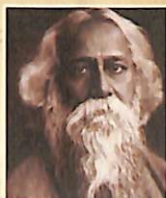


LETTERS OF YORE



Edited by - Dr. Binny Deka

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LETTERS OF YORE

EMILY DICKINSON
RABINDRANATH TAGORE
ASUTOSH MUKHERJEE

B.C.B.L



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Edited By
Dr. Binny Deka



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PREFACE

Emily Dickinson, widely acclaimed, original, innovative, pre-modern poet enjoys a prominent and powerful position in America's literary world. Her writings, carrying her distinctive stamp, have enriched literature of the world. They have become subjects of research, scholarly debate and study in schools and universities around the globe. Her persona as her poems and letters are elusive and they challenge every scholar bewitched by the unusual spiritual strength of her writings.

Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore is revered in India. A patriot, nationalist, educationist, social worker, religious reformer, poet, novelist, musician, painter, his genius is unparalleled. He is immortal. Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest of the Jalianwala bagh massacre. The letter renouncing it is an important part of India's history.

Sir Asutosh Mukherjee's moral strength is a source of inspiration to the people of India and his contribution in the field of education is memorable.

The present work intends to present Dickinson, Tagore, and Mukherjee's prescribed letters in context and in a lucid manner.

All suggestions for improvement are welcome and will be incorporated in future editions.

I take this occasion to express my gratitude to Aditya Book Distributor for giving me this opportunity.

Binny Deka.
Mumbai.

Emily Dickinson

Letter To Mary Bowles

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Life And Works	5
Chronology	12
Texts of Letters To Mary Bowles (With Notes)	14
Textual Questions	21
Bibliography	22

INTRODUCTION

Emily Dickinson is one of the most revered and important literary figures of America. While close relatives and friends admired her poems during her lifetime, scholars received this unexpected cache of wealth after her death. These letters are as much a part of her writings as her poems. They are her only writings in prose and no other prose in journals and notebooks have survived. In fact, they span a larger period of her life than her poems.

Letters revealed Emily as she truly was, without any reserve. She had bared her innermost emotions in them. At Emily's death, her sister Lavinia destroyed all correspondences found in her desk, as she had been directed to. Those that have survived are letters she had written to friends, relatives and her literary mentor. Three letters filled with passion and love for an unknown man whom she refers to as 'master' has survived that are referred to as her 'master letters'. Emily Fragos rightly states in the foreword of her book *Letters: Emily Dickinson* that, "Reading these letters is as close as we can come to being inside Emily Dickinson's alive mind as it engaged with the world around her. Almost a century and a half after she asked Higginson to 'say if my verse is alive' her words still takes one's breath away." Her letters record her personal growth from a child to just before her death when she sent her famous letter to her cousins bearing the words, "Called back."

Scholars had recognized the importance of her letters along with her poems. Hence, Mabel Loomis Todd, Austin's mistress, published the first book of her letters in 1894. However, she had missed a number of letters and the dates of the letters were misquoted. In 1958, Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward edited three volumes of her letters, which was published by Harvard University Press. Research has established beyond doubt that no boundary existed between her prose and poetry. It led Agnieszka Salska to the conclusion that, "Dickinson's refusal to differentiate between the functions of her poetry and her correspondence points

in turn to the convergence of the principles of poetics for all her writings."¹ Suzanne Juhasz pointed out that Emily would adopt a stance while writing her letters with the intention of persuading recipients to agree to her point of view. It would be a deliberate choice at which she was successful as when she presented herself as a learner to Higginson. The same attitude was observed in her poems. In all probability, Emily's letter writing and poetry sprang from the "common ground"² of "cultivation of emotional intensity."³

Emily Dickinson had merely been following the culture of the Victorian era. Agnieszka Salska observes, "She lived in a culture that persistently encouraged the fusion of literary and personal experience beyond the need and, really, the possibility of separating the two. The epoch's intense correspondence implemented both the cultivation of intimacy and the pervasive literariness of the culture."⁴ It was also the contemporary culture to extend the essentially private content of letters to the reader and she used it to fix her relationship with her reader. Since letter writing included responses from the addressee, it seems that Emily used the nature of letter writing to formulate the principles of her poetics. It coloured all her writings.

Letters also fulfilled the obvious purpose of keeping in touch with friends, family and the intellectual and literary circle of her time. Emily's letters showed her as a warm woman who wrote to people, both older or younger to her. With the older people, she often adopted a pose of humility. She wrote at birthdays and at deaths; sometimes she included poems in her letters as gifts. She wrote to her friends from her schooldays, of whom, Susan who later became her sister-in-law, was very close. Recent studies suggest that the passionate letters to Susan are evidence of Emily's sexual leanings. They however, also show that both girls shared a common love for literature and that Susan was the first critic whose views helped Emily to compose poems after the death of her first mentor Benjamin Franklin. Writing about her 'master letters' Agnieszka Salska states, "...written to the best of our knowledge between 1858 and 1861 to someone she called 'master'. We do not know and most probably will never know with a satisfactory degree of certainty who the master was. Yet the three drafts continue to tantalize because

, when compared with her earlier letters, they seem to offer a glimpse of the poet forging, presumably under extreme stress, in broken syntax and cryptic metaphors, her characteristic, powerfully intense style."⁵ Another group of letters were addressed to literary friends like Higginson, Helen Hunt Jackson, and letters written to friends Mr. and Mrs. Holland, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bowles, the Reverend Charles Wadsworth and Judge Otis. Commenting on the importance of the letters to a recognized critic as Higginson, Salska states, "Here, for the first time in her life, Dickinson separates her artistic concerns from her emotional involvements and attempts to test the response to her poetry of a reader who was personally unknown to her but professionally well established. Writing to Higginson seems a 'coming-of-age' gesture of a 'homegrown' artist."⁶

However, it is difficult to fix the emotional core of Emily's letters to Samuel and Mary Bowles. Samuel Bowles was the editor of the Springfield Republican, an abolitionist and supporter of women's rights. Emily met him in her brother's house in 1858 when she was a lively socializer. Their friendship has become a subject of debate, as some scholars believe that Emily sought to use her acquaintance with Bowles to publish her poems. Noted biographer, Richard B. Sewall on the other hand opines, "If her words mean anything at all... she was deeply in love with him for several years and never ceased loving him at a distance, for the rest of her life."⁷ As for publishing her poems, Bowles did publish a few of them when Susan smuggled them to him but Emily did not approve of the heavy handed editing that, she claimed, had changed the meaning of her poems. She however, maintained correspondence with him and his wife Mary Bowles. Mary Schermerhorn of Geneva, New York, was a plain, hypersensitive woman who suffered from chronic asthma. Though Samuel Bowles was an attentive husband, he often discussed his marital problems at Austin and Sue's house. He addressed many of his letters to Sue and Mary was known to dislike her. Rumours linked both of them as more than friends. Judith Farr suggests that Sue's interest in Bowles made him exceptionally appealing to Emily.

Mary Bowles, as is evident from the letters addressed to her

was a friend whom Emily never ignored. Often she wrote letters to both husband and wife, together. Some letters were written exclusively to Mary that showed the writer's desire to be friendly. The friendship seems to have been reciprocated and their correspondence carried on after Samuel's death when Emily sent a letter with the intention of providing comfort. Sharon Leiter believes that, "She tried to establish a separate connection to Mary."⁸ Habegger also acknowledges Emily's attempts to touch the other woman with her confidences. However, Mary's response seems to have been occasional.

The simple reason behind Emily's letters seems to be love of correspondence; however, the common impetus behind her letters and her verse seems to be emotional intensity. Towards the later part of her life, she seems to ignore definitive boundaries of prose and poetry. Considered an unconventional, eccentric poet, her letters too tended to demand a response from the recipient that she always did not receive. She was not averse to adopting different stances for different people; it seems she realized the necessity for it early enough in her life. Her poems and the letters, taken together, show Emily's creative sovereignty and her revolutionary zeal. It, "...led her to a mode of writing that altogether destabilized divisions between poetry and prose and yoked the two by the force of emotion underlying all her written expression."⁹

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LIFE AND WORKS

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 at Amherst Massachusetts. She was the second child of Edward Dickinson and Emily Norcross Dickinson. Her grandfather, from her father's side was Samuel Dickinson, considered a pillar of Amherst society. He was addressed Squire Dickinson in recognition of the position, privilege and authority he enjoyed. Her mother's father was a prosperous businessman who provided his daughter, Emily's mother, with sound education. Emily had an elder brother, William Austin Dickinson, a year older to her and a sister younger to her by three years, Lavinia Norcross Dickinson.

After her sister's birth, who was affectionately called Vinnie, Emily was sent to her aunt's house at Monson. She was only two and a half years old but she was content in her new surroundings and her aunt wrote a letter to Amherst with the message that she did not miss anyone from home. Her parents were hardworking people who took good care of their children. They were well aware of the need to love and protect their children, especially since Emily was a frail child who would often fall sick.

At the age of five, in 1835, Emily entered a public primary school, where she continued for the next four years. She learnt to read, write, spell and do arithmetic in the school. However, her attendance was poor because her parents were protective and mindful of her frail health did not allow her to attend whenever there was bad weather. Her father subscribed to Parley's magazine, a children's magazine, Isaac Watt's Divine and Moral Songs for children and the evangelical monthly, Sabbath School Visiter in an attempt to keep the children happy and stimulated when they were confined indoors.

In 1840, Emily joined Amherst Academy where she spent the next seven years of her school life. Emily proved to be a bright student; moreover, she made a number of friends who influenced her life largely. Five of them, Abby Wood, Harriet Merrill, Abiah Palmer Root, and Sarah Tracy comprised of her core group of friends. She was also friendly with Jane Humphrey, Emily Fowler, Eliza M. Coleman and Sophia Holland. The teachers of the school were college students of Amherst College; energetic and zealous, they were strong influences on the students of the school. She developed deep respect for Elizabeth C. Adams, her preceptress, Leonard Humphrey and Edward Hitchcock, her teachers at school. Emily began by attending English lectures but later switched to classical course for two years. She studied Latin, History, Ecclesiastical History, Mathematics, Botany and classes in Composition and Declamation. Though the school provided her with a rich intellectual life and she acquired several friends while she was there, the school's policy of expecting children to convert to the Christian faith was disliked by Emily. When her final term ended she became a boarding scholar at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts. She was intellectually active and resisted pressure to convert to the Christian faith. In her final semester, she expressed her love for the world and her inability to give it up for the happiness, which the other world might have in store for her. Emily returned home at the age of seventeen and embarked upon a life, very different from that of her childhood. During this period, she continued the intellectual pursuits that she had enjoyed in Amherst Academy. Her father had wished her reading to be restricted to the Bible, but understanding his daughter's need had provided his home library with a number of titles that kept her engrossed and stimulated. She read the Bible and acknowledged its wisdom; the tragedies of Shakespeare, the 19th century women writers Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, George Eliot; American writers Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne were her favourites. Like Marvel's *Reveries of a Bachelor* and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Kavanagh* left a deep impression on her. Emily was fond of the sentimental literature of the times

and was drawn to scenes of death, misery and to lives that she considered sweet as opposed to great.

Benjamin Franklin Newton became her intellectual and spiritual mentor. He had come to work at her father's law office and had exposed her to Unitarianism. Its lessons of life's dignity and power instantly struck a chord with Emily's love for life. When he left in 1849, they contacted each other through letters that remain untraced. Newton encouraged her power of expression in the form of poems and gifted her Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Poems* whose view of the poet as an intuitively powerful person was appreciated. Emily also met the Alpha Delta Phi Fraternity through her brother Austin who was a student at Amherst College. These were exceptionally brilliant young men of the college, William Cowper Dickinson, Henry Vaughan Emmons, George Gould and her cousin John Long Graves. Emmons and Gould were Emily's favourites and she enjoyed long discussions with them on literature. She composed her first prose comic valentine for Gould in 1850, "Magnum Bonum" which appeared anonymously in the 'Indicator', the student literary magazine of the college. In the next month of 1850, she sent a second comic valentine, a poem, to her father's law partner, Elbridge Gerry Bowdoin. She advised the confirmed bachelor to seize his beloved without caring for space or time. The Springfield Republican published her third comic valentine in 1852, "Sic Transit".

Emily's mother suffered an acute neuralgic attack that left her paralysed in 1855. Emily assumed the role of housekeeper and was generally occupied with it. During this time, she suffered two other major setbacks. Her early mentor, Leonard Humphrey died in 1850 and Benjamin Franklin died of consumption in 1853. The latter's death filled her with a sense of loneliness as there was none to whom she could turn for advice on literary issues. Her friends were getting married and leaving Amherst too which further intensified her feeling of being left behind and of being abandoned. Most of her relatives and friends had already converted to the Christian faith leaving her isolated. Her brother Austin had been with her, however in 1856, he too converted at the behest of his fiancée and Emily's friend Susan Gilbert. Susan had been Emily's

friend from her schooldays and their religious difference had never stood in the way of their unusually loving friendship. Emily's love for her friend is recorded in the letters that survive but it is not known about Susan's reaction. However, she became engaged to Austin in 1853.

During the same year, Emily became very friendly with Elizabeth and Josiah Gilbert Holland of Springfield where Josiah was the literary editor of *The Springfield Republican*. Soon, Elizabeth who was elder to her by seven years became her friend, confidant and advisor. Emily and Vinnie visited them at their Springfield residence and on their return kept in constant touch through letters. Ninety-four of them have survived, as proof of their friendship.

In 1855, Emily's father, Mr. Dickinson was a member of the House of Representatives and they stayed at Washington D.C. for three weeks. On their return, they visited the Coleman family at Philadelphia. Emily met Reverend Charles Wadsworth there while she was on her visit to meet her friend Eliza, daughter of Mr. Coleman. According to Emily's biographer and niece, Martha Bianchi, this meeting was a fateful one for Emily fell in love with the married preacher, known for his thoughtful sermons. Bianchi suggests that after this meeting Emily returned to Amherst and began to gradually withdraw from society. In 1860, Wadsworth visited Emily at Amherst after which the touching poem "There came a Day" was composed. In 1862, The Wadsworths sailed to San Francisco and there is no evidence of further meetings until 1882, before Wadsworth expired.

After The Dickinsons returned from Washington, Emily's father bought back the homestead and began to renovate and furnish it. This was the house where Emily would spend the rest of her life. They left their house of fifteen years at North Pleasant Street and set up house anew. However, the change proved to be harmful for her mother whose chronic depressive illness became worse. In 1856, when Emily wrote to Mrs. Holland, she mentions not only of her mother's illness but also of her feeling of being under immense physical and mental strain. There seems to be no letters or poems, existing evidence of her life between the years 1855 and 1858. In 1856, Austin and Susan married and settled at the house next to

theirs, named the Evergreens. The wonderful Italianate villa was built by their father for Austin as incentive to become his legal partner and settle at Amherst instead of Chicago. Emily felt the loss of companionship of her brother and her friend immediately and the feeling of loneliness increased as they became engrossed in their married life. Her mother's health also contributed to her sense of darkness as she became overburdened with household chores. However, she managed to survive this period of extreme tension and by 1858; she emerged as a poet in her own right. Before 1858 there are only five known poems, in 1858 she composed forty-three poems in all. In the same year, she began to file her work systematically into booklets of fascicles by sewing the sheets of paper together. She continued with this practice until 1865. By then she had completed forty such fascicles that contained eight hundred poems. Emily was in the habit of sending poems in letters to her friends and relatives. At times, she would send them as gifts on Christmas or Birthdays. However, she never shared her fascicles or manuscripts with anyone.

Only ten of Emily Dickinson's poems had been published during her lifetime. This was not due to lack of demand for her poems but the result of her own lackadaisical attitude toward publication of her work. Then in 1858, she wrote the first of the letters, which came to be referred to as the 'Master Letters'. Three in all, these letters were filled with love and passion for a man whom she calls 'Master', whose identity she does not reveal. In the same year, the young, energetic, handsome man Samuel Bowles, editor of *The Republican*, came to The Evergreens where Emily met him. Eventually a number of Emily's poems were published in the newspaper but they were heavily edited. Her friendship with him was intense and she sent him at least fifty letters and thirty-five poems. These have become subject of much debate and criticism because of the cryptic and encoded language of her letters. Some critics believe Bowles to be the master of her "Master Letters".

In 1860, Emily began to wear only white; she stayed indoors, hardly appearing in the town for any purpose. In 1861, she continued to dream of making her family proud with her work. In 1862, Bowles

set off for Europe for several months. It coincided with Wadsworth's relocation to San Francisco. Both men, close friends and for some critics one of them was the recipient of her love, were moving away from her, affecting her deeply. Meanwhile, she had composed eighty-two poems in 1859, fifty-four in 1860, eighty-eight in 1861 and two hundred and twenty seven in 1862. In 1862, Emily read Higginson's article in the *Atlantic Monthly* addressed to the young contributor and wrote to him seeking his help as her literary guide. She presented herself as a learner and was successful in arousing his curiosity in the young woman who wanted to know whether her poems were alive. More than seventy letters to Higginson have survived and they reveal Emily's poetry and her life. She had confided in him about her deepest spiritual and artistic problems that she had to face in her later life. The letters were well written, literary and thoughtful. However, none of them referred to the turbulent times they were going through. The civil war, contemporary issues of abolition, women's rights and poverty were religiously avoided. However, it can not be regarded as an indication of negligence towards the political and social issues of the day because she happened to be a regular reader of newspapers and periodicals. Her father, brother and the men with whom she maintained contact were powerful men; her house was visited by political figures of the time and a few of her poems allude to sufferings and death because of war.

During this time, Emily suffered from acute eye disease that filled her with terror. She could not envisage a world without books, her closest friends. The poet had to go to Boston twice for treatment: from April to late November in 1863 and from April to October in 1864. After her return, her eyes recovered gradually but she withdrew from society even more. She did not receive visitors and did not visit Evergreens; she did not venture out of the house. Her lifestyle became a subject of discussion in the town. Yet, in 1863, she composed about three hundred poems.

After 1866, she did not compose as many poems as she wrote letters. From 1866 to 1869, she wrote about forty-four poems only. On the home front, she was struggling with household chores, as they did not have regular domestic help. This could be a reason

for her decreased number of poems. In 1869, the situation became better when she employed an Irish woman as their housekeeper. In 1870, she once again began to write in earnest, and she composed twenty-seven to forty-eight poems a year until 1884. Her life continued in this way, her time divided between her writing, gardening, exchanging confidences with Susan, and sharing baked delicacies with the young children of the family who played under her window. She also met select visitors like Bowles and Higginson. The latter showed some of her poems to poet Helen Fiske Hunt who encouraged her and called it her duty to have them published. In 1878, Robert Brothers of Boston published an anonymous anthology of poems, "A Masque of Poets". People mistook them as Emerson's poems. Publisher Thomas Niles offered to publish her poems but she never took up the offer.

In 1874, Emily's father died suddenly of apoplexy; it seemed to be the culmination of many other deaths that she had to overcome between 1870 and 1874. Ill luck continued when in 1875, her mother suffered a paralytic stroke that left her an invalid for life. Emily cared for her until her death in 1882. Samuel Bowles too had died in 1878, devastating Emily. She wrote to his wife and his mistress too in the belief that she could bring them some comfort. In the same year she struck up a friendship with the elderly Judge Otis Phillips Lord. Her letters to him prove beyond doubt that she loved him and that her love was reciprocated. They never married because of Lord's failing health and in 1884, he died of a stroke. Two months after his death, Emily suffered her first attack of what has now been concluded as hypertension. Charles Wadsworth too had died in 1882 and her dear friend Helen Hunt succumbed to stomach cancer in 1885. However, Emily was emotionally shattered when her favourite nephew, Thomas Gilbert Dickinson, Austin and Susan's eight year old died of typhoid. She visited Evergreens after fifteen years but she became increasingly ill.

In 1886, she wrote a letter to Fanny and Lou Norcross with whom she had put up at Boston with the famous words "Little Cousins, Called back, Emily." It seemed that she was aware of her imminent death. Emily breathed her last on May 15, 1886. She lies

buried in the plot next to her parents in the cemetery. Ever since, it has become a place of tourist interest with admirers offering flowers in her memory. After her death, Vinnie destroyed most of her letters and her correspondences. While engaged in this activity she discovered hundreds of Emily's poems and since she had left no instruction regarding their fate, Vinnie took it upon herself to have them published. Recent studies suggest that her letters are of equal importance as her poems. For some critics her letters are indeed, poetry and scholarly debate continues in the hope of unraveling the unusual life and works of Emily Dickinson.

CHRONOLOGY:

- 1830 : Emily Elizabeth Dickinson is born in Amherst, Massachusetts. She is the second of three children of Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson.
- 1840 : Emily and her sister Lavinia enters Amherst Academy. In her seven years of schooling, she is frequently absent due to illness.
- 1844 : Thirteen-year-old Emily is deeply affected by her cousin sister's death.
- 1847 : Dickinson enrolls at the Mount Holyoke College. It had a policy of converting students to the Christian faith. Dickinson did not embrace the faith even though almost all of the students did.
- 1848 : Less than a year into college, Dickinson quits her studies. Her brother Austin escorts her home.
- 1850 : Dickinson's friend and former principal, Leonard Humphrey, dies unexpectedly at the age of 25.
- 1855 : For the first and last time in her life, Dickinson travels outside the borders of her home state. With her mother and sister, she spends three weeks in Washington, D.C. visiting her Congressman father; she then spends two weeks with relatives in Philadelphia. After their return, Dickinson's mother falls ill.
- 1856 : Dickinson's brother, William, marries Emily's friend, Susan Gilbert.

- 1858 : The Springfield Republican, a paper edited by her friend, Samuel Bowles publishes some of her poems.
- 1862 : Literary critic and abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson in The Atlantic Monthly, calls upon young writers to contribute. Dickinson writes and requests him to be her literary mentor.
- 1867 : Emily withdraws from social life, preferring to speak with visitors through a door rather than in person. She stays socially active by sending numerous letters to favorite correspondents.
- 1870 : Meets Higginson.
- 1872 : In 1872, Emily meets Massachusetts Supreme Court Judge Otis Phillips Lord. They become close friends and some scholars believe that they were romantically involved after the death of Otis's wife in 1877.
- 1874 : Dickinson's father, Edward, dies of a stroke in Boston at the age of 71.
- 1882 : Dickinson's mother, Emily Norcross Dickinson, dies after living an invalid's life for thirty years.
- 1883 : Gilbert Dickinson, William and Susan's son and Emily's favourite nephew, dies of typhoid.
- Mar 1884: Judge Otis Phillips Lord, dies.
- May 15, 1886: Emily Dickinson dies of hypertension. She is buried in West Cemetery in Amherst.
- 1890 : Dickinson's sister, Lavinia, discovers hundreds of Emily's unpublished poems in her desk after her death. They were published together for the first time four years after her death. They had eleven printings in two years.

TEXT OF LETTER TO MARY BOWLES Winter, 1858.
(Ed. By Mabel Loomis Todd)

To Mr. And Mrs. Samuel Bowles 1858

Winter, 1858?
Monday Eve

DEAR MRS. BOWLES, -You send sweet messages. Remembrance is more sweet than robins in May orchards.

I love to trust that round bright fires, some, braver than I, take my pilgrim name. How are papa, mamma, and the little people?

It storms in Amherst five days--it snows, and then it rains, and then soft fogs like veils hang on all the houses, and then the days turn topaz, like a lady's pin.

Thank you for bright bouquet, and afterwards verben. I made a plant of a little bough of yellow heliotrope which the bouquet bore me, and call it Mary Bowles. It is many days since the summer day when you came with Mr. Bowles, and before another summer day it will be many days. My garden is a little knoll with faces under it, and only the pines sing tunes, now the birds are absent. I cannot walk to the distant friends on nights piercing as these, so I put both hands on the window-pane, and try to think how birds fly, and imitate, and fail, like Mr. "Rasselas." I could make a balloon of a dandelion, but the fields are gone, and only "Professor Lowe" remains to weep with me. If I built my house I should like to call you. I talk of all these things with Carlo, and his eyes grow meaning, and his shaggy feet keep a slower pace. Are you safe to-night? I hope you may be glad. I ask God on my knee to send you much prosperity, few winter days, and long suns. I have a childish hope to gather all I love together and sit down beside and smile....

Will you come to Amherst? The streets are very cold now, but we will make you warm. But if you never came, perhaps you could write a letter, saying how much you would like to, if it were "God's will." I give good-night, and daily love to you and Mr. Bowles.

EMILIE

NOTES

The Reference to the wintry weather in Amherst proves the veracity of the date of the letter.

Rasselas: Emily compares Lowe to Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia who along with the help of a mechanist or scientific man tried to fly from a hill with the help of wings that the man had built. Unfortunately, their enterprise failed when the wings did not work and the man fell into the sea.

Professor Lowe: The New Hampshire balloonist T.S.C. Lowe abandoned his unique venture of crossing the Atlantic Ocean after three months of preparation. The Springfield Republican reports on 9 December about Professor Lowe's boast that he cleared \$4000 through his 'Atlantic balloon humbug'.

Carlo: Emily's beloved dog and companion, a large, brown Newfoundland, a gift from her father.

TEXT OF LETTER TO MARY BOWLES Winter, 1858.
(Ed. By Thomas H. Johnson)

To Mrs. Samuel Bowles
Dear Mrs Bowles.

about December 1858

Since I have no sweet flower to send you, I enclose my heart; a little one, sunburnt, half broken sometimes, yet close as the spaniel, to it's friends. Your flowers came from Heaven, to which if I should ever go, I will pluck you palms.

My words are far away when I attempt to thank you, so take the silver tear instead, from my full eye. You have often remembered me.

I have little dominion-Are there not wiser than I, who with curious treasure, could requite your gift. Angels fill the hand that loded

Emily's!

NOTES
The date of the letter has been inferred from the handwriting.
Since I have no flower to send you, I enclose my heart: The gift referred to here seems to be a remembrance of Mary's birthday.
Close as the spaniel: a loyal friend.

**TEXT OF LETTER TO MARY BOWLES after Christmas,
1859.
(Ed. By Mabel Loomis Todd)**

1859

AMHERST

I should like to thank dear Mrs. Bowles for the little book, except my cheek is red with shame because I write so often. Even the "lilies of the field" have their dignities.

Why did you bind it in green and gold? The immortal colors. I take it for an emblem. I never read before what Mr. Parker wrote. I heard that he was "poison." Then I like poison very well. Austin stayed from service yesterday afternoon, and I ... found him reading my Christmas gift.... I wish the "faith of the fathers" didn't wear brogans, and carry blue umbrellas. I give you all "New Year!" I think you kept gay Christmas, from the friend's account, and can only sigh with one not present at "John Gilpin," "and when he next doth ride a race," etc. You picked your berries from my holly. Grasping Mrs. Bowles!

To-day is very cold, yet have I much bouquet upon the window-pane of moss and fern. I call them saints' flowers, because they do not romp as other flowers do, but stand so still and white. The snow is very tall, ... which makes the trees so low that they tumble my hair, when I cross the bridge.

I think there will be no spring this year, the flowers are gone so far. Let us have spring in our heart, and never mind the orchises! ... Please have my love, mother's, and Vinnie's. Carlo sends a brown kiss, and pussy a gray and white one, to each of the children.

Please, now I write so often, make lamplighter of me, then

Emily Dickinson

17

I shall not have lived in vain.

Dear Mrs. Bowles, dear Mr. Bowles, dear Sally-Sam and Mamie, now all shut your eyes, while I do benediction!

Lovingly,

EMILY

NOTES

Reference to Theodore Parker's *The Two Christmas Celebrations*. (1859), which however did not survive. In the book Parker presented Jesus as a good man with a genius for religion but not as a savior. Hence, Emily writes, "I heard that he was 'poison'." Then I like poison very well."

Make lamplighter of me: a roll of paper used for lighting a lamp; a spill.

TEXT OF LETTER TO MARY BOWLES 1860?

(Ed. By Thomas H. Johnson)

To Mrs. Samuel Bowles

1860?

Don't cry, dear Mary. Let us do that for you, because you are too tired now. We don't know how dark it is, but if you are at sea, perhaps when we say that we are there, you won't be as afraid.

The waves are very big, but every one that covers you, covers us, too.

Dear Mary, you can't see us, but we are close at your side. May we comfort you?

Lovingly,

Emily

NOTES

This note was written to console Mary when she gave birth to her third stillborn child. Their son Charles was born after this episode in 1861.

The waves are very big... covers us too: For Emily the sea is often a symbol of boundless, uncontrollable force equivalent to death.

The letter attempts to console Mary Bowles; It is recognized as a model letter on tactful control. She senses the mother's feeling of loss and offers to share her suffering and thereby to ease her pain.

**TEXT OF LETTER TO MARY BOWLES 1861,
on the birth of a son**

(Ed. by Mabel Loomis Todd)

Written in 1861, on the birth of a son.

DEAR MARY, -Can you leave your flower long enough just to look at mine?

Which is the prettiest? I shall tell you myself, some day. I used to come to comfort you, but now to tell you how glad I am, and how glad we all are.... You must not stay in New York any more- you must come back now, and bring the blanket to Massachusetts where we can all look. What a responsible shepherd! Four lambs in one flock! Shall you be glad to see us, or shall we seem old-fashioned, by the face in the crib?

Tell him I've got a pussy for him, with a spotted gown; and a dog with ringlets.

We have very cold days since you went away, and I think you hear the wind blow far as the Brevort House, it comes from so far, and crawls so. Don't let it blow baby away. Will you call him Robert for me? He is the bravest man alive, but his boy has no mamma. That makes us all weep, don't it?

Good-night, Mary.
EMILY

NOTES

Will you call him Robert... Weep, don't it? Emily suggests that Samuel and Mary should name their newborn child Robert after poetess

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's son. The poetess whom Emily revered perhaps even more than Shakespeare is often referred to after her death. When referred to in this letter she had died only six months previously. Her sorrow is evident when she refers to the 'boy' who does not have a mother now. She also requests the Bowles to touch the poetess gravestone with their hand for her and describes herself as 'her unmentioned mourner'.

**TEXT OF LETTER TO MARY BOWLES AUGUST, 1861.
(Ed. by Mabel Loomis Todd)**

August, 1861

MARY, -I do not know of you, a long while. I remember you-several times. I wish I knew if you kept me? The doubt, like the mosquito, buzzes round my faith. We are all human, Mary, until we are divine, and to some of us, that is far off, and to some as near as the lady ringing at the door; perhaps that's what alarms. I say I will go myself- I cross the river, and climb the fence-now I am at the gate, Mary-now I am in the hall-now I am looking your heart in the eye!

Did it wait for me-did it go with the company? Cruel company, who have the stocks, and farms, and creeds --and it has just its heart! I hope you are glad, Mary; no pebble in the brook today--no film on noon.

I can think how you look; you can't think how I look; I've got more freckles, since you saw me, playing with the school-boys, then I pare the "Juneating" to make the pie, and get my fingers "tanned."

Summer went very fast--she got as far as the woman from the hill, who brings the blueberry, and that is a long way. I shall have no winter this year, on account of the soldiers. Since I cannot weave blankets or boots, I thought it best to omit the season. Shall present a "memorial" to God when the maples turn. Can I rely on your "name"?

How is your garden, Mary? Are the pinks true, and the sweet williams faithful? I've got a geranium like a sultana, and when the hummingbirds come down, geranium and I shut our eyes, and go

far away.

Ask "Mamie" if I shall catch her a butterfly with a vest like a Turk? I will, if she will build him a house in her "morning-glory."

Vinnie would send her love, but she put on a white frock, and went to meet to-morrow--a few minutes ago; mother would send her love, but she is in the "cave spout," sweeping up a leaf that blew in last November; I brought my own, myself, to you and Mr. Bowles.

Please remember me, because I remember you--always.

Then follows the poem beginning "My river runs to thee," published in the First Series of the Poems.

Don't cry, dear Mary. Let us do that for you, because you are too tired now. We don't know how dark it is, but if you are at sea, perhaps when we say that we are there, you won't be as afraid.

The waves are very big, but every one that covers you, covers us, too.

Dear Mary, you can't see us, but we are close at your side.
May we comfort you?

Lovingly,
EMILY

NOTES

I say I will go myself...Your heart in the eye: Emily is aware that letter writing is a delicate, fragile process. "Since the physical transmittal of her written words from her hands to those of her reader is her sole means of maintaining connection, the actual moment when her reader receives her message often becomes a prominent part of the texts themselves, as in an 1861 letter to Mary Bowles. "Stephanie Tingley in 'Women's culture and the Poetics of Dickinson's Correspondence'.

It: Probable reference to Samuel Bowles. David Higgins believes that the letters written between 1861 and 1864 employs the grammatical device of using the neuter 'it' instead of 'you'.

Since I cannot...the season: Refers to the civil war. Community work or social service was carried out by women. Emily will present a memorial instead. The Springfield Republican published columns of soldiers' letters home and 'Piety and Patriotism'. (Wolosky)

Vinnie would send her love...I remember you always: Probable reference to a sense of finality, a break with the order of things brought about by brother Austin and Susan's marriage. "...1856 did mark the end of an era...A remark in a letter to Mary Bowles about August 1861 has a symbolic finality...however whimsical its context." (Richard B. Sewall)

Textual Questions

1. Examine Emily Dickinson's letters as a source of information for her biography.
2. Apart from details of Emily Dickinson's life what do her letters to Mary Bowles suggest?
3. What does friendship mean to Emily Dickinson?

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Rabindranath Tagore's

Letter Dated May 30, 1919

Letter Dated May 11, 1933.

CONTENTS

Life And Works	25
Chronology	27
Text Of Letter Dated May 30, 1919	29
Summary Of Letter Dated May 30, 1919	30
Annotations	31
Note	31
Textual Questions	32
Text Of Letter Dated May 11, 1933.	33
Summary of Letter Dated May 11, 1933.	34
Annotations	35
Note	36
Textual Questions	36
Bibliography	36

LIFE AND WORKS

Rabindranath Tagore, son of Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on the 7th of May 1861. The youngest of thirteen children; he lost his mother during his childhood and was raised mostly by servants. He was born in the illustrious Tagore family: his grandfather 'Prince' Dwarkanath Tagore was a loyalist, trusted by Queen Victoria and he was a rare Indian who employed European estate managers on his sizeable estates. His father Debendranath with his friend Ram Mohan Roy formulated the philosophies of the Brahmo Samaj that reposed faith in the Upanishads as the basis of Hinduism. Their home at Jorasanko was the meeting ground of a large number of like-minded people who pursued their love for Indian and Western music, rehearsed and put up theatres, discussed and wrote on different issues and composed poems. His brothers and sisters too were able musicians, writers, poets, philosophers; his brother Satyendranath was the first Indian to be appointed into the Indian Civil Service, which up till then had been the sole reserve of the English. Their house was the hub of social reformers. Hence, Rabindranath Tagore was fortunate to have inherited a background, which encouraged perfection in anything that he did.

Formal education was not Tagore's cup of tea; he received his early education at home. His brother Hemendranath taught him subjects like History, Geography, Literature, Mathematics, Sanskrit, English and Drawing. He conditioned the young boy physically by teaching him to swim in the river Ganges and to trek in the hills. When Tagore was eleven years old, his father took him on a trip to Dalhousie. They visited their home at Santiniketan, toured Amritsar and then reached their destination. This period of time spent with his father was educative: his day would start with a walk in the hills as he recited Sanskrit shlokas, followed by lessons in English, History

and Geography. He discussed books written by intellectuals like Benjamin Franklin and Edward Gibbon with his father. After his return from Dalhousie, in 1878, his father sent him to England where he enrolled at a public school, but attended it for only a number of months. He also entered University College London to study Law in accordance to his father's wishes but did not continue his studies. He became more interested in English literature and began to study them on his own. The lively music of the region, English, Irish and Scottish tunes also caught his imagination. In 1880, he returned to Calcutta without a degree. In 1883, he married Bhabatarini, who was renamed Mrinalini Devi. They had five children of whom two died in childhood.

In 1890, Tagore went to work at their family home in Shelaidaha (now in Bangladesh), where the family had a huge estate. He began to manage the estate and his wife and children joined him there in 1898. During this period Tagore received a realistic view of rural Bengal while he conducted his Zamindari duties and it influenced him greatly. Manasi his first book of poems was published in 1890 and at least more than half of the stories of the three volumes, eighty-four stories Galpagucha were completed during this period. These stories depicted rural Bengal as he found it without trying to idealise the condition of the people and their region.

Tagore returned to Calcutta and then moved to Santiniketan in 1901. Here he founded an ashram where education was imparted in the ancient Indian traditional manner of 'tols'. Classes were conducted in the open under trees or in the gardens. It was here that his wife and two of his children died. His father too expired in 1905 leaving Tagore emotionally drained. In 1901 he published Naivedya and in 1906 Kheya, and translated poems into free verse. In 1912, his Gitanjali was published and in 1913 the translated poems of Gitanjali in English (Gitanjali: Song Offerings) with a foreword by William Butler Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. It was the first instance of an Asian being honoured by the prestigious prize. In 1912, Tagore began an extensive tour of the United States and raised funds for his beloved project at Santiniketan. Between 1878 and 1932 he toured thirty countries in five continents and had

met people like Einstein, Romain Rolland amongst others. In 1915, he was knighted by the British Crown but he returned it in protest against the massacre of innocent people in Jalianwala Bagh in 1919. In 1921, Tagore established Shriniketan with the assistance of agricultural economist Leonard Elmhirst as a way of uplifting the ignorance and poverty in the villages. He believed that the development in the western countries could help in constructing and shaping India. To this end he sought aid from people worldwide. Though Gandhi was his dear friend he never really supported Gandhi's non-cooperative movement as he believed it would deprive India from the knowledge already acquired by the world. In the 1930's he spoke openly against untouchability and used such characters as heroes in his stories in a bid to remove the prejudices within the minds of the people. Meanwhile, he published fifteen volumes of poems and novels. Tagore encouraged a scientific outlook and his poems bore the influence that Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Astronomy had left on him.

In 1937, Tagore lost consciousness and remained in a state of coma, almost dead. However, he revived though he had to suffer unbearable pain. In 1940, he had a second attack to which he succumbed on 7 August, 1941.

CHRONOLOGY:

- 1861 : 7th May, birth of Rabindranath Tagore in Jorasanko, Calcutta.
- 1868 : Composed his first poem
- 1878 : Left for England to pursue higher studies and Law
- 1880 : Returns to India without a degree
- 1883 : Marries Mrinalini Devi
- 1890 : Moves to Shelaidaha to work in their estates.
Manasi Collection of poems published
- 1901 : Establishes school at Santiniketan
- 1902-1907: Death of wife and two children-daughter Renuka and son Samindra
- 1905 : Death of his father, Debendranath Tagore.
- 1910 : Gitanjali published in Bengali language

- 1912 : Gitanjali published in English
 1913 : Awarded Nobel Prize in Literature. First Non-European to receive it.
 1915 : Knighted by British King George V
 1919 : Renounces Knighthood in protest against Jalianwala Bagh Massacre
 1921 : Founded Shriniketan with the help of agricultural economist Elmhirst.
 1924 : Tagore opens Vishwa Bharati University
 1929 : Tagore begins painting
 1937 : Falls seriously ill for the first time and lapses into coma but revives.
 1941 : 7th August, Rabindranath Tagore dies in Calcutta, India.

TAGORE AS A WRITER

Rabindranath Tagore was a prolific writer who is famous more for his poems than for his novels, short-stories, biographies, travelogues, dramas, essays and songs. He wrote in his mother tongue Bengali though translations of his work in English are available today. He is a pioneer in the short-story form in Bengali literature.

Influences of 15th and 16th century Vaishnavite poets, the Upanishads, Kabir and Ramprasad Sen have been established in Tagore's early poetry; his mature poetry bear influences of Bengali folk music like the Baul ballads. The Gitanjali poems celebrate celestial love in the tradition common in Vaishnavite literature in India. Some poems talk of a union with the supreme one in metaphysical terms, while the subject of nature features in some others. The Nobel Foundation described them as 'profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse.'

The most complete anthology of Rabindranath Tagore's works, eighty volumes of Kalanukromik Rabindra Rachanavali was published in Bengali on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary in 2011.

TEXT OF LETTER

Calcutta, [India] 31 May 1919

Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilised governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers - possibly congratulating themselves for what they imagine as salutary lessons. This callousness has been praised by most of the Anglo-Indian papers, which have in some cases gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings, without receiving the least check from the same authority - relentlessly careful in smothering every cry of pain and expression of judgement from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that our appeals have been in vain and that the passion of vengeance is blinding the nobler vision of statesmanship in our Government, which could so easily afford to be magnanimous as befitting its physical strength and moral tradition, the very least I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to

stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen, who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.

These are the reasons which have painfully compelled me to ask Your Excellency, with due deference and regret, to relieve me of my title of Knighthood, which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hands of your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.

Yours faithfully,
Rabindranath Tagore

SUMMARY OF LETTER

Rabindranath Tagore wrote a letter to Lord Chelmsford on May 31, 1919 renouncing the honour of Knighthood conferred on him by the King of Britain in 1915. This unprecedented move of an Indian protesting publicly came in the wake of the harsh measures taken by the government in Punjab to quell some local disturbances. The body of the letter contains his reasons for doing so.

The severe punishments meted out were disproportionate to their deeds and Tagore was convinced that they were unprecedented in the history of civilized governments. The vengeful attitude of the government was not in keeping with the might of the British Empire, especially as it had been unleashed against unarmed, defenceless people.

The accounts of sufferings and humiliations suffered by Indians in Punjab had become known to the people of the country despite the government's policy of secrecy. It compelled Tagore to realize that the British Government considered Indians insignificant. Instead of addressing the agony of indignation aroused by such treatment, it was callous, forcing him to believe that they were immune to the sorrows of Indian people. Some Anglo-Indian newspapers

had gone to the extent of poking fun at the hapless condition of the Indians. The government did not silence them. Yet, the same authority was cautious enough to smother every cry of pain and expression of judgements from such organizations that sought to represent the sufferers.

Under the circumstances, in the absence of nobler vision of statesmanship, despite its tradition of moral strength and magnanimity, Tagore felt that the least he could do for his countrymen was to stand beside them. The Knighthood, that Tagore had deemed his badge of honour was now a badge of humiliation to him and his compatriots.

Tagore did not want any special distinctions from them. Therefore, with regret he expressed the desire to return the honour as a mark of protest.

ANNOTATIONS

Your Excellency: Lord Chelmsford, (1905-1933) Viceroy and Governor General of India from 1916 to 1921.

Knighthood: A knighthood or a damehood for females, is the highest honour conferred on an individual in The United Kingdom. The Queen or a member of the royal family confers it either in a public or a private ceremony.

His Majesty the King: King George V (1910-1936).

Your predecessor: Lord Hardinge, (1858-1914) Viceroy and Governor General of India from 1910-1916.

NOTE

1919 was a significant year in the history of India's struggle for independence and in the history of the world. Rabindranath Tagore renounced the knighthood conferred on him in 1915, by the British Monarch. It symbolized his complete loss of faith on the governance of the country. The immediate reason behind his repudiation was the suppressive measures unleashed by the Rowlatt Act of 1918. On 21 March, 1919 it was turned into a law recommending emergency powers of wartime to remain in force during peacetime. Mahatma

Gandhi launched a massive all India Satyagraha that culminated in the shooting massacre at Jalianwalabagh, Amritsar, leaving nearly four hundred people dead and thousands wounded. These were unarmed, defenceless Indians, killed mercilessly on 13 April, 1919, by the British Government. Martial law was clamped immediately in Punjab. All news from the area was censored; The Statesman carried news only of atrocities suffered by the British. However, news reached Tagore through his friend Charles Freer Andrews at Santiniketan. Andrews received it from the Principal of St. Stephen's College, Delhi through his students. The Principal, Susil Rudra called Andrews to Delhi, who received firsthand information of the sorrowful plight of the Indians. Tagore came to the conclusion that the government had lost its moral prestige. He was worried and shocked by its insensitivity towards its Indian subjects. Tagore felt that he ought to act. His letter to the Viceroy dated 31 May, was published on June 2 in The Statesman and in July of the same year in an English, Indian newspaper Modern Review, Calcutta. It was the first public protest by a distinguished Indian under the British Raj.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

1. Why does Tagore renounce his knighthood?
2. Comment on Tagore's letter as a protest against British rule in India.
3. Elucidate, "Accounts of insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India."

TEXT OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S LETTER DATED 11 MAY 1933.

To Mahatma Gandhi

Glen Eden, Darjeeling, [West Bengal, India]
11 May 1933

Dear Mahatmaji

I am trying clearly to find out the meaning of this last message of yours which is before the world today. In every important act of his life Buddha preached limitless love for all creatures. Christ said 'Love thine enemies' and that teaching of his found its final expression in the words of forgiveness he uttered for those who killed him. As far as I can understand, the fast that you have started carries in it the idea of expiation for the sins of your countrymen. But I ask to be excused when I say that the expiation can truly and heroically be done only by daily endeavours for the sake of those unfortunate beings who do not know what they do. The fasting which has no direct action upon the conduct of misdoers and which may abruptly terminate one's power further to serve those who need help, cannot be universally accepted and therefore it is all the more unacceptable for any individual who has the responsibility to represent humanity.

The logical consequence of your example, if followed, will be an elimination of all noble souls from the world leaving the morally feeble and down-trodden multitude to sink into the fathomless depth of ignorance and iniquity. You have no right to say that this process of penance can only be efficacious through your own individual endeavour and for others it has no meaning. If that were true you ought to have performed it in absolute secrecy as a special mystic rite which only claims its one sacrifice beginning and ending in yourself. You ask others to actively devote their energy to extirpate the evil which smothers our national life and enjoin only upon yourself an extreme form of sacrifice which is of a passive character. For lesser men than yourself it opens up an easy and futile path of duty by urging them to take a plunge into a dark abyss of self-

mortification. You cannot blame them if they follow you in this special method of purification of their country, for all messages must be universal in their application and if not they should never be expressed at all.

The suffering that has been caused to me by the vow you have taken has compelled me to write to you thus - for I cannot bear the sight of a sublimely noble career journeying towards a finality which, to my mind, lacks a perfectly satisfying justification. And once again I appeal to you for the sake of the dignity of our nation which is truly impersonated in you, and for the sake of the millions of my countrymen who need your living touch and help to desist from any act that you think is good only for you and not for the rest of humanity.

With deepest pain and love

Rabindranath Tagore

SUMMARY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S LETTER DATED 11 MAY 1933.

Gurudev Tagore wrote this letter to Mahatma Gandhi from Glen Eden, Darjeeling, West Bengal, when he learnt of the latter's intention to start a fast. Tagore was unable to understand the Mahatma's reason for the fast. Lord Buddha had preached limitless universal love while Jesus Christ had admonished all to love neighbours as themselves. He had set his forgiveness of those who had killed him as an example. In a similar manner, Tagore believed that Gandhi wanted to fast for the atonement of sins committed by his countrymen. However, Tagore could not accept it as a reason for his fast because it had no direct action upon the wrongdoers. Besides, it would force all those people who were involved in guiding those misguided people to discontinue their noble work. At the same time, it could not be supported at all in Gandhi's case as he had the responsibility of representing humanity.

The logical conclusion of such a fast would be the elimination

of all morally strong people while the morally weak and downtrodden multitude survived in the world and sank further into ignorance and iniquity. Tagore reminded Gandhi that he could not claim this process of penance to be effective through his individual endeavor and that it had no meaning for others. Had it been so, he should have conducted it in absolute secrecy as a special mystic rite that began and ended with him. It seemed odd that Gandhi should instruct others to devote their energy to destroy evil while he took upon himself an extreme sort of sacrifice of a passive nature. It was dangerous for it opened an easy and futile path of duty that urged the common people into a dark abyss of self-mortification. Gandhi would be wrong to blame such people when they followed his example because his message was a public one. Tagore believed that if the common public could not follow such messages then, it should have been left unexpressed.

The fast lacked justification. Hence, Gandhi's vow pained Tagore; it was unbearable that a sublimely noble career as the Mahatma's should journey towards such an end. He therefore, appealed to Gandhi for the sake of the nation, which was truly impersonated in him and for the millions of compatriots to desist from the fast that would be good only for him but would be harmful to humanity.

Tagore ended the letter with his expression of deepest pain and love for Gandhi.

ANNOTATIONS

Buddha: Siddhartha Gautama Buddha or Shakyamuni (563BC?-483BC?) is the founder of Buddhism. He was born as Prince Siddhartha of Kapilavastu, now in Nepal. At the age of twenty-nine, he renounced his princely life and began an ascetic life. He preached universal love; his teachings included the adoption of a middle path in life among others.

Christ: Christians recognize Jesus Christ as son of God. Christian teachings present the love of Christ as a basis for his sacrificial act which brought salvation to mankind.

Expiation: atonement, the extinguishing of guilt by suffering or penalty.

Iniquity: gross immorality, wickedness, injustice.

Extirpate: to pull up by the roots, to cut out by surgery

Self-mortification: voluntary self-punishment to atone for sins, penance.

NOTE

This letter to Gandhi was published in the Modern Review, Calcutta in June, 1933. Clearly, Tagore was anxious about the outcome of this fast which he perceived as a threat to the wellbeing of the country, the countrymen and above all Gandhi's frail health. Earlier, when Gandhi had written to him from Pune jail, on 2 May, informing him about his fast, Tagore sent him a telegram requesting him to reconsider his decision. Later, after Gandhi had issued a justification for his fast to the Bombay Press on 9 May, Tagore opposed it for he felt that Gandhi was more intent on self-purification rather than the country's urgent need for leadership. However, Gandhi was undeterred and when the fast became a reality Tagore supported it and sent him two encouraging telegrams. The second telegram was read out as Gandhi broke his fast of twenty-one days. Gandhi had undergone this penance against the practice of untouchability. He expressed his fear that without this fast he would be useless for further service of Harijans or for any other service.

Asutosh Mukherjee

LETTER TO LORD LYTON

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

1. Why did Tagore oppose Gandhi's fast?
2. Do you agree with the view that Tagore was Gandhi's conscience keeper?

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CONTENTS

Life And Works	39
Text of Letter To Lord Lytton	41
Summary of Letter To Lord Lytton	41
Annotations	42
Note	42
Textual Questions	42

LIFE AND WORKS

Sir Asutosh Mukherjee was born on June 29, 1864, at Bowbazaar, Kolkata to the famous doctor, Ganga Prasad Mukherjee. He grew up in an atmosphere conducive to the study of science and literature. At a very early age, he showed unusual aptitude for mathematics. He studied in the Sisu Vidyalaya at Chakraberia, Bhowanipur, Kolkata and passed the entrance exam to Calcutta University in 1879, at the young age of fifteen. In 1880, he entered Presidency College of Calcutta. He was fortunate to have classmates like Narendranath Dutta, who later became universally famous as Swami Vivekananda and P.C.Ray. In 1883, he stood first in the B.A. examination of Calcutta University and was awarded the Premchand-Roychand scholarship to complete post-graduate studies in mathematics. In 1885, he received his master degree in mathematics and in 1886 received his second master degree in physical science making him the first student to receive a dual post-graduate degree from Calcutta University.

In 1883, Asutosh solemnized his marriage with a Bengali lady named Jogomayadevi. Their son, Syama Prasad Mukherjee became the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangha.

The Department of Public Instruction offered him a job but he decided to complete his bachelor's degree in law instead. Meanwhile, he carried on his scholarly studies in physics and mathematics. In 1888, at the age of twenty-four, he became a fellow of the Calcutta University. His greatest achievement was his ability to transform the university into a centre of great teaching and research in India. He was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the university in 1906, a position that he occupied to 1914 and again after a short gap from 1921 to 1923. He rejoiced in nurturing talents; Dr. C.V. Raman and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan were his students.

It was because of his efforts that several graduate programmes, new at that time, were introduced in Calcutta University. Comparative Literature, Anthropology, Applied Psychology,

industrial Chemistry, Ancient Indian History and Culture and Islamic studies were introduced. Post-graduate classes in Bengali, Hindi, Pali and Sanskrit were also instituted.

Mukherjee was a man of great personality and he enjoyed a dominant status in the field of education. In 1906, he founded the Bengal Technical Institute, in 1908 The Calcutta Mathematical Society, in 1914, The Calcutta University, College of Science and in 1916, he established Asutosh College in South Calcutta. He served as the founder President of the Mathematical Society from 1908 to 1923 and was the first President of The Indian Science Congress in 1914.

Asutosh Mukherjee possessed tremendous courage of conviction and never compromised with his self-respect. A man of great integrity and extreme moral courage, he defied the British administration whenever such necessity arose. It earned him the sobriquet of "Tiger of Bengal". In 1909, Mukherjee was appointed a 'Companion of the Order of the Star of India' and in 1911, the British Crown knighted him. The Intellectuals of Bengal awarded him titles of *Saraswati* and *Shastravachaspati* for his contribution to education in India. Independent India honoured him with a postage stamp bearing his facsimile in 1964.

Lord Curzon tried to impose restrictions in education in India, in 1902, particularly in Calcutta University because he considered it a centre of sedition. In 1923, Lord Lytton set down several conditions for Mukherjee's reappointment as Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, he refused it. He was a member of the Sadler commission of 1917-1919, which enquired into the state of education and its system in India.

A learned pundit in his own right, Mukherjee possessed a personal collection of eighty thousand books that he donated to the National Library, Kolkata. His vision for an educated India was instrumental in bringing about major improvements for which India remains indebted to him forever. He passed away in 1924.

TEXT OF LETTER TO LORD LYTTON

YOUR EXCELLENCY

I am being urged by my countrymen to assist them in giving expression to their sense of indignation at the remark made by your Excellency in referring to the complaint regarding police outrages on Indian woman.

There can be no room for doubt that the great majority of my countrymen who have come across your Excellency's reported words have been profoundly hurt by what they have taken them to mean - a meaning so far as I am aware which has upto now have not been authoritatively stated to have been wrongly attributed to those words.

At the same time knowing what I do of your excellency personally and of the traditions of chivalry which are your inheritance, I find it extremely difficult to believe that it could have been your Excellency's intention to cast aspersion on the fair names of the women of our country or even to hurt the feelings of my countrymen.

So I feel that I owe it to your Excellency no less than to myself, frankly to write and ask what your Excellency's real meaning was, before saying anything further about the matter.

Trusting your Excellency will excuse any liberty which I may have unknowingly taken. 1924.

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO LORD LYTTON

Asutosh Mukherjee addressed his letter to Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal at the behest of his countrymen who wished him to assist them in conveying their sense of indignation about his recent remark. He refers to the complaint regarding police outrages against women and Lord Lytton's comment on it. Mukherjee believes that Lord Lytton may have meant something other than what the people of the country had accepted it as. Since Mukherjee knew

him personally and recognized him as a traditionally chivalrous man, he finds it difficult to accept that he had knowingly cast aspersions on the fair names of the women of the country or even hurt the sentiments of his countrymen. Hence, he requests Lord Lytton to reveal what the true meanings of his words were.

ANNOTATIONS

Aspersions: Damaging remark, slander

Fair names: good name, honour

NOTE

NOTE
According to a Reuter telegram dated London ,August 21, Lord Lytton had addressed a police parade on August 6,where he had said that he was distressed to find that mere hatred of authority could drive Indian men and induce Indian women to invent offences against their own honour merely to discredit Indian Policemen. This remark was construed as an insult to Indian women. Nationalist leaders were extremely vocal against the Governor and protest meetings were held .These were addressed by Mr.C.R.Das, Mr.Nehru ,and Mrs.Sarojini Naidu of whom Mrs.Naidu was the most aggressive. They demanded a public apology from the Governor. *The Straits Times*,September 1,too reported Lytton's speech at Dacca where he commented that the men of the country were not above urging the womankind for political ends, to make allegations that they have been criminally assaulted by the police. It reported that the speech raised a great storm of indignation throughout Bengal and had overshadowed all political agitation.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

1. What did Sir Autosh Mukherjee write to Lord Lytton?
2. What do you gather about Mukherjee, as a person from his letter to Lord Lytton?
3. Describe the incident that prompted Mukherjee to write to Lord Lytton?



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