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TAGORE'S VIEWS ON ALLIANCE OF THE MORTAL AND THE IMMORTAL

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ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore was a literary genius who expressed his views on spiritualism, mysticism, religion, self realization, oneness with the Divine Being and various other aspects of life. A human being is, essentially, a part of the Supreme Reality. The soul seeks fulfillment through the union with the Almighty which is its ultimate purpose. God reveals Himself in the different forms of nature. An individual can become one with the Supreme Power only when he has freed himself from the bondage of Maya which has captivated the human soul. A man is caught in the meshes of the practical and materialistic world and is unable to identify his real self. One forgets that the ultimate purpose of life is to follow the course of truth and humanity. Tagore's poetry presents spirituality and mystical values becoming one with the Divine. His collection of devotional songs, *Geetanjali* discloses his outlook on the various aspects of human life and the Divine. God is engaged in the continuous process of creation through which He manifests Himself. It is the yearning of the soul to unite with the Omnipotent. But it gets itself involved in the worldly attachments and the practical world forgetting its true nature. It is the interrelatedness between the two which forms the basis of the universe. The present paper explores the views of Tagore on this alliance between the human and the Divine, mortal and the Immortal as observed in his poetry, *Geetanjali* in particular.

Keywords: Creation, inter-relatedness, mysticism, spiritualism

Rabindranath Tagore, a multitalented genius, was the first Indian who received Nobel Prize in English literature for the collection of his devotional poems, *Geetanjali* and raised India to the world literary scene. Tagore expresses his views regarding the communion of finite with the Infinite, a connection between a human being and the Supreme Being. According to him death is a new birth of the spirit into the great unknown. The Divine Being expresses itself also through the myriad forms of Nature.

The concept of Jevan Devata constantly appeared all through his career transcending the poet's self. It is the Lord of his life. The Supreme Person expresses Himself in those longings of the individual which connect him with the larger world lying beyond. Jevan Devata is the guide of the poet's life, who happily leads the poet through all obstacles and crookedness towards the fulfillment, towards the union with the Infinite. Tagore has full trust in larger life. This inner self is not only the Lord of the poet's self but also its lover, for love is the fundamental principle of life.

Jevan Devata works within and through the individual soul, making it long for union with the Infinite. It also works within the Divine making it desire for union with the finite. This Supreme Being is the source of life. He seeks his best expression in an individual's personality which is the base of both religion and art.

Tagore is a firm believer in the essential unity of man and the external universe. Tagore seems to acknowledge the benignity of nature and the unity and the harmony of the world. The body is the sign and the utterance of the soul. Man has built his soul in the playground of nature.

Tagore's poetry is an authentic representation of the mystical values. According to S.B. Mukherjee, "Tagore's poetry, in its integrity, its totality of multitudinous facets, is a vast philosophical poem."¹

It is the freedom from the noisy world of action, an escape from the machinery of life which brings man face to face with the Infinite. It is this surplus which enables man to express himself in disinterested literary, scientific and artistic activity. Divinity is in man and nature and above them also. One can approach the Almighty only when one has acquired freedom from bondage of practical necessity. It is through this freedom that man approaches and blends with the Omnipotent as a river mingles with the sea.

It is this surplus of time and energy which makes man a creator. One cooks and prepares his own food in his own way out of the materials supplied by nature. It gives him a sense of power and a sense of happiness which are spiritual experiences. This becomes possible only because of the surplus which man alone enjoys. The surplus provides him with freedom and leisure and one can satisfy his likes and dislikes. It is this which makes one a creative artist by enabling him to give a concrete shape to his dreams and visions. This ability to behold dreams and visions is called imagination and its creations provide pleasure. Imagination is creative and not utilitarian. This creative imagination is a part of man's heritage from the Divine. The Almighty is a supreme creative artist and His creation is universe. The act of creation is delightful and so delight is the basic principle of the

creation in Tagore's philosophy. This universe is His Lila according to Vaishnava poetry. The first characteristic of the Divine's lila is that it is not guided by any purpose or motive. It exists in and for itself. Although it is a delightful activity which doesn't refer to any ulterior goal, it doesn't follow that it is a mere pastime not connected with the artist's deeper self. Creation is a manifestation. God is seen as the Supreme will and He expresses himself in this universe. Lila is not only unmotivated but also impeded and elusive. It is a ceaseless process in which the divine artist both expresses and hides Himself. God didn't cease the process of creation after a fixed period of time. He is continuously depicting Himself in the finite, in the heaven full of stars, in the flowers and in the soul of man.

The final truth of life is inter-relatedness, the unity which is the result of harmony. A work of art is the revelation of the personality of the artist. This personality has a centralizing and controlling influence on the works created. This sense of inner unity can be entirely realized only if the artist feels the presence of the Supreme Person who comprehends both the human and the material world.

Tagore has no trust in absolute Identity. He is a dualist who has faith in a mysterious identity in difference. The duality is there but it is not the ultimate truth according to him. Harmony and rhythm is the universal law governing all life and matter and Tagore continuously reconciles and harmonizes the opposites of life due to this trust. There is a constant synthesis of opposites in his poetry. Therefore, freedom means freedom from bondage, but can be realized only through bondage. Just as the string is bound to the harp and it gives rise to music, in the same way life realizes its freedom in the midst of bonds. The Almighty is bound to the universe of His own creation. There will be no creation at all if He were entirely free. He is apart from it but also in it. God is eternal and infinite but His infinity is achieved in time and space through endless forms.

Tagore also requests for a synthesis of Being and Becoming. Brahma is the Supreme Being, but we have also to become Brahma. We should Become and lose ourselves in the sea of Supreme

Being like a river. This process of Becoming and Blending with God is everlasting like the everlasting flow of the river towards the sea. This is also the continuous manifestation of the Almighty. Mutability is the law of life and there is unity in diversity everywhere.

Tagore also harmonizes the opposition between illusion and truth. The world may be Maya, but it is also necessary for without appearance reality cannot exist and truth will be hollow without illusion. It can be said that truth derives its significance from the existence of illusion. It is through the illusory world that God expresses Himself and it is by reaching forth to the Absolute that illusion justifies its existence. Life manifests itself through reality and illusion.

Tagore harmonizes death and life as well. Death has its own place in the scheme of life. Rabindranath Tagore, himself, had to suffer bereavements one after another but he was not dismayed. He felt that the death was swallowed up in the victory of life over death. He realized that his sorrow only made him capable to witness the beauty and charm of nature in a more correct perspective after the death of Jyotindranath's wife. His attachment to the world was relaxed. He came to realize a deeper meaning of the beauty of the world. The death provided him with a sense of freedom. He came to admit that death is the completion and fulfillment of life. There is nothing lost in death. It is the medium through which life ceaselessly flows and renews itself.

Just as death has its place in the rhythm of life, in the same way evil, ugliness and imperfection have their own importance and significance. Creation is a ceaseless process continuously perfecting itself. Imperfection can be called as only incompleteness, a part of the rhythm of life. The tragedies of life are only a part of the rhythm of life through which the joy of life asserts itself.

It is this very rhythmic harmony that governs the individual's relations with society and the universe. One's first consciousness of personality is an assertion of one's separateness from others. But it is incomplete. The completeness is acquired when one knows himself as a part of the larger unit. A man is bound to other men and to the

external universe through a variety of relations. There is a rhythm of separateness in relatedness.

Mysticism denotes that the divine reality may be realized directly. Tagore always knew that he had communion with the Omnipresent and this spiritual consciousness casts a net of mysticism all round. Tagore believes that union with the Almighty, like most of the mystics, could take place in two ways: - first through trust and love and second, through perception. That's why Tagore enunciates the blessings of love and the consequent union with the beloved in his poetry. Describing one of his spiritual experiences, Tagore says that one morning he was staring upon the sun when all of a sudden:

A covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. The radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart and flooded it with universal light.²

He had witnessed the world only with his eyes before this experience. Tagore now started beholding everything with the whole of his consciousness. All his writings express the joy of attaining the Infinite with the finite.

Tagore's songs get their basis from the emotional experiences of one whose soul longs to feel intuitively the soul of existence through trust and love in this world's festival. The wanderer who is restless in the poet is very intense to establish the relationship with the Great Beyond as he calls him. The mysticism's true and genuine power is the strength of its psychology in the science of self.

The Crescent Moon develops the love between mother and child in such a way that it achieves metaphysical heights. The Gardener deals with the meditative design of love between man and woman, the divine she at the center of the universe which reminds one of the great Sufi poets. Once this continuity is believed into existence, the rapturous happiness and spiritual illumination fills the entire earth, and the poet experiences immortality in all mortal things. It is love that blesses and flows through the creation and gives its glow even to the blade of grass.

Tagore's concept of love, therefore, assumes spiritual significance. Humayun Kabir writes:

Tagore's love for man unconsciously and inevitably merges into love of God... For him God was essentially love. The love of the mother for her child or the love of the lover for the beloved are only instances of the Supreme love that is God. And this love expresses itself not only in the ecstatic devotion of the mystic but also in the routine of everyday life of the common man.³

Tagore spiritualizes love. His spiritual love presents the impact of Vaishnava love poetry which revolves around Radha and Krishna. The secular wish of the lover becomes the spiritual want of the human soul for union with the Almighty.

Nature is the manifestation of Omnipotent which is the medium of spiritual communion. The Supreme Person manifests Himself in the elements of nature as well as in the consciousness of man. Tagore says in the *Creative Unity*, "This great world where it is a creation, an expression of the infinite... has its call for us."⁴

Almighty is inherent in nature for Tagore. The sun and the moon, the hills and the rivers, the storm and the sea are outbursts of the Divine Reality. The inherence of Lord has to be realized in the objects of nature. According to Rabindranath, the relation of man to nature is one of interdependence. He creates nature and man in and through whom he manifests himself.

The Supreme Being is the immanent spirit which guides, leads and controls everything in the universe. God exists in every form of life according to Tagore. It is this alliance of mortal with the Immortal which makes life complete and fulfils the purpose of the creation of the universe.

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