

# Characters, Ideas and Situations As Displayed in R.N. Tagore's Play Sacrifice

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## Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore, honoured with the most prestigious Nobel Prize, is one of the most distinguished Indian playwrights in the history of English literature. He is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century India. He has derived the idea from the Indian ritual of animal sacrifice. Real sacrifice lies in the sacrifice of ill-feeling, ill-will, anger, animosity, hatred and violence. Sacrifice, a play dedicated to 'those heroes who bravely stood for peace when human sacrifice was claimed for the Goddess of War'. He possesses very good qualities as a human being. All the major aspects of human existence including the love, religion, creed and faith find an outstanding place in his plays. His plays are the plays of symbols, ideas, situations and characters. His thoughts are profoundly rooted in our culture, tradition and ethics.

**Keywords:** Arts, symbols, ideas, characters, situations etc.

### Introduction

R. N. Tagore is a great playwright born with dramatic talent. He has an exquisite place as a dramatist. He often made extensive changes in the text subjecting the original to rigorous condensation. He has acquired a unique place in the history of English literature. He is a very great artist and possesses very good qualities as a human being. But as a critic Pramathnath Bishi remarks:-

The symbolical plays of Tagore are only dramas of ideas [1].

His dialogue in plays is generally poetical. Sisir Kumar Ghosh has aptly pointed out:-

To see Tagorean Drama calls for more empathy than many critics have displayed- the changing scenario but each with a thesis open or hidden reveal a complex evolving mind, repertoire of versatility and development in theme, treatment as well as choreography far beyond the professional play house [1].

Sacrifice is a highly symbolical play. Sacrifice, a play dedicated to "Those heroes who bravely represented peace when human sacrifice is claimed for the Goddess of war" is a shorter version of Bengali original. Its Bengali name is Visarjana. In this play Tagore teaches the true meaning of worship, need of religion with the present requirement as everything should be changed according to circumstances so religion should also be. In the connection, K. R. S. Iyengar remarks:-

Tagore's plays are engines of ideas, and men and women are caught just when they are possessed by, and have become the vehicles of, certain ideas [2].

In his famous play Sacrifice, R. N. Tagore has dealt with a significant theme. He has derived the idea from the Indian ritual of animal sacrifice. He has tried to display here that real sacrifice lies in the sacrifice of ill-feeling, animosity, hatred and violence. His thoughts are deeply rooted in our culture, tradition and ethics. His plays described the life of human being and mystery of human existence. All "Major aspects of human existence including the love, religion and faith" [1] find an important place in Tagore's play. He is mainly a general and kind-hearted person in his life so he shows faith, religion, love, death, relations of sequence to each other. Satish Kumar remarks:-

His plays are expressions of the problems of human life which are attempted to be solved in the actual conflict of human activities. He raises some problems in his plays and often his solution does not appeal to the reader [1].



**Narendra Kumar Yadav**  
Assistant Professor,  
Dept. of English,  
Shri Chitragupta  
P. G. College, Mainpuri,  
U. P., India

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Tagore is a master character painter and delineates several important male and female characters in his famous play Sacrifice. His characters are the real characters. He has presented them symbolically. Nobody can judge them in a traditional model. He brings characters from his surroundings; he feels problems in his society so he gives solution in his play by presenting his characters. Some characters are static, but most of the characters are dynamic and progressive.

Sacrifice is the most powerful of Tagore's drama of the period based on Shakespearean model. He writes dramas of action and character. His characters express the views, thoughts, ideas and emotions of Tagore. King Govinda is a true historical figure whose name has been slightly altered and minimized by playwright. He is King Govinda Manikya of Tripura in eastern India. He lived in the time of emperor Shahjahan with his queen Gunavati and his brother Nakshatra Rai and there is a reliable chronicle account of his dealings with Prince Shuza, Shahjahan's second son. There are references of Kings and Queens, Princes and Princesses, orthodox Brahmins and hypocritical Godmen are not presented with the power of determining and personality of their own. As Satish Kumar remarks:-

These characters stand as symbol for certain idea as well as they personify certain vital and fundamental conceptions of the playwright. They are a part of the fundamental philosophy on which the edifice of his plays has been founded; which truly speaking is his whole poetic creed, the immanence of the infinite in the finite and struggle of the human spirit for freedom [1].

Govinda, the King of Tripura, is a symbolic character. He is a symbol of peace, kindness and mercy. Tagore presents his idea of peace through the character of King Govinda. King Govinda Manikya banned sacrifice in his kingdom before Goddess Kali and he has to face much opposition but at last he wins.

The King impresses with his kind heartedness and sensible behavior. He is a very merciful man. Aparna, the beggar girl, came to him to request that his goat is sacrificed today forcefully, she requests to stop killing her goat as she says:-

I am his mother, if I returned late to my hut, he refuses his grass, and bleats, with his eyes on the road. I take him up in my arms, when I come, and share my food with him. He knows no mother but me [3].

King Govinda hears it very carefully because his heart is made of wax so his heart melts for that girl and her goat. He orders in his kingdom:-

That I forbid shedding of blood in the temple from today forever [3].

No one is with the King even his wife, Gunavati also does not support him. As a kind hearted man, he pays attention on every common people and on their grief. He visits to temple to confirm that grievance made by Aparna. Jaising asked his desire for why did they come here? Govinda says that Aparna's goat should not bring by force. Jaising says that he will offer himself to Maa Kali, who is the symbol of war and there is no other way to do this. Govinda says:-

Is it true that this poor girl's pet goat has been brought by force to the temple to be killed? Will mother accept such a gift with grace [3]?

King Govinda loves everybody; he takes care of Aparna's pet goat on account of her plea. He does not know when he worships from where people to arrange these offerings. As Jaising says:-

King, how are we to know whence the servants collect our daily offerings of worship? But, my child, why is this weeping? Is it worthy of you to shed tears for that which mother herself as taken [3]?

He wants that everybody should be happy in his kingdom. He wants to establish a good kingdom in his life where everybody would live without any tension. For goat, he says that Goddess Kali came in his dream forbade all sacrifice of creature.

He believes that killing animal is not sacrifice but it is a kind of crime. It is very sorrowful thing. Those people who do it, are criminals. But lack of rational thinking, they are all superstitious. So he says in the name of Goddess Kali that she wants to stop his crime. As he declares:-

The command is not mine, it is Mother's[3].

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Govinda praises Jaising and offers flowers on his dead body. The king says how the Goddess has come back to women's heart.

Tagore's symbolizes King Govinda who loves his queen so much. But it does not mean that for her he will change her rule. She is not his weakness. She can not dominate in his decision. But he has not affection to her.

When Queen Gunavati sends her offerings 'the red bunches of hibiscus and beasts of sacrifice', she does not know that the King has forbidden the shading of poor creatures. She says very angrily:-

What is it you say?... Is there a man in his land who carries more than one head on his shoulders...? Who is that doomed creature?[3]

As King Govinda loves her. But he does not alter his mind. He says:-

I beg to ask your pardon for the culprit [1].

Raghupati is the priest in the temple of Goddess Kali in Tripura. Tagore presents his idea through Raghupati that the priest spent his entire life in service of Goddess Kali. He is a blind follower of traditions but he cannot tolerate any challenges. He is an orthodox priest. Some characters of Tagore are purely symbolical as Raghupati. In this connection, Satish Kumar remarks:-

The priest, in Sacrifice, suggests dignity but he proves to be a butcher [1].

Tagore symbolizes an orthodox and superstitious priest. He presents him that he is not a such kind of person who changes according to situation. He is not presented as a rude priest. He believes that Goddess please by the blood of any creature so he suggests people to offer the blood of creatures.

He says to Gunavati to have patience and offer special Sacrifice to Goddess Kali. As he says:-

Have patience daughter today we shall offer special Sacrifice in your name to please her [3].

Tagore symbolizes a character who his full of pride and selfish. As when King Govinda declares to forbid the shedding of poor creatures, he feels that it is a great insult for him and he decided to convince Nakshatra to kill Govinda.

He also convinces Jaising to murder the king. He says that Goddess wants blood because she is thirsty for blood of King Govinda. He says to Jaising:-

To kill is but to kill- It is neither sin nor anything else- The world is ceaselessly killing; and time is sending with her thirsty tongue hanging down from her mouth [3].

Tagore presents him as a tone-hearted man. He is presented as a cruel person who makes a plan to kill Dhruva. He insists queen Gunavati to come under his control. After it he says to Nakshatra to kill the boy Dhruva. Because he is snatching his throne. Raghupati says about Dhruva:-

I'll drug him to sleep, if he wakes up [3].

And he says:-

Have more faith in the Goddess. The victim is now in her own hand and it shall never escape [3].

As Govinda forbade blood shedding poor creatures. He says:-

She has been drinking blood for ages. Whence comes this loathing all of sudden [3].

He presented as a complex character. Nobody is able to understand him. When he comes to know that the king has orders not to sacrifice to her poor creatures, he goes mad as a blood thirsty man.

At the end of the play Raghupati suddenly changes and realize his folly:-

Our bitterest cries wander..... Our world! [3]

Thus, Tagore presents Raghupati neither as a God nor a Demon. He is a simple and common man like us. He has some weaknesses but this is his mentality that he does not want any change.

Aparna is the messenger of Goddess. She symbolizes renunciation. She embodies the idea of sacrifice and love in the widest commonly spread. She is

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of the view that the goddess does not live in the statue of stone but in our heart, in our good deed, she is always with us.

In the play, nobody knows where is Goddess. Everybody worships the statue of goddess by sacrificing creature but she is the only one who defines the real means of worship. She comes to the temple and blame goddess Kali that she snatches dear things from human being. As she says:-

You rob us all over best without uttering a word. We find for love and die beggar for want of it yet it comes to you unasked, though you need it not [3].

She is a purely symbolical character. She symbolizes love for all creatures. She is the only girl in Tripura that raised her voice against sacrifice of poor creatures. Aparna is the other name of goddess Parvati whose violent form is worshipped as goddess Kali.

As she goes to King Govinda to stop shedding poor creatures. As she says:-

I am his mother. If I return late to my hut. He refuses his grass and bleats with his eyes on the road..... [3] Tagore presents her as a person who revolted against in justice with poor creatures. In the words of M. K. Nayak; Tagore's methods are:-

Suggestive and for him the drama lies not in the revelation of character and the clash of personalities but in the basic concentration of opposed approaches [4].

Jaising is a suggestive, dynamic and impressive character. He is a treasure house of a number qualities. He is a living symbol of devotion and loyalty to Raghupati. Raghupati, the priest makes a plan to kill Govinda. He orders Jaising to kill him but he loves him too much. He goes to kill the King and he says that he should offer himself to Goddess Kali. He is a Kshatriya. His ancestors have set upon thrones. He observes:-

It is with me. Let go my hands. Let me offer it myself. Must thou have kingly blood, Great Mother, who nourished the world at thy breast with life? I am of the loyal caste... I have kingly blood in my veins. Take it and quench thy thirst forever [3].

**Objective of the Study**

Thus, the aim of this research paper is to show the ideas, situations, characters and symbols as displayed in the play Sacrifice of Rabindranath Tagore.

**Conclusion**

The symbolical plays of Tagore are the dramas of ideas, situations and characters. They deal with the problems of the society. They present Tagore as a great prolific writer. He occupies a unique place as a great playwright. He depicts the contemporary problems in his plays. He also gives a solution in his own way. He wants to convey his ideas, situations, characters and symbols through his plays.

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