CHAPTER - IV

ANNADASANKAR ROY ON
TAGORE LITERATURE
The literary environment and atmosphere in which Annadasankar took his first strides was totally inspired by a Tagorean milieu. Later on, when he started going his own way and formed his own philosophy of life and the world, there was even then little difference between that philosophy and the Tagorean philosophy, thereby reflecting the deep impact of Tagore upon him. That accounts for the frequent reference in his diverse compositions to Tagore and his works and thoughts. Annadasankar got to know Tagore properly from the journal Sabujpatra when he was only twelve years of age. He read many writings of Tagore in Prabasi as well, apart from the series of booklets entitled Rabindranath O Santiniketan written by Ajit Kumar Chakraborty, which he found in the school library. He even acted in Tagore's play mukut before the poet had been honoured with the Nobel Prize although he did not know till then that Tagore was also a poet.  

Annadasankar always felt that Tagore was as great a writer of stories, novels and essays as he was as a poet. He thought that in this country, nay in the world, there was no other writer who moved about so freely in the diverse fields of literature and art.
When he went for the first time to Santiniketan to meet Tagore, Annadasankar was just an unknown student, very eager to get acquainted with the poet. As he said later:

আমি যে একা বিদ্যান্তের সঙ্গে আলাপ করতে গেছি এই আমার ভক্তনার দিনের সেরা যাড়িতেকার।

It was after spending three days that he put a question to Tagore:

Is art too good to be human nature's daily food? ³

Later on, Tagore gave answer to this question in a lecture delivered in Calcutta University, in this way:

It is like higher mathematics. It calls for preparation.

Annadasankar of course was not privileged to listen to that lecture, but the impact of those words was everlasting upon him. ⁴

In 1929, on his return from England, Annadasankar met Tagore again. By then had been published Pathey Prabashey of Annadasankar in Prabashi and Tagore had gone through it. When the two met, Tagore praised him and told him to get it translated into English. Next meeting was in 1931 in Santiniketan together with his wife and then again in 1937 in Atraighat in Bengal when the poet told him to write plays based on episodes taken from the Mahabharata. He also told Annadasankar to compose poems in doggerel verse. They had discussions on many other topics during that meeting. The last meeting was about a year before the poet breathed his last, in 1940, in Santiniketan. Next year, on his own birthday, Tagore sent a tyoed poem to Annadasankar, addressed to him. ⁵ It may be mentioned that Tagore had written letters to him twice already before that-- the first, praising him for the book Rakhi in 1930 (3rd January) and following it,
twice he received telegrams from the poet. Annadasankar was greatly surprised on getting the last birthday poem from Tagore some eleven years following their last meeting. The words, 'To Annadasankar Roy' were written on top of the letter.

The poem

আমার এ জন্মদিন-মাঝে আমিহারা
আমি চাহি বদুজল যারা
তাহাদের হাতের পরশে
ষংজ্ঞার অভিম প্রিতিসে
নিয়ে যাব জীবনের চরম প্রসাদ,
নিয়ে যাব মানুষের শেষ আশীর্বাদ ! .......

This is number 11th poem in Tagore's collection named *Shesh Lekha* and it was first published in *Prabashi* ('Shravan' number) in 1348 Bengali year (P. 405). This poem was sent to Bankura addressed to Annadasankar Roy, I.C.S.

In Annadasankar's words,

কবিতাটি অত্যন্ত করুণ। যদুর মনে পড়ে নিচে কবির হাস্যকর ছিল কমিতা হতের হিজিবিজির মতো। আমাকে তিনি তাঁর শেষ জন্মদিনে শ্রপে করেছিলেন। আমি ধন্য যে আমএর মনে না আছ।

Annadasankar had become a great devotee of Tagore much before he first met the poet. As he said:

তেমন ভক্তি আমি আর কাছে প্রতি অনুভব করিমি। মনে মনে তাঁকে অনুহরণ করেছি। কিন্তু চিঠিপত্র লিখে বিরত করিমি। ............

Thus through occasional meetings, Annadasankar's regard, respect and reverence for Tagore intensified gradually and he got irresistibly attracted by the genius and personality of the great man. It was through his creative genius that Annadasankar could draw
the attention of Tagore and this is proved by the continued love and affection showered by the poet upon the young writer.

Annadasankar has discovered the real worth of Tagore from a totalitarian point of views, on the basis of the poet’s life and works. The great cultural and philosophical milieu in which Tagore’s genius flourished and the Aryan culture which the poet epitomised, were taken to be the backdrop through which Annadasankar tried to evaluate Tagore. In this endeavour he was remarkably successful. He himself had his basis in the same culture and tradition. That was why Annadasankar cast his glance on the mindset of Tagore to find out the distinctive quality of his creations.

He writes:

Tagore’s greatest achievement was that he blended and fused the contemporary western culture with the ancient and primitive culture of India. Annadasankar found out completely that aspect of Tagore’s works and that was why, even after receiving education abroad, he looked upon Tagore as his main prop and the first and last object of worship. It is true that gradually Annadasankar evolved his own style of writing and made definite subjects his area of operation.

As he writes:

But yet, he could not keep himself away from Tagore:

*Tagore did not go out of mind*
and so even after he started going his own way, he felt:

রবীন্দ্রনাথই বাংলার রেনেসাঁসের পরিপূর্তা, আমরা যারা পরে জন্ম ছিল, তারা সেই
পরিপূর্তাকে অতিক্রম করতে পারবে কি ?

He knew, it could not be, and so he admitted:

বাংলার রেনেসাঁস এখনও অসমাপ্ত। রামমোহন রবীন্দ্রনাথকে অধীকার করে
রেনেসাঁসের সমাপ্তি হতে পারে না।

That was why Annadasankar never tried to take himself out of Tagorean circle. He sought to discover Tagore a new by keeping himself within that circle.

Annadasankar has written about 25 essays and treatises on tagore and his vast range of literary output and these are to be found in his books *Rabindranath, Pramatha Choudhuri O Sabujpatra* and *Rabindranath*. There are nine other essays on Tagore--

*Raktakarabir Teenjan* (1927),
*Santiniketan Visvabharati* (1930),
*Martya Haite Biday* (written on Tagore's death in 1941-42),
*Rabindranather Parichay*,
*Rabindranath O Mussalman*,

and *Rabindranather Aparadh*.

Then there is the essay-
*Rabindranath O Aamra*, transformed from a speech delivered in 1951, *Rabindrayan*, a discussion of Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya's famous book *Rabindrajibani* and *Aamar Rabindranath*, verbally told for the paper *Rabindranath* and later compiled in the volume *Prasanga : Annadasankar* in 2003. Besides, we find many other reminiscences and observations on Tagore in the book *Jeebanyouban* and other
essays scattered here and there. All these reveal the extent of Tagore's influence and impact on Annadasankar.  

His first writing on Tagore is *Raktakarabir Teenjan* which was published in *Bichitra* when Annadasankar was twenty three years old. Indeed, about no other person or writer did Annadasankar become so vocal and enthusiastic as in respect of Tagore. His writings on Tagore can be classed into two groups-

1. **on the life of Tagore** and
2. **on the literature of Tagore.**

However, his personal feelings for Tagore are manifest in almost all his writings on Tagore. He looks upon Tagore as a person who is constituted of an astonishing variety of knowledge, something unique and rare in the world of literature, and who has presented that knowledge brilliantly through his poetry, drama, novel and essay. Tagore is a person who has studied intimately the ins and outs of nature and Man through his extraordinary power of vision. That he is a writer of multifaceted genius is evidenced by his work *Chhinnapatra*.  

To Annadasankar, the life of Tagore itself is a living wonder and he has discovered that life in the light of reverence. tagore, to him, is the epitome of eternal youth and this induced him to look at Tagore from a different perspective, as the manifestation of a global outlook. He has tried to measure Tagore by placing him beside Tolstoy - the two apostles of Humanism and it is in that perspective he has analysed the life and works of Tagore.
Tagore got the example of living beyond time and space from Rammohan Roy, the great man who discovered the eternal India at a time when he was passing through bad days. The Indian tradition of worshipping the whole inspired Annadasankar greatly. How did Tagore who was almost a home imprisoned person in his boyhood, grow up to be a world-traveller and a world-citizen is a big history. It was not really a path chosen by him for himself; it is interesting to note that the boy who used to play truant at school ultimately became a tireless and indomitable educationist and teacher. Tagore had gone abroad in the beginning of his life, so to say, and that was a good thing, for it enabled him to get intimate with the world. As Annadasankar writes:

পৃথিবীতে এসে পৃথিবীর সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠ পরিচয় হলো না, এর নত দুঃখের কথা অবই আছে।

Tagore got completely merged in body and spirit with this world and so he said:

ইচ্ছা করে বার বার নিটাইতে সাধ
পান করি বিশ্বের সকল পাত্র হতে
আনন্দমদিতা ধারা নব নব প্রোত।

His deep love for the mother earth has greatly impressed Annadasankar and he has been moved by the intensity and depth of the poet's love for Nature and Man. Tagore, the votary of Beauty, has found every thing--big and small, ordinary and extraordinary-beautiful, and his ideal of life has got inseparably bound with his thoughts and ways of life. Tagore's philosophy of life is not just a theoretical one; it is an outcome of his deep realization of life--a life made of many ups
and downs, hopes and aspirations, joy and sorrow. To the poet the town and the country are equally true and living and he has tasted the flavour of both the truths through his deep love for Nature. Tagore is a creator first and foremost and he has a special affection and sympathy for this created world of God with whom he has been eternally bound by a tie of love and good will. It is this feeling of closeness and love that has induced him to move all over Nature. This created world is, as it were, a poem, a song of the poet himself and despite whatever is harsh, tuneless, rhythmless and defective, it is so good, so true.

Annadasankar has analysed Tagore not only as a poet, but also of his role as a Zamindar, and he has done so with equal reverence. Tagore was wise and efficient as a Zamindar and Annadasankar has tried to find out whether he oppressed or ill-treated his subjects through close investigation. He noted what the subjects told about Tagore:

W * m r n u s r  m m  c w B i f c i  a m f w i

and Annadasankar added:

f S r t B R T  3 3

This into the blind eulogy of a devotee, but the truthful utterance of an investigating mind.

Annadasankar has found in Tagore the manifestation of a Renaissance personality with his distinctive thoughts, behaviour, manners and ideals of life. Tagore's secular mindset, his great yearning for knowledge and beauty, his attraction for Science, his
eagerness to manifest life in all its colours and varieties and his freedom of thought and independence of action mark him as one in whom the European Renaissance exercised its clear impact. 23

In this context, he writes:

Renaissance was a kind of stir, an opportunity to smash the old and create things anew. Tagore was one of those who were entrusted with the task of creating new things out of the old.

According to Annadasankar, Tagore's thoughts and philosophy of life were especially influenced by Vedic culture, Upanishadic messages, Buddhist idealism, Vaishnavic ideas and Shaiva idealism etc. He took whatever was acceptable in them and discarded the rest silently. It was Tagore's humanism which particularly attracted Annadasankar. The source and root of that humanism lay in the familial environment of his boyhood and youth and the new awakening in thoughts and ideas of the 19th century India. Just as Tagore never discriminated against different castes, creeds and religions, so also he made no distinction between one society or one culture and another. He believed that all had equal right to freedom. His world of thought is nourished by Upanishadic ideas and his humanism too is a product of those ideas-- it is what is called liberal humanism. 25
and rituals, no hatred and no malice, but only an image of goodwill and well-being. He realized all people of all races through his own race and community and this finds clear reflection in his novel *Gora* where Gora, the protagonist, tells Pareshbabu:

> আজ সেই দেবতারই মন দিন, যিনি হিন্দু মুসলমান গীর্জান ব্যক্তিগত সংকলনকেই। যার মন্দিরের ধার কোনো জাতির কাছে কোনো বাধ্য কাছে কোনোদিন অবরুদ্ধ হয় নাই। যিনি কেবল হিন্দুর দেবতা নন, যিনি ভারতবর্ষের দেবতা।

Tagore realized India as an integral entity, for in him patriotism was ever-alive. Annadasankar observed that Tagore's vision of India was akin to Arjuna's vision of the whole universe, as described in the *Geeta*. It was this that induced him to offer the following salutation:

> অহরহ তব আধান প্রচরিত, প্রণীত তব উদার বাণী।
> হিন্দু বৌদ্ধ শিখ জৈন পার্সিক মুসলমান গ্রীষ্মানী।
> পূর্ব পশ্চিম আসে, তব সংহাসন পাশে
> প্রেম হার হয় পাঞ্জা।

> জনপদ-সমাজবিদ্যাক জয়হে ভারতভাগবিদ্যাত।

To the poet the East and the West have equal significance and position. But, for that, he did not anticipate that the people of the west would turn into Hindus. All would be united and integrated without losing their own identities, and there would be unity in diversity. That was the germ and the root of *Visvabharati*.

In his book *The religion of Man*, we find repeated use of the word *human*, suggesting thereby that one needs to know a man’s religions faith along with his physiology and psychology, if one has to know the man. Man too like God, is possessed of limitless and endless power of diverse character which need to be developed. It is this that has
enabled the man of today to move in the space and to bring Nature under control. In his later life Tagore studied Science with great interest and the illustration of it can be found in his book *Bisvaparichay*. Tagore had a feeling of completeness in him during the last phase of his life when he attempted to fuse religion with science. annadasankar has detected this in *The religion of Man*. Tagore has great faith in man and he believed that it is this faith that would save man in the end. No ism or principle shall be able to help man in getting rid of his danger. That faith will have to be preserved and safeguarded till the end. In fact, it is this faith which is the essence of Humanism.

Tagore had all his life been inspired and fashioned by the new tradition set by Rammohan Roy and as such he was acutely conscious of his age and time. He freely took things from both the age and the country to which he belonged. He no doubt rejected idolatry and other religious conventions and along with that gave up what can be called *Europeanism* but he was a nationalist at heart and he became so much before the Swadeshi Age ushered in and he dedicated his life for nationalist education. His conception of nationalism was form-based and to him religion was not a medium to be used for political gain, not even for the cause of nationalism. We find reflection of it in the political ideology of Nikhilesh as expressed in *Ghare Baire*. In his opinion, the foundation of freedom must be strengthened at all costs and for that strengthening, relentless organisation and service are needed. When the Swadeshi Age came to an end, Tagore once again went abroad, for he believed that he had something to give to Europe, nay, to the world at large. At the time of taking leave, he said in the essay, *Jatrar*
Among the essays written by Annadasankar on Tagore, we find discussion of Tagorean literature and craft in *Raktakarair Tinjan*, but it was not put into any book by him. In 1963-64, Partha Basu and Surajit Dasgupta published a collection of essays named *Prabandha* in which they included it. Apart from this, there are certain places where he made brief analysis of Tagore's works and art and Annadasankar has observed that whatever Tagore wrote is wonderful and distinctly original. There is more suggestion than apparent in the works of Tagore, more of symbolism than direct statement, something unreachable, for which Annadasankar so enjoyed Tagore's poetry.

Annadasankar had a partiality towards Chandidas probably because of the strong influence of the later upon him, but in his estimation, Tagore was the undisputed greatest poet, because—

What Annadasankar seeks to say is:

Annadasanakr has called Tagore a painter of life. In his opinion:
Because he built up his life like a piece of art, so he is a true painter of human life. To Annadasanakar, Tagore's life itself is a great marvel, and he has discovered that life in the light of reverence, from the strange similarity between the poet's creations and his philosophy of life. Tagore realised that this world itself is a song like his own songs. He could not become a realist because he could endear himself to the whole universe.

It is the ideal side of man that has gained the greatest importance in Tagore's vision of life. He saw how man was busy making the world along with the Divine Creator with the help of his creative urge, eager to be what he could not be as yet. Tagore has great respect for man, not pity and so he never undermines man in his poems or novels. There is no devil in his works, because there is no devil in the universal creation. To him, all are good and beautiful and all are kings- \textit{We are all kings in the reign of this King}. He dwells in a vast world in a wide span of time and so even the agony of a jasmine overwhelms him more than the pain of a million human beings. A poet's task is to disseminate and distribute sweetness all over; his vision is spread all around, transcending all barriers of time and space. That is why in his writing there is no undue partiality to any country or age. He is as just as his comrade, \textit{the Divine Creator}.

Annadasankar has written innumerable treatises on Tagore, but nowhere do we find any scholarly analysis or discussion of the poet's
works. He has tried to understand the over-all message of Tagore's works, not what the poet has created by his wonderful poetic sense, poetic beauty, his sense of rhythm and measure and his artistic sensibility. He has devoted more time in explaining and analysing what the poet has given, through a study of his life-story more than his creative life and artistic skill. Annadasankar has tried to unravel one by one various aspects of Tagore's long and colourful life. Thus his Tagore-study and tagore-analysis have an altogether different significance. Though Tagore himself has said, *you shall look in vain for the poet in his life's story*, yet Annadasankar seems to have had more interest in tagore's life than in his literature.

In Annadasankar's opinion, Tagore is not just a Romantic; he is a poet belonging to the poetic tradition of Indian classical literature and culture, though in many ways resembling Shelley, Keats, wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning. Annadasankar is not eager to assess Tagore's poetry through the traditional way of poetical analysis. He observes that according to the criticism of modern times, Tagore's poetry has in it the sensibility of western Romanticism. Language, artistic method and themes are all oriental, but the trend is western. In his words:

বাংলাভাষার সাহিত্যিক চন্দ্রীমণ্ডপ তাঁকে অপারুপ্তের করার কম চেষ্টা করেন।
কিন্তুপরবর্তী যুগের কবিরা একথার থেকে তাঁর পদাঙ্ক অনুপ্রবর্তন করেন। আর *Noble Prize তাঁর সিরে Laurel পরিয়ে দেয়। সারা দেশ সেই গৌরবের প্রতিফলনে গৌরববাদিত হয়।............*

Modern Europe left its imprint upon Tagore, no doubt, but in Annadasankar's view, Tagore started from Shakespeare, i.e., not from classical but from romantic.
A large portion of Annadasankar’s literary output contains expressions of his thoughts on Tagore written with all devotion and reverence. It is difficult to put down all his views within a limited space. It is obvious that he was greatly influenced by the poet’s works after studying his life, his philosophy and his literature. This can be ascertained from his innumerable essays. Buddhadeb Basu has rightly remarked that just as it is difficult to follow Tagore, so it is to keep away from his influence. To imitate him without understanding him properly runs the risk of getting lost in the abyss. Annadasankar is one of the very few who could understand Tagore properly, because Vaishnavism and Baulism which are so prominently existing in the Bengali society have found their fulfilment in Tagore and Annadasankar also belonged to the same school of thought and interest.

Tagore’s impact on Annadasankar is discernible in many places in his essays. His attitude to life as revealed in the book of essays Tarunya is clearly tagorean, where he has laid importance on the freshness and vitality of life. To him youth is more important than life and in this respect he follows Tagore who has urged upon the people to march forward by breaking the chains of lassitude and fatigue to reach the goal of fulfilment in life. The essay Ekla Chalo Re has the title taken directly from Tagore, while the travelogue called Pathey Prabashey bears close resemblance to Tagore’s Europe Prabashir Patra. In this way we find many close similarity between Annadasankar and Tagore.

Annadasankar has been very vocal in admiring Tagore’s life and writings, but it has to be admitted that his discussions have been nothing more than some panegyrics of the poet. It has been nothing
but a devotee's worship of an idol, so to say. Nowhere does he appear as a critic of Tagore, and it must be said with regret that he has given nothing about Tagore that could enrich Bengali literature. His observations on Tagore are nothing short of mere idolatry, a kind of hero-worship. This unpleasant truth has to be admitted, with due respect to Annadasankar's genius, because nowhere do we find him making any critical analysis of Tagore. We would like to conclude our observation in this respect by quoting the following remark of Annadasankar:

Let Tagore live long, let him live a hundred years and unfurl the petals of the lotus of his life. Therein lies his salvation. The example of a liberated man invites a million liberated souls. Time is eternal and the earth too is vast. Posterity will remain grateful to Tagore for what he has left behind for them - the answer to the question, 'how to live'?

In this eulogy of a devotee, there is no doubt, no hesitation, no question and also no analytical assessment. It is just a panegyric on a great man by one who is blinded by the greatness of that man.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES:-

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.


18. 'Basundhara' poem from *Sonar Tari Kabya* by Rabindranath Tagore.


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