

# ‘Truth’ as the Immaterial Essence of Beauty in Tagore’s Play *Chitra*

---

ASHER ASHKAR GOHAR

**Abstract:** This paper examines Rabindranath Tagore’s aestheticism with reference to his play *Chitra* (published 1913). By employing John Keats’ concept of ‘beauty’ as in his couplet: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” (Lines 49-50), from his *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, this paper contends that Rabindranath Tagore in his play *Chitra* averts ‘material’ existence of beauty as ultimate ‘truth’. Rather, he lays emphasis on striving towards what Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his Romantic predecessors called “das Absolute” (Gorodeisky), that is, the beauty we find in truthfulness (Satyam), which lacks materiality. Aarti Devi states: “Tagore seems to follow the base of [Indian] aesthetics known as Satyam [Truth], Shivam [Goodness] and Sundaram [Beautiful]” (Devi 314). In this sense, Tagore in his play sees ‘truth’ – an immaterial cognizance – rather than materiality, as the essential form of beauty. And in this capacity, his ideas of ‘truth’ and ‘beauty’ peculiarly coincide with the idea of the Romantics, especially with that of John Keats. By obviating ‘materiality’ from truth and beauty, he illustrates the idea of beauty as truth, not bound within materiality, and hence fundamentally aesthetic.

*Keywords:* Beauty; truth; materiality; immateriality; perception

This paper contends that Rabindranath Tagore in his play *Chitra* discards the idea of materiality (in the Berkeleian sense) in beauty as being ‘truth’. The argument of this research rather posits that Tagore averts materiality as associated with beauty and confirms immateriality of beauty as truth in his play. George Berkeley “...holds that there are no such mind-independent things, that, in the famous phrase, *esse est percipi (aut percipere)* — to be is to be perceived (or to perceive)” (Downing). In this sense, every truth established is based in perception. Tagore achieves this feature by providing a humanized picture of the gods, who are otherwise idolized. Through this demonstration he shows that even religion (which is often times considered as materially absolute) is something temporal, and consequently, not the ultimate. His primary aesthetic element in the play is ‘truth’, which the Romantics called “das Absolute” (Gorodeisky), referring to ‘totality’. It appears that if an entity exists, the existence of that entity becomes ‘truth’, and this ‘truth’ that the entity exists as it is, is beautiful. The research in this regard employs John Keats’ ideology of ‘beauty’ and ‘truth’ to explicate the mentioned notion within Tagore’s play. Keats states: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” (lines 49-50). He essentially suggests the primacy of ‘truth’ over everything, hence, ‘truth’ being beautiful. This concept of ‘truth’ is further explained by Francis Herbert Bradley in his *Essays on Truth and Reality* (published 1914), where he positions truth as

the essence of reality (Bradley 113). Taking the idea of essence and correlating it with the Berkeleyan sense, we can gather that ‘truth’ (Satyam) eludes material existence and, is an abstract reality. In his play *Chitra*, Rabindranath Tagore also elevates ‘truth’ (Satyam) above all. The play aims at the notion of religion and belief (materiality), humanizes the gods (and their boons) depicted in the play, and by doing so, reverberates material existence of beauty in ‘religion’. Materiality renders the existence of entities as temporal (bound to being affected by time). And the play shows that the beauty which emanates from the supposed ‘truth’ thus becomes an elusive factor in this material religious ideology.

*Chitra* (the play) relates to John Keats and his poem in question in another significant capacity. The word “Chitra” in Sanskrit stands for “picture” (painted, sculpted, sketched, etc.), and the play, in essence, appears to be a picture painted upon a canvas manifest through its imagery. John Keats’ *Ode on a Grecian Urn* also deals with the same mechanism. The poet looks at a picture drawn over an ancient Grecian urn, and feels the mesmerizing captivity of its existence, which appears as if its animate. The people who are illustrated upon the Urn, although being static, seem to be dynamic in their individual actions in a harmonious way. By making the emanating beauty of the urn visible to his readers, Keats points out to an immaterial truth that evades the materiality of the urn. Observable and material entities are beautiful but temporal, while things immaterial are manifestations of truth and, therefore, eternal. *Chitra*, also provides the same imagery of nature, with people, lovers, and their mirth, all that comes together to make what Coleridge calls ‘totality’ and T.L.S. Sprigge, rephrases as the “unconditioned reality” (Sprigge). Their existence, and their true being presented as it is emanating through, essentially reflects the beauty of this world. Tagore is known widely by many critics to be a Romantic, and therefore, his aestheticism appears intrinsically romantic in nature. Kenneth R. Stunkel attests this statement by saying: “[Rabindranath] Tagore was an intrinsic romantic by temperament” (Stunkel 249).

The play begins with exposition of ‘Chitra’ (the titular character), a warrior princess of Manipur, conversing with the gods of ‘Love’ and ‘Eternal Youth’, “Madana” and “Vasanta”, respectively. She enquires the verity of ‘Madana’ as being the “Lord of love” (Scene I, pp.1). Even though Madana asserts himself as being who she says he is, nevertheless, it cannot be overlooked that the play begins with an enquiry and uncertainty of truth in materiality. It is interesting to note that Tagore, in the beginning of the play, puts forth the genuineness of religion, and the idea of an all-powerful deity, as questionable. Similarly, Chitra questions the second deity, ‘Vasanta’, who also answers in the affirmative, suggesting the claim of being “Eternal Youth”. The freshness of Chitra’s youth is complemented in Madana’s query, which gives a strong sensuous impression: “Why dost thou wither thy fresh youth with penance and mortification?” This entire conversation between Chitra and the deities establishes the apparent reality. It also established the concept of material existence of beauty and spirit as truth. Madana also asks about her being and her prayer. Upon this query, Chitra introduces herself and that her family, who had been bestowed with a boon from Lord Shiva stated as “an unbroken line of male descent”. However, she declares that “the divine word proved powerless...”, which again brings in Tagore’s implicit idea of religious fallibility and temporality. Upon Madana’s enquiry about her prayer, Chitra unfolds her heart’s desire to him. She has fallen for the greatest warrior known in her time, ‘Arjuna’ of the Kuru clan. Her recollection of the route, upon which she first met Arjuna, is described by Tagore with the romantic depiction

of nature as we find in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats: "a narrow sinuous path"; "entangled boughs"; and "chirping of crickets". In doing so, Tagore celebrates the existence of these entities and their being as truth, a part of 'totality', and therefore emanating the essence of beauty. In a similar capacity, Swati Debnath remarks that "Tagore's romanticism... [is] the deep understanding of the beauty and wealth of Mother Earth and Nature" (Debnath 46).

Following her confession, Chitra prays to Madana and Vasanta that they may turn her 'feminine' i.e., with all embellishments and qualities and appearance traditionally associated with women that she lacks. She abhors her manly attire, that she acquired from her father's training her as a man, since her childhood. Her impression of beauty correlates with materiality. Everything she sees as beautiful is a corporal embellishment. This conception of hers leads her to believe that Arjuna ignored her, on their first encounter with each other, due to her lack of traditional womanly embellishments. She despises what is her real 'self', the immaterial 'truth' of her being. She knows that she is a woman, but she asks for the embellishments of the traditional womanly attire that she believes she lacks:

Therefore, I have come to thy door, thou world-vanquishing Love, and thou, Vasanta, youthful Lord of the Seasons, take from my young bong this primal injustice, an unattractive plainness. For a single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beautiful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart. Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will answer for the days that follow. (Scene I, pp.9-10)

In these lines, we see Chitra as an individual who detests her true self, her immaterial being and so, despises the 'truth' of her existence. In explanation to why Chitra seems to desire such transfiguration in Tagore's play, Devi writes: "Love to Tagore is libidinal outlook, not an emotional nonsense" (311). She wishes to seduce her desired Arjuna with what she considers "perfect beauty". She remains oblivious of the worth of her true self. The essence she misperceives is based in the fleshliness of embellishments. Both gods grant her prayer, and that not for a day, but for a whole year "the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle round...[her] limbs". Her appearance before Arjuna in Scene II is reminiscent of the sensuousness that is most evident in Keats, as Arjuna upon beholding her for the first time (dressed as a woman) says: "...when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage and apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink... she bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress." (Scene II, pp. 11-12). We see an erotic image of Chitra in her newfangled "perfect beauty" as she is encountered, and so described, by Arjuna. The illusion that Chitra wears is potent enough to seduce a man known for his celibacy that has lasted for twelve years. Arjuna also mistakes the illusion for the "perfect form", mistakes it for the 'absolute truth' (Satyam), and willingly sacrifices his meditation and celibacy. In this context, Aarti Devi inscribes: "Tagore has made the original framework of religious beauty as well as the religious truth through the portraits of women like Chitra" (315). But this does not appear to be the case in the play's situation. Tagore purposely brings up the idea of 'illusion' with the mentioned "perfect beauty", which Chitra receives from Madana and Vasanta. George Berkeley states that when we individuals perceive the being of external bodies, we "...are all the while only contemplating our own ideas. But the mind taking no notice of itself, is deluded to think it can and doth conceive bodies existing unthought of or without the mind; though at the same time they

are apprehended by or exist in itself” (Downing). Tagore expounds that the beauty she deems “perfect” is merely an illusion immersed in appearance (materiality), and not essentially ‘truth’. As both of them converse, she reveals her heart’s desire of being with Arjuna, the Kuru. As a result, Arjuna falls for her in the same vein of this misperception.

Tagore’s use of Shiva’s temple as a meeting place for both of them hold much significance in regard with his sensuousness: “Lord Shiva is the embodiment of the fulfillment of desires” (Devi 314) and his emblem is the ‘Lingam’ (“Lingam”) which signifies the union of male and female genitals. Arjuna calls her “...the goal of all efforts” which echoes the notion of ‘das Absolute’. Pain of deceit takes hold of Chitra. David Hume puts this concept in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* as follows: “[o]bscurity is painful to the mind as well as to the eye” (7), her mind’s obscurity regarding truth and illusion pains her senses, and she tends to stop Arjuna from giving into such falsehood. Nevertheless, both give in eventually, as Chitra says: “take me, take all I am!”. Here again, the description of the moment by Chitra shows Tagore’s sensuousness at its full: “One curtain of darkness covered all. Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable ecstasy” (Scene III, pp.24). It also reflects the Romantic idea of “union of oppositions” (“Samuel Taylor Coleridge”) which recurs heavily in Tagore’s approach in this play to emphasize the relation between truth and beauty.

It is again the pain of falsehood that snatches the pleasure away from Chitra. She becomes utterly vexed because she is not her ‘self’. The true beauty that she had always known in her ‘self’ (her immaterial beauty) appears to have faded away in and due to the superfluities endowed upon her. Moreover, the contemplation of her guilt, of making Arjuna lose his celibacy to mere deceit, distresses her. Her delight turns into sadness and guilt when she realizes that she has lied to her beloved. She feels such remorse on the thought of being the embodiment of ‘lie’ by the boon of the gods upon her request. “I found that my body” says Chitra, “had become my own rival. It is my hateful task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved and see her caressed by him” (Scene III, pp.27). Leading her lover and herself away from ‘truth’ takes away all pleasure of beauty away from her mind. The thought, of her being an illusion, makes her hate herself as if she were a prostitute to “send her [body] to [her] beloved” and under such realization calls it a “hateful task”. She had been so blind to pursue the temporal pleasures that she remains unaware of the truth that lies beyond them. Previously, she had perceived the embellishments of a “womanly” attire as true pleasure. But now, she only feels melancholy. It reiterates the idea that if there is no the truth, there is no pleasure, and so, no true beauty that generates pleasure.

Upon contemplation of her guilt, and the will to tell the truth to her lover pressing her mind, she is tempted by Madana. This particular instance in the play divulges signs of skepticism in Tagore towards religious truth, as he depicts a god encouraging falsehood and deceit: “To snatch away the cup from his lips when he has scarcely drained his first draught of pleasure, would not that be cruel?” (Scene III, pp.27). Temptations to do wrong are customarily associated with the devil, and not deities. Yet, here Madana plays the devil. Vasanta, conversely, contemplates the beauty of truth, expresses that she should not feel dejected, and encourages her to tell the truth about herself to Arjuna; “...the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in thee”. Chitra realizes that beauty is not something one wears as an embellishment. It is rather what Swati Debnath calls “...[a] positive value that is intrinsic” (Debnath 48). Beauty is what dwells within, what is truthful. Vasanta’s words show this sensation remarkably.

Chitra is not the only one who experience guilt of self-deception in this play. Arjuna also experiences the same guilt. He fears he has indulged himself so much in mortal pleasures that he has forgotten he is a Kshatriya, a defender. He sanctions his feeling in such words: “My Kshatriya’s right arm, idly occupied...forgets its duties” (Scene VI, pp.35). He has heard the cry of the people, but has not heeded their plea, while he was with Chitra (under guise). His guiltiness tears him apart from within as he has long been away from the truth of what he really is, and has been living a lie (even though for a while). He insists, while talking to Chitra, that he must go hunting, which is the recreation that everyone in his clan practices. Upon insisting, Chitra grants him leave. In this instant, Arjuna also manifests his true beauty that has made Chitra fall for her. It is not Arjuna’s material existence that makes him a desire for many. Rather it is his immaterial valor, his courage and devotion, that in essence is beautiful. But, as he is gone, Chitra again falls under temptation of the illusion of corporal beauty and pleads Madana to let her womanly attire shine to its full, for it is the last night until the boon is annulled, which Madana grants to her. In this situation, her feelings for love’s pleasures take hold of her and she feels overpowered by her libidinal desires.

After taking Chitra’s leave, Arjuna finds some villagers complaining about the robbers that vex and terrorize them, and that their princess Chitra was their only hope against such evils. Upon hearing about the legends of Chitra, the warrior, Arjuna is awe-struck. He cannot help but think about this warrior princess, even though he has seen a “perfect” image of beauty quite recently. This unravels two things: first, that Arjuna’s desire for the girl he has been living with is merely a lustful drive; second, that Chitra’s gamble up till this moment has brought nothing but momentous pleasure and beauty that fades away the next moment. For the problem “arises when we consider a mode without paying attention to its substance” (Arnauld and Nicole 37). Truth in both Berkeleian as well as Keatsian sense is immaterial and thus not bound by the effects of temporal reality. It surpasses time and remains eternally beautiful (Flage). She thought she might win Arjuna’s heart, but instead she had only won his lust for her. This is the same feeling that Chitra expresses earlier upon her contemplation of living a lie, of being nothing but a mere prostitute. Falsehood has evoked displeasure in both of them, as they have not been true to one another. Essentially, with themselves, the joy no longer prevails.

Arjuna, upon his return, is captivated by the idea of “Chitra”, the warrior princess. He craves a mere sight of hers to satiate his desire for the true beauty that he understands. Chitra, however, tries to convince him that the girl he craves for is not beautiful. She projects her own fears onto Arjuna, oblivious of his preferences. Chitra’s distrust in her own true beauty is due to her immersion in and preoccupation with established womanly superficial embellishments. She does not face the fact that she is a warrior, and that is what makes her ‘Chitrangada of Manipur’, the woman who appears to have captivated the mind of Arjuna. Her lack of knowledge about her own ‘self’ had led her to believe that she is not beautiful in her true apparel. Her insecurity is plainly evident in her reply to Arjuna’s fascination with the warrior princess: “Ah, but she is not beautiful. She has no such lovely eyes as mine, dark as death. She can pierce any target she will, but not our hero’s heart” (Scene VIII, pp.45). Nonetheless, Arjuna has caught hold of Chitra’s, what Swati Debnath calls, “intrinsic” beauty (Debnath 48). That beauty which unravels the truth about Chitra, the warrior. Aarti Devi explicates: “Religion creates the true self of the man. Chitra says to Arjuna: “If you allow me to share the great duties of your life,

then you will know my true self” (Devi 315). This statement appears, however, quite off beam. Madana offered ‘illusion’ as a mask for Chitra to hide her true self. And consequently, through Chitra, it sullied Arjuna, a Kshatriya from his duties (Celibacy and Kshatriya oath). Tagore exploits another element of folly in the deities – the lack of aesthetic judgement. If they be omniscient, they should know the true nature of beauty. And, if not halt Chitra, they could have at least provided her with other options. It is rather the pursuit for truth, the Romantic “das Absolute”, that creates harmony in our being. F.E. Sparshott says: “Beauty is relatively stable or real pleasure” (Sparshott, 78). In this sense, it happens to be the stability and prevalence of what is true, the immaterial, that is beautiful in an entity, and not its temporary manifestation. Chitra, the warrior, by mere description of her qualities has been able to captivate the mind of Arjuna. Whereas Chitra’s illusion and contrived ‘self’ has scarcely been able to win his lust. Hence, the immateriality of beauty surpasses its materiality.

Further in the play, we see Arjuna enthralled as he says: “They say that in valor she is a man, and a woman in tenderness” (Scene VIII, pp.45). In this description, Tagore again brings the Romantic concept of ‘union of oppositions’ – combination of manly and womanly attributes. As Coleridge creates “caves of ice” along with a “sunny dome” (lines 36) in his *Kubla Khan*, so Tagore brings, as union, the man/woman dichotomy in a single character, again referring to a truth that is, and cannot be, in no sense entrapped inside material existence of a human body. Arjuna, who had been a slave of his lustful desires previously, is so much transfixed upon the thought of Chitra, the warrior, that he bluntly denies to sleep with his current partner. This indirect encounter with the immaterial ‘truth’ inspires true beauty beneath Arjuna’s lustful exterior. He finally realizes that he is a Kshatriya, and is obliged to perform his duty, come what may. He says: “...permit me for a short while to set about a Kshatriya’s work. With new glory will I ennoble this idle arm, and make of it a pillow more worthy of your head.” (Scene VIII, pp.47). As a Kshatriya, he needs to strive for the prosperity of others. That is what his true ‘self’ insinuates. He seems so eager to learn about this warrior princess, since merely her name has rejuvenated the long-forgotten Kshatriya in him, the truth that has been within him all along. He now strives towards his original ‘self’. Richard Eldridge in expanding upon the idea of truth and beauty quotes Friedrich Hölderlin as follows: “...I am now convinced that the highest act of reason, by encompassing all ideas, is an aesthetic act, and that truth and goodness are siblings only in beauty.” (Eldridge 275). The “act of reason” for Arjuna lies in performing his duty to the people. This is the act that ‘reason’ compels him to commit. Therefore, it is naturally an “aesthetic act” in Friedrich Hölderlin’s sense, an act illustrating true beauty.

On the other hand, Chitra is still under the impression of her embellished “perfect beauty”, and is unable to see lucidly, with reason. She shows her concerns about the warrior princess in these words: “Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning, sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds” (Scene VIII, pp.48). Her worries about Arjuna witnessing her true self are nothing more than instability of spirit. The “act of reason”, however, demands her to be true to Arjuna, and to herself. She fears her own ‘self’ covered in “dark clouds” that “[blot] all her light”. She feels certain that her newfound womanly attire is the ultimate truth, and believes it to be her true beauty. Chitra’s fallacy is remarkably resounded in John Keats’ *Ode on Melancholy*: “She dwells with Beauty— Beauty that must die” (Line 21). The superficial beauty that does not even belong to her



is only time-bound. It is a boon of the gods that must perish when its time comes. Even if she had it that fabricated beauty naturally, it would still fade away in time. The only thing that shall always stay with her, and belongs to her in the real sense, is her own true ‘self’. For her, the “act of reason” is in realizing herself as the warrior princess, and not any person’s beloved. This is the “aesthetic act” that Chitra must strive towards in her pursuit for love.

Arjuna, after knowing about the warrior princess, feels the same angst as Chitra endured in her undecidedness upon telling the truth to Arjuna. For Chitra, the disclosure of ‘truth’ made her endure pain, while for Arjuna, the lack of knowledge about the ‘truth’ (not being able to see her) makes him undergo such pain. He says: “I am eager to learn all about her. I am like a traveler come to a strange city at midnight. Domes and towers and garden-trees look vague and shadowy, and the dull moan of the sea comes fitfully through the silence of sleep. Wistfully he waits for the morning to reveal to him all the strange wonders. Oh, tell me her story” (Scene VIII, pp. 49). All nature seems nebulous to him. All those previous nights, when he lied down, he found everything in “perfect beauty” of illusion. But now, he cannot sleep. Only the contemplation of ‘truth’ could quench his burning thirst. His imagination makes him draw wonderful images of the warrior princess. He further states: “I seem to see her, in my mind’s eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and in her right a bow, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope all round her.” (Scene VIII, pp.49).

He envisions her in splendor and majesty, but still does not see her. As David Hume puts it, Arjuna’s “mind’s eye” (Hume 15) is pained by this obscurity. Chitra, after seeing him in much distress, conjures up courage to tell him the truth. Yet, she feels greatly insecure upon the thought of Arjuna discovering her true ‘self’ and, consequently, neglecting her permanently. She asks herself fearfully that if she might unveil her true ‘self’, will he stay with her even then, or will leave? She states: “I will smilingly pour out for you the wine of pleasure in the cup of this beauteous body” if Arjuna let things be as they are. In a way, these lines reiterate the meaning that Keats delivers in his *Ode to a Nightingale* to remain in his fancy: “That I might drink, and leave the world unseen/ And with thee fade away into the forest dim” (Lines 19-20). She wants him to stay in the illusion he has been in the entire time. Here, it should be noted that she is also oblivious of a one certain ‘truth’ while having knowledge of the other. She is unaware that Arjuna deeply loves the warrior princess. He is yet to witness her, this warrior princess “Chitra”, his love knows no bounds for her regardless. Rabindranath Tagore in his book of lectures, *Personality*, declares: “Those who pursue the knowledge of finite for its own sake cannot find truth. For it is a dead wall obstructing the beyond [knowledge]... This knowledge [the mere finite] accumulates but does not illuminate. It is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music” (Tagore 56). Chitra has not yet been able to comprehend the fact that what she appears to be in reality is a mere aspect of her complex personality. The physical or material existence she possesses is a mere superficial portion of her profound true self. She has immersed herself so much into religious (and by extension, material) illusion that she has forgotten what lies within and beyond her exterior, the immaterial truth. Her “mere finite” knowledge, as Tagore puts it, about herself is the prime illusion, which clutches her mind and hinders it from seeing beyond.

Arjuna is perplexed upon hearing that she has something hidden beneath the surface. He states that his love is imperfect and without any meaning, if such might be the case. Yet, he is prepared to see her pulling off the veil of illusion and show her “naked dignity”.

The use of this expression paints an image, which marks the “aesthetic act” in embodiment. Nakedness is a source of shame and disrespect in traditional thought, especially in the religious sense. Predominantly, religion comes up with the idea that clothing is a mark that provides respect. By using the expression “naked dignity”, Tagore further challenges the established religious norms. He does not find dignity in artificiality, but in nature. And through Tagore, Arjuna desires this “bare simplicity of truth”. He craves the truth, considering that now he discerns that true beauty lies only in ‘truth’. The truth he longs for can be understood in the words of Matthew Arnold: “Ah, love, let us be true/To one another!” (*Dover Beach*, Lines 30-31). The message that Arnold puts forth is of ‘humanity’. He is pained by the thought of lies that preoccupied his mind. Therefore, Arnold addresses all humans as “love” and appeals to them to be truthful to one another. Only then, according to Arnold, could we see the true beauty that lies ahead of us.

Since Arjuna constantly requests her to unveil the truth, Chitra unveils her original “male-like” attire and states: “The gift that I proudly bring you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies an imperfection which yet is noble and grand. If the flower service is finished, my master, accept this as your servant for the days to come!” (Scene IX, pp.56). For the first time, Chitra bravely brings up the truth before Arjuna. She narrates to him the entire truth about herself and the land where she come from. She also discloses the secret of the boon she had received from Madana, the god of love. She proudly wears her warrior’s attire, and tells Arjuna that she will bear him a son and teach him to become another Arjuna. She desperately tells him: “I can only offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king.” Arjuna, upon hearing the truth, is filled with an unfathomable joy. A joy that only truth can provide. In relation to ‘truth’ which is one with ‘beauty’, Keats also states in *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* (Book 1): “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:/Its loveliness increases; it will never/Pass into nothingness;” (Lines 1-3). In this sense, we witness Arjuna being released from his misery as he now knows the warrior princess of his dreams to be none other than his own beloved. And finally, after he has learnt the ‘truth’ about her, Arjuna states: “Beloved, my life is full.” (Scene IX, pp.58).

Thus, the idea of ‘truth’ and ‘beauty’ being one in the ‘immaterial’ sense (as put forth by John Keats and George Berkeley), resonates throughout the play *Chitra*. Tagore, through the imagery of a forest and two lovers, delivers a message of love through truth in humanity beyond physical existence. As Keats sees the two eternal lovers depicted upon the Grecian urn, Tagore puts forth his “Chitra” (picture) with the idea of love for truth, and love for the essentially beautiful. His picture also presents the truth about human life, and how in search of the ‘idealized self’, we forget our ‘true self’. A person “...deserves to be loved not because [they are] beautiful, gracious or good but because of [their] existence, and that is the truth.” (Debnath 53). In his “Chitra”, Tagore also portrays nature and man in harmony. Through the play, comes forth this rule upon which the ideas of ‘truth’ and ‘beauty’ operate. Religion is cultural product, and culture is temporal, subject to question and potential negation. Matthew Arnold in his essay *The Study of Poetry* states: “There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve” (Greenblatt, Stephen, and Carol T. Christ, eds., p. 1404). This notion, that Arnold puts forth, coincides with the message that Rabindranath Tagore’s *Chitra*, which, by



humanizing deities, discards the idea of an “absolute religious materialism”, and encourages humanity to live in truth, peace, and harmony. Beauty can be found only in truth, which lies within each entity, and not without.

*Edwardes College Peshawar, Pakistan*

### Works Cited

- Arnauld, Antoine and Nicole, Pierre. *Logic or the Art of Thinking*. Translated by Jill Vance Buroker. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Bradley, F. H. *Essays on Truth and Reality*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1914.
- Beer, John Bernard. “Samuel Taylor Coleridge.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Samuel-Taylor-Coleridge>. Accessed 18 Jan 2018.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Lingam.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/lingam>. Accessed 18 Jan 2018.
- Debnath, Swati Rani. “Quintessence of Truth and Beauty in the Writings of Rabindranath Tagore and Keats a Comparative Analysis.” *IJOHMN (International Journal Online of Humanities)*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2017.
- Devi, Aarti. “Inevitability of Beauty and love In Aesthetics in Study of Rabindranath Tagore.” *IJAR*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2015, pp. 309-312.
- . “Propagation of Truth through Beauty of Religion in Aesthetics in study of Rabindranath Tagore.” *IJAR*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2015, pp. 313-316.
- Downing, Lisa. “George Berkeley.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 19 Jan. 2011, [plato.stanford.edu/entries/berkeley/#2](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/berkeley/#2).
- Eldridge, Richard, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Flage, Daniel E. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [iep.utm.edu/berkeley/](http://iep.utm.edu/berkeley/).
- Gorodeisky, Keren. “19th Century Romantic Aesthetics” [www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-19th-romantic](http://www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-19th-romantic). Accessed 15 Jan 2018.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, and Carol T. Christ, eds. “Kubla Khan.” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 2. WW Norton & Company, 2005, p. 446.
- . “Ode to a Nightingale.” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 2. WW Norton & Company, 2005, p. 903.
- . “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 2. WW Norton & Company, 2005, p. 905.
- . “Ode on Melancholy.” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 2. WW Norton & Company, 2005, p. 906.
- . “Dover Beach.” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 2. WW Norton & Company, 2005, p. 1368.
- . “The Study of Poetry.” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 2. WW Norton & Company, 2005, p. 1404.
- Hume, David. *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Charles River Editors, 2018.

- Saunders, T. F. "Studies in Art Education." *Studies in Art Education*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1964, pp. 75–77. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1319755](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1319755).
- Sprigge, T.L.S. Absolute, the, 1998, doi:10.4324/9780415249126-N001-1. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/absolute-the/v-1>.
- Stunkel, Kenneth R. "Rabindranath Tagore and the Aesthetics of Postmodernism." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2003, pp. 237–259. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/20007677](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20007677).
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Chitra: A Play in One Act*. Macmillan, 1914.
- . "The World of Personality." *Personality: Lectures Delivered in America*. Macmillan and Co., Limited, London, 1917.