

MULTICULTURALISM IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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Abstract

The present study examines the select plays of Rabindranath Tagore under the literary dimension of American Sociologist, George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism. In other words, it is a frame of reference used in the present research to analyse how the literary characters interact with one another to create symbolic worlds, and in return, how these worlds shape human behaviours. Symbols are culturally derived social objects having shared meanings that are created and maintained in social interaction. Through language and communication, symbols provide the means by which the invisible language of self is comprehended and thereby, reality is constructed.

Keywords: culture, sociology, psychology, interactionism

Significance of the Present Study

The present paper examines the integration of sociological, psychological and literary domains in the select works of Tagore. Though early research has explored the extension of these interdisciplinary realms, no body of research has focused on Symbolic Interactionism from the characters' point of view in literature. Therefore, it is essential to address the actual psychological transformation that occurs in the personas of literatures in the process of interacting with the symbols and interpreting them in reality. Postmodern writings especially Indian discourse in English literature also demonstrates an exemplary responsiveness to self-complexity. A socio-cultural explanation is crucial to analyze the characterisation as well as its developmental conceptualization. Mead's concept of self and symbolic interactionism has more application to Tagore's psychological narratives its base of mythical representations.

The basic tenets of symbolic interactionism state that: (1) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them; (2) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings; (3) meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society and (4) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction

with others (Blumer, 1969). The symbolic interactionism understands the human being as a thinking being who defines the environment where it acts. The environment does exist, but what matters is one's definition about it. These definitions do not occur occasionally, but as a result from the constant social and individual interactions. The environment with which the individual acts and interacts is symbolic. Symbols are produced through interaction and may or may not be altered in the course of the interaction.

Origin of the Study

One of the aims of literary text is to convey as much as possible in minimum words to achieve maximum impact on the readers. As a result, Tagore has employed a variety of significant symbols; those interact with one another on the basis of its Universal meanings and characters' manifestation. Their responses to one another depend on the interpretation of symbols rather than merely on the enactment of responses they have been conditioned to make. Thus, they engage in symbolic interaction. Ostensibly, the interdisciplinary and the patterns of symbolic interactions in Tagore's plays across both time and space make it a medium to understand human behaviours -artistic, aesthetic, literary, linguistic and social. The present study sees the relevance and significance of symbolic interactions as meaningful and progressive. The study is an attempt to perceive such human and non-