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**THE TRANSLATION OF RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE'S 'GITANJALI' IN DARI  
(AN ANCIENT PERSIAN DIALECT)  
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India has always had a very close relation with its neighbouring countries. In the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "Among the many peoples and races, who have come in contact with and have influenced India's life and culture, the oldest and persistent have been the Iranians. Few people have been more closely related in origin and throughout history than the people of India and the people of Iran". He further says, "For it was out of the same common stock that the Indo-Aryans and the ancient Iranians diverged and took their different ways".

According to G. A. Grierson "Aryans wandered forth from Russian Steppes passing through Turkistan and finally reached the country round Badakhshan, where they split into two parties one entered India via Kabul valley and the other proceeded towards Merv and Eastern Persia". Therefore it is confirmed that the Aryans, were the ancestors of both the Indians and the Iranians with similar background and culture. The Rigveda and Avesta, which were the earliest literary work of Indian Aryan and Iranian Aryan respectively; are concrete evidence of the above facts/relationships.

The advent of the Turko-Afghans in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century opened the way for the Sufis, who were well-versed in Persian language and literature, which was highly charged with mystical thoughts and ideologies. Thus forming a common platform between the two countries, of which Rabindranath Tagore, himself became the golden link in the chain of spiritual and cultural friendship binding up Iran and India. Tagore was very much impressed by the exquisite beauty and mystical flavour of Persian literature. His love for Persian language was hereditary. His grandfather Prince Dwarkanath Tagore was well-versed in Persian. He with some other persons, used to publish newspaper "Bengal Herald" and "Banga doot", which contained Persian sections too. It is known to all that Rabindranath Tagore's father Maharishi Devendranath Tagore was a great admirer of the Persian poet Hafiz Shirazi and used to recite and quote the couplets of Hafiz frequently in his conversations, letters and writings. Rabindranath was so impressed by the language that in 1927, he established the Deptt.; of Arabic, Persian and Islamic Studies in Visva-Bharati.

Mr. M. H. Kashani, the first president of the Iran Society of Calcutta and his friends had decided to present Tagore a book of appreciation named as "The Golden Book of Tagore" on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday as such he wrote to his friend Rahim Zadeh Safavi to announce in the then most important Persian journal "Iran", about the celebrations and requested some Iranian professors and writers to write about the poet or his works so that the tribute from Iran would also find place in the Golden Book. Mr. M. Mohit Tabatabai, an educationist, a writer and a journalist of Iran had collected some information about the poet from Arabic and French sources, wrote a series of articles about him in the "Iran", which was later printed in a book form. Thus the name of Rabindranath Tagore was already known not only to the educated circles of Iran, but to all Persian speaking countries and when this very same person being an Asian for the first time was awarded

the Nobel Prize, their joy knew no bounds for two reasons. Firstly, due to cultural affinity with India and her sympathies for the aspirations of the Indians to throw away the British rule, which had strangled Iran also. The later period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are considered to be the period of national movement of Iran, the oppressed Iranians were also engaged to get free from the colonialism of big powers especially Britain. Thus Iran always felt proud of India achievements. Secondly, because the prize was awarded for literature and in its recognition. Iran considered herself as a co-partner in the making of Inadian literature for her contribution and legitimate claim for it, because from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Persian was the language of culture and administration through out India, as such the aspirations and talents of the people found expression in this language and expanded the horizon of their knowledge paving the way for the evolution of composite culture.

The translation of Rabindranath Tagore's "Gardener" from its German version, received a wide publicity in Iran and it was sufficient to introduce Tagore to the Iranian public. They got the Iranian flavour in Tagore's Bengalee compositions. Again when he west to Egypt in 1927, long articles about him and extracts from his writings appeared in Egyptian papers and these were translated into Persian and publicized in Iran, met with such tremendous success that the poet's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated in Iran in Nov. 1931. Seeing this enthusiasm, his Imperial Majesty the late Reza Sah Pahalavi invited the great poet to Iran in 1932, where he was very warmly received by the government and the people of Iran. On this occasion the poet wrote a poem in Bengali, which he rendered into English :

Victory to Iran!

Iran, all the roses in their garden

And all their lover birds

Have acclaimed the birthday

Of the poet of a far away shore

And mingled their voices in a poem of  
Rejoicing  
Iran, thy brave sons have brought  
Their priceless gifts of friendship  
On this birthday of the poet of a far  
Away shore,  
For they have known him in their hearts as  
Their own  
Iran, crowned with a new glory  
By the honour from thy hand  
This birthday of the poet of a far away shore  
Finds its fulfillment  
And in return I bind this wreath of my verse  
As thy forehead, and cry:  
Victory to Iran!

As the poet had started for Iran on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1932, his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday occurred in Tehran on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1932, the writers, poets and others of Iran who had celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday a few months ago, came to him with offerings. Tagore's this visit and his works particularly Gitanjali provided new fields of writing not only to Iran, but as well as to other Persian speaking countries.

Persian translations of Tagore's work also helped in the study of his thoughts and works in Iran. The earliest translation of Tagore's poem from Bengali source was done by an Indian Punjabi teacher of Persian, at Shantiniketan named M. Ziauddin under ("Habibya" Kabul in Afghanistan) the title "Sad Bande Tagore". This work contains 100 poems of Tagore taken from ten poetic collections including Gitanjali was prepared with the help of Pour-Dawood, whom Tagore had himself invited as a visiting Professor of Persian. Later, however, the Iranians themselves started translating the works of Tagore into Persian from the English versions of the same. Tathollah Mojtabayee translated Tagore's Chitra, Mohammad Reza Tajaddod translated "Ghare Baire", which again was re-translated by Bozorg Alavi under the title

"Kane va Jahan". Faridoun Geragani translated five plays, *Bisotjan*, *Post Office*, *Sanniyasi Malini* and *Raja O Rani* under the title *Qorbani*, *Postkhane*, *Mortaz*, *Malini* and *Padshah O Malekeh* respectively all together in 1961, *girdhari Lal Tikku*, an Indian scholar compiled in Persian an important work entitled *Soroudehaye Javedani* containing translations of Tagore's poem on different themes, selected from his various poetic collections elaborated with the inner meaning of the poem before presenting its translation.

The earliest work done on Tagore in Iran was a booklet in Persian entitled *Rabindranath Tagore: Sha'r va Filsufe Bozorge Hind* by *Mohammad Mohit Tabatabayee*, published in Tehran in 1952. This contains articles of the author printed previously in Persian daily, the 'Iran'. It comprises of three chapters life and work of Tagore – thoughts of Tagore and Tagore's style of instruction with special reference to *Shantiniketan*. Some other works in Persian are: *Thoughts and ideas of Tagore* by *Dr. Ali Akbar Siyasi*, *life of Rabindranath Tagore* by *Ibrahim Pour Davoud*, *Zoraster in the eyes of Tagore* by *Dr. Rezazade Shafaq*. *The Literary greatness of Tagore* by *Dr. Souratgar*, the plays of Tagore by *Mr. Mahdi Toroughi*.

To this list may be added *Dr. Ravan Farhadi*, an Ambassador of Afghanistan's verified translation of *Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali* into Dari which came much later near about 1975. Dari is an ancient Persian dialect especially used by Zoroastrian of *Yezd* and *Kirman*. *Rabindranath's Gitanjali* had received the world-wide fame at that very time whom the Muslim world had united to shatter the British shackle. The Arab, Egypt, Turan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries were fighting for freedom of which Afghanistan had already gained freedom with the help of Bolshevik and had set an example before the world. The great Bengali poet *Kazi Narul Islam* has given detailed information in Column named "Muslim Jahan" of his famous magazine "Doomketu".

After the First World War, Gitanjali, which was already translated into various languages of the East and West, brought solace to many afflicted hearts. Through the rhythmic lines of Gitanjali, the poet created a new sense of strength in the people of all parts of the world. He wrote:

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might. Give me the strength to rise my mind high above daily trifles,  
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

At a time when the world lay exhausted by the shedding of blood the poet's work provided a new stimulus. Through his writings, he created a spirit of reconciliation and enlightenment. Rabindranath Tagore through his beautiful play "Kabuli Wala" had already showed the extent of his sincere heartfelt love for the rurals of north Afghanistan, who felt this feeling of his Dr. Farhadi in his boyhood days came across a magazine entitled "Kabul" among his father's books, in which he saw the picture of Tagore and also read in it the translation of Gitanjali, which from that every created. He got great pleasure in reading it that he remarked: "The poetry of Rabindranath Tagore is so simple that it can be enjoyed by eight years old to eighty years old". After completing his education in Kabul, he went to Paris in 1949 and joined Paris University for further studies. He studied law, political science and linguistics at Sorbonne and had the privilege of learning under Professor Louis Renou the great indianist and Zoel Bloch, the transformer of the Hindi language from Indo Aryan, who selected two Indian languages for him - Bengali and Gujrati. Due to some illness he was not able to continue these classes of Bloch regularly but he continued his study of Bengali language. During his stay in Paris Dr. Farhadi got a chance of meeting Andre Gide, who had already translated Gitanjali into French and had a good knowledge of Rabindranath's work, seeing Dr. Farhadi's enthusiasm in Bengali language, particularly in the Gitanjali advised him to translate it

into Dari, for to him translation of one eastern language to another would be much better. In answer to which Farhadi said that to translate poetry of any other language one must be a talented poet.

In reply to this Gide told him that one need not have to be talented to become a poet, but if he likes poetry, then he must read beautiful poetries again and again and in the long run he will become a poet. And if this does not happen, then this would be a challenge to that person, who had encouraged him to become a poet (in the same manner). Farhadi who had read many poetries of great Sufi poets of his land from his father thought that if the young generation desired to read Hafiz then what interest would they have in the translation of Tagore? After a few years progressive change came in their culture and the young generation started taking interest in the hymns and poetries of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, masnavi of Rumi, Mantiquat Tayr, Khamsa and Haft Aurang, while some took interest in the poems of Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil. Thus after his six years educational stay in Paris, he came back to Afghanistan in 1955, then his attention turned towards Gide's advise for the versification of Tagore's Gitanjali.

It so happened that he was sent as an ambassador to Karachi, where he came in close contact with some Bengali writers and as a result he got the chance of reading and understanding the original Bengal text of the Gitanjali, which made him realize that there was a great difference between the original Bengali text and the English translation, though it was done by Tagore himself. This inadequacy of the translation was revealed in Mary M. Logo's book entitled "Translation of Tagore". The translation of the English text is a short summary. According to the opinion of the English readers, the language of the English text is lacking in the fascinating beauties of the rhythm of Bengali and that the translation is deprived of similes and metaphors.

When he came back to Kabul from his three years stay in Karachi, he discussed the topic with his friend Syed Taqir Ali who

was at that time responsible for the publishing of the newspaper entitled *Islah* and then it was printed.

On the occasion of the birth century of the poet of the east a series of *Gitanjali* had begun to be published simultaneously with the translations of Hindi, Urdu, English and French which are the everlasting work of Tagore, but this translation in Dari which is in accordance with the moral verses of the original text in unique". Dr. Farhadi under the garb of Dari has tried to capture the sublimity of the style and the spiritual beauty of the great Poet's thoughts. Although he spent 11 years, which is consequently a time in completing his work, but for only versified poetry is able to make an adequate and irresistible appeal to those speaking the language of Saadi, Hafiz and Khayyam.

In the beginning of the work the author has written several chapters on different aspects of the life and works of the poet. He has analysed the tendencies which had their impact on the poet's mind. The influence of the classical tradition of India, the Bhakti and Sufi poetry and the impact of western liberalism have been very ably emphasized. In handling the content of "*Gitanjali*", Dr. Farhadi has presented a thorough, elucidation of the various concepts, so that Dari speaking people may have no difficulty in understanding the ideas which the poet aimed to convey. The quotations from the verses of Jalaluddin Rumi the great Sufi poet of the 13<sup>th</sup> century which conveys the similar thoughts and are known to the Dari speaking people enhances the importance of the work.

Thus although the people of Afghanistan were well acquainted with the verses of Tagore for a very long time, but this work of Dr. Farhadi rendered from the original Bengali has done a remarkable contribution to the study of Tagore, not only to his countrymen, but to all the Persian knowing people. Translation of verses are not as simple as we think, for if we try to translate it literally, then it comes out in the prose form and loses its original beauty. So that translation of any verse if it is beautiful then it is



...from its original facts, the closer it is to its original facts the less is its beauty. But in the case of Dr. Farhadi's translation, he has tried his level best to retain the shape of the original poem, keeping the length of each line almost the same as the original one. He has brought the original charm of the Bengali Gitanjali in its Urdu version in a very simple and beautiful way. Those words and couplets which are found in the Bengali text and not translated into English, especially these couplets which are in the form of metaphors (Tarjihband or Retum-tie) gives beauty to the Bengali text when translated into English and Urdu does not have the same beauty to the Bengali text when translated into English and Urdu does not have the same beauty. But in Dari Dr. Farhadi has brought out of the same original beauty. He has arranged the Persian translation of the verses according to the English version.

Anyone who has a good knowledge of Persian mystical poetry especially of the Sufi poets Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi and Fariduddin Attar will at once feel the spiritual beauty of the Gitanjali of Tagore. As Rumi says in the following verse:

Sukhan yaki ast wali dar nazar zi surati seer  
Kumad chun shu'lai jawalah nuqtai parkari  
The thing is one but due to its velocity of rotation,  
The moving one point flame, makes like a circle,  
Thus we can say that although  
Time has passed, but the luster of  
The centuries old relationship between  
The Aryan ancestors remains shining  
In the timeless consciousness of their descendents.

Which is further proved by the  
Embassy of the Islamic State of  
Afghanistan in India, who on the

20<sup>th</sup> All India Persian Teachers' Conference held in Shantineketan in November 1998, published the second edition of Dr. Ravan Farhad is a scholar of Afghanistan's Dari translation of the original Bengali Gitanjali entitled surudniyash which means "Songs of

Blessings". The writer himself was present on this occasion because he was a great fan of the poet and had several times visited the abode of the great Indian poet. I would like to reproduce a few of the verses of the great poet is Bengali gitanjali and its Persian version Dr. Farhadi's Songs of Blessings or surud niyayash. Then Dr. Farhadi explains this in the foot note in Dari:

It is useless that I am not aware of you, for I always repeat that I want you, though I am a slave of desire, but your love is always guiding me. Such as the desire of morning is hidden in the night. I am not aware of my depth, but still this cry echoes that I want you. As the desire of rest is hidden in the storm. The agitation of sin compared to your love again my heart laments that I want you. Then he says that this is similar to Maulana Rumi's this hemstich: "From the world I have selected you only".

Dr. Farhadi explains this in the footnote. Every moment the worldly desires darkens the heart, you enlighten it with lightning and thunder. Although the worldly affairs surround and mislead me, O you kind one guide me, come O giver of new soul to the world.

Then he quotes Maulana Rumi's verse with same theme: "Come O giver of new life to the world".