

Alo amar, alo ogo

The poem 'Light, oh where is the light?' from Tagore's Gitanjali no. 27, is actually a song that can be found in "Swarabitan", belonging to 'Bichitro Parjay', written in 1911: set in the Taal 'Dadra', Raag 'Iman'. As usual in Tagore, love and worship mingle inextricably. He speaks to God in amorous terms; as the poet's Heart, that is his soul, yearns to mingle with the Divine. The poet is speaking to his own Heart and he says that God is ever wakeful. God is calling him to come to a meeting place which is filled with love: even though the poet is immersed in darkness and misery. These are the obstacles on the path of the poet: which he has to overcome in order to reach the Divine.

When the poet says, 'Light, oh where is the light?' he indicates that he is in total darkness. He says that he wants the light which is 'the burning fire of desire!' to be present in his life. The above phrase suggests the intensity of his desire. In the darkness he finds a lamp ('There is the lamp'): but it is only a flicker. Only a flicker of light will not be sufficient, however, only when the light becomes a bright flame, we can see around us. One point should be noted here: which is 'light' is the central image of the poem/song, symbolising the existence of the Divine power.

The poet says in this darkness, it thunders and the wind blows, screaming violently. The night is dark, 'black as a black stone.' But suddenly, in the darkness, there is a "moment's flash" which shows the poet the path along which he can go and get united with his beloved God.

The poet says that in the darkness surrounding him, what is the use of a flicker? He tells his heart that death is 'better by far' for it than to live in this state of darkness. The darkness is caused by an overcast sky and the unceasing rain. All these elemental details are symbols of the poet's miserable earthly existence. He says that in this darkness, where he cannot see around him and misery is knocking at his door (that is, when he is miserable) God is calling out to the poet to come to him: so that they can be united in love. God, the poet's beloved, is waiting for him to come to him and the poet also wants to go and be united with God. But there is total darkness surrounding him, though he has a lamp in his hand. But the light is only a flicker, not a flame: which only can irradiate his surrounding; and show him the path to God. In this situation, the misery (overcast sky, ceaseless rain) brings the poet the message that God is waiting for him to be united with his devotee-lover in a "love-tryst". In short, the whole poem is about the yearning of a believer to be united with his beloved God.

In this song, the poet imagines himself to be a lover: and God is his beloved. This is the typical amorous approach of Tagore to divinity: the human soul yearns to be united with the Divine, expressed in terms of love. He expresses his desire to overcome all earthly obstacles and be united with God.

Finally, the poet says that he does not want the night to pass in the enveloping darkness. He wants the lamp of the light of love to be kindled in him: so that the poet's soul can be submerged in God.