



# Expressions of Love in the Lyrics of Rabindranath Tagore

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**Abstract:** Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore is widely appreciated and loved for his numerous art, literature, and music works. This paper analyzes some selected songs (live lyrics) of Tagore, imagining them as a single unit with various components in between. However, these Tagore songs are independent and not interconnected but somehow interrelated. These songs reflect love, sacrifice, innocence, maturity, fantasy, and vulnerability. They all portray different but similar stories (themes) with an ending that feels complete but sometimes does not. Considering some selected Tagore songs in the love multiverse, this paper explores and examines the layers of love and emotions through critical interpretation and content analysis of a selection from the *Gītābitāna*, a collection of Tagore songs containing multiple themes.

**Keywords:** Love Expressions, Lyrics, Rabindranath Tagore.

## I. Introduction

Tagore's lovesongs usually have a speaker. The themes are portrayed from the speaker's subjective point of view, which can be perceived from the romantic feelings of anyone, regardless of gender. Considering the speaker as the protagonist of the song's story, the speaker expresses love for someone, which can be a person of romantic interest, any unknown entity of an attractive mystery, or a divine phenomenon from heaven, making the speaker vulnerable with devotion. There are longing and pain of separation, dilemma and anxiety of proximity and distance, and relief of togetherness and promise of longevity dedicated to the particular person or entity the speaker addresses. Through the songs, the speaker describes the feelings for someone as if telling a story or sometimes sharing the emotions and experiences with a friend, just like a

conversation. The audience is free to play the role of the listener of the story, the friend of the speaker, the love interest of the dedication, or simply the listener identifying with the emotions conveyed through the songs.

## II. Methodology

This paper follows the method of close-reading the lyrics of Tagore's lovesongs, with the intention to carve out the story of the songs from the lyrics of love and passion.

## III. Devotion and Vulnerability, Blissful Sacrifice

**3.1 *Majhe Majhe Tobo Dekha Pai:*** This lyric can be perceived as a song of devotion towards a divine presence and the determination of the devotee to maintain a strong dedication. The theme can simultaneously express regretting the distance from a loved one, i.e., God, desiring a closer attachment to allow the speaker to surrender with love and admiration. Here the speaker laments over the lack of glimpses s/he can get of the entity s/he loves and how the invasive distractions of the world are blocking sight as the clouds soften invade the free clear sky. The speaker desires to be constantly able to gaze at the loved one's entity; the fragmented nature of the union hurts the speaker. The entity of intense admiration appears with flickers of light, and this scares the speaker that s/he will lose sight of the superior appearance with just a blink, left dejected and unsatisfied over and over again. The speaker also begs for an answer, for a way to keep the existence of love closer as long as possible, even forever. At the same time, the lovesick speaker questions the worth and doubts if s/he is good enough to be granted the prize of the admired entity's love, as s/he of being unable to contain the overwhelming weight of grandeur of this love unless the revered entity is kind enough to descend to the speaker willingly. Finally, the speaker vows



never to set the eyes anywhere other than the entity s/he admires and addresses. Without a second thought, s/he is willing to let go of all the possessions to acquire the blessing of the revered entity's companionship; nothing else matters. The speaker seals the pleas with the vows of sacrifice with an unanswered hope for divine reciprocation.

**3.3 Tumi Robe Nirobe:** In this lyric, the speaker directly addresses the person s/he loves with gratitude, declaring as a relentless silent companion, grateful to the loved one, i.e., God, for being omnipresent in the speaker's life despite not being present. The speaker is at peace with the circumstances of the loved one; they cannot be together but are still connected in silence. The speaker finds love in the moonlight of a quiet night, quietly making the presence of the addressee felt by the speaker. The loved one stays with the speaker like a peaceful night, filling the ages of their life with serene and silent bliss. Eventually, the speaker acknowledges how the loved one, who also loves back, stranded by the distance, must be feeling desolate, sleepless with eyes filled with longing and loneliness, and quietly spreading comfort through dreams onto the speaker to turn the desolation into sweetness. The song is an ode to the sacrifice and vulnerability of the other side rather than the speaker's torment.

**3.4 Amaro Porano Jaha Chay:** This song is about the speaker ultimately embracing the weakness towards the loved one with no boundaries, and the deficiency has not been deemed a shortcoming but a strength by the speaker. Their generous love for the admired one is the most significant strength of the speaker that s/he does not want to hide anymore; s/he admits that the heart desires the loved one. S/he also acknowledges that the addressee is the only comfort s/he can look up to. But simultaneously, the speaker does not expect anything in return for devotion-like love from that person. The loved one's happiness is the only thing that matters, even if the happiness does not lie with the speaker. S/he is satisfied only with the thought of the loved one's existence in the heart; the speaker accepts the emptiness in reality. The speaker also finds a strange joy in being immersed in the raging emotions of unrequited love; they thrive in the idea of quietly living in the memories of the loved one without mistakenly bothering with the speaker's existence. S/he happily stays in such a state, hoping the desired one will choose to respond someday. However, the speaker grants the desired one the freedom to leave, never consider

returning, and embraces the punishment of abandonment when the loved one's love is elsewhere.

Amidst the themes of vulnerability and devotion, the speakers of these songs reflect a sense of authority and strength by accepting the harsh reality. They do not let the disappointing truth consume them, and they wait with no hope, silently but happily suffering.

#### IV. Fantasy and Symbolism Leading to Ultimate Union

**4.1 Ami Chini Go Chini:** Here, the speaker addresses a "bideshini," a female foreigner, someone from a different world living far away from the speaker, but the speaker has found a way to reach the "bideshini" by whom the speaker has been enamored despite the unreachability. The connection between them has been of an enigmatic love. The speaker admits having always known the foreigner living in a faraway land. They have had glimpses of the foreigner in the beautiful autumn mornings and the enchanting nights, the glimpses that come out of the speaker's heart. The speaker has heard the "bideshini's" songs that wave across the sky, making the soul sway. Now, the speaker has traveled through the world to reach out to the "bideshini," like a guest enchanted in love with the humble gift of existence brimming with admiration for her (bideshini). And there are apparent scopes to interpret this song through the eyes of symbolism. Though "bideshini" refers to a female living in a foreign place, it does not bind to any specific gender. The "bideshini" can symbolize something or someone that the speaker has been desiring for a long time but has been unable to reach. The unreachability makes the selected entity foreign. The speaker has been dreaming about the desired entity through the days, nights, and seasons and has now come closer to the entity, waiting for it to accept the speaker. The absence of any resolution to what the speaker finds establishes an open-ended mystery of infinite possibilities.

**4.2 Kotobaro Bhebechinu:** This song is also a subtle mixture of fantasy and reality, directly addressed to the addressee the speaker has secretly loved but has been hesitant to express. The distance created by the speaker's hesitation places the addressed valued one on a pedestal-like status, a God-like entity not within reach of an ordinary speaker. The speaker starts to confess the love. S/he admits the thoughts of letting go of the restraint and opening the heart to the admired



onebut has failed due to hesitation. The speaker wants to surrender to the address and tell how much s/he has always loved secretly but could not muster the courage to let the passion flow to someones/he considers a mighty deity from the heavens. The speaker deemed it suitable to lock the feelings in the heart and keep silently loving from afar. The speaker hopes no one will notice the emotions or see the tears. Little did the speaker know that the feelings were about to be acknowledged with the possibility of reciprocation even before they were released. Now that the loved one with an incredible aura of admiration has implored the speaker about love and passion, the speaker still hesitates and waits to find enough comfort to let go of the restraints.

**4.3 Tomar KholaHawa:**This song is good enough to consider filled with symbolism. The “kholahawa” (open wind) symbolizes the love from the speaker’s beloved one (the addressee); as the love intensifies, the wind turns into a storm by which the speaker is happy to be engrossed. The journey across the river symbolizes the speaker’s trip to the loved one; that person’s “open wind” of love is needed to push the speaker’s boat to the other side of the river. However, the intensified love turning into a storm hinders the boat from crossing the river, making the speaker likely to drown, but the speaker is happy even to drown in love despite not reaching the addressee with a steady wind. The intense storm of love can symbolize the growing fears in love that halt the continued progress of relationships. However, the speaker is no longer scared of the concern; even if s/he is sinking, s/he is sinking in love. The speaker does not want to resist the fears anymore; s/he does not want to control or be controlled anymore. Instead of letting the days go in vain because of fears and hesitations, the speaker would somewhat be swaying in the waves of all kinds of emotions of love. The speaker also wants to seek the support of comfort, the comfort of any solution to hold the storm back. But the tumultuous waves only bring more uncertainty than comfort. So, the speaker faces the upheaval and gets engulfed by the fears to defeat the worries themselves. The storm of love and dread is not scary anymore; it also exposes endless possibilities that can be unlocked with the speaker’s confrontation.

## V. A Distant Mystery Like a Reality Close to Heart

**5.1 Mayabono Biharini:**Someone like a wild unreachable golden female deer from the

forest generates dreams within the speaker. The speaker tries to hold the source of the dreamy thoughts, but it slips away, and the speaker wonders why s/he even tried to get a grip on something that does not let itself be caught. The entity only hovers briefly and sprinkles desires. When the speaker attempts to touch them, the entity flies away, like an unrequited lover deliberately teasing the speaker with disconnecting connections. The speaker then accepts the unrequited lover staying away as she wishes. The speaker is satisfied only with the distant tunes of her flute. The speaker realizes there is no reason to be allowed to touch, hold, and embrace the unrequited love that has stopped teasing and undoubtedly gone far away. Here, the pouring rain and the flaring clouds from the sky bring back the thoughts of the unrequited love’s existence, almost as if bringing back the shutdown lover closer. The speaker resists it this time, even if it is an external illusion. S/he decides to be independent in the rights of this forgotten yet blazing love; s/he not only chooses to keep stretching the distance but also decides to make the fading love flourish only in the internal illusion of dreams, in the secrecy of the mind filled with the same ideals of passion that have been scattered away and left, cherishing only the vague idea of the nonexistent addressee. From the never-ending distance, the speaker keeps a bond firm, the bond that is already so free and lite and stray, as good as extinct, but only the speaker has the power to keep it alive, not the loved one who just teased and left.

**5.2 Tumi Kon Kanoner Phool:**There is the existence of someone that tickles the speaker’s mind that s/he is unsure of. The speaker is asking questions to the vague entity to understand why it feels so familiar yet strange, if the speaker had met that entity through some unnoticed fragrance in a garden or while mindlessly soaking in the moonlight, or the entity only briefly flashed into their dreams and disappeared before they could realize. However, that vague entity can also refer to a lover fluctuating between hesitant proximity and deliberate separation. The conflicted emotions perplex the speaker too, and s/he struggles to remember when last that person looked at the eyes (of the speaker) and sang (for the speaker); all the blissful memories somehow slip away, leaving a fading sparkle in the eyes of the speaker. But the speaker wants the confusing loved one (the addressee) to be in close touch somehow, and it is okay with the speaker if the loved one does not talk or even goes away in a second of eye contact. The



speaker wants the loved one to keep smiling in the waves of the moonlight silently, and the s/he (speaker) is content in dreamily gazing at the dim radiance of the moon with the sweetness of their quiet love.

**5.3 Diboshorajoni:**Someone is always in the speaker's mind, uncertain who the person is. It can be an idea of someone, a faint hope to find someone to love, someone not appearing yet, but the speaker's heart eagerly waits for the unknown to show up, keeping each of their senses alert with every tingling sensation of someone arriving. The speaker wanders around restlessly, hoping to see the blurry entity; the birds in the doorway startle the speaker with the false hope of someone coming. It is always too close but too far. However, if reality does not avail this person of love to the speaker, the dreams promise that love. The speaker takes shelter in sleepy dreams to embrace the faceless person of mysterious love without disappointment. Even if the realities are deceiving the speaker, and the person s/he is dying to fall in love with is being kept away, the speaker's heart is fulfilled enough with the idea of love and passion for filling the emptiness of distance. S/he believes the desires are strong enough to turn the manifestation into truth and draw the person of love closer to the speaker.

All the speakers in the above three selected lyrics are rescued by their fantasies, making them thrive even without love and certainty because, regardless of logic, their dreamy romance promises the desired hopes, which also confirms the idea of the predecessor English Romantics, i.e., an escape from reality.

## VI. Request to Hold on to Memories and Prayer for Happiness

**6.1 Valobesheshokhi:**The speaker implores the friend, or the loved one, to remember the name and existence (of the speaker), but in silence, through the secret prayers of silent nights, in the quiet corners of the mind through the tunes of memories. The speaker requests the friend or beloved (the addressee) to gently hold on to the memory of the image in the friend's abode and insists the friend keep the connection thread tied to the friend's jewelry to remind them of the speaker occasionally. The speaker also prays that even by mistake, the friend picks a flower petal in the speaker's name and adorns the friend's beauty with the petal; even if the friend's (addressee's) love belongs to someone else, at least one grain of dust in the

remembrance of the speaker is mixed in the fragrance of the friend's adornment. The speaker wishes, with all these requests, to remain in the consciousness of the friend, despite slowly fading.

**6.2 Olo Shoi:**This song is not primarily about love or a love story; rather, it can be perceived as a mild and gentle plea for help from a person going through a depressive state, yearning for love or companionship, if not love, someone to spend time with, someone to fill the heart with, as a "shoi" (a female friend). The speaker feels empty inside, with no words or feelings to pour out and wants to talk the heart out and share the emotions just like the others, if only someone could be there. Instead of only staring in the corner blankly, the speaker wishes to let the body relax, cry, and laugh with someone. The speaker laments for not having words and the thoughts that others exchange and wonders what one could talk about and celebrate or even mourn when the inside is hollow and contains nothing but the harrowing emptiness, but still wants to expand in abundance despite nothing. Every evening, the speaker is lonely, drowned in the tears of confusing pain, the pain of a mixture, the lightness of nothingness, and the suffocating weight of the hollowness. Not knowing what and why hurts and what can be the cure, the speaker only keeps silent and weeps if someone asks what happened.

**6.3 Shokhi Vabona Kahare Bole:**This song can be viewed as the alternate version of *Olo Shoi*, where hopelessness is transformed into curious prayers of hope. This song is filled with the speaker's questions, curiosities and basic childlike ideas in conversation with a "shokhi" (a female friend, a synonym for "shoi"). The speaker wonders what thoughts and desires create the formation of love, why the lovers are so obsessed with love if love only hurts and makes someone cry, and what joy this love brings if it is just a fuming bundle of pain. The speaker's perspectives are fresh; s/he finds everyone simple and pure, calmly singing and looking for uncomplicated happiness, just like the speaker oneself, just as pristine and tranquil as the clear blue sky and glistening green bushes soaked in the rain. But the growing pains thrown towards the joy-seeking lovers concern the speaker, who wishes the lovers' cries could be soothed down and prays that the hurt will be forgotten and they will be singing the songs of bliss again.

## VII. Concluding Remarks: From Beginner's Bliss to Embracing Finality



All the lyrics or songs selected in this study have a common thread of love, though not interconnecting but interrelating. However, each piece has a specific narrative-like description of the transitory stages of love. The idea of transitions in love can be reflected through another Tagore song, *Amar Mollika Bone*, representing the starting and gradual passing of a loverelationship. This song can also be taken as a closing stamp of the open-endedexpressionthrough the lyrics discussed in this study;this can also be the finale of the ensemble multiverse of love in Tagore songs. The “mollika bon” (the garden of flowers) can be a metaphor for a romantic awakening for the young speaker who prepares the gift of flowers dedicated to someone (the beloved) as soon as they bloom in the garden, falling in love with someone at the moments/he understand what love feels like. The lovers enjoyed each other’s company with passion, and the love was as fresh and vibrant as the dewdrops sparkling in the light of dawn. The budding relationship elevated theunion. Now has come the time for a turn and a conclusion. The lovers' time in the garden has ended, and they mustdepart. However, if they want to accept this end and separation, they must stretch their time as they wish and stay together longer;they have tried to hold the singing of the birds as their temporary deadline for togetherness, wondering if it will be fair to part ways while the birds are still singing. Still, as the day has started to wither and even the flowers need to rest, the lovers decide to exchange their last words of romance and prepare to depart, embracing the finality of their moment with the hope of returning and reuniting. The lovers’ acceptance of the timely separation shows their maturity, and the hope of meeting again leaves the story open-ended, still providing a completion, aiming at a momentary conclusion. And thus, this study also finds a way to conclude, like Tagore’s use of an infinite variety of thematic expressions through the love lyrics, from open-end to momentary departure with a universal appeal of hope and reunification.

#### Reference

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