

Timeless Wisdom for Transient Minds: Revisiting Tagore's Gitanjali through the lens of Sustainable Human Values and its Relevance for Present and Future Generations

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Abstract

With the Rapid expansion of Digital dependency, Environment degradation, social conflicts and the challenges faced by an individual in daily life, Sustainable Human Values gain a significant attention to deal with these contemporary challenges. Sustainable Human Values refers to ethical and moral parameters that guide the individuals and the societies towards promoting Sustainable Environment, responsible social behavior and moral integrity which facilitate the wellbeing of humanity across generations. This research paper focuses on investigating the pertinence of Sustainable Human Values I.e. Ecological values or Nature centered values, social values, Humanistic values, and Ethical values across generations explored in Gitanjali , along with its underlying root causes of diminishing in the contemporary era. This study adopts qualitative research methods for data collection. To accomplish this, aim qualitative thematic analysis of Selected poems from the textbook of Gitanjali is adopted to identify that the explored Sustainable Human Values are not only highly relevant for the individuals of contemporary era to face the current challenges but also strengthen the wellbeing of future generations. Findings of the investigation reveals that there is the gradual decline of Ecological, Social, Humanistic and Ethical Sustainable Human Values due to the influence of digital dependency, materialistic nature of an individual, and adoption of artificial digital personas, while simultaneously there is the timeless relevance of Universal Sustainable Human Values across the generations explored in Gitanjali. This provides the humanity a path to nurture the environment, foster universal harmony and integrity and creating peaceful societies.

Keywords: Sustainable Human values, Ecological values, social values, Humanistic Values, Ethical values, Digital Dependency, Gitanjali, Contemporary Era, Future Generation

1. Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the eminent Bengali Indian poets, novelist, writer, artist as well as musician. He was born on May 7, 1861 in Calcutta. He is also known as Rabindranath Thakur. In 1913 he was awarded with noble prize for his excellent literary masterpieces. His best-known work Gitanjali was originally published in August 1910 in Bengali language, which was later published in different languages. Its preface was written by W.B. Yeats. It contains 103 songs which are devoted to Divine and nature embedded with deep philosophical, spiritual, ethical/ moral, social, ecological and humanistic Sustainable Human values. Which enlightens the path of an individual by inspiring them to cultivate inner awareness, moral accountability, social harmony, ecological coherence and compassionate humanistic value. In addition to this, text explores the essence of life, existence, truthfulness, compassion, humility, harmony in nature, love and moral accountability. Rabindranath Tagore explored the relevance of the mentioned universal Sustainable Human Values not only for present time but for future generations also. Furthermore, Sustainable Human Values inspire Humanity despite the influence of Technological advancement, Digital dependency, Environment degradation and social conflicts etc. put a lot of contribution for the sustainable future of the coming generations.

2. Hypothesis

2.1 Main Hypothesis

H1: The sustainable human values explored in Tagore's Gitanjali are still relevant for present and future generation.

2.2 Sub hypothesis

2.2.1. H1a The values of Social Harmony and equality explored in Gitanjali are still relevant to flourish just and equal society.

2.2.2. H1b: Expansion of artificial intelligence and advance technology eradicates the difference between life and death cycle over the calm acceptance of death explored by Tagore in Gitanjali.

2.2.3. H1c: Over consumption of the resources and adopting luxury lifestyle by contemporary generation leads humanity towards decay and wastage of resources in comparison to embracing simplicity explored by Tagore in Gitanjali.

3. Research Gap

Various critics have examined the text of Gitanjali primarily from the spiritual, social and ecological perspective. Scholarly articles and research papers are existed on the Humanistic and Ecological Values which are explored in the text of Gitanjali. Along with-it research papers are also available on exploration of Tagore's philosophical ideas on moral or ethical values throughout the Gitanjali. Through the literature review it come into light that no doubt various scholars give their best efforts to explore Humanistic, Ecological and Ethical values presented in Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali. But still there is Research gap which is not addressed appropriately in the previous research works, it is the interdisciplinary investigation or rereading of the text of Gitanjali on the basis of the framework of Sustainable studies or Environment studies, to explore the Humanistic, Moral, Social and Ethical values, by connecting it with contemporary era and to explore its importance for the Sustainable future of the coming generations. To address this research gap text of Gitanjali along with scholarly articles, research papers and journal articles embedded in Gitanjali are analyzed deeply to explore the aimed goals.

4. Literature Review

The Term 'Sustainable Human Values' is highly discussed in the present-day Interdisciplinary fields to taken into consideration the wellbeing of coming generations. Sustainable Human Values ensures the following values: -

- a) Long term wellbeing of Human beings
- b) Ecological balance
- c) Social equality
- d) Ethical accountability

To investigate the underlying themes related to Sustainable Human values a thorough literature review has been done to explore the previous research which is available on this topic. To find out

the views of different research scholars, writers and eminent personalities on Tagore's philosophical ideas different Research papers, articles and books are used to review the literature available on this topic. The literature review explores the themes of everlasting relevance of sustainable human values explored in Gitanjali by Rabindranath Tagore. Sisir Kumar Das in his eminent work History of Indian Literature affirms that Tagore not only believes in rigid religious boundaries as well as ritualistic religion but also ensures that 'Divine' exists among poor and lower section of society. Here Das asserts the relevance of Tagore's believe in universal humanism and brotherhood across generations (Das,45). The relevance of Sustainable Human values is not only explored by critics but also by affirmed by UNESCO inscribing 'Shantiniketan' under the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list to emphasis on that how ESD 'Education for Sustainable Development' is required (UNESCO). Here Education not only refers to the study of different disciplines but Education includes inculcating Ethical accountability, Universal brotherhood and Social Justice embedded in Tagore's teachings to establish a just society. In one of the online blog article Clooney admits that how important are the Humanistic values i.e. empathy, truth and universal brotherhood in the modern disenchanted era to establish inclusive and harmonious society (Clooney). Along with-it denial to materialistic possessions and embracing sympathy, social harmony, freedom and self-realization are key elements for the personal growth of an individual asserted by Dr. S Radhakrishnan (Radhakrishnan,112). Furthermore, Shreemanta Sarkar explains that Ecological and Nature centered values are embedded in Gitanjali which portray a harmonious relationship between an individual and Environment. Revitalizing growth and establishment of Just society to combat with inequality and imbalanced economic growth along with sustainability are prerequisite elements for the wellbeing of contemporary era. (Sarkar,45). In addition to this Tagore asserts in Religion of Man "Men's religion is not sectarian, it's universal" reflects the importance of secular religion and universal brotherhood over the division on the basis of caste, color and creed. (Tagore, 68). According to Hossain Tagore's works anticipate modern environmental ethics, as they promote ecological balance, human-nature harmony, and spiritual respect for life (Hossain,4). Conclusively the literature review reflects the everlasting spirit of the Tagore's philosophical ideas which desires for the establishment of secular, inclusive and just society across the generations. Moreover, there is a need for further exploration of these values in the present time as well as for the coming generations.

5. Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the core sustainable human values embedded in Gitanjali for sustainable development of coming generations.
2. To investigate how technological advancement and Digital dependency put a transformative effect on moral sensitivity and ethical/moral accountability.
3. To investigate how Gitanjali Critiques the Materialism and extreme individualism in contrast to sustainability.
4. To examine the relevance of Tagore's value system explored in Gitanjali to face the contemporary challenges of environment degradation, social fragmentation and moral decline.
5. To identify Humanistic, Social, Moral and Ecological Sustainable Human Values and their relevance across generations.

6. Research Methodology

This Paper adopts textual descriptive analysis of the text of Gitanjali as a research methodology to collect data. Basically, it is based on qualitative thematic analysis method. Textbook of Gitanjali is used as a primary source of data collection. Selected poems from Rabindranath Tagore's textbook of Gitanjali are taken as sample to investigate the underlying themes related to basic Social, Humanistic, Ecological Sustainable Human Values. Along with its qualitative thematic interpretative analysis of Scholarly articles, Research papers and journal articles are also used as secondary resources of data collection. UNESCO's *Index Translationum* database shows extensive translations of Tagore's works (including *Gitanjali*) into numerous languages worldwide, demonstrating international dissemination and cross-cultural engagement with his ideas. In addition to it this methodology is adopted not only to fulfill the criteria of Fundamental research but also it is a mixture of Fundamental and action research by interrelating the textual analysis with investigating the relevance of Tagore's philosophical Social, Humanistic, Ethical and Ecological values in contemporary and for future generation.

Table 6

S.No.	Source	Description
01	Gitanjali (Primary Source)	Poetic lines are used for thematic close analysis
02	literary works (Secondary source)	Analysis of reoccurring themes
03	Online Blogs (Secondary source)	Content analysis of Similar themes
04	Reports of Institutes (e.g. UNESCO) (Secondary source)	Deep analysis of similar themes

7. Discussion/ Interpretation

7.1 Concept of Sustainable human values in Gitanjali

Basically, the Term ‘Sustainable’ refers to the long-term use of the things without any depletion taking into consideration the welfare of future generations. In context of Gitanjali Sustainable Human values are embedded in the text and expressed through the following values: -

1. Social Harmony and Equality
2. Simplicity over artificiality
3. Compassion, Humility and devotedness
4. Universal brotherhood
5. Universal brotherhood

7.2 Social Harmony and Equality V/S Contemporary Imbalance and Injustice

Social harmony, equality, universal brotherhood and social justice are prerequisite components to establish harmonious and just society. In Gitanjali, Rabindranath Tagore put an Emphasis on the Social Sustainable Values to foster social equality, justice and accountability in various selected poems. The following lines: -

Give me the strength never to disown the poor

Or bend my knees before insolvent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind

high above daily trifles,

And give me the strength to surrender

my strength to thy will loves. (Tagore, Song 36)

Reflects on how Tagore advocates the social harmony and equality by acquiring moral strength from Divine to flourish social responsibility, truthfulness, compassion and harmony towards poor section of society. In addition to it he strongly desires and seeks strength from Divine to stand against injustice and falsehood. Moreover, Tagore focuses on the unity of Nation by rising over daily trifles i.e. Fragmentation on the basis of caste, color and creed etc. In the last line Tagore focuses on the surrender of self to meet the ultimate Divine by shedding Ego, Status and materialistic thinking. Along with it in the following lines: -

Where the world has not been broken

Up into fragments by narrow domestic walls (Tagore, Song 35)

Tagore dreams and desires a kind of country in which marginalized section of the society will be provided with all the equal opportunities and social dignity away from fragmented world, which should not be divided on the basis of caste, color or creed. Here again Tagore urges for a Harmonious Nation to establish.

In contemporary advanced era of materialistic possessions gulf between rich and poor section of society increasing rapidly. Which is clearly mentioned in World Inequality Report 2026, released by World Economic forum that the top 10% of earners in India capture approximately 58% of the national income, whereas the bottom 50% receive only about 15%, indicating a significant structural imbalance in income distribution. Furthermore, wealth concentration is even more skewed, with the richest 1% owning nearly 40% of total national wealth. Access to Technology, Opportunities and preferences are easily available to the rich section of the society. Whereas poor are marginalized to the margins of society. However collective efforts are regularly taken by governments as well as Law to establish equal and just Society. But still there is lack of

accessibility and dignity for poor section of society which leads the society towards injustice and inequality Which creates an obstacle in the path of wellbeing of society.

In addition to it Tagore's philosophy is still relevant not only for present but also to bring sustainable future for the coming generations to address the challenges of rapid expansion of injustice, inequality and lack of social responsibilities. With massive expansion of Technology in future along with degradation of universal social harmony will endanger the establishment of just society. There is a primary requirement to embed the society with harmony, compassion, Universal brotherhood, Unity and integrity to sustain the future generations.

7.3 Human Mortality v/s Digital Immortality

Mortality is the inevitable reality of this world. A thing which came into existence in this world will meet to its decay one day that is the ultimate reality of this world. Simultaneously who takes birth in this world will be met with Death one day it is the part of the cycle of Life and Death. which leads the union of soul with ultimate Divine along with the completion of life. That's how calm acceptance of mortality and surrender of self before ultimate Divine leads towards the inner joy, contentment and solace. Throughout the poems of Gitanjali Rabindranath Tagore explored the Concept of Mortality referring the death as ultimate reality of life in the following lines:

Even so, in death the same unknown will

Appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life,

I know I shall love death as well (Tagore, Song 95)

Tagore reflects in these lines the calm acceptance of Death as an inevitable reality of life, which leads him towards the completion of life by union of soul with Divine. Whereas in Contemporary era of digital advancement in one of the scholarly article Rodríguez Reséndiz and Rodríguez Reséndiz argue that AI resurrection blurs the boundaries between life and death by recreating the deceased individuals through deadbots. (Rodríguez Reséndiz and Rodríguez Reséndiz 71), This creation is followed by digital footprints of an individual in terms of voice, data and images which questions the insecurity and data privacy issues. Due to the technological advancements human

mortality turns into Digital immortality along with adoption of digital personas, 3D filters, anti-aging diets and several AI simulation apps that create fake illusion of Digital immortality among people. Which leads the society towards psychological anxiety and loses of human dignity as well as emotions, overconsumption of resources, changed behavior towards ethical and social values along with decreases the fear of ultimate death. Furthermore, it will also threaten the Future generation with the wide span of artificial intelligence and upgrading technology. Which will eradicate the fear of the Law of nature i.e. Cycle of life and death along with destructive consequences for the sustainable future.

7.4 Embracing Simplicity over Artificiality

Rabindranath Tagore Privileges Simplicity over Artificiality which leads the society towards harmony and integrity rather than pomp and show. Here in Gitanjali Tagore mentioned

‘Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me.’ (Tagore, Song 7)

Here in literary context of Gitanjali ‘Ornaments’ referred to the Vanities i.e. Ego, pride, disparity and jealousy condemned by Tagore, which will create obstacles in the path of ultimate union of soul with Divine. Furthermore, Tagore admitted before Divine and desires a simple and straight life away from artificiality and gaudiness. Simultaneously historic leader Mahatma Gandhi was wearing simple Khadi symbolically reflects their self-reliance and ethical living beyond artificiality.

Simultaneously in the context of Contemporary Era ornaments refer to Materialistic wealth, modern lifestyle, pursuit of luxury items beyond necessity which leads the wastage of resources, creating economic imbalance, Excessive collection of wealth, and adoption of artificial appearances by the people of modern generation. To reduce these kinds of the practices the concept of LiFE mission is introduced by PM Narendra Modi in COP 26 to preserve nature and natural resources for the contemporary and future generations. (Mission LiFE)

In addition to this Tagore’s Philosophy of adopting simplicity over artificiality is still relevant not only for present generation but across generations to flourish Social Sustainability and remain

grounded with ethical principles, which will lead the society towards contentment, aesthetic relationships, love for nature and natural resources.

7.5 Illusion of Materialistic Security v/s Digital Dependency

In Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali Tagore repeatedly put an emphasis that excessive materialistic things, wealth and power, modern lifestyle works as chains which bounds an individual to the treasure house of status and dominance, which created an illusion of Materialistic security whereas these things distance an individual from harmony, integrity, empathy and internal freedom.

I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance..." (Tagore, Song 50)

In the context of these lines Tagore reflects on the idea that how the people of modern generation seek security and pleasure in wealth, materialistic gain, and disillusionment. Here the word 'golden chariot' creates an illusion of the things i.e. wealth, power and materialistic things which appears valuable but doesn't valuable in real sense. Through the philosophical ideas of Gitanjali true comfort and internal freedom lies in the surrender before the ultimate Divine and the union with Divine. This will bring solace, Contentment and internal peace

In contemporary Era with the vast expansion of digital dependency, data driven world and dependency on materialistic possessions creates an illusion of social security. Excessive dependence of an individual on technology leads towards distance in relationships, erosion of ethical and moral values, degrading nature and natural resources along with decay of social responsibility. Which will harm the harmony and integrity of the wellbeing of society.

In addition to it the massive expansion of Digital networks in near future will create unethical practices in form of exposing privacy, distancing personal relationships, reduces ethical concerns and depletion of environment. Advancement and innovation are required for a progressive and advanced society but along with-it cultivation of Moral, spiritual, social and ethical responsibilities are prerequisite factors to flourish emotional connectedness reduces anxiety, stress and unethical practices not only for contemporary era but also for the sustainable future of coming generations.

7.6 Patience and calmness V/s Hi Tech fast Contemporary Society

Nature has magical powers to teach an individual uncountable values i.e. patience, calmness, Humility, and waiting for the growth through the gradual process of slow blooming of plant or a flower The following lines: -

“This is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadows chase light and the rain come in the wake of the summer” (Tagore, Song 44) reflect on the value of patience, steadiness and humble behavior for gradual growth. Growth doesn’t occur rapidly but on the other hand side it needs its own pace.

“Come forth into the light of things, Let Nature be your teacher” (Wordsworth, Lines15-16)

The similar idea is reflected by Wordsworth that how Nature can become a better teacher than books and teaches better lessons related to our life. That’s how not only Tagore but other poets also explore the similar philosophical ideas that to gain Divine Grace, spiritual calmness, self-reflection and Humility, Patience is the key element to follow.

In contrast to Contemporary Hi Tech data driven Society Immediate results, quick responses and speedily processed information is required in comparison to patience and calmness. which leads the society towards impatience, anxiety, discourage and disconnected from fellow individuals.

Hi technology of Future generations will make the situation even worse and will encourage the overconsumption of resources for immediate and quick results, reduces patience along with environment degradation, which will threat the sustainable future of coming generations.

8. Findings/Results

8.1 Main Hypothesis

H1: The sustainable human values explored in Tagore’s Gitanjali are still relevant for present and future generation.

8.1.1. Result

The analysis of selected poems of Gitanjali reveals the reoccurring themes of encouraging social harmony, Humility, devotedness and ecological balance. These sustainable values are crucial to tackle the contemporary challenges of injustice, imbalance and environment degradation. So, the Main Hypothesis is supported by this analysis.

Table 8.1.1

S.No	Themes	Evidence from Gitanjali	Contemporary Challenges	Implication
1.	Social Sustainable values	Tagore explores the relevance of social equality, harmony, Integrity and social justice to establish harmonious society	Gulf between rich and poor, social injustice, and fragmented contemporary society	Can be implied to establish peaceful and inclusive societies.
2.	Humanistic values	Humility, truthfulness, dignity, rejection of ego are reoccurring values throughout Tagore's Gitanjali	Growing materialism and ego centric behavior of contemporary generation	Can be implied to inculcate these values in the lives of modern generation via education and moral values
3.	Ecological values	Tagore's poems are embedded with nature centric imagery in form of rivers, trees, seasons and flowers which asserts the relevance of ecological balance,	Environment depletion, contemporary environment crisis	Inspires the policy makers as well as masses to encourage sustainable interaction with environment

4.	Spiritual values	Devotion, Humility and surrender before Divine frequently occurred themes in Gitanjali	Materialism overpowers the spiritual values	Inspires humanity to inculcate spiritual values
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8.2 Sub Hypothesis

H1a The values of Social Harmony and equality explored in Gitanjali are still relevant to flourish just and equal society.

8.2.1. Result

Throughout the selected poems of Gitanjali Tagore put an emphasis on the equal opportunities and to establish equal society to eradicate disparity and divide between rich and poor. Report of World Economic forum 2026 reflects the gulf between rich and poor section of society. So, to address these kinds of challenges Tagore’s philosophical ideas are still relevant across generations. So, the above hypothesis is supported by the findings.

Table 8.2.1

S.No	Themes	Evidence from Gitanjali	Contemporary Challenges	Implications
1.	Equal Opportunities	Poems emphasize fairness and spiritual equality among masses	Supported by WEF 2026 report highlighting rich-poor disparity in contemporary time	Tagore’s ideas can guide policy makers and societal mindset
2.	Social Equality	Critique of social hierarchy and class divisions	Gap between rich and poor remains prominent globally	Philosophical insights remain relevant for reducing disparity and

3.				spread social accountability
	Human Dignity	Poems stress respect for every individual	Disparity between the wages of manual and mental labor	Can inspire education, social reforms, and ethical leadership

H1b: Expansion of artificial intelligence and advance technology eradicates the difference between life and death cycle over the calm acceptance of death explored by Tagore in Gitanjali.

8.2.2. Results

Throughout the Tagore’s selected poems calm acceptance of death and devotedness is reflected in comparison to the eradicating difference between life and death with the usage of Artificial intelligence. To address these kinds of contemporary issues still there is a need of Tagore’s Sustainable human values. So, this Hypothesis is also supported by the textual findings.

Table 8.2.2

S.No.	Themes/Concepts	Evidence from Gitanjali	Contemporary challenges	Implication
1.	Calm acceptance of death	Tagore represents death as a fulfilment and intimate union with life, not fear — e.g., in “Death” death is personified as bridegroom and welcomed as the last fulfilment of life.	Primacy of AI in blurring the boundaries between life and death	AI systems should incorporate human limitations and uncertainty rather than overstepping ethical boundaries,

				<p>avoiding dehumanizing practices encourages human-AI collaboration grounded in respect for life</p>
2.	Devoted before Divine	Poems of Gitanjali emphasis on devotes before ultimate Divine is the ultimate reality of human life	AI reflects the desire of control and dominance	Can be implied on AI to admit the sovereignty of ethical accountability
3.	Life- Death Unity & Human Values	Tagore focuses on the union of soul with ultimate Divine leads towards permanent fulfilment	AI tries to erase the binary opposition of Life and Death with the usage of simulation and artificial practices	Suggests harmony and integrity in spite of artificial intervention

H1c: Over consumption of the resources and adopting luxury lifestyle by contemporary generation leads the humanity towards decay and wastage of resources in comparison to embracing simplicity explored by Tagore in Gitanjali.

8.2.3. Result

However, Tagore emphasizes on embracing the simplicity over artificiality throughout the text of Gitanjali , simultaneously to face the challenges of adoption of luxury lifestyle and wastage of unnecessary resources and adopting LiFE mission to protect and preserve nature are progressive steps to cater the sustainable future of coming generation, in which Tagore’s Teaching are still relevant to face these future challenges. So, these textual findings again support the hypothesis.

Table 8.2.3

S.No.	Themes	Evidence from Gitanjali	Contemporary challenges	implication
1	Simplicity over artificiality	Tagore focuses on simple lifestyle and denies the excess materialism	Luxury as well as expensive lifestyle	reducing the over consumption and exploitation of resources and embracing practices like LiFE mission
2	Sustainable future vision	Emphasis on balance harmony and integrity	Threats to resource depletion and crisis	Implied in cultivation intergeneration responsibility

9. Suggestions

1. Adoption of Sustainable practices avoiding overconsumption of resources and environment to preserve the resources for future generations.
2. Contributing individually in the social equality and justice to establish balanced and equal society for the coming generations.
3. Avoiding over dependency on the AI tools or technology to flourish data security and privacy for the wellbeing of sustainable society.

4. Embracing Patience, calmness universal brotherhood and harmony instead of inequality and imbalance to cultivate sustainable future societies.
5. To create Ecological balance by adopting Simple life style and avoiding overconsumption.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion Tagore's philosophical ideas explored in Gitanjali not only flourishes universal brotherhood, social justice and social equality as social values but also integrates it with Humility, compassion, Truthfulness and love for humanity as Humanistic Values. Along with-it Tagore explored the Nature as a best teacher to teach the entire humanity patience, humbleness and steadiness in rapid Hi Tech society. Throughout the findings it came into light that no doubt due to the Technological advancement, digital dependency, materialistic progress and degradation of ethical and moral standards endangered the Social, Humanistic, Moral, Ethical Sustainable Human Values, still these values have everlasting relevance not only in contemporary era but also for coming future generation for their sustainable future. Still there is a scope for further study in which perspective of Contemporary generation can be explored to investigate their attitude towards the relevance of Sustainable Human Values.

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