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THE PHILOSOPHY AND THE EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF
(SIR) RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A Thesis
by
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PREFACE

In a world of scientific truth, the materialistic point of view seems to be more logical, and naturally Idealism has come to be on the wane. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries we can detect a new note in philosophical ideas, i.e., the idea of Pragmatism. Pragmatism acknowledges the importance of action as our main concern. To the Pragmatists activity is of paramount significance and the rest should be determined by scientific natural law. But as a student of philosophy one is likely to recognize that in our present day world we are honestly questioning the materialistic premises and are not quite satisfied with its explanation of values, spiritual experiences and idealism and aspirations.

While acknowledging the importance of subjective Idealism, Realism and Pragmatism in the field of education, I was still believing that there was something more to it than mere awareness of objective, material truths of science. I felt that this objectivity of science was cruelly ignoring the manifold characteristics of human life; in the hands of psychology all mystery and beauty of human behaviour becomes nothing but stimulus and response. Nonetheless, I believed the dissection of human mind and behaviour was not the only way to know the truth about man and life. With a belief like this I undertook the study of Tagore's philosophy. As a Bengali and a student of Bengali Literature I was aware of Tagore's ideas only through his poems and novels, but it occurred to me more clearly while reviewing the other philosophical ideas that Tagore

is the only thinker of our age who has accepted scientific views and yet has not completely brought man down to matter.

I took up this research with an intention of bringing up this neo-idealism of Tagore in the field of education and to justify through his ideas that the reality of man's mind which is intangible and invisible can add a great dimension to man's knowledge. The great truth can only be known through the inner qualities of man and not only by knowing the constituents of Matter. In Tagore's own words the search for truth is carried on mainly by heart and not by intelligence alone:

There is a vast forest named the Heart,
Limitless all sides--
Here I lost my way.¹

This study has been based upon a fair knowledge of Tagore's poetic and philosophical works including his short stories and a few novels. But the analysis of his literary style is outside my scope; only Tagore's philosophical thoughts are being presented in this thesis.

I wish to thank Prof. J. S. Nystrom for the enthusiasm and interest he has shown throughout the study, whose intellectual guidance was the main force behind my endeavour. I also wish to thank Dr. Habib Amin Kurani for the suggestion of the topic and helpful advice. My special admiration and thanks go to Dr. L. P. Cajoleas whose occasional guidance and help provided me with moral support. My gratefulness extends to Miss Kathleen M. Horton who has spent many long hours in typing and proof-reading this thesis. My thanks are due to Mr. A. Khanna and A. K. Gupta, the first secretary and the cultural attache of the Indian Embassy in Beirut, respectively, who kindly provided me with Tagore's original works and other necessary materials.

¹Translated from the Bengali by Edward Thompson, Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist (2d ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 35.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	ii
ABSTRACT	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
 Chapter	
I. METAPHYSICAL IDEAS OF TAGORE	11
The Nature of Reality	
The Nature of Human Nature	
The Problem of Soul and Ego	
Ethical Values and Freedom of Will	
Attitude Towards God	
Summary	
II. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL IDEAS OF TAGORE	33
The Nature of Knowledge	
Egocentric or Autoconscious Knowledge	
Knowledge in Unity of the Stream of Consciousness (Jiban Probaho)	
Knowledge as Harmony of Subjective and Objective Reality	
The Sources of Knowledge	
Sense Experience	
Knowledge Through Reason and Intuition	
The Value and Validity of Knowledge	
Summary	
III. THE EDUCATIONAL IDEALS OF TAGORE	49
Aims of Education	
Education as personality creation	
Harmony with environment as an aim	
Education of the Whole Man	
Discipline and Skill as Aims	
Contemplation and Action as Dual Aims of Education	
National and International Knowledge of Culture as an Aim	
Moral Training as an Aim of Education	
Aesthetic Enjoyment as an Aim of Education	
Santiniketan	

Chapter	Page
Methods of Teaching	
Learning Through Senses	
Learning Through Self-Expression	
Teaching According to Individual Differences	
Learning Through Action	
Teachers' Personal Influence	
Curriculum	
Summary	
IV. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TAGORE	75
V. CONCLUSION	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106

ABSTRACT

This study has been undertaken with the intention of--as the title suggests--exposing Rabindranath Tagore as a philosopher and as an educationist. The thesis includes two main streams of thought: one dealing with the perennial questions and beliefs of the poet, the other with a description of Tagore's attempt to crystallize his ideas in his school, Santiniketan (Abode of Peace).

The study is an interpretation or translation of Tagore's literature into philosophy rather than a critical examination of his thoughts, either in education or in philosophy.

The introduction gives the background of the poet's life and his social and political ideas. This includes a description of Tagore's reaction to India's struggle for freedom, reaction to British policy in India and his concern and admiration for Europe's political and social make-up.

Chapter I is an interpretation of Tagore's metaphysical ideas such as the nature of truth, the nature of man, Tagore's idea of ego and soul-consciousness, problem of evil and good and his attitude towards God.

Chapter II deals entirely with an explanation of his Idea of knowledge, the main theme of which is that knowledge is an united quest of the whole human race as well as Nature, knowledge is evolutionary and finally, knowledge is a continuous truth-making for an individual in particular and the whole humanity in general.

Chapter III deals with aims of education, methods of education and curriculum planning along with a description of Tagore's school, Santiniketan. The main aim of Tagorian education is "Personality creation" and along with this goes his idea of a whole man who is contemplative, active and religious in an aesthetic and humane way.

Chapter IV has three parts. The first part is an analysis of Tagore's main implications of education, namely, freedom, religion, aesthetic enjoyment and the acquisition of knowledge in a dynamic as well as dialectic manner. The second part is a comparative study of Tagore's ideas with Plato, Nietzsche and Dewey. The final part shows evidence of Tagore's humanistic idealism as distinct from realism.

INTRODUCTION

On the sixth of May, 1861, Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta to one of the most wealthy and cultured families of Bengal. Tagore's father, Maharshi (Saintly) Debendranath Tagore, used to be abroad most of the time either travelling in different countries or meditating in the lofty peaks of the Himalayans. Left to the care of servants, young Rabi was a lonely child in the old palacial house of the Tagores. As a child Tagore longed for the fulfillment of a single desire, namely, freedom. He was always on the lookout for a freedom that existed in the nature outside which he was denied. His greatest friendship was established with the old Banyan tree and a slice view of the curve of the Ganges that could be seen through his study room, and it was his silent communication with this view that inspired his first poetic outburst.

Rabindranath proved to be a rebel against the Anglo-Indian schooling system even as a child. He spent a little time in the school only to remember the bitterness of the experience which later on induced him to build Santiniketan to give full freedom for the students to know the world directly and joyfully. Tagore refused to be educated and his refusal stood firm against all coaxing and entreating.

Tagore, however, was fortunate enough to be in the midst of some of the most outstanding personalities right at home. In fact the house of Jorasonko was responsible for producing some of the most versatile geniuses Bengal can count. Tagore's father was a keen thinker, frugal

and wise in both practical and spiritual life. Although most of his life he spent away from home, he also was responsible for the reformation of Hindu religion and through the influence of Rammohan Ray, Maharshi founded a religious belief based upon the Upanishad called Brahmo-Samaj. Tagore was deeply influenced by the humanistic ideas of Brahmo-Samaj and remained devoted to it till his last day.

Satyendranath, Tagore's oldest brother, in spite of his being a civil servant of the British Raj, was a noteworthy scholar of Sanskrit and translated the Gita and the Meghduta into Bengali. Tagore's other brother, Joytindranath, was a versatile genius and one of the most accomplished men of his age. A musician, composer, poet, dramatist and a painter of remarkable sensitivity, he had infused a deep influence on Tagore. Tagore's sister, Swarna Kumari, was a distinguished musician and writer who is remembered as the first woman novelist of outstanding success in Bengal.

With such influences at home and some private education Tagore was sent to England to study law, but even that proved to be futile for him. He would listen patiently to the unsuccessful plans of his Latin teacher and kindly pay him in full even when months passed without any knowledge of Latin.

Tagore started writing poems at the age of ten. At first ignored and then criticized he finally became the representative of a century of Bengali Literature. His literary output is as fabulous in its copiousness as in its variety. It comprises over one thousand poems, nearly two dozen plays and playlets, eight novels, eight or more volumes of short stories, more than two thousand songs of which he composed both the words and the music, and masses of prose on literary, social, religious,

political and other topics.¹ His contribution as a translator of Bengali into English, painter, educationist, social, political and religious reformer is not meagre. Added to this are his travel accounts and letters from Russia, Europe and America.

In 1913, Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and utilized this money for the improvement of Santiniketan. In 1919, he received knighthood but shortly after he resigned it as a protest against the British Raj policy in suppressing the revolution in the Punjab. In 1929, Tagore took up painting in which he also showed a great deal of originality and success.

Rabindranath Tagore died in 1942.

Much criticism and praise have been put forward regarding Tagore's zeal in inspiring his own country and the countries round the world to make way for his much cherished ideal of "Human Unity". Opinion about his political and social ideas are varied; for some they are too mystical and far-fetched, for others they are old-fashioned and there are still others who believe they are much ahead of our time. Before we discuss his main ideas, a brief account of his political career and his reactions to political and social conditions is necessary.

Tagore was not a professional politician nor a socialist but an idealist who thought it hypocritical to preach high ideals without taking an active part in realizing them. Moreover, he was the man of a period (late 19th and early 20th century) when no true thinker could afford to be indifferent to the conditions the world was facing then. The grandiose achievement of science inspired a great hope and a fearful apprehension

¹See J. C. Gosh, History of Bengali Literature (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 169.

in his mind. The insanity of two gigantic world wars for national power and the colonial tyranny and injustice in Asia and Africa rather crudely pulled him down from his ivory tower and he set out with his mission of appealing to people's intelligence and higher nature to view things from a humane angle rather than accepting immediate gains as the aim of man's existence.

Although India was the main arena in which he preached his ideas, the whole world was in the background of his thinking. He went to Japan, China, Thailand and other far-Eastern countries and to Europe and Russia with his message.¹ The reaction to his message varied from place to place according to the political attitude and psychological set-up of the people in different countries.

In India Tagore saw the turmoil and general upheaval for national liberty. Starting from 1890 till his death in 1942, he saw political riots, terrorism and murder and other such violences. Political leaders in India had one objective in their minds, namely, political freedom from British rule. But as much as he wanted liberty from injustice, his ultimate aim was not blurred by immediate political aims. He realized, in the midst of agitations of nationalism and the "British quit" movement, that the problem of India was not political but social.² India was a heterogeneous country with different races, culture, languages and religions under one national name. So her problem ever since the time of Aryan settlement was one of compromising and forming a unity among these diversities by enforcing strict rules of behavior. But the social system

¹For details see A. Aronson, Rabindranath Through Western Eyes (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1943), pp. 14-78.

²Anthony X. Soares, Lectures and Addresses by R. N. Tagore (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1955), p. 101.

deteriorated to such an extent that it was literally destroying a large number of people. The rigidity of the caste system gave vent to hundreds of social absurdities and was an obstacle to people's initiative and imagination. So, for Tagore, the political enthusiasm India had been developing during the early decades of the 20th century was not India's first priority while racial prejudice and the caste system allowed human beings to suffer like half-animals.

Tagore, with the ideal of "Human Unity", could not condemn a superior country's rule over an inferior one provided the ruling country was aware of its responsibilities and had a sense of human justice. But such an ideal sounded so otherworldly during the Indian struggle for freedom that it is not surprising that he was ridiculed.

European nations, especially war-worn Germany, were attracted to the mission of this "Indian Tolstoy".¹ But Aronson holds that Europe never really understood Tagore fully because of the political ambiguities of that period which led to many political parties interpreting his ideas according to their own ends.² But thinkers and personal friends of Tagore like Andre Gide, Romain Rolland, Paul Valery, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, George Russell and Sir William Rothenstein believed and accepted his ideas.³ Tagore's impression of the West was that its societies were lacking that moral spirit which was the most important element behind her civilization. Europe's faith in religion served to give her the hope of a spiritual future. But this spiritual faith has shifted to faith in material power and respect for the human cause has been exchanged for

¹Aronson, p. 53.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

adoration of scientific power. Europe, therefore, lacked spiritual guidance.

Secondly he felt that the West was as much in need of the East as the East was in need of the West. But in general a sympathy and true understanding was lacking on both sides. He thought that not only East and West must meet but also all corners of the world must meet for balanced human relationships and unity.

Nationalism and Internationalism

As against the ideal of human perfection and universal spiritual unity, Tagore could not reconcile the ideas of nationalism and "Patriotism". The theory and practices of nationalism are immoral because it inspires egocentricity on a large scale, resulting in conflicts hampering the true progress of human society.¹ Although Tagore agrees that independent national power does allow certain groups to attain better opportunities and become stronger and more efficient, nevertheless it tends to drain away man's moral nature of self-sacrifice and creativity. It limits man by putting prejudices between different nations. He says:

When a whole body of men train themselves for a particular narrow purpose, it becomes a common interest with them to keep up that purpose and preach absolute loyalty to it. Nationalism is the training of a whole people for a narrow ideal, and when it gets hold of their minds it is sure to² lead them to moral degeneracy and intellectual blindness.

Nationalism is not only immoral, but also dangerous. While the aim of social man is unselfishness the ideal of nationalism is selfishness. He felt that had it not been for this nationalistic selfishness, mankind would not have paid such a costly price to learn the knowledge

¹Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 148.

²Ibid.

that two great wars taught them. Because of the pride of nationalism the whole world is unsteady and apprehensive of its future. He says that because of this nationalism:

Every sound of a footstep, every rustle of movement in the neighbourhood sends a thrill of terror all around. And this terror is the parent of all that is base in man's nature. It makes one almost openly unashamed of inhumanity. Clever lies become matters of self-congratulation. Solemn¹ pledges become a farce--laughable for their very solemnity.

Tagore does not, however, distrust group work for certain goals but it is the spirit behind the ideal of work that matters. In general, he is skeptical about mass responsibility.

An important idea in Tagore's social philosophy which follows from his skepticism of nationalism is his ideal of unity through diversity.² In a speech in China he said: "Let all human races keep their own personalities and yet come together, not in a uniformity that is dead, but in a unity that is living."³ The source of this idea lies in the proposition that the highest truth of life is most perfectly realized through unity of multiformities. The ultimate truth of the universe is in its "Relatedness". Therefore, the harmony of the human world is broken when the parts receive over-emphasis thereby creating separation rather than unity. The civilization of modern world is mainly one of separation because it nourishes rejection and hostility.

Society needs a unitary ideal. As an atom forms its nucleus by drawing its companions into a rhythm and thereby creating a unit, so should the society have an ideal of realizing unity through differences

¹Sakti Das Gupta, Tagore's Asian Outlook (Calcutta: Nava Bharati, 1961), p. 155.

²Rabindranath Tagore, a Centenary Volume (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961), p. 151.

³Soares, p. 93.

of customs, cultures, races, languages, and religions. Whenever a society lacks this aspiration it tends to lead people from "things to nothing".¹

Individual and Society

The progress of a society depends upon the amount of dignity it bestows upon individuals. The society should arouse a sense of responsibility in each individual rather than depending upon organizations and institutions. In the balanced growth of each individual lies the strength and beauty of a society.

Society, with mass aims, tends to demand loyalty to its mechanical functions without any appeal to individual interest but true progress can be achieved when the majority members of a society find harmony in their intention for work and personal lives.² An individual is a free thinker, unique in his feeling and receptivity, but society, which is a collective abstract idea cannot be as creative and conscientious as an individual. "Crowd psychology", Tagore maintains, is always untrustworthy. Accordingly, a country is bound to suffer whenever a collective social aim smothers individual interest. The individual realizes himself fully when he is autonomous and therefore decentralization of authority should be encouraged.

Individual freedom is necessary not only for the better administration of society but also for the better advancement of mankind as a part of evolutionary process. Human beings, as a rule, crave for beauty. Man requires the satisfaction of physical needs but also he needs the satisfaction of emotional and intellectual desire. Restricting rules

¹Soares, pp. 57-58.

²Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 146.

and a pre-planned design of society is apt to hamper an individual's personal and spontaneous way of searching for it and thus subdues the full vigour of human advancement.

The society should be co-operative in its attitude, but to expect co-operation every member should develop his best qualities and through an unobstructed, unbiased power of reasoning and feeling.¹

Civilization and Progress

The aim of civilization is refinement of culture and not a "growing totality of happenings that by chance have taken a particular shape which we consider to be excellent."² Culture is defined by his well-known hero Amit Ray in Farewell My Friends. The difference between education and culture, Amit says, is the difference between a precious stone and its radiance; education is the stone and the halo is its culture; a stone has weight but the halo has beauty in simplicity.³ The culture of a social group comes from an ideal that people hold for ages with reverence and express it in the activities of life and even in simple gestures of social behavior. Culture attains its highest excellence when a society is unaware of its value and unpretentious in its use. It grows through modification according to the ultimate aspiration of a society and therefore is respectable. Tagore says:

It is simple; but that simplicity is the product of centuries of culture; that simplicity is difficult imitation. In a few years time it might be possible for me to learn how to make holes in thousands of needles instantaneously by turning a wheel, but to be absolutely simple in one's hospitality to one's enemy or to a stranger requires generations

¹ See Soares, Lectures and Addresses, "Civilization and Progress".

² Soares, p. 43.

³ Tagore, Shesheh Kabita (Calcutta: Visvabharati, 1916), Translated from the Bengali by the author.

of training. Simplicity takes no account of its own value and claims no wages.¹

Therefore this simplicity of spiritual expression is the highest product of civilization.

This cultured beauty of simplicity is liable to be disintegrated by a misdirected conception of accumulation of wealth and power as the mark of civilization. Progress in utilitarian aspect alone breaks the rhythm of this ideal of such a culture. Tagore translates "civilization" into Sanskrit "Dharma" and explains its motto accordingly: "Dharma" for man is that principle that holds things together firmly and leads for the best welfare. Man is free to accept this dharma or reject it and still continue to be prosperous in material power but the true self slowly dies within.² The following poem depicts the shortcomings of that kind of civilization:

He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this
dungeon.
I am ever busy building this wall all around; and
as this wall goes up into the sky day by day
I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.
I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it
with dust and sand lest a least hole should be
left in this name;
And for all the care I take I lose sight of my
true being.³

The struggle of civilization, then, is the struggle to save mankind from adharma:⁴ greed that overwhelms man's true human nature.

¹Soares, p. 50.

²Soares, Lectures and Addresses, "Civilization and Progress".

³Tagore, Gitanjali (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1946), p. 23.

⁴Lack of a moral principle.

CHAPTER I

METAPHYSICAL IDEAS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore contains some distinct influences of the teachings of the Upanishad, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and the spiritual songs of the Bauls (the mad saint-singers of Bengal). Through Tagore these sources have assumed a new interpretation which has been named Panentheism. This name or category is being used only to distinguish him from the Pantheists; but actually it does not adequately describe Tagore's philosophy. There are two contradictory views of the philosophy of Tagore. Some, like Coomaraswami, believe that he is mainly a Vedanta philosopher trying to solve new problems by the ancient Upanishadic wisdoms of India. To such scholars Tagore's philosophy is Indian in origin and spirit. Others hold that the spirit of Tagore's philosophy is essentially Christian.

K. J. Saunders says:

"The God of Gitanjali is no impersonal, imperturbable absolute of Hindu philosophy but in fact, whether He be explicitly Christ or not, He is at least a Christ-like God, . . ."¹

It may appear that Tagore might have been indebted to many religious, philosophic and scientific ideas but it is difficult to categorize him with a particular doctrine even after studying all his literary works. In Pravasjivan Chaudhury's words:

It has all the elements of all that is true in the various religious ideals of the world but it is not exactly any one

¹S. Radhakrishnan, The Philosophy of Tagore (Baroda, India: Good Companions, 1961), p. 3.

of these. . . . It is the work of a highly sensitive yet profoundly thoughtful poet whose soul goes out to comprehend the mystery of life and this world in its totality.¹

One point needs to be clarified at the outset. No philosophy of education stands out, as it were, completely apart from a philosopher's perennial questions about the ultimate reality and the basic questions of life. On the contrary, all educational ideals are bound to emerge from the answers or reconciled beliefs that a thinker reaches as a result of his quest. Tagore's philosophy of education has not followed a different rule. This chapter and the next one, therefore, include an analysis of Tagore's main philosophical questions concerning the nature of reality, the nature of human nature, the theory of knowledge and its value, and an attitude towards God all of which are introductory to Tagore's theories of education. These divisions are superficial because they are but one single belief that answers all questions in turn; there is one theme that rings throughout. Therefore, it is obvious that while discussing one idea, other ideas will dimly stay behind or are even liable to come up boldly.

The Nature of Reality

Rabindranath Tagore, in the attitude of an Indian mystic, believes the world is the outcome of Lila, a game of creation played by the Absolute infinite reality. It is the expression of joy, a joy which is identical with the joy of an artist who succeeds in giving form to his image in lines and colours. As an artist infuses his own personality into his creation, so the universe has the Absolute or the supreme personality immanent in it. Tagore believes in an Absolute reality which is

¹Pravasjivan Chaudhury, "Tagore and the Problem of God," The Visvabharati Quarterly, XIX, No. 3 (Winter, 1953-54), 188.

"a logical antecedent of its concrete manifestation which is finite and temporal."¹ This absolute is not abstract; it includes human interest, thoughts and emotion. He says that as the truth of the existence of a grain of sand is guaranteed by the whole physical world as its background, similarly the individual's existence indicates the presence of a supreme and great personality in the background.² The suggestion of the creative game of Lila is indicated in this poem:

.....
My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through
my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to
listen to thine own eternal harmony?

Thy world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is
adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love
and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me.³

The supreme person or God of our religious consciousness is Real. God is the source of the whole universe, but God in his absolute and whole form does not create the reality. He is an axiomatic truth in the sense that eternal music exists but it is not music until and unless it is captured within the keyboards of musical instruments. Similarly, the "Whole" is divided into two aspects of self and not self, Isvara and Maya (Truth and Illusion), Purusa and Prakrit (Personality and Appearance).

Reality comes about through the union of these two aspects of the Absolute; reality is infinite-finite. It is finite in appearance but infinite in essence; but the modes are separate. Tagore's idea of the realization of reality in separation is best expressed in the following poem:

¹Ibid.

²Tagore, The Religion of Man (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1931), p. 119.

³Tagore, Gitanjali, p. 61.

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all night from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves . . .¹

This division of the reality into parts is not dualistic in the ordinary meaning of the term. Reality itself is not dualistic; ultimate reality is one but it seeks perfection by separation into two aspects, one passive and the other active. This is no more a dualism than the dualism of an artist or a singer who while painting or singing is divided into two selves, one creating and the other observing and criticizing. This separation is positive in the sense that the separation is not only going forth from the whole but also coming back to it in a more fulfilling way.² The Infinite is ever seeking perfection through the finite. The following poems bear the stamp of such a belief:

মূৰ্ছা অক্ষয়নাৰে- ষট্ৰু নিতে- ৰূপে- হৃদে,
হৃদে বিলিমা হৃদে মোত- ৰূপে- মূৰ্ছা।
ঈশ পোতে ৰূপে- ৰূপেৰ মাঝাৰে- অক্ষয়,
ৰূপে পোতে ৰূপে হৃদেৰ মাঝাৰে- হৃদে ॥
* * * * *

Tune wishes to hold on to metre
Metre strives to break out into tune.
Feeling wants to embody itself in form,
But form wants to sink itself in feeling.
The infinite craves for closeness of finite
But finite ever desires to be lost in the infinite.³

¹ Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1958). p. 39.

² See Radhakrishnan, pp. 20-21.

³ Tagore, "Utsharga, Poem No. 17", Shanchayta (Calcutta: Visvabharati, 1338 [Bengali year]). p. 467. Translated from the Bengali by the author.

and

সীমাত অক্ষয় অসীম সুর
বাজতে আপন ঘর ॥

O thou Infinite one,
You play the finite music.¹

Reality is not finished but yet to be; it is undergoing evolutionary changes and striving to reach the truth which is not limited within time and space. Reality is ever changing; it is in constant flux, because it is in the process of becoming ultimate perfection. The world is the product of an evolutionary process but this process has an ideal manifested in Nature. Reality is both subjective and objective. The objective aspect is the physical world of matter that we perceive through our senses, but there is another aspect which is felt in the human mind; its existence is revealed in man's arts, music and literature. Hence reality is being incessantly created in the harmony of these two. From this idea we must assume that Tagore believes in degrees of reality, i.e., although God is the absolute reality, the revelation of Him is realized in different degrees by different things. For example, the universe started through a physical and material struggle to create the truth by giving birth to life; life in its turn of evolution produced man who developed a human conscience.² Similarly it is still going on. The stages of evolution are different in the sense that they have achieved different degrees of reality. Man and Nature are the different stages of the same energy.³

¹Ibid., p. 511.

²Tagore, The Religion of Man, pp. 29-30.

³Radhakrishnan, pp. 18-22.

In the centre of Tagore's philosophy is man. Through Man reality has received a positive appearance. Man has overcome the limitations of inanimate and mere animate existence and has achieved the dignity of consciousness. Man has revealed ultimate reality to a great extent and is continuing to do so, but now the process is not merely physical but intellectual, emotional and capable of being purposive. Reality is being perpetually created through the mind of man. The world of our sense perception or the world that man imagines is man's world. The mind of man is the principal element of creation, and through the mind of man reality is being created in time and space. Asked by Albert Einstein whether the table in a room would have existed if there were no man to see it, Tagore's reply was that the table would exist in the sense that it would be seen by the universal mind, i.e., it is perceivable by the same kind of consciousness although it may remain outside an individual mind. A small extract from Tagore's conversation with Einstein on the nature of reality will make the problem clearer.

E.: There are two different conceptions about the nature of the universe: (1) The world as a unity dependent on humanity. (2) The world as a reality independent of the human factor.

T.: When our universe is in harmony with Man, the eternal, we know it as truth, we feel it as beauty.

E.: This is a purely human conception of the universe.

T.: There can be no other conception. This world is a human world--the scientific view of it is also that of the scientific man. There is some standard of reason and enjoyment which gives it truth, the standard of the Eternal Man whose experiences are through our experiences.¹

Truth and beauty, according to Tagore, would not have any value if not known through the human mind. Without human eyes to see and a human mind to feel, the "Appollo of Belvedere"² would cease to have any

¹Tagore, The Religion of Man, pp. 222-23.

²Amya Chakravarty, (ed.), A Tagore Reader (London: Macmillan & Co., 1961), p. 111.

beauty. Beauty lies in the ideal of perfect harmony in the Universal Being and truth comes out of the perfect realization of the Universal Mind. The individual human mind having the spirit of the Eternal Mind strives with blunder and faults to attain timeless truth and beauty. This striving to achieve truth and beauty is also continuous. Through the finite reality of one's own self, through the separation from the Absolute, man is constantly trying to establish the dignity of perfection.

There is an inner inter-relatedness in reality, a unity that is found in the earlier stages in evolution of multicellular life. Creation is possible through the submission of the individual units to a greater unit through a mysterious inter-relationship maintaining perfect coordination of function. This unity of reality is regarded by Tagore as a creative unity which implies that a change in one field brings change in another. The world of appearance with its manifold diversities are linked together by a divine unity. It is an integral whole. Tagore believes in the individual entity of things but at the same time agrees to an inner relationship without which creation would not have been possible. He gives a scientific analogy of this inner relationship, i.e., when we find a matter is composed of electrons and protons the wonder that it stirs in us is not merely the number of electrons and protons but their mysterious relationship.¹ He expresses this idea in his Gitanjali:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night
and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic mea-
sures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust
of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into
tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

¹Chakravarty, p. 110.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch to this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.¹

This inner relationship is the essence of the creative principle. It is not limited to the physical aspect but is also manifest in the mind. It is the feeling of this unity that inspires desire in the human mind to proceed beyond mere existence; man feels he also belongs somewhere else with someone greater who is not subject to destruction in time and space. Tagore argues that because of this unity and individual's death is not the end of the process but continuation for the realization of the whole where every individual forms the parts.²

The type of unity Tagore is talking about is essentially mystical in character, because it implies that everything of the infinite and finite reality are striving to unite in a perfect whole which he describes as:

Absolute unity, in which comprehension of the multitude is not as in an outer receptacle but as in an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its content, like the beauty in a lotus which is ineffably more than all the constituents of the flower.³

The Nature of Human Nature

At one pole of my being I am one with sticks and stones. There I have to acknowledge the rule of universal law. . . .

But at the other pole of my being I am separate from all. There I have broken through the cordon of equality and stand alone as an individual. I am absolutely unique, I am I, I am incomparable.⁴

¹Tagore, Gitanjali, pp. 64-65.

²See Tagore, Sadhana (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1954), pp. 3-22.

³Ibid., p. 59.

⁴Ibid., p. 69.

The nature of human nature is individual and universal. Man's individual reality is true to him more than anything else, his uniqueness to him is, as it were, his stock in trade, because without individuality he is a flute without music, as the Vaisnab poets¹ say. But although individual, man can also grow through it into the universal spirit. That is at the time of creation the Perfect has been divided into two parts, one perfect and the other imperfect. The imperfect has constantly been striving ever since to be united with the Perfect and has reached its individualistic human form. But man is aware that his aim is still not fully realized. This individuality, since it is acquired through ages of struggle, is very precious to man. It is unique and through its uniqueness he tries to comprehend the Perfect and break the separation between them. Through this separation of individuality man can gain the universal in a more fulfilling way than if the imperfect had remained in slumber within the Perfect and had been unaware of its identity. Tagore uses the Biblical story of eating the fruit of knowledge as a similar symbolical act. Adam and Eve's eating the fruit of knowledge is a painful separation from the entirety, acquiring the knowledge of their individual identity.

Tagore claims that although an individual knows his identity as real in nature, the universal in him always reminds him not to end his identity by limiting his nature to his physical self.² Like the nature of reality, the nature he ascribes to humanity is dualistic in appearance but monistic in connotation. Unlike traditional idealists, he does not view man as having two completely different attributes, body and mind

¹Pre-Tagorian writers of Bengal influenced by the religious thoughts of Vaisnab sects.

²For details see Tagore, Sadhana, pp. 3-22.

which belong to opposite worlds. Most of the readers of Tagore are baffled at this point and tend to charge him with inconsistency. Because as he describes two different aspects of human nature, he seems to approve of two opposite characteristics, one material, another spiritual in a constant tug of war. It is true that Tagore gives two opposing attributes to human nature, one individual, another universal; one selfish, another magnanimous, but it is different from the traditional idea of dualism in mind and body. In many poems Tagore divides the self into two aspects.

I came out alone on my way to my tryst. But who is
this that follows me in the silent dark?

.....
He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger;
he adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.
He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no shame;
but I am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.¹

Here the self is obviously divided into two: one inferior to the other but it does not follow that one aspect is devoid of the qualities of the other. Tagore's idea of human nature can be called monistic in the sense that one aspect resides in another, one is no doubt superior than the other but there is no breach between them but rather a continuation from one state to another. In the analogy of a ladder, for example, each step constitutes a separate individuality, it stands apart but since it is linked with the whole frame of the ladder it is related to the whole and the relation is that of a creative spirit than that of a negative one.

Body and mind therefore do not constitute separate entities; their regions are not totally different from one another. The great desire of unity which is felt in the soul is also beautifully manifested

¹Tagore, Gitanjali, pp. 23-24.

in the grandeur of body. They are opposite but in need of each other.

In Gitanjali he says:

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body
pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my
thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled
the light of reason in my mind.¹

Body and mind are two different stages of the same reality.

Tagore believes mind is a late comer; it emerged out of the
creative struggle of life. But he does not say it was ever completely
absent in the process of physical evolution,² it was only dimly realized
before. Mind in its present form is essentially non-material and quali-
tative. Man is self-creative and mind is a great factor for this action
but mind alone does not create man. A continuous interaction between
mind and body, the spiritual and the natural, helps him to march forward
with the mission of establishing the final truth about himself. Mind and
body with all their conflicts of opposite nature act well together.

Man's original nature is not fallen or evil, as a Christian
interpretation would have it, but creative. His creative spirit is com-
posed of intelligence, the power of imagination, thinking, logical appre-
hension, and physical power. Possessing such qualities (which he has
earned through physical evolution) man can foresee the promise of an
unlimited future and hence wants to exploit his present qualities in order
to go beyond the limitations of time and space. This aspiration is the
aspiration of Mukti, freedom from the walls of limitations. Some
Rabindra-Sangeets (Songs of Tagore) are touchingly fraught with the mys-
tical aspiration of such possibilities. These can be translated literally

¹Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²Tagore, The Religion of Man. p. 37.

but their depth can be appreciated only in the original. For example, in one song he says:

Unlimited thirst is in my eyes and the thirst is in
my soul.¹

and in another:

I am restless; I am athirst for the far beyond.²

or:

From the heart of the fathomless blue comes one
golden call.³

Man's progress comes through a growth that springs from within. Man is like a seed covered with a deceptive appearance of finitude, but innate in his nature sleeps the promise of the spiritual tree of immortality. Progress, however, is never to come if he does not harmonize himself with his environment. Following Tagore's analogy we can deduce that since man's aim is to be one with the Supreme truth he has to harmonize or act upon his environment, like a seed that mingles with water, soil, sun, air to realize its true nature.

The Problem of Soul and Ego

Like all other things man has two aspects, Maya (Illusion) and Satvam (Truth). In man's limited physical self he is Maya, but in his soul-conscious state he is one with Satvam. The knowledge of the soul which is being termed as "the thing in itself" or "the creative principle" lies buried in man's state of ego and when man comes to know of it he finds the ultimate truth.

In Huxley's interpretation of Chandogaya Upanishad we find reference to the quest of such knowledge. The story goes that Svetaketu had

¹Translated from the Bengali by the author.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

completed his education when his father asked whether he knew that knowledge by which the unhearable can be heard, unperceivable can be perceived and unknowable can be known. When Svetaketu replied in the negative his father commanded him to break a huge fruit called nyagrodha. Svetaketu did so. The father asked, "What did you see there?" to which Svetaketu replied, "Nothing at all." The father's reply was:

"My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there--in that very essence stands the being of the huge nyagrodha tree. In that which is the subtle essence all that exists has its self. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou, Svetaketu, art That."¹

That in the unperceivable essence of the seed lies the resource of the perfect huge nyagrodha tree explains in a nutshell the nature of soul and ego. In ego or in finite and physically bound individuals rests the quality of soul-consciousness through which man can know Satyam.

But what prevents man from knowing Satyam? Tagore claims that it is Avidya or ignorance of ego that hides him from the truth that is within him.² A man has contradiction in himself; "he is earth's child but heaven's heir."³ The two contradictory elements of man are symbolized in ego and soul-consciousness. The ego, which is only the surface of the essential quality of man is selfish and limited in outlook and therefore tries to cloud man's true knowledge. The self, when it is only self without the knowledge of soul, narrows its life into a hopeless frustration. Due to its egoistic short-sightedness, the self stumbles on the stony pavements of material acquisition instead of walking on the king's pathway of selflessness.

¹Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), p. 16.

²See Tagore's essay "Soul Consciousness," Sadhana, pp. 25-44.

³Radhakrishnan, p. 5.

It is the narrowness and inelasticity of self-love and egoism that causes the problem of death and separation as a candle burning in a small covered place causes its own extinction.

But the nature of soul is different from the nature of ego. It is that principle which suddenly lifts up all mists of separation and opens the one single truth that explains all and shows "one in all". The soul-consciousness establishes a Yoga (Union) with everything; it is an answer to all questions. This Yoga is the same knowledge which Svetaketu was looking for; it is the "essence" through which the unknowable can be perceived and the unhearable can be heard.

Ego, however, is not completely devoid of the qualities which soul-consciousness can give, but these qualities remain diffused and vague until known. The essential knowledge of soul is a knowledge of universal belongingness and enlargement of one into everything. In ego a need of belongingness is also felt and that is the reason why one loves his sons and friends; "in them he grows larger" and he is linked with them. But this relation is not perfect. Tagore says:

Our friendship becomes exclusive, our families selfish and inhospitable, our nation insular and aggressively inimical to other races.¹

The difference between these two natures is described by Tagore with the simile of a lamp and its light:

The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus is it separate from all other objects around it and 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 flames.²

¹Ibid.

²Tagore, Sadhana, p. 76.

At this point, a scientifically minded person would surely ask: How do we know that man has this "essence" in him at all? Tagore's answer is that he believes reality is the universal totality which is not found only in scientific objectivity but in inner relationships of the human spirit. Science in its impersonal love of objectivity tends to forget the truth of inner search of human heart. He says:

When a crocodile finds no obstruction in behaving like an orthodox crocodile he grins and grows and has no cause to complain. It is truism to say that man also must behave like a man in order to find his truth. But he is sorely puzzled and asks in bewilderment: What is it to be like a man? What am I?¹

This tension which man has within himself brings us to the point of unity and separation. Tagore believes (like the Upanishadic message) that God, the ultimate truth, is in everything.

He himself is the tree, the seed, the germ,
He himself is the flower, the finite and the shade.
He himself is the sun, the light and the lighted.
He himself is Brahma, creature and Maya.
He himself is the manifold form, the infinite space.
He is breadth, the word, and the meaning.
He himself is the limit and the limitless, and
Beyond both the limited and the limitless is
He the Pure Being.²

The main difference between Tagore and the Upanishad writings on this point is that Tagore says although Brahma is everything, everything is not Brahma.³ The Absolute is the organic whole consisting of the different elements of matter, life, consciousness and intellect; as parts of the absolute they are real but as unconnected they are Maya. This idea reveals one of Tagore's major faiths: that nature is not alien to man.

¹Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 62.

²Radhakrishnan, pp. 18-22.

³Tagore, Sadhana, p. 5.

We could have no communication whatever with our surroundings if they were absolutely foreign to us.¹

The great fact is that we are in harmony with nature, that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things.²

Man, therefore, has to find a synthetic unity among everything to be with Satyam and gain Ananda or joy. So long as man does not find his link with nature, he believes like Bertrand Russell that man has nothing beyond the grave, that all his heroism, love of beauty, fancy and imagination extinguish with man's death. But if man feels and understands that he has been linked with the whole surrounding and they are working together for improvement and that they are moving and changing for a perfect union, then death for an individual is no death.

This state of finding oneself with all pervading spirit is described by Tagore as Nirvana or extinction of a lamp, i.e., an individual self by ceasing to be egocentric or separate, finds himself with all creation of the universe and thus a belongingness is established. Man then is like the little bird that breaks its shell to find itself in a greater world.³ An individual realizes that the welfare of the world is his own welfare:

It is the extinction of the lamp in the morning light not the abolition of the sun.⁴

Now the questions arise: Since egocentricity is the worst ignorance how can a mortal man get rid of it? Does Tagore preach ascetic self-renunciation? The answer is: Tagore does not believe in

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Tagore, Sadhana, p. 43.

⁴Ibid.

self-renunciation as it is prescribed in Hindu and Buddhist religions but rather in self-creation through experiences of good and evil. He says:

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel
the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.¹

Reality has not only one aspect, it is not "virtue of the virtuous". It has an aspect of evil also. God is in everything good and bad, high and low. Therefore the low has to reach the high not through renunciation but through experiences of good and evil.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of
joy and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.²

To reach the state of unity man needs a freedom to know, feel, experience, exploit, criticize and appreciate spontaneously without any pre-suppositions. Man needs schooling in the sense of providing an atmosphere of freedom to be in direct touch with nature and having one's imagination and feeling alert to receive the truth. Nature, Tagore believes, has a great influence in inspiring the sense of Yoga by demonstrating its own unity. He agrees upon two aspects of nature, one scientific, impersonal and objective and the other subjective and unitary. For example, a flower has an objective botanical existence, but it also has its aesthetic element which gives happiness. It is the latter quality of nature which actually brings the sense of unity that man has with the universe and Absolute God. If man is sympathetic with nature its message is revealed by God somewhat as described by Wordsworth:

And I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused

¹Tagore, Gitanjali, p. 68.

²Ibid.

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts
And rolls through all things.¹

When man feels this kinship with the whole universe, he feels a moral responsibility and immediately and spontaneously his will takes the place of his wish and therefore he abstains from immorality. And this, Tagore believes, is positive self-creation rather than negative self-renunciation. The action follows from Love which is simplified in Tagore's words:

We do not love because we do not comprehend or
rather we do not comprehend because we do not love.²

Ethical Values and Freedom of Will

The Imperfect is the manifestation of the Perfect, Tagore paradoxically says. Everything is in motion, so evil also has to pass on and to grow into good. But in this motion man has a decisive role to play because with man's willful direction the process can save itself much wastage. The direction of humanity, he believes, is from evil to good; it is only when man's observation is concentrated into a limited time and area that the miseries and failures become so cruel and big. Like a child that starts walking for the first time, his constant failure seems cruel in that particular span of time. But in spite of these failures the child feels a joy that keeps his spirits up. Similarly, man should live with a hope that walks in front of him which never accepts any failure as final but asserts that man has oneness with the

¹William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," Major British Writers, ed. Walter J. Bate and Others (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1959) II, p. 41.

²Tagore, Sadhana, pp. 95-113.

perfect and every day his dream becomes truer through his creative action and knowledge.

To think of failures and imperfection as absolute is ignorance. This is similar to Browning's idea that if we are greedy for a quick return prematurity is the result and bad is the bargain. Aiming at millions we may miss a unit. "Image the whole, then execute the parts."¹ In the same faith Tagore says no pain or evil is permanent but only the want of adjustment of man's individual self to his universal self.

Man is free in his will and action; he is the captain of his own ship; he can mar or make his own future. Although the knowledge of God is true freedom, He never imposes himself upon man, nor is the man limited by any taboo or fixed ways of any particular social order and religion to comprehend Him. The earth is full with heaven and all existence vibrates with God. Although He is everywhere man must know Him through self-creation, love and action. In this region of will full freedom is the core. Tagore writes:

God has stood aside from our self, where his watchful
patience knows no bounds and where he never forces open
the doors if shut against him.²

But Tagore believes that freedom in the sense of mere independence has no value. Freedom is the freedom to arouse one's interest and insight and find out one's own rules and system in realizing the truth. Because without system or orderliness, truth never comes. Freedom is not found in leading an aimless irresponsible life but in seeking that essential knowledge which impels the human mind to work constructively. But in the process of gaining freedom man needs to check his will firmly

¹Robert Browning, "A Grammarian's Funeral," Major British Writers, ed. Walter J. Bate and Others (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1959), II, p. 526.

²Tagore, Sadhana, p. 42.

in order to save himself from distraction and wastage. Freedom is to join universal humanity in a spirit of oneness.

Attitude Towards God

In the study of Tagore's philosophy we should keep one thing in mind: that his faith in God is the ruling passion in all his thoughts. Like the teachings of the Upanishad Tagore also believed in two things: "Atman," the soul within the individual and "Paramatman," the infinite soul which is synonymous with God. Man's aspiration is to be with Him because even unconsciously he is aware that for all his knowledge, gathered bit by bit, his own existence is not an end in itself, but rather a means to realize something within him that will give him "Nirvana" or immortality. Man finds himself completely when he realizes God's presence within himself. Tagore has compared human life with a rushing stream that goes on singing "I shall be the sea."¹ The river on its way to the sea makes its two banks fertile, serves forests, villages and towns in various ways but its final aim remains in meeting the sea. The river can never be the sea but being with the sea it forgets its own identity, and becomes one with the sea. In the same manner, man's soul becomes Brahma (the infinite) as the river becomes the sea. Tagore, through some of his poems, says that the road to this realization is not made by intellect alone. Knowledge is important but love and joy are necessary to inspire activity leading towards this perfection. He speaks of man's relation with God:

Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then call-
est thy severed self in myriad notes. This thy self-separa-
tion has taken body in me.

¹See Tagore, Sadhana, 156.

.....
With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant,
and all ages pass with the hiding and seeking of thee
and me.¹

His devotional songs are deep and full of peaceful emotion and we find from them that his ideal of education was to promote among his pupils an understanding that helps them toward a state of peace and reconciliation with the world and life. His prayer is:

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses
spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of
unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in
one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains
into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one
salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day
back to their mountain nests let all my life take its
voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.²

Summary

The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore contains the themes of all the major religions of the world; it has affinity with the essential implications of all religious teachings; nevertheless, his is different in attitude because it approves of man's priority to religion and not vice versa.

I. Reality without man is inconceivable. The idea of God is the true reality but God is nothing without being conceived in man's mind. Reality consists of two aspects, one subjective, another objective. The image of subjective reality is in the mind of man, the objective reality is manifested in nature or matter. Man stands in the centre to combine

¹Tagore, Gitanjali, pp. 66-67.

²Chakravarty, p. 308.

the matter and the spirit for the realization of the perfect truth. There is no fixed reality in an absolute sense, because it is being continually revealed through man's creation, action, love and intelligence. The idea of God in Tagore is a hypothesis, a dream of harmonious perfection which is sometimes faintly and sometimes strongly felt in human mind and which remains as the fountain of our existence and striving.

II. There is an inner inter-relationship in reality, i.e., the whole universe of man's "Ideas" and the "Material Universe" are united with one single principle. According to Tagore the essence of truth is in anything and everything in a lesser and greater degree, and the truth can be realized when this unity is revealed in man's mind, inspiring, thereby, a unitary love and action.¹

III. The religion or the aim of man is to comprehend the unity and reveal it in his inner and outer life, i.e., man must become God and reveal Him in himself. Man has two characteristics, one is apparent (Maya) and the other is real (Satvam). In his maya aspect man is ego-centric and limited when the most immediate achievement seems to be the greatest gain; therefore, his own ego becomes prominent. But in his satvam aspect man feels he is one with everything and is striving along with everything to conceive and become the ultimate Truth. An individual is both finite and infinite; he is limited by his physical sphere but is unlimited in spiritual quality; he is both man and God in the sense that although he is limited, he bears the promise of becoming universal and one with God. Man is basically creative; he is constantly struggling through ages to create and reveal himself as a universal man and to realize himself in God and God in him.

¹See Tagore, Sadhana, pp. 93-117.

CHAPTER II

EPISTEMOLOGICAL IDEAS OF TAGORE

Tagore's theory of knowledge basically stems from his metaphysical ideas. Although the theory of knowledge constitutes the major premises of an educationist, Tagore did not put forward a clearcut epistemology as such; but from his metaphysical ideas from reflections found in essays dealing with perennial questions, such as "Personality", "What is Art", "My School", "Meditation", etc., a theory of knowledge can be outlined. This chapter is an attempt to put forward Tagore's principles of knowledge which determine or perhaps should determine the educational aims and methods of Santiniketan, Tagore's school.

The history of Western philosophy shows that three main epistemological questions have puzzled philosophers, namely: What is the nature of knowledge? What are the sources or ways of knowing? What is the value and test of knowledge? Rabindranath Tagore's epistemological concepts can also be defined under these headings for the sake of clarity and convenience.

The Nature of Knowledge

The questions that we encounter in determining the nature of knowledge are such as: What is knowledge? Is knowledge possible? Does knowledge have any meaning without a knower? Idealists, realists and pragmatists have their distinct answers to such questions based upon basic beliefs as to the nature of reality because knowledge necessarily

means the knowledge of reality. Knowledge, in the Tagorian conception refers to all human experiences, primary, secondary or any other. Knowledge involves a change, a continuity which implies that knowledge is related to further growth and development of human understanding when knowledge has been partially attained by the knower. It also implies a change from being to becoming, i.e., knowledge continuously changes the organism or the knower into something better or worse than its present state of being. As it is described in the previous section man and the world are in an evolutionary flux towards the realization of a harmonious unity. Similarly knowledge helps man in his change for more and more development. Knowledge means a continuous process for realizing the very essence of things and to explore whether there is one truth about man and universe or many truths. Unlike Kant's opinion that the knowledge of ultimate essence (Ding an sich)¹ is not possible, Tagore believes that knowledge is not knowledge if it is not for the thing in itself or at least an endeavour to determine the final truth about all things.

Egocentric or Autoconscious Knowledge

Man is the central theme, as it were, round which or through which knowledge attains meaning. "I exist, I become, I move. All these are tremendously important. I am I and along with me all else is."² Tagore holds like Berkley that "to be is to be perceived". He believes that there can not be any such thing as matter in the sense of an inert substance existing independently. If anything exists--a tree, for example--it exists for the human mind. Tagore does not completely nullify

¹G. T. W. Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), p. 220.

²V. S. Narvane, Rabindranath Tagore (Allahabad: Central Book Depot), p. 82.

matter outside mind, but argues that without the human mind no reality would have any value for us. Moreover, to be aware of the existence of an independent tree does not complete our knowledge, it only forms a part; it is an essential fragment of reality because it provides us with experiences although different in different persons. Even time and space are relative to the person. "The variety of creation is due to the mind seeing different phenomena in different foci of time and space."¹ For example, the star in the sky seen with the naked eye from earth seems to be still but when nearer it shows its movement. The stillness of the star, therefore, is not true even though men of the whole earth may suggest their perceptions correspond as to the stillness of the star.² This illusion is not only liable to be individual but also an illusion of humanity at large. This being the problem, Tagore avoids the argument of appearance and reality and says that the importance of the star is not what it is in itself but in what experience it gives to the perceiver. He says:

. . .let us boldly declare that both facts are equally true about the stars. Let us say that they are unmoved in the plane of the distant and they are moving in the plane of the near. The stars in their one relation to me are truly still, in other relation are truly moving. The distant and the near are the keepers of two different facts but they both belong to one which is their master.³

The impact of these experiences are not in their absolute truthfulness but they carry value as long as they have a consistency within the individual's idea of reality. Therefore, he emphasizes man's participation in knowledge:

¹Tagore, Personality (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1959), p. 47.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 44.

All the facts and shapes of this world are related to this central creative Power, therefore they become inter-related spontaneously. His world may be like a comet among stars, different in its movement from others, but it has its own consistency because of the central creative force. It may be a bold world, with an immense orbit swept by its eccentric tail, yet it is a world.¹

Knowledge in Unity of the Stream of Consciousness (Jivan Probaho)

Tagore's epistemological theory can also be understood in terms of three things, Prakiti (Nature), Manush (Man), Iswara (God). Each one of these names presents some initial difficulties. The word Nature is being used in various senses. It might mean the created universe as distinct from the creator, in this sense Nature includes man. The word is also used as life excluding man or sometimes the bare material world to the exclusion of anything else. But mostly, in the poems, Tagore talks of nature in terms of the world as a whole, and not merely of hills and valleys, brooks and groves. He views nature as Bradley does as "that endless world of sensible life which appeals to our sympathy and exerts our wonder."² Or it can be defined in Spinoza's words: "Nature is the connected unity which includes man"³ or in Goethe's words; "Nature is a living whole in which man and matter, kernel and shell are one."⁴ Man is matter and spirit; Nature is also matter and spirit but less so than man. God is the essence present both in man and nature in lesser or greater degree. Tagore agrees upon an absolute reality of God but the manner of his faith is fraught with philosophic

¹ Ibid., p. 50.

² Narvane, p. 108.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

interest. God is absolute in his original quality but He is also a co-partner with His finite manifestation, Man. "Limitation of the unlimited is Personality."¹ Man is the knower, God is the aim; He is the unitative principle. These three elements are indispensable, the relation of them as a whole constitute reality. Among these three aspects there is a stream of consciousness and an interdependence. Nature needs interpretation by man, and man needs the presence of nature to make progress in the journey toward truth, knowledge. The infinite is manifested in fragments: Man, nature, etc. The absolute is a systematic, rational totality of all experiences, the whole of which is expressed in every part and in whose wholeness every part finds its explanation and completion. Reality, therefore, must include all appearances with sense made of nonsenses. Reality, therefore, is one single principle that permeates everything. But as mentioned before, unless and until this unity is realized within man's mind the truth has no value. It is man's task to establish the relation in his own mind. There is a game between man and God for man's realization of this unity, and therefore, the reality is void without the cooperation of each. It is stated in the following poem:

. . . O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy
love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth.
. . .²

Thus the timeless infinite is the "that" of everything which can not be exhausted by the "whats" (man and nature) which determine and qualify reality and its knowledge.

¹Chakravarty, p. 233.

²Tagore, Gitanjali, p. 51.

Knowledge as Harmony of Subjective and Objective Reality

Tagore accepts objective reality as do empiricists and rationalists, a reality which can be known to a certain extent through a scientific impersonal way. He believes reality does make itself available to us through sense experiences. One side of reality can be objectively seen, discussed and put under examination and analysis. This Tagore calls the impersonal human world of truth the genuinity of which can be established by checking whether our ideas correspond to external reality and comparing their consistency with other people's ideas. This is the maya aspect of reality which gives us knowledge of appearance only, but not of the essence, the thing in itself. Nevertheless, its importance is well nigh indispensable. This aspect is real but only in a relative sense because it leaves out the most important thing, i.e., the inner personality of an individual--it ignores the imaginative and emotional aspect through which reality is comprehended as a whole truth. About this shortcoming of science Tagore says:

She tries to do away altogether the central personality in relation to which the world is a world. . . . Science sets up an impersonal and unalterable standard of space and time which is not the standard of creation. Therefore at its fatal touch the reality of the world is so hopelessly disturbed that it vanishes in an abstraction where things become nothing at all. For the world is not atoms and molecules or radio activity or other forces, the diamond is not carbon, and light is not vibration of ether. . . . Not only world but God Himself is divested of reality by science, which subjects Him to analysis in the laboratory of reason outside our personal relationship and then describes the result as unknown and unknowable. . . . It is the same thing as saying the food is uneatable when the eater is absent.¹

Science according to Tagore can analyze reality to a great extent but not fully. Wherever its objective--which is only the study

¹Chakravarty, p. 267.

of the maya aspect--analysis stops it declares the rest is all darkness. But to Tagore the rest becomes more eloquent when the human personality tries to unify his whole experiences, subjective and objective. With the help of subjective experiences created by imagination, feeling, sensitivity, emotion, fancy and dreams as well as objective experiences known through the senses, the individual tries to understand the principle of unity, from which science turns away. The importance of the internal aspect is described in the following argument. Supposing a teacher narrates a story to a youngster that one day a tiger being disgusted with the black stripes on his body comes to a gentleman's house asking for a piece of soap and frightens everybody; the child would have all the pleasure of visualizing it because in his mind's eye he can see it.

Tagore says:

I am sure even this child knows that it is an impossible tiger that is out on its untigerly quest of an absurd piece of soap. The delightfulness of the tiger for the child is not in its beauty, its usefulness or its probability but in the undoubted fact that he can see it in his mind with a greater clearness of vision than he can the walls around him that brutally shout their evidence of certainty which is merely circumstantial. . . . The tiger in the story is inevitable, it has the character of a complete image, which offers its testimonial of truth in itself.¹

Similar to this conception there should be a wholeness in our knowledge. Science, no matter with what precision and accuracy gives us a one-sided view, we tend to ask, "So what?" It is like conceiving the canvas as the painting. Knowledge to be true needs all subjective and objective experiences constantly.

This mode of perception is broader than either the scientific or the subjective alone. It is mystical and can freely work upon all the faculties of a person and is considered essential in knowledge because

¹Ibid., pp. 261-262.

it gives the synthetic rather than the analytic view of truth having the whole in view rather than the parts. Tagore accepts objective reality with caution because it acknowledges parts and suggests knowledge should be found by accumulating bits of knowledge, whereas he believes the reality which is in everything can not be known by parts but only as a harmonious whole. It is the awareness of the "essence" that gives knowledge of the truth. In Tagore's version science can help but can not give the truth as he states here:

Those who pursue the knowledge for its own sake cannot find truth. . . . You can not know a book by measuring and weighing and counting its pages, by analyzing its papers. An inquisitive mouse may gnaw through the wooden frame of a piano, may cut all its strings to pieces and yet travel farther and farther away from the music. This is the pursuit of the finite for its own sake.¹

This subjective and objective conception of knowledge is a contradiction of which Tagore is very well aware, but this is a contradiction which can not be helped because it is there. Tagore puts it this way:

I have nothing to say in my defence except that this paradox is much older than I am. It is the paradox which lies at the soul of existence. It is as mysterious yet as simple as the fact that I am aware of this wall, which is a miracle that can never be explained.²

The Sources of Knowledge

The main questions of this section are: How do we attain knowledge? What are the ways of knowing? Does knowledge drift in from outside or do we make it? The answers to these questions are implicit in the previous assumptions that God is an ideal, an hypothesis to be proved in man's life; Reality is void without man's experiences;

¹Tagore, Personality, p. 51.

²Ibid., pp. 55-56.

There is a unity in multiplicity and knowledge is the continuous deepening of insight about this unity in subjective and objective experiences.

W. T. Stace, in his The Theory of Knowledge and Existence, states that the idea of knowledge can never return to its pre-evolution attitudes. The idea that action in some measure governs knowledge should be reflected in all post-evolutionary theories of knowledge otherwise it is likely to be condemned as unscientific.¹ The argument proves to be true even in a straight forward idealistic epistemology like Tagore's. In his idealism we find his faith in the emergence of knowledge rather than fixed and static knowledge. In Tagore's own words:

For revelation of idea, form is absolutely necessary. But the idea which is infinite can not be expressed in forms which are absolutely finite. Therefore forms must always move and change, they must necessarily die to reveal the deathless. . . . If the world remained still and became final, then it would be a prison house or orphaned facts which had lost their freedom of truth, the truth that is infinite. . . . In movement lies the meaning of all things--because the meaning does not entirely rest in the things themselves but in that which is indicated by their outgrowing of their limits.²

Therefore the ways of knowing consist in knowledge-making. As the pragmatists say truth is literally verification or truth-making which is never complete but always is in the making. "Truth does not exist; it happens."³ Man, the form, is an artist by nature and necessarily the creator of his own truth and reality. Therefore, whatever he learns, he learns through his act of creation. He never takes anything passively.

¹W. T. Stace, The Theory of Knowledge and Existence (Oxford: Claren Press, 1932), pp. 1-2.

²Tagore, Personality, p. 60-61.

³J. S. Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, 2d ed.; (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1950), p. 77.

A continuous transformation of these facts takes place through his imagination, feeling and reason making the truth unique to him.¹ A question, however, can be put forward at this point; that is, how is it possible for a teacher to check whether knowledge is being attained when everybody is likely to have an individual idea of reality? His paradoxical idea of unity in diversity again comes in to answer the question, i.e., although individuals are seeking the truth in different ways the result is not individual but universal.

The mysterious fact about it is that though individuals are separately seeking their expression their success is never individualistic in character.²

To analyze the sources of knowledge in Tagore's epistemology we find there are three distinct ways of knowing which are not contradictory but complementary. The sources are sense experiences, reason or intelligence, and intuition or mystical illumination. These three sources, however, do not exhaust all the means of experiences. On the contrary, Tagore believes all experiences through any source are useful for interpretation of true knowledge. So, in Tagore's philosophy, imagination, fancy, feeling, dreams, emotion and even illusions constitute important sources of knowledge.

Sense Experience

Sense experiences, deceptive as they may be, create our basic source of knowledge. Like Kant Tagore believes that conception without perception is empty and percepts without concepts are blind. Although it is possible that what we learn through sense perceptions are all maya, yet he recognizes there is an order in appearance and is capable of

¹Chakravarty, p. 265.

²Ibid., p. 260.

imparting some essential experiences. For example, a bowl of water may be deceptive as to its coolness or warmth depending upon the warmth and coolness of the hands put into the water, yet the two different essential qualities have two different experiences to the knower. The sky is not blue nor is the sea yet the enjoyment of these deceptive perceptions is not untrue. Whatever is illusory is not devoid of truth. Although we may not know the real nature of water and sky we know the different experiences. What is most important here is the human organism that stores these experiences only to refer and interpret in times of use and need. The human organism having profound interest and propensities explores a sometimes hostile and sometimes friendly world, interacts with his environment the result of which is primary experiences of sight, hearing, pressure, taste, smell and temperature. Tagore goes on to say, sense perceptions themselves can not give the truth, the knower can view them as stepping stones to knowledge. Sensory experiences forever point beyond themselves and need the interpretation of nonsensory facets of reality. Senses are, therefore, tentative or funded experiences; they are the stimulus and beginning of knowledge but not knowledge itself. We have to exploit experiences to reach knowledge but we get so overawed and pleased with our first step that we hardly wish to go further.

Knowledge Through Reason and Intuition

Knowledge is funded experience, to a certain extent, but the process of funding includes some mental actions such as memory, thought, conceptual analysis, reflection, selective organization and creative synthesis. Tagore admits that intelligence, reason or any such names that have been attributed to man's capacity to arrange and adjust proper focus, as it were, on experiences to see it in right perspective is a

major source of our knowledge, i.e., knowledge is cognitive and contemplative. But even sense knowledge and reason both do not give us the final truth. These two are like the candle and the wick but the spark that kindles it is still missing. It is about this point that Tagore introduces intuition or that mysterious illumination of mind that gives meaning to all experiences, sensitive or cognitive. This flashing quality of man has been named by Tagore in various ways, e.g., love, sympathy with one's environment, a keen awareness of the whole, etc. This experience is similar to Kofka and Kohler's experiment with the chimpanzee's sudden insight of the whole situation. The difference between Gestalt theory of learning and Tagore's unitative principle is that the former scientifically proves it whereas Tagore with the spirit of a poet says "I know it is true because I have felt it."¹ Tagore holds bits of knowledge accumulated laboriously remain merely raw material until illuminated by this glimpse of insight. Knowledge comes when the whole situation becomes perfectly linked with each other. It reveals that kind of knowledge which ignores many details only for the sake of all inclusive relationship of stored up subjective and objective experiences.

The Value and Validity of Knowledge

Tagore is reluctant to give any scientific proof as to the test of knowledge. It is not possible to test knowledge completely by such devices as examination and objective analysis. But since he admits that knowledge is attained through correspondence of ideas to the world outside, it is implied that the truth of these ideas can be proved by analyzing the consistency of an individual's ideas. But again Tagore

¹Tagore, The Religion of Man, see the chapter on Vision.

believes consistency and correspondency are no final tests of truth, because pure knowledge is not found in these two aspects:

If you ask me to draw some particular tree, and I am no artist, I try to copy every detail lest I should otherwise lose the peculiarity of the tree, forgetting that the peculiarity is not the personality. But when the true artist comes, he overlooks all details and gets into the essential characterization.¹

Since the artist determines knowledge it is well nigh impossible to test the validity of his truth. But Tagore gives, however, the proof of change, namely that knowledge necessitates a change. Whenever the learner knows the essence of a situation or rather grasps the comprehensive idea of a situation he is likely to act in a certain way. Thus the idea of change, i.e., man has been changing from early times of his being and still is continuing to change, proves the validity of knowledge.

Knowledge does change the human organism toward an improvement of thought, aim and action, and it is in itself a proof of knowledge. Secondly, Tagore proves the validity of knowledge by his idea of unity or stream of consciousness in a mystical way. Man's knowledge is not merely what he thinks of it but it also corresponds with others. "My world is my mind, yet it is not wholly unlike your world."² There is a link between man and the universe. The link can not be described but it is there, for otherwise no knowledge would be possible. The morning dew dropping silently with the shephali³ creates a rhythm in the mind of the observer; the full-throated song of a bird gives a sudden joy to the hearer; should there be no link between man and the world, would such an interaction take place? Tagore says:

¹Tagore, Personality, p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 58.

³Small white flowers with red receptacle, typical winter flower of Bengal. They bloom in millions at night and drop in the morning like tear drops.

However awe-inspiring we may find this immense magnitude in speed, distance and the measure of time regarding the world of stars, the inconceivable force, and the circumferences of their fiery revolving movements, we have yet to admit that what is still more miraculous is that man is aware of them.¹

Therefore, we can conclude that Tagore suggests that test of truth can be proved by comparison of ideas in a liberal sense, i.e., while comparing ideas we should bear in mind that no knowledge is absolutely exhaustive but continuously in the making.

Tagore's third argument about the proof of knowledge can more accurately be called the incentive to know rather than the proof of knowledge. Tagore believes that in the human mind there is a longing for something he does not know, but whose absence makes him desperately lonely and anxious. The silent stirring voice whispers on, even when he has everything he wants. There is a disquietude, a restlessness expressed in the form of anxiety, and loneliness. Tagore believes this is the nostalgia for home coming, to be with the Absolute whom he has not known except through longing.² This is the very urge that inspires in man the love of other human beings. It persists even when the illusion of love, art, and religion fades away; the silent voice still keeps on urging. It is Tagore's faith that in every age in every soul this restlessness is present. In the following poem he refers to this strange message:

Have you not heard his silent steps.
He comes, comes, ever comes.
Every moment and every age
He comes, comes, ever comes.³

According to him this strange voice that cries to lead one forward is necessarily the promise of ends, the index to the certainty of home in

¹Tagore, Personality, p. 62.

²See Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem No. 74., p. 69.

³See Gitanjali, Poem No. 45., p. 36.

God. Man's vague awareness of this force keeps him active towards the goal; it is always pushing man beyond what he is now; he will never know peace until he is one with that Supreme Perfection. In every age every individual tries to recognize himself with that ideal but always he finds it is not time yet, an individual dies but the quest goes on. Tagore declares the presence of this master in him in such poems as:

I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming
nearer to meet me. . . .

In many a morning and eve thy foot-steps have been heard
and thy messenger has come within my heart and called me in
secret.¹

or

I know not how thou singest my master! I ever listen in
silent amazement.
.
My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles
for a voice.²

Tagore puts forward this mysterious longing pointing to the future as a proof or assurance of the final absolute knowledge. The value of man's knowledge lies in man's search for the cause of this voice; man must realize the far-beyond within him as Echart plainly says that the seed of God is in us and as an apple seed grows into an apple, pear seed into pear, similarly God seed will grow into God, given to a hard-working intelligent farmer.³

Summary

Knowledge means the knowledge of ultimate truth about our existence or the reality. Tagore believes knowledge of the ultimate truth is a continuous process on the part of humanity.

¹Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem No. 46., pp. 37-38.

²Ibid., Poem No. 3., p. 3.

³Huxley, p. 51.

I. Knowledge comes from all sources. i.e., sense-perception, reason, intelligence, imagination, dream, illusion and even fancy. Knowledge means to become something higher than one's former being. This process of knowing or becoming is at the root of our lives, human, animal and vegetable.

Knowledge is considered always human knowledge; knowledge has value in terms of a human knower. Therefore, even if there is an independent truth irrespective of a human knower, it can not be of any use because man creates his own reality in terms of his own time and space.

II. Knowledge is subjective and objective, i.e., an individual can recognize and appreciate objective existence of a thing but at the same time he acquires some subjective knowledge such as knowledge acquired from visual illusion, dream, imagination, etc. They are both important for the knowledge of the final truth, but presiding over these there is a strange mysterious quality named intuition which imparts the knowledge suddenly in a flash of vision. The implication is that knowledge comes from an accumulation of subjective and objective experiences or datas harmonized by this quality of intuition.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATIONAL IDEALS OF TAGORE

Tagore was equipped with the many gifts of poet, philosopher, painter and musician, and educationist. Tagore's emergence as an educator was a matter of personal development; a result of his keen, sensitive observation and philosophical beliefs. The educational ideals discussed in this chapter are revealed in Tagore's attempt to translate his basic philosophy into practical life and action. Tagore stated that his school, Santiniketan, was not built to challenge conventional ways of education but to avoid wastefulness and superficialities for the sake of grasping the ultimate aim of education; a continuous self-creation. Tagore emphasized the importance of certain aspects of personality as no educator had done before. A believer in scientific accuracy, he improved and raised the position of imagination, the aesthetic sense and the higher emotions to the level of reason. These aspects manifested in the fields of poetry, music and other forms of art are almost as important means of discovering reality as is reason. In education man's purpose is to participate in God's play of creation by continually re-creating his own personality. Tagore gave importance to scientific imagination and art not only for the sake of release of subconscious forces or romanticizing of the nature of man, or for the pure development of special aptitude, but that they are expected to affect the entire education of a man.

Before we analyze the educational ideals of Tagore, it is important to know what he did not want in education. His classic satire against authoritarian education is his short story "Parrot's Training".¹ The story itself symbolically presents the main faults of authoritarianism in education. It goes: Once upon a time a Raja had a bird. It sang and whistled all right but never recited scripture; hopped gaily but lacked manners. The Raja thought, "Ignorance is costly in the long run."² Therefore the bird should be educated. At his command Pundits (scholars or teachers) came and together they discovered that the ignorance of the bird was due to their natural habit of living in modest nests. So, the first step to its education was to put it into a decorated golden cage. People came from all over the world to see and gave their verdict: "Culture captured and caged"; others remarked, "If culture be missed, the cage will remain to the end, a substantial fact." All the king's men were busy keeping the cage trim. But the world having no dearth of fault-finders, the Raja heard that the cage was receiving more attention than the bird. The Raja himself went to visit the education department; on his approach he heard the sounds of conch shells and gongs, bugles and trumpets and the recital of scriptures by the Pundits. Mightily pleased the Raja came back, but again fault-finders said, "Have you seen the bird, Raja? Do you know the methods they are using?" Exasperated, the Raja inquired once again what methods were being used. It was shown to him. The method was so stupendous that the bird looked ridiculously unimportant in comparison. There was no opinion from the bird itself. Its throat was so completely choked with book leaves that it could neither whisper nor whistle.

¹L. K. Elmhirst, Rabindranath Tagore, Pioneer in Education (London: John Murray, 1961), pp. 96-100.

²Ibid., p. 96.

But nature is sometimes more powerful than training and when morning light peeped through the cage, the bird would sometimes flutter its wings. "What impertinence," thought the guard. Along came the blacksmith and the bird's wings were clipped and tied with an iron chain. The Raja thought, "Those birds not only lack good sense but also gratitude." Day after day, textbook in one hand and the baton in another, the Pundits delivered lessons to the ignorant bird. The bird died. No one knew how long ago it happened, but the fault-finders spread the rumour. The Raja asked for an explanation. The Pundits replied, "Sire, the bird's education is completed. It neither hops nor sings nor flies." The bird was brought to the king; he poked its body with his finger. Only its inner stuffing rustled.¹

Tagore's whole criticism of formal and pre-planned education is reflected in this story. A man is not a container of knowledge but a maker of knowledge, therefore, if education be showered on him with all the grandeur of mechanical methods, the result would be no better than hailstones showered on flower petals.² Indian education, he believed, suffered from such an inadequacy and that is why he established Santiniketan in 1901, to try to rescue children from some of the frustration he had suffered as a boy in the name of education. The school was to cultivate and develop the arts of life, to discover whether or not the Bengal villager could learn to stand upright on his own feet and solve his many problems for himself. Tagore's educational ideals sought to emphasize the following aims of education.

¹Ibid., p. 100.

²Ibid., pp. 44-65.

Aims of Education

Education as Personality Creation

Tagore's first and foremost conception of education is that it is a continuous Sadhana (Endeavour) for improving one's intellectual, spiritual, physical, aesthetic and moral qualities. It is the task of discovering one's true and genuine self by freeing him from all untruth, aberration, all imbalance caused by his own propensities or by the doctrines of society. Education means freeing oneself intellectually, mentally and to express it in uninhibited action. The ultimate aim of education does not lie in the perfection of the formal trainings of the school, but in finding one's place in the world

This aim is an eternal search for the man of one's heart as it is suggested in an obscure Baul song:

Where shall I meet him, the man of my heart?
He is lost to me and I seek him wandering from land to land.
I am listless for that moonrise of beauty
Which I long to see in the fullness of vision,
In gladness of heart.¹

"The Man of My Heart" can be understood as a musical instrument perfectly tuned and this is what every individual is aspiring to: a perfect harmony with one's environment and individual self made out of all discord. In Tagore's education developing a distinct personality is the main theme, i.e., an individual must construct his own world view and be guided by it unhampered. He states:

Personality is a self-conscious principle of transcendental unity in man which comprehends all the details of facts that are individually his in knowledge and feeling, wish and will and work. In its negative aspect it is limited to individual separateness while in its positive aspect it ever extends

¹A Baul song of unknown composer translated by Tagore, Creative Unity (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 79.

itself in the infinite through the increase of knowledge, love and activities.¹

Harmony with Environment as an Aim

Tagore believes that man is so made that, to be educated he needs free and unobstructed communion with nature and not a man-made atmosphere. The greatest discord man finds in his life is the discord that his inner conceptions are constantly being ridiculed by the biased conceptions of the society. His inside feelings do not tally with the outside social world. The reason of this conflict does not lie in reality but in the dogmatic and twisted values of society. A man must surely be educated according to the ideals of society but before he is a full-fledged member of society his own individual capacity for evaluation must be developed. This open-minded evaluative quality can not be fostered in a child if the child is exposed to pre-accepted values found in religious, moral and social institutions. If society, in any case, imposes such restraint on the first fresh vital impulses of life then it tends to pervert the learner unless he is accustomed to having his own way of looking at problems and solving them. Crowded with the ready-made supply of answers to his questions, the child never gets the chance of knowing what the world would have looked like through his own eyes instead of through the spectacles of society. The growth of individuality being one of the aims of education, Tagore suggests that to be educated the child should be provided with a conducive atmosphere where students may know the naked world without any obstruction. Nature with its simplicity, orderliness and silent examples can provide such an atmosphere. Nature is capable of giving scientific accuracy as well as

¹Tagore, Sadhana, p. 87.

mysterious vagueness of some greater truth, which having a direct contact with the learner produces an interest or motive without which education is not possible. Therefore, children should be surrounded by nature untrammelled by tradition; driven forward by inherent as well as acquired desires; carry on their own research with a carefree exuberance of an animal; because

For our perfection we have to be vitally savage and mentally civilized: we should have the gift to be natural with Nature and human with human society.¹

Nature has another function in education which is rather mystical in character. Following his faith that there is a stream of consciousness in man and nature, Tagore suggests that closeness to nature is likely to reveal this truth of unity in man.

We so often see modern men suffering from ennui, from world-weariness, from a spirit of rebellion against their environment for no reasonable cause whatever. Social revolutions are constantly ushered in with a suicidal violence that has its origins in our dissatisfaction with our hive-wall arrangement--the too exclusive enclosure that deprives us of the perspective, which is so much needed to give us the proper proportion in our art of living. All this is an indication that man has not really been moulded in the model of the bee, and therefore he becomes recklessly anti-social when his freedom to be more than social is ignored.²

Tagore believes this is due to lack of man's proper adjustment with his environment or of not belonging in the world. But if a child from the very beginning establishes a sympathetic and loving relationship with nature, then, his work and nature's work coordinate harmoniously as he says:

In a little flower there is a living power hidden in beauty which is more potent than a maxim gun. I believe that in the bird's notes nature expresses herself with a force which is greater than that revealed in the deafening

¹Elmhirst, p. 52.

²Ibid., pp. 48-49.

roar of the cannonade. I believe that there is an ideal hovering over the earth--an ideal of that Paradise which is not the mere outcome of imagination, but the ultimate reality towards which all things are moving. I believe that this vision of Paradise is to be seen in the sunlight, and the green of the earth, in the flowering streams, in the beauty of the springtime, and the repose of a winter morning. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of Paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. We are deaf to its call; we forget it; but the voice of eternity wells up like a mighty organ and touches the inner core of our being with its music.¹

Education of the Whole Man

Education is not fragmentary; it needs a whole situation where not merely intellect but all the faculties of a man are being exploited. An educated person must have balanced intellectual and emotional qualities. The idea of wholeness can be explained in Upanishadic ideals of three yogas, i.e., Jhana (Knowledge), Bhakti (Devotion or Appreciation) and Karma (Action).² Jhana is that aspect of education which collects materials; in this aspect one accepts facts and a formal guidance from Guru (teacher, literally guide). Secondly, Bhakti is a step further ahead of Jhana because at this stage the learner does not only collect material but also evaluates the whole situation. His mind stands aloof, as it were, to have a good look at the whole setting. Karma or action is the last stage when the knower being aware of the whole situation allows himself to work upon it. These three stages are almost simultaneous in the learner's mind, but they are presided over by one condition which is Ananda, i. e., personal interest in the problem. These

¹Quoted from Tagore's address in Tokyo University, D. J. Fleming, Schools With a Message in India (Oxford: University Press, 1921), p. 171.

²See Sunil Chandra Sarkar, "Tagore's Educational Ideal," Cultural Forum, Tagore Number (New Delhi: Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, 1961), p. 63.

four conditions applied unitedly create the wholeness of learning; therefore, one of the aims of Tagore's education is to improve these qualities simultaneously with effective use of them. He believes

in an education that takes count of the organic wholeness of human individuality that needs for its health a general stimulation to all its faculties bodily and mentally.¹

Discipline and Skill as Aims

Tagore admits that mastery of some skills and developing discipline in habit has great educative value.² For example, logical and consistent thinking, linguistic accuracy in communicating, deft use of hands in handicraft.

There is some art to be mastered, some business organizing capacity to be developed, some law of science to be recognized, and in all of them there is a call for the recognition of the need for individual self-preservation as well as of the duties, responsibilities and privileges of family membership and citizenship.³

Apart from these Tagore suggests that a person needs to know certain facts and general principles that guide facts in the learner's physical, social and cosmic environment. Moreover, since a man finds his environment constantly changing he needs to know the skill of constant evaluation and assessment of the situations in which he finds himself. Therefore the students should acquire the skill of evaluating his changing environment sensitively, thoughtfully and objectively. Finally, Tagore says that one of the basic skills that one can learn is the skill of looking at things with deeper and wider perspective so that he does not confuse the essence with the appearance of things. Men are always open to prejudices such as racial, social, national, religious and cultural,

¹Elmhirst, p. 59.

²Ibid., p. 70.

³Ibid., pp. 69-70.

but if we accept their face values, education remains superficial. Some value-standard and criterion is undoubtedly necessary for the learner but Tagore does not believe that any value can be infallible and have static importance; therefore, one of the aims of education is to train students to look for the essence. But although Tagore admits the necessity of these skills, he emphatically points out that nothing can be "taught" directly unless the spirit of learning or a passion or a "feel" for acquiring some skill, discipline and attitude is aroused among the learners. Learning is Ananda (Enjoyment) and in no situation this spirit should be smothered in education as he remarks:

Children are not born ascetics, fit to enter at once into the monastic discipline of acquiring knowledge. At first they must gather knowledge through their love of life, and then they will renounce their lives to gain knowledge, and then again they will come back to their fuller lives with ripened wisdom.¹

You can lead a horse to water but you can not make him drink; therefore, formal drilling might do a great deal but it always has the danger of making the pupil disinterested and consequently yielding little constructive value. In this connection, Tagore suggests the importance of the teacher's personal influence, because all necessary skills can be taught only by indirection, inspiration and example, i.e., what is most important can be achieved only indirectly and that what can be achieved directly is merely a means, not an end in itself. So, the teacher's responsibility is not fully discharged in formal instruction; far more important than all his knowledge and skill is his character, personality and basic attitude. These intangibles influence education rather than book learning. The students are made aware, in this way, that they are in need of facts,

¹Soares, p. 26.

correct and accurate means of communication, standards of value and deep perception, which will necessarily lead them to take help from appropriate books and teacher's guidance. By this measure, teachers and students both are likely to reap a richer harvest in the field of education. It is Tagore's belief that in education what is most necessary is the breath of culture and no formal method of teaching.¹

Contemplation and Action as Dual Aims of Education

Tagore believes all knowledge is contemplative in nature and that education at its final and highest achievement tends to develop the contemplative outlook. But Tagore is also a believer of the Upanishadic ideal: "In the midst of activity alone wilt thou desire to live a hundred years,"² implying that although contemplation is a major ideal of education, action should always follow to enrich it because

the more man acts and makes actual what was latent in him, the nearer does he bring the distant yet to be. In that actualization man is ever making himself more and yet more distinct, and seeing himself clearly under newer and newer aspects in the midst of his varied activities, in the state in society.³

Knowing is external as well as internal; it needs an interaction of contemplation and action to break the obscurity that hangs between man's mind and the world outside. The argument is clear in this reference:

It is to escape from this obscurity that the seed struggles to sprout, the bud to blossom. It is to rid itself of this envelope of vagueness that the ideas in our mind are constantly seeking opportunities to take an outward form.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 35.

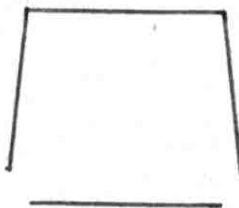
²Tagore, Sadhana, p. 121.

³Ibid., p. 120.

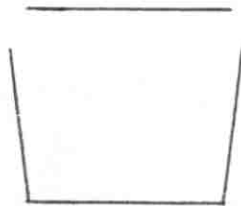
⁴Ibid.

It is the very characteristic of life that it is not complete within itself, it must come out. Its truth is in the commerce of the inside and the outside.¹

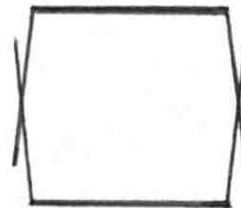
A perfect balance between man's scientific and spiritual contemplation must, therefore, be continuously manifested in his action. The balance or correlation of contemplation revealed in action is the only thing that determines learning. The importance of contemplation lies in the fact that it provides the "wholeness" by means of which a man can adjust within himself both visible and invisible reality. Moreover, through contemplation alone man can reach a stage where he can unite the fragments of knowledge to see the unity or harmony of reality and thereby reach the ultimate aim of all education: unity in diversity or all in one and one in all. This principle of Tagore can be illustrated in three diagrams; i.e., if Diagram No. 1 be the knowledge gained by



No.1



No.2



No.3

actions alone, Diagram No. 2 stands for knowledge which is purely contemplative; in both these cases something is missing which is barring the learner's view from the real truth which is a square. But in Diagram No. 3 the black lines are facts or knowledge gained through direct participation of doing some actions whereas the red lines are the results of contemplation which, by fitting together, make a perfect whole. Therefore, education should necessarily be a synthetic knowledge of the frag-

¹Ibid., p. 124.

ments of knowledge acquired from "doing" and fragments of knowledge attained through contemplation.¹

National and International Knowledge of Culture as an Aim

While the child's sensitivity should be well grounded in an appreciation of the best traditions of his people's cultural heritage, his thought and activities, as he grows up, should be linked with the economic life of his countrymen. But also, the social and moral consciousness of the future citizen should be extended to an appreciation of other people's cultures and ideals of life as well. To find the mental horizon only in the national frontiers is likely to sow the seeds of discord among mankind and is also an abridgment of the human personality itself. To foster an international and world outlook is, therefore, one of the most emphasized aims of the poet's scheme of education at Santiniketan.

Moral Training as an Aim of Education

To ensure that the emphasis on individual self-expression and development of one's personality does not degenerate into a sharpening of the ego, with its inevitable passions of cupidity and self-aggrandizement, which thereby chokes the very aim of true education, an individual should be given the opportunity to build some moral principles. Tagore's ideal of moral education is based upon the belief that only intellectual convictions are not sufficient enough to subdue the tempest of man's overwhelming ego; an overall understanding is necessary for conducting one's life creatively. Man is not morally neutral; he is bestowed with

¹It is noteworthy here that in Tagore's philosophy "contemplation" means more than thinking or mere intuition. It can be called a combination of both; add to this is also imagination, feeling, emotion, fancy, dreams, etc.

the capacity to choose to develop himself for better or for worse, but he has no option to refuse to choose sides.¹ Unlike other thinkers, such as Samuel Alexander or Vaihinger, Tagore's opinion is that man is not morally neutral although it is possible that his sense of moral questioning is dormant at times. It is absurd to believe that morality is a fiction, illusion or even an orientation of religion and society, because it is one of the characteristics of the human race that men never cease to ask questions about the value of every aspect of life which, according to Tagore, is the first step to forming any moral principle. The difference between an animal and a man is that while the animal is aware of its immediate present the man does what he thinks to be good or bad for him before and after.² He also says:

Man is distinguished from the rest of the creation by the dualism in his consciousness between what is and what ought to be. To the animal this is lacking; its conflict is between what is and what is desired; whereas in man the conflict is what is desired and what should be desired.³

Tagore, however, does not believe in any conception of morality imposed upon an individual by the social and traditional taboos or the fear of religion. This system of giving ready-made standards of morality has destructive rather than constructive value because the fear of the tyranny of an unseen and unfelt God or the unbalanced demands of society can not yield the best result of morality. Moral principles, to be of any value, must necessarily mean something personal to a man. Moral principles are positive in human behavior, but that does not imply accepting timidly what tradition or religion have prescribed man to do.

¹See Narvane, pp. 216-233.

²Tagore, Sadhana, p. 5.

³Ibid.

In Tagore's philosophy ethics or religion have a different connotation, i.e., a man fully and freely following natural activities comes upon a point when he uses all his faculties especially intelligence and aesthetic experiences and says, "I like this" and "I don't like that." From this realization comes the obligation, "I should do this" and "I should not do that." From these likes and dislikes man evaluates everything, first unconsciously and then consciously. "This is good, that is bad;" therefore, this being good ought to be done and that being bad ought not to be done. This stage, Tagore believes, is inevitable in man if given the right freedom and atmosphere to grow one's capacities harmoniously. A sense of morality developed this way has a great creative and idealistic importance for man.

Goodness, according to Tagore, must emerge from a synthesis of badness and goodness. He says, "To question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection or in other words, why there is creation at all."¹ Tagore sometimes agrees that religion is the source of morality but he suggests that ethics must always come before religion. Narvane interprets that Tagore hardly differentiates between ethics and religion. Religion, understood in this way, is a whole consciousness or to put it another way, most important contribution of religion should be the spirit of religion rather than religion itself.²

Aesthetic Enjoyment as an Aim of Education

Aesthetic experiences are the crowning phases of Tagore's educational ideals; without the growth of aesthetic appreciation man is prone to lack the unity or harmony of a whole person. Music, painting,

¹Chakravarty, p. 277.

²Ibid., p. 279.

dancing or any other art is likely to refine and heighten sensibility, purge the emotion and train one in the exquisite and unique use of his natural instrument of self-expression. The knowledge of beauty includes that part of education which brings a synthetic wholeness in the learner's entire personality.¹ Aesthetic experiences not only enrich the whole personality they also touch upon those inner and most subtle chords of the human mind by which a man can experience the unrevealed and the unconceived aspect of reality.

Santiniketan

The unique contribution of Tagore in the field of education is found in the emphasis he laid upon indirect education rather than formal education. A direct drilling is possible but direct teaching is inconceivable. Learning is a spontaneous activity, and all normal children are born with a thirst for growing and learning, but if in any situation the freedom or the spontaneity is hampered, the education becomes the education of parents and society; designed and fostered among the youngsters according to adult aims where the individuality of a child becomes most insignificant. Believing that education, in its true meaning, can be attained from "the atmosphere" of learning and not merely from classroom teaching, Tagore ventured to establish an unconventional school in the heart of Bengal. A brief description of Tagore's school will clarify his idea of atmosphere in education.

By way of a poet's apology when intruding into the field of education, Tagore once said that Santiniketan is his tangible poem composed with a new medium. Santiniketan (Abode of Peace) later named as Visbha Bharati (World University) stands on a pastoral plain of Bengal

¹Tagore, On Art and Aesthetics (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 1.

about a hundred miles north of Calcutta. A true believer of the fruitfulness of solitude and the creative inspiration of nature, Tagore founded this school in a place where, in the meditative calm of the woods and meadows, an "ideal" truly "hovers" on air and earth. There are two sides of Bengal: one is seen in the lush green plains of riverside Bengal; the other is the Bengal of upland plain, dry but decorated with stately palms and sal trees and amalaky groves. Tagore's school is situated in the midst of this latter Bengal; it does not have the soft and gentle atmosphere of East Bengal but it has an air of activity for which the fields and forests are noted in Bengal. On the horizon there are sal woods; on the other side there are lines of palm trees with fields all around the school. Among the mango groves on the campus the various sweet-scented tropical flower plants, trees and creepers, e.g., juthi, malati, champa, kadam, bakul, shephali, etc., serve to establish that friendship with the children of the school. As Tagore says in his school he has given "an opportunity to the children to find their freedom in nature by being able to love it . . ." ¹ because

It gives us that fullness of existence which saves us from playing with our soul for objects that are immensely cheap. . . . I tried my best to develop in the children of my school the freshness of their feeling for nature, a sensitiveness of soul in their relationship with human surroundings. . . . Only when the mind has the sensitiveness to be able to respond to the deeper call of reality is it naturally weaned away from the lure of the fictitious value of things. ²

About the atmosphere of the school Edward Thompson says: Had the poet's jivandehta ³ chosen for him a better place for his genius it could not

¹Elmhirst, p. 57.

²Ibid., pp. 57-58.

³The deity of poetic inspiration similar to Milton's Muse or Dante's divine inspiration.

have been found.¹ Satischandra Ray, a student of Tagore, describes Santiniketan and its influence in the following way:

These broad open spaces round Bolpur help one to understand the burning fierceness of the sun, and reveal in the storms the power of the wind. The clouds and rain remind one of Indra² himself while the moon and stars with their light decorate the darkness with a language that speaks of Aswinikumar.³ . . . When I go out into the fierce heat which fills the surrounding plains, I feel as Saturn must have felt when the rings of fire were placed round his head. It seems as if in a less intense light I could not have seen the images of the sky, bright and burning like molten gold, or of the lonely plain, with its distant red road gleaming across its widespread fields. Grey, like the bed of a dried-up river, the slightest unevenness can be seen distinctly--so far away, and yet every smallest inequality standing upright as though to compel attention and as if saying, "Today you must see me!" . . . Here at Bolpur, the wind comes across a vast plain panting and seizing in its embrace like a drunkard the tall sal trees.⁴

In this wild disorderd beauty of nature Tagore made his Asram or a home for the spirit of India⁵ and the spirit of all nations.

Santiniketan is an international university where a student is not recognized or classified by country, religion or caste but accepted as an individual human being. Students from all over the world have easy access in Santiniketan and the staff consists of teachers from France, Germany, England, China, and Japan along with the Indians. Among the foreign teachers to whom Tagore was deeply indebted for their superhuman endeavour to carry out his educational ideals in Santiniketan the names of W. W. Pierson, L. K. Elmhirst, C. F. Andrews and Sylvian Levi are noteworthy. These teachers along with Tagore's company left an outstanding example of the fertility of the teacher's influence in indirect learning.

¹Thompson, p. 187.

²God of thunder and rain.

³The Castor and Pullox of Hindu mythology.

⁴Thompson, pp. 187-188.

⁵Ibid., p. 188.

The dominant ideal of Santiniketan is that of education through sharing a life of high aspiration with one's guru or master. This system of teachers' close contact with students' lives in general is an ancient Indian system of Tapobana education¹ which Tagore revived in Santiniketan where the Indian conception of guru has been deepened and enlarged. The teachers in Santiniketan not only live within close contact to their pupils but also share many social, formal and informal activities; yet the sense of respect from the student to the teacher is never lacking.

Except during the rains, the classes in Santiniketan are held out of doors and a student is free to choose his seat anywhere, even on a branch of a tree. The most impressive of all training in Santiniketan is its religious education. In the morning and evening a period is set apart for meditation. The glass Mandir (temple), open to the air on all sides, is the school chapel but students are allowed to do their meditation even outside the temple. At dawn with the sound of a gong the students come out of their dormitories with their little mats and for fifteen minutes they sit down in yoga position for meditation, but it is always possible that some will be watching the birds or blossoms overhead or the glowing Indian sunrise. The idea behind this meditation is nothing but creating an atmosphere of contemplation because they are not compelled to meditate but only to remain silent and not disturb others. The meditation is again done at sunset.

¹Tapobana education is India's ancient Brahmanic system of education for equipping the youth for every situation in life. The pupil, irrespective of his birth, had to live with his forest dweller master and participate in all activities. The teacher was a full time guide.

Inscriptions at the gate of Santiniketan forbid the taking of life, the bringing of any idol or flesh or any kind of unclean remark about any religion.¹

Physical education and sports of all types constitute one of the main activities of the school. The students play games vigorously throughout the year.

Santiniketan is a student governed institution of education. Boys look after the cleanliness of their own dormitories; girl students participate in other housing management. The students look after their own post office, cafeteria; they hold their own courts where youngish faults are brought before their self-governing council and punishments are inflicted upon offenders according to general opinion which never exceeds beyond other students avoiding the particular student and not speaking to him for a few days.

Visbha Bharati has three general sections of learning, namely, Sriniketan (the institute of Rural Reconstruction), Kala Bhaban (the institute of Fine Arts) and Vidya Bhavan (the institute of Oriental Research). Although science constitutes a main part of Santiniketan education, it is mainly a school for the arts. With this description of Santiniketan we come to Tagore's general ideas about the methods of teaching.

Methods of Teaching

The method of education which can freely be called an extension of Tagore's ideals of education are based upon three main principles, namely, freedom, vastness and fullness.² Education in the real sense

¹Thompson, p. 189.

²Sarkar, p. 63.

starts with the free inquisitiveness of the learner; therefore, what the teacher can do about educating the pupil is to give his explanation when the student comes for it. But if training be given before the learner understands the necessity of it, the result would be the same as putting the cart before the horse. Therefore, the first step to learning is the freedom of the student's inquiry. Making the student curious by providing the situation is the most important thing in teaching because without personal interest no education is of any value. Tagore believes the students, especially the youngsters, should be given the freedom of a young animal or a growing tree. The small kitten has the simple carefree exuberance of treating life as a perpetual game and the world as a fairy make-believe in which whatever moves is a mouse. Children also should always have this joyful exuberance in growing and making their own perception. Tagore argues in favour of this idea of freedom in the following way:

With the growing tree there is the same kind of exuberance in the joyful pushing upward of the young shoot. Such is the whirl of life packed within the tip of this first tender out-growth, that cell is added to cell with an amazing rapidity whilst the food supply that has been packed away in the mother seed remains unexhausted. Even when this supply is gone, the growing point still finds its own natural way up and out into the open air, and woe be to the tree of the future if some accident befalls and damage is done to that first shoot. Other branches may develop and try to replace the lead that has gone, but some driving force, some urgent desire to seek for life will have gone too.¹

But freedom in the mere sense of independence has not content and therefore no value. Freedom should be allowed in the midst of experiences; these should be as ample and vast as life itself because education is not knowing but becoming. Tagore admits that the whole life can not be exposed to a child immediately in every lesson but the teacher's attitude

¹Elmhirst, p. 67.

of pointing towards the essence or whole situation should prove helpful; but he also suggests that the whole view of life can be done through dramas and plays. The teacher can also stimulate students' imaginative capacity to visualize things that are found in life in general. Thirdly, to make education a training of the whole person, the teacher should make use of a pupil's every quality by making him first interested in a problem and then engaging him in personal projects.

Learning Through Senses

Tagore believes learning can be extremely lively and fruitful if a child's senses are made use of. Tagore says that children between the ages of six and twelve are most absorbed in gathering impressions through sight, smell, hearing, and taste, but more especially through touch and the use of hands. Therefore, from the very beginning of education a child should start as an apprentice in handicraft as well as housecraft. In the workshop, as a trained producer and a potential creator, he will acquire skill and win freedom for his hands, whilst as an inmate of the house, which he helps to construct, furnish and maintain, he will gain expanse of spirit and win freedom as a citizen of the small community. Learning, therefore, should start always with sense experiences.

Learning Through Self-Expression: Use of Movement

Tagore says that in children the whole body is expressive. When we ask children to sit in the school and think, we take the first false step in teaching. In learning the body must always work as a partner of the mind; it must not sit still while the mind is at work although for certain types of thinking sitting is useful.¹ If self-growth be a part

¹Elmhirst, p. 103.

of education, self-expression is the most useful means of that growth. But this self expression is greatly obstructed if it is done only through writing or speaking. Tagore believes body also has a great contribution towards self-expression. This body expression is possible through the art of dancing in which children should have all the freedom of imagination with occasional guidance in Mudras.¹

Teaching According to Individual Differences

Teachers should always remember that every individual student has unique likes and dislikes, unique ways and capacities of learning. One experience may have different color and tone in different pupils; therefore, the teacher has no right in distorting the child's experience by emphasizing his opinion about an experience. This individual difference in personal experiences presents a difficult challenge to teachers no doubt, but it is a challenge that can not be avoided. Therefore, the teachers should cultivate the habit of less teaching and more observation and occasional guidance. The teacher should also remember that education takes place according to the needs and demands of the learner; therefore, he should first arouse in him the need for learning.

Learning Through Action

Learning is sound when the student actively participates in some problem solving and in thus doing he acquires a knowledge which he can claim as his own. This personal involvement is a crucial point in Tagore's idea of learning for to be personally involved a student needs to do something where he can employ his united faculties, e.g., making an experiment of growing vegetables, etc. Theories, Tagore suggests, should always be tested in practice, but the student must have the freedom either to start

¹Symbols of expression in Indian dance.

with practice and then take the help of theories or vice versa. Tagore says the aim of Siksa sastra (the theories of teaching) is nothing but giving ample opportunities for the experimental enterprise.

Teacher's Personal Influence as the Greatest Help of Learning

Of all the techniques of teaching Tagore's emphasis was laid upon the character of the guru who should become the fountain of all learning. Tagore has repeatedly said that creating an environment which gives the breath of the struggle for learning is the principle aim of education; but this can only be done with the personal example of the teacher's life. In Tagore's philosophy of education, the teacher is an ideal person who combines in himself the ideals of society, the affection and sympathy of parents, the confidence and reliance of a friend, the observations of a psychologist and the healthy and efficient guide of the physical and spiritual pursuit. Teaching and learning are never a part time job but a continuous one. Therefore, the teacher should set an example rather than ask the students to be something of which they are ignorant. Tagore believes the child's mind is extraordinarily aware of the things he sees around him and is extremely receptive. The child knows when he likes the teacher what he means him to do or become even when the guidance is silent. Therefore, the main thing for a teacher is to become a dominant guiding force to let the students create themselves.

Curriculum

As regards curriculum Tagore has little controversy with the traditional selection except to say that no curriculum can guarantee any education on the part of the student if it is not imparted with efficiency and according to the knowledge of child nature and learning.

The success of any curriculum wholly depends upon the method of teaching. Therefore the curriculum should be guided by the following principles. Firstly, curriculum organization in all cases should be based upon the nature of man and his ways of learning. Secondly, it should give proper attention to social desirability, but at the same time keep its flexibility. Thirdly, the curriculum should provide subjects that include the wholeness of life experiences and finally there should be special emphasis in curriculum organization so that science and liberal arts receive equal attention.

Rabindranath Tagore, not considering himself a regular educationist, tends to avoid the question of curriculum and gives this general opinion that it should include subjects conducive to sound physical, moral and intellectual education.

Tagore emphasizes the importance of scientific objectivity of knowledge but does not specifically point out any suggestion for curriculum planning for science teaching. Among other regular art subjects, dance, music and painting seem to attract his attention more than anything else. In Santiniketan, Tagore introduced all types of Indian dance, music and painting, but folk dances like Manipuri, Santhal appeared to him more expressive and therefore more educative than classical dances like Kathakali or Bharat Nathyam. Ballet dances of all countries should be explored in the school curriculum, but in Santiniketan Bengali ballets are more popular than others. In music, too, Tagore was more in favor of those songs where the meaning or the poetic values are as important as tunes.¹ Indian classical music should also be included in the curriculum.

¹Rabindranath Tagore himself composed about two thousand such songs of various moods; they are seasonal and devotional, gay and meditative. They are popular in Bengal as Rabindra Sangeets.

Dramatic art and painting also have important places in Santiniketan education where the influence of the West is cordially acknowledged even though they try to keep the Indian tradition.

Summary

Tagore's complaints against the then existing system of Anglo-Indian education are:

1. It lacked freedom, joy and interest.
2. The system itself was not directly based upon the cultural and economic conditions of India.
3. It was passive knowledge-gathering and the cause of education was shackled by the practice of memorization.

The aim of education is for an unbiased, deeply sensitive, reflective, compassionate and creative personality formation that gives each person an awareness of distinct dignity of selfhood. Secondly, education should infuse naturally and legitimately into every being the idea of unity that exists from the lower to the higher forms of creation, from individuals to groups, from nationalism to internationalism. Thirdly, education is for equipping all members of the society with its economic and cultural temper. Education, furthermore, should equip every student with skill of handicrafts, art of expression in language, and movement of the body, and similar other forms. To acquire these skills both freedom and discipline should be used by the teachers with a fine sense of balance. Education should inspire two major things, namely, contemplation and action.

Education should be imparted in a way that gives ample freedom of thought, experimentation and appraisal, etc. so that a deep sense of morality might spontaneously bloom out of one's free nature, a morality

which is not taught and therefore distinctly individualistic and which might clash with the society not to tumble down but gain vigor out of a clash and compromise with society and other individuals' ideas.

Finally, education should facilitate an aesthetic pleasure as a mode of improving knowledge. It is not an attitude of drilling in some special aptitude but letting the unuttered and unrevealed truth of reality make itself be expressed through everyone's vague perception, beauty and truth.

The first thing considered in the method of teaching is to provide a suitable atmosphere that induces the above mentioned qualities. A close contact with nature, a freedom of establishing friendship or belongingness with the environment, a freedom of feeling, understanding, consulting teachers, undertaking personal experiments and projects are the main characteristics of the method involved in Tagore's ideal education. The use of visual aids and life-like conditions for acquainting students with real life problems are being advised. There should be a tendency on the part of the school to let the student learn from his own trial and error, pleasure and pain. Among other formal subjects curriculum should include such art items that help students in self-expression and a joy of creation.

CHAPTER IV

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TAGORE

From the discussion of the previous chapters we have gained an insight into the main ideals of education according to Tagore's philosophy. They can be summed up in such terms as education for freedom, education for aesthetic enjoyment, education for moral guidance in life and finally acquiring knowledge with an attitude that the nature of knowledge is dynamic and it has to be gained through a dialectic method of educating the external and internal aspects of human life. These are in gist the main ideals of Tagore's philosophy which he would rather call means or apparent ideals through which we are to attain the greater ideal, a fully developed personality. But these terms, abstract as they seem, do not convey to us the right implications of them, therefore, we will elaborate them with a comparative attitude.

Firstly, the idea of freedom in modern life has become extremely ambiguous. In the midst of political, industrial, religious and secular arguments of this idea of freedom, we have really lost the meaning of freedom. We therefore tend to ask what is freedom? Can it be taught? Is this freedom external or internal, i.e., does the society determine freedom or the individual? Is it freedom from something or is it freedom to do something? Is it the absence or presence of something?

In Tagore we find that freedom means both dependence upon something and independence from something. Freedom necessarily means locating

man's duty and responsibility by knowing his own nature and the nature of the world. Freedom means to view ourselves and our aims in the right perspective and the lack of it means absence of freedom. Macmurray's definition of freedom of good man is similar to Tagore as far as revealing man's nature is concerned; it is as follows:

To be free is to act in a way that expresses one's own essential nature. . . . A good man is a proper human being, one who realizes in his behaviour the true nature of human life in the circumstances in which he finds himself. To be a good human being is to realize true human nature in oneself; that is to say, to be really human in one's way of living. But that is the same as being free. Anything is free when it realizes its own proper nature.¹

In Tagore we see this naturalism of revealing one's true nature to oneself and thereby to seek an ideal of perfection is freedom incarnate, as he has simplified his educational ideal by saying that it is a means to realize the divinity of man or the humanity of God.² Tagore's philosophy seemingly proves to be God-intoxicated but actually it is deeply humanistic. It is by observing the diverse qualities of man and his sensibility transcending mere senses, that he writes songs of divinity. He has never known God outside man and it is through man that Tagore has imagined God.

Freedom in Tagore's view is external and internal; external freedom is the freedom of practical life; it asks for freedom to do something without the bondage or limitation imposed upon by authority, but on the otherhand man feels the necessity of some bond of faith for the very cause of freedom. Erich Fromm defines this dialectic characteristic of human psychology of growing freedom in an awareness of individuality and

¹John Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), p. 167-184.

²This can be called the summary of Tagore's Oxford lectures entitled The Religion of Man.

the loss of security as one detaches oneself from the sense of oneness with one's parents and the universe. When a child is born, his independence is marked by the cutting off of the umbilical cord. Yet this separation remains a superficial separation of two bodies; the child is carried, fed and nursed by the mother and thus the child remains a part of the mother, and has a feeling that everything around him is ego-centered, his things of interest are not separate from him, the parent or authority do not seem to be fundamentally separate entities; they are parts of the child's universe and this universe is still a part of the child. But with the first awareness of separation and individuality at adolescence the child really comes to know his independence and the more the child grows and the more his primary ties are cut off, the greater grows his quest of freedom and independence. But during this process he also grows a feeling of aloneness; in one side he grows strength, his will and reason develop, on the other side he becomes insecure and lonely. Then, he feels a need of dependence on some authority which might give him security, but the freedom he has gained through his individuality is too precious for him to give up for his illusion of security.¹ The same myth is true in man's social history. Because of man's utter sense of loss of integrity and the burden of a too heavy responsibility, men tend to submit to an authority for a sense of value and security; his religion, the guidance of a king makes him feel he "belongs" and thus serves his purpose of security. But history shows that just as a child can not go back to his previous security when he becomes aware of his individuality, so can not man obey authority when he realizes his freedom does not lie in his blind belief or trust but finding truth about himself;

¹Erich Fromm, The Fear of Freedom (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1961), pp. 19-32.

therefore he rebels against all authority to get back his individuality. (In this respect Tagore refers to the history of Western Civilization.) But Tagore would ask the question: Do freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of press, etc. give us real freedom and does mere denial of authority mean freedom? The answer is positively negative because although by these means we can have external freedom, yet we still lack internal freedom so long as we are ignorant of our true nature and our sense of belongingness in a home. Tagore holds that man's first quality is that he is egocentric, he is aware of his individuality but curiously enough his individuality loses its meaning if he does not belong anywhere. His aloneness is his greatest pain and his limitations are his hardest imprisonment. He must know what is he and what is his role. Internal freedom is the knowledge of the truth which he must find out to be free. Tagore says that in modern history the attention was focused on denying old forms of authority; it is believed that the more people get rid of old rules the more free they are, but we fail to realize that although man has rid himself from old customs and authority, internal factors are blocking the full realization of the freedom of personality. Therefore, Tagore believes, submission to law and authority itself is not lack of freedom but prior to submission man must know why he should submit and to what object and for what result he should show his obedience. If the internal problem of aloneness is solved by the knowledge of universal unitary purpose, only then can man accept restraint as means to his freedom. Only then, he says:

the bonds become the form of freedom incarnate. . . . The freed soul delights in accepting bonds and does not seek to evade any of them, for in each does it feel the manifestation of an infinite energy whose joy is in creation.¹

¹Tagore, Sadhana, p. 119.

Tagore observes that there are two conditions in our modern life which determine our lack of freedom. Firstly, the modern civilization has put man into a dilemma, into a war of head and heart, people are confused, unsatisfied, are almost groping in the darkness for lack of true reliance upon some authority, whereas the other reaction is that some people are frantically clutching to old traditional faith with an attitude similar to escape-mechanism for fear of losing all balance of life; their fear is of losing the ground under their feet, as it were, if the values they cling to prove to be untrue. Neither of these two conditions are positive examples of freedom; the former is blackened with cynicism whereas the latter is blind and frightened. The conflict is a conflict of internal and external conditions and consequently there is a lack of harmony in modern mind. Tagore's view is that to create the strength of personality one must have a harmony of internal faith and external action--an united freedom of internal and external aspects--of life. Therefore we come to a position when in our heart of hearts we realize that there is a need for believing in something absolute for which we exist, the cause of all cause; it is this utter need that our belief in God as an ideal is necessary. But arguments can be raised that no matter how much we approve of the fact that there is a need for an ideal of perfection yet no faith can be created for an utilitarian purpose alone; it must give us the absolute and objective truth in which we can put our trust and faith. The answer to this argument can be found in Tagore's deep belief in human race itself rather than in an absolute. A man becomes hopeless when he finds himself Godless but a man who sees God in himself tries to manifest Him through his personality, brings Him closer and closer in his love and action. It is this faith that leads Tagore to preach that man must find himself one with the whole humanity and thus find his highest belongingness

and discard his pain of aloneness for the joy of leading it towards greater improvement of humanity as a whole. Tagore's philosophy of education is, therefore, man-centered rather than authoritarian or God-centered. He believes like the Vaisnab poets:

• শুনে মামুষ বন্ধু -
মামুষ ক'রে মানুষ মজ -
মামুষ ক'রে মামুষ । "

Listen brother men
There is no truth
Greater than Man.¹

To achieve man's truth and avoid the anxiety of aloneness, man must spontaneously establish a relationship with man and nature, a relationship that connects the individual with the world and the universe without eliminating his individuality. The foremost expressions of this belongingness are love and productive work which naturally strengthen the total personality to break every limit that exists for the growth of the self.

The same humanistic attitude of Tagore is also carried on into his theory of religious education. Tagore avoids any extreme view of religion; he is neither with those who deny the moral value of life nor with those whose outlook is so wholly spiritual that they refuse to ascribe ultimate value to morality. The religion should be the religion of man based upon his love of perfection. His religious view can be compared with Descartes and Locke who believed that religion is the source of morality, whereas Kant and Martineau asserted that ethics must necessarily be considered before religion. Tagore inclined toward the latter view yet in his philosophy we can hardly distinguish a sharp division between ethics and religion.

¹Translated from the Bengali by the author.

If religion is considered supernatural and taught in divisions and watertight compartments, then, Tagore holds, it is bound to prove psychologically unwholesome, intellectually unreasonable and emotionally unsatisfying. To justify this argument of Tagore we can refer to literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where the picture of the frustration resulting from religious teaching of absolute faith is marked. One of them is the story of Philip Carey the club-footed boy who was taught to believe in God in the traditional way that God is all powerful in whom he must lay his absolute faith and obedience. Philip believed wholeheartedly and obeyed all the things the scripture taught him. Then he prayed to God to cure his clubfoot, the centre of his life's misery. Somerset Maugham relates the frustration thus:

He prayed with all the power of his soul. No doubts assailed him. He was confident in the word of God. And the night before he was to go back to school he went up to bed tremulous with excitement. . . . The idea came to him that he must do something more than usual to attract the attention of God, and he turned back the rug which was in front of his bed so that he could kneel on the bare boards; and then it struck him that his night shirt was a softness that might displease his maker, so he took it off and said his prayers naked. When he got into bed he was so cold that for some time he could not sleep, but when he did, it was so soundly that Mary Ann had to shake him when she brought in his hot water the next morning. . . . This was the morning for the miracle. His heart was filled with joy and gratitude. His first instinct was to put down his hand and feel the foot which was whole now, but to do this seemed to doubt the goodness of God. He knew that his foot was well. But at last he made up his mind and with the toes of his right he just touched the ground. Then he passed his hand over it. He limped downstairs and then sat down to breakfast. . . .

"Supposing you'd asked God to do something," said Philip, "and really believed it was going to happen, like moving a mountain, I mean, and you had faith and it didn't happen. What would it mean?" . . .

"It would just mean that you hadn't got faith," answered Uncle William.

Philip accepted the explanation. If God had not cured him, it was because he did not really believe. And yet he did not see how he could believe more than he did. . . . He continued to pray. But presently the feeling came to him that this time also his faith would not be great enough. He could not resist the doubt that assailed him. He made his own experience into a general rule.

"I suppose no one ever has faith enough," he said.

It was like the salt which his nurse used to tell him about: you could catch any bird by putting salt on his tail; and once he had taken a little bag of it into Kensington Gardens. But he could never get near enough to put the salt on the bird's tail. Before Easter he had given up the struggle. He felt a dull resentment against his uncle for taking him in. The text which spoke of the moving of mountains was just one of those that said one thing and meant another. He thought his uncle had been playing a practical joke on him.¹

Tagore's 'Religion of the Artist' is a rebel against such ways of religious teaching. The religion which Tagore preaches does not have the ambition to tame the Infinite for domestic use. Tagore describes his religion in contrast to the above mentioned religious teaching in this way:

It is as indefinite as the morning and yet as luminous; it calls our thoughts, feelings and actions into freedom, and feeds them with light. In the poet's religion we find no doctrine or injunction, but rather the attitude of our entire being towards a truth which is ever to be revealed in its own endless creation. . . . In dogmatic religion all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid, like the atmosphere round the earth where lights and shadows play hide and seek, and the wind like a shepherd boy plays upon its reeds among flocks of clouds. It never undertakes to lead anybody anywhere, to any solid conclusion; yet it reveals endless spheres of light, because it has no walls round itself. It acknowledges the facts of evil; it openly admits 'weariness the fever and the fret' in the world 'where men sit and hear each other groan'; yet it remembers that in spite of all there is the song of the nightingale and 'haply the Queen Moon is on her throne'.²

¹W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage (Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1963), pp. 54-55.

²Tagore, Creative Unity, pp. 16-17.

Tagore renounces absolute external supernatural element of religion but by doing that he does not by any means glorify science to the extreme. He is both in favor of scientific and religious spirit provided Man, in between, receives the greatest importance. Science no less than supernaturalism bears within itself the possibility of authoritarianism. What frustrated people like Philip would do under this circumstance is too clear; he would shift his absolute faith from supernatural to scientific naturalism which is no better than the former faith. Therefore, if the conflict is a conflict between democracy and authoritarianism both naturalism and supernaturalism bend on the side of authoritarianism. Therefore, Tagore believes religion should be a synthesis of both because although they both have authoritarianism yet both naturalism and supernaturalism are creative. Tagore admits religion and idealism have done the greatest justice to the creativity in the universe, but the contribution of materialism is not meagre. Therefore Man's religious approach should be a synthetic one. But we can put our faith less on science than on religion, because science is merely concerned with facts and the laws that govern facts. It is completely unbiased, unemotional, disinterested. It has no purpose except to understand facts. What we do with knowledge of science is no business of science. Science without human conscience has nothing to do with good or evil or with the satisfaction of human desire. It is not concerned with action because when we admire the power of science we actually value man's efficient use of it. Therefore we trust in man rather than in science. Science can be used to get what we want to get. It is from this sense of value from which religion has come into human society. The problem of teaching religion is a question of putting value in something worthwhile. Coming back from his European and Russian tour Tagore reported to his village

people with the deepest compassion:

I had never expected to see so much inner suffering in the West. The people are not happy. No doubt they have multiplied luxury enormously and all manner of paraphernalia has been created, but a deep unrest, a deep unhappiness has seized them everywhere. . . . Many of you will probably not know how true it is.¹

This unrest, Tagore believes, is the unrest of the loss of value. And this value man can regain not by putting faith in an external power either of science or of God of churches and mosques or temples but in the religion of man. According to Tagore, man's social life is the birthplace of religion; it is in society and its manifold activities, and in realizing man's full nature--which is Love and Action--that religion has its first bloom. Man's religion consists in his humanity, his innate creative force and love of unity with others. He says, "The religion of water is wateriness, the religion of fire is combustion and the religion of man is in his own innermost truth."² For man the best opportunity for such a realization has been in man's society. It is a collective creation of his through which his social being tries to find itself in its truth and beauty. But unless it degenerates, it ever suggests in its concerted movements a living truth as its soul which has personality. In this large life of social communion man feels the mystery of unity as he does in music. From the sense of that unity, men came to the sense of their God.³ Tagore says creation is man's religion; through his ideal of revealing his true nature he realizes the divine in humanity.⁴ But when this

¹Rabindranath Tagore, Letters From Russia (Calcutta: Visva Bharati, 1960), p. 137.

²Narvane, p. 199.

³Tagore, Creative Unity, pp. 21-22.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

energetic expression is obscure his faith in the Infinite within him becomes weak and therefore his aspiration does not go beyond the idea of success.¹

According to Tagore, Satyam (Truth) and Mangal are meaningless except in relation with the Sunder (Beautiful). In Tagore, we find all these three are united together to reveal the truth. He says:

The good is . . . beautiful not merely because of the good it does to us. There is something more to it. What is good is in consonance with creation as a whole and therefore also with the world of men. Whenever we see the good and true in perfect accord, the Beautiful stands revealed. . . . Beauty is good in its fullness as fullness of Beauty is Good incarnate.²

The existence of the sense of beauty in man is a surplus in life by which man does not only know those things which are necessary but also the reality which is beyond his perception. Art, Tagore says, is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real. Art evokes in us the deep sense of reality, its object is to reveal, in nature or in the mind, within as well as without us, things that we can not reach through the consciousness. Tagore says:

All our literature, all our music and fine arts are tending towards the true, whether consciously or unconsciously, all of them seem to try to bring the true into prominent focus. That which was untrue to us because it was unperceived so far, the poet brings within our range of vision. In this way the extent of our joy of the true is becoming wider, vaster. Our literature is putting the hall-mark of artistic beauty on all that appeared to be petty and went unnoticed, it makes a friend of a mere acquaintance and a thing of beauty out of every visible object.³

¹Ibid., p. 23.

²Tagore, On Art and Aesthetics, p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 8.

Another important idea in Tagore's aesthetics is that man's sense of ethics is only an outcome of his sense of beauty. Therefore education of moral principles can not be outside the realm of beauty. Ethics and aesthetics in Tagore's philosophy are interconnected, one without the other is not complete. When certain objects or actions seem to be unappealing to man he feels he is not satisfied. Once this dissatisfaction is detected he finds out some rules that are likely to make things or behaviour appealing to his sense of beauty. Therefore, we see that sense of beauty is prior to our ethics and hence the former should receive greater attention in Tagore's educational system.

Art, Tagore says, deepens in human mind a self-consciousness as well as a world-consciousness. Through man's artistic creation a sense of deep awareness of self is aroused in him which Tagore considers as the first step of the awakening of personality. Art is reciprocal; man creates it and it creates man. The function of art, therefore, is to remove the shadows which obscure reality as well as the creation of a personality and thereby bring them together in intimate union.

In art Tagore believes there is an uniting quality which is also joyful. Tagore believes, as we have noticed before, that rhythm and harmony are at the root of reality itself. In art we feel this rhythm more than in other spheres of life because our own creative activity reflects directly the universal rhythm. In Tagore's view the aesthetic activity is the relating, harmonizing, unifying force which enhances the value of life itself. Like Kant Tagore believes that all other perceptions divide men, being based exclusively either upon sensuous or the spiritual side of his being. But the perception of beauty makes him entirely because it needs both his natures, spiritual and material. The

true principle of art, Tagore says, is the principle of unity. Apart from the external parts which create taste, value, etc. in a particular picture or symphony we find a unity of the artist's personality in them. Beauty is seen in Tagore's philosophy as a link that unites man with nature, society and God or ultimate reality itself.

These being the influences of art in man we come to the idea of knowledge which has been discussed in detail before. There is one particular thing, however, which is worth mentioning; that is knowledge, according to Tagore, is twofold; it is accumulating and transcending. That whatever we gain as knowledge must always be used as means leading always beyond itself. In Tagore's words:

Life is a continual process of synthesis and not of additions. . . . Otherwise they have the insane aspect of the eternally unfinished; they become like locomotive engines which have railway lines but no stations.¹

This idea of accumulating and transcending knowledge necessarily gives an idea of continuous ongoing process of knowing; in this process of going collection of material is useful only because it can be used for gaining something else. The pursuit of this knowledge has been typically symbolized by Tagore in his famous poem "Balaka" (The Homeward Flight of Swans). The flight of these swans has been compared with man's search for final truth. For Tagore it is an idealistic journey of human life. The poem itself is an explanation of man's quest for knowledge according to Tagore's idea.

O flying swans.
Your wings drunk with the wine of tempest
And scattering peals of joyous laughter,
Raise waves of wonder in the still sky.
.....

¹Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 23.

As if the music of the wings
Brought for an instant the rhythm of movement
Into the heart of joyous immobility.
The mountains yearned,
To become the aimless cloud of summer,
The trees to take wing
And follow the trails of sound
And search the ends of space.

O winged wanderer,
Breaking the dreams of twilight
Waves of anguish arise,
Yearning for the beyond.
In the heart of the universe echoed the burning refrain.

Not here, not here, somewhere far beyond,
O flying swans.

.....
I behold this mountain this forest,
Spreading their wings,
Winging from island to island
Soaring from unknown to unknown.
To the beating of the wings of stars
Throbs the cry of light in darkness.

.....
I hear the countless voices of the human heart
Flying unseen
From the dim past to the dim unblossomed future.
Hear, within my own breast,
The fluttering of the homeless bird which
In company with countless others
Flies day and night
Through light and darkness,
From shore to shore unknown,
The void of the universe is resounding with the music
Of wings.
"Not here, not here, somewhere
Somewhere far beyond."¹

According to the ideals discussed above Tagore's educational philosophy would prescribe a type of education which can make provision and opportunity in the school and society which will make a student deeply concerned about human causes by identifying himself with universal human aspiration and struggle. A man of Tagorian education should have control both of mind and body; he is compassionate, sensitive towards his envi-

¹Translated from the Bengali poem "Hansa Balaka" by Aurobindo Bose (London: John Murray, 1955), pp. 1-3.

ronment and tries to improve his sensibility continuously. He is active in social life as well as in individual pursuit. An education of Tagore's ideal would allow individual students to set their physical, emotional, intellectual link with their surroundings and establish a bondage of love with what they come across. A student of Tagore's school should also be a man of discipline, have critical but appreciative obedience towards tradition not because he is absolutely fixed but because he carries the tradition of age-old experiences of human life. He believes in religious spirit but not in religious dogma; he knows every religion has grown out of some human need and therefore has some value; he himself is humanitarian and love, justice, action, creation, appreciation, compassion, co-operation, discipline, skill form parts of his religion. An educated man of Tagore's school should be well aware how to deal with problems of life objectively and independently as well as collectively; he should be well acquainted with his self-preservation of economic and cultural life. And finally, a well-educated man should have his emotion, feeling, thinking, sensitivity and sensibility so harmoniously balanced that he is not overwhelmed by just one aspect of them in times of facing problems of life but can use them collectively. He is an artist in every sphere of life, and keeps his capacities alert and open to receive the new and the unknown.

Rabindranath Tagore combined in his philosophy the wisdom of both East and West; he was appreciative of both eastern and western culture and his educational principles carry the stamps of both. Among the western poets his ideas are very close to Shelley's and Goethe's¹ and

¹Albert Schweitzer, "Goethe of India," Rabindranath Tagore, A Centenary Volume: 1861-1961. (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961).

among the eastern thinkers he is close to Buddha and was greatly influenced by the Baul, rural singers and poets of Bengal. In this section we will try to determine Tagore's ideology by comparing and contrasting it with that of three prominent thinkers of the West.

Tagore was greatly influenced by Plato, yet he is distinctly different from him in more than one respect. Plato and Tagore both share a religious tone about reality, both of them approve that ultimate reality is an ideal of man's education. In the field of knowledge Tagore agrees with Plato's theory of idea or forms; that is even in changes there is something essential which is unchangeable, for example a seed of a tree undergoes all kinds of changes but all through the changes the treeness of the tree is the same. Tagore also believes in Plato's metaphysical implication of this idea to a certain extent, i.e., the tree is real although particular trees are apparent. Tagore, however, did not believe that reality as we see it, touch it and experience it through our senses is not true. He would agree with Plato that the world and man are copies of the ideal reality but he would, by no means believe that the ideal is fixed and unchangeable and all our imperfection comes from the fact that the idea can not be perfectly impressed upon matter. Tagore on the other hand believes the ideal or the real is in the flux, the ideal is a hypothesis yet to be proved and there is no duality of matter and idea, but one grows into another. Tagore and Plato are almost the same type of believer but the difference that we find between them is the difference of Darwinian theory that highly influenced Tagore and because of this influence on Tagore we can call Plato a pure idealist and Tagore a scientific and practical idealist. The philosophies of Plato and Tagore are the same in the sense that both of them try to find the "vision of

truth", yet they differ as to the nature of truth; therefore, for one, education is drawing out what is already true whereas for the other knowledge is continuous knowledge-making or making the truth in the learner himself. In Tagore's philosophy of education we find senses and mind both receive equal importance, so does in Platonic education, e.g., the music and gymnastics. Yet the philosophies that guide these are different from each other. In Plato's philosophy an individual is not so important as in Tagore's philosophy. In the field of sociology Tagore completely denies that aristocracy should rule unchecked although he believes in individual differences. In the field of aesthetics, Plato gives little freedom of expression in art and literature whereas Tagore says this is exactly where man should receive greatest freedom for his self-creation. In Plato's drama a good man should never be punished and the music that completely relaxes or brings feeling of sadness should be avoided, whereas Tagore accepts good and evil, ugly and beautiful, sadness and happiness as aspects of reality. In short, in Plato's educational ideal or the ideal of life everything should be pre-planned and moulded and shaped according to the fixed idea, the ultimate reality which is believed and already known. But in Tagore's philosophy man has to use all experiences and exploit it gradually to reach the truth.

In the opposite side of Tagore's philosophy stands the philosophy of Nietzsche. A hater of romanticism, Christianity, democracy and supporter of Spartan discipline he directly clashes with the ideas of Tagore. But the most interesting observation that can be made in comparing Tagore and Nietzsche is that there is a basic point where they agree in spite of all their differences. Nietzsche's criticism of Christian idealism, idea of love, democracy, etc. is his direct criticism of their formalism and rigidity. Tagore also believes religion can not be taught nor brother-

hood aroused through mere preaching. Nietzsche is somewhat right when he says religion is nothing but taming the heart by means of fear; Tagore also believes religion is personal awareness and not fearful obedience. It is willful submission to definite actions and principle knowing that without devotion no progress is possible. But Tagore would no doubt shudder at the idea of mankind being taught according to an ideal where aristocracy and authority take up the place of individual freedom of growth, love, creativity and universality. These very words are enough to annoy Nietzsche; he would say there is no such thing called love; it is the power that matters in the world and evil is better than good. Bertrand Russell has conjured up an argument of Buddha and Nietzsche in front of God, which would be a similar quarrel between Tagore and Nietzsche, if they were nominated to convince God of their ideas. Russell imagines the debate thus:

Buddha would open the argument by speaking of the lepers, outcast and miserable; the poor toiling with aching limbs and barely kept alive by scanty nourishment the wounded in battle. . . . From all this load of sorrow, he would say, a way of salvation must be found, and salvation can only come through love.

Nietzsche, whom only omnipotence could restrain from interrupting, would burst out when his turn came. "Good heavens, man, you must learn to be of tougher fibre. Why go about snivelling because trivial people suffer. Trivial people suffer trivially, great men suffer greatly, they are noble. Your ideal is a purely negative one, absence of suffering. . . . I admire Alcibiades and the Emperor Frederick II and Napoleon. For the sake of such men any misery is worthwhile."

Buddha, who in the court of Heaven has learnt all history since his death and has mastered science with delight in the knowledge and sorrow at the use to which men have put it, replies with calm urbanity, "You are mistaken, Professor Nietzsche, in thinking my ideal a purely negative one . . . it has quite as much that is positive as is to be found in your doctrine. Though I have no special admiration for Alcibiades and Napoleon, I too have my heroes: my successor, Jesus, because he told men to love their enemies; the men who discovered how

to master the forces of nature and secure food with less labour; the medical men who have shown how to diminish disease; the poets and artists and musicians who have caught glimpses of the Divine beatitude. Love and knowledge and delight in beauty are not negations; they are enough to fill the lives of the great men that have ever lived."

All the same Nietzsche replies, "Your world would be insipid. . . Your love is compassion, which is elicited by pain; your truth if you are honest, is pleasant, and only to be known through suffering; and as to beauty what is more beautiful than the tiger, who owes his splendour to fierceness? No, if the Lord should decide for your world, I fear we should all die of boredom."

"You might," Buddha replies, "because you love pain and your love of life is a sham. But those who really love life would be happy as no one can be happy in the world as it is."¹

Rabindranath Tagore never was in favour of Nietzsche's ideas and agreed that Nietzsche was a kind of reaction to Europe's spiritual lethargy. Tagore realized Nietzsche's was a bad wave of thought and no constructive philosophy and he expressed this feeling to him even in personal conversation. Like Russell Tagore also believed that if Nietzsche's was a mere symptom of disease, the disease was quite well spread in the modern world.² Although Nietzsche did not live to see the result of such ideology, Tagore witnessed it in the second world war.

One of the most prominent educational philosophers with whom Tagore's ideology of education resembles, to a great extent, is John Dewey in spite of their basic philosophical difference. Tagore, like Dewey, is a believer that truth is not static and final, perfect and eternal. Tagore is also an instrumentalist in the sense that his philosophy is based upon a similar faith of knowing the truth gradually and

¹R. E. Egner, Bertrand Russell's Best (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), pp. 101-102.

²B. Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), p. 767.

creatively. Both Tagore and Dewey believe the aim of philosophy is the better organization of human life here and now, but while due to the materialistic belief Dewey puts his attention on methods, attitude and techniques alone for biological and social progress, Tagore tries to combine both metaphysics and practical techniques. Another important educational point on which these two thinkers agree is "experience". Tagore believes with the full eagerness of a pragmatist that experience constitutes the whole human drama, and education includes a total process of interaction of the living organism with its social and physical environment. Tagore also believes that the reality is in a constant process of change therefore knowledge should be a continuous reconstruction of experiences. In the field of methods of teaching Tagore resembles Dewey but the sharp distinction of an idealistic philosophy and pragmatic philosophy is detected when the former asserts that although he does not say that the ultimate reality is fixed, he has the dream of perfection in his mind which is the incentive to his religion, Action and Creation. This dream of an ideal is an axiomatic truth but its touch is felt in his emotion and feeling. The scientific attitude of Dewey is reluctant to accept this mystic view; he can express "the thoughts of the man of the machine shop on the street, the man of common sense" but can not scientifically approve that man bears within himself the seed of God. When Dewey says experience is all, Tagore says:

I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen
in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life
breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream
of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes
on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly
struggles for a voice.¹

By this time we know that Rabindranath Tagore is an idealist in every sense, yet he is not an idealist of Platonic order. We have seen that there are many thoughts of Realism or Materialism with which Tagore agrees. For example, like the realists Tagore lays stress on fidelity to real life and is opposed to the complete sentimentality but unlike the realists Tagore does not view facts just as they appear.

Like all realists Tagore has respect for scientific objectivity but unlike the realists Tagore believes in the subjective valuation. Like an idealist Tagore argues that it is impossible to prove that there is any object independent of the knower. Like a realist Tagore believes in man's emergence from a less conscious and intelligent state to a more conscious and intelligent state but unlike the realists Tagore believes there is a divine purpose of creation, i.e., to realize the perfect ultimate within the imperfect infinite, nature and man. In its attempt to be objective and scientific, realism tends to minimize man and the importance of human life. But Tagore says that an explanation of the world through physical sciences is not so much false as inadequate because it is incapable of giving us the whole truth. In the field of education realism preaches that there is certainly a basic core of knowledge that every human person should know in order to live a human life, a member of the world community, of his own nation and of the family. This should be studied by every student and should be presented with increasing complexity and discipline throughout the school curriculum. The reality being out there, the student has to copy it. But in Tagore reality has to be explored and conceived as a whole where human emotion, feeling and

¹Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem No. 3, p. 3.

intelligence are constantly being used to reveal the truth within the man. Therefore, the curriculum in Tagore's school is not fixed but explorative and experimental. But yet Tagore admits there is necessity of acquiring some basic skills through discipline. In an analysis like this Tagore stands neither in the extreme idealistic position nor in the extreme realistic position. We can freely admit that in the field of education Tagore is the only modern philosopher who has tried to combine the pragmatic, the realistic and the idealistic ideals into a system which may very well be called Humanism. It may be doubted if the word Humanism has ever had any precise connotation but we can call Tagore a Humanist, firstly because he accords to man the highest place within the phenomenal world and secondly, because he does not hesitate to attribute humanness even to God, and describes ultimate reality in human terms. But if Humanism means a dethroning of the infinite or a glorification of the finite man as finite, then certainly he can not be called a Humanist. He declares that man must continually outgrow himself, must come out of himself; the idea of the human God is supplemented by that of the "divine man". We have seen that Tagore accepts reality of the world as well as the self. But to accept the reality of everything is not to deny that one thing is more real than another. Nature and spirit are both real and yet the latter is more real than the former.

Of all the manifestations man is incomparable. The human self is unique, because in it God reveals himself in a special manner. . . . The revelation of the infinite is to be seen most fully not in the starry heavens, but in the soul of man.¹

Summary

In this chapter Tagore's position as a thinker is being determined by comparing his ideas with those of Plato, Nietzsche and John Dewey. If

¹Tagore, Sadhana, p. 21.

Plato is a pure speculative idealist, Tagore can be called a scientific idealist. In the philosophical ideas of Tagore a distinct influence of Platonic aim of perfection can be easily detected, but the basic difference that stands out is the difference of different attributes they ascribe to the nature of reality. For Plato, the reality is absolutely fixed with an educational implication of copying or knowing it; whereas Tagore believes reality is being continually made through man's mind and actions implying that a man makes his reality for himself. The two philosophers have similar ideas in the sense that both try to find the vision of truth yet they both differ as to the nature of truth.

Tagore is completely against Nietzsche's ideas, who hated such romantic ideas of universal unity, love, creation and optimism about the human race which are very characteristic of Tagore's. Nevertheless, these two opposed thinkers very subtly agree upon one point, i.e., there should not be any dogmatism and rigidity of faith and conceptions. In Tagore we also find many pragmatic ideas of John Dewey such as believing that truth is not static and final, perfect and absolute, but truth is in the making through man's mind and action here and now. In education, both Tagore and Dewey emphasize similar ideals such as learning by acting upon environment, exploring and making knowledge of oneself. They equally give importance to sense-learning, learning according to individual differences, learning with joyful interest, etc. They differ slightly, however, in their philosophical approach, namely, Tagore is an idealist who takes the metaphysical concern for the ultimate into account along with practical actions, whereas Dewey is primarily concerned with materialistic experiences of the present moment.

The conceptions that emerge from the discussion have the following educational implications: 1) education for freedom, 2) education for

self-creation through aesthetic enjoyment and practical action, 3) education for religious and moral guidance and finally, 4) education for accumulating knowledge to transcend the present condition of knowledge and actions of human beings.

Freedom is a problematic point in the field of education, it does not mean a mere absence of order or law. Instead, order is extremely necessary for the realization of freedom. Freedom means dependence upon something as well as independence from external limitations for free actions. It means a sense of trust in something that guides toward Mangal (Goodness and Perfection) which also implies an independent mind that enquires, explores, deducts, adds and eliminates the ways and means of life's action according to necessity.

Man grows in all respects when he creates. The desire for creation is such that it calls all human faculties, mundane or spiritual, into work and thus necessitates man's growth of the whole being. Aesthetic expressions are one particular aspect of education where men, through a desire for perfection and creation, are most prone to visualize good and bad, ugliness and beauty, blacks and whites of creation and thus try to bring out a truer reality through their works. Moreover, one's sense of good and bad, wrong and right are the outcome of his sense of his beauty and ugliness.

The spirit of religion is also an important aspect of education. It provides us with a devotional zeal of action and gives us an ideal for improving ourselves. Religious teaching should not be the teaching of particular religious doctrines but the spirit of religion which is common to all religions.

Finally, knowledge should be gained with an idea of exploiting it for the better realization of reality. It should be acquired with an

intention of putting all human qualities into action and consequently improving them and realizing the final truth that there is a universal unity and everything has meaning in relation to the inner link of reality. This knowledge necessarily produces a sense of belongingness, an aim of improvement and most of all, a tie of love with everything. And this final love is the ultimate aim of Tagore's education.

According to these ideals, an educated person of Tagore's school should have the following qualities.

1) A deep concern for human cause because he identifies himself with the universal man.

2) A mature control over mind and body for creative thought and action.

3) Sensitive, compassionate, he continuously tries to improve his creativity and sensibility.

4) He sets a physical, emotional and intellectual link with his environment and establishes loving bonds with what he comes across.

5) A student of Tagore's school is a man of discipline, obeys traditional and cultural activities critically and respectfully. He has obedience and respect towards tradition not because he believes in them dogmatically but because they carry the good things of age-old human experiences.

6) He is religious in spirit but not in dogma. To him all religions are the expression of man's love of perfection and therefore has respect for devotional spirit and thoughtfulness in all religions.

7) A humanitarian, Tagore's students love justice, action, creation, appreciation, cooperation, discipline and skill.

8) He knows how to deal with the problems of life objectively, independently and collectively.

9) He knows the ways of self-preservation in economic and cultural life.

10) An educated man has his emotions, feelings, thinking, sensitivity and sensibility so harmoniously balanced that he is not overwhelmed by any one of them in times of crisis but knows how to make use of them judiciously.

11) Finally, he is an artist in every part of life and never accepts anything passively but creatively. He also keeps his capacities alert to receive the new and the unknown.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION

The philosophy of Tagore and its educational implications are based upon an artistic attitude towards life. If the educational theories of Froebel, Herbert and Dewey can be called Pragmatic, the theories of Locke as Realistic and the Utopian theories of Plato as Idealistic, we can name Tagore's educational ideas as aesthetic. It is the idea of creation which is at the root of Tagore's suggestion. A man is an artist by nature and his education must allow him to create. Therefore, a good system of education should take those things into consideration which allow each individual student to assimilate knowledge, observe the environment and feel one with it and work upon it to make his truth and add value to it. For this aim freedom to be one's true self and freedom of exploration are necessary. Natural tendency and individual interest should also be considered two main factors of education because in the unhampered, well-guided explorative tendency and the desire for making this experience as one's own in all forms and actions lie the aim of education.

A careful observation of Tagore's ideas shows that Tagore's conception of aesthetics has great affinity with what he prescribes for education. First of all, according to Tagore, aesthetics is a tendency to manifest reality through art work. But aesthetics is not limited within painting, music, dance and all such accepted arts, but in every

step and sphere of life. The urge to create the beautiful and reveal the truth is in every activity of human life. This desire to create teases everyone vaguely but can not be directly communicated. It is also sensing, feeling, understanding or even having a vision of something that begs to be created, expressed outwardly and thus be communicated to others. Therefore, art is an attempt to find reality through feeling, sensing, understanding, and manifesting the truth from vision and imagination. The aim of education also is not other than this. The basic aim of education is to know truth from personal exploration, action and creation.

Secondly, aesthetics is a tendency to ascribe value or appreciation to things that an individual can feel, see and experience in his internal self. This realization of a truth that comes suddenly either through imagination or some practical experience or inspiration, needs two things to be manifested in full, i.e., a blending of the creative vision or spirit with the concrete materials for art work and the skill or craftsmanship to reveal the truth that is teasing to be expressed with its original beauty, energy and detailed vigour. An artist, according to Tagore, does not merely state, but modifies, selects, distorts and enriches the matter of fact and thus puts his own appreciation or value to the work of art. Art is an act of appraisal where the outer material mixes with the internal spirit. So is the case with education. Like art, the function of education is not mere assimilation of facts but accepting the facts only to create, modify, enrich and make them of some worth to each individual. In this system of education, training, craftsmanship, and mastery of skills are as important as following independent thought, feeling, reason and imagination. In an art work the concrete fact of the canvas along with its particular size and quality is

important, the paints and brushes are important and so is the artist's vision. Likewise, an educational system should take care of material school conditions and the students should have discipline, restraint and training as much as freedom of thought, likes, dislikes and interests. The teacher should have the discretion to keep the balance of these various aspects of education according to the necessity.

Thirdly, aesthetic experience tries to reveal the universal, the real. In this respect we can refer to Tagore's Upanishadic belief in Satyam, Shundaram, Shivam and Anandam. The idea is almost Keatsian:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"--that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.¹

But in Tagore, perhaps, this idea goes a little further. According to him Truth (Satyam) and Beauty (Shunder) are directly linked with Shivam, i.e., God. Whatever is beautiful has something of Shivam and Satyam. And a perfect realization of them all in oneself is Anandam or happiness. This is the happiness of unity. Art is an attempt to realize this unity and so is education. The main reason behind Tagore's emphasis upon aesthetic education is that it gives an opportunity to visualize the whole and that to create that "wholeness" one is likely to use all his faculties. Take for example, the art of dancing. To Tagore it is far from being mere movement and rhythm. To express an honest idea through dance one uses one's imagination and coordinates it with the physical movement and rhythm and thereby uses his sensitivity, argument, reason, emotion and imagination. Therefore, it is Tagore's conviction that true thoughtfulness, creative tendency, hard work, moral poise, dignity of

¹John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Major British Writers, ed. Walter J. Bate and Others (2 vols.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959), II, p. 346.

human life and decency in every sphere of life which form the aims of education come from man's sense of aesthetics.

It is to be mentioned in this respect that when Tagore says that aesthetics reveal the universal and the real he does not only include beauty as the ultimate truth. The real includes all the ugly and the beautiful, the whole and the fragments, the spirit and the matter, and the aesthetic is the only means to view them all together and try to transcend them unto perfection. Aesthetic education is the best guide to a balanced education and that is the reason why Tagore had emphasized aesthetic education in Santiniketan; but to do this Tagore always gave a caution, i.e., while emphasizing aesthetics, he distinguished it from sheer emotion and depthless sentiment. It is not the softening of human nature for which he aims but a balanced personality.

There is another aspect of Tagore's educational implications. That is the idea of love and action. Tagore says that the awareness of universal unity is also the aim of education. This knowledge of unity is a mystical belief of Tagore which is hard to describe but can be felt. Tagore's idea of love allows one to identify with everything in his environment. This love is that state which we have seen in Tagore's characters: in the love of deaf and dumb Shuvashini who speaks to her inanimate surroundings thinking them as her own ones. She speaks to the cows whose eyes respond to her mute love. We have seen this love in the tomboy country girl Mrinalini who is vaguely in love with the soil, the air, the mango and the banyan trees and the children and peasants of the neighbourhood; in fact she is in love with everything except her highly educated, civilized husband of the social world who never understands her. We have seen this love in the behaviour of the boy who runs away from home only to feel a kinship with the world; he does not know what he is

searching for but the reader understands when he finds the boy swimming in the big river with the happiness and security of a fish in the water. This is the feeling of belongingness to the world which Tagore feels is very necessary for the final knowledge of Nirvana, an all-understanding all-loving unity. Action to improve, to create, follows from this feeling of acceptance by the world which one creates and modifies.

Tagore's educational implication can be summarized in such terms as: education should not hamper man's basic qualities; there should be a spontaneous growth of likes and dislikes, thinking and judgment, imagination and action. Secondly, man's sense of beauty should be enriched because this aesthetic is likely to give a religion which might be called man's religion which is good and satisfactory without even a God of concrete shape. Finally, the whole life is a canvas and an individual's personality is a canvas incarnate. The life is a continuous struggle to add colour and beauty to the canvas in the truest way. As we started this thesis by saying that the universe is the expression of God's Lila and is a continuous game of creation so we conclude by saying that education is a means of equipping oneself with all those qualities which are necessary to participate efficiently in this game of creation.

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