

Chapter - X

A Critical and conclusive remarks on Tagore's view

A question may be raised what is the special contribution of Rabindranath Tagore in the philosophy of religion. Let us look at his contribution in this field:

1. Tagore has stated that after the realisation of Brahman, the external world will not be *Vādhita* or contradicted, because to him it is not product of *Māyā*. In this standpoint he has no faith on *Śankara's Advaitism*. External world or phenomena are as true as the Divine, as all are the reflection on Him. All are real as the *Brahman* and they should not be ignored. After the realisation of the *Brahman* the external world should be true and real. There is a similarity between Ramanuja and Tagore on this point. In this system it is stated clearly that an individual, though the part of the Divine, can not be infinite or *Māyātīta*. Even after the stage of liberation the relation between a man and the Divine is that between worshiper and worshipped. But Tagore has a different view and his view stands between the main thesis of Śankara and Ramanuja. He, though conscious of his ego, thinks himself as infinite as the Divine. In the same individual there is *Viśva* i.e. whole world and *Veśesatva* or ego. In other words, a person who is doing this-worldly works is at the same time related to the Divine. Tagore does not believe in liberation in the sense of *Kaivalya* (isolation), but he speaks about liberation existing in innumerable bondages. So to him, liberation lies in between finite and Infinite. At this stage an individual looks towards as the manifestation of the Infinite and the Infinite as the manifestation of the finite, which is the

1. real picture of harmony. Tagore has clearly expressed that God intentionally takes the form of the finite out of love. This theory of liberation is really an addition and it deviates from the traditional theories of liberation.
2. Tagore has added an another theory with Indian traditional philosophy. He has shown that a man has got universal manhood in him. In other words we can say that he has given the name of the Divine as universal man which is new in Indian Tradition. In his philosophy a highest honour is given to mankind. To him liberation means the connection of the individual man to the Universal man. If we explain this point then it should be clear to us that an individual extends himself towards the universal man. So the Divine does not reside in the external world but it dwells with in himself, in the heart of individual man.
3. The main objective of Tagore's philosophy of religion is harmony. To point out this Tagore beautifully explained that the necessity of harmony and the means of harmonising in mankind. In the *Sādhanā* he has said that enjoyment is restricted in order to check one-pointed leaning. Here it can be pointed out that there are many prohibitive injunctions in our *Śāstras*. All of them should be maintained, otherwise one would get demerit according to *Śruti*. Tagore also said that these would be helpful in building one's personality. For being balanced, one should do something as well as should not do something. It is called the balanced work. Due to the loss of balance a man will have one-sided development and harmony is not possible to them. Tagore was the first thinker who gave more emphasis on harmony among the finite and Infinite with his surplus value. It is excellent contribution in Indian Philosophy and religion.

Let us try to highlight the place of Tagore in the history of contemporary Indian philosophy. In the previous chapter it is pointed out

that basically Tagore was a poet and his philosophy cannot be compared with the so-called philosophy. Because, the tendency of our academic philosophy is to show that it runs on the highway of reasoning and in everywhere-logical thinking plays an important role.

But our poet-philosopher had no schooling of philosophy. His life, activity, artistic creation and everywhere we see the touch of philosophy. He had realised the truth directly. He realised the Beauty and expressed it's sense directly. For him, the immortal and the eternal is attained, in the quality of man's experience, whether in love, love of nature or man, in longing for God or Truth when the limits within which man lives are suddenly overcome. At such moments the finite becomes the Infinite and time is turned into the timeless. Tagore expressed one of such experiences in his Reminiscences, - suddenly I came to a rhythmic sentence, 'water falls, the leaves move' (jal pare pātā nare). All at once I come to a world wherein I recovered my full meaning. My mind touched the creative realm of expression, the rhythmic picture of the tremulous leaves beaten by the rain opened before my mind the word which does not merely carry information but a harmony with my own being. The unmeaning fragments lost their individual isolation and my own being. I felt sure that some being who comprehended me and my world is seeking its best expression in all my experiences, uniting them into an ever-widening individuality which is a spiritual work of art.

The philosophical characteristics of this poet-philosopher can be described as intuitionist. Because the Ultimate Reality revealed to him immediately. There is no media, which helps to take him to the Reality. In Indian philosophy, we see, there are nine schools of philosophy. Among them three are *nāstika* and six are *āstika*. They accept *pramāna* as a means of knowledge. In the western philosophy, there are also few ways by which they realize the object. Like this the poet-philosopher accepted a few ways to know the external object. Here his philosophy can

be characterized as a subjective-objectivism. Because it was discussed in the previous chapter that his view may not be considered as a subjective. He realized the truth as a unity and it depends solely on the mind of a subject.

In the case of external object it can be said subjective-objectivism. But it is difficult to understand which process was used as a means to realize the Ultimate Reality. Perhaps in this case he was an intuitionist. Surely he realized the Ultimate Reality by intuition as evidenced from his writing.

To him *Brahman* is nothing but the self of man. *Brahman* resides in the human body. He does not reside in the so-called Heaven and it is needless to worship His image in the 'Decorated Temple'. To him love for the human is *Mukti* or salvation. It means to realize the ultimate reality within a man's inner world. So, the process of Intuition can know it.

If intuition is accepted as the process to realize the truth then it can be said that his process is a subjective one, because, the Ultimate Reality will not be revealed to all in the same way. It should vary from person to person. How is the Universal Knowledge possible? On the other hand, the mental structure of each and every person is not same. There are some persons in our society who are busy with their *Preya* or worldly pleasure. To them Ultimate Reality will never be revealed as His original nature.

So, what is the path for them to realize the Reality? Tagore did not give any process to the common people.

Furthermore 'intuition' will never be the process for all. It is personal and it helps an individual to realize *Brahman* or *Bhūmā*. But

how can this 'intuition' be attained? The question remains unanswered. For Rabindranath the boundless was so enchanting precisely. Because it was found to be expressing itself within the bound, even in his own being, and his God was a God who lives not some where in heaven, but in the mystery of his own being, in its joys and sorrows and specially in its urge to go beyond all limits. So, the language, which expresses his love of God, is not solely different from the language of human love or from that of man's self-expression. For this Tagore said – You have made me endless, such is thy divine sport. Or that is why thy joy in me is no full. For this reason you have come down to me. O! then, Lord of all heavens, where thy love if I were not, Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart there is the endless play of thy delight .

This union between finite and Infinite is easily possible to Tagore through his poems, which are the expression of his immediate feeling of the Reality. As a poet he looks at the world as a composite whole charged with human participation, an abiding within and a communion with it. Tagore said in his *Sāhitya* that –

When we experience anything aesthetically, we do not experience only that subject. A good poem confers dignity on land, sea and sky, on the whole of the existence¹

Tagore said a human being is not merely a member of species, but a person. Hence the relation that man holds with the world is personal. The personal man extends himself over the world through his surplus power. He said –

I exist, and everything else exists. There is this Union of the two in my existence. If I do not feel Anything beyond my own self, I do not feel myself.²

So, to Tagore, truth of this kind of awareness rests on the union of subject and object. This truth comes out when the relation between man and his world is established.

Tagore has accepted that each and every man has got 'surplus' in him on account of which he always longs for something which, is not in this world. If such 'surplus' power exists, why is it not manifested all the time and to all?

The attitude for attaining renunciation is found if there is the fulfilment of this-worldly needs. Hence initial biological needs are first and foremost for a man. If there is such fulfilment, he will try to have something, which is not in this world. Hence, biological needs cannot be neglected, which is not explicitly mentioned in Tagore's philosophy.

Secondly, it is not clear to us what may be the means for the attainment of such power. It is true that 'surplus' power is hidden in man but how can this power be manifested? Why do we not always feel the existence of it? There must be some factors through which a man can long for other-worldly object. What are these factors? Can this 'surplus' power be equated to *Angusthaparimānāatman* as described to *Kathopānised* or *Kūlakundalinī Śakti* as found in *yoga*? For the realisation or manifestation of it certain means are given in the *Upanisads* and *yoga*. For Tagore what is the means awakening this 'Surplus'? These problems come up if we seriously ponder over the concept.

In our country we have the tradition that through the process of *yoga* man can transcend the utmost bounds of his humanity and find himself in a pure state of consciousness of the undivided unity with the Highest.

For Tagore, man has two aspects, i.e. animal man and Universal man. Tagore has given much emphasis on this spiritual aspect of man called universal man, which is described by Sri Aurobindo as super man.

Tagore's contribution in the field of philosophy lies in the fact that he defines truth as human, beauty as human and goodness as human. Above all, to him reality is human reality. Of course this is highest dignity given to mankind. Such interpretation is not explicitly found in Indian philosophical system.

Tagore's *Sādhanā* for the manifestation of the universal man is of different types. Apart from the practice of detachment etc. Tagore has pointed out to the personal suffering, miseries etc. that are taken as *Sadhana* for human perfection. These are some of the contributions of Tagore.

If Tagore's view were thoroughly reviewed, one would wonder about the path of self-realisation. Sometimes it seems that Rabindranath was in favour of devotion (*Bhakti*). When we go through his devotional songs like prayer to God to provide him opportunity to have proper love and devotion to him, it seems that he is a *bhaktivādin*. It is prayer to Lord that when the doors of our hearts are closed, he is requested to get into my room after breaking the doors without going back, (*Yadi e amara hrdaya duyara vandha rahe go kabhu, dvara bhenge probhu eso mora prane phiriya yeyo na kabhu*). In this poetry we can see a great devotion to Lord, which points to his philosophical learning to *Bhaktivāda*. This is evidenced from his various compositions.

In some of his writing it is found that as if he was leaning towards *Jñāna*. When he speaks of *Ānanda*, he has identified it within *Jñāna*. To

him the whole world is covered with *Ānanda* (cp. “Jagat jude udar sure ananda gan baje, “Jagate anandayane amar nimantrana” etc.) One can realise this bliss if he has proper knowledge of the reality. This *Ānanda* can only be reached if some one has proper awareness regarding His existence everywhere (“Rayeccho tumi e Katha Kabe Jivan majhe Sahaja habe”). In this cases he has shown his philosophical inclination to *Jñāna* like an Advaitin.

Moreover, his main thesis on humanity is centred around the concept of ‘surplus’ existing in each and every individual. He can realise his Infinite power existing in him through his creation in the field of literature and activities, which transcend his narrow desire. In this context *Karma* has done as a means of self-realisation.

Though there is a chance of being confused regarding the path of self-realisation, the philosophy of Tagore has given due importance of the integral views where there is the combination of *Jñāna*, *bhakti* and *Karma*. None of these are less important in his philosophy.

Rabindranath has taken suffering in one's life as a rectifier, but not as hindrance of obtaining something.

His prayer to Lord is always to provide him power of ending such suffering, but not to protect him from it.

This type of outlook is very novel in Indian tradition.

He has described the cruelty of God as His blessing.

Suffering as the means through which some one is

Rectified as Gold is rectified through fire.

A man is the abode of the Infinite as observed by Tagore. In our *Śruti* also men are described as the sons of the Immortal (*amrter putra*). Hence a Individual has got the potentialities of Infinite power. For the manifestation of this power there is the necessity of suffering as observed by Tagore. Rabindranath believes that suffering has got a prominent role in promoting in one's infinite power. Being purified with the fire of suffering a man remains in his own essence (*Svarūpa*) which provides him with infinite power. To be victorious over suffering should be the main objective of an individual. That is why, Rabindranath is of the opinion that whatever is given to him in the form of pain by the cruel hearted Lord is always acceptable to him. Moreover, he frequently demanded suffering, so that his other inherent power are manifested through the method of purification (*Ei Karechho bhalo nithura he, emni kare hrdaye more tūpa dahana jvalo*). The suffering in a man can open the door of Infinite.

The existence of suffering in a man's life makes him balanced. If there is no pain in one's life, one would not feel necessity to work sincerely. If it is so, it may be asked why a man free from suffering would not perform his duty sincerely. In reply, it may be said that a person having no suffering may perform his duty very carefully out of his own accord, but not due to fear from suffering. But a person suffering from miseries would become more sincere due to fear of getting more suffering. It is true that where there is the cause of fear there we become more conscious. The suffering, which makes a man perfect by way of removing his one-pointed learning, has got a positive role in life. Considering this Rabindranath said that - "the fundamental thing for the performance of high austerity in the whole world is to curb the enjoyment and to curtail the desire of happiness. We should proceed in such a way so that we do not learn towards a negative side in which there is too much burden. In other words, the minimisation and

limitation of enjoyment helps us to maintain harmony so that we are not torn towards a negative side after being over burdened. This limitation has got a prominent role in beautification. Ugliness lies there where there is no limitation or restriction or suffering. Where there is harmony, there is beauty and hence an individual maintaining harmony is always associated with the well being.”³

Reference:

1. Tagore, Rabindranath: *Sahitya*, Visva Bharati, 1958.
2. Tagore, Rabindranath: *Sahitya tattva*, Ravindra Rachanabali, Vol. XIV.
3. Dr. Ghosh Raghunath: *Sura, Man and Society: The Philosophy of harmony in Indian Tradition*, Academic, 1994, P. 69.