

Chapter - III

Rabindranath & Buddhist Thought

Before the birth of Rabindranath, Tagore's family was well known and few of them were influenced by Goutam Buddha. Rabindranath Tagore was grownup in such kind of multi-cultured environment. But the book "The Sanskrit Buddhist literature of Nepal", by Rajendralal Mitra, made him keener to Buddha and Tagore wrote a lot of dramas, poems and stories on the basis of that book.

In 1914, Tagore visited Buddhagayā to pay his gratitude and *pranam* toward Buddha and his attitudes toward Buddha were same as it was before. He visited Buddhagaya after 19 years of his first visit (1933) and declared "I come to pay my gratitude in an auspicious occasion of *Vaiśākhi pūrṇimā* to the man whom I consider the superior of all on this Earth"¹.

In his essay '*Buddhadeva*' Tagore said – "if I were in the time when the Buddha was roaming with his physical appearance and purified the earth with the touch of his feet, then I would be very happy"².

From the above statements it is clear to us that how he was influenced by Buddha. Buddha was the only man in the cultural heritage of India, who influenced Tagore deeply.

Actually Tagore likes Buddha's ethical teaching and attitude towards his fellow. Their important is fundamentally practical. It will be clear if we follow the lines from the *Sutta Nipāta*

–

*"If you know your own good
And know where peace dwells*

*Then this is the task:
Lead a simple and frugal life
Uncorrupted, capable and just,
Be mild, speak soft, and eradicate conceit,
Keep appetites and sense calm.
Be discrete and unassuming,
Do not seek rewards,
Do not have to be ashamed
In the presence of the wise.
May everything that lives be well!
Weak or strong, large or small.
Seen or unseen, here or elsewhere.
Present or to come, in height or depths.
Have that mind for the entire world,
Get rid of lies and pride,
A mother's mind for her baby,
Her love, but now unbounded.
Secure this mind of love,
No enemies, no obstructions,
Where ever or however you may be!
It is sublime, this, it escapes birth and death,
Losing lust and delusion,
And living in the truth. ”³*

Buddha's teaching is based on the simple and practical truth i.e. *Karmavādā* or as we do, so we become.

Buddha believes on *Karma* and rebirth according to their *Karmaphala*. From Buddhist points of view their teachings are part of the karmic reduction of suffering and of reaching better rebirths or final enlightenment. In the present context, the search for common Buddhist conviction is an integral part of grasping *Mahāyāna Buddhist* ethics by those who lack the experience as available in Buddhists Literature. The quest for common Buddhist moral teaching is a small, but vital part of the humanistic quest for a minimal common denominator ethic of human survival and co-operation on this planet of swiftly depleting resources.

COMMON BUDDHIST MORAL TEACHING:

Buddha never preaches about the supernatural power or God who come and saved the sufferer human community, but he firmly believes on *patityasamupādatattva* or dependent origination. It is difficult to understand what the exact nature of this dependence is.

Tagore eyes Buddhism from a different perspective. His vision and persuasion for Buddhism has a distinct backdrop of devoted erudition practice. It is known to everyone that he is gifted with an enviable and unparalleled family background of cultivation in different disciplines amidst a galaxy of intellectual giants. In fact, he has his lesson on the *Upaniṣads* from his father who had an exceptional and incomparable depth of vision in different religious scriptures. Again, with Abanindranath and Jyotirindranath, both well verse in art and music of

the East and the West, he has his crystallization in religious and spiritual vision in artistic and aesthetic dimensions well distilled in the great religious and spiritual thoughts of the Eastern and the Western visionaries. To be very categorical, Tagore finds a wonderful aroma of harmony in different religious and spiritual thoughts of Buddhism and the Upanisads. No doubt, in his own creative and critical contributions right from the very early stage of his life, Buddhism in particular has its deep and lasting impression.

With the inception of Viśva-Bhāratī in July 1919, Tagore feels the need of making a fusion of religious and spiritual ideas of different religious and spiritual thoughts and experiments of the world in his own institution. A great Buddhist scholar from Sri Lanka Dharmadhar Rajguru Mahasthvir is the first to come to Śāntiniketan to teach the philosophy of Buddhism. It is interesting to note in this connection how the students and teachers of different sections of Viśva-Bhāratī have found in him a serene spirit of wisdom and scholarship which has greatly influenced them to delve deep into the branches of Buddhist studies.

What prompts Tagore to cultivate and disseminate the philosophy of Buddhism at Viśva-Bhāratī is to involve the young learners in the school section in learning the life and philosophy of Buddha. In this respect, the teachers of Śāntiniketan always play a very crucial and important role in introducing the fundamentals of Buddhism to their little learners in a lucid, thrilling and lively manner. As a teacher par excellence, he has invited eminent teachers of our country like Pandit Vidhusekhar Shastri, Kshitimohan Sen, Nityanandabinod Goswami, to name a few, to familiarize these learners with the essentials of Buddhism through stories and anecdotes, poems and dramas.

Tagore himself has his own creative contributions, specially designed for and oriented to cater to the needs of fostering Buddhism amongst the students of Śāntiniketan. To be very justified to his mission of dissemination of studies in Buddhism, he has invited illustrious scholars to discuss the salient features of Buddhism which would crystallize the minds of students and sensitive them in the realization of life in its proper perspectives. That he has paid ample attention to the deeper and the more intricate areas of philosophy of Buddhism has its living testimony at Chīnā-Bhavana at Viśva-Bhāratī, where scholars from Japan, Korea, China, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan in particular have their regular and disciplined congregation in the intensive study of Buddhism. Towards the year 1934 onwards Tagore has his vision of Buddhist studies further intensified with the welcome of two celebrated thinkers in Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism, Dr. V. Gokhale and Pandit N. Aiyaswamy Shastri, who were closely associated with the cultivation of Buddhist philosophy at Chīnā-Bhavana at visiting professors.

What are the areas in the philosophy of Buddhism that have prompted Tagore to be primarily interested? What are specific components inherent in Buddhism, which he always wanted to be specifically and very intensively exercised and nurtured in day to day course of studies at different levels of educational endeavour at Viśva-Bhāratī? What vigorous steps are undertaken to cultivate Buddhism right from the early stage of school education? What are the diverse programmes of activities, scholastic or otherwise, which enrich everyone to be more devoted to the study of Buddhism in a comparative and critical manner?

To be prepared to answer the questions as above, one does not necessitate to harp on this fact that in Viśva-Bhāratī the study of Buddhism dates from her genesis when the spirit of individuality has been revered in the Buddhistic philosophy of universality and *vice versa*. This endearing spirit of Buddhism caressed and cultivated in thought and action at every stage of learning and teaching here always stimulates the spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice to be exercised anew and afresh in order to be continually justified to the great saying : ‘Be ye a lamp unto this universe’⁴.

The harmonious blending of the *Upaniṣad* and the Buddhist Philosophy as Tagore time and again introduces in the different programmes of academic activity in Viśva-Bhāratī deserves special attention. The spirit of self-denial that he wants to introduce among the students and the teachers of Viśva-Bhāratī in course of cultivation of the great *Upaniṣadic* saying *Tena Tyaktena Bhuñajūhāh*, Ma Gṛdhah-thou shall gain by giving away, thou shall not covet-has its resonance of the great saying of Buddha in connection with self-denial. This is a preparation of a true learner who is always in the quest of true wisdom. Tagore’s concern in wisdom if this kind where the spirit of self-dedication and self-denial so prominently stressed by Buddha finds freedom of efflorescence. And so, when he speaks of emancipation of the soul from all greed and selfishness, he cares for the nursling and sustenance of the Buddhist philosophy of *Dharma* where the liberation of the self and the soul from all narrowness is the primary end-in-view of our life.

Elucidating the Buddhist philosophy of the self in terms of self-denial and freedom as Buddha disseminates in his philosophy of *Dharma*, Tagore characteristically remarks:

We can look at our self in its two different aspects- the self, which displays itself, and the self which transcends itself and thereby reveals its own meaning. To display itself, it tries to be big, to stand upon the pedestal of its accumulations, and to retain everything to itself. To reveal itself it gives up everything it has, thus becoming perfect like a flower that has blossomed out from the bud, pouring from the chalice of beauty all its sweetness.

The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus it is separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted it finds its meaning at once; its relation with all things far and near is established, and it freely sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flame⁵.

Tagore makes a further inroad to inner consciousness by highlighting the importance of the study of Buddhism specially in *Viśva-Bhāratī* in course of pursuing the spirit of emancipation. He pays sincerest attention and respect to the path of emancipation as Buddha proclaims in his philosophy of *Nirvāṇa*. He wants to bring forth the spirit of love in its best efflorescence of promise and perfection. Drawing our attention to the revelation of freedom in terms of love of the highest kind as Buddha's *Nirvāṇa* teaches us, he emphatically asserts:

The lamp must give us its oil to the light and thus set free the purpose it has in its hoarding. This is emancipation. The path Buddha pointed out was not merely the practice of self-abnegation, but the widening of love. And therein lies the true meaning of Buddha's teaching.

When we find the state of *Nirvāṇa* preached by Buddha is through love, then we know for certain that *Nirvāṇa* is the highest culmination of love. For love is an end up to itself.

Everything else raises the question ‘Why?’ in our mind, and we require a reason for it. But when we say, ‘I love’, then there is no room for the ‘Why?’ it is the final answer in itself⁶.

The message of love and peace that Buddha has highlighted in his philosophy has been one of the fundamental ends-in-view of Tagore’s philosophy of man. In *Viśva-Bhāratī* his main concern is to study the minds of man in its perfect symphony of love and peace in every action and contemplation amidst a serene and calm atmosphere of Nature. What he actually wants to emphasize in course of every programme of activity in *Viśva-Bhāratī* is to make a perfect fusion of love and peace for the realization of self in the contentment of happiness in self-denial and self-sacrifice. It is interesting to refer to the great spirit of austerity and simplicity of leading one’s life in devotion to ascent and excellence on which Tagore has always emphasized in *Viśva-Bhāratī* for all the students and teachers who all the time have their sincerest endeavor to realize the philosophy of Buddha in doing away with materialistic richness and affluence. That the real grandeur of life can be had only from a broadened vision and widened outlook of life is the invaluable lesson that Tagore wants to be ardently learnt from the philosophy of Buddhism, and, for this end-in-view, he gives priority to the education for sympathy rather than that kind of education that is dull and drab, lifeless and materialistic.

Admittedly, Tagore’s thoughts and experiments of Buddhism in *Viśva-Bhāratī* find their incomparable and unparalleled strategies in observing and enjoying the vast, unending and open blue firmament in the silent and lonely noon, the star studded or moonlight evening, the dark mysterious night or the misty dawn with an elegant promise of the bright red sunrise. It is undeniably a quest for emancipation of the self in boundless joy and freedom of the mind and the

heart. This quest for the great 'I' in order to be liberated from the 'I' in course of natural and abiding communion with the universe in and through continual and tireless strivings for purposeful, meaningful and living education in Viśva-Bhāratī has its emulating and enviable significance and legacy and even now in perfect tune with the essence of Buddhism.

Among the multi-pronged avenues on studies in the philosophy of Buddhism in Viśva-Bhāratī, what is really very noteworthy is that side by side with cultivation of Jainism, Islam, Christianity and other religious philosophies, he introduces a new line of approach to harmonizing and appreciating the unique feature of Buddhism in order to foster and accelerate the nobler visions and higher prospects of life. This is why till now in Viśva-Bhāratī studies on Buddhism have become a part and parcel of education of the highest and the most serene manner that always endears naturalness, spontaneity, humility, simplicity, creativity and critical consciousness. A new cathedral of awareness in the philosophy of values as Buddhism preaches, always pulsates the teachers and the students of Viśva-Bhāratī to embrace Buddhism not as a matter of theoretical study alone but essentially as a very way of life, a living and thrilling adventure towards excellence and ascent of man.

For the true achievement of the mind, Tagore introduces studies in Buddhism in that catholicity of vision, which finds its best synthesis in the endless quest for truth. Like Buddha, he accelerates a new vision of truth, which envisions joy as the fountain of all creation. His mission for making Viśva-Bhāratī a serene centre for pursuit of joy as freedom of mind which in *Upaniṣad* has been highlighted as '*Ānandādhyeva khalvimāni bhūtānījayante*' has undeniably its fine tuning in Buddhism as well.

Tagore's pointers to the philosophy of religion as Buddhism enshrines, have their diverse dimensions in the pursuit and advancement of erudition and edification in Viśva-Bhāratī with the same thirst for truth as Buddha has preached the evolutionary and transcendental spirit of the philosophy of religion and values. In fact, he makes *karuṇā* or what in Buddhism is christened as compassion an essential component of truth to be exercised in fusion with all educational programmes of activities with devotion and dedication. The various co-curricular activities like functions and festivals all throughout the year encapsulating dramas, dance, songs, fine arts, games and sports in which every learner spontaneously participates amply prove how the quest for finer values and nobler sensibilities is directed towards fullness in consonance with the serene spirit of Buddhism. It may not be inappropriate to refer in this connection to the fact that Tagore himself has written a remarkable number of dance-dramas, stories, poems etc. where there are fine bleedings of the philosophy of Buddhism and the broader visions of ascent and excellence.

Studies on Buddhism in Viśva-Bhāratī is always solemnized with the most invaluable words of Tagore.

O gives of thyself! At the vision of thee as joy let our souls flame up to thee as the fire, flow on to thee as the river, and permeate thy being as the fragrance of the flower. Give us strength to love fully, our life in joys and sorrows, in its gains and losses, in its rise and fall. Let us have strength enough fully to see and hear thy universe and to work with full vigor therein. Let us fully live the life thou hast given us, let us bravely take and bravely give. This is our prayer to thee. Let us once for all dislodge from our minds the feeble fancy that would make out thy joy to be a thing apart from action thin, formless and unsustained.⁷

Why not prepare ourselves afresh and anew with the Tagorean words of prayer as above in order to explore and expand the ever-vibrant philosophy of Buddhism?

Buddha had a quest in his mind that how they escape from this misery of decay and death. He came to know that the decay and death depending on what they come. It occurs only when there is birth (*Jāti*), so they depend on birth, what being there, is there birth, on what does birth depend? Then it occurred to him that birth could only be if there was previous existence (*bhava*). But on what does this existence depend, or what being there is their *bhava*. Then it occurred to him that there could not be existence unless there were holding fast or *upādāna*. But on what did *upādāna* depend? It comes from desire (*Tanha*) on which *upādāna* depends. There must be *upādāna* if there is desire. But what being there can there be desire? To this question it occurred to him that there must be feeling (*vedanā*) in order that there may be desire. But on what does *vedanā* depend, or rather what must be there, that there may be the feeling? To this it occurred to him that there must be a sense-contact (*Sparśa*) in order that there may be feeling. But on what does sense contact depend? It depends on consciousness. If there were no consciousness there would be no *Nāmrūpa* or sense contact. That kind *Saṁskāra* or conformation will continue if ignorance (*avidyā*) is there. So to stop the cycle of dependence of existence (*Bhavacakra*) and suffering, individual should follow prescribed moral codes which will save himself as well as its effect fall on the rest of the society. No religious activity, rituals, sacrifices are needed to reach the heaven. Human being can make their heaven here in this world. These morals are discussed in the following way:

- i) Ten Buddhist commandments.

- ii) Virtues like liberality (giving *dāna*) and four unlimited virtues i.e. *brahmavihāras* of compassionate equanimity.
- iii) Value emphasis such as caste equality; and lastly
- iv) The fourth Noble Truth i.e. means for attaining enlightenment.

Ten Buddhist commandments: This ethical emphasis conquers with Winston King's belief that from the *Theravādins Buddhist* point of view, including that of its monastic elite, the five Buddhist precepts "may be internalized into attitudes and further extended by more positive ethical qualities"⁸ like the Hindu, Islam and Buddhist unlimited virtues of compassionate equanimity. In Buddhism, not only man, even the neglected animals also get a prestigious position. It is reflected in the Jātaka tales where Buddha took birth again and again in the form of deer, peacock, cow etc. and with the virtue of ten commandants or divine rules (i.e. *Dāna, Śīla, Karma, Niskarma, Prajñā, Virya, Satya, Adhithāna, Maitrī, Upekṣa*), he liberated himself.

The *Theravādins* believed that the five precepts were externally binding on everyone. But only the saint could really observe them.

Other five precepts are covetousness, slander, wrong views, hatred or insult, and idle talking. All those group of *Śīlas* are called *dasa-śīla* (ten precepts) from humanist, social and activist viewpoints all of these norms may seem self-centered or negative unless they are surveyed in the wider context of Buddhist virtues and values.

Virtues:

Beside those precepts, there are other virtues in Buddhism. These virtues or qualities are considered as crucial for the path to better rebirths or enlightenment. These are presenting or liberality (*dāna-śīla*; sharing without clinging) and the four unlimited virtues (*Brahmavihāras*) of maître or benevolence, *karuṇā* or compassion, *mūditā* or sympathetic joy.

Value emphasis:

Values exist in both the *Theravādin Buddhism* and *Mahāyāna Buddhism* and five offences are judged especially grave. They prohibit killing one's mother, father an *Arhat*, a *Buddha*, or harming the community of monks. In addition to the virtues of compassionate equanimity, therefore, one begins to discern a more concretely expressed Buddhistic ethos of non-injury (*ahiṃsa*). In humanistic terms and at a glance, therefore, common Buddhist morality does not seem to offer moral precepts, virtues or value emphasis inferior to other religious and human traditions.

The four Noble Truths:

The last factor in the fourfold Noble Truth, which concern the means for attaining enlightenment is the practice of the eightfold path which involves qualities of correct seeing, and entails correct doing.

There are:

- i) Faith (*samyag dṛṣṭi*)

- ii) Right resolve (*Sankalpa*)
- iii) Right speech (*vāk*)
- iv) Right action (*Karmānta*)
- v) Right living (*ājīva*)
- vi) Right effort (*vyāyāma*)
- vii) Right thought (*smṛti*) and
- viii) Right concentration (*Samādhi*)

Correct behaviors or 'Śīla' for both laity and monks (the *sangha*) prohibit killing, stealing, lying, adultery and the use of intoxicants. These precepts are contained already in Hindu, Islam and other religious ethics. We have to collect those Śīlas in our practical life and exercise them in our daily life. These are the means to our Salvation or *Nirvāṇa*. It helps us to build our character. Character or *Caritra* is a means, which help us to reach our end or goal. Śīlas are assets of our journey.

Buddha has generated a variety of codes for ethical conduct. These codes are not only a commandment but these are accepted as training principles. The most common formulation of a Buddhist ethical code is the list of five precepts, which are followed by the Buddhists.

- i) I undertake not to kill.
- ii) I undertake not to take what has not been given.
- iii) I undertake not to engage in sexual misconduct.
- iv) I undertake not a lie.
- v) I undertake to avoid intoxicants.

These precepts are intended as a support to our spiritual training and also a way of helping people to transform every dimension of their daily lives, their body, speech and mind. These can be expressed in the positive way.

“With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body.

With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.

With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body.

With truthful communication, I purify my speech

With mind fullness, clear and radiant, I purify my mind”⁹

We transcend ourselves by practicing those precepts and in this way kindness, generosity, contentment, honesty and clarity purify our mind as well as our body.

The basic question of philosophical anthropology which, was raised before i.e. what I ought to do as a man has a great appeal to Buddha as well as Raindranath Tagore.

In the *Bodhicaryavatara* it is said “First he will diligently foster the thought this his fellow creatures are the same as himself. All have the same sorrows, the same joys, as I and I must guard them like myself. I will cease to live as self and take as myself my fellow-creatures. We love our hands and other limbs a member of the body then why not love other living beings as members of the universe? By constant use man comes to imagine that his body, which has no self-being is a ‘Self’ then why should he not conceive his ‘self’ to lie in his fellows also?.....

Then, as you would guard yourself against suffering and sorrow, so exercise the spirit of help fullness and tenderness to the world”¹⁰.

The question, if I am only for myself, what I am? And not now, when? Influenced Buddhadeva and Rabindranath Tagore. So, they were not satisfied with themselves. It forces them to go forward and do something for the total human being.

In the *Ātmaparicaya* Tagore said about the human religion, “It is the religion that concealed in his mind to create himself. It is the inherent life forces that create the living being of the animal kingdom. The animal need not know anything about this life force. But man has another entity, which is bigger than his sentient being i.e. his humanism. This creative force within his life is his religion”¹¹.

Tagore himself worked untiringly spent a lot of money to relieve the distress due to food and famine, poverty, ill health and want of education in his own villages of Bengal. He also brought the message of the global brotherhood to the world’s citizen.

Buddha gave emphasis on human power and potency, which lies within him, “Buddha did not beg help and kindness from the heaven but he raised it out from the inner world of human being”¹².

In this way with the help of love, respect and devotion, Buddhadeva established the inward wisdom, power and generosity of human being and gave him a special status.

Tagore's philosophy was developed from his poetic expression, which grew out of his genuine concern for the wellbeing of humanity. He clearly stated that his main subject was the idea of humanity of our God, or the divinity of man.

Tagore said that if we want to know religion, we have to go through our lives and observe them through our lives. Buddhism at first gave the special status of human being and saw the man as a being bigger than he is. In the dance drama *Candālikā* Rabindranath had emphatically shown that an ordinary lady's transformation from untouchable position to a honored one. *Candālikā* by virtue of her accidental birth in the family of a *Candāla* (lower caste) was neglected by each and every person belonging to the so-called upper caste, even by the hawkers of bangles and seller of curd. She was untouchable to other social members. Her much neglected nature was apparent, because it was imposed by the society and hence it was not her real character, when a Buddhist monk had accepted her hospitality by way of drinking water offered by her. The monk did not treat her as untouchable, but has offered her the honour of humanity (*mānaver samman*). It is rightly pointed out by the Buddhist monk that she is after all a human being and the blood of a human being is flowing to the race of *Candāla*. ("Tini bale gelen amay nijere nindā karo nā, mānaver vamsa tomār mānaver raktatomārnadie"). The property of beng *Candāla* is an imposed one having no actual reality and hence there does not arise any question of untouchability. If *Candālatva* were imposed on the dense cloud spread over the sky in the month of *Śravana*, would it be treated as *Candāla* and its water be impure? ("*Śravaner kālo ye megh tāre yadinam dāo Candāla, to bale ki jātghucive tār, asuci have kei tār jal*"). In other words, we cannot call the black cloud *Candāla*. Even if it is called, it is an extraneous factor, which is to be imposed on it. Hence it can never be ascribed as *Candāla* and for this reason its

water can never be impure. This honour of humanity conferred on *Candālika* is a transformation from artificiality to naturality. The descriptions like *Candāla* etc are given by the social beings in a particular situation, but they have no reality. On account of this these are called aharya or imposed properties, which are artificial. As soon as there is transformation, it is towards the state of naturality, which is describes as a new birth. It is achieved by her through confer of the honour to her by quenching thirst of the monk (*‘ e natun janma nutun janma nutun janma āmār āmāke dilensahasā mānusera tṛṣṇā metāno samman’*) She was in the realm of falsity, which is demolished through the arrival of truth (*“bhānglo e jammer mithya”*). Rabindranath has taken the word *Candāla* as someone who does not devote his life for welfare of the mass (*Vahujanahitaya*). Such person having no desire for doing public welfare, *maître, karūṇā* etc are available even the family of the so-called Brahmins. As the *Candālika* has performed a moral work by way of providing water to a thirsty Buddhist monk, she cannot be said as *Candāla* (*‘Dvijer vamse Candāl kata ācche āmi nai candāli’*). Each and every person has got mud or dust in her heart and it is essential to remove this by transformation to the heavenly region, which is metaphorised as pure as flower, *Candālika* has transformed to this stage and she thinks herself fortunate. Just as a flower is auspicious as it is used in the service of the God, *Candālika* also thinks herself pious as her birth is utilized in the service of a thirsty human being. (*Phul bale dhanya āmi dhanya āmi mātir pare, devatā ogo tomār sevāmārghare’, Dhulīr dhānke karo svargiya’, ‘nāi dhulī mor antare’*). This state of *Candālika* is her real nature. This is true about all women and men who are neglected in our society due to some artificial character imposed on them. The transformed stage is the natural one, which has to be achieved by the human being. Man could able broke out this natural boundaries with the embodied appearance of wisdom and

kindness. Buddha got salvation or *nirvāṇa* but remained in this world just for show the light of wisdom to the sufferers.

Buddhism had maintained the three tier system like:-

- i) *Buddha*
- ii) *Dharma*, and
- iii) *Sangha*

Here Buddha means devotion, *Dharma* means wisdom and *Sangha* means *Karma*. These three doctrines give the completeness in Buddhism.

This three-tier system is also found in Tagore's ideology. He did not agree with the renunciation in action. He gave more emphasis on action. It can be seen in his *Gītāñjali*, poem no. XI.

“..... Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thin eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is braking stone. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil”¹³.

We can see touch of wisdom everywhere in his creation. Tagore did not believe the society where man is neglected and religious rituals and mantras make the human life more complicated.

His drama '*Achalāyatana*' and novel '*Gorā*' make us clear that *JñānaYoga* or wisdom plays an important role in salvation.

Not only action and wisdom but also devotion to God or super natural soul helps us to get salvation. It reveals in his *Drama* '*Candālika*' and all the poems of '*Naivedya*'. All the three doctrines reveal in the poem '*Mukti*'.

“ *Meditation by blocking all avenue is not my path.*

Thy blissful joy rests amidst

The lust of my life will go up with flames of salvation

My love will flow as devotion to thee

*The joys and pleasures of sight, fragrance and melody”.*¹⁴

Tagore says in the *Gītāñjali* the same thing in other way

Where thou art in union with the multitude

I shall seek union with thee

Neither in the forest not in solitude

Nor inside my own mind

But where thou art the beloved of every body

*Thou are my beloved too.*¹⁵

Tagore could find out the harmony of *Jñāna*, *karma* and devotion. So far as the *Hinayāna Buddhism* concerned prayer and devotion are absent in it. On the other hand devotion, hymns and wisdom are found everywhere in *Mahāyāna* sect of Buddhism. The only aim of Buddhism is

to practice those teaching in personal life. Love does not come from nothingness and with love all relations get its completeness.

Like all other positive mental states, the clarity of mind which Buddhist ethic enjoys can be consciously cultivated. One of the most direct means of doing so is through the practice of meditation.

Buddhism is not against joy and pleasure. But it suggests that the dulled state of intoxication is actually unpleasant and we only choose to enter into it because it seems to offer some temporary respite from the pain of ordinary existence. Instead of trying to just blot out of pain of our daily lives, Buddhism suggests that we can consciously cultivate states, which are not painful. A clear mind, aesthetic appreciation, the love of nature, meditation, kindness and friendship all these bring about skillful mental states in dependence on which ever-greater joy arises.

Like Buddha, Tagore also gives a spiritualistic interpretation of human religion. Religion involves a sense of humanness in it. It is an expression of essential and inner aspect of man. Tagore says “if it is the human aspect of this truth which all great personalities have made their own in their lives and have offered to their fellow beings in the name of various religions”¹⁶. It is clear that religion implies the acceptance of spirituality. “Tagore remarks that religion is the spiritual truth”¹⁷. So, spirituality is the core of religion. Human’s religion, according to Tagore, essentially makes him aware of a communication which is beyond the physical universe. This leads him to have faith in spiritual order.

A question may arise: What was Tagore's actual religious status? He became atheist at his old age or he had strong faith in God. This kind of question was raised. The metaphysical world where he belonged to was so vast that ordinary people like us cannot evaluate it. In Indian philosophy theism (*āstika*) and atheism (*nāstika*) are measured not in the traditional way. An individual who believes in the Veda is called theist and one who does not is called atheist. So, in Indian philosophy not only *Cārvāka* but also Buddha and Mahavira also belong to the atheist group. Tagore firmly believed in the Veda and *Upaniṣad*. So, he can be said to be theist, but he did not have any faith on traditional so-called gods and goddess. There was no doubt about the poet's religious belief. God revealed to him in so many forms like the worldly object. The earth became meeting place of God and living being. Here the time had lost its dimension and the past and the future merge into one eternal superior authority. And in this way the poet's religious feeling crossed its limitation and became 'the religion of man'. Man naturally wants to know the infinite and it helps him- "to train his attitude and behaviors towards the infinite in its human aspects"¹⁸. He does not belong to any religious sect and for this it became easy to him to criticize the so-called religious groups. He realized that religion was a special kind of feeling, self-realization and so-called orthodox system of any religious groups stands as a wall in between man and his God. So, Tagore again and again criticizes the *Hindu* rituals. Tagore's religious feeling became truth in Pareshbābu and Ānandmoye in his novel *Gorā*. We can also see in the Hobib Khan in Tagore's *Musalmānir gappo*. It is seen also in Tagore's real life that he had a relation with his friend Andrews. Andrews could not understand what was his religious attitude. Would he keep any relation with Christian religion or not? Then how Tagore made him understand and relieve him can be seen in Andrews biography – "Tagore met his needs with the insight and patience of genuine friendship. Faithfully he reminded him that human love, when

not disinterested, must be shunned at any cost; he saw the tendency for his friend to slip into the vagueness and laxity which two years earlier he had so strongly condemned, and he urged him to return to his God, and to cling fast to the priceless heritage of his Christian devotional life”¹⁹.

So, it is clear that Tagore was not in favour of any religion. He was not also against of any religious group, but he was against the religious group, which was not in favor of the growth of human personality. Actually religion should keep human consciousness alive. For this he called the atheism the ‘atheistic religion’. He said:

Nāstik seapāi Vidhātār bar.

Dharmikatar kore nāārambar.

Śraddhākoreā jwale buddhīr ālo

*Śāstra mānenā, mane mānuṣer bhālo.*²⁰

That is,

Atheist who are also getting the bliss of God,

Are not showing their fake religious faith

They used to lit the light of knowledge

They do not believe in God

But have a vast faith on the goodness of the humanity.

Tagore was associated with the pupil who believed strictly on religious scripture but it is difficult to say how he was influenced by the atheist and created the character like *Jyethāmahasāi* and *Caturanga* and *Abhik* in *Rabibār*. How man crosses his limitation and belongs to his surplusness without believing in God is evidenced form the characters of

Abhikand *Jyethāmahasāi*. Tagore was blamed for his atheism and he answered in this way—The real god is roaming out side the temple. They spread their hands for begging on the road. Though I am blamed as a atheist! What is the use of those rituals which are offered to the Gods in the religious temple by neglecting the needy, hungry poor people?...I love to those needy people and I pay my gratitude to them. I do not have any faith on those imaginary deities²¹.

The positive side of Tagore's atheism reached to its highest value when atheist Jagamohan invited Muslims poor people and needy untouchable cobblers at his home. His brother Harimohan opposed it and then Jagamohan answered that – “they are my Gods and I must offer my *bhog* (sacred food offered to God) to them, please do not oppose me ... they are my Gods because they can eat food which are offered to them”²². Tagore wrote the drama *Rabibar* when he was 80. He was too much matured himself and created a character like Abhik in *Rabibar*. He is the representative of non-believer of gods and in the story Tagore's voice comes out in Abhik's mouth. In our country people are quarreling with themselves for their own religion. They claim that their religious are superior to other. Here Abhik says, “in that country, where people are quarreling for the superiority of there the noble task of me like atheist is to make a bridge among all religions”²³. Tagore's religious viewpoint will be more clear from his statement in his letters – “Where people are cheated in the name of deity, then I cannot control myself. When I visited *Gayā*, there I saw a landlady offered a lot of gold and money to the *Pāndā* – those gold coins were forcibly collected from the poor citizen of her reigns.... The negligence of man to his own fellow cannot be seen in other country because the deity takes the lion's share from the poor people”²⁴. The so-called religion makes him so dissatisfied that he address himself as atheist and created a character like Abhik in *Rabibār*. Atheist here is not used

in a negative way or it is not slang. The people, who are doing business with religion, use atheist in a negative sense for hurting the people. So, they do not have any idea that man may have ethics detached from religion. But Tagore strongly believed that atheist are more ethical than religious people. It is evidenced in the dialogues between Abhik and Vibha in *Rabibār*.

Vibha: Please wait and look after my Jewellery, I am coming.

Abhik: But who will control my greed?

Vibha: why? Your atheism!

Tagore is said to be the true maker of universal man. He tried to develop a child into a universal man. So, personality development takes an important part in his education system. For this he prescribed spiritual education along with emotional and physical. Truly speaking spiritual education takes a vital role to develop a child. For him religion cannot be imparted in the form of lesson in the classroom. It is not a commodity that can be rationed in fixed weekly period in fixed does as a subject of school curriculum. To him religions are the way of life to us. It is actual means, which help us to reach our goals. It makes ensure us to get a close relation with the infinite. So, it can be said that it is the center of gravity of our life and can be developed by the daily practice from our childhood. Truth of spiritual life not in the artificial necessities but the simple livelihood surround by fullness of leisure, by ample space and pure air and profound peace of nature, where man lives with a perfect faith in the internal life before them. Tagore's religious life was all pervading. It is not based on any partial feeling and parochialism. It was truly a religion to be practiced by man to make himself happy and the world better place to living. To him religious education is not teaching of some rules and dogmas. So, in his own school he felt that his students could enjoy and realize their reunion of delight in the midst of

nature. It is enough for them. He makes sure that religious education is not an external imposition but an internal development and it definitely leads us to sublimity of thought. Tagore experienced such a situation when he wrote ... “when I was 18 a sudden breeze of religious experience comes in my life for the first time and passes away, living a message of spiritual reality ... the poem I wrote on the first day was called the *Nirjharer Swapnabhanga* (awakening of the waterfall)”²⁵. He described his religion as the religion of man and advocated that God manifested himself in man in the sense that it was through human activity he realized himself in the universe. The evaluation of the universe is a co-operative activity in which man is not only a recipient but also a donor. Tagore was of the opinion that religion can never be taught in a prescribed lesson. He believed that a person, who has undertaken a profession of teaching about God and good to others, merely confuses and does not guide the aspirants of truth. Religion to him as to us is to be lived and not taught.

We have to remember that Tagore is dead against moral institution as imparted by teachers in schools. For him, it is a pure waste of time and effort. He said- “it is futile and it is disagreeable and I cannot think anything that does more harm to society. It is not moral institution that is needed for building up a boy’s mind and character but friendly guidance and congenial environment”²⁶. Tagore believed in universal religion, which is taught or practiced. It is rather the idea of universal religion that is propagated. In his Śāntiniketan there is no moral and religious education as a separate curriculum. Since, Tagore believed that this two cannot be part of school syllabus but the whole Śāntiniketan curriculum was so devised that one could imbibe this values naturally in an atmosphere of freedom. Even the very conception of discipline has a special connotation here.

Discipline here means the attitude of discipline. It stands for good behavior irrespective for other order orderliness, modesty, cleanliness- all this benefits a student and without which a life of serious study is impossible and this can lead a student to an idea man.

Critics may think that Tagore was an atheist because there was no place of God in his religious philosophy but he was not in favour of godless system of education. Even so, he admired the Russians for their achievements and raising their living standard in period of hardly two decades. In his address in Moscow he expressed to his feelings- "I have been able to realize that your ideal education is very much similar to that of mine, that the people are living a complete life through which their minds are prepared to receive education in his full richness and not merely horde of isolated facts of scientific instruction and information..."²⁷. It is said before that Tagore's idea of education is a part of life and something realistic and also concrete. With such high ideas Tagore never compromise him with the budding Russian system of education. His mind was clear on this point and wanted to uplift the tender mind and to bring repulsive uniformity in their thinking. It was his desire that children were to be allowed to lead a life of their own amidst utmost freedom to develop a variety of interest and to participate in a lot of activities which could stimulate their faculties and strengthen the development of their own self into a complete person. Tagore was an optimist, and hence he was confident that India will have a better future and the country will be progressive through the light of education where will reach every corner of the country. In his farewell address he expressed such hope."I dream of the time when it will be possible for the ancient land of Aryan civilization also to enjoy great boon of education and equal opportunities for all pupil"²⁸.

Spirituality plays an important role in the philosophy of Buddha. He himself always went on his wondering with a close companion. Most of the time he was accompanied by his cousin cum friend Ānanda. One day a dialogue was opened on spirituality.

Ānanda:

“Lord I’ve been thinking, you know, spiritual friendship is at least half of the spiritual life.

The Buddha replied:

Say not so Ānanda, say not so, spiritual friendship is the whole of the spiritual life”.

This is the way in which the Buddhist tradition has preserved the teaching for the last two and a half thousand years. Teachers have passed on their knowledge and experience to their disciples in an unbroken chain of spiritual friendship, which reaches back to the Buddha himself. Without those friendships it would not be possible for the vast majority of us to tread the path of enlightenment. ‘Virtual’ spiritual friendships are indispensable.

Spiritual friendship gives one a context for self-transcendence, an opportunity to put another’s needs beyond one’s own. It is all very well to insist that our sense is ultimately illusory and that therefore we should care no more for ourselves than for others, but it is very much harder to put this into practice. In the case of spiritual friendship however, one can come to feel so strongly for one’s friends that one naturally wants to put their needs about one’s own. We should cultivate spiritual friendships with one another. This is no easy matter and is not

something, which can simply be left to chance and the working of Buddhist goodwill. Gone about in that short of way, one or two people might find themselves sufficiently drawn to one another to begin to forge stronger links between one another, but most will find that their relationships with one another stay at a more or less superficial friendly level. For most people, spiritual friendships need to be consciously cultivated. Like all things, spiritual friendships come about only in dependence upon the right condition.

Edward Thomson, Tagore's first Western interpreter, introduces the collection of spiritual love song where relation between the divine and finite reveals. Among them one is given below:

God of the silent soul

Awake, alone,

Today I will open a door

And be known.

Whom do I seek all day

in the swift outside,

I will learn the holy word.

of eventide.

I light the lamp of my life

With your life's light

O priest, in quite I will make

My gift tonight

Where the cosmos has taught

A world to pray

I too of that radiance

*Will hold a ray.*²⁹

In *Sādhanā*, Tagore says how much he is influenced by *Upaniṣad* as well as the great teacher Buddha. “To me the verses of the *Upaniṣads* and the teaching of Buddha have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others and awaiting for their confirmation, my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality”³⁰.

The magnetic character for the personality of Lord Buddha had its own towards its positive and negative prescriptions. There were many other influences too, which in their own ways determined the nature of Tagore’s religious philosophy. But the main thing about Tagore’s ways of thinking is that he moulds and shapes all the sources from where he was influence and he creates them in accordance with his own realization and visions.

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