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The Folk Mysticism of Rabindranath Tagore: *MānērMānus* and *JīvanDēvatā*¹

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Abstract

The lyrical mysticism of Rabindranath Tagore in its musical dimension was outstandingly inspired by the Bāul devotional vocal tradition. The primeval aboriginal spirit permeated the unbound genius of the poet with the idea of *Mānēr Mānus* which he imaginatively transformed into the deeply symbolic concept of *Jīvan Dēvatā*. Thus, the indigenous musical folklore of Bengal becomes the poetic medium of the reunion between man and the Creator as the way to the realization of *Jīvan yātrā*. Music in its divine form of *gītā* guides man on his path to the Lord through the Heart understood as the symbolic dwelling of the Ultimate Truth where the Cycle of Love is completed.

[Keywords: folk mysticism, *MānērMānus*, *JīvanDēvatā*, Bāuls]

The mysticism of Rabindranath Tagore blossomed on the soil of rich and complex religious influences, which became the fusion of his poetic interest. The spirit of *Upaniṣad*, the voice of the *Brāhmasāmaj* movement, the light of the *Bible*, the *Ṣūfī* esotericism and the *Bāul* folk tradition of Medieval India create together the realm of Tagore's artistic genius. However, the imaginative musical tone of his poetic expression finds its special inspiration in the vocal heritage of the devotional mystic songs of the Bāuls. It is their unsophisticated authenticity that touched Tagore's spirit with its overwhelming force. The light and the magical charm of the aboriginal songs of Bengal reached the innermost depths of Rabindranath's heart to blossom in his imagination into lyrical song offerings. Music filled the creative spirit of the poet, building a divine path to the Creator and shaping the universe of his creations, midst of which *Gītāñjali*, *Gītāli* and *Gitimālya*² arose with their

¹*MānērMānus*, a Bengali phrase commonly translated as 'the Man of the Heart', refers directly to the Bāul concept of God. The notion of *MānērMānus* was popularized by a Bāul of Bangladesh, LālanPhakir also known as LālanSāh. It is said that during Rabindranath's *Silāydhā* period of life, Lālan used to come to the Tagore family on their boat. Being an icon of folk mysticism, Lālan whose mind and heart were permeated with the spirit of tolerance, inspired the imagination of many writers, among them were Rabindranath Tagore and KaziNazrul Islam.

JīvanDēvatā, 'life-God,' translated by Tagore as 'Lord of my Life.' *JīvanDēvatā* dwelling in the deepest recesses of the heart represents a creative dynamic principle which is the core and the essence of human life. The concept penetrates Tagore's poetic thought and appears explicitly in his *Gitanjali*.

²*Gītā*, being the form employed in *Gītāñjali*, *Gītāli* and *Gitimālya* was intentionally chosen by the poet for the expression of his devotional message of the Truth. Rabindranath perceives music as the highest art, the

outstanding artistic quality. Rabindranath's devotional songs resounded in the mystic flute of Kṛṣṇa with the message of the Truth inherently rooted in the Infinite Divine Consciousness and ultimately realized within the human heart.

The poet accepts song for the medium of his poetic expression, which finds its justification in his poetic philosophy, as he explains in *The Religion of Man*: "(...) where realization grows, there music has its seat."³ Thus, music, being perceived as the voice of the Supreme Spirit must inevitably take a role of a golden string linking man and his Creator. Aware of the irresistible beauty and powerful impact of music on human aesthetic perception, Rabindranath employs musical lyricism for the self-expression of his poetic spirit. Music, being devoid of any verbal confusion and thus introducing no division among recipients proves to be the perfect medium for the communication of the most universal ideas and truths originating from the concept of the absolute communion and *yoga* with the Divine.

Poetry, being the metrical transformation of music into the lines of the melodious phrases, combines the heavenly realm of expression with the earthly means of communication, the mystic with the real God, the Supreme Poet, inevitably becomes the voice of spiritual inspiration for those who seek his presence through their artistic path of creation. However, he reveals himself only where the Heart of the heart sings in its unadorned genuine simplicity, not where the mind dressed in artificial ornaments has its voice. The Highest One descends to pace among the lowest and the poorest who become the messengers of his Truth. "(...) these ineffable tidings from the realm of Spirit, the world of the Infinite", as the poet concludes, are brought to us "not by the potentates or philosophers, but by the poor, the untutored, the despised."⁴ Thus, God himself chooses the smallest and the lowest to dwell among them:

'Here is thy footstool and there rest
thy feet where live the poorest, and
lowliest, and lost.'⁵

divine language by means of which man can communicate with God. See: Rabindranath Tagore, *Sādhanā*, New York 1915, pp.79-80

However, particularly with reference to the English version of *Gītāñjali*, the complex influence of the mystic and esoteric elements rooted both in the East and the West must be recognized for the right comprehension of the work.

³ Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, New York 2004, p.201

⁴ *The Religion of Man*, p.198

⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, New York 1930, song no.10 (the English version). Compare the Bengali original: Rabindranāth Thākura, *Gītāñjali*, Calcutta 2011, song no. 107:

Yēthāy thākē sabāradhamdinērhatēdin
sē'ikhānēyēcaraṇtōmārrājē
sabārpichē, sabārnīcē,
sab-hārādērmājhē |

Hence, Rabindranath Tagore, ‘descends’ from the pedestal of the highest cast into the lowest stratum of society to experience unity with the Supreme. He ‘abandons’ his tutored philosophy to indulge in the aboriginal creative spirit of rivers and forests, in their mystic charm permeating the devotional adorable spirit of the Bāuls.⁶ Their primeval indigenous spirituality awakens in his heart an irrepressible craving for the same natural pure experience of the Omnipresent Soul which the folk singers of Bengal convey in their devotional songs by addressing and reuniting with the Man of their Heart.

The concept of reunion arises from the awareness of a loss, as man is originally said to have lived in communion with the Supreme One but through his greed and blindness he lost his way and strayed away from his Lord. Now, only through his devotional search, on the path of *bhakti*, can he regain the primeval bliss of communion with the All. The concept of ‘the path’ is essential for the comprehension of the Truth, as only through the right direction can the human being meet his Creator. ‘*Urdha –srōta* (the elevation of the current)’ is indispensable to reach the Spirit. ‘The current of *jīva* (animal life) must be converted into the current of *Śiva* (God life)’⁷, as Rabindranath interprets the Bāul concept of union through the body (*KāyāSādhā*). The life-giving juices within a new life must flow upwards like in a newly grown sprout which comes from a seed; hence, the stream of human devotion must take the right direction, which is not outward but inward. It must lead into the innermost depths of the human heart, into the Heart of the heart which represents the microcosm in reference to the macrocosm of the Universal Heart, thus realizing the concept of *advaita*, dualism in unity.⁸ Rabindranath reflects this idea in his song:

Hidden in the heart of
thingsthough art nourishing seeds
into sprouts, buds into blossoms,

⁶ The simple beauty of the Bāuls comprises and unites the streams of various, syncretic religious and philosophical thoughts. Their spiritual tradition derives directly from *Sahajiyā* philosophy which is rooted in the *Nāth school of thought* whose founder, Mātsyēndrānāth, is also worshipped in Tibetan Buddhism. However, with the continuous decline of Buddhism in India and growing hostility towards its followers, the Bāuls for the self-expression of their path resorted to *Sufism* which being the form of Islam, began to appear in India around the 12th/13th century. They rejected the idea of ritualism, which inspired deeply Rabindranath Tagore. The poet opposing the artificial conventional rituals of Hinduism, praised simplicity and authenticity in the human approach to God. The idea found its realization in *Bisarjan* and also in *Mālinī* where additionally Buddhism was manifested. Although, the Bāuls renounced ritualism, they incorporated into their tradition the rituals related to the Tantric Buddhism which convey deep symbolic meanings and are performed secretly. Finally, in the 16th century, the Bāul tradition was enriched by the *Vaiṣṇava* cult whose followers accepted *Caitanya Mahāprabhu* for the avatar of Kṛṣṇa who proved to be a great advocate of *Bhakti Yoga*, the idea of which became the fundament of the devotional poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.

See and compare: Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal*, Cambridge University Press 2002 and Bhāskara Bhāttācārīyā, *The Path of the Mystic Lover: Bāul Songs of Passion and Ecstasy*, Vermont 1993.

⁷ Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 188

⁸ *Advaita*, the philosophy of Oneness which is the basis for the right comprehension of the concept of *Bhakti Yoga* (yoga of divine love) in Rabindranath Tagore’s thought and refers directly to the Upaniṣadic equation: *Brahman=Ātman*. See: *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (II.I.I.)*

and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.⁹

Therefore, the Bāuls who rejected rituals and temples, mosques and churches chose the human body for the place of meeting and celebrating God.¹⁰ The right direction of the *bhakti* stream inevitably leads a human being inwards, into the realms of her own body, where in the centre of her heart, the Lord, the most faithful and patient Friend, is waiting for her while she is erring outward, round the earthly market of *māyā*.

'*ManērMānus*', 'the Man of the Heart', is the central and most essential theme of the Bāul songs and the core of their thought transformed by Rabindranath into his concept of *JīvanDēvatā*, 'the Lord of Life'. The Supreme One, living in the deepest realms of the human heart, journeys with man by stepping on the path of his joy and sorrow throughout his life until the day when he stops to look inward and behold the destiny inside his self. This truth can be explicitly heard in the words of a Bāul singer:

'I would not go, my heart, to Mecca or Medina,
For behold, I ever abide by the side of my Friend.
Man would I become, had I dwelt afar, not knowing Him.
There's no worship in Mosque or Temple or special holy day.
At every step I have my Mecca and Kashi; sacred is every moment.'¹¹

Rabindranath adopts the Bāul unceremonious direct attitude towards God and creates his own personal relationship with the Supreme by addressing Him as 'the Lord of

⁹*Gitanjali*, no.81. Compare the Bengali poem *Saphalatā* from *Naibēdyā* [in:] Rabindranāth Thākura, *Sañjayitā*, Calcutta 2011, p.348

Antarēantarē
gōpanēpracchannarahikōnabasarē
bijērēaṅkurarūpētulēchajāgāyē;
mukulēprasphuṭabarṇēdiyēcharāñāyē;
phulērēkarēchaphalrasēsūmadhur
bijēpariṇatagarbha |

¹⁰In the 16th century, *Vaiśnāva-Sahajiyā*, being a form of tantric Vaiśnavism, began to influence the Bāuls. The Vaiśnāva Bāuls chose the Rādha-Kṛṣṇa myth for the expression of the union between man and God, which is supposed to be realized in a physical act. Thus, the Bāuls, accepted sensual love as a way of communion with God, where through the profane sexual intercourse, the divine act is fulfilled. The role of the human body in the Bāul esoteric practices is very symbolic. Semen used by the Bāuls during the rituals has direct reference to the concept of the seed being understood as the essence of the body. Woman in this divine sexual act is given a role of *Nirvāṇa*. See: Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal*, Cambridge University Press 2002

It is worth noticing that the seed symbolism refers directly to *The Upaniṣads*, where the seed is represented as the essence because of which the world exists. See: *Chāndogyopaniṣad* (VI.12.1-2)

This is not incidental as Rabindranath Tagore himself indicates the similarities between the Vēdic and the Bāul traditions. See: Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 186.

¹¹ A Bāul song quoted in: Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p.184

my Heart'¹² and even more intimately names him 'the 'Beloved of my Heart'¹³ He rejects the decorum to reach the proximity of God and experience deeply his presence within the innermost shrines of his being. The simplicity of the folk spirit of the Bāuls inspires him to abandon the ritual distant approach towards God and to reach him through the authenticity of an undecorated heart:

'From now I leave off petty
decorations. Lord of my heart, no
more shall there be for me waiting
and weeping in corners, no more shy
and soft of demeanour.'¹⁴

Rabindranath accepts simplicity as the most genuine and expressive medium of communication with the One who is the incarnation of the Highest Truth. The sophisticated tutored language must be rejected, as it builds the distant gap between God and man by conveying puzzled messages which cannot reach the heart and are left only for the mind. Hence, to reach the realm of the heart and experience the proximity of the Lord, man must abandon the artificiality of his intellect. Only then can he realize the light of 'Bōdhihṛdaya' the Heart of Enlightenment'¹⁵

My song has put off her adornments.
She has no pride of dress and
decoration. Ornaments would
mar our union; they would come
between thee and me; their jingling
would drown thy whispers.
My poet's vanity dies in

¹²Gitanjali no.52. Compare the Bengali original: the poem 'Dan' from *Khēyā*[in:] RabindranāthThākura, *Sañāyitā*, Calcutta 2011, p.393. Tagore uses the Bengali phrase: *HṛdayaRājā*, which literally means: 'the King of the Heart'.

¹³Gitanjali, no.59. Compare the Bengali original, RabindranāthThākura, *Gītāñjali*, Calcutta 2011, song no. 30. Tagore uses the Bengali phrase: 'HṛdāyāHaraṇa' which literally means: 'the Abductor/the Robber of the Heart'.

¹⁴Gitanjali, no. 52. Compare the Bengali original: the poem 'Dan' from *Khēyā*[in:] RabindranāthThākura, *Sañāyitā*, Calcutta 2011, p.393

Tōmārlāgiaṅgabhari
karbanāārasāj|
Nā'i-bātumiphireēlē
Ōgōhṛdayarāja|
Āmikarbanāārasāj|
Dhulāybasētōmārtarē
kādbanāāraēklāgharē,
tōmārlāgigharē-parē
mānabnāāralāj|

¹⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *Creative Unity*, London 1922, p. 75, 'One who understands the nature of the *Bōdhihṛdaya* sees everything with a loving heart; for love is the essence of *Bōdhihṛdaya*'

shame before thy sight. O master
poet, I have sat down at thy feet.
Only let me make my life simple
and straight, like a flute of reed for
thee to fill with music.”¹⁶

This ‘intense yearning of the heart for the divine which is in man’¹⁷ endows the body with the role of the temple and rejects the concept of physical inferiority, thus elevating it to the noble position of God’s own instrument, a spirited flute through which the Supreme Artist, the Poet and Singer, breathes his melodies and songs.

“My heart is like a flute he has played on”¹⁸, says a Bāul beggar. Rabindranath echoes this thought in *Gitanjali*:

He it is who puts his
enchantment upon these eyes and
joyfully plays on the chords of my
heart in varied cadence of pleasure
and pain¹⁹

Music resounds constantly within the human heart and it is the human *dharma*²⁰ to listen to it and follow it carefully. One who loses the direction and strays away, must

¹⁶*Gitanjali*, no.7. Compare the Bengali original, RabindranāthThākura,*Gitāñjali*, no. 125:

Āmār ē gānchēṛēchētār
sakalalañkār,
tōmārkāchērākhēniāra
sājērahāñkār. |
Alañkāryēmājhēparē
milanētēārāñkārē,
tōmārkathāḍhākeyētār
mukharjhañkār

Tōmārkāchēkhāṭēnāmōr
kabirgarabkarā,
mahākabi, tōmārpāyē
ditēcā’iyēdharā |

¹⁷ Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, , pp.110-111

¹⁸ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p.87

¹⁹*Gitanjali*, no.72. Compare the Bengali original in: RabindranāthThākura, *Gitimālyā*, ViśvaBhāratī1914, no 22:

Ākhitēāmārbulāy mantra,
bājāyḥḍaybiñāntantra,
kata ānandējāgāychanda
kata sukhēdukhēharaṣē

²⁰ The human *dharma*, for Rabindranath, means the realization of humanity in disinterestedlove. See: Rabindranath Tagore, *Sādhanā*, pp.40-53

face the silence of darkness with no light and no music. By following the *sahaj*(simple)²¹ way, by floating naturally on the stream of God’s music, man reaches the heart filled with the ocean of heavenly sound. The Bāulsays:

(...) delight in the ever-changing play of life which cannot be expressed in more words but (...) may be captured in song, through the ineffable medium of rhythm and tune.²²

Music bridges the illusory gap between man and his Creator by uniting the two with the most intimate and personal experience which arises from the emotional artistic expression of its universal quality. Thus, the unique language of cosmic nature comes to the fore to utter what appears to be unutterable, a language which is a life and light-giving force, enveloping and penetrating each and every God’s creature, a language vibrating on his chords in every form and shape of the Universe. This cosmic nature of music reveals its intangible property, reminiscent of the wind being a formless element whose dynamism brings constant change and is directly related with the Breath of the Eternal.

Gangaran, a Bāul singer, conscious of this truth, reminds that the cosmic breath²³, the Breath of the Lord, permeates also the human body:

‘Realize how finite and unbound are One,
As you breathe in and out.’²⁴

The metaphor evolves, resulting in the concept of a flute and music being the voice of God, as represented in a song of a Bāul:

‘Fulfilled is my life, being the sigh of his own breath within his flute.’²⁵

Rabindranath Tagore echoes this symbolism in *Gitanjali*:

²¹ Tagore, *The Religion of Man* p.182

²² *The Religion of Man*, p.181

²³ *Bṛhad-āraṇyakopaniṣad* (III.4.1.) teaches that: ‘He who breathes in with your breathing in is the self of yours which is in all things. He who breathes out with your breathing out is the self of yours which is in all things. He who breathes up with your breathing up is the self of yours which is in all things. He is your self which is in all things.’ See: *The Principal Upaniṣads*, ed. and trans. by S. Radhakrishnan, New Delhi 2011, p.219:

‘ yaḥprāṇenaprāṇīti, sa ta ātmāsarvāntaraḥ
yo’pānenāpānīti, sa ta ātmāsarvāntaraḥ,
yovyānenavyānīti, sa ta ātmāsarvāntaraḥ;
yaudānenaudānīti, sa ta ātmāsarvāntaraḥ,
eṣata ātmāsarvāntaraḥ’

anāhata chakra (the heart chakra) is perceived as the symbolic dwelling of God.

Note that breath understood as the cosmic sun energy is recognized in Hindu yoga as *prāna* and is directly related to *anāhata chakra*, the chakra of the heart, with *Vāyu*, the Lord of the Winds, as its deity.

²⁴ Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 190

²⁵ RabīndranāthThākūr, *Bānglākāvya-paricaya*, Calcutta B.S. 1345; A.D. 1939, p.66.

‘This little flute of a reed
thou hast carried over hills and
dales, and hast breathed through it
melodies eternally new.’²⁶

The wind as the Breath of the One dwelling in the human heart reappears constantly in Rabindranath’s poetic imagery and constitutes the essential Truth of the Formless All-pervading, Omnipresent Supreme Soul. The concept of God’s Breath, metaphorically embodied by the wind, finds its realization in the lines of Rabindranath’s song offering:

(...) I started up
from my dream and felt a sweet
trace of a strange fragrance in the
south wind.

That vague sweetness made
my heart ache with longing and it
seemed to me that it was the eager
breath of the summer seeking for
its completion.

I knew not then that it was
so near, that it was mine, and that
this perfect sweetness had blossomed
in the depth of my own heart.²⁷

“(...) God’s call is ever wafted in man’s heart in the world-music, drawing him towards the union,”²⁸ proclaims Rabindranath. This music has its cosmic-oceanic rhythm which is

²⁶*Gitanjali*, no.1. Compare the Bengali original in: RabindranāthThākura,*Gitimālyā*, ViśvaBhāratī1914, no 23:

Kata yēgiri kata yēnaditirē
bēṛālēbahichōṭō ē bāśitirē,
kata yētānbājālēphirēphirē
kāhārētāhākaba

²⁷*Gitanjali*, no.20. Compare the Bengali original in: RabindranāthThākura,*Gitimālyā*, ViśvaBhāratī1914, no 17:

Sbapanedēkhēcāmkeuṭhēcāy,
mandamadhurgandhaāsēhāy
kōthāy dakhinsamīraṇē

Ōgōsē’isugandhēphirāyēudāsiyā
āmāy dēsēdēsāntē
yēnasandhānētāruṭhēniśbāsiyā
bhubannabīnbasantē |
Kējānitadūrētōnē’isē,
āmārigōāmārisē’iyē,
ē mādhurīphuṭēchēhāy rē
āmārḥṛday-upabanē

²⁸Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p.85

reflected both outside, in the world through the waves of the seas and the flow of the rivers, and inside, in the human body, through the throbs of his heart and the flow of the blood in his veins, which mirrors the organic quality of the Universe, consisting in the Upanishadic equation *Ātman=Brahman*, microcosm=macrocosm; an equation in which ‘the inward way of contemplation takes us to the self’, thus leading to ‘the other side of union with the world.’ In this union ‘the knower penetrates the whole world and becomes the All’²⁹ and his heart becomes identical with the Heart of the Universe. The natural stream of life arising from the movements of the Heart as the central force and the reason for the dynamic quality of all things, introduces the concept of musical rhythm which brings harmony to the whole Universe. A Bāul woman sings:

I dance to the rhythm of your heart-throbs and heaving of the waves.³⁰

Rabindranath weaves this metaphor into his lyric:

And my pride is from the
life -throb of ages dancing in my
blood this moment.³¹

The cosmic-oceanic rhythm³² of the universe which echoes the throbs of the heartbeing the dwelling of the Highest Spirit, is powerfully reinforced by the rhythm of the footsteps of God ever coming from inside and from outside:

Have you heard his silent steps?
he comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every
age, every day and every night he
comes, comes, ever comes.

Many a song have I sung in
many a mood of mind, but all their
notes have always proclaimed, ‘He
comes, comes, ever comes.’

In the fragrant days of sunny
April through the forest path he
comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July

²⁹ See: *Muṇḍakopaniṣad (II.I.9.)* [in:] *The Principal Upaniṣads*, ed. and trans. by S. Radhakrishnan, New Delhi 2011, p.682: ataś ca sarvāośadhayorasaś ca yenaiṣabhūtaistiṣṭhatehyantar-ātmā.

³⁰ Quoted in: Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p.126

³¹ *Gitanjali*, no. 69. Compare the Bengali poem *Prāṇa* from *Naibēdya* [in:] RabindranāthThākura, *Sañāyitā*, Calcutta 2011, p.348

Sē’iyugayugāntērbirāṭṣpandan
āmārnārītēājikarichēnartan

³² The concept of ‘the comic ocean’ appears both in Hinduism, in *The Upaniṣads*, and in Christianity, in the Biblical mythology. It involves the notion of ‘cosmogony.’

nights on the thundering chariot of
clouds he comes, comes, ever
comes

In sorrow after sorrow it is his
steps that press upon my heart, and
it is the golden touch of his feet
that makes my joy to shine.³³

The image of God's feet and the sound of their steps evoke the dynamic quality of movement that brings change, which is the essence of the Universe. Everything is in motion, as only in motion and through motion can life grow and develop.³⁴ The life journey must find its culmination in its destiny which is hidden in the innermost depths of the heart:

The traveller has to knock
at every alien door to come to his
own, and one has to wander through
all the outer worlds to reach
the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and
wide before I shut them and said
'Here art thou!'³⁵

³³*Gitanjali*, 45. Compare the Bengali original in: RabindranāthThākura, *Gitanjali*, Calcutta 2011, p.74, no 62:

Tōrāśunīsūnikīśunīsītārpāyērdhbani,
ō'iyēāsē, āsē, āsē|
Yugēyugēpalēpalēdīnārājānī
sēyēāsē, āsē, āsē|
Gēyēchīgānyakhanyata
āpan-manēkhyāpārmātō
sakalsurēbējēchētār
āgamānī-
sēyēāsē, āsē, āsē

Kata kālērphāgun-dinēbanērpathē
sēyēāsē, āsē, āsē|
Kata śrābaṇandhakārēmēghērarathē
sēyēāsē, āsē, āsē|
Dukhēraparēparamdukhē,
tāricaraṇbājēbukē,
sukhēkakhanbuliyēsēdēy
paraśamaṇi|
sēyēāsē, āsē, āsē

³⁴ The concept of 'the eternal motion' and continuous change is derived directly from *The Upaniṣads*, See: *Īśopaniṣad* (I.1)

³⁵*Gitanjali*, no. 12. Compare the Benagli version: RabindranāthThākura, *Gitimālyā*, Calcutta 1914, no 14:

Hence, the concept of the river metaphorically representing life and conveying the message of its own destiny realized in the act of merging with the sea which symbolically signifies the very God. The streams of the human body limited and bounded by its shape are destined to unite with the boundless unlimited sea-waters of the cosmic body of the Creator, which proves that man is *isviśvārūpā*, as his body 'includes the whole world within itself.'³⁶ Hence, the poet announces victoriously:

I dive down into the depth of the
ocean of forms, hoping to gain the
perfect pearl of the formless.³⁷

and finally sings:

Let all my songs gather
together their diverse strains into
a single current and flow to a sea of
silence in one salutation to thee.³⁸

Through *Bhakti Yoga* the Cycle of Truth is completed, as God 'in giving his love finds its completeness in man's will returning that love.'³⁹ *ManērMānus*, the Man of the Heart, takes the shape of *JīvanDēbatā*, the Lord of Life. The poet abandons the illusion of 'the market wealth,' thus leaving all the obstacles to the union behind and fulfils

Parērbārēphirē, śēṣē
āsēpathikāpandēsē,
bāhir-bhubanghurēmēlē
antarērthākur

"Ē'iyētumi" ē'ikathāṭi
balabaāmiba'lē
kata dikē'icōkhaphērālēm
kata pathē'ica'lē|

³⁶ Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p.93

³⁷ *Gitanjali* no. 100. Compare the Bengali original in: RabindranāthThākur, *Gitanjali*, Calcutta 2011, p.57, no 47:

Rūpasāgarēḍubadiyēchi
arūparatanāśākari;

³⁸ *Gitanjali*, no. 103. Compare the Bengali original in: *Gitanjali*, Calcutta 2011, p.163, no. 148:

Nānāsūrērākuldhārā
miliyēdiyēāt mahārā
ēkṭinamaskārē, prabhu,
ēkṭinamaskārē
samastagānsamāptahōk
nīrabpārābārē

³⁹ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p.80

his *dharma karma*,⁴⁰ expressed in disinterested love as the highest expression of humanity and realized in communion with God.

The folk mysticism of Rabindranath Tagore reveals the roots and the sources of his imaginative personal attitude towards the Creator. God inhabiting his heart is not only the Master Poet who created the whole Universe with the stream of his love but also his Friend and the Companion of his *Jīvanātrā*.⁴¹ Devoted love for God manifested in adoration of the world perceived as his creation and the extension of his divine body, becomes the essence of the artistic self-expression of Rabindranath who employs the folk imagery of fields, forests and rivers to paint and draw the pantheistic omnipresence of the Highest Spirit. In worship for the Universe, the poet expresses his love for God incarnated in his own creation, thus uniting with the All in his devotion. Inevitably the journey into the world must come full circle to direct its footsteps towards the source of life, which is the heart.

The Bāul concept of the heart as the dwelling of the Highest Spirit and the core of love undeniably echoes *Upaniṣad*,⁴² thus creating the link between the Vēdic tradition and the aboriginal culture, which, in the case of Rabindranath Tagore is the fusion of his philosophical, mystic and artistic convictions, moods and attitudes. Hence, his *JīvanDēbatā* naturally arises as the poetic transformation of *ManērMānus*.

The worship of God realized in the Bāul songs, adopted by Rabindranath in his *Gītāñjali*, *Gitimālyā* and *Gītāli*, depicts the divine nature of his vocal poetry. Music being the highest medium of artistic expression becomes the most universal language in uttering the Highest Truth and addressing the Highest Being. As the poet proves in his *Sādhanā*, music is the purest form of art, the least touched by artificiality. It is the language of the Ideal Beauty which comes to us from the Heart of the Universe and immediately reaches the innermost shrine of the human heart.⁴³ Therefore, it was employed as the perfect medium of expression by the Bāuls to address *ManērMānus* and by Rabindranath Tagore in his lyrical offerings to reach *JīvanDēvatā*.

The musical folk mysticism determining the Bāul tradition, reflects the primeval beauty of the aboriginal Bengali spirit of the simplest people whose charm became a powerful creative force of the poetic genius of Rabindranath Tagore, one of the greatest poet-singers of India. Rooted in the most authentic indigenous soil, surviving the time, it proves to be an exceptionally inspirational and still inexhaustible source of musical lyricism. Its untutored simplicity meets the boundless genius of Rabindranath in the realm

⁴⁰Tagore believes that *dharma karma*, the works/deeds of *dharma* are realized through disinterested activities. See: Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p.96.

⁴¹*Jīvanātrā*, in the Bengali language the phrase meaning: 'life journey'

⁴²*Bṛhad-āraṇyakopaniṣad* (V.3.1) teaches: "This is Prajā-pati (the same as) this heart. It is Brahman. It is all. It has three syllables, hṛ, da, yam." See: *The Principal Upaniṣads*, ed. and trans. by S. Radhakrishnan, New Delhi 2011, p.291: 'eṣaprajā-patiryadhṛdayam, etad brahma, etatsarvam. Tat etat try-akṣaram; hṛ-da-yam iti.'

⁴³Tagore, *Sādhanā*, p.79-80

of the vocal tradition of Bengal to combine the real with mystic thus creating the perfect universal whole in the timeless spirit of art.

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