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Tagore's Vision: Commitment to Life and its Manifold Duties

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Abstract:

Human life is the supreme gift of the Almighty. Tagore believed in the equality of all the human beings. All religions guide us towards the same God. The best source of salvation is the service to humanity. One cannot attain god by chanting mantras & telling the beads. Tagore's view of life is not of an ascetic. His poetry is not an escape from life. God is, himself, continuously engaged in the creation of the universe. Tagore doesn't preach the renunciation of life. On the contrary, he considers that it is the duty of human beings to help the poor & the needy.

Keywords: Salvation, humanity, deliverance, renunciation .

Tagore discovers God within the life of man. Every object of nature is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Salvation consists in the integral divine perfection of the whole being of the man. And this fundamental belief in the spiritual unity of things and the kinship and affinities between seemingly diverse and fragmentary things in the universe is the keynote of Indian mysticism.

Tagore's vision enables him not only to see, but also to feel, the Immanent, taking a bodily form as Milton's cosmic imagination enables him to move between heaven and hell. Tagore's vision enables him to see God as a stainless white radiance.

Tagore came to identify himself with the sorrows of the whole world, however impure and murderous they might be, until his heart was scored with scars. The poet conveys his thanks to God that his destiny lies with the humble who suffer and bear the burden of power and hide their faces and stifle their sobs in the dark. He must love God in all sort and conditions of men, however antagonistic and hostile and in all forms of thought controlling their existence and often setting them at variance the one with the other.

In short, he recognized that all religions lead by different paths to the same God. Hence, Tagore was curious to explore them all, for with him comprehension meant existence and action. Tagore found salvation not in renunciation. He recommended

service to humanity as the best source of salvation. Buddha's teaching speaks of Nirvana as the highest achievement possible.

Tagore has criticized the worship of idols. He says:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!..... Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense!-1

Tagore prevented the worship of idols in the premises of Vishvabharati. Rabindranath denied going to the idolatrous ceremony of Shivaji's anniversary when called on by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandrapal. Tagore's religion is universal in nature. The poet's voice addresses all humanity and arouses the spirit of man, caught in the meshes of materialism:

It is one of the distinctive marks of Rabindranath's view of life that he looks upon the Supreme Person as comprehending the individual and the universe, and the Supreme person manifests Himself in those yearnings of the individual which connect him with the larger world lying beyond... The Lord of the poet's life shades off into the Lord of the universe.-2

God's presence is all pervasive. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. The Almighty is present in man's body, heart and action. It is the duty of a man to keep him pure and free of all evil so that his body, mind and heart become the temple of God. Monism is the keyword with the poet and he quotes the Upanishadic text. He has firm faith in the oneness of the reality.

Rabindranath Tagore witnessed his God. But where did he witness Him:

He exists where the cultivator does farming,
where roads are being constructed by crushing
the stones.

Toiling round the year-

You dwell in those places

Where the poorest of the poor lives.

Among the downtrodden and dispossessed lagging behind.-3

Man has the ability to surpass his normal instincts to reach a higher plane of sensitivity. He can win over his daily needs of hunger, greed and helplessness to step forward into the world of deep meditation. He is the seeker of ultimate beauty through his culture and creation. The human being represents that Supreme Man who can outshine distress to attain ingenious creativity. The power of the self can only enlighten human being. Tagore values human qualities and encourages us to choose the right path in our struggle of life.

Tagore accepts life, and enjoys the manifold beauties of life and nature enthusiastically. His view of life is not that of a saint or an ascetic. The poet does not want to renounce the world. Infact we should not worried by the idea of deliverance at all.

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.-4

God Himself has joyfully taken upon Him the bonds of creation and is bound with us all forever. His advice to the priest is to leave his singing and chanting, and search God where the tillers are tilling the soil or path makers breaking stones. The Almighty is not to be found in the temple or through the secluded life of a saint but through love and service to our fellowmen. It is by being united with them that we can be truly united with Him. Humility is the virtue which the devotee must cultivate before he can enjoy the ineffable bliss which arrives through union with the Almighty. Participation in the humble activities of daily life is important for the realization of the Divine. If God Himself is the God of compassion, we cannot afford to remain hard hearted. Tagore seeks union with God through union with his companions. This is the unique characteristic of his mysticism and in this respect he stands alone among mystics.

The English version of Tagore's Gitanjali was first introduced to the West on June 30, 1912. A meeting of men of letters and poets was organized that evening in the house of William Rothenstein. Tagore's poetry opened a new world of beauty to all men. An English friend of India, C.F. Andrews was present as one of the listeners. Andrews wrote letter referring to this occasion:

That night the supreme delicacy and beauty of India's great world culture was brought home to me with overwhelming power as I listened to the poet's songs and met the poet himself. It was a night of inner illumination and clear vision.-5

To the poet life is ever a march. The glory of life lies in fighting the hard rocks of trouble and beating the drum of victory. The trumpet seems to declare war with evil and thus symbolizes the call of Almighty to combat the forces of evil. Whenever there is any need, man must tolerate the sorrows and sufferings of life to win over the forces of evil. The poet's identification with common people and his sympathy for the oppressed and enslaved makes him concerned for the other half of the human society- the women. His freedom is to be traced in earthly bondage with delight. He wanted all human beings to be treated equally regardless of the country or nation to which they belong. Tagore glorified man and elevated him to a high pedestal. Man is the centre of interests because he manifests the Almighty in the most effective form.

Tagore regards it as his special mission to sing of the fugitive and the trivial, but by his imaginative sight depicts the soul of mystery and wonder that lies beneath. He invests it with a peculiar charm and glory. His poetry is not an escape from life; rather it is an expression of his joy in the mere act of living. Real happiness is to be found not in the pursuit of distant gains, but in the enjoyment of the trifles of the moment. The poet has his own utopia where he wants refuge from the trouble and toil of human life. The poet finds rest from his distant wanderings in the cool grass of common life. The Almighty is imminent in common things and in the heart of the common people and must be searched there. His romantic poetry does not ignore reality; its romance comes out of an acknowledgement of the trivialities of daily life. The immanence of the Lord in the common things of life has been felt in all ages in the simple hearts of the people whose names are unrecorded.

The poet is deeply conscious of human suffering and misery which finds an expression in a number of poems, especially in the poems of *The Fugitive*. But it is nature which is a bringer of consolation and hope. The tiny flower among the thorns gives him hope that the spirit of man will at last get victory over the forces of destruction. The flower smiling in its thorny surroundings becomes a symbol of men's ultimate triumph over the sufferings and grievances of human life.

Rabindranath tries to reveal the mystery and wonder in the birth of the child in a few lyrics of *The Crescent Moon*. The child asks his mother where he came from. This is a mystery which is as old as humanity. The poet tries to probe the mystery by projecting himself into the mind of the mother out of whose womb the child gets life. It is a common knowledge that man's advent on earth has been preceded by evolution extending over ages and that before the child's birth the mother passes through a period of child carrying covering about three hundred days. The poet transfers this period from the physical plane to the region of longings, prayers and dreams. The baby lay concealed in the earliest desires of the mother; he was to be found in her childish plays and in her prayers. Even the softness of his features was reflected in the tender beauty of her youthful limbs. Not only does the poet add to the mystery of creation by transferring the focus of interest from the physical region to the psychological, but by other magnificent flight of fancy he makes the child the symbol of something afar which has come to her in a mysterious way from above. The child is so great for her that she can never think that she was its creator. This is the greatest mystery in the world to her.

The principal characteristic of childhood is supreme unconcern towards life's struggles and problems. While men toss on the rough waves and try to make headway, children play on the seashore, weaving toy boats with withered leaves, gathering pebbles and empty shells. Not only do they play on the shore of the sea of life, but the sea also

plays with them. The beauty of the seashore is derived no less from the magnificent conception of life as an infinite sea on the shore of which childhood plays eternally than from sharp contrast between what this sea is for children and what it is for men and women.

As children are unacquainted with life, they have a feeling of mystery and wonder about it. Therefore, children's lullabies are full of fairy love which appeals to their sense of wonder and also satisfy their eagerness which does not bother about proof. When mothers are anxious to lull their children to sleep in the evening, the moon which is so enchanting and which seems to be at the same time so near and distant, is the thing that most easily attracts children. It is little wonder that much of the fairy love intended for babies is woven round the crescent moon. The poet looks at children's lullabies from a more comprehensive point of view. The world is certainly a source of mystery and wonder for children; but children are also a source of mystery and wonder for their mothers. So, in children's lullabies, the poet finds an expression of the attitude of the mothers, of the magic and beauty which grown-up people find in babies. The sleep that flits on a baby's eyes and the smile that flickers on a baby's lips have their source in a fairyland which is the home of the crescent moon. When the child lived there, it had no end of freedom and no lack of wealth; but it has come down to earth in order to win the endless love, pity and joy that lay hidden in the mother's breast. The reason why the child's beauty is entrancing is that the fairy mistress of dreams creates it and that this beauty is associated with the wind, the sun and the sky.

Tagore also deals with the child's craving for freedom, his desire to meet the far off. The child thinks that clouds are paper boats and wants to get them. He wishes to go the far off country on the other bank, and, therefore, the work of a sailor has a special charm for him. It symbolizes for him an escape from the dull and the same familiar. In a number of poems, many of the callings of life are shown in a similar manner to be full of fascination for him. The poet depicts the mind of the child, its desire for freedom, its simplicity as well as brings out the hidden beauty of the humble occupation of the life.

To conclude, Tagore has his feet firmly planted on the earth. His poetry shows a deep concern for a number of human heroism, human suffering and human problems. The poet stresses the superiority of spiritual to material wealth. Tagore is not an ascetic who preaches a renunciation of life, of its joy and its activity. He is a spiritual humanist who discovers spiritual significance in the commonplace activities of life, and finds the Almighty Lord in the humblest cottage and not in the temple.

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