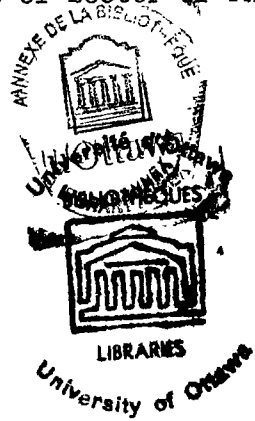


THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF
RABINDRANATH TAGORE: IDEALS
OF UNIVERSALISM

by Joseph A. Kattackal

Thesis presented to the Faculty
of Education of the University
of Ottawa as partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

In a world which is shrinking rapidly and where relations and contacts between the Orient and the Occident are becoming increasingly frequent and intimate - and sometimes even explosive - nothing seems to be more important and urgent than the need for international understanding which will ultimately lead to the spiritual unity of mankind. Never was such an understanding between the East and the West of more consequence to the peace and welfare of the world than it is today. It is one of the important lessons of history that no political arrangements or alliances can bring about lasting peace unless they are based upon solid philosophical, cultural and spiritual foundations.

Among the many world figures who have contributed to international understanding at the philosophical, cultural and spiritual levels, Rabindranath Tagore - poet, philosopher, educator, novelist, playwright and painter - seems to occupy a pre-eminent position. While the comprehensiveness and versatility of his mind, the range of his creative faculties, and the abundance of his creative output are truly astonishing in themselves, they are dwarfed by the largeness of his sympathies and the breadth and depth of his all encompassing world-view. By his life and work he taught the world that "truth has many voices, beauty many forms and civilization many patterns".¹

¹ Krishna Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 12.

The impact of his life and work both in the East and in the West reached its zenith during the third decade of the present century. He worked for one supreme cause, namely, the union of all sections of humanity in sympathy and understanding. He knew that the eternal personality of man can spring into being only from the harmony of all peoples. He anticipated the new age of internationalism and with devotion worked for the emergence of a new era in world history. He used his great gifts of imagination and art for fostering faith in the unity of man and for forging bands of kinship with others. He was convinced that world community is an achievement to be gained not only through political, economic, and historical means, but also through educational and cultural forces. For this reason, amidst his other multifarious activities, he laboured in the field of education for not less than forty years trying to break down the barriers that separate men and ideas. During this period he wrote a great deal on philosophical and educational topics besides his prolific creative output in literary, social, political and cultural fields. He gave institutional expression to his faith in the intercommunication of minds and hearts as the basis for world harmony by the establishment of two pioneering experimental schools and a University with an international character.

In the context of the facts and circumstances noted above, it was felt that an exploration of the range and depth of the multifaceted vision and manifestation of Tagore's universal ideals in education with reference to his philosophy of life would be a worthwhile undertaking especially since no such attempt, to the knowledge of the present investigator, has hitherto

been made. The present study, thus, endeavours to present a faithful and logical exposition of the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore in the light of his philosophy of life and tries to establish that it is permeated with the ideals of universalism. It is to be hoped that such a deep understanding and appreciation of his educational philosophy - the value of which does not lie in any narrow individual or national characteristics but in the elements of universality which appeal to the whole world - would lead to a better understanding and mutual appreciation of the values of the Orient and the Occident besides making an obvious contribution to the theory of education.

The versatility of his genius, the largeness of his sympathies, and the comprehensiveness of his world-view entitle Tagore to be called a universal man. Such a verdict passed after making a study of the historical setting, his background, and biography, is further confirmed and attested by the testimonies of many of his eminent contemporaries. Accepting and affirming the fact that Tagore was a universal man as a first premise, the hypothesis is advanced that his world-embracing universalism is rooted in his philosophy of life or stated differently, that his philosophy of life is replete with the ideals of universality. The legitimacy and validity of this hypothesis will be tested by a careful study and systematic analysis, exposition and synthesis of the philosophical works of Rabindranath Tagore. This investigation will attempt to prove that the above stated hypothesis is a valid one giving rise to the second hypothesis, namely, that since Tagore's philosophy of education - like everybody else's - stems from his philosophy of life, it is saturated with the ideals of universalism. The

basic assumption made in this latter hypothesis is that every theory of education takes its origin from a philosophy of life. As in the first instance, the validity of the second hypothesis also will be proven by a close scrutiny and systematic exposition of the educational writings of Tagore.

It may be noted here that with a view to interpret the mind of Tagore as faithfully as possible, exact and lengthy quotations from his writings have been used rather profusely in this study. Without such an approach the force and flavour of much of his poetic and often colourful language would have been lost besides something of its impact and effect. The non-availability of the philosophical and educational writings of Tagore in any compact, collected format is an added reason for making available as much of the exact extracts as possible from his widely scattered writings for any interested reader of this report.

At this point it seems relevant to put down clearly some of the delimiting factors that directly affect the present investigation. To reiterate what is already stated in a previous paragraph, the present enquiry is primarily concerned with the educational philosophy of Rabin-dranath Tagore on the basis of his philosophy of life. The main thrust of the study is to highlight the ideals of universalism that dominate his philosophy of life as well as his philosophy of education. Consequently, it will not be surprising to find this concept of universalism running like a golden thread all through the report that follows. Be that as it may, it should be clearly understood that the present enquiry does not propose to study the versatile genius of Tagore in all its multidimensional aspects.

It does not even attempt to present his total philosophy in all its dimensions and details. There is no attempt to compare his philosophy with that of any other philosopher or evaluate it in the light of some other system. What is actually attempted is a straight forward exposition of the main trends of his philosophical thought and their salient features. What has been said about the manner of approach to his philosophy of life equally applies to the mode of approach to his philosophy of education as well.

The study as it stands now is not free from certain difficulties and limitations, though attempts have been made to solve them to the best of one's ability. First of all, the present investigator does not understand Bengali, the mother tongue of Tagore and the original language of most of his writings. But since almost all the major philosophical and educational writings of Tagore are available in English - in many cases rendered into English by Tagore himself - this initial handicap is not as disabling as it may seem to be at first sight.

The second difficulty is inherent in the very character of Tagore's philosophical and educational writings. It is a well-known fact that he was not a professional philosopher or an academician. His thoughts on philosophy and education - unlike those of several other well-known authors and thinkers - have not been formulated and presented in any formal treatises. They lie scattered in many books, pamphlets and periodicals posing a real challenge to even the most painstaking student. The present writer does not claim to have read every word of what Tagore ever published on philosophy and education or to have garnered all his ideas on these subjects. All that he would dare to assert is that all the major writings of Tagore

available in English in these two pertinent areas have been carefully read from cover to cover - none of Tagore's published English works is provided with an index - and that from the numerous repetition of ideas he has come across he feels that nothing of any special significance has escaped his attention or careful scrutiny. However, the task of building up a reasonably intelligible and systematic body of thought out of a mass of widely scattered materials has not been an easy one.

A few of the terms used in this report may require some clarification. The phrase "Educational Philosophy" is used in its ordinary sense of a philosophy dealing with and applied to the process of education and used as a basis for the general determination, interpretation, and evaluation of educational objectives, practices, outcomes, needs, and materials of study. The word "ideal" also is used in its usual sense of something looked upon as a standard of perfection, the attainment of which is deemed worthy of effort. The word "Universalism", however, is not used in its strictly philosophical sense of a doctrine that each individual should seek as an end the welfare of all or in its purely theological meaning of a belief in the final redemption and salvation of all mankind. It is being used throughout this report as meaning a body of doctrine which includes a belief in, dedication to, and advocacy of the spiritual unity of mankind regardless of race, colour, creed, sex, geographical and cultural differences, nationality, etc. and as such it connotes belief in the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, in world-wide co-operation at all levels and especially in the intellectual and cultural fields, and in the common destiny of man.

A search through the literature in English published about Tagore during his lifetime and since indicates that some serious studies pertaining to his philosophy and his contribution to education have been published at one time or another. One of the earliest studies belonging to the former category entitled The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore was published by the internationally famous Indian philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan² in 1918. The work is somewhat polemical and as the author himself admitted several decades later it shows youthful enthusiasm and lacks restraint. Since Tagore himself lived for another twenty-three years after the publication of this book, it is also obviously incomplete. The second important full-length philosophical study was brought out by Vishwanath S. Naravane in 1948 or so. (No date given on the book). Entitled Rabindranath Tagore - A Philosophical Study,³ it is based upon a doctoral dissertation submitted by the author to the University of Allahabad in 1946. This work provides a systematic and rather full statement of Tagore's philosophical views, the emphasis being on exposition rather than comparative evaluation or criticism. A slightly modified and much abbreviated version of the same work appeared as a chapter in the same author's Modern Indian Thought: A Philosophical Survey,⁴ in 1964. A recent publication by Benoy Gopal Ray

2 S. Radhakrishnan, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, London, Macmillan, 1918. (First Indian edition, Baroda, Good Companions, 1961).

3 Vishwanath S. Naravane, Rabindranath Tagore - A Philosophical Study, Allahabad, Central Book Depot, Date not given.

4 Idem, Modern Indian Thought: A Philosophical Survey, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964.

entitled The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore,⁵ is actually a revised and expanded edition of a work which originally appeared in 1949 where the author maintains that the philosophy of Tagore being an artist's creation is to be understood and appreciated as a flower is enjoyed.

Turning now to studies dealing with Tagore's contribution to education one comes across a number of works. One of the first in the field was by William Winstanley Pearson called Shantiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore⁶, which gives a perceptive but very brief account of Tagore's school up to the date of its publication. A fuller and more scholarly study of Tagore's contribution to education was made by John Jesudason Cornelius in his doctoral dissertation Rabindranath Tagore: India's Schoolmaster⁷, submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University in 1928. Though limited in scope and obviously incomplete for having been published in 1928, it is a pioneering piece of research. It attempts to interpret Tagore's experiment in the Indianization of education in the light of India's history. Semanti Battacharya's doctoral dissertation⁸ submitted to the same University in 1953, while primarily dealing with Tagore's concept of nationalism and internationalism, has devoted a whole chapter to

5 Benoy Gopal Ray, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, Rev. and enl. 2nd ed., Calcutta, Progressive Publishers, 1970.

6 W.W. Pearson, Shantiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore, New York, Macmillan, 1916.

7 John Jesudason Cornelius, Rabindranath Tagore: India's Schoolmaster, Doctoral Dissertation, New York, Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University, 1928.

8 Semanti Bhattacharya, Tagore's Concept of Nationalism and Internationalism - A Historical and Critical Analysis, Doctoral Dissertation, New York, Columbia University, 1953.

the exposition of his educational philosophy. The next in significance are Sunil Chandra Sarkar's Tagore's Educational Philosophy and Experiment⁹ and Leonard K. Elmhirst's Rabindranath Tagore: Pioneer in Education¹⁰, both collections of essays, published in 1961. The former work, despite its title, does not succeed fully in bringing out all the salient features of Tagore's contribution to education in its seven disparate chapters. The latter title is a collection of essays and exchanges between Tagore and Elmhirst and the two essays on Sriniketan and Siksha-Satra by Elmhirst are among the best of its kind. The Social Thinking of Rabindranath Tagore by Sasadhar Sinha¹¹ is also worthy of note. In this work the author conceives of the educational ideas of Tagore as the key to his social thinking oriented towards the national reconstruction of India. Perhaps the most comprehensive and full length account of Tagore's educational thought and activity ever published in English is Education for Fulness: A Study of the Educational Thought and Experiment of Rabindranath Tagore, by Himangshu Bhushan Mukherjee¹². This work, as the author says, is an abridgement of a doctoral dissertation which took him thirteen years to complete before it was finally submitted to the Allahabad University in 1959. Admittedly vast in scope, this study presents a critical discussion on

9 Sunil Chandra Sarkar, Tagore's Educational Philosophy and Experiment, Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1961.

10 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Rabindranath Tagore: Pioneer in Education, London, John Murray (Distributor), 1961.

11 Sasadhar Sinha, Social Thinking of Rabindranath Tagore, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962.

12 Himangshu Bhushan Mukherjee, Education for Fulness: A Study of the Educational Thought and Experiment of Rabindranath Tagore, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962.

almost all the major aspects of Tagore's thought on education. The one great drawback of the work seems to be its tiresome length which is the result of so much needless repetition of ideas.

It should be obvious from the foregoing brief account of the relevant literature pertaining to the topic of this report that no major investigation of the present kind concerned with a systematic exposition of the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore in the light of his philosophy of life and characterizing it as the embodiment of the ideas of universalism has hitherto been completed. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that this study is probing into an area not yet explored.

The primary sources for this study will be the major published philosophical and educational works of Tagore in English. The historical and biographical materials given in the appendices, by their very character, are dependent upon secondary sources. The procedure and methodology employed throughout this study may be characterized as historical and the approach heuristic. By means of analysis, interpretation and synthesis a logical and factual exposition is sought to be achieved. Straight narration is generally confined to the first three appendices demanded by the nature of the themes discussed in those pages.

The report which follows is divided into five chapters followed by a summary and conclusions. The first and second chapters have for their theme the philosophy Rabindranath Tagore. Only because of the extent of the treatment given to this topic has it been organized into two chapters. Chapter one deals with Tagore's Metaphysics and Religion and chapter two discusses his Ethics and Aesthetics. Tagore's General Theory of Education

is the concern of chapter three. An adequate treatment of this topic called for the division of this chapter into five sections. Tagore gave concrete expression and institutional form to most of the ideas discussed in this chapter by the establishment of his two educational institutions at Santiniketan and Sriniketan. Chapter four, therefore, provides an exposition of the educational ideals of these two institutions as related to and as a logical outcome of the ideas discussed in the previous chapter. The final chapter is devoted to a discussion of Tagore's ideals of higher education. It has two sections: the first dealing with the origins of these ideals and the second providing an exposition of the ideals of Visva-Bharati, Tagore's international University. The report will conclude with a summary of the findings of the investigation and suggestions for further research in the field.

Appendix one provides the historical background and setting to the biographical sketch of Rabindranath Tagore which is given in appendix two. While this latter appendix will mainly be a straight, factual narrative, it is hoped that the multifaceted personality of Tagore with its manifold talents and gifts will stand revealed there. The third appendix attempts, through documentary evidence, to show that Tagore was acknowledged and accepted as a universal man by many of his eminent contemporaries from all walks of life throughout the world. The abstract of the thesis is given as appendix four.

CHAPTER I

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE (I)

In tracing the roots of the universalism or for that matter, the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, the enquirer is naturally led into the realm of the poet's philosophical thought. It is readily admitted that Rabindranath Tagore was not a professional or academic philosopher in the modern sense and that he did not propound or produce any original systematic philosophy. At the same time one can easily notice that several works of Tagore are philosophical in character and content. By a careful study of these works, one can come to a clear understanding of his philosophy of life. In the true Indian tradition, philosophy has never been a mere intellectual discipline devoid of other human dimensions. It has been more of a vision, a weltanschauung or world outlook, comprehensive in scope and moral and spiritual in content. Tagore's philosophy has the hall-mark of this Indian tradition. For the same reason it is not possible to analyse the philosophical thought of Tagore without reference to his religious thought. As a matter of fact Tagore's philosophy and religion are the two sides of the same coin.

In view of the fact that the primary purpose of this chapter is to trace the sources of the universalism and educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore and thus has a rather limited objective, the exposition of his philosophy attempted here will not be quite exhaustive. Nevertheless, every effort will be made not to leave out any aspect of his important philosophical thought that has a direct bearing on the topic under investigation. Stated briefly, what is attempted in the following pages is a broad outline of Tagore's weltanschauung.

The central aim of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy was to synthesize the elements of highest worth in every religious and philosophical tradition, to soften the edges and fashion a creative middle path between contending points of view, to mediate between extremes. ¹

The present writer finds himself in agreement with the statement just quoted and is of the opinion that a clear understanding of this dominant characteristic of Tagore's philosophy is essential for a firm grasp of the details of his philosophical thought.

It is proposed to set down in some detail Tagore's thoughts on some of the fundamental problems of philosophy in the realms of Metaphysics, Religion, Ethics and Aesthetics. For the sake of convenience, the material of this topic will be divided into two parts consisting of chapters four and five. Section one of chapter four will deal with the three constituents of the metaphysical triangle - the ultimate Reality or God, the individual self or Man and the phenomenal world or the Universe. Section two will be devoted to a discussion of the religion of Rabindranath Tagore. Chapter five will deal with the views of Tagore on Ethics as applied to individual, political, social and cultural relationships and a discussion of his thoughts on Aesthetics.

1. Metaphysics.

a) Ultimate Reality or God.- Tagore did not arrive at the idea of God through any conscious logical reasoning. The process by which he came to have this notion he himself has clearly stated:

¹ V.S. Naravane, Modern Indian Thought, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964, p. 122.

The idea of the humanity of God --- has not grown in my mind through any process of philosophical reasoning. On the contrary it has followed the current of my temperament from early days until it suddenly flashed into my consciousness with a direct vision --- on the surface of our being we have the ever-changing phases of the individual self, but in the depth there dwells the Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge. 2

Although Tagore acquired the consciousness of this "Eternal Spirit of human unity" through a direct vision, he was capable and ready to give 'proof' of the existence of such a Supreme Being through logical reasoning when occasion demanded as the following passage shows:

For the ultimate reality is in the Person and not in the law and substance. And man must feel that if this universe is not the manifestation of a Supreme Person, then it is a stupendous deception and a perpetual insult to him. He should know that under such enormous weight of estrangement his own personality would have been crushed out of its shape in the very beginning and have vanished in the meaninglessness of an abstraction that had not even the basis of a mind for its conception. 3

In another part of the same work, he has come up with the classical argument from design as a proof of the existence of God. Towards the end of a discussion of the meaning of the transitory and the eternal he comes to the following conclusion: "world movements are not mere blind movements, they are related to the will of a Supreme Person". 4

One comes across several passages in the writings 5 of Tagore where he expresses his firm conviction in the existence of an Infinite Reality

2. Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man, London, Allen & Unwin, 1931, Unwin Books ed., 1961, p. 11.

3 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, London, Macmillan, 1917, (Reprint, 1970), p. 71-72.

4 Idem, Ibid., p. 61-62.

5 See especially, Sadhana (1913), Personality (1917), and Creative Unity (1922), all published by Macmillan.

and its relationship with finite beings. In fact, he regarded man's life on earth as a constant search for the Infinite in the true tradition of many other men of religion. Man's pursuit of the Infinite has found symbolic expression in the following poem of Tagore:

I hunt for the golden stag.
 You may smile, my friends, but I pursue
 the vision that eludes me.
 ...
 I run across hills and dales, I wander
 through nameless lands - because I am
 hunting for the golden stag. 6

Tagore, however, is not content with giving utterance to the idea of God in poetic language. He feels that this idea is a very important one requiring clear enunciation. Tagore writes:

The time has come when we must, for the sake of truth and
 for the sake of that peace which is the harvest of truth,
 refuse to allow the idea of our God to remain indistinct
 behind unrealities of formal rites and theological mistiness. 7

Tagore's understanding of the nature and manifestation of The Infinite shows clear signs of shifts in emphasis as he developed his religious and philosophical thought. In an essay written as early as 1904, Tagore has expressed clearly his idea of God in the following words:

the deep-hidden creative force of which I have written, the
 force that has given one whole significance to all the joys,
 sorrows and incidents of my life, the force that is threading
 my different and various births into one continuity, and through
 which I can feel the unity with the created universe of all
 animate and inanimate objects, I have described as "The God of Life".⁸

6 Rabindranath Tagore, The Gardener, London, Macmillan, 1913, (Reprint, 1956), Poem 69.

7 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 97.

8 Idem, A Tagore Testament, trans. Indu Dutt, Bombay, Jaico Publishing House, 1969, p. 12.

That God is the principle of unity, that God is the One, is an idea that Tagore is never tired of reiterating. He writes:

The quality of the infinite is not the magnitude of extension, it is in the Advaitam, the mystery of Unity. Facts occupy endless time and space, but the truth comprehending them all has no dimension; it is One. Wherever our heart touches the One, in the small or the big, it finds the touch of the infinite. 9

This principle of unity, even though very important, is not something which can be easily explained. Tagore views it as a mystery and a paradox, as is expressly stated in the following passage:

This principle of unity is the mystery of all mysteries. The existence of a duality at once raises a question in our minds, and we seek its solution in the One. When at last we find a relation between these two, and thereby see them as one in essence, we feel that we have come to the truth. And then we give utterance to this most startling of all paradoxes, that the One appears as many, that the appearance is the opposite of truth and yet is inseparably related to it. 10

Even though there is a mystery surrounding the idea of God, the consciousness of His existence is something universal. As Tagore points out: "The consciousness of God transcends the limitations of race and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union." 11

In his effort to understand and expound the mysterious nature and essence of the Infinite, Tagore has recourse to the classical writings of Indian philosophy as embodied in the Upanishads. 12 As he explicitly states, 13 he was well versed in the philosophy of the Upanishads and was

9 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 4.

10 Idem, Sadhana, London, Macmillan, 1913, (Reprint, 1966), p. 97.

11 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 49.

12 The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Hindu Sacred Scriptures called the Vedas and the basis for the Vedanta philosophy. The Upanishads have dominated Indian philosophy, religion and life for well over two thousand years.

13 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. viii.

greatly influenced by its teachings. Therefore, it is not surprising that he relies on the Upanishadic texts for explaining some of the intricate concepts pertaining to the Infinite Reality. With reference to this topic he writes:

The Upanishad says, The being who is in his essence the light and life of all, who is world-conscious, is Brahma. To feel all, to be conscious of everything, is his spirit. We are immersed in his consciousness body and soul. 14

And again: "In the Upanishad it is said, The supreme being is all-pervading, therefore he is the innate good in all". 15

With reference to the knowledge of this Supreme Being he continues:

The Infinite in India was not a thin nonentity, void of all content. The Rishis of India asserted emphatically, "To know him in this life is to be true; not to know him in this life is the desolation of death". How to know him then? "By realising him in each and all". Not only in nature, but in the family, in society, and in the state, the more we realize the World-conscious in all, the better for us. Failing to realize this, we turn our faces to destruction. 16

Tagore is fully aware of the limitations of mere intellectual knowledge and its inadequacy in comprehending the Infinite Reality or Brahma. For he says:

Intellectual knowledge is partial, because our intellect is an instrument, it is only a part of us, it can give us information about things which can be divided and analysed, and whose properties can be classified, part by part. But Brahma is perfect, and knowledge which is partial can never be a knowledge of him. 17

14 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 18.

15 Idem, Ibid., p. 21-22.

16 Idem, Ibid., p. 20.

17 Idem, Ibid., p. 159.

But he does not despair of knowing and realising the Infinite Reality which is Brahma. Nay more, he has suggested ways of knowing the Brahma as follows:

But he can be known by joy, by love. For joy is knowledge in its completeness, it is knowing by our whole being. Intellect sets us apart from the things to be known, but love knows its object by fusion. Such knowledge is immediate and admits no doubt. It is the same as knowing our own selves, only more so. 18

Therefore, concludes Tagore, mind can never know Brahma, words can never describe him; he can only be known by our soul, by her joy in him, by her love. Or, in other words, we can only come into relation with him by union - union of our whole being. We must be one with our Father, we must be perfect as he is. 19

Tagore disagrees with the European philosophers who have asserted that the Brahma of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world. Such a doctrine has been held by a few people in India too. But, as Tagore says,

this is certainly not in accord with the pervading spirit of the Indian mind. Instead, it is the practice of realising and affirming the presence of the infinite in all things which has been its constant inspiration. 20

In one of his discourses Tagore has sought to clarify the idea of the infinite by stating what it is not. The relevant part of that memorable statement is as follows:

18 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 159.

19 Idem, Ibid., p. 159.

20 Idem, Ibid., p. 16.

It is quite evident that the infinite is not like one object among many, to be definitely classified and kept among our possessions, to be used as an ally specially favouring us in our politics, warfare, money-making, or in social competitions. We cannot put our God in the same list with our summer-houses, motor-cars, or our credit at the bank, as so many people seem to want to do. 21

It is thought appropriate to present the views of Tagore on the manifestations of God at this point. He has some very definite ideas on this topic which he very modestly states as follows:

I am no authority on metaphysics. In any controversial discussion regarding monism and dualism I shall remain silent. I only say from what I feel that my innermost God has a joy in expressing Himself through me - this joy, this love pervades every part of my being, diffusing my mind, my intellect, this entire universe which is so vivid before me, my infinite past and my eternal destiny. This game of life is beyond my comprehension, and yet right within myself. He is intent on playing His game of love continuously. 22

The same idea is brought out even more plainly in another context.

He starts with a quotation from a Sanskrit text:

The immortal being manifests himself in joy-form. His manifestation in creation is out of his fulness of joy. It is the nature of this abounding joy to realise itself in form which is law. The joy which is without form, must create, must translate itself into forms. 23

Tagore had given poetic utterance to the theme of the indwelling presence of God in man and the places where He could be found. This religious

21 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 147.

22 Idem, A Tagore Testament, p. 9-10.

23 Idem, Sadhana, p. 104.

poetry, while revealing Tagore's deep religious insight, touches the boundaries of a mystic realm. Only a few examples are quoted below:

You were in the centre of my heart, therefore when
my heart wandered she never found you; you hid your-
self from my loves and hopes till the last, for you
were always in them. 24

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and
said "Here art thou!"
The question and the cry "Oh, where?" melt into tears
of a thousand stream and deluge the world with the
flood of the assurance "I am!" 25

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of
a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and
see thy God is not before thee! 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!. 26

The important question of the relationship of the finite man with the Infinite God is a problem which exercised Tagore's mind a great deal. In some of his prose writings as well as in many of his religious lyrics Tagore has dwelt on this issue. Couched as his thoughts are in poetic language, very often the reader can sense the mystic vision and the ecstatic enjoyment that enveloped this religious philosopher. He is of the opinion that man and nature are part of the same creation and as such have an intrinsic unity. "I do not boast of exclusiveness -- I do not acknowledge

24 Rabindranath Tagore, Fruit-Gathering, London, Macmillan, 1916, (Reprint, 1957), Poem, LXIX.

25 Idem, Gitanjali, London, Macmillan, 1912, (Reprint, 1962), Poem 12.

26 Idem, Ibid., Poem 11.

there is any division between me and the universe".²⁷ In fact, he goes even a step further and declares:

I have not divided up my devotion into segments by separating the soul, the nature of the universe, and Lord of the Universe, each from each, and placing them in little cubicles. 28

The following quotations from his religious lyrics expressing man's relationship with the 'Lord of the Universe' have to be understood and appreciated in the context of his all-inclusive thought on God, man, and universe. He addresses the Lord of the Universe:

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.
O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love
that encloses the soul with colours and sounds
and odours.

... ..
But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the
soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless
white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor
form, nor colour, and never, never a word. 29

The joyful love relationship between man and God is expressed beautifully in the following lines:

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. 30

27 Rabindranath Tagore, A Tagore Testament, p. 16.

28 Idem, Ibid., p. 16.

29 Idem, Gitanjali, Poem 67.

30 Idem, Ibid., Poem 65.

The same theme is continued in the following stanzas:

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is
that thou hast come down to me. 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.
In my heart is the endless play of thy delight. In
my life thy will is ever taking shape.
And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast
decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And
for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy
lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union
of two. 31

The pangs of separation and the longing of the soul to be united
with God are portrayed in the following verse:

- I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly
roaming in the sky, O my sun ever-glorious!
Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one
with thy light, and thus I count months and years
separated from thee. 32

The perpetual play of maya or illusion in the relationship of the
creator and the creature is brought out in the poem that follows:

That I should make much of myself and turn it on all
sides, thus casting coloured shadows on thy radiance
-- such is thy maya.

...
The great pageant of thee and me has overspread the
sky. With the tune of thee and me all the air is
vibrant, and all ages pass with the hiding and seek-
ing of thee and me. 33

In one of his Hibbert lectures Tagore reiterated the ancient
Upanishadic doctrine that this world is pervaded by one supreme unity

31 Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem 56.

32 Idem, Ibid., Poem 80.

33 Idem, Ibid., Poem 71.

and that true enjoyment can be had "only through the surrender of our individual self to the Universal Self".³⁴ He thinks that this idea of unity with the infinite being is something which the West has not accepted fully. He writes:

Though the West has accepted as its teacher him who boldly proclaimed his oneness with his Father, and who exhorted his followers to be perfect as God, it has never been reconciled to this idea of our unity with the infinite being. It condemns as a piece of blasphemy, any implication of man's becoming God. ³⁵

But Tagore thinks that "This idea of absolute transcendence is certainly not that which Christ preached, nor perhaps the idea of the Christian mystics".³⁶ He wants everybody to strive after the infinite ideal of perfection who is Brahma or God. Tagore unequivocally states his position as follows:

Yes, we must become Brahma. We must not shrink from avowing this. Our existence is meaningless if we never can expect to realise the highest perfection that there is. If we have an aim and yet can never reach it, then it is no aim at all. ³⁷

In the foregoing pages an effort was made to analyse Tagore's understanding of the Ultimate Reality or God. It was shown that Tagore did not acquire the knowledge of God through any conscious logical reasoning but through a direct vision and intuitive grasp of reality. Tagore, however, did not dispense with reason. On the contrary, in many instances he gave convincing 'proofs' of the existence of God. In tune with his religious

³⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man, p. 14.

³⁵ Idem, Sadhana, p. 154.

³⁶ Idem, Ibid., p. 154.

³⁷ Idem, Ibid., p. 155.

and philosophical development his understanding of the nature and manifestations of God also underwent certain changes. Tagore firmly held that mere intellectual knowledge of God was quite inadequate. He believed that God had to be known and realised through love. It is quite evident that Tagore's God is not a mere abstract philosophical entity, but a personal God of love. He maintained that the highest manifestation of God is in love and joy. He was fully conscious of the indwelling presence of God in man and nature as a unified whole. Love is the bond that unites man to God. Man has the capacity to become God by perfect love and absolute self-surrender.

b) The Individual Self or Man.- After considering Tagore's understanding of the Universal Self or God, logically one should follow it up with an exposition of his views regarding the individual self or man. Both these topics are intimately interrelated and form the very basis of Tagore's universalism. Throughout his writings he placed great emphasis upon love in man's relationship with God and with his fellow human beings. He thinks that "we never can have a true view of man unless we have a love for him."³⁸ He even goes to the extent of stating that the criterion for judging a civilisation should not be the amount of power it has developed, but its love of humanity.³⁹

Like many other thinkers Tagore was deeply concerned with, as he puts it, "the eternal problem of the coexistence of the infinite and the finite, of the supreme being and our soul".⁴⁰ He thinks that this "is the

38 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 38.

39 Idem, Ibid., p. 38.

40 Idem, Ibid., p. 95.

sublime paradox that lies at the root of existence".⁴¹ In his attempt to resolve this paradox, he has given a reasoned presentation of his views on the topic. Following the footsteps of the ancient sages of India, he holds the view that "the immortal being manifests himself in joy-form."⁴² "This joy, whose other name is love" says Tagore, "must by its very nature have duality for its realisation."⁴³ Therefore, argues Tagore, "The amritam, the immortal bliss, has made himself into two. Our soul is the loved one, it is his other self."⁴⁴ Tagore does recognize that human soul is not God, that it is separate from God. What he holds is that this separation is not absolute. If that was so "there would have been absolute misery and unmitigated evil in this world."⁴⁵ The separation that exists arises not "from alienation but from the fulness of love".⁴⁶ God who is infinite joy manifests Himself in manifold forms. Man fulfils himself when he goes back from his mortal form to the infinite joy.⁴⁷

The question now arises as to what Tagore thought about the human soul. The answer as it has come from his pen is in the form of a quotation from the Isha Upanishad:

⁴¹ Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 95.

⁴² Idem, Ibid., p. 104.

⁴³ Idem, Ibid., p. 104.

⁴⁴ Idem, Ibid., p. 104-105.

⁴⁵ Idem, Ibid., p. 105.

⁴⁶ Idem, Ibid., p. 105.

⁴⁷ Idem, Ibid., p. 106.

It is one, and though unmoving is swifter than mind;
organs of sense cannot reach it; while standing it
progresses beyond others that run; in it the life
inspiration maintains the fluid forces of life. 48

The inference which he draws from this Upanishadic teaching is
as follows:

Because it is one, because it is more than its parts,
because it is continual survival, perpetual overflow,
we feel it beyond all boundaries of death. 49

Further on, Tagore comments, "This consciousness of oneness
beyond all boundaries is the consciousness of soul". 50 It is to be noted
further that "it is only the revelation of the Infinite which is endlessly
new and eternally beautiful in us and gives the only meaning to our self". 51
This self of ours is maya where it is merely individual and finite, whereas
it is satyam where it recognises its essence in the universal and
infinite. 52

Tagore thinks that,

Our self, as a form of God's joy, is deathless. For his joy
is amritam, eternal. This it is in us which makes us
skeptical of death, even when the fact of death cannot be
doubted ... Our self to live must go through a continual
change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual
death and a continual life going on at the same time. 53

48 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 66.

49 Idem, Ibid., p. 66.

50 Idem, Ibid., p. 66.

51 Idem, Sadhana, p. 91.

52 Idem, Ibid., p. 85.

53 Idem, Ibid., p. 81.

On the basis of Tagore's doctrines on the human soul and the individual self, he comes to certain logical conclusions regarding Man which give a clue to his fervent faith in the universal brotherhood of man. With the sages of ancient India, Tagore held the view that the human soul is something very great which sought its ultimate destiny in Brahma or God.

Any limited view of man would therefore be an incomplete view. He could not reach his finality as a mere Citizen or Patriot, for neither City nor Country, nor the bubble called the World could contain his eternal soul. 54

Though man has certain elements of animal nature in him he is not entirely an animal. "He aspires to a spiritual vision which is the vision of the whole truth." 55 Man, therefore, is a spirit as well and this spirit can truly be known only by love. Tagore goes even a step further and asserts:

When we know him as a spirit we know him as our own. We at once feel that cruelty to him is cruelty to ourselves, to make him small is stealing from our own humanity, and in seeking to make use of him solely for personal profit we merely gain in money or comfort what we pay for in truth. 56

With regard to the esteem one should have for any human being, in a meditative mood Tagore has written as follows:

At one pole of my being I am one with stocks and stones...
But at the other pole of my being I am separate from all. Then I have broken through the cordon of equality and stand alone as an individual. I am absolutely unique, I am I, I am incomparable. 57

54 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 122.

55 Idem, Sadhana, p. 111.

56 Idem, Ibid., p. 109-110.

57 Idem, Ibid., p. 69.

This uniqueness and ultimate truth in man does not reside in his intellect or his possessions. On the other hand,

It is in his illumination of mind, in his extension of sympathy across all barriers of caste and colour; in his recognition of the world, not merely as a storehouse of power, but as a habitation of man's spirit, with its eternal music of beauty and its inner light of the divine presence. 58

Intelligence and physical power are both shared by man and beast.

What is unique in man is the development of his consciousness, which gradually deepens and widens the realization of his immortal being, the perfect, the eternal. 59

This realization is an important fact of epic significance which Tagore has portrayed in the following striking passage:

Man, suckled at the wolf's breasts, sheltered in the brute's den, brought up in the prowling habit of depredation, suddenly discovers that he is Man, and that his true power lies in yielding up his brute power for the freedom of spirit. 60

As Tagore sees it, man is the only creature in the whole creation that "represents the Creator, and this is why of all creatures it has been possible for him to comprehend this world in his knowledge and in the feeling and in his imagination"⁶¹ and thus to realize in his individual spirit a union with the Universal Spirit.

58 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 27.

59 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 11.

60 Idem, Ibid., p. 101.

61 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 64.

It is in keeping with this idea of man that Tagore has set down certain ideals for man's life on earth. One of the key concepts here is that of spiritual love. Tagore writes:

The whole object of man is to free his personality of self into the personality of soul, to turn his inward forces into the forward movement towards the infinite, from the concentration of self in desire into the expansion of soul in love. ⁶²

In other words, as Tagore has stated in another context, the emancipation of the human self consists in the attainment of love. ⁶³ The fulfilment of man is realized by his union with the Infinite. No man is sufficient unto himself. As Tagore puts it:

Man must realise the wholeness of his existence, his place in the infinite; he must know that hard as he may strive he can never create his honey within the cells of his hive, for the perennial supply of his food is outside their walls. He must know that when man shuts himself out from the vitalising and purifying touch of the infinite, and falls back upon himself for his sustenance and his healing, then he goads himself into madness, tears himself into shreds, and eats his own substance. ⁶⁴

Tagore thinks that essentially man is a lover whose freedom and fulfilment is realised in love. By love man is united with the all-pervading Spirit. When a man tries to raise himself to eminence at the expense of all others, then he is alienating himself from this Spirit of love. On the other hand, those who have attained the goal of human life are in perfect harmony with man and nature and therefore in undisturbed union with God. ⁶⁵

⁶² Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 97-98.

⁶³ Idem, Sadhana, p. 83.

⁶⁴ Idem, Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁵ Idem, Ibid., p. 15.

Tagore's views regarding the individual self or man presented in this section may be summarized as follows: God, who is immortal bliss assumed the dual form making the human soul His other self in the process. Man, however, is not God. Human soul derives its meaning from the revelation of the Infinite. It is a form of God's eternal joy and is destined to be united with Him one day. The concept of man, to be true, has to be comprehensive. Man is really a spiritual being to be known by love. He is a unique creature endowed with immortality. Man attains the fulfilment of his goal in life by his union with the Infinite through love.

c) The Phenomenal World or the Universe.- After having considered the views of Tagore on God and man, one now turns one's attention to what he thought of the phenomenal world or nature or the universe. It may be stated from the very outset that Tagore did not admit of any kind of antagonism between man and nature. On the contrary, he, in accordance with the ancient Indian tradition, believed in the fundamental unity and harmony of all creation. On this subject, he makes the following observation:

For her, (India) the great fact is that we are in harmony with nature; that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things; that he can use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal, and that in the long run his purpose never can knock against the purpose which works through nature. 66

According to Tagore, "In the west the prevalent feeling is that nature belongs exclusively to inanimate things and to beasts, that there is a sudden unaccountable break where human-nature begins."⁶⁷ He contrasts this view

66 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 6.

67 Idem, Ibid., p. 6.

with that of India which he accepts as follows: "the Indian mind never has any hesitation in acknowledging its kinship with nature, its unbroken relation with all."⁶⁸

On this question of 'kinship', V.S. Naravane offers the following clarification:

But this recognition of kinship, between Man and Nature by no means amounts to an identification of the two --- Tagore steers between both these extremes, namely, naturalism on the one hand and panpsychism on the other. ⁶⁹

Tagore further notes:

The fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was her life-object to realise this great harmony in feeling and in action. ⁷⁰

In the light of the clarification stated a little earlier, it is relevant to note what Tagore had to say further on this question. He is firmly convinced that "When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him."⁷¹ On the other hand:

When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated, for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established. ⁷²

⁶⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 7.

⁶⁹ V.S. Naravane, Rabindranath Tagore - A Philosophical Study, p. 109.

⁷⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 7.

⁷¹ Idem, Ibid., p. 8.

⁷² Idem, Ibid., p. 8.

In tune with the spirit of the above statement, Tagore has given the following interpretation of the Indian attitude towards the phenomenal world:

According to the true Indian view, our consciousness of the world, merely as the sum total of things that exist, and as governed by laws, is imperfect. But it is perfect when our consciousness realises all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. 73

It may be noticed that one of the basic reasons for Tagore's universalism, namely, the consciousness of the spiritual unity of man and nature, is clearly stated in the above quotation.

In one of his autobiographical essays, Tagore has given an account of his personal experience of this kinship with nature. He writes:

At times while journeying through life, during some leisure-period or in rare auspicious moments, when I have looked at the universe with widened eyes and unflinching gaze, I have been overwhelmed by another feeling. The one inseparable link between me and the universe - nature - this everlasting unity of soul has drawn me intensely. 74

In many of his poems he has given passionate expression to this intense feeling of unity and oneness with the nature-universe. A few instances are quoted below:

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it
into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel
that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe. 75

73 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 48-49.

74 Idem, A Tagore Testament, p. 15.

75 Idem, Gitanjali, Poem 87.

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

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.
 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 of
 this world of life. And my pride is from the life-
 throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment. 76

A handful of dust could hide your signal when I did
 not know its meaning.

Now that I am wiser I read it in all that hid it be-
 fore.

It is painted in petals of flowers;
 waves flash it from their foam;
 hills hold it high on their summits.

I had my face turned from you, therefore I read the
 letters awry and knew not their meaning. 77

Suddenly the window of my heart flew open this morning,
 the window that looks out on your heart.

I wondered to see that the name by which you know me
 is written in April leaves and flowers, and I sat
 silent. 78

Tagore thinks that science has helped man to understand his unity
 with nature. When this insight is not only intellectual but also spiritual
 it can result in radiant joyfulness and illumination. He writes:

Through our progress in science the wholeness of the world and
 our oneness with it is becoming clearer to our mind. When this
 perception of the perfection of unity is not merely intellectual,
 when it opens out our whole being into a luminous consciousness
 of the all, then it becomes a radiant joy, an overspreading love.
 Our spirit finds its larger self in the whole world, and is filled
 with an absolute certainty that it is immortal. 79

76 Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem 69.

77 Idem, Fruit-Gathering, Poem V.

78 Idem, Ibid., Poem LXVIII.

79 Idem, Sadhana, p. 113.

Tagore has spoken and written in ecstatic terms about the joy that results from "the realisation of the truth of oneness, the oneness of our soul with the world and of the world-soul with the supreme lover".⁸⁰

To sum up: Tagore fully subscribes to the ancient Indian view that there is a close kinship between man and nature-universe. But this does not amount to any sort of identification of the two entities. The spiritual unity of man and nature is a key concept in the philosophical thought of Tagore. As a matter of fact, by his own admission, Tagore has experienced in his own life this feeling of kinship with nature. He has given expression to this feeling in many of his poems. Though science is an ally in the understanding of man's unity with the universe, it is the spiritual insight that is more helpful in the realisation of the unity of man and nature-universe.

2. Religion.

At the beginning of this chapter⁸¹ the writer stated that it was not possible to analyse the philosophical thought of Tagore without reference to his religious thought. For this reason it was thought appropriate to discuss the latter topic immediately after dealing with his metaphysical thought. Tagore himself has made a distinction between philosophy and religion as follows:

Philosophy may try to find some universal principle which is at the root of all things, but religion inevitably concentrates itself on humanity, which illumines our reason, inspires our wisdom, stimulates our love, claims our intelligent service.⁸²

80 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 116.

81 See p. 1.

82 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 71.

Tagore is convinced that, "One's religion is at the source of one's being".⁸³ For this reason he has spoken and written about his own religious evolution on several occasions.

Tagore was born in a family practising a monotheistic religion based upon the philosophy of the Upanishad.⁸⁴ But somehow his mind at first remained "coldly aloof, absolutely uninfluenced by any religion whatever."⁸⁵ He "refused to accept any religious teaching merely because people in my surroundings believed it to be true."⁸⁶ Tagore became what he was, namely, a very religious man, "through a process of growth and not by the help of inheritance or importation."⁸⁷ The initiation ceremony of Brahminhood at which the gayatri verse of meditation was given to him may be said to mark the beginning of his religious evolution. At his eighteenth year "a sudden spring breeze of religious experience for the first time"⁸⁸, came to his life. It passed away after four days leaving behind in his memory "a direct message of spiritual reality".⁸⁹ He had a similar vision or religious experience at a later date in life.⁹⁰ After this vision the fact of his life suddenly appeared to him in a luminous unity of truth. He felt sure

83 Rabindranath Tagore, A Tagore Testament, p. 38.

84 See Appendix 1.

85 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 57.

86 Idem, Ibid., p. 57.

87 Idem, Ibid., p. 56.

88 Idem, Ibid., p. 58.

89 Idem, Ibid., p. 58.

90 Idem, Ibid., p. 59.

that some Being who comprehended him and his world was seeking His best expression through him.⁹¹ As he puts it "I felt that I had found my religion at last, the religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and co-operation"⁹².

Tagore, however, did not discover his 'religion of man' at one stroke. A chronological probe into this question reveals three stages of development in his religious evolution. First of all, there were his poetic experiences, feelings and emotions crystallized into the form of a personal belief.⁹³ This personal faith was later transformed into what he modestly called 'the religion of a poet'. At various occasions and circumstances he has explained at length what exactly he meant by this expression. For instance during the course of a lecture delivered in China in 1924, he declared:

My religion essentially is a poet's religion. Its touch comes to me through the same unseen and trackless channels as does the inspiration of my music. My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetical life.⁹⁴

Towards the end of the same lecture occurs the following passage:

I have already confessed to you that my religion is a poet's religion; all that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer your questions about evil or about what happens after death. And yet I am sure that there have

91 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 59.

92 Idem, Ibid., p. 60.

93 Idem, A Tagore Testament, p. 1-12.

94 Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, London, Macmillan, 1928, (Indian edition, Calcutta, Macmillan, 1970), p. 12; S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, editors, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 3rd ed., London, Allen & Unwin, 1966, p. 32.

come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy. 95

The following extracts are taken from a volume of Tagore's essays entitled Creative Unity. The first essay in this collection deals with 'the Poet's Religion'.

... Peace is true and not conflict, Love is true and not hatred; and Truth is the One, not the disjointed multitude. We realise that Creation is the perpetual harmony between the infinite ideal of perfection and the eternal continuity of its realisation; that so long as there is no absolute separation between the positive ideal and the material obstacle to its attainment, we need not be afraid of suffering and loss. This is the poet's religion.

... the poet's religion is fluid, ... 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 'the 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',... 96

In the third and final stage, with the deepening of his personal experience and spiritual insight, his religious beliefs evolved into the 'religion of Man'. As Niharranjan Ray remarks:

His (Tagore's) religion of man reflects the story of an evolutionary process, beginning from what was purely a personal experience as a poet and culminating into what he felt and realised to be the fundamental meaning of the existence of man as man in this world. 97

95 Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 16-17; S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, editors, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 3rd ed., p. 33; Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 67 (with difference in wording).

96 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 15-17.

97 Niharranjan Ray, An Artist in Life: A Commentary on the Life and Works of Rabindranath Tagore, Trivandrum, University of Kerala, 1967, p. 335.

The 'infinite (who) became defined in humanity', Tagore called Jivan Devata or the Lord of his life. As months and years rolled by he addressed a number of poems to his Lord of Life in which he sought to define his idea of the 'religion of Man'. According to Tagore's own testimony "any evidence revealed through the self-recording instrument of poetry is more authentic than answers extorted through conscious questionings".⁹⁸ A very significant poem of this type which Tagore addressed to his Jivan Devata or Lord of Life is quoted below:

Thou who are the innermost Spirit of my
being, art thou pleased,
 Lord of my life?
For I gave to thee my cup
filled with all the pain and delight
that the crushed grapes of my heart had surrendered,
I wove with the rhythm of colours and songs the cover
 for thy bed,
and with the molten gold of my desires
I fashioned playthings for thy passing hours.

I know not why thou chosest me for thy partner,
 Lord of my life!
Didst thou store my days and nights,
my deeds and dreams for the alchemy of thy art,
and string in the chain of thy music my
 songs of autumn and spring,
and gather the flowers from my mature moments
 for thy crown?

I see thine eyes gazing at the dark of my heart,
 Lord of my Life,
I wonder if my failures and wrongs are forgiven.
For many were my days without service and nights
 of forgetfulness;
futile were the flowers that faded in the shade
 not offered to thee.

⁹⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man, p. 60.

Often the tired strings of my lute
 slackened at the strain of thy tunes.
 And often at the ruin of wasted hours
 my desolate evenings were filled with tears.

But have my days come to their end at last,
 Lord of my life
 while my arms round thee grow limp,
 my kisses losing their truth?
 Then break up the meeting of this languid day.
 Renew the old in me in fresh forms of delight;
 and let the wedding come once again in a new
 ceremony of life. 99

In Tagore's own words "The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal"¹⁰⁰ is the key concept in his 'Religion of Man'. He has given the world a brilliant exposition of his understanding of this concept in his well known book The Religion of Man. As Tagore himself has stated this concept of God did not grow in his mind through any process of philosophical reasoning. In fact, it simply followed the current of his temperament from his early days until it suddenly flashed into his consciousness with a direct vision. As a result of this, he became fully convinced that "in the depth (of our being) there dwells the Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge".¹⁰¹

En passant, it may be noted here that this 'Eternal Spirit' of human unity who dwells in the depth of all of us is the sheet-anchor for Tagore's concept of universalism and brotherhood of man.

According to Tagore's own testimony inclusiveness is the dominant ideal of his religion. He writes:

99 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 60-61.

100 Idem, Ibid., p. 11.

101 Idem, Ibid., p. 11.

... what is the ideal of my religion?
 ... Within myself when I ask this question my
 innermost heart says, I am not in favour of
 rejecting anything, for I am only complete with
 the inclusion of everything.
I want to accept all excluding nothing,
for it is I, my friend, that waits outside to meet me! 102

In the opinion of Tagore all religions present the ideal of human
 unity based upon the vision of "the One in man".¹⁰³ The One in man is
 also universal, "proving that the truth of human unity is the truth of Man's
 God".¹⁰⁴ And again:

... whatever may be the name and nature of his religious
 creed, man's ideal of human perfection has been based upon a
 bond of unity running through individuals culminating in a
 supreme Being who represents the eternal in human personality. 105

It is obvious from all these statements how deep was Tagore's
 conviction with regard to human unity based upon the 'truth of Man's God'.

According to Tagore "Religion consists in the endeavour of men to
 cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of
 Man the Eternal, and to have faith in him".¹⁰⁶ He ascribes to religion
 the function of reconciling the contradictions in man. This process of
 reconciliation is helped by man's faith in the Eternal Man who is called
 by different names and imagined in various shapes. Man gains his true
 religion when he consciously co-operates with the Eternal Man who is the
 Supreme Spirit.¹⁰⁷

102 Rabindranath Tagore, A Tagore Testament, p. 43.

103 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 77.

104 Idem, Ibid., p. 89.

105 Idem, Ibid., p. 91.

106 Idem, Ibid., p. 89.

107 Idem, Ibid., p. 90.

In another place Tagore writes:

... to be conscious of being absolutely enveloped by
Brahma --- must be the aim of the whole of our life.
In all our thoughts and deeds we must be conscious
of the infinite. 108

Man should know that his soul is far above material things. He
truly realises his soul by outgrowing his possessions and progresses in the
path of eternal life through renunciation. 109

... our daily worship of God is not really the process
of gradual acquisition of him, but the daily process of
surrendering ourselves, removing all obstacles to union
and extending our consciousness of him in devotion and
service, in goodness and love. 110

No one can absolutely possess the infinite being. This truth far
from being a mere intellectual proposition is something which has to be
experienced. But the human soul may soar in the infinite and this ex-
perience is her supreme joy and final freedom. 111

About this supreme joy and final freedom Tagore has written as
follows in another context:

To know the Supreme Joy through all earthly love, to per-
ceive the visible form of the Exquisite One through the
world of beauty is what I call the realisation of freedom.
This world has enchanted me. In my enchantment I taste the
essence of freedom. 112

108 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 149.

109 Idem, Ibid., p. 151-152.

110 Idem, Ibid., p. 149.

111 Idem, Ibid., p. 152.

112 Idem, A Tagore Testament, p. 20.

In one of his Gitanjali poems Tagore has expressed beautifully what exactly he meant by this Supreme Joy and final freedom or deliverance.

It runs as follows:

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

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught
of thy wine of various colours and fragrance,
filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps
with thy flame and place them before the altar
of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses.
The delights of sight and hearing and touch
will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumina-
tion of joy, and all my desires ripen into
fruits of love. 113

Tagore's religious temperament, attitude and philosophy is revealed best in some of his poems. On account of the limitation of space only a few samples are given below:

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.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away
from my heart and keep my love in flower,
knowing that thou hast thy seat in the
inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee
in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives
me strength to act. 114

That I want thee, only thee - let my heart
repeat without end. All desires that distract
me, day and night, are false and empty to the
core. 115

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy
sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy
feet. Only let me make my life simple and
straight, like a flute of reed for thee
to fill with music. 116

My portion of the best in this world will
come from your hands: such was your promise.

Therefore your light glistens in my tears.

I fear to be led by others lest I miss you
waiting in some road corner to be my guide.

I walk my own wilful way till my very folly
tempts you to my door.

For I have your promise that my portion of
the best, in this world will come from your
hands. 117

Tagore's whole philosophy of life and religion seems to have been
epitomized in the following poem of his:

This is my prayer to thee, my lord - strike,
strike at the root of penury in my heart.

114 Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem 4.

115 Idem, Ibid., Poem 38.

116 Idem, Ibid., Poem 7.

117 Idem, Fruit-Gathering, Poem XIV.

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys
and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful
in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor
or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high
above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my
strength to thy will with love. 118

There does not seem to be a more appropriate way of concluding this section than by quoting a paragraph from Tagore where he recapitulates the philosophy of religion of his writings. He writes:

If there is any philosophy of religion in my writings, it amounts to this:

To realise the relationship of perfect love between the Supreme soul and the soul of all created beings is indeed true religious-sense -- this love that holds duality on one side and non-duality on the other, union as well as separation, and bondage along with freedom. In this love strength and beauty, form and emotion, the limited and the unlimited have all become one. It is the love that by acknowledging this world, truly transcends the world, and by acknowledging what is beyond the universe, accepts this universe in its true form. It is the love that admits peace even in the midst of strife, knows good in the midst of evil, and worships the One Supreme through things varied. 119

To sum up: Religion was the warp and woof of Tagore's life. But this was not a part of his inheritance but the result of a process of growth and evolution in his religious awareness. Beginning from what was purely a personal faith, his religion gradually evolved into a poet's religion, and

118 Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem 36.

119 Idem, A Tagore Testament, p. 68-69.

later into the 'religion of Man'. The Infinite who became defined in humanity Tagore addressed as the Lord of life. He was always conscious of the indwelling presence of this 'Eternal Spirit of human unity' in the heart of humanity. Tagore's universalism has its roots in this deep conviction. Comprehensiveness was the ideal of his religion. Reconciliation of inherent contradictions in man he held to be one of the important functions of religion. Man became truly religious by co-operating with the Supreme Spirit through love and self-surrender. None can absolutely possess the Infinite. But the human soul is capable of soaring in the Infinite and thus experiencing her supreme joy and deliverance. Some of the poems of Tagore reveal best his religious philosophy. The essence of Tagore's religion consists in the love of God and man manifested in thought, word and action.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE (II)

Tagore's thoughts on ethics and aesthetics have the same characteristics as his metaphysical and religious opinions, namely, harmony, balance and totality of outlook. Whether dealing with ethics in general or with ethics of social, political and cultural relationships the ideal that Tagore holds forth is a comprehensive one that has reference to the whole of human nature. Similarly, in aesthetics the idea that dominates his thinking is the universal law of harmony.

1. Ethics.

For the sake of better analysis, Tagore's thoughts on ethics will be considered under four aspects, namely, general and personal ethics, ethics of political relationships, ethics of cultural relationships and ethics of social relationships. Keeping in view the broader perspective the treatment accorded to this topic here will not be strictly technical. The same observation applies to the presentation of Tagore's thoughts on aesthetics too.

a) General and Personal Ethics.- An important distinction between the animal and man that Tagore has noted is this: the animal is almost completely confined within the boundaries of its necessities whereas man has large outlying areas surrounding his necessities where he has objects that are ends in themselves.¹ Knowledge is one such 'surplus' object. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is freedom and pure enjoyment. Altruism

¹ Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 9.

is another such surplus. Man can practise goodness for its own sake. Thus Tagore thinks that goodness is the foundation of all ethics. He writes:

And upon this wealth of goodness, -- where honesty is not valued for being the best policy, best because it can afford to go against all policies, - man's ethics are founded. 2

Neither man nor society exists for his or its own sake. Both of them have ends beyond themselves.

To give perfect expression to the One, the Infinite, through the harmony of the many; to the One, the Love, through the sacrifice of self, is the object alike of our individual life and our Society. 3

The strength of the divine in man "is not in the muscle or the machine, neither in cleverness of policy nor in callousness of conscience; it is in its spirit of perfections". 4 When one knows the highest ideal of freedom which a man has, one knows one's dharma, which is one's innermost nature or essence. Real freedom is achieved through self-sacrifice and not through self-gratification or self-aggrandizement. As Tagore observes:

The higher nature in man always seeks for something which transcends itself and yet is its deepest truth; which claims all its sacrifice, yet makes this sacrifice its own recompense. This is man's dharma, man's religion, and man's self is the vessel which is to carry this sacrifice to the altar. 5

According to Tagore every human being has two 'sides'. The one is finite and it expends itself in every step. The other is infinite in its

2 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 10.

3 Idem, Creative Unity, p. vi.

4 Idem, Personality, p. 104.

5 Idem, Sadhana, p. 75-76.

aspiration, enjoyment and sacrifice. "This infinite side of man must have its revealments in some symbols which have the elements of immortality".⁶ Truth, beauty, goodness, and bliss have in them these elements of immortality. They are universal by their very nature. As Tagore says, "Truth is everywhere, therefore, everything is the object of our knowledge. Beauty is omnipresent, therefore everything is capable of giving us joy".⁷ Regarding goodness he writes:

To live the life of goodness is to live the life of all. Pleasure is for one's own self, but goodness is concerned with the happiness of all humanity and for all time. ⁸

Realisation of the whole truth is the attainment of immortality. That is why Tagore considers gladness as the "one criterion of truth".⁹ As Tagore puts it "we know when we have touched Truth by the music it gives, by the joy of greeting it sends forth to the truth in us".¹⁰

Though truth and beauty are present everywhere, untruth and ugliness are also to be found in the world. Tagore tries to account for them by stating that untruth is not in the system of the universe but in our power of comprehension, that ugliness comes from our imperfect realisation of Truth.¹¹ Therefore, he concludes as follows:

6 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 30.

7 Idem, Sadhana, p. 138.

8 Idem, Ibid., p. 56-57.

9 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 66.

10 Idem, Ibid., p. 66.

11 Idem, Sadhana, p. 140-141.

To a certain extent we can set our life against the law of truth which is in us and which is in all, and likewise we can give rise to ugliness by going counter to the eternal law of harmony which is everywhere. 12

Along with truth and beauty Tagore held goodness in high esteem.

As a matter of fact, he went to the extent of stating that:

To live in perfect goodness is to realise one's life in the infinite. This is the most comprehensive view of life which we can have by our inherent power of the moral vision of the wholeness of life. 13

By the exercise of the activity of disinterested goodness man can become one with the infinite. The moral life thus, really becomes universal life. 14

Though truth, beauty and goodness are basic values with 'elements of immortality' in them, Tagore considers bliss as the supreme value. For, all the three former values are contained in the latter one. To put it differently, truth, beauty and goodness, according to Tagore, are but the varied expressions of one supreme value, bliss which is really identified as God in the Indian tradition.

Tagore has stated on various occasions that man becomes all the truer the more he realises himself in others. "The moral law, which is the greatest discovery of man, is the discovery of this wonderful truth..."¹⁵ Men are so closely knit that any injury inflicted on others rebounds and hurts

12 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 141.

13 Idem, Ibid., p. 57.

14 Idem, Ibid., p. 58.

15 Idem, Nationalism, London, Macmillan, 1917, p. 78.

the wrong-doer himself. This home truth has not only individual value but also universal validity. He has recognised and emphasized the need for inculcating in the minds of children the right moral principles. He writes:

We must not vitiate our children's minds with the superstition that business is business, war is war, politics is politics. We must know that man's business has to be more than mere business, and so should be his war and politics. 16

It is difficult to question the soundness and wisdom of the following statement of Tagore:

It is so easy to dull our sense of honour and delicacy of mind with constant abrasion, while falsehoods stalk abroad with proud steps in the name of trade, politics and patriotism, that any protest against their perpetual intrusion into our lives is considered to be sentimentalism, unworthy of true manliness. 17

Scattered through his varied writings can be found Tagore's views on ethical questions such as freedom, sin, immortality and self-realisation. For obvious reasons, only a very brief discussion is attempted here.

To begin with freedom: in the mind of Tagore love and freedom were associated inextricably. Freedom is possible only where there is love.

He writes:

... this self of ours has to attain its ultimate meaning, which is the soul, not through the compulsion of God's power but through love, and thus become united with God in freedom. 18

16 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 85.

17 Idem, Ibid., p. 86.

18 Idem, Sadhana, p. 42.

He is even more emphatic and clear on this issue in the following statement:

Thus we find in perfect love the freedom of our self.
That only which is done for love is done freely, however
much pain it may cause. Therefore, working for love is
freedom in action. 19

Freedom resides in the human will and therefore, "the more it
is freed and widened, the more our moral relationship becomes true,
varied and large". 20

Tagore has given a brief but memorable definition of sin as
follows:

The evil which hurts the natural man is pain, but
that which hurts his soul has been given a special name,
it is sin... Crime is against man, sin is against the
divine in us. 21

Tagore's approach to life and work has been very positive. He knew
that "perpetual giving up is the truth of life". 22 Human life, however,
should be fully suggestive of its soul which is infinite and not merely
of its possessions which have no meaning in themselves. As he puts it:

The consciousness of the infinite in us proves itself
by our joy in giving ourselves out of our abundance. And
then our work is the process of our renunciation, it is one
with our life. 23

19 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 78.

20 Idem, Personality, p. 82.

21 Idem, Ibid., p. 86-87.

22 Idem, Ibid., p. 63.

23 Idem, Ibid., p. 63.

The following passage is a typical example of Tagore's exuberant outlook on life. He exhorts:

Let us live. Let us have the true joy of life, which is the joy of the poet in pouring himself out in his poem. Let us express our infinity in everything round us, in works we do, in things we use, in men with whom we deal, in the enjoyment of the world with which we are surrounded. Let our soul permeate our surroundings and create itself in all things, and show its fulness by fulfilling needs of all times. This life of ours has been filled with the gifts of the divine giver... And let it like an instrument fully break out in music of its soul in response to the touch of the infinite soul. 24

As man is a mortal being, he should know not only to live but also to renounce life with equanimity and grace. It is only by living one's life fully can one learn to outgrow it. As Tagore views it:

... the wisdom of living is in that which gives you the power to give it up. For death is the gate of immortality. Therefore it is said, Do your work, but let not your work cling to you. For the work expresses your life so long as it flows with it, but when it clings, then it impedes, and shows, not the life, but itself. 25

Tagore, thus, gives strong and forceful reasons for the need for perfect detachment and renunciation in our lives. He is firmly convinced that "man truly realises his soul by outgrowing his possessions, and man's progress in the path of eternal life is through a series of renunciations." 26

But this idea of renunciation is something very positive as Tagore has shown in the following striking passage:

24 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 63-64.

25 Idem, Ibid., p. 64-65.

26 Idem, Sadhana, p. 152.

Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God. They make it easier for him to part with all that he has, not excepting his life. His existence is miserable and sordid till he finds some great idea which can truly claim his all, which can release him from all attachment to his belongings. Buddha and Jesus, and all our great prophets, represent such great ideas. They hold before us opportunities for surrendering our all. When they bring forth their divine alms-bowl we feel we cannot help giving, and we find that in giving is our truest joy and liberation, for it is uniting ourselves to that extent with the infinite. 27

When a man truly realises what his earthly possessions really are, he ceases to have any more illusions about them. Then he will know that his soul is far above these things and thus he will become free from the thralldom of their bondage.

Many of Tagore's poems express this theme beautifully. For example:

None lives for ever, brother, and nothing
lasts for long. Keep that in mind
and rejoice.

Our life is not the one old burden, our
path is not the one long journey.

... ..
All is done and finished in the eternal
Heaven.

But earth's flowers of illusion are kept
eternally fresh by death.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice. 28

Impermanence of all things on earth including that of human life does not bother the poet. On the contrary, he finds reason to rejoice at the thought of the eternity of heaven. He is firmly convinced that the

27 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 152-153.

28 Idem, The Gardener, Poem 68.

ultimate end of man is "to find the One which is in him; which is his truth, which is his soul; the key with which he opens the gate of ... the heavenly kingdom.²⁹ For this reason Tagore was not at all scared of the sting of death. He, in fact, welcomed it as the gateway to immortality. Several of his lyrics have 'death' for their theme. At one place death is depicted as a servant of God who has brought a message from him. "Death, thy servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought thy call to my home".³⁰ The welcome he accords to this messenger is quite revealing. He says: "I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart".³¹

In the stanza quoted below he more or less repeats the same idea:

On the day when death will knock at thy
door what wilt thou offer to him?
Oh, I will set before my guest the full
vessel of my life - I will never let
him go with empty hands. ³²

The following lyric of Tagore is reminiscent of the inspired utterance of St. Paul:³³

O THOU the last fulfilment of life, Death,
my death, come and whisper to me!
Day after day have I kept watch for
thee; for thee have I borne the joys and
pangs of life.

29 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 35-36.

30 Idem, Gitanjali, poem 86.

31 Idem, Ibid., Poem 86.

32 Idem, Ibid., Poem 90.

33 St. Paul, I Corinthians, Chapter XV, vss. 54-55.

All that I am, that I have, that I
 hope and all my love have ever flowed
 towards thee in depth of secrecy. One
 final glance from thine eyes and my life
 will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the
 garland is ready for the bride-groom.
 After the wedding the bride shall leave
 her home and meet her lord alone in the
 solitude of night. 34

In another poem Tagore sings loud and clear "because I love this
 life, I know I shall love death as well".³⁵ And he gives a very cogent reason
 for his love of death by means of the following very striking imagery:

The child cries out when from the right
 breast the mother takes it away, in the
 very next moment to find in the left one
 its consolation. 36

In the preceding pages of this chapter some important thoughts of
 Tagore with regard to general and personal ethics were discussed. He holds
 the view that goodness is the foundation of man's ethics. Dharma is the ultimate
 purpose that is working in man. The strength of the divine in him is derived
 from its spirit of perfection. The infinite side of man reveals itself
 through the universal values of truth, beauty and goodness all of which are
 embodied in the concept of bliss. Truth and beauty are omnipresent, the
 former having joy for its criterion. Only through goodness one can be
 united with the infinite. The moral law is deemed to be the greatest dis-
 covery of man. True freedom can be achieved only through perfect love.
 Whereas crime is against other men sin is against one's own inner self which

34 Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem 91.

35 Idem, Ibid., Poem 95.

36 Idem, Ibid., Poem 95.

is divine. The wisdom of living consists in the ability to give it up when the call comes. Man's abiding happiness consists in giving rather than receiving. Death is the servant of God and should be welcomed for bringing the glad tidings of immortality and bliss.

b) Ethics of Political Relationships.- The first thing that one notices while considering the political, cultural and social ideas of Tagore, is that they were deeply influenced by his view of man and his place in the universe. Another important thing to be noted is the period during which he expressed his thoughts on these issues and the circumstances surrounding them. Unless these factors are taken into consideration and his thoughts interpreted in their proper perspective, he is likely to be misunderstood.

Tagore delivered several lectures and addresses pertaining to the theme of the present and the following two sections of this chapter approximately between 1910 and 1925 -- the period of the gathering storm, outburst and aftermath of World War I. Imperialism, colonialism and national aggrandizement were at the height of their pomp and glory. India, Tagore's Motherland, was still smarting under the yoke of British rule. It is not surprising, therefore, to find many public utterances of Tagore during this period coloured by the course of events at home and abroad.

Knowing the world situation as he knew, the problem of national antagonisms profoundly exercised Tagore's mind. He knew that wars in all parts of the world and periods in history had their beginnings in the mind of men. He, therefore, holds aggressive nationalism responsible for some of the major evils of the modern age. In Tagore's vocabulary, 'nationalism' seems to have the connotation of predatory imperialism and

monopoly capitalism thriving on colonial exploitation. This inference is justified by the following descriptions of a 'nation' that he has given.

Thus, according to Tagore:

A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose... it goads all its neighbouring societies with greed of material prosperity, and consequent mutual jealousy, and by the fear of each other's growth into powerfulness. The time comes when it can stop no longer, for the competition grows keener, organization grows vaster, and selfishness attains supremacy. Trading upon the greed and fear of man, it occupies more and more space in society, and at last becomes its ruling force. 37

In another lecture he has described the same term in almost identical words, thus:

It (Nation) is the aspect of a whole people as an organized power. This organization incessantly keeps up the insistence of the population on becoming strong and efficient. But this strenuous effort after strength and efficiency drains man's energy from his higher nature where he is self-sacrificing and creative. For thereby man's power of sacrifice is diverted from his ultimate object, which is moral, to the maintenance of this organization, which is mechanical. 38

Elsewhere he has defined the nation as an "organization of politics and commerce" ³⁹, "the organized self-interest of a whole people where it is least human and least spiritual" ⁴⁰, and as "collective egoism of the people" ⁴¹ Tagore goes on to say that "the wisdom of the Nation is not in

37 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 9-10.

38 Idem, Ibid., p. 110.

39 Idem, Ibid., p. 12.

40 Idem, Ibid., p. 15.

41 Idem, Lectures and Addresses, p. 136.

its faith in humanity but in its complete distrust".⁴² He thinks that "the idea of the Nation is one of the most powerful anaesthetics that man has invented"⁴³, and "dead monotony is the sign of the spread of the Nation".⁴⁴ He holds the view that "the nations do not create, they merely produce and destroy".⁴⁵ He is convinced that "Nationalism is a great menace"⁴⁶, and gives the following reasons for it:

Whenever the spirit of the Nation has come it has destroyed sympathy and beauty and driven out the generous obligations of human relationship from the hearts of men. It has spread the ugliness of its cities and its markets into the minds and enthroned the demon of deformity in the hearts of men. ⁴⁷

Tagore has warned that when the Nation "becomes all powerful at the cost of the harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity".⁴⁸ He, therefore, exhorts the people of the world to fight the spirit of the 'Nation' if they wish for peace. He tells them to pluck up courage from the fact that 'the nation' is not immortal. In fact,

⁴² Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 40.

⁴³ Idem, Ibid., p. 42-43.

⁴⁴ Idem, Creative Unity, p. 144.

⁴⁵ Idem, Ibid., p. 144.

⁴⁶ Idem, Nationalism, p. 111.

⁴⁷ Idem, Lectures and Addresses, p. 135.

⁴⁸ Idem, Nationalism, p. 12.

it "will die like the worm which lies in the heart of the fruit that it has devoured".⁴⁹ But, unfortunately, "it may meanwhile destroy things of unrivalled worth, the products of centuries of self-control and spiritual training".⁵⁰

One is amazed by the similarity of thought expressed by Tagore half a century ago and of a recent statement by a historian of international reputation. Professor Arnold Toynbee writes:

Today we have begun to recognize that nationalism and democracy are spiritually debased substitute for traditional religion, and that mechanization is a cornucopia that spews out wealth for some, seasoned with pollution for all alike. Now the enslavement of humanity to machines and the injection of fanaticism into politics are bringing upon us so painful a nemesis that we can no longer blind ourselves to the ruthlessness of the new world. ⁵¹

Tagore emphatically asserts that "man's world is a moral world"⁵² which cannot be divided into compartments to suit the taste and advantage of each individual or nation. He is ready to believe those who exhort others to be more good, more just, more true, and to make more perfect the expression of consciousness of the divine in humanity. But, he cannot agree with those who declare that it is not the soul, but the machine, which is of the utmost value.⁵³ For, "man's truth is moral truth and his emancipation is in the spiritual life"⁵⁴, and moral and spiritual freedom should be his object in life.

⁴⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 135.

⁵⁰ Idem, Ibid., p. 135.

⁵¹ Arnold Toynbee, "Ruthless Age: 20th century brings in new barbarism", in The Ottawa Citizen, Wednesday, May 19, 1971, p. 7.

⁵² Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 33.

⁵³ Idem, Ibid., p. 31.

p. 122.

Tagore, as was stated so often, always tried to take a total view of things. "Reality is the harmony which gives to the component parts of a thing the equilibrium of the whole".⁵⁵ Power attained through intellect and science, is only a detached part of man. It often outpaces the total humanity of man, thus causing inequilibrium. The progress of the moral side of man is slow because it has to deal with the whole reality. Tagore has described this situation by means of a striking simile as follows:

... man with his mental and material power far outgrowing his moral strength, is like an exaggerated giraffe whose head has suddenly shot up miles away from the rest of him, making normal communication difficult to establish. This greedy head, with its huge dental organization, has been munching all the topmost foliage of the world, but the nourishment is too late in reaching his digestive organs, and his heart is suffering from want of blood.⁵⁶

At this point it is relevant to recall the remarks made in the first three paragraphs of this section and to caution against any possible misinterpretation of Tagore. Tagore, no doubt, was harsh and severe in his indictment of the 'West'. But his moral indignation was not inspired by malice or spite. Besides, it was not aimed at the individual people of the West but against monopoly capitalism, political chauvinism and aggressive imperialism.

With reference to the inequilibrium caused by a surfeit of power and strength Tagore writes:

55 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 34.

56 Idem, Ibid., p. 35-36.

Of this present disharmony in man's nature the West seems to have been blissfully unconscious. The enormity of its material success has diverted all its attention toward self-congratulation on its bulk. The optimism of its logic goes on basing the calculations of its good fortune upon the indefinite prolongation of its railway lines toward eternity. It is superficial enough to think that all to-morrows are merely todays, with the repeated additions of twenty-four hours. It has no fear of the chasm, which is opening wider every day, between man's ever-growing storehouses and the emptiness of his hungry humanity. Logic does not know that, under the lowest bed of endless strata of wealth and comforts, earthquakes are being hatched to restore the balance of the moral world, and one day the gaping gulf of spiritual vacuity will draw into its bottom the store of things that have their eternal love for the dust. 57

The two World Wars and some other local conflagrations seem to have amply justified the truth of Tagore's poetic prophecy. In the opinion of Tagore:

... the spirit of conflict and conquest is at the origin and in the centre of Western nationalism; its basis is not social co-operation. It has evolved a perfect organization of power, but not spiritual idealism. It is like the pack of predatory creatures that must have its victims. With all its heart, it cannot bear to see its hunting grounds converted into cultivated fields. In fact, these nations are fighting among themselves for the extension of their victims and their reserve forests. 58

Therefore, Tagore has no hesitation in asserting as follows:

This European war of Nations is the war of retribution. Man, the person, must protest for his very life against the heaping up of things where there should be the heart, and systems and policies where there should flow living human relationship. The time has come when, for the sake of the whole outraged world, Europe should fully know in her own person the terrible absurdity of the thing called the Nation. 59

57 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 36.

58 Idem, Ibid., p. 21.

59 Idem, Ibid., p. 43.

As everybody knows Japan was the first country in the East to exhibit the symptoms of a 'nation' in the Tagorean sense of the word at the dawn of the present century. Tagore had ample opportunities to observe at firsthand some of the manifestations of this newly acquired 'Nation' status of Japan. He was pained and upset by the evidence of the kind of political propaganda and indoctrination that was being carried out especially among the children and youth of the country. Therefore, in all sincerity and with goodwill, he addressed a Japanese audience in the following outspoken words:

... where the spirit of the Western nationalism prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood to foster hatreds and ambitions by all kinds of means - by the manufacture of half-truths and untruths in history, by persistent misrepresentation of other races and the culture of unfavourable sentiments towards them, by setting up memorials of events, very often false, which for the sake of humanity should be speedily forgotten, thus continually brewing evil menace towards neighbours and nations other than their own. This is poisoning the very fountainhead of humanity. 60

It goes without saying that political propaganda and indoctrination are not a unique feature of Japanese system of Government alone, then or now. The 'poisoning of the very fountainhead of humanity' goes on all the time, everywhere. Therefore the warning which Tagore issued to the Japanese 'Nation' is still valid in the case of all the 'Nations' of the world. What Tagore spoke is as follows:

60 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 79.

Never think for a moment that the hurts you inflict upon other races will not infect you, or that the enmities you sow around your homes will be a wall of protection to you for all time to come. To imbue the minds of a whole people with an abnormal vanity of its own superiority, to teach it to take pride in its moral callousness and ill-gotten wealth, to perpetuate humiliation of defeated nations by exhibiting trophies won from war, and using these in schools in order to breed in children's minds contempt for others, is imitating the West where she has a festering sore, whose swelling is a swelling of disease eating into its vitality. 61

From these remarks of Tagore, once again it must be insisted, one should not draw the wrong conclusion that he was against the people of the West. In fact, the contrary is the truth. Tagore's own testimony can be adduced to substantiate this statement. As for instance, to the British people whom, perhaps, Tagore knew better than any other section of humanity, he has paid the following generous tribute:

I have a deep love and a great respect for the British race as human beings. It has produced great-hearted men, thinkers of great thoughts, doers of great deeds. It has given rise to a great literature. I know that these people love justice and freedom, and hate lies. They are clean in their minds, frank in their manners, true in their friendships; in their behaviour they are honest and reliable. The personal experience which I have had of their literary men has roused my admiration not only for their power of thought or expression but for their chivalrous humanity. We have felt the greatness of this people as we feel the sun, but as for the Nation, it is for us a thick mist of a stifling nature covering the sun itself. 62

But it was not only the British people whom he greatly admired. To the magnificent and eloquent tribute he paid to the people of Europe there may be hardly any parallel in the writings or utterance of any non-European. Here is what he spoke:

61 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 80.

62 Idem, Ibid., p. 16-17.

I must not hesitate to acknowledge where Europe is great, for great she is without doubt. We cannot help loving her with all our heart, and paying her the best homage of our admiration, - the Europe who, in her literature and art pours out an inexhaustible cascade of beauty and truth fertilizing all countries and all time; the Europe who, with a mind which is titanic in its untiring power, is sweeping the height and the depth of the universe, winning her homage of knowledge from the infinitely great and the infinitely small, applying all the resources of her great intellect and heart in healing the sick and alleviating those miseries of man which up till now we are contented to accept in a spirit of hopeless resignation; the Europe who is making the earth yield more fruit than seemed possible, coaxing and compelling the great forces of nature into man's service. Such true greatness must have its motive power in spiritual strength. 63

The last sentence in the above quotation seems to contain a truth either forgotten or ignored by many Europeans themselves needing the insight of a genius like Tagore to stand revealed. It is also worth noting that the above passage was not an exercise in oratory delivered before an assembly of admiring Europeans, but spoken before a nationalistic Japanese audience. In the very same address Tagore continued:

In the heart of Europe runs the purest stream of human love, of love of justice, of spirit of self-sacrifice for higher ideals. The Christian culture of centuries has sunk deep in her life's core ... the fountainhead of the water of everlasting life has not run dry in Europe, and from thence she will have her rebirth time after time ... Europe is supremely good in her beneficence where her face is turned to all humanity; and Europe is supremely evil in her maleficent aspect where her face is turned only upon her own interest, using all her power of greatness for ends which are against the infinite and the eternal in Man. 64

63 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 65.

64 Idem, Ibid., p. 66-67.

The two extracts quoted above from an address Tagore delivered in Japan before World War I seem to reveal the mind and world outlook of Tagore as much as they provide an insight into the true heart and soul of Europe. It should be transparently clear by now that Tagore's moral indignation was wholly directed against the demoniac spirit of the 'Nation' and not against any people, East or West. True, as a true humanist and universal man, he did vehemently protest against the sight of the national, political and commercial machinery of the Western industrial countries turning out "neatly compressed bales of humanity ... (whom) the Creator will find it difficult to recognize as (things) of spirit and (creatures) made in His own divine image".⁶⁵ Tagore, however, had the capacity to recognize that against this soulless mechanization, monopolistic capitalism and statism, there was another spirit struggling. He pointed out this fact as follows:

We must admit that there is a living soul in the West which is struggling unobserved against the hugeness of the organizations under which men, women and children are being crushed, and whose mechanical necessities are ignoring laws that are spiritual and human, -- the soul whose sensibilities refuse to be dulled completely by dangerous habits of heedlessness in dealings with races for whom it lacks natural sympathy. The West could never have risen to the eminence she has reached if her strength were merely the strength of the brute or of the machine. The divine in her heart is suffering from the injuries inflicted by her hands upon the world, -- and from this pain of her higher nature flows the secret balm which will bring healing to those injuries. 66

Tagore is very frank in his admission of indebtedness of the East to the West. He thinks that the former has a great deal to learn from the

65 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 6.

66 Idem, Ibid., p. 88-89.

latter, "not merely about the materials of power" as he puts it, "but about its inner source, which is of mind and of the moral nature of man".⁶⁷

At this point it may be relevant to ask what precisely are the things which Tagore thought that the East could learn from Europe which is a synonym for the West. Tagore does not leave us guessing an answer to this question as he himself answers it as follows:

Europe has been teaching us the higher obligations of public good above those of the family and the clan, and the sacredness of law, which makes society independent of individual caprice, secures for it continuity of progress, and guarantees justice to all men of all positions in life. Above all things Europe has held high before our minds the banner of liberty, through centuries of martyrdom and achievement, -- liberty of conscience, liberty of thought and action, liberty in the ideals of art and literature. ⁶⁸

One is pleasantly surprised to note that much before Christopher Dawson,⁶⁹ Tagore held the view that Europe owes all her greatness in humanity to the medieval period of her history during which her moral personality was formed, by the reconciliation of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit in human integrity.⁷⁰

The following utterance of Tagore seems to echo the Biblical saying, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth".⁷¹

⁶⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 89-90.

⁶⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁹ Christopher Dawson, Understanding Europe, (1960), Medieval Essays, (1959), Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, (1958), Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, Image Books.

⁷⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 33-34.

⁷¹ The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Chapter V, verse 4.

... only those who can overcome the egoistic sense of nationalism, who can develop the understanding of sympathy that pierced through barriers of race differences, who have the enduring strength of meekness, will inherit the earth; and not those who are imagined to be born rulers of men. 72

It must, however, be admitted that like the truth of the Sermon on the Mount, Tagore's aspirations still remain in the realm of ideals posing a challenge to the moral sense of peoples and nations. It is to the eternal credit of Tagore that he never lost faith in humanity which for him was always one family. As in the preceding quotation, in the following one too, Tagore's universalism is crystal clear. The clarion call for East-West solidarity which he sounded from a lecture hall at Manchester College, Oxford, reads as follows:

I ask once again, let us, the dreamers of the East and the West, keep our faith firm in the Life that creates and not in the Machine that constructs -- in the power that hides its force and blossoms in beauty, and not in the power that bares its arms and chuckles at its capacity to make itself obnoxious. Let us know that the Machine is good when it helps, but not so when it exploits life; that Science is great when it destroys evil, but not when the two enter into unholy alliance. 73

In the preceding paragraphs of this section, an attempt was made to show that according to the diagnosis of Tagore, 'nationalism' in the sense of aggressive imperialism and monopolitic capitalism was at the root of all political antagonisms. Nationalism dehumanizes man by transforming him from being a moral being into an artificial product. Therefore, it has proved itself a great menace wherever it made its appearance. Man's world

72 Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 132.

73 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 101.

being a moral world, moral and spiritual freedom should be found in human life. Whenever material power outstrips moral strength, life's equilibrium is disturbed causing disharmony and chaos. In the opinion of Tagore, the Western 'nations' of his time seemed to have been quite unaware of this fact. The spirit of conflict and conquest reigns supreme at the origin and centre of Western 'nationalism'. Therefore, Tagore viewed the Great World War as a war of retribution. In his opinion, political propaganda and indoctrination poison the very fountainhead of humanity. Tagore had deep love and great respect for the British race as human beings. Similarly, he expressed great admiration for European civilization and culture which he thought had a moral and spiritual foundation. In fact, he was of the opinion that the East could learn a good deal from Europe. It was his firm conviction that only those who conquer the egoistic sense of 'nationalism' would finally inherit the earth. Therefore, he appealed to men of idealism in the East and the West to rally under the universal flag of human solidarity and brotherhood.

c) Ethics of Cultural Relationships or East-West Entente.— Nothing seems to have been dearer or closer to the heart of Tagore than the realization of an East-West entente. Nobody who has followed closely the trend of his thought as presented in the preceding two sections of this chapter, has any reason to be surprised by this statement. On the contrary, Tagore's ideals in this area of culture may be regarded as a logical outcome of his thinking in the realm of international politics.

Tagore was quite impressed by the meeting of the East and the West.

As he has stated explicitly: "The most significant fact of modern days is this, that the West has met the East".⁷⁴ He, however, felt that such a meeting to be fruitful had to be founded on some great spiritual ideal. As stated in the preceding section, Tagore was generous in his appreciation of Western cultural values. This appreciation was enhanced by his personal contact with numerous men and women of culture from the West. Tagore is quite explicit on this point:

I have been fortunate in coming into close touch with individual men and women of the Western countries, and have felt with them their sorrows and shared their aspirations. I have known that they seek the same God, who is my God -- even those who deny Him. I feel certain that, if the great light of culture be extinct in Europe, our horizon in the East will mourn in darkness. It does not hurt my pride to acknowledge that, in the present age, Western humanity has received its mission to be the teacher of the world; that her science, through the mastery of laws of nature, is to liberate human souls from the dark dungeon of matter. ⁷⁵

As stated in the previous section, Tagore did not approve everything Western. He, in fact, repudiated western nationalism in all its manifestations. But that was no reason for distrusting the people of the West. He has cautioned against such a mentality in the following words:

We must again guard our minds from any encroaching distrust of the individuals of a nation. The active love of humanity and the spirit of martyrdom for the cause of justice and truth which I have met with in the Western countries have been a great lesson and inspiration to me. I have no doubt in my mind that the West owes its true greatness, not so much to its marvellous training of intellect, as to its spirit of service devoted to the welfare of man. ⁷⁶

74 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 99.

75 Idem, Ibid., p. 98.

76 Idem, Ibid., p. 104-105.

Tagore, who always took a total view of things, readily recognized that the East needed the West, in spite of its grave defects. He writes:

... we have to consider that the West is necessary to the East. We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which have given us different aspects of truth. Therefore if it be true that the spirit of the West has come upon our fields in the guise of a storm, it is nevertheless scattering living seeds that are immortal. 77

That East and West are 'complementary to each other' is a fact which is yet to be practically recognized. Cultural intercourse, if it is to be fruitful, has to be a mutual give and take. A 'one way' bridge is something of an anomaly, especially when it is a 'cultural bridge'. On account of this, Tagore was rather unhappy with the situation that prevailed. He deplores:

To-day the real East remains unexplored. The blindness of contempt is more hopeless than the blindness of ignorance; for contempt kills the light which ignorance merely leaves unignited. The East is waiting to be understood by the Western races, in order not only to be able to give what is true in her, but also to be confident of her own mission. 78

Unfortunately for the cultural inheritance of humanity, the West seldom came to the East with the fellowship of human equality but more often with the arrogance of imperial masters. Besides, too often it was not the best type of Western humanity who went out into the East but the aggressive and the grasping kind. No wonder, but for certain honourable exceptions, the West in general developed nothing but contempt for Eastern values. But in spite of all these, Tagore in his high moral idealism and

77 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 15.

78 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 103-104.

humanism had an individualistic vision of India's destiny. He writes:

We must recognize that it is providential that the West has come to India. And yet, someone must show the East to the West, and convince the West that the East has her contribution to make to the history of civilization. India is no beggar of the West. And yet even though the West may think she is, I am not for thrusting off Western civilization and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association. If Providence wants England to be the channel of that communication, of that deeper association, I am willing to accept it with all humility. 79

There are indeed noble words only a man of Tagore's moral stature and universal outlook could utter with a convincing tone. The implicit faith in the West that he showed was based upon his religious philosophy of life and consequent trust in human nature itself. Thus, he writes:

I have great faith in human nature, and I think the West will find its true mission. I speak bitterly of Western civilization when I am conscious that it is betraying its trust and thwarting its own purpose. 80

As is well known, Rabindranath Tagore was the first man from the East who ever won a Nobel Prize. Even though this event literally brought Tagore to the limelight on the world stage, true to his convictions, he remained modest as ever. He has, however, given a very revealing interpretation of the distinguished award he received, as follows:

As a recognition of individual merit it was of great value to me, no doubt; but it was the acknowledgment of the East as a collaborator with the Western continents, in contributing its riches to the common stock of civilization, which had the chief significance for the present age. It meant joining hands in comradeship by the two great hemispheres of the human world across the sea. 81

79 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 109.

80 Idem, Ibid., p. 109-110.

81 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 103.

As Tagore was conscious of his mission to the world as a representative poet of the East, so would he have liked to see some Western poet realise and sing to his people about the meeting of East and West. His plea for this noble endeavour was as follows:

Earnestly I ask the poet of the Western world to realise and sing to you with all the great power of music which he has, that the East and the West are ever in search of each other, and that they must meet not merely in the fulness of physical strength, but in fulness of truth; that the right hand, which wields the sword, has the need of the left, which holds the shield of safety. 82

Fulness of truth is the bond of unity between people everywhere, is an axiom accepted by all, but seldom realized in practice. Tagore's incisive mind while reiterating this truth went a step further and brought in another historical truth to reinforce it which may seem surprising to some. He asks his Western audience:

The man from the East, with his faith in the eternal, who in his soul had met the touch of the Supreme Person - did he never come to you in the West and speak to you of the Kingdom of Heaven? Did he not unite the East and the West in truth, in the unity of one spiritual bond between all children of the Immortal, in the realisation of one great Personality in all human persons? 83

Jesus Christ as the one who united the East and the West in truth, in unity of one spiritual bond between all the children of God, is a concept which Tagore had the vision and insight to grasp, but largely not understood or ignored or forgotten in many quarters today. Be that as

82 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 110.

83 Idem, Ibid., p. 111.

it may, many will not agree with Tagore's concept of Jesus merely as a man from the East who had a touch of the Supreme Person in his soul. Without entering into the realm of Christian Theology unnecessarily, it is thought more relevant and appropriate in the present context to find out how Tagore himself answered the questions he posed in the preceding paragraph. He answers:

Yes, the East did once meet the West profoundly in the growth of her life. Such union became possible, because the East came to the West with the ideal that is creative, and not with the passion that destroys moral bonds. The mystic consciousness of the Infinite, which she brought with her, was greatly needed by the man of the West to give him his balance. 84

The meeting of the East and the West on a spiritual and therefore, on a deeper level, is a theme on which Tagore has spoken at length. For Tagore, religion and spirituality were closely related and therefore he found no difficulty in pointing out the role played by two major historical religions of the world, namely, Buddhism and Christianity, uniting all 'children of the Immortal' in the bond of love and peace. As Tagore sees:

Two prophecies about the world's salvation are cherished in the hearts of the two great religions of the world. They represent the highest expectation of man, thereby indicating his faith in a truth which he instinctively considers as ultimate--the truth of love. These prophecies have not for their vision the fettering of the world and reducing it to tameness by means of a close-linked power forged in the factory of a political steel trust. One of the religions has for its meditation the image of the Buddha who is to come, Maitreya, the Buddha of love; and he is to bring peace. The other religion waits for the coming of Christ. For Christ preached peace when he preached love, when he preached the oneness of the Father with the brothers who are many. And this was the truth of peace. 85

84 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 111.

85 Idem, Ibid., p. 128-129.

In tune with the hopes of these two religious 'prophecies' Tagore also looks forward to "the time when the spirit of the age will be incarnated in a complete human truth and the meeting of men will be translated into the Unity of Man".⁸⁶ As stated earlier, Tagore had tremendous faith in human nature and on account of this he rests his case for East-West entente on an optimistic note as follows:

I refuse to think that the twin spirits of the East and the West, the Mary and Martha, can never meet to make perfect the realization of truth. And in spite of our material poverty in the East and the antagonism of time I wait patiently for this meeting.⁸⁷

Though the East and the West have met at several points, the objective Tagore had in mind, namely, to make perfect the realization of truth, does not seem to have been achieved up to the present day.

This section attempted to show how deep and sincere were Tagore's aspirations for the East-West entente and the principles on which such a meeting could take place. He always felt that the East-West meeting to be fruitful and lasting had to be based upon some spiritual ideal. His appreciation of Western cultural values was enhanced by his numerous personal contacts in the West. Even though he deplored certain manifestations of the 'national' spirit in the West, he recognized the fact that the East had many things to learn from the West. In his opinion, the East and the West are complementary to each other. He regrets the fact that the real East has not been understood by the West up to the present time. In the award of the Nobel Prize to him he saw the beginning signs of a better

86 Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 146.

87 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 109-110.

understanding in this matter. He entertained the fond hope that some Western poet would soon sing to his people about the coming meeting of the East and the West. Jesus Christ was, for Tagore, an Eastern man who united the East and the West at a profound spiritual level. He centred his hope for the coming union of the East and the West in the two prophecies of love and peace contained in the teachings of Buddhism and Christianity respectively. Because of his firm faith in human nature, he was optimistic about the eventual meeting of the twin spirits of the East and the West in the fulness of truth and harmony.

d) Ethics of Social Relationships or Human Unity.- Tagore's thought with regard to the spiritual unity of mankind may be considered as a logical outcome and culmination of his thinking in the area of East-West understanding and co-operation. The liberal humanist note of his outlook and vision, as noted earlier, was apparent right from his youth. This characteristic of Tagore became even more marked during the last two decades of his life, the period roughly between the First World War and the time of his death in 1941. To the very end of his life he held the view that the spirit of harmony was the basic law of life and universalism, its natural concomitant. But Tagore's universalism, it must be emphasized, was not a mere posture; nor was it sheer sentimentalism shorn of substance. As shall be shown in the following pages, it was with Tagore a positive moral and spiritual concept.

In the opinion of Tagore, "Neither the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship, is the

goal of human history".⁸⁸ Therefore, what he advocates is the ideal of a family of nations to which every member will bring his unique gift. Harmony will be the keynote of such an international system. Civilizations will, thus, be inspired by the ideas of the wholeness of the world and its oneness.

As he looks back in history, Tagore finds that "Our great prophets in all ages did truly realize in themselves the freedom of the soul in their consciousness of the spiritual kinship of man which is universal".⁸⁹ Thus, the 'spiritual kinship of man which is universal' is the basis for Tagore's advocacy of the ideal of human unity. This 'spiritual kinship' itself results from the origin of mankind in God. Tagore points out that, from the early time of the Upanishads up to the present time, it has been the endeavour of many spiritual teachers "to set at naught all differences of man by the overflow of our consciousness of God".⁹⁰ Be that as it may, "human races, owing to their external geographical conditions, developed in their individual isolation a mentality that is obnoxiously selfish".⁹¹ But this geographical barrier has been almost completely obliterated in recent years. Consequently, as Tagore says:

The races of mankind will never again be able to go back to their citadels of high-walled exclusiveness. They are today exposed to one another, physically and intellectually. The shells which have so long given them full security within their individual enclosures have been broken, and by no

88 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 5.

89 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 97.

90 Idem, Nationalism, p. 6.

91 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 97.

artificial process can they be mended again. So we have to accept this fact, even though we have not yet fully adapted our minds to this changed environment of publicity, even though through it we may have to run all the risks entailed by the wider expansion of life's freedom. 92

Science and technology have transformed this planet of ours into a "global village" or even a "space-ship". But in spite of the physical proximity, it is doubtful if men have come closer together in moral and spiritual unity, an idea so often repeated in Tagore's writings. In the vision of Tagore, "There is only one history -- the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one".⁹³ For him, "The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of men have come close together".⁹⁴ "This is a fact of epic significance".⁹⁵ The significance lies in the fact that:

Man suckled at the wolf's breasts, sheltered in the brute's den, brought up in the prowling habit of depredation, suddenly discovers that he is Man, and that his true power lies in yielding up his brute power for the freedom of spirit. 96

This freedom of the human spirit is nurtured where there prevails the harmony of completeness in humanity which has for its ingredients spiritual love, compassion and empathy. Tagore has therefore no hesitation in asserting that the future definitely belongs to

92 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 97-98.

93 Idem, Nationalism, p. 99.

94 Idem, Ibid., p. 100.

95 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 101.

96 Idem, Ibid., p. 101.

those who are gifted with the moral power of love and vision of spiritual unity, who have the least feeling of enmity against aliens, and the sympathetic insight to place themselves in the position of others. 97

In his opinion there is a 'divine unity' at the foundation of all the great civilizations of the world from which men throughout ages have drawn their sustenance and still derive their inspiration. In the poetic language of Tagore,

The civilizations evolved in India, or China, Persia or Judaea, Greece or Rome, are like several mountain peaks having different altitude, temperature, flora and fauna, and yet belonging to the same chain of hills. There are no absolute barriers of communication between them; their foundation is the same and they affect the meteorology of an atmosphere which is common to us all. This is at the root of the meaning of the great teacher who said he would not seek his own salvation if all men were not saved; for we all belong to a divine unity from which our great-souled men have their direct inspiration; -- 98

That unity of mankind rests upon a spiritual foundation is a concept which Tagore was never tired of repeating. He had absolute faith in the efficacy of spiritual power. As he puts it,

Today, more than ever before in our history, the aid of spiritual power is needed. Therefore I believe its resources will surely be discovered in the hidden depths of our being. Pioneers will come to take up this adventure and suffer, and through suffering open out a path to that higher elevation of life in which lies our safety. 99

These words reveal not only Tagore's spiritual outlook but also his optimism, faith in humanity and vision of the future. In his view it is

97 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 101.

98 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 34.

99 Idem, Ibid., p. 99.

"the man, whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness", ¹⁰⁰ who is best fitted to realize "the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences of race". ¹⁰¹ Tagore himself seems to answer very well the description of the man given above and thus, eminently qualifies to realize the spiritual unity of which he has spoken.

The realization of the spiritual unity of man is however not as easy as it sounds. Tagore is fully aware of this. For, he writes:

... man will have to exert all his power of love and clarity of vision to make another great moral adjustment which will comprehend the whole world of men and not merely the fractional groups of nationality. ¹⁰²

Thus, 'love and clarity of vision' are required 'to comprehend the whole world of men'. This demands a good deal of 'moral adjustment' on the part of man. However demanding such an adjustment may be, in the opinion of Tagore, nobody is excluded from such a noble venture. He writes:

The call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself and his surroundings for this dawn of a new era, when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings. ¹⁰³

It is noteworthy that this spiritual discovery demands individual 'preparation' as well as the preparation of one's surroundings.

Tagore has wisely warned against the futility of seeking human unity

¹⁰⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ Idem, Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰² Idem, Nationalism, p. 102.

¹⁰³ Idem, Ibid., p. 102.

through mere political and commercial alliance. Such arrangements are often based upon expediency and material advantages and therefore lack depth and permanency. The real unity, he reiterates, "men of thought and power"¹⁰⁴ will discover in spiritual unity. In another context he acutely remarks that just as the realisation of the unity of the material world through science and commerce gives us power, so the realisation of the great spiritual unity of man alone can give us peace.¹⁰⁵

On several occasions Tagore has professed his unqualified faith in humanity. "I have great faith in humanity. Like the sun it can be clouded, but never extinguished".¹⁰⁶ And again,

To despair of humanity is only possible if we lose faith in truth which brings to it strength, when its defeat is greatest, and calls out new life from the depth of its destruction. ¹⁰⁷

He displayed this admirable faith in human nature in spite of adverse evidence and serious provocations which would have shaken the confidence of a less ardent believer in the ultimate triumph of truth and goodness. As he himself has stated:

I admit that at this time (the first quarter of the present century), when the human races have met together as never before, the baser elements appear predominant. The powerful are exulting at the number of their victims. They take the name of science to cultivate the schoolboy superstition that

104 Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, p. 106.

105 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 130.

106 Idem, Lectures and Addresses, p. 146.

107 Idem, Nationalism, p. 88.

they have certain physical signs indicating their eternal right to rule, as the explosive force of the earthquake once might have claimed, with enough of evidence, its never-ending sway over the destiny of this earth. But they in their turn will be disappointed. 108

Tagore knew that "what is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting". 109 It is no cause for wonder then to read his following statement:

Only those races will prosper who, for the sake of their own perfection and permanent safety, are ready to cultivate the spiritual magnanimity of mind that enables the soul of man to be realized in the heart of all races. 110

It was almost an axiom with Tagore that man derives his greatest delight when he realizes himself in others. Stated differently, it means that the highest happiness of man consists in the love and service of his fellow men through self-transcendence. But such a love has for its source the Supreme Being who is the only bond of unity among men. 111 Tagore has given poetic utterance to this thought in one of his Gitanjali poems as follows:

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not.
Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own.
Thou hast brought the distant near and made a
brother of the stranger.

... ..
When one knows thee, then alien there is none,
then no door is shut.
Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the
bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the
many. 112

108 Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 146.

109 Idem, Nationalism, p. 135.

110 Idem, Lectures and Addresses, p. 146.

111 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 30.

112 Idem, Gitanjali, Poem 63.

The idea of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God reverberates in the following ringing declaration of Tagore addressed to 'men of simple faith' everywhere in the world.

The God of humanity has arrived at the gates of the ruined temple of the tribe. Though he has not yet found his altar, I ask the men of simple faith, wherever they may be in the world, to bring their offering of sacrifice to him, and to believe that it is far better to be wise and worshipful than to be clever and supercilious. I ask them to claim the right of manhood to be friends of men, and not the right of a particular proud race or nation which may boast of the fatal quality of being the rulers of men. 113

One of Tagore's prayerful aspirations for his motherland was that it may wake up into a world which "has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls".¹¹⁴ Such a wish is certainly in accord with Tagore's ideal of human unity.

In this section an attempt was made to show that the thought of Tagore on the spiritual unity of mankind was the logical outcome and culmination of his thinking in the realm of East-West entente. Unity of mankind was for Tagore a positive moral and spiritual concept derived from his conviction regarding the Supreme Being as the sole bond of unity. The universal spiritual kinship of man is the raison d'être for the unity of mankind. Human races have been separated from one another by geographical barriers for a long time. Thanks to Science and Technology, this situation has changed at the present time. The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of mankind have come closer together, physically

113 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 101.

114 Idem, Gitanjali, Poem 35.

at least. This is a fact of epic significance and it lies in the fact that man has at last discovered himself. The future belongs to the man of love, compassion and empathy. There is a divine unity at the foundation of all the great civilizations of the world. The man of inner vision is best able to realize the spiritual unity that reigns supreme over all differences of race. Such a realization, however, is not an easy task but all men have a call for it. It is futile to think that human unity can be brought about through political and economic alliances. Only spiritual unity can bring us peace. Tagore had an admirable faith in humanity in spite of serious provocations. He was firmly convinced that only those races will prosper who had the magnanimity of mind to realize the soul of man in the heart of all races. The greatest happiness of man consists in the love and service of his fellowmen based upon the love of God. In the family of God there are no aliens.

2. Aesthetics.

Aesthetics occupies an important place in the total philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. Not only has he written extensively on this subject, but also with deep penetration and perspicacity. Indeed, this is what one would naturally come to expect from a creative writer of Tagore's stature. It is quite obvious that the subject in itself was of great relevance and significance to Tagore. One student of Tagore's philosophy sees aesthetics "as the coping stone of his entire thought-structure".¹¹⁵ This is an opinion with which one could hardly disagree especially when one recognizes

115 V.S. Naravane, Modern Indian Thought, p. 155.

the fact that Tagore was first and foremost a poet, "an artist, an artist in life".¹¹⁶ It may however be noted here that just as in other branches of philosophy, in aesthetics too, Tagore did not write any systematic treatises. It may also be added that in his widely scattered writings on this subject one notices the same sobriety, balance and harmony as are evident in his writings on other branches of philosophy.

True to the classical Indian tradition, Tagore firmly believed in the fundamental unity of all creation. Man's harmony with nature is well implied in this doctrine. Tagore has given an exposition of this Indian doctrine as follows:

For her, (India) the great fact is that we are in harmony with nature; that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things; that he can use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal, and that in the long run his purpose never can knock against the purpose which works through nature. 117

A little further on, Tagore observes that,

The fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was her life-object to realise this great harmony in feeling and in action. 118

It was also Tagore's 'life-object to realise this harmony in feeling and in action'. For, he felt that,

When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated, for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established. 119

116 Niharranjan Ray, Op.cit., p. 354.

117 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 6.

118 Idem, Ibid., p. 7.

Thus, one can see that the idea of harmony was a fundamental and live doctrine with Tagore. With this background in mind it is much easier to understand the thoughts of Tagore on aesthetics.

Unity, wholeness and comprehensiveness were key concepts in Tagore's thinking. On this account, Tagore held the view that the human intellect in itself, or for that matter the intellectual man as such, did not fully reveal a human being. He writes:

Man, as a knower, is not fully himself, -- his mere information does not reveal him. But, as a person, he is the organic man, who has the inherent power to select things from his surroundings in order to make them his own ... The principal creative forces, which transmute things into our living structure, are emotional forces. 120

Thus, Tagore believes that a 'person' is more than a mere intellectual man. A person is, in fact, an 'organic man' endowed with the gift of creativity. And in creativity emotional forces play a leading role. Tagore has elaborated on the place of emotions in human life as follows:

This world, which takes its form in the mould of man's perception, still remains only as the partial world of his senses and mind. It is like a guest and not like a kinsman. It becomes completely our own when it comes within the range of our emotions. 121

According to Tagore, the world becomes a part of our personality by the interplay and interaction of our emotions upon it. The content of our personality is proportionate to the amount of assimilation that has taken place. Thus, "if this world were taken away, our personality would lose all its content". 122

120 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 13.

121 Idem, Ibid., p. 14.

122 Idem, Ibid., p. 14.

Tagore uses a familiar metaphor to expound the emotions' assimilative role. He writes: "Our emotions are the gastric juices which transform this world of appearance into the more intimate world of sentiments".¹²³ It is quite obvious that human intellect is incapable of filling this role. By the help of intellect, we can of course use "the world of science (which) is not a world of reality..."¹²⁴ The world of science is, in fact, an abstract world of force and therefore cannot be realized by the help of our personality. But, besides the world of science,

there is another world which is real to us. We see it, feel it; we deal with it with all our emotions... This is the world from which Science turns away, and in which Art takes its place.¹²⁵

Thus, we see that Art has for its domain, a region full of mystery where emotions hold their sway. And Tagore felt that if one could answer the question what art is, one would also know "what this world is with which art has such intimate relationship".¹²⁶

There was a time in Tagore's early career when he was quite reluctant to define Art. His preference then was for knowing the reason for its existence.¹²⁷ But at a later stage in his life he did give a definition of Art as "the response of man's creative soul to the call of

123 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 14.

124 Idem, Ibid., p. 4.

125 Idem, Ibid., p. 4.

126 Idem, Ibid., p. 4-5.

127 Idem, Ibid., p. 7.

the Real".¹²⁸ He felt that "Art is for evoking in our mind the deep sense of reality in its richest aspect."¹²⁹

What exactly did Tagore mean by 'the Real' and 'reality' in this context? The answer is not far to seek. He has answered it as follows:

... reality is not based in the substance of things but in the principle of relationship ... reality is the definition of the infinite which relates truth to the person. Reality is human; it is what we are conscious of, by which we are affected, that which we express.¹³⁰

The intensive awareness, delight in and expression of reality is the work of arts and literature. By their very nature, they thus represent the "creative activity which is fundamental in man".¹³¹ Tagore has stated elsewhere that "expression of personality"¹³² is the principal object of art and that therefore it necessarily uses the language of picture and music. But, the use of such media has wrongly led some people to think that the object of art is the production of beauty. As Tagore sees it, "beauty in art has been the mere instrument and not its complete and ultimate significance".¹³³

128 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 87.

129 Idem, Ibid., p. 87.

130 Idem, Ibid., p. 84.

131 Idem, Ibid., p. 84.

132 Idem, Personality, p. 19.

133 Idem, Ibid., p. 19.

Art derives its 'complete and ultimate significance' when it is creative, when it builds man's true world which is the world of truth and beauty. ¹³⁴

In Tagore's view, the truth of art "is not in substance or logic, but in expression. Abstract truth may belong to science and metaphysics, but the world of reality belongs to Art." ¹³⁵

In another context, Tagore has stated that "the only evidence of truth in art exists when it compels us to say, 'I see'." ¹³⁶ This statement is in keeping with his other view that,

... analytical treatment will not help us in discovering what is the vital point in art. For the true principle of art is the principle of unity ... Therefore we find all abstract ideas are out of place in true art, where, in order to gain admission, they must come under the disguise of personification. ¹³⁷

Tagore is of the opinion that "man by nature is an artist". ¹³⁸
The artistic nature of man urges him "to realize the manifestation of personality in the world of appearance, the reality of existence which is in harmony with the real within us." ¹³⁹

It is the personality of man which is 'the real within us', and it "ever strives to make its expressions immortal and to make the whole world its own". ¹⁴⁰ Art is the name given to this striving for immortal expression.

¹³⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 31.

¹³⁵ Idem, in Contemporary Indian Philosophy, edited by S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, p. 37.

¹³⁶ Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 85.

¹³⁷ Idem, Personality, p. 20-21.

¹³⁸ Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 83.

¹³⁹ Idem, Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁴⁰ Idem, Personality, p. 38.

Stated in the words of Tagore: "In art the person in us is sending its answer to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts. ¹⁴¹

Thus, Art gives to the personality of man "the disinterested freedom of the eternal, there to find it in its true perspective". ¹⁴²

To repeat what was stated a little earlier, Tagore held the view that "beauty in art has been the mere instrument and not its complete and ultimate significance". ¹⁴³ From this statement one should not conclude that Tagore did not attach much importance to beauty in his scale of values. As a matter of fact, there are several passages in his writings which prove his appreciation for beauty and the role he assigned to it in the total view of Aesthetics. He always felt that beauty is a source of joy. As he remarks, "Beauty is omnipresent, therefore everything is capable of giving us joy". ¹⁴⁴

Though 'everything is capable of giving us joy', the joy we experience in things is not of equal intensity, proportion or duration. Man's experience of beauty takes time to ripen and in the meantime it may exhibit itself in various forms and colours. As Tagore puts it,

¹⁴¹ Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 38.

¹⁴² Idem, Creative Unity, p. 39.

¹⁴³ Idem, Personality, p. 19.

¹⁴⁴ Idem, Sadhana, p. 138.

... our first acquaintance with beauty is in her dress of motley colours, that affects us with its stripes and feathers, nay, with its disfigurements. But as our acquaintance ripens, the apparent discords are resolved into modulations of rhythm. 145

Recognition of beauty is not something esoteric which is confined to a coterie of connoisseurs. Simplicity is the heart of aesthetic appreciation. In the words of Tagore:

... the recognition of beauty in things great and small becomes easy, ... when we see it more in the unassuming harmony of common objects than in things startling in their singularity. 146

The same sense of beauty which enables a man to recognize harmony in common objects also enables him to recognize harmony in the universe. The greater the recognition of this harmony, so much greater will be his gladness in creation and his expression of its beauty in Art. 147

Not being satisfied with stating what is true in the physical world, Tagore advances a step further and applies the same principle in the realm of the spirit too. He writes thus:

As we become conscious of the harmony in our soul, our apprehension of the blissfulness of the spirit of the world becomes universal, and the expression of beauty in our life moves in goodness and love towards the infinite. 148

The ideal that Tagore places before us is a very noble one indeed. Quoting with approval a famous phrase from poet Shelley, he categorically

145 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 139.

146 Idem, Ibid., p. 139.

147 Idem, Ibid., p. 141.

148 Idem, Ibid., p. 141.

states that the ultimate object of our existence is to know that "beauty is truth, truth beauty". 149

A very brief exposition may be presented here regarding what Tagore thought about the phenomenon of ugliness in the world. In his views, it is only the narrowness of man's perception which demarcates his field of aesthetic consciousness into ugliness and beauty. This narrowness of perception is caused by man's self-interest and the lust of the senses. When these are overcome, man will have true vision of the omnipresent beauty. What is unpleasant to us is not necessarily ugly. Here is how he presents his position:

... it is only the narrowness of perception which sharply divides the field of his aesthetic consciousness into ugliness and beauty. When he has the power to see things detached from self-interest and from the insistent claims of the lust of the senses, then alone can he have the true vision of the beauty that is everywhere. Then only can he see that what is unpleasant to us is not necessarily unbeautiful, but has its beauty in truth. 150

From this statement, one should not draw the wrong conclusion that Tagore did not see any ugliness in the world. In fact, he did see plenty of it everywhere. What he tells us is that ugliness is not a part of the system of the universe but only a negative element of beauty. He has clarified this point with the help of a comparison as follows:

149 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 141.

150 Idem, Ibid., p. 140.

Untruth there certainly is, not in the system of the universe, but in our power of comprehension, as its negative element. In the same manner there is ugliness in the distorted expression of beauty in our life and in our art which comes from our imperfect realization of Truth. To a certain extent we can set our life against the law of truth which is in us and which is in all, and likewise we can give rise to ugliness by going counter to the eternal law of harmony which is everywhere. 151

It was stated on several occasions that Tagore believed in the omnipresence of beauty. The following quotation from one of his essays on Art gives an idea of the extent of his belief. He writes:

I believe that the vision of Paradise is to be seen in the sunlight and the green of the earth, in the beauty of the human face and the wealth of human life, even in objects that are seemingly insignificant and unprepossessing. Everywhere in this earth the Spirit of Paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ear without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life which sends our aspiration in music beyond the finite, not only in prayers and hopes, but also in temples which are flames of fire in stone, in pictures which are dreams made everlasting, in the dance which is ecstatic meditation in the still centre of movement. 152

It is clear from the above passage that Tagore found beauty in nature as well as in Art. In the latter category he has singled out music, architecture, painting and dance for special mention.

Of all Art forms, Tagore had the greatest love and admiration for music. No wonder that he composed more than two thousand songs ¹⁵³ during his lifetime. Tagore has amply vindicated his love for music in the following words:

151 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 140-141.

152 Idem, in Contemporary Indian Philosophy, edited by S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, p. 44-45.

153 Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji, "Tagore's Music" in Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume. New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1961, p. 180. Also, Humayun Kabir, "Foreword" to Mahendra Kulasrestha, ed., The Tagore Centenary Volume, Hoshiarpur, Vishvesharanand Vedic Research Institute, 1961, p. xiv.

Music is the purest form of art, and therefore the most direct expression of beauty, with a form and spirit which is one and simple, and least encumbered with anything extraneous. We seem to feel that the manifestation of the infinite in the finite forms of creation is music itself, silent and visible. 154

In the subsequent lines in the same essay from which the above quotation is extracted, Tagore goes on to elaborate and illustrate the truth of his statement that the 'manifestation of the infinite in the finite forms of creation is music itself' and concludes therefrom that, "the true poets, they who are seers, seek to express the universe in terms of music". 155

Music occupied an honourable and high position in Tagore's theory of Art. He has noted with precision the relationship that exists between music and mathematics. "Music is the most abstract of all the arts, as mathematics is in the region of science. In fact these two have a deep relationship with each other." 156 After showing the 'deep relationship' that exists between mathematics and music, Tagore concludes as follows:

... the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music. Expressiveness finds the least resistance in sound, having freedom unencumbered by the burden of facts and thoughts. This gives it a power to arouse in us an intimate feeling of reality. In the pictorial, plastic and literary arts, the object and our feelings with regard to it are closely associated, like the rose and its perfumes. In music, the feeling distilled in sound becomes itself an independent object. It assumes a time-form which is definite, but a meaning which is undefinable, and yet which grips our mind with a sense of absolute truth. 157

154 Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana, p. 141-142.

155 Idem, Ibid., p. 142.

156 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 87.

157 Idem, Ibid., p. 88.

It was stated on page 150 that reality is the definition of the infinite which relates truth to the person and that when we are intensely aware of it, we are aware of ourselves and that this awareness gives us delight. Tagore holds that we are not only aware of this reality but also we live in it constantly widening its limits in the process. This is a creative activity fundamental to man which finds its expression through arts and literature.¹⁵⁸ After making this observation Tagore goes on to add that the mysterious fact about this fundamental creative activity "is that though the individuals are separately seeking their expression, their success is never individualistic in character".¹⁵⁹ If artistic success is not meant to be merely 'individualistic in character' what else should it be? Tagore gives the following answer to this question:

Men must find and feel and represent in all their creative works, Man the Eternal, the creator. Their civilization is a continual discovery of the transcendental humanity. In whatever it fails it shows the failure of the artist, which is the failure in expression; and that civilization perishes in which the individual thwarts the revelation of the universal. For Reality is the truth of Man, who belongs to all times, and any individualistic madness of men against Man cannot thrive for long. 160

To require that 'men must find and feel and represent in all their creative works Man the Eternal' is a very high and demanding ideal for

158 Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 84.

159 Idem, Ibid., p. 84.

160 Idem, Ibid., p. 84.

any artist to pursue. But anything less than that will not 'thrive for long'.

To sum up: Aesthetics occupied an honourable niche in the philosophical edifice of Rabindranath Tagore. Being an aesthete and creative artist himself, Tagore was able to write with authority and characteristic sobriety on this subject. True to the classical Indian tradition, Tagore was a firm believer in the fundamental unity of all creation. It was his life-long endeavour to realize this unity in feeling, sentiment and action. Consequently, one finds that harmony was one of the key concepts in his thinking in the field of aesthetics. He also attached great importance to the idea of 'personality' in man as distinguished from his mere intellectualism. Tagore believed that it was the organic man or 'the person' who had the gift of creativity. The world became a part of one's personality through the interplay and interaction of one's emotions. The human intellect could gain access to the world of science but not to the world of reality which was the domain of Art. Tagore defined Art as the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real. The principal purpose of Art was not the production of beauty but the creation of man's true world. The truth of Art was to be found not in substance or logic but in expression. The true principle of Art was the principle of unity which was to be found in the harmony of the human personality with the world of appearance. Thus, Art was the name given to the striving of the human personality to make its expression immortal. Beauty in Art was only an instrument and not its ultimate

significance. Nonetheless, it was something ubiquitous and was a source of joy. Simplicity was the soul of artistic appreciation. The same sense of beauty enabled man to recognize harmony in common objects as well as in the universe. Man's consciousness of harmony in his own soul led him to the infinite. Though ugliness was a fact of life, it was only a negative element of beauty and not a part of the system of the universe. Tagore found beauty in nature as well as in Art. Among various Art forms, he assigned the place of honour to music because 'the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music.' Though every artist sought an individual expression, he should not be 'individualistic' but should 'find, feel and represent in all his creative works Man the Eternal', who is the creator.

CHAPTER III

TAGORE'S GENERAL THEORY OF EDUCATION

It is almost a truism to state that there is an organic nexus between one's philosophy of life and one's philosophy of education.¹ In the particular instance of Rabindranath Tagore, at any rate, it seems valid to posit an intimate relationship between his philosophy of life and his philosophy of education. It will be the task of the concluding chapter of this study to probe into this question in greater depth. What will be attempted in the present chapter is to present the thoughts of Tagore on education up to the university level in as systematic a manner as possible. In this context, it is important to note that Tagore's theory of education has the same characteristics as his philosophy of life mentioned in the introduction to chapter IV. Just as Tagore was not an academic or professional philosopher who propounded a specific system of philosophy, so also in education he did not formulate and present his thoughts in any systematic treatises. His thoughts on education have to be garnered from a wide range of essays and letters which he wrote and the lectures he delivered over a period of nearly half a century. The present researcher does not claim to have read every word of what Tagore spoke or wrote on education. However, from the mass of material he did read, he feels that nothing of any relevance or importance has been left out that would vitiate the validity of the systematic analysis and synthesis attempted in this chapter.

1 Franz De Hovre, Catholicism in Education, trans. Edward B. Jordan, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1934, p. 3-29; see also the same author's Philosophy and Education, trans. Edward B. Jordan, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1931, p. xxvii-xl.

For the sake of clarity and coherence, the contents of this chapter have been divided into five sections. Section one deals with Tagore's thoughts on the nature, function and aims of education; section two is concerned with what he thought about the educand and his all-round, harmonious development. Tagore's views on curriculum, method and the various agencies of education are the topics dealt with in sections three, four and five respectively.

1. The Nature, Function and Aims of Education*

Though Rabindranath Tagore did not write any systematic treatises on education, his vast number of essays, letters and speeches pertaining to it touched upon almost all aspects of it. As a number of commentators² on Tagore's life and work have observed, what is worthy of note is that his philosophy of education is not a mere preconceived theory but something which gradually evolved out of his own personal experiences and his intuitive responses to life's challenges.

It may come as a surprise to some to know that Tagore thought his mission in life was education besides the vocation of being a poet. During the course of a farewell speech given at Moscow towards the close of his visit to the U.S.S.R. in 1930, he said,

My mission in life is education. I believe that all human problems find their fundamental solution in education. And outside of my own vocation as a poet, I have accepted this responsibility to educate my people as much as lies in my individual power to do so. I know that all the evils,

2 Humayun Kabir, Rabindranath Tagore: Tagore Lectures, 1961, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1962, p. 47; Niharranjan Ray, Op. cit., p. 430; Sasadhar Sinha, Op. cit., p. 18.

almost without exception, from which my land suffers are solely owing to the utter lack of education of the people. 3

It is evident from the above passage that Tagore set a very high value on education and it becomes imperative to enquire as to the concept of education held by Tagore. Fortunately, one can find several passages in his writings where he has discussed the nature of education as understood by him. One such passage runs as follows:

Education is nothing short of the highest purpose of man - the fullest growth and freedom of soul. To the child, the environment will provide an ever-ready background for its spontaneous activity; to the adolescent, it will be an object of scientific or artistic curiosity; the adult will see in her the soil on which his country and his people grow, the cultural and economic background of human existence. 4

Tagore, thus identifies education with the highest purpose of man, which, according to him, is the fullest growth and freedom of soul. Besides, he holds the view that education is a life-long process beginning with childhood and progressing through adolescence into the maturity of adulthood. Elsewhere he has stated that education is a permanent part of the adventure of life; that it is not like a painful hospital treatment for curing children of the congenital malady of their ignorance, but is a function of health, the natural expression of their mind's vitality. 5

In the very same essay, "A Poet's School", he has expressed his faith "in an education which takes count of the organic wholeness of human

3 Rabindranath Tagore, Letters from Russia, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1960, p. 208.

4 Rabindranath Tagore, "Thoughts on Education", in Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 12, Pt. I, 1946, p. 19, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Seven Indian Educationists, New Delhi, Asha Prakashan Griha, 1968, p. 123-124.

5 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1961, p. 299.

individuality, needing a general stimulation of all faculties, bodily and mental".⁶

In another essay entitled "My School", he has stated explicitly that the "highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence".⁷ The reason he advances for this view is that man has come into this world not merely to know it but to accept it. He may become powerful by knowledge but he can achieve fulness of life by sympathy only.

During the course of an address he delivered in the U.S.S.R., he said, "my idea of education is that it should be imparted in contact with life itself; it should be a part of life".⁸ He has given a fuller explanation of this idea in another context, thus:

... our education should be in constant touch with our complete life, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our schools should be at the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operation. For, true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings.⁹

The idea that education should be in tune with life is a recurring thought in Tagore's writings. In an essay entitled "An Eastern University", he writes:

6 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 297.

7 Idem, Personality, p. 116.

8 Idem, Letters from Russia, p. 171.

9 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 202-203.

Education should not be dragged out of its native element, the life-current of the people. Economic life covers the whole width of the fundamental basis of society, because its necessities are the simplest and the most universal. Educational institutions, in order to obtain their fulness of truth, must have close association with this economic life. 10

In an address to the Concordia, Tokyo, which was delivered on June 3, 1929, he spoke as follows:

We in our home sought freedom of power in our language, freedom of imagination in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds and that of mind in our social environment. Such an opportunity has given me confidence in the power of education which is one with life and only which can give us real freedom, the highest that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human world. 11

Besides discussing the nature of education where one sees reflected his philosophy of life, Tagore has also stated his views regarding the function of education and the deficiencies he noticed in the prevalent system. In this instance too, one can see his philosophy of life coming through. Tagore regarded man as an individual, a social being and a spiritual being. This is quite evident from the following passage:

As individuals, each of us possesses the unity of a living organism, distinct in himself. As social beings, we are parts of the complex organism we call humanity. As spiritual beings, we belong to a Reality which is Anantam, Infinite, which is Shivam, Goodness, which is all-comprehensive. 12

10 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 199.

11 Idem, Visva-Bharati Bulletin, No. 14, November, 1929, p. 70.

12 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 90.

Tagore followed up the above-stated view of man by expressing his expectations with regard to the education of man as an individual, as a social being and as a spiritual being. While the functions he assigns to education are only stated indirectly, he points out clearly the deficiencies he has noticed. On the education of man as an individual, he writes as follows:

The education of man should allow room for a training in the perfect maintenance of his individual life. Otherwise not only does he become helpless, but this faculty for self-preservation, the exercise of which gives him a true enjoyment of life, can atrophy altogether. Generally speaking, in our process of education this training of how to live our physical life is neglected; therefore we miss the Shantam, the Peace, on which the self-reliant freedom of a well-organized existence depends. 13

On the education of man as a social being, Tagore has the following to say:

The adjustment of our individual life to our social life, and of these two with the vast life of man, needs for its training the spirit and acceptance of mutual responsibility. In our educational institutions, training and experience in this type of adjustment hardly find a place ... Owing to this lack of training in sympathetic understanding, man suffers from the want of that true freedom in his social life, which comes from his deeper consciousness of the need for welfare and for a widespread atmosphere of mutual sympathy and co-operation. 14

On the education of man as a spiritual being, Tagore continues as follows:

13 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 91.

14 Idem, Op. cit., p. 91-92.

When in our own deeper spiritual being we fail to find some deeper harmony or meaning in the universe, we lose faith in ourselves and proceed to sink all our resources in the pursuit of immediate self-interest. Ordinarily, our processes of education do nothing to train our minds for the realization of our deeper spiritual relationship with the Supreme Truth. For want of this training, we fail to develop that spirit of detachment that gives us the broader atmosphere, within which our inner being finds a natural dwelling and the space and the leisure for fulfilment in imaginative creation. 15

From the foregoing three quotations one can infer Tagore's conception of the rôle or function of education in the life of man. Stated briefly, he attributes a threefold function for education, namely, that of enabling man to maintain his individual life, social life and spiritual life.

There are a number of passages in the writings and speeches of Tagore which give a clear picture of what he thought should be the aims of education. For example, in an address delivered before a Japanese audience in 1929 occurs the following passage:

The activity represented in human education is a world-wide one, it is a great movement of universal co-operation inter-linked by different ages and countries... The messengers of truth have ever joined their hands across centuries, across the seas, across historical barriers, and they help to form the great continent of human brotherhood. Education in all its different forms and channels has its ultimate purpose in the evolving of a luminous sphere of human mind from the nebula that has been rushing round ages to find in itself an eternal centre of unity. 16

The ultimate purpose of education as "the evolving of a luminous sphere of human mind" may require some elucidation to bring out its full import. Fortunately, Tagore has elaborated on this theme in other contexts.

15 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 92.

16 Rabindranath Tagore, Visva-Bharati, Bulletin, No. 14, November, 1929, p. 71-72.

One of the most important statements of his on education is contained in his essay entitled "My School" in which occurs the following passage on the aims of education.

... for us to maintain the self-respect which we owe to ourselves and to our creator, we must make the purpose of our education nothing short of the highest purpose of man, the fullest growth and freedom of soul... Only let us have access to the life that goes beyond death and rises above all circumstances, let us find our God, let us live for that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love. 17

Once again one comes across an instance where Tagore's philosophy of life is reflected in his educational thought. It is apparent from the above quotation that for him the ultimate aim of education is identical with that of the ultimate purpose of life, namely, the emancipation of the soul. It may be added here that this view of education is in full accord with the Upanishadic teaching with which Tagore was saturated.

In the same essay, "My School", Tagore goes on to recall the tradition of spiritual wisdom India is reputed to have and he sets down as one of the objects of education the opening out of this treasure of spiritual wisdom. He writes:

Let the object of our education be to open it (treasure of spiritual wisdom) out before us and to give us the power to make the true use of it in our life, and offer it to the rest of the world when the time comes, as our contribution to its eternal welfare. 18

17 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 129.

18 Idem, Ibid., p. 130.

In an address to a Japanese audience Tagore has asserted that another object of education is freedom. He felt that without freedom, education loses its meaning. This is how he puts it:

... education has its only meaning and object in freedom -- freedom from ignorance about the laws of universe, and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world. 19

Besides the aims already stated, Tagore also set forth the following other aims for education: "to know man and make oneself known to man",²⁰ and "to lead us beyond the present".²¹

Unity, integration and harmony are some of the key concepts in the philosophical thinking of Tagore. This trend of thought is reflected in his thinking with regard to the aims of education too. Thus, on one occasion he wrote:

The highest mission of education is to help us to realize the inner principle of the unity of all knowledge and all the activities of our social and spiritual being. 22

The same idea in a more expanded form appears in the following statement of Tagore:

The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. Formerly when life was simple all the different elements of man were in complete harmony. But when there came the separation of the intellect from the spiritual and the

19 Rabindranath Tagore, Visva-Bharati, Bulletin, No. 14, November, 1929, p. 71.

20 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 197.

21 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 208.

22 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 199.

physical, the school education put entire emphasis on the intellect and the physical side of man. We devote our sole attention to giving children information, not knowing that by this emphasis we are accentuating a break between the intellectual, physical and the spiritual life. 23

To discover truth and to realize the unity of mankind are two other aims of education set down by Rabindranath Tagore. He writes:

Our education must enable every child to grasp and to fulfil this purpose of the age, not to defeat it, by acquiring the habit of creating divisions and of cherishing national prejudices. There are, of course, natural differences in human races which should be preserved and respected and the mission of our education should be to realize our unity in spite of them, to discover truth through the wilderness of their contradictions. 24

To sum up: Tagore envisioned education as nothing short of the highest purpose of man, namely, the fullest growth and freedom of soul which requires a lifetime of effort to achieve. In other words, education, according to Tagore, is a permanent part of the adventure of life. The highest education is that which makes one's life in harmony with all existence. It is the function of education to facilitate the development of man as an individual, as a social being and as a spiritual being. Among the aims Tagore ascribed to education are the emancipation of the soul; the evolving of a luminous sphere of human mind; the opening of the treasures of spiritual wisdom; the bestowing of freedom; helping to know oneself and to make oneself known to others; helping man to go beyond the present; helping to realize the inner principle of unity of all knowledge; helping to give the unity of truth and helping to realize the unity of mankind.

23 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 126.

24 Idem, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Seven Indian Educationists, p. 125.

2. The Educand and His Education.

In this section an attempt will be made to delineate Tagore's thoughts on the child and his education. His views on the child as a growing human being is the theme of the first part of the present exposition. This discussion will bring into view Tagore's ideas on child psychology, learning process and other related topics. In the remaining parts, the type of education the child receives will be treated under three headings, namely, intellectual and physical, religious and moral, and aesthetic. These divisions are made for the purpose of analysis only. As mentioned on several occasions, Tagore's tendency is always to view things as a harmonious whole rather than as distinct parts under particular labels.

a) General.- It is obvious from the writings of Tagore that he held the child in high esteem. "Children are God's own creation"²⁵ he once wrote. One of his poetical works entitled The Crescent Moon²⁶ is a collection of child-poems exuding unusual charm and beauty - a standing testimony to his understanding and appreciation of children and their nature. He held the view that:

children are in love with life, and it is their first love.
All its colour and movement attract their eager attention.
And are we quite sure of our wisdom in stifling this love?
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.²⁷

25 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 116.

26 Idem, The Crescent Moon, London, Macmillan, 1913.

27 Idem, Personality, p. 124.

Children being in love with life, it is natural and easy for them to enter into communion with nature and life. As Tagore puts it:

Children with the freshness of their senses come directly to the intimacy of the world. This is the first great gift they have. They must accept it naked and simple and must never again lose their power of immediate communication with it. 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 man. 28

As a corollary to the above statement, Tagore draws the conclusion that:

Therefore our childhood should be given its full measure of life's draught, for which it has an endless thirst. The young mind should be saturated with the idea that it has been born in a human world which is in harmony with the world around it. 29

He bitterly complained of the fact that the school system of his day almost completely ignored the truth contained in the above statement of his. He writes,

It (regular type of school) forcibly snatches away children from a world full of the mystery of God's own handiwork, full of the suggestiveness of personality. It is a mere method of discipline which refuses to take into account the individual. It is a manufactory specially designed for grinding out uniform results. 30

Tagore held the view that the child's subconscious mind was more active than its conscious intelligence. He, therefore, attached great importance to the type of learning that took place through that faculty. There are several passages in his writings which support this view. For example:

28 Rabindranath Tagore, "Thoughts on Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October 1947, p. 3.

29 Idem, Personality, p. 113-114.

30 Idem, Ibid., p. 114.

I believe, as I suggested before, that children have their subconscious mind more active than their conscious intelligence. A vast quantity of the most important of our lessons has been taught to us through this. Experiences of countless generations have been instilled into our nature by its agency, not only without causing us any fatigue, but giving us joy. This subconscious faculty of knowledge is completely one with our life. It is not like a lantern that can be lighted and trimmed from outside, but it is like the light the glow-worm possesses by the exercise of its life-process. 31

In another context, Tagore writes as follows:

Children have their active subconscious mind which, like the tree, has the power to gather food from the surrounding atmosphere. For them the atmosphere is a great deal more important than rules and methods, buildings and appliances, class teaching and textbooks. 32

In a lecture he delivered before a gathering of teachers in China in 1924 occurs the following passage:

Children's minds are sensitive to the influences of the world. Their subconscious minds are active, always imbibing some lesson, and realizing the joy of knowing. This sensitive receptivity helps them, without any strain, to master language, which is the most complex and difficult instrument of expression, full of indefinable ideas and abstract symbols. Through their natural ability to guess they learn the meaning of words which we cannot explain. 33

According to Tagore, the adult world generally thinks that the best way to educate a child is through concentration of mind whereas Mother Nature thinks that the best means for that purpose is the dispersion of mind. It is common knowledge that children gather facts by scattering mental energy, through unexpected surprises. The element of surprise is needed in making

31 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 139.

32 Idem, "Thoughts on Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October 1947, p. 2.

33 Idem, Talks in China, as reproduced in Amiya Chakravarty, Editor, A Tagore Reader, Boston, Beacon Press, 1966, p. 213.

them intensely conscious of the facts of life and of the world. Tagore finds the utter lack of purpose in child life quite significant. He observes:

The child, because it has no conscious object of life beyond living, can see all things around it, can hear every sound with a perfect freedom of attention, not having to exercise choice in the collection of information. It gives full rein to its restlessness which leads its mind into knocking against knowledge. 34

On the basis of the above understanding of child nature, Tagore came to the conclusion that:

The first important lesson for children would be that of improvisation, the constant imposition of the ready-made having been banished therefrom in order to give constant occasions to explore one's capacities through surprises of achievement. I must make it plain that this means a lesson not in simple life, but in creative life. 35

With many other educators before him Tagore also believed that Nature is the greatest of all teachers. He felt that the human teacher very often thwarted the work of Nature over the child. He expressed his faith in Nature as teacher, as follows:

I believe that children should be surrounded with the things of Nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens in the life of to-day. The new to-morrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. This is the best method for the child. But what happens in school is, that every day, at the same hour, the same book is brought and poured out for him. His attention is never hit by the chance surprises which come from learning from Nature. 36

34 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Schoolmaster" in The Modern Review, Vol. 36, No. 4, issue of October, 1924, p. 370.

35 Idem, "Thoughts on Education", in Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October, 1947, p. 4.

36 Idem, "My School", in The Modern Review, Vol. 37, No. 5, issue of May, 1925, p. 502.

In the very same essay, "My School", he recalls his own boyhood experiences in a number of schools as follows:

We had the God-given gift of taking delight in the world, but such delightful activity was fettered and imprisoned, stilled by a force called discipline which kills the sensitivity of the child mind, the mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive firsthand knowledge from Mother Nature. We had to sit inert, like dead specimens of some museum, whilst lessons were pelted at us from on high like hailstones on flowers. 37

Highly sensitive and creative a poet that Tagore was, he almost instinctively revolted against all forms of undue restrictions and regulations. In the way he felt, the ordinary schools of his day were a hindrance rather than a help in the learning process. He remarks thus:

In our childhood we imbibe our lessons with the aid of our whole body and mind, with all the senses fully active and eager. When we are sent to school, the doors of natural information are closed to us: our eyes see the letters, our ears hear the abstract lessons, not the perpetual stream of ideas which form the heart of nature, because the teachers in their wisdom think that these bring distraction, that they have no great purpose behind them. 38

He has remarked elsewhere that the "highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence". 39 But from his experience Tagore could testify that such an education was not only systematically ignored in schools, but also severely repressed. He has written movingly about the irony of such a situation as follows:

37 Rabindranath Tagore, "My School", in The Modern Review, Vol. 37, No. 5, issue of May, 1925, p. 501.

38 Idem, Ibid., p. 502.

39 Idem, Personality, p. 116.

The greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead. We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the Epic, but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates. He was born in the human world, but is banished into the world of living gramophones, to expiate for the original sin of being born in ignorance. Child nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment. 40

Tagore was firmly convinced that childhood was the period when one has or ought to have more freedom - "freedom from the necessity of specialization into the narrow bounds of social and professional conventionalism". 41

In another context he asks pointedly:

Are children to be blamed for not having learnt problems of algebra before coming into the world? And is there any reason for depriving them of air and light, of freedom and joy and turning their education into a punishment in every detail? 42

In one of the earliest essays he published on education, Tagore already seems to have been concerned about the answer to the above questions as is indicated in the following passage:

Had he not been sent to school at all, he would have had all the time in the world to play games, climb trees, swim in rivers and ponds, pluck flowers and do a thousand damages to fields and woods. He would thus have fully gratified his youthful nature and developed a cheerful mind and a healthy body. But as he struggles with his English, neither does he learn it, nor does he enjoy himself; neither does he acquire the ability to enter the imaginary world of literature, nor does he get the time to step into the real world of nature. 43

40 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 116-117.

41 Idem, Ibid., p. 117.

42 Idem, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 127.

43 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 42.

The importance Tagore attached to Nature in the education of children has been discussed already. What remains to be stressed is the emphasis Tagore laid on the concept of freedom in the education of the growing child. There are numerous passages in his writings which indicate where he stood with regard to freedom and its role in the education of the child. In the following passage, he clearly explains what he understood by freedom:

Freedom is not merely in unrestricted space and movement. There is such a thing as unrestricted human relationship which is also necessary for the children. They have this freedom of relationship with their mother, though she is much older in age, - in fact through her human love, she feels no obstruction in their communion of hearts, and the mother almost becomes a comrade to her children. This gift of love which Nature has given the mother is absolutely necessary for children because this love is freedom, and so I felt in this Institution (Santiniketan), that our young pupils who came away from their mothers, should have their freedom of relationship with their teachers. 44

Thus, according to Tagore, love is the essence of freedom. Taking his stand on this basic notion, he goes on to analyse the various types of freedom required by a human being. Tagore finds it very significant that a child comes into this world with an active mind, heart and soul or spirit - all of which seek the kinds of freedom suited to their own nature. In the effort to educate the child this fact has to be taken into consideration. So, Tagore writes thus:

This active mind of theirs must not be thwarted by constant imposition from outside; and their active heart must not be restricted through the unsympathetic obstruction of artificial relationship; and the active creative will must not be allowed

44 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Schoolmaster", in The Modern Review, Vol. 36, No. 4, issue of October, 1924, p. 371.

to dwindle away into utter passivity through want of opportunity. So in my institution I try to make provision for these three aspects of freedom - freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will. 45

An opposite course of action may make matters smoother and easier for the teacher but will do positive harm to the child. As Tagore puts it:

We are saved from trouble when the children, who have their restless wings given them by Nature are at last put into this cage (classroom). But we kill that spirit of liberty in their mind, the spirit of adventure, which we all bring with us into the world, the spirit that every day seeks for new experiences. This freedom is absolutely necessary for the intelligent growth of the mind, as well as for the moral nature of children. 46

Tagore recognizes the fact that an immense amount of sympathy is needed to educate the human child in the right lines. He goes to the extent of stating that he "who has lost the child in himself is absolutely unfit for this great work of educating human children." 47

Educating children is a highly creative activity which can be exercised properly only in an atmosphere of freedom. It is somewhat like the creative act of God Himself. In the words of Tagore:

... as God himself finds his own freedom in his own creation and then his nature is fulfilled, human beings have to create their own world and then they can have their freedom. And for that they must be trained, not to be soldiers, not to be clerks in a bank, not to be merchants, but to be the makers of their own world and their own destiny. And for that they must have all their faculties fully developed in the atmosphere of freedom. 48

45 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Schoolmaster", in The Modern Review, Vol. 36, No.4, issue of October, 1924, p. 372.

46 Idem, Ibid., p. 370.

47 Idem, Ibid., p. 372.

48 Idem, Ibid., p. 372-373.

According to Tagore if man loses his freedom, he loses the most precious gift that God has given him, namely, the gift of creation, which comes from His own nature. For, God is creator and as His children, human beings also have to be creators. But as Tagore notes:

that goes against the purposes of the tyrant, of the school-master, of the educational administration, of most of the governments, each of whom want the children to grow up according to the pattern which they have set for themselves. 49

Though Tagore ascribes full credit to the work of Nature in the growth and development of the child in an atmosphere of freedom he does not forget that such growth and development are gradual processes both on the physical side and on the mental side. Tagore notes this phenomenon in the following words:

A man's years are like links in a chain, and it will be somewhat superfluous to state anew the wellknown fact childhood grows into manhood by degrees. Certain mental qualities are indispensable to a grown-up man who has just entered the world of action. But these qualities are not instantly available; they have to be developed. Like our hands and feet our mental qualities grow at every stage of our life in answer to the call that is made on them. They are not like ready-made articles which can be bought in shops whenever needed. 50

Tagore had a deep understanding of the various stages of human growth and development. On the basis of this insight he advocated tolerance and tact on the part of teachers in dealing with their pupils. Here is how he presents his views on this topic:

49 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Schoolmaster", in The Modern Review, Vol. 36, No. 4, issue of October, 1924, p. 373.

50 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 42-43.

This critical period in the body and mind of an individual is marked by acute self-consciousness and sensitiveness, when the least offence embitters and the slightest gesture of affection sweetens his life.

During this transitional period, the students at times suddenly perpetrate some embarrassing follies. Where the relation between the teachers and the pupils is easy and natural, these unpleasant outbursts are allowed to pass away like the flotsams and jetsams in flood water; for if they are dragged up, they create nuisance.

Those who do not see the bright light of that future glory, who are always ready to despise them out of the vanity of their learning, position or nationality, are unworthy of the status of a teacher. 51

In another context he has cautioned against the folly of judging the growing child by adult standards. He brings home the message through his vivid poetic imagery as follows:

I now clearly see the mistake is to judge boys by the standard of grown-ups, to forget that a child is quick and mobile like running stream; and that in the case of such, any touch of imperfection need cause no great alarm for the speed of the flow is itself the best corrective. When stagnation sets in, then comes the danger. So it is for the teacher, more than the pupil, to beware of wrongdoing. 52

From Tagore's advocacy of freedom for the child, it should not be misconstrued that he did not believe in discipline. As a matter of fact, the contrary is the truth. But the kind of discipline he wanted the children to have was based upon internal motivation. In the matter of discipline, he looked for inspiration and model to the ancient practice of brahma-charya as practised in the ashramas of India. It may be recalled here

51 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 132.

52 Idem, Ibid., p. 129.

that in ancient India it was considered essential that the pupil should live at his teacher's home (ashrama) and that he should practice brahmacharya. Tagore, however, took care to explain fully what he understood by bramacharya and why he thought that it was a very reasonable practice, in the following words:

Brahmacharya should not be narrowly interpreted as austerity. A boy brought up in society is distracted by the impact of many people and many affairs, and his natural development is impeded. His feelings, while they are still in a formative stage, are aroused by false stimuli. Much waste of physical and mental power then follows. Young nature must be insulated from everything that might pervert it, and the object of bramacharya is to protect growing manhood by disciplining it against the premature awakening of desire and its unhealthy gratification. 53

And Tagore thought that boys would, in fact, be happy to live in such a discipline of nature. He felt that such a life would help them "to develop fully and taste the pleasure of real freedom". 54

Tagore seems to sum up his idea of the child and the provision for his education in the following eloquent passage:

I know it for certain, though most people seem to have forgotten it, that children are living beings - more living than grown-up people, who have built their shells of habit around them. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love. It must be an ashram where men have gathered for the highest end of life, in the peace of nature; where life is not merely meditative, but fully awake in its activities, where boys' minds are not being perpetually drilled

53 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 71.

54 Idem, Ibid., p. 71.

into believing that the ideal of the self-idolatry of the nation is the truest ideal for them to accept; where they are bidden to realize man's world as God's Kingdom to whose citizenship they have to aspire; where the sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of stars are not daily ignored; where nature's festivities of flowers and fruit have their joyous recognition from man; and where the young and the old, the teacher and the student, sit at the same table to partake of their daily food and the food of their eternal life. 55

It is very unlikely that anybody would dispute the fact that children are lively organisms more active and alive than the adults and that they should not merely be instructed in conventional schools but brought up in a world imbued with personal love. But the ashrama environment which he so beautifully depicts is likely to remain in the realm of an ideal, something worth striving for as all ideals are.

b) Intellectual and Physical.- On account of Tagore's characteristic mode of viewing things in their totality rather than in their constituent elements, one does not come across too many instances where he has spoken or written about intellectual and physical education per se. From this phenomenon if one were to draw the conclusion that Tagore did not attach much importance to intellectual or physical education that would be an unwarranted conclusion not justified by facts. As a matter of fact, there have been a few occasions when Tagore noted and commented upon the intimate relationship between the body and the mind and the consequent bond between physical and intellectual education. In an essay entitled "The Art of Movement in Education" Tagore writes as follows:

55 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 147-148.

Nature made a perfect adjustment between the body and the mind. It is civilized man who, by his formalism in the classroom, has caused dissension between the two of them, who has severed the connection and made the gap as wide as possible. But body and mind are indissolubly connected. The most natural form of healing is that which takes place through the suggestion of the mind. We are at last coming to accept this idea. Civilization has built up the barrier between the two, and it is our task to breakdown this gap and to open up once again the natural passage-ways between the two. 56

It is readily admitted that there is nothing original about Tagore's observations about body-mind link. The idea is traceable to Homeric times ⁵⁷ and Tagore himself seems to have been fully aware of it as the following passage indicates:

The Greeks were probably aware of the need for this interrelation, for they cultivated a perfect harmony of body and mind. They linked teaching with music and with games. 58

Even though the body-mind interrelation was not an original idea with Tagore, he seems to have attached a good deal of importance to this notion in his practical work of providing education to the students of his educational institution. The reasons he advances for his belief in this idea and its implementation are set forth in the following passage:

There is a close and inseparable connection between the faculties of mind and the body. Each gains strength by co-operating with the other. If the education of the body does not proceed along with the education of the mind, the latter cannot gather strength. We should know that the great task of our educational effort in our institution is to provide for the education of the mind and

56 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 110-111.

57 Anthony Paplauskas-Ramunas, Development of the Whole Man Through Physical Education, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1968, p. 81.

58 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 111.

all the senses through various activities. I believe that in our Ashram every pupil should be taught to master some forms of handwork or other. To learn the particular type of handwork is not the main objective. The fact is that through the exercise of the limbs the mind is also strengthened. 59

While Tagore was ready to recognize the close bond between body and mind and the benefits derived from the co-operation between the two, he was not slow to point out the need for equilibrium that should be maintained between the various activities of the mind. On the need for proper balance between the manifold mental pursuits he writes as follows:

The minds of those who, in the pursuit of their immediate or daily needs, cling closely to the soil of life, grow dull. Mind, to discover freedom of outlook, must soar into the upper air of abstraction, swim into the very heart of the infinite for the mere joy of it and then fly back to its nest in the world. 60

In the above passage one notices again Tagore's gift for blending the practical with the theoretical aspects of life.

c) Religious and Moral.- It is quite possible that Tagore did not write much on intellectual and physical formation of the child simply because these aspects of education were understood and accepted by everybody. As a matter of fact, intellectual education was and is, in very many cases, identified as education itself. Tagore could not accept, even for a moment, this truncated view of education. Perhaps, it was for redressing the imbalance that existed in the prevailing system of education that he paid a great deal of attention to aspects of education

59 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 124.

60 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 93.

other than physical and intellectual. His writings on the religious and moral formation of the child are rather extensive and they have the imprint of Tagore's personal religious convictions on them. At this point it may be worth recording Tagore's idea of the spiritual world of which he was fully convinced. He writes:

I believe in a spiritual world - not as anything separate from this world - but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth, that we are living in God. Born in this great world, full of the mystery of the infinite, we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance, drifting on the current of matter towards an eternal nowhere. We cannot look upon our lives as dreams of a dreamer who has no awakening in all time. We have a personality to which matter and force are unmeaning unless related to something infinitely personal, whose nature we have discovered, in some measure, in human love, in the greatness of the good, in the martyrdom of heroic souls, in the ineffable beauty of nature, which can never be a mere physical fact nor anything but an expression of personality. 61

After thus stating his reasons for his unshakable belief in a spiritual world, he goes on to enunciate the educational implications derived from such a belief as follows:

Experience of this spiritual world, whose reality we miss by our incessant habit of ignoring it from childhood, has to be gained by children by fully living in it and not through the medium of theological instruction. But how this is to be done is a problem difficult of solution in the present age. 62

That religious spirit or spirituality is something to be acquired by living and growing up in a proper atmosphere and not by mere acquisition of knowledge pertaining to religion or spirituality is a basic idea with Tagore.

61 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 126-127.

62 Idem, Ibid., p. 127.

He was fully cognizant of the difficulties that would be encountered in implanting and developing in the child a proper religious spirit. After recognizing the difficulties involved he came up with certain solutions. For, he writes:

Teaching of religion can never be imparted in the form of lessons, it is there where there is religion in living. Therefore the ideal of the forest colony of the seekers of God as the true school of spiritual life holds good even in this age. Religion is not a fractional thing that can be doled out in fixed weekly or daily measures as one among various subjects in the school syllabus. It is the truth of our complete being, the consciousness of our personal relationship with the infinite; it is the true centre of gravity of our life. This we can attain during our childhood by daily living in a place where the truth of the spiritual world is not obscured by a crowd of necessities assuming artificial importance; where life is simple, surrounded by fulness of leisure, by ample space and pure air and profound peace of nature; and where men live with a perfect faith in the eternal life before them. 63

That religion is the truth of our complete being and that it is something to be acquired by living in an atmosphere of piety rather than from instruction in a piecemeal fashion is a recurrent theme in the writings of Tagore as the following passage illustrates:

What is really necessary is neither temples nor external rites and rituals. We want the ashram, where the clear beauty of Nature combined with the pure pursuits of human mind has created a sacred site for worthy endeavours. Nature and the human spirit wedded together shall constitute our temple, and selfless good deed our worship ... Such a spot, if found, shall provide the true atmosphere for religious education. For, as I have said before according to the mysteries of human nature, religious education is possible only in the natural atmosphere of piety; all artificial means only pervert or obstruct it. 64

63 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 135.

64 Idem, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 142.

He writes almost in the same vein in another context as follows:

There are circumstances in which the imbibing of religion should be as easy for children as taking breath... When spiritual feeling permeates a community, then the religious life is spontaneous; it naturally finds its creative activity and moral expression. The problem of religious education of children does not then separately arise, because their subconscious mind grows in an atmosphere rich with the sense of divine presence. 65

In the very same essay occurs the following passage which is an affirmation of Tagore's views on religion and religious education recorded a little earlier:

Just as health is a condition of man's whole body, so is religion of his whole nature. Health cannot be given in the same way as money is put into one's palm. But it may be induced by bringing about suitable conditions. Religious teaching, likewise, cannot be left to a school committee to be put on their syllabus along with arithmetic and Euclid. No school inspector will be able to measure its progress. No examiner's blue pencil can assign it proper marks. An appropriate environment must be created in which religion may have its natural growth. 66

Tagore drew a clear distinction between secular truths and religious truths. The former are of the nature of information which could be accumulated from without whereas the latter are of the nature of inspiration which spring from within and consequently they are beyond the purview of instruction. They must, in fact, germinate and grow in a suitable religious atmosphere. Tagore states his position thus:

65 Rabindranath Tagore, "Religious Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, New Series, Vol. I, Part 3, issue of November, 1935, p. 1.

66 Idem, Ibid., p. 6-7.

There are truths which are of the nature of information, that can be added to our stock of knowledge from the outside. But there are other truths, of the nature of inspiration, which cannot be used to swell the number of our accomplishments. These latter are not like food, but are rather the appetite itself, that can only be strengthened by inducing harmony in our bodily functions. Religion is such a truth. It establishes the right centre for life's activities, giving them an eternal meaning; maintains the true standard of value for the objects of our striving; inspires in us the spirit of renunciation which is the spirit of humanity. It cannot be doled out in regulated measure, nor administered through the academic machinery of education. It must come immediate from the burning flame of spiritual life, in surroundings suitable for such life. The Asrama, the Forest University of ancient India, gave for our country the answer to the question as to how this Religion can be imparted. 67

With reference to the stand Tagore has taken in the above statement, he anticipates a difficulty, namely, the lack of definiteness or a system in religious education. He tries to answer this difficulty as follows:

This much already becomes evident, that religious teaching of this character cannot consist merely in prescribing formulas to be learnt by heart, or rites to be repeated. At the same time, the difficulties due to the absence of that kind of definiteness which comes from outward forms must not be shirked. We must not allow ourselves to be moved by regretful longing for those facilities of sectarian religion, be it Hindu or any other, which make the problem easier. What is the good of trying to make religion easy? Dust is easy to get, not gold. 68

The suitable environment on which Tagore laid so much stress seems to be the real answer to the difficulty raised. It has to be admitted, however, that the creation of such an atmosphere is not as easy as it may

67 Rabindranath Tagore, "Religious Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, New Series, Vol. I, Part 3, issue of November, 1935, p. 9.

68 Idem, Ibid., p. 6.

sound. But Tagore's answer to that is: "Dust is easy to get, not gold".

The following quotation is a further comment by Tagore on the question of suitable atmosphere for religious education:

Attainments, which do not have their origin in external habit, but are the result of the unfolding of the inner nature of man, cannot be gained by artificial methods. They depend on favourable conditions. If religious feeling is not considered a mere sectarian accomplishment, but rather the fulfilment of humanity itself, then it must have a suitable environment for its exercise, and sufficient leisure for its growth. The surrounding light and air must be so ample that the soul may gain fresh life with every breath it draws. This amplitude is what the forest universities of ancient India offered for the spiritual education of her children. 69

While thus setting down his ideals on the religious and spiritual formation of the child, Tagore was painfully aware of the lamentable state of religious education that prevailed in his native land. He bemoans the plight of religious education in India in his days in the following words:

Our educated communities in India, at the present time, are faced with the same problems which beset the peoples of Europe. Our intellect and our will are forcibly attracted outwards, and our soul is left dormant in a world of emptiness. Owing to our absorption in the external, we have not even the time to realise the gaping disproportion between our inner and outer life. Such religious activity as still remains to us represents the inertia of habit, it continues because we ignore it by our conformity which is too lethargic to question itself. 70

69 Rabindranath Tagore, "Religious Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, New Series, Vol. I, Part 3, issue of November, 1935, p. 8.

70 Idem, Ibid., p. 3.

Tagore, after correctly diagnosing the weaknesses of the prevailing state of religious education in India, made the following eloquent plea to improve the situation and in the process issued a warning which is nothing if not prophetic, thus:

Our ideal should be to make ample provision in our homes and in our schools for that development of our spiritual relationship with the Supreme Being, which may best give us a sense of freedom in all departments of life. We know full well that life divested of a deeper consciousness of the Infinite can breed only new and diverse forms of slavery under the appearance of liberty. 71

In the opinion of Tagore mere instruction in morality was as useless and futile an exercise as mere 'teaching' of religion. He was of the view that such an attempt could only bring about more harm than good and therefore expressed himself very strongly against the prevailing practice in moral instruction in schools. He writes:

Moral instruction has now displaced brahmacharya⁷² in our schools, and guardians want it to be given on every conceivable pretext. But it is a mechanical affair, like daily doses of sarsaparilla⁷³ to an invalid, or prescribed diet for building up bonny babies, and it presents many difficulties. It cannot possibly be made attractive to a boy; it either hurts him or goes over his head, and it makes him feel like a criminal in the dock. I consider moral instruction utter waste of time and effort, and I am frightened that good people should be so keen on it. It is as futile as it is disagreeable, and I cannot think of anything that does more harm to society. 74

71 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 93-94.

72 The first of the four stages of life as conceived by the ancient Hindus. It was regarded as a period of discipline and preparation for the subsequent stages.

73 A popular potent medicine of the day.

74 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 71.

If mere moral instruction is useless and even harmful, what else should take its place? Tagore's answer could have been anticipated from the foregoing quotation. He comes out strongly in favour of the practice of brahmacharya. As he puts it:

Brahmacharya gives power instead of mere instruction, and considers morality to be the essential ingredient, rather than the superficial ornament, of life. The person who practises it, far from regarding religion as something alien, takes to it easily and naturally as to a friend, and holds it close to his heart. It is not moral instruction that is needed for building up a boy's mind and character, but friendly guidance and congenial environment. 75

Friendly guidance will be offered by dedicated teachers who have chosen the education of the young as their vocation in life. As to a congenial environment Tagore has uppermost in his mind the salutary atmosphere of nature. He states:

... nature's help is indispensable when we are still growing up, and still learning, and before we are drawn neck and crop into the whirlpool of affairs. Trees and rivers, and blue skies and beautiful views are just as necessary as benches and blackboards, books and examinations. 76

As Tagore envisioned it the ideal setting for education in general and moral education in particular was an institution where teachers and pupils lived together in natural surroundings in the practice of brahmacharya by the latter. In his opinion the practice of brahmacharya was founded on the eternal truths of human nature which are as valid today as they were centuries ago.'

75 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 72.

76 Idem, Ibid., p. 72.

77 Idem, Ibid., p. 74-75.

Morality is something to be imbibed from the living examples which one comes across in community life of the residential school rather than from any instruction in moral principles. Tagore obviously believed in the ancient adage that example is better than precept. He presents his views on this point as follows:

Simplicity, naturalness and ease are the marks of the civilized, and excess and ostentation, of the barbarian. Real greatness shines with its own native lustre, and loses nothing in humble surroundings. This is the simple truth, but it must be brought home to our boys in every possible way and instilled into their nature. They must learn it, not as a moral precept that can do them no good, but through the vivid example of plain living that they will see everywhere in their school. 78

And the acquisition of the ideal of plain living, when one is young, is no small matter. It requires a lot of effort and the process of acquiring it strengthens one's moral fibre.

d) Aesthetic.- It is but natural to expect that a great poet and artist like Tagore would lay a good deal of emphasis on the aesthetic education of the child. Be that as it may, it must be noted that Tagore's insistence on aesthetic education was based not only on his personal inclination and taste but also on sound educational principles. As he contemplated the Indian scene of his days there was very little that could gladden his heart in the area of aesthetic education. On the contrary, many things were happening that went against his expectation and that situation brought forth the following lament from him which seems to have a tinge of anger in it, thus:

78 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 77.

We almost completely ignore the aesthetic life of man, leaving it uncultivated, allowing weeds to grow there. Our newspapers are prolific, our meeting-places are vociferous; and in them we wear to shreds the things we have borrowed from our English teachers. We make the air dismal and damp with the tears of our grievances. But where are our arts, which, like the outbreak of spring flowers, are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual magnificence? 79

According to Tagore the lack of aesthetic education was one of the greatest deficiencies of our modern education. On account of this deficiency people,

... are condemned to carry to the end a dead load of dumb wisdom. Like miserable outcasts, we are deprived of our place in the festival of culture, and wait at the outer court, where the colours are not for us, nor the forms of delight, nor the songs. Ours is the education of a prison-house, with hard labour and with a drab dress cut to the limits of minimum decency and necessity. We are made to forget that the perfection of colour and form and expression belongs to the perfection of vitality, - that the joy of life is only the other side of the strength of life. 80

In this context Tagore has observed that even in the West it was only the intellectual aspect of education which has received its full attention. For as he says:

The Western Universities have not yet truly recognized that fulness of expression is fulness of life. And a large part of man can never find its expression in the mere language of words. It must therefore seek for its other languages, - lines and colours, sounds and movements. Through our mastery of these we not only make our whole nature articulate, but also understand man in all his attempts to reveal his innermost being in every age and clime. 81.

79 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 197-198.

80 Idem, Ibid., p. 198.

81 Idem, Ibid., p. 196.

In the foregoing passage Tagore seems to have advanced some of the most profound reasons for fostering aesthetic education. However, he has carried his argument even further in the following extract:

It is the duty of every human being to master, at least to some extent, not only the language of intellect, but also that personality which is the language of Art. It is a great world of reality for man, - vast and profound, - this growing world of his own creative nature. This is the world of Art. To be brought up in ignorance of it is to be deprived of the knowledge and use of that great inheritance of humanity, which has been growing and waiting for every one of us from the beginning of our history. It is to remain deaf to the eternal voice of Man, that speaks to all men the messages that are beyond speech. 82

Besides these good reasons Tagore has enunciated others equally valid in some other context. He was fully convinced that music and the fine arts are among the highest means of national self-expression and that without them the people will remain inarticulate. National self-expression, however, is based upon individual self-expression and without the latter it is impossible to have the former. On individual self-expression in fine arts and other related fields Tagore writes as follows:

Our conscious mind occupies only a superficial layer of our life; the subconscious mind is almost fathomless in its depth. There the wisdom of countless ages grows up beyond our ken. Our conscious mind finds its expression in activities which pass and re-pass before our view. Our sub-conscious, where dwells our soul, must also have its adequate media of expression. These media are poetry and music and arts; here the complete personality of man finds its expression. 83

82 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 197.

83 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 225.

It may be surmised from the above statement of Tagore that he attached great importance to aesthetic education as the means for the expression of the complete personality of the growing child. All what Tagore has written on this theme, he seems to summarize in the following eloquent passage:

Man has not only discovered scientific truths, he has realised the ineffable. From ancient times the gifts of such expressions have been rich and profuse. Wherever man has seen the manifestation of perfection, - in words, music, lines, colours and rhythm, in the sweetness of human relationships, in heroism - there he has attested his joy with the signature of immortal words. I hope and trust that our students may not be deprived of these messages; not for the sake of enjoyment only, but, so that our country may be blest by receiving the benefit of an education which will give us the right and power to tell others that being born into this world we have seen the beautiful, we have realised the sublime, we have loved the loveable. 84

From the above passage one can not only obtain a sublime vision of aesthetic education but can also find the supreme aims and purposes of such an education. One notes that, according to Tagore, the ultimate aim of aesthetic education is not mere enjoyment but to enable the child to see the beautiful, to realise the sublime and to love the loveable.

3. The Curriculum .

In the preceding section on the educand and his education could be found a number of indirect references to Tagore's ideas on the school curriculum. As in the case of several other educational topics, in the area of curriculum too he did not embody his thoughts in any systematic treatise. If one wishes to have a clear picture of what he thought on the

84 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Place of Music in Education and Culture", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October, 1947, p. 45.

subject, it has to be assembled from a variety of his writings and lectures. Even though some of his statements on the subject are implicit rather than explicit it is worthy of note that in their variety and richness they, as a well-known contemporary Indian educator writes, "stand out in striking contrast to the narrowness of the prevalent concepts and practices".⁸⁵ Tagore was never satisfied with a programme of mere academic activities and pursuits. Not that he underestimated the importance of academic work. On the other hand while assigning it its proper place in the total programme he also advocated the introduction of several non-academic subjects for the education of the emotions and as a means of self-expression and fulfilment. A more detailed presentation of the views of Tagore on the school curriculum is reserved for the following chapter devoted to Santiniketan and Sriniketan. What is going to be discussed in this section is only a broad outline of his thinking on the subject.

From the statements of Tagore quoted in the preceding section it is evident that he set a high value on creativity and he believed that a natural environment is the best milieu for fostering it. Almost two decades after the founding of his Santiniketan School he expressed his thoughts on this issue as follows:

In education the most important factor is an atmosphere of creative activity, in which the work of intellectual exploration may find full scope. The teaching should be like the overflow water of a spring of culture, spontaneous and inevitable. Education becomes natural and wholesome only when it is the fruit of a living and growing knowledge. ⁸⁶

⁸⁵ K.G. Saiyidain, The Humanist Tradition in Indian Educational Thought, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1966, p. 44.

⁸⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 202.

Further on in his discussion on teaching and education, Tagore writes that "our education should be in constant touch with our complete life, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual".⁸⁷ It may be noticed that all the major components of a well-rounded and comprehensive programme of study as implemented in his experimental school are mentioned in the foregoing statement.

That it was the kind of curriculum he envisioned for his school from the very beginning is clear from the following statement he made in 1906:

If we at all understand the needs of the present day, we must see that any new schools founded by us fulfil the following conditions: that their courses are both lively and varied, and nourish the heart as well as the intellect; that no disunity or discord disrupts the minds of our young; and that education does not become something unreal, heavy and abstract with which the pupils are concerned only for those few hours when they are at school. ⁸⁸

To what extent the conditions stated in the above statement were realized in Tagore's school will be examined in chapter VII. In the meanwhile it is relevant to highlight the importance Tagore attached to the proper atmosphere in the school so that the various programmes in the school may flourish and fructify. In fact, for him the former was more important than the latter as the following statements will indicate:

Children have their active subconscious mind which, like the tree, has the power to draw food from the surrounding atmosphere. For them the atmosphere is a great deal more important than rules and methods, equipment, textbooks and lessons.

...
I tried to create an atmosphere in my school - this was the main task. In educational institutions our faculties have to be

⁸⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 202-203.

⁸⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 68-69.

nourished in order to give our mind its freedom, to make our imagination fit for the world which belongs to art, and to stir our sympathy for human relationships. This last is even more important than learning the geography of foreign lands. 89

Tagore tried to develop in the children of his school a feeling for Nature and a sensitiveness to their human surroundings through programmes involving a variety of academic and non-academic activities and pursuits. He describes some such programmes as follows:

With the help of literature, festive ceremonials and religious teachings I tried to develop in the children of my school their feeling for Nature as also a sensitiveness to their human surroundings. I prepared for them a real home-coming into this world. Among the subjects they learnt in the open air, in the shade of trees, were music and painting, and they had their dramatic performances.

But this was not sufficient, and I waited for men and the means to be able to introduce into our school activities that would build up character. I felt the need of the western genius for imparting to my educational ideal the strength of reality which knew how to achieve a definite end of practical good. 90

There are several passages in the writings of Tagore which indicate that he fully recognized the role of intellect and reason and appreciated the contribution of Western science to the modern world. On the basis of this conviction he advocated the adoption of a scientific outlook on the ordinary problems of life and championed the cause of science teaching in the educational institutions of India. He exhorted his countrymen to eschew narrow nationalism and cultural bias in the following words:

If we are biased against western science just because it is of the West, we shall not only deprive ourselves of the principles it has to teach, but put down our own eastern spirituality. 91

89 Ragindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 300.

90 Idem, Ibid., p. 296.

91 Idem, Ibid., p. 237.

Tagore knew that there was a period in history when India was far ahead of Europe in culture and civilization. He attributes this to the advancement in science which ancient India had achieved. As he puts it:

... I maintain that the Indians were superior to the Europeans of those days because they knew more science. Only by acquiring a greater knowledge of science is man able to evolve from the stage of wearing animal skins to that of wearing fabrics woven on looms; from the stage of getting food by hunting animals to that of getting it by agriculture; and from the stage of piracy to that of good government. The reason why the situation has since been reversed, and Europeans are now superior to Indians is not to be found in any trick played by Providence, but in the fact that Europeans know more science. Indians should, therefore, try to rival Europeans in the knowledge of science if they want to rival them in civilization. 92

The secret of success and happiness in life seems to be to find the golden mean between science and spirituality. It is easier enunciated than achieved. What has actually happened, as Tagore states is:

Overmuch attention to science would seem to have made Europeans put the soul aside, and give it no place in their scheme of things. Preoccupation with spirituality has made the East enfeebled and supine... 93

The most urgent need of the present age appears to be a fusion of the finest values of the East and the West, balancing and complementing each other.

All national States in modern times, as Tagore says, "have ... used education as an incubator for hatching nationalism..."⁹⁴ Therefore one of the vital tasks he set for the new type of education he proposed was to save the growing generation from the virus of arrogant nationalism. He thought

92 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 237-238.

93 Idem, Ibid., p. 241.

94 Idem, Ibid., p. 249.

that the proper teaching of history as a record of man's cultural achievements would be an efficient means for achieving this goal. He bewails the fact that:

The minds of the children of today are almost deliberately made incapable of understanding other people with different languages and customs. The result is that, later, they hurt one another out of ignorance and suffer from the worst form of the blindness of the age. 95

To remedy such a deplorable situation Tagore has pleaded for a universal outlook in the teaching of history in the following words:

Tomorrow's history will begin with a chapter on internationalism, and we shall be unfit for tomorrow if we retain any manners, customs, or habits of thought that are contrary to universalism. 96

Tagore was also anxious to find room for as many languages as possible in the academic content of the curriculum. He, thus, hoped to provide the key to the doors of as many cultures of the world as possible to the young students.

The realistic outlook of Tagore on education is clear from the following statement of his:

... our schools should be at the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operation. For, true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings. 97

95 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 300-301.

96 Idem, Ibid., p. 249.

97 Idem, Ibid., p. 203.

In another occasion he wrote that education should not be dragged out of its native element which is the life-current of the people. In his view the economic life covered the whole width of the fundamental basis of society and consequently, educational institutions, in order to obtain their fulness of truth, must have close association with this economic life. For him the highest mission of education was to help us to realise the inner principle of the unity of all knowledge and all the activities of our social and spiritual life. ⁹⁸

In keeping with the tenor of the ideas expressed above, Tagore provided an honourable place in his school curriculum for arts, crafts and handwork in general - subjects which were looked down upon by other people of his generation in India.

One need only mention here that Tagore attached great importance to the spiritual and moral formation of the child as his thoughts pertaining to this topic were discussed in detail in a previous section.

4. The Method.

Tagore's approach to educational methodology was, to say the least, rather informal. It may, however, be remarked that the views he has expressed on the question of method are consistent and in keeping with his other educational ideas. It is a well-known fact that he did not start out on his educational enterprise as a professional educator intent on implementing a certain set of theories or doctrines. Besides his inborn

⁹⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 199.

talents he had only the experiences of his childhood and later life to guide him in his endeavours. Tagore himself has borne testimony to this fact in the following words:

I had only this experience of my early life (freedom and joy in the exercise of his mental and artistic faculties) to help me when I started my school. I felt sure that what was most necessary was the breath of culture and no formal method of teaching. 99

The last sentence in the above quotation seems to epitomize Tagore's thinking on the topic under discussion. There are other passages in his writings which corroborate this statement. Tagore, thus:

I for my part believe in the principle of life, in the soul of man, more than in methods. I believe that the object of education is the freedom of mind which can only be achieved through the path of freedom - though freedom has its risk and responsibility as life itself has. 100

Tagore in another passage has elaborated on his concept of freedom in the following words:

Freedom is not merely in unrestricted space and movement. There is such a thing as unrestricted human relationship which is also necessary for children... This gift of love which Nature has given the mother is absolutely necessary for children because this love is freedom. In my institution I try to make provision for these three aspects of freedom - freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will. 101

Tagore believed that during his early period at least a child should receive his education directly through persons and things. He thought that books would be an encumbrance rather than a help at this stage of education. He presents his point of view very vividly as follows:

99 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 140.

100 Idem, Ibid., p. 147.

101 Idem, "Thoughts on Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts I & II, in the issue of May-October, 1947, p. 3.

Have not our books, like most of our necessities, come between us and our world? We have got into the habit of covering the windows of our minds with their pages, and plasters of book phrases have stuck into our mental skin, making it impervious to all direct touches of truth. A whole world of booked truths have formed themselves into a strong citadel with rings of walls in which we have taken shelter, secured from the communication of God's creation. Of course, it would be foolish to underrate the advantages of the book. But at the same time we must admit that the book has its limitations and its dangers. At any rate during the early period of education children should come to their lesson of truths through natural processes - directly through persons and things. 102

The important place Tagore assigned to nature in the education of the child was already emphasized in other places in this chapter. He held the view that nature is the greatest of all teachers and that the human teacher who pins his faith in artificial lessons rather than in life lessons is interfering with the work of nature. The child mind is thus, not only injured but also forcibly spoiled.¹⁰³ Tagore has suggested the following alternative:

Children should be surrounded with the things of nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble upon and be surprised at everything that happens in today's life; the new tomorrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. 104

Naturally, in such an institution, improvisation would be the first important lesson that the child learns. The child would get the opportunity to explore his capacity through surprise achievements. But as Tagore insists "this implies a lesson not in simple life, but in creative life".¹⁰⁵

102 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 142-143.

103 Idem, "To Teachers" in Amiya Chakravarty, ed., A Tagore Reader, p. 214

104 Idem, Ibid., p. 214.

105 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 295.

It should be apparent by now that Tagore was totally against all kinds of formalism in the classroom. He has only a kind of mild scorn for those teachers who thought that all the learning that took place solely depended upon their teaching. Tagore writes:

They possess such a superstitious faith in the efficacy of their own teaching, that they don't realize that periods of non-teaching are just as important as a means of tempering formal instruction. Utilitarian by nature, they must fill every niche and leave no space or time for 'Not-teaching'. Poor body. Nature made a perfect adjustment between the body and the mind. It is civilized man who, by his formalism in the classroom, has caused dissension between the two of them, who has severed the connection and made the gap as wide as possible. 106

From the above statement one should not draw the conclusion that Tagore thought that teachers are a dispensable factor in education. On the contrary, he assigned a very important rôle to the teacher in the education of the child; only his concept of the teacher and the functions he was expected to perform were slightly different from the ordinary. The following statement of Tagore may sound extraordinary, but basically it expresses an essential truth:

Man can learn only from a man. Just as water tank can be filled only with water and fire can be kindled only with fire, life can be inspired only with life... In our social organization we are searching for a guru who will add meaning and give pace to our life; in our educational system we are searching for a guru who will seek deliverance of our mind from its imprisonment. However it may be, we want a human being in every sphere of our life. Mere method shall bring us no salvation. 107

106 Rabindranath and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 110.

107 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 138.

If mere method would not answer the needs of the child it was even more improbable that a teacher who was "a mere vehicle of text-books" ¹⁰⁸ would.

It was mentioned more than once that Tagore was a great admirer of the ancient forest colonies of India which were also centres of learning and culture. Some of the traditions and practices of these bygone institutions are still preserved in the tols and chatuspathis, ¹⁰⁹ which are to be found in some parts of India. According to Tagore these latter institutions do not regard book-learning as the most important part of education. They are, however, surrounded by an atmosphere of culture, and the teachers are dedicated to their vocation. They usually live a simple life without any material interest or luxury to distract their minds and with plenty of time and opportunity for absorbing into their nature the things they learn. ¹¹⁰ Tagore would like to see the example and practices of these traditional institutions followed in the ordinary modern schools also. He writes:

My view is that we should follow the ancient Indian principles of education. Students and teachers should live together and in natural surroundings, and the students should complete their education by practising brahmacharya. Founded on the eternal truths of human nature, these principles have lost nothing of their significance, however much our circumstances might have altered through the ages. ¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ Schools and colleges that provide orthodox Hindu learning.

¹¹⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 70-71.

¹¹¹ Idem, Ibid., p. 74-75.

Tagore had some considered views on the rôle of discipline in education. He was of opinion that any external imposition of discipline was worse than useless. He always wanted a positive rather than a negative attitude on the part of teachers.

He writes:

True goodness lies not in the negation of badness, but in the mastery of it. It is the miracle that turns the tumult of chaos into the dance of beauty. True education is that power of miracle, that ideal of creation. Punishments and disciplines imposed from outside are negative. 112

The above statement is part of a kind of guidelines he set down for the running of his school which he conveyed to his English friend C.F. Andrews while he was touring abroad.

In another context Tagore has explained more fully the theory and practice of discipline as it prevailed in his school. His own words follow:

No coercion is employed to enforce (sic) discipline among the boys, they must come to realize, of their own accord, what is antisocial and what is desirable. Co-operation here again is encouraged and any disputes that arise are dealt with first in the Vichara Sabha, or court of justice, where they are settled or punishments meted out to the offenders. A record is kept of these cases, the offences and punishments. Should, however, the Vichara Sabha find itself incompetent to settle a dispute, the matter is taken to the teacher who is addressed a dada (elder brother) and who takes this as an opportunity of demonstrating how useless, wasteful and disturbing to fruitful work are dissensions and quarrels. 113

Tagore knew full well that an atmosphere of freedom and trust was congenial and conducive to the cultivation of the habits of self-discipline

112 Rabindranath Tagore, Letters to a Friend, C.F. Andrews, ed., London, George Allen & Unwin, 1928, (Reprint 1929), p. 94-95.

113 Idem, as quoted in A Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit. p. 131.

and co-operation among students. He has written on this issue as follows:

I never said to them: Don't do this, or don't do that, I never prevented them from climbing trees or going about where they liked. From the very first I trusted them and they always responded to my trust. Parents used to send me their most difficult children, who were supposed to be incorrigible. When the children found themselves in an atmosphere of freedom and trust, they never gave me any trouble. The boys were encouraged to manage their own affairs and to elect their own judge, if any punishment was to be given. I never punished them myself. 114

Tagore was concerned about the progress the students were expected to make in their studies. His approach to the problem was in keeping with the findings of modern psychology in that area. While a well thought-out programme of study was important in itself he thought that the mental preparation of the students to follow such a programme is equally, if not more, important. He writes:

It is certainly important to think about the subjects that should be taught in our schools; but the question how to get the pupils fully interested in their work is just as important. 115

Tagore felt that the power of thought and the power of imagination are indispensable to any human being for discharging the duties of his life. He also felt that these two basic powers should be cultivated when one is young. The prevalent system of education in India was not very helpful towards that end. There was too much emphasis on memorization at the expense of real thought. As Tagore says, "To read without thinking is like

114 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 131.

115 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 70.

accumulating building materials without building anything".¹¹⁶ Further on, he suggests that the child, "should be told not to rely entirely on memory, and be given plenty of opportunity to think for himself and use his imagination".¹¹⁷

It is one of the accepted axioms of education that for learning and teaching one's own mother-tongue is the best medium. But Tagore in his time had to fight for the acceptance of this principle by his contemporaries in India. He has written on this issue at various times and places. As he surveyed the Indian educational scene towards the end of the last century he felt that the most pressing problem of the day was to effect the union of education and life.¹¹⁸ He was convinced that such a union was possible only through the medium of one's mother tongue. But, unfortunately, as he puts it:

From whatever angle we consider the matter, we find that our life, our thought and our language are not harmonized. Because of this fundamental disunity, we cannot stand on our two feet, cannot get what we want, cannot succeed in our efforts.¹¹⁹

Tagore has made strong pleas for the union of one's language with one's thought and one's education with one's life on several occasions. The following is an instance where he has argued his case against the use of a foreign language as the medium of instruction, using striking imageries, thus:

¹¹⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 43.

¹¹⁷ Idem, Ibid., p. 44.

¹¹⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹⁹ Idem, Ibid., p. 48.

For the proper irrigation of learning, a foreign language cannot be the right medium... when we are compelled to learn through the medium of English, the knocking at the gate and the turning of the key take away the best part of our life. The feast may be waiting for us inside the room, but the difficulty and delay of admission spoils our appetite and the long privation permanently injures our stomach. The ideas come late and the tedious grinding over grammar, and a system of spelling which is devoid of all rationale, take away our relish for the food when it does come at last. 120

On another occasion he has commented on the same theme as follows:

"To say that adequate pursuit of education is not possible except through the English language is the same thing as saying that nourishing food cannot be had save from the manager of an English hotel." 121

All that Tagore could admit was that "a foreign language, like foreign soil, may be good for hothouse culture, but not for that cultivation which is necessary for the maintenance of life". 122 Over and over he warned against the futility of borrowing the language of one's culture from a far-away land and making the running stream of one's mother-tongue shallow and stagnant. 123 It must, however, be emphasized that Tagore was not against the learning of English or any other foreign language in the higher educational institutions as a means of acquiring knowledge from other cultures and climes.

Tagore believed that short periods of silence at set times during the day would promote the capacity for self-control among his students. So, he advocated the practice of it in his school in the following words:

120 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 212.

121 Idem, "Education for Rural India", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts I & II, issue of May-October, 1947, p. 27.

122 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 215.

123 Idem, Ibid., p. 216.

I believe in the hour of meditation, and I set aside fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes in the evening for that purpose. I insist on this period of meditation, not, however, expecting the boys to be hypocrites and to make believe they are meditating. But I do insist that they remain quiet, that they exert the power of self-control, even though instead of contemplating on God, they may be watching the squirrels running up the trees. 124

Whether or not others have discovered it, Tagore found a lot of value and merit of an educational nature in poverty and plain living. He has provided some strong arguments in favour of poverty when one is a student, thus:

... seen from the point of view of education, should we not admit that poverty is the school in which man had his first lessons and his best training? ... Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world, for living richly is living mostly by proxy, and thus living in a world of lesser reality. This may be good for one's pleasure and pride, but not for one's education. ... Therefore in my school, ... I had to provide for this great teacher, - this bareness of furniture and materials, - not because it is poverty, but because it leads to personal experience of the world. 125

In some kind of education, especially of a scientific nature, as much if not more importance is attached to seeing as reading as a method of learning. And one can hardly disagree with Tagore when he says that travelling is one of the best means of learning by seeing. In fact, he went to the extent of stating that, "If with the object of education alone, children could be taken all over the land for five years, their education would be complete." 126 Because of his conviction that "education by

124 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p.145-146.

125 Idem, Ibid., p. 121-122.

126 Idem, Letters from Russia, p. 72.

travelling is essential for the mind"¹²⁷ he had even hoped, resources permitting, to start such educational tours.

5. The Agencies.

Tagore's ideas on the agents of education and the importance he attached to each of those agents are somewhat controversial. In his own lifetime many of his contemporaries did not agree with him on this issue. His ideas on this question seem to have been coloured by the situation which prevailed in certain segments of the Bengal society of his day and certain political happenings in his part of the country. The present investigator fails to notice the usual breadth of outlook, depth and realism in the writings of Tagore on the question of educational agents. It could well be that Tagore did not think it very necessary to devote too much attention to this topic.

It is generally acknowledged all over the world that the home is one of the most important agents of education. Home as an agent of education gets only very scant attention from Tagore and that too not in a very favourable light. It may be that the majority of the homes and parents within Tagore's knowledge did not educate their children according to his ideals. But one would have thought that on account of the tremendous influence exerted by his father and the home environment on his own education he would have assigned a higher status to home and parents as agents of education than he actually did. In general he felt that it was much better

¹²⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, Letters from Russia, p. 73.

for boys to be sent away from home for their education.¹²⁸ He disagreed with and disapproved of the common practice of the parents with regard to the education of their children and the motives that impelled them for such an undertaking. Tagore writes:

... to give a boy what is now commonly regarded as education, our parents see no need to do anything more than send him to the nearest school and maybe, engage a private tutor. That sort of 'education' aims solely at helping a boy to grow into a moneymaker and, ... it is unworthy of its name. 129

He notes that the world consists of people of different occupations who live in homes of varying character and atmosphere. And because of this situation children grow up with distinctive traits of their parents right from their infancy. Tagore felt that such a growth and development was not good for them. As he puts it:

Due to their occupations adults must attain different characteristics and fall into separate groups; it is not good for a boy, however, to be cast in the mould of his parents on the threshold of life. 130

As Tagore sees it, parents should build up the common humanity of their children at first and then only and that too, to the extent absolutely necessary, teach them to act and behave like the adults of their milieu.¹³¹ He goes on to remark that, "What actually happens is just the opposite."¹³²

128 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 79.

129 Idem, Ibid., p. 79.

130 Idem, Ibid., p. 79.

131 Idem, Ibid., p. 80.

132 Idem, Ibid., p. 80.

From observation and experience Tagore came to the conclusion that "parents, who sow the cornfields of the earth with weeds"¹³³ were not the best people to be in charge of the education of their children. But, unfortunately, as Tagore says,

Since people are blind to their own defects, they fail to see the harm they do to others. That is why they are unwilling to send their children away from home to be educated, even when the homes are hotbeds of evil passions, prejudices and superstitions. ¹³⁴

Obviously, the above statement of Tagore, though it may be true in itself, will not please too many parents. Nobody, however, questions Tagore's sincerity in saying these things. It was his conviction with regard to this question which prompted him to write as follows:

It must be laid down that parents who want their boys to become real men should consider it their duty to send them to schools where they would live with gurus in close communion with nature and under the discipline of brahmacharya. ¹³⁵

In the last sentence of the above statement Tagore seems to distil some of his deepest convictions with regard to the education of the child. A student practising brahmacharya and living in close touch with his guru in the bosom of nature was a life-long ideal of Tagore with regard to education. The importance he attached to each of these factors was already referred to in the previous sections of this chapter. What requires further elucidation is only the role of nature and teacher as agents of education. With regard to the former Tagore writes as follows:

¹³³ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 80.

¹³⁴ Idem, Ibid., p. 81.

¹³⁵ Idem, Ibid., p. 81.

The human mind is in the embryo stage in childhood and schoolboys should live in surroundings which protect them from all disturbing forces. To acquire strength by absorbing knowledge both consciously and unconsciously should be their sole aim, and their environment should be adopted to this purpose. 136

The 'surroundings' and 'environment' Tagore has in mind is the setting of nature. This is obvious from the following statement of his:

Besides practising brahmacharya a boy should live in the midst of nature. Towns are not our natural abodes, and have been built to supply our material needs... But nature's help is indispensable when we are still growing up, and still learning, and before we are drawn neck and crop into the whirlpool of affairs. Trees and rivers, and blue skies and beautiful views are just as necessary as benches and blackboards, books and examinations. 137

It is clear from the above statement that Tagore attached a good deal of importance to nature as an agent of education. The role it plays, especially in the unconscious kind of learning that takes place, cannot be over emphasized. Again, Tagore has this to say:

The four elements of earth, water, air and fire form a whole and are instinct with the universal soul - this knowledge cannot be gained at school in town. A school in town is a factory which can only teach us to regard the world as a machine. 138

Tagore, however, was conscious of the fact that some people may not take him seriously when he spoke thus about the 'personality' of nature and its role in education. His answer to such people was as follows:

136 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 82.

137 Idem, Ibid., p. 72.

138 Idem, Ibid., p. 73.

Practical people will dismiss an idea of this kind as mysticism or mystification. But even they will not be able to deny that blue sky and air, trees and flowers, are indispensable for the proper growth of the body and mind of a boy. 139

Among the various agents of education, Tagore attached the greatest importance to the teacher. In numerous contexts he has written and spoken about the qualities and qualifications he expected of a teacher. In a negative way he has stated plainly the characteristics of a teacher who is a misfit and in a positive way the ingredients that go into the making of an ideal teacher. With regard to the former type of teacher Tagore has written as follows:

An immense amount of sympathy and understanding and imagination are needed to bring up human children. They are not produced and trained for some purposes of display, they are not dancing bears or monkeys. They are human beings, with the treasure of their mind and their spirit. And that work should never be left to the care of those who have no imagination, no real sympathy for children, who cannot be a child. He who has lost the child in himself is absolutely unfit for this great work of educating human children. 140

Besides having the qualities of imagination and sympathy a good teacher needs to be a student as well. As Tagore says:

A most important truth, which we are apt to forget, is that a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, can only load their minds; he cannot quicken them. Truth not only must inform but inspire. 141

139 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 73.

140 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Schoolmaster", in The Modern Review, vol. 36, No. 4, issue of October, 1924, p. 372.

141 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 186-187.

Instead of being living 'flames' Tagore found many teachers of his day as mere 'tradesmen' and 'vendors of education'. He describes them in his colourful idiom as follows:

The teacher is now a tradesman, a vendor of education in search of customers, and no one expects to find affection, regard, devotion or any other feeling in the list of goods he has for sale. After he has sold his goods, paid for in the form of a salary, he has no more to do with his pupils. 142

This type of teachers was common not only in the lower levels of education but also in the higher institutions of learning. He describes them in the following memorable words:

We have instead (of the living teacher) purveyors of book-lore in whom the paper god of the book-shop seems to have made himself vocal. As a natural result we find our students to be "untouchables" even to our own professors. These teachers distribute doles of mental food, gingerly and from a dignified distance, with walls of notebooks between themselves and their students. This kind of food is not palatable, nor does it give nourishment. It is a famine ration, strictly regulated, and saves us, not from emancipation but only from death. It holds out no hope of that culture which is far in excess of man's mere necessity; it is certainly less than enough, and far less than a feast. 143

The root cause of the malaise that thus affected the entire teaching body, according to the diagnosis of Tagore, is the fact that only a small part of the mental and spiritual energy of the teachers came into full play while teaching. His analysis of the problem and the remedy he suggests are as follows:

142 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 78.

143 Idem, Ibid., p. 209.

The duties performed by a schoolmaster today do not call for more than a very small part of his mind and spirit and they can be performed almost as well by a gramophone with a bit of brain and a cane tied to it. But the same schoolmaster will devote his whole mind and spirit to the service of his students if he is called upon to undertake the duties of a guru. 144

The question now naturally arises as to the kind of duties a teacher as a 'guru' would be called upon to perform. Tagore has provided a detailed answer to that question in the following words:

... a teacher will not fail to appreciate, when he is a guru, that he will do himself credit only if he can put life into his pupils with his own life, light their lamps with his own learning, and make them happy with his affection. By giving his pupils things, that cannot be bought and sold and are really beyond all price, he will earn for them a devotion that owes nothing to the fear of being punished, and is deep enough to be called religious and genuine enough to be called natural. 145

Tagore has stated elsewhere that education in ancient India was in the charge of such gurus who were moral and spiritual preceptors and of teachers who were men rather than machines. ¹⁴⁶ Book-learning was not the be-all and end-all of the education provided in the asramas by the gurus. Close contact between teachers and students was more important. Tagore had a great fascination and admiration for that kind of education. For, as he says:

144 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 78.

145 Idem, Ibid., p. 79.

146 Idem, Ibid., p. 68.

Communication with life is possible only through a living agency. And culture, which is the life of the mind, can be imported only through man to man. Book-learning simply turns us into pedants. It is static and quantitative; it accumulates and is hoarded under strict guard. Culture grows and moves and multiplies itself in life. 147

The gurus were cultured men full of life and the living contact with their everwakeful mind was the most valuable ingredient of the asrama education. Tagore has not failed to note the similarities between such an education and the educational traditions of certain European universities. He writes:

The students of European universities not only have, in society, their human environment of culture, but they also make gains by their close contact with their teachers. They have their sun to give them light; it is the human relationship between teachers and students. 148

While teachers are important agents of education, schools have also a part to play as an agency of education. In the opinion of Tagore the school plays only a minor rôle in the education of a European boy; the major part is played by the life of the country in which he grows up. He actually observes that European education is an integral part of its life in general. As he says:

It (education) grows, develops and circulates in society, and leaves its imprint on what people say, think and do in their everyday life. The school is only a medium of the culture which society has acquired through its long history and the manifold activities of many people. 149

147 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 209.

148 Idem, Ibid., p. 209.

149 Idem, Ibid., p. 68.

Tagore could not help noticing the marked difference between such European schools and the schools of India. He writes: "What we now call a school in this country is really a factory..."¹⁵⁰ And again, "the schools in our country, far from being integrated to society, are imposed on it from outside".¹⁵¹ From these remarks it is rather obvious that Tagore did not consider the ordinary Indian schools of his day as great agents for the education of the young. But while looking down the corridors of Indian history Tagore could find shining examples of institutions which were genuine agents of education. He writes about these institutions as follows:

These places were neither schools nor monasteries, in the modern sense of the word. They consisted of homes where with their families lived men whose object was to see the world in God and to realize their own life in him. Though they lived outside society, yet they were to society what the sun is to the planets, the centre from which it received its life and light. And here boys grew up in an intimate vision of eternal life before they were thought fit to enter the state of the householder. ¹⁵²

And further on he continues:

... in the ancient India the school was there where was the life itself. There the students were brought up, not in the academic atmosphere of scholarship and learning, or in the maimed life of monastic seclusion, but in the atmosphere of living aspiration. They took the cattle to pasture, collected firewood, gathered fruit, cultivated kindness to all creatures, and grew in their spirit with their own teachers' spiritual growth. This was possible because the primary object of these places was not teaching but giving shelter to those who lived their life in God. ¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 67.

¹⁵¹ Idem, Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁵² Idem, Personality, p. 127-128.

¹⁵³ Idem, Ibid., p. 128.

From the context in which the two passages quoted above occur, it is clear that Tagore wished to see such models as referred in them to be adopted in the educational system of modern India. He went a step further and gave the lead by founding his own pioneering institutions of Santiniketan and Sriniketan on the model of these ancient exemplars. The following chapter is devoted to an exploration of the ideals of Tagore's twin institutions of Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

CHAPTER IV

EMBODIMENT OF THE IDEALS: TWO SCHOOLS

An attempt having been made to present the main outlines of the thinking of Tagore on the education of the young it is but logical and pertinent to try to delineate the important ideas and ideals that went into the founding and operation of his two institutions for the education of youth. In dealing with this topic the main emphasis will be on the 'philosophy' that informed and inspired the birth and growth of Tagore's educational institutions at Santiniketan and Sriniketan rather than on their day to day working or routine programme of activities. Such an approach is demanded by the fact that Tagore's general principles of education found their particular, concrete expression in the institutions which he founded. In other words, both sets of ideas were closely related and interdependent to the extent of their mutual inspiration. Tagore's general theory of education and the philosophy of education of his institutions were in fact the two sides of the same coin and as such without the presentation of the latter the discussion of his total philosophy of education will not be complete.

In the biographical sketch of Tagore given in appendix two the details of the founding of the Santiniketan school in 1901 and of the Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan in 1922 are narrated. The various educational and related institutions at these two places are commonly called by their respective place names and this study will follow the same practice. As a matter of fact, the school proper at Sriniketan was known as Siksha-Satra. This chapter is divided into two sections: the one dealing with Santiniketan and the other with Sriniketan.

1. Santiniketan.

During his many foreign travels and tours within his own country Tagore was often called upon to give an account of his experimental school at Santiniketan. Strangely enough, he did not consider it an easy task to give a clear and thorough account of the philosophy behind his institution. To a Chinese audience of teachers who wished to hear about his school he confessed as much in the following words:

... it will be difficult for me to give you a distinct idea of my institution of learning, which has grown gradually during the last twenty-four years. My own mind has grown with it, and my own ideal of education has reached its fulness so slowly and so naturally, that I find it difficult to analyze and place it before you. 1

To an American audience also he said almost the same thing as follows:

... I must confess it is difficult for me to say what is the idea which underlies my institution. For the idea is not like a fixed foundation upon which a building is erected. It is more like a seed which cannot be separated and pointed out directly it begins to grow into a plant. 2

In spite of this real or imagined difficulty, Tagore has left us more than one account of the philosophy and ideals that inspired and informed the founding of his institution. One of the most moving and complete of such accounts is an introduction which he wrote for a book by W.W. Pearson. 3

1 Rabindranath Tagore, "To Teachers" in Amiya Chakravarty, ed., A Tagore Reader, p. 213.

2 Idem, Personality, p.111-112.

3 W.W. Pearson, Op. cit.

In that introduction, after recalling with nostalgia the golden period of the flowering of the spirit of India in its forest sanctuaries, he continues as follows:

In the modern time my turn has also come to dream of that age towering above all ages of the subsequent history in the greatness of its simplicity and wisdom of pure life ... a time came when I woke up to the call of the spirit of my country and felt impelled to dedicate my life in furthering the purpose that lies in the heart of her history. I seemed choked for breath in the hideous nightmare of our present time, meaningless in its petty ambitions of poverty, and felt in me the struggle of my motherland for awakening in spiritual emancipation. ... I said to myself that we must seek for our own inheritance and with it buy our true place in the world. 4

After giving the background as quoted above the narrative continues as follows:

Then came to me a vision of the fulness of the inner man which was attained in India in the solemn seclusion of her forests when the rest of the world was hardly awake. The truth became clear to me that India had cut her path and broadened it for ages, the path that leads to a life reaching beyond death, rising high above the idealisation of the political selfishness and insatiable lust for accumulation of materials. The voice came to me in the Vedic tongue from the ashrams, the forest sanctuaries of the past, with the call -- "Come to me as the rivers to the sea, as the days and nights to the completion of their annual cycle. Let our taking and imparting truth be full of the radiance of light. Let us never come into conflict with one another. Let our minds speed towards their supreme good". 5

Tagore goes on to say how his heart responded to that call and how he determined to do what he could to bring to the surface for daily use and purification the stream of "ideals of simplicity of life, clarity of spiritual vision, purity of heart, harmony with the universe, and

4 Rabindranath Tagore, "Introduction", in W.W. Pearson, Op.cit., p. 18-19

5 Idem, Ibid., p. 19-20.

consciousness of the infinite personality in all creation"⁶ that originated in the summit of India's past and was flowing underground at present. As a very intelligent man and perceptive observer Tagore knew that "the lessons of the modern schools and the present time were aggressively antagonistic to these ideals",⁷ but he was also certain that the ancient teachers of India were true when they said with a positive assurance that it was an absolute death to depart from this life without realising the Eternal Truth of life.⁸

Tagore brings his narrative to a conclusion by stating:

Thus the exclusiveness of my literary life burst its barriers coming into touch with the deeper aspirations of my country lying hidden in her heart. I came to live in the Shantiniketan sanctuary founded by my father and there gradually gathered round me, under the shades of sal trees, boys from distant homes. ⁹

Tagore has, thus, explained at length his basic reasons and motives for founding his school. He has given an added reason in another of his essays which was originally published in the Visva-Bharati Quarterly for October, 1926 and which was later reprinted in more than one format. The relevant passage in that essay runs as follows:

⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, "Introduction", in W.W. Pearson, Op. cit., p. 20.

⁷ Idem, Ibid., p. 20.

⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 20-21.

⁹ Idem, Ibid., p. 21.

Looking back upon those moments of my boyhood when all my mind seemed to float poised upon a large feeling of the sky, of the light, I cannot help believing that my Indian ancestry has left deep in my being the legacy of its philosophy, the philosophy which speaks of fulfilment through harmony with nature. It arouses in us a great desire to seek our freedom, not in the man-made world but in the depth of the universe; and it makes us offer our reverence in the divinity inherent in fire, water and trees, in everything moving and growing. The founding of my school had its origin in the memory of that longing for freedom, the memory which seems to go back beyond the sky-line of my birth. 10

Ironically enough, Tagore's 'longing for freedom' could not be realized during his own schooldays. He wanted to make sure that what he missed in his childhood and boyhood, his own and other children should not be lacking. Thus, the not too pleasant memory of his own school-days was an added incentive and motive for starting a school of his own. 11

The school which Tagore founded at Santiniketan near Bolpur in Bengal was not an ordinary institution. As he says:

It has a special character of its own which is still struggling to find its fulfilment; for it is a living temple that I have attempted to build for my divinity. In such a place education necessarily becomes the preparation for complete life of man which can only become possible by living that life, through knowledge and service, enjoyment and creative work. The necessity was my own, for I felt impelled to come back into a fulness of truth from my exile in a dream-world. 12

Such then were some of the motives and reasons given by Tagore for the founding of his school at Santiniketan. From the very outset he wanted

10 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 291. The same passage with a few very minor variations in wording occurs in Tagore's, The Religion of Man, p. 106.

11 Idem, Personality, p. 112.

12 Idem, The Religion of Man, p. 102.

his institution to be one where the first lessons in the perfect union of man and nature might be learned unobstructed. As he put it:

We have to keep in mind the fact that love and action are the only media through which perfect knowledge can be obtained, for the object of knowledge is not pedantry but wisdom. An institution of this kind should not only train up one's limbs and mind to be ready for all emergencies, but to be attuned to the response between life and the world, to find the balance of their harmony which is wisdom. ¹³

Improvisation was one of the important lessons which Tagore wanted to teach the children of his institution. This was for the purpose of developing their creative talents. ¹⁴ Besides, he gave the children the opportunity to find their freedom in nature by being able to love it. For, as he says, "love is freedom; it saves us from paying with our soul for objects that are all too cheap". ¹⁵ As Tagore himself says, his institution reminded him of Robinson Crusoe's island. ¹⁶

About his attempt to develop in the children of his school the freshness of their feeling for nature and sensitiveness to their human milieu he writes as follows:

With the help of literature, festive ceremonials and religious teachings I tried to develop in the children of my school their feeling for Nature as also a sensitiveness to their human surroundings. I prepared for them a real home-coming into this world. Among the subjects, they learnt in the open air, in the shade of trees, were music and painting, and they had their dramatic performances. ¹⁷

¹³ Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 295. With slight variation in wording the same passage occurs in The Religion of Man, p. 110.

¹⁴ Idem, Ibid., p. 295; Religion of Man, p. 110.

¹⁵ Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 296.

¹⁶ Idem, Ibid., p. 295; Religion of Man, p. 110.

¹⁷ Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 296.

Tagore did not remain content for long with the above mentioned programmes only. As he himself says, when more means and personnel became available he introduced into his school additional activities for the building up of the character of the children. In these latter activities he was able to muster the help of some of his admirers and devoted friends from abroad.¹⁸

As was already noted in the previous chapter, Tagore firmly believed that for the real education of the child the atmosphere of a school was much more important than classroom teaching. On the basis of this conviction he endeavoured to provide the most congenial and suitable atmosphere in his school. Part of this atmosphere was the gift of nature. As Tagore told a Chinese audience of teachers:

The atmosphere was there; how could I create it? The birds sang to the awakening light of the morning, the evening came with its own silence, and the stars brought the peace of the night.

We had the open beauty of the sky, and the seasons in all their magnificent color. Through this intimacy with nature we took the opportunity of instituting festivals. I wrote songs to celebrate the coming of spring and the rainy season which follows the long months of drought; we had dramatic performances with decorations appropriate to the seasons.¹⁹

Besides the kind of atmosphere described above, a climate of freedom prevailed in the organization and administration of Tagore's school. As he writes:

18 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 296.

19 Idem, in Amiya Chakravarty, ed., A Tagore Reader, p. 215-216.

... it is not a school which is imposed upon the boys by autocratic authorities. I always try to impress upon their minds that it is their own world, upon which their life ought fully and freely to react. In the school administration they have their place, and in the matter of punishment we mostly rely upon their own court of justice. 20

Although the above statement may not strike a contemporary reader as something extraordinary, in the first decade of the present century such ideas seemed quite unusual in the society in which Tagore lived.

According to Tagore the greatest distinction of his school was the direct and immediate emotional contact that existed between the pupils and the teachers and external nature. He wanted to educate his pupils in inseparable association with nature. He did not aim at the acute development of a few particular faculties of theirs. His aim was to bring about an all-round development of their individual personalities through harmonious union of their spirits with the environment. 21

On several occasions Tagore has stated plainly that his principal object in starting his school was to give spiritual culture to his pupils on the model of the ancient forest sanctuaries of India. Such an institution, naturally, took on the character of a home and a temple and teaching was but part of a worshipful life. In a letter which he wrote to a schoolmaster in England he has reiterated these ideas and goes on to enumerate some of the practices of his school for achieving the goal of spiritual realization. Thus:

20 Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 146.

21 A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit. p. 143.

The first help that our boys get here on this path, is from the cultivation of love of nature and sympathy with all living creatures. Music is of very great assistance to them... Mornings and evenings fifteen minutes time is given them to sit in an open space composing their minds for worship... We rely more upon the subconscious influence of Nature, of the associations of the place and the daily life of worship that we live than on any conscious effort to teach them. 22

To realize the unity of races was one of the tasks Tagore assigned to education in general and to his own institution in particular. He writes:

Our endeavour has been to include this ideal of unity in all the activities in our institution, some educational, some that comprise different kinds of artistic expression, some in the shape of service to our neighbours by helping the reconstruction of village life. 23

The children of his school had the freedom to grow, which, as he says, is the greatest possible gift to a child. Besides this, in his school they aimed at another kind of freedom, namely, "a sympathy with all humanity, free from all racial and national prejudices". 24

The concept of the universality of man and spiritual unity of mankind was one of the highest ideals fostered and cherished in the school of Tagore. There are quite a number of passages in his writings which bear witness to his thinking on this issue. Thus:

22 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in W.W. Pearson, Op. cit., p. 77-78.

23 Idem, in Amiya Chakravarty, ed., A Tagore Reader, p. 216.

24 Idem, Ibid., p. 216.

The power of man has reached its limit. The time has come for striving for Union. Shall we not succeed in initiating at our institution this supreme mission of our age? Shall we not succeed in holding before the world the ideal of the universality of man? 25

That Tagore did attempt to introduce into his school the noble ideal of human unity is evident from the following passage:

I have tried to save children from the vicious methods which alienate their minds, and from other prejudices which are fostered through histories, geographies and lessons full of national prejudices. In the East there is a great deal of bitterness against other races, and in our homes we are often brought up with feelings of hatred. I have tried to save the children from such feelings, with the help of friends from the West, who, with their understanding and their human sympathy and love, have done us a great service. 26

In the letters which Tagore wrote to his devoted friend and collaborator C.F. Andrews during his tour of Western countries in 1920-21 there occur several passages that clearly indicate his ideals and aspirations for Santiniketan as an international institution with a universal mission and message. Thus, from Antwerp, on October 3, 1920, he writes, "Now I know more clearly than ever before that Santiniketan belongs to the world and we have to be worthy of this great fact".²⁷ After a fortnight he wrote from London, more or less in the same vein, as follows:

25 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p.143.

26 Idem, in Amiya Chakravarty, ed., A Tagore Reader, p. 216-217.

27 Idem, Letters to a Friend, p. 96.

Santiniketan is there for giving expression to the Eternal Man - asato ma sad gamaya,²⁸ the prayer that will ring clearer as the ages roll on, even when the geographical names of all countries are changed and lose their meaning. If I give way to the passion of the moment and the claims of the crowd, then it will be like speculating with my Master's money for a purpose which is not His own. 29

In the very same letter Tagore goes on to state that, "Santiniketan must treasure in all circumstances that santi (Peace) which is in the bosom of the Infinite".³⁰

On October 28, 1920, from New York, he wrote again to C.F. Andrews, as follows:

Our loyalty must not be for any land of a limited geography. It should be for the nationality of the common idea, to which are born individuals belonging to various nations, who are carrying their gifts of sacrifice to the one great shrine of Humanity. 31

Consistent with the above view Tagore wrote once again to his friend a week later advising him to keep Santiniketan away from the turmoils of politics. He knew very well that at a time when political and nationalistic feelings were growing in intensity in India it was very difficult for an institution like Santiniketan to resist their blandishments. He, however, did not think that there was something intrinsically wrong about politics but only that it was out of harmony with the spirit and ideals of his institution. Tagore writes:

28 Literally, "Lead me from Untruth to Truth".

29 Rabindranath Tagore, Letters to a Friend, p. 97.

30 Idem, Ibid., p. 102.

31 Idem, Ibid., p. 97.

We must clearly realize this fact, that the name of Santiniketan has a meaning for us, and this name will have to be made true. I am anxious and afraid lest the surrounding forces may become too strong for us and we succumb to the onslaught of the present time. Because the time is troubled and the minds of men distracted, all the more must we, through our Asram, maintain our faith in Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam. 32

Santiniketan literally meant 'the abode of peace' and the last three words in the above quotation refer to peace, goodness and unity as the embodiment of the Supreme Being.

In another letter which Tagore wrote to his friend Andrews from New York on November 25, 1920, he states that his gift to his country and to the world is a life of sacrifice. In the very same letter he has given expression to some of his noblest sentiments and aspirations with regard to the character and development of Santiniketan in the following words:

... my earnest request to you is to keep your mind high above politics. The problem of this new age is to help to build the world anew. Let us accept this great task. Santiniketan is to make accommodation for the workers from all parts of the world. All other things can wait. We must make room for Man, the guest of this age, and let not the Nation obstruct his path. I am afraid lest the cry of our own sufferings and humiliations should drown the announcement of His coming. For His sake we shall set aside our grievances and shall say: "Whatever may happen to us, let His cause triumph; for the future is His". 33

Tagore expressed more or less the same ideals in another letter which he wrote to Suhrit Kumar Mukhopadhyaya from New York on December 11, 1920. The letter reads in part as follows:

32 Rabindranath Tagore, Letters to a Friend, p. 102.

33 Idem, Ibid., p. 103.

Let the illusion of geographical barriers disappear from at least one place in India - let our Santiniketan be that place. For us there is but one country- the world. We have but one nation, that is Man. Our Santiniketan is near the summit where the sun daily rises, and there I have invited the men of the land of the setting sun. One day they will accept that invitation. 34

Thus, it is clear from the various statements of Tagore that he wanted his institution to be an international centre of culture besides being an asram on the model of the ancient forest sanctuaries of India. How this idea was further developed and was given concrete expression in an institutionalized form, will be dealt with in the following chapter. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the presentation of the ideas and ideals of Tagore that inspired the founding of Sriniketan.

2. Sriniketan.

The word 'Sriniketan' literally means 'The Abode of Prosperity'. The name was originally given by Tagore to an Institute of Rural Reconstruction which he founded at a village less than two miles from Santiniketan, in 1922. To this institution was added a rural school called 'Siksha-Satra' in 1924, which was originally founded by Tagore in 1922 as an extension of the Santiniketan school. The moving of this institution from Santiniketan to Sriniketan seems to have been aimed at linking the educational and cultural activities of the former place with the economic and cultural life of the villages surrounding the latter. Since the Institute of Rural Reconstruction and Siksha-Satra were essentially

34 Rabindranath Tagore, as reproduced in Sisirkumar Ghose, ed., Tagore for You, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1966, p. 129.

based on the same ideas and ideals and served the same purpose, namely, the improvement of the quality of life in the rural areas of India, it is thought legitimate, following the common practice, to refer to both the institutions simply as Sriniketan in the present discussion. Students of Tagore are agreed that Sriniketan occupies a position of considerable importance in the pioneering venture of Rabindranath Tagore in the field of education. Needless to add, therefore, that no discussion of his educational philosophy would be complete without exploring his thoughts with regard to Sriniketan.

In the minds of some the question may arise as to why Tagore found it necessary to found another educational institution when one was already in existence and flourishing. The answer to this question lies in the fact that in the new institution he wanted to avoid the shortcomings of his Santiniketan school as well as to introduce certain new features such as greater emphasis on practical work to gain direct experience of the world around.

The reasons that prompted Tagore to embark on such a new venture he has recapitulated in a letter which he wrote to L.K. Elmhirst, one of his former collaborators, a few years before his death. According to this letter ³⁵ he had been cherishing for a long time his hope of establishing an ideal centre of education at Sriniketan. It was no mean ideal curtailed to the strictest measure of a narrow village environment. He knew very well that the education prevalent in India during his days was extremely meagre

³⁵ Rabindranath Tagore's letter of December 19, 1937, as quoted in Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 36-38.

and barren. But the privileged few who were fortunate enough to receive such an education thought differently. They hankered after University degrees as hallmarks of respectability and passports to lower cadre employment with the Government. Outside the pale of this privileged few was a vast and obscure multitude of people who could not even dream of such a costly ambition. Tagore felt that he had his best opportunity in helping those people by offering them the best kind of all-round culture which was not mutilated by officialdom. He was firmly convinced that education and culture must not be apportioned differently according to the social status of the recipients. With these ideas as a backdrop Tagore writes:

I am therefore all the more keen that Siksha-Satra should justify the ideal I have entrusted to it, and should represent the most important function of Sriniketan, in helping students to the attainment of manhood complete in all its various aspects. Our people need more than anything else a real scientific training, that can inspire in them the courage of experiment and the initiative of mind which we lack as a nation. Sriniketan should be able to provide for its pupils an atmosphere of rational thinking and behaviour, which alone can save them from stupid bigotry and moral cowardliness. 36

The above passage clearly indicates that Tagore was no mere visionary but a practical idealist close to the realities of life. While it is possible, as Leonard K. Elmhirst has done, to trace the evolution of Tagore's ideas with regard to Sriniketan to his experiences at Santiniketan, at a deeper level they owe their origin to his philosophical stand. This is abundantly clear from a talk he gave to the Sriniketan staff and students in 1924 just before he left on a tour of China. That lecture rendered into English

36 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 37.

by Tagore himself is entitled "The Philosophical Approach to Sriniketan".

In the following passage taken from that lecture Tagore talks about the triple rôle of every human being:

As individuals, each of us possesses the unity a living organism, distinct in himself. As social beings, we are parts of the complex organism we call humanity. As spiritual beings, we belong to a Reality which is Anantam, Infinite, which is Shivam, Goodness, which is all-comprehensive. 37

After the above statement with regard to his basic position pertaining to man, Tagore proceeds to elucidate the educational implications that flow from such a three dimensional understanding of man.

Firstly, about education and man as an individual, he writes as follows:

Each individual living organism has its own need and faculty for self-preservation. The education of man should allow room for a training in the perfect maintenance of his individual life. Otherwise not only does he become helpless, but this faculty for self-preservation, the exercise of which gives him a true enjoyment of life, can atrophy altogether. Generally speaking, in our process of education this training of how to live our physical life is neglected; therefore we miss the shantam, the Peace, on which the self-reliant freedom of a well-organized existence depends. 38

Secondly, with regard to education and man as a social being, Tagore writes:

The adjustment of our individual life to our social life, and of these two with the vast life of man, needs for its training the spirit and acceptance of mutual responsibility. In our educational institutions, training and experience in this type of adjustment hardly find a place ... Owing to this lack of training in sympathetic understanding, man suffers from the want of that true freedom in his social life, which comes from his deeper consciousness of the need for welfare and for a widespread atmosphere of mutual sympathy and co-operation. 39

37 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 90.

38 Idem, Ibid., p. 90-91.

39 Idem, Ibid., p. 91-92.

And finally, on man as a spiritual being and on the educational implications of such an understanding of man, Tagore has the following to say:

When in our own deeper spiritual being we fail to find some deeper harmony or meaning in the universe, we lose faith in ourselves and proceed to sink all our resources in the pursuit of immediate self-interest. Ordinarily our processes of education do nothing to train our minds for the realization of our deeper spiritual relationship with the Supreme Truth. For want of this training we fail to develop that spirit of detachment that gives us the broader atmosphere, within which our inner being finds a natural dwelling and the space and the leisure for fulfilment in imaginative creation. Our creations in the worlds of science, of philosophy, of art, and of literature can reach their fulness of growth only under a sky of this kind of detachment. 40

It is almost impossible to disagree with Tagore on the positions he has maintained in the above three quotations. It is all the more so with regard to the following statement of his. He writes:

Our ideal should be to make ample provision in our homes and in our schools for that development of our spiritual relationship with the Supreme Being, which may best give us a sense of freedom in all departments of life. We know full well that life divested of a deeper consciousness of the Infinite can breed only new and diverse forms of slavery under the appearance of liberty. 41

Tagore concludes his discourse on the philosophical approach to Sriniketan by quoting a lengthy passage from another of his lectures on the plan for an ideal educational institution, the last paragraph of which reads as follows:

... this institution should be a perpetual creation by the co-operative enthusiasm of teachers and students, growing with the growth of their soul; a world in itself, self-sustaining, independent, rich with ever-renewing life, radiating life

40 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit. 92.

41 Idem, Ibid., p. 93-94.

across space and time, attracting and maintaining round it a planetary system of dependent bodies. Its aim should lie in imparting life-breath to the complete man, who is intellectual as well as economic, bound by social bonds, but aspiring towards spiritual freedom and final perfection. 42

The above quoted passage seems to be a succinct statement of Tagore's ideals and aspirations with regard to Sriniketan viewed from a philosophical point of view.

From purely philosophical considerations one may now turn to the exploration of strictly educational principles which inspired the founding of Sriniketan. There is ample evidence to show that at least three years before the founding of Sriniketan in 1922, Tagore had already stated publicly some of the educational principles which were destined to be implemented later at Sriniketan. During the course of a lecture tour to South India in 1919 he declared:

... our education should be in constant touch with our complete life, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our schools should be at the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operation. For, true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings. 43

The above quoted statement seems to represent the basic philosophy of Tagore's institution at Sriniketan. He has, however, elaborated on the same theme in another part of the same lecture. After analysing the causes and suggesting the remedy for the poverty of intellectual life in India he goes on to suggest a solution for the poverty of material life in the following words:

42 Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 95. The passage is quoted from his book, Creative Unity, p. 203.

43 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 202-203.

Our material poverty, likewise, can be removed only by the co-operation of our individual powers. And our institution should be based on this economic co-operation. It must not only instruct, but live; not only think, but produce... Our centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life as well. It must cultivate land, breed cattle, to feed itself and its students it must produce all necessities, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. Its very existence would depend on the success of its industrial ventures carried out on the co-operation principle, which will unite the teachers and students in a living and active bond of necessity. This will also give us a practical, industrial training whose motive force is not profit. 44

It may be noted here that although all the suggestions contained in the above statement were not translated into practice due to many practical difficulties, some of them found a place in the programme of Sriniketan after a few years.

Many have wondered what prompted a poet and philosopher like Tagore to come down from the rarefied atmosphere of poetic imagination and philosophic abstractions to the level of practical economics. One explanation lies in the fact that Tagore was steeped in the history and culture of his country and when he compared the past with the present he noticed many things in the present which troubled his social conscience. This is clear from the following statement:

There was a time when our villages were in intimate contact with the manifold culture of this land. Towns were administrative centres serving certain special purposes mostly of an official and professional character while for the complete purposes of the people's life the villages were cherished and

served by all the capable persons of the land with the most of their means and the best that their minds produced. Today, for various reasons, villages are fatally neglected. They are fast degenerating into serfdom compelled to offer to the ungrateful towns cheerless and unintelligent labour for work carried on in an unhealthy and impoverished environment. The object of Sriniketan is to bring back life in its completeness into the villages making them self-reliant and self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural tradition of their own country, and competent to make an efficient use of the modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic condition. 45

The last part of the above quotation is one of the clearest statements on the aims and objectives of Sriniketan one comes across from the pen of Rabindranath Tagore. Besides this, there are some other more elaborate statements of an official character which were without a doubt approved by Tagore but which cannot be identified as formulated by him. One such statement of the "aims and objects" of the Institute at Sriniketan occurs in Visva-Bharati Bulletin No. 6, issued in November, 1925, and entitled, The Institute of Rural Reconstruction - Sriniketan. Out of the eight aims and objects listed in the bulletin, the last three are quoted below because of their relevance to the present discussion:

6. To train the students to a due sense of their own intrinsic worth, physical and moral, and in particular to teach them to do with their own hands everything which a village householder or cultivator does or should do for a living, if possible, more efficiently.
7. To put the students in the way of acquiring practical experience of husbandry, poultry-keeping, carpentry, smithing, weaving, tanning, practical sanitation work and in the art and spirit of cooperation.

45 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in Visva-Bharati Bulletin, No. 11, issued in December, 1928, p.1.

8. To give the students elementary instruction in the sciences connected with their practical work to train them to think and record the knowledge acquired by them for their own benefit and for that of their fellow men. 46

Tagore had very high hopes and expectations from his Sriniketan institution. In the last decade of his life he thought that his Sriniketan school, Siksha-Satra, had greater potentiality and usefulness than his Santiniketan school. This view is supported by the statements of Tagore himself.

For instance, while he was on a tour of U.S.S.R., in 1930, several people questioned him with regard to his educational enterprises. In reply to one such query pertaining to Sriniketan Tagore replied in part as follows:

There I am trying to introduce all my methods which I consider to be absolutely necessary for a perfect education. Before long, this village school, I believe, will be the real school, the ideal school, and the other one will be neglected. 47

While there is no evidence to prove that Sriniketan flourished at the expense of Santiniketan, the above statement clearly indicates that Tagore entertained high hopes for Sriniketan. This conclusion is further strengthened by the following statement which occurs in a letter which he wrote to Leonard K. Elmhirst on December 19, 1937. Thus:

Sriniketan should be able to provide for its pupils an atmosphere of rational thinking and behaviour, which alone can save them from stupid bigotry and moral cowardliness. I myself attach much more significance to the educational possibilities of Siksha-Satra than to the school and college at Santiniketan,... 48

46 From Visva-Bharati Bulletin, No. 6, November, 1925, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 145-146.

47 Rabindranath Tagore, Letters from Russia, p. 206.

48 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 37.

Undoubtedly, Sriniketan took count of the organic wholeness of human individuality and thus provided opportunities for the full exercise and development of both the bodily and mental capabilities of its students. On this account and because of the freedom for experimentation it enjoyed, the educational possibilities of Siksha-Satra were immense indeed.

Leonard K. Elmhirst, who took a leading part in creating and guiding Sriniketan in its infancy, corroborates the view expressed in the above paragraph in the following words:

The aim, ... of the Siksha-Satra is, through experience in dealing with this overflowing abundance of child life, its charm and its simplicity, to provide the utmost liberty within surroundings that are filled with creative possibilities, with opportunities for the joy of play that is work -- the work of exploration, and of work that is play -- the reaping of a succession of novel experiences; to give the child that freedom of growth which the young demands for its tender shoot, that field for self-expansion in which all young life finds both training and happiness. 49

The analysis and interpretation of the educational ideas and ideals of Rabindranath Tagore as presented in the foregoing pages are not unlike that of Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, the eminent scholar and erstwhile literary secretary of Tagore, who writes:

Santiniketan and Sriniketan are the consummation of the Poet's idea of education. Education to him is commensurate with the entire process of our living, of becoming, of directing our personality along widening intensities of growth. The painful memory of his own boyhood's contact with school-life, his constant dealings with the victims and

49 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst, Op. cit., p. 68.

perpetrators of a borrowed paraphernalia of imperial education, and his wide-travelled experiences of some of the modern pedagogic cults dragooning human personality into standardised grooves of respectability had been preying on his mind suggesting to him the idea of launching an educational project in which he could concretise his ideas of creative education for children. 50

It is doubtful if anybody would disagree with the author quoted above that Santiniketan and Sriniketan are the consummation of Tagore's idea of education and that he concretised his ideas of creative education for children in these institutions. However, to make the present investigation thorough and complete it is necessary to explore Tagore's ideas on higher education as well. The following chapter will attempt to do this.

50 Amiya C. Chakravarty, "The Poet at Work", in Ramananda Chatterjee, editor, The Golden Book of Tagore, p. 48.

CHAPTER V

IDEALS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THEIR FRUITION

Tagore's writings on the philosophy of higher or university education are not very extensive as compared to his output in the field of general or pre-university education. Most of what he did write on this aspect of education is related to his "Visva-Bharati" or International University which he formally inaugurated in 1921. An exploration of the ideals of Visva-Bharati is reserved for section two of this chapter which will provide a more complete picture of the thinking of Tagore on higher education.

1. Genesis

What will be attempted in this section is to investigate Tagore's ideas on higher education in its general aspect. It is relevant to recall here the exposition of Tagore's philosophy of universalism with reference to political, social and cultural relationships of man and mankind presented in the first part of chapter II. It was shown there that the basic idea underlying his thinking in those fundamental aspects of human relationship was spiritual unity, harmony and universality. Tagore's thinking on higher education in its general aspect may be considered as a logical outcome of those ideas evolving and crystallizing into a particular pattern impelled by events such as the First World War. As in other instances, here also one notices the intimate relationship that exists between his philosophy of life and his philosophy of education.

Tagore noticed much that was discouraging in the state of the world before, during and after the First World War. This was especially true of

the East-West relation as it existed. Though a good deal of what he observed caused him grief, the fear of danger or loss to one people or another was not the most important among these. He was saddened more by the "demoralising influence of the constant estrangement between two hemispheres"¹ which spelt world-wide spiritual disaster for mankind. To ward off such a calamity, from the depth of his anguished heart, he made the following memorable plea:

... in the present age, with its facility of communication, geographical barriers have almost lost their reality, and the great federation of men, which is waiting either to find its true scope or to break asunder in a final catastrophe, is not a meeting of individuals, but of various human races. Now the problem before us is of one single country, which is this earth, where the races as individuals must find both their freedom of self-expression and their bond of federation. Mankind must realise a unity, wider in range, deeper in sentiment, stronger in power than ever before. Now that the problem is large, we have to solve it on a bigger scale, to realise the God in man by a larger faith and to build the temple of our faith on a sure and world-wide basis. 2

Tagore's philosophy of universalism is set forth clearly in the above statement. What was crystal clear to him did not seem to have appeared in the same light to many of his contemporaries, especially to those who were in the arena of politics. To such people Tagore issued the following warning:

1 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 170.

2 Idem, Ibid., p. 171.

It is a national folly, this deadly passion for self-aggrandizement that makes people averse to international unity. But it is a fact nevertheless that the peoples of the world have come together. Since no nation, however strong or imperialist, can deny this fact, all must come to terms with it. Else there will be no end to these wars of annihilation under the spur of national passion with its hypocritical diplomacy. 3

Science and technology have brought the peoples of the world closer together physically, but how nearer they are in spirit is another matter. The words of Tagore quoted above were uttered half-a-century ago. But they have lost none of their validity even today. Not satisfied with issuing a mere warning he went on to suggest some positive action in the manner of a seer and prophet as follows:

How to be free from arrogant nationalism is today the chief lesson to be learnt. Tomorrow's history will begin with a chapter on internationalism, and we shall be unfit for tomorrow if we retain any manners, customs, or habits of thought that are contrary to universalism. 4

He rightly held the view that "education in the modern age should be in harmony with the spirit of the times". 5 But education is a two-edged sword. It can be wielded for yielding good or evil. As Tagore notes, "Worshippers of nationalism consider it their duty to invent excuses for disseminating self-aggrandizement through education". 6 If education can be manipulated for serving the interests of pride, greed and chauvinistic nationalism, fortunately, it can equally well be utilized to promote

3 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 248-249.

4 Idem, Ibid., p. 249.

5 Idem, Ibid., p. 249.

6 Idem, Ibid., p. 249.

ideals of human unity and brotherhood. Tagore felt that the latter type of education was the need of the hour. He writes:

An education which can free the nations from this ungodly fetish of Nationalism is what is chiefly needed today. Tomorrow is to begin the chapter of the federation of races. Any evil tendencies of thought and sinful habits, which militate against the spirit of federation will unfit us to take our part in the history of tomorrow. 7

Tagore had even more profound reasons, apart from the ones already mentioned, for advocating the philosophy of universalism in education. For example, he observes:

... the great mind of man is one, working through the many differences which are needed to ensure the full result of its fundamental unity. When we understand this truth in a disinterested spirit, it teaches us to respect all the differences in man that are real, yet remain conscious of our oneness; and to know that perfection of unity is not in uniformity, but in harmony. 8

If one realizes that the great mind of man is one he would be more tolerant and would be prepared to respect the individual differences that exist among men. One should not, however, be satisfied with the realization of this truth within but should be prepared to express it without for the purpose of liberating and revealing one's soul. Education, according to Tagore, is the best means of propagating such a doctrine of the revelation of man. He writes:

The essential thing is that truth should be realized within and expressed without, with the sole object of liberating and revealing man's soul. The doctrine of man's revelation must be propagated through our education, and practised through our action. Only then shall we be honoured by honouring all mankind, and shall overcome the infirmity of age by invoking a new age. 9

7 Rabindranath Tagore, "The Union of Cultures", in The Modern Review, Vol. 30, No. 5, issue of November, 1921, p. 541.

8 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 172.

9 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 251.

In the thinking of Tagore "honouring all mankind" consists in realizing the God in man.¹⁰ He has suggested the means for achieving this realization in the following words:

The first step towards realisation is to create opportunities for revealing the different peoples to one another. This can never be done in those fields where the exploiting utilitarian spirit is supreme. We must find some meeting-ground, where there can be no question of conflicting interests. One of such places is the University, ...¹¹

Tagore goes on to make clear his idea of a University and the type of education that should be imparted at such an institution. A university, according to him, is a meeting-ground of different peoples with no conflicting interests. All can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together a common heritage, and realise that the creations and achievements of artists, scientists, philosophers and saints were not merely for the particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind.¹²

Tagore has advanced some cogent reasons for his concept of the university as a meeting-ground of different peoples. He writes:

It will not do to keep our culture so reverently shackled with chains of gold. The age has come when all artificial fences are breaking down. Only that will survive which is basically consistent with the universal. That which seeks safety in the out-of-the-way hole of the special will perish.¹³

10 See last sentence in the second quotation on page 170.

11 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 171.

12 Idem, Ibid., p. 171-172.

13 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 219.

Tagore, after having thus stated his deeply-felt convictions with regard to the coming age of universal culture, goes on to conclude as follows:

So we prepare the grand field for the co-ordination of the cultures of the world, the field of give-and-take. This adjustment of knowledge through comparative study, this progress in intellectual co-operation, is to be the key-note of the coming age. We may seek to shield our holy aloofness in the imagined security of a sheltered corner, but the world will prove stronger than our refuge. 14

On the basis of the deep-rooted convictions stated above Tagore earnestly hoped that the institutions of higher education, commonly designated as universities, would be the meeting ground of both the East and the West. This is an oft-recurring thought in his writings. Thus:

I deeply hope that our educational centres will be the meeting ground of the East and the West. In the world of material gain human beings have neither stopped fighting, nor will they easily do so. But there are no obstacles to their meeting in the field of cultural exchange. The man who entertains no guests, living solely for himself, is petty-minded; that applies to a nation, too. Besides providing for its own comforts, a nation should have guest houses where it will entertain visitors from all parts of the world; and national educational institutions are its best guest houses. 15

To be the meeting ground and guest house of the East and the West was only one of the several rôles Tagore assigned to a university. As he conceived it, an institution of higher education worth its name, was

14 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 220.

15 Idem, Ibid., p. 250.

expected to perform several other important rôles as well. He writes:

The educational institution, ... which I have in mind has primarily for its object the constant pursuit of truth, from which the imparting of truth naturally follows. It must not be a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food artificially prepared. It should be an open house, in which students and teachers are at one. They must live their complete life together, dominated by a common aspiration for truth and a need of sharing all the delights of culture. 16

It can be readily seen from the above quotation that the pursuit of truth, imparting of truth, and being an open house of culture are some of the key rôles which Tagore assigns to a university. But he does not stop there; he goes on to claim a few other vital functions for it as follows:

For our Universities we must claim, not labelled packages of truth and authorised agents to distribute them, but truth in its living association with her lovers and seekers and discoverers. Also we must know that the concentration of the mind-forces scattered throughout the country is the most important mission of a University, which, like the nucleus of a living cell, should be the centre of the intellectual life of the people. 17

Tagore has more or less repeated the afore-mentioned idea of a university in another context and calls it "the centre of the creative life of the national mind".¹⁸ He has given a more detailed account of the functions of a university in the following passage:

16 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 187.

17 Idem, Ibid., p. 188.

18 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 214.

The primary function of a university ... should be the constructive work of joining and imparting knowledge. Men should be brought together and full scope given to them not only for intellectual exploration, but for vital creation as well; and the teaching should be the overflow of this spring of culture, spontaneous and inevitable. Moreover, education should be in touch with our complete life, economic, aesthetic, intellectual, social, and spiritual. It must not only instruct but help to live; not only think and feel but act and produce. 19

The qualifying word "constructive" is very significant in the context in which he has used it in the above quotation. For, as he states in another context:

Universities should never be made into mechanical organizations for collecting and distributing knowledge. Through them the people should offer their intellectual hospitality, their wealth of mind to others, and earn their proud right in return to receive gifts from the rest of the world. 20

It was stated at the beginning of this chapter that although Tagore's writings on the general theory of higher education as such are rather meagre, one can gain a fuller understanding of his views on the subject from what he wrote about the ideals of his Visva-Bharati or World University during the course of more than two decades. The following section, therefore, is devoted to a thorough exploration of the educational ideals of Rabindranath Tagore as enshrined in the institution of higher education called Visva-Bharati which he founded in 1921.

19 Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in Visva-Bharati and its institutions, rev. ed., Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1961, p. 63.

20 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 178.

2. The Growth and Fruition: A World University

The philosophical and educational ideals of Rabindranath Tagore appear in their full glory and splendour in his writings on Visva-Bharati or the World University which he formally inaugurated in December, 1921. The ideals which are embodied in this institution represent the very acme of his thinking with regard to universalism as well as education. Tagore himself considered that this institution represented the very best of his life's work; this is evident from a letter which he personally handed in to Mahatma Gandhi in 1940 - a year before his death. It reads in part as follows: "Visva-Bharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure, and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation".²¹

It is also worthy of note that even though the formal inauguration of Visva-Bharati did not take place until December, 1921, according to some commentators,²² the ideals embodied in that institution have been enunciated by Tagore on a number of occasions stretched over a period of nearly two decades preceding that date.

As noted earlier, some of the basic ideas and ideals that are germane to the founding of Visva-Bharati were set out in the first section of this chapter. The material presented in this section may be considered as a further development and logical outcome of those thoughts. Also, one

²¹ Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 388.

²² See for example: Himangshu Bhushan Mukherjee, Op. cit., p. 185-191; C.F. Andrews, ed., Op. cit., p. 82-83.

can notice once again, the close relationship of Tagore's philosophy of life and his philosophy of education. The exposition that follows is set out under the three headings of nature, aims and objects, and programmes of Visva-Bharati.

a) Nature.- Visva-Bharati, as Rabindranath Tagore conceived it, could be viewed under a three-fold aspect, that is, as a Centre of Indian Culture or an Indian University, as a Centre of Eastern or Asian Culture or an Eastern University and as a Centre of International Culture or a World University.

Firstly, as a Centre of Indian Culture: in a lecture Tagore delivered during the course of a tour of South India in 1919 he made the following suggestion:

My suggestion is that we should generate somewhere a centripetal force which will attract and group together from different parts of our land and from different ages all our own materials of learning, and thus create a complete and moving orb of Indian culture. 23

Tagore did not want his orb of Indian culture to be nurtured in isolation. For, he believed that intellectual co-ordination and co-operation were to be the hallmarks of the age that was dawning. At the same time he realised that a certain amount of preparation had to precede the stage of fruitful collaboration. He writes:

23 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 216-217.

But before we are in a position to face other world cultures, or co-operate with them, we must build up our own by the synthesis of the diverse elements that have come to India. When we take our stand at such a centre and turn towards the West, our gaze shall no longer be timid and dazed, our heads shall remain erect. For, we shall then be able to look at truth from our own vantage ground and open out a new vista of thought before the grateful world. 24

While Tagore thus sought to achieve a synthesis of the various cultural elements of India in his institution he took care to insist that economic co-operation should form the basis for such a university. In all probability he derived the inspiration for such an emphasis from the example of the ancient tapovanas or forest 'universities' of India which he admired greatly. He writes:

Our centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life as well. It must cultivate land, breed cattle, to feed itself and its students it must produce all necessities, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. Its very existence would depend on the success of its industrial ventures carried out on the co-operative principle, which will unite the teachers and students in a living and active bond of necessity. This will also give us a practical, industrial training whose motive force is not profit. 25

Tagore would not have been happy if such an institution existed just for the welfare and happiness of its students and teachers only. As a humanitarian he was fully alive to the social and economic necessities of the community in which he lived. So he wrote as follows:

24 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 220.

25 Idem, Ibid., p. 227; Idem, Creative Unity, p. 200-201 (with minor differences in wording).

Such an institution must group around it all the neighbouring villages and unite them with itself in all its economic endeavours. The improvement of their housing and sanitation, besides their moral and intellectual life should be the object of the social side of its activity. 26

It may be mentioned here that Tagore's ideals of Visva-Bharati as a centre of the economic life of India were to a large measure implemented at his Sriniketan Institute of Rural Reconstruction.

Secondly, as a Centre of Eastern or Asian Culture: Tagore was impressed by the fact that the Western Universities gave their students opportunities of learning what all the European peoples have contributed to their Western culture. The mind of the West has been thus revealed to the whole world. He regreted the fact that no such arrangement or institution existed to reveal the Eastern mind. This is all the more deplorable especially when one knows that a number of Asian countries had and has such fine intellectual and cultural tradition. He was, as stated early, absolutely convinced that the age of seclusion and isolation was over and the era of co-ordination and co-operation was near at hand. He, however, knew that before Asia was in a position to offer her cultural treasures to the West, she should have them consolidated into a coherent synthesis and realize the unity that subsisted among their varied elements. He writes:

26 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 227.

... before Asia is in a position to co-operate with the culture of Europe, she must base her own structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures which she has. When, taking her stand on such a culture, she turns toward the West, she will take, with a confident sense of mental freedom, her own view of truth, from her own vantage-ground, and open a new vista of thought to the world. 27

If Asia did not act in the way Tagore hoped, he logically concluded that she would allow her priceless inheritance to crumble into dust and in her effort to replace it with feeble imitations of the West would make herself superfluous, cheap and ludicrous. In this context he asks the following pointed questions:

If she (Asia) thus loses her individuality and her specific power to exist, will it in the least help the rest of the world? Will not her terrible bankruptcy involve also the Western mind? 28

The answer to the first question is obviously 'no' and the answer to the last, 'yes'. He, therefore, logically comes to the following conclusion: "If the whole world grows at last into an exaggerated West, then such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity." 29

To prevent such a calamity from happening, and more positively to reveal the mind of Asia to the rest of the world, Tagore wanted to develop his institution into a Centre of Eastern or Asian culture. He writes:

27 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 174.

28 Idem, Ibid., p. 175.

29 Idem, Ibid., p. 175.

In this belief, it is my desire to extend by degrees the scope of this University on simple lines, until it comprehends the whole range of Eastern cultures - the Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian and others. Its object will be to reveal the Eastern mind to the world. 30

It may be added here that great deal of this plan was put through during the course of more than a decade.

And thirdly, as a Centre of International Culture or a World University: without a doubt, this is the most important feature of Visva-Bharati as its very motto, "Yatra visvam bhavatyekanidam" or "Where the world makes its home in a single nest", indicates.

Tagore was fully aware that there are natural differences in human races which needed to be respected and preserved. But he believed that one of the most important missions of education is to realize and bring about the spiritual unity of mankind in spite of these differences. This ideal of human unity was one of the corner-stones of Visva-Bharati. As Tagore writes:

This we have tried to do in Visva-Bharati. Our endeavour has been to include this ideal of unity in all the activities in our institution, some educational, some that comprise different kinds of artistic expression, some in the shape of service to our neighbours by way of helping the reconstruction of village life. As I wanted his institution to be inter-racial, I invited there great minds from the West. They cordially responded, and some have come permanently to join hands with us and build a place where men of all nations and countries may find their true home, without molestation from the prosperous who are always afraid of idealism or from the politically powerful who are always suspicious of men who have the freedom of spirit. 31

30 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 175.

31 Idem, "My School", in The Modern Review, Vol. 37, No. 5, issue of May, 1925, p. 504.

There is not a shadow of doubt that Tagore wanted to make Visva-Bharati a place where men and women of all nations could make their true home without any bothersome external interference. The idealism and the universal outlook that inspired him for such a noble endeavour stand out clearly in the following statement of his:

We are building up our institution upon the ideal of the spiritual unity of all races. I hope it is going to be a great meeting place for individuals from all countries who believe in the divine humanity, and who wish to make atonement for the cruel disloyalty displayed against her by men. 32

A number of almost identical passages as the above occurs in several other places in his writings and published speeches.³³ This fact clearly indicates how close and dear to his heart was this ideal. Tagore goes on to state that in his numerous tours abroad, especially in Europe, he has come across a number of 'idealists' who have suffered and struggled for causes ignored by the clever and the powerful. He believed that such people will alter the outlook for the future and that they will usher in a new era of truth and love like,

that great personality, (Jesus Christ) who had only a small number of disciples from among the insignificant, and who at the end of his career presented a pitiful picture of utter failure. He was reviled by those in power, unknown by the larger world and suffered an inglorious death and yet through the symbol of this utmost failure he conquers and lives for ever. 34

32 Rabindranath Tagore, "My Educational Mission", in The Modern Review, Vol. 49, No. 6, issue of June, 1931, p. 622.

33 For example, see: Amiya Chakravarty, ed., A Tagore Reader, p. 217.; Rabindranath Tagore, "My School", in The Modern Review, Vol. 37, No. 5. issue of May, 1925, p. 503-504.

34 Rabindranath Tagore, "My Educational Mission", in The Modern Review, Vol. 49, No. 6, issue of June, 1931, p. 622.

It is obvious that Tagore had absolute faith in the final victory of the noble cause these Christ-like personalities advocated. It is also implied that his own advocacy of the divine humanity of man and spiritual unity of mankind was destined for ultimate acceptance by people of goodwill everywhere. Tagore's firm faith in the inner spirit of Man and the moral links that bind together the various sections of humanity is also clear from a letter which he wrote in reply to Professor Gilbert Murray's appeal for collaboration in the work of the intellectual union of the East and the West. The letter reads in part as follows:

... at no other period of history has mankind as a whole been more alive to the need of human co-operation, more conscious of the inevitable and inescapable moral links which hold together the fabric of human civilization. I cannot afford to lose my faith in this inner spirit of Man, nor in the sureness of human progress which following the upward path of struggle and travail is constantly achieving, through cyclic darkness and doubt, its ever-widening ranges of fulfilment. Willingly therefore I harness myself, in my advanced age, to the arduous responsibility of creating in our Educational Colony in Santiniketan a spirit of genuine international collaboration based on a definite pursuit of knowledge, a pursuit carried on in an atmosphere of friendly community life, harmonized with Nature, and offering freedom of individual self-expression. 35

It is expressly stated in the above extract that the creation of a spirit of genuine international collaboration in his educational colony was one of the arduous responsibilities he undertook in his advanced age. But this was not a new idea with him. As a matter of fact, several years before the above statement was made he had already stated as follows:

35 Rabindranath Tagore, in Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore, East and West, Paris, International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations, 1935, p. 32-33.

... the inner spirit of India is calling to us to establish in this land centres where all her intellectual forces will gather for the purpose of creation, and all resources of knowledge and thought. (,) Eastern and Western, will unite in perfect harmony... She is seeking the glorious opportunity when she will know her mind and give freely to the world, when she will be released from the chaos of scattered power and the inertness of borrowed acquisition. 36

The establishment of Visva-Bharati was Tagore's response to that call of the inner spirit of India and he wanted his institution to be a place where all the resources of Eastern and Western knowledge and thought could be united in perfect harmony. He gave expression to the very same ideal on another occasion as follows:

It is the dream of my heart, that the culture-centre of our country (Visva-Bharati) should also be the meeting ground of the East and West. In the field of business, antagonism still prevails; it struggles hard against reconciliation. In the field of culture, there is no such obstacle. The householder, who is exclusively occupied with his domestic concerns and is chary of his hospitality, is poor in spirit. No great country can afford to be confined to its kitchen, it must have its reception room where it can do honour to itself by inviting the world. 37

Besides being a meeting ground of the East and the West, Tagore wanted his institution to be an international centre for the cultivation of Truth. He has elaborated on this ideal as follows:

It is my prayer that India should, in the name of all the East, establish a centre for the culture of Truth to which all may be invited. I know she lacks material wealth, but she has no lack of spiritual wisdom. On the strength of the latter she may invite the world, and be invited into every part of the world, not to hang round the threshold, but to take the seat prepared for her in the inmost chamber. 38

36 Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 221-222.

37 Idem, "The Union of Cultures", in The Modern Review, Vol. 30, No. 5, issue of November, 1921, p. 542.

38 Idem, Ibid., p. 542.

A decade after the two above quoted statements of his aspirations were made, Tagore was able to write with a certain amount of confidence and satisfaction about the truly international character of his institution as follows:

I represent in any institution an ideal of brotherhood, where men of different countries and different languages can come together. I believe in the spiritual unity of man and therefore I ask the world to accept this task from me. Unless it comes and says, "We also recognize this ideal", I shall know that this mission has failed. 39

In the foregoing pages an attempt was made to elucidate the nature of Visva-Bharati as Tagore conceived and expounded it. As a logical next step, it is relevant to explore the aims and objects he set down for his institution.

b) Aims and Objects.- It may be noted here that many of the aims and objects of Visva-Bharati are implicitly stated in the words of Tagore already quoted in the preceding section of this chapter. It is, however, possible to find several explicit statements as well from his pen on this topic. The most important of these will be considered in the pages that follow.

In keeping with the character of Visva-Bharati, as an Indian, Asian and International Cultural Centre, its aims and objects also may be considered under a three-fold aspect. But all these more general aims and objects have also to take into account certain personal aims of the individual man. Tagore's mind on this latter question is very clear from the following two statements:

39 Rabindranath Tagore, "My Educational Mission", in The Modern Review, Vol. 49, No. 6, issue of June, 1931, p. 623.

Its (Visva-Bharati's) aim should lie in imparting life-breath to the complete man, who is intellectual as well as economic, bound by social bonds, but aspiring towards spiritual freedom and final perfection. 40

Coupled with the above stated ideal of imparting life-breath to the complete man, Tagore had in mind another equally important aim. He has written about it as follows:

At first, I had founded the school in Santiniketan and invited children here with the purpose of liberating them in the wide field of Nature. But gradually it occurred to me that the formidable gulf that existed between man and man had to be removed and all men had to be released in the vast Universe of Man. This inner aspiration found expression in the history of the evolution of my institution. For, the institution that bore the name of Visva-Bharati was founded with this call that man had to be set free not only in the field of Nature but also among mankind. 41

Imparting life-breath to the complete man and setting him free in the universe of Man or mankind are aims that will affect every individual who will ever be associated with Visva-Bharati. Besides these basic aims directed towards every individual, Visva-Bharati had other national, continental and international aims. With regard to the national aim of his institution Tagore writes as follows:

It is my hope that in this school (Santiniketan) a nucleus has been formed, round which an indigenous University of our own land will find its natural growth - a University which will help India's mind to concentrate and to be fully conscious of itself; free to seek the truth and make this truth its own wherever found, to judge by its own standard, give expression to its own creative genius, and offer its wisdom to the guests who come from other parts of the world. 42

40 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 203.

41 Idem, as quoted in A. Biswas and J.C. Aggarwal, Op. cit., p. 143.

42 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 179.

While striving to fulfil the above-mentioned aims on a national level Tagore wanted his institution to transcend the national boundaries and to be a continental and global institution. About these wider aims and aspirations he has written very explicitly. Thus:

The aim of Visva-Bharati is to acknowledge the best ideal of the present age in the centre of her educational mission. The question therefore arises, what is the immediate step that she should take in order to fulfil her object. The first thing which must occupy our attention is to concentrate in this institution the different cultures of the East and West, especially those that have taken their birth in India, or found shelter in her house. India must fully know herself in order to make herself known to others.
... Our wealth is truly proved by our ability to give, and Visva-Bharati is to prove this on behalf of India. Our mission is to show that we also have a place in the heart of the great world; that we fully acknowledge our obligation of offering it our hospitality. 43

Tagore thus felt that he could acknowledge the best ideal of the modern age which is universalism by concentrating in his institution the different cultures of the East and the West, especially those that have taken their birth or found shelter in India. He hoped that his institution would in this manner promote mutual understanding between the East and the West. He writes:

I have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West. This institution, according to the plan I have in mind, will invite students from the West to study the different systems of Indian philosophy, literature, art and music in their proper environment, encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with the scholars already engaged in this task. 44

43 Rabindranath Tagore, "Visva-Bharati", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1, issue of April, 1923, p. 3.

44 Idem, Creative Unity, p. 173.

For the promotion of mutual understanding between the East and the West as envisioned by Tagore it was not only necessary that the West must come to the East but also that the East must go to the West. His views on this issue are very explicitly stated in an interview he gave to a representative of the Free Press of India. Thus:

I hope the movement of Visva-Bharati will help to bring India out from her spiritual and intellectual segregation into contact with the West. This is the one service I can render to my Motherland. We have to know that in the modern age the problems of each country are parts of the world-problem. No country to-day can live segregated. And until we Indians find our true place in this greater world we shall remain obscure and neglected, and there will be no chance of our real civilization asserting itself in our own life or making its contribution to the world progress. 45

In another part of the same interview he went a step further and asserted:

Through Visva-Bharati I endeavour to give expression to the truth of the indivisible entity of the human race. This institution is going to be my last gift to my country. I hope it will be accepted. I also hope India may have reason to be proud of the fact that this message of world-unity first took shape on her soil. It is this expression of truth and nothing more, the expression of faith in the ideal of human oneness and the divinity in man, that Visva-Bharati seeks to achieve. This is also the Truth which the great utterances of our Upanishads preach and it is the special spiritual mission of India to give expression to this Truth by precept and practice and to secure its acceptance by the whole world. This is the voice of India and the voice of Truth. 46

45 Rabindranath Tagore, "Rabindranath's Last Tour: Interview by the Free Press of India", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 2, issue of July, 1925, p. 185.

46 Idem, Ibid., p. 186-187.

It would appear from the above statement that the most important aim of Visva-Bharati was to give expression to the truth of the indivisibility of human race or the oneness of mankind.

All the aims and objects of Visva-Bharati as discussed in the foregoing few pages seem to be well summarized in its "Memorandum of Association" the relevant section of which is quoted below:

Objects:

To study the Mind of Man in its realisation of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view.

To bring into more intimate relation with one another, through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity.

To approach the West from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia.

To seek to realise in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres.

And with such ideals in view to provide at Santiniketan aforesaid a Centre of Culture where research into and study of the religion, literature, history, science and art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and other civilisations may be pursued along with the culture of the West, with that simplicity in externals which is necessary for true spiritual realisation, in amity, good-fellowship and co-operation between the thinkers and scholars of both Eastern and Western countries, free from all antagonisms of race, nationality, creed or caste, and in the name of the One Supreme Being who is Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam. 47

It may be pointed out here that while there is no evidence to show that the "Memorandum of Association" of the Visva-Bharati was actually

47 "Visva-Bharati Memorandum of Association", as reproduced on the inside front cover of Visva-Bharati: A Brief Survey of Its Activities in all Its Departments, Santiniketan, 1950.

drafted by Rabindranath Tagore, - probably, it was mainly the work of Surendranath Tagore and Prasantachandra Mahalanobis ⁴⁸ - it is only reasonable to assume that it expresses the mind of Rabindranath Tagore. Such an important official document could not have been published without his approval. Another paragraph of the same document pertaining to the membership of the Visva-Bharati again points to the universal character of this institution. The relevant passage reads as follows:

The membership of the Visva-Bharati and of its Constituent Bodies shall be open to all persons irrespective of sex, nationality, race, creed, caste or class; and no test or condition shall be imposed as to religious belief or profession, in admitting members, students, teachers, workers, or in any other connection whatsoever. ⁴⁹

At this point it will be of some interest to make an enquiry into the means proposed by Tagore for the realization of the aims and objects he set down for his international institution. The following section is devoted to this task.

c) Programmes.- The following passage is a succinct but comprehensive statement from the pen of Tagore with regard to the proposed programmes of activities for Visva-Bharati.

... in our centre of Indian learning, we must provide for the co-ordinate study of all these different cultures -, the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and Zoroastrian. The Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan will also have to be added; for, in the past, India did not

⁴⁸ See Visva-Bharati and its institutions, rev. ed., Santiniketan, 1961, p. 43.

⁴⁹ "Visva-Bharati Memorandum of Association", as reproduced on the inside front cover of Visva-Bharati: A Brief Survey of Its Activities in all Its Departments, Santiniketan, 1950.

remain isolated within her own boundaries. Therefore, in order to learn what she was, in her relation to the whole continent of Asia, these cultures too must be studied. Side by side with them must finally be placed the Western culture. For only then shall we be able to assimilate this last contribution to our common stock. 50

The cosmopolitanism and universal outlook of Tagore once again stand out distinctly in the above quoted statement of his. He wanted to incorporate into the programme of studies at Visva-Bharati, where the world makes its home in a single nest, all the main cultural heritages of India, Asia, and the West emanating from all the major religious traditions of the world. Besides these very inclusive cultural studies in the classical tradition, he also wanted his institution to undertake modern literary studies. Thus:

It is needless to add that, along with the languages in which lies stored our ancestral wealth of wisdom, we must make room for the study of all the languages which carry the living stream of the mind of modern India. Along with this study of our living languages, we must include our folk literature in order truly to know the psychology of our people and the direction towards which our underground current of life is moving. 51

The modern languages and folk literature are, thus, for Tagore, not mere means of communication, but the vehicles of living culture of the people. Be that as it may, he would still not be quite satisfied and would not stop short at this point. He wanted the cultural education provided in his institution to be as broad as possible. On this account he laid great emphasis on aesthetic education in its various aspects. Thus:

50 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 195; Also, with some variation in Towards Universal Man, p. 224.

51 Idem, Towards Universal Man, p. 224.

Constriction of life, owing to this narrowness of culture, must no longer be encouraged. In the centre of Indian culture (Visva-Bharati) which I am proposing, music and art must have their prominent seats of honour, and not be given merely a tolerant nod of recognition. The different systems of music and different schools of art which lie scattered in the different ages and provinces of India, and in different strata of society, and also those belonging to the other great countries of Asia, which had communication with India, have to be brought there together and studied. 52

Tagore's view of Visva-Bharati as a centre of the economic life of India and the appropriate activities he suggested for achieving that goal were discussed in a few pages earlier. 53

One last point to be considered among the programme of activities at Visva-Bharati is the status of the teaching of religion. Tagore himself thought that this was a very delicate matter for discussion let alone for implementation. In a country like India where all the major religions of the world have found their home, the question has an added poignancy. It appears to the present writer that Tagore tackled this problem as masterfully as anybody else could. He readily accepted the fact that religious pluralism in the modern world is due to historical causes. He recognized that there would always be many who, by tradition and temperament, would find solace in belonging to a particular religion. The possibility of honest differences always existed. With these ideas as a backdrop Tagore tried to answer a question which he himself posed as to what must be the religious teaching to be given at Visva-Bharati, in the following words:

52 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 199. An abridged version of this passage is also found in Towards Universal Man, p. 226.

53 See pages 179-180.

Allowing for the possibility of squabbles, can there be no wide meeting place, where all sects gather together and forget their differences? Has India, in her religious ideals, no space for the common light of day and open air for all humanity?... when I look back to India's culture -- in those ages when it flourished in its truth -- I am emboldened to assert that it is there. Our forefathers did spread a single carpet on which all the world was cordially invited to take its seat in amity and good fellowship. No quarrel could have arisen there; for He, in whose name the invitation went forth, for all time to come, was Santam, Sivam, Advaitam -- the Peaceful, in the heart of all conflicts; the God, who is revealed through all losses and sufferings; the One, in all diversities of creation. And in His name was this eternal truth declared in ancient India:

He alone sees, who sees all beings as himself. 54

Tagore, thus, hoped that Visva-Bharati would be a meeting place for people of all religions where religious ideals acceptable to all of mankind could be taught and practised in amity and good fellowship.

Eminent people from various walks of life have commented on Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati in their writings. Quotations from such writings would make quite interesting and worthwhile reading. But since the purpose of the present chapter was to set down Tagore's own thoughts on higher education with reference to Visva-Bharati, presentation of such external testimonies will be kept to a minimum. A single quotation from Helen Keller may be considered as representative of the rest. An open letter from her addressed to Tagore reads in part as follows:

Your school at Visva-Bharati is a bright pledge of a nobler civilization; for it is a meeting-ground of the East and the West. There you teach in object-lessons of sympathy and good-will that the true happiness of individuals and nations is identified with the highest good of

mankind. When this supreme truth is grasped, the dream of all the greatest teachers spoken through the ages shall be fulfilled; 'Wars will be dead; hatred will be dead, boundaries will be dead; dogmas will be dead; man will live, he will possess something greater than all these ... the whole of earth for his country and the whole of Heaven for his hope' 55

The foregoing words of Helen Keller seem to sum up admirably some of the main ideas discussed in this chapter and may, thus, serve as a fitting conclusion to the same.

55 Hellen (sic) Keller, "Open Letter", in Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 122.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken in an attempt to explore the range and depth of the multifaceted vision and manifestation of the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore in the light of his philosophy of life which appeared to have been permeated with the ideals of universalism. It was felt that a systematic exposition and logical synthesis of his educational thought which has universal validity would not only make a contribution to the theory of education but also lead to a better understanding and mutual appreciation of the cultural values of the Orient and the Occident.

The first two chapters made an attempt to present a careful and systematic exposition of the philosophy of life of Tagore. It was felt that the result of such an exploration would enable one to determine the extent to which the roots of his universalism could be traced to his philosophical position and at the same time could form the foundation for the investigation that was to follow. Chapter one was devoted to an exposition of his thoughts on metaphysics and religion; chapter two, to a discussion of his ideas on ethics and aesthetics.

Tagore's views on metaphysics were treated under three headings: ultimate reality or God; individual self or man; and the phenomenal world

or the universe. It was found that Tagore did not come to the knowledge of God through any kind of ratiocination but through a direct vision as well as intuition. Perhaps, on account of this personal experience, he felt that mere intellectual knowledge of God was not quite adequate; God had to be known and realised through love. Tagore's God is a personal God whose highest manifestation is in love and joy, and love being the bond of union man could become God-like by perfect love and absolute self-surrender. God, who is immortal bliss, assumed a dual form making the human soul His other self. Man, however, is not God. The human soul derived its meaning from the manifestation of the Infinite. It was a form of God's eternal joy and was destined to be united with Him one day. The concept of man, to be true, had to be comprehensive. Man in reality was a spiritual being endowed with immortality and he attained his fulfilment by his union with the Infinite through love. Tagore believed in a close kinship between man and nature but not in any identification of the two entities. The spiritual unity of man and nature was found to be a key concept with him.

Religion constituted the warp and woof of Tagore's life. It was not a part of his traditional cultural inheritance but the result of a process of growth and evolution in his religious awareness. Beginning from what was purely a personal faith, his religion gradually evolved into a poet's religion and later into a religion of Man. He was constantly conscious of the indwelling presence of the eternal spirit of human unity in the heart of humanity. Comprehensiveness may be said to be the ideal

of his religion. He held the view that man became truly religious by co-operating with the Supreme Spirit through love and self-surrender.

Just as in metaphysics and religion, so also in ethics and aesthetics, harmony, balance, and comprehensiveness were the hallmarks of Tagore's thought. He held the view that goodness is the foundation of man's ethics and moral law, the greatest discovery of man. Only through goodness could one seek union with the Infinite, the goal of human life. According to the diagnosis of Tagore aggressive imperialism and monopolistic capitalism were at the root of all political antagonisms. Such political ideologies dehumanized man by transforming him from being a moral being into a mechanical product. Moral and spiritual freedom should form the basis of human life. Whenever material power outstripped moral strength, life's equilibrium was disturbed and resulted in disharmony and chaos. Tagore made fervent appeals to men of goodwill and idealism both in the East and in the West to rally under the universal flag of human solidarity and brotherhood, but he rightly felt that the East-West meeting to be fruitful and lasting had to be based upon certain spiritual ideals. In his opinion the East and the West were complementary to each other and he hoped to find a basis for the eventual union of the East and the West in the two prophecies of love and peace contained in the teachings of Buddhism and Christianity respectively. His advocacy of the spiritual unity of mankind was the logical outcome and culmination of his thinking on the question of the East-West entente. Spiritual unity of mankind was for Tagore a moral and spiritual concept

derived from his idea of the Supreme Being as the One. The universal spiritual kinship of man could be discerned by all whose inner vision is not clouded by prejudice. Tagore could detect a divine unity at the foundation of all great civilizations of the world. It was futile to think that human unity could be brought about through political or economic alliances. Only the spiritual unity of mankind could usher in an era of peace. He was firmly convinced that in the family of God there were no aliens.

Aesthetics occupied an honourable niche in the philosophical edifice of Tagore. He was a firm believer in the fundamental unity of all creation. Harmony was one of the key concepts in his thinking in the area of aesthetics. So also was the idea of personality as distinguished from mere intellectualism. He was convinced that it was the organic man or person who had the gift of creativity. The world of reality belonged to the domain of Art and Tagore defined Art as the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real. The principal purpose of Art was not the production of beauty but the creation of man's true world and its truth was to be sought not in substance or logic but in expression. Beauty in Art was only an instrument and not its ultimate significance. There was beauty in nature as well as in Art and the sense of beauty enabled man to recognize harmony in common objects as well as in the universe. His consciousness of harmony in his own soul led him to the Infinite. While it was quite legitimate for any artist to seek individual expression, he should not become individualistic but should find, feel, and

represent in all his creative works 'Man the Eternal' who is really the creator.

The systematic investigation of the philosophical ideas of Tagore carried out in chapters one and two - a summary of which is given in the preceding few paragraphs - led the present writer to the conclusion that Tagore's philosophy of life is permeated with the ideals of universalism as defined in the "Introduction" to this report to such an extent that it would not be inaccurate to designate it as universalism itself.

The close affinity that exists between one's philosophy of life and one's philosophy of education was accepted as an axiom in the pursuit of the present study. The main task the present investigator had to contend with was to conduct an enquiry into the degree and extent of the relationship that existed between Tagore's philosophy of life and his philosophy of education or stated differently, to find out the extent to which his philosophy of life - universalism - was reflected in his philosophy of education. The most rational way to carry out such an investigation was to attempt a systematic study of his educational thought as recorded in his published works and as embodied in the educational institutions he founded.

Chapter three attempted to set out Tagore's thought on general education in as systematic a manner as possible within the conceptual framework of the following five topics: the nature, function and aims of education; the educand and his education; the curriculum; the method; and the agencies.

Tagore envisioned education as nothing short of the highest purpose

of man, namely, the fullest growth and freedom of soul which required a lifetime of effort to achieve. The highest education was that which made one's life in harmony with all existence. It was the function of education to facilitate the development of man as an individual, as a social being and as a spiritual being. Among the several important aims of education were emancipation of the soul, bestowing of freedom, realization of the inner principle of unity of all knowledge and the realization of the unity of mankind.

Children were God's own creation. Since they were in love with life it was natural and easy for them to enter into communion with nature and life. The child's subconscious mind was more active than his conscious intelligence and nature was his greatest teacher. He should enjoy as much freedom as possible and the essence of freedom consisted of love. Educating a child was a highly creative activity which required a great deal of patience, tolerance and tact on the part of teachers. Discipline should emanate from internal motivation. Since there existed a close and inseparable link between the body and the mind, there should be an equally intimate bond between physical and intellectual education besides having a proper balance among the manifold mental pursuits themselves. The religious spirit or spirituality which was the truth of one's complete being must be acquired by living and growing up in an atmosphere of piety rather than by the mere acquisition of religious knowledge through instruction. The same principle was equally valid as applied to morality and moral instruction as well. One of the greatest deficiencies of modern education was the lack of emphasis on aesthetic education. It was incumbent on every human being to master, at least to some

extent, not only the language of intellect, but also that personality, which is the language of Art. The ultimate aim of aesthetic education was not mere enjoyment but to enable the child to see the beautiful, to realize the sublime and love the loveable.

The most important factor in education was an atmosphere of creativity. Education should be in constant touch with man's complete life, namely, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social, and spiritual. Science should find an important place among the subjects taught in the school. The secret of success and happiness in this world consisted of finding the golden mean between science and spirituality. The most urgent need of the present age was to find ways and means to effect a fusion between the finest values of the East and the West. The teaching of history should be approached from a universal standpoint. Since language was the key that opened the door to a culture, provision for the teaching of as many languages as possible should be made in the school curriculum.

An atmosphere of culture should take precedence over any formal method of teaching. In the early period at least, a child should receive his education directly through persons and things. Nature was the greatest of all teachers and therefore children should be surrounded with things of nature. Real education was possible only through a "living teacher" and not through any artificial method. Punishment and discipline imposed from outside were negative and thus worse than useless. On the contrary, an atmosphere of freedom and trust was congenial and conducive to the cultivation of the habits of self-discipline and co-operation. Eliciting the interest of the pupils in a subject was just as important as making

provision for that subject in the curriculum. They should be given plenty of opportunity to think for themselves and use their imagination. Union of one's language with one's thought and one's education with one's life was a necessity. Therefore, the mother tongue of the child was the best medium for his instruction. It was futile to borrow the language of one's culture from a foreign country and to allow the running stream of one's own language to become shallow and stagnant. Frugality and plain living were educationally valuable; so were educational tours.

Parents who are often driven by economic and social ambition were not the best agents of education. A guru leading a selfless life would be a much suitable person to fill that rôle. Nature was, without a doubt, one of the best educators especially for imparting the unconscious kind of learning that took place. A teacher, to be a genuine agent of education, had to be a guru - a moral and spiritual preceptor of exemplary life. While teachers could be important agents of education, the schools also had a similar rôle to play.

The educational ideas of Tagore discussed in chapter three found their concrete expression and institutional form in the two schools he founded, the one at Santiniketan in 1901 and the other at Sriniketan in 1922. It was the task of chapter four to outline the ideals which are embodied in these twin institutions. Education imparted at Santiniketan and Sriniketan was meant to be a preparation for the complete life of their students. The general atmosphere of these institutions was as important as the classroom teaching itself. A climate of freedom prevailed in their

organization and administration. There was close contact between the teachers and students and harmonious union of their spirits with nature. The ideal of the spiritual unity of mankind and sympathy for all sections of humanity derived from such an ideal were fostered and cherished. In Tagore's view Santiniketan, the abode of peace, as an international cultural centre belonged to the whole world.

Santiniketan was based upon the philosophy that education should be in constant touch with the complete life of the people - economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual, that schools should be at the very heart of society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operation; that true education consisted of realizing at every step how one's training and knowledge had an organic connection with one's environment.

The final chapter of the study was concerned with an enquiry into Tagore's ideals of higher education and their fruition in the form of an International University. The first section of the chapter dealt with the origins of his ideals pertaining to higher education and the second section was devoted to an exposition of the ideals of Visva-Bharati, his International University.

Tagore was convinced that it was imperative for mankind to realize a unity which was wider in range, deeper in sentiment, and stronger in power than ever before. It was the deadly passion for self-aggrandizement that made people averse to international unity. How to free humanity from the

clutches of arrogant nationalism was, therefore, the chief lesson to be learned. The dawn of internationalism was near at hand and we would be unfit for that era if we retained any manners, customs or habits of thought that were contrary to universalism. Education had to be shaped in harmony with the spirit of this new age; it should promote the ideals of human unity and brotherhood. We must respect all real differences in man, yet remain conscious of our oneness; perfection of unity was not in uniformity but in harmony. Intellectual co-operation was destined to be the key-note of the coming age. A University was one of the best meeting-grounds for diverse peoples with no conflicting interests. It would also be the trysting-place as well as the guest house of the East and the West. As an open house of culture its rôle would be the pursuit of truth and the imparting of truth, but it would also keep in touch with the complete life of the people it served.

The philosophical and educational thoughts of Tagore appear in their full glory and splendour in the ideals he enshrined in the International University - Visva-Bharati - which he formally inaugurated in 1921. This institution, according to the concept of Tagore, had a three-fold aspect as a Centre of Indian Culture, as a Centre of Asian Culture, and as a Centre of International Culture. Visva-Bharati had to be the centre of the intellectual as well as the economic life of India. Before Asia could begin co-operating with the culture of the West, she should base her own culture on a synthesis of all the different cultures she possessed. Visva-Bharati would participate in this stupendous task of cultural synthesis.

It would, thus, reveal the Eastern mind to the rest of the world. Be that as it may, Visva-Bharati was above everything else, a centre of international culture. The ideal of the spiritual unity of mankind was one of its corner-stones. It was to be a meeting ground of the East and the West as well as an international centre for the cultivation of Truth. In keeping with its three-fold character, it had national, regional, and global aims - the last one dominating the other two. By concentrating in it the different cultures of the East and the West, the best ideals of universalism could be acknowledged. Visva-Bharati could, thus, express in concrete terms the truth of the indivisibility of the human race. Its aims and objects could be seen best expressed in its official "Memorandum of Association". In the programme of studies at Visva-Bharati, where the world made its home in a single nest, all the main cultural heritages of India, Asia, and the West were to be incorporated. At the same time, modern literary, aesthetic and scientific studies were not to be neglected. Being a meeting place for people of all religions, Visva-Bharati would teach and practise, in amity and good fellowship, religious ideals acceptable to all its community of scholars.

The results of the careful and thorough exploration and exposition of the educational thought of Tagore, as reported in chapters three, four, and five and summarized in the preceding few pages, clearly indicate that there is an intimate interrelationship between his philosophy of life and his philosophy of education and that just like the former, the latter too is permeated with the ideals of universalism.

It is almost a truism to state that for a proper understanding and appreciation of the mind and thought of any great thinker or writer, one has to study him in the perspective of his life's setting. Tagore's case was no exception to this generally accepted principle. The first appendix of this study, therefore, attempts to sketch the broad outlines and to spotlight the salient features of the social, political, cultural and religious milieu into which he was born as well as his unique family background which had such an important influence in his life. Tagore was born into a highly artistic and cultured family in a remarkable period of the history of India both of which provided a congenial but challenging setting for the blossoming of his many-splendoured genius.

Appendix two provides a brief biographical sketch of Tagore. Within the short space of about forty pages an effort has been made to portray his life and work spanning a period of full four score years. He had a rather lonely childhood dominated by domestic servants and devoid of much parental affection and tenderness, but the highly sensitive and introvert lad had a free spirit within, which could dwell in realms of its own. He found the formal schooling made available to him uninteresting and sometimes even beyond sufferance. On the other hand he enjoyed and profited from his contacts with some of his close relatives. In early manhood he had ample opportunities for gaining first-hand and intimate knowledge not only of urban life but also of rural life, a knowledge which he fully utilized in his literary creations as well as in his social and educational work. From his youth till the end of his eventful life, literary works of all kinds kept flowing from his prolific pen like a never drying fountain. At the mature age of fifty-two he

received international recognition for his literary genius by winning the Nobel Prize for literature. Literary pursuits were, however, but one aspect of his multifaceted personality. He had a wideranging interest in almost all aspects of life and culture. Many of his contemporaries, especially in the West, held him in high esteem not only as a poet but also as a philosopher and prophet. He was a thinker of considerable originality; he not only enunciated new social and educational ideas but also worked them out through the three well-known educational institutions he founded. He also found time to participate actively in many of the national as well as international causes and movements of his day. He was one of the best-travelled men of his generation. Kings and commoners as well as philosophers and peasants of many lands thought it a privilege to have met him. He lectured at Harvard and Oxford; wherever he went he preached the gospel of harmony, peace and goodwill. Thus, the picture that emerges from a study of his life and work is that of a truly universal man, who in the versatility of his genius, the largeness of his sympathies, and the comprehensiveness of his world view had very few peers.

That the pen picture of Tagore portrayed in appendix two is not a distorted or an exaggerated one receives further affirmation and attestation through the documentation provided in the third appendix. This appendix records the published testimonies of a number of eminent contemporaries of Tagore from many parts of the world who had been almost unanimous in their considered opinion that Tagore was one of the most complete, encompassing and universal of human beings who ever lived.

From the present study, thus, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Rabindranath Tagore was born into a highly artistic and cultured family in a remarkable period of the history of India which provided a congenial but challenging setting for the exercise of his many-splendoured genius.

The comprehensiveness and versatility of his mind, the range of his creative faculties, the abundance of his creative output, the largeness of his sympathies and above all, the breadth and depth of his all-encompassing worldview entitle him to be called a universal man - a fact, significantly enough, recognized by many of his eminent contemporaries.

The world-embracing universalism of Tagore emanated from his philosophy of life.

His philosophy of life is so saturated with the ideals of universalism that it would not be inaccurate to designate it as universalism itself.

There is an intimate interrelationship between his philosophy of life and his philosophy of education; just like the former, the latter too is permeated with the ideals of universalism.

At this point the present writer would like to make a few suggestions for possible future research related to the study just completed. In this investigation it was not possible to treat exhaustively all the dimensions of such a vast subject. It was primarily concerned with a straightforward exposition of the main features of Tagore's educational thought in the light of his philosophy of life. There was no attempt at comparisons with other thinkers or any effort in the direction of a critical evaluation, though such exercises would have had their own

usefulness. Nobody could claim that all the philosophical or educational thought of Tagore has permanent value or significance. Be that as it may, a great deal of his thought in these two areas seems to have contemporary relevance. Tagore in his constant striving towards universality pointed the way towards the solution of some of the most pressing problems of our age. There is ample scope for a detailed study of his proposals for solving some of these problems, especially in the realms of education, ethics and culture.

Tagore, as the harbinger of a world embracing new humanism and the herald of a new era of universal humanity, anticipated by several decades many of the platforms and programmes put forward by the United Nations Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization during the past two decades. An enquiry could be conducted to determine whether or not UNESCO owes anything to Tagore and if so, to what extent.

A comparative study of Tagore as a philosopher and educator, with, say, Leo Tolstoy or Hermann Keyserling or Paul Geheeb or Sri Aurobindo would be another interesting and worthwhile academic exercise.

A study of the extent of the indebtedness of the Community Development Programme of the Government of India as well as that of the Rural Institutes of India to Tagore's pioneering Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan is another project that could be taken up by any interested researcher in rural education.

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Prose translations by the author of a selection of poems from some of his Bengali works. The book contains many lyrics of love and life imbued with Tagore's religious and philosophical ideas. A total of 85 poems.

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A collection of essays and lectures. Contents: The Relation of the Individual to the Universe; Soul Consciousness; The Problem of Evil; The Problem of Self; Realisation in Love; Realisation in Action; The Realisation of Beauty; The Realisation of the Infinite. Most of these papers were read before the Harvard University and later on in London. As Tagore makes it clear in his preface to the book, most of the essays in it have been adapted and translated from several of his Bengali discourses delivered at Shantiniketan in previous years. Many consider it as the chief philosophic work of Tagore in English.

-----, The Crescent Moon, London, Macmillan, 1913, (New York, Macmillan, Reprint April, 1914), xii-82 p.

A collection of poems about children, with a unique flavour. Translated by the author himself mostly from his Bengali book of poems, Sisu. Apart from the exquisite poetry the book contains, the reading of it may help the adult to understand the wonderland of the child's mind.

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English translations of a selection of poems, LXXXVI in all, from Gitimalya, Gitali, Balaka, etc. containing many philosophical ideas.

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English translation by Surendranath Tagore of Rabindranath Tagore's autobiography in Bengali entitled Jivansmriti published for the first time in 1912. As the translator remarks in his preface, "In these memory pictures, so lightly, even casually presented by the author, there is, nevertheless, revealed a connected history of his inner life, together with that of the varying literary forms in which his growing self found successive expression, up to the point at which both his soul and poetry attained maturity". Though the work is not a complete autobiography in the usual sense but only a series of reminiscences, yet, coming as it does directly from the pen of Tagore, is a valuable document.

-----, Nationalism, London, Macmillan, 1917, 135 p.

This book was published after Tagore's 1916-17 tour of Japan and the United States of America and contains some of the lectures he delivered on this visit. They are entitled: Nationalism in the West; Nationalism in Japan; and Nationalism in India. They were written during his stay in Japan and were a direct outcome of his disapproval of the excesses in the name of nationalism he saw all around him in that country. Tagore regarded nationalism as a characteristic product of European history and civilisation and he held it responsible for many of the ills of our age such as fratricidal wars and aggressive imperialist expansionism. His basic assumption in this book is that nationalism and imperialism are synonymous, a view with which many may not fully agree. Tagore apparently did not properly distinguish the two terms "nation" and "state". His attack in the book is plainly aimed not at nationalism itself but at the aggressive and expansionist imperialism.

-----, Personality, London, Macmillan, 1917, (Reprint 1970), 184 p.

Another collection of lectures which Tagore delivered in the United States of America during his 1916-17 tour of that country. Contents: What is Art?; The World of Personality; The Second Birth;

My School; Meditation; Woman. In this book one comes across the underlying idea of the "personal element" in Reality and also in Art and Ethics, which Tagore later developed in many of his poems and plays. Though lacking thematic consistency, the work embodies some of Tagore's profound reflections on art, education, religious philosophy and the divine potential in the human personality.

-----, Creative Unity, London, Macmillan, 1922, (Reprint 1962), vii-203 p.

A volume of essays and lectures. Contents: The Poet's Religion; The Creative Ideal; The Religion of the Forest; An Indian Folk Religion; East and West; The Modern Age; The Spirit of Freedom; The Nation; Woman and Home; An Eastern University. Obviously this book does not deal with a single theme. In it Tagore has re-emphasized some of his aesthetic views and has extended his concept of creativity from the human imagination to Reality as a whole. His favourite theme of "reconciling" the Infinite with the finite finds expression here. He also pleads for a synthesis of Eastern and Western thought and renews his warning about the danger of dogmatizing in philosophy.

-----, Talks in China, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1925.

A collection of Addresses. Contents: Autobiographical; To My Hosts; To Students; To Teachers; Leave Taking; Civilisation and Progress; Satyam. These lectures exemplify with what understanding and sympathy he approached the Chinese mind. He was personal, reminiscent and friendly, and though he was as usual blunt and forthright in his opposition to war and national rivalries, was able to disarm most of the hostile criticism and to win over many of the progressive intellectuals of China to his side.

-----, Lectures and Addresses, selected from the Speeches of the Poet by Anthony X. Soares, London, Macmillan, 1928. (Indian edition, Reprint 1970), x-160 p.

Four out of the nine papers in this collection are extracted from Tagore's Sadhana, Personality and Nationalism. Out of the remaining five, "My Life" and "Civilization and Progress" are from his Talks in China. "Construction versus Creation" in an address he delivered at the Gujarati Literary Conference. "International Relations", a lecture delivered in Japan and "The Voice of Humanity", an address given in Milan. The compiler's attempt to present to the reader a coherent account of Tagore's life, thought, convictions and ideals in his own words appears to be a success.

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This volume consists of letters written by Tagore during the years 1913-1922 to one of his best friends, C.F. Andrews. It is actually a revised and enlarged edition of Letters from Abroad which was published in 1924, consisting of letters relating to Tagore's 1920-21 trip abroad. In preparing the later volume Andrews added letters dating back to 1913, arranged the Selection in chapters interspersed with explanatory comment, and prefaced the material with two introductory essays. From these letters one is able to gather intimate glimpses of Tagore which is not possible otherwise. In these personal letters one finds him very downright and candid in expressing opinions. The letters from July 1920 onward, which cover half the book, reveal Tagore's mind on Indian affairs more clearly than in most of his English essays on political subjects.

-----, The Religion of Man, London, Allen & Unwin, 1931, (Unwin Books edition 1961), 128 p.

This book is based upon lectures delivered by the author at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1930, under the auspices of the Hibbert Trust. In this book Tagore seems to have summed up his entire philosophy as well as religion. As he himself states, "The idea of the humanity of God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal, is the main subject of this book". Ideas and doctrines taken from or inspired by the Upanishads, Vaishnavism, Biology, Mysticism and Psychology are enunciated here in a highly individualistic, poetic, Tagorean style. Besides giving his own world view, Tagore endeavours here to relate his views about personality with his theory of the Absolute. Speaking as a poet and philosopher he says that man must always be a music-maker and a dreamer of dreams without losing in his material quests, his longing for the touch of the divine. An all-inclusive humanism of an elevated nature pervades the whole book which is one of the most important philosophical works of Tagore in English.

-----, Man, Waltair, Andhra University, 1937.

The book contains three lectures which Tagore delivered at Andhra University, Waltair, in December 1933, under the sponsorship of Sir Krishnaswami Aiyer endowment.

Tagore, Rabindranath, My Boyhood Days, trans. Marjorie Sykes, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1940, (Reprint, 1968), 77 p.

The Bengali original of this autobiographical work is entitled Chhelebelā and was written just a year before Tagore's death in 1941. It is a sequence of memories covering the period from Tagore's earliest recollections to his first trip abroad in 1878. The English translation by Marjorie Sykes was serialized in The Visvabharati-Quarterly for August and November, 1940 and a month later published in book form.

-----, Crisis in Civilization, Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1941.

The Bengali original of this Address is entitled Sabhyatar Sankat and was read in the presence of Tagore, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday anniversary on April 14, 1941, at Santiniketan. It contains Tagore's last public utterance and his testament of faith. Somewhat critical in tone, Tagore seems to have been disillusioned with Western civilization towards the end of his life, a period when the Second World War was raging with fury. Tagore, however, did not give up his faith in Man. He ended his address on an optimistic and hopeful note. An English translation of this address was published as a booklet in May 1941 and is included as the last essay in the well known publication, Towards Universal Man.

-----, A Tagore Testament, trans. Indu Dutt, London, Meridian Books 1953. (1st Jaico Impression, Bombay, Jaico Publishing House, 1969), xiv-123 p.

The Bengali original of this book is entitled Atmaparichay and was published in 1943. It contains six autobiographical essays by Tagore collected from the various contemporary periodicals. This work of compilation was done by Pulin Behari Sen. The English translation is by Indu Dutt. In addition to the essays the book contains some poems of Tagore selected by the translator to introduce the essays and some useful notes.

-----, Letters from Russia, trans. Sasadhar Sinha, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1960, 222 p.

The Bengali original of this book published in 1931, is entitled Russiar Chithi. Rabindranath Tagore's letters on Russia, fourteen in all, written during the course of his visit to Russia in 1930, are a running commentary on men and affairs, vividly topical

and full of descriptive details of the Soviet Russian scene at that time. The English translation of the book by Sasadhar Sinha contains, besides Tagore's letters, seven appendices, occupying almost half the length of the book. These appendices give an account of Tagore's tour of Russia, based on notes kept by Amiya Chakravarty and other members of Tagore's party.

-----, Towards Universal Man, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1961, (Reprint 1967), xi-387 p.

A carefully chosen selection of some of the best essays of Tagore on social, economic, political and educational topics prepared by the Tagore Commemorative Volume Society, New Delhi, and published simultaneously in India, the United Kingdom and the United States of America on the occasion of the Centenary of the birth of Tagore on May 7, 1961. The book consists of eighteen essays by Tagore rendered into admirable English by scholarly hands and an Introduction specially contributed by the late Humayun Kabir. Besides five appendices which are all lists of collaborators in the publication of the work, there is a section of very interesting and useful "Notes" contributed by Kshitish Roy. Out of the eighteen essays, the following seven were found to be most relevant and useful for the present investigation: "The Vicissitudes of Education"; "The Problem of Education"; "East and West"; "Hindu University"; "The Centre of Indian Culture"; "The Unity of Education"; "A Poet's School". Found very useful for the present investigation.

Chakravarty, Amiya, ed., A Tagore Reader, New York, Macmillan, 1961, (Paperback, Boston, Beacon Press, 1966), xiii-401 p.

This book has been accepted in the Indian Translation Series of the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. As the editor, who is himself a poet and writer and whose personal knowledge of Tagore is almost unrivalled, states in his "Introduction", "This anthology is intended to offer a fairly comprehensive view of Tagore's contribution to our times...". True to the task he set out for himself, the editor has tried his utmost to provide a truly representative selection of the creative writings of Tagore in his own words within the limitations imposed by considerations of high quality and availability of space. The selections appear under the following twelve headings: Travel; Letters; Short Stories; Autobiographical; Conversations; Fables; Drama; On India; On Education; Art and Literary Criticism; Philosophical Meditations; and Poetry. Besides a general "Introduction", the editor has provided an individual introduction to

each of the twelve sections which is both very illuminating and interesting. The scholarly "Notes" and the "Glossary" which constitute the last part of the work are valuable as well as useful. For the present investigation, the most relevant and useful sections were found to be the ones "On Education" and "Philosophical Meditations".

Ghose, Sisirkumar, ed., Tagore for you, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1966, xvi-179 p.

An anthology of essays and addresses, parables, letters and poems which will give a reasonably fair idea of Tagore, the poet and the thinker. The book does not claim to provide a representative selection from the writings of Tagore in its rather restricted confines.

Murray, Gilbert and Tagore, Rabindranath, East and West, Paris, International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations, 1935, 67 p.

Number four in an international series of Open Letters. Professor Gilbert Murray, the great British classical scholar, was instrumental in the establishment of the Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. In a frank and forthright letter dated August 17, 1934, Murray appealed to Tagore as a representative of the East for his cooperation to bring about the intellectual and cultural union of the East and the West. In a three-part letter dated September 16, 1934, Tagore responded warmly and candidly to Professor Murray's open invitation. He touches upon topics such as Science, Religion, Nationalism, East-West relation and Education in this letter.

Tagore, Rabindranath and Elmhirst, L.K., Rabindranath Tagore: Pioneer in Education, London, John Murray, (Distributor), 1961, 111 p.

The writings and discourses of Tagore included in this book of essays and exchanges between him and Leonard Elmhirst are: A Poet's School; The Philosophical Approach to Sriniketan; The Parrot's Training; and The Art of Movement in Education. Besides the six letters from Tagore quoted in the text, some of his conversations with Elmhirst are reported in the latter's Preface to the book and in his essay 'The Foundation of Sriniketan'. Altogether a useful book in the context of the present research.

Tagore, Rabindranath, "The Union of Cultures", in The Modern Review, Vol. 30, No. 5, issue of November 1921, p. 533-542.

At the beginning of this essay Tagore makes a powerful plea for the cultivation of Science in India as in the West. Then he goes on to

caution his readers against onesided pursuit of Science which is detrimental to the development of human personality. He also castigates against nationalism which he characterizes as the collective egotism of the whole nation. He concludes the essay by expressing his earnest hope that his Visva-Bharati would become the meeting ground of the East and the West in cultural union.

-----, "Visva-Bharati", in the Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 1, issue of April 1923, p. 1-4.

The first part of this essay sets out the reasons for launching a new educational experiment not on the basis of nationalism but on a wider relationship of humanity. Following this the main aims of Visva-Bharati are clearly stated. He concludes the essay by stating that one's wealth is truly proved by one's ability to give and that it is the mission of Visva-Bharati to prove this on behalf of India.

-----, "The Schoolmaster", in The Modern Review, Vol. 36, No. 4, issue of October 1924, p. 369-373.

The contents of this essay was also delivered as a lecture to a Japanese audience. This essay perhaps contains one of the finest statements of Tagore in English on the child and his education. He makes a powerful plea for freedom in the growth and development of the child and concludes by saying that God is Creator and as children of God, teachers also have to be creators.

-----, "My School", in The Modern Review, Vol. 37, No. 5, issue of May 1925, p. 501-504.

This essay is based on a lecture Tagore delivered in China to an audience of teachers. In it Tagore traces the origin and development of his educational enterprises culminating in the founding of Visva-Bharati. A glimpse into the internal dynamism and operation of his educational institutions is provided in this article.

Tagore, Rabindranath, and the Free Press of India, "Rabindranath's Last Tour: Interview by the Free Press of India", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 2, issue of July 1925, p. 183-189.

In the interview recorded in this article Tagore responded freely and frankly to a wide range of questions pertaining to a variety of topics such as his recent Western tour, his mission to bring about cultural unity, East-West relations, Visva-Bharati, and India's materialism and social ills. Quite interesting as it provides an insight into the thinking of Tagore on these issues.

Tagore, Rabindranath, "Ideals of Education", in Visva-Bharati Bulletin, No. 14, November 1929, p. 69-73.

An address to the Concordia, Tokyo, Japan, which Tagore delivered on June 3, 1929. In it he expresses his faith in the efficacy of education which is one with life to give us real freedom and human dignity.

-----, "My Educational Mission", in The Modern Review, Vol. 49, No. 6, issue of June 1931, p. 621-623.

Though the title is different, the content of this essay is almost the same as that of "My School" noted above.

-----, "Religious Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, New Series, Vol. 1, Part 3, issue of November 1935, p. 1-10.

This is a well-written essay on the question of religious education which has contemporary relevance. Tagore sees the necessity and therefore wholeheartedly advocates the provision of religious education for the child. He, however, does not want religion to be taught like any other subject. He holds that the imbibing of religion should be as easy for children as breathing. As he puts it religion cannot be doled out in regulated measure, nor administered through the academic machinery of education. It must come immediate from the burning flame of spiritual life, in surroundings suitable for such life. An important and thought provoking statement on the topic of religious education from the pen of Tagore.

-----, "Thoughts on Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 12, Part 1, 1946, p. 19.

A reprint of some extracts from the writings of Tagore on Education.

-----, "Thoughts on Education", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October, 1947, p. 1-7.

"Thoughts on Education" is the first article in this issue of The Visva-Bharati Quarterly which is a special "Education Number". As a footnote to these selections comments, in the choice and arrangement of these extracts from Rabindranath Tagore's various writings on Education, the attempt has been to present them not as a collection of disjointed observations, but more or less as a sequence of thoughts. The greatest drawback of these extracts from a research point of view is that the exact original source from where each of them has been extracted is not indicated.

Tagore, Rabindranath, "Education for Rural India", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. 13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October 1947, p. 25-29.

An address delivered at the anniversary of the Rural Reconstruction Institute, Sriniketan in February, 1931. Translated by Sasadhar Sinha from the original Bengali. A plea for the uplift of the rural communities of India.

-----, "The Place of Music in Education and Culture", in The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol.13, Parts 1 & 2, issue of May-October 1947, p. 38-45.

This article is a translation by Indira Devi Chaudhuri from the original Bengali article of Tagore published in Bulletin I of Bengal Section of New Education Fellowship. Stresses the importance of aesthetic education in the total development of all human beings.

2. Authors Consulted

"Anon", Visva-Bharati: A Brief Survey of Its Activities in all Its Departments, Santiniketan Press, Santiniketan, 1950, 19 p.

An official publication giving a short description of the various "schools" and departments of Visva-Bharati located at Santiniketan.

-----, Visva-Bharati and its institutions, Rev. ed., Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1961, 63 p.

Another official publication of the Visva-Bharati tracing the growth and development of that institution and giving short descriptive accounts of its various departments and institutions, fifteen in all at the time of its publication. This well produced booklet also contains two well known essays of Tagore on "A Poet's School" and "An Eastern University". There are also some eight pages of excellent illustrations.

Aronson, Alex, Rabindranath Through Western Eyes, Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1943, xv-158 p.

This book, though an excellent document of scholarly research, is somewhat one-sided and suffers from the author's hatred of the Nazi régime. The bias of the author, who is of German and Jewish origin, is not unnatural. The study provides a rather partial analysis of the reactions in the foreign press to Tagore's sudden rise to fame and his later journeys to the West.

Baumer, Sybil, An Introduction to Tagore's Mysticism, London, H.R. Allenson, n.d.

The present writer has no direct acquaintance with this book. Read about it in other works.

Bhattacharya, Semanti, Tagore's Concept of Nationalism and Internationalism - A Historical and Critical Analysis, Doctoral Dissertation, New York, Columbia University, 1953, ii-186 p.

The main argument of this Dissertation is that with Tagore nationalism is a cultural, rather than a political concept. Nationalism of Tagore reveals its true cultural value when seen in the context of his internationalism. Chapter five of this Dissertation is devoted to the exposition Tagore's educational philosophy and shows how it is institutionalized in Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan.

Biswas, A. and Aggarwal, J.C., Seven Indian Educationists, New Delhi, Asha Prakashan Griha, 1968, ix-323 p.

The seven Indian educationists studied in this book are Dayanand, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan and Husain. Chapter four which is devoted to Tagore begins with a review of the major educational writings of Tagore. The remaining portion of the chapter consists of selected excerpts on education from the works of Tagore which was found to be the most valuable part for the present study. The main drawback of this section from a researcher's point of view is that the exact original sources of the excerpts are not given.

Chakravarty, Amiya C., "The Poet at Work", in Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, Calcutta, The Golden Book Committee, 1931, p. 45-50.

An excellent article by one of the closest associates of Tagore dealing mainly with Tagore's educational ideals and endeavours. It also gives a vivid description of the setting of Tagore's daily work, written from the vantage point of personal knowledge and observation. Outstanding in insights.

Chatterjee, Ramananda, ed., The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, Calcutta, The Golden Book Committee, 1931, xx-374 p.

The idea for this work was originally suggested by Romain Rolland and later on Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, M. Kotes Palamas and Jagadis Chandra Bose joined Rolland in sponsoring it. It contains the scholarly contributions, tributes, appreciations and greetings of some 213 eminent men and women from thirty-one countries. Most valuable primary source for chapter III of the present study.

Cornelius, John Jesudason, Rabindranath Tagore: India's Schoolmaster, Doctoral Dissertation, New York, Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University, 1928. (Madras, Methodist Publishing House, Reprint 1930), v-222 p.

It is a pioneering study of Tagore's experiment in the Indianization of Education in the light of India's history. Admittedly limited in scope, it could not possibly be a complete study due to having been published in 1928. It is divided into two parts: part one deals with Tagore's interpretation of India's problems; the second part is devoted to the discussion of Tagore's educational theory and practice. Rather verbose in style, it is fraught with certain political overtones.

Dawson, Christopher, Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Image Books, 1958, 242 p.

This book is, in fact, the Gifford Lectures, which Christopher Dawson delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1948-1949, in printed form. Comprehensive in scope, the book deals with all the significant aspects of medieval European culture. Its main thesis, however, is that Western Culture is religious in origin.

-----, Medieval Essays, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Image Books, 1959, 240 p.

The book is as Dawson himself points out, a study of Christian culture - a culture which is not only worthy of study for its own sake, but is the source of the actual sociological unity which we call Europe. Dawson holds that religion is the key of history and that it is impossible to understand a culture unless we understand its religious roots. From this premise, he goes on to show that the Middle Ages are not a kind of waiting-room between two different worlds, but the age which made a new world - the modern world.

-----, Understanding Europe, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Image Books, 1960, 238 p.

The author deals with three interrelated themes in this book: that Europe is a society of peoples; that Europe is a spiritual unity, based on the tradition of Christian culture; and that the modern revolt against Europe is the inevitable result of its loss of the common spiritual aims and the common system of moral values which it derived from the Christian tradition.

De Hovre, Franz, Philosophy and Education, trans. Edward B. Jordan, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1931, xlii-443 p.

The introductory part of this book provides one of the clearest and the most succinct expositions on the question of the interrelation between philosophy of life and philosophy of education. The ensuing

three parts of the book are devoted to an exposition of the educational theories of Naturalism, Socialism and Nationalism. The last part gives an account of the philosophy and educational theory of Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster. An excellent textbook.

De Hovre, Franz, Catholicism in Education, trans. Edward B. Jordan, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1934, xx-501 p.

This work is a sequel to the one mentioned above and is specifically concerned with Catholic philosophy and Catholic education. First part of the book deals with general principles and the second part analyzes the educational theories of five representative Catholic educators of modern times: Spalding, Dupanloup, Newman, Mercier and Willmann. Chapter one of the book which discusses the interrelations of philosophy and education is the one most relevant to the present study.

Durant, Will, Story of Civilization, Vol. I: Our Oriental Heritage, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1935, (23rd printing, 1963), xxxii-1049 p.

This book is volume one of Durant's monumental ten volume Story of Civilization. The introductory section of this large volume deals with the establishment of civilization and then takes up, not in rapid review but in rich and fascinating detail, the colourful, complex dramas of the Near East, India and her neighbours, and the Far East. The story is carried up to the 1930's. The section on India is the most relevant to the present study.

Estborn, Sigfrid, The Religion of Tagore in the Light of the Gospels, Madras, Christian Society for India, 1949, viii-182 p.

The contents of this book are: Religious Influences on Tagore; Tagore's Basic Religious Experience; Tagore's View of the World; Tagore's View of Life; Tagore's Conception of Man; Tagore's Ethical Views; Tagore's View of Sin and Evil; Tagore's Conception of Salvation; Tagore's Conception of God; Conclusion. Though this is a well organized book many students of Tagore may not agree with some of the conclusions of the author.

Gupta, Atulchandra, ed., Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, Jadavpur, The National Council of Education, Bengal, 1958, xv-620 p.

This large composite work consists of some forty learned studies on almost all aspects of Bengal Renaissance and its leaders by contemporary writers in Bengal. The introduction by the editor attempts to focus the attention of the readers on the various strands of thought running through the work.

Hay, Stephen N., Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970, xv-480 p.

Tagore's failure to win the support of Asia's educated classes for his non-political ideal of an India-centred Asian civilization forms the principal theme of this scholarly work. The examination of the lives and writings of eighty-four Chinese, Japanese, and Indian intellectuals as they responded to Tagore's message presented in this volume is not wholly convincing. More than a third of this well produced book is given over to notes, bibliography, select glossary and the index.

Hurwitz, Harold M., Rabindranath Tagore and England, Doctoral Dissertation, Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois, 1959, 227 p.

This study is a record of the English career of Rabindranath Tagore. It includes an account of his six trips to England, a brief analysis of some of his most popular English works, a history of his friendship with some of the most important literary figures of the present century, and an evaluation of his contribution to English letters.

Jawaharlal Nehru Souvenir Volumes Committee, The Emerging World: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Volume, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964, xii-268 p.

This volume is a fitting tribute to the life and work of Jawaharlal Nehru who embodied the spirit of India and world peace. It consists of some twenty-six scholarly contributions from eminent thinkers and statesmen of many lands. The themes dealt with in this volume cover a great variety of subjects and represent, even if indirectly, the wide range of Jawaharlal Nehru's interests, such as peaceful change and scientific progress; war against poverty, against tyranny, and against dogmatism; economic development and the enlargement of the higher values; friendship among nations and a better future for mankind.

Kabir, Humayun, Rabindranath Tagore: Tagore Lectures 1961, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1962, 72 p.

A perceptive and insightful study of Tagore as artist, humanist, and internationalist in the background of the social, political and cultural renaissance in modern India. The author, himself an educationist and writer of distinction in both Bengali and English, is considered an authority on Tagore.

Kabir, Humayun, "Foreword" to Mahendra Kulasrestha, ed., The Tagore Centenary Volume, Hoshiarpur, Vishvesharanand Vedic Research Institute, 1961, p. xiii-xvii.

Within the limitations imposed by space, Kabir, the well-known Indian educationist and an authority on Tagore, provides a masterful summary of the life, thought and achievements of Tagore.

Keller, Helen, "Open Letter", in Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., The Golden Book of Tagore, Calcutta, The Golden Book Committee, 1931, p. 122.

This very touching "open letter" written in beautiful poetic language is full of humanistic sentiments. Towards the end of it can be found some admirable, insightful and pithy comments on the spirit and ideals of Tagore's Visva-Bharati.

Kripalani, Krishna, Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, 417 p.

An able, detailed and reliable study of Rabindranath Tagore's life and work which gives a picture of the complete man: poet, philosopher, educator, playwright, storyteller, musician, and painter. The author, at present Secretary of the National Academy of Letters, India, lived and worked with Tagore at Santiniketan in Bengal from 1933 until the latter's death in 1941. One of the most outstanding biographies of Tagore in English, heavy reliance was placed on it in the writing of the second chapter of the present study.

Kulasrestha, Mahendra, ed., The Tagore Centenary Volume, Hoshiarpur Vishvesharanand Vedic Research Institute, 1961, xxi-385 p.

This composite work is divided into two parts. The first part consists of twenty-two contributions by some well known writers on the various aspects of Tagore's multi-splendoured genius. This section includes also a few selections from the writings of Tagore. In the second part there are twenty-eight essays on various aspects of Indian culture. Very few articles in this collection can claim to be very profound. Not a very outstanding reference work.

Mukerji, Dhurjati Prasad, "Tagore's Music" in Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1961, p.180-186.

In this article, the author who is an economist and music critic provides a critical analysis of the technical quality of Tagore's music. He maintains that Tagore's music has the quality of profundity not inferior to the quality of his poetry- rich, subtle and universal.

Mukherjee, Himangshu Bhushan, Education for Fulness: A Study of the Educational Thought and Experiment of Rabindranath Tagore, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962, xvi-495 p.

This book is perhaps the most comprehensive and full-length account of Tagore's educational thought and activity available in English up to the present moment. Apart from a detailed chronological survey of Tagore's educational writings and institutional activities in the perspective of his life and thought in general, it also contains a critical discussion on almost all the major aspects of his educational work. The concluding chapter provides an overall evaluation of Tagore's unique contribution to education and his message to the world. The main drawback of this study is that it is overly repetitious in many places.

Mukherjee, Sujit Kumar, Passage to America: The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States, 1912-1941, Doctoral Dissertation, Philadelphia, Pa., University of Pennsylvania, 1963, lv-350 p.

This Dissertation undertakes a comprehensive study of the different aspects and chronological phases of Tagore's contact with the United States, examines the causes and consequences that altered America's admiration of Tagore to neglect, and thereby documents a continuous history of his reception in the United States of America. The study is aimed primarily at the American reader, and has been confined to the years between Tagore's first visit to the United States of America and the year of his death.

Naravane, Vishwanath S., Rabindranath Tagore - A Philosophical Study, Allahabad, Central Book Depot, n.d., iii-238 p.

This book is based upon the author's Doctoral Dissertation entitled "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore" which was accepted by the University of Allahabad, India, in 1946 for the D. Phil. degree. The work provides a systematic and thorough account of Tagore's philosophical thoughts. The approach throughout is factual and expository rather than interpretative and critical.

-----, Modern Indian Thought: A Philosophical Survey, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964, xiii-310 p.

This interesting and readable book discusses the fundamental ideas of some of the outstanding thinkers who have moulded the Indian consciousness since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The author approaches the subject from a philosophical rather than a social or political point of view. Chapter five from page 111 to page 167 is devoted to a discussion of the fundamental philosophical views of Tagore which is essentially an able summary of his book on Tagore mentioned above.

Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Discovery of India, edited, with a foreword and comments by Robert I. Crane, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1960, xii-426 p.

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote this remarkable history of India covering a period of nearly five thousand years when he was a prisoner in Ahmadnagar Fort prison in 1944 and was originally published by The John Day Company in 1946. The present edited version seems to retain most of the grace and readability of the original. A scholarly and illuminating book, not only in its exploration of the Indian heritage but also for the light it throws on the character of a remarkably brilliant and complex personality that Nehru was.

Paplauskas-Ramunas, Anthony, Development of the Whole Man Through Physical Education, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1968, xviii-435 p.

An extraordinarily erudite work on the subject of the development of physical education and its importance to peoples and countries in different parts of the world. The approach throughout is interdisciplinary and comparative and shows remarkable familiarity with the educational literature of the countries both in the East and in the West. Valuable as a reference work and bibliographical sourcebook.

Pearson, W.W., Shantiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore, New York, Macmillan, 1916, 130 p.

This interesting little book is prefaced with the Santiniketan School song from the pen of Tagore. Tagore has also contributed the introduction wherein he traces the origins of his educational endeavours. On pages 75-78 is quoted a letter which Tagore wrote to a schoolmaster in England which is a fine summary of the ideals of Santiniketan.

Radhakrishnan, S., The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, London, Macmillan, 1918. (First Indian edition, Baroda, Good Companions, 1961), xiv-180 p.

The author is now a philosopher of international repute. But this book was written during his early manhood. It is a brilliant polemic against any view which says that Tagore's philosophical and religious ideas were derived from foreign sources. As the author himself admitted several decades after the first publication of this book, it shows youthful enthusiasm and lack of restraint. Since Tagore lived for another twenty-three years after the book was brought out, it is also transparently incomplete in the treatment of its theme.

Radhakrishnan, S. and Muirhead, J.H., eds., Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 3rd ed., London, Allen & Unwin, 1966, xii-648 p.

This composite work first published in 1936 consists of some twenty-five contributions by the best known contemporary Indian Philosophers all of whom are not professional academics. It starts with an essay by Gandhi followed by Tagore's. The latter's essay is entitled "The Religion of An Artist" covering pages 25 to 45. The main burden of the first part of this essay is that Tagore's religion is essentially a poet's religion realized by intuition rather than by rational knowledge. The second part of the essay is devoted to a discussion on Art and Creativity where he maintains that the world of reality belongs to Art.

Rawlinson, H.G., India: A Short Cultural History, 2nd rev. ed., New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1952, (5th Printing, 1968), xiv-454 p.

A scholarly, comprehensive and magnificently illustrated history of the inner India - her literature and philosophy, her art and architecture, her religious thought and sects. The original edition of this book was published in Great Britain in 1937 by The Cresset Press. Subsequent editions and reprints indicate the popularity of the book.

Ray, Benoy Gopal, Contemporary Indian Philosophers, Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1947, 107 p.

Brief studies of some nine modern Indian Philosophers: Rammohun Roy, Devendranath Tagore; Keshab Chandra Sen; Ramakrishna; Vivekananda; Dayananda; Rabindranath Tagore; Gandhi; and Aurobindo. An interesting book but not a very erudite one.

-----, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, Rev. and enl. 2nd ed., Calcutta, Progressive Publishers, 1970, 150 p.

The original edition of this book by the professor of Comparative Religion at Visva Bharati was published in 1949. To make the central metaphysical position of Tagore more broad-based, two new chapters have been added in the second revised edition. In this work the author maintains that the philosophy of Tagore is an artist's creation and as such it is to be understood as a flower is understood, and therefore in its exposition he has kept logical analysis subservient to understanding and appreciation. An insightful and readable volume.

Ray, Niharranjan, An Artist in Life: A Commentary on the Life and Works of Rabindranath Tagore, Trivandrum, University of Kerala, 1967, 480 p.

This large volume is perhaps the most comprehensive study of Rabindranath Tagore's life and personality so far to appear in English. The evolution of Tagore's personality - so vast and complex and many-sided -

is revealed in this book through a comprehensive study of his life and works. The book is divided into three parts. The author begins by providing a critical account of Tagore's background, followed by an interpretation of the forces, ideological and intellectual, that influenced him. This part of the book ends with an analytical study of the entire complex of contemporary life and its movements and Tagore's reactions and responses to them. Part two is a running commentary on the unfolding of Tagore's life and works, divided into six phases. Part three is devoted to a discussion of Tagore's religions, aesthetic and social thoughts. A learned work, one of the best books on Tagore the present writer has come across.

Roy, Dilip Kumar, Among the Great, Bombay, Jaico Publishing House, 1950, xvi-367 p.

The author has brought together in this book the records of his conversations and correspondence with some of our great contemporaries: Romain Rolland, the writer and artist; Gandhi, the saint; Bertrand Russell, the thinker; Rabindranath, the poet; and Sri Audobindo, the seer. The relevant section on Tagore, found useful for the present research, is from page 161 to page 196. A very interesting book.

Sahitya Akademi, Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1961, xxv-531 p.

This sumptuously produced volume on Tagore was brought out by the National Academy of Letters, India, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. Besides the introduction by Nehru, it contains nearly sixty serious studies on the many aspects of Tagore's personality and genius contributed by eminent writers and savants from many parts of the world. There are, besides, a full and comprehensive chronicle of the poet's life, from year to year, and a bibliography of his publications in Bengali and English. Reproductions in colour of some famous portraits of Tagore by distinguished artists add to the elegance of this publication which is as much a tribute to the genius of Tagore as a guide to its understanding. The section entitled, "Rabindranath Tagore: A Chronicle of Eighty years, 1861-1941" p. 447-503 was found to be the most useful for the present study, especially for the composition of Chapter II.

Saiyidain, K.G., The Humanist Tradition in Indian Educational Thought, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1966, xvi-237 p.

This book presents the significant contributions to educational thought by six eminent Indian thinkers - Tagore, Iqbal, Gandhi, Azad, Radhakrishnan, and Husain - each of whom is a non-conformist in the best sense of the word and who is distinguished by a liberal, broad-minded

approach which has, consequently, a universal appeal. After a brief analysis of the basic problems of Indian education in which he brings out the vision that inspired some of the finest minds of India, the author gives a critical exposition of the creative ideas of each of the selected thinkers. The chapter on Tagore runs from page 38 to 60. In Saiyidain's view Tagore's greatest gift to education was his own many-splendoured personality, his vision as a poet which retained the simplicity to see unity in diversity. A very readable book by one of India's best-known writers on education.

Sarkar, Sunil Chandra, Tagore's Educational Philosophy and Experiment, Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1961, ii-200 p.

The title of this book is derived from its second chapter. The volume consists of a collection of seven essays of uneven standard. Despite its title, the book does not succeed fully in discussing all the salient features of Tagore's educational philosophy. The author, having been the Head of the Education Department, Visva-Bharati, could write from personal knowledge on his chosen themes.

Schweitzer, Albert, Indian Thought and Its Development, Paperback ed., Boston, The Beacon Press, 1957, (3rd printing, 1960), xii-272 p.

A critical and short account of Indian philosophy and its development. It begins with the discussion of the general principles of Indian thought and advances the thesis that the existence and inter-fusion within it of world and life negation and world and life affirmation constitute its special characteristic and determine its development. The treatise then proceeds to discuss the Upanishads, the Samkhya doctrine, Jainish, Buddhism, Brahmanic doctrine, Hinduism, Bhakti Mysticism, and modern Indian thought.

Sen, Nabaneeta Dev, The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in England, France and the United States, Doctoral Dissertation, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1964, v-156 p.

The sudden, phenomenal rise of Tagore as a literary figure in the West was soon followed by a sharp decline. This Dissertation is a study of this reception and attempts to explore its causes.

Sinha, Sasadhar, Social Thinking of Rabindranath Tagore, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962, xiv-198 p.

According to the author of this book the essence of Tagore's social philosophy lies in his insistence on rationality which is also the basis of his belief in Science and scientific method. The educational thought of Tagore provides the key to enter into his social thought which was oriented towards the national reconstruction of India. Besides the main text, the book has seven appendices, mostly articles having a bearing on the main theme of the book which the author wrote for various periodicals. An interesting book written in a lively style.

Singhal, D.P., India and World Civilization, 2 vols., East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1969, Vol. I., xix-435 p., Vol. II, 384 p.

As the author himself states the story of the interaction of various civilizations from ancient times to the present has been told in bits and pieces in hundreds of works. This two-volume work puts these pieces together into a coordinated whole -- a synthesis of the original research of numerous authorities, including scientists, philosophers, historians, linguists, archaeologists, and anthropologists - woven into a wider historical context. This book is the product of many years of painstaking and thorough research and as such is a reliable reference.

Smith, Vincent A., The Oxford History of India, 3rd ed., edited by Percival Spear, London, Oxford University Press, 1958, (Reprint 1967), xiii-898 p.

The first edition of this standard text-book was published in 1919 carrying the Indian story down to 1911. It was entirely the work of the late Vincent Smith. In the third edition published in 1958 although the work has been thoroughly revised and brought up to date by Wheeler and Basham for ancient India, Harrison for the Islamic period and Spear for the British period, it is still recognizably the work of Vincent Smith. This standard work of wide learning, of concise statement, and of forthright opinion is a reliable reference work.

Spear, Percival, India: A Modern History, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1961, x-491-xix p.

This very readable book is divided into four parts. It begins with a general historical view of India's past, emphasizing those aspects which time has proved to have been creative agents in the formation of the present. The Mughal period of Indian history is dealt with in part two and the British period in part three. The last part deals with events from the middle of the last century to the present. Several pages of notes, suggested readings, glossary, and index add to the usefulness of the book. A dependable text-book written in a pleasing style.

Tagore, Debendranath, Autobiography of Maharshi Debendranath, Translated into English by Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi, London, Macmillan, 1914.

The present writer has no direct acquaintance with this book. Read about it in other works.

Tagore, Rathindranath, On the Edges of Time, Calcutta, Orient Longmans, 1958, 191 p.

An unconventional book of reminiscences by Rabindranath Tagore's son. It is a series of kaleidoscopic pictures - sometimes intimate and personal, sometimes objective and remote - of a son's memory of a great father.

The author has throughout his life been closely associated with his father's work and here, presented in a charming style, are glimpses of some aspects of Rabindranath's life and personality not dealt with by his biographers. Valuable for its authenticity and reliability.

Thompson, Edward, Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist, 2nd rev. ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1948, 330 p.

Thompson, one-time lecturer in Bengali and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, had personal acquaintance with Tagore and knew Bengal well. For the first edition of the book published in 1926 the author received his Doctorate degree from Oxford University, though he did not expressly write the book for that purpose. The volume is divided into five parts or "Books". The 'revised' second edition published in 1948 contains an additional chapter on "Last Years" bringing the Story up to the last days of Tagore. For some unknown reason, the bibliography which the first edition contained is missing from the second edition. One among the three or four top biographies of Tagore in English.

Toynbee, Arnold, "Ruthless Age: 20th century brings in new barbarism", in The Ottawa Citizen, May 19, 1971, p. 7.

A highly critical and thought provoking article by the distinguished British historian in which he marshals ample evidence to prove his thesis that the present century is more ruthless and barbaric in a certain sense than any other previous period in history.

APPENDIX 1

THE BACKGROUND

Rabindranath Tagore was born in a remarkable period of the history of India and especially that of the then Province of Bengal noted for its innovations and changes in the social, political, cultural and religious spheres of life. According to Niharranjan Ray, one of the latest and best biographers of Tagore,

One cannot fully understand the mind and personality of Rabindranath Tagore, his works and his contribution to culture, unless one sees him against the literary, social and political background that prevailed in this country (India) when he was born. ¹

In this appendix an attempt will be made, therefore, to sketch an outline of and to delineate the important features of the rich and diverse political, religious, social and cultural milieu into which Rabindranath Tagore was born.

India was slowly settling down to a period of peace and stability when Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861. The preceding decades were years full of tensions and convulsions culminating in the so-called Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed by the British Army and there followed the transfer of the government of India from the English East India Company to the British Crown.

What cultural historians usually refer to as Bengal Renaissance ² was in full bloom in Rabindranath Tagore's boyhood days. The origin of this Renaissance period, however, can be traced back to the second decade of the

¹ Niharranjan Ray, An Artist in Life: A commentary on the Life and Works of Rabindranath Tagore, Trivandrum, University of Kerala Press, 1967, p. 16.

² Atulchandra Gupta, ed., Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, Jadavpur, The National Council of Education, Bengal, 1958.

nineteenth century when Rammohan Roy³ (1772-1833) started his active public career. He

was the nearest approach to the universal scholar which nineteenth century India produced. He knew ten languages, studied the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity and the philosophy and science of the West along with those of India. 4

This Hindu reformer and innovator helped to found the first institution of higher Western education in India, that is, the Hindu College in Calcutta, in 1816. A pioneer in journalism he attacked the abuses of caste, suttee, and idolatry. But by far the greatest achievement of Rammohan Roy was the founding of the Brahma Sabha on August 20, 1828. This religious movement, later to be known as the Brahmo Samaj⁵, was a purified, spiritualised monistic version of the old Vedantic faith in one Great Being as the Supreme force behind the creation.

It was a progressive off-shoot of Hinduism ridden of its superstitious overgrowths such as caste, idolatry, and other ritualistic aspects which were believed to be remainders of some primitive customs, totally unnecessary and, in fact, encumbering to the cultivation of one's spirit. 6

3 Atulchandra Gupta, ed., Op. cit., p. 8-15; Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India, 3rd ed., edited by Percival Spear, London, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 651-652; H.G. Rawlinson, India: A Short Cultural History, 2nd rev. ed., New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1952 (5th Printing, 1968), p. 409-411; D.P. Singhal, India and World Civilization, Vol. 2, East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1969, p. 280-282. Note: Roy's full name is spelt by different authors in different ways, such as: Rammohan Roy, Rammohun Roy, Raja Rammohun Roy, Ram Mohan Roy, Ram Mohun Roy. Roy itself is sometimes spelt Ray.

4 Percival Spear, India: A Modern History, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1961, p. 292.

5 Atulchandra Gupta, ed., Op. cit., p. 479-508.

6 Nabaneeta D. Sen, The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in England, France, and the United States, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1964, p. 31.

Men of all creeds, all castes, and social classes were invited to worship together. This idea of public worship and united prayer was an innovation since it was previously unknown among the Hindus. No name or form was attributed to the Supreme Being whom they worshipped; it was actually influenced by the tenets of Protestantism, especially that of Unitarianism. "It was a Protestant movement, but one with which Erasmus would have had more sympathy than Luther".⁷ Brahmo Samaj, in its turn, exerted some influence on the Unitarian Movement in the West.

Its first principle was reason as exemplified in the (Hindu) philosophical treatises called the Upanishads. Its loans from the West may be described as the principle of human dignity and as the ethical system expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. Ram Mohan Roy accepted Jesus as one of the religious Masters and advocated his teaching in a book called the Precepts of Jesus.⁸

Rammohan Roy made this effort to modernise Hinduism in order to make it adequate to meet the challenge posed by the advent of the scientific ideas from the West. The traditional and ritualistic Hinduism of that period was not capable of meeting the intellectual demands of the new age. The new generation of Indian intelligentsia who received a Western style education could have either remained attached to the traditional religious observances which were equated with superstitions, or become strangers to the old tradition altogether while accepting the new scientific learning. Roy's Brahmo Movement sought to retain the allegiance of the Western-educated intellectuals without discarding the nation's spiritual heritage.

⁷ Percival Spear, Op. cit., p. 293.

⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 293.

He stood forth as the unrelenting opponent of the christianisation of the country and infused the new revolutionary liberalism of Europe into Hinduism. In doing so he was far ahead that the effect of his religious revolution did not percolate beyond the upper strata of the contemporary society. ⁹

Although the Brahmo Movement did not produce more than a ripple on the surface of the contemporary Indian society, it acted as a powerful lever to all progressive ideas and movements initiated and organised by the Indian intelligentsia of the period. It

represented a New Ideology, a New Discipline of life, a new Socio-Culture from religion to politics that emanated in the last century from Bengal and enveloped all India, releasing hidden and unexpected springs of national energy. ¹⁰

Rammohan Roy's life and work deserve one's attention for the mere fact that he was "one of the spiritual progenitors" ¹¹ of Rabindranath Tagore. His premature death in 1833 upset the Brahma Samaj temporarily, but it soon found in Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath Tagore, a worthy successor.

By the time of Ram Mohan Roy's death there had arisen in Calcutta movements aiming variously at the reform of Hinduism from within, a synthesis between East and West and the outright rejection of Hinduism. The reforming movement came to be lead by Devendranath Tagore; the radical tendency, stimulated by Derozio and impelled by the Presbyterian Alexander Duff, lead to a number of notable conversions to Christianity. ¹²

⁹ Niharranjan Ray, Op. cit., p. 18-19; Vincent A. Smith, Op. cit., p. 730.

¹⁰ Jogananda Das in Atulchandra Gupta, ed., Op. cit., p. 508.

¹¹ Niharranjan Ray, Op. cit., p. 19.

¹² Vincent A. Smith, Op. cit., p. 652.

A further response to Western challenge came from the followers of Ramakrishna Paramahansa ¹³ (1834-1886). If Rammohan Roy was the mind, Ramakrishna was the soul of the new India. The latter sought to realize God by the bhakti marga or the path of loving devotion. After twelve years of storm he attained peace and spent the rest of his life teaching his disciples. While his personal way was that of self-surrender, he based his teaching on the Vedas. His disciples devoted themselves to the spread of his teaching and found a leader in Swami Vivekananda who did much to rehabilitate Hinduism in the eyes of the Indians and the world by his tours in India and abroad.

Movements like the Brahmo Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission tried to assure the Indians that their past was respectable and worthy of their loyalty. At the same time the new generation of educated Indians came to realize that it "had to come to terms not only merely with the British Empire, nor with a few modern inventions, but with the spirit of the West as a whole". ¹⁴ A subtle change in the Indian outlook had come about which was not perceived by many at the time. "It was a change, one might say, away from medieval theocracy and religious exclusiveness toward secularism and nationalism". ¹⁵ The principle of reason was the key concept in this new outlook. In the fifty years from about 1830 to 1880 the new

¹³ Vincent A. Smith, Op. cit., p. 731-732; Percival Spear, Op. cit., p. 294.

¹⁴ Percival Spear, Op. cit., p. 295.

¹⁵ Idem, Ibid., p. 295.

Indian middle class ¹⁶ became permeated with it. There was a willing acceptance of certain importations like modern education; Western professions of teaching, law, and medicine were also willingly embraced. By and large this new generation of middle class people became saturated with mid-Victorian rationalism and liberalism. Most of them had an inordinate respect and admiration for the British rule, institutions and the way of living. "They spoke English better than their mother-tongue, could quote long passages from English poetry, and felt very happy in Western clothes even in the severe heat of Calcutta". ¹⁷

As a reaction to this newly acquired mentality there developed strong revivalist tendencies among some Hindu intellectuals. A third group sought to strike a balance between the above mentioned two types by attempting a synthesis between the East and the West. Rabindranath Tagore's father, Debendranath, belonged to this last group. Jawaharlal Nehru has given us the following assessment of the situation:

English education brought a widening of the Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and institutions, a revolt against some customs and aspects of Indian life, and a growing demand for political reform. The new professional classes took the lead in political agitation, which consisted chiefly in sending representatives to government. English educated people in the professions and the services formed in effect a new class, which was to grow all over India, a class influenced by Western thought and ways and rather cut off from the mass of the population. In 1852 the British Indian Association was started in Calcutta. This was one of the

¹⁶ Vincent A. Smith, Op. cit., p. 733-736; Percival Spear, Op. cit., p. 298-304.

¹⁷ Nabaneeta D. Sen, Op. cit., p. 28.

forerunners of Indian National Congress, and yet a whole generation was to pass before the congress was started in 1885. This gap represents the period of the revolt of 1857-58, its suppression, and its consequences. The great difference between the state of Bengal and that of northern and central India in the middle of the century is brought out by the fact that while in Bengal the new intelligentsia (chiefly Hindu) had been influenced by English thought and literature and looked to England for political constitutional reform, the other areas were seething with the spirit of revolt." 18

The Province of Bengal thus stood out among other parts of India in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was also a period when the middleclass Bengalis prospered and rose in social prestige which, in its turn, awakened a sense of national consciousness in many of them. Through the patient and painstaking labours of European and Indian scholars the classical learning of ancient India was being brought to light which made the middle class intelligentsia feel proud of their ancient civilization. As a consequence, a wave of reaction against the superficial imitations of Western style of life set in gradually, demanding in their place a strong national mode of thought and behaviour. These national sentiments found their natural outlets in the literary activities of many contemporary Bengali intellectuals.

After having thus sketched very briefly the socio-cultural milieu into which Tagore was born, one may now give an outline of his family background ¹⁹ which played such a significant role in the development of his

18 Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, ed. Robert I. Crane, Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company, Anchor Books, 1960, p. 231.

19 Krishna Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 14-32; Rathindranath Tagore, On the Edges of Time, Calcutta, Orient Longmans, 1958, p. 2-8.

personality. From the very outset, it may be stated that the Tagore family had played a leading role in the various reform movements in Bengal during the nineteenth century. It is a family which has produced a galaxy of philosophers, artists, musicians, dramatists, and poets, but Rabindranath towered above them all. Rathindranath Tagore, the son of Rabindranath, gives the following account of the origin of his family:

The Tagores belong to the Bandyopadhyaya group of Bengali Brahmins. The genealogy can be traced back to Daksha, one of the five Brahmins who were imported sometime in the 8th century from Kanauj to help in reviving orthodox Hinduism in Buddhist-ridden Bengal. The descendants of this Brahmin moved from one place to another until one Panchanan in 1690 settled down at Govindapur near Calcutta. The opportunities of making money in this flourishing mercantile town, the stronghold of the East India Company, finally attracted the family to Calcutta in the latter part of the eighteenth century and they built their homes at Pathuriaghata and Jorasanko...

Not only were the ancestors of the Tagores wanderers in the Province of Bengal moving from one place to another and never settling down, but latterly they were looked upon as outcasts. They had to depend upon their own resources and struggle to win any sort of position in society. They soon found that this could be done only by accumulation of wealth. These two factors probably helped to develop the pioneering spirit and the freedom of mind that could rise above all social and religious conventions which are the basic characteristics of the Tagore family. Once they had accumulated wealth and gained the assurance of comfortable living their spirit went adventuring in other realms and their talents effloresced in many a direction. 20

The Tagore family reached the peak of its wealth and prosperity during the lifetime of Dwarkanath Tagore, the grand-father of Rabindranath. Dwarkanath was a handsome, versatile and romantic figure. A younger contemporary of Rammohan Roy, he was closely associated with him in many of his public activities rendering financial assistance whenever the need

20 Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 2-3.

arose. With Rammohan Roy he played a leading role in the reform movement, especially in the realms of higher education and social welfare.

In his bold denunciation of the superstitious beliefs and practices of his countrymen as well as in his public controversies with the Christian missionaries in defence of the basic values of Hindu philosophy and religion, in his heroic crusades against the practice of Suttee (the Hindu widow burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband) as well as in his passionate advocacy of the modern system of education with its emphasis on the teaching of the sciences, Raja Rammohun Roy had the powerful support of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. 21

Dwarkanath's regal style of living and philanthropic activities earned for him the title of 'Prince'. His extensive business enterprises covered many areas hitherto unexplored by his countrymen. People still remember him for the munificent and ever lavish donations he gave to many public institutions such as the National Library, the Hindu College and the medical college -- all pioneer institutions established at Calcutta in Bengal in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In fact, there was hardly a public institution in Bengal of his day which did not benefit from his generosity. He was the Rockefeller of nineteenth century India.

At a time when crossing foreign seas was considered an offence against Hindu Orthodoxy, Dwarkanath visited Europe and England twice, in 1842 and again in 1844, demonstrating in the process his moral courage and rational outlook. Queen Victoria and the nobility of England held him in high esteem. ²² He was, however, not destined to return home from his second voyage to England; for he died suddenly in London on August 1, 1846, at the age of fifty-one.

21 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 20-21.

22 Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 4-5.

Dwarkanath left behind him three sons of whom the eldest was Debendranath,²³ father of Rabindranath. Debendranath who succeeded Dwarkanath as head of the joint-family was even more remarkable than his illustrious father. Though brought up in the lap of luxury, in his late adolescence, he turned to a life of prayer and austerity. The last forty years of his life were mainly spent in pilgrimages and meditation. As a saint and sage, he came to be known as the Maharshi. The death of his grandmother to whom he was deeply attached was the occasion for his turning away from wordly ways and for the spiritual Odyssey on which he embarked. In his autobiography²⁴ which he wrote late in life he "has described vividly his spiritual hunger, his search for truth and development of his faith".²⁵ At the age of twenty-two he founded a purely theistic association called Tatvabodhini Sabha for the worship of the One Formless Divinity and for the propagation of the basic tenets of Hinduism as found in the Upanishads. Rammohan Roy had already founded in 1825 the Brahma Sabha with more or less the same ideals. It was but logical that these two kindred associations would be amalgamated. This was done in 1843 under the new name of Brahma Samaj²⁶ which gradually developed into a dynamic movement of

23 Atulchandra Gupta, ed., Op. cit., p. 33-46; Benoy Gopal Ray, Contemporary Indian Philosophers, Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1947, p. 20-28.

24 Debendranath Tagore, Autobiography of Maharshi Debendranath, Translated into English by Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi, London, Macmillan, 1914.

25 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 24.

26 Atulchandra Gupta, ed., Op. cit., p. 479-508.

of social and moral reform. Though the son of 'Prince' Dwarkanath, Debendranath truly became the 'moral heir and the spiritual successor of Raja Rammohun Roy whose mission he continued and made fruitful".²⁷

At a comparatively young age he became a highly respected figure among his people. As mentioned earlier, his great wisdom and righteous living earned for him the title Maharshi - an enlightened man of God. This "passionate religious reformer and mystic whose feet were firmly planted on the earth"²⁸ greatly influenced the intellectual and spiritual development of his fourteenth child Rabindranath Tagore.

Debendranath had nine sons, two of whom died very young. His eldest son, Dwijendranath, was a great scholar and philosopher, noted for his comparative studies of Eastern and Western philosophies. The second son, Satyendranath, was the first Indian to become a member of the prestigious Indian Civil Service. No mean Sanskrit scholar, he translated several classics in that language into Bengali besides producing some original writings in the latter language. He spent a good part of his time in England with his family. His wife was a very progressive woman who took pride in accompanying her husband in many of his official tours disregarding the traditional taboos attached to such conduct. The third son, Hemendranath, was also a gifted person. His fifth son, Jyotirindranath was greatly influenced by the progressive views of his England-returned brother Satyendranath. Besides being an original writer in Bengali, he translated French writers like

²⁷ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 23.

²⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 29.

Molière, Hugo, and Lamartine into that language. He is also noteworthy for the influence he exerted on his brother Rabindranath who was twelve years younger. Among the daughters was Swarnakumari, the first woman novelist and the first woman to edit a literary journal in India. Indeed, Tagore's was an household humming with cultural activities.

Niharranjan Ray, a recent biographer of Rabindranath Tagore, writes of his subject's background as follows:

Tagore's was a rich, aristocratic family which stood aside from the main currents of Bengal's social life in the nineteenth century. It possessed a distinctive and individual tradition consisting of a curious mixture of many elements: an over-refined polish inherited from an urban and decadent Muslim culture; a strain of deep and brooding self-introspection emanating from a much older inheritance, that of the Upanishads and all that they connote; the influence of the best English writers of the time, and, through them, of Western life and thought; and, the most significant of all, an ardent although unspoken nationalism, mainly Hindu in content and character. Altogether, it was an extraordinary spiritual atmosphere in which Tagore passed the most impressionable years of his life. The social aloofness of the family was completed by its exclusiveness in marriage relations owing to its being outside the orthodox Brahmanical pale, and also by his father's adherence to the movement for heterodox religious reforms inaugurated by Rammohan Roy. 29

Rabindranath Tagore, like any other person, was largely conditioned by the forces of contemporary life and society in his country. Hence, it was thought relevant to give an outline of the major social, political, religious and cultural factors that had a bearing on the development of his rich and multifaceted personality. In this context it was found necessary to bring into focus the salient features of the Bengal Renaissance,

29 Niharranjan Ray, Op. cit., p. 32.

the Brahmo Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, the new middle class intelligentsia and the Tagore family itself. Against this background an attempt will be made to give a biographical sketch of Rabindranath Tagore in the following appendix.

APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ¹

Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta on the 7th of May, 1861. The birth of the fourteenth child of Maharshi Debendranath and Sarada Devi was not considered an event of any great significance at the time. The huge and rambling mansion at Jorasanko in the heart of Calcutta which was the family residence of the Tagores was filled with many children and grandchildren, a common sight in any joint-family.

Maharshi Debendranath, an austere person, did not allow any luxuries ² for his children. But this did not matter much to young Rabindranath who had plenty of things to interest him in the spacious house and the large garden with a pond that surrounded the house. The house and the garden formed as it were a wonder-world for the sensitive and precocious child that Rabindranath was, and the sights and sounds of this world made lasting impressions on him, impressions which he later recorded in his two books Reminiscences and My Boyhood Days. Even as a child he had a deep feeling for the beauty and the mystery of the world and he has described ³ how he would wake up at dawn and watch with a thrill the first flush of light on the tips of the huge palm-fronds in the garden.

1 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences London, Macmillan, 1917, (Reprint, 1966); My Boyhood Days, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1940, (Reprint, 1968); Rabindranath Tagore, Op. cit.; Niharranjan Ray, Op. cit.; Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit.; Edward Thompson, Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist, 2nd rev. ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1948; Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya and Kshitis Roy, "Rabindranath Tagore: A Chronicle of Eighty Years, 1861-1941" in Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1961.

2 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 9.

3 Idem, Ibid., p. 18.

As the child grew into a boy and the boy into a man, this feeling for beauty developed into an intense love of nature, perhaps the most remarkable trait in Rabindranath's poetry.

During childhood and early boyhood Rabindranath was looked after by family servants whose 'regime' he has characterized as 'servocracy'.

In the history of India the regime of the Slave Dynasty was not a happy one. In going back to the reign of the servants in my own life's history I can find nothing glorious or cheerful touching the period. There were frequent changes of king, but never a variation in the code of restraints and punishments with which we were afflicted. 4

Rabindranath was initiated into the study of the three R's under a private tutor at home. At the age of seven he was allowed to attend a well-known institution called the Oriental Seminary which was not very far from his home. Except for the corporal punishments the teachers meted out to the pupils there was nothing remarkable about this school. Before long young Rabi was admitted to another school known as Normal School which was supposed to be a good school modelled on the British pattern. The young boy fared no better in this school.

As my memories of the Normal School emerge from haziness and become clearer they are not the least sweet in particular. Had I been able to associate with the other boys, the woes of learning might not have seemed so intolerable. But that turned out to be impossible - so nasty were most of the boys in their manners and habits ... Of the teachers I remember only one, whose language was so foul that, out of sheer contempt for him, I steadily refused to answer any one of his questions. 5

4 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 24.

5 Idem, Ibid., p. 32-33.

Though Rabindranath was unhappy with his formal schooling and profited very little from it, he was given a thorough education at home supervised by one of his elder brothers, Hemendranath. Reminiscing about this period in later life Tagore wrote:

My third brother was very keen on imparting to us a variety of knowledge. So at home we had to go through much more than what was required by the school course. We had to get up before dawn and, clad in loin-cloths, begin with a bout or two with a blind wrestler. Without a pause we donned our tunics on our dusty bodies, and started on our courses of literature, mathematics, geography and history. On our return from school our drawing and gymnastic masters would be ready for us. In the evening Aghore Babu came for our English lessons. It was only after nine that we were free. 6

It would thus appear that, contrary to the wide-spread notion, young Rabindranath's education far from being neglected, was fairly well taken care of by his elders. Rabi started versifying when he was about eight years old. It did not take him very long to fill a blue copy-book with many an amateur poem. The budding poet, however, had some kind of natural aversion to any kind of systematic study. As he admitted towards the closing years of his life:

It was no one's fault but my own, that nothing could keep me for many days together in the beaten track of learning. I stayed at will, filling my wallet with whatever gleanings of knowledge I chanced upon. 7

That he was not exactly in love with routine learning is evident from the following statement:

6 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 38.

7 Idem, My Boyhood Days, p. 33.

From morning till night the mills of learning went on grinding. To wind up this creaking machinery was the work of Sejadada - Hemendranath. He was a stern taskmaster, but it is useless now to try to hide the fact that the greater part of the cargo with which he sought to load our minds was tipped out of the boat and sent to the bottom. My learning at any rate was a profitless cargo. If one seeks to key an instrument to too high a pitch, the strings will snap beneath the strain. 8

Rabindranath's reputation as a precocious poet slowly spread among the members of his family and among his classmates. One day, one of the teachers in the Normal School put Rabi's skill in writing poems to the test. The young poet came out of the test with flying colours; but some of his classmates deliberately refused to be convinced of his abilities.

When Rabindranath was ten years old it was arranged that he should attend an English school called the Bengal Academy in order to improve his knowledge of English. About this new arrangement Tagore wrote later in life:

We felt we had gained an access of dignity, that we had grown up - at least into the first story of freedom. In point of fact the only progress we made in that academy was towards freedom. What we were taught there we never understood, nor did we make any attempt to learn, nor did it seem to make any difference to anybody that we did not. 9

While Rabi was attending the Bengal Academy an epidemic of a kind of infectious fever broke out in Calcutta causing him and some other members of his family to be taken outside the city to a riverside villa. This was the first opportunity he had to get acquainted with the countryside of Bengal.

A year later, when Rabindranath was about twelve years old, his father arranged for and personally presided over the Upanayana (the investiture with

8 Rabindranath Tagore, My Boyhood Days, p. 30.

9 Idem, Reminiscences, p. 59-60.

the sacred thread) of his son. Rabi had, thus, like every other Brahmin boy, his second spiritual birth and initiation in the Vedic rites. Not long after this important religious ceremony he got an invitation from his father to accompany him on his pilgrimage to the Himalayas and to other holy places.

On their way to the western Himalayan region, they stayed for a while at Santiniketan (Abode of Peace), a family villa a little over ninety miles north-west of Calcutta. This private retreat was destined to become famous as the seat of Rabindranath's Visva-Bharati (International University) several decades later. From Santiniketan the Maharshi and his son proceeded to Dalhousie in western Himalayas, stopping on the way at Amritsar for a few weeks. The many devotional visits to the Golden Temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar left an indelible impression on the young mind of Rabindranath. The stay in Dalhousie lasted for three months during which period Rabindranath had ample opportunity to roam about as he pleased and enjoy the beauty and grandeur of the Himalayas. But it was not all play and no work. He received regular lessons from his father in Sanskrit, English and Elements of Astronomy. According to one of the better biographers¹⁰ of Rabindranath Tagore, the four months he thus spent in his father's company away from the dull routine of home and school were not only the happiest days of his boyhood but became the richest experience and source of his early education.

Since his return from the holidays in the Himalayas he was treated with greater respect by the ladies of the house and was admitted to their inner apartments. As he puts it:

10 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 53.

When I arrived it was not merely a home-coming from travel, it was also a return from an exile in the servants' quarters to my proper place in the inner apartments. Whenever the inner household assembled in my mother's room I now occupied a seat of honour. 11

After attaining this new status he found it all the more difficult to resume his school life and consequently resorted to all manner of subterfuges to escape the tedium of going to the Bengal Academy. The elders who directed his education were very patient and persevering and engaged two private tutors to instruct him in Sanskrit and Bengali. The tutors soon discovered that they were dealing with an exceptional pupil and therefore, discarding the traditional approach, introduced their pupil to the classics in Sanskrit and English. It was during this time that Rabindranath, at the age of thirteen, translated Macbeth into Bengali verse displaying an amazing mastery of that language. A portion of this verse-rendering was later published in the Bengali magazine Bharati. A year earlier, at the age of twelve, he had written a long poem entitled Abhilash (Yearning) which appeared anonymously in the family journal Tathvabodhini Patrika.

On leaving the Bengal Academy he was admitted into St. Xavier's School in Calcutta run by the Jesuit priests. Though his attitude towards this school also was no better than towards the previous ones, he, at least, liked the teachers there. "One precious memory of St. Xavier's I still hold fresh and pure - the memory of its teachers". 12 One priest in particular he held in high esteem - Father De Peneranda, a Spaniard.

Whenever I looked on him his spirit seemed to be in prayer, a deep peace to pervade him within and without ... I cannot speak for the other boys, but I felt in him the presence of a great soul, and even to-day the recollection of it seems to give a passport into the silent seclusion of the temple of God. 13

11 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 100.

12 Idem, Ibid., p. 107.

13 Idem, Ibid., p. 108-109.

Rabindranath attended St. Xavier's school for only a year. In 1875, at the age of fourteen, he gave up going to school altogether. It was also the year in which his mother died. According to Krishna Kripalani¹⁴ though this was his first introduction to death and the loss of this remarkable lady must have been deeply mourned by the family, the bereavement did not leave any marked impression on Rabindranath's mind.

Though he bade farewell to formal schooling altogether he did not while away his time at home. He continued the pursuit of knowledge in greater freedom and according to his own inclination. His family atmosphere was quite congenial for such intellectual activities. It was "like a lively bee-hive where honey sucked from many flowers, wild and cultivated, was being gathered".¹⁵ As stated in the previous appendix¹⁶ poets and scholars, musicians and philosophers, artists and social reformers were to be found in the Tagore family.

In 1867, an annual cultural-cum-political festival called the Hindu Mela sponsored by the Tagore family was started. On the occasion of the celebration of this festival in 1875 Rabindranath recited a patriotic poem before an enthusiastic audience which was later published in an Anglo-Bengali Weekly called the Amrita Bazar Patrika. "This was not only young Rabi's first public appearance but also the first occasion when his name appeared in print over his composition".¹⁷ Following this literary

¹⁴ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁵ Idem, Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁶ Appendix 1, p. 243-44.

¹⁷ Krishna Kripalani, Ibid., p. 59.

triumph, in the pages of the Bharati edited by his eldest brother Dwijendranath, he published several poems on the model of the Vaishnava lyrics, besides contributing literary and sociological essays, short stories and parts of a novel.

In those days nobody in India thought of a literary career as a worthwhile profession in itself and consequently the direction in which Rabindranath was developing was a matter of legitimate concern to his family. One of his elder brothers, Satyendranath who was the first native member of the prestigious Indian Civil Service, suggested to their father that he might take Rabi to England with him for higher studies. The Maharshi agreed. And so in 1878 Rabindranath accompanied his brother to Ahmedabad in the Bombay Presidency where the latter was posted as a District Judge. It was thought that a few months' stay with his England-returned brother would groom him for the anticipated foreign tour. While staying with his brother at Ahmedabad Rabindranath set some of his lyrics to music for the first time. Besides, he contributed a series of articles on English life and letters and also on the romantic love of poets such as Dante, Petrarch and Goethe, to Bharati. After several months' stay at Ahmedabad and Bombay, on September 20, 1878, he set sail for England accompanied by his brother Satyendranath.

In England at first he stayed with his brother and sister-in-law at Brighton. "My days passed merrily under the affectionate care of my sister-in-law and in boisterous romplings with the children".¹⁸ But he was not sent to England to exchange a home beyond the seas for the one in India. The

¹⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 157-158.

purpose was that he should study Law and return to India as a barrister. So after a brief attendance at a Public School in Brighton, at the instance of a friend of Satyendranath, Rabindranath was sent to London to be admitted to the University College where he studied English Literature under Professor Henry Morley. Beyond attending the lectures of this professor and going to a few plays, concerts and meetings, Rabindranath did not seem to have profited much by way of academic discipline. But he found time to contribute to the Bharati a brilliant series of letters on his sojourn in England and to begin a drama in verse called Bhagna Hriday (The Broken Heart).

About his student days in London, in later life, Tagore made the following comment:

I was able to study in the University for three months only, but I obtained almost all my understanding of English culture from personal contacts. The Artist who fashions us takes every opportunity to mingle new elements in his creation. Three months of close intimacy with English hearts sufficed for this development... I went to England but I did not become a barrister. I received no shock calculated to shatter the original framework of my life - rather East and West met in friendship in my own person. 19

In February 1880 Rabindranath returned to India with his brother and his family without achieving the purpose for which he was sent abroad. He had to obey his father who had got wind of the new emotional attachments he was forming in England. ²⁰ About his home-coming one of his biographers observes:

His somewhat ignominious return from abroad, without any academic achievement to his credit, had not been well received by several members of the family who looked upon him as a gifted wastrel. 21

19 Rabindranath Tagore, My Boyhood Days, p. 76-77.

20 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 86-87.

21 Idem, Ibid., p. 95.

Undaunted, the youth settled down to the life of a writer and a composer. While in England Rabindranath had become acquainted with Western music. Some of the tunes he had learned there soon found their way into the enchanting opera Valmiki Pratibha which he wrote on his return to India. Among those who saw and praised the performance of this work in the Tagore residence was the greatest Bengali literary figure of the day, Bankim Chandra Chatterji. A year later, when a collection of Rabindranath's poems, Sandhya Sangeet (Evening Songs) was published, Bankim Chandra personally congratulated the poet and acknowledged his pre-eminence among the rising writers of the day.²²

Some friends of the Tagores concerned about the abrupt ending of a career in Law for Rabindranath, persuaded the Maharshi to allow his son to proceed to England once again to study for the Bar.²³ The permission was granted and Rabindranath set sail for England for the second time on April 20, 1881 accompanied by one of his nephews, Satyaprasad Ganguli. This second voyage to England, however, did not come off. Rabindranath in later life made the following comment on this episode:

My fate, however, had so strongly vetoed my being called to the bar that I was not even to reach England this time. For a certain reason we had to disembark at Madras and return home to Calcutta. The reason was by no means as grave as its outcome, but as the laugh was not against me, I refrain from setting it down here.²⁴

Aware of the serious consequences of the apparently capricious way he behaved, Rabindranath travelled all the way to Mussoorie in western Himalayas to explain the matter personally to his father. This is how he recalls this incident:

22 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 96.

23 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 203.

24 Idem, Ibid., p. 203.

I went to him in fear and trembling. But he showed no sign of irritation, he rather seemed pleased. He must have seen in this return of mine the blessing of Divine Providence. 25

On his return from Mussoorie Rabindranath went to stay with his brother Jyotirindranath and his wife who were residing in a villa on the Ganges in the French Settlement at Chandernagore, near Calcutta. Here, in idyllic surroundings, he wrote a series of belles-lettres type of essays and began writing his first fully-fledged novel, The Young Queen's Market.

After their holidays in the villa on the Ganges, instead of returning to their ancestral home at Jorasanko, they took up residence in Sudder Street, a fashionable quarter of Calcutta in those days. While living there Rabindranath underwent a deeply felt spiritual experience, his first glimpse of and insight into cosmic unity. He has described this vision in detail in his Reminiscences ²⁶ and in his Hibbert Lectures at Oxford University published as The Religion of Man. ²⁷

During a visit to his brother Satyendranath at Karwar on the sea coast of Bombay Presidency he wrote a verse drama, Sanyasi. On his return to Calcutta he continued to stay with his brother Jyotirindranath and to engage in various literary activities. During this period his relatives selected for him a bride. On December 9, 1883, the twenty-two year old Rabindranath was married to an eleven year old girl, Bhavatarini Devi, daughter of one Benimadhav Raichaudhury of Jessore. After the marriage the young bride's name was changed

25 Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 204.

26 Idem, Ibid., p. 216-217.

27 Idem, The Religion of Man, London, Allen & Unwin, 1931 (Unwin Books edition, 1961), p. 58.

into Mrinalini Devi. She was destined to bear her husband two sons and three daughters before she died at the early age of twenty-nine.

The literary endeavours of Rabindranath continued unabated. At about this time he was stricken with the first great sorrow of his life in the death of his sister-in-law, the wife of Jyotirindranath, to whom he was deeply attached. Though "no other loss ever had so profound an impact on his mind and his genius"²⁸ he bore his bereavement valiantly. "He continued to write, and poems, stories and articles poured from his pen".²⁹ In the meanwhile, his father appointed him Secretary of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, the reformist religious society which the Maharshi had founded. Rabindranath shouldered his new responsibilities conscientiously by wielding his pen in defence and propagation of the tenets of his Samaj.

In 1886, when Rabindranath was twenty-five his first child, a daughter, Madhurilata, was born. Two years later his son Rathi was born. In 1889, while staying with his brother Satyendranath at Sholapur, he wrote his first five-act drama, The King and the Queen, in blank verse. In the very same year while on a visit to his family estates in North Bengal he wrote his well-known play Sacrifice. In the following year he took charge of the management of the Tagore Estates with Shelidah on the river Padma as his headquarters. Soon after he left on a trip to England accompanied by his brother Satyendranath and an intimate friend Loken Palit, visiting Italy and France on the way. He kept a diary of this voyage which, in the

28 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 116.

29 Idem, Ibid., p. 116.

year following his return to India, he published as The Diary of a Visitor to Europe. "The diary is a charming and delightful piece of writing as all his prose writings in a lighter vein are, full of acute observation and genial humour."³⁰ In 1890, soon after his return from England, was published that exquisite bouquet of poems entitled Manasi (Of the Mind) which was widely acclaimed and set the seal on his reputation as a major poet of Bengal.

Rabindranath now entered upon the happiest and most creative period of his life. The years he spent at Shelidah in the very heart of rural Bengal in charge of his family estates "widened and strengthened his intimacy with nature which he loved so much ... But even richer was the intimacy he thus gained with the actual life of the common people."³¹ In the words of one of his English biographers, Edward Thompson:

During these years he was a giant, reaping his wealthy fields. Drama, every sort of poem, short story, satire, criticism, essay, abundant private correspondence, these were the sheaves he gathered.³²

Rathindranath, the son of Rabindranath, concurs in this assessment. "Father's output of writing was perhaps at its maximum during the years at Shelidah."³³

In 1892 at the request of the Rajshahi Association he wrote his first criticism of the system of education introduced by the English in an essay entitled Sikshar Herpher (Tortuosities of Education). It was a vigorous and reasoned plea for the acceptance of the mother tongue as the medium of

30 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 125.

31 Idem, Ibid., p. 137.

32 Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 96.

33 Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 31.

instruction. In 1894 he was elected Vice-President of the newly founded Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (Academy of Bengali Letters). In the very same year he took over full editorial charge of the high quality literary monthly, Sadhana, which had been launched a few years earlier as a family enterprise.

Rabindranath's growing interest in the education of children was manifested in his writing in collaboration with Hemchandra Bhattacharya Sanskrita Siksha, a Sanskrit Primer, in 1896. His youngest son, Samindranath, was born on December 12 of the same year. During the next couple of years he showed some interest in the nationalist causes and movements of the time. In his political theory and practice he tried to be constructive. In 1897, he attended the Bengal Provincial Conference at Natore and moved, unsuccessfully though, for the conduct of the proceedings in the mother-tongue. At the Dacca session of the same Conference in the following year he again vainly pleaded for the use of the mother-tongue. His literary activities continued to be as vigorous as ever during this period.

In 1901, Rabindranath was forty years old. About this year one of his biographers has the following comment to make:

Altogether the first year of the present century is a very significant year in Tagore's life, significant in every respect, from the point of view of his literary achievement, his spiritual development, his public commitments and his struggles as a man. The year marks the end of his freedom as an individual owing no obligations save to his Muse and to his family; from now on his soul will be increasingly pledged to God, the baffling God of the Hindu metaphysics who is both Redeemer and Mephistopheles in One. The lover will become a teacher and the poet will don the robe of a prophet. 34

34 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 188.

In 1862, a year after Rabindranath was born, his father the Maharshi had acquired some property near Bolpur in the Province of Bengal. It was made over to a board of trustees and the trust deed specified that the place was to be used for meditation on the Supreme Formless Being. According to the Maharshi's wishes, a seat of prayer and a temple of worship had been built and close to the temple, a residence which was called Santiniketan, the Abode of Peace. Rabindranath who had been for sometime now worrying about the education of his children decided to start an experimental educational institution at this place. It was to be a school but not like the schools that had been the nightmare of his own childhood. It was to be like the tapovana or forest hermitages of ancient India where the disciples lived with their gurus or masters and imbibed their wisdom.³⁵ But to bring it into being was not an easy task. For one thing it cost money and Rabindranath had to sell, among other things, the copyright of his books to defray the expenses. His wife contributed her share by selling nearly all her jewellery.³⁶ Three months after the school was inaugurated with five pupils including his eldest son, his wife was taken ill and died on November 23, 1902. For Rabindranath it was only the beginning of a series of personal tragedies. Nine months after his wife's death, his second daughter Renuka passed away. His father, the Maharshi, died on January 19, 1905. The hardest blow of all came two years later. His youngest son, Samindranath, who took after his father in many ways, fell a victim to cholera when he was only twelve years old. His eldest son, Rathindranath, makes the following comment about his father in this context:

35 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 189.

36 Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 53-54.

Vicissitudes of life, pain or afflictions, however, never upset the equanimity of my father's mind. Like his father, the Maharshi, he remained calm and his inward peace was not disturbed by any calamity however painful. Some superhuman sakti gave him the power to resist and rise above misfortunes of the most painful nature. 37

Consequently, in spite of several bereavements and afflictions Rabin-dranath participated in one of the major political upheavals in the history of India occasioned by the partition of Bengal. Besides political articles and patriotic songs, poems, novels, short stories and essays of a creative character continued to pour forth from his fertile pen. Krishna Kripalani writes about this period of his life as follows:

All the pain and suffering, the bereavements and rebuffs, the struggles and mortifications, both in the world and in his mind, which this poet, who had begun his career as a dashing and gay cavalier, went through in the first decade of this century were finally resolved and sublimated in the songs that poured forth from his full and chastened heart in 1909 and 1910 and published as Gitanjali (Handful or Offering of Songs) in the latter year. Fifty-one of these 157 songs were later translated by him into English and included in the English book of that name which made him world-famous. 38

The reminiscences of his early life under the title, Jivansmriti ³⁹ were published serially in the Bengali Monthly Pravasi in 1911 when he was fifty years old. His own countrymen at last, came to recognize him as their leading man of letters. They bore testimony to this when they accorded him an unprecedented reception in the Town Hall of Calcutta on January 12, 1912. Sponsored by the Bengal Academy of Letters and attended by thousands, it was

37 Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 65.

38 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 210.

39 Rabindranath Tagore, Jivansmriti, English translation, Reminiscences, London, Macmillan, 1917.

a unique literary manifestation in India. But to the outside world, Rabin-dranath was still an unknown name until he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

The very active and strenuous life he was leading for over a decade brought in its train bodily and mental strain and exhaustion. "Doctors and friends prevailed upon him to take a long sea-voyage and visit Europe for treatment and an operation, if necessary."⁴⁰ So he sailed for London from Bombay on May 27, 1912, accompanied by his son Rathindranath and daughter-in-law, Pratima. In England some of his poems translated by him on the voyage and earlier, were published under the title Gitanjali; this created a literary sensation. In October of the same year he sailed for the United States of America on a lecture tour. He returned to England in the following April. After undergoing a surgical operation at a nursing home in London he returned to India in October. In November news reached Santiniketan that the Nobel Prize for Literature had been awarded to him.

Other honours followed the award of the Nobel Prize: on December 26, at a Special Convocation, the University of Calcutta conferred on him the degree of D. Litt. (Honoris Causa). On June 3, 1915, the British Government honoured him with the Knighthood.

Ever since his return from England in 1913, as Krishna Kripalani states:

He was more a world-citizen than an Indian. He was a world-citizen not because he became world-famous but because he felt with the world. There have been many men world-famous who were world-scourges, and many who have failed to see beyond their noses. But Tagore made the world's destiny his own and felt the agony deeply if there was suffering or injustice in any part of the world. ⁴¹

⁴⁰ Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 111.

⁴¹ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 235.

Rabindranath's English works began to be translated into all the principal languages of Europe. Included among his translators are André Gide, Zenobia Jimenez and many others well known in their own language. His premonition about a global disaster came true with the outbreak of World War I in Europe on August 4, 1914.

On March 6, 1915, Mahatma Gandhi paid a visit to Santiniketan. This first meeting between the two great men generated a deep mutual respect but probably also revealed a difference in outlook and approach. They had other meetings later on and with each successive meeting their esteem for each other increased.

Tagore undertook his fourth foreign tour to Japan and the United States of America in May 1916. On his way to Japan he halted at Rangoon, Penang, Singapore and Hong Kong for brief periods. In Japan he lectured at the Imperial University and at the University of Keio-Gijiku. His open criticism of the spirit of aggressive nationalism latent in Japan's imperialist policy towards China roused considerable resentment among official circles. After fulfilling several engagements in Japan, he sailed for the United States of America in September. His lecture-tour of the latter country was sponsored by the Pond Lyceum.⁴² The lectures he gave on this tour were later published in two volumes under the titles Nationalism⁴³ and Personality⁴⁴ respectively.

⁴² Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 257.

⁴³ Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, London, Macmillan, 1917.

⁴⁴ Idem, Personality, London, Macmillan, 1917.

Though the burden of Tagore's lectures was the menace of the nation-state and policy of imperialist exclusion and aggrandizement he spoke on this tour some of the deepest things he ever uttered on Art, Education, and the world of Personality. He was back in India in March 1917 after staying for another month in Japan on his return voyage.

His position in India involved him again in certain activities of a political nature. The repressive measures adopted by the foreign rulers under the Defence of India Act was the occasion for his reading at a public meeting his famous political paper Kartar Ichchay Karma (As the Master Wills). The visit of the Calcutta University Commission headed by Sir Michael Sadler to Santiniketan gave Tagore an opportunity to place his views on education before that galaxy of eminent educators and administrators who were deeply impressed by his educational experiment at Santiniketan.

On May 16, 1918, his eldest daughter Madhurilata died in Calcutta after a protracted illness. A good part of Tagore's time was now devoted to teaching his students at Santiniketan. It was in the Autumn of the same year that he conceived the idea of an intercultural centre at Santiniketan. Shortly after, he went on a tour of South India during the course of which he got acquainted with the South Indian style of music. On his return to Santiniketan the plan about creating an institution which would be a true centre for the different cultures of the East was given final shape and the foundation stone of Visva-Bharati (International University) was laid with proper ceremony on December 22, 1918.

During the first quarter of 1919 he went again on an extensive tour of South India, visiting several towns where he lectured on his educational

ideals. It was at Salem in South India, that he delivered for the first time his lecture on The Centre of Indian Culture delineating the basic ideals of Visva-Bharati. On April 13, troops under command of Brigadier General Dyer committed the notorious Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in Punjab. "The official estimate of casualties was 379 killed and over 1,200 wounded. This was followed up by the proclamation of martial law, punitive measures, and humiliating orders."⁴⁵ So strict and efficient was the censorship that the news of this dastardly act and the subsequent horrors reached Bengal only a month later. Deeply perturbed by this tragic news, Tagore hastened to Calcutta and after having failed to convene a public meeting of protest over which he offered to preside, wrote his historic letter⁴⁶ on May 30 to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, renouncing his Knighthood. The concluding portion of that courageous letter reads as follows:

... the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings. ⁴⁷

On June 26, 1919, at the request of Romain Rolland, Tagore signed La déclaration pour l'indépendance de l'esprit which the former "had drafted

⁴⁵ Percival Spear, Op. cit., p. 346.

⁴⁶ Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 259-260.

⁴⁷ Idem, Ibid., p. 259-260.

on behalf of the European artists and intellectuals." ⁴⁸ Shortly after, the nucleus of Visva-Bharati was formed when a new department, Vidya-Bhavana, was opened for advanced studies in Indology. Later in the same year was opened the department of Fine Arts, Kala-Bhavana, under the direction of Nandalal Bose.

The early part of 1920 Tagore spent on a tour of Western India during the course of which he visited Mahatma Gandhi at his Asram on the bank of Sabarmati river. During his tours within the country Tagore availed himself of every opportunity to disseminate the ideals of his newly-established Visva-Bharati. The next ten years of Rabindranath's life were filled with ceaseless activity. The urge to travel, and the necessity to collect funds for his University, took him to all parts of the world. On May 11, 1920, accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law, he set out on his fifth foreign tour. On board the ship he had long talks with the Aga Khan who read out to him from the great Persian poet Hafiz and held discussions on Sufism. ⁴⁹ In England he did not have a happy time. He was rather surprised and not a little pained to notice the studied aloofness on the part of several English friends who seemed to resent his outspoken comments on the character of the British rule in India and the renunciation of his Knighthood. Edward Thompson gives the following succinct account of the rest of Tagore's fifth Western tour:

⁴⁸ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 277.

⁴⁹ Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 129.

After a brief stay in England, he crossed to France, where he found an enthusiastic welcome. He went on to America, where his reputation had suffered even more than in England, people having passed from extravagant homage to disregard. Then, in 1921, he visited Denmark, Sweden, and Germany, in all of which countries, as later in France, he was received with almost incredible honour. His lecture-rooms were crammed and his plays were received with wild applause. Generous gifts of whole libraries were made to Santiniketan; European Governments made him their guest, and put aeroplanes at his disposal. At Copenhagen there was a torchlight procession of students in his honour. German publishers made purchases of paper which contemplated a sale of three million copies of his books; ... 50

Rathindranath who accompanied his father on this triumphant tour makes the following observations about it:

The two years 1920 and 1921 which we spent travelling in nearly every country on the continent of Europe and a long winter in the U. S. A. were a most revealing experience for us and gave us for the first time a true understanding of the outside world. The devastating effects of the war were fresh in the minds of the people and the very foundations of their civilization had received a rude shock. In desperation they were turning again to the East for some light to guide them in reconstructing their lives. Just then the presence of Father in their midst was looked upon as a godsend. His message gave them hope. In England and France people are not usually carried away by emotion. But even there the love and veneration Father received wherever he went was surprising. In central and northern Europe, the people simply worshipped the ground he trod upon. In crowded meetings and railway stations we got used to the sight of people jostling each other to approach Father in order to touch the hem of his robe. The sale of his books was phenomenal. In Germany millions of copies were sold. 51

Then Tagore returned to India in July 1921 after an absence of nearly fourteen months, the non-co-operation movement was in full swing under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. But Tagore was all for intellectual and moral co-operation between India and the West. He gave eloquent expression

50 Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 264-265.

51 Rathindranath Tagore, Op. cit., p. 125-126.

to his views in two public lectures in Calcutta, thus courting unpopularity among his own people. Shortly afterwards Tagore had a closed-door conference with Gandhi and the mutual regard and respect the two great men had for each other did not suffer any damage.⁵² In November Professor Sylvain Levi, the French savant, left Harvard to join Visva-Bharati as its first Visiting Professor. On December 23, 1921, Visva-Bharati, the World University of India, was formally inaugurated by the well-known Indian philosopher Dr Brajendranath Seal. Tagore handed over his Santiniketan properties, the Nobel Prize money and the copyright of his Bengali books to the Visva-Bharati by a trust deed. In the following year the Rural Reconstruction Institute at Sriniketan was formally opened with Leonard Elmhirst, a young and generous Englishman as its first Director. In August of the same year Tagore addressed the students of Presidency College, Calcutta, on the ideals of Visva-Bharati. In September he went on a lecture tour of western and southern India during the course of which he visited several towns giving lectures on educational and cultural topics. The development of Visva-Bharati was uppermost in his mind in those days. From South India he proceeded to Ceylon to deliver a series of lectures at Colombo and Galle. On his return to the mainland he again visited a number of cities and towns in southern and western India before returning to Santiniketan towards the end of the year. A few books of poems and an important collection of essays intitled Creative Unity⁵³ were published during this year.

The three following years (1923-1925) were crowded with work for Visva-Bharati and with literary work -- songs, masks, essays, anthologies,

52 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 292.

53 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, London, Macmillan, 1922.

redactions of his own earlier work.⁵⁴ In the early part of 1923 he visited a number of towns in northern and western India. An important cultural journal, Visva-Bharati Quarterly, was launched under Tagore's editorship in April. His considered views on Hindu-Muslim relations appeared in an article entitled The Way to Unity in this periodical. He again went on a tour of the country to collect funds for the Visva-Bharati department of Fine Arts. In February of the following year, at the invitation of the University of Calcutta, he delivered a course of three lectures on Literature. Shortly after, at the invitation of Liang-Chi-Chao, the President of the Universities Lecture Association of China, he sailed for China accompanied by four of his associates. En route he was received warmly at Rangoon, Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong. While he was still at the last city, he received a letter of welcome from the Chinese leader, Sun Yat-Sen. Before proceeding to Peking Tagore spent some time at Shanghai, Hangchow, Nanking and Tsinan. At Peking he attended several formal receptions and met the intellectual elite of the city. While his outspoken views on East-West relations provoked bitter criticism in some quarters, at other places he had an enthusiastic audience. Some of the lectures he delivered in China at this time were later published under the title Talks in China.⁵⁵ Cultural unity of Asia was one of the main themes of his lectures in China. From China Tagore and his party proceeded to Japan on an extended tour of the latter country. In Tokyo, Tagore addressed audiences at the Imperial University, the Women's University, the National Ladies Association and at the Pan-Pacific Club. About an outcome of this Asian tour of Tagore, Krishna Kripalani remarks:

54 Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 272.

55 Rabindranath Tagore, Talks in China, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1925.

His visit to China and Japan led to the first conscious attempt in the history of Asia to formulate the idea of Asian unity by the organization of an Asiatic Association in Shanghai in September of the same year. 56

Tagore returned to India in July. Later in the year, he accepted an invitation of the Republic of Peru to attend the centenary celebrations of its independence. Unfortunately, he fell ill during the voyage and was prevented from proceeding to Peru after touching port at Buenos Aires. He took several weeks' rest at a villa near that city as the guest of Madame Vicotia Ocampo. A book of poems, Puravi, which he wrote during this period he dedicated to his charming hostess whom he addressed as Vijaya, the Sanskrit equivalent of Victoria. On the eve of his departure from Argentina he had a meeting with the President of that Republic. He returned to India in February 1925 after visiting Genoa, Venice and Milan, en route.

During 1925 Tagore received such distinguished visitors as Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal at Santiniketan in spite of the fact that he had occasion to criticize publicly some of their views and opinions. In November of that year, the distinguished Orientalist Carlo Formici came to join Visva-Bharati as a Visiting Professor with a gift of valuable Italian books from Mussolini. Another Italian Professor, Giuseppe Tucci joined Visva-Bharati shortly afterwards. In the last month of 1925 Tagore presided over the first session of the Indian Philosophical Congress in Calcutta delivering a lecture on the deeper truths of folk cultures and folk religions of India.

In the second week of January, 1926, the Cultural Representative of the League of Nations, F.S. Marvin, visited Santiniketan. In February,

Tagore after having delivered a series of lectures at the University of Dacca in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) visited all the principal towns of that region. In May of that year he set out on his eighth foreign tour accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law. This time he was a State guest of the Fascist government of Italy. Mussolini and the people of Italy accorded him an unprecedented welcome. Probably nobody excepting Mussolini himself had been thus honoured in Italy within living memory. Rome, Naples, Florence, Turin, everywhere he was fêted lavishly. From the children giving the Annual Choral Concert in the Coliseum to the Professors in the University halls, the reception given to Tagore was simply overwhelming. The poet was very pleased with the reception he received and spoke of Mussolini and his Government in appreciative terms. He did not know at that time that the Fascist Dictator was using his visit and distorted versions of his public speeches for his own political propaganda. But when he crossed over to Switzerland, Romain Rolland and several distinguished Italian exiles apprised him of the real nature of Fascism. They showed him garbled reports of his statements to the Italian Press in which he was made out to be an admirer of Fascism. Tagore was greatly incensed by this duplicity and wrote a strong letter to the Manchester Guardian of England, condemning Fascism. "As a result, the Government controlled Press of Italy broke into a storm of denunciation"⁵⁷ of Tagore.

From Switzerland Tagore and his party proceeded to Vienna to fulfil a lecture engagement. From Vienna he went to London by way of Paris. In August he visited Norway to address the Oriental Academy at Oslo and made a

⁵⁷ Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 275.

brief trip to Stockholm to meet the members of the Swedish Academy. After visiting Denmark he arrived in Berlin in the second week of September. Two days after his arrival in the German capital he was received by President Hindenburg. He had also a memorable and long meeting with Albert Einstein. From Berlin he went on a tour of almost all the principal cities of Germany, lecturing and reading from his poetry and plays. He again visited some central European countries and then moved east. During this part of the tour he was received by the Kings of Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece and Egypt. The Greek Government decorated him with the 'Order of the Redeemer'. A meeting of the Egyptian Parliament was adjourned in his honour. Wherever he went he was honoured as the messenger of peace and harmony. On arrival in Calcutta in December at the conclusion of this grand tour he was given a rousing welcome by a large body of citizens headed by the Mayor of that great city.

In the first half of 1927 Tagore staged two dance-dramas and began writing a novel Tin Purush (Three Generations) the title of which he later changed into Yogayog. In July of that year he sailed from Madras, this time on a tour of some South-East Asian countries. His itinerary included Singapore, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Taiping, and Penang, in all of which places he had to follow an endless round of public and social engagements. From Malaya he set out on a tour of Java and Bali. On his return voyage he visited Siam, was received by the King, and later delivered a lecture on Education at Chudalongkorn University, Bangkok.

In January 1928 he received at Santiniketan the delegates of the Indian Science Congress. In the same month Professor Victor Lesny arrived from Prague to join Visva-Bharati as a Visiting Professor. In May, he received an invitation from Oxford University to deliver the Hibbert Lectures. After

reaching Madras, the proposed voyage to England had to be cancelled due to illness. With a view to recoup his health he took a trip to Ceylon. But after ten days he returned to the mainland without much improvement in his health. He spent the following three weeks in Bangalore as the guest of his old friend, the learned philosopher Sir Brajendranath Seal, the then Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University.⁵⁸ During this rest period he completed the novel Yogayog mentioned in the previous paragraph and finished another one called Sheshar Kavita which he had begun during his voyage to Ceylon. In September, Tagore contributed a message to the Golden Book of Peace published by Ligue Mondiale pour la Paix. Shortly after, he assumed full administrative responsibility for all the institutions of Santiniketan. Also, he began to devote much time to his new medium of creative self-expression, painting.

An invitation from the National Council of Education of Canada to attend their Triennial Conference was the occasion for his tenth foreign tour. He left India on March 1 and on his way, after touching Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai, stopped for a few days in Japan. His first lecture in Canada, on the Philosophy of Leisure, was delivered at Victoria on April 6. The second lecture on the Principles of Literature was given at Vancouver. In the meanwhile he had received several invitations from Universities in the United States. On arrival at Los Angeles he lost his passport and in resentment at the way he was treated by the Immigration officials which exhibited racial prejudice, he cancelled his engagements in protest and sailed for Japan.

⁵⁸ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 333.

During the weeks spent in Japan, at a meeting of the Indo-Japanese Association of Tokyo, he delivered a lecture on Oriental Culture and Japanese Mission. On his way back to his native land he visited Indo-China where the Government and people of that country accorded him a most cordial welcome. In the month of August he delivered two lectures under the auspices of the Tagore Society of the Presidency College, Calcutta, on literary themes.

In January 1930 Tagore went on a lecture-tour of western India during the course of which he held discussions on educational problems at the Teachers' College in Baroda. In February he received the Governor of Bengal at Santiniketan incurring thus public criticism on account of the tense political situation prevailing in the country then. It was at about this time that Tagore took up painting seriously as a new medium for his creative expression.

Tagore set out on his eleventh foreign tour, which was also his last European tour, in March, 1930. Exhibitions of his paintings were held in Paris, Birmingham, London, Berlin, Copenhagen and Moscow eliciting enthusiastic appreciation from Art critics. The high point of this last European tour, however, was the Hibbert Lectures which he delivered at Oxford in May. All Oxford listened spell-bound to the poet from Bengal. These lectures were later published by Allen & Unwin under the title The Religion of Man.⁵⁹ While visiting with the Quaker community at Woodbroke near Birmingham, he delivered a lecture on the Ideals of Education in East and West.

⁵⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, Op. cit.

From England Tagore went to Germany where he was received by the members of the Reichstag. Later, he had two meetings with Albert Einstein. After visiting several German cities he crossed over to Denmark where he participated in a meeting of the New Education Fellowship which was in session then at Elsinore. The month of August was spent mostly in Switzerland. From Geneva he proceeded on his first and last visit to the U. S. S. R. via Poland. The leading intellectuals of the latter country came to pay their respects to Tagore at Warsaw Station. During his two weeks' stay in U. S. S. R. he fulfilled several cultural engagements and was deeply impressed by the Soviet achievements in education and social welfare. "His Russian visit proved a revelation, an intense delight whose influence never left him."⁶⁰

He left Moscow on September 25, 1930, and after a brief stay near Berlin went to the United States of America. In New York a great public banquet was organized in Tagore's honour by 400 leading citizens of that great city. At a reception held in the Carnegie Hall under the auspices of the Discussion Guild and the Indian Society of America, Tagore spoke on educational problems. Exhibitions of his paintings were held at New York and Boston. President Hoover received him in Washington. Tagore returned to England in December and was back in India in January, 1931.

Tagore's seventieth birthday was celebrated all over India on May 8, 1931. A week-long formal celebration with varied cultural programmes was organized by the citizens of Calcutta. Several cultural Organizations and the

⁶⁰ Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 277.

student community of Calcutta presented the poet-philosopher with formal addresses. The highlight of the celebration was the presentation of The Golden Book of Tagore⁶¹ to him containing the messages and tributes of his friends and admirers all over the world.

Tagore birthday celebrations were suddenly cut short on January 4, 1932 when news was received of the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi.

The poet who had still considerable faith left in the British professions of justice and fair play, sent a cable to the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, protesting against 'the policy of indiscriminate repression ... causing permanent alienation of our people from yours'. On 26 January he issued a statement which the government censorship of press did not allow to be fully published. The poet, hurt and mortified, expressed his feelings in a poem, called 'Prashna' (The Question),...⁶²

An exhibition of his paintings was opened at the Government Art School, Calcutta, in February. Shortly after, to a group of Quakers visiting him at Santiniketan, he spoke of a future of moral federation and an inner harmony of peace between the peoples of India and England.

At the invitation of the King of Iran, Reza Shah Pehlavi, Tagore undertook by air his twelfth foreign tour in 1932. He

was overwhelmed with honour, both official and popular, the newspapers hailing him as 'the greatest star shining in the eastern sky'. His birthday was celebrated, on 6 May while he was still in Teheran, with great éclat and the poet was deeply moved by the affection and honour showered on him with oriental lavishness, both by the Shah and by the people, and expressed his feelings in his farewell speech.⁶³

61 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, Calcutta, The Golden Book Committee, 1931.

62 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 361.

63 Idem, Ibid., p. 363.

He returned to India by air after a brief halt at Baghdad where he was received by King Feisal of Iraq. The University of Calcutta held a special Academic Reception in his honour and invited him to occupy the University Chair of Bengali. Later in the same year he issued a fervent appeal to the public to eschew caste prejudices and social discrimination. At the beginning of 1933 he delivered a series of lectures at the University of Calcutta on religious and educational topics. Also, he organized the work of compiling a glossary of technical terms in Bengali. In spite of several public engagements he found time to write two new plays during this period. In December he delivered a series of important lectures at Andhra University which was published later under the title Man.⁶⁴ In Hyderabad at a garden party organized by Osmania University he delivered his Message to Youth. At Secunderabad he addressed a public meeting on the Ideals of an Eastern University.

Jawaharlal Nehru with his wife Kamala visited Santiniketan in January 1934 and Tagore held a public reception in their honour. In May, the poet with a party of teachers and students of Santiniketan sailed for Ceylon on a cultural tour. His address to the Rotary Club of Colombo on Visva-Bharati was broadcast over Radio Ceylon. He and his party returned to Santiniketan after about six weeks' stay in Ceylon. In August of the same year Tagore received an open letter from the British scholar Gilbert Murray inviting his co-operation in promoting international understanding, an ideal very dear to both of them. Tagore's response was characteristic of him. The open letters exchanged between these two idealists were published later by the International

64 Rabindranath Tagore, Man, Waltair, Andhra University, 1937.

Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, Paris.⁶⁵

In January 1935, Tagore received the delegates and invitees of the Indian Science Congress at Santiniketan. In the following month he delivered the Convocation Address at the Banaras Hindu University on the occasion of which the University conferred on him the degree of D. Litt. (Honoris Causa). From Banaras he proceeded to Allahabad, Lucknow and Lahore to address audiences consisting mainly of students and was back in Santiniketan by March. In November he held a public reception in honour of the visiting Japanese poet Yone Neguchi.

During the Education Week organized under the auspices of the Bengal Government and the New Education Fellowship in February 1936, Tagore delivered a series of lectures on Education. He continued his creative writing as before and directed the production of a ballet he wrote. In July, the University of Dacca (now in Bangladesh) honoured him with the degree of D. Litt. (Honoris Causa in absentia). In September of the same year he sent a message to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom at Brussels.

On February 17, 1937, Tagore delivered the Convocation Address of the University of Calcutta, the first non-official invited by the University to perform such a function. In the following month he addressed the Parliament of Religions convened in Calcutta to mark the centenary of the birth of the great Indian saint Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Tagore's address was entitled Religion of the Spirit and Sectarianism. On the occasion of the opening of the China Bhavan (Department of Sino-Indian Studies) at Santiniketan, he

⁶⁵ Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore, East and West, Paris, International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations, 1935.

delivered a lecture on China and India. In September while preparing to visit Gwalior he fell ill suddenly and was in critical condition for about two days. The recovery was a slow process with many days of anxiety for everybody who loved him. Jawaharlal Nehru and other political leaders attending a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Calcutta visited him and later on passed a resolution of thanksgiving on his recovery. Before his illness he had written a textbook on Science, Visvaparichay, and during his convalescence he wrote a number of poems with an undertone of mystic realization, later published as Prantik (Borderland).

In 1938, his health kept him within the borders of his Province but his pen continued to be quite active. Between 1937 and 1939 he published not less than ten volumes.⁶⁶ In 1938 he received several important visitors from India and abroad at Santiniketan. In March Osmania University of Hyderabad conferred on him the degree of D. Litt. (Honoris Causa in absentia). In the same year he wrote a famous open letter to the Manchester Guardian on the Government of India Act of 1935 and also sent a very frank and straightforward reply to the Japanese poet Yone Neguchi who had written to Tagore trying to justify the Japanese aggression of China. The year 1939 was also a very fruitful one with many private and public engagements.

In February 1940, Mahatma Gandhi and his wife Kasturba visited Santiniketan which proved to be the last meeting between the saint and the poet. Tagore held a public reception in honour of Gandhi. Prior to the

66 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 387.

latter's departure from Santiniketan Tagore handed over to him a letter requesting him:

'Accept this institution under your protection, giving it an assurance of permanence if you consider it to be a national asset. Visva-Bharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure, and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation.' ⁶⁷

The years had brought many bereavements and sorrows to Tagore. In the death of his devoted English friend, C.F. Andrews, in April 1940 Tagore suffered one of his last great sorrows.

The last, but not the least, academic honour conferred on him during his long life-time came from the University of Oxford which, according to Edward Thompson, ⁶⁸ only twice before in its long history had granted a degree in absentia. In August 1940 the University deputed Sir Maurice Gwyer, the then Chief Justice of India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the world-renowned Indian philosopher, and Mr. Justice Henderson of the Calcutta High Court to hold a special convocation at Santiniketan where the degree of Doctor of Literature (Honoris Causa) was conferred upon Rabindranath Tagore. "The University whose representative I am", said Sir Maurice Gwyer, "has, in honouring you, done honour to itself." ⁶⁹ In the opinion of Edward Thompson, "Few events in his (Tagore's) life gave him greater pleasure." ⁷⁰

In September, while on a visit to Kalimpong, Tagore took seriously ill again and was brought down to Calcutta for treatment. After two months

⁶⁷ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 338.

⁶⁸ Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 287.

⁶⁹ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 389.

⁷⁰ Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 287.

of devoted care he regained some health and was taken to Santiniketan to convalesce. "But his pen was as active as ever and, before the year was over, four new volumes were published, ..." ⁷¹ During this period a goodwill Mission from China came to visit him and his institutions.

For Tagore, with the passing of months, infirmities of old age only increased. The forebodings of his friends about the approaching inevitable event were indicated by the fact that they celebrated his eightieth birthday anniversary three weeks ahead of time. Tagore marked the occasion by composing a message in the form of an address entitled Sabhyatar Sankat (Crisis in Civilization). ⁷² As Krishna Kripalani remarks, it was "his last public utterance, his testament of faith". ⁷³ This address was widely published and created a profound impression among those who read it.

On May 8, 1941, Tagore's actual birthday was celebrated all over India. This day were published three more of his latest books. His health kept on deteriorating. Towards the end of June he had a relapse. On June 25, after a most touching farewell, Tagore was taken from Santiniketan to Calcutta where he underwent an operation on July 30. A few hours earlier on the same day he had dictated his last poem. His condition only deteriorated after the operation. On August 5, he lost consciousness and breathed his last on Thursday, August 7, 1941, shortly after noon.

⁷¹ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 390.

⁷² Rabindranath Tagore, Crisis in Civilization, Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1941.

⁷³ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 393.

Thus came to a close the remarkable and eventful career of a great man. "All his life he had lived by his faith in life, in humanity, in God." ⁷⁴

The brief biographical sketch attempted to portray the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore from his birth to death. It was made clear that Rabindranath had a rather lonely childhood dominated by domestic servants and devoid of much parental affection and tenderness. But the imaginative and inward-looking boy had a free spirit within and the authority of home, school, and society sat lightly on him. The Tagore household - a centre of art and culture - provided a very congenial atmosphere for the budding genius of young Tagore. In the fullness of time he blossomed out as a poet, philosopher, educator, novelist, playwright, painter and a man of action. His literary genius received international recognition by the award of the Nobel Prize in 1913. But poetic pursuits were only one aspect of his multifaceted personality. He was also a social thinker of considerable originality and strength. He not only enunciated new social and educational ideas but also worked them out by establishing a unique school and later, a very remarkable University and an experimental centre of village reconstruction. Throughout his adult life he took an active part in many national as well as international causes and movements. During many lecture-tours in his own country and scores of other countries he exposed himself to a wide range and variety of interesting experiences and at the same time preached the gospel of peace and goodwill to all nations. In his endeavour to promote world harmony and international understanding he had many supporters and admirers who came to look upon him as a world citizen and a universal man. It is the task of the next appendix to examine this phenomenon more closely.

⁷⁴ Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 394.

APPENDIX 3

SOME CONTEMPORARY ESTIMATES OF TAGORE

It is but natural that a versatile genius like Tagore could elicit a multitude of widely differing reactions among those who came in contact with him directly or indirectly. A number of research studies pertaining to this subject, especially with reference to reactions in the foreign press, has been completed during the past three decades. The works of Aronson,¹ Hurwitz,² Mukherjee,³ Sen,⁴ and Hay,⁵ fall under this category. The point to be noted here is that in all these studies Tagore was viewed mainly from a literary and/or political angle. Since the present study is concerned with the philosophy and educational thought of Rabindranath Tagore rather than his literary achievements, it is thought appropriate to investigate in this appendix some typical contemporary reactions to Tagore from a philosophical and humanistic point of view. For this purpose it will be found necessary to bring together the views held about Tagore as a philosopher, educator

1 Alex Aronson, Rabindranath Through Western Eyes, Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1943.

2 Harold M. Hurwitz, Rabindranath Tagore and England, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois, 1959.

3 Sujit Kumar Mukherjee, Passage to America: The reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States, 1912-1941, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Philadelphia, Pa., University of Pennsylvania, 1963.

4 Nabaneeta D. Sen, Op. cit.

5 Stephen N. Hay, Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970.

and humanist by some of his eminent contemporaries from various walks of life who knew him well. By recording the testimonies of these witnesses it is hoped to bring to light the many qualities and accomplishments of Tagore which made him a truly universal man. This topic will be dealt with under ten headings as follows:

1. World Poet and Littérateur of Genius.

First and foremost, Rabindranath Tagore was a poet. But he was no ordinary poet. In this section, the views expressed by some eminent writers on the special appeal of Tagore as a poet will be presented.

In the opinion of the well-known historian K.M. Panikkar who was himself a littérateur of considerable stature:

Tagore is a world-poet in the universality of his appeal,⁶ in the message which it conveys to all without difference of race, colour or creed; but to us he is essentially the poet of India, the inspired singer of songs who has shown a new way in literature, who has opened up new vistas of life and thought.⁷

John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church, New York, made the following statement about Tagore:

... Tagore holds great place to-day in the life not merely of his nation but of all mankind...
As poet and philosopher alike, Rabindranath Tagore has been the supreme reconciler of East and West.⁸

⁶ N.B. The underlining in this and the following quotations in this appendix was added by the writer for emphasis.

⁷ Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 195.

⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 109.

Richard B. Gregg of Boston, Massachusetts, notes that "More than any other man Rabindranath Tagore has through his own works taught the world the marvellous beauties of Indian literature and song." ⁹

Sir Hari Singh Gour, a member of the former Legislative Assembly of India, gives the following appreciation of the writings of Tagore:

His writings breathe, not the musty fumes of the lamp, but the green aroma of the corn fields. Unlike many a Hindu poet, he has not confined his poetry to describing the imaginary exploits of the great heroes of Hindu legend like Sri Ramachandra and Sri Krishna; but he has followed the lead, if I may be permitted to say so, of the great humanist poets of the West for whom humanity counts and of which they are the heralds and the symbols. ¹⁰

The Australian author, H. Duncan Hall of Sydney, writes about Tagore as follows:

It is not merely that the Poet and Philosopher in him are universal and appeal to hundred spirits (sic) whatever the outward circumstances of their lives. No Australian who passes through the sunburnt plains of India and sees its people living close to the earth and the elemental things of life, can fail to realize that despite all the differences, there are common elements in the lives of the two peoples ... To some of them at least Tagore has given a fuller vision of the inner beauty of that fusion of nature and the human spirit which is part of their daily lives. ¹¹

The following excerpts are taken from a literary appreciation of Tagore written by a Bombay journalist and author, Nagendranath Gupta:

⁹ Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁰ Idem, Ibid., p. 94.

¹¹ Idem, Ibid., p. 105.

... the world hails him as a world-poet, a singer whose melodies contain a world appeal, who has voiced the yearnings and aspirations of all humanity in verses of singular sweetness and penetration ... The world has reacted promptly and eagerly to the magic of his songs, because the world longs for words of faith and the harmony of peace and beauty.

... The man as well as his work have had universal acceptance; Rabindranath himself has been welcomed with open arms and warm hearts wherever he has gone, east, west, north and south, and his writings have found a permanent place in the literature of almost every country in the world ... East and West stand side by side rendering homage to the poet and prophet. ¹²

Further on Mr. Gupta writes: "For him there are no bounds of nationality or country. His gift is the heritage of humanity, his voice is the clear expression of human thoughts struggling for utterance." ¹³

Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged his indebtedness to Tagore in the following significant words: "In common with thousands of his countrymen I owe much to one who by his poetic genius and singular purity of life has raised India in the estimation of the world." ¹⁴

2. Man of Religion and Spirituality.

Tagore, the world-poet with a universal appeal was also a man of religion, spirituality and pure life who sought and found his inspiration in God and in His divine love.

Charles Freer Andrews, an English missionary and a close friend of both Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, writes about the latter as follows:

¹² Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 99.

¹³ Idem, Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁴ Idem, Ibid., p. 1.

There is a sentence in the Book of the Psalms of David that I have often remembered when Rabindranath Tagore's personality has come before me in some unexpected aspect of greatness. The Psalmist speaking to the Divine Lord says:

"Thy humility hath made me great."

That verse is true of the Poet. The divine humility in him has made him great. He is humble as a little child. The immortal spirit within him, keeping him thus childlike, has wrought this sovereign inspiration of true genius.

There is one more significant passage, this time taken from the Sermon on the Mount, which seems more than any other to complete for me the whole picture. It runs thus:-

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

In the untarnished mirror of his own innocent and childlike heart the vision of God is reflected. 15

Mahatma Gandhi, in a passage already quoted, ¹⁶ bears testimony to the "singular purity of life" of Rabindranath Tagore.

In the opinion of Kostas Palamas, the Greek poet who was the Secretary of the University of Athens from 1897 to 1943, Rabindranath was "the spiritual ambassador whom Asia has accredited to Europe." ¹⁷

Johan Bojer, the well-known Norwegian novelist and playwright, writes of Rabindranath Tagore as follows:

He is India bringing to Europe a new divine symbol, not the Cross, but the Lotus. His wisdom knows no age, it is old as the rivers of India and younger than even childhood, for there shimmers in it something in-born, which will not be revealed until the Morrow. His Poetry belongs to no school - the flowers of Bengal were created by sun and rain... His religion knows neither hope nor fear. It dwells in the calm of the Spiritual Universe which nothing but the human heart can comprehend. 18

15 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 26.

16 See page 286.

17 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 15.

18 Idem, Ibid., p. 40.

Rendel Harris, a prominent member of the Society of Friends in England, after reading Tagore's Gitanjali recorded his impressions about and reactions to the book and its author as follows:

The things that are said here sparkle like diamonds with many facets; one moment you seem to be reading a handbook of Christian devotion; the next moment, after the manner of the Sufis, all creeds, all buildings that house creeds, mosques as well as churches, are left far behind, and the Soul is heard singing like a lark,

'Sucked up out of sight,

In vortices of glory and blue air.'

Is he, then, a Sufi, or just one of the lovely company that are almost Christians, because in so many ways they are beyond what is called Christianity? Where did the man find this secret hunger after God which burns his heart away in great flames of desire, and will not be satisfied till the whole world is aglow with the heat from the same central fire and radiant with the light from the same central flame? 19

Joseph Jankowski, the polish author and poet, expressed the following opinion about Tagore:

Rabindranath Tagore is one among those few who are gifted with the highest inspiration of God, of Truth, of the Absolute Reality. He is on the way to God. He is nearest to His Reality. 20

The Japanese poetess, Ina Metaxa, in dedicating one of her exquisite poems to Tagore wrote: "To Rabindranath Tagore, whom of all poets I love best, for none has spoken of God as he did." 21

Romain Rolland, a Nobel Prize winner and a personal friend of Tagore, held the opinion that "he (Tagore) was not only the 'poet' but the spiritual ambassador of Asia to Europe..." 22

19 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 104.

20 Idem, Ibid., p. 119.

21 Idem, Ibid., p. 157.

22 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 293.

J. Ph. Vogel, the well-known Orientalist and Rector of the University of Leyden, Holland, in an essay entitled Champions of Love, makes the following reflections:

What then is the antidote against that deadly poison which threatens to consume the whole world of the living? It is Universal Love. It is sympathy fostered by knowledge and true culture. This is the great task of the leaders of mankind - prophets and saints, poets and artists, statesmen and scholars - to promote that feeling of mutual understanding and goodwill which is inspired by Universal Love. Love is the heavenly champion whose mission it is to slay the beasts of evil. Among those leaders of men we greet the Poet of India, whose songs have comforted and rejoiced not only his own people but the peoples of the East and the West, and whose noble mission it has been to unite the disunited through the power of Divine Love. 23

3. Seer and the Prophet of the Law of Love.

Helen Keller, the world-renowned American author and lecturer, addresses Rabindranath Tagore in the following moving words:

Again the Voice bade you go from land to land in search of knowledge. With observing eye and listening ear you journeyed, and saw the curse of division, the darkness of prejudice, the deafness of hate in which men live as strangers and enemies. But, looking long and patiently, you found the dynamic force of love hidden in humanity... the force which, understood, shall transform their life of selfdestruction into a life of creative work and peace. To a world living under the law of fear you are a Prophet of the Law of Love. 24

Krishna Kripalani, an authority on Tagore, makes the following perceptive comment about Tagore:

23 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 264.

24 Idem, Ibid., p. 122.

Though Tagore was essentially a poet, he was much more than a mere poet in the Western sense of the term, as Gandhi was more than a mere politician or patriot. He was a poet in the traditional Indian sense of the word, kavi, a seer, an intermediary between the human and the divine. His genius enriched whatever it touched. Like the sun after which he was named ..., he shed light and warmth on his age, vitalized the mental and moral soil of his land, revealed unknown horizons of thought and spanned the arch that divides the east from the west. 25

The illustrious scientist and thinker, Albert Einstein, addresses Tagore thus:

Thou sawest the fierce strife of creatures, a strife that wells forth from need and dark desire. Thou sawest the escape in calm meditation and in creations of beauty. Cherishing these, thou hast served mankind all through a long and fruitful life, spreading everywhere a gentle and a free thought in a manner such as the Seers of thy people have proclaimed as the ideal. 26

Selma Lagerlof, a Nobel Prize winner and the first woman member of the Swedish Academy, in a poem addressed to Tagore refers to him as the "Indian seer". 27

It is worthy of note how people of widely varying background and traditions view Tagore under the same light, often using identical vocabulary.

4. Hindu Mystic with the Stamp of a Muslim Sufi.

Sybil Baumer ²⁸ has made a book-length study of Tagore's mysticism. In Sigfrid Estborn's study ²⁹ too there are references to the mysticism

25 Krishna Kripalani, Op. cit., p. 2-3.

26 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 12.

27 Idem, Ibid., p. 334.

28 Sybil Baumer, An Introduction to Tagore's Mysticism, London, H.R. Allenson, n.d.

29 Sigfrid Estborn, The Religion of Tagore in the Light of the Gospel, Madras, Christian Society for India, 1949.

of Tagore. The following quotations, however, are from two Bengalis - one, a Hindu and the other, a Muslim - who had a deep empathy with their subject.

Surendranath Das Gupta, the eminent historian of Indian Philosophy, in a brief study of the mysticism of Rabindranath Tagore makes the following comments:

In his autobiographical sketch he refers to one fine morning when the sun shone before the tree tops and the houses before him and brought with it a new message which cleared away the darkness and delusion in which he was groping so long. He feels throughout all his mystic writings that man is but a part of the universe as a whole. 30

And further on Dr. Das Gupta writes:

In his mystic vision Rabindranath deeply feels that God is always approaching us in the various phenomena of nature, in the heat of summer, in the rains of the monsoon, in the corn-fields and sun-shine of autumn, through the shivering cold of winter and the rejuvenating touch of spring. Numerous songs of the poet testify to the feeling of communion with God through the various occurrences of nature... The mysticism of Rabindranath thus consists in the conviction of his personality, of his true relation with the higher man in himself, its place in the world of events and nature, and in the final fulfilment of the destiny of man, in the totality of the whole from which we can never be thrown away. 31

Hasan Suhrawardy, the first Muslim Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, makes the following observations on the mysticism of Tagore:

His songs speak with a touching sincerity and with the naturalness of his relationship with the Unseen; his passionate love of nature and his mystic sentiveness are supreme.

30 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 68.

31 Idem, Ibid., p. 70.

His first spiritual inspiration must have come from his great father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore. The Maharshi was a passionate admirer of the mystic poetry of Sufism, and Rabindranath's poetry, too, in its spiritual content is reminiscent of the poems of the immortal Hafiz and other great Sufi or mystic poets of Iran. His external appearance has the stamp of a Persian saint and a Muslim Sufi. The Tagores with their broad spiritual outlook, received the best from Islamic mysticism. In their culture they seem to indicate the best type of Hindu-Muslim Unity. 32

5. Friend, Champion and Guru of Womanhood.

Tagore's veneration and love for womanhood and his championship of the rights of women are relatively unknown aspects of his personality. One can, however, catch a glimpse of his views on woman, home, feminine love, motherhood, etc., in one of his lectures ³³ as well as in a section of Dilip Kumar Roy's ³⁴ record of his conversations with Tagore. The testimony given below comes from Dr. (Mrs.) Muthulakshmi Ammal Reddi, who was formerly the Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council. Dr. (Mrs.) Reddi writes:

True to the spirit and teachings of Hinduism, he has been advocating absolute equality, equal rights and equal opportunities between the sexes and his speeches and writings breathe a deep veneration and love for womankind. He believes that India's redemption, nay, the redemption of the whole world from greed and quarrels and the establishment of international Peace and Goodwill is possible only with the help of a refined, pure and devoted womanhood. Women of the East and the West look upon him as their friend, champion and Guru. 35

32 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 356.

33 Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, London, Macmillan, 1922, (Reprint 1962), p. 157-166.

34 Dilip Kumar Roy, Among the Great, Bombay, Jaico Publishing House, 1950, p. 173-183.

35 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 136.

6. Philosopher and Educator.

Since the philosophy and the educational thought of Tagore are to be treated more fully in subsequent chapters, the testimonies in this section will be kept to a minimum.

Ramananda Chatterjee, the well-known editor and an intimate friend of Tagore, makes the following incisive comment on the latter's philosophy:

In philosophy he is not a system builder. He is of the line of our ancient religio-philosophical teachers whose religion and philosophy are fused components of one whole. Both his poetry and prose embody his philosophy - the latest prose-work in English being The Religion of Man.³⁶

H. Duncan Hall³⁷ of Sydney in a passage already quoted states that "the Poet and Philosopher in him are universal..."

John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church, New York, also writes in the same vein. "As poet and philosopher alike, Rabindranath Tagore has been the supreme reconciler of East and West."³⁸

Amiya C. Chakravarti who had been associated with Tagore for many years as his literary secretary makes the following significant observation: "As an educator of nations he (Tagore) shows us that the elusive links of a common destiny hold humanity together in its progressive manifestation of the world-mind of Man."³⁹

³⁶ Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. iv.

³⁷ See page 285.

³⁸ See page 284.

³⁹ Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 49.

Ramananda Chatterjee has written the following thoughtful comment on Tagore, the educator:

As an educationist, he has preserved in his ideal of Visva-bharati, the international university, the spirit of the ancient ideal of the tapovanas or forest retreats of the Teachers of India - its simplicity, its avoidance of softness and luxury, its insistence on purity and chastity, its spirituality, its practical touch with nature, and the free play that it gave to all normal activities of body and soul. While the ancient spirit has been thus sought to be kept up there is in this open-air institution at Santiniketan no cringing to mere forms, however hoary with antiquity. The Poet's mental outlook is universal. He claims for his people all knowledge and culture, whatever its origin, as their province. 40

7. Internationalist and World-Citizen.

The fact of being recognized as a poet and philosopher with a universal outlook is indeed one aspect of being an internationalist and a world-citizen. As Rajani Kanta Das of the International Labour Office, Geneva, writes, "Dr. Tagore is in fact a leader of mankind. His contribution to culture stands out as a great landmark in human progress." 41

Bipin Chandra Pal, a Calcutta journalist and author, has advanced the following reasons for Tagore's internationalism:

He (Tagore) is also the prophet of the new age. His denunciation of modern nationalism marks him out as the prophet of that internationalism towards which the whole world is unmistakably advancing. The word of the history and evolution of the last century, as Lord Morley once pointed out, was nationalism. That nationalism has already done its work. The word of the history and evolution of the present century is Internationalism. And Rabindranath stands in the very forefront of the prophets of this internationalism. 42

40 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. viii-ix.

41 Idem, Ibid., p. 63.

42 Idem, Ibid., p. 191.

Jawaharlal Nehru, another internationalist of world stature, looked at Tagore's internationalism from another angle as can be seen from the following statement:

Nationalism, specially when it urges us to fight for freedom, is noble and life-giving. But often it becomes a narrow creed, and limits and encompasses its votaries and makes them forget the many-sidedness of life. But Rabindranath Tagore has given to our nationalism the outlook of internationalism and has enriched it with art and music and the magic of his words, so that it has become the full-blooded emblem of India's awakened spirit. 43

Ramananda Chatterjee makes the following illuminating comment on the internationalism of Rabindranath Tagore:

The origin of what is called his Internationalism has sometimes been traced to his revealing and disappointing experiences during the Anti-partition and Swadeshi movement of Bengal of the first decade of this century. Such experiences are not denied. But his love and interest in the affairs of the whole of humanity are traceable even in his writings of his boyhood in his teens. And in maturer life, this feature of his character found distinct expression in a poem, named Prabasi, written thirty-one years ago, in which he says that his home is in all lands, his country in all countries, his close kindred in all homes, and that he is resolved to win this country, this home and these kindred. 44

Edward Thompson, one of Tagore's British biographers, after a careful and thorough study of the life and work of his subject came to the conclusion that, "(Tagore) shook off the last shreds of whatever remained to him of narrow and national prejudices, and almost became the first completely emancipated citizen of the whole world." 45

43 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 183.

44 Idem, Ibid., p. vi.

45 Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 285.

The concluding paragraph of Thompson's biography of Tagore contains the following passage: "... his (Tagore's) genius was a tree whose branches spread to every land and time, and his catholicity was as great as his courage." ⁴⁶

Another Englishman J.A. Spender, the late editor of Westminster Gazette, England, made the following perceptive comment about Tagore:

Tagore is always an Indian patriot and he has rightly resented what is wounding to the pride or self-respect of his countrymen, but his thoughts travel beyond patriotism to the unity of the spirit in which alone there can be peace and reconciliation for nations or individuals. In this he had been a true citizen of the world, teaching not an Eastern or an Indian doctrine, but the one human truth of which mankind everywhere stands in urgent need today. ⁴⁷

8. Reconciler of East and West.

Bertrand Russell, the internationally known British philosopher and public figure, gave the following assessment of Tagore:

He has contributed as much as any man living to the important work of our time, namely, the promotion of understanding between different races. Of what he has done for India it is not for me to speak, but of what he has done for Europe and America in the way of softening of prejudices and the removal of misconceptions I can speak, and I know that on this account he is worthy of the highest honour. ⁴⁸

Sir Atul Chandra Chatterjee of the India Office, London, England, agrees with Bertrand Russell on this point.

⁴⁶ Edward Thompson, Op. cit., p. 291.

⁴⁷ Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 248.

⁴⁸ Idem, Ibid., p. 220.

Sir Atul Chandra writes:

Not only has his (Tagore's) creative genius been universally recognised but it has given our country (India) a high place for intellectual achievement among the nations. His influence has been one of the primary factors of the day which are welding together in harmony and concord the peoples of the world. 49

John J. Cornelius, who was one of the first to write a doctoral dissertation on Rabindranath Tagore as an educator, makes the following statement:

Rabindranath's mission in life is essentially that of reconciliation and unification, of sowing seeds of goodwill and peace among the children of men. He is in himself the embodiment of the cultural synthesis of East and West. 50

Ramananda Chatterjee is in complete agreement with the above statement as is evident from the passage quoted below:

His (Tagore's) hands reach out to the West and the East, to all humanity, not as those of a suppliant, but for friendly grasp and salute. He is among the foremost reconcilers and uniters of races and continents. 51

John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church of New York has borne the following eloquent testimony to this facet of Tagore's personality:

As poet and philosopher alike, Rabindranath Tagore has been the supreme reconciler of East and West. To each, as a sort of inspired mind, he has been the interpreter of the other. More than any other oriental of whom I know, he has understood the West, seen the good in the midst of its evil, discerned in its mastery of the material world an indispensable and permanent contribution to the life of man, and commended to

49 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 52.

50 John J. Cornelius, Op. cit., p. iv.

51 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. vii.

the East this vast achievement. But just because he has known the West so well, he has seen its need of what the East could bring - namely, a mastery of the inner life to match the West's great mastery of the outer realm of things. If the West has developed the means of living, the East has found the end of living. Her people have laid hold upon the spirit, without which no people, whatever their mechanistic miracles, can hope in the long run to survive. So here was a severed world, each part of which needed the other, as the two halves of Plato's mythical man hungered and searched for one another. To bring these two divisions of mankind together has been Tagore's great mission. 52

D.J. Irani, a Solicitor and author belonging to the Parsee (Zoroastrian) Community of Bombay while discussing the need for East-West understanding makes the following significant observation:

Unless there is a better and more intimate cultural and spiritual understanding between the East and the West, a great calamity stares the world in the face. But should such an understanding be an accomplished fact, it might be the precursor of universal peace and brotherhood in this world. If this vision ever comes true, the future history of the world, will attribute it most to the two great men of the present age, Gandhi and Tagore, both coming from the ancient land of India, both sons of the great Aryan race. 53

What William H. Kilpatrick, the well-known Columbia University professor and educationist, has to say about Tagore is no less remarkable. Writes Professor Kilpatrick:

Tagore represents in the very finest way the spiritual history of India flowing forth into the future, leaving behind its outworn parts and blending itself with the best in the cultures of all the worlds. He and his University represent India in the dignity of her past taking the next step forward.

52 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 109-110.

53 Idem, Ibid., p. 118.

His appreciation of the West goes much deeper than that of most other leaders of India. He has often been criticized in India by extremists because he will not speak against the West as they would have him do. Instead he defends the West for its practical idealism and its broad vision. He senses with the clarity of a Prophet that the East and the West are great and how much greater they could become if they could be brought into closer co-operation with each other. 54

Sten Konow, the well-known Norwegian Orientalist who had the opportunity to observe Tagore at close quarters expresses the following cautious and well-considered opinion about Tagore:

We do not want to become Indians, and we do not want the Indians to become Europeans in their mind and in other ways. But we want the East to join hands with the West, in a noble contest for the promotion of the highest ideals, which are common to the whole world. We feel that Rabindranath Tagore has been our best guide towards this deeper understanding. And we also feel that he, with his deep sympathy, will be able to show the East, and above all India, that we are her brethren, and not her enemies. We called him Guru Dev in Santiniketan. And he has become our Guru. He has shown that oceans and continents cannot separate what is one: the human mind in its longing for peace and harmony, for beauty and lofty ideals. Our hearts go out to him, in gratitude, and in hope, the hope that he will long be able to continue his noble work for mutual understanding and love. The world is in need of it. 55

C. P. Scott, the editor of The Manchester Guardian, expressed more or less the same idea more succinctly as follows:

Perhaps our chief ground for gratitude to Rabindranath Tagore is that he has bridged the gulf that divides East and West. He is not only a supreme representative of the culture of his own people, but has entered into the very heart of ours. That is an extraordinary achievement for which we owe him in equal measure admiration and thanks. 56

54 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 123.

55 Idem, Ibid., p. 131.

56 Idem, Ibid., p. 229.

Hasan Suhrawardy, the distinguished Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, has almost identical views on this facet of Tagore's personality as is evident from the following passage:

We should be grateful to Rabindranath, not only because he has won through his poetry such a splendid recognition for India, but also because of the greater cause of humanity which he has served. He has realised in his soul the unity of man and the harmony of nature. The ideal which he has set up is freedom of the mind and spirit, and universal peace and good-will by true understanding between the peoples of the East and of the world at large. 57

9. The Great Sentinel, Leader and Benefactor of Mankind.

Romain Rolland, the French humanist and Nobel Prize winner, makes the following perceptive comment about Tagore:

He has been for us the living symbol of the spirit of light and Harmony, - the great free bird which soars in the midst of tempests, - the song of Eternity which Ariel makes to vibrate on his golden harp, above the sea of unloosened passions. But his sovereign Art has never remained indifferent to human misery and to the heroic struggles of peoples for freedom. He has been the "Great Sentinel" as he was named by Gandhi (who would be the first amongst us, to greet him, if he is not separated from us by the prison walls). In tragic hours, Tagore is the clear-eyed and undaunted watchman of his own people and of the world. 58

Rajani Kanta Das of the International Labour Office, Geneva, in an essay on "Dr. Tagore and Cultural Progress" emphatically states: "Dr. Tagore is in fact a leader of mankind. His contribution to culture stands out as a great landmark in human progress." 59

57 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 355.

58 Idem, Ibid., p. 361.

59 Idem, Ibid., p. 63.

The great humanist-scientist Albert Einstein's tribute to Tagore is equally appropriate in the present context as under another aspect already considered.⁶⁰ To repeat that quotation, here is what Einstein has written:

Thou (Tagore) sawest the fierce strife of creatures, a strife that wells forth from need and dark desire. Thou sawest the escape in calm meditation and in creations of beauty. Cherishing these, thou hast served mankind all through a long and fruitful life, spreading everywhere a gentle and a free thought in a manner such as the Seers of thy people have proclaimed as the ideal.⁶¹

Count R. Bassewitz, the one time Consul-General for Germany at Calcutta, writes as follows:

It gives me great pleasure to express on behalf of my Government to Rabindranath Tagore on the occasion of the publication of the Golden Book of Tagore the best wishes for the future. The general admiration felt for him has found a beautiful expression in the Golden Book. Many thousands of my fellow-countrymen join the great poet's Indian followers in gratitude for his donations to mankind and wish that for many years to come Rabindranath Tagore will continue to be to the German people the outstanding interpreter of Indian philosophy, poetry and wisdom.⁶²

Another distinguished German, Professor Heinrich Meyer-Benfey of Hamburg University, who thought that "the Indian and the German peoples are children of the same mother",⁶³ writes of Tagore as follows:

⁶⁰ See p. 290.

⁶¹ Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 12.

⁶² Idem, Ibid., p. 27.

⁶³ Idem, Ibid., p. 162.

Rabindranath Tagore is not the messenger of India alone, but the announcer and prophet of a new humanity in which the best and deepest aspirations of the Eastern and the Western man are united. This he presents to our eyes in his teaching, in his work, in his person. Herder and Goethe laid the foundation of a universal literature in the German language (the term is Goethe's), in which the voices of all nations were to mingle. Rabindranath Tagore initiates a universal culture in which all nations will co-operate, each bringing its own gift in brotherly union. In this sense we all feel ourselves to be his disciples and bow to him in deep veneration. 64

According to Johan Bojer of Norway:

His (Tagore's) love for his fellowmen is not the love of the Samaritan, but of the Song of Songs. He knows that just as the dew drop in the grass may mirror the Heavens, so the human mind may reflect God. 65

In the judgment of Arnold Toynbee, "The Indian missionaries of an Indian philosophy, Buddhism, were the first people in history to think and feel in terms of the human race as a whole." ⁶⁶ Therefore, it is of considerable interest and significance to record what two prominent Buddhists wrote about Rabindranath Tagore during his life time. The following passage is part of a message from the religious and nationalist leader of Burma, Bhikkhu Ottama:

On behalf of Burma and the Burmese Buddhist Community, I welcome the Seventieth Birth Anniversary of one of India's greatest sons, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. Through his services to humanity in manifold spheres he has given us honour, and we honour him. We are proud of him and we are grateful for all that he has done for us. As a messenger of peace and a missionary of human brotherhood, he has travelled far and wide, and he has worked strenuously to bind the East and the West together with the golden tie of Love. His life and ideals will long inspire all workers in the cause of humanity. 67

64 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 166.

65 Idem, Ibid., p. 40.

66 Arnold Toynbee, "Towards One World by Peaceful Change" in The Emerging World: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Volume, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964, p. 238.

What Sri Devamitra Dharmapala, the Head of the Maha Bodhi Society (Buddhist) of Calcutta, has written about Tagore is no less significant.

Writes Sri Devamitra:

The world has deservedly crowned him (Tagore) as the greatest living poet of the present age and one of the greatest of any age, but very few realize as yet that his silent and often unnoticed labour in the cause of World Peace, is one of his greatest titles to immortality. Poets will come and poets will go, but very few of the creative artists of the world show this unique record of Tagore, as a spinner of the golden dream of Maitri, fellowship, making the whole world kin, silently removing the apparently irremovable barriers between nation and nation. Through his prophetic messages and passionate poems men and women all over the world have felt that they belong to one family; and that is the greatest miracle which Rabindranath has worked in this age darkened by selfishness and savagery. 68

It is appropriate to close this section with a quotation from Selma Lagerlof, a Nobel Prize winner and the first woman member of the Swedish Academy. The concluding stanza of a poem this great woman addressed to Rabindranath Tagore reads as follows in English translation:

When it shall dawn - that day, so distant,
 so ardently longed for,
 when life has reached its goal, when the
 final harmony is attained,
 and the old dream of Paradise has become
 a reality;
 then will the men of that time remember
 the Indian seer
as one among those who prepared the happy future,
as one among those who, with invincible hope,
uprooted the poison-plant of hatred,
to sow in their stead the apples of love,
 and the roses of peace. 69

68 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 71.

69 Idem, Ibid., p. 334-335; (Swedish original on p. 136 of the same book).

10. One of the most Universal, Greatest and Complete
of Human Beings.

Albert Schweitzer, a many-sided genius like Tagore and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, concludes a study of the world view of Rabindranath Tagore as follows:

So he is as little able as the others who had attempted it before him really to found the world-view of ethical world and life affirmation on knowledge of the Universe. But the Goethe of India gives expression to his personal experience that this is the truth in a manner more profound, more powerful and more charming than any man has ever done before him. This completely noble and harmonious thinker belongs not only to his own people but to humanity. 70

The well-known American historian Will Durant wrote of Tagore in 1935 as "perhaps the most impressive of all men now on earth". 71

The great Indian scientist, Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman who won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1930, concludes his appreciation of Rabindranath Tagore as an international figure as follows:

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Tagore's great international fame rests only on such of his writings as have found their way into other languages from the original Bengali. It would be more correct to say that it is the rare charm of his personality and human qualities which have won for him the high place he holds in the esteem and affection of mankind. In the course of his extensive travels, he has left behind him everywhere personal memories which are cherished and treasured. His simplicity and dignity, his varied gifts in literature, art and music, and his fine sense for all that is true and good and beautiful are some of the hall-marks of his greatness which are patent to all. That the world claims him today as one of the greatest of living men admits of no manner of doubt. 72

70 Albert Schweitzer, Indian Thought and Its Development, Paperback ed., Boston, The Beacon Press, 1957, (3rd printing, 1960), p. 248-249.

71 Will Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. I: Our Oriental Heritage, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1935, (23rd printing, 1963), p. 621.

72 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 203.

This section will be concluded with one last testimony, the one from Hermann Keyserling, the German philosopher, *littérateur*, and world traveller. Writes Count Hermann Keyserling:

Rabindranath Tagore is the greatest man I have had the privilege to know. He is very much greater than his world reputation and above all, his position in India imply. There has been no one like him anywhere on our globe for many and many centuries. That is, Rabindranath is the creator of a nation... Rabindranath, however, is the great model of the full-grown oecumenic Indian of centuries to come. In this he should mean much the same to India as Goethe has meant and means to Germany... I admire my great friend Rabindranath Tagore as I admire no other living man, because he is the most Universal, the most encompassing, the most complete human being I have known. 73

In the foregoing paragraphs an attempt was made to marshal the testimonies of a number of eminent contemporaries of Rabindranath Tagore with regard to his multi-faceted personality. In this galaxy of men and women who wrote about Tagore are included historians and orientalists, scholars and authors, Christian clergymen and Buddhist monks, journalists and editors, legislators and statesmen, diplomats and international civil servants, poets and playwrights, scientists and *littérateurs*, University professors and academicians, and educators and philosophers. Five of them, at least, are Nobel Prize winners. Among them are to be found Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians - representing all the major religions of the world. In national origins, they are as varied: people from Australia, Burma, England, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, India, Japan, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and United States of America. In spite of their varied backgrounds, professional interests, religious affiliations, and national

73 Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., Op. cit., p. 127.

origins, they had one thing in common, namely, the similarity of the views they held about Rabindranath Tagore. As is but natural, each of them saw Tagore under his or her own individually tinted spotlight. The happy outcome of this endeavour is the prospect of seeing and appreciating Tagore as a world poet, a *littérateur*, a humanist, a philosopher, a man of singular purity of life, a spiritual ambassador, a divine symbol, a man of God, a prophet of the Law of Love, a seer, a mystic, a friend, champion, and Guru of womanhood, an educator, a leader and benefactor of mankind, a messenger of peace, a missionary of human brotherhood, an embodiment of the cultural synthesis of East and West, a reconciler and uniter of races and continents, and a citizen of the whole world. The facts that lie behind all the foregoing appellations could be synthesized in a single, general, comprehensive concept, namely, universalism. Any impartial and fair-minded reader of these testimonies may, therefore, come to the conclusion that Rabindranath Tagore was one of the most complete, encompassing and universal of human beings who ever lived.

APPENDIX 4

ABSTRACT OF

The Educational Philosophy of

Rabindranath Tagore: Ideals of Universalism¹

The purpose of this study was to explore the range and breadth of the multifaceted vision and manifestation of the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore with reference to his philosophy of life which appeared to have been permeated with the ideals of universalism.

The investigation was centred round two hypotheses, namely, that the philosophy of life of Tagore is replete with the ideals of universalism and that since his philosophy of education stems from his philosophy of life, it also is saturated with the ideals of universalism.

The primary sources for the study were the published philosophical, educational and relevant literary works of Tagore available in English. The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with the metaphysical and religious thought of Tagore and chapter two discussed his ethical and aesthetic ideas. The result of the systematic investigation of his philosophical thought showed that it is permeated with the ideals of universalism. The premise that one's philosophy of education stems from one's philosophy of life was accepted as an axiom. An exposition of Tagore's theory of general education was presented in chapter three. Chapter four examined how his theory was embodied in the two schools he founded. The final chapter was devoted to a discussion of Tagore's ideals of higher education and how they found their fruition in the International University he founded. These investigations clearly indicated

1 Joseph A. Kattackal, doctoral thesis presented to the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1972, xv -308 p.

that there was a close affinity between his philosophy of life and his philosophy of education, both of which are imbued with the ideals of universalism.

The study led to the following main conclusions: Tagore truly deserved to be called a universal man; his world-embracing universalism emanated from his philosophy of life; his philosophy of life could be designated as universalism; his philosophy of education had close affinity with his philosophy of life; his philosophy of education is permeated with the ideals of universalism.