

RABINDRANATH TAGORE - ART IS MĀYĀ

Rabindranath Tagore, a name of one of the most distinguished sons of India, was essentially a bard and minstrel. However he was a man of multicoloured hues, a philosopher of rare vintage and a prophet of a new age of collaboration. A poet's conviction not to lose faith in man and the world around gave his ideas a new dimension. He had a deep insight into the integral nature of India's past and equally a radiant hope for a brilliant future. The Archbishop of Upsala while introducing him before the Swedish Academy had rightly said, "The Nobel Prize for literature is intended for the writer who combines in himself the artist and the prophet. None has fulfilled these conditions better than Rabindranath Tagore."¹

In discussing Rabindranath's conception of māyā we have to remind first in Dr. Radhakrishnan's language "Rabindranath is essentially a poet and not a philosopher, though it is possible for us to gather his philosophical views from his poetry."² Radhakrishnan points out the fact that "While both philosophy and poetry aim at the same end, their starting points are different. They approach reality from different angles. While philosophy aims at grasping the synthesis which gathers together all aspects of the universe, poetry aims at catching the vision which sees the things of beauty of the world as a whole."³ Rabindranath being essentially a poet could not condemn this world as full of sorrows and miseries. He could not get lost or frustrated with this world of

everyday experience of limitation and failure. He could not but be an optimist who could realise the harmonious bond between the higher and lower in the Ultimate truth. But this ideal of Truth was not akin to the transcendentalists who could just think this world as a mere dream, the Truth beyond time and space, and flying from this world of nothingness want to take refuge in world negating ascetic life of inactivity.

In Rabindranath as in all true poetry and philosophy, the ideal is to realise the harmony not the discord - the beauty not the ugliness. "The poet should face the world with its ugliness and misery, horror and imperfection, but in the end let us feel that the world we live in is good enough."⁴ He could feel in his heart that the principle of harmony is the guiding principle beyond this world creation. Rabindranath says "My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony ?"⁵

Again he says "I believe that there is an ideal hovering over the earth - an ideal of that Paradise which is not the mere outcome of imagination, but the ultimate reality towards which all things are moving. I believe that this vision of paradise is to be seen in the sunlight, and the green of the earth, in the flowing streams, in the beauty of Spring time and the repose of a Winter morning. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of Paradise is awake and sending forth its voice."⁶

The conception of latent harmony in every aspect even in discord resulted in Rabindranath's reliance of the principle of unity in diversity. Rabindranath, as a great philosopher with a prophet-like vision led stress on the one in many-though he did not deny the latter as unimportant. "The principle of unity is the mystery of all mysteries. The existence of a duality at once raises question in our minds, and we seek its solution in the one. When at last we find a relation between the two and thereby see them as one in essence, we feel that we have come to the truth and then we give utterance to this most startling of all paradoxes, that one appears as many that the appearance is the opposite of truth and yet is inseparably related to it."⁷

We common people generally tend to think in the diversified line of ideas as finite and infinite, limited and unlimited. For us there remains an unfathomable gap between these two opposites. Thus we forget that the ultimate unity itself breaks itself into the two factors of subject and object, man and nature." Intellect reads the manifestations, but misses the unity in which the two gathered together."⁸

"The piper pipes in the centre, hidden from sight, And we become frantic, we dance."⁹ The Cycle of Spring. Again in **Personality** Rabindranath says, the mere infinite is "utter emptiness." The finites and the infinite are real in their union. "The infinite and the finite are one, as song and singing are one."¹⁰ It is by the blending of these two the finites and the Infinite, this created world of experience and existence can

come to fruition and true reality.

Rabindranath was highly influenced by the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads preached the ideal that the one unlimited infinite truth is the Absolute Brahman. But in India, this Absolute is not conceived as a mere philosophical speculation but is as real as the sunlight. Rabindranath protests against such a misconception that the Brahman of the Vedānta is an abstract beyond. He says "The infinite in India was not a thin non-entity, void of all content. The Ṛṣis of India asserted emphatically, "To know Him in this life is to be true, not to know Him in this life is the desolation of death". How are we to know Him then ? "By realising Him in each and all ? Not only in nature but in the family, in society, and in the state, the more we realise the world conscious in all, the better for us. Failing to realise it we turn our faces to destruction."¹¹ "He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones"¹²

Rabindranath, we have already discussed was a poet in heart - a man of emotion and personal feelings. To him intelligence could not be cherished as only ideal way to realise the truth. He says, to consider the Absolute an object of mere intellect - not to make a bridge in between "Only gives satisfaction to our intellect, and as it does not appeal to our whole being it only deadens in us the sense of the infinite."¹³

Without the tender touch of emotion of heart nobody can embrace the Real. The Intelligent runs after the hair-splitting discussion of antagonism between the categories like reality - unreality, truth-falsity, limited, unlimited reaches a truth-mere abstract.

The absolute for the poet, is the organic whole consisting of the different elements of matter, life, consciousness and intellect. The latter are the expressions of the whole; but as soon as we consider the expressions as the expressed, manifested beings as the absolute truth we are in the region of māyā. Radhakrishnan says "Avidyā or ignorance of the real nature of the world and man's place in it chains in the bonds of māyā. Then the finite existence becomes a pathos and nature a bondage from which we should escape."¹⁴ Rabindranath himself has said, "Everything has this dualism of māyā and satyam where it recognises its essence in the universal and infinite in the supreme self, in Paramātman"¹⁵ Now, we can find out the distinguished characteristics of the poet's conception of māyā, the world creations and impact on ethical life. The world of nature was never conceived by him as a place of delusion. To him the creator was no devil. He cannot present us a world full of deception, on the contrary the world of persons and things has achieved a different dimension in Tagore's creative outlook. He never conceived the world as a place to be escaped from. It is here to enable the finite individual to reach his goal. "The entire world is given to us, and all over-powers have their final meaning in the faith that by their help we are to take possession of our patrimony."¹⁶ Again, "You are

all my world. I am lost in you !!¹⁷

To Rabindranath's artistic mind māyā was also conceived as the indispensable creative force behind the process of creation. It is nothing to be condemned. Art was viewed by him as māyā 'art is māyā' and the world as a whole being a work of image could be viewed as a work of art for art is essentially image making.

Rabindranath has related the works of art with the world of reality, where the infinite, unlimited has adopted himself limitations. This self adoption has implied the sense of freedom through so called bondages, reality among so called unrealities. "He accepts the limits of his own law and the play goes on, which is this world whose reality is in the relation to the person. Things are distinct not in their essence but in their appearance, in other words, in their relation to one to whom they appear. This is art, the truth of which is not in substance or logic, but in expression. Abstract truth may belong to science and metaphysics, but the world of reality belongs to Art."¹⁸

In explaining how is art possible ? Tagore, includes the process of creativity as the necessary condition of art. The conception of art and then creativity, were inter-linked with the concept of surplus in man. Through the emotional bond a man feels close relation with this world. Emotion plays a vital role in unification and harmonisation with the world and our personality would have lost in a vacuum if

this world were taken away. For Tagore truth is beautiful, beauty means for him freedom in appearances. In explaining the concept of Art Tagore could successfully correlate the concept of freedom of appearances with truth of mortality. For surplus man is the true and distinguished field of human existence in reality and truth and since it seeks expression through art, in case of supreme creator, māyā could also be sought for creative delight. In respect of art, which can also be applied in case of māyā or the creative process, Rabindranath always maintained that a wholesome comprehensive outlook is to be adapted instead of mere analytic approach. Such a comprehensive outlook could realise that aesthetic value inheres moral values, human values.

Upaniṣad's impact on Rabindranath was immense. He was born and brought up in such an atmosphere in which Upaniṣad was the ideal, though his time and his family specially were highly influenced, by threefold current affairs viz Rammohan's sanctification movement, Bankimchandra's literary works and the birth of national movement. However, Rabindranath could grasp Upaniṣad nay the ideas of Indian philosophy in their real perspective with a realistic approach of life. He criticised the modern philosophers of Europe, who being directly or indirectly indebted to Upaniṣads, far from realising their debt, criticise Indian idea of the Absolute truth i.e. Brahman is mere abstraction, a metaphysical speculation of null and void. Rabindranath does not agree with such a view and clearly states that, "But this is certainly

not in accord with the pervading spirit of the Indian mind. Instead it is the practice of realising and affirming the presence of the infinite in all things which has been its constant inspiration." ¹⁹

For Rabindranath, Upaniṣad though teaches us in favour of one Absolute truth he raises the question can this Absolute be abstracted from the world ? Instead, it signifies not merely seeing him in all things, but saluting him in all the objects of the world. The attitude of the God-conscious man of the Upaniṣads towards the universe is one of a deep feeling of adoration. His object of worship is present everywhere. It is the one living truth that makes all realities true. This truth is not only of knowledge but of devotion. It is recognised in the outburst of the Ṛṣis, who addresses the whole world in a sudden ecstasy of joy." Listen to me, ye sons of the immortal spirits, ye who live in the heavenly abode, I have known the Supreme person whose light shines forth from beyond the darkness." "Do we not find the overwhelming delight of direct and positive experience, where there is not the least trace of vagueness or passivity ?"²⁰

Rabindranath has asserted categorically the Upaniṣadic teaching that Reality is one, non-dual. Though somewhere he apparently referred to dualism, he has clearly stated in a letter that "Previously I remarked that dualism is at the root of creation but the remark is rather incomplete. Creation is the synthesis of dualism and non dualism."²¹ He firmly believes in the monism i.e. the oneness of Reality. "The Upaniṣads

say with great emphasis, know thou the one, the soul."²² But the question arises why does the one become many ? We have already discussed that Śāṅkarāchārya had advocated māyā i.e. the deceptive force which might be called as the cause of creation resulting in the world creation, ultimately unreal.

Rabindranath has emphasized on the fact that "everything has sprung from immortal life and is vibrating with life, (yadidaṁ Kiñcha prāṇa etajē niḥṣṭam) for life is immense (Prāno virāt).²³ In this context we come to the eternal problem of how the infinite coexists with the finite. The poet who discusses the relation of finite and infinite in the chapter entitled 'Realisation in Love' in the Religion of Man - himself is giving his ideas regarding the relation. There is intimate relation which is to be realised through love. This relation seemed to him an inexplicable paradox. He says "There is the sublime paradox that lies at the root of existence. We never can go round it, because we never can stand outside the problem and weigh it against any other possible alternative. But the problem exists in logic only, in reality it does not offer us any difficulty at all. Logically speaking the distance between two points, however near, may be said to be infinite, because it is infinitely divisible. But we do across the infinite at every step and meet the eternal in every second. Therefore some of our philosophers say there is no such thing as finitude, it is but a māyā, an illusion. The real in the infinite, and it is only māyā, the unreality, which causes the appearance of the finite. But the word māyā is a mere

name, it is no explanation. It is merely saying that with truth there is this appearance which is the opposite of truth but how they come to exist at one and the same time is incomprehensible ?" ²⁴

To a poet like Rabindranath for whom art is existence, creation is delight, self-less service is the way to arrive at satisfaction, this world can none-the-less play an important role of reality. He, though asserts, Reality is one & Ultimate, describes māyā in this way; "Our self is māyā where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is Satyam where it recognizes its essence in the universal and infinite, in the supreme self, in Paramātman" ²⁵

Rabindranath could not deny the importance of this world of multitude, limited existence and existences within forms. He writes "Coming to the theatre of life we foolishly sit with our back to the stage. We see the gilded pillars and decorations, we watch the coming and going of the crowd, and when the light is put out at the end, we ask ourselves in bewilderment, what is the meaning of it all ? If we paid attention to the inner stage, we could witness the eternal love drama of the soul and be assured that it has pauses, but no end, and that the gorgeous world preparations are not a magnificent delirium of things." ²⁶ He was always against such an approach which analyses the Real into its parts but fails to appreciate the organic connection in between them. He criticises the men of mere intellectual practice as one-sided blunt.

To him, Absolute is something concrete, life is something real. Thus, Rabindranath's qualified monism excels over absolute monism and a

vaiṣṇava ideal appears to be acceptable with Advaitistic ideal of 'anērvacanēya; aparupa'.²⁷ The finite individuals play in qualified monism vital parts of a whole which may be called the Absolute. Though the members cannot exist by themselves separately they retain their unique value. However in Rabindranath's philosophy we can find out a different trend, something anew which also differs from Vaiṣṇavic explanation of subordinate role of the finits in the all embracing One Absolute. In Rabindranath's philosophy, individual has got a distinct role to play. He says, "The absolute eternal is timelessness, and that has no meaning at all - it is merely a word. The reality of the eternal is there, where it contains all times in itself."²⁸ "To all things else you give, from me you ask."²⁹

In this world process of creation everything bears the name of Brahman - they all are the replica of the almighty God. But though God is everything, everything is not God, while the whole universe accepts His blessings in every aspects of life and expresses Himself, yet different things express Him in different degree. Man comes to be the highest in this hierachy. He strives most, he acts freely, he thus with his concisouness brings in this world an effort to retain and to make substantive all his creations. "The revealment of the infinite in the finite, which is the motive of all creation, is not seen in its perfection in the starry heavens, in the beauty of the flowers. It is in the soul of man."³⁰

We common people often use words designating opposite forces like

Infinite - finite, but Rabindranath says these are names, they stand for no explanation "They are only different ways of asserting that the world in its essence is a reconciliation of pairs of opposing forces. These forces, like the left and the right hands of the creator, are acting in absolute harmony, yet acting from opposite direction!"³¹

The world is full of mysteries. The principle of unity is mystery of all mysteries. The man who appreciates unity can go beyond though respecting the diversities. Vedic R̥ṣis could realise this unity in this world of beauty and peace. The places of pilgrimage were chosen in the calm and serene atmosphere of natural beauty. If this world were mere illusory product of māyā, the adoration of beauty, explanation of truth and realisation of the bond of love, will come to a futile end of unreality. In every sphere of creation as it was explained in case of world creation so also in respect of literary works the guiding principle is unity. Aimless analysis leads one to mere abstraction which was not the poet's intention. Rabindranath says "A great poem, when analysed, is a set of detached sounds" ... when we come to literature we find that though a poem should conform to some laws, to rules of grammar, yet it is a thing of joy, it is freedom itself. The poet says, "The laws are its wings, they do not keep it weighed down, they carry it to freedom. Its form is in law but its spirit is in beauty ... Beauty harmonises in itself the limit and beyond the law and the liberty."

In the same way, "In the world if we try to analyse it in its diversification, we fail to realise its real rhythm. Only he has attained the final truth

who knows that the whole world is a creation of joy."³²

This world - the joyous manifestation of the infinite, does not bind Him. He manifesting his graceful expression enjoys existence in the true sense of the term among the limited souls. The limits are self-imposed and hence bear the token of joy and freedom with which the master leads them to live. Rabindranath with his poetic brilliance beautifully describes how the worldly things bear the message of the Almighty God. He cites the episode of the ring of Rāma in Rāmāyana, being brought by Hanumana, the messenger to Sita, who remained isolated in Rāvana's palacial campus. The ring was the token of love and the eternal bond of something beyond with something remaining in isolation. The ring being brought asserted that the latent relation is there. Likewise a flower in a plant, with its beautiful colour and scent brings the message of the truth - The Beauty. However science may warn us that we are mistaken" which we think it bears to us is all our own making, gratuitous and imaginary." But our heart replaces says we are not in the least mistaken.³³ The beautiful flower remains in its place, works in its own way. Rabindranath says referring to the episode mentioned before "Such a messenger is a flower from our great lover." He quotes, " immortal being manifests himself in joy-form."³⁴ (Ānandarūpamamṛtaṁ yad bibhāti). "His manifestation is out of his fulness of joy. It is the nature of this abounding joy to realise itself in form which is law. The joy, which is without form must translate itself into forms. "The joy of the singer is expressed in the

form of a song, that of the poet in the form of a poem. Man in his role of a creation is ever creating forms, and they come out of his abounding joy."³⁵

Rabindranath explicitly explains this joy, as love the eternal bond between the infinite and the finitude and points that love by its very nature have duality for its realisation. The creation of the universe is nothing but the realisation of the Absolute - in other words revelation of its freedom. "God finds himself by creating."³⁶ It is the creative joy which leads the Absolute to be finite, to create duality and to remain sustaining all these in a harmonious whole. Māyā is sometimes conceived as the cause of limitation and thereby to be condemned and over-ruled. But in Rabindranath limited finites have got reality of their own, to which māyā is nothing but the root cause and if there be such a maya which creates, it should be trusted as something indispensible. In the world of beauty and joy passivity and activity supplement each other. Radhakrishnan says "The principle of negativity impels the eternal one to realise itself in the world. "It is the woman in the heart of creation." Fruit Gathering.

The creative joy and love makes duality, separation inevitable. "This joy, whose other name is love, must by its very nature have duality for its realisation. When the singer has his inspiration he makes himself into two; he has within him other self as the hearer, and the outside audience is merely an extension of this other self of his. The lover seeks his own other self in his beloved. It is the joy that creates this

separation in order to realise through obstacles the union."³⁷ Through joy, the creative process goes on, the new replaces on old one. Though everything is inherently one still duality must be there. "You did not know yourself when you dwelt alone I came and you woke."³⁸

To realise His own manifestation Brahman has created this world but this does not mean the created in something degraded than the creator. "We are separate, but if this separation were absolute, then there would have been absolute misery and unmitigated evil in this world. Then from untruth we never could reach truth, and from sin we never could hope to attain purity of heart, then all opposites would ever remain opposites, and we could never find a medium through which our differences could ever tend to meet."³⁹ The absolute, the singer is translating his singing into song. For Rabindranath, Brahman's manifestation is rather of infinite joy in manifold forms. That does not Brahman is dependent on the finites to fulfil his need of manifestation. Rabindranath emphasized on the relation of love, in love all contradictions merge in spontaneous harmony. "Only in love are unity and duality not at variance"⁴⁰ Love must be one and two at the same time. Neither this created world adopts any bondage and limitation on Him. "Bondage and liberation are not antagonistic in love. For love is most free and at the same time most bound. If God were absolutely free there would be no creation. The infinite being has assumed unto himself the mystery of finitude. And in him who is love the finite and the infinite are made one."⁴¹ Love thus leads to welcome all limitations to transcend them.

"O thou Lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?"⁴²

Through love among us and the world around Almighty God sacrifices himself. The *Bhagavadgītā* also says that He sacrifices himself so that this world and the humanity can retain their existence. The universe is new born continually, as a result of this joyous sacrifice. Man in his life as being potentially infinite should entertain and sacrifice through love. This will lead one to realise his real existence successfully. This universe thus should not be considered as unreal, a mere dream. This universe is neither made out of Brahman it is not a mere going forth from God, but is also coming towards Him. Advaita Vedānta emphasizes on the union between those two but forgets that, in this very universe it is being made. The universe is the very place where the finite beings struggle for realising the infinite. The world is not a mere phantasy. In this world through selfless act and high ideals one can fulfill ethical aspect of his life. World is such a place of reality, poentiality, that in explaining Rabindranath's philosophy in this aspect Radhakrishnan declares "The world is the process of becoming infinite, but not the consummation. Should man completely realise the infinite, and should the world reach its goal of becoming the infinite, then there will be no universe and necessarily no Absolute."⁴³ The world is but the progress of pilgrims in their quest for the infinite.

Every object in it cries out" I want Thee, only Thee," and struggle to attain eternal life. In Radhakrishnan's view "He (Rabindranath) gives us a 'human God', dismisses with contempt the concept of the world illusion, praises action evermuch and promises fulness of life to the religious soul."⁴⁴

The Absolute, for Rabindranath is the highest unity from which all being proceeds - We shall be able to see Him until we see him everywhere. Rabindranath says, "You were in the centre of my heart, therefore when my heart wandered she never found you."⁴⁵ My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said "Here art thou!"⁴⁶ A closer scrutiny of Tagore's concrete monism shows that for him *Īśavāsyamidam sarvaṃ yat Kiñcha Jagatyan jagat* i.e. We are enjoined to see whatever there is in the world as being enveloped by God is no less important than Brahma Satya. To his poetic mind, monistic ideal gets outspring in *Ānandarupaṃ Bībhāte*. In fact he advocated a sort of pantheism which coincided with mystic naturalism. Thus his belief in God, the Absolute truth not only expresses itself in bliss but existence in this very earth - in this dusty land of world. He again cites the Upaniṣadic ideal "I love to God over and over again who is in fire and in water, who permeates the whole world, who is in the annual crops as well as in the perennial trees."

In this context it might be noted that Rabindranath made a synthesis between the materialistic view of life and the spiritualistic traditional ascetic outlook. In *Sadhana*, Rabindranath discussed in detail in the chapter 'Individual and Universe,' that the way the Indian civilisation developed, was quite different from the way of development and progress took place in Western countries. The civilisation in the West was centred round urban culture rather in Tagore's language "is the product of city wall habit and training of mind."⁴⁷ The latter created an artificial dissociation between man and the Universal Nature within whose bosom they lie. But in India, everything was understood in the concept of truth-one great Truth - Consequently emphasis was given on the harmony that exists between the individual and the world around. There is no conflict between the man as a thinking being and the things surrounded, be it being or non-being. The principle of harmony which led Rabindranath to conceive the world of creation is inherently real found its reflection in his concept of harmony with nature because the Absolute - the eternal harmony is behind.

"For her (India), the great fact is that we are in harmony with nature, that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things, that he can use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal, and that in the long run his purpose never can knock against the purpose which

works through nature."⁴⁸ This harmony is one's life ideal - this ideal cannot but be established in this very world.

No doubt essential and distinguishing purpose of Indian civilisation lies in its unique end towards spiritual ideal. The aim is not to acquire but to realise. Undoubtedly this emphasis on spiritual life leads us to think of a life speculative, indifferent to action and worldly touches. This misconception which resulted in the Western thinkers to criticise basic Indian Philosophical themes as mere formal, speculative non-ethical might have resulted in conceiving the concept of māyā as something deriving the world as mere phantasy and illusion. This is the view against which the creative thinkers like Rabindranath rose a strong voice specially with reference to the discussion of the Upaniṣadic ideal of thinking and life-style. He says, "The fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was here life-object to realise this great harmony in feeling and in action. With meditation and service, with a regulation of her life, she cultivated her consciousness in such a way that everything had a spiritual meaning to her. The earth, water and light fruits and flowers, to her were not merely physical, phenomenal to be turned to us and then left aside. They were necessary to her in the attainment of her ideal of perfection, as every note is necessary to the completeness of the symphony. India intuitively felt

that the essential fact of this world has a vital meaning for us; we have to be fully alive to it and establish a conscious relation with it, not merely impelled by scientific curiosity or greed of material advantage, but realising it in the spirit of sympathy, with large feeling of joy and peace."⁴⁹

Neither spiritual ideal alone, nor mere science-based mechanical ideas can give us satisfaction and perfection in life. Beyond this apparent crude things there is something so vital, so essential is there. But it is not only transcendent but also immanent among the things we experience in our everyday life of existence. The Absolute always depicted and realised by Rabindranath as a great artist could never discard away the worldly beings. On the otherhand men who are also being the replica of the Great Artist, artist in nature and realises in his life that, "It is for the artist to remind the world that with the truth of our expression we grow in truth."⁵⁰ This gives us the joy of life - this adds a new dimension to one's own existence. "The water does not merely cleanse his limbs, but it purifies his heart, for it touches his soul. The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind; for its contact is more than a physical contact - it is a living presence. When a man does not realise his Kinship with the world, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated, for then he

discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born, then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established."⁵¹

To a poet's eye everything has a meaning of its own. So called good, evil are nothing but substantial counterpart. Completeness is not abstraction but realisation in the sense of manifestation, which makes the manifested and the manifestation both real in the true sense of the term. "A closer scrutiny reveals us the kinship of nature and spirit, not-self and self."⁵² Rabindranath does not look upon the body as the tomb or the prison of the soul from which it has to be liberated. The world is not the denial of Brahman. Contact with the body, respect towards the worldly creatures and its continuity is just the essential condition necessary for developing one's nature i.e. morality. The world is not māyā but to consider it as separate from God is to be involved in the world of māyā. The body is the medium through which the spirit reveals. The world is the object through which the divinity comes to be realised as perfect. Without ignoring these all one should purify his senses to become the organ of the higher spirit, which in other words bears deep ethical significance and moral conscience. Purification is no denial - Rabindranath says "The flowers grow out of dirt but the foulness of the source is abolished in the flower itself."⁵³ Senses are not to be ignored, one should try to fathom the unfathomable

bliss of God (the Absolute) through experiences they and only they can provide us. "No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight."⁵⁴ Again he states that "From my infancy I had the keen sensitiveness which always kept my mind tingling with consciousness of the world around me, natural and human."⁵⁵ In any case he was not ready to accept which 'rudely summoned me away from the world around me, which was my friend and my companion, He freed himself from the clutch of a formed educational system for that reason. In his later life in Santinikatan he introduced a different type of educational system which was appealing to both brain and mind which could free one from his materialistic bondages in a field of spiritual ideal and artistic rhythm. "It as a great thing for me that my consciousness was never dull about the facts of the surrounding world. That the cloud was the cloud, that a flower was a flower, was enough., because they directly spoke to me, because I could not be indifferent to them."⁵⁶

Rabindranath was a great artist. In any sphere of art and culture he was a man of unique talent and expediency. He could appreciate the Absolute necessarily as an Artist with this world creation a project of art. This the genesis of creation was another name of the origin of art for him.

Thus in explaining the origin of the later he directly refers to the Sāyana-

charya's commentary on the Vedas, "Yajñehutāsishtasya odanasya sarva jagatkāranabhūta Brahmabhedena stutih Kriyate!" "According to this explanation Brahma is boundless in his superfluity which inevitably finds its expression in the eternal world process."⁵⁷ God with his divine grace creates this world and through which He sacrifices his own self so that each and every particle becomes an object of adoration and glory. The world does not reside outside of him enjoying some status of reality different from the ultimate but the Absolute is in every object in each and every person. A man with deep feelings of love and determination of self sacrifice can make his life significant in this very world. This needs a poet's eye, a touch of sympathy and understanding the harmony behind the odds and diversities. Rabindranath declares, "I have already confessed that my religion is a poet's religion; all that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge."⁵⁸ To such a person, the world outside can never be discarded away as mere māyā, an illusion. "The I am in me realises its own extension, else."⁵⁹

The objectivity of the world inheres love. The objectivity of this world plays a great role in explaining our ethical consciousness and sense of morality. There we can follow in Rabindranath a transition from aesthetic to metaphysical and then towards ethical ideas. This is highly reflected in his saying, "The fact that we exist has its truth in the fact that everything else does exist, and the "I am in me crosses its

finitude whenever it deeply realises itself in the "Thou art". The crossing of the limit produces joy, the joy that we have in a higher degree, self-sacrifice, is our acknowledgement of this experience of the infinite. This is the philosophy which explains our joy in all arts, the arts that in their creations intensify the sense of the unity which is the unity of truth we carry within ourselves. The personality in me is a self-conscious principle of living unity, it at once comprehends and yet transcends all the details of facts that are individually mine, my knowledge, feeling, wish and will, my memory, my hope, my love, my activities, and all my belongings. This personality which has the sense of the one in its nature, realises it in things thoughts and facts made into units."⁶⁰

Sometimes it appears that for Rabindranath māyā was something indescribable. This indescribability refers to poet's eye of art and beauty. It was the very thing not to be explained, but to be realised and which in turn evokes a man to express himself through his works and action. Māyā if it were not even something eternal constant substance, yet it is there, none can deny either māyā or its product. It gives reality to the objects we deal with, we live with and among which retain our existence towards an ideal life.

"The world as an art is the play of the supreme person revelling in

image-making. Try to find out the ingredients to the image they elude you, they never reveal to you the eternal secret of appearance The appearance does not any commentary of itself through its material. you may call it māyā and pretended to disbelieve it, but the great artist, the māyāvin, is not hurt. For art is māyā, it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness it mocks even its own definition and plays the game of hide-and-seek through its constant flight in changes."⁶¹

This change, this ups & downs is life. Life means death comes - it has to be terminated and also to be brought into reality in its continuation in some form and other. It seems eternal but it might be perished at any moment. "Every day is a death, every moment even" ... "So life is māyā, as moralists love to say, it is and is not. All that we find in it is the rhythm through it shows itself. Are rocks and minerals any better ? Has not science shown us the fact that the ultimate difference between one element and another is only that of rhythm ?"⁶²

A piece of stone, a paragraph in any language may just remain as deadly still - but "The moment they are taken and put into rhythm they vibrate into a radiance. It is the same with the rose. In the pulp of its petals you may find everything that went to make the rose, but the rose which is māyā an image, is lost, its finality which has the touch of the infinite

is gone. The rose appears to me to be still, but because of its metre of composition it has a lyric of movement within that stillness, which is the same as the dynamic quality of a picture that has perfect harmony. It produces a music in our consciousness by giving it a swing of motion synchronous with its own. Had the picture consisted of a disharmonious aggregate of colours and lines, it would be deadly still."⁶³

Māyā is this very rhythm, dynamicity and the tune behind this process of creation. It is in the form of art which infuses the poetic flavour, the creative spirit resulting in shining radiance from a mere happening. "That is art. It has the magic wand which gives undying reality to all things it touches and relates them to the personal being in us. We stand before its productions and say : "I know you as I know myself, you are real."⁶⁴ Creation is a process mysterious, wonderful yet having significant sense of unity. A poet realises this in his poetic works, an artist in his art - the Brahman in his world creation. This rhythmic dynamicity of the creator is expressed not in mere blending of words, but in a significant adjustment of ideas. It can never be understood in intricate discussion of logic regarding the illusoriness of this world (Compared by the poet as the collection-mania for dead butterflies) but to be realised "in a beautiful faces of a finite that is inscrutable, elusive and profoundly satisfactory."

"The combination it represents' may be uncouth, may be unfinished, discordant, yet it has a dynamic vigour in its totality which claims recognition, often against our wishes for the assent of our reason."⁶⁵

In discussing Rabindranath's ideas on *Māyā* we have already noted that he was one of the galaxy of gallants in perspective of nineteenth century in Bengal in India. He was a man, in whom distinguishing historic features were noticable as effective. His philosophical ideas, his religion of man were guided by principle of harmony and resulted in an humane view of practicable idea and poetic religion. In him old ideas and ideals were having their first shock from the impact of a western civilisation and India got a seer, a sage, a creative idealist and an eminent educationist. However, he was dreamer, a weaver of imageries, sensuous, passionate, sensitive to every yearning in man and nature, susceptible to every change in mood and outlook and combining them in an expression of beautiful harmony and thus in and out first and last he was a poet. In addition to all these were the influences of an Upaniṣadic monism, a Vaiṣṇavic dualism, which shaped his ideas in a unique type of creative spirit. It ultimately took shape in a doctrine of life whose last exposition has in the theme of divinity of humanity and humanity of divinity.

His Jivandevata that everevolving personality gradually merged himself in the Universal man. The poet's infinite or Jīvan - Devata needs the

finite and needs them most. The relation between the two is one of intimate love and without love Godhead is never fulfilled. The finites are not passing phenomena nor are they unreal. They are as much real as the Jivan-Devata Himself. A truly organic relation exists between the two-the infinite and finite, in as much as the one exists in and through the other in this very world. In the drama *Prakrtir Pratisodh* written in 1884 the poet has depicted the realisation of an ascetic who renounces the world in the hope of attaining salvation. Suddenly a little girl catches him in the shares of affection. The ascetic realises that salvation does not lie in renunciation but in bondage. Thus he has loved this finite earth with varieties of colour and sound. "He sings I do not like to die in this beautiful world. I like to live amidst men."⁶⁶ Like Green and Bosanquet he too asserts that Man is torn between finitude and infinity, the present and future - his present has a nisis to the future.

Thus from present a man proceeds to life in future. Though life terminates at every moment yet continuation is there. The sense of morality is related with this sense of continuing process. One should love humanity, human values - to Rabindranath, they are in consonance with values eternal. Rabindranath writes -

"In our life we have one side which is finite where we exhaust ourselves at every step, and we have another side, where our aspiration, enjoyment

and sacrifice are infinite. This infinite side of man must have its revealments in some symbols which have the elements of immortality. There it naturally seeks perfection. Therefore it refuses all that is flimsy and feeble and incongruous. It builds for its dwelling a paradise, where only those materials are used that have transcended the earth's mortality."⁶⁷

His idea of an ideal life devoted to selfless work towards the upliftment of humanity inheres the basic inspiration expressed in Hibbert. Lectures "The solitary enjoyment of the infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure, I vaguely feel that my need was spiritual self-realisation in the life of man through some disinterested service."

In discussing Rabindranath's philosophical ideas (through sometimes were to be realised through his literary work and his mode of life) it is obvious that he did not follow Saṃkara's monism nor Rāmānuja's dualism. It might be called a sort of synthetic vedāntism which was initiated by Vivekananda and Rabindranath himself with Aurobindo on the same par. It is tinged more by Hegel's Idea and existence. Liberation or Mukti was to go back to our original entity which is divinity in one. But the way is not the denial of this world and meditation,

nor the way is devotion only. This world is real so much real as the self is. There is dynamicity latent in stable eternal unity. It is very eternal one what is evolved is already involved in this world-creation and is Līlā or manifestation which is other name of love. It is love rather, in which a man realises Him and becomes a Real man.

Rabindranath thus declares in no uncertain words. "I believe that the vision of Paradise is to be seen in the beauty of the human face that are seemingly insignificant and unprepossessing. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ear without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life which sends our aspiration in music beyond the finite, not only in prayers and hopes, but also in temples which are dreams made everlasting, in the dance which is ecstatic meditation in the still centre of movement."⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

Rabindranath was one of the torch bearers and champions of the Eastern mind and the West for his gospels of love and peace. Though he was a poet and was essentially a man of literature, his philosophical ideas are not hard to be found as latent and expressed in all his literary works and specially in *Sādhana*, *Religion of Man* and *Religion of Artist*, *Shantiniketan* etc. Radhakrishnan was highly impressed by his philosophy (Ref : *The Philosophy of Rabindranath*. Preface by : Dr. S. Radhakrishnan). For Rabindranath philosophy and poetry were not opposed to each other, rather they were mingled in his quest for the Beyond.

Rabindranath was deeply influenced by the Vedānta philosophy and Vaiṣṇavism which is traceable in his ideas about the relation between the finite and infinite. In this context it is traceable that in his vision, this world is not at all to be discarded away as illusory. Māyā, if it were to be apprehended, is to be apprehended in the sense of a creative energy or Śakti. This world being real, senses, body all being there, man should try to maintain his Religion in this very world of everyday experience. Love and love alone the poet says leads one to salvation. This no mere monistic idea of One Real. It bears the implication of conceiving more than one to be loved and adorned. This is life and this was also his philosophy.

To understand what was Rabindranath's world view, we may first discuss his ideas about the Absolute. Absolute for him is not a complete whole without contradictions. It passes over into its opposite but in the long run all oppositions are overcome and reconciled. He was opposed to mere application of intellect and logic to realise the truth. It is beyond their capacity to realise the completeness that reconciles the contradictions. Again, the Absolute is not only the truth but also bliss (*ānandam*). It finds its joy of creation towards the name and form it undertakes. With reference to the poem *Urvashi* and to clarify idea of beauty Rabindranath said "It is not merely abstract. The abstract form must take some material to express itself. The abstract beauty has taken here the matter of a female body in order that it may manifest itself."⁶⁹

The Absolute truth was for Rabindranath another name of beauty. Moreover he says not to think beauty as mere phantasy. "Beauty is no phantasy, it has the everlasting meaning of reality."⁷⁰ Beauty was also conceived as something expressed through concrete object. In any case he did not underestimate the worldly objects as something disgraceful. For him the Absolute is the Artist - a singer and the universe is the song. "The infinite and the finite are one as song and singing are one."⁷¹ The entire cosmic process exists in Him.

In this context we must remind poet's conception of *Jivan - Devata*

who manifests Himself through the finites. More specifically the finites - mostly the human beings retain some role to play in this world process. Though Rabindranath was highly influenced by the Upaniṣadic ideal of Monism, still for him the relation between the finites and the infinite is of intimate love. It is not only mere one-sided dependence but inter-dependence. The finites, because of their temporal existences are not unreal - motion and movement are within the Truth. In Balāka the poet describes the change-aspect of Reality. They are as much real as Jivan-Devata, Himself. There is an organic relation in between them.

With reference to the discussion regarding the basic philosophical ideas of Rabindranath, we may now proceed to concentrate our discussion on his idea of māyā. To Śaṅkara, māyā was inexplicable but without it plurality cannot be explained. Rabindranath though was against to any such theory which indicates māyā as sole deceptive force, resulting in illusion, writes, "Our self is māyā where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is Satyam where it recognizes its essence in the universal and infinite, in the supreme self, in Paramātman."

For Rabindranath the Absolute is not a mere philosophical speculation, but it is as real as the sunlight. He described Him as the great Artist,

the great Artist, who as a singer realises His creative urge through the audiences, who are none but part and parcel of His own existence. Art was viewed by Rabindranath as māyā. This work being a work of image could be viewed as a work of art, for art is essentially image making. It was something unique for Rabindranath that, he related the works of art with the world of reality, where the infinite and unlimited adopts limitation Himself. In explaining how is art possible, Tagore includes the conception of creativity as a necessary condition of art. Again art being viewed as māyā, māyā implies creativity. In this context we may refer to Tagore's ideas of surplus man who gets satisfaction in creative delight and exposition.

Rabindranath took Upaniṣadic ideal of monism not in exclusive sense but in an inclusive One. He refers the god-conscious man portrayed by the Upaniṣads as having deep feeling of adoration towards this world - the latter being considered as sudden ecstasy of joy. Everything has sprung from immortal life and is vibrating with life, for life is immense (Prāṇo Virāt). The intricacy of explaining how the One becomes many, how an Abstract adopts concrete objects in the mode of expression was explained with the concept of māyā in Advaita philosophy (we have already mentioned) which for Rabindranath, is another name for inexplicability. In practical field we always come across the infinitude

within our finite existence, though it is not an easy task to explain all those why and how, which 'mere logical approach demands. Thus Absolute is something concrete, life is something real. Here, it is obvious that qualified monism excels over absolute monism. He initiated Vaiṣṇavic ideal of personality and emotional touch in the concept of Jivan Devata who was glorified in later writings as Visva - Devata. Still he differed from Vaiṣṇava philosophy of total surrender and subordinate role of the finite. For Tagore, "To all things else you give, from me ask".⁶ To realise His own manifestation Brahman has created this world, but that does not mean that the created is something degraded than the creator. If the finitude were to be condemned outrightly there would have been no way for one's self-perfection and realisation of the very Infinite.

This universe is not a mere phantasy or dream and something unreal. The world is being made - it is not mere going forth from Brahman but essentially a coming towards Him. It is the place of becoming Brahman, since we are not potentially different from Him. Rabindranath made a synthesis between the materialistic view of life and spiritualistic ideal. He did not coincide with the materialistic ideal of artificial dissociation between man and universal nature. The latter conceived Indian Philosophical themes as implying passivity and inactivity. To this misinterpretation he reacted in his famous Hibbert lectures "The

solitary enjoyment of the infinite, in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure, I vaguely feel that my need was spiritual self-realisation in the life of man through some disinterested service."

Rabindranath clearly declares that his religion was a poet's religion. He relies on the principle of harmony in discord, unity in diversity which is beauty - it is the very Truth. That, with the contemporary influence of current Indian and world affairs with his own constant belief on Upaniṣadic ideal resulted in a poetic vision of reconcilliation between the finite - infinite, Brahman, One and many, this was also obvious that he did not remain indifferent to social and cultural problem of his own country and abroad. He wanted to introduce an ideal system of education in Santiniketan near Bolpur which has an appeal to man's heart and soul. His life was an eventful life, reflecting his keen sensitivity and alertness towards life and its problem. These all express the poet's attitude towards this world and human life. This was in no sense an indifference or safe escape of inactivity. In him old ideas and and ideals were having their first shock from Western civilisation and India got a seer a sage,

a creative idealist and an eminent educationist. He was a dreamer, a weaver of imageries, sensuous, passionate, sensitive to every yearning in man and nature.

In any case Tagore finds art, rhythm and dynamicity behind this world-creation. It is no mere happening - it bears the creative spirit resulting in a shining radiance. He did not even imagine to deaden the senses, the receptivity of art which is not to be traced in this world beyond but in the finite objects - in māyā. Thus in 'The Religion of An Artist' Rabindranath the great artist himself has declared "Everywhere in this earth the spirit of paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reached its inner ear without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life which sends our aspiration in music beyond the finite, not only in prayers and hopes, but also in temples, which are dreams made everlasting, in the dance which is ecstatic meditation in the still centre of movement."⁶⁸ Rabindranath's unique approach towards life and its ideal, is expressed in his clear-cut identification between art and māyā.

NOTES

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7. Sādhana by Rabindranath Tagore P 97
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