

(The songs of Rabindranath Tagore, an important Bengali poet and philosopher who lived from 1861-1941)

Hindi transcript:

- तो, और तुम्हारी – जो तुम बता रही थी – दादी को हिन्दी सीखना... no! Bengali सीखने...
- Yeah, मेरी दादी जो है, वह तो... whatever... बहुत पुराने ज़माने की है। तो मेरी दादी चाहती थी... but I think she is really right from... her point of view... और मेरी दादी हमें... चाहती थी कि मैं Bengali ठीक से सीखूँ। सङ्गीत सीखूँ, especially...
- Hmm!
- और मैं बचपन से, जब मैं पाँच साल की थी, तभी से I started s... I started singing। और मैंने शुरू किया था शास्त्रीय सङ्गीत और रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत से। पर शास्त्रीय सङ्गीत जो है, उस... वह actually बहुत tough है, और पूरा time devote करना पड़ता है। And I couldn't devote the entire time. तो मुझे लगता है कि कोई चीज half-heartedly नहीं करनी चाहिये।
- Hm.
- तो इसीलिये, the best solution was to give it up।
- Hm.
- तो मैंने basically शास्त्रीय सङ्गीत सीखना छोड़ दिया, but I continued with रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत, and...
- Uh-huh.
- I learned it for a long time.
- Wow.
- और मुझे लगता है कि सङ्गीत सीखना, अपनी भाषा को सीखना बहुत, बहुत ज़रूरी है।
- Uh-huh.
- तो, और हमारी एक temple है, एक मन्दिर है, एक राधा-कृष्ण की मन्दिर है – जो मेरे grandfather ने स्थापित किया था।
- राधा-कृष्ण... भगवान राधा, भगवान कृष्ण?
- Yeah, भगवान कृष्ण का एक temple है।
- जो बाँसुरी बजाते हैं...
- हाँ, जो बाँसुरी बजाते हैं। तो, हमारी जो मन्दिर है, वहाँ पे... आज भी हम सब जो जन्माष्टमी है – लॉर्ड कृष्ण की जो जन्मदिन है – हम सब एकसाथ मिलजुल के मनाते हैं। और my grand... my grandmother actually ensures कि हमारी पूरी परिवार एक हो के, इकट्ठा हो के हम सारे त्योहार मनाएँ, and things like that... like, she is very particular about all this। तो मुझे लगता है कि मैं काफी attached हूँ अपनी roots से Calcutta में।

- Uh-huh.

- और वैसे मुझे लगता है सबको होनी भी चाहिये।

- Uh-huh. तो आयोती, बचपन से... तुमने बताया कि रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत तुम बचपन से सीख रही हो।

- हाँ।

- तो तुम्हें क्या लगता है कि रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत में ऐसी कुछ qualities, ऐसी कौन सी distinct qualities हैं जो... characteristics हैं जो तुम्हारे दिमाग में आती हैं?

- मुझे लगता है रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत एक ऐसी... ऐसी form of music है जो आप महसूस कर सकते हैं।

You know, they're so sensuous, you can almost touch the words, and feel the words. तो मुझे लगता है मैं काफी relate कर सकती हूँ रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत से। And it's like a recourse from... you know... I can take shelter from... whatever, you know, from pain, and anxiety and... you know. It's a good way to... whatever, you know... alleviate my pains and anxiety...

- ऐसी... तुम बोल रही हो कि... तुमने बताया कि touching words भी होते हैं... यह... ऐसी कुछ qualities..... और, nature के बारे में काफी रङ्गीन...। तो एक... कुछ हमें उदाहरण दोगी... पसन्द करे...

- रबिन्द्रनाथ ने जो...जो सङ्गीत लिखे थे, वो... you can... you can divide them in four categories। तो एक है जो भगवान के लिये पूजा में होती है। एक स्वदेश और nature और... you know, that way। तो जो nature की जो songs हैं, वो मुझे लगता है बहुत, बहुत अच्छा है। The...the imagery is, like, very vivid. You can almost picturize it.

- So, I can sing two...two lines.

- Sure.

- Yeah. (बङ्गाला भाषा में गीत का मुखड़ा गाती हैं।)

- (ताली बजाती है।) Very nice! तो इसका अर्थ क्या है?

- It basically is... it's a nature song. तो इसमें जो setting है कि... जो poet है...

- प्राकृतिक... की...

- हाँ। जो... जो setting है इसमें, poet अकेले घर में बैठे हैं, और बहुत जोर से – you know, it's raining – बारिश हो रही है।

- Uh-huh.

- और वो जो describe कर रहे हैं, वह basically is the beauty of nature. जैसे कि the beauty of rain। और जो... he compares the black clouds to काजल, and you know। And it's a beautiful description, you know. The imagery is so vivid. कि आप, you know, आप जब सुनते हैं तो you can actually picturize what's happening। तो मुझे लगता है बहुत touchy है... you know, the description of the rain, the rivers...

- Right.

- The dense forest and... ऐसे...

- So... yeah, it is beautiful. तो आप अभी भी सीख रही हैं रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत, या...
- हाँ, I was learning till August. Basically, हाँ.

English translation:

(Note: The person interviewed is a native speaker of Bengali. The gender mistakes are characteristic, but since they are *mistakes*, most have been pointed out.)

- So, your – as you were saying – grandmother[’s views on] learning Hindi ... no! learning Bengali...
- Yeah, my grandmother ... she ... whatever, she happens to be very old-fashioned.* So she wanted ... but I think she is really right from her point of view ... and my grandmother alw ... wanted that I learn Bengali well. That I learn music, especially... (*मेरी दादी ... हैं is probably better.)
- Hmm!
- And I learnt singing as a child, from the time I was five years old. I began with classical (Hindustani) music and Rabindrasangeet. But classical music is actually very tough, and one has to devote a lot of time [to learning it]. And I couldn’t devote the entire time. So I think that nothing ought to be done half-heartedly.
- Uh-huh.
- So, that’s why the best solution was to give it up.
- Uh-huh.
- So basically I discontinued lessons in classical music, but I continued with Rabindrasangeet, and ...
- Uh-huh.
- I learned it for a long time.
- Wow.
- And I think that learning music, learning one’s language is very, very important.
- Uh-huh.
- So, and we have a temple,* (repeats in English) a temple, a temple dedicated to Radha and Krishna, which my grandfather established.
(*‘हमारी... temple’ is incorrect. मन्दिर – ‘temple’ – is masculine, hence, ‘हमारा... temple’.)
- Radha, Krishna – the gods?
- Yeah, we have a temple dedicated to Lord Krishna.
- He who plays the [bamboo] flute?
- Yes, he who plays the flute. So, at the temple, during Janmashtami – Lord Krishna’s birthday – all of us [members of the extended family] take part in the celebrations. And my grand ... grandmother actually ensures that all our family members* congregate and celebrate the festival(s) together, and things like that ... like, she is very particular about all this. So I think that I am very attached to my roots in Calcutta.

(*हमारी पूरी परिवार should be replaced by हमारा पूरा परिवार. Also, की... जन्मदिन is incorrect. कृष्ण is a masculine name.)

- Uh-huh.

- And I believe that everyone should be similarly attached [to their cultures].

- Uh-huh. So, Ayoti, you said that you have been learning Rabindrasangeet ever since you were a child.

- Yes.

- So do you think that Rabindrasangeet has certain qualities – certain distinct qualities... certain characteristics that come to your mind at this time?

- I think that Rabindrasangeet is... a form of music* that you can feel. You know, [the songs] are so sensuous, you can almost touch the words, and feel the words. So I think that I can relate very much to [Rabindranath's songs]. And it's like a recourse from ... you know ... I can take shelter from ... whatever, you know, from pain, and anxiety and ... you know. It's a good way to ... whatever, you know ... alleviate my pains and anxiety ...

(*Wrong gender. It ought to be रबिन्द्रसङ्गीत एक ऐसा, etc.)

- Such ...you are saying that ... you have said that [the songs] have touching words ... this... [they have] such a quality to them... and, there are colorful ... of nature ... So ... will you give us ... some examples ... would like...

- The songs that ... that Rabindranath wrote ... you can ... you can divide them into four categories. So there is one [category of songs] which are in the form of prayers to the divine. There is another with the *svadesh* (loosely, patriotism: literally, 'one's own country') theme and [another consisting of songs of] nature... you know, that way. So the songs of nature, I think, are very, very good. The...the imagery is very vivid. You can almost picture it. (The language is shaky here.)

- So I can sing two ... two lines.

- Sure.

- Yeah. (Sings the opening lines of a song in Bengali.)

- (Claps her hands.) Very nice! [And] what does it mean?

- It basically is ... it's a nature song. So what is going on here is that ... the poet ...

- That ... [nature] ...

- Yes. What ... what is going on here is that the poet is sitting alone at home, and it's – you know, raining.

- Uh-huh.

- And basically he is describing the beauty of nature. For instance, the beauty of rain. And he compares the black clouds to coal, and you know. And it's a beautiful description, you know. The imagery is so vivid. That – you know – when you hear it, you can picture what is going on. So I think that it's very [sensuous] ... you know, the description of the rain, the rivers ...

- Right.

- The dense forest ... and so forth ...

- So ... yeah, it's beautiful. So are you still learning Rabindrasangeet, or...

- Yes, I learned it until August. Basically, yes.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use everyday. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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