

THE TRINITY OF NATURE, MAN AND GOD IN THE WRITINGS OF TAGORE

Bavanu Vijaya Raju

Research Scholar

Dept. of English

Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, A. P

Abstract

Rabindhranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate poet, writer and philosopher was the ambassador of Indian culture to the rest of the world. The correspondence of God, man and nature which had been a predominant note in Tagore's personality is so easily brought out in his writings. Tagore stepped into the world of man, very cautiously with one foot firmly rooted into the world of nature. He went deeper into the world of man; it was easy for him to love-God, himself in the exploration of man and nature. He was first a poet of Nature, then he became a poet of Man and finally he became the poet of God. He served as a mediator of the trinity of Nature, Man and God. "Over and over again, Tagore hints at the harmony between man and man, man and nature and man and God" (Tagore's Poetic Vision, Uma Shankar Joshi 142). Tagore considered human life as a process of continuous search for a better and higher existence, a search for his inner spirit. Man's spiritual apprehension of truth is the truth of human being as the ultimate reality of existence. This human reality has, therefore, to be called forth from its obscure depth by man's faith in the Supreme. This faith in the Supreme can be achieved only when people are guided by a spiritual design which transforms them into an 'organic whole'. This spiritual design is the gift of faith in the Ultimate Reality. And age after age man has heard the unceasing call of faith that whispers. "You are more than you appear to be, more than your circumstances warrant. You are to attain the impossible, you are immortal". (Creative Unity, Tagore 22). The unity of reality in Tagore's works teaches that everything in the universe originates from the One, emanates from Him; assumes that God, humans and the universe form one ecosystem and identifies the mutually enhancing relationships with the natural world. This piece of literary work has been attempted to explore Tagore's three forces that form the Trinity- God, Man and Nature. The external world of nature, the internal world of the soul are combined and brought together to form the unity of his individual self with the Universal Self and sees the same in other humans and the nature.

Key words: Trinity, God, Man, Nature, Ultimate Reality

Introduction

One of the greatestmen, who ever lived was Rabindhranath Tagore a founding father of modern India. The Nobel laureate poet, writer, philosopher was the ambassador of Indian culture to the rest of the world. The correspondence of God, man and nature, which had been

a predominant note in Tagore's personality, is brought out in his writings very vividly. Tagore believes God, nature and self to be inseparable aspects of reality. They are essentially the same. He says, "If this universe is not the manifestation of a person, then it is a stupendous deception and perpetual insult to him." Hence, for Tagore, the world is not unreal or *maya*. As it is the manifestation of the Ultimate Reality, it is as real as Reality.

The Trinity of Nature, Man and God in the Writings of Tagore

Tagore went deeper into the world of man; it was easy for him to love-God, in the exploration of man and nature. He was first a poet of Nature, then he became a poet of Man and finally he became the poet of God. He served as a mediator of the trinity of Nature, Man and God. "Over and over again, Tagore hints at the harmony between man and man, man and nature and man and God" (Tagore's Poetic Vision, Uma Shankar Joshi 142). In his writings, Tagore never tries to classify his doctrines. He says, "I have never looked at God, man and nature as problems, which can be considered in isolation from each other. I could never conceive of their occupying watertight compartments." (Tagore 36) His philosophy presents the integral picture of God, man and nature. "My mind", he says, "is used to look at reality as an integral whole, it being understood of course, that I am referring to the wholeness of spirit and not to material unity." (Tagore 35)

God is considered as a postulate, an axiomatic reality in the philosophy of Tagore. He is the transcendent reality as well as an immanent being. The formless Absolute is conceived as one who has formed for the purpose of love. The Absolute is considered as the personal Lord of the universe (Tagore). God for Tagore is the one who makes all things new. God, who is ever new, continues to spread "everywhere new grace and charm". Tagore says to God, "Day after day your world shows forth a new splendour, new flowers, new songs, new joy, new lights, the heart expanding ever more with the fresh flow of affection." This activity of renewal goes on "for ever".

The God of Tagore is multi-faceted. He is *Satyam*, *Anandam*, *Sivam*, *Santanm* and *Sundaram*. At one moment he is very far away but at another he is very close and even in the heart of devotee. He is the friend, the beloved, the lotus flower. The Ultimate Reality or God for Tagore is *Satyam* or Truth. One finds the image of this aspect of Reality in the laws of nature. The Lord of the universe has ordained everything for all time to come. But there is a second aspect of this Divinity which may be called *anandam* or bliss; the Absolute is *Rasa*. He is also the *Sivam* or Good. He is the good and the quiet (*Santam*) because all his ordained laws are in harmony with one another. He is also the *Sundaram* or the beautiful, for one finds the image of bliss in beauty. Tagore believes that these qualities of Godhead are in union with one another.

Man was the hero of all Tagore's songs. In line with the spirit of Indian culture and her time honoured heritage and philosophy, Tagore gave the accolade to Man, the central figure in the drama that is being enacted in the world arena. The great glory of man has been the teaching of the Mahabharata and other holy scriptures. In Tagore's understanding, man can know God only because God reveals himself. Describing God, Tagore uses for Him names such as 'Giver of Thyself', 'the Self-revealing One', 'the Infinite Love manifesting itself through finite forms, and 'the One who reveals Himself in an outpouring of ever new forms and charms'. (Sen 5) God comes to humans through all ages and at all moments. He comes through the forests in the form of perfume, in the form of rain and thundering clouds in the dark month of July. "Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes. Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes..." (*Gitanjali* 45)

The poet broods over the ways to realize God. He feels that God can be realized only through love and humility of mankind. He says: "...*Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and the lost.*" (*Gitanjali* 10)

Tagore pines to mix with the suffering humanity in order to feel the presence of God. He says:

"He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path – maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!" (*Gitanjali* 11)

Rabindranath Tagore encounters God, with simplicity of a child. He explained the mystery of God in clear terms, which even a lay man can grasp very easily. This Mystery is no more a mystery but a loving Father and Mother, a King, a Master Musician so familiar to each individual. According to him, fulfilment of empty meaningless rituals is of no use. Tagore feels that, running away from the ordinary life will no way serve the purpose. So he proposes a 'common man's way' to reach God, i.e., one must be able to see God through one's daily activities; tilling the land, breaking the stones, etc. Like most of the spiritual sages Tagore also invites people to renounce the undue attachment to the world.

Along with the relationship of the individual soul and God, the relationship of the individual soul with other men also is explored to a great extent in his writings. Tagore communicates with love the triple entity of God, Man and Nature. He poses the feeling of at-homeness on the whole. For him to love God is to love the entire universe with human beings, animals and plants. There is unity in all things of world. The one who has attained the goal of human life is one with God: "They are in perfect harmony with man and nature and therefore in undisturbed union with God."

Tagore tells of no escape or deliverance from this world of man and nature. "Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bond of creation; he is bound with us forever." (*Gitanjali* 11) A religion and worship that excludes this world of reality is hollow. Tagore believes more in spiritual realism than asceticism.

Tagore was always grieved to see the mind of human being in fear and the head held low, knowledge in fetters, and the world broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls, and the words coming out from the depth of untruth, and where the clear stream of reason had lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit. As a great humanist he prays to God for his country,

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free; where the world has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls, where words come from the depth of truth; where tireless stretching strives its arms to perfection...into that heaven of freedom let my country wake."(*Gitanjali* 35)

It is the fundamental unity of life, the inner unity, which binds all things. As far as God and man are concerned, it is the unity of love to which God has called *atman* and which has to be realized and perfected gradually. The most basic relationship between God and the universe is that God is the creator of the universe. All creation is God's own handiwork and therefore the world and everything in it has its origin and existence in Him. It is His power that created the earth, the sky and the stars. God is 'the Infinite Personality in whom the reality of the world is contained.

God has not only created the universe, He continues to be its all-powerful Lord and King, whose all-pervading spirit rules, controls and protects everything. He bears the burden of the universe, steers and guides it safely to its destiny. Tagore says, "Revelation of the Infinite in the finite is the motive of all creation."(Tagore 34) According to him, God who is the inscrutable without name or form, God who is the self-revealing One, is spreading Himself out in the universe in an outpouring of ever new forms and charms. Thus for Tagore, the beauty of creation reveals to the humanity God's beauty, giving a vision of the Infinite. The universe, God's creation, is the manifestation of God's power and beauty and especially of God's love.

Thus the universe and all creation is the manifestation of God's truth. What is this truth that is revealed? The universe is the revelation of the truth that God is Infinite Beauty, Infinite Joy, Infinite Love. Tagore's concept of human personality finds its fruition through intimacy with nature. From the childhood days, he is fascinated by the splendour of nature-the rising of the sun, the chirping of the birds and whistling of the wind through the trees. The World around him is not alien to man, it is very closely related to human being. Nature is not alien but is

essentially related to man. Man is not stranger in the enormity of the World. He/she is part and parcel of nature. Tagore writes,

“When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in the world that the inscrutable without name and form had taken men in its arms in the form of my own mother.” (Gitanjali 95)

It is as if God the Lover is whispering words of love to man the beloved, through His gifts of flower, fruits, sunshine, stars and so on. Tagore calls God ‘my Love’ and says to Him, “I have learned the simple meaning of thy whispers in flowers and sunshine...(Epigrams 31) God makes use of ‘ever new forms and charms’ in the universe to win man’s love.’ Everything in the universe is the gift of God’s love to man. However, God is the Lord and everything in the universe belongs to Him. So Tagore insists that the light that shines down for the benefit of man is ‘His light’ and the air that man ceaselessly breathes is ‘His air’.(Cithipatra1) In other words God’s house opens upon the world.

Creation, says Tagore, is “an endless activity of God’s freedom... freedom is true, when it the revelation of truth. (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. 29, 616) Thus the universe and all creation is the manifestation of God’s truth. What is this truth that is revealed? The universe is the revelation of the truth that God is Infinite Beauty, Infinite Joy, Infinite Love. In the Vedic terminology, purusha and prakriti are nothing but God and Nature respectively, the two God and Nature, as in *Vedantic* terminology is *purusha* and *prakriti*, the two facets of the nature leading to realization of God. Nature is self-manifestation of the Ultimate Reality. God has created this world with manifold wonders of nature and the best way to worship and the path of realization of God is to relish these wonders of nature. Tagore was a great lover and admirer of nature and common life. He seems to be the first among saints who has not refused to live. He make use of nature to bring form to his ideas and healways thinks through the eye of nature.

According to Tagore, nature is the melody of God. Man is ultimately bound up with nature. God, man and nature – these three concepts have close kinship. Tagore is the greatest lover and admirer of nature around him. In nature he finds the affection, inspiration and spiritual love. Tagore believed in the oneness of man and nature.

Conclusion

In Tagore the Trinity of God, Nature and man are all real. In fact nature and man are expressions or manifestation of the same Divine being. The world outside of the humans and the mind within them: these two are the expressions of the same *Shakti* or power. His writings present Tagore’s strongest and deepest of thoughts, his burning desire and love for the Infinite and his abandonment to the attitude of worship. He seeks to realize the Infinite in him, to realize the unity of his individual self with the Universal Self and sees the same in

other humans and the nature. Thus, Tagore believes the Trinity of God, Nature and Man to be inseparable aspects of reality.

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