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**POETIC NEUROAESTHETICS AND THE HEALING SELF: LYRIC, MEMORY, AND TRAUMA IN THE WORKS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In the multidisciplinary field of medical humanities, this study explores the therapeutic value of lyric poetry and music, paying special attention to Rabindranath Tagore's writings. Based on the theories of trauma (Caruth, LaCapra), affect (Sedgwick, Tomkins), and lyric (Orr, Culler), the research investigates the ways in which poetry structures—particularly those found in Gitanjali, and Rabindrasangeet—mediate memory, trauma, and emotional healing. Based on spiritual transcendence and bhava-rasa aesthetics, Tagore's poetics is demonstrated to support what D.W. Winnicott refers to as "transitional space," providing a psychological buffer against loss and disintegration.*

*The study emphasises how poetry and music activate brain networks involved in emotional regulation, memory consolidation, and trauma processing, including ideas from modern neuroscience (Sacks, van der Kolk). By stimulating the limbic system, prefrontal cortex, and default mode network, rhythmic repetition, metaphor, and melodic phrasing improve neuroplasticity and emotional integration. Through embodied aesthetic experience, Tagore's works elicit karuna and shanta rasa, facilitating cathartic release and promoting recovery.*

*In order to establish the lyric as a transitional place where pain is converted into narrative coherence and emotional reconstruction, this study bridges Indian classical poetics with Western concepts of trauma and neurological rehabilitation. Ultimately, it affirms the therapeutic potential of poetic voice as both an emotional medium and a neuropsychological agent, arguing for a fresh engagement with Tagore's lyric legacy as a culturally grounded, scientifically relevant intervention within the growing area of medical humanities.*

**Keywords-** Narrative Medicine, Lyric Temporality and Trauma, Neuroaesthetics, Affect Theory and Poetic Form, Tagorean Poetics and Cultural Memory

**INTRODUCTION**

Within the dynamic field of medical humanities, where narrative, affect, and embodiment converge, the lyric becomes a powerful tool for narrative healing and psychological repair. More and more, the medical humanities—an interdisciplinary discipline that connects philosophy, medicine, neurology, and literature—use literature as an active tool in therapeutic therapy rather than just as a mirror of human suffering. Lyric poetry and musical compositions become essential to literary discourse, as well as to cognitive science and neuroaesthetic research, in this framework. In the context of trauma, loss, and emotional recovery, this study examines how poetry and song—especially in Rabindranath Tagore's writings—serve as mnemonic and therapeutic tools. It also focuses on the neurological underpinnings of these treatments.

The lyric becomes a potent instrument for psychological therapy and narrative healing in the dynamic field of medical humanities, where narrative, affect, and embodiment merge. The multidisciplinary field of medical humanities, which links philosophy, medicine, neurology, and literature, is increasingly using literature as an active therapeutic tool rather than only as a reflection of human suffering. In this context, lyric poetry and musical compositions become crucial to literary discourse, as well as to studies in cognitive science and neuroaesthetics. This research looks at how poetry and song, particularly in Rabindranath Tagore's writings, function as mnemonic and therapeutic devices in the context of trauma, loss, and emotional healing. The neurological foundations of these therapies are also emphasised.

This investigation is grounded in the theories of literary trauma (Caruth, LaCapra), affect (Sedgwick, Tomkins), lyric (Orr, Culler), and modern neuroscience (Sacks, van der Kolk). A culturally based expression of pain that goes beyond the confessional and makes suggestions for group recovery, Tagore's corpus is permeated with spiritual sadness, loss, and transcendence. Tagore mediates trauma through spiritual imagery, bhava-rasa aesthetics, and rhythmic cadences that enact what D. W. Winnicott refers to as the "transitional object" in psychoanalytic recovery in works such as Gitanjali, and his Rabindrasangeet compositions.

This study prepares the case that Tagore's poetic language serves as a healing tool for broken people to deal with loss, exhibit fortitude, and regain narrative coherence. Poetry and music also stimulate the prefrontal cortex, modulate the autonomic nervous system, and engage limbic structures (such as the hippocampus and amygdala), all of which support emotional regulation, memory consolidation, and trauma integration, according to recent neurological research on the subject. This makes the lyric a liminal zone with both literary and

neurological consequences, a space between self and other, between disease and healing, between remembering and forgetfulness.

### TRAUMA AND LYRIC MEMORY

This study argues that broken individuals may deal with loss, show resilience, and restore narrative coherence by using Tagore's poetic language as a healing aid. According to recent neurological research, poetry and music also engage limbic structures (like the hippocampus and amygdala), stimulate the prefrontal cortex, and modulate the autonomic nervous system—all of which support emotional regulation, memory consolidation, and trauma integration. The lyric therefore becomes a zone of transition between self and other, between illness and recovery, between remembering and forgetting, with literary and neurological ramifications.

According to neuroscience, the medial prefrontal cortex, which is essential for integrating traumatic memories, is activated by the rhythmicity and repetition of lyric forms (van der Kolk, 2014). Poetry's use of metaphor and symbolic language also activates the right hemisphere of the brain, which improves emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal. Readers of Tagore's poetic language experience a type of narrative exposure therapy in which emotionally charged memories are progressively processed within a safe and symbolic environment. According to van der Kolk, constructing a cohesive story of trauma facilitates the transfer of the memory from the emotionally charged amygdala to the hippocampus, where it may be securely kept.

Examine Tagore's statement from Gitanjali's poem 36:

“এই লঘু গানে মোর নয়নের বেদনা ঘুচেছে।”

In this simple song, the ache of my eyes has vanished.

Gregory Orr (2002) defines poetry's capacity to turn chaos into order as the release of mental tension through lyrical production, which is reflected in this manifestation.

Furthermore, the song serves as a medium for post-memory (Hirsch, 2008), giving voice to cultural scars and hereditary traumas that span generations. The way that the lyric becomes a vehicle for the emotive transmission of communal memory is shown by Tagore's lyrical invocations of loss, particularly in *Shishu*, where death and separation are mediated through the child's gaze. Consider the following lines:

“তুমি চলে গেছো, হৃদয় আমার রয়ে গেছে শূন্য করে।”

You have departed, leaving my heart completely hollow.

These terms serve a reparative purpose in addition to denoting loss. Articulation promotes intergenerational healing by activating the limbic system and solidifying emotional memories.

### BHAVA, RASA, AND AESTHETIC EMOTION

Tagore's poems and songs have a distinct emotive charge because of his involvement with Indian classical aesthetics, especially the ideas of *bhava* (feeling) and *rasa* (aesthetic taste). These pieces have therapeutic potential because they can arouse "*karuna rasa*," or the feeling of compassion, and "*shanta rasa*," or tranquilly, which, in accordance with Bharata's *Natyashastra*, facilitate emotional catharsis. This aesthetic function is carried out not just culturally but also neurologically by his Rabindrasangeet compositions, which are still performed in therapeutic or contemplative contexts.

According to recent neuroscientific research, listening to emotionally charged music controls the autonomic nerve system, lowering cortisol levels and triggering the release of oxytocin, two chemicals that encourage emotional connection and relaxation. Additionally, music promotes neuroplasticity and resilience in people with affective disorders by synchronising neural oscillations in the auditory cortex with emotional rhythms. These outcomes highlight the neurological foundations of the *rasa* experience, in which embodied empathy and meditative concentration are transformed into beautiful feeling.

Tagore's portrayal of *bhava* is frequently based on devotional tone and natural imagery, demonstrating a deliberate interweaving of inner awareness and sensory perception. For instance, in *Gitanjali* 11, he writes:

In "তুমি আমাদের করেছো জীবন-গানের নায়ক,"

I am infinite because of your delight.

Here, the poet evokes *shanta rasa*, which calms turbulent emotions by fusing humility with heavenly submission. Deeply relaxing and essential to healing emotional states, this *rasa* is connected to the parasympathetic nerve system.

Here, Eve Sedgwick's idea of reparative reading takes on particular significance: Tagore's poetics promotes emotional healing in addition to understanding.

According to Sedgwick, reparative reading aims for comfort and sustenance rather than mastery. In this method, readers and listeners turn to Tagore's works not just for analysis but also to immerse themselves in, be affected by, and come away altered. Thus, Tagore's combination of *rasa*, rhythm, and introspective lyricism serves as an experiential intervention in the area of emotional wellness as well as a literary-aesthetic experience.

### LYRIC VOICE AND THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE SELF

Trauma often leads to psychological self-fragmentation, which results in discontinuities in identity and narrative coherence. Apply D. W. Winnicott's ideas of the transitional object and transitional space to understand how Tagore's lyrical voice acts as a soothing external presence that enables the damaged self to re-engage with the world. Disjointed emotions might find resonance and symbolic order in his poetry musings, which serve as creative reservoirs.

From a neurobiological standpoint, this therapeutic interaction stimulates the brain's default mode network (DMN), which is linked to autobiographical memory, introspection, and self-referential cognition. The speaker in Gitanjali 95 accepts mortality by using the fall leaves and the fading sun as metaphors:

“যে ক্ষণগণনা করি, সেই ক্ষণ জয় করো তুমি”

You conquer the moments I count in fear.

Echoing Martin Buber's concept of the I-Thou relationship, Tagore's poetry turns into a dialogic conduit between the traumatised self and a listening world. The poet's voice becomes a therapeutic enactment of relational restoration in poems that invoke the divine as a compassionate absence or as a patient listener.

### CONSIDER:

“তব চরণে নিবেদন করেছি হৃদয় মম, সে আজি করো তুমি গ্রহণ।”

I offer my heart at Thy feet—let it be accepted today.

Through the poeticization of devotional vocabulary, the act of surrender enables the subject to develop a cohesive sense of self that surpasses individual suffering. What psychologists refer to as the re-establishment of safe attachment is reflected in the neuroaffective mechanisms at play, including the activation of oxytocin pathways and the calming of the amygdala.

Accordingly, the lyric voice in Tagore serves as what psychotherapist Julia Kristeva may refer to as a “semiotic chora”—a pre-linguistic, rhythmic field that allows the ego to re-constitute itself symbolically and affectively. His poetry provides therapeutic rhythm in addition to intellectual understanding; it gives emotive recalibration in addition to confession. In this way, poetic utterances gradually knit the traumatised self back together.

### CONCLUSION

A rich field for comprehending the convergence of literature, neuroscience, and therapeutic practice is provided by Rabindranath Tagore's lyrical corpus, which is located at the nexus of poetics, spiritual desire, and embodied emotion. It has been shown in this study that lyric serves as a tool for psychological, cultural, and neurological healing, particularly when it is penned by a mystic-modernist poet such as Tagore.

We have seen, under the prism of trauma theory, how the lyric both provides a place for the symbolic integration of traumatic experience and replicate its fragmented temporality. In addition to providing narrative confinement, Tagore's use of metaphor, melody, and repetition also regulates the body, relaxing the nervous system and giving the ego back its coherence. His use of *rasa* and *bhava* connects poetry expression to traditional Indian aesthetics, providing an emotive framework that stimulates catharsis and intense emotional resonance.

Furthermore, this study situates Tagorean lyric at the intersection of cultural poetics and affective neuroscience by referencing neurocognitive conceptions of healing, such as the reactivation of the prefrontal cortex and the calming effects of music on the limbic system.

All things considered, Tagore's poems are emotional technologies rather than merely literary artefacts, with the power to control, repair, and reconstruct the self. They exemplify the assertion made by medical humanities that the power of language, rhythm, and interpersonal presence, in addition to professional intervention, is what may bring about healing. He reminds us that there may be melody in pain and a rhythm towards healing in brokenness.

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