



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

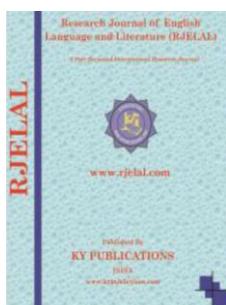
## TAGORE'S INNER SELF IN *THE RELIGION OF MAN*

Dr. RUCHIKA KATIYAR

Department of English, APB Government PG College, Agastyamuni, Rudraprayag

E-mail-[katiyar25ruchika@gmail.com](mailto:katiyar25ruchika@gmail.com)

<https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7219.107>



### ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore's literary creations portray the Inner Self of the individual which 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. There is an inner person behind the outward current of thoughts, feelings and events. Tagore who believes in unity and love as the principle of harmony doesn't witness the guide as distinct from the human self. A mystic communion with the Infinite not only overwhelms the human soul with ineffable bliss, but also irradiates the soul with dazzling light of truth and wisdom. 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 draws images from common everyday objects of nature and, thus, the mystical and the spiritual is made concrete and communicated with lucidity and clarity. Nature is the melody of God according to Tagore. The paper focuses on exploring this specific concept given by Tagore.

Keywords: Illumination, vitality, religion, immortality

Rabindranath Tagore expresses his idea of the inner self which leads him towards fulfillment. It is one of the distinguishing features of Rabindranath's outlook of life that he looks upon the Supreme Person as comprehending the individual and the universe. The Supreme Person expresses Himself in those yearnings of the individual which connect him with the larger world lying beyond. The Lord of the poet's life shades off into the Lord of the universe, and the boatman comes from the other shore, crossing the wild sea to meet her. Tagore continuously preaches the message of harmony and unity. There is perfect harmony of idea and emotion, of poetry and prophecy in his poetry which surprises the western world. Tagore uses imagery and symbolism to enhance the expressive range of his language. It is through symbolism that highly abstract truths can be communicated in an easy comprehensible form.

The guide of the poet's life happily leads the poet through all obstacles and crookedness towards the fulfillment. He says that there is a duality in man. It is little known or reached. It is this inner self which may be called Lord of life. Around all human facts, there is an atmosphere of expectation. A person always struggles to be greater than he is. He is a fragment of finitude and his bliss is in the union with the Infinite. It is this desire that gives man his assurance of immortality. The Lord of the poet's life, is same with the Almighty who is the Lord of the universe:

Ramakrishna expressly maintains that it is absurd to pretend that the world is unreal so long as we form part of it, and receive from it for the maintenance of our own identity the unquenchable conviction although hidden in our own lantern of its reality. Even the saint who comes down

from Samadhi to the plain of ordinary life is forced to return to the envelope of his differentiated ego, however attenuated and purified. He is flung back into the world of relativity. So far as his ego is relatively real to him, so far will this world also be real; but when his ego has been purified, he sees the whole world of phenomena as the manifold manifestation of the Absolute to the senses<sup>1</sup>.

The flower in all its beauty is a symbol of the fulfillment of the human desire for the eternal. The bud fulfills itself in the flower and the flower in the fruit:

Everything belongs to this river of the soul, flowing from the dark unplumbed reservoir of our being down the inevitable slope to the ocean of the conscious, realized and mastered Being. And just as the water condenses and rises in vapor from the sea to the clouds of the sky to fill again the reservoir of the rivers, the cycles of creation proceed in uninterrupted succession<sup>2</sup>.

The universe is God's lila in the sense that He delights in it as a player in his sport, but it is also a work of God, the artist, who is continuously expressing Himself. He is the Supreme One who comprehends the universe and unites all things and men through the perfect relationship of love. In the Religion of Man, the poet refers to his Great Illuminations which is a mystic experience and says that he felt that he had found his religion at last, the religion of man, in which the Infinite became defined in humanity and came close to him so as to need his cooperation and love. This is the truth of Jevan Devata who is also the Lord of the Universe besides being the guide of Rabindranath's life and who is defined not only through his manifestation in the poet but also through all other things of the world.

He has discovered the secret of the world as a poet and revealed the reason why the lily is pale for the moon's love and the lotus draws her veil aside before the morning sun. The meaning of life for him lies in a universal inter-relatedness and he

has not only presented the secret affinity between one object in nature and another, but witnessed the commonest physical things as symbols of man's passions, desires and ideals.

The simplest example of creative vitality in nature is the flower which grows and fades and then renews itself in the dust. The flower symbolizes the vast mystery of creation for it serves no useful purpose. The poet supposes it is the embodiment of the dreams of the grass. The flower finds its fulfillment in the fruit which symbolizes the desire of the individual soul for union with the Infinite. It is the soul's fulfillment. It grows in an environment of thorn and this symbolizes the victory of charm and happiness over pain and ugliness. It symbolizes love and the power of the love and therefore the bridegroom is welcomed with flowers and man offers prayers to God with flowers. Its hundred petals symbolize life's many-sidedness. It takes birth and dies and this symbolizes the rhythm of life or cycle of birth, death and rebirth. It symbolizes the perpetual renewal of life, in ever new forms of beauty. The sensuous appeal of the flower is extremely complex. It is soft, beautiful and fragrant. It carries in its silence God's own melodies. Its charm is possibly God's reply to the theory that phenomenal life is Maya. Darkness perpetually renews itself in light which tells the renewal of life through death. The darkness ceaselessly marches towards light, so the poet calls it a beautiful Queen and imagines her riding in her chariot to meet light across the sky.

The dark night is the mystery of life. And since Almighty's presence can be felt rather than seen, the poet imagines Him as the king of the Dark Chamber whom Queen Sudarshana courts as a bridegroom hidden from sight. Darkness is also terrible and thus, the Destroyer is imagined as concealing himself behind the veil of the night and the storm is God's own signal. The opposition between light and darkness, the terrible and the frail is not the final truth, as they are only a part of the rhythm of life and contribute to the ultimate impression of harmony. The chief glory of night is in its stars which illuminate darkness and appear as anklets of light. The stars are freedom, happiness and love. They are as flowers blooming in the sky

and they seem to pour forth the melodies of the Omnipotent. They are heaven's lamps which are like earthen lamps and are yet different from them. They continue to give light when man's frail lamp is broken but when they are concealed behind clouds, man's frail lamps constantly dispel darkness providing light. They seem to be fixed and the space between them is the period of separation. In their blending of light and darkness, they describe the rhythm of life and death. They are known to be constantly moving towards each other, which reveals the attraction of love and the human longing for reunion with the Infinite.

The horizon is the meeting of the finite and the Infinite. The blue sky is the infinitude, the tenderness and the majesty of the Almighty and death may be said to present the passage from the known to the unknown skies. The floating clouds are the joyous vagrancy and freedom in which lies the real significance of life. The flight of birds in the sky represents the desire of the human soul for that freedom which it ever fails to acquire. Whereas the wings of a home seeking bird in the dusk is the sweeping energy of human love for the poet. God is presented both by the sky and the nest. The Upanishads say, "Man becomes true if in this life he can apprehend God, if not, it is the greatest calamity for him."<sup>3</sup>

A flock of birds flying swiftly is the passion for speed which is in the heart of the universe. The world is on the move in the quest for a home or place of rest in the far away. A number of images present this ceaseless flow. It is presented most frequently by a current of water and life is the Eternal Fugitive.

The river frequently presents the journey of life or death and the Almighty is set to be the Boatman. This boatman commenced his job long ago and he has been doing it ever since. This represents the permanence of the ordinary occupations of life as contrasted with the impermanence of empires. He represents the Lord of his life, who attracts man with the lure of the far away, for it is he alone who knows the secret of the other shore. This idea is also presented by the open road which leads to strange countries and makes the

heart wistful for the unknown. The traveler hears the call of the unknown and commences the voyage. The far off goal towards which the river moves is the shoreless sea which in its darkness and silence seems to be the custodian of the secret for which the waterfall or the river rushes forth. But when the sea is tossed by the storm and its waves are angry, it becomes a sign not of the assurance of truth but of an eternal question which it puts to the skies. In the sea and in the wind, there is a call of the eternal stranger, and when the huge ocean lifts its arms to the infinite sky for the unattainable, we have in that longing for union, the answer to the riddle of life. The steersman, who sits at the helm of the boat, ever eludes the passenger, but he is to be known by the thrill in the darkness, by the whisper of the unseen word and by the breath of the unknown shore.

Tagore speaks of a moment of great illumination. One morning as Tagore was standing on the veranda with his face to the east, he witnessed an extraordinary view just before him. The sun was climbing, inch by inch through the topmost sprays of the thickly leaved trees in the Free School compound at the further end of the road. Masses of golden light streamed from the foliage. As Tagore stared wide-eyed, it was as though a curtain was ripped aside to show an altogether different scene. The familiar pattern of the world was changed and filled with a wondrous radiance. On every hand, his eyes met wave upon wave of beauty and happiness. With the brilliance flooding all the poet's heart, the layers of grief and despair were stripped away, and waves of happiness and loveliness rippled through his innermost being.

Tagore seems to acknowledge the benignity of nature and the unity and the harmony of the world. Man is bound up with nature. The body is the sign and the utterance of the soul. Man has built his soul in the playground of nature. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that when we silently adore the living presence that reveals itself through the grandeur of nature, which makes itself heard in the soul through the contemplation of the world of immanent divinity, a great peace steals over us. The infinite then whispers its secret into our ears and narrates the story of the soul and the legend of the

earth. To commune with the unutterable, we should get away from the noisy world of action, an escape from the machinery of life which kills the soul. Dull mechanical work degrades the individual while a life in nature elevates and purifies the soul. This is also the faith of Tagore.

It is this surplus which enables man to express himself in disinterested literary, scientific and artistic activity. It is through this surplus alone that the human being can acquire self fulfillment and self realization. Freedom in the real sense of the word means harmony of relationship.

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. 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.

It may be thought that if creation is without any aim and unimpeded, it will lead to new extravagance and artistic work will mean only the growth of eccentricity. But this is not true. 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 harmonizes death and life as well.

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. 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.<sup>4</sup>

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 poetry is an authentic representation of the mystical values. The faith promises immortality, the union with the Lord. The mystery of death loses all meaning consequently. 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.<sup>5</sup>

Tagore spiritualizes love. The Supreme Person manifests Himself in the elements of nature as well as in the consciousness of man. 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.

Tagore's views regarding the inner self of the individual and the light in his poetry represents the spirit of freedom, the victory of life over death and of freedom over bondage. It is the negation of death whereas darkness is the mystery of creation.

#### **Works Cited**

1. Rolland, Roman and Christophe, Jean. Ramakrishna, "Christ's Younger Brother". Almora: Advaita Ashram, 1931. p. 58-59.
2. Rolland, Roman. "A Colossus named Vivekananda Whose Mission Awaits Completion", Ed. Mahendra Kulasrestha. New Delhi: India Book Variety, 1932. p.12.
3. Radhakrishnan, S. "Indian Philosophy", Vol. I. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.p.94.
4. Tagore, R.N. My Reminiscences. London: Macmillan and Co., 1971. p.217.
5. Humayun, Kabir (ed). "One Hundred and One". Mumbai: Asha Publishing House, 1966. p. xxxiv.