pragmatist.

REFERENCES

1. Benerji, Hiranmay. *Builder of Modern India: Rabindranath Tagore*. Hyderabad: Pub Division, 1989.
2. Chatterji, Sameer. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Humanist Extraordinaire*. Delhi: Vijay Goel, 2008.
3. Das, Sisir Kumar. *English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore Vol. 1 Poems*. Gandhinagar: Sahitya Akadami, 1994.
4. Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*. London: Bloomsbury, 1995.
5. Ravishankar. *Celebrating Love*. eds. Hayden Bill and Anne Elixhauser. Bangalore: Vyakti Vikas Kendra; 2006.
6. *Wisdom for the New Millennium*. Bangalore: Sri Sri pub. Trust; 2008.
7. *Spirituality*. eds. Kaimall, R.G. and Puravi Hegde. Bangalore: Vyakti vikas Kendra; 2007.
8. Tagore, Rabindranath Soni Ramanlal. *Gurudev Rabindranath*. New Delhi: Mihir Prakashan
9. Das, S. (2009), "Tagore's Garden of Eden", *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, India (published 2 August 2009), retrieved 29 September 2011
10. Dasgupta, A. (2001), "Rabindra-Sangeet as a Resource for Indian Classical Bandishes", *Parabaas* (published 15 July 2001), retrieved 17 September 2011
11. Dyson, K. K. (2001), "Rabindranath Tagore and His World of Colours", *Parabaas* (published 15 July 2001), retrieved 26 November 2009