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# Poetry by Rabindranath Tagore and Jibanananda Das - A Comparative Study

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**Abstract:** Of all the living beings, man is the only being who has been able to express his emotions explicitly in many forms. Emotions for other fellow beings, nature and self have been expressed by man in various creative forms. As man is creative in nature and has always expressed his emotions through music, art, philosophy and literature. Thus, literature the art of written word acts as the reflection of an authors' mind. So through literature one can go deep into the mind of an author and understand the dynamics of his mind. This idea is applied in the method of psychoanalytic literary criticism. It refers to literary criticism which, in method, concept, theory, or form, is influenced by the tradition of psychoanalysis formulated by Sigmund Freud. The objective of psychoanalytic literary criticism is the psychoanalysis of the author reflected through the characters he has created. This article tries to reveal the psychodynamics of the ace authors', Rabindranath Tagore and Jibanananda Das, through their literary works here poetry- the 'SeshBasanto' and the 'PochisBachor Pore' respectively.

**Keywords:** Literature, Poetry, Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism

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## 1. Introduction

Man has always been creative and has expressed himself in various art forms. His strong emotions and feelings led to expression of self in the form of music, art, philosophy and literature.

Literature is the art of written works. The word literature means "acquaintance with letters". Literature introduces us to new worlds of experience; we enjoy the comedies and the tragedies of poems, stories, and plays; and we may even grow and evolve through our literary journey with books. Literature reveals the different shades of human mind-love, hatred, envy, joy, grief, helplessness etc. Literature represents language, people, culture and tradition. Poetry is a form of literature that uses aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language—such as phonaesthetics, sound symbolism, and meter—to evoke meanings in addition to, or in place of, the prosaic ostensible meaning. It is a verbal composition designed to convey experiences, ideas, or emotions in a vivid and imaginative way, characterized by the use of language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by the use of literary techniques such as meter, metaphor and rhyme.

The poet is the one who has the gift of poetic thought,

imagination and creation, together with eloquence expression. Literature in the form of poetry is thus a reflection of human mind (of the poet), how he perceives his surrounding environment and how he deals with it. It is also a kind of wish fulfillment where the poet makes his created characters to speak or act in a way which was actually desired by him but which he couldn't carry out. It reveals the innermost emotions and desires of the poet which may be even unknown to him. Thus the poet reveals his own mind through his work. Thus literature is the mirror of the author's mind. So through poems one can go deep into the mind of the poet and understand the dynamics of his mind.

Psychoanalytic Criticism of literature appeared in the early 20th century. It is an extrinsic approach which consists of the application of some psychological values to the study of literature. Psychoanalytic criticism of literature focuses on the writer's psyche and the study of mental processes of creation; it focuses on the psychological types and principles within literary works, or the effects of literature upon its readers. The major figures were Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. (Dr. Kristi Siegel, 2006).

According to Jung, psychology being the study of psychic processes can be brought to bear upon the study of literature as the human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and arts.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism refers to literary criticism which, in method, concept, theory, or form, is influenced by the tradition of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a set of ideas developed by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. It is mainly devoted to the study of human psychological functioning and behavior. Psychoanalytic literary criticism is a literary approach where critics see the text as a kind of dream. This means that the text represses its real (or latent) content behind obvious (manifest) content. Psychoanalytic criticism helps in revealing the latent contents and bringing out the unconscious mind of the author.

The object of psychoanalytic literary criticism, in a simple sense, can be the psychoanalysis of the author or of characters. Psychoanalytic criticism can yield useful clues to the sometime confusing symbols and actions in a literary work. Psychoanalytic reading has been practiced since the early development of psychoanalysis, and has developed into a rich and heterogeneous interpretive tradition.

- Writers
  - Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a Bengali poet, philosopher, artist, playwright, composer and novelist. He was the greatest writer in modern Indian literature and India's first Nobel laureate who won the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature.
  - Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) was a Bengali poet, writer, novelist and essayist. He is acknowledged as the premier poet of the post-Tagore era in India and Bangladesh.
- Poems
  - 'SeshBasanto' (Last spring) by Rabindranath Tagore where he writes about the last day of spring spend with beloved, before he would part away as he has realized that time has changed bringing about change in their relation.
  - 'PochisBachor Pore' (After 25 years) by Jibanananda Das states about how the poet and his beloved promises to meet after 25 years but after long waiting one day poet realizes that 25 years have passed long time back.

## 2. Literature Survey

The objective of psychoanalytic literary criticism is the psychoanalysis of the author or of a particularly interesting character. According to Freud, literature is a means to express repressed desires: "Happy men never fantasize; just unsatisfied men fantasize". So, it is a kind of "auto-therapy". Freud wrote essays on literature, through which he explores the psyche of authors and characters, to decipher the narrative mysteries, and brings forth new concepts into psychoanalysis. According to Freud Shakespeare's "Hamlet" was written because of the death of Shakespeare's father. In fact, his old, repressed instincts against his father re surfaces and provoke him into harboring the doubt, whether he should take revenge for his father's death or not. (Manuel Asensi Pérez, p.541). Named his approach to art as 'pathography' as he puts forth in his works such as 'Leonardo da Vinci and Memory of his

Childhood' (1910) and also attempts to understand the psychodynamics of artists and novelists, in Shakespeare's Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth. In this pathographical approach the psyche is the prime object of inquiry. It explains the relation between the life experience of the artist and his work. Freud turned to literature both for evidence of his mappings of the unconscious and in attempt to describe what had found in that realm of human consciousness. Freud's conception of the "Oedipus complex" culminated from the Mythology of Oedipus Sophocles's tragedy. More recently, in the Jungian school, Helen M. Luke in her *Dark Wood to White Rose* uses Dante's *Divine Comedy* for evidentiary, explanatory, and psychotherapeutic purposes. Lacan was interested in works of Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe. A legion of writers from the therapeutic community has explored the psychoanalytic basis of fairy tales, popular literature, and even the texts of the Bible. In 1909, the psychoanalyst Otto Rank published *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*. In this work, Rank subscribes to the notion that the artist translates his potent, secret wish into a literary fantasy. According to Jung (1922) the primordial image or archetype recurrently appears where ever creative fantasy is freely expressed. "The impact of an archetype, whether it takes the form of immediate experience or expressed through spoken word stirs us because it summons upon a voice that is stronger than our own". In Jungian parlance, art is conceived as autonomous and constituted by its own internal relations. Conrad Aiken wrote "A Freudian study of American literature" and poets such as Robert Graves and W. H. Auden applied Freudian insights while writing critical prose. William Faulkner, Henry James, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, and Toni Morrison are only a few of the novelists who have either written criticism influenced by Freud or who have written novels that conceive of character, conflict, and creative writing itself in Freudian terms. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren included "psychological" criticism as one of the five "extrinsic" approaches to literature described in their influential book *Theory of Literature* (1942). Psychological criticism, they suggest, typically attempts to do at least one of the following: provide a psychological study of an individual writer; explore the nature of the creative process; generalize about "types and laws present within works of literature"; or theorize about the psychological "effects of literature upon its readers". Entire books on psychoanalytic criticism began to appear, such as Frederick J. Hofman's *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, (1945). Edmund Bergler (1947) said that great writers have known intuitively everything that psychoanalysis has discovered and proved clinically. Ernst Kris (1952) held a theory of art as communication, and as a process of recreation. In his words: 'We started out as a part of the world which the artist created, we end as co-creators. We identify ourselves with the artist.' Ernst Gombrich (1963), an art historian offered a psychoanalytic perspective on connoisseurship as a genetic model for aesthetic pleasure. In 1963, Charles Mauron conceives a structured method to analyse literary works. The study implies four different phases- metaphors and symbols, the juxtaposition of a writer's works, metaphorical networks

and the last phase that links the writer's literary creation to his own personal life. A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature (1970), Robert Rogers begins with the view that human beings are double or multiple in nature. Aided with this assumption, along with the psychoanalytic concept of "dissociation" (best known by its result, the dual or multiple personality), Rogers concludes that writers reveal instinctual or repressed selves in their books, often without realizing that they have done so. In a 1970 article entitled "The 'Unconscious' of Literature," by Norman Holland was published, while not denying the idea that the unconscious plays a role in creativity. Lacan, took Freud's whole theory of psyche and gender and added to it a crucial third term — that of language. Wimsatt and Beardsley (1978) accused romantic criticism as an incorporation of the so called intentional fallacy. They defined intention in terms of the works the artist has created. Intention must be equated with the results (artistic products) on their own terms. Thus they gave the art an ontological status in the culture. In 1998 Norman N. Holland came up with Psychoanalysis in Literature - the Mind and the Book: a Long Look at Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism, he discussed the earlier developments in psychoanalytic criticisms of literature and its approaches and also suggested future ways. Writing and Madness is Shoshana Felman's most influential work on literary theory and criticism explores the relations between literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. The "Crisis of the Soul": Psychoanalysis and African Literature Research in African Literatures by the Uzoma Esonwanne University of Toronto in 2007 is another recent example of research done on the psychoanalysis of literature.

In the present study attempt has been made to investigate the psychodynamics of two poets through the analysis of their poems. Both similarities and differences are present in the writings. Closeness may be due to the psychodynamic resemblance of the writers. In great art the writers are not lost in the isolation of their creation, but they share the unspoken desires of the times where all men are caught in a common rhythm which allowed them to communicate the feelings and strivings of mankind (Jung, 1922).

### 3. Method

The present investigation is based on pathographical approach (Freud, 1910). Here the selected poems are analyzed to penetrate the psyche of the writer. This approach is concerned about the creation and the experience of the artist. The model of psychoanalytical interpretation of art as propagated by Jung and also by Ego psychology is also taken into account. These approaches view the art as relatively autonomous functions of the ego with its organized and stable patterns of defenses and adaptation. (Jung, 1922) (Kris, 1952).

#### Samples

Two poems by two famous Bengali poets, Rabindranath Tagore and Jibanananda Das are selected. 'SeshBasanto' (Last spring) by Rabindranath Tagore and 'PochisBachor Pore' (After 25 years) by Jibanananda Das has been selected.

## 4. Literary Review

#### *Rabindranath Tagore:*

Life history: Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861 – 7 August 1941), sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali poet, novelist, musician, painter and playwright. He reshaped Bengali literature and music. Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Kolkata of parents Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi.

Work: He is known mostly for his poetry, Tagore also wrote novels, essays, short stories, travel-ogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. The novels and novellas written by Tagore are Chaturanga, ShesherKobita, Char Odhay, Noukadubi, GhareBaire etc. Tagore composed roughly 2,230 songs. He was a fecund painter. His songs comprise RabindraSangeet, which is an integral part of Bengali culture. His poetry books include Manasi, Sonar Tori, Balaka and Purobi. Internationally, Gitanjali is Tagore's best-known collection, winning him his Nobel Prize.

About present poem: 'SeshBasanto' (Last spring) by Rabindranath Tagore where he writes about the last day of spring spend with beloved, before he would part away as he has realized that time has changed bringing about change in their relation.

#### *Jibanananda Das:*

Life history: Jibanananda Das (17 February 1899 – 22 October 1954) was a Bengali poet, writer, novelist and essayist. Dimly recognised during his lifetime, today Das is acknowledged as "the premier poet of the post-Tagore era in India" and Bangladesh. One of his translators, Clinton B. Seely, is among those who consider Jibanananda Das as "Bengal's greatest modern poet".

Work: He is considered one of the precursors who introduced modernist poetry to Bengali Literature, at a period when it was influenced by Romantic poetry. During his lifetime he published only 269 poems in different journals and magazines, of which 162 were collected in seven anthologies, from Jhara Palak to Bela Obela Kalbela. His works include Jhōra Palok (Fallen Feathers), Dhushor Pandulipi (Grey Manuscript), Banalata Sen, Mohapriithibi (Great Universe) etc.

About present poem: 'PochisBachor Pore' (After 25 years) by Jibanananda Das states about how the poet and his beloved promises to meet after 25 years but after long waiting one day poet realizes that 25 years have passed long time back.

## 5. Psychoanalytic View Point

In 'SeshBasanto' (Last spring) by Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, through the poem states his longing to be with his beloved. The poemsays about their last day of being together, which he states as the last day of spring; spring being the season of love, season of blooming flowers, singing birds, green leaves, a picture of nature in its youth.

He wishes to spend the last day of togetherness in a memorable way. He has seen dearth of love in the eyes of his beloved and has realized that it is time for him to depart. They

had spent long time together but this sudden realization has made the last few moments of togetherness more precious. The poet knows that he must leave and he assures his beloved that he will not obstruct her path, he will not remind her of the promises they have made. He will not return in the next spring when the garden will again be full with flowers, birds will sing songs of love. He does not expect his beloved to be sad or shed tears for him; he knows that she would move on. The poet wants to cherish the last moments, he asks his beloved to sit in front of him till the last ray of sunlight is in the sky; her beautiful face is the last thing he wants to remember before he leaves this place after the sun sets and the sky gets dark.

The poetry reveals strong need for love and affection and a fear of rejection. The poet is being rejected by his beloved, where he says that he could sense the lack of love from his beloved's part. This rejection is making him sad and dejected leading low esteem about self. In each line he expresses his desires to be with his beloved, he expresses how he wants to hold onto and cherish these moments forever. He expresses a sense of remorse, a loneliness which he would feel without the beloved, yet he has to leave. He expresses a hidden desire to be held back by his beloved or to be able to return. But he knows that he might be forgotten. There is acceptance of the rejection and the poem does not reveal any direct aggression however there is presence of passive aggression towards the beloved. As he says that he will not become an obstacle in the path of his beloved. These last moments and emotions are the treasures which he wants to keep forever near his heart, he might not be with his beloved but the memories would be his forever.

'PochisBachor Pore' (After 25 years) by Jibanananda Das, states about how the poet and his beloved, in their last meeting had promised to meet after 25 years. He describes how days and nights pass, seasons change as time flies after the meeting. He remains awake as the stars move through the night sky and dawn breaks in, but 25 years seem to be long. He embarks in his endless journey, where he longs for the end of 25 years. Time progresses as world move on in its own pace, nature takes its own course as we carry out our daily chores and move from one day to another. He waits alone to see the green grass grow yellow, to experience the fall. He watches fallen nests wet in the morning dew with broken egg shells in it. He witnesses as the world around wither. The foggy night falls with dew drops gathering on the yellow cucumber flowers in the field and few dried cucumber lying nearby; spider webs embracing the climbers. Then again moon shines brightly, lighting the paths in between the fields, stars shine across the sky. Owl flies through the night sky with wide open wings searching for running mice. Amidst all these he waits patiently and observes the open night sky to realize that 25 years have passed long time back.

The poet has expressed his need for belongingness with his beloved where he promises to meet his beloved after 25 years and waits through this time. Throughout this time he waits passively witnessing the changes around him. His needs for affiliation, belongingness have been fulfilled by the nature. He has become a part of it, relating to nature. His emotions

towards human companions may have been directed towards nature, leading to substitution. Nature itself including its trees, animals, moon and stars have become part of his life. He witnesses the changes in nature passively; he observes the movement of stars, the falling of dew, flying of owl and as if these movements fulfill his needs of being active, while he himself passively waits. His wait seemed endless, and then one day he realizes that 25 years have long passed and he was still waiting. There was a longing to meet but ultimately he could not make it. This reflects underlying conflict between affiliation and rejection; activity and passivity, he wanted to meet but did not play active role to meet his beloved. He accepts the fact that time has passed which may have reflected a need for abasement. Passivity might have also acted as a defense, as by being passive he was dealing with his fear of rejection. This fear of rejection might have made him displace his emotions to nature and satisfy needs through this affiliation. He remains passive and the active and dynamic nature fulfills his needs for activity. He withdraws himself to a passive observer and let time pass away. There is a pang of loneliness expressed, which leads the poet to relate to nature which might not reject him and move away from human companionship.

## 6. Comparison

Both the poets reveal need for affiliation and love as they want to be with their beloved. Both the poems reveal presence of feeling of rejection. Their lies conflict between need for affiliation and need for rejection in the poem by Jibanananda Das where he has the need to be with beloved but at the same time does not play any active role to reach his beloved. In the other poem by Rabindranath Tagore he has longing to stay with his beloved but his beloved is seen here pushing him away rejecting him, leading to him being a rejected figure. Both perceives self as rejected but as poet Jibanananda Das takes shelter in nature, his emotions are expressed as his love for nature; whereas Rabindranath Tagore expresses his wish to move on with his love for beloved, with him. Jibanananda Das in the poem 'PochisBachor Pore' (After 25 years) withdraws himself to a passive observer, he relates to nature which might not reject him and slowly moves away from human companionship. In 'SeshBasanto' (Last spring) by Rabindranath Tagore, the poet expresses passive aggression towards the beloved, as he takes in the pain of being dejected. However he does not withdraw or wish to withdraw from the need of being with beloved, he instead wants to cherish the moments forever, unlike Jibanananda Das who prefers solitude in nature's lap who fulfills his needs and makes him forget about his beloved.

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