Introduction

Rabindra Nath Tagore is one of the outstanding aesthetic thinkers of the contemporary world. His aesthetic thought is essentially idealistic. His idealism does not try to avoid the temporal and the finite but it has still a hold on the Eternal spirit. It is sometimes held that he is only an artist and that we cannot possibly find any philosophy in his writings. But such a statement has only some element of truth. It cannot be accepted in its entirety. The poetic and philosophic aspects of Tagore's thought do not conflict with each other. We have a philosopher-poet in Tagore. In fact, we have both poetry and philosophy in Tagore's thought. Poetry is the worship of Reality in its aspect of beauty; philosophy is the worship of the same reality in its aspect of truth.

His ideas are subtle and elusive. His approach to philosophy is aesthetic. For Tagore, the Real is the Beautiful. He finds nature to be unpredictable and loves her more for it. He is a humanist and his humanism is coloured by his aesthetic experience.

Tagore's aesthetic thought is based on six pillars. Six pillars are Satya (Truth), Sundar (Beauty), Mangal (good),
Ananda (joy), Prakash (Expression) and Sahitya (literature).

When one's soul will establish a harmonious relation with other souls and nature, there the beauty will emerge. There will be the concord amongst the souls and the external reality. Unity in diversity forms the core of Tagore's principle of beauty. Beauty is not a part of luxury, it involves restraint.

Tagore is an idealist, a spiritualist. He has been influenced by the teachings of the Upanishads. He has tried to divinise the creative element of man. He is one of the foremost leaders of Indian Renascence in art, music, dance and literature.

To get well acquainted with Tagore's aesthetic thought, we have endeavoured here to focus his interpretation of art from the aesthetic point of view. It has been attempted to show how through creative middle path, Tagore wants to have harmony, which is a vital element in his aesthetics. In Tagore's aesthetic experience, idea of God seems to be inescapable. The interdependence of God and His creation is shown to find out its aesthetic base. Attempt is also made to go through his view of love which dissolving all contraries helps the aesthetic thought to emerge. Lastly, the role of freedom and bondage in aesthetics has been shown.
Art and surplus energy - "Art for Art's sake" - Art and its mission

Of all the living creatures of the world, man has his vital and mental energy vastly in excess of his need. This excess insists him to work in various lines of creation for its own sake. According to Tagore, Brahma is boundless in his superfluity which inevitably finds its expression in the eternal world-process. Like Brahma, man takes joy in productions with his excess energy. Man's surplus energy seeks its outlet in art. With this excess energy, man sings, writes poetry, dances and these all are arts of different types. All of them are the revelations of man's aesthetic awareness. Tagore says, "The voice that is just enough can speak and cry to the extent needed for everyday use, but that which is abundant sings, and in it we find our joy. Art reveals man's wealth of life, which seeks its freedom in forms of perfection which are an end in themselves."

Due to our excess energy, we think of others, sympathise with others, and at this juncture, we climb high above our narrow ego-centric consciousness. In such pleasing circumstances, man's inner being may be aroused by love or by some great emotions. At such moment, man's inner being yearns to express itself only for the sake of expression. Artistic creations are the media of such expressions. Here external necessities of life are totally absent, man is free from the
checks and balance of the material world. According to Tagore, "in everyday life when we are mostly moved by our habits, we are economical in our expression; for then our soul-consciousness is at its low-level, - it has just volume enough to glide on in accustomed grooves. But when our heart is fully awakened in love, or in other great emotions, our personality is in its floodtide. Then it feels the longing to express itself for the sake of expression. Then comes Art, and we forget the claims of necessity, the thrift of usefulness."  

The artistic impulse or the creative impulse is a kind of extension or enlargement of one's personality. The artist has a peculiar tendency to share his feelings with others. He tends to have an aesthetic response from others. In this sense, art is communicative. Leo Tolstoy also considers art to be communicative. True art has an universal appeal in it. Tagore conceives that because of his excess energy, man knows himself well, feels his personality intensely. His personality requires an outlet of expression and it is art through which personality is revealed. Tagore explains, "only man knows himself, because his impulse of knowledge comes back to him in its excess. He feels his personality more intensely than other creatures, because his power of feeling is more than can be exhausted by his objects. The efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression. Therefore, in Art man reveals himself and not his objects."  

Art is
social. It has the power of persuading others and to unite them. Art helps us to extend our personalities.

In all the processes of conceiving, expressing and communing, there is a forgetting of one's self. This forgetting gives delight, because the truth is then realised that individuality is unreal. Self-forgetfulness is the secret of all art. The source of delight, the beautiful is found everywhere to the extent to which one is able to look beyond the unreal limitations of appearances or to negate the sense of difference and duality. Thoughts of all other objects are lost in the artist's mind. He identifies himself with the particular subject he wishes to present, merges his consciousness in it, and loses himself. By the time when this forgetfulness of self and identification with the not-self occurs, when the life within the artist becomes one with the life without him, art takes its birth. True art transcends the narrow barriers of the individual and personal. To seek the universal in the particular, the ever-enduring in the transitory is the clue to the very nature of all great art. In the "cycle of spring", Tagore says, "We (Poets) set men free from their desires." V. Subramanya Iyer also says in the same tone as Tagore, "The artist often forgets his body and the material surroundings when he is engrossed in the ideas which for him constitute everything."
According to Indian theory, aesthetics is not only confined to that limited branch of study which deals with the appreciation and creation of art works, but it is the delineation of all ordinary experiences including those which arise from pure art activity. The aesthetic consciousness comes about through a complete identity of the knowing subject with the aesthetic object. It is a pure experience indeed, filtered of all extraneous influences and ingredients.

According to Indian philosopher, beauty is subjective, not objective. It is not inherent in form or matter, it belongs only to spirit, and can only be apprehended by spiritual vision. There is no beauty in a tree or flower, or in man or woman, as such. Beauty belongs only to the human mind. Indian theory of art agrees with Hegel in thinking that "the outward shape by which the content is made perceptible is merely there for the sake of mind or spirit." K.C. Pandey says, "A work of art has its origin in human spirit. It is a product of spiritual activity. It receives its due form through the creative impulse of the artists."

Tagore has been profoundly influenced by the classical Indian aesthetic thought. He also entertains the subjective view of art. According to him, self-expression is the dominant interest of the artist. The object is not everything, it is a means to an end. Realization is considered to be of utmost value in a work of art. To realize that beauty is not there in
form or matter but belongs to spirit is the actual truth. Beauty follows simultaneously from self-expression. Thus beauty is not objective. Tagore says, "Men are children of light. Whenever they fully realize themselves they feel their immortality. And as they feel it, they extend their realm of the immortal into every region of human life. This building of man's true world - the living world of truth and beauty is the function of art." Tagore observes, "The object of art is not beauty but expression or self-expression."

In the domain of art, the need for harmony is more powerfully and immediately felt. Outer proportion must be enriched by inner harmony. In their art-activities, artists find themselves lost in an unending, all-engrossing sea of pleasure. Other interests are then of no value to them. The artists become free from the torment of external impressions and there they have aesthetic repose. Art is thus the great harmonizer, the pacifier, the reliever. "The artist comes to the beholder with a gift - the gift of repose and harmony and feeling of unity and completeness. Such an experience as this is aesthetic experience."

To Tagore, the world of art is real. He holds that art should rise above necessity. It should not be led by any utilitarian purpose. All great artists, all creative geniuses, have only one aim or purpose, namely to express the creative impulse of life as they themselves experience it. Kant also
holds the same view. Such activity is free and spontaneous.*

Theories of 'pure intuition' and 'pure feeling' belittle the importance of communication in art. Croce identifies intuition with expression.** Gentile says that art is not the expression of feeling but the feeling itself. Tagore conceives this to be one-sided view. Excluding expression, if we restrict aesthetic activity to the mere contemplation of the beautiful would be self-contradictory. In a note on 'Sahitya Mulya' (The value of literature), Tagore says: "The production of rasa is not the sole pursuit of art. It has the other aspect of creation and expression of form as well." **11 Regarding the 'alliance' between feeling and communication in music, he says: "To the singer, idea and expression are brother and sister. Very often they are born twins." **12

Thus it is evident that life is perpetually creative, because it contains in itself that surplus energy which ever overflows the boundaries of the immediate time and space. According to Abhinavagupta, "Artistic creation is the direct or unconventional expression of a feeling or passion "generalised”,

*According to Kant, in art, the genius creates spontaneously and is dominated by original inspiration, he does not follow set rules or definite laws. (History of Modern Philosophy, by Frederick Mayer, p. 322)

**Intuitive activity possesses intuitions to the extent that it expresses them. Be it pictorial, or verbal, or musical, or in whatever other form it appears, to no intuition can expression in one of its forms be wanting; it is, in fact, an inseparable part of intuition. (Aesthetic, by Benedetto Croce, p. 8)
that is freed from all distinctions in time and space and therefore, from all individual relationships.\textsuperscript{13}

We are to admit, 'art for art's sake', as would it not have been so, creation of art would have been impossible for the people of ancient times, when civilization was at the cradle. Only out of the urge to create, they engage themselves in painting, sculpture, music etc. Art has penetrated deeply into the natural life of India. This we find in the case of Indian peasant-folk. They are illiterate in the sense of unlettered, but they can challenge comparison in point of culture with their corresponding classes anywhere in the world. Indian tradition denies any dichotomy between art and life. Life should not be isolated from the significant current of art. Without art, life cannot be a comprehensive one. Art, like life itself, has grown by its own impulse and man has taken his pleasure in it without definitely knowing what it is. Tagore admits this.

At the same time like Milton, Tolstoy and George Bernard Shaw, Tagore believes that all true art has a mission to perform. A true poet has a definite end to achieve. Tagore has a distinct ideal to realise - to make man think and yearn for a higher life. The real fact is this that art itself is a yearning for a higher life, life universal, and what we find in Tagore is that through art we are endeavouring to attain this higher life. Thus in his aesthetic thought, Tagore
primarily admits 'Art for Art's sake'. But in the second stage, he has annexed a purpose or a goal to art and claims that art has the unique power of exaltation. It heightens life.

**Adherence to the creative middle path, quest for harmony**

Tagore believes in the reality of creation. It has already been found that surplus energy in case of man enforces expression in the varied forms of self-realization. This surplus energy, which encourages self-expression through creative activities, is the source of joy. God has infinite and unlimited power, so naturally a lot of surplus energy is there with Him. God Himself creates the world in the fullness of joy. Joy is thus the cause of creation, joy will therefore be everywhere in the created world. Tagore says, "Our master Himself has taken upon Him the bonds of creation, he is bound with us for ever."^{14}

Tagore holds that God, the creator, i.e., the universal spirit is not separate from the human souls as human souls are the creations of God Himself. This implies that there is a deep and abiding harmony between man's spirit and the spirit of the universe. This harmony is the source of delight which is aesthetic in nature. Tagore also conceives that the "Reality is human ... .. when we are aware of it, we are aware of ourselves, and this gives us delight."^{15}
The realisation of the affinity of the goodness of man with the godliness brings heavenly happiness, i.e., delight to us. Delight is a touch-stone of Tagore's aesthetics. This delight is poured from the goodness of man. Goodness means to be good to himself or herself, at the same time to be uniformly good to others and what is more charming is to be good enough or kind enough to all the creatures of God including nature. Beauty is also God's creation; beauty reveals God's majesty. In the same way, goodness reveals the beauty of human conduct. Beauty of goodness endows man with godliness. The realisation of this intimate nearness of goodness and godliness overflows us with happiness. We consider nothing to be more beautiful than this realisation. Tagore says, "Beauty reveals God's majesty in the midst of His creation. Goodness does the same in the conduct of the human being. The beauty of goodness is a thing of much widen and deeper significance - it endows man with godliness. It is because of this intimate nearness that we do always notice goodness as beauty. When we do realize this, our whole being overflows with happiness like a river in flood, we come to know that nothing in the world can be more beautiful."16

Tagore maintains that truth lies primarily in relatedness, - relation of man with God, relation of man with man, relation of man with other creatures of God. The base of this relatedness is goodness, because goodness in man cannot
keep him aloof from others and this goodness is beauty according to Tagore. Pity, forgiveness and love are beautiful. They are beautiful owing to their relatedness and relatedness is due to goodness. Relation implies wholeness. Wholeness does not mean that there is nothing controversial amongst the parts of the world. The divine element will arrive at a compromising stage not ignoring the controversies but sucking the best of all. This is the beauty and realization of this endows us with aesthetic delight. Tagore writes, "So we must know that the meaning of our self is not to be found in its separateness from God and others, but in the ceaseless realization of the yoga, of union, not on the side of the canvas where it is blank, but on the side where the picture being painted."

Contrary forces are there in the world. Natural laws as well as natural calamities are also there. Unity and diversity are also present in the world. But we cannot overlook the fact that unity is there in diversity. The very universe where we are living is the first and foremost witness of this unity in diversity. Creation thus consists in the harmony of contrary forces. Creation does not mean demolishing one creature for the survival of another, rather to maintain a co-existence amongst them is the proper principle of creation. Whenever such harmony is being flashed upon us, we become overjoyed amongst ourselves and consequently an aesthetic
feeling dawns upon us. N.R. writes, "In the evolutionary process, in obedience to the laws of nature, all isolated specks, as reflected in its countless multitude of cells, came to be bound together into a larger unit, not through aggregation, but through a marvellous quality of complex relationship maintaining a perfect combination of functions."

Good and evil are there in the world. We should not anticipate to have goodness ignoring or avoiding evil altogether. If evil is allowed to get the upperhand, it will break the unity of the whole. Then how can we eradicate this evil? Through proper restraint and discipline whenever the urge to cultivate the life of goodness becomes strong enough in us, evil can be conquered. The life of goodness means to live harmoniously with all. Naturally, evil idea can no longer be there in such an ordered life, i.e., in the life of goodness. Here evil itself has to grow into good. While evil grows into good, everything becomes beautiful and divinity becomes immanent. Harmony, real happiness, and real joy emerge automatically as their accompaniments. Tagore observes, "Evil cannot altogether arrest the course of life on the highway and rob it of its possessions. For the evil has to pass on, it has to grow into good, it cannot stand and give battle to all."

To attain something which is not easily attainable is a strenous job. But human nature is such that it is always in
search of something great, something better. Definitely, there is strain and suffering in this upward march. Thus that there is pain cannot be denied. But pain for what? This pain is for something pleasurable. When through strain and suffering, the target is reached, pain itself becomes pleasurable. Suppose infinity is reached, thereby getting divinity we become over­joyed. Struggle, therefore, is the world's supreme blessing. Pleasure attained through struggle is a spiritual pleasure, i.e., aesthetic. Tagore expresses, "The pain was great when the strings were being tuned, my master." In another place he states, "In pain is symbolised the infinite possibility of perfection, the eternal unfolding of joy."21

Our life is always with good and evil, pain and pleasure. Birth is the cause of life. Then again, death is also there. The two - birth and death are related terms, related to the sense that they move in a circular way. When the duration of this life ends in death, we pass on to the next life. Birth is necessary as well as death too is necessary. Death is necessary for bringing newer and newer lives. Death has therefore, some element of good in it. Each life with newness in it is an asset. There is continuity of the present life-force through endless deaths. If we can realise this, we will find beauty both in life and death as nothing is there to worry for death. This continuous, pure life-force is maintaining the perfect harmony amongst the
successive lives, bestowing spiritual blessings and aesthetic bliss to us. Tagore says, "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This final vessel thou emptiest again and again and fittest it even with fresh life."  

Thus we find that through synthesis, harmony is established between contrary forces. Thus softening the edges, Tagore tries to design a creative middle path between contending points of view. It has been tried to make it clear that Tagore's approach is aesthetic. "This middle path is the path of 'sadhana', 'self-realization'." As it has already been found in this chapter that self-realization means the understanding of the relation of the self with other selves and thus with the universal spirit or soul itself. Thus, by his sadhana, self-realization, Tagore wants each man to be complete. To be complete, man must be aware of the wholeness which is truth. This truth of wholeness is beauty.

Now, we arrive at a position that with careful insight through proper restraint and discipline beauty can be enjoyed through balanced harmony. This is spiritual beauty and it is the crux of Tagore's aesthetic thought. "If beauty is to be enjoyed to the uttermost, restraint is essential." 

God finds Himself by creating the universe. He finds Himself in his creations through self-expression. He creates out of joy. In the like manner, Tagore accepts the lyric as the medium of his creative expression to express his joy, to find
himself in the play of joy. Poets write poetry in order to express themselves. Poetry is creation, not copying. It is a vision, not imitation. Poetry aims at catching the vision which sees the things of beauty of the world as a whole. The work of a poet bears the impress of his life and individuality and it is evident from the view of creation that what is a part of one man's life, can surely enter others' lives. The implication is that poetry should be the utterance of the universal mind or the general will. "The soul thinks, feels and enjoys with the poet. Poetry attunes the soul to the life of truth, and the reader sees truth with the eye of the mind, and hears it with the ears of the soul. By its music and melody poetry induces consent, disarms criticism and overpowers the soul."^25

When the difficulties or obstacles of ego and self-interest have been overcome, and the true self of man stands revealed in all its plentitude, his being is flooded with delight. So, art is the creative middle path. Art is the inner necessity of a creative personality. Whether we use poetry, music or dance - we arrive at the same goal - delight. The delight of aesthetic thought is not physically verifiable. The function of art is to bring us, with its creations, into immediate touch with Reality, the supreme person, whose another name is Beauty. As the Beauty is the Reality itself, it has its entry everywhere. According to Tagore, "Art is the
response of man's creative soul to the Real.  

Thus we find that Tagore preserves the elements of truth in monism and pluralism, recognises the world as real without rejecting the concept of maya. "Using the Indian concept 'lila', Tagore says that creation is 'lila' of the creator." He stresses the affinity between man and nature while preserving man's exalted status, interprets the Divine in the light of human experience without equating the Infinite with the finite. All these evidences prove the confirmation of Tagore's role as a solicitor of the creative middle way, thereby establishing harmony, which in turn is the source of delight - disinterested and serene, i.e., aesthetic in sense. This conviction has found aesthetic expression in a number of his poems. The following poem from the volume of 'Utsarca' is particularly vital:

The Infinite craves from the Finite's close comradeship,  
While the finite desires to lose itself in the Infinite.  
In creation and dissolution, through some mysterious contrivance,  
There is eternal coming-and-going between Form and Feeling.  
Bondage is in search for its own Freedom,  
And Freedom legs for a dwelling place with Bondage.

Such harmonious relation is found and according to Tagore, beauty is here in this harmonious relation.
Inescapability of the idea of God and aesthetic experience

Reality as Personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations:

In our previous discussion, it has been mentioned that there is a deep and abiding harmony between man's spirit and the spirit of the universe as God Himself creates the universe in the fullness of joy. Beauty lies in harmony. From the aesthetic point of view, the idea of God is inescapable as it seems that God is scattering His beauty throughout His creation and only because of this man enjoys aesthetic delight here. God is regarded as the creative cosmic Being. God is thus conceived as the only one, the only reality and is the basic postulate of everything. He is the concrete ideal of man's life and aspirations. God is called Satyam, anandam, shivam and sundaram. Tagore writes, in Gitanjali "Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well."\(^{29}\)

We have found that despite the existence of so many contrary forces in the universe, harmony is there, so peace and beauty are also there. Tagore finds music there instead of noise. How peace, beauty, music - all aesthetic facts can reside in such diverse universe? These lead to the idea of God's presence, because God being beautiful, everything beautiful is to follow from His nature. Tagore, therefore, feels that from the fact of aesthetic experience, the idea of God is inescapable. Tagore expresses, "Through so much of
movement and endeavour, through the cycle of life and death, joy and sorrow, it does not seem overburdened. How is it possible for peace and beauty to reside in the midst of such diversity and striving? Why is it that all this is not just noise, but there is music in it? Tagore himself answers that there He (God) stands, silent like a tree.

Thus while experiencing the things of beauty, Tacoref realises his 'Jivandevata', i.e., God. His soul finds his extension and infinity in unification with 'Jivandevata' and this is joy for him. In the words of Tagore, "The I am in me crosses its finitude whenever it deeply realised itself in 'Thou art'. This crossing of the limit produces joy - the joy that we have in our life."  

It is taken for granted that 'Jivandevata' is a great musician. It seems as if he sings the eternal song and the world is illumined by the light of His music. Tagore says:

"I know not how thou singest, my master! 
I ever listen in silent amazement. 
The life breath of thy music illumines the world. 
The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. 
The holy stream of thy music breaks through all starry obstacles and rushes on."  

Thus God's music is echoing everywhere in the world and it seems as if through this music God is delivering aesthetic delight everywhere to everybody. So, from the aesthetic
standpoint, the idea of God is inescapable.

God, the Supreme person, cannot be seen with our finite eyes, like other objects. Rather, it is the very light by which we see all objects. Therefore, it is to be regarded both as the subject and the object. It is the life of life, the self of self. It is in our very heart. To reach it neither we are to search it in the sea nor in the sky. What is necessary is just the conversion of the soul. Provided we can break through the ordinary gage, we will be able to find it. Tagore says, "You were in the centre of my heart, therefore, when my heart wondered she never found you."33

We worship God with a belief that He is benevolent to us. We love Him with the sole idea that He loves us. God is omnipresent. Tagore believes on the personal contact of man and God. The presence of God is felt in noble humanity where evil finds no room. Thus nowhere He is distant from us. In all the sublime human relationships of love and affection, and in our festivities God's nearness is deeply felt. The feeling of divine presence arouses aesthetic awareness in us. Tagore says, "He comes, comes, ever comes. Every moment and every age, every day and every night, he comes, comes, ever comes."34

According to Tagore, Reality is one and he identifies this Reality with personal God. He speaks of personal God, which suggests that the personality is the very being of God.
A being endowed with self-will has personality. God has self-will and self-determination. The powers namely, omniscience, omnipotence, creatorship etc. are the elements in the very being of God. Personality of God, for Tagore, conveys the sense of transcendental unity of all finite beings. Like Hegel*, Tagore conceives God as a unity comprehending all finite existences. Tagore speaks of personal companionship between the ultimate and ourselves. "Reality", Tagore observes, "can be regarded as personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations." 35

Tagore has a human reason for believing in a personal God. According to him, man to find interest in anything must have an actual inter-communion with that thing. God is Truth, Beauty and Goodness which are related to human capacities. Truth is man's capacity for knowledge, beauty for enjoyment, while goodness consists of man's expression of his personality in the ideals of life. The poems of Gitanjali are addressed to God, and through them Tagore expresses his utmost love and devotion to God. God is thus the Supreme personal Being. Unapproachable Brahma cannot anticipate an active and living interest from man. The declaration of "that thou art" is not enough, the throb of the 'that' must be felt within. "Man can take interest in the Absolute only when it is humanised." 36

*Hegel writes, "The opposites are opposites with respect to one another, but not with respect to the unity or whole of which they form the parts." (A History of Philosophy, by Frank Thilly, p. 423).
Now, God is the Reality having personality and therefore, He is considered to be the Supreme Person. All beings proceed from God, the Supreme Person. Each being has got its own personality but the original source of each personality is the supreme Person. The nature of God can be understood by us only in terms of our experience as persons. Thus all personalities are the incessant manifestations of the One Reality as Personality. It is so sweet and beautiful to live, for the manifestation of the Infinite takes place in us, in our very existence. Tagore says, "Thou soundest they note in our finite beings, O Infinite. Within us is your light. That is why thy manifestation in me is so sweet."\(^{37}\)

The personalities of all men, being the manifestations of One Reality as Personality, - are treated as one, i.e., it signifies the idea of a complete whole, - and beauty lies in the realization of this wholeness. So all personalities have aesthetic awareness because of God, the Supreme Person. "My Person is given to a personal me by a personal Being. It is a gift of soul to soul."\(^{38}\)

While referring to God, Tagore mostly uses the words 'Purusha' (Person) and 'Manush' (Man), he avoids the use of the word 'Absolute'. But he always uses some adjectives like 'Eternal', 'Immortal', 'Perfect', 'Universal', 'Conscious', 'Primal', 'Supreme', etc. before the words 'Person' or 'Man', so that they are not to be taken in the finite sense. Therefore,
it becomes clear that Tagore ascribes personality to God not in the sense of bringing Him down to the level of the human individual, rather God is regarded to be at the root of the highest and the best that humanity strives for. He says, "Reality is contained in Infinite Personality." A personal God must not be a limited God.

Thus from the aesthetic point of view, Tagore's idea of the inescapability of the idea of God is a truth, equally true is a fact that for His (God) aesthetic expression, i.e., truth, beauty and goodness, the universe of personalities must be there. Therefore, God without men is an unthinkable idea, as well men without God is a misnomer.

All individual personalities are thus comprised in one supreme personality. This unity brings a luminous joy at the perfect state. In such a state, man is free and he realises the truth, the joy of his whole life. He is having aesthetic experience of divine presence.

**Reality of God, Nature, the Finite individual and Self or Spirit:**

**Identity-in-difference**

In the foregoing discussion it has been ventured to establish the inescapability of the idea of God from the aesthetic point of view. It has also been shown why God - the
Reality is regarded as personal God and how the Reality as personality is acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations. It has been attempted to find out how a harmonious relation is established between the Infinite personality and the finite personalities. Tagore does not reject the impersonal aspect of Reality altogether. It is not his opinion that the idea of personality exhausts the whole nature of Reality. Synthesis of personal and impersonal aspects of God is favoured by Tagore.

Tagore conceives that a meeting ground must somehow be found for the personal and the impersonal, for God with qualities (saguna) and the qualityless Brahma (nirguna), for God with form (sakara) and the Formless (nirakara). In the Poet's philosophy, such a meeting ground has been offered from the standpoint of aesthetic experience. Tagore's God is not a cosmic God, nor is He an object of scientific investigation. He is a human God, the embodiment of man's nature. He is to be sensed, perceived or experienced through unity and harmony, through love and sacrifice. He describes God by calling Him the sky, the seed, the tree and ascribes to him many other epithets. God is full of love for all creatures.

Tagore's God is not an abstract reality like the Brahman of the Advaita Vedanta. He conceives of God as 'who is near to us' and is interested in our actions and thoughts. God is within us but we wrongly search Him in the outer world.
"He is there where the path-maker is breaking stones."\(^{40}\)

A mere feeling of God's reality cannot satisfy the philosophic mind. Along with the question of God's nature, the question of God's relationship with the universe and with human individuals inevitably arises. Reality of the individual self follows from the recognition of a personal God. The concept of personality would lose its concreteness if the reality of the human individual is denied.

A wrestler enjoys being defeated by his own son, a guru gets a sense of fulfilment in being surpassed by his own shishya (disciple). Likewise, God enjoys creating the world with the finite selves and at the same time bestowing uniqueness of existence to them. Tagore expresses -

My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently To listen to thine own eternal harmony.\(^{41}\)

Another more explicit example is the following one:

Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then Callest thy several half in myriad notes This thy self-separation has taken body in me.\(^{42}\)

In both these poems, God is addressed as poet and musician, in consonance with Tagore's aesthetic approach to the question. God is conceived as musician or singer and the world is imagined to be the song of that musician.
Tagore speaks of the two aspects of self, - the lower or the finite self in man remains confined within the boundaries of human limitation, whereas the other is the divine soul existing within him. Tagore compares the 'soul' to the eternal flow which prevents the spontaneous flow of the river. He conceives that "the immortal soul and the finite self, i.e., the Aham, are connected with each other like the shadow with the light." 

Tagore compares human being with a lamp. As oil is in the lamp, so the self is lying hidden in man. Man collects and saves everything for this 'self' and loves it most. Tagore says, "The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus it is separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted, it finds its meaning at once, its relation with all things far and near is established and it freely sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flame." 

Our self is also a lamp. As the lighted lamp is used to enlighten the dark ones, the illumined self forgets its finitude and spiritualises the world. The soul sacrifices its finitude and attains the infinite. In such sacrifice, the illumined self becomes overjoyed having a firm idea that alone with his own happiness, he is making others also happy. This is aesthetic experience of the illumined self.
The infinite self can never be seen by the external eyes of man. To have the vision of the real self, man should develop the power of insight, a vision into the heart of the things. The vision can be obtained by the perfection of the lower self or the Aham and then man can realise the inner self, the Infinite within him.

The most basic and perhaps the most important character of the infinite aspect of man is that all its expressions and activities are expressions of joy. Man's natural urge for realising the truth, the Good and the Beautiful gives rise to the expression of joy. It is on account of the element of 'joy' present in man, that whenever he rises above the mere physical, he is able to forget the worries and anxieties of life. He then realises the spiritual life which enlightens him and provides him with spiritual delight which is nothing but aesthetic.

Next to the supreme spirit and the finite individual, the reality of nature is to be established. We may call it nature, the phenomenal world, the region of multiplicity, Prakrti, jagat etc. According to Tagore, the finite world like the finite self, is indubitably real. To him, the world is real with its manifold appearances having a unity maintained by God. Appearance is not contrary to reality. "A thin\ may be real and yet 'appear'. The paper of the bank-note derives its value from the authority stamped upon it. But we cannot say
that the paper does not exist at all without the stamp."  

Sankara admits that the world-appearance is not as unreal as a square circle or a rabbit's horn which simply does not exist. Tagore declares, "When we deprive truth of its appearance, it loses the best part of its reality. For appearance is a personal relationship."  

Tagore denounces the negative attitude towards the world and does not regard it as a product of maya or illusion. He believes that God has expressed Himself in His creation. True insight reveals the beauty and harmony of God's creative act behind all apparent conflict and chaos in this world. Tagore argues that, "The world may be appearance produced by God. Yet it is God's work and God is an artist."  

The eye cannot see the face and in order to do so it requires a mirror. Likewise, God in order to realise His own nature consisting in absolute freedom, creates this universe which is His mirror. Therefore, creation itself must derive the qualities of God, the creator Himself. Truth, Beauty and Goodness are of the nature of God. We can realise them in nature too. 

Tagore thus accepts all three - God, Nature, and the human self as real. The mark of reality is that it is all-embracing. From this point of view, there is reality of God, there is reality of Nature and there is reality of human self.
But the reality of each does not mean that it has got no relation with the other, rather each is found to be interrelated. Notwithstanding the fact of interrelation, each one is free. This leads us to the idea that there is unity in diversity. Tagore's God is a great lover. According to him, there is one and the one intends to become many, i.e., the one wanted to appreciate its unity in diversity.

Our self in order to have its union with God, renounces its narrow individuality. This renunciation is not the negation of the self, rather it is the attainment of a higher self by purifying it through perfect universal love. Tagore does not regard the self merely as a Visheshana (adjective) of the ultimate, rather self's reality is substantial. According to Tagore, rejection of the finite self will naturally mean a rejection of the Infinite self also as it is in and through the finites that the Infinite is sought to be realised. Tagore says, "I want to taste sugar, I do not want to be sugar. In 'his' relation to God man does not lose himself, but rather finds himself more completely."48

Thus human soul embraced God along with God's creation without losing its uniqueness. God too embraces all without losing its infinitude. Therefore, both are real. Real spiritual beauty is enjoyed there in this embrace to each other. Thus God is real and each and every finite soul is real. The souls are like the pulse beating of the Divine heart. He says,
"I have come from thee - why I know not;
But thou art, O God! What thou art
And the round of eternal being is the
pulse of thy beating heart."49

Man is conscious of his finitude only because there is something of the Infinite in his nature. According to Tagore, the self in us is divine. It is a part of God as it is the creation of God. God is in harmony with the selves. This harmony brings unity amongst the selves. Between selves and God, there lies the real truth, this truth in turn is beautiful having aesthetic content in it. The selves thus derive their joy, being in harmony with God. Even in such highest state of his existence, man retains his identity. Thus the theism of Tagore presupposes the reality and freedom of the self. He is not of the opinion of losing one's existence in the Infinite, but to have a divine life on earth.

Thus differences are there in the world, but an underlying unity is also there. This unity prevents the parts from destroying each other. Whenever we come to realise the idea of this unity, this wholeness, we become overjoyed being fascinated by the beauty of wholeness. Tagore says, "Truth has an inner consistency which works not by excluding and rejecting differences, but by accepting and transcending them. I have no use for a truth which cuts out all differences and erects a mechanical wall of unity."50
The universe is created by God out of joy as if it is a game played by God. As a result that joy of God is encircling everywhere in his creation too. "The piper pipes in the central hidden from sight. And we become frantic, we dance." To separate one from the other is to break up the real into two abstracts of the finite and the Infinite, which are both unreal and illusory. The mere finite is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music. The mere infinite is "utter emptiness". The two are real in their union but none loses their uniqueness thereby. "It is only in marriage with the finite that the Infinite can bear fruit, divorced from it, it remains barren." This sort of unity only can be the source of truth and beauty.

Identity-in-difference is an undeniable fact in creation of any type. As for example, a particular plant will also point to the same fact. In this case, when the seed is under the earth, it is 'one'. When the seed sprouts, diversity appears and its true life begins. But it is the same tree having the seed, trunk, leaves and branches. There is a wholeness of the tree and this wholeness is its beauty. "The rose has its petals, its stalks, its whorl of leaves, but over and above all these is an invisible principle of wholeness of unity, which is beauty." It is the harmony between the parts of a rose which is the vision of true unity. Tagore suggests through such metaphors the idea of identity-in-difference.
have found that the identity-in-difference is true, according to Tagore, in case of the whole universe. Identity-in-difference forms the core of Tagore's principle of beauty. So, it is the base of Tagore's aesthetic thought.

**Interdependence of Nature and Spirit**

We have already come through Tagore's concepts of the reality of God, Nature and the human self and their aesthetic significance. It has been stated there that God, Nature and the human self - all are real. However, there is a mutual relation or the relation of interdependence amongst them. The same divine rhythm is sustaining the song of nature as well as the song of humanity. The world of nature is the playground where we have to build ourselves.

We are face to face with this great world and our relations to it are manifold. Food, clothes, shelter are the necessities of life. We are to have these materials from Nature. Thus we come in touch with Nature in our efforts to meet these demands. Tagore conceives that there is a distinction, not contradiction, between Nature and spirit. It does not mean the identification of the two. Tagore does not reduce the human to the level of the natural, nor does he elevate the natural to the level of the spiritual. He admits the interdependence of Nature and spirit without disputing the
superiority of the latter. The advance of spirit lies in freedom but that freedom does not mean the absolute severance from Nature. To claim complete separation between Nature and spirit would be like "dividing the bud and the blossom into two separate categories and putting their grace to the credit of two antithetical principles."  

In the works of Tagore's early adolescence, the richness of nature is dealt with more emphasis. In the next stage, he seems to be dissatisfied with the mere enjoyment of the varied beauties of nature. This is reflected in 'Sandhya-Sangit'. Thereafter, Tagore attempts to find a basis of unity between man and nature. In 'Manasi' and 'Chitrangada', the consciousness of this unity deepens in terms of the universal principles of joy, harmony, love and beauty. This beauty in unity clearly displays his aesthetic notion. He grasps well that life is intimately connected with nature. Beauty is the bridge between Matter and spirit. A true spiritual relationship has nothing to do with fear or fervour, it is a relationship of beauty and joy. In the words of Tagore, "The highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union."  

In Rabindranath's thought, Nature and spirit are incomplete without each other. Nature depends upon spirit for
its meaning, the spirit depends upon Nature for its expression. For their own completion, Nature's objects look up to man. Beauty of nature would have been meaningless had there been no human mind. The human mind reveals the nature's contents and its beauty. Barring nature, man would have lose his balance. The eye of an artist is needed to perceive the beauty of the things of nature. Only a poet's eye can pierce into the confusing chaos of shadows and appearances and see the cosmos within. Tagore is a poet of nature in whose hands the crudest stuff of existence acquires a poetic colouring. To Tagore, even a blade of grass or an atom of dust brings a message from the unknown. Tagore loves nature deeply. To him, every aspect of nature becomes a symbol of beauty. He describes plants as "our friends who teach us how to greet the sky. Their language is the primal language of life, and their movements point to the source of being. The history of a thousand forgotten ages are stored up in their gestures." The poet does not love nature for its own sake, but because he views it as a manifestation of the divine. Nature gives intimations of a higher spiritual life. Indian aesthetic thought is not materialistic, rather it is spiritual and this is equally true in case of Tagore. Nature brings intimations to him of a higher spiritual life. Nature is endowing us with aesthetic thought.

So devoted Tagore was to nature that everything of nature is a thing of beauty for him. Flower, forest, hill-top,
the sound of the running water, the rustle of the leaves, the
song of the bird - all are beautiful. He treats all these to
be the hymns of praise to the Great God. He considers every
flower to be a symbol of worship. To him every forest is a
temple, every hill-top is a God's dwelling place. To his
mystic's mind, all beauty in Nature is the living touch of God's
love which fills him with an ecstasy of joy. Nature supplies
him with food for his imagination in his leisure. To him,
Nature is a loving companion that never forshakes him and
always reveals to him new treasures of beauty and joy.

Man and Nature together form the wonderful and perfect
whole which inspires the poet with grand and beautiful visions.
In his nature poems, Tagore suggests nature and man to be one,
they breathe the same life and feel the same joys and sorrows
and have the same passions. What man feels of beauty and love,
is echoed back from the nature's spirits. Without man nature
would be, in Bradley's words, "a broken arch", "a circle
unclosed". "The earth and the sky", says Tagore, "are wove
with the fibres of man's mind." In the experience of this
oneness, all his doubts and apprehensions vanish. Instead,
there is now a deep calm of soul, an easy and assured delight,
a resting place and this is the beauty of life.

The relation of nature and spirit is so intimate that
even those aspects of life which elevate man above nature can
be nourished only by assimilating, not by repudiating, what he
shares with nature. In man himself, there is both nature and spirit. He is of nature and also beyond nature. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "Nature is fuel for the flame of the spirit."

It is evident that the emphasis is not merely on life but also on rhythm and here Tagore's vitalism ascends from the biological to the aesthetic plane. Nature and human life are united not merely because both are animated but because both display rhythm and harmony. They are like the two stanzas of the same poem, two movements of the same symphony. Tagore admits the world of facts and objects but interprets them finally in terms of unity and harmony and hence in terms of joy and beauty and bliss. The dance of the seasons finds its response in human actions. In many of his poems, particularly in 'Sonar Tari' and 'Chitra', we see how intensely the poet is attracted by the world. It seems as if a firm and deep tie unites the poet's life with the life of the world. Everything that exists rouses unmeasured wonder and delight in his soul. Summer's burning sun, the clouds during the rains, the autumn sun and green fields - each one gets its proper response in human actions. It is imagined as if by one foot of the Nataraaja, the Lord of Dance, the outer world of form is stirred; by his other foot the inner world of human spirit is set in motion. Tagore says, "The language of harmony in nature is the mother-tongue of our own soul."
The poet is thrilled by the discovery that the human world and the world of nature are energised by a common storehouse of power and vitality. He wonders at this power and finds its manifestations beautiful. Though invisible this power is felt by us. It is inconceivable and yet an undeniable source of delight. All these impressions combine to evoke in the poet a feeling of divinity. He glorifies this power, adores it, and in a worshipful mood calls it 'devata' (deity). Tagore's 'Jivan-devata' is nothing but the spirit of life in nature and man. This universal life-force is a source of boundless delight to Tagore. This delight of oneness is the unique aesthetic experience of man. This life force flows through every blade of grass, each branch of every tree. It thrills the green fields.

In many of Tagore's poems, we find the fine presentation of the abovementioned vitalism. The touching are the following lines from the poem 'Pran':

In every vein of my body, night and day
The stream of life surges, ever surges.
The same breath of life is out to conquer the universe,
Flowing with wonder-inspiring rhythm,
Dancing, beating time, swaying.
It enters every grain of dust on this earth,
It rejoices through a million blades of grass,
And expands through leaves and flowers.
In the vast ocean of life and death
The same current rises and falls in tide and ebb.
I feel that every limb of my body
Has been rendered glorious by the touch of this life-force.
This stream, throbbing in the vast universe age after age
Dances in every drop of my blood. 61

So, we find that on account of the presence of the
universal life-force, i.e., 'Jivan-devata' which is the infinite
aspect of man, man feels attracted towards nature, overawed by
the sublime powers of natural forces. Nature is not alien to
man. Tagore expresses, "I believe that in a little flower,
there is a living power hidden in beauty which is more potent
than a maxim gun. I believe that in the bird's notes, Nature
expresses herself with a force which is greater than that
revealed in the deafening roar of the cannonade. I believe that
there is an ideal hovering over the earth, - an ideal of that
paradise which is not the mere outcome of imagination, but the
ultimate reality towards which all things are moving. I believe
that this vision of paradise is to be seen in the sunlight, and
the green of the earth, in the flowing streams, in the beauty of
spring time and the repose of a winter morning. Elsewhere in
this earth, the spirit of paradise is awake and sending forth
its voice." 62 Thus both nature and spirit have tremendous
aesthetic significance in Tagore's thought.

Humanism : Love as the magic wand dissolves all contraries

Tagore lays stress on 'sarvanubhuti' or the feeling of
at-homeness in the whole. 'Sarvanubhuti' is not merely a
feeling, it is also an attitude. At-homeness entails harmony with all created objects. A serene solace is being entertained in this harmony, as wherever this harmony is felt by us, feeling of singleness disappears. A complete man is one who has the capacity for union, a lone individual is a fragmented being. The basis of unity is unbounded love. Therefore, love promotes our aesthetic thought as we have aesthetic experience only where we realise the unity, at-homeness in the whole. Love should pervade all and it should be extended to all beings and things. Behind the parts of the world, there is one reality. There should be the vision of love to grasp the reality. According to Tagore, love can bridge the finite and the infinite. He maintains, "love is ultimate, because it is an interrelation which makes truth complete." 63

The goodness that God sees in His creation is its beauty and to feel the beauty of the world is to love it and its creation. We should pervade the whole world with love, love generates compassion, joy and indifference. Love is the most perfect relationship. Tagore says, "Truth is widowed without love." 64

The end of love is harmony. The unity which is based on love is all-comprehensive. It is only through love that our consciousness can be enlarged, only love can comprehend all in a 'unity'. Man misses himself when isolated; he finds his own larger and true self in his wide human relationship. This unity
which promotes harmony amongst all, is itself beautiful. Therefore, harmony brings aesthetic awareness to us. To have harmony, we are to love all. Tagore feels this synthesis within himself and expresses his feeling like this: "I seem to experience in the wholeness of my vision - the rhythm of all humanity."  

In the previous discussion on 'Interdependence of Nature and spirit', we have come to know about the poet's notion of 'Jivan-devata'. Tagore's 'Jivan-devata' is nothing but the spirit of life in nature and man. The realisation of 'Jivan-devata' is possible only through love and in the sacrifice of the narrow self.

The Infinite requires the finite for the fulfilment of His love. God plays with the devotee in love. Love has been depicted as ineffable light that illumines itself and all around it. God loves all and He makes all to love each other and also Him - the super person. So, love is the path for the realisation of the Supreme Being.

Love, undying love, is true and fixed as the pole star. To have love is to kill one's ego. This shows that love demands a going beyond the egoistic impulses. So long as 'I', 'me' and 'mine' continue to guide man, he cannot love. Tagore, therefore, asks man to transcend his ego-centric individuality. Thus love presupposes sacrifice. Love and sacrifice go together. Without the one the other loses its function. In his famous
poem, 'Nirjharer Svapnabhanga' (Awakening of the Waterfall), Tagore symbolically expresses how man transcends the narrow boundaries of his ego and merges into the current of humanity. "Just as the stream finds in the torrent of truth it had missed in the glacier", similarly, the progress of man, "on its ethical side is the ascending movement from selfishness to selflessness." 66

Thus love is the magic wand which dissolves all contraries. This evades the idea of separateness with others. Complete cessation of the idea of separation makes us all enlightened. Then everywhere around us we see beauty. The feeling of remorse and hatred are doomed for ever. Delight - spiritual delight, i.e., aesthetic delight - we entertain in such a state. Tagore writes, "When our self is illumined with the light of love, then the negative aspect of its separateness with others loses its finality. When separation was thus overcome, man could see the truth of things in their universality." 67

Thus when our heart is fully awakened in love, our personality is in its flood-tide. Suffering is no more there in us as through love suffering itself is transformed into delight. A man possessing true love cultivates the spirit of the Brahma and he moves and breathes in the same spirit. What is Brahma Vihara? Tagore answers: "With everything whether it is above or below, remote or near, visible or invisible, thou shalt
presume a relation of unlimited love without any animosity or without a desire to kill. To live in such a consciousness while standing or walking, sitting or lying down till you are asleep, is Brahma Vihara, or in other words is living and moving and having your joy in the spirit of Brahma.\(^6^8\)

Tagore pleads for dispassionate love. He feels that man in his love for nature, beauty and other creations of God, experiences the Divine love. The love of Radha for Krishna represents also the finite individual's eternal love for the supreme Divine Being. Becoming one with Him means losing ourselves in Him through love. Love is truth. Tagore's two great works, - 'Gitanjali' and 'Naivedya' are filled with devotional poems that speak of self-surrender and love to the Infinite. According to Tagore, the best way to seek complete union with the Infinite is to seek contact through men. God creates individual souls not out of necessity, but out of joy and love. So to love the creations of God is to love God. Tagore, therefore, advises us to love every creature, the hungry and the thirsty, the sick and the imbecile, the stranger and the naked, for God is in them all. As he puts it, "Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest and lost."\(^6^9\)

The ultimate end of human life is to realise the truth of the self. To realise this truth, we must have universal love. It is through God's love and joy that our souls receive
bliss and liberation. Tagore feels that his salvation lies in loving the Infinite. To love God is not to bid adieu to all actions and to take recourse to emotions. Love without activity is no love. The human action is the play of love. Tagore says, "In his spiritual life his sense of the union and the will which is free has its culmination in love. In the freedom of consciousness, he realizes the sense of his unity with his larger being, finding fulfilment in the dedicated life of an ever-progressive truth and ever-active love."70

It is believed that out of love God sends suffering to the people. Pain and evil are not ultimately real. They have a definite purpose in life. They are the megaphones that rouse us from our deaf selves. Suffering and pain must purify our passion. They make us move in the right direction. They teach us to think for others. Our greatest delight we have when we realise ourselves in others, and this is love proper. If we seek pleasure alone in love then love eludes us and the pleasure itself becomes unbearable pain and frustration. But love sustained by suffering is immortal: the smile that flickers behind a drop of tear remains vivid for ever. This love gives us the testimony of the great whole, which is the complete and final truth of man. God hurts man only to heal him, punishes man to love him.

Tagore regards warm human feelings as spiritual in nature. In the drama "Prakritir Pratisadh" (Nature’s Revenge),
he points to us how necessary is the normal life to man. Here it is shown that a 'sannyasi' who retires to a cave suddenly happens to pick up a castaway girl in the street. The girl calls the 'sannyasi' back to life and the world by the simple power of her love. 'Sannyasi' can no more go back to his lonely and dark cell, screened off from light and joy and beauty. The 'sannyasi' denied life and love of nature, nature took its revenge; life and love assert themselves and enable him to discover the joy and meaning of life. In a poem 'Fran' of 'Kari O Kamal' Tagore expresses his deep and sincere love for nature. "The glamorous nature is so sweet and dear to him that he does not want to be away from the nature, rather he wants to live eternally, amidst men, in nature. He intends to share in happiness as well as in sorrows of men of the nature."

**Freedom and Bondage**

Tagore has given immense importance on freedom in his aesthetic thought. It is freedom which provides outlets to the creative power of man. It has been found that through our sense of love, we realise harmony in the universe. Man can live with self-respect only after he enters into a relationship with the forces of nature and the world around. In the finite aspect, the soul is always conscious of its separation from God. It thinks that it has its own freedom and is completely unrelated to God. But the case is not so, it is not freedom,
rather it is bondage. Freedom never implies the distinctness of soul from God, whereas it is bondage which means separation of soul from God. Ignorance is the cause of soul's bondage. Hence freedom can be attained by removing ignorance. We are to go beyond our narrow selfish desires to overcome ignorance. The true meaning of freedom lies in the recognition that the soul is not merely individual and separate, but is universal, infinite and ever united with the supreme or God.

According to Tagore, man's superiority in the scale of creation depends on his freedom. The other creatures never cry for emancipation from the limits of life. But man asserts his freedom. He is a creative being. As an artist his creativity flows through free outlets. The spark of divinity in man is the sign of his freedom. The freedom that characterises the infinite nature of man is spiritual freedom, the freedom which breaks the shackles of the finite body and aspires for the realisation of oneness or unity. His cry according to Tagore is as follows:

Free me as free are the deluge of rain, and the storm that shakes its locks and rushes on to its unknown end.
Free me as free is the forest fire, as is the thunder that laughs aloud and hurl's defiance at darkness. 72

Tagore advocates a middle path between action and contemplation, which is the path of Sadhana, self-realisation. This self-realisation means to know the individual himself in
relation with others. This sadhana is bound up with the question of freedom, as with a free mind only man may find out his real relation with others.

We cannot realise the highest self unless we understand that absolute freedom is anarchy and absolute determinism is death. Thus Tagore asserts that the highest freedom of man as a moral being, lies in the capacity of joyfully surrendering his freedom. Freedom means not estrangement from life or killing of faculty, but the enlargement of the self, the expression of personality. Salvation is for him, a state of divine life on earth. It is through dependence, bondage and love with God, i.e., with all His creation that one attains freedom. Tagore is of the opinion that real enjoyment is there in the renunciation of the individual self. He means by renunciation the self-dedication, not the self-denial. When man discovers that his own self is a part of a greater Reality, he will find "generous opportunities of enjoyment in renunciation."73

So, perfect freedom, according to Tagore, lies in a perfect harmony of relationship - in the realisation of the universal within the individual. In the liberated soul, perfect service is perfect freedom. Thus man can attain freedom only when he attains his truest nature. An artist gains his freedom in art only when he realizes the artistic
ideal. The artist through the medium of objects, expresses his artistic talent. Here he finds unity between himself and the object created by him and feels perfect joy. Thus art is born of the joy of self-forgetfulness, fulfilling the aim of producing joy. This helps the soul to leap freely from its fetters and attain peace with itself and the world. Radhakrishnan writes, "it affects the greater life of which it is a part, for it brings the infinite into the common life of which it is a part. It thus adorns life and gladdens existence." 74

Now, it becomes evident that all existence is woven with the thread of relatedness. Nothing is altogether unconditioned. To emphasize this, Tagore poetically describes God Himself as "shackled by His own creation" 75 and in this sense bound. The ethical life begins with freedom and develops through law. Perfection demands the chastening and refinement of law, not the rejection of law. The musician adjusts the strings of his lute. His freedom does not consist in loosening those strings, but rather in tightening them in accordance with the highest requirements of his art. The same is true in case of a poet. He expresses himself through metre and rhyme. His freedom lies in choosing his own rhythm, not in doing away with rhyme. "Art and literature belong to that revolutionary region of freedom where the importance of need is reduced to a minimum, where the material grows insubstantial and the ideal alone is revealed as the truth." 76
Once freedom and bondage are seen as relative terms, we understand that the law of harmony operates in this aspect of life as in other aspects. We then cease to regard freedom as the opposite of restraint and look upon them as complementary parts of the moral order. "The river of life", says Tagore, "has freedom on one of its banks and restraint on the other." 

According to Tagore, if death is understood in its proper perspective, we shall find it to be a stage that gives to life an onward direction. Death, according to Tagore, serves another human and spiritual purpose also, it is a supreme lesson of giving away. Life can realise its proper function only when it gives up its narrow egoistic outlook. Thus death plays an important role in the spiritual process of the extension of consciousness. According to Tagore, soul survives death and continues to live till its ultimate destiny is attained. It may be inferred that even rebirth is not the destiny of man, it is merely a stage through which soul has to pass.

The ultimate destiny is the realisation of immortality and complete freedom. As we go on unfolding the powers and the freedom of the soul by rising above the body and by trying to realise our essential affinity with all, we are progressing towards immortality - towards the realisation of complete freedom. The true meaning of freedom lies in the recognition
that the soul is not merely individual and separate, but it is universal, infinite and united, with the supreme soul, 'Paramatman' or God.

It can be said that in this state all the fever and the fret of our normal embodied existence come to an end. The discord, conflicts and contradictions of life are quietened and there emerges a fully harmonious existence. In this state man rises completely over his egoistic life and has a realisation of the essential unity of everything. This enables him even to rise above the distinction between pleasure and pain, good and evil. Such distinctions arise only when we believe in the distinction between me and thou, or between mine and yours. According to Tagore, this is the feeling of the presence of 'Him' all around, this is the realisation of the Divinity. Tagore says, "The soul is to dedicate itself to the Brahman through all its activities. This dedication is the song of the soul, in this is his freedom. Joy reigns when all work becomes the path to the union with Brahman; when the soul ceases to return constantly to its own desires; when in it our self-offering grows more and more intense. Then there is completion, then there is freedom, then in this world comes the kingdom of God." Tagore asks us to win freedom spiritually and fight for the lost provinces of the soul.

The liberated man does not become an entirely different individual - a separate unit. On the other hand, his outlook
gives place to love and joy. He enters into the ocean of joy as it were, which is boundless, which knows no shores. He becomes a transformed man, - an aesthete in true sense.

**Conclusion**

In our foregoing study on Tagore's aesthetics, we find that he is pre-eminently a poet and an artist, though his versatility is noticed in other spheres too. He is a mystic philosopher and a spiritual humanist too.

Tagore has had the vision of the divine beauty of life. His idealistic attitude imparts a shining purity to his poetry where the body is not denied but surpassed. Through bodily beauty the poet has a vision of beauty itself, which lies above and beyond it. Bodily desire rarefies itself into the desire for this ideal beauty.

He is not merely a versifier, building an ivory tower in a rose garden. Practical idealism is the target of his endeavour. His supreme spirit is not an abstract entity residing at a safe distance from the world, but is the concrete dynamic life at the centre of all things. It is the final truth of the cosmic dance of life and death. This we may infer from his different aesthetic expressions.
He is found to denounce the negative attitude towards the world and he does not regard the world as a product of maya or illusion. He believes that God has expressed Himself in His creation. True insight reveals, therefore, the beauty and harmony of God's creative act behind all apparent conflict and chaos in this world.

Eternal beatitude lies in the heart of all the good things of the world.
REFERENCES

1. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Art and Aesthetics, p. 4r
2. Ibid., p. 19
3. Ibid., p. 16
4. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Cycle of Spring, p. 18
5. Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, ed., Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p. 614
6. Hegel, Aesthetics, p. 91
7. Pandey, K.C., Comparative Aesthetics, p. vii
8. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Art and Aesthetics, p. 28
9. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Angel of Surplus, pref ace
10. Patrick, George Thomas White, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 470
11. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sahityer Swarup, p. 34
12. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sadhana, p. 143
14. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Gitanjali, p. 11
15. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Angel of Surplus, ed. by Sisir Kumar Ghosh, p. xiv
16. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Art and Aesthetics, p. 3
17. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sadhana, p. 71
19. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, *Sadhana*, p. 52
20. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, *Fruit-gathering*, p. XLIX
22. Rabindra Jivani, vol. VI, p. 301
27. Lal, B.K., *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 57
28. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, 'Abartan' of 'Utsarga' in Sanshaya, p. 468
30. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, *Dharma*, p. 29
31. Radhakrishnan edt., *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 34
32. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, *Gitanjali*, p. 3
33. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, *Fruit-gathering*, p. Lxix
34. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, *Gitanjali*, p. 45
35. Naravane, V.S., *Tagore - A Philosophical Study*, p. 74
37. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Gitanjali, p. 120
38. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Personality, p. 69
39. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Creative Unity, p. 71
40. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Gitanjali, p. 11
41. Ibid., p. Lxv
42. Ibid., p. Lxxi
43. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Shantiniketan, Nadia Kool, p. 168
44. Srivastava, A.K., God and the Finite Self in Tagore's Philosophy, p. 91
45. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sadhana, p. 80
46. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Personality, p. 51
47. Radhakrishnan, S., edt., History of Philosophy Eastern and Western, p. 532
48. Naravane, V.S., Tagore, p. 86
49. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Santiniketan, vol. I, p. 68
50. Naravane, V.S., Modern Indian Thought, p. 125
51. Radhakrishnan, S., Philosophy of Tagore, p. 43
52. Ibid., p. 43
53. Tagore, Rabindra Nath edt. by Sisir Kumar Ghose, Angel of Surplus, p. 77
54. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sadhana, p. 7
55. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Creative Unity, pp. 45-46
56. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Viksha Vandana "Homage to the trees" of 'Bana Bani' (Sanchayita), pp. 610-11

57. Radhakrishnan, S., Philosophy of Tagore, p. 89

58. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Personality, p. 74

59. Radhakrishnan, S., Philosophy of Rabindra Nath Tagore, p. 11

60. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Creative Unity, p. 7

61. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, 'Pran' of 'Naibedya' in Sanchayita, p. 436

62. Radhakrishnan, S., The Philosophy of Rabindra Nath Tagore, p. 87

63. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, The Religion of Man, p. 117

64. Prakash, Dewan Raj, edt., Tagore Centenary Souvenir, p. 32


67. Damodaran, Indian Thought - A Critical Survey, p. 422

68. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sadhana, p. 18

69. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Gitanjali, p. 10

70. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Religion of Man, p. 45

71. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, 'Pran' of 'Kari O Kamal', Sanchayita, p. 42

72. Naravane, V.S., Modern Indian Thought, p. 145
73. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, The Religion of Man, p. 23
74. Radhakrishnan, S., The Philosophy of Tagore, p. 79
75. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Gitanjali (Bengali) Poem No. 110 from Rabindra Rachanabali (Akadash Khanda), p. 94
76. Tagore, Rabindra Nath ed. by Sisir Kumar Ghose, Angel of Surplus, p. 78
77. Naravane, V.S., Modern Indian Thought, p. 146
78. Tagore, Rabindra Nath, Sadhana, pp. 128-129