

The essence of India encapsulated by Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel and Ramanujan

The Heaven of Freedom: A power loaded verse written by Tagore

The poem *Where the mind is without Fear* by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, an excerpt taken from *Geetanjali* begins with the brilliant idea that everyone in India should live fearlessly and dauntlessly. Education should be free to all, irrespective of class, caste, race and religion. It should not be a sole monopoly of the affluent. He also envisages an India totally undivided and unravished on the lines of parochialism and narrow political ideologies. Tagore opines that the minds of the people should be enriched and empowered by ever widening thoughts and impeccable actions that would be beneficial for nation building. Words of truth and pearls of wisdom should be proclaimed courageously for the whole world to hear. Tagore endorses fortitude. He underquotes that we should be able to strive tirelessly to attain absolute perfection. There should be a scientific temperament that will enable us to keep away from blind beliefs, superstition, antiquated ideas and outdated rituals. He prays to the Almighty that India may attain that heaven of freedom of sound and logical reasoning and righteous action.

In the Bazaars of Hyderabad: A Tribute to Indian Trade by Sarojini Naidu

In the poem, *In the Bazaars of Hyderabad*, one of the most sought after poetesses, Sarojini Naidu has captured the very essence of Indian Culture. Hyderabad is a confluence of Hindu as well as Muslim Culture. The bazaars have all the paraphernalia that is needed by the rich and the poor. They activate our senses as in the sights, sounds and smells at the bazaar are enchanting and mesmerizing. The poetess has created a lively scene as all the characters come to life and her questions and answers given by the vendors give a conversational feel.

Naidu's poem gives us a panoramic view of the traditional bazaars of Hyderabad, replete with beautiful ethnic objects. The sounds and sights make the bazaars vibrant, titillating and scintillating. Shopping is an exciting experience here for the readers as they shop virtually. There are a variety of merchants, maids, pedlars, goldsmiths, fruit sellers, magicians and musicians, flower girls, catering to all sorts of customers, irrespective of the social strata of society they belong to. Colourful turbans and tunics, mirrors and daggers, food items and aromatic herbal cosmetics, jewelry like wristlets, anklets and rings. Some sell musical instruments, some sell saffron, lentil and rice. Some sell sandalwood, henna and spices.

Both ecstatic and pensive moments of life are depicted by the poet. During festive seasons and weddings, the bazaar is a buzz with activities, with the selling of fruits flowers and jewelry. The flower girls make resplendent garlands for bridegrooms. The bazaars also see the bereaving occasions of the deaths of kings and soldiers and the

common people. The flower girls then weave garlands made of white flowers to perfume the sleep of the dead.

Through this poem, the poet discusses the boycott of foreign goods and reminds the Indians that there are such delightful things in our local bazaars that we do not have to go in for foreign goods.

The Professor: An Unsparing Satire written by Ezekiel

It is a satirical poem. It is a waspish, venomous and malignant satire on one of the noblest professions which is called Teaching. It is a dramatic monologue; the Professor speaks and the listener remains silent. In this poem the poet mocks the typical way Indians speak in English, and the Indian tendency to use the native language structure in English. The Indians talk in present continuous tense and think in the regional language. It highlights the influence and interference of the mother tongue and caricatures the Geography Professor, Mr. Sheth, as he converses in English with one of his former students, who is also his listener. A Professor is the one who teaches, and should have an undisputed command over his subject. His words and his ideas seem rather mediocre, typically middle class and very funny.

The Professor heaps encomiums on his family and is keen to showcase their family achievements. He is boastful beyond limits as he poses his sons as social trophies to be displayed and mocks the Indian tradition of having rhyming names for their kids. All this is hackneyed, cliched and stereotyped. Sarala and Tarala, he says, are married and gushes with pride and a sense of satisfaction. His Boys, on the other hand, are have high paying jobs. The basic themes are: the educated illiterates of India, the commercial aspect of success superseding academic excellence and the ridiculous and ludicrous way Indians speak in English.

The Professor's interests are restricted to his family, their stupendous success and his robust health. He is of the opinion that economic success is the only parameter of human achievement. Also, the orthodox belief that the sons should have a lucrative job and the girls should be happily married. The Professor's choice of words is hilarious. It appears to be a literal translation of the native language, with the same structure and tone. The tone quality of the poem is serious, though the subject is trivial as a small incident is given a big aura. The Professor's conversation does not even verge on academic topics. Though the poet Nissim Ezekiel utilizes end number of figures of speech, the language is grammatically incorrect. The Professor seems to be ego centric, narcissistic, obsessed with his own matters and head over heels in love with himself. His ideas are static. The tendency of Indians to exaggerate and blow things out of proportion is also apparent.

A River by AK Ramanujan

In Madurai, which is the city of temples and poets sing for the beauty of the city, its temples and its seasonal river which dries up making the sand visible. The poet celebrates

the picturesque surroundings of Madurai so also the squalor that has polluted the river water. As the river water flows in small streams, the sand looks like ribs of humans. This is a beautiful Simile used by Ramanujan. The poet also points out the various environmental violations done by humans to obstruct the flow of the river. In addition to the sand, there are knick knacks, straws and woman hair under the bridges having rusted bars and also patches of repair all over them. And these rusty bars obstruct the free flow of water.

There are boulders, wet stones and pebbles which are shining and look like sleeping crocodiles and those which are dry seem to be like water-buffaloes. The far - fetched Similes used by Ramanujan are truly noteworthy. The poet does not exaggerate or use overstatements to describe the

The poet says that the poets have written only about these two seasons i.e. the summer and the rain, describing its unsurpassed beauty. They have not touched upon the reality in their verses that refer to the losses inflicted on the people because of the rainy season. Ramanujan considered poetry to be an instrument of social change. The poet says he spent a day in Madurai. He tells that he had been a witness to that incident when there was a deluge. The entire area was annihilated. People everywhere talked about the rising level of river water and went helter skelter asking for help. A number of stones of the bathing places had submerged in the river and there was a catastrophic situation everywhere. The Deluge also carried off three village houses, a woman who was in the family way and a couple of cows which were named Gopi and Brinda as usual. The names of the cows seem to be amusing and they owe their origin to Krishna's Vrindavan.

According to Ramanujan, no one ever discussed the turmoil and turbulence of the times and talked about the pregnant woman who were drowned with the twins in their bellies who kept kicking the blank walls even before birth i.e. they merged with the elements before coming to the world. The poets never brought this tragic incident to their poems and always romanticized the waters. According to Ramanujan, the river is poetic or in other words, it can be romanticised only once a year. Otherwise it is an adamant, obstinate and stubborn water body taking the humans in her lap of death. And then in the twinkling of an eye, it takes away 3 houses, a couple of cows and a pregnant woman who were expecting twins having fair bodies. This is a heart wrenching incident and an irreparable loss faced by humanity. The last stanza, which is very significant, thus compares and contrasts the writing of poet himself and other poets of his age. On one hand, all the other poets try to praise the timeless beauty of the river and on the other hand, the poet himself makes a balance between the enchanting beauty of the river and the losses inflicted on the people by it due to the horrifying deluge.