

## The Flute: A Pensive Music of the Heart

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**Abstract:** *The poem has been translated into English by William Radice in the prescribed text book of 'ISC Poetry' (Indian School Certificate Examination), edited by W. R. Gardner bearing the title 'Flute Music', from the Original Composition of Rabindranath Tagore's 'BANSHI': Literally 'THE FLUTE', written on 25<sup>th</sup> Asharh 1339 (9<sup>th</sup> July 1932). The poem was first published in the volume 'Parishesh', and thereafter transferred to the volume 'Punashcha'. I, always believe that a 'title' is like a signboard. From the signboard of a concern, a person comes to know what the concern deals in. Likewise, from a title of a work of art, prima facie the reader can have a perfect glimpse of the work. The title of our poem the 'Flute Music' has come from the cornet music of Kanta Babu which at times inundates every nook and corner of the so called alley named after Kinu, the milkman. The caption used by the poet here does not monotonously bring out the details of the flute music but highlights the dipsomaniac impact. The power of music has with the help of which a human being, irrespective of his financial status can easily transcend to a newer world, far above his personal miseries and hardships and the limits set by society around him. This idea becomes more and more clear in the concluding part of the poem-*

*"The music is true  
Where, in the everlasting twilight – hour of my wedding,  
The Dhalesvari river flows,  
Its banks deeply shaded by tamal-trees,  
And she who waits in the courtyard  
Is dressed in a Dacca sari, vermilion on her forehead".*

*-Translated by William Radice*

**Key words :** *clairvoyance, dilapidated, frugality, redeeming, squalid, trance.*

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### I. Introduction

So many poets have trod the path that leads towards the temple of poetry. Some of them have been gratified by a silver lining while some of them have become hopeless as they discover it to be 'slap on the road', 'windows barred', 'decaying walls', 'crumbling to dust in places'. But there are few poets in whom the fusion of thought and form, the combination of rare insight and a rarer power of the faithful depiction of what the poet perceives has effectively been made as we find in Tagore's poem the 'BANSHI', (Literally 'The Flute').

### II. Discussion

The poem clearly depicts the hopes and aspirations, the dreams and apprehensions of an unsuccessful man, Hari Pada, a junior clerk in a trading office. He lives in a dilapidated tumble down house in an abject condition. He draws a very meagre pay as a result of which he lives as a rent payer in a ground floor room of the decaying house which is carelessly placed on the surface of the road in KINU, the milkman's alley. The small room 'stained with damp' with a barred window and walls discoloured by wet patches gives the look of a prison cell. He is rather forced to rent one room of an almost tumble down house which, along with its precincts, appears to be filthy, malodorous and hellish. His plight seems to be unending and is beggars all description. In his damp room during the monsoon days the clerk feels himself like an entrapped animal which is dazed and listless. His humble confession 'Day and night I feel strapped bodily / on to a half-dead world', aptly upholds his spiritual ennui. However, the room is shared by another creature that does neither go hungry nor pay the rent and it is a lizard.

Tagore leaves no stone unturned to give a vivid description of urban life in a destitute environment. The pecuniary anaemia of Hari Pada compels him to give tuition to the son of Mr. Datta's in exchange of which

he manages two square meals there. The scanty amount that he earns (twenty five rupees a month) is not sufficient to make his both ends meet. The circumspect and calculative Hari Pada exerts himself out to save every penny of his earning. In order to save the cost of evening light he spends his evening at Sealdah station looking at the busy and boisterous people and their activities at the railway station. It is for the sake of frugality only, that he is forced to digest this raucous situation till half past ten. Then slowly and silently he comes back to his dark solitary confinement.

This loneliness or solitude in which Hari Pada is drowned, as if becomes everlasting. The deplorable, unhygienic environment worsens with the advent of the monsoon. The alley presents the most nauseating site with discarded mango skins and stones, jackfruit pulp, fish gills, dead kittens and many other rubbish things that lie in rotting heaps emitting stinking smell. Sometimes, due to heavy downpour the lane is choked and the room of Hari Pada becomes dark and dingy. Hari Pada undergoes untold suffering in his small dark room where he finds himself as an animal trapped in a cage.

The dull, drab, vapid, insipid and squalid days of Hari Pada sometimes find a new horizon where the psyche of the junior clerk satiates itself by usurping an all together different height and free from all sorts of his known irritating drudgery. There is a beacon of light, a redeeming element present in the life of the pent protagonist, when the squalor alley provides him a redeeming feature, at the tune when Kanta babu, his neighbour and a man of fine tastes plays on his flute 'Sindhu-Baroya raag' some times in the middle of the night or in the early morning twilight or in the afternoon when 'sun and shadows glitter'. The music comes floating on the stinking breeze of the locality, but it has invariably a soothing and transforming effect on the jaded nerves and troubled heart of Haripada. He gets bemused. All of a sudden he is laid into a world of complete oblivion where he forgets his own identity, his miserable condition and every mundane reality. The music has an intoxicating magical effect on him too. He loses himself completely at that hour, forgets about his poverty and frugality and experiences a divine bliss. He becomes unconscious of his conscious level, feels as if he is no longer a poor clerk but a mighty king like Akbar. His torn and worn out umbrella is metamorphosed into a royal canopy. In a state of trance, in a solely souly mood, his psyche usurps a higher dreamy plane where he is empowered with a clairvoyance. This helps him to have the experience of the fulfilment of his long cherished unfulfilled desires or visualise his bride whom he could not marry. He can still see her in her wedding 'Dacca sari' and her forehead marked with vermilion eagerly waiting for him under the shade of tamal trees at the banks of Dhalesvari river.

### III. Conclusion

The blight of financial crisis that sets a plague in the life style of Hari Pada has least impact in his psychological domain where his long cherished dreams come back once and again. Thus, the poem points out the ennobling effect of flute music in particular and the impact of music on human mind in general. The cornet music is largely effective in the mind of Hari Pada that makes him forget his abject poverty and utter failure of life. It is the music of the flute that makes him at par with Akbar the king. It is once again the sweet, sad, sonorous, symphony of the flute that induces a reverie in his distressed life and plays a pivotal role in bringing an upside down change in his psychic world.

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