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Breaking, Burning, and Becoming: An Islamic Reading of Donne’s “Better my Heart Three-Parsoned God” and Tagore’s “Aguner Parasmoni”

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Abstract

This paper explores the spiritual longing and the quest for purification in John Donne’s “Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God” and Rabindranath Tagore’s “Aguner Parasmani”. Despite their distinct religious contexts—Christianity and Hinduism—both poets express deep vulnerability in confronting evil and seek divine intervention for spiritual transformation. The analysis highlights how both poets use powerful metaphors of fire and physical transformation to depict inner cleansing. An Islamic perspective is incorporated to critique and contextualize their respective views on evil, repentance, and divine purification, offering a cross-religious insight into the human struggle for spiritual purity.

Keywords: spiritual transformation, repentance, evil, cross-religious insight

1. Introduction

Spiritual purification is a core concern in many religious traditions, including Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. In this study, two seminal poetic works—John Donne’s “Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God” and Rabindranath Tagore’s “Aguner Parasmani”—are examined to uncover their shared themes of spiritual vulnerability, divine intervention, and the struggle against evil. Although they belong to different eras, cultures, and theological backgrounds, both poets portray the human soul’s urgent need to be reshaped and purified by a higher power. This paper approaches their works from an Islamic theological lens to evaluate how effectively each aligns with or diverges from Islamic concepts of purification, selfhood, and divine mercy.

2. Objectives

- i. To analyse the central theme of spiritual purification in Donne’s and Tagore’s selected poems.
- ii. To compare and contrast the poets’ use of metaphors and imagery, particularly the symbolism of fire.
- iii. To contextualize each poet’s perspective within their religious traditions—Christianity for Donne and Hinduism for Tagore.

- iv. To critically evaluate the compatibility or divergence of their purification concepts with Islamic theology.
- v. To explore the psychological and emotional dimensions of the struggle against the 'evil self' (*nafs*) in light of Islamic spirituality.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative and comparative textual analysis approach. The primary texts—Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV and Tagore's "Aguner Parasmani"—are examined for thematic content, metaphorical structure, and philosophical underpinnings. A theological framework grounded in Islamic concepts of purification (*tazkiyah*), the self (*nafs*), and repentance (*tawbah*) is employed to interpret and critique the poems. Secondary sources on Christian, Hindu, and Islamic doctrines, along with critical literary analyses of both poets, support the discussion. The study also incorporates intertextual reading to identify parallels and divergences in doctrinal thought and poetic expression.

4. Research Questions

- i. How do John Donne and Rabindranath Tagore depict spiritual purification in their respective poems?
- ii. What metaphorical tools—particularly the image of fire—do both poets use to convey the process of inner transformation?
- iii. In what ways do the theological contexts of Christianity and Hinduism shape each poet's approach to divine intervention and self-purification?
- iv. From an Islamic standpoint, how valid or compatible are Donne's and Tagore's representations of the struggle against evil and the path to purification?
- v. How does the notion of *nafs* in Islamic theology deepen our understanding of the poets' inner conflicts and spiritual aspirations?

5. Literature Review

The themes of spiritual purification and divine intervention have been longstanding subjects in both theological discourse and poetic expression. John Donne and Rabindranath Tagore, despite emerging from vastly different religious and cultural contexts, have attracted critical attention for their intense spiritual introspection and metaphysical symbolism. This literature review synthesizes relevant scholarly perspectives on Donne's and Tagore's spiritual poetics and positions the present study within the broader field of comparative literary and religious analysis.

5.1. John Donne and Christian Spiritual Conflict

Donne's *Holy Sonnets* have been widely discussed as poetic expressions of the tension between carnal sin and divine grace. Critics such as Helen Gardner (1961) and John Carey (1981) emphasize Donne's obsession with spiritual struggle, particularly his use of violent metaphors to describe the soul's submission to God. In "*Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God*", scholars often highlight Donne's paradoxical rhetoric—where divine violation is necessary for redemption—as a reflection of the Reformation-era anxiety about salvation and sin. His plea for God to "break, blow, burn" is interpreted as a desperate cry for a transformation that the poet believes cannot be self-willed but must be divinely forced. These interpretations align Donne with the Christian notion of total depravity and the need for sanctifying grace.

5.2 Tagore and the Idealism of Bhakti

Rabindranath Tagore's spiritual poetry, including "*Aguner Parasmani*", has been deeply influenced by the Bhakti tradition and the Upanishadic worldview. Scholars such as Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson (1995) emphasize Tagore's belief in a personal yet formless God, one who can be reached through love, beauty, and inner purity. Unlike Donne, Tagore's notion of purification is not agonizing but celebratory, focusing on illumination rather than destruction. His spiritual worldview is grounded in the idea that divinity resides within, and that the soul's transformation is a gentle and natural unfolding. This vision aligns closely with the Vedantic understanding of moksha as the realization of the self's unity with the cosmic Brahman.

5.3. Comparative Religious Approaches to Purification

While studies have explored Donne's and Tagore's religious poetics separately, few have undertaken a comparative analysis through the lens of Islamic theology. Islamic thought provides a rigorous framework for understanding the nature of evil (sharr), the self (nafs), and the process of purification (tazkiyah). Works by scholars like Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and contemporary authors such as Hamza Yusuf elaborate on the gradations of the soul—from *nafs al-ammara* (the commanding soul) to *nafs al-mutma'inna* (the tranquil soul)—and the methods of overcoming spiritual ailments through divine remembrance and submission. The Quranic vision of purification is more structured and discipline-oriented than Tagore's romanticism or Donne's desperation, emphasizing personal accountability, ritual practice, and ethical conduct.

5.4. Gap in Existing Literature

Although both Donne and Tagore have been extensively studied within their respective traditions, a comparative study that incorporates Islamic theological principles remains underexplored. Most analyses remain confined within Christian or Hindu frameworks, often overlooking how Islamic philosophy can offer critical insights into the nature of self-transformation, divine agency, and moral struggle. This study seeks to fill that gap by offering an Islamic reading that not only critiques but also bridges the spiritual philosophies of two poets from radically different backgrounds. By doing so, it contributes to the growing body of interfaith literary scholarship and opens new avenues for cross-religious dialogue.

6. Discussion

In Donne's religious sonnet "Better my Heart three-personed God" and in Tagore's lyric "Aguner Parasmani" (Touchstone of Fire), the extinction of evil and the idea of purification are presented in different dimensions. Although they belong to different religions, nations, and eras, both poets share a considerable number of similarities in their perspectives on spiritual redemption. Both poets viewed life as a spiritual journey, and during this quest, they recognized their helplessness in overcoming the inherent nature of evil. Consequently, they desperately invoke God so that they can repel evil. Both texts use fire as the central metaphor and present the image of the body to intensify the idea of reshaping and giving a new existence. Both Tagore and Donne belonged to different religions, and their respective religious beliefs are prominently reflected in their poetry. Hinduism, to which Tagore belonged, unites its beliefs around the idea that there are various paths to a perfect relationship with God through learning, love, and work. In any case, Donne has a place with Christianity that is monotheistic and spreads out into a wide range of temples.

Donne's lyrics reflect the foundation of institutional religion. His poem reflects a faith in Trinity that completely contradicts Tagore's conviction. To understand Tagore, it is important to make an effort, at least to some extent, to grasp the social and familial background that shaped him. Tagore frequently recognized that he was indebted to Rammahan Roy, often referred to as the father of modern India, who was an early reformer of Hinduism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a young man, Roy received an excellent education in Arabic and Persian, followed by the study of Islam, Sanskrit, and the traditional texts of the Upanishads. He then spent time in Tibet studying Buddhism, all of which contributed to his understanding of the fundamental unity among major religions. This complete learning instructed the unity of the Supreme Being and the solidarity of mankind, stressing basic good and moral ideals.

The idea of good and evil, though abstract concepts, builds the central belief system in Islam; in fact, Islam gives a comprehensive representation for elucidating good and evil. Allah (SWT) is the only authority in defining good and evil, as the human's spiritual faculty is inadequate to perceive the reality of evil. More importantly, human beings should follow religious restrictions because the idea of good and evil is related to the purpose of this universe; without these restrictions, they fail to repel evil due to their insufficient knowledge. Donne, who is both a poet and a believer in the Catholic religion, recognises that without divine intervention, he could not save his soul from the devil's grasp. Although Tagore hardly believes in religious restrictions, he invokes God Almighty to purify his soul.

Islam is a complete code of life; the Quran has been revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) so that he can show the right path to humankind by implementing the revelation of the Holy Scriptures. Through the Quran and Sunnah, we gain a comprehensive understanding of al-nafs, Satan, vanity, and delusion, as well as guidance on how to avoid these evils by relying on Allah, practicing scrupulousness, and cultivating contentment.

Religion in Tagore must be free from all confinement. It must enable individuals to develop and create. He corresponds with God through Nature. Tagore's verse exemplifies his bliss, his pleasure which he encounters in such fellowship with the truth. This affirms that the human soul remains uncritical unless it is filled with the Supreme. Birth and demise are only discharging and filling of the spirit by the Supreme Soul, and the person along these lines shares God's perpetual life, His everlasting status. We should keep the human body unadulterated, as it serves as the sanctuary of God. Since God resides in the innermost sanctuary of the heart, individuals must avoid all forms of evil that can taint their spirit. Our exertion ought to be to uncover God in our activities since it is He who enables us to act. The result is genuine love. In our relationship with the divine, what is essential is total surrender so that we may recognize God as everything. According to Tagore, a humble devotee has hardly any belief in institutional or dogmatic religion because it lacks spontaneity and freedom. Institutional religion, to some extent, imposes intellectual slavery, which hinders personal growth and healthy relationships with both God and other people.

From the above discussion, it is evident that though both poets are true devotees and conscious about their inherent sinful nature,, their concepts about God are different from an Islamic viewpoint. In both poems, they passionately invoke God's interference so that they can be free from evil. However, Allah (SWT) created the human being with free will, a conscience and a complete code of life that is the Quran. Now, human beings are free agents who can either repel evil using the Quran and Sunnah or surrender to it. The significant difference is that Islam is founded on Tawheed, which emphasizes the oneness and uniqueness of Allah in relation to His Lordship and the Sunnah, which includes the deeds and sayings of the Prophet (sm). However, Donne, a believer in Christianity, invokes the 'three-personed God,' while Tagore, despite his faith in the oneness of God, lacked any definite standard.

Both poems are appeals to God, pleading with Him not for compassion, pity, or benevolent aid but for spiritual purification, which is a painful process. At the very beginning, both poets employ the image of fire to signify burning, suffering, reshaping, and the annihilation of evil. Donne uses very violent and forceful metaphors, like a blacksmith's anvil that will "break, blow, and burn" his stubborn and evil soul.

In contrast, while Tagore employs the image of fire, his tone and mood are much softer and more soothing. Tagore uses the important metaphor of a touchstone. Any physical or scholarly measure can serve as a touchstone to test the legitimacy or value of an idea. It is being used comparatively for a basic analysis. Our soul is stubborn and succumbs to evil instantly. Therefore, the process of purification is not only painful but also serves as a critical test of one's character. Although Donne and Tagore belong to two different religions, their poems express nearly the same perspective on purification. However, Tagore's image of 'divine flaming', or 'touchstone', is very idealistic, and his romantic idea about the communion between man and God is reflected in the poem. But the incompatibility lies in the fact that the process of purification is neither heavenly nor romantic. The process involves pain, agony, sacrifice, and sometimes brutality, as illustrated in Donne's sonnet, where God is called upon to use His might and force to compel Donne into submission.

Donne piles on several verbs, especially in that first quatrain, to invoke God, to urge, to pray to fight against the evil self.

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new. (l. 1-4)

Tagore also uses a multitude of verbs to invoke God for his purification, as he expresses in the phrase, 'Aguner parasmani choao praana.../ E jivan punya karo dahan-dane'' (Touch my soul with the fire's divine stone,.../ Make this life sacred through the gift of burning). (l. 1-5) He continues, "Amar ei dekhani tule dharo/ Tomar oi devalayer pradeep karo/ Nishidin aalok-shikha jwaluk gane" (Take unto you my mortal form;/ make it a lamp of your divine abode;/ let the flame of my song glow through night and day). (l. 7-9) Both of them feel the need to be reshaped, and this urge is reflected in Donne's use of the paradox 'rise' and 'stand' or 'throw" and 'bend'. More importantly, the verbs 'break', 'blow', and 'burn' align closely with his plea to 'make me new.'

In Tagore's lyric, as he continues prayer, he seems to be in a contemplative frame of mind; unlike Donne, he entirely avoids self-analysis and fails to present the physical agony that is involved in the spiritual modification.

Nayaner drushti hate ghuchabe kalo
Yekhane parve setha dekhbe alo
Vyatha mor uthve jwale urdhv pan
Vyatha mor uthve jwale urdhv pan...

(The darkness will lift from the vision of my eyes,
Wherever it falls, there you shall see light.
My sorrow shall rise in flames, reaching upward,
My sorrow shall rise in flames, reaching upward....) (l. 16-19)

In the following lines, he describes the process of purification as 'the dark of my eyes slowly lifts'. Here, the veil of darkness signifies the inherent evil of the human soul. Separated from its stubbornness and evil, the soul sees the light of heaven drifting upwards.

However, Donne is very mindful that he is frail all alone. He doesn't record anything in his cry to God for help, yet his transgression humbles him. An urgent aching for a genuine and unwavering affection for God permeates the words.

Tagore does not use any paradox; instead, the purification process illustrated by the poet maintains a chronology that exerts an idealistic approach. The purification process separates evil from our souls and

instills them with divinity. Firstly, Tagore invokes God to apply the philosopher's stone that can make the impossible possible only with its touch. He mentions the touchstone signifying 'divine flaming' that can reform the poet's corporal existence. Then, the poet's body transforms into the sacred flame through its cabalistic power and magical touch. Though a physical image is used, in the process of transformation, the change is spiritual, as he perceives, "the veil of darkness from my eyes slowly lifts". Once the process is complete, the speaker receives 'celestial clusters' and experiences the disappearance of evil.

Expressions of the lyric are cruel and extreme. The hard solid enables the reader to see how frail and injured the speaker feels. The lyric dominantly represents symbolism that touches the readers' feelings, both physically and inwardly. The words masterfully depict the terrifying images of imprisonment, breakage, or violation. The reader feels the pain that would be experienced if these events occurred. Clearly, the self has been torn apart by the great malevolence and harrowed by the intense battle between these two distinct selves, and this otherworldly pressure is expressed impeccably in both lyrics. Donne's poem explicitly presents the nature of conflict, as the speaker desperately seeks refuge from his evil self. Islam provides us with a comprehensive idea of the evil self, meaning nafs: Nafs has two meanings in Islamic discourse. First, it means the forces of anger and sexual desire in a person, and this is the most common use among the general population of tasawwuf [Sufis], who use "nafs" as a broad term for all malice.

The second meaning of nafs refers to the spirit, the individual, and essentially, one's self. Different portrayals of it reflect its diverse states. On the off chance that it expects tranquillity under the charge and has expelled from itself the unsettling influence caused by the assault of enthusiasm, it is called "the fulfilled soul" (al-nafs al-mutma'inna). In its first significance, the nafs does not predict its arrival to God since it has kept itself a long way from Him: such a nafs is from the gathering of shaytan. Be that as it may, when it doesn't accomplish tranquillity yet sets itself against the adoration for interests and protests it, it is called "the self-harging soul" (al-nafs al-lawwama), on the grounds that it reprimands its proprietor for his disregard in the love of his lord... and in Donne's poem it is obvious that the speaker fails to raise against "the self-accusing soul". (Ahmed, 2023)

However, in Tagore's lyric, we neither find the tranquility of "the satisfied soul" nor can we trace the restlessness of the self-accusing soul. Whether the speaker suffers from intolerance or struggles to resist the evil self remains unclear. In Donne's poem, the reference to the evil self is overt, and his conscience is also well aware of this temptation.

The poem's metaphors (the speaker's heart as a caught town, the speaker as a lady pledged to God's adversary) work with its uncommon arrangement of savage and capable verbs (player, o'erthrow, twist, break, blow, consume, separate, loosen, break, take, detain, enchant, violate) to make the picture of God as a mind-boggling, rough winner. The unusual idea of the speaker's supplication discovers its apotheosis in the dumbfounding last couplet, in which the speaker guarantees that exclusively if God takes him prisoner, would he be able to be free, and just if God violates him,, would he be able to be pure? The personality that urges fiendishness (nafs ammara), that is, desire and outrage, resembles an adversary that troubles him in his kingdom and endeavors to butcher his kin.

The word usage and the cadence of the lyric are brutal enough to underscore the underlying procedure of destroying the old man before the new man is made. The alliterative expression "break, blow, burn" jarringly helps the readers remember this ruinous inclination. Furthermore, "break" and "thump" symbolize the raw mercilessness of God the Father; "blow" and "inhale" represent the fiery nature of the Holy Spirit; and "consume" and "shine" illustrate the radiant essence of Jesus, the Son of God.

Tagore's poem's diction and rhythm are soothing, but his use of euphony seems discordant with the poem's theme. In this context, the images of 'the house of God', 'celestial clusters', and the frequent references to light signify the greatness of God and the sweet relationship between the finite and the infinite. Tagore's poem centrally compares fire to a touchstone. Fire symbolizes destruction,

purification, and agency in elevation. In this poem, fire symbolizes divine enchantment and saintly light, or divinity, that can purify the sinner and extract evil from the soul.

Tagore also asks for purification that results from the action performed by God. However, the theme of the poem that is invoking God for purification does not match with the tone and mood of the poem, though Tagore uses some physical imagery to heighten the sense of pain and agony. He invokes purification using physical imagery:

Take unto you my mortal form;
make it a lamp of your divine abode;
let the flame of my song glow through night and day. (l. 7-9)

He earnestly desires to burn his corporal existence and turn it into divine flame. He appeals to God for purification, mixing the discourse of the spiritual and the physical.

Aadharer gay gay parash tab
Sara raat photok tara nav nav

(Let Your touch fall upon the body of darkness,
So that new stars may bloom all through the night.) (l. 12-13)

These lines blend the holy and the secular. In this situation, the speaker accomplishes that amalgamation by asserting that he can beat sin and attain profound immaculateness if he is constrained by God.

The poet recognizes the limited and sinful nature of human beings' corporal existence. But God's infinite magnanimity makes him optimistic and assures him about purification. The speaker is well aware of the process of purification; however, he exposed his yearning in soft and soothing language. He, avoiding negative and destructive features of fire, emphasizes only its light and illumination: hailing celestial clusters born anew. Here, the speaker underscores the necessity of transformation to eradicate the evil self. Tagore's view is devoid of practicality. It appears obvious as we go through the images of the process of purification exquisitely presented in his poem "Better my heart three persons'd God".

Donne had put the world and erotic life altogether behind him and was examining with horrible tension the correct association with the everlasting. The writer is aware of his sinful life and, furthermore, of God's eternal significance. He is aware of his wicked nature, and he passes on his emotions in a dialect accused of nostalgia. Utilization of metaphor is broad. Then again, in Tagore, this connection between the limited and the unending scarcely infers a sensible approach, the wicked nature of the individual, and the significance of God's pardon. To Tagore, this procedure of sanitization is sentimental, as it includes the longing of the lover for the get-together with the awesome rather than the agonizing procedure upheld by the god-like. Tagore's idea of sanitization ingrains into the fan's mind the way that the limitless is sprouted into our spirit and sweetness of consolidating the limited with the vast. We should keep the human body unadulterated, as it serves as God's sanctuary.

Both poets are well aware of the unavoidable sin inherent in the human soul, and they understand that only God's interference can free them from the grasp of the devil. Donne was overwhelmingly aware of his sin and his inability to do anything about it, which perhaps explains his hesitancy in taking orders and becoming a preacher. Donne felt helplessly bound by his sin, held tight by Satan while desiring only God. Obviously then, the implied meaning is that there is a struggle between good and evil within the soul of the poet and his helplessness and deep anguish.

Likewise, Tagore also believes in the journey of the human soul from finite to infinite. Evil is an essential part of the lives of the finite. Evil is not ultimate, and the whole life is a process of purification. The motto or goal of life is to reach Him by resolving imperfections, maya, or ignorance. The journey ends after reaching the land of bliss or union with Brahma.

Repentance in Islam is a critical idea. It provides each adherent with a way to return to their honour and seek forgiveness from the Creator. Islam completely rejects the idea of original sin, which suggests that people are born with wrongdoing. Every individual is responsible for his deeds. There is nothing in Islam that is known as "the first sin." As indicated by the verse of the Holy Qur'an and Mutawatir (widely related) customs, every one of the wrongdoings which man submits are excusable in the event that he apologizes genuinely. It is incorrect to assert that a transgression like this can never receive forgiveness. The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Glorious Qur'an,

And He is it who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deeds; He knows what you do. (Surah Ash-Shūrā 42:25)

Another principal contrast between these two religions is that Christians believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, which expresses that God is a single being who exists simultaneously and eternally as a fellowship of three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In Islam, the belief in a plurality of gods is considered a denial of monotheism and is therefore regarded as a major sin, known as 'al-Kaba'ir.' Hindus are the followers of the Upanishads and Vedas, which emphasize meditation as the supreme method for salvation. Be that as it may, what is the information? The learning of Ultimate Reality. For them, Brahma is the ultimate reality. Brahma is not an individual but rather the Cosmic Power, which is expressed in the phrase "Sarvam Brahma" (everything is Brahma). The individuals who comprehend this fact will encounter salvation.

However, Tagore disavows the term "collective religion" as encompassing "Christian", "Mohammedan", and "Vaishnava" beliefs, stating that "man's religion is his innermost truth." Exterior religion by definition has failed to understand the situation. Tagore, in his own particular manner, battled and composed against the tide of universal Hinduism, including its rituals, customs, and variety of icons and deities, to essentialise his beliefs. For Tagore, God is One, the Brahma of the Upanishads, the Supreme Person, the Infinite Being past every single human origination. Additionally, Tagore rejects the idea of discipline or renunciation. He believes the body is God's sanctuary, and the endless can be felt through the corporal presence.

The Islamic perspective varies fundamentally from these methodologies. As indicated by Islam, God has delegated the human soul as His Khalifah (vicegerent) in this world. He has endowed the soul with specific authority and given it certain duties and responsibilities, for which He has provided it with the best and most suitable physical form. The body was made to let the spirit use it to fulfil its duties. The body is a workshop for the spirit, which can only grow and create there. Thusly, this world isn't a position of discipline in which the human soul, shockingly, gets itself. According to Islamic Shariah, the concept of evil and the need for purification to eliminate Satanic influence is presented objectively, as everything has been revealed by Allah and should not vary from person to person. In Islam, the process of purification is objective as Allah subhanallahu tala reveals some obligatory rituals of worship that optimize the process of self-purification. For example, the performance of *Salah* (prayers) is a continual process of remembrance and submission to the Transcendent We maintain the cleanliness of our clothes and body through ablution, and our self-purity through devotion.

From the Islamic perspective, this struggle with the evil self (*nafs ammārah*) and the need for divine guidance is a central element of human life. However, unlike Donne's theology of original sin or Tagore's romantic spiritualism, Islam offers a balanced framework where divine mercy (*rahmah*) and human accountability coexist. Islam rejects the notion of inherited sin, asserting that every soul is born pure (*fitrah*) and becomes responsible for its choices through free will. The purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is not a passive plea for transformation, but an active journey requiring discipline, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), repentance (*tawbah*), and righteous deeds (*'amal sālih*) (Ahmed, 2019).

Additionally, in Islam, purification is not limited to internal transformation; it also involves outward conformity to divine law (*shari'ah*). Practices such as regular prayer (*ṣalāh*), fasting (*ṣawm*), and giving charity (*zakāh*) serve not only as worship but as instruments for refining the soul and resisting the

inclinations of the *nafs*. The Quran states, “He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who corrupts it” (Surah Ash-Shams, 91:9–10), emphasizing that self-purification is a matter of moral striving and divine support, not mystical absorption or extreme suffering.

Unlike Donne’s perception of needing to be violently overpowered by God, or Tagore’s poetic hope for gentle divine illumination, Islam teaches that the soul’s refinement requires both struggle (*jihād al-nafs*) and reliance on Allah’s guidance. True purification is neither forced upon nor passively awaited—it is a covenant between servant and Creator, where the path to salvation is clearly laid out through divine revelation. In this way, Islam presents a comprehensive, practical, and deeply spiritual roadmap for overcoming evil and achieving nearness to God (*qurb ilā Allāh*), integrating both the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of human existence.

Conclusion

John Donne’s “Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God” and Rabindranath Tagore’s “Aguner Parasmani” offer rich poetic reflections on the human soul’s struggle for spiritual purification. Despite their differences in theological background—Christianity and Hinduism respectively—both poets recognize the inherent presence of evil within the human self and express an intense desire for divine intervention to overcome it. Through powerful metaphors—particularly that of fire—and emotionally charged language, they portray purification as both a spiritual necessity and a transformative ordeal.

Donne’s depiction of purification is rooted in Christian dogma, especially the Trinity and the idea of sin’s bondage, where the soul must be violently reformed by divine force. In contrast, Tagore’s vision is more idealistic and internalized, reflecting the Vedantic belief in self-realization through divine grace and inner enlightenment. While both poets plead for divine assistance, their conceptions of God, the self, and the purification process differ significantly in tone, imagery, and theological grounding.

An Islamic reading of these poems reveals both points of convergence and divergence. Islam acknowledges the inner battle with the *nafs* (ego/self), and like both poets, emphasizes the need for divine guidance in achieving purification. However, unlike Donne’s notion of original sin or Tagore’s romanticism, Islamic theology presents a more structured and objective model of self-purification—grounded in free will, moral responsibility, and revealed guidance through the Qur’an and Sunnah. Thus, this comparative study reveals that while Donne and Tagore both express sincere spiritual longing, their frameworks reflect the doctrinal limits of their respective traditions. An Islamic lens allows for a critical engagement with both, offering a more balanced perspective on the concept of spiritual purification—one that integrates divine mercy, personal accountability, and the transformative journey of the soul.

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