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### The Concept of *Jīban-Devatā* in *Gītabitān*: A Philosophical Quest

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#### Abstract

The idea of *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life) that is reflected in the works of Rabindranath Tagore, especially in his poetic anthology *Gītabitān*, offers deeper philosophical understanding of the connectedness of existence, divinity, and humanity. The development of this motif by Tagore gives a subtle reason to reevaluate the way of life itself is reflected as a divine presence. This paper starts by questioning the meaning of *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life) as introduced in *Gītabitān*. Through preempting this theme, we attempt to shedding light on how Tagore defines a dialogic experience between the individual and the transcendent. By means of a scrupulous close reading of some of the songs of the collection of *Gītabitān* and the analysis of the overall philosophical context in which Tagore was working, the proposed inquiry is expected to clarify how the author combines metaphysical, existential, and spiritual realms in his poetic embodiment. This analytical paradigm allows us to follow the lines of his thinking as they echo in his writings. Conclusively, this paper attempts to summarize the concept of manifesting the divine in the self as an instrument of achieving divine agency, therefore, controlling our interaction with the concept of *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life).

**Keywords:** Self-realization, Moral compass, social justice, Inner man, Human spirit, Divine power

#### Introduction:

Rabindranath Tagore (1861 -1941) was a great literary and philosophical figure of Bengali origin who is generally known to have contributed a lot in music, poetry and art (Dutta and Robinson, 2003). His anthology, *Gītabitān* (The Garden of Songs), is considered a collection of songs and is a good reflection of his philosophical interest in the nature of these issues of life, divinity, and human condition. *Gītabitān* carries the notion of *Jīban-Devatā*, which means “the Lord of My life”, thus capturing the unique vision of Tagore of divinity as an immanent presence in the everyday experience of life. The entirety of the anthology is based on this conceptual framework. This is a collection of 2,232 theme-based songs in Bengali, an immense amount that has earned it the name the ‘garden of songs’. The size of it gives a panoramic perspective of the poetic landscape of Tagore. The volume is divided into seven major parts including: *pūjā* (worship), *prem* (love), *prakṛti* (seasons), *swadeśa* (patriotism), *ānusthānik* (occasion-specific), *bicitra* (miscellaneous), and *nṛtya-nātya* (dance dramas and

lyrical plays) (Chakravarty, 1966; Tagore and Kabir, 2005; Tagore, 2018). All the segments are carefully edited to highlight the tenet of *Jīban-Devatā* and the concomitant implications. Each single part is full of the songs, which preannounce *Jīban-Devatā* and welcome the listeners into the process of self-awareness through self-realization. It is through these lyrical manifestations that the idea is made available and close to the individual. Tagore states that every individual has own *Jīban-Devatā*, the inner spirit, no one can properly realize him. This self-god is the pole around which self-actualization is partial, and has an immense meaning to the inner contentment of the person in question. Self-realization articulated by Tagore creates an overwhelming feeling of personal satisfaction and leads people to the execution of their tasks in a proper way, which preconditions the life full of happiness without burdens. Tagore offers a highly personal and introspective paradigm of divine realization that cuts across traditional metaphysical paradigms in interpreting the title, *Jīban-Devatā* (the Lord of My Life). This paper aims at exploring the meaning of the concept of existence of a person in the form of the *Jīban-Devatā* as represented in the *Gītabitān*, and thus exploring its philosophical aspect and its suitability in modern discussions of existentialism and metaphysics. Through a thorough analysis of the songs that make up the whole of *Gītabitān*, this paper aims to explain how the Life Deity as envisioned by Tagore explains and guides human experience and further action.

### ***Jīban-Debatā* (The Lord of My Life) in *Gītabitān*:**

In *Gītabitān* corpus, many compositions share a very forceful interest in the notion of *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of my life). These collections of songs perfectly interwoven themes that reveal the idea of divinity as something that pervades in our ordinary life as conceived by Rabindranath Tagore. For instance:

#### **1. Song 121, *Prem-Parjaay*:**

**In Bengali:**

*“tomarei koriyacchi jibaner dhrubatara,  
E samudre aar kobhu habo nako pathohaara.  
Jetha aami jaai naako tumi prokashito thaako,  
Aakul nayonjale dhaalo go kiranodhara.  
Tabo mukho sada mone jaagitechhe sangopane,  
tilek antar hole na heri kulokinara.  
Kokhono bipathe jodi bhromite chaahe e hridi  
Amoni o mukho heri sharome se hoy saara.”*

**In English:**

*“I have made you my life’s cynosure  
Ne’er again shall I be lost in this ocean.  
Where ever I roam may your presence be left,  
Let boundless tears pour like moonbeams.  
Glimpses of your face recur in my consciousness  
A moment’s absence sets me adrift upon this shoreless ocean  
Should I go astray impelled by this wandering heart  
A glimpse of that face renders it shamefully done.” (Song tomarei koriyachhi  
jiboner | English translation, no date)*

The *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life) of this composition in particular is an expression of philosophical axis which can work like a pole-star, and thus provide guidance and definition

in the human life. Similarly to the navigator who depends on the pole-star as a fixed point of reference so also the fear of his *Jīban-Devatā* will ensure that he is guided in making wise decisions and prevents him from going off track. Tagore points out the immense importance of the identification one's *Jīban-Devatā*, and believes that this is a moral guide that directs the behavior and helps solve dilemmas. The song, therefore, praise the virtue of following his or her interior conscience without being subject to outside forces.

**1. Song 36, Prem-Parjaay:**

**In Bengali:**

*“Tumi sondharo meghomaala, tumi aamar saadhero sadhona,  
Mamo shunyo gagona bihari.  
Aami aapon moner madhuri mishaye tomare korechhi rachona –  
Tumi aamari, tumi aamari,  
Mamo asimogagonobihari.  
Mamo hridayorage tabo charono diyechhi raangiye,  
Oyi sondhyaswaponobihari.  
Tabo adhoru enkechhi sudhabishe mishe mamo sukhodukho bhaangiya –  
Tumi aamari, tumi aamari,  
Mamo bijanojibanobihari.  
Mamo moher swaponu-anjano tabo nayone diyechhi paraye,  
Oyi mugdhonayonobihari.  
Mamo sangito tabo ange ange diyechhi jaraye jaraye –  
Tumi aamari, tumi aamari,  
Mamo jibanomaronobihari.”*

**In English:**

*“You are the cloud of the evening; you are my arduous devotion,  
O wanderer of my empty sky!  
With my own sweet imagination, I have created you–  
You are mine, you are mine only,  
O the wanderer of my infinite sky!  
With the melody of my bleeding heart, I have dyed your feet scarlet–  
O the wanderer of my twiling dream!  
Shattering my joys and pain I have painted your lips with nectar and poison–  
You are mine, you are mine only,  
O the wanderer of my lonely existence!  
My infatuated dream's kohl I have put in your eyes,  
O wanderer of my charmed eyes!  
I have entwined your body with my music–  
You are mine, you are mine only,  
O wanderer of my life and death!” (Song tumi sandhyar meghomala 1 | English translation, no date)*

Throughout this song, the poet is attempting to match the *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life) with the beloved thus creating a sense of the poignant longing and deep affection. The bright descriptions of clouds and evening sky bring to mind the abstract beauty and temporal nature. By building the image of the beloved in the form of the *Jīban-Devatā*, the speaker idealizes a beloved being and imagines it as a full-fledged source of satisfaction, both in this world and in the afterlife. The song goes into the depth of the inner world of human soul

permeating the composition with a recognizable romantic and ethereal tenor, a thematic rhythm that carries on echoing in the nocturnal thoughts of Tagore.

## 2. Song 546, *Puja-Parjaay*:

### In Bengali:

“Aami kaan pete roi o aamara apon hridayo gahono dwaare baare baare  
Kon gopan baasir gopan katha shunibare – bare bare.  
Bhromor setha hoy bibagi nibhrito nil paddo laagi re,  
Kon raater paakhi gay ekaaki songibihin andhokare baare baare.  
Ke se mor kei baa jaane, kichhi taar dekhi aabha.  
Kichhu paai onumaane, kichhu taar bujhi naa baa.  
Maajhe maajhe taar baarta aamar bhaasay pay ki kotha re,  
O se aamay jaani paathay baani gaaner tane lukiye tare baare baare.”

### In English:

“I press my ears deep into my own heart  
To listen to the concealed sob and laughter of them who reside secretly again  
and again.  
Wasps lose hope wandering in vain for the secret blue lotus,  
Lonesome nocturnal birds sing along losing a companion in the dark again  
and again.  
I know not who that is, can not follow him either,  
Can only see a glimpse of him, intuition tells me something.  
His message sometimes are converted to speech with my words,  
O, I know, he sends me his messages secretly through expressions of song.”  
(*Song ami kan pete roi* | *English translation*, no date)

The song looks at the deepest desire of a man to reveal the secrets of life, which he seeks to be told in the secrets of a secret flute, symbolized as *Jiban-Devatā* or The Lord of My Life. It dwells upon the beauty and spiritual meaning of blue lotus flower, and envisions a bee carrying its soul and a strange bird singing during the nocturnal hours. The lyrics are so melancholic because the man struggles with the brief glances of the unknown, being unable to fully appreciate their meaning. Finally, the song also dwells upon human want to understand the mysteries of the world and realizes that our senses are insufficient to decipher the mysteries. It embodies the mysterious and transcendent beauty of the world through elements like metaphors of the secret flute, the mysterious bird.

### Meaning and Significance of *Jiban-Debatā* (The Lord of My Life):

The *Gītabitān*, is a masterpiece of Bengali literature, a landmark of poetic genius on the part of Rabindranath Tagore (Bhattacharya, 2017). The language manipulation of Tagore through a mixture of colloquial and classical forms with a perfect blend, provides a very individual and expressive voice. The themes in the *Gītabitān* are multiple, including love and nature, but also social commentary and philosophical exploration; its tones are heard not just in Indian culture but in all cultures. Touching upon universal issues like love, loss, faith, and human search of meaning (Tagore, 2007), the poems of Tagore are impressing the readers all over the world by their great imaginations and their deep ideas. His international fame was boosted by the fact that he was the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, in large part by the popularity of the “*Songs Offering*” which is a translated form of *Gītabitān*. This led to the Bengali literature being brought to world stage and

established Tagore as a literary giant. Today the *Gītabitān* is a permanent part of Bengali and world literature, learned in school, read during cultural events and translated into many millions of languages. The poetry of Tagore continues to become a point of discussion, spring of imagination and comfort and beauty to the readers across the globe (Chaudhuri, 2020). Further parts of this paper examine the relevance of the *Gītabitān* to areas like self-realization, unity with nature, artistry and a campaign in favor of social justice.

### **The *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life): As Self-Realization:**

By his catalogue of songs Rabindranath Tagore realised the concept of *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life), even though the Boul's songs. Boul's are easily known as *dehavādi*, and they claim that God exists within the heart of every human and thus allows a way to God through love and sacrifice. Tagore explores his inner being in his "The Religion of Man" (1931) where he uses the following lines to describe it: "*amar mon, jekhon jagli na re, / o tar moner manus elo dvare*" (Rabindranath Tagore - Songs - *pooja - amar man jakhan jagli na re*, no date) (Song 550, 1914). The close relationship between God and inner self is hence depicted in this work. This interior of God we find in both fantasy and reality in imagination and in actual appearances of heart, mind and action. This internal man is what is known as Tagore *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life).

Letting ego go - an overindulgence in self-absorption and worldly fears is also necessary. When we seek material wealth, we do not know how to appreciate simple pleasures. The *Jīban-Devatā* is escapist in the case that our minds are burdened with unremitting thoughts. This does not mean abandoning duties rather means the engagement in activities of the duties without stress. True happiness is something external. Through giving up on ego and concerns, space is provided within which there is awakening of the divine spark, the *Jīban-Devatā*. This flame is the symbol of our utmost potential love, creativity, and oneness to something bigger (Sen, 2015). It is not a one-time event but a continuous process that is characterized by highs and lows.

### **The *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life): As Embracing Nature:**

The *Gītabitān* by Tagore has a vivid picture of how close the connection between the *Jīban-Devatā* or the Lord of My Life and the natural world. Most of his songs are beyond mere descriptions of flora and fauna, and they turn into containers full of godly essence. According to Tagore, when we immerse ourselves into nature, we are also opening ourselves to be affected by the *Jīban-Devatā* the essence of life that permeates everything in creation (Khan and Rashid, 2023).

Tagore uses descriptive images to depict nature as a medium of the voice of the *Jīban-Devatā*. The 'whispering flowers' and the 'murmuring trees' are not merely beautiful decorations of the landscape that are animated but are the representatives of the divine symphony. Their mumbling may be taken as words of the *Jīban-Devatā*, and warnings to people to listen to a higher reality. This is in keeping with the idea of the *Jīban-Devatā* as the vitality life which fills the existence. There are as many positive movements of nature as there are positive movements of our bodies. When we listen carefully to the voice of nature, we hear the song of the *Jīban-Devatā* - an incessant hum of living which links us to every other living being.

Tagore accentuates the ability of the *Jīban-Devatā* to bring the mundane to the divine. Even the most ordinary things are shot through with divinity by nature. A plain flower that is no

longer a moment of beauty is a tribute to the creative ability of the *Jīban-Devatā*. The falling leaves, the murmur of a stream, all these common things become ample chances to get in contact with divine nature. This school of thought promotes an escape out of a strictly materialistic world-view. When we value the natural beauty and marvels in nature, we are exposed to another level of life. *Jīban-Devatā*, becomes an intermediary and allows us to perceive the sacred not only in big shows but in the seemingly banal.

Tagore welcomes the view of nature as an embodiment of the *Jīban-Devatā*. It is a call to live in unity with nature and understand that we are all one with each other. When we make ourselves friends with nature, we are making ourselves friends with *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life) and there we find that there is a feeling of peace and belonging with the great tapestry of the creation.

### **The *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life): As an Artistic Expression:**

The *Jīban-Devatā* (the Lord of my Life), the conception of Rabindranath Tagore, is beyond self-knowledge, to the sources of artistic inspiration. In his work, the speaker begs to receive 'immortal wine', the metaphorical representation of the creative spark that *Jīban-Devatā* has. This divine drive allows artists to express the divine in music, poetry, and visual art and, therefore, to transmit transcendent truth to their listeners, viewers, and readers (Nisa & Mahbub-ul-Alam, 2024). Being the life-force that makes the psyche active, *Jīban-Devatā* provokes the metamorphosis of the feelings and experience into communicable manifestation that provides viewers with the vision of the divine (Reba, 2010).

Tagore continues to demonstrate the healing power of the breath of the *Jīban-Devatā* which restores a fading soul. Such a healing effect highlights the strength of the artistic inspiration to revitalize the inner life of the creator and eliminate artistic immobility. The immortal wine then becomes a stimulus of a wide range of artistic output. Tagore himself was the representation of such paradigm as he created poetry and musical scores and performed visual paintings which reflected the essence of *Jīban-Devatā*. His poetry questions love, loss, and meaning dimensions of existence where the presence of the divine is felt. More specifically music also acts as a medium of the expression of the *Jīban-Devatā* because melodic systems and rhythmic patterns induced emotional conditions that can be used to carry listeners beyond the realm of ordinary experience. As a result, music appears as an effective art of expressing the divine and creating a shared resonance.

Artists are not merely producers to Tagore, but channels through which the creative energy of *Jīban-Devatā* passes. Just like the instruments that transform divine nature into the understandable ones, artists play a higher role by ensuring that the delicate existence of the divine is made available to man. They have worked hard to develop their skill and art so much, that they become a medium through which the *Jīban-Devatā* can talk. Although the technique is essential, the true strength of the artistic expression is in the loyalty to the own point of view, thus enabling the artist to express his/her own individual worldview centered around the divine. This authenticity creates such a strong sense of connectivity between both the creator and the audience. Hence, giving individuals the ability to experience the presence of *Jīban-Devatā* in mutual situations. Therefore, the explanation of the *Jīban-Devatā* given by Tagore as the source of artistic inspiration has highlighted the miracle of the immortal wine as a divine blessing that has allowed to express the divine through the various artistic forms.

## **The *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life): For Social Justice:**

Tagore in his *Jīban-Devatā*, ideology in the context of social justice, goes beyond individual self-realization to create equity in the whole world. With the help of the principle of a perfect world where human beings are brave and free, Tagore assumes that this perfect world can be achieved due to the existence of the universal spark of *Jīban-Devatā* (Rathi, 2019). Having realized this divine spark in others and in oneself, brings about an internal respect to human dignity, regardless of race, religion or social status. This respect is the pillar to social justice. In addition, the message Tagore gives that where the mind fears not are an imperative to overcome fear; fear of poverty, fear of violence, and fear of discrimination altogether, in order to realize justice in totality. The life-affirming force *Jīban-Devatā* drives an emancipation out of fear and an experience fulfilling life. Therefore, the transformational possibilities of the vision of Tagore provoke the action in the direction of equity, equality of rights, and just distribution of needs, which will help to create a more harmonious world.

The message that Tagore conveys is one of hopefulness; the *Jīban-Devatā* or the lord of my life that we can easily realize inside and that is a bright light for leading us to a fair world. Through this spark, people are welcomed to join together and create a just and a harmonious world (Hill, 2015). To conclude, the *Jīban-Devatā* is not only an internal revelation but a driving force of societal improvement.

### **Conclusion:**

To sum up, the explanation of *Jīban-Devatā* provided by Tagore in his work *Gītabitān* gives a deep philosophical discussion of the existence-divinity interdependence. Tagore criticizes the traditional religious patterns by placing the divine as a close form of influence that permeates both nature and human relationships, and offers a holistic picture of the spiritual nature. The *Jīban-Devatā* that calls upon the followers to discover the divinity in the mundane and to exist in harmony with the divine nature that pervades every existence.

The study of the *Jīban-Devatā* has come out of the scope of literary examination; it has brought sharp cutting points of the existentialism, moral philosophy and spiritual debate of today. It is especially relevant in dealing with burning issues in the world like climate change. The current ecological disaster is an expression of a human alienation to nature; the *Jīban-Devatā*, or divine life-force of all creation, is a reminder of our inherent unity with the Earth and forces us to be good stewardship. On the same note, another social problem that is systemic and, in most cases, occurs due to the preference of materialism over human potential is unemployment. The *Jīban-Devatā* focuses on the innate worth and creativity in every person and thus promotes the establishment of workplaces that appreciate human possibilities in complementary relation to economic agenda. In the end, the *Jīban-Devatā* (The Lord of My Life) calls on abandoning self-interest in favor of acknowledging the interdependence of all the creatures, a redefinition in thinking that can help the human race navigate the modernities and create more peaceful future.

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