

## *Preface*

The question concerning Man and the Universe is very important in the history of philosophy. Actually 'man' occupies a unique position in the mind of philosophers. In spite of differences in their metaphysical outlook the Indian systems have an internal unity. Perhaps before Protagoras philosophers had no interest in Man and he discussed from the Vedic period till today. As an Indian, Tagore was influenced by the *Upaniṣads*, Buddhism and other scriptures. He developed his concept of philosophy from the *Upaniṣad*, Buddhism, *Bāuls*, folk-singers and mystic saints like Lalan, Kabir etc. In the present era we mainly discuss how Tagore developed his philosophy being influenced by Buddhism.

It is felt or experienced that man suffers from deficiency though he has sufficient divine potency within himself. In this dissertation an effort will be made to discuss the philosophy with special reference to Rabindranath Tagore. A critical discussion has been done throughout the dissertation.

After some introductory remarks the second chapter deals with Tagore's philosophy. Tagore as a metaphysical poet was influenced by Indian Scriptures like *Upaniṣads* and *Vedānta*. Especially he frequently and spontaneously recited Buddhist hymns. This influence lasted long, till his death. It was not because he was born in a Hindu family but because the philosophy of those scriptures shaped his own way of life and helped him reach the highest goal of human aspiration. Tagore's monism, his emphasis on the all-pervasive character of God, his assertion of the kinship between 'man and man' and between 'man and nature' are all taken from the *Upaniṣads*. He was also fully acquainted with the entire *Upaniṣadic* tradition and as such carried

the stamp of some of the *Vedāntic* system in his thought. *Vaiṣṇavism*, a sect of *Vedānta*, made him realise the necessity and importance of opening the ways of the heart for apprehending the one.

Rabindranath had brought harmony between the Finite and the Infinite. To him such harmony remains within a man. An individual's ego wants to bind him in this worldly object while his soul longs for the Infinite, which is represented in the poem- '*Dui Pākhi*'. In an individual there is both *Viśva* (whole world) and *Viśesatva* (ego). Just as a string of the lyre remains in two poles a man while performing his worldly work is conjoined with the Infinite.

Rabindranath accepted good (*Śreya*) as moral value. Our life gains what is called *Śreya* in those of its aspects, which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in characters and creative works. When the 'surplus in man' is not revealed, he would not be in position, which exceeds him. Under this situation all will seem to be *preya* (pleasant) to him, which is not at all desirable to Tagore.

Freedom, for Tagore, is a freedom from bondage created by alienation, which is essentially a 'freedom to'. The action which is taken out of need brings bondage while the action taken from surplusness is called *Mukti* or salvation. He always wanted to have the taste of freedom amongst innumerable bondages but not through detachment in the sense of that which moves us away from the practical world. The so-called bondage may become the source of unbound pleasure available in salvation.

In chapters three and four Tagore's thought in the light of Buddhism has been discussed. Buddhism also shaped Tagore's own metaphysical philosophy like the verses of *Upaniṣads*. Tagore said, "To me the verses of the *Upaniṣads* and the teachings of the Buddha have ever been thing of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth 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" (*Sādhanā* P. VIII). So, it is clear to us by his own words how he was influenced by Buddha.

Tagore's thought in the Light of *Bāul*, Sufi, Saints and Kabir is concentrated upon in chapter four. Tagore was impressed by *Bāul* singers of Bengal, Kabir and other mystic saints. The unsophisticated theology and the simple ways of the *Bāuls* impressed Tagore very much. Besides the *Bāuls*, the mystic Saints like Kabir and other saints always held special fascination for Tagore. Under these influences Tagore shaped his own religion – "*The Religion of Man*" and created a lot of poems, songs, novels, paintings etc. for us.

Tagore's concept of Man is nourished in the light of education as a man-making process. Man and Surplus in Man occupy a prominent place in Tagore's philosophy. To Tagore an individual realizes his own self more fully when he exceeds himself at large. Human creativity is surplus in man because there alone takes place an incessant explosion of freedom. Man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something, which exceeds him. He is aware that he is not imperfect but incomplete.

In the concluding chapter an effort will be made to make critical and evaluative remarks on Tagore's view. Though Rabindranath had drawn our attention to the unique concept of philosophy, many religious issues may be raised. The points of departure of Rabindranath from our ancient *Śāstrasa* need to be explored and examined. Is his philosophical thought related to our religious tradition? If the answer is in the positive, the specific points of his agreements and departure are also to be focussed.