

**A Structural and Functional Analysis of Analogies in Tagore's
*Nationalism***

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Abstract

This article begins by highlighting the significance of using figurative language in literary communication. Writers often employ literary devices such as simile, metaphor, and analogy to convey their messages more effectively and vividly to readers. These devices aim to draw comparisons between similar or dissimilar objects, ideas, or phenomena. Among them, analogy differs from simile and metaphor in that it presents a more elaborate and structured comparison. One of the salient features of Rabindranath Tagore's essays in *Nationalism* is an extensive use of analogies. This article identifies and categorizes twenty five analogies from the book into nine types: object-to-purpose/function, cause-to-effect, part-to-whole, source-to-product, characteristic, general-to-specific, user-to-tool, synonyms, and antonyms. The article further examines the roles and functions of analogies in literature, particularly how they enhance clarity, persuasion, and aesthetic value in Tagore's prose.

Keywords: figurative, simile, metaphor, elaborate, comparison, functions etc.

1. Introduction

A writer strives to effectively communicate their ideas to the readers. Using literary devices like simile, metaphor they send the message across effectively. Comparison is a very common method to convince the readers. The success of the writer depends on how they uses the figurative language in their communication. So very often they tend to say that 'something is like something' (simile) or 'something is something' (metaphor). One of the practices is the application of elaborate

comparison is called as an analogy. Comparing two objects or ideas is common practice in the English language and literature. While there are many forms of comparison, one literary term that encompasses most types of comparison is known as an analogy. Tagore delivered some lectures in Japan in June 1916. Later he traveled to the United States and delivered a few lectures on the theme of nationalism in September and December 1916 when the First World War was unfolding. The principal aim of these lectures is to criticize the eurocentric exclusionary model of nationalism and suggest a new model of nationalism grounded in moral, ethical and spiritual principles.

2. What is an analogy?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary emphasizes “resemblance” between “unlike things” and defines an analogy as “a comparison of two otherwise unlike things based on resemblance of a particular aspect” (“Analogy”). According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, an analogy highlights a “similar feature” and serves an explanatory function. It defines an analogy as “a comparison between things that have similar features, often used to help explain a principle or idea” (“Analogy”). The *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* also underscores the importance of “similar features” in its definition: “a comparison of one thing with another thing that has similar features; a feature that is similar” (“Analogy”). The *Collins Dictionary* defines *analogy* using an example and states: “If you make or draw an analogy between two things, you show that they are similar in some way” (“Analogy”). The *Britannica Dictionary* offers a brief and straightforward definition: “a comparison of two things based on their being alike in some way” (“Analogy”). The *Longman Dictionary* introduces additional terms such as “situations” and “processes,” defining an analogy as “something that seems similar between two situations, processes, etc.” (“Analogy”). Finally, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* provides a more elaborate definition: “an analogy is a comparison between two objects, or systems of objects, that highlights respects in which they are thought to be similar” (“Analogy”).

3. What are the functions of an analogy in a literary work?

From the above definitions, we can identify several important functions of analogies in literature. First and foremost, writers use analogies to compare things and demonstrate that two seemingly different elements share certain similarities. This is a common objective. However, the purpose of an analogy goes beyond merely stating

that *X* is similar to *Y*; rather, it highlights the similarity through an elaborate and structured explanation. In this sense, an analogy functions as a kind of extended metaphor.

Another key purpose of using analogy in literary works is to provide additional information or insight. An effective analogy helps the writer clarify the relationship between two concepts or phenomena. It can also reveal a shared abstraction—an underlying principle or idea that connects the compared elements. Interestingly, analogies can also point out differences between two things, particularly by contrasting features within a broader comparison. They are often employed to create vivid imagery, making abstract or complex ideas easier for readers to grasp. A well-crafted analogy can make an argument more memorable and impactful.

Thus, analogies help make abstract concepts relatable and concrete, aiding long-term retention and comprehension. They support the writer's argument, often leaving a deep emotional impression on the reader. Analogies enrich the text and enhance its aesthetic and intellectual appeal. When writers use analogies effectively, they communicate their ideas in a more powerful and persuasive way. As a result, readers are better able to perceive the parallels between the compared elements, gaining a deeper understanding of otherwise difficult or abstract concepts.

4. Analogies in Rabindranath Tagore's *Nationalism*

S.N.	Analogy	Type	Explanation
1.	Her mission has been like that of a hostess who has to provide proper accommodation for numerous guests, whose habits and requirements are different from one another. (Tagore 5)	Object to function	The hostess is the object and the function is to provide accommodation
2.	It is like a hydraulic press, whose pressure is impersonal, and on that account completely effective. (17)	Object to function	<i>'Hydraulic press' is the object while 'impersonal yet efficient force' is the function.</i>
3.	Thus India is being turned into so many predigested morsels of food ready to be swallowed at any moment by any nation which has even the	Object to function	India is an object <i>Function is swallowing by any nation which has the most rudimentary set of teeth in its head</i>

	most rudimentary set of teeth in its head. (126)		
4.	It is like the pack of predatory creatures that must have its victims. With all its heart it cannot bear to see its hunting-grounds converted into cultivated fields. (21)	Object to function	Predatory creature is the object Function is to hunt
5.	Like gaseous particles forced into a too narrow space, they come in continual conflict with each other till they burst the very arrangement which holds them in bondage. (10)	Cause to effect	Cause is 'gaseous particles forced into a narrow space' and effect is 'conflict and bursting of the container.'
6.	When a father becomes a gambler and his obligations to his family take the secondary place in his mind, then he is no longer a man, but an automaton led by the power of greed. (12)	Cause to effect	Cause is 'ather becomes a gambler' Effect is 'he is no longer a man, but an automaton led by
7.	It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul. (60)	Cause to effect	Cause is 'concentrating forces on one purpose.' Effect is 'millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul.'
8.	Our food is creative, it builds our body; but not so wine, which stimulates. Our social ideals create the human world, but when our mind is diverted from them to greed of power then in that state of intoxication we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom. (120)	Cause to effect	Cause: when our mind is diverted from them to greed of power Effect: we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom

9.	But this piety being a mere unreal abstraction completely deadens the moral sense of the individual, just as the man, who would not hurt an animal unnecessarily, would cause horrible suffering to a large number of innocent creatures when he drugs his feelings with the abstract idea of 'sport. (42)	Cause to effect	Cause: Piety completely deadens the moral individual Effect: cause horrible suffering to a large innocent creatures
10.	Therefore the Western Nation acts like a dam to check the free flow of Western civilization into the country of the No-Nation. (21)	Cause to effect	Cause: The Western Nation acting like a dam checks the free flow of Western civilization Nation.
11.	In the products of the hand-loom the magic of man's living fingers finds its expression, and its hum harmonizes with the music of life. But the power-loom is relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production. (18)	Antony m	Hand-loom is concerned with life, expressive Power-loom is concerned with lifelessness,
12.	A railway train makes its progress towards the terminus station,— it is movement. But a full-grown tree has no definite movement of that kind, its progress is the inward progress of life. (63)	Antony m	A railway train makes its progress towards station A full-grown tree has an inward progress of
13.	It is like a child who, in the excitement of his play, imagines he likes his playthings better than his mother.	Antony m	This shows a contrast between what is real (what is superficially attractive (playthings)).
14.	The reaction of disillusionment is just as unreal as the first shock of illusion. (87)	Antony m	Illusion and disillusionment are opposites, unreal.

15.	A true unity is like a round globe, it rolls on, carrying its burden easily; but diversity is a many-cornered thing which has to be dragged and pushed with all force. (114)	Antony m	A true unity is like a round globe, it rolls on, carrying its burden easily Diversity is a many-cornered thing which has to be dragged and pushed with a
16.	It is like dressing our skeleton with another man's skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bones at every movement. (54)	Charact eristic	It highlights the conflict (characteristic) between the “other man’s skin” and the “our own skeleton.”
17.	You have discovered that nature reserves her power in forms of beauty; and it is this beauty which, like a mother, nourishes all the giant forces at her breast, keeping them in active vigour, yet in repose. (70)	Charact eristic	It explains the characteristic of beauty: nurturing life like a mother nurturing her child.
18.	But life has its sleep, its periods of inactivity, when it loses its movements, takes no new food, living upon its past storage. (51)	Charact eristic	Here the characteristic of life is stated: sleeping and ffeding on its own past during period of inactivity.
19.	To a Western observer our civilization appears as all metaphysics, as to a deaf man piano-playing appears to be mere movements of fingers and no music. (62)	General to Specific	Here the western observer and the deaf man sees only the general abstract and undrestimates the specific music.
20.	A true unity is like a round globe, it rolls on, carrying its burden easily; but diversity is a many-cornered thing	General to Specific	‘Unity’ is general while ‘round globe’ is specific.

	which has to be dragged and pushed with all force. (114)		
21.	In man's history there come ages of fireworks which dazzle us by their force and movement. They laugh not only at our modest household lamps but also at the eternal stars. (108)	General to Specific	Here 'general' is 'Ages of dazzling fireworks' while the specific is 'compared to modest household lamps stars'.
22.	When you go a-hunting, the less pity you have the better; for your one object is to chase the game and kill it, to feel that you are the greater animal, that your method of destruction is thorough and scientific. (76)	User to tool	Here the hunter uses the tool of lack of pity to achieve the goal of a successful hunt.
23.	We can take anything else from the hands of science, but not this elixir of moral death. (79)	Source to Product	Science is the source; product is elixir of moral death.
24.	Our food is creative, it builds our body; but not so wine, which stimulates. Our social ideals create the human world, but when our mind is diverted from them to greed of power then in that state of intoxication we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom. (120)	Synonym	Health implies strength and freedom while liberty implies their ideal form.
25.	Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets, ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism. (44)	part-to-whole	Here 'men' constitute the parts of the 'nation called the 'whole'.

5. Conclusions

This research paper discussed the meaning and functions of analogies in literature. It analyzed twenty-five examples of analogies from Rabindranath Tagore's essay collection *Nationalism* (1917). These examples were further categorized into nine types: object-to-function, cause-to-effect, characteristic, general-to-specific, user-to-tool, source-to-product, synonym, antonym, and part-to-whole. The findings show that Tagore made extensive use of analogies in his speeches on nationalism, most of which function as extended metaphors. Among the identified types, *cause-to-effect* and *characteristic* analogies were the most frequently used. There is also a notable presence of *object-to-function*, *general-to-specific*, and *antonym* analogies. In contrast, fewer examples were found in the *user-to-tool*, *source-to-product*, *synonym*, and *part-to-whole* categories. The use of analogies significantly enhances the literary quality and overall appreciation of Tagore's essays, enriching both their rhetorical power and conceptual clarity.

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