

Short Communication

Perception of Night- A psychodynamically oriented study on Datta and Tagore

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Poetry and psychoanalysis often intersect; great writers intuitively know things that psychoanalysis can clinically prove. A study of these two domains would likely foster their unity. Keeping this in mind, two poems, Michael Madhusudan Datta's *Night* and Tagore's *Night*, were psychodynamically analysed. Freud and Jung's psychoanalytical approach and Kris and Bellak's theoretical assumptions of ego psychology were utilised. The findings highlight that both Datta and Tagore wondered about and perceived the beauties of night in various forms and colours. Symbolically, the night is related to the passive principle, the feminine and the unconscious. In ancient mythology, the night is viewed as the 'mother of Gods'. In the analysed poems, night represents the mother archetype, which functions as a vital, essential, and dynamic aspect of the poets' psyche. The poets' innate potentialities appear in their vision and provide the psychic energy to convert their phantasies into symbolic images. Psychodynamically, Datta felt melancholic sadness, and Tagore perceived enlightenment.

Key words: Datta, Tagore, mother figure, psychodynamically, night, beauty.

INTRODUCTION

The symbol of night is related to the passive principle, the feminine and the unconscious. Hesoid called the night the 'mother of Gods', which is 'expressive of fertility, potentiality and germination' (Hesoid 1962). In both of these poems, the poets perceive the archetypal mother in the form of a transformative goddess whose influences are wide-ranging and universally powerful.

METHODOLOGY: CONTENT AND DYNAMIC ANALYSIS

Psychodynamics explain mental phenomena as the result of the interaction and counteraction of forces in a dynamic way. A dynamic explanation is also a genetic one, since it examines not only a phenomenon as such but the forces that brought it about as well (Fenichel, 1945). It does not examine single acts, it examines phenomena in terms of process of development of

progression or regression. Here psychodynamics refer to the poet's unfulfilled wishes, conflicts, anxieties and defences expressed in the poetry from beginning to the end.

In the beginning of his poem, Datta imagined that the solitary star shines like a radiant being on a throne and looks like a blue sapphire. The hour when the night calmly comes upon the earth moves silently and slowly, and bright gems reflect the night's 'sable brow'. The clouds that floated on her 'golden wings' melted away 'as if they never had been'. The scene reminds Datta of long forgotten memories: 'Wakes thought of days now past - sunk in the dense/Gloom of oblivion's Lethe!' In the beginning of the poem, her power is evident 'in the form of the great goddess who created earth and night sky.' The appearance of stars that look like blue sapphires in the night sky is indicative of his need for support and affection from the mother figure. The flaming radiance of the melted clouds dynamically indicates his

transcendence from the diffused anxiety of childhood, which is he wishes to regress.

Tagore fantasises the night as veiled; within his mother's shadow, 'there are some who have sat speechless for ages'. Tagore attempts to utter their songs, their unspoken desires. He appeals to the night to take him on the wheel-less chariot, which is dark and beautiful and runs noiselessly from world to world through the passage of time.

In the second and third stanzas, Datta suffers from nostalgia. He is 'in the situation of a narcissistically hungry infant lacking the necessary external care' (Fenichel, 1945). He wishes to unite with the mother figure, which is expressed in the form of depression called nostalgia. The poet welcomes the sweet night that is dear to his heart, though he appears sad and tearful. The silence of the night is eloquent. The night's 'stirring breath among the trees' revives past thoughts that had sunk in the 'dense gloom of oblivion's Lethe'. Datta recalls a time when life was sweet with the hopes and 'dreams of childhood', which are now fleeting thoughts in 'solemn silence'.

An individual's life events and psychic situation can activate the mother archetype. The death of Tagore's mother had a significant impact on him. When his mother died, Tagore felt a tremendous grief and pain of separation. This sense of separation and pain was retained in his unconscious and formed an 'indivisible lattice' with 'a highly charged crystal', which Jung calls a constellation of the archetype. This symbol of archetypal constellation appears in Tagore's vision. In the poem Night, Tagore's mother's tremendous power is evident in the night sky as her words are whispered; her songs croon every day, and the moon and stars gaze at her light. The power is in man's dreams, as his mother's darkness precedes the creation of all things.

Datta recalls the night as waves come from the sea and then recede. The night is compared to gems and a gentle breeze that suddenly appears and vanishes. However, the image leaves behind a solitary voice of the past that speaks of the forthcoming years; the voice indicates that 'happiness is but a dream below'. The wave symbol also indicates an 'abode of dragons' that is 'symbolic of purity'. There is a juxtaposition between the poet's two desires: the wish to regress suddenly appears like the 'rhythmic undulation' of waves, and the wish to sublimate appears 'by virtue of their (the waves) white foam, which suggests purity'.

From his mother's darkness, Tagore finds that the unknown bursts forth from the 'glad chants' and 'the arrow of joy'. He imagines a hidden treasure in the wakeful souls that have gazed in wonder in the starlight. The poet explores the areas of darkness that Jung has called shadows. There is a constant struggle in the human psyche between light and darkness, which suggests a dynamic struggle between the super-ego and the id.

Enlightenment appears suddenly and spontaneously, but not from above. Rather, enlightenment rises up from the darkness because of pressure from below, and enlightenment increases in strength as consciousness detaches itself from the darkness and climbs to the light.

The symbol of the 'whispering breeze' and the 'stirring breath' is indicative of the poet's inner conflict. These uncontrolled forces are frequently aroused in the form of impulses, and they likely indicate a repressive need that the poet could not fulfil. In Jungian parlance, one cannot free oneself from childhood. Remembering one's childhood is also a re-experiencing. The poet wishes to recall but instead re-experiences the hopes and dreams of childhood, which are lost.

CONCLUSION

In the end, the poet expresses a dynamic need for a primary attachment with his mother. The 'Night' represents the mother archetype, and the poet pleads to 'Make me their poet, O Night, the poet of thy fathomless silence'.

In the end of Datta and Tagore's poems, a melancholic sadness is echoed. The poets imagine that a thoughtful memory breathes in the night like a whispering breeze; this symbol wakes the sleeping mind in the same way that fortune's smile often brightly illuminates the darkness (Sachs, 1942). The feeling of melancholy remains, but the poets perceive beauty: 'Pure beauty drives those who are willing and able enough for its reception back into the depths of their inner self'¹ (Cirlot, 1962). In the poems, beauty supersedes all of the poets' interests. Beauty isolates the poets and makes them feel a sweet and wonderful sadness.

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¹ According to J. E. Cirlot, the contradiction that arises from ocean swells has two aspects: the ocean's rhythmic undulation is reminiscent of dragons, and by virtue of the white foam, the ocean swells suggest purity. There is no question of the dual tendencies, but there is a juxtaposition between them.