

CHAPTER - IV

POETIC APPROACH OF THE CONCEPT OF UNTOUCHABILITY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

It is true that Rabindranath Tagore was an icon of Indian culture. He was born in the Jorasanko Mansion in Calcutta on 7th May 1861 in a wealthy *Brahmin* family. He was the ninth son of his parents - Debendranath Tagore (Father) and Sarada Devi (Mother). Dwakanath, the grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore was a rich Indian landlord and a social reformer. His oldest brother Dwijendranath was known as a philosopher and poet. Tagore did not like the conventional education in his child days. That is why he had started his study at home under several teachers. When Tagore was eleven years old, he had completed his *Upanayana* ceremony and then he left Calcutta to tour India with his father. At first, they were visited Santiniketan estate and Amritsar. After that they went to the *Himalayan* hill station of Dalhousie and here Tagore reads several biographies and studies history, astronomy, modern science, Sanskrit etc. At the same time he had examined the classical poetry of Kalidasa. After this long journey they returned Jorasanko and then Tagore completed a set of major works.

Rabindranath Tagore was the first Asian who won the *Nobel Prize* for his collection of poems *Gitanjali* in 1913. In this time he established *Viswabharati University*. His two songs from *Rabindrasangit* are now the *national anthems* of India and Bangladesh. He was generally known as a poet, philosopher, musician, writer and educationalist etc. He was called as *Gurudev* to his followers. In the period of later 19th and early 20th century he had reshaped Bengali literature and music. It is true that, Tagore was a mesmerizing representative of the Indian culture which influence and popularity spreaded throughout the world.

It is well known to all of us that, Caste system is the first and foremost which are poisoning the very springs of national life. Rabindranath Tagore also aware about the purposes for

which it served and the value of the principles on which it was framed. According to him, when the *Aryans* came to India, they had to encounter the previous inhabitants of the country. Basically, the *Aryans* were dominated by the spiritual impulse. Although they were organized a social system which was based on the recognition of spiritual unity as well as racial differences, but they did not adopt the lazy device of either extirpating the native peoples or reducing them to slavery. When different peoples could live together in mutual harmony and enjoying the freedom to maintain their differences, the caste system was instituted as a social unity. Generally the social organization of India was based on the principle of understanding. In this regard Tagore said: "It is not the case in Europe that all classes do their respective, legitimate functions, and thus try by their collective efforts to maintain the social organization; on the contrary, they are mutually antagonistic: every class is always on the alert to prevent others from growing stronger. Thus the social harmony is destroyed. . . India has tried to reconcile things that are mutually alien to each other. . . She set limits to and fenced off all the rival conflicting forces of society and thus made the social organism one, and capable of doing its complex functions." ⁴⁶ According to him, every good society should have a section which is corresponding to it. It was a work of art in the Indian social organization. The *Brahmins* are recognized as leaders and they have enjoyed the top of society. In the political fortune India passed through several vicissitudes. The society has not been much surprised and the ideals and traditions were long preserved by this class. Actually *Brahmins* were the trustees of tradition and the conservers of the religious spirit. The ideal *Brahmins* were count poverty as a privilege, consider learning their calling and pursue the ideals of spirit with self-sacrifice in a disinterested manner. The characteristic features of *Brahmins* are scorn of wealth and the pursuit of spirituality, reckless of praise or blame. Not

⁴⁶ Modern Review, December 1910.

only in economics but also in other matters division of labor is now recognized to be a valid principle of a social organization. According to him, if we cannot make our clothes or our shoes for ourselves and trained men to do these things much better than we can for ourselves, then why should we not have a class set apart for artistic production and spiritual discovery? As a symbol of art and beauty, the members of this class are discover and bring home to the community. So, this class happens to consider higher than the others. The tradesman and the merchant are contribute to the physical needs for spiritual health and joy to the community. The leaders of society are regulating these things by which the community ought to take pleasure. According to him, those who are in the thick of the conflict of the world have not the time to think of the welfare of the whole community. In the name of God, the *Brahmins* have lost their old self-sacrifice and spirituality. That is why they have no claim to the respect and regard of the other classes. The *Brahmins* were drilled the other classes into submission and decreed their inferiority. As a result they destroy the place of their respect and prestige. In this regard Tagore said, "When the *Sudra* joined his palms in submission to the *Brahmanical* decree of inferiority, on that very day was dug the pit for the fall of the *Brahmins*."⁴⁷ The *Brahmins* do not possess their ideals and spiritual strength which would win respect. But there is no question of doubt that the hierarchy of values has been incorporated in the caste system of India.

According to Tagore, the main aims of caste system are to establish the universal brotherhood and love. The basis and end of Caste system is freedom. Man is not a mere creature of the moment by which we can solve our purposes and then throw off. But man is an eternal being whose purpose and destiny are to express his free spirit in actions of the world. Tagore argues that the modern class system of the West is material in its outlook, but the caste system is

⁴⁷ Modern Review, September 1917, p. 33?

really spiritual. We cannot satisfy the deeper needs of man whenever we practice the materialistic division of Caste. We have to take a lesson from the caste system for building a spiritual civilization, which will be based upon love and brotherhood, freedom and fellowship etc. It is not like that we are holding a brief for the caste system as it prevails in India at the present day. But we are aware that we have come to a time when that institution requires modification. In this way the rigid and exclusive caste system has served its purpose and one day it must vanish. Tagore said that: "It has largely contributed to the freedom from narrowness and intolerance which distinguishes the *Hindu* religion, and has enabled races with widely different cultures and even antagonistic social and religious usages and ideals to settle down peaceably side by side. . . But this very absence of struggle, developing into a ready acquiescence in any position assigned by the social system, has crushed individual manhood, and has accustomed us for centuries not only to submit to every form of domination, but sometimes actually to venerate the power that holds us down . . . The regeneration of the Indian people, to my mind, directly and perhaps solely depends upon the removal of this condition."⁴⁸ Actually caste system failed to recognize the flow of life, the mobility of mind and the flexibility of characteristics. It also failed to realize that in human beings differences are not like the physical barriers of mountains. The soul of the caste system has departed and that is why India is now worshipping with fear. The vast social mechanism created by man is now crushing the soul. So, the independent thinking and individuality are suppressed. Every individual are caught in the wheels of the machine. Again Tagore argued that, if we cripple our minds and narrow our freedom by confining it to our closed prisons like the child *Amal* in the *Post Office*, then we shall not recover us from our

⁴⁸ Modern Review^ August 1910 and February 1911.

illusions. So, for the air and light of God, it is necessary to break open the gates and pull down the walls of our closed house.

Tagore does not analysis the social problems from the narrow economic or utilitarian point of view. But he brings his spiritual vision to stand on the social problems and lifts them up to a higher idealist plane. Generally his attitude to them was determined by the spiritual vision. According to him, the present social conflict would be abolished, if people adopted the right attitude to life and developed respect for the divine in man. It is true that the materialist view of life makes us afraid of poverty. But according to the spiritual vision of life, poverty is not the cause of social discontent. Although India is very poor, but centuries of spiritual discipline have given the Indian peoples so much self-control and self-suppression. When a great famine invades the country or death-dealing disease stalks through the land, then the Indian people submit to it in humble resignation. In the time of suffering and distress, they beg and pray, mope and pine, and at worst, weep and die in silence, handing over their souls to God. Their calm acceptance of pain and silent submission to suffering are the wonder of the world. That is why Tagore argues that materialist view of life is the root cause of social discontent and the remedy for the social unrest is a spiritual one.

Tagore argues that greatest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes, but the forces that dwell within their borders. According to him, real obstacles to Indian progress lie in regions where the *British Government* has no way. The blind superstitions, the deification of customs, the ancient institutions which make for discord etc. are responsible for the present degenerate condition of India. Tagore questioned that why is India only a dependency and not a partner? Why is she merely in the group without being of it? Why is she a veritable outsider among the nations of the *British Empire*? Why are the forty million untouchables kept down by the people of India? Why are they in Hinduism but still not of it? Why are they considered pariahs among the peoples of India? Tagore thinks that India is only reaping the fruits of her

past karma. Only India treats her lower classes throughout the society. Till caste prejudice and religious pride disappear from India. That is why there is no right to complain of the race hatred and race prejudice of the outside world. We cannot ask for absolute political freedom so long as we welcome cruel tyranny in social life. We cannot break life into fractions. We cannot say we shall be free in religion. Although we are fighting for freedom in politics, but we are enslaved in social life. Tagore argues that God helps the nations to recover their souls by the ages of suffering. Though the stars are always in the heavens, yet man sees them only at night. The misfortune that has overtaken India will help her to look up to the stars of eternity, which shine as brightly in the heaven above as in the heart below. The hard school of misfortune is needed to tear India from the false idols of commerce, luxury, and pleasure and bring her back to God. Suffering is the penalty which India has to pay for the corruption of centuries. Through it the soul of India is being glorified and her spirit is regenerated. Under the urge of sorrow, suffering and subjection nations like individuals rise to their spiritual heights. God is chastising the people of India and calling them to repentance. So Tagore thinks that contact with the West has made India become conscious of her weakness and unworthiness. In this respect Tagore says: "To-day India is on every side defrauding and humiliating her in scripture, religion, and society; she is not awakening her own soul by means of truth and sacrifice, therefore she is not getting from others what she otherwise might have had. Therefore, the union with the West is not becoming complete in India; that union is not bearing full fruit, but only giving us shame and pain."⁴⁹ But Tagore is not a skeptic to laugh at the condition of India. He is dreadfully earnest and has neither the time nor the mood for skepticism. The undertone of sorrow in his writings is due to the consciousness that India is not doing her share. The present condition of India makes his heart sick. That is

⁴⁹ The Future of India.

why he says: “Our endeavors after political agitation seemed to me unreal to the core and pitifully feeble in their utter helplessness. I felt that it is a blessing of Providence that begging should be an unprofitable profession, and that only to him who shall be given. I said to myself that we must seek for our own inheritance and with it buy our true place in the world. What is that inheritance? The ideals of simplicity of life, clarity of spiritual vision, purity of heart, harmony with the universe, and consciousness of the infinite personality are in all creation.”⁵⁰

Now we are trying to explain and examine some literatures, drama, stories and poems of Tagore, where he highlighted about inequality of the society or castes:

CHANDALIKA:

Chandalika was written by Rabindranath Tagore in the year of 1938. It was recreated to perform on stage as a part of the ongoing 14th *Bharat Rang Mahotsav* in Delhi. *Chandalika* has been performed and staged in many languages with multiple interpretations across the country and out of the country. Tagore was living with his literary works and music which will never stop. The main character of this drama is *Chandalika*. She performed on stage by the name of *Prakiti*. *Chandalika* was an untouchable girl and she was the daughter of a black magician *Chandala*. She has raised a voice for the silenced and marginalized peoples of India who were humiliated by the higher castes peoples of the *Hindu* society. She was a rebel who questioned about communal norms which relegated her to an existence of a lesser being or an untouchable. Generally, the *dancing body* of *Chandalika* indicates a symbol of mobility, resistance and autonomy. Through her dance movements *Chandalika* articulated her anger and loves. She has articulated her anger against a social status which has imposed upon

⁵⁰ Shantiniketan, Introduction, pp. 2, 3.

her. On the other hand, she has articulated her love for a monk who respects and acknowledges her as a human being.

We can see in the first part of the drama, a flower seller was selling her flower. *Prakiti* wants to buy some flowers from her. But the flower seller avoids her without any response. After that a milk seller enters on the stage. Again *Prakiti* wants to buy some milk from her. In that time a women vociferates that:

In Bengali: “ওকে ছুঁয়ো না ছুঁয়ো না, ছি,
 ও যে চণ্ডালিনীর ঝি -”

In English: “Oke chhunyo naa chhunyo, chhi,
 O je chandalinir jhii” –⁵¹

(Meaning that don't touch her, touch her, tut, because she was a daughter of *Chandala*.)

After that a ring seller coming on the stage and again *Prakiti* wants to buy some rings for her. She puts her hand for taking the ring, at that time a woman threatening her. And again *Prakiti* listen this word:

In Bengali: “ওকে ছুঁয়ো না ছুঁয়ো না, ছি,
 ও যে চণ্ডালিনীর ঝি -”

In English: “Oke chhunyo naa chhunyo, chhi,
 O je chandalinir jhii”⁵² –

(Meaning that don't touch her, touch her, tut, because she was a daughter of *Chandala*.)

In this way *Prakiti* was insulted by her nearest friends, whenever she was going to close with them. She realized that the main cause of this negligent was to birth in the house of a *Chandala*. Being a *Chandala* girl, she has no right to physically took anything from the

⁵¹ Tagore, R. Rabindra Natya – Sangraha, 2nd edition, Viswabharati, Calcutta, 1406 (Bengali), P- 738.

⁵² Tagore, R. Rabindra Natya – Sangraha, 2nd edition, Viswabharati, Calcutta, 1406 (Bengali), P- 739.

others. Her physical touch will make them impure. According to them, she was not like a human being. That is why *Prakiti* argued that:

In Bengali:

“যে আমারে পাঠাল এই
অপমানের অন্ধকারে
পুজিব না, পুজিব না সেই দেবতারে, পুজিব না ।
কেন দিব ফুল, কেন দিব ফুল,
কেন দিব ফুল আমি তারে -
যে আমারে চিরজীবন
রেখেদিল এই ঝিক্কারে ।”

In English:

“Je amare pathalo ei
Apomaner andhokare
Pujibo na pujibo na sei debotare, pujibo na.
Kyano dibo ful, kyano dibo ful,
Kyano dibo ful ami tare –
Je amare chirojibon
Rekhedilo eii dhikkare.”⁵³

(Meaning that, I don’t worship that God, who gives me this life. This life has full of darkness and affront. Those who kept my entire life in indignation, I don’t give him flowers.)

It is true that there is no meaning to leads a life where she has full of insult and indignation of others. *Prakiti* has neglected, humiliated and faced inequality everywhere from the society. It is impossible to lead a life where she did not found any respect from her own religion. But one day she has got respect from an unknown person, which has changed her life. *Prakiti* was

⁵³ Ibid, P- 739.

bathing her calf near of a stript. Suddenly she sees that a *Buddhist Monk Ananda* was coming across her. *Ananda* wants some water from *Prakriti*. In this respect *Ananda* said:

In Bengali: “জল দাও আমায় জল দাও,
রৌদ্র প্রখরতর, পথ সুদীঘ
আমায় জল দাও ।
আমি তাপিত পিপাসিত,
আমি শ্রান্ত,
আমায় জল দাও ।”

In English: “Jal dao amay jal dao,
Rouidra prokhorotaro, path sudirgh
Amay jal dao.
Ami tapito pipasita,
Ami sranto,
Amay jal dao.”⁵⁴

(Meaning that, give me some water, because the sunlight is keenness and the road is overlong. Please give me some water. I am thirsty and exhausted by the heat of sun. Please, give me some water.)

But *Prakriti* refused his request and she informed him: as a daughter of *Chandala*, she has no rights to give him water. *Prakriti* Said:

In Bengali: “ক্ষমা করো প্রভু, ক্ষমা করো মোরে -
আমি চন্ডালের কন্যা,
মোর কুপের বারি অশুচি ।
তোমারে দেব জল হেন পুণ্যের আমি

⁵⁴ Ibid, P- 740.

নাহি অধিকারী,

আমি চন্ডলের কন্যা ।”

In English: “Khama karo probhu, khama karo more –

Ami chandalero kanya,

Mor kuper bari ashuchi.

Tomare debo jal heno punyer ami

Nahi adhikari,

Ami chandalero kanya.”⁵⁵

(Meaning that my lord please remits me, I cannot give this water for your drinking. The water of my stript has regarded as impure, Because, I am a daughter of a *Chandala*. Being a *Chandala* girl, I have no right to give you water. I could not earn this type of virtue.)

So, it is clear from the above quotation that, *Chandala* has been treated as untouchable during the time of Tagore. They have no right to lead a life where they will live with others. Actually day after day they were humiliated, exhausted by the upper castes *Hindus*. But when the *Hindus* were going to detach *Chandalas* from their religion, in that time they were accepted by the other religion, which is namely called *Buddhism*. The *Buddhists Monk Ananda* talked her that, she was not 'impure'. He argued that, a child is coming from the same almighty like others. That is why there is no division between *Prakiti* and him. *Ananda* said:

In Bengali: “যে মানব আমি সেই মানব তুমি কন্যা ।

সেই বারি তীথ বারি

যাহা তৃপ্ত করে তৃষিতেরে,

যাহা তাপিত শাস্ত্রে স্নিগ্ধ করে

সেই তো পবিত্র বারি ।”

⁵⁵ Ibid, P- 740-41.

In English: “Je manob ami sei manob tumi kanya.

Sei bari tiirtho bari

Jaha tripta kare trisitere,

Jaha tapita srantere snigdho kare

Sei to pabitra bari.”⁵⁶

(That means there is no difference between you and me, because we all are produced by the same almighty. On the other hand, which will appease the thirsty persons, calm the exhausted persons are always called pure and pilgrimages water.)

Naturally, *Prakriti* surprised for getting this respond from the *Monk*. For a moment she just realized about the truth and necessity of her life. This is important to notice here that, all this was happening when *Prakriti* had internalized herself as a victim of society. She was running her life with the stigma of untouchability. In this situation this type of behavior changed her life. That is why, when she recounting this incident to her mother, she says, "This is my new birth. In satisfying his thirst I feel baptized. I am aware of myself now mother. I now know what freedom tastes like." In this regard she said:

In Bengali: “আমি চন্ডালী, সে যে মিথ্যা, সে যে মিথ্যা

সে যে দারুন মিথ্যা ।

শ্রাবনের কালো যে মেঘ

তারে যদি নাম দাও ‘চন্ডাল’

তা বলে কি জাত ঘুচিবে তার,

অশুচি হবে কি তার জল ।”

⁵⁶ Ibid, P- 741.

In English: “Ami Chandali, se je mithya, se je mithya

Se je darun mithya.

Sraboner kalo je megh

Tare Jodi nam dao ‘Chandal’

Ta bole ki jat ghuchibe tar,

Ashuchi hobe ki tar jal.”⁵⁷

(That means it is false that I am a *Chandala*, it is really false. If we will give the name of the dark could of *Srabana* as *Chandala*, then how it is possible to change his castes or to blemishes this water as impure.)

She again said that:

In Bengali:

“নিজের নিন্দা করো না,

মানবের বংশ তোমার,

মানবের রক্ত তোমার নাড়ীতে ।

ছি ছি মা, মিথ্যা নিন্দা রটাস নে নিজের,

সে - যে পাপ ।

রাজার বংশে দাসী জন্মায় অসংখ্য,

আমি সে দাসী নই ।

দ্বিজের বংশে চন্ডাল কত আছে,

আমি নই চন্ডালী ।”

In English:

“Nijer ninda koro na,

Manober bansho tomar,

Manober rakto tomar narite.

⁵⁷ Ibid, P- 743.

Chi chi ma, mithya ninda ratas ne nijer,

Se – je pap.

Rajar bonshe dasi janmay asongkhya,

Ami se dasi noi.

Dvijer bonshe chandal kato ache,

Ami noi chandali.”⁵⁸

(Means that don't spread humor yourself, because you have come from human heredity, human blood is circulates in your vein. It will sin to spreads humor for own. I was not like a maid who was born in the king's family. There are so many *Chandalas* who was born in *Dvija*'s family. So, I am not a *Chandala* girl.)

On the basis of the above discussion, we can easily say that, by this drama Tagore basically wanted to point out, about a defile part of our society where we have practiced inequality in name of *Hindu Dharma*. Tagore clearly described that with the negative effects of the untouchability how an untouchable has led her life with a desire in her mind. It is true that the *monk* appeared as an embodiment of freedom to *Prakriti*. Although *Ananda* was not the central character of the play, but by this character Tagore awaken the society from the myth of untouchability and its unethical practices. This drama was not written for *Ananda*'s journey. According to Tagore, it has *Prakriti*'s journey which occupied the centre-stage of the drama. It is indeed ironic to see how a girl named *Prakriti*, which meaning *nature* and which could be fascinated in a web of class, caste and gender distinctions. So, it was fullness to address *Prakriti* as an untouchable girl. This was clear from the last quotation, when *Prakriti* said that she was not a *Chandala*. It is true that, we cannot say someone as *Brahmin* as he was birth in a *Brahmin* family. According to *Prakriti*, there were thousand examples which

⁵⁸ Ibid, P- 743.

would reflect that a man born in a *Brahmin* family, but his performance was like a *Chandala*. On the other hand, there were so many *Chandalas* whose performance is like a *Brahmin*. Birth cannot determine the castes of the individuals. Castes will be determined according to the performance of an individual.

So, we can easily say that Rabindranath Tagore's remark on untouchability is clear from his drama *Chandalika*. Generally, he did not support the practice of untouchability in our society. He did not believe in the theory of caste system of *Manusmriti*. Tagore criticized the by-birth distribution of caste system of *Manu*. On the other hand, Tagore pointed out that only *Hindu* religion has been practicing this untouchability from many years, whereas all the other religions will be ready to accept these peoples in their religion without any discrimination. Tagore wanted to give this message to the *Hindus* that untouchable peoples may change their religion. So, I think Tagore's *Chandalika* was giving a message to our society and aware the *Hindus* for their unhealthy practices of untouchability.

RATHER RASHI:

Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Rather Rashi* for the society to teach against the discrimination of human beings. A Chariot was taking the key role of the entire drama. When our society has practiced untouchability in their everyday life and the so-called *Brahmins* has imagined that they were the superior in this globe, at that time *Rather Rashi* has been written for awakening everyone for overcoming this unhealthy practice. Generally, *Shudras* were exhausted and day to day they have lost their rights by the domination of *Brahmins* in *Hindu Dharma*. Ultimately *Shudras* have been regarded as untouchables. In this way, they have lost their identity and also their rights to entry in the temple. But *Rather Rashi* shows that *God* himself was trying to balance all the castes altogether.

In the first part of the drama, we observe that all the upper caste *Hindu* gathered in near of a temple for observing a religious festival, where they will move a *Chariot* from one temple to

another. But the *Shudras* were not joining this festival, because recently they have entitled as untouchables. Whatsoever except *Shudras*, everyone joined the festival and preparing for move Chariot. But there was a person who was realizing and understanding this matter. He is not a mere human being; but is superior to human being. This super human being, for whom the festival has arranged, wants to teach about the discrimination of the peoples. That is why we can see that in the time of moving the Chariot they faced a serious problem. They realize that today the rope, by which the Chariot will move, is contrary to the earlier. Sometimes, it looks like a boa and sometimes as a trail of *Hanumana* of *Lanka*. Someone argues that it looks like a river flowing of *Jamuna*, or the trail of snake, or trunk of *Ganesha* etc. The *Brahmin* class peoples, the troopers, the businessmen, the common men – everybody is trying to move the Chariot one by one with the help of their own conduct and power. But they all are failed to move the Chariot. After that, the higher class women worship the “Daari Devota” (Rope God) by their own conducts. But the Chariot does not move. After spend long time and power, they all understand that it was impossible to move the Chariot by them, because God is not happy with them. It is true that traditionally *Shudras* were moving the Chariot. But today they have been regarded as untouchables by the custom of *Hindu Dharma*. That is why they have no right to touch the Chariot. But it also to be true that without them, the so-called *Hindus* were unable to move the Chariot. Although all the *Hindus* understood about this matter, yet they would never acknowledge this. In this regards a conversation of a failure trooper is important to highlight. He said that:

In Bengali:

“ও যে আমাদের কাজ নয়, তাই ।

ক্ষত্রিয় আমরা, শূদ্র নই, নই গোরু ।

চিরদিন আমরাই চড়েই এসেছি রথে ।

চিরদিন রথ টানে ঐ ওরা - যাদের নাম করতে নেই ।”

In English: “O je amader kaj nay, tai.
Kshatriya amra, Shudra noi, noi goru.
Chirodin amrai charei asechi rothe.
Chirodin rath tane oi ora – jader nam korte nei.”⁵⁹

(That means, being a *Kshatriya* it was not their work, because they were not like a cow. From ancient time they were sitting on the top of the Chariot and the *Shudras* actually moved the Chariot, whose name did not speak.)

It is true that in ancient time the Chariot moving ceremony was serving by the *Shudras*. They have the right to enter into the temple and worship of God. They also joined to every religious festival of *Hindu Dharma*. After that, they have been deprived by the cunning *Brahmins*. According to them, *Shudras* were not *Dvija Varna* and that is why they have no right to maintain *Upanayana*. This *non-dvija* determination indirectly makes them untouchables. Being an untouchable, *Shudras* has lost their right to enter into the temple and move the Chariot. Because, according to the upper caste *Hindus*, the Chariot will be impure by the touch of *Shudras*. But we can see, by his empyreal power God informs *Shudras* that, the Chariot cannot move without them. After hearing these, breaching the entire rules and customs of the upper caste *Hindus*, they touch the rope and the Chariot. We can see without any difficulty the Chariot moves by the pull of the *Shudras* or the Untouchables.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can say that, *Shudras* were humiliated by the upper caste *Hindus* in the time of Tagore. They deprived from their religious, social and political rights. *Shudras* were entitled as untouchables and being an untouchable they had no right to enter into the temple. That is why they did not able to share their pleasure or pain in front of God. But Tagore argued that God was not happy without *Shudras*. All men are equal in the

⁵⁹ Ibid, P- 573.

mind of God. Nobody will treat as untouchables in the eyes of God. According to Tagore, God indirectly teaches our society against to deprive someone for his rights.

The outlook of the above discussion, gives rise to some points that need to be taken care of. Firstly, there is a difference between Tagore and Ambedkar regarding the status of *Shudras*. Tagore shows that *Shudras* were regarded as Untouchables, whereas Ambedkar argued that *Shudras* were not the Untouchables. Secondly, Tagore's opinion about the overcome of Untouchability will be possible and this was performed by the God himself. When our society was misbalanced by inequality, prejudices, partiality etc. then God himself will take the necessary actions. In this regard Gandhi's view was that, the upper castes *Hindus* will raise their hand for the upliftment of the Untouchables. Finally Ambedkar said that, neither God nor the upper castes *Hindus* shall give this right. It is possible when the humiliated untouchables were fights against it.

It is well known to all of us that Tagore from his childhood was very much interested about *Baul Gan* (Folk Song). Lalon Fakir was regarded as a great *Baul Singer* and Tagore was deeply influence by Lalon Fakir. According to Tagore, *Folk Song* of Lalon Fakir actually reflected the inside of human being. *Baul Gan* comes from the heart of human being. It is natural and unbiased in the true sense of the term. Lalon Fakir, according to Tagore, was the true musician who actually represents through *Baul Gan* the neighbor of rural communities. In short, Tagore was one of the leading advocator of *Baul Gan*. Lalon Fakir was living in Kustiya, Shilaidah district, which was located very adjacent to the area of Tagore's *Jamindari*. Tagore was attracted by the language of these songs basically written for the investigation of *Moner Manus* (Real Man or Friends or Spiritual God). The term *Moner Manus* is particularly relevant in the context of my thesis. The problem of Untouchability does not bear any sense if we think that the people belonging to our community or society or belonging to the same religion are our *Moner Manus*. If my neighbor is my *Moner Manus*,

then how can I treat him Untouchable? We can not do it. We can do it only such a case where the perception of *Moner Manus* as reflected through *Baul Gan* is absent. If we carefully go through the meaning of *Baul Gan* of Lalon Fakir, we come to realize that each of the song reflects the spirituality of the individual. The force of each song actually touches upon the stream of human life and by cognizing the inner meaning of this song, one come to aquire the harmonious relationship and cordiality with his fellow beings. Tagore realized it's very well that the song of Lalon Fakir actually helps a lot to bridge a harmonious relationship among the members of the society. The society is in need to have a harmonious relationship because the society is dissected or divided in various sects and take the paths of *Himsa* in the name of Untouchability. Whatever the origin of Untouchability may be, it is our general perception that Untouchability is a social curse which can not be accepted under any short of imagination. Untouchability is a social event, a curse, a misnomer, an evil which hampers the harmonious relationship among the people of the society. As a result of that the society is facing many unwanted social conflicts and maladies due to false perception of the concept of *Varna*, *Varnavyasastha*, Caste system etc. The concept of the division of labour which is relevant from economical perceptive has been misplaced and misapplied in various ways. As a result of that it actually goes against its objectives set forth in its inauguration. Considering the prevailing situation, it is pertinent to bring back the concept of *Moner Manus* of Lalon Fakir through which all such evils can be eradicated from the society.

Actually, most of the song of Lalon Fakir was written in respect of spiritualistic manner. But there are some songs, which generally described about the social system of the *Hindu* religion. Here we mentioned one song of Lalon Fakir, which he was written about the caste system of *Hindu* society:

In Bengali: “জাত গেল, জাত গেল বলে
এ কি আজব কারখানা ।
সত্য কাজে কেউ নয় রাজি -
সবই দেখি তানা না না”-

In English: “Jaat gelo, Jaat gelo bole
A ki ajob karkhana.
Satta kaaje keu noi raaji –
Sabii dekhi tana na na”-

(Meaning that, there are wonder event that was happened in our society regarding the name of caste, where everybody was shouted for lost their identity or caste. But no body was ready for doing their true or right work.)

Generally at the time of Lalon Fakir, our society was badly affected by the unhealthy practice of casteism. Everybody has maintained the practice of Untouchability. They were very carefully removed themselves from the touch of Untouchable peoples. Because they believed that a single touch will lost their purifications. But according to Lalon, they all were busy to serve false duty. There is no any single person who was interested to perform his right actions. For this reason, he questioned that:

In Bengali: “ব্রাহ্মণ - চন্ডাল - চামার - মুচি
এক জলেই সব হয় গো শুচি”

In English: “Brahman – Chandal – Chamar – Muchi
Ak Jalei sob hoi go Suchi”

(Meaning that, Brahman, *Chandala*, *Chamar* and *Muchi* – all are purified by the same water)
He questioned that, if Untouchables are different, then how the Untouchable peoples were purified by the same water, by which *Brahmins* also purified? Actually he wanted to aware

the common people about the unhealthy practice of Untouchability. That is why he again said that:

In Bengali: “জন্মের আগে কি জাত ছিলে ?
জন্মে এবার কি জাত নিলে ?
কি জাত হবা যাবার কালে ?
এ কথাটি ভেবে বলো না”

In English: “Janmer aage ki jaat chile?
Janme ebar ki jaat nile?
Ki jatat hoba jabar kale?
A kothati vebe bolo na.”

(Meaning that, what was your Identity or caste before your birth? What is your identity after birth? And what will your identity at the time of your death? Please answer to me.)

It is true that there was no identity before birth of a child and there will no identity at the time of his death of a person. So, why we will identify ourself as a member of particular caste at the living period?

That is why *Rabindranath Tagore* in Poem no-15 of his poetry “*Patraput*,” says that:

In Bengali: “ওঁরা অন্তজা, ওঁরা মন্ত্রবর্জিত,
দেবালয়ের মন্দির দুয়ারে -
পূজা ব্যবসায়ী ওঁদের টেকিয়ে রাখে,
ওঁরা দেবতাকে খুঁজে বেড়ায় তাঁর আপন স্থানে -
সকল বেড়ার বাইরে,
সহজ ভক্তির আলোকোঁ”

In English: “Ora antaja ora mantrabarjita.
Debaloyer Mandir dware
Puja babsaye othr thekia rakhe.

Ora debotake khuje beray tar apon sthane

Sakal Berar baire,

Sahaj vaktir aloke.”⁶⁰

That means, *Antaja* or Untouchable peoples have no right to learn the religious scriptures and pray the God into the area of temple. The so-called *Brahmins* constipate them in front of the gate of temple. That is why they plagiarize their God in to their mind. In the help of pieties they meet with God.

In the last of this poem he also said:

In Bengali: “হে চিরকালের মানুষ, হে সকল মানুষের মানুষ -

পরিত্রান করো,

ভেদ চিহ্নের - তিলক - পরা,

সংকীর্ণতার উদ্ব্যত থেকে।”

In English: “Hey chirokaler manus, Hey sakal manuser manus,

Paritran karo

Vedchinher- tilak- para

Sankirnatar oudhatta theke.”⁶¹

Tagore requests the people to overcome this practices and narrow thinking. According to him this type of thinking separates the human beings, which is against the welfare of the society.

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⁶⁰ Tagore R.N, *Patraput*, Reflect Publication, 2003, p.44.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 45