



STUDY HUMANITY AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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Abstract: The idea of the human, which played a central role in the thought-world of Rabindranāth Tagore, was invoked by him in 'Sabhyatār sangkat' ('Crisis in Civilization', 1941), his last address in Santiniketan, to envisage a possible future on the other side of a global civilizational crisis: Tagore did not live to see the full genocidal impact of the Nazi regime, but had he done, he might still not have endorsed the anti-humanist sweep of Adorno's famous observation on the silencing of poetry, the most refined expression of human language: '[T]o write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today.' To revivify civilization cannot be anything but a human project; crisis, however deep, can only be contested in Rabindranath's thinking by the figure of the human. Yet the idea of the human, at least in its essentialist formulation, has been under severe pressure in recent times. The attack took its sustenance from Nietzsche, one of the first architects of the anti-humanist gesture. In European modernity, the human, in its essentialist formulation, travels from Renaissance painters and thinkers to the Cartesian discovery of the centred *cogito* to the ethics of human dignity propounded by Kant. Each of these conceptions argues for a common presence of the human across histories and cultures, subverting the idea of difference. Nietzsche famously questioned this idea of 'man as an *aeterna veritas* [eternal truth], as something constant in the midst of all flux, as a sure measure of things' by noting the lack of historical sense in philosophers and concluding that there are no eternal facts, just as there are no absolute truths.

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Introduction:

Rabindranath Tagore's concept of 'man' shows that he attributes highest rank to human existence. According to him nothing is as real as man. He places man above all living beings, Nature and sometimes above God too. It is the starting point of Tagore's philosophy of humanism. We may call Tagore a humanist because (1) he attributes humanness', to whole world, and even to God, (2) he attributes 'divinity' to man and (3) Man as finite worldly being is given importance in his philosophy; and in all his thinking, deeds and creative works his love for humanity is expressed.

The nature of Indian humanism is spiritualistic. Indian humanists give importance to spiritual ethical nature of man, whereas Western humanists, though do not reject the importance of ethics for human beings, give more importance to material nature of man than to spiritual. The humanism of Rabindra Nath is influenced by Renaissance humanists, still his humanism resembles Indian humanism of Upanishads, Buddhism and Vaisnavism, and therefore is spiritual in its nature. Though Tagore gives equal importance to man's economic, political

and social welfare, he looks at these problems from spiritual viewpoint. Any attempt, made for welfare of mankind is to him adequate where it helps to reveal the spiritual and ethical nature of man. Man is accorded highest place in the world because he has spirit in him. Man is replica of the Divine spirit, the ultimate consciousness is revealed in man. Tagore has seen the great 'purusa' the universal spirit manifested in man who is one, the poet has seen him in many. Therefore, we see, there is no conflict between his spiritualism and humanism. His spiritualism does not make him reluctant of world and man, but brings him nearest to man. Belief in spirituality is translated into love for humanity. For realizing the spirit in himself man does not have to go to any supernatural world, but in this worldly existence he realizes spiritual nature of him. The aim of spiritual discipline for Tagore is to enter into the hearts of all men. Tagore believes in harmony between man, nature and the universal spirit. Therefore, he says, "From grass to man, wherever in the world my mind becomes indifferent, there my spirituality becomes limited. When our consciousness, our spirit get diffused in the whole world then we feel all consciousness with our consciousness.

Rationalism in Humanism:

Tagore is rationalist humanist. His belief in spirituality of man does not make him non-believer of rational power of man. He gives importance to reason and so is against any prejudice and pre-conceived notion, be it of religious sect or narrow nationalism. Tagore accepts the reality of the two, man and God, but man for him is great because God is present in him. He says that when we insult man we insult God, who dwells in the heart of every man. He believes that God has created the world but man will have to give it meaning by making it charged with values. Man's truth is grounded on his own greatness and perfectness. He is purifying himself more and more through many births and this God also is becoming greater with the purification of Himself. Thus in this period, man has become more real to him than God.

Human Love: An Abode of God:

In 'Vaisnava Kabita' he says that the Vaishnava poets have pictured the love play of the divine lovers by seeing the lovers of this earth. Human love, for him is a non-worldly thing. Man wants to get the taste of love of God by loving his beloved and removes the distance between earth and heaven. There is one infinite source of flow of love, in upward direction it is flowing towards God and in downward direction it is coming towards man. When we love someone clearly we forget ourselves and thus reach to God. When a man loves a woman he rises above his ego, and then he can feel unity of himself not with his beloved only, but the whole world, comes within his heart. Thus, human love in any form is great, as it gives glimpse of the infinity and divinity in man. Rabindranath found immortality in human love and affection, human sacrifice and suffering. The poet sees his God in man:

If we try to find our God in temples only, forgetting man, we miss all. When we try to get Him uniting ourselves with all men we realize Him. He lives in the heart of all men, Therefore, human love promoting the welfare of mankind is the best expression of one's gratitude towards God, The service of man is service of God. The worship of universe will be meaningless if it will not embody in itself the service for man, according to Tagore. For achieving God it is not necessary for any person to leave his family or society, But his 'bonds with mankind' will pull him towards God. The poet lays emphasis on the individual's relation to society, his unending debt to the collective culture of mankind and his corresponding obligation to serve the common good.

Philosophy of Acceptance:

The another aspect of Tagore's humanism consists in his acceptance of life. He urges men to accept freely and joyously the great gift of life and to realise that life

in its own right and for its own sake can be beautiful. He does not teach us the philosophy of negation or of barren renunciation, but a realization completely comprehensive. He is not an escapist rather expresses his joy in the act of existence or living. Real happiness is to be found not in pursuits of distant gains, but in the enjoyment of the trivialness of the moment. His romanticism doesn't ignore reality, it's romance springs out of an acknowledgement of the trivialities of daily life. He says in poem no 11 of Gitanjali: "Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever Meet him and stand by him in toil and sweat of thy brow."

Against Social Injustice:

Tagore lays much emphasis on social evil of India and he thinks that these social evils are at the root of India's backwardness in the field of politics and economics. No other poet except Tagore has ever written so ferociously about the orthodoxy of his own people. In one of his poem in Gitanjali he poignantly strikes at the hollowness of Indian traditions, hollow rituals. In poem 64 he satirizes on the Hindu religious custom of floating lamps on the river. The lights are believed to reach the souls of the departed ancestors. The rich people want to dedicate their lamps to the empty sky and let them uselessly burn out over the water whereas the poor live in darkness as they can't afford even a lamp. Tagore satirizes the callousness of upper middle class who is indifferent to the suffering of their poor brethren. In other of his social poems he protests against all inequalities and injustice. He satirizes on caste system, social evil of sati, untouchability, difference of rich and poor.

Real Freedom: Patriotism:

Tagore, like all other patriots wanted that India would be free from alien rules. But at the same time he was aware that only political freedom cannot be the main objective. To him, freedom movement meant struggle against British administration as well as against prejudices and superstitions of people which are bar to real freedom of their personality. He says therefore, "Swaraj is not our objective. Our fight is spiritual fight. It is for man. We are to emancipate man from the meshes."

Freedom is not an object which can be attributed to us from outside but we will have to acquire it through selfless service for our country. To him freedom means full opportunities of development of every individual in the country. The poem no. 35 of Gitanjali expresses his whole concept of man's internal and eternal freedom:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
where knowledge is free;

where the world has not been broken
 up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
 where words come out from the depth of truth;
 where tireless striving-stretches it's
 arms towards perfection;
 where the clear stream of reason has
 not lost its way into the dreary
 desert sand of dead habit;
 where the mind is led forward
 by thee into ever-widening thought and action -
 Into that heaven of freedom, my
 Father, let my country aware,

Love for Nature: Romantic Imagination:

Tagore's romantic imagination enables him to pierce to the reality beneath the external appearances. Thus he discovers the eternal and the Infinite in the most commonplace objects and phenomena of Nature. The beauty of Nature for him is but an expression of joy of the Infinite in the act of creation. He sends the screen of the familiar and show things in a new and unfamiliar light. His imagination easily pierces the appearance and reveals the joy and wonder that accompanied "Creation's everlasting first moment." This is the theme of one of the poems of Tagore.

Nature Accompanies with Human Emotions:

Tagore's concept of affinity between man and Nature is another aspect of his humanism. Tagore perceives a strong affinity between man and Nature. Infact he saw it as the outward manifestation of God. Like Wordsworth he speaks about Nature - as a friend, and the guide. The nature rejoices with the joy of mankind. The birds chirp, the flowers and leaves dance, the golden yellow light scatters and doves begin to coo. All participate in the mirth and joy of mankind.

Romantic Glorification of the Child:

Just as the poet seeks in nature the symbol of the Infinite, so also he seeks it in the child. Like the Romantics, he is constantly glorifying the child. First, the innocence, purity, and carefree nature is in lime light. The unconcern towards the sea of life, the child is constantly busy in playing on the shore of sea of eternal life. The carefree child devoid of problems, struggle, callousness, lust, guile and loss gives a glimpse of divine glory. The element of romance flows in poem no 61 where poet Speaks about the mystery of child's birth and glorifies his activities. The poet asks where does this beautiful child come from? How does it come? And he answers that sleep on its eyes seems to come from two blushing buds in a fairy village that has been lighted up by a glow worms. The smile on its lips seems to come from the young pale of the crescent moon that has touched the vanishing autumn cloud.

Where does its freshness come from? It comes from the youth of its young mother and the silent mystery of love that is pervading her heart. The beauty

of this poem lies in the extremely delicate similes used by the poet, then another aspect of humanism. The devotion of child towards his guileless play and his innocence towards the mystery of life and death, the ignorance towards the hectic life and materialistic lust is being appreciated by Tagore. Along with poet, Nature delights in child's joy. When the child dances the leaves play music and ocean sings.

Dominating Personality in Tagore's Poetry: Man

Humanism is the dominating theme of Tagore's poetry. Man is his recurring theme and Tagore is concerned with man's glorification, welfare and his salvation.

In Gitanjali we see the poet at iirst hesitates that whether the union between man and God is possible or not because man is much smaller than God, who is king of kings. But later on, we find his hesitation is overcome. Soon he expresses the greatness of finite with the greatness of Infinite. Man is not only devotee of God but he is a lover. Therefore we see the poet of Gitanjali wants to give himself completely to his God, but at the same time he does not forget his own self. Man loves God and his highest aim is to meet Him but God, too loves him. From eternal time God is coming nearer to man for meeting him. God waits patiently for man's coming, for getting his love. It is man only who expresses God, he is His expression and here lies his greatness over the Infinite. He is immortal in that aspect where he is 'true' transcending the small partial Ego of him. In his inner being he actualises the desire of all, gives form to joy of all. But if he goes to the opposite direction, he falls from the truth of humanity.

Tagore, reminds man that they are 'Children of Immortality'. His immortality consists in his greatness. Man's greatness is compared by Tagore with the morning sun whose horizon is far before us. Tagore also believes in man's infiniteness, his divineness. According to him, by nature he is moral, spiritual and so he wants to attain perfectness surpassing his animality, his egoism. He has never lost sight of the divine in man though in any particular act he has seen the animality in man being expressed, because he knows that those are temporary failures of man for reaching the perfect man in his inner being. Ultimately the real nature of him which consist in perfectness will be attained by him. Dr. K.P. Menon says about Tagore, "His optimism-faith and hope in man and the final outcomes - 'the Divine in Man' that is what he never forgot."

Being a humanist in true sense, he believes in the greatness of finite. His humanism preaches that it is not the aim of man to try to perfect himself only, but he must work to make humanity more and more perfect. He must work for the freedom of consciousness of other members of society. Then only

he can get freedom in true sense, He says "The freedom which one attains by one's power is useless, and meaningless unless he gives that to others." One cannot attain salvation in the real sense when others are in bondage of selfishness grossness. The realized souls, according to Tagore do active service to humanity and endeavour to lift up the masses and to make them ideal and spiritual.

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